

The Influence and Exploration of Forceful Control in Enshi Area in China during the Resistance War against Japan

Zhaoxue Zhang¹

¹ The Preparatory Department, Wuhan Yangtze Business University, Wuhan, China

Correspondence: Zhaoxue Zhang, The Preparatory Department, Wuhan Yangtze Business University, Hongshan District, Wuhan 430065, China. E-mail: zhaoxue816@sohu.com

Received: August 25, 2011 Accepted: November 20, 2011 Online Published: July 1, 2012

doi:10.5539/ach.v4n2p77

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ach.v4n2p77>

Abstract

During the resistance war against Japan in China, the national administrative authority penetrated the rural society in Enshi city in Hubei province. For one thing, the village officials as the national administrative power strengthened their functions controlling the rural area; for another, the clan organizations in the rural area in Enshi combated the control. The result of confrontation between the two forces was to further strengthen the legitimacy of the system, extend the national executive power down to the grassroots level, instead of the legitimacy of cultural traditions, and control the rural communities in the Enshi area. This control shows that a modern local administrative system has been established in the Enshi area, and to a certain extent, it reflects that the national government was trying to combine the national strong power with the democratic system to explore patterns of modern political initiatives. The result was that this powerful control in this particular setting of the war against Japan set an unprecedented performance.

Keywords: during the war, Enshi region, a new system of rural county, rural social control

1. The Social Situation before the Formation of the Dominant Social Control Power

In November 1938, Provincial Government moved westward to Enshi city in Hubei province in China because of the resistance war against Japan, and directly participated in and led the rural society of the area. Therefore, the national government became the centre power of grass-roots society.

Due to the war, the need of soldiers and civilians' provisions increased, which became the leading problem of the government of Hubei province. However, the local warlords' control on peasant economy seriously affected the government's administration; in this case, national administrative power is difficult to draw deeply into the rural society to obtain social resources for the war.

By means of Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles, National Government also began to explore a modern political system to strengthen the control of rural society and to lay the foundation for the resistance war against Japan. These were carried into execution by "New County System" and gradually a new social structure and control mode—"nation (countryside official)—small farmers" was formed.

2. The National Administrative Power Infiltrating into the Rural Society and the Formation of "Nation (Countryside Official)—Small Farmers" as the Dominant Social Control Power

2.1 The Infiltration of Authority of National Administration under "New County System (Control Power)"

The infiltration of authority of national administration under "New County System (control power)" and the anti-control of rural society varied around grass-roots organizations. As Zhu (2004) holds, when control power strengthened, the administration of grassroots organization was intensified; equally, when control power weakened, the administration of grassroots organization abated. In the rural social interaction, the anti-clan organization also rose. In the process of implementation of "New County System", pao chia was becoming the village organization supported by the nation administration and its authority was derived from the provisions of national power. Xiao (1999) holds that the re-integration of the counties, townships, towns, and pao chia, broke geopolitical structure which was led and controlled by the clan in Enshi area. Even though there were some clan villages, they were under the acquiescence of national power and their existing was on the premise of supporting the leadership of the national executive power and cooperating with central executive administration.

The original marginalization led by clans and the religion organization were not the main functions anymore although the affection of religion was still on. Xu (2007) also studies that the anti-control power was becoming weaker, which would be the political condition of the infiltration of administrative power into the countryside.

2.2 The Execution of the Land Report and the Reduction of Tenant's Land Rent by 25 Per Cent

The execution of the land presentation and the reduction of tenant's land rent by 25 per cent, which were the main elements of land reform, injured the core profit of the gentry who own land. They objected the policy. On the other side, as Duara (1996) studies, the government of Hubei Province took repressive policies, which intensified the gentry's differentiation. Some of them were avoid of politics, while some local tyrants and evil gentry fled for the national government ranks, who would be the actual operators of the administrative power infiltration into the country.

The national party forces were growing steadily. They regulated the behavior of members with the party's organization principle and the government's disciplines and implemented the policies around grass-roots unit of the society. They executed "party-government contact" and "harmony party in politics" to concentrate on power in the national party's central executive committee and establish the central and local grassroots vertical management. Some local tyrants and evil gentry's families joined the national party organization which lined the religion with party, and then they partially replaced the administrative power of local clan organization and also introduced organization programs for the infiltration of the administrative power.

2.3 The Profound Changes in Enshi Region

In addition, the government moved to Enshi, made use of local tyrants and evil gentry, suppressed bandits, and soiled overlord, which greatly disintegrated the power of the local clan. The peasants partly broke away from the control of the local clan. They got protection through taxes payment, military service and various corves. The clan elder took action in mediating an issue, producing cooperation. Along with the implementation of "new county system", the social structure underwent profound changes in Enshi region. National administrative power filtered down to the village, the government worked on the rural resource through the administrative power, and then gradually a leading power structure—"nation (rural officials)—small farmers" was formed.

3. The Position and Influence on All Class Levels in the Control Mode of "Nation (Rural Officials) —Small Farmers"

3.1 The Constituent Part of Rural Officials

In the previous discussion, the author has referred to constituent part of rural officials. According to the origin and meaning of "Empire foundation – rural officials and the squire" created by Taiwan scholar Wang (1992), "rural officials" was a semi-autonomous bureaucrat under the unified empire in the local village community; "squire" are titles of those who have passed the imperial examinations and were incumbent. Those were forces besides the government and the power of antigovernment. It seemed that they belonged to the power of common people. This showed that rural officials and gentry should be two different groups and categories. However, there was overlap phenomenon in varying degrees during wars. Rural officials were made up of such parts during wars: the representatives elected by the local villages who had had short-term or long-term training from the government and were back to their hometown (elected individuals or family as representatives who owned prestige, school educated graduates); "important person" appointed by government (obtained through non-normal channels without strong prestige); local gentry who have been spitted off and were employed by the government. Rural officials' identity recognition and legitimacy was from the government's record and its functions were regulated by the government.

3.2 The Position and Influence of Small Farmers

Small farmers were controlled and belonged to the bottom of society, mainly made up by a large number of tenant farmers and small farmers. Despite the land reform, there were no change in the relation of production, such as national tax collection and other aspects on the premise of land property change, so the majority of small farmers can not always escape the fate of exploitation; there was also the burden of labor and military service during the war, in addition to their rent to make significant contribution to the victory of the war. In addition, the modern democratic sense of small farmers improved, as reflected in Dr. Sun Yat-sen's "civil rights" thinking.

3.3 The Series of Measures Working Actively

Under this control mode, the series of measure did work actively, and social stabilization is the important indemnity of the victory of the resistance war of against Japan. With grass-roots unit administrative organization foundation and all the public organization instauration, all the countryside officials would start to work in the

constituted requirement of the provincial government. In this case, all the local social business began to develop. Increasing production warranted the base goods and material supplying, reduced the supplying of local money, and warranted the living of people, government employees and teachers especially through land tax collected in the labor exchange. To some extent, it can make popular feelings stable through dealing with almsgiving, salt, reducing interest, putting down price, healthy, ban on opium-smoking and the opium trade; when the provincial institutions of high education move in, it set up all levels of schools, and it also started night schools for women. It held all levels of cadres training classes; increased all the schools and houses outlay. And it carried out free tuition fee system in the planning of a school or college for special instruction or training to train a certain amount of competent people and drill a lot of ethnic cadres, which improved its country civilizable function; make country construction take a new look through erecting and tidying telephone line, intensifying the water-control project, disseminating agricultural science and technology, calling for stockbreeding, mineral exploitation, building airport in Enshi city and Laifeng city, and developing transferring condition. It made rear production in the west of Hubei province and got a relative balanced social environment by rooting out local tyrant and cleaning up general mood of society. The development of those economy, culture and hygienist made great contribution to the anti-war in Hubei, and even to the whole country, so that Jiang Jieshi called it “model province of the Three People's Principles”.

3.4 Autonomy with Great Official Governance in the Control Mode “The Two Elements”

The national government highlighted the national power, resulting in the implementing of national consciousness and party consciousness in the process of the formulation of laws and regulations. When the national government emphasized “party consciousness”, a very important aspect is to carry out the party government into the rural area. Therefore, the national government’s “autonomy” was always in the core of the “party rule”. During the resistance war of against Japan in China, the national government could not arrange large-scale bureaucratic teams to go to the countryside, and had to train and develop large-scale party members in the countryside. Expanding the number of party members relied on the force of administration, suppressed the local clan organization, and prompted the development of clan organization into the organization for economic cooperation. It was also a very important aspect in the process of the modern transformation of rural society. Once the “party governance” took place of the autonomous function of clan organization and completed the political power restructuring of the countryside region, Chinese rustic appearance would change radically, completely into the administrative villages under the leadership of government, which is quite different from the currently popular village community under the modern management, and which also shows that in the “two elements” control mode, the national government’s autonomy was just a sign.

In short, in the rural society under the county, establishing the scientific administration of the rule of law was a basic content of a local administrative system reform in the modern society of China. In the background of “new county” and the national force control mode, the reforming of the village system and rural social transformation played an important part in the political history of modern China. Its system design and the concrete operation process provide the useful experience and lessons for today’s local administrative system and the construction of rural grassroots democracy, such as in the “two system mode” of township politics and village governance, the distribution of the power of rural party organization and administrative power at the basic level, the influence of university students as village administrative leaders on rural grassroots construction, villager autonomy, and so on.

4. Conclusion

When the national government moved to Chongqing in China, most of Hubei's local region was occupied, and only the several counties' affection from the war in the Enshi area is relatively small. At the same time, the special geographical position in the Enshi area provided the conditions for the national administrative power penetrating into the countryside. In 1939, the practice of new county system provided operation platform for its infiltration, and the constitutional pattern also changed and formed a powerful control mode as the “officials in countryside—small peasants”. Controlling the Enshi rural society essentially damaged the traditional political system. Then, it also provided the significance for village social control and modern transformation. But in the reform process, some measures taken—the private ownership of land did not touch the foundations of the society, and therefore, the reform is impossible to comply with the development trend of modern history.

To sum up, in the rural villages under the county, the establishment of the rule of law and the rural society of bureaucratic administration is a basic content of a local administrative system reform in modern society of China. In the background of new county system and the national force control mode, the reform of villages and towns system and rural social transformation are an important part of the political history in modern China. As the

famous scholar Zhang (2007) holds, the system designing and the concrete operation process provide very useful experience and lessons for today's local administrative system and the construction of rural grassroots democracy such as rural party organization power and the distribution of rural administrative power in the two-system mode of township politics and village governance, the influence of graduate students as the administrative officials in villages on rural grass-roots construction, villager autonomy, and so on,

References

- Dura, P. (1996). *Culture, power and state - 1900 - 1942 in rural areas of North China*. Jiangsu: People's Press.
- Wang, S. M. (1992). *Empire foundation – rural officials and rural squire. Chinese culture - the system. National macro regulatory*. Sanlian Bookstore.
- Xiao, L. H. (1999). The origin and development of villagers' autonomy in China. *Theory and Reform*, 4, 58.
- Xu, Y. (2007). Go to the countryside of modern state regime: the local social integration. *Guizhou Social Science*, 11, 128.
- Zhang, X. G. (2007). The history reform and inspiration of rural administrative system in China. *Journal of Nanjing Normal University (Social Science)*, 1, 30.
- Zhu, X. S. (2004). *Rural social structure changes and reconstruction of organization*. Shanghai: University Press.