Study of Peng Yuting's Thought of Self-cultivation

-- An Investigation of the Success or Failure of Wanxi Autonomy

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Abstract. In the first half of the 20th century, the rural construction movement was one of the major social trends in China. The Wanxi autonomous leader headed by Peng Yuting carried out a vigorous rural self-government campaign in the Wanxi region of China, forming a local self-government theory centered on the "Three-Self", which includes self-support (self-enrichment), autonomy, and self-defense. Aspects. Peng Yuting's self-sustaining ideology takes Sun Yat-sen's "people's livelihood" as his theoretical source. In the process of Wanxi's self-government, he implemented a series of rural economic developments such as tree planting, water conservancy, improvement of agro-industrial skills, and management of rivers, and improvement of the rural economy. Production conditions. Although it has also been praised by reporters as "a model for the rural self-government movement," it has not fundamentally touched the foundation of the ruling order - feudal landlord land ownership. Therefore, it ultimately ended in failure.

Keywords: Peng Yu-ting; Self-feeding Thought; Wanxi Autonomy; Rural Construction Movement.

1. Introduction

Peng Yuting, is one of the main representatives of China's rural construction movement. Having received traditional Chinese private school enlightenment education, as well as systematic modern education, he is an advanced intellectual. After the outbreak of the Xinhai Revolution, he actively participated in the revolution and followed Feng Yuxiang to serve in the Northwest Army. He was a leader with political aspirations and abilities. He is a clean and upright official, determined to be a good person and not do bad things. In 1927, he returned to Zhenping after his mother's death, and along the way he saw the people in dire straits and oppressed. Driven by conscience internally and at the request of the people externally, he decided to give up his official position and return to his hometown to lead the people in carrying out the rural construction movement in Wanxi. Peng Yuting's "Three Self Doctrine" is a special theoretical practice formed under a special historical background, and has its unique historical position in the history of China's rural autonomy movement.

2. The Origin of Peng Yuting's Self support Thought

2.1 Theoretical Origins

Peng Yuting's "Self support Thought" takes Sun Yat sen's "Livelihood Principle" in the Three Principles of the People as its theoretical origin, and the "autonomy, self-defense, and self support" in the Three Self Principles correspond to the "civil rights, nationality, and people's livelihood" in the Three Principles of the People. Peng Yuting was influenced by the Three Principles of the People before the beginning of the Xinhai Revolution. He believed that Sun Yat sen's Three Principles of the People were the most suitable for China's national conditions and a gradual social reform ideology. The reason why the Three Principles of the People did not succeed is that they did not receive understanding and support from the grassroots people. To find a way out for the nation, it is necessary to build rural areas; to build rural areas, it is necessary to start from the difficulties of the people. "[3] Therefore, he proposed the ideological theory of" self-sufficiency ". The essence of Sun Yat sen's livelihood ideology is "equal land rights" and "control of capital". Peng Yuting believed that "control of capital" did not quite match the actual situation in Wanxi. The concept of 'equal land rights' can be gradually achieved through the implementation of progressive taxation, or through measures such as

land area surveys, river management, and land reform to ensure that everyone has land to cultivate and every household has land to grow.

Liang Shuming's rural construction ideas also gave Peng Yuting great inspiration. In 1929, Peng Yuting was invited by the then Governor of Henan Province, Han Fugu, to serve as the dean of Henan Village Governance College, and invited famous rural construction activists such as Liang Shuming to give lectures at the college. The development path of industry triggered by agriculture proposed by Liang Shuming had an important impact on the formation and development of Peng Yuting's "self-sufficiency ideology". Liang Shuming believed that agriculture has been the foundation of the national economy since ancient times, and compared to industry, it has received slightly less external pressure. Therefore, the development of rural economy should start with agriculture. However, Liang Shuming also realized the important role of industrial development. With the gradual development of agriculture, the increasing demands of farmers for funds, technology, production equipment, etc., will further stimulate the development of industry. Therefore, Peng Yuting promoted the development of agriculture while actively promoting the development of industry and commerce in the practice of "self-sufficiency", adopting measures such as improving agricultural and industrial skills, introducing advanced science and technology; Establishing a Farmers' Bank to attract funds for agricultural development; Improve transportation conditions and promote commercial development; Establishing cooperatives and other measures to improve the productivity level in the Wanxi region.

2.2 Origin of Reality

As a local autonomist, many of Peng Yuting's theories on self-sufficiency were derived from long-term autonomous practices. The Wanxi region is mountainous and hilly, with the barren mountains in Zhenping accounting for more than half of the total area of the county. The development prospects for afforestation are very broad. And there are also many idle spaces around the riverbank, roadside, and residential areas. At the same time, in the case of rural economic bankruptcy, it is impossible to invest large amounts of funds in promoting autonomous construction, and afforestation has become the best choice. Therefore, Peng Yuting regarded "afforestation" as one of the main ways to achieve his self-sufficient ideas. By proposing measures for afforestation, we aim to improve the environment while also providing stable financial resources for the autonomous governance of Zhenping. The unique climate and geographical environment in Wanxi make its rivers highly susceptible to seasonal changes, coupled with the long-term disrepair of water conservancy projects. Every time extreme weather occurs, the rivers in Wanxi area flood or dry up, causing great suffering to the people of Wanxi. So Peng Yuting realized that river control and land reform were important tasks for developing local economy and solving people's suffering. Moreover, the Wanxi region is mountainous and hilly, although the total area is relatively large, the arable land area is relatively small. Therefore, in the process of river control, while increasing the arable land area, we actively create terraced fields and build channels to continuously improve people's production and living conditions. For the shrinking silk industry in Zhenping, measures such as restructuring the entire silk weaving industry, improving production technology, and establishing a silk committee will be taken to revitalize the local traditional handicraft industry. As a pure localist, Peng Yuting's "self-sufficiency ideology" was based on the actual situation of the local area, and the ultimate goal was to seek local development. Therefore, the formation of his self-sufficiency ideology has a profound practical foundation.

3. The Formation of Peng Yuting's Theory of Self-sufficiency

During the process of promoting autonomy, Peng Yuting proposed a complete set of local autonomy theories based on the experience of autonomy in other regions and the actual situation in Wanxi region - the "Three Self Doctrine" theory with "self-defense, autonomy, and self-sufficiency" as its core. The Three Self Doctrine covers various aspects such as politics, economy, society, and culture. It starts with self-defense and gradually integrates with autonomy and self-sufficiency,

forming a relatively complete development process for social transformation. The main content is: "To stabilize social order and defend autonomy through self-defense; to transform society through autonomy and overthrow official rule; to develop the economy through self enrichment and eradicate poverty and chaos[4].

Self defense is a means of autonomy in Wanxi, aimed at eliminating difficulties in the process of autonomy, and its method is to establish a militia. The importance of the relationship between rural self-defense issues is like the foundation of building a house. It should be deep and firm, not pulled or shaken, and there will be a landing[5]. Peng Yuting organized the people in the form of militia groups, mainly divided into three forms: "standing, reserve, and defending militia groups". The militia adopts the method of compulsory militia system to gather the people for military training as the basic force to maintain autonomy. With the militia, there was the county government of Zhenping, so the militia is the driving force for promoting the autonomy of Zhenping County[6].

Autonomy is the central link of Wanxi autonomy and also a stage for further consolidating the foundation of self-defense. Establishing sound social organizations and cultivating the ability of the people to participate in politics is the main content of Sun Yat sen's theory of local autonomy, and also the main goal of the autonomy stage in the Three Self Doctrine. It refers to true people's autonomy, giving the people the power to manage their own affairs. Thus, Peng Yuting designed a set of autonomous organizations to replace the old regime, implementing universal suffrage from local to county levels, ultimately achieving the goal of improving society through autonomy.

Self support, also known as self enrichment, was the ultimate goal that Peng Yuting aimed to achieve in promoting local autonomy. Peng Yuting believed that poverty was the main problem in current society. To this end, he proposed two principles of "increasing production and reducing consumption" and two practical methods of "passive poverty control" (cost cutting) and "active poverty control" (open source)[7], which enabled people to escape poverty and gradually become prosperous. To achieve the recovery and development of rural economy in a relatively short period of time, and basically solve the problem of farmers' food and clothing. And ultimately achieve the goal of 'staying indoors at night, leaving no trace on the road, no litigation in every village, and having surplus in every household'.

The purpose of Peng Yuting's proposal of the "Three Self Doctrine" was to solve some contradictions in the society of Wanxi, attempting to transform society and promote autonomy. Peng Yuting said that only by managing the militia well can self-defense be achieved; Only by being able to defend oneself can one have autonomy; Only when the autonomy is successful can everyone be completely lifted out of poverty! Only future generations can be happy. Self defense is a prerequisite for promoting the cause of autonomy, providing military guarantees for it; Self support is the goal that autonomy aims to achieve, while also providing a material foundation for the cause of autonomy; Autonomy is the fundamental guarantee for achieving self-defense and self-sufficiency. Therefore, the three are interrelated and inseparable, forming a whole. The "Three Self Doctrine" requires self-defense to protect autonomy, autonomy to promote self enrichment, and self enrichment to eradicate poverty and chaos[8].

4. The Practice of Peng Yuting's Self support Thought

4.1 Clearing Acres of Land and Investigating Household Registration

Peng Yuting believed that land issues were one of the prerequisites for developing rural economy. Therefore, only by resolving the land issue can other autonomous measures be smoothly implemented. The work of clearing land acres is mainly carried out in two steps: the first step is publicity, investigation, and clearance. The purpose of the promotion is to dispel farmers' concerns and strive for their understanding and cooperation in this work; The investigation is to clarify the land distribution situation in Zhenping County; Qingzhang is to re measure the land and clarify the proportion of various types of land. According to measurements, the total area of Zhenping County is 4925 square kilometers, including 16245 hectares of mountainous land, 1301 hectares of land

affected by water erosion and sand pressure, 384 hectares and 86 acres of land for public schools and social assistance in townships, 25 hectares and 29 acres of land for provincial and county automobile roads, and 767 hectares and 82 acres of arable land on mountain slopes[9].

The second step of the work is surveying, mapping, and mapping. Clearing land acres is mainly to ensure fair collection of taxes, and the premise of tax collection is to ensure fair division of land grades. Therefore, the Zhenping Autonomous Office first ordered each flower household to list the location, silver, and grain of their land clearly, and each township mayor reported it to the office. Then, the office organized personnel to conduct on-site inspections in each township according to the slope photo book. After the survey is completed, draw a map based on the final measurement results of each township, and color it according to the level of land area. As the basis for collecting taxes, the purpose is to ensure the fairness of tax collection. Subsequently, the autonomous office conducted a household registration survey: "By 1931, there were a total of 84634 households in the county, with 228512 men and 156228 women[10].

4.2 Rectify the Fiscal System and Improve Finance

Peng Yuting believed that self governance should start with rectifying the finance, and only after the finance has sorted out all the construction projects can it be implemented. After the establishment of the Zhenping Autonomous Office, it implemented centralized collection and expenditure to eradicate all accumulated problems. At the same time, it strictly reduced expenses and prevented all overcharging[10]. Firstly, it granted the Zhenping Autonomous Office the power to levy taxes, and each township was not allowed to levy taxes on the masses without authorization. Once discovered, it would be severely punished. Secondly, the expenditure of various funds shall be stipulated: the office expenses of each region and department shall be uniformly managed by the office; The salaries of the staff are paid according to a certain standard. Then, strict collection of various taxes: in rural areas, progressive tax rates are adopted based on the annual harvest level; In urban areas, taxes are divided based on the amount of capital and paid according to the progressive system. This tax collection policy fully embodies the idea of "controlling capital". Progressive taxation is a pioneering and unique approach in modern Chinese history[11]

In 1931, the Zhenping Autonomous Committee established the Farmers' Loan Office with the aim of supporting the development of rural economy, offering lower loan interest rates to benefit the people, and providing guidance for rural cooperative undertakings. The main businesses of the Farmers' Loan Office include lending, exchange, deposit, operation, and savings. Farmers' loan offices are nominally supportive of farmers, but they do not directly lend to farmers and must go through credit cooperatives to transfer loans. To this end, Zhenping has also established a credit cooperative, and farmers who want to borrow loans must join the credit cooperative. The deposit and loan business of credit cooperatives are guided by the Farmers' Loan Institute, which also has a complete set of rules and regulations, such as the current deposit regulations, savings regulations, loan regulations, etc. The deposits absorbed by credit cooperatives are basically lent to farmers, and their loan interest rates are much lower than those of private high interest loans. Farmers borrowing from lending institutions need to have a joint guarantee organized by a credit cooperative, and use their own real estate, movable property such as livestock and utensils, and crops that have been planted but not yet harvested as collateral.

In 1933, in order to stabilize the market and avoid financial panic, Zhenping decided to issue paper currency: one was the "foreign yuan bill" and the other was the "copper yuan bill", both of which were issued by farmers' loans. The issuance of these currencies not only alleviated the problem of capital shortage, but also played a certain positive role in stabilizing the finance of Wanxi region and promoting financial circulation. Financial institutions such as farmer loan offices and credit cooperatives were established in the Wanxi region, which formed local financial separatism through economic means such as issuing loans, absorbing savings, printing and issuing banknotes, but also to some extent avoided the impact of external economic crises.

4.3 Combining Industry and Commerce to Develop the Economy

Wanxi is located in the southwestern part of Henan Province, with backward transportation, external isolation, strong self isolation consciousness, and a lack of basic conditions such as transportation, equipment, and technology necessary for the development of modern industry. Therefore, until the 1930s, the modern industry in Wanxi region was basically blank. After implementing the Three Self Doctrine, Peng Yuting, starting from the idea of resisting foreign goods, implemented some measures to develop industry and commerce, mainly including:

a. Establish military and migrant worker factories. The gun factory established in 1929 was the earliest in the Wanxi region to use modern industrial equipment and technology for production. Not only did it improve the weapons and equipment of the militia, providing military support for the "self-defense" of Wanxi, but it also further promoted the industrialization of the Wanxi region. In 1930, a silk weaving factory was established, which took advantage of the abundant silk resources in Wanxi region and recruited more than 60 workers to produce silk. The factory produced over 1000 pieces of silk annually and sold it to regions such as Henan, Shaanxi, and Hubei. In 1931, a civilian weaving and silk printing and dyeing factory was established to carry out production activities such as sock weaving, weaving, and printing and dyeing. There were 22 machines and more than 40 workers. In the same year, a women's straw hat braid training center was established, hiring technicians and recruiting students to learn how to make straw hat braids, smoke and dye them, and dress them up.

b. Improve agricultural and industrial skills. An agricultural improvement research association was also established in Zhenping to improve agriculture. Its main task is to study crop varieties and fertilizer improvement; Research on the improvement of agricultural technology; Research methods for preventing and controlling pests and diseases; Research on the improvement of agricultural tools; Research on the improvement of livestock and agricultural by-products. Zhenping County was renowned for its silk production both domestically and internationally in history. However, during the period before autonomy, on the one hand, due to severe banditry, industry and commerce were disrupted to a certain extent. On the other hand, due to the greed for small profits and fraudulent practices of merchants engaged in the silk industry, the development of the silk industry in Zhenping has almost come to a standstill. In order to change the current situation of the silk industry, the Silk Committee was established in Zhenping in 1932 with the aim of "revitalizing the silk industry and rescuing the rural economy". A strict set of "Zhenping Silk Improvement Regulations" was formulated, which greatly improved the quality of local silk. This transformation of traditional handicrafts not only increased the yield and quality of silk, but also introduced some advanced management methods and concepts, promoting the transformation of traditional handicrafts into modern industry.

c. Repair roads and install electrical wires. Wanxi is located on the western edge of the Nanyang Basin, with most of the area consisting of hills and shallow mountains. It has always been relatively isolated and has limited external connections. In order to develop the economy, the Zhenping Autonomous Committee decided to build roads in 1931, and the County Construction Bureau conducted on-site surveying and formulated road construction plans. Subsequently, a vigorous road construction movement began in Wanxi. By the spring of 1932, Zhenping had built a total of 11 roads, totaling over 125 kilometers[5]. The implementation of road renovation measures has ended the history of no roads in the Wanxi region, objectively promoting economic exchanges and becoming a bridge for Wanxi's external connections. With the construction of highways, various counties in Wanxi have successively introduced advanced communication tools - telephones. By 1934, the telephone lines in Zhenping County had reached more than 300 kilometers[5].

4.4 Planting Trees and Afforestation, River Control and Land Conversion

The Wanxi region is mountainous and hilly, with the barren mountains in Zhenping accounting for more than half of the total area of the county. The prospects for afforestation and development are vast. Peng Yuting believed that afforestation could not only regulate the climate, but also be used as fuel and for construction. The northern part of our county is over a hundred miles away, with

overlapping mountains and rolling hills. It is truly a great afforestation area and a natural infinite source of wealth[12]. The Zhenping Autonomous Office has also established a specialized agency to guide afforestation activities in the region. From 1932 to 1935, the county planted over 5 million trees of various types, greatly improving the production and living environment in the area.

In the late 1920s, severe droughts and floods occurred in the Wanxi region. In order to prevent floods and droughts, Wanxi has carried out a large-scale river control and land improvement project, which has achieved certain benefits. According to the fact that there are many mudflat and wastelands on both sides of the river in Zhenping County, the Zhenping Autonomous Office adopts the method of "cutting willows to control the river": first, it can increase trees, second, it can control flood and sand, and third, it can increase cultivated land. With the development of river control projects, land improvement projects are also being carried out simultaneously. Although the total area of Wanxi region is relatively large, most of it is mountainous and hilly, and the arable land area is relatively small. The measures taken at that time were mainly in the process of river control, such as building water conservancy projects, cutting river channels, using sediment in river water to create land, or increasing cultivated land by building terraced fields in hilly areas.

5. Conclusion

The practice of Peng Yuting's theory of self-sufficiency promoted the stability of rural society and economic development in Zhenping for a certain period of time, and to some extent changed the living conditions of the people. As a reporter from Tianjin's Ta Kung Pao said: When the car reaches the territory of Zhenping... the roads are all three zhang wide, slightly bulging next to them, and there are flowing ditches on both sides. Although it rains heavily, there is no mud. All the streets and alleys within the city have been repaired. The vegetable market, meat market, and egg market all have certain addresses, and the order is well-organized. It is said that "the achievements of Zhenping Autonomous City can be called exemplary". But what the reporter saw was only a superficial phenomenon, and the real rural society and farmers' lives are still very poor. The survey report conducted by the National Government's Rural Revitalization Committee in Zhenping showed that "compared to 1928, although the number of landlords in Zhenping County decreased in 1933, they still held 67.15% of the land. The number of poor farmers not only increased by 16 households compared to 1928, but their land area also decreased from 927.47 mu to 879.45 mu". This indicates that Zhenping did not effectively solve the problem of local land concentration in the process of autonomy, reflecting that there is still a serious crisis in rural areas of Zhenping. Farmers, especially middle peasants, poor peasants, and hired laborers, still live in extreme poverty.

The autonomous activities in Wanxi were able to emerge and maintain for a relatively long period of time due to its unique geographical location and the special historical environment of modern China. However, these are only objective factors that determine the development of things. On the other hand, the guidance and efforts of Peng Yuting and others were the subjective reasons for the success of the local autonomy cause in Wanxi. However, the Wanxi Autonomous Movement ultimately died prematurely due to the deaths of Peng Yuting and others. Although the local autonomy in Wanxi has achieved some results, it has not fundamentally solved the problems that arise in rural areas. So the Wanxi Autonomous Region ultimately cannot avoid the outcome of 'people in political elections, people dying in politics'. From another perspective, the local autonomy in Wanxi, like other rural construction movements during that period, underwent social changes while maintaining feudal landlord land ownership, which was the fundamental reason for its failure. In semi feudal and semi colonial China, the "land problem" is the central issue in solving rural problems, as well as the foundation and key to developing rural economy and improving rural areas. Peng Yuting and others only acknowledge the existence of different social classes in rural areas on the surface of land ownership, but refuse to acknowledge the class differentiation in rural areas, and fundamentally ignore the serious constraints that the extreme irrationality of land ownership brings to the development of productive forces. Therefore, without completely abolishing the feudal landlord land

ownership system, it is impossible to achieve the development and transformation of rural productivity, and farmers will not be able to achieve liberation and liberation.

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