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Stabilization and Service: The Evolutionary Logic of Grassroots Governance in Guilin (1930-1944)

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Abstract: The Republican period was a time of intense social changes and complex conflicts in modern China. The New Gui system ruled Guangxi for 24 years after the rise of the National Revolution in the 1920s, and its grassroots construction experience provided a reference basis for the national government's local governance policy. Taking the removal of Guilin as a county and the establishment of a city in 1940 as the dividing line, the period of grassroots governance exploration in Guilin can be divided into the county government period and the municipal period. The historical background, mission objectives, value orientation, policy requirements, institutional arrangements and governance performance of Guilin's grassroots governance in different periods are different. Taking history as a guide, reviewing the experience of Guilin's grassroots governance during the new Guilin rule period is still of great significance for the current sustained promotion of Guilin's urban development and construction.

Keywords: Republican Period; Guilin; Grassroots Governance.

1. Introduction

In 1912, under the auspices of Lu Rongting, the leader of the old Gui warlord system, the capital of Guangxi province was moved from Guilin to Nanning. After the collapse of the old Gui system in the early 1920s, Guangxi was plunged into chaos, and the New Gui system, headed by Li Zongren, Huang Shaohong, Bai Chongxi and others, became the new rulers of Guangxi in 1930, and established the Guangxi provincial government in Nanning. After coming to power, the New Gui system attached great importance to the construction of county-level power, believing that "the construction of county government is the basic work of the revolution", and put forward the idea of "grassroots construction" for the first time.[1] The concept of "grass-roots construction" was first proposed, and the county government led the work of grass-roots governance in order to maintain the stability of the New Gui regime from the bottom up.

Influenced by the war, in 1936, the new Guilin system decided to move the capital of Guangxi province back to Guilin. 1937 July war broke out in full swing, Guilin became the center city of the rear area and the town of anti-Japanese resistance in the southwest, political, economic, military and foreign exchanges have achieved greater development and progress, unprecedented prosperity of culture and education, and became the famous "Guilin culture city! ".[2] At this time the county government's administrative institutions have not been able to adapt to the large number of factories in Guilin, refugees, population growth, the reality of factories, urban planning and municipal construction can not be delayed, a coordinated planning and powers and responsibilities of the municipal institutions came into being. 1939 Guangxi Provincial Government Committee decided to set up the city of Guilin. The founding of Guilin City and the establishment of specialized municipal institutions changed the path of Guilin's grassroots governance, and since then Guilin's grassroots governance has entered the municipal period. At present, domestic and foreign academics focus on the following aspects of the new Guilin system and its construction in Guangxi during the Republican period: first, they explore the political, economic, military and cultural construction of Guangxi as a whole during the period of the new Guilin system;[3][5-7] The second is to discuss the construction of local autonomy or villages in Guangxi.[1][4][8-11] The third is to explore the course of modernization of Guangxi cities by taking a certain city as an example[12-15] . At present, there is no relevant thesis that specializes in studying the evolution of grassroots governance from county government to municipal government in Guangxi during the Republic of China period, and there are fewer theses that study the grassroots governance in Guilin municipal government period. Therefore, this paper analyzes the logic of the evolution of grassroots governance in Guilin from the county to the municipal period from a historical perspective, with a view to exploring the administrative characteristics of urban grassroots governance in the Republican period.

2. Grassroots Governance in Guilin During the County Government Stage

The construction of grassroots governance in Guilin by the New Gui system during this period was oriented towards maintaining stability as the main value. After this period of restructuring, the new Guilin system gradually established a network of county, township (township) and village (street) administrative organizations with clear hierarchies, orderly operation, and well-functioning governmental orders.

2.1. Restructuring and Reorganizing the Establishment of Grass-Roots Organizations in Villages

Prior to the 1930s, governmental decrees in Guangxi could often only be advanced to the county level, leaving social organization scattered and disorganized. After the unification of Guangxi, the New Gui system decided to focus the construction of county government on the rectification of

rural government and the establishment of rural grass-roots organizations. In August 1931, the New Gui system first set up the first training district in Guilin, Xing'an, and Guanyang, trying to establish rural grass-roots organizations, and then gradually spread throughout the province. In September 1932, the Guangxi provincial government promulgated the "Outline of the Establishment of A Village Street Township District in All Counties of Guangxi," which began the establishment of A Village Street Township Organization in each county. The compilation of A village street township organization in each county, and the village street became the administrative unit at the most basic level. Through the political construction at the grassroots level, the new Guanxi system penetrated its sphere of strength into the countryside and constructed a huge network of political centers in the countryside. At the same time, these newly established village administrative organizations put an end to the scattered and disorderly state of the rural society in the past, integrated the villages into the modern social system, and realized the re-engineering of the rural system.

2.2. The Trinity Promotes the Construction of Military and Political Unity

The basic model of the New Gui system to carry out rural governance and strengthen grass-roots political construction was to gradually promote grass-roots political, economic, cultural, social and military construction through the creation of the new militia group system, with the militia groups as the core force. The construction of new militia groups of the New Gui system first began in 1930, and after the militia groups played an important role in maintaining local law and order, in July 1931, the Guangxi military and political conference decided to implement the militia group system throughout the province. The most important feature of the New Gui system's militia group system was that its militia groups had the function of self-defense and defense, and also combined certain administrative functions, which was in line with the organizational structure of the "three-in-one" system. "In June 1934, Guangxi formally established the Trinity System, which consisted of three different functions: public offices, militia groups, and schools. Although the construction of new militia groups has undergone several changes since 1932, they have played an important role in maintaining local social order and economic and cultural construction. The formation of the "trinity" system marked the establishment of the village grass-roots political system centered on the vigilante groups. [8]

2.3. Multi-channel Promotion of Political Awareness among the Population

The creation of public opinion organizations and the consolidation of the foundation of public opinion was an important element in the political construction of the New Gui system's "Program for the Construction of Guangxi" in the 1930s. Through the Village People's Assembly, the Township People's Representative Council, the County Provisional Senate, and later on the City Provisional Senate, public opinion organs were created with the intention of achieving the effect of "training the people to exercise the four powers" and realizing local autonomy. The village assembly was a bottom-up mobilization of the people. The New Gui system demanded guidance and support from all levels of government, and asked the county government to send key officials to participate in the Village People's Congresses, which thus became government-run public opinion organizations at the grassroots level.[7] The Township People's Representative Council was an extension of the Village People's Assembly at the township level. On November 2, 1938, the Guangxi Provincial Government Committee adopted the "Statute of the Provisional Township People's Representative Council of Guangxi Province," deciding to establish the Township People's Representative Council. Compared with the Village People's Assembly, the Township People's Representative Council has higher requirements for delegates, but the Township People's Representative Council only serves as an advisory body.

3. Grassroots Governance in Guilin During the Municipal Phase

In 1936, the Guangxi Provincial Government was relocated from Nanning to Guilin, and with the outbreak of the war of resistance in 1937, the population of Guilin surged and the unprecedented prosperity of politics, economy and culture made the county government institutions unable to match the reality of the needs of the specialized municipal institutions were established, and the path of grass-roots governance was transformed.

3.1. Adjustments to the Grass-Roots Zoning and Organizational System

At the beginning of Guilin's founding in 1940, the area taken over by the municipal government consisted of 6 townships, 5 towns, and 118 villages (streets) [16], and the basic zoning compilation was adjusted to form 12 townships (towns) and 135 villages (streets) .[17] In 1942, Guilin Municipal Government adjusted some of the townships into districts, so that there were 9 districts after the adjustment of the basic zoning of Guilin City, and each district set up district offices. Guilin city set up district, township (township), village (street) three-level organization as the grass-roots administrative institutions. In April 1940, the Executive Yuan approved the I*mplementation Plan of the Outline of the Organization of All Levels of the County of Guangxi Province*, which stipulated that the villages (streets) to ten as the principle, not less than eight but more than fifteen. The village (town) chiefs and village (street) chiefs are all trained young cadres, and the trinity system of village (street) chiefs who are also principals of the National Basic School and captains of the National Reserve Corps is implemented.

3.2. Strengthening Grass-Roots Cadre Training

The basic principle of Guangxi's personnel policy is "implement new policies and employ new people".[5] Guangxi's personnel policy is characterized by training as the center to achieve the ideal requirements, as early as the 1920s, the New Gui system paid attention to the training of grass-roots rural cadres. With the administrative organization of the province's villages, the New Gui system expanded the training of cadres at the grassroots level.

After the establishment of Guilin Municipal Government, the grass-roots cadres were generally trained to meet the needs of the war effort. In July 1940, 56 village (street) chiefs were transferred to Guangxi Local Construction Cadre School for training, and the number of trainees was 73% of the total number of incumbents until the end of the cadre school at the end of December. In 1943, the Guilin Local Administration

Cadre Training Institute was established. The municipal government stipulated that any district or village (street) chiefs who had not been trained or had been trained for more than three years, or whose nature of training was different from that of their current position, should be transferred to training.[17] The training institute organized 14 sessions in 1940 and 6 sessions in 1946, transferring 753 rural government officials and military service cadres to training; a total of 2,245 people were transferred to training in three years.

3.3. Creation of a Public Opinion Body to Decentralize Administrative Powers

After the establishment of the city of Guilin, the original county provisional senate, provisional township (township) people's congresses, and village (street) people's assemblies were adjusted to create and form new public opinion organs. The creation of public opinion organizations was an important part of the political construction of the new Guilin system in Guangxi, and the city's Provisional Senate was an important element of the city's public opinion organizations. The method of creating senators and the powers of the councils were based on the statutes of the county provisional senates. Due to the new district-level administrative division, Guilin City actively organized the District People's Representative Council. The Guilin City District People's Representative Council was established in 1940 and became slightly larger by 1942. The District People's Representative Councils were grass-roots public opinion organizations that directly represented the people in making requests to the government and conveying their opinions. Since the establishment of Guilin as a city in 1940, the National Monthly Meeting was established and combined with the Village People's Assembly. The National Monthly Assembly discusses the work assigned by the city government and the district office, as well as important matters in the village.

4. Analysis of the Evolutionary Logic of Grassroots Governance in Guilin

4.1. Reorganization of Administrative Planning and Improvement of Rural Infrastructure

After Guilin was abolished as a county and established as a city, the administrative planning of the original county government period could not be adapted to the requirements of the new phase of governance, and the old administrative planning and establishment needed to be adjusted. The adjusted Guilin Municipality has streamlined its personnel and institutional setup, improved the operational efficiency of grassroots governance, and facilitated the construction of other areas in Guilin. At the same time, it still insists on continuously improving rural infrastructure construction and raising the political and cultural literacy of the grassroots. On the political front, it established rural administrative organizations, reorganized the rural population, set up training districts, and prepared the organization of each county, village, street, and township; on the military front, it implemented the Trinity System, in which the mayor of the township (township) wore three posts, and the township (township), village (street) offices, militia groups, and national basic schools were combined into a single office; on personnel training, it paid attention to the cultivation of rural cadres; on local self-governance, it established various kinds of public opinion organizations at all levels to communicate between the government and the grassroots. In the area of local autonomy, various kinds of public opinion organizations were established at various levels to communicate between the government and the people at the grassroots level; in the area of education, a national basic education campaign was launched and adult education was promoted..... During the 1930s, the New Gui system carried out almost all-round governance and construction in the villages of Guangxi, which to a certain extent improved the quality of the peasants and their standard of living, and provided the basic safeguard for other undertakings to be developed.

4.2. Leading Grass-Roots Governance with Military Might

Under the dual system of the new militia system and the "Trinity" policy, the head of a local administration was both the chief administrator and the military governor of the militia. Through the transformation of the old militia, the New Gui system basically realized the transfer of power in the rural society, and took the force controlled by the original Guangxi tusi and local gentry into the government's possession, so as to realize the actual control of the rural areas. At this time the new militia not only as the army reserve team and exist, also has the function of maintaining local social security, but also assumed part of the grass-roots administrative organization function, this stage of Guangxi militia organization has evolved from the pure armed self-defense group into a composite social organization, military and political unity is the most important feature of its. Under the support of the "Trinity" system, the local autonomy of Guangxi was developed on the basis of the strong military power of the New Gui system and the township militia groups, which was also one of the characteristics of the construction of autonomy in Guangxi at this stage. Strengthening the institutional construction with military power and constructing an effective policy operation mechanism and power operation organization were the important guarantees for the stability of the New Gui system in a short time.

4.3. Consolidating Grass-Roots Power with Talent as the Driving Force

Traditionally, villages have been relatively culturally backward, with peasants having a low level of literacy and a low sense of democracy, and there is a lack of specialized personnel for grass-roots power-building and consolidation. Guided by the principle of "practicing new policies and employing new people", the Guangxi Provincial Government has taken appropriate measures to address these problems. First, priority has been given to the selection of young people with academic qualifications, ability and management skills for core cadre positions. Secondly, special training institutions have been set up to provide intensive training for grass-roots cadres, to improve their management skills and professional knowledge, and to link training results to job promotion. Thirdly, it is raising the cultural quality of farmers, fostering their democratic awareness, and organizing the participation of farmers between the ages of 18 and 45 in militia training. In 1940, when Guilin was set up as a city, the Guangxi Local Construction Cadre School ceased to be operated and then set up the Guangxi Local Administrative Cadre Training Corps in Guilin, and Guilin became the center of grass-roots cadre training. Guilin became a center for training grass-roots cadres. The new Guilin system organized the selection and training of cadres at the grassroots level to

provide talents for grassroots construction, and at the same time, the selection and training procedures were gradually formalized. These initiatives have been of great significance to grass-roots governance in Guilin and throughout Guangxi, promoting grass-roots construction and further consolidating grass-roots power in the course of training.

4.4. Promoting the Decentralization of Administrative Power with Services Instead of Stabilization

After the establishment of the city of Guilin, grass-roots governance was transformed from the original purpose of maintaining stability to the purpose of service, and the service nature of urban management led to a shift in the focus of Guilin's administrative power and organization during this period. The New Gui system guided the grassroots administrative organizations to focus on livelihood affairs and set up grassroots public opinion organs to listen to people's opinions through the issuance of decrees and other means.

Unlike the late Qing Dynasty, when local autonomy started from the top, Guilin's public opinion organizations started from villages, townships, districts, municipalities, and provinces, and the creation and operation of public opinion organizations also reflected the political philosophy and direction of governance of the New Gui system. Whether it was the village assemblies, township assemblies, and county provisional senates before Guilin became a city, or the newly established and organized national monthly assemblies, district assemblies, and municipal provisional senates after the establishment of the city, the public opinion organs created by the new Guilin system all added democratic elements to its grassroots governance. In terms of the actual effects of the operation of these organs, the holding of meetings of representatives at all levels provided the grassroots with venues and opportunities to express their wishes and discuss public affairs, and had a positive effect on the delivery of governmental orders, communication between the government and the people, and the expression of public sentiments. The creation and operation of grass-roots organs of public opinion is characterized by a certain degree of modern political awareness, which can broaden the channels for feedback of grass-roots public opinion, strengthen the people's political participation, and enhance the people's self-governance ability.

5. Conclusion

The history and logic of grass-roots governance in the 20-odd years of the New Gui system show that grass-roots governance has always been an important part of national governance and national modernization, and occupies an important position in the national governance system. Therefore, the construction of the contemporary grassroots governance system needs to be based on the needs of the national development strategy for top-level planning, and more importantly, it should be guided by the Chinese-style modernization to come out of the path of grassroots governance with Chinese characteristics. Guilin, which is under the background of the construction of the new era, has a natural development advantage over Guilin under the 1930s, whether in terms of leadership strength, governance theory or construction resources. In the long term, it is still necessary to promote the exploration of Guilin's grassroots governance system in an orderly manner, and to reasonably summarize and summarize its evolutionary path, with a view to providing appropriate references and bases for the construction of the national governance system in the longer term.

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