

The Sequencing and Timing of “Three-rule Integration” in Rural China

Based on the Investigation in Three Villages of Zhejiang Province*

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Abstract—This paper reviews time politics and value ordering theory, and believes that the governance of grassroots community should pay more attention to its timeliness, mainly including sequencing and timing. The rule of self, rule of law, and rule of virtue in rural community should have their sequence of priority in development. They must start from the special time and space environment of each place and seek a timeline and road map conforming to the localization characteristics. The feasible way is to implement rule of law, then rule of virtue, and finally realize the rule of self. It is a process from normalization to consciousness. At the same time, it is needed to find the best time to start the governance, and follow the social rhythm to grasp the rhythm of the governance advancement.

Keywords: *three-rule integration, rural grassroots governance, timeliness, sequencing, timing*

I. INTRODUCTION

The rule of self, rule of law, and rule of virtue in rural community should have their priority in development. It is necessary to look for a timeline and road map conforming to the localization characteristics based on the special time and space environment of each place. In June 2013, Deqing County and Tongxiang City, Zhejiang Province began to advance the pilot work of "three rules (rule of self, rule of law and rule of virtue) in one". Subsequently, this rural governance model was written into the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China and the local practice of "three-rule integration" was transformed into a national will. The success of this model is benefited from the long history of market economy tradition and deep contract culture in the north of Zhejiang Province, grew out of Fengqiao's experience, formed in the new era, and settled in Zhejiang where the pilot work of this model was carried out first. This model has its uniqueness and should also be

popularized.

II. TIMELINESS: THE SEQUENCE DIMENSION OF GRASSROOTS SOCIAL GOVERNANCE

By constructing the concept of time, philosophers can better grasp the experience and give the concept of time a richer content. Historians analyze the climate and phenology in a lunar month and the like "book of time" and examine the seasonal consciousness and periodic "political timetable" in ancient times.¹ Physicists believe that time is a continuous and irreversible change process of matter or event. If time is added into a three-dimensional space, you may find that everything's movement can be recognized.² Sociology opens the research agenda using social time as the research content to explore the life of social groups, the social structure, social identity, and social culture.

It also seems that timeliness needs to be taken into serious consideration in the governance of grassroots society. It is reflected in two aspects: priority and value ordering. Fukuyama once said that political development had its own sequence, it is necessary to firstly realize state building and national capabilities, then realize rule by law, and finally achieve a democratic accountability system, and the final political development cannot be reached in case of any mismatching in time.³ It seems confirming Paul Pearson's famous saying that "real social process has its own special time dimension".⁴ It is not only needed to concern about the cause of the result but also needed to pay attention to the combination of causes in different time nodes. In addition, it is necessary to pay attention to the evolution of knowledge

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¹ Xue Mengxiao. Climate and phenology in a lunar month and "political time" in early China [M]. Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House, 2018.

² Hawking, Stephen W. A brief history of time: from the big bang to black holes. Toronto: Bantam Books, 1988

³ Francis Fukuyama. The Origins of Political Order: From Pre-human Era to the French Revolution [M]. Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2014.

⁴ Pierson, P. Politics in Time: History, Institutions and Social Analysis. NJ: Princeton University Press. 2004

behind the sequence. In other words, the time sequence is not a fixed and stable symbol, but will evolve with the overall social civilization, and its meaning will also change with the change of generations.⁵ Western value ordering theory provides a value guideline on how to arrange time sequence. Scheler, Hartmann, and Dewey all provided different paradigm choices based on their specific knowledge background. One criterion that can be used for reference is the five styles of value given by themselves in phenomenological experience, namely, sensory value, practical value, life value, spiritual value and sacred value. Historical institutionalism gives time more meaning and forms some assertions about the influence of time. Institutions have the function of self-defense and strengthening. Past institutional choices can affect or even change the meaning of subsequent events or processes. So, time sequencing becomes especially important.

The time shift of grassroots social governance is based on the following considerations: first, because of "heavy tasks" and "short time", grassroots regimes always want to do the most things in the shortest time, so they may often seek an "overall solution" to accomplish multiple tasks simultaneously. However, grassroots governance has the characteristics of grassroots, complexity, and marginality. The goals of governance are diverse and overlapped. It is impossible to "grasp the eyebrows and beards" with one hand and "do the best in one battle". This requires us to act as a time surveyor, cutting and separating various governance objectives, and sequencing various governance objectives (events) according to certain criteria. This is like the invention and popularization of watches and clocks which make people available to more carefully distinguish the life of a day, and then divide the daily life of every day based on this.

Second, due to the limitation of time, experience, and material resources, grassroots social governance needs to seize the main contradictions. It is not wise to distribute the limited financial resources and manpower equally to various governance goals, but sequence them by certain value and schedule the governance times according to the order of importance and emergency. The change of grassroots governance is a process of constantly coping with the differentiation and integration of a social structure. The world is undergoing tremendous changes. Both the "de-embedding" in Polanyi's saying and the "self-organization" in Hayek's saying present the intellectual elites' thinking of the change of the era proposition; they need to answer the priorities of the development of an era. Lu Fuying believes that China's rural grassroots governance should shift from management to effective governance, from management and control to the provision of comprehensive services, from the implementation of "divided governance" to the promotion of "shared governance", and from traditional technology governance to intelligent governance.⁶ He is very keenly

aware of the new changes in China's rural economy and society. The change depends on the fundamental changes in China's social structure and major social contradictions. The "governance method" does need to change with the "governance environment", but the key to the problem is how to change according to certain priority as there are many goals.

Third, due to China's vast territory and the huge differences in regional development levels, the starting point of governance in each region is different, and different sequencing needs to be considered. China's regional differences are unprecedented. According to the data collected in 2018, the per capita GDP of Beijing and Shanghai exceeded US \$ 20,000, and the per capita GDP of nine provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions, including Tianjin, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang, exceeded US \$ 10,000; but the per capita GDP of Gansu, Guizhou and Yunnan in the western of China was only about US \$ 4000-6000. If the model of grassroots governance is implemented as a template and classics without consideration of its applicability, the result is also conceivable. The form and structure of grassroots social governance are all generated in time and space. In order to avoid spatial misplacement, the correct timing must be allocated to the corresponding space in order to get the goals and effects of governance under control.

III. THE SEQUENCING OF "THREE-RULE INTEGRATION": FROM NORMALIZATION TO CONSCIOUSNESS

In terms of the value demands of the three rules, rule of self is the highest standard and points to the field of individual consciousness. In practical operation, it is connected with self-management, self-governance, self-education, and self-service. However, during the practice, rule of self is excessively dwarfed and instrumentalized into mere self-management based on democratic elections, democratic decision-making, democratic management, and democratic supervision, ignoring the meaning of self-education, self-governance, and self-service. Uneven development leads to the rule of self, lacking inclusiveness, and makes rule of self's function cannot be fully played in the new era. In fact, from the perspective of the evolution of human society, the more advanced the development is, the more obvious the role of rule of self is and the less the role of other rules is. In a society of highly rule of self, man is both the object and subject of governance. It strengthens the subjectivity of people, stimulates people's enthusiasm for participation, and produces the best governance effect with the least cost of governance.⁷ So only after we grasp the connotation of rule of self can we have an objective understanding of the "three-rule integration" and do effective practice in a certain space.

In terms of value, rule of self takes the priority; but the practice of rule of self is progressive and can neither be

⁵ Zheng Zuoyu. *Time of Society: Formation, Changes and Problems* [M]. Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press (China), 2018.

⁶ Lu Fuying. *Grasping the new trend of rural grassroots governance* [N]. *Chinese Social Science*, April 10, 2019.

⁷ Zhang Wenxian, Xu Yong. *Promoting the integrated construction of rule of self, rule of law and rule of virtue, and innovating grassroots social governance* [J]. *Governance Studies*, 2018. No.6.

finished overnight, nor take root through only one item of social policy. Just as North said, although formal constraints may be changed overnight, the informal constraints embedded in customs, traditions and codes of conduct may not make response immediately. To reach the highest standard of rule of self, it is inevitable to go through a process from rule of law to rule of virtue and finally to rule of self and from normalization to consciousness.

The first step is the rule of law, namely to shape the rural multi-structure by modern laws and rules. In most central and western rural communities, a sound agricultural and rural legal system should firstly be established to deal with the problems of multiple benefits and guarantees brought about by the economic and social development. At this stage, the grassroots regimes should play a major role, guide villagers' behavior with normative principles, and shape the interest patterns of rural society by institutions. In rural legislation, it is needed to supplement the inadequacy of local "three-rural" legislation, add laws in relevant field and revise and cancel the items not in line with the practical condition of rural society; in the construction of rural law enforcement teams, it is needed to normalize the law enforcement education to improve relevant persons' vocational competencies, and enhance supervision on law enforcement to improve the efficiency of law enforcement; in rural judicial guarantees, it is needed to properly try cases involving significant interests of villagers, enhance the enforcement effort and strengthen providing legal assistance and Judicial assistance to villagers so that villagers can believe and resort to law in need of using law; in rural law-abiding consciousness, measures should be taken to vigorously popularize the law and build ordinary villagers' law-abiding awareness by enhancing grass-roots cadres' legal sense. This series of actions is mainly to rationally distribute, maintain, and guarantee rural rights, paving the way for shaping consciousness from a perspective of normalization.

The second step is the rule of virtue, namely to rebuild the moral maintenance mechanism of grassroots society through enlightenment and guidance. In villages where legal system has been initially established, it is necessary to focus on improving the value priority of rule of virtue in village governance; the rule of virtue emphasizes regulation and influence. It is a kind of self-discipline obtained by self-consciousness in daily life. Villager is the law enforcement officer of him/herself. Rural community particularly emphasizes belonging and emotion. In such community, the rule of virtue often plays a role like spring breeze stimulating influence. On the one hand, it uses rural regulations and folk conventions to connect the construction of the rule of law in rural areas, and implants the rules and concepts of modern law the "contract and custom" as a living technology, making it a belief, ethics, and negotiation technology for villagers.⁸ On the other hand, it can take use of new local respectable persons based organizations, moral evaluation committees, wedding and funeral councils and other organizational carriers to constantly cultivate individual's self-

consciousness in combination with the construction of rural regulations and folk conventions, family rules and the like specific action in the new era.

The third step is rule of self, namely to realize final consciousness from normalization. Only under the premise that the rule of law and the rule of virtue are effectively implemented can rule of self be advanced. The reason why the three-rule integration is firstly conducted in Tongxiang is related to the fact that people in the northern Zhejiang region always lives a rich life, leads the fashion in modern times and their civilization and behavioral rationality are relatively high. It can be said that it is a combined effect of a series of politics rules, economic rules, and individual contracts. In order to form a vivid situation of "doing something different together, letting everyone to judge the good or bad; and everything is under management", we can start to improve the level of rule of self from three aspects: first, villagers participate in decision making: the right to know, suggest and participate can be enlarged to make government's decision scientific and rational so that villagers can advocate and popularize relevant policies in the position of a master. Second, villagers participate in judgments: the power of moral evaluation can be taken use of to eliminate bad habits, the power of typical models can be used for promoting truth, goodness and beauty, and rural civilization can be promoted through participatory rural cultural activities. Third, villagers participate in services: villagers' self-management ability can be cultivated in the spirit of voluntary service; this way is to let villagers take part in grassroots public services and finally build individual's consciousness.

IV. PRACTICE IN THREE VILLAGES OF HUZHOU CITY

In recent years, led by party construction, insisting on "three-rule integration" and taking intelligent governance as the "booster", the three counties and two districts of Huzhou City explored a way of rural governance under "three-rule integration" to realize "democratic management of the village by law and virtue and protection of the ecology and villagers of the village under the guidance of village cadres in justice way". This provides many precious experiences, especially in how to rationally arrange the development priorities of rule of self, rule of law and rule of virtue in rural community. It also started from the specific space and time environment of villages, sought a timeline and road map conforming to the localization characteristics. Meanwhile, it also gives people enlightenment in how to find the optimum time to start governance follow the society's rhythm to grasp the rhythms in advancing the governance.

A. *Dongheng village in Deqing County: leading by rule of virtue*

In the construction of rule of virtue, Dongheng village has adopted a series of innovative measures with the purpose of promoting the social theme, innovating a moral environment, strengthening moral cultivation, and improving moral standards. For example, in order to strengthen the construction of moral positions, Dongheng village has established a cultural auditorium and beautiful-village hall.

⁸ Zhang Yangjin. "Convention" and the Construction of Rule of Law in Rural Areas [N]. *Chinese Social Science*. January 11, 2017.

The cultural auditorium is not only a place for conducting cultural activities, but also a place for providing moral education. The beautiful-village hall focuses on displaying the culture, ancient and modern celebrities, civilized customs, folk customs, and characteristic industries of the village to inherit the village culture and carry forward village customs and civilization. In the construction of credit system, Dongheng village also launched a "moral credit" activity to record the villagers' moral practice, guide the villagers to "accumulate small good for great good conduct" and "accumulate small virtue for great virtue", and advocate a social custom of pursuing moral virtue.

On the other hand, Dongheng village also initiated a new measure of virtue ruling through local respectable persons, namely "looking for the local respectable persons in case of small matters and looking for the government in case of big event". In Dongheng village, the "local respectable persons based counselor association" is very popular. Many difficult problems in the village are solved by the council. "The reason why the local respectable persons based counselor association is so popular is because the local place takes village as the base, local respectable persons as the core, village matters as the focus, absorbs grassroots wisdom, effectively stimulates villagers internal motive and further creates a new multi-governance pattern in modern rural area with extensive participation of villagers, taking the party of the village as the core and villagers' rule of self as the basis", said by a village cadre in the interview. At present, in the 151 villages in Deqing County, there has already been 56 "local respectable persons based counselor associations", which in total have provided 1,756 times of counselors' service, 2338 times of service, benefited more than 90,000 villagers. Such associations have become a key power in the rule of self, rule of law and rule of virtue in the village. This is the so-called "way of ruling the country by law and cultivating people by virtue". In social governance, Dongheng village has always been attaching importance to the rule of virtue. It promotes the cultivation of villagers at the grass-roots level by cultivating their virtues, improving morals through literature, and building virtues by assessment, and stimulates the spiritual leading role of good local customs.

B. Yu village in Anji County: leading by rule of law

In the construction of three-rule integration, Yu village emphasizes giving priority to the construction of democratic rule of law, building rich law popularization base and optimizing contradiction and disputes settlement. The first municipal standard for creating village in democratic rule of law in China officially issued by Huzhou City in November, 2017 "Code for construction of democratic rule of law in beautiful village" right takes Yu village as the model. Through interviews with the Judiciary Bureau, it is learned that, in order to deepen grassroots democratic rule of law and the construction of beautiful countryside, Huzhou actively summed up the experience of Yu village, and issued this Code based on the experience of pilot work in Anji. The Code is divided into six categories. The content includes village organization and members, site facilities, "two committees" of the village, whether there is a sound system,

whether villagers' consciousness of rule of law has been established, whether the rule of self by law and democratic construction are normative, whether the legal propagation is carried out and the effect, whether a legal cultural front is established and functioning, whether legal service guarantees are in place, as well as the overall harmonious development of the village.

The establishment of the Code not only sets a code of conduct for the management of village-level affairs management power, but also provides basic rules for the supervision and control of all aspects of power practice, strengthens the element of the rule of law for scientific development at the village level, improves the legal ecology in village governance, creates a legal environment for village-level fairness and justice, and establishes a "Huzhou sample" for standardizing grassroots social governance.

C. Xingyao village in Nanxun District: leading by rule of self

Relying on the six major carriers such as "Rule of law lecture, ethics promotion vehicles, village situation station, service window for the convenience of villagers, family style display stands, and small safety grid" and through villager council institution, "let's villagers talk" system and transfer order system, Xingyao village goes on a very characteristic rural governance road. The matters involving the immediate interests of the masses are disclosed and discussed by the masses so that the masses can fully participate in management of village affairs. At the same time, the village focuses on strengthening the leadership role of the party branch, and strengthens the guidance to villagers' self-restraint, self-management, and self-service.

In the interview, a member of the villager council said that, with the in-depth development of beautiful rural construction, there have been many engineering projects conducted in the village over the years, but in their village, even small projects must first pass the review of the villager council. It can be said that the most important change in Xingyao village over the years is that the villagers' "speaking right" becomes greater so that villagers actively participate in the management to protect their common home.

At the same time, Xingyao village also creates a transfer order system. According to the villagers' words, each village has its own "account of affairs". The village cadres who are on duty every day may record the contents said by the masses and prioritize and resolve the matters. Small matters and urgent matters will be transferred to joint meeting for discussion, large event will be transferred to representative meeting for discussion, and difficult event will be submitted to the superior level for discussion. According to statistics, since the implementation of the "transfer order" system, the incident resolution rate in the whole village has reached more than 90%, and the key issues concerned by villagers such as "multiple houses in one household", rural pensions, and collective economy have been properly handled.

In the end, Xingyao village also worked hard to attract more village elites, especially college students to return

home. After years of efforts, more than 10 college students have returned to their hometowns to start business, the village environment has been renewed, and the rural tourism industry has become gradually mature. Last year, Xingyao village was selected as a "Rural Governance Demonstration Village" in Huzhou. This effort relying extensively on villagers and involving villagers in rural governance has made Xingyao village a new countryside with strong party construction, prosperous industries, beautiful ecology and wealthy people.

V. CONCLUSION

Through an analysis on the three villages in Huzhou, it is found that how to rationally prioritize the development of rule of self, rule of law, and rule of virtue in rural community is very important. The reason why sequencing is important is that the happened event or process may trigger "positive feedback" or "self-reinforcing mechanism" and further advance or impede the subsequent social change process.⁹ It is necessary to set out according to the special space-time environment of each village, and seek a timeline and road map that conform to its local characteristics.

But another important aspect is how to find the best time to start the governance. We find that the importance of timing lies in the schedule of sequencing in line with the social situations. It is also necessary to identify the starting time correctly. Starting too early or too late will not get the best results. In other words, the effectiveness of schedule of sequencing will change over time. Therefore, in the future practice of promoting "three-rule integration" based grassroots community governance in various places, it is necessary to determine the optimum policy implementation time period, find the best time to starting the governance and follow the social rhythm to grasp the governance advancement rhythm. Everything is timed, and governance in rural communities must be the product of time and space. The rule of time contains the time structure and time process, and determines the order, speed, and period of conducting an action.¹⁰ The "three-rule integration" based grassroots governance in rural community should also grasp its specific rhythm and implement its schedule in stages and steps according to a certain time sequence.

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