

Local clientelism of democratic progressive party and the transition of Taiwan's grass-root democracy: lessons from Tainan experience

Jen-Fang Arthur Ting, author

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Abstrak

ABSTRACT

In recent years, Western scholars who study the experience of the transition of young democratic countries have found that the traditional clientelism has not disappeared during the process of democratization, but rather it has changed form or even consolidated in some young democratic countries. The independence of the bureaucracies, the way political parties and the state system integrating special interests, and the party election strategy or competition among parties all may affect the articulation of the special interest within clientelism. This article examines the incumbent experience of several heads of the DPP in more than 20-year reign of the Tainan city (county) through the public resources to draw on supporters and attract voters, and then to infer the development patterns and potential problems of Taiwan's grassroots democratic transition. Roughly speaking, Tainan city (county) has different DPP heads in reign for more than 20 years, and they had gradually developed more delicate clientelistic linkages with supporters and grassroots voters, from Tainan County magistrate Chen Tangshan starting to coopt Kuomintang traditional factions through the ruling resources and then building clientelist relationship, later on different heads of counties and cities absorbing political support through the ruling resources, but also through a number of clientelist policies to stabilize the linkage with the voters, so that the DPP electorate in Tainan city (county) is becoming more and more stable. This paper examines the experiences of Taiwan's local clientelist transformation through a case study, and makes some generalizations about the possible problems occurred within the process.