

Yunnan Newspapers and the Early Spread of Marxism

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Abstract: The early dissemination of Marxism in Yunnan was mainly carried out through books and newspapers. Propaganda through the medium of newspapers and periodicals had a great influence in the early Yunnan society. In the context of the reality of the time, the types of early newspapers mainly included those founded by students, institutional newspapers, and newspapers spontaneously founded by labor and peasant groups. The early progressive press introduced the lives of the classic Marxist writers, the initial understanding of the basic principles of Marxism, and the revolutionary ideas of the proletariat. It publicized the international communist movement, promoted the spread of new cultures and ideas in the early frontier areas, and laid the ideological, talent, and popular foundations for the establishment of party and group organizations in Yunnan. An examination of the early history of the spread of Marxism in Yunnan reveals that the people did not passively accept Marxism, but grasped its connotations on the basis of combining it with the real situation. This is of great significance for today's deep understanding of the connotations of the Chineseization and epochalization of Marxism and the promotion of Chinese-style modernization.

Keywords: Yunnan newspapers, early spread, Marxism.

1. Types of Early Yunnan Newspapers

As a result of the impact of new ideas and culture, there was an early wave of newspaper founding in Yunnan, and at the beginning of the twentieth century, publications leading the changes of the times, such as *New Youth* and *New Wave*, were introduced into Yunnan one after another. Under the impact of this strong progressive trend, Yunnan gave birth to a large number of advanced people who actively sought weapons of thought. A considerable number of them accepted Marxism and founded various periodicals with a view to promoting the spread of new ideas in various regions of Yunnan.

Under the baptism of the new ideology, Yunnan students first began to found progressive newspapers and magazines and made efforts to introduce and spread the new ideas. The early Yunnan students who devoted themselves to the propagation of the new Marxist ideas were mainly divided into two groups, those who lived abroad and those who lived at home. The publications they founded mainly focused on the propaganda of patriotic ideas, including *Yunnan*, *Yunnan Students*, and *Yunnan Students' Patriotic Association Weekly*. These publications vigorously publicized anti-imperialist and patriotic ideas and were the main position for spreading the results of the New Culture Movement and new ideas in Yunnan in the early days.

Yunnan students living abroad are able to receive more advanced education and are the first group to bring new ideas to Yunnan. Backed by an open international educational background, foreign students were more receptive to and absorbed new ideas and theories, and thus became an important propaganda force. As early as 1906, members of the Yunnan Alliance had already founded the magazine *Yunnan* in Tokyo, arming the public with theories and sowing the seeds of revolution for Yunnan. 1923, Zhang Tianfang, Cun Shusheng and Dai Shixi, students studying in Japan, founded the newspaper *Shudian* in Tokyo. It published many Marxist articles and introduced the international communist and workers' movements.

Yunnan students in the country founded a large number of progressive newspapers and magazines and were the

backbone of the early spread of Marxism. In 1917, Gong Zizhi, a graduate of Peking University, and his classmates founded a newspaper called *Shangzhi*, modeled on the *New Youth* magazine, and in 1918, the Shanghai National Salvation Corps sent Zhang Tianfang and others back to Yunnan, where they initiated a national salvation movement and founded the *National Salvation Journal*. Before the May Fourth Movement, Yunnan students established the Yunnan Student Union, which founded the *Weekly of Yunnan Students' Patriotic Association*, and later renamed it the *Weekly of Yunnan Students' Union*. After the May Fourth Movement, the trend in Yunnan gradually changed to the propagation of socialist ideology, and a large number of classic works began to appear in Yunnan. 1920, the progressive young people in the Yunnan Federation of Students secretly formed a research group specializing in socialist ideology, known as the *Cosmos Society*, and in the name of the *Students' Self-Government Association of Yunnan High School*, they founded a magazine called *Dianchao*. In 1923, Yunnan students in Beijing, who witnessed the birth of the Party, set up the "*Innovation Society*" in Beijing and founded the weekly magazine "*Innovation*". [1] On its basis, the leftists among the Yunnan students in Beijing jointly published *Iron Flower*, which was dedicated to the propaganda of Marxism-Leninism.

At the beginning of the 20th century, more than fifty kinds of newspapers and magazines appeared in Yunnan, among which the organ newspapers had a wider scope of publicity and stronger appeal, effectively clearing the obstacles to the dissemination of Marxism. In terms of connotation, an organ newspaper refers to a newspaper organized by an organ group, and therefore has a wide range and deep influence. Early organ newspapers in Yunnan mainly included *Dian Sheng Bao*, *Yi Sheng Bao* and *Jue Bao*, etc. These newspapers propagated advanced revolutionary theories, enlightened the people who had been bound by feudalism for a long time, and made ideological preparations for the wide spread of Marxism in Yunnan.

As early as the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, progressive intellectuals in the Yunnan area had already run a large number of patriotic newspapers.

Among them, the Yunnan Gazette boldly criticized the traitorous acts of the Qing government and exposed the Qing court's crime of surrendering and pandering to foreigners, igniting the patriotic fervor of the masses. After the Xinhai Revolution, Yunnan Lunar Newspaper was founded in Kunming, aiming to publicize new knowledge and laying the foundation for the development of the new culture movement in Yunnan. 1915, under the instruction of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, Ma Youbo, Du Hanfu and others joined hands in Yunnan to set up Dian Sheng Newspaper and Jue Newspaper. In the same year, with the rise of the National Protection Movement, Hui I Chun and Mr. Li Hualin co-founded the Yixing Newspaper. These three newspapers published a large number of editorials for the purpose of democratic revolution, which promoted the democratization of thinking in the ethnic areas of Yunnan. In addition, various local publications, such as the weekly Rising Light, founded by the Songming branch of the CPC, and the Women's Voice, founded by the Women's Liberation Association of the provincial capital, used newspapers and magazines as a platform for propaganda, actively carried out revolutionary propaganda, organized the peasant movement, and raised the banner of democratism.

In addition to student-founded newspapers and organs, there were also many publications founded by the masses of workers and peasants on their own initiative. For example, the Kunming Worker and the Axe. It can be seen from the groups of people who founded the publications, as well as the objects to which the publications were directed, that in the early 20th century, especially after the May Fourth Movement, the new trend of thinking began to spread widely in Yunnan, and Marxism was also gradually accepted during this period.

2. Content of early Marxist communication

Marxism spread widely in Yunnan after the May Fourth Movement. During this period there were many pages on Marxism-Leninism in the press, the contents of which mainly consisted of introductions to the lives of Marxist-Leninists, explanations of the basic principles of Marxism, and propaganda for the revolutionary ideas of the proletariat. Although there were problems of insufficient and incomplete understanding of Marxism in the early days, the significance of the propaganda could not be ignored.

2.1. Introduction to classic Marxist writers

Yunnan newspapers and magazines published biographies of classic Marxist writers, deepening the public's understanding of scientific socialism. After the May Fourth Movement, Marxism spread widely throughout the country, and a large number of newspapers published biographies of Marxist-Leninist writers in Yunnan. 1919, Dian Sheng Bao published biographies of Lenin and Liebknecht, which not only introduced their great deeds, but also documented the international communist movement. 1920, Yi Sheng Bao published a serialized biography of Marx, under the title of Marx in the latter half of the nineteenth century, which described Marx as "the most important person in the world during the latter half of the nineteenth century, and the most important person in China. Marx's biography, which called Marx "the great thinker and revolutionist of the second half of the nineteenth century". [2]These newspapers and magazines made it possible for Marxism to move from the intellectual community in Yunnan to the whole Yunnan

society, and it remains important to this day.

2.2. Elaboration of the basic principles of Marxism

Publishing literature related to the basic principles of Marxism and attempting to relate Marxism-Leninism to the concrete realities of China not only publicized the ideal spirit of Marxism, but also promoted the social development of the Yunnan region.

First of all, the class situation in China at that time was recorded in the early newspapers, which elaborated the relevant contents of Marxist class ideology. In February 1919, Yunnan Shangzhi, Volume 2, Issue 3, reprinted Li Dazhao's The Triumph of Bolshevism, which systematically introduced the October Revolution and some of the views of Marxism and published an editorial under the title of "1919 Years". [3]The editorial pointed out: "The future of big investment and big enterprises in the recent economic world is becoming more and more developed. As a result, the occupations of the majority have been deprived and monopolized by the minority. The dictatorship of capitalists in the economic world is no different from the dictatorship of nobles and warlords in the political world." [4]The article applies Marxism to analyze the class situation in China and uncovers the exploitation of the people by the bourgeoisie at that time. Although the understanding of the bourgeoisie was still inadequate, it had sown the seeds of class consciousness in the Yunnan land.

Secondly, the New Cultures also brought to Yunnan an advanced Marxist view of women, putting forward the ideas of equality between men and women and freedom of marriage, and promoting the idea of women's liberation. The development of the New Culture Movement and the May Fourth Movement set off the call for Yunnan women to seek liberation. After the establishment of the Yunnan Youth Endeavor Association, students of the Provincial Women's Secondary School, such as Wu Cheng, Yang Jingshan, Zhao Qinxian, Zhang Shijin, and Xie Xiuying, joined the Association.[5] They read Marxist books extensively and realized that the prerequisite for women's liberation and economic independence was political liberation through revolution. [6]Dianchao also wrote in its inaugural issue, "Since women have independent personalities, they should naturally be treated equally by society, and political life is not something that men can monopolize and not allow women to participate in." [7]

Thirdly, the advanced intellectuals have gained an initial understanding of Marxist political economy and have publicized it through the press. The cornerstone of Marxist political economy is the theory of surplus value, which exposes the exploitative nature of capitalism and provides scientific theoretical support for the struggle of workers for their own interests.

The concepts of production and consumption are explained. The whole process of production and consumption constitutes the entire economic life of the whole society, and clarifying their meaning is the basis for understanding political economy. In the article "From Production to Consumption", published in Dian Sheng Bao, the concepts of production and consumption were clarified. It is argued that production is the use of human labor to create value, and consumption is the elimination of production to satisfy human needs. The newspaper not only provided a preliminary explanation of the meaning of production and consumption, but also illustrated them with examples, making the article easy to understand

and disseminate.

It exposed that the contradiction of the mode of production of the capitalist countries lies in its disorderly competition, and proposed that planned production must be carried out. In the Dian Sheng Newspaper, it is stated that "the purpose of capitalist production lies in exchange, in the process of exchange to obtain profits." "The production of capitalism is also the production of anarchy not according to the needs of society as a whole, but according to the interests of individuals when it is easy to lead to the imbalance between production and consumption." [8]The press not only elaborated on the disadvantages of carrying out production activities under the capitalist system, but also proposed that in order to balance production and consumption, economic planning must be carried out so that the results of production can be dictated by the producers and other solutions. The publication of these concepts made Marxism's views in the field of political economy clear, deepened the public's understanding of the capitalist system, and accelerated the public's pursuit of a better life in the future.

2.3. Describes the state of the proletarian revolution

The press documented the international communist movement as well as the May Fourth Movement held by the progressive youth in the country, spreading the idea of proletarian revolution. On the one hand, the press introduced the general situation of the proletarian revolution in Russia and publicized the international communist movement. In Shangzhi, it was written, "Although the revolution in Russia in 1917 was due to the war, the real reason was that the majority of the peasants and workers could not bear to be oppressed by the big landowners and big capitalists for a long time." [9]The text introduces the class contradiction in Russia, and at the same time reflects the reality, warns the people, and calls on the proletarians to unite, which is of great significance for the promotion of the revolutionary movement in Yunnan.

On the other hand, Yunnan newspapers also published the status of the progressive movement in the country. The Dian Sheng newspaper played an important role in the May Fourth Movement in Yunnan, vividly describing the situation of the May Fourth Movement, in which all the students in the city, from the teacher training students to the primary school students, took part in this patriotic action. They carried flags with the words "Return Qingdao", "Don't Forget the National Shame", "Fight for Qingdao", "Vow to Kill the Traitors", "Save the Nation", "Save the Nation", "Save the Nation", and so on. "Save our country's rights" or "We can cut off our heads, we can kill ourselves, but we can't lose Qingdao". Small flags with such words were waiting at rest in the stadium outside the tea garden. [10]After that, the newspaper reprinted the Beijing Student Manifesto, and the revolutionary movement in Yunnan was pushed to a climax. The Kunming students set up the Yunnan Student Patriotic Association and organized various schools to carry out propaganda with a view to awakening the people to defend themselves against foreign invasion. Under the propaganda of the newspaper, the revolutionary movement in Yunnan, spearheaded by the students, quickly became a great patriotic movement with wide participation of the people.

3. Impact of the spread of Marxism

Early newspapers in Yunnan actively publicized the international communist movement and promoted the development of the revolutionary movement in Yunnan. At the beginning of the 20th century, although Yunnan was also affected by the impact of new ideas, due to its geographical location, the majority of the people were still trapped in the rule of the feudal warlords. In order to respond to the nation's call for revolution and inspire the masses to revolt, the intellectuals of Yunnan used their ideas as a weapon and actively devoted themselves to the cause of revolution in the ethnic minority areas. The publication of Dianchao and Shudian was an important manifestation of the deepening of the New Culture Movement in Yunnan, both of which aimed at spreading Marxist ideas. In its launching address, Dianchao called on the people to awaken quickly and take action against feudal rule and the warlords, so that the masses would realize that the Chinese Revolution was a revolution of the proletariat and part of the revolutionary movement of the world's proletarians.

The spread of Marxism in the early days broke, to a certain extent, the confinement of the people by feudal thought and awakened the revolutionary consciousness of the people in the ethnic areas of Yunnan. In the field of thought and culture, there was once a retrofuturistic countercurrent in Yunnan, i.e., opposition to the use of the vernacular language and advocacy of the revival of traditional Confucianism. However, with the rise of a wave of founding magazines that published new ideas and culture, Marxism-Leninism spread widely in Yunnan, and the people began to break through the prison of feudal culture. For example, Shangzhi publicized the New Culture Movement and advocated ideological and cultural innovations that were "anti-traditional, anti-confucian, and anti-literary". [11]The Dawn of Dian published articles hoping to arouse the public's consciousness to fight for the future. Progressive ideas took root in the border areas through the medium of the early newspapers, bringing Yunnan to a new stage of striving for and practicing democracy.

The popularization of Marxism in Yunnan folklore has made sufficient ideological preparations for the establishment of party and group organizations in Yunnan, and at the same time laid down the organizational and talent bases. On the one hand, Marxism laid the ideological foundation for the establishment of party and group organizations. With the increasing number of progressive newspapers and magazines, the relevant contents of Marxism were widely disseminated. Its content widely covered the three aspects of philosophy, political economy and scientific socialism, providing a channel for the public to recognize and understand Marxism. The Yunnan Students' Organization in Beijing published a monthly magazine, Renovation, which was dedicated to uniting students in Beijing and guiding them towards the path of revolution.

On the other hand, the positions for the spread of Marxism were the organizational basis for the establishment of party and group organizations, and a large number of progressive talents were sent to the nascent organizations. Under the propaganda of Yunnan Students and Iron Flower and other newspapers, the Yunnan people participated in the worker-peasant movement and actively carried out activities to build the Party in the organization. The fifth issue of Renovation published Wang Desan's article "To the Yunnan Students before the Winter Vacation", in which he stated, "If we want

to liberate Yunnan, of course, we have to carry out the National Revolution and overthrow all the dark forces oppressing the people, and the first step is to awaken the people and organize them." [12] After that, Wang De-san opened the "Yunnan Political Cram School" and vigorously propagandized Marxism-Leninism by using newspapers and magazines as a position, and developed 28 party members in a short period of time, cultivating a large number of backbones for the founding of the party in Yunnan.

4. Conclusion

The early history of the spread of Marxism in Yunnan tells us that Marxism is not only a spiritual banner of China, but also a guide to follow up the development of the border areas. The distribution of early newspapers and periodicals baptized the people of Yunnan with advanced Western scientific ideas, opening the way for the spread of Marxism in Yunnan. Nowadays, Marxism can be adapted to the local characteristics of ethnic minority areas without the propaganda of Marxism-Leninism by early progressive periodicals. It is of great significance for us to sort out the early periodicals that publicized Marxism in order to enrich the resources for learning and educating about the Four Histories and to understand why China chose Marxism.

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