

Study on Jiangxi's Newspapers and Periodicals During the Republic of China Period

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Abstract: This paper systematically combs the development process of Jiangxi newspapers and periodicals from 1911 to 1949, and divides it into three stages: the early period of the Republic of China (1911–1919), the middle period (1920–1937), and the late period (1938–1949). Through research, it was found that the development of Jiangxi's newspaper industry during the Republic of China period was closely linked to social and political changes. Its characteristics and functions demonstrated in different historical stages not only reflected the needs of the times, but also shaped the spiritual outlook of the times to a certain extent, providing valuable historical experience and inspiration for the development of modern media.

Keywords: Republic of China period; Jiangxi newspapers and periodicals; social and political changes; development characteristics; historical enlightenment

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1. Introduction

The Republic of China period was a critical transition period for China from an imperial system to a republic one, and from a closed system to an open system. As an inland province, the development of Jiangxi's newspaper industry not only reflected the dramatic changes in the local political, economic, and cultural ecology, but also reflected the evolution of information control and public opinion mobilization mechanisms at the national level. Jiangxi is located in the southeastern hinterland of China, in the middle reaches of the Yangtze River, connecting the six provinces of Hunan, Hubei, Anhui, Zhejiang, Fujian, and Guangdong. It is known in history as “the head of Wu and the tail of Chu, the home of Guangdong and the courtyard of Fujian, a beautiful place”^[1]. Jiangxi's newspaper industry ushered in a new period of development and became a tool for information dissemination media and political forces to compete for public opinion positions. The development of Jiangxi's newspaper industry has gone through a complex process from official newspapers in the late Qing Dynasty to the coexistence of party newspapers, private newspapers, and red newspapers in the Republic of China, forming a unique “Jiangxi Experience”. This experience not only reflects the interaction between the local and the national, but also reveals how the media plays a structural role in wars, revolutions, and cultural movements.

This article hopes to fully reveal the development context of Jiangxi's newspaper industry during the Republic of China period and its important role in social and political changes, and provide new perspectives and profound insights for understanding information dissemination and social changes during the Republic of China period.

2. The rise and development of Jiangxi's newspaper industry in the early years of the Republic of China (1911-1919)

Before formally discussing the specific development of Jiangxi's newspaper industry in the early Republic of China, it is necessary to first clarify the rupture and continuity between the "old" and "new" of Jiangxi's public opinion ecology in the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China, so as to highlight the epoch-making significance of the 1911 Revolution in the history of local media.

2.1. The policy of press freedom after the Xinhai Revolution

Following the Xinhai Revolution, the Provisional Government of the Republic of China promulgated the Provisional Constitution of the Republic of China on March 11th, 1912, which for the first time explicitly enshrined in a fundamental law that "the people shall have freedom of speech, writing, publication, and assembly and association^[2]." This provision not only repudiated the two-thousand-year-old tradition of speech prohibition but also marked the first time that press freedom was incorporated into the constitutional framework of national governance, providing unprecedented institutional protection for the newspaper industry. The relaxation of regulations led to a rapid proliferation of newspapers in Jiangxi, with a scene of "numerous press offices and lively public opinion."

As the law was relaxed, revolutionaries, progressive gentry, graduates of new-style schools, and business groups founded newspapers and periodicals through fundraising, joint ventures, and donations, forming a competition and collaboration among multiple newspaper Publishers. The predecessor of Jiangxi Minbao, the Self-Government Daily, was founded in November 1911 and was originally hosted by Liu Jinglie, a member of the Local Advisory Council, with the purpose of "advocating local autonomy." In February 1912, Wu Zongci, the head of the Jiangxi branch of the Tongmenghui, took over and renamed it Jiangxi Minbao. In his editorial, he proposed "using public opinion to supervise administration and to instill republican ideas among the people^[3]."

In addition to *Jiangxi Minbao*, *Nanchang Dajiang Daily* and *Chenzhong Bao*, *Jiujiang Jiangsheng Daily*, *Ganzhou Gannan Daily*, etc. also have their own characteristics. *Dajiang Daily* was founded in January 1912 and was located in Nanchang Jingboyuan. It was known for its "boldness", was praised by readers as "Jiangxi's *Minli Daily*". *Chenzhong Bao* claimed that "it is committed to promoting the Three Principles of the People and developing the province's industry"^[4]. *The Jiangxi Gazette*, founded in March 1912, was the first to use vernacular Chinese to write "local news" and to open a "reader forum" to publish contributions from workers and students, thus setting a precedent for "conveyance of opinions from the grassroots" in Jiangxi newspapers and periodicals^[5].

The surge in newspapers and periodicals also promoted the innovation of printing technology, distribution network and journalism education. Between 1912 and 1914, new printing enterprises such as "Jiangxi Printing House", "Changming Printing Company" and "Gan Province Movable Type Company" appeared in Nanchang successively. Lead printing and lithography were used together, and the daily printing capacity increased from thousands of copies to more than 10,000 copies.

2.2. Major newspapers and periodicals in Jiangxi and their political stance

At the beginning of the Republic of China, the number of newspapers and periodicals in Jiangxi increased sharply. However, its political spectrum was not single, but presented a triple variation of "revolutionary radical-moderate republican-conservative and stable", competing and complementing each other. The following selects the four most representative ones- *Jiangxi Minbao*, *Dajiang Daily*, *Chenzhong Bao* and *Nanchang Daily* for analysis to see the differentiation and convergence of the public opinion field.

2.2.1. Jiangxi Minbao: "Revolutionary flagship" of the Tongmenghui system

After the reorganization in March 1912, "Jiangxi Minbao" hosted by Wu Zongci publicly announced that "supervising the government and advocating civil rights are the only purpose". In addition to serializing Sun Yat-sen's "Letter to

Compatriots Across the Country”, its editorial page also serialized Song Jiaoren’s “Kuomintang Manifesto”, which sharply criticized Yuan Shikai’s “contempt for the Constitution”.

2.2.2. Dajiang Daily: The mouthpiece of radical youth and labor movement

Although Dajiang Daily also advocated republicanism, it emphasized “social revolution” more. The first issue in April 1912 Published the “Letter to the Laborers in Jiangxi Province”, proposing the slogan of “eight hours of work, minimum wage”, and maintaining hotline contact with the Nanchang Machinery Union and the Pingxiang Road Mine Workers Club. In the spring of 1913, the newspaper opened a “Laborer” column and continuously reported on the Anyuan miners’ strike, which offended the authorities; in August of the same year, Li Chun closed it down on the grounds of “inciting laborers”, making it one of the earliest radical newspapers to be closed down in Jiangxi.

2.2.3. Chenzhong Bao: Saving the Nation through Industry and Moderate Reform

Compared with the above two newspapers, the political stance of Chenzhong Bao (“Chenzhong” means “morning bell” in Chinese) is more moderate. Its inaugural statement clearly stated that “we will not talk about radicalism, but will focus on developing industry and popularizing education”. In terms of economy, the newspaper cooperated with Jiangxi Industrial Promotion and Nanchang Chamber of Commerce, and Published “An Overview of the Province’s Industry” every week, which detailed the export data of tea, porcelain, and summer cloth; in terms of politics, it advocated “cabinet system and provincial autonomy in parallel” and took a “limited cooperation” attitude towards Yuan Shikai’s government.

2.2.4. Nanchang Daily: “Semi-mouthpiece” under the official background

Founded in June 1912, *Nanchang Daily* was funded by the Jiangxi Provincial Council and its first president was the Speaker Long Qin Hai. The newspaper was controlled by the Governor’s Office in terms of personnel and funds, so it often gave a “positive interpretation” to the central and provincial government orders. However, after the “Second Revolution” in 1913, a split occurred within the *Nanchang Daily*: most young reporters in the editorial department sympathized with the fight against Yuan Shikai, while the management department was ordered to “maintain neutrality.” In the end, the newspaper adopted a compromise strategy of “moderate editorials and radical supplements.”

2.3. The role of newspapers and periodicals in social change

During this period, the newspapers and periodicals not only spread revolutionary ideas by reporting and commenting on revolutionary events, but also aroused the public’s attention to democracy and reform. For example, when reporting on the memorial meeting for martyrs Huang Ai and Pang Renquan, Dajiang Daily Published a large number of commentary articles, exposing the crimes of reactionary warlords and calling on the people to rise up in resistance. This reporting method not only enhanced the influence of newspapers and periodicals, but also stimulated the revolutionary enthusiasm of the people and promoted social changes in Jiangxi.

In addition, newspapers and periodicals also provided a platform for the people to express their opinions, enhancing social participation and transparency. For example, *Chenzhong Bao* has opened several columns to publish readers’ contributions and comments, giving ordinary people the opportunity to express their views and opinions. This interaction not only enhances the affinity of newspapers, but also promotes the exchange and collision of social thoughts, and promotes social progress and change.

3. Fluctuations and adjustments in Jiangxi’s newspaper and periodical industry during the mid-Republic of China (1920-1937)

If we say that the prosperity of Jiangxi newspapers and periodicals in the early years of the Republic of China benefited from the legal relaxation brought about by the “Provisional Constitution”, then in the 1920s, with the confrontation

between the North and the South, the warlords' melee, the eastward spread of the New Culture Movement, and the rise and fall of the power of the Kuomintang and the Communist Party, the Jiangxi public opinion field was no longer just a single voice of "revolution" or "republic", but a polyphony of multiple political melodies.

3.1. The May Fourth Movement and the "Enlightenment-Mobilization" Shift of Jiangxi's Newspapers and Periodicals (1920-1924)

After the outbreak of the May Fourth Movement, students in Beijing sent telegrams to the whole country, and Nanchang Xinyuan Middle School and Jiangxi Law and Politics School were the first to respond. On May 4, 1920, *Jiangxi Youth* was founded in Nanchang. The inaugural statement declared that "it is the mission to criticize the old ethics and promote new ideas"^[6]. The second issue of the first volume of the magazine reprinted the "Democracy and Science" special issue of "New Youth" in full, and opened a column for vernacular poetry in the "Readers' Forum". More than 320 submissions were received within three months, one-third of which came from students of the night school for coal miners in western Jiangxi.

The Dajiang Daily juxtaposed the "external struggle for national sovereignty" and "internal punishment of traitors" of the May Fourth Movement. In 1922, the leaders of the Hunan workers' movement, Huang Ai and Pang Renquan, were unfortunately killed by Hunan warlords. Upon learning the news, Dajiang Daily immediately joined forces with progressive groups in Nanchang to hold a mass rally on May 1, International Labor Day, to mourn the two martyrs Huang and Pang, express grief, and expose and denounce the crimes of the reactionary warlords in slaughtering revolutionaries. The next day, a special issue named "May 1, Labor Day Special Issue" was Published, with a full-page black border containing "A Song to Mourning Huang and Pang" and "A Letter to Jiangxi Workers", which was the first time that the slogan of "worker-peasant unity" was publicly raised in Jiangxi^[7]. This move angered the governor of Jiangxi, Chen Guangyuan, and the special issue was confiscated by the military and police on the same day on the charge of "inciting workers and advocating communism". The newspaper was ordered to suspend publication for two weeks. However, the short-term closure did not suppress public opinion. Instead, it stimulated the emergence of more small newspapers and periodicals: Between 1922 and 1924, more than 20 vernacular newspapers and periodicals appeared in Nanchang, Jiujiang, Ji'an, Ganxian and other places, including Red Lantern (semi-monthly), Lonely Lantern (weekly), Nanchang Student (ten-day), and Ji'an Youth (monthly), all with the common banner of "anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism".

In addition, the May Fourth Movement also promoted the innovation of Jiangxi newspapers in terms of content and language form. "Their content and written language have changed greatly compared with the early period"^[8]. Many newspapers and periodicals began to use easy-to-understand vernacular Chinese and Published more articles reflecting social reality and people's lives, which enhanced the affinity and influence of newspapers and periodicals. In 1923, Gannan New News announced that "all articles would be Published in vernacular Chinese and with new punctuation marks"^[9]; in 1924, the supplement of Jiangxi Gazette, Popular Weekly, went to the countryside to "lecture on newspapers" and set up a free newspaper reading center in Luojia Town, Nanchang County. Within three months, the number of readers exceeded 12,000^[10]. The combination of vernacular Chinese, punctuation marks, Arabic numerals and the Western calendar enabled newspapers and periodicals to break through the circle of gentry and truly reach the masses.

3.2. The "United Front" and the Public Opinion in the Northern Expedition (1924-1928)

In 1926, the Kuomintang, under the active participation and leadership of the Communist Party of China, carried out the Northern Expedition. Under the favorable situation of the Northern Expedition's successive victories and frequent good news, Jiangxi's newspaper industry also developed rapidly. According to statistics, there were more than 90 newspapers of all sizes during this period, which became the heyday of Jiangxi's newspaper history. On November 23, 1926, the revolutionary left of the Kuomintang Jiangxi Provincial Party Committee founded the *Republic of China Daily* in Nanchang in order to publicize the victory of the Northern Expedition and expand political influence. The newspaper was later controlled by the Kuomintang rightists and became an important propaganda tool for the Kuomintang reactionaries.

During the War of Resistance Against Japan, the newspaper was successively moved to Ji'an, Taihe, Ningdu and other places for distribution. On May 21, 1949, *the Republic of China Daily* was closed with the defeat of the Kuomintang.

By reporting the victory of the Northern Expedition, these newspapers not only boosted the morale of the Northern Expedition Army, but also mobilized the people to support the revolution. During the period of cooperation between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party, Jiangxi newspapers also actively reported the activities of the Communist Party and Published speeches in support of the Communist Party, which promoted the in-depth development of the cooperation between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party.

3.3. The Nationalist Tendency of Jiangxi Press on the Eve of the Anti-Japanese War

In June 1932, Chiang Kai-shek launched the fourth counter-revolutionary military “encirclement and suppression”. In order to cooperate with this military encirclement and suppression, the Political Training Department of the “Bandit Suppression” Army of the Kuomintang Training General Directorate founded the *Sweeping Daily* in Nanchang on June 23 of that year. Its purpose was to “suppress bandits”, and the news focused on military aspects, while editorials and special reports focused on the discussion of the “bandit suppression” issue. The *Sweeping Daily* was an important propaganda tool for the Kuomintang to fight against the Communist Party. It moved to Hankou in 1933, and then moved to Chongqing, Guilin and other places for distribution. At the same time as the *Sweeping Daily*, there were also the *Sweeping Weekly* sponsored by the Political Training Department of the Nanchang Camp of the National Military Commission, the *Sweeping Weekly* compiled by the Political Training Department of the Jiangxi-Guangdong-Fujian Border Region, and the *Sweeping Brief* Published in various “bandit suppression” troops, forming a tight anti-communist network.

These newspapers and periodicals not only aroused the national sentiments of the people of Jiangxi by reporting on Japan's aggressive acts, but also laid the foundation of public opinion for the subsequent all-out war of resistance. For example, when reporting on Japan's aggressive acts, the *Sweeping Daily* Published a large number of commentary articles, calling on the people to awaken and support the anti-Japanese war and save the country. This reporting method not only enhanced the influence of newspapers and periodicals, but also aroused the people's anti-Japanese enthusiasm and laid the foundation of public opinion for the subsequent all-out war of resistance.

4. Challenges and transformation of Jiangxi newspapers and periodicals industry in the late Republic of China (1938-1949)

After experiencing fluctuations and adjustments in the middle period of the Republic of China, the Jiangxi newspaper industry faced more complex and severe challenges in the late period of the Republic of China. During this period, the Jiangxi newspaper industry not only had to rebuild on the ruins of the war, but also had to struggle to survive in the whirlpool of politics. Its development trajectory showed unique transformation characteristics.

4.1. Jiangxi newspapers and periodicals during the Anti-Japanese War

After the full outbreak of the Anti-Japanese War, Jiangxi's newspaper industry suffered an unprecedented impact. In January 1938, Nanchang fell, and Jiangxi's newspaper industry fell into chaos. Many newspapers and periodicals were forced to suspend or relocate. Major newspapers such as the *Jiangxi Daily* and the *Nanchang Daily* moved to Ji'an, Ganzhou and other places to continue publishing. However, even in such a difficult environment, some newspapers and periodicals still insisted on publishing and continued to play a role in promoting the war of resistance and boosting morale.

On October 4, 1936, the *Rixin Daily* was founded in Ji'an. On May 9, 1939, it was renamed the *Qianfang Daily* after being taken over by Wang Zaoshi, one of the seven patriotic gentlemen. This is a semi-official private newspaper with the purpose of promoting the war of resistance, advocating democracy and constitutionalism. During the war, the *Qianfang Daily* played an extremely important role. It not only reported the front-line situation in a timely manner, but also Published a large number of commentary articles, exposing the atrocities of the Japanese army and calling for international assistance.

4.2. Political Propaganda and Newspapers and Periodicals Control during the Civil War

After the victory of the Anti-Japanese War, the domestic political situation has undergone profound changes rapidly. The contradictions between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party, which had been temporarily shelved in the process of jointly fighting against foreign invasion, have intensified sharply again, and the dark cloud of civil war has quickly enveloped the country, and it is imminent. However, during this period, the content of newspapers and periodicals was often strictly censored and controlled, and the freedom and independence of the press were greatly restricted. The development of the newspaper industry showed a complex and contradictory state.

In this complex political environment, Jiangxi's newspaper industry presents a polarized trend. On the one hand, under the strict control of the government, the Kuomintang's newspapers and periodicals have become an important tool for promoting its policies and attacking its opponents. Their contents are often highly politically biased and difficult to be objective and fair. On the other hand, the Communist Party's secret newspapers and periodicals have survived tenaciously in a difficult environment, spreading the Communist Party's ideas and propositions through underground channels, rallying people's hearts and gathering strength for the revolutionary cause. Although these secret newspapers and periodicals face great risks, they have always adhered to the purpose of serving the people and the revolutionary cause, and have played a positive role in promoting social progress and change.

4.3. The social role and influence of Jiangxi newspapers and periodicals in the late years of the Republic of China

At the end of the Republic of China, with the dramatic changes in the domestic political situation, Jiangxi's newspaper industry also experienced an extremely important period of transformation. During this period, Jiangxi's newspapers were no longer limited to traditional current political reports, but more focused on social issues and livelihood issues, deeply reflecting the public's strong desire for peace and development. Jiangxi's newspapers have played an extremely important role in promoting social progress and reflecting the voice of the people, and have become an important force that cannot be ignored in social change.

On December 11, 1931, the Provisional Government of the Chinese Soviet Republic founded the *Red China* as official newspaper in Ruijin. The birth of this newspaper shouldered the important mission of playing the leading role of the central government in the Chinese Soviet movement. On January 27, 1933, in order to adapt to the urgent needs of the revolutionary war at that time, especially in the emergency mobilization to smash the enemy's fourth encirclement and suppression and large-scale offensive, *Red China* underwent an important reorganization. It was jointly run by the party and league organs of the Soviet government and the trade union, and changed from a weekly to a tri-weekly to more efficiently spread revolutionary information and mobilize the masses. In October 1934, the Long March of the Red Army began, and *Red China* ceased publication on October 4. However, after the Red Army arrived in northern Shaanxi, the newspaper did not die. In January 1936, *Red China* resumed publication in Wayaobao and continued to play its role in propaganda and mobilization for the revolutionary cause.

5. Conclusion

From the vigorous rise in the early years of the Republic of China, to the fluctuations and adjustments in the middle period, and then to the difficult transformation in the late period, the development trajectory of Jiangxi's newspaper industry is like a mirror, reflecting the turmoil and changes in society during the Republic of China. During this period, Jiangxi's newspaper industry did not exist in isolation, but was closely connected with the pulse of social politics. Its development characteristics not only reflected the needs of the times, but also shaped the spiritual outlook of the times. By studying the development of Jiangxi's newspaper industry during the Republic of China, we can better understand the characteristics of information dissemination and its impact on social change, and provide useful reference and inspiration for the development of modern media. The development of Jiangxi's newspaper industry during the Republic of China not only

provides us with valuable historical experience, but also points out the direction for the development of modern media. In the new historical period, the media should continue to play its important role in social change and contribute to promoting social progress and achieving national development goals.

Disclosure statement

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