

Study on Sun Yat-sen's Spreading Socialist Thought in late Qing Dynasty and Early Republic of China (1905-1912)

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Abstract: Sun Yat-sen was a pioneer in the early dissemination of socialist thought in China. At the end of the Qing Dynasty and the beginning of the Republic of China, Sun Yat-sen introduced the popular socialist schools through speeches, among which there is no lack of marxism. In the late Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China, Sun Yat-sen's spreading socialist thought had four characteristics: first, Sun Yat-sen was good at integrating Chinese traditional culture with socialist thought; Second, Sun Yat-sen was good at combining foreign situations to interpret the necessity of socialism in China; Third, Sun Yat-sen was good at using others' theories to expound his own socialist views. Fourth, Sun Yat-sen was good at using his political reputation and media volume to spread socialism. Sun Yat-sen pioneered the spread of socialism in China, and some of his propositions and views also provide reference for future generations.

Key words: Late Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China; Dr. Sun yat-sen. Socialism; spread.

Sun Yat-sen was the forerunner of the democratic revolution in modern China and the early communicator of socialism in China. Liang Qichao believed that Sun Yat-sen was the first person to spread socialism in China. He pointed out that although Sun Yat-sen was not a scholar, he "advocated socialism and took him as the first" [1]. Arif Derick, an American scholar, also compared Sun Yat-sen to the "father of Chinese socialism" [2]. During a visit to the United States in 1896, Sun yat-sen came into contact with Henry George's proponents of single-tax socialism, which later became an important theoretical source for sun's "equal estate" ideas. According to Soong Ching Ling, Sun Yat-sen was familiar with the theories and activities of Marx and Engels during his trip to Europe at the end of the 19th century. He also "urged foreign students to study Marx's Das Kapital and The Communist Manifesto and read socialist books and journals of the time" [3]. Although Sun Yat-sen did not understand the true meaning of scientific socialism, his enthusiastic propaganda of socialism enlightened the public and laid a foundation for the spread of scientific socialism in China.

1. The background and reason of Sun Yat-sen's spreading socialism

1.1 The impact of the rise of the socialist movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, with the rapid economic development of capitalist countries, sharp social problems such as the widening gap between the rich and the poor and prominent social contradictions appeared, the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie became increasingly acute, and the workers' movement rose and fell. With the continuous awakening of the working class consciousness, a variety of socialist trends of thought constantly emerge, impacting the ideological basis of capitalist rule. The establishment of the Second International in 1889 further expanded the influence of socialism, socialist parties were established in many countries, and the socialist movement flourished. In Asia, Japan, through the Meiji Restoration, witnessed rapid development of capitalism and the expansion of workers' power. Influenced by the Socialist movements in Europe and America, Japan became the center of spreading socialist thought in Asia, and a number of influential socialist activists such as Xingde Qiushui and Pian Shanqian emerged. Sun Yat-sen was politically persecuted by the Qing Government and exiled to Britain, Japan and other countries. He was deeply influenced by the

socialist movements in those countries, which laid a foundation for his initiative to understand and spread socialism later.

1.2 Sun Yat-sen's personal subjective basis for spreading socialist thought

Sun Yat-sen was born in a peasant family in Xiangshan County, Guangdong Province in 1886. His childhood was poor and he had the opportunity to attend a private school at the age of 10. At the age of 12, he received western modern education in Hong Kong, Guangdong and other places under the sponsorship of his elder brother Sun Mei. Sun Yat-sen was dissatisfied with the autocratic rule of the Qing Government in his early years. At first, he placed his hope of political reform on Li Hongzhang, an important minister of the Qing Dynasty. After being rejected, Sun Yat-sen abandoned his fantasy and embarked on the path of revolution. After the failure of the Canton Uprising in 1895, he was forced to go into exile. During his exile in England, he often went to the London Library to read some socialist works, and got to know Marx and Henry George and other people's socialist ideas. Sun Yat-sen also observed the capitalist system carefully during his stay in Britain, and had a profound understanding of the social problems in Britain under the capitalist system, such as the severe polarization between the rich and the poor and the oppression of the workers by the capitalists and the government.

During his exile in Japan, Sun Yat-sen communicated with The Japanese socialist activist Xingdeqiushui. Xingdeqiushui translated and published a number of works related to socialism with high theoretical level. The communication with Xingdeqiushui enabled Sun Yat-sen to have a further understanding of socialism. Sun Yat-sen also paid great attention to collecting and reading works related to socialism. According to the Catalogue of Books in Sun Yat-sen's Former Residence in Shanghai, "he collected more than 10 kinds of works in Western languages related to socialism" [4]. These extraordinary life experiences laid a subjective foundation for Sun Yat-sen to accept and spread socialism.

2. Sun Yat-sen's introduction to the schools, essence and basic characteristics of socialism

2.1 Sun Yat-sen's introduction to the main schools of socialism

2.1.1 Introduce single-tax socialism

Socialism began to be popular in Europe in the 1830s and 1840s, and in the middle and late 19th century different factions were derived. In a speech to the Chinese Socialist Party in 1912, Sun Yat-sen introduced the more popular school of socialism at that time, introducing Henry George's single-tax socialism and Marxism. He pointed out that the theory of single-tax socialism advocates the public ownership of land, which is "a theory of precision and no grinding" [5](P29). The single tax socialism theory is the important theoretical source of Sun Yat-sen's "equal land rights" thought, Sun Yat-sen especially praised it. *Progress and Poverty*, translated by Tu Fu, was published in the first issue of *Minbao*. This article was translated by Liao Zhongkai at the request of Sun Yat-sen. It translated the preface and part of the content of *Progress and Poverty*. The introduction of this work in the first issue of *People's Daily* shows that Sun Yat-sen attached great importance to the theory of single-tax socialism.

People in the newspaper, the founding anniversary of the speech, Sun Yat-sen's thought in Europe and the increase in wealth and poverty population increase in the root of social problem is not solve the land problem, he put forward the key to solve this problem is to take land pricing, he praised the German settlers in Jiaozhou Bay land single tax the results obtained. Although Sun did not mention Henry George in his speech, the core of his views on the land issue came from Henry George. Sun Yat-sen once pointed out in his speech that "his (Henry George's) explanation of the reasons for the local tax law was so precise that the theory of single-tax socialism came into being" [6], and believed that his theory of single-tax socialism was deeply in line with the socialist views. In an

interview with an American journalist, Sun Yat-sen made no secret of his praise for single-tax socialism, pointing out that "the doctrine of Henry George, your single-tax theorist, will be the basis of our reform program" [7]. At the same time, he insisted on adopting all the doctrines of Henry George and giving all natural profits to the government.

2.1.2 Introduce Marxism

Sun Yat-sen introduced Marxism in his lecture *Socialist Factions and Methods*. He spoke highly of Marx, pointing out that Marx had studied capital for more than 30 years and wrote *Das Kapital*. This book is different from other theories catering to superficial remarks, making socialist theory "become a systematic theory" [5](P6). In addition, Sun Yat-sen also compared Marx with Adam Smith, thinking that Marx was a new economic school, focusing on the happiness of the majority of workers in distribution, and opposing capitalists to enjoy the benefits. He believed that "the theory of equal remuneration for labor" [5](P34) advocated by Marx was accepted by scholars all over the world. Sun Yat-sen not only took the initiative to spread Marx's ideas, but also actively approached the Second International. He expressed to the head of the Second International his confidence in building socialism in China as a socialist. From this point of view, Sun Yat-sen's attitude of introducing and spreading socialism was sincere and earnest. Under the influence of Sun Yat-sen, *Minpao* also had related articles about the introduction of Marxism. For example, the biography of German Social Revolutionaries made a comprehensive introduction of Marx's life, and emphasized the introduction of the Communist Manifesto and *Das Kapital*.

2.2 Sun Yat-sen's induction and introduction of the essence and basic characteristics of socialism

Sun Yat-sen did not agree with Darwin's proposition that "might is right" based on species evolution, and he believed that socialism could save "the defects of heaven" [5](P8). Sun Yat-sen pointed out that the essence of socialism is universal love, equality and freedom. He thought that universal love proposed by Mozi was similar to socialist universal love, but socialist universal love is universal love for the happiness of all mankind, which is broader than Mozi's narrow sense of universal love. Sun Yat-sen divided socialism into centralized socialism and communist socialism. He believed that collectible socialism was characterized by state-owned ownership of land, railways, minerals and other important means of production, and distributed according to the amount of labor in the distribution system. Communist socialism, he pointed out, was characterized by people doing what they could and what they wanted, with the state doing nothing and eventually dying.

Sun Yat-sen also discussed the relationship between people's livelihood doctrine, socialism and communism. According to Feng Freyou, the term "people's livelihood doctrine" did not appear before the issue of *Min Pao*, and Sun Yat-sen used the word "socialism" when studying social and economic issues with members of the *Tong Meng Hui*, but he declared that his economic propositions were "actually more extensive than the socialism described by Europeans and Americans at present" [8]. Although Sun Yat-sen has "people's livelihood, is the current socialism" [9], but the whole Sun Yat-sen's thought of people's livelihood extension than socialism is wide, the extension of socialism than communism is wide, if use graphical representation of the people's livelihood is a big circle, socialism is a circle, communism is a small circle, three circles are set together, Communism is the ultimate goal of future social development. Although Sun Yat-sen had some misconceptions about what socialism was, such as calling Bismarck's state capitalism state socialism, his understanding of the relationship between socialism and communism is still commendable.

3. Sun Yat-sen's two main forms of spreading socialist thought

3.1 Spreading socialism through speeches

Sun Yat-sen was not only a great revolutionary, but also an excellent orator. During his life, he made many speeches on the subject of socialism, some of which were attended by thousands of people, and had a wide and far-reaching influence on the spread of socialism. In 1906, Sun Yat-sen introduced the three People's Principles in his speech at the celebration of minpao's founding anniversary in Tokyo. When talking about people's livelihood, he introduced foreign Socialist parties advocating people's livelihood [here people's livelihood refers to socialism]. The efforts made in this regard point out that there are different schools of socialism that "hold that the abolition of capitalists should belong to the state, that they should be divided equally among the poor, and that they should belong to the public" [10](P16). In 1912, Sun Yat-sen pointed out in his speech at the farewell meeting of the Members of the Nanjing Tongmeng Association that capitalist monopoly was the root cause of the hardship of workers, and only socialism could prevent the evils of capitalist monopoly. Sun pointed out that socialism could not only make the country prosperous and strong, but also prevent the evils of capitalism, so the Policy of national socialism was adopted in the platform of the Tongmeng Hui. In his speech, Sun Yat-sen praised Germany's state-owned policy towards large industries such as railways and electricity, and he believed that China would become rich and strong if it adopted the national socialist policy. In his speech at the Nanjing Road Of Shanghai, Sun Yat-sen proposed that "the people's livelihood advocates, namely national socialism" [10](P50), and believed that the task of nationalism and civil rights had been accomplished, and the next goal was to realize people's livelihood advocates.

In his speech at the welcome party of wuchang 13 groups, Sun Yat-sen refuted the argument that socialism was not suitable for China. He believed that in order to achieve national interests and people's prosperity, not only political revolution should be completed, but also social revolution should be achieved through the implementation of socialism. At that time, many people mistakenly thought that a strike was socialism. Sun Yat-sen pointed out that a strike was a protest against the failure to realize socialism and could not be equated with socialism. In this speech, Sun Yat-sen not only reflected on whether socialism could be realized, but also clarified the concept of socialism, and his understanding of socialism was deepening. In his speech at the welcome meeting of The China Industry Association in Shanghai, he summarized the relationship between socialism and people's livelihood, and proposed that "the purpose of servitude is to promote industry, implement people's livelihood, and take socialism as its destination" [10](P62), and emphasized that he would pursue happiness and well-being for the people of the whole country as his lifelong ambition.

From October 14 to October 16, 1912, Sun Yat-sen was invited by the Chinese Socialist Party to give a special lecture on socialism in Shanghai, which was attended by thousands of people. Sun Yat-sen's speech was very theoretical, giving a systematic introduction to the schools of socialism, the essence of socialism and how to develop socialism in China. He also mentioned Marx many times in his speech. "I still remember him saying Karl Marx loudly in English," Zhang recalled. At that time we really knew nothing about socialism, until Mr. Sun explained it to us." [11] Sun Yat-sen's speech was later reprinted by minli Daily and other newspapers, and its influence far exceeded that of the Chinese Socialist Party.

3.2 Spread through paper media such as Min Pao

As the official newspaper of the Alliance, Min Pao was greatly influenced by Sun Yat-sen in the idea of running a newspaper. Minpao began to consciously spread the socialist theory since its release. The first nine issues of Minpao included introductions of socialism-related content, and the fourth issue published four articles about socialism. Newspaper, according to statistics, the people have "34 article explicitly mentioned the word" socialist "[12], these articles from the content, roughly three aspects: one is about the history of socialism and the socialist genre, in marxism, in the introduction of socialism genre socialism and anarchism, single tax la salle socialism are

involved; Second, the first International, the second International and the socialist party activities; The third is the discussion on whether socialism is suitable for China. In addition to the "up", "people newspaper" and other newspapers are also plays an important role in the spread of socialist theory, they ran more than sun yat-sen's speech about socialism and conversation materials, not only to expand the influence of socialism, also for our research of socialism in China provided valuable historical materials in the early years.

4. Characteristics of Sun Yat-sen's spreading socialism

4.1 Sun Yat-sen was good at integrating Traditional Chinese culture with socialist ideology

Sun Yat-sen was not only influenced by traditional Chinese culture, but also studied abroad and came into contact with western culture. When spreading socialist thought, Sun Yat-sen stressed that socialist thought "existed in ancient Times" in China, and he interpreted socialism with the ideas of great harmony and equality between the rich and the poor. Sun Yat-sen attached great importance to excavating socialist elements from ancient Chinese society. He believed that historically, "China's Solid state advocates socialism" [5](P7). He compared the well field system to the beginning of socialism and the cohabitation of generations to the beginning of communism. Sun Yat-sen was also good at using ancient Chinese philosophers' thought to pave the way for the spread of socialism. He took Confucius' thought of great harmony as an important theoretical basis for his interpretation of socialism. On many occasions, he equated people's livelihood, socialism and great harmony, and regarded "great harmony in the world" as the goal of an ideal society. He also used Yao and Shun's universal charity and Mozi's universal love as analogies to socialist universal love.

4.2 Sun Yat-sen was good at interpreting the necessity of implementing socialism in China by combining foreign situations

Sun Yat-sen had rich experience of studying abroad. In the process of spreading socialism, he was good at emphasizing the necessity of promoting socialism in China by analyzing the situation of western capitalist countries. In his analysis of the social development of Britain, he pointed out that despite the rapid development of productivity and sharp increase of social wealth driven by the machine industry, "the poverty of the British people is more than thousands of times higher than that of previous generations" [13](P6). The gap between the rich and the poor in the society is constantly widening, and the people at the bottom do not share the fruits of social development. He believed that capitalist monopolization of various industries was the main cause of inequality between the rich and the poor, and the socialist parties in Europe advocated socialism to solve the problem of inequality between the rich and the poor. It should be said that Sun Yat-sen saw the problems of capitalism and took socialism as the preferred solution to the problem of the polarization of the rich and the poor in capitalism. For some time after the Revolution of 1911, he imagined that the country would benefit and the people would become rich through the implementation of socialism. Sun Yat-sen appreciated the state-owned policy adopted by Germany for large industries, and believed that "such policy was not adopted by Britain and the United States at the beginning, and the disadvantages are now serious" [14](P66). He put forward that only by realizing the nationalization of land, railway and other big industries can "the society be free from the pain of economic class oppression" [14](P67) and realize the national interests and the well-being of the people.

4.3 Sun Yat-sen was good at using others' theories to explain his own views

In the process of spreading socialism, Sun Yat-sen did not systematically spread and practice some socialist theories, but looked for theoretical basis from different socialist theories according to the realistic needs. He introduced a wide range of socialist theories, from Marx's "public ownership of capital" (a misinterpretation by Sun Yat-sen) to Henry George's treatise on public ownership of land, to the so-called national socialist policies of the time in Germany. Although Sun Yat-sen had a

high opinion of Marx and his ideas, he did not believe in Marxism, but rather paved the way and propagated his ideas of capital control by means of "public ownership of capital" and "equal distribution". Xinhai revolution after sun yat-sen thought political revolution has been basically completed, the next step by relying on the national capital is the focus of the railway and other large industrial construction, therefore he through Germany by state-owned railway and other national socialist policies not only realizes the country rich and strong, and avoids the capitalist private monopoly, to support his point of view is correct.

4.4 Sun Yat-sen was good at using his political popularity and media volume to spread socialist ideas

Sun Yat-sen was a very influential political figure in modern China, whose political reputation and media voice were very high. On the one hand, he is good at using his political identity to talk about socialism in the communication with social elites. On the other hand, he is good at using his media voice to spread socialist views and propositions. Sun was close to Jiang Kanghu, the founder of the country's first socialist research institute, who was adept at political speculation and actively elected Sun as president of the provisional government. On the day before sun Yat-sen took office as the provisional president of the Republic of China, he talked with Jiang Kanghu for more than an hour about advocating socialism. Sun yat-sen also called himself "Yu Shi is a complete socialist" [15](P12) and hoped that the Chinese Socialist Party founded by Jiang Kanghu could translate and publish the socialist masterpieces he brought from Europe and America. After sun Yat-sen resigned as the provisional president of the Republic of China, he did not stop his support for Jiang Kanghu's communication of socialism, and still supported his communication activities in various forms such as speeches and correspondence.

As a politician, Sun Yat-sen had many opportunities to communicate with journalists and spread his socialist views. In 1912 alone, Sun talked about his socialist ideas of land, railway nationalization and equal distribution in at least six interviews with journalists. These talks took place in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and other places, involving newspapers such as Wen Wei Po, Minli Daily, Asia Daily and so on. Sun Yat-sen used the power of journalists to expand the volume of socialist communication.

5. Sun Yat-sen's contribution to the dissemination of socialist ideology in the late Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China

5.1 It pioneered the spread of socialism

It takes a process and an initiator for any kind of thought to be accepted by the masses. Sun Yat-sen can be said to be the initiator of the early spread of socialist thought in China in the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China, and he promoted the rise of the first spread of socialism in China. Although Sun Yat-sen did not fully understand the true meaning of scientific socialism, he was sincere in his communication and appreciation of socialism. He proposed that socialism should be "widely propagated to make its theories popular in the minds of the whole nation" [13](P212). Sun Yat-sen did spread socialism in many ways, and his introduction of the concept, classification and terminology of socialism was widely disseminated, which laid a certain foundation for people to understand and accept scientific socialism. Sun Yat-sen's introduction of Marxism provided a new method for the advanced intellectuals of that time to analyze history and understand society, and made a preliminary ideological preparation for the later people with lofty ideals to spread Marxism.

5.2 To provide reference for future generations to spread socialism

Sun Yat-sen's activities of spreading socialism in late Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China left important enlightenment for later generations. First of all, Sun Yat-sen's propagation of

socialism is based on his criticism of the western capitalist system, which helps people to understand the disadvantages of the capitalist system and not take the capitalist system as the only choice in the choice of the future social path. Secondly, Sun Yat-sen believes that socialism can be divided into two factions: collectivist socialism and communist socialism, and points out that "communism is originally the superior of socialism" [5](P10), and actually regards communism as the highest stage of socialism. Third, Sun Yat-sen did not completely deny private ownership in terms of production relations, but advocated a partially state-owned policy, implementing state-owned policies on land, railways and other important means of production and large industries. In terms of distribution, he advocated common prosperity without equalization. These propositions did not violate the law of economic development and met the realistic requirements of China's development at that time. They are also of reference value to our economic construction after the founding of New China.

6. Conclusion

Although the influence of Sun Yat-sen's socialist communication activities was mainly in the intellectual class and did not have much influence on the bottom people, it is commendable that Sun Yat-sen used it as a spiritual weapon to mobilize the people when most Chinese people did not know much about socialism. Sun Yat-sen did not act as a "setter" in the process of spreading the socialist theory, but under the influence of the socialist thought combined with the national conditions at that time put forward the people's livelihood doctrine with "equal land rights" and "controlled capital" as the core. Sun Yat-sen's own dissemination of socialism was sincere and eager, which also laid a certain ideological foundation for the first cooperation between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party. The introduction of Marx's life and ideas by Zhu Zhixin and others also opened the door for the early spread of Marxism in China.

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