

## Session II: Modern Chinese History

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### ***The Research on Republican Chinese History in Recent Years***

The research on Republican Chinese history is the component part of Chinese traditional dynasty history research. After 30 years development, it has become the most dynamic discipline with most research achievements in Chinese history studies since China adopted the policy of reform and opening up in 1978. Today, I hope my brief introduction about the research on Republican Chinese history recently will help you understand betterly of present situation to historical research in China. My introduction focus on studies of Chinese inland scholar's, but not mention that of China Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan scholar's.

#### **1. Comprehensive study on Republican Chinese history**

In 1978, the publication of *Biography of Republican China* (volume 1), edited by Division of Republican China Research, CASS Institute of Modern History, is generally considered as the beginning of the study on Republican Chinese history. In 1981, *History of the Republic of China* (volume 1, series 1) was published, which is considered as the foundation-laying of discipline for Republican Chinese history. Since then, the work, the archives and the materials about Republican China have been publishing massively with the academic research teams expanding rapidly, academic exchanges becoming more frequent.

On macro research of Republican Chinese history, the representative work of general and comprehensive study is *History of the Republic of China* edited by Division of Republican China Research, CASS Institute of Modern History. The work consists of 3 series and 12 volumes. Now 7 volumes have been published. The remaining 5 volumes will be published in the near future. *History of the Republic of China* centers its study on political history of the Republican period, and also study on the history of economy, diplomacy and military in that time. It has aroused widespread concern and considerable attention from the academic circles at home and abroad with its accurate and reliable writing and down-to-earth fair comments. 12 volumes of *Biography of Republican China*, edited by the same Division, published in all in 2006, which covers brief biography of nearly 1000 influential figures in the political, military, diplomatic, economic, and cultural circles during the Republican period. *Chronicle book of Republican China*, edited also by the same Division, consists of 39 volumes and published in 1997, which makes the daily records of the major and important events in politics, military, diplomacy, economy, culture and other aspects during the Republican period. This three works constitute a complete research system of discipline of Republican Chinese history.

A number of books on comprehensive study of the Republican period also have been published in recent years. *History of the Republic of China* edited by Zhu Hanguo and Yang Qun consists of 10 volumes written in the form of Lun (General research), Zhuan (Biography), Zhi (Special research), Biao (Table), which is closer to the form of Chinese traditional history. CASS Institute of Modern History published *General History of Modern China* edited by Zhang Haipeng this year, which is composed of 10 volumes, and five of them study on the Republican period. Although the above-mentioned works are about the general study for the Republican period, most of them still focus their study on political history, so economical, cultural and social history for the Republican period still should be strengthened.

In respect of comprehensive study of Republican China, it should also be noted that the significance of the symposium. In recent years, several international symposiums are held every year, and the participants are from various research units at home and abroad

with the relative broad research area and advanced research results, which fully reflects the study of Republican Chinese history has become a subject of international characteristics.

## 2. Special Study of Republican Chinese History

As for the research time interval, the research of Republican China is generally divided into two parts: the period of Beijing Government and the period of Nanjing National Government. In recent years, the key to the study is more often put on the period of Nanjing National Government. As for the research areas, the research results are still notable during recent years in such traditional research areas as the history of politics, economy, military and diplomacy. Meanwhile, many new research areas, like the history of society, culture, region, city and so on are attracting attention from many researchers. As for the research tendency, scholars in accordance with the spirit of free discussion propose new viewpoint, or amend original view on many issues of Republican China, thus greatly promoting the right understanding for that time. As for the methodology, the posture of pluralistic development is assumed, but case study based on historical materials is still the main part of the research. As for the form of publication, apart from numerous books published annually, the publication of a large number of research papers involved in various fields is also an important aspect to special study for Republican China. However, it is difficult to have accurate statistical figure about them, for they scattered among various academic journals. Those published by *Historical Research* and *Modern Chinese History Studies* are more influential. Now I will make a brief introduction on the research for political history of the Republican period. Because of the limited space and time, I will no longer introduce research fruits in the fields of economy, diplomacy, culture, and society etc.

The ups and downs of Guomindang(GMD)'s rule during the Republican period has always attracted attention from scholars. Professor Wang Qisheng from CASS Institute of Modern History has carried out a whole set of research on the history of GMD's organizational system. He focus his study in-depth on the GMD's organizational structure, the party membership, hiring system, the relationship between the party and government, factional struggles, and so on, which is based on historical method, combining research orientation of sociology and political science. Professor Wang's research has attracted the attention from academia with the detailed analysis and original interpretation for GMD. According to him, after GMD reorganized in the mid-1920, its organization shape was undisciplined as before; GMD control the central government with the Party while separated the local government from the Party. As a result, the party power was weakened day by day in the local politics operation which made GMD's dominant authority and the foundation deteriorated to a large degree, and finally GMD could only establish rule order with the vulnerable dictatorship.<sup>1</sup>

Chinese scholars used to concern the evolution of relations between GMD and CCP and the political situation of the Revolutionary Government of the South from the perspective of CCP history when engaging in the study of national revolution in the mid-1920s. In recent years, researchers proceeded from the historical reality, have noticed many factors especially the political situation of the North government that affected the eruption and development of the national revolution. According to Professor Luo Zhitian from Beijing University, the principal political contradiction in China at that time is the "South-North struggle" instead of the "GMD-CCP struggle". Based on the opinion, he approaches the factors that influence the national revolution such as regional culture and social identification from different viewpoints.<sup>2</sup> Professor Yang Tianhong from Sichuan University takes into account the struggle between the south and the north for the control of the central and local governments in his mid-1920s study of North-South relations, which is different from the previous study that was made from the perspective of government in the south opposing the northern warlords.<sup>3</sup> The previous study of mass movement during the period of national revolution was mainly from the viewpoints of the revolutionary history. Professor Feng Xiaocai from Fudan University in his study of the

May 30th Movement of 1925 holds that the expanding of the Movement is related to the political and diplomatic strategies of Beijing Government. Therefore, the mass movement in modern China has never been a simple expression of popular will. It is impossible to understand complex connotation of modern Chinese mass movement if we ignore the forces behind it.<sup>4</sup> Previous study of peasant movement during the period of the national revolution was usually concentrated on peasant movement of Hunan and Hubei under the leadership of or influenced by CCP. Professor Liang Shangxian from CASS Institute of Modern History has studied the relationship between GMD and peasant movement in Guangdong province and holds that GMD supported peasant movement in Guangdong but at the same time kept close relations with the landlord gentry, which sowed the future defeat.<sup>5</sup>

The relationship between GMD and CCP has always been one of the central topics of academia.<sup>6</sup> The research on the relationship between GMD and CCP in mid and late 1920s made by Professor Yang Kuishong from Beijing University, and the research on the relationship after the World War II by professor Deng Ye and Wang Chaoguang from CASS Institute of Modern History, all reveal the complexity and multiplicity of the relationship and various factors which affects the development of the relationship between the two parties, thus further deepening people's understanding of the relevant historical issues.<sup>7</sup>

The scholars also concern the research about Jiang Jieshi. Professor Yang Kuisong from Beijing University investigates the course of accommodating CCP into GMD, separating CCP from GMD and broke with CCP at last by Jiang Jieshi and holds that Jiang's action experienced very complex and contradictory transformation before he broke with CCP publicly. His choice was inevitable to high degree, but occurred to some degree by accident as well. The exhaustive investigation into the sharp conflict between Jiang Jieshi's inner feeling and outer environment may help people to have a general understanding of the formation of the historical resentments between GMD and CCP.<sup>8</sup> Professor Yang Tianshi from CASS Institute of Modern History studies Jiang Jieshi's strategy towards Japan, secret negotiations between China and Japan during the Anti-Japanese war, and Jiang's attitude during these negotiations, revealing the Jiang Jieshi's several aspects previously unknown to the public.<sup>9</sup>

### **3. Factors Affecting the Research of Republican Chinese history**

#### **1) Material Factor**

Historical materials are the basis of historical study. The progress in the research of Republican China is benefited from easy access to the massive historical materials. The archives of the Republican period especially those local files kept in China inland archives, the archives of Jiang Jieshi and GMD in China Taiwan, the archives of Song Ziwen, Kong Xiangxi, and other important figures in Stanford, Colombia, Harvard University of America, Comintern files in Russia are all open to researchers gradually in recent years.<sup>10</sup> The above-mentioned research progress towards national revolution, the relationship between GMD and CCP and Jiang Jieshi are all benefited from the opening of these archives. For more exemple, Dr. Jin Yilin from CASS Institute of Modern History research on Jiang Jieshi and GMD factional struggles using mainly archives collected in China Taiwan.<sup>11</sup> Professor Chen Hongmin's study on Hu Han-min, the leader of GMD is based on archives kept in Harvard-Yenching Library of America.<sup>12</sup> Professor Wu Jingping from Fu Dan University research on financial history of Republican China in accordance with archives in Shanghai City Archives.<sup>13</sup> It should also be noted that the published photo-offset copy of newspapers and magazines (such as Shenbao and Oriental Magazine) and mass local archives for the Republican period are very useful for researchers. Now the fundamental problem is not lack of historical data but how to use the vast historical materials to do research, and how to identify the problems from the tremendous amount of materials and solve them.

## 2) Expanding Fields of Study

The previous study on Republican China used to be concentrated on such traditional areas as politic, economic, military and diplomatic history. Now new areas of research have been greatly expanded while the research on traditional fields is carried on. The research on such areas as social, cultural, regional and urban history is booming. The reasons are as follows: the changing of research concept (from "externalization" to "internalization", from "upward to downward"), more abundant materials (such as the use of regional, oral, pictorial, video historical data), the choice of thesis topics by large number of new researchers and graduate students. For example, Professor Zhu Ying, Central China Normal University and other scholars have made more intensive research on movement of commercial civilians which rarely attracted attention before.<sup>14</sup> The study of administrative system from the late Qing Dynasty to the period of Northern Warlords Regime by Professor Wei Guangqi, Capital Normal University,<sup>15</sup> and the study of social administration function of the Chinese local governments of first half of the 20th century by Professor Wen Rui, Jiangxi University of Finance & Economics,<sup>16</sup> help us to understand transformational functions of modern Chinese local systems modernization. The research on local autonomy movement in 1940s by Dr. Cao Chengjian, Sichuan Normal University, leads people to deliberate why the rule of Nanjing National Government collapse from the perspective of the control at the grassroots level.<sup>17</sup> The study of local power organs in rural areas in Guangdong province by professor Qiu Jie, Zhongshan University,<sup>18</sup> and the study of political power building at the grass-roots level in rural areas of Guangxi province by Dr. Zhang Wei, Zhongshan University,<sup>19</sup> provide the case for us to understand the evolution and transformation of the rural community and expansion of the state's power into the rural areas. The study of the civil official examination system during the Republican period by Dr. Li Lifeng, Nanjing University, enables us to realize that specific aspects of the constitution of government organization structure at that time.<sup>20</sup> Some fields that researchers rarely concern previously has been brought to the range of study: the study of the relationship between comics and the Northern Expedition by Professor Wang Qisheng, CASS Institute of Modern History; the study of relationship between the building Zhongshanling (Sun Yat-sen' Mausoleum) and politics by Dr. Li Gongzhong from Nanjing University;<sup>21</sup> the study of the film censorship system by Professor Wang Chaoguang from CASS Institute of Modern History.<sup>22</sup> The expanding of research field will help people to have a more full and in-depth understanding and a better knowledge towards the multiple and complex facts for Republican China.

## 3) Switching of Study Trend

The basic method of historical research, of course, is based on the historical data. However, recently researchers, especially some new researchers use social scientific methods more often. They focus on raising questions, construction of the framework and theoretical analysis. Professor Yang Nianqun, China People's University, introduces sociological research methods in his research on Chinese modern health system, concerns the relationship between the establishment of modern medical system and traditional Chinese culture and ethics, and other modern systems such as the police system; the influence of modern medical system to social organization control and people's daily life; the role played by the state power in modern health system through the way of medical procedures and physical control and so on.<sup>23</sup> The switching of the trend for Republican China research continues developing, and the future may witness more new fruits which are followed by many new researchers and graduate students.

## 4. The Prospect of the Trend for Republican Chinese History Research

Although works and original viewpoints for Republican Chinese history research keep coming forth in recent years, it is not mature enough and there are still some problems yet to be resolved. 1) The present research of the Republican period is mainly composed of case study. Researchers often choose the subject rarely touched and consult materials never be used before. Its advantage lies in expanding research areas to fill gaps in

research while its disadvantage in the lack of intersection and discussion. 2) Despite the research of the Republican period has greatly expanded, there are still many blank spots. The in-depth study has not been made on some important periods and issues. For example, the special study on the period of Beijing Government is still not enough. There is no in-depth research on many events and figures of this period and reasonable interpretation of many issues such as the evaluation of parliamentary system during the period.<sup>24</sup> Another example is the research on the occupied areas during the Anti-Japanese War: it is still far from enough though we have made certain research results recently on it.<sup>25</sup> 3) The research on the Republican period is generally considered as to the ruling class of that time. That is to say that it is considered as the research mainly on Beijing government, Nanjing National Government and the related issues. Therefore it is to some extent the special history research rather than the general history research. The resulting problem is that many historical events and figures during the Republican period may not be able to be brought into the research framework. The time is not yet ripe to incorporate the study of Republican Chinese history into the framework of general history fully for its specific characteristics and the lack of in-depth study in some extent. In the next period of time, the study on the Republican period will be made as the special study as well as the general study.

In general in my view, the perspective of the developing trend of the study on Republican Chinese history is as follows: 1) The traditional field of the study will still attract the attention of many scholars, among which the weak parts will be continuously strengthened while the new research fields such as the history of society, culture, system and region are becoming a focus of attention and will be further developed. 2) Because the research on Republican China started rather late which left many gaps and the study attitude has switched, case study will continue to occupy an important position in it. The progress of case study in turn is of great significance to the macro study of Republican China, which will have a double-significance: revising history and exploring the problems. 3) The opening of the archives for the Republican period will be a large driving factor to both the macro and micro research study, and help researchers to make the in-depth exploration of Republican China. 4) Along with the development of higher education, a large number of graduate students choose Republican China as the thesis topics each year, which will continue to promote research on the Republican period.

1. *Party Members, Party Power and Party Struggle: 1924-1949 Chinese Kuomintang's organization structure*, ShanghaiShuDian House 2003; *The Social Composition and Grassroots Organization of the Guo mindang after Its Reorganization, The Guomindang's Organizational Degeneration after the 1927 Purge*, Modern Chinese History Studies 2000, 2, 2003, 5; *The Relation between the Party and the Government: the Operation of KMT Governance at the Local Level (1927-1937)*, Social Sciences in China, 2001, 3.
2. *North and South and the Re-interpretation of Success of the Northern Expedition*, Open Times 2000, 9; *Evolution of Military and Political Pattern in North China Before the Northern Expedition: 1924-1926*, Historical Review, 2003, 1; *Legitimizing the Revolution: Guomindang Efforts to Justify Its Cause and the Northern Loss of Mandate on the Eve of the Northern Expedition*, Social Sciences in China, 2003, 5.
3. *A Study of the Relations between the Guomindang and the Re-construction Conference in 1925*, Modern Chinese History Studies, 2003,3.
4. *Negotiations on the Shanghai Incident, the May Thirtieth Movement, and the Duan Qirui Government in 1925*, Historical Research 2004, 1.
5. *The Guomindang Suppression of the Guangdong Peasant Movement and Its Effects, KMT and Guangdong Militia*, Modern Chinese History Studies 2002, 3, 2003, 6.
6. *Sun Yat-sen and the Communist Party-A Historical Survey Based on the Russian Factor, Accommodate the Communist Party" or "Split from the Communist Party"? The Course of the Guomindang's Split over "Accommodating the Communist Party" in 1925*, Modern Chinese History Studies, 2002, 3. 2002, 4; *The Qing Dang(Purging*

the KMT) Movement in Nanjing in 1927, *Historical Research*, 2005,6.

7. Deng YE: *Coalition Government and On-Party Ruling—The Political Struggle between KMT and CPC during 1944-1946*, Social Science Academic Press 2003; *Negotiations on Coalition Government and Chinese Politics in the Final Stage of the Anti-Japanese War*, Social Sciences in China, 2002,5; A Study on the Second Plenary Conference of the 6th Central Committee, KMT, Issues of the Northeast and Siping Decisive Battle, The Nanjing Negotiations and the End of the Second Cooperation between the Guomindang and the Communist Party of China, *Historical Research* 2002,2; On the Political Nature of the Chongqing Negotiations between the Nationalist Party and the Communist Party, *Modern Chinese History Studies* 2005, 1; Wang Chaoguang: *The Setback Suffered during the Process of Democratization in China in Early 1946 — A Study Focusing on the Political Consultative Conference and the Relationship between the KMT and the CCP, A Key Turning Point of Guomindang's Policy towards the Communist Party of China after the War against Japanese Aggression — A Further Study of the Second Plenum of the Sixth Central Committee of the Guomindang*, *Historical Research* 2000,6.2001,4; *A Variation on War and Peace: The Evolution of China's Political Situation from the Chongqing Negotiations to the Political Consultative Conference, A Study of the Sino-Soviet Economic Cooperation Negotiations in Manchuria after the War*, *Modern Chinese History Studies* 2002,1,6; *On the diplomatic Policy to Soviet Union after the World War II and fierce dispute ABOUT the Northeast*, *Republican Archives* 2006, 3.
8. *What Led to the "March Twentieth Incident of 1926"?* *Historical Research* 2002, 6; *Jiang Kai-shek's Psychological Change from "March, 20 Incident" to "April, 12 Incident*, *Journal of Historical Science*, 2002, 6,7.
9. *Chiang Kai shek's Strategy toward Japan before the Marco Polo Bridge Incident: An Investigation Based on Chiang's Diary*, *Modern Chinese History Studies* 2001,2; *An Exploration into the Kiri Project, Chiang Kai-shek Restraining Kong Xiangxi from Making Peace with Japan: A Study of Sino-Japanese Relations during the Anti-Japanese War*, *Historical Research* 2006,5; *Chiang Kai-shek Personally Controlling Secret Talks with Japan*, *Collected Papers of CASS Academic Advisory Board Vol.2*, Social Science Academic Press 2006.
10. Some of these archives have been published in the mainland of China, such as the *Soviet Union Communist Party (Bolshevik), the Comintern and the Chinese National Revolutionary Movement (1920-1925)*, *the Soviet Union Communist Party (Bolshevik), the Comintern and the Chinese National Revolutionary Movement (1926-1927)*, *the Soviet Union Communist Party (Bolshevik), the Comintern and Selections of Chinese revolutionary Historical data (1926-1927)* Beijing Library Press 1997, 1998. *Chiang Kai-shek and Yan Xishan's Archives* published in Taiwan China.
11. *Stress on Place of Origin and Factions inside the Nationalist Party: An Observation of Nationalist Party Leaders from Guangdong in the 1920s and 1930s, Chiang's Resignation as the Chairman of the Nationalist Government and His Return to Power*, *Historical Research* 2005,3. 2006, 2. *Yan Xishan's Activities Opposing Chiang Kai-shek and Zhang Xueliang before and after the Nanjing-Guangdong Conflict*, *Modern Chinese History Studies* 2005, 5.
12. *Interpersonal Communications and Politics in Telegrams and Letters: Reading of the Harvard-Yenching Library's collection "Hanmin's Exchanging Telegrams and Letters"* Shenghuo-Dushu-Xinzhi Joint Publishing Company, 2003; *Elaboration on the Relation between Guangdong, Guangxi and Fujian Incident*, *Modern Chinese History Studies* 2001,4.
13. *On The Jiangsu & Shanghai Financial Committee in 1927i, The Shanghai Bank Guild during the Period from the September 18th Incident to the January 28th Incident*, *Modern Chinese History Studies* 2000,1. 2002, 3.
14. *Zhuying: Movement of Commercial Civilians and Modern Chinese History Studies* Tianjin Social Science, 2005, 4. *Huoxinbin: Dispute between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party and class polarization — The case study of the relationships*

- between labor and merchants during the period of the Guangzhou National Government*, *Historiography Research in Anhui*, 2005,5. QiaoZhaohong: *Association and the Movement of Commercial Civilians in the Early Period of the Great Revolution*, Social Sciences Academic Press 2005, 6. Li Buohuai: *Businessperson Interest Group: Business Association — Difference between Businessperson Association of Chengdou and Business Association of Shanghai*, *Social Science Front*, 2005, 1.
15. *Government ruling and Self-ruling — County-ruling of late of 20th Century in China*, Commercial Press 2004.
  16. *The Preliminary Transition of the Social Administration Function of the Chinese Local Grass-root Governments During the First Half of the Twentieth Century — A sample research in the Border among Gan, Min and Yue*, *Journal of Literature History & Philosophy* 2004,1.
  17. *Local Autonomy Implementation and Effect Under the New County System in the City of Chongqing in the 1940's, Local Autonomy Policy of Nanjing Nationalist Government During Late 20's and Early 30's and Its Performance, Readjustment of Local Autonomy by Nanjing National Government During the 1930's*, *Journal of Sichuan Normal University*, 2000,6. 2003, 1, 5.
  18. *Local Self-Government Organizations in Guangdong Countryside in the Early Years of the Republic of China*, *Journal of Historical Science* 2003, 5.
  19. *Militia, School and Local Government — The Regime at the Basic Level Established in the Country of Guangxi in 1930's*, *Agricultural History of China*,2005,3; *Between the Government's Will and the People's Will: the Villagers' Congress in Guangxi in the 1930s*, *Journal of Historical Science* 2006.8.
  20. *The Operational Effectiveness of the Civil Service Examination System*, *Historical Archives*, 2004, 1; *Several Issues on the Civil Servant Examination System of Nanjing Nationalist Government*, *Journal of Historical Science* 2004, 1; *Modernity and its limits: Comment on the civil service examination system of the Republic of China*, *Historiography Research in Anhui*, 2004,4.
  21. *Northern Expedition and Cartoons; Open Memorial: Expression and Practice of the Architectural Spirit of Sun Yat-sen's Mausoleum*, *Journal of Nanjing University* 2004, 4.
  22. *The Origin of the Republic's Film Inspection System, Control and inspection guide-Shanghai Film Censorship Committee*, *Modern Chinese History Studies* 2001,3, 2004,6; *Film Censorship of the Kuomintang Nationalist Government After the War of Resistance Against Japan*, *Journal of Nanjing University* 2001,6; *The Film Censorship in the Occupied Areas during the Anti-Japanese War*, *Journal of Studies of China's Resistance War Against Japan*, 2002,1; *The Politics of Filmmaking: An Investigation of the Central Film Censorship Committee in the Mid 1930s*, *Historical Research* 2006,2; *Main Points of "No Fear of death" incident and the precedent of banning American films "humiliating to Chinese"*, *Modern China's urban and rural areas*, Social Sciences Academic Press 2006.
  23. *Reconstructive patient — political space under the conflict of China's traditional and Western Medicine (1832-1985)*, China's Renmin University Press 2006.
  24. For the latest research results see *Yuan Shih-kai and Northern Warlords* compiled by Su Zhiliang and other people. Shanghai Renmin ChuBanShe
  25. Yu Zidao: *History of Wang Qingweis Puppet Regime*, Shanghai Renmin ChuBanShe 2006; Wang Qiang: *Traitor Organization: Xinmin Association*, Tianjin Academy of Social Science Press; Pan Min: *Study on Grassroots Political Power of Japan and Puppet Regime in Jiangsu Province (1937-1945)*, Shanghai Renmin ChuBanShe.