

# The Localization Strategies of Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper

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**ABSTRACT:** *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper (1907-1908) adhered to the principles of China's early modern press, as pioneered by the Reform Movement, with the primary objective of enlightening and educating the public. Employing colloquial language, the newspaper aimed to disseminate scientific knowledge and modern civilizational ideals, while also focusing on local affairs in Lijiang. Its narrative style was deeply localized, integrating regional idioms and reduplicative expressions, thus serving as a quintessential example of vernacular journalism. By utilizing accessible language, the publication played a pivotal role in intellectual enlightenment within the region. Moreover, Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper holds significant value in the historical study of journalism, particularly in the context of ethnic minority communities in Yunnan, offering critical insights into the development of the press in this unique socio-cultural setting.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Intellectual Enlightenment; Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper; Localization Strategies*

## I. Introduction

In the wake of the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), reformist newspaper editors played a crucial role in the establishment of modern newspapers, introducing Western ideas and advocating for reformist ideologies to catalyze social transformation. This period marked a significant phase in the development of the native Chinese press. As observed by Ko Kung-chen<sup>[1]</sup> (1927, Chapter 4, p. 1), “In the 21st year of the Guangxu reign, following the Sino-Japanese War, a pervasive sense of national indignation gripped the population. *The Zhongwai Jiwen* and *Qiangxue Bao*, first published in Beijing and Shanghai by the Qiangxue Association, were soon succeeded by *Shiwu Bao* and *Shiwu Ribao*, heralding the rise of a flourishing newspaper industry.” These reformist publications, distinguished by their use of vernacular language, were instrumental in shaping public opinion and fostering widespread intellectual engagement. Their accessible and impassioned discourse was central to the intellectual awakening of modern Chinese journalism, positioning these newspapers as critical agents in the dissemination of enlightenment and reformist thought in late Qing society.

The reformist movement sought to enlighten the populace by utilizing accessible vernacular Chinese, thereby enhancing public awareness of national affairs, promoting Western knowledge, and fostering participation in the national salvation movement. In 1898, Qiu Tingliang (裘廷梁) published his influential article *On Vernacular as the Basis of Reform* (《论白话为维新之本》) in *Su Bao*, in which he argued that “nothing obscures the people

more than classical Chinese, and nothing enlightens them more than vernacular Chinese”<sup>[2]</sup>(Xu Zhongyu, 1994: 82). This argument became a cornerstone in shaping the theoretical framework of the Late Qing vernacular movement<sup>[3]</sup>(Deng Wei, 2009: 78). Qiu contended that the press and public opinion were essential prerequisites for reform, asserting that newspapers played a crucial role in disseminating new ideas. Despite the publication of official and commercial newspapers in major cities like Beijing and Shanghai, these publications remained inaccessible to the general population due to their reliance on classical Chinese. In response, Qiu advocated for newspapers written in simple, vernacular Chinese—language that could be universally understood<sup>[4]</sup>(Liu Jialin, 1989: 32).

Chen Rongjun (陈荣衮) was the first to explicitly advocate for the adoption of vernacular Chinese in newspapers. In 1899, he published *On Newspapers Adopting Simple Language* (《论报章宜改用浅说》), where he underscored the significance of accessible language in journalism: “The calamity of classical Chinese has led to China’s downfall... Newspaper articles should employ simple language to facilitate the importation of civilization”<sup>[5]</sup>(Tan Pian, 1956: 8). In a similar vein, Huang Zunxian (黄遵宪) called for the unification of spoken and written language, arguing that “to enable all tradesmen, merchants, women, and children to utilize written language, spoken and written forms must be unified”<sup>[5]</sup>(Tan Pian, 1956: 8).

Under the reformists’ initiatives, a significant wave of vernacular newspapers emerged across China. As noted by Ko Kung-chen<sup>[1]</sup>(1927, Chapter 4, p. 17), “Among those advocating for popular education, the *Wuxi Vernacular Newspaper*, first published in Wuxi in March of the 24th year of the Guangxu reign, was issued every five days... From the fifth issue onwards, it was renamed *the China Official Pronunciation Vernacular Newspaper* and published biweekly. Following this, the *Suzhou Vernacular Newspaper*, *Hangzhou Vernacular Newspaper*, *Yangzi Jiang Vernacular Newspaper*, and *Jinghua Newspaper* were launched in quick succession, with numerous others soon appearing.” By the late Qing and early Republican periods, over 370 vernacular newspapers had been established, alongside more than 50 “literary vernacular newspapers” that either featured vernacular columns or published vernacular supplements<sup>[6]</sup>(Hu Quanzhang, 2011: 23).

Modern scholarship on vernacular newspapers can be broadly categorized into three key areas. The first category focuses on the discourse systems, developmental trajectories, and dissemination models of vernacular newspapers. Xu Xiaofeng (2013), in *The Emergence and Editorial Philosophy of Modern Vernacular Newspapers* (《近现代白话报的出现及其办刊思想研究》), argues that the rise of vernacular newspapers catalyzed the modernization of newspaper concepts, transforming them from elitist literary forums into platforms for disseminating knowledge and information to a broader public. Similarly, Li Dan (2019), in *Late Qing Vernacular Newspapers and the Enlightenment of Western Economic Thought among the Lower Classes* (《清末白话报刊与下层社会的西方经济思想启蒙》), examines the content and rhetorical strategies employed in the economic discourse of these newspapers. Li argues that vernacular newspapers were essential in introducing Western economic thought to grassroots communities, thereby facilitating the transformation and modernization of Chinese economic thought.

The second category of scholarship examines the editorial philosophies, linguistic styles, and social impact of

specific vernacular newspapers. Among the most influential vernacular publications in late Qing and early Republican China, *the Hangzhou Vernacular Newspaper* (established in 1901) and *the Wuxi Vernacular Newspaper* (1898) have garnered significant academic attention. Xue Yan (2011) argues that *the Hangzhou Vernacular Newspaper*, by employing clear and accessible vernacular language, played a key role in popularizing concepts such as “nation” and “sovereignty” among the masses, thereby cultivating national consciousness and contributing to ideological shifts during the Xinhai Revolution (辛亥革命). Other newspapers, including those based in Beijing and Shanghai—such as *China Vernacular Newspaper* and *Jinghua Daily*—as well as publications from the Chaoshan region, including *the Chaoshen Vernacular Newspaper* and *Chaozhou Vernacular Newspaper*, have also been the focus of scholarly inquiry.

The third category focuses on research pertaining to vernacular newspapers in ethnic minority regions. In addition to their proliferation in inland and coastal areas, vernacular newspapers also emerged in regions with significant ethnic minority populations, such as Xinjiang, Tibet, and Yunnan, during the late Qing and early Republican periods. An Ling (2013) offers a comprehensive analysis of *the Yili Vernacular Newspaper*, the first newspaper in Xinjiang, established in 1910 during the Xuantong era. An’s study examines the newspaper’s masthead design, column structure, and publication details, emphasizing its role in promoting national unity and fostering a cohesive state identity in Xinjiang. In a similar vein, Chen Hangxing (2020) and colleagues, in *A Re-examination and Understanding of Tibetan Vernacular Newspapers and Other Related Publications* (《关于<藏文白话报>等系列报刊的重新考察与认识》), compare three newspapers—*Tibetan Vernacular Newspaper*, *Hui Vernacular Newspaper*, and *Mongolian Vernacular Newspaper*—published by the Ministry of Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs in 1913. They argue that the scholarly understanding of these newspapers remains limited and warrants further investigation.

*Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* was one of the earliest vernacular publications to emerge in China’s ethnic minority regions, representing a deliberate experiment within the broader vernacular movement. Established in 1907 (the 33rd year of the Guangxu reign), the newspaper published a total of ten issues. According to Wang Zuozhou’s *A History of Journalism in Yunnan*<sup>[7]</sup> (2008: 8), by 2008, only eight issues had been preserved in the Lijiang Library. Currently, the Lijiang Old Town Library holds five surviving issues (Issues 1, 2, 5, 6, and 7).

Currently, academic research on vernacular newspapers in ethnic minority regions predominantly focuses on Xinjiang and Tibet, with relatively scant attention given to the establishment and dissemination of vernacular newspapers in late Qing Yunnan. Due to challenges in historical data retrieval, existing studies on *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* remain limited to broad overviews, lacking systematic and comprehensive analysis. This study, drawing upon the five surviving issues of *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* preserved in the Lijiang Old Town Library and supplementary historical sources, seeks to investigate the newspaper’s localized strategies for public enlightenment.

## II. The Founding of *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* and Its Localized Enlightenment Mission

## 2.1 The Founding of the *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper*

In March of the 33rd year of the Guangxu reign (1907), Peng Jizhi (彭继志), the magistrate of Lijiang Prefecture, established *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* in Lijiang. He appointed Zhao Shiming (赵式铭), a Bai scholar and principal of Jianchuan Higher School, as the chief editor. Zhao Shiming, writing under the pen name “Jing Yu” (精愚), authored the primary articles of the publication. In the inaugural issue, Peng Jizhi outlined the newspaper’s mission to awaken public consciousness and enlighten the masses in his article *Mou Yan* (《牟言》), a vision further elaborated by Jing Yu in the preface *Lijiang Prefecture Vernacular Newspaper* (《丽江府白话报》).

The cover design of the first and second issues of *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* featured the issue number and publication date on the left, with the title “Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper” prominently centered, and the inscription “Published in the third month of the Dingwei year of the Guangxu reign” on the right. However, in issues five through seven, this right-side inscription was replaced with the phrase “Approved by the Provincial Education Commissioner Ye,” indicating a growing level of official recognition and oversight by local authorities.

An analysis of the surviving *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* issues reveals that the publication did not feature designated columns, advertisements, images, or illustrations. Each issue typically comprised 15 to 20 pages, containing four to five articles. The content covered a broad range of genres, including commentary on current affairs, essays on intellectual enlightenment, adapted theatrical scripts, poetry criticism, and transcripts of speeches.

The lower-left corner of the inaugural issue’s cover bore the inscription “One volume per month, published on the full moon day,” indicating that the newspaper adhered to a monthly publishing schedule, with distribution occurring around the middle of each month. Initially, *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* was circulated exclusively among schools in five counties—Zhongdian, Weixi, Lijiang, Heqing, and Jianchuan. However, its distribution eventually expanded to include the provincial capital, Kunming, as well as other prefectures and counties<sup>[7]</sup>(Wang Zuozhou, 2008: 8).

A detailed examination of the surviving issues reveals a gradual evolution in both layout and typographic design. The inaugural issue featured no header inscriptions on the inner pages, nor did it include page numbers at the footer. Starting with the second issue, the phrase “*Lijiang Prefecture Vernacular Newspaper*, Issue 2 (5, 6, 7)” was prominently placed at the top of the recto pages, while the verso pages featured the titles of the respective articles. The second issue also introduced a sequential page numbering system, comprising a total of ten pages. Notably, the second act of Jing Yu’s adapted theatrical script, *Deng Ying* (《登瀛》), was paginated separately and marked with the annotation “Continuation of the previous theatrical script.” By the fifth issue, the top of the inner pages featured the inscription “*Lijiang Prefecture Vernacular Newspaper*, Issue 5,” with page numbers systematically assigned to each article. The sixth issue followed a similar format, displaying “*Lijiang Prefecture Vernacular Newspaper*, Issue 6” at the top, and implementing a sequential page numbering system across six pages. Notably, the concluding article, *On Power* (《权力说》), was uniquely paginated. The seventh issue adhered to this format, maintaining the serial placement of each article within the issue. These developments reflect a

gradual but consistent refinement in the layout and article organization of *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* throughout its publication.

*Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* was produced using lead-type printing technology and printed on Bai cotton paper, a distinctive material commonly utilized in the Bai ethnic region of Yunnan. The newspaper's dimensions were approximately 23.4 cm × 15.3 cm. A crucial piece of evidence supporting the identification of its printing method appears in the second issue: the lower-left corner of the final page of the article *Supplementary Notes on the Theory of Livelihood*(《附录生计学说》) bears the inscription “Printed by Lijiang Movable Type Printing Office.” This inscription provides conclusive evidence that *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* was printed using movable type technology.

Table 1: Contents of *Lijiang Prefecture Vernacular Newspaper*

Issue	Title	Author	Thematic Category
Issue 1	Mou Yan 牟言	Peng Jizhi, Magistrate of Lijiang Prefecture, from Baling 丽江郡守巴陵彭继志	Preface 序言
	Lijiang Prefecture Vernacular Newspaper 丽江府白话报	Jing Yu 精愚	Editorial 发刊词
	On the Play “Bitter Vietnam” – Two Introductory Notes 《苦越南》——例言二则	Jing Yu 精愚	Theatrical Commentary 戏曲说明
	New Adaptation: “Bitter Vietnam” Act I – Exile 新串《苦越南》第一出《亡命》	Jing Yu 精愚	Local Opera 地方戏曲
	A Plea for the Founding of Female Educational Institutions 劝立女学堂	Jing Yu 精愚	Women’s Education (Local Theme) 女性教育（当地主题）
Issue 2	Appendix, Beiyang Official Gazette Education for Family Occupations 附录《北洋官报》家庭职业的教育	Reprinted from <i>Beiyang Official Gazette</i> 转载《北洋官报》	Women’s Education 女性教育
	Citizens Must Possess Military Qualifications	Unattributed 未标注	Advocacy of Martial Spirit 推崇尚武精神

Issue	Title	Author	Thematic Category
	国民须具军人资格		
	Supplementary Notes on the Theory of Livelihood	Zhao Quanlai from Jianchuan	Local Industrial Development (Local Theme)
	附录生计学说	剑川赵荃来搞	当地实业开发（当地主题）
	Continuation of the Play – Act II: Ascending Yingzhou	Jing Yu (Adaptation)	Local Opera
	戏曲续前稿 第二出《登瀛》	精愚度曲	地方戏曲
	On the Harm of Superstitions and Feng Shui	Jing Yu	Changing Customs and Habits (Local Theme)
	论迷信风水之害	精愚	移风易俗（当地主题）
	Encouraging Young Men of Lijiang Prefecture to Pursue Self-funded Education	Unattributed	Local Educational Development (Local Theme)
	劝丽江府属青年宜自费求学	未标注	地方教育发展（当地主题）
	Jiechao's Poetry Commentary	Unattributed	Poetry Instruction (Local Theme)
Issue 5	睫巢诗话	未标注	诗歌教学（当地主题）
	Speech at the Yunnan Civilization Lecture Assembly	Zhou Mo	Local Patriotic Speech (Local Theme)
	云南文明演说会演说	周谟	地方爱国演讲（当地主题）
	On Rights	Zhao Quan	Enlightenment on Rights
	权利说	赵荃	权利思想启蒙
	On the Importance of Industry and Commerce	Jing Yu	Local Industrial Development (Local Theme)
	劝注重工商业	精愚	当地实业开发（当地主题）
	On the Fundraising Appeal for the Expansion of Jinshan Temple in Lijiang	Peng Jizhi	Local Affairs (Local Theme)
	丽江金山寺开祇募引	彭继志	地方事务（当地主题）
	Advising Officials and Gentry to Earnestly Improve Education	Jing Yu	Development of Local Education (Local Theme)
	Institutes	精愚	地方教育事业发展（当地主题）
Issue 6	劝告官绅切实整顿劝学所		



Issue	Title	Author	Thematic Category
Issue 7	On Taking Risks 说冒险	Jing Yu 精愚	Intellectual Enlightenment 思想启蒙
	Jiechao's Poetry Commentary 睫巢诗话	Unattributed 未标注	Poetry Instruction (Local Theme) 诗歌教学（当地主题）
	Record of the Changchun Iron Chain Bridge 长春铁索桥记	Peng Jizhi 彭继志	Local Transportation (Local Theme) 地方交通（当地主题）
	Extracurricular Notes on Mineralogy 矿物学课外余谈	Instructor Zhou Guannan from the Training Institute 传习所教员周冠南	Local Geological Studies (Local Theme) 地方地质学研究（当地主题）

This table illustrates the wide range of thematic concerns addressed by *Lijiang Prefecture Vernacular Newspaper*, encompassing topics such as social reform, education, industrial development, military advocacy, poetry instruction, local infrastructure, and the dissemination of scientific knowledge. The publication primarily focused on local issues, with particular emphasis on educational enlightenment, economic progress, and the promotion of civic responsibility.

## 2.2 The Localization of *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* in Enlightening the Populace

### 2.2.1 Awakening the People and the Initial Aspiration for Intellectual Enlightenment

In the preface *Bian Yan* (《弁言》) to *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper*, Peng Jizhi forcefully proclaimed: “Wake up, wake up, wake up! This office has something to say, shattering the deep slumber of the masses...”<sup>[8]</sup>(Peng Jizhi, 1907: Mou Yan, Issue 1). He continued, “The elders and youths of our two sub-prefectures, two departments, and one county remain ensnared in an era of darkness, dozing in ignorance. This office seeks to extend its voice and rouse them from their foolish dreams”<sup>[8]</sup>(Peng Jizhi, 1907: Mou Yan, Issue 1). His rhetoric conveys a profound sense of urgency, underscoring his intention to utilize the vernacular newspaper as a vehicle for enlightening the local populace of Lijiang Prefecture, urging them to broaden their awareness and engage with the wider world. Jing Yu echoed this sentiment in the editorial *Lijiang Prefecture Vernacular Newspaper*, writing: “Now, only the old empire of Asia remains, a square piece of meat, neatly laid out. Today, a sliver is taken; tomorrow, another piece is sliced off. Its surrounding territories have been nearly devoured, and even its interior is being eyed and encroached upon. If China continues to dally and procrastinate, we will soon find ourselves equals to the Red and Black peoples”<sup>[9]</sup>(Jing Yu, 1907: *Lijiang Prefecture Vernacular Newspaper*, Issue 1). As a representative vernacular publication from the ethnic minority regions of Southwest China, *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* served as a crucial vehicle for the transmission of intellectual enlightenment, functioning as an essential conduit for progressive thought in the region.

By utilizing colloquial expressions and vivid metaphors, *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* illustrated the colonial aggression of Western powers, emphasizing the principle of survival of the fittest in global politics and seeking to awaken the populace to the existential threats confronting the Chinese nation. Jing Yu (精愚) argued that, in response to the humiliation inflicted by foreign powers, the Qing government must identify the root causes of their ascendancy and prioritize the advancement of national education to promote unity. He asserted that the success of foreign powers was not solely attributable to their naval and military capabilities or superior weaponry, but rather to the widespread education of their citizenry, which instilled a sense of patriotism and collective solidarity: “Every move they make secures an advantage, while ours leads to defeat. The fundamental reason is not their navy, army, or rapid-fire guns, but rather the fact that the majority of their population has received education, cultivating a spirit of love and unity, making them invincible in battle and triumphant in conquest”<sup>[9]</sup> (Jing Yu, 1907: *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper*, Issue 1).

Moreover, *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* advocated for a harmonious integration of civil and military education, promoting martial values and inspiring young men to take pride in defending their homeland. The article *Citizens Must Possess Military Qualifications* (《国民须具军人资格》) urged: “We sincerely advise our young compatriots to learn from Confucius, from the noble Zilu, from the great General Li Guang, from the Spartans of Europe, and from Japan’s Yamato spirit... If we cultivate ourselves into a nation of soldiers, we shall safeguard our homeland’s honor”<sup>[10]</sup> (Citizens Must Possess Military Qualifications, 1907: *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper*, Issue 2).

Thus, *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* was founded with the primary mission of awakening the masses and disseminating enlightenment thought. Through its reports, the newspaper encouraged the local populace to see themselves not merely as residents of Lijiang Prefecture but as integral members of the broader Chinese nation, united with their compatriots in resisting foreign encroachment. In this way, the publication contributed significantly to the development of national identity and the cultivation of civic responsibility.

### **2.2.2 Advocating Industrial Development and Promoting Ethnic Enterprises**

*Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* strongly advocated for the strategic use of local resources and the development of indigenous industries. In the article *The Theory of Livelihood* (《生计学说》) in Issue 2, it was emphasized that improving livelihoods was contingent upon industriousness, alongside the principles of wealth creation and resource management. Drawing on examples of local natural resource distribution, the article outlined practical strategies for economic development: “Jianchuan (Jian) possesses abundant metal resources, but large-scale enterprises require substantial capital investment. Nevertheless, even small-scale entrepreneurs can participate. For instance, iron ore is plentiful in Mishama Pingguan (modern-day Ma Pingguan, Jianchuan), and ironworks can be established... Lijiang produces sulfur, which, through chemical refinement, can be used to smelt metals”<sup>[11]</sup> (Zhao Quan, 1907: *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper*, Issue 2). The article further cautioned against wasteful practices, advocating for the rational utilization of natural resources to foster the collective development of local industries, thereby stimulating economic growth and enhancing living standards.



Jing Yu further expounded on this economic vision in his article *On the Importance of Industry and Commerce* (《劝注重工商业》), noting: “Among the counties under Lijiang Prefecture, Heqing is dominant in commerce, yet aside from a few affluent merchants, most are inconsequential. Jianchuan is renowned for its craftsmanship, yet beyond carpenters and lacquerware artisans, there is little of note. As for Lijiang itself, while an outsider may perceive it as prosperous at first glance, industry remains stagnated, with idle hands aplenty—its economy is far from robust”<sup>[12]</sup>(Jing Yu, 1907: *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper*, Issue 6). He proposed that the development of industry and commerce could effectively address the issue of unemployment, urging Lijiang’s residents to pursue technical education abroad or in other parts of China and return to establish factories: “(Upon their return) they can pool resources to establish manufacturing plants—large factories could employ hundreds, while smaller ones could still accommodate dozens. This approach would eliminate the threat of unemployment. Industry and commerce are the lifeblood of society and must not be neglected”<sup>[12]</sup>(Jing Yu, 1907: *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper*, Issue 6). Promoting industrialization and economic development in Lijiang Prefecture was a central concern of the newspaper. *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* integrated its economic discourse with a clear understanding of the region’s industrial characteristics and resource distribution, offering practical financial strategies tailored to the local context.

### 2.2.3 Promoting Education and Encouraging Self-Funded Study

Education reform and intellectual enlightenment were foundational principles of *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper*. In the editorial *Lijiang Prefecture Vernacular Newspaper*, it was asserted: “Our faculties and limbs are no different from those of foreigners—why, then, are they strong while we remain weak? The answer lies entirely in education”<sup>[9]</sup>(Jing Yu, 1907: *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper*, Issue 1).

The article *On Earnestly Improving Schools* (《切实整顿劝学所》) further emphasized the critical need for educational reform”, stating: “Universal education requires only eight to nine years to cultivate a well-educated populace. China faces an imminent existential crisis, and the only viable remedy is mass education”<sup>[13]</sup>(Jing Yu, 1907: *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper*, Issue 6). It outlined specific measures to improve educational accessibility in Lijiang, urging local authorities to take immediate action: “Officials and gentry must swiftly establish educational councils, delineate school districts, appoint education advocates, and systematically implement educational policies. Officials must not adopt a transient attitude, nor should the gentry treat education as a mere formality”<sup>[13]</sup>(Jing Yu, 1907: *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper*, Issue 6).

The article *Encouraging Young Men of Lijiang Prefecture to Pursue Self-Funded Study* (《劝丽江府属青年宜自费求学》) in Issue 5 addressed the challenges facing local educational institutions and proposed practical solutions. It argued that, akin to the scholars of the imperial examination system who were required to finance their own studies, modern students should also bear responsibility for their tuition fees. The article suggested that wealthier students should self-fund their education, thereby allowing public funds to be redirected toward improving school infrastructure and enhancing the overall quality of education<sup>[14]</sup>(Encouraging Young Men of Lijiang Prefecture to Pursue Self-Funded Study, 1907: *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper*, Issue 6).

### 2.2.4 Advocating for Women’s Education and Self-Reliance

*Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* devoted considerable attention to the status of women, publishing a series of articles that advocated for the enhancement of women's rights and the promotion of female education. The article *A Plea for the Founding of Female Educational Institutions* praised the recent establishment of modern schools in Lijiang Prefecture, emphasizing the crucial need to create and expand educational institutions for women. It highlighted the detrimental effects of feudal ideologies on women's rights, particularly focusing on the historically low status of women within the family, exemplified by the practice of foot-binding, which was critiqued as a violation of women's human dignity. The article also challenged the traditional belief that "a woman's lack of talent is her virtue," calling for women to actively engage in acquiring knowledge and skills that would enable them to manage households and build careers. *A Plea for the Founding of Female Educational Institutions* affirmed women's intellectual capacity and potential: "As long as women acquire knowledge in areas such as the principles of managing clothing, food, shelter, and caring for children... as well as sewing, handicrafts, and other practical skills, their innate dexterity and intelligence will ensure that they are not outpaced by men"<sup>[15]</sup> (Jing Yu, 1907: *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper*, Issue 2, *A Plea for the Founding of Female Educational Institutions*).

*Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* further underscored the importance of female education in the article *A Plea for the Founding of Female Educational Institutions* by reprinting an excerpt from *the Beiyang Official Gazette* titled *Education for Family Occupations* (《家庭职业的教育》). This excerpt delves deeply into the significance of awakening women's intellectual potential. The article opens by stating: "The nature upon which our women rely is rooted in their inability to support themselves," arguing that in order for women to break free from this state of dependency, it is essential not only to provide moral and academic education, but also to cultivate an awareness of vocational skills—skills that are "innately present within women" and can be activated through education. This potential, the article asserts, can be awakened particularly within the family context, where every household task can serve as a platform for instilling such concepts<sup>[16]</sup> (Appendix, *Beiyang Official Gazette Education for Family Occupations*, 1907: *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper*, Issue 2). The article explores four specific areas—fine arts, sewing, weaving, and flower-making—proposing that parents can guide their daughters toward self-sufficiency through family education, while simultaneously highlighting the inherent advantages of women: "Moreover, women possess a sharp attention to detail, excelling in meticulous tasks, and are therefore able to achieve results with half the effort"<sup>[16]</sup> (Appendix, *Beiyang Official Gazette Education for Family Occupations*, 1907: *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper*, Issue 2). The article further emphasizes: "As for families of wealth, even they should not remain idle; making shoes and mending garments—these are tasks that should be undertaken personally rather than outsourced. How can one demand the right to freedom while neglecting such basic duties?"<sup>[16]</sup> (Appendix, *Beiyang Official Gazette Education for Family Occupations*, 1907: *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper*, Issue 2). The author suggests that even the children of affluent families must cultivate self-reliance and self-improvement, as such qualities would enable them to confidently assert their rights. In the ethnic minority regions of the borderlands, where such modern ideas were rarely encountered, these perspectives represented a remarkable shift toward progressive social thought.

### III. The Localization of Reporting and Public Enlightenment in *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper*

#### 3.1 Local Themes of Lijiang

*Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* placed significant emphasis on local themes. Of the 21 articles preserved across the five extant issues held by the Lijiang Old Town Library, 11 are dedicated to topics directly relevant to the local context, accounting for approximately 52% of the total (see Table 1). The publication prioritized issues pertinent to its primary readership, aligning its content with regional concerns. Articles such as *On the Importance of Industry and Commerce* (《劝注重工商业》), *The Theory of Livelihood* (《生计学说》), *Record of the Changchun Iron Chain Bridge* (《长春铁索桥记》), and *Extracurricular Notes on Mineralogy* (《矿物学课外余谈》) provided in-depth analyses of the economic and infrastructural conditions of Lijiang Prefecture, addressing critical matters that directly impacted the local community. For example, *Record of the Changchun Iron Chain Bridge* (《长春铁索桥记》) underscored the strategic importance of railway and bridge construction in addressing the geographical challenges of Yunnan: “The Xiao River in Lijiang County serves as a critical route for outbound travel from Sichuan, marking the boundary with Yongbei...”<sup>[8]</sup> (Peng Jizhi, 1907: *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper*, Issue 7). Likewise, *Extracurricular Notes on Mineralogy* (《矿物学课外余谈》) commenced with a thorough analysis of Lijiang’s geological characteristics: “Nestled amidst the southern mountain ranges, Lijiang’s geological formations are among the most ancient, rich in metallic mineral resources...”<sup>[18]</sup> (Zhou Guannan, 1907: *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper*, Issue 7).

Additionally, *A Plea for the Founding of Female Educational Institutions* focused on the modernization of female education and vocational training in Lijiang, while *Encouraging Young Men of Lijiang Prefecture to Pursue Self-Funded Study* (《劝丽江府属青年宜自费求学》) addressed the financial challenges faced by local educational institutions and students: “Our esteemed magistrate, Lord Peng (Lijiang Prefect Peng Jizhi), has expended considerable resources—between eight to nine thousand taels of silver—on establishing schools, yet financial constraints remain a significant issue”<sup>[14]</sup> (Encouraging Young Men of Lijiang Prefecture to Pursue Self-Funded Study, 1907: *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper*, Issue 5). In response, the article urged local students to assume responsibility for financing their own education whenever possible.

#### 3.2 Narrative and Stylistic Approaches Rooted in Local Culture

In its editorial discourse, *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* frequently incorporated comparative analyses involving prominent historical figures from both China and the West. These references, often drawn from Western Europe, Japan, and Australia, served to broaden the global perspective of its ethnic minority readership in Lijiang, while simultaneously grounding its discussions in local realities.

For instance, in *On Taking Risks* (《说冒险》), the article chronicled the daring expeditions of Western explorers such as Columbus and Magellan, who navigated across Africa, the Americas, and Australia: “These Western men possessed an indomitable courage, and their spirit of adventure has been inherited by their entire nations”<sup>[19]</sup> (Jing Yu, 1907: *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper*, Issue 7). The article then juxtaposed this with the perceived passivity of the Chinese populace: “Alas, we Chinese seem to be born with a natural inclination toward

contentment... Over time, the spirit of progress and adventure has been discarded like the wind”<sup>[19]</sup>(Jing Yu, 1907: *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper*, Issue 7). The article further highlighted the contrast between European explorers, who continued to follow in the footsteps of Magellan and Columbus, and the relatively few Chinese who emulated the pioneering efforts of figures like Zhang Qian (张骞) and Zheng He (郑和). It urged readers to embrace a spirit of exploration and enterprise, invoking the examples of historical Chinese figures as inspiration: “We implore our compatriots—look to the past and learn from the exploits of Zhang Qian and Ban Chao (班超), and more recently, from our own Yunnan-born Zheng He. Let us awaken our collective spirit and achieve great deeds that will reverberate across the world”<sup>[19]</sup>(Jing Yu, 1907: *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper*, Issue 7). By anchoring its arguments in the accomplishments of notable Chinese and local figures, the article sought to foster a sense of adventurous ambition among its readership. Moreover, the use of vernacular expressions such as “we all” (大伙儿) and “these white men” (这几个白人) made the message more relatable and accessible, enhancing its appeal to the ethnic minority audience of Lijiang.

### 3.3 The Use of Localized Expressions, Reduplicative Words, and Colloquialisms

Throughout its articles, *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* frequently employed phrases such as “our Lijiang Prefecture...” to introduce key topics, as exemplified in expressions like “our Lijiang Prefecture’s higher elementary schools...” and “our Lijiang Prefecture’s natural resources...”. Similarly, in discussions of broader provincial issues, the newspaper regularly used constructions like “our Yunnan...” and “we Yunnanese...”. In the editorial Speech at “the Yunnan Civilization Lecture Assembly” (1907), the author consistently referred to himself as “brother” (兄弟), using the term seven times throughout the text. This informal, fraternal mode of address helped establish a sense of camaraderie and solidarity between the newspaper and its readers. Additionally, phrases such as “our Lijiang” and “our Yunnan” reinforced the idea that local educational, industrial, and social issues were of direct relevance to the people of Lijiang Prefecture. By adopting such inclusive and familiar language, the publication sought to cultivate a personal connection with its audience, thereby fostering a shared collective identity and reinforcing a sense of local and regional patriotism. Overall, *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* distinguished itself through its integration of local themes, the use of accessible and engaging narrative techniques, and a language that resonated deeply with its target audience. These strategies not only enhanced the newspaper’s readability and appeal but also reinforced its role as a vehicle for social enlightenment. By fostering a sense of regional and national identity, the publication played a pivotal role in cultivating civic awareness and intellectual awakening among the ethnic minority communities of Lijiang Prefecture.

Table 2: The Use of Reduplicative Words in *Lijiang Prefecture Vernacular Newspaper*(Based on the five existing issues)

Issue	Article Title	Reduplicative Words
Issue 1	Bian Yan (Preface) 弁言	“Wake up, wake up, wake up! This office has something to say, shattering the deep slumber of the masses...” “醒醒醒”本府有一席话，搅破众人清梦.....。

Issue	Article Title	Reduplicative Words
	<i>Lijiang Prefecture Vernacular Newspaper</i> 丽江府白话报	“If China continues to delay, lingering and lingering, procrastinating and procrastinating, it may soon find itself no different from the Red and Black peoples...” 中国若再荏苒荏苒蹉跎蹉跎，恐怕不久也就与那红人黑人为弟兄了.....。
Issue 2	Citizens Must Possess Military Qualifications 国民须具军人资格	“When Europeans first arrived in the Americas, these indigenous people also fought them fiercely, engaging in great, great clashes rather than simply extending their necks and waiting to be slaughtered...” 当欧人初到美洲时候，这些红人，也大大的与他冲突过几次，并不是伸着头颈，挺着脖子，坐待他们宰割.....。
Issue 5	Speech at the Yunnan Civilization Lecture Assembly 云南文明演说会演说	1. “As brothers of Yunnan, we must discuss Yunnan’s dangers, Yunnan’s concerns, and Yunnan’s advantages clearly and systematically, presenting them one by one, two by two, for our compatriots and elders to hear...” 兄弟是云南人，把这云南的危险，云南的关系云南的好处，地扯外人的法子，一一二二说着出来，与我们同胞诸父老子弟听听.....。 2. “Yet our Yunnan people, upon hearing these words, remain highly, highly indifferent...” 偏偏我们云南人听着这话，却又大大意意.....。

**Table 3: Expressions Emphasizing Collective Identity in *Lijiang Prefecture Vernacular Newspaper* (Based on the five existing issues)**

Issue	Article Title	Expression Emphasizing Collective Identity
Issue 1	Bian Yan (Preface) 弁言	“Yet the elders and youths of our two sub-prefectures, two departments, and one county remain in an era of darkness.” 而我两州两厅一县之父老子弟还在黑暗时代。
Issue 2	A Plea for the Founding of Female Educational Institutions 劝立女学堂	“Our Lijiang Prefecture’s higher elementary schools have only begun to take shape in the past two years.” 我们丽江府属的高等小学堂，这两二年来，才整顿得略有头绪。

Issue	Article Title	Expression Emphasizing Collective Identity
Issue 5	On the Harm of Superstitions and Feng Shui 论迷信风水之害	<p>“We in Lijiang do not yet have such bad customs, but in other places, they still exist.”</p> <p>我们丽江，尚无此种恶俗，至于别处，还是有的。</p>
	Speech at the Yunnan Civilization Lecture Assembly 云南文明演说会演说	<p>1. “Today, it is my turn to speak. Although I, your brother, am not a skilled orator, the dire situation in Yunnan leaves no room for hesitation.”</p> <p>开头第一句：今天轮到兄弟演说，兄弟本来不会说话，但是云南到这个地步，也是弱极了。</p> <p>2. “The claim that Britain and France intend to destroy Yunnan is not my fabrication; surely, you have all heard it before...”</p> <p>英法要灭我们云南，这句话不是兄弟捏造的，想来诸君也听过了.....。</p> <p>3. “We Yunnanese do not understand the threats posed by Britain and France...”</p> <p>我们云南人晓不得英法的利害.....。</p> <p>4. “Yet our Yunnan people, upon hearing these words, remain highly, highly indifferent...”</p> <p>偏偏我们云南人听着这话，却又大大意意.....。</p>
Issue 6	On the Importance of Industry and Commerce 劝注重工商业	<p>1. “Among the counties of our Lijiang Prefecture, Heqing is the strongest in commerce...”</p> <p>至于我们丽江府属，为商的要算鹤庆独占优胜.....。</p> <p>2. “Our Lijiang Prefecture is endowed with rich natural resources...”</p> <p>我们丽江府属的天然物产，是极其丰饶.....。</p> <p>3. “Now, our five counties must pursue a balanced development of both industry and commerce...”</p> <p>如今我们五属就是要工商业并重.....。</p>
	On Earnestly Improving Schools 切实整顿劝学所	<p>“Yet in our five counties of Lijiang Prefecture...”</p> <p>无奈我们丽江府五属.....。</p>



Issue	Article Title	Expression Emphasizing Collective Identity
Issue 7	On Taking Risks 说冒险	“Distantly, we must learn from our forebears Zhang Qian and Ban Chao; more recently, we must learn from our Yunnan-born Zheng He...” 远的要学我先民张骞班超，近的要学我云南人郑和.....。

**Table 4: The Use of Local Dialect in *Lijiang Prefecture Vernacular Newspaper*(Based on the five existing issues)**

Issue	Article Title	Local Dialect Expressions
Issue 5	On the Harm of Superstitions and Feng Shui 论迷信风水之害	“Rushing around in a panic, blindly following the geomancer’s horse like fools—such behavior is laughably stupid and pitifully ignorant.” 把哀痛迫切的日子（亲人丧葬），忽忽的尾着地师马屁股后跑来跑去，这等举动，真是呆得可笑，愚得可怜。
	Speech at the Yunnan Civilization Lecture Assembly 云南文明演说会演说	1. (Regarding foreign invasions of China) “Some understand it, some do not, some say there is no need to fear the foreigners, and some even claim it is better to live under foreign rule. Hearing such words, I cannot endure it, cannot bear it, as the saying goes, ‘a drum will not sound unless it is struck...’ （面对列强入侵中国的情况）也有认得的，也有认不得的，也有说不消怕洋人的，也有说做洋人的百姓更好的，这些话兄弟听着，忍也忍不住耐也耐不住了，俗话说鼓不打下响.....。 2. “Everything I say today is completely true, with not a single word of deception...” 兄弟今日所说的话，都是句句是真，并无一句拉谎.....。
Issue 6	On Earnestly Improving Schools 切实整顿劝学所	“With only eight or nine years of effort, a well-educated citizenry can be cultivated...” 只消八九年内，便能造成大多数国民.....。

The textual style of *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* is characterized by a pronounced use of reduplicative expressions and regional dialects, which serve to heighten the emotional resonance and communicative urgency of its message. The repetition of phrases such as “wake up, wake up, wake up” sought to rouse the local population from ignorance, while expressions like “lingering and lingering, procrastinating and procrastinating” underscored China’s inertia in the face of foreign encroachment. Similarly, the use of “highly, highly” was strategically employed to intensify the sense of conflict, while the repetition in “one by one, two by two” was intended to

convey a methodical and systematic approach in presenting detailed explanations.

The newspaper also incorporated a considerable number of colloquial expressions unique to Lijiang, effectively reflecting the linguistic characteristics of the local population. Examples of such expressions include: “呆得可笑” (laughably stupid), “不消怕洋人” (no need to fear foreigners)—where “不消” denotes “not necessary” in the local dialect; “只消八九年” (only requires eight or nine years)—with “只消” meaning “only requires” in the Yunnanese dialect; “忍也忍不住, 耐也耐不住了” (I cannot endure it, cannot bear it)—with “耐不住” being a regional expression for “unable to tolerate”; and “并无一句拉谎” (not a single word of deception)—where “拉谎” refers to “telling a lie” in the Lijiang dialect.

By embedding such vernacular expressions into its discourse, *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* succeeded in delivering its messages with a heightened emotional impact. The integration of these locally familiar linguistic structures not only facilitated a deeper understanding of its content but also reinforced its goal of awakening public consciousness among its readership, thereby enhancing the newspaper’s ability to resonate with the local population.

#### **IV. The Enlightenment Function of Localized Reporting in *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper***

*Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* employed a clear, vivid, and engaging style of language to effectively disseminate reformist ideologies and enlightenment thought. The publication was instrumental in stimulating local consciousness, fostering patriotism, promoting female empowerment and self-reliance, constructing a unified national identity, advocating for industrial development as a means of national salvation, and advancing educational reform in Lijiang Prefecture. As a localized endeavor aimed at intellectual awakening, *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* carefully tailored its narrative to the specific socio-cultural context of the region. It centered on issues directly relevant to Lijiang’s female population, the region’s industrial and commercial development, and the pressing need for educational reforms. Through this strategic focus, the newspaper sought to address the immediate concerns of its readership while contributing to broader national movements of reform and modernization.

A defining characteristic of *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* was its extensive incorporation of local linguistic elements, such as Lijiang-specific expressions, colloquial reduplicative words, and regional slang. These stylistic choices not only enhanced the accessibility and relatability of the newspaper but also positioned it as a powerful ideological tool within the broader movement aimed at safeguarding national survival, catalyzing societal transformation, and advancing progressive reforms in Southwest China.

While *Lijiang Vernacular Newspaper* was relatively modest in scale compared to its counterparts in the more economically advanced coastal regions, it held a vital place within the ethnic minority press of Yunnan. In the culturally and economically underdeveloped southwestern frontier, the newspaper played an essential role in addressing the unique needs of its readership. Today, in Lijiang Prefecture—home to ethnic minorities such as the Naxi people, who continue to preserve their linguistic and cultural heritage—the newspaper remains a valuable historical document, encapsulating early efforts to modernize and enlighten these communities.

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