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A Contemporary Perspective
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Minzhong □□
Nanputuo □□□
qiaologie □logie
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Shengwulian □□□
Shifu □□
Taixu □□
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Wu Zhihui □□□
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Xiamen □□
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Contents

between an imported anarchism and native legacies.[34] With our heightened sense of difference, we would probably want to ask, for example, whether or not Daoism as enunciated in the *Laozi* is entirely consistent with anarchism, what it might gain from an anarchist reading and how some of its reflections would enrich the anarchist definition of goals. This last possibility points to a notion of universality that is flexible and non-exclusive, so long as these ideas point in the same general direction. Whether or not this is preferable to an anarchism that is at the mercy of being different is worth pondering.

Glossary

Bajin □□
Guocui xuebao □□□□
He Zhen □□
Heng bao □□
Huang Wenshan □□□
Huiming xueshe □□□□
Jiang Kanghu □□□
Laodong daxue □□□□
Li Feigan □□□
Li Shizeng □□□
Liu Shipei □□□
Liu Shifu □□□
Liu Shixin □□□
Laozi □□
Makesi zhuyi Zhongguohua □□□□□□□□
Minsheng □□

[34] Anarchist feminism espoused by He Zhen as the core of anarchism nevertheless was viewed "as but one aspect of the anarchist revolution," a position with which contemporary feminism would take issue for not sufficiently stressing the particularities of women's problems. See, Zarrow, *Anarchism and Chinese Political Culture*, 130.

of this called for a theorization of difference within anarchism, because the assimilation of difference to the universal goals of anarchism obviated the need for such a theory.

Difference, in other words, could coexist without friction with universalist goals, so long as the awareness of difference did not demand insistence on being different, which characterizes contemporary attitudes to the question among liberals and many on the left. Within the context of an emergent nationalism, anarchism in its universalism provided a counterpoint. Anarchists did not insist on a *Chinese* anarchism, or an anarchism with Chinese characteristics, which are obsessions of contemporary Chinese nativism, but rather viewed elements from the Chinese past as expressions of universal anarchist principles. They dwelled in universalism, so to speak, and lived the difference, assimilating it to the universals they made their own, which contrasts sharply with the contemporary repudiation of universalism to the point where difference threatens to overwhelm commonality as well, depriving anarchism of its coherence. It is noteworthy that there was nothing inconsistent with difference in the universalist aspiration to integrate mental and manual labor, or industry and agriculture, which were intended to bring education and livelihood into the concrete context of everyday life. Their essentialist and universalist assumptions concerning human nature were nevertheless accompanied by a recognition that it would be an arduous process, by no means oblivious to different needs, to restore society to its original goodness or sociability — it was as much a project as a premise, not something to be dismissed cavalierly for its humanism. Even different universalisms could coexist, as was the case with those who saw no contradiction between anarchism, Daoism or Buddhism.

This is not to say that contemporary criticisms of the past are without justification. The assimilation of the particular to the universal passed over important questions and possible contradictions

Abstract

Anarchism flourished in Chinese radical thought and practice during the first three decades of the twentieth century. While the issues and concepts which anarchists introduced into radical thought would continue to retain their significance, they persisted as trace elements largely assimilated into mainstream radical ideology, increasingly represented by Marxism from the mid 1920s. Anarchist activity (including ideological activity) since then has been isolated, transient and marginal, without a visible or sustained impact on the course of Chinese radicalism. Chinese anarchists' conflicting engagements with anarchism may be of some relevance in sorting out contemporary problems within anarchism, especially over issues of cultural difference. Most of those who identified themselves as anarchists were drawn to anarchism not because of some native predisposition but because of its universal appeal. The indigenization of anarchism indicates an effort by some anarchists to adapt native intellectual legacies to an assortment of imported ideas that already had come to be associated with the term "anarchy" in its European origins. Why and how they did so are important questions with theoretical implications that go beyond anarchism in China, as they bear upon issues of universalism and localism in anarchist theory and practice.

Introduction

Anarchism flourished in Chinese radical thought and practice during the first three decades of the twentieth century. While the issues anarchists introduced into radical thought would continue to retain their significance, they persisted as trace elements assimilated into mainstream radical ideology, increasingly represented by Marxism from the mid 1920s. Anarchist activity (including ideolog-

ical activity) since then has been isolated, transient and marginal, without a visible or sustained impact on the course of Chinese radicalism. It is obvious why this should be the case after 1949 in the People's Republic of China, dominated as it is by a Bolshevik-style Party-State. But it is also safe to observe, I think, that there is little visible sign of explicitly anarchist activity of any significance in peripheral Chinese states free of similar controls or among overseas Chinese populations; certainly nothing to compare with anarchist influence a century earlier or sufficiently consolidated institutionally to allow for any political or theoretical generalizations. The post-revolutionary revival of interest in anarchism remains evanescent.

If it is possible to speak of an anarchist tradition in China, then, it is only in the sense of the existence of a past that, if resurrected in memory, may yet serve as the basis for creating such a tradition or traditions. But that past, nevertheless, exhibited complexities that resonate with issues that have been thrown up by a new global situation, including fundamental issues of commonality and difference in the understanding and practice of anarchism. Chinese anarchists' conflicting engagements with anarchism may be of some relevance in sorting out contemporary problems within anarchism, especially over issues of cultural difference.

The discussion below draws on this early period of anarchism. My approach may be described as historicist, by which I mean in this case not a narrative account of anarchism in China, which is available elsewhere,[1] but rather an analysis of the circumstances within which anarchism gained a hearing and a following, which also gave rise to conflicting interpretations of its meaning and significance. Historicizing anarchism is necessary to counter a tendency, beginning with some Chinese anarchists, to discover native

[1] Arif Dirlik, *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991); Edward Krebs, *Shifu: The Soul of Chinese Anarchism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998); and, Peter Zarrow, *Anarchism and Chinese Political Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

by commonly recognized goals, themselves subject to change with new challenges and the accretion of new constituencies.[32] Commonality suggests neither identity, nor teleological unilinearity. Still, it is the presumption of common goals that renders difference problematical. Without such projects, moreover, there is no reason to expect that the consequential proliferation of difference, however welcome in the abstract, will produce outcomes consistent with anything that resembles what historically has been associated with the term anarchy. On the contrary, difference will end up as a substitute for anarchism. This reification of difference, rather than its recognition in theory and practice, which is hardly novel, may distinguish contemporary claims to a "post-" as distinct from a classical anarchism.

Difference was very much a feature of anarchism in China but there was little or no theorization of what that might mean. This oversight is significant. Where anarchists discovered roots in the past, they assimilated them to common anarchist goals. They added anarchism to other native beliefs, or vice versa, as if a multiplicity of intellectual loyalties could coexist without friction. They used anarchist strategies in the cause of national development and liberation from imperialism. Anarchism also produced offshoots that displayed a recognition of difference. Prominent examples were the Paris anarchist Li Shizeng's proposal of diasporalogy *(qiaologie)* as way to look at human development, and the field of culturology (*wenhuaxue*) established by the anarchist anthropologist Huang Wenshan to analyze culture as a problem.[33] But none

[32] This is, after all, evident in the recruitment of Daoism into the anarchist pantheon, although this has taken the form of the assimilation of Daoism to anarchism which would seem problematic from a contemporary perspective which would recognize Daoist difference and make its values into candidates for the enrichment of anarchism.

[33] For Li, see footnote 8 above. For culturology, see, Huang Wenshan, *Wenhuaxue lunwen ji* [Collected Essays on Culturology] (Guangzhou: Zhongguo wenhua xuehui, 1938).

ertheless, what need there might be for anarchism if the various political offshoots of poststructuralism already do the job!

Poststructuralist anarchism's insistence on difference and locality is important in challenging authoritarian politics of every kind, as is the implicit prioritization of practice over theory in its articulation to different places and constituencies — hyphenated anarchisms, so to speak. Important too is its historicization of anarchism. Indeed, anarchism needs to be grasped historically, with due attention to demands of time and place. Anarchist political activity likewise needs to be attentive to the needs and possibilities of its location. Anarchists are justified in their claims to enhanced relevance at a time when radical political space is defined by the localized contradictions of a globalized capitalism. Working from the bottom up through the creation of liberated spaces is important not because of the advantages it brings to anarchists over their radical rivals, but because it is necessary to meet the needs of those left out of the processes of global capitalism. It is also consistent with an anarchism with anything like a vision that transcends the immediate present, where the construction (or reconstruction) of community is informed not by the community as an end in itself but rather as a global project that offers a plausible alternative to the present. Such a vision is also important in legitimizing anarchism as a social and cultural project. In their preoccupation with de-legitimizing the existing system, not to speak of their self-celebration as the heralds of a new radicalism, anarchists are apt to forget that if they are to go beyond fringe activity, anarchism, too, needs legitimacy in order to speak to broader constituencies. Presently, that means offering alternative visions of a desirable society crucial to human survival. If this sounds too much like social anarchism which in turn is a reminder of a shared past between anarchism and Marxism, it may still be the only way to rescue anarchism from its dissipation into a multitude of constituencies.

Attention to the localized needs of places or of diverse social constituencies does not rule out universal projects that are informed

sources (not to be confused with *resources*) of anarchism in the distant Chinese past.[2] As I will argue below, most of those who identified themselves as anarchists were drawn to it not because of some native predisposition but because of its claim to universalism. Secondly, the indigen- ization of anarchism is not proof of its indigeneity (which rests on a circular argument), but indicates an effort by some anarchists to relate native intellectual legacies to an assortment of imported ideas that already had come to be associated with the term "anarchy" in its European origins. Why and how they did so are important questions with theoretical implications that go beyond anarchism in China, bearing upon issues of universalism and localism in anarchist theory and practice.

Suffice it to say here that readings of anarchism that established an equivalence between anarchist ideas and native legacies were not intended to parochialize or qualify the universalist claims of anarchism. On the contrary, the reinvention of native legacies through anarchist mediation implied not its parochialization, but a commitment to its universalism. On the one hand, it bolstered anarchist claims to universality by appropriating it for a social and cultural context other than that in which it had originated historically, and on the other hand it rescued native ideas from their parochialism by rendering *them* universal in their newfound status as harbingers of Euro-modern anarchism. This is not to say that values drawn from the past were no more than passive objects of manipulation. The discovery of anarchism in native values could not be accomplished without a reading of anarchist theory that resonated with those values. It distinguished anarchists of this persuasion from those who were more explicit, and less compromising, in their commitment to universalism. It also opened up the possibility for a more dialectical conceptualization of the local (or particular)

[2] As in the rendering of Laozi into the origins of anarchism, see, Randall Amster et al., eds., *Contemporary Anarchist Studies: An Introductory Anthology of Anarchy in the Academy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), Introduction, 2.

and the universal which remained unfulfilled because the assimilation of the one to the other precluded attentiveness to questions of difference upon which any dialectical reconceptualization must be conditioned.

The issues raised here bear upon a problem that has been raised by recent debates over post-structuralist anarchism: how to reconcile the universalist assumptions of anarchism with local differences (here "local" is understood in a variety of ways, as I will further discuss below).[3] A critical grasp of the questions raised by this problem calls for a two-way historical analysis: not just to find in the past antecedents for the present, but also to explore the ways in which they differed from the present and what that may tell us both about past antecedents and, perhaps more importantly, about contemporary thinking on this question. For any critical analysis, it is not just the past that needs to be historicized but the present as well.

The post-structuralist insistence on difference, in contrast to the universalist assumptions of classical anarchism with its homogenizing and essentializing presuppositions, is important in counteracting reductionist, one-size-fits-all assumptions that inform universalist claims in theory and political practice. On the other hand, an escape into difference, if unchecked, ultimately abolishes radical claims that rest upon the transformative challenge of universalist goals and visions. The question of articulating difference to the universal demands of political vision and theory (or vice versa) is one that pertains to all radical political philosophies from Marxism and

[3] Gabriel Kuhn, "Anarchism, Postmodernity, and Poststructuralism," in *Contemporary Anarchist Studies,* 18–25. The most elaborate exposition of postructuralist anarchism, or post-anarchism, is that of Todd May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism* (University Parl, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994). See, also, Lewis Call, "Editorial — Post-Anarchism Today," *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies,* no. 1 (2010): 1–15, and, Andrew M. Koch, "Poststructuralism and Epistemological Basis of Anarchism," *The Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 23, no. 3 (September 1993): 327–351.

heir to Enlightenment values that are now discredited, is in disarray. The only universal, if we overlook *its* fractures, is capitalism globalized.

It may be argued that this situation makes memories of an earlier universalism that drove anarchists (and other revolutionaries) more, not less, important. It is difficult to see how claims to a vision promising an alternative mode of human development may be justified without some self-definition as a universal idea.[30] An even more serious result of the fetishistic embrace of difference is to lend legitimation to regimes (in the broadest sense) that are also obstacles to professed radical aspirations. Rather than falling in with the intellectual inclinations that are responses to a situation of uncertain transformation, anarchists may be well advised to uphold the universality of the visions that are their *raison d'etre* if only in order to elucidate what is distinctive about an anarchist vision of society — unless, of course, the desire is to do away with the social as such, and redefine anarchism, as Todd May does, as the pursuit and promotion of difference.[31] We may wonder, nev-

[30] For an important critique, see, Murray Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2001). It has been suggested that postanarchist efforts to distinguish contemporary from classical anarchism is driven partly out of anxiety about the latter's resemblance to and overlap with Marxism (Amster et al., *Contemporary Anarchist Studies,* 3). Mutual suspicion and hostility between these two radical political philosophies has been detrimental to both. These two philosophies are divided by common goals, so to speak, due to the implicit Bolshevism of one and the implicit libertarianism of the other. But they not only share common aspirations to democracy and community, they are complementary in their different emphases on social structure and the state, which are integral aspects of any constitution of power that need to be addressed in radical philosophy worthy of the name. Presently, the libertarian wing of anarchism (poststructuralist or otherwise) would seem to be enjoying ascendancy as it resonates with its contemporary social, ideological, cultural and intellectual context. The challenge to social anarchism likely seems less of a factionalist move within the broader context of the retreat from Marxism in radical politics.

[31] May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism,* 133–7.

> radical politics is moving in, then this would seem to suggest an increasingly anarchistic orientation. Indeed, this is a tendency that is being borne out in many radical movements and forms of resistance today… It would seem that the prevailing form taken by radical politics today is anti-statist, anti-authoritarian and decentralized, and emphasizes direct action rather than representative party politics and lobbying. Is it not evident, furthermore, that there is a massive disengagement of ordinary people from normal political processes, an overwhelming skepticism — especially in the wake of the current economic crisis — about the political elites who supposedly govern in their interests? Is there not, at the same time, an obvious consternation on the part of these elites at this growing distance, signifying a crisis in their symbolic legitimacy? As a defensive or preemptive measure, the state becomes more draconian and predatory, increasingly obsessed with surveillance and control, defining itself through war and security, seeking to authorize itself through a politics of fear and exception.[29]

Ours is not an age when universalism carries much weight despite the continued lip service given to it by those in power. Revolutions that once headed in some general direction into the future are distant memories, remembered as nightmares. Identities are in chaos, as are the population movements that breed them. Nativism and racially-tinged group particularism are on the rise. Political agendas are deeply fractured, except where they are kept in check through authoritarian means. The left (which now seems to include everything from right of center to socialism and anarchism),

[29] Saul Newman, "The Horizon of Anarchy: Anarchism and Contemporary Radical Thought, "*Theory and Event* 13, no. 2 (2010), muse.jhu.edu.

feminism to anarchism. It is especially important for anarchism because of the fundamental place orientation implied by anarchist visions of social organization.

The need to translate imported philosophies into local circumstances need not imply a culturally informed assertion of difference but may rather suggest a qualification of paths to be followed as dictated by a complex of local circumstances in the pursuit of goals that, regardless of their origins, are endowed with universal validity. These circumstances may range from colonialism to differences in local cultural practices that might demand a modification of practices — perhaps to remain true to basic anarchist ideas (for example, democracy) even while compromising others (for example, equality).[4] But this raises the question of how far such a modification can go without rendering both the idea and the practice incoherent. Universalism serves in this instance as a compass that ultimately guides the way to desired social and cultural goals. As in the case of kindred social visions (including Marxism), a universal vision is necessary to anarchism's integrity both as social practice and concept. On the other hand such a vision is sustainable only if it is able to accommodate difference in its content, which is open to newcomers.

What seems in contemporary hindsight as compliance in the ethno-universalist hegemony of ideas of Euro/American origin, appeared to radicals until only a few decades ago as a necessity of overcoming the hegemony of native pasts that held back progress. It was this faith in universalism that justified revolutionary transformation. One difference between now and then intellectually is the retreat from universalism among radicals, which is by no

[4] For recent discussions of anarchism that take a global perspective, see, Steven Hirsch and Lucien van der Walt, eds., *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870–1940: The Parxis of National Liberation, Internationalism, and Social Revolution* (Leiden: EJ Brill, 2010), and, Jason Adams, "Non-Western Anarchisms: The Global Context, "pamphlet (2003) http://raforum.info/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=2@lang=en.

means unwelcome, but which also presents the predicament of making them indistinguishable on issues of culture and cultural difference from what in more revolutionary times had been considered conservative nativism. This is a feature of the condition of "global modernity," or modernity globalized, which is characterized by a fetishization of difference, visible on the global scene in a renewed embrace of native legacies that under the regime of Euro-modernity had been condemned to inevitable extinction.[5]

I. Anarchism in early twentieth century China

For reasons that should be obvious, the question of universality has long been central in radical political movements outside of Europe and North America, which owed their inspiration to radical philosophies that had to be engaged as alien imports. In the case of China, the most evident example of this kind of engagement was the effort within Chinese Communism, beginning with Mao Zedong, "to make Marxism Chinese" (*Makesi zhuyi Zhongguohua),* which carried a much more complicated meaning until recently, when the Party-State decided to define it within the confines of nationalism. Such was also the case with anarchism in the early twentieth century where it took the form of conflicting interpretations between those who viewed anarchism as scientific truth that called for repudiation of the past and those who sought to nativize it by projecting it upon the imperial past. Still others treated it as an add-on, a philosophical orientation that could co-exist with inherited beliefs with which it seemed to have an affinity, primarily Buddhism and Daoism. Anarchist loyalties or beliefs, moreover, did not preclude the pursuit of national goals even for those who formally rejected nationalism.

[5] Arif Dirlik, *Global Modernity: Modernity in the Age of Global Capitalism* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Books, 2006).

tion at risk and revolutionary goals in jeopardy. The revolution was limited not by excessive devotion to theory or obliviousness to it, but by its own conditions of possibility. Where revolutionary projects were concerned, defeat did not necessarily indicate failure just as victory was no sign of success.

It may be pertinent here to explore briefly the relevance of anarchism in China, and its relevance to questions raised by recent developments in anarchism that find expression in terms such as "post-anarchism" or "poststructuralist anarchism," which represent responses to a changed world situation. Without getting bogged down in disagreements over details, it seems fair to say that like the poststructuralists with whom they claim an affinity, post- and poststructuralist anarchists are at one in rejecting Enlightenment legacies of essentialism (as in human nature) and universalism (as in humanism) which characterized classical or traditional anarchism, and in that they promote an anarchism inspired by "poststructuralism's antirepresentationalist principle and the principle of protecting or even promoting difference."[27] Corresponding to this shift is emphasis on contingency, situatedness and diversity, which calls for the prioritization of practice over theory, and tactical over strategic thinking.[28] Proponents perceive in post-anarchism an answer to the most fundamental questions facing contemporary radicals, including Marxists. It is worth quoting a rather lengthy passage from Saul Newman who is credited with the origination of the term "post-anarchism":

> It seems to me that these themes and questions [of contemporary radical politics] — political subjectivity beyond class, political organization beyond the party, and political action beyond the state — relate directly to anarchism. If these are the new directions that

[27] May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism,* 135.

[28] Ibid., chapter 1. See also, David Graeber, "Anarchism, Academia, and the Avant-Garde," in *Contemporary Anarchist Studies*, 103–112.

ure in their inability to live up to the pressures of the search for national wealth and power. It is also the case that the priority Mao gave to practice in revolution strained theory to its limits. There is a strong suggestion in Maoism that revolutionary institutions should be produced not out of abstract theory but revolutionary practice, which called for attentiveness to concrete circumstances, and the contextual deployment of theory as an analytical instrument. The valorization or government support of practice threatened the coherence of the theory and, ironically, of practice itself. But unlike anarchists, Maoists never questioned the importance of theory. Theory was not merely an instrument for uncovering objective conditions. What made it indispensable was its equal, if not greater significance as an instrument for locating practice itself in the uncertain historical terrain of revolution. The tension or even the contradiction between theory and practice is important for analyzing anarchism as much as it is for Marxism.[26] More to the point here, if anarchist tenuousness over theory is viewed as one important source of failure, it is worth noting that the refusal to give up on theory was not sufficient to salvage Maoist revolutionary projects. From a contemporary perspective, it appears that all the radical social and cultural projects that animated the Chinese Revolution, informed by different permutations of theory and practice, would ultimately be assimilated to and limited by a singular revolution devoted to the achievement of national development modeled on advanced capitalist societies. For Marxists and anarchists alike, placing revolutionary social transformation at the service of the state — especially the developmental state — put the transforma-

[26] Unfortunately, most discussions of anarchism that juxtapose it to Marxism are quite oblivious to anything outside of Europe and North America. Todd May, to note one important example, works his way through his argument by sorting out anarchist tendencies in post-Bolshevik Marxism, but has nothing to say about Mao's Marxism or, for that matter, other tricontinental Marxisms which were marked by their own contradictions. See, May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism,* chapter 2, 17–44.

Anarchism appeared as a distinct current within the emergent socialist movement among Chinese intellectuals toward the end of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), in the midst of a burgeoning revolutionary movement inspired by nationalist concerns.[6] Following the Boxer Uprising in 1900, the Qing dynastic government sent students abroad in large numbers as part of its reform movement. In 1906–1907, two anarchist groups appeared among Chinese intellectuals abroad, one in Paris, the other in Tokyo. The New World Society, established in Paris in 1906, began in 1907 to publish a journal, *The New Era* (Xin shiji), which for the next three years would serve as a major source of anarchist theory and information on the anarchist movement in Europe. Its guiding light was Li Shizeng (1881–1954) who had gone to France to study biology, and converted to anarchism through his acquaintance with the family of the French anarchist geographer Elisee Reclus. *The New Era* promoted a revolutionary futuristic anarchism, and was among the first Chinese publications to openly attack native traditions, in particular, Confucianism.

An anarchist society established in Tokyo almost simultaneously, The Society for the Study of Socialism, by contrast promoted an anti-modernist anarchism influenced by Leo Tolstoy, which stressed the affinity between anarchism and philosophical currents in the Chinese past, especially Daoism. Led by the classical scholar Liu Shipei (1884–1919) and his wife, He Zhen, this society published its own journals, *Natural Justice* (Tianyi bao) and *Balance* (Heng bao). Interestingly, these Tokyo publications evinced a more radical stance on contemporary issues than their counterpart in Paris, especially on issues of antiimperialism and feminism. Their publications also promoted Kropotkin's ideas on the combination of agriculture and industry in social organization, and the social and ethical benefits of combining mental and

[6] The summary below of anarchism in China draws on the three works cited above in footnote 1.

manual labor. Anarchism in Tokyo was short-lived. Liu Shipei left Tokyo in 1908, suspected of betraying fellow revolutionaries to the Qing government. The ideas that Tokyo anarchists promoted under his leadership remained on paper, but they were to have a lasting influence in Chinese radicalism.

Following the 1911 revolution that replaced the monarchy with a republic, anarchism grew deeper roots among radicals on the Chinese mainland, who suffered from police interference as did their counterparts elsewhere, but also had greater space for action in the turmoil following the fall of the dynasty. Anarchist activity was visible in the incipient labor movement in South China. Paris anarchists brought their activities home, and were especially influential in educational circles. A new generation of anarchists appeared in South China around the figure of an assassin turned anarchist, Liu Shifu (1884–1915), better known by his adopted name of Shifu. The Cock-Crow Society (Huiming xueshe) that Shifu established in 1912 and its journal, *The People's Voice* (Minsheng), served in the mid 1910s as the most important organs of anarchism in China. Despite some apparent affinity to Buddhism in the group's activities, these affinities do not seem to have had any significant influence on the anarchism they espoused. Shifu promoted the social anarchism of Kropotkin, and while not a particularly original thinker, played an important part in his polemics with the socialist Jiang Kanghu (1883–1954) in clarifying differences between anarchism (pure socialism) and other currents in socialism. It was above all his seriousness of purpose that impressed his followers and others, so that by the 1920s his ideas would achieve the status of an "ism," Shifu'ism. Shifu died in 1915 but his followers carried on the activities of the society he had founded.

A few words are in order here concerning Shifu's debate with other socialists over the nature and lineages of socialism. Shifu's polemics were mainly directed at Jiang Kanghu, but they also targeted the socialism of Sun Yat-sen and the Revolutionary Alliance, predecessor to the Guomindang, which was kept alive by Sun after

ary consciousness. Some anarchists were members of nationalist revolutionary organizations even as they repudiated nationalism. Criticism of the family in principle, another important concern of revolutionaries, did not automatically mean the termination of family ties; Liu Shifu's anarchist community consisted primarily of his siblings. Given the adversities of their social and political context, moreover, anarchists proved to be quite tenacious in their commitments. So long as the revolution remained multi-dimensional in goals and popular in constituency, anarchists made their presence felt both ideologically and in the pursuit of their projects. It was when the revolution turned into a political contest between two centralized and armed organizations (the Guomindang and the Communist Party) that anarchism was squeezed out of the revolution.

Anarchist projects are even more difficult to evaluate in terms of success or failure. There are no markers (such as the conquest of state power) to provide unambiguous criteria for such judgments. It is both a strength and a weakness of anarchism that it is more a practice than an easily definable program with a teleological timeline established by theory. Certainly, the creation of an institution such as the Labor University in Shanghai was a major success. But it was also only a beginning of a long arduous process of social transformation through education. It may also be adjudged a failure in its dependence on the state through personal relationships, which curtailed its autonomy and rendered it into part of the project for state development, vulnerable to conflicts over the direction development should take.

Interestingly, this would be the fate also of similar Maoist attempts to integrate mental and manual labor and industry and agriculture. Mao Zedong was probably as close to anarchism as it was possible for the leader of a Bolshevik communist party to get. In hindsight, the radical economic and social reorganization his policies sought to bring about, much more thoroughly organized and backed by monopoly over state power, were also doomed to fail-

their Marxist counterparts in the newly established (1921) Communist Party; indeed Maoist policies on combining mental and manual labor in education or integrating agriculture and industry would resonate with anarchist revolutionary goals and methods. The differences, however, proved to be more significant in determining the relationship of the two groups. Anarchists rejected the state (at least in theory), and eschewed politics directed at the capture of state power. They insisted on congruence between revolutionary means and ends, and repudiated Bolshevik organization as the harbinger of a new form of despotism. While they were attentive to laborers, their ideal gave even greater significance in social change to questions of youth, women and the family. And while they were by no means immune to the attractions of political theatrics, they viewed the achievement of an anarchist society as a long process in which education would play a fundamental role in restoring the natural human propensity for goodness and sociability that they believed had been distorted by a long history of authoritarianism. Anarchists came closest to realizing their goals in the area of education even if they were compromised by their reliance on the dictatorial Guomindang state and fragile personal relationships which were in the end unable to sustain their educational experiments.

I am not concerned here with the successes or failures of anarchism in China. Anarchism in general does not lend itself to unequivocal judgment on these counts. Individual anarchists may be judged in terms of their consistency, their seriousness and their loyalty to the principles they upheld. It is easy enough to condemn someone like Liu Shipei for his fickleness, if not duplicity, just as it is possible to laud an anarchist like Liu Shifu for his seriousness of purpose, which made him into a model among anarchists. But it is also necessary to recognize the contradictory demands on the anarchists of their anarchist commitments on the one hand and the cultural and ideological conditions of their environment on the other — as with nationalism, for instance, that was at once an object of anarchist criticism and a formative moment of revolution-

1911, as well as the pure socialism claimed by the likes of Taixu, an anarchist Buddhist monk and one-time abbot of the famed Nanputuo temple in Xiamen. While the polemics may be seen as a bid for intellectual leadership over the burgeoning socialist movement (if not sheer frustration at the reigning confusion over socialism which marred all socially-oriented politics), in the process it clarified distinctions between major trends in socialism and their ideological lineages. Not surprisingly, Shifu viewed anarchism (or more precisely, anarcho-communism) as the most comprehensive strategy and highest goal of socialism because it targeted not only social inequalities but also the part played by authority relations — not just by the state but also by the family — in inequality and oppression. Until the May Fourth period and the establishment of the Communist Party, the term "communism" would be associated most closely with anarchism.[7]

By the mid 1910s, educational reform activities had gotten underway in Beijing that would culminate in the New Culture Movement of the late 1910s and early 1920s, and which was later to play a seminal role during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in modern China. Paris anarchists and their associates played an important part in these reforms; they were joined enthusiastically by the younger anarchists who had received their training under Shifu's tutelage. Anarchist ideas on the family, youth and women, the communal experiments that they promoted, and their concern for labor acquired broad currency in the culture of a new generation, even though not many were aware of their anarchist origins within the Chinese context. Among those to come under anarchist influence was Mao Zedong who, like many later Bolsheviks, expressed

[7] For more detailed discussion and references, see, Dirlik, *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution,* 133–145. It is important to emphasize here that anarchists opposed not just the state but all authority relations in society. The term *wuzhengfu* is misleading in this respect as it refers only to the state. Some anarchists preferred the term "no rule," *wuzhi* to *wuzhengfu,* but the latter term won out in the long run.

enthusiasm at this time for European anarchists and their ideas. Anarchists also played a part in the founding of the first Bolshevik groups in China, culminating in the formation of the Communist Party in 1921, which gradually overshadowed the anarchists and marginalized them in Chinese radicalism.[8]

By the early 1920s, anarchism entered a decline from which it would not recover. Following the October Revolution in Russia, anarchists around the world found a formidable competitor on the left; Bolshevik communists who commanded better organizational abilities, were more effective therefore in organizing the growing labor movements, and, not incidentally, received backing from the new Soviet Union. Competition from Bolshevism proved to be debilitating. By 1927, Chinese anarchists, in their anti-Bolshevism, devoted their efforts mainly to fighting Bolshevik ideological and labor activity, some of them in collusion with the most reactionary elements in Chinese politics.

Despite this decline, anarchism would have a lasting influence in the Chinese revolution. While politically irrelevant after the mid 1920s, anarchists continued to be active in the labor movement in South China, where they continued to challenge Communist organization. After 1937, during the Anti-Japanese Resistance War, anarchists in Sichuan, in Western China, agitated for popular mobilization in the conduct of the War. Some Chinese anarchists would also participate in the late 1930s in the Spanish Civil War against the forces of Fascism.[9]

More significant in the long run were cultural and educational activities. In the cultural arena, the most important contributions were those of the novelist Li Feigan (Bajin) (1904–2005), who for

[8] For detailed discussion, see, Arif Dirlik, *The Origins of Chinese Communism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

[9] Nancy Tsou and Len Tsou, *Ganlan guiguande zhaohuan: Canjia Xibanya neizhande Zhongguo ren (1936–1939)* [The Call of the Olive Laurel: Chinese in the Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939] (Taipei: Renjian Publishers, 2001). Its English title on the cover is given as *The Call ofSpain.*

rather social transformation towards a future of which the past would be one element among others, no less modern for its help in bringing modernity under control.

III. Postanarchism/anarchism in China

The marginalization of anarchism in the Chinese revolution after the mid 1920s did not mean that the issues they had introduced into revolutionary thinking were marginalized along with it. The idea of social revolution came to be shared widely among revolutionaries by the 1920s, with reference to restructuring kinship relations, transforming class and gender relations and a cultural revolution to change social habits as well as ways of thinking. The combination of mental and manual labor in education as a means to these social revolutionary ends would emerge in later years as a hallmark of Maoist revolutionary thinking. So would the idea of combining agriculture and industry in development, not just in Maoist years but in the small town development model pursued until the mid 1990s.[25] If these ideas are not exclusively anarchist, it was nevertheless the anarchists who placed them on the revolutionary agenda in the early part of the century. But the origins of these ideas were forgotten as they came to be appropriated for other strategies of revolution.

Anarchist visions in China were derivative of the classical anarchism of the nineteenth century; most importantly, Kropotkinite social anarchism that repudiated capitalism and put social and economic transformation at the center of revolutionary change. Some of Shifu's followers in the 1920s did not sound very different from

[25] For traces of anarchism in Maoism, see Dirlik, *Anarchism in the Chinese* Revolution, 294–300. The township economies that played an important in the take-off of the Chinese economy in the 1990s are discussed in the essays collected in Gregory E. Guldin, ed., *Farewell to Peasant China: Rural Urbanization and Social Change in the Late Twentieth Century* (Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe, 1997).

archism. Liu's followers not only participated in educational activities, some of them in institutions initiated by the Paris anarchists, but also in labor organization activities, especially in Guangzhou, their home town, where Liu's brother, Liu Shixin, played a prominent part. Their labor activities were entangled in local social webs, with participants including members of the Guomindang as well as more traditional secret society associations. These associations may have reinforced their hostility to the Bolshevik Communists who by the mid 1920s were on their way to taking over leadership of the revolutionary movement as well as labor organization. Their activities would in the end play into the hands of the very forces that anarchists themselves sought to overthrow. These activities, the details of which are presently lost from view, point to both the necessity and the predicament of localized politics. The immediate point here is that neither association with Buddhism, nor localized activity, precluded universalist commitments.

Efforts to find some kind of equivalence between anarchism and native Chinese philosophies gradually declined among a newer generation that was nourished by the antitraditionalism of the New Culture Movement of the 1920s. It is tempting, in light of these early efforts, to conclude that there was indeed some resonance between native philosophical legacies and anarchism that facilitated Qing intellectuals' attraction to anarchism. This obviously was not the case for all anarchists, some of whom were attracted to anarchism for exactly the opposite reason: its promise of revolutionary, cultural and social transformation, inspired by imported anarchist ideas. Care needs to be exercised even in the case of those who sought to find some affinity between received philosophies and anarchism. Translation of anarchist ideas into native concepts and practices may have helped familiarize those ideas, but it also required re-reading native texts and endowing them with a new meaning, in effect de-familiarizing native legacies. The re-reading of the past was intended not to point the way towards restoration of the imagined practices of the past but

a long time was the only Chinese anarchist of stature familiar to anarchist circles abroad. Equally interesting is the career of Li Shizeng, one of the foundational figures of anarchism in China, who in the 1930s turned his attention to the study of migrant societies under the rubric of *qiaologie,* which may best be rendered as "diasporol- ogy." Interestingly, despite his close association with the nationalistically-obsessed Guomindang right, Li saw in migrant societies a key to the cosmopolitanism required by a new world.[10]

Paris anarchists used their influence within the Guomindang, where they constituted the right-wing due to their anti-Communism, to establish a Labor University (Laodong daxue) in Shanghai in 1927, which for a period of five years sought to put into practice the anarchist belief in the necessity of combining mental and manual labor in education.[11] This belief, and the Kropotkinite insistence on combining agriculture and industry in social development, had become part of radical culture during the New Culture Movement. Both would reappear after 1949 during efforts to rejuvenate the promises of the revolutionary movement, most importantly during the 20-year period from 1956 to 1976 that is dismissed these days as a period of deviations from socialism due to the misdeeds of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. During the Cultural Revolution, Mao himself would criticize several radical groups involved with the Shanghai Commune of January 1967 and the Shengwulian in Hunan Province for their

[10] Li Shizeng, who himself was quite nomadic, privileged migration much like contemporary postcolonial intellectuals, and proposed a new field of study, "qiaologie" (or *qiaoxue),* which is best rendered as "diasporalogy" (note the bilinguality of the term). See, Li Shizeng, "Qiaoxue fafan" [Introduction to Diasporalogy], in *Li Shizeng xiansheng wenji* [Collection of Mr Li Shizeng's Writings] (Taipei: Zhongguo Guomindang dangshi weiyuan hui, 1980), 291–341. Originally published in New York in *Ziyou shijie* [Free World], 1942.

[11] Ming K. Chan and Arif Dirlik, *Schools into Fields and Factories: Anarchists, the Guomindang, and the Labor University in Shanghai, 1927–1932* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991).

anarchism.[12] The reform leadership after 1978 has applied the term "anarchist" to the Cultural Revolution itself. It is possible, given the past entanglements of Marxist with anarchist communism, that these charges were not merely a derogatory reduction of anarchism to chaos, but recall certain radical tendencies that have been associated in Chinese socialism with anarchism. From this perspective, anarchist contributions to Chinese radicalism would outlast the anarchist movement, and would appear after 1949 as important elements in the conflicts over Bolshevik bureaucratism within the Communist Party itself.

II. Legacies

What are the legacies of anarchism in China from what we might describe as its golden age? I have in mind here not legacies as models left behind by such exemplary individuals as, for example, Liu Shifu, whose rectitude as an anarchist moved the Paris anarchist Wu Zhihui to write that if emulated by others, it would speed up the realization of an anarchist society from 3000 to only 100 years.[13] Rather, I have in mind the varieties of social visions that attracted them, and which they propagated, if not put into practice. And while my immediate concern is with China, 100 years later these legacies still have global relevance. Even as anarchism in China was tinted with local features or sometimes even given a Chinese face, it confirmed the universal claims of contemporary anarchism in its variety.

The articulation of anarchist ideas to local concerns, and the differences in ways of doing so, is one question that may be of far greater interest in our day than in the early twentieth century.

[12] Wu Yiching, "Revolution at the Margins: Social Protest and the Politics of Class in the Chinese Cultural Revolution, 1966–1968," (manuscript under consideration). I am grateful to Professor Wu for sharing it with me.

[13] See his contribution to the special issue on Shifu of *Minzhong* [People's Tocsin], 2.1 (March, 1927).

Among Western anarchists, Liu found in Tolstoy confirmation of the ideals that he had discovered in native sources.[23] Like Tolstoy, he idealized rural life and manual labor and opposed a commercialized economy. He believed that Chinese society had begun to degenerate with the emergence of a money economy during the late Zhou. The money economy had led to the strengthening of despotism. Commercialization had led to the impoverishment of many, prompting government efforts to establish controls over land. Liu almost certainly had Sun Yat- sen's "equalization of land rights" in mind when he described this development as one that enhanced despotic government. His suspicion of the commercial economy also underlay his hostility to recent changes in Chinese society. He emphasized the destruction of the rural economy under pressure from Western commerce and the ensuing crisis this had created for the peasantry. He also expressed a strong dislike for the kind of urbanization represented by Shanghai's colonial modernity as a moral sink where men degenerated into thieves and women into prostitutes.[24] Liu favored the kind of development that sought to overcome such degeneration and felt that he had found it in Kropotkin's suggestion of combining agriculture and industry, thus preventing the alienation of rural from urban life as happened in modern society.

Anarchism was also entangled in its reception in the late Qing in a revival of interest in Buddhism. Not only were there Buddhist monks among Chinese anarchists, but the Guangdong anarchists led by Shifu displayed more than a casual interest in Buddhism. Yet their interest did not seem to interfere with the universalist goals of anarchism. It is also possible that Buddhism confirmed their an-

[23] Shenshu, "Dushu zaji" [Random Notes on Books Read], *Tianyi bao,* nos. 11–12 (November 30, 1907): 416–7.

[24] It is noteworthy that Liu was also among the first critics of imperialism, and an advocate of Asia for Asians. See, Shenshu, "Yazhou xianshi lun" [The Contemporary Trend in Asia], *Tianyi bao* [Natural Justice], nos. 11–12 (November 30, 1907): 345–368

the Chinese past, which represented more of an intellectual than a popular legacy.

Liu's approach to anarchism sought to establish analogies between modern anarchism and currents of native thought. Indeed, he believed that Chinese thought came closer to upholding anarchist social ideals than its counterparts elsewhere. In a speech at the inaugural meeting of the Society for the Study of Socialism in Tokyo in 1907, Liu stated that though the imperial political system had been despotic in appearance, the power of the government had been remote from the lives of the people, who thus had considerable freedom from politics. Furthermore, advocacy of laissez-faire government by Confucianism and Daoism had helped minimize government intervention in society. As a result, he concluded, China was more likely than other societies to achieve anarchism. In fact, he implied that if only the Chinese people could be purged of their habits of obedience (he did not say where those came from), an anarchist society could be achieved in China in the very near future.[21] The fifth issue of *Natural Justice* carried a picture of Laozi as the father of anarchism in China. In formulating his utopian scheme, Liu acknowledged his debt to Xu Xing, an agrarian utopian of the third century BC, who had advocated rural life as the ideal life and promoted the virtues of manual labor by all without distinction, including the emperor. Liu noted that whereas he himself advocated cooperation, Xu had promoted self-sufficiency, but otherwise he saw no significant difference between Xu's ideas and his own.[22]

[21] See the report, "Shehui zhuyi jiangxihui diyici kaihui jishi" [Record ofthe Inaugural Meeting ofthe Society for the Study of Socialism], *Xin Shiji* (New Era), nos. 22, 25, 26. This in no. 22 (November 16, 1907): 4.

[22] Shenshu (Liu Shipei), "Renlei junli shuo" [On the Equal Ability of Human Beings], *Tianyi bao* [Natural Justice], no. 3 (July 10, 1907): 24–36

Political and ideological differences among Chinese anarchists were visible in the different readings they placed on anarchism and, by implication, on the question of its relationship to Chinese cultural legacies, which were themselves in the process of radical re-evaluation in the early part of the twentieth century. The Paris anarchists were involved in the anti-monarchical activities of the emergent Guomindang, but displayed little patience for native philosophical legacies. It is noteworthy, however, that their anarchism did not preclude the possibility of participating in national and nationalist struggles. Resolutely modernist, they fetishized science and called for a cultural revolution (they were the first among Chinese revolutionaries to call for a "Confucius Revolution").[14]

The strategy of revolution which the Paris anarchists favored was universal education to remake the Chinese population. This was also the strategy they favored in later years as powerful members of the Guomindang. While unquestioningly universalist, however, their activities were very much in tune with a pervasive feeling in Chinese intellectual and political circles concerning the necessity of scientific education for the task of nation building. They were instrumental in establishing the work-study programs that enabled Chinese students to acquire an education in Europe, primarily France. In return, they facilitated the recruitment of Chinese laborers to fill a labor shortage occasioned by World War I.[15] In ensuing years, they were also responsible for the establishment of the Labor University in Shanghai, which offered a curriculum that combined classroom education with industrial and agri-

[14] See, Jue Sheng, "PaiKong zhengyan" [Soliciting the Overthrow of Confucius], *Xin shiji* [New Era], no. 52 (June 10, 1908): 4, and, Zhen (Li Shizeng), "Sangang geming" [Three Bonds Revolution], *Xin shiji*, no. 11 (August 31, 1907): 2.

[15] Many important Chinese communists (Marxist) were graduates of this program. See, Marilyn A. Levine, *The Found Generation: Chinese Communists in Europe during the Twenties* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1993).

cultural work (a domestic parallel to the work-study program of Europe). The goal of the university was not only to provide an education for needy students, but also to help overcome through education the division between mental and manual labor which anarchists believed to be a fundamental source of inequality, hierarchy and structures of authority. Though short-lived (opponents in the liberal educational establishment took advantage of the destruction of the campus by the Japanese attack on Shanghai in 1932 to shut it down), it not only resonated with similar experiments around the world at the time, it possibly provided inspiration for a variety of labor universities to be established by the Communist Party in later years.[16]

More complicated, and of even greater interest from our contemporary perspective, was the attitude toward native legacies of the Tokyo anarchists who, in contrast to their counterparts in Paris, promoted an anti-modernist anarchism. Liu Shipei had made his fame as a classical scholar before he became an anarchist, and was a leading light of the national essence group that advocated a reformulation of received culture in the reconstruction of China as a nation. Seemingly conservative, the search for a national essence also had subversive implications in its reconstruction of the past because it sought to formulate out of past legacies a national essence that could be used to challenge the contemporary status quo. Their interpretations of the Chinese past drew heavily on the inspiration of contemporary theories of progress and social evolution, social (especially gender) egalitarianism and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's ideas of a social contract.[17] Liu Shipei did not hesitate to find analogies between the Chinese and European pasts, as in his comparisons between the cultural efflorescence of the late Zhou dynasty (roughly sixth-third centuries BC) and the European Renaissance.[18] Indeed, national essence writers called for a renaissance in ancient values before they could be rendered suitable to the contemporary age. It is possible that anarchism offered to Liu an intellectual means to such a renaissance. One important aspect of such a renaissance was in gender relations. With the guidance of his wife He Zhen, *Tianyi bao* (Natural Justice), the journal of the Tokyo anarchists, emerged as one of the first journals addressing the question of women's equality.[19]

The national essence stance on the question of intellectuals may also be important in assessing Liu's anarchism. National essence writers discovered the sources of Chinese culture in the late Zhou dynasty (circa 1100–206 BC), when the unprecedented freedom enjoyed by intellectuals had led to the cultural creativity which helped to form a national essence. Although this freedom had been curtailed over the ensuing two millennia of imperial rule, it had never been extinguished. What was needed was a new renaissance to rejuvenate it. Intellectuals in this view held a special place in society as the carriers of a national essence, and their freedom from political control was key to their ability to carry out this task.[20] For someone like Liu, the anarchist persuasion brought about a greater consciousness of social organization in general, but the views on the role of intellectuals in society that he brought to his anarchism may have been responsible for his ability to discover anarchism in

[16] Ming K. Chan and Arif Dirlik, *Schools into Fields and Factories,* chapter 9, 269–276.

[17] Zheng Shiqu, *Wan Qing Guocui pai wenhua sixiang yanjiu* [The National Essence Group of Late Qing: Study of Culture and Thought] (Beijing: Beijing Shifan daxue chubanshe, 1997), chapters 3 and 6.

[18] For a discussion, see, Hon Tze-ki, "Revolution as Restoration: The Meanings of 'National Essence' and 'National Learning' in the *Guocui xuebao* (National Essence Journal), 1905–1911" (paper presented at The Writing of History in 20th Century East Asia: Between Linear Time and the Reproduction of National Consciousness Leiden, Netherlands, June 4–7, 2007). I am grateful to Professor Hon for sharing this paper with me. See, also, Arif Dirlik, "Guoxue/National Learning in the Age of Global Modernity," *China Perspectives,* no. 1 (2011): 4–13.

[19] Peter Zarrow, *Anarchism and Chinese Political Culture,* chapter 6, and, Peter Zarrow, "HeZhen and Anarcho-Feminism in China," *Journal of Asian Studies* 47, no. 4 (1988): 796–813.

[20] Peter Zarrow, *Anarchism in Chinese Political Culture,* chap. 6, 130–155