

SUMMARY

This study aims at a comprehensive overview concerning the role anarchism played in early 20th century China. Up to now scholarship has tended to focus upon the political aspects, especially the rivalry between the anarchists and the CCP. This study approaches Chinese anarchism from the perspective of a cultural movement which implies a broad discussion of various aspects connected with the genesis as well as with the development of the Chinese anarchist movement. Not only the problem of possible relations with elements of the Chinese cultural heritage and the representations of this issue in the early 20th century discourse on anarchism will be touched upon, but different ways of Japanese influence and Western, namely French, backgrounds as well as „side aspects“ like language questions (especially Esperanto and the attempts to reform the Chinese language), educational and also communal experiments, connected with the so-called new life-styles, are included in the discussion.

The sources used are mainly original publications of the time, mostly Chinese (and Japanese) periodicals collected in Western Europe, Japan, Taiwan and the PRC. These periodicals will be treated in detail, giving due share to the individual authors who, in any case, did not consider their publications as „organs“ of an ideological organization, but as open forums of discussion. In this way it will be possible to glean the plurality and complexity present in Chinese anarchism. Even though pseudonyms are often used, it is possible to identify quite a few of them to give a clearer picture of the individuals involved, their intellectual developments, cherished ideals vs. problems encountered, and their sometimes pragmatical choices. The view on the history of Chinese anarchism that emerges will hopefully be less anonymous and stereotyped, not exclusively presenting ideological debates as defining „the anarchists“, but related cultural aspects, too. Furthermore, international developments have to be taken into account as well.

The historical period covered in this study is basically from the beginning of the 20th century to the 1930ies. As the general outline of the Chinese anarchist movement will make evident, the Chinese (and Japanese) not only considered the anarcho-communism of Peter Kropotkin as the „orthodoxy“, but the ideas of Kropotkin found a broad resonance in intellectual circles well outside declared anarchist groups, too. Therefore special emphasis will be given to Kropotkin's work and its influence in China. Because of the close historical relationship between Chinese and Japanese anarchism (a fact that is often ignored or only mentioned in passing, but not really spelled out) as well as with regard to the general pervasive influence of Japanese discussions and translations of Western models on the Chinese ones in the period considered, not only will there be often references to the Japanese case, but a special outline of the Japanese response to Kropotkin will be included in this study. This may serve as a useful comparison and background to the Chinese reception of Kropotkin's works and ideas.

A further goal of this study is to take Chinese anarchism beyond the usual sino-centered approach which treats it as a part of Chinese modern history only, considering it also in the more general context of world anarchism, of which it was part, too, and very consciously so.

