A Global Conceptual History of Asia, 1860–1940

Edited by

Hagen Schulz-Forberg

Number 33
2 DIFFERING TRANSLATIONS, CONTESTED MEANINGS: A MOTOR FOR THE 1911 REVOLUTION IN CHINA?

Hailong Tian

When the Western concept of the 'social' was first introduced to China by way of Japan in about 1898, the Japanese words 社会 (pronounced sabōkō) were directly adopted by Chinese intellectuals and the concept of the social was translated as 社会 (pronounced as shèhuì) in the Chinese language. However, the indigenous Chinese characters 社会 did not have the same connotation as the Japanese words and as a result multiple meanings exist for the Chinese characters 社会 (shèhuì). To complicate matters further, some intellectuals translated the concept of the social as 社 (sō), a similar situation occurred with the concept of the economic, which was translated both as 經済 (jīngjì), adopting the Japanese words 經済 (kōken), and as 生計 (shēngjì), adopting the traditional Chinese words. Although shèhuì and jīngjì outlined the early alternative translations and became standard translations in Chinese, the early alternative translations, together with the differing connotations of each translation, indicate that the concepts of the social and the economic were interpreted differently by intellectuals with different educational backgrounds. This chapter applies this perspective to a particular context over concepts of the social and the economic between two groups of intellectuals, namely the debate of 1905–7 between a group of intellectuals represented by Sun Yat-sen and another by Liang Qichao. The chapter therefore investigates, first, how these two historical figures conceptualized the social and the economic; second, the promotive that determined their conceptualizations; and, third, in what way the conceptualizations served as a driving force for the 1911 Revolution.

Intellectuals at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

In order to achieve a better understanding of the debate over the concepts of the social and the economic, it is important to examine the situation of the Chinese intellectuals at the turn of the twentieth century. This is not only because they were
involved in the debate, but because they themselves introduced the new concepts. Funded and supported by the Qing dynasty, many Chinese students travelled overseas to study in this period, mostly to Japan. It is estimated that in 1904 there were 20,000 overseas Chinese students in Japan, most of whom were government-funded. They learned and then introduced Western ideas, either directly through the adoption of Japanese words, or by translation from Western languages. Among those new ideas were the concepts of the social and the economic.

It should be noted that the process by which Chinese intellectuals grew into a prominent force in Chinese modern history was full of twists and turns. Most Chinese intellectuals came from the great feudal families in decline, and they began to emerge as a class after the Sino-Japanese War of 1894. With the failure of the Wuchang reforms only four years later in 1898, these intellectuals experienced a setback, with some retreating and turning back. This twist in their fortunes, however, did not stop their rise to influence, with some continuing to introduce Western ideas and to fight against feudalism. These 'advanced' intellectuals eventually turned their patriotic spirit to revolutionary action, leaving behind those who continued to believe in feudalism (who were known as reformists). In our case of the debate, we have as revolutionaries Sun Yat-sen and his colleagues (for example, Hu Hanmin, Wang Jingwei, Chen Tianhua, Zhang Tiyu, Liao Zhongkai, Peng Zhen and Song Jiachen) on the one side, and Liang Qichao and his colleagues (such as Kang Youwei and Xu Xizhi) as reformists on the other.

Sun Yat-sen and his Three Principles of the People

Sun Yat-sen was an important historical figure both in terms of thought and action. His experience in the West, whether in exile or raising money for his party, was a significant source of his revolutionary thoughts. At first, Sun aligned himself with the reformists Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, who sought to transform China into a Western-style constitutional monarchy. In 1894, Sun wrote a long letter to Li Hongzhang, the governor-general of Zhejiang province and a reformer in the court, with suggestions on how to strengthen China, but he was rebuffed. From then on, Sun began to call for the abolition of the monarchy and the establishment of a republic.

Sun travelled to Hawaii in October 1894 and founded the Xinhai Hui (Revive China Society) there as the platform for his future revolutionary activities, with the intention of unveiling the objective of a prosperous China. Members were drawn mainly from Cantoneser expatriates. The Society's declared aim was 'expelling the Manchu people, reviving China (Zhonghua), and building a united government.' In 1895 a coup plotted by Sun failed and some of his supporters at home were executed. Sun spent the next sixteen years as an exile in Europe, the United States, Canada and Japan, a period in which he experi-

enced at least one assassination attempt. During his time in London, Sun could see both the prosperity and the many social problems brought about by capitalist development, including the contrasting extremes of rich and poor and of employers and employees. During this same year Sun became acquainted with socialist thinking, which was a great influence on his own subsequently developed principle of minsheng (one of his three Principles).

His American experience also had a lasting influence. Sun attached particular importance to the ideas of Alexander Hamilton and Abraham Lincoln. It is widely agreed that the formulation of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, 'government of the people, by the people, for the people,' was the inspiration for Sun's 'Three Principles of the People,' eventually expressed as 'expelling the Manchu people, reviving Zhonghua (China), building a united government, and redistributing land ownership.' As his political philosophy, the 'Three Principles of the People' were proclaimed in the preface of the first issue of Min Bao, the party newspaper of Tungmeng Hui (the forerunner of the Kuomintang), founded by Sun in 1905 in Japan. There he advocated using his Principles to establish ultimate peace, freedom and equality in the country, being determined to devote his lifelong efforts until death to the cause of a strong and prosperous China and the well-being of its people.

Sun's 'Three Principles of the People' also known as the 'Three People's Principles' or collectively the 'Sun-mien Doctrine,' constitute his political philosophy. The Principles include the principle of min (minzu, the principle of minorities and the principle of minsheng). We give a brief account of the Principles in the following as we believe it indispensable to the discussion of Sun's conceptualisation of the social and the economic.

The principle of min (民族主义, 'the people's relation/connection' or 'government of the people') refers in general to nationalism. By this, Sun meant freedom from imperialist domination. To achieve this he believed that China must develop a 'national nationalism' (zhonghua minzu), as opposed to an 'ethnic nationalism,' as to unite all the different ethnicities of China, mainly composed of the five major groups of Han, Mongols, Tibetans, Manchus and the Mins, together symbolised by the five-colour flag of the First Republic (1911–28). This sense of nationalism differs from the idea of 'ultranationalism,' which is also translated as 'nationalism' in the Chinese language.

The principle of minzhu (民权主义, 'the people's power' or 'government by the people') refers to democracy. To Sun, this principle represented a Western-style constitutional government. He divided political life in his ideal vision of China into two sets of 'powers': the power of politics and the power of government. The former, also known as minshuizhuan (民权), is the power of the people to express their political wishes, similar to those vested in the citizenry or the parliamentarians in other countries and is represented by the National Assem-
There are four of these powers: election (選舉), recall (罷免), initiative (提案) and referendum (公投). These may be expressed as 'civil rights'. The power of governance, also known as zhizhi (自治), is the power of administration. Here he expounded the European-American constitutional theory of a three-branch government and a system of checks and balances by incorporating traditional Chinese administrative traditions to create a government of five branches, each of which is called a 'bureau' (院) or 'court', such as the Legislative Yuan, the Executive Yuan, the Judicial Yuan, the Central Yuan and the Examination Yuan.

The principle of wenshehui (文社會, the people's welfare or livelihood or 'government for the people') refers to what is sometimes translated as socialism. The concept can be understood as social welfare or as populism (e.g. for the people, or to the pleasure of the people) governmental measures. Sun understood it to mean an industrial economy and equality of land allotment for Chinese peasant farmers. He divided livelihood into four areas: food, clothing, housing and transportation — and planned out how an ideal (Chinese) government could take care of these for its people.

Sun's pioneering thoughts did not merely exist in discourse form, but were put into action. On 10 October 1911, a military uprising at Wuchang began a process that ended the more than 2,000 years of imperial rule in China. Although not personally involved in the Revolution (at that moment Sun was still in exile and Huang Xing was in charge), Sun immediately returned to China from the United States when he learned from press reports of the successful rebellion against the Qing empire. Later, on 29 December 1911, a meeting of representatives from provinces in Nanjing set 1 January 1912 as the first day of the first year of the Republic, and at that meeting Sun was elected the provisional President of the Republic of China; thus he was frequently referred to as Father of the Nation.

Liang Qichao and his Reformist Ideas

Chinese intellectuals played an important role in history which is often metaphorically described as that of bridge and pioneer. They combined their patriotic traditions with Western-democratic thought, arousing the mass consciousness of revolution on the one hand and becoming revolutionaries themselves on the other. This, however, does not mean that all the intellectuals turned out to be revolutionaries, or at least to be engaged as revolutionaries. We have mentioned the twists and turns in the ascendency of Chinese intellectuals, and here we need to point out that there were intellectuals who continued to believe in feudalism, hoping that the Qing dynasty would undergo reform by itself. Among these reformers were Kang Youwei and his student, Liang Qichao.

Initially, Liang Qichao was unhappy with the governance of the Qing government and wanted to change the status quo in China. Together with Kang Youwei, he organized reforms, putting their ideas on paper and sending them to Emperor Guangxu in 1898. This movement is known as the Wuma (戊戌) or Hundred Days Reform. The proposal asserted that China was in need of more than 'self-strengthening' and called for many institutional and ideological changes such as getting rid of corruption and remodelling the exam system. However, opposed by Empress Cixi, the leader of the political conservative party who later took over the government as regent, this proposal soon ignited a frenzy of disagreement, and Liang was exiled to Japan.

Liang's exile in Japan, however, allowed him to speak freely and exercise his intellectual autonomy. In Japan he continued to actively advocate democratic notions and reforms, using his writings to raise support from overseas Chinese and foreign governments. He edited two prominent newspapers, Zhengzheng Gaozhao and Shuming Riba. He also published his moral and political ideals in Qing Yi Liao and Xinmin Gongzao. He continued to emphasize the importance of individualism, and to support the concept of a constitutional monarchy as opposed to the radical republicanism supported by Zhang Pinghai. In 1899, Liang travelled to Canada, where he met, among others, Sun Yat-sen, then to Honolulu in Hawaii. During the Boxer Rebellion, Liang was back in Canada, where he formed the 'Save the Empress Society' (保皇會). This organization later became the Constitutionalist Party, advocating constitutional monarchy.

As Liang advocated reform, he eventually came to occupy an opposing position to Sun Yat-sen, who advocated revolution.

As the turn of the nineteenth century to the twentieth century in short, Chinese intellectuals were searching for ways to build a strong China. They had gained overseas experience and had learned Western thought. They wanted to import these Western ideas into China. In addition, they involved themselves in political action by way of spreading their ideas. But disagreement occurred frequently, and one such case was how to understand the status quo in China. This was closely related with, and to some extent determined, the intellectuals' conceptualizations of the social and the economic, which we will discuss shortly.

The Western concepts of the social and the economic are commonly expressed in the Chinese language as shehui (社會) and jingji (經濟); but this was not the case when they were first translated into Chinese. The accepted translations emerged from a process that was not free from struggle, in which translators with different educational backgrounds and differing understandings of the concepts became entrenched in debate and struggled with competing interpretations. We examine this process in more detail in what follows, and hope to find some explanations.
The Concept of the Social in Translation

In the ancient Chinese language, the characters of the word shehui (社会) were used separately with diverse but related meanings: 社 (she) means a place, while 社 (sui) means a meeting. Later, around the time of the Tang dynasty, the two characters were used together and acquired a joint meaning: "gathering of village people" or "organization of people of common interest." When the characters 社会 were borrowed and imported into the Japanese language in about 1874, they had roughly the same meaning, namely, a village people's gathering. Whether this meaning subsequently changed or not we do not know, but we can assume that when used as translations of the Western concept of the social, shehui (社会) carried a meaning that was different from its original one and thus very different from its meaning in ancient Chinese. In other words, when shehui (社会) returned to the Chinese language towards the end of the nineteenth century, the word represented the new concept of the social, a concept the Japanese had learned from the West.

Then what meaning did the translated or "borrowed" characters 社会 (shehui) carry? As concepts are tied to words on the one hand but refer to facts on the other, we can understand that shehui as a translation represented the new, Western concept of the social, a concept that referred to facts that were unique to Western society. In this sense, understanding the meaning of the translated shehui meant understanding facts in the West or, more exactly, the facts that the translators knew were true in the West.

A subsequent question then would be: who were the translators? In other words, who were the persons who used the returned Chinese words to express their understanding of the Western situation? Finding an answer to this question would be helpful because the historical and educational background of the translators would give us a key to the whole story of why they used this rather than another word to translate the concept of the social.

Let us first examine the case in which the concept of the social was translated as shehui. It has already been noticed that shehui was a direct translation of the Japanese shakai. Here are two specific examples. In 1896, an article was published in the newspaper Current Affairs (時事報) under the title "On shehui." The article was translated from Japanese, and the Japanese words were directly taken into the Chinese language to represent the concept of the social. This case is supported by Kang Youwei's translation of the social as shehui. Despite not knowing Japanese, Kang used the term shehui in his writings and translations. For example, in his "Memorial to the Qing Emperor" of January 1898, Kang proposed twelve planks for his plan of reform, the eleventh being the "bureau of society" (社會局). This might explain some extent his direct adoption of the Japanese word shakai as the translation of the social.

In this specific case we know the identity of the translator. Here, Kang Youwei directly adopts the Japanese word for the social. But shehui was not the only Chinese term used for the social around the turn of the twentieth century. Another translation was, for example, quan (群), used by Yan Fu, a famous scholar in Chinese history who is considered the father of quan (群) (群). An example of this was Yan Fu's translation of Herbert Spencer's work, A Study of Sociology. In 1903, Yan Fu translated the book title as quan xue ji yan (群學揭要). Yan Fu did not use the then popular translation of shehui in his translation of the social, but used the Chinese word quan for this concept. To explain this, he quoted from the fourth century sage Xie Qi (謝諤子): "What makes people different from animals is that they can form a society (人之所以異於禽獸者，以其能群也)." It seems that Yan Fu's translation being the concept of the social closer to the indigenous meaning of the original Chinese characters shehui (社會), that is, a gathering of people. This argument may remain a question of debate, but what is clear for the moment is that Yan Fu's adoption of quan rather than shehui as his translation of sociology was rooted in his profound knowledge of Chinese culture.

An obvious difference between the two translations was that shehui was the result of the direct adoption of the Japanese words, while quan was used when the concept of the social was translated from Western languages. The two specific cases of translating the social indicate that a translator's background interpretation of the concepts concerned has much to do with their translations. In Yan Fu's case, traditional Chinese words were used for translating the Western concept because, though known as a specialist in Western learning, he often worked located within Chinese traditional culture. His deep-rooted belief in this tradition, as shown in his quan xue ji yan: "While using the Japanese word for the concept of social, Kang Youwei added his own interpretations to the translated word shehui. These varied, some being closer to the Western concept of social (e.g., referring to the institutional form of human common life) and some closer to the indigenous meaning (e.g., forming an association, or mass organization). Though using the words shehui for the Western concept of social, Kang Youwei in fact incorporated his understanding of the new concept into the word shehui.

The Concept of the Economic in Translation

As with the concept of the social, the concept of the economic has a complex translation history. The characters forming the Chinese word jingji (經濟), currently the accepted translation of the economic, are etymologically more closely
related to politics than economy in the Chinese language. For example, in the Chinese expressions jingliang jigu (经理纲) and jingdi jingji (经度计), jing and ji mean to govern the country. From the Song dynasty onwards, the two characters jingji were used together and made their way into the titles of many books, none of which were used as reference works by candidates for the imperial examinations under the Ming dynasty, and thus jingji referred to the knowledge required by prospective officials. Under the Qing dynasty, jingji referred more explicitly to an engagement with politics. What is meant by the Western concepts of the economic, however, is traditionally expressed by Chinese words like shengxi (生产), huoshu (商品), lian (理财), and jigu (经济).\

A range of different translations were used to translate the concept of the economic. In the context of its introduction from Japan, the Japanese term Eden (経済) was adopted directly. Other translations included jigu (经济), shengxi (生产), and yuanshi (原视), which drew on the Chinese language. For example, in 1880 the 1862 edition of H. T. Fryer's Manual of Political Economy was translated under the title of jigu, or, marking the beginning of Chinese translations of the Western concept of the economic. When in 1902 Liang Qichao published A Short History of the Evolution of Shengxi Zuo, a book devoted to introducing the Western history of economic thought, he used the expression hao shengxi. In 1901, when Pan Zuo translated Adam Smith's The Wealth of Nations, he rendered the Chinese title as yuanshi (the origin of wealth).\

It can thus be seen that the concept of the economic was translated in two different ways: one whereby the Japanese words were directly adopted for the translation, and the other whereby traditional Chinese words were chosen for the then new concepts. This situation parallels the translation of the social, an added similarity being that the two approaches led much to do with the translator's understanding of the concepts.

Translations' Interpretations and Translations

In the above discussion of translations of the social and the economic, we can see a nexus of meanings in which the Western new and the indigenous old became mingled together. Whether through direct adoption of the Japanese words shengxi (生產) and lian (理财) or by the use of the indigenous Chinese words yuan (源) and shengxi (生產), the Western concepts of the social and the economic were incorporated into the translators' own understandings and interpretations. These understandings, we may argue tentatively, were constrained by the translators' personal experience, for instance their educational background or the source materials that were available to them. For example, when the concepts were translated from Western (say, English) writings rather than from Japanese writings, traditional Chinese expressions rather than Japanese words were adopted. In order to connect this argument to the fact that shengxi evolved par and that jingji evolved other translations, it is safe to deduce that the reason for the success of these terms may be the Japanese influence on China in that period. As we have already mentioned, many Chinese intellectuals were educated in Japan at the end of the nineteenth century, and this counts to a great extent in this manner.

Differing Conceptualizations and the 1911 Revolution

At the two Western concepts were introduced into China, as indicated in the above discussion, there were two general directions in terms of translation. One, originating in Japan, whereby Japanese words were adopted, and the other originating in the West, whereby Chinese words were used. There were also other differences, such as differences in meaning given to the translated terms. Here we have noted the intellectuals' differing interpretations of the concepts. There might be other reasons, for example, the intellectuals putting their own meanings to the concepts because they were using them to argue for their own political policy that is, differences of conceptualization.

Here a relevant example is the debate between the two groups of intellectuals represented by Sun Yat-sen and Liang Qichao from November 1905 to August 1907. The debate concerned a number of issues, twelve of which were summarized in an article entitled Outlines of the Debate between Min Bao and Men Wei Cheng, published in Min Bao in April 1906. Key issues included the conceptualizations of the status quo of the time Chinese society and the ways in which to build a strong China. These two issues, as far as we understand from the perspective of conceptual history, can be correlated with the concepts of the social and the economic. Sun and his colleagues publicized their conceptualizations in Min Bao (a newspaper launched by Sun in Tokyo, Japan, in 1905), while Liang and his colleagues publicized theirs in Xinhai Gongbao (a newspaper of their group).\n
Differing Conceptualizations of the Social

By 1905 the term shengxi had begun to be used more widely than jigu and was becoming the standard translation of the social, but the social was not yet uniquely conceptualized. Here, for example, are two expressions: minsheng (民生) (as in Sun's conceptualization) and minjiu (民权) (as in Liang's conceptualization).

Sun Yat-sen's Conceptualization

Sun preferred the word minsheng (民生) to shengxi (生产). In his First Lecture on the Principle of Minsheng, for example, Sun Yat-sen pointed out that the word minsheng (民生) was more appropriate than the word 'social' or 'communist'
when referring to social problems. By mishmash Sun was referring to the question of how people were living, specifically their survival and living conditions at a time when the invention of machinery had deprived large numbers of people of their jobs. As survival was a very real issue for these people and for society, the social problem was, for Sun, a mishmash issue or shehui weishu (社会问题) in Chinese.

It is important to note that Sun’s conceptualization of the social as mishmash dated from his time in London, where he saw the social problems resulting from the development of capitalism. His study of problems such as inequality and tension between capitalists and workers gave him insights which he was able to apply to Chinese social problems. At the turn of the twentieth century, usually termed as the ‘ancient modern’ (late Qing dynasty and the early Republic), traditional Chinese agriculture was backward, while modern industry had not yet taken shape. Wars and droughts continuously hit the population, who ran short of food, clothing and shelter. Sun used the word mishmash rather than shehui to refer to the ancient world of the then Chinese society to underline that his concern was with ordinary individuals. With this down-to-earth conceptualization of the social, Sun actually made a thorough and detailed analysis of the problems existing at that period in China.

The primary social problem, Sun identified, was the poverty of the peasant farmers. This was a big social problem, because farming was the most important means for making a living and peasants constituted the majority of the population. Most peasants did not have their own land to cultivate, but planted on land belonging to landlords and, as a result, most of what they produced went to the landlords or landlords. An associated problem was the situation of women. For a very long time before the 1911 Revolution, women in China had been dominated by their families and husbands deprived of the right to education and mostly illiterate, they were positioned at the bottom of society. There was also the problem of bandits. Due to famine and poverty, some poor people did anything they could to survive.

Sun also identified as social problems some traditional customs that were harmful and hindered the progress of society. Among these were, for example, foot-binding (缠足) (women’s feet being bound from infancy with long strips of cloth), the plaintiff (原告) (men wearing their hair in long plait), the practice of keeping concubines (妾侍) (men having multiple wives, known as concubines), and extremely differential forms of address (称谓), such as laor (上人) and laor (下人), which were used by social inferiors to address officials in government and landlords at home.

Sun’s concern with down-to-earth social problems is in a way indicative of his understanding of the newly imported concept of social, but when emerges more importantly in his conceptualization that he advocated his own way of doing socialism. In fact, his conceptualization of the social as mishmash rather than shehui was a sign of his leaning towards socialism, as he believed that social problems could only be solved by way of socialism. In a letter to a friend on 17 December 1903, for example, Sun expressed his determination to know about socialism and to redistribute land ownership in the country. In a speech as a welcome party to the Shanghai Zhonghua Industry Association on 17 April 1912, Sun openly pointed out that the principle of mishmash cannot be fully realized without involving socialism.

Sun Yat-sen first became acquainted with the concept of socialism in London in 1896–7 when, according to Song Qingling, his wife, Sun read On Capital, The Communist Manifesto, and other socialist books and articles. In addition, Sun saw the various social problems of capitalist society at first hand. He identified, for example, that there was no equality in Europe and America, and assumed that the inequality would lead to great conflict which could result in equality. Now in our revolution, he asked, why do we not balance the rich and the poor? Why do we leave this all the inequality gets worse? By this Sun is actually advocating an important idea of socialism in arguing that the rich should not be allowed to exploit the poor and that the poor should have the opportunity to compete for their benefit. The socialist thought Sun had absorbed gave him insight into looking for ways to solve social problems in China.

First translated in China by Chinese intellectuals from Japan,6 in the late nineteenth century the concept of socialism lacked any definitive translation among Chinese intellectuals. In his first lecture on the principle of mishmash, for example, Sun Yat-sen translated the term ‘socialism’ phonetically into Chinese as shehui, 5 (社会), He wrote: “In fact, the English word ‘socialism’ is derived from Greek, which means ‘community’. This meaning is similar to ‘society’ in colloquial Chinese. (其实英文的社会主义就是‘社会’, 跟中文的‘社会’两个字一样。)” As shehui later became the standard translation for the social, shehui mishmash (社会主义) was taken as the translation. Here, the two characters shehui (社会) in ‘socialism’ have the meaning ‘community’ or ‘society’. Because of this, and also because Sun conceptualized social as mishmash, it is safe to say that Sun’s principle of mishmash was how he conceptualized ‘socialism’ before the 1911 Revolution. For him, socialism was the principle of mishmash. Both were concerned with the social and economic problems of society.

The association of Sun’s principle of mishmash with his conceptualization of socialism is clear when we examine the influence of socialism on the principle of mishmash. Sun’s principle of mishmash came into shape under the influence of several intellectuals who had introduced Western ideas of socialism into China. In March 1903, in an article entitled ‘Comparison between Socialism and Evolutionism’, Ma Jiaoxu explained the connection and the difference between socialism and evolutionism: he believed that Marx was the superior of Darwin.
In 1996, Zhu Zhixin published ‘Biography of German Socialists’ in Min Bao, in which he introduced Marx, Lassalle, Engels and Hedel, as well as the main points of The Communist Manifesto and the idea of the value of surplus. In 1996, Song Jiaoren introduced in Min Bao the world movement of socialism and Marxist revolutionary struggles. Liang Qichao, also in Min Bao, introduced the origins of socialism thought and the various stages of socialist development. Min Bao was the newspaper in which Sun Yat-sen and his associates publicized their interpretation of the socialist movement and socialism. It was also a forum for advancing their way of doing socialism.

**Liang Qichao’s Conceptualization**

Having examined Sun's conceptualization of the social and having noted the socialistic feature of his principle of minzhou, I now move to examine Liang Qichao’s conceptualization of the social. As a contemporary of Sun, Liang too saw China experiencing radical change caused by foreign invasion and domestic poverty. However, he conceptualized the then social and economic problems as the general weakness of the nation as a whole. He believed that the early twentieth century was a time of competition for existence. For example, he wrote: “Today is a time when strong foreign nations are arrayed, with the strong beating the weak and the advantaged surviving the disadvantaged (今日列强并立，强凌弱之时代)”. According to him, at a time like this when one country as a whole nation is competing with others for survival, it is the nation’s economic power that will determine its survival. Here the problem was that China as a nation was weak in economy. Social problems for Liang Qichao did not mean food, clothing or shelter for individuals, but the overall weakness of the nation. Using the word ‘national’ (minzu 民族 in Chinese), Liang was able to raise social problems to a level at which the country’s entire population might die as a result of invasion by other nations. Thus this was a problem of the whole nation and not individuals.

Liang’s ideas of minzu came from two sources: his reading of Western scholars’ works on the one hand, and his experience in Japan and America on the other. Several scholars believe that Liang’s stay in Japan after the fall of the Wu Hao reform enabled him to read works of politics, economics, history and sociology by Western authors, which helped him develop his ideas of nation. For example, Wang Dongyuan maintains that Liang’s nationalism was greatly influenced by these Western thoughts. In an article entitled ‘Differences and Similarities in the Change of Thought on Nation’ in Qingsheng Bao (清声报) in October 1901, Liang discussed the development of nationalism in the West and China. He wrote: “In Europe and America, nationalism and national imperialism have developed to their full extent, but in China there are no roots, no soil.” By nationalism he meant that “we do not invade other nations and are not invaded by others. Inside, we as a people are independent; outside, we as a country are independent”. Liang’s nationalism was further developed in 1903 when he traveled in America, where he was deeply impressed by the advance of capitalism. It was during this visit that he began to attach increasing importance to his idea of developing China’s ability of national competition.

It is worth noting in a few lines here that Liang’s idea of minzu differs from Sun’s principle of minzu (one of Sun’s Three Principles). Liang’s concept of minzu was how he envisaged the status quo of Chinese society during the late Qing dynasty and the early Republic. Liang’s use of minzu emphasized the danger of the nation as a whole dying out as a result of invasion by strong foreign nations like those of the West. It is in the sense of identifying social problems that Liang’s minzu can be compared to Sun’s minzhou, which emphasized problems of food, clothing and shelter for individuals. Sun’s principle of minzu, however, referred to his doctrine of expelling the Manchu people from China. By this principle Sun proposed a kind of struggle by the Han people against the Manchu people, the aim of which was to overthrow the Qing dynasty. Thus although both used the term minzu, Sun and Liang applied different meanings to it, with Sun referring to the struggle between the Han and Manchu peoples, while Liang referred to the competition between China as nation and foreign countries. These different meanings attached to minzu will be of significance when we discuss the conceptualizations as modes of politics.

**Differing Conceptualizations of the Economic**

Although there were various early translations for the concept of the economic, the term jingying outlined the others. No one has yet provided conclusive reasons for this survival, but when we observe that Sun and Liang differed in how they proposed to perform jingying (though both used the term jingying), we are reminded that jingying originally meant ways of doing politics (as in the Chinese expression jingying jihua). Here is the observation.

**Sun Yat-sen’s Conceptualization**

In his second lecture on the Principle of Minzhou, Sun dwelt on the solutions to social problems. The essentials here were, first, balance of land ownership (平等所有) on the one hand and, second, centralized ownership of capital on the other (平均资本). By balancing land ownership Sun meant to abolish the ownership of land by private landowners. By restricting capital he meant to restrict private capital and develop national capital, so that the great capitalists could not manipulate the national economy. He believed that these two methods would suffice to solve social problems.
For his goal of land reform, Sun proposed detailed plans consisting of four strategies to achieve equality in land ownership among peasants. The aim of the land-ownership revolution was to provide the poor with food, clothing, and shelter by altering land to those who were in need. The first strategy was to affirm the value of the land (土地估价法); that is, landowners were no longer be levied according to land area as measured by the tax collector, but according to the price of the land. As a result, the tax rate was set as 1 per cent. The third strategy was to purchase land on behalf of peasants at the same price as the landowners, thus equating the price of land and the income from land ownership.

Sun also launched another revolution to counteract the land-ownership revolution, his goal being to prevent land from being alienated. Sun's plan was to create private capital to control the land, which would be managed efficiently by businesspeople. This plan was designed to create a national capitalism and thereby strengthen the nation's economy.

Here we can see that in launching political and social revolutions and taking the two revolutions as a means of promoting land ownership and nationalizing the capital, Sun expressed his clear vision of how to build a country. His proposals, together with others such as developing transport by building railways and seaports and utilizing foreign capital, are outlines of his thoughts concerning the economy. For Sun, the economic was not something separate, but composed of practical solutions to social problems. In this sense, his conceptualization of the economic was action; that is, the two simultaneously implemented revolutions, as termed in his introduction to the book "Political and social revolution".

Sun's conceptualization of the economic was closely related to his London-based study of capitalism. As he realized in his industrial plan (工业计划), problems in Europe and America were identified only decades later and therefore could not be used as a basis. Drawing on the lessons of capitalist development, Sun wanted to prevent such problems from developing in China by launching the two revolutions. He further pointed out that China had not yet experienced an industrial revolution, and that manual labor was still the principal means of production. Here China differed from European and American societies, which were facing the second stage of the Industrial Revolution. Therefore, China had to enact the two revolutions—balance land ownership and nationalizing capital—simultaneously.

### Liang Qichao's Conceptualization

Sun Yat-sen's position, favoring land reallocation and nationalization, was opposed by Liang Qichao. Based on his conceptualization of the social as the overall situation of the country, Liang proposed to develop "national competitiveness" (国家竞争). He held that it was human nature to compete in order to live and survive, and that the same is true of nations. In the field of business and economy, to compete was the natural law, and this law applied to people as well as nations. He wrote, "A nation is the biggest unit for competition, and accordingly the competition is the most severe among nations. (国家竞争最激烈)."

By advocating this competition, Liang hoped for the emergence of strong capitalists in China who would compete with foreign capitalists and make the nation stronger. Liang also criticized Sun's socialist viewpoint, saying that the nationalization of land was only one part of socialism. He believed that for socialism all the production means should be nationalized. Land is an important production means, and capital is another. He further pointed out that to achieve socialism one should first of all nationalize capital and then nationalize the land. In one word, socialism requires nationalization of all means of production.

### Conceptualizations as Motors of Politics

Sun and Liang's differing conceptualizations of the social and the economic grew into a debate in the first few years of the twentieth century. We will discuss this debate further by reading an article entitled "Refuting Criticism of the Min-jiang Principle (民权主义原则)" published by Hu Hanmin (under the pen name Min Yi) in the twelfth issue of Min Bao, to investigate how this debate served as a means of politics for the 1911 Revolution: that is, how Sun and Liang used their concepts to argue for their own political actions.

Hu Hanmin's article was written to refute Liang's conceptualization of socialism published in Xinwen Chingbao. The article argued that Liang did not know the meaning of economy or socialism, and identified eight wrong conceptualizations by Liang. These were: (1) putting capital first and land reform last; (2) ranking production as difficult, but allocation as easy; (3) sacrificing others in order to reward capitalists; (4) excluding foreign capital; (5) not knowing the origin of prices; (6) not knowing the truth of price changes; (7) not knowing the difference
between land rent and land tax; and (8) not knowing the difference between individual economy and social economy. The article then concentrated, its refutation of Liang's arguments against social revolution under three subtitles: (1) refuting the idea that it was unnecessary for China to carry out social revolution; (2) refuting the idea that it was impossible for China to carry out social revolution; and (3) refuting the idea that China was unable to carry out social revolution.

This article, one of many in the debate, appeared in March 1907 and brought the publication of Xunjie Congshe to a close. From the contents outlined above, we can see that the author strongly advocated a social revolution that technically involved economic solutions to social problems. For example, in refutation of the idea that it was unnecessary for China to carry out social revolution, the author wrote that "to solve social problems we must first solve the issue of land, which includes nationalizing the land to avoid it from falling into the hands of a small number of people." Clearly, their differing conceptualizations of the social and the economic led Sun Yat-sen and Liang Qichao to advocate opposite ways to develop the country. Sun advocated the overthrow of the Qing dynasty and the establishment of a republic. By redistributing land, Sun wished to see that every farmer had his own land to plant, an aim that could only be accomplished by revolution. To Sun Yat-sen, revolution was the only way to realize his principle of minsheng. In contrast, Liang Qichao proposed the evolutionary development of his nationalism. He believed that once revolution occurred, the country would suffer and people would die. What was more, in the event of revolution, foreign troops would invade. He wrote, "China will not die from being robbed but from the new party. To fight against the government is a secondary task; instead, to fight against the revolutionary party is the first and foremost. This is a life-and-death fight." He believed in reform of the Qing dynasty.

The above-quoted article indicated the voice of Liang's party and marked the victory of Sun's party in the debate. How to evaluate the two parties may be a topic for further research, but here we are interested in whether Sun's victory over Liang had a link with the 1911 Revolution. As we all know, the 1911 Revolution was a success in the sense that it overthrew the Qing dynasty and ended feudalism in China. Sun's conceptualization contributed to this success. In terms of the conceptualization of the social as minsheng, every social problem Sun identified was the result of the dynasty's poverty management of the country. Such a conceptualization of the social was stronger than those of minzhu and quan, so far as action – that is, revolutionary action – was concerned. Equally, a central feature of Sun's conceptualization of the economic was finding solutions to social problems. By joining in revolutionary action, individuals could free themselves from poverty. In contrast, Liang's conceptualization of the social as minzhu, though reasonable to some extent, seemed to ignore the then serious tension between the Han and Manchu peoples and thus was considered reformist rather than revolutionary. These issues were made more explicit in the debate over the conceptualization of the social and the economic. They can thus be metaphorically seen to have been a motor of politics for the 1911 Revolution, though they may not have been a direct cause.

Conclusion

I have examined the background of Chinese intellectuals and their contribution to turning China into a modern country at the turn of the nineteenth century to the twentieth century. Sun Yat-sen and Liang Qichao were taken as examples of Chinese intellectuals, and their conceptualizations of the social and the economic were discussed. The discussion began with the introduction of these two concepts into China, the offering of various different translations and the multiple meanings given to each of the translations. I then outlined the differences between Sun and Liang's conceptualizations of the social and the economic. Finally, discussing the debate between Sun and Liang over the conceptualizations of the social and the economic, I argued that the debate served as a motor for the 1911 Revolution.

In this argument, I have drawn attention to the difference between Sun and Liang's conceptualizations. While Sun conceptualized the social as minsheng (food, clothing and shelter for everyone), Liang conceptualized it as minzhu (the nation as a whole). In addition, Sun conceptualized the economic as "balancing land ownership and renting capital" while Liang conceptualized it as "national competitiveness." This difference, as I observed, stems from how these two historical figures envisaged the status quo of Chinese society. Both Sun and Liang's conceptualizations of the social addressed China's social problems at the beginning of the twentieth century, while their conceptualizations of the economic referred to their approaches to social problems and their attempts to make China stronger. Terms like minsheng and minzhu, though not as popular as shehuicizi quan, are specific and unique to Sun and Liang's conceptualizations of the social. Both thinkers interpreted the Western concept in terms of their own understandings of it, a process in which their own understandings became inextricably connected to the Chinese situation. Although both Sun and Liang used the same term, jingji, the same is also true of their conceptualizations of the economic.

The conceptualizations did differ in themselves. They differed because Sun Yat-sen and Liang Qichao deployed them in the service of politics. By conceptualizing the social as minsheng, for example, Sun Yat-sen listed the vital social problems facing China and aroused a strong consciousness among the Manchu people. In fact, such a conceptualization led Sun advocate a revolution that aimed to overthrow the Qing dynasty. In contrast, in conceptualizing the social
as mooted, Liang Qichao ignored the tension between the Manchu and Han people. What he actually intended to achieve was reform of the Qing dynasty. In this sense, it is not unreasonable to conclude that the 1911 Revolution was a consequence of Sun's victory over Liang in this debate.