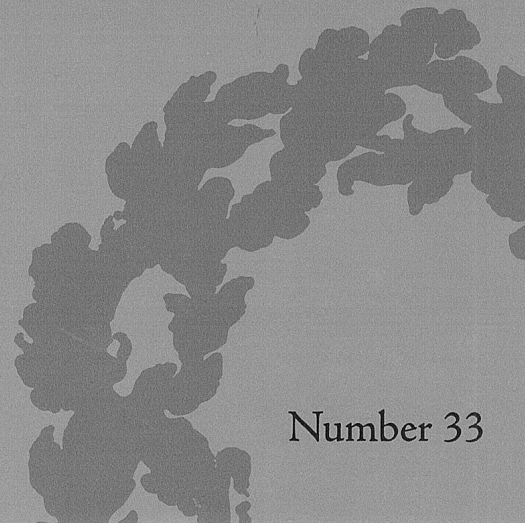


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A Global Conceptual  
History of Asia,  
1860–1940

*Edited by*  
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## 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 *xiakayit*) were directly adopted by Chinese intellectuals and the concept of the social was translated as 社会 (pronounced as *shehui*) 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 (*shehui*). To complicate matters further, some intellectuals translated the concept of the social as 群 (*gun*). A similar situation occurred with the concept of the economic, which was translated both as 经济 (*jingji*), adopting the Japanese words 経済 (*keizai*), and as 生计学 (*shengjixue*), adopting the traditional Chinese words. Although *shehui* and *jingji* outlived 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 contest 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 potentials 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 Wuxu 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 Taiyan, Liao Zhongkai, Feng Ziyou and Song Jiaoren) on the one side, and Liang Qichao and his colleagues (such as Kang Youwei and Xu Fesu) 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 thought. 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 Zhili 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 Xingzhong 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 Cantonese expatriates. The Society's declared aim was 'expelling the Manchu people, reviving Zhonghua (China), 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 (驱除鞑虏, 恢复中华, 创立民国, 平均地权)'. As his political philosophy, the 'Three Principles of the People' (三民主义) were proclaimed in the preface of the first issue of *Min Bao*, the party newspaper of Tongmeng 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 'San-min Doctrine', constitute his political philosophy. The Principles include the principle of *minzu*, the principle of *minquan* 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 conceptualization of the social and the economic.

The principle of *minzu* (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 'civic nationalism' (*zhonghua minzu*), as opposed to an 'ethnic nationalism', so as to unite all the different ethnicities of China, mainly composed of the five major groups of Han, Mongols, Tibetans, Manchus and the Muslims, together symbolized by the five-colour flag of the First Republic (1911–28). This sense of nationalism differs from the idea of 'ethnocentrism', which is also translated as 'nationalism' in the Chinese language.

The principle of *minquan* (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 governance. The former, also known as *zhengquan* (政权), is the power of the people to express their political wishes, similar to those vested in the citizenry or the parliaments in other countries, and is represented by the National Assem-

bly. There are four of these powers: election (选举), recall (罢免), initiative (创制) and referendum (复决). These may be equated to 'civil rights'. The power of governance, also known as *zhiquan* (治权), is the power of administration. Here he expanded the European-American constitutional theory of a three-branch government and a system of checks and balances by incorporating traditional Chinese administrative tradition to create a government of five branches, each of which is called a *yuan* (院) or 'court', such as the Legislative Yuan, the Executive Yuan, the Judicial Yuan, the Control Yuan and the Examination Yuan.

The principle of *minsheng* (民生主义, 'the people's welfare or livelihood' or 'government for the people') refers to what sometimes is translated as socialism. The concept can be understood as social welfare or as populist (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 emperor. 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 tradition 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 regarded as revolutionaries. We have mentioned the twists and turns in the ascendancy 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 reformists 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 Wuxu (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 state examination 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 to 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 premier newspapers, *Zhongwai Gongbao* and *Shiwu Bao*. He also published his moral and political ideals in *Qing Yi Bao* and *Xinmin Congbao*. 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 *Tongmeng Hui*. 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 Emperor Society' (保皇会). 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.

At 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 thoughts. 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 currently expressed in the Chinese language as *shehui* (社会) and *jingji* (经济), 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 entangled 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 discrete but related meanings: 社 (*she*) means a place, while 会 (*hui*) 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.<sup>1</sup> Whether this meaning subsequently changed or not we do not know, but we can be assured that when used as translation 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 'returned' characters 社会 (*shehui*) carry? As concepts are tied to words on the one hand but refer to facts on the other,<sup>2</sup> 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 *xiakay*. Here are two specific examples. In 1896, an article was published in the newspaper *Current Affairs* (时务报) 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 bureaux for his plan of reform, the eleventh being the 'bureau of society' (社会局).<sup>3</sup> This might explain to some extent his direct adoption of the Japanese word *xiakay* 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 to the twentieth century. Another translation was, for example, *qun* (群), used by Yan Fu, a famous scholar in Chinese history who is considered the father of *qun xue* (群学).

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 *qun xue yi yan* (群学肄言). Yan Fu did not use the then popular translation of *shehui* in his translation of the social, but used the Chinese word *qun* for this concept. To explain this, he quoted from the fourth-century sage Xue Zhi (荀卿子): 'What makes people differ from animals is that they can form a society' (人之所以异于禽兽者, 以其能群也). It seems that Yan Fu's translation brings the concept of the social closer to the indigenous meaning of the original Chinese characters *shehui* (社会), 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 *qun* 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 *qun* 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 a specialist in Western learning, he was firmly located within Chinese traditional culture. His deep-rooted belief in this tradition, as shown in his quotation from Xue Zhi to explain his translation, makes it possible for him to use traditional Chinese words for the Western concept. In Kang Youwei's case, because of his knowledge of Japanese learning, the Japanese words were adopted directly. Even so, it is worth noting that, while using the Japanese words 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* (经济), 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 *jingbang jiguo* (经邦济国) and *jingshi jimin* (经世济民), *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, most 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 concept of the economic, however, is traditionally expressed by Chinese words like *shihuo* (食货), *huozhi* (货殖), *licai* (理财) and *fuguo* (富国).<sup>4</sup>

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 *keizai* (経済) was adopted directly. Other translations included *fuguo ce* (富国策), *shengji xue* (生计学) and *yuanfu* (原富), which drew on the Chinese language. For example, in 1880 the 1863 edition of H. Fawcett's *Manual of Political Economy* was translated under the title of *fuguo ce*, 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 Shengji Xue*, a book devoted to introducing the Western history of economic thought, he used the expression of *shengji xue*. In 1901, when Yan Fu translated Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, he rendered the Chinese title as *yuanfu* (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 concept. This situation parallels the translation of the social, an added similarity being that the two approaches had much to do with the translators' understanding of the concepts.

#### Translators' 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 *xiaohui* (社会) and *keizai* (经济) or by the use of the indigenous Chinese words *qun* (群) and *shengji xue* (生计学), 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 *shehui* outlived *qun* and that *jingji* outlived 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 that counts to a great extent in this matter.

#### Differing Conceptualizations and the 1911 Revolution

As 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 'Outline of the Debate between *Min Bao* and *Xinmin Congbao*', published in *Min Bao* in April 1906. Key issues include the conceptualizations of the *status quo* of the then 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 *Xinmin Congbao* (a newspaper of their group).<sup>5</sup>

#### Differing Conceptualizations of the Social

By 1905 the term *shehui* had begun to be used more widely than *qun* and was becoming the standard translation of the social,<sup>6</sup> but the social was not yet uniquely conceptualized. Here, for example, are two expressions: *minsheng* (民生) (as in Sun's conceptualization) and *minzu* (民族) (as in Liang's conceptualization).

#### Sun Yat-sen's Conceptualization

Sun preferred the word *minsheng* (民生) to *shehui* (社会). 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 words 'social' or 'communist'

when referring to social problems. By *minsheng* 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 *minsheng* issue, or *shehui wenti* (社会问题) in Chinese.

It is important to note that Sun's conceptualization of the social as *minsheng* 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 '*Qingmo Minchu*' (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 *minsheng* rather than *shehui* to refer to the *status quo* 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 landowners and, as a result, most of what they produced went to the landowners or landlord. 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, even if it damaged society.

Sun also identified as social problems some traditional customs that were inhumane 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 pigtail (辮子) (men wearing their hair in long plaits), the practice of keeping concubines (纳妾) (men having multiple wives, known as concubines), and extremely deferential forms of address (称谓), such as '*daren*' (大人) and '*laoye*' (老爷), 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 the social, but what emerges more importantly in his conceptualization is that he advocated his own way of doing socialism. In fact, his conceptualization of the social as *minsheng* 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 at a welcome party by the Shanghai Zhonghua Industry Association on 17 April 1912, Sun openly pointed out that the principle of *minsheng* 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.<sup>7</sup> 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 till 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 benefits. The socialist thoughts 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,<sup>8</sup> in the late nineteenth century the concept of socialism lacked any definitive translation among Chinese intellectuals. In his first lecture on the principle of *minsheng*, for example, Sun Yat-sen transliterated the term 'socialism' phonetically into Chinese as '梳西利基' (*suxiliji*). He wrote: 'In fact, the English word "socialism" is derived from Greek, which means "comrade". This meaning is similar to "fellow" in colloquial Chinese. (其实英文中的社会主义'梳西利基'那具字, 是从希腊文变出来的, 希腊文社会主义的原意是'同志', 就象中国俗话说说是'伙计'两个字一样。)'<sup>9</sup> As *shehui* later became the standard translation for the social, *shehui zhuyi* (社会主义) was taken as the translation of socialism. Here, the last two characters *zhuyi* (主义) in '社会主义' have the meaning 'doctrines' or 'theories'. Because of this, and also because Sun conceptualized 'social' as *minsheng*, it is safe to say that Sun's principle of *minsheng* was how he conceptualized 'socialism' before the 1911 Revolution. For him, socialism was the principle of *minsheng*. Both were concerned with the social and economic problems of society.

The association of Sun's principle of *minsheng* with his conceptualization of socialism is clear when we examine the influence of socialism on the principle of *minsheng*. Sun's principle of *minsheng* 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 Junwu explained the connection and the difference between socialism and evolutionism: he believed that Marx was the superior of Darwin.



In 1906, Zhu Zhixin published 'Biography of German Socialists' in *Min Bao*, in which he introduced Marx, Lassalle, Engels and Bebel, as well as the main points of *The Communist Manifesto* and the idea of the value of surplus. In 1906, Song Jiaoren introduced in *Min Bao* the world movement of socialism and Marxist revolutionary struggles. Liao Zhongkai, also in *Min Bao*, introduced the origins of socialist thought and the various stages of socialist development.<sup>10</sup> *Min Bao* was the newspaper in which Sun Yat-sen and his associates publicized their interpretation of the social and socialism; it was also a forum for advocating their way of doing socialism.

### Liang Qichao's Conceptualization

Having examined Sun's conceptualization of the social and having noted a socialist feature of his principle of *minsheng*, 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 many, with the strong beating the weak and the advantaged surviving the disadvantaged (今日列国并立, 弱肉强食、优胜劣败之时代。)'<sup>11</sup> 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 individual peasants, but the overall weakness of the nation. Using the word 'nation' (*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 *minzu* (民族) or nation, rather than 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 failure of the Wuxu reform enabled him to read works of politics, economics, history and sociology by Western authors, which helped him develop his idea of nation. For example, Wang Dongyan maintains that Liang's nationalism was greatly influenced by those Western thoughts.<sup>12</sup> In an article entitled 'Differences and Similarities in the Change of Thought on Nation' in *Qingyi Bao* (清议报) 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 have not taken their shape'. 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.'<sup>13</sup> Liang's nationalism was further developed in 1903 when he travelled 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 *minsheng*, 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 the term, with Sun referring to the struggle between the Han and Manchu peoples, while Liang referred to the confrontation between China as nation-state and foreign countries. These different meanings attributed to *minzu* will be of significance when we discuss the conceptualizations as motors of politics.

### Differing Conceptualizations of the Economic

Although there were various early translations for the concept of the economic, the term *jingji* outlived 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 *jingji* (though both used the term *jingji*), we are reminded that *jingji* originally meant ways of doing politics (as in the Chinese expression *jingbang jiguo*). Here is the observation.

### Sun Yat-sen's Conceptualization

In his second lecture on the Principle of *Minsheng*, Sun dwelt on the solutions to social problems. The essentials here were, first, balance of land ownership (平均地权) on the one hand and, second, restricted ownership of capital on the other (节制资本). 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 allotting land to those who were in need. The first strategy was to affirm the value of the land (核定天下地价): that is, landowners were to report the price of their land, and the government was to record the reported price on the title deed. The second strategy was to determine tax based on value (照价征税): that is, tax would no longer be levied according to land area as measured by *mu*, but according to the price of the land. At that time, the tax rate was set as 1 per cent. The third strategy was to purchase based on price (照价收买), that is, when necessary, the government would purchase land according to the price recorded on the title deed. The fourth strategy was to accrue the profit of the land to the country (土地涨价归公): that is, if the price of the land was higher than reported, the profit should go to the country as a whole so as to be enjoyed by everyone. To carry out this principle of equality in land ownership, Sun hoped that once the peasants had their own land to cultivate, they would pay tax only to the government and no longer pay rent to the landowners, thus the equality of society being achieved.

To accompany this first revolution in the area of land ownership, Sun proposed another revolution to be carried out simultaneously, with the aim of preventing private capital from being manipulated – in other words, the aim of the second revolution was to restrict private capital. For this, he wrote, 'Businesses run by Chinese and foreigners, if they grow too big to be run privately, such as banks, railways and air transportation, are to be managed by the government. This is an essential principle of restricting capital, that is, we do not allow private capital to manipulate the national economy'.<sup>14</sup>

Here we can see that in 'launching political and social revolutions' and taking 'the two revolutions of balancing land ownership and nationalizing the capitals', Sun expresses his clear vision of how to build the country. These proposals, together with others such as developing transport by building railways and seaports and utilizing foreign capital, are outlines of his thoughts concerning the economic. For Sun, the economic was not something theoretical, but consisted of practical solutions to social problems. In this sense, his conceptualization of the economic was of action: that is, the two simultaneously implemented revolutions, as termed in his introduction to *Min Bao* (民报发刊辞) 'political and social revolutions'.<sup>15</sup>

Sun's conceptualization of the economic was closely related to his London-period study of capitalism. As he realized in his industrial plan (实业计划), 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 labour 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 – balancing land ownership and nationalizing capital – simultaneously.<sup>16</sup>

### Liang Qichao's Conceptualization

Sun Yat-sen's position, favouring 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 (一國者，团体之最大圈，而竞争之最高潮也)'.<sup>17</sup> 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 one important production means, and capital is another'.<sup>18</sup> He further pointed out that 'to achieve socialism one should first of all nationalize capital then nationalize the land. In one word, socialism requires nationalization of all means of production'.<sup>19</sup>

### 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-sheng* Principle' (告非难民生主义者), 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 motor 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 *Xinmin Congbao*. 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) taking 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 price; (6) not knowing the truth of price change; (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 *Xinmin Congbao* to a close. From the tenets outlined above, we can see that the author strongly advocated a social revolution that centrally 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.'<sup>20</sup>

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 reallocating 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 stubborn 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.'<sup>21</sup> He believed in reform of the Qing dynasty.

The above-quoted article silenced 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,<sup>22</sup> 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 poor management of the country. Such a conceptualization of the social was stronger than those of *minzu*, *shehui* and *qun* 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 *minzu*, though reasonable to some extent,<sup>23</sup> 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 taken 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 *minzu* (the nation as a whole). In addition, Sun conceptualized the economic as 'balancing land ownership and restricting 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 *minzu*, though not as popular as *shehui* or *qun*, are specific and unique in 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 not 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 against the Manchu people. In fact, such a conceptualization helped Sun advocate a revolution that aimed to overthrow the Qing dynasty. In contrast, in conceptualizing the social

as *minzu*, 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.