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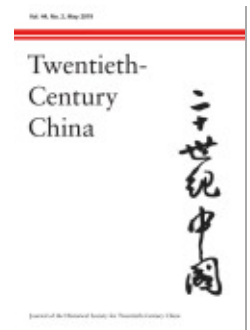
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A Perspective of Cultural Field

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REVISITING THE DISSEMINATION OF MARXISM IN MAY FOURTH CHINA: A PERSPECTIVE OF CULTURAL FIELD

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The dissemination of Marxism in May Fourth China has always been a heated topic among Chinese historians, and the perspective of social history has influenced this issue over the last 20 years. Current opinion tends to regard the spread of Marxism as a rebellion of marginalized intellectuals against the whole establishment while the cultural elite tried to return to the center of society. Nevertheless, I argue that the dissemination of Marxism in the May Fourth period relied heavily on the existing cultural hierarchy and that a three-tiered configuration began to form among intellectuals that was dominated by top-down rather than bottom-up flow of knowledge of Marxism. The farewell to existing authority had to wait until these intellectuals gradually transformed themselves into revolutionaries after 1922.

KEYWORDS: cultural hierarchy, Marxism, May Fourth movement, three-tiered configuration

Discussions of the dissemination of Marxism in China have long been integrated into the framework of the revolutionary history of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). A typical conclusion of this paradigm maintains that a group of Chinese intellectuals, inspired by the Russian Revolution and irritated by domestic political corruption and diplomatic setbacks, were attracted to Marxism as a revolutionary ideology for reconstruction of the country.¹ The revolutionary approach was enriched and, to some extent, revised by some historical studies in English that emphasized the diverse ways in which Marxism was accepted and comprehended. This approach of intellectual history can be seen, for instance, in Maurice Meisner's analysis of the role of populism in Li Dazhao's understanding of Marxism, Arif Dirlik's detailed discussion of anarchism as a passage toward Marxism, and Brantly Womack's em-

¹ See, for example, Peng Ming, *Wusi yundong shi* [History of the May Fourth movement] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1984), 450–52.

phasis on the influence of Friedrich Paulsen's ethical philosophy on the formation of Mao Zedong's early thought.²

Nevertheless, study of the thought of early Marxists should not overlook the interaction between knowledge and social institutions, for ideas and thoughts arise from people "acting with and against each other in diverse social settings and groups," as E. Doyle McCarthy argued.³ Indeed, ideas are produced and spread within social space. Understandably, historians since the 1990s have been increasingly interested in a social perspective focusing on the social status, identity, and network of Chinese Marxists. This tendency has produced some outstanding case studies of Marxists in Shanghai, Changsha, Wuhan, and Chengdu.⁴ Despite distinctions in analytical framework, all have tried to investigate the social origin of the Chinese radicalism among these Marxists. These case studies have offered much insight into diversified social, cultural, and spatial environments by understanding the formation of thoughts within certain social contexts. However, these researches face the hazard of fragmentation that fails to produce a general framework to account for the rise of Marxism in China.

There are thus other attempts from the social perspective to show the whole picture, which may be traced back to Ying-shih Yü (Yu Yingshi 余英時) and his pioneering study of the "marginalization of intellectuals" in society. Yü pointed out that after the abolition of civil examinations (科舉 *keju*) in 1905 the direct connections Chinese literati (士 *shi*) had with politics were severed. As a result, Chinese intellectuals lost their earlier key positions in Chinese politics and became marginalized.⁵ Yü's students Luo Zhitian and Wang Fan-sen expanded his argument in different ways. Luo distinguished these intellectuals as two broad groups: "the highly educated" (上層讀書人 *shangceng dushuren*) and "marginal intellectuals" (邊緣知識分子 *bianyuan zhishi fenzi*); the former managed to return to the center of society but the latter remained isolated at the periphery.⁶ He also

2 See Maurice Meisner, *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967); Arif Dirlik, *The Origins of Chinese Communism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Brantly Womack, *The Foundations of Mao Zedong's Political Thought: 1917–1935* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1982).

3 E. Doyle McCarthy, *Knowledge as Culture: The New Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1996), 3.

4 On Shi Cuntong, see Wen-hsin Yeh, *Provincial Passages: Culture, Space, and the Origins of Chinese Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). On Shen Dingyi, see Keith Schoppa, *Blood Road: The Mystery of Shen Dingyi in Revolutionary China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). On Cai Hesun, Mao Zedong, and Hunan First Normal School, see Liu Liyan, *Red Genesis: The Hunan First Normal School and the Creation of Chinese Communism, 1903–1921* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012). On Yun Daiying, see Shakhar Rahav, *The Rise of Political Intellectuals in Modern China: May-Fourth Societies and the Roots of Mass-Party Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). See also Kristin Stapleton, *Fact in Fiction: 1920s China and Ba Jin's "Family"* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016).

5 Yu Yingshi [Ying-shih Yü], "Zhongguo zhishifenzi de bianyuanhua" [Marginalization of Chinese intellectuals], in Yu Yingshi [Ying-shih Yü], *Zhongguo zhishi fenzi lun* [On Chinese intellectuals] (Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 1997), 164–66.

6 Luo Zhitian, "Jindai Zhongguo quanshi de zhuanqi: zhishifenzi de bianyuanhua yu bianyuan zhishifenzi de xingqi" [Transfer of power in modern China: marginalization of intellectuals and the rise of marginal intellectuals], in Luo Zhitian, *Quanshi zhuanqi: jindai Zhongguo de sixiang shehui yu xueshu* [Transfer of power: thoughts, society, and academics in modern China] (Wuhan: Hubei renmin chubanshe, 1999), 216.

pointed out that marginal intellectuals, once dedicated to political action, could be far more radical than the cultural elite.⁷ Compared with Luo, Wang paid more attention to the psychological pressure faced by intellectuals, shedding light on their feelings of frustration and inferiority due to marginalization. Uncertainty and pessimism led them to moral self-abasement and an increasing praise of the virtue of the common people. Some Chinese Marxists were born from this populist culture.⁸ Following Luo and Wang's arguments, Xu Jilin agreed that Chinese revolutions were largely initiated by marginal intellectuals who were removed from authority and thus rebelled against the establishment. Unlike members of the cultural elite like Liang Qichao and Hu Shi, who intended to return to the center, Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao, and Mao Zedong located themselves at the periphery and strove to rebel against the whole establishment.⁹

Admittedly, when historians try to account for the origin of the Chinese Revolution, the influence of the drastic changes in intellectuals' social status due to the educational reform of the first decade of the twentieth century can never be overestimated. However, was the Chinese Communist Revolution a story wherein marginal intellectuals, excluded from the existing power system, driven to radicalism, and equipped with Marxism, finally rose up to overthrow the dominant group? Was the dissemination of Marxism in China during the May Fourth era really an antiestablishment process?¹⁰

By examining the formation of the CCP, the present study argues that the spread of Marxism during the May Fourth era was essentially a top-down rather than a bottom-up process, heavily shaped by the cultural hierarchy that gradually formed in the 1910s and early 1920s. In some cases, aside from the cultural elite, we can even see the shadows of some politically dominant groups behind the spread of Marxism.¹¹ Despite the fact that Marxist political theory was a revolutionary ideology against the existing power structure, its dissemination was achieved inside the establishment. Prior discussions have identified the significant participation of marginal intellectuals but have understated the leading position of the cultural elite in the movement. They have failed to highlight the relativity between the "core" and "periphery" and between "elites" and "marginalized intellectuals," for the same person could be regarded concurrently as a marginal intellectual nationally and a member of a cultural elite within a certain region, or as a nobody in the

7 Luo Zhitian, "Jindai Zhongguo quanshi de zhuanyi," 239–40.

8 Wang Fansen [Wang Fan-sen], "Jindai zhishifenzi ziwo xingxiang de zhuanbian" [Transformation of self-image of modern intellectuals], in Xu Jilin, ed., *Ershi shiji Zhongguo zhishifenzi shilun* [Historical essays on Chinese intellectuals in the twentieth century] (Beijing: Xinxing chubanshe, 2005), 115–18.

9 Xu Jilin, "Duanlie shehui zhong de zhishi fenzi" [Intellectuals in a fractured society], in Xu, *Ershi shiji Zhongguo zhishifenzi shilun*, 3–4.

10 The term "May Fourth" can refer to different time ranges. For this article, I basically agree with Chow Tse-tsung's classical definition of "May Fourth movement," which lasted from 1917 to 1921. See Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 6.

11 Due to space limitations, this article does not discuss in detail the role of political authority in the spread of Marxism, which can be identified in some memoirs and personal letters of early Chinese Marxists. A typical recent study revealing the connection between radical intellectuals and the political establishment that discusses support of the student movement by provincial warlords is Chen Zhongping, "The May Fourth Movement and Provincial Warlords: A Reexamination," *Modern China* 37, no. 2 (March 2011): 135–69.

provincial capital but a somebody in his hometown, depending on different contexts and criteria. Therefore, the involvement of many local students in the spread of Marxism did not necessarily prevent it from being a trickle-down process.

In this top-down dissemination, Shanghai and Beijing as cultural hubs of the whole country played the most crucial roles. Some cultural leaders in the two cities kindled the fervor for Marxist theory, translated foreign monographs, pamphlets, and articles, and initiated serious studies of Marxism. With the help of personal relationships and publication networks, Marxism reached provincial capitals like Wuhan, Changsha, Guangzhou, Jinan, and Chengdu, where regional cultural elites were often the main actors. It then expanded further to hinterlands where regional elites engaged with local intellectuals hailing from nearby counties. In many cases, the spread of these networks relied on the spatial travel of intellectuals between cities and towns, as mentioned by Wen-hsin Yeh.¹² Outside China, overseas students intrigued by Marxism also established cells in Japan, France, Belgium, Germany, and Moscow, but they were in fact an extension of social networks inside China. A trickle-down, three-tiered system was thus established little by little.

The three-tiered system described in this article also responds to the case studies of Yeh, Keith Schoppa, Shakhar Rahav, and Kristin Stapleton by summarizing a national framework and underlining the significance of cultural hierarchy and capital within early Chinese Marxist groups. The cultural power exerted significant influences on the production and spread of Marxian concepts and theories, which means that those with higher positions in the hierarchy often had more say about how to define Marxism and how to understand political events like the Russian Revolution.

It should be noted that the system was not a rigid and static one, as intellectuals would sometimes move from one tier to another, according to changes in their reputation and the ethos within cultural circles as a whole. There were also frequent interactions between different levels. The downward flow of knowledge did not mean that those on lower levels were merely passive receivers. On the contrary, they were quite active and creative in mixing their own philosophies and observations into the materials on Marxism gained from the upper level. They also presented their own interpretations to their counterparts on the same or lower level. Upward communication also existed but seldom genuinely changed the thought of those above. Different views of Marxism both within a single level and between levels in this complicated system can partly explain the tension and conflict within the CCP early on.

I also argue that reliance on cultural hierarchy did not give way to a new structure until Chinese Marxists after 1922 began to transform themselves from “intellectuals” into “revolutionaries.” This may be reminiscent of Hans van de Ven’s monograph, which observes a similar transformation of Chinese Communists from “friends” to “comrades.”¹³ Van de Ven mainly stresses a change of organizational structure, seeing the CCP as a combination of autonomous groups that in the next few years gradually transformed into a centralized, Leninist party.¹⁴ Nevertheless, I would emphasize that the interactions of these “friends” were also shaped by cultural hierarchy and power, and it was various social networks

12 Yeh, *Provincial Passages*, 5–6.

13 See Hans van de Ven, *From Friend to Comrade: The Founding of the Chinese Communist Party, 1920–1927* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

14 Van de Ven, *From Friend to Comrade*, 55–56, 241.

that softened this power structure and made it look more “equal.” Meanwhile, my focus is not so much on the organizational dimension but on changes of both the social identity of the members and the power basis of the party leaders. Marxists were not encouraged to study theories in an academic institution but to commit to mass movement and revolutionary propaganda. The source of authority in this process also changed from cultural prestige and scholarly achievement to revolutionary leadership and political judgement. Accordingly, the legitimacy and authority of those who could define the “correct” way to understand Marxism no longer derived from cultural capital and reputation but from the leaders of an increasingly disciplined and centralized party system. The discussion and spread of Marxism were no longer things happening in the cultural field but belonged to a new revolutionary cause outside the establishment. Therefore, when we examine Communist history it is necessary to distinguish the May Fourth era from the era after 1922. My argument about 1922 as a watershed is also strengthened, though in a different way, by the argument of Fabio Lanza, who believed 1921 or 1922 to mark the end of May Fourth.¹⁵

CULTURAL HIERARCHY AND CULTURAL POWER

The cultural field in early twentieth-century China has been explored in a number of historical studies over the past 10 years. Using Pierre Bourdieu’s concepts, such as field (場域 *changyu*) and capital (資本 *ziben*), these studies attempt to analyze cultural activities and competitions, but they have not touched the issue of Marxism.¹⁶ Bourdieu’s definition of field means a “network,” or “configuration,” in the sociological sense, wherein individuals interacted and struggled for capital and power.¹⁷ Ying Xing further connected the formation of the cultural field with educational reforms from 1902 to 1912 in the case of Hunan.¹⁸

Ying correctly pointed out the key role of educational reform in the formation of the new cultural field.¹⁹ As we know, there were three main educational reforms before and during the rise of Marxism, in 1902–1903, 1912, and 1922. The reform of 1902–1903, together with the annulment of civil examinations in 1905, legitimized graduates from both newly established domestic schools (學堂 *xuetang*) and foreign educational institutions. Zhang Zhidong (張之洞 1837–1909), the chief designer of the reform, transplanted the Japanese school system to China with some adaptations, thereby establishing a hierarchy for general, normal, and professional education.²⁰ The government accordingly

15 Fabio Lanza, “Of Chronology, Failure, and Fidelity: When Did the May Fourth Movement End?” *Twentieth-Century China* 38, no. 1 (January 2013): 67–68.

16 See, for example, Xu Jilin, ed., *Jindai Zhongguo zhishi fenzi de gonggong jiaowang* [Public communications of modern Chinese intellectuals] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2008); Yang Nianqun, *Wusi jiu shi zhounian ji* [In memory of the 90th anniversary of the May Fourth movement] (Beijing: Shijie tushu chubanshe, 2009).

17 Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 97.

18 Ying Xing, *Xin jiaoyu changyu de xingqi* [Rise of a new educational field] (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2017), 89–91.

19 Ying, *Xin jiaoyu changyu de xingqi*, 57.

20 Qu Xingui and Tang Liangyan, eds., *Zhongguo jindai jiaoyu shi ziliao huibian: xuezhi yanbian* [Collected historical documents of modern Chinese education: changes in the educational institution] (Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu chubanshe, 1991), 291–397.

acknowledged academic certificates gained from Western-style institutions as a new type of cultural capital. To facilitate the legitimation of the new education system, the Qing government released a regulation gearing different levels of new degrees to the previous official honor system (功名 *gongming*).²¹ Although the reforms in 1912 and especially in 1922 drastically changed the original system, they helped consolidate the established hierarchy of educational degrees.

In the meantime, over the decades when Chinese students were sent abroad for further study in the Republican era, a belief gradually emerged that students who studied in Europe and the United States were superior to those from Japanese universities. “Indigenous” graduates had to accept their even more inferior position relative to overseas students within this xenocentric aura.²²

Hence, by the late 1910s the evolving modern educational system had seen the rise of a twofold hierarchy in China. Vertically, different degrees began to be equivalent to corresponding knowledge accumulation and educational level. Horizontally, overseas students tended to distinguish themselves from their domestically educated counterparts. Perhaps the situation was best illustrated by an interesting formula, mentioned in Fei Xiaotong’s memoir, by which girls might evaluate potential lovers: “high school girls should look for boys from university while college girls should think about boys returning from abroad” (中學找大學，大學找留學 *Zhongxue zhao daxue, daxue zhao liuxue*).²³

Such was the general cultural background of the rise of Marxism in China. In fact, the early introduction and translations of Marxian theories occurred sporadically in the first decade of the twentieth century, and Japan was surely the most important avenue for some Chinese intellectuals to gain familiarity with socialism and at least some basic knowledge and vocabularies on Marx and Marxism. Zhu Zhixin (朱執信 1885–1920) and Liu Shiwei (劉師培 1884–1919) were two good examples, as shown in Martin Bernal and Peter Zarrow’s books.²⁴

However, it was not until the late 1910s that Marxism began to be targeted individually and studied extensively, and it reached its first pinnacle in the early 1920s. Some have attributed this delay to the Russian Revolution breaking out in November 1917, treating it as a catalyst for the welcome of Marxism in China.²⁵ Certainly, the revolution—together with the eagerness for rapprochement expressed in the Karakhan manifesto—offered a favorable external environment for the acceptance of Marxism, but in its immediate

21 See Qu and Tang, *Zhongguo jindai jiaoyushi ziliao huibian*, 540–42. See also Dong Shouyi, *Qingdai liuxue yundong shi* [History of the overseas study movement in the Qing dynasty] (Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, 1985), 203–4.

22 Shu Xincheng, *Jindai Zhongguo liuxue shi* [History of overseas study in modern China] (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 2011), 135–36.

23 Fei Xiaotong, “Liu ying ji” [Recalling my study in Britain], *Wenshi ziliao xuanji* [Selected historical accounts], vol. 31, 31.

24 Martin Bernal, *Chinese Socialism to 1907* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976), 116–17; Peter Zarrow, *Anarchism and Chinese Political Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 84.

25 Mao Zedong had a famous argument that “the sound of gunfire from the Russian Revolution delivered Marxism and Leninism to China” (Shiyue geming yisheng paoxiang, gei women songlaile makesi liening zhuyi). The writing of revolutionary history in mainland China thus followed that opinion, positioning the Russian Revolution as a key, if not the most important, element for the dissemination of Marxism in China. See Peng, *Wusi yundong shi*, 450–51.

aftermath the Bolshevik action was regarded in China more as a rebellion, or turmoil, than a laudable revolution.²⁶

Evidence indicates that it was Yang Paoan (楊匏安 1896–1931), a Cantonese journalist, who first praised the revolution in *Guangdong Chinese News* (廣東中華新報 *Guangdong zhonghua xinbao*) at the end of 1917. However, as a middle school teacher and unknown reporter, he gained little fame. He was a “marginal intellectual,” in the words of Luo Zhitian. Naturally, Yang’s articles drew very little attention nationwide, and both political and cultural elites were still confused about how to understand such an upheaval.

THE THREE-TIERED SYSTEM SPREADING MARXISM

Attitudes began to change when two influential journals in Beijing, *New Youth* (新青年 *Xin qingnian*; also known as *La Jeunesse*) and *Renaissance* (新潮 *Xinchao*; also known as *New Tide*), praised the revolution. *New Youth* in October 1918 published two articles by Li Dazhao, “The Victory of the Common People” and “The Victory of Bolshevism.”²⁷ Echoing Li’s cheerful shout, three months later, *Renaissance* published its inaugural issue, in which the two chief editors, Luo Jialun (羅家倫 1897–1969) and Fu Sinian (傅斯年 1896–1950), held that the Russian Revolution was destined to transcend the French Revolution and spark the most powerful new trend in the twentieth century.²⁸ Outstanding intellectuals like Chen Puxian (陳溥賢 1891–1957) and Chen Qixiu (陳啟修 1886–1960) soon followed in 1919, and Marxism was thus fully exposed in Beijing cultural circles.²⁹

Shanghai responded quickly. Some Guomindang (國民黨 Nationalist Party) leaders, such as Dai Jitao (戴季陶 1891–1949), Hu Hanmin (胡漢民 1879–1936), Shen Dingyi (沈定一 1883–1928), Shao Lizi (邵力子 1882–1967), and Lin Yungai (林雲陔 1881–1948), began to discuss the possible application of Marxist theories (historical materialism, class, labor movement, surplus value, etc.) in China. Dai and Hu seemed to be even more knowledgeable than Li Dazhao about Marx’s theory of political economics. They were quite active in analyzing political and social problems in China from an economic perspective.

All of this group had graduated from American and Japanese universities, and their reputation as outstanding Guomindang theoreticians earned them high positions in the cultural circle. Their new journals *Weekend Review* (星期評論 *Xingqi pinglun*) and *Construction* (建設 *Jianshe*) soon became the bellwethers of the New Culture movement in Shanghai.

26 Jarkko Haapanen, “The Concepts of Bolshevism and Radicalism in the May Fourth Movement Radicalization,” *Journal of the History of Ideas in East Asia*, no. 5 (December 2013): 285.

27 Li Dazhao, “Shumin de shengli” [Victory of the common people], in *Xin qingnian* 5, no. 5 (October 1918): 436–38; Li Dazhao, “Bolshevism de shengli” [Victory of Bolshevism], in *Xin qingnian* 5, no. 5 (October 1918): 442–48.

28 Luo Jialun, “Jinri zhi shijie xinzhao” [Today’s new tide in the world], *Xinchao* 1, no. 1 (January 1919): 19–23; Fu Sinian, “Shehui geming: eguo shi de geming” [Social revolution: the Russian Revolution], *Xinchao* 1, no. 1 (January 1919): 128–29.

29 See, for example, Yuan Quan [Chen Puxian], “Makesi zhi fendou shengya” [Life of Marx], *Chenbao*, April 1–4, 1919; Chen Qixiu, “Makesi de weiwu shiguan yu zhencao wenti” [Marx’s historical materialism and the issue of chastity], *Xin qingnian* 6, no. 5 (May 1919): 500–504.

It is worth noting that their understanding of Marxism diverged from Li Dazhao's to some extent. For Li, the glamour of Marxism came together with the triumph of the Russian Revolution. In fact, Li's articles on Russia antedated those on Marxian theories. The Bolshevik Revolution to him seemed to be an inseparable element and the best footnote of Marxism and thus a political blueprint for China's future. His understanding of the revolution by then was still somewhat superficial, in that the tension between Bolshevism and Marxism did not draw his attention. As Meisner argues, Li by this time had not yet realized Lenin's originality regarding how to build a revolutionary party.³⁰ Li seemed to overemphasize the decisive effect of productive force and hold an optimistic attitude toward the inevitability of a socialist revolution, thus neglecting the imperative of making a disciplined party.

Hu Hanmin and Dai Jitao, in contrast, did not treat Marxism as such. They were actually quite fearful that China might become a second Russia.³¹ Marxism, especially historical materialism, was no more than a theoretical tool for them. At that time, the economic interpretation of history was still a novel concept to Chinese intellectuals, and they suddenly discovered its huge potential for analyzing Chinese politics, society, and thoughts. For this reason, when discussing Marx they also paid attention to political economists like Achille Loria (1857–1943), rather than to Lenin or Trotsky.³² The distinction between politically oriented and academically oriented approaches would become more obvious after 1922.

Chen Duxiu converted to Marxism a bit later. Like Li Dazhao, Chen was keen on the political significance of Marxian revolutionary theory, but there was one trivial difference between them. His famous article "Talking about Politics" showed clearly his interest in proletarian dictatorship and class struggle.³³ However, Chen confessed that he had no idea what would happen afterward.³⁴ By contrast, Li Dazhao still emphasized philanthropy and mutual assistance among human beings as the ultimate end, while seeing class struggle merely as a tool to transform society.³⁵

Some cultural leaders, mostly those with foreign degrees and high prestige, formed the nucleus of Marxist study groups in Beijing and Shanghai. However, without engaging with local intellectuals they could find no way to spread Marxism comprehensively. The reasons local intellectuals embraced Marxism varied, but they probably all shared one: the new ethos in Beijing and Shanghai had lifted Marxism to a position no one could ignore.

In Shanghai, local intellectuals began to be involved after two students from Zhejiang, Shi Cuntong (施存統 1899–1970) and Yu Xiusong (俞秀松 1899–1939), joined

30 Meisner, *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism*, 203–5.

31 Dai, for example, discussed how to prevent a Bolshevik-style revolution in China in June 1919. See Dai Jitao, "Duifu buerseweike de fangfa" [Method to cope with Bolsheviks], in *Dai Jitao ji (1909–1920)* [Collected works of Dai Jitao, 1909–1920] (Wuhan: Huazhong shifan daxue chubanshe, 1990), 894–97.

32 Hu Hanmin, "Weiwushiguan piping zhi piping" [A critique of the critique of historical materialism], *Jianshe* 1, no. 5: 974–76.

33 Chen Duxiu, "Tan zhengzhi" [Talking about politics], in *Chen Duxiu zhuzuo xuan* [Selected works of Chen Duxiu], vol. 2 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1993), 158–59.

34 Chen Duxiu, "Tan zhengzhi," 164.

35 Shouchang [Li Dazhao], "Jieji jingzheng yu huzhu" [Class struggle and mutual assistance], *Meizhou pinglun* [Weekly review], July 6, 1919

the group. In Beijing, Li Dazhao convened a group of students at Peking University, such as Zhang Guotao (張國燾 1897–1979), Deng Zhongxia (鄧中夏 1894–1933), and Luo Zhanglong (羅章龍 1896–1995).

In order to popularize Marxism across the country, the cultural leaders in Beijing and Shanghai interacted with intellectuals in some provincial capitals, relying on personal, correspondent, and readership networks that had existed before or developed during the May Fourth period. Shi Cuntong and Yu Xiusong showed that local intellectuals could be influenced and attracted, and soon cities like Changsha, Wuhan, Guangzhou, Jinan, and Chengdu had similar Marxist study groups, which later became Communist cells. The network also expanded to Japan and Europe.

When the Marxist groups turned into Communist organizations, those facilitating the wide dissemination of Marxism did not necessarily participate in the CCP. When Chen Duxiu organized several meetings to discuss building a party in Shanghai, Hu Hanmin showed no interest in attending them. Dai Jitao did contribute to the meetings but did not join the party. After all, they regarded Marxism mainly as an academic theory, not a political creed. However, we should not downplay the role of these Guomindang leaders. Without them, Shanghai could not have been a significant center propagating Marxism and it would have been much harder for Marxist study groups to be localized. An example was the translation by Chen Wangdao (陳望道 1891–1977) of Marx's *Communist Manifesto*, the first Chinese version of the full text. It was Dai Jitao and Shao Lizhi rather than Chen Duxiu or Li Dazhao who invited Chen to make the translation. The provincial fellowship (鄉誼 *xiangyi*) between them still functioned as one of the most crucial social networks inside the Marxist study circle.³⁶

We can in general classify the intellectuals engaged in the dissemination of Marxism in China into three levels: nationwide cultural elites, regional cultural elites, and local petty intellectuals. Although it is almost impossible to offer a precise description for each individual, there are at least some characteristics of each category. The nationwide cultural elites were mostly those with foreign educational certificates (or experiences) and foreign language proficiency. They already formed their own system of thought and enjoyed cultural prestige across the country. Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao, and Dai Jitao can be included in this group.

Following the hierarchy ladder downward, we find regional cultural elites who graduated from domestic universities or advanced colleges and thus had varied levels of foreign languages. Many would have had difficulty reading original foreign texts. However, relying on personal relationships, close or loose, with the nationwide cultural elite and subscriptions to top publications in Chinese, they were still able to acquire new knowledge (in our case, vocabulary and knowledge of Marxism) either from printed matter or in person. They were quite discerning about the value of different foreign theories. Most of them belonged to the “builder” generation, as Vera Schwarcz termed it, who held different values and perspectives from their teachers, the generation of “doubters.”³⁷ Yet

36 Dai Jitao, Shao Lizhi, and Chen Wangdao were important members of the South Society (南社 Nanshe), the largest and perhaps most influential literature association in early twentieth-century China, which strengthened their close relationship.

37 Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 23–24.

it should be noted that the distinction between national and regional elites in my study shows more fluidity and volatility than Schwarcz's generational classification, because in the three-tiered system individuals may move between levels, independent of age. I also pay more attention to the diversified understanding of Marxism within each generation, which adds complexity to the analysis.

Notwithstanding, Schwarcz revealed to us the originality regional elites might have in understanding Marxism. Indeed, before receiving the new theories, they had already formed a relatively independent worldview, which enabled them to integrate unique comprehension into the system. Regional cultural elites generally found themselves in a peripheral position in the cultural circle in Beijing and Shanghai, but in their own provinces they occupied center stage. Regional elites served as the core of local Communist cells. Shi Cuntong, Zhang Guotao, and Mao Zedong fall into this category. In fact, most attendees of the first congress of the CCP in July 1921 were drawn from regional cultural elites.

Marxism rose in China together with the vernacular movement (白話文運動 Baihuawen yundong), and the "vernacular" language actually excluded the masses and built up a new cultural power for those acquainted with foreign language and knowledge, as Shu-mei Shih and Sang Bing have indicated.³⁸ This means the spread of foreign theories like Marxism in China was bound to follow a top-down direction. Naturally, the nationwide and regional cultural elites mainly served as producers and suppliers of knowledge, though to different extents.

Robert Culp held that "the combination of basic literacy and education with relatively low status and pay characterized the 'petty intellectual.'"³⁹ Most petty intellectuals were current students or graduates of educational institutions up to middle school. They hardly had a say in the cultural circles nationally or provincially and had few connections with the nationwide elite. The regional elites, thus, served them as an intermediary tier. When exposed to Marxism, most petty intellectuals lacked the ability to think critically about it and more often than not accepted the knowledge in a simplified way. In contrast to the elites at both national and regional levels, most petty intellectuals could be called consumers of knowledge.

As I indicated in my introduction, the system was neither an immobile model nor a machine-like apparatus but was characterized by constant and unpredictable communication and mobility as Marxism was introduced, discussed, and understood. A "field" to Bourdieu meant a "system of relations," and interpersonal relationships did play key roles in spreading Marxism in China.⁴⁰ The three-tiered system relied heavily on various social networks (kinship, friendship, collegueship, provincial fellowship, readership, etc.) to

38 Shu-mei Shih regards the vernacular language as a Westernized one, distanced from the ordinary people. Sang Bing uses a similar term, "Europeanized," to describe this new form of language. Shu-mei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917–1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 70; Sang Bing, "The Divergence and Convergence of China's Written and Spoken Languages: Reassessing the Vernacular Language During the May Fourth Period," *Twentieth-Century China* 38, no. 1 (January 2013): 92.

39 Robert Culp, "Mass Production of Knowledge and the Industrialization of Mental Labor: The Rise of the Petty Intellectual," in Robert Culp, Eddy U, and Wen-hsin Yeh, eds., *Knowledge Acts in Modern China: Ideas, Institutions, and Identities* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 2016), 209.

40 Bourdieu and Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 106.

spread it from the core to the periphery. Furthermore, relationships sometimes helped to soften, smooth, and cover up the hierarchical power inside the cultural field, making it look more “equal” and thus facilitating communication between intellectuals at different levels. This is exemplified by Mao Zedong’s first visit to Beijing in 1918. The recommendation of his teacher Yang Changji (楊昌濟 1871–1920) enabled the unknown young man from Hunan to meet Li Dazhao and get a job as a librarian at Peking University. Yet without the support of other personal networks he was often ignored by cultural celebrities on campus, tasting the bitterness of being excluded by the cultural hierarchy.⁴¹ Something similar happened also in Shanghai. When Shi Cuntong was uncertain where to go after the failure of the Work-Study Corps (工讀互助團 Gongdu huzhu tuan) in Beijing, his last hope was his connection with Shen Dingyi and Dai Jitao.⁴² Clearly, the cultural hierarchy shaped the production and understanding of Marxism, but it was social networks that lubricated the power structure and accelerated its dissemination.

When the establishment of Communist cells was put on the agenda, the organizations in Beijing and Shanghai were dominated by nationwide cultural leaders, followed by some regional elites. At the provincial level, it was regional elites who initiated the formation of the Communist teams and further influenced local petty intellectuals. Hence the significance of regional elites as intermediaries deserves more attention from historians. Given the rich literature on Shanghai, Beijing, Changsha, Wuhan, and Chengdu, I will concentrate on Guangzhou to examine in detail the thoughts and key influences of regional elites in understanding and spreading Marxism.

TAN PINGSHAN AND CHEN GONGBO: THE CASE OF GUANGZHOU

The Guangzhou cell has not gone unnoticed by historians, but as Wen-hsin Yeh, Arif Dirlik, and Ishikawa Yoshihiro have shown, the focus is usually on the cooperation and debate between Marxists and anarchists while building a Communist organization there.⁴³ Yet whether Cantonese anarchists ever joined the party has been questioned, and Marxists such as Tan Pingshan (譚平山 1886–1956) and Chen Gongbo (陳公博 1892–1946) who played a key role have received only cursory mention.⁴⁴ Compared to other regional cultural elites (like Mao Zedong, Cai Hesen, Shi Cuntong, and Yun Daiying) who have become quite familiar to academics, Tan and Chen show us another way of understanding Marxism.

41 Edgar Snow, *Red Star over China* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1937), 148.

42 Yeh, *Provincial Passages*, 200–1.

43 Yeh, *Provincial Passages*, 216; Arif Dirlik, *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 214–17; Ishikawa Yoshihiro, *The Formation of the Chinese Communist Party* (New York: Columbia University Press), 178–86.

44 Both Dirlik and Ishikawa believe the Cantonese Communist Party was established by seven anarchists and two Russian journalists. However, in the 1980s a Cantonese historian, Sha Dongxun, interviewed two living anarchists among the seven; both firmly denied involvement in any Communist Party. Sha Dongxun, *Yuehai jindai shitan* [On modern Cantonese history] (Guangzhou: Huanan ligong daxue chubanshe, 1989), 37–38, 51–53.

Before spending three years (1917–1920) studying philosophy at Peking University, Tan Pingshan and Chen Gongbo each graduated from a top college in Guangdong.⁴⁵ After coming to Beijing, they organized a small group called the Society of Political Critique (政衡社 *Zhengheng she*) with several Cantonese friends, advocating democracy (民治主義 *minzhi zhuyi*).⁴⁶ Their interest in democracy was surely enlightened by the New Culture movement on campus, but their definition of democracy differed from Chen Duxiu's Mr. De (德先生 *De Xiansheng*). It included not only universal suffrage (political democracy) but public ownership and social relief (economic and social democracy), to remedy the exploitation and suppression discussed in Marx's monographs.⁴⁷ Definitely, what they sought was a certain form of social democracy:

The origin of social democracy can be traced far backward, so its foundation is strong enough to develop one day into a full-fledged one. It also contains indisputable truth, which we humans will certainly need in the future.⁴⁸

Understandably, Tan and Chen spoke highly of the Erfurt Program written in 1891 by Karl Kautsky (1854–1938) and Eduard Bernstein (1850–1932) for the German Social Democratic Party.⁴⁹ Tan was also said to be the first to translate it into Chinese.⁵⁰ Previous studies on Chinese social democracy, like Edmund Fung's, ignored Tan and Chen's contribution.⁵¹

Interestingly, their enthusiasm for the Erfurt Program was in stark contrast with their gloomy description of Soviet Russia, which they thought had betrayed social democracy: "The nation and people suffered so much from [Bolshevism] that they yielded to power and force, but they had no one to blame but themselves" (國家遭其蹂躪，人民受其荼毒卒至屈伏于強權，授人以刃，夫復何怨 *Guojia zaoqi roulin, renmin shouqi tudu, zuzhi qufuyu qiangquan, shourenyiren, fufuheyan*).⁵²

45 Tan graduated from Liangguang youji shifan xuetang (Advanced Normal College of Guangdong and Guangxi) and was a teacher at and later principal of Leizhou zhongxue (Leizhou Middle School) before enrolling in Peking University. He was a member of Tongmenghui. Chen graduated from Guangdong fazheng zhuanmen xuexiao (College of Law and Politics of Guangdong). These two colleges were the only institutions of higher education in Guangdong.

46 See Chen Boheng, "Wo suo zhidao de Chen Gongbo" [What I know about Chen Gongbo], *Guangzhou wenshi ziliao* [Historical accounts of Guangzhou], no. 4, 183; Xu Sida and Gao Chengyuan, "Wo suo zhidao de Chen Gongbo yiwen de buchong dingzheng" [Some supplements to the article "What I know about Chen Gongbo"], *Guangzhou wenshi ziliao*, no. 11, 180.

47 Tan Pingshan, "Demokelaxi zhi simianguan" [Four aspects of democracy], *Xinchao* 1, no. 5 (May 1919): 807–21.

48 Tan, "Demokelaxi zhi simianguan," 816–17.

49 Tan, "Demokelaxi zhi simianguan," 816–18.

50 Liu Hui, "Aierfute gangling ji kaociji de jieshuo zaihua zaoqi chuanbo yu zhonggong de guanxi" [Early dissemination of the Erfurt Program and Karl Kautsky's explanation in China and the CCP], *Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu*, no. 10 (2015): 55–56.

51 See Edmund S. K. Fung, "State Building, Capitalist Development, and Social Justice: Social Democracy in China's Modern Transformation, 1921–1949," *Modern China* 31, no. 3 (July 2005): 318–52.

52 Tan, "Demokelaxi zhi simianguan," 819.

Tan and Chen's interest in social democracy was rooted in the new cultural atmosphere in Beijing mobilized by national cultural elites like Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao. Nonetheless, their unique understanding of Marxism differed from both Li's embrace of the Russian Revolution and Chen's praise of class war. Nor did they experience a stage of anarchism before entering Marxism as Mao Zedong and Yun Daiying did. Coincidentally, their political plan to construct a social democratic institution from above and educate and train the masses from below was partly shared by Chen Jiongming (陳炯明 1878–1933). After graduation they went back to Guangzhou, which was controlled several months later by Chen Jiongming's army. Chen Jiongming legitimized political elections for magistrates, labor protection, and the dissemination of New Culture, though he was not a Marxist. Tan and Chen surely did not completely agree with these policies, many of which, however, did kindle their hope for a social democratic polity in Guangdong, although they had adjusted their opinion about Bolshevism by then.⁵³

Tan Pingshan and Chen Gongbo also consolidated their positions as provincial cultural celebrities in 1921 and 1922. They returned to their alma mater as professors and soon became new stars in the Cantonese cultural circle. Their newspaper, *Guangdong qunbao* (廣東群報), propagated new theories and gained popularity among young students. Both served as commissioners on the Guangdong Education Committee (廣東教育委員會 Guangdong jiaoyu weiyuanhui), and Chen was appointed principal of the Provincial Cadre School (宣講員養成所 Xuanchuanyuan yangchengsuo). Their cultural positions enabled them to attract and influence core members from local middle schools like Ruan Xiaoxian (阮嘯仙 1897–1935), Liu Ersong (劉爾崧 1899–1927), and Feng Jupō (馮菊坡 1899–1957), who shared both their theoretical attitude toward Marxism and attitude toward Chen Jiongming. In contrast, leaders in Shanghai, like Chen Duxiu and Cai Hesen, were more and more convinced that the CCP should commit to a violent revolution against the establishment rather than cooperating with someone in power like Chen Jiongming. This led Chen Duxiu in 1922 to criticize Chen Jiongming as someone who knew nothing about socialism.⁵⁴ Cai Hesen's disdain for Chen Jiongming might even have dated from August 1920 when the latter was glorified as a "socialist general" in Zhangzhou (漳州).⁵⁵

The divergence between the Cantonese organization and Shanghai leaders was completed once Chen Jiongming split from Sun Yat-sen in June 1922. Tan and Chen were accused by Shanghai of "attaching to Chen Jiongming and opposing Sun Yat-sen" (附陳反孫 *fu Chen fan Sun*), and many Cantonese members were so furious about the decision of Shanghai leaders that they demanded a complete separation from the CCP.⁵⁶

53 Tan, for example, praised the magistrate election in July 1921: "We Cantonese people have easily gotten [the right to vote], which has not been achieved in other provinces; this is really fortunate" (Zai tasheng suo lizheng er weide zhe, wo Guangdong renmin que chuishou er dezhi, chengran jiaoxing yiji). See Tan Pingshan, "Difang zizhi yu yiwujiaoyu yanchang" [Local autonomy and the extension of compulsory education], *Guangdongsheng jiaoyuhui zazhi*, no. 1 (1921), 132.

54 Chen Duxiu, "Chen Duxiu zhi Wu Tingkang de xin" [A letter from Chen Duxiu to Grigory Voitinsky], in *Erda he sanda: Zhongguo gongchandang di er san ci daibiao dahui ziliao xuanbian* [Second and third congress: collected documents of the second and third CCP congresses] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1985), 55.

55 Cai Hesen, "Cai Linbin gei Mao Zedong" [Letter from Cai Hesen to Mao Zedong], in *Cai Hesen wenji* [Collected works of Cai Hesen] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1980), 51.

56 Chen Gongbo, "Wo yu gongchandang" [I and the CCP], in *Hanfeng ji* [Cold wind] (Shanghai: Difang xingzheng she, 1945), 226–27.

TRANSFORMATION FROM INTELLECTUAL TO REVOLUTIONARY

Another origin of the conflict lay in the different social identities of Shanghai and Cantonese leaders. Chen Duxiu and Cai Hesen at that time did not occupy a position in any political or educational institution and had transformed themselves into revolutionaries. Tan Pingshan and Chen Gongbo, on the other hand, were still important figures in cultural and educational circles. Marxism, or social democracy, to them was not only a political blueprint but something requiring scrupulous theoretical discussion. After the June incident, Tan Pingshan published an anonymous article in *The Endeavor* (努力週報 *Nuli zhoubao*) and criticized both Sun Yat-sen and Chen Jiongming in the tone of an outsider.⁵⁷ In hindsight, the accusation that Tan Pingshan and Chen Gongbo followed Chen Jiongming was truly unfair, but their dispassionate and even aloof attitude toward politics did collide with Shanghai leaders who were eager to announce explicitly their political stance as a revolutionary party. Here we can see the heritage of the tension between Dai Jitao and Hu Hanmin's academic orientation and Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao's political one, discussed above.⁵⁸

Clearly, from mid-1922 the issue of remaining an intellectual or becoming a revolutionary loomed large. A resolution of the CCP's second congress warned that "since we are not intellectuals studying theories," "there is no need to go to a university, study society, or library." A party member should instead make revolution and obey "iron discipline."⁵⁹ Marxism thus began to move from cultural field to revolutionary network, with the academic inclination of studying Marxism suppressed.

The transformation could be recognized outside China as well. In January 1921, Zhang Shenfu (張申府 1893–1986), Zhao Shiyan (趙世炎 1901–1927), Zhou Enlai, and Liu Qingyang (劉清揚 1894–1977) created a branch in France. Before that, Zhang had been a lecturer at Peking University and ranked only behind Li Dazhao in the Beijing Marxist circle. He became a cultural celebrity for his well-known introduction into China of the philosophical and mathematical thought of Bertrand Russell (1872–1970).

Zhang was surely the core of the French cell, a cell more like a salon than a disciplined party, shaped by a cultural aura and personal friendship. However, the branch absorbed many young students and in November 1921 developed into the Chinese Communist Youth Party (中國少年共產黨 *Zhongguo shaonian gongchandang*); Zhao Shiyan was elected secretary.⁶⁰

57 Di Jin [Tan Pingshan], "Ji Sun Chen zhi zheng" [Discussing Sun-Chen conflict], *Nuli zhoubao*, no. 16 (1922), 1–4.

58 In an article titled "Institution and Thought" published in March 1920, Chen Gongbo showed his strong interest in the relation between economic life and thought. After breaking from the CCP after the June incident, Chen left Guangzhou for Columbia University in New York. His dissertation demonstrated his enduring interest in the application of the economic interpretation of history in China. Chen Gongbo, "Zhidu yu sixiang" [Institution and thought], *Zhengheng* [Critique of politics], no. 1 (March 1920): 1–6; Chen Kung-po [Chen Gongbo], *The Communist Movement in China: An Essay Written in 1924*, ed. Martin Wilbur, East Asian Institute Studies Series (New York: Columbia University East Asian Institute, 1960), 64–66.

59 *Erda he sanda*, 85.

60 Zhang Hongxiang and Wang Yongxiang, *Liufa qingong jianxue yundong jianshi* [Brief history of the "diligent work, frugal study" movement] (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 1982), 102.

In contrast to poor students coming to France, Zhang Shenfu came there as a well-paid teacher, living comfortably in his luxurious flat on rue des Écoles in Paris.⁶¹ Among the students in France, there was a saying that those financed by government belonged to the bourgeoisie while poor students supporting themselves were the proletariat.⁶² By this standard, Zhang Shenfu belonged to the grand bourgeoisie.

With the absorption of the radical “proletariat,” the initial network and leadership style within the organization changed dramatically, and Zhang Shenfu’s role became subtle. As a noted intellectual he did not want to confine himself within the theory of Marx. He was a fanatical fan of Bertrand Russell and gradually expanded his interests to Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein. Sometimes he just left Zhao Shiyan and Zhou Enlai to take charge, but on other occasions he would interfere behind the scenes. Zhang’s immersion in academic research and his arrogance and bourgeois lifestyle seemed to be increasingly incompatible with the leadership the party required. In February 1923 the party held a meeting in France and decided to dismiss Zhang Shenfu, and, unsurprisingly, the prideful leader, then living in Berlin, was furious about the decision: “Would you dare to, would you presume to, oust Chen Duxiu from the Communist Party if he were here in my place?”⁶³ In his eyes, he was the Chen Duxiu of Europe.

According to Schwarcz’s interview with Zhang, the incident was ended by the Comintern, which restored Zhang’s position.⁶⁴ However, Zhang’s power base quietly changed. In the past, Zhang had based his authority upon a high reputation as a cultural leader, but now he was led by the Comintern. The era of intellectuals in the CCP was over, and it was time for revolutionaries to take the stage. In the end, Zhang Shenfu left the party in 1925.

This important transformation may be observed more clearly in the Chinese Communist cell in Moscow, which was established at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East (東方勞動者共產主義大學 Dongfang laodongzhe gongchanzhuyi daxue). In the spring of 1923, when Zheng Chaolin (鄭超麟 1901–1998), a member of the Chinese Communist Youth Party, arrived in Moscow from France, he was surprised by the rigid superior-subordinate relationship among the Chinese comrades there. The warm-hearted friendship among intellectuals had disappeared, displaced by several supercilious “leaders”—like Luo Yinong (羅亦農 1902–1928) and Peng Shuzhi (彭述之 1895–1983)—and the obedient and apprehensive “masses,” though in theory they were comrades to each other.⁶⁵ If the youth party in France still retained some elements shaped by a cultural circle, the Moscow branch already exhibited a very different model, shaped by Bolshevik style.

61 Vera Schwarcz, *Time for Telling Truth is Running Out: Conversations with Zhang Shenfu* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 102–3.

62 Zheng Chaolin, *Zheng Chaolin huiyilu* [Memoir of Zheng Chaolin] (Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 2004), 172.

63 Schwarcz, *Time for Telling Truth is Running Out*, 115.

64 Schwarcz, *Time for Telling Truth is Running Out*, 117.

65 Zheng, *Zheng Chaolin huiyilu*, 185–88.

CONCLUSION

The dissemination of Marxism in China during the May Fourth period took place in the cultural field, shaped by cultural hierarchy and cultural power. Those wielding cultural power had a better position for defining what Marxism was and how it was relevant to China. The nationwide and regional cultural elites thus became the producers of knowledge, albeit on different levels, leaving the local petty intellectuals to consume the knowledge. Therefore, the spread of Marxism was not equivalent to a rebellion against the existing social and political order; rather, it relied on the established cultural power to expand. The existence of the three-tiered system reveals to us that such expansion was a trickle-down process, in which Marxism was reunderstood within specific contexts in different cases.

However, when Marxism became the ideological guidance for revolutionary practice after 1922, the basis of the leaders' power, the members' social identity, and the whole organization of the party all began to change. The people discussing and propagating Marxism no longer behaved as intellectuals but identified themselves as revolutionaries. For Chen Duxiu and Cai Hesen, such a transformation was an easy and natural one, but Chen Gongbo and Zhang Shenfu may have found it a bitter and tortuous passage. But the process was irreversible, and these intellectuals had to choose their own ways. Contrary to existing opinion, it was not marginalized intellectuals, abandoned by society, who initiated the spread of Marxism and committed to the Communist revolution; it was the cultural elites who led the way during the May Fourth era and then isolated themselves from the establishment after 1922.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTOR

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