



Panel's title : *Charity and the Nation, late Qing to early Republic*

Coordinator (Goethe University Frankfurt): Daniel Hausmann

Discussant (University of Michigan): Emily Mokros

Language : English

Topics : (History, Nationalism, Charity, late Imperial China, Republican China, Disasters)

Panel presentation :

This panel analyzes the interplay of nationalism and charity in the late Qing and early Republic. We argue that traditional religion, that is spiritual retribution (baoying) and practices of ethical self-cultivation in particular, but also a strongly political interpretative framework of crisis contributed to link charity to nationalism. It seeks to locate the rise of nationalism within the specific context of charitable practices in order to provide a critical foundation to discuss the uneasy relation between nationalism and charitable movements.

Key words : Nationalism, Charity, late Imperial China, Republican China

Participants :

- 1) Daniel Hausmann (Goethe University Frankfurt)

Communication's title : Nationalism and Late Qing Charity: Private Charity during the Great North China Famine

Language : English

Presentation :

Interprovincial charity, mainly based in Shanghai and Suzhou, first emerged in the 1875s and its leaders famously orchestrated a large scale relief effort for the Great North China Famine (1876-78). Many Chinese and Western researchers argued that this so-called "righteous relief" (yizhen) movement was tightly connected to both: the rise of a new merchant class and their growing awareness that the nation was in peril.

By focussing on news clippings and editorials in the Shenbao, announcements, appeals and other public writings by philanthropists at that time, and lastly on diary entries, this paper sketches the motivational horizon wherein to situate "righteous relief." It tries to show that beliefs of spiritual retribution (baoying) were an important framework which fundamentally shaped the ethical outlook of these late 19th century philanthropists, and it was a major reason to provide charity on a national scale. Moreover, the diary entries in particular display a certain degree of xenophobia triggered by missionary relief thus building on traditional values and prejudices. In sum, this paper highlights how traditional beliefs and values shaped the emergence of nationalism in the domain of charity.

Key words : late Imperial China; Charity; Nationalism



2) Matthias Schumann (Goethe University Frankfurt)

Communication's title : Between the National and the Global: The Red Swastika Society (Shijie Hongwanzihui) and the Rise of Humanitarianism in Republican China

Language : English

Presentation :

As many scholars have noted, a new global humanitarianism arose after WWI which did no longer provide relief primarily based on ethnic or national affiliation. There was a similar development in China. In 1922, the Red Swastika Society was founded which sought to assist all humans in distress regardless of religious creed or nationality. Building on the model of the Red Cross, the Society saved many lives during the recurring crises within China but also provided relief in the international arena. At the same time, however, the relationship to foreign organizations and models remained ambiguous. The Red Swastika Society sought to establish an essentially Chinese charity organization, grounded in Buddhist and Daoist religious imagery. Furthermore, the presence of foreign actors such as the Red Cross underlined the presumed inability of Chinese actors to provide charity on their own terms. Members of the Red Swastika lamented this situation, calling for the Chinese to care for their own citizens. The global humanitarianism of the Red Swastika Society was thus at once the result of the appropriation of global models as well as a conscious attempt to showcase Chinese parity with foreign actors.

Key words : Republican China; Charity; Nationalism; Religious Societies

3) Pierre Fuller (University of Manchester)

Communication's title : Student coverage of charity and disaster in early Republican China and the formation of revolutionary nationalism

Language : English

Presentation :

Great numbers of students took up journalism during the May Fourth era as a way of capturing everyday life and diagnosing social ills with the aim of reformist and revolutionary transformation. This paper analyses an overlooked aspect of this journalistic movement, as well as the formation of national identity in China generally, by documenting the process through which radical intellectuals handled the subject of charity and disaster response. The paper focuses on May Fourth coverage of two monumental disasters – the great Gansu (Haiyuan) Earthquake of December 1920 and the great North China drought famine of 1920-21 – both of which struck at a key moment in the formation of modern Chinese nationalism and identity. It offers a revealing window onto the politicization of disaster narratives in the service of revolutionary objectives by revealing the tensions between local/communal and revolutionary memory of catastrophe, while shedding light on the roles of intellectuals and student activists in shaping the ideological programs of future revolutionary regimes.

Key words : Republican China; Charity; Nationalism, May Fourth Movement