

CHAPTER 1

Beyond Independence

The Dawn of Korean Anarchism in China

Anarchism had already been introduced to Koreans exiled in China before 1919.¹ But it was only after 1919 that anarchism was viewed as a suitable principle for the construction of a new Korean society, as well as for their country's independence. Needless to say, the Russian Revolution of 1917 first greatly impacted Koreans in China and elsewhere, as it generated their strong interest and desire in socialism, including anarchism. At the same time, anarchism was also considered by many Korean exiles in China in the wake of factional strife within the independence camp, especially those in the Korean Provisional Government in Shanghai, established as a direct outcome of the 1919 March First Movement; the ongoing internal conflicts within the government and among the independence activists nurtured an antipolitical aura among many Koreans in China, which laid the groundwork for them to distrust politics, and thus also for their interest in anarchism, because of its disdain of politics and political movement. They were in dire need of a guiding principle for their united activities for both independence and anticolonialism. Anarchist repudiation of the nation-state at the same time led to the foundation for a regional alliance and solidarity among anarchists, paving the way for their transnational joint activity for a cosmopolitan world. This regional and transnational aspects of anarchism, as well as the negation of the state, may explain why many Korean anarchists had a rupture with the Provisional Government, at least until the late 1930s and early 1940s when, as I demonstrate in chapter 4, some anarchists

shifted their prime priority to national liberation and even decided to participate in the government to form a united national front against Japanese imperialism and render it a precondition to liberate Korea and then construct an anarchist society afterward.

The growing interest of China-based Korean independence activists in anarchism and their subsequent reception of it in the late 1910s and early 1920s resulted most importantly from their increased opportunities to have contacts with anarchist ideals and principles that were introduced to them through their encounters with Chinese anarchists and readings of anarchist writings available at the time in China, either in original Chinese text or in translation. In particular, their potential exposures to anarchist literature available in China in Chinese by 1920, which was, according to Arif Dirlik, “unmatched in scope and comprehensiveness by any other social and political philosophies of European origin,”² as well as their direct associations/interactions with Chinese anarchists and their organizations, played a crucial role in their growing interest in and acceptance of anarchism. As Peter Zarrow adds, the years “from the New Culture Movement of the mid-1910s to about 1925” were “the heyday of Chinese anarchism,” during which “a good deal of organizational activity, especially anarcho-syndicalism, as well as ideological refinement” were visible.³ With the abundance and richness of anarchist literature and increased anarchist activities through organizations, Korean exiles were exposed and then converted to anarchism, finally joining and/or cofounding many anarchist organizations together with Chinese and other Asian counterparts, not to mention publishing many anarchist journals jointly or independently.

Becoming Anarchist in Beijing

Many sources demonstrate the increased contacts and interactions after the March First Movement of 1919 between Korean exiles/radicals and Chinese anarchists, which marks the dawn of Korean anarchist movement in China.⁴ While the Provisional Government of Korea was established in Shanghai, many Korean radical exiles seemed to concentrate in Beijing as well as Shanghai for their activities for independence movement. Some had even gone to south China, especially Guangzhou. One of the earlier such cases can be found in the publication of an anarchism-oriented journal titled *The Light*

(*Guangming* in Chinese and *Gwangmyeong* in Korean), first published in Guangzhou on December 1, 1921. *The Light* was the only journal published jointly in the early twentieth century with the collaboration of Koreans and Chinese, albeit most of the articles it carried were written by Chinese.⁵ It was not a Korean anarchist journal per se, but nevertheless carried some anarchism-oriented articles, for example, in its inaugural issue. The author of an article in the issue titled "The Future of the Light Movement," propagated mutual aid with a prediction that "the future of the Light Movement lies within the world of freedom, equality, universal love, and mutual aid."⁶ In another article titled "The Light Movement in China and Korea," the author of it asserted that the revolutions in China and Korea aimed at achieving a social revolution, for China, having gone only through a political revolution (i.e., the 1911 Revolution), still had to be under the rule of and pressure from the warlords.⁷ It is safe to say that by the early 1920s, a fraternal alliance between Chinese and Koreans against Japanese aggression had become a commonly shared agenda of both Korean exiles in China and Chinese intellectuals. In the process of making an alliance, Korean radicals accepted anarchism in those Chinese cities with help from Chinese anarchists; Korean radicals' associations and interactions in various forms with Chinese anarchists and their organizations surely prompted the interest and ultimate reception of anarchism among them. However, not only through personal relationships with Chinese anarchists but also through readings on socialism and anarchism, Korean exiles/radicals in China were also increasingly drawn to anarchism, enticed initially to its principles like mutual aid and social transformation based on freedom and equality.

Among the first Korean anarchists in China was Shin Chaeho (1880–1936), a prominent Korean historian, journalist, and writer. Along with other Korean radicals in China, Shin had already published a journal in Shanghai called *New Greater Korea* (*Sin daehan*), basically an anarchism-oriented journal,⁸ for about four months between October 1919 and January 1920, in which socialism and anarchism were introduced and discussed. Although it is not clear if he was physically in Shanghai around that time, Shin also published a monthly journal called *Heavenly Drum* (*Cheon-go*), also in Shanghai in classical Chinese, between January and July 1921. This monthly journal was, in its orientation and content, not anarchist but carried articles written both by Koreans and Chinese, on the issues of mutual aid, and also promoted the Korean-Chinese alliance. For example, in its

third issue, published in February 1921, there was an article on Kropotkin's death in January of the same year, written by Shin himself with his pen name of Nammyeong, which introduced Kropotkin's idea of mutual aid and praised Kropotkin's personality.⁹

Shin had long had interest in anarchism, but became an anarchist only in the early 1920s, preferring "direct action" in the course of Korea's independence and revolution. Despite his long-held interest in anarchism, it seems Shin became an anarchist through his good relationship with some prominent Chinese anarchists like Li Shizeng (1881–1873), a Paris Chinese anarchist and one of the key members of the Guomindang (GMD, the Nationalist Party of China), and Cai Yuanpei (1868–1940), both at Beijing University. Li as a professor at Beijing University provided Shin in 1918 with a place to stay and an access to the Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature (*Sigu quanshu*), at the same university, to assist Shin's study of prehistoric Korean history. And according to a Korean source, around the time Shin was indulged and interested in reading the writings of Liu Sifu, commonly known as Shifu and called the "soul of Chinese anarchism,"¹⁰ Shin was also deeply influenced by what Kropotkin stated in his *An Appeal to the Young*. Kōtoku Shūsui's (1871–1911) many writings, particularly *On the Obliteration of Christ* (*Kirisuto Masatsuron*),¹¹ must have impressed Shin as well. At his trial later in 1929, after being arrested by Japanese police, Shin even testified that he had understood that Kōtoku's anarchist works were the most "reasonable" ones for the understanding of anarchism.¹² Not only through personal relationships and associations with Chinese/Japanese anarchists, but also through the readings of their writings on anarchism, both original and in translation, Korean exiles in Beijing like Shin were increasingly drawn to anarchism and became acquainted with other Asian anarchists.

In addition, Shin's friendship with Yi Hoeyeong (1867–1932), often called "the pioneer of Korean anarchism,"¹³ must have been a factor as well for his acceptance of anarchism. Yi had exiled to China in 1910 with his five brothers for independence movement and had been in Beijing with Shin as exiles, having a wide range of relationship with many Korean expatriates, including anarchists such as Yu Ja-myeong (1894–1985).¹⁴ Yu, born in Northern Chungcheong Province in Korea, was known as "the best [anarchist] theoretician of the time."¹⁵ After participating in the March First Movement of 1919 as teacher of a school in the city of Chungju, Yu moved to Shanghai

and became a member of the Provisional Government of Korea in Shanghai. He seemed to be interested in socialism at the time but rejected communism because he believed that the most urgent task for Korean people was national liberation, not class struggle or class liberation.¹⁶ His range of activities was wide: as an anarchist he participated in the Righteous Group (Uiyeoldan), a terror-oriented Korean anarchist-like group in China, and in the formation of the United Society of the Eastern Oppressed Peoples (Dongfang beiyapo minzu lianhehui) in Wuhan in 1927;¹⁷ and as a teacher Yu taught briefly at Dawn Advanced Middle School (Liming gaoji zhongxue) and Lida College (Lida xueyuan) in 1930. In China in the 1930s, Yu would become a central figure in the formation of the national front.¹⁸ Yu along with Kim Wonbong (1898–1958),¹⁹ leader of the Righteous Group, requested Shin Chaeho to write the famous “Declaration of the Korean Revolution” (“Joseon [Chosŏn] hyeokmyeong seoneon”), which Shin penned in January 1923 and is now believed to be a sign of his conversion to anarchism.²⁰

The case of Yu Rim (1894–1961) illuminates a constant move of Korean anarchists from and to Korea and even within China. Yu moved to Manchuria in 1919 for independence movement and became soon an anarchist, interacting with Shin Chaeho and others in Beijing but at the same time possibly with Sichuanese Chinese anarchists between 1922 and 1925, when he was a student at National Chengdu University in Sichuan Province. After participating in the Wuchang Uprising and the Guangzhou Uprising in 1927, Yu returned to Manchuria where he organized the United Society of All Korean People (Hanjok chong yeonhaphoe) with Yi Eulgyu (1894–1972) and Kim Jongjin (1900–1931) in 1929. In November of the same year, he sneaked into the Korean peninsula to help establish the Korean Anarcho-Communist Federation (KAF, Joseon gongsan mujeongbu juujia yeonmaeng) with his comrades in colonial Korea. After being imprisoned for his anarchist activities in Korea, he returned to Manchuria and then moved to Chongqing where he joined the Provisional Government of Korea in the name of a united fight of all Koreans against the Japanese.²¹ According to his loyal disciplines, Yu was the most important Korean anarchist in the history of Korean anarchist movement, since he not only endeavored unflinchingly to embark on the anarchist movement in colonial Korea before 1945 at the risk of his life when he crossed the border between Manchuria and Korea, but also because he consistently understood the importance of promoting

a mass movement and educating of workers and peasants in realizing anarchism before and after 1945.²²

Yi Jeonggyu (1897–1984), one of the most active Korean anarchists in 1920s China, just like other Korean exiles, began his career as an independence activist and converted later to anarchism. Unlike many Korean anarchists in China, he was first exposed to and become interested in socialism in Tokyo when he was a student at Keiō University in 1918.²³ When the 1919 March First Movement occurred, Yi returned to Korea at once and then left for Shanghai in April 1919, where he immediately participated in the Provisional Government of Korea there, representing the Province of Chungcheong, his home province. Until he was arrested and brought to colonial Korea for trial by Japanese police in October 1928, he had conducted his anarchist activities in China. According to his own recollection, Yi had been attracted by the news from Russia about the Russian Revolution and initially had a plan to go to Russia from China. Changing his plan, however, on his way to Russia at the end of 1921 to attend the Far East University in Chita, because of a rumor he heard about a potential danger of losing his life as a result of factional strife among Korean communists at the time, Yi decided to stay in Beijing. There he met Yu Ja-myeong and Chinese anarchists such as Li Shizeng and Cai Yuanpei, who gave him a chance to continue his education at Beijing University where he was enrolled as a sophomore in the Economics Department. The two years in Beijing from 1921 to 1923 were a “very important period” to Yi in formulating his ideas and personality, particularly in launching his life as an anarchist for the cause of independence and anarchist society.²⁴ Explaining how he had thrown himself to the divine cause of independence, Yi later stated that “living a life to fight for liberation of the fatherland was the one thing we the [Korean] youth only could do and felt proud of,” when they had to stay and live in China as exiles.²⁵ Yi must have accepted anarchism in regard to his national goal for Korea’s independence. In China he used to be called “the tip of a writing brush” (*pilbong*),²⁶ meaning that he had a sharp theoretical understanding of anarchism, while Yi Eulgyu, his elder brother who converted to anarchism in China as well, used to be nicknamed and known as “Korea’s Kropotkin” at that time for his extensive knowledge of anarchist “theories” and his cogency.²⁷

To many Korean anarchists in China like Yi Jeonggyu, establishing their own organizations was the first task, and they had two simultaneous goals in organizing themselves: independence

and building a new society in Korea based on anarchist ideals and principles, for both of which they first looked for alliance with their Chinese counterparts and actively engaged in the latter's activities. One earliest such a case comes from Yi Jeonggyu's association with Chinese anarchists and Esperantists. According to a police report of the Beiyang warlord government in Beijing, dated June 5, 1922, the Association for the Study of World Language (i.e., Esperanto) in China (Shijieyu xuehui) had just held a meeting over tea, days before the report was composed. The purpose of the meeting was to welcome a Japanese "communist" (*sic*) and two Koreans, Yi Jeonggyu and Yi Byeonggyu (probably Yi Eulgyu). A Chinese representative of the Association delivered a welcoming address, in which he explained to the attendees the current situation of the "Chinese anarchist party" (*Zhongguo wuzhengfu dang*) in various locations in China.²⁸ This was followed by Yi Jeonggyu's response. Yi, thanking the Chinese present, stated that all Koreans wished to recover Korea's national sovereignty and land, and thus strove for national liberation without any fear of sacrificing themselves. Yi then briefly expressed his hope that youths in China, Japan, and Korea could be united to move forward. At the meeting it was decided, according to the report, that those present from the three countries would get permission from their respective comrades to look into the possibility of convening a conference for all, at one place.²⁹

About a year after the meeting, Yi Jeonggyu collaborated with a Chinese man named Chen Kongshan to set up Beijing Special School for Esperanto (Beijing shijieyu zhuanmen xuexiao) and was appointed as a faculty member at Dawn Middle School (Liming zhongxue) attached to the Special School. Chen was allegedly an alumnus of Beijing University with Yi, who entered it in 1922.³⁰ In September of 1923, Yi also participated with Chen Weiqi (or Chen Weiguang) in a project proposed by a Chinese anarchist with surname of Zhou, which schemed to move about fifty Korean peasant families from Korea to Hanshui Xian in Hunan Province in China, to construct an ideal farming village together with Chinese peasants there. The project was intended to have them cultivate ginseng together to increase their income. Although it failed because the Zhou family was scattered around as a result of the internal warfare in Hunan, the proposed project is highly praised by Korean historians as "the first experiment that attempted to build an ideal society in farming villages in the history of Korean anarchism."³¹ The failed project could be included

in the history of Korean anarchism, mostly because the underlining goal of it, to build an ideal society in rural villages by increasing farmers' income, was to be revived again and again by Yi, among others, even after 1945.

Besides participating in the anarchist activities of Chinese comrades, Yi Jeonggyu also interacted in Beijing with many other radicals and anarchists such as Lu Xun (1881–1936), a pen name of Zhou Shuren, who was one of the most influential figures in Chinese literature; Zhou Zuoren (1885–1967), Lu Xun's brother and a well-known writer and essayist; and Taiwanese anarchist Fan Benliang (1897–1945). The latter deserves special attention. Just like Yi, Fan used to be a study-abroad student in Tokyo, where he had converted to anarchism. He had moved to Beijing where he organized the New Taiwanese Anarchist Society (*Xin taiwan ansha*), and launched its journal called *New Taiwan* (*Xin taiwan*) in Beijing in December 1924, which became a newspaper beginning with its third issue on March 1, 1925.³² Fan's name appears quite often throughout the history of Korean anarchist movement in 1920s China as one of its main non-Korean comrades.

In addition to Fan, Vasilij Eroshenko (1889–1952) was one of the most important anarchists Yi had met and interacted with in Beijing. Eroshenko was a blind Russian poet and anarchist who visited China in the early 1920s, and delivered his cosmopolitanism to the Chinese audience and possibly Korean exiles and anarchists in China, as well.³³ In fact, what Eroshenko talked to Yi about the situation in Soviet Russia under Lenin's rule convinced Yi that anarchist principles, not those of the Soviet-style communism, must be used to achieve social revolution.³⁴ When he became aware of then-Russian situation from Eroshenko, Yi probably recalled what he had heard about the rift among Korean communists in the early 1920s over the funds given to them from Lenin and their bloody factional fight, which stopped him from taking a trip to Chita in Siberia. In fact, Eroshenko was instrumental in not only introducing anarchist ideas to Korean anarchists in China, particularly in Beijing, but also to giving Korean radicals the sense of what Leninist communism in the Soviet Union looked like. An example, in this regard, is the case of Jeong Hwaam who, just like others in China, heard from Eroshenko about the political realities of Soviet Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, such as the purge of anarchists there. Jeong was one of the Korean exiles in China who converted to anarchism through his interactions with Eroshenko, among many others.³⁵ Yi and Jeong were the ones who were

ultimately convinced of the value of anarchism through their interactions with other anarchists in Beijing, and accepted it as the principle most suitable for Korea's independence and social transformation.

In pursuing the above-mentioned project to build an ideal farming village in Hunan, Yi Jeonggyu widely solicited support from other Korean exiles in Beijing. One of them was Yi Hoeyeong, who had worked with many Korean exiles and anarchists, including Shin Chae-ho, Yu Ja-myeong, Han Yeongbok, and Bak Seungbyeong, all of whom published with Yi an anarchism-inspired journal called *Heavenly Drum* in 1921. According to a Korea source, in December 1922, Yi Hoeyeong was in search of a principle that he thought could answer the question of independence and its related problems, for which he met with not only Koreans such as Yu Ja-myeong, Yi Eulgyu, and Yi Jeonggyu, but others as well, including Lu Xun, Eroshenko and Fan Benliang. His search for an answer to the question of independence must have stopped when he found anarchism, which is quite obvious from his statement about what had enticed him to it. Yi Hoeyeong allegedly explained later in 1925 that "I don't think I have consciously become or converted to be an anarchist. From a contemporary perspective of thoughts, my idea and plan for the realization of Korea's independence are coincident with those of anarchism."³⁶ Yi had met with a wide range of radicals and independence activists, including the ones listed above. In fact, it is believed that there were no Korean independence activists in Beijing who didn't drop by Yi Hoeyeong's residence in Beijing.³⁷ It seems that Yi Hoeyeong surely was impressed with Yi Jeonggyu's project and anarchist ideas with regard to the proposed ideal farming villages in Hunan. Indeed, it is said that Yi Jeonggyu's role was decisive in converting Yi Hoeyeong, who was persuaded by the former about the goal of anarchism and thus accepted it in later 1923.³⁸ Discussing with many kinds of independence activists and radicals, including Chinese and Taiwanese, Yi Hoeyeong finally chose anarchism for his own answer. The national goal, of course, was the key that drew him to anarchism.

Yi Hoeyeong was one of those who frequently proposed that Korean anarchists must participate in the movement of Chinese anarchists and vice versa; he saw making close connections between the two movements through reciprocal cooperation so crucial.³⁹ This proposed interactiveness between Korean and Chinese anarchists remained of importance until 1945, as we will see in chapter 4, and at the same time explains the existential conditions Korean anarchists

faced in China. In other words, from the Korean anarchist perspective, their cooperation and alliance with Chinese comrades was simply necessary and even essential, first, for their survival as political refugees and, then, for the effectiveness of their independence activities, but, most importantly, for the implementation of their shared anarchist ideals in a foreign soil. Anarchism with its cosmopolitan messages and principles, to put it blatantly, allowed Korean anarchists to emphasize an alliance with other anarchists beyond their national boundaries, which in turn was imperative to seek safety in their activities in China. In this sense, to call Yi Hoeyeong “the pioneer of Korean anarchism” is an interesting indication of the coming trajectory and transnational character of Korean anarchism in China in the 1930s and '40s. Their deep, shared belief with other anarchists, especially Chinese, that without a social revolution no political changes in both Korea and the world could be made, was to play a crucial role in having them transcend their national and, even in some cases, regional boundaries for, first, an independent Korea and, then, a better world.

Next, Jeong Hwaam explains how he converted to anarchism in China, which vindicates the importance of national consciousness and the popularity of socialism in general as the most important two motives for Korean anarchists to accept anarchism in China. Jeong, one of the leading Korean anarchists in China before 1945,⁴⁰ recalls two elements that attracted the Korean exiles in China, including himself, to anarchism: their resistance to Japanese imperialism in order to secure independence, and their adoration for “communism,” with the emphasis on the former. He was particularly attracted to anarchism because of his “instinctive nationalist impulse” to resist Japan, and became convinced that “the final goal of the anarchist movement” was “the overthrow of Japanese imperialism” and “independence through resistance against Japan [*hang-il*].”⁴¹ Jeong also discussed with other anarchists such as the Yi brothers (Yi Eulgyu and Yi Jeonggyu) and Yu Ja-myeong, finding a “non-theoretical ideology” (*sic*) for the independence movement to clarify “the objectives of [Korean] nation-building.”⁴² It was at this moment, I think, that anarchism began to be read and understood by these theoretically equipped Korean anarchists, not just for the goal of independence but with reference to a new society after independence. Nevertheless, as Jeong recalls, to him anarchism “sounded good anyway at first,” more emotionally than theoretically.⁴³ As their activities in the ensuing years demonstrate, however, he and others were not deaf at all to the universal mes-

sages with the theoretical implications anarchism delivered to them, such as freedom, equality, revolution, democracy, development, and so on. As I mentioned in the Introduction, Jeong was also drawn to anarchism as a result of his increased awareness of the universal problems under capitalism.

Indeed, with their growing interest in and acceptance of anarchism, Korean exiles and radicals in Beijing now began to organize themselves and engage in various activities, chief among them involving organizations and publications for the cause of both independence and anarchism. The Beijing Branch of the Black Youth Alliance (BBBYA, Heuksaek cheongnyeong dongmaeng or Heise qingnian tongmeng), presumably the first Korean anarchist organization in China, was allegedly organized in the early 1920s, but didn't publish its own journal. Not many facts are known about it and its membership, but it seemed that the BBBYA could have possibly been organized by Shin Chaeho.⁴⁴ And next, sponsored by Chinese anarchist Cai Yuanpei, Zhang Ji (1882–1947), Li Shizeng and Wu Zhihui (1865–1953), the Black Flag League (BFL, Heukgi yeonmaeng or Heiqi lianmeng) was organized at Beijing Minguo University in October 1924 by some Korean anarchist students like Yu Seo (or Yu Giseok, 1905–1980) and Sim Yonghae (Sim Yeochu, or Shen Ruqiu in Chinese, 1904–1930) with participation of Chinese such as Ba Jin (1904–2005) and Xiang Peiliang.⁴⁵ The BFL, a product of the like-minded Korean and Chinese anarchists and of their joint activities, had its own journal titled the *Eastern Miscellaneous* (*Dongfang zazhi*), published in Chinese. Some of the Korean anarchist students such as Yu Seo and Sim Yongcheol (Sim Geukchu, or Shen Keqiu in Chinese, 1914–?), Sim Yonghae's younger brother, organized a group for the study of Kropotkin later in September of 1926, and began to exchange their unknown journals with other anarchists groups.⁴⁶

Here, Yu Seo's activities draw our special attention in terms of intense interactions between Korean and Chinese anarchists. Yu, born in the Province of Hwanghae in Korea, left for China in 1912 and became a Chinese citizen in 1916, after his family had moved in 1913 to the city of Yanji in Jilin Province of China. Believing that "the life of a person who has lost the country (*wangguo nu*) is more miserable than that of a dog in the house of death,"⁴⁷ he readily participated in both anarchist and Korean independence movements in China. In 1925 he promoted the establishment of the Society of the Masses (*Minzhongshe*) with Chinese anarchists. And probably due to

his relationship with Lu Xun, whose short story titled “A Madman’s Diary” (Kuangren riji) was translated by Yu in Korean, when there was a debate with Marxists led by the Young Chinese Anarchist Federation (Xiaonian Zhongguo wuzhengfu zhuyi lianmeng), later in 1928 Yu, in defense of anarchist literature against Marxist literature, participated in Shanghai in the publication of Chinese anarchist literary journals, *Contemporary Culture* (*Xiandai wenhua*), *Popular Culture* (*Minjian wenhua*), and *Cultural Front* (*Wenhua zhanxian*), contributing articles to them with other Chinese anarchists such as Mao Yipo (1901–1996) and Lu Jianbo (1904–1990), and advocating the “literature of the masses” (*minzhong wenxue*). According to Sim Yongcheol, Yu once plotted an assassination of Chiang Kai-shek with Chinese anarchist Wang Yachu (1897–1936) in January 1933, after the “Shanghai Incident.”⁴⁸

Evidence of the intimate interactions in China between Korean and Chinese and other Asian anarchists could be found further in the case of the Sim brothers. Sim Yonghae, a young Korean anarchist who was fluent both in Chinese and Esperanto, and was murdered by Japanese military in Manchuria in 1930, once worked as an editor for the *National Customs Daily* (*Guofeng ribao*), published by Chinese anarchists such as Jing Meijiu (1882–1959), as publisher, and Hua Lin (1889–1980), as editor-in-chief. Sim made the newspaper’s editing office his workplace and home as well and shared it with Chinese anarchist Suofei and two Japanese anarchists whose surnames were Sano (probably Sano Ichirō) and Matsumoto, respectively. Sim and the Japanese anarchists shared the idea of “Great Unity” (*datong*), believing that “All under Heaven [*tianxia*] comprises one family and the whole world [*sihai*] is full of whole brothers.” Not only did they share the cosmopolitan idea, but they worked together. For example, Sim translated Matsumoto’s article titled “The so-called Rebellious Koreans” (*Suowei ‘bucheng xianren’*) into Chinese, which was subsequently carried in *Sea of Learning* (*Xuehui*), a supplement of the *National Customs Daily*.⁴⁹ The Sea of Learning Society (*Xuehuishe*), which published *Sea of Learning* from October 1922 to 1924, was an important base for Chinese anarchists and had extensive connections with not only Chinese but also other anarchists, creating a relatively huge influence on the latter.⁵⁰ Sim and the Japanese anarchists must have been associated with the Society, given their consensus that the only enemy was Japanese imperialism.

Sim Yonghae also published *Korean Youth* (*Gaoli qingnian*) in the winter of 1924, to which prominent Chinese anarchist Ba Jin contrib-

uted his writings.⁵¹ Sim's younger brother, Sim Yongcheol, confirms the close relationship between his brother and Chinese anarchists. He recalls that his brother, in addition to Yu Seo, worked closely with Chinese anarchists such as Ba Jin, Shen Zhongjiu (1887–1968), Wei Huilin (1900–1992), and so forth to publish the biweekly magazine *The Masses* (*Minzhong*) in Shanghai in 1925.⁵² According to Yu Ja-myeong, Ba Jin also was befriended by Sim there, as well and later acquainted with Yu Seo through Sim.⁵³ Sim Yongcheol became friends with Fan Benliang and Lin Bingwen (1897–1945), Taiwanese anarchists who throughout their presence in China worked closely with Korean anarchists on many occasions. Sim Yongcheol also recalls that he had once studied and made friends in China with a Vietnamese student whose Chinese name was Yuan Xingguo, who, Sim later realized, was a younger brother of Ho Chih Minh.⁵⁴

After having some experience with small and sporadic organizations and publications, Korean anarchists in China, in an effort to organize themselves, finally gathered in Beijing to establish the Korean Anarchist League in China (KALC, *Jae jungguk joseon mujeongbu juuija yeonmaeng*) in April 1924. It included almost all Korean anarchists active in then-China as participants, such as Yi Hoeyeong, Yu Ja-myeong, the Yi brothers, Jeong Hwaam, and Baek Jeonggi (1896–1934), all of whom were expatriates also working for Korea's independence in China. Not much is known about the KALC's activity but many have testified that it published its organ *Justice Newspaper* (*Jeong-ui gongbo* in Korean or *Zhengyi gongbao* in Chinese),⁵⁵ supposedly the first Korean anarchist newspaper published in China. The newspaper has not survived and only fragmentary information about it is available today. Yi Hoeyeong was its editor-in-chief, and among the frequent contributors to it was Shin Chaeho who, for unknown reasons, didn't join the KALC itself but obviously partook in its newspaper works. The basic stance of the newspaper was to criticize the "wrong ideas" for Korea's independence, mainly led and employed by the Korean nationalist independence camp in China, represented by the Provisional Government of Korea in Shanghai, which had functioned as the legitimate exile government of Korea since 1919. The newspaper's criticism was also directed toward the factional strife within the nationalist camp and the Provisional Government itself. Bolshevism, of course, was another target of the newspaper's criticism. In addition, the newspaper insisted on the cooperation and coalition of various Korean independence groups in China, on the basis of the

anarchist “spontaneous alliance” principle. Due to the shortage of funds, it is said, after publishing its ninth issue, the newspaper was discontinued.⁵⁶

Although no issue of *Justice Newspaper* is available now for the current study, the comments of Yi Hoeyeong, its editor-in-chief, at about the time of its publication, regarding a future Korea after independence may help us to understand the newspaper’s vision of a postindependence Korean society. In his conversation in 1926 with Kim Jongjin, a young Korean anarchist then active in Manchuria, but who was to be murdered there later in 1931 by Korean communists at the age of thirty-one, Yi is said to have stated that:

It is expected that the internal political structure [of Korea] after independence should definitely avoid the concentration of power and that a local autonomous system, based upon the principle of decentralization of power, would be established and, at the same time, the central political structure, drawing upon the alliance of the local autonomous bodies, would be constructed.⁵⁷

And the “economic system [of the postindependence Korean society] should be managed by the society,” Yi added. “Since anarchism, unlike communism, does not require uniformity, anarchism, while maintaining its basic principles, can be accommodated to [Korea’s] custom or tradition, and cultural or economic situation,” Yi further contended.⁵⁸ In sum, the newspaper under his editorship probably propagated spontaneous alliance as the main principle to construct a new Korea and the unity of all independence movement organizations in China, not to mention anti-Bolshevism along with its critique of factionalism in the Korean nationalist camp in China.⁵⁹ What is most revealing is Yi’s openness to an understanding of anarchism for its “Koreanized” practice. As it will become clear in this study, the general anarchist principles adopted earlier but subsequently Koreanized or localized were to be of importance in the practice of anarchism among Korean anarchists in China, even after 1945.

It might be possible to locate some other factors that might have had some “influence” on the KALC’s activity and its newspaper’s vision for a new Korea. According to some Korean sources, the members of KALC frequently met and maintained a relationship with a group of Chinese anarchists such as Li Shizeng, Wu Zhihui, and Cai

Yuanpei.⁶⁰ The former two were the well-known core members of the Paris Chinese anarchists who were “modernists,” fetishized science, called for a cultural revolution, and favored “universal education,”⁶¹ while the latter was one who “shared some of the philosophical premises of anarchism and its vision of a cosmopolitan world.”⁶² Given their long relationship with Korean anarchists that would in fact continue until the 1940s,⁶³ it is quite possible that their version of anarchism was shared and possibly considered by Korean anarchists in shaping their version of it, which was the case as I demonstrate in chapter 4. The KALC anarchists also frequently met and interacted with other anarchists such as Vasilij Eroshenko and Fan Benliang. Of importance were not just their encounters and meetings but their possible engagement in the discussions of anarchism and the vision of a future world, as well as of the problems of their respective nation and the world with their solutions. Eroshenko particularly has been known as the one who converted many Korean exiles in China to anarchism, and Fan, probably sharing many concerns and problems as a colonized people with Korean anarchists, consented with his Korean comrades and they took actions together. These Korean interactions with other anarchists and their possible influences on Korean anarchists’ understanding of nationalism, anarchism, and the world problems, let alone their joint actions, cannot be treated lightly. There is no clear, direct evidence that shows that the influence from Chinese and other anarchists on Korean anarchists was decisive or formative in the latter’s conversion to anarchism, but it is revealing that many Korean exiles accepted anarchism in Beijing in the early 1920s through their various interactions with other anarchists in the course of their quest for Korea’s independence. More important was the nationalist direction of Korean anarchism they seemed to set at its inception, which had longer and more lasting impacts than they initially thought on the history of Korean anarchism.

Experimenting Anarchist Ideals Jointly in Shanghai

Since the turn of the twentieth century, Shanghai as a breeding place of Chinese revolutionaries and reformers had already made “the Tokyo-Shanghai connection,” posing a threat to the Qing dynasty, while Tokyo was a base for their revolutionary/reform activities.⁶⁴ For example, in Shanghai radical literary figures from China and Japan

frequently met at Uchiyama Bookstore (Uchiyama shōten), run by Uchiyama Kanzō (1885–1959), who had vague but “longstanding [*sic*] sympathy for the left,” and there also was the Gongfei Coffee Shop, where “leftwing [*sic*] Chinese and Japanese writers and cultural types frequently congregated.”⁶⁵ Shanghai in the 1910s was “readily becoming a breeding ground for subversive types from both” China and Japan.⁶⁶ This trend continued and was even strengthened after the Russian Revolution of 1917, and the arrival in Shanghai in 1920 of the representative of the Communist International (Comintern), George Voitinsky (1893–1953). With the formation of the alliance in 1924 between the GMD and the CCP under the sponsorship of the Comintern, Shanghai became a place where many kinds of radicals gathered from all over the world. By the early 1920s, Shanghai played a role as a node of the transnational network of radicals in Eastern Asia. Under the situation the “wind” of anarchism also blew in Shanghai to Korean radicals and exiles, as anarchist Yi Honggeun (1907–?) recalls.⁶⁷

Huaguang Hospital (Huaguang yiyuan) in the French Concession of Shanghai, established and run by Chinese anarchist Deng Mengxian, served from the early 1920s to the 1930s as a place for communication and contact not only among Chinese anarchists such as Ba Jin, Mao Yipo, and Lu Jianbo, but also among all other East Asian anarchists, including Yu Ja-myeong who became acquainted there with Sano Ichirō, who used his Chinese name Tian Huamin,⁶⁸ as well as with Ba Jin, Mao, Lu, and Deng.⁶⁹ The encounter between Yu and Ba Jin, in particular, developed later into a short story about Yu, written by Ba Jin. As Olga Lang notes, Ba Jin’s short story titled “A Story of Hair” (*Fa de gushi*), published later in 1936, “deals with Korean rebels (most probably anarchists), their struggle against the Japanese, and the relations between Chinese and Korean revolutionaries,” and was primarily based on Yu and his activities.⁷⁰ Deng had established a good relationship with Japanese anarchists since his study abroad in Japan and had provided his private hospital as a place of contact and communication for anarchists. According to historian Kim Myeongseop, the hospital was to host the Eastern anarchist convention later on June 14, 1928, at which the representatives from six countries decided to establish the Eastern Anarchist Federation (EAF, Dongfang wuzhengfu zhuyizhe lianmeng).⁷¹ Other than Yu, many other young Korean anarchists in Shanghai such as Kim Gwangju, Yi Gyeongson, Kim Myeongsu, and An Usaeng were

among those who used to drop by Deng's hospital.⁷² In the case of Jeong Hwaam, he had a chance to meet Japanese anarchist Shiroyama Hideo (1901–1982) there, with whose help Jeong was able to develop a plan with Yi Jeonggyu later to threaten the then-Japanese consul general and a consul in Shanghai, whose surnames were Yatabe and Shimizu, respectively, to expose their corruption and humiliate them. Japanese anarchist Akagawa Haruki (1906–1974), who deserted from the Japanese army, and Take Riyōji (1895–?) with whom Jeong became acquainted also at the hospital, took part in this plan, albeit it ultimately failed. Yi Jeonggyu, Akagawa, Shiroyama, and Take were all arrested by Japanese police, charged with the crimes of blackmailing and intimidation, and Yi was brought to colonial Korea for his trial.⁷³ In addition to Deng's hospital, it is said that there was a bookstore in Shanghai, run by Chen Guangguo, which also functioned as a place for book exchanges among anarchists and for contact and communication for all anarchists.⁷⁴

In addition, Shanghai was where the Provisional Government of Korea was established in 1919, and served as the center of its activities until the Japanese invasion of the city in the 1930s. As Kim San stated, it was quite commonplace to see Korean exiles heading to Shanghai and working for and with the Provisional Government, sometimes turning to radical thinking and thus taking various anti-Japanese violent actions, independently or in tandem with the government or other radicals there.⁷⁵ The latter case was the Society of Taiwanese and Korean Comrades (*Taihan tongzhi hui*), organized in 1924 in the French Concession in Shanghai. There also was an anarchism-oriented journal published three times a month by the Equality Society (Pingshe), a radical society organized by Sichuanese anarchist Luo Hua (1899–?); Taiwanese radicals such as Peng Huaying, Lin Yaokun, and Zhang Xiuzhen; and Korean radicals such as Tak Mucho, Yeo Unhyeong, and Yun Jahyeong. Luo was the key figure who led the establishment of the society and the publication of its journal, *Equality* (*Pingping*), the goals of which were, among other things, the accomplishment of mutual aid of mankind and the opposition to proletarian dictatorship and the Russian Revolution. Carried in the journal, first published in April 1924, were the articles that contained its criticism of Japanese colonialism and its advocacy of Korean independence, and the writings of Chinese anarchists, for example, by Lu Jianbo. The significance of the publication of *Equality* is that, although not a Korean anarchist journal, it was the earlier product of the collaboration and

joint publication activity in Shanghai of three East Asian radicals, including anarchists.⁷⁶

By late 1924, Yi Jeonggyu had moved to Shanghai from Beijing and was hired there as an apprentice at a British-owned foundry, but soon was fired for his activities for a labor union and a labor school he helped to open. A year after he was reemployed by Shanghai Tramway Company, where he again attempted to organize a labor union. On May 30 of the year, Yi participated with his Taiwanese friends from Shanghai University, such as Wong Zesheng and Zhuang Hongshu, and Chinese anarchist Mao Yipo, in the general strike in the wake of the May 30th Movement in Shanghai. Possibly due to these activities, it seems Yi had to bear the hardships of life in Shanghai without a job or under Japanese surveillance. As a solution to the hardships in life and to get away from his extreme and dire situation, he began to translate many anarchist books and works for publication. It is unknown who the publisher was, but included in his translations for publication were, according to Yi, Kropotkin's *Law and Authority* and *Anarchist Morality*, and some pamphlets that contained the writings by Bakunin, Malatesta, and Elisée Reclus.⁷⁷

One of the joint activities Shanghai-based Korean anarchists participated was the educational experiments of Chinese anarchists in Shanghai. It was unthinkable for them to do so without sharing their anarchist ideals with their Chinese counterparts. Lida College (Lida xueyuan) provides the first case in this regard. Lida College was established in Shanghai by Hunanese anarchist Kuang Husheng (1891–1933), and was operated for about ten years from the early 1920s until the Japanese attacked Shanghai in 1932.⁷⁸ As “the immediate precedent for Labor University in Shanghai” (see below), it became “an esteemed example for many of what an institution for alternative education could accomplish.”⁷⁹ Its main offices were located at Jiangwan in Shanghai, where no anarchists were hired. However, the faculty at the Department of Rural Village Education (Nongcun jiaoyuke) of the senior middle school of Lida College were all anarchists. Wu Zhihui and Li Shizeng, two prominent GMD anarchists, had supported Lida College, because of which the funding for the college came also from the Department of Education in the GMD, and anarchists were hired to teach in the department. And it was since then that the department became a gathering place for all anarchists, because of which Yu Ja-myeong remembered Lida College as “a home [*bogeum jari*] for anarchists.”⁸⁰

Among Korean anarchists, Yu Ja-myeong was hired to teach agriculture and Japanese language in the department where students received an education that combined education and productive labor including poultry farming, beekeeping, and fruit growing.⁸¹ Although similar to Shanghai Labor University in its educational goals and method, Lida College nevertheless was an independent and autonomous educational institution, free of the GMD influence. In fact it was quite the opposite to the Labor University in terms of its curricula; it was open to criticism of Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles (*San-min zhuyi*) and no worship of Sun was practiced among the faculty and students, therefore.⁸² According to Korean sources, some Korean anarchists attended Lida College as a student. One of them was Yi Gyuchang (1913–2005), a son of Yi Hoeyeong and a member of the League of Korean Youth in South China (LKYSC, Namhwa hanin cheongnyeong yeonmaeng) in the 1930s, although he later recalled that he did not believe he learned much there.⁸³ Later, according to Jeong Hwaam, Lida College was to become a base of Korean anarchist activities in Shanghai, particularly the LKYSC (see chapter 4), at least until the Japanese occupation of Shanghai in 1937.⁸⁴

Another educational experiment Korean anarchists joined was the opening and operation of Shanghai National Labor University (Shanghai guoli laodong daxue), although it is difficult to say to what extent they were involved in the establishment and operation of it. Shanghai Labor University was a national university funded by and under the control of the GMD. The university, often abbreviated as Laoda, was "a Chinese instance of socialist experiments with alternative education that have sought a means to the creation of socialism through the integration of labor and education."⁸⁵ Yi Jeonggyu, one of the Korean anarchists who participated as a "guest" in 1927, in Laoda's opening from the beginning, also recalls that the importance of Laoda needs to be understood in relation to the Movement for Self-Defensive Rural Communities in Quanzhou (hereafter Quanzhou Movement; see more on it below). According to Yi, Laoda as an educational institution was assigned its responsibility to teach students how to organize urban workers through theory and practice in order to raise them as new urban leaders, while the Quanzhou Movement was responsible for organizing and raising the ability of rural villagers in Quanzhou.⁸⁶

Both Shen Zhongjiu (1887–1968), "one of the anarchists instrumental in founding"⁸⁷ Laoda, and Wu Kegang (1903–1999) invited the