

Revolution Goes East: Russia and East Asian Revolutions, 1870s to 1917

The project deals with the interactions between the late nineteenth - early twentieth century revolutionary cultures in Russia and East Asia's revolutionaries.

About the Project

By the 1880s Russia, a peripheral empire aggravated by a combination of absolutist legacy and large-scale landlordism with the contradictions intrinsic to its newborn industrial capitalism, became one of the worldwide centers of revolutionary activities. These activities exerted certain influence even on Russia's western neighbours – for one example, the Russian 1905 Revolution triggered a number of demonstrations and strikes in Germany and Austria-Hungary with workers demanding the extension of suffrage and other democratic reforms.

However, the strongest was the influence the revolutionary ferment in Russia exerted eastward, onto the countries with a similar institutional setup – autocratic or strongly authoritarian regime on the top, “land hunger” among the peasantry (high tenancy rate), and late, unevenly developing industrial capitalism.

Objectives

The topic of the present project is to explore the influence of Russia's revolutionary movements on East Asia: China, Japan and Korea. The project is interdisciplinary, combining the study of literary representations, media reporting, and political history with the history of ideas. The portrayals of Russian “nihilists”, Narodniks, in Meiji Japanese and Late Qing fictions – for example, Zeng Pu's (曾樸) novel *Niehai Hua* (孽海花, *The Flowers in the Sea of Evil*) – will be studied alongside with the reports on Russian revolution in such publications as Japanese *Kakumei Hyōron* (*Revolutionary Review*) and Chinese/Korean newspapers (particularly *Minbao* and *Taehan Maeil Sinbo*) and the real-time contacts between the Russian revolutionaries (Bronislav Pilsudsky, Nicholas Russel-Sudzilovsky, Grigory Gershuni etc.) and their Chinese and Japanese colleagues.

In the end, the project has to clarify the role of “periphery-periphery” connections in the spread of such a worldwide phenomenon of industrial capitalist age as social revolution. The project will result in an English monograph and 3-4 articles in English, to be published in the peer-reviewed academic journals.