

# **Paradoxical Routes of the Sinification of Marxism:**

## **Materialist Dialectic and Immanent Critique**

Joyce C.H. Liu

Institute of Social Research and Cultural Studies

National Chiao Tung University, Taiwan

### **The Question of the Sinification of Marxism**

The question behind this chapter is firstly why and how did “Sinification of Marxism” (馬克思主義中國化) go wrong, and secondly what does this failure indicate in a larger context? The Sinification of Marxism in the very beginning, proposed by Mao Zedong 毛澤東 in 1938, was an attempt to decolonize Marxism, to resist to be dictated by abstract dogmatism (教條主義) and foreign stereotypes (洋八股) imported from the West, and to exercise the dialectic logic of Marxism according to the historical and material conditions in China. According to Mao, “Sinification of Marxism” meant to practice Marxism in the concrete struggles within the concrete situations (具體環境的具體鬥爭). Furthermore, Mao insisted that Marxism should be applied through national forms (通過民族形式的馬克思主義) and with Chinese characteristics (中國的特色). He wanted to make Marxism fresh and lively (新鮮活潑), appealing to the taste of Chinese people (喜聞樂見). (Mao 1971[1938]: 241-263)

In 1956, Mao again reminded the Chinese Communist Party members that theory and practice have to be unified, and Marxist truth has to be united with the concrete practice of Chinese revolution. Mao explained that, according to dialectic materialism,

thought has to reflect objective reality and truth has to be verified through objective practice. (Mao 1999[1956]: 86-99)

The route of the Sinification of Marxism, however, paradoxically moved away from its original agenda and its realization ended up in the opposite direction. Though Mao considered revolution as a permanent materialist dialectic process, and the *Sinification* of Marxism in China was a necessary method of praxis, the interplay between the objective reality and objective practice according to the local conditions, highly dialectic in its nature, ironically prefigured the path of the internal power struggles and highlighted the primacy of the demands of the time, through the operations of discursive and semiotic syncretism that are effected in the spheres of signs and to be instituted in the material reality, and turned out to be the tool for internal colonization and the game of the alternating seizure of power.

I shall take the philosophical events in socialist China *yifēnwéièr* (一分为二 one-divides-into-two) in 1963-1964, and *rúfǎdòuzhēng* (儒法鬥爭 the struggle between Confucianism and Legalism) in 1973-1974, as two exemplary instances in history to illustrate the paradox of the Sinification of Marxism. The former is known as the precursor to the Cultural Revolution beginning in 1966, and the later known as the last instance of the continuous revolution launched by Mao Zedong. These two philosophical events proved to be emblematic signatures of the reification of Marxist ideas in the particular historical conjunctures and are exemplary of the pathological route of the *Sinification* of Marxism in socialist China. Marxist ideas such as materialist dialectics and class contradiction were reified and transformed into hypostasized and institutionalized power struggles, giving up the concept to view history retrospectively and dialectically and the practice to analyze class difference according to different forms of inequality in local conditions. These cases of power

struggles, I shall also argue, were not merely determined locally, but were also triggered, implicated and displaced by global conditions, combining diverse systems of subsumptions and co-figured the path of historical development both locally and globally in the Cold War Era in East Asia in a mode of discursive and semiotic syncretism.

To point out the paradoxical and pathological route of the Sinification of Marxism does not mean to indicate that there is a normal route or intact norm of the practice of Marxism in China that should be followed or restored. I do not think there's any *normal* route of the translation of Marxism into China. These paths of course were diverse and even singular in many cases. The question for me therefore is not what the norm should be, but why and how there were proclaimed normative constructive and reconstructive paths, why and how these exercises were affected by the demands of the time, and why and how did they turned to its negative and pathological side and the excuse for internal colonization. Pathological route here means the path that are affected by the pathos of the time and therefore is related to the affective regime that is operative both as an epistemic apparatus and a consensus of shared sensibility.

### **A Project of Decolonization or a Paradoxical-Pathological Turn?**

When Jürgen Habermas discussed the concept of social pathologies and internal colonization in *The Theory of Communicative Action*, he pointed out the over-developed societal rationalization and its bureaucratic administration that caused the reification of the life-world and the systemic imperatives that created critical disequilibria and called forth social pathologies and internal colonization. The implementation of institutional subsystems and bureaucratic controls augmented the internal expropriations and conflicts to the extent that some parts of the people in the

same society were exploited, excluded and cannot enjoy equal opportunities to actualize their capacities. For Habermas, this paradox points to the question of the capitalist modernity. Habermas suggested that the critical question should be to inquire why the rationalization of the life-world and its various subsystems developed “irresistible inner dynamics” that brought about both the “colonization of the life-world and its segmentation.” (Habermas 1987: 305, 327-331, 367, 385)

To me, the paradox of the societal rationalization exists not only in the societies of capitalist modernity but also in those of socialist modernity. It is crucial for us to note that the modernity of socialist states in the twentieth century such as China actually follows the same capitalist logic of accumulation, expansion and competition of capital, though in the form of state-centric totalized project (Cf. the chapters by Postone and Werner in this volume). It is also crucial for us to note that the Sinification of Marxism, though an attempt to decolonize and provincialize Marxism imported from the West, paradoxically aggravated the mechanism of the internal colonization basing on the over-developed societal rationalization and its bureaucratic administration in the socialist state. The shared pathos of the time constituted the affective as well as epistemological imperatives. The pathological development through the process of the Sinification of Marxism, as what we are about to discuss, was not caused by the deficient rationality, but by overdeveloped socialist rationality of progress, military competition and formal equality in the context of global politico-economic conditions in the Cold War Era. The bureaucratic cadre system as well as local ideological subsystems, undergirded with the consensus shared by the society, further automatically reproduced the mechanism of internal partitions and detected certain parts of the people as potential threat to the total system.

The concept of provincialization was proposed by Dipesh Chakrabarty in his project of the decolonization of knowledge. To Chakrabarty, to provincialize Europe was to reject the assumption that European ideas are universal and to find out how and in what sense European ideas were drawn from “very particular intellectual and historical traditions,” and to ask the question about “how thought was related to place.” Chakrabarty wrote, “can thought transcend places of their origin? Or do places leave their imprint on thought in such a way as to call into question the idea of purely abstract categories?” (Chakrabarty 2007: xiii) The travel of European ideas and capitalist modernity, Chakrabarty insisted, was not merely a question of historical transition, but a question of translation, and the translation on the local and subaltern level is “more like barter than a process of generalized exchange,” and the local and subaltern practice of everyday life has the capacity to disrupt the totalizing project of universal history of capitalist modernity. (ibid. 16, 71)

Looking at the process of the Sinification of Marxism in China, we shall see that thought is indeed inevitably deeply related to its place and that the translation of Marxism to China signifies a larger semiotic exchange. But, we need to be aware of the fact that the local and the subaltern history of everyday life does not necessarily have the capacity to disrupt the project of either capitalist modernity or socialist modernity. On the contrary, the local power structure and the subaltern consensus oftentimes carried out complicit collaborations with the concurrent political tendencies and profitable investment in whatever forms of capital. The project of decolonization, to me, should start from within the local context of contradictions through historicizing the trajectories of crucial representative events so that we could carry out a form of immanent critique. This paper therefore attempts to re-read the representative historical discourses related to the Sinification of Marxism and to

examine how and why the discourse and the institutional practices the Sinification of Marxism moved toward the perverse turn. To assume a position of immanent critique is not to suggest a clear cut of the inside from the outside, but to face the fact that the colonizer-colonized dichotomy or the West-East distinction is false and to engage with the topological collaborative apparatus that is both implicated globally but is always rooted and instituted from within.

The discursive trajectories of the Sinification of Marxism itself in the history of PRC already is informative in its pathological route. Mao's "Sinification of Marxism" was denounced by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as "nationalist" (搞民族主義) and was not openly used in the official documents during the 1960s. After the age of the Cultural Revolution, however, a second wave of "Sinification" of "Marxist-Leninism" was proposed by Deng Xiaoping in 1980s, followed by Jiang Zeming and Hu Jintao, with the objective to "establish the socialism with Chinese characteristics" (中國特色社會主義). Jiang Zeming stated in 1997, "only Deng Xiaoping's theory, and no other theory, that bridged Marxism with contemporary Chinese practice and the characteristics of the time, could solve the problem of the future and the fate of socialism. Deng Xiaoping Theory is Contemporary Chinese Marxism." (Jiang 2007[1997]: 1413) In 2008, Hu Jintao once again stressed the objective to "unite the basic principles of Marxism with the Sinification of Marxism," and the guiding principle of "Reform and Opening-up" (改革開放) is "to emancipate thought, to be practical and realistic, to keep abreast with time, and to innovate theory on the bases of practice." (Hu 2009[2008]: 796) The practice of the "Sinification of Marxism" now ironically turned out to be the rationalization and justification for the economic reform and the developmentalism that China has followed in the post-1989 and post-socialist stage.

It is clear to us in retrospect that the project of the Sinification of Marxism confronted double stakes. On the one hand, it claimed to resist the domination of a universal and homogeneous historical process suggested by the Eurocentric view of Marxism and to situate the praxis of Marxism in the materialist conditions and the historical moments pertained to the Chinese context, while this project was in fact subsumed under the domination of the Comintern, particularly the dictate of Stalin. On the other hand, by refusing to take Marxism in its abstract form and insisting to apply Marxism in the concrete struggles in the concrete environment in China through “national forms,” Mao nevertheless had subsumed the praxis under the domination of local power structure and the manipulation of nationalist sentiments.

The central problem, to me, in we want to make a preliminary speculation before we move into detailed analysis, lies in the fact that Mao’s theory the “Sinification of Marxism” and constant revolution with the concept of “one divides into two,” though highly mobile and complex, nevertheless led to the hypostatization of Marx’s method of analytical dialectics by making the concept of the nation, the people and the proletariats into substantialized categories basing on Mao and his followers’ strategic targets of the time. The question presented itself most obviously when Mao insisted in his talk on the united front against the Japanese invasion that internationalism should be closely combined with national form. The concept of nation, state and people are conflated in the term *minzu* (民族 the people) and *guojia* (國家 sovereign state). The idea of the “national form” (民族形式) Mao emphasized linked the importance both of the local/vernacular culture and the survival of the nation-state with the tinge of nationalist sentiments. In the same talk in 1938 in which he discussed about the Sinification of Marxism and the question of national form, he also stressed that it was the time that people should join and fight in order to show their patriotic passion (愛

國) and to save the country (救國). Those people who were mobilized by Maoist ideas would be at the same time self-posed in a nationalist context as national subjects. The objectives for the internationalist movement to resist the concentration of power and capital controlled by the state then lose its effect in the Chinese context. This form of total mobilization turned out to be the most successful mechanism whenever the danger of war and the threat from outside were discursively or rhetorically conjured. The Sino-Japan War in 1930s and 1940s, the Korean War and the Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1950s, and the incident of Zhenbao Island 珍寶島 (Damansky Island) in late 1960s, all triggered strong passion from the people to serve and even sacrifice for the nation. Along with the various movements of mobilization, the internalized oppositions among the people were also repeatedly called forth in order to differentiate “the people” and “the enemy of the people”, such as the pro-West members, the pro-capitalist “rightists,” or the Five Black Categories.

Just as Harry Harootunian had succinctly analyzed, provincializing Marx was to adhere to a “rigid conception of a Marxian historical trajectory,” a scenario derived from the Second and Third Internationals and subsequently reproduced in the imaginary of the nation-form, to uphold “a particular progressive narrative all societies must pass through, on the template of a geographically (and culturally) specific location exemplified by England as Marx ‘sketched’ its genesis of capitalism in volume one of *Capital*.” (Harootunian *forthcoming*). The Sinification of Marxism, to put the practice of Marxism in the Chinese historical and contextual circumstances, ironically demonstrated for us a different form of provincializing Marxism and the paradox of the effort to decolonize Eurocentric Marxism, not only with the attempt to catch up with the pace of modernity heralded both by the West and by the Communist International led by the USSR, but also processes of the actualization of systemic



reification of Marxian ideas dominated by local power structures and subaltern desires in China.

“Sinification of Marxism,” therefore, not only served as a strategy to alter the path of revolution according to the analysis of the changed situation, but in fact also functioned as a reflection of the trajectories in the course of history according to the changed local as well as global conditions. Looking into the complex historical and materialist conditions in which Mao and his followers made their strategic decisions and adaptations, we would soon find out that the act of “Sinification” in fact connotes the ever-changing material and political conditions, and the routes and the effects of its bifurcations need to be examined.

In the following sections, I shall look into the two philosophical events *yifenweier* (one divides into two) in 1963-1964 and *rufadouzheng* (the struggle between Confucianism and Legalism) in 1973-1974, and discuss how and why Marxist ideas of materialist dialectics and class contradictions were reified and transformed into institutionalized local power struggles that were over-determined by complex local and global conditions and co-figured the long arc of the Cold War history.

### **One Divides into Two and Mao’s Theory of Contradiction**

The phrase “one divides into two” (一分为二) was first brought up by Mao in a speech he delivered at the Moscow Meeting of Representatives of the Communist and Workers' Parties on November 18, 1957. Mao stated that contradictions exist everywhere in the world, and every object and person can be analyzed according to this principle of contradiction. “One divides into two” is both a general phenomenon and the “method of dialectic” to be used in the scientific analysis of all situation. One

would fall into metaphysics if he refused to admit that everyone is analyzable according to this principle. (Mao 1999[1957]: 332)

The talk on “one divides into two” in 1957 is emblematic in many ways. In this talk, Mao presented his analysis of the changing global situations in mid-1950s and announced that it was the time for the East Wind to gain the upper hand over the West Wind (東風壓倒西風). (ibid.) This remark informed the turnover of the greater power in the Middle East after the Suez Crisis in 1956. The former colonial empires had encountered setbacks, and the socialist countries, including the Asian, African and Middle East countries, were on the rise through the alliance of the Third World countries since the Bandung Conference in 1955. This remark also indicated that China had successfully achieved its strategy to gain more supports from the Arabic nations and had gained the recognition by seven countries, including Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Morocco, Algeria and Sudan, and consequently alleviated from the international total isolation of PRC since its establishment in 1950 (Shichor 1979: 89-96). Moreover, Mao announced in this talk that China was going to catch up with UK in 15 years with its massive production of steel. The resolution to overtake UK was again reconfirmed in the New Year’s talk in 1958 in which Mao proposed to move his “continuous revolution” to a new stage: a technological revolution.<sup>1</sup> This new revolution led to the Great Leap Forward (*dayuejin* 大躍進) launched in 1958, the main task of which was to be discussed in the extended meeting of CPC Political Bureau at Beidaihe starting from August 17, 1958.<sup>2</sup>

It was also in the same talk concerning “one divides into two” that Mao openly denounced people such as Trotsky, Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀, Zhang Guotao 張國燾, Gao Gang 高崗, and Chiang Kai-shek 蔣介石, as “incorrigible” and “absolutely exclusive to the socialist party.” In this sense, there is “only one aspect to their nature,

not two.” The absolute antagonistic dichotomy therefore is set up by Mao through “one divides into two,” differentiating between the colonial and the colonized, the capitalist and the socialist, the right and the left. This antagonistic denouncement explained the underlying logic of the national large-scale anti-right movement in 1957 against the Democratic League and the intellectuals, and would recur repeatedly through the purge of the “five black categories,” that is, landlords, rich farmers, anti-revolutionists, bad-elements, and right-wingers, especially during the Cultural Revolution.

Mao’s concept of the dialectics was first developed in his essay “On the Question of Contradiction” (矛盾論) that he lectured in Yen-an in 1937, basing on his readings of Lenin’s comments on the dialectics in his *Philosophical Notebooks* written in 1915 and other Marx-Lenin textbooks available in the 1930s. In his theory of contradiction, Mao elaborated his view of the materialist dialectics of the infinite splitting of all matters, and constant movement of differentiation and integration, action and reaction, positive and negative electricity, combination and dissociation of atoms, and class struggle.<sup>3</sup>

Mao’s theory of contradiction echoed Lenin’s reading of Marx’s *Capital* as well as Hegel’s dialectics. In *Capital*, Marx took the commodity as the “cell” of the economic life, the “germs” of *all* the contradictions, and analyzed the scission within the object between the labor force and the value form. (Marx 1867: 6-7) The operative logic of the scission between the labor force and the value form needs to be analyzed in its historical and material conditions. Lenin pointed out in his *Philosophical Notebooks* that the Hegelian logic (dialectics) is essential in order to account for Marx’s practice of dialectics in his writing of *Capital*. Lenin (1976: 357)<sup>4</sup> stated straightforwardly in the beginning of his essay that “the splitting of a single whole

and the cognition of its contradictory parts” was the “essence” of dialectics. If we look into Hegel’s method of dialectic in his *Phenomenon of the Spirit*, we would also notice that, to him, the dialectic movement always involves the self-movement of all living matters in the process of “the bifurcation of the simple,” the “doubling,” “self-othering” and “becoming-other” through pure negativity. The living matters constitute the process of the doubling and self-othering movement of the ideas. For Hegel, the negative is the potential that refutes and transforms the temporary positing of the “one,” and the constant splitting of the “one” would materialize into “another” while this “other” will constitute the formation of the self. The *actual* here then means the movement itself, and then is also the Subject and the Essence of the living being. (Hegel 1977[1807]: 10-14)

This concept of “one constantly splitting into two” and the permanent movement of materialist dialectic were reverberated by Mao in his essay on contradiction in 1937 and elaborated by the Chinese Marxist philosopher Yang Xianzhen 楊獻珍 in 1963 through his reading of classical Chinese dialectic thought. But, the case of Yang Xianzhen in 1963-1964 in relation to the debate of “one-divides-into-two” demonstrated one of the crudest example of the irony in the hypostatization of the dialectic movement into fixated oppositional political persecution in the name of class struggle.

Yang Xianzhen had long criticized the dominant discourse of the Chinese Communist Party’s practice of the USSR’s model of “single economic basis” (*danyi jingji jichu* 單一經濟基礎) which was especially advocated by another Marxist philosopher Ai Siqu 艾思奇. Following Stalin’s policy, Ai Siqu’s theoretical formulation of the “Single economic basis” specified that the political regime belongs to the dictatorship of the working class, and the economic base for the state can only

be the working class. It is also the guiding principle for the people's commune. Ai Siqu insisted that it is unacceptable to have both the working class and its opponents to serve as the colligated economic bases. According to Ai and other CCP cadres, PRC had come to the stage that there should not be the co-existence of different economic forms at the same time, and all the economic forms such as the capitalist, the individual farmers, land owners, and petit bourgeoisies should be obliterated. For Ai Siqu, it is a struggle between the rising socialist classes against the declining capitalist economic structure and this struggle is a matter of life and death. (Ai 1983[1955]: 295-305)

Yang Xianzhen, however, developed the theory of "colligated economic basis" (*zonghe jingji jichu* 綜合經濟基礎) in 1953-1955 and argued that there are necessarily diverse economic components in contemporary society with different economic forms co-existing in the society that were developed through the gradual process of history. He insisted that it is not right to eliminate or even to erase the other forms of production because the concrete conditions of the contemporary society do not present itself in this way. (Xiao 2006: 21-38)

Yang's criticism of the "Great Leap Forward" in 1958 voiced his disagreement against the CCP's unconditional acceptance of the USSR economic policies of nation-wide rapid communalization and the prioritization of heavy industry. Basing on his investigation of the contemporary social conditions of production systems, he questioned the party's ideational decision to switch from one economic stage to a different economic stage without concretely consulting local conditions. Yang visited several rural villages and observed the party cadre's ignorance of the practical reality that the damage the Great Leap Forward had brought to the farmland, and the false information about the food production that were prevailing throughout the country.

Yang also severely criticized the practice of formal equality, depriving private properties of all member and mistaking “equalization” (*pinjunzhuyi* 平均主義) as communism, as “idealist” (*weixinzhuyi* 唯心主義) and a “violent fantasy” as suggested by Engels.<sup>5</sup> Though in the beginning Mao and many other party members shared Yang’s views and agreed that the Great Leap Forward was too drastic and rash and had to be modified, but after the dramatic event of the meeting at Lushan Conference (*Lushan huiyi* 廬山會議) in 1959, the situation turned to far-left politics and revisionist views were denounced. (Cf. Li 1993)

Furthermore, around the same time in 1959, the frictions between China-USSR started to increase. Nikita Khrushchev openly chastised CCP’s People’s Commune during his visit to Poznan in Poland in July 1958. In the meeting on October 2, 1959, severe disputes were aroused between CCP and USSR representatives on issues related to the military tension that PRC caused respectively with Taiwan and with India at the Sino-India border. In the following year, Khrushchev withdrew around 1400 Soviet experts and technicians from China, and more than 200 scientific projects were forced to be cancelled. Adding up with USSR’s siding with India and Tibetan rebels against China in the Sino-Indian War, and USSR’s signing the Limited Test Ban Treaty with Britain and the United States, the PRC and USSR officially broke relations, and Mao organized a series of nine letters of criticism, from September 1963 to July 1964, to criticize every aspect of Khrushchev’s leadership. (Pantsov & Levine. 2015[2007]: 493-495, 500-513)

Yang Xianzhen’s idea of “two fusing into one” (合二而一), a notion he appropriated from a traditional Chinese philosopher Fang Yizhi’s 方以智 (1611-1671), together with the ideas by Lao Zi 老子, to elaborate Mao’s dialectic theory of “one divides into two,” was utilized in the open debates against Soviet

revisionism.<sup>6</sup> Yang's usage of Fang Yizhi's phrase was an attempt to sinicize Marxist concept of materialist dialectic through traditional Chinese dialectic thought. He suggested that Fang's notion of "two fusing into one" and "one divides into two" indicate the constant moment of continual change and can explain exactly what Mao meant as materialist dialectics. For Yang, this typically Chinese dialectic notion of revolution explains the moments of revolving and transformation of all living matters explicated by Mao. Yang believed that the synthesis of the opposites is necessarily a moment in the dialectic, a moment between movement and stillness, and the moment to begin again, just as what Lenin and Mao said about dialectics. (Xiao 2006: 9)

Yang's resort to the classical Chinese dialectic notion turned out to be the object of a plotted debates during 1964-1965, with Yang's discourse as a public bait, that paved the way to the anti-revisionist political campaign and was identified as the precursor of the Cultural Revolution. Yang's article on the "colligated economic basis" was also brought up again as the proof of his revisionist position. (Cf. Wang 1999: 43-68; Jin 2009: 26-28; Xiao 2006; Yang 1981; Hu 2009: 56-86) He was crudely criticized, disposed with his position as the principle in the Communist Party School of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, and more than 150 intellectuals was involved in this case. Two years later, during the Cultural Revolution, all those who had written to support the concept of "two fuse into one" were labeled as rightist and revisionists, with bourgeois mentality attempting to reconcile class contradictions and were brutally persecuted. Many people who were persecuted in the event committed suicide in the beginning of Cultural Revolution. Others were put into jail or exiled to remote farms for labor reform for many years. Yang was kept in jail for eight years. At the closure of the Cultural Revolution, in 1967, he was again sent for labor reform for three more years because of his former association with Liu

Shaoqi 劉少奇. (Cf. Sun 1997; Zuo 2005)

“One divides into two” turned out to be an act of purgation and internal party cleansing. The contemporaneous political power relations apparently determine the logic of separation. The education of the purgation theory of “one divides into two” was so successful and wide-spread that, even 10 years later, Li Changmao 李長茂, a factory worker in Tianjin, wrote an article in 1974, still vehemently, professing to obey the instruction of “one divides into two” taught by Chairman Mao, urging people to use the weapon of ‘one divides into two’ to fiercely attack “the reactionary discourse of ‘two fusing into one.’” For him, and most of the people of his contemporary who were taught in schools how to think according to this logic from their childhood, the notion of “one divides into two” indicates the action to dig out bourgeois class “hidden within the proletariat class,” and to continuously exclude “the handful of class enemy” (一小撮階級敵人), in order to make the proletarian class “clean” and “solidified” and to strengthen the proletarian dictatorship. (Li 1971[1970]: 29-33)

The randomly chosen example of this Tianjing worker’s article on “one divides into two” served as the index of the affective effectivity of the hypostatization of the dialectic movement of ideological revolution and the philosophical debates consequently turned out to be class struggle on reified ideological ground. The production of a new social body, or the national body, is enacted through cleansing and digging out one part from the whole, through naming the people and the enemy of the people within the people. Physical humiliations and assaults were carried out in the name of the people in order to abolish the class of the bourgeois and the capitalist. The partition between the left and the right, however, is literally the projection of the Cold War divide, the greater forces of opposite camps that tended to control and to



stabilize the global situation. The internalized border and the duplication of the hypostatized opposition, “one divides into two”, is practiced as the policy for the statist stabilization. The formulation of the “Sinification of Marxism” fused nation-state-party into one concept and make it even more difficult to detect the unevenness of social relation in the statist order.

### **The Struggle between Confucianism and Legalism and Its Return**

The movement of *Examining Legalist Theories and Censuring Confucianism* (*pinfapiru* 評法批儒) that mobilized sustained philosophical debates on the *Struggle between Confucianism and Legalism* (*rufadouzheng* 儒法鬥爭) in 1973-1974 was another exemplary incident of the pathological development of the Sinification of Marxism. This philosophical debate was heralded by the movement of *Criticize Lin & Criticize Confucius* (*pilinpikong* 批林批孔) in which Lin Biao 林彪 was the real object of the purgation. Lin Biao's winning of the support within the Communist Party and his control of military leadership, especially Lin's aggressive military move during the Damansky Island Incident (Zhenbao Island) in March 1969, irritated Mao. Lin's criticizing Cultural Revolution in the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in 1970 further offended Mao. The failure of Project 571, an armed uprising devised by Lin's son Lin Liguo 林立果, intending to assassinate Mao, forced Lin's family to flee China for the Soviet Union. Lin and his family died when their plane crashed over Mongolia on September 13, 1971. In 1973, Jiang Qing 江青 and the gang of four initiated the movement of *Criticize Lin & Criticize Confucius*, using the proof of the Confucius's texts found in Lin's house to confirm the rumor of Lin's secret association with Kuomintang, intending to extend the accusation of all Confucian bureaucrats, especially targeting on Zhou Enlai 周恩來 as a modern

Confucian prime minister. At this point, the philosophical debates turned out to be a historiography of allusions used to haunt down the internal enemies. (MacFarquhar 2009: 314-341; Pantsov & Levine 2015[2007]: 576-583; Torrill 2011: 473-497.)

The critique against the tradition of Confucian ideology was the position Chinese Marxists held since the beginning of the Republic of China in the 20<sup>th</sup> century because the political rulers after the fall of the imperial regime all were inclined to employ the discourse of reviving Confucianism through *fugu* (復古 returning to the past), *zunkong* (尊孔 worshipping Confucius) and *dujing* (讀經 reading classics) in order to justify their legitimacy in their autocratic rules. Obvious examples include Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 who proclaimed himself the Emperor of the Chinese Empire of the Republic era and restore the monarchy in 1914, the warlords who occupied different provinces through military forces during the period of the Northern Government (Beiyang Government 北洋政府) during 1912-1928, Chiang Kai-shek of the Nanjing Government who launched total militarization through the New Life Movement in 1934, and again started the Chinese Cultural Renaissance in the 1960s in Taiwan during the martial law period. Even the Japanese colonial rules in the Manchuria government and in Taiwan also practiced the policies of *fugu*, *zunkong* and *dujing*. All these strategies of governmentality have attested the political function Confucian ideology held for the centralization and militarization of the ruling government to rationalize its legitimacy and its concentration of power.<sup>7</sup>

The discourse of the revival of Confucianism was actually started in late Qing period, especially by Kang Youwei 康有為, when China was moving on the path toward building a new nation-state. Kang Youwei's advocacy of making Confucianism the national religion for the new China, eradicating all local temples, and building Confucius Temples in every provinces and cities so that people can

worship Confucius as the sage king, was based on what he had learned from Western politics that religion is essential for the governance of the state. Kang took up the interpretation of Confucius by Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179-104 BC), a Confucian scholar in the Han Dynasty, in his interpretations of the *Gongyang Commentary* of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (春秋公羊傳), and stressed that the newly founded Republic should establish a well-ordered hierarchical regime, a strong and centralized political authority, and a benevolent ruler whose legitimacy is based on the Mandate of Heaven (*tianming* 天命). He also suggested that the Republic should follow the teachings in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* to reinforce the proper dutiful relations between the monarch and his subjects, to achieve the reconciliation between past and present sources of political legitimacy (*tongsantong* 通三統) in order to enhance the unity of cosmological and political order (*dayitong* 大一統). He even suggested that the way to reform China also should be modeled after ancient kings (先王), and that the Republic should take *Spring and Autumn Annals* as sacred scriptures and the bases for the national constitution.

Dong Zhongshu's theories basing on the *Gongyang Commentary* of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* prospered only briefly in Han Dynasty and then revived in late Qing Dynasty. Dong integrated the mystic cosmology, that is, the correspondence between heaven and mankind (*tianrenganying* 天人感應), into Confucian ethical framework and emphasized the political implication in *Spring and Autumn Annals* so as to lay down rules for deciding the legitimacy of a monarch as well as the hierarchical subordination of the political system. The concepts of filial piety and loyalty were particularly emphasized, and a general norm of submissiveness in terms of adequate social relations was also established. Dong also implemented complicated

penal system, appropriating Confucius' classics, to the effect that the so-called Confucianism is actually a mixture of the school of Legalism in its core, Confucianism as the appearance and Legalism as the practice (*waire-neifa* 外儒內法).

The autocratic concentration of power and rigid hierarchical control exercised by the governments in the Republic of China, in the name of the revival of Confucianism, was severely criticized by Marxist thinkers of the time. Two examples will suffice.

Zhou Yutong (周予同 1898-1981) (2010[1929]: 413-421), an important scholar of classical Confucian texts who was familiar with Marxist method of historical analysis, insisted on differentiating the historical Confucius from the false image of the ideological Confucianism, and criticized the practice of *fugu* and *dujing* in the 1910s and 1920s as “zombie rising” (*jiangshi de chusui* 殭屍的出祟). Zhou (2010[1934]: 227) insisted that the real Confucius is dead, but the false Confucius would re-appear in accordance with the historical changes of Chinese economic institutions, political conditions and intellectual vicissitudes. Zhou spent his 50 years of research on Chinese classics. His major contribution was to historicize various texts of Confucianism in different dynasties and analyze the economic and political contexts in order to explain the modes of discourse and their political implications. He pointed out that the Book of Filial Piety (*xiaojing* 孝經) was not written by Confucius, but composed by the scholars Han Dynasty 漢朝 (206BC-220AD) in order to promote obedience and loyalty for the sake of the unified empire. The concept of filial piety was in fact a technique, together with the feudal system and the patriarchal clan system in China, to govern and stabilize the society. (Zhou 2010[1936]: 338-340, 342-343) Zhou also teased out the controversies over Confucian classics in different versions in ancient school and modern school, as well as the political contestations between the Confucianism of the Song school and of the

Han school. He explained that Dong Zhongshu's *Gongyang Commentary* of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* was in fact a text of mysticism in the service of the authoritarian regime in Chinese history. (Zhou 2010[1933]: 216-226; 2010[1937]: 351; 2010[1936]: 338-340, 342-343; Zhu 1996[1994]: 335)

Zhou's scholastic analysis of the political economic of various discursive modes in Chinese history was based on the influence of socialist thoughts, Tolstoy, anarcho-syndicalism and Marxist writings that he encountered in the 1920s and 1930s. He joined the movement of Work-Study Mutual Aidism (工讀互助會), and was acquainted with other Chinese communist thinkers such as Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀, Li Dazhao 李大釗, Lu Xun 魯迅 and Mao Zedong.

Jian Bozan 翦伯贊 (1898-1968), a renowned Marxist historian, whose ancestor was of the Uighur tribe, was another example. In an article that he wrote in 1936 on the development of the idea of *fa* (law 法) in early Qin Dynasty (秦朝 221BC – 206BC), Jian contended that the political agenda of the scholars of the Legalist, such as Yang Zhu 楊朱, Shen Buhai 申不害, Shen Dao 慎到, Shang Yang 商鞅 and Han Fei 韓非, were to reject the rule of man and to promote the rule of law. The primacy of the concept of law is equality. The emperor should follow the law too. Only law could emancipate the plebeians from the hierarchical system. Jian also acknowledged the fact that law should be revised along the change of time in order to fit the contemporary social structure and material conditions. No ancient law could be applied to modern time without revision. The law of early Qin Dynasty was to assure the concept of *gong* (公), the common, and to prevent any form of privatization, that is, *si* (私 privatization) (Jian 2008[1936]: 426-448).

Jian also published an article in 1959, a survey of the history of land reform in

Chinese history, and explained that Qin Shi Huang's 秦始皇 policy of ceasing the succession of inherited aristocratic titles and salaries was to stop the centralization of land and property so that the plebeians could farm their own land. The Well-field system (*jintianzhi* 井田制) realized by Wang Mang 王莽(45BC-23 AD) is another case of land reform basing on the method of equal distribution. Likewise, Xun Yue 荀悅 (148-209) in Dong Han Dynasty proposed the policy to farm and not to possess the land. (Jian 2008[1948]: 25-28)

In a series of writings that he wrote during 1950-1951, Jian (2008[1950]; 2008[1951]) explored the question of the countless farmer uprisings in Chinese history and analyzed the causes to these uprisings to be the continual processes of land appropriation and concentration to the extent that the poor had no place to live in at all. Jian's historical studies demonstrated a Marxian method of historical and materialist analysis. Through his works, we could see how the thinkers and plebeians in Chinese history carried out different models of political reforms in order to resist the authoritarian appropriation and concentration of power and land.

Following the route of Jian's studies, we can also find numerous volumes of publications, textbooks and even cartoons published during the movement of *Examining the School of Law and Censoring Confucianism*, targeting the critique against Confucianism and advocating the tradition of the school of Legalism. From the long list of examples which were included as the school of Legalism in the articles published during this period of time, we can easily see that these thinkers are the early socialists who proposed socialist visions and equalitarian policies in different historical and social conditions. Shang Yang 商鞅 of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, for example, insisted on the rule by law and the equality of everyone under law (一刑無等級). Wang Mang 王莽, another excellent example in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, banned the

slavery system and instituted the system of ownership of farmland according to the field-well-system, that is, if a family had less than eight members but had one well or larger property, it was required to distribute the excess to fellow clan members, neighbors or other members of the same village (男不盈八，田不得過一井). Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773-819), a member of the Yongzhen reformist movement (永貞革新) in the 9<sup>th</sup> century that proposed to reduce heavy taxation and to stop privatization of military powers, criticized the discourse of Heavenly Mandate (天說), and promoted the self-governance of local government (郡縣論). Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021-1086), a socio-economic reformer in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, opposed the concentration of land and broke up private monopolies and introduced some forms of government regulation and social welfare.

This long list of Legalist thinkers could serve as a counter-discourse of the critique against the ideology of Confucianism in Chinese history, or the history of political reforms (*bianfa* 變法 literally changing the law) against the authoritarian concentration of power. Such immanent political critiques were activated basing on the idea of equality against the domineering hierarchical ideology of the ruling regimes. The studies of the struggle between Confucianism and Legalism, therefore, served as an index and pointed to a significant genealogy of the intellectual politics fighting for equality against the authoritarian domination and centralized power in different dynasties of Chinese history. This counter-discourse could offer us a different perspective in Chinese intellectual history other than the hierarchical and centralizing autocracy practiced in the history of China.

It is ironic, however, to see that the Chinese communist's tradition that picked up the genealogy of the critique against the authoritarian and hierarchical regime in the

name of Confucianism made its perverse turn in the Cultural Revolution not only through destroying all Confucius temple, classical texts and monuments, but also by assuming an autocratic control that penetrate all levels of Chinese societies. The movement of *pilinrikong* itself was a reified power struggle and involved the purgation of more than 1000 high officials close to Lin Biao, and even more persecutions of the scholars who refused to criticize Confucius. Zhou Yutong who criticized the *fugu* and *zunkong* practices of the Japanese colonial government and the Chinese republican government in the early twentieth century was cruelly persecuted in the case of Wu Han 吳晗 when Zhou refused to join the critique against Wu and was forced to dig Confucius's grave with his bare hands in Shandong 山東 in 1966. Zhou was tortured to blindness and paralysis and lain in bed for thirteen years till his death in 1981. The Marxist historian Jian Bozan, like Yang Xianzhen and Zhou Yutong, was also persecuted during the cultural revolution and committed suicide with his wife and both died in 1968.

Contemporary revival of Confucianism in recent two decades in China is of course a reaction against the campaign in the Cultural Revolution which destroyed the Confucian tradition. But, this recurring discourse of Confucianism in China, reverberating the rationale used in the several restorations of conservative political power in the twentieth century and resonating with the discourse of politico-economic expansion in the 21 century, appears to be a more paradoxical turn regarding the Chinese Marxists' socialist ideas of equality. Gan Yang's 甘陽 book *Tong San Tong* (Bridging Three Traditions 通三統) is a typical case of the contemporary attempt of the Sinification of Marxism. Gan advocates the political order of the Grand Unification (*dayitong* 大一統) and the reconciliation between the past and present by



“bridging the three traditions” (通三統) that he learned from Dong Zhongshu’s discussion of *Gongyang Zhuan*. To Gan, the unification of the traditions of Confucianism, Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping is the perfect solution to achieve the Grand Unification. (Gan 2007: 1-3) It is basing on the Confucian rhetoric of the Mandate of Heaven and the operation of the Grand Unification in the Confucian political ethics that a new model of the Chinese empire and a new politico-economic tribute system is discursively formulated in contemporary neoliberal age. The center-periphery economic attachment system in the regional entrepreneurial partnership speaks just the same logic as the one of the pre-modern Chinese tributary system. Following the same logic of Confucian political order as elaborated by Jiang and Gan, Jiang Shigong 強世功 explains in his book *China Hong Kong* (《中國香港》) that Hong Kong naturally and necessarily should be a tributary of China, which means that the central government should take up the responsibility to take care of the security and stability of Hong Kong, and Hong Kong should follow the dictate of the central government and offer its tribute in the form of obedience. In this way, there is no chance for Hong Kong to establish autonomously its own legislature procedure for the governance of its own local affairs. (Jiang 2010: 228)

Confucian political ethics that served to stabilize the hierarchical subordination system is now easily appropriated to justify the rationale of the center-periphery structure of the imperial-colonialism in the dependency system of contemporary regional economic blocs. Contemporary form of imperial-colonialism in fact does not need to occupy land or sea by force. It can be achieved through the expansion of its transnational entrepreneurial networks, supported by the neo-liberalist strategy of the free market competition and the cooperative maneuver of financial territories through

local governments' eager supports. Traditional Confucian political ethics and its rhetoric of benevolence have provided a convenient imaginary grid that superimposes over the economic subordination system of geo-politics of the area framed up by the transnational cooperative networks. The collaborations of the government at the peripheral positions with the government at the center of the economic empire would make it an easy pass for the local governments to dismiss and exploit local people's equal right to their living resources. The discourse of surrendering partial profit and aiding the development in the name of Confucian benevolence would make it all the more irresistible for local governments and local people in the face of the investments and developmental plans.

### **Conclusion: Materialist Dialectic as Immanent Critique**

Chakrabarty proposed the concept of two temporal processes to modify Marx's analysis of the logic of capital: History 1 as the universal and necessary movement of capital, a past "posited by capital" that lends itself to the reproduction of capitalist relationships, and History 2 as the histories that belong to capital's "life process," affective histories of cultural-dwelling of peripheral societies, a history that continually erupts within capitalist history and interrupt the totalizing project of History 1. Chakrabarty especially focused on the daily life histories of the workers in India as his version of History 2 and argued that this local history is heterogeneous and could resist the overarching movement of the capital (Chakrabarty, 2007: 64-66; Cf. Max Ward's chapter in this volume).

From the processes of the Sinification of Marxism in socialist China, however, we've seen how Marxist ideas were objectified and reified as "use value" and "exchange value" to trade in power as capital in the communist cadre bureaucratic

system. In *Grundrisse*, Marx differentiated objectified labor from living labor. Living labor exist in time, alive, present only as the *living subject*, in which it exists as capacity, as possibility and creates values, whereas the *objectified labor* is present in space as past labor, first as use values and then exchange values. The *objectified labor* would then be incorporated into capital, and exchanged, invested and purchased as commodities (Marx, 1973: 271-272, 304-305). The process of realization and even institutionalization of the objectified and reified ideas is what I've discussed in this chapter. The Sinification of Marxism was in the beginning an act of living labor in accordance to the contemporary circumstances in order to engage with the present of the historical moment. But these Marxist ideas soon turned into exchangeable and purchasable commodities, fetishized and sanctified, circulated in the society as in the market. Not only all students and their parents knew it, but also the workers in the factories and the farmers in the fields shared the same value framework and helped stabilizing the totalizing project of the centralized and hierarchical state. The question here then is not only the fact that socialist China had followed the logic the state-centric capitalism after the founding of the state in 1949, but how Marxist ideas were transformed into marketable commodities in socialist China. (Cf. the chapters by Postone and Harootunian in this volume)

Alain Badiou once pointed out that “one divides into two” is the core of dialectic, and the true division of Hegelian dialectic is the opposition of idealism and materialism, that is to say, the opposition of the effects of the system built upon idealist construction and materialism as the rational kernel (Badiou 2011: 81, 96). What Badiou meant was that all dialectic movements were initiated on the basis of the materialist ground through ideas and thoughts. This concept of materialist dialectic is also the method of his study of the twentieth century, that is, through the study of how

the thoughts of the twentieth century think itself, through the bifurcations and ramifications of ideas and their institutionalizations, we can understand the “maximal interiority” and its “immanent prescription” (Badiou 2007: 3-6).

In our discussions of the two philosophical events of the Sinification of Marxism in socialist China during the Cold War era, we see how the “ideas” were invested and materialized through institutional subsystems and mechanisms of partitions. Mao’s conceptualization of contradiction in 1937 presented dialectic subtleties, but his comment on “one divides into two” in 1957 was clearly fixated in the Cold War situation. The examples I discussed in my paper, such as Yang Xianzhen, Zhou Yutong and Jian Bozan, were the Marxist scholars in Chinese history of the twentieth century, and could be viewed as real practices of the Sinification of Marxism in local contexts. The fact that they were all persecuted to death before or during the Cultural Revolution, over-determined by and co-figured the path of historical development both locally and globally in the Cold War Era, served as a witness of the pathological and paradoxical route of the Sinification of Marxism that turned out to be the technique of border and internal colonization.

Through looking into these two events as the anchorage points or markers of the time, we could see more clearly how these events converged complex political forces, both locally and globally. These local and subaltern histories in our studies paradoxically served as a testimony for the internal partition and colonization, as well as a method for immanent critiques that informed us the contradictions of the translation of Marxist ideas in the context of socialist China.

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<sup>1</sup> Mao explained that Chinese socialist revolution has gone through different stages from anti-feudal land reform, the agricultural co-operation and socialist reconstruction of private industries, commerce and handicrafts, and the revolution on the ideological and political front in 1957. “The twenty-first

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article” of his “Sixty Points On Working Methods—A Draft Resolution From the Office of the Centre of the CPC” (Mao 1999[1958]: 349-351)

<sup>2</sup> In May 1958, at the Second Session of the Eighth National Congress, the CPC initiated the "Great Leap Forward" movement. High targets were set for agricultural production. In August 1958, the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee convened an enlarged meeting at Beidaihe and decided that in 1958 the output of steel should reach 10.7 million tons, double the output in 1957. Also, a movement to mobilize people's commune spread throughout the entire country in the same year.

<sup>3</sup> Mao's essay (1966[1937]: 274-312) "On the Question of Contradiction" was Originally delivered as lectures at the Anti-Japanese Military and Political College in Yanan in 1937. In recent years, long debates among Chinese scholarship devoted to the question whether Mao's essay "On Contradiction" was actually a plagiarism of Ai Siqi or other Chinese Marxist intellectuals. Concerning this controversy, Nick Knight (2002: 419-445) accurately pointed out that whether the source of the idea is from Ai Siqi or Mao Zedong, they were all inspired by the translations of Marx and Lenin and the Marxist-Leninist textbooks that were flooded at that time. Also, Pantsov & Levine 2015[2007].

<sup>4</sup> *From Marx to Mao* (2008). Online. Available HTTP: < <http://www.marx2mao.com/>> (accessed 22 April 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Yang (1986[1958]: 126-152) (1986[1959a]: 184-195, 1986[1959b]: 196-209, 1986[1959c]: 210-214, 1986[1959d]: 215-230, 1986[1959e]: 231-253, 1986[1961a]: 254-258, 1986[1961b]: 259-327) criticized the drawbacks of the Great Leap Forward in 1958, including the general tendency of coxcombry (*fukua* 浮誇), blind leadership (*xiazhihui* 瞎指揮), idealist subjective dynamism (*huguan nengdong* 主觀能動). His article was the first one that criticized the Great Leap Forward.

<sup>6</sup> Fang wrote in 1652 in his book *Dongxi Jun* (東西均) that "two moving into one and one moving into two. Separating and rejoining. Joining and departing. It is the moment of encounter and revolution at the same time." For Fang, "Two fusing into one" is the same dialectic movement of "one divides into two," intersected at the moment of "encounter" (交) and "revolution" (輪), the transitory moment between movement and stillness, tension and relaxation, masculinity and femininity. (Fang 2001[1652] 40, 57, 198)

<sup>7</sup> The publication of *xiaojing*, *The Book of Filial Piety* (孝經), together with the propaganda of the Kominka Movement as *Huangmin fenggong jing fu xiaojing* 皇民奉公經附孝經 by the Japanese colonial government in Taiwan, encouraging the *subject of the emperor* to serve in the battlefield, as fulfilling his duty of filial piety to the state, further exemplified how the concept of loyalty and filial piety could be merged in the disciplinary governance of the subjects of the modern state.