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# Reopening the “Opening of Japan”: A Russian-Japanese Revolutionary Encounter and the Vision of Anarchist Progress

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SHO KONISHI

IN THE SPRING OF 1874, the Russian populist and international revolutionary leader Lev Mechnikov (1838–1888) sailed to Japan in order to observe and participate in the Meiji Ishin, commonly known in English as the “Meiji Restoration.”<sup>1</sup> Japan was still in the throes of disorder and conflict as he disembarked in Yokohama. Comparing the Ishin to revolutionary movements in Europe, Mechnikov called it “a complete and radical revolution, the kind we know only from history.”<sup>2</sup> Seeking to right a common misunderstanding among many in the West about the causes of the Ishin, he described it as being of native origin. He argued that the Ishin was not simply a political reaction to external pressure on Japan to adopt Western civilization and become involved in capitalist development. Rather, it was a complex revolution from within, based on centuries of social, cultural, and intellectual developments, that had merely been given further impetus by disturbances from abroad. Mechnikov would eventually accord the Ishin global significance for human progress in a different direction altogether from Western modernity.

Historians have rarely questioned one aspect of the birth of modern Japan: the “Opening of the Nation” to the West, or *kaikoku*, and the resulting initiation of civilization and progress. As a result, the meaning of *kaikoku* has been closed, and alternative narratives of modern Japanese history have essentially been precluded from the historiography on Japan. By exploring Mechnikov’s private encounter with Ishin Japan on the non-state level beyond the imagined East-West divide, it may be possible to reopen the meaning of *kaikoku* and introduce the larger associated vision of cooperatist anarchist civilization and progress.<sup>3</sup> At the very moment that Japan’s

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<sup>1</sup> In this article, only when referring to how nineteenth-century Russians described the events surrounding the overthrow of the Tokugawa feudal regime do I use the term “revolution.” Elsewhere I use the Japanese term “Ishin.” On the problem of rendering *Meiji Ishin* as “Restoration” in translation, see, for example, Tetsuo Najita, “Japan’s Industrial Revolution in Historical Perspective,” in Masao Miyoshi and H. D. Harootunian, eds., *Japan in the World* (Durham, N.C., 1993), 19–23.

<sup>2</sup> Lev Mechnikov, “Era prosveshcheniia Iaponii: Meidzi,” in A. A. Shcherbina, ed., *Iaponiia na perelome: Izbrannye stat'i i ocherki* (Vladivostok, 1992), 76. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

<sup>3</sup> I use a new term, “cooperatist,” instead of “cooperativist,” to emphasize an ethic and subjectivity

borders opened to negotiation with the West and to the concomitant narratives of civilizational progress, they opened as well to alternative visions of progress. Mechnikov would give Japan's modern revolution world-historical meaning as a major catalyst for the advancement of humanity based on the principles of cooperatist anarchy. The resulting idea of progress would emphasize cooperation between people over Social Darwinist competition, and spontaneous free associations of peoples over the rule of law and state governance, as fundamental for the advancement of human life. It would be based on the premise that individual and group differences on multiple levels constituted an essential basis for a cooperative human society, making possible a modern subjectivity that simultaneously incorporated both the individual and the collective.

Mechnikov's encounter with Ishin Japan led him to refashion anarchism, transforming it from a Bakuninist ideology of primordial and violent destruction of the existing social and political structures into an evolutionary construct for developing a civilization on the basis of mutual aid.<sup>4</sup> Mechnikov identified a dynamic model of civilizational progress in Japan that transcended the provincially bounded idea of the Russian commune. He was struck by the cooperative self-organization he observed among commoners during the Ishin. Cooperative practices enabled the people to have economic and social stability in their lives at a time when they were experiencing tremendous political instability, a lack of organizational guidance from above, and sudden dislocation to urban areas. Mechnikov noted the commoners' consciousness of and pride in their contribution to the larger society, with recognition in turn of others' contributing role. Japanese called this organizing ethic for the conduct of everyday life "mutual aid." He observed that the principle of mutual assistance had the capacity to extend beyond the confines of the immediate family, the neighborhood, and even the nation, and was marked by an intense effort to learn from and interact with the outside world, which he saw happening on many levels of society. Mechnikov viewed this ethic as essential for the advancement of humanity. The developing vision of progress and civilization inspired by the encounter between the Japanese ideas of *ishin* and Russian populist notions of *revoliutsiia* (revolution) would later constitute one of the most important intellectual bases for Kropotkinism, a leading current of modern anarchism.

Not only is Mechnikov's encounter revealing with respect to the open and unsettled nature of the early meanings given to the "beginnings" of modern Japan, but the alternative meanings given to those beginnings were salient for further action. Japanese intellectuals would turn the vision of cooperatist progress into one of the most important conceptual foundations for modern cultural life in Japan. For example, it heavily influenced the women's movement, the non-war movement, and the spheres of education, religion, language, literature, art, and even primatology. Transforming the idea of time itself, participants imagined and put into practice "coop-

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of cooperation not limited to the enterprise of the cooperative, a society of persons for the distribution of goods.

<sup>4</sup> While Mechnikov had conspired with Bakunin in revolutionary activities in the 1860s, he acknowledged that their relationship was fairly negative. Hoover Institution of War and Peace Archives, Stanford, California, B. I. Nicolaevsky Collection, Box 183, #34, Letter from L. Mechnikov to Vasilii Danilovich, January 29, 1884.

eratist anarchist modernity," a temporal belonging that transcended ethnic, racial, gendered, national, and other means of modern belonging.<sup>5</sup>

Our understanding of Japanese anarchism as a product of Western intellectual traditions has helped to prevent us from seeing cooperatist anarchism as a form of modernity in Japan. We have long defined anarchy, the absence of state governance and legal order, as characterizing the most primitive stage of human progress and civilization. By extension, the history of nineteenth-century anarchism has often conceived anarchism as an intellectual and cultural legacy of the social fury of the French Revolution, and thereby associated it with terrorism and the formless dreams of utopianism. Similarly, Japanese historiography has viewed anarchism in Japan as a reactionary impulse against the Western civilizational order, expressing an emotional preoccupation with "traditional" and "conservative" moral and spiritual values threatened by the West.<sup>6</sup> Common to both of these characterizations is the notion that anarchism, whether by its ideals or in practice, was opposed to modernity.

The idea of Western modernity provided the starting point from which we have arrived at much of our scholarship on modern Japan. While existing explorations of an "alternative Japanese modernity" have attempted to examine how Japanese reconfigured and retranslated Western modernity into "indigenous" or "Japanese" national forms as historical difference, the modernity of the "West" nonetheless remained for historians the source that defined the terms of modernity in Japan.<sup>7</sup> Studies of the diverse trajectories of alternative forms of modernity in the non-West have tended to speak of "hybridity" between two ultimately foreign elements, an oil-and-water mixture between the traditional and the new. The "multiple modernities" in the non-West have qualified as such through the indigenous development or reconfiguration of major modern elements already defined by the West and its historical experience, such as the public sphere, capitalism, and democratic political institutions.<sup>8</sup> While our emphasis on these historical trajectories will undoubtedly continue to advance our historical understanding, at the same time it has caused us to overlook the creative transnational production of a cooperatist anarchist vision of human progress and civilization outside the epistemological limits of "East" and "West."

Proceeding from a similar logic, we have long studied the modern relationship between Russia and Japan from the perspective of state-to-state relations, beginning with the Russian expedition to Japan in 1853 led by Admiral Evfimii Putiatin. The story of the expedition's contribution to the "Opening" of Japan, followed by the

<sup>5</sup> For a theoretical discussion on the reimagination of time and the possibility for alternative identities, see Lawrence Grossberg, "History, Imagination and the Politics of Belonging: Between the Death and the Fear of History," in Paul Gilroy, Lawrence Grossberg, and Angela McRobbie, eds., *Without Guarantees: In Honour of Stuart Hall* (London, 2000), 148–164.

<sup>6</sup> See F. G. Notehelfer's important contribution to our earlier knowledge of Japanese anarchism, *Kōtoku Shūsui: Portrait of a Japanese Radical* (Cambridge, 1971). Other, more recent works that have similarly described anarchism in Japan include Germaine Hoston, *The State, Identity, and the National Question in China and Japan* (Princeton, N.J., 1994), 137–148; and Steven G. Marks, *How Russia Shaped the Modern World: From Art to Anti-Semitism, Ballet to Bolshevism* (Princeton, N.J., 2003).

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Julia Adeney Thomas, *Reconfiguring Modernity: Concepts of Nature in Japanese Political Ideology* (Berkeley, Calif., 2002).

<sup>8</sup> For example, Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, N.J., 2000); Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, ed., *Multiple Modernities* (New Brunswick, N.J., 2002).

Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), which demonstrated Japan’s rising power and permitted its entry into the Western international community of nation-states, is a familiar one. With the narrative of Western modernity repeated as essentially the sole historical meaning and value embedded in the history of Russo-Japanese relations, our accounts of that relationship have often been written from within the cultural fold of Western modernity. Ironically enough, the more we have expanded the ways to look at their interactions, the more we have solidified Western modernity as the master narrative for international history involving modern Japan. While making an enormous contribution to the volume of our historical knowledge, this has led us all the more to overlook the phenomenon under examination. Even studies in the fields of literature, theater, and art, which have added significantly to our knowledge of Russo-Japanese relations from a non-state perspective, have been construed largely within the conceptual framework of Russia’s impact on Japan within a larger West-East binary and its unidirectional flow of culture.<sup>9</sup>

The purpose here is not to provide a single overarching characterization of the rich and variegated history of Russian-Japanese relations.<sup>10</sup> Rather, examining the interlocking transnational networks of intellectuals that formed on the non-state level, beyond the cultural construct of the encounter between West and non-West, enables us to take a new approach to the “Opening” of Japan. As alien as the Russian-Japanese revolutionary encounter was to the mid-nineteenth-century culture of international relations of Western nation-states,<sup>11</sup> it provides us with an alternative lens through which to read *kaikoku* as a moment of rupture, thereby giving it new historical meaning and value.

From the standpoint of Western modernity, Europeans and Americans in Japan during the Ishin believed that modern Japan owed its birth to the civilizing presence of the Western nation-states. Merchant Francis Hall observed the events largely through the lens of his business interests in Japan and the Western diplomatic activities that supported them. When he described the progress that foreigners were bringing to Japan as an eventual “good,” he meant the extent of capitalist development as the measure of that progress. From another perspective, Isabella Bird was one of the very few Westerners to travel widely through Japan in the early years of Meiji. She described in minute detail the technologies of everyday life during her trip to Japan in 1878, revealing the “hopeless darkness” of the Oriental peasant’s primitive lifestyle. Her descriptions referred to a hierarchy of peoples based on their level

<sup>9</sup> Since the discussion of the “Western impact” of Russian literature on Japan and the resulting emergence of modern Japanese language and literature in Marleigh Grayer Ryan’s 1965 work on Russianist Futabatei Shimei, our studies of the topic have not departed much from the conceptual framework of Russia’s impact on the East. Ryan, *Japan’s First Modern Novel: Ukigumo of Futabatei Shimei* (New York, 1965); Nobori Shōmu and Akamatsu Katsumaro, *The Russian Impact on Japan: Literature and Social Thought*, ed. and trans. Peter Berton, Paul F. Langer, and George O. Totten (Los Angeles, 1981); Marks, *How Russia Shaped the Modern World*; and Thomas Rimer, ed., *A Hidden Fire: Russian and Japanese Cultural Encounters, 1868–1926* (Stanford, Calif., 1995), a collection of essays by twenty scholars from Russia, Japan, and the U.S.

<sup>10</sup> Recent Russian language studies have successfully unearthed new archival findings in relation to Russian-Japanese cultural relations. Much work by Russian scholars in this field has reflected a renewed interest in the history of the Russian Orthodox Church via its activities in Japan and East Asia. See, for example, the informative reports in V. S. Belonenko, ed., *Iz istorii religioznykh, kul’turnykh i politicheskikh vzaimootnoshenii Rossii i Iaponii v XIX–XX vekakh* (St. Petersburg, 1998).

<sup>11</sup> On this culture of international relations, see Beate Jahn, *The Cultural Construction of International Relations* (New York, 2000).

of development in science, technology, and Christianity. From a diplomatic perspective, measuring modern progress by a nation's capacity for empire-building in the international arena, British Embassy secretary Ernest Satow assessed during the Ishin that Japan would never "get beyond a third or fourth rate position." Satow saw the general populace as a major reason for Japan's inability to improve its international ranking, because they "seemed to be too much mere imitators, and wanting in bottom."<sup>12</sup> The idea that an interest in taking from the outside world was a sign of backwardness contrasted starkly with assessments by Russian observers. Hall, Bird, and Satow provide us with examples of how Europeans and Americans—male and female, private and public—shared a vision of Western civilization and progress that included elements of state- and empire-building, rationality via science and technology, capitalism, and Christianity.

In contrast, Mechnikov attached tremendous meaning to the intellectual achievements of the Tokugawa period (1600–1868). He saw progressive aspects of the Ishin as the product of social and cultural developments that were already apparent in Tokugawa Japan. As someone who had been directly involved in revolutionary movements across Europe, Mechnikov was uniquely positioned to compare the Ishin at the moment of its occurrence with radical movements in the West. His fascination with the "Revolution in Asia" led him to examine it meticulously and to cultivate an extensive network of personal relationships with Ishin participants and intellectual figures in Japan. He further stood out in terms of his preparedness in the Japanese language.<sup>13</sup> Having attained fluency in Japanese before he went to Japan, Mechnikov studied historical texts, literature, popular pamphlets, and scholarly works unmediated by translation to deepen his knowledge. Furthermore, distancing himself from the diplomatic and merchant communities of the treaty ports, he based his observations of Ishin Japan on his experiences as a private visitor essentially without citizenship, at a time when Westerners who came to Japan were under strict diplomatic protection and patronage.

Mechnikov's Ishin was both rooted ideologically in Russian radical thought and influenced by the perspectives of those in Japan who had lived through it. Thus, as much as Western interpretations of the Ishin were specific to the historical time and space from which they emerged, Mechnikov's accounts warrant historicization.

MECHNIKOV HAD BEEN INSTRUMENTAL in forming the larger discursive space of populism, a radical Russian political doctrine of the 1860s to 1880s. With the heightened state of political repressions in Russia at the time, Russian political dissidents re-

<sup>12</sup> Francis Hall, *Japan through American Eyes: The Journal of Francis Hall, 1859–1866*, ed. F. G. Notehelfer (Princeton, N.J., 1992), 414–415; Isabella Bird, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan* (Boston, 1984); Ernest Satow, "Letter to F. V. Dickens," in Tetsuo Najita, ed., *Readings in Tokugawa Thought*, 3rd ed. (Chicago, 1998), 297–299.

<sup>13</sup> Fully intending to travel to Japan in order to observe the "revolution" as it unfolded, Mechnikov went to the Sorbonne in 1872 to attend the only Japanese program in Europe. Mechnikov, "Vospominaniia o dvukhletnei sluzhbe v Iaponii," in Shcherbina, *Iaponiia na perelome*, 25. Dissatisfied with the poor quality and slow pace of education at the Sorbonne, however, he left for Switzerland to seek out Ōyama Iwao, a military leader of the Ishin, for one-on-one study. Ōyama was on assignment there to study military affairs and French. Yet he selected the Russian revolutionary to be his teacher. The two became so close that they decided to room together.

siding in Europe provided a mouthpiece for the populist cause. Mechnikov played a leading role in this small but active community of émigrés. He served as the tactical organizer of the group's dissident activities and as an articulator of its ideas through his many writings.<sup>14</sup> His actions also extended far beyond the immediate Russian community; in the 1860s and early 1870s, he participated in or assisted revolutionary movements and uprisings in Poland, Spain, France, and Italy. In Italy he even fought and was wounded as a lieutenant in Giuseppe Garibaldi's military campaign for Italian unification.<sup>15</sup>

Impressed with the young radical's insights, the widely read émigré social critic Alexander Herzen frequently had Mechnikov contribute to his journal *Kolokol'*, which was banned in Russia. Mechnikov oversaw the opening of the journal's branch in Switzerland. Instrumental in maintaining the émigrés' direct underground ties to intellectual life in Russia, he created and ran an illegal publications transport route from Europe into Russia, which provided Russian readers with works from the émigré community.<sup>16</sup> Mechnikov's steps were recorded in detail and stored in a thick file kept by the tsar's secret police. He used a number of irreverent pseudonyms to further attenuate his relationship to the state, hoping "to remind the Russian government as little as possible of my existence."<sup>17</sup>

The larger community of Russian intellectuals that Mechnikov belonged to questioned the narrative of civilizational progress in the West. Widely sharing the perception of a hierarchically bound Europe, Russian intellectuals increasingly believed that the revolutionary movement in the West was incapable of creating an equitable and free society. If some had anticipated the possibility for a new social order with the establishment of the Paris Commune in 1871, the violent suppression of the Communards solidified the belief that much of Europe was immature and ill-prepared for a successful revolution aimed at achieving social equality and justice.

Herzen's influential writings had earlier provided a devastating analysis of the virtual impossibility of a revolution in much of Western Europe, where a hierarchical order and a massive centralized government structure to rule over it were fully in place, instituted over centuries of development. The problem with Europe lay not in the institutional creation of freedoms, which the Russian intelligentsia generally considered to be successful, but in the ingrained customs of daily interaction, which were difficult to alter. Mechnikov's own account of his disenchantment with the revolutionary movement in France echoed the older Herzen's recollections of his experiences with the revolutions in Europe decades earlier. Mechnikov described the suppression of the Paris Commune by a public made up of a privileged class seeking

<sup>14</sup> The Russian secret police considered Mechnikov's writings to be as dangerous as Nikolai Chernyshevskii's "What Is to Be Done?," the so-called bible of the Russian narodniki. Police reports stated that "What Is to Be Done?" and Mechnikov's autobiographical story "Bold Stride," which were published in the same issue of the journal *Sovremennik*, caused the landmark publication to be shut down.

<sup>15</sup> Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi federatsii, Moscow (hereafter GARF), f. 6753, op. 1, d. 383, l. 34; Mechnikov, "Bakunin v Italii," *Istoricheskii vestnik*, no. 3 (1897): 824; "Iz perepiski deiatelei osvoboditel'nogo dvizheniia: Materialy iz arkhiva L. I. Mechnikov," in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo: Iz istorii russkoi literatury i obshchestvennoi mysli 1860–1890 gg.* (Moscow, 1977), 463; A. K. Lishina, "Russkii garibal'dits," in S. D. Skazkin, ed., *Rossiiia i Italiia* (Moscow, 1968).

<sup>16</sup> Mikhail Bakunin, *Pis'ma M. A. Bakunina k A. I. Gertsenu i N. P. Ogarevu* (St. Petersburg, 1906), 258.

<sup>17</sup> GARF, f. 5770, op. 1, ed. khr. 156. Among the pseudonyms he often used were Leon Brandi and Emil' Denegri.

to maintain power and the uneducated, tradition-bound rural masses.<sup>18</sup> Coming from two generations of Russian intelligentsia, the literary and theoretically oriented "fathers" and the action-oriented "sons," Herzen's and Mechnikov's ideas represented a broad swath of Russian revolutionary experience in Europe.<sup>19</sup> "The European revolution was a failure" had become a cliché with Russian intellectuals by the early 1870s.

For many, the source of a new revolutionary way of life lay within Russia. Following a suggestion by Herzen in 1855, the agrarian lifestyle associated with the Russian agricultural commune came to provide a core principle for future development and revolution. The Russian state, in their view, was a foreign import that had been introduced by force, with no roots in native tradition. The path to revolution in Russia could thus be greatly simplified.<sup>20</sup> While the Russian commune served as an example of alternative development for the populist movement, it would be in Ishin Japan, with its radical openness to technological change and new ideas from abroad, that Mechnikov would identify a universal possibility for cooperatist anarchist human progress that transcended the provincialist claims of Slavophiles. Following his stay in Japan, he would acknowledge the severe limitations of the Russian commune as a model for socialist everyday life.<sup>21</sup>

For Mechnikov in the early 1870s, the revolution in Japan provided both a real and a metaphoric alternative to the conservativeness of "old Europe." He responded to the ongoing developments in Japan with sudden determination:

The horizon, which had hung heavy and foul over Europe, shone in the Far East with an unexpectedly bright light. We had been accustomed to thinking of [Japan] as an eternal bulwark of immobility, inertia, and stagnation . . . Japan suddenly stirred, awakened, and with unexpected life came to meet "white civilization," despite the unwise actions of Europe.<sup>22</sup>

Mechnikov's resolve to go to Japan thus was not an attempt to go "to the people," in the sense of traveling to enlighten the backward masses and stir their revolutionary instincts. Rather, he was interested in studying the dynamics of a progressive revolution that had been accomplished in the East.

Other Russians who visited Japan during the Ishin similarly described it as a modern revolution unprecedented in Asia. Generally sharing a moral apprehension about the conduct of foreigners in Japan, Russians saw the Western presence as having disturbed as much as fueled the progress that ensued. They described Western Europeans in Japan, from sailors to diplomats, as having a misguided under-

<sup>18</sup> Hokkaido University Northern Studies Special Collections, Hokkaido Colonial Office and Its Foreign Employees, Advisers, and Other Foreigners: Correspondence, Lev Mechnikov report, "La France Sous Mac-Mahon: Résumé politique," November 16, 1873.

<sup>19</sup> My use of "fathers" and "sons" comes from Ivan Turgenev's popular novel on the social problem in Russia, *Fathers and Sons* (1862), which depicts two generations of Russian intellectuals. Mechnikov and Herzen mutually respected one another. Herzen said that Mechnikov was "the only one capable of thinking and writing." Mechnikov, in turn, often said of Herzen that "no man had left a deeper impression on his life." A. I. Herzen, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 30 vols. (Moscow, 1954–1965), 28: 10; and Olga Mechnikov, *The Life of Elie Mechnikov, 1845–1916* (Boston, 1921), 47.

<sup>20</sup> Herzen, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 24: 184; 6: 7. Mechnikov had similarly sought an embryo of future socialist development in the commune in the 1860s.

<sup>21</sup> By 1881, Mechnikov would criticize the idealization of contemporary Russia as some kind of "good kingdom of limitless communalism." Mechnikov, "Obshchina i gosudarstvo v Shveitsarii," *Delo* 6 (1881): 227.

<sup>22</sup> Mechnikov, "Vospominaniia," 23.

standing of civilization and progress and failing to incorporate social justice and brotherly love in their idea of universal development.<sup>23</sup> Even the leading Russian Orthodox missionary in Japan, Nikolai, who theoretically stood on the opposite political shore from Mechnikov, held remarkably similar views. Based on his exceptional knowledge of the Japanese language and history and his experiences in Japan during the Ishin, Nikolai viewed the “revolution” as the definitive beginning of a new era of progress predicated on religious faith in which the West had played only a peripheral role. For Nikolai, the Ishin was not just the violent overturning of an old sociopolitical order, but the natural product of a developed commoners’ society. He wrote that the “democratic” order of Japanese life not only had developed over centuries on home soil, but was more advanced than that of the most powerful Western nations. Like Mechnikov, he described the Japanese to Russian readers as among the most educated and cultured people in the world, with a highly developed popular culture rooted in centuries-old traditions of peasant education.<sup>24</sup>

Grigorii Blagosvetlov, editor of the populist journal *Delo* in St. Petersburg, believed that Mechnikov could provide an account of Ishin Japan that would prove stimulating to the publication’s broad readership. In a letter to Mechnikov, he wrote:

Leaving behind old Europe with her routines and prejudices, you are setting out for a country that is beginning a new period of life. In Japan, everything is being re-created anew. Her awakening is a great and particularly interesting one for Europe to observe . . . Most important for *Delo* would be to give a good general view of the deep-seated reforms that Japan has achieved in recent times. If subjected to a general analysis and well explained, they would be edifying for us.<sup>25</sup>

In keeping with the meaning of the Japanese term *ishin* as a vision of constructing everything anew, Blagosvetlov contrasted revolutionary Japan with old Europe. Meanwhile, Euro-American concepts of progress relegated the geographical space of the East, which often included Russia, to the temporal position of backwardness. Karl Marx, for example, objectified the “East” as eternally stagnant. He wrote in *Capital* that a true picture of ancient or feudal economies in Western Europe could be deduced from a close study of the “primitive forms” found in contemporary Russia and Japan.<sup>26</sup>

By redirecting the capacity for progress away from the West, Russian intellectuals in the 1870s began to redraw the map of development and hierarchical order. With Japan seen as a locus of tremendous progress, the divide that marked the geography of difference between a stagnant East and an advanced modern West appeared to dissolve.

<sup>23</sup> See N. Bartoshevskii, *Iaponiia (Ocherki iz zapisok puteshestvennika vokrug sveta): Vzgliad na politicheskuiu i sotsial'nuiu zhizn' naroda* (St. Petersburg, 1868), and M. Veniukov, *Puteshestvie po Priamur'iu, Kitaiu i Iaponii* (Khabarovsk, 1970), 271–280.

<sup>24</sup> Iermonakh Nikolai, “Iaponiia s tochki zreniia khristianskoi missii,” *Russkii viestnik* 83, no. 9 (1869): 221–222.

<sup>25</sup> GARF, f. 6753, op. 1, ed. khr. 43.

<sup>26</sup> Karl Marx, *Selected Writings* (Indianapolis, 1994), 237–239, and Marx, *Capital* (St. Petersburg, 1872), 616.

MECHNIKOV'S ESTABLISHMENT OF RELATIONSHIPS with likeminded Japanese would lead to a meeting of *ishin* and *revoliutsiia* in Japan. A physical meeting took place between the Russian revolutionary and Japanese radicals. Simultaneously, a dialectical relationship emerged, a meeting between the meanings of *Ishin* and revolution. A new understanding of the *Ishin* as an expression of cooperative civilization would develop out of these revolutionary networks.

In the years before his departure for Japan, Mechnikov had formed close ties with a number of former *shishi*, revolutionary samurai of the *Ishin* who had been sent to Europe to learn about the outside world. His self-identification as a wounded veteran of Garibaldi's war in Italy, graphically illustrated by his pronounced limp and wooden heel, led his Japanese acquaintances to identify him as an internationalist and a populist revolutionary.<sup>27</sup> Mechnikov's relationships with the *shishi* were established on an interpersonal and unofficial basis. He recalled, "I conducted all my agreements with Japanese in Europe exclusively in verbal fashion, outside of any official setting, and without any witnesses."<sup>28</sup> He was secretly given a private invitation to go to Japan to spend time with Saigō Takamori, a famous *shishi* who had become a charismatic leader in the new Meiji government. Mechnikov was assigned to work personally under Saigō, who would serve as his sole supervisor and patron. As part of the invitation, which was facilitated through Saigō's own family network, Saigō Takamori's younger brother, Saigō Tsugumichi, invited Mechnikov to live with him in his Tokyo home during the latter's stay in Japan.<sup>29</sup>

At the time that he extended the invitation to Mechnikov, Saigō Takamori had been protesting the Meiji leadership's undignified bureaucratic assaults on the samurai as excessively harsh, particularly their policies toward the already poor country samurai. Saigō claimed that by attacking the warrior class that had fueled the spirit of the revolution and by implementing overly ambitious Westernization projects through greater centralization of the state bureaucracy, the Meiji leaders had betrayed the idealist motives at the root of the *Ishin*. In an attempt to revive a sense of spiritual dignity and idealism among Japan's future leaders, Saigō created a special school in Tokyo, the Shugijuku, to simultaneously develop warrior ethics and teach foreign knowledge. He used the annual stipend he was awarded for his leadership in the *Ishin* to found the school. The Shugijuku in this sense, then, was a linkage point between the national future and those who had died in the revolutionary past. Saigō declared in its charter that there could be no more appropriate way to use his stipend than to support a school to honor the memory of the dead, and to help the living prepare to follow their noble example.<sup>30</sup> As an accomplished revolutionary, Mechnikov was invited to serve as director of the Shugijuku as part of Saigō's project to revitalize the spirit of the *Ishin*.

Mechnikov, in turn, described Saigō as a populist revolutionary leader who was one of the common people. He recalled that Saigō had given up his immense power to voice his opposition to the policies of the Meiji government in order to adopt a

<sup>27</sup> Kido Takayoshi, *Kido Takayoshi nikki*, vol. 2: 1871–1874 (Tokyo, 1983), 337.

<sup>28</sup> Mechnikov, "Vospominaniia," 45.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 44–45.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 28. Saigō Takamori, *Saigō Takamori zenshū*, 6 vols. (Tokyo, 1976–1980), 3: 333.

simple agrarian lifestyle.<sup>31</sup> Saigō's turn to an agricultural way of life as an expression of his beliefs seemed to fit with Mechnikov's own expectations of revolutionary leadership rooted in democratic and populist ideals. In fact, Saigō resigned from the Meiji government just before Mechnikov arrived in Japan, and the Shugijuku was closed. Saigō would be propelled to the head of the infamous Satsuma Rebellion, in which he led forty thousand troops to overthrow the Meiji government soon after Mechnikov's arrival.

Instead, Mechnikov would fulfill his assignment to inspire revolutionary idealism among his students as an instructor of Russian at the Tokyo School of Foreign Languages (TSFL), a major center for Russian language training.<sup>32</sup> As the primary instructor for upper-level courses, he established a program that taught history from below and the Russian literary traditions of polemicism, satire, and critical realism, a curriculum that would be maintained for years thereafter by fellow Russian revolutionaries who came to teach at the school.<sup>33</sup> After Mechnikov's arrival, the program became an autonomous space within the university that some students identified with as an expression of revolutionary idealism. Many students came to view this space as separate from the state and its nation-building projects.

While an instructor at TSFL, Mechnikov developed extensive relationships with people whom he described as "the most important leaders of the Japanese progressive movement."<sup>34</sup> They were leaders of the Freedom and People's Rights Movement for social equality and popular political participation, which was gaining momentum throughout Japan. Within a few years of Mechnikov's departure from Japan, activists in the movement would organize almost two hundred political societies across the country. One of the most prominent of those with whom Mechnikov established a relationship was the theoretical leader of the movement, Nakae Chōmin, then president of TSFL.

In their private interactions with Mechnikov, the activists provided him with a unique source of knowledge about their movement. As he himself would acknowledge, much of his understanding of Ishin Japan depended on both his direct observations and his private relationships with a wide range of Japanese friends and acquaintances from all walks of life. His interpretation of the Ishin thus would come as much from his acquaintances as from his own expectations and personal experiences. Mechnikov described the extraordinary care his Japanese friends took to guide him in developing his knowledge of Ishin Japan: "I affectionately guarded [my acquaintances] every day and exploited them unscrupulously for the profit of my studies."<sup>35</sup> His interaction with Japanese from a nonhierarchical perspective shaped

<sup>31</sup> Mechnikov, "Vospominaniia," 44–45. The scholarship on Saigō has neglected this aspect of his thoughts and activities between 1873 and 1877. Scholars have treated Saigō during this period as either preparing for civil war or retiring completely. Charles L. Yates suggests that his interest in adopting an agrarian lifestyle at this time appears to have been quite serious. Yates, *Saigō Takamori: The Man behind the Myth* (London, 1995).

<sup>32</sup> Peter Berton, Paul Langer, and Rodger Swearingen, *Japanese Training and Research in the Russian Field* (Los Angeles, 1956), 16.

<sup>33</sup> Thanks to the staff at the Municipal Archive of Hokkaido for helping me to photograph Kojima Kurataro's class notes of Mechnikov's lectures held in the Kojima Kurataro Collection.

<sup>34</sup> Mechnikov letter to Mikhail Evgrafovich Saltykov-Shchedrin, in Saltykov-Shchedrin, *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 102 vols. (Moscow, 1931–2000), 13–14: 361–362.

<sup>35</sup> Mechnikov, "Vospominaniia," 32–34, and Lev Mechnikov, *L'Empire Japonaise: Pays-Peuple-Histoire* (Geneva, 1878), iv.

his knowledge of the event as a revolution from within, and informed him of the corresponding expectations among many in Japan, rooted in revolutionary ideals, for equality and cooperation on the individual, societal, and international levels. In this way, Mechnikov's original idea of *revoliutsiia*, rooted in the claims of Russian populism, fused with the actualities of the Ishin itself and was further shaped by the understanding of *ishin* among those who had led or experienced it.

In turn, the TSFL Russian program would impart knowledge about the Russian revolutionary movement to the Freedom and People's Rights Movement. After Mechnikov assumed the directorship of the program, a series of former populist prisoners and political exiles from Russia took teaching positions there.<sup>36</sup> Sixty-five books on Russian populism were published in Japan in 1881–1883 alone, and newspapers were filled with reports about the revolutionary activities in Russia.<sup>37</sup> Among the bestselling books in Japan during this period was an account of the Russian revolutionary movement written by Mechnikov's close friend Sergei Stepniak that had been translated for those involved with the movement in Japan. A student of Mechnikov's, Muramatsu Aizō, would lead one of the most infamous incidents of the movement, the Iida Uprising.<sup>38</sup> Participants linked their own movement to resurrect the perceived unfulfilled promises for equality in the Ishin with the revolutionary movement in Russia.

Saigō's concern with restoring the spirit of the Ishin had, by virtue of his inviting a Russian revolutionary to Japan, given the movement a new global meaning for human progress and civilization. In both the physical interactions between Russian and Japanese radicals and the resulting coalescing of meanings, *ishin* met *revoliutsiia*. This was a novel meeting that arose in the particular historical juncture of the Meiji Ishin and the Russian revolutionary movement in the wider world context. It emerged beyond the imagined divide between a backward and traditional Orient and a progressive and civilized West.

MECHNIKOV'S FIRST DAYS IN JAPAN were an unsettling encounter with total instability. He heard reports everywhere about an outbreak of uprisings in the south. A number of Ishin leaders with whom he had associated in Switzerland were involved. His patron, Saigō, had resigned from his post and left Tokyo.<sup>39</sup> "My situation was made all the more desperate by my complete lack of knowledge, my inability to orient myself," Mechnikov wrote of the chaos he found in Japan.<sup>40</sup> What he knew about

<sup>36</sup> Watanabe Masaji, a professor of Russian at Tokyo University of Foreign Languages (formerly TSFL), documents the "populist spirit" that continued at the school after Mechnikov in "Mechinikofu to Muramatsu Aizō," in Hara Teruyuki and Togawa Tsuguo, eds., *Surabu to nihon* (Tokyo, 1995), 133–156. Andrei Kolenko, for example, who taught at TSFL for more than six years, had been imprisoned and exiled for his political activities. In his recitation class, students were asked to memorize and recite poems subversive of the existing sociopolitical establishment, often reflecting radical populist thought or recalling the life of the political exile. Other political émigrés who taught in TSFL's Russian program were S. Iu. Gotskii-Danilovich, Nikolai Gray, and Aleksandr Stepanovich Bogomolov. *Kokuritsu kobunroku monbusho no bu*, March 3, Meiji 9 (1876), 2A-25-1768; December 11, Meiji 9 (1876).

<sup>37</sup> Asukai Masamichi, "Roshia dai ichiji kakumei to Kōtoku Shūsui," *Shisō* 520 (October 1967): 1328.

<sup>38</sup> Watanabe, "Mechinikofu to Muramatsu Aizō."

<sup>39</sup> Mechnikov, "Vospominaniia," 42–47.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.



FIGURE 1: Lev Mechnikov in samurai dress. Photograph courtesy of the State Archive of the Russian Federation. An examination of Mechnikov's encounter with Ishin Japan suggests that he identified with Ishin samurai not as relics of Oriental difference, but as cohorts for revolutionary change.

the Ishin and Japanese history from reading European books and journals was not enough to prepare him for what he witnessed and experienced in Japan. Mechnikov would be led to describe the Ishin as a conflict-ridden and multilayered experience, full of contradictions and competing claims about its meaning for Japan's future. Out of these observations would come his particular fascination with what he saw as the social foundation for a revolution from within, the nature of which seemed to be the opposite of the path of centralization and bureaucratization taken by Japanese political leaders.<sup>41</sup>

Mechnikov viewed Japan's revolution as offering the West a model for radical social reform. He observed the institutional and social elimination of hierarchical class structures and the creation of vast arenas of social mobility for the common people. He further noted that access to new knowledge had opened up on a vast scale.<sup>42</sup> After traveling across Japan, staying at rural homes and visiting plebeian quarters of the cities, as well as factories and the Ashio copper mine, he wrote, "It is impossible not to be surprised at her unusual transformation. This is a complete and radical revolution, the kind we know only from history . . . Not a single branch of social and political life has remained untouched in this revolution."<sup>43</sup>

Mechnikov's discussions of the historical developments within Japan that had led up to the Ishin were remarkably detailed. He noted that commentators had overly exaggerated the influence of American and European interference in Japanese affairs. He also refuted the testimonies of other foreign witnesses who explained the Ishin as simply a reactionary uprising against trade agreements with foreigners. Mechnikov believed that the Ishin had arisen out of cumulative domestic dissatisfaction and strife and was only exacerbated by the foreign presence.<sup>44</sup> It was a conscious response from a broad-based constituency to the need for progressive, liberal reforms, which they believed would be instituted with the overthrow of the Tokugawa government. The so-called patriots, or *shishi*, who emerged from the educated class had defined their goal as overthrowing the shogunate and the entire political order that came with it. Mechnikov told his readers that the *shishi* came from a variety of economic backgrounds, and could be identified mainly by their literacy and education. He pointed out that they had a shared social consciousness, and were willing to give up their status for the betterment of society as a whole.<sup>45</sup> The leaders of the revolution were committed to "change and replace not only the political structures, but also the very social essence of Japanese life."<sup>46</sup> The Ishin was thus not just about

<sup>41</sup> For example, Mechnikov observed those Japanese elites "strolling down Parisian boulevards," and their leaders, "erecting progress and centralization according to the Napoleonic model," as "having hardly any understanding of the details and particularities of Japanese life." *Ibid.*, 31–32.

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, *ibid.*, 67–68; Mechnikov, "Era prosveshcheniia Iaponii," 76–77; Mechnikov, "Era iaponskogo prosveshcheniia," in Shcherbina, *Iaponiia na perelome*, 122–123.

<sup>43</sup> Mechnikov, "Era prosveshcheniia Iaponii," 76.

<sup>44</sup> Mechnikov, "Vospominaniia," 46–47; Mechnikov, "Era prosveshcheniia Iaponii," 88.

<sup>45</sup> In Élisée Reclus, ed., *Nouvelle géographie universelle*, 19 vols. (Paris, 1876–1894), 7: 847; Mechnikov, "Era prosveshcheniia Iaponii," 92–93. Japanese historians have since found that a considerable number of revolutionaries in the Ishin came from wealthy upper-class farm families. See, for example, Haga Noboru, *Bakumatsu kokugaku no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1978). On the development of Tokugawa-era literary networks that would serve to unite radicals and revolutionaries across status lines, see Eiko Ikegami, *Bonds of Civility: Aesthetic Networks and the Political Origins of Japanese Culture* (New York, 2005).

<sup>46</sup> Mechnikov, "Era prosveshcheniia Iaponii," 80.

a single leader seizing power, or a coup by self-serving elites, as most Westerners believed; it was a social and political revolution with all the attendant demands and expectations.

At the same time, the revolution necessitated successful social *evolution*. Japan's arrival on the stage of world civilization was not an arbitrary act or a historical accident, but "an unavoidable result of Japanese life itself."<sup>47</sup> Throughout his various writings about the Ishin, for example, Mechnikov repeatedly drew upon Ōshio Heihachiro's 1837 "democratic" uprising, as he called it, as a symbolic action that disclosed the accumulation of intellectual developments over the course of the Tokugawa period.<sup>48</sup> It was the result not of a collision between a primitive, isolated society and an advanced civilization, he said, but of historical developments within Japan that had been under way for centuries.

Mechnikov discovered that even amid tremendous political and social chaos, the common people were able to go about their daily lives without direction from above. He noted that physical laborers in Japan had a remarkably developed consciousness of social participation, equal to that in other sectors of society. One of his strongest impressions was of the proud and confident boatmen who had greeted his ship when it first arrived. They were "brilliantly tattooed and stately figures, whose naked bodies were covered with bright white, blue, and red images of female faces, dragons, flowers, fossilized in fantastic arabesques."<sup>49</sup> Body tattoos or *irezumi* had become popular in the seventeenth century among laborers. Usually telling a story through their multicolored designs, they were a response to Tokugawa laws that dictated clothing styles on the basis of class. Laborers who wanted to express uniqueness often shed their government-sanctioned commoners' garb and instead wore nothing at all—except for the tattoos that covered their bodies.<sup>50</sup> Mechnikov found in the tattoos an expression of wit, aesthetic taste, and social pride. He conveyed to his readers that these people were not the legendary repressed and cowering dark masses of Oriental despotism, but vocal commoners, enthusiastic individuals with pride in their labor for society. Mechnikov seemed to have stumbled upon the bright masses of revolution.<sup>51</sup>

For Mechnikov, the Ishin was the revolution of the century. That social revolution was the result of cumulative social and intellectual evolution was further evidenced by the voluntary cooperative associations that he encountered across Japan. He found urban groups of volunteers who worked from their home regions as part of an active network involved with mutual aid. In this voluntary support system, Mech-

<sup>47</sup> Mechnikov, "Era iaponskogo prosveshcheniia," 116–117, 134.

<sup>48</sup> Mechnikov, "Era prosveshcheniia Iaponii," 86; Mechnikov, "Era iaponskogo prosveshcheniia," 117.

<sup>49</sup> Mechnikov, "Vospominaniia," 37.

<sup>50</sup> Mechnikov, "Era prosveshcheniia Iaponii," 55–56. Meanwhile, American and British travelers to Japan largely saw the tattoos as an exotic, savage custom reminiscent of an uncivilized, if idealized, Nature. Christine M. E. Guth, *Longfellow's Tattoos: Tourism, Collecting, and Japan* (Seattle, Wash., 2004), 142–158.

<sup>51</sup> This view of a developed social and political consciousness among commoners during this period is echoed in more recent studies of commoners' participation in the Freedom and People's Rights Movement. Irokawa Daikichi and Roger Bowen attribute a widespread political consciousness and desire for social and political equality to substantial popular organization and participation in the movement. Irokawa, *The Culture of the Meiji Period* (Princeton, N.J., 1984); Roger Bowen, *Rebellion and Democracy in Meiji Japan* (Berkeley, Calif., 1980).



JAPONAIS TATOUÉ.

Dessin de E. Ronjat, d'après une photographie.

FIGURE 2: Tattooed laborer. Illustration for the entry on Japan in Reclus, ed., *Nouvelle géographie universelle*, 7: 769, which relied heavily on Mechnikov's contribution.

nikov saw the rootedness of cooperative practice in everyday existence. He observed that when the new Meiji government failed to provide institutional support for the demographic shift to urban centers, the economy depended on these informal local networks to help those in need. Students attending schools far from home benefited from voluntary cooperative associations back in their hometowns, which pooled vil-

lagers' money to help pay for their studies. The expressions of mutual aid that Mechnikov saw as integral to the revolutionary emergence of modern Japan were rooted in Tokugawa intellectual traditions.<sup>52</sup>

Mutual aid as a progressive tendency in Ishin Japan was indicated by people's tremendous will to learn and to actively acquire new knowledge and techniques from others. The act of learning was thus not an expression of inferiority in relation to the object of study, but an indication of progressiveness of thought. Mechnikov described the active, bold, selective acquisition of European methods and ideas as evincing a cooperative ethic that, through a willingness to learn from the outside world and to establish mutually beneficial relations with others, was instrumental for civilizational progress. He emphasized that acquiring knowledge was a conscious act that the learner selectively manipulated as a tool for national well-being, rather than an inevitable divine flow of reason from civilized to uncivilized, West to East.<sup>53</sup> Instead of serving as a model for Westernization, Ishin Japan's rapid modernization offered an example of selective development in which scientific, technical, and intellectual advancements were rooted in cooperative values.<sup>54</sup>

A number of Mechnikov's observations echoed interpretations of the Ishin then circulating among Japanese from commoners to intellectuals. Historian Irokawa Daikichi claims that millions of commoners believed that the Ishin was a revolution from within that would negate all divisions, achieve equality for all classes, and create a new world order that would include equality among nations.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, the idea of long-term evolution appears to have been circulating widely even among Japanese commoners at the time that Mechnikov was in Japan. Ishin-era commoners studied the history of political protests in Tokugawa Japan, focusing on the same Ōshio uprising that Mechnikov cited in his writings. Like Mechnikov, they used such incidents to question the assumption that the concept of popular rights was a recent import from the West.<sup>56</sup>

Furthermore, Japanese commoners themselves used the language of mutual aid to give moral meaning to the Ishin. A widely circulated pamphlet on international commerce published in 1868 by the Osaka merchant Katō Sukeichi gave moral meaning to the practices of merchants, formerly the lowest class in the Tokugawa social order, by encouraging international trade as an expression of mutual aid. The pamphlet used a commonsense ethical vocabulary shared by many in Japan at the

<sup>52</sup> Mechnikov, "Vospominaniia," 67–68. For suggestive essays on cooperatives within the Japanese context, see Tetsuo Najita, "Political Economy in Thought and Practice among Commoners in Nineteenth Century Japan," *The Japan Foundation Newsletter* 16, no. 3 (1988):12–18; and Najita, "Past in Present: Danpenteki Gensetsu to Sengo Seishinshi," *The Journal of Pacific Asia* 3 (1996): 3–32.

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, Mechnikov, "Era iaponskogo prosveshcheniia," 108; Mechnikov, "Era prosveshcheniia Iaponiia," 102–103.

<sup>54</sup> Mechnikov's observations reflected widespread practices of cooperatist self-organization among commoners. Cooperatives expanded in a variety of forms following industrialization in Japan. Every Japanese town and village had some type of cooperative association. In 1923, for example, 14,000 cooperatives existed in Japan, with almost 3 million members nationwide. In 1935 in Hokkaido, 40.7 percent of all households were members of a cooperative, while in the Far Eastern Mountain region, 83.2 percent of all households were in cooperatives. Recognizing the role of cooperatives in the economy, the Japanese government actively supported them. Galen M. Fisher, "The Cooperative Movement in Japan," *Pacific Affairs* 11, no. 4 (December 1938): 478, 483–484.

<sup>55</sup> Irokawa, *The Culture of the Meiji Period*, 60.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

time to explain the moral value of international commerce.<sup>57</sup> For Katō, trade was a reciprocal provision (*oginau*) of goods that expressed mutual aid (*ai tasukeau*) as the truth or essential principle of human action (*hito tarino dōri*).<sup>58</sup> To trade surplus goods was to provide "strangers with what they have a need for, and thus to fulfill the duty of benevolence," Katō wrote.<sup>59</sup> Other countries were described as partners in mutual assistance through economic exchange. In this way, Katō's original text conveyed neither a sense of the foreignness of international trade nor the superiority of the West. The references in the treatise to language from an 1868 Ishin document called the Charter Oath reflected one interpretation of the Ishin as an ongoing revolutionary experience imbued with moral promise for the new sociopolitical order.<sup>60</sup> Katō thereby framed mutual aid as a means to fulfill the Ishin's promise of social equity.

A comparison of two translations from this Ishin-period text, one into Russian by Mechnikov and the other into English by the prominent British Japanologist Lord William George Aston, shows how they clarified the competing directions of progress that Japan's opening implied and thereby gave added meaning to the text. Mechnikov emphasized mutual aid throughout his translation as a basis for Japan's post-revolutionary development independent of the Western model of capitalism. Aston, on the other hand, interpreted the text as Katō's assertion that Japan had embarked on a path to join the community of civilized capitalist nation-states as an expression of a universal law of progress. Both Aston and Mechnikov appear to have conscientiously attempted to produce translations that were as true to the original as possible. Yet through only slight variations in their choice of words, they produced very different texts on the historical meaning of *kaikoku*.

Meaningful contrasts can be found throughout their translations, as can a sense of the different futures that the two men projected. For example, Aston translated one particular passage as follows:

Our Mikado has become convinced of the necessity of upholding the policy of commercial relations, and has caused our friendly intercourse and trade with foreign countries to be established on a liberal scale. This is the only course by which we can take our place in the community of nations, and remain true to natural principles of truth and justice.<sup>61</sup>

According to this version, "natural principles of truth and justice" can be achieved only by joining the community of nation-states, and by participating in capitalist interactions with the West. Free trade was to be conducted within the

<sup>57</sup> Katō Sukeichi, *Kōeki kokoro e gusa* (n.p., 1868). Although Katō's pamphlet circulated widely at the time of its publication, surprisingly little is known about Katō himself. A local Yokohama history study group uncovered some details about his earlier life, *Kaikō eno bakushin ryochū nikki* (Yokohama, 1996), but further study on him is overdue.

<sup>58</sup> Katō, *Kōeki kokoro e gusa*, 4.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 5–6.

<sup>60</sup> The Charter Oath, a document issued to the public in the name of the emperor in 1868, promised a series of revolutionary changes. The Oath would become a touchstone for much of the political contention in Japan in following decades. By borrowing language from it, Katō gave his discussion the weight of revolutionary meaning associated with the Ishin document. His text emphasized that Japan's opening should be in harmony with the just laws of nature, language reminiscent of the Charter Oath. International trade was thus to be practiced in a consciously moral manner as an expression of mutual aid, in accordance with the perceived promises of the Ishin. Aston and Mechnikov's translations can be seen as competing interpretations of the term "laws of nature" in revolutionary Japan.

<sup>61</sup> W. G. Aston, "Remarks on Commerce by Katō Sukeichi," *The Phoenix* 20 (February 1872): 118.

limited community of civilized nation-states and “on a liberal scale.” This referred to the Western model of the liberal state as the protector of the liberal values of freedom of the individual and the rights of private property. For Aston, who would serve in British consular offices in Japan for twenty-three years and who would become the first British consul general in Korea, the liberal state of the West represented the basic unit for peace and order in the international arena. In its maintenance of free trade through support of international law and preservation of private property, the Western political model was the embodiment of “natural” (and therefore universal, or “true”) principles of liberty and “justice.”<sup>62</sup>

Mechnikov translated the same passage thus:

Our Mikado has become convinced of the necessity to maintain friendly relations with them; only in this way can we take our proper place in the ranks of other nations, *without backing down from the principle of mutual aid and equity*.<sup>63</sup>

This version posed the alternative phrase “mutual aid and equity” as the principles of truth and justice that needed to be defended, *despite* Japan’s participation in the Western community of nation-states. This implied that the international community of Western nation-states and the political and economic code of behavior on which that community depended were neither natural nor just. In the process of clarifying for his Russian readers Katō’s departure from Western understandings of international trade and relations, Mechnikov had given Katō’s text added polemical meaning.

In Aston’s version, moreover, free trade by virtue of its existence naturally leads to the mutual benefit and prosperity of everyone involved.<sup>64</sup> In Mechnikov’s version, trade is beneficial for the parties involved only “if it is done according to the demands of fairness and mutual aid.”<sup>65</sup> Mutual aid was something to be consciously achieved and practiced, not simply a natural outcome of capitalism.

Aston’s translation conveyed the inevitability of Japan’s opening up to capitalism and the modernity of the West. For the most part, his language reflects the interpretation of *kaikoku* and *Ishin* that we still use today. Mechnikov removed the inevitability of merging with the West’s modernity, and put the focus and meaning of future development in another arena altogether.

Out of the above dialectical interaction of knowledge with experience, expectation, and transnational contact, Mechnikov came to see the *Ishin* as a revolutionary fulfillment and model for his developing vision of human progress.<sup>66</sup> The *Ishin*

<sup>62</sup> On the invention of the “state of nature” and its influence on the practice and idea of the international in the West, see Jahn, *The Cultural Construction of International Relations*.

<sup>63</sup> Mechnikov, “Era prosveshcheniia Iaponii,” 99; my emphasis.

<sup>64</sup> Aston translated, “At present, there is every reason to believe that any petition asking permission to form companies after the European model, will, if presented to the proper authorities, be favorably received as a proposal eminently conducive to the prosperity of the people of Japan. There is nothing to prevent such associations from being durably established.” Aston, “Remarks,” 119.

<sup>65</sup> Mechnikov translated it as follows: “Now, if someone requests from the government permission to establish trade associations based on the European model, the government not only will not refuse, but will be very pleased. Because the time has come when Japan must have its own system of durable associations, *founded on the principles of mutual aid and equity*. Only in this way can our commercial development expand.” Mechnikov, “Era prosveshcheniia Iaponii,” 99–100; my emphasis.

<sup>66</sup> Russian scholars on Mechnikov have asserted, in contrast, that Mechnikov viewed the *Ishin* as an unfinished bourgeois revolution. See, for example, K. S. Kartasheva, *Dorogi L’va Mechnikova* (Mos-

emerged for him as an idea and relative accomplishment of a nonhierarchical, cooperative society, and by virtue of its location in Asia, opened up the possibility for its realization on a global scale. For Mechnikov, the notion of revolution was now inseparable from social evolution.

MECHNIKOV RETURNED TO SWITZERLAND in 1876 with an intellectual key that would open the door to a new era, a beginning for a new human history. He conveyed the progressiveness of the revolution in Japan in books and several series of articles for influential journals in Russia and Europe during the 1870s and 1880s. With the publication of his historical and ethnographical studies, *L'Empire Japonais*, and his contribution to the chapters on Japan and China in *Nouvelle géographie universelle*, an authoritative encyclopedia on world geography compiled by the anarchist theorist Élisée Reclus, he became recognized as one of the top Japanologists in Europe.<sup>67</sup>

Simultaneously, Mechnikov would provide an intellectual foundation for the development of one of the principal currents of modern anarchist thought. In the late 1870s and 1880s, leading anarchists spoke of evolution in Social Darwinist terms. Reclus defined evolution for those in the West as the rising consciousness among the masses of the need for solidarity to overthrow the ruling classes in a violent struggle.<sup>68</sup> Viewing Western Europe as at the highest level of social evolution, Reclus defined progress for the rest of the world as its inevitable Europeanization and homogenization.<sup>69</sup> At the time, anarchism was synonymous with violence and terrorism, used by elites in an attempt to stir the masses to revolt. Peter Kropotkin and Reclus supported terrorist acts of "propaganda by the deed" and popular expropriation of property by force.

Mechnikov then shifted the focus of anarchism to a distinct vision of universal human evolutionary development. His contributions to anarchist theory, which have been entirely forgotten in the history of the movement, were inseparable from his interpretations of the *Ishin*.<sup>70</sup> While revolution was for Mechnikov a real stepping-stone toward anarchism, he envisioned a future cooperatist anarchist civilization that would be hard-won and dependent on a highly developed culture at all levels of society. That civilization would be achieved through the widespread development of a cooperatist consciousness and corresponding social practices. After his encounter with *Ishin* Japan, Mechnikov saw mutual aid as a natural law for civilizational progress toward "anarchy."

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cov, 1981), 23; and A. A. Shcherbina, "L. I. Mechnikov—Sovremennik i issledovatel' burzhuaznoi revoliutsii v Iaponii," in Shcherbina, *Iaponiia na perelome*, 3–22.

<sup>67</sup> Documentation of Mechnikov's achievements in Japanology can be found in his personal archive in GARF, f. 6753, op. 1, dd. 36 and 38. See also Reclus, *Nouvelle géographie universelle*, vol. 7, and Reclus, "Predislovie Elize Reklieu," in Mechnikov, *Tsivilizatsiia i velikie istoricheskie reki: Stat'i*, ed. V. I. Evdokimov (Moscow, 1995), 219.

<sup>68</sup> Mechnikov, "Revolution and Evolution," *The Contemporary Review*, September 1886, 412–437; Reclus, *Evolution et Révolution* (Geneva, 1880, 1884; Paris, 1891).

<sup>69</sup> Marie Fleming, *The Geography of Freedom: The Odyssey of Élisée Reclus* (Montreal, 1988), 180–183.

<sup>70</sup> Even works on Russian anarchism do not mention Mechnikov's name. See, for example, Martin A. Miller, *Kropotkin* (Chicago, 1976); Caroline Cahm, *Kropotkin and the Rise of Revolutionary Anarchism, 1872–1886* (Cambridge, 1989); Paul Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists* (New York, 1978).

In 1789, French revolutionaries had envisioned that an enlightened government would fashion a new nation on the basis of grand abstract ideals. According to this idea, the rational being had the right to rule the less rational. Meanwhile, “philosopher kings” had no place in Mechnikov’s understanding of Ishin as the new vision of the future world. Mechnikov believed that the “old order” lay in unexpected places, in oneself and in one’s everyday interactions with others.<sup>71</sup> The accomplishments of a successful revolution ultimately depended on the mundane, on people’s struggle for existence rather than self-sacrifice for abstract moral or political causes. Instead of the grand illusions of utopia, Mechnikov looked to achievements in everyday life. Change came about when people responded to necessity in ways that fostered a cooperative ethic. Human agency arising out of the basic human needs of daily life was for Mechnikov the source of progress for civilization.

Viewing Social Darwinism as merely the straitjacketing of Darwin’s discoveries into a Malthusian framework of competition for limited resources, Mechnikov criticized Marx and other contemporaries for echoing Malthus’s ideas in their views of society.<sup>72</sup> On this point, Mechnikov was part of a wider sphere of Russian intellectual efforts, particularly in the scientific world, to discredit the Darwinist metaphor of competitive survival of the fittest as the engine of natural evolution. This anti-Darwinian understanding was so common among Russian intellectuals that Daniel P. Todes termed it a “national style” of reaction to Darwin.<sup>73</sup> Russian biologists—prominent among whom was Lev Mechnikov’s younger brother Ilya, who would go on to win the Nobel Prize for his phagocytic theory of inflammation—sought a law of evolutionary development in the animal and plant world that was fueled not by competition and struggle, but by cooperation. At the time of Lev’s scholarship on Japan, this effort was still limited to the fields of natural science. Lev integrated the basic ideas of cooperation in evolutionary development among animals into his studies of culture, society, and civilizational development.<sup>74</sup> It took his encounter with the progressive revolutionary society of Ishin Japan for him to fashion an idea from the Russian natural sciences into an anarchist law of human civilizational development.

Mechnikov concluded that the cooperative aspect of human nature is stimulated by the natural environment. The more difficult and dangerous that environment, the greater the obstacles to survival, the more developed is human consciousness of the need for social cooperation in order to overcome those obstacles. Survival of the fittest, then, is accomplished not through individual or collective competition, but in social cooperation to surmount the obstacles placed before us.<sup>75</sup> Mechnikov wrote:

Nature gives its inhabitants a choice: *death or solidarity*. There are no other paths for humanity. If humanity does not want to die, then people must unavoidably resort to solidarity

<sup>71</sup> This understanding can be found, for example, in Mechnikov’s unpublished report to his sponsors in Japan, “La France Sous Mac-Mahon.”

<sup>72</sup> Mechnikov, “Revolution and Evolution,” 430.

<sup>73</sup> Daniel P. Todes, “Darwin’s Malthusian Metaphor and Russian Evolutionary Thought, 1859–1917,” *Isis* 78, no. 4 (December 1987): 538.

<sup>74</sup> Mechnikov, “Revolution and Evolution”; Mechnikov, “Shkola bor’by v sotsiologii,” in Mechnikov, *Tsivilizatsiia*, 186–192; Mechnikov, *Tsivilizatsiia*, 238–253. Mechnikov refers to ichthyologist K. F. Kessler’s landmark talk on the “law of mutual aid” in nature, published as “O zakone vziamnoi pomoshchi,” *Trudy Sankt-Peterburgskogo Obshchestva Estestvoipyatelei* 2, no. 1 (1880): 124–127.

<sup>75</sup> Mechnikov, *Tsivilizatsiia*, 273–282.

and mutual, collective work . . . This is the culmination of the great law of progress and the law of the successful development of human civilization.<sup>76</sup>

In this way of thinking, human civilization was not attained by eliminating the weak to enrich the strong. Mechnikov redefined culture as human achievements gained through mutual aid.

Mechnikov had observed in Japan that a collaborative response to the challenges of nature provided a major impetus for cultural and social creativity. As he described it, the mountain ranges divided the island nation into so many different communities that there was wide linguistic variety across the different regions, to the point that the language spoken in one area could not be understood elsewhere. Those divisions of the island had also forced its inhabitants to develop a political order that for millennia had consisted largely of small, autonomous federations. In addition, the ruthlessness and violence of the ocean had compelled the people to develop a highly cooperative and therefore highly developed culture.<sup>77</sup>

Mutual aid as a factor of modern civilizational development was dependent on one's capacity to express multiple talents and thereby to play multiple roles in society. There were an infinite number of co-actors, and thus there were infinite possibilities for mutual gain. As a society advanced over time, the spheres in which mutual aid could be practiced became ever broader. Individual uniqueness was maintained in the very act of cooperation, as cooperation itself required the incorporation of various capabilities and thoughts to be successful. In Mechnikov's thinking, an individual is capable of cooperation only by maintaining her or his own unique talents.<sup>78</sup> This view of human existence became the basis for his thoughts on freedom and social equality. Freedom was achieved not by separating oneself from others, but rather by doing for others. The individual merged with others in the act of doing, but without the loss of individual uniqueness.

What was society for Mechnikov? He severely criticized what he termed the "Struggle School" of sociology. Adherents of this view categorized societies as stable entities defined by ethnicity, race, or class, ordered along a hierarchy of civilizational development. In describing a never-ending competition for existence, they implied the eventual disappearance of the weaker social elements. For Mechnikov, human society and culture were continuously evolving expressions of the laws of nature.<sup>79</sup> He divided the world into three spheres of activity—inorganic, biological, and sociological—each with its own set of natural laws. The inorganic sphere consisted of physical and chemical processes that could be explained by Isaac Newton's law of gravity. The biological sphere was defined by expressions of the desires for food and sex, and incorporated the world of plant and animal individualities, which competed and changed in accordance with Charles Darwin's law of the struggle for existence. Mechnikov further proposed a new, third sphere of development, which he termed sociological. It incorporated the world of associations and networks, the world of interests beyond the boundaries of individual biological existence. He defined this

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 443.

<sup>77</sup> Mechnikov, "Vospominaniia," 29–31, 39.

<sup>78</sup> Mechnikov, *Tsivilizatsiia*, 85–99.

<sup>79</sup> Mechnikov, "Shkola bor'by v sotsiologii."

space as the sphere of cooperation, which included both human and nonhuman interactions.<sup>80</sup>

According to Mechnikov, one sphere followed another in order of increasing complexity and variety of processes and forms.<sup>81</sup> In turn, he defined society as consisting of complex and expanding varieties of cooperative associations and networks. Society, therefore, did not exist as a stable, concrete entity or entities primordially defined, but rather was constantly being formed and re-formed in a progression of social life. This cooperative sphere contained expanding possibilities for associating with and doing for others.

Finding the roots and possibilities of a progressive culture of mutual aid in Japan had enabled Mechnikov to develop a global application for cooperatist civilizational development. This essentially de-centered the world away from the West, and gave centeredness to what had always been the referent of backwardness. The “West,” then, suddenly became backward with respect to the demands of progress and civilization. Westerners arrived in Japan ill-prepared to meet the Meiji Ishin on cooperative terms. Commodore Matthew Perry’s initiation of peaceful relations through the persuasion of force was a barbaric introduction of Western “civilization,” Mechnikov wrote.<sup>82</sup>

By reconstituting time, Mechnikov had reconceptualized the world order. However, while the West had lost its inherent superiority, a new problem emerged. Mechnikov had created another hierarchy by using Ishin Japan as a model of revolutionary achievement. If time created a hierarchy based on its measurement of progress, nature might be able to level out that hierarchy by creating difference, that is, different paths to the attainment of cooperatist civilization colored but not determined by human interactions with various environments.<sup>83</sup> In nature lay the source of humans’ freedom to determine a society’s own path to cooperatist development beyond primordial identifications of ethnicity and race. Nature provided Mechnikov with the possibility for a heterodoxy of developmental forms.

A dominant conception of nature and history in the West during the last decades of the nineteenth century had come to embody a hierarchical order that Mechnikov sought to overturn. He severely criticized racially ordered versions of Social Darwinism, which took an extreme form among eugenicists, who proposed that a new, just social order could be built through the natural selection of a special race of people.<sup>84</sup> Mechnikov went beyond the assumptions of nineteenth-century anthropologists who treated the different human races as different species, either in actuality or in essence.<sup>85</sup> For him, ethnic or racial amalgamation in a society was a progressive quality, which had characterized and contributed to the great civilizations of the past: “Generally speaking, the great historical civilizations were the re-

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 164–165.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Mechnikov, *L’Empire Japonaise*, ii; Mechnikov, “Vospominaniia,” 67–68; Mechnikov, “Era proshchcheniia Iaponii,” 76–77, Mechnikov, “Era iaponskogo proshchcheniia,” 122–123.

<sup>83</sup> Mechnikov differentiates his work from geographical determinism in *Tsivilizatsiia*, 262, 323.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 290–310.

<sup>85</sup> According to John S. Haller, Jr., Charles Darwin explained the phenomenon of races as “various human types that ‘remained distinct for a long period.’ In such cases, the varieties might just as well be called species.” Haller, “The Species Problem: Nineteenth-Century Concepts of Racial Inferiority in the Origin of Man Controversy,” *American Anthropologist* 72 (1970): 1319–1329.

sult of cooperative work by the most complex blend of different ethnological elements, a blend in which it was impossible to even roughly determine and sort out the participation of 'whites,' 'yellows,' and 'blacks.'"<sup>86</sup> In his use of externally visible traits to identify various peoples, Mechnikov applied nineteenth-century scientific approaches to the study of racial origins. Yet his conclusion that racial and ethnic mixing was natural and linked with cultural development departed from those traditions. Combining his observations of body structure, facial features, and skin color with his hypotheses about the origins of Japanese cultural practices, Mechnikov identified people in Japan as being of diverse interethnic origins. For example, he noted that the widespread predilection for public nudity in Japan was absent elsewhere in East Asia: "In connection with several other indicators, this naturally led me to think that the ancestors of this teeming crowd before me must have come not from the Asian continent, but from the tropical islands, populated to this day with diverse and little-studied interethnic Malay-Polynesian tribes."<sup>87</sup> He was further struck by the diverse features and variety of skin tones that he saw.<sup>88</sup> He concluded, "The Japanese type represents much greater variation and fluctuation than the population type of any European country, and this alone is sufficient to suggest that today's Japanese nation originated from multiple tribal elements."<sup>89</sup>

Mechnikov also emphasized the influence of people's surroundings on their behavior, which was in keeping with European trends in social science at the time. However, his approach and conclusions differed from what Paul Rabinow has described as the shared interest of "regulating the normal" among social scientists in late-nineteenth-century France. According to Rabinow, French sociologists' examinations of people's surroundings were a response to the need to provide a powerful social glue for class antagonisms. The sociologists were ultimately seeking external factors controllable by the state that could regulate the collective behavior of society, whether of the French working class or its colonial peoples.<sup>90</sup> Meanwhile, Mechnikov emphasized human agency, people's creative ability to overcome adverse surroundings. Rather than striving to create an environment in which human behavior could be directly controlled, he endeavored to reveal how human beings use their wits and strengths within a powerful natural environment to create positive conditions for the collective good.<sup>91</sup>

He came to see the cultures of port cities and islands, where the powerful forces of the ocean and the wrath of its storms made existence precarious, as likely sites for advanced cooperative social development. This idea could be affirmed by studying areas that were considered primitive or undeveloped. Between his departure from Japan in 1876 and his death a decade later, Mechnikov traveled to island nations and ports across the Pacific, including San Francisco, Hawaii, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, and Singapore, to further explore this idea.<sup>92</sup>

In his final, culminating work, *Civilization and the Great Historical Rivers*, Mech-

<sup>86</sup> Mechnikov, *Tsivilizatsiia*, 300.

<sup>87</sup> Mechnikov, "Vospominaniia," 54; Mechnikov, "Era prosveshcheniia Iaponii," 103.

<sup>88</sup> Mechnikov, "Vospominaniia," 56.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>90</sup> Paul Rabinow, *The French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Chicago, 1989).

<sup>91</sup> See, for example, Mechnikov, *Tsivilizatsiia*, 262.

<sup>92</sup> GARF, f. 6753, op. 1, d. 38; GARF, f. 6753, op. 1, d. 67, ll. 1–2.

nikov ordered space and time to reveal the general progression of human beings from coerced cooperation among early civilizations, toward increasing levels of voluntary mutual aid in the form of free associations. He observed that the achievement of freedom had been integrally associated with human societies' relationship with water as the source both of life and of hardship and the struggle for survival. Only through cooperation, not competition, were humans capable of surviving and controlling water and thereby producing increasingly complex and advanced societies. While peoples such as the Cossacks were undoubtedly free, Mechnikov wrote, they were lacking in mutual cooperation, and thereby represented a primitive form of human civilization.<sup>93</sup> From the river civilizations to the civilizations on the seas, and finally ending with oceanic civilizations, where people's everyday lives revolved around the most dangerous and inhumane bodies of water, humans developed more advanced, cooperative societies. In this picture, while technology itself was not a measure of human progress, it was a frequent companion to progress when used collaboratively for survival.

Mechnikov's new construct of civilizational progress incorporated existing ideals predicated on a hierarchy of social competition and capitalism as only one stage in the advancement of the world toward increasingly complex cooperative human relations. He divided world history into three major periods, each characterized by a corresponding sociopolitical type. The River Period, when the Euphrates and Tigris, Indus and Ganges, Yellow River and Yangtze became the cradle of civilization, was characterized by unprecedented despotism. The Sea Period began with the moment of the appearance of cross-sea trade and the cultural interactions of the Greeks and Romans. Oligarchy became the fundamental form of government among these societies. The most recent, modern period, the Ocean Period, began with the declaration of human rights. Mechnikov divided the Ocean Period into two stages: the Atlantic Era, which spanned the opening of America to the beginning of gold fever in Alaska and Russia's colonization of its eastern region; and the Global Epoch, which was to be the period of greatest human cooperation and anarchy, given impetus by interactions across the Pacific toward the end of the nineteenth century and the rise in internationalisms among people on the non-state level.<sup>94</sup> Before his death in 1888, Mechnikov had planned to write two more volumes of *Civilization*, as an expansive exploration of the role of free associations in the formation of transoceanic international society as the most advanced known stage of human development.<sup>95</sup>

Mechnikov took pains to overcome cultural, racial, and geographical determinism by showing that the character and social composition of a civilization depended to a considerable extent on how its people adjusted to their surroundings through cultural production and social organization. In writing a nature-centered history that focused on the influence of bodies of water on human societies, he broke through the hierarchical divide between East and West, and made possible the development of advanced free and cooperative associations in the West as well.<sup>96</sup> The result of this intellectual practice was that the West was no longer inherently behind Japan.

<sup>93</sup> Mechnikov, *Tsivilizatsiia*, 259–262.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 258–259, 263–270, 325–443.

<sup>95</sup> Reclus, "Predislovie," 221, and Mechnikov, *Tsivilizatsiia*, 446.

<sup>96</sup> Mechnikov directly critiques the East-West paradigm of civilizational development in *Tsivilizatsiia*, 276–277.

This was a modernity that constructed a heterodoxy of developments and styles aimed at the global attainment of cooperatism. In his theory of social evolution's identification of mutual aid as a principle of progress for human civilization, Mechnikov delegitimized the naturalization of competition and aggression that had undergirded hierarchically arranged categories of race, class, gender, and nation under Social Darwinism.

ALTHOUGH PROHIBITED IN RUSSIA, Mechnikov's *Civilization* was widely read in Russian intellectual circles and beyond. Thinkers as classically far apart in their beliefs as the philosopher Vladimir Solov'ev, the "father of Russian Marxism" Georgii Plekhanov, and the anarchist Reclus strongly recommended it to the public. In fact, the appearance of *Civilization* marked the moment when Russian radical thought shifted from the populist belief in a divergent Russian path to the single path of world development envisioned by Russian Marxists. Although Mechnikov had clearly opposed Marx, Plekhanov was intrigued by Mechnikov's idea of universal development beyond the East-West divide and used it to defend his crucial monist view of history for the applicability of Marxism in Russia. Plekhanov wrote that *Civilization* answered some of the most fundamental intellectual problems of the day.<sup>97</sup> For him, the work resolved the question of apparent inequality in world progress through a scientific study of the effects of nature on social relations. In key essays defending Marxism, he expressed his excitement about Mechnikov's work, writing, "we urgently advise our readers to acquaint themselves with it, or better yet, to study it."<sup>98</sup> It is not surprising, then, that one of the only two works reviewed in the opening issue of Plekhanov's journal of Russian Marxism, *Social Democrat*, was *Civilization*.<sup>99</sup> When Mechnikov died, Plekhanov wrote his obituary.<sup>100</sup>

Reclus, who committed himself to completing the unfinished *Civilization* after Mechnikov's death, wrote that the book "opened a new era in the history of science" by "founding a truly scientific morality."<sup>101</sup> Kropotkin, who was becoming the leading anarchist theorist, closely echoed Mechnikov's ideas in his own work.<sup>102</sup> He integrated Mechnikov's construct of cooperatist civilizational development as a basis for

<sup>97</sup> James White, "Despotism and Anarchy: The Sociological Thought of L. I. Mechnikov," *Slavonic and East European Studies* 54, no. 3 (1976): 395–411; Georgii Plekhanov, "O knige L. I. Mechnikova," in Plekhanov, *Sochineniia*, 24 vols. (Moscow, 1922–1928), 7: 15–28.

<sup>98</sup> Plekhanov, "O knige L. I. Mechnikova," 28. For Plekhanov's references to *Civilization* in his defense of Marxism, see also Plekhanov, *Selected Philosophical Works*, 5 vols. (Moscow, 1974–1981), 1: 415, 475, 610, 699; 2: 147, 651.

<sup>99</sup> Plekhanov, "O knige L. I. Mechnikova."

<sup>100</sup> Asserting that Mechnikov was the best symbol of a generation, Plekhanov wrote in his obituary, "Mechnikov was one of the most amazing and kindest representatives of that generation of the '60s, to whom our social life, our science, and our literature owe so much." Plekhanov, "L. I. Mechnikov," in *Sochineniia*, 7: 327. Plekhanov was not the only one who thought of Mechnikov as the symbol of a generation. Plekhanov and the other leaders of the Russian Marxist group called Liberation of Labor contributed money to erect a memorial to Mechnikov in Switzerland. About 120 people, Russian émigrés across Europe, made contributions toward its purchase. They also participated in the design of the memorial, which was open to public vote among contributors. GARF, 6753, op. 1, ed. khr. 86.

<sup>101</sup> Reclus, "Predislovie," 221.

<sup>102</sup> Mechnikov worked with Reclus in organizing financial and political support for Kropotkin while the latter was imprisoned in France, and he became a close friend of the Kropotkin family. Professionally, the two corresponded about their mutual work in the anarchist movement. Hoover Institution of War,

his anarchist theories of ethical human progress. With dedication and respect, Kropotkin also worked to complete *Civilization* after Mechnikov died, at the very moment when he began to “move beyond criticism of the present order to a more detailed consideration of the future society.”<sup>103</sup> Kropotkin even worked on a biography of Mechnikov, whom he called “the purest, most beautiful expression” of the Russian populist movement, a sentiment that was shared by many in the Russian émigré community.<sup>104</sup> According to letters to Kropotkin from Mechnikov’s wife, Ol’ga, the biography was going to devote considerable space to Mechnikov’s experiences in and scholarship on Japan.<sup>105</sup> It was not a coincidence that Kropotkin simultaneously dedicated himself to writing his famous anarchist study *Mutual Aid*, which was published in various forms beginning in 1890.<sup>106</sup> In it Kropotkin essentially echoed Mechnikov in identifying mutual aid as the engine of human progress and civilization. Like Mechnikov, he characterized the Darwinian “struggle for existence” among human beings as dependent on mutual assistance, not competition, for success. Further, he viewed sociability as a basic human instinct. These key elements of a scientifically based ethical anarchism that incorporated a vision of civilizational development would give so-called Kropotkinism in Japan a wide appeal.

Cooperatist anarchism would cut across the grain of Japanese society in the first quarter of the twentieth century, making it a virtual phenomenon in intellectual life. Even celebrity writer Arishima Takeo expressed this broader public sentiment in 1905 by calling for a “cleansing and rectification of history” through cooperatist anarchism.<sup>107</sup> A graduate of elite American universities, Arishima had been a disciple of Nitobe Inazo before his conversion to cooperatist anarchism. Nitobe has long been considered the foremost Japanese representative of “internationalism” and Western cosmopolitanism. That Nitobe served both as the leading professor of colonization theory at Tokyo Imperial University and as under secretary general of the League of Nations reflects well this notion of peace and world order.

Converting to a new world order and redefined internationalism, Arishima’s cooperatist anarchist turn appeared complete when his historicity was expressed in his diary: “I hope that America will wake from the slumber of ancient tradition and further the progress of universal brotherhood. The state must go.”<sup>108</sup> Here, the pro-

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Revolution and Peace Archives, B. I. Nicolaevsky Collection, Box 183, #34, ll. 6–9; GARF, f. 1129, op. 3, ed. khr. 285, ll. 1–2; GARF, f. 1129, op. 2, ed. khr. 1747, ll. 1–15.

<sup>103</sup> Miller, *Kropotkin*, 192.

<sup>104</sup> GARF, f. 6753, op. 1, ed. khr. 9, l. 18.

<sup>105</sup> GARF, f. 6753, op. 1, ed. khr. 9.

<sup>106</sup> When Mechnikov died, Kropotkin asked Mechnikov’s family to keep him in mind if they wanted someone to sort through the deceased’s papers and complete his unfinished writings, the most important of which was *Civilization*. Kropotkin was at the time part of the central committee overseeing the erection of Mechnikov’s memorial. Although Kropotkin’s biography of Mechnikov was apparently never published, he worked seriously on it for quite some time. Mechnikov’s wife, Olga, even moved from her home in Switzerland to live at the Kropotkins’ home just to help him write it. GARF, f. 1129, op. 3, ed. khr. 285, 286; GARF, 6753, op. 1, ed. khr. 9. It was also during this time that Kropotkin was working on the earliest drafts of *Mutual Aid*. The earliest appearance of a part of the work was an 1890 article entitled “Mutual Aid among Animals,” *Nineteenth Century* 28 (1890): 337–354, 699–719. However, the fully developed work on civilizational progress that we now know as *Mutual Aid* did not appear until 1902. Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (London, 1902).

<sup>107</sup> Arishima Takeo, “Rokoku kakumeitō no rōjo,” *Mainichi shimbun*, April 5–10, 1905.

<sup>108</sup> Arishima Takeo, *Arishima Takeo zenshū*, 16 vols. (Tokyo, 1979–1988), 9: 5.

gressive America that he had originally set out to study in order to link Japan to the wider world via Western cosmopolitanism was sharply flipped upside down. The reconfiguration of time had transformed the spatial world around Arishima, in the process altering his subjective belonging to that world. Arishima never opposed "the West" or "America" per se, but rather the modernity in which he believed that many Americans located themselves. In fact, probably no school of thought came closer to providing an intellectual basis for a peaceful relationship with America than did cooperatist anarchism. In response to the Russo-Japanese War, Arishima and many others helped to form the non-war movement, in reference to which historian Hyman Kublin suggested that Japanese and Russians during this period provide us with one of the most successful and unique cases of antimilitarism in a time of war in modern history.<sup>109</sup>

Through an expansion of his ties with Japanese radicals, Mechnikov's construct of cooperatist progress and civilization was reconfigured in Japan as a way to link participants to the wider world through the vision of cooperatist anarchism. Kōtoku Shūsui, a leading figure in the non-war movement and a disciple of Freedom and People's Rights leader Nakae Chōmin, initiated a personal correspondence with Kropotkin following the war. Kōtoku introduced a number of Kropotkin's works into Japan, translating them himself. He became one of the country's most prominent anarchist thinkers. While there were echoes of Mechnikov and Chōmin's ties in the bond that developed between Kropotkin and Kōtoku, none of them knew about their mutual transnational connections. Together they formed a crucial link in an expanding interlocking network, an epistemic organ of cooperatist anarchism and its temporal belonging that transcended racial and national boundaries.

Kōtoku found that the network community provided the best means to distribute his writings and translations of Kropotkin's works even before they had been made officially available to the public. While both men's works were banned for the most part, people were still able to widely access them. In fact, the network of cooperatist anarchists across Japan functioned so well that when Kōtoku translated a work by Kropotkin, his tactic for getting it out to as many people as possible was first to sell the thousands of copies that he had printed out via personal networks, and then to sell it through bookstores after it had already circulated nationwide. As Kōtoku expressed in his private correspondence to Kropotkin in 1908, "The police, of course, will try to seize all copies. But too late!"<sup>110</sup> Numerous intellectuals, even in remote Hokkaido, were able to obtain Kōtoku's translations.<sup>111</sup> In this way, prohibited knowledge traveled both within and across national boundaries, concretizing networks in the process.<sup>112</sup> With the ideas of cooperatist anarchism circulating through a variety of movements and interest groups, no institution existed to coordinate the members of this larger community. Informal interlocking networks were able to or-

<sup>109</sup> Hyman Kublin, "The Japanese Socialists and the Russo-Japanese War," *The Journal of Modern History* 21 (March–December 1950): 322–323.

<sup>110</sup> GARF, Kropotkin P. A. Collection, f. 1129, op. 2, ed. khr. 1418, ll. 18–19. Letter from Kōtoku, December 26, 1908.

<sup>111</sup> GARF, Kropotkin P. A. Collection, f. 1129, op. 2, ed. khr. 1418, l. 9. Letter from Kōtoku to Kropotkin, May 14, 1907.

<sup>112</sup> The context is unique in this discourse, but the way in which they circulated knowledge via networks is not. Book lending practices during the Edo period, for example, circulated a tremendous amount of information quickly.

ganize participants' activities without the need for institutions, reflecting the very nature of cooperatist anarchist thought.

The epistemological capacity of cooperatist anarchism provided the intellectual foundation for a variety of distinctive cultural and social movements in Japan during the first decades of the twentieth century, and came to define a form of "democracy [*demokurashi*]" by 1920. Students at Tokyo Imperial University founded Shinjinkai, the New Man Society, in 1918 in the pursuit of "democracy." Its famous journal, *Demokurashi*, led off its first several issues with articles featuring discussions of cooperatist anarchism. In its first year, almost every issue featured Kropotkin's thought. The aim of the organization was expressed as "*jinmin no naka e*," which was a translation of the Russian populist slogan "*v narod*," or "to the people."<sup>113</sup> *Demokurashi* changed its name over time, finally settling on *Narodo* [*Narod*, "The People," in Russian], using the Russian word that referred to the popular subject of the populist movement. With the title appearing in both Japanese and Russian on the cover of the journal, it did not lose the transnational intellectual roots of their activities.

Cooperatist anarchist progress and civilization and its anti-hierarchical world order offered alternative realities that united movements and interest groups beyond national, racial, gender, or other hierarchical categories. Cultural movements and societies inspired by cooperatist anarchism included the people's arts movement, the Anti-Discrimination Society, the children's education and literature movement, the proletarian literature movement, the Esperanto movement, the National Student Union, and the women's movement.<sup>114</sup>

It was the idea of anarchist democracy that fueled the first international relief effort in Japan to be spontaneously organized from below. In response to the famine that struck Russia in the early 1920s during its revolutionary civil war, local clubs and associations, including Shinjinkai, established the Russia Famine Assistance Movement. This national-scale civic endeavor drew together a myriad of small groups from a variety of specialties and occupations across Japan, including music schools, the miners' union, dental schools, local women's clubs, and agricultural institutes.<sup>115</sup> The movement stood out for its ability to unify so many local associations in a mutual effort to assist people outside Japan, representing a modern selfhood that transcended national borders. In the name of saving the "Russian people endangered by imperialism," the movement was organized during Japan's military intervention in the civil war, and reflected a public effort to put the competing internationalism of cooperatism into practice. The unwritten history of this humanitarian relief movement as an expression of anarchist *demokurashi* could revise our understanding of spontaneous civic organization and democracy building in Japan as a postwar, post-Occupation phenomenon.<sup>116</sup> Such internationalist expressions of the temporal be-

<sup>113</sup> George O. Totten, "Akamatsu Katsumaro: Political Activist and Ideologue," in Nobori and Akamatsu, *The Russian Impact on Japan*, 79.

<sup>114</sup> The Japanese Esperanto movement for international language equity, led by anarchists, had the largest number of non-European Esperanto participants in the world, including the United States. Treating language not only as a transnational communication tool, but also as having potential control over one's interiority, anarchist intellectuals learned and taught the "neutral" language of Esperanto.

<sup>115</sup> Kensetsu sha domei shi kanko iin kai, *Waseda Daigaku Kensetsu sha domei no rekishi: Taishōki no v narōd undō* (Tokyo, 1979), 173.

<sup>116</sup> For a history of civic organization in postwar Japan, see Wesley Sasaki-Uemura, *Organizing the Spontaneous: Citizen Protest in Postwar Japan* (Honolulu, 2001).

longing of cooperatist anarchism reveal a fresh concept of participation in a world order distinct from pan-Asianism and Western cosmopolitanism.

A powerful current of the feminist movement in early-twentieth-century Japan also gave expression to anarchist *demokurashi*, often symbolized by Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*. Leading figures in the women's movement, including the self-proclaimed anarchists Itō Noe and Takamure Itsue, and female laborers reflected a modern vision of cooperatist human progress and civilization and its corresponding subjectivity in their thoughts. Many of these feminists continued to be closely involved in the wider network of cooperatist anarchists until World War II. For example, Takamure, known as the pioneer of women's history in Japan, saw in cooperatist anarchism the answer to the problem of Western modernity's hierarchy of gender and capitalist human relations, on the one hand, and the official national ideology that created hierarchically gendered constructs of the family as subjects under the emperor-patriarch, on the other.

The domestically rooted cooperatist activities that prospered in Japan were "the reality of anarchism in Japan" for anarchists such as Itō Noe, who found in those everyday practices a global significance for modernity. Much as Mechnikov himself had witnessed decades earlier, she wrote that anarchism had existed and continued to exist in everyday practice. Therefore, it was this "reality" that "we should consciously work on."<sup>117</sup> Like many of those who took part in cooperatist anarchism, Itō placed primary value on the everyday practices of cooperatism and its corresponding anti-hierarchical relationality and subjectivity.

Cooperatist anarchists also contributed to the emergence of a Japanese brand of Marxism. An irony of historical dialectic, perhaps, it was the Marxist teleological view of history dominant in Japanese social sciences that would help to erase this very intellectual history under exploration.

THE ENCOUNTER BETWEEN Mechnikov and Japanese who experienced the *Ishin*, and the corresponding conceptual encounter between *ishin* and *revoliutsiia*, led to the emergence of a new global meaning for the *Ishin*. *Ishin* Japan came to represent an impulse toward the global realization of human progress based on the anarchist principles of mutual aid. It was this alternative meaning given to the *Ishin* in the wider world that would later materialize in modern Japan as the cultural and social phenomenon of cooperatist anarchist modernity. This transnational encounter and the resulting vision of civilizational progress reopen the meaning of the "Opening" of Japan that has been used to represent the beginning of Japan's embarkation on the path toward Western modernity, whether in self-colonized, reconfigured, or hybridized forms.

Western modernity has long provided the internal logic for the writing of history on modern Japan. This logic has often interlinked our use of archives or sources of historical evidence, the method of investigation, theory, and historical narratives of modern Japan. To understand the emergence of this phenomenon, it was necessary to construct an alternative logic of history that linked together archives, method,

<sup>117</sup> Itō Noe, *Itō Noe zenshu*, vol. 2 (Tokyo, 1970), 464–474.

concept, and theory, such as the tracing of non-state, non-organizational-level transnational relations and their resulting social thought, by means of Russian archival holdings on discredited revolutionaries and their broader network of acquaintances. Such interstices of transnational activity provided a space in which a new time was imagined. At this intersection, networks were formed and ideas were exchanged and transformed outside the encounter between East and West, and beyond the bifurcated imaginaries of internationalism as Western cosmopolitanism and encountering nationalism, and of power and resistance/accommodation. In reopening the opening of Japan in this way, and in identifying the beginnings of a temporal belonging distinct from the imagined time-space of Western modernity, we can attempt to open up new dimensions for modern history writing.

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