Anarchist Modernity

Dr. Sho Konishi of Oxford on Japan, Russia and Anarchism

Dr. Sho Konishi interviewed by Matt Dagher-margosian

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Part 1

1. For scholars, I'm always interested if there were formative life experiences which led them to pursue their specific field of study. Were there any events or figures which led you to research collaboration and translation between Japanese and Russian Anarchists?

Your question about life experiences is an interesting one. Our memories of life experiences often lead us unconsciously to (re)examine our world in a particular way. We are usually unable and unwilling to recognize this tendency, so we create narratives that allow us to live within such invented narratives. We tell stories that conveniently makes sense afterward, and which continue to change over time as we ourselves change. Our autobiographical narratives would appear to be the most accurate, but they are possibly the most inaccurate form of narrative. We're all very good at pretending as if we know what led to what… We're natural storytellers for our own psychological well-being. I guess our death-bound subjectivity leads to such creativity. So to respond honestly to your question, 'I do not know' is probably the most accurate answer.

Having said that, I imagine that my interest in Russia and Japan may have had something to do with my unhappiness with formal schooling in Japan back in the 1980's when I grew up. I have almost no memories of my school life in Japan – it's like a big blank in my mind, as if it had never happened, probably because I hated it. It became stronger as elementary school progressed. I still remember clearly when I asked in Year 7, which is when children began studying English as a requirement, why we were studying only one foreign language and why that had to be English. I failed to understand why English language should have so much power over us. The teacher answered that that's the language required to get into high school. I responded, 'If I don't go to high school, then I don't need to learn it?' His response was that I was a bad influence on my classmates. I was asked to leave the classroom and stand outside. I got beat up by the teachers and had to stand outside the classroom, but none of this served to help me understand – in fact just the opposite.

I began to realize that the problem was too large to solve in one classroom. Of course I threw away my English texts at the time. My schoolmates came to me with admiration and reverence for what I said and did – they agreed with me — yet they themselves did and changed nothing, fearful of saying anything and doing anything. It was as if nothing happened. The best students academically were the wisest, as they knew how to do well in such a system.

That was the pattern of my everyday school years. So I quit and became a school dropout, drinking by myself in the park from the morning, while my peers were preparing for their exams. My confrontation with modern state education had started much earlier, almost as soon as I was asked to go to school, but I won't go on about that here. This sort of experience, and countless more, probably influenced how I saw the world, and played a part in what I wrote decades later. I was quite seriously concerned about that country's future.

My early interest in Esperanto language (not that I studied it then) had something to do with this, for example, in that Esperanto is a kind of linguistic solution to all sorts of discrimination.

My interest in Russia was formed in this same way, because Russia was always so hidden in Japanese education. In Japan they never talked about the Soviet Union in school back then, as if it did not exist, or as if it were something bad and scary to talk about. If English had celebrity status, Russian was the opposite. So I ended up doing my undergraduate education in Russia.

Similarly, the military in Japan is always hidden from public sight and scrutiny. 'The military does not exist in Japan,' they used to say. So I became interested in military affairs precisely because of that. Of course, the requirement to study English has a lot to do with a longer and broader global history and, more immediately, Japan's defeat in the Asia-Pacific war. This intertwining of the hidden presence of the Japanese military with the all pervasiveness of English language probably also had something to do with my becoming a cadet at a military university in the US, where I trained in military affairs while learning Chinese and Russian languages— remnants of the Cold War. This university possessed a highly rated Russian language program, including the best summer Russian program at the time. I ended up representing the US military school in the Russian/Soviet city of Tula, a military industrial complex that had just opened to foreigners the year I came. So I was 'the first foreigner from the West' (as Russians used to labeled me then) to enter that city since it was closed during the Soviet period.

Funnily enough, nearby Tula is also the Russian writer Lev Tolstoi's estate home. I first encountered Tolstoi, who was to become an important part of my book, while I was living in Tula as an undergraduate. But it was not through the front gate of the Tolstoi Museum that I encountered him, but through a back way, when my Russian friends and I went to 'gulyat', walk around aimlessly to smoke and joke, to rest, or to swim in the same pond that Tolstoi used to swim in. The water looked filthy, smelly and green, but nevertheless… That was my first real encounter with Tolstoi – imagining him swimming in that pond on the estate neighboring the city that decades later would become a Soviet military industrial complex. When we did go to the Tolstoi house and museum for no particular reason, I did notice that his house had preserved a surprising number of books and letters in Japanese, which made me curious. Also, I realized then that the microbiologist Ilya Mechnikov and other scientists befriended him, despite his embrace of a pastoral, simple life of manual labor. I became curious about these people who were from such different backgrounds and professions, and yet appeared to be networked in multiple ways to one another, directly or indirectly. So yes, my curiosity was there then. But frankly, at that time, just to make my body move was tiring at the end of the Soviet regime. Especially being the first foreigner 'from the West' as a first-year undergraduate, without any family or friend connections, with endless shortages of everything, my primary focus was finding food to survive however I could — not scholarship.

Before my university studies, I had also become homeless for a good while in a number of countries. While I slept on the street, I was still holding on to my 9th-year school completion certificate as if that was going to help me. But quite the contrary, the certificate was of no value at all. I didn't realize it then. While I slept on the street, I had many encounters with other homeless, as well as certain 'tribes' of outcastes (whether ethnic, racial, immigrant, social, intellectual or otherwise) in various countries. In the US, some of these 'teachers', as I used to consider them, were often the disposable and hurting veterans of America's various wars. Some of them told me about America's de-institutionalization policy, which released patients, many of whom were vets, from mental and other hospitals onto the streets. I am not an Americanist or sociologist and have no idea what led to all this homelessness among folks with war injuries in both mind and body. I have no idea if what they told me was true either. This type of experience, nevertheless, also helped lead to my interest in the problem of seeing like a state, not only in Japan, but internationally, creating a global if not transnational 'underground' world. On the streets of New Zealand, I encountered people of various ethnic and national backgrounds. I was wanted to learn more about what tied certain Maoris to the Malaysians, and Indians to others underground,

with various ethnic and religious backgrounds, who made themselves invisible and escaped such national labels.

Ultimately, while homeless, I started speaking to God without an 'o' — not 'God' as a historical artifice, in the narrative sense, but Gxd without Being, without church, Bible, preacher, etc. It was just me and Gxd, always and everywhere, in an intimate relationship. I had lost utterance being alone there. I didn't want to be a part of capitalist modernity (I didn't call it as such then, it was more like 'the money-centered empty culture of post-war Japan' or some such expression I had), but to avoid being part of it had made me homeless. There was no one other than myself to justify my derailment. I felt then that if no one followed me, even if they agreed with me, then at least I should act alone. When you have no one else to talk to on the street, you naturally develop a conversation with Gxd about right and wrong. Without that experience, I probably couldn't have thought about 'anarchist religion', a term that I invented, then discovered in historical reality, as a term to make sense of what was in fact there. Then I had to make sense of the space-time that had necessitated such an idea.

So this might have been an influence on my interests. It probably led me to be curious about the history of thought and practices that overturned the existing culture. My skepticism about any institutionalized knowledge that was in the interest of the state within the rigid departmentalization of modern institutions, and the accompanying politics of knowledge, all made me want to think outside them. Applying that to modern Japanese history many years later has at least partly led me to disclose anarchist modernity as a major cultural and intellectual current in Japan. All this is in hindsight of course. Until you asked me, I hadn't thought about such links. But my attempt to create new approaches to study the history of modern Japan outside the fold of 'West'-, Soviet- or Japan-centric historicity to make sense of the intellectual phenomena captured in my book, in hindsight had something to do with some of these 'life experiences'.

2. We'll be discussing your incredible book today: *Anarchist Modernity: Cooperatism and Japanese-Russian Intellectual Relations in Modern Japan*

I notice throughout the book you highlight the impressive volume and diversity of places where cooperatist anarchism took root in Japan between 1860 and 1930: *seminaries, hospitals, candy stores, farms, urban/rural poetry circles, prison camps and elite universities* are just a few examples.

How were activists at that time able to transform multiple spaces (and communities) into sites of cooperatist anarchism? And what contemporary lessons does this offer for present-day individuals to also try and transform seemingly fixed (in meaning or function) spaces and communities?

Diversity and multiplicity are the very essence of anarchist thought itself, which reflects how these ideas develop out of the practical concerns of the everyday. That nature of multiplicity and everydayness in turn reflects on where and how they relate and communicate. Yes, space can be designated, fixed, and even controlled and managed by power, but what you think and do in these spaces at an undesignated time essentially determines the meaning of the space. Perhaps many of the actors didn't intend to transform these places into something that they were not. It was in the process of putting their ideas into practice that came to give certain meanings to certain places.

For the most part, I don't consider these spontaneous participants 'activists' per se. For instance, in the 'people's cafeteria' *Taishu Shokudo* used by thousands of people in Tokyo at the time, customers were reminded with signs and other means that they were participating in the

larger purpose of *Sogofujo*, mutual aid for global progress. Many of the actors I talk about would not even have identified themselves as 'cooperatist anarchists' per se. That's probably why they were able to think and do what they did from outside the state-centric political sphere that revolved around civilization discourse. 'Resistance' was not a conceptual framework to fully make sense of their ideas. They had their own thought on progress that was simultaneous, but separate if not independent from Western civilization discourse — even as they lived with and often in it. It was beyond the modern bifurcation of colonizer and colonized. Theirs was a non-imperial thought that spread in a non-imperial way. That's another reason why they couldn't be identified then or now, through the investigations of neither the police at the time, nor many able historians' many decades afterward. They were often just doing their everyday informal life practices that worked for them through mutual aid, with an 'anarchist modern' subjectivity that emphasized symbiosis with surrounding nature. They valued individual freedom and difference, mutual aid in time of crisis, as well as the beauty and virtue of conducting everyday life in everyday spaces. They saw and understood biological nature along the same lines. These ideas and practices circulated not only among public intellectuals, but also among ordinary folks, who believed that mutual aid was indeed the best function for survival even in the worst of times, times of pandemics, natural disaster, war and otherwise. It seemed that cooperation, not stark individualism and competition, was the most natural way of making their lives better.

Through these spaces, knowledge circulated in a multi-directional manner. Not from Tokyo or London to the rest, from city to countryside, or from 'above' to 'below'. It is important not to believe that the origin of knowledge as coming from the 'state'. In general, the state is usually many steps behind the reality, as everyone knows from everyday experience. So to talk about space, we have to talk about the direction of the process of knowledge formation. For anarchist modernity specifically, this circulation was often in reverse flow, even as it flowed in a multi-directional manner: from the countryside to the city, from the civil war losers of the north to the 'winners' of the war in the south, from Japan or Russia in this case to the West, and so on.

Disrupting the dominant direction of the formation of knowledge can serve to denature the hierarchical structure of knowledge. Multi-directional and even reverse flows of knowledge have stripped the power embedded in the circuits designed to propagate the state's ideology.

There was a practical necessity of using different spaces for various learning functions. While imperial universities in Japan closely followed state guidance, cooperatist anarchists needed unofficial learning places. Imperial universities after all were far outnumbered by these unofficial learning places.

Imperial universities like Tokyo Imperial University wouldn't teach anarchist thought. But on the formal chessboards that they created, an anarchist form of chess with its own rules and strategies was being played. So although spaces like state-run universities were controlled, historians have failed to look at what students actually did in those spaces that were designated for Western modernity. At night, in the dormitory, completely different activities that uprooted and challenged what was being taught during the day were taking place.

The seemingly mundane places where they developed their networks and the off-times when they practiced cooperatist anarchism have methodological implications. Your readers may understandably not be interested in research methodology per se. But it may be important to know that they acted outside our usual spheres of historical investigation, on the second floor of sweet shops, in hospitals, in people's cafeterias, and in the evenings and weekends. They penetrated the interstices and passed through borders and other man-made barriers without discrimination,

attaching themselves non-hierarchically to anyone along the way. As it spread, it transcended the states' territorial borders, discarding class and occupational borders flexibly (although not so freely), and without discriminating gender, legal or financial power. And it did so through countless unexpected encounters and chance meetings. It acted a bit like an epidemic in this sense. The difference is that people in Japan did not fear or seek to avoid contraction. To encounter and absorb the ideas of cooperatist anarchism was to free oneself, to maximize one's unique potential, and be given a place and opportunity to offer love and empathy in everyday life. What they encountered in cooperatist anarchism was often an articulation or an added value to their own existing cooperative practices. The ideas of cooperatist anarchist justified being active participants rather than backward, uncivilized and unvirtuous beings waiting to be directed by those with political, legal and financial power. In contemporary times (since that may be your readers' foremost interest), it's up to the reader to take different things from different aspects of the book to develop and apply as one wishes, like anarchist thought itself. But it does seem that we need such articulators occasionally who can give new meanings to people's everyday practices. I hope the book has made a minor contribution to this end that will give new energy to ordinary folks and highlight their extraordinary potential through everyday practice, or to those who feel peripheralized in academia but who are working on incredibly innovative work.

Speaking of a lesson, sometimes the same person played dual roles in anarchist modernity, at different times of the day — like the Waseda University professor in the book who went out at night to join activities that contradicted what he was teaching at his university during the day. This may be another implication for us today in contemporary times, that you shouldn't be afraid to do seemingly self-contradictory practices in this complex world. If you try too hard to unify everything in your life around a particular set of ideas, you could end up being homeless like me. If you feel like you are locked in, but you feel no other way to survive in this world, do something outside your 'employed' time that can be locked in by forces that you feel are outside your control. There are alternative times that belong to you, when you can create and belong to another temporality, and yet act in effective ways.

Paying attention to these odd places and times not only revealed how and where they were acting, but it also had methodological implications. A lesson for historians is to unlock these interlocked conceptions of historical knowledge production that connected sources, method, theory, and concept. This releases history from the fold of Western modernity, as well as currently popular 'post-humanist' positions that ironically often re-confirm modernity as a done deal.

Their connections also interconnected people of all walks of life. They themselves didn't measure people according to class, gender, race, specialization, nationality, etc. And they easily connected in their minds what we now distinguish as the social sciences, humanities and natural sciences. This may be yet another lesson for contemporary knowledge production in modern higher educational institutions that neatly separate specializations and create their own territory and legitimacy, deep in their own wells. In the intellectual landscape of the anthroposcene, we should reflect and connect the social sciences and humanities with the natural sciences.

There was nothing strange, then, about early twentieth-century geographers drawing ideas from biology, or the White Birch School of literary people promoting Ilya Mechnikov's microbiology and immunity. Ilya Mechnikov saw cells as symbiotically functioning in the inner core of our bodies, which helped lead to the idea of symbiogenesis. Nor was it odd that the anarchist Osugi Sakae translated the entomologist Jean Henri Fabre's studies of the 'lowly' dung beetle. Osugi's translation has become not only the most popular biology book of all time, together with

Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, but also a sort of *Mother Goose* for Japanese children. Osugi created a nickname for one of Fabre's favorite objects of study, the dung beetle, as 'funkorogashi', or 'dung ball roller'. The dung beetle became extremely popular among Japanese children and adults alike, and remains to be so, even today. As I pointed out in the book, the dung beetle long outlasted the imperial ideologies that banned it. However, in academia, no one ever talked about this popular intellectual phenomenon, while focusing instead on the imperial ideologies that banned it.

Other instances include the most famed primatologist of Japan, Imanishi Kinji, who was a student of the philosopher Nishida Kitaro and what I called 'anarchist sciences' in the book. Imanishi did not look at primates as 'nature' separated from us, 'civilization/culture'. Instead, he began to seek culture in nature, how empathy worked among primates, for instance. And the anarchist ethnographer Lev Mechnikov, who was a mentor for the natural scientist and anarchist Peter Kropotkin. Anarchists in Japan actively connected the humanities, social sciences, biology, philosophy, entomology, literature, ecology/environmental studies, agriculture, and Gxd/religion. The very thought that interconnected all those people of all walks of life on the street, interconnected the various 'disciplines' in which they became interested. That's why literary circles meeting in places like the second floor of sweet shop studied about anarchist science and biology, and how to practice agriculture. Esperanto meetings become circles to study about the ecology and environment, concerns that are still very much associated with Esperanto language today in Japan. Places like local hospitals developed into anarchist meeting and publishing spaces. These various conversions of space occurred very naturally and unproblematically.

Urban spaces also turned into critical transnational spaces transcending borders, where people and ideas of various origins met. During the great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, key anarchist figures Osugi Sakae and his partner Ito Noe were brutally murdered by police terrorism. However, it was the thought and the multitudes of human beings that they left behind, as much as what they wrote and translated, that have survived until now.

The presence in history of such activities and the absence in our historical knowledge (historiography) are telling. It shows the nature of how and why history is often written and how it governs the future.

Historians often have defined 'activists' as those who engaged in the state's political language. By so doing, these political actors determine their position by speaking the language of the civilizational discourse of the West. According to this measure, Asian societies have 'weak civil societies'. However, we need to look outside Western modern vocabularies of 'activists' who speak the language of conventional state politics. Such studies of the weakness of political activism in the Nonwest inevitably revolve around state-centric and thus West-centric political history.

I don't have quantitative evidence for this, but the Kanto Earthquake of 1923 was probably a major impetus as well for the weakening of the anarchist movement, because, while we are used to thinking of the 'end' or 'weakening' of anarchism by the events of the Russian Revolution and the rise of Bolshevism and Marxism in Japan, it was the natural and spatial destruction of Tokyo as hubs for these intricately formed networks that really helped lead to the displacement of anarchism – at least temporarily. The earthquake forced smaller hubs like the Shirakaba School to move out of Tokyo, dissolving the cooperatist anarchist networks that had formed at a time when spatial proximity was still essential for network formation. The police murdered two key leaders of the anarchist movement in the destructive aftermath of the earthquake, Osugi and Ito Noe, together with their young nephew, but it was the spatial dissolution of the earthquake

itself, the disintegration of Tokyo's sites as hubs of cooperatist anarchist networks, that most negatively interrupted this movement.

Many scholars search for feminism in Japanese history among figures who were part of anarchist modernity, like the above-mentioned anarchist Ito Noe. In their search for feminism, though, with almost no exception, scholars focus on suffrage as the measure and keyword of feminism and women's history. However important this type of scholarship may have been and continue to be, it's worth being cautious here as well. Once we make the Western version of suffrage-based feminism our measure and lens for examining Japanese 'women's' history, then we miss a huge number of female historical actors who were very important, sometimes vital actors. These women were at the forefront of some of the most distinctive cultural and political movements in modern Japan. The history of environmentalism in Japan, for instance, cannot be discussed without consideration of the influential anti-pollution activism initiated, organized and led by ordinary Japanese housewives in the 1950s. The places where these ordinary housewives studied and practiced were their homes and backyards. Yet the fact that involvement in the national politics of the state was never a part of the women's interest or ambition should not be considered a weakness. Our reliance on suffrage and conventional political participation as a social scientific yardstick of Western modernity has caused us to miss too many important female actors in Japanese history in the first place. Today, I imagine we could learn something new from the practice of these ordinary housewives that would allow us to change our very understanding of 'democracy', 'civil society' and 'politics' by looking at these least likely heroes of history.

One of my former DPhil students, Anna Schrade, has looked into ordinary housewives encountering mass pollution in the industrialization of Japan, during its economic expansion in the immediate postwar. These ordinary women initiated and conducted extraordinary scientific studies by collaborating with scientists. They gathered evidence from and studied their mundane everyday surroundings to demonstrate inhumane pollution levels. They collected dust and tested the air and water around them under the motto of *sogo fujo,* mutual aid, when the government and the corporations weren't acting. Their counter network to state and capitalist modernity spread horizontally, transcending age, occupational and class differences. Indeed, those differences were the key to the success of their counter network. They also made their own amateur documentary of the local pollution that was eventually shown nationwide on the national broadcasting channel. Spontaneously organized and networked on the grassroots level, these women were very much an example of anarchist democracy in postwar Japan that made fundamental differences in their own lives. The implications of producing a historical account of their activities are not small. Until now, we have looked at the global 1960s and '70s, by focusing on male elites initiating an environmental movement, with an assumption that knowledge spread from 'above' to 'below'. We are finding exactly the opposite; that we have overlooked the housewives of the '40s and '50s, women who didn't believe in or simply didn't give a damn about voting. The media and then elite male intellectuals followed these women's initiation of postwar environmentalism only much later. Only then did some elites begin to join when it was already safe to do so, because it had become acceptable to talk about these things in the 1970s. Our historical accounts have only paid attention to these elites. At a time when the men were employed by the polluting industries and often fully contributing to environmental disaster, their wives were acting the other way around in the same household, by going against the polluting activities of their own husbands and their employers' — without any violence. Women throughout the world should

be encouraged to act without the state, and anarchist modernity has shown just how much one they have made difference, and will continue to be so.

Speaking of space, when counter networks form against domination, segregation, and power, what shape do they take? Here we can take a cue from nature on the molecular level and from the ancient art of basket weaving. Bamboo weaving practices are being looked at by Jo McCallum as a contact point between humans and nature. We can view effective and long lasting networks as *kagome*, a pattern used in Japanese bamboo weaving. The method of bamboo weaving takes into account the natural form, grain, and coloring of each individual piece in the weave, making the baskets strong and yet pliable. Physicists have used the term *kagome* as a name for a particular formation of lattice discovered as occurring naturally on the molecular level. Kagome lattices now form the basis for cutting-edge research in highly conductive manmade materials likely to be useful for the quantum computers of the future. We can similarly view the development of strong, pliable and highly conductive social networks by using the metaphor of *kagome*.

Part 2

Asia Art Tours: You highlight throughout the book the incredible diversity of collaboration between individuals, not just between countries but also between the demographics of those countries. (rich & poor, young & old, atheist & religious)

What was it about Russia and Japan at this time that spurred this international, inter-demographic collaboration between so many groups? In our recent era of global protests that remain relatively isolated, what lessons can we take from this historic period for building solidarity?

SHO KONISHI: That's another unique question. For one, cooperatist anarchist modernity was expressed and promoted in the most interesting, intimate, and familiar terms, such as in the tales of dung beetles and other insects translated by Japanese anarchists. It was never promoted as some sort of –ism. In fact, there was no single shared name for it, and it took my perspective of distance in time and space as a historian to uncover it as a phenomenon. They also targeted the manifold, interconnected ideas of Western modernity from all sides and folds. The articulators, or public intellectuals, in this discourse were keenly aware of the interconnected set of ideas that were at work for the civilizational discourse of the West, so to counter that also took an interconnected uprooting practice. As much as English language, Christianity, technology, rationality, whiteness (race), territoriality, military and masculinity were all interconnected, so was the counter culture that uprooted them.

In the case of Japan, high literacy rates also helped, allowing this discourse to become grounded in popular level interests and perceptions of the world. After all, it was an informal 'politics' of everyday life. So it was more about popular discourse, one that tied intellectuals to the general populace in very real and concrete ways. Because in Japan 'everyone' was reading, anarchist thought easily found its way onto Japanese popular soil not as anarchism per se, but as an ethical set of ideas and practices and understanding of nature. We need to be careful not to fall into the trap of seeing them through the lens of 'latecomer' theory, like Gerschenkron, a capitalist interpretation that is quite trendy among elites, or as a latecomer to modernization at large, which was also absorbed and promoted by elites in Japan with new aims and interests in the postwar.

In Japan, mutual aid fit well with existing practices and values, given how cooperatism has long been engrained in the everyday life of this ocean culture where the threat of mass destruction by nature is always imminent. This allowed them to adopt and develop the concept of mutual aid progress more naturally. The ideas were already long embedded in Japanese culture since Tokugawa times and were not foreign to them.

Why Russia and Japan? Many Russians and Japanese looked for a way to combine the cultures of West and East. They engaged with the West, but they had never been colonized. In the modern era, many people of both places characterized themselves as situated between East and West. For Japan, being an Asian country that had not been colonized by European powers was unique, and appears to have been a factor leading to this thought. They did not feel the urgency to throw off the West (or the East); they did not have to prioritize decolonization either. Adherents of cooperatist anarchism were looking for universality, rather than to Japanize or Westernize or Russianize. It was a kind of social thought, an idea of progress that sought to transcend hierarchies of all kinds: East vs. West, national, ethnic, racial, gendered, social, religious, etc.

The nonhierarchical premises of cooperatist anarchism promoted the development of new ideas that interconnected all kinds of people. Esperanto, which promotes linguistic equality, is a good example. Much later, in the latter part of the twentieth century, Esperantists became active in environmental movements like the post-Chernobyl antinuclear activism that sought to both give humanitarian aid to the victims and to promote environmental protections. In fact, environmentalism and Esperantism have long been interconnected. The defense of language rights, particularly among ethnic and national minorities, relates closely to the defense of nature, human rights and equality. Esperantists, and cooperatist anarchists at large, believed that multiplicity, not standardization, generates a better society and sociality.

AAT: I'd like to highlight popular writer of this period: Arishima Takeo, you discuss him as follows: *Arishima similarly said in an interview that the success of any future social revolution lay in the hands of a fully able and ready "people". He explained that as elites, intellectuals like himself had no place as leaders in this movement. Even such luminaries of the anarchist movement as Kropotkin had no role in leading any movement.*

Could you discuss how Arishima and other cooperatist anarchists from Japan and Russia, put this into practice? Did this movement emerge organically as a sum of its parts? How did those with elite backgrounds like Arashima contribute without becoming leaders?

Another interesting question. Yes, right, Arishima didn't have a vision of being a revolutionary leader and in fact, none of the historical actors identifiable as anarchist moderns did. That shows just how much this phenomenon was different from say, the Russian Revolution.

Ours is naturally becoming a more anarchist world without intellectuals or leader figures needing to stand at the front of the movement waving their flags. Key figures in Japan were murdered by the state or committed suicide, but the practices and notions that they espoused have long continued naturally up to today. The state wrongly thought that by executing a leader like Kotoku, they would get rid of the movement. Of course, their violent act did rob us of the fascinating books that Kotoku would have written. It is striking that Japanese anarchists never wrote a book of anarchism per se; they only had time to work on it. For Kotoku and others, cooperatist anarchism was no big deal – it was so embedded already in everyday life and the worldviews of ordinary people that they didn't need a violent revolution to initiate it.

Eventually, cooperatist anarchism took shape as what I have characterized as a 'cultural revolution'. A key development in the cultural revolution was the redefinition of 'nature' as symbiotic and centerless, as opposed to Spencerian Darwinist nature and its hierarchical teleology. Culture was to be aligned with the centreless universe of nature. So-called elites and intellectuals may have had a place in this 'revolution', but not a place of power to order society with their own self-protective design. They sought to help articulate ideas or instigate action, but not lead or exercise power over others.

How did Arishima put it into practice? When Arishima was a teacher at Sapporo Agricultural College (now Hokkaido University) where Christianity, rationality, military, science and technology, large-scale agriculture (for colonial practice), and English language were taught, Arishima began teaching about the Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin and literature in informal settings such as in the dorm at night, and thus turned the imperial institution into an academy of anarchist ideas.

He also funded various anarchists to link with the wider world. He supported the anarchist Osugi Sakae's trip abroad, for instance. Arishima also gave many public talks in local areas that often opened up critical discourse among locals. So he did a lot of 'ground work' before the end.

As his final closing act before he committed suicide, he gifted his farm to the tenants working on the farm that he had inherited from his wealthy father. His liberation of his tenant farmers and gifting them the farm was as perfectly fitting to anarchist thought and practice as any could be. Here again, none of the members of Arishima Farm thought of themselves as anarchist, but their self-organization and practices of mutual aid in response to their liberation almost perfectly accorded with cooperatist anarchism over time. This gave fresh meaning to their everyday practice. They adopted the most advanced levels of irrigation and rice processing technology on their farm. Their revolutionary practices occurred not with a gunshot or murder, but within themselves and out of dreadful fear. There was nothing heroic about it. Without the security provided by their former landowner, they feared for their survival in the arctic winters and severe nature of Japan's northernmost island of Hokkaido. The Arishima farmers' level of material wellbeing was about the same as the other tenant farmers of Hokkaido, with the major difference being that they owned the land on which they farmed. But it was their sense of themselves standing at the forefront of progress that made them stand out from the others. Arishima understood what the farmers' local knowledge and habits of mutual aid could bring to their shared ownership of the farm. He created the conditions that allowed them to form a new symbiotic relationship with each other on the one hand, and symbiotic with nature on the other. It's important to point out here that revolution was not about political change, but about how they identified symbiotically with one another as shared owners and laborers on the farm.

There was in fact nothing utopian about what these farmers were doing if the term 'utopia' is understood as a perfected place of finality. For them, the world is always changing and adapting, constantly forming and reforming. We can have an urge to progress without destroying nature, and an urge to change without bloody and violent revolutions. The ordinary farmers of Arishima Farm made revolutionary acts in order to survive, without destroying things or killing others. The notion of mutual aid for survival is integral to cooperatist anarchism.

We can take the phrase 'the dexterous hand that reaches to itch the right spot' in Japanese as a humorous yet reflective phrase suggestive of the functioning of anarchism as its participants viewed it. That is, anarchism served to encourage all individuals to freely develop and practice their own individual talents and in this way to best serve society. It is reflective of a particular

cooperatist anarchist idea of equality and democracy whereby every individual nurtures their own unique talents gifted by nature and thereby flexibly and dexterously enhances and improves society, each in their own unique way.

The farm members considered water, air, and soil to be a part of them, and cared for the nature around them cooperatively for their shared survival. They made use of their knowledge of their local natural environment. Due to their respect and valuing of the forces and behavior of nature and their dependence on natural resources, they replaced the emperor's masculine symbols on their farm, the same symbols that were replicated across every town in Hokkaido, with a stone of the goddesses of nature that humbly emerged from the soil. They embedded the worship stone of the goddesses on the hill, above their meeting place.

Inspired by Arishima Farm, cooperatism became a Hokkaido-wide cooperative movement without a leader. Participants used the language of Kropotkinism taken from the Arishima farm, to globalize their local practices. Across Hokkaido and beyond, people admired and followed what Arishima Farm had achieved – despite the fact that the cooperative living farm members were still living together with their chickens on dirt floors, under snow-covered thatched roofs with no electricity.

Intellectuals like Arishima could never be farmers. Yet Arishima triggered democratic communities by providing positive conditions for action, and giving power to ordinary farmers to realize anarchist modernity on the local scale.

AAT: I'd like to examine the international (often Russian and Japanese) pairings you show collaborating throughout the book's time period of 1860s-1930s. The first pairing would be Lev Mechnikov with Saigo Takamori during the era of the Meiji Ishin (also known as the *Restoration*). How were these men connected in their philosophies and why did their contributions to the Meiji Ishin diverge so much from the goals of the Japanese State?

Many competing ideas of the future in the past coexisted. The Japanese revolutionary leader Saigo Takamori's and the Russian anarchist/populist revolutionary Lev Mechnikov's ideas of the future were different from the newly formed oligarchs' ideas of the future that have so often been the object of historians' interest. The 'Opening of Japan' (*kaikoku)* has long meant the opening to the West and its civilization discourse. That particular interpretation has been the sole historical meaning given to that event as the beginning of modern Japanese history, and we have precluded all other possibilities of the future in the past.

Both Saigo and Mechnikov saw that what they were doing in Japan had global significance. They did not see Japan as some sort of local peripheral place, but rather that their actions in Japan had global implications. Moreover, they believed that what had been practiced and developed for centuries from within Japan offered a direction for the future. In contrast, those practices and beliefs from an earlier era were treated as backward by both Western powers and the new Japanese state. It was in those 'evil practices' from an earlier era, the Tokugawa period, that Mechnikov observed unique seeds of revolution. These seeds of revolution did not exist in what he perceived as a backward Europe. Mechnikov was deeply disappointed by the conservative habits of Western Europeans and didn't believe they would be able to make the kind of revolutionary changes he observed in Japan, changes that promoted mutual aid and trust beyond family and class. These values led seamlessly to borderless concern for humanity at large. The openness and development of a mutual aid culture demanded by the ocean culture of Japan inspired him to develop further an anarchist theory of civilizational development, based on his alternative understand-

ing and vision of the future. His theory greatly influenced such future leading anarchists as Peter Kropotkin, for whom Mechnikov was a mentor.

Some trust and bonding likely came out of Saigo and Mechnikov's understanding of mutually shared circumstances. Both had placed themselves on the periphery of power and culture when they began their correspondence. Saigo resigned from the government and began to practice farming in the rural outreaches of a place called Kumamoto in the south. He was disturbed by the poor treatment and impoverishment of the samurai who had carried out the revolutionary changes of the Meiji Ishin (Restoration) in the first place. Mechnikov had directly participated in the failed European revolutions of the mid-nineteenth century, and Saigo, who was a leading figure in the revolutionary Meiji Ishin, was attracted to Mechnikov's revolutionary experience and his idealism. Both had clear revolutionary ideas that they felt had been not reaching its potential and felt alternative, ground-up work was necessary. They saw injustice in the government. Saigo must have seen some parallels in what revolutionaries were trying to achieve in Europe and the Meiji Ishin that had been 'betrayed' in his view. For Mechnikov, maybe Saigo looked like the Garibaldi with whom Mechnikov had fought in Italy. Both were ambivalent about Western modernity as it was being promoted and realized by the government. They perceived that the Japanese state was going down the route of the modern Western state, and they shared a conviction that this was not the right direction for Japan or for Russia, nor for the rest of the world.

You can imagine the consequences when Mechnikov and other Russian Populist revolutionaries started teaching at the prestigious School of Foreign Studies in Tokyo where the 'father of modern Japanese language and literature' Futabatei Shimei was trained as a Russianist. Mechnikov and the revolutionaries who followed him to Japan focused the Russian language programme on studies of Russian Populist revolutionary literature. As a result, Futabatei began translating Russian populist literature as a defense against capitalist modernity of the West. His writings were widely read, and circulated in particular among the activists of the Freedom and People's Rights Movement whose actions often echoed the Russian revolutionary movement's.

So the global significance that Mechnikov gave to the Japanese revolution came to be reflected in Russian translation culture in Meiji Japan, a culture that would color the cultural and intellectual life of modern Japan for a long time to come. What is shocking is that scholars weren't able to see this current over many decades of studying modern Japanese history.

AAT: To conclude, let's look at the relationship between the Dean of Tokyo's Orthodox Seminary: Konishi Masutarō and Lev (Leo) Tolstoy. On these figures, you note: *Nowhere, except Russia, have the works of Tolstoy been published as many times as in Japan.*

What did Tolstoy's philosophy unlock for Masutarō in his own exploration of faith? And what were the reasons that Tolstoy's interpretations of faith, and common people captivated Japan's readers at this moment in time?

(I'm particularly fascinated w. Tolstoy's concept of God as '*Gxd*' and its relation to the concept of *Heimin* in Japan)

It's not that the philosophy of the Russian writer Lev Tolstoy unlocked new ideas for the Orthodox seminarian Konishi Masutaro. Rather, it was a simultaneous and mutual articulation process and translation project. This is clearly shown in the historical records of their interactions. Yet no one has ever been able to pick up on this relationship that has entirely failed to fit our Eurocentric and hierarchical understandings of the East-West interaction.

The nature of their transnational relationship as mutual and non-hierarchical reflected the premises of cooperatist anarchist modernity. Both of them were interested in *Tao te Ching* (Lao Tzu) as an antidote to the institution of Christianity. But it was Tolstoi who came to learn from Konishi initially, not the other way around. Konishi was already known as a classical Asian philosophy specialist, ironically because he had been trained in the Russian Orthodox Christian seminary in Japan. The Orthodox Church in Tokyo in turn had absorbed former leaders and teachings of the Kaitokudo, the commoners' 'Academy of Virtue' in Osaka that had taken an independent position from the official Tokugawa regime. Using classical Chinese thought as a way to resist power, the Orthodox Church in Japan stood against Japan's oligarchs and Western modernity at large. This was in line with its traditions in Russia, but its reliance and teaching of Chinese classics were unusual and unique to the Japanese branch of the Church. Konishi was a graduate of both the Orthodox Christian seminary and the leading Russian Orthodox Seminary in Kiev. He in turn tried to develop with Tolstoi an ethical thought that was 'universal' and without hierarchy from the Chinese classics, *Tao te Ching*. The text guaranteed ontological equality. We could look at their understanding of the divine as Gxd – or God without Being — much in the way that the *Tao te ching* embodied a divine essence or spirit, or Gxd. Japanese beginning with Konishi translated Tolstoi's religious writings as expressions of 'Gxd'. One didn't need to be Christian to be Tolstoian in Japan, although it's important to point out that Tolstoi himself did believe in a God with Being. It was Konishi's and others' originality of translations and the people who took it that transformed Tolstoi's religious thought into anarchist religion in Japan.

Japan's translated Tolstoi uprooted the translated concept of 'modern religion' as the Christianity of the West. It was in this context that the idea of 'religion' developed as an ethical code that the common people possess. In other words, according to their religious ideas, one didn't need to be Christian to be civilized. The theoretical implications for this are extremely large. This history gives us a completely new, if not revolutionary way of thinking about the intellectual history of modern Japan.

Why did it work so well? They did not think of themselves as anarchists. So this was not about an 'ism' per se, as in a kind of dedication to a utopian ideology. But rather it was a means of making a set of interlocked ideas and practices visible and coherent.

Part 3

Asia Art Tours: You explicitly highlight the role of translation in creating an environment of cooperative Anarchism between Russia and Japan:

Rather than a form of unequal power relations, translation in this discourse was a transnational exchange conducted on equal grounds that implied a non-hierarchical world order beyond the epistemological limits of East-West relations.

Could you discuss how you see translation as critical to understanding the Cooperatist Anarchism of the period? How were works that were forbidden or beyond criticism in one country (Tolstoy, The Tao te Ching) exchanged between countries in a way that created radical new meanings and solidarity between Russian and Japanese anarchists

SHO KONISHI: Translation is one of the most productive ways to understand the intellectual history of Japan. The intellectual history of modern Japan is actually a history of translation in

one form or another. If intellectual history is a history of translation, then all modern intellectual histories are in a way, transnational histories.

There are a number of theories out there about translation in intellectual history. One theory is that translation is an expression and producer of cultural nationalism as identity and difference. This is because translation acts to allow the reader to identify his or her 'mother' language from foreign language as the 'other.' In modern Japan, this was predominantly occurring in translations of English, which, according to Naoki Sakai, produced a sense of the other vs. the self, West vs. Japan. Another theory is of translation as self-colonization, according to which translations of English literature were an act of self-colonization, of adaptation to and a perceived superior culture and adoption of the Western concept of 'self'. In contrast, the translation practices that I talk about in my book uprooted such dichotomies. They negated colonization practices justified by ideologies of civilizational hierarchy. The translations of Tolstoi and Tao te Ching liberated their readers from that hierarchy and its embedded temporality. They allowed ordinary people to be the vehicles of social progress. These translations were not expressions of cultural nationalism or self-colonization, but rather a practice of liberation that embraced a global outlook.

This history of translation allows us to better understand how translation can be an even more innovative practice and process than we thought. Not only were they *not* translating Western terms, but their translations uprooted the very Western terms and the meanings embedded in them. In this way, they liberated people from the constraints of the Western meaning of modern religion.

In order to be civilized, human beings no longer needed to be Christian or Muslim, but just oneself, as unique individuals. In plural, they were called '*heimin*' ('the common people'). This conflicted with the standardized usage of the term for 'the people' as *Kokumin* ('the nation's subjects').

Tolstoi was the most translated writer in the entire history of translation practice in Japan. He was translated as a religious figure, when religion was critical to determine not only who was to carry civilization, but what sort of idea of progress. Konishi's introduction and translation of Tolstoian religion changed the temporality of modernity in Japan and people's belonging to that temporality. It allowed one to have a much broader sociality beyond the nation state. It allowed and nurtured non-state level transnational links with other Asian countries outside the relationality of colonizer and colonized, White and Yellow, and civilized and uncivilized. The translations allowed for new temporalities that liberated people from the constraints and limits of Western modernity that had generated such conceptual hierarchy of divisions for world order. An alternative world order was simultaneously taking root that changes the way we think about the global history today at large.

AAT: During the Russo-Japanese War, How did State institutions and media promote its concept of Kokumin and how did this contrast and compete with Non War and Co-operatist Anarchists who promoted the concept of the Heimin? ***(I found your writing about the battle to define the meanings of "honor" and "peace" to be fascinating)*** **What was at stake in this battle of meanings?**

SK: In the Russo-Japanese War, war was peace in a way, a 'peace' that revolved around the territorial notion of the imperial nation state, the territorial utopia. To win war meant to gain peace and to adhere to an idea of progress toward a perfected space governed by civilized human beings, u-topos. The Nonwar Movement at the time was not reducible to anti-imperialism.

Their critique was not only anti-war, but against that war and its idea of peace that the war was intended to bring.

Interiority became a site of contestation. Teddy Roosevelt promoted the idea that anarchism was terrorism, while Nonwar adherents saw 'terror' as belonging to the state's uncontrolled abuse of power. Nonwar adherents had no intention of using violence. Meanwhile, the state used violence as means to control and govern the state's subjects. Kotoku Shusui, a leading anarchist and the leading voice of the Nonwar Movement, and 11 other alleged co-conspirators including Kotoku's common-law wife, were murdered by the state for conspiring to assassinate the emperor in 1910. Osugi Sakae, translator of accounts of the dung beetle, was also murdered, by the military police, 10 years later.

The determination of what was natural was at stake. All other moral vocabularies followed to that end. For cooperatist anarchists, what was natural was symbiotic nature. Around the time of the war, people were reading not books about war, protest or revolution, but the above-mentioned Ilya Mechnikov's writings on microbiology in which he described symbiosis functioning on the micro-most level within the human body. A battle of meanings over 'nature' was part of a larger battle over the definition of what was good.

If we look at the artist Ogawa Usen's cartoons in Nonwar publications during the war, we find women, older men, and fishermen quietly napping, sleeping and at rest. These were far from the action-oriented images we might expect to find in a time of war. The images of napping during a time of war were very powerful. In the middle of the day, when one ought to have been most productive, an older man was depicted fishing – not just fishing, but napping quietly and alone while he waits. The cartoon shows him sleeping in the afternoon sun while a fish tugs at his line. This, at the height of war, was one of numerous powerful cartoons with hidden critical commentaries by Ogawa, published in the leading Nonwar publication of the time, *Heimin shimbun*. His perspective, aligned with the philosophy of the *Tao te ching* and perhaps easily lost on us today, would have been picked up by readers at the time in Japan. Readers would have been widely familiar with the *Tao te ching*, a key text at the time. This classical Chinese philosophy usurped the concentration of power in the hands of rulers and elites through its focus on the divine power and majesty of the small and weak masses, in gentle and peaceful inaction or natural action, as opposed to the force and power of rulers and elites. It saw the divine itself as flowing within the small and weak.

Over the past two decades of our own time, we've been facing a similar battle of definitions, based on which a different word order might be imagined. Many examples come to mind. An obvious one, for instance, is the term, 'globalization,' the spread and institutionalization of capitalist modernity worldwide. The related term 'global history' that reflects 'globalization' has the power to justify the present and thereby close the future, rather than opening it up to alternative possibilities. What sort of 'global history' would we see if we were to take anarchist modernity seriously?

AAT:During the War, you provide insight about Japan's POW Camps as sites of revolutionary potential:

With some ninety thousand Russian POWs scattered in twenty- eight POW camps across Japan, the camps served as ideal hubs... for the networked activities of Non-war Movement activists and their Russian revolutionary counterparts... These figures turned the camps into a kind of a liberal arts college, or a "barbed-wire college"... Without charge for tuition and with free room and board, Japanese socialists and anarchists, as well as

Russian revolutionaries in Japan, treated the camps as ideal campuses to educate captured Russian soldiers … Hundreds of thousands of Russian soldiers were radicalized by their experiences in the war and their education in the POW camps.

Could you describe how revolutionaries took advantage of these punitive spaces and transformed them into sites of revolutionary potential? Are there contemporary lessons which can be taken and applied to the modern panopticon of prisons and camps that currently festers across the globe?

SK: The tens of thousands of Russian POWs in Japanese camps during the Russo-Japanese War were already discontent. It was a matter of redirecting that energy and critical mind toward revolutionary thought and action. Russian Populist revolutionaries in Japan led by the physician Nikolai Sudzilovskii-Russel published a newspaper, *Iaponiia i Rossiia* (*'Japan and Russia'*), which was disseminated to the POWs. Russel was given free hand to disseminate his material. I believe the Japanese government was well aware of the revolutionary nature of the material, as it had been using secret agents to support and funnel money to Russian revolutionaries in an attempt to destabilize the Russian government. Some of the biggest names in the Russian revolutionary movement moved through Japan in this period, and there were powerful effects of the education and coaching of POWs in garnering the POWs' support for the Russian revolutionary movement. Indeed, the Russian writer Andrei Belyi depicted the return to Russia of mass waves of revolutionary minded veterans of the Russo-Japanese War in his 1913 novel *Petersburg*.

Time was suspended in the camps, and there was quite a lot of time to kill. Being in the camps gave people time to reflect. The war was brutal, and people wondered for what they had fought. The Russian POWs felt the contrast between the brutality of the war being fought against Japan, and the incredible suspended period of calm in the camps, when they were free to walk around the town, interacting freely with Japanese people. They were treated incredibly well in Japan, and given access to the highest standards of medical care. This was in accordance with the Japanese government's effort to show the high civilizational achievement. The same motive that led Japan to win the war with Russia, led it to treat Russian POWs extremely well.

In the POWs' psyche, their service to the state was pending. Japanese treated the POWs generously as general civilians, and the POWs no longer perceived themselves as soldiers serving the nation state with weapons. In the camps, the POWs transformed their thinking, from service to the nation state, to conceiving of themselves as people without the state, which they shared with the Japanese Nonwar Movement.

AAT: The final pairing I'd like to highlight is Anarchist Ōsugi Sakae and Jean-Henri Fabre the French Entomologist.

Could you discuss how Japan's anarchists saw their own perspectives within Fabre's writing on the natural world? Why did this viewpoint resonate so vividly with the wider Japanese populace (to this day). Lastly, why did they reject the more Malthusian and Spencerian notions of brutal competition and hierarchy expressed by Darwin.

SK: From the outset, Fabre and Osugi had different ideas about the natural world. While Fabre saw insects as God's creation, Osugi saw them as cooperatively connected with the wider nature including humankind, kind of like the idea of 'Gaia' as James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis have called it.

Osugi's originality in his translations made Fabre's writings on insects extremely popular in Japan. The way Osugi translated Fabre was vivid, colloquial, humanizing and humorous. Many translations have appeared since then, but I still think it's hard to beat the first by Osugi.

His translations appeared within a broader interest among cooperatist anarchists in the natural sciences, most specifically, a fascination with the smallest creatures of our universe. Interestingly, while Lev Mechnikov's writings never became known in Japan, it was Lev's younger brother Ilya, a Nobel Prize-winning microbiologist, whose writings came to be widely read among cooperatist anarchists. Ilya Mechnikov's writings on microbiology proved that human beings' innermost being was mutual aidist. He demonstrated that the nature that surrounds us and is within us from our very cells is symbiotic. Thus, symbiotic development was at the heart of our evolutionary origins. Many decades after Mechnikov's own work, the world-renowned biologist Margulis developed her own work, inspired by the symbiotic functioning of phagocytosis by Mechnikov and other early twentieth-century Russian and Soviet biologists. She took important cues from these Russian biologists on the role of symbiogenesis in evolution, biologists who likely worked in the same circles as Ilya Mechnikov.

Why did it resonate with the wider Japanese populace? It perhaps echoed their mode of existence and sociality, particularly at that time. Anthropologists often make sweeping generalizations and assumptions that divide so-called individualist societies vs. collectivist ones, as if human subjectivities and societies can be divided into two models. Cooperatist anarchists reflected symbiotic human subjectivity onto the tiniest, seemingly most unimportant little creatures, like microbes and dung beetles. They demonstrated these little creatures doing, and their acts as being not only necessary for the health of larger society and environment, but also illuminating for our understanding of the nature of our own existence. Each tiny element, each little creature, was viewed as significant for the well-being of the larger entity that we are all a part of. It was both aesthetic and ethical. It was also simultaneously collective and individual. To be individual, one needs to be collective, and to be collective, one must be individualistic. So, neither of these terms would have captured their subjectivity.

Cooperatist anarchists did not reject Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, but they did reject *The Descent of Man*, by ignoring it. Darwin's understanding of evolution was embraced as it suited their idea that everything is constantly evolving, and forming and reforming. Competition as well as cooperation was essential to the survival of any species. With each individual talent gifted by Gxd, each has different roles to play, resulting in an intricate interconnectivity of energies. For cooperatist anarchists, the world of insects was a missing piece in their worldview. If colonizers at the time sought to prove the right of their mission by measuring the bones and skulls of inferior creatures in accordance with the Western civilizational model of the hierarchy of species, Japanese anarchists sought to prove their worldview by removing the hierarchy of world order. They did so by decentering the world, talking about the dung beetle and microbes, and exploring the negative discovery of the universe. Fabre fit their concept of the natural world that embraced the smallest and seemingly most useless creatures like the dung beetle, and made it the hero and subject of fascination, recounting in smallest detail its utterly eccentric behavior. Yet this odd eccentricism made the dung beetle the most essential creature for the survival of human civilization. Its recycling of animal dung allowed for the survival of the entire agricultural world that is so essential to human survival. This is perhaps why the scarab beetle, a type of dung beetle, was worshiped by the Egyptians. The notion accords well with the earlier mentioned philosophy of *Tao te Ching*. Ever since Osugi's translation, the beetle has been called endearingly the 'dung ball roller' by Japanese children and adults alike, and spawned a mass culture of dung beetle paraphernalia, from t-shirts to model figures, etc. Its mass popularity can be entirely attributed to Japanese anarchist translations of Fabre's scientific observations of the dung beetle's and other

insect behaviour. Their translations have ever since the early twentieth century been the *Mother Goose* of Japan, the book that every Japanese child reads. Children's collection and observations of the behavior of beetles in nature have been ingrained in the play repertoire of Japanese children and primary school education ever since.

Why did the wider Japanese populace reject Spencerian Darwinism's competition? They faced the brutality of capitalism, money-driven social norms and ethics that were antithetical to more rooted anarchist notions of symbiotic coexistence and progress driven by mutual aid. They were attracted not to ideas of segregation or hierarchy, but rather to anarchist celebrations of the 'weak' (as defined by Western modernity) as the strong, the necessary, and the divine. This helped lead to the widespread interest in Esperanto, again from below. Esperanto was a language without culture that simultaneously embraced all languages and cultures equally — at a time when culture meant race, and race meant the hierarchy of civilization, which served as an ethical justification for the weak to be colonized and controlled under eugenicist policies.

AAT: To conclude with the beginning, early in the book you bring up Zygmunt Bauman's criticism of the *"Sedentary Imagination"* of Western Modernity, which you explain (through his framing) as one tied to boundaries, borders, a sovereign with power and legal order. This is compared throughout your book to the bottom-up and borderless utopia of everyday practice that inspired so many Japanese and Russian Anarchists.

As Western Modernity is crumbling and Capitalism threatens to extinguish all life on Earth do you see a chance for the politics and international collaboration that we see in your book to resurface? If so, what inspiration or tactics can contemporary activists find in the image of the Heimin and Cooperatist Anarchists of your book?

SK: Yes, I do.

What inspiration? That's not for me to say. I'm a mere student of history. If 10 people read it, there will be more than 10 ways to reflect the ideas found in the book. But I imagine that what you are doing here will certainly be an inspiration that contemporary folks would find important. And as such, let me thank you again for such an exceptional opportunity to communicate with you in this way.

For Dr. Konishi's incredible scholarship, please see his book Anarchist Modernity: Cooperatism and Japanese-Russian Intellectual Relations in Modern Japan by Harvard University Press.

Dr. Sho Konishi interviewed by Matt Dagher-margosian
Anarchist Modernity
Dr. Sho Konishi of Oxford on Japan, Russia and Anarchism
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