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REVOLUTIONARY CHINA: 
THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES

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CHINESE CULTURE AND THE HUMANITIES: 
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China’s revolutionary century +
Late imperial China as a holistic civilization
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• Socially – shared assumptions about gender relations; social hierarchy
Reform or revolution?
Regardless, where to start?
For us it will be with Liang Qichao (1873-1929)
“Renewing the People”

Nation as body

Diagram of human body and map of China.
What themes dominate Liang’s call for a people renewed?
Attack China and Chinese culture in order to construct the nation. This attention to what is wrong with China and the character of the Chinese people runs throughout the 20th century – and was addressed from across the political spectrum.
Chen Duxiu:  
Chen Duxiu was a founder of the Chinese Communist Party – only revolution, and a Communist one at that, could save China from its own imprisoning, feudal, past.
Mao Zedong: “Combat Liberalism” (1937)
Terms & ideas that Mao uses to describe “liberalism”

- Unprincipled
- Decadent
- Irresponsible
- Irresponsible
- Undisciplined
- Cautious
- Irresponsible
- Self-indulgence
- Tolerant of wrong ideas
- Afraid to stand up
- Halfhearted
- Incapable
- Drifting
- Disdainful
- Slack
- Corrosive
- Removed from masses
- Opportunistic
- Selfish
- Passive
- Helpful to the enemy
Science & Democracy = Marxism
The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution
&
Mao’s emphasis on “redness” over “expertise,”
on red ideology,
on red politics
Culture as the focus
Mao Zedong
The Revolutionary Prophet
Lei Feng was the ideal new Communist man -- selfless and pure of heart.
In 1978, Mao by then two years in the grave, and seeking to bury the Cultural Revolution, Deng Xiaoping called for MODERNIZATION, EMANCIPATION OF THE MIND & SEEKING TRUTH FROM FACTS
But those who opposed Deng Xiaoping also called for EMANCIPATION OF THE MIND.
In spring 1989 the students worked to renew themselves and to renew China. Values, beliefs, character, were the key. The fate of the nation, the sacred nation, was at stake.
The fundamental tension of the post-Mao period: who is in control? Modernization and change are necessary, but who leads?
“Reviewing the course of struggle and the basic experience over the past 80 years and looking ahead to the arduous tasks and bright future in the new century, our Party should continue to stand in the forefront of the times and lead the people in marching toward victory. In a word, the Party must always represent the requirements of the development of China's advanced productive forces, the orientation of the development of China's advanced culture, and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the people in China.” – Jiang Zemin
But the competing idea, that the people can only be emancipated, renewed, if you will, by themselves, continues to crowd the CCP’s comfortable position that only enlightened dictatorship can assure China, the great nation, a bright future. Liu Xiaobo, winner of the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize, has emerged as the best known fly in the ointment.
What renewal? Which modernity?