



Shifu,
Soul of Chinese Anarchism

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Daring to Die:
A Life of Shifu

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Chapter 1

"Daring to Die": A Life of Shifu

For the last three years of his life, he was Shifu. This was the person, or the persona, that he wanted to be and the name by which he wished to be remembered. During his lifetime he used three names: Originally he was Liu Shaobin, the name his parents gave him. When as a teenager he began to regard himself as a reformer, he used the name Liu Sifu, "thinking of restoration [of the Han people]." When he became an anarchist, he called himself Shifu, "to teach renewal." With the last change he stopped using his family name in order to comply with his anarchist principles; among other things he sought to change the family system. For this last period in his life it is correct to call him "Shifu." Prior to that, it is more appropriate to call him "Liu" or "Sifu," and I will adopt these usages in all that follows.¹

Liu Shaobin was born on June 27, 1884. He was still a boy when China's defeat at the hands of Japan in 1895 sent shock waves through the intelligentsia, who then saw China's urgent need for reform. In 1898 he earned the top place in local examinations in Xiangshan xian, Guangdong, his home district. That year also brought the Hundred Days' Reform, the abortive attempt at reform from the center of the Manchu government. The Boxer movement started in the north the next year and reached its climactic disaster in the summer of 1900. Liu was a young man of twenty-one in 1905 when the Qing government decided to terminate the examination system that for centuries had been the route to success for the literati. In that year Liu Sifu was studying in Japan, and there he joined Sun Yatsen's Tongmenghui; he had become a revolutionary. These monumental

Shifu's comrades published a memorial issue of *Voice of the People* to him a few weeks after his death in March 1915. In addition to many tributes to Shifu, this issue included a brief discussion of a strike in Shanghai about which he had written. He had reported on other labor activity in earlier issues, and on the Shanghai strike in the next-to-last issue produced under his editorship. This record of attention to the conditions of China's workers suggests that, had he lived longer, Shifu might have found new and more effective ways to link his anarchist message directly to the labor movement. Soon after his arrival in Shanghai, a reader had written to ask, "Are you, Shifu, a worker?" Shifu responded by describing his labors on the journal, in printing it as well as editing it; yes, he said, he was a worker.

He could not have answered otherwise, even though this response was not the objective truth. Even so, he had sought to identify with workers and all other "plain people" (*pingmin*), and with their predicament in society as it was, and to understand their potential in a transformed society. Critics might point to those blind spots in his consciousness that kept Shifu from moving farther, but he had advanced a great distance beyond most of his contemporaries. His presentation of anarchism inspired the next generation of Chinese anarchists and indeed went far toward shaping the generally accepted view of anarchism among Chinese activists. So profound was the effect of Shifu's uncompromising personal example that he was made the focus of "Shifu-ism," testimony to the respect those later anarchists accorded him. These influences appear in the final two substantive chapters of this study (chapters 9 and 10).

His comrades decided to bury Shifu beside West Lake, where he had launched his mission on behalf of anarchism. A carved stone marks the grave near Red Mist Cave (*Yanxia dong*) in the hills beside the lake. Shifu would have been most pleased to know that, during the next few years, his efforts did attract many to the anarchist movement, which reached its greatest strength from the late 1910s through the early 1920s.

events between 1905 and 1912. Some of his reactions were typical. But during his stay in Japan he encountered ideas that would mark him as unusual. There he first learned of anarchism; more accurately, he learned of a bundle of ideas that included anarchism, and he decided to attempt an assassination as a way to contribute to the cause of revolution. Toward this end he learned to make explosives, also while in Japan. These decisions set him apart as a "doer," one who was prepared not just to talk about revolution, but to act.

Although there were further turns on the road to his uncompromising commitment to anarchist principles in 1912, his decision to join action with thought in 1905 marked an early distinction between Liu and the vast majority of his peers. When in 1912 he made his final turn and became the apostle of anarchism in China, he completed a transition that had been under way for several years. Thus, when almost everyone else thought the revolution was over, he thought it was just beginning.

His father, Liu Bingchang, had served as an official and sometimes engaged in business ventures as well. He headed an upper-class family that had known better times. Still, the family home in Shiqi, the Xiangshan district seat, impressed those who visited it. Known as the Water Mansion (*Shui lou*), the family compound included an elegant garden with ponds, a covered bridge, and pavilions. The family was also blessed with children; Liu Sifu had eleven siblings, many of whom later joined in his work on behalf of anarchism.

When an American family produces a rebel or a revolutionary, biographers speculate that the offspring had problems with his or her parents. While this was also true of many Chinese revolutionaries, it was not so with Liu Sifu. Liu Pingchang took a leading role when progressive Xiangshan gentry joined the reform movement in the late 1890s. He organized a "natural-foot society" to oppose footbinding for local girls. He established the first public school in Xiangshan. He also circulated reform pamphlets calling for public works and mining development.

For Liu Bingchang, reform began at home. One of his six daughters never had her feet bound. This radical child also was allowed to dress as a boy. The other daughters, who had begun the footbinding process, "liberated" their feet. Perhaps the most remarkable demonstration of the father's progressive attitude was that he let his daughters go swimming. The elder Liu's behavior helps to explain why his brightest son took up the cause of social reform while still teenager and developed into one of the most insistent advocates of social revolution in his generation.

Though not the oldest son, Sifu displayed such great ability that he became the focus of his father's hopes for a successful career in the rising generation. Sifu excelled in his studies and gained the first (*yuecai*) degree in the local examinations when he was fifteen *sui*, in 1898. The next year he went to Guangzhou to take the provincial examination for the *juwen* degree. That v

his only experience of the "examination hell" that generations of Chinese scholars had experienced. The aspirant stayed in a cramped cubicle for three days, writing his examination, eating, performing his bodily functions, without so much as a breath of fresh air. Liu Sifu did not pass this examination. He was traumatized by it, and he finished well down the list of candidates. Unable to believe his son had failed, Liu Bingchang asked a well-placed friend to get a look at the examination. Sifu had made a mess of his effort. He had written randomly on the scroll, and instead of sticking to the subject, he had scrawled some disrespectful verses. Later he told his younger brother, "When I saw the ugliness of the examination compound, I knew that we had to have political reform." He rejected the system and began efforts to change it.

Sifu undertook his first reform activities in Xiangshan. He helped to organize a reading group to study books and magazines for the "new knowledge" that he and his friends saw as essential if change were to come about in China. They also formed a public speaking society; many such organizations were being launched throughout the country to develop the speaking skills that were ignored in traditional Chinese education. A cousin, Liu Yuehang, joined Sifu in these activities, and the two shared many experiences during the next several years. They set up a branch of their reading group in Macao, where they were joined by Zheng Guangong, an activist who was several years older. Zheng had already studied in Japan, where he had worked with Liang Qichao on the *Public Opinion Journal* (*Qingyi bao*). Sifu's contact with Zheng at this time introduced him to one of the most radical thinkers on the local scene. Zheng edited a series of newspapers associated with Sun Zhongshan's revolutionary organizations until his premature death in 1906. Liu and some associates launched a successor to Zheng's last journal soon afterward.

Another of Liu's early reform activities was to start a girls' school in Xiangshan. The Empress Dowager had ordered that public funds should be used to support such projects, but in Xiangshan (and many other places, we may assume) the controlling gentry clique mouthed support while actually opposing Liu's school. In exasperation the young reformer went to the magistrate's office and, when his requests for funding were denied once more, banged his fist on the official's desk—rash behavior. Sifu now encountered resistance from the same local groups whom his father had opposed. The school project had to depend on private funds. From this time on Liu consistently worked on behalf of education for girls and the broader cause of women's rights. His own family experience made these issues the basis for his sense of the need for systemic change in the Chinese family and society.

Alongside these reform activities Liu maintained a quest for knowledge to meet his country's needs, and for a viewpoint, some broader sense of how China ought to be transformed. He was among those reform enthusiasts whose concern for his country probably led him into fields for which he had little aptitude and little genuine interest. Thus, he studied the fields of traditional mathematics

called Sun and Jiang. Shifu likened them to Karl Marx in his disagreement with Bakunin in the First International. Thus one major result of Shifu's career was to establish a negative image of Marx that would last until the early 1920s among the Chinese intelligentsia.

Shifu's concern to have anarchism understood correctly by him to criticize even those who shared his anarchist principles. He attacked Wu Zhihui, one of the editors of *New Century*, from which Shifu first learned his anarchism, for accepting an appointment under the Republican government. Shifu also criticized his disagreements with leaders of the Socialist Party (*Shehui dang*), a group that had split from Jiang Kanghu's party because they practiced anarchism. Jiang's watered-down socialism. If it espoused anarchism, Shifu asked, why did the new party content to call itself socialist? All of Shifu's allegations suggest that he was focusing on disagreements at a time when Chinese socialists desperately needed all the unity they could generate. Something more than disagreement on principles was undoubtedly involved; as had happened in earlier periods of China's history and would happen again in twentieth-century opposition political movements, new movements tended to center on the individual who led them, and these individuals were more jealous regarding their followership than they could ever acknowledge. While this tendency partly explains Shifu's contentiousness, he did have an important point: if socialism were ever to be correctly understood in China, someone had to stand for theoretical consistency.

August 1914 brought the break in Shifu's health from which he never recovered. Probably the cause of his decline was simply physical. Never robust physically, he had sustained serious wounds in his abortive assassination attempt in 1907; most recently, he had exhausted himself in his cause. Yet it is possible that a new and for him inconceivable source of despair was part of the cause of his physical decline. When war began in Europe, Kropotkin decided to support the Allied side against Germany. Shifu's saint had denied the anarchists' faith in internationalism! For Shifu the effect of Kropotkin's decision must have been much like that of students in Beijing in reacting to the Versailles peace conference's decision on Shandong in 1919, a loss of faith in the high principle stated by Westerners whom they had respected. Even in this experience Shifu was ahead of his time. While it is impossible to know how directly this disillusionment contributed to the break in Shifu's health, obviously it provided little incentive to recover.

As his condition deteriorated, Shifu again displayed his uncompromising dedication to principles. A doctor urged him to eat meat, as diet was important in combating tuberculosis. Shifu had pledged not to eat meat, and he did not do so now. His comrades suggested that they sell the group's printing press in order to pay medical expenses. Shifu refused because the press was essential to their work. In his dying as during his lifetime, these expressions of Shifu's commitment established his place as the soul of the Chinese anarchist movement.

of the People (*Min sheng*) was used for these and all subsequent issues. The second issue from Macao (Number 4) gave a new address for the group at the American post office in Shanghai. After relocating in that city's international section, Shifu attacked his work with renewed energy. He and his helpers produced *Voice of the People* regularly between April and early August of 1914. By that time World War I had begun in Europe. That momentous development coincided with a break in Shifu's health. He began a losing battle against tuberculosis that ended with his death in March 1915.

While four months of publication does not seem impressive, this was a respectable publication record as compared to the short lives of many journals in early twentieth-century China. Shifu was convinced of his themes, and this period of regular publication was sufficient for him to make these clear. Shifu was a dynamo of activity; he had his mission, and he pursued it without reserve. Always in his writing for *Voice of the People* there is a tone of urgency and persistence. His experiences in Guangzhou had shown him that something more than spreading the truth among the people would be necessary to bring about the true revolution. And as he had learned firsthand, malevolent forces centering on Yuan Shikai lay ever ready to move against those who spread the truth, or any part of the truth that conflicted with Yuan's notion of it.

After resettling in Shanghai, Shifu announced the formation of his new organization, the Society of Anarchist-Communist Comrades (*Wuzhengfu gongchan zhuyi tongzhi she*). Two basic statements published in *Voice of the People* in spring 1914, a "Proclamation" and a "Statement of Goals and Methods," outline Shifu's vision of the anarchist society to come. Kropotkin provided the basis and outline for Shifu's vision; the combination of morality and the scientific viewpoint had made him Shifu's long-distance mentor. But on some questions, for example Shifu's call for open male-female relationships and public rearing of children, he focused on issues that were of secondary interest to Kropotkin. These points represent the form Shifu now gave to issues that had been important to him throughout his career as reformer and anti-Manchu revolutionary. Chapter 8 presents the form Shifu's anarchism took in this last part of his career.

Another of Shifu's persistent themes in *Voice of the People* was to attack Sun Yatsen and Jiang Kanghu. Both men had great influence, and both claimed to favor some form of socialism. Shifu's criticisms reflected his effort to assure that socialist principles would be understood correctly in China. His major complaint against Sun and Jiang was that they sought only political revolution, which would approach social change only through social policies (*shehui zhengce*), while anarchism called for social revolution (*shehui geming*). Revolution should set aside all political authority, Shifu believed, and begin with the transformation of society. Shifu's chief concern in his attacks on both Sun and Jiang was that if China depended on these two, there would be no true understanding of socialism at all. In attacking these "state socialists," as he

equivalent to algebra and trigonometry. It was in other areas of scholarly pursuit that his real interests and abilities emerged more clearly. He read widely in the works of the heterodox thinkers of the late Zhou "Hundred Schools," these were the *shu*, "all the masters." In these readings he applied the method of philological research, *kaozheng*, the "examination and verification method" of the Han School that had characterized much scholarship during the Qing period. Over the next several years many scholarly reformers and revolutionaries used this approach in their effort to find a rationale for change within the tradition of Chinese scholarship.

In an experience shared with thousands of others of his generation, Liu went to Japan to study. This sojourn was important in his continuing development, however, few details about it are clear, in part because its length. Perhaps he went in 1904, but it might not have been until 1905. He returned home during the second half of 1906. His cousin Liu Yuechang joined him on the trip, and they probably lived together. They were in Tokyo when the Revolutionary Alliance (*Tongmenghui*) was organized under Sun Zhongshan's leadership, and they signed up together about a week before the formal establishment of the Alliance.

Study in Japan did not necessarily mean formal enrollment in a school or university. We have no record that Liu studied on a formal basis. He was adept at language, and surely he learned enough Japanese to use it in reading the great variety of material on political and social thought then available in Japan. Certainly Liu received his introduction to anarchism during this stay in Japan. It is essential to note, however, that what he and other interested Chinese activists learned about anarchism at this point was intermixed with information about other similar movements in Europe and Russia. Anarchism, populism, and nihilism all were rolled together in an impression of revolutionary activity carried out by heroic youths against reactionary rulers. These vague "isms" held a powerful attraction for Chinese activists because they appeared to have been effective in Russia and Europe, whereas their own efforts at revolution were achieving nothing. Theoretical refinement would come later, through better informed journals which began publication in 1907, one in Tokyo and one in Paris.

Liu Situ got enough of the message on activism to decide that he wanted to make assassination his own special contribution to revolution in China. While he was inspired by what he read about activists in the West, China had heroes too. "Men of determination" (*chishi*) had fought injustice in ancient times, and Tan Sitong had revived this tradition with his martyr's death in 1898. Then in September 1905 Wu Yue had tried to assassinate a group of imperial commissioners as they left Beijing to study constitutional systems in Europe and Japan. The *Tongmenghui* ran an informal course for members who wished to learn how to make explosives, and Liu probably began to learn these skills at this operation in Yokohama. The instructors were two veteran Cantonese

activists, Li Zhisheng and Liang Muguang. Liang had participated in the Guangzhou uprising of 1903, led by Hong Quanfu, a nephew of the Taiping leader Hong Xiuquan.

By late 1905 there were more than 8,000 Chinese students in Japan, many of them under some kind of government sponsorship but even more as private students, those arranging for their own expenses. The Qing government had become concerned, particularly about the latter group and its increased revolutionary activity. The establishment of the Tongmenghui in August merely confirmed the government's suspicions. At the beginning of November the Japanese Ministry of Culture, prompted by the Chinese ambassador, announced a series of new regulations for the Chinese students, which were to take effect at the beginning of the new year.

Rumblings of resistance began almost immediately. Of fifteen new rules, the students were especially outraged at two. One would have allowed the Japanese government to deport any Chinese student for "improper behavior," an open-ended provision directed against anyone either the Chinese or Japanese government regarded as undesirable. The other required payment of housing fees in a lump sum, in advance; this was directed against the private students, whose funding was more precarious than those on government programs and among whom were many activists. The students held many meetings during November and December and opposed the regulations with petitions and threats of a strike.

Liu Sifu assumed a modest leadership role in this student movement and signed at least one of the petitions. While the students agreed that they must resist the new regulations, they were divided as to what form their resistance should take. Students from the central provinces tended to favor return to China as a protest. Those from Guangdong and the other southern coastal provinces supported a boycott of classes. Another of the leaders among the southern group was Wang Jingwei, who like Liu Sifu later organized an assassination corps and also became an anarchist. These parallels between the two were rooted in their shared experiences in Japan, where they became friends. They joined their fellow southerners in boycotting classes.

Liu returned to China sometime during the summer of 1906. Soon after his return home he went to Wuzhou, Guangxi, to teach at a new school. There he met Xie Yingbo, an activist from Canton who was a year or two older than Liu. They participated together in many activities until 1912. Also at Wuzhou, Liu received a visit from Huang Xing as the Tongmenghui leader traveled in southwestern China. Huang knew of Liu's interest in assassination, and presumably they discussed ways by which Liu's willingness to undertake a mission might be coordinated with other Tongmenghui plans.

Liu and Xie went to Hong Kong soon after Huang's visit. There they helped to start the *Eastern Journal* (*Dongfang bao*) as a successor to the journals that Zheng Peigang had been involved in. They also taught at Anluai Girls' School, where Xie introduced Liu to a young woman teacher, Ding Xiangtian.

the international anarchist movement, including Kropotkin, Bakunin, Tolstoy. These were simple but effective means to stimulate a mass interest in anarchism.

Shifu remained devoted in his efforts to present a living demonstration of the principles of anarchism. As the group's Esperanto school was located at eastside headquarters, Shifu made the long walk across Guangzhou to attend classes. But when his comrades had business at the Zunshan East Street office they sometimes rode the streetcar or used a ricksha, only walking when they were within sight of the office. Shifu's comrades contrasted their own practice with his by calling Shifu "Mr. Earnest." He knew no compromise on principles.

But there are many dimensions to principles, and before the end of 1906 complications entered Shifu's life. Ding Xiangtian gave birth to a daughter in the year. Her relationship with Shifu began to deteriorate, presumably at least in part because of the child's arrival. Ding remained loyal and continued to do her part of the work that she had taken on for herself; after this time, however, she seems to have experienced little of the promise with which the relationship began. It is not clear why Shifu behaved as he did in this most intimate relationship. Public rearing of children was one of his anarchist principles; he also appears to have believed that his group should not have to carry the expenses for his own child. His love relationship seems to have crashed in the conflict involving his views on free love, personal responsibility, and the long principle of public rearing of children.

During the summer of 1913 the group achieved one of their major goals when they bought a printing press. From this point on they did all the printing themselves at the Zunshan East Street office. Shifu had wanted to start a journal to strengthen the propaganda work. In August the group produced the first issue of the *Cock-crow Record* (*Huiming lu*). Shifu served as editor and chief essayist. His brothers and sisters, with Zheng Peigang, served as the printers; the sisters bound the journal and prepared the mailings for copies distributed beyond Guangzhou. This division of labor was used in all subsequent issues of the journal.

Also in summer 1913 the group began efforts to establish a rural commune. They had located a pleasant tract of land in Xin'an xian on the eastern shore of the Canton Delta and were trying to arrange financing and purchase, when politics intervened. The unsuccessful Second Revolution against Yuan Shikai's increasingly despotic approach to governing the Republic brought a change in the local administration, and Yuan's men in Guangdong forced Shifu and his group to flee. For Shifu, Zheng Peigang, and the female members of the Zunshan East Street group, several months of dislocation followed the expulsion from Guangzhou. This period apparently passed without great hardship as the group relocated in Macao, where two more issues of the journal were published; their printing press went with them. The new title *Voice*

an unfailing personal example of the principles of anarchism. This marked his final transition, a decision to finish out his life in sacrificial living, a new dare-to-die mode.

The founders of the Conscience Society returned to Guangzhou in early summer 1912 to launch their mission. As they had assumed, post-revolutionary conditions in the city offered a good opportunity to circulate new ideas. The group obtained two centers for their activities. The first was a rented building on Zunshan East Street in the merchant-dominated western suburb of Guangzhou. Shifu and Ding Xiangtian lived here, soon joined by several of Shifu's siblings and Zheng Bi'an's younger brother Peigang, who eventually married one of Shifu's sisters. The group soon got a second site in the gentry-dominated eastern part of the city, where Mo Jipeng, Zheng Bi'an, and Zheng's wife took up residence. These became worksites and study centers for discussions of anarchism and for classes in Esperanto, which they envisioned as the universal language appropriate for the worldwide anarchist community.

The Esperanto movement that Shifu's group launched in Guangzhou was modestly successful. It is difficult now to comprehend why a group of idealistic young Chinese would place so much emphasis on a contrived international language. Much of the explanation for their effort is suggested by the very origins of Esperanto. Its originator, Ludwig Zamenhof (1859-1912), lived in Bucharest, then a city in provincial Russia, an area of many languages and difficult communication. Esperanto drew on Latin roots, seeking to maximize the common background of many European languages. Zamenhof chose the term "one who hopes" as the name for his language. Shifu advanced quickly in his own study of Esperanto, another demonstration of his facility with languages. He found much to be encouraged about after he began to use Esperanto. He used the language to correspond with idealistic reformers and revolutionaries abroad, whom he saw as those who not only hoped but also truly understood. They were the first citizens of the great world community he ardently wished China to join. Both anarchists and Esperantists had their international organizations, with periodic world congresses (Shifu served as China's correspondent to both bodies). It was no wonder that Shifu found many kindred spirits through Esperanto; most European anarchists at this time also were Esperantists. There was some basis, then, for these aspirations that now seem naive. The outbreak of World War I dashed all such hopes, however, and left in its wake problems previously unimagined.

Initial efforts to propagate anarchism centered on the publication of several anthologies to present the theory and appeal of anarchism. Most of the materials included in these anthologies were reprinted from *New Century*, which was still the major source for Chinese translations of anarchist writings. Four such anthologies were produced between summer 1912 and spring 1913, in runs of 5,000 copies each. Besides the anthologies, the group also printed and distributed thousands of picture postcards bearing portraits of major figures in

Thus began a romantic relationship in the new style of anarchism, which would develop its own difficulties.

Liu undertook various other activities during late 1906 and early 1907, working out of the Hong Kong branch office of the Tongmenghui. But other projects gave way to his preparations for an assassination attempt. Like several others who planned assassination missions, Liu did not quite reach the moment of truth. Instead he was seriously injured in an accidental explosion on the morning of May 1, 1907, when he intended to attack Li Zhun, the Guangdong naval commandant. Yet the episode was of great importance, as it marked the culmination of this phase of Shifu's career. The assassination episode is discussed in chapter 4.

A period of almost three years' imprisonment followed the assassination episode, much of the time at the local jail in Xiangshan. Especially during this later period, Liu was held in relaxed conditions that allowed him to study and write. When his release from jail was arranged, his benefactors noted that a study of Cantonese dialects and a discussion of prison reform, written while Liu was in jail, displayed a talent so remarkable that it should no longer be restrained. A group of eleven essays written under various pen names during this prison period offer better insight into Liu's thinking than for any other part of his life before he began his ceaseless labors on behalf of anarchism. Zheng Bi'an, another talented young Xiangshan scholar who in 1912 would join Liu in launching his anarchist group, published these essays in his *Xiangshan Weekly* (*Xiangshan xunbao*) and, years later, got them reprinted in a collection of local writings published in 1949.

Liu's prison essays show the great degree to which he shared the viewpoint of "national essence" writers at this point in his career. Zhang Taiyan (Binglin) had taken the lead in national essence scholarship, the major theme of which was to revive great principles from China's ancient past in order to save the nation and Chinese culture in the modern world. The thrust of national essence thinking was to oppose Confucius himself, and Confucianists down through the centuries, who had appropriated all of China's ancient wisdom and served every autocratic government, including those of the "barbarians." This view of the ancient past offered a rationale for Han restoration. As manipulated by Zhang's younger associate, Liu Shipet, it supported the idea that earliest China had been a pristine anarchist society. Another part of national essence thinking was to revive values from Chinese tradition for use in saving the culture in its current crisis. In Liu Shifu's prison essay on morality, he presented "the incomparable concept of daring to die" (*daxi wu'er* [*du ganxi zhuyi*]) as the indispensable ingredient in morality. He connected this great principle to Buddhism, noting that many in the revolutionary movement had been moved by that religion. At least since the time when he prepared himself for his assassination mission, "daring to die" had been the essence of his own living. From that time, if Liu did not actively seek death,

he made several attempts to put himself in harm's way. These and other themes in Sifu's prison essays are discussed in chapter 5.

Liu's prison essays suggest the distance he had yet to travel between this national essence outlook of 1908-9 and the commitment to anarchist principles he would make by early 1912. Another part of his prison experience pointed the way to his destination: while in prison he saw a number of copies of *New Century* (*Xin shiji*), the journal of the Paris group of Chinese anarchists, which had commenced publication in summer 1907. In the relaxed conditions under which he was held, his brother and perhaps other visitors brought him the journal; through it he began to study the anarchist ideas that ultimately carried him to the vision of a great human community based on universalistic principles of science and rationalism.

Following his release from jail in autumn 1909, Liu continued to study anarchism through *New Century* and presumably other sources of information. Convinced that removal of the Manchus, and of the imperial system, was the sine qua non for revolutionary change in China, he also returned to assassination activity. During 1910 Liu organized the China Assassination Corps (*Zhina ansha tuan*) at Guangzhou. As shown in chapter 5, where this later activity is the subject, such groups became the standard organizational form for assassination plots during the last few years of the revolutionary period. Liu's corps took part in two successful assassination missions. The first wounded Li Zhun, Sifu's intended target four years earlier, in August 1911. The second killed Fengshan, the Manchu nobleman whom the government deputed to Guangzhou to restore order following the Wuchang uprising. Occurring on October 25, the assassination of Fengshan probably hastened the decision by new leadership in Guangdong to secede from the Manchu empire.

Liu himself took no more than a supporting role in either of these actions. However, his activity as an assassination specialist was not yet finished. Months of struggle followed the outbreak of revolution in October. The Manchus still hoped to emerge from the crisis with a constitutional monarchy. They turned to Yuan Shikai to rescue the central government, giving him supreme military authority at the beginning of November. Thus, diehard members of the court such as Zaifeng, or Yuan Shikai himself, became potential targets for an assassination attack. Accompanied by Ding Xiangtian, Sifu went to Shanghai to await the call to make an attack on one or the other of these two men. As events turned out, others carried out assassination missions that were of some significance in the negotiations leading up to the Manchu abdication on February 12, 1912. Still, Liu had remained ready to undertake a "dare-to-die" assassination mission. It is significant that, within a few months, he would reject assassination and other such forms of revolutionary violence as part of his fully developed anarchism.

Liu did not turn immediately to his new mission on behalf of anarchism. He and Ding Xiangtian traveled for several weeks in the lower Yangzi valley,

joined by friends for some of their excursions. This was a time of euphoria. The goal of revolutionary action seemed to have been achieved, and it was a time to rejoice. The euphoria of these days was personal as well; at this time, if not earlier, he and Ding consummated their relationship physically. This seems one of the few periods in his life when Liu Sifu simply enjoyed himself.

During this period of leisure, Liu had begun to develop plans for launching an anarchist movement in Guangzhou. He and his friends continued their travels at West Lake in Hangzhou, where at Liu's call they began a spiritual retreat. Two friends joined Liu and Ding. One was Zheng Bifan, who had published Liu's prison essays. The other was Mo Jipeng, another young idealist from Dongguan *tuan* across the Canton Delta from Xiangshan, who had become acquainted with Liu through their work in the revolutionary armies. The group lived and held discussions first at White Cloud Cloister (*Baiyun si*), relocating after a few weeks to a private home at the south end of the lake.

This retreat brought the group's decision to launch the Conscience Society (*Xin she*) as the nucleus of an anarchist movement at Guangzhou. These founding members set their names to a twelve-point pledge, or covenant, for personal behavior that embodied their anarchist principles. These were the points: (1) Do not eat meat. (2) Do not drink liquor. (3) Do not smoke tobacco. (4) Do not use servants. (5) Do not ride in sedan-chairs or rickshaws. (6) Do not marry. (7) Do not use a family name. (8) Do not serve as an official. (9) Do not serve as a delegate to an assembly. (10) Do not join a political party. (11) Do not serve in the army or navy. (12) Do not follow any religion.

This pledge came to be identified with Shifu; almost every account of his career repeats it. His initial statement of a sinicized anarchism included points drawn from Buddhism, an indebtedness that the Conscience Society's founders would refuse to acknowledge. (This secularized Buddhism is discussed in several places, but especially in chapter 6.) The naive approach reflected in this pledge suggests that Chinese anarchists assumed that a conscious moral renewal could launch the transformation of society. While Shifu retained his emphasis on principles, in the last year of his career he would address more practical concerns such as labor organizing.

Acceptance of the Conscience Society pledge completed the transition of Liu Sifu to the anarchist Shifu. In dropping the use of his family name, Shifu and his associates complied with one of the points in their pledge, and as monks renounce family connections to pursue higher spiritual goals, they rejected ordinary family links in order to work for a universal human family. The new name may be construed in two possible ways that would reflect Shifu's new sense of mission. He now felt able to "teach renewal"; and as this *shi* which means "teacher" also had the ancient meaning of an ordinary soldier who was part of a mass army (this term is still used to identify one of the pieces in *Xiangqi*, Chinese chess), the name also could mean "renewal of the masses." As teacher to the masses whom he sought to mobilize, Shifu set out to provide