

28: THE FIRST STAGE OF THE CHINESE REVOLUTION (11/87r, 8/89e; 11/94e, 9/95e, 11/96e)

a. What evidence exists for the thesis that after the late 18th century the Qing Dynasty was entering the dynastic decline phase of the “dynastic cycle” as the Confucian historians defined that cycle? What evidence is there that it was becoming a pre-Revolutionary “old regime,” like late Tokugawa Japan, eventually destroyed more by its belated attempts to reform more than by its earlier attempts to avoid reform?

b. What kind of people made the Double-Ten Revolution, and how much credit do they deserve for its success? Why should we call the class from which the revolutionaries came the “new meritocrats?” Why did their appearance undermine the old meritocracy’s right to rule? Why did the best and brightest expect the monarchy to be restored after 1912, why were they wrong, and what did China get instead, 1912-26?

A. The Qing Dynastic Cycle’s Downturn Phase

1. The post-ancient version of the dynastic cycle

Chinese Confucian historians began arguing as early as the late 18th century that China was going through the decline phase of a dynastic cycle.

The idea of the dynastic cycle was an old one amongst Confucians. In principle its roots went back to the ancient Zhou religion of Tian. If a ruling family lost contact with Heaven, the dynasty over which it presided lost virtue, and hence also ultimately lost Heaven’s Mandate as well. Finally, it fell from power, to be replaced by a new family.

However, as Confucian historiogra-

phy was elaborated down through the ages, the concept of the dynastic cycle became an ever more precisely defined *secular* idea, comparable in sophistication to the best of modern Western political theory. To the very end, nevertheless, the theory of the dynastic cycle retained some tinges of the ancestor worship basis of Confucianism itself.

The key actors in the dynastic cycle for both Confucian and modern political theorists are the successive rulers within an imperial family. The Confucians understood that a meritocratic or a mixed aristocratic-meritocratic ruling class required a strong imperial chief executive to rule over it. An ancient dynasty’s founding figure was a literally charismatic individual leader—someone who had gained a direct connection with the gods. The later, secularized version of that figure substituted wisdom and organizational ability for literal charisma.

Though they knew nothing of Mendelian genetics or Darwinian evolution, the Confucian historians were good observers. They noticed that family lines tend to weaken over time. Heroic founders of dynasties, even if their regimes survived the crisis of the first succession, tend to be followed by merely adequate, then increasingly inadequate rulers.

As that happened, the meritocrats began to get out of control of the imperial chief executive, and turned corrupt and inefficient. They and the dynasty they served began to lose their grip on the country. This allowed external barbarians to start impinging on the borders, and rebels to start making trouble within. However, barbarians are just a disease of the skin, pontificated the Confucian historians, a superficial thing, but rebellions within are more serious. They represent a disease of the inner organs.

Merely adequate rulers give way to somewhat inadequate, then wholly inadequate emperors, and eventually to children, with their mothers ruling from “behind the screen.”¹ If empresses rule from behind the screen, they will surely be sending eunuchs off to run errands

¹ As those who have seen *The Last Emperor* know, a dowager empress sat behind a screen within whispering distance of the child emperor seated on the throne.

for them, and one innocent errand will lead to other bad ones, and increasing corruption.

Eventually drastic reform is needed to stave off the collapse of the regime. A handful of honest meritocrats make the attempt at reform. If they succeed, the result is a dynastic revival—literally translated from the Chinese, a rise in mid-course (*zhōngxīng* 中興). But this revival is merely the work of a few good meritocrats. It does not raise the quality of the emperors. The rot continues to grow beneath the reformed surface.

After a generation or two, the downward slide resumes and then accelerates. The barbarians return. Ever more ferocious rebels arise. More often than not, some conniving but intelligent general at or near court founds a new dynasty, and the cycle begins again.

Notice how this early modern Confucian historians’ version of the great political cycle secularizes the role of Tian. Tian is no longer “Heaven,” but in this context merely the natural consequences of the natural propensity of ruling families to degenerate.

Like any worthwhile guiding framework for a high civilization, no matter how far removed from religion, the dynastic cycle theory embodies an element of religious tragedy. It implicitly recognizes man’s alienation from Heaven as his civilization grows more complex. Descendants of great founders must inevitably betray their ancestors as they succumb to the complications of civilized life.

Qing fits this scenario better than most of the earlier dynasties. In part this is because the secular theory of the dynastic cycle was only fully elaborated during Qing times. Once present, the theory became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Well-educated Confucians knew what to expect, and acted so as to bring what they expected into existence.

2. Qing’s Dynastic Downturn

a. insufficient men

Qing’s founding figures, from Nuerhaci at the turn of the 17th century to the Kangxi Emperor at the turn of the 18th century, all fit the description of founders as great men. The Kangxi Emperor

(r. 1662-1723) may be ranked as one of the Qing founders because he completed the conquest of south China and of the more useful parts of subzone A2. This rounded out the Qing universal state's boundaries.

The Yongzheng Emperor (r. 1723-1736) was at least an adequate emperor. At best Qianlong was a slightly less successful repeat of Kangxi. If you look at him with the jaundiced eye of some modern observers, including some of the Confucian historians of the 19th century, he became the first of the poor emperors.

The Jiaqing Emperor (r. 1796-1821) was adequate, but despite his best efforts, the situation seemed to be getting out of his control. He inherited several early 19th century rebellions from Qianlong. The opium problem and the related problem of official corruption could no longer be ignored by his time. But he did not and apparently could not do much to end or mitigate any of these problems.

The Daoguang Emperor (r. 1821-1851) suffered thirty years of troubles. Though reasonably competent, he could not seem to do anything about the inherited problems that turned critical during his reign. He lost his grip on the meritocracy, knew that he had, complained about but could do nothing to remedy it. Some argue that the failure of this decent and competent man suggests China was suffering more from crisis of civilization than from the dynastic cycle's downturn.

Opium first became a social problem under Yongzheng when some Chinese began smoking it for pleasure, not just eating it as a stomach ulcer medicine. By the 1830s this bad habit caused a moral and economic crisis.

On the social side, opium smoking was spreading from the coolie laborers up the social structure into the middle classes and even the meritocracy.

On the economic side, silver was draining from China, because by 1826 China was buying more of the drug from the foreigners than it could sell tea and wallpaper and porcelain to them. This reduced China's silver money supply. Prices and taxes expressed in silver fell; expressed in copper coins they rose. Because most opium was

coming in illegally, smugglers bribed meritocrats to wink at its import. No one could figure out how to stop opium, corruption, or the effects of the money supply changes.

b. barbarians at the gates & roving bandits within

Foreign barbarians prospered. The British East India Company, the rulers of India by the end of the 18th century, sponsored ever larger opium crops in Bengal. The Company sold the drug to private English and Scottish merchants for silver, used that silver to pay its administrative overhead in India, and to make the fortunes of its investors and their clients at home.

Americans also did well from the opium trade, including many who did not participate in it. Though the United States abolished the Second Bank of the United States after 1837, Americans never missed not having it to guarantee fiat bank notes. Plenty of silver was soon floating around the country, much of it from China, mostly as payment for Turkish opium brought to China by American smugglers. The Americans completed their run toward industrial takeoff by the 1850s using much ex-Chinese silver as their primary money.

Unwilling to legalize opium, but unable to ban it, China blundered into the 1839-42 First Opium War with England. Because China had not kept up with improvements in military technology since the 17th century, it lost the war. Opium was defacto legalized.

The Treaty of Nanking of 1842 with England that ended the war was the first of the "unequal treaties." Under its terms five "treaty ports" were opened to foreigners, and China had to pay a substantial money indemnity to England.

These European external barbarians were pressing in from the frontiers and gaining extraterritorial privileges, much as did the Uighurs during late Tang.

Internal rebellion came next. The Taiping Rebellion broke out in 1850 near Canton, in the region destabilized after Qing fought and lost the Opium War there a decade before. The Taipings quickly spread north into the Yangzi Valley, and controlled parts of it for

another decade.

Bad rulers had tempted barbarians to pound on the gates, and this had shaken loose bandits who roved from region to region, provoking a serious disease of the universal state's internal organs.

c. bad rulers, children, and women behind the screen

As decent and competent an administrator as the Daoguang Emperor was, he could no longer cope with the moral and political-economic crises involving opium. The reign of his son, the Xianfeng Emperor (r. 1851-62), proved a disaster. Xianfeng was, to put it charitably, less than adequate. He was a dissolute young fellow, who probably engaged in all kinds of improper activities, sexual and otherwise. These likely contributed to his early death.

More ominously, he took a strong Manchu woman, named Yehonala, as one of his secondary wives. She bore the Emperor his only son, and soon dominated the harem through sheer force of character. After Xianfeng's death, she became the Dowager Empress Cixi. As co-regent with the childless and weak senior empress, she allied herself with the late Emperor's younger brother, a far more sensible politician than she was. He lived on as a moderating force until 1898.

The Xianfeng Emperor was supposedly so bad a human being, so inadequate a male person, that he was rumored to not even be capable of fathering a child. Or so said the Peking gossip-mongers, whose tales got built into the "yellow books" (*huángshū* 黃書, yellow cover pornographic novels) of the late 19th century. Yehonala supposedly got around the Emperor's impotence by having a love affair with the handsome and brave Manchu guards officer, Ronglu. The fruit of that love affair was the child who became the Tongzhi Emperor after his nominal father, the Xianfeng Emperor, died.

Ronglu is notable not only for his supposed prowess in other men's beds, but also for being a non-decadent imperial guards officer in an age when most of the Manchu banner officers had degenerated into upper class welfare bums, good for nothing but consuming transfer

payments in gambling, booze and opium. He remained a loyal and effective supporter of the Dowager Empress's long regency.

Amidst and partly because of all this hanky panky at court, by the end of the 1850s, not only had the Taiping Rebels taken over the south and threatened the north, but a second Opium/Anglo-Chinese War had broken out.

The Xianfeng Emperor and his court had to flee Beijing, with the English and the French on their heels. Xianfeng expired in exile at the far corner of subzone B1. The child Tongzhi Emperor took the throne, with his mother, now the Dowager Empress Cixi, as co-regent and the dead Emperor's brother, Prince Qing, as her adviser. The two formed a kind of dyarchy, backed by the military power Ronglu could mobilize.

d. the Tongzhi Restoration

Prince Qing rallied a few honest executive meritocrats at the center and in the key provinces to the side of the regime, and these men temporarily revived the dynasty's fortunes. They made the deals with the Western barbarians that had to be made to win their help in putting down the internal rebellions.

A handful of provincial civilian meritocrats invented new or rediscovered old ways of combining civilian with military power, adopted some Western technical innovations, and did most of the fighting to put down the rebellions, though only at the price of ravaging the most developed eastern and central parts of the empire.

They and the few honest executive meritocrats at court also checked corruption, at least for a time. But during a decade (the 1860s) when Japan was girding itself to launch the Meiji Restoration's revolutionary leap into full modernity, China merely had a mid-dynastic restoration rather than a "making-new" as Japan was to enjoy. As a consequence, the virtues of these zealous men of merit merely postponed the start of China's true revolution for another fifty years.

The Tongzhi Emperor turned out to be something of a chip off his putative old block. He died in 1875, perhaps of syphilis, which he is rumored to have

picked up in the brothels of Peking, into which the palace eunuchs used to smuggle him.²

The Dowager Empress Cixi replaced her dead son, the Tongzhi Emperor, not with someone from the next generation, but with his cousin, the Guangxu Emperor. This was an act of vast impiety, because according to the Manchu aristocracy's rules, succession was supposed to go to the next generation, not sideways to someone from the same generation. However, the Dowager Empress did not just want another child on the throne, she wanted one without powerful relations, so she could continue to rule from behind the screen. The Guangxu Emperor remained her pawn until he finally reached his majority in the late 1890s.

And yet, for all her scheming to get and keep it, the Dowager Empress essentially did nothing with her power except continue to hold it. She only grudgingly allowed the zealots of the Tongzhi Restoration (as the reign of her son was known even to contemporaries) to carry out their proposed repurification of the old order.

As the zealots died off, even though some of their purifications held, the Restoration slowly gave way to a renewed period of gradually accelerating dynastic decline during the childhood and adolescence of the Guangxu Emperor.

Finally, however, something inconceivable happened. The people whom the Chinese had and would always think of as the Dwarf-slave (*wōnū* 倭奴) Pirates of the Eastern Sea—the Japanese—defeated and humiliated the Chinese in the 1894-95 war over the status of Korea.

Meritocratic opinion held the Dowager Empress responsible for this disgrace. She felt constrained to formally retire from her regency, particularly since the Guangxu Emperor had come

into his majority. The young ruler soon inaugurated what turned out to be a short period of destabilizing reform. Reform and instability succeeded each other ever more rapidly during the remaining decade and a half of the dynasty's tenure.

Part way through this time, in 1908, after the Dowager Empress and the Guangxu Emperor died almost simultaneously, yet another and even younger child emperor, the Xuantong Emperor (the flawed hero of the movie *The Last Emperor*) was thrust by his mother and uncle onto the throne. Three years later, in October 1911, a minor local rebellion in the south provided the occasion for a coup by a courtier general which finally ended the dynasty at the beginning of 1912.

The classical dynastic downturn pattern of decay, crisis involving rebellion within and barbarians without, temporary revival, followed by resumption of decay and final dissolution in the face of internal rebellion and treachery at a court dominated by women had played itself out.

3. Late Qing's return to crisis of civilization

Though the pattern of decay at the center may have fit the model of the dynastic cycle, some aspects of it are also reminiscent of the civilizational crisis we ourselves are now going through. At least some aspects of the internal rebellions and the barbarian intrusions were novel in Chinese terms, and perhaps constituted abortive revolutions, and hence signs of China's return to civilizational crisis.

When, in 1911, China's revolution began in earnest, it was accompanied by a crisis of civilization already in its acute later stage. By contrast, Europe's and Japan's revolutions preceded by several generations to more than a century the acute phase of their crisis of civilization.

a. rebels or revolutionaries?

With this kind of decay at the center, rebellions within were to be expected. But rather peculiar new sorts of rebellion with revolutionary potential also

² We do not know if this story is true. It is also from the pornographic novels of the late 19th century. Whether true or not, people at the time, including the Confucian historians whose chronicles we follow, believed it. If you learn Chinese, you can read these dirty novels for yourselves, and perhaps brood over their significance for history, literature, and for the virtually fully modern Chinese literary market of those days. A Ph.D. in Chinese social history leads a tough life, but someone has to do the job.

began to break out, starting in the south-east, even before the death of the Qianlong Emperor in 1798. Such rebellions had been occurring with ever greater frequency since mid-Song and late Yuan.

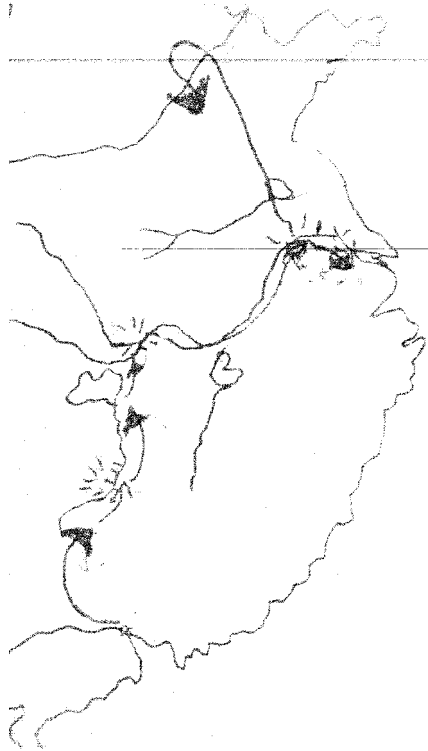
One such revolutionary rebellion began near the capital in 1813.. Though it only took three months to put it down, the capital establishment panicked. The ideas of these rebels were more disturbing.

Like its predecessors, it was a peculiarly Chinese type of early modern millenarian rebellion, mixing Buddhist, Daoist and Persian religious elements with martial arts practices. Such faiths attracted lower middle class people subject to market pressures because they lived in local market towns. These already insecure people sensed that their rulers had become secular Confucians or even post-Confucians, but could not bring themselves to give up links to religious visions of Heaven. No longer tied by emulation of their social superiors to the orthodox Buddho-Confucian vision of Heaven, these people were tempted to whore after strange new gods.

With the benefit of hindsight, we realize that such revolutionary rebellions foreshadowed the Taiping and the Nian Rebellions of the 1850s which, not coincidentally, began in the same areas.

The Taipings adopted a new kind of millenarianism linked to the peculiar new version of Christianity they evangelized so aggressively that they evoked persecution which eventually drove them from their home area.

They advanced up from the south-east to the to the headwaters of the Xiang River, and then north down the Xiang and through Lake Dongting to the Hankow area at the confluence of the Han and Yangzi Rivers. They then quickly raced down the Yangzi, took Nanking, which they made their capital and threatened Shanghai,. The Taiping rulers subsequently sent an abortive expedition to the north. Though it ran out of steam well short of Beijing, it frightened the court into finally taking advice from the reformers of the Tongzhi period. The earlier millenarian risings had not spread so widely or so quickly.



Route of the early 1850s Taiping military advances. (Compare with the route of the new railroads built at the end of the century on p. 10.)

This Taiping northern campaign also stimulated the outbreak of the Nian Rebellion in the northeast. The Nian was a nativist, non-Christian movement, in contrast with the Taipings, who embraced a hybrid Christian and Buddho-Daoist millenarian faith.

Though somewhat more than nominally Christian, the Taiping religion was just Buddho-Daoist enough to offend potential allies among European and American Protestant Christian missionaries whose preaching had in part inspired it.

The rulers of the European powers would probably not have listened to missionary advice to help the Taipings anyway. They preferred a weakened Qing Dynasty that would yield further concessions to them in exchange for help.

The Taipings were Christian enough to offend the Chinese Confucian meritocracy and the majority of Chinese who were still mostly Buddhist. Nevertheless, they enjoyed a measure of genuine popular support in the areas they passed through or conquered. Merchants, for example, both Chinese and Western, preferred to trade in low tax and *laissez faire* Taiping areas rather than in high tax and interventionist Qing controlled

regions.

Both Nationalist Party and Communist Party intellectuals during the 20th century have with equal plausibility found antecedents for their movements among the Taipings. The Nationalists point to Taiping Christianity and their openness to trade; the Communists to their proposals for land reform and female equality; both cite the Taiping aim of reclaiming Chinese sovereignty over their own country from the hated Manchu foreigners.

One might, therefore, argue that at least the Taiping Rebellion, if not its predecessors, represented early modern China rehearsing for the 20th century true revolution that would complete China's transition into full modernity after 1911.

Perhaps that is why the Qing government put so much energy into wiping out rather than co-opting the Taipings. Their rebellion was an even more terribly risky disease of the inner organs than the propounders of the theory of the dynastic cycle realized when they characterized the Taipings as "roving bandits" rather than as more easily co-optable "local bandits."

Instead, the Qing authorities preferred to put up with a case of eczema. That is, they tolerated even the almost equally new "Southern Devil barbarians" (i.e. Europeans) who, like the medieval Uighurs, could help them resist these internal rebels who threatened the vital organs of Chinese early modern civilization.

b. new kinds of barbarians inside the gates

The category of barbarians now included large numbers of Europeans. These were called *nán guǐzi* 南鬼子 or *yáng guǐzi* 洋鬼子 by the rednecks of Canton, the region to which Qing isolationism originally limited them. The former means "southern devils;" the latter means "sea-going devils." Both are the equivalent in Chinese of a Mississippi red neck talking about "Chinks" or "Niggers." Other Chinese cheerfully accepted these bigoted Cantonese labels for Europeans.

The Chinese ruling classes thought of these European foreigners, when they

thought of them at all, merely as variants of traditional sorts of barbarians. They did not take them seriously as protagonists of a rival civilization until it was too late. These southern devils had become obstreperous, the people who believed in the dynastic cycle argued, not because of their innately superior qualities, but only because of the moral decline of the emperors and the meritocracy of China.

During a period of dynastic decline, these barbarians had to be appeased. It would be best to isolate them in enclaves within the coastal cities, as had been done with seagoing Arabs and Persians during Tang and Song times. Wherever possible, one set of barbarians should be used to neutralize another set, so as to keep any of them from penetrating the interior.

When it was absolutely necessary, some barbarians might be called in to help deal with the more fundamental threat, the internal rebellions. That too was no different from what the Tang did in the 8th and 9th centuries, when it invited the Uighurs into northwestern China to help put down the border lords, thereby buying another century of life for itself. Caution was required to avoid Ming's experience. Ming had invited the Manchus in to deal with B1 rebels in 1644, but the Manchus had never gone home.

It was perfectly reasonable to invite the help of these *nanguizi* to put down the Taipings, to hire their officers, buy their weapons, copy their methods, and even to hire some of them to build arsenals and shipyards so that the Chinese could equip their old armies with the new weapons.

Even at the peak of its vigor Tang had given the Bosi (Persian) and Alabo (Arab) peoples extraterritorial rights in the east and southeast coast ports because that was the easiest way to wall them off, and keep them from corrupting Chinese laws and administrative procedures. As a consequence, seagoing barbarians were not a military threat to China either then or later the way Northern Periphery barbarians like the Uighurs were.

Surely, historically literate Confucian politicians of late Qing times argued, it was not necessary to be cultur-

ally poisoned by having a bunch of latter day equivalents of the Persians and Arabs wandering around the interior of China. Give them their own space in Canton (as was done before the Opium Wars) or even in Quanzhou, Shanghai or Ningpo or Tientsin and a dozen other places after the two Opium Wars. As these aliens spread deeper into China, it was all the more expedient to let them try their own criminals. and thereby keep their customs from tainting the Chinese. If the barbarians wanted to call this wholesome segregation "extraterritorial privilege" in their vulgar languages, well then, let them.

So there was nothing novel about giving supposed privileges to these ugly, large nosed, hairy, pale eyed and pale haired people who were intruding into China in the course of the 19th century, at least not if you were a scholar, Confucian meritocrat historian.

But of course the Confucian historians were wrong. Their historical precedents were accurate, but inadequate. Something very fundamental was actually happening in addition to dynastic decline. These southern barbarians were both its symbol and some of its carriers.

B. The Qing Dynasty Becomes An "Old Regime"

1. What is an old regime?

China was not merely witnessing the downturn of the dynastic cycle for a particular dynasty, though that was also happening. The Manchus' Qing Dynasty was also reentering civilizational crisis and turning into an "Old Regime" on its way to a revolutionary transformation.

Recall the definition I gave to this term when applying it to Tokugawa Japan. An old regime is an early modern state ruling a society and economy which either have become or easily can become fully modern, but are not doing so because the old regime refuses to allow them to make or complete the transition. Nor will an old regime be willing to undergo such a transformation itself at the political level. Too many of the interests of the old regime's ruling

class seem to run counter to change for it to permit so drastic a set of transformations.

Between the middle of the 17th century and the first quarter of the 20th century each of the old regimes in Europe and East Asia went through an excluding or a non-excluding revolution, or was swamped by some neighbor that had.

Japan had a brisk non-excluding revolution from 1868 to 1889, less than a century after Tokugawa turned into an old regime. China's government probably became an old regime midway through the 18th century, but only in 1912 did China finally begin to suffer a long drawn out and agonizing excluding revolution. Its first phase lasted until 1949. After a forty year pause, that excluding revolution may have resumed since 1989.

It is hard to say why it took so long for China's old regime to give way to revolution. Maybe it was just because China's early modern civilization was so old and so elaborate that it took a long time to break it down. Maybe it was just the sheer size of China, a territorial state covering a whole subcontinent.

Perhaps such changes normally just take a while to happen. It would be equally plausible to inquire why parts of Europe and Japan rushed through old regimhood so unnaturally rapidly.

2. Gestation of the new stage of civilization: Christianity

Achieving a new stage of civilization would require finding a new Heaven, or a new way of looking at the old Heaven, for eventual re-presentation onto Earth. During the 19th century, the European Christian missionaries assumed Christianity was destined to provide that new Heaven for China. In the 20th century, Marxists have supposed their ideology would provide the secular equivalent of that new Heaven. As we approach the end of the 20th century, the Marxists seem to have been proved as wrong as or perhaps wronger than the earlier Christian missionaries.

Historians of China may have written Christianity off too soon. After all, Catholic Christianity only first came

into China with the Jesuits at the beginning of the 17th century, and Protestantism only during the 19th century. Buddhism first came into China during Han times in a small way and took another five centuries to become dominant in China. It is now only just a little under four centuries since European Christianity first reached China.

Some people argue (contrary to what I suggested in chapter 9) that Buddhism's religious influences were more important than its secular and philosophical consequences, whereas the real contribution of Christianity was destined to be its secularized offshoots—science and Marxism.

As Christianity's influence in China began to deepen during the 19th century, the emphasis of the missionaries did indeed shift from the sacred to the secular. By the end of the century, Western science, and not long thereafter, Marxism entered China, both of them more often than not carried by Christian missionaries, from whose control they then escaped to play independent roles.

There is, however, room for disagreement as to the secular influences of religion. I have already noted (in chapter 9.D) how important Buddhism's secular influences became on both China's state and economy within a few centuries of its entrance into China. The links between Christianity and both state and market by the late 19th century are no stronger.

This is not to underestimate Buddhism's non-material influences. Eventually, by the 11th and 12th centuries, Buddhism obliged even Confucianism to transform itself into Neo-Confucianism, with the Confucian Heaven reinterpreted in Buddhist terms.

Maybe we have not given Christianity enough time yet to exert analogous influence on the philosophical level. We have at least another century to go before Christianity will have been around in China as long as Buddhism was before it became China's dominant religion.

Dominance by Christianity may not be necessary for it to exert significantly more influence. After yet another few centuries it is just possible that some sort of a hybrid between Buddhism, Confucianism and Christianity will have

become part of the spiritual-intellectual mix for the next stage of high civilization, perhaps in China, perhaps in our part of the world, perhaps in both.

Some might argue that Christianity could hardly be expected to exert such an influence in China since it has been fading away within Western Christendom just at the time it is supposed to be influencing China so heavily. But this is exactly what earlier happened to Buddhism, which faded away in India while it was in the process of being transmitted to China during the first eight centuries AD.

Christianity also seems to be shifting its base to other civilizations. Demographers estimate that by the year 2000 nearly 70 percent of all Roman Catholics will *not* be Europeans or North Americans. They will be Africans, Latin Americans and Asians.

However imperfectly the Taiping rebels and the narrow-minded Protestant missionaries who had taught them represented this new Christian Heaven in China, their very presence may be a measure of the extent to which the Qing Dynasty had become an old regime which could neither absorb nor completely eliminate such influences.

3. Gestation of the new stage of civilization's secular level

Late imperial China also exhibited another aspect of old regime-like behavior at the social level. Many Chinese and foreign historians early in this century argued that, quite independently of Christianity, the Treaty Port "*compradors*" played a crucial role in alienating Chinese society from the state, and hence in turning the Qing state into an old regime.

The *compradors* were a class of intermediaries in the treaty ports. Originally they were Chinese who knew English or at least "pidgin" English. Pidgin English was a hybrid language, using Chinese syntax and English, Malay and Chinese vocabulary. It grew up in the ports of Asia where these several peoples traded with each other. The *compradors* served as the intermediaries between Westerners and Chinese businessmen, both in business and in cul-

tural terms.

Some historians argue that these *compradors* were of more than economic importance; that they created a new social matrix, within which a modern middle class finally took shape in the Chinese interior as well as on the coast. This new middle class was supposedly too alien to be assimilated by the old regime. Nor, it was said, could Chinese culture in general accommodate its members.

Turn of the century Chinese *compradors* supposedly felt alienated from their own culture, believing they belonged neither to East nor West. As members of the middle class became more like the old *compradors*, they too supposedly began to feel similarly alienated. Such people allegedly came to feel that China had been reduced to the status of a merely derivative civilization, one which could not even acquire capitalism without the foreigners providing the matrix for it.

But by the latter part of the 20th century both foreign and Chinese historians have begun to notice that a perfectly well-adjusted native Chinese early industrial age middle class had been living and prospering in China's non-treaty port cities and abroad (cf. chapter 25) ever since the 11th century. Europeans and Chinese brought up in the treaty ports just did not notice them, or if they did, they took their presence for granted.

If anything, the *compradors* were a local variant on this long-standing indigenous Chinese middle class pattern rather than its creators.

This Chinese middle class was sometimes even politically powerful as, for example, during late Ming. Its power faded a bit during the wars of early Qing times, but its leading members became much stronger during the peaceful 18th century. During the civil wars and southern barbarian invasions of the 19th century, in places abandoned by the meritocracy, they became the main prop of local governments through their chambers of commerce and other local associations.

When the government came back to these places, it realized it had to recognize the richest and most public-spirited of the members of these groups as

members of a set of local and regional plutocracies. Early in this century, a national plutocracy grew out of this middle class as the old regime availed itself of middle class talents to found central banks and other publicly-owned businesses.

Most of these new plutocrats survived the old regime's fall to become part of the ruling class of a new regime which ruled China at least during the first half of the 20th century, and may be reconstituting itself as the century ends.

4. Admitting the new southern barbarians' superiority

The old regime accommodated this native new plutocracy more willingly than it did the alien new Christian Heaven of the European barbarians and the Taiping rebels. It was long also less accepting of the new ideas about Earth the foreigners seemed to be bringing into China.

During the 19th century the motto even of the reformers of the Tongzhi Restoration was "*Dongxue wei ti; Xixue wei yong* 東學爲體西學爲用." Translated, this couplet means "Eastern studies for the substance; Western studies for mere usage." *Ti* was here just a synonym for the old Neo-Confucian *li* (form, Heaven). *Yong* was a synonym for the old Neo-Confucian *qi* (substance, Earth), the two terms used by the Song Neo-Confucian philosophers to express the dual reality of the universe.³

The old regime would not adjust its template of merit for selecting meritocrats to accommodate the new Western techniques even as mere *yong*. In the end, this stimulated some meritocrats to reconsider what underlay these Western techniques and to come to the conclusion that not just the *yong* but the *ti* that underlay them was superior to China's *ti*.

As one anguished reformer of 1898 bitterly conceded, the Westerners and

even the Japanese could defeat China so easily because their ruling *ideas* were superior to China's. Once that admission was made by the meritocrats, the integrity of the Neo-Confucian template of merit was fatally compromised, and revolution could not be long delayed.

Westerners find it hard to empathize with the shock of alienness their own ancestors, these "southern barbarians," evoked in Chinese minds. The relationship of these Westerners with Qing China was closest perhaps to being analogous to the relationship that Song had with the equally civilized Liao and Jin Dynasties during the 10th through the 13th centuries, except that Liao and Jin, were civilized on Chinese terms. The southern barbarians were also as civilized as Qing, but on their own independent terms.

The Westerners' superiority in making war eventually forced China to notice their superiority in other respects. China's rulers had to at long last confront the obdurate fact that there was more than one high civilization on the planet, and that China's own high civilization was not necessarily the best of the lot.

This represented a sharp reversal of roles. For two centuries after the 16th century West discovered China, the West had to admit that China was better developed than itself. The Enlightenment of the 18th century even embraced China as a model. The *philosophes* believed that they could become as powerful a meritocracy as the Chinese mandarin was. Now, however, China had to concede primacy to the Europeans. That confession doomed its current rulers to extinction.

C. The Most Dangerous Time For An Old Regime is when . . .

1. The old regime at last decides to reform

By the turn of the 20th century, the Qing Dynasty entered into the stage that Alexis de Tocqueville in his masterpiece, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, called the most dangerous

time for an old regime—the time when it at last determines upon fundamental reform.

Reform is dangerous for two mutually antagonistic reasons:

1) It threatens the interests and security of the old regime's own supporting classes, but

2) it does not really appease the new classes which had grown up outside the old regime's constraints.

At a certain point delaying reform seems to become imprudent and even unsafe. If an old regime decides to try for reform, but as it were, tries to remain within established guidelines, it does not go far enough, soon enough to appease the new people, but it goes too far to keep the old fellows from getting anxious. This may trip off an unstable equilibrium, an equilibrium state that is itself oscillatory.

his is something akin to what happened to the old Tacoma Narrows Bridge. Because a key part was left out, under certain wind conditions the bridge's normal state was to wiggle in an ever steeper sine curve. Because the bridge was not strong enough to sustain that accelerating equilibrium state, it quickly shook itself to pieces.

After its defeat by Japan in 1895 a key aspect of the Chinese universal state—the legitimacy and hence the authority as chief executive of the Dowager Empress, and as it turned out of *any* chief executive—disappeared. Dowager Empress Cixi had to take responsibility for the loss. Her moral authority and consequently the stability of the Qing old regime were never quite restored.

The Manchus gave up their monopoly of military authority in 1895 when they permitted a Chinese, Yuan Shikai, to begin organizing wholly modern army units. Yuan recruited new men and officers for these units among the Chinese rather than the Manchus. The Manchus went along this to assuage Chinese feelings of humiliation at the country's defeat by Japan, but largely because the Manchu banner men had deteriorated into upper class welfare bums, incapable of participating in reform. Before long, however, the Manchus lost control over this new army.

So long as the Dowager Empress

³ The great modern intellectual historian, Joseph Levinson, committed one of the prime puns in the history of Chinese historiography, when he summed up the attitude of the old regime in his book, *Confucian China and its Modern Fate*. Even for the 19th century reformers, Levinson observed, the Western *yong* was just not their cup of *ti*.

lived, she just barely managed to retain the loyalty of the members of the new army, but within four years of her death in 1908, the old regime lost control over this new army and disintegrated altogether.

2. The old regime begins true reform

Shaken by defeat in 1895, the old Dowager Empress hastily began to yield power to the Guangxu Emperor. In 1898 her old ally, her late husband's younger brother, Prince Qing, died. This removed the last stable element at the top of the court hierarchy.

The Prince's death scared off his key protégé, the Imperial Tutor, a Cantonese Confucian named Weng Tonghe, the chief Confucian intellectual at court. As frightened by the prospect of radical reform as he was disgruntled by the earlier failures to reform at all, Weng retired to save his skin from the Prince's enemies.⁴

For obscure reasons, Weng recommended as his replacement an eccentric and much more radical reformer, also from Canton, named Kang Youwei, who immediately hit it off with the young emperor.

In the spring of 1898 Kang and the Guangxu Emperor decided to initiate a fundamental reform, later known as the Hundred Days Reform, after the number of days the reformers remained in office. Their plans were far more radical than those of the Tongzhi reformers of the previous generation.

They aimed at creating a hybrid: a European constitutional monarchy with an intuitionist Neo-Confucian intellectual framework for the new government. This proposal frightened off the court meritocrats and appalled the Manchu court aristocracy. The reformers rushed to win "General" Yuan Shikai's help.

Yuan was still the head of the several modern army divisions he was organizing for the government. Though an able executive meritocrat, Yuan was also a devious politician. As resident Governor

General he had failed to keep Korea as a tributary during the early '90s, but had been clever enough to get out of Korea before he could be blamed for its loss to the Japanese in 1894-95. He then successfully lobbied to take on the task of organizing a modern army. By 1898 he was in a position to climb still higher up his own unique ladder of merit. Not bad work for a concubine's son who had never been allowed to take the civil service exams.

Kang and the Emperor attempted to recruit Yuan to their side so as to neutralize the power of the Dowager Empress to serve as rallying point for the old meritocracy and to counter Ronglu's ability to mobilize the remnant of the Manchu Imperial Guard on the old lady's behalf.

Yuan concluded that the real power was still on the side of the old order. His inexperienced new army likely could not save the Emperor, but if he went over to Cixi, her position would be impregnable, and he would have earned her gratitude. So he surreptitiously told Ronglu what was going on, and along with Ronglu and the Empress launched a counter-coup against the reformers in September 1898.

Kang and his disciples had to flee for their lives. The hapless Emperor became a prisoner in his own palace. The Dowager Empress, having no one else to turn to, fell into the hands of the utter reactionaries among the Manchu court aristocrats. These men in turn played into the hands of a new set of millennial rebels, the so-called Boxer Rebels.

The Boxers resembled the earlier Taipings in many respects, except that they were overtly anti-Christian rather than eccentrically Christian. They played in China a role very much like that of the Tonghak rebels a generation earlier in Korea, inadvertently following Christian and Western ways while denouncing them.

They lynched a few missionaries in outlying towns of subzone B2, and proposed treating the Manchus, whom they considered an even more noxious set of foreigners, just as badly. Reactionary Manchus got them to give up their originally anti-Manchu orientation when they showed up in Beijing, and instead encouraged them to stage a mostly

phony "siege" of the embassy district.

This provoked organization of an Eight-power Allied Expeditionary Force which landed in Beijing's port city, Tientsin, and marched to the capital to relieve the diplomats seemingly being held hostage.⁵ The original incident was very much analogous to the taking of American diplomatic hostages in Tehran during 1979-80.

Unlike Jimmy Carter's debacle in the Iranian desert in 1980, the Allies succeeded in taking Beijing and freeing the hostages. The Dowager Empress and the Emperor had to go on the lam again.⁶

3. The old regime reforms itself to death

The Dowager Empress came back to Beijing in 1901 in defeat, and bereft of her reactionary courtiers. She even had to execute some of them in order to appease the great powers.

Now that she had no choice but to become a reformer herself, she did so with a vengeance. By the time of her death and the death of the Emperor in 1908 (suspiciously close to the time of her own death), she had herself all but shaken the Old Regime to pieces with her reforms. Under the child Xuantong Emperor (r. 1908-1912), with the Guangxu Emperor's widow and brother as his co-regents, the last part of the cycle of destruction via reform was completed.

A real foreign office, one actually called a *waijiaobu* 外交部—Foreign Affairs Ministry—was created to replace the "Management Minor Office" of the 1860s. China was now to be a nation-state engaged in foreign relations on a basis of equality with other such states. It would no longer be a universal state, ruling All Under Heaven, and therefore able to include even a barbarian conquest aristocracy within its ruling class. The Manchus had delegitimized not just themselves but any conceivable

⁴ Sixty years later, Weng Tonghe's grandnephew was teaching me classical Chinese in Iowa City. I construed sentences from Mericius while sitting beneath a pair of hanging scrolls brushed by Weng.

⁵ As viewers of late night movies on TV know, this provided the occasion for Charlton Heston to save Ava Gardner in *Fifty-five Days To Peking*

⁶ If you prefer your melodrama in print rather than via video, you can read all about what the gossip historians believed was going on in the court then in the English translation of Yao Xinong's melodrama written during the 1930s, *The Malice of Empire*.

alternative version of a Confucian universal state.

The government also proposed a constitution and a Western style law code. The very idea of such proposals alarmed the old meritocracy. Their modest nature enraged the fundamental reformers. Convening of a parliament was proposed and then postponed. The law code turned out to be based on the father- and family-centered French Napoleonic Code rather than on the individualistic Anglo-American tradition favored by most reformers.

The government also allowed itself to be talked by the English into prohibiting opium. During the late 19th century, Chinese domestic production of opium had gradually replaced imports of the drug from British India. Having nothing left to lose, England was now ready to embrace virtue and urge opium prohibition on China. Unfortunately, the tax bases and local economies of subzones B3 and B4 had become so dependent on excise taxes levied on opium that the ban caused what amounted to a regional depression, particularly in subzone B3, by 1910.

Both domestic and foreign opium continued to be sold in large quantities because demand for opium by Chinese had not yet fallen. Demand gradually declined during the first half of this century, but the much lower levels of demand of the 1940s came far too late to make the late Qing prohibition work.⁷

After 1908, the Manchu regents attempted to increase the power of the throne and Manchu aristocracy over the new army. This so antagonized its Chinese officers that when the regime needed them in 1912, their loyalty was gone too.

The Western powers forced abolition of the civil service exams after 1901 in areas where the Boxers had committed atrocities against Westerners. This rendered the entire examination system unviable. In 1905, after some footdragging, the court abolished the traditional

exams altogether. It announced a new Western style education system ranging from primary through tertiary levels to replace it.

Abolition of the old system further alienated the old meritocracy. Delays in implementing the new system also delayed the creation of an officially sanctioned new meritocracy that might have become the chief constituency of a reforming old regime.

An *unofficial* new meritocracy sprang up as would-be meritocrats went abroad for tertiary educations or enrolled in Western style missionary or the handful of state run colleges within China. These unofficial meritocrats proved to be revolutionaries almost to the last man.

As a transitional measure the authorities offered official scholarships for what were called *liúxuéshēng* 留學生—literally “detained for study students.” These were Chinese students studying overseas. The label implied that they had been “detained” on alien shores. When they returned from this foreign detention, the label “crab-walk scholars” was sometimes applied to them because they had learned to write like a crab walked—sidewise, instead of from top to bottom.

Most of these government scholarship students were sent to Tokyo, which was not a very dignified place for a respectable Chinese meritocrat to be detained. But at least Japan was conveniently close to China and its cost of living was comparable. It was also comforting to the Chinese government that the Japanese had managed a fundamental reform without the overthrow of the ruling dynasty.

The Japanese written language at least *looked* familiar because the Japanese used a script based on Chinese characters. An added attraction was that many Western language books on politics and economics had recently been translated into Japanese.

Unfortunately for the Chinese government, a number of these Western books were handbooks for one form or another of socialist revolution. As you might expect, even the subsidized detained students came back from abroad alienated from their own culture and behaving like secret society members,

ready to launch a Taiping Rebellion-like secret society coup of a new sort. That coup turned out to be the 1911-12 revolution.

Meanwhile, back in China, by the eve of the revolution, the few primary and secondary schools funded by the government were just numerous and widespread enough so that even in so remote a location as central Hunan province, during the first years of the revolution, the young Mao Zedong could attend the Changsha modern secondary school, and there learn how to be an even more radical revolutionary than were the men of 1911-1912.

D. The Double-Ten

1. Armed “detained students”

The men who tripped off the Double Ten Revolution (called Double Ten because it broke out on the tenth day of the tenth month—October 10, 1911) were members of several small, secret society-like cabals of returned detained students, mostly returned from Japan. By 1907-1912, many of them had come home, and they made revolution the first chance they got.

But the question arises, did these detained students really make the revolution, or did they just trip it off? Were they cause or trigger? A good case can be made that they were no more than an imperfect trigger.

To begin with, there were not a lot of them, even compared to the size of the old ruling class. Of the less than half a billion Chinese, perhaps ten million were within the old ruling class and its adjuncts. In total, several tens of thousands of people at most studied abroad or had tertiary educations of the modern Western type at home during the last decade before the Double Ten.

A fair number of these detained students joined one or another of the new revolutionary secret societies, either while abroad or after returning home, simply because they were such odd ducks that there was still no other niche for them to fit into. Traditional secret society members were often dismissed

⁷ The post-1949 Communist government took full credit for this decline in demand even though the decline occurred before the Communists took power. Demand also fell during the first half of the century among the Chinese in Hong Kong and Singapore, places not controlled by the Communists and not subject to their bloody techniques for suppressing demand.

as “widowers and orphans.” They supposedly joined together to raise hell because they lacked the constraints of family and community. These new cultural orphans also had a tendency to hang out together so as to launch rebellions.

Students in Japan might easily encounter and be influenced by a genuine revolutionary like Sun Yat-sen. Sun was himself an archetypical detained student.

Born in Canton Province not long after the Taiping Rebellion, he was sent to Hawaii at age six to live with his older brother. Since he went to school in Hawaii, his English was soon just about as good as his Cantonese. Upon his return to China as a young adult, he attended medical school in Hong Kong, but soon began to play at reformist politics. By the middle 1890s he had turned himself into the archetypical revolutionary troublemaker.

Forced to flee Canton, and then thrown out of Hong Kong because of his slogan-mongering, he escaped to London where the Qing regime kidnapped and imprisoned him in their embassy in London for a time. Only the intervention of some of his American and English friends got him released. Thereafter he settled in Japan, but frequently traveled about the world among the Overseas Chinese, raising money and consciousness wherever he went. As we will see (chapter 29), Sun’s American education made him more an American Progressive than a Chinese revolutionary in his ideas. It was only his context that made him a revolutionary because of the consequences of his actions.

By the turn of the century, Sun was competing for the loyalty of the increasing number of detained students resident in Japan with Liang Qichao, a former disciple of Kang Youwei, the leader of the reformers of 1898.

Liang had also had to go on the lam when Yuan Shikai betrayed that attempt to renovate the Qing old regime. Once in Japan, Liang abandoned both Confucianism and attachment to the monarchy, and became a Marxist republican.

Liang and Sun did not agree as to what kind of republic China should have. They spent most of the decade after 1901-2 squabbling in their respective newspapers over what shape that

republic should take. Liang’s ideas (cf. chapter 30) were lucid, but difficult to either understand or apply. Sun’s ideas were murky, but seemed simple both to understand and to apply.



Sun Yat-sen. (Harold Z. Schiffrin, *Sun Yat-sen and the Origins of the Chinese Revolution*, dust cover illustration.)



Liang Qichao. (*Encyclopedia of World Biography*)

The two agreed only in rejecting both Confucianism and the Confucian monarchy. Between them, however, they did a pretty good job of turning at least some of these students into active if confused revolutionaries by the time they returned to China.

Still, there were not many of these young revolutionaries, and they often worked at cross-purposes. They also clashed with the traditionally anti-Manchu secret societies with which they formed alliances of convenience. Except for the army officers, not many

held important strategic jobs. They were still too young for that.

Concluding that people like Sun were the only ones that made the Qing Dynasty collapse therefore seems wrong. It simply had become so weak from so many causes, some of its own making, that when, in October 1911, Sun’s followers started one more abortive secret-society rebellion, it collapsed entirely, to everyone’s surprise, including the rebels themselves.

2. Consequences of Qing’s self-destabilization

Let us review these destabilizing reforms, but this time from the perspective of the revolution to which they led rather than from the perspective of the old regime trying to use them to save itself.

Opium eradication was promoted after 1901 by the English, who did not want China to profit from growing opium at home now that England could no longer profit by selling Indian opium to the Chinese. This prohibition evoked resentment in China among those who lost profits and wages and tax revenues derived from opium. These people became at least fellow travelers of the revolution in 1911.

Those who grew the opium in the southwest resented losing one of their few cash crops. The people who transported the opium were mostly coolie laborers who earned a pittance by pulling barges up the Yangzi past the Gorges into western China and earlier had to return downstream without cargo. Once opium began to be produced in the southwest, however, they could walk back east carrying bags of opium placed in baskets at ends of carrying poles. They made much more money carrying this opium back downstream than they did tugging barges upstream. These Chinese teamsters had connections with the Chinese analog of the Mafia, the Green Gang, which used its opium profits to muscle into other rackets and even into the revolutionary movement in southern China by way of the old anti-Manchu secret societies.

Gangsters, teamsters and opium growers all became mad at the govern-

ment by the time the opium reform was well under way, and were all soon eagerly collaborating with idealistic detained students who had cheered on the opium prohibition movement, but who remained angry with the government for other reasons.

After Dowager Empress Cixi, and the Guangxu Emperor almost simultaneously died in 1908, the throne went to another infant, the Xuantong Emperor, for whom the regents were the Guangxu Emperor's widow and his younger brother. Naturally these two had it in for General Yuan Shikai, who had betrayed the Guangxu Emperor in 1898. Yuan had retired in 1906 as the old Dowager faded from active political life again.

After 1908, Yuan's former associates were also threatened by a reform which put command of the new army more firmly in the hands of the Manchu aristocracy. The Chinese officers in the new army resented having decadent Manchu aristocrats cutting them off from access to the upper rungs of the new ladder of military merit. They and Yuan now had the perfect sort of excuse for meritocrats to become double crossers: the government had betrayed them first.

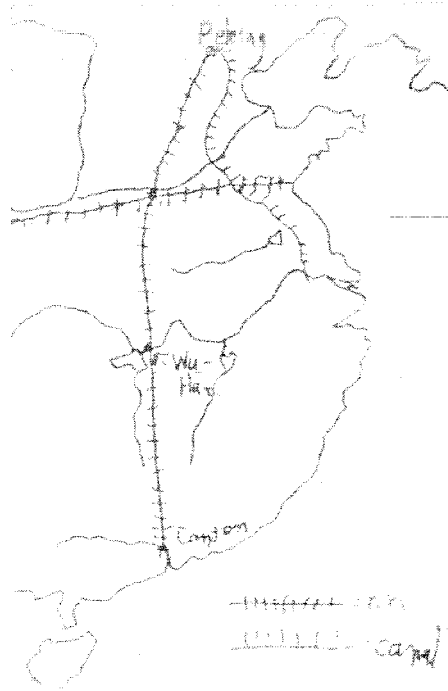
The Peking-Hankow-Canton Railway, projected since 1895, was finally to be built as a government line, replacing the long blocked Grand Canal with a new and more secure because further inland north-south means of transportation.

On the eve of what turned out to be the revolution, the government proposed to take over as a spur to this main trunk route a line from Hankow into the southwest. Such a line had already been projected by a private company which hoped to make much money, licit and illicit, for its middle class and meritocratic stockholders in the southwest.

Because these subzone B3 regional meritocrats and would-be plutocrats had just found out in 1911 that the government was threatening this fat source of potential profits, on the eve of the revolution they were sponsoring riots against the government for nationalizing their hoped for source of boodle.

The old regime thought it was following the precedent set by Japan's Meiji Restoration by adopting a conservative French style of proposed consti-

tutional and legal reform. However, this ruined the government's reputation amongst its own traditional constituency while not winning it any new friends amongst the modern-minded. Instead, the latter were repelled in the direction of the revolutionaries, who promised them a vague but attractive mixture of English liberal and continental radical reforms once the Manchus had been thrown out.



The New Railroads

The old Dowager Empress was shrewd enough to keep postponing so radical a step as the convening of even an elected consultative assembly. Her successors did not have her clout and found it easier to hint they might speed up the election of what they hoped would be a toothless body.

This only raised expectations, even among the traditional gentry, who hoped to use the new body to make up for the blow to their status caused by the loss of the traditional examination system (officially abolished since 1905).

The revolutionaries could play to that desire with their agitation to go faster toward having a true parliament, one with real control over the imperial executive. By the eve of the revolution local assemblies had convened, and were beginning to agitate this question.

3. The Wu-Han uprising

It was within this context that Sun Yat-sen's secret society, in alliance with a local group in Hunan, proposed to attack the local garrison in the tri-cities (Hankow, Hanyang and Wuchang—collectively called Wu-Han). This was in the heart of China where the Han River joins the Yangzi, and not far from where the Xiang River, which drains the southcentral region, flows north into Lake Dongting and then the Yangzi. Wu-Han was remote from the Qing political center in Beijing, but was strategically located to reach most of Central China, and that made it easier for the old regime to reinforce it.

This *golpe* was expected by the more cynical among the revolutionaries to be just one more in a series of such attacks, like a highly unsuccessful raid by returned student revolutionaries launched against the more remote Canton garrison in the spring of 1911. That failure had at least apotheosized the "Seventy-two Martyrs" who are still worshipped as secular saints in temples to the national revolution on both Taiwan and the mainland. No doubt Sun Yat-sen hoped for a similar set of martyrs from the Wu-Han adventure. The people planning the coup were more Sun's rivals than his allies, and so he probably hoped it would fail and thereby damage his rivals.

Sun Yat-sen thought so little of this prospective coup's chances that he went traipsing off to Europe beforehand on a fund-raising expedition, and was still there raising money and influencing people when the uprising began.

The revolutionaries botched the Wu-Han uprising almost as badly as their Cantonese brethren did the debacle in Canton. Plans leaked out to the authorities, the coup was postponed, but then hastily rescheduled for October 10, 1911.

Much to Sun's surprise, however, he had dropped a revolutionary match onto ideological fuel heaped up by the general resentment against the old regime that had been building up since the reforms began in 1901. In a matter of weeks, this putsch began consume the Old Regime. It turned into a real revo-

lution. By the time Sun scuttled back home again early in 1912, his Wu-Han allies were ready to offer him the provisional presidency of a “Republic of China” which controlled at least a portion of the south.

But was it really Sun and his little band of eccentric revolutionaries who made this revolution through their own positive acts, or was it the old regime doing itself in by raising up both reformist and traditional opposition to its continued existence as it accelerated its reform?

To show that it was likely mostly the latter, aside from the positive evidence about all the traditional and traditionally modern opposition I have cited above, we can also look at what happened during the years immediately after 1911. The modern revolutionaries from Sun’s crowd who supposedly made the revolution turned out to be the *least* influential of all the groups contending for power in the early years of this rather odd “republic.” That it was nevertheless a revolution is shown by the fact that no one managed to restore anything resembling the monarchy of the Old Regime.

E. Abortive Restorations And The “Warlord” Era

1. Rationality of restoring the monarchy

At the beginning of the next stage of the revolution, many of the best and brightest people said that the last thing China needed was a republic (*mínguó* 民國, literally common-people’s state, a 19th century neologism). The very word for republic was so new in Chinese that hardly anybody in China even knew what such a thing was. Even the attempt to teach the Chinese how to have something so novel seemed destabilizing. China really needed a restored monarchy, some said. This was true enough, but China did not after all get a restored monarchy. It had no alternative to being a republic.

From exile, Kang Youwei still advocated monarchy. He remained loyal to the memory of the Guangxu Emperor, had founded a “Restore the Qing Soci-

ety,” and even helped foment an unsuccessful coup to restore the Qing in 1917. Maintaining the true Neo-Confucian spirit right into the Jazz Age, Kang kept faith with his heritage until his own death in 1927.

Clearly, however, a Qing Restoration was not in the cards, at least not if General Yuan Shikai had his way. Yuan easily took the provisional presidency away from Sun. But he was no republican. He moved steadily toward a new Chinese dynasty, with the Yuans as the imperial family, and himself as founding emperor.

Yuan could claim to have been a successful reformer. He had created a modern army and reformed administration of the ancient salt monopoly. He even hired as his political consultant Dr. Frank Goodnow, the retired president of Johns Hopkins University, former chairman of that school’s Political Science Department, and one of the founders of modern Political Science in America.

Goodnow had brought Political Science to America from Germany where he earned his Ph.D., and was now bringing it to China, much as Bismarck’s professors had brought German political thought to Meiji Japan during the 1870s and ‘80s.

Goodnow agreed that China needed a monarchy and was happy to have Yuan hire him to write a paper stating that the most stable solution for China’s political problems would be a restored Confucian monarchy, though he prudently added the caveat if it was possible to have one.⁸

Opinion on restoring monarchy was not, in fact, unanimous. One of the brightest men in China, Yan Fu, said this monarchic restoration scheme of Yuan’s would not work. Yan had been one of the pioneering students in the 1860s at the Foochow Naval Shipyard School—one of the first modern Western types of school that the government

had set up along with this first western style shipyard. Yan was so bright a pupil that he got the first (and, for a generation, the only) government scholarship to study in England and France. This was during the ‘70s. He learned both French and English so well that while in Europe he advised China’s first diplomatic mission to Europe.

Upon his return home there was no job waiting for him and no civil service exam he could take. He had not prepared for the traditional exams, and there was no official exam on French or English or on English classical economic theory, another of his specialties.

What could he do to earn a living? The authorities rather embarrassedly gave him a job at his old school back home in Foochow. There, between classes, he sat, rereading the modern European classics of political theory, political economy and Darwinian evolution. To stave off boredom, he began translating them into classical Chinese.

Yan translated Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations*, Herbert Spencer’s *Social Statics*, Montesquieu’s *The Spirit of the Laws*, T.H. Huxley’s defenses of Darwinism—all the monuments of 18th and 19th century Positivism in both its French and English incarnations.

He translated these books into pure classical Chinese, just as his younger contemporary, Lin Shu, was translating Dickens’ novels, and Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes stories into classical Chinese. Turning the prolix Dickens into the austere, laconic sentences that characterize classical Chinese was as strange as putting them into Latin.⁹

People in and near the old and new meritocracies read both Yan and Lin; Lin for entertainment and Yan for a modern education. As a consequence, Yan became very influential among both the traditionally modern who knew no foreign languages but had become

⁸ Oracles are all alike, whether ancient Delphic or modern Political Scientific. They always cover the backs of their laps on such occasions. You may recall that the ancient Greek Oracle at Delphi once told a king in Asia Minor, “If you launch a war, a great empire will fall.” The king launched a war. His empire fell. Goodnow and his boss, Yuan, missed the shift from 19th century non-excluding to 20th century excluding revolutions.

⁹ My graduate school adviser, H. P. Chang, remembered being surprised the first time he saw a Dickens novel in English. The book was four times as thick as Lin Shu’s Chinese translation. He was, however, gratified to learn that Lin had preserved most of the complications of Dickens’s plots so that he could use his copies of Lin’s Chinese versions like bilingual *Cliff’s Notes* for his English Lit class at Washington State University. Similarly, Yan preserved the essence of the arguments of the worldly philosophers whom he tersely paraphrased.

curious about what made the West tick, and among the detained students, who anticipated my advisor (Cf. footnote 9 below) and used his books as trots in their English and French language courses.

In the course of the last decade of the Qing, Yan sometimes gave advice to the government on how to reform itself. Of course the Manchus considered his proposals too radical, and never listened to him. So he took up the smoking of opium to provide solace for himself between translations, and no doubt to help him put up with undergraduates coughing and sleeping through his lectures.

With the leading Chinese military reformer as provisional president, it at last appeared that someone would listen to him. Yuan Shikai offered Yan an important job in the new government. But when Yuan told him of his plans to restore the monarchy, Yan dismissed this as impossible. It would not work, he told Yuan.

Yan held no grudges against the old order. The Confucian monarchy that had treated him so contemptuously was, in his opinion, nevertheless potentially viable. He would just as soon have kept it once it had adopted some reforms, he told Yuan. But it was like Humpty Dumpty. Once it fell off the wall and smashed into pieces, it could never be put back together again.

Yan turned down the job Yuan had offered him, went back home to Foochow, found himself a hilltop there, and sat atop it for the last decade of his life reading *Lao Zi* and *Zhuang Zi*, the old philosophical Daoist texts. He abandoned the Western books, like *Wealth of Nations*, on which he had made his career. They were not as deep as Daoist anti-interventionism after all, he belatedly concluded.

Sour grapes? Maybe. But Yan's diagnosis of the situation turned out to be accurate. The Confucian monarchy apparently *was* like Humpty Dumpty. That it took a semi-Westernized outsider zealot intellectual like Yan Fu to see what was invisible to both a Western conformist intellectual like Goodnow and a mere reforming executive meritocrat like Yuan suggests that the situation was more radically revolution-

ary than it seemed on the surface.

2. Yuan fails to reassemble Humpty Dumpty

Yuan moved rapidly to restore the Confucian monarchy from the moment he returned to power. He began in 1912, as was his custom, with a slick double double cross, this time of Provisional President Sun Yat-sen and the Manchu court.

In desperation, the Manchus called Yuan back to lead the army against the southerners. Yuan sent word to Sun that he, Yuan, could probably talk the Manchus into abdicating, but that they would never yield power to someone like Sun (i.e. to a lower class Cantonese rebel). If Sun would yield the presidency to Yuan, the Manchus would abdicate. Sun agreed.

Meanwhile, Yuan was also haggling with Beijing. He complained that he could not beat the southerners, even using the modern army. The rebels were just too strong and too far away. But if the Manchus were to abdicate and yield the provisional presidency to him, he would be able to appease the southerners who would agree to leave the courtiers in residence in the palace. The Manchu regents reluctantly agreed. Before the end of January 1912 Yuan became provisional president of the Republic of China.

Sun's fellow Cantonese revolutionary, Song Jiaoren, was a smarter and more consistent revolutionary politician than Sun Yat-sen himself. Song quickly organized the Kuomintang (KMT, Guomindang 國民黨 in the *pinyin* transliteration we normally use, literally the "National People's Party" or "Republican Party" or "Nationalist" Party) out of the aboveground bits and pieces of Sun's and allied secret societies, and from the informal clubs organized by some of the non-party and traditionally modern gentry who had been agitating for a parliament.

Song proved to be so good a coalition builder that when Yuan grudgingly allowed elections for a provisional parliament to go ahead in 1913, the Kuomintang became the majority party in this first true parliament in all Chinese

history.

Removing this threat turned out to be no problem. One of Yuan's friends hired some outside muscle. In 1914, they caught Song Jiaoren with his guard down in the Tientsin railway station and shot him dead. Even Sun Yat-sen did not raise much objection, since Song had been as much his rival as Yuan's. The Kuomintang quickly faded away into incoherence.

Having decapitated the opposition, Yuan then began to mobilize support for the positive proposition that the Mandate of Heaven had indeed shifted to him. Instead, however, of getting Confucian scholars to interpret signs and portents from the heavens, since this was the 20th century, he got people to send him telegrams of support from the provinces.

But no telegrams came from the generals of the divisions of the modern army. When Yuan proclaimed the monarchy at the beginning of 1916, none of the officers he had selected, trained, promoted and conspired with responded to his call. The Mandate was not to be his. Yuan grew depressed, his kidneys went bad, he lapsed into uremic poisoning, and died.

There were perfectly traditional reasons for the generals' betrayal. They decided that Yuan was merely another Cao Cao—the military courtier who usurped power from the Han Dynasty in 220 AD.

Both Yuan and Cao had somewhat disreputable origins. Yuan was a concubine's son; Cao was the adopted son of a eunuch. Both were generals. General Cao's usurpation had allowed his son to set up Han's first successor state, but the Caos were in turn usurped by their own prime minister.

This occurred in spite of, indeed because of the fact that Cao Cao was one of the most brilliant, ruthless and able generals of his time. There is a saying in Chinese: "Speak about Cao Cao, and here he is!" (*shuodao Cao Cao, Cao Cao jiu dao* 說道曹操，曹操就道) just as we say "Speak of the Devil and here he is!" In the end, no one trusted the all too versatile Cao Cao.

If the generals thought of Yuan as another Cao Cao, it was because they knew him to be a double-crosser who

might practice the double cross one time too many and get them too. His generals may also have feared that Yuan would behave as had Zhao Kuangyin, the general who founded the Song Dynasty in 960 AD, to his former colleagues: he might pension them off out into the south, and leave them with no soldiers to command or any power at all.

And so they double crossed the double crosser before the double crosser could double cross them, and thereby fulfilled the Golden (Brass?) Rule for corrupt executive meritocrats.



Yuan Shikai in modern uniform. (Brown Brothers)

But was not Yuan a modern man? After all, was he not the fellow who founded China's modern army? Did he not reform the Salt Administration so that the salt tax became the early 20th century central government's most reliable source of revenue? Did he not hire Frank Goodnow, the very model of a modern political scientist? Do we not have all these delightful photographs of him dressed up like a European soldier, in puttees, and with his queue tucked up under his field helmet so that it does not show?

Perhaps he was too non-traditional after all. He rose not by taking the civil service exams which were soon to become obsolescent, but by his wits, becoming personal secretary to Li Hongzhang, the civilian meritocrat

turned general who helped beat the Taiping rebels and their Nian allies in the 1860s, and became boss of the northeast as a consequence.

However, was Yuan's modernization just skin or even uniform deep? Were traditional ambitions, like his queue, merely tucked under his modern field helmet? A truly modern would-be ruler would have been mobilizing students rather than assassinating their leader.

After all, Yuan wanted to be emperor. Maybe, despite his talents as an administrator, he was merely taking an irregular traditional rather than an irregular modern route to power. Social mobility was common within the Chinese tradition during times when dynasties were falling and new ones rising. At such times even commoners could become emperors, as happened with the founders of the Han and Ming.

Yuan showed how traditional his motives were when he ordered the new public schools to go back to making Confucianism more than half their curriculum. The schoolmasters did not pay any attention to him, for the very good reason that people who took the trouble to send their sons to the new schools no longer saw any profit in studying Confucianism.

By 1914-15 students in the new schools wanted to take English and French, European history and algebra. Many even wanted to take the equivalent of ROTC and learn how to be modern soldiers the better to express their new-found patriotic loyalty to the republic.

Yuan received as few telegrams of support from the modern tertiary and secondary schools as he did from the generals of the new army. The new Western templates of merit may not have been unified or even coherent, but they had already crowded out the old Confucian template for many of the new elite.

Yuan lost even more modernizer support in 1915 when he had to cave in to Japan on the Twenty-one Demands. Japan had entered World War I on the Allied side, swallowed the German colonial possessions in the Western Pacific and on the south coast of Shantung. Russia and England were busy on the eastern and western fronts in Europe.

Japan concluded it could easily become the dominant imperial power in East Asia.

These twenty-one Japanese demands called for China to yield the same deference to Japanese interests everywhere in China that it had long since been granting to the major foreign powers in the more limited sphere of the treaty ports.

Yuan, who had always stayed on the good side of the British, desperately called in his chips and asked the British ambassador for help, but his chips turned out to be worthless. The ambassador said he would like to help, but reminded Yuan that a world war was going on, and that Japan had just become allied to England's side. Yuan would just have to make the best deal he could with Japan. Yuan did, and was discredited even with the traditional Chinese ruling class.

Yuan's was not the last attempt to restore a Confucian monarchy. In 1917, the year after Yuan's death, Kang Youwei allied with a northern military leader to make another even more short-lived and sillier looking attempt at an outright coup to restore the Qing Dynasty. A decade later, the poor little Xuantong Emperor was expelled from the Forbidden City palace complex in Beijing. This drove home the fact that the fall of the Confucian monarchy was irrevocable.

Yuan's failure tripped off the second stage of the early republic (Yuan's provisional presidency and abortive monarchy constituted the first stage), the so-called "Warlord Era" from 1916 to 1926.

3. The "Warlord Era"

The Warlord (*junfa* 軍閥) Era can be defined broadly to encompass not just the decade after 1916, but Yuan's four years in power before that and the two decades following 1926 dominated by a revived version of Sun Yat-sen's Kuomintang, and even the four decades since 1949, since Communist rule has also rested on regionalized military power. The Warlord Era can also be extended back to the 1860s, since it was regionalized military power (command over which constituted "warlord" status)

that put down the mid-century rebellions, and kept the Manchus in power for another half century.

In length, the Warlord Epoch defined in these larger ways was most nearly comparable to the fifty-odd years of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period from 906 to 960. In terms of the fundamental nature of the change that accompanied it, it was more like the Northern and Southern Dynasties of the 3rd through the 6th centuries AD, the period when China turned Buddhist and made the transition from the first to the second stage of high civilization.

When read as narrative, the politics of the 1916-26 core years of this period look (and are) complicated, but much of what was going on was a game of political musical chairs, an elaboration of the unstable equilibrium of the last decade of Qing. Warlords A, B, and C (usually all generals running one or another of the corps comprising the modern divisions Yuan had created earlier) would take control of the Republic's capital, with Warlord A the top dog, Warlord B in the middle, and Warlord C as the bottom dog.

After a few months or a year or so, Warlord C might become sick of being the bottom dog of the trio, and would make a deal with out of power Warlords D and E. These too were usually generals from Yuan's modern army or were friends or rivals on the periphery of subzone B2 where most of Yuan's army was stationed. The new alliance of C, D and E would throw A and B out. But most of the civilian politicians connected with A and B remained in office, merely shifting from major to minor ministries to make room for the teachers' pets of Warlord C to have the top positions, with D and E people taking slightly less attractive jobs.

If such coalitions were unstable, it was a peculiarly stable form of instability. These governments were certainly no more destabilizing to Chinese life outside the political realm than the similar musical chairs governments of Third and Fourth Republic France or of post-war Italy were to French and Italian life.

During 1920-24, there may even have been a trend toward dominance by the Zhili faction of northerners, led by a

well-read general named Wu Peifu. A premature war during 1924-25 undermined Wu's position and restored the unstable equilibrium. The remaining generals and their pet politicians went back to happily exchanging amongst themselves the prerogatives of power, and making a little extra on the side from the foreign powers, particularly the Japanese.

Even Sun Yat-sen was ambitious and dopey enough to become a minister in one warlord government for a few months during the late teens. He took the job of railroad minister. Luckily for him, the generals played another game of musical chairs fairly quickly, throwing him out of office before he could ruin his reputation among his fellow revolutionaries by doing a deal with Japan for railroad investment in exchange for more privileges than Japan got from the Twenty-one Demands a few years earlier.

Economically, Sun's scheme would have been a good deal for China. It was just stupid politically. It would have gotten him in wrong with the new meritocrats who represented China's political future. Fortunately, Warlord Era stable instability threw Sun out of office soon enough to save his reputation among these new men of merit who were becoming dominant within the ruling class.

F. The "New Meritocrats"

1. "Affirmative action's" breakdown

The returning "detained scholars" and their peers who had studied in Christian mission colleges or in Chinese state universities all grew up to be the new meritocrats. With the disappearance of the old regime these men began to lose their aura of disreputability. Their rivals, the old meritocrats, were weakening. They had lost their template of merit test and hence their connection with Heaven.

These crabwalk scholars in detention still seemed alien. They wore funny short-jacketed suits which let their trousers

ered legs show, resembling the jackets worn by servants or women in China. Most baffling of all, they used funny words transliterated from barbarous languages. No wonder these poor devils had to join secret societies when they came home. Everyone respectable looked down upon them as freaks.

Nevertheless, by its last years even the Qing Dynasty was actually beginning to treat these oddballs with some respect. Since 1901 in fact, and since 1905 formally, the traditional civil service exams were no longer being given. But without the examinations to function as the most visible measures of the templates of merit, how was the government going to recruit men of merit?

Until it could establish enough tertiary schools of the modern Western type, the government started recruiting meritocrats by giving government scholarships for some Chinese students to study in Western-style colleges at home or abroad.

In an informal way, even old-style meritocrats would treat a man who had a degree from an American or a European college like someone who had passed the old metropolitan degree exam at the capital. If he had a degree from a Japanese university, it was like passing the old provincial level examinations. If he merely had a degree from a modern Chinese university, that was no better than passing the old prefectural level qualifying examinations. Modern businesses, like the Commercial Press, even assigned desks by sizes using these standards.

The men who studied Western ways began to formally enter into the meritocracy even before the Qing fell, suggesting that at long last a new template of merit was being crafted. During the last few years before 1912, the government selected a number of middle-rank officials who had passed the old metropolitan level exams before 1901 and sent them to study in Japan. After the revolution, these men quickly rose to the top of the government of the republic as fellow travelers of one or another warlord coalition. Once in office, they were inclined to cooperate with Japan, since they had studied there.

The new meritocracy's membership

was skewed in a more fundamental way. The majority of the new meritocrats systematically differed in geographic origins from the old meritocrats.

Since Song times meritocrats had been selected partly on the basis of a geographic “affirmative action” profile. The more remote provinces with the smallest populations and the least economic development were given disproportionately *high* quotas for exam passers compared to the provinces near the mouth of the Yangzi on the coast or in the southeast. These were densely populated and full of well-educated men from rich, highly commercialized families who could finance the many years of study needed to pass the exams.

The Chinese government practiced such discrimination because it wanted to have a geographically representative ruling class. As early as Song times it began to self-consciously aim at keeping the meritocracy from becoming dominated by the bright sons of rich lower Yangzi landlords and merchants. Such discrimination was initially encouraged by the contempt the Song founder, a northern aristocrat felt against southerners, rich or poor.

Harvard University and the other Ivy League schools have done the same thing since the 1920s, when an American meritocracy first began to visibly separate itself out from the 19th century plutocracy. Because the Ivy League educates our ruling class’s top meritocratic component, it feels it must have a geographic affirmative action program to make sure enough people are admitted to its ranks from poorer and less densely populated states. That this policy tended to discriminate against the bright sons of New York Jewish merchants, just as the Song affirmative action did against southern merchants’ sons, was merely an added bonus for genteel anti-Semites of the Ivy League during the interwar years.

We cannot give too much credit for devising affirmative action to the Ivy League. At best it merely independently reinvented this principle, which like so many of the institutions of bureaucracy, was invented and perfected in China.

Racial affirmative action by elite schools on behalf of Blacks and women came later in America, but with the

same goal: to make sure the meritocracy also included enough Blacks and women to win the obedience to their commands of non-ruling class Blacks and women.

Those who object to such affirmative action can only maintain consistency by also opposing having a ruling class that is predominantly meritocratic. Abolishing affirmative action will not get rid of meritocracy, but will merely render it less representative and hence less legitimate.

Aristocrats sprinkle themselves around the countryside more or less uniformly. Plutocrats can be selected from amongst those who succeed in markets wherever there are markets. Only the meritocratic component of a ruling class requires affirmative action to keep it representative. Once a large and prosperous commercial class grows out of an early or full industrial revolution, the children of the men of the market will tend to disproportionately pass whatever tests the template of merit requires, and since markets are not uniformly spread across a state’s territory, neither will be successful meritocrats.

Using Western-style education as the basis for defining the Chinese new meritocracy turned out to undermine, at least in the short run, the traditional geographical forms of affirmative action in China because it inadvertently skewed new elite recruitment toward the treaty ports.¹⁰

To afford an education abroad, a student usually had to have a modern income source to have a large enough income. His (or her, thanks to the female missionary influence) father either had to be very rich, if from the interior, or a moderately rich person in one of the treaty ports.

When the detained student came home from his or her foreign detention, even if originally from the provinces, the odds were that he or she would settle in a treaty port or close to one of them so that he could earn a high enough salary to afford the appurtenances of mod-

ernity or she could marry someone who could provide her with these usufructs of modernity.

The Chinese economy then was a dual one, much like Japan’s during its run toward takeoff. The modern sector’s goods often had high prices but its purchasers earned high wages. The traditional sector comprised different and cheaper goods, bought by people earning low wages. A transitional economy, comprising people making cheaper modern goods by traditional methods for traditional wages, was only just reaching significant size.

A member of the new Chinese elite would want to buy expensive modern sector goods like books and Western-style newspapers and therefore had to earn high wages. To do that he likely had to live and work in or near a treaty port.

At least the upper levels of the new elite that was forming during the generation from the teens into the ‘40s were not geographically representative of China as a whole. This rendered them and the government they controlled less fully legitimate in the eyes of people, including lesser new meritocrats, who came from under-represented areas.

The lower levels of the new elite were more likely to have gotten their modern educations in China, and at the secondary rather than tertiary level. They usually remained in or moved to places where the traditional economy predominated. They eventually joined the ranks of local leaders in such places, but were socially and politically isolated and hence alienated from as well as geographically separated from the upper new elite members ensconced in the modern sector of the economy on or near the east coast.

Both upper and lower new elite people had similar educations, and both were (as we will see below and in chapter 30) biased to the left by their educations and by the inherent links of any meritocracy to the state. However, the members of the lower new elite tended to be pushed sooner and faster to the left. They were usually not only less well-off themselves, but were also closer to contact with the poorest, least commercialized, and geographically most remote sectors of the traditional econ-

¹⁰ This point was made earliest and most clearly by Y. C. Wang, *Chinese Intellectuals and the West, 1872-1919* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966). Wang deserves all the more credit for this insight since “affirmative action” had not yet become a “hot button” word in the early 1960s.

omy.

That is why the left in China (and for slightly different reasons also in more developed countries) retains links with certain aspects of traditional culture. The men of the market, not the meritocrats, are always the truest and most consistent nephiliacs.

2. Triumph of Western positivism

Even more important than this geographic skewing in the short run was that all these new meritocrats, upper and lower, made a hard break with the Neo-Confucian tradition. They had read Yan Fu's translations all too well. They accepted without question the Positivism of Herbert Spencer. By Positivism I mean the belief that the only ideas that are valid are empirically derived ideas about and from Earth, to the exclusion of all those purporting to be about or from Heaven.

If you approve of this style of thought, you would be content to label it 19th century Positivism. If you disapprove of it, as I and Eric Voegelin tend to do, you would instead call these ideas products of a deformed consciousnesses that are causing the descent into the terminal phase of the crisis of the second stage of high civilization. (If you recognize these as fighting words, you really understand what Voegelin was getting at!)

In 1917 Chen Duxiu was a returned detained student from Japan and France and a newly fledged professor, teaching at Beijing National University.¹¹ Reflecting a vulgarized form of Spencerian Positivism, Chen praised the abstract personifications he called "Mr. Science" and "Mr. Democracy" and denounced "Mr. Obscurantism" and "Mr. Superstition" in his new magazine, *La Jeunesse*—*New Youth* (*Xin qingnian* 新青年).

Chen's Beida colleague, Hu Shi, was newly returned from Cornell and Columbia, where he had studied under John Dewey, a Vermont-born Positivist

who had also studied the German Romantic-Rationalist philosopher, Hegel, and who had a peculiarly American (and cozily turgid) way of combining the two. Hu echoed Chen's ideas, but with a practical-seeming American twist.

Hu also advocated replacing the old classical written language—called *wenyan* 文言—with a written version of the spoken, colloquial language—*baihua* 白話. Ironically, he had to write the essay in which he first advocated this reform in the same *wenyan* used for the *Analects* of Confucius, the writings of Mencius, Xun Zi, and indeed all the classic works of philosophy and history in China. Otherwise no intellectual would have read it.

3. Spencer to Dewey to Marx

The faculty of Beida finally got a critical mass of new intellectuals and apprentice new intellectuals together by the end of World War I. On May 4, 1919, egged on by their professors, the patriotic students rioted, ostensibly against the Japanese takeover of the German imperial prerogatives just ratified at the Versailles Conference. They were, however, really mobilizing themselves directly into political life as the surrogates for the new secular Heaven—the People. In their own eyes they constituted the leading edge of the new elite.

The police of the Warlord government of the Beijing Republic, which was sympathetic to the Japanese, dutifully banged heads and created a few martyrs. Their consciousnesses having been raised, the survivors straggled back to campus where Hu Shi soon had a treat waiting for these representatives of Young China:

Hu's mentor, John Dewey, had arrived to deliver a series of lectures at all the major centers of Western tertiary education in China, with Hu standing at his side to interpret for him.

Dewey's lectures tripped off the second stage in the triplet of enormous intellectual changes that would characterize Chinese intellectual life during the 20th century. This would become the biggest intellectual double-play combination of the age. It was not Tinkers to

Evers to Chance, as in the National League of those days, but Spencer to Dewey to Marx.

Yan Fu had led the Chinese new elite to Spencer during the previous generation. That had gotten them used to the Western equivalent of what had already happened to Chinese Confucianism since late Ming times: the loss of its connection with Heaven, and the establishment of the new rule that all valid ideas must be derived from data about Earth.

Now Hu Shi was introducing the apprentices of the new elite to John Dewey, who was trying to synthesize Spencer with Hegel, but on Spencer's terms. Hegel's "spirit" was, no matter how complicated the changes it wrought, to be reduced wholly to being a product of Earth.

Before Dewey's return from China to America in 1920, it seemed that almost to the last man the new elite had turned into Deweyans, just as would happen to most denizens of American schools of education from then up until the early '60s, when they then turned Marxist too.

All that remained was to complete the last part of this intellectual double play: Dewey to Marx. Dewey, as it turned out, was doing with an American accent (i.e. with clumsy friendliness) what Marx had done a generation earlier with a German accent (i.e. with an equally clumsy vindictiveness): Dewey, like Marx, was blending Spencer with Hegel, but on Spencer's material determinist terms.

In other words, Dewey was providing Young China with the moral equivalent of Marxism. This got the Chinese new elite ready to make the jump into Marxism.

¹¹ Beida 北大 (for short), formerly the Peking Imperial University, and before that the School for Translators established at the turn of the century for the brighter Manchu aristocrats.