

PRINT and POLITICS

'Shibao' and
the Culture of Reform
in Late Qing China

JOAN JUDGE

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STUDIES OF THE EAST ASIAN INSTITUTE,
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

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*For my father,
mentor and friend*

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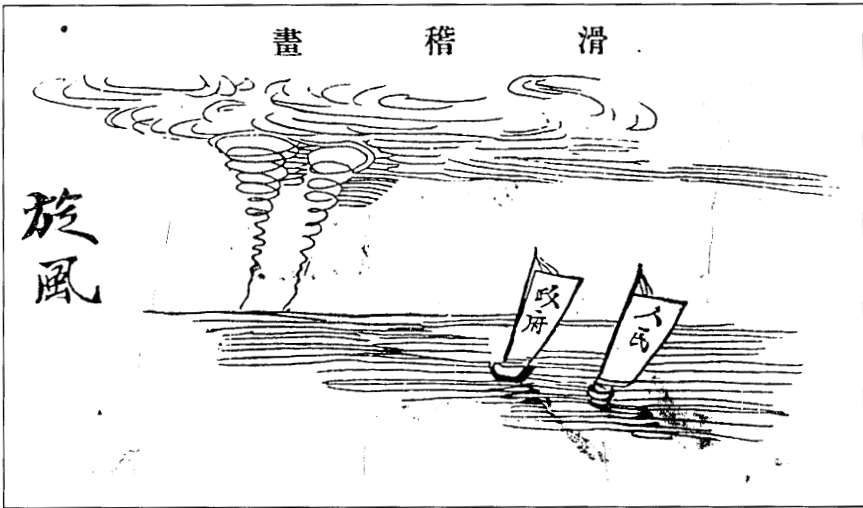
Print and Politics

Introduction: The Significance of the New Middle Realm

In April 1904 three men held a series of secret meetings in the foreign quarters of Shanghai. One of them, Liang Qichao, was a fugitive from the Qing government with a price of 100,000 taels on his head. Another, Di Baoxian, had played an instrumental role in organizing an uprising against the dynasty in 1900.¹ When they met that spring, their purpose was not to plan the overthrow of the imperial regime or to subvert the existing system of authority, however. It was to advance political opposition through other means—the creation of a daily newspaper.

Liang, Di, and the other journalists who would work for the newly founded daily, *Shibao*, thus drew an explicit link between print and politics: adopting a new form of print mediation—the political press—they promoted a new mode of politics—constitutional reform. Casting themselves as members of the “middle level of society” (*zhongdeng shehui*), they saw their role as one of negotiating between the dynasty “above” and the common people “below.” From this intermediate ground they struggled—as both publicists and activists—to shift the locus of authority downward and channel the abilities of the people upward. This intermediate ground, including both the metaphoric space that their journalistic writings occupied and the actual sphere of their social and political initiatives, constitutes the late Qing middle realm.²

Focusing on the new-style press—the preeminent institution and primary text of the middle realm—this book tells the story of the formation, expansion, and meaning of this emerging space. *Shibao*, the most influen-



"Cyclone," *Shibao*, August 5, 1907. The government and the people sailing toward inevitable conflict.

tial reform organ of its day, serves as both subject and document. An entry point into late Qing society, the newspaper is also used as a matrix for the various discourses and practices that took place within the society, revealing the way new cultural meanings were negotiated and age-old political practices transformed. This examination of *Shibao* thus enables us to develop a more nuanced understanding of the early twentieth century in China, a period that has often been overdetermined by tropes of dynastic decline, the teleology of the 1911 Revolution, or the notion of a transitional era. Taking the final years of Qing rule as a distinct historical moment allows us to reproblematicize the social, political, and cultural configurations of this era and opens up avenues for rethinking what followed later in the century.

The late Qing middle realm was the product of a complex interaction between discourse, practice, and culture; between printed texts, their political and institutional contexts, and the cultural assumptions that informed both. In analyzing the intentions of the new-style publicists who struggled to reform late Qing society, therefore, this book also examines the political, social, and cultural circumstances that often impinged on, redirected, or directly influenced those intentions. Reading *Shibao's* essays as both political texts and cultural artifacts, it focuses on the language the journalists used, the cultural constructs they deployed to structure their arguments, and the sources of authority they appealed to in advancing their claims for reform.

This inquiry into culture and politics in late Qing China has been in-

spired by the new cultural history and, in particular, by historical studies of print culture. Most exemplary of this field is the work of Roger Chartier, who attempts to “rethink the relation traditionally postulated between the social realm . . . and the representations that are supposed to reflect it or distort it” in an effort to construct “a new articulation between ‘cultural structures’ and ‘social structures.’” Specifically, Chartier analyzes how “the increased circulation of printed texts transformed forms of sociability, authorized new ideas, [and] modified relationships with authority” in old regime societies.³ Michael Warner, although not a cultural historian, adopts a similar approach in his book on the “cultural meaning of printedness” in eighteenth-century America. Examining the reciprocal determination between a medium and its politics, he seeks both to explicate societal change and to make a hermeneutic attempt to account for culture.⁴

While in recent years many scholars of European and American culture have turned their attention to the press in order to analyze “history from the middle,” this is the first study of late Qing China to do so.⁵ Employing a cultural historical methodology to examine China’s early political press, it raises different questions and seeks different insights from those of previous scholarship on this period.⁶ Whereas the political narratives on the late Qing have been largely structured by the events of 1911, this book does not recite a “prologue to the revolution.” It concludes in 1911 not because of the revolution itself but because the circumstances that surrounded that event indirectly brought an end to the most innovative and influential phase in *Shibao*’s history. The purpose of this examination of the early *Shibao*, therefore, is not exclusively to analyze where the incidents of the last Qing decade led. Rather, it is to examine how these events were culturally constituted in the pages of the newspaper and how these representations in turn generated new political and social meanings that perhaps contributed to, but ultimately transcended, the revolution.

This cultural historical approach also differs from intellectual narratives on late imperial China by deemphasizing the role of “great figures” in history. While some of the more prolific writers, influential thinkers, and visionary activists in the late Qing populate this book, it is not their story. Instead, it is the history of the integration of their ideas into the broader social discourse by a group of new-style publicists. Brokers between the realm of high ideas and the sphere of practical political concerns, between the circle of high politics and the world of local politics, between the promise of Western learning and the time-worn truths of Confucian culture, these journalists inhabited, theorized, and attempted to activate the late Qing middle realm. As a new class of cultural entrepreneurs and political activists, they operated in various modes—editorialist, women’s instructor, translator, and fiction writer—in an effort to disseminate their new vision for China.

This exploration of the middle realm also builds on recent work that complicates the dichotomies that once held a privileged position in the lit-

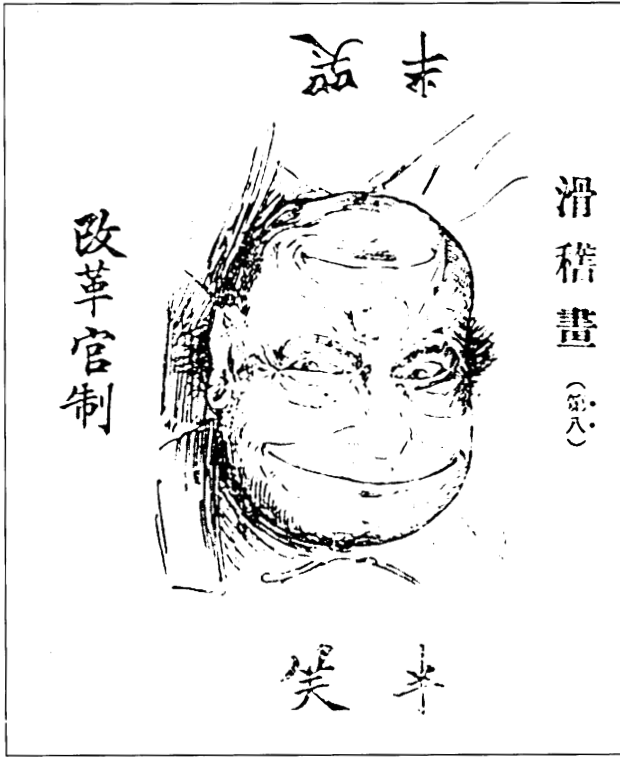
erature on the late Qing: tradition/modernity, Western impact/indigenous response, reform/revolution.⁷ Its method of excavation reveals a site where the classical Chinese ethos merges with foreign ideas, creating a synthesis driven by new political aspirations that are neither uniformly reformist nor exclusively revolutionary. As the *Shibao* journalists infused the Confucian tradition with new elements and transformed foreign ideas to conform to familiar cultural constructs, tensions and disjunctions arose and new social and political possibilities unfolded. It was this process of interaction that defined the content of the late Qing middle realm and gave rise to China's unique historical trajectory in the early twentieth century.

The Middle Realm and the Press

The press, a key site of this interaction, played a multivalenced role in the late Qing middle realm. A means of reproducing cultural values and encouraging social integration, it was first and foremost a political tool. A number of historians and theorists of the press, both Western and Chinese, have emphasized the importance of the link between press and politics and particularly between press and revolution, publicist and revolutionary militant.⁸ The historical record is rife with references to this connection. The leading Bolshevik agitator, V. I. Lenin, argued that a newspaper was both substance and symbol of the revolutionary cause. The French Revolutionary journalist Jacques-Pierre Brissot claimed that "without newspapers, the American revolution would never have succeeded." And Liang Qichao, China's foremost theorist of the late Qing press, declared in 1912 that "the establishment of the Republic of China was the result of a revolution of ink, not a revolution of blood."⁹

While print journalism served a political function in many nations, this role was particularly consequential in late Qing China, which had neither a system of political parties nor a representative national assembly. Independent of the dynasty and accessible to the reading public, the political press provided one of the few forums where reformists could advance their political agenda. Opening a field of mediation between the different spheres of late Qing society, the new journals made it possible for reform publicists to challenge imperial authority and express popular grievances, encourage debate over government policies, and educate their compatriots about the urgent need to reform the structure of dynastic power.

The *Shibao* journalists' principal political task from the time the newspaper was founded in 1904 was to fragment and disperse centralized imperial authority through constitutional reform. While the Qing government had already committed itself to administrative reform in its announcement of the New Policies (Xinzheng) on January 29, 1901, it was not until September 1, 1906, that it published an edict mandating the gradual implementation of a system of constitutional rule. From this time on the journalists' primary mission became one of exposing the disjuncture



"The reform of the official system," *Shibao*, April 9, 1907. The double face of the November 6, 1906, Resolution on the Reform of the Official System (Guanzhi gaige), which initially brought joy but ultimately produced frustration.

between the court's promise of constitutional reform and the reality of imperial politics. Two related issues became increasingly contested in their writings: the centralization of dynastic power and the representation of popular power.

Conflicts between the publicists and officialdom over these two issues escalated during the last years of Qing rule. When the dynasty published its long-awaited Resolution on the Reform of the Official System (Guanzhi gaige) on November 6, 1906, the *Shibao* journalists realized that the government was merely using the facade of constitutionalism to centralize its financial and military power.¹⁰ This centralizing agenda was further manifest in the dynasty's measures to control all regional railways, the issue that became the focus of the 1907 Suzhou-Hangzhou-Ningbo Railway dispute. When the court unilaterally decided to borrow money from Britain to complete construction of the railway, the journalists accused it of selling out China's national rights. Criticizing the government's flagrant abuse of

its power, the journalists further decried its efforts to limit the expression of public opinion and the exercise of popular representation. They attacked the new press laws of January 1908 for placing restrictions on the freedom of expression and condemned stipulations in the August 1908 "Outline of the Constitution," which granted the dynasty exclusive authority in drafting China's constitution. When representative bodies were finally created in October 1909 with the opening of the provincial assemblies, the journalists further criticized the government for severely limiting the powers of these new institutions.

The momentum of opposition that had been building in late Qing society from 1906 over the issues of popular representation and imperial centralization culminated in 1910 and 1911, providing further grist for the publicists' mill. In 1910 the government refused to comply with the demands of the Parliamentary Petition Movement (Guohui qingyuan yundong) for the rapid opening of a representative national assembly. In May 1911 the court announced the nationalization of all Chinese railways, ignoring the appeal of numerous regional railway movements for greater local autonomy and the preservation of China's national rights, and ensuring that the government would continue to be dependent on foreign loans in developing China's rail system.

As these hostilities intensified, alienating increasing numbers of railway activists, petitioners, and citizens sympathetic to their causes, the reform publicists worked to delink the idea of the nation from that of the dynasty in their journalistic writings and their political activities. Entreating the Chinese to unite themselves with the nation rather than subordinate themselves to the imperial bureaucracy, they reconceived education as the means of mobilizing citizens in the national interest—as opposed to training bureaucrats to serve the dynastic interest—and they encouraged the common people to understand the ways of the nation instead of following the dictates of the court. By the time the final crises erupted in 1910 and 1911, the representatives of the middle level of society had done much to weaken the once-compelling construct of "those above" and "those below" existing in a state of symbiotic harmony and constituting one body (*shangxai yiti*). Although not directly or solely responsible for the heightening tensions between ruler and ruled in the last years of the Qing regime, the *Shibao* journalists helped to make these conflicts take on the significance that they did. Thanks in part to their impassioned rhetoric and powers of mobilization, reform became thinkable in early-twentieth-century China.

This analysis of the important role the reform press played in the turbulent last years of Qing rule provides a more complex understanding of the political parameters in this period. In particular, it allows us to reassess the division between constitutional reformists and radical revolutionaries that defines most of the historiography of the late Qing.¹¹ There clearly were crucial differences between these two factions: while the reformists,

generally followers of Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, favored a gradualist approach and the creation of a constitutional monarchy, the revolutionaries, predominantly followers of Sun Yat-sen and members of the Tokyo-based Tongmeng hui (Revolutionary Alliance), called for the overthrow of the Manchu regime and the immediate establishment of a republic. The line between these two groups was most clearly drawn in the exile and student communities in Tokyo during the late Qing, in polemical texts of this period, and in their later interpretations. Once we examine the dynamics of reform politics in Shanghai, however, the line begins to blur. The *Shibao* journalists, who had initially been associated with the Kang-Liang faction, would increasingly distance themselves from it, both philosophically and institutionally, while sharing political perspectives and concrete affiliations with certain members of the revolutionary group.

Although some scholars have noted the existence of various subgroups within the constitutionalists and have even attempted to create a typology for them, few to date have recognized the role of Shanghai reformists affiliated with *Shibao* in setting a radical agenda for the constitutional movement.¹² While most commentators on the late Qing have read the reformists' rhetoric of constitutional monarchy as evidence of their complicity with and support for the dynasty, the meaning of reform was greatly contested both between official and unofficial reformers and among members of the latter group, as this study will illustrate. Different models—Japanese, British, French, moderate, radical—were invoked by the various groups to support their conflicting claims, revealing the depth of the reform publicists' dissatisfaction with the dynasty's constitutional program. This dissatisfaction drove them, on several occasions, to mobilize populist forces and nationalist sentiment against the government's policies.

Ultimately, what united the reformists and the revolutionaries in the last years of Qing rule was often more significant than what divided them. Occupying the same political ground between the government and the people, both reformists and revolutionaries in Shanghai considered themselves members of the middle level of society intent on opposing the Qing and revitalizing society.¹³ Moreover, their shared sense of political priorities went well beyond rhetoric or temporary expedience, extending to political activities, institutional commitments, and tangible cooperation between the *Shibao* journalists and their more radical compatriots.

In addition to serving as a political tool in the conflict-ridden last years of Qing rule, the reform press also performed an important cultural role. The publicists who wrote for the new newspapers and periodicals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries considered the cultural function of journalism as paramount, believing the print medium would replace teachers and learned scholars in reproducing and producing cultural values.¹⁴ More than simply relaying messages and imparting information or influence, their writings helped to create, represent, and celebrate shared beliefs.¹⁵

Culture, as it is defined here, does not inhabit any one particular field of practice or production; rather, it is a network of meaning, a “repertoire of interpretative mechanisms and value systems” that emerges from the apparently “least cultural” discourses and behavior.¹⁶ In the final decade of the Qing, important cultural changes were taking place in China. As the new publicists sanctioned their bold new demands for constitutional reform with age-old cultural references and invested familiar constructs with new, often foreign content, they expanded and enriched China’s cultural repertoire. In seeking to understand these cultural shifts, we are confronted with two modes of appropriation and the complex interaction between them: the use of familiar cultural forms and the adoption of concepts from abroad.¹⁷

Western concepts became integrated into the late Qing reform discourse as an indirect result of the foreign military and technological challenge in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. This challenge motivated hundreds and eventually thousands of reform-minded Chinese to study the “new learning” (*xinxue*)—which emphasized Western-style political-legal studies rather than philosophical-literary Confucian teachings—in Europe and America, but, most commonly, in Japan. The key *Shibao* journalists and editorialists were all part of the first wave of this movement in Japan. The course of study that they followed broadened their range of sources of cultural authority and served as an impetus for their efforts to reorient Chinese culture. As the new publicists integrated the ideas of Western thinkers into their own writings, they merged representations of the idyllic Chinese past with notions derived from the foreign present, simultaneously appealing to Confucius and Darwin, Mencius and Montesquieu, in forwarding their constitutional agenda.

The Chinese reform discourse accordingly became a synthesis of ancient principles and imported ideas. The journalists reinterpreted the classical principle of *gong*, for example—which is variously defined as openness, justice, and fairness—by associating it with a series of new terms or foreign-influenced redefinitions of terms, including the nation (*guojia*), popular power (*minquan*), and public opinion (*yulun*).¹⁸ And while they continued to uphold the ancient principle of the people as the foundation of the nation (*minben*), they reconceived “the people” as dynamic subjects of government policy rather than as passive objects of dynastic benevolence. The cultural representations that the Chinese had used for centuries to make sense of their world thus became instrumental in the reform publicists’ efforts to transform social and political practices in the early twentieth century.

The new foreign terms were also transformed as they were associated with classical principles, translated into a culturally familiar language, and appropriated into the late Qing discourse. Embedded in inherited webs of meaning, these concepts were reworked in a manner that rendered them comprehensible within the Chinese historical context.¹⁹ The central re-

form idea of popular power (*minquan*), for example, while inspired by Western notions of civil rights and democracy, was given a more collectivist and imperially bound thrust within the Chinese hermeneutic framework. The role of institutions such as the national assembly and the meaning of foreign political practices such as the parliamentary process were also interpreted in ways that reflected fundamental cultural concerns.

While the use of familiar cultural constructs in the translation of foreign ideas may seem to have tempered reform objectives, at the same time the infusion of new meaning into the old constructs does reflect an impulse for radical change. In the reform discourse, the locus of *gong*, or the greater good, shifted from the dynasty to society as the journalists promoted policies and programs aimed at decentralizing and redistributing power: freedom of expression, universal education, and broad participation in local self-government. Politicizing the meaning of old tropes and creating a new vocabulary, the reform publicists expanded the sphere of what was both culturally conceivable and politically possible in the late Qing middle realm.

In addition to reconceiving both culture and politics in the late Qing, the reform publicists also attempted to alter accepted social boundaries. Situating themselves between the two groups that defined the borders of the middle realm—the officials and the common people—they developed a threefold social mandate in an effort to bridge the divide between “those above” and “those below.” A central component of the publicists’ “new citizen” ideal, this mandate aimed to represent, reach, and mobilize those the publicists called “the people”: to represent the popular interest in order to make the demands of society known to the dynastic powers, to educate and uplift their compatriots in order to disseminate knowledge of the reform agenda, and to formulate strategies of social inclusion in order to integrate “the people” into the political process.

The journalists used various terms to represent “the people” in their writings, from neutral to damning to laudatory (for example, *renmin*, *min* [the people], *yumin* [ignorant masses], *guomin* [citizen]), terms that—as is often the case in our own discourse—had loose sociological referents. The boundaries determining who would be addressed as a citizen and who would be regarded as the masses would shift according to what aspect of the reformists’ social mandate was being emphasized. When the journalists spoke on behalf of the people and against the government, for example, they used the powerful rhetoric of oneness with a progressive people. In attempting to uplift “those below” and galvanize them into action, however, they berated the masses for their weakness, political ignorance, and selfishness.

The *Shibao* publicists took this lack of political sophistication into account in their efforts to reach the common people. In order to make their reform objectives more accessible, they invented new forms of print presentation that were simpler, more direct, and more colloquial. In an

attempt to reach prospective citizens who were illiterate, they devised new practices of cultural translation that would carry their message to the countryside. Committed not only to represent and inform but also to mobilize their compatriots, the journalists established a network of informal organizations and promoted various social and political movements, drawing growing numbers of their compatriots into the reform process. The new citizen who emerged in the late Qing middle realm was thus both a discursive construction and a political actor—not only a figure in the imaginations and texts of the reform publicists but also a participant in their campaigns to strengthen the nation and reclaim national pride.

The Middle Realm in Theoretical Perspective

Instrumental in promoting social, cultural, and political change, the political press was the preeminent institution of the late Qing middle realm. Its role in early-twentieth-century Chinese society is comparable to that of the press in Western conceptions of “civil society” and the “public sphere.” The former, a concept of long-standing significance in European history and social science, can be most simply defined as “the realm of autonomous social organizations outside the control of the state.”²⁰ The public sphere, a theoretical construct most recently associated with the writings of the German sociologist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas, is defined as “a sphere which mediates between society and state, in which the public organizes itself as the bearer of public opinion.”²¹ Focusing on print mediation, publicity, and public opinion in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, Habermas traces their effect on political change.

While scholars of imperial, modern, and contemporary China have recently begun to debate theoretical issues related to these two concepts, few have directly addressed the relevance of the press.²² The introduction of the late Qing political journals into a discussion of civil society and the public sphere suggests a number of caveats concerning the application of Western conceptual frameworks to the analysis of Chinese history. While it reveals the value of using a common language to analyze and compare societies across cultures and national borders, it also alerts us to the dangers of making superficial comparisons and imposing the teleology of one historical experience on another.²³

Rather than hold up the existence of the press as evidence of structural similarities between early-twentieth-century Chinese society and “modern bourgeois” Europe, it is more productive to use it as a point of departure for elucidating differences and uncovering the unique dynamic that shaped the late Qing middle realm. Although the political press served as a mediator between what Western scholars label “state and society” in both the bourgeois public sphere and the middle realm, the Chinese field of mediation was both conceptually and institutionally distinct from the

European. First and foremost, the transferability of the terms of analysis cannot be taken for granted. Both “state” and “society” are culturally specific, complex notions that can only be understood within their particular contexts. In late Qing China, for example, it was the distinction between the “dynasty” and the “nation,” rather than any unified notion of “the state,” that was paramount to understanding the development of the middle realm. Furthermore, state and society cannot be as clearly dichotomized in China as in Europe. While there was no direct government funding, influence, or control in the print-mediated middle realm, members of society, like the reform publicists, were not averse to working through official bodies such as provincial assemblies in order to achieve their reform objectives.²⁴ The political dynamic in the late Qing middle realm was thus less one of the ruled in opposition to the ruler and more one of the ruled becoming complicit in the construction of the state in order to alter the principle of power. A further consideration related to society as a reified and comparable entity is that while “the people” was a privileged construct in Chinese social discourse from ancient times, it both took on and was assigned a profoundly different sense from, for example, that of *le peuple* in Enlightenment discourse or in the context of the French Revolution.

Institutionally, the differences between the two fields of mediation are also marked. Whereas Habermas describes the press as one of the social and cultural bases within civil society, in China—where there had been no centuries-long development of an independent noble class, a regime of estates, or a church independent of political authority—journalism was not supported by a well-established civil society.²⁵ With the exception of the press itself, few early-twentieth-century Chinese organizations could be described, the way the organs of civil society ideally are, as “dimensions of social life that [could not] be confounded or swallowed up in the state.”²⁶ Nor were these late imperial institutions embedded in the legal and economic infrastructure that characterizes both the public sphere and civil society. Because China did not have a genuine structure of fundamental rights, one can at most speak of late Qing society as a civil society in formation.²⁷ The capitalist market, a precondition for the emergence of the public sphere according to Habermas, was also poorly developed in late Qing China, as were financial institutions, such as a central bank, that were integral to the development of a public domain in nations such as Great Britain.²⁸

What is significant in making this comparison, however, is not the absence of elements of a Western-style civil society in early-twentieth-century China. Rather, it is the existence of the political press, the pivotal institution of the bourgeois public, in the profoundly different social, legal, and economic Chinese context. This reveals an important distinction between the course of Chinese and Western history. Whereas the development of the public sphere in Europe was premised on the existence of civil society (Habermas wrote of the public sphere *of* civil society), in China it

was the organs of publicity that served as the impetus for the creation of the institutional infrastructure that constitutes a civil society. Given the late Qing journalists' status as reformists without a political structure and publicists within an emerging print medium, their new political strategies were initially developed on the discursive, and only more gradually on the organizational, level.

This distinct history of early-twentieth-century China is the product of a different impulse for reform. In eighteenth-century Europe it was the expansion of trade and industry that made the growing bourgeoisie demand more knowledge of and input into state policy, but in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century China the impetus to reform was more political than economic. Frustrated with the government's incompetence in dealing with internal and external pressures, forces for change in the late Qing demanded that power be dispersed and superannuated social and political structures be dismantled. Within the context of the Chinese political tradition this represents a historic departure. In the past, remonstrance had been more administrative than political in orientation, targeting how affairs were managed rather than how politics were structured. In the late 1890s and early twentieth century, however, the focus shifted to the restructuring of power through the expansion of the middle realm.

In formulating this new political agenda, the Chinese publicists mediated not only between past and present notions of society and politics but also between foreign and indigenous ideals and concepts. While the journalists studied or were exiled abroad in the late 1890s, they immersed themselves in foreign theory, internalizing a new vocabulary and formulating a new national vision. Through their efforts as cultural brokers, many of the political concepts that structured Western polities penetrated the middle realm, ultimately influencing, but in no way determining, the changes taking place within it.

In order to decode the meaning of the changes taking place in the last decade of the Qing, we must therefore place them within China's historical context and examine the mutual influence of the three overlapping spheres of the middle realm—culture, politics, and society. The three sections of this book correspond to these three spheres and to the three components of society that defined the contours of the middle realm—the new reformists, the common people, and the officials. The first section, "The Formation of the New Middle Realm," traces the institutional formation of this new realm through the rise of the political press in the 1890s and the creation of *Shibao* in 1904. It introduces the *Shibao* journalists, who, as social brokers, cultural entrepreneurs, and new-style intellectuals, expanded the dimensions of this emerging space and theorized its contents. The second section, "New-Style Noble Men," recounts the evolving relationship between the publicists and "the people" as the journalists defined and operationalized the new citizen ideal and attempted to formulate and

deploy new practices of social inclusiveness. "Ruffians in Scholars' Robes," section three, relates the tensions that existed between the publicists and the power holders as the journalists struggled to alter the structure of power through the critique of officialdom, the demand for institutionalization, and popular mobilization.

These three sections do not, however, represent totally discrete fields of analysis. Because the purpose of this study is to describe the interaction between the cultural, social, and political spheres within the middle realm, and because the borders between these three spheres are permeable and often artificial, the narrative threads frequently become intertwined. The significance of the three concepts of the nation, popular power, and public opinion in the construction of the new middle realm, for example, does not lie exclusively on the discursive level but pertains to the arena of social and political practice as well. As such, these concepts appear in different configurations in all three sections of the book. The nation, which serves as a metaphor for the new realm of negotiation between ruler and ruled in the reform discourse, is the focus of the new citizen ideal in the social realm and the locus of the struggle for institutionalization in the political. Popular power, the defining concept in the reformists' political program, was the object of their campaign of civic education and the counterpart to overarching official power. Public opinion, a rhetorical device employed by the journalists to challenge the authority of the dynasty, lent cohesiveness and power to disparate social groups who were struggling for self-definition and contesting government authority. Concepts that defined the middle realm thus helped structure Chinese history in the early twentieth century. They opened a space in which old practices could be challenged and new ones developed, and in so doing they contributed to the transformation of the culture of politics in the late Qing and beyond.

PART I

*The Formation of the
New Middle Realm*

The Power of Print in the Late Qing: The Rise of the Political Press

The greater the number of newspapers, the stronger
the nation.

—Liang Qichao, 1896

The history of the late Qing middle realm, and of the political press that defined it, began in the decades before *Shibao* was founded. In the mid-to-late 1890s, a new paradigm of politics and a new paradigm of print simultaneously emerged as reformists evolved a more contestatory mode of politics and constituted a new political meaning for the press.¹ This shift in the role of print was mediated by the foreign newspapers that had operated in China from the early 1800s. Influenced by the form and function of these journals, the reform publicists integrated new ways of producing and using print into their reform program. It was ultimately this interaction between foreign models and the exigencies of late Qing reform politics that gave rise to new-style political journals like *Shibao*.

The critical role foreign newspapers played in fostering the emergence of the late Qing political press demonstrates that print is not an unmediated medium.² China's own print civilization was the oldest in the world: the Chinese had invented paper in the Later Han Dynasty (25–220 C.E.), woodblock printing in the Sui (589–618) and Tang (618–907), and movable type in the Song (960–1279). Centuries before foreigners introduced new-style newspapers, China had its own official press, *dibao* (metropolitan gazettes), which can be dated back possibly as far as the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.), and with greater certainty to the Tang. A form of private correspondence sent to provincial authorities by their accredited agents in the capital, these gazettes were the official medium of commu-

nication between the court and provincial officials. In the Qing Dynasty, these official gazettes took the form of *Jingbao* (Capital gazette), which became *Zhengzhi guanbao* (Political gazette) in 1907 and then *Neige guanbao* (Cabinet gazette) in 1910.³

Despite the development of these indigenous print forms and the existence of print technology in early China, it was the foreign presence that would have the greatest impact on the form of late Qing journals and on the logistics of their production. Western missionary and commercial interests that had operated in China from 1815 provided publicists later in the century with models and with the printing technology necessary to emulate them: lithography in the late 1870s and, by the 1890s, movable lead type.⁴ International concessions in China further afforded the physical and legal space where indigenous newspapers could operate free of the threat of imperial censorship. Shanghai became the leader in the development of China's new journalism and the home of *Shibao* precisely because it was the treaty port city par excellence, offering enclaves of extraterritorial protection, access to imported paper and printing machinery, and a cosmopolitan culture.⁵

This is not to say that the foreign factor determined the outcome of late Qing press history. Rather, it provided tools for expressing the new publicists' political and social vision, as well as the context within which they could articulate and disseminate their reform aspirations. The Chinese press remained distinct, however, from the foreign in many ways. Whereas in the West printing was organized by early capitalism, in China, where print had existed some 500 years before its advent in Europe, its function was tied more exclusively to politics. Although Benedict Anderson's interpretation of the role of print as engendering a new subjectivity expressed through "imagined communities" is relevant to late Qing China, neither the beginning nor the endpoint of Anderson's story coincides with the unfolding of Chinese print history. It was not the interaction between capitalism and print that made a new political community imaginable in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century China.⁶ Rather, it was the connection between new-style printing and reform politics that made it possible for the publicists to challenge old truths and foster, for themselves and their readers, a nascent sense of collective identity. This restricted sense of collective identity, significant as it was, does not correspond to Anderson's model of a radically distinct and "modern" national consciousness.⁷

The major crises and political turning points of the last decade and a half of Qing rule marked this evolving Chinese sense of collective identity and punctuated the history of the new-style press. The humiliating terms of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, which ended the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95, galvanized young, reform-minded literati and led to the creation of China's first predominantly political newspapers. The Hundred Days'

Reforms of 1898 further expanded the space that these journals occupied, while the coup that followed almost completely eliminated it, driving the key publicists into exile. When the Qing government finally announced its commitment to constitutional reform in 1901, an opening once again emerged on the mainland, where newspapers like *Shibao* could forward the ambitions of unofficial reformers committed to expanding China's new middle realm.

Beginnings: Foreign, Missionary, and Commercial

Western-style newspapers would influence both the function and the form of political journals like *Shibao*. Since the early nineteenth century, foreign missionaries and both foreign and Chinese merchant groups had used newspapers to advance their religious or commercial interests in China. Between 1815 and 1894, this new-style press was almost exclusively in the hands of foreigners, with approximately 150 foreign-managed foreign-language newspapers and 70 foreign-managed Chinese-language newspapers established. Although the first newspaper was founded by a Portuguese, it was the British who eventually outnumbered all other nationalities, owning twice as many newspapers as any other nationality. The Americans were second, followed by the French, Germans, and Japanese. Most of their newspapers were located in major centers and treaty port cities such as Shanghai, Hong Kong, Macao, Guangzhou, Fuzhou, Hankou, Tianjin, Xi'an, and Yantai.⁸

Seventy percent of the 70 Chinese-language newspapers were created by missionaries as instruments of proselytization. Reflecting the religious and moral dimension of the "transmission view of communication," these Western missionary journals transmitted and distributed Christian "truth" in order to extend God's kingdom on China's soil.⁹ While the content of their message may have been of little relevance to later Chinese reformers, their use of the print medium as a means of advocacy clearly pointed to its political potential.

The other 30 percent of Chinese-language newspapers and 80 percent of the English newspapers in nineteenth-century China were established by foreign merchants. This reflected both the importance of the commercial role foreigners played in China at the time and the link that had traditionally existed between commerce and the press in Europe.¹⁰ One of the primary features of these early commercial newspapers was their lack of a strong political orientation. They emphasized trade and shipping news, in accordance with the mercantile interests of the majority of their subscribers—the trading population and the new class of compradores. Any foreign news that did appear was generally translated from the Office of Foreign Affairs (Zongli yamen) and published one month after the fact.¹¹ The *Shanghai xinbao* (New Shanghai journal), which was edited by West-

erners and which ran from December 1861 until the end of December 1872, was one of the earliest Shanghai newspapers dealing with merchant news. Although it did report extraordinary events, such as the Taiping Rebellion of 1850–64, generally it published little political news.¹²

In 1872 *Shanghai xinbao* was superseded by *Shenbao* (Shanghai journal). Founded by two British tea merchants, Frederick and Ernest Major, *Shenbao* would have the longest history of any of these early newspapers, surviving until May 1949. While *Shenbao* did publish articles on regional, national, and international issues, until 1905, when it was reformed under *Shibao's* influence, it was less a new-style political organ and more a commercialized news service. As Ernest Major himself stated in an October 11, 1875, editorial, the newspaper “was started for business reasons.”¹³ Only *Shenbao's* commercial news was consistently up-to-date, and its editorial line stressed commercial issues, expressing strong support for the industrialization and modernization of the Chinese economy. Its political lead essays were frequently “long, turgid,” and even trivial rather than topical. By the 1890s these essays became increasingly conservative and tended to stagnate around the kinds of issues that had been newsworthy in the 1880s.¹⁴ *Shenbao's* chief competitor, *Xinwen bao* (The news), was also devoted primarily to merchant news. Founded in 1893 by a group of foreign and Chinese merchants and officials, including Sheng Xuanhuai and Zhang Zhidong, it was managed by a succession of British and American nationals.¹⁵

Distinct from these commercial newspapers largely run by foreigners (*wai bao*) and from the official gazettes (*guanbao*) in this period were what Ge Gongzhen calls “popular newspapers” (*minbao*). Founded by merchants, compradores, Western-leaning officials (*yangwupai*), and intellectuals influenced by Western culture, these journals represented the beginnings of the tradition of *zhenglun*, or political commentary, that would mark the late Qing political press. These journals published more political discussion than the foreign-run newspapers, and they also sought to expose official corruption. They included Wang Tao's *Xunhuan ribao*, established in Hong Kong in 1873, and other newspapers founded in Hankou, Shanghai, and Guangzhou between the early 1870s and the late 1880s. However, even Wang Tao's progressive Hong Kong newspaper had a commercial section that was typically twice the size of the newspaper's other sections.¹⁶

“Awakening the Laggards”: *Shimonoseki* and the Rise of the Political Press

The late-nineteenth-century Chinese press was radically transformed in response to the dramatic events that punctuated the last decades of Qing rule. The newspapers of the mid-to-late 1890s focused their penetrat-

ing commentaries on China's precarious political situation and struggled to foster a new sense of political community and national responsibility. Promoting a new mode of politics, they began to change the role of print-mediated communication in the late Qing.

The Chinese press historian Yao Gonghe states that whereas foreign newspapers created international political trends, Chinese newspapers were created by them. While this is clearly an exaggeration, since world events had a profound impact on the press in other national histories, Yao is correct in emphasizing the important role of international developments in the rise of the new-style political press in China.¹⁷ The seminal event was China's defeat by Japan in the war of 1894–95 and Beijing's acceptance of the humiliating terms of the Treaty of Shimonoseki. In a retrospective issue of *Shibao* in 1932, an editorialist, Xu Binbin, using the pen name Lao Han (meaning "Old Man"), attributed the resolve of late Qing new publicists to "awaken the laggards and arouse the phlegmatic" to their deep sense of national shame following the Sino-Japanese war.¹⁸

Anger over China's acceptance of the treaty was first expressed in the May 1895 Gongju petition to the throne drafted by Kang Youwei and signed by some 1,300 metropolitan civil service examination candidates. It was then channeled into the Qiangxue hui (Self-Strengthening Study Society), founded by Kang and several of his students, including Liang Qichao, Xu Qin, and Tang Juedun. China's first new-style political journals were the organs of this society. They included *Zhongwai jiwén* (Sino-Foreign news, originally named *Wanguo gongbao*, or World gazette), founded on August 17, 1895, in Beijing, and *Qiangxue bao* (Journal of self-strengthening), established in January 1896 in Shanghai.¹⁹ The objective of these newspapers and of the study society itself was to raise popular awareness of national and international issues. Although the Qiangxue hui was ultimately closed down on January 20, 1896, by officials suspicious of the aims of the young "self-strengtheners," official obstruction was powerless to quell the commitment to reform and national change that had been aroused by the events of 1895. *Zhongwai jiwén* and *Qiangxue bao* were soon replaced by *Shiwu bao* (China progress) on August 9, 1896, which was to become one of the most influential early reform journals.²⁰ The course of Chinese press history had been irrevocably set.

The changes in the late Qing press initiated by the events of 1895 were both qualitative and quantitative. Whereas in the early and mid-1890s about a dozen newspapers were published in the chief port cities, between 1895 and 1898 some 60 newspapers were established, many of them outside the foreign-dominated centers. This trend would continue into the twentieth century, with the number of newspapers increasing from 100 in the late 1890s to 700 or 800, including those that were short-lived, by 1911.²¹

The distinguishing feature of this emerging political press was the editorial (*shelun*). Defined in terms of public-mindedness (*gong*), significance

(*yao*), comprehensiveness (*zhou*), and topicality (*shi*), this new style of essay and political commentary was most fully developed under the brush of such reform publicists as Liang Qichao, Mai Menghua, Xu Qin, Ou Jujia, Tang Caichang, and Tan Sitong.²² Driven by a deep sense of political crisis, these editorialists focused on national affairs: condemning national weaknesses, debating national potential, formulating methods of national strengthening, and constantly assessing China's international standing. It was their conviction that raising popular awareness of the issue of national survival would lead to the formation of a reform-minded citizenry.

Liang Qichao explicitly linked the role of the press to national strengthening in his famous essay, "The Beneficial Effect of Newspapers on National Affairs" ("Lun baoguan youyi yu guoshi"), which appeared in *Shiwu bao* in 1896. Liang stated that the "greater the number of newspaper readers, the higher the level of popular knowledge. The greater the number of newspapers, the stronger the nation."²³ Liang would again link the press to national prestige and survival in the inaugural statement (*fakan ci*) to *Shibao* in 1904. Claiming that the newspaper's editors and writers would lead the nation and the newspaper to international prominence, he wrote: "Our nation will ultimately take the position of leader among nations. Therefore *Shibao* must also take the position of leader among international newspapers. The citizens will show limitless gratitude for our efforts! The citizens will show limitless gratitude for our efforts!"²⁴

The reformists believed that, in addition to promoting national strengthening, the press would facilitate the development of popular knowledge. In his May 1895 petition to the throne, Kang Youwei proposed that newspapers be published with the explicit purpose of instructing the public. Kang's aim was not universal, however, but targeted the gentry elite, who, despite their accomplishments in classical studies, lacked basic knowledge of national and world conditions. By circulating the new-style *Zhongwai jiwen* free of charge with *Jingbao*, the official gazette read by most high-level bureaucrats, Kang and his cohort hoped to raise the consciousness of the approximately 1,000 *Jingbao* subscribers and alert them to the national crisis. Going a step beyond his mentor, Liang Qichao emphasized the development of popular knowledge (*kai minzhi*) rather than the education of the gentry elite. In particular he stressed the importance of political education and the primacy of political over technological reform, focusing on the need to expand popular political participation and establish a parliament.²⁵ A recurring theme in Liang's essays from the late 1890s, *kai minzhi* became one of the leitmotifs in the early-twentieth-century political discourse. This emphasis on popular knowledge reflects the reformists' conviction that the broad public had to reach a certain level of intellectual autonomy before the nation could progress toward a constitutional order.

The appeal of the early reform press, with its themes of generalized

political education and national strengthening, was so great that many bureaucrats preferred it to the official gazettes published by central and provincial imperial authorities. This development alarmed the dynasty, which attempted to diminish the influence of the new journals by increasing the number of official organs published in the provinces and publishing excerpts from the reform press in the pages of the official gazettes. Both efforts failed, however. The old gazettes could not compete with the new press by merely grafting on pieces of it, and no matter how many official journals were published, they were ultimately incapable of attracting many readers. The problem was not one of supply but of demand.²⁶

The emerging political press had become so popular in official circles that powerful governors-general in at least eleven provinces (including Zhang Zhidong in Hunan and Hubei, and governors in Zhejiang, Hunan, Guangxi, and Zhili) all ordered the subordinate offices and institutions in their administrations to purchase and study the principal reform newspapers. These same officials would even go so far as to quote from new press editorials in their memorials to the emperor.²⁷ Although this support was not unconditional—in 1895, for example, Zhang Zhidong banned *Qiangxue bao*, a paper he had once supported, for using dates calculated from Confucius's birth rather than from the reign period of the Qing—reform-minded officials were generally aware of the press's vital role in China's process of political reform.

The young Guangxu emperor also recognized the importance of the new press and of the freedom of expression and publication. During the Hundred Days' Reforms, he encouraged the establishment of newspapers by granting the press legal status, and on July 26, 1898, his government decreed that *Shiwu bao* would become an officially managed newspaper under the direction of Kang Youwei.²⁸ The new journals gained such prestige in this period that they even became examination texts under the civil service examination reform announced in a June 1898 edict. In formulating essay questions on current affairs, examiners would take topics exclusively from newspapers, and the candidates would limit their preparation to the study of the press. The demand for journal articles became so great that bookstores started publishing selections from newspapers for profit.²⁹

This new, officially sanctioned press role ended when Guangxu's brief experiment with reform was abruptly halted on September 21, 1898. The Empress Dowager Cixi's coup, which forced Kang and Liang's exile to Japan and the relocation of the reform press to Yokohama, marked the beginning of press censorship in China proper. Before 1898, Chinese restrictions on the new journals and periodicals had been limited to the Prohibition of Devilish Books and Talk (*Zao yaoshu yaoyan*), a statute of the Qing Code (the *Da Qing lüli*), and the enforcement of this stipulation had been largely left to the discretion of officials.³⁰ This situation changed on October 8, 1898, when an edict decreeing strict censorship of the press

was issued. Newspaper editors were accused of being degenerate and subversive scholars, and their arrest was called for. On February 14, 1900, a further edict forbade the entry of Liang Qichao's periodicals into China from Japan and commanded governors-general to destroy all reform publications and punish all persons found in possession of them.³¹

Because these publications continued to circulate in China with little difficulty despite official prohibitions, the government reasserted its position in the edict announcing the New Policies on January 29, 1901. This document further indicted Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao's efforts to disseminate their journals in China, claiming that although they had "fled overseas, they continued to lead people astray with their . . . incitement to rebellion."³² Edicts ordering the closing of newspapers and the arrest of journalists multiplied thereafter, causing many newspapers in the interior either to cease publication or to move to the foreign concessions in Shanghai. Students, who the government realized were the most avid newspaper readers, were also targeted by newly drafted school regulations. It was prohibited for students to buy any literature besides textbooks, to depart from the "way of the classics," or to become journalists or correspondents.³³

Reform in Exile: Enlightened Factionalism

Although the political retrenchment after the Hundred Days halted the production of political journals on the mainland for a number of years, it did not eliminate the influence of the new reform press. Instead, it gave rise to one of the most important chapters in the development of late Qing political journalism. Two of the most influential reform organs were founded in Japan by Liang Qichao in this period, *Qingyi bao* ("The China Discussion") on December 23, 1898, followed by *Xinmin congbao* (New people's miscellany) in February 1902. The success of these newspapers demonstrates both the irreversibility of China's movement toward reform in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the continuing importance of the foreign factor in nurturing China's developing political press.

Qingyi bao, which was established with the help of Chinese merchants in Japan, particularly Feng Jingru (father of the famous revolutionary historian Feng Ziyou), was twice the length of *Shiwu bao*, the most influential reform journal in China at the time when Kang and Liang fled to Japan. *Qingyi bao's* objectives were to uphold China's "righteous elite opinion" (*qingyi*), to contribute to the development of knowledge in China, and, reflecting Liang's debt toward and enthusiasm for Japan in this period of exile, to better integrate the Chinese and Japanese peoples.³⁴ Shortly after *Qingyi bao* stopped publishing in December 1901, *Xinmin congbao* was founded. This was to be Liang's most successful newspaper, as well as the most influential journal among Chinese reformists in the early years of

the twentieth century. With a circulation of approximately 14,000 copies, it was distributed in 97 locations in Japan, China, and abroad. In November 1902 Liang supplemented *Xinmin congbao* with *Xin xiaoshuo* (The new novel), which promoted ethical renovation through fiction.³⁵

The exiled reformists' experience in Japan during the period when *Qingyi bao* and *Xinmin congbao* were published was crucial to both the development of the political press and the process of reform in late Qing China. The Chinese publicists made contact with Japanese intellectuals interested in similar problems of national reform and immersed themselves in the large body of Western political and philosophical works that had been translated by Japanese scholars. It was in this context that Liang Qichao began to study, translate, and probe Western political theory and its relevance for China, going beyond his teacher, Kang Youwei, who continued to seek sanction for his reform ideas almost exclusively from ancient Confucian texts. While Kang justified the idea of progress by quoting the *Gongyang Commentary* on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, for example, Liang appealed to the principles of Social Darwinism in order to explain historical linearity.

Qingyi bao and *Xinmin congbao* rapidly became China's window on the world of Western learning, the major source for the broad introduction of Western thought to the Chinese audience between 1898 and 1903. Together with several other overseas student publications, these journals interpreted and translated the theories of Charles de Secondat Montesquieu, John Stuart Mill, Johann Casper Bluntschli, Herbert Spencer, and Francis Bacon. They also presented historical documentation on democratic revolutions in France and America, Italy and Greece, and discussed the lives of political theorists and revolutionary heroes, from Rousseau to Hobbes, and from Washington to Napoleon.³⁶

Exposed to new political perspectives, the reformists were able to develop their own political ideas further. It was during this period, for example, that Liang began to see the press as one component in a larger constellation of rights that included freedom of thought, expression, and publication.³⁷ At the same time, Liang came to appreciate the press not just as a means of strengthening the nation from within but also as a tool in the political struggle against the dynasty from without. He began openly to call newspapers factional organs (*dangbao*) and, under the influence of Western parliamentary theory, to conceive of them as protopolitical opposition parties. Liang believed that once newspapers had laid the political groundwork by raising public consciousness, the establishment of political associations and, ultimately, political parties would naturally follow.³⁸

Liang's reference to newspapers as *dangbao* was an appeal to the view, held by Ouyang Xiu in the Song Dynasty and *qingyi* literati in the early nineteenth century, that factions were true parties organized by superior men, not transitory and partisan cliques.³⁹ Liang expressed his own ab-

horrence of the latter kind of factionalism in the first of the regulations he drafted for editorial essays (*Junshuo*) in *Shibao*. He stated that these editorials would adhere to the broader public interest (*yi gong wei zhu*) and would not follow any one faction (*bu pianxun yidang zhi yijian*).⁴⁰ At the same time, Liang realized that in the absence of autonomous political bodies, *dangbao* were one of the few institutional options available to reformists (the others being study societies and schools) that could serve as mediators between ruler and ruled. Writing in 1901, Liang explained that “although China had produced individual newspapers [which served only the selfish interests of the individual rather than the public interest], it had no factional, national, or international newspapers.”⁴¹ It was his ambition that *Qingyi bao*, *Xinmin congbao*, and later *Shibao* and *Guomin gongbao* (Citizen’s gazette) would become such factional organs.

The two defining characteristics of the late Qing political press that Liang’s use of the term *dangbao* brings to light—its important political role as the only organized force mediating between ruler and ruled in the Chinese polity, and its institutional isolation within this newly emerging political space—are what distinguish it most clearly from the political press in France, Britain, the United States, and Japan at a similar juncture in their national histories. While the Chinese political press shared certain important characteristics with the political press in other nations—all were journals of opinion, which was expressed in leading editorial articles and articulated by editorial writers who, like Liang and other late Qing reformists, considered themselves to be tribunes of the people—the differences were marked.⁴² The Chinese newspapers were not part of a political structure that included other autonomous political bodies, as the foreign papers were: American newspapers were “the privilege of recognized parties,” British newspapers were party organs and records of parliamentary debates, French newspapers were an indispensable third element in representative government on a level with the people and the legislature, and Japanese newspapers were used by all parties in the early years of the Meiji Diet.⁴³

Neither did the Chinese political press project the same teleology as the Western or Japanese press. It was not an intermediate stage between the old medium of simple newsletters and a future medium serving consumer culture, as Jürgen Habermas has described the case for Europe.⁴⁴ Nor was it under the reformists’ tutelage, in transit from government to mass tutelage, as Lippmann has characterized the American political press.⁴⁵ And it was not on the verge of becoming a modern mass medium, as the Japanese press became in the late 1890s.⁴⁶ China’s press history does not even compare with that of Russia, which, like China, did not have developed representative institutions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Because the Russian Old Regime was developing an industrial base, the evolution of its press followed the more familiar course outlined

by Habermas, from journals of conviction to journals of commerce, from the political “thick journals” to a commercialized press.⁴⁷

Working from within a very different institutional and cultural field, the Chinese press followed a path distinct from other press histories—Western and Japanese. While it shared certain features with these foreign political newspapers in terms of form, its uniqueness is reflected in the content of its lead editorials: the political message they conveyed, the cultural constructs they reflected, and the social and political practices they engendered. This content evolved from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century, as did the political meaning of the press. When reform journals were revived in mainland China in the early 1900s, the exiled publicists’ predominant themes—national strengthening and the development of popular knowledge—would take on a new and more concrete form in calls for civic education, cultural translation, and political institutionalization.

Reform Repatriated: New Policies and New Beginnings in the Shanghai Press

The period when the reform press was in exile, from 1898 to the early years of the twentieth century, was one of the most important in China’s press history. This was not only because of the significant advances made by such key figures as Liang Qichao but also because young intellectuals who would later become major actors in the early-twentieth-century China-based press would use this time to develop their skills as reformists and publicists. Di Baoxian, *Shibao*’s future publisher, had fled to Japan in 1898 after the coup, and he frequently contributed poetry to *Qingyi bao* and *Xinmin congbao*.⁴⁸ Luo Xiaogao, a student in Japan in 1898, who would help found *Shibao* together with Liang and Di, did translation work for the same two journals.⁴⁹ Lei Fen, another future *Shibao* editor, was one of a number of overseas students in Tokyo, working on minor journals of translation (most of which rendered Japanese translations of Western works into Chinese) that looked to Liang’s publications as a model.⁵⁰ Rather than lose time in the years following the 1898 coup, the reformists thus gained knowledge and experience that would prove invaluable once reform was put back on the official agenda in Beijing.

This process began, however tentatively, with the Qing government’s announced commitment to reform in the imperial decree of January 29, 1901. Proclaiming the review of “all dynastic regulations, national administration, official affairs, matters related to people’s livelihood, modern schools, systems of examination, military organization, and financial administration,” this decree was followed by a series of measures in political, educational, military, judicial, and legal reform.⁵¹ Among the most important of the new measures were those concerning constitutional reform.



"The many hands of Shanghai," *Shibao*, October 26, 1907. Shanghai newspapers: *Shibao*, *Shanghai*, *Zhongwai ribao*, *Shenzhou ribao*, *Xinwen bao*, *Shenbao*, and *Nanfang bao*.

Although such reform had been discussed within the Qing court from the early years of the twentieth century, the government did not begin to take concrete measures toward a program of constitutional preparation until 1905. At that time, Japan, a nation of the yellow race with a constitution, defeated Russia, a nation of the white race without a constitution, in the war of February 1904–June 1905. Impressed with Japan's victory, on July 16, 1905, the court announced a plan to send five ministers abroad to investigate the political systems of Japan, Great Britain, the United States, Germany, and France. After a minor setback, the five officials finally set off on December 12, 1905.⁵² In the interim, on November 25, 1905, the Kaocha zhengzhi guan (Office for the Investigation of Modern Politics and Government) had been established to facilitate the transition to a constitutional monarchy. As outlined in a November 25, 1905, edict, the agenda for this mission, and for the office itself, was to "select the political systems of every nation that were compatible with the Chinese system of governance (Zhongguo zhiti), to consider their advantages and disadvantages, and to compile and arrange these findings into a book." These efforts culminated in the publication of the September 6, 1906, edict on constitutional preparation, which outlined the constitutional changes that would gradually be implemented in China over the next decade.⁵³

The Qing government also undertook important changes in education. A 1901 decree stipulated that all old-style academies (*shuyuan*) be converted into new-style schools (*xuetang*), for example. But it was the September 2, 1905, decision to abolish the civil service examination system that was most historic. This measure led to the dismantling of a centuries-old structure that had not only determined the career possibilities of the literati but had also helped shape the worldview of the empire's finest minds.

Although these reform efforts did not represent a fundamental transformation of the Qing government's conservatism, unofficial reformers were quick to occupy the new space created by the government's announced commitment to reform. From the year 1904, the reformists began to create newspapers and periodicals committed to the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in China. These included *Dongfang zazhi* ("The Eastern Miscellany"), founded by Commercial Publishing on March 11, 1904, and *Shibao* ("The Eastern Times"), founded in June 1904.⁵⁴ The mandate of these early-twentieth-century journals was to monitor the depth of the government's commitment to reform, to inform and educate future constitutional citizens, and to guide China to a position of strength in the world through legal and institutional reform.

These reform journals frequently published trenchant criticisms of the government's constitutional reform program. Because they were located in the English, French, or international concessions in Shanghai, however, they were able to operate relatively free of government intervention.⁵⁵ Shi-

bao was itself located in the French concession, and from 1907 it was registered at the Japanese consulate, with Munakata Kotarō (1864–1923), a Japanese adventurer and newspaper entrepreneur, listed as its official publisher.⁵⁶ There is evidence in consular reports sent back to the Japanese Foreign Office (Gaimushō) that in addition to benefiting from Japanese diplomatic protection, *Shibao* and other Shanghai newspapers also received foreign office financial support.⁵⁷

Another reason reform newspapers such as *Dongfang zazhi* and *Shibao* were relatively exempt from government repression was that they were more moderate in their criticisms of the authorities than the revolutionary organs of this period.⁵⁸ Although these more radical journals were also located in the foreign concessions, the government was prepared to go to greater lengths to restrict their influence. In 1903, the year before *Shibao* was founded, a court case involving *Subao* (Jiangsu journal) brought the government into sharp confrontation with the revolutionary press. The first newspaper in Shanghai to promote revolution, *Subao*, founded on June 26, 1896, had become increasingly radicalized by 1903. In June of that year, the newspaper quoted from two essays by contributing author and editor Zhang Binglin: his introduction to *Geming jun* (The revolutionary army), by the nineteen-year-old Zou Rong, and a "Letter Disputing Kang Youwei." The publication of these excerpts so angered the Qing authorities that *Subao* was forced to close on July 7. Zhang Binglin and Zou Rong were tried by the Mixed Court in Shanghai and sentenced to jail terms of three and two years, respectively. Zou died in prison on April 5, 1905.⁵⁹

The number of revolutionary newspapers established in China after the founding of the Tongmeng hui (Revolutionary Alliance) in Tokyo in August 1905 grew rapidly despite the government's increased efforts to halt their publication. Between 1905 and 1911 in Shanghai alone some fifteen such organs were established, and although many were ephemeral, several were a constant thorn in the side of the Qing regime. This was particularly true for those newspapers founded by the publicist Yu Youren, which included *Shenzhou ribao* (North China daily news, founded on April 2, 1907) and the three papers known as the Shusan min (Three upright people): *Minhu ribao* (The people's cry, May 15, 1909), *Minxu ribao* (The people's sigh, October 3, 1909), and *Minli bao* (The people's stand, October 11, 1910). As soon as one of these newspapers was closed by the government, Yu began to raise the next on its ashes.⁶⁰

Spared this constant threat of government intervention, the reform press was able to develop with relatively little official interference in the early twentieth century. Among the most important new reform organs in Shanghai in this period besides *Dongfang zazhi* and *Shibao* were *Zhenglun* (Political commentary) and *Guofeng bao* (National mores). These two journals, like *Shibao*, were associated with Liang Qichao. *Zhenglun*, the organ of the Zhengwen she (Political Information Society), had been moved to

Shanghai from Tokyo after the publication of its first issue in November 1907. *Guofeng bao* was founded in Shanghai on February 20, 1910.

Shibao stands out among these reform journals for several reasons. Like *Dongfang zazhi*, which ran until 1949, but unlike the two other journals, which were both short-lived, *Shibao* became a national press institution, in print for 35 years, until it stopped publication on September 1, 1939.⁶¹ And while *Shibao*, *Zhenglun*, and *Guofeng bao* had all been founded on Liang Qichao's initiative, *Shibao* alone distanced itself from the Kang-Liang faction, rapidly surpassing the advances Liang and others had made in the new field of political journalism. Developing its own distinctive style and voice in response to political events, *Shibao* also differed from *Dongfang zazhi*, which relied primarily on selections from other newspapers for its material.

Intimately connected to the constellation of unofficial and official organizations at the core of the early-twentieth-century constitutional movement in Shanghai, *Shibao* applied the theories developed in the reformist press to the realities of late Qing society. The most influential reform organ of its day, it would link print and politics, molding and mobilizing China's emerging public opinion as it expanded the boundaries of the late Qing middle realm.

*The 'Shibao' Journalists:
Political and Cultural Brokers
in the New Middle Realm*

Who is responsible for supervising members of the upper level of society and educating members of the lower level? Is it not members of the middle level of society?

—Jiang Ruizao, *Shibao*, March 16, 1909

*S*hibao's history began by dictate from the exiled reformists in Tokyo. In the early spring of 1904 Kang Youwei instructed Di Baoxian and Luo Xiaogao, who were both living in Japan, to return to Shanghai and prepare for the establishment of the new daily.¹ In April of that year Liang Qichao risked visiting Shanghai in order to guide these preparations. Forced to remain under cover, he changed his name and took up residence on the third floor of the Japanese Tigers' Den hotel in the Hongkou section of the city. During his approximately three-week stay, he met frequently with Di, who was to become the future publisher of *Shibao*, and Luo, who was to serve as general editor. Liang acted as Kang Youwei's emissary in laying the groundwork for the establishment of *Shibao*. He chose the newspaper's name, wrote the inaugural statement for its first edition, and outlined its general regulations.²

Kang and Liang's role in founding *Shibao*, combined with the historiographical tendency to view reform elites in this period as part of a single, monolithic force, has led to the characterization of *Shibao* as either the propaganda organ of the exiled reformists or the mouthpiece of the constitutional movement.³ These characterizations fail, however, to reflect the complexity of the newspaper's network of affiliations or the distinctiveness of its own political positions.

The journalists writing for *Shibao* were influenced by the same political events and cultural encounters that helped shape Liang Qichao's reformist stance—the 1898 coup, exile in Japan, exposure to foreign politi-

cal theories in Tokyo. Their experience diverged, however, when they returned to China. Sharing Liang's commitment to reinvigorate the people and strengthen the nation, and appropriating much of his language, they nonetheless interpreted the reformist agenda according to a different complex of concerns and articulated the constitutional vision in their own voice. As they took on new cultural roles in publicity and education, they undertook important innovations in the style and content of the press. Rapidly surpassing the advances that had been made in the earlier new political journals, they established *Shibao* as the most widely circulated Shanghai daily in the region and the beacon of the new education in China.

The *Shibao* writers asserted their political independence by refusing to submit to the dictates of the exiled reformists. Instead they responded to the newly awakened political aspirations in the Jiang-Zhe region surrounding Shanghai and to the rapidly developing events in the last Qing decade. Occupying, commanding, and ultimately expanding the new middle realm created by the rise of the political press, they introduced an element of pluralism into the reform movement. Through their writings, their political activities, and their cultural initiatives, they began to map a new direction for reform in early-twentieth-century China.

The Journalists: Representatives of the New Middle Level of Society

The journalists who wrote for *Shibao* represented a new lineage of cultural elites. Mediators between rulers and ruled, they played a familiar role in the unfamiliar context of the newly emerging middle realm. Although they had much in common with their literati predecessors in terms of social background and commitment to public service, they transformed, rather than assumed, their inherited social and cultural role. They introduced constitutional principles, a more inclusive position vis-à-vis the people, and a more critical stance vis-à-vis authority into the late Qing political discourse, thereby infusing the conventional literati practices with new elements.

The reform publicists positioned themselves in a social space that they themselves defined as the "middle level of society" (*zhongdeng shehui*). They claimed that reform activists in all nations emerged from this social level. While members of the upper level of society, officials and elites, were "dependent on the old ways to feed and clothe themselves" and quite naturally opposed to reform, representatives of the lower level of society, the common people, lacked the knowledge, capital, and literacy necessary to launch a sustained movement.⁴ The middle level's reform mandate was further established by the moral uprightness of its members. The *Shibao* journalist Jiang Ruizao explained that the "lower levels of society" (*xialiu shehui*) were too ignorant to be moral, and the "upper levels of society" (*shangliu shehui*) were too corrupt and power hungry to work for the



Di Baoxian as a young man.

benefit of the collective. It was thus incumbent upon the “middle level of society” (*zhongliu shehui*) to take social and political responsibility.⁵

This new middle level, with its superior morality and activist spirit, was more a product of the upper than the lower level of society. *Shibao*'s leading editors and journalists—Di Baoxian, Chen Leng, Lei Fen, and Bao Tianxiao—were all the descendants of venerable literati families. And while they refused to hold office in the bureaucracy, they all possessed civil service examination degrees.⁶ Di Baoxian, a native of Piaoyang county in Jiangsu province, was a member of a family that had held office for generations. His father had been a magistrate in Jiangxi province, and Di, a celebrated scholar in his own right, became a graduate of the provincial-level civil service examination (*juren*) at an early age.⁷ Bao Tianxiao, of Wu county, Jiangsu, and *Shibao*'s editor of regional news, Lei Fen, a native of Songjiang county in Jiangsu and the editor of Shanghai news, and Lin Kanghou, from Shanghai, who would replace Lei in 1909, were all *xiuca*i, or prefectural examination graduates.⁸ There were also a number of *jinshi*, or graduates of the highest-level metropolitan examination, who wrote for *Shibao*. These included Li Yuerui, from Xianyang county in Shaanxi province, who had been employed as a high official in Beijing until the September 1898 coup and who used the pen name Xi Song in his editorials.⁹ *Shibao*'s Beijing correspondent, Huang Yuanyong, from Jiangxi province, was also a metropolitan graduate.¹⁰ (See Appendix A for biographical notes on and pen names of these and other *Shibao* authors.)

By virtue of their classical training and social background, these new publicists clearly distinguished themselves from earlier journalists. They

defied the traditional image of their chosen field as a profession without honor, deriving from "the lineage of copyists sitting at yamen doors rather than from any legitimate branch of literary endeavor."¹¹ The reform publicists were not failed examination candidates, nor were they sycophants to foreign editors. Rather, they were dynamic, reform-minded, and well-educated young scholars. As such, they commanded the respect, if not of the court itself, then at least of officials such as Governor-General Zhang Zhidong, who claimed that the journals founded by these new cultural elites were "the first healthy newspapers since the beginning of journalism in China."¹²

While classical education separated the new publicists from the less-educated old-style journalists, their training in the new, or Western, learning distinguished them from members of the upper level of society. With its emphasis on politics and law rather than on Confucian teachings, this new learning inspired the reform journalists to infuse the old literati role with a new vision and new values. Esteemed strictly for its technical or functional merits by members of the Self-Strengthening Movement during the 1870s and 1880s, by the late 1890s the reformists increasingly valued these Western teachings for their political and cultural content, which they deemed relevant to China's current national crisis.

In the last years of the nineteenth century a group of Chinese intellectuals left China to study the new learning in Tokyo. Included in this group were those who would eventually form the core of *Shibao's* editorial staff: Di Baoxian, Lei Fen, Chen Leng, and Lin Kanghou, all brilliant young scholars from Jiangsu province. While in Tokyo, Lei, together with Luo Xiaogao and Huang Yuanyong, studied at Waseda University, where Lei and Huang both graduated with degrees in politics and law. Lei then went on to join a group of Jiangsu overseas students in Tokyo involved in publishing a journal entitled *Fanshu huibian* (Collected translations). Di Baoxian, who was highly respected as a new-style scholar, did not formally take classes in Japan, where he lived in exile after the failure of the Hundred Days' Reforms and again in 1900 after the abortive Independent Army uprising. However, he was closely associated with Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao at that time and frequently contributed his poetry to *Qingyi bao* and *Xinmin congbao*.¹³

Of all the *Shibao* journalists, it was Chen Leng, the graduate of a Japanese middle school, who most openly challenged the inherited image of the cultural elite. In 1904 he had already cut off his queue of braided hair, which all Chinese males had been forced to wear as a symbol of their submission to the Qing Dynasty. He thus anticipated by some seven years a practice that would become one of the commonest forms of protest on the eve of the dynasty's fall. Chen further cultivated a cosmopolitan air by wearing Western suits and a cap with a visor, smoking a pipe, riding a bicycle, and serving Western food at his second wedding.¹⁴

Expanding the Middle Realm: Innovation and Outreach

The *Shibao* journalists' training and experience in Japan prepared them for new cultural roles upon their return to China. This is reflected not only in the content of the editorials they wrote for *Shibao* but also in the creative ways they sought to engage their audience. By introducing important innovations in the form, style, and language of the newspaper, they increased the accessibility of their articles and drew in a growing readership. The journalists were also committed to extending *Shibao's* geographic sphere of influence, thus raising the political awareness and encouraging the political participation of a widespread audience.

Di Baoxian's stated objective in founding *Shibao* was "not to reform public opinion, but to reform the press that represents public opinion."¹⁵ This aim was achieved immediately upon publication, as *Shibao* entered the Shanghai world of print like a burst of color on a field of grey. Its two main competitors, the long-standing journals *Shenbao* and *Xinwen bao*, founded in 1872 and 1893, respectively, had grown stale and uninteresting. Hu Shi, educator and scholar, read *Shibao* from its inception. He claimed that the "fiery content and innovative presentation of [its] articles broke down the old habits of writers for the Shanghai press, opening new doors to knowledge and arousing new interest. Because these innovations were appropriate to the times, other newspapers had no choice but to adopt them. Gradually they came to define the general structure of the Chinese daily newspaper."¹⁶

The most basic of *Shibao's* innovations were in format (*banshi*) and layout (*banmian*). While all previous Chinese newspapers had been printed in the shape of a book, *Shibao* was the first "folio newspaper"—a sheet of paper folded once to produce two leaves, or four pages, with printing on both sides of the four pages. In 1907 *Shibao* increased the number of large sheets that made up the daily newspaper from two to three. Expanding on innovations that had been made by Wang Kangnian in *Shiwu ribao*, the *Shibao* editors also livened up the layout of the newspaper with the introduction of columns, titles, and new typefaces.¹⁷ It was also the first newspaper to indicate the importance of a particular news item by using six different sizes of type to set off the headlines. Following Liang Qichao's lead, the *Shibao* journalists used paragraphs and topic sentences, and they perfected the art of presenting arguments in a series of numbered points. These various alterations in form were rapidly imitated by *Shenbao*, *Xinwen bao*, and subsequently by all Chinese newspapers.¹⁸

Shibao's most renowned innovation, which has been attributed to the editor Chen Leng, was the *shiping*. These short, pithy, and lively essays of approximately 200 characters offered succinct interpretations of, and witty commentaries on, the day's events, marking a new stage in the development of critical commentary in the Chinese press.¹⁹ First called *piping* (critical commentary), the name was changed to *shishi piping* (critical com-

mentary on current affairs) in December 1904, and finally to *shipping* in January 1907. As the press historian and former journalist Zheng Yimei explained, "*Shipping* was the name for *Shibao's* commentary. Afterward, each newspaper gradually imitated *Shibao*, introducing a similar column and also calling it *shipping*. In this case, however, *shipping* simply meant commentary on the current situation."²⁰

The purpose of the *piping*, as described in *Shibao's* regulations, reflected the journalists' commitment to reaching a broad general audience and advancing popular knowledge. Unlike the longer leading essays, or *shelun*, which were often dubbed the "eight-legged essays of the press" (a reference to the formalized civil-service examination essay style), the *piping* were to be short and to the point.²¹ They would offer a commentary on the day's events that was brief enough to allow readers with little time to become familiar with current issues. While increasing the public's interest in events, they would thus ultimately raise the level of knowledge of the newspaper's readership.²²

Appearing sporadically at first, these short essays soon became a regular feature of the newspaper, with three *shipping* printed daily. The three essays corresponded to the three main sections of the news: major national and international events, regional news, and Shanghai news. They were written by the editors responsible for each of these sections, Chen Leng, Bao Tianxiao, and Lei Fen, respectively. The *shipping* were highly influential not only because they were more accessible to the readers, but also because they were provocative. In Hu Shi's words, "The *shipping* writers dared to speak out courageously on the issues, and so they riveted the attention of the reader and had a powerful impact on their audience." Given what Hu called their "wizardly power," it was understandable that the short essay became a common literary form in all Chinese newspapers.²³

The "wizardly power" of *Shibao's* short essays and the compelling authority of its leading editorials owed much to editorial style and not just to form. Influenced by the writings of early- to mid-nineteenth-century intellectuals, this new editorial style was more fully developed by publicists living in Japan in the late 1890s, including Liang Qichao and a number of the future *Shibao* journalists.²⁴ As these writers attempted to express the foreign ideas they encountered in translations in Japan, they found the resources of the classical language to be inadequate. Forced to develop novel literary forms, they began to experiment with *baozhang wenti* (newspaper style), *shiwu wenti* (current affairs style), and *xinmin wenti* (new people's style). These new styles rapidly replaced the previous eight-legged essay style and the ancient-style prose, known as the Tongcheng classical style, in the political press.

The first feature of these innovative essays was a general liberation from constraining stylistic conventions. Using a more common and readable language, the new publicists integrated vernacular language into classical forms, and merged elements of prose (*sanwen*) with rhythmic paral-

lel structures (*pianwen*). Reflecting the reform journalists' experience in Japan, this style incorporated elements of various European languages, as well as new terms adapted from the Japanese. Composed of Chinese character compounds that had either been coined by the Japanese or adopted from the literary Chinese language and invested with a new meaning, these included political terms such as political party (*zhengdang*), revolution (*geming*), self-government (*zizhi*), and power (*quanli*), as well as the term for politics itself (*zhengzhi*); terms associated with constitutional rights such as freedom (*ziyou*) and assembly (*jihe*); social terms such as society (*shehui*) and education (*jiaoyu*); and press terms such as news (*xinwen*), dissemination (*chuanbo*), and telegram (*dianbao*). Even when a comparable expression existed in the Chinese language, the more novel Japanese words were used in order to emphasize their new meaning.²⁵ Although some of these terms were dropped almost as quickly as they were taken up, many survived to form the mainstream of twentieth-century reform discourse.

In addition to loosening their essay style and infusing it with foreign elements, the reform publicists also strived to make it more expressive. Believing that their writings should be exciting in order to rouse their readers and stir them to action, they often used the form of the novel rather than the essay. While Liang Qichao had been one of the first to move in this direction with his creation of the journal *Xin xiaoshuo* (The new novel) in 1902, *Shibao* became the first newspaper to incorporate a literary section within its own pages. Publishing excerpts from novels and plays as a means of disseminating Western thought and culture (sometimes employing the vernacular), the *Shibao* editors separated the texts into two sections: selections and translations. Chen Leng and Bao Tianxiao both published their own fiction in *Shibao*, and the two were also responsible for the translations (which were usually done from Japanese translations of the Western texts). Examples include Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days*, Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.²⁶

All of these innovations in form, style, and content helped to make *Shibao* the most widely read reform journal in the early twentieth century. Its popularity was enhanced by the expansion of newspaper distribution networks in the last Qing decade. During this period, the number of places commissioned to sell newspapers was broadened to include schools, newspaper offices, reading rooms, bookstores, book associations, guilds, local-place associations (*huiguan*), popular associations, and general newspaper outlets. Subscriptions were also an option, particularly for well-to-do readers. For those who were less well off, there was the opportunity to peruse newspapers in reading rooms, schools, and the small-scale libraries opened by popular associations. All of these developments encouraged a shift in readership from officials to the "public" (*shehui gongzhong*).²⁷

In addition to benefiting from this expansion of press distribution networks, *Shibao* also capitalized on Shanghai's accessibility to transporta-

tion and communication networks to expand its geographic sphere of influence further. As stated in the newspaper's regulations, *Shibao* planned to engage a large number of correspondents in the provinces and abroad. It would also encourage submissions from famous individuals both within and outside China, and it would maintain one price for copies sold inside and outside Shanghai.²⁸ As a result of this commitment, *Shibao* was one of the first Chinese newspapers to have its own correspondents in Beijing and in the provinces.²⁹ Huang Yuanyong reported on political developments in the capital. This was a particularly risky assignment, since access to news concerning the government was extremely restricted, forcing journalists to bribe officials for information and to compete ruthlessly among themselves. In addition to printing these hard-earned reports from Beijing, each edition of *Shibao* devoted at least one page to letters from different regions of the country. Special representatives in various provinces contributed approximately two letters a week, each 2,000–3,000 characters in length. While the majority of the letters came from correspondents in Jiangsu and Zhejiang, there were also representatives in most of the other provinces. Ye Xiaan, for example, began sending fifteen essays and ten letters a month to Di Baoxian from Hubei in 1905.³⁰

The effectiveness of these various innovations undertaken by *Shibao*—from geographic outreach to changes in style and form—may be gauged from the number of other newspapers that followed its lead, notably *Shenbao*. In its February 8, 1905, issue, which appeared some six months after the establishment of *Shibao* and 33 years after its own founding, *Shenbao* undertook a series of twelve sweeping reforms, which included lengthening its articles, translating more pieces from foreign newspapers, printing outside submissions, employing more special correspondents, and publishing more reports from the provinces. Together with these changes, *Shenbao* also reformed its content and altered its political orientation. Whereas the newspaper had been critical of Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao at the time of the Hundred Days' Reforms, the February 8, 1905, edition, which was the first to appear after the newspaper's makeover, cited an essay of Liang's. Although *Shenbao* would never become as radical in its views as *Shibao*, it followed its competitor's lead in advancing the reformist agenda.³¹

The success of *Shibao*'s efforts at social and geographic outreach is, however, best reflected in its circulation, which was, according to Japanese consular reports and Chinese press sources, the highest of the Shanghai dailies. The August 20, 1909, edition of *Huashang lianhe bao* (Newspaper of the Chinese merchant's association) records *Shibao*'s circulation at 17,000 copies versus *Xinwen bao* at 15,000, *Shenbao* at 14,000, *Shen Zhou ribao* and *Yulun shibao* both at 9,000, and *Zhongwai ribao* at 4,000.³² These figures are consistent with the Japanese consular reports to the Foreign Office, which also put *Shibao*'s circulation at 17,000 in 1908, and with Xu Qin's estimate of *Shibao*'s circulation as 16,000 copies in September

1907. They are also comparable to the 1906 estimate for Liang Qichao's Tokyo-based *Xinmin congbao*, which was recorded as having a circulation of 14,000.³³

Although Zheng Yimei and Bao Tianxiao claimed that *Shibao* did not sell as well as the two other leading Shanghai newspapers of the period in the city itself, it was more popular outside Shanghai, particularly in the provinces of Jiangsu and Zhejiang. It was widely read in Suzhou, for example, and in neighboring towns and villages. Three thousand copies of *Shibao* were sold in Suzhou a day, and because these arrived on the early Shanghai-Suzhou train, Suzhou residents could read the paper the morning it was published. *Shibao* also had a distribution branch on Beijing's most famous street of bookstores, Liulichang.³⁴

Given the estimate that there were approximately fifteen readers per newspaper copy in the late Qing—including people who rented, borrowed, or read copies in public spaces such as reading rooms—and given the circulation figures, it can be conservatively estimated that *Shibao* had approximately 255,000 readers daily.³⁵ However, because numerous educational institutions had subscriptions to *Shibao* as well, the numbers were probably significantly higher. It is very likely that not only teachers and students but also members of the community would have had access to the newspaper through local schools. Even so, *Shibao's* circulation in particular, and the readership of the early-twentieth-century press in general, were infinitesimal in relation to the Chinese population. It has been estimated that the audience for all periodicals in the late Qing was between two and four million readers, representing approximately 1 percent of the population.³⁶

The numbers cannot fully represent the sociopolitical effect of the new medium, however. First, it is important to consider how dramatically the political press had expanded during this period, radically altering the reading culture and intellectual habits of a generation of literate elites. Newspapers that had a circulation of a few hundred copies in the mid-1890s were now reaching hundreds of thousands of readers. This broader circulation was in part due to the postal authority's agreeing to lower postal rates in 1897, contributing to the increased flow of mail in Shanghai from one million pieces in 1900 to 23 million in 1911.³⁷ It must, however, be more directly attributed to the appeal of the new-style press, and the social and political circumstances that made the readers receptive to its message.

Furthermore, the new press not only directly affected its readers, but it also had an indirect impact on the broader society. Because the people who read the new journals were typically reform minded, they did not look to the press for information or diversion alone but also for guidelines in transforming Chinese politics and society. Many of them therefore attempted to translate the reform agenda put forward in the new press into tangible changes in the middle realm. Local schoolteachers tried to communicate the importance of social reform beyond the classroom by lecturing to the

community on such issues as hygiene and foot binding. Constitutional activists took the first steps toward administrative and political reform by building institutions of local self-government at the department, county, and prefectural levels. Regional leaders responded to the press's call to protect national rights by mobilizing local populations against the government's railway policy. It was through such actions that the ideals and objectives expressed in the reform press reached, and in some measure influenced, even the lower and more far-flung rungs of society.

Cultural Entrepreneurs: Educators, Artisans, and Activists of the New Middle Realm

The *Shibao* journalists themselves embodied this broader social commitment in their choice of secondary occupations in culture and education.³⁸ Di Baoxian, the publisher of *Shibao* and a regular columnist, was also a "cultural entrepreneur." The private owner of a publishing house, Youzheng shuju, he contracted two Japanese technicians to teach the technique of colotype printing to its staff. As the first publishing house in Shanghai to use this technique, Youzheng shuju was renowned for its reprinted texts and reproductions of rubbings from stone tablet inscriptions, together with its new publications. The publishing house served as an adjunct to *Shibao*. Rather than reward the newspaper's free-lance contributors with cash, for example, Di would present them with Youzheng shuju book certificates. And because it was more financially solvent than the newspaper, its annual profits were often used to offset *Shibao's* losses.³⁹ Di also used the publishing house to expand the literary and social dimensions of *Shibao* by printing various supplements and magazines, such as *Xiaoshuo Shibao* (Fictional supplement to *Shibao*) in 1909 and *Funü Shibao* (The women's *Shibao*) in 1912. In addition to these pursuits in the world of publishing and printing, Di also had an interest in photography, which led him to found a studio for the study of photogravure, the *Mingying zhaoxiangguan*.⁴⁰

Most of the *Shibao* editors and journalists, however, pursued more pedestrian secondary occupations in the field of education. This is not only because they were not as entrepreneurial as Di but also because they were generally less well off. Although the salaries of journalists had greatly improved since the period before the rise of the political press, when writers earned as little as ten yuan a month, piecework still paid relatively poorly.⁴¹ Bao Tianxiao's original contract with *Shibao* in 1905 required him to write six leading essays a month for five yuan apiece, and he was paid two yuan for every short story of 1,000 characters. Ye Xiaan, engaged by Di Baoxian as a Hubei correspondent in 1905, received a salary of 50 yuan a month for fifteen essays (*lunshuo*) and ten letters. Permanent positions were better remunerated. When Bao was promoted to full-time editor in 1906, his monthly salary was stabilized at 80 yuan. Chen Leng, who was a

particularly prolific writer and talented editor and who had been with the newspaper from the first day, earned 150 yuan a month. Given Bao Tianxiao's estimate that family expenses in Shanghai were approximately 50–60 yuan a month, these salaries were quite adequate. However, they were slightly lower than the 200 yuan a month that Liang Qichao estimated a general editor would require to live in Shanghai at this time.⁴²

In order to supplement these meager salaries while disseminating the principles of the new education, the journalists served as instructors in new-style women's schools, as principals of private schools, and as participants in educational associations. Convinced that the new learning was the key to uplifting the common people and strengthening the nation, they took full advantage of the opening up of the educational system brought about by the reform of the schools in 1901 and the abolition of the examination system in 1905. Bao Tianxiao had been a middle-school teacher in Qingzhou county, Shandong province, before joining *Shibao* in 1906. Once he moved to Shanghai, he became associated with the Yangyinyu Women's School, and he himself established a school for women in Suzhou. Lin Kanghou was the principal of an elementary school, the Nanyang Public Affiliated Elementary School. Chen Leng and Lei Fen were also involved in women's education, and together with Bao and Lin they all served as lecturers at their friend Yang Baimin's Chengdong Women's School. Most of the *Shibao* journalists were also members of the Jiangsu jiaoyu zonghui (Jiangsu General Educational Association), which played the leading role in developing new education in the province. Established in 1905, this association was run by the most prominent local educators, who were known as both the "worn-out boots of the west gate" (the location of the association's office in Shanghai) and the "education warlords," terms that reflect the association's mix of prominent elders and dynamic new-style elites. Di Baoxian and Bao Tianxiao both served on the association's executive committee, and Lei Fen was also a member.⁴³

At the forefront of educational reform in the late Qing, the reform publicists rapidly established *Shibao* as the newspaper of the new learning. While the two other major late Qing Shanghai newspapers, *Shenbao* and *Xinwen bao*, appealed to politicomilitary and commercial audiences, respectively, *Shibao* became known as the voice of students and educators. In the words of Hu Shi, who was a young student in Shanghai in 1904, when *Shibao* was created, "Reading *Shibao* was a necessity for those members of the intellectual class who were concerned with fine arts and education."⁴⁴

The single journal that schools subscribed to, not only in Shanghai but also in the provinces, particularly Jiangsu and Zhejiang, *Shibao* served as a communication channel for the educational community: "All schools that biannually advertised for students through competitive examinations would do so in *Shibao*, not in any other newspapers." *Shibao*'s most frequent free-lance contributors were also educators, indicating that scholars and teachers represented the newspaper's most engaged readership.



The front page of *Shibao*, December 16, 1909. In the upper left corner is an advertisement for Commercial Press, Shanghai's largest publisher.

Even the nature of *Shibao's* advertising, the second source of revenue for late Qing newspapers after sales, reflected its intellectual and education-minded audience. While there were four main sources of publicity revenue in Shanghai's various journals—theaters, patent medicine companies, publications, and miscellaneous (including merchants)—*Shibao* was the only newspaper to have advertisements on the first page, and all of them were from publishing houses. The newspaper had a special contract with Shangwu yinshuguan (Commercial Press), Shanghai's largest publisher, to print advertisements for its textbooks and magazines. In addition, certain Commercial Press books were exclusively advertised in *Shibao*.⁴⁵

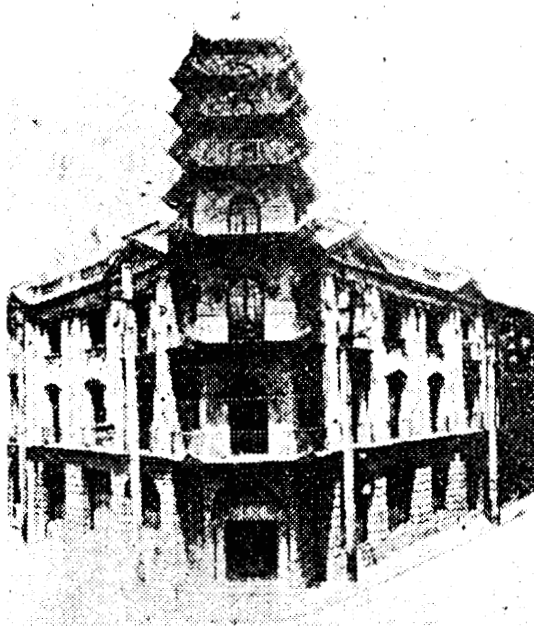
The vanguard of the new education, the *Shibao* journalists were also at the forefront of developments in fiction and poetry. Just as the traditional literati frequently wrote in several modes—literary, philosophical, and historical—many new-style journalists also made a name for themselves in the literary fields emerging in the late Qing. Di Baoxian was known in literary circles as an authority on contemporary poetry. His column, *Pingdeng ge* (Pavilion of equality), which functioned as a focal point in the early modern poetry movement in China, appeared regularly in *Shibao*. In addition, Di published two works: *Pingdeng ge shihua* (Comments on poetry from the pavilion of equality) and *Pingdeng ge biji* (Personal jottings from the pavilion of equality). Chen Leng and Bao Tianxiao, who

both published their own novels in installments in *Shibao's* pages, were likewise known outside newspaper circles for their fiction. Bao eventually became a member of the Nanshe (Southern Society), the progressive literary society founded by a group of revolutionaries in Shanghai in 1907 and formally established in Suzhou on January 13, 1909. Xu Zhiyuan, a journalist who wrote for *Shibao* under his given name, also became involved in the world of fiction after having been an editor for the prestigious Commercial Press.⁴⁶

The *Shibao* journalists' diverse activities as cultural entrepreneurs, publicists, and activists had one central locus, a "club" named Xilou (Resting Place), the quintessential institution of China's late Qing middle realm. Established by Di Baoxian and located on the floor above the newspaper offices, Xilou was a place where reformers of all persuasions could meet and exchange their views. Frequented by educators, constitutionalists, industrialists, and agitators for self-government, Xilou served as a nexus linking the spheres of learning, politics, and commerce in early twentieth-century Shanghai.⁴⁷ The club had several practical functions. Newspaper staff could receive friends there or, as its name suggests, spend their moments of leisure. It also served to keep competing journalists out of the newspaper offices and away from the temptation of scooping hot news items. The Xilou area consisted of two rooms: one for entertainment, equipped with playing cards and mahjong tiles; the other for relaxation, where guests could drink tea and casually read the newspapers. Only the most trusted and intimate acquaintances of the *Shibao* staff visited Xilou, and most visitors were from Shanghai itself or from nearby Songjiang county.⁴⁸

Xilou's most frequent guests can be divided into two, not totally discrete, groups that together formed the core of the Jiangsu-Zhejiang constitutionalist movement. The first consisted of educators and school principals. The most representative were known as the "three *juren* [provincial graduates] of Xilou": Chen Xinqing, a school principal; Yuan Xitao, an educator who would play a role in Shanghai's declaration of independence from the Qing in 1911; and Huang Yanpei, an educator and member of Sun Yat-sen's Tongmeng hui. Other guests involved in education included Shi Liangcai, an educator who took over *Shenbao* in 1911; Wu Huaijiu, who opened the first women's school in Shanghai; and Yang Baimin, the manager of the Chengdong Women's School in Shanghai, where Chen Leng, Lei Fen, Bao Tianxiao, Lin Kanghou, and others from Xilou often gave lectures.

The second group of Xilou visitors was composed of local constitutional activists involved in, for example, movements for self-government and the recovery of railway rights. This group included Zhang Jian, who was considered to be the head of Xilou. One of the leading constitutional activists in the Jiang-Zhe region, Zhang was an educator, an industrialist, and one of the directors of the key Jiangsu reform organizations, including the Shanghai Yubei lixian gonghui (Constitutional Preparation Asso-



The *Shibao* building, which housed the newspaper offices and the club Xilou, stood at the intersection of Shengping and Fuzhou streets in the newspaper district of Shanghai. Because Di Baoxian was a Buddhist, he had the building built in the distinctive form of a pagoda. (From Zeng Xubai, *Zhongguo xinwen shi*, p. 154.)

ciation). A number of his close associates also visited Xilou, including Li Pingshu, head of the Shanghai Local Self-Government Association, and Yang Tingdong, organizer of a constitutional preparation association, the Xiangzheng yubeihui, and a constitutional journal, *Xiangzheng zazhi*.⁴⁹

Xilou played a unique historical role in late Qing China. Bringing together individuals with diverse backgrounds and professional concerns but with a common social vision, the Shanghai club fostered the emergence of the new cultural and social forces that would mark late Qing reform politics.

Independence: Shanghai Constitutionalists and Tokyo Reformists

The *Shibao* journalists' role as publicists, educators, men of letters, and political activists made them exemplars of the new-style Chinese reformists.⁵⁰ Their distinct social and political role was defined not only in relation to the old society but also in relation to other groups of reformists vying for influence within the nascent middle realm. Initially tied to Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, Di Baoxian and his colleagues rapidly dis-

tanced themselves from the community of constitutional reformists exiled in Tokyo. And while they were increasingly drawn into the complex of institutions and associations that constituted the Jiangsu-Zhejiang constitutionalist movement, they nonetheless continued to maintain their political and editorial independence.

Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao had two related objectives in founding *Shibao*: to disseminate their ideas and to influence political movements in mainland China. Both objectives would have required their control over *Shibao's* management and editorial policy, and they believed their investment in the newspaper warranted this control. But Di Baoxian, who had also made an important contribution to financing the newspaper, refused to relinquish his hold on *Shibao*.

There is much ambiguity in the sources about who contributed the major funding to *Shibao*. According to Bao Tianxiao, Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao provided 30 percent of the original capital for the newspaper, and Di Baoxian the other 70 percent.⁵¹ Zhang Jinglu, a renowned mainland Chinese historian of publishing, writes, however, that *Shibao* was exclusively financed by Di Baoxian with money left over from the army provisions fund of Tang Caichang's Independent Army. Di had been a close collaborator of Tang's and had sold some of his personal property, calligraphy, and paintings to supplement the provisions fund. Since the army suffered rapid defeat in 1900, not all the money was used. It was this sum, Zhang Jinglu claims, that became the basic capital for *Shibao*.⁵²

Without resolving the question of how much Di Baoxian contributed, private correspondence between Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao reveals the important sums that the Kang-Liang faction invested in the newspaper. In a letter to Liang dated February 1908, Kang claimed that in 1903, before *Shibao* was founded, his faction contributed 70,000 yuan to its future establishment.⁵³ Chang P'eng-yüan has suggested that this 70,000 yuan was the same sum that Zhang Jinglu referred to as the Independent Army's excess provisions fund. Its source could have been investments by overseas Chinese, a hypothesis that is lent credence by the fact that Kang mentions the issue of interest.⁵⁴ Although this question cannot be definitively resolved, it is probable that both—Di, who came from a wealthy family, and Kang, who had diverse financial assets—invested in the newspaper.

Kang and Liang initially sought to exert their control over *Shibao* by appointing two of Kang's loyal disciples from Guangdong, Luo Xiaogao and Feng Tingzhi, as editors of the newspaper's leading daily essay. With Luo and Feng at the helm, members of the Kang-Liang faction believed they would be in a position to set the political tone of the newspaper and determine its position on local, national, and international issues. In the early years, 1904 and 1905, Luo and Feng did write many of the leading essays, and several others were sent in by Liang Qichao from Yokohama and published unsigned.⁵⁵ Di Baoxian refused, however, to be a "kept publisher," and he immediately moved to regain control of the newspaper's editorial function. From the beginning, he did not allow Luo and Feng

to sign their own editorials lest outsiders know the newspaper employed Guangdongese writers associated with Kang Youwei. And within a little more than a year of *Shibao's* establishment, he had relegated Kang's protégés to the lowly position of proofreaders with almost no administrative or editorial responsibilities and no say in the newspaper's finances.⁵⁶

Luo and Feng were replaced by persons who, like Di Baoxian, were from the Jiangsu-Zhejiang region surrounding Shanghai. "My province of Jiangsu has many talented men," one of the journalists was quoted as saying. "Why bother using those from Guangdong?" It was Chen Leng, one of those talented men of Jiangsu province, who eventually became the newspaper's general editor. Chen, who had joined *Shibao* immediately after it was established, quickly became Di's closest confidant, his most respected writer, and his "favored son." A prolific essayist as well as an editor, Chen would sign his pen name, "Leng," to everything he wrote in order to distinguish his articles from the unsigned essays of the Guangdongese. Enjoying unlimited editorial privileges, Chen was in a position to minimize the influence of the Kang-Liang faction over the newspaper. He did so by vetoing the publication of manuscripts sent in by leaders of the exiled reformists' faction, including Liang Qichao and Mai Menghua. In addition, Chen and Lei Fen, the second major editor from Jiangsu, both received salaries that were significantly higher than those of Luo and Feng.⁵⁷

For all these reasons, the exiled reformists accused Di Baoxian of monopolizing power on the newspaper, unilaterally making all decisions about personnel and finances, and turning *Shibao* into a mouthpiece of the Jiangsu constitutionalists rather than a forum for the reformists' ideas. In 1907 Liang Qichao and Xu Qin attempted to reclaim *Shibao* and salvage their investment in the newspaper by appointing Mai Menghua, a member of the Kang-Liang group, as *Shibao's* new general editor. Di Baoxian refused to consider the proposal.⁵⁸

The Tokyo reformists' preeminent concern in controlling *Shibao's* editorial direction was to disseminate the principles of the Society to Protect the [Guangxu] Emperor (Baohuang hui). Since 1898, when the society became the central institution of the reformist movement, Kang and Liang had tried to promote its principles from Japan and other nations abroad. In early 1904, shortly before the founding of *Shibao*, Kang had ordered his disciple Xu Qin to establish *Shangbao* (The merchant's journal) in Hong Kong in an effort to promote the pro-Guangxu program. He held the same hopes for *Shibao* in Shanghai. Liang Qichao was returning to Japan from a meeting in Hong Kong of the Society to Protect the Emperor when he stopped in Shanghai to establish *Shibao* in early 1904.⁵⁹ Much to Kang and Liang's disappointment, however, even when Kang's disciples at *Shibao*, Luo and Feng, were responsible for editing the paper, they "confined their discussions to the matter at hand and never publicized [what the *Shibao* editors considered to be] the unworthy cause of the Society to Protect the Emperor."⁶⁰

Di Baoxian and Chen Leng were the *Shibao* members who were most

resistant to promoting the Baohuang hui's ideology, prompting the exiled reformists to declare that these two men clearly did not belong to their "faction" (*dang*). Xu Qin and Tang Juedun, members of the Tokyo group, described Di as a renegade whose mind was unfathomable. Others referred to Chen Leng as a maverick who was totally unwilling to promote their group's cause in mainland China. Ma Xiangbo and Xiong Xiling also voiced their dissatisfaction with the position of importance that Di Baoxian had granted Chen Leng on *Shibao*.⁶¹

Chen had been identified with anti-Kang-Liang groups in the past, first as a former delegate for the Xing Zhong hui (Revive China Society), one of the associations that was to merge to form the Tongmeng hui in 1905, and later as a journalist for the Shanghai magazine *Dalu* ("The Continent") from 1902. This monthly periodical exemplifies the complexity of the political landscape in this period. While it was opposed to Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, and their Society to Protect the Emperor, it was not prorevolutionary. Involved in a running dispute with Liang's *Xinmin congbao*, *Dalu* editorialists accused Liang of plagiarizing the Japanese, soliciting money from overseas students to fill his own pockets, extorting money from overseas Chinese, and writing trivialities. Some editorialists even went so far as to condone the actions of Ronglu, the Manchu official who helped Cixi in executing the 1898 coup, while others compared Kang to the hated Manchu official Gangyi.⁶²

Although *Dalu* had not been a revolutionary paper, Chen and other *Shibao* journalists clearly did have radical leanings. This was manifest in their editorials, which often expressed views favorable to the revolutionaries, Kang and Liang's principal ideological and political antagonists. Between 1905 and 1907 a fierce theoretical debate raged between the reformists and the revolutionaries in the pages of their respective press organs in Japan: Liang Qichao's *Xinmin congbao* and the Tongmeng hui's *Minbao* (People's news).⁶³ During this time, the *Shibao* journalists refused to endorse Liang's antirevolutionary position. Identifying the Qing regime as the principal obstacle to political and social reform, they willingly cooperated with the revolutionaries in order to diminish imperial power. Huang Yanpei, for example, a member of the Tongmeng hui, was closely associated with *Shibao* journalists and other constitutionalists through his membership in the Shanghai-based Constitutional Preparation Association and the Jiangsu Provincial Assembly. He was also a frequent visitor to Xilou.⁶⁴

The *Shibao* editorialists also generally avoided criticizing the revolutionaries in their commentaries, and they openly expressed sympathy for revolutionary martyrs. When the female revolutionary Qiu Jin was executed by the Qing authorities on July 15, 1907, for example, *Shibao* published a two-part article written by a woman, Jiang Zao, which was sympathetic to Qiu's case, and another three-part article that was highly critical of the government's actions. Over a year after the execution, Bao Tianxiao wrote a short essay recounting how the inhabitants of Ningguo prefecture

had refused to welcome the Manchu official Guifu, who had been responsible for Qiu's death.⁶⁵ Chen Leng was most consistently outspoken in favor of the revolutionaries. He so enraged Kang Youwei with his writings that Kang protested directly to Di Baoxian. But Di continued to give Chen free rein, and ultimately it was Chen who was the force behind *Shibao's* early embrace of the revolutionary events in October 1911.⁶⁶

The Kang-Liang faction had hoped to use *Shibao* not only to disseminate its theories but also to promote its political causes in China. There had been an early convergence of interests between the Tokyo and Shanghai reformists on the issue of the recovery of national rights to the Yue-Han (Guangzhou-Hankou) Railway in 1904-5—an issue that developed when treaties were signed between Beijing and Washington in 1898 and 1900, ensuring loans for the railway (which crossed the three provinces of Guangdong, Hubei, and Hunan) from the U.S. government and making the Americans responsible for engineering and managing the railway. Upon his return to Yokohama after founding *Shibao* in 1904, Liang used *Shibao's* pages to promote the railway rights recovery movement. He wrote several unsigned essays, with supplementary investigative reports, in an effort to raise awareness of the issue and hasten the formation of local railway self-management groups.⁶⁷ *Shibao* editors and journalists in Shanghai also supported the railway struggle, printing materials on secret negotiations concerning rights to the railway and publishing editorials that openly accused the government of selling out the nation. Inspired in part by the press's consciousness-raising effort, public protest over the railway issue ultimately forced the Qing government to abrogate its treaty with the United States in September 1905.⁶⁸

Following the resolution of this issue, however, the Shanghai daily rapidly distanced itself from the Kang-Liang faction and became more closely aligned with the constitutionalists of Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces. As the center of the reform movement shifted from Japan to China in 1906, when the dynasty committed itself to a program of constitutional reform, *Shibao* had little reason to look to Tokyo for direction. Located in the center of the Jiangsu-Zhejiang region and drawing most of its staff from this area, the newspaper was naturally drawn into the dynamics of the Jiang-Zhe constitutional movement, one of the most dynamic regional movements in China.

Di Baoxian had a personal and professional relationship with Zhang Jian, one of the leading figures in the Xilou group, the Jiangsu Educational Association, the Shanghai Constitutional Preparation Association, and the Jiangsu Provincial Assembly. While Di and most of the other *Shibao* editors and journalists were active members in these institutions, *Shibao* served, in turn, as the mouthpiece for Zhang Jian's political concerns, publishing his essays and recording his important speeches.⁶⁹ Zhang had particularly close ties to *Shibao's* Shanghai news editor, Lei Fen, who eventually left the newspaper in 1909 to serve as Zhang's full-time political advisor.

Zhang Jian's political style was altogether different from Kang Youwei's or Liang Qichao's. An entrepreneur and an educator deeply involved in the minutiae of local projects, he was more a pragmatist than a theorist. This was evident in his comment at the time of the Hundred Days' Reforms that "Kang wants to change the institutions, but he does not know with what to replace them," as well as in his later warning to Liang Qichao that continually stirring up trouble would not lead him anywhere.⁷⁰ Zhang's pragmatism was part of his appeal to the *Shibao* editors, who were themselves more concerned with the practical than the more arcane and theoretical aspects of reform.

Members of the Kang-Liang faction, who had been so powerless to control *Shibao*, resented the Shanghai daily's ties to the Jiang-Zhe constitutionalist movement and claimed that *Shibao* was ideologically and politically under Zhang Jian's thumb.⁷¹ This position was, however, clearly overstated. Although there were many ties between the newspaper and the Jiang-Zhe constitutionalists, there were also important political and social differences. Zhang Jian was more politically conservative than the *Shibao* journalists and editors, and they distanced themselves from him on several political issues. While Zhang attempted to minimize conflicts with Governor-General Zhang Renjun in the Jiangsu Provincial Assembly debates, for example, the *Shibao* journalists wrote commentaries that were consistently critical of the governor.⁷² And in late 1910 *Shibao* editorialists mocked the festivities organized by Zhang Jian and his followers to celebrate the Qing government's feeble concessions to the demands of the Parliamentary Petition Movement's activists, calling instead for the battle to continue. Zhang, who was known as a member of the Jiangsu Elders Faction (Jiangsu yuanlaopai), was also more socially conservative than those in *Shibao*'s circles. He once voiced his disbelief that anything could get done at the newspaper given Chen Leng's passion for gambling (*haodu*) and Bao Tianxiao's penchant for visiting whorehouses (*haopiao*).⁷³

The escalating tensions between the Shanghai and Tokyo groups over *Shibao*'s Jiang-Zhe connections and its editorial independence were brought to a head in 1907 and 1908 by Di Baoxian's refusal to endorse the exiled reformists' Zhengwen she (Political Information Society) and by increasing financial strains. The Political Information Society and its journal, the monthly *Zhenglun*, were established in Tokyo in October and November 1907, respectively, to replace *Xinmin congbao*, which had stopped publication that August.⁷⁴ From 1904 to 1907 the vision and fate of *Shibao* and *Xinmin congbao* had often been connected despite Di's and Chen's independence. Created by Liang Qichao, the two journals echoed similar themes: popular renewal, universal education, and the development of a new citizenry. And both were, however reluctantly on *Shibao*'s part, associated with the Society to Protect the Emperor. Despite *Shibao*'s efforts to maintain its distance, it still suffered, Bao wrote, from "having the odor of the Baohuang hui."⁷⁵ As a result of this affiliation, both *Xinmin congbao*

and *Shibao* were targets of the hostility of radical groups; in March 1907, for example, the offices of *Shibao* and of the Shanghai branch of *Xinmin congbao* were both set on fire.⁷⁶

The Kang-Liang faction had hoped that this connection between *Shibao* and *Xinmin congbao* would be extended to the latter's successor, *Zhenglun*, and the society it represented, the Zhengwen she. The exiled reformists had great plans for this new society, which they claimed would represent all reformists and constitutionalists in both Japan and China. When Di Baoxian thwarted Kang and Liang's efforts to use *Shibao* to expand the society's influence on the mainland, they accused him not only of discrediting the Zhengwen she but also of dividing the constitutionalist movement. Frustrated at having invested over 200,000 yuan in a newspaper that was ultimately of no use to their faction, the Tokyo-based reformists gradually relinquished their efforts to reclaim *Shibao*.⁷⁷

Although Liang Qichao, Ma Xiangbo, and Xiong Xiling all blamed Chen Leng for the newspaper's refusal to cooperate on the Political Information Society issue, the reason for *Shibao*'s reluctance was not only ideological or factional but also practical. Di Baoxian, who was apparently not a political risk taker, realized that it was not expedient for the newspaper to endorse a society that had been condemned as subversive by Grand Minister of State Yuan Shikai.⁷⁸ Di's deference to Yuan was already a long-standing source of contention between the *Shibao* publisher and the exiled reformists, who despised Yuan for his role in the 1898 coup. From *Shibao*'s founding they had pressed Di to take the lead in criticizing Yuan Shikai in the press, which Di refused to do. While not openly supporting Yuan's position on the Political Information Society in mid-1908, *Shibao* did publish his statement accusing the society of being detrimental to the stability and well-being of the Chinese nation.⁷⁹ In August 1908 the Zhengwen she was disbanded by the Qing government for "promoting chaos and endangering public order." *Zhenglun* was suppressed after seven issues for having "offended the honor of the court" and for "unsettling public opinion."⁸⁰

This final dispute over the Zhengwen she was compounded by financial tensions, which also escalated in late 1907 and early 1908. According to Kang Youwei, *Shibao* had a constant need for subsidies. The 70,000 yuan contributed by the exiled reformists in 1903 had been followed by another 40,000 yuan in 1904, including 20,000 that Kang had borrowed from the Guangzhi Publishing House, a concern in which he had a financial interest. In 1905, 1906, and 1907 the Tokyo-based group further contributed at least 10,000 yuan a year to the newspaper. Together with three years' interest that was also donated, the sum amounted to nearly 200,000 yuan. These funds were still far from sufficient to meet all of *Shibao*'s needs, however. Estimates for *Shibao*'s monthly expenses were approximately 7,000 yuan, including 4,000 yuan a month for advertising. Not including the expense of telegrams from the Beijing correspondent and the cost of renovating the editorial offices, annual expenses totaled at least 100,000

yuan.⁸¹ *Shibao's* multiplying financial needs were particularly onerous for Kang and Liang at this time, since it had become increasingly difficult for them to raise money overseas.⁸²

In 1907 *Shibao's* financial need was even greater because the newspaper was faced with two additional expenses. The first was due to the expansion of the newspaper from eight to twelve pages of print (representing an increase from two to three large pages), which had cost the newspaper over 10,000 yuan by September 1907. The second was the cost of renovating the newspaper's offices, which had been damaged by fire in March of that year. Di Baoxian reported to Xu Qin, a member of the Kang-Liang faction, that although the newspaper had recently received a contribution of 20,000 yuan from Jiangbei, all of the money had been spent on the office renovations. Claiming that *Shibao* was short 200,000 yuan, with no means of covering the sum, Di asked Xu to request another 20,000 from Kang Youwei. By early 1908, however, salvaging *Shibao* was no longer the exiled reformists' financial priority.

Members of the Kang-Liang faction had finally become exasperated with *Shibao's* limitless financial needs. Xu Qin stated that even if the newspaper were granted 100,000 or 200,000 yuan, the money would never be enough.⁸³ Liang claimed, after receiving 1,000 yuan to help *Shibao*, that the sum was as insufficient for the task as a glass of water would be in putting out a cartload of burning firewood. When Liang finally received a long-awaited 20,000 yuan from Kang, he spent it on the Political Information Society offices in Japan and China. At the same time, the Tokyo-based reformists began investing in *Hankou bao* (Hankou news), a new mainland Chinese newspaper they hoped would replace *Shibao* as their forum in China.⁸⁴

From the time of its creation in 1904, *Shibao* gradually established its own political position and its own cultural role without being beholden to either the dictates of the Kang-Liang faction or the decisions of the Jiang-Zhe constitutionalist movement. *Shibao's* editors supported the establishment of a constitutional monarchy, for example, but they refused to endorse Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao's Society to Protect the Emperor. The newspaper was closely aligned with Zhang Jian, the leader of the Jiang-Zhe constitutionalist movement, but it took a consistently more strident anti-Qing position than did Zhang and supported the 1911 Revolution much more readily. *Shibao* both shaped and was shaped by the broadly reformist politics of the Lower Yangzi region, which embraced views ranging from moderate reformism to much more radical and even revolutionary ideas. By responding directly to political events in the early twentieth century and not to the leadership of any one faction or party, *Shibao* played a crucial role in developing the complexity, plurality, and scope of the late Qing middle realm.

*Theorizing the Middle Realm:
Classical and Contemporary
Sources of Authority*

[By not respecting freedom of expression,] the government is not only going against the way of the advanced constitutional nations; it is also turning its back on the greater meaning handed down by the Chinese classics.

—Jian He, *Shibao*, January 19, 1908

The *Shibao* journalists envisaged the emerging late Qing middle realm—encompassing the sphere of print they commanded and the middle level of society they represented—as a new arena of negotiation between ruler and ruled. While they continued to define this arena in terms of the dynastic structure and the fundamental principles of Chinese classical theory, they also viewed it as the site of a radically new politics of contestation. Based on constitutional principles and aimed at countering the government’s efforts to recentralize dynastic authority, this new realm would alter the way power operated in early-twentieth-century China.

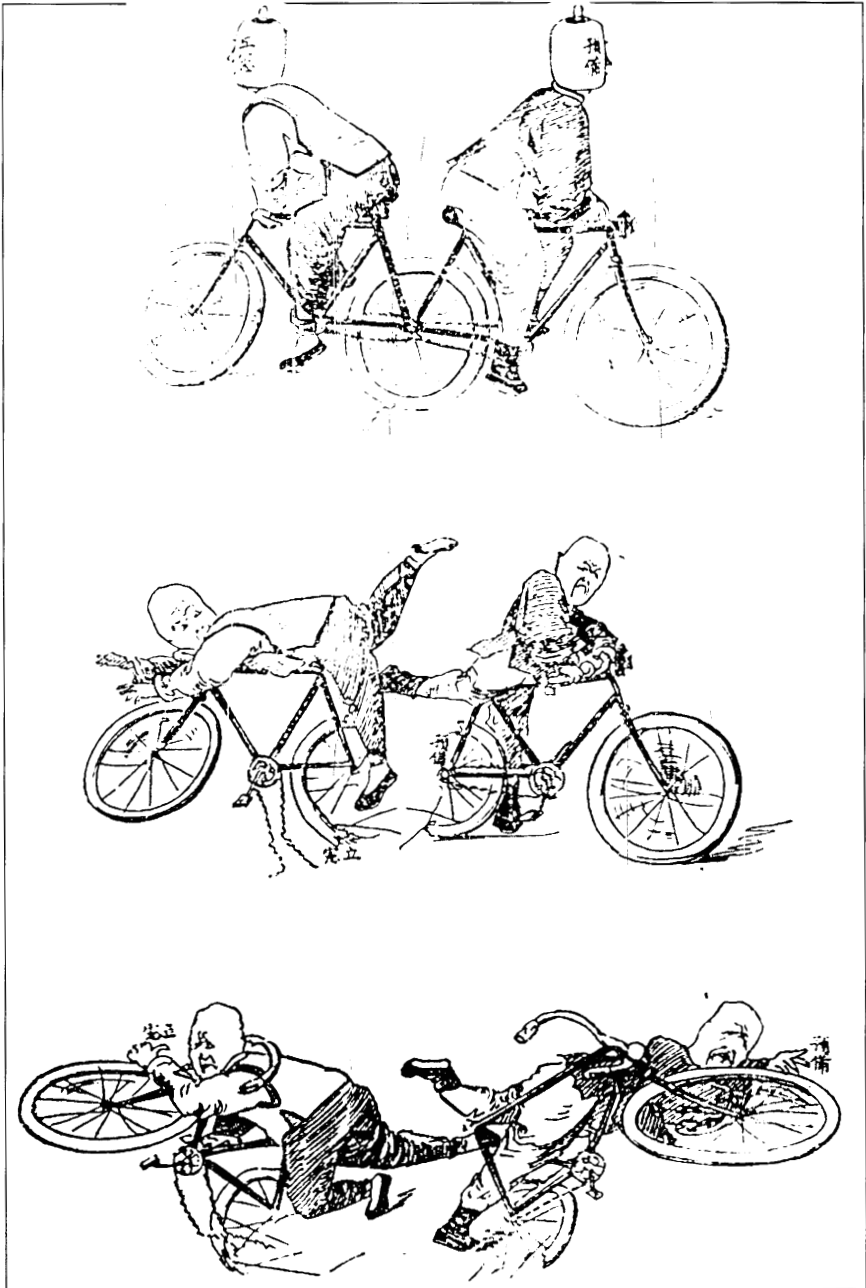
The journalists defined the middle realm in terms of three new, or newly interpreted, concepts associated with foreign constitutionalism. The first was the nation (*guojia*). Embracing both the dynasty and society, but not exclusively identified with either, the nation constituted the arena where the state or government (*zhengfu*) and society would meet and mutually decide China’s course under the authority of the constitution. The input of society into this process of negotiation was further dependent on two nascent forces in the late Qing polity: popular power (*minquan*) and public opinion (*yulun*). While the rise of *minquan* would diminish dynastic power by shifting the locus of authority from the closed world of dynastic imperium into the open realm of popular politics, public opinion

would be the voice of this emerging popular power and the tribunal of the new political domain.

The *Shibao* journalists' appeal to these newly defined concepts—the nation, popular power, public opinion—reflected their training in Western social and political theory. This course of study expanded their cultural horizons, compelling them to challenge the familiar Confucian social and political constructs and to reorient their political vision. Rather than continue to look backward to the golden age of antiquity for revelations concerning dynastic restoration, they began to look outward to new models of national reform and forward to the establishment of Chinese constitutionalism. The journalists had not, however, become completely alienated from the Confucian heritage, as the iconoclasts of the May Fourth period would be some five or ten years later. Trained in the classical texts, they lived sufficiently within the Chinese cultural tradition to see it not as a monolithic entity, but as offering alternatives, conflicts, and possibilities that left room for the integration of new ideas.¹ Continuing to uphold the classical constructs as their own most enduring points of reference, they infused these time-honored precepts with a radically new spirit and fused them with constitutional principles. The result was tension rather than synthesis, with the editorialists themselves often unaware of the contradictions that arose as they continued to honor the inherited ideal of harmony between ruler and ruled while promoting the confrontational new mode of public politics.

This tension is most apparent in the journalists' equation of modern Western constitutionalism with China's "ancient constitutionalism"—the classical theory of the people as the foundation of the nation (*minben*).² An element in all of the Thirteen Classics, this theory states that the ruler must tend to the people's welfare in order to ensure stability and prosperity in the polity. Despite this original focus on the role of the ruler, however, this theory was later read by generations of social critics as an assertion of the primacy of the people. The richest source of positive social images in the Chinese tradition, it provided writers from Qu Yuan (339–c. 278 B.C.E.) of the Warring States period to Huang Zongxi (1610–95) and Tang Zhen (1630–1704) of the Ming and Qing dynasties with the means of denouncing autocratic authority and calling attention to the sufferings of the people.³ Following in the line of these social critics, the late Qing reformists appealed to the theory of the people as the foundation of the nation in promoting their own political vision. Reinterpreting the ancient *minben* trope according to their twentieth-century political concerns, they claimed that ancient Chinese and contemporary Western constitutionalism shared the same ultimate ideals: the unification of ruler and ruled, social welfare, and popular participation in the political process.

The journalists also appealed to the age-old principle of *gong* in formulating and validating their constitutional claims.⁴ Intimately connected to



"Constitutional preparation," *Shibao*, April 6, 7, and 8, 1907. One cartoonist's view of the tensions and difficulties of constitutional reform, with "constitutionalism" riding in one direction and "preparation" in the other.

minben thought in the Confucian discourse, the concept of *gong* is rich in classical resonances and multiple historical meanings. Most often conceived in a dichotomous relationship with *si*—privateness and selfishness, wickedness or unjustness (*buzheng*)—*gong* embraces a range of connotations, from openness and publicness to the ethical principles of moral equality (*pingfen*), justice (*zheng*), and fairness (*gongping*).⁵ In order to re-establish the principle of *gong* in their age and lay the foundation for an open and just middle realm, the reform journalists invested this classical concept with a new significance. Associating it with the nation rather than the dynasty, they redefined *gong* in terms of the assertion of popular power and the free expression of public opinion.

Seeking both to recover venerable ideals that had fallen into obscurity and to apply contemporary political solutions to the problems of the time, the new publicists thus appealed to a fusion of old and new cultural and political constructs, combining classical conceptions of society and justice with Western notions of constitutionalism, nationalism, and civil rights. While they followed the Confucian practice of contrasting a troubled present with an idyllic past, they further extended this juxtaposition by equating the “glory” of the modern constitutional nations with China’s golden antiquity. Advocating the principles of appropriateness and the golden mean in the inaugural statement to *Shibao*, for example, Liang Qichao quoted the *Book of Rites* and Confucius alongside Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer.⁶ Another editorialist promoted democratic constitutionalism by likening Montesquieu’s advanced views on democracy to those of Mencius, urging the emperor to “look backward to the halcyon days of the emperors Yao and Shun, and outward to the contemporary model of the United States.”⁷ The sources of authority for the journalists’ new politics were thus drawn from both “the greater meaning handed down by the classics” and the experience of the “advanced nations” (*wenming guo*) of the contemporary world.⁸

While the journalists’ appeal to these disparate ideas—classical Chinese and present-day foreign—reflects an underlying tension in their reform project, their method of appropriating these ideas provides insights into China’s unique history in the early twentieth century. Ultimately, it was not the reformists’ adoption, but rather their adaptation, of foreign models and terms that reveals the most about the distinctly Chinese vision of constitutionalism. And it was not the bold newness of their claims but the traditional resonances echoing within them that suggest the true potential for reform in early-twentieth-century China.

The Nation (‘*Guojia*’)

The late Qing reformists’ primary political concern was to shift the locus of authority from the imperial court to the middle realm by replacing the dynastic interest with the national interest as the ruling principle

in the polity. This shift was premised on a new conception of the nation (*guojia*). In ancient times, the *guojia* had been conceived of as the combination of the fiefs (*guo*) of the feudal princes (*zhuhou*) and the communities (*jia*) of the great officers of state (*dai fu*). In later periods, the ideas of "nation" and the dynasty were collapsed, and *guojia* came to refer instead to the imperial system. This centuries-old theory of imperial sovereignty was repudiated in the late Qing reformist discourse as the new publicists drew a distinction between nation and dynasty and claimed that the *guojia* was the collective property of all of those who inhabited the national territory, not the private property of the ruling house.

This redefinition reflected the development of statecraft consciousness in the late Qing as the reformists sought effective responses to both the foreign threat and imperial autocracy. Realizing that the encroachment of the "great powers" on China's territory endangered the survival not only of the ruling house but of the nation itself and that the court was incapable of adequately addressing this challenge, they advocated mobilizing the entire population to defend the national interest. The notion of *guojia* thus took on a new meaning in both the international and domestic contexts, representing an assertion of sovereignty in the international arena and of popular power within the dynastic structure.⁹

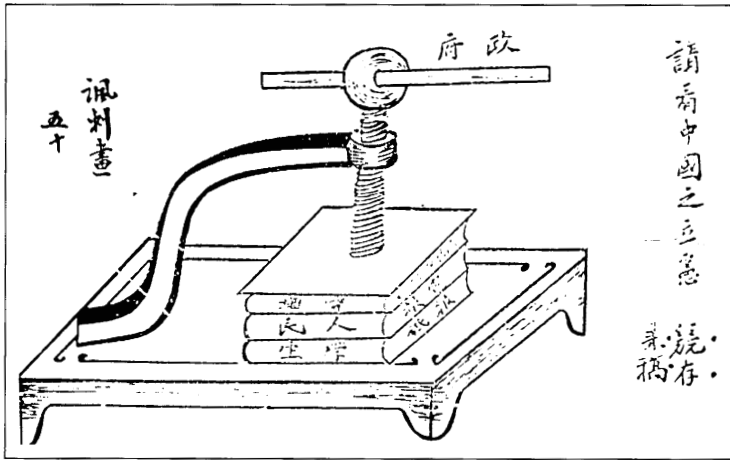
Late Qing reformists sought historic sanction for this new concept of the nation in the long-standing Confucian and Neo-Confucian discourse on collective (*gong*) and private (*si*) interests.¹⁰ They referred, for example, to the ancient text, the *Spring and Autumn Annals of Mr. Lü* (*Lüshi chunqiu*) in explaining the danger of equating the broader national interest (*gong*) with the private, selfish interest (*si*) of the ruling house. "The world (*tianxia*) is not the world of one man," the *Lüshi chunqiu* declared; "the world is the world of the people of the world."¹¹ In elaborating their critique of dynastic self-interest, the reformists were perhaps most directly influenced by the late Ming thinker Huang Zongxi. Although Huang's writings were banned by the Qing government, two chapters of the *Mingyi daifanglu* (A plan for the prince), "On Rulership" ("Yuanjun") and "On Ministership" ("Yuanchen"), circulated among members of the revolutionary and reform movements in the late nineteenth century. Resonating with late Qing political concerns, the "Yuanchen" contrasted rulership as a public trust with dynastic rule as the embodiment of the selfish desire to own and control everything. The policies of the empire should be "for the good of all under heaven, not for the good of the ruler," the text stated, "for the good of the masses [*wanmin*], not for the good of one clan."¹² Liang Qichao and Tan Sitong were so inspired by Huang's violent opposition to despotism that they secretly made tens of thousands of copies of the proscribed text while teaching in Hunan in 1897.¹³ Their efforts made Huang's writings more accessible to reformists such as the *Shibao* journalists.

Despite similarities between late Ming critiques of dynastic self-

interest and the late Qing conception of the nation, the Qing reformists were much more adamantly and openly antiautocratic than their Ming predecessors. This more oppositional stance was reflected in Liang Qichao's articulation of a clear semantic distinction between the terms "dynasty" (*chaoting*) and "nation" (*guojia*) in a 1900 essay. "The nation," he wrote, "is the public property [*gongchan*] of all the people in the nation; the dynasty is the private property [*siye*] of one clan." And while "the future of the nation is very long, the destiny of one clan is very short; while the area of the nation is immense, the prestige of one clan is trifling. The so-called dynasty is nothing but an accidental and temporary phenomenon, the most prominent family within the greater family of the entire nation. In order for a dynasty to exist, there must first be a nation. And while the nation can change the quality of the dynasty, the dynasty cannot absorb the nation."¹⁴

The *Shibao* journalists further expanded on this distinction between the dynasty and the nation. In 1904 an editorialist claimed that "those who have even the slightest understanding of the concept of nationhood all know that the nation is not the private property of the imperial family but that it belongs to all. Therefore, those who want to strengthen the nation need not rely on the imposing authority of a minority of heroes, militarists, and strongmen—but on the spirit of the majority."¹⁵ If this "spirit of the majority" were to triumph and the nation to survive, the journalists insisted, the people themselves had to be capable of making this important distinction: "A nation goes into decline when its people do not know the difference between the nation and the dynasty." And if they do not know the difference, it is precisely because "they had been weakened under the oppressive weight of the autocratic political system."¹⁶

In a 1906 article on the fundamentals of constitutionalism, another author expanded on the difference between the nation and the state or government that represents the dynasty. Promoting the idea of the middle realm, he explained that the nation included both the state and society and so could not be equated with either of them. He condemned the view of populists who claimed that "society and the state are one and the same, and the people are the main body of sovereignty." It was such a view, he opined, that had given rise to mob rule (*baomin zhengzhi*) in eighteenth-century Europe and to the "scourge of anarchism" in early-twentieth-century China. The editorialist was equally critical of those who asserted that the state was "the main locus of sovereignty." "Since ancient times," he claimed, "autocratic governments have all been guilty of this error." Such views gave rise to imperial despotism (*baojun zhengzhi*), which had predominated in Europe before the eighteenth century. The idea of nationhood that the reformists espoused therefore lay somewhere in the middle ground between statism and populism: "A compromise between the theories of state sovereignty and popular sovereignty, it placed the nation above both the state and the people." The journalists also linked the idea of



"Please take a look at Chinese constitutionalism," *Shibao*, December 21, 1907. The government is a vise crushing society: the people, students, and newspapers.

the nation to the constitution, which would serve as its fundamental law. "Those who govern and those who are governed all act under the constitution," the 1906 editorialist wrote. "Therefore, it is false to say the state establishes the constitution and uses it to control society. And it is also false to say society establishes the constitution to limit the state."¹⁷ Rather, it was the constitution that would both "inhibit the rulers from using their autocratic powers and force the ruled to abandon their passivity."¹⁸

The publicists were initially encouraged by the court's edict announcing a program of constitutional preparation in September 1906. But they soon realized that the imperial authorities did not share their understanding of the role of the constitution or of the nation. Over a year after the edict was published, the editorialist Hu Ma wrote that despite the government's supposed plan to "open up all affairs of state" to the people and establish a constitution, "all decisions continued to be made by the dynasty." While the Qing court upheld the ideal of the "unification of ruler and ruled [*shangxia yixin*]," those who constituted the nation—including "gentry, merchants, literati, and commoners [*shenshang tushu*]"—were still left out of the political equation. "We lowly people [*xiaoren*]," Hu wrote, "continue anxiously to await the day when the constitution will be established."¹⁹

Although Hu Ma's criticism of the dynasty's policies is an assertion of the new politics of contestation, his appeal to the rhetoric of the "unification of the hearts of ruler and ruled" reflects the enduring power of the ancient *minben* ethos of social unity. Many of the reform publicists, like Hu Ma, explicitly identified their new vision of the nation and mod-

ern constitutionalism with classical *minben* principles. In an 1898 essay on Mencius, for example, Liang Qichao had equated *minben* theory with modern Western government. "Mencius said the people are the most important element in the nation, and that their concerns must be immediately addressed," Liang wrote. "Therefore his entire text spoke of benevolent government, kingly government, compassionate government, all for the sake of the people. The governments of the various Western nations have almost approximated this today."²⁰

The *Shibao* journalist using the pen name Min, or "The People," explained the rise of the constitutional movement and the emerging concept of the nation in China by referring not only to new forces but also to the reemergence of *minben* thought. Constitutionalism would triumph over official resistance to reform, he claimed, because "the banner of popular power [*minquan*] was flying higher day by day, Western learning was spreading to the east," and "*minben* thought was increasingly realized in the nation." He made specific references to "the ancient theories [expounded in the *Shangshu* (Documents classic) and the *Mencius*], that 'only the people are the foundation of the nation,' and 'the people are the most important element [in a nation].'"²¹ Min also drew on *minben* principles to emphasize the distinction between the dynasty and the nation and to denounce "the erroneous theory that claims that the modern sovereign is equal to the nation" (*l'état c'est moi*, in other words). Only when the ruler began to "plan for the survival of the collective citizenry" would "the true meaning of the nation" finally be realized.²²

Even when the *Shibao* editorialists did not explicitly refer to classical *minben* texts, the familiar *minben* tenets echoed in their discussions of the nation. Whereas "in an autocratic dynasty," Hu Ma wrote, "the emperor is the foundation of the nation, in a constitutional nation, the people [*minren*] are the foundation of the nation, and the monarch is nothing more than their representative." It was only in recent history, he argued, that this fundamental principle had been betrayed. "Looking at the history books," he noted, "with the exception of the cruelty of Jie and Zhou [the last rulers of the Xia and Shang Dynasties, respectively], the two generations of Qin emperors, and the tyranny of Emperor Yang of the Sui Dynasty, all rulers devoted themselves to the people. It is not until today that one sees such a disjunction between the dynasty and popular sentiments." Qing officials who claimed that they respected the national ethical teachings actually betrayed the message of the sages and worthies by going "against the will of the people [*minzhi*]." In admonishing these officials, Hu Ma quoted the Confucian classic, the *Great Learning* (*Daxue*): "Love what the people love, hate what the people hate. Those who follow these principles may be called the mother and father of the people." The *Great Learning* further says, "If the ruler loves that which the people hate and hates that which the people love, this goes against human nature and will bring disaster."²³

Other journalists, however, did not see the abuse of the people as a recent trend but rather as an age-old scourge that the establishment of the nation under constitutionalism alone could finally alleviate. An editorialist using the pseudonym Jiu Jiu (meaning "The End of a Long, Cold Winter") declared that "from ancient times the rulers have betrayed the people and destabilized the foundation of the nation. They have done nothing but trouble the people, agitating them and preventing them from proceeding with their own lives." He quoted at length from the ode entitled "The People's Labor" ("Min Lao"), an officer's lament over the prevailing misery of the distressed "lower people." Using this ode, Jiu Jiu indirectly chastised the late Qing officials for their neglect of the well-being of the population and urged the people to take their fate into their own hands. "Citizens, citizens!" he pleaded. "Demand that the reward of constitutionalism will have its day."²⁴

According to these editorialists, the greatest impediment to the recovery of the lost *minben* ideal was the self-interest of the ruling officials. Min wrote that the imperial bureaucrats had only drafted the New Policies because "they had no choice but to follow behind the great powers and whitewash their real attitude toward the people." They did not really feel responsible for the welfare of society, nor were they outraged by popular suffering: "The government's true motivation for introducing reform was nothing but self-interest."²⁵ This primacy of self-interest, Hu Ma argued, directly contradicted the time-honored principles of the collective good (*gong*) and the primacy of the people. The classical texts, he claimed, "clearly stated that those above should exhaust their duties for the sake of the people." The *Documents Classic*, for example, claimed that "if the people do not obtain their livelihood, then it is [the ruler's] fault," while the *Poetry Classic* (*Shijing*) stated that the "emperor is only happy when he is like a parent to the people." Hu Ma lamented that despite these classical injunctions, "for the last 250 years the citizens alone have taken full responsibility for their duties in the nation."²⁶

The centrality of the ancient principles of *minben* and *gong* to the new publicists' mission remained even as their focus shifted from advocacy of constitutional monarchy to advocacy of democratic constitutionalism and republicanism. The argument for democratic constitutionalism expressed in an essay by Xu Qian, for example, like the arguments for constitutional monarchy that preceded it, equated ancient and Western constitutionalism. "I have heard," he wrote, "that Mencius said 'the people are the most important element [in a nation]; the spirits of the land and grain are the next; the sovereign is lightest.' This is the ancient theory of democratic constitutionalism invented by China. From the time when Montesquieu advocated popular power [*minquan*], foreigners also began to understand this principle." Indirectly petitioning the emperor to abdicate, Xu appealed to the principle of *gong* in order to sanction the establishment of

a republic. He argued that the ancient sage-kings Yao and Shun had embraced constitutional democracy by rejecting the belief that “one family owned the whole realm [*jia tianxia*],” a belief that violated the “public good [*dagong*].”²⁷

Even as they advocated dismantling the dynastic structure in order to renew the nation, then, the reform publicists continued to sanction their new political claims with appeals to timeless principles. Their approach reveals both how the past was reinvented in new meanings of the nation and how embedded the new politics of contestation was in a universe of familiar cultural constructs.²⁸

Popular Power ('Minquan')

The publicists' concept of popular power was intimately connected to their new understanding of the nation. Their distinction between the dynasty and the nation (*guojia*) was reflected in a series of dichotomies describing the middle realm: the “people's nation” (*minguo*) versus the “sovereign's nation” (*junquo*), the “public nation of the citizen” (*guomin zhi gongguo*) versus the “private nation [*siguo*] of the dynasty,” and popular power (*minquan*) versus imperial power (*junquan*). Linked to the inherited principle of *gong*, popular power was both opposed to the selfish interests and private rights of the emperor (*dasi*) and identified with the people's legitimate self-interest (*si*).²⁹ While this validation of the popular self-interest as a source of *minquan* has precedents in the established discourse on *gong* and *si*—the two terms were often depicted in classical writings as part of a continuum running from the particular to the collective, or as complementary rather than opposing values—the idea of the people's practical self-interest took on a new significance in the late Qing as it became tied to the concept of the nation. The reformists believed that while the dynastic authorities neglected China's larger public interest, endangering national survival, the assertion of the people's practical self-interest through the development of popular power would ensure national salvation.³⁰

Whereas the nation, or *guojia*, was an old term that had been infused with new meaning in the late Qing, popular power, or *minquan*, was a late-nineteenth-century neologism. The single character *quan* does, however, have many resonances that are potentially suggestive for the meaning of *minquan*, particularly in its New Text Confucian rendering as “political expedience.” While according to the classical Confucian doctrine of the standard and the exceptional (*jing* and *quan*), imperial power would be considered the political standard, according to New Text doctrine exceptional circumstances such as the late Qing national crisis would warrant balancing imperial power with popular power to ensure the nation's survival. As the dynasty failed to use the power (*junquan*) it had received

from Heaven to protect society, it became necessary for alternative forces to sanction a new, more popularly based power in an effort to preserve the nation.³¹

These meanings of *quan* may have informed the late Qing reformists' understanding of the character compound *minquan*. The inspiration for the concept itself was distinctly foreign, however. A rendering of the Western notions of democracy and civil rights, the term first appeared in the May 19, 1878, entry of *Riji*, the journal of Guo Songtao, who had served as the Guangxu emperor's minister to France and England in 1876–77, and in Huang Zunxian's *Annals of Japan (Riben guozhi)* in 1879.³² Guo and Huang were certainly aware that the Japanese had used the same character compound (in Japanese, *minken*) to translate Western democratic ideas in the early Meiji period, particularly in the context of the Popular Rights Movement (*Jiyū minken undō*) in the 1880s. *Minquan* later figured prominently in the work of two scholars educated in Hong Kong and England, He Qi and Hu Liyuan, notably in their joint essay entitled "Xinzheng zhenquan" (The real interpretation of the new policies), written in 1899 and published in 1901. These authors viewed popular power as a product of Western natural rights advocacy, and as a nineteenth-century British phenomenon manifest in such practices as the expansion of the vote, the development of an inner cabinet system, and an increase in power of the lower house.³³

Through these various foreign influences, Western and Japanese, *minquan* entered the mainstream of Chinese political discourse in the early twentieth century. But the late Qing publicists transformed the meaning of the term as they adopted it. Rendering *minquan* compatible with both the Chinese conceptual universe and their own political agenda, they integrated it into the dynastic structure and imbued it with collectivist content. Despite the term's provenance in foreign democratic discourses and its association with the new, more popularly based notion of the nation, the *Shibao* journalists followed writers such as Huang Zunxian, Yan Fu, Kang Youwei, and Liang Qichao in making *minquan* a component of constitutional monarchy. Seeking simultaneously to preserve the existing structure of authority and expand the sphere of political participation, the new publicists did not perceive a contradiction between the development of popular power and the preservation of the dynasty. Rather, they understood *minquan* as a synthesis between the classical *minben* ethos of the unification of ruler and ruled and foreign-inspired ideas of democracy (*minzhu*) based on constitutional principles. This engendered a new form of political dualism that would maintain the state structure (*guoti*) while formalizing and rationalizing its operation (*guozheng*).³⁴

Associating popular power with the dynasty, the journalists did not use *minquan* in its original radical sense as equivalent to *minzhu*, or democracy.³⁵ Instead they redefined it as the power or authority of the people (*renmin de quanli*), as distinct from *minzhu* or popular sovereignty (*renmin zuozhu*). They advocated the expansion of popular power under the

dynasty (*minquan*), while opposing the replacement of dynastic authority by popular power (*minzhu*).³⁶ In an article on constitutionalism in *Qingyi bao*—a newspaper dedicated solely, in Liang Qichao's words, to advocating popular power—Liang attempted to clarify the difference between *minquan* and *minzhu* by demonstrating how popular power would coexist with dynastic power. People were apprehensive about popular power, he explained, only because they had not grasped the distinction between “imperial constitutionalism [*junzhu lixian*]” and “democratic constitutionalism [*minzhu lixian*].” In the former system, popular power would develop under, rather than in opposition to, the emperor.³⁷

At least until late 1911 the *Shibao* journalists also regarded the emperorship as a key component of the Chinese notion of *minquan*. Although they consistently and adamantly criticized imperial policies, they continued to generate their proposals for constitutional change and the expansion of popular power from within the framework of the dynastic structure. Seeking to convince the emperor that constitutionalism and the attendant expansion of popular power would secure, not imperil, dynastic rule, an editorialist declared in 1904 that “the implementation of a constitution would guarantee the preservation of the throne.”³⁸ Min, writing in 1908, claimed that as long as popular power was asserted through a constitution and a supervisory assembly, “the emperorship would be as stable and secure as a massive rock.” Min advised the court that “the tragedy of a revolution has never occurred in a constitutional state.”³⁹

But while the *Shibao* journalists remained committed to the preservation of the monarchy, they went beyond the earlier imperial-bound writings on popular power. More influenced by Western political theory than their predecessors had been, they linked *minquan* to the expansion of constitutional rights. An editorialist using the pen name Li (meaning “To Establish”) described the difference in the meaning of rights in China and the West. He explained that the development of fundamental constitutional rights in the Western liberal polity, including freedom of speech, opinion, the press, assembly, and association, was the product of specifically Western historical processes. In England, Li wrote, constitutionalism had evolved out of an internal struggle that gave rise to private and public citizens' rights (*guomin gongsi quanli*). “But the situation in our nation today is not at all like this,” Li claimed. “The recent changes in the political system [*zhengti*; i.e., the Qing's commitment to constitutional reforms] were made in response to the external threat. Therefore, our citizens do not enjoy the rights that all constitutional citizens enjoy, and they are unequipped to supervise the government.”⁴⁰

Journalists like Li saw it as their duty to advance reform in China by making constitutional rights one of the foci of their political discourse. They sought both to raise national consciousness about the notion of rights and to force the issue onto the government's agenda. Between April and July 1907, *Shibao* devoted a special series of editorials to the subject

of constitutional rights. It was the newspaper's duty during the sensitive period of transition, one of the editorials stated, to "conscientiously compare the strengths and weaknesses of autocracy and constitutionalism" in an effort to convince the government and the citizens of the superiority of the constitutional system.⁴¹ Stressing the fundamental rights enjoyed by constitutional citizens as the key to this superiority, the newspaper published a translation of the full text of the French *Declaration of the Rights of Man* (*Renquan zhi xuanyan*) in April 1907. Prefacing the translation was a brief explanation of the concept of natural rights and its implications for the citizens of a constitutional nation.⁴²

When the authorities issued new press laws in January 1908 and placed new restrictions on the freedom of association, the *Shibao* journalists countered with arguments for the protection of the "three great freedoms" (*sanda ziyou*) of expression, publication, and association.⁴³ The journalists emphasized that the establishment of the higher authority of the constitution was the only way to ensure the government's respect for civil rights. Without a "constitution jointly observed by state and society," the citizens would never enjoy true freedom, one editorialist observed. He explained this was the reason "the people of Europe and America had willingly struggled for a few dozen articles of a constitution, disrupting several hundred years of peace and risking several hundred thousands of lives." Only a constitution would guarantee citizens the essential freedoms of expression, publication, association, change of domicile, religion, production, shelter, the body, private correspondence, and legal process. In addition it would grant them "the right to petition, the right of political participation, and the right to become an official."⁴⁴

The journalists' advocacy of this battery of civil rights was expressed in the context of the citizens' collective rights (*gongquan*) rather than the rights of the individual. This points to the second distinctive characteristic of the concept of *minquan* in late Qing China after its association with the dynasty: its collective orientation. Because the reformist notion of *minquan* was a corollary of the constitutionalist project of national strengthening, it represented the power of the group rather than of the individual. Even though it opened up a new conceptual space and a new sphere of political action, the scope of this space was defined by its mandate to serve collective ends.⁴⁵ Civil rights and freedoms were called for, but their primary purpose was to enable the citizenry to take responsibility for the survival of the nation and counter the self-interest of the dynasty.

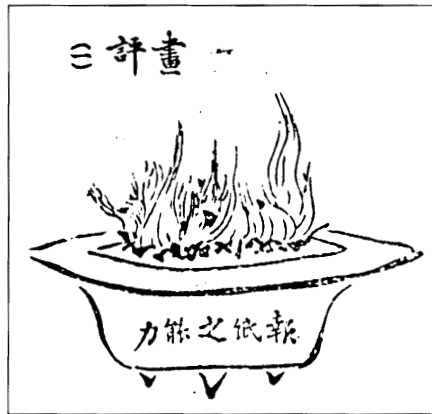
This emphasis on the collective nature of *minquan* is particularly striking in the *Shibao* journalists' discussion of natural rights, another Western concept that was transformed as it was adopted into the early-twentieth-century reformist discourse.⁴⁶ Consistent with their understanding of popular power and in contrast to the European tradition, the journalists shifted the locus of natural rights from human personhood to the state, interpreting those rights not as a moral claim that is prior and superior in

status to the state's laws, but as deriving from the state itself.⁴⁷ While the author of a 1906 editorial stressed that "the freedom of the people is based on their natural endowment [*tianfu*]," for example, he went on to assert that it was "the state that defined the limitations to this freedom."⁴⁸

The journalist Ma Weilong made a similar argument in 1908, claiming that natural rights were not inherent in human society but derived from some externally determined standard of political ability and then granted to the citizenry by the state. Ma, like the earlier editorialist, endorsed the importance of natural law, and he criticized the Qing for violating it by depriving the citizens of freedom of speech, association, and publication. "The dynasty has thus ensured that the people cannot play even the slightest role in politics," he stated, asserting that this was a violation of the principles of natural law. Ma appended one serious qualification to his argument, however, by declaring that "the level of rights is determined in accordance with ability [*nengli*]." The natural outcome of this "theory," which in his opinion was upheld in all advanced nations of the world, was that "citizens who lacked political ability could not enjoy political rights." Rather than a violation of natural law, he argued, this was "a proper application of natural law."⁴⁹ Although Ma's ultimate objective in this passage was to stress the importance of raising the citizens' level of political ability, it manifests the understanding of natural rights that prevailed in this period. Instead of considering these rights as anterior to the formation of political society, Ma and other late Qing political commentators viewed them as dependent on the level of popular political sophistication, which could itself only be developed within political society.

While Ma's argument seemed implicitly to justify the Qing's repressive rights policy, most editorialists were explicitly critical of it. Min claimed that it was only because the government had been thoroughly humiliated by foreigners that it had attempted to "entice the citizens with some form of rights" to gain their support in defending the nation. These so-called rights, he continued, narrowed, rather than expanded, previously held civic freedoms: "Before the publication of the press laws and the laws of association, the citizen's right to freedom of speech was tacitly recognized. Today, however, the freedom of speech is tightly restricted and the right of association is so limited that all organizations are approaching extinction." The government was guilty of "forcefully repressing public opinion [*yulun*], humiliating public sentiment [*minqi*], and secretly implementing a policy of repression while ostensibly promoting constitutional preparation."⁵⁰

The journalists thus drew an intimate connection between popular power, constitutional rights, and public opinion in their efforts to further the development of the middle realm. As one editorialist explained, the power of the absolutist state could only be diminished by the implementation of civil rights and the free expression of public opinion: "In the beginning of the seventeenth century, rights law was first announced, followed



Newspapers being burned in a pot
marked "the power of the press"
—a response to the new press laws.
Shibao, January 14, 1908.

by the *Declaration of Rights*. These gradually formed the foundation of public opinion politics, and they served to protect against the evils of autocratic politics." A government that recognized the three great freedoms of expression, publication, and association and was willing to submit to public opinion "qualified as a constitutional government and not an autocratic government."⁵¹

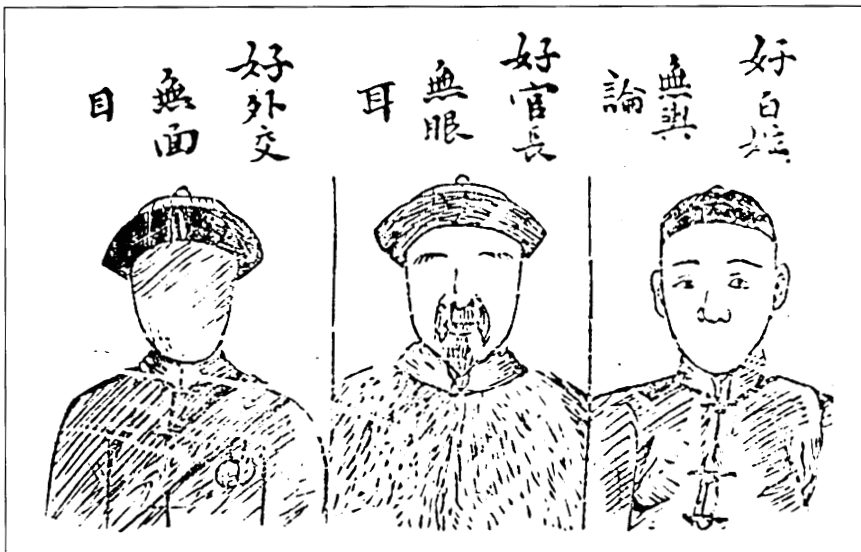
Public Opinion ('Yulun')

In their efforts to expand popular power and consolidate the nation, the *Shibao* journalists used the concept of public opinion as a device to limit and transform the authority of the dynasty.⁵² *Yulun*, the character compound they used for public opinion, dated back to at least the third century and had been used throughout Chinese history to describe elite opinion within the bureaucracy.⁵³ In the early 1900s the reform publicists invested this old term with a new political meaning. Redefined as the "collective opinion [*gonglun*] of the common people [*yiban renmin*] about government and society," *yulun* became a key component in the larger agenda of forcing a transition to a more open mode of politics.⁵⁴ The Qing court unwittingly advanced this agenda by adopting the new political idiom itself. The 1906 edict on constitutional preparation stated that "all affairs of state would be open to public opinion" (*shuzheng gongzhu yulun*), a phrase the journalists would constantly appeal to in validating their own constitutional claims.⁵⁵

Late Qing reformists were among the first in China to discuss in detail the nature and significance of public opinion in politics. While a small

number of their peers claimed that China had not yet passed what Liang Qichao had called "the age of destruction," when popular sentiment was so undeveloped that it was necessary to suppress it, most reform publicists viewed public opinion in positive terms.⁵⁶ They generally located themselves in Liang's "age of transition," when it was the reformists' role to be the mother of public opinion. Recognizing that they had not yet reached "the age of accomplishment," when they would be the servants of an independent and informed *vox populi*, the *Shibao* journalists nonetheless viewed public opinion as a rational and powerful force that they had to both lead and be led by.⁵⁷ Idealizing the public voice as instrumental in promoting reform politics, they believed that it would replace the inherited authorities as a new locus of authority and legitimacy.

The journalists equated the politics of public opinion with constitutional politics and considered the free expression of the *vox populi* to be the key to the strength and power of the "advanced" Western nations. "Today," an editorialist wrote in 1908, "the only reason the advanced nations bathe in the showers of constitutionalism and enjoy the riches of freedom is that they have benefited from public opinion." Public opinion was thus the source of political reform, "the means of abolishing autocracy and moving toward constitutionalism."⁵⁸ Once a constitutional system was established, they further believed, public opinion would be its mainstay and its "pivotal institution."⁵⁹ The journalists thus linked the very survival of the Chinese nation to free and open public discussion.⁶⁰



"A good common person has no public opinion. A good official has no eyes or ears. A good diplomat has no face." *Shibao*, January 6, 1908.

"All nations that have a vital public opinion are prosperous," declared an editorialist named Jian He (meaning "A Vigorous Style of Penmanship"). "Any nation that lacks a vital public opinion will ultimately perish."

As the journalists saw it, by refusing to advance toward constitutionalism and create a sphere for open debate, the authorities were consigning China to a disastrous fate. They accused the government of using its perfunctory adoption of a constitutional program as a pretext for suppressing public opinion. "The government has made an appeal to the entire nation by proclaiming its commitment to constitutional preparation," Jian He continued; "for the government then to strip the people of their freedom of speech . . . this is the great inconsistency." He further railed against the officials for using the pretext of what they called the complete secrecy of law in constitutional nations to constrain public opinion. "Does the government not know that freedom of speech is written into the constitutions of all constitutional nations as an inviolable right of the citizens?" he asked.⁶¹

Public opinion was central to constitutional politics, the late Qing reformists believed, "because the citizens' political knowledge was superior to that of the government, and their enthusiasm for reform was also much greater."⁶² Embodying reason and political insight, the *vox populi* would function as the ultimate principle of authority in society, an independent tribunal safeguarding against abuses of political power and arbitrating moral standards.⁶³ In the journalists' writings, public opinion thus came to be equated with *gong* in the sense of justice, fairness, and equality. Jian He juxtaposed the *si* of the dynasty, which was based on superior power, established position, and dynastic inheritance, to the *gong* of public opinion. "Today," he declared, "one person's sense of what is right and what is wrong has become the entire society's standard of right and wrong. And while what is right for one person is not necessarily right, the people do not dare oppose him. Therefore, the society can no longer recover the real right and wrong, and the nation perishes in the hands of one man." The only way to avoid this danger of national peril, he felt, was to have "the standards of right and wrong determined by all of the people under Heaven [*tianxia zhi gong*]."⁶⁴

In using this phrase, Jian He legitimized his challenge to sovereign authority by invoking the celebrated passage from the "Liyun" (Evolution of rites) section of the *Liji* (Record of rites), "the world shared by all the people [*tianxia wei gong*]." While he clearly meant to conjure up the text's image of an age of perfect openness and harmony, he no longer understood *gong* exclusively in the classical sense as the embodiment of the higher principles of right and wrong. In the late Qing reformist discourse, the concept had become associated with public opinion as a concrete political force struggling to secure these ideals. The role of public opinion was to ensure that "the collective sense of right and wrong [*gongshi gongfei*] in society remained clear to the eyes and ears of all."⁶⁵

It was in the name of this greater public interest that the journalists were able to mobilize society in political movements protesting foreign loans for Chinese railways and demanding the rapid opening of the national assembly. In the Suzhou-Hangzhou-Ningbo Railway dispute, the journalists invested the citizens' antiloan groups with the moral power of *gong* while they portrayed the authorities as betraying these higher principles. Jian He wrote that although "everyone in society considered it wrong to borrow money" from the British for the construction of the railway, the government attempted to force the people of Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and of the whole nation to accept the loan. "Now this right and wrong is not difficult to distinguish," he continued. Linking public opinion to national survival, he argued that "what the government wants to do would deprive us of our national rights, while those who are struggling against the loan in Jiangsu and Zhejiang are struggling to preserve all national rights. Therefore, right is on the side of the people of Jiangsu and Zhejiang and wrong is on the side of the government." The officials were also guilty of coercing those who upheld the universal precepts of right and wrong by "punishing the people of Jiangsu and Zhejiang for displaying a small degree of public sentiment and for holding honest opinions. All they want to do is to nip this nascent public sentiment and public opinion in the bud. Only then will they be happy."⁶⁶

The reformists also considered official deference to public opinion and the forces of *gong* to be the key to international success. An editorialist wrote in 1909 that "in foreign affairs, the citizenry is regarded as the most important component of the nation." Consequently, public opinion must play a crucial role in successful diplomacy: "Although Disraeli and Bismarck had their own strategies for dealing skillfully with their international allies and competitors, even they did not dare to go against public opinion in formulating their assessments of a particular diplomatic situation. In choosing to advance or retreat, to seize lands or abandon property, they would never risk openly taking a position that was different from that of the citizens."⁶⁷

Just as the *Shibao* journalists had used *minben* theory and the principle of *gong* to lend sanction to their claims for the nation and popular power, so they appealed to ancient authority in constructing and validating the concept of public opinion. This method of theorizing public opinion by embedding it in a classical constellation of meanings was unique to China. Whereas Western advocates of the *vox populi* depicted it as a distinctly "modern" force that had emerged in reaction to religion and royal authority, the Chinese publicists emphasized *yulun's* historical legitimacy.⁶⁸

A 1909 *Shibao* essay directly linked the press—the voice of public opinion—to the theory of the people as the foundation of the nation. "The establishment of newspaper offices was the original intention of the ancient sages," the editorialist proclaimed. He validated this statement with a citation from the *Mencius*: "The words of the sages are, 'The people are

the most important element [in a nation].” He then cited proof from other old texts. “[The Shang Dynasty ruler] Pan Geng said, ‘With the people, all is created.’ In the “Great Plan” [“Hongfan,” a section of the *Documents Classic*] it is written that ‘plans should include the common people.’ And the *Rites of Zhou* [*Zhouli*] states, ‘It is the responsibility of the ruler to gather 10,000 people and ask them their opinion.’ All of these are outstanding examples of why the establishment of newspapers is the intention of the ancient sages.”⁶⁹

The *Shibao* journalists further linked China’s idyllic past to the twentieth-century politics of public opinion by describing the benevolence of the former sage-kings in terms of their sensitivity to public opinion and by attributing periods of intellectual effluorescence in former dynasties to freedom of expression. Jian He wrote that Confucius had a powerful impact on society because the authorities of the time honored the role of public opinion, arguing that “if the Zhou Dynasty had restricted the freedom of expression, then the objectives of respecting the Zhou and ruling the kingdom of Lu could not have been achieved. And if it had restricted the freedom of association, then the 3,000 people who flocked to hear Confucius at Xing Ta could not have gathered.” He also extolled Mencius as a promoter of “the ideology of popular power” even though the term *minquan* did not appear in the Chinese language until 1878: “Mencius’s discussions of politics were exclusively premised on the ideology of popular power. He exhausted himself promoting political movements, and several hundreds of people peacefully followed behind his carriage.”⁷⁰

Jian He further drew a contrast between the brilliance of the hundred philosophers of the later Zhou Dynasty and the moribund state of subsequent periods in Chinese history, suggesting that only the “revival” of the “ancient” value of freedom of expression would save the nation from intellectual and political oblivion. It was only “because the politics of the day were open to the rough and tumble of open and fair competition” that “the masters of the interval between the Spring and Autumn [722–481 B.C.E.] and the Warring States periods [403–221 B.C.E.] were . . . able to enrich our national tradition. The outstanding nature of their thought continues to be appreciated today.” This, he pointedly continued, “is very different from the paralysis and insensibility of later periods. Since this is the case, how can freedom of speech be bad for the nation?”⁷¹

Equating their bold new political claims with traditional political practices, the journalists invested them with age-old sanction. Hu Ma described mass politics as an invention of the ancient period: “According to the method of rule of Zhou Dynasty officials, the masses [*wanmin*] must be consulted on all major affairs. It is written in the classics and does not need to be discussed.” And he presented popular political participation as a traditional institution since “in the Han, Jin, Tang, and Song Dynasties, even the most lowly of people [*yimingzhiwei*] could seal a dispatch or send a memorial in order to point out the sufferings of the people. It is

in the historical records and cannot be denied." In this way the journalists were able to criticize the Qing, not for being insufficiently modern, but for disrespecting practices that had endured "from the time of the Three Dynasties." These practices had supposedly been halted by the Mongols, only to be reinstated in the Ming, "but under the Qing Dynasty limits to the discussion of affairs again began to be imposed."⁷²

The reformists' new usage of the expression "public opinion" (*yulun*) was itself granted historical sanction by its equation with the term *qingyi*, or "righteous elite opinion." The latter was invested with the authority of the ancients. "According to Confucius, righteous elite opinion was equal to life," Jian He wrote.⁷³ From the early period of the Later Han Dynasty (25–220 C.E.), when the term *qingyi* was first used, it referred to standards of Confucian moral excellence, and by the end of the Later Han it further took on the meaning of a literati political movement that opposed corrupt government practices. In later history both senses of the term—an opinion or a group of individuals who put forward this opinion—were retained, and both were relevant to the conception of public opinion in *Shibao*.

As the custodians of Confucian values, righteous elite opinion—in the sense of a group of opinion makers—frequently formed the opposition to declining regimes that had lost moral authority. The term *qingyi* thus became associated with a patriotic tradition of remonstrance. Such movements generally arose near the end of a dynasty, as was the case in the Later Han, the Southern Song, and the Ming.⁷⁴ In the Qing, *qingyi*-inspired literati groups first appeared in the early nineteenth century and were followed in the late 1870s and the 1890s by two related groups, the Pure Current (Qingliu) and the Emperor's Party (Didang), respectively.⁷⁵ *Shibao* was linked to these late-nineteenth-century circles of righteous elite opinion by the newspaper's founders, Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, who were both associated with the Emperor's Party. In 1895 Kang had memorialized that in the Han and the Ming Dynasties the conduct of *qingyi* harmed traitors in power but was of great benefit to the country. He appealed for the revalidation of the practice in the late nineteenth century.⁷⁶

After the failure of the Hundred Days' Reforms in 1898, the locus for challenging official power shifted outside the bureaucracy, with the new political press becoming the most important base of righteous elite opinion-style political opposition.⁷⁷ This development is clearly reflected in *Qingyi bao*, the title of the newspaper that Liang founded in exile in Tokyo immediately after the 1898 coup and that was the predecessor to such influential early-twentieth-century newspapers as *Xinmin congbao* and *Shibao*. Drawing on the moral and historical legitimacy of righteous elite opinion, a *Shibao* editorialist explained that the esteemed role of public opinion in the "advanced" constitutional nations was no different from the role of righteous elite opinion in the Chinese past. "The ancients said righteous elite opinion [*qingyi*] was more honored than coronets and royal gowns and more severe than the executioner's ax," he observed. "That

which was called righteous elite opinion is probably the same thing as public opinion with a different name. In studying history it is clear that nations that allowed the expression of righteous elite opinion flourished, and nations that did not perished."⁷⁸

What is most revelatory of the reform journalists' political agenda, however, is not how they brought history to bear on the present but how they projected their modern-day understanding of public opinion, the citizenry, and the national interest onto the traditional construct of righteous elite opinion. "*Qingyi* is no different from the citizens' collective sense of good or bad [*gonghao gongde*]," an editorialist claimed. "If the government uses its power and prestige to oppose public opinion, is this not tantamount to destroying the national spirit?"⁷⁹ By imbuing righteous elite opinion with populist and nationalist content, the journalists were not simply misrepresenting the meaning of the original term. Rather, they were lending authority to their own project of expanding the parameters of the late Qing middle realm.

The construct of the new middle realm that emerges in the pages of *Shibao* from 1904 to 1911 is complex and often contradictory. In turns, it was presented as a conduit of irrepressible social forces from below, or as a site of negotiation that would be directed from the dynasty above. In some instances the nation, popular power, and public opinion were portrayed as weapons against autocracy, and in others as forces of harmony that would strike a new and more enduring balance between ruler and ruled. In part, these inconsistencies reflect the uses of rhetoric in the service of politics. When the journalists' concern was to render their new ideas acceptable to officialdom, they advanced constitutionalism as a means of stabilizing imperial authority and harmonizing social and political relations. But when their purpose was to berate the authorities for betraying the reform project, they brandished the powerful instrument of public rage and popular power. Just as discourse influences praxis, ideas themselves are modified in the practice of politics.

Beyond the level of rhetoric, the contradictory presentation of the middle realm as the site of both harmonizing negotiations between the prince and his people and a new politics of contestation reflects a deeper tension inherent in the journalists' project itself. As constitutional reformists who remained monarchists, their objective was to limit and challenge imperial power while not totally undermining the structure of dynastic politics. This tension derives from the two historically and geographically distinct sources of authority for the middle realm. The first was foreign notions of popular power and the nation that were premised on a new epistemology compelling in its promise of national wealth and power. The second was China's "ancient constitutionalism," based on the ideal of the full integration of the collectivity and corresponding to the theory of the people as the foundation of the nation.

The appeal to such diverse sources inevitably led to disjunctions in the early-twentieth-century politics of reform. The reform publicists' new concept of popular power, for example, was shaped by long-standing Chinese cultural constructs that emphasized harmony and the collective, giving it a form very distinct from its origin in Western notions of democracy. And whereas the journalists asserted the importance of natural rights, their representation of these rights deprived them of all "naturalness," imbuing them with a purely postpolitical content. It is therefore the reform publicists' *mode of appropriation* of these classical and foreign resources that reveals more about their vision of the middle realm than do the specific cultural symbols and foreign terms they appropriated.

This complex process of adoption, adaptation, and transformation, which merged classical Chinese and contemporary foreign impulses, reveals both the ambiguities within and the very real potential of early-twentieth-century reform in China. Although the journalists' ultimate ideal remained within the familiar social paradigm of concord between ruler and ruled, their methods for achieving it—the establishment of constitutional authority, the advocacy of civil rights—had distanced them from it for all practical purposes. The inherited *minben* ideal was never displaced, however. Infused with a new contestatory political idiom, it was expanded and reconceived, a testimony to both the enduring nature of the classical ideal and the adaptability of ancient concepts.

PART II

*New-Style Noble Men:
The Publicists and “the People”*

Prologue

The new political press opened up a space in late Qing China not only for reconceptualizing the structure of politics but also for renegotiating the structure of society. The relationship between print and society, between the publicists and the people, was a complex and multivalenced one. The press was, first of all, a metonym for “the people”—voicing its opinions, representing its desires, and supervising the government in its name. It was also the arena within which the reform publicists imagined and constructed “the people” as a unified collective distinct from, and often in conflict with, the imperial authorities.¹ The new press was, however, more than a realm of representations and mediated imaginings. It served as the journalists’ forum for mapping new modes of social interaction, new levels of social integration, and new strategies of social mobilization. It was this project of social transformation that distinguished the reform publicists from their literati predecessors and made them the leaders in an emerging political tradition.

Using the press to represent, reach, and mobilize those they called “the people,” the reform publicists combined elements of old and new, social and cultural roles. As self-styled spokesmen for the *min*, they clearly drew inspiration from the inherited ideal of the Confucian noble man (*junzi*), sharing his sense of social obligation and his readiness to criticize the established order. At the same time, however, they introduced new social expectations into the late Qing reform discourse, differing from the ideal *junzi* in their estimation of the common people’s abilities, their social objectives, and their proposed methods of achieving these objectives.

Although the reform publicists may have concurred with their elite forebears' description of the masses as weak and degenerate, ignorant and immoral, they were convinced of the common people's reformability and political potential. Unlike the noble man who did not bother to scold his charges for dereliction of duty or hold them responsible for remedying suffering and injustice, the reformists harangued the people, laying the burden of social and political responsibility on them and holding them, at least in part, accountable for their own fate.² The journalists' different social approach reflected their distinct social agenda. Their mission was not merely to improve the people's lives, as the *junzi* had struggled to do, but to transform them; not to reinforce certain patterns of social behavior but to alter established political practices and bring their compatriots into the early-twentieth-century reform process. Abandoning the moral persuasion that the Confucian literati had used to make abject common people into loyal and obedient subjects, the new publicists promoted a course of edification intended to convert their moral and intellectual inferiors into politically active citizens.

Redefining the role of the noble man, the *Shibao* journalists also distinguished themselves from late Qing officials who claimed to represent the people. Throughout the imperial period and on into the early twentieth century, speaking or remonstrating officials (*yanguan*, *jianguan*) were responsible for conveying the people's grievances to the court. Using what were known as the "avenues of criticism" (*yanlu*), the only officially established channels for expressing popular concerns, these bureaucrats were responsible for "gathering the latest public opinion and expressing the sufferings of the people to the ruler." The *Shibao* journalists claimed, however, that these official avenues were "narrow and ineffective" in comparison with both the ways of the idyllic past and the mechanisms of the constitutional present. While they did not live up to "the ideals contained in the writings of [the Shang Dynasty ruler] Pan Geng or in the 'Great Plan' ['Hong fan,' a section of the *Documents Classic*]," neither could they match the power of the new political press.³ Accusing the remonstrating officials of insensitivity to the plight of the common people, the reform publicists claimed they would use the new print medium to better serve their compatriots. They would break through the layers of bureaucracy and relay information to and from the people more swiftly and accurately than any imperial censorial institution could. "Just as the officials would attempt to obfuscate and hide their wrongdoings and defiance of popular opinion," an editorialist wrote, "the press would have already publicized them throughout the nation."⁴

The new publicists were equally condemnatory of contemporary cultural elites across the political spectrum who, like the remonstrating officials, claimed to address the people's needs. In defining the newspaper's mandate, the inaugural statement to *Shibao* described the incompetence of these elite groups. To begin with, the conservatives were ignorant of the

exigencies of the present. They wrongly "believed that thousand-year-old politics and thousand-year-old learning were appropriate to the situation of the day," thus obstructing the forces of change. But the "heroic young activists" also impeded constructive reform. Ignorant of the complexity of contemporary problems, they advocated the wholesale adoption of Western solutions. Naively believing that they had found the panacea for all of China's ills, they ran around shouting, "We too must do it that way! We too must do it that way!" And in between the old conservatives and the young radicals were impractical reformers. While knowledgeable, they were grievously unpragmatic; while well-versed in abstract principles, they were incompetent when it came to implementing their ideas. As the inaugural statement noted, although "there were numerous publicists and politicians in the nation, upon scrutiny, all of them belonged to one of these three categories" of conservatives, radicals, and impractical intellectuals.⁵

Distancing themselves from both contemporary groups of spokesmen and ancient models of social service, the journalists considered themselves to be the only qualified advocates of the popular interest in the last Qing decade. Their sense of responsibility was compounded by feelings of political urgency. Aware of the danger hostile foreign powers posed to China and lacking confidence in what they viewed as an ineffective centralizing state, they realized that cooperation with the broad-based citizenry was crucial to both defending China's national integrity and shifting the locus of power downward. Their sense of national purpose thus became fused with their social mission to integrate the people into the process of national renewal.

The journalists worked from the assumption that the people could be transformed from the object to the subject of government, from dependent subjects to the creators of their own destiny. They therefore promoted a program of popular edification that included civic education, a new code of public ethics, and politicization. Once the people were uplifted and informed, the publicists believed, they would provide the source of national cohesion and the force behind national strengthening. Infused with "nation-mindedness," devoted to the collective, dynamic and determined, they would realign the relationship between ruler and ruled and elevate China to a position of power in the international struggle for survival.

At the same time, for all of the journalists' heightened rhetoric about uplifting the broader citizenry, whether couched in normative statements or sweeping exhortations, they never clearly defined who constituted "the people" or who was being addressed as the new citizenry. In discussing specific measures and concrete programs, they clearly targeted the more literate segments of the population. They employed elevated arguments to advocate universal education, for example, but paid little attention to the elementary level of the school system in discussions of civic education. And although they claimed that the new public ethics were to penetrate

all of society, their principles were expounded in texts that the vast majority of the common people were unable to read.

Marginalized in the drive for civic enlightenment, the common people were by no means absent from the larger project of reinventing society, however. Rejecting the inherited view that the people could be made only to follow but not to understand, the new publicists were convinced that the "ignorant masses" could be educated and politically informed. When confronted with the imposing gulf between themselves and those they sought to reform, they explored new avenues of cultural translation and cultural negotiation in an effort to draw even members of the lowest rungs of society into what would become the new Chinese citizenry.

Striving to forge a new relationship with the people in the last Qing decade, the reform publicists sought to eliminate the people's dependence on the dynasty, to apprise them of their social weaknesses, educate them, and include them in the political process. Aimed at strengthening the social fabric of the new middle realm, their efforts would help to lay the social groundwork for political change in early-twentieth-century China.

From Subjects to Citizens

The process of forming a nation must begin with improving the quality of the people. Boiled sand cannot become rice, assorted shrubs cannot become a forest, and cowardly masses cannot become heroes.

—“Lun lixian zhengti qiyu difang zizhi,” *Shibao*, June 23, 1904

The *Shibao* journalists' primary social objective in the late Qing was to transform the people from passive subjects of the dynasty to active participants in the new middle realm—from the classically conceived *tianmin*, “Heaven’s charge,” to new, Western-style *guomin*, or citizens of a constitutional order.¹ This objective strengthened as the journalists' disillusionment with the government increased after 1906. In their essays from this time they gradually replaced the inherited *minben* ideal of the harmonious, symbiotic, and dependent relationship between ruler and ruled with a more dynamic principle of unity between the citizen and the nation (*guojia*). A component of the new middle realm, this principle cast the nation, rather than the dynasty, as the true embodiment of the collective good (*gong*), and the citizens, rather than the officials, as the guardians of national rights.

Considering the people to be newly responsible political actors, the journalists radically redefined the expectations for and demands on society, striving to transform the subjects of the Qing into autonomous and responsive citizens of China. Unlike the Confucian noble man, who did not berate or criticize the *min*, the journalists decried the people's passivity, dependence, and lack of nation-mindedness in an effort to encourage them to assume their new political role.

Reconfiguring the Relationship Between Ruler and Ruled: The Breakdown of Dependence

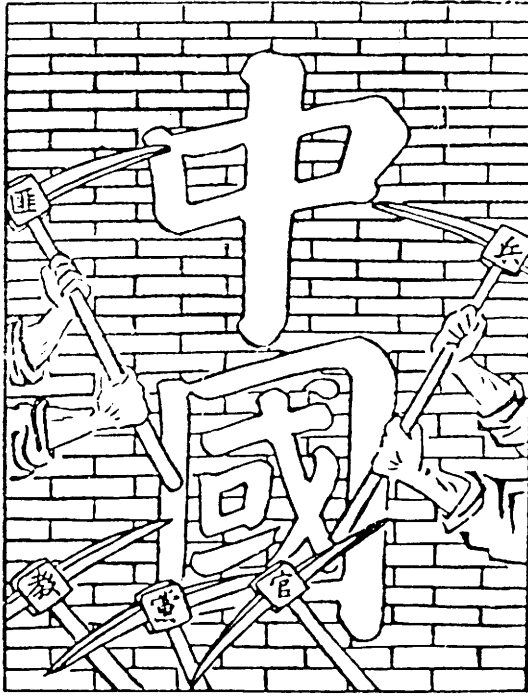
The inherited conception of the relationship between the dynasty and the people was one of dependence and paternalism. These terms did not have negative connotations in the classical discourse, however, but represented a relationship that was stable and beneficial to all—an established view that continued to be reflected in several of the earlier *Shibao* editorials. “In an autocratic nation, the stronger the citizenry’s reliance on the dynasty, the more stable the national system [*guoti*],” one journalist proclaimed in 1904. A relationship of dependence had existed, he continued, in the “sagacious and divine” Han, Tang, Song, and Ming Dynasties, much to the people’s benefit: “Although the people had to submit to the dynasty, they were treated with kindness and profound benevolence in the manner of the Three Dynasties.” The people, in turn, rejoiced in their reliance on the imperial ruler: “Although the emperor had the power to take the people’s lives and confiscate their financial assets, he also had the power to protect them and keep them secure. The people were content with this arrangement, and there was great peace under Heaven.”² In a familiar rhetorical mode, editorialists found sanction for this arrangement not only in Chinese history but also in the example of the wealthy and powerful constitutional nations. “The dynasty is assigned by the people to rule all under Heaven,” an essayist wrote in 1905, “and therefore its behavior must be judged according to whether or not it benefits all of the people in the nation. Today, all constitutional nations are like this.”³

The more accurate historical comparison with the Western nations, however, lay in the increasingly urgent questioning of the people’s dependent role just prior to the establishment of a constitutional order. While the changes taking place in late Qing China were not as extreme as those in America at the time of the revolution or in late absolutist France, there was an important shift in society’s assumptions concerning the rights and privileges of officialdom.⁴ Some editorialists attributed this shift in China to the vacillations of the dynastic cycle. “Ages of decline and national peril come about when the power of autocracy begins to diminish,” one writer explained. “Then, either the dynasty is no longer able to protect the people’s lives and financial assets, or it becomes cruel and allows the exploitation of the population. In this way, the people no longer dare to resign their fate to the emperor, and they are forced to take their destiny in their own hands.” Whereas the first few Manchu emperors had treated the people with benevolence, “during the reign of Qianlong, the period of mutual dependence between ruler and ruled reached its climax and then declined. The emperor failed to live up to the people’s expectations. By the time of the Jintian uprising [the Taiping Rebellion, 1851–64], several hundred thousand disaffected people were ready to respond to one command on the part of the rebels.”⁵

There were several reasons for this disaffection from the declining dynasty. One editorialist wrote in 1904 that he had "once put [himself] in the position of the common people and discovered the reasons they were gradually becoming less dependent on the dynasty." These included government neglect of internal policy, the harshness of taxation, and official corruption, violence, and incompetence.⁶ Domestic problems of imperial decline and official abuse were compounded by foreign aggression, which, as one editorialist wrote, served to "wreak further destruction on our nation, which is already in a state of ruin." Forced to "concentrate on training soldiers, regulating finances, and preventing foreign disasters," the dynasty was less concerned with caring for its own people.⁷ "Because the foreigners are powerful and the Chinese are ignorant and weak," another argued in 1905, "the officials have chosen to fend off the fierce and truculent by repressing the ignorant and cowardly." By making the foreign threat its priority, moreover, the government had betrayed and alienated its own people: "The authorities do not realize that foreigners are foreigners, and that we Chinese people are the Chinese people. Although our government is also Chinese, its fear of our powerful neighbors is so great that it would even strike down its own children and its younger brothers. It therefore shows respect for the enemy while butchering its compatriots."⁸

The earlier *Shibao* editorials did not celebrate the breakdown of the age-old relationship of dependence brought about by privileging foreign over domestic concerns, dynastic decline, and official abuse. Rather, they bemoaned this breakdown as the harbinger of future chaos: "If the people saw that the rulers cannot be depended upon, then they would join bands of robbers and secret societies [*huidang*]. In this way order would be destroyed and anything could happen." By forcing the people to become outlaws, the editorialist warned, the dynasty was ensuring its own demise: "Violence will increase exponentially, and thieves and bandit societies will flourish, leaving the court powerless to control them. Then how could it uphold its own authority?"⁹ Failing to address the concerns of society, the dynasty would not only provoke lawlessness among the lower segments of the population, but it would also drive educated citizens to subversive activities: "As for those whose knowledge was greater than that of the common people, their disappointment in the dynasty was also proportionately greater, and their power of reaction was even greater again. Today, therefore, there is much talk of revolutionary independence."¹⁰

Violence—in the form either of banditry or of revolutionary activity—was one of the potential outcomes of society's alienation from the dynasty. Another, an editorialist warned, was that the Chinese people would transfer their dependence from the dynasty to foreigners. If one of the foreign powers were to take over China and establish a benevolent government, he claimed, all the people would flock to it. "Because our people's dependent nature is hereditary, they would cherish the foreigners' benevolence," he argued. "And because they would continue to fear the foreigners at the



"Experts at destroying China," *Shibao*, June 18, 1908. Soldiers, officials, factions, missionaries, and bandits destroying China with pickaxes.

same time, their embrace of dependence would be as intense as it had been for centuries under the dynasty. . . . The characteristic of dependence is so firmly rooted in Chinese society that if the people don't depend on one thing, then they will depend on another." Neither the people nor the dynasty would profit from this breakdown in their long-standing relationship. As the people "lose their sense of patriotism and compete amongst themselves to fawn on the foreigners, they will turn and resist the dynasty. This would definitely not benefit the citizens. Would it, in the final analysis, benefit the dynasty?"¹¹

Gradually, however, as the *Shibao* journalists themselves became increasingly wary of the dynasty's commitment to society, they began to question the inherited construct of the symbiotic relationship between ruler and ruled and realized that the chain of dependence had to be broken. They believed this would only come about when the Chinese people stopped viewing violence, destruction, and a general breakdown of social order as the alternative to subordination. In their opinion, it was necessary to reconceive the relationship between society and the state in more autonomous and constructive terms, with the citizens acting as the subject,

rather than being acted upon as the object, of government. This process of constructive autonomy, which would ultimately lead to popular political participation and the citizens' enjoyment of political rights, would begin once the citizens were able to make the critical distinction between the dynasty and the nation. Rather than cast their fate with the imperial institution, the citizens had to begin to take the national destiny into their own hands.

From late 1906 an increasingly radical strand in the journalists' discourse vilified dependence as anathema for the nation and glorified independence from the dynasty as the only path to national survival. While showing some sympathy for the people's powerlessness in the face of dynastic oppression, Min hoped they would rise up and defend themselves and the nation. "Alas!" he exclaimed, "My compatriots! How can they be blamed for the oppression they suffer? My compatriots! How can they be so ignorant as to willingly submit to this humiliation? How can not one of them plan to avenge it?"¹² It was clear in these writers' minds that humiliated and dependent subjects could never become constitutional citizens. Hu Ma wrote in 1907 that "because our people do not know how to seek happiness for themselves, they look to the dynasty to implement the constitution for them. . . . This passive attitude is extremely contrary to the necessary qualifications of constitutional citizens." He claimed that for centuries the rulers had taken advantage of this passivity in order to expand their autocratic power. Finally, in the early twentieth century, their excesses had begun to provoke the people's wrath. "This is what could truly be called constitutional preparation," he declared. "Our people have finally become humiliated and angry. At last they are gathering their strength in order to fulfill the dynasty's promise of constitutionalism." Citing both Mencius and Napoleon, he urged the people on to independence and victory. "The ancient book declares, 'Calamity and happiness in all cases are men's own seeking.' Napoleon claimed, 'The opportunity for victory in battle lies in the last fifteen minutes.' We hope that our citizens' rise to anger will be heroic."¹³

The editorialist Chen Leng, who wrote under the pen name Leng or Lengxue, meaning "Cold" or "Cold-blooded," warned his readers that the government's new constitutional rhetoric was merely a mask for its efforts to reinforce society's dependence. In the negotiations over the 1907 Suzhou-Hangzhou-Ningbo Railway dispute, for example, the government gained the people's trust by apparently including them in the deliberations. Representatives were sent to Beijing, and some of their opinions were ostensibly considered by the authorities. "The people" were thus deceived, saying "to themselves that this was better than the government's previous unjustified policy of depriving the people of their rights." Once the agreement was publicized, however, the participants and their supporters realized they had been duped.¹⁴ To prevent this kind of deception in the future and preserve China's national rights, the new publicists advo-

cated severing the dependence of the ruled on the rulers. They accordingly promoted a new role for the citizen in relation to the nation.

The Citizenry ('Guomin') and the Nation ('Guojia')

The term *guomin* was redefined in the late Qing to mean "citizen" or "citizenry," just as the term *guojia*, with which it was often associated, was redefined to mean "nation." Although the character compound for *guomin* had been in use since ancient times, it had been interchangeable with other terms designating a subject (*chenmin*) in relation to the ruler (*junzhu*), or terms referring to the common people (*baixing*) or the multitude (*limin*, *lishou* or *lishu*). In this earlier view, rather than being the citizens of a temporal political entity, the people were the charge of Heaven. They existed at a distant remove from the cycles of dynastic rise and decline, deprived of political rights but also free from political concerns and responsibility. It was not until the late nineteenth century that a new concept of the *guomin* intimately linked to the national destiny arose.¹⁵

Whereas the older meanings of the term suggested passivity and subordination, it was now imbued with qualities the journalists associated with the Western concept of citizenry—activism, autonomy, and political responsibility. The translation "citizen," however, requires certain caveats. The late Qing conception of the *guomin* did include some aspects of the concept of citizenry as it is understood in the West: the *guomin* stood in contrast to the privileged members of society, particularly the officials; they were exhorted to manifest civic virtue and advance the collective good; and it was understood that they would participate in the ruling of the nation. At the same time, the new meaning of *guomin* was more prescriptive than descriptive, since it did not emerge in conjunction with the institutions, rights, and duties that have defined citizenship from the time of the French Revolution.¹⁶

The Chinese term for "citizen" lacked a precise sociological referent. In some contexts *guomin* seemed to refer exclusively to literate urbanites, as the cognate *kokumin* did in Japanese.¹⁷ In others, it clearly designated members of what the new publicists loosely defined as the middle level of society, including all nonofficials with some education—literati, merchants, and educators (*shen*, *shang*, and *xuejie*). In still other instances, the citizenry was extended to include even society's lowest levels (*xialiu shehui*, or *xiadeng shehui*).¹⁸ Whatever the precise level of society the journalists had in mind, however, their prime concern was to foster an organic unity between the people and the nation and to heighten the citizen's sense of national responsibility.

This call for organic unity was clearly articulated in a new genre of vernacular text, citizens' readers (*guomin bidu*), written by reformists in the *Shibao* journalists' circle as introductions to the meaning and role of

the citizen. The opening section of one such reader, which was composed by two Chinese students who had studied in Japan and which was published in 1905, was entitled "The Relationship Between the Citizen and the Nation."¹⁹ Defining the terms of its discussion, the authors wrote that "one must understand that the two characters of the term citizen [*guomin*] originally meant the people [*minren*] and the nation [*guojia*]. These two cannot be disconnected from one another. The reputations, interests, honor and dishonor of the nation and the people are all one. Only the survival of the nation can ensure the survival of the people." Further illustrating the link between the citizen and the nation, they explained that "if the nation is a pond, the people are the fish in the water. If the water were to dry up, how could the fish possibly survive on their own? If the nation is a tree, the people are the branches of that tree. If the tree were to become withered and dry, how could its branches survive?"²⁰

Late Qing reformists, from Liang Qichao to the authors of the *Citizen's Reader*, from Yan Fu to the *Shibao* journalists, believed that only a vital and binding unity between the citizen and the nation could counter the lack of cohesiveness that threatened Chinese society. The chief source of inspiration for this idea of unity was the writings of the British Social Darwinist Herbert Spencer (1820–1903). Spencer's theory stated that the social "totality" was an aggregate of "units," that only strong units could form a strong totality, and that individual units were made strong only through competition. These ideas were influential in Yan Fu's formulation of the notion of the nation-society and in Liang Qichao's conception of *qun*, or solidarity—the citizenry's united struggle for survival.²¹ Demonstrating how foreign ideas could be transformed as they were adapted to serve the reformist agenda, Yan, Liang, and the *Shibao* journalists all disregarded Spencer's emphasis on individualism in fostering competition and a stronger nation. This was reflected in the translation of the title of Spencer's work "The Study of Sociology" as "Qunxue," or "the science of group strength," rather than as the study of the different elements in society. It was not the individualism of the unit (*yaoni*) or citizen that was important to the late Qing writers, but the strength the united citizens would lend to the total social aggregate (*tuodu*).²²

In the *Shibao* editorials, Spencer's ideas were advanced as a means of transforming China's 400 million people into constitutional citizens and strengthening the nation. One editorialist, who claimed to follow Spencer's theory of the social aggregate and the unit, wrote that "not one of the 10,000 affairs and the 10,000 things in the world can escape the two paths of the general and the particular. While the nation is the aggregate, the people are the unit. Therefore the process of forming a nation must begin with improving the quality of the people. Boiled sand cannot become rice, assorted shrubs cannot become a forest, and cowardly masses cannot become heroes."²³ Relating Spencer's theory to China's national

survival, another editorialist warned that if the Chinese citizens "did not share a certain degree of affinity," their nation would disappear from the international arena.²⁴

The *Shibao* journalists' use of Spencer's theory reflected their concern that China was a nation without a people.²⁵ In 1906 a *Shibao* editorialist related how "foreigners reproach us, saying we have only a ruler but no people, that we have only distinct families but no nation, that we have only a unit [*yaoni*] but no aggregate [*tuodu*]. Viewing China in this way, they are emboldened to exert their brute force to invade and humiliate us." The author quoted a passage from the *Poetry Classic* in order to substantiate further the relevance of Spencer's theory of collective solidarity: "Brothers may quarrel inside the walls, / But they will oppose insult from without." He warned that if the Chinese people lacked solidarity, "great unified China would bring about its own disunion and peril."²⁶

In addition to drawing on Spencer's theory of the unit and the collective in advancing their program of national unity and strengthening, the reformists also appealed to the Darwinian principle of struggle. They viewed struggle as the mother of progress. "The survival of the fittest," Chen Leng wrote in 1908, "is the principle of evolution. By not comprehending this principle, and by continuing to defer to and be dependent on an incompetent government, our citizens are relegated to the position of greatest inferiority in the world system. . . . Beyond any hope of salvation, our race will eventually perish. In this nation, the great heroes are all cowards, the great sages are all fools, and the great victories are all defeats."²⁷

Advocating competition, another editorialist echoed Liang Qichao's view that while the warring between separate states had given rise to the cultural efflorescence of the ancient Zhou Dynasty, the classless unity of the post-Zhou era had only produced stagnation.²⁸ He claimed that without competition there was nothing to compare oneself with, and consequently there was no progress. In such a situation, "The rulers cannot see beyond the dynasty, the literati beyond the schools, the merchants beyond the markets, the farmers and the laborers beyond the land and the stores. In this way the autocratic political system can forever maintain its form."²⁹ According to these journalists, the authorities responsible for this political system restricted people to certain spheres of activity in order to better control them, thereby ensuring their dependence on the dynasty. It was for this reason that the people were unaware of their national responsibilities. "In the autocratic period," an editorialist using the pen name Di Min ("Imperial People") wrote in 1909, "because the government would not cede any political power to the citizens, the citizens did not have any understanding of political power."³⁰ The new publicists were convinced, however, that the age of autocracy was passing as the middle realm gradually expanded and the citizens became increasingly aware of their responsibility to the nation. "This is the transitional age of throwing off autocracy and preparing constitutionalism," Min commented in 1908. "Whether

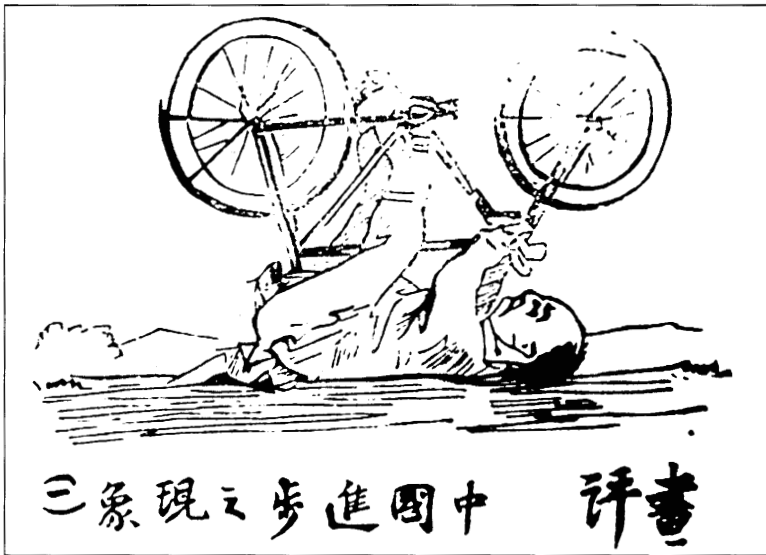
the old will be replaced by the new or whether tyranny will worsen all depends on the knowledge and ability of today's citizens. The survival or peril of the nation is hanging in the balance."

Certain that the government's intention in promoting constitutionalism was purely self-interested, the journalists believed the outcome of the reform program depended entirely on the citizens themselves. Min argued that if the people chose to "embrace the vigorous and overpowering constitutional trend, it was hopeful that they would eventually become constitutional citizens. Once the citizens' movement gained momentum, it would be like a stone released from the top of a mountain. Nothing could stop it, not even government repression."³¹ Within the constitutional political system, the editorialist Jiang Ruizao explained, "the people, not the emperor, constitute the most important institution." If they did not "respect one another, encourage one another, and supervise one another, how could they hope to make preparations for the new China?"³²

The journalists felt it was their duty to expedite this civic self-awakening. In a pose very different from that of the noble man who declined to berate or scold the people, the new publicists saw it as their responsibility to galvanize and arouse a population that had been cowed into servility and passivity. While they believed that some progress had been made in citizens' awareness of constitutional principles, it was not their role to celebrate the historic emergence of this new political force but rather to provoke and further consolidate it. As *Shibao's* inaugural statement declared, "We, the members of *Shibao*, must drive ourselves on. We will use our columns to define and convey the will of the nation."³³

Sources of Civic Weakness

The late Qing publicists began their task of elevating the citizenry and promoting nation-mindedness by investigating and critiquing what they defined as "the national character." Liang Qichao had been one of the first to undertake such an investigation systematically. In his 1901 *Qingyi bao* essay entitled "The Sources of China's Weakness" ("Zhongguo jiruo suyuan lun"), he analyzed China's defects from the perspective of ideals, customs, political theory, and current affairs. While admitting that there were historic and political causes for the sorry state of China, including its autocratic heritage and the oppressive policies of the Empress Dowager Cixi, he asserted that the most profound explanation was the inherent nature of the citizenry (*guomin quanti*).³⁴ Continuing his exploration of the national psyche in an essay entitled "Ten Kinds of Opposing, but Complementary, Virtues" ("Shizhong dexing xiangfan xiangcheng yi"), Liang developed his analysis most fully in "Renovation of the People" ("Xinmin shuo"), a twenty-part essay that appeared serially in the journal *Xinmin congbao* from 1902 to 1906. Stating that national renovation would depend on the renovation of the people, Liang wrote that the renewal had



"Chinese progress," *Shibao*, September 26, 1908.

to begin with identifying the weaknesses in the national character, followed by cultivating the virtues necessary to overcome those weaknesses. Each installment of the essay was devoted to one of these prescribed qualities: public virtue, nation-mindedness, adventuresomeness, knowledge of rights, freedom, self-governing ability, progress, self-respect, solidarity, capacity for production and consumption, determination, a sense of duty, militarism, private morality, political skill, and popular spirit.³⁵

The *Shibao* journalists, whose intellectual affinity with Liang was most marked on the issue of the renovation of the people, also sought to rectify any "undesirable aspects of the cultural heritage" that might impede the development of a constitutional citizenry. Their analyses and prescriptions reflect a deep sense of cultural and national anxiety. How, the writers asked with a near obsessiveness, did the Chinese citizenry measure up against its counterpart in the "advanced nations"? Every identified character flaw was viewed comparatively and analyzed in terms of how it hurt the nation in its struggle to compete internationally.

Preoccupied as they were with national survival and strengthening, the journalists focused on China's weakness as a world power. Insular and inward-looking, the nation was unable to compete internationally because its citizens were uninformed about the outside world. "The people of our nation cannot be called a great people," an editorialist wrote in 1904. "The reason for this is that they lack a global perspective [*shijie sixiang*]. They live like cavemen, deficient of all vision. Their concerns extend only as far as their own jobs, and they are almost unaware of the fact that there is a

world that exists beyond them. This is the common state of our citizens." The source of this insularity was the limited vision of the nation's elite, who were "practically ignorant about the different territories, peoples, and industries that existed in the world." Because their range of vision "extended no further than the borders of their own nation," it naturally followed that "the range of vision of those who were even less knowledgeable than they extended no further than the borders of one province, or one prefecture, or one town. As for the vision of those who were the least knowledgeable, it extended no further than the borders of one family, or one person." As a result, the editorialist exclaimed, "the people of the entire nation lack far-sightedness, determination, a spirit of adventure, and self-respect. Humble and hesitant, it is as if they are stuck in an old moat."³⁶

As always in the reformists' social and political commentary, the sorry present was held up to both a paradigmatic past and the dynamic Western present. The same author who so severely criticized the current lack of vision claimed that "in the ancient period in China there were many people who were knowledgeable about the world. At the time of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, the breadth of thought of such men as Zhuang Zi [c. 369–286 B.C.E.] and Zou Yan [c. 305–240 B.C.E.] was greater than that of any other period, ancient or modern." In the modern era, though, it was Westerners who excelled in intellectual depth and scope. After several centuries of exploration and discovery, "they have advanced to doing research on politics, military affairs, foreign affairs, and geography, and their international policy has become increasingly developed."³⁷ The reformists attributed this progress in the West to the aggressive and outward-looking policies of the foreign nations. Chen Leng claimed that because France had lost these qualities, it no longer dominated Europe and was unable to regain its original leadership in the world. He offered this example as a warning to the Chinese, who, he claimed, shared the French propensity for inwardness: "While most of the young people of England and Germany rush to foreign nations with excitement in their hearts, the French remain deeply attached to the beauty of the mountains and lakes of their ancient territory. This is one of the reasons why they cannot advance in the world."³⁸ The danger of insularity was not only stagnation but also the kind of xenophobia that had served to alienate China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Decrying how village ignorants had attacked foreign property and destroyed new-style schools in 1904, an editorialist claimed that "if one wants to act in conformity with the majority today, one must follow the ignorants [*chichizhe*] in destroying schools and establishing temples for the worship of spirits. Those who have acted most in conformity with public sentiment in recent times, therefore, are none other than the Boxers."³⁹

The second national flaw to which the reformists pointed was physical weakness. Again, the international ramifications of this defect were underlined, specifically China's inability to fend off foreign aggressors.

Chen Leng explained that China had been weakened by a series of internal and external calamities in the previous century. Over this period it was unknown how many had died "by soldiers' knives or by famine, . . . how many had suffered from the great calamity of the Taiping Rebellion or the evil effects of opium, . . . how many were affected by the Sino-Japanese War or the Boxer Rebellion, . . . how many had suffered from the Sino-Russian War or the suppression of the secret societies, . . . how many were harmed by the natural disasters of Xu[zhou] and Hui[yin], or by the disastrous uprising in Ping county." Chen likened China to other nations whose vital force (*yuanqi*) had been greatly diminished after wars or natural disasters.⁴⁰ Because China had been the victim of such calamities in the recent past, there was all the more reason for it to concentrate on strengthening its military prowess today, especially since, as the 1905 *Citizens' Reader* explained, "a doctrine called colonization had become the great driving force in the international arena."⁴¹ This concern with foreign aggression resulted in a preoccupation with physical training and military might that was more pronounced in the *Shibao* editorials and in the 1905 reader than it had been in Liang's earlier essays. Whereas only one of the twenty sections of "Renovation of the People" was on this theme, five of the thirteen lessons of the first section of the reader were devoted to developing a militarized and physically vigorous citizenry.⁴²

Voluntarism and activism were to be the basis of this new militarism. Abandoning the Confucian ethos of rational adjustment to the world, Liang Qichao had already become a proponent of the Western belief in the rational mastery of the world. He emphasized the citizens' cultivation of an adventurous, enterprising spirit (*maoxian jinqu zhi jingshen*), which would be driven by hope, zeal, wisdom, perseverance, and courage.⁴³ Chen Leng also praised these qualities, lauding the people of England and Germany for their "limitless enthusiasm for entrepreneurial undertakings." Again Chen compared the "dispirited French character" with the more dynamic nature of the British and the Germans. He then pronounced "a warning to our own citizens. . . . We must prepare our spirits to forge ahead, to exert our strength and manage great industries."⁴⁴

In describing and promoting the ideal of the citizen as risk taker and adventurer, the reformists looked to foreigners for a supply of exemplary heroes. In the section entitled "Adventuresomeness" ("Lun jinqu maoxian") in "Renovation of the People," Liang had drawn all his examples from Western history, describing the achievements of Columbus, Luther, Magellan, Livingstone, Adolphus, Peter the Great, Cromwell, Washington, Napoleon, William Egmont, Lincoln, and Mazzini.⁴⁵ In September 1904, a *Shibao* editorialist questioned whether China would ever be able to produce its own heroes: "Those who once worried that there were not enough heroes [*haojie*] in our nation now worry that there are too many. Alas! Are there really too many heroes? No, it is only a matter of there not being any true heroes." He continued by asking: "Were not Washington, Napoleon,



"The Chinese understanding of constitutionalism"—which is being poured from above, out of a bottle of "National Assembly Water." *Shibao*, August 18, 1908.

Cromwell, and Bismarck the only true heroes in history?"⁴⁶ Hu Ma juxtaposed the servile passivity of the Chinese people to the heroism of Western leaders. Alluding to the Zhuang Zi, he described how the powerful giants (in this case the Western powers) were carrying off all of the nation's railway and mining rights while the citizens passively stood by. "If this had taken place in London or Paris, I know the likes of Cromwell, Robespierre, and Danton would have risen up long ago," Hu declared. Instead, the Chinese people were so cowed by the authorities that they merely watched as the government sold off the nation's rights to the foreigners, not even daring "to make a peep like that of a chicken or a pig."⁴⁷

The editorialists also unfavorably compared the Chinese citizens with the Japanese who had risen up against the Tokugawa government and ushered in the Meiji Restoration: "Before the constitution was established in Japan, the citizens took part in political movements and did not shun danger. It was as if the whole nation were wildly enthusiastic about political reform. This is very different from the apathy and quiet that pervades our nation today."⁴⁸ In the opinion of the *Shibao* writer Jian He, this passivity had worsened after the announcement of the constitutional prepa-

ration program in 1906, and particularly after the government increased restrictions on freedom of the press and of association in early 1908. "For many years, we could rely on weak public sentiment, and nascent, humble public opinion to resist the government," he claimed. "Now even this no longer exists. Our people prefer to live than to die." Disappointed over how representatives of the Zhejiang and Jiangsu Railway Associations dealt with the authorities in official negotiations in late 1907, Jian berated them for being "voiceless mockingbirds and spineless flatterers" and decried China's situation as "the historical rut of a perishing nation."⁴⁹

While the editorialists made these scathing critiques and comparisons in the hope of galvanizing their readers into action, at the same time they realized that the Western ideal hero-type could not be directly transplanted to Chinese soil. Even if such a Western hero were to arrive in China, one editorialist argued, he would not necessarily be able to save the situation, because the differences between Western and Chinese social conditions gave rise to different customs and ways of thinking. "When a Chinese person first takes Western medicine, it has little effect," he pointed out. "When he first eats Western food, he would be most likely to throw down his chopsticks in disgust. When Lian Po [a general of the state of Zhao during the Warring States period] entered the state of Wei, he wanted to use the soldiers from his native Zhao. It is for these reasons that I hope there will be real indigenous heroes to save China."⁵⁰

Although true heroes were as urgently needed as "ice in summer, coal in winter, rice in times of famine, and water in times of drought," the journalists claimed, there were none in China. The self-proclaimed men of conviction (*youzhi zhi shi*) and national vision spoke only empty words, lacking the substance of true national heroes.⁵¹ Those who called themselves the social and political vanguard (*xianjue zhi tu*) were, moreover, no better. Rather than be at the forefront of government reform and social activism, "they always waited until after an incident had occurred before they would begin to think of how to deal with it."⁵² Young radicals were also deemed deficient. Complaining that they "generally adopt extremely emotional behavior," Min declared that "there are very few who understand the inner workings of the nation and seek an appropriate resolution of our problems."⁵³

The new publicists stressed the urgency of the national situation by emphasizing how, as China stagnated, "the great powers continued to develop scientifically, industrially, militarily, and even in terms of population growth and territorial expansion. In all fields," Min wrote, "they move as fast as the wind, rapidly making progress."⁵⁴ If the Chinese were ever to catch up with the West and produce their own heroes, they would first have to cultivate self-reliance. In a 1908 editorial an author named Fang Rongjun cited the *Mencius* in his effort to awaken the Chinese citizens to the importance of this quality: "In ancient times Mencius ridiculed King Xuan of Qi saying, 'I have heard of one who with 70 *li* exercised all the func-

tions of government throughout the kingdom. That was Tang. I have never heard of a prince with 1,000 *li* standing in fear of others." Fang related this criticism to modern-day China. "It is deplorable," he stated, "that our nation, which covers 200 million square *li* of territory and which unites 400 million people, cannot progress and conduct itself in a heroic manner. Instead, it is oppressed by the great powers and faces hostility and difficulties on all sides." Claiming that the source of the problem was the citizens' lack of autonomy (*zizhi li*), Fang bolstered his argument by referring to the *Great Learning's* emphasis on self-cultivation and Gu Yanwu's (1613–82) discussion of the sense of autonomy felt by the common people (*pifu*).⁵⁵

Chen Leng also castigated the people for lacking autonomy and being incapable of taking responsibility for national affairs. "Those who discuss the Suzhou-Hangzhou-Ningbo Railway problem today blame the railway companies, blame the representatives, blame the government, and blame the foreigners for the outcome of the dispute," he remarked. They sought to blame everyone but those who were most responsible, the citizens themselves, those who—despite having created the railway companies and sent representatives to Beijing to negotiate—continued to be submissive to government authority. Because of this submissiveness, Chen argued, "there is only a government in this nation; there are absolutely no people. If the foreigners say give and the government says give, do the people dare not to give? If the foreigners say cede and the government says cede, do the people dare not to cede? No, they give or they cede without the slightest hesitation."⁵⁶

The journalists linked this theme of submissiveness to the issue of rights. Because the Chinese people lacked a concept of rights, they were meek and cowardly. An editorialist using the pen name Xue Hong ("White Swan") wrote, "The people of our nation do not know what rights [*quanli*] are; all that they know are simple obligations [*yiwu*]. The father appeals to obligations to admonish his son, and the older brother uses obligations to instruct his younger brother." He claimed that although a few men of purpose and principle (*zhishi*) had tried to introduce the ideas of constitutionalism and rights in China, the Chinese people preferred to remain autocratic subjects. "They embrace the traditional cangue and whips with the same gratitude they feel when they are granted favors or shown kindness. They regard their personal life's savings as belonging to the collective, knowing only how to pay taxes, not to develop their own assets. Alas! The dung beetle eats shit and rejoices. A fish swimming in a kettle forgets the water is boiling. . . . I am appalled that our compatriots would willingly abandon their rights rather than join together to struggle for a better life."⁵⁷

As the images of the dung beetle and the fish in the kettle suggest, the reform publicists also accused the Chinese people of lacking self-respect. In a lesson of the *Citizens' Reader* on the reasons foreigners mistreated the Chinese, the author quoted the *Mencius*: "A man must first despise himself and then others will despise him." He then recounted a telling

anecdote, relating that he had returned from Japan the previous year on a Japanese boat and that several Chinese had boarded at a port in Korea. He was angry and humiliated to find that the Japanese refused to let the Chinese share their cabin and overheard a few of them say they most detested the Chinese because they smoked and stole. The author was indignant on behalf of his compatriots. When he went to the freight cabin where the Chinese had retreated, however, he found lighted opium lamps. And later, when the Japanese discovered they had lost some rice bowls, their goods were found in the suitcases of the Chinese. "We all must struggle to vindicate our honor," the author of the reader asserted. "We must act in such a way that foreigners will have no reason to look down on us. Only if we retain our self-respect will we be able rightfully to dispute the foreigners when they do not treat us correctly. To vindicate ourselves is to vindicate our nation."⁵⁸

All of these weaknesses in the Chinese national character that the reformists catalogued—from insularity to a lack of self-respect, from physical frailty to submissiveness—contributed to what they viewed as the overriding and most serious flaw: a lack of nation-mindedness. In order to strengthen and expand the middle realm, they believed, the citizens had to deepen their commitment to the nation. The 1905 *Citizens' Reader* opened with a discussion of this problem. "The people of China today have a very bad habit," the authors wrote. "When they see that the nation has a problem, they say, this is a matter of the nation; it is not relevant to us. This is the most ignorant kind of statement. Let us pose the following questions: These people are the people of which nation? This nation is the nation of which people? If the affairs of the nation are irrelevant to the people, then the nation is an entity unto itself, and the people are an entity unto themselves. How can they be called citizens?"⁵⁹ Addressing this pivotal theme, a *Shibao* journalist complained in late 1909 that the Chinese people "viewed the vicissitudes of the nation as the dynasty's matter and of no concern to the majority of the citizens." This lack of connection to the nation was summed up in the common saying, "I take care of my own affairs, and as for the affairs of others, they have nothing to do with me." The editorialist alleged that Chinese history was rife with examples of this kind of attitude: "Ancient kings established isolated temples. Officials of all ranks and descriptions undertook their own separate enterprises. And the masses [*yunyun zhi zhong*] placed themselves outside the sphere of national concerns." The result was a nation lacking all cohesion and sense of purpose, one in which "the left and right hand could not work together, and the 400 million people formed 400 million nations, all incapable of cohering one to the other."⁶⁰

According to the estimate of one journalist, only some 10 percent of the total Chinese population actually contributed to the national well-being. He wrote that "out of the 400 million people in our nation, half of them are weak women with bound feet. Of the remaining 200 million,

half again are emaciated and sickly opium addicts, and the rest are beggars, thieves, Buddhists, and Daoists, good-for-nothings from wealthy families, local bullies, the diseased, criminals, and actors and actresses."⁶¹

Despite the rhetoric of disgust and frustration that characterized the reform publicists' editorials on the state of the Chinese citizenry, the very act of committing their concerns to print manifests their deeper conviction that society could be transformed. For all of their detailed and indignant criticism of the Chinese citizen as he or she was, the *Shibao* writers were no less convinced of who he or she could become. They were certain that through education and politicization, the keys to the success of Western societies, China's citizens could be uplifted and reformed. "If the people's level of political understanding is high," Min declared, "then their conception of the nation is clear. If their political knowledge is profound, then all public speech [*yanlun*] and all political action would be undertaken for the sake of the nation."⁶²

To enrich the people's political knowledge, encourage their independence from the dynasty, and cultivate their sense of national responsibility, the journalists committed themselves to developing civic education (*guomin jiaoyu*) and raising the level of popular political awareness. Convinced that this ambitious new course for society would succeed only if these intellectual and political developments were ethically grounded, they also promoted a new public morality. These were the tasks—education, moral edification, and politicization—that the journalists set for themselves in order to transform late Qing society and forge a new citizenry.

Forging a New Citizenry

China's most serious problem is that only the scholars are educated. The soldiers, farmers, workers, and merchants have all been kept on the margins of the system of education.

—“Lun puji jiaoyu,” *Shibao*, January 26, 1906

The late Qing reform publicists foreswore the Confucian noble man's practice of holding knowledge in trust and acting on the common people's behalf. Instead they devoted themselves to informing, educating, and politicizing their compatriots in order to forge a more autonomous Chinese citizenry. Considering popular knowledge (*minzhi*) to be a direct corollary of popular power (*minquan*), they argued that “if the people command 10 percent of all knowledge, then they will hold 10 percent of all power. If they command 60 or 70 percent of knowledge, they will hold 60 or 70 percent of power.”¹

The *Shibao* journalists first sought to empower their readers by furnishing them with accurate and objective reports, thus equipping them with the information necessary to pronounce judgments on issues that had previously been the exclusive province of the higher authorities. As the inaugural statement to *Shibao* proclaimed, it was the duty of newspapers “to report the facts in the news” and “investigate the situation in the interior of the nation.”² Chen Leng explained that reporters must do on-site investigations, using their eyes, not their ears, and that they must always write objectively, not on the basis of their personal opinions.³

Committed to edifying their readers through reliable and truthful reporting, the new publicists were also at the forefront of educational reform in the late Qing. As members of educational associations and as teachers in new-style schools, they sought to expand the sphere and redefine the content of education in the new middle realm. Questioning both the utility of the established “system for educating and disciplining the masses” (*zheng-*

jiao) and the relevance of elite schooling that produced government bureaucrats, they promoted civic education (*guomin jiaoyu*) as the foundation of the new society. Characterized by its independence from imperial agendas, its universal ambitions, and its new genre of texts, this civic education also had a strong ethical component. A new public morality (*gongde*), the journalists claimed, had to accompany the new education in order to strengthen the citizens' sense of collective commitment and national purpose.

The reform publicists realized that in order to mobilize their compatriots in the national interest effectively, it was necessary not only to educate but also to politicize them. Treating topical issues as political texts, they used their commentaries on such issues to heighten popular political awareness. Convinced that political participation was the source of political commitment, they supported the use of newly opened spaces in the late Qing polity—the emerging local self-government bodies, for example—as training grounds for a reform-minded constitutional citizenry.

The journalists' multifarious, ambitious, and often unsystematic approach to forging a new citizenry reflects the enormity of their task and the imposing obstacles they faced, from illiteracy to political apathy. More important, however, it reveals their willingness to relinquish the inherited literati role of proxy for the people, by offering the *min* the means to reinvent themselves.

Civic Education and Public Morality

In the opinion of the *Shibao* journalists, the imperial government had maintained a policy of keeping the people ignorant (*yumin zhengci*) throughout Chinese history. Based on the Confucian principle that "the people may be made to follow a path of action, but they may not be made to understand it," this policy translated into the system for educating and disciplining the masses under dynastic rule (*zhengjiao*). Blaming this system for engendering and enforcing weaknesses in the Chinese character— from insularity to submissiveness, from passivity to a lack of self-reliance—the new publicists insisted that it must be replaced by a new system of civic education (*guomin jiaoyu*).⁴ Only under such a system would the Chinese people finally be able to evolve from slaves to citizens, from subjects to participants, from disparate individuals to committed patriots.

The greatest fault of the various levels of the imperial system of education, the journalists held, was that they militated against the creation of an independent, autonomous citizenry. As a 1904 editorial explained it, "the people's dependent nature was molded by the system for educating and disciplining the masses," which "demanded that all the people in the nation be law-abiding and content under autocracy." Unaware that "they were mere objects exploited by the autocratic system, the people did not realize that this traditional ethos was irreconcilable with the modern impera-



"The New Person," *Shibao*, August 18, 1908. An amalgam of new and old: a person in traditional dress reading a book on economics through a pair of sunglasses.

tives of uniting the collective, protecting the race, and consolidating the nation." At the same time, the system of higher learning repressed those "whose knowledge was deep and broad," giving rise to a nation of narrow-minded pedants.⁵ "All that the learned people understand," an editorialist wrote, "are the principles of Neo-Confucianism [*xingli*], the recorded dialogues of Song Dynasty Confucian scholars [*yulu*], ornamental phrasing, and the eight-legged essay. All they hope for is fine clothing, good food, lofty titles, and high position." Moreover, the members of the lower social echelons (*xiadeng zhi ren*) aspired only to imitate these worthless pedants in the higher levels of society (*shangdeng shehui*), with the result that "the entire population lacks any knowledge of the world." For this to change and for China to be able to fend for itself internationally, it needed to cultivate pragmatic and common knowledge in the form of civic education.⁶

This civic education would serve an important practical function, developing the citizenry's knowledge of the world and of "the administrative divisions and the geography of their own nation."⁷ It would also perform a spiritual service, encouraging the students' "habits of self-reliance, ethic of solidarity, spirit of determination, and overall activism."⁸ Its overriding objective, however, was political. Upholding the linkage between education and politics that had been maintained throughout Chinese history

by the examination system for the elites and the system of education and discipline for the masses, the reformists tied their vision of constitutional reform to educational reform. A 1905 editorial claimed that "national politics must be supported by the educational system, and schools must operate as a miniature of government. Students of outstanding ability will become the future beloved sons of politics."⁹ But as the reformists became increasingly disillusioned with the Qing's commitment to constitutional reform after 1906, they were less sanguine about the symbiotic relationship between the state and education. They increasingly viewed education not as a miniature version of the government but as a tool to promote reform in spite of, or even in direct opposition to, the government.

A late 1909 editorial argued that "when government officials are responsible for planning and sponsoring schools, they never have thoughts of educational reform. They are only concerned with employing surplus personnel." According to this author, in order for the status quo truly to change in education, "officials must not be employed as school principals." Instead they should be replaced by dynamic local gentry leaders who understand the value and the needs of education.¹⁰ This independence from the government should extend from the lower, local levels to the higher levels of the educational system. One writer lauded the Western European method of granting academic degrees after the review of doctoral committees and the recommendation of the head of the university. "High officials of the Ministry of Education cannot intervene," he explained. "In this way specialized education is independent of government power."¹¹

Another method the journalists devised in an effort to assert the independence of education from the state was to define a "new canon" of national culture. In 1909 the editorialist using the pen name Zhuang ("Simple-minded") criticized adherents of the National Essence Movement, including veteran officials (*laochen*) and remonstrating officials (*yanguan*), who had petitioned to have the examination system reinstated. Their ostensible aim was to ensure that the study of the traditional forms of poetry and literary works (*shifu cizhang*) would take the lead in popular education. In closely analyzing their program, however, Zhuang found that their true motivation was quite different. Just as Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty had attempted to destroy the hundred schools of thought (*baijia*), he wrote, so the advocates of the National Essence Movement wanted to eliminate from the canon any writings that challenged the authority of the dynasty.¹²

Zhuang berated these conservative pedants for neglecting the books of the masters of the Zhou and Qin Dynasties, the extraordinary discussions of the *Chunqiu*, the principles of the plan of the Yellow River and the book of the River Luo, Yong Jia's system of the classics, Yaojiang's (Wang Yangming's) theory of innate knowledge, and the writings of Chuanshan (Wang Fuzhi), Lizhou (Huang Zongxi), and Xizhai (Yan Yuan).¹³ Although Zhuang was not an advocate of wholesale Western learning, he favored the



A depiction of the tension between reformist and conservative forces, *Shibao*, June 26, 1908. Two bulls, one marked "Ministry of Law" and the other "Ministry of Education," are pulling in opposite directions, the Ministry of Law toward the "advanced world," the Ministry of Education toward "the world of national essence."

principles on which the Western educational system was based. His own prescription for the "new canon" was a mix of Western civic educational values and certain established works. "In order to educate and mold the spirit of the citizen," he recommended texts "for regulating one's heart and mind": the universal love of the *Chun qiu* (from Dong's [Zhongshu's] book, the *Spring and Autumn Annals' Radiant Dew* [*Chunqiu fanlu*]); Mo Di's emphasis on universality as a supplement to the *Analects*; Zeng Zi's prescriptions for exercising caution in private life; and Mencius's discussion of innate knowledge. These texts would serve political reform by emboldening the timid and stabilizing the foundation of the nation.¹⁴

These various educational concerns were still lofty ones: instituting a new canon, granting independent higher degrees, imparting knowledge of China's administrative divisions. Civic education as reflected in these *Shibao* editorials was not so much a means of instructing the benighted masses who had been repressed under the older system of education and discipline as it was a method of *reeducating* those who were literate, but classically trained and ignorant of the basic principles of the new learning. At the same time there were many editorialists who addressed the problem of the universalization of education. A new shibboleth that carried much rhetorical weight in the reform discourse, the ideal of universal education reflected the new elites' desire to eliminate not only the structure but also the ethos of the traditional examination system by reaching every citizen with the new learning. Although the late Qing reformists were not the first to put the wide diffusion of knowledge on the Chinese agenda—

generations of Confucian scholars considered it to be the sine qua non of a viable political and social order—their early-twentieth-century conception of universal education was more political in ambition and more Westernized in inspiration than that of their predecessors.¹⁵

The *Shibao* editorials consistently linked universal education to the issue of national salvation. A Chinese student in America who contributed an editorial to the newspaper in 1906 defined the general objective of education as “cultivating civic qualities and developing the nation’s ability to defend itself against foreign aggression.” Universal education was particularly important, he asserted, because “the nation could not be revitalized by a minority of citizens.” The value of universal education therefore lay in “making all of the people literate, helping them to understand the principles of action [*shili*], and encouraging them to cultivate loyalty and patriotism.”¹⁶ An editorialist using the pen name Tian Chi (meaning “A Mythical Sea,” mentioned in the *Zhuangzi*) advocated using education to guide and channel the popular spirit (*minqi*) toward the ends of reform and national defense. To do so, he wrote, it was necessary to “establish lower schools to form young students, and night schools and literacy classes to educate those who are older, uneducated, and im-



“Scientific faces,” *Shibao*, March 9, 1908. The faces of ancient wisdom, Western learning, and biology.

poverished."¹⁷ Tying universal education to the struggle for international prominence, the journalist Li declared that "the fate of the nation depends on national education and industry. As long as a united national spirit is lacking, England, France, Germany, Japan, and America will have the power to influence and educate our citizens. The Chinese people will thus become Anglicized, Frenchified, Germanified, Japanized, and Americanized."¹⁸ Concurring with this view, Chen Leng stated that while according to Confucius, wealth was the nation's top priority, followed by education, for the new-style publicists it was the reverse. Universal education, they believed, would be the source of national wealth and power.¹⁹

The journalists thus considered the mandate of the new education to be the development of the broader competence of the patriotic citizen, not the cultivation of the limited expertise of the official. "China's most serious problem is that only the scholars are educated," an advocate of universal education wrote. "The soldiers, farmers, workers, and merchants have all been kept on the margins of the system of education." This was different from constitutional nations, he added, where education was everyone's right, not the elite's privilege.²⁰ "The most important policy of the period of constitutional preparation" was thus "the universalization of education, with an emphasis on elementary, middle, and industrial education." Because "elementary school students were the seeds of future constitutional citizens," elementary schools had to expand if constitutionalism were to succeed in China.²¹

This emphasis on the education of the citizens rather than the officials was the impetus behind the development of the new genre of citizens' readers in the early twentieth century.²² The dynasty itself gradually came to recognize the important role such texts could play in the reform program, and stipulated in the Nine-Year Constitutional Preparation Program that citizens' textbooks (*guomin bidu keben*) should be published as part of the plan for the year 1908.²³ Well before the dynasty had made this commitment, however, a number of readers and textbooks had already been published. The authors of the 1905 *Citizens' Reader* explained the *raison d'être* for these new tracts: "The nation is collectively owned by the people. It is not true that only officials can take care of national matters and that these matters are of no relevance to the rest of the people."²⁴ Similar to prerevolutionary French pamphlets such as "The Citizen's Catechism," these readers were thus designed to encourage the citizens' expanded role in national affairs.²⁵

The 1905 reader emphasized the theme of national strengthening through universal education: "Patriotism is based on all of the people sharing common knowledge. Only when this goal has been achieved can people begin to equate their interest with the national interest." The authors underscored the importance of universalizing education by referring to both the classics and the modern Western and Japanese experience. They explained that universal education had given rise to an intensely

patriotic citizenry in Meiji Japan and that the Japanese-style school system corresponded to the ancient Chinese system of different levels of schools described in the *Record of Rites*. They further claimed that Prussia had been able to defeat France only after Kaiser Wilhelm had instituted compulsory education. Civic education and national strengthening were thus portrayed as a single movement: "Once the people share a certain level of common knowledge, they will be of one heart and mind, and they will all come to the aid of the nation. Then how could the nation not be strong?"²⁶ Arguing that only an educated citizenry would win the respect of the great international powers, the authors cited the Japanese tenet that "a great hero is not as valuable to society as a great citizen. The three characters for great citizen [*daguomin*] refer not to the physical size of the nation but to the qualities of the citizen. If the people lack civic qualities, then although the nation is large, the people would only be viewed as the people of a large nation; they certainly would not be viewed as great citizens." The authors insisted, moreover, that universal education was the key to this greatness. "If all of the people in our nation were educated and developed civic qualities, then every nation in the world would naturally treat us in a civilized manner and not dare to regard us with contempt."²⁷

In addition to the 1905 text, other readers were privately published by reform associations such as the Shanghai-based Constitutional Preparation Association (Yubei lixian gonghui), of which most of the leading *Shibao* journalists and editors were members. In 1908 and 1909 advertisements appeared in the association's journal announcing two editions of their own *Citizens' Reader* (*Gongmin bidu*). These texts were aimed at individuals who had a higher level of education than the prospective audience for the 1905 vernacular reader, however. The advertisements for the first edition noted that the text, written by Meng Zhaochang, a member of the association, was designed for local self-government deputies and local managers (*dongshi*), while those for the second edition explicitly stated that the text was aimed at educating high-level citizens (*gaodeng guomin*), meaning provincial assembly deputies, and persons preparing to become national assembly deputies.²⁸

From its most elementary to its most sophisticated levels, the reform publicists believed the new civic education had to be accompanied by a new civic morality. In part this was a reflection of the old elitist view that the common people's deficiency in knowledge was inevitably accompanied by deficiencies in character. But it also reflected the new-style elites' concern that their project of civic edification should have a solid ethical basis.²⁹ Fearing that popular gains in new knowledge would be offset by losses in established ethical principles, the late Qing reformists were as cautious about losing their traditional moorings as they were bold about promoting their reform ideas.

In a lesson devoted to ethical education in the 1905 *Citizens' Reader*, the authors state that "common knowledge and ability alone do not make

a citizen." Although mental training is important, "ethics are the foundation of human life. If there are no ethics, then no matter how strong the citizen's body is or how ample his knowledge and ability, in the end, he would not be considered a complete person."³⁰ As the government's constitutional program was gradually implemented, the *Shibao* writers emphasized the need to develop a strong sense of morality to undergird the new political-legal system. Jiang Ruizao warned in an early 1909 editorial that the people's hopes for constitutionalism could be thwarted by unforeseen problems. "What precisely is the source of concern?" Jiang asked. "It is the unique method that the ancient sages embraced as a means of establishing oneself in life and that people today reject as old talk. It is ethics."³¹

As both Jiang and the authors of the *Citizens' Reader* emphasized, every nation had its own ethical system that had been "passed on from the ancient sages. To draw an analogy," the authors of the reader wrote, "a family's ancestors pass their assets on to their descendants. If these descendants do not respectfully preserve them, are they not failing to live up to the expectations of their forebears? In the same way our nation must emphasize the unique feature of its own ethical system, the five human relationships [*lunchang*]." The authors linked the preservation of this system of national ethics to national survival. "If the morality of the five relationships [*lunchang daode*] is not maintained," they warned, "the special essence of the nation will be imperiled. Could such a nation be expected to survive?"³² Jiang tied respect for China's inherited moral system to the success of constitutionalism. "If the citizens lack ethics," he wrote, "then it is absolutely impossible to speak of constitutionalism. . . . If we cannot preserve our traditional ethical system in adopting a constitutional system, we will be doing nothing more than unsuccessfully imitating others while losing our original acumen. The traditional way will be lost, and then I would fear for China's future."³³

The journalists argued, however, that the ethical system most appropriate to this new age of politics would have to include both old and new elements. The authors of the reader extended their analogy of an inheritance to make this point. Although an inheritance must be respectfully preserved, they claimed, it would have to be supplemented in order to sustain all of the descendants. In parallel fashion, the classical morality based on the five human relationships had to be supplemented by a new "public morality" (*gongde*): "Given the situation today, one cannot only speak of conducting oneself virtuously. One must also do what is beneficial to the nation and to society in order to fulfill one's obligations [*yiwu*]." It was no longer permissible for hermits to retreat from society and piously live in isolation. As the authors of the reader put it, "If everyone thought in this way, then who would take care of social matters? There has to be private morality [*side*] (*side* is not the same as *sishi* [private affairs]; that which relates to the morality of one person or one family is *side*), and there also has to be public morality."³⁴

Liang Qichao was the first to articulate the importance of public mo-

rality at this critical juncture in China's history. Premised on moral relativism rather than the absolutism of Confucianism, this concept, like the concept of solidarity (*qun*), was absent in the classical Chinese writings. Liang believed these two principles—public morality and solidarity—were integrally linked to each other. The central function of any moral system was solidarity or grouping, and the essence of morality was to strengthen group cohesion and promote the collective interest. Liang invested his innovative ideas on civic morality with classical moral sanction by using the term *xinmin*, a concept central to the Neo-Confucian classic the *Great Learning*, in the title of his serialized essay "Xinmin shuo."³⁵ At the same time, in the "Public Morality" section of the essay, he emphasized the newness of these ideas in Chinese history. "The significance of public morality has not yet dawned on the Chinese people," he wrote. They had yet to realize that "national affairs are the concern of every citizen and that the original basis for morality lies in serving the interests of the group." The purpose of public morality was to cultivate a nation-minded citizenry by emphasizing duties over rights. If there were no sense of civic obligation, there could be no citizenry.³⁶

Sharing Liang's concern, the *Shibao* journalists believed that as the representatives of the new middle realm in China, they had the responsibility to set the moral tenor of the age. Neither the common people below them nor the officials above them were able or willing to undertake this responsibility. "The members of the lower level of society," Jiang Ruizao declared, "are confused and dazed. As if unable to awaken from a deep dream, they have no concerns besides cultivating the land and raising their children." At the same time, "the members of the upper levels of society are corrupt and servile, and they act and speak in a devious and strange manner. In the end they have thoughts only of wealth and status, merit and fame. They are not in the least moved by the danger of the national situation or the distressing state of the people's livelihood." It was therefore the duty of representatives of the middle level of society to imbue the people with the higher principles of the new public morality. This moral mandate was particularly pressing, since society was in the sensitive period of transition to constitutionalism. Jiang claimed that "those who have official ambitions [within the dynasty's New Policies reform program] pose the greatest threat to society. They exploit good people and use the pretext of the new learning to gain advantage." These unethical characters, such as pettifoggers (*lansong*), would, he felt, then drive those who had a moral conscience from participating in reform politics. In the end "nine out of ten elected deputies and local self-government officers" would come from the ranks of "this group of immoral individuals. They would not submit to public opinion [*yuqing*], plan for the public good [*gongyi*], or be willing to put aside their own interests in order to work for the nation and the people. They most certainly would not supervise the officials or devote themselves to educating the common people [*pingmin*]."³⁷

In addition to the new publicists' commonly held view that public

morality had to be cultivated within the various levels of society, there was a second, more Rousseauian tendency according to which morality had merely to be *recovered*. Writing in late 1907 on the need for establishing supervisory institutions in China, the editorialist Li argued that civic virtue could gradually be reclaimed through the citizens' struggles over railway and policing rights. All, Li claimed, were patriotic in their hearts: "However, because the people had lived under autocracy for so long, their selfish desires [*ziwei zhi si*] had overcome their altruism [*lita zhi nian*], and their natural instincts were submerged." After several challenges to their sense of national dignity, though, the people would finally "recover this altruistic instinct."³⁸

Whether civic morality had to be cultivated or merely regained, it was inextricably linked to the reformists' vision of constitutional reform and to their ambitions for national strengthening. In their view, politics and morality were mutually reinforcing. Whereas morality was the foundation of political progress, new political challenges were a catalyst in the development of a new civic ethics. This was why raising the citizens' level of political awareness and encouraging political engagement was the third element—after civic education and civic morality—in the reformists' program to make constitutional citizens out of imperial subjects.

Politicization: Political Participation and Local Self-Government Reform

The new-style publicists distinguished themselves from the Confucian noble men by speaking directly *to* the people rather than *for* the people. Even in the rare circumstances where the literati had attempted to address the common people—in, for example, the community compact lectures (*xiangyue*) from the Song through the Qing Dynasties—their purpose had been to ensure submission and obedience.³⁹ The late Qing journalists, in contrast, sought to rouse society to activism and civic responsibility. Focusing on the spiritual, rather than the material, needs of the people, they aimed to educate, uplift, and *politicize* the citizens, not to merely nurture and subdue them. The reformists were fully aware, however, of the difficulties this politicization would entail. They had placed such great emphasis on civic education and civic morality in part because they realized that the mass of the Chinese population lacked the education and political experience necessary to take part fully in constitutional reform. This was a reality the authorities relentlessly focused on. Official edicts and documents were replete with such phrases as "the people's level of political development is insufficient" (*renmin zhi chengdu weizu*), or "popular knowledge remains undeveloped" (*minzhi wei kai*).⁴⁰

A 1904 editorial articulated the dilemma the publicists faced as they undertook their program of popular politicization: "While reformists claim that without a constitution it would be impossible to implement reform,

government officials say that because the people of our nation do not yet qualify as constitutional citizens, it is not possible to give them constitutional rights all of a sudden. These two positions cannot both be held at once." Conceding that it would be excessively hasty to grant the citizens constitutional rights abruptly, the editorialist argued that one could also be overly cautious. Withholding constitutional reform from the Chinese people, he claimed, was "like refusing to eat for fear of choking." How, he argued, "would the people be able to develop the qualifications of constitutional citizens if the government refused to grant a constitution?"⁴¹

Shortly after the government's announcement of its constitutional preparation program in September 1906, and before the reformists had become completely disillusioned with the government's commitment to political change, the *Shibao* editorialists expressed some trepidation about implementing constitutionalism too precipitously. They argued that one would harvest only what one sowed, that if the foundation of the constitutional system were not strong, the entire structure would be fragile and inferior to the political systems of Europe, America, and Japan. "The standard for a constitution is the citizens' level of political knowledge," an editorialist declared in 1906. In order for this level to be sufficient, the citizens would be required to understand the following: the difference between the nation and the government, the constitution's role in granting civic freedoms, the assembly's role in upholding the constitution, and the distinction between constitutional and ordinary law.⁴²

This editorial was published a year after the manifesto of Liang Qichao's more conservative phase, "On Enlightened Despotism" ("Kaiming zhuanzhi lun"). Inspired by the Chinese legalists and Western statisticians such as Machiavelli, Bodin, and Hobbes, Liang wrote that because constitutional monarchy presupposed political, educational, and institutional conditions that had not yet been fulfilled in China, and because this domestic situation was compounded by external aggression, the rational conduct of the government alone could ensure the survival and security of the nation. Echoing the dynasty's position, Liang argued that "the level of popular knowledge is not up to standard" (*renmin chengdu wei jige*) and the people were not ready to assume the duties of constitutional citizens. The electorate, Liang explained, would be inadequately prepared to exert their supervisory responsibilities and comprehend their electoral obligations. Even the deputies would be incapable of acting in the public interest.⁴³

Expressing the same kind of trepidation, another *Shibao* journalist criticized the most educated citizens in the nation, the overseas students in Japan, for not understanding the principles of electoral politics. He offered the example of a recent election of overseas Chinese students in Tokyo to make his point. In accordance with the charter of a particular student organization, an election was held for members of the executive committee. When it was discovered that nine out of ten of those elected

were from one province, an investigation was undertaken that revealed some 200 excess ballots had been cast. Suspecting misconduct on the part of those from the province that had won 90 percent of the seats, students from the other provinces demanded a new vote. This provoked a conflict between the different provincial factions, and the meeting was hastily adjourned. The editorialist wrote that if the students (who "possessed the noblest and most advanced qualifications") conducted themselves in such a manner, then allowing the common people (whom he referred to as "this disorderly, unlawful race, as disparate as sand") to participate in elections would give rise to "an unimaginable kind of political system."⁴⁴

The journalists' reservations about the citizens' abilities were attenuated—but not completely eliminated—shortly after the failed reform of the official system in late 1906, however. At this time, they began to fear that the government was using the people's unpreparedness as an excuse to stall the reform program. The editorialist Hu Ma questioned the government's method of evaluating the citizens' level of political ability according to their degree of knowledge. "Because knowledge cannot be measured according to length or width," Hu Ma wrote, "I do not understand how the authorities can measure and compare it and decide that it is definitely insufficient. After all, is the level of the government up to standard?" Hu further argued that because the dynasty's greatest fear was popular opposition, the dynasty was most critical of the people when they challenged the authorities. "Alas!" he moaned, "to use this standard to evaluate the people would be to call the insensible, mindless, and numb natives of Africa and Mexico or the social outcasts of India and Burma the citizens of a constitutional nation."⁴⁵

Even if the government's so-called standard for the citizenry was suspect, the publicists continued to express their own caveats about pushing reform too quickly. Ma Weilong warned in 1908 that "if the people are not firm in their own convictions, then even after they enjoy the privilege of supervising the government in theory, in reality, the government will make fools of them."⁴⁶ These concerns were reinforced when local self-government was first implemented in 1909. One editorialist expressed, yet again, the constitutionalists' dilemma of being committed to political change while harboring reservations about whether or not the people were ready for such change. To grant the people political privilege suddenly would be like taking "a three-foot high child to a temple to worship. Of course, he would be frightened and back away. Or it would be like taking a few peasants who till the land and offering them lofty positions in the hall for parliamentary politics and assigning them administrative duties. Of course the peasants would not know how to proceed in their ignorance, and would speak haltingly."⁴⁷

Although the reformists were largely in agreement with the government concerning the citizens' present level of political development, they had radically different views on how the citizenry should be transformed.

In addition to adopting the more conventional methods of developing a patriotic citizenry—universal education and ethical instruction—the constitutional reformists took a step beyond their Confucian predecessors in promoting politicization as a means of popular renovation. As tensions with the dynasty increased, the reformists capitalized on contemporary crises to augment public awareness about the larger issues of national rights and popular power.

In 1905 an editorialist described how popular political thinking developed through struggles with the government over the rights to the Yue-Han Railway and through the Zhou Shengyou case. "Today, because of these two matters, the people have finally started to form associations and to fix and maintain their opinions. This is certainly a sign of progress on the part of the people and bodes well for the good fortune and peace of the dynasty."⁴⁸ Hu Shi left testimony to how effectively *Shibao* used the Zhou Shengyou case to raise the political consciousness of students of the period: "I still remember being influenced by a short essay in *Shibao* just as the Zhou Shengyou case was about to be concluded. After reading the essay I became enraged with the Shanghai intendant, Yuan Shuxun, who was squandering our national rights. Together with two of my colleagues I wrote a long letter condemning him. This incident reveals how profound *Shibao's* influence was on the youth of the day."⁴⁹

In 1907 the journalist Li argued that the Chinese citizenry's political skills were developing as they became engaged in national issues such as the struggle over the Suzhou-Hangzhou-Ningbo Railway in Jiangsu and Zhejiang, and the control of policing rights—which the government proposed handing over to foreigners—along a segment of the West River in Guangdong province. He compared the stakes involved in these disputes to the government's sacrifice of China's national interest over the previous fifty years: their "confiscation of the people's collectively owned land and assets, their dismemberment of the nation and relinquishing of it to foreigners," their territorial and nonterritorial concessions to the four nations at the conclusion of the 1895 Sino-Japanese War, and the indemnity of 450 million yuan that they paid to the foreigners after the Boxer Rebellion. While the 1907 railway and policing issues were a "mere drop in the bucket" in comparison with these egregious actions, it is today, Li observed, that "a strong opposition to government policy is finally developing. Is it not," he asked, "because our citizens have evolved from submission to self-consciousness?"⁵⁰

The editorialist Chen Leng saw it as his mission to use current issues to develop this national self-consciousness further. Employing the powerful metaphor of fire, he sought to galvanize the people in the face of official obstruction of national rights. Referring to many of the same cases commented on by the other editorialists, he wrote that "today's government sets fires everywhere in order to set China on fire. The water of the West River has been set on fire and is boiling. The mines of Guan Moun-

tain have been set on fire and are dripping. The Jiangsu-Zhejiang Railway has been set on fire and will be destroyed. The plains of Manchuria have been set on fire and the earth is scorched. In addition, all kinds of rights, all kinds of industries have been set on fire and reduced to ashes." But Chen encouraged the people to regard this situation not as an augury of destruction but as the occasion for the birth of new and vital forces. "This newspaper is the herald of the new," he declared. "Our colleagues at *Shi-bao* will not be forced to bend by the fire. They themselves will pick up the ashes, raise the flags, beat the drums, and seek the final victory. As for those citizens who are burned by the government, they must all join us and fight the last battle."⁵¹

Another journalist writing shortly after these editorials by Chen and Li were published triumphantly entitled his editorial "The People of Our Nation Have the Level of [Political Consciousness Required of] Constitutional Citizens." He claimed that "taking the two incidents [of the Jiangsu-Zhejiang Railway dispute and the Chenwan case] as examples, it is clear that our people today possess the qualities of constitutional citizens. I do not know what further proof the government would require before it will finally forsake its allegation that the people's level of political development is insufficient."⁵²

All the same, many journalists continued to express reservations. The same editorialist who had praised the popular political progress that had been made in the struggle over the rights to the Yue-Han Railway asserted that this progress remained insufficient. "If this were a constitutional nation," he wrote, "then the rights of the nation and the fate of the people would be regarded as sacred by the entire society, and all would have united in protest." Instead, the people had only taken a few timid and ineffective measures: "They did nothing more than send telegrams to Liang Xingshi and Marshal Zhang Xiang [Zhang Zhidong], who then ordered the abrogation of the treaty. There was no mention of strategies for raising money or organizing resistance."⁵³ And Chen Leng ultimately took an ambiguous position at best on the Suzhou-Hangzhou-Ningbo Railway dispute. Unimpressed with how the citizens had dealt with the issue, but unwilling to declare absolute defeat, Chen asked, "Could it be that the time is still not ripe for our citizens' true ability to manifest itself?"⁵⁴

Despite, or perhaps because of, this trepidation, the journalists kept pressing to find new methods of developing the citizens' political abilities. Many believed that resistance to taxation, like the struggles over national rights, could serve as a political training ground. This way of thinking was new in China, where entrepreneurs were small in number and not prone to use economic force as a means of pressing their demands against the state. In an effort finally to apply such economic pressure and, perhaps more important, to raise popular awareness of the political power of economic issues, the reformists adopted the slogan "no taxation without representation," explaining to the public that citizens in constitutional nations enjoyed civic freedoms in exchange for the taxes they paid.

In 1908 *Shibao* editor Bao Tianxiao, using the pseudonym Xiao (meaning "To Laugh" or "To Deride"), wrote an editorial subtitled "The Reason for No Taxation Without Representation." Bao explained that although in ancient times it was common that "the people had duties but no rights and the sovereign had rights but no duties," in the contemporary world this was true only in autocratic states. "Autocratic monarchs," he wrote, "cheat the people [*xiaomin*], forcing them to labor arduously to contribute to the national revenue while seizing their right to supervise national finances in return." Bao explained that the problem of taxation had been the source of all great revolutions in Europe and in America, revolutions that had won the citizens the right of political participation in exchange for the duty of paying taxes. "Among citizens whose ideas about rights are developed," he wrote, "the saying 'no taxation without representation' is tantamount to a golden rule." But because such ideas were so undeveloped in China, discussing this principle was "like talking about ice to summer insects."⁵⁵

Chen Leng also hoped to promote popular political awareness by raising the issue of taxation. True to form, Chen's presentation of the problem was direct and effective. He alerted the people to the fact that by paying taxes they were providing the government with the means to suppress and coerce society. On the one hand, the government "uses tax money," Chen explained, "to hire soldiers to kill people, to establish police to repress the people, and to employ officials to enforce legal orders that restrict the people. All of these methods serve to make the people's lives more difficult. The people, on the other hand, have no weapons, no police, no officials in their employ. Even if they wanted to resist the government, they would certainly not succeed." The people were thus misguided, Chen claimed, in believing they could empower themselves simply by demanding popular power (*minquan*). The effective means of empowerment was withholding taxes: "Any government that grants popular power does so in exchange for money. 'No taxation without representation.' This is why all constitutional nations have a popular assembly [*minyiyuan*]."

Even so, Chen realized that tax resistance in China had to be compatible with Chinese circumstances. It would be irresponsible for the people to refuse to pay the basic taxes, given the government's dire need for revenue. However, they could in good conscience, Chen asserted, refuse to pay for the so-called new reforms, which were nothing more than the government's crafty ploy to raise more money. In this way, the citizens could take the financing of the reforms into their own hands, deciding "how much money they wanted to give to the government, and how much money they wanted to use themselves to manage local self-government or develop education." Chen even advised the people to take over the management and financing of the navy: "In this case, what could the government do? It could not do anything and eventually it would have to exchange taxes for political rights."⁵⁶

Struggles over national railway and policing rights and discussions of the need to resist taxes did have some effect on the level of popular politi-

cal awareness in the early twentieth century. Since these efforts were, however, ad hoc and issue specific, they did not yield a broad transformation of the citizen's political outlook. In contrast, the reform publicists took a more systematic approach to politicizing the citizenry in their plans for the implementation of local self-government. They viewed self-government as an educational device, a method of popular politicization, and a mechanism for transforming self-interested subjects into public-spirited citizens. In short, it was the preeminent training ground for the new *guomin*.

The rhetoric of the new citizen was first linked to local self-government in the writings of Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao in the early years of the twentieth century. In *Citizen Self-Government (Gongmin zizhi)*, Kang wrote that if citizens were to be empowered to make their own plans for the public good, they must participate in the implementation of local self-government. After Liang's exile to Tokyo, where his ideas on the new citizen and popular political participation crystallized, he explicitly linked the issue of popular power to self-government. "Popular power is not only a matter of parliaments and participatory politics; more specifically, it is a matter of local self-government," Liang wrote in 1902. "In nations with a well-developed system of local self-government, popular power flourishes. In nations where the system of local self-government is poorly developed, popular power is weak. France calls itself a democracy. However, the degree of popular power that its citizens enjoy is far inferior to that in England. This is because the French system of local self-government is feeble."⁵⁷

The reformists viewed England as the "mother" of all constitutional nations because its citizenry was the most politically developed in the world. An editorialist using the pen name Hui ("Disappointed" or "Discouraged") claimed that the basis of England's success was in its system of self-government, which was "the very essence of constitutionalism."⁵⁸ In an attempt to follow England's example, the reformists advocated the adoption of the local self-government system to cultivate popular political abilities and develop national power. The editorialist who wrote under the pseudonym Da Guan (a Daoist term meaning "A Kind of Wisdom That Enables a Person to Be Oblivious to Emotions and Adversity") argued that in order to develop its citizens, China first had to "develop their self-governing habits and strengthen their self-governing abilities" through the implementation of local self-government." To ignore this principle, he remarked, would be to "want to make a mirror out of bricks or rice out of sand." Without a system of self-government the people would be totally dependent on the government for their welfare. He drew an example from the *Documents Classic*: "During the summer rains, the common people [*xiaomin*] do nothing but complain. during the severe cold of the winter, the common people again do nothing but complain." But if local self-government were implemented, Da Guan held, the government would

only have a supervisory role in local affairs, and the citizens would be forced to take matters into their own hands.⁵⁹ Min likewise asserted that the implementation of a system of local self-government would “serve to develop the people’s sense of responsibility” by helping them to better understand what was at stake in the national interest. “A spirit of research would then follow,” he claimed, inspiring the people to “study the good laws and fine policies of every nation in order to use them as the basis for implementing their own system. Political experience would then naturally develop.”⁶⁰

The reformists’ confidence in the transforming capability of local self-government reflected their belief that popular power did not necessarily have to be legislative power. For Min, the people would be empowered if they were able to participate in local administration rather than in the legislative process. In his view, the existing laws were adequate, but if those responsible for enforcing them in the administration were incompetent, popular rights would not be protected: “People in constitutional nations are overjoyed today, not because they have won the right to participate in legislation, but because they have been granted the means to participate in the administration and thereby secure the protection of their rights.”⁶¹

The first facet of this plan to politicize the citizenry through implementing local self-government was to prepare the official and unofficial elites for their role in the administration of local reform. As early as June 1906 the Ministry of Education had instructed provincial officials to establish schools of law and administration. Owing to limited public funding, however, these efforts were generally unsuccessful and were often superseded by private initiatives. In 1906 the leading Jiangsu constitutionalist, Zhang Jian, founded an alternative Law and Administration Lecture Hall (Fazheng jiangxi suo) using his own resources. By 1906 local self-government associations and research bureaus—the latter intended as a means to gather and disseminate information regarding current issues—had already been formed in Shanghai and Tianjin with official backing. And between 1906 and 1907 self-government research bureaus were established through gentry initiatives in five counties in Jiangsu province, although Jiangsu’s experience was not representative. Local self-government research bureaus were not established in other parts of the nation until 1907 in a few cases, and, more generally, not until 1908.⁶²

The effectiveness of these efforts is questionable, moreover, given that several editorials appeared in *Shibao* in 1909 calling explicitly for the establishment of local self-government research bureaus and lecture offices. In view of *Shibao*’s close association with Jiangsu constitutional circles, and the fact that these articles appeared three years after the first local organizations ostensibly were established, it appears that their scope and effect could not have been very great. To remedy this situation, the journalists focused their attention on promoting short-term training bu-

reus that would educate the local population about the importance of local self-government and the means of implementing it.

An editorial, written shortly after the city, town, and rural township local self-government regulations were promulgated in January 1909, explained that because the people had lived under an autocratic system for so long, they were ignorant of the ways of administration and would not know how to proceed if they were given administrative responsibilities. The first danger was that they "would not understand the limits of power of the official system [*guan zhi*] and would act in contravention of the regulations." Or they would be incapable of appreciating the advantages the new system offered them as participating citizens and would continue to behave as submissive subjects: "They would throw away the rights of self-government, continuing to recoil from power out of a deep-seated fear of politics." Finally, "they would repeat previous mistakes and perform matters perfunctorily." Any one of these actions would be sufficient to obstruct the future of constitutionalism. "It is for this reason," an editorialist claimed, that "we demand our citizens urgently establish self-government short-term training bureaus [*zizhi jiangxi suo*]." ⁶³

The proposed content of the courses that would be offered in the training bureaus reveals what the reformists considered to be the requisite political knowledge for the new citizens. Emphasizing aspects of the new learning, specifically legal and administrative skills, an editorialist writing on this subject underscored the importance of ethics. He explained that "a competent individual who lacked a grounding in ethics would be likely to embezzle money and harm society." The new publicists envisaged that the self-government research offices offering this civic training would be established in stages and on different levels, gradually penetrating deeper and deeper into the local community. The first stage was to set up offices in the cities (*cheng*) for the education of the gentry from the towns (*zhen*) and rural townships (*xiang*). The study period would be three to six months. Specialists would be hired as lecturers, and classes would be divided into morning and evening sessions. Upon graduation, the local elites would return to their native areas and take the lead in local reform. In the second stage, one lecture office (*xuanjiang suo*) would be established at the town and rural township levels, and several in the vicinity of a city. These offices would become the site where the "minority of learned men of talent" who had been trained in the city offices would "work together with the majority of rural township ignorants [*xiangyu*]." The lecturers would be educators rather than officials, "either school teachers or members of educational associations and educational promotion offices."

The reformists were aware of the difficulties this task represented. Local administration was still disorganized, and the people were generally untutored. "Today," an editorialist wrote, "the level of popular knowledge is not high enough so that we could expect the people to respond to just one announcement about the implementation of local self-government."

Therefore a sustained lecture program was necessary. "We must establish lecture offices to encourage the progress of society," he continued, "and cultivate the common knowledge of the people." The topics to be covered in the lectures ranged from the pragmatic to the lofty: "the spheres of official rule and self-rule, the delimitation of rights and duties, social protection, the love of village, and the love of nation." While voicing his trepidation regarding the rapid transformation of the lower rungs of local society, the editorialist claimed that "after less than one year of lectures, legal thought would penetrate through all of *urban society* and self-government would flourish." But his optimism was more guarded when it came to rural society: "The common people [*pifu*] are ultimately responsible for the fate of society. Some days I am optimistic about the future of the rural people [*xiangmin*], and some days I am more cautious."⁶⁴

Indeed, reaching and uplifting the villagers was the most formidable trial the late Qing reformists faced in their efforts to forge a new citizenry.

The Common People's Cause

Rioters [*luanmin*] are not the same as rebel bandits [*panzei*]. The people were forced to adopt this barbaric, violent behavior by hunger, cold, and a sense of utter helplessness.

—Xi Song (Li Yuerui), *Shibao*, April 19, 1910

The greatest challenge the reformists faced in the early twentieth century was not Western gunboats or foreign technology, not institutional restructuring or constitutional law. It was “the people”—the illiterate “lower levels of society” (*xialiu shehui* or *xiadeng shehui*), the anonymous, unknowable, and often dreaded *min*, excluded from participation and power, but always invoked in Confucian and reformist political and social discourse.

In the last Qing decade, the *Shibao* journalists were forced to confront the issue of “the people” in the context of rebellion and domestic upheaval. The sequence of reform and protest that had been a leitmotif throughout Chinese history reached a new intensity in this period as 56 incidents of scattered opposition to the government’s New Policies (Xinzheng) erupted between 1904 and 1907, followed by a crescendo of protests between 1908 and 1911.¹ Five particular uprisings received the *Shibao* journalists’ greatest attention, becoming the subject of investigations, reports, and analytical editorials in the newspaper. They were the Ping-Li-Liu uprising of late 1906 and early 1907, which took place in the Hunan-Jiangxi border region; the Danyang, Jiangsu, uprising of August 1909; the Changsha, Hunan, rice riots of April 1910; the Laiyang, Shandong, uprising of July 1910; and the anti-self-government protests in Chuansha, Jiangsu, in March 1911. (See Appendix B for details on these uprisings.)

The interpretations of and commentaries on these disturbances that the reform publicists offered revealed a tension in their attitude toward the common people. Reflected in ambiguities and contradictions in their

social stance, this tension was a product of the two forces inherent in their status as new-style intellectuals—populist reformism and enduring elitism. As proponents of educational, industrial, and institutional reform, the journalists realized that their quest for national wealth and power could only be fulfilled if the people were enlightened, renovated, and included in the enterprise. At the same time, they remained committed to defending the common people when advances were made at their expense. Seeking to fulfill these two objectives of national reform and social justice, the journalists took on a dual role of cultural translation, serving as advocates both for the common people vis-à-vis officials and local elites and for the reform project vis-à-vis the common people. Refusing simplistically to label the protesters as revolutionaries or lawless barbarians, they brought the complexities of the disturbances—their sources and meanings—into the print media of the middle realm. And rejecting the Confucian view that the people could be made only to follow but not to understand, they created new methods of rendering the objectives of political reform intelligible to an often-isolated and resistant rural populace.

The new publicists' inclusive and reformist-inspired agenda coexisted with an inherited paternalistic posture toward the common people. Reflected in a broad spectrum of attitudes—from benign concern to condescension and contempt—this elitist inclination was inherent in the publicists' political ambitions. Believing that political change was premised on changing the political behavior of the masses, the journalists worked from the unspoken assumption that they alone were capable of formulating and executing this transformation. Taking it upon themselves to speak for those who did not have the privilege of education, they often portrayed the common people as passive and impotent—referring to them in even the most sympathetic treatments as *yumin* (ignorant masses) or *chichi zhi mang* (ignorant people).² While the use of such terms was grounded in reality—the rural people were largely uneducated—more important, it was a testimony to the enormous gulf the constitutionalists sensed between themselves and those they strove to transform. Building a bridge to the common people thus became one of the *Shibao* journalists' most pressing concerns. Although they were would-be populists, their reformist ambitions never completely overwhelmed their elitist inclinations.

Filtering the common people's issues and grievances through their own lens and their own texts, the journalists were not creating the discourse of the common people but their own discourse on the common people. While this practice raises questions about the educated elite's ability to speak authoritatively for others, it served to advance the new publicists' own agenda of renegotiating the relationship between ruler and ruled. At the same time, it contributed to the formation of a new political culture that, through May Fourth and on to the Communists, would keep edging "the people" closer to center stage.

Enduring Elitism: Paternalism and Obscurantism

The new publicists' discourse on the common people reflected the tension between their inherited elitism and their new tendencies toward populist reformism. As reformists, they struggled to eliminate the citizens' reliance on the dynasty and reconfigure the relationship between ruler and ruled in a new nationalist idiom. When faced with the violence of the late Qing uprisings, however, many of them reverted to the language of dependence, appealing once again to the inherited construct of the people as the foundation of the nation (*minben*), to images of paternalistic rulership, and, most frequently, to a Mencian concern for economic justice.

Several of the editorialists linked national stability to upholding the principles of *minben* theory. Quoting the quintessential statement of this theory—"The people are the foundation of the nation; if the foundation is consolidated, the nation is peaceful"—one journalist attributed the peacefulness of past dynasties to the *minben* ideal. If this idea was adhered to and "the ruler had the support of the people," he wrote, "the weak could be made strong, the dangerous could be pacified, and the vulnerable could survive. If the ruler were to lose the support of the people," he cautioned, "then the strong would become weak, the peaceful dangerous, and national survival imperiled."³ The late Qing uprisings were held up by the journalists as examples of how chaos can erupt when officials lose the support of the people. As one editorialist commenting on the Danyang Rebellion of 1909 explained, in the past the popular spirit (*minqi*) had been sufficient to sustain the nation. However, degenerate officials had so abused the people that their spirit was almost completely exhausted. "Once popular sentiments [*minxin*] have been fully dissipated," he warned, "the disaster of national disintegration will befall us."⁴

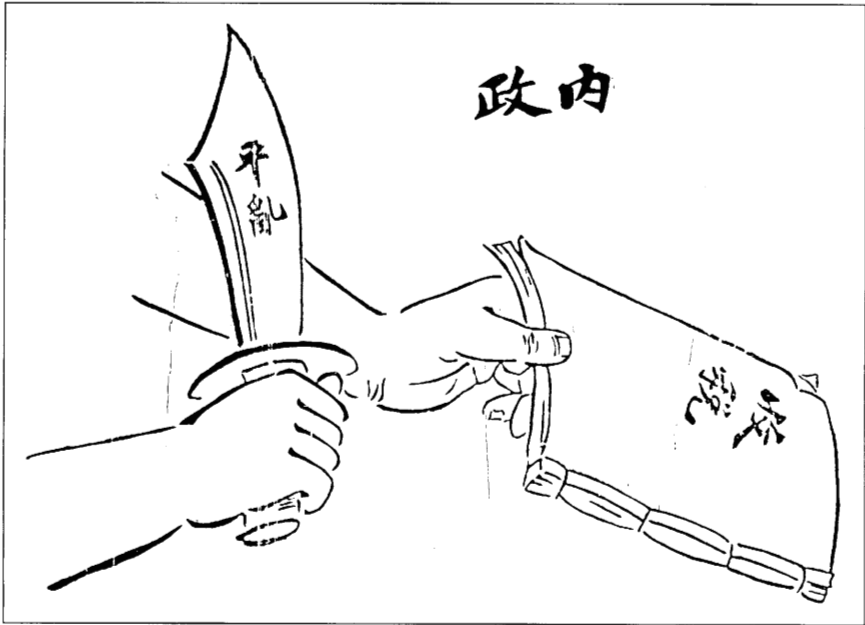
A number of the new publicists appealed to the paternalistic Confucian tradition in calling for national stability and social justice. Referring to the breakdown of social order in terms of a parent's betrayal of his own children, they alluded to China's founding myth, which portrayed the sage-king Yao as a fatherly figure with a parental concern for those he ruled.⁵ The twentieth-century journalists posed essentially the same question Mencius had asked centuries before them: "When the parent of the people causes the people to wear looks of distress, and, after the whole year's toil, [they are] yet not to be able to nourish their parents, so that they proceed to borrowing to increase their means, till the old people and children are found lying in the ditches and water-channels: where, in such a case, is his parental relationship to the people?"⁶ Echoing Mencius, one editorialist wrote that abusive officials could no longer be likened to "mothers and fathers who stive to protect the people, but to wolves and tigers who want to devour the people."⁷ Using the same trope, a commentator on the Danyang uprising claimed that people would not willingly rebel against their own parents unless they were desperate and "the road of life had been cut

off before them."⁸ Statements the journalists attributed to the common people also described the role of the officials in ideal parental terms. "The villagers say," another editorialist recorded in 1909, that "if the officials loved the people as their children, they would not dare to make such excessive demands on them."⁹

The clearest Confucian tenet of the new publicists' discourse on the common people was the correlation between the people's material well-being and their tendency to rebel. Mencius had written, "The way of the people is this: If they have a certain livelihood, they will have a fixed heart; if they have not a certain livelihood, they have not a fixed heart. And if they have not a fixed heart, there is nothing which they will not do in the way of self-abandonment, of moral deflection, of depravity, and of wild license."¹⁰ Following this ethos, many of the *Shibao* writers attributed popular violence in different regions of the nation to economic hardship. They claimed that the protesters were not subversive rebels but desperate rioters unable to cope with the sharp decline in standards of living in the last Qing decade and the equally dramatic increase in taxes. As an indication of how intolerable this situation had become, 51 popular protests against taxes were launched between 1902 and the winter of 1911-12, as compared with four in 1873-81, and two in 1892-1901. While tax protest was not unique to the early twentieth century, or to China, the late Qing fiscal crisis—the culmination of centuries of revenue problems and a series of nineteenth-century rebellions—was particularly severe.¹¹

Indignation over harsh taxation in the Chinese countryside inspired the *Shibao* editorialists to take up the common people's cause. One remarked in October 1904, well before the most severe reform taxes had been levied, that taxes "have become as abundant as hair. The people are forced to pay them at every turn. They are taxed twice when transmitting goods—once upon entering the city and once upon leaving the city, and they must pay again if they lead an ox past a checkpoint. In addition to these direct levies, and even more difficult to enumerate, are the indirect taxes such as household taxes, electrical taxes, and pawn shop taxes." In response to these intolerable measures, the journalist noted, tax resistance was becoming widespread: "Checkpoints are destroyed and offices robbed with an ever-greater frequency. Rebels proliferate daily in Guangxi, Hunan, Jiangsu, and Anhui provinces. All areas are overwhelmed by this reaction against the dynasty's demands."¹²

The *Shibao* editorialists' most vehement criticism of the government's fiscal policy was directed at the series of New Policies taxes imposed by the government in 1908 to fund the establishment of county-level local self-government bureaus and police offices.¹³ Their response was a hybrid of old and new concerns: as committed reformists, they supported the policies themselves; as Mencian defenders of the people, they denounced the harsh methods that had been used to extract funds to pay for them. Chen Leng described the government's "devious and cunning methods" of



The government collects taxes with one hand and threatens to quell any disturbances with a knife held in its other hand. "Domestic politics," *Shibao*, April 3, 1907.

squeezing more money from local society. Unwilling to add new taxes directly that would provoke public opposition, the authorities would establish a new bureaucratic office or a new administrative unit and label it part of "reform." Earnest and sincere literati, Chen claimed, were frequently deceived into supporting these ersatz reform efforts: "Some committed themselves to training the new army, some to developing the navy. Patriotic literati who were afraid of the foreign threat also entered into this trap . . . as did great merchants abroad, and wealthy businessmen in China. And so without explicitly announcing new taxes, in reality the government has added new taxes."¹⁴

The impact of these surcharges affected most regions of the country. Although "the levying of new taxes was the cause of the popular uprising in Laiyang," Tian Chi wrote, referring to the 1910 rebellion in Shandong province, "the reason for the new taxes was the establishment of the various departments of the new administration—police, education, and self-government." He claimed that "without even considering how much of a fiscal burden the people can endure, the officials have rashly adopted the tax system of the advanced nations, hastily implementing it in China. In addition, they have appended harsh and exacting miscellaneous taxes, claiming the people can bear them. As a result, chaos has broken out and

cannot be pacified."¹⁵ Li Yuerui, using the pen name Xi Song (meaning "To Lament"), cited the same excessive and inappropriate tax policy as the reason for the unrest in Changsha in 1910. He explained that "in the last few years, schools, police bureaus, an army, a navy, industrial promotion, and local self-government have all been hastily established under the New Policies." Rather than lauding these reform efforts, he criticized the government for pressing change with excessive alacrity: "The authorities have hoped to implement in one day reforms that other nations spent several decades preparing. And in their haste they have not researched what their priorities are or which aspects of the program are most urgent. Because they do not have the capital to pay for the reforms, they extract it from the people by continuously raising taxes. In the end, however, their funds are still insufficient."¹⁶

The new publicists' Confucian-style defense of the common people against harsh taxation was premised on fundamental concepts of justice. The journalists assumed, as the protesters themselves did, that everyone had a right to an adequate standard of living and that officials were responsible for attending to the people's welfare. When these obligations were not met, the new publicists believed, the common people were justified in protesting to express their grievances. Far from traitors to the dynasty, they were themselves the victims of the dynasty's betrayal.

Chen Leng insisted that the "local bandits in Nankang who committed murder, the barbarous brigands in Zhennan who incited disturbances, the reckless outlaws in the three northwestern provinces who rose up, and the smugglers of contraband between Jiangsu and Zhejiang who turned to stealing" did not become violent because they enjoyed creating disturbances. It was only because "they were so impoverished as to lack any other means of survival."¹⁷ The author of "Record of the Disturbance at Danyang" wrote that "the Danyang affair was not a matter of starving people willingly uniting with bandits to cause a disturbance." Rather, it "was the result of suffering caused by the excessive farm tax paid to the capital in grain."¹⁸ Blaming economic desperation compounded by the currency devaluation as the cause of the 1910 Changsha rice riots, Li Yuerui forcefully made the point that "rioters [*luanmin*] are not the same as rebel bandits [*panzei*]. The people were forced to adopt this barbaric, violent behavior by hunger, cold, and a sense of utter helplessness." He further argued that "the rebellion was certainly not something that the people had planned for a long time, nor was it a means of expressing enmity for the dynasty."¹⁹ Commenting later on the 1911 anti-local self-government uprising in Chuansha, Jiangsu, he reiterated the same theme. The "people have not rebelled because they are inherently fond of uprisings," he declared, "but because their livelihood is very poor, and they have had no other choice."²⁰

Viewing the late Qing protests as just causes and the rebels as victims of poverty and abuse, the journalists pleaded in their editorials for

the lenient treatment of the rioters. In forwarding their petitions, several of them appealed to the same historical anecdote that described the amnesty the Jiaqing Emperor [r. 1796–1820] extended to the bandit sects (*jiaofei*): “When the emperor heard the description [rebel leader] Wang [Wang Sankui, 1764–99] gave of how the people had been driven to rebellion by tyranny,” a commentator on the Danyang uprising wrote in 1909, “he was deeply moved. He decreed that the official ceremonies that were to be held to celebrate the dynasty’s triumph over the bandits [*yinzhi*] and to record meritorious imperial policies [*cexun*] be canceled. How great was the emperor’s kindness! In 100 generations the memory of it will still move people to tears!”²¹ In a short essay on the same uprising, *Shibao* editor Bao Tianxiao pleaded with the high officials to follow the Jiaqing emperor’s example and “demonstrate the quality of mercy in sparing the lives of those ignorant people who had no choice but to risk their fate and rise up.”²²

An important component of the journalists’ concept of social justice was that “those officials who abused the people and incited rebellion should be punished to the limits of the law.”²³ Writing specifically of Governor Cen, whose carelessness and arrogance had ostensibly caused the Hunan uprising, Li Yuerui argued that “if the dynasty is to punish Governor Cen in an enlightened way, it must deal with him in the spirit of the public good [*dagong*]. It should not be severe in censuring the people and lenient in censuring the officials.”²⁴ Commenting on the anti-local self-government disturbances in Chuansha in 1911, Hui advised that “if the offending bureaucrats were properly disciplined, then the people would become totally servile and submissive once again.” In order fully to ensure that social harmony would be restored, Hui asserted, the leaders of the agitation should “be executed in a public space in order to send a clear warning to the villagers.” Moreover, “a pardon should be announced for all of those whose cases were ambiguous. In this way the hearts of the people could finally be at ease.” In Hui’s opinion, once the people’s good faith had been restored by the proper application of justice, “future rifts between officials and the masses could be forestalled.”²⁵

While the journalists’ elitism was generally expressed in this tone of Confucian paternalism, more despairing and condemnatory critiques of the people’s ignorance were voiced at two specific points in the reform discourse: in the early years (1904 and 1905), before the publicists had shifted the focus of their agenda from cooperation with the dynasty to the transformation of society, and in the later years (1909–11), in response to local opposition to self-government reform.

An editorial discussing the destruction of a number of new-style schools in Wuxi, Jiangsu, in 1904 suggested that the ignorant people must be kept ignorant through a policy of obscurantism, or *yumin zhengci*. “In nations where popular knowledge is already developed [*minzhi yi kai*],” the journalist wrote, “public sentiment can be relied on. In nations [such as China] where popular knowledge is not developed, however, public sen-

timent absolutely cannot be relied on." He then quoted the classical statement of *yumin* thought from the *Analects*: "Confucius said, 'The people may be made to follow a path of action, but they may not be made to understand it.' This means that the level of popular knowledge is very low." While he celebrated Westernized reformers who had founded new-style schools as "heroic individuals committed to protecting their race and strengthening their nation," he condemned the common people as "ignorant, mean people [*chichi xiaomin*]" incapable of understanding the value of the new elites' efforts. "The common people despise, slander, and abuse the reformers without restraint," he wrote. "They call new books Western books; new schools, schools for Western studies; and new school students and teachers, little Western ghosts." Equating the common people's violence against the schools with their unenlightened antiforeign attitude, he declared that their "hatred of the new schools is really the same as their hatred of the Western churches."²⁶

This editorialists' reaction to the incident in Wuxi is echoed, in somewhat attenuated form, in later commentaries on anti-local self-government disturbances. After nine schools and the homes of fourteen self-government deputies had been destroyed in Chuansha in 1911, Hui expressed exasperation: "Alas! Our people are truly the subjects of a ruined empire [*wanguo zhi min*]! They do not understand that self-government is a policy that will ultimately benefit the people and that it is unfair to draw conclusions so hastily, before the project is completed."²⁷ This "hasty" popular response was provoked not only by sweeping reform policies, however, but even by minor disruptions of the villagers' customary ways. In Songjiang and Chuansha, in Ningbo and Yin counties, for example, Hui wrote, there had recently been an outbreak of violence simply because the "new department of hygiene had prohibited urination in public."²⁸

Li Yuerui bemoaned the fact that the local disturbances in the last years of Qing rule had not erupted in the most backward areas, as one would expect, but in the more developed regions, where the New Policies reforms were the most advanced. "If those who lived in the culturally undeveloped and remote hinterland were startled by the introduction of local self-government, it would be understandable. The reforms would of course appear to them as a great novelty," he commented. "However, the subprefecture [*ting*] of Chuansha is adjoined to Shanghai. Was this not one of the first regions to be developed in our nation?" He feared that this did not bode well for the introduction of reforms in the rest of the nation: "If a highly refined area such as Sanwu responds to the reforms in this way, it should be 100 times worse in the infertile and desolate borderland areas where popular customs are lowly and mean, and finances are scarce."²⁹

In the late Qing reform discourse, these skeptical or paternalistic reflections on popular resistance to reform were complemented by but often in tension with the journalists' more prevalent reformist view. Premised on their belief that wealth and power depended on the energy and contri-

bution of every man, this view gave rise to the commitment of the publicists to *include* the common people in their national project rather than *impose* this project on them. The journalists thus served as advocates for the common people's cause, striving to make popular grievances and concerns a part of public consciousness. At the same time, they formulated strategies of cultural translation and negotiation in an effort to draw the people into the process of reform.

Populist Reformism: Cultural Translation and Negotiation

The new publicists maintained their commitment to uplifting and reforming the common people even as the villagers resisted the implementation of the New Policies and even as rioters attacked and destroyed the local self-government institutions that were the embodiment of the reformist ideal of enlightened nationhood. They did so by constructing two mutually exclusive categories of common people—the educable and the incorrigible, the righteous and the wayward, the redeemable and the lost—which allowed them to accept the most egregious acts on the part of the common people as the machinations of a wicked minority without losing faith in the ultimate reformability of the virtuous majority. The minority included bandits, brigands, and robbers (*feitu*), wicked people, villains or outlaws (*yumin*), pettifoggers, mischiefs (*haoshi zhi tu*), Buddhist monks (*heshang*), and so-called witches (*nüwu*).³⁰ Regarded as backward and superstitious, these people directly impeded the reformists' plans for extending the citizenship ideal to the uneducated masses.

The most pernicious among the wicked people were those who became known as the ringleaders (*zhudong zhe*). A journalist using the pseudonym Bai Yi (meaning "A Common Person Without Rank") wrote a seven-part investigation of the Ping-Li-Liu uprising in April 1907, in which he described how the ringleaders recruited their followers (*xiesong zhe*): "When their robbing and pillaging campaigns are successful and their forces are strengthened, then the ringleaders try to force law-abiding subjects to enter their ranks and follow their ways."³¹ In an article on the resolution of the Chuansha anti-local self-government uprising in 1911, Hui advocated "that we divide the group of rioters in two: those who caused the trouble and those who were forced to join the rebellion." He described the former—the ringleaders—as jobless wanderers who would take advantage of any situation to make trouble. "It would be in accordance with provisions in the law concerning the regulation of rebellious populations to arrest and severely punish these individuals without showing the slightest leniency," he argued. "As for those who were forced to join the rebellion, they were not driven by a well-defined mission to oppose the authorities. They were simply coerced into going along with the ringleaders."³²

The distinction between good and bad people was most clearly articu-

lated in discussions like Hui's of the appropriate punishment for those involved in the various disturbances. A commentator on the Danyang case urged that those who were "guilty of homicide and looting" be made to pay reparations so that "the power of the law would be protected and the importance of human life would be emphasized." The punishment should be much lighter, however, "if the rebels were only guilty of setting fire to official buildings and wounding underlings in the magistrate's office. Such actions merely reflected the desperation of the impoverished, and the individuals responsible for them should not be put in the same category as rioters [*luanmin*]." ³³ Similarly, Li Yuerui claimed that "as for the masses who merely went along with the ringleaders in the 1910 Changsha rice riots, they should be amnestied for their past wrongs and given the opportunity to reform." ³⁴ At the same time, "the heads of the rebellion must be severely dealt with." ³⁵

There were both old and new components to this method of dividing society. It resonated, first of all, with the long-standing distinction between good people (*liangmin*) and wicked people or outlaws (*yumin*). The kind of people considered undesirable by the new publicists were often the same as those excoriated by imperial officials. Both lists of undesirables were based not so much on class as on occupation, attitude, and opposition to authority. One important difference, however, between the official position and the early-twentieth-century reform discourse was that the journalists viewed a much larger number of the "wicked people" as reformable. ³⁶ Bai Yi claimed that the line between an outlaw (*yumin*) and a law-abiding subject (*liangmin*) was not always clear, because the official army, to take one example, behaved worse than the so-called outlaws did. "In my opinion," he wrote, "just as the attributes of the citizenry must be very different from the attributes of officialdom, the behavior of the outlaws must be even more clearly distinguishable from the behavior of the official army. But in examining the facts, we find this is far from true." Bai Yi also took issue with the authorities' claim that the Ping-Li-Liu protesters conducted themselves as violently as outlaws. ³⁷

In stressing the reformability of the bad elements, the reformists did not, however, go as far as some groups of late Qing revolutionaries, who embraced secret society leaders and activists. Whereas the revolutionaries emphasized the character—notably the patriotism and spirit (*minqi*)—of popular heterodox sectarians as the key source of the masses' potential as citizens, the reformists continued to group them with the nonreformable minority. ³⁸ Bai Yi described secret society members as mere thugs: "Although the nucleus of the outlaws is the descendants of the Hong Bang's impoverished caves, they have forgotten the original intentions of their predecessors. . . . Now the society consists of nothing but crafty individuals gifted with the skills of scoundrels. Urban hoodlums, they employ these skills to steal food." ³⁹ More important, the secret societies did not constitute a coherent political force. "They can hardly hold themselves

together as a society," he claimed, "and have never so much as dreamt of so-called nationalism [*guojia sixiang*] or so-called ethnicity [*minzu sixiang*] or so-called social psychology [*shehui xinli*]. So to say that the outlaws hold revolutionary objectives, that they are qualified to create a nation and forge an ideology, this is to see a mouse and call it a tiger, to grasp a fish and believe it's a dragon, to catch a chicken and consider it to be a phoenix."⁴⁰

The *Shibao* editorialists' disdain for secret societies was premised, in part, on their own experience of failed collaboration with such groups. Di Baoxian and Chen Leng, for example, had participated in the tragic uprising of the Independent Army in 1900, an effort orchestrated by reformists but largely dependent on bandit forces.⁴¹ It was firsthand experience of this kind of violent misadventure that led them to adopt a gradualist approach to popular renewal. Rather than attempt to channel the energy of secret society members and other "wicked people" into militant opposition to the government, the publicists devoted their attention to including and educating the "good people" in an incremental process of constitutional change.

As the number of antireform protests escalated in the last Qing decade, the reformists realized that many of these "good people" were involved in the uprisings and that their claims were, in part, justified. They used the press to demonstrate that the protesters were not subversive rebels following a revolutionary plan, as the officials would prefer to depict them. Rather, they were desperate rioters whose actions had to be viewed within the context of official and social structures so dysfunctional that injustice had become endemic. The journalists' on-site investigations of the disturbances, their reporting of the events and analyses of their implications, broadened the discourse on the common people and mobilized elites—in the capital, in provincial assemblies, and in local areas—to focus more attention on the problems of the countryside.

A NEW CHANNEL FOR POPULAR GRIEVANCES

The journalists' role as the common people's advocate was not new; the literati had long served as spokesmen for the masses in the Confucian humanist tradition. What was new, however, was their mode of advocacy, the press rather than the petition, and their audience, the public rather than the prince. At a time when the coercive power of local elites was on the rise and the reform ambitions of the state were growing progressively more intrusive at the local level, the print media opened a new channel for the expression of popular grievances.⁴²

The *Shibao* journalists took their new advocacy role very seriously, going beyond merely editorializing on events by conducting personal investigations of the conditions that led to the late Qing disturbances. Bai Yi, for example, claimed that his seven-part investigation of the Ping-Li-Liu uprising was based on "what I have personally heard and the evidence

accumulated over several months of investigation."⁴³ Another editorialist, who analyzed the reasons for official incompetence in controlling rural banditry, stated that he had come to understand the situation "through my personal experience in the countryside. I have heard with my own ears and seen with my own eyes the local situation that I have described." Conceding that each province had its own particularities, he nonetheless maintained that his observations could be generalized.⁴⁴

As rural uprisings were increasingly discussed at length in newspaper editorials and reports, the press provided socially concerned elites with a forum for translating the common people's inarticulate and often violent claims into legitimate demands. The new print medium also facilitated communication among educated persons on these problems to an extent that had not been possible through the channel of official petitions and memorials. As the journalists wrote reports and editorials pleading the common people's cause, the offending members of the gentry sometimes responded, using the press to build their own defense. Their responses often spurred independent investigations of particular incidents, such as Bai Yi's reportage on Ping-Li-Liu, which themselves generally conveyed some further information on the protesters' views. In the aftermath of the Chuansha uprising, for example, local self-government officials (many of whom were members of the Pudong Club, a merchant association of Chuansha residents in Shanghai) personally wrote reports on the disturbance. These reports became the source of articles on the incident printed in *Shibao*, and these articles in turn triggered an outside magistrate's investigation of the conflict. The magistrate's report, which also appeared in *Shibao*, presented further information on the protesters' version of the events.⁴⁵

In addition to *Shibao*, which had a broader national profile, many regional newspapers also took up the role of protester advocates in reporting on the uprisings.⁴⁶ Serving as a new and effective medium for the discussion of rural issues, the press thus took the popular protests out of their discrete regional settings and placed them under more general scrutiny in the print media of the middle realm. By making the common people's concerns an issue in the late Qing social discourse, the new publicists contributed to a stronger sense of solidarity among those who sympathized with the protesters. They also helped to heighten national awareness of rural problems. In his "Announcement to the Hunanese High Officials," which concerned the 1910 Changsha rice riots, Li Yuerui described this rising collective consciousness: "The Changsha disturbance erupted with a sudden and violent force. As fellow sufferers, the 22 provinces all felt sympathy for Changsha in its misfortune. How, then, will it be possible to limit such protests in the future?"⁴⁷

A new forum for the discussion of popular unrest—disseminating news, heightening consciousness, and encouraging solidarity—*Shibao* also offered fresh perspectives on the meaning of the rural protests. In an effort

to push social perceptions beyond the rigid categories of the Confucian moral discourse on the common people, the journalists provided sociological and economic interpretations of the uprisings. Manifesting the tension between their reformism and elitism, they no longer exclusively analyzed rural unrest in terms of the breakdown of dependency and the *minben* construct. They also introduced and debated the importance of new sociopolitical phenomena, such as economic stages of development, transportation infrastructure, and revolutionary activity.

In his investigation of the Ping-Li-Liu uprising in late 1906 and early 1907, Bai Yi attempted to explain the recent rise in the number of bad elements (*yumin*) in late Qing society. Although he began with the more familiar explanation that "the nurturing and education of the people [*jiaoyang*] has gone awry," he then put forward several more specific sociological reasons. The first was the recent dismissal of Hunanese soldiers who had been conscripted into the Jiangsu and Hubei armies after the Boxer Rebellion. Unemployed, these ex-soldiers "idled in river and coastal regions. In the north they cooperated with the Great Sword Society [Dadao hui], in the southeast with the salt smugglers and secret societies, and in the south with the Three Points Society [Sandian hui, Sanhe hui]. They wandered without returning to their native provinces, struggling to secure their food and clothing by looting, robbing, and kidnapping."⁴⁸

Providing insights into the life of such wanderers (*liumin*), Bai Yi detailed how those soldiers who returned to Hunan found they could no longer make a life for themselves: "They found there were no fields to till, no mountains to excavate, no labors to engage in, no houses to live in, and no boats to pull. They therefore returned to their native villages and relied on their relatives for housing, clothing, and food." The money they had left over from gambling, robbing, and kidnapping quickly ran out, and their relatives could offer little support, since most earned a meager livelihood themselves, cultivating tea, chopping trees, mining coal, and pulling boats. Unable to "make a living in the village, the ex-soldiers had no choice but to wander about and live miserably at all the ports along the river." They would gather "together with all kinds of bad elements and follow the markets, wandering from place to place, seeking rice." In the spring they would follow the tea markets, in the fall the incense market of Heng Mountain or the temple fairs, and in the winter they would wander about searching for work in coal mines: "They migrated in crowds of hundreds of thousands of people, like the great waves of a turbulent sea," the more cunning among them becoming mob leaders.

The second sociological reason Bai Yi gave for the rise in banditry was the abolition of the examination system, which left vast numbers of people with no career options. He claimed that the situation was particularly severe in the Ping-Li-Liu region, because with only 40 percent of the population of Jiangsu province, this region had three times as many examination candidates. Part of the reason for this was that commerce and the

new education were less developed in Hunan (one of the provinces constituting the Ping-Li-Liu border region) than in Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong, and Jiangxi provinces. "In Jiangsu, for example," Bai Yi wrote, "only the smallest minority of the population had placed all of their hopes in the examination system, while many others were involved in associations for private school reform [*sishu gailiang hui*], in developing special chemistry and physics curriculums [*lihua zhuanxiu ke*], and in running all kinds of industrial companies." In contrast, in Hunan and Hubei not only were the lower levels of society exclusively dependent on careers in the military or in lower office, but members of the middle level and above, lacking in commercial skills, also had no occupational route to follow once the examination system was abolished. Fearing that "their bodies would rot away and that they would starve to death in the mountain forests if they continued to lack sustenance, the people of Hunan and Hubei had no choice but to throw themselves into making a living by reckless means."

The editorialist Hui likewise cited sociological phenomena in explaining the reasons for the 1911 Chuansha anti-local self-government uprisings. "When we examine the calamity closely, it is clear that although the uprising was initiated by the Buddhist vegetarian sects [*sudang*], those who were the most active were the opium smokers and gamblers who lived along the rivers," he wrote. Angered by the new reform regulations that restricted their habits and frustrated because they had lost their old jobs, these people "came to despise the self-government deputies as the worst kind of affliction. They therefore provoked disasters in the town of Changren and in the Yugong Temple district (near the county of Nanhui). The violence then spread over a distance of more than ten *li* to eight or nine well-organized, wealthy towns."⁴⁹

Tian Chi explained the 1910 Changsha rice riots in terms of stages of economic development, a form of analysis that would have been inconceivable in China several decades earlier. He claimed that all societies passed from a nomadic stage to an agricultural stage, which was followed by an industrial stage, and finally by a commercial-industrial stage. In this final stage, one could obtain all daily necessities without having to use one's own body to till the land for food. Tian Chi explained that because China had hardly advanced beyond the second, agricultural level, its standard of living was falling further and further behind that of the more "advanced" nations. "Today," he wrote, "the daily income of the citizens of an advanced nation is more than equivalent to the annual income of our people in the hinterland. To compare the two economic levels would be as inappropriate as the statement of Emperor Hui [of the Jin Dynasty, 265-420 C.E.], 'Let them eat meat' in order to satisfy their hunger. In today's world, all nations that have developed industry and commerce become powerful. Nations do not become powerful through agriculture."⁵⁰

Tian Chi argued that China's poorly developed transportation infrastructure, which impeded the free flow of grain, was the second factor

contributing to the outbreak of the rice riots. He made his argument by referring to both ancient Chinese theory and Western economic practice: "Those who skillfully adopt Ji Ran's [late Zhou] theory do not consider ten million *li* as too great a distance to transport rice in order to trade. Applying this same principle, the great powers are aggressively promoting international trade today." But because Hunan did not have the transportation networks necessary to follow these trade principles, hoarding, famine, and popular protest had ensued.⁵¹

In addition to economic and sociological phenomena, the reform publicists considered new political factors in their analysis of the common people's situation—specifically the influence of the emerging revolutionary forces. Aware that between 1906 and 1908 there were seven attempts by revolutionaries to overturn the dynasty, five out of the seven by the Tongmeng hui, the *Shibao* journalists recognized that revolutionary forces posed a potential threat in the countryside.⁵² "If the thieves in every province are not pacified," an editorialist wrote in 1908, "the revolutionary party [*geming zhi dang*] will disseminate nationalistic propaganda, mobilize the people and collect money to publish books abroad."⁵³ But while the new publicists saw the revolutionary involvement in the countryside as a potential threat, both central and local officials proclaimed it was already a potent reality, exaggerating its importance in order to justify their harsh repression of the uprisings. Demonstrating how the reform publicists' political allegiances were often more in line with those of the revolutionaries than with those of the authorities, the journalists minimized the danger of subversion in the countryside in order to criticize the official position.

In their analyses of specific uprisings, the editorialists accused the government of wrongly implicating members of the revolutionary Tokyo-based Tongmeng hui and wrongly deducing revolutionary motivations. Writing on the Changsha rice riots, Li Yuerui depicted the uprising as a spontaneous event. Its brevity, he claimed, "was proof that it was merely an outburst of violence and not the result of a well-reasoned strategy of opposition to the dynasty. Since there was no precise plan involved, there was definitely no revolutionary party [*gedang*] behind the disturbance."⁵⁴ If there had been such a strategy, others would have been mobilized to join the struggle. The riots "would not have been limited to some 100 or even 1,000 urbanites, with everyone ten *li* outside the city tranquil and unresponsive to the events." Li Yuerui also made a sociological argument against the theory of revolutionary involvement by referring to the high level of education of most Tongmeng hui members. Because the revolutionary party ostensibly adhered to "advanced" ideas, it would not have condoned the violence against churches and schools at the beginning of the uprising or the attacks on foreigners, he claimed. Furthermore, the young revolutionaries who were "without exception wealthy members of the gentry" would never have cooperated with the thugs involved in the disturbances—the "starving hordes and local hoodlums."⁵⁵



"The more the flames are fanned, the more vigorous the fire," *Shibao*, August 10, 1907. The government fanning the flames of the revolutionary faction.

Bai Yi went to the most extensive lengths to discredit the official theory of a revolutionary "black hand" as the force behind the 1906 and 1907 Ping-Li-Liu disturbance, even though the involvement of radical students returned from Japan in this uprising was the least disputable.⁵⁶ He claimed that "those bad elements who have become traitors to the dynasty were not necessarily influenced by the revolutionaries." The official strategy of repressing this nonexistent heterodoxy, he further contended, would ultimately backfire: "By emphasizing this new antirevolutionary policy, the high officials are actually encouraging the outlaws to esteem, worship, and follow the revolutionary path. Exhausted and bereft of the means of survival, the bad elements will be particularly inclined to turn and embrace what officials have pointed to as the way of the revolutionary."⁵⁷

Bai Yi offered a detailed argument to refute the government's interpretation of the uprising, thereby offering insights into the disturbance and the protesters' possible motivation for rebelling. He concurred with Li Yuerui's skeptical view on the involvement of the so-called revolutionary overseas students. He questioned whether these students were truly capable of mobilizing the lowly rioters and whether the revolutionary leaders' prestige was sufficient to control the "unruly ruffians." They were not in any way linked to "the secret societies of the interior" or to local society in general. "The students and the old society [*jiu shehui*] are like

water and coal, which cannot abide one another," he wrote. While the members of the old society accused the students of being traitors (*hanjian*) and followers of Western religion (*yangjiao*), the students criticized members of the old society for their "antiforeignism and conservatism." In addition to these sociological and political considerations, Bai Yi also offered material reasons to prove that the rebels were not revolutionaries. For one, their weapons were unsophisticated: "Although some people exaggerated and claimed that the rebels had rifles, in fact they had nothing more than bird-hunting guns, spears, and the like." And there was no evidence of stockpiled weapons. The rebels also clearly lacked a coherent military strategy and a specific destination. "Would the revolutionary army conduct itself in this way, as if an uprising were mere children's play?" Bai Yi asked.⁵⁸

He did, however, concede that the rebels had, at one point, adopted revolutionary slogans, worn revolutionary badges, and flown revolutionary banners. "However," he added, "their motivation for doing so was not rooted in any revolutionary aspiration." While the rebels "did not truly understand the meaning of revolution . . . they did understand that revolutionaries were the enemies of officialdom. The members of the lower levels of society were thus convinced that the revolutionaries must share their feelings, their fate, and their daily concerns." While some protesters took up the revolutionary banner as a sign of antagonism toward the officials, the young followed suit simply because they were "easily moved by curiosity and excitement," and the ignorant (*yumin*) because "they could be stirred up by a trifling." This did not make them ardent radicals: "Just as those who read the *Water Margin* [*Shuihu zhuan*] do not immediately become wandering bandits, and those who read the *Dream of the Red Chamber* [*Honglou meng*] do not suddenly scale the walls of their neighbor's property and drag away his virgin daughter in order to get a wife, so those who have some curiosity about the new movement will not instantly become committed revolutionaries."⁵⁹

Instead of blaming the "revolutionaries" for the rural disturbances, the *Shibao* editorialists discussed sociological and infrastructural problems that had led to the uprisings, thereby infusing the inherited discourse on popular protest with new elements. They remained, however, sensitive to the old, particularly to the enduring cultural concerns that constituted another important element in the late Qing disturbances. The common people were not only expressing grievances against social and economic abuses, the journalists claimed; they were also resisting the cultural imperatives that accompanied the new reforms—the disruption of local customs and the destruction of community temples. The journalists' response was neither to suppress or ignore these assertions of popular culture nor to yield to them and alter their own course. Continuing to uphold two of the defining features of the constitutionalist program—gradualism and educa-

tion—they searched for new ways to help the people understand rather than force them to follow.

CULTURAL TRANSLATION AND NEGOTIATION

The journalists realized that local reform elites not only imposed new programs, new taxes, and new authority on the common people, but they also imposed their own cultural norms and hierarchy of values.⁶⁰ Aware of the disjunctions such a process could give rise to and realizing that the New Policies were not always welcomed in the villages, the journalists attempted to bridge the gulf that separated city from countryside by taking the common people's worldview into account. They advocated strategies of interaction that demonstrated their sensitivity to the villagers' own language, their own forms of organization, and their own practices. Although the late Qing constitutionalists clearly considered their own ideas on citizenry and nationhood to be the most enlightened, and although they wished to disseminate those ideas throughout society, their efforts are best understood as a precursor of the "back to the people" movement later in the century, rather than as an example of elitist cultural hegemony.⁶¹ Based on principles of cultural negotiation, the method of local reform they advocated was rarely duplicated in the following decades.

This process of cultural negotiation was developed in response to the often-fierce popular resistance to reforms following the announcement of official local self-government regulations in January 1909.⁶² These disturbances forced the reformists to realize that if they did "not carefully handle the problem of popular ignorance in implementing the reform program, endless complications would arise in the future." Rejecting the premise that the common people should be forced to follow, they were committed instead to helping the villagers understand that local reform was for the good of the local community. It was therefore necessary, they believed, first to examine closely popular sentiment (*minqing*) and then to "make the two characters 'self-government' penetrate the hearts of the common people [*yiban renmin*]." ⁶³

Making reform comprehensible to the common people meant bringing the villagers to a level where they could understand and, ultimately, participate in local reform. Hui advised those who were responsible for this reform to "first conduct an investigation of the specific circumstances of the common people's lives. Then, they should establish a strategy of implementation appropriate to those circumstances." In order to deflect any opposition, "those responsible must address any of the local people's concerns by publicly announcing the rationale for the administrative change." If a program compatible with local conditions were defined and if the rationale for the reform were clearly explained, then, in Hui's mind, "there would be less danger of upheaval, and the foundation of local self-government could gradually be consolidated." ⁶⁴

By the time Hui wrote these editorials in the spring of 1911, it had become clear that the local self-government research bureaus, which had been set up in certain locations as early as 1906, had been unsuccessful in disseminating knowledge of the new local administration to the lowest levels of society. The journalists were thus forced to reassess their tactics. Recognizing that new-style intellectuals were ineffective as messengers of reform because their rhetoric was foreign and meaningless to the common people, they turned instead to "cultural translators." These "translators" would mediate between distant social-cultural groups—in this case the new publicists and the common people—facilitating the movement of ideas from one group to another, and from the city to the countryside.⁶⁵ The journalists, as representatives of one social-cultural group, thus encouraged the officials and gentry, as members of a proximate group, to ask the village elders, members of a more distant group, to mediate in conveying the message of local self-government to the rural people, the most distant group. Hui proposed that officials or gentry recommend several village elders (*xianglao*) who enjoyed great prestige in the local area but who were not associated in any way with self-government reform: "These individuals would then be asked to go out and promote the concept of local self-government and explain its advantages to the villagers [*xiangmin*]." Hui was convinced that if this method were used, "then despite their ignorance, the common people would stop obstinately holding on to their wrong beliefs. The desire to follow the rebels would disappear, and the ringleaders would all be killed." Hui advised first waiting until the "great tide" of the disturbances against local self-government had calmed. Then it would be possible to "assign rural elders to go to all towns and rural townships to lecture publicly on the advantages of self-government. In this way the benefits of self-government and the harm of opium and gambling could be explained to the people of every town." Without such mediation, moreover, "once there was a setback in implementing local self-government, the common people would become despondent, and the enemies of reform would be encouraged to express their opposition."⁶⁶

The reformists' concern that the common people be carefully integrated into the process of local self-government was premised on the belief that the lower strata of self-government were the root of the entire constitutional system, just as the common people were the foundation of the nation. In an emendation of the traditional *minben* quotation from the *Documents Classic*, Hui wrote in 1911, "The people are the foundation of the regulation of the nation. If the people are competent, then the foundation of the nation is consolidated."⁶⁷ He blamed the Constitutional Commission, responsible for the final revision of the self-government regulations, for privileging the higher levels of local self-government—subprefecture, department, and county (*ting, zhou, xian*)—over the lower levels of city, town, and rural township (*cheng, zhen, xiang*). As a result "people in society view lower-level self-government as lowly and mean, and higher-

level self-government as respectable and lofty. Is this not absurd? I cannot but suspect that those who are establishing the law are ignorant of the basic objective of the constitution."⁶⁸

This official policy of privileging the higher over the lower levels of self-government was a manifestation of the political elites' tendency to overlook the concerns of local society in formulating policies that directly affected rural life. This bias was particularly pronounced in the lack of appreciation most urban elites displayed for the role of popular religion in the countryside. Showing scant regard for village culture, elites destroyed or converted structures of local cultural significance, such as temples, shrines, and ancestral halls, for use as schools, police bureaus, and self-government offices. Even if the actual property were not taken over, the gentry managers often attempted to extract temple taxes to promote the New Policies. The editorialist who commented on the popular attack on the schools in Wuxi identified this as one of the key reasons for the violence: "Today because [Yang Mu] levied temple contributions in order to establish the new school, all of his family has been harassed, and four or five schools in two cities have been totally destroyed."⁶⁹

The *Shibao* discourse on popular religion, however, counters this view of the elites as a monolithic force bent on "assaulting" local culture. As early as 1905, Zhang Jian, the educational reformer who was closely associated with *Shibao*, announced that the integrity of local religious institutions should be respected in the process of implementing the new education.⁷⁰ And in reporting on various local uprisings, the journalists consistently supported the position of the protesters who were demonstrating against the elites' encroachment on their local sacred space. In Laiyang, Shandong, in July 1910, for example, they supported the common people in their protest against the reform elite's expropriation of the Buddhist temple tax to pay for new schools. And in the March 1911 Chuansha, Jiangsu, uprising, they defended the rioters who opposed the reform elites' efforts to convert a sect temple into a self-government office, lauding the efforts of the temple manager and widow Ding Fei, who led more than 2,000 people in the four-day disturbance.⁷¹

The reformists' attempts to comprehend rural society on its own terms and to reach the common people by using local elders to convey their message in a language the people could understand bely the commonly held view that the growing divergence between urban intellectuals and the people in the twentieth century was a historical inevitability that began in the late Qing. Despite elitist elements and remnants of a paternalist tradition in the early-twentieth-century reformist discourse, the publicists' plans for a "new cultural design" and their sense of nationalism were much more nuanced and less totalitarian than some critics of late Qing and early republican elites suggest.⁷² The reformists' discourse on the common people was an amalgam of past and present values, a merging of the long-standing ideal of upper-class concern and responsibility, the equally long-

standing sense of the scholar's social and cultural superiority, *and* new concerns with reform and popular power. The process of cultural negotiation that resulted from the infusion of these new elements into the Confucian discourse on the people had barely begun when the 1911 Revolution erupted. It has been reinitiated several times in subsequent decades, but to little effect, and it has been virtually arrested in China today.

In their effort to serve as new-style noble men and to create a new citizenry, the reform publicists were thorough diagnosticians of the ills of Chinese society, describing in detail the character flaws and social afflictions that were the source of China's national weakness. Their prescriptions for the removal of these ills were also the subject of much debate and analysis. A sense of unity, popular enlightenment, public ethics, political education, cultural negotiation—all were seen as ways of forging a more dynamic people who would rise to the task of building a nation worthy of pride.

The much-discussed "new citizen" did begin to emerge in the final years of the Qing dynasty, an individual with a heightened political consciousness and a deepened commitment to the nation. This new citizen was not exclusively the product of these self-conscious efforts at collective intellectual and ethical transformation, however. Of equal importance was the subtle yet historic restructuring of the relationship between society and the dynasty that commenced within the late Qing middle realm. As the principle defining the nature of relations between ruler and ruled shifted from the paternalism and dependence that had determined the nation's social history for centuries to a new and more confrontational mode of relating, issues of egregious mistreatment of the common people in the countryside, of constitutional reform in the capital, and of the protection of national rights in the international arena were increasingly contested. It was this process of contestation, which lined the publicists and the people up against the power-holders, that most forcefully prompted the emerging Chinese citizenry to start defining itself.

PART III

*“Ruffians in Scholars’ Robes”:
The Publicists Versus the
Power Holders*

Prologue

The new middle realm that the *Shibao* journalists sought to expand through the redefinition of the nation and the transformation of society was not uncontested territory. As disputes over the meaning and scope of constitutional reform intensified in the last Qing decade, this realm became the site of confrontations between the publicists and the power holders. In these confrontations, the *Shibao* journalists and editors relied on the print media as their primary political tool.¹ Using the press to expose abuses of official power (*guanquan*), promote the establishment of balancing institutions, and mobilize for the creation of a reformist “base of operations” (*genju zhi di*), they envisaged it as a “Fourth Estate” (*disi zhongzu*), independent from and equal to the government. Although this Western-based concept was hardly applicable in the context of early-twentieth-century China, where there was neither a Second nor a Third Estate, it reveals the new publicists’ understanding of the political press as an alternative power.²

For the *Shibao* journalists the press thus embodied not only their impatience to speak but also their “temptation to govern.”³ This merging of journalism as a profession with politics as a vocation was standard in the history of the press in all nations—but the nature of both the profession and the vocation differed in China. Whereas many French and British publicists fought for their ideals not only in print but also as deputies in representative assemblies, for the *Shibao* journalists, who mediated from within a much less institutionalized middle realm, it was the struggle to establish such representative bodies that linked their calling as publicists

to their role in politics.⁴ Debating the merits of various foreign constitutional models in their editorials, they launched an urgent appeal, in the press and on the streets, for the establishment of a representative national assembly and organs of local self-government.

While engaged in this struggle for the creation of formal representative institutions, the journalists both promoted and participated in a network of informal organizations and associations.⁵ This network extended from the newspaper itself to new schools and educational associations, from constitutional preparation organizations to railway companies and railway rights recovery leagues, from the local to the national level, and from the unofficial to the official sphere. The *Shibao* club, Xilou, furnished the nexus of these new institutions, linking educators and journalists with constitutional activists and institutions. Whereas *Shibao* had "opened a space where the literati [*wenren*] could discuss politics," Xilou provided them with an entrée into the world of politics.⁶ Together, the newspaper and the club lent an increased cohesion to disparate actors and organizations, serving as both a channel of communication between these diverse bodies and a conduit between them and the upper reaches of power.

The reform publicists used the pages of *Shibao* and the activities of organizations linked to Xilou to advocate shifting from an imperial to a constitutional mode of politics. Contending that the relationship between the emperor and the people should be premised on the rule of law rather than on benevolent rule, they asserted that government policy could be legitimately challenged through an appeal to constitutional principles. These principles would serve as the basis of their criticism of officialdom, the premise of their demands for institutionalization, and the rallying cry of their movement for political mobilization.

One of the clearest measures of the press's influence in promoting this new mode of politics in the late Qing middle realm was the rigor with which the dynasty attempted to limit the production and circulation of newspapers. The government despised the journalists as "ruffians in scholars' robes [*siwenbailei*]" and accused them of inciting social disturbances and fostering dissent.⁷ The high official Sheng Xuanhuai, for example, blamed the public outcry over the Suzhou-Hangzhou-Ningbo Railway issue on the manipulation of society by the press and the students, while Yuan Shikai, the minister of the Board of Foreign Affairs, claimed that "social unrest" was a fabrication of the newspapers.⁸ Aware of the power of the political press, the government attempted to restrict its influence by law. The history of the measures and regulations designed to censor the news in the late Qing is thus the history of the dynasty's recognition of the new print medium as a legitimate—and threatening—component of early-twentieth-century Chinese political life.⁹

The Qing government had attempted to restrain the press by passing a series of edicts in 1898 and again in 1901. These measures were largely ineffective, however, forcing the dynasty to pass ever-more specific laws

during the period of constitutional preparation. In July 1906 the Qing Special Law on Printing (Da Qing yinshua wu zhuanlü) was announced. The first specialized law to regulate printed matter, including newspapers, it stipulated that works of journalism must first be inspected before they were printed. That same year, a supplement to the special law, the Regulations for Newspapers (Baozhang yingshou guize), was drafted, followed by the even stricter Provisional Press Regulations (Baoguan zhanxing tiaogui) in August 1907.

It was not until January 1908, however, that the Japanese-inspired Qing Press Laws (Da Qing baolü), which exclusively targeted newspapers and periodicals, were formulated, provoking a strong reaction in the pages of *Shibao*.¹⁰ Stricter than the 1906 law, the 1908 code had two notable additions: newly founded newspapers were required to pay a deposit, and all copy had to be submitted for censorship by midnight before the publication date. The press laws further forbade the premature publication of edicts and proclamations, and they prohibited libel, slander, bribes, the publication of court proceedings, and unfavorable mention of the imperial government. They also required the registration of editors, publishers, and printers.¹¹

Although these laws were generally ignored, it cannot be said that government censorship had no effect whatsoever on the late Qing press. Officials could force newspapers to close even before the new press laws were promulgated, and foreigners could request that local intendants shut down newspapers or stop the publication of stories unfavorable to their interests. Moreover, even if specific regulations and stipulations laid out in the Qing's press laws were not followed, the general atmosphere of repression that prevailed induced some degree of self-censorship. Many journalists avoided political advocacy or controversy so as not to offend readers, provoke government harassment, or be denied post or telegraph privileges. Even a newspaper like *Shibao*, which was located in the French concession and registered under a Japanese national, was careful not to be too critical of powerful government officials such as Yuan Shikai.¹²

These limitations were, however, much less historically significant than the intensity and duration of the struggle between the press and the authorities in the late Qing. The progression from 1898 of edicts, regulations, and laws designed to limit the influence of the print media reflects, first, how deeply the dynasty felt threatened by the newly emerging voice of public opinion and, second, how ineffective government measures ultimately were in silencing it. Even though some journals were closed and some writers were forced to put down their brushes, the press survived and thrived, a testimony to the vigor of the late Qing middle realm.

After all, in 1911, it was the newspapers that sounded the death knell for the dynasty, not the other way around.

‘*Minquan*’ and ‘*Guanquan*’:
*Popular Power Versus
 Official Power*

Every day that these meat-eaters hold power is one more day of popular misery caused by government oppression.

—Min, *Shibao*, May 29, 1908

From ancient times Chinese society has been conceptualized in terms of the dichotomy between the officials (*guan*), who served the state, and the people (*min*)—including farmers, laborers, merchants, and literati out of office—who did not. Late Qing reformists added a new gloss to the age-old official/popular dichotomy by representing it not only in terms of *guan* and *min* but also in terms of official power (*guanquan*) and popular power (*minquan*).¹ And whereas in the classical writings of, for example, Mencius and Xunzi, the *guan* was associated with *gong* as the embodiment of a conscious commitment to the common good, the new publicists followed a Confucian subtradition in reversing the terms and identifying private interest (*si*) with the officials and with *guanquan*.²

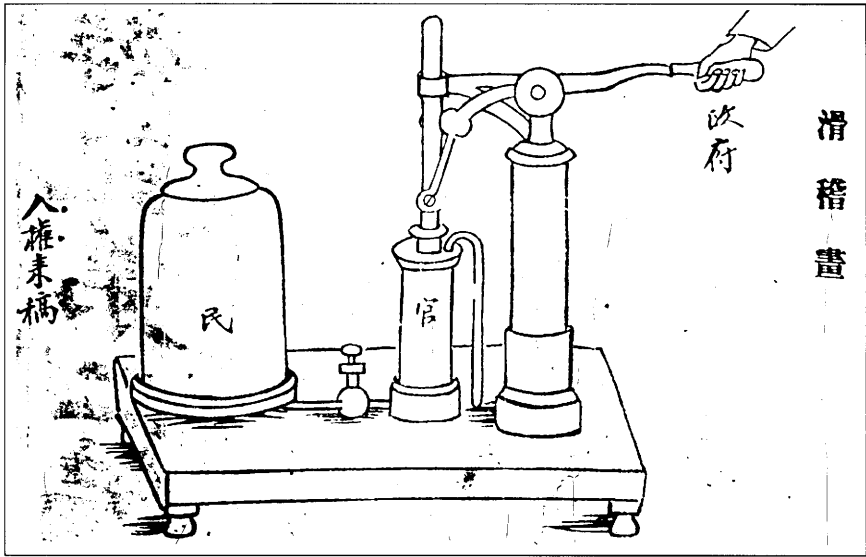
At the same time, the new publicists’ critique of officialdom has many classical resonances. Their commitment to exposing official abuses and miscarriages of justice echoes the remonstrations of literati exemplified by Confucius and Mencius, and their assumption that all social evils flowed from connections to the bureaucracy was based on the familiar practice of reducing the problem of dynastic rule to one of corrupt and cruel officials. The *Shibao* journalists were beginning to identify increasingly complex contradictions in local society on the basis of social distinctions and economic deprivations, such as the levels of economic development they cited in their analyses of popular disturbances. They were often constrained, however, by their role as polemicists and by their lack of highly sophisti-

cated tools of analysis from developing their observations beyond the more familiar official critique.

The journalists also took an established stance toward the emperor vis-à-vis the officials. Unlike the revolutionaries, who called for dismantling the imperial system, the new publicists—at least until late 1911—were less concerned with the great selfishness (*dasi*) of the monarch than with the petty self-interestedness of officials. In accordance with their particular understanding of *minquan* as a new power that would develop in opposition to official power but in harmony with the dynasty, they continued to represent the emperor as the incarnation of benevolence and the bureaucrats who served him as the enemies of society. "Today our compatriots [the revolutionaries] detest imperial power and do not understand the danger of official power," an editorialist named Liu Xiyuan declared. "This is to attempt to remedy the situation by the branches and not by the root, to eliminate the symptoms and not the source of the problem."³

The journalists portrayed the emperor as devoted to the welfare of the people and critical of venal and self-seeking officials. "Fortunately," Jiu Jiu wrote, "the emperor knows that the remonstrating officials [*jianyan zhuchen*]" are guilty of "misleading the public."⁴ Zhuang contrasted the sovereign's diligence in conducting national affairs with the dissipation and irresponsibility of the officials. "Above, the emperor works into the night," he observed. "Below, the vassals are reluctant to leave their parties. They rejoice in idleness and delight in playing chess."⁵ The reformists were convinced that if the emperor, rather than the officials, determined policy, peace would reign in the nation and constitutionalism would be successfully implemented. They blamed the officials for obstructing reform and credited the emperor alone for adopting any measures that were true to constitutional principles. When new policies are introduced, the journalist Lin Baishui, who used the pen name Xuan ("To Propagate" or "To Announce"), wrote, "the people are readily able to discern which measures are honest and which are dishonest. If they are honest, the people know it is because the emperor is overseeing their implementation and strictly exercising caution and discipline."⁶

While this reference to the people as the arbiter of just policies resonates with inherited Chinese views of the oneness of the prince and the people, the popular role was infused with a new meaning and a new dynamism in the late Qing reform discourse on officialdom. Having identified public opinion as one of the principal forces within the middle realm, the journalists envisaged it as a bulwark against official abuses of power. They warned that if selfish and wily officials manipulated laws and rhetoric to their own advantage, betraying the venerable principle of *gong*, public opinion would expose their hypocrisy. If the authorities trampled on the people's right to equitable treatment, the *vox populi* would rally to oppose them, upholding new principles of the rule of law as a means of balancing official power with popular power.



The government squeezing the people by means of its officials. *Shibusen*, September 1, 1907.

The Power Holders: Enemies of the People

True to the spirit of righteous elite opinion (*qingyi*), the *Shibusen* journalists were vociferous critics of all power holders, high and low, central and local, who equated their personal interest (*si*) with the public interest (*gong*) and refused to yield to the concerns of the collective. Employing a timeworn trope of commiseration with the people, they drew a direct correlation between the excesses of official power and the aggravation of popular misery. Using the new print medium to convey this familiar message, they exposed those who abused their positions of authority in late Qing society—from members of the Grand Council to clerks and runners, from governors-general to soldiers in the army—as enemies of the people.

As the journalists explained, there was an inverse relation between the strength of official power and the weakness of popular power, between the affluence of the bureaucrats and the misery of the people, between the promotion of the power holders' *si* and the sacrifice of society's *gong*. Liu Xiyuan described how official power had expanded historically, to the detriment of popular power. "In the middle ages," he wrote, "the people's hearts were not pure, and deceitful individuals became officials in order to seize political authority and supplant popular power. As official power increased, popular power diminished. The days turned and the months accumulated, and gradually the autocratic imperial system was entrenched within society, and official power became a plague on the people's lives."

If popular power were ever to reassert itself, Liu argued, his compatriots would have to understand that "we live in a new era. We must demand to become citizens, not officials. We must plan for the development of popular power, not official power."⁷

The trend toward the expansion of official power and the sacrifice of the popular good originated at the highest levels of the bureaucracy. Rather than act in the public interest, members of the Grand Council and a number of governors-general "want to make their personal likes and dislikes the basis for punishment and reward for all under heaven." As a result, "right and wrong have been reversed," and the nation plunged into a state of moral chaos.⁸ This chaos was further reflected in the unequal distribution of wealth. Denouncing the excesses of official affluence—which ranged from tens of millions of yuan for the household capital of high officials to tens of thousands for lower officials—one journalist stated that "the source of these assets is the blood of the people."⁹ Official bribery, corruption, and embezzlement were absorbing all of the nation's resources. Another editorialist recounted his observations of "the operation of tax bureaus in every location. When the officials received 10,000 silver in taxes, only 20 or 30 percent of the sum would enter the bureau's coffers"; 60 or 70 percent of the remainder "served to fatten the officials [*yousi*] and fill the stomachs of the deputies [*weiyuan*]." Another portion was absorbed by the gentry managers (*shendong*), and still more was embezzled by the clerks (*shuli*). Whatever was left over was sent to the great managers (*daying*) and to all imperial general inspectors (*qinchai dachen*). They, in turn, gave the soldiers some 10 or 20 percent of the sum that they had received.¹⁰ Summing up the injustice of this situation, Min declared, "Every day that these meat-eaters [high officials] hold power is one more day of popular misery caused by government oppression."¹¹



"The officials are fat and the people are thin," *Shibao*, April 23, 1907.

The journalists referred to both the foreign present and the idyllic past in analyzing the wrongs of the officials, condemning the bureaucrats for neither promoting constitutional reform nor honoring the principles of classical morality. They pointed to official obstruction of constitutional reform as one of the more egregious manifestations of how official self-interest could jeopardize the popular interest. Only when constitutionalism was established, they believed, would the officials finally be forced to abandon their selfish ways: "to submit to public opinion," work for the nation, and "forget themselves, forget their families."¹² Most officials, however, resisted the implementation of constitutional reform, they argued, precisely because it would benefit the nation, not themselves. "There are none who are as indifferent to or as critical of constitutionalism as the remonstrating officials," Jiu Jiu wrote. "We must demand that these officials participate in this new plan of constitutionalism and stop viewing the situation exclusively from the point of view of their own concerns."¹³ Even when certain officials promoted constitutional reform, they did so in a perfunctory and hypocritical manner, whitewashing their rapacious designs with lofty-sounding justifications. "The words of the officials are all the words of the *Rituals of Zhou* and Confucius," an editorialist remarked in 1909, "but to encounter their behavior is to encounter the skill of Shen [Buhai] and Shang [Yang]."¹⁴ "Feeling pressured by the current agitation for constitutionalism," the officials would "throw a bone to the people by adding several dozen articles to the Qing Code [Da Qing huidian]." Speaking in the name of "imperial sanctioning constitutionalism," they "would beguile our people and deceive the world."¹⁵

Warning that the constitutional promise could not be fulfilled "by simply tampering with the wording of documents," the journalists alerted their readers to the danger of what they called "false constitutionalism" (*jia lixian*).¹⁶ False constitutionalism, they claimed, would eventually bring about the demise of the nation, just as true constitutionalism would assure its deliverance. The journalist Lin Baishui explained, "We know that a knife can protect a person or it can kill a person. If it is directed outward, it can be used to protect oneself; if it is pointed inward, it can be used to kill oneself. A constitutional government is also like this. It can be the means of survival for a nation or it can bring on the rapid peril of the nation. If it is a genuine constitutional government, the nation will survive; if it is false, the nation will perish." Under such false constitutionalism, "the government would go through the motions of allowing the people to establish a constitution, and it would approximate the form of a constitutional nation by, for example, letting the people select assembly members and establishing what would appear to be an assembly. At the same time, however, it would maintain the old ways of thinking and continue to coerce the people and suppress popular opinion [*minyì*]." Such a system would do "nothing more than sell the empty promise of constitutionalism while displaying the awesomeness of authority."¹⁷

Lin Baishui drew an analogy between an autocratic government and a lineage assembly to elaborate his point. If, he began, a household had a problem and the head of the household took action using his own judgment, then, even though the members of the lineage might not agree with his actions, they could only say that he had made a temporary mistake, not that he had intentionally provoked a rift within the lineage. But it is very different "if he gathers all the members of the lineage to a meeting and calls for a collective decision, and then arrogantly and discourteously refuses to show the members proper respect." Referring to the Manchu princes, Lin continued that "it is very different if he invites the young members of the family who have violated the lineage laws and enraged the other members and seats them in places of honor, treating them with the utmost ceremony so as to humiliate the others. This would be self-consciously to provoke a rift with the lineage members; it could not be treated as a mere mistake." These criticisms of the government's false constitutionalism were all the more trenchant since Lin's editorial was written in late 1910, after important reforms had been implemented and several institutions, including the provincial assemblies, had been established. He claimed that by creating these institutions formally while refusing to grant them any real power, the government had, in effect, "invited the people to a banquet only to have them arrive and find that the wine and meat had not been prepared. The host would squat and scornfully revile his guests. The guests would then demand a drink, and when they didn't receive it, they would become insulted and leave."¹⁸

Just as the officials resisted implementing true constitutional reform that would expand popular power, so they attempted to obstruct the dissemination of the new learning, which threatened Confucian intellectual hegemony. Whereas the journalists encouraged their readers to study Western learning, it was not surprising, Hu Ma wrote, that government officials who were "erudite in terms of traditional culture and learning [*guogu*] but ignorant when it came to modern politics" posed the greatest obstacle to this process of political edification.¹⁹ In the view of the editorialist Zhuang, the problem with those who were mired in the old learning and trained to take the civil service examinations was that "what they have studied has no practical application, and whatever is of practical use they have not studied. They only know distant history but are ignorant of the present. Or they employ inappropriate measures, trying to trim the foot to make it fit the shoe."²⁰ Products of a system that "emphasized flowery prose and deemphasized practical studies," the officials were ignorant, Jiu Jiu claimed, when it came to the pressing matters of the day, from constitutional reform to the universalization of education, from the establishment of local assemblies to the control of the sea harbors. Incapable of addressing these issues, the officials sought to mask their incompetence by appealing to their useless erudition, "randomly quoting from corrupt and obsolete writings." These old-style officials went so far as to attempt

to reinstate the examination system after its abolition in 1905. Recently, Jiu Jiu went on, "Li Zhuohua petitioned for the reinstatement of the bi-annual examination, Yun Yuding petitioned for the reinstatement of the county examination, and Liu Pengnian petitioned for a revision of the proposals for the establishment of modern schools. . . . Does this not augur the overthrow of constitutionalism?" Quoting from the *Poetry Classic*, he urged the officials not to "make a mockery of things" and jeopardize the process of constitutional reform.²¹

Unable to recognize the realities of the present, the officials were also incapable of upholding the moral foundation of the ancient past. Taking the inherited notions of morality as their standard, the editorialists not only exposed the rapacious and corrupt behavior of the officials but also proposed a means of improving their comportment. One editorialist argued in 1909 that the traditional moral code alone could prevent the further betrayal of the *minben* principle by so-called reformist officials. "In recent years, watching those who use the new laws as a cover for their misconduct, I believe in the correctness of the words [on the importance of self-cultivation] of Lu [Jiuyuan (1139-92)] and in the value of the *Record of Rites*. If one's soul and inner thoughts are not managed honestly, then it is as if bandits have been provided with weapons to steal grain." To ensure against further official misconduct, the editorialist argued, it was necessary to reinvigorate official discipline (*guanzhen*), starting with the higher officials, who would then set an example for all under Heaven. He cited several historical examples of the successful adoption of such a strategy: "The Shang emperor punished Tai Fu in order to implement the law. The Duke of Wu slayed Ma Su in order to clarify punishments." These actions were necessary, he asserted, because "if one compromises with evil and tolerates depravity, then, as with a wound that is not adequately treated, problems will arise in time."²²

The editorialist Zhuang combined Confucian ethical principles with foreign examples in discussing the spirit of constitutional preparation. He exhorted "the eminent personalities [*gungun zhugong*]" whose "spirit was not directed" to "imitate Zengzi's Three Introspections," a reference to the philosopher Zeng's method of self-cultivation as described in the Confucian *Analects*. Arguing that a lack of control or restraint in regulating oneself "impeded both the implementation of the New Policies and the preservation of old principles," Zhuang held ancient etiquette to be a necessary component of a constitutional nation. "In ancient times," he wrote, "the national system [*guoti*] was premised on feelings, sincerity, and reciprocity." He equated these principles, which he claimed went back to "The Deer Call to One Another" in the *Poetry Classic*, with Western constitutional practices: "I have heard that in the two nations of France and America, the various ministers, the literati, and the people all have audiences with their president. They shake hands with him and happily sit

with him, talking and laughing in a relaxed manner. . . . This was also the way of our nation in antiquity."²³

The publicists believed that the gross inequities built into the relationship between the officials and the people nationally were as severe, if not more so, locally. In their analysis of the rash of popular uprisings during the last few years of Qing rule, they found venal and corrupt officials to be largely responsible for the economic deprivations, infrastructural problems, and mishandling of the New Policies reforms that had incited the people to rebel. These bureaucrats had so antagonized the citizens that they had become completely alienated from the reform process, convinced that the "constitution was a constitution for the minority of people who benefited from it and that local self-government was a new privilege for the minority of people who had positions as self-government deputies."²⁴

The journalists portrayed the local officials as the adversaries of the people, the nation, and even the dynasty. They "did not think of serving the emperor above, nor did they think of benefiting the people below," an editorialist wrote in 1904. "Day and night they levy taxes, exploit the common people, and fatten their own pockets. They neglect the emperor's territories and conduct themselves as if they were the mortal enemy of the people. They will continue in their nefarious ways until the popular spirit has dissipated, the nation has been weakened, and absolute, uncontrollable chaos has broken out." He bemoaned the fact that "while the resources of the common people [*baixing*] are limited, the greed of the corrupt officials is limitless. When this limitless greed has exhausted the limited resources, the people not only become poor and sick, they turn toward upheaval and banditry."²⁵

Commenting on the 1910 Changsha rice riots, Tian Chi claimed that "the starving people of Hunan rose up because the governor of Hunan had sold rice to the governor-general of Hubei, forcing the price of every *sheng* up to eighty *wen*." The announcement of the governor's sale had provoked a rush of grain hoarding in the towns and prefectures in the Changsha region, halting the flow of grain to the city and forcing the price of rice up. In addition to this mismanagement of policy, the officials had worsened the situation by not showing any sympathy for the people. As a result, "the angry masses had finally reverted to violence—burning the yamen office and destroying churches, schools, and all Western stores."²⁶ Tian Chi also blamed the local officials for the August 1910 disturbance in Laiyang, Shandong: "Collaborating with the evil gentry [*lieshen*] in the region, the magistrates precipitously established new police, educational, and self-government institutions, thus imposing great hardships on the local people. Unable to bear the burden of the new taxes that these reforms demanded, the villagers rebelled. The public held the officials responsible for the uprising. "According to all of the newspapers that have reported on the Laiyang uprising in recent days," Tian Chi recounted, "the majority

of the citizens sympathize with the people, while only a few sympathize with the officials. It can therefore be concluded that the officials have mismanaged national affairs, and their grave errors are inexcusable."²⁷

Local officials resisted self-government reform, the journalists claimed, for the same selfish reasons that higher-level bureaucrats resisted constitutional reform: it would weaken official power while strengthening popular power. Li Yuerui explained that local officials opposed the implementation of self-government reform since it would "make it more difficult for them to flaunt their authority." Because these officials could not openly obstruct the government's reforms without jeopardizing their own positions in the bureaucracy, they had adopted subtler methods of sabotaging it by encouraging and abetting anti-local self-government disturbances: "When there were conflicts that affected the safety or the stability of the region, the magistrates enjoyed watching from the sidelines as the competition between the gentry and the people heated up. Allowing a small rift to develop into a great disturbance that would diminish the prospects for rapid reform, they were able to vent their own pent-up anger over local self-government."²⁸ Hui shared this view, claiming that responsibility for the Chuansha uprising lay with those officials who wanted to obstruct the New Policies.²⁹

Official incompetence and indifference further jeopardized local self-government by undermining the common people's confidence in the reform process. The villagers "became increasingly wary of self-government" when they saw how incapable the appointed officials were of handling local problems.³⁰ The villagers lived in fear whenever an uprising broke out, knowing "that the hands of the officials and the gentry were all tied, and that they had no policy whatsoever to deal with the disturbance."³¹ Li Yuerui wrote that the common people could not even hope for peace when troops were called in. Unable to stop the hostilities, the army commanders "merely sat back and watched as their soldiers extorted and fleeced the villagers. Who is responsible for having let the situation come to this?" he asked. "It is the fault of the officials; how can they deny it?"³²

The new publicists realized that this official incompetence and loss of popular support for local self-government reform would eventually imperil the entire constitutionalist project. "Our current problem of self-government is more than the local problem of Chuansha," Hui wrote. "It is ultimately the problem of the survival or peril of our people. When it is examined in its particulars, it is the problem of the locality; when it is examined in its totality, it relates to the entire nation."³³

The journalists could not exclusively blame the officials for the problems that arose in local areas, however. Since the bureaucratic arm of the state could only reach as far as the county, and since each county magistrate was responsible for approximately 300,000 people, local officials were heavily dependent on members of the local gentry—former officials and qualified aspirants who formed part of the local ruling class—when it came

to taking care of rural problems.³⁴ The gentry's local role had expanded significantly in the early twentieth century as gentry-managers (*shendong*) became responsible for running the New Policies. Accompanying the gentry's rise to prominence in the countryside were an intensification of competition between local elites and an increase in gentry exploitation of the common people. This exploitation became a major theme in the late Qing riots, with the houses of gentry-managers becoming the targets of destruction as often as foreign-type schools, police stations, or self-government offices.³⁵

In the *Shibao* editorials, the gentry were most frequently depicted as morally corrupt, socially marginalized elites who ran local affairs for their own advantage. This is hardly an accurate picture of the entire gentry class but reflects the publicists' view that the official system was so corrupt and dysfunctional that the "good gentry" would refuse to serve it. An on-site investigation of the causes of banditry in local areas, published in 1908, explained that because the magistrate was an outsider prohibited by the law of avoidance from serving in his native area, "he was forced to entrust his eyes and ears to the gentry." And because he had "not yet learned that virtuous local elites rarely entered the official gates," he would inevitably choose one of the "reckless and evil gentry [*lanlie zhi shen*]" as his assistant instead. Such a person would hand over one or two bandits in order to enter into the magistrate's good graces. He would then feel free to coerce the local people, causing "the weaker among them to endure and complain silently, while the craftier ones would join with the bandits and plan killings, further inflating the ranks of the outlaw gangs."³⁶

Li Yuerui described how tensions between members of the gentry contributed to the Chuansha antireform protest: "When discussion of local self-government began, scrupulous and self-respecting scholars took one look at the proposals and distanced themselves from the project." It was the "bad gentry" who chose to become involved: "Nine out of ten of those who rose to take responsibility for local reform were gentry members who had previously monopolized public affairs, exploiting the people in order to enrich themselves." Those who did not take on the new positions resented those who did and sought to weaken their position by spreading slanderous rumors about their rivals, turning the common people against them, and stirring up a local disturbance. "Although these two kinds of people appear to be enemies, they are really birds of a feather," Li wrote, referring to those who assumed the new positions and those who did not. "The two factions bandy each other about and stir each other up. One rises as the other falls, and in the meantime, the local people do not have one night of peace."³⁷

The lowest level of elites, frequently referred to as government students (*shengyuan*), were also vilified in the reformists' analysis of the abuse of authority in local society. Bai Yi characterized these government students as one of the "new elements" in the group of outlaws that had

turned to banditry after the examination system had been abolished. He echoed the revolutionary Zhang Binglin's opinion of "*xiuca* revolutionaries," or "scholar-rebels," as inferior to secret society members and deficient in power, spirit, and self-confidence.³⁸ According to Bai Yi, "In terms of ability, vitality, and depth of knowledge, these new elements were bandits of the lowest quality, and greatly inferior to the wandering heroes of the militia." Because they were literate, however, "they held higher social positions than the militia members." Crafty and cunning, they used their writing skills to advance their devious ways, minting counterfeit money or forging the official seal on simulated paper. Bai Yi criticized these low-level elites for continuing to aspire to officialdom, again expressing a view similar to Zhang Binglin's. Having continuously harbored the desire to advance into government service, "they lived in fear of never attaining their objective. They were like a spurned woman or a forsaken catamite weeping at the end of a long alley. What did this abject and cowardly behavior have to do with making great plans for China?"³⁹

Below the government students were members of the county sub-bureaucracy, clerks and runners, the former more socially respectable than the latter, but both accused of exploiting local society for personal gain. Referring to the important role of these minor officials in tax farming, the *Shibao* editorialists accused them of fiscally squeezing and generally abusing the common people, thus alienating them from the dynasty: "The yamen runners [*chaixu*] inflict endless suffering on the people. They imprison and abuse them, subjecting them to cruelty and repression and forcing them to live as if in total darkness."⁴⁰ After the Chuansha uprising, Hui chastised the runners for "taking advantage of the chaos to promote their own gains."⁴¹

The official army, the publicists contended, also profited from the chaotic conditions surrounding rural unrest, rather than working to alleviate them. According to Bai Yi, members of the official army called in to pacify the Ping-Li-Liu uprising behaved more irresponsibly than had the bandits themselves. "When the Hubei official army entered the city of Changsha, it disrupted the brothels, interrupted trade in all of the restaurants, tea houses, and wine shops, and disturbed private residences," Bai Yi reported. "Sent in to exterminate the bandits, the soldiers proceeded instead to massacre women and children. A missionary even reported that the soldiers had minced human meat and eaten it. In the end it was not known how many were killed, how many injured, or how many eaten. This demonstrates the level of humanitarianism and military discipline that exists in the army." Moreover, this was not some lowly local army but "the famous Hubei army, renowned throughout the nation for its purity and goodness. Its officials had all received Western educations, and the army organization itself was based on the model of the 'advanced nations.' But still the officers and soldiers did not conduct themselves any better than outlaws or bandit factions."⁴² In many cases the soldiers even encouraged banditry.

The publicists warned that this pervasive abuse of power in the nation—from the lowest petty officials to the members of the Grand Council—potentially led to disaster. They claimed that the situation in early-twentieth-century China was more volatile than it had been at the end of the Ming Dynasty, during the Taiping Rebellion, or at the time of the 1789 revolution in France. The primary danger was that the Qing would be overturned by a peasant uprising—the ultimate revolt of the people—just as the Ming Dynasty had been destroyed by rebel forces led by Li Zicheng. One editorialist warned that because the late Qing bureaucrats were like the Ming officials in “regarding the nation’s difficulties with casual detachment,” it was likely that they would meet the same fate: bandits would storm the capital, forcing “all the officials to hand over everything they possessed in the hopes that their lives would be spared.”⁴³ What most angered the journalists, however, was that by inciting domestic upheaval and maintaining their selfish behavior, the officials were weakening China’s position in the international community and jeopardizing its chances for survival. China lacked national unity and a sense of national purpose because the officials “only knew how to honor themselves and bend the law.”⁴⁴ “Alas!” Li exclaimed, “how appropriate that this kind of selfish and self-interested official would sit on his hands and wait until the foreigners take control of all domestic and foreign rights.”⁴⁵

The People’s Revenge: Public Opinion and the Rule of Law

Despite the familiar refrains in the publicists’ condemnation of officialdom as the source of popular suffering and national chaos, there were a number of new elements in their discourse on the evils of the bureaucracy. The journalists no longer represented the people as having no choice but to rebel in the face of corrupt and rapacious official power. Rather, they portrayed the struggle between *minquan* and *guanquan* as one between an ever-more powerful public opinion and increasingly vulnerable, if obdurate, officials. The journalists also went beyond simply pleading with the rulers to be more benevolent in their treatment of the people and more conscientious in their handling of national affairs. They instead demanded the establishment of a more equitable legal system based on the greater social interest rather than official privilege.

The journalists appealed to both ancient and modern examples to describe the political power of public opinion. “When powerful officials ruled the nation in ancient times,” Jian He wrote, “they all tried to suppress society by restricting the expression of public opinion [*yulun*].” This is because, like Napoleon, they had recognized that “public opinion is more fearsome than six or seven powerful nations.”⁴⁶ Chen Leng claimed that government suppression was futile in the face of the *vox populi*. “From early times, China has depended on fire to suppress public opinion,” he ex-

plained. This practice began with "Qin Shi Huangdi, the first autocrat, who used book burning as a method of keeping the people ignorant." Neither the fire of foreign weapons nor the fire of government oppressors could destroy the "fire" of public opinion, however. "Just as there are firearms that have material form, there are also firearms that have no material form," Chen wrote, and "the spirit of the people has still not been destroyed." Like Jian He, Chen Leng deferred to Bonaparte on this point. "Was it not Napoleon," he asked, "who said, 'If there is one newspaper of the opposition party, it would triumph over 100,000 rifles?'"⁴⁷

The journalists warned that if the officials did not respect freedom of the press, they would jeopardize both their own reputations and national stability. As long as the government allowed the newspapers to flourish, an editorialist declared in 1909, "the progress of the nation will be peaceful, and the officials will enjoy honor and fame." In this way they would spare themselves the humiliation other world leaders such as England's Shaftesbury, Germany's Bismarck, and Japan's Itō Hirobumi suffered at the hands of the press. But if the authorities stifled public opinion and "totally disregarded the desires of the citizens," they would "be unable to recover tranquillity."⁴⁸ Alluding to an incident in the opening chapter of the classic *Discourses of the States* (*Guoyü*), another editorialist cautioned that "to obstruct the voice of the people is worse than to obstruct a river. . . . A dammed river will eventually overflow its banks. An obstructed voice, it could thus be presumed, would do something unthinkable worse." He admonished the officials that if "the citizens lack the means to unite and express their interests in a dignified and effective way, they would have no choice but to take the path of secret societies." Or, even worse, "the Russian practice of political assassination would again be reenacted in China. Although the government does not take measures for the sake of the nation, is it also incapable of taking measures to ensure its own survival?"⁴⁹

As a powerful new force in politics, the journalists argued, public opinion should play a role in the selection of the officials who would lead the country. "If the dynasty intentionally goes against public opinion [*minyü*] by employing someone and continuing to favor him despite the objections of the people," an editorialist wrote in 1910, "then how can it pretend this is a period of constitutional preparation?"⁵⁰ Because the government ignored all constitutional principles, Zhuang explained, it could "not distinguish between the learned and the ignorant, the virtuous and the vile," in making official appointments. Instead, it "indiscriminately employs those who have money" or those who "depend on the merit of their ancestors." He insisted that basing appointments on inheritance rather than on public opinion had given rise to disastrous successions in the past: "In spite of the wisdom of Yao, there was Dan Zhu. In spite of the wisdom of Shun, there was Shang Jun. In spite of the wisdom of King Wen, there

were Guan and Cai. After Confucius people could not all be like Bo and Li. After Qi, people could not all be like Huan and Jing."⁵¹

While Zhuang's condemnation of official privilege suggests that the rule of man was a deeply flawed system that finally had to be replaced by the rule of law, a few of the journalists continued to argue that even the rule of law could not eliminate the abuse of power. "As long as the nation lacks the appropriate people to serve as officials," one editorialist contended, "the law would be established in vain." This was particularly true in the sensitive period of transition before "the constitution was formulated, supervisory institutions established, and civic rights protected." If particularly skilled people were not chosen to undertake these reforms, then it would be "as if Yi Ya and Kai Fang were to regulate Guanzi's internal policies, or if Gan Long or Du Zhi were to undertake Shang Yang's new orders, or if Huang Hao organized Zhuge's regulation of the law, or if Metternich carried out Washington's constitution." Under such circumstances the reforms would "never be effective and the people would criticize their uselessness. Is this not what we have seen in the last ten years?" the author asked, referring to popular resistance to the New Policies since their implementation began in 1901.⁵²

Despite this strain in the late Qing reform discourse that argued for the rule of man, increasing numbers of journalists stated that the reason abusive and corrupt official practices were so endemic in China was that the rule of law had never been established. "Throughout its 4,000-year history," an editorialist explained, "China has largely been dependent on the rule of man." This pattern inevitably gave rise to autocracy because "the duties of the entire nation were all handled by one or two people. If they were virtuous, the nation was regulated; if they lacked talent, the government was in profound disarray." In a nation under the rule of law, however, "national duties were divided among the people of the nation. While the sovereign and the prime minister controlled the powers of the judiciary above the masses, they would also have to obey the law like everyone else. Therefore, it was not imperative to have virtuous people in high office." Further proof of the superiority of this system lay in the experience of "the great Western nations that had all implemented the rule of law."⁵³

"The law" as it existed in early-twentieth-century China, the journalists claimed, was merely a system for maintaining official privilege, at the cost of popular suffering. The lack of true justice, one editorialist argued, "is the reason corrupt officials are fearless, while the lives of the people become increasingly difficult."⁵⁴ No matter what an official was guilty of, he could rest assured that "national laws could not reach him."⁵⁵ And even when an official was convicted of wrongdoing, the punishment was never severe. "For those officials who were charged with the vexatious levying of taxes and with inciting rebellion," for example, "the heaviest sentence was exile to the frontier." This exile would last no more than a year, at

which time the guilty official could return to his native place and begin to "eradicate his previous disgrace and reestablish official contacts." This afforded a stark contrast to the situation of the common people, who were massacred or tormented even though they had been coerced by rebel ring-leaders into participating in the disturbance against their will.⁵⁶

Harassment of the common people took many forms. Bao Tianxiao claimed that "despite the national ban on the use of torture during interrogation, the practice of forcing the accused to kneel on chains for a long period of time continues. The officials clearly realize that by applying torture, they will get the information they want. And in the end, would they not use any means to gain rapid promotion and honors from the court?"⁵⁷ The officials' deviousness extended to tampering with government documents. Hui described how the official reports on the Chuan-sha disturbance merely served to whitewash the crimes of those officials who were the most closely implicated. As frequently happened when the people faced off against the officials in the late Qing, the result was that "the right and wrong of the case were overturned, and the black and white of it reversed."⁵⁸

The new publicists' calls for the establishment of a more equitable and objective legal system demonstrate their recognition of the limitations of the familiar practice of remonstrating against the corrupt bureaucracy or the excesses of individual officials. Although they invoked popular power and public opinion as new deterrents to official power, they understood that these forces needed to be legally secured and formally institutionalized in order to be truly effective. Promoting the rule of law as the necessary solution to the people's suffering and the national crisis, the journalists both advocated and mobilized for the institutionalization of the middle realm.

The Institutionalization of the Middle Realm

Although the sages and kings of dynasty after dynasty were broad-minded in their thinking, they lacked the mechanisms necessary to achieve their objectives. Without a Western-style system of higher and lower assemblies or a method of recommending representatives, the good intentions of the benevolent rulers gradually waned, and they became increasingly apathetic toward the people.

—“Lun cuizhe yanlun yu weichi yanlu zhi lihai,”
Shibao, September 21, 1909

The institutionalization of the middle realm was central to the late Qing publicists' plans to renegotiate the structure of dynastic power through constitutional reform. The cornerstones of this institutionalization were the national assembly (*guohui*) and organs of local self-government (*difang zizhi*), which would serve as channels for popular supervision of the bureaucracy and popular control of imperial policy. While both of these institutions were included in the government's program of constitutional preparation—the national assembly was to open in 1917, after elections in 1916, and regulations for local self-government were announced in 1909—the journalists' vision of their capacities far exceeded those outlined by the officials. Embodying the salient concepts in the reformist discourse—the nation (*guojia*), popular power (*minquan*), and public opinion (*yulun*)—these new institutions would serve what the journalists defined as the higher principle of *gong*. The national assembly would be the site of negotiations between ruler and ruled and the center of representative politics. Local self-government would balance relations between a centralizing state and rural society by making local rule more effective and creating a firm foundation for the constitutional order. Fragmenting, rather than upholding, the centralized authority of the state, these institutions would shift the locus of power downward from the imperial to the popular realm.

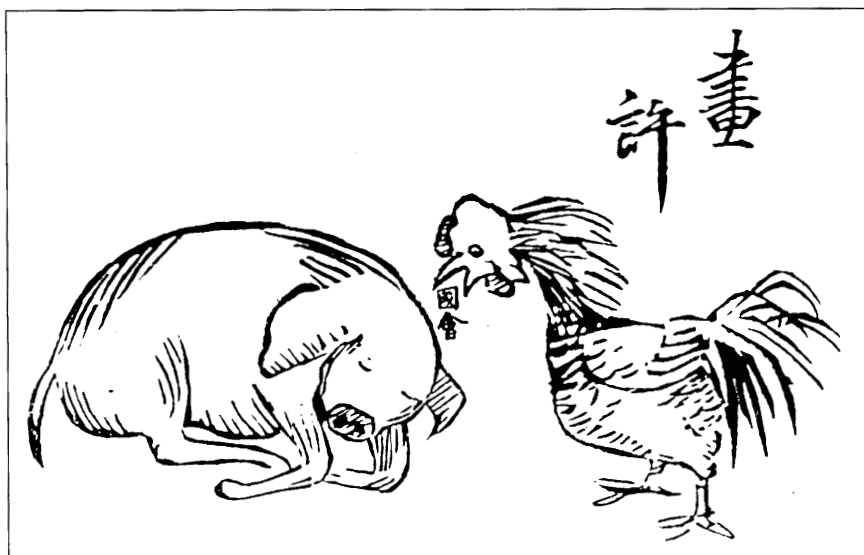
The new publicists' understanding of the meaning and role of these

institutions was the product of a complex interweaving of foreign and Chinese, historical and contemporary sources. While they traced the source of their ideas for a national assembly and local self-government back as far as the Three Dynasties, they looked to foreign models in determining how these institutions would operate in the new middle realm. Carefully assessing the value of these various foreign examples, the *Shibao* journalists debated their appropriateness for China. Their training in the new learning and their understanding of Western political theory allowed them to do so, setting them apart from both the ranks of officialdom, whose caprices they dissected, and the mass of the population, whose crude understanding of constitutional politics they hoped to enlighten. Warning their readers of the dangers of adopting inappropriate foreign systems, and exposing the centralizing motivation behind the official promotion of certain models, the journalists heightened their readers' awareness of the many and complex issues at stake in creating a Chinese constitutionalism.

The National Assembly: Locus of the New Constitutional Nation

The national assembly was the institutional centerpiece of the reformists' constitutional vision and the focus of their constitutional program. "Constitutional politics are parliamentary politics," Min wrote in 1908.¹ Although the journalists recognized the importance of the separation of the legislative, executive, and judicial functions of the government (*sanquan fenli*), as well as the roles a responsible cabinet (*neige*) and an independent judiciary (*sifa*) would play in a constitutional system, they saw a representative assembly as the key to expanding popular influence and restricting imperial power in the late Qing middle realm.² One of the *Shibao* journalists' most pressing mandates, therefore, was to explain the value of a parliament to their readers, to describe its mode of operation in foreign countries, and to analyze its various functions.

The *Shibao* writers were not the first reform-minded Chinese to recognize the crucial role a representative body would play in balancing the central power of the dynasty. In defining the function of the future national assembly, they were able to draw inspiration from a number of sources within their own political tradition, including the writings of the late Ming scholar Huang Zongxi. Most relevant to the problems of constitutional reform in this period was Huang's policy recommendation that schools serve as institutions for the expression of public opinion. Anticipating later debates on the importance of a national assembly, Huang asserted that the power of the emperor would be reduced if the schools became forums for the debate of imperial rectitude and channels for the expression of the *vox populi*. He claimed that in ancient times "the emperor did not dare to determine right and wrong for himself, so he left to the schools the determination of right and wrong."³



A chicken attempting to awaken a sleeping pig to the importance of opening a national assembly. *Shibao*, May 7, 1908.

Huang's emphasis on the role of schools as the primary forum for the institutionalized expression of public opinion was echoed in Liang Qichao's early writings. Already in his 1896 essay "Discussion of Reform" ("Bianfa tongyi") Liang had promoted the idea of using schools and educational associations as arenas for public discussion and as institutional antecedents to parliaments.⁴ The focus on schools as the single institutional channel for public opinion shifted, however, as late Qing writers—many of whom preceded Liang—made a direct appeal for the establishment of Western-style assemblies. As early as the Self-Strengthening Movement (1860–94), a number of writers, including Feng Guifen, Wang Tao, Ma Jianzhong, Zheng Guanying, Chen Qiu, Chen Chi, and Hu Liyuan, advocated establishing an assembly to foster closer ties between the leaders and the people. These writers did not address the issue of popular power, however. Instead, they emphasized how a parliament would facilitate, rather than impede, imperial rule.⁵

Kang Youwei went beyond these initial formulations in advancing a more representative role for China's future parliament. In his fourth petition to the emperor on June 30, 1895, entitled "Opening an Assembly as a Means of Connecting with Popular Sentiment" ("Sheyiyuan yi tong xiaqing"), he described the parliament as a locus of policy formation. During the Hundred Days' Reforms he took his argument a step further, promoting the assembly as a place "where national affairs are settled by a common agreement of the people," thereby recognizing the citizens' right



Two views of the national assembly: from the government's side (right) it is nothing but talk, and from the citizens' side (left) it is everything but talk. *Shibao*, August 8, 1908.

to make their own political choices and play a role in formulating national law.⁶

The *Shibao* journalists followed this legacy—from Huang Zongxi's antiautocratic writings through the late Qing reform thinkers—in advocating the creation of a national assembly in the new middle realm. A 1909 editorial echoed Huang's claim that because there was no difference between tyrannical and benevolent rule under an autocracy, it was necessary to change the structure of the autocratic system and not merely to seek a more magnanimous ruler.⁷ "Although the sages and kings of dynasty after dynasty were broad-minded in their thinking," the editorialist wrote, "they lacked the mechanisms necessary to achieve their objectives." In discussing these specific mechanisms, the author referred to parliaments rather than to Huang's educational institutions. Without either "a Western-style system of higher and lower assemblies or a method of recommending representatives," he continued, "the good intentions of the benevolent rulers gradually waned, and they became increasingly apathetic toward the people."⁸

By the early twentieth century, foreign ideas had risen to prominence in both the reformist and the official constitutional discourses. The Qing court acknowledged the importance of foreign constitutional models in formulating its own constitutional preparation, sending five of its most trusted princes and high officials abroad to study foreign systems of constitutional government in late 1905. It was the constitutional reformists

out of office, however, those who had devoted their studies to the new learning since at least the mid-1890s, who had a deeper understanding of Western political theory and practice. A number of officials recognized this fact. Duanfang, for example, a high official and member of the 1905 Qing mission abroad, commissioned Liang Qichao to write up the mission's findings and draft a number of memorials (comprising more than 200,000 characters) recommending the establishment of a constitutional system.⁹ Confident in their own understanding of the reform process, the *Shibao* journalists, many of whom had studied politics and law in Japan, took it upon themselves to formulate what would be a "constitutionalism with Chinese characteristics."

The journalists realized that the nature of constitutional systems in the contemporary world varied widely. The first question they posed, therefore, concerned which model would be most appropriate for China. "There are constitutional monarchies, constitutional democracies, and constitutional federations," an editorialist explained in 1906. "Some constitutions were established through peaceful revolution, as in England, some were won through violent revolution, as in France, some were created through the united will of the citizens, as in America, and some were solely the product of governmental decree, as in Japan." In implementing China's constitution, therefore, he asked, "will we follow the example of Europe and America? Will we imitate Japan?"¹⁰

For the Qing government the Japanese model was particularly attractive because it assumed a top-down, gradualist constitutional approach. Announced in the Charter Oath of 1868, the Meiji Constitution was not promulgated until February 1889, and the Diet was not opened until November of the following year. Since the Qing authorities had great trepidation about delegating authority to constitutional powers, this 21- or 22-year schedule was particularly inviting. The content of the Japanese constitution also appealed to the Manchu court, particularly the paramount position it granted the emperor, the restrictions it placed on the powers of the Diet, and its recognition of imperial decree as above the law. The Qing government accordingly based the pillars of its own reform program—the New Policies of 1901 and the edict on constitutional preparation of 1906—on Japanese precedent.¹¹

The first late Qing reformists had also looked to the Meiji constitutional reforms as a model. In 1897 Kang Youwei had written *A Record [or Study] of the Political Reforms in Japan Under the Meiji Emperor* (*Riben Mingzhi bianzheng ji [kao]*). Two years later, just before the Hundred Days' Reforms in China, he petitioned the Guangxu emperor to follow the Meiji example in reforming China's institutions.¹² In 1903, in his *Discussion of the Bureaucratic System* (*Guanzhi yi*), Kang again founded his argument on the example of Meiji Japan, where he claimed mass literacy and public political involvement had increased the unity between emperor and subject. This early reform interest in the Japanese model, which was premised

on the cultural, geographic, and linguistic proximity of Japan to China, was reinforced in the early twentieth century. As the number of Chinese youths studying in Japan rose from 200 in 1898 to 13,000 in 1906, knowledge of the Meiji model deepened. When Japan defeated Russia in 1905, moreover, the Chinese became increasingly convinced of the effectiveness of the Japanese reforms.¹³

In the early period of constitutional reform (1904–6), the *Shibao* publicists also generally accepted the appropriateness of the Japanese model. In 1904 an editorialist asserted that "the imitation of the Japanese legal precedent" was the only means of compromising between the urgent demands of the reformists and the guarded caution of the authorities. He argued that because "Japan was the first among the ancient nations of the East to establish a constitution, its method of implementation could serve as a model for China." The editorialist thus advocated "imitating the Japanese case by first delivering a decree and after a 10-year period establishing a constitution (i.e., today is 1904, and therefore the period would extend until 1914)."¹⁴

After the disappointing results of the 1906 "reform" of the official system, however, the journalists began to question the suitability of the Japanese model and the Qing government's motivation in choosing it. Criticizing the authorities' efforts to imitate the Meiji precedent blindly, an editorialist complained that "the officials think that by taking some ten articles of the Japanese constitution and grafting them onto a Chinese document, they would be fulfilling the goals of constitutionalism." This, he warned, would be a mistake, because the Japanese was not the finest of all the constitutions in the world. Today, he asserted, "we should be cultivating our citizens' abilities, not impeding their progress by holding up the Japanese constitution as our standard."¹⁵

As the reform publicists became more critical of the Meiji model, they began to view the national assembly as a tool the citizens could use to supervise and control their rulers. The Chinese people had passively endured thousands of years of government abuse, Min wrote, not because "they didn't want to act, but simply because they had not yet received their weapon. And what is their weapon? It is the national assembly." As the people's weapon, the new parliament would simultaneously serve as the forum for public opinion, the site of popular power, and the locus of the nation. Just as an elected assembly was the master of the government in constitutional nations, Min explained, public opinion was the master of the assembly. In order "to realize the government's objective of making all matters open to public opinion [*shuzheng gongzhu yulun*], it was absolutely necessary," he maintained, "first to establish a national assembly."¹⁶ The editorialist Li also emphasized the importance of institutionalized public opinion, using the example of Britain. "When the Anglo-Saxon people began to establish their nation," he pointed out, "they had a parliament that supervised the government." All that China had "to de-

pend on in resisting the government," by contrast, was its amorphous and unreliable public opinion. As a result, Chinese citizens could only press particular claims against the dynasty without ever developing a stable organizational base for their broader social and political concerns.¹⁷ Only when this base was established would the leaders be forced to take public opinion into account: "The executive would be required to wait for the assembly to pass a resolution before it could be implemented," ensuring that "the emperor and prime minister could not be recklessly opinionated and conceited and do whatever they wished without first consulting and then gaining the approval of all the citizens."¹⁸

The assembly would also serve as the site where popular power would operate. The journalists explained that the parliament would have two specific and very important powers: legislative and supervisory. Because "the constitution was the source of civil law [*zhongfa*]," an editorialist wrote in 1906, "it could not be maintained by the judiciary" but only by an assembly that could both pass legislation and supervise the executive branch.¹⁹ While the parliament's legislative powers were defined rather vaguely as the authority to approve the constitution and establish laws, the legal right to resolution, and the right to approve policy after an emergency, its supervisory powers were more clearly outlined.²⁰ According to one editorialist, the assembly should have "four distinct powers for supervising the administration": the power to pass resolutions on the budget proposal (*yusuan*), to pass resolutions on the final budget (*juesuan*), to approve emergency measures that had already been taken, and to question and impeach government officials. Another editorialist added to this basic list the "power to accept the petitions of the people" and the "power to take the initiative" on nonfinancial matters. Of all of the assembly's supervisory powers, however, it was financial supervision that was the very source of popular power and the most "essential function of an assembly in a constitutional nation. If the citizens do not have power over a nation's finances," Hu Ma wrote, "then the constitutional system is like a tree without roots. No matter how exuberant the branches may appear, they would eventually dry up."²¹

The base of popular power and the forum for public opinion, the national assembly was the foundation of the journalists' new conception of the nation as a political entity distinct from the dynasty. The *Shibao* writers debated whether China should adopt an imperially sanctioned (*qinding xianfa*), Japanese-style constitution, which would allow the dynasty to draft the document before the national assembly was opened, or a nationally contracted, American- or British-style constitution (*guoyue*, or *xieyue xianfa*), which would be formulated *after* the national assembly was established. The publicists continued to dispute the appropriateness of the Japanese model by contending that only a nationally contracted constitution would be "based on the citizens' collective will [*gongyi*]," thereby ensuring that "national sovereignty lay completely in the hands of the masses [*dazhong*]." In contrast, they viewed an imperially decreed

constitution as anathema to popular power. "An imperially sanctioned constitution is a one-sided constitution," Min proclaimed, because "those who have authority arbitrarily decide how to enact the constitution without seeking the opinion of the people."²² The sole *raison d'être* of such a system "was government expedience. Its resolutions did not have to be approved by the assembly, and its ultimate objective was the expansion of governmental power."²³

Although the journalists had begun to advocate the nationally contracted model as early as 1906, their position on this issue was not clearly defined until the "Outline of the Constitution" (Xianfa dagang) was published on August 27, 1908. The journalists read this document—which stipulated that the drafting of the constitution would precede the opening of the national assembly by nine years—as evidence that the government planned to use the constitution to enforce the citizens' submission to dynastic authority.²⁴ They feared that the government would cause irrevocable damage to the nation in the period before the assembly was convened. "In reading the list of measures that must be undertaken during each year of preparation as outlined in the draft of the Constitutional Commission," Li Yuerui wrote, "it is stated that in the eight years prior to the opening of the assembly, between 1908 and 1916, 91 matters must be taken care of." In this way, by the time the assembly was convened, irreversible measures would have been enacted, leaving the parliamentarians powerless: "They would not know how to do anything but follow the precepts already laid out by the emperor and naively sing the praises of the nation in a time of peace."²⁵

As the journalists' position on this issue became more firmly established, there was a clear shift in their method of dividing the various constitutional systems throughout the world according to the two categories of nationally contracted or imperially decreed constitutions. Before the summer of 1908, editorialists depicted Britain as the only nation to have had an assembly before a constitution. At this time, the journalists generally believed that because China did not share Britain's unique historical conditions, they should not follow it as a model. Li wrote in 1907 that "today China cannot be compared to England, and so it must imitate Russia, France, Germany, and Japan instead." He encouraged the citizens to "demand that the government first proclaim a constitution and then call an assembly in order to establish a national legal foundation."²⁶ But when the reformists resolutely decided in 1908 that it was necessary to limit the dynasty's power to create the constitution by opening an assembly first, they divided the world system up in a different way, describing the European nations and America as all having a nationally contracted constitution and Japan alone as having an imperially decreed one. They clearly considered the Western model to be superior at this juncture. "Since the constitution is the basic law of a nation," Min stated, "it should be instituted with the full support of the people." Japan, he explained, "did not obtain a perfect

constitution" because the Japanese government had deprived the people of the means to participate in its formulation. Countering earlier arguments that the Japanese model had been most appropriate for China because the two nations shared certain cultural characteristics, he emphasized their differences: "The Japanese are a homogenous race with a single line of emperors for 10,000 generations. Moreover, prior to the abolition of the shogunate and the organization of the new government, they did not have a legacy of government problems as we do in our nation today."

The journalists' criticism of the Japanese model was a way to express their opposition to the Qing's centralizing ambitions and suppression of popular power. At the same time, however, their concern that the Chinese citizenry was not politically prepared to participate in a nationally contracted constitutional system tempered their desire to aim higher than the Japanese. Min, for example, who in some sections of his lengthy six-part essay had been highly critical of weaknesses in the Meiji model, wrote that the Japanese had been much better prepared for constitutionalism in the late 1880s than the Chinese were in the early twentieth century. Whereas the Japanese citizens were organized in political movements, unafraid of danger, and wildly enthusiastic about reform before the Meiji Constitution was established, Min argued, the Chinese citizens were apathetic and passive. China's difficulties were "further compounded by its domestic problems and external worries, which were several times worse than Japan's in 1868."²⁷

Another editorialist emphasized China's need for preconstitutional political preparation by likening China to Russia, rather than to Japan or the West, in terms of the long tradition of autocracy the two shared. He described how, from the time of Peter the Great, Russian monarchical power and government autocracy had been unparalleled in the world until one day, as a result of external provocation and internal agitation, the tsar agreed to establish a constitutional monarchy. "Suddenly the limitations of a constitution were grafted onto several hundred years of unlimited imperial power, and the supervision of the assembly was appended to the autocratic government of one or two people," he wrote. This constitutional experiment failed because "while the rulers considered that they were making great compromises, the ruled felt that they were only receiving crumbs from the table." Political chaos and social unrest ensued. The author suggested that a similar state of disorder would prevail in China if a constitution were precipitously adopted: "Today, the practice of autocracy in our nation is even deeper than in Russia, and the constitutional thought of our citizens is not as developed as that of Japan."²⁸

In their search for a blueprint for China's constitutional middle realm the *Shibao* journalists were thus unable to find a perfect model that would serve both to limit dynastic power and to allow for a period of tutelage for the Chinese citizens. Their vacillating assessments of different models reflect their own evolving political concerns as their relationship with

the dynasty deteriorated and their assessment of popular political abilities wavered. On a more fundamental level, these shifts reveal the tension that existed in the new publicists' simultaneous desire for political change and social harmony. Despite their forceful rhetoric about the role of the national assembly as the center of a new mode of politics, ultimately its purpose was not to destroy, but to reinforce, the age-old *minben* ideal. "If the officials pervert the principles of the national good and popular well-being," Min argued, "then the assembly can criticize them with one single document. In this way, national affairs will all be taken care of, and the position of the emperor will remain as stable and secure as a massive rock."²⁹ Li described how the assembly would guard against national instability. "If supervisory institutions are not established to monitor our long-term national plans," he wrote, "then when calamities arise in the future, there will be no way of stopping them."³⁰

While pressing for a national assembly, the *Shibao* journalists also promoted local self-government as a means of firmly establishing the foundation of constitutional reform and preparing the citizenry for political change from the ground up. The editorialist Hui warned that the only way the nation could prepare for the day when the assembly would finally open was if "the people concentrate all of their force on local self-government. If the constitution is implemented before local areas are self-governed and before popular power is consolidated, then it will be nothing more than a constitution in name only."³¹

Local Self-Government: Self-Rule Versus Official Rule

In the new publicists' demands for the institutionalization of the middle realm, implementing self-government reform was to play as essential a role locally as forming a parliament would nationally. As was the case with the national assembly, the journalists' understanding of local self-government was derived from both indigenous and foreign sources. The term for self-government was introduced into the Chinese political lexicon from the Japanese in the 1880s by the diplomat Huang Zunxian (1848–1905). The Japanese term *jichi* (the correlate of the Chinese *zizhi*) itself derived from the English expression "self-government," introduced into Japan by a student of the Prussian legal scholar Rudolf Gneist (1816–95). Gneist's interpretation of self-government resonated with the Chinese reformists' concern for the collective good (*gong*) in its emphasis on inducing the dominant classes to abandon their own interests in the service of the larger society.³²

Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, who had both worked with Huang Zunxian in Hunan in 1897, gave the term greater currency through their writings in the late 1890s. By 1902 the idea of local self-government surfaced regularly in Tokyo-based Chinese student journals such as *Overseas Student Translations* (*Youxue yibian*), *Zhejiang Wave* (*Zhejiang chao*), and

Jiangsu, and in the years following *Shibao's* creation in 1904, the reform of local administration was a widely debated topic.³³ Even in the midst of the excitement surrounding the opening of the provincial assemblies in 1909, or the furor over the Parliamentary Petition Movement in 1910, the issue of local self-government was never eclipsed. It formed the basis of the journalists' constitutional discourse just as local self-government was itself to be the foundation of the constitutional system.

The reform publicists had established the importance of local reform well before the Qing Dynasty's official local self-government regulations were promulgated in January 1909. Writing in 1907, Tian Chi explained that "self-government associations are microcosms of the nation. Just as the nation has legislative institutions, the self-government associations have decision-making bodies (*jueyi jiguan*). Just as the nation has administrative institutions, self-government associations have executive institutions."³⁴ If the organizations of local self-government could run themselves, then, Da Guan was convinced, "the nation would also be able to govern itself." If the organizations in one local area successfully "supervised national politics and encouraged national development," then organizations in all of the other local areas would follow and the nation would be effortlessly regulated.³⁵ For these reasons, local self-government was the very "essence of constitutionalism. There has never been a case," Hui remarked, "where local self-government was weak and constitutionalism strong, or local self-government strong and constitutionalism weak."³⁶

According to the *Shibao* journalists, only local self-government could strengthen the nation from the base. Alluding to the failures of the Self-Strengthening Movement, and of the Hundred Days' Reforms in 1898, an editorialist writing in 1904 declared that "in order to save China, we cannot rely on centralizing reforms, imperial restoration, the renewal of the navy, or the establishment of schools." Local reform was needed above all else.³⁷ Self-government would insulate local society from the vicissitudes of higher-level factional infighting and the machinations of the imperial government, "by granting the local bodies an independent status within the sphere of national law," Min argued. "Thereafter, even if the government altered its policies, few people would be affected, and the entire nation would not be disrupted."³⁸ In this way, local reform would make an "unwavering contribution to the great plan of stabilizing the foundations of the nation and achieving greatness."³⁹

Local self-government would also further the reform aim of expanding popular power by supplementing the system of official rule (*guan-zhi*) with a system of self-rule (*zizhi*). Da Guan wrote in 1907 that while "the national administration in all of the advanced nations could be divided into the official administration [*guan-zhi xingzheng*] and the self-government administration [*zizhi xingzheng*]," the Chinese system had an official component only. The reason for this was the Qing government's fixation on the centralization of power, which was reflected in its efforts to

"unify military power, dominate financial power, and reduce the authority of the governors-general." He complained that "outside of consolidating their own power, the high officials do nothing but repress popular power, seize political prisoners, incite agitation, and use intimidation on a grand scale—all the while galloping toward extreme autocracy."⁴⁰

The source of this policy of centralization, Bao Tianxiao explained, was the officials' fear "that rights would be transferred down to the people." To avoid this, they had created "officially managed [*guanban*] local self-government" in order to keep society under their control. "Today [the high officials] release an order, tomorrow they release a document. They supervise the province, the education bureau, the provincial judge, the intendant, the prefecture, and the county; they control the councillors [*canshi*], the clerks [*wenan*], and the business managers [*tidiao*]." Although these supervising officials appear authoritative, with their "carriages and horses, feather caps and boots," their hand salutes and audiences at the yamen, they have accomplished nothing. "When they are asked which matters they have taken care of," he contended, "they can only speak of those matters that they should take care of. All of these matters should be included in the sphere of local self-government."⁴¹

The journalists recognized that their appeals to supplement the system of official rule with a system of local self-rule echoed the *fengjian* (feudalistic) principles put forward in the seventeenth century and revived by the statecraft school in the nineteenth century.⁴² According to these principles, local rule would be effective only if the centralized bureaucratic [*junxian*] system were infused with "feudal" (*fengjian*), or decentralized, local elements. Concurring with the *fengjian* theorists' diagnoses of the ills of the Chinese countryside and with many of their proposed solutions to rural problems, the new publicists appealed to a number of their ideas in formulating their own political program. The late Qing reformists were most influenced by Gu Yanwu's proposals for local autonomy and the elimination of the law of avoidance, Huang Zongxi's advocacy of institutions of gentry participation in local administration, and Feng Guifen's (1809–74) adaptation of *fengjian* political theory to contemporary conditions.⁴³

Late-nineteenth-century thinkers, such as Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, Tan Sitong, and Yan Fu, had already seen the relevance of *fengjian* and statecraft ideas and had based many of their reform proposals on them. In his first memorial to the emperor in 1884, for example, Kang Youwei offered several proposals for local administrative reform, including abolishing the rule of avoidance, improving the status of the magistrate, establishing local parliaments to ensure the participation of the gentry in local affairs, and overhauling the examination system. He expanded on these themes in his second (1895), fourth (1895), and fifth (1897) memorials, which all emphasized the need to increase the authority of provincial administrators and local magistrates. Although Kang had become increas-

ingly influenced by Western local self-government theory by 1897, *fengjian* ideas remained at the core of his work.⁴⁴ Even Liang Qichao, who had read more widely in the foreign literature on this subject than had Kang, continued to define many aspects of his self-government reform proposals in statecraft terms.

By the time Gu Yanwu and Huang Zongxi were officially sanctified at Confucian shrines on September 25, 1908, *fengjian* principles were already deeply rooted in the unofficial late Qing reform discourse and widely debated in the political press. *Dongfang zazhi*, for example, printed an article in May 1906 entitled "Local Self-Government Theory as Seen in Gu Yanwu's *A Record of Daily Knowledge* [*Rizhi lu*]," and *Shibao* published several editorials on similar themes, including Zhuang's June 20, 1909, essay, "Junxian hou lun" (After bureaucratic centralism). Most frequently, however, the ideas of the feudal thinkers entered the *Shibao* discourse on local society without being explicitly identified as such, a sign of how deeply they had penetrated the early-twentieth-century vision of rural reality.

The editorialists blamed the law of avoidance, which had been a target of *fengjian* theorists from the time of Gu Yanwu, for rampant chaos and banditry in the countryside. Min noted that because of this law, which stipulated that a magistrate could not hold office in either his native province or a neighboring province within 500 *li* (about 167 miles) of his hometown, the officials were unequipped to "respond to the particular demands of the region and take local circumstances into account."⁴⁵ Elaborating on this theme, another editorialist explained that "because the officials come from over 1,000 *li* away, they have no relations in the local area, and their sole objective is to catch a number of bandits quickly and gain prestige for themselves. They are not concerned with planning for the long-term peace of the region." The lack of continuity from one magistrate to the next, a problem that Gu had addressed by proposing the institutionalization of a hereditary magistracy, was also one of concern to the editorialist. "In the custom of officialdom," he wrote, "the successors act contrary to their predecessors. Therefore, although there are enthusiastic local gentry, they do not wish to work for the local officials."⁴⁶

The brevity of the magistrates' tenure was another source of official ineffectiveness in the countryside. "When magistrates take up their positions, it is as if they were visiting the area temporarily," a journalist commented. "They are transferred before anything is completed." At the same time, they were put under immense pressure to impress the higher officials (*shangguan*), a problem that Gu Yanwu had also addressed. Some attempted to do so by acting with excessive force, others by underreporting local disturbances. In the former case, the hasty official would "falsely accuse hundreds of common people [*pingmin*] in seeking one or two real bandits," and in the latter, "timid officials would hide problems and not control them. If there were numerous incidents of banditry, they would

only report a few, and if there were a few, they acted as if there weren't any." In either case, the countryside suffered. The use of excessive force gave "chaotic factions the excuse to oppose the authorities and recklessly make propaganda," while the underreporting of incidents created a potentially explosive situation. "A wound not treated in time will cause great trouble afterward," the journalist warned.⁴⁷

To ensure that local problems would be effectively dealt with, the *Shibao* journalists advocated empowering the local people, again echoing the earlier statecraft theories of Gu, Huang, and Feng. Da Guan wrote that "because the local people are directly affected by local problems, they would be more conscientious in attending to local administrative affairs." If the people were forced to obey officials who only perfunctorily performed their tasks, the local area would inevitably suffer.⁴⁸ The solution was for "all gentry who are responsible for local matters to be publicly chosen by local residents, for all local governing expenses to be paid for from local public funds, and for all local problems to be locally studied."⁴⁹

The reform publicists used the language of *fengjian* theory in describing the Chinese countryside because many rural problems had remained unchanged for centuries: the ineffectiveness of the law of avoidance, the corruption of low-level clerks and runners, the thinness of administration below the county level. Unlike statecraft theorists who traced their local ideal to the Three Dynasties or the distant Zhou Dynasty, the journalists based their prescription for change in the countryside on the local self-government experience outside China. While they continued to view the general principles of local administration as "a custom left by the Three Dynasties"—just as they considered the core values of the middle realm to be derived from classical theory—they regarded the early-twentieth-century incarnation of local rule as a distinctly foreign institution, "the perfect government of Europe and the West."⁵⁰

The *Shibao* journalists were aware of the myriad of local systems that had been developed in China over the centuries, some of which had served as the inspiration for the *fengjian* theorists.⁵¹ "In ancient times," an editorialist wrote in 1909, "there were village supervisors [*lushi*], faction leaders [*dangzheng*], and village headmen [*xiangsui*]. In the Han Dynasty there were the elders [*sanlao*] and the bailiffs [*sefu*]." However, he continued, those local institutional precedents could not serve as models for rural reform in the early twentieth century because there were no extant records detailing their activities. The local organizations established in the Song Dynasty—community self-defense groups (*baojia*), a public welfare system with relief stores, orphanages, homes for elder care, and burial service associations—were not able to serve as models either, the journalist argued, because the majority of them existed in name only. He used the standards of Western political practice to analyze the weakness of these organizations, stating that they were not regulated by law, supervised by assemblies

(*yishi hui*), or distinct in their functions from the official administration. In addition, their members were not elected.⁵²

Faced with the inadequacy of Chinese precedents for local reform, the publicists were compelled to look to foreign models in conceptualizing their own system of local self-government. Meng Sen, who wrote using the pen name Xin Shi (the title of a Song Dynasty text), explained that if local self-government were to distinguish itself from these earlier institutions and not be merely a new incarnation of them, it was absolutely necessary to supplement "that which was incomplete in the self-government regulations of the historical institutions" with selected "details from the self-government of foreign nations."⁵³

Bao Tianxiao explained the process through which these foreign local self-government ideas had been introduced to China. "There was a nation in the East that lived in a simple and honest world," he recounted. "Like frogs at the bottom of an empty well, its members did not know what kind of creatures existed in the outside world. However, one or two men of great purpose and broad knowledge [*zhigao shiyuan*] secretly suspected that beyond Heaven there was still Heaven. They therefore began to investigate the so-called politics of other nations." Although these men were suspicious of the Western political systems at first, they eventually came to praise them. "They jumped and leaped and ran madly throughout the nation crying, 'Reform! Reform!'" But when "people asked: 'What method of reform should be used? How should it begin?'" the men of great purpose and broad knowledge gazed wide-eyed and did not know how to respond. Eventually they were able to make an outline of a constitution. . . . But little came of all of this talk of constitutionalism." And so, today, "some of those who use the new terms speak of constitutionalism in a concrete, rather than an abstract, way. They have selectively isolated one aspect of constitutionalism, and say 'Local Self-Government! Local Self-Government!'"⁵⁴

Bao's satire aside, the introduction of Western ideas about local self-government was the result of an important effort on the part of "men of great purpose and broad knowledge" on both the official and unofficial levels. From the 1830s, Chinese intellectuals and officials began reading foreign texts that introduced such ideas, thereby familiarizing themselves with the English, American, and French systems. They did not yet advocate adopting the foreign example to the Chinese case, however. It was not until the 1890s that members of the Confucian gentry class who had been indirectly influenced by Western political theory, including Chen Qiu, Tang Zhen, and Chen Chi, recommended that the form of Western local self-government be grafted onto the substance of the ancient *xiang-guan* system.⁵⁵

Western theories of local reform became increasingly influential as foreign texts concerning local self-government were more systematically

introduced into China. This process began with Kang Youwei's 1897 *Index to Japanese Publications* (*Riben shumu zhi*), which included seven titles related to the topic.⁵⁶ It continued in the early twentieth century, as many such works were translated and commercially published in China. These included *Local Self-Government Administration in Prussia*, written in German, translated into Japanese, and then retranslated into Chinese as *Pulushi difang zizhi xingzheng shuo* and published by Commercial Publishing; *Local Self-Government*, translated into Chinese from the French by Wang Xiangfu and published by the Wenming shuju under the title *Difang zizhi lun*; another book by the same title, translated from the Japanese by Tao Maoli and also published by the Wenming shuju; and *British Local Government*, translated into Japanese from the English and then into the Chinese *Yingguo difang zhengzhi lun* by Zhao Bizhen and published by Xinmin yiyin shuju.⁵⁷ At the same time, representatives of the Qing government became involved in translating Western and Japanese works on constitutionalism and local self-government. As part of the effort of the Investigation Commission, which was headed by the five officials sent abroad in late 1905, Song Yuren (1857-1931), a reform-minded metropolitan graduate from Sichuan, was appointed on February 6, 1906, to establish an office in Shanghai for translating books and materials that the commission would be sending back to China. In all, some 434 titles in Japanese and Western languages were collected. By November 1906, 76 of them had been translated.⁵⁸

In their own study of foreign local self-government, the *Shibao* journalists first looked to the West rather than to Japan. This was in contrast to the approach of both government officials and other reformists. When the Ministry of Civil Affairs (Minzheng bu) promulgated the series of self-government regulations on January 18, 1909, the influence of the 1888 Japanese regulations was clearly apparent.⁵⁹ Late Qing proponents of local self-government who were familiar with translated works also favored the Japanese model while continuing to make references to China's ancient local system. Zhang Jian began his argument for local self-government with reference to the district grand masters (*xiangdaifu*) and other local leaders mentioned in an ancient text, the *Rituals of Zhou* (*Zhouli*). He then went on to speak in detail of the need to imitate the Japanese system of elected prefectural (*fu*) and county (*xian*) assemblies. Kang Youwei also concluded that the Japanese model was the most suitable for China after comparing the various foreign systems and the traditional *xiangguan* system in *Kang Youwei's Discussions of the Bureaucratic System* (*Nanhai guanzhi yi*).⁶⁰

Several of the *Shibao* journalists, including Lei Fen, were directly involved in translating Western constitutional theory, including works on self-government, from Japanese into Chinese. This erudition was evident in a number of the editorials that promoted Western modes of local reform. One editorialist began his argument for local self-government with

a quotation from John Stuart Mill: "If a nation does not have a system of local self-government and attempts to establish constitutionalism," Mill purportedly stated, "it would inevitably fail." Underlining the legal basis of such a system, the editorialist went on to quote Montesquieu, who ostensibly claimed that "the difference between civilized and barbaric peoples is the difference between those peoples who have laws and those who do not." Finally, he referred to Spencer's theory of the social aggregate and the unit: "In regulating a nation, it is most important that there be small nations within the nation. These small nations within a nation are a province, a department, a county, a town, a city, a company, or a school, all of which appear to have the form of a nation."⁶¹ Another journalist took it upon himself to explain the evolution of local self-government in the West to *Shibao's* audience. "Of all of the nations of Europe with a self-government system," he wrote in 1909, "England was the first of them. Before 1066, during the Anglo-Saxon period, its local self-government system was already complete and the people's self-governing ability was well-developed. Then in 1215, as a result of the demands of the aristocrats and the urban citizens, they published the Magna Carta, which was the antecedent to the constitution."⁶²

All of these writers claimed that the objective of serving the greater social interest (*gong*) could best be achieved under the Western system, thereby demonstrating how the reform publicists read their own agenda into the political experience of the West. "Because the citizens of Europe and America regard local public affairs [*gongshi*] as their own personal concerns [*sishi*]," Hui wrote, "education and self-government were developed, national affairs were regulated, and everyone enjoyed wealth and happiness."⁶³ The journalist Di Min maintained that citizens of Western nations were better able to transform their personal interests into concern for public matters because their political system was based on elections. He represented the function of the Western electoral system as eliminating all differences of opinion rather than balancing a plurality of interests. In the West, "the elected candidate must focus on ensuring the greatest good for the greatest number of citizens," Di Min declared. "He cannot be preoccupied with the concerns of one moment, one person, or one place." Because the Chinese citizens' concerns were currently "dominated by selfish localism," they had to cultivate public virtue (*gongde*) through Western-style elections of local self-government deputies. Such deputies, Di Min claimed, "would abandon petty personal concerns in order to work for the greater good."⁶⁴

Perhaps because of this concern for the collective interest, however, the journalists ultimately followed earlier reformists and most officials in opting for the Japanese, rather than the Western, model. The reasons they gave for this decision were more pragmatic than ideological. Min explained that although "England was the mother of constitutionalism," the British constitutional model was particularly difficult to imitate because

it had evolved slowly, almost imperceptibly. The Japanese, who had themselves looked to the British precedent for inspiration, presented an easier model for the Chinese to follow since definite stages of development were identifiable. "From the time of the Meiji Restoration," Min wrote, "the Japanese emphasized the establishment of an administration of local self-rule. In Meiji 11 [1878] they announced the regulations for prefectural and county associations, and in Meiji 13 [1880] they established regional, block, and village association laws. Once the self-government foundations were stable, and up until the Meiji 21 [1888] revision of the city, block, and village system, all regulations were based on the principle of the local division of power. The self-government system was thus completed."⁶⁵ Because such details of the Japanese example were available, the *Shibao* journalists began to refer to them as a blueprint for China. Tian Chi, for example, presented his readers with a concrete proposal for local self-government by describing the intricacies of the Japanese system: the number of people who constituted a city or a village, the city and village associations responsible for drawing up local self-government regulations, and so forth.⁶⁶

The new, foreign-inspired local self-government system proposed by the *Shibao* journalists would continue to be responsible for a number of functions that earlier organizations (such as the community self-defense groups) or local elites (such as village elders) had performed. Security was one such function that was essential to the local community. To alleviate local security problems, one editorialist wrote in 1908, the self-government administration would be responsible for reorganizing the local militia (*xiangcun tuanbao*), uniting small villages (*xiang*) with large villages in order to protect against bandit incursions, instituting night and day surveillance to prevent bandits from hiding in uncultivated areas, desolate mountains, and swamps, and developing areas where bandits had hidden in the past.⁶⁷ Local self-government would also play a familiar social role by "mediating local conflicts, stopping the exploitation of the weak by the strong in local society, and encouraging local strongmen to play responsible roles in the new administration."⁶⁸

The model developed by the reform publicists was, however, much more than just a reworking of the traditional administrative structure. Influenced by foreign theory and example, and informed by the reformists' new-style educational training, their local vision was based on new principles of social, political, and economic organization. In addition to its proposed political role—according to Tian Chi, the self-government system incorporated all political duties except "foreign affairs, military affairs, legislation, and policing"—the editorialists described various other new functions of local self-government. Tian Chi claimed that "the four most pressing areas of local self-government activity were construction, hygiene, industrial promotion, and education."⁶⁹ Another editorialist also linked local reform to the promotion of what he called hygiene but what were really broader health and scientific issues. "Our nation is improv-

erished because of the two evils of bound feet and opium smoking," he announced. Once these two problems have been eliminated and local self-government established, he continued, "we must go on to study physical education, physiology, anatomy, dissection, and chemistry. We must regulate the amount of nutrition consumed, the quantity of material used for clothing, the size of housing, and the period of labor. Rules must also be established for preventing epidemics and regulating pregnancy."⁷⁰ The intent of the reformists was clearly to transform society through local self-government and not merely to codify traditional local administrative practices under a new name.⁷¹

In the reform publicists' vision of the institutionalization of the middle realm, the national assembly and the system of local self-government would work in tandem to reduce dynastic power. The parliament would weaken the imperial prerogative at the center, check the excesses of executive authority, and be granted tangible financial powers. On the local level, the system of self-government would at first supplement and eventually displace official rule. Although the national assembly did not open before the fall of the Qing, debate over the definition of its functions and the timing of its opening was heated, ultimately driving the three waves of the 1910 Parliamentary Petition Movement. The local self-government system that was gradually instituted after 1909 perhaps best represents the potential for reform in the late Qing. Setting an example for an electoral system, it exemplified "the initial stage in the people's enjoyment of rights."⁷²

The reform publicists' program of institutional reform—their understanding of the role of the parliament and the function of local self-government—was inspired by both Japanese and Western models. These foreign influences reinforced what was innovative in the journalists' vision: the national assembly would be the home of public opinion and the base for the expansion of popular power; local self-government would represent a political and social force in the countryside distinct from all previous forms of local administration. The importance of this foreign borrowing lies less in the choice of particular models, however, and more in the way these choices reflect vacillations in the reform publicists' evolving political agenda. The journalists first embraced the Meiji constitutional model, then rejected it, then accepted it with certain qualifications, for example, not because their assessment of the Japanese polity had changed, but because their perception of the optimal balance between official and popular power in China had shifted.

At the same time, age-old cultural concerns emphasizing harmony and the collective continued to come into play even as the reform publicists looked to foreign precedents and formulated radically new functions for China's constitutional institutions. When we analyze the late Qing reform process, the inherent function of the foreign institutions that the journalists chose to imitate is thus less important than the way certain cultural

values informed the journalists' understanding of the role these organizations would play in Chinese society. While they advocated the adoption of a Western-style parliament and the implementation of an electoral system, for instance, they invested these institutions with functions and meanings that were consistent with familiar ideals of political and social harmony. The Chinese national assembly would ultimately be the guarantor of national stability and consensus rather than the locus of debate and compromise. The Western-style electoral system would strengthen local society by eliminating all differences, not by attempting to balance incompatible interests.

Despite these disjunctions in the late Qing reformist discourse, the new mode of politics the publicists promoted distanced them from the familiar realm of the *minben* ethos and instead placed them firmly in the emerging sphere of contestatory politics. As their plans for the institutionalization of the middle realm were continually thwarted by government obstruction, the journalists pushed their political program to another level and struggled to create a reformist base of operations in opposition to the dynasty.

The Reformists' Base of Operations

If the government seizes our rights in 1,000 areas, then we will respond by forming 1,000 citizens' resistance associations.

—Li, *Shibao*, December 14, 1907

The reform publicists went beyond criticizing the officials and promoting institutionalization in their efforts to limit the government's centralizing ambitions and ensure the preservation of national rights. They also encouraged and mobilized for the creation of a "base of operations" (*genju zhi di*) within the new middle realm from which they could effectively organize opposition to imperial policies.¹ As political conflicts with the dynasty intensified in the last decade of the Qing, the reformists attempted to expand this arena by both broadening the range of contested issues and increasing the number of groups involved in negotiating the resolution of those issues.

The journalists first contributed to the development of this new base by participating in organizations concerned with education and constitutional preparation, as well as in railway associations, from 1905 on. When the Suzhou-Hangzhou-Ningbo Railway dispute broke out in 1907, they worked through these organizations to mobilize broad segments of the population in opposition to the government's policy on foreign loans. In 1909 a number of *Shibao* writers also became deputies to the newly opened provincial assemblies (*zìyì jù*). Shifting the base of operations to these legally sanctioned institutions, they fought to bring both the concerns of the railway movement and the broader anticentralizing agenda of the reformists to the floor of the parliaments. When the deputies' demands were consistently obstructed by higher levels of officialdom, the journalists contributed to the further consolidation of the base by supporting the Parliamentary Petition Movement of 1910, the establishment of

the United Provincial Assemblies in August of the same year, and the formation of the first constitutional "political party" in 1911.

The *Shibao* journalists' role in establishing a reformist base of operations thus linked print and politics. As members of constitutional preparation associations, railway companies, and provincial assemblies, they were activists in the organizations that formed the core of this new base. As editorialists and reporters, they defined the base's functions and objectives by linking discrete issues and spheres of issues in their editorials and commentaries. Realizing that the sources for the constitutional and anti-loan movements were the same and that regional struggles over railway and mining rights had a national dimension, the reform publicists used local issues to enhance national consciousness. Communicating the disparate, but related, concerns of Jiangsu constitutionalists, Zhejiang new-style intellectuals, and Sichuanese railway activists, they helped to foster a new "imagined community" of constitutional citizens.² The sense of common purpose that united these various social groups was critical to forging the increasingly widespread opposition to the Qing government.

From Regional to National Issues

In the view of the late Qing reformists, the first step in establishing a base of operations was to organize associations that promoted various aspects of constitutional reform—from preparing for the actual drafting of the constitution to improving the system of education. Even though many of these associations were created in support of the government's announcement of constitutional reform in September 1906, the new publicists viewed them primarily as training grounds for the exercise of popular power and as the embryo of future political parties. This was particularly true after the dynasty's November 6, 1906, resolution on the reform of the official system (*guanzhi gaige*), which the reformists interpreted as proof that the government's "hidden agenda was to centralize power."³

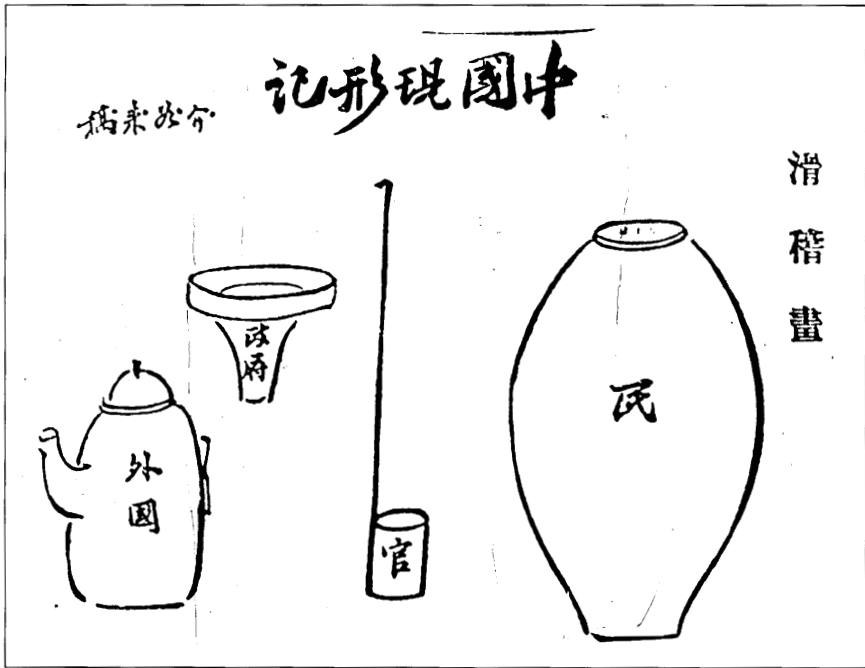
The *Shibao* club, Xilou, served as a nexus of the various constitutional reform organizations in the Jiangsu-Zhejiang region. Zhang Jian, considered the head of Xilou, was the leader of the Jiang-Zhe constitutionalist movement, and the club's frequent guests included many of the movement's most prominent participants. Most of them were involved in at least one of the constitutionalist organizations based in Shanghai with which Zhang was associated. The first was the Jiangsu jiaoyu zonghui (Jiangsu General Educational Association), established in 1905 to develop education in the province. The second, the Yubei lixian gonghui (Constitutional Preparation Association), founded in December 1906, took both its name and its mandate from the Qing government's September 1, 1906, edict on constitutional preparation—a document that affirmed the need to "make the people [*shenmin*] aware of government affairs in order to prepare for the adoption of a constitution." The association assumed

not only a significant regional stature but also a national one, circulating its bimonthly periodical, the *Constitutional Preparation Association News* (*Yubei lixian gonghui bao*), throughout China and maintaining close ties to other local constitutional groups, such as the Hubei and Hunan Constitutional Preparation Associations (the Xianzheng yubeihui and the Xianzheng gonghui, respectively), the Guangdong Self-Government Association, and even groups based in Tokyo such as Liang Qichao's Zhengwen she.⁴

The key *Shibao* journalists were all important players in these Jiang-Zhe reform organizations. Di Baoxian was an executive member of the General Educational Association, and both he and Lei Fen participated in the Constitutional Preparation Association. Bao Tianxiao joined the educational association in 1906 and became a member of its executive committee in 1907. A number of Xilou visitors were also active members of the Constitutional Preparation Association, including Li Pingshu, Yang Tingdong, and Huang Yanpei. In addition to being participants in these more established institutions, several of the *Shibao* writers formed their own fledgling constitutional association, the Xianzheng qichenghui (Association for the Realization of Constitutionalism), which also put out its own journal. Seven of the eight members were from Jiangsu province.⁵

The activities of the *Shibao* writers and Xilou members extended to the Jiang-Zhe Railway movement. Di Baoxian, Bao Tianxiao, Lei Fen, and Lin Kanghou were all members of the Jiangsu Railway Company, which had been founded in April 1906 to undertake the construction of the railway and to ensure its local autonomy. Zhang Jian served as one of the company's vice-directors.⁶ In October 1907, when the Suzhou-Hangzhou-Ningbo Railway dispute broke out between regional activists and central authorities, the journalists attempted to use this event to consolidate and expand their base of operations. Emphasizing the legitimacy of the antiloan struggle and the egregiousness of the government's policy, they guided public awareness from regional to national issues, from the already contentious local railway conflict to the broader issues of the centralization of power and the reconfiguration of relations between ruler and ruled on the basis of constitutional principles.

The source of the railway dispute lay in the 1906 reform of the official system. The resolution announcing this reform placed three industries that were instrumental to the Qing's plan for centralization—railways, steamships, and posts and communications—under the newly created Board of Posts and Communications.⁷ Because this policy required capital the dynasty did not have, the authorities were forced to borrow from the foreign powers. On October 20, 1907, the government announced its unilateral decision to renew an 1898 Sino-British treaty draft in order to borrow money from the British to complete the Suzhou-Hangzhou-Ningbo Railway. At the same time, it declared that the Zhejiang and Jiangsu Railway Companies would no longer have a role in managing the local rail sys-



"A record of the situation in China," *Shibusen*, August 26, 1907. Officials serve as a ladle, scooping into the jug of the people and then pouring what belongs to them through the funnel of government into the possession of foreigners.

tem. This announcement provoked the rage of Jiang-Zhe Railway activists, publicists, merchants, and gentry, who began organizing in opposition. On October 22, a mass rally protesting the loan was held in Hangzhou. Two days later the Jiangsu and Zhejiang Railway Companies issued a statement opposing the loan. In an effort to quell this public outburst, the minister of the Board of Foreign Affairs, Yuan Shikai, called representatives from both provinces—including *Shibusen* editor Lei Fen—to the capital to discuss the matter on November 29. As the journalist Li wrote, from the point of view of the railway companies "these representatives had not gone to the capital to discuss the loan, but to represent popular opposition to the loan."⁸ Misled by Sheng Xuanhuai into believing that the initial 1898 contract had been tacitly nullified by the British, the representatives ultimately agreed to a compromise on April 15, 1908. When, however, they eventually learned of this deception, it only served to further strengthen their resolve to forward the antiloan movement.⁹

In their efforts to mobilize support for this movement, the journalists attempted to assure their readers that the struggle was legitimate. They did so by making a distinction between what they called an "enlightened struggle for railway rights" (*wenming zhenglu*) and violent rebellions

against tyranny (*guanbi minfan*). Appealing to constitutional principles, they explained to their readers that the people had the right to supervise the government and that the antiloan movement had a legal basis that the dynasty should recognize. "Today we have entered the age of constitutional preparation, which means that the methods of the old autocratic system no longer apply," an editorialist wrote in late 1907. "Whereas in the past relations between the government and the people were based on a family relationship [*jiashu zhi guanxi*], today, they are based on a legal relationship [*falü zhi guanxi*]." To substantiate this claim, he quoted from the government's edict on constitutional preparation. "When the government disregards public opinion today," he argued, "it is defying an already existing law that stipulates that 'all affairs of state would be decided by public opinion [*shuzheng juezhu gonglun*].'"¹⁰

The new publicists made this appeal for the legitimacy of the antiloan movement in an effort to draw those outside elite circles into the struggle for national rights. At the same time, through provincewide or regional public organizations such as the Zhejiang Citizens' Antiloan Association and the Jiangsu Railway Association, the reformists attempted to unite new-style intellectuals and students with gentry, merchants, and soldiers. They also helped to organize mass rallies in support of the movement, which drew together large segments of the local population. In reports and editorials from this period, the journalists presented themselves as one with the ordinary citizens. "It is unprecedented in our nation," an editorialist wrote in November 1907, "to rely on the abilities of common people like ourselves to oppose the government and to seek our own self-protection."¹¹

When two young activists in the antiloan movement, Wu Gang, a student at the Zhejiang Railway School, and Tang Xu, a vice-engineer-in-chief of the Zhejiang Railway Company, died while participating in a hunger strike, on October 23 and 26, respectively, the *Shibao* journalist Li celebrated the new spirit of heroic martyrdom that united the people. "The lives of Wu and Tang have been sacrificed for the railway movement," Li proclaimed. Emphasizing that this incident was not an isolated case, he announced that popular commitment to the railway cause was so great that "even elementary school students had struggled to purchase shares in the railway companies."¹² An "unconfirmed report" on the October 22 mass rally in Hangzhou reflected, if not the reality, at least contemporary perceptions of the social breadth and political significance of the antiloan activities. Its author described the diversity of the crowd, which included "officials, gentry, educators, soldiers, merchants, religious devotees . . . laborers, women, overseas students. . . . There were as many as 900-1,000 people gathered," he asserted, declaring that "this kind of citizens' meeting has certainly never been held before in Chinese history."¹³

Realizing the political potential of this social movement, the reform publicists began to view the railway rights dispute as an opportunity

to advance their broader claims for the reconfiguration of the late Qing political structure. They warned the citizens that the railway dispute was not merely a regional conflict; rather, it "represented the first phase of the struggle between the emperor and the people [*junmin xiangzheng*]."14 The government's policy on the Suzhou-Hangzhou-Ningbo Railway, they claimed, was only a prologue to its longer-range plan of selling the rights to all of China's railways and natural resources. Today, one *Shibao* editorialist wrote in November 1907, "the government has gone from protecting the citizenry to seizing their lives and property in order to serve the enemy. This is a profound and historic change. . . . Both the fate of the railway and the future of the constitutional program lie in the outcome of this struggle."15

Linking the railway and constitutional movements discursively, the journalists also attempted to unite them organizationally. They proposed that the locus of the reformist base of operations should be citizens' railway and mines associations (*guomin lukuang xiehui*) and a National Association of Railways and Mines (Quanguo lukuang zonghui). Although this national association was never established, Li reported in late 1907 that merchants and educators in 22 provinces had already created provincial associations. He announced that a new organization would be formed in response to every government measure put forward to limit the expansion of popular power. "If the government seizes our rights in 1,000 areas," Li asserted, "then we will respond by forming 1,000 citizens' resistance associations."16

When the provincial assemblies opened two years later, the reform publicists no longer had to rely exclusively on informal citizens' associations to forward their claims. It was from the assemblies—the reformists' new, officially sanctioned base of operations—that they would organize their most challenging confrontations with the central government.

From Accommodation to Autonomy

The court had originally conceived of the provincial assemblies (*ziyi ju*), which were scheduled to open in October 1909 across the country, as one component in their larger plan of recentralization under constitutional reform.¹⁷ However, the new parliaments rapidly became the center for struggles between the constitutional reformists and the dynasty. Many leaders of the antiloan movement, including a number of the *Shibao* journalists, became members of the provincial assemblies, thus shifting the reformist base of operations from the railway rights recovery organizations to the provincial parliaments. Using the assemblies as their base, the reform activists were able to assimilate the informal local power that they had accumulated throughout the course of the railway dispute and draw more fully on the constitutional legitimacy to which they had appealed in debating the railway issue.

Fifteen percent of the Jiangsu Railway Association members were deputies of the Jiangsu Provincial Assembly, one of the better organized and most effective of the newly opened parliaments. They included Di Baoxian and Lei Fen, who were both assemblymen, and Zhang Jian, who served as the assembly's president.¹⁸ When the provisional national assembly, the Political Advisory Board (Zizheng yuan), was opened on October 3, 1910, Lei—who was no longer an editor at *Shibao*, but still part of the *Shibao* circle—would serve as the Jiangsu assembly's representative.¹⁹ In all, approximately one-half of the members of the Jiangsu Provincial Assembly were constitutional reformists, and seventeen of the 125 assemblymen, including Di and Lei, were members of the Constitutional Preparation Association. These seventeen association members were among the most influential deputies. Since many of them were also successful new-style publicists—in addition to Di and Lei, *Shibao* writer Meng Zhaochang and Xilou member Yang Tingdong, for example—their impact on public opinion was particularly great.

The reform publicists attempted to parlay disputes between the provincial assemblies and other government organs into a means of broadening the social foundation of the reformist base of operations. In these disputes, as in the railway conflict, the publicists identified themselves and the assemblymen as representatives of "the people" and opponents of both the gentry (*shen*) and the officials. Only the reformists would "speak out in the people's defense and vigorously struggle for the benefit of the masses [*gongzhong*]," one editorialist claimed.²⁰ This was true, for instance, in disputes between the assemblymen and Jiangsu Governor-General Zhang Renjun. Aligning himself and his colleagues with the people and identifying the governor-general with the old-style gentry, a *Shibao* writer asserted that "just as gentry strength [*shenli*] is used to limit official power [*guanquan*], popular strength [*minli*] should be used to limit gentry power."²¹

The new publicists also regarded the assemblies as a crucial counterweight to the central government. "The provincial assembly possesses the greatest consultative power [*yishi quan*] in the province," Di Min wrote. "Erect and firm like a mountain, it stands and faces the central administration."²² An intermediary between the officials and the people, the parliaments were key institutions in the struggle for popular power within the new middle realm. "Today, the provincial assemblies are engaged in an intense battle with a group of degenerate officials in a corrupt political arena," an editorialist wrote several months after the parliaments first opened. "If the assemblies win, constitutionalism will have the opportunity to advance, and there will be hope for the nation. If they lose, official power will increase, and popular power will be decimated. The survival or peril of our nation will thus be determined by the outcome of this struggle between the officials and the people."²³

As one of the sites of contention between popular power and official or gentry power, the provincial assemblies would serve as a training ground

for the expansion of *minquan* in the national parliament and as a "channel for the citizenry's participation in politics."²⁴ One editorialist declared that as "the foundation of constitutionalism and the herald of the national assembly, the provincial parliaments were originally conceived of to benefit the people. What," he asked, "do the officials have to do with them?"²⁵ Di Min defined the assemblymen's responsibilities along these populist lines, explaining that the deputies were not to act *for* the people but in conjunction *with* the people. They were to work selflessly in the popular interest in order effectively to "fulfill the task that the masses [*zhongren*] entrusted them with." Although the number of those who could actually participate in the elections for provincial assembly deputies was infinitesimal, the journalists claimed that once this process was put into place, the Chinese would begin to develop the qualities of constitutional citizens.²⁶

To help the provincial assemblies fulfill their mandate of expanding popular power, the journalists and deputies attempted to extend the new parliaments' sphere of activity beyond the boundaries stipulated by the Qing government. The official regulations defined the assemblies' functions as "expounding on the interests of the entire province and planning for local peace and order." The reform publicists, however, envisaged the new parliaments as organs equipped to decide "matters concerning the preservation of provincial rights."²⁷ The journalists' primary concern was that the railway issues be treated as within the jurisdiction of the new assemblies. Realizing that the rail system represented one of the most viable regional and national industries, they believed that by aligning the provincial parliaments with powerful railway companies, they would both strengthen the assemblies' position vis-à-vis the state and ensure that profits from the railway would be used to benefit society.²⁸

The assemblymen's efforts to define the powers of the provincial assembly were consistently thwarted, however. The governor-general often refused even to submit their memorials to the court—which demonstrates how powerless the provincial assemblies were in actually influencing policy and how beholden they remained to higher officials. But even as the Jiangsu and Zhejiang provincial assemblies appeared to be losing in their struggles against the governor-general and the forces of centralization, they were gaining support from other assemblies engaged in their own railway rights disputes.²⁹ Their shared sense of frustration with the policy-making process gave rise to a vision of national politics that started with, but ultimately transcended, local concerns. As struggles against government centralization intensified in 1910, this new national vision became focused on the demand for the rapid opening of a national assembly in the Parliamentary Petition Movement (Guohui qingyuan yundong).

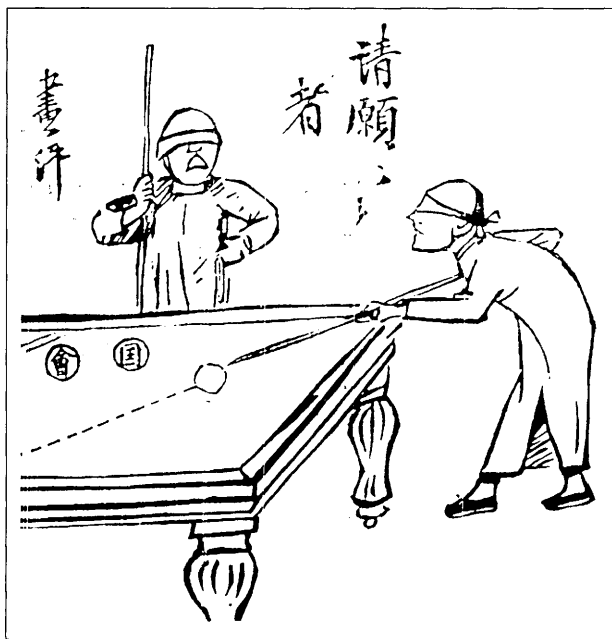
In the broadest historical sense, the Parliamentary Petition Movement began with the drafting of Kang Youwei's June 30, 1895, petition to the emperor, "Sheyiyuan yi tong xiaqing" (Opening an assembly as a means of connecting with popular sentiment). It was not until the summer of 1908,

however, that provinces either sent representatives to Beijing or joined the national Signature Movement (Qianming yundong) to request the rapid opening of the national assembly. In December 1909, 51 representatives from sixteen provinces responded to Zhang Jian's appeal and joined to form the Association of Representatives for the Parliamentary Petition (Guohui qingyuan daibiao tuan) in Shanghai.

It was this group of representatives that presented three separate petitions to the throne on January 26, June 22, and October 3, 1910, giving rise to what became known as the Parliamentary Petition Movement. The number of participants in this movement rose dramatically from the first to the third petitions, and the political profile of the signatories became increasingly impressive. Two-hundred thousand people signed the first petition, most of them members of local assemblies. Three-hundred thousand signed the second, including members of education, commerce, agriculture, railways and mines associations, bannermen, overseas Chinese, and residents of Beijing. The third petition, which allegedly represented 25 million signatures, was supported by a number of governors and governors-general and by the newly formed Zizheng yuan. The mass demonstrations that accompanied the final petition are recorded to have been larger than any that had previously been held in Chinese history.³⁰

The *Shibao* writers played an instrumental role in promoting this movement from the spring of 1908. At this time, as part of their effort to link the railway and constitutional movements, a number of editorialists attempted to channel some of the passion that had been aroused by the various railway rights recovery movements into the struggle for the rapid opening of the national assembly. Criticizing so-called patriots for focusing all of their energies on protesting foreign railway loans rather than on more pressing domestic issues, they encouraged the citizens to "shift their concerns from the external to the internal by petitioning for the rapid opening of a national assembly."³¹ The urgency of the journalists' appeal for broad support intensified after the court's rejection of the first petition in February 1910. This petition had demanded that the national assembly be opened in one year, arguing that only a parliament and a responsible cabinet could save China from foreign invasion, bankruptcy, and revolution by forcing officials to perform their duties responsibly. In response, *Shibao* writers encouraged "all classes—literati, peasants, laborers, and merchants [*shi, nong, gong, shang gejie*]"—to rise up and collectively demand the rapid opening of the assembly." They claimed that only "an irrepressible social movement" that mobilized "the entire body of citizens" could move the government to respond to society's demands.³²

When the second petition, which was even harsher than the first in its attack on government corruption, was rejected by the Censorate (Duchuan yuan), the *Shibao* journalists berated the people for still not having awakened to the urgency of China's national situation. In England, one editorialist wrote, "when the establishment of the constitution was at issue, all



Petitioners blindly trying to hit the national assembly. *Shibao*, July 26, 1908.

LEFT: Petitioners climbing up a pole toward the national assembly, only to be pushed back down by the Censorate. *Shibao*, August 11, 1908.

the people of the nation rose up and did battle with the government, struggling tirelessly for several decades as if it were one day. When the Japanese demanded that the government open a national assembly, more than 7,000 petitions were presented to the emperor, and the popular will never waned." Encouraging their compatriots to be as courageous as the English and as tenacious as the Japanese, the journalists urged them to persist in their struggle, undaunted by the failure of two petitions, or of 100, or of 1,000. "If our people are truly committed to the opening of an assembly," an editorialist insisted, "then even if they do not attain their objective the first or the tenth time, the tenth or the hundredth or the thousandth time, they must not rest."³³

True to this spirit, the *Shibao* journalists supported the October 1910 petition, the most forceful in its accusations against the government, despite the Censorate's warning to the petitioners not to memorialize again. This third appeal was endorsed by several governors-general and members of the Zizheng yuan.³⁴ Perhaps because of this high-level support for the petition, the court agreed to advance the opening of the parliament by three years. While more conservative constitutionalists, including Zhang Jian, called for a celebration upon hearing the news, the *Shibao* editorialists refused to accept this compromise. "The national assembly is the soul of constitutional government," wrote one editorialist shortly after the court had made its announcement. "If it is not opened, how can there possibly be a constitutional government? Although the dynasty attempts to appease the people by announcing 'We will have a constitution! We will have a constitution!' it stingily refuses to implement it. In the end, where is the substance of this so-called constitution?"³⁵ Despite their frustration, the reform publicists did not regard the Parliamentary Petition Movement as a failure, because it had enabled them to advance their larger constitutional agenda. "I don't consider the reduction of the schedule by a few years to be anything to be happy about," an editorialist admitted. "But I rejoice to have had the opportunity to help the people understand the urgent need to establish a national assembly."³⁶

In addition to raising public awareness, the Parliamentary Petition Movement provided the impetus for the creation of a national network of provincial assemblies, thus further consolidating the reformists' base. On August 9, 1910, in the period between the rejection of the second petition and the presentation of the third, the First United Provincial Assembly Conference (Ziyi ju lianhehui diyici huiyi) was held in Beijing, gathering 10 presidents and vice presidents of provincial assemblies and 38 assemblymen. The second session was held on May 12, 1911, with 22 provincial assembly presidents and vice presidents, 18 Political Advisory Board deputies, and 23 assemblymen in attendance. Enforcing the image of the provincial assemblies as a locus of popular power, the deputies at the conference identified themselves as members of the people's party (*mindang*).³⁷

In the interval between the first and second meetings, the reformists'

assessment of the role of the base of operations shifted in response to three important political developments: the government's refusal fully to honor the demands of the Parliamentary Petition Movement, its creation of an imperial cabinet (*huangzu neige*) on May 6, 1911, and its announcement of the nationalization of all railways (*ganlu guoyou*), which occurred the following day.³⁸ One editorialist described how these developments radically altered the deputies' political outlook and strategies. Whereas at the first meeting the deputies focused on preparing resolutions in the provincial assemblies or in the Political Advisory Board, by the second meeting they were emphasizing the unreliability of these institutions and the need to take matters into their own hands. On June 4, 1911, they organized the Association of the Friends of Constitutionalism (*Xianyou hui*), an offshoot of the United Provincial Assemblies and the first constitutionalist party to be formed in China.³⁹ The association's mandate was to strengthen the base of operations within the new middle realm by representing popular opinion (*minyi*), opposing the imperial cabinet, and preparing what the members called "the local division of power" (*difang fenquan*).

This final proposal is the most profound reflection of the reformists' increasing alienation from the Qing regime. The purpose of the local division of power was to establish organizations that would be completely autonomous from the central government. Plans for this system stipulated that the new organs would establish their own local armaments factories and raise the funds necessary for local development. Unlike the self-government system, which emphasized education and the cultivation of the new citizen as the means of expanding *minquan*, the local division of power would encourage popular empowerment through military self-defense.⁴⁰ Local organs would establish ties to other local organizations, such as the Shanghai Merchants' Volunteer Corps (*Shanghai shangtuan*) and the Wuhan Merchants' Volunteer Corps (*Wuhan shangtuan*), to strengthen their military and economic autonomy in the area.⁴¹

The reformists' new focus was thus on building strength within their own base rather than on dissipating their energies in struggles with the center. As part of this refocusing, the journalists discouraged their readers from becoming involved in the latest phase of the railway rights recovery movement, which had reached a level of renewed intensity in the spring and fall of 1911.⁴² "The issue of nationalization [*guoyou*] or popular ownership [*minyong*] [of the railways] has been relegated to second place," a *Shibao* report announced in July 1911.⁴³ Now, an editorialist explained, "we must emphasize the people's livelihood [*minsheng*] and the local division of power. We cannot be overly concerned with central government policy."⁴⁴

By mid-1911 the reform publicists had realized that neither accommodation nor struggle was an effective means of dealing with the Qing's centralizing policies. Their efforts to establish an institutionalized middle realm where popular power could flourish, provincial and national rail-

way rights be preserved, and representative institutions be integrated into the policy-making process had been increasingly frustrated by government officials who were unable to appreciate the power of the emerging social and political forces. These officials believed that by sanctioning the form of the new politics, they could control its substance, that by authorizing the establishment of constitutional preparation associations, provincial assemblies, and eventually a national parliament, they would be able to channel the energy that had so forcefully erupted in Jiangsu and Zhejiang in the fall of 1907 and in Beijing in 1910. Their efforts betrayed the court's utter lack of understanding of the new politics in the early twentieth century as well as its unwillingness to engage in a genuine dialogue on the issue of reform.

Consistently thwarted in their efforts to negotiate with the center, the journalists were forced to adopt a new course. In the spring and summer of 1911 they became convinced that a retreat from centralized politics through local empowerment and autonomy represented the citizens' most effective means of protecting national rights and defending their communities. Before this proposal could be actualized, however, a new political dynamic was set in motion, which the publicists were quick to embrace.

1911 and Beyond

As the reformists abandoned the possibility of renegotiating the structure of power with the dynasty, their political trajectory became more closely aligned with that of the revolutionaries. The Xianyou hui's emphasis on military self-defense in their proposals for the local division of power, together with a number of *Shibao* editorials that openly challenged the efficacy of peaceful opposition, manifested the constitutionalists' increasing frustration with gradualist and nonviolent approaches to political reform. In early 1911, after the failure of the Parliamentary Petition Movement was evident, an editorialist warned that future movements might be less pacific. Paraphrasing Xunzi (298–238 B.C.E), he declared: "The people are like water. Water can either carry a boat or overturn it. How can the authorities not be aware of this?"⁴⁵ Throughout the year, several journalists bemoaned the ineffectiveness of passive resistance to the government. "In expressing their opposition to official policy, the Chinese people have only relied on their voices and their pens," one wrote in June. "They do nothing but hold meetings, send telegrams, and run around shouting slogans." Explaining that the authorities could easily repress these activities, he encouraged the people to start employing what he referred to vaguely as "more potent weapons."⁴⁶

Such a potent weapon exploded in Wuchang on October 10, and the *Shibao* journalists were among the first to express their support for the forces of political change that this uprising represented. Referring to the relatively good working relationship between reformists and revolu-

tionaries in China, the lead *Shibao* editorial on October 14 declared that the two groups had always shared the same political objectives, even while they disagreed on the specific means of achieving them.⁴⁷ The next day a new column, "News of the Chinese Revolution" ("Zhongguo geming xiaoxi"), appeared on the newspaper's front page, reflecting the editors' recognition of the historic importance of the recent events. Editorials celebrating the significance of the revolution appeared almost daily throughout the month of October, and after the two provinces most closely linked to *Shibao*, Jiangsu and Zhejiang, declared their independence from the Qing government on November 3 and 5, respectively, the newspaper began to print the date according to the lunar calendar rather than the reign name of the Xuantong emperor.⁴⁸

This commitment to the revolution was apparent not only in the pages of the constitutionalist press, but also in the reformists' involvement in the activities and programs that brought an end to imperial rule in China. The *Shibao* club, Xilou, whose visitors included Tongmeng hui members, was one of the settings for the reformists' eventual decision to join forces with the revolutionaries during the final months of Qing rule. Xilou visitors became leaders of the revolution in Shanghai and prominent figures in the unfolding of events in other regions of the nation.⁴⁹

While supporting the revolution as an historical inevitability, the *Shibao* editorialists interpreted it less as the victory of radical forces and more as the ineluctable outcome of a long struggle between popular and official power. Using the language that had marked their political commentary from the time the newspaper was founded, the journalists appealed to the trope of the people as the foundation of the nation in presenting the revolution as the triumph of the popular will. "The significance of the Wuchang Rebellion does not lie in the events in Wuchang, but in the opposition to the government that subsequently broke out in every province in China," one journalist wrote. "It does not lie in the revolutionary party [*gedang*] that orchestrated the rebellion but in the masses of people who supported it. And, ultimately, it does not lie in popular support for the rebellion but in the people's profound disillusionment with the government."⁵⁰ The declarations of independence announced by every province (with the exception of Zhili and Henan) within one month of the Wuchang Uprising, Xu Qian declared, "reveal to us what is really in the hearts of the people." If the government were to oppose this sentiment, it would "become the public enemy of the citizens."⁵¹ Identifying the need to dismantle the dynastic structure in accordance with the people's wishes, another editorialist announced that any efforts to resist the idea of a republic would be tantamount to "turning one's back on humanity and casting off the masses."⁵²

Although there is rhetorical continuity between the *Shibao* editorialists' invocation of the people as the embodiment of the national will and their earlier political commentaries, by late 1911 there was a profound rupture in their discourse as they began to target the imperial system,

rather than corrupt bureaucrats, as the enemy of the people. Around the time of the October uprising, the journalists began to direct the same criticism that had been leveled against officials for centuries toward the emperor. He had, they claimed, defied social principles enshrined in ancient texts and institutions by sacrificing the greater good (*dagong*) to his own personal pursuit of wealth and power. Citing a pre-Qin text, the *Lü-shi chunqiu*, Xu Qian declared that rulership should be a public trust, not a private monopoly. "The law that enables one family to own the whole realm [*jia tianxia*] defies the ancients' law of all under Heaven and goes against the greater good." Petitioning the emperor to be more like the ancient sage-kings Yao and Shun, Xu implored him to embrace the principles of constitutional democracy and abdicate the throne. In this way, the ruler would not only "bring good fortune to the nation for 10,000 generations; he would also bring blessings to the court."⁵³

Chen Leng proclaimed that it would be not only impolitic but immoral if the reformists did not relinquish all ties to the imperial system and embrace the new republic. "Although the advocates of a constitutional monarchy wished to avoid the tragedy of revolutionary bloodshed," he wrote, "today there has already been a revolution, and blood has already been spilled. If those who continue to advocate a constitutional monarchy are not the most ignorant people in the world, then they are the most shameless."⁵⁴

The efforts of the *Shibao* journalists to establish a reformist base of operations, to formulate strategies of social inclusion, and to theorize the middle realm were instrumental in laying the political, social, and semantic groundwork for the events of 1911. The newspaper could not and would not, however, claim this moment as its own. Instead of signifying the culmination of the journalists' political ambitions, the revolution would mark the end of the most important stage in the newspaper's political life. After 1912, a watershed year for *Shibao*, the newspaper's tone of moral and political seriousness grew attenuated, and it ceased to lead, politically and intellectually. Featuring social news, sports reports, and photography, the later *Shibao* targeted a more general audience. In February 1919 the newspaper added a number of specialized magazines that would appeal to this general readership: *Jiaoyu zhoukan* (Education weekly), *Funü zhoukan* (Women's weekly), *Ertong zhoukan* (Children's weekly), *Tuhua zhoukan* (Illustrated weekly, edited by the press historian Ge Gongzhen), and a number of others. Finally, in October 1921, after Di Baoxian's death, *Shibao* was sold to Huang Cheng'en (Bohui). The newspaper's style remained largely unchanged until it closed on September 1, 1939.⁵⁵

A number of practical reasons have been put forward to explain the decline of *Shibao* after 1911: Di Baoxian was not an adept businessman, the newspaper was never well managed, and financial problems had plagued the journal from the time of its founding. Nonetheless, the newspaper had

flourished despite these difficulties in the early years, which suggests that the source of the problems after 1911 lies elsewhere.⁵⁶ Of critical importance was the loss of *Shibao's* chief editor, Chen Leng. In September 1912, Chen left *Shibao* for *Shenbao*, taking with him much of the incisiveness, irreverence, and independence of mind that had made the newspaper what it was. Chen was offered his new job by Shi Liangcai, a frequent visitor to Xilou, whom Zhang Jian, one of the new owners of *Shenbao*, had appointed as director-general of the newspaper. Shi Liangcai was familiar enough with *Shibao* to appreciate Chen Leng's singular style and editorial talents. He offered Chen a position as *Shenbao's* chief editor, doubling his *Shibao* salary (300 yuan versus 150). On September 23, 1912, *Shenbao's* three new owners, Zhang Jian, Zhao Fengchang, and Ying Dehong, together with Shi Liangcai and Chen Leng, signed a partnership contract.⁵⁷

While the precise reasons why Chen accepted the offer—economic, political, personal—remain unclear, what is clear is that his departure was devastating for Di Baoxian and for *Shibao*. Although Chen remained loyal to *Shibao*, continuing to visit the newspaper's offices and offer editorial assistance and advice, Di seemed to lose all interest in the newspaper following the departure of his trusted chief editor. Focusing most of his energies on his publishing firm, Youzheng shuju, Di rarely appeared at the newspaper offices after 1912. The change in *Shibao* was further reflected in the transformation of Xilou's role: the once-dynamic political meeting place gradually became a club of leisure and games.⁵⁸

Ultimately, however, the changes in *Shibao* had more to do with the times than with personalities. The newspaper's mandate—to expand, theorize, and activate what the reform publicists conceived of as China's new middle realm—became increasingly difficult as the ground shifted beneath it. The events of 1911 dramatically altered not only the political landscape but the print paradigm that accompanied it. The late Qing political press, which had dominated the newly emerging sphere of politics by supervising and challenging imperial authority, lost its primary purpose when this structure of authority collapsed.⁵⁹ The middle realm, an arena of negotiation and integration, was further threatened by the increasing polarization of politics following the revolution. Whereas in the last Qing decade the line had often blurred between reformists and revolutionaries, between constitutional monarchists and constitutional democrats, this was no longer the case in the early republic. Radical factions were more sharply differentiated from the forces of reaction, committed republicans from restorationists, and, ultimately, communists from nationalists.

Social polarization was also accentuated in the years following 1911. Despite the revolution's claims, those whom the reform publicists referred to as "the people"—illiterates, villagers, laborers, craftsmen—continued to be left out of the political equation. The trend toward augmenting the power of provincial and local elites that had begun under the late Qing New Policies was reinforced after the revolution. As "Westernized urban

elites" forwarded their own particular agendas, the divide between the city and the countryside widened, and the practices of cultural translation and negotiation the *Shibao* journalists had advocated became less feasible.⁶⁰

Changes at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century also altered the *Shibao* journalists' cultural role in the new middle realm. The voice of the new education, the newspaper had been founded a year before the civil service examination system was abolished. Its foreign-educated journalists and editors were devoted to mediating between new and old, Chinese and Western forces, ideas, and possibilities in order to map a future for their country that would integrate new concepts into the Chinese cultural cosmos. It was this commitment to integration—the infusing of the contemporary with the ancient and the familiar with the foreign—that had made the newspaper exciting and of the moment. By 1912, however, as conservative national essentialists faced off against ardent radicals, foreshadowing the cultural conflicts of the May Fourth period, it was much more difficult for *Shibao* to play its synthesizing role. And as the republican regime continued to build on the educational reform begun under the New Policies, it became much less meaningful for *Shibao* to serve as the vanguard of the new education.

As proponents of a new mode of social and political integration, the *Shibao* journalists had thrived in the liminal intellectual and cultural environment of the last decade of the Qing. They were constantly striving to cross new borders and enter unexplored terrain—from the riot-torn villages of the Chinese countryside to the lofty principles of Western constitutional theory. And while their efforts were not always fully successful—their understanding of the common people remained partial, their sense of Western political theory not always accurate—their awareness that such borders existed and their willingness to explore what lay beyond them sufficed to make their politics important. The tensions, and the dynamic, that their quest engendered defined, and would ultimately transcend, the late Qing middle realm.

Conclusion: The Fate of the Middle Realm

We are standing at the crossroads: either we let our ancient civilization fall, never to rise again, or we help it to acquire the mechanisms for a new life.

—*He shang*, 1988

It is the spring of 1914 in Shanghai, ten years after the founding of *Shibao*. If Liang Qichao and Di Baoxian met again, it would have been as changed men in very changed circumstances. Liang would no longer have been a fugitive from the Qing dynasty but a party to the new republican regime under Yuan Shikai, the man who had once helped force him into exile. Di would appreciate the irony, remembering how his own qualified support for Yuan had contributed to his rupture with Liang and Kang Youwei some six years earlier. He would view the situation with detachment rather than malice, however. After suffering professional frustration and personal tragedy, he retreated from the world of print and politics and deepened his commitment to Buddhist practice.¹ Although Liang's and Di's paths diverged and their friendship would perhaps never be renewed, the cultural, social, and political changes to which they contributed by founding *Shibao* were irreversible.

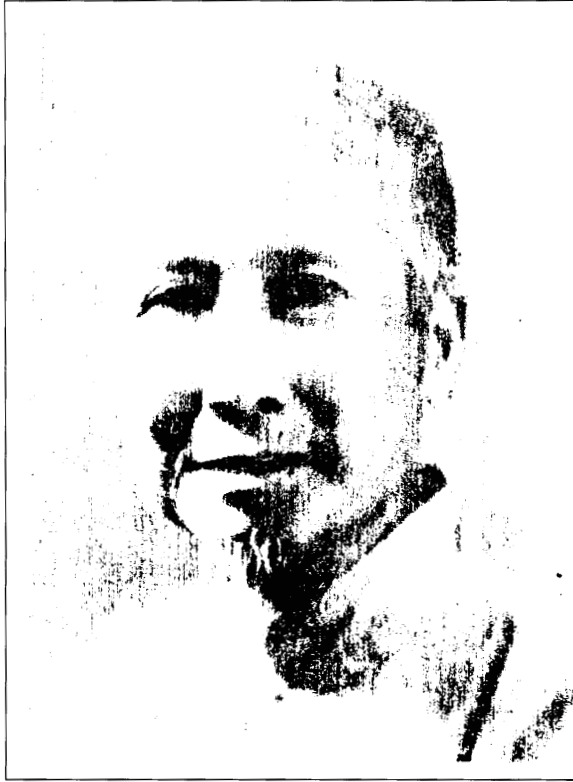
The *Shibao* journalists and editors had played an instrumental role in opening up a new middle realm of discussion and debate in early-twentieth-century China. In broadening the political discourse, they exposed previously forbidden and unexplored zones of the empire—from the rarefied heights of the imperial court to the rustic depths of the isolated village. Mediating between ruler and ruled, reformists and conservatives, cultural elites and political activists, they helped to introduce the idea of government accountability to their audience and instigated debate on the promise and the difficulties of constitutional reform. The new publicists also gave this arena of expanded debate a theoretical life by introducing

new concepts or reinterpreting old ones. The nation, popular power, and public opinion—the three mutually reinforcing notions by which the journalists defined the new middle realm—served both a discursive and a practical function as they structured emerging political practices in the last Qing decade.

The *Shibao* writers linked discourse and praxis, print and politics, struggling not only to define but also to activate the middle realm by establishing ever-more complex networks of action. More than just “a record of what happened,” the newspaper was “an ingredient in the happening . . . an active force in history.”² A leading institution in the new political field, it was closely affiliated with informal organizations and associations that shared its political objectives, from constitutional preparation to educational reform, from reclaiming control of China’s regional railways to the rapid opening of a national assembly. Realizing that these various organizations could do little more than proclaim their reform objectives, the *Shibao* journalists understood that only further institutionalization and legal guarantees could secure them. Their political priority was therefore to demand the recognition of constitutionally guaranteed rights that would enable the institutions of the middle realm to penetrate politics at the center and ensure their own survival. While their understanding of these legal rights was primarily collective rather than individual, post- rather than prepolitical, national rather than natural, it went beyond the prevailing perception of rights. The reform publicists did not promote national rights as a prerogative granted *by* the state to enable the citizenry to serve the state better, but as a means of mobilizing the citizenry *against* the state.

The journalists’ efforts to advance this new mode of politics were constantly obstructed by the old. The dynasty countered their demands for freedom of expression with the drafting of China’s first press law, their pleas for the rapid opening of a national assembly with admonitions against the right to petition, their appeal for regional railway autonomy with railway nationalization, and their efforts to disperse power with ever-bolder centralizing measures. This imperial intransigence did not nullify the reformists’ advances, however. Neither did the revolution of 1911, the trials of the republican period, or the challenges of the communist era that followed diminish their significance. Rather than be thwarted by these historical developments, the late Qing constitutional agenda has overcome them and continues to represent the intellectual mainstream in China today. As officials in the post-1989 PRC strive to silence the voices of would-be reformists, the issues that dominated the pages of *Shibao* almost a century earlier have assumed a new relevance for the Chinese people.

The free expression of public opinion is as central to the late-twentieth-century Chinese reform agenda as it was integral to the early-twentieth-century constitutional discourse. In the democracy movement of 1989, two of the students’ most pressing demands were for unconstrained public



The elderly Di Baoxian.

discourse and a guarantee of freedom of the press. Petitions forwarded to the Chinese government in the spring of 1995 by prominent intellectuals, scientists, journalists, and editors declared that "China's future can be best assured by . . . empowering the Chinese with the 'sacred right of freedom of speech,' freedom of the press." Linking the free expression of public opinion to safeguards against official corruption, as the *Shibao* journalists had done, 45 distinguished intellectuals proclaimed in a May 15, 1995, petition that "without the supervision of democracy, especially the supervision provided by independent public opinion, corruption cannot be eliminated."³

Appeals for constitutionalism and the establishment of "truly independent legislative and judicial bodies," which figured prominently in the late Qing editorials, are also echoed in the recent petitions. A document forwarded by 56 intellectuals on May 19, 1995, resonates with the *Shibao* journalists' fears concerning "false constitutionalism." "When a country draws up a Constitution stipulating rights and freedoms of its citizens," the petition states, "this is not merely an adornment to decorate the facade of those who are in power; it is a sacred text holding that the Government

must guarantee the rights of the citizens."⁴ Constitutional law was also the subject of a number of conferences at several major Chinese universities in the early 1990s, including Beijing University and People's University.⁵

The issue of institutionalization, now expressed in the language of "civil society" (a term variously translated as *gongmin shehui*, *minjian shehui*, *shimin shehui*, and *wenming shehui*), has also become a topic of heated debate in academic and political circles in China and in the exiled Chinese community in the West, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. Since 1986, Chinese journals covering a broad range of subjects from philosophy to politics have developed a theoretical discourse on civil society. Chinese intellectuals in exile have debated related issues, such as the value of transplanting the recent East European concept of civil society to China. And in Taiwan in the last ten to fifteen years, the term *minjian shehui*, meaning a social protest movement, has become an important component of political discourse.⁶

Given these similarities between contemporary Chinese and late Qing political concerns, this study of the first decade of the twentieth century—the period when Western political ideas were widely introduced for the first time and the press enjoyed the most freedom—can potentially open up new avenues for understanding the interplay of political, social, and cultural forces in China today. There are, of course, important differences between these two moments at opposite ends of the twentieth century. The Chinese state is much stronger in the 1990s than it was in the early 1900s, which allows it to coopt the national aspirations that the late Qing publicists had attempted to mobilize against the dynasty. Whereas this rising nationalist sentiment had been the source of the early-twentieth-century reformists' program of civic edification, by the post-Tian'anmen period, the authorities had posited an irreconcilable tension between their own "nationalist concerns" and what they considered to be a threatening enlightenment project.⁷ Other differences appear to favor, rather than militate against, the activation of a broadened sphere of politics in contemporary China, however. The current economic and financial developments on the mainland, for example, which have no parallels in the early twentieth century, have opened a new space for the potential development of society's capacity for self-organization outside the state. Many commentators on contemporary China have even begun to hypothesize that economic liberalization will lead to political liberalization and that (at last) China will begin to develop a civil society patterned on the Western model.

Despite such conjecture, this study of the late Qing suggests a Chinese political and social trajectory that has been, and will continue to be, distinct from the West's. Just as the aspirations of would-be reformists in the contemporary PRC echo the earlier publicists' claims for the middle realm, so they are often charged with similar ambiguities and tensions. The greatest source of political tension in the late Qing program lay in the journalists' ambivalent position vis-à-vis the dynastic regime. Reformists, they

nonetheless remained monarchists devoted to limiting and challenging, but not completely undermining, dynastic politics. Cultural elites who had become constitutionalists, they sought to uphold inherited ideals of social and political harmony even while infusing them with a new contestatory spirit. The writings of contemporary Chinese reform theorists manifest a similar tension. Accepting as inevitable the existence of the Communist state structure, these thinkers claim that civil society must maintain an intimate and harmonious, rather than a hostile and antagonistic, relationship with the state.⁸ This position appears to be the only tenable one after the 1989 crackdown, which clearly defined the limits of change the Communist party would allow and the degree of institutional innovation the Communist structure could endure. The dissolution of quasi-official organizations such as the Economic Structural Reform Research Institute, the arrest of their patron, Party Secretary Zhao Ziyang, and the imprisonment of organizational "black hands" such as Wang Juntao and Chen Zimin, all demonstrate the risks involved in attempting to secure a sphere of autonomy from within the present system.

Ambiguities about the role of the common people in the late Qing reform effort are also relevant for China today. The new publicists' program of national renewal in the early twentieth century was accompanied by a project of social transformation. Committed to expanding the social boundaries of the middle realm, the publicists announced that all Chinese should become involved in constitutional reform, declaring education to be an equalizing principle not an elite privilege, and morality to be a public not a private concern. Although this promotion of the principle of general access to the middle realm reflected the journalists' populist reformism, their proposed social strategies were, however, often informed by an enduring elitism. Striking a populist pose in their diatribes against official abuses and the centralization of power, when confronted with political inertia or popular violence, they would bemoan the people's inadequacies. A similar tension between populist and elitist tendencies exists in China today. Faced with a new rash of rural disturbances in recent years, some intellectuals have recognized the need to better familiarize themselves with conditions in the countryside. A number have even written investigative articles on the peasantry, as Bai Yi did after the Ping-Li-Liu uprising of 1906-7.⁹ At the same time, however, many intellectuals dismiss the notion of undertaking radical change in the countryside, stating—as the more conservative commentators did in the early 1900s—that the common people's "cultural level is too low" (*wenhua shuiping taidi*) for them to be expected to play a role in political reform.¹⁰ Significantly, none of the recent petitions put forward by intellectuals and journalists directly address rural problems, even though the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people continue to live in the countryside.

The cultural tensions that provide the broader context for these political and social ones are perhaps the most enduring and significant. The in-

herited *minben* ideal of the people as the foundation of the nation, existing in a state of symbiotic harmony with the ruler, continued to serve as a controlling construct in the late Qing, even as the publicists promoted a more dynamic and autonomous role for the citizenry and a new, more contestatory approach to politics. Although *minben* rhetoric has almost vanished in China today, its legacy still clings to social and political discourse, no longer in the form of Mencian theory but in terms of Communist principles. The Chinese Communist Party constantly asserts the primacy of the people by labeling everything in their name: in the People's Republic of China (Zhonghua renmin gonghe guo), the National People's Congress (Quanguo renmin daibiao dahui) (allegedly) represents the people's interest, and the People's Liberation Army (Renmin jiefang jun) (ostensibly) protects them.¹¹

The larger issue of reconciling China's cultural heritage with a new mode of politics, one with which the late Qing publicists struggled in their editorials, is still a prominent cultural concern. As the commentator in the controversial 1988 television series *He shang* (River dirge) stated, "We are standing at the crossroads: either we let our ancient civilization fall, never to rise again, or we help it to acquire the mechanisms for a new life."¹² In the view of *He shang's* scriptwriter, Su Xiaokang, "both anti-Communist and pro-traditional" elements would have to be mobilized to create a new civil society in China. Other current thinkers, however, reject any effort to reconcile Eastern and Western concepts. Su Wei, who organized a number of petitions in the late 1980s, for example, recommends jettisoning the foreign idea of civil society altogether and encourages Chinese intellectuals instead to "search for 'new ideological sources' from China's own legacy."¹³

The tension between old and new cultures is thus compounded, at both ends of the twentieth century, by issues of foreign influence and the integration of imported ideas. During the late Qing, the foreign factor was crucial to the development of the middle realm. European newspapers published in nineteenth-century China furnished a model for the indigenous new political press, while the international concessions provided the context in which reform journals could operate with relatively little state interference. Most important, overseas Chinese students, particularly those living in Japan, became cultural brokers, assimilating, translating, and disseminating Western political ideas. Offering not only new concepts but a new language to accommodate them, they helped to unveil a universe of political possibilities in the early twentieth century. Since Deng Xiaoping reopened China's doors in the late 1970s, imported ideas and symbols have been used once again to express reform aspirations, as the presence, however brief, of the "goddess of democracy" in Tian'anmen Square demonstrates.¹⁴ In the post-Tian'anmen period, the continuing growth of commercial and academic exchanges and the escalation in the number of Chinese students studying abroad point to the potential for a higher level of synthesis between Chinese and Western values. At the same

time, though, the issue of human rights—embedded in long-standing conceptions of natural rights articulated by the *Shibao* journalists—reveals the enduring obstacles to such a synthesis. And the integration of the sphere of “cultural China,” including Taiwan, Hong Kong, and overseas communities, suggests a new alternative, an ever-broader Sinic realm.

The challenge for would-be reformists today and the journalists in the late Qing is fundamentally the same—how to fuse these new and old, foreign and indigenous elements successfully into a reform program that is coherent and meaningful in the Chinese context. In the early twentieth century, as the new publicists attempted to achieve such a fusion by joining the cultural values of one age and one national history with the political claims of another, disjunctions in both discourse and political practice arose. On the level of discourse, the journalists advanced their reform agenda by equating the “glory” of the modern constitutional nations with China’s idyllic antiquity, asserting, for example, that Montesquieu merely echoed Mencius’s democratic principles and that Napoleon and the ancients in China held similar views on public opinion. On the level of praxis, they adopted a contestatory mode of politics to press their demands for the institutionalization of the middle realm while interpreting the function of new institutions as facilitating harmonious relations between ruler and ruled and ensuring the stability of the dynasty.

Awkward as it was, synthesis was at least still conceivable in the late Qing. As the century progressed, however, the lines became more sharply drawn: in the 1910s May Fourth activists embraced Mr. Science and Mr. Democracy and rejected all aspects of the Confucian tradition; in the 1950s campaigns were waged against the “three olds,” and Western-trained intellectuals were attacked as rightists; in the late 1960s and early 1970s Red Guards smashed any vestiges of foreign culture, and Confucius was personally vilified. Today, a tentative synthesis, with attendant disjunctions, appears more possible. It has both superficial manifestations—McDonald’s on the corner of Wangfujing, an abundance of cellular phones in cities that lack basic telecommunications services—and more profound ones such as the effort to remobilize Confucian ethics in the drive to promote Western-style “modernization.”¹⁵

While the future course of Chinese history is uncertain, efforts to find a resolution of these tensions will do much to shape the story. Many Chinese intellectuals and “foreign experts” will continue to try to fit their projections of China’s path into the well-worn tracks of Western theories of civil society and the public sphere. This approach, if handled too didactically, however, will only be a source of further disjunctions. Ultimately, it is the distinct cultural and political assumptions about the role of state and society, the meaning of private and public, the importance of institutionalization, and the desirability of social integration that will define the culture of reform in China.

Appendixes

*Biographical Index of Journalists and
a Word on Pseudonyms*

Bao Tianxiao (1876–1973). Pen name, Xiao. Alternate name, Gongyi. From Wu county, Jiangsu province. Became a *xiucai*, or prefectural examination graduate, in 1893. Taught middle school in Suzhou in 1903, and in Qingzhou county, Shandong province, in 1904. Joined *Shibao* in 1906. Originally submitted individual essays or stories but soon became one of *Shibao*'s three major editors. Responsible for regional news, and for a short essay corresponding to regional news. In 1909 edited the monthly *Xiaoshuo Shibao* (Fictional supplement to *Shibao*) with Chen Leng. Stayed with *Shibao* until 1919. Involved in women's education, he was a member of the executive committee of the Jiangsu jiaoyu zonghui (Jiangsu General Educational Association). Also wrote and translated fiction, which frequently appeared in *Shibao*. A member of the Nanshe literary society.

Chen Leng (1877–1965). Pen names, Leng, Lengxue. Alternate name, Chen Jinghan. From Songjiang county, Jiangsu province. Graduate of a Japanese middle school. Served as a delegate to the Xing Zhong hui (Revive China Society) in 1901, and as a journalist for the Shanghai magazine *Dalu* ("The Continent") from 1902. Joined the staff of *Shibao* as chief editor immediately upon the newspaper's founding in 1904. Responsible for editing and commenting on national and international news, and for a short essay corresponding to major national and international events. Renowned for having created the short essay form. In 1909 edited the monthly *Xiaoshuo Shibao* (Fictional supplement to *Shibao*) with Bao Tianxiao. He was involved in women's education and in the world of fiction, publishing his own novels in installments in *Shibao*'s pages. A very private and eccentric man who had already cut off his

queue in 1904, he wore Western suits, smoked a pipe, rode a bicycle, and refused to attend social gatherings.

Di Baoxian (1873–1921). Pen names, Pingdeng ge, Pingzi. Alternate name, Di Chuqing. A native of Piao yang county in Jiangsu province. Became a *ju ren*, or provincial graduate, at an early age. Lived in exile in Japan after the failure of the Hundred Days' Reforms and again in 1900 after the abortive Independent Army uprising, in which he took part. One of the founders of *Shibao*. Served as the newspaper's publisher and as a regular columnist. Also involved in education as a member of the Jiangsu jiaoyu zonghui's executive committee and in politics as a member of the Jiangsu Provincial Assembly. A "cultural entrepreneur," he was the private owner of a publishing house, Youzheng shuju, and a studio for the study of photogravure, the Minying zhaoxiangguan. Known in literary circles as an authority on contemporary poetry, his *Shibao* column, "Pingdeng ge" (Pavilion of equality), functioned as a focal point in the beginnings of the modern poetry movement in China. Also the author of *Pingdengge biji* (Notes from the pavilion of equality) and *Pingdeng ge shihua* (Commentary on poetry from the pavilion of equality).

Feng Tingzhi (exact dates unknown). From Guangdong province. A disciple of Kang Youwei's. Kang originally appointed him editor of *Shibao*'s leading daily essay.

Huang Yanpei (1878–1965). Alternate name, Huang Renzhi. From Chuan-sha county in Jiangsu. Received the *ju ren* degree in 1902. Involved in education from an early date. Arrested for spreading revolutionary ideas. Upon his release, fled to Japan, where he concentrated on the study of education and joined the Tongmeng hui in 1905. When he returned to China, he became associated with members of *Shibao* as a frequent visitor to Xilou, a member of the Jiangsu Provincial Assembly, and a director of the Jiangsu branch of the Xianyou hui (Friends of Constitutionalism). After the revolution, appointed commissioner of education for Jiangsu.

Huang Yuanyong (1885–1915). Alternate name, Yuansheng. From Jiujiang, Jiangxi province. Received the *jinshi*, or metropolitan degree, in 1904. Received a degree in politics and law in Japan. Upon his return to China, took a number of jobs in both official and unofficial capacities, including lecturer at a law and administration lecture hall (*fazheng jiangxi suo*) and editor at a translation office. Served as *Shibao*'s Beijing correspondent.

Jiang Ruizao (1891–1929). Alternate name, Hua Zhuosheng. From Zhuji county in Zhejiang province. Edited *Xiaoshuo kaozheng* (Evidentiary research on the novel) and wrote a number of works on poetry and fiction. Perhaps wrote for *Shibao* under the name of Jiang Zao nüshi, assuming a female identity.

Kang Youwei (1858–1927). Alternate name, Nanhai. Born in a village in Nanhai, a district southwest of Guangzhou. In 1893 became a *ju ren*. In 1895 passed the *jinshi* examination and sent the Gongju memorial to the emperor urging the rejection of the terms of the Treaty of Shimonoseki. In the summer of that same year he and Liang Qichao founded the *Zhongwai jiwen*

(Sino-foreign news) in Beijing and the Qiangxue hui (Self-Strengthening Study Society). In April 1898 organized the Baoguo hui (Society for Protecting the Nation) and from June 16, 1898, was involved in the Hundred Days' Reforms. After the September 21 coup, fled to Japan. In exile he founded the Baohuang hui (Society to Protect the Emperor), which changed its name to Guomin xianzheng hui (Society for Constitutional Government) in 1907.

Lei Fen (1876–1918). A native of Songjiang county in Jiangsu and a *xiucai*, or prefectural examination graduate. Studied at Waseda University in the late 1890s, and then became involved in publishing a journal entitled *Fanshu huibian* (Collected translations) with a group of Jiangsu overseas students in Tokyo. Married to Chen Leng's older sister and had been a student of Chen's father. Became one of *Shibao's* three major editors, responsible for Shanghai news. Also involved in women's education, and a member of the Jiangsu jiaoyu zonghui and the Jiangsu Provincial Assembly. Had close ties to Zhang Jian and left the newspaper in 1909 to serve as Zhang's full-time political advisor. In 1910 was elected a member of the Zizheng yuan (Political Advisory Board).

Li Pingshu (1854–1927). Alternate name, Li Houyou. From Baoshan, Jiangsu (now part of Shanghai). In 1900 worked as private secretary to Zhang Zhidong. Between 1903 and 1911 promoted a number of social and urban reforms in Shanghai. In 1903 served as manager of the Jiangnan arsenal, supervisor of the Shanghai General Works Office, and leader of the Shanghai Merchants' Association. Elected president of the Jiangsu Railway Association in November 1907 and was also an executive member of the Jiangsu Railway Company. Later worked in banking circles. A frequent visitor to Xilou. In 1911 joined the revolutionary movement in Shanghai.

Li Yuerui (exact dates unknown). Pen name, Xi Song. From Xianyang county in Shaanxi province and holder of a *jinshi* degree. Employed as a high official in Beijing until the September 1898 coup, when he was accused of leaking government information to the press. Was involved in the financing of *Shiwu bao* in 1896 and joined the Baohuang hui in 1898.

Liang Qichao (1873–1929). Alternate and pen names include Zhuoru, Rengong, and Yingbing shi. Native of Xinhui, Guangdong province. In 1889 passed the provincial exams in Guangzhou and became a *juren*. In 1890 went to Beijing to take metropolitan exams but did not pass. Returned to Canton and became associated with Kang Youwei. In 1895 returned to the capital with Kang, where he again failed the exams. Assisted Kang in drafting the *Gongju shangshu* and in the summer of 1895 served as secretary to the Qiangxue hui. During the Hundred Days' Reforms drew up a program for the translation of Western books. On September 21, 1895, orders were issued for his arrest by the government, and he escaped to Tokyo, where he founded *Qingyi bao* (The China Discussion) in 1899 and *Xinmin congbao* (New people's miscellany) in 1902. In 1904 helped found *Shibao*. In 1907 organized the Zhengwen she (Political Information Society) and created the society's journal, *Zhenglun*. In 1910 founded another newspaper, *Guofeng bao*. In 1912 ended his political alliance with Kang Youwei and took an active role in the republican regime.

Lin Baishui (1873–1926). Pen name, Xuan. From Houguan, Fujian, and a *juren* degree holder. Went to Japan to study law and journalism at Waseda University. The first Chinese to study journalism abroad. In 1903 returned to China, where he wrote for a number of newspapers, including *Shibao*, *Minli bao*, and *Jingzhong ribao*.

Lin Kanghou (1881–1949). Alternate name, Lin Zujin. A *xiucai* from Shanghai. Studied in Japan. Involved in education as the principal of an elementary school, the Nanyang gongxue fushu xiaoxue. Also taught at a women's school. When Lei Fen left *Shibao*, became editor of the paper's Shanghai news. Later entered banking circles, becoming the manager of two Shanghai banks in 1912.

Luo Xiaogao (exact dates unknown). One of Kang Youwei's disciples from Guangdong. Studied at Waseda University. Appointed by Kang as editor of *Shibao*'s leading daily essay in 1904.

Ma Xiangbo (1840–1939). Alternate name, Ma Liang. Born in Danyang, Jiangsu, into a family that had embraced Roman Catholicism. Studied Western science. In 1896 became associated with Liang Qichao. During the Hundred Days' Reforms, Liang suggested he be appointed head of a translation bureau in Shanghai. In 1907 went to Japan to serve as general manager of Liang's Zhengwen she. When the Zhengwen she offices were moved to Shanghai in March 1908, he continued to head the society there, and when the Zhengwen she was disbanded, continued to serve as Liang's representative in Shanghai. In 1910 elected to the Zizheng yuan and in 1911 joined the Xianyou hui.

Mai Menghua (1875–1915). From Shunde, Guangdong. Holder of *juren* degree, disciple and son-in-law of Kang Youwei. In 1895 signed the *Gongju shangshu*. Participated in the Qiangxue hui in Beijing and with Liang Qichao served as an editor of the Qiangxue hui's organ, *Zhongwai jiwen*. In 1896 wrote for *Shiwu bao*. From 1898 participated in the Baohuang hui. After the coup following the Hundred Days' Reforms, fled to Japan. Helped Liang with *Qingyi bao*. Later followed Kang Youwei abroad to pursue Baohuang hui activities. Liang had wanted him to replace Chen Leng as chief editor of *Shibao*.

Meng Sen (1868–1938). Pen name, Xin Shi. From Wujin, Jiangsu. Studied from 1901 to 1904 at Hōsei University in Tokyo. Returned to Shanghai in 1905 and with Zhang Jian organized the Yubei lixian gonghui (Constitutional Preparation Society). In July 1908, became the chief editor of *Dongfang zazhi*, a position he would hold until May 1909. In May 1909 elected to the Jiangsu Provincial Assembly and in October 1909 sent by Zhang Jian to visit various provincial assemblies in anticipation of the Parliamentary Petition Movement. In 1910 edited a book on local self-government, *Chengzhenxiang difangzizhi shiyi xiangjie*. Also the author of a number of works on local self-government, law, and the provincial assemblies, subjects on which he occasionally wrote editorials for *Shibao*. In November 1911 wrote the proclamation for the attack on Nanjing by revolutionary forces of Jiangsu.

Meng Zhaochang (exact dates unknown). A Jiangsu constitutionalist involved with *Shibao* members in the Yubei lixian gonghui, the Suzhou-Hangzhou-Ningbo Railway antiloan movement, and the Jiangsu Provincial Assembly. In 1910 elected to the Zizheng yuan.

Shi Liangcai (1879–1934). Born near Shanghai. From 1901 to 1903 studied at the Sericultural School in Hangzhou and later founded a sericultural school for women. Instrumental in promoting the Jiangsu jiaoyu zonghui and a frequent visitor to *Shibao's* Xilou. In 1912 became co-owner and general manager of *Shenbao*. Would become one of China's greatest print capitalists.

Tang Caichang (1867–1900). From Liuyang, Hunan. Together with Tan Sitong, became involved in the reform movement both as a publicist and as an organizer of armed movements. From 1897 involved in the production of a number of Hunan journals, *Xiangxue xinbao*, *Xiangbao*, and *Yadong shibao*. After the failure of the Hundred Days' Reforms, went to Japan and Hong Kong, and visited other parts of China, including Shanghai, promoting the Qinwang yundong (Save the Throne Movement). In 1900 started the Independent Army uprising (Zilijun qiye) with the collaboration of Di Baoxian and Chen Leng. Was executed when the uprising failed.

Xu Binbin (1888–1961). Pen name, Lao Han. From Yixing, Jiangsu. Served as Beijing correspondent for *Shibao* from 1916.

Xu Fosu (1879–1943). From Hunan, participated in the Huangxing hui. Arrested for his political activities. After his release went to Japan, where he joined the Baohuang hui. Mediated in debates between the revolutionaries and the Baohuang hui.

Xu Qin (1873–1945). From Sanshui county, Guangdong. A disciple of Kang Youwei's and active in the reformist press. In 1895 involved in *Qiangxue bao* and in 1896 helped Liang Qichao establish *Shiwu bao*. Recommended by Kang Youwei to become principal of a school in Yokohama, Japan, where he helped spread reform ideas to Chinese overseas students. In 1899, with Liang Qichao, established *Wenxing ribao*, the organ for the Baohuang hui in San Francisco. In 1904 helped to establish *Xianggang shangbao* in Shanghai. Active in debates on the value of reform versus revolution.

Xu Zhiyan (exact dates unknown). Pen name, Zhiyan. Alternate name, Guoying. A journalist who wrote for *Shibao*. Also an editor for the prestigious Commercial Press. Eventually became involved in the world of fiction.

Yang Tingdong (exact dates unknown). Studied at Waseda University in Tokyo. A member of the Jiangsu Provincial Assembly, a close associate of Zhang Jian's, and a frequent visitor to Xilou. Organized a constitutional preparation society, the Xiangzheng yubei hui, and published the journal *Xiangzheng zazhi*. Author of two works on constitutionalism and the provincial assemblies.

Ye Xiaan (exact dates unknown). Hubei provincial correspondent for *Shibao*. Began sending fifteen essays and ten letters a month to Di Baoxian in 1905.

Zhang Binglin (1868–1936). Alternate name, Zhang Taiyan. A scholar and anti-Manchu revolutionary. The editor of *Subao* and of the Tongmeng hui's *Minbao*. Arrested in connection with the *Subao* case in 1902.

Zhang Jian (1852–1926). Born in Nantong, Jiangsu. Passed the *jinshi* exam in 1894 and was appointed to the Hanlin Academy, but refused to serve as an

official after the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki. An industrialist, educator, conservationist, scholar, and entrepreneur. In 1903 spent four months touring Japan. Returned to China an ardent advocate of constitutionalism. Closely associated with *Shibao* journalists through his active role in the Shanghai Yubei lixian gonghui and the Jiangsu Provincial Assembly. Supported the 1911 Revolution in December 1911.

A WORD ON PSEUDONYMS

Almost all of the *Shibao* editorialists used pen names. This practice, which is a long-standing one in Chinese literary tradition, took on a new meaning in the late Qing. Political editorialists hoped to shield their identity from a government that was increasingly suspicious of the press, and social reformists felt compelled to put forward their views not as private, interested persons, but as anonymous citizens of the new middle realm. The sense behind the various pen names varies widely, from an assertion of the writer's role as publicist and spokesman for the people to self-deprecating expressions. While some of the pen names are simple and direct in meaning, a number feature arcane classical allusions.

The following is a selected list of the pen names that appear most frequently in the articles referred to in this book. The meaning of the name is given, and the identity of the journalist is revealed when it is known.¹

Bai Yi	A Common Person Without Rank
Chi	Sincere
Da Guan	Wisdom That Enables a Person to be Oblivious to Emotions and Adversity [Daoist term]
Di Min	Imperial People
Gong	Fairness, Justice
Gu Fen	Righteously Indignant
Hu Ma	A Reckless Horse
Hui	Disappointed or Discouraged
Jian He	A Vigorous Style of Penmanship
Jiu Jiu	The End of a Long, Cold Winter
Lao Han	An Old Man (Xu Binbin)
Leng	Cold (Chen Leng)
Lengxue	Cold Blood (Chen Leng)
Li	To Establish
Min	The People
Min	A Stone Resembling Jade
Pingdeng ge	Pavilion of Equality (Di Baoxian)
Pingzi	Master of Equality (Di Baoxian)
Tian Chi	A Mythical Sea [mentioned in the <i>Zhuangzi</i>]
Xue Hong	White Swan
Xi Song	To Lament and Praise [a section of the <i>Chuzi</i>] (Li Yuerui)
Xiao	To Laugh or Deride (Bao Tianxiao)
Xin Shi	History of the Heart and Mind [title of a Song dynasty text] (Meng Sen)
Xuan	Propagate, or Announce (Lin Baishui)
Zhuang	Simple-minded

*Background to the Late Qing
Popular Uprisings*

The causes of the late Qing social and economic crisis were both deep and numerous. As John Lust has noted, "The precarious situations of huge rural populations living at or below subsistence levels were aggravated by the abuse of supplementary taxes and ad hoc levies, by the neglect of irrigation systems, canals, and the like, by the running down of communal granaries intended to alleviate local food shortages, and by the flight of gentry to the towns, leading to the deterioration of their mediatory role between officials and people."¹ As respect for authority weakened in the early years of the twentieth century, the implementation of the New Policies demanded large sums of money that ultimately had to come from rural and urban lower classes. As a result, riots swept through the lower Yangzi (including Jiangsu and Hunan), Manchuria, Guangdong, Sichuan, and Shanxi, reaching a crescendo in the years 1909–11. The specific causes were multiple and mutually reinforcing: increased taxes to pay for new schools, police, and local self-government; the census preparations for local reform; local shortages of grain brought about by the growth of speculative grain markets; the ban on the opium poppy; and an inflationary trend that drove the prices of commodities, rents, and services up 80–200 percent in local areas throughout eastern China during the first decade of the 1900s while wages clearly lagged. The riots that ensued in reaction to these circumstances were highly localized and traditional in organization, meaning that each *xiang* of a *xian* usually acted independently of the others. A description of five such local disturbances that the *Shibao* journalists responded to follows.

PING-LI-LIU UPRISING, LATE 1906–EARLY 1907

The Ping-Li-Liu border area had long been a center of secret society activity. It was composed of Liuyang and Liling in eastern Hunan and Pingxian

across the border in Jiangxi. Liuyang in particular had been the site of rebellious activity, most notably attacks on the gentry academies in 1852, 1867, 1872, and 1891. It was also the home of Tan Sitong and Tang Caichang. Tang had involved a number of Liuyang secret society leaders in his Independent Army plot of 1900. Pingxiang, Jiangxi, had a similar reputation as a center of subversive activity, and several of the area's market towns were notorious gambling and entertainment centers dominated by secret societies. The potential for unrest in this area further increased in the early twentieth century when the Anyuan coal mines were developed in Pingxiang and a railway link was built to carry the coal from Pingxiang to Zhuzhou on the Xiang River above Changsha. The secret societies recruited heavily among the miners and in 1903 reportedly made preparations for an uprising. The railway thus not only led to increased trade along this established commercial route between Hunan and Jiangxi, with a consequent trade-related growth of lumpenproletariat, but also served to facilitate communication between the various local dissident groups. Liling was the center of Hunan's porcelain industry, and the independent craftsmen and their workers were also inclined toward involvement in secret societies. In many ways, then, this was not a typical isolated border region. Moreover, because Liuyang and Liling were part of Changsha prefecture, they were close enough to urban concentrations to have high tenancy rates.

Ma Fuyi was the principal secret society leader in the area until 1905, when he was executed. Before his death, Ma had laid much of the organizational groundwork for the uprising. In 1906 flooding and famine increased tensions in what had already started out as a restless year. The flooding in the spring led to rice riots and highway robbery, and the drought in the fall ruined thousands of peasants who had no cash reserves, as well as increasing the cost of rice. This inflationary trend, which hit the miners particularly hard, was compounded by the official tendency to mint large amounts of copper currency. These natural and economic factors only increased an existing polarization of the community between gentry and officials on the one hand, and workers and peasants on the other.

Students returned from Japan, who had left Changsha (after the repression of the student movement there) for the secret society strongholds in the border region, walked into this explosive situation in the summer of 1906. They brought together the area's various secret society units in a new common organization, the Hong River Society, *hong* being a favorite secret society term associated with both the founder of the Ming Dynasty and the leader of the Taiping Rebellion. Later, two of these students traveled to Shanghai seeking arms and support from the national revolutionary organization.

By the winter of 1906 the militia and secret societies faced each other like two armed camps. Slogans popular at the beginning of the uprising were "Sweep away the Qing but protect the foreigners" and "Rob the rich and aid the poor," proclamations clearly inspired by revolutionary students. The radicals also made their presence felt when the uprising took place. One of the *huidang* armies in the field accepted an alliance with republicanism, using the term "revolution" on its badges and "Revolutionary Army" on its banners. A radical manifesto issued in the name of a society chief involved in the uprising incorporated much of the Revolutionary Alliance (Tongmeng hui) program.

Despite their influence and involvement, however, the revolutionary stu-

dents were little more than catalysts who helped organize and trigger a popular uprising that was primarily responding to an internal dynamic. What Ping-Li-Liu proved was not that students could go into remote regions of the province and create a revolutionary movement but that contradictions and discontents were growing in these regions and could, to a degree, be guided to express themselves in terms compatible with the students' revolutionary ideology. But the students were clearly not able to dictate the ideology of the entire uprising. One secret society leader, for example, defined his mission as one of establishing a monarchy under a Han emperor.

Given the fundamental lack of unity among the participating secret societies and the lack of anything more than the most primitive weapons, the rebels were completely helpless against the 17,500 regular army troops summoned from Wuchang, Changsha, and the lower Yangzi. Consequently, they were unable to capture even a district capital. The area had been so effectively sealed off that rebel forces could establish no direct liaison either with the Tongmeng hui or with *huidang* armies from outside the area. The fighting, which lasted one week, resulted in a bloodbath. Discouraged by the total failure of the movement, the radicals decided the *huidang* were not capable of being taught modern military methods and that in the future republicanism should look for support in the New Army.²

DANYANG UPRISING, AUGUST 1909

In 1909 the price of silver rose in the county of Danyang, in Jiangsu province, and the copper currency that was used to levy taxes on farmland was devalued, provoking a popular rebellion. On August 21 more than 1,000 people entered the city and destroyed the home of the director-general of grain transport, Ding, burning clothing and other items. All stores in the city were closed. On August 22, some 3,000 farmers stormed the gates of the city, destroying rice shops, the county seat, and the home of General Secretary Xia. The entire city went on strike. The following day, over 1,000 people entered the city again, burning the homes of four gentry-managers (*shendong*), the Office of Coal and Iron, and a salt storehouse. On August 24 and 25 there was further plundering of gentry homes and three salt warehouses. On August 30 the farmers gathered over 1,000 people and created a disturbance in front of the county seat, demanding the release of those farmers who had been arrested.³

CHANGSHA RICE RIOTS, APRIL 1910

The Changsha, Hunan, rice riots were much less significant in scale and duration than the disturbances that would break out in Laiyang, Shandong, in July of the same year. However, because Changsha was a major provincial capital and because foreign property was destroyed during the two days of rioting on April 13 and 14, the rice riots attained greater national notoriety.

Hunan, which had traditionally been a rice-exporting province, found itself in straitened circumstances in early 1910 as rice prices rose steeply throughout central China. Three factors contributed to this: general inflation in all commodities, especially in copper cash prices; reduced grain supply due to flooding; and hoarding by the Hunanese gentry, which significantly accelerated the

other inflationary forces. By buying up grain and holding back exports to flood-stricken Hubei, the gentry who controlled the rice trade calculated that they could reap even larger profits in the spring and summer of 1910, when that province's needs became acute. As a result, winter-quarter exports of grain in 1909 were barely one-half of their 1908 level. This situation was compounded by a series of natural disasters in 1909 that forced refugees to pour into Changsha at a time when gentry hoarding and grain exports were driving the price of rice to unprecedented heights. The combined rapid inflation of rice prices and the flood of destitute refugees soon created a major threat to public order.

The two relief measures that the government enacted both led to conflicts between the more conservative gentry and the officials. The first was to establish public granaries; the second, to prohibit rice exports to Hubei and the lower Yangzi, which brought the gentry, the governor, the viceroy in Wuchang, and the British into a complex series of conflicts. The prohibition was finally published on March 16, 1910, however, and by March 17 the pressure of increased demand had been sufficient to raise the price of rice in Changsha from between 30 and 40 cash per pint to between 75 and 85. Wang Xianqian led the gentry in demanding the immediate cessation of exports as the price rapidly rose.

After the export prohibition had gone into effect on April 7, a crowd of over 10,000 went to the governor's yamen to demand the release of a carpenter, Liu Yongfu, who had been arrested, and to demand the opening of the public granaries. Governor Cen Chunming, who was clearly in the middle in this dispute—caught between the gentry and the imperialists and lacking the support of either the Wuchang viceroy, Ruizheng, or his own lieutenant governor, Zhuang Gengliang—did little to calm the protesters. By April 13 the disturbance had grown larger than a usual rice riot. The anti-imperialist wrath of the urban poor, fed by British attempts to prevent the prohibition of rice exports, was vented on the most vulnerable foreign institution, the missions. On April 14 the riot broke out in its full fury. New Army troops opened fire on protesters at the governor's yamen, killing 14 and wounding 40. The mob burned down most of the yamen in response, and the governor telegraphed his resignation to Beijing.

The conservative gentry attempted to use the antireform and anti-imperialist wrath of the mob to stop both the reform movement and imperialism in Hunan. Perhaps the most convincing evidence that the riots were directly encouraged by the gentry was to be found in the pattern of destruction; clear distinctions had been made between property owned by foreigners and property merely rented by them. However, the British claim that the riot was managed and manipulated by the gentry overstates the case. The disturbances began as a rice riot and followed certain patterns typical of grain riots in general. On April 13 the rioters had already indicated their antireform and anti-imperialist sentiments with their attacks on the police and the *daotai* (circuit intendant) and on the first three missions, and on April 14, as conservative gentry gained control of the city, a different group of people—workers, craftsmen, small merchants, and mysterious “black soldiers”—carried out more specialized acts of destruction. They did not, however, change the direction of the riot or go against the predilections of the urban poor. The conservative gentry's

role had been to channel and focus the destructive passion of the mob, not to create it.

By April 15 the uprising had almost run its course. New Army and reserve forces, which had been absent on the previous day, reappeared and began to reassert order. On April 17 British, Japanese, and Chinese gunboats, sent from Hankou at the first news of violence, began to arrive, the Chinese carrying New Army troops from Hubei. Harsh sentences were ultimately meted out to arsonists, almost all of whom were craftsmen. The riot also marked the end of the line for the conservative gentry leaders. Encouraged by the British, the Wuchang viceroy, Ruizheng, placed much of the blame on them, and unusual punishments for the gentry were meted out. Several were accused of hoarding grain, encouraging the rioters, and attempting to dictate the replacement of Governor Cen Chunming with their own candidate. All were reduced in official rank and dismissed from their honorary and expectant official positions. Their prestige was so damaged that they never again challenged the reformist gentry. Despite these harsh punishments and the general pacification of the situation, however, tensions in the region remained high, since the fundamental causes of the riots remained unaddressed.⁴

LAIYANG UPRISING, JULY 1910

Excessive taxation was the leading cause of the July 1910 uprising in Laiyang, Shandong province. Between 1906 and 1910, new taxes fell into two categories. The first was composed of taxes for reform programs, including the 1906 Buddhist temple tax to obtain money and property for new schools, the 1907 oil tax to finance police bureaus, and the 1908 retail tax levied on stores dealing with dye, thread, hemp, and tobacco. The second group was made up of nonreform taxes, such as a deed tax paid on each change in the ownership of property. In addition to these new taxes, the manipulation of the exchange rate between taels and cash further compounded the common people's already heavy tax burden.

On April 21, 1910, Qu Shiwen and Yu Zhushan, two intermediate rural division headmen who had previously led a movement against the expanding economic authority of the elite, gathered with others at Tanjia temple to attempt to address the difficulties the local population was facing. The people's grievances were directed against the new miscellaneous taxes, the embezzlement of grain funds, and the poll taxes collected by census takers. Yu proposed forming a tax resistance movement, and both leaders posted their statements on the issues in the villages and towns of the county. They sought support from villagers in organizing a federation to represent the villages north of Laiyang city. This village federation would become the core of the protest movement.

On May 21 approximately 1,000 people from the area southwest of Laiyang city gathered at Guandi temple to announce that they would go to the city to demand grain. Their numbers had grown to 10,000 by the time they reached the magistrate's yamen. Magistrate Zhu Huaizhi spoke to the crowd for three hours, listened to their demands, and promised that an account would be rendered of the granary fund. Two days later more than 1,000 monks and priests gathered at the yamen to demand the abolition of the temple tax and to ex-

press their anger that 30 percent of the temple property would be sold, instead of taxed, to finance new public schools. On May 24 Magistrate Zhu reversed his stratagem of appeasement and requested that government troops be sent in to end the agitation. He had several dozen monks and priests arrested and ordered the blacksmith to make several hundred pairs of handcuffs immediately. In response, the villagers began to arm themselves. On June 2 some 5,000 villagers established a rebel encampment near Jiulihe, which became the base of the popular resistance.

Because Magistrate Zhu did nothing to meet the people's demands, a crowd gathered at the yamen on June 11, whereupon the first outbreak of activist violence occurred. The crowd destroyed the house of Wang Jingyue, a member of the county elite who had become the chief of the new police bureau. Wang was particularly hated for squeezing rural taxpayers for unofficial taxes and for fabricating charges against them. The protesters also destroyed the residences of Gao Yufeng, who had reported many rural people for nonpayment of the increased deed tax, and Chen Yude, who was not considered a member of the political elite but who had vast stores of grain that he refused to sell during periods of grain shortages.

On June 13 the protesters issued the final form of their demands, which included a just land-tax collection rate, the repayment of grain fraudulently taken from granaries, no new miscellaneous taxes, and the retirement of "degraded gentry and corrupt managers." On June 26 matters took a turn for the worse when Magistrate Zhu was replaced by Kuibao and 300 troops were ordered into the county. They opened fire, killing seven protesters. By July 2 the uprising had escalated into a full-scale rebellion; 30,000 to 40,000 people camped on the banks of Jiulihe. For the first two weeks of July they controlled the situation, putting Laiyang city in a virtual state of siege. The estimated number of rebels was 100,000, and by July 12, 2,400 official troops were on the scene. The following day the uprising reached its tragic end. Following a false report that four officers had been killed by the rebels, official troops responded by killing villagers. They shelled the Jiulihe encampment with cannon, killing over 300 people. The troops continued their attack, burning 800 residences. The villagers had paid heavily, and their cause was lost.

Appeals were made to provincial and national figures in the aftermath of the uprising in the hopes of reaching a more equitable final settlement. Laiyang city merchants hoped to gain the support of the Shandong Landsmann's Association, a group of merchants and officials residing in Beijing, in order to request an imperial audience and bring charges against Governor Sun Baoqui for his flagrant attacks on the Laiyang people. Although the Landsmann's Association did press Prince Qing, the head of the Grand Council, for the dismissal of Governor Sun, he remained in office because he was related to Prince Qing through their children's marriage. On November 7 lesser officials were punished. The magistrate, *daotai*, and prefect were dismissed, and several others were deprived of their status as degree holders.

While the magistrates, the *daotai*, and the prefect had taken the traditional position that the disturbances were the work of "local bullies and bad elements," Censor Wang Baotian and Governor Sun traced the source of the trouble to the network of corruption, which included merchant tax farmers

and local official personnel. The minority group in the Shandong Provincial Assembly agreed, and they moved toward the view that the protesters had legitimate grievances and demands. Wang Zhixun, assemblyman and editor of *Jinan ribao*, in particular, stressed the reasonableness and respectability of the demands of Qu Shiwen, the intermediate rural division headman, and his partisans. The Landsmann's Association also defended the Qu partisans, claiming that Qu was a spokesman for public opinion and that a government that considered itself a constitutional body should listen to, rather than suppress, such expressions of popular grievances.

The New Policies reforms continued despite popular opposition, with elections held early in 1911 for city self-government officials. Qu Shiwen made two further attempts at resistance in the fall of 1911 and 1914. Both failed, and he was executed in 1914.⁵

CHUANSHA UPRISING, MARCH 1911

The Chuansha uprising was the result of social, political, and economic tensions that had arisen because of the New Policies reforms. When protesters were asked what had caused the conflict, they replied, "The New Policies collected taxes that were too harsh. There was a house tax, a tea tax, a room tax, and a meat tax; in addition, there were taxes on cows, sheep, chickens, ducks, and also on home-loom-woven cloth. Everything was taxed, and the people were not able to sustain themselves."⁶ The spark that finally ignited the protest, however, was the local self-government bureau of Changren *xiang's* attempt in February 1911 to take over several rooms in the Yugong temple, a local vegetarian community center, for its own use. The initiator of the protest was Ding Fei, the female manager of the Yugong temple. On February 7, 100 people had gathered to tear down the self-government plaque on the temple wall. This incident merely served to mobilize latent grievances that had built up over the previous few years. The self-government officials had antagonized people from a diverse collection of occupations—cow salesmen, weavers, and vegetarian sect members—by attempting to impose their new regulations, institutions, and opposition to vegetarianism on the community.

On March 1 and 2 protesters attacked property related to self-government in the villages of Changren and Caochang. In the following two days clerks and runners of the yamen subbureaucracy also seized the opportunity to fan the flames of protest against self-government officials. Sent by the subprefect to calm the people, the clerks instead told them that they would be safe if they destroyed offices, schools, and gentry residences in the countryside but not in the city. They pointed out as well that Zhiyuan Hall in the city, the center for the new self-government network, had to be destroyed.

In all, the uprising lasted four days. Placards aimed at mobilizing the people were posted in every market town of the subprefecture and all over the countryside. Each commoner's household was required to send one able-bodied man to fight on the rebels' side. By March 5 a force of 2,000 had been gathered, and they destroyed 300–400 taels of property, including the residences of 32 officials, 16 of lower degree-holding status. The destruction was largely seen as the common people's means of finally settling old grievances against elite

households. Two merchants with no connection to self-government, for example, were singled out for attack. Attempts were also made to reclaim temple property taken over by self-government institutions.

The protest ended with no major military encounters between government troops and the rural people. By the end of the first week in March the protesters had scattered. Self-government and provincial officials called for investigations, which eventually led to a settlement with the common people and the yamen personnel so that self-government could be reestablished. The uprising ultimately served to draw out and destroy active opposition to self-government that existed among the commoners and some members of the local subbureaucracy. The reforms were thus able to continue into the republican period, and many of the officials who suffered losses during the uprising resurfaced as prominent officials after 1912.⁷

Reference Matter

Glossary

NOTE: Glossary entries are alphabetized according to Chinese syllables rather than English alphabetic order.

- baihua 白話
baijia 百家
baixing 百姓
Bai Yi 白衣
banmian 版面
banshi 版式
banyunfu 搬運夫
ban zizhi 辦自治
Bao Gongyi 包公毅
Baoguan zhanxing tiaogui 報館
暫行條規
Baohuang hui 保皇會
baojia 保甲
baojun zhengzhi 暴君政治
baomin zhengzhi 暴民政治
Bao Tianxiao 包天笑
baozhang wenti 報章文體
Baozhang yingshou guize 報章
應守規則
Bo 伯
bu pianxun yidang zhi yijian
不偏徇一黨之意見
buzheng 不正
- Cai 蔡
caizheng 財政
canshi 參事
canshi hui 參事會
cexun 策勛
chaixu 差胥
chaoting 朝廷
Chen Chi 陳熾
Chen Jinghan 陳景韓
Chen Leng 陳冷
chenmin 臣民
Chen Qiu 陳虬
cheng 城
Chi 赤
chichizhe 蚩蚩者
chichi zhi mang 蚩蚩之氓
chuanbo 傳播
Chuanshan (Wang Fuzhi) 船山
Chunqiu 春秋
Chunqiu fanlu 春秋繁露
Cuixin bao 萃新報
- Dadao hui 大刀會

- dagong 大公
 Da Guan 達觀
 Dalu 大陸
 Da Qing baolü 大清報律
 Da Qing huidian 大清會典
 Da Qing lüli 大清律例
 Da Qing yinshua wu zhuanlü 大清印刷物專律
 daying 大營
 dazhong 大眾
 daifu 大夫
 Danyang 丹陽
 Dan Zhu 丹朱
 dang 黨
 dangzheng 黨政
 daotai 道台
 deyu 德育
 Dibao 氏報
 Di Baoxian 狄葆賢
 Di Chuqing 狄楚青
 Didang 帝黨
 Di Min 帝民
 difang fenquan 地方分權
 difang zizhi 地方自治
 disi zhongzu 第四種族
 dianbao 電報
 Ding Fei 丁費
 Dongfang zazhi 東方雜誌
 dongshi hui 董事會
 Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒
 Duchu yuan 都察院
 Du Zhi 杜摯
 Duanfang 端方

 enyin 恩蔭

 fakan ci 發刊辭
 fakan li 發刊例
 falü zhi guanxi 法律之關係
 fazheng jiangxi suo 法政講習所
 fang'an 方案
 Fang Rongjun 方容均
 feitu 匪徒
 Feng Guifen 馮桂芬
 fengjian 封建
 Feng Tingzhi 馮挺之
 fu 府
 Funü shibao 婦女時報

 Gan Long 甘龍
 ganlu guoyou 干路國有
 gaodeng guomin 高等國民
 gedang 革黨
 geming zhi dang 革命之黨
 genju zhi di 根據之地
 gong/Gong 公
 gongchan 公產
 gongdao 公道
 gongde 公德
 gonghao gongge 公好公惡
 gonghe 共和
 Gongju shangshu 公車上書
 Gongli shu 公理書
 gonglun 公論
 gongmin 公民
 gongmin shehui 公民社會
 gongping 公平
 gongshi gongfei 公事公非
 gongtang 公堂
 gongquan 公權
 gongyi 公議
 gongzhong 公眾
 Gu Fen 孤憤
 Gu Yanwu 顧炎武
 guan 官
 Guan 管
 guanbao 官報
 guanbi minfan 官逼民反
 guanquan 官權
 Guanshan 官山
 guanzhen 官箴
 guanzhi 官制
 guanzhi gaige 官制改革
 guanzhi xingzheng 官治行政
 Guanzhi yi 官治議
 gungun zhugong 袞袞諸公
 guogu 國故
 Guohui qingyuan daibiao tuan 國會請願代表團
 Guohui qingyuan yundong 國會請願運動
 guojia 國家
 guomin 國民
 Guomin gongbao 國民公報
 guomin gongsi quanli 國民公私利
 guomin jiaoyu 國民教育

guomin quanti 國民全體
Guomin ribao 國民日報
 Guomin xianzheng hui 國民憲政會

Guo Songtao 郭嵩燾
 guoti 國體
 guoyue xianfa 國約憲法

hanjian 漢奸
Hankou bao 漢口報
 Hangzhou guomin jukuan hui
 杭州國民拒款會

haodu 好賭
 haojie 毫傑
 haopiao 好嫖
 haoshi zhi tu 好事之徒
 heshang 和尚
 He Qi 何啓
 Hong 洪

Hongfan 洪範
 Hu Liyuan 胡禮垣
 Hu Ma 胡馬
 Hu Shi 胡適

Huan 桓
 Huang Hao 黃皓
 Huang Renzhi 黃任之
 Huang Yanpei 黃炎培
 Huang Yuansheng 黃遠生
 Huang Yuanyong 黃遠庸
 Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲
 huangzu neige 皇祖內閣
 Huang Zunxian 黃遵憲
 Hui (journalist) 灰
 Hui (emperor) 惠
Huibao 匯報
 huidang 會黨

jihe 集合
jinan ribao 濟南日報
 jinü 妓女
 Ji Ran 計然
 jia 家
 jia lixian 假立憲
 jiashu zhi guanxi 家屬之關係
 jia tianxia 家天下
 jianguan 諫官
 Jian He 鍵翻
 jianyan zhuchen 諫言諸臣

Jiang Ruizao 蔣瑞藻
 Jiangsu jiaoyu zonghui 江蘇教育總會

Jiangsu tielu xiehui 江蘇鐵路協會
 jiaofei 教匪
 jiaoyang 教養
 jiaoyu 教育
 jinshi 進士
 Jintian 金田
 Jing 景

Jingbao 京報
 Jiu Jiu 九九
 jiu shehui 舊社會
 jiuwang jiaoyu 救亡教育
 juren 舉人
 juesuan 決算
 jueyi jiguan 決議機關
 junchen shangxia 君臣上下
 junguo yiti 君國一體
 junmin xiangzheng 君民相爭
 junquan 君權
 junxian 郡縣
 junzheng 君政
 junzhu 君主
 junzhu lixian 君主立憲
 junzi 君子

Kai Fang 開方
 Kang Youwei 康有為
 Kaocha zhengzhi guan 考察政治館

lanlie zhi shen 濫劣之紳
 lansong 攬訟
 laobaixing 老百姓
 laochen 老臣
 Lao Han 老漢
 Lei Fen 雷奮
 Leng 冷
 Lengxue 冷血
 Li 離
 Li (journalist) 立
 li 里
 Li Houyou 李厚佑
 lihua zhuanxiu ke 里化專修科
Liji 禮記
 limin 黎民
 Li Pingshu 李平書
 lishou 黎首

- lishu 黎庶
 lita zhi nian 利他之念
 Li Yuerui 李岳瑞
 Lizhou 黎洲
 Li Zicheng 李自成
 Lian Po 廉頗
 liangmin 良民
 Liang Qichao 梁啓超
 Liang Xingshi 梁星使
 lieshen 劣紳
 Lin Baishui 林白水
 Lin Kanghou 林康侯
 liumin 流民
 Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵
 Lujun bu 陸軍部
 lukuang xiehui 路礦協會
 lüshi 閩師
 Lüshi chunqiu 呂氏春秋
 luanmin 亂民
 lunchang 倫常
 Luo Xiaogao 羅孝高
- Ma Jianzhong 馬建忠
 Ma Liang 馬良
 Ma Su 馬謖
 Ma Xiangbo 馬相伯
 maoxian jinqu zhi jingshen 冒險
 進取之精神
 Meng Sen 孟森
 Meng Zhaochang 孟昭常
 Min (journalist) 民
 Min (journalist) 岷
 min 民
 Minbao 民報
 minben sixiang 民本思想
 mindang 民黨
 Minhu ribao 民呼日報
 minjian shehui 民間社會
 minli 民力
 Minli ribao 民立日報
 minqi 民氣
 minqing 民情
 minquan 民權
 minxin 民心
 Minxu ribao 民吁日報
 minyi 民議
 Minying zhaoxiang guan 民影照
 相館
 Minzheng bu 民政部
- minzhi wei kai 民知未開
 minzhi yi kai 民知已開
 minzhu 民主
 minzhu lixian 民主立憲
 Mo Di 墨翟
 Nanshe 南社
 Nanxue hui 南學會
 Neige guanbao 內閣官報
 nüwu 女巫
 Ou Jujia 歐矩甲
 Pan Geng 盤庚
 panzei 叛賊
 pifu 匹夫
 piping 批評
 pianwen 駢文
 Pingdeng ge 平等閣
 pingfen 平分
 pingmin 平民
 Pingzi 平子
 Pulushi difang zizhi xingzheng-
 shuo 普魯士地方自治行政說
 Qi 齊
 Qianming yundong 簽明運動
 Qiangxue bao 強學報
 qinding xianfa 欽定憲法
 Qingliu 清流
 qingxiang ju 清鄉局
 qingyi 清議
 Qingyi bao 清議報
 Qu Yuan 屈原
 Quanguo lukuang zonghui 全國
 路礦總會
 quanli 權利
 quanli xuanyan 權利宣言
 qun 群
 qunxue 群學
 qunzhong 群眾
 rengen 人格
 renjian 人間
 renmin zhi chengdu wei jige 人民
 之程度未及格
 renmin de quanli 人民的權利
 renmin zhi chengdu weizu 人民
 之程度未足

- renmin zuozhu 人民作主
renquan 人權
Renquan zhi xuanyan 人權之宣言
renren 人人
Riben guozhi 日本國志
Riben mingzhi bianzheng kao
日本明治變政考
Riben shumu zhi 日本書目志
Riji 日記
Rizhi lu 日知錄
Rong Hong 容閔
- sanda ziyou 三大自由
Sandian hui 三點會
Sanhe hui 三合會
sanlao 三老
sanquan fenli 三權分立
sanwen 散文
sefu 番夫
Shangbao 商報
shangguan 上官
shangjie 商界
Shanghai shangtuan 上海商團
Shanghai xinbao 上海新報
Shang Jun 商君
shangliu shehui 上流社會
shangren 商人
Shangshu 尚書
Shangwu yinshu guan 商物印書館
shangxia yixin 上下一心
Shang Yang 商鞅
Shangyu 上諭
shangzhong shehui 上中社會
shehui gongzhong 社會公眾
shelun 社論
Shenbao 申報
Shen Buhai 申不害
shendong 紳董
shenjie 紳界
shenli 紳立
shenmin 紳民
shenpi 紳痞
shenshang shishu 紳商士庶
shenshi 紳士
Shenzhou ribao 神州日報
sheng 升
Sheng Xuanhuai 盛宣懷
shengyuan 生員
Shibao 時報
- shi, nong, gong, shang gejie 士農
公商個界
shifu cizhang 詩賦詞章
shijie sixiang 世界思想
Shijing 詩經
Shili gongfa quanshu 實理公法全
書
Shi Liangcai 史量才
shimin shehui 市民社會
shiping 時評
Shiwu bao 時務報
Shiwu ribao 時務日報
shiwu wenti 時務文體
Shujing 書經
shuli 書吏
Shusanmin 暨三民
shuyuan 書院
shuzheng gongzhu yulun 庶政公
諸輿論
Shun 舜
si 私
side 私德
sishi 私事
sishu gailiang hui 私塾改良會
siwenbailei 斯文敗類
sixin 私心
sudang 素黨
- Tai Fu 太傅
Tan Sitong 譚嗣同
Tang Caichang 唐才常
Tang Juedun 湯覺頓
Tang Xu 湯緒
Tang Zhen 湯震
Tao Maoli 陶懋立
tidiao 提調
tiyu 體諭
Tian Chi 天池
tianfu 天賦
tianxia gongfa 天下公法
tianxia wei gong 天下為公
tianxia zhi gong 天下之公
Tongmeng hui 同盟會
tuodu 拓都
- waibao 外報
wangu shenshi 頑固紳士
wanmin 萬民
wangguo zhi min 亡國之民

- Wang Sankui 王三槐
 Wang Tao 王韜
 weisheng 衛生
 weiyuan 委員
 Wen 文
 wenan 文案
 wenhua shuiping taidi 文化水平
 太低
 wenming guojia 文明國家
 wenming shehui 文明社會
 Wenming shuju 文明書局
 wenming zhenglu 文明爭路
 wenren 文人
 Wu 武
 Wu Gang 鄔鋼
 Wuhan shangtuan 武漢商團

 Xijiang 西江
 Xilou 息樓
 Xi Song 惜誦
 Xizhai 習齋
 xiadeng shehui 下等社會
 xiadeng zhi ren 下等之人
 xialiu shehui 下流社會
 xian 縣
 Xianfa dagang 憲法大綱
 xianjue zhi tu 先覺之徒
 Xianyou hui 憲友會
 Xianzheng jiangxi hui 憲政講習會
 Xianzheng qicheng hui 憲政期成會
 Xianzheng yanjiu hui 憲政研究會
 Xianzheng yubei hui 憲政豫備會
 Xianzheng zazhi 憲政雜誌
 xiang 鄉
 Xiangbao 湘報
 xiangcun tuanbao 鄉村團保
 xiangguan 鄉官
 xianglao 鄉老
 xiangsui 鄉遂
 Xiangxue bao 湘學報
 xiangyu 鄉愚
 xiangyue 鄉約
 Xiao 笑
 xiaoren 小人
 Xiaoshuo shibao 小說時報
 xiecong zhe 脅從者
 xieyue xianfa 協約憲法
 Xinbao 新報

 Xinmin congbao 新民叢報
 xinmin wenti 新民文體
 Xin Shi 心史
 xinwen 新聞
 Xinwen bao 新聞報
 Xinzheng 新政
 xingli 性理
 Xiong Xiling 熊希齡
 xiucai 秀才
 Xu Binbin 徐彬彬
 Xu Fosu 徐佛蘇
 Xu Jishe 徐繼畬
 Xu Qian 徐謙
 Xu Qin 徐勤
 Xu Zhiyan 許指嚴
 Xuan 宣
 Xue Hong 雪鴻
 xuejie 學界
 xuetao 學堂
 Xunhuan ribao 循環日報

 Yan Fu 嚴復
 yanguan 言官
 yanlu 言路
 yanlun 言論
 yangjiao 洋教
 Yang Tingdong 楊廷棟
 Yao 堯
 Yaojiang 姚江
 yaoni 么匿
 Ye Xiaan 葉遐菴
 yiban renmin 一般人民
 yi gong wei zhu 以公為主
 yiming zhi wei 一命之微
 yishi hui 議事會
 yishi quan 議事權
 Yishu huibian 譯書匯編
 yiwu 義務
 yixinyiyi 一心一意
 Yi Ya 易牙
 yinzhi 飲至
 Yingguo difang zhengzhi lun 英國
 地方政治論
 Yinghuan zhilue 瀛環志略
 Yongjia 永嘉
 Youchuan bu 郵傳部
 youmin 莠民
 yousi 有司

- Youxue yibian 遊學譯編
 Youzheng shuju 有正書局
 youzhi zhi shi 有志之士
 Yubei lixian gonghui 豫備立憲公會
 yulu 語路
 yulun 輿論
 yumin 愚民
 yumin zhengce 愚民政策
 yusuan 豫算
 Yu Youren 于佑任
 Yuan chen 原臣
 Yuan jun 原君
 yuanqi 元氣
 yunyun zhi zhong 芸芸之眾

 Zao yaoshu yaoyan 造妖書妖言
 Zengzi 曾子
 Zhang Binglin 章炳麟
 Zhang Jian 張謇
 Zhang Renjun 張人駿
 Zhang Xiang 張香
 Zhejiang chao 浙江潮
 zhen 鎮
 zheng 正
 zhengdang zhengzhi 政黨政治
 Zheng Guanying 鄭觀應
 zhengfu 政府
 zhengjiao 政教

 Zhenglun 政論
 zhengti 政體
 Zhengwen she 政文社
 Zhengzhi guanbao 政治官報
 zhigao shiyuan 志高識遠
 zhiyu 知諭
 zhongdeng shehui 中等社會
 zhongfa 眾法
 Zhongguo zhi ti 中國之體
 zhongliu shehui 中流社會
 zhongren 眾人
 Zhongwai jiwen 中外記文
 Zhongwai ribao 中外日報
 zhudong zhe 主動者
 Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮
 zhuhou 諸侯
 Zhuang 躉
 Zhuang Zi 莊子
 zisi zhi jian 自私之見
 zisi zili 自私自利
 ziwei zhi si 自爲之私
 ziyi ju 資議局
 Zizheng yuan 資政院
 zizhi 自治
 zizhi jiangxi suo 自治講習所
 zizhi li 自治力
 zizhi xingzheng 自治行政
 Zou Yan 騶衍

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. Ding and Zhao, p. 336; Ge, pp. 117–18.
2. I use the terms *journalist* and *publicist* interchangeably in this book since late Qing “journalists,” as we understand the term today—reporters on the news—were also publicists—commentators on public affairs.
3. Chartier, *Cultural History*, pp. 14, 48, and “Le monde comme représentation,” *Annales E.S.C.* 36 (1981): 191–209, quoted in Popkin, *Media and Revolution*, p. 20. On cultural history, see Hunt, *New Cultural History, Politics, Culture, and Class*, and “History Beyond Social Theory.” The methodology of this study has also been influenced by Pierre Bourdieu’s work on the sociology of culture and politics. See *Language and Symbolic Power*, pp. 127–36, 163–251, and *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, pp. 72–95, 159–97; Bourdieu and Passeron, pp. 3–68.
4. Warner, pp. xii, 10.
5. Daniel Moran (p. 1) uses the phrase “history from the middle” in describing the role of periodicals and books in culture. On studies of the press in France, see Popkin, *Revolutionary News*; Censer and Popkin; Chisick. On Russia, see McReynolds; on America, see, e.g., Schudson.
6. This scholarship provides much of the background for the present study. Among English language sources, see, e.g., Wright; Gasster, *Chinese Intellectuals*; Esherick; Fincher; Lust; Chang P’eng-yüan, “Constitutionalists”; Chang Hao, *Liang Ch’i-ch’ao*; P. Huang, *Liang Ch’i-ch’ao*; Chu.
7. See, e.g., P. Cohen, *Discovering History*, pp. 9–96, for a critique of the dichotomies of tradition/modernity and Western impact/Chinese responses, in particular.
8. Writing on the link between press and politics, Robert E. Park (p. 22) claimed that “the newspaper is a political institution.” See also Moran, pp. 11–18, on Germany; Popkin, *Revolutionary News*, on France; and, on England, Curran. On the

press and revolution, see Popkin, *Revolutionary News*, and *Media and Revolution*.

9. Popkin, *Media and Revolution*, pp. 13-15; Eisenstein, p. 155; Liang, *Liang Ren-gong*, p. 4.

10. The reform of the official system had been promised by the dynasty in the September 6, 1906, edict on constitutional preparation. Gugong, 1: 44. On the journalists' reaction, see, e.g., "Lun jinhou," *Shibao* (hereafter *SB*), December 5, 1906. The journalists complained that the government had only created one new board, Posts and Communications (Youchuan bu), while making no significant changes to any of the other government departments. At the same time, "The authorities rushed to centralize the boards of War [Lujun bu] and Finance [Duzhi bu], placing them in the hands of Manchus." "Gaige guanzhi," *SB*, January 26, 1907.

11. See, e.g., Chang P'eng-yüan, "Background," p. 65; Gasster, "Reform and Revolution," pp. 67-96.

12. Chüzō Ichiko (p. 311) distinguishes three kinds of gentry within the constitutionalist party; Chang P'eng-yüan ("Background," pp. 69-70) describes differences between "progressive" and "conservative" constitutionalists. Chang has also written one article on *Shibao*, but his conclusions are mostly drawn from Bao Tianxiao's memoirs, and he does not discuss at length *Shibao's* position within the broader constitutional movement. See "*Shibao*." See also Chang Yu-fa on various groups of constitutionalists; Hou, for a detailed treatment of the constitutionalist movement.

13. On the revolutionaries and the concept of the middle level of society, see, e.g., Chen Xulu, pp. 257-76.

14. Fang Hanqi, *Baokan shi*, p. 140.

15. James Carey characterizes the press's cultural role as the "ritual view of communication." According to this view, communication is a process whereby a shared culture is created, modified, and transformed. *Communication as Culture*, pp. 18-34, 43-65, "Journalism History," pp. 3-5, 27.

16. These definitions of culture appear in Chartier, *Cultural History*, p. 47; Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob, p. 218.

17. The notion of appropriation, one of the cornerstones of a cultural historical approach, refers to the ways in which an individual or group uses an intellectual theme or a cultural form. See, in particular, Chartier, *Cultural History*, pp. 13, 35.

18. The term *minquan* as it was used in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in China is difficult to render into English. It is frequently translated as "popular rights," the term used for the name of the *Jiyū minken* movement in Meiji Japan in the 1880s, or as "democracy" when it refers to one of Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles. Although "popular power" is not a satisfactory translation either, it is at least free of the connotations of "popular rights" or "democracy." An explanation of the specific definition of the term as it was used at this time is given in Chapter 3. For a discussion of the meaning of *gong*, see Mizoguchi, "Kōshi kinen," pp. 19-38.

19. Lydia Liu, who claims that "the modern intellectual tradition in China began with translation, adaption, appropriation, and other interlingual practices in relation to the West," explains that meanings "are not so much 'transformed' when concepts pass from the source language into the target language as (re)invented within the local environment of the latter" (p. 165).

20. Calhoun, "Civil Society," p. 268. For other definitions, see Arato and Cohen, *Civil Society*; Taylor; Keane.

21. Habermas, "Public Sphere," p. 50. See also *Structural Transformation*. On various interpretations and uses of the public sphere, see Calhoun, *Habermas*.

22. On the civil society / public sphere debate in relation to imperial China, see,

e.g., de Bary, *Confucianism*. In relation to the late Qing, see Rowe, "Public Sphere"; Rankin, "Origins"; and "Symposium." On the republican period, see Strand; on the contemporary, He and Kelly. Civil society in East Asian countries, traditional and modern, was also the subject of a symposium of the Joint Committee for European–North American Cooperation in East Asian Studies, held in Paris in May 1991, Montreal in October 1992, and Hong Kong in August 1993.

23. On the problem of applying Western models to other societies and China in particular, see Lee, pp. 165–78; Calhoun, "Civil Society"; Wong; P. Huang, "'Public Sphere'/'Civil Society'"; and Hui and Lee, pp. 598–605.

24. In that the government had no role in the press, the middle realm differs from what Philip Huang has called the "third realm"—an arena in which both state and society are active. See "'Public Sphere'/'Civil Society.'"

25. Charles Taylor describes the historical development of civil society in this way (p. 100).

26. *Ibid.*, p. 95. John Keane (p. 14) defines civil society as "an aggregate of institutions whose members are engaged primarily in a complex of nonstate activities—economic and cultural production, household life and voluntary associations—and who in this way preserve and transform their identity by exercising all sorts of pressures and controls upon state institutions."

27. Arato and Cohen, "Politics," pp. 138–39. They have also written that civil society was "institutionalized and generalized through laws, and especially subjective rights, that stabilize social differentiation." *Civil Society*, p. ix.

28. Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, pp. 59, 74.

CHAPTER I

1. Similarly, Michael Warner (p. 43) describes a new paradigm of print and a new paradigm of politics appearing together and making each other mutually intelligible in the context of eighteenth-century American republicanism.

2. For a discussion of the relation between print technology and the cultural meaning of printedness, see *ibid.*, pp. 5–7.

3. See Ge, pp. 20–54; Mei, p. 503; Lin, pp. 11–19. *Jingbao* copied central government edicts and memorials and printed excerpts from local gazettes produced in provincial capitals. *Zhengzhi guanbao* performed many of the same functions but also recorded constitutional developments, as did *Neige guanbao*.

4. On the introduction of new printing methods from the West into China, see Zhang Jinglu, pp. 352–61. On the history of printing in general, see Mei, pp. 444–46, and on printing and the press, pp. 27–28.

5. On the foreign enclaves in Shanghai, see R. Wagner, esp. pp. 429, 441.

6. Anderson, pp. 40–49.

7. On the relevance of Benedict Anderson's model of the nation to China, see Duara, "Bifurcating Linear History," pp. 780–84. See also his "Deconstructing the Chinese Nation."

8. Mei, p. 528; Nathan, "Late Ch'ing Press," pp. 1289–90.

9. Carey, *Communication as Culture*, p. 16. The first Chinese language newspaper was *A General Monthly Record*, established by a British missionary in Malaya, William Milne, and distributed among overseas Chinese of Southeast Asia from 1815 to 1828. Nathan, "Late Ch'ing Press," p. 1289.

10. The mercantile economy of the early seventeenth century was one of the sources of European newspapers. Moran, p. 10.

11. Britton, p. 81.

12. Hu Daojing, pp. 308–9.
13. Quoted in R. Wagner, p. 433. Wagner argues, nonetheless, that *Shenbao* played a key role in creating a Chinese public sphere.
14. Hu Daojing, pp. 310–12; Xu and Xu (p. 105) describe how the lead essay in *Shenbao* changed in 1905. Whereas before this date it was called *lunshuo* (an essay), afterward it was called *pinglun* (commentary). Terry Narramore, in his dissertation on *Shenbao* (pp. 46–48, 66–67), claims the lead essays were “long and turgid” compared with those in *Shibao*. Perry Link (p. 97) describes how, in the early-to-mid 1870s, “it became apparent that the best means of increasing the circulation [of *Shenbao*] was to sacrifice the newspaper’s other avowed goal, viz., faithful and detailed reporting.” Mary Rankin stresses the importance of *Shenbao* as a source of national, regional, and foreign news and describes how it contributed to the development and expansion of “reconstruction public spheres.” *Elite Activism*, pp. 141–66.
15. Hu Daojing, p. 314.
16. The other *minbao* include *Zhaowen xinbao* (New enlightened journal), founded in Hankou in 1872; *Huibao* (Repository), founded by one of Di Baoxian’s future collaborators in the Independent Army uprising, Rong Hong (Yung Wing), in Shanghai in 1873; *Xinbao* (New journal), founded in Shanghai in 1876; and *Guangbao* (Guangzhou journal), created in Guangzhou in 1886. Ge, p. 95. On *Xunhuan ribao* in particular, see P. Cohen, *Wang T’ao*, p. 77.
17. Yao, p. 259. Daniel Moran writes, for example, that it was under the pressure of war and revolution in the West that “newspapers were transformed from banal, parochial chronicles of commerce and court life into the essential organs of political opinion in the nineteenth century” (p. 11).
18. Lao, *SB*, June 27, 1932.
19. Yao, p. 262; Ge, pp. 101–3. On Liang Qichao’s first journalistic essay, see He Bingran, “Liang Qichao.”
20. Ge, pp. 103–4.
21. Figures based on Chang Hao, p. 333; Mei, p. 528; Sang, p. 238.
22. The character of the *shelun* was defined in the inaugural regulations for *Shibao*, “*Shibao fakan ci*,” *SB*, June 12, 1904.
23. Liang, “Lun baoguan.” Other influential essays in the same journal, such as “China’s Weakness Is the Product of Its Efforts at Self-Protection” (“Lun Zhongguo jiruo youyu fangbi”) and “An Opinion on Eliminating China’s Bad Habits” (“Zhongguo chuhai yi”), further warned against the dangers of the national situation. An earlier *Shenbao* editorial, from August 18, 1873, establishes the same link between the prosperity of a nation and the success of its newspapers. See R. Wagner, pp. 433–34.
24. “*Shibao fakan ci*,” *SB*, June 12, 1904.
25. Other reform journals founded in 1897 and 1898 in various regions of China echoed these themes, including *Zhixin bao* (The China reformer), *Shiwu bao*’s affiliate in Macao, Yan Fu’s *Guowen bao* (National news) in Tianjin, and the two newspapers edited in the Changsha region by Tang Caichang, *Xiangxue bao* (Hunan study journal) and *Xiang bao* (Hunan journal).
26. In the summer of 1898, for example, excerpts from *Shiwu bao* were integrated into the *Jingbao*. On the gazettes, see Britton, pp. 108–9.
27. Ge, p. 139. Chang Hao, “Intellectual Change,” p. 334.
28. On Guangxu granting the press legal status, see *Xinwen jie*, p. 127. Guangxu’s decision to make *Shiwu bao* an official paper prompted Wang Kangnian to change the name of the newspaper he had founded on May 5, 1898, from *Shiwu ribao* to

Zhongwai ribao in August 1898 in order to distinguish it from *Shiwu bao*, which would now be under Kang's direction. Wang was not a supporter of the Hundred Days' Reforms. Hu Daojing, pp. 326–27.

29. The examination reform in June 1898 also abolished the eight-legged examination essay form (*baguwen*) and redefined the nature of the examinations. With the coup in September, however, the examination reforms were overturned, and the eight-legged essay reinstated. Yao, p. 266.

30. Fang Hanqi, *Baokan shi*, p. 594. On the history of this statute, which dates to the Tang Dynasty and underwent significant modification under the Qing Dynasty Kangxi emperor, see Ting, p. 8.

31. Ge, pp. 139–40.

32. The entire edict is translated in the appendix to Reynolds, *Xinzheng Revolution*, p. 202.

33. Ge, p. 139.

34. *Qingyi* is most often rendered in English as “pure discussion” or “public opinion.” I find both these translations inadequate, however, “pure discussion” because it is virtually meaningless in English and “public opinion” because it misrepresents the meaning of the Chinese term. The notion of *qingyi* is imbued with the values of Confucian morality and ethical uprightness, which is not reflected in the English “public opinion.” *Qingyi* also represents the opinion of bureaucrats—albeit those of the middle or lower level rather than the higher, but bureaucrats nonetheless—and this dimension of its meaning is not at all suggested by the English word “public.” I have therefore chosen to translate *qingyi* as “righteous elite opinion” in an effort to incorporate the ethical and elitist connotations of the Chinese term. Elman's translation as “voices of remonstrance” is another more acceptable alternative. See *Classicism*, p. 276.

35. *Xinwen jie*, pp. 94–97.

36. Xiong, *Minzhu*, pp. 302–23.

37. *Xinwen jie*, p. 122. On changes in Liang's thought, see also Li Huaxing; Zhou.

38. On Liang and the idea of *dangbao*, see Zhang Kun, pp. 196–208. On later contacts between Chinese and Japanese journalists, see *Gaimushō*, “Ni-shin.”

39. On factions, see Elman, *Classicism*, pp. 276–90; Wakeman, “Autonomy,” pp. 41–42.

40. “*Shibao fakan li*,” *SB*, June 12, 1904. Once the republic was established and true political parties formed, Liang would be able to avoid the semantic confusion of appealing to both the positive and negative resonances of the term *dang* by distinguishing between political parties (*zhengdang*), which represented the public interest, and historical cliques in China (*youdang*), which were selfish and partisan. Liang, “Jinggao zhengdang,” pp. 2–8.

41. Liang, “*Qingyi bao*,” p. 47.

42. See, e.g., Park, p. 15; Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, p. 183, and “Public Sphere,” p. 53.

43. On the American press, see Lippmann, p. 435; on the British, Park, pp. 13–15; on the French, Popkin, *Revolutionary News*, pp. 115–16; and on the Japanese, Huffman, pp. 140–42.

44. Habermas, “Public Sphere,” p. 53.

45. Lippmann, p. 436.

46. Huffman, p. 142.

47. Habermas, “Public Sphere,” p. 53. On the Russian press, see McReynolds.

48. *Zhongguo shehui*, pp. 573–74.

49. Fang Hanqi, *Baokan shi*, p. 273.

50. Xiong, *Minzhu*, pp. 307–15.
51. *Guangxu chao Donghua lu*, translated in the appendix to Reynolds, *Xinzheng Revolution*, pp. 201–4.
52. The setback occurred on September 20, when a young radical, Wu Yue, attempted to deter the constitutional commission's progress by blowing up the train that was taking the mission out of Beijing. Two members of the mission were slightly injured; Wu Yue was killed.
53. Gugong, 1: 43, 44.
54. On *Dongfang zazhi*, see He Bingran, "Dongfang zazhi," pp. 178–219. A number of late Qing newspapers, including *Dongfang zazhi* and *Shibao*, were given English or, in some cases, French names. This practice attests both to the erudition of the papers' founders, who were often students of Western learning, and to their desire to situate these new Chinese journals within the context of the international press. In this book, if a newspaper had a Western-language title, this title is given in quotation marks after the newspaper's Chinese name. Otherwise, the translations of Chinese newspaper titles are my own and appear without quotation marks.
55. Yao, p. 263.
56. See Munakata, p. 460. Munakata was a member of the Chinese study group founded by Arao Kiyoshi in the late 1880s that eventually became the Nis-Shin Bōeki Kenkyūjo, the precursor of the Tōa Dōbunkai (East Asian Common Culture Association), set up by Arao and his associates in 1889. Hashikawa, pp. 332–33. Munakata was also the editor of *Hanbao*, the Tōa Dōbunkai's Chinese-language daily in Hankou, which he had founded in 1896. See Huang Fu-ch'ing, p. 262; Reynolds, "Training," p. 231.
57. According to a February 15, 1909, document, for example, *Shibao* received 200 Mexican dollars from the Japanese to help pay its telegraph bills. *Gaimushō*, "Nichi-Ro."
58. Fang Hanqi, *Xinwen shiye*, p. 758.
59. On the *Subao* case, see Hu Daojing, pp. 328–31; Shimada, pp. 18–19; Rankin, *Early Chinese Revolutionaries*, pp. 85–95. The Mixed Court was composed of a Chinese magistrate and a foreign assessor on the bench. It had extended jurisdiction not only to cases of a "mixed nature" but also to cases in which no foreign interests were involved. Ting, p. 35.
60. Fang Hanqi, *Baokan shi*, pp. 481–93; Hu Daojing, pp. 347–50. On the revolutionary press in general, see Fang Hanqi, *Baokan shi*, pp. 474–99; Ono Shinji. For excellent essays on most of the individual journals of the 1911 period, see Ding Shouhe.
61. According to both Hu Daojing (p. 335) and Fang Hanqi (*Baokan shi*, p. 274), *Shibao* was the most successful of the reform newspapers founded in Shanghai in this period.

CHAPTER 2

1. Fang Hanqi, *Baokan shi*, p. 276. Luo Xiaogao was one of Kang Youwei's thirteen close disciples. Others included Liang Qichao, Ou Jujia, Luo Boya, Zhang Zhiru, Li Jingtong, and Tang Caichang. Koseki, p. 21.
2. Ding and Zhao, pp. 336, 337.
3. See, e.g., Chang P'eng-yüan, "Shibao"; Min Jie, "Shibao."
4. Liang, "Yadian."
5. Jiang Ruizao, *SB*, March 16, 1909.

6. Zhu Chuanyu (p. 23) describes how Chen Leng continued to refuse official appointments even after the republic was established.

7. Zhongguo shehui, pp. 575-76; Hu Daojing, p. 335.

8. Bao, *Chuanyinglou*, pp. 321, 330; Li Shengping, p. 265.

9. Zhongguo shehui, p. 573.

10. Bao, *Chuanyinglou*, p. 348.

11. Nathan, "Late Ch'ing Press," p. 1288.

12. Quoted in Chang Hao, "Intellectual Change," p. 335.

13. Lei Fen and Chen Leng were both from Songjiang county and would be connected by marriage when Lei married Chen's older sister. Bao, *Chuanyinglou*, p. 411. On the Waseda graduates, see *ibid.*, p. 348; Koseki, p. 21. The Chinese encyclopedia on the press and publishing states that Huang Yuanong attended Chūō daigaku in Japan. Mei, 151. On Lei Yi's experience as translator, see Xiong, *Minzhu*, pp. 307-15. On Di Baoxian's experience, see Fang Hanqi, *Baokan shi*, p. 274.

14. Bao, *Chuanyinglou*, pp. 408-10; Yuan Yiqin, p. 161.

15. Zhongguo shehui, pp. 573-74.

16. Hu Shi, pp. 1-3. On *Shibao* versus its competitors, see Hu Daojing, p. 314; Yan, p. 81; Bao, *Chuanyinglou*, p. 426.

17. Fang Hanqi, *Xinwen shiye*, p. 771; Hu Daojing, p. 326.

18. Mei, pp. 265-66.

19. Wang Hongxiang, pp. 275-79; Zhu, pp. 20-21.

20. Zheng, p. 217.

21. Bao, *Chuanyinglou*, p. 317.

22. "Shibao fakan li."

23. Hu Shi, p. 2.

24. These intellectuals included Gong Zizhen, Wei Yuan, Feng Guifen, and Xue Fucheng. Fang Hanqi, *Baokan shi*, pp. 141-42.

25. On the absorption of Japanese terms into Chinese, see Gao and Liu; Sanetō; Mateer. On Liang Qichao's role in first adopting the new-style language, see Nathan, *Democracy*, p. 40.

26. These comments on style and literary innovation are based in part on *Xinwen jie*, pp. 161-62; Fang Hanqi, *Baokan shi*, pp. 142-45, and *Xinwen shiye*, pp. 770-71.

27. Sang, pp. 238-42. Evelyn Rawski (p. 140) has estimated that in the 1800s 30-40 percent of Chinese men and 2-10 percent of Chinese women may have known how to read and write. More precise statistics must await the development of more refined methodologies.

28. "Shibao fakan li."

29. There is some discrepancy in the sources as to whether *Shibao* was the first paper to have correspondents. Bao Tianxiao (*Chuanyinglou*, p. 320) and Koseki Nobuyuki (p. 23) claim it was, whereas Yuan Yiqin (p. 162) states that *Shenbao* had a Beijing correspondent in 1882. He does concede, however, that with *Shibao* the practice became much more developed.

30. Ye, p. 8.

31. On the reform of *Shenbao*, see *Shenbao*, February 8, 1905; Xu and Xu, pp. 97-112; Narramore, pp. 68-70; Hu Daojing, pp. 314-18. On *Shenbao*'s conservatism, see, e.g., Sang, p. 251; Shen and Yang, p. 73, n. 9. As late as 1911 Japanese consular reports from Shanghai registered *Shenbao* as a paper for officials (*kanryō ha*). *Gaimushō*, "Shinbunshi."

32. A Japanese consular entry of March 6, 1909, claimed that since *Shibao* was the newspaper with the highest circulation in Shanghai, Japan should give it more money. *Gaimushō*, "Nichi-Ro"; "Shanghai ge ribao."

33. Other circulation figures in the Japanese consular report are inconsistent,

however. *Xinwen bao* is recorded as having a circulation of only 11,000, *Shenbao* 10,000, *Shenzhou ribao* 6,000, and *Zhongwai ribao* 11,000. *Gaimushō*, "Shinbushi." Xu Qin's estimate is recorded in Kang, *Baohuang hui*, pp. 374-75. The figures for *Xinmin congbao* appear in Nathan, "Late Ch'ing Press," pp. 1283-84. To put these figures into an international perspective: Jeremy Popkin claims that in the revolutionary period in France, a newspaper could have a substantial public impact with a run as low as 2,000-3,000. *Revolutionary News*, p. 84. In Japan in the same period, however, circulations ran as high as 200,000, although in the late 1880s they had been more like China's 1909 numbers. Huffman, p. 145.

34. Bao, *Chuanyinglou*, p. 425, and "Xinhai," p. 88; *SB*, July 15, 1904.

35. Chang P'eng-yüan, *Liang Qichao*, p. 320; Nathan, "Late Ch'ing Press," pp. 1299-1303.

36. Nathan, "Late Ch'ing Press," pp. 1306-7.

37. Sang, p. 249. The Chinese Imperial Post Office was not founded until 1896. In 1897 the implementation of special newspaper rates that allowed newspapers to be sent on a freight basis significantly decreased the postage for newspapers.

38. This was true of publicists in other nations also. Jeremy Popkin writes that at the time of the French Revolution many French publicists engaged in other activities, such as publishing books, pamphlets, plays, and magazines. *Revolutionary News*, p. 67.

39. Bao, *Chuanyinglou*, pp. 349, 414. The publishing house probably served as the newspaper's major source of funding from 1908 on, when Kang and Liang withdrew their financial support. See the following section, "Independence: Shanghai Constitutionalists and Tokyo Reformists."

40. Zheng, p. 219; Wei, pp. 280-84; Bao, *Chuanyinglou*, pp. 324, 412.

41. On salaries in the early period of journalism, see Nathan, "Late Ch'ing Press," p. 1288.

42. Bao, *Chuanyinglou*, p. 414; Ye, p. 8; Ding and Zhao, pp. 433-44.

43. Bao, *Chuanyinglou*, pp. 312, 331, 351-52. Although the issue of gender in the middle realm is beyond the scope of this study, it is important to note *Shibao's* contribution in this sphere as well. A number of the journalists were committed to developing women's education, and, as mentioned above, the newspaper ran a supplement for women, *Funü Shibao*, from 1912. *Shibao* was, moreover, the only journal to allow women into its offices. Bao, *Chuanyinglou*, p. 419.

44. Zheng, p. 220; Hu Shi, p. 2.

45. Bao, *Chuanyinglou*, p. 424. On advertisements in the late Qing press, see Yao, p. 270.

46. On Di Baoxian, see Britton, p. 115. Other members of the Nanshe, besides Bao, who were at the same time journalists included Song Jiaoren of *Minli bao* and Huang Binghong of *Shenzhou bao*. Bao, "Xinhai," p. 89. On Xu Zhiyan, see Yuan Cangzhou, p. 332.

47. Xilou's role in the broader forum of political debate is comparable to that of the eighteenth-century coffee houses of London or the salons of Paris. For a discussion of the characteristics and function of these coffeehouses and salons, see Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, pp. 31-43. Nor was Xilou the only institution of its kind. At least one other such club existed in Shanghai at this time. The Xiyang tang (Hall of Cherishing Time), established in the homes of *Shenbao's* biggest investors, also provided a place where political activists could gather in 1911. Its members included Tang Shouqian, Zhang Yuanji, Shi Liangcai, and Zhang Jizhi. A more informal institution was the restaurant Douyi chu (All Beneficial Place), where Li Ping-shu frequently invited local self-government activists. "Xinhai Shanghai," p. 101.

48. Bao, *Chuanyinglou*, pp. 407–13.
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 328–33; Bao, “Xinhai,” p. 101. On Li Pingshu, see Pingshu, Ouchu, and Wang.
50. Much of the material in this section appears in Judge, “Factional Function of Print.”
51. Bao, “Xinhai,” p. 87.
52. Zhang Jinglu, 1: 87; Ge, pp. 117–18.
53. Ding and Zhao, p. 446.
54. Chang P’eng-yüan, “*Shibao*,” p. 155.
55. Ding and Zhao, p. 337.
56. The term “kept editor” was used by Walt Whitman to designate a person who would willingly edit the organ of a party or mouthpiece of a school. Quoted in Park, p. 16. Di Baoxian had made his younger brother, Di Baofen (Nanshi), responsible for the newspaper’s finances. Kang, *Baohuang hui*, p. 374.
57. Kang, *Baohuang hui*, pp. 374–76.
58. Although Mai Menghua arrived in China in early 1908 from Japan, together with other representatives of the exiled reformists’ newly founded Political Information Society, he did not become general editor of *Shibao*. Ding and Zhao, pp. 432–33.
59. *Ibid.*, pp. 336–38. The Baohuang hui (Society to Protect the Emperor) was founded in 1898, when Kang and Liang were first driven into exile, and functioned until 1907, when it was transformed into the Citizen’s Constitutional Association (Guomin xianzheng hui). The mandate of the society was to replace the Empress Dowager Cixi and her conservative faction with a constitutional monarchy headed by the young and reform-minded Guangxu emperor.
60. Bao, “Xinhai,” p. 87.
61. Ding and Zhao, p. 432.
62. The magazine *Dalu* was founded in Shanghai on December 9, 1902. After the first two issues it became a bimonthly. Many of its writers and editors had been overseas students in Japan, and a number of them had been involved in *Guomin bao* while living in Tokyo, including Lei Fen, Yang Tingdong, and Chen Leng, who served as an editor. In Shanghai, *Dalu*’s newspaper offices were located on Sima lu in the French concession, the same street where the *Shibao* offices would later be established. The newspaper stopped publication in January 1906, after 47 issues had appeared. Criticism of Kang and Liang was first voiced in *Dalu*’s sixth issue, which included editorials entitled “A Critique of the Criticisms in the *New People’s Miscellany*” (“*Xinmin congbao* piping zhi piping”) and “The Value of the Writings of Guangdongese Provincial Examination Degree Holder Liang Qichao” (“Lun Guangdong juren Liang Qichao shubao zhe jiazhi”). These attacks were made in response to a critique of a number of newspapers that had appeared in *Xinmin congbao* no. 26, which had been particularly disdainful of *Dalu*. Huang Mo, pp. 138–41.
63. Xiong, *Minzhu*, pp. 363–73.
64. Bao, *Chuanyinglou*, p. 328. For other examples of revolutionaries who worked closely with constitutionalists before the revolution, such as Qiu Fengjia in Guangdong and Meng Jing in Guangxi, see Geng, “Guohui,” p. 59.
65. Jiang Zao nüshi, *SB*, August 26, 1907. It is possible that Jiang Zao is the journalist Jiang Ruizao, adopting a female identity. I have been unable to verify this, however. “Duiyu Qiu Jin,” *SB*, September 1, 1907; Bao (Xiao), “Gongdao zizai,” *SB*, October 29, 1908.
66. Zeng, p. 305; Wang Hongxiang, pp. 275–79.
67. Ding and Zhao, p. 337.
68. See, e.g., *SB*, October 28, 1904; December 12, 1904. Min Jie, “Shehui yundong,” p. 89.

69. Zhang Kaiyuan, pp. 188, 175.
70. Bastid, pp. 25–26.
71. Kang, *Baohuang hui*, p. 375. Zhang Jian's biographer is also sympathetic to this view, stating that *Shibao* abruptly rejected the influence of Liang Qichao's Political Information Society and aligned itself with Zhang Jian. Zhang Kaiyuan, p. 188.
72. E.g., *SB*, October 25, 1909.
73. Bao, *Chuanyinglou*, p. 412.
74. Whereas *Xinmin congbao* had emphasized moral renewal as the key to national regeneration, the *Zhengwen* she took a more pragmatic and institutional approach to political and social change. This is reflected in the major objectives of the new society, outlined in the first issue of *Zhenglun*: to establish a national parliamentary system, a responsible government, a legal system, local self-government, and to maintain China's control over its foreign affairs. *Zhenglun* no. 1 (1907).
75. Bao, *Chuanyinglou*, p. 413.
76. Ding and Zhao, p. 378.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 429.
78. Bao Tianxiao claims that Di was not a political risk taker. *Chuanyinglou*, p. 349. Despite *Shibao's* refusal to endorse the *Zhengwen* she publicly, Shanghai news editor Lei Fen independently joined the Chinese branch of the organization. He attended the March 3, 1908, Shanghai meeting held by *Zhengwen* she representatives Mai Menghua, Ma Xiangbo, and Xu Fosu. Lei remained a member of the society until it was dissolved by Yuan Shikai in August 1908. Ding and Zhao, p. 442. Zhang Jian's biographer suggests that both Lei and Di Baoxian were members of the *Zhengwen* she's social relations department, but this seems highly unlikely. Zhang Kaiyuan, p. 188, n. 1.
79. Ding and Zhao, pp. 433, 452.
80. Mei, p. 378.
81. Ding and Zhao, pp. 446, 433–34.
82. According to Fang Hanqi, immediately following the 1898 coup, Kang and Liang were able to raise more significant sums of money than they were after about 1904. Fang claims that in 1899, when the *Baohuang hui* was first formed, the exiled reformists received contributions of more than \$1 million. Fang Hanqi, *Baokan shi*, p. 580.
83. Kang, *Baohuang hui*, p. 374.
84. Ding and Zhao, pp. 433–35. Although detailed plans for the financing and planning of *Hankou bao* had been worked out, the newspaper was never established. It was one of a number of newspapers that Kang and Liang had hoped to found. Others include a newspaper promoting national essence, which Liang had approached Huang Zunxian about establishing in 1902; a Buddhist newspaper Kang had hoped to start in India in 1903; a Beijing newspaper Liang had hoped to found in 1906 with Yang Du, Jiang Guanyun, and Xu Foqin; and two large dailies that were to have been established in 1911 in Shanghai and Beijing. Ding and Zhao, pp. 363, 435, 542; Fang Hanqi, *Xinwen shiye*, pp. 678–79.

CHAPTER 3

1. Schwartz, "Tradition Versus Modernity," p. 80.
2. Some of the editorials refer to the traditional relationship between ruler and ruled as China's ancient constitutionalism. See, e.g., "Xu Qian," *SB*, November 29,

1911. This ancient constitutionalism that was expounded upon in the Confucian *Analects* and the *Mencius* differed greatly from the Western concept. Rather than a specific document or a core body of laws that define and delineate government activities (something that is generally linked to the primacy of law), it was more a loose social contract according to which the people recognize the ruler's right to govern and the ruler governs for the benefit of the people, with the unity between ruler and ruled resting in the confidence that each side places in the other.

3. Other writers who used *minben* theory include the poet Du Fu (712–70), of the Tang Dynasty, and the social critic Deng Mu (1247–1306), of the Song and Yuan Dynasties. On the development of *minben* theory in China, see Feng Tianyu, “Cong wan” and “Minben xueshuo.”

4. One of the journalists even used “Gong” as a pen name. See, e.g., Gong, “Keju,” *SB*, January 12, 1909, and “Yi keju,” *SB*, January 8, 1909.

5. Mizoguchi, “Kō-shi kinen,” pp. 19–38. See also Hui and Lee, p. 600.

6. “*Shibao fakan ci*,” *SB*, January 21, 1904.

7. “Xu Qian,” *SB*, November 29, 1911.

8. Jian, *SB*, January 19, 20, 1908. I translate *wenming* not in the classical sense of a civilized cultural condition but according to the new meaning of “advanced” that the term took on in Meiji Japan in the late nineteenth century.

9. Mizoguchi, “Minquan,” pp. 350–51.

10. This discourse includes, for example, the writings of Confucius, Mencius, Xunzi, Fan Zhongyan (989–1052), Gu Yanwu (1613–82), and Lü Liuliang (1629–83).

11. Mizoguchi, “Kō-shi kinen,” p. 20. The quotation is from the “Guigong pian” (Essay on distinguished gentlemen), *Lüshi chunqiu* (The spring and autumn annals of Mister Lü). This text was a collection of pre-Qin Dynasty (221–207 B.C.E.) sayings and ancient historical documents.

12. Huang Zongxi, “Yuanchen” (On ministership), in *Mingyi*, p. 4.

13. Ono Kazuko; Liang, *Qingdai xueshu gailun* (A general discussion of Qing learning), cited in Feng, “Minben xueshuo,” p. 64.

14. Liang, “Zhongguo jiruo,” p. 16.

15. “Difang zizhi,” *SB*, September 30, 1904.

16. “Lun juanmin,” *SB*, October 17, 1904.

17. “Xianfa jieshuo,” *SB*, December, 16, 17, 1906. See also “Lixian jinlun,” *SB*, February 21, 1907.

18. Min, “Yubei lixian,” *SB*, May 28, 1908.

19. Hu Ma, *SB*, December 12, 1907. In the 1906 edict on constitutional preparation, the phrase used to express the idea of the unification of ruler and ruled is *junmin yiti* (the emperor and the people as one body); in other instances—in the Hu Ma article, for example—it is expressed as *shangxia yixin* (the unification of the hearts of those above and those below).

20. Liang Qichao, “Mengzi,” p. 18.

21. Min, “Yubei lixian,” *SB*, May 27, 1908. The first quotation is from the *Shangshu* (Documents classic). Section 7 continues, “If the root is consolidated, the nation is peaceful.” The second of the quotations from the *Mencius* continues, “The spirits of the land and grain are next; the sovereign is the lightest.” *Mencius*, bk. 7, pt. 2, ch. 14:1; *Mencius* p. 483.

22. Min, “Yubei lixian,” *SB*, May 27, 1908.

23. Hu Ma, *SB*, December 27, 1907. The *Great Learning* (*Daxue*) is a chapter in the Confucian classic the *Book of Rites*, which was elevated by the Neo-Confucian scholar Zhu Xi, of the Song Dynasty, to a position of prominence in Confucian literature. This particular quotation is from the *Liji* (Record of rites), *zhuan* 60.

24. Jiu, *SB*, March 8, 1909. The ode is from the *Shijing* (Poetry classic), pt. 3, bk. 2, ode 9, “Min Lao” (The people’s labor). The full ode reads:

God has reversed His usual course of procedure,
 And the lower people are full of distress.
 The words which you utter are not right;
 The plans which you form are not far-reaching.
 As there are no sages, you think you have no guidance;
 You have no reality in your sincerity.
 Thus your plans do not reach far,
 And I therefore strongly admonish you.

Legge, *She King*, p. 499.

25. Min, “Yubei lixian,” *SB*, May 29, 1908.

26. Hu Ma, *SB*, December 27, 1907. The selections are from the *Shangshu* (Documents classic), *zhuan* 10, and the *Shijing* (Poetry classic), *zhuan* 1–2.

27. “Xu Qian,” *SB*, November 29, 1911. According to the *Dai kan-Wa jiten* (Great Chinese-Japanese dictionary) compiled by Morohashi Tetsuji, the locus classicus for the term *dagong* is the “Zhigong” chapter of the *Shuoyuan*, by Liu Xiang of the Former Han. Its original meaning is extreme fairness or disinterestedness, a concern for the greater good rather than for personal gain, *dagong wusi*. I follow Benjamin Elman (*Classicism*, p. 279) in translating it as “public good.” The quote is from the *Mencius*, bk. 7, pt. 2, ch. 14:1; *Mencius*, p. 483. Xu Qian (1871–1940) was a *jinsi* degree holder from Anhui province. In 1907 he became a government compiler (*bianxiu*) for the Hanlin Academy, a counselor (*canshi*) for the Ministry of Law (Fa Bu), a chief justice of the Beijing court (Jingshi Shenpanting), and a high-level procurator general of the Supreme Court (Jianchazhang). After 1911 he organized the Citizens’ Progressive Association (Guomin gongjinhui) and later, with members of the Tongmeng hui, the Zhongguo guomindang. Liao, p. 503.

28. On the paradigm of political speech, see Pocock, p. 19.

29. Mizoguchi, “Kō-shi kinen,” p. 35. The idea that the *si* of the people (meaning not self-benefit but a practical conception of self-interest) should not be violated by the *dasi* of the monarch had already been articulated by Huang Zongxi in “Yuanjun pian.” Mizoguchi, “Minquan,” p. 345. Huang did not take the argument as far as the early-twentieth-century reformists did, however, by linking it to the concepts of the nation and popular power.

30. On the relationship between the concepts of the nation and popular power, see Xu Zhengxiong, p. 79; Wakeman, “Autonomy,” p. 65. Concerning the relationship between *gong* and *si*: in Neo-Confucian terms the self-cultivation of the individual begins with the particular, but its ultimate objective is the application of self-knowledge to the greater society. In the late Qing, He Qi and Hu Liyuan claimed that “separately *si* and *gong* were harmful, whereas together they were perfect.” He and Hu cite the policies of the sage-king Shun as evidence that the more sincere a leader’s *si*, the more enlightened his *gong*; the truer his *gong*, the more successful his *si*. Xu Zhengxiong, pp. 41–42. Some authors have, however, attempted to represent the *gong/si* dichotomy as purely antagonistic without recognizing its elements of complementarity. See, e.g., Munro, for a presentation of the view of *si* as selfishness. Such arguments have been used to support the view that individual self-interest was an unequivocally negative principle in the Chinese tradition.

31. I thank Benjamin Elman for urging me to look into this issue. In a paper —“Politics and Classics: The Duke of Chou Serves King Ch’eng and Kills Two Brothers”—delivered at the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies,

Boston, March 26, 1994, Elman demonstrated how the New Text concept of *quan* is used to explain why the Duke of Zhou rightly executed his brothers, an action that went against kinship ideals. Elman does not himself, however, draw any direct connections between conceptions of *quan* and *zhiquan* (knowing how to weigh circumstances) and late Qing concepts such as political power (*zhengquan*) and *minquan*. On the general concept of *quan*, see Chan, pp. 26, 75; Fung, pp. 249, 292. *Quan* can also be conceived in classical terms as the means by which the ways of Heaven are carried out on earth; just as Heaven gives life, it also gives *quan*, the power to protect life. Xu Zhengxiong, p. 50.

32. Like Guo Songtao, Huang Zunxian had been active in foreign relations as an attaché at the Chinese legations in Britain and Japan and as consul general in San Francisco. Liao, pp. 522, 556.

33. See Xu Zhengxiong, pp. 46–62.

34. The Chinese faced a problem similar to that which confronted the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European bourgeoisie. Although the Chinese and Europeans had dramatically different reasons for wanting to preserve the absolutist state—in the Chinese case to ensure national survival, in the European case to guarantee the legal and political preconditions of a private capitalist market economy—both faced the same dilemma of wanting simultaneously to preserve the existing structure of authority and to expand popular power. And both attempted to resolve this dilemma by adopting the same historical solution; on the one hand preserving the modern state created by absolutism while formalizing and rationalizing its operation on the other. See Arato and Cohen, *Civil Society*, p. 216; and Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, pp. 57–88.

35. Japanese dictionaries of the period equated *minquan* with democracy, giving the two character compounds of *minquan* and *minzhu* an identical definition. The late Qing revolutionaries used *minquan* in this original sense. Xiong, *Minzhu*, pp. 11–19. *Minquan* eventually became one of Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles. It was translated in this context as democracy.

36. Liang, "Aiguolun san."

37. Liang, "Lixianfa."

38. "Lixian pingyi," *SB*, September 27, 1904.

39. Min, "Yubei lixian," *SB*, May 27, 1908.

40. Li, *SB*, December 14–17, 1907.

41. "Zhongguo jianglai," *SB*, April 25, 1907.

42. "Renquan," *SB*, April 1, 1907.

43. See, e.g., "Shu xin baolü," *SB*, March 30, 1908. For a discussion of the new press laws, see the Prologue to Part Three.

44. "Xianfa jieshuo," *SB*, December 16, 17, 1906.

45. See, e.g., Mizoguchi, "Kō-shi kinen," p. 36, and "Minquan," p. 353.

46. The concept of natural rights was first introduced in the *Yinghuan zhiliu* (Annals of the world, 1848) by Xu Jishe, a description of democratic systems in the West. In 1885 and 1886, in *Renlei gongli* (Axioms of humanity), *Gonglishu* (Axioms), and *Shili gongfa quanshu* (Complete writings on implementing civil law), Kang Youwei spoke of freedom and equality as part of man's basic nature. In the late 1890s He Qi and Hu Liyuan also spoke of rights originating in Heaven, emphasizing that the ignorant were as deserving of these rights as were the sages. These disparate references did not, however, give rise to any systematic treatment of the concept of natural rights in the late nineteenth century. He Yimin, pp. 64–67.

47. On Western notions of natural rights, see Nathan, "Rights Thinking." When Liang Qichao first read about natural rights and social contract theory, he was mys-

tified and treated the notion that rights had ever existed outside society in a state of nature as a curiosity. Nathan, *Democracy*, p. 114.

48. "Xianfa jieshuo," *SB*, December 16, 17, 1906.

49. Ma, *SB*, March 7, 1908.

50. Min, "Yubei lixian," *SB*, May 30, 1908.

51. Ma, *SB*, July 3, 1907.

52. Some of the material in this section has appeared in my article "Public Opinion." Recently, public opinion has been recognized as an increasingly important concept in studies of the French Revolution. Scholars, including François Furet, Mona Ozouf, and Keith Michael Baker, have focused on public opinion as a means of linking prerevolutionary developments to revolutionary politics. Jeremy Popkin notes the influence of Jürgen Habermas and Reinhart Koselleck in the rise of this "public opinion paradigm" of the revolution. See "Concept of Public Opinion," p. 77. See also La Vopa.

53. The locus classicus for *yulun* is a third-century text, the biography of Wanglang of the Wei in the *Sanguozhi* (Chronicle of the three kingdoms). The term was used throughout Chinese history to refer to general elite opinion within the bureaucracy, often interchangeably with *qingyi* and *gonglun*. *Yulun* and *gonglun* were also used to denote local public opinion in the Qing. Rankin, "Chinese Public Sphere," p. 42.

54. The quotation appears in Min, "Yubei lixian," *SB*, May 31, 1908.

55. Gugong, 1: 44. The dynasty had itself adapted this phrase from the Japanese. *Banki kōron* (*ni kessubeshi*), meaning "all measures [shall be decided by] public discussion," was one of the three formulas presented in the Charter Oath of 1868 as a means of making Meiji Japan strong. See Barshay, p. 3.

56. Writers who called for the elites to oppose public opinion argued, for example, that "in nations [such as China] where popular knowledge is not developed, public sentiment absolutely could not be relied on." "Wuxi," *SB*, August 24, 1904. Such negative views of public opinion as contradictory or false were expressed in the later part of the nineteenth century in the West by such thinkers as G. W. F. Hegel and Rudolf Gneist. See, e.g., Palmer, pp. 243-48.

57. Liang Qichao spoke of the three stages of public opinion in "Yulun." Chen Leng described the role of the press as on the one hand leading public opinion, and on the other hand being led by it. Zhu, p. 26.

58. Jian, *SB*, January 20, 1908.

59. Min, "Yubei lixian," *SB*, May 31, 1908.

60. Jiu, *SB*, March 12, 1909.

61. Jian, *SB*, January 20, 1908.

62. *Ibid.*

63. Jeremy Bentham was the first to write a detailed discussion in English of public opinion as a tribunal. He regarded the free expression of public opinion as the chief safeguard against misrule and as the characteristic mark of a democratic state. He saw in an enlightened public opinion a tribunal that would "unite all the wisdom and all the justice of the nation." This "public opinion tribunal" was an unofficial, unpaid, and uncorruptible judicatory. On public opinion as a tribunal, see Palmer, pp. 239-45; Boyce, pp. 20-21; Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, pp. 89-140. French historians of the Revolution such as Furet, Ozouf, and Baker also refer to it. See Popkin, "Concept of Public Opinion," p. 81.

64. Jian, *SB*, January 19, 1908.

65. Leng (Chen Leng), "Baozhi," *SB*, July 11, 1906.

66. Jian, *SB*, January 19, 1908.

67. "Lun cuizhe," *SB*, September 23, 1909.
68. Jeremy Popkin, private correspondence.
69. "Lun cuizhe," *SB*, September 21, 1909. The Mencius quotation continues, "The spirits of the land and grain are the next; the sovereign is the lightest." *Mencius*, bk. 7, pt. 2, ch. 14:1; Mencius, p. 483. Pan Geng was a Shang Dynasty ruler responsible for reforming corrupt aristocratic practices and avoiding disasters. The "Hongfan" (Great plan) is Section 12 of the *Shangshu* (Documents classic). The *Rites of Zhou*, one of the Confucian classics, includes a description of the official system of the Zhou Dynasty and the systems of all states during the Warring States period.
70. Jian, *SB*, January 19, 1908. On the origin of the term *minquan*, see Xiong, *Minzhu*, pp. 11–19.
71. Jian, *SB*, January 19, 1908.
72. Hu Ma, *SB*, December 27, 1907.
73. Jian, *SB*, January 19, 1908.
74. Eastman, pp. 597–98.
75. On the early-nineteenth-century groups, see Polachek, pp. 95–99; Elman, *Classicism*, p. 290.
76. Wakeman, "Autonomy," p. 56.
77. This general discussion of late Qing *qingyi* is based on Eastman; Rankin, "Public Opinion," pp. 453–84; Schrecker.
78. Jian, *SB*, January 19, 1908.
79. "Lun cuizhe," *SB*, September 21, 1909.

II. PROLOGUE

1. On print discourse and the imagining of a people, see Warner, p. xiii. On similar themes in the French context, see J. Wagner.
2. For a discussion of the role of the noble man *vis-à-vis* the people, see de Bary, *Confucianism*, pp. 1–56.
3. "Lun cuizhe," *SB*, September 21, 1909. From the Han Dynasty on, "remonstrance official" was the generic term for officials appointed to keep watch over documents flowing to and from the throne and to remonstrate with the ruler about the conduct of policies they considered improper. These officials used the avenues of criticism (*yanlu*) to communicate with the emperor. By the Tang Dynasty the offices had become regular ones, but from the Yuan on special remonstrance officials were no longer appointed. Instead, remonstrance functions became the added responsibilities of the censors (*yushi*), who had previously been limited in general to watching over the bureaucracy and impeaching wayward officials. See Hucker, pp. 149, 579, 580. The terms *yanguan* and *jianguan* continued to be used in the late Qing, however, to designate officials responsible for speaking honestly about public affairs. See, e.g., Jiu, *SB*, March 12, 1909.
4. "Lun cuizhe," *SB*, September 21, 1909.
5. "Shibao fakan ci," *SB*, June 12, 1904.

CHAPTER 4

1. On the concept of *tianmin*, see Mizoguchi, "Minquan," p. 357.
2. "Lun juanmin," *SB*, October 17, 1904.
3. "Lun chaoting," *SB*, January 28, 1905.
4. On the American situation, see, e.g., Wood. On the French, see, e.g., Chartier, *French Revolution*, pp. 150–51.
5. "Lun juanmin," *SB*, October 17, 1904.
6. "Lun renmin," *SB*, October 17, 1904.

7. "Lun juanmin," *SB*, October 17, 1904.
8. "Lun chaoting," *SB*, January 28, 1905.
9. *Ibid.*
10. "Lun renmin," *SB*, October 19, 1904.
11. "Lun chaoting," *SB*, January 28, 1905.
12. Min, "Yubei lixian," *SB*, May 30, 1908.
13. Hu Ma, *SB*, December 27, 1907. The quotation is from the *Mencius*, bk. 2, pt. 1, ch. 4: 5. *Mencius*, p. 198.
14. Leng (Chen Leng), "Dabaipei," *SB*, March 14, 1908. At the December 1907 meeting between delegates of the Jiangsu and Zhejiang railway companies and Yuan Shikai, the minister of the Board of Foreign Affairs, the delegates were persuaded to accept the British loan indirectly. They were told the loan would be received not by the railway companies themselves but by the Board of Posts and Communications and would be secured by mortgaging revenues from other national railways. The board would then "reloan" 10 million yuan to the two companies. The delegates later felt they had been tricked into accepting several of the Loan Deposit Agreement's terms. Zhejiang railway representatives ultimately decided to abrogate the agreement in June 1910, and the Jiangsu representatives followed suit in March 1911. See Min Tu-ki, pp. 188, 201.
15. Mizoguchi, "Minquan," p. 354.
16. The literature on the meaning of citizenry is extensive. See, for example, the excellent essays in Dawson, Waldinger, and Woloch; see also Sewell, Jaume.
17. Such an elite sociological referent had already been tacitly applied to the term "citizen" in the Meiji Japanese discourse, which had served as the prime inspiration for the Chinese constitutionalist discourse. As Carol Gluck writes, "For however much the word *kokumin* was invoked in 1889, its effective meaning was closer to that of the oft repeated *yūshi*—it was the men of influence, and those who could and would join them, who had comprehended the news of [the] Constitution" (p. 49).
18. *Xialiu shehui* and *xiadeng shehui* were the terms most frequently used to refer to the common people. Although loosely defined, they generally meant illiterates. See Li Hsiao-t'i, p. 11.
19. The authors of the 1905 *Citizens' Reader* were Chen Baoquan and Gao Buying. Chen, a native of Tianjin, attended Kōbun gakuin in Japan and eventually took up the post of director of the Board of Education (Xuebu langzhong) in China. This would have been after the publication of the *Guomin bidu*, since the Xuebu was not founded until December 1905, the year the text was published. Gao Buying (1873-1940), the holder of a *juren* degree from Hebei province, went to Japan to study in 1902. After the revolution he also took up a position at the Board of Education. Li Shenping, pp. 409, 583.
20. Chen and Gao, 1: 1-2. See also "Lun guojia," *SB*, November 20, 1904.
21. On Yan Fu, see Schwartz, *Wealth and Power*, pp. 57-61. Chang Hao defines *qun* as follows: "This term explained the need for establishing associations among the gentry-literati to mobilize and organize them for social and political action." "Intellectual Change," p. 196. Viewing *qun* as the source of Western power, Liang believed that the only way for China to become a strong competitor internationally was to adopt the principles of Social Darwinism and develop a Chinese nationalism as popularly based and collectively driven as Western imperialism. Liang, "Lun hequn," in "Xinmin shuo," pp. 76-80.
22. The neologisms *yaoni* and *tuodu* were Yan Fu's; they were not derivations from Japanese renditions of Spencer's terms. This indicates that even though Yan Fu's translations were ultimately abandoned, they did enjoy some currency in the

early twentieth century. For a discussion of Social Darwinism in China, see Pusey.

23. "Lun lixian," *SB*, June 23, 1904.
24. "Lun guojia," *SB*, November 20, 1904. In grappling with Spencer's language, the translator awkwardly employed terms from physics, such as *zhidian* (particle), and chemistry, such as *aili* (affinity). This is an example of how ill-equipped the classical Chinese language was to absorb new Western political, sociological, and philosophical concepts, and why these translations were not readily accessible to the broader Chinese public.
25. Liang Qichao had already articulated this concern in 1900. "The members of one single family constitute our nation, while all the other people are slaves. Although in principle there are 400 million people in China, in reality there are no more than the number of people in this one single family." "Zhongguo jiruo," p. 17. This issue, like so many that the reformists voiced, has not gone away. Nicholas Kristof recently quoted a "prominent" Chinese journalist as saying, "In Russia there's no state, but there is a society. Here it's more like the reverse" (*New York Times*, February 21, 1993).
26. "Lun guoren," *SB*, February 21, 1906. The quote is from the *Shijing* (Poetry classic), pt. 2, bk. 1, ode 4, verse 4. Legge, *She King*, 251.
27. Leng (Chen Leng), "Dabaibei," *SB*, March 14, 1908.
28. Chang Hao, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao*, pp. 168-70.
29. "Lun Zhongguo ren," *SB*, November 3, 1904.
30. Di, "Ziyi ju," *SB*, June 4, 1909.
31. Min, "Yubei lixian," *SB*, May 27, 1908.
32. Jiang Ruizao, *SB*, March 16, 1909.
33. "Shibao fakan ci," *SB*, June 12, 1904.
34. Liang, "Zhongguo jiruo," pp. 12-42.
35. Liang, "Xinmin shuo."
36. "Lun Zhongguo ren," *SB*, November 3, 1904.
37. *Ibid.*
38. Leng (Chen Leng), "Guomin," February 20, 1907.
39. "Wuxi," *SB*, August 24, 1904.
40. Leng (Chen Leng), "Guomin," *SB*, February 20, 1907. The reference is to Xu-zhou and Huaiyin. See App. B for a narrative account of the late 1906 Ping-Li-Liu uprising.
41. Chen and Gao, 1: 21.
42. The seventeenth section of Liang's "The New Citizen" was entitled "Militarism" ("Shangwu") and was published in 1903. Chen Baoquan and Gao Buying incorporated several lessons on militarism in their 1905 *Citizens' Reader*, including "National Military Education" ("Shuo junguomin jiaoyu"), "The National Military System" ("Shuo junguomin zhidu"), "The Martial Spirit in Ancient China" ("Shuo Zhongguo gushi shangwu de jingshen"), "The Martial Spirit in All Nations of the World" ("Shuo geguo shangwu de jingshen"), and "The Armaments of Every Nation in the World" ("Shuo geguo de junbei"). In the second section of the reader, a chapter on physical training (*tiyu*) precedes the chapters on mental training (*zhiyu*) and ethical training (*deyu*).
43. Liang, "Lun jinqu maoxian," in "Xinmin shuo," pp. 23-31.
44. Leng (Chen Leng), "Guomin," *SB*, February 20, 1907.
45. Liang, "Lun jinqu maoxian," in "Xinmin shuo," pp. 23-31.
46. "Lun jiu," *SB*, September 29, 1904.
47. Hu Ma, *SB*, December 27, 1907.
48. Min, "Yubei lixian," *SB*, May 28, 1908.

49. Jian, *SB*, January 19, 1908.
50. "Lun jiu," *SB*, September 29, 1904.
51. *Ibid.*
52. Li, *SB*, December 15, 1907. The term *xianjue* was first used in the *Mencius*, bk. 5, pt. 1, ch. 7: 5. In that text the founder of the Shang Dynasty, Tang, is quoted as saying, "Those who first apprehend principles [*xianjue*] should instruct those who are slower to do so. I am one of Heaven's people who have first apprehended; I will take these principles and instruct this people in them. If I do not instruct them, who will do so?" *Mencius*, p. 363. Since the principles being considered in the *Shibao* discourse are social and political ones, I have translated *xianjue zhi tu* as the "social and political vanguard."
53. Min, "Yubei lixian," *SB*, June 1, 1908. See also Zhuang, "Lun zaoji," *SB*, September 27, 1905.
54. Min, "Yubei lixian," *SB*, June 1, 1908.
55. Fang Rongjun, *SB*, March 22, 1908. For the quotation, see *Mencius*, p. 170. Liang had addressed the issue of self-reliance in a subsection of "Xinmin shuo" entitled "Lun zizhi," pp. 50-54.
56. Leng (Cheng Leng), "Dabaibe," *SB*, March 14, 1908.
57. Xue, *SB*, May 11, 1908. Liang Qichao also linked autonomy to rights in "Lun quanli sixiang," in "Xinmin shuo," pp. 31-40.
58. Chen and Gao, 1: 25-28. The *Mencius* quotation is from bk. 4, pt. 1, ch. 9: 4. The verse continues, "A family must first destroy itself and then others will destroy it. A State must first smite itself, and then others will smite it." *Mencius*, p. 299. The anecdote recounted by the authors of the reader is distinctly similar in tone and content to those recorded in the Taiwan author Bo Yang's 1985 critique of the Chinese character, *The Ugly Chinese (Choulou de Zhongguoren)*. Liang analyzed the issue of self-respect in the "Lun zizun" section of "Xinmin shuo," pp. 68-76.
59. Chen and Gao, 1: 1.
60. Min, "Lun guomin," *SB*, November 27, 1909.
61. "Difang zizhi," *SB*, September 30, 1904.
62. Min, "Yubei lixian," *SB*, May 31, 1908.

CHAPTER 5

1. Liang, "Lun Hunan," p. 41. On popular education in the late Qing, see Bailey. On the new learning, see Yue.
2. "Shibao fakan ci," *SB*, June 12, 1904.
3. Cited in Zhu, p. 24.
4. The passage on *yumin zhengci* appears in the *Analects*, bk. 7, ch. 9; *Confucius*, p. 211. Liang Qichao was one of the first to discuss the relationship between autocracy and popular ignorance and between popular government and enlightened citizens. Eight of the fourteen sections of his 1898 essay "Bianfa tongyi" (General discussion on reform) were devoted to the issue of enlightening the people.
5. "Lun renmin," *SB*, October 17, 1904.
6. "Lun Zhongguo ren," *SB*, November 3, 1904.
7. "Shiping san," *SB*, August 8, 1909.
8. "Lun jinri dangzhong," *SB*, January 1, 1906.
9. "Xuetang," *SB*, December 26, 1905.
10. "Lun xuexiao," *SB*, November 23, 1909.
11. "Lun Xuebu," *SB*, November 16, 1909.
12. For a discussion of the National Essence Movement, which arose in 1901,

see Yang Tianshi. The civil service examination system was abolished in 1905, four years before Zhuang's editorial was written. The reign of Emperor Wu (157-87 B.C.E.) marked the peak of the Han Dynasty. *Baijia* (100 schools) refers to the many schools of thought, from Confucianism to legalism, that arose in the late Zhou Dynasty.

13. The plan of the Yellow River and the book of the River Luo were diagrams said to have been mystically revealed. Yong Jia was a member of the Song Dynasty *lixue* school, which was devoted to a rational approach to the study of the classics. The philosophy of Wang Yangming (1472-1529) represented a culmination of the school of mind or intuition in the Ming Dynasty. Wang Fuzhi (1619-92) was a late-Ming, early-Qing philosopher who reacted against the idealism and subjectivism of Wang Yangming. Yan Yuan (1635-1704) was a member of a late-Ming, early-Qing Zhejiang school of thought.

14. Zhuang, "Guocui," *SB*, May 31, 1909.

15. On early efforts to promote universal education by Northern Song Dynasty literati, Zhu Xi of the Southern Song, and Huang Zongxi and Lü Liuliang of the late Ming and early Qing, see de Bary, *Confucianism*, pp. 89-90.

16. "Puji," *SB*, February 8, 14, 15, 1906.

17. Tian, "Xiangluan," *SB*, May 6, 7, 1910.

18. Li, *SB*, December 14, 1907.

19. Leng (Chen Leng), "Lun guomin," *SB*, February 20, 1907. The reference is to the Confucian *Analects*, bk. 13, ch. 9:1-4: "The Master observed, 'How numerous are the people!' Yu said, 'Since they are thus numerous, what more shall be done for them?' 'Enrich them,' was the reply. 'And when they have been enriched, what more shall be done?' The Master said, 'Teach them.'" Confucius, pp. 266-67.

20. "Lun puji," *SB*, February 19, 1906.

21. "Lun ziyi ju," *SB*, October 13, 1909.

22. These readers were clearly inspired by Japanese texts of the same nature. Xiong, *Xixue*, p. 668. Some examples of the Japanese readers that these Chinese texts were modeled on and that I have been able to locate are Ōkuma, *Kokumin dōtoku no kanyō*, *Kokumin dōtoku no kontei*, and *Kokumin tokuhon*.

23. Chi, *SB*, September 23, 1908.

24. Chen and Gao, 1:6-9.

25. "The Citizen's Catechism" (*Catechisme du citoyen*), written by Guillaume-Joseph Saige in 1775, was designed to rectify an important historical distortion that had resulted from absolutist rule. Because the citizens (the Third Estate) had been crushed beneath the burden of autocracy for centuries, their role in the nation had not been adequately recognized—and this even though they were "the most numerous part of the nation and consequently the most important." Baker, p. 123.

26. Chen and Gao, 1:6-9.

27. *Ibid.*, 2:1-3.

28. Advertisements for the *Gongmin bidu chubian* (Citizens' reader, first ed.) appeared in each of the bimonthly issues of the *Yubei lixian gonghuibao* (Constitutional preparation association report) from March 13, 1908, until May 2, 1909, when the second edition began to be advertised. From what I could learn at the Shanghai Municipal Library and from scholars in Shanghai, neither of these readers is extant. Meng Zhaochang also wrote occasionally for *Shibao*. See Meng, *SB*, June 2, 9, 1908.

29. A similar view prevailed in early Meiji Japan, where civic morality was considered essential to welding the people into a nation. Gluck, p. 102. Whatever its broader pan-Asian Confucian resonances, Thomas Metzger (pp. 278-79) regards this moral impulse as one of the defining features of premodern and modern Chinese culture. Discussing a 1987 debate published in two Taiwan newspapers, he

made an observation that could also have been made from reading the pages of *Shibao*: both “intellectuals [involved in the debate] assumed that their nation was headed for disaster unless the citizenry would become not only law-abiding and hard-working but also truly virtuous.”

30. Chen and Gao, 2: 7.

31. Jiang Ruizao, *SB*, March 16, 17, 1909.

32. Chen and Gao, 2: 7-8.

33. Jiang Ruizao, *SB*, March 17, 1909.

34. Chen and Gao, 2: 8. The parenthetical note about *side* was included by the authors of the reader, indicating that the ambiguity of the meaning of *si*—as either selfish and private or merely as personal and particular—was inherent in the Chinese use of the term itself and not merely a difficulty of translation.

35. The term *xinmin* can operate as a noun or a verb, meaning either “new people” or “renovation of the people.” The *Daxue* opens with the sentence, “What the *Great Learning* teaches, is—to illustrate illustrious virtue; to renovate the people [*xinmin*]; and to rest in the highest excellence.” Confucius, p. 356.

36. Liang, “*Xinmin shuo*,” p. 12. This translation appears in de Bary, *Sources*, 2: 95. In contrast to the *Citizens’ Reader*, which claimed that the five human relationships were the essence of Chinese morality and devoted several lessons to family themes—filiality, fraternal love, marital harmony, and in-laws—Liang blamed the Confucian emphasis on the family for the Chinese deemphasis of public morality. One explanation for this discrepancy may be that Liang’s critique of the five relationships was written in 1902, during his more radical period. Liang’s own very long subsection on private morality in “*Xinmin shuo*” was written after the 1903 visit to the United States that inspired a major reassessment of many of his more antitraditional views. By 1904 Liang had realized that public ethics needed the support of private ethics, and when it came to questions of personal conduct, personal relationships, character discipline, and the cultivation of mind, he did not question the validity of the Confucian tradition. This section on Liang’s views on morality is loosely based on Chang Hao, *Liang Ch’i-ch’ao*, pp. 149-298; Chen Kuangshi, Zhou. A second reason behind the reader’s emphasis on family themes is that it was a vernacular textbook aimed at a less-sophisticated audience than that of the “*Renovation of the People*” essay. The reformists, including Liang, tended to temper their more radical social and political ideas when they were addressing a relatively popular audience.

37. Jiang Ruizao, *SB*, March 17, 1909.

38. Li, *SB*, December 14, 1907. Li’s view echoed that of Jean-Baptiste Salle, who wrote during the revolutionary period in France. In Salle’s account, the corrupt French people were *recovering* their virtue through the act of revolution. He explained, in terms similar to Li’s: “This is how—having been sunk in slavery for centuries, having despaired of itself—a great people, degraded by oppression but always noble in spirit, *recovers* all its force and dignity when it experiences those great passions which are naturally held in reserve in every heart.” Baker, p. 280. See also, in Baker, Saige’s comments on the true citizen rekindling the sparks of civic virtue (p. 138).

39. On the *xiangyue*, see Mair.

40. The latter phrase, for example, appeared in the September 1, 1906, Edict on Constitutional Preparation. Gugong, 1: 44.

41. “*Lixian pingyi*,” *SB*, September 27, 1904.

42. “*Xianfa jieshuo*,” *SB*, December 16, 17, 1906.

43. Liang, “*Kaiming*,” pp. 77-81.

44. “*Lun lixian*,” *SB*, June 23, 1904.

45. Hu Ma, *SB*, December 27, 1907. 46. Ma Weilong, *SB*, March 7, 1908.
47. "Yubei," *SB*, April 14, 1909.
48. "Lun chaoting," *SB*, January 28, 1905. On the Yue-Han (Guangzhou-Hankou) Railway, see Chapter 2. The Zhou Shengyou case involved the killing of a Chinese national by Russian marines. *Shibao* took a resolute position on the incident, printing twelve articles recounting its unfolding and demanding that the Russian ship be expelled and the murderers punished.
49. Hu Shi, pp. 1–3.
50. Li, *SB*, December 12, 1907.
51. Leng (Chen Leng), "Zai huo," *SB*, January 15, 1908.
52. "Lun woguo," *SB*, April 9, 1908. The Chenwan case erupted in February 1908, when a Japanese steamship was captured off Macao and the governor-general of Guangdong, Zhang Renjun, paid reparations. The people of Guangdong, the Shanghai lianguang tongxianghui (Shanghai Same-Province Association for Guangdong and Guangxi), and the Zhengwen she (Political Information Society) all protested by boycotting Japanese goods.
53. "Lun chaoting," *SB*, January 28, 1905.
54. Leng (Chen Leng) "Dabaibe," *SB*, March 14, 1908.
55. Bao (Xiao), "Yuanshui," *SB*, March 2, 1908.
56. Leng (Chen Leng) "Jinhou," *SB*, April 11, 1908.
57. Liang, "Moujun," p. 52.
58. Hui, "Xiaji," *SB*, May 1, 1911.
59. Da, *SB*, March 18, 1907. The citation is from the *Shangshu* (Documents classic), "Jun Ya" 27, *zhuan* 19.
60. Min, "Yubei lixian," *SB*, June 1, 1908.
61. *Ibid.*
62. On developments in Jiangsu under Zhang Jian, see Thompson, "Visions of the Future," p. 310. On Shanghai, see Tang Zhenchang, pp. 427–32; Elvin, pp. 239–62. On further developments in Jiangsu, see Shen Huaiyu, "Mengya," pp. 304–5. On bureaus in other parts of the nation, see Thompson, "Visions of the Future," p. 311. Thompson does not mention the earlier Jiangsu cases discussed by Shen Huaiyu, however, and dates all local initiatives in self-government from 1907.
63. "Jishe," *SB*, March 28, 1909.
64. "Yubei," *SB*, April 14, 1909; emphasis mine.

CHAPTER 6

1. The "New Policies" refers to the Qing government's announcement of sweeping administrative reforms in 1901 to compensate for its failed policy at the time of the Boxer Rebellion. In addition to mandating the reorganization and rationalization of the bureaucratic structure, these policies also called for the reorganization of the structure of local government—affecting such areas as education, commerce, and police. The local initiatives provoked many of the uprisings in the last Qing decade: 113 resistance struggles were counted in 1909 and 285 in 1910, with 90 of them concentrated in the lower Yangzi Valley. Out of the 48 tax protests that were documented between 1903 and 1910, 22 of them occurred in 1910. Prazniak, "Community Protest," pp. 114, 119. Wang Shuhuai (pp. 319–20) lists 32 incidents in 1910, and five in 1911 in Jiangsu province alone. Kathryn Bernhardt (p. 58) records 25 collective actions in northern Zhejiang between 1902 and the winter of 1911–12. Most of these actions took place in protest over the exactions for the New Policies reforms, as did 38 of the 51 incidents in Jiangnan in this period.

2. Cheng Wah-kwan (p. 74) describes the reformer as a redemptive personality who views it as his sacred mission to restore the people to history. In adopting such a pose, he portrays the people as existing in a state of inertia and unrealized potential.

3. "Lun juanmin," *SB*, October 17, 1904. The *minben* quotation is from the *Shang-shu* (Documents classic), *zhuan* 7.

4. "Lun Danyang," *SB*, August 28, 1909.

5. See de Bary, *Confucianism*, p. 1.

6. *Mencius*, bk. 3, pt. 1, ch. 3; see *Mencius*, pp. 241-42.

7. "Lun juanmin," *SB*, October 17, 1904.

8. "Lun Danyang," *SB*, August 28, 1909.

9. "Danyang luanshi," *SB*, September 1, 1909.

10. *Mencius*, bk. 3, pt. 1, ch. 3; see *Mencius*, pp. 239-40.

11. After a period of rising expectations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, standards of living throughout China were suddenly threatened with a sharp decline between 1908 and 1911. In the Jiangnan region, for example, although until roughly the turn of the century taxes had not kept pace with prices, increases in taxes began to outpace the rise in prices at that time, significantly increasing the real burden on most taxpayers. Bernhardt, p. 155. See also Prazniak, "Community Protest," p. 265. Just as tax abuses at the county level had traditionally been the single most common target of both reform measures and protest movements in China, so in France fiscal grievances were the most important source of popular rebellion up to the 1789 Revolution. Chartier, *Cultural Origins*, p. 146.

12. "Lun renmin," *SB*, October 19, 1904.

13. Whereas in 1907 the government had collected 5.8 million cash in surcharges, in 1909 and 1910 the surcharges amounted to 16 million cash annually. They included new levies on land and property deeds, and a great variety of new taxes on such things as pigs, melons, peanuts, and dozens of sundry commodities. Prazniak, "Community Protest," p. 50. It is interesting to note that as this book was being written, several poor, rural areas of China were shaken by protests in opposition to new taxes that were levied to finance reforms not terribly different from those of the late Qing New Policies. See, e.g., WuDunn.

14. Leng (Chen Leng), "Jinhou," *SB*, April 11, 1908.

15. Tian, "Lun Laiyang," *SB*, August 10, 1910. See also "Laiyang xian," *SB*, August 8, 1910.

16. Xi (Li Yuerui), "Xiangluan," *SB*, April 21, 1910.

17. Leng (Chen Leng), "Zaishangzhe," *SB*, January 7, 1909. Nankang is a county in Jiangxi province, and Zhennan was until 1954 a county in Yunnan province.

18. "Danyang luanshi," *SB*, September 1, 1909.

19. Xi (Li Yuerui), "Jinggao Xiangsheng," *SB*, April 19, 1910.

20. Xi (Li Yuerui), "Chuansha," *SB*, March 11, 1911.

21. "Lun Danyang," *SB*, August 28, 1909.

22. Bao (Xiao), "Danyang minbianshi," *SB*, September 16, 1909.

23. Xi (Li Yuerui), "Xiangluan," *SB*, April 21, 1910.

24. Xi (Li Yuerui), "Lun Xiangsheng," *SB*, May 4, 1910.

25. Hui, "Lun Chuansha," *SB*, March 7, 1911.

26. "Wuxi," *SB*, August 24, 1904. The editorialist is quoting from the *Analects*, bk. 8, ch. 9. See *Confucius*, p. 211.

27. Hui, "Jingtianci," *SB*, March 6, 1911.

28. Hui, "Xiaji," *SB*, May 1, 1911. Songjiang and Chuansha are both in Jiangsu province, and Ningbo and Yin counties in Zhejiang province.

29. Xi (Li Yuerui), "Chuansha," *SB*, March 11, 1911. San Wu refers to the region of Suzhou, Runzhou, and Huzhou on the banks of the Yangzi River.

30. Wang Shuhuai, p. 322.

31. Bai, "Zhuilun," *SB*, April 8, 1907.

32. Hui, "Jingtiancidi," *SB*, March 6, 1911.

33. "Lun Danyang," *SB*, August 28, 1909.

34. Xi (Li Yuerui), "Jinggao Xiangsheng," *SB*, April 19, 1910.

35. Xi (Li Yuerui), "Lun Xiangsheng," *SB*, May 4, 1910.

36. See, e.g., Bai, "Zhuilun," *SB*, April 8, 1907.

37. *Ibid.*, April 14, 1907.

38. Price, pp. 1-4.

39. Bai, "Zhuilun," *SB*, April 11, 1907. One Qing Dynasty secret society, the Hong bang—also known as Hongmen jiao, Tiandi hui (Association of Heaven and Earth), Sandian hui (Three Points Society), and Sanhe hui (Triad Society)—had as its objective the overthrow of the Qing and the restitution of the Ming Dynasty.

40. *Ibid.*

41. Di Baoxian, a signatory of Kang Youwei's 1895 petition and a fugitive in Japan after the 1898 coup, had returned to Shanghai in 1900 to join Tang Caichang in organizing a series of revolts in support of the restoration of the Guangxu emperor. Di was also involved with Tang Caichang in the organization of the Zhongguo duli xiehui (Chinese Independent Association) in Shanghai, which planned to link up with secret societies in order to carry out a large-scale military operation in Beijing. After Beijing was occupied by foreign forces during the Boxer Rebellion, Di united the literati who had escaped to Shanghai from the provinces and organized the Guohui (National Assembly) with Tang, Rong Hong, and Yan Fu. This organization planned to use Hankou, where it stockpiled arms, as its base of opposition to the capital. Information was leaked to Governor-General Zhang Zhidong, however, and Tang Caichang and fifteen to twenty others were assassinated. Chen Leng also played a role in this uprising. Ge, pp. 117-18; Fang Hanqi, *Baokan shi*, p. 274; Hu Daojing, p. 335; Reynolds, "Tōa Dōbun Shoin," p. 231n; Tang Zhijun, *Jindai Shanghai*, p. 552.

42. The coercive power of local elites was increasing in the late Qing as local managers were granted authority to implement the New Policies reforms and quell internal disorder. Despite the recent outburst of popular disturbances, one editorialist wrote in 1908, "effective means were being developed to suppress them. Telegrams could be more rapidly transmitted, rifles were more widely available, and transport barges were more agile." The role of the local police had also been institutionalized in the countryside. For these various reasons, the essayist claimed, "we can rest assured that the recent wave of banditry will never reach the proportions of the Nian rebellions under the Xianfeng and Tongzhi emperors [r. 1851-62 and 1862-75]." "Lun gesheng," *SB*, December 12, 1908. This comment on the police applies to the particular region with which the journalist was familiar, most probably Jiangsu province, not to the whole nation. In some areas the local police force was strengthened; in others it was not.

43. Bai, "Zhuilun," *SB*, April 8, 1907.

44. "Lun gesheng," *SB*, December 14, 1908.

45. "Shanghai Daotai's Report," *SB*, April 11, 1911, cited in Prazniak, "Community Protest," pp. 279-81.

46. For example, Wang Zhixun, the editor of the *Jinan Daily*, wrote up the results of a personal investigation of the 1910 Laiyang uprising in Shangdong province, in which he stressed the reasonableness and respectability of the demands of

Qu Shiwen, the local headman (*shezhang*), and his partisans. His report provided members of the Shandong Provincial Assembly, to which Wang also belonged, with detailed coverage of the case, moving them toward the view that the protesters had legitimate grievances and demands. See Prazniak, "Tax Protest," p. 66.

47. Xi (Li Yuerui), "Jinggao Xiangsheng," *SB*, April 19, 1910.

48. Bai, "Zhuilun," *SB*, April 10, 1907. The comments quoted in the next two paragraphs are also from this article.

49. Hui, "Jingtianci," *SB*, March 6, 1911.

50. Tian, "Xiangluan," *SB*, May 6, 1910. Tian is referring to a comment recorded in the Emperor Hui section of the *Jinshu* (The history of the Jin Dynasty), compiled during the Tang Dynasty: "All under Heaven is in a state of devastation and upheaval. The common people [*baixing*] are starving to death, and the emperor asks, 'Why do they not eat meat?'" The parallel with Marie Antoinette's statement, "Let them eat cake," is striking.

51. *Ibid.* Ji Ran lived between the Spring and Autumn (722–481 B.C.E.) and Warring States periods (403–221 B.C.E.). He was responsible for the policy of selling grain at low prices (*pingtiao*) in order to stabilize the price of rice and thus protect against disaster and develop trade.

52. Fincher, p. 94.

53. "Lun gesheng," *SB*, December 12, 1908. Another editorialist had warned that as dependence on the dynasty decreased, the more educated people would join revolutionary organizations. "Lun renmin," *SB*, October 19, 1904.

54. Xi (Li Yuerui), "Jinggao Xiangsheng," *SB*, April 19, 1910.

55. Xi (Li Yuerui), "Xiangluan," *SB*, April 21, 1910.

56. In the case of the 1906 and 1907 Ping-Li-Liu uprising revolutionary students were actually complicit in the events. In the spring of 1906 the Tongmeng hui sent two of its members, Liu Daoyi and Cai Zhaonan, to Hunan to make contact with secret societies and to plan an uprising for the end of the year. While Liu went to Changsha, in Hunan, Cai went to Ping county in Jiangxi, where he established connections in the region of Liuyang and Liling. The two radicals made their presence felt in the area, and when the uprising took place, one of the secret society armies in the field accepted an alliance with republicans. This force used the characters for *geming*, or revolution, on its identifying badges and *geming jun* (revolutionary army) on its banners. In addition, a radical manifesto issued in the name of a secret society chief involved in the uprising incorporated much of the Tongmeng hui program. Yang Liqiang, pp. 451–52. See also Lust, p. 178. For a contemporary account of the uprising, see Chen Chunsheng. Esherick (p. 59) argues that although the students' role was less instrumental than either contemporary official reaction or subsequent Chinese Communist historiography would suggest, they did help to advance a popular uprising, albeit one that already possessed its own momentum.

57. Bai, "Zhuilun," *SB*, April 15, 1907.

58. *Ibid.*, April 11, 13, 1907.

59. *Ibid.*, April 11, 13, 1907. On the Ping-Li-Liu rebels wearing revolutionary badges, see Lust, p. 178. *Shuihu zhuan* (The water margin, or all men are brothers) is a popular Ming novel, probably written by Shi Nai'an. *Honglou meng* (Dream of the red chamber) is one of the greatest Chinese novels, written by Cao Xueqin, of the Qing Dynasty. The reference to "[dragging] away his virgin daughter" comes from the *Mencius*, bk. 6, pt. 2, ch. 2. The full quotation is, "If by getting over your neighbor's wall, and dragging away his virgin daughter, you can get a wife, while if you do not do so, you will not be able to get a wife, will you so drag her away?" *Mencius*, p. 424.

60. Eugen Weber (pp. 241-77) describes this process as the city or state carrying its values to the countryside.

61. In a recent study, Taiwan scholar Li Hsiao-t'i (pp. 223-25) compares what he calls the late Qing "enlightenment movement" to the populist movement in Russia in the 1860s.

62. In Jiangsu province alone, 32 anti-local self-government incidents were documented for the year 1910. Wang Shuhuai, pp. 319-20.

63. Hui, "Jingtiancidi," *SB*, March 6, 1911.

64. Hui, "Xiaji," *SB*, May 1, 1911.

65. Johnson, p. 71.

66. Hui, "Jingtiancidi," *SB*, March 6, 1911.

67. Hui, "Xiaji," *SB*, May 1, 1911.

68. Hui, "Chengzhenxiang," *SB*, August 10, 1911.

69. "Wuxi," *SB*, August 24, 1904. On the efforts of the elites to take over structures of local cultural significance, see, e.g., M. Cohen, "Being Chinese," p. 130; Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State*, pp. 148-57, 245-57; Prazniak, "Community Protest," pp. 269-73.

70. Wang Shuhuai, p. 325.

71. *SB*, March 9, 1911. On this uprising, see Prazniak, "Community Protest," pp. 142-49, 307-8. On the journalists' support for the protesters who were attempting to protect their sacred space, see, e.g., Tian, "Lun Laiyang," *SB*, August 10, 1910; Xi (Li Yuerui), "Chuansha luanshi," *SB*, March 11, 1911.

72. M. Cohen, "Being Chinese." See also his "Cultural and Political Inventions."

III. PROLOGUE

1. Di Baoxian, the founder of *Shibao*, as well as several other of the journalists, had turned to the press as a political tool after becoming disillusioned about the efficacy of violent action. On Di's and Chen Leng's involvement in the 1900 Independent Army uprising, see Chapter 6, n. 41.

2. The idea of a Fourth Estate was originally formulated as an addition to the Lords Spiritual, Lords Temporal, and the Commons in Britain, or as a *quatrième pouvoir* or *pouvoir nouveau* in France. On the idea of the Fourth Estate in France and England, see Eisenstein, p. 151; Murry, p. 171. George Boyce ("Fourth Estate") argues that the concept of the Fourth Estate was merely an ideological construct. The term *disi zhongzu* was, to the best of my knowledge, first introduced by Liang Qichao in 1901 in an essay criticizing the state of journalism in China, in which he asked when one would begin to see the development of a Fourth Estate in China. Liang Qichao, "Qingyi bao," p. 53. The expression was later used—in 1903 and 1904, for example, in *Guominri ribao* (The citizen's day daily) and *Cuixin bao* (New association news)—in the sense of a group that represented the people and served society as a whole. See Sang, pp. 247-48.

3. Commenting on the emergence of journalism as a "new power" in human affairs at the time of the French Revolution, Louis Blanc argued that the press reflected not just the journalists' impatience to speak but their "temptation to govern." Eisenstein, p. 145.

4. In Europe politics and journalism were often mixed: Mirabeau pursued a political career in the National Assembly, Brissot and Condorcet in the Legislative Assembly, and the last two plus Marat in the Convention. The situation was similar in Great Britain. Eisenstein, p. 145; Popkin, *Revolutionary News*, p. 54; Murry, p. 176. According to Max Weber, in "Politics as a Vocation" (p. 96), the political

publicist was a significant political actor in his own right, representing the rise of a new demagogic species.

5. The existence of such organizations defied the long-standing Confucian injunction against the formation of independent power bases or factions (*dang*). While this precept was upheld in the early-to-mid Qing by the Manchus' 1652 ban on the discussion of national politics, the situation began to change later in the dynasty with the rise of New Text and statecraft notions of practical institutional reform. Ruan Yuan's establishment of the Xuehai tang (Hall of the Sea of Learning) in 1820 foreshadowed the dramatic increase in the number of extrabureaucratic organizations in the mid 1890s. At this time Kang Youwei (who had studied at the Hall of the Sea of Learning), Liang Qichao, Tan Sitong, and Yan Fu created new-style schools, study societies, and newspapers. Halted by the 1898 coup, these efforts at informal organization were renewed in the early twentieth century by the Shanghai reform publicists.

6. Xu Zhucheng, p. 22.

7. Bao, *Chuanyinglou*, p. 322.

8. Mo, p. 495.

9. On the political significance of government restrictions on the press, see Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, p. 60; Moran, p. 14.

10. Fang Hanqi, *Baokan shi*, p. 596; Sang, p. 252. Japan had been drafting press laws since the early Meiji period. The 1897 law was a slightly liberalized form of earlier laws, but the law of 1909 was more oppressive. Huffman, p. 150. For *Shibao's* reaction, see, e.g., "Shu xin baolu," *SB*, March 30, 1908.

11. Mei, p. 404; Ting, pp. 44-48; Britton, pp. 109-10.

12. The *Chongqing ribao*, the Beijing *Zhonghua xinbao*, and the Tianjin *Beifang bao* were all forced to close before the new press laws were even promulgated. As for foreign influence in censoring newspapers, the Germans, for example, prohibited *Shibao* and three other newspapers from criticizing their role in Shandong, and the Americans, Japanese, and Russians frequently took similar actions. Ge, pp. 142-43. On self-censorship, see Nathan, "Late Ch'ing Press," p. 1287. On *Shibao's* attitude toward Yuan Shikai, see Ding and Zhao, p. 433.

CHAPTER 7

1. In their essay "Quanxue pian shuhou" (A review of "An exhortation to learning"), He Qi and Hu Liyuan used the terms *minquan* and *guanquan* in criticizing Zhang Zhidong. Xu Zhengxiong, p. 74.

2. The late Ming writer Huang Zongxi best exemplifies this subtradition. Huang Zongxi, *Waiting for the Dawn*, p. 16; Mizoguchi, "Minquan," p. 345.

3. Liu Xiyuan, *SB*, December 3, 1911.

4. Jiu, *SB*, March 9, 1909.

5. Zhuang, "Lun choubei," *SB*, May 28, 1909.

6. Xuan (Lin Baishui), "Jia lixian," *SB*, December 31, 1910.

7. Liu Xiyuan, *SB*, December 3, 1911.

8. Jiu, *SB*, March 8, 1909.

9. "Lun juanmin," *SB*, October 17, 1904.

10. "Lun renmin," *SB*, October 17, 1904.

11. Min, "Yubei lixian," *SB*, May 29, 1908.

12. Jiang Ruizao, *SB*, March 17, 1909.

13. Jiu, *SB*, March 8, 1909.

14. "Lun cuizhe," *SB*, September 23, 1909. Shang Yang (d. 330 B.C.E.) and Shen Bu-hai (385-337 B.C.E.) represented the two poles of legalist thought.
15. Min, "Yubei lixian," *SB*, May 27, 1908.
16. "Xianfa jieshuo," *SB*, December 16, 17, 1906.
17. Xuan (Lin Baishui), "Jia lixian," *SB*, December 31, 1910.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Hu Ma, *SB*, December 27, 1907.
20. Zhuang, "Lun choubei," *SB*, May 28, 1909. The journalist using the pen name Gong ("Fairness") also wrote of the profound harm the civil service examination system had done to the Chinese intellect. Gong, "Keju," *SB*, January 12, 1909.
21. Jiu, *SB*, March 8, 1909. For the selection from the *Poetry Classic*, see pt. 3, bk. 2, ode 10, verse 4. Legge, *She King*, p. 501.
22. "Lun zhiren," *SB*, March 5, 1909. During the Three Kingdoms period, in the state of Shu, Ma Su (190-228 C.E.) received the favor of the Duke of Wu—another name for the prime minister, Zhuge Liang (181-234 C.E.)—for his military abilities. However, Ma later committed grave errors in the prime minister's campaign against the kingdom of Wei and was executed by Zhuge for this reason.
23. Zhuang, "Lun choubei," *SB*, May 28, 1909. The reference to Zengzi is to the Confucian *Analects*, bk. 1, ch. 4: "The philosopher Zeng said, 'I daily examine myself on three points: whether in transacting business for others, I may have not been faithful; whether in intercourse with friends, I may have not been sincere; whether I may have not mastered and practiced the instructions of my teacher.'" Confucius, p. 139. The ode "The Deer Call to One Another" belongs to a section of the *Poetry Classic* that describes the manners appropriate at lesser occasions. It speaks of "admirable guests" at a festival, whose "virtuous fame is grandly brilliant" and who serve as an example to the officers. Legge, *She King*, pp. 245-47.
24. Hui, "Chuansha jieguo," *SB*, June 11, 1911.
25. "Lun juanmin," *SB*, October 17, 1904.
26. Tian, "Xiangluan," *SB*, May 7, 1910. A *sheng* is a unit of measurement equal to one-hundredth of a *shi*, which is itself equal to roughly 103.6 liters. A *wen* is a counter for cash.
27. Tian, "Lun Laiyang," *SB*, August 10, 1910.
28. Xi (Li Yuerui), "Chuansha," *SB*, March 11, 1911.
29. Hui, "Chuansha jieguo," *SB*, June 11, 1911.
30. Hui, "Chuansha sujie," *SB*, March 7, 1911.
31. Hui, "Jingtiancidi," *SB*, March 6, 1911.
32. Xi (Li Yuerui), "Chuansha," *SB*, March 11, 1911.
33. Hui, "Jingtiancidi," *SB*, March 6, 1911.
34. Prazniak, "Community Protest," p. 13.
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 43-53; Lust, pp. 167-68.
36. "Lun gesheng," *SB*, December 14, 1908. The law of avoidance prohibited a magistrate from holding office either in his native province or in a neighboring province within 500 *li* (about 167 miles) of his hometown.
37. Xi (Li Yuerui), "Chuansha," *SB*, March 11, 1911.
38. Price, p. 9.
39. Bai, "Zhuilun," *SB*, April 10, 11, 1907.
40. "Lun renmin," *SB*, October 19, 1904.
41. Hui, "Chuansha jieguo," *SB*, June 11, 1911.
42. Bai, "Zhuilun," April 14, 1907.
43. "Lun juanmin," *SB*, October 17, 1904. Declaring that the situation in the late

Qing was not only "worse than it had been during the uprisings of Zhang [Xianzhong] and Li [Zicheng]" but also "worse than 100 years ago in the southwest of France," an editorialist blamed the officials for delighting in placing the nation in a state of peril. "Lun Danyang," *SB*, August 28, 1909. Warning that "the corruption of the official system and the difficulties of popular subsistence were all much worse" in the early twentieth century than they had been just before the Taiping Rebellion, Li Yuerui argued that it was the officials' responsibility to improve present conditions. If they did not, "the nation could be ravaged once again as it had been when Hong [Xiuquan] and Yang [Xiuqing] started an uprising and rebels rose up from all four corners of the nation." Xi (Li Yuerui), "Xiangluan," *SB*, April 21, 1910.

44. "Xu Qian," *SB*, November 29, 1911.

45. Li, *SB*, December 16, 1907.

46. Jian, *SB*, January 19, 1908.

47. Leng (Chen Leng), "Zai huo," *SB*, January 15, 1908.

48. "Lun cuizhe yanlun," *SB*, September 21, 1909.

49. Jian, *SB*, January 19, 1908. The opening chapter of the classic *Discourses of the States* (*Guoyu*) purportedly represents the protest of the Duke of Shao against the tyrannical rule of King Li, of the Zhou Dynasty, who had suppressed all those who dared criticize him. The Duke of Shao said, in language clearly echoed in the *Shibao* editorial, "You have merely dammed them up. But stopping up the mouths of the people is more dangerous than stopping up a river. When a river is blocked and then breaks through, many persons are bound to be injured, and it is the same with the people. Therefore, one who desires to control a river will leave an opening where the water can be drawn off. And one who would control the people should do likewise, encouraging them to speak." Translated in de Bary, *Confucianism*, pp. 82-83. The allusion to political assassination refers to the attempted murder, on September 20, 1905, in the Beijing train station, of the five officials who had been appointed by the government to investigate constitutional systems abroad.

50. Xuan (Lin Baishui), "Jia lixian," *SB*, December 31, 1910. This statement resonates with a passage from the *Mencius*, bk. 1, pt. 2, ch. 7:4: "When all those about you say, 'This is a man of talents and worth,' you may not therefore believe it. When your great officers all say, 'This is a man of talents and virtue,' neither may you for that believe it. When all the people say, 'This is a man of talents and virtue,' then examine into the case and when you find that the man is such employ him." *Mencius*, pp. 165-66. It also closely corresponds to the reflections of the pre-French Revolution liberal constitutionalist Malherbes on public opinion: "A tribunal has been raised independent of all powers and respected by all powers, which evaluates all talents and pronounces on all people of merit." Quoted in Ozouf, p. 59.

51. Zhuang, "Junxian," *SB*, June 20, 1909. Dan Zhu was the son of the sage-king Yao, but he lacked his father's wisdom. It was the same for the sage-kings Shun and Wen, but Bo and Li were known as good people.

52. "Lun zhiren," *SB*, March 5, 1909. Yi Ya was a famous culinary artist, and Kai Fang a prince of the Spring and Autumn period (722-481 B.C.E.). Guanzi (?-644 B.C.E.) was a Legalist prime minister of the state of Qi during the Warring States period. Shang Yang was prime minister of the state of Qin and the organizing genius behind its long drive to imperial power. Huang Hao was an official and Zhuge Liang the prime minister of the kingdom of Shu during the Three Kingdoms period (222-265 C.E.) Zhuge Liang was known for his great wisdom.

53. "Difang zizhi zhenglun," *SB*, September 30, 1904.

54. "Lun Danyang," *SB*, August 28, 1909.

55. Xi (Li Yuerui), "Jinggao Xiangsheng," *SB*, April 19, 1910.

56. "Lun Danyang," *SB*, August 28, 1909.
57. Bao (Xiao), "Danyang," *SB*, September 27, 1909.
58. Hui, "Chuansha jieguo," *SB*, June 11, 1911. See also "Lun guomin falü," *SB*, July 3, 1907.

CHAPTER 8

1. Min, "Yubei lixian," *SB*, June 1, 1908.
2. For a discussion of the separation of powers, see, e.g., "Lun jinri guoquan," *SB*, April 23, 1907.
3. Huang Zongxi, *Mingyi*, p. 10. See de Bary's discussion of these issues in the introduction to his translation of the *Mingyi daifang lu*. See Huang Zongxi, *Waiting for the Dawn*.
4. Liang Qichao, "Biangfa tongyi," pp. 31-34.
5. Chang P'eng-yüan, "Constitutionalism," p. 4. Chang is quoting from *Wuxu Bianfa* (The 1898 reform), ed. Zhongguo shixuehui (Shanghai: Shenzhou guoguang she, 1953), 1: 9, 55-58, 177-78, 228, 245-47.
6. *Wuxu Bianfa*, 2: p. 176, quoted in Chang P'eng-yüan, "Constitutionalism," p. 4.
7. Liang Qichao had made a similar statement in "Xinmin shuo," pp. 35-36.
8. "Lun cuizhe," *SB*, September 21, 23, 1909.
9. Ding and Zhao, p. 353. On Liang and constitutional politics, see Dong. On Chen Leng's reaction to the official mission abroad, see Leng, "Wei guoren," *SB*, December 29, 1905. On the mission itself, see Hou (Yi Jie).
10. "Xianfa jieshuo," *SB*, December 16, 1906. See also Bai, "Lixian," *SB*, February 21, 1907; Bao, "Lun guoren," *SB*, January 21, 1907.
11. In the field of education, the 1901 interim regulations drafted by the Minister of Education and the standardization of the modern educational system in 1906 were both modeled on the Japanese structure of higher-elementary, middle, and higher-level schools. The 1906 military reform, the 1907 legal reform, and the 1909 local self-government reform were also based on Japanese-inspired regulations. For a thorough treatment of the Japanese influence on all facets of Chinese reform, see Reynolds, *Xinzheng Revolution*, and "Golden Decade." For a discussion of the Japanese model for local self-government, see Thompson, "Statecraft," pp. 206-13.
12. Howard.
13. On the students in Japan, see Sanetō; Harrell; Huang Fu-ch'ing.
14. "Lixian pingyi," *SB*, September 27, 1904.
15. "Xianfa jieshuo," *SB*, December 16, 1906.
16. Min, "Yubei lixian," *SB*, May 31, 1908. Min was referring to the statement made in the government's 1906 edict on constitutional preparation that "all matters would be open to public opinion [*shuzheng gongzhu yulun*]."
17. Li, *SB*, December 15, 1907.
18. Hu Ma, *SB*, December 27, 1907.
19. "Xianfa jieshuo," *SB*, December 16, 1906.
20. Min, "Yubei lixian," *SB*, May 29, 1908; Li, *SB*, December 16, 1907.
21. Min, "Yubei lixian," *SB*, May 29, 1908; "Xianfa jieshuo," *SB*, December 17, 1906; Li, *SB*, December 16, 1907; "Liuyue," *SB*, July 25, 1908; Hu Ma, *SB*, December 27, 1907.
22. Min, "Yubei lixian," *SB*, May 28, 1908.
23. "Xianfa jieshuo," *SB*, December 16, 1906.
24. The full title of the document that became known as the *Xianfa dagang* was "Xianzheng bianchaguan zizhengyuan huizou xianfa dagang ji yiyuan faxuan jufa

yaoling ji suinian choubei shi yizhai." *Gugong*, 1: 54-67. For *Shibao's* reaction to this document, see, e.g., "Xianfa bianchaguan," *SB*, September 6-8, 1908.

25. Xi (Li Yuerui), "Du xianfa," *SB*, September 6, 1908.

26. Li, *SB*, December 15, 1907.

27. Min, "Yubei lixian," *SB*, May 27, 1908.

28. "Xianfa jieshuo," *SB*, December 16, 1906.

29. Min, "Yubei lixian," *SB*, June 1, 1908.

30. Li, *SB*, December 16, 1907.

31. Hui, "Xiaji," *SB*, May 1, 1911.

32. Gneist himself continued to use the English term rather than a German variant. Albert Mosse, Gneist's student, was Yamagata Aritomo's assistant in drafting the Japanese local self-government code of 1888. Kuhn, pp. 270-72.

33. Shen Huaiyu, "Xiyang," p. 176.

34. Tian, "Lun difang," *SB*, February 2, 1907.

35. Da, *SB*, March 17, 1907.

36. Hui, "Xiaji," *SB*, May 1, 1911. This view resonated with Liang Qichao's. In his manifesto for the Political Information Society (*Zhengwen she*), written in the fall of 1907, Liang declared that all constitutional nations had local self-government as their foundation. Liang Qichao, "Zhengwen she," p. 26.

37. "Difang zizhi," *SB*, September 30, 1904. Liang Qichao had put forward a similar view, claiming that local self-government was a natural principle of the national economy and the people's livelihood. "To want the nation to be strong," he wrote, "it must begin with the people of the entire nation all uniting their strength to manage those affairs that they must manage. It is local self-government that is the natural principle of the people's livelihood." Liang, "Shanghai," p. 1.

38. Min, "Yubei lixian," *SB*, May 31, 1908. In this, Min was echoing Rudolf Gneist's assertion that local self-government would protect the local administration from the vacillations of central policy. Kuhn, pp. 271-72.

39. Da, *SB*, March 17, 1907.

40. Da, *SB*, March 18, 1907.

41. Bao (Xiao), "Xin liuxing," *Shibao*, February 16, 1908.

42. For a concise summary of statecraft ideas, see Fogel, p. 60. See also Elman, *Classicism*, pp. 298-306; Kuhn.

43. Gu's proposals were made in his nine-part treatise "On Centralized Bureaucracy" ("Junxian lun"). In addition to opposing the law of avoidance, Gu also advocated increasing the number of officials at the subcounty level and controlling the county clerks, who, undisciplined by bureaucratic accountability and separate from the units of local society, sought only their own enrichment. "Junxian lun," in *Tinglin wenji*, as cited in Min Tu-ki. Huang Zongxi, although he did not discuss the issue of feudalism as thoroughly as Gu, addressed the problem of local self-government by stressing the need for the establishment of local institutions of gentry participation, specifically schools, as a means of checking the arbitrary power of the monarch. Huang Zongxi, *Mingyi*, pp. 9-13. Feng Guifen had attempted to adapt traditional feudal political theory to modern conditions. While he did not make an explicit conceptual link between traditional feudal concepts and Western ideas of participatory democracy, he had been influenced by Western local self-government as it was practiced by foreigners in the Shanghai concessions. These ideas were expressed in Feng's "On the Reinstatement of Local Posts" ("Fu xiangzhi yi") in *Jiaobinlu kangyi*. His writings later served as an inspiration for the Hundred Days' Reforms movement. In 1898 1,000 copies of his *Straightforward Words from*

the *Jiaobin Studio* (*Jiaobinlu kangyi*) were distributed to government officials. See Min Tu-ki, pp. 105-7.

44. Seven of the entries in Kang's 1898 *Index to Japanese Publications* (*Riben shumuzi*) were on foreign local self-government systems, and both *Citizen Self-Government* (*Gongmin Zizhi*), which first appeared in *Xinmin congbao* on April 8, April 22, and May 8, 1902, and *Kang Youwei's Discussions of Political Systems* (*Nanghai guanzhi*), 1903, demonstrated how Kang's ideas about feudalism had developed into theories concerning local self-government.

45. Min, "Yubei lixian," *SB*, May 31, 1908. On local government in Qing China, see Ch'u T'ung-tsu.

46. "Lun gesheng," *SB*, December 14, 1908.

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Da*, *SB*, March 18, 1907.

49. "Lun gesheng," *SB*, December 14, 1908.

50. "Yubei," *SB*, April 14, 1909.

51. The ancient Zhou Dynasty (1122-221 B.C.E.) established the *liuxiang liusui* (six inner and six outer districts) system, which regulated the six districts in the immediate environs of the local capital and the six external districts. Hucker, pp. 233, 462. During the Spring and Autumn (722-481 B.C.E.) and Warring States (403-221 B.C.E.) periods, the most representative institution was the *guobi* (ward) system of the state of Qi. This system, which was similar to that of the Zhou Dynasty, united self-government organizations and military organizations. Under the reforms of Prime Minister Shang Yang of the state of Qin, small *xiang* (rural townships) were united to form *xian* (counties), with *xiangting* (rural villages) further established below these. The Han Dynasty (202 B.C.E.-220 C.E.) established four levels below the county. The *san lao* (elders), *se fu* (bailiff), and *you jiao* (patroller) were all locally elected (*tuiju*) and were responsible for such matters as tax collection and eliminating bandits. From the Han Dynasty on, all local deputies were appointed by the government. In the Sui Dynasty (589-618) the *xiangzu lubao* (rural clan neighborhood protection) system was established, while the Tang Dynasty (618-906) instituted four levels below the county: the *li*, *xiang*, *lin*, and *bao*. In the beginning, the Song Dynasty (960-1279) followed the Tang system, but after the Wang Anshi Reforms (from 1069) the *baojia* (community self-defense) system was created. In addition, scholars led in the formation of the *xiangyue* (community compact), an institution devoted to moral exhortation of the people. Because this system was freely organized by private individuals, however, it was not a part of local self-government. The Yuan Dynasty (1260-1368) established the *lizhi* and *shezhi*, both community systems. The *lijia* (community self-monitoring) system was set up during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), with the *lizhang* (community head) and the *jiashou* (tithing head) both following government orders. Within the *lijia* were such organizations as the *xiangyue*, which was responsible for the moral instruction of the people, the *lishe*, an organization in charge of sacrifices, the *shecang*, or community granary, and the *shexue*, community schools responsible for universalizing education. In addition, Wang Yangming established several institutions in Jiangxi province, including a *baojia* system. The early Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) also used the *baojia*, *xiangyue*, and *shexue* systems, but in the second year of the Qianlong reign (1737) the *baojia* system was transformed into the *bilu shiwu*, or neighborhood system, and from that time on different provinces developed their own distinct local systems. Shen Huaiyu, "Xiyang," pp. 159-60. In Jiangsu province, for example, the system was called *tubao* (defense planning), although it was in

essence the same as the *baojia* system. Under all of these systems the local gentry (*shishen*) were responsible for public welfare organizations. Wang Shuhuai, p. 313.

52. "Jishe zizhi," *SB*, March 28, 1909.

53. Xin (Meng Sen), *SB*, February 4, 1909. The community compact, or *xiangyue*, an institution created by scholars in the Song Dynasty, was devoted to popular moral exhortation. See, e.g., Shen Huaiyu, "Xiyang," pp. 159-60.

54. Bao (Xiao), "Xin liuxing," *SB*, February 16, 1908.

55. The "*xianguan* system" is a reference to the elders (*san lao*) and bailiffs (*sefu*) systems. Shen Huaiyu, "Xiyang," pp. 162-68.

56. Min Tu-ki, p. 126.

57. Tang Zhenchang, p. 431.

58. Thompson, "Statecraft," p. 209.

59. *Ibid.*, pp. 206-16.

60. Shen Huaiyu, "Xiyang," p. 173.

61. "Lun lixian," *SB*, June 23, 1904.

62. "Jishe zizhi," *SB*, March 28, 1909.

63. Hui, "Jingtianci," *SB*, March 6, 1911.

64. Di, "Zizhi," *SB*, April 24, 1910.

65. Min, "Yubei lixian," *SB*, May 31, 1908.

66. Tian, "Lun difang," *SB*, February 2, 1907. The Chinese system of local self-government was modeled on the Japanese in that the two systems were divided into two levels according to population density, with the lower level including the city, town, and rural township (*cheng, zhen, xiang*), and the higher level including the subprefecture, department, and county (*ting, zhou, xian*). For a description of the program for these two levels, see, e.g., Xin (Meng Sen), *SB*, February 4, 6, 1909.

67. "Lun gesheng," *SB*, December 14, 1908.

68. Da, *SB*, March 19, 1907.

69. Tian, "Lun difang," *SB*, February 2, 1907.

70. "Difang," *SB*, September 30, 1904.

71. Philip Kuhn (p. 277) has raised the question of whether local self-government represented anything more than the continuing devolution of power from the bureaucracy into the hands of the local elites, or whether it represented a true innovation.

72. *SB*, September 4, 1906. Mainland scholar Tang Zhenchang (pp. 431-32) argues, for example, that the elections of *dongshi* (directors) and *mingyu dongshi* (honorary directors) to the Shanghai Zong gongcheng ju (General Works Board) and the Zizhi gongsuo (Self-Government Office), although limited and elitist in nature, did set an example for a democratic electoral system. The regulations of such organizations also respected the democratic principle of the minority submitting to the majority. The Taiwan scholar Shen Huaiyu claims that when scholars assess China's attempts to implement Western-style democracy, they are wrong to consider only the Zizheng yuan (Political Advisory Board) and the *ziyi ju* (provincial assemblies) without examining the beginnings of local self-government. Shen suggests that it was the self-government reform effort that best represented the potential for democratic reform in the late Qing. "Mengya," p. 292.

CHAPTER 9

1. "Ni jiuhe," *SB*, November 14, 1907.

2. Benedict Anderson (p. 49) defines the nation as "an imagined community"; Benjamin Lee (p. 168) as a "deep horizontal comradeship" shared by citizens.

3. "Gaige," *SB*, January 26, 1907.

4. Zhang Jian was the Constitutional Preparation Association's first director, and he also served as vice-director under the fourth director, Tang Shouqian. On the as-

sociation and its publication, the *Yubei lixian gonghui bao*, see Zhang Kaiyuan, pp. 183-93.

5. Bao, *Chuanyinglou*, pp. 331-32, 351-56, 413; Munakata, p. 187; "Xinhai Shanghai," p. 101.

6. On the Jiangsu Railway Company, see Min Tu-ki, pp. 184, 187. The Zhejiang Railway Company had already been established on August 3, 1905. Bao Tianxiao claims that Lin Kanghou founded the "Jiang-Zhe Railway Company," an antecedent to the "Hu-Hang Railway Company," but I have found no information to back up that claim. According to Mary Rankin, Lin was active in the founding of the Jiangsu Railway Company, the head of one of its bureaus, and an alternate member of its board of directors in 1906 (private correspondence).

7. Central control of the railways was crucial because the government had always regarded it as a military rather than a civilian industry. See, e.g., Gugong, 1: 222. Liang Qichao wrote in a letter to Wang Kangnian that "while Westerners construct railways for the exclusive purpose of transportation, when the Chinese speak of constructing railways, it is for the exclusive purpose of transporting soldiers." "Liang Qichao zhi Wang Kangnian," p. 1829. In addition to recognizing their military role, the dynasty also regarded the railways as essential to the consolidation of political power. In a February 5, 1907, telegram to the Board of Commerce, printed in *Shibao*, Cen Chunxuan, the governor-general of Guangdong province, stated that "the railways are related to political power [*zhengquan*]. They cannot forever remain a merchant industry [*shangye*]." "Cen Chunxuan," *SB*, February 5, 1907.

8. Li, *SB*, December 17, 1907. On some of the deliberations among the railway activists prior to the November meeting, see "Jiangsu tielu," *SB*, November 12, 1907; "Jiangsu Zhejiang," *SB*, November 20, 1907.

9. For an account of the Suzhou-Hangzhou-Ningbo Railway dispute, see Mo; Min Tu-ki, pp. 181-218.

10. "Xuanbu jukuan," *SB*, November 19, 1907. The phrase *shuzheng juezhu gong-lun* refers once again to the September 1, 1906, edict on constitutional preparation. Gugong 1: 44.

11. *SB*, November 8, 1907. This reflects the popular-based strategy of the Jiang-Zhe Railway movement. Rather than rally support from officials above, as the Guangdong, Hunan, and Hubei gentry had done in the 1905 Yue-Han Railway dispute, the Jiang-Zhe activists attempted to mobilize the people from below. Because the Yue-Han movement was antforeign, it had benefited from the support of *jing-guan* (high officials residing in the capital) and *dufu* (governors-general), whom the gentry leaders could petition to help them forward their demands. The Jiang-Zhe movement, in contrast, was more clearly antigovernment and more openly opposed to official policy. The *jing-guan* and the *dufu* were thus not as eager to lend their support. On the various antiloan rallies, see Min Tu-ki, pp. 191-99.

12. Li, *SB*, December 17, 1907. On the death of Wu and Tang, see Mo, pp. 219-20, 236. In addition to the "higher levels" of the masses (*qunzhong*), such as the gentry (*shenshi*), the merchants (*shangren*), and the students, lower classes within the cities, including porters (*banyunfu*), prostitutes (*jinü*), and beggars (*qigai*), were also purportedly involved in the antiloan movement. Some members of the lowest classes—carters, butchers, entertainers, and sedan-chair bearers—even subscribed to shares in the railway, which demonstrates the broad support for the movement that existed at the grass roots. In Hangzhou 200 sedan-chair bearers subscribed to 100 lots of railway stock, and a French correspondent further reported that 6,000 laborers and 2,000 beggars, actors, and monks also subscribed. Min Tu-ki, pp. 194-96.

13. "Ji guomin." I thank Min Jie of CASS for pointing this source out to me.
14. "Ni jiuhe," *SB*, November 14, 1907.
15. "Jinggao Jiangsu," *SB*, November 11, 1907. Elaborating on this theme in numerous essays, the journalists used the railway issue to advocate the rapid opening of the national assembly. See, e.g., Li, *SB*, December 16, 1907.
16. Li, *SB*, December 14, 1907. A number of reformists, including Liang Qichao, Ma Xiangbo, Tang Qiu, and Su Zhizeng, supported the idea of promoting citizens' railway and mines associations and a National Association of Railways and Mines. Sun Zhizeng, for example, wrote a letter to Liang Qichao advocating the creation of such associations and emphasizing the reformists' need to "use the railway and mining issues to arouse the people's awareness of rights. This would certainly make it easier for us to lead." Ding and Zhao, p. 459.
17. The term *ziyi ju*, which literally means consultative body but which is commonly translated as provincial assembly, was first used by Cen Chunxuan, the governor-general of Guangdong and Guangxi, in a June 10, 1907, memorial. On October 19, 1907, an edict decreed the creation of the provincial assemblies, and on July 22, 1908, regulations for the assemblies and their electoral procedures were made public by the Xianzheng bianchaguan. Elections were to be held from February to July 1909, and the assemblies were to be established in every province by October of that same year. The issue of provincial assemblies had been discussed by Sun Yat-sen and Wang Kangnian as early as 1900, by Zhang Jian in his "Bianfa pingyi" (1901), and by Kang Youwei in his *Nanhai guan zhi yi* (1903). Min Tu-ki, pp. 150-68.
18. Ten of the 68 activists who had established the Jiangsu Railway Association became Jiangsu Provincial Assembly deputies, and 11 of the 113 members (10 percent) of the Zhejiang antiloan movement became members of the Zhejiang Provincial Assembly. Min Tu-ki, pp. 163-64.
19. Munakata, p. 187. Many authors, including Min Tu-ki and John Fincher, translate both *Zizheng yuan* and *guohui* as national assembly. I distinguish the two institutions by translating the prospective *guohui* as national assembly and the *Zizheng yuan*, which was actually established in 1910, as the Political Advisory Board. The *Zizheng yuan* was a provisional organization of 200 deputies. Half of them were appointed by the emperor; the other half were elected by representatives of local provincial assemblies. Lei Fen's appointment demonstrates that he was one of the most respected members of the Jiangsu Provincial Assembly.
20. "Lun jianglai," *SB*, January 21, 1909. See also Chi, "Wei ziyi ju."
21. "Guan yu shen," *SB*, October 22, 1908. Other influential periodicals in Shanghai, including *Shenbao* and *Dongfang zazhi*, also generally sided with the provincial assembly in such disputes. Zhang Kaiyuan, p. 193.
22. Di, "Ziyi ju," *SB*, June 4, 1909.
23. "Lun Jiangsu," *SB*, January 26, 1910.
24. "Lun ziyi ju zhi qiantu," *SB*, June 4, 1909.
25. Chi, "Wei ziyi ju," *SB*, August 28, 1908.
26. Di, "Ziyi ju," *SB*, June 4, 1909. "Lun xianzheng," *SB*, November 3, 1909. The number of citizens who could actually participate in the elections for provincial assembly deputies was very small. Chang P'eng-yüan and Geng Yunzhi both estimate that only 0.42 percent of the Chinese population had the right to vote. Chang P'eng-yüan, "Constitutionalists," p. 149; Geng, "Ziyi ju," p. 144. This figure corresponds with Zhang Zhongli's estimate that the gentry represented 0.39 percent of the population in the late nineteenth century.
27. Gugong, 2: 667. *SB*, July 12, 1907. The authority of the provincial assemblies

was outlined in Section 6, Article 21, of the Regulations of the Provincial Assembly as follows:

1. approval of regulations for programs relevant to the province
2. deliberation on the provincial budget
3. settlement of accounts of the budget for the province
4. decisions concerning financial obligations or welfare burden of provincial population
5. revisions of regulations in the province
6. affairs relevant to concessions in the province
7. election of national assemblymen (from among provincial assemblymen)
8. decisions in response to requests from the national assembly
9. decisions in response to requests for advice from the governor
10. settlement of disputes among lower local self-government assemblies
11. decisions regarding appeals or recommendations from lower self-government associations

Article 28 gave the assemblies the additional authority to denounce officials or gentry to the governor-general or governor for accepting bribes or for other illegal acts.

28. The railway industry often boasted a capital base several times greater than that of any of the other modern provincial industries. According to recent research on the Zhejiang Railway Company, from 1905, when it was established, until June of 1910 the company's received capital stock amounted to 9,480,762 yuan. In comparison, from 1901 to 1910 the total capital of all the other Chinese enterprises in the entire province represented only 2,400,000 yuan. In other words, the capital generated by one railway company in six years was nearly four times the combined capital of all the rest of the enterprises in the province, which was one of the most economically developed in China at the time. Min Jie, "Zhelu gongsi," pp. 271-80.

29. Zhejiang and Jiangsu were not the only provinces where assemblymen fought to gain control of regional railways. Significant movements were also launched in Sichuan, Guangdong, Yunnan, Hunan, and Hubei. On the important Sichuan movement, see Zhang Huichang.

30. Chang P'eng-yüan, *Lixianpai*, p. 71, "Constitutionalists," pp. 161-62; Geng, "Guohui qingyuan," p. 51.

31. "Lun jinri guomin," *SB*, March 30, 1908.

32. "Shiping [untitled]," *SB*, March 19, 1910.

33. "Lun guomin yi su zhunbei," *SB*, July 9, 1910.

34. Many of the elected representatives of the Zizheng yuan who were also provincial assemblymen had taken part in the first and second petitions. When the third petition was presented, they moved that the entire board support it. Chang P'eng-yüan, "Constitutionalists," p. 165.

35. "Lun guohui," *SB*, January 7, 1911. Although many reformists concurred with the *Shibao* journalists in finding this compromise unacceptable, only the citizens of the provinces of Fengtian and Zhili attempted to continue the struggle. They put forward a fourth petition in December of 1910, but their appeal was summarily suppressed. Geng, "Guohui qingyuan," p. 46.

36. "Lun kai guohui," *SB*, November 8, 1910.

37. *SB*, May 14, 1911. The chair of the conference was Tang Hualong, the president of the Hubei Provincial Assembly, and the vice-chair was the Sichuan Provincial Assembly president, Pu Dianjun. Deputies from Jiangsu included Lei Fen, Yang Tingdong, and Meng Sen. Geng, "Ziyiju," 269.

38. Nine of the new cabinet's thirteen members were Manchus, and five of those nine were imperial nobles. More important, the institution was accountable only

to the emperor. The nationalization of the railways was a policy that the Qing had originally wanted to implement in 1906 as part of the reform of the official system, but it had been postponed as a result of the railway disturbances, particularly in Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces. By 1911, however, the authorities were emboldened to try to resurrect it.

39. *SB*, May 14, 1911.

40. Gu, "Yu xianyou," *SB*, May 17-19, 1911.

41. Geng, "Ziyiju," p. 270.

42. At the time of the Second United Provincial Assembly Conference, the railway protection movement had once again gained momentum under the leadership of the provincial assemblies and the railway companies. In Hunan province alone, an unprecedented 10,000 people were reported to have gathered to protest the railway nationalization policy and were "determined to die for the struggle." "Xiangsheng," *SB*, May 27, 1911. The cabinet responded to this fervor with orders for a crackdown, which the governors-general of Hunan, Hubei, and Guangdong expeditiously carried out, virtually crushing the movement. The focus of the railway movement then shifted to the Sichuan Railway Protection League (Sichuan baolu tongzhi hui). The Sichuanese movement ultimately met with the same fate as those of Hunan, Hubei, and Guangdong, however: in September 1911, Sichuanese Governor-General Zhao Erfeng ordered the troops to open fire on railway protection demonstrators.

43. "Hunan," *SB*, July 13, 1911.

44. "Zhongguo zhengdang," *SB*, June 12, 1911.

45. "Lun guohui," *SB*, January 7, 1911. The quote paraphrased is from Xunzi's "Wangzhi" (The kingly system).

46. "Zhuanyi," *SB*, June 18, 1911.

47. "Lun Eluan," *SB*, October 14, 1911.

48. See, e.g., "Jinggao wo guomin," *SB*, October 22, 1911; "Guan zhi xinyong," *SB*, October 24, 1911; "Jiu gefangmian," *SB*, October 25, 1911; "Gonghe," *SB*, October 24, 1911. Not all constitutional reformists joined the revolutionaries so readily, however. Zhang Jian, for example, continued to press for a constitutional monarchy until December 23, 1911.

49. Yan, p. 84; "Xinhai Shanghai," p. 101. In addition to mingling at Xilou, reformists and revolutionaries both participated in such organizations as the Constitutional Preparation Association and the Jiangsu Provincial Assembly. Bao, *Chuanyinglou*, p. 328. For other examples of revolutionaries who worked closely with constitutionalists before the revolution, such as Qiu Fengjia in Guangdong and Meng Jing in Guangxi, see Geng, "Guohui," p. 59.

50. "Lun Eluan," *SB*, October 14, 1911.

51. "Xu Qian," *SB*, November 29, 1911.

52. "Huo wen," *SB*, November 28, 1911.

53. "Xu Qian," *SB*, November 29, 1911.

54. Leng (Chen Leng), "Fei junzhu," *SB*, December 7, 1911.

55. On the later years of *Shibao*, see Chang P'eng-yüan, "*Shibao*," pp. 171-75; Yuan Yiqin, pp. 163-69.

56. On the practical reasons for *Shibao*'s decline, see, e.g., Chang P'eng-yüan, "*Shibao*," p. 173.

57. During the first year of the republic, Zhang Jian, Zhao Fengchang, and Ying Dehong purchased *Shenbao* from Xu Ziping for 120,000 yuan. Although Zhang had been intimately associated with *Shibao* from 1904, working closely with a number of its journalists in various political institutions and serving as the informal

head of Xilou, he had never been able to control the newspaper. This is evident, for example, in *Shibao's* rejection of the government's concession to the Parliamentary Petition Movement, which Zhang accepted, and the newspaper's embrace of the revolution over two months before Zhang's. *Shenbao* had undergone important changes in 1905, when it reformed itself along the lines of *Shibao*, and again in 1906, when it began its transition from foreign into Chinese hands. When the opportunity to buy the already well-established *Shenbao* arose in 1912, Zhang welcomed the chance to establish his own mouthpiece. See Narramore, pp. 87–88. According to some biographical dictionaries, Shi Liangcai actually served as an editor of *Shibao* from 1908. See, e.g., Mei, p. 217. This is not, however, corroborated by other memoirs or press studies, including those of Bao Tianxiao and Ge Gongzhen (both of whom worked for *Shibao*), Chang P'eng-yuan, and Fang Hanqi.

58. Yuan Yiqin, p. 165; Chang P'eng-yüan, "*Shibao*," p. 174.

59. The commercial press, exemplified by *Shenbao*, which was of secondary importance in the early years of the twentieth century, was now on the ascendent. See Narramore, p. 77.

60. On this increasing social polarization, see Esherick, pp. 106–42, 250–55.

CONCLUSION

1. Di Baoxian lost his three-year-old son in a fire in the early republican period and became a more devoted Buddhist after this tragedy. *Chuanyinglou*, pp. 422–23.

2. Robert Darnton and Daniel Roche (p. xiii) describe the role of the press in revolutionary France in this way.

3. Tyler, "Twelve Intellectuals," p. 4; see also "Excerpts."

4. *Ibid.*, and "China Arrests Petitioner," p. 4.

5. In addition, a joint Sino-American project studying China's constitutional past and future prospects is presently under way at Columbia University. Funded by the Luce Foundation and the National Endowment for Democracy, this project has brought scholars from China and the overseas community together with Americans to discuss China and constitutionalism. The project is sponsored by the Center for the Study of Human Rights, the Center for Chinese Legal Studies, and the East Asian Institute of Columbia University. Three conferences have been held: *China and Constitutionalism: Cross-National Perspectives* (1993), *China's Constitutional Systems: Convergence of Divergence* (1994), and *China and Constitutionalism: The Diverse Approaches* (1995). Visiting scholars such as Guo Luoji, Tan Jian, Yan Jiaqi, and Hu Ping have participated in the various sessions. A volume or volumes are forthcoming.

6. On civil society as it is viewed in China, the exiled Chinese community in the West, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, see Rowe, "Civil Society," p. 142. Rowe cites the following sources: Shi Yuangkang, "Shimin shehui yu zhongben yimo—Zhongguo xiandai daolushang de zhang'ai" (Civil society and the policy of emphasizing the fundamental and repressing the secondary—an obstacle in China's road to modernization), *Ershiyi shiji* 6 (August 1991): 105–20; and Wang Shaoguang, "Guanyu 'shimin shehui' de jidian sikao" (Reflections on the notion of "civil society"), *Ershiyi shiji* 6 (December 1991): 102–14. See also the excellent research note by Shu-Yun Ma; and Hui and Lee, p. 601.

7. The tension between national salvation (*jiuwang*) and enlightenment (*qimeng*) dates back to the May Fourth, 1919, period. See Li Zehou; Schwarcz. Li Zehou's essay was critiqued in study sessions in China after the Tian'anmen massacre.

8. Ma Shu-Yun, pp. 185, 193.

9. On recent disturbances, see e.g., WuDunn. On recent investigative reporting on the peasantry, see, e.g., Sun.

10. These comments are based on discussions I have had with a number of intellectuals in China over the past five years.

11. On this theme, see Kelly and McCormick, p. 815.

12. Quoted in Wakeman, "All the Rage," p. 19.

13. Ma Shu-Yun, pp. 188-89.

14. The "goddess of democracy" was, however, a very complex and eclectic symbol, combining the traits of Western goddess figures, such as the Statue of Liberty, with elements of both traditional representations of Chinese deities and socialist realist icons. See Tsao, pp. 140-47.

15. See, e.g., de Bary, "New Confuciansism."

APPENDIX A

1. For references to pen names, see Zhang, Lin, and Li; Zhang and Li; Zhang Taigu.

APPENDIX B

1. Lust, p. 166.

2. Esherick, pp. 58-65; Lust, pp. 179-80; Chen Chunsheng, pp. 463-99; Yang Liqiang, pp. 451-52.

3. Ding and Zhang, pp. 82-83; Zhongguo diyi, pp. 283-84. Very little secondary material, in Chinese or in English, exists on the Danyang uprising.

4. Li and Li, pp. 10-17; Esherick, pp. 123-42; Prazniak, "Community Protest," pp. 329-33.

5. Zhongguo diyi, pp. 170-71; Li and Li, pp. 2-9; Prazniak, "Community Protest," pp. 59-119; Lust, pp. 169-70.

6. Prazniak, "Community Protest," p. 152.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 120-55.

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