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River Sands/Urban Spaces: Changsha in Modern Chinese History

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Dedication

For my good friend Hou Xiaohua

River Sands/Urban Spaces: Changsha in Modern Chinese History

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This work is a modern history of Changsha, the capital city of Hunan province, from the late nineteenth to mid twentieth centuries. The story begins by discussing a battle that occurred in the city during the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864), a civil war that erupted in China during the mid nineteenth century. The events of this battle, but especially its memorialization in local temples in the years following the rebellion, established a local identity of resistance to Christianity and western imperialism. By the 1890's this culture of resistance contributed to a series of riots that erupted in south China, related to the distribution of anti-Christian tracts and placards from publishing houses in Changsha. During these years a local gentry named Ye Dehui (1864-1927) emerged as a prominent businessman, grain merchant, and community leader. When a massive urban riot erupted in April 1910, Ye and other gentry were accused of withholding grain from starving peasants and other disgruntled locals. At the end of the same decade, in 1919 the Treaty of Versailles ended the war in Europe but awarded German owned territory in north China to Japan. Students and activists erupted in protest in cities throughout China, especially in Changsha. The climate of urban activism that emerged by the 1920's inaugurated an age of civic identity in the city. Activists embraced certain ideas associated with western modernity—such as Marxism—

in order to overcome western imperialism. Among the voices of dissent were young activists such as Mao Zedong (1893-1976). Students from foreign missionary schools even joined the protests. This new generation of activists published articles in the local press and other journals denouncing the West's influence not only in Changsha, but also in communities throughout China.

I also discuss the history of women in Changsha, most notably the experiences of an activist named Zhu Tierong (1915-2009). During World War II she worked with the local chapter of the YMCA to care for refugees. The war also brought intense carnage to Changsha, as much of the city was destroyed by a fire in 1938.

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Preface

Changsha is the capital city of Hunan, a province in southern China. It lies in the northeastern part of the province along a main river called the Xiang (pronounced Shee-ang). Running from north to south, for centuries the Xiang has been the center of Hunan's and even much of China's rice cultivation and production. The low wetland areas around Changsha and the Xiang River have always been a fertile agricultural area, as other cities along the river have also served as regional trading posts. Apart from the paddies used for rice production near the river, much of the remaining territory of the province is comprised of rugged terrain, mainly in the form of forested mountains and small hills. Containing the two Chinese characters for "long," and "sand," Changsha's name dates back to antiquity. It likely derives from the sandy beaches of a long islet that sits in the middle of the Xiang River, dividing the city's eastern and western banks, today known as "Orange Island."

This dissertation examines the history of Changsha's modernization during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It argues that cities such as Changsha were more authentic examples of how gradually the rest of China developed, as compared to the more prominent urban centers such as Beijing, Shanghai, or even Hankou. By the late nineteenth century Hunan was known as one of China's most anti-foreign and conservative provinces. My central research question is to investigate the various social, cultural, and economic reasons why such was the case. This will encompass the later years of China's last imperial dynasty, the Qing (1644-1911), and

extend through the better part of what is known as China's Republican period (1911-1949). Chapters 1 through 5 cover the intense anti-foreign and anti-reform mentality that existed in Changsha, from waning decades of the nineteenth century and through the 1920's. Chapter 6 and 7 are a history of women in Changsha. Chapter 8, the final chapter, is about Changsha's "Great Fire of 1938," and discusses the role of the Nationalist Party and its leader, Chiang Kai-shek in ordering the fire. It also chronicles the humanitarian relief effort by local organizations such as the YMCA.

My first chapter discusses the enduring legacy upon Changsha's urban space of the battle for the city during the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864) in 1852. This rebellion began as a result of the influence of Christianity in southern China. Hong Xiuquan, a lower-ranking literati who hailed from the countryside near the city of Guangzhou, became inspired by teachings from the Bible. He began preaching his own version of Christianity, and won many converts among the disenfranchised and lower classes. By the early 1850's he amassed such a large following of disciples and converts that he raised an organized army. This posed a significant threat to the Qing dynasty, whose imperial armies were ill equipped to face the southern rebels.

During their campaign to capture and subdue cities in southern China, the Taiping rebel army laid siege to Changsha in the summer and fall of 1852. The south wall of the city, as well as the Tianxin Pavilion, located along the southeastern corner, were important areas of public space and tradition that symbolized how the city remained resistant to outsiders—such as western missionaries or reform-minded intellectuals—in the years that followed. The battle as well as the fame of the Hunan Army and its

leader, Zeng Guofan (1811-1872), were also celebrated in memorial temples built throughout Changsha following the rebellion. By the early twentieth century the area around the city's south gate continued to be an important area of local culture and civic life. Chapter 2 shows how anti-Christian sentiment remained a problem during the post-Taiping years for both western missionaries who attempted to penetrate Hunan, but also for reform-minded Chinese intellectuals.¹ In the same decade of the anti-Christian riots mentioned above, in 1898 Liang Qichao (1873-1929), one of the most famous intellectuals in Chinese history, led an effort to establish training academies with Western-based curricula in Changsha, but ultimately failed.

The subject of Chapter 3 concerns a rice riot that broke out in 1910, very much influenced by local resentment towards the Qing government and westerners in the city. Mostly led by members of local carpenter's guilds, large crowds attacked and burned the governor's compound, a center of state power. American, British, as well as other international schools and businesses were also burned, wrecked, or looted by urban peasants. The chapter also recounts how reportage of the riot in the national press contributed to the growing seeds of discontent, contributing to the abdication of the Qing imperial court during the Revolution of 1911.

A prominent member of Changsha's gentry, Ye Dehui (pron. Yeh Dehway, 1864-1927), hoarded grain during the riot, but his influence on local life merits further attention. In Chapter 4 I construct a narrative biography of Ye. I begin with his

¹ See Paul Cohen, *China and Christianity: The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Anti-foreignism, 1860-1870* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 48ff., also R. Wardlaw Thompson, *Griffith John: The Story of Fifty Years in China* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1906) 484.

family's migration to Hunan during the Taiping Rebellion, his birth in 1864, and then discuss his place as one of the most powerful members of Changsha's urban civic and business community during the late Qing. His rise to power was indicative of the emergence during the post Taiping period of a new class of urban gentry-merchants throughout China. Under the imperial *baojia* system that divided the city into streets and wards, each headed by different street wardens, Ye was the most powerful "community leader" of all the wards. He conducted most of his business and other affairs out the Huo Gong Dian, or infamous "Fire Palace," located on Pozi Street in the city center. More than simply a businessman, he was also an active member of Changsha's intellectual scene, an avid collector of books, and patron of the arts.

Chapter 5 discusses how throughout the 1910s and 1920s Changsha also became a center of labor and civic activism. Many years prior to becoming leader of the People's Republic, Mao Zedong (1893-1976), was an urban labor organizer and activist who worked closely with students from Yale Medical School and other radicals in the city. Many of the articles he wrote for the Hunan newspaper *Da Gong Bao (L'Impartial)* during this period reflected his concerns with issues such as women's emancipation and marriage equality, as well as the general mood of discontent present in the city following the Treaty of Versailles following World War I, which awarded German territory in north China to Japan. This resulted in nationwide protests on May 4, 1919, as well as a period of intellectual and cultural enlightenment, now known as the "May Fourth Movement." Anti-foreign sentiment in the city also escalated after the "May Thirtieth Incident" in 1925, when a group of protesters in Shanghai were gunned down by police. Especially

following this incident, students from schools throughout the city, from middle schools, girl's schools, and even those from the Yale Medical College, all produced and distributed leaflets advocating the violent expulsion of foreign interests in the city.

In Chapter 6 I chronicle a brief history of women in Changsha. The suicide of a local woman in November 1919 was widely discussed in the local press as an example of the precarious conditions experienced by women not only there, but throughout China. This was also true for those who worked in trades such as prostitution. The chapter benefits from my translation and analysis of some of the most infamous cases of prostitution that existed in Changsha during the Republican period. But the most profound story of women in Changsha is narrated in chapter seven. Sophia Zhu Tierong (1915-2009) was an activist who volunteered in the city during World War II. Volunteering with the local YMCA, she and her husband played vital roles in the humanitarian relief effort to help displaced refugees and other victims of the war. Following the Communist Revolution in 1949 she authored several English language articles for the *China Monthly Review*, noting the intense effort by the CCP to fully modernize Changsha. During the Anti-Rightist Campaign in the 1950's her husband tragically took his own life, and she was forced to endure the horrors of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) on her own.

Today on northern face of the Tianxin Pavilion there lies a small park, where especially during cooler spring and summer days local residents enjoy reclining to drink tea. Here one will find another landmark also important to Changsha's history: A plaque and memorial drum bell commemorating the fire of 1938, which is the subject of

Chapter 8. When faced with an invading Japanese army in 1938, and as a part of Chiang Kai-shek's "scorched earth policy," local officials were ordered to burn much of the city to the ground.

I am greatly indebted to a great number of scholars, colleagues, and friends, who have helped and supported me during my postgraduate career at the University of Texas. First and foremost I am grateful to my doctoral advisor, Huaiyin Li. His patient, consistent, and thoughtful criticism has shaped and challenged my view of modern Chinese history. He has taught me to set the highest standards of scholarly excellence for my work. I am also grateful to my other doctoral committee members in UT Department of History, Mark Metzler and Mary Neuburger, who have given me thoughtful support, encouragement, and feedback. Thanks also to David Sena for serving on my committee, and for the friendly mentoring of Wen Hua Teng and Camilla Hsieh, as well as Robert Oppenheim, Yvonne Chang, Chiu-mi Lai, and Jennifer Tipton in the Department of Asian Studies at UT. In UT History I owe additional thanks and appreciation to Marilyn Lehman, Jacqueline Jones, Alison Frazier, James Vaughn, Benjamin Brower, and Alberto Martinez. A big thanks to William Hurst of Northwestern University, for serving on my committee all the way from Chicago!

My development as an historian has also greatly benefited from the teaching of Roger Louis and the program in British Studies at UT Austin. From 2011 to 2015 I was the recipient of a Winston Churchill Fellowship that was a valuable source of funding and financial support. The chapter on the Changsha Rice Riot of 1910 was partly composed during a writing workshop with H.W. Brands during the spring of 2011, and I am grateful

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From 2012 to 2013 I was granted a Fulbright IIE fellowship to conduct my doctoral research in Changsha, and am very grateful to Janet Upton and Jonathan Akeley, the program directors for China, as well as the Fulbright Taiwan program. I have to also acknowledge a number of people, both scholars and friends in Changsha: the staff of Hunan Normal University’s Foreign Students office, as well as Zhou Qiuguang of their Institute of Modern History and Culture, and the friendly archivists at the Hunan Normal Library. Rao Huaimin, their distinguished and veteran scholar of Hunan’s history, once gave me one of his own shirts to replace mine, after arriving at his house late, hurried, and soaked with sweat one hot summer Changsha day. I am also grateful to Zhang Jingping, Yu Pengyuan (next time the dumplings and noodles at Xin Hua Lou will be on me!), Ren Bo, Tang Ying, Liu Duping, Tracy Wang Ying, Janet Wang, Emily Yi, Mark Ma, Richard Tang, and other local friends. I am also grateful to the CET Program in Harbin, China, as well as Professor Wang Jingrong of the Harbin Academy of Social Sciences, for helping me read through historical documents during an intensive Chinese language program during the fall of 2012. I also benefited from the friendship,

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Introduction



Image 1-1. Map of Hunan province.

A permeating narrative of this dissertation concerns the number of conflicts that emerged during the years prior to and following Changsha's contact with both western institutions and ideas during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This is a study of urban unrest and activism that resulted from the confrontation of opposing forces—the rapid appearance in the city of western colonial institutions, such as businesses, schools, and missions, followed by rejection and antagonism from local residents. Changsha during these years was a place that experienced conflicts between rural and the urban, indigenous and the foreign, conservative and radical, as well as the

civic and unruly. In this regard, during my early study of Hunan, I drew much inspiration from the late Angus McDonald, who noted that:

Patriotism, for the nineteenth century Hunanese, went hand in hand with anti-Christianity. Changsha was the national center [in China] for the most lurid anti-Christian propaganda during the nineteenth century, and missionaries were driven out of the province at least eleven times between 1863 and 1900.²

In many respects the entire present work owes its inspiration to these two sentences. Much of the opening chapters discuss Christianity and anti-Christian movements in Hunan. This will help answer the question of why Hunan and its capital city were so extremely anti-foreign, and how this attitude forged its modernization during the first half of the twentieth century. In the words of Eric Hobsbawm, studying Changsha's development in these years is one of an "age of extremes."³

As noted in my Preface, a foreign religion was introduced into Hunan during one of one of the largest and most violent civil wars in human history. This was the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864). In recent years perhaps no other event has attracted the interest of scholars who study modern Chinese history. Responsible for the deaths of some 30 million people, it exerted an extremely violent toll on the Chinese population. One of the more popular works about the rebellion remains Jonathan Spence's *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, a detailed account of the origins and history of the Taiping movement, from its beginnings in the southern provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi, to its violent end. A lesser-known but equally important book

² Angus McDonald, *The Urban Origins of Rural Revolution, Elites and the Masses in Hunan Province, China, 1911-1927* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 16.

³ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Age of extremes: the short twentieth century, 1914-1991* (London: Michael Joseph, 1994).

is Jian Youwen's *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*. Its extensive use of Chinese language primary source material makes it an essential piece of English language scholarship on the rebellion. A more recent book by Stephen Platt narrates the history of the Taiping Rebellion from the perspective of global history, with special emphasis on the role of Zeng Guofan and the Hunan Army. Tobie Meyer-Fong has recently published a fascinating and important book about the violent toll the rebellion exerted on Chinese society. Additional scholars such as Joseph Levenson, Kathryn Bernhardt, and Philip Kuhn have also expanded our knowledge in areas related to the socio-political consequences of Taiping governance in southern China, as well as the cultural clash of two opposing worldviews during the rebellion, Taiping as opposed to Confucian.⁴

This amount of scholarship does contain some accounts of the Taiping's siege of Changsha in 1852. But left out of these narratives are the legacy of not only that battle, but the memory and commemoration of the rebellion in public memorials throughout Changsha during the late 19th century. This will be discussed in my first chapter. Memories of resistance to a foreign religion remained ingrained upon the conscious of people throughout Hunan and in Changsha, which partly explains the degree of hostility experienced by missionaries who unsuccessfully tried to enter Hunan in the decades following the rebellion.

⁴ See Joseph R. Levenson, "Confucian and Taiping 'Heaven': The Political Implications of Clashing Religious Concepts." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Jul., 1962), pp. 436-453. Kathryn Bernhardt, "Elite and Peasant during the Taiping Occupation of the Jiangnan, 1860-1864." *Modern China*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Oct., 1987), pp. 379-410. Philip Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China: Militarization and Social Structure, 1796-1864* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970).

By the early 1890's western missionaries also encountered intense resistance in communities throughout Hunan and its provincial neighbor to the north, Hubei. This often represented a clashing and blending of competing ideologies and worldviews: the West and Christianity on the one hand, and China and Confucian orthodoxy on the other. Hunan's conservatism was also related to the history of its intellectual traditions. For centuries Changsha had been one of the national centers for education and learning. This tradition was upheld by the presence and influence in the city of a strong wealthy gentry class who were steadfastly opposed to western modernization. Resistance to outsiders was not only limited to urban elites and the educated classes, but also extended to the ordinary rank and file.

Through the course of Changsha's modernization there was a transformation away from traditionalist thought and local consciousness that rejected western modernization and imperialism toward one that embraced certain aspects of westernization, resulting in a unique form of Chinese modernity. A rice riot in 1910, followed by the Revolution of 1911 just over one year later, ended the Qing dynasty. It represented the breaking point and decline of the traditionalist regime in the city, ushering in a new era of radicalism. The socialists and urban activists who embraced anarchism in Changsha during the 1920's were just avowedly anti-western as the traditionalists who opposed Christianity and reform during the 1890's. But they embraced certain ideas and resources of modernization—such as printed media, political mobilization, as well as ideologies such as Marxism and Anarchism—in order to

overcome western domination and imperialism. This resulted in a self-determined citizenry in Changsha and modern China.

Beginning in the late 1970's historians produced monographs narrating modern Chinese history from the perspective of specific regions or localities, emphasizing reform at the urban or civic levels, arguing that the nucleus for a nascent civil society had its beginnings in villages, towns, and cities. G. William Skinner's highly influential *The City in Late Imperial China* introduced "regional systems theory," and "standard marketing areas" to the historiography of urban China. It covered subjects such as the cosmology of the ancient walled city, urban administration, guilds, imperial academies, as well as distinctions between urban and rural space. For the purposes of this study, within Skinner's system of macro regions Hunan would be considered in the "middle Yangtze region."

The city of Hankou, the large Middle Yangtze trading port city just to the north of Changsha in Hubei province, was Changsha's urban big brother. It was a metropolis on par in size and significance to Beijing and Shanghai. William Rowe has argued that Hankou definitely evinced a distinct urban mentality, where the typical city dweller often proceeded in daily life "however they damn well pleased." This was a result of the heterogeneous composition of Hankou's city life, a mixture of itinerant merchants, laborers, and other urban dwellers. The existence of organizations such as water brigades to prevent and control frequent flooding, as well as fire brigades, were possibly

the first signs of a civil society with Chinese characteristics.⁵ But much of the basis of William Rowe's argument, that the city was a Chinese model of a community with a Western conception of a civil society, or public sphere, has been criticized by Frederic Wakeman.⁶ In my chapter on the powerful gentry merchant Ye Dehui, I argue that like Hankou, by the late Qing Changsha had developed its own Central Business District.

Among all the studies done on Chinese cities and urban life, Changsha shares a kinship with other smaller main land cities such as Chengdu. My own use of the term "urban commoners" in Chapter 3 is borrowed from Di Wang, who has done important work on the relationship between Chengdu's urban commoners and public space during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Public spaces such as teahouses became an important part of city life, serving as indoor "extensions" of public space, and "as places of public leisure, recreation, and entertainment, but also as work sites and arenas for local politics," becoming "windows" through which changes in urban life could be understood. People relaxed and socialized, merchants discussed business, and some settled disputes.⁷ Other important work on Chengdu has focused exclusively on its development into a modern city. During the Republican period reformers worked to establish urban reconstruction programs, such as a modern police force, as well as telegraph lines and railways. Beginning with the New Policies that were introduced by 1901, there was a movement to establish a western-style city administration during the

⁵ William Rowe, *Hankou: Conflict and Community in a Chinese City, 1796-1895* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 19.

⁶ Frederic Wakeman, "Civil Society in Late Imperial and Modern China," in Lea H. Wakeman ed., *Telling Chinese History: A Selection of Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 336-337.

⁷ Wang Di, *Street Culture in Chengdu: Public space, urban commoners, and local politics, 1870-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

1920's.⁸ These new policies were also attempted in Changsha. But my discussion on the rice riot of 1910 suggests that such policies were resisted and resented by certain disenfranchised segments of the local population.

Changsha was also like many cities in China in that throughout its history it has often served as a hub for immigrants or refugees. Prior to the first Opium War (1841-1843, Shanghai was a small market town and most of its residents came from other places. Those who hailed from neighboring prosperous areas emerged as the dominant classes in Shanghai. The main reason Shanghai's population explosion was that many fled the Taiping rebels during the Taiping Rebellion. Although many refugees from regions afflicted with drought or famine often fled there, the city flourished economically during the later half of the nineteenth century, with the largest foreign concession of any treaty port actually open to Chinese residents. Thus the famous attractions of Shanghai, notably the "Bund" or Nanjing road would have been largely irrelevant for the average urban dweller, who lived in traditional neighborhood and houses, or *lilong fangzi*. Often these two story structures served the dual function of both storefront and residence, and was also the case with Changsha.⁹

In treaty port towns throughout the lower and middle Yangtze regions of southern China, native place associations and guilds were also influential community organizations and active in civic affairs. In Shanghai guildhalls served as important public spaces, and by the early Republican Period urban community organizations

⁸ Kristin Stapleton, *Civilizing Chengdu: Chinese Urban Reform, 1895-1937* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

⁹ Hanchao Lu, *Beyond the Neon Lights: Everyday Shanghai in the Early Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

conceptualized their own vision of state making at local levels. Native place associations (*tongxiang hui*, *hui guan*, or *gongsuo*) were manifestations of a unique brand of Chinese civil society. Such associations were so commonplace in Shanghai that they were “generally taken for granted” by the larger public.¹⁰ Native associations were important for finding burial spaces for deceased members, as well as philanthropy. These were the primary functions of the native associations, to help those who could not help themselves. The reform minded members of the native associations were usually returned students from overseas or wealthy merchants. The conservatives were mainly comprised of gentry elites, who monopolized positions of authority within the association, and many held positions for life.¹¹ In similar fashion, the family of Ye Dehui, the subject of Chapter 4, were migrants who came to Hunan from Jiangsu on China’s eastern coast. When first arriving in Changsha they enjoyed patronage at the Suzhou guild house in the central part of the city. In addition, carpenters, dockworkers, and water carrier guilds maintained a considerable presence in Changsha. They were a main reason for the vibrant and active trade unionism that emerged in the city during the late 1910’s and early 1920’s.

When considering the amount of secondary literature related to urban China, the question remains as to how best construct a coherent theoretical framework for understanding Changsha’s distinctive place in the narrative of modern China, one that helps us unpack the issues specific to Changsha’s modernization raised thus far.

¹⁰ Byrna Goodman, "Being Public: The Politics of Representation in 1918 Shanghai," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* (2000), 52.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

If the present discussion will be one of such opposing binaries, one useful and important work for the study of the urban form and space remains Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*. Focusing on various aspects of European history, art, literature, politics, etc, an important part of his argument is how dialectics, or more specifically, the concept of binary (ex. the proletariat and bourgeoisie, theory and practice, the mental and the social, philosophy and reality, etc.) thinking has shaped the formation of modern cities, that the urban form implies the interplay of contradictory forces at work: it is repressive yet liberating, it is hegemonic yet empowering.¹² Such extremes also play out throughout each of my chapters on Changsha.

In accounting for the West's creation of the "other" in literature and other writings, Edward Said has helped shape our understanding of the West's engagement with the non-Western world. But although the historical subjects discussed herein often operated within a world of extremes and confrontation, the challenge remains to construct historical narratives that "complicate the binary categories—East/West, progress/backwardness, self/other—that Said sees as constitutive of Orientalism."¹³ In doing so we can begin to recognize that even amidst the struggles brought about by the conflict between East and West, there nonetheless exists the need to engage in newer and more unique ways of thinking and writing about China. For instance, recent work has identified two competing narratives—modernization and revolution—in the study of modern Chinese history, and instead suggest a third way, such as a "within time"

¹² Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 2000).

¹³ Mary Neuberger, *The Orient Within: Muslim Minorities and the Negotiation of Nationhood in Modern Bulgaria* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 4.

approach to studying history, where key historical events are analyzed in the moment of their occurrence, absent of a linear progression or assumed teleology. My analysis of certain formative events in Changsha's history, such as the riot of 1910 and the fire of 1938 will benefit from such a narrative framework.¹⁴ Other scholars have also proposed how best construct a uniquely Chinese version of modernity, one embracing historical empiricism and analysis that does not over-indulge too heavily in Western critical theory. A good place to start for these kinds of "alternative visions" could even come from Chinese thinkers.¹⁵ The relevance of western theory to the study of China should also be one "understood and evaluated from a perspective grounded in Chinese reality."¹⁶ Approaches viewing events, actors, and other phenomena as "within time," told from the Chinese perspective, or those that allow "alternative visions" of historical narrative, can all contribute to our understanding of Changsha's modern history.

One of the problems with attempting to move beyond a binary understanding of urban space in China is that the very formation and layout of the traditional city lends itself to a certain dualism. From the time of the Warring States period (475-221 BCE), cities in China transitioned from the capitals of regional city-states to provincial administrative centers, purposed for extracting taxes from the local population. They also served as military outposts for the formation of militias and the garrisoning of troops.

¹⁴ Huaiyin Li, *Reinventing Modern China: Imagination and Authenticity in Chinese Historical Writing* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2013).

¹⁵ Philip Huang, "Theory and the Study of Modern Chinese History: Four Traps and a Question," *Modern China*, Vol. 24, No. 2, Symposium: Theory and Practice in Modern Chinese History Research. Paradigmatic Issues in Chinese Studies, Part V. (April 1998), pp. 183-208, 205.

¹⁶ Zhang Longxi, *Mighty Opposites: From Dichotomies to Differences in the Comparative Study of China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 179.

Every city in imperial China, similar to cities in Europe, was enclosed by a large wall and a moat. Changsha's city wall was known as one of the most formidable in the empire, with its gates arranged according to the "four cardinal directions," at north, south, east, and west. The western gates of the city, called Da Xi Men and Xiao Xi Men, literally the "Big" and "Small" Western Gates, were located along the banks of the Xiang River, and were important areas of commerce. But inside the main city gates also existed other walled enclosures that housed county, provincial, imperial governments, and employed hundreds of officials, and staff, as well as runners. Despite such separation there were, of course, areas of urban space that transcended such dualism, in that Changsha was also known for its complex network of narrow streets and alleys.

Changsha's own segregated spatial characteristics were partly the cause of events such as the rice riot of 1910. The local and provincial governments worked in compounds that were completely separated from the rest of urban life. But though in many respects binary, Changsha's urban form nonetheless evinced its own pattern of social formation. Examples of this will be seen in my discussion of Pozi Street as one of Changsha's most active business and civic centers. Other areas, such as the part of the old city just outside the South Gate, became important civic spaces where various kinds of commoners or itinerant travellers gather, worship local deities, or buy snacks from street vendors.

According to James Scott, the layout of most any modern city's streets and alleys may have been confusing to the visitor, but "The fact that the layout of the city, having developed without any overall design, lacks a consistent geometric logic does not mean

that it was at all confusing to its inhabitants.”¹⁷ This evokes a certain similarity to Pierre Bourdieu’s conception of *habitus* as a basis for conceptualizing the structural foundations of any given society and its social conditions.¹⁸ If one were to provide a laymen’s definition, *habitus* is essentially the unwritten system of social conventions and customs by which any group or society lives. This can obviously be applied to close-knit communities, such as rural villages in remote parts of the world, or even a walled city, which represents a somewhat larger manifestation of the same construct. Although often applied to the study of rural society, such a structural understanding of city life, allows us to understand the formation of Changsha as a unique urban space. It was a physical space enclosed by a wall, representing its own closed system, but also functioned as a center of intellectual history. The presence of educational institutions, such as schools and academies, existed as forces which formed a local identity of conservative traditionalism that was directly related to the legacy of Confucianism. Following the Taiping Rebellion its cityscape also became laden with ancestral temples and other halls commemorating the bravery of Zeng Guofan’s Hunan army.

In the following section I next section I give a comprehensive historiography of Hunan and Changsha, of works referenced throughout my dissertation. More importantly is that it recognizes the contributions of historians in mainland China, such as Zou Qiuguang, Rao Huaimin, Zhang Pengyuan, and others, who have devoted a lifetime of scholarship to the study of Hunan and its history.

¹⁷ James Scott, “Cities, People, and Language,” in *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 53.

¹⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, in Richard Nice trans., “Structures and habitus,” *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 72.

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF MODERN HUNAN

The late 1970's produced some important scholarship that shaped our understanding of Changsha's history. The first of these was Joseph Esherick's *Reform and Revolution: The 1911 Revolution in Hunan and Hubei* (1978). Drawing on the radicalization of the social sciences within the U.S. academic community during the 1960s, Esherick's study became one of the seminal works of a whole new generation of western scholarship employing Marxist approaches to Chinese history. Another work produced in the late 1970's was Angus McDonald's *The Urban Origins of Rural Revolution: Elites and the Masses in Hunan Province, China, 1911-1927*. This book is hands down the best book ever written about Hunan. Much of McDonald's narrative takes place within Changsha, and extensively chronicles its most important historical events during the Republican period: the reform and independence movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Revolution of 1911, the workers movements, and the struggle for leadership among Hunan's various feuding warlords. Lynda Shaffer's work, *Mao and the Workers: The Hunan Labor Movement, 1920-1923*, discussed in detail the major strikes and unionization of the provincial working class in wake of the May Fourth Movement and founding of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921. Professor Shaffer's work is also an encouraging reminder that I am not the first native Texan and alumnus of the University of Texas to write about the history of Hunan and Mao Zedong!

Another monograph produced in the 1970's added an important contribution to the debate on Hunan's intellectual history, Charlton M. Lewis' *Prologue to the Chinese Revolution: The Transformation of Ideas and Institutions in Hunan Province, 1891-1907*. Focusing on the decade and a half during the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, Lewis identified and discussed two the themes of anti-foreignism and nationalism. The former of these were typified in events such as the numerous instances of missionary disturbances and anti-Christian riots occurring during the 1890's, as well as the conservative opposition to the reform movement of 1898 in Hunan. Because these two events figure so prominently in the modern history of Changsha, both will be discussed with detail in Chapter 2. In the case of nationalism, Lewis addresses the failure of social revolution during these years to arouse significant popular support among secret societies and student organizations.¹⁹

Very recent English language scholarship by Stephen Platt and Liu Liyan has made a very valuable contribution to our knowledge of Hunan's rich intellectual history. In *Provincial Patriots: The Hunanese and Modern China*, Platt discusses Hunan's tradition of reform, beginning with Wang Fuzhi and even Zeng Guofan. Liu Liyan's, *Red Genesis, The Hunan First Normal School and the Creation of Chinese Communism, 1903-1921*, provides a detailed history of Changsha's First Normal School as formative to the education of a young Mao Zedong and other communist leaders.

¹⁹ Charlton Lewis, *Prologue to the Chinese Revolution: The Transformation of Ideas and Institutions in Hunan Province, 1891-1907* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976).

Numerous main land Chinese historians have also written about Changsha and Hunan history. After 1949 one of the foremost influential scholars of Hunan's history was Lin Zengping. Beginning in the early 1960's Lin was one of the first post revolution Chinese scholars to seriously study the Revolution of 1911. His series, simply titled, "The Xinhai Revolution" (*Xinhai Geming*), was a collection of volumes commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the events of 1911. It focused specifically on the role of secret societies in the early part of the 20th century, and their cooperation with the revolutionary factions in Hunan.²⁰ Like many scholars of his generation, Lin benefited from having come of age during the Republican period, when the most talented generation of scholars in the history of modern China, came of age. They benefited from the study of the Confucian tradition of Chinese classics, as well as their exposure to western ideas and thinking. Lin also mentored Zhou Qiuguang, one of the foremost scholars on the study of philanthropy during the late Qing today, specifically on the work and writings of Xiong Xiling.²¹ Upon his death in 1991, Lin Zengping's private library was donated to the library at Hunan Normal University. During my time spent there as a visiting scholar from 2012-2013, this collection was of great use to my research. Lin's collection contained rare volumes of *Hunan Wenshi Ziliao* and *Changsha Wenshi Ziliao*, most of which are out of print, will be referenced, translated, and even quoted throughout this dissertation. Of also great benefit to the present work is the multi-volume collections of *Hunan Lishi Ziliao*, a series first published in the late 1950's and then again

²⁰ Lin Zengping, Lin Zengping wencun, "Zhi shi suo yan," pp. 1ff.

²¹ Xiong hailed from west Hunan (Xiangxi), and helped organize flood and famine relief efforts not only in his region, but throughout the province. He was also one of the late Qing thinkers involved the reform and independence movements in Hunan during the late Qing and early Republican years.

in 1980. The former of these series represented the first efforts by mainland historians of modern China to chronicle the events of their own history and modernization prior to 1949. Many historians of modern China, be they from the mainland or universities in the west, have benefited from these collections. The collection, allocation, and editing of various *ziliao*, or “materials” makes the historian’s task quite easy, because in many respects the work of collecting data on a given topic (such as the Revolution of 1911 or May 4th Movement), has already been done for us. However, this should also give us pause for concern.

Although a large amount of historical materials are available within the thematically edited *ziliao* volumes, they represent a body of knowledge produced by scholarly committees at universities. After 1949 their publication was under the exclusive direction of the Communist Party (CCP). As such one wonders what significant materials and other data have been excluded from public record, or to what extent the content of the documents presented in the various *ziliao* have been edited for content, and if the final products handed down to us represent the institutional bias of the Communist Party.

But recently, another body of edited volumes, the newly published scholarly series *Huxiang Wenku*, represents the most significant era during China’s era of reform by the intellectual community in Hunan to produce an encyclopedic series of books solely devoted to Hunan’s history and culture. These works have gone beyond traditional Marxist or CCP approaches to modern Chinese history, and have incorporated modernization as well as the thought of other western theorists. The multi-volume

collection includes provincial and city gazetteers from cities and counties throughout Hunan, as well as edited collections and essays on Hunan's most influential intellectuals and thinkers. This collection, the volume on Ye Dehui in particular, has also been quite useful for my research.

Long based out of Academia Sinica in Taiwan, Zhang Pengyuan's *Hunan Xiandaihua de Zaoqi Jinzhan* (*The Early Progression of Hunan's Modernization*, 2001), is a comprehensive and exhaustive history of Hunan. Although educated in the school of modernization theory, Zhang's work represents a comprehensive and exhaustive examination of Hunan in the modern era. It discusses political, environmental, as well as the socioeconomic conditions of Hunan during the late Qing, and calls upon a variety of original source material; gazetteers, literature, and the like. Owing to his fluency in English, Zhang also uses a western social theory to explain his specific understanding of Hunan's modernization. Like many recent historians he has also theorized about finding new approaches to modern Chinese history, recognizing that China's contact with the West, especially Hunan's, was invasive and even "deceptive" in nature, but explains modernization as part of *jincheng*, or a "process," and that "modernization is a revolutionary process."²²

Following Lin Zengping's generation, Rao Huaimin, another scholar based out of Hunan Normal University, has also contributed numerous publications and articles on Hunan's history. Professor Rao's work has also focused on the Revolution of 1911.

²² "Xiandai hua shi gemingxing de jincheng." For further study of Professor Zhang's understanding of modernization and process, see the introduction to his book, p. 6ff.

But most relevant for this study, he has also published extensively on the events in Hunan prior to the revolution, and is the foremost expert on Changsha's Rice Riot of 1910. One of his most important pieces of scholarship, and one extremely important for this present work, is his 2001 edited volume of primary documents on the riot, *Changsha Qiangmi Fangqiao Ziliao Huibian (A Compilation of Materials on the Changsha Rice Riot)*. Possibly owing in part to the publication of Professor Rao's edited work, in the last decade new interest has emerged in the mainland academic community in Changsha's rice riot, producing several important monographs. Among these are two articles written by Li Xizhu of the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences.²³ These articles discuss Changsha's powerful gentry and the Qing government, and how in the moments leading up to the rice riot relations between these two camps broke down. Another of Li Xizhu's articles, and by far the most interesting, discusses the role of the media in the late Qing. Reportage of the events in Changsha influenced public opinion throughout the empire, strengthening public distrust of the imperial government.

Another important source for understanding the events of the rice riot, are several oral history interviews conducted by a middle school teacher named Liu Duping during the mid 1970's. A few of these interviews are included in the back pages of Rao Huaimin's edited volume, as well as in a volume of *Changsha Wenshi Ziliao (Changsha Literature and Historical Materials)* also specifically devoted to the riot. Based on the data he collected in these interviews, Liu himself wrote an article that appeared in

²³ I am indebted to graduate students from the history department at Beijing University, Ma Siyu and others, for familiarizing me with Professor Li Xizhu's work, as well as some valuable constructive feedback on my research, during a conference held at Beijing University in July 2013.

Changsha Wenshi Ziliao no. 6, published in 1988. Yang Shiji's *Xinhai Geming Qianhou Hunan Shishi (A History of Events Before and After the Revolution of 1911)* served as one of the main sources for Joseph Esherick's own discussion of the Changsha rice riot. Liu Duping's article is longer and contains more information not only about the role of the urban gentry and Qing authorities, but also about the history of the grass roots nature of the uprising, thus presenting a more well rounded picture of the events. More of this will be discussed in my chapter on the riot, in Chapter 3. In 2006 Liu Duping's oral history interviews reappeared in their entirety, in *Changsha Jiyi: Qingmo Changsha "Qiangmi" Fangqiao Changbian Jishi (Remembering Changsha: The Late Qing Changsha Rice Riot)* written by a Changsha author named Tang Ying.

Finally, my work draws upon much of the scholarship discussed and cited above. But as with any study, I aim to embark on new territory and find my own voice. The pages which follow attempt to tell a unique story of a unique space and place, neither of these of which cannot be understood without telling a story of how people of Changsha, be they warriors, revolutionaries, local gentry, or female activists lived and died. It begins with people, walls, and guns.

1-“Two Wills Clashing”¹

September 11, 1852. A group of two thousand armed rebels rides into the southern suburbs of Changsha. Their objective is to capture the city. Having originated in the provinces that border Hunan to the south, in the span of a few years these rebels were part of a movement large enough to threaten to the Qing, China’s last and fading dynasty (1644-1911). Inspired by his own bizarre vision of Christianity combined with native folk beliefs, Hong Xiuquan (1814-1864), leader of the movement, amassed an army bent on overthrowing the Qing, leading them on a steady advance that began in his native Guangxi province in southern China. Hong and his rebels hoped to secure Hunan’s provincial capital in order to gain control of the province’s main waterway, the Xiang River, granting them vital access to an easy transportation route that fed directly into neighboring Hubei to the north. But for as much success that the Taipings enjoyed in their early campaigns, the siege of Changsha proved to be their biggest challenge to date and a formidable obstacle. From the time of the Three Kingdoms (220-280 B.C.E.), its city wall was well known for its strong fortifications, and had been repaired and rebuilt through successive dynasties.

This chapter introduces Changsha’s urban geography by discussing the legacy of the siege of 1852. Doing so will make a significant contribution to the few existing English accounts of the battle, specifically those from Jonathan Spence and Jen Yu-wen.

¹ This phrase comes from Jonathan Spence’s description of the battle of Changsha: “The siege of Changsha is thus partly the story of two wills clashing, one steeped in the successful practice of Confucian virtue, one confidently in touch with God the Father.” Jonathan Spence, *God’s Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1996), 164.

Both have provided good descriptions of the siege, but place little emphasis on the significance of specific places and place names associated with the siege, such as the Tianxin Pavilion and Changsha's south wall. Thus I also introduce my own analysis of the siege and its relationship to some of Changsha's historic landmarks, as well as insights about why the siege and the battle for Hunan remained one of the most important contests of the entire Taiping Rebellion.

Although the Taipings never successfully captured Changsha, the rebellion and the siege of 1852 left an indelible mark on the city. If we conceive of the pre-Taiping traditional Chinese city in imperial China as not only a physical urban *habitus*, surrounded by large walls and a moat, but also as an epistemological space, one that functioned as a military, administrative, and educational center, then the Taiping Rebellion and its aftermath brought about a change in the existing social and economic order. This initiated a transformation of local society that will be covered in the chapters that follow. Specific case studies of the consequences of this process on the local level can also help us learn much about how communities in late imperial China transitioned from spaces of tradition to ones of modernity and nationhood.

THE SIEGE

The attack on Changsha began in early September 1852, after the Taiping army made their way into Hunan from Guangdong province. After sacking Hunan's

southern-most city of Chenzhou they proceeded north and captured Hengzhou, as well as Zhuzhou in eastern Hunan as well as its surrounding counties. These successive victories gave them control of virtually half the province, as well as most of the Xiang River. One of Hong Xiuquan's most trusted generals, Xiao Chaogui (1820-1852), known as the "Western King," was charged with leading the assault. Initially his forces had the element of surprise. After routing Hengzhou a few kilometers to the south, the rebels secured control of the main public road that went straight to Changsha's south gate. Qing troops had long expected and prepared for the Taipings to force their attack on Changsha from there. But guided by local bandit groups antagonistic to the Qing and newly recruited into the rebel's fold, Xiao bypassed the main road and led a small detachment of two thousand soldiers through eastern Hunan's rugged countryside into the outskirts of Changsha. Then on the morning of September 11, approximately 10 *li* from the southern gate in an area called Shima Pu, Xiao and his men suddenly appeared on horseback with a detachment of soldiers in the southern suburbs.² The Qing troops garrisoned there had recently arrived from Shanxi in north China had been preparing to eat breakfast and were taken completely by surprise. Xiao ordered the execution of their commander, Yin Peili, as well as many as two thousand Qing army soldiers. Some Qing forces managed to escape into the city interior to give warning that rebel troops had arrived. The city gates were immediately ordered closed and barricaded.³

² One *li* is equivalent to approximately 500 meters.

³ Wang Qingcheng, "Renzi er nian taiping jun jin gong Changsha zhi yi," *Taiping tianguo de lishi he sixiang* (Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 168.

Although Xiao's attack took some the government troops stationed south of the city by surprise, eventually it may have worked to the Qing's advantage. Changsha's mazelike networks of streets and alleys, coupled with his lack of familiarity with the city could have caused Xiao to believe that the Tianxin Pavilion, the highest point of the city wall, located on its southeastern corner, was the drum tower at the city's center. This caused Xiao to focus the thrust of the rebel attack there, unconsciously establishing one of the main centers of combat for the entire two-month duration of the siege.⁴ For some historians the problem with Xiao's surprise attack was the small number of his force, a mere two thousand soldiers, for the initial attack. Had Xiao chosen a more conventional attack with a large army, the results of the siege might have been different.

Furthermore, prior to the attack Qing generals already garrisoned in the city had been making preparations for a siege for several weeks prior to the rebel's arrival, so they were not completely overwhelmed once the Taipings arrived. Their southern advance eventually forced a focused attack at Changsha's southern and western walls, specifically at the South Gate, as well as the "Xiaowu," and "Liuyang" gates along the eastern wall. Despite the surprise attack, the Qing forces in the city still had enough time to close the gates and refortify the city walls. Enough imperial troops were already garrisoned inside the city and stationed along defensive outposts along the city walls to fend off such a small contingent. This bought time for reinforcements to arrive.⁵

⁴ Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement* (London: Yale University Press, 1973), 97.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 97ff. Lin Zengping and Fan Zhongcheng, *Hunan jin xian dai shi* (Changsha: Hunan shi fan da xue chu ban she, 1991), 56-57.

Upon realizing the city gates had been closed, Xiao ordered construction of a command post and positions for fixed cannon atop a nearby hill called Miaogao Peak. This provided the necessary elevation to pose a significant strategic threat to the highest point of Changsha's southern wall and the Tianxin Pavilion, where Qing cannons had been equally positioned for defense. Another Taiping command post was set up at Aoshan Temple, not far away. As for the Qing forces, the soldiers inside the city numbered around eight thousand. Although there were a large number of officers, many of them became too "convulsed with fear" (*jing kong wan zhuang*), to command. The provincial governor present at the time, Bao Qibao, was said to be an inept military commander and completely beside himself with worry. Believing in the superstition of Changsha's city god, he ordered its statue erected atop the south gate drum tower, and for priests to continually pray over it day and night for good luck.⁶ But fortunately one of the Qing's chief military minds and ablest commanders, Luo Bingzhang, also happened to be in Changsha at the time of the Taiping attack. A *jinshi* (a successful scholar official who had passed the highest level of imperial examinations, held in Beijing), Luo ironically hailed from the same county in Guangdong as Hong Xiuquan. For a time he served as Hunan's governor, and even had a residence in the city. From the beginning of the siege Luo personally coordinated the Qing's counterattack from atop the south wall.⁷

⁶ "Shi jiu, Taiping jun lian ke Yong Xing, An Ren, You Xian, Li Ling, jin gong Changsha" (1852 nian 8 yue), *Hunan sheng zhi, Hunan jin bai nian da shi ji shu*, di yi juan, di er ci xiu ding ben (Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 1979), 26.

⁷ Jen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 97. Spence, *God's Chinese Son*, 164.

After establishing their base from the position at Miaogao Peak, the Taiping cannons rained down destructive volleys of rocket propelled fire bombs into the city, killing and wounding many, and inflicted much damage upon homes and property. Charged with not only with its defense but also with putting out of the numerous fires caused by fire bombing, Qing forces remained helpless during the initial days of the attack. Then on the morning of September 18, Xiao Chaogui ordered a concentrated barrage of rocket firebombs aimed at the south wall, hoping to break down its defenses. Following the barrage thousands of rebel soldiers hoisted ladders up its face, while the Qing defenders desperately fought to repel them from the top. Intense fighting commenced between the two armies in urban areas directly outside the south gate, such as Bingxiang Alley. The fighting continued into the next day and raged from street to street and house to house. On this day Qing forces also experienced their first stroke of good fortune, as general Deng Shaoliang (1801-1858), a native of West Hunan, arrived from nearby Xiangtan with an additional nine hundred soldiers as reinforcements. Coming from the south, his army arrived via back road, catching the Taipings by surprise. This distraction allowed the Qing defenders to reinforce the south wall by using stones from alleys and streets in the city.⁸

On September 26 Jiang Zhongyuan (1812-1854), arrived in Changsha with approximately fifteen hundred reinforcements. He ordered his men to immediately construct ramparts at the Tianxin Pavilion. Since it was the highest and most heavily fortified point of the city wall, the pavilion's southeastern orientation provided a tactical

⁸ "Shi jiu," *Hunan sheng zhi*, 27.

advantage to the defenders, as it could be used to defend two sections of the wall simultaneously. From this corner as well as from the city's eastern gate, known as Liuyang Gate, the Qing mounted stiff resistance, and were thus able to control much of the engagement.⁹

Qing General Jiang proved himself one of the ablest commanders of the entire rebellion. He was a native of southern Hunan, and as with all scholar officials in the Qing government, had served the majority of his career outside the province. When his father died in 1850 he was summoned back to his hometown to observe the required mourning ritual, and thus happened to be in Hunan during the Taiping invasion. This same custom of mourning a dead parent was also the cause of Zeng Guofan's return to Hunan a few years later. Zeng organized local militia forces into an effective army that became one of the major reasons why the Qing were finally able to suppress the rebellion. His story and contribution to Changha's history will be further discussed below. But like Zeng Guofan, Jiang Zhongyuan also had experience organizing local militias, and later the two men even joined forces. His death by suicide in 1854 while defending the city of Luzhou in Anhui province was a great loss to the imperial army.¹⁰

Although the exact date remains uncertain, in late September 1852 the Qing also dealt the rebels their first serious setback since the beginning of the rebellion. Most likely during one of the intense attacks on the southern wall, cannon fire from the guns mounted atop the Tianxin Pavilion struck and mortally wounded the Western King, Xiao

⁹ Wang, "Renzi er nian," *Taiping Tianguo de lishi*, 173.

¹⁰ Spence, 158-159, 216.

Chaogui. Xiao had dramatically charged into battle while wearing bright yellow robes, making him an easy target for archers, cannon gunners, or just about anyone else fighting on top of the wall. Jen Yu-wen's narrative of the event claims Xiao was struck by a cannonball, which also concurs with most definitive Chinese language accounts, such as Hunan historians Lin Zengping and Fan Zhongcheng (1991). Most scholars also agree that his death occurred unnecessarily and dealt a tragic blow to the Taiping's morale. Xiao had been one of its founding members and one of Hong Xiuquan's most trusted military advisors. His death also allowed for Yang Xiuqing to assume command of the siege and become one of the Taiping's primary commanders in the field. More importantly it marked the beginning of a conflict between Yang and Hong Xiuquan, bringing irreparable harm to the entire movement.¹¹

Upon receiving news of Xiao's death the Qing government immediately ordered further reinforcements to defend Changsha. On October 3 the Qing Third and Middle Route armies arrived, offering the first serious resistance since the attack began almost a month earlier. But despite the onslaught of government troops, the Taiping front lines held and pushed the Qing armies back. The rebel's numbers were further strengthened by the arrival on October 5 of Yang Xiuqing (the "Eastern King") and most of the remainder of the entire Taiping army, the final thrust of rebel forces that had been steadily advancing from southern Hunan.¹² The Taipings also constructed a series of pontoon bridges to join up with other rebel forces encamped on the western bank of the

¹¹ Lin and Fan, *Hunan jin xian dai shi*, 52. There is also some discrepancy regarding the exact date of Xiao's death. Jonathan Spence suggests September 17. But this conflicts with other accounts which suggest Xiao had still been giving orders and directing the battle on September 18.

¹² "Shi jiu," *Hunan sheng zhi*, 28.

Xiang River, as well as Shui Lu Zhou (today referred to as Juzi Zhou, or “Orange Island”), the large islet situated in the middle of the river. Doing so increased their numbers and allowed for a steady stream of supplies and provisioning. It also allowed for a more direct attack of Changsha’s western wall.¹³

Increased fortifications enabled the Qing defenders to hold until the month’s end, allowing other generals to arrive with reinforcements. Recognizing Bao Qibao’s inept leadership, the imperial court in Beijing quickly ordered his replacement by Zhang Liangzhi, who arrived on October 7 with five thousand soldiers. One of General Zhang’s most capable aides in Changsha was a young officer named Zuo Zongtang (1812-1885), another great military leader in China’s modern history.¹⁴ Thus by early October the Qing imperial army had gathered as many as many as 50,000 troops and capable officers to defend the city. Soon after arriving they consolidated their forces and convened a meeting to plan for a prolonged siege. Deng Shaoliang, Zhu Han, He Chun, Zhang Guoliang, and Jiang Zhongyuan ordered for the even division and encampment of forces to guard the city at each of its major gates—north, west, and east.

Soon after Yang Xiuqing assumed command of the Taiping army and launched a major counteroffensive, the Qing General Xiang Rong (1792-1856) arrived in Changsha with giant cannons that were immediately mounted atop the southeast corner of the wall at Tianxin Pavilion. Xiang had achieved success in the imperial army by literally rising through the ranks. First as a common soldier, he gained promotion by distinguishing

¹³ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁴ Jen, 99.

himself in various campaigns against insurgent rebel uprisings during the first Opium War (1841-1843), as well as during the earliest days of the Taiping uprising in Guangdong in Guangxi provinces. In 1847 he was appointed military governor of his native province in Sichuan. He later served in the same capacity in Hunan and Guangxi, and was one of the ablest Qing commanders to arrive in Changsha since the fighting began.

To counter the Taiping's pontoon occupation of the Xiang River, on October 31 Xiang Rong and one of his lieutenants Wang Jialin, led a force of 3,000 crack troops on an offensive from the shallow waters of the Xiang's western bank to attack enemy encampments on Orange Island. But they seriously underestimated the rebel's numbers. A large contingent commanded by the young Taiping General Shi Dakai (1831-1863) lay waiting in ambush amidst the islet's dense foliage. A mere twenty-one years old at the time of the siege, at an early age Shi was introduced to Christianity by Hong Xiuquan in his native Guangxi. His family's wealth and social position in the region proved a valuable asset to the formation and growth of the rebel army. Despite his youth, Shi's leadership and position as the "Wing King," and "seventh brother" of Jesus Christ within the Taiping hierarchy remained a valuable asset to the rebel's military victories throughout the rebellion.¹⁵ The Qing offensive was a huge failure, resulting in over one thousand casualties, forcing a chaotic retreat back across the river. Xiang was

¹⁵ Su Shuangbi, *Taiping tian guo ren wu lun ji* (Fuzhou: Fujian ren min da chu ban she, 1981), 120.

eventually dismissed from office as a result, only to be promoted a few months later when the Taipings invaded Wuchang in neighboring Hubei.¹⁶

On October 14 the Taipings launched their largest assault on the southern and eastern walls. A force of six to seven thousand men set out from their base at Miaogao Peak staged another massive offensive, attacking the gates along the eastern face of the city wall. One account from this offensive reads:

On Chu er (October 14), six to seven thousand bandits of the third army group rushed out from Miaogao Peak and rounded the wall to stage an attack outside the Liu Yang [Eastern] Gate. Officers and men were immediately dispatched, led by County Deputy Yan Zhengqi, Jia Xiangpu, and the acting governor Jiang Zhongyuan. Their forces met the bandits head on and cut their force in half. General Xiang Rong also dispatched an additional two-hundred men from inside the city as reserve support. . .¹⁷

To further supplement their attack on Changsha's formidable southern wall, the Taiping's new commander Yang Xiuqing, relied on the skills of miners recruited into the Taiping ranks from neighboring Hengzhou to dig tunnels at its base. Once the tunnels were dug in deep enough, explosives were packed in tightly and detonated. Within the city the Qing countered these efforts by employing blind people to listen for sounds of tunneling at the base of the wall. But by the afternoon of November 10, a deep enough tunnel had been dug under the wall. Through the detonation of a large amount of high explosives, the south wall was finally breached. The breach occurred near the Tianfei Gong, a temple dedicated to imperial concubines, where it was said that Deng Shaoliang happened to be inside gambling. Following the explosion Taiping forces poured into

¹⁶ Lin and Fan, *Hunan jin xian dai shi*, 55. Also see Ju, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 102.

¹⁷ Wang, "Renzi er nian," *Taiping Tianguo de lishi*, 174-175.

the city but Qing troops quickly converged to the area near the temple for a counterattack. From atop the city wall vats of steaming oil were poured down on the rebels, slowing their advance. The fighting at the breach became so intense and chaotic that troops from either side became virtually indistinguishable.¹⁸ But the Qing forces held their ground and forced the rebels out of the city.

On November 13 the Taipings successfully tunneled through the city wall again at its southwestern corner, near Golden Fowl Bridge (Jinji Qiao). After detonating a large mine, another large force poured into the city, but were pushed back in retreat after meeting with a hoard of Qing defenders commanded by Generals Jiang Zhongyuan and He Chun. Finally on November 30, the Taipings breached the south wall yet again, tunneling and blowing an eight to nine feet hole, ironically at Kuixing Lou, a Daoist temple dedicated to the God of Fate. But as with each of the numerous previous attempts, they mounted heavy casualties whilst attempting to enter the city. In this one attack they lost a thousand men. Shi Dakai also made several forays from the western banks of the Xiang as well as Shui Lu Zhou to attack Changsha's western wall, but by late November these also proved unsuccessful. Although Shi had severely beaten Xiang Rong's forces during the failed offensive at Orange Island on October 31, the Taiping occupation of the Xiang River's western bank, as well as Shui Lu Zhou by means of a massive flotilla of pontoon bridges, though ingenious, divided the bulk of the rebel forces

¹⁸ "Shi jiu," *Hunan sheng zhi*, 29-30.

and forced an engagement on two fronts. It also prevented the Taipings from attempting to surround the city from either the eastern or northern sides of the city wall.¹⁹

In the final analysis it seems that what saved Changsha during the siege of 1852 was attributable to a combination of certain key factors. First, its extremely large and thick city wall, especially at its southern face. The Tianxin Pavilion's high position and placement of Xiang Rong's large cannons enabled the Qing to constantly keep the Taiping forces at bay throughout the duration of the siege. Despite exhaustive efforts at tunneling and blowing large holes into Changsha's wall, they were never able to penetrate into the city. Second, the city's unique geographical position, with the western portion of the wall running directly parallel to the Xiang River, forced the enemy to refocus their efforts to attack the city from the water via a complex system of pontoon bridges. This also represented one of the few instances during the early years of the Taiping Rebellion when the Qing's officers and generals commanded competently. They also took full advantage of Xiao Chaogui's error to stage a surprise attack, which resulted in the bulk of the Taiping forces having to siege the city from two different positions. But because the Qing had spent most of the fall of 1852 preoccupied with defending the city, they also failed to take advantage of the Taiping defeat and recognize an opportunity to attack the fleeing army.

Finally realizing the siege was quickly becoming a battle of attrition in the Qing army's favor, Hong Xiuquan ordered for his forces to abandon the effort at Changsha. On the evening of November 30, the same evening of their last failed attempt to breach

¹⁹ Lin and Fan, *Hunan jin xian dai shi*, 56.

the wall, the rebels made preparations to evacuate and began a forced march under the cover of darkness along the western bank of the Xiang. The army marched north and eventually captured the city of Yuezhou near the border of Hunan and Hubei. Thus despite the loss of Changsha, the Taipings eventually gained access to the Xiang River's main outlet at Dongting Lake, which allowed them to proceed unabated to Wuhan.

THE LEGACY OF ZENG GUOFAN

Following the siege Hunan continued to be a main theater of combat throughout the course of the Taiping Rebellion. As the rebels made their way north to Wuhan and then finally to Nanjing on the eastern coast, the pacification of Hunan remained a priority. Although they gained control of much of the territory of China's Middle and Lower Yangtze regions, Changsha remained a Qing held island within a sea of Taiping-held territory. Control of Changsha would have allowed the rebels to use the city as an administrative center as well as military outpost to garrison troops and distribute supplies. But without such a resource, and at least in Hunan, they remained an army on the move. In the years and months that followed the Taipings made additional attempts to subjugate the province and its capital. The Qing on the other hand, continued to take full advantage of Changsha as an outpost and command center. The man at the heart of this effort was a native Hunanese official named Zeng Guofan (1811-1872).

Zeng obtained the *jinshi* degree in 1838 at the age of twenty-eight. After entering the Hanlin Academy, and within the span of a few years, he became one of the

ablest ministers at the imperial court. While serving in a government post in Jiangxi province during the summer of 1852, just prior to the siege of Changsha, Zeng learned of his mother's sudden death in his native Hunan. In accordance with established custom he was required to renounce his post and remain in his hometown (near present day Xiangtan, very near Changsha) to mourn for a period of two years. Soon after he began the journey, the Taiping army invaded Changsha, and he was forced to take a detour to attend his mother's funeral. When he finally arrived by early October, the Taipings were already in their second month of laying siege to the provincial capital, located just a few kilometers from his hometown. Following the fall of Wuhan, in January 1853 the Qing government ordered Zeng to organize militias in Hunan, as a possible alternative to the Qing army. The call to Zeng and other scholar officials to raise these kinds of local militias was an attempt on the part of the Qing imperial court to find a force that could pose a legitimate counter to the Taiping's successes. In campaign after campaign the rebels had taken advantage of the Qing army's poor organization and leadership. Although Changsha had been successfully defended, many towns and cities throughout southern China had not been so lucky. On paper it also seems that Zeng was ill equipped for the job. He possessed little or no military training, and could not even ride a horse. What he did have, according to one contemporary, was a keen ability to judge and evaluate talent, which he put to good use when he began organizing what became known as an elite fighting force known as the "Xiang Army" (named from Hunan's River) in Changsha.²⁰

²⁰ Stephen Platt, *Provincial Patriots: The Hunanese and Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University

When Zeng arrived in Changsha in January, the city served as his base of organization and command post for the organization of local militia groups to serve in the army. Soon after arriving, he declared martial law and immediately refortified the city to prepare for another siege. Because the Taipings had recruited heavily from anti-Qing secret society organizations throughout Hunan, Zeng began a local campaign aimed to root out potential traitorous elements, executing over two hundred insurgents suspected of ties to secret society organizations. Thus in the early stages of Zeng's efforts to organize the army, Changsha became a testing ground for such harsh methods of administration that had not been used by previous regional governors. In the months following the siege, by late 1852 the city served as the "main bastion" and training center for Zeng's militia forces. He even noted in his personal correspondence that a local magistrate, Yang Yibao, began organizing a "street corps" in Changsha for urban security. By the next year Zeng personally played a part in training and commanding this force, stating in an imperial memorial that the purpose of the street corps in the city was "to patrol the streets to guard against wandering bandits, and 'if there are suspicious figures or any who have ever robbed in bands, [the street corps] would use the commanding flag granted by the provincial governor and request imperial orders to execute them right on the spot.'" ²¹

Some of his contemporaries believed Zeng overstepped his bounds as a scholar official, even defying the dictates of the neo-Confucian philosophy under which he had

Press, 2007), 117.

²¹ Zeng Guofan, *Zeng Wencheng gong zougao*, vol. 2, p. 24. Quoted in He Wenping, "The Street Corps of Changsha around 1920," in the *Journal of Modern Chinese History*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2014), 66.

been reared. And much like many view the role of Abraham Lincoln during the American Civil War, some of Zeng's contemporaries believed him too harsh, and that he often exceeded his authority.²² Almost a year after his arrival in Changsha, in 1854 Zeng appealed to the local masses by issuing a public proclamation declaring the superiority of Confucianism to Christianity. The Taipings unique form of Christian teaching and interpretation of the Bible, had even led them to ban the teaching of Confucianism. To a scholar such as Zeng, this represented a direct threat to all of Chinese civilization and their way of life. "Scholars cannot read Confucius, but instead there are the so-called words of Jesus: the 'New Testament' book. They take thousands of years of Chinese manners, ethics, classics, and laws, and in a single day sweep them away completely."²³

Thus taking on the role of military leader and administrator in Changsha presented Zeng with a number of challenges. But the army Zeng initially raised in Hunan during the early 1850s, first from his base in Changsha, helped turn the tide of the entire rebellion in the Qing's favor. The Xiang Army has even been referred to as a "counterinsurgency force," one faced with the challenge of winning the hearts and minds of peasant communities often antagonistic to the Qing.²⁴ Beginning in 1854 they marched into neighboring Hubei and recaptured the trading port of Hankou (modern day Wuhan). In the years that followed they proceeded eastward down the Yangtze

²² Ju, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement*, 219-220.

²³ Quoted in Stephen Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom: China, the West and The Epic Story of the Taiping Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 124.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 129.

corridor, where they finally recaptured the city of Nanjing (the rebel capital) from the Taipings in July 1864. While the successes of Zeng's military achievements have been well chronicled in other studies of the Taiping Movement, what next follows is a discussion of its legacy in Hunan and Changsha in the years following the rebellion.

SECRET SOCIETIES IN HUNAN

The Taiping Rebellion left millions dead throughout China. In the years after it finally ended, the Qing government also faced additional problems of administration. The demobilization of Zeng Guofan's Xiang Army and other forces that fought against the Taiping proved difficult and also left its own legacy. Most of his troops came from small rural communities in Hunan and its neighboring provinces. Once they returned to their homes following the war, they struggled to find means of subsistence. Unable to find steady work as farmers or laborers, many joined secret societies. By this time there existed numerous such organizations. Some originated after the fall of the Ming dynasty, and began as small groups who professed loyalty to the Ming. Societies such as the "Hong River Society" (Hong Jiang Hui), and the "Heaven and Earth Society," (Tian Di Hui) also gained many members during the late Qing. The Hong society owed its allegiance to the former Taiping leader Hong Xiuquan, whereas the roots of the Tian Di Hui dated back even further, as one of the first organizations formed in wake of the Qing's conquest of the Ming Dynasty two centuries prior. Frederic Wakeman characterized secret societies of this period, especially those of southern China, as a kind

of “counter state,” in a largely agrarian society. They were also an autonomous “political organism within society,” and “represented an artificial but complete social subsystem.”²⁵ In addition to being Ming loyalists, the origins of secret societies after the Taiping was also attributable to the rapid inflation that followed the rebellion, and economic inequality. Such organizations also served as “mutual aid societies” to help each other.²⁶ In addition to demobilized soldiers society members were also comprised of boatmen, common peddlers and lower class people, tax evading salt smugglers, itinerant shaman who practiced divination and sorcery, general “greenwood” outlaws (Lu Lin Hao Han), stick-carrying hooligans, as well as numerous beggars and other thieves.²⁷

During the late Qing the most important secret society in Hunan was the “Elder Brother Society,” or Ge Lao Hui. In Hunan the organization owed its origins to the Taiping Rebellion when the number of “stranded and disbanded soldiers,” (*san bing you yong*), increased due to the Qing government’s policy of recruiting soldiers and then disbanding or dismissing them when no longer needed. In the years following the rebellion reports from successive Hunan governors discussed the emerging problem of secret society activity in the province, and their difficulty in pacifying them. In 1877 governor Wang Wenshao reported to the Guangxu Emperor,

Your servant has looked into the question of the Ge Lao Hui bandits, they have raised their own military camps in each and every province, many of the soldiers in the camps are from Hunan and Anhui. They organize their

²⁵ Frederick Wakeman, *Strangers at the Gate: Social Disorder in South China, 1839-1861* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 119.

²⁶ Dian H. Murray, in collaboration with Qin Baoqi, *The Origins of the Tiandihui: The Chinese Triads in Legend and History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 12.

²⁷ Lin Zengping, *Lin Zengping wencun*, “Xinhai geming shiqi tiandi hui de xingzhi wenti,” (Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju, 2006), 166-167.

own military affairs, and are continuously disbursing. These bandits groups constantly cause trouble and invade villages.²⁸

Governor-General Zhang Zhidong expressed similar sentiment and frustration in 1893, noting in a report the brave and competitive nature of Hunanese temperament throughout history. During the Taiping Rebellion Hunan's peasants may have cast aside farm tools to join Zeng Guofan's army, but the consequences of demobilization proved a continuing problem. Many hailed from poor villages in the countryside and were from non-landowning families. According to Zhang, many roamed the countryside as vagabonds with former brothers in arms searching for work or adventure, and sooner or later:

From some pamphlet they discover these absurd notions that the secret societies can offer them refuge (*miu li shan tang ming hao*), sing some fake folk ballads and are incited by such ignorance (*shan huo yu meng*), then begin a lifestyle of violently robbing and plundering.²⁹

Thus it goes without saying that in the late Qing period, provincial authorities remained confounded by the prevalence of secret society activity in Hunan. Growth of secret societies in the post Taiping years is another example of the increasing localism that eventually helped bring about the collapse of the empire. Despite the successes of Zeng Guofan's regional armies, dismissing of their troops in inland provinces such as Hunan and Anhui caused such problems. By the first decade of the twentieth century secret society membership throughout China had grown so much that many new recruits to China's first revolutionary organizations were from secret societies. The city credited

²⁸ Guo Hanmin, "Xin hai ge ming shi qi Hunan hui dang de xing zhi yu zuo yong," *Xinhai geming zai Hunan*, lun wen ji (Changsha: Hunan renmin chuban she), 64.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

for the outbreak of the Revolution of 1911, Wuhan, by 1911 had some 5,000 to 6,000 members who belonged to the Qing government's New Army. This explains why the revolution was successful. Because so many of its members were part of a society, they may have joined the army, but remained disloyal and antagonistic to the Qing.³⁰

LEGACY OF THE TAIPING IN CHANGSHA: URBAN FORM AND FOLKLORE

Another important legacy of the Taiping Rebellion, in Changsha specifically, concerned the construction of temples commemorating the sacrifices of those who defended the city in 1852, as well as the exploits of Zeng Guofan and his Xiang Army. The courage of the Qing defenders from the siege and later Zeng Guofan earned their places in memorial halls throughout the city, becoming fixtures of urban space and popular worship. Being thus memorialized, the popularity of such men and their exploits must have been common knowledge among the population. This was an understanding of local history prior to the advent of the Communism and revolutionary ideals, when Zeng Guofan's reputation became tarnished by Communist historiography. Today, a visit to one of Changsha's most famous landmarks, the Tianxin Pavilion, is evidence of such a legacy. Prominently on display outside the south wall of the pavilion at a major intersection is a large and imposing statue of Xiao Chaogui, the Taiping general who laid siege to the city. Zeng Guofan on the other hand, enjoys no such

³⁰ Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 2nd edition (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1999), 259.

position of public prominence anywhere. This is because after 1949 the Communist interpretation of history viewed the Taipings as their revolutionary forebears.

The Tianxin Pavilion is a public marker and reminder of the contradictions and complexities of local history, much like David Harvey's discussion of the Sacre Coeur. What is now considered one of Paris' most famous urban landmarks and tourist destinations, construction of the Sacre Coeur, a Catholic church, was built upon the exact site where some of the most notorious mass killings and atrocities were committed during the Paris Commune of 1871. Local authorities eventually won the right to construct the church on the site, but even a century later it was still remembered by leftist groups as a site of pilgrimage.³¹ In a similar fashion, the Tianxin Pavilion in Changsha represents the competing ideologies of two versions of history. One recognizes the invading rebels as heroes, and the other celebrates the courage of those who defended the city in 1852, as well as other Hunanese who fought against the Taipings until the conclusion of the rebellion.

County records from the late 1850s suggest that respect of Zeng Guofan and the Xiang Army were an important fixture of Changsha's urban space following the Taiping Rebellion. According to the gazetteer for Changsha County from 1871, during the reign of the Tongzhi emperor, in the year 1856 (the sixth year of Emperor Xianfeng) a site was chosen in the northeast part of the city, in an area called He Long Chi (He Long Pond) for the construction of ten memorial temples to honor those who fought against the Taipings. Most likely this consisted of one large temple with ten rooms or chambers, one for each

³¹ David Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2006), 327-339.

of the men memorialized. Funds for temple construction were donated by Xiang Army veterans, and called for the establishment of a school, the Qinzhou Academy, for the children of those commemorated in the temple. During the second month of every season an “auspicious day” was chosen to pay homage and respect to those honored. The report says that the bronze vessels inside the temple were constantly fragrant (*fendou xinxiang*), and incense always burned, and that the temples were frequented by thousands of visitors each year.³² As with any modern war memorial, such sites served as vital reminders to Changsha residents of the brave exploits of soldiers who had defended their city during the great siege of 1852, and throughout the duration of the Taiping Rebellion in Hunan. As such, the temple erected at Helong Chi was a site of public memory, one that based itself on the sacrifices of those who had come before. It was also a reminder to Changsha’s citizens that foreign intruders and their heterodox beliefs had been repelled and defeated. The fact that such memorial sites existed may help explain why Changsha and even all of Hunan remained intensely conservative, anti-western, and anti-Christian during the late Qing, a theme that will be revisited in the chapters that follow. What is also interesting is that of the ten men memorialized at the Helong Pond temple in 1856, only one of the ten actually came from Hunan province. While some higher ranking officers may have come from Hunan, the majority of the soldiers who died during the siege were not from there, but were from other provinces, such as Anhui, Hubei, Zhejiang, and Guangxi.

³² *Changsha Xianzhi*, Tongzhi shi nian, vol. 14, p. 24-25.

Many of the public temples and sites of worship were concentrated around the area of the north gate of the city, also known as Xiangchun Men. This was in accordance with the traditional layout of the imperial Chinese city, where urban structures of administration, worship, and officialdom were often situated in the north part of a walled city. By the early twentieth century such temples still existed in Changsha. In 1905 British Customs Commissioner Alfred Harris noted that throughout Changsha the prowess of Zeng Guofan and other Hunan heroes were "commemorated in the city in splendid temples or memorial halls, where their tablets dwell in lonely grandeur—no one else being worthy of association with such leaders."³³ Following his death in 1872 a huge public temple in his honor was erected in Changsha, establishing Zeng's legacy as a permanent feature of Changsha's urban space and religious culture at the time.³⁴

Another legacy of the 1852 siege concerns the tradition of urban folklore. During the mid 1980's the "Hunan Provincial South Changsha Folk Literature Community Organization," conducted a series of interviews with south Changsha elderly residents to gather stories related to local myths and legends. Many date back to antiquity while others told more modern tales. A few are related to the memory of the Taiping Rebellion. One such story came from a retired teacher named Song Wenzhong, aged 66 at the time of his interview, who recounted a popular local tale of the Western

³³ Alfred H. Harris, "Changsha Trade Report for the Year 1904," *China: The Maritime Customs. Decennial Reports on the Trade, Industries, etc. of the Ports Open to Foreign Commerce, and on the Condition and Development of the Treaty Port Provinces* (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, Ltd., 1904). In *Zhongguo jiu haiguan shiliao* (Beijing: Jinghua chubanshe), 228.

³⁴ *Changsha Xianzhi*, 24-25.

King Xiao Chaogui's death during the siege of 1852. According to Song, local legend had it that Xiao's death at the hands of the Qing General Xiang Rong's giant cannons occurred as the result of an accidental discharge, and that the specific gun that inflicted the fatal wound was officially conferred the title "The Red-clothed General" (*Hong yi jiang jun*), by the Qing emperor.³⁵

During his residence in Changsha in the early part of the twentieth century the American doctor and founder of the Yale-China mission in Changsha, Edward Hume, recounted a similar but slightly different version of the same story. According to Hume's version, the cannon's name was the "Red-haired General" (*hong mao jiang jun*). After walking along the south wall one day a soldier stationed there recounted to Hume and his wife the story of the siege of 1852, and the role this specific cannon played in taking the life of Xiao Chaogui. According to local belief, since the cannon possessed the power to take life, then it must have the power to give life as well. In Hume's words, the soldier explained that the locals in Changsha believed spirits existed "in every rock and tree, in every mountain and hill and river. We believe there are protecting spirits even in our guns and swords. Isn't it natural that the people should come up here [to climb the wall] to worship—not the metal body of the gun, but the spirit within?" The powers of the Red-haired General were especially called upon during the cruel winter and summer months, when young infants were most vulnerable to illness and death. During those months women from the city often climbed the wall to ask for

³⁵ Xiang Zhiqian et. al. ed., "Qiu zai xia hai: Laolong tan de chuanshuo," *Minjian wenxue zi liao ben* (Changsha: Hunan sheng Changsha shi nan qu minjian wenxue jicheng daoyi xiao zu, 1987), 73-75.

blessings from the cannon. Designating the cannon as “red-clothed,” or “red-haired” may have originated from the Chinese designation for the Dutch, whom they often referred to as the “red-haired ones.” The Dutch were also known for their exceptional use of firepower and modern cannons.³⁶ Thus even by the 1910’s locals in Changsha still worshipped the cannon as a kind of deity or symbol of good luck. It had remained in its original position atop the south wall near the Tianxin Pavilion, and locals could freely climb atop the wall to burn incense sticks, hang scrolls to express thanks, or even touch the cannon to receive a special blessing. What many believe to be the original cannon also remains atop the pavilion to this day.

Another south wall oral history came from a 90 year-old man named Zhong Ergong, who recounted a local tale related to burial of the dead following Xiang Rong’s failed attack on Orange Island in particular. It was said that following the battle, the dead bodies of thousands of Qing soldiers remained floating in the waters of the Xiang, stretching for several miles beyond Changsha. Many of the corpses were eventually gathered by Changsha’s farmers and fishermen and buried in mass graves at the eastern base of Tian Ma Mountain (near Yuelu Mountain and the present day campus of Hunan University), on the west side of the Xiang River. Years later the Changsha gentry, led by Ye Dehui, petitioned the local government to have this area renamed the “Tombs of the South River Soldiers.”³⁷ In the context of the particulars of warfare, soldiers and generals described thus far, such data speaks to the toll in lives lost the Taiping Rebellion

³⁶ Edward Hume, *Doctors East, Doctors West: An American Physician’s Life in China* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1946), 69-71.

³⁷ Xiang, *Minjian wenxue zi liao ben*, 76.

exerted on Changsha society. Tobie Meyer-Fong's recent work on the social consequences of the rebellion, specifically in the Jiangnan region, provides similar stories of tragedy and death. Her translation of an Anhui gazetteer from 1860 describes a poignant and frightening picture of the violence of the rebellion. Many residents in that county "suffered and were killed, or killed themselves or were captured or starved to death or died in epidemics. Those that died totaled more than half the population."³⁸

The existence of memorials and temples honoring the sacrifices of the war dead illustrates how even by the early years of the twentieth century the legacy of the siege of 1852 still must have exerted a lasting influence in the memory of Changsha's residents. Located near the famed Yuelu Mountain, the existence of mass graves at Tian Ma Mountain was likely. The area has long been a repository for war dead throughout Changsha's modern history. Today if one ascends Yuelu Mountain from behind the campus of Hunan Normal University or Hunan University, they would encounter the tombs of Hunan's most famous revolutionaries. There are tombs of heroes such as Huang Xing and Chen Tianhua (both discussed in the following chapters), as well as the burial mounds of many soldiers who lost their lives during World War II and the ensuing civil war.

In ways more profound and symbolic than the written page, the memory of the seige of 1852 and the pro-Taiping, revolutionary view of Hunan history still exists today in modern Changsha. One of its most prominent public and historical landmarks, the

³⁸ Tobie Meyer-Fong, *What Remains: Coming to Terms with Civil War in 19th Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 9.

Tianxin Pavilion still stands as the last remnant of the city's ancient and once formidable southern wall. Entrance to the park allows one to walk through the pavilion, where amongst other historical relics and information on local history one will also find what are believed to be some of the actual cannons that General Xiang Rong used during the siege of 1852 to suppress the Taiping. Most significantly is that located at the base of its outside wall is a statue commemorating the brave sacrifices of Xiao Chaogui and the Taiping rebel army who perished whilst attacking the city (Figure 1.1).



Image 2-1. Tianxin Ge (天心阁).
The Tianxin Pavilion, Changsha, Hunan province.
Statue was constructed in 1993. Xiao Chaogui is seated atop the horse.
Photographed by the author.

Conclusion

The kind of romanticization of the Taipings, represented in this statue (Image 2-1), both in urban form and in modern historiography, resulted in Zeng Guofan, his family,

and Qing generals such as Jiang Zhongyuan to be viewed as “counterrevolutionaries” and “bad elements” in the historical narrative of modern Chinese history. But the era of reform and opening allowed for a new generation for scholars and historians, as well as the general public, to examine Zeng’s contribution to Chinese history. The rise of Zeng and the subsequent recruitment of his Hunan army has since become the stuff of legend, in that many credit him with turning the tide of the entire conflict in the Qing army’s favor.

Following the rise of the communist party, after 1949 Zeng’s reputation suffered within historical writing that viewed the rebel Taiping army as the revolutionary forebears of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). According to Huaiyin Li, the controversy over Zeng’s contribution to modern Chinese history first began during the Republican period between the nationalist historian Jiang Tingfu, who supported modernization theory, and Fan Wenlan, whom Mao commissioned to write a new history of modern China based on a more revolutionary narrative. According to Fan and other Marxist historians influenced by his school of thought, Zeng Guofan and his Hunan Army were nothing but Qing loyalists who “butchered” the rebel Taipings, was the “forefather of all reactionaries in the past one hundred years,” and a “traitor to the Han.”³⁹ Even in one of the more significant works on the Taiping movement, *Taiping tianguo de lishi he sixiang*, by Wang Qingcheng, published in 1985, is exclusively devoted to discussing the exploits and achievements of the Taiping army and its leaders.

³⁹ Huaiyin Li, *Reinventing Modern China: Imagination and Authenticity in Chinese Historical Writing* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2013), 87-88.

There is very little discussion on the Qing army or Zeng Guofan, and when referred to they are merely labeled as *diren*, or “enemy.” Other contemporary Western historians, such as Stephen Platt have identified Zeng as one of Hunan’s “Provincial Patriots,” who was nonetheless a “Reluctant General,” who was “physically inept and could barely ride a horse,” yet assumed command out of an obligation to protect his hometown and native province.⁴⁰ Tobie Meyer-Fong has remarked that in recent years Zeng has been “ambivalently rehabilitated along with Confucius as an exemplar of national values, as a part of an officially promoted search for new sources of legitimacy in a world where loyalty to the current system partially trumps Han ethnic nationalism,” and that focusing on the wartime destruction of the Taiping Rebellion “is understood as a negation of the Taiping movement as revolutionary and progressive, and as a critical statement about the post-1949 order.”⁴¹

Bearing this understanding of Zeng Guofan’s complicated legacy in mind, the statue outside the Tianxin Pavilion also serves as a modern symbolic metaphor of the complexities of Changsha’s modern history. The existence of what remains of the south wall and its cannons, along with each of the colors of the Qing army banners, reminds of the legacy of China’s last dynasty, the Qing, and how members of its army, as well as local residents defended the city in 1852. But the statue of Xiao Chaogui at the base of the wall outside pavilion also reminds us that Changsha’s modern history was often one of contradictory forces at work. The presence of the two in the same physical urban

⁴⁰ Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 127.

⁴¹ Tobie Meyer-Fong, *What Remains: Coming to Terms with Civil War in 19th Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 13.

space, commemorating a singular event represents the complexity of this legacy, one that will be discussed throughout the present work.

2-The Conservative Tradition

Christianity came to Hunan through foreign missions. The years following the Taiping Rebellion witnessed a series of anti-Christian riots that erupted throughout China. The first part of this chapter discusses how, by the early 1890's, much of this activity originated from publishing houses in Changsha. The second part of this chapter discusses the influence of the reform movement of 1898. In 1897 Liang Qichao (1873-1929), a reform-minded intellectual during the late Qing, went to Changsha to establish new, western style training academies. I also discuss the specific roles of local reformers during this movement, such as the founding of the Southern Study Society and School of Current Affairs, and the influence of influential publications such as *Xiangbao* and *Xiangxuebao*. Though a failure at the time, Liang Qichao's work left an enduring legacy for future generations of activists, those of the May Fourth era in particular.

“MISSIONARY CASES” IN CHINA

Sources related to missionary disturbances during the late Qing are numerous, often consisting of reports from regional officials to the Qing court. To glean the western perspective there are collections of British consular papers from Wuhan specifically related to the Zhou Han case. A cursory reading of these materials makes it clear that Zhou exacerbated both British officials and the missionary community in southern China. Within the reform centered narrative of modern Chinese history, discussed elsewhere in

this book, characters such as Zhou Han often take a back seat to the actors and heroes of reform and modernization. In some respects this is also the case in Platt's *Provincial Patriots*, where the author suggests that Zhou Han was the "alter ego" of the famed Hunan reformer Guo Songtao. Whereas Guo's patriotism called for China to embrace western ideas, Zhou's anti-foreignism and polemical attacks on Christianity represented a different kind of patriotism, one based in a "fundamental desire to unify that Hunanese audience in resistance to a weak central government." And the two shared some similar ideas, in that they both believed the imperial government was responsible for China's weakness. But by elevating Guo Songtao as well as other anti-foreign Hunan radicals such as Chen Tianhua, Zhou's influence and activity during the anti-Christian riots of the late nineteenth century merits little attention from Platt.¹ For as much attention that Platt devotes to discussing Guo Songtao, in the long run it seems that Guo's brand of reformism failed. Rather it was the intense anti-foreignism espoused by Zhou and others who following him such as Chen Tianhua, that fanned the flames of anti-foreign nationalism during the waning years of the Qing dynasty. Discussing complex historical characters mired in the traditions of China's ancient cultural heritage within the modern constructs of patriotism and nationhood represents another problem. Thus one of the additional aims of this chapter is to discuss Zhou Han separately from other reformers and radicals of his time. Although intensely anti-foreign in some respects

¹ Stephen Platt, *Provincial Patriots: The Hunanese and Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 64-67.

Zhou was more of a “patriot” than any of those who followed him, in the sense that he fought to preserve and defend Hunan and China from Western thought.

One of the most famous instances of anti-Christian activity in China came in June 1870, when nineteen people were killed in Tianjin, most of them French nationals engaged in missionary activity. A French consular official, Henri Fontanier, frustrated with the local government for not doing enough to address the growing anti-western sentiment in the city, stormed into the a county magistrate’s yamen with a pistol, killing the magistrate’s attendant. A mob stormed into the compound and seized Fontanier, beating and killing him. The mob was also responsible for the deaths of other missionaries and their families, even the sisters from a nunnery. In the years following the western expatriate community labeled this incident as the “Tianjin Massacre.”² Much anxiety was caused by the practice of Catholic missionaries to adopt and baptize abandoned infants, and since most missionary compounds and churches were closed to the public common bystanders never knew what was actually taking place behind their walls. Such practices caused rumors and speculation.

But crowd violence and against western missionaries had occurred in other parts of China prior to the incident in Tianjin. In 1862 crowds attacked and destroyed French Catholic churches in Nanchang, Jiangxi, as well as the Hunan river towns of Xiangtan and Hengyang. In both instances it was believed that inflammatory literature inspired

² Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W.W. Morton and Company, 1990), 205.

the rioters and that much of this literature emanated from sources in Changsha.³ Following the Taiping Rebellion a tract entitled “A Record of Facts to Ward off Heterodoxy,” circulated throughout China. Paul Cohen suggests that the unknown author of this tract was most likely Hunanese and had been a part of Zeng Guofan’s military staff. In the years following the first opium war “hostile literature emanated from the province in all directions and provided the spark for an untold number of missionary disturbances.”⁴

DISTURBANCES IN HUNAN

In Hunan alone, between the years of 1861 and 1910 there were as many as nineteen *jiaoan*, or “missionary cases.” In more serious cases churches were attacked and burned, and missionaries chased out of cities, as happened in Wuling district near Changde in 1881. In the less severe cases, again in Changde in 1893 or Hengzhou five years later, anonymous posters appeared denouncing Christianity.⁵ These protests and riots were often not simply mindless outbursts of the unruly masses but reflective of very practical concerns. For instance, there was a widespread misunderstandings related to women and childbirth, that after a women’s menstrual period arrived it was a custom of Western barbarians to drink it, and that soon after birth infants were sodomized. There

³ Paul Cohen, *China and Christianity: The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism: 1860-1870* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 100.

⁴ Cohen, 48.

⁵ Zhang Pengyuan, *Hunan xiandaihua de zaoqi jinzhan* (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 2001), 112-113.

were also rumors that during worship services congregants of both sexes fornicated with each other freely. However, some parts the content of “A Record of Facts to Ward off Heterodoxy,” present several logical and concise arguments against Christianity and biblical teachings. Nonetheless, the main purpose of the tract, notes Paul Cohen, was to “encite mass action.”⁶ As the record of missionary cases in Hunan suggests, this goal was certainly achieved.

In 1883 the British missionary Griffith John wrote of his journey by boat from Hankou into Hunan. He and his party were barely able to penetrate the northern part of the province, encountering local resistance to their presence in literally every town and port. Their first stop was in Yuzhou, the port city adjacent to Dongting Lake in the very northern part of Hunan. Upon arrival John and his party dropped anchor and immediately “left the boat and walked right into the thickest part of the busiest suburb,” to begin preaching and distributing Christian literature. But soon upon arrival they aroused the suspicions of locals, drawing a hostile crowd. The residents obviously did not take kindly to such an intrusion, and along with cries to beat and have them killed, began pelting John and his party with stones. A local magistrate helped escort them out of the city, but the pelting continued even as they boarded their boat to depart.⁷

John’s next stop was a smaller Hunan river town, called Longyang, along one of the adjoining rivers, a few miles southwest of Yuzhou. On the morning after their arrival, and without any invitation from the local government or prearrangement, John

⁶ Cohen, 52ff, 58.

⁷ Griffith John, “Griffith John in Hunan,” *The Chinese Recorder* (August 1891), 364.

and his party set out into the city to once again begin preaching and distributing literature.

As with Yuzhou similar results followed, but even worse:

Soon after entering the city gate, a man passed me with a long slip of red paper, which turned out to be a placard, denouncing the foreign barbarians and calling upon the people to rise en masse, and cast them out of the city. I turned around, followed the man, and saw him post the placard on the wall. I deemed it advisable, however, to take no notice of it, and went on with my work. By-and-by another came up to me with a handful of placards, which he was going to scatter all over the place. He shook them in my face and told me that I must get out of the city at once. . . He then took hold of me, and dragging me by the coat, declared that I must go out of the city at once.⁸

By this time a sizable crowd gathered around John and his party. The fact that they were not beaten was most likely due to the presence of soldiers sent by the local magistrate, to urge the crowd not to beat the foreigners, and to also protect them. After finding the magistrate's office, they argued for the right to remain in Longyang and continue preaching, but to no avail. In the meantime a crowd of thousands had gathered around the magistrate's office. The ensuing spectacle described by John is worthy of a movie drama, where among the throng of locals a narrow path was made by which the hapless band of missionaries were hurriedly escorted by local militia back to their boat, luckily without injury. They encountered even fiercer resistance at the larger treaty port town of Changde, up the river from Longyang, but were not even able to exit their boat.

Soon after arriving in Changde John discovered that the residence of a Catholic missionary had been destroyed, and that its priest had been forced to leave the city. John also secured a copy of a public placard, which he was able to translate, announcing

⁸ *Ibid*, 366.

that Changde's gentry, scholars, and merchants would soon convene at the city temple to decide the fate of a Catholic convert surnamed Guo, who would be beaten and his house demolished. After discovering such sentiment, John wisely decided not to go ashore and venture into the city, and that if they did so "we should be left to the tender mercies of the mob."⁹

Charlton Lewis noted Griffith John's proficiency in both mandarin and also many dialects of the Yangtze region, but his "single-minded ambition to save souls was facilitated by a monumental scorn for Chinese civilization."¹⁰ In many ways it was figures such as John who precisely typified the Western attitude toward China at the time, be they missionaries or merchants. While readily admitting to the unfairness of the unequal treaties that followed the opium wars, John nonetheless believed that it was incumbent upon the West to bring China up to speed with the rest of the developing world. China's traditions, culture, and ways of life represented an obvious impediment to its eventual progress.¹¹ For him and many at the time there was also little doubt that Hunan and Changsha was at the center of a large printing enterprise meant to discredit Christianity and the Western presence in the region.

Lewis' study of the anti-foreign movements throughout China during these years also suggests that such activity also owed its influence to the success of Zeng Guofan's Hunan Army and the resulting Hunanese diaspora following the Taiping Rebellion, a

⁹ *Ibid.*, 369.

¹⁰ Charlton Lewis, *Prologue to the Chinese Revolution: The Transformation of Ideas and Institutions in Hunan Province, 1891-1907* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 25.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

period that when many of the more important cities in China come under the governance and leadership of officials and military leaders from Hunan. Such was the case in Nanjing, where not only official posts became occupied with men from this province, but also members of the rank and file. The influence of secret society organizations such as the Ge Lao Hui, or “Elder Brother Society,” further contributed to the unrest, because it was through such organizations where anti-Qing and anti-western sentiment thrived. Within these organizations attacks against western establishments could be planned and coordinated.¹²

Western evangelical Christianity’s frontier style methods of proselytization in southern China’s hinterland had also been among the causes for the Taiping uprising. Missionaries, Isachar Roberts, a southern Baptist, illegally distributed Christian tracts in south China during the 1830’s and 1840’s. Despite exhibiting admiration for Hunan and its people, Griffith John and other missionaries even referred to its inhabitants as “Hunanites,” as if they were some Old Testament tribe. But from reading John’s account of his first trip into Hunan, it is clear that he and at least some of his party were conversant and skilled at Chinese, and possessed some working knowledge of local customs and traditions. Even during the early 1880’s when John and his group first ventured into Hunan, they knew that Hunan had been a focal point of resistance to the Taiping rebels, an army inspired by Christian teachings and ideals. But John and others

¹² Lewis, *Prologue to the Chinese Revolution*, 20ff.

did not recognize that attempting to preach the same religion in the region could prove to be frustrating.¹³

John's and other missionary accounts suggest that the reason for such local resistance to the Christian message, and even to the presence of westerners generally lay in the local gentry's manipulation of the masses. Given the conservative nature of Hunan's gentry in the late Qing, perhaps such was the case in some instances. But perhaps deeper fears and concerns caused such an intense reaction on the part of town Hunan's town and country residents, such as local superstitions and folk customs, as well as general xenophobia.

THE CASE OF ZHOU HAN

By the early 1890's many suspected that the author and instigator of a growing body of anti-Christian placards and tracts, was a Hunan native named Zhou Han, and that he managed a large printing operation somewhere in Changsha. Apparently as a reward for his military service under the famed General Zuo Zongtang in Western China, Zhou had been awarded an official posting in Shanxi, in northwestern China. But in 1885, and possibly resulting from as a result from a dispute with Zuo Zongtang, he petitioned to move back to Changsha with his family, when much of the trouble surrounding his case began. Like the author of "A Record of Facts to Ward off Heterodoxy," Zhou's writings claimed that Christianity was an evil cult, that Jesus Christ was the "pig god,"

¹³John, *The Chinese Recorder*, 361.

and that his teachings aimed to “scrape out the eyes, and to cut out the heart and cut apart infants, to cut out a woman’s uterus, and to rape and cut off the queues of infants.”¹⁴

In September 1891 numerous churches and missionary residences in Yichang, Hubei just to the north of Hunan were attacked and burned by mobs. That fall disturbances continued throughout the province, with uprisings in Hankou and the smaller town of Wuxue. By early the next year the posting of placards continued. On the morning of January 21, 1892 the British Consul stationed in Yichang, C.W. Everard, awoke to find an inflammatory placard posted on the front door of his residence, as well as numerous others posted on the back walls of the area Catholic churches, on some were written the characters “kill the foreigners.”¹⁵

In November 1891 the British consul stationed in Hankou, C.T. Gardner, forwarded to the British Foreign Office in Beijing a translations of a series of placards recently discovered in the city. The author of many of the placards identified himself as Zhou Han, or Zhou Zuoying, and that he was from Hunan. A section of one states:

Every one who follows the devil’s religion and worships the pig spawn offends Heaven, earth, the three luminaries, the saints, the sages, the fairies, the Buddhas, ancestors, and forefathers, father and mother. Every one who only obeys the holy men of the central land, the teachings of their Imperial Majesties of the Manchu Dynasty, is in his true heart an official, secretary, clerk, attendant, soldier, militiaman, scholar, farmer, artisan, and merchant. All these bitterly hate Jesus the pig spawn. All these bitterly hate the wild pig, the devil families, the piggish devils. There are open pig devils and there are secret pig devils. There are grandchildren and

¹⁴ Zhang, *Hunan xiandaihua de zaoqi jinzhhan*, 112-113.

¹⁵ “C.W. Everard to Fang Daotai and the Viceroy’s Deputy, Yichang, February 22, 1892.” Document No. 149, in Ian Nish, ed. *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office in Confidential Print, From the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the First World War*. Part I, Series E, Asia, 1860-1914, Vol. 23. *Instability in and Beyond China, 1885-1892*, 263.

great grand children of the pig devils. The pig devils have wives, concubines, daughters, and women.¹⁶

Circulation of such inflammatory literature caused a sensation throughout Hankou. The year before a missionary doctor had been severely beaten, and around the time these placards were discovered two other foreigners were murdered. Gardner immediately petitioned to personally lead an envoy of gunboats to Changsha, to find and destroy the printing houses responsible, but was refused.¹⁷ It was also with a bit of irony that Zhou Han hailed from Ningxiang county in Changsha municipality, known throughout China for its pork trade, so famous in fact that it was often said that in imperial times swine from Ningxiang was shipped to Beijing for consumption by the emperor.

¹⁶ “Translations of Six more Anti-Christian Placards, published in and disseminated from Hunan. Placard, November 18, 1891,” Document No. 60, Item No. 6, in Ian Nish, ed. *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, 175.

¹⁷ P.D. Coates, *The China Consuls: British Consular Officers, 1843-1943* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 271.



Image 3-1. One of Zhou Han's placards.

See C.W. Allan, *Our Entry into Hunan* (London: Robert Culley, 25-35 City Road, and 26 Paternoster Row, E.C.), 25.18 See also in Paul Cohen, *China and Christianity*, 140ff.

A classic example perfectly illustrating the some of the alarming visual aspects of Zhou Han's placards can be seen in figure 1.1, originally published in C.W. Allan's *Our Entry into Hunan*. The picture seen here, titled *da gui shao shu tu*, or "Illustration depicting the burning of the great devils," depicts a bearded Chinese gentleman supervising the execution of two foreigners, likely missionaries, by being poked and stabbed to death with stakes, while their bibles and other literature burn in the pot nearby. The Chinese men in scholarly attire standing near the pot show their disgust and disdain

¹⁸ The inscriptions on the placard read, "Trashy, magical books, foul as dung, slandering the sages and reviling the immortals, making enmity with all the world, and "The heretical teaching of the swine breed brought from abroad; mocking at heaven and earth, destroying ancestral worship—wickedness more than myriads of arrows and swords can abolish," See C.W. Allan 24ff.

for the foul odor emanating from the pot. The incendiary nature of just this one illustration suggests that to even non-speakers of Chinese would have been alarmed and shocked by such a depiction. The man carrying the pole bearing scales with books stacked on both sides contrasts with the books being burned in the pot to show how the viewer how when compared with the teachings of Christianity, the Chinese intellectual tradition offered true balance and harmony to the world.

Thus by late 1891 and early the next year western consular officials throughout China remained certain that anti-Christian literature and placards were being published and circulated from Hunan. Zhou Han and other conspirators, or perhaps even Changsha's gentry, were responsible. In February 1892 the foreign residents of Fuzhou, the capital of Fujian province on China's eastern coast, petitioned the British Foreign Secretary in Beijing to address the growing amount of literature being "sent forth in vast quantities" from Changsha "to all provinces of the empire."¹⁹ Later the same month the residents of Hankou followed suit. They filed a similar petition, to address "the wide diffusion, amongst the natives of this and adjoining provinces, of the virulent anti-foreign literature, in the shape of placards, cartoons, pamphlets, and books."²⁰

By early 1892 it was also clear to British officials that Zhou Han or the Hunan gentry were the source of all the trouble. Part of their exasperation lay in the fact that because Changsha had not yet been established as a treaty port it remained relatively cut off from communications from Hankou by telegraph, thus dealing with the potential

¹⁹ "W.M. Waham and 28 Others, Letter from Foreign Community at Fuzhou to the Marquis of Salisbury, February 10, 1892." Document No. 135, in Ian Nish, ed. *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, 254.

²⁰ "A.E. Reynell and 92 Others, Letter from Foreign Community at Hankow to the Marquis of Salisbury, February 27, 1892." Document No. 150. In Nish ed., *Ibid*, 263-264.

source of the agitation proved difficult.²¹ Within Changsha's city walls Zhou's work also enjoyed wide circulation, and with apparently little resistance from local officials. Anti-Christian posters, placards, and other vivid illustrations regularly appeared directly alongside imperial decrees aimed at denouncing such activity. The British consul in Hankou also concluded that it was beyond a shadow of a doubt that the various writings and illustrations depicted on the placards "were not the production of illiterate men. The Hunan anti-Christian publications, almost without exception, have scholars for their authors."²²

According to an April 1892 investigation and memorial to the Qing emperor from Zhang Zhidong, the Governor-General of Hunan, Hubei, and Guangdong provinces, Zhou Han was somehow associated with at least three literary press shops in Changsha. At each of these locations anti-Christian literature, placards, and posters were printed. One of Zhou's supposed accomplices Chen Jude, was one of the managers of the printing house in Changsha probably responsible for the printing of the inflammatory placards and other literature, but testified that he was unaware of the content of what was being printed, which meant that he was either illiterate or simply making excuses. Chen also testified that the workers in his shop frequently came and went, and there would be no way to track or hunt down any other specific employees responsible, or to prove that they worked for Zhou Han. Chen also had many clients, and printed books for many people.

²¹ "Minute of Interview between Sir J. Walsham and the Tsung-li Yamen at the Legation on the 22nd February, 1892," *Ibid*, 267.

²² "Introduction and Review prefixed to one of the Anti-Christian Publications entitled, 'A Complete Picture Gallery,' " Hankow, December, 31, 1891, Document 102. *Ibid*, 207, 210.

His account records only listed the surnames of his clients and their sponsoring institutions, and how much they were charged based on the number of characters printed.

Deng Maohua, another acquaintance of Zhou's, ran another bookstore or printing house called Baoshan Tang, or a "charity hall" located near a well just inside Changsha's Xiaoximen gate. From the nineteenth century such halls had been set up throughout the empire to encourage philanthropy and public welfare, but most importantly to serve as sites for the reading of the Sacred Edict. In fact such charity halls often served as the centers for anti-foreign activity throughout the empire, and in Changsha Zhou Han authored tracts such as *Death to the Devil's Religion* were often read and recited in public by local *xiuca*i degree holders alongside the Sacred Edict.²³ Its location near the city's Xiao Xi Men, or "Small West Gate," is of further interest to note, because this would have placed it on or very close to Pozi Street, one of Changsha's main business thoroughfares. This area was controlled by the family of Ye Dehui, a powerful local literati and conservative gentry. Access to this small western gate also put Zhou Han's charity hall in close proximity to the docks along the banks of the Xiang River. After printing and mass production they could be easily moved to be loaded onto ships to be transported to other port towns throughout China. Many in the foreign community suspected that Zhou received special patronage and financial support from Changsha's gentry. Thus it is possible that gentry such as Ye Dehui and some of his associates could have been among Zhou's chief supporters and financiers.

²³ Lewis, *Prologue to the Chinese Revolution*, 29, 33.

Deng Maohua testified that he was well acquainted with Zhou as well as his comings and goings, and that in 1891 Zhou had actually lived in the shop for several days, then abruptly left. It is possible that Chen Jude, Deng Maohua, and another accomplice named Zeng Yuwen apparently ran printing and distribution operations in Changsha while Zhou travelled itinerantly throughout the middle Yangtze region to preach his anti-Christian message.²⁴ Among the placards and other publications circulated by Zhou were “Admonishing the Gentry,” (*guanshen baoxun*), “Laws for Raising Children,” (*yuying liangfa*), “Liferaft for Saving Children” (*zhengni baofa*), “Maxims for Jade Pupils,” (*geyan zhenbi*), and many others. Also there were forged documents made to look like official Qing script, denouncing Christianity and calling on citizens to rise up in open rebellion against missionaries and other westerners. Zhou and his followers were also accused of circulating forged letters from the governors of Hubei and Hunan. In terms of character those he came into contact with regarded Zhou as somewhat of an oddity. Numerous witnesses claimed that even in person he would make the most nonsensical claims, and that communicated with dead spirits. In Hubei a middle level official named Yi Shu appears to have been under Zhou’s employ, and was responsible for a large portion of anti-Christian literature appearing there.²⁵

Governor Zhang’s report was likely an attempt to strike a bargain between Zhou’s supporters in Changsha and the foreign authorities. It is suggested that Zhou Han was so mentally handicapped and impaired that he was incapable of giving his own testimony, so

²⁴ Zhang Zhidong, “Hunan kanbo fanjiao jietie andeng qingxingzhe,” April 21, 1892, *Qingmo jiaoan*, di erce, (Zhonghua shuju: Zhongguo diyi lishi danganguan, Fujian shifan daxue lishixi, 1998), 552.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 552-555.

neighbors and family had to testify on his behalf. Each of the men apparently responsible for printing Zhou's works and operating the Changsha bookstores—Deng Maohua, Chen Jude, and Zeng Yuwen, at any point never emphatically admitted that it was Zhou Han who was responsible for printing the anti-Christian literature. Zeng Yuwen had died the previous year, and even under torture both Deng and Chen refused to admit guilt, or that they had committed any wrong offense, either on their own part or Zhou Han's. Governor Zhang also concluded that perhaps some person or persons were allegedly using Zhou Han's good name as a reputable official to print the tracts and other literature, and that since Zhou Han was so mentally ill and crazy it would have been impossible for him to do so.

But given the influence of Changsha's conservative gentry in the late Qing, it is likely that Zhou enjoyed their patronage, which explains why the progress of Zhang Zhidong's investigation seemed hindered at the time. Given the widespread perception that Zhou Han was the chief agitator and cause of all the unrest, there is little doubt that he was the main author of much of the literature. In many respects Zhang Zhidong's report played the middle ground, with one hand meant to pacify Changsha's gentry, and the other British officials. The conservative gentry in Changsha, who supported Zhou Han financially obviously had no problem with the printing of literature expressing such views. But If Zhang had taken any punitive action against Zhou Han the gentry would have incurred the wrath of many in Changsha sympathetic to Zhou. Zhang also faced pressure from British authorities to do something about the case, so in the end it seemed a

compromise was reached. In order to placate both parties Zhou was placed on house arrest and Zhang filed a report thoroughly detailing his efforts to address the matter.²⁶

The British were also limited in regards to how they could respond. While it is true they enjoyed extraterritorial power in major treaty ports, at least by the late nineteenth century their number of gunboats and troops, especially within China's hinterland, remained limited. Thus use of force was not an option. They were also at a loss to seek aid from other western powers, such as France or Germany, for fear of jeopardizing their military and commercial supremacy in China.²⁷ Britain's foreign minister to China in 1891, Sir John Walsham, failed to adequately address the rising tide of anti-foreignism rampant throughout China during these years.²⁸ Even Britain's Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, to which most of the correspondence from missionaries and consular officers stationed in China was addressed, seemed particularly out of touch and unsympathetic to Chinese officials distressed about British imperialism. Serving as Prime Minister from 1886-1892, Lord Salisbury, or Robert Baskoyne-Cecil—was known as a conservative and staunch supporter of imperial policy and the commonwealth. He served as Britain's minister to India and was also a devout Christian, making him sympathetic to the plight of persecuted missionaries abroad. In the minds of Salisbury and other conservatives, Christianity represented another component of Britain's civilizing mission to the non-western world.²⁹

²⁶ Lewis, *Prologue to the Chinese Revolution*, 36.

²⁷ Edmund S. Wehrle, *Britain, China, and the Antimissionary Riots, 1891-1900* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966), 30-31.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

Even by the time Changsha opened as a treaty port in 1904, Zhou Han's legacy continued to reverberate throughout the city. British Consul Alfred Harris referred to him as a "scholar" and "misguided patriot," and that Zhou's "bitter anti-Christian writings and the violence of his publications earned for Hunan an unenviable notoriety as an anti-Foreign and anti-Christian province; they were the cause of the Yangtze riots of the previous decade . . ." But more importantly Harris suggested that Zhou's lurid distaste for all things foreign only achieved the opposite effect, that instead "led to the opening of the province—the very thing their author hoped to render impossible." Harris also notes that at least as of 1904 Zhou Han was one of Changsha's most notorious residents, still living in confinement. For Harris, and no doubt much of the expatriot community in Hunan, these kinds reactionaries were an obvious impediment to commerce and progress.³⁰

Zhou Han's extreme reaction to Christianity also bears further thought. What is fascinating is Zhou's use of the homophonic qualities of the Chinese language to serve as a counter to Christian teachings. After the first Catholic missions first arrived in the mid 19th century, the Chinese language also created problems for translation of the gospel. Owing to the legacy of Mateo Ricci, a Jesuit missionary who first visited China during the sixteenth century the Catholic term for the Christian god was *tianzhu*, or "heavenly master." But for those who displayed distrust of foreigners, the *zhu* in *tianzhu* could also be translated as the term for "pig," also pronounced as *zhu*. Although the two terms

³⁰ Alfred Harris, "Changsha Trade Report for the Year 1904." *China: The Maritime Customs. Decennial Reports on the Trade, Industries, etc. of the Ports Open to Foreign Commerce, and on the Condition and Development of the Treaty Port Provinces*. Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, Ltd., 1904. In *Zhongguo jiu haiguan shiliao* (Beijing: Jinghua chubanshe), 228-229.

differed tonally, with the *zhu* of *tianzhu* being pronounced with the third tone and the *zhu* of *zhurou* pronounced in the first, nonetheless much of the anti-Christian literature appearing in China by the late nineteenth century remained tainted with illusions to the “pig-god,” or “pig-gospel” and graphic illustrations depicting a pig being crucified on a cross.³¹

When compared to other cultures and traditions, the intense ideological and cultural reaction to Christianity bears further thought and analysis. Consider the example of Mexico and the story of the Virgin of Guadalupe. According to legend in December 1531 an Aztec native named Juan Diego was walking in the hills near present day Mexico City when he saw a vision of a young girl surrounded by light, speaking to him in his native language. When he confessed his vision to a local Spanish priest, and later presented him with an image emblazoned in his cloak, it was believed that it was the Virgin Mary. But the hill where Juan Diego reportedly witnessed this event was also the site of Tepeyac Hill, where the Aztec earth goddess Tonantzin was worshipped, a kind of reimagining on the part of Aztec culture of transplanting their own indigenous religious iconography to allow for the introduction of an alien religion. Like Juan Diego, Hong Xiuquan’s exposure to Christianity was interpreted through the lens of his folk beliefs, resulting in millenarian visions of sainthood, reaping one of the largest civil wars in human history, killed untold millions, and literally brought the Qing empire to its knees.

³¹ Charlton Lewis also accounts for the use of homonyms in the Chinese language to manipulate foreign phrases and Christian teachings. See Lewis, *Prologue to the Chinese Revolution*, 33.

In similar fashion Zhou Han interpreted the teachings of the Bible through the lens of his own knowledge of Chinese culture, literary tradition, and folk beliefs. In terms of the later, this can be seen in his understanding that the divine figure of Jesus depicted in the Bible was not some heavenly master, but a pig, a notion equally at odds with the Judeo-Christian tradition that pigs and pig meat are filthy and not fit for consumption. The other important contrast with other colonial encounters was the pervasive influence of an intellectual tradition—in this case Confucianism—which also created significant conflict between China and the Christian world. The use of native folk beliefs was one of the ways in which local populations in Changsha interpreted western modernization during this period. This question will be further discussed in the chapters that follow.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Mateo Ricci's *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, made a convincing case for the compatibility between the Confucian and Christian traditions, that the teachings of the god of the western bible amounted to a summation or completion of Confucian ideals. However, one could just as well argue that the two traditions also contrasted in many respects. Confucianism has always been a highly pragmatic and ritual centered philosophy, emphasizing one's proper behavior in society, and one's relationships within a patriarchal hierarchy of the nuclear family and ruling state. Such a philosophy might have meshed well with Mateo Ricci's Catholic vision of the Christian faith, always relying upon its own authoritarian structure of priests, bishops, archbishops, pontiffs and popes—a hierarchy very similar to the Confucian doctrine of the five relationships—friend to friend, older to younger brother,

husband to wife, father to son, and ruler to ruled. But the introduction of evangelical protestant Christianity into China emphasized individual salvation. Each convert had a special calling from god, such views came at odds with the Confucian world. Since antiquity Confucian teachings have also been regarded as highly humanistic in their worldview, lacking emphasis on aesthetic or spiritual concerns, further bringing it to odds with Christianity.

Even Zhou Han's inflammatory rhetoric, extreme as it may sound, contains traces of a desire to protect and safeguard China's Confucian heritage. In the passage above Zhou refers to the Christian presence in China as being a threat to "earth, the three luminaries, the saints, the sages, the fairies, the Buddhas, ancestors, and forefathers, father and mother." Furthermore, "every one who only obeys the holy men of the central land, the teachings of their Imperial Majesties of the Manchu Dynasty, is in his true heart an official, secretary, clerk, attendant, soldier, militiaman, scholar, farmer, artisan, and merchant." By referring to literally every class and position of Chinese society, Zhou called upon his understanding of Confucian hierarchy, and that Christian teachings represented a direct threat to this revered legacy. Some of Zhou's other literature confiscated and translated by British authorities, while equally vitriolic, also contains illusions to China's intellectual heritage and Confucian legacy, and at times even reads like a commentary critiquing Christian doctrine and western thought.

Even in some of the earlier writings discussed by Paul Cohen that appeared in Hunan following the Taiping Rebellion, "A Record of Facts to Ward off Heterodoxy," in particular, we find that the anonymous author of this tract also called upon Confucian

tradition to criticize Christian teachings. For instance, the Christian god's claim of dominion over all, and that the authority of rulers of all nations derived from him. But if such were the case, the author argues, then "why is it that from ancient times on there has been no lack of tyrannical rulers?" The author also attacked the concept of Jesus as God's son, sent down into the world to redeem humanity, using the common phenomena of revolt and popular uprisings in China's history as an example. He noted that if thousands of subjects were to engage in revolt, and one official deemed himself responsible for the crimes and transgressions of many, would such a judgment be just? Finally and most importantly, the author challenged the claim that in the end times the Christian god would extinguish all heterodox teachings. If such were to happen, the author argued, did this mean that the teachings of Confucius, Mencius, of Laozi, or the teachings of Buddha would be extinguished as well?³² Cohen also notes that the tools used by the author of "A Record of Facts to Ward off Heterodoxy," combined "a skillful blending of truth and falsehood," with the way they seem obsessed with women's menstrual periods and sexuality, as well as the abduction of children, thus on the one hand to the lay reader they seem to be perverse exaggerations. But in other parts the author argues quite eloquently and effectively against biblical teachings. We also find this to be the case with the Zhou Han related literature.

During January 1899 William Barclay Parsons, an American engineer, journeyed to China and later wrote of his trip to Hunan and Changsha. He travelled to the

³² In discussing these themes Paul Cohen also provides more lengthy quotations and further discussion. See Cohen, *China and Christianity*, 52-53.

province to survey the surrounding land for railroad construction. At the time he observed:

Changsha, the capital of Hunan, is one of the most interesting places in the empire, on account of its extreme exclusiveness. Only two or three foreigners, but no missionary, had ever been in the city, and these few were smuggled in in closed chairs. Like all Chinese cities, it is heavily walled, and strongly gated, the gates being locked at night, giving a most medieval air.³³

Parsons and his party were received by the provincial governor, and entered the city amidst a very formal procession:

With our chairs in line, from the leading on of which the chief engineer waved a small American flag—we entered the city, the first foreign party to do so publicly and with official honors, and very proud to feel that the first foreign flag to wave within Changsha walls should be that of the great republic. Thus fell Hunan's strongest tradition!³⁴

The people of the city seemed generally welcoming to Parsons and his entourage:

Although the streets were jammed with people and the houses along the route filled to overflowing, there was not heard a single opprobrious epithet or even impolite reference. As a general thing, the people seemed glad to see us, or, at the worst, merely exhibited a stolid indifference, or more usually an inordinate curiosity.³⁵

Perhaps one reason this particular party was met with a more friendly reception was that they were not missionaries, but members of a foreign expedition to inquire about railroad construction. This may have been reflective of the local gentry's pragmatic attitude toward modernization. While rejecting of foreign ideas such as religion and philosophy, they nonetheless may have been eager to do business with the foreign devils.

³³ William Barclay Parsons, *An American Engineer in China* (New York: McClure, Philips, and Co., 1900), 82.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 87.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 88.

Absent of the dogmas and proselytizing charisma of missionaries, the engineers also seemed to be more welcomed by the local population. But by the late 1890's Changsha's gentry became embroiled in their own dispute with reformist factions in the city.

Late Qing Reformers in Hunan

The expedition of William Barclay Parsons during the fall and winter months of 1898-1899 came during the exact time when the imperial court in Beijing initiated the Hundred Days of Reform. Following China's defeat in the first Sino-Japanese War in April 1895, intellectuals in China became alarmed by its lack of modernization, and that it lagged behind the West in the areas of math, science, and technology. Beginning in summer 1898, over a one-hundred day period the young emperor Guangxu (1871-1908) issued a series of edicts calling for comprehensive changes in a number of areas: modernizing the imperial examination system, reforming the education to include math, science, and Western philosophy, as well as Western capitalism, and strengthening the military. Within the imperial court, Kang Youwei (1858-1927), the emperor's personal tutor, was the main voice of reform. During this time Liang Qichao (1873-1929), Kang's protégé, and considered one of the brightest young minds in the empire, journeyed to Changsha to establish new training academies where students could be reared in new curriculums based on Kang's thought, with special emphasis on newer

interpretations of the Confucian classics that combined them with western philosophy and history. But Liang and the other reformers were met with stiff opposition from Changsha's wealthy gentry elite.

A core issue driving the debate between conservatives and reformers across the empire during the late Qing was the conflict between followers of the New Text (*jin wen*) and Old Text (*gu wen*) schools of thought. Students of the New Text School advocated a different approach to interpreting the Confucian classics, one that placed philosophy before literature, history, and poetry. More importantly their ideals made them open to integrating Western philosophy, as well as math and science into the traditional curriculum that emphasized students in China only learn and memorize the Confucian classics.

If the reform faction faced such conservative opposition during the Hundred Days of Reform, why did they choose Hunan, a province known for its intense conservatism, to practice their ideas? Such questions are best answered by first considering that by the late nineteenth century Hunan province was home to some of the empire's most promising young minds, many of which were influenced by Kang's thought. Throughout its history Hunan and its capital also maintained a rich and storied intellectual heritage. Data from the sixtieth year of the reign of Qianlong (1796) reveals that out of all of the provinces in the Chinese empire at that time Hunan contained the most land devoted to educational purposes, numbering some 730,080 *mu*.³⁶ By the late Qing the city boasted three of the finest Confucian academies in all of the empire, located

³⁶ A *mu* is equal to approximately .165 acres of land. In Zhang, *Hunan xiandaihua de zaoqi jinzhhan*, 78.

within the city or its outskirts. There was Yuelu Academy, situated at the base of Yuelu Mountain, on the western bank of the Xiang River. Just outside the south gate was Chengnan Academy, former school of the famed Song philosopher Zhu Xi. Qiuzhong Academy was located just outside the north gate.³⁷

One of Hunan's earliest and most important post Taiping reformers was Guo Songtao (1818-1891). His eagerness to embrace western models of thinking and militarization during the Self-Strengthening Movement in part derived from his experiences as a young man. During both opium wars he participated in the Qing army's poor defensive campaigns in Zhejiang, and then at the Dagu forts near Beijing in 1858. The superiority of western military power during these battles made a big impression on him.³⁸ After serving under Zeng Guofan in suppressing of rebel forces during the Taiping Rebellion, the two remained close friends and confidantes. Intellectually Guo was a disciple of one of Hunan's most famous and revered thinkers, Wang Fuzhi. In the years following the rebellion Guo became one of the late Qing's staunchest advocates of self-strengthening and reform. He helped found Changsha's famous Chengnan Academy, and constructed temples honoring Wang Fuzhi, Zeng Guofan, and other Hunan army heroes throughout the city. In 1863 he was appointed Governor of Guangdong province, where he established close relationships with western merchants and missionaries. Through these contacts Guo became exposed to western ideas and thinking for the first time. Due in part as a gesture of compensation for the

³⁷ Lewis, *Prologue to the Chinese Revolution*, 10.

³⁸ Kuo Ting-yee and Liu Kwang-ching, "Self-Strengthening: The Pursuit of Western Technology," in John King Fairbank, ed., *The Cambridge History of Modern China, Vol. 10, The Late Qing 1800-1911* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 500ff.

murder of a British interpreter in Yunnan, in 1875 the Qing court sent Guo to England to serve as diplomatic consul and ambassador to the English throne. During his few years in England Guo witnessed first hand the progress of the industrial revolution and parliamentary government. He visited factories and attended sessions of parliament, and met dignitaries and officials from all over the world. Since the population of Hunan was larger than all of Japan at the time, Guo was alarmed by the number of Japanese studying in England.³⁹

But owing to Hunan's anti-western xenophobia following the Taiping Rebellion, throughout his career Guo was one of the first reform minded intellectuals from Hunan to confront the conservative ideology that dominated Changsha's intellectual culture. His fascination and association with westerners and their ideas made him a subject of ridicule and suspicion in the conservative province. Even before his trip abroad, Changsha's gentry viewed him with suspicion. Guo advocated modern advancements such as railroads, telegraphs, and steamships to be built in Hunan, but the gentry roundly opposed them, fearing that it would only court the entry of foreigners into the province. It was even said that in July 1872 following the death of Zeng Guofan his body was brought back to Changsha for burial. Zeng had distinguished himself as one of the greatest military leaders in modern Chinese history, and was the Hunan patriot who raised the provincial army that suppressed the Taipings. When the steamship bearing his body arrived in Changsha the local gentry became alarmed and did not allow it to dock in the

³⁹ Platt, *Provincial Patriots: The Hunanese and Modern China*, 38ff.

city. A more conventional and less “modern” boat had to be found, and eventually they allowed Zeng to be entombed southwest of the city.⁴⁰

After Guo’s turn as ambassador in England, he returned to his residence in Changsha only to face shame and ridicule. Nonetheless, he persisted in his efforts to reform Hunan’s educational curriculum. In his later years Guo befriended and mentored another of Changsha’s influential gentry, Wang Xianqian, who ironically mentored one of the city’s most iconic and infamous conservative gentry, Ye Dehui. Guo’s most enduring legacy to China’s era of self-strengthening lay in his contribution to shaping a unique Hunanese identity, as well as “a partial model for a modernizing Chinese nationalism based in Chinese culture.”⁴¹

Hunan especially became a center for reform minded debate during the Hundred Days of Reform. In the fall of 1897 Liang Qichao (1873-1929) journeyed to Hunan and partnered with young reform minded intellectuals to found The School of Current Affairs and the Southern Study Society. Another native Hunan reformer, Xiong Xiling, was integral in securing the school’s location, and later served as its headmaster. After temporarily holding classes in another location, a proper school was eventually constructed by September outside the northern city gate in an area called Hou Jia Long. Among the forty or so initial pupils enrolled with Liang was a young student named Cai E who went on to become one of Hunan’s greatest generals, and a hero of the Revolution of 1911 in Yunnan. After Liang’s arrival in November, he gave official lectures for at

⁴⁰ Zhou Qiuguang, “Huxiang wenhua fazhan gaiyao,” Zhou Qiuguang, ed., *Huxiang wenhua hongguan yanjiu* (Changsha: Hunan shifan daxue chubanshe, 2001), 47.

⁴¹ Platt, *Provincial Patriots*, 62.

least four hours every day and was said to have remained at the school until the late hours of the night, often going without sleep, helping students with their assignments. Such a pace of work no doubt led to his exhaustion, and was one of the reasons he was forced to leave Hunan the following February. Twenty-six years later, in 1922 Liang was invited back to Hunan by then governor Zhao Hengti, for his first visit back since his short stay during 1897-1898. When Liang revisited the site of his former school, and fondly recalled his experiences in Hunan during the Hundred Days of Reform, he was moved to tears.⁴²

Another lecturer at the School of Current Affairs was Tan Sitong (1865-1898). A Hunan native, Tan was one of the first modern Chinese thinkers to advocate statehood.⁴³ His ideas of reform were very much inspired by a reimagined version of Confucianism in wake of modernity, brought forth in *Ren Xue*, or “On the Study of Humanity.” Tan’s understanding of *ren*, emphasizing the values of raw energy and dynamism in all people, also informed his understanding of Western economics. This made him a proponent of the free market and trade at a time when western imperialism was becoming increasingly unpopular in China. He often critiqued Chinese society as backward, and that it should become more open to western thinking.⁴⁴ At meetings of the Southern Study Society Tan lectured on subjects such as astronomy, where he taught that western ideas regarding the origin of the universe were inherent in Confucian

⁴² Chen Xianshu, “Liang Qichao ti “ ‘Shi wu xue tang gu zhi shi mo’,” *Xiang cheng wen shi cong tan* (Beijing: Zhong guo wen lian chu ban she, 2001), 94-95.

⁴³ Hao Chang, *Chinese Intellectuals in Crisis: Search for Order and Meaning (1890-1911)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 67.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 94.

thought. Such knowledge was not a newfound concept that derived from the West, but was even alluded to in Chinese classics such as the *Book of Changes* or *Book of History*. He also argued for a more relativistic understanding to the concept of Chinese existence expressed in the term *zhongguo*, or “middle kingdom.” For Tan it was obvious that most societies placed themselves as the center of all existence and anyone from outside their region as outsiders.⁴⁵ In “On the Study of Humanity” Tan also advanced the then radical notion that the emperor of China was on par with the rest of his subjects:

The ruler is also one of the people; in fact, he is of secondary importance as compared to ordinary people. If there is no reason for people to die for one another, there is certainly less reason for those of primary importance to die for one of secondary importance. Then, should those who died for the ruler in ancient times not have done so? Not necessarily. But I can say positively that there is reason only to die for a cause, definitely not reason to die for a prince.⁴⁶

The mere suggestion that the emperor, a revered figure and part of China’s imperial tradition for centuries, was simply a regular man, would have been viewed by many at the time as blasphemous. Not only was he “one of the people,” but for Tan he was also of “secondary importance compared to ordinary people.” Years after his death such sentiments endeared him to student radicals and activists such as Mao Zedong.

Another radical concept from Tan’s “On the Study of Humanity” concerned the equality of the sexes, where he observed how the mistreatment of women in traditional Chinese society was in fact a distortion of Confucian thought. He observed that even in ancient China it was legal for women to ask for a divorce:

⁴⁵ Charlton M. Lewis, “The Hunanese Elite and the Reform Movement, 1895-1898,” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (1969), 39.

⁴⁶ T’an Ssu-T’ung, “On the Study of Humanity,” in William Theodore DeBary, et. al. eds., *Sources of Asian Tradition*, Vol. II (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 90.

As to the husband-wife relationship, on what basis does the husband extend his power and oppress the other party? Again it is the theory of the three bonds which is the source of the trouble. When the husband considers himself the master, he will not treat his wife as an equal human being.

The “three bonds” referred to the traditional Confucian bonds which of subjects to the ruler, wives to husbands, and fathers to sons. According to Tan, beginning with the Legalist school of the Qin dynasty (221-206 BCE) these bonds had been distorted to justify the subjugation of women in the household.⁴⁷ After the conservatives shut down the new training academies, Liang fled Changsha and eventually ended up in Japan, whereas Tan went directly to Beijing to protest. He was later executed in the wake of a palace coup staged by the Empress Dowager Cixi, the young emperor’s aunt, which summarily abolished all of the reforms he had enacted. His martyrdom inspired future generations of revolutionaries.

Another prominent voice in the Hunan reform movement in 1898 was Wang Kaiyun, who founded Hunan’s first steamship line, construction company, and was one of the initial proponents of a railway line connecting Changsha with Hankou to the north and Guangzhou to the south. Wang also invited Liang to found the Changsha Academy of Current Affairs.⁴⁸ The reform-minded Governor Chen Baozhen, who came to power in 1895, was preceded by Wu Dacheng, who had already initiated reforms in the areas of Hunan’s economy, education, and military. Like Wang Xianqian, Ye Dehui, and

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Angus McDonald, *The Urban Origins of Rural Revolution: Elites and the Masses in Hunan Province, China, 1911-1927* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 14.

Governor Zhang Zhidong, this Wang initially supported the reformers but then later rejected them.

The radicalism taught by Liang and Tan at the new school also emphasized Han nationalism and vehemently criticized the ruling Manchus. In the winter of 1897 Liang issued a memorial to Governor Chen, calling for Hunan declare its independence from the rest of China. Liang had been inspired by similar calls for independence, as well as folk heroes from late Tokugawa Japan, such as Oshio Heihachiro and Saigo Takamori. According to Peter Zarrow the ideas that most inspired Liang were the administrative efficiency and constitutionalism of the Meiji reformers, and calls for independence, not necessarily grounded in notions of advancing democracy. For Liang the role of a national emperor “lay neither in his political powers nor his symbolic value, but precisely in his openness to change for the sake of the national community.” By doing so he likened a despot’s role to that of a “sage emperor,” and as with Russia’s Peter the Great and Wilhelm I of Germany, where the emperor had a more “unifying role” for his subjects. Liang also took note of how the Japanese employed students and emissaries returned from visits to Europe. In Japan they were given suitable positions in government, but in China the students took a back seat to the conservative institutions already in power.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Peter Zarrow, *After Empire: The Conceptual Transformation of the Chinese State, 1885-1924* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 70-71.

Liang had also become incensed by the German annexation of territory in neighboring Shandong.⁵⁰ Writing an article for *Xiangbao*, a Hunan newspaper, he urged Hunan's gentry to learn from the successes of the Meiji restoration in Japan. More than any other place in China, Hunan represented the best locale for reform. Liang and his disciples also helped found the Southern Study Society (Nan Xue Hui), which served as the chief venue for printing, publishing, and circulating the influential newspapers *Xiangbao* and *Xiangxuebao*. These two publications served as the outlets for the spread of revolutionary and reform-minded ideas in Hunan, the core of a newly "imagined community" in Hunan, one inspired by western learning and the right to self-government.⁵¹ In its early stages many of Changsha's powerful conservative gentry supported the reform movement, but as the rhetoric in Liang's newspapers intensified, they became increasingly alarmed, setting the stages for an ideological confrontation between Liang's school, the moderates, and the gentry. Wang Xianqian, Ye Duhui, and other gentry mobilized Changsha's students into their own literary society, the Scholar's Compact of Hunan (*Xiangsheng xuehui*). After attending some of Southern Study Society's meetings, Wang became appalled at many of their radical ideas, namely the concept that all people should have individual rights. Students from Hunan's famed Yuelu Academy, on the west side of the Xiang River petitioned Wang to fervently oppose such teachings, since they had the same potential to unravel Chinese society that

⁵⁰ Chang Hao, "Intellectual Change and the Reform Movement," in Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank eds., *The Cambridge History of Modern China, Vol. II, part II, Late Qing* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 300ff.

⁵¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Verso, 1991).

the Christian ideas of the Taipings some years before. According to Hao Chang, the antireform movement at once “took on a character reminiscent of the anti-Christian incidents in the late nineteenth century.”⁵²

The gentry were also alarmed by the radical teachings of Kang Youwei, and his treatise, *The Study of Confucius as a Reformer*. Kang’s belief that the western ideals of social equality between all classes and egalitarianism completely clashed with traditional notions of Confucian hierarchy. But perhaps most alarming was that Kang-Liang school completely denied the legitimacy of Neo-Confucianism, even dating their letters from the date of Confucius birth rather than that of the ruling Manchu dynasty.⁵³ Wang and Ye Dehui published a seven-point rebuttal of Kang’s doctrine, claiming that although western ideas were important to China’s modernization, Confucian thought was the vanguard of Chinese civilization.⁵⁴ Once an ardent supporter of Liang Qichao and the reformists, Wang Kaiyun even joined the opposition. He and the other gentry were all in favor of what the west offered in terms of technology and innovation, but remained intensely suspicious of any ideas that threatened Confucian tradition, and the foundations of elite/state authority.⁵⁵ A native of Hengzhou, Wang and others were also alarmed by the number of Confucian academies being converted to new schools, where students

⁵² *Ibid.*, 306-311, 315.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 310.

⁵⁴ Lewis, “The Hunanese Elite and the Reform Movement, 1895-1898,” 41.

⁵⁵ McDonald, *The Urban Origins of Rural Revolution*, 15.

gathered in large numbers to hear teachers lecture on various subjects, a model also akin to Christian—but more importantly, western—style of worship.⁵⁶

CONSERVATIVE OPPOSITION

Outside Hunan another leading voice of conservative opposition came from Zhang Zhidong, the aforementioned Viceroy of the Hu-Guang region who reported to the emperor regarding the Zhou Han case a few years before. Zhang published his own influential treatise, *Exhortation to Study*. Like the Hunan gentry and other advocates of self-strengthening, Zhang agreed that China needed to reform and accept modern innovations such as the railroad and telegraph, but that Confucianism should remain the central tool of statecraft. Taking a more moderate stance on reform he criticized both hardcore conservatives and liberal reformists:

The conservatives resemble those who give up all eating because they have difficulty swallowing, while the progressives are like a flock of sheep who have arrived at a road of many forks and do not know where to turn. The former do not know how to accommodate to special circumstances; the latter are ignorant of what is fundamental.⁵⁷

In addition, Zhang's understandings of some of the tenets essential to Chinese political thought, such as *zheng* (“political affairs”) and *fa* (the “law”), completely differed from those advocated by the Liang-Kang school, who believed that in order for China to reform western political ideas should inform or change the way rulers thought

⁵⁶ Joseph Esherick, *Reform and Revolution in China: The 1911 Revolution in Hunan and Hubei* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1976), 41.

⁵⁷ Chang Chih-tung, “Exhortation to Learn,” in William Theodore DeBary, et. al. eds., *Sources of Asian Tradition*, Vol. II (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 83

about concepts such as *zheng* and *fa*. But for Zhang and others such thought amounted to blasphemy, because these concepts had been handed down over the centuries through other sages and rulers, and were therefore immutable.⁵⁸ Zhang's track record of reform also illustrates his dedication to modernization and industrialization. From 1886 to 1899 he helped found as many as eight different training schools or academies in or around Wuchang and Guangzhou; a torpedo school, school of mining, railroad, military arts, and a school for non-commissioned officers.⁵⁹ These were institutions more concerned with modernizing reforms, and less with western philosophy or history.

But as the debate intensified the most vicious opponent and leader of the opposition against the reform movement in Changsha came from Ye Dehui (1864-1927). As a disciple of Wang Kaiyun, during the late Qing and early Republican periods, Ye became Changsha's most well known and wealthiest member of the gentry elite. Aged thirty-eight in 1898 the Hundred Days of Reform allowed Ye's reputation and power to rise in prominence throughout Changsha. In December 1897 Ye had expressed his extreme dissatisfaction with the reformist fever occurring throughout the empire, and with the thought of Kang Youwei in particular. Of Kang and the other reformers, at the time Ye noted,

All of this debate began last November. You's [Kang Youwei] intelligence is extremely vast and great, and has been so for a number of years. There are many schools of thought related to the Confucian classics, and each expresses their own point of view. The best of these thoughts are seen in the achievements of the finest examination

⁵⁸ Chang Hao, "Intellectual Change and the Reform Movement," 313.

⁵⁹ William Ayers, *Chang Chih-tung and Educational Reform in China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 105-106.

candidates. But I'm afraid that the fanning of these flames and beating of drums have no teachers or fathers to guide them. These beastly floodwaters should be restrained, and it is our responsibility to do so.⁶⁰

Initially Ye also displayed similar respect and good will toward Liang Qichao. When Liang first arrived in Changsha Ye and other local gentry initially welcomed him with open arms. The two men actually dined together on a number of occasions, and seemed quite congenial.⁶¹ But Ye took issue with the Kang-Liang school's interpretations of the *Gong Yang*, *Zuo Zhuan*, commentaries on the Confucian classics as well as the works of Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi. In short, for Ye and other the conservatives the reformist interpretations of the Confucian classics represented a radical break from tradition, and were completely heterodox. This criticism soon ramped up after the founding of Liang's Southern Study Society.

The struggle between the conservatives and reformers in Changsha also included some of the Southern Study Society's other reform-minded lecturers, most notably Pi Xirui and Wen Tingshi. Pi Xirui (1850-1908) was a Changsha native who obtained the *jinshi* degree in 1882.⁶² When the Southern Study Society officially opened for classes on February 21, 1898, Pi Xirui gave the introductory lecture. It was a grand affair with much of local officialdom, governor Chen Baozhen, leaders from the provincial educational administration, the chief prosecutor of the local court, and most of Changsha's high-ranking gentry attending. Chen Baozhen even lectured, and with

⁶⁰ Zhang Jingping, *Ye Dehui sheng ping ji xueshu sixiang yanjiu* (Changsha: Hunan shifan daxue chubanshe, 2008), 81-82.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁶² A *jinshi* was the highest level of degree attainable under the Qing imperial court.

respect to most of Pi's subject matter initially all seemed kosher. Wang Xianqian, Ye Dehui, and others deemed most of its contents "orthodox." But during the lecture Pi also mentioned the need for political reform and its relationship to protecting Confucian values. This is where he, as well as the entire reform movement in Changsha, encountered criticism and resistance.⁶³

While Pi, Liang, and other teachers of the society lectured on the thought of Kang Youwei, Ye also became increasingly hostile to their embrace of Western ideas. The tension between Ye and Pi later played out in the Changsha press and literary circles. The April 6 issue of *Xiangbao* contained a poem composed by Pi's son Pi Jiayou, which among other things suggested that the world was perfectly round. China comprised only a part, and was "not in the middle" (*bing bu zai zhong yang*). To the modern observer this may seem trivial, but to conservatives such as Ye anyone who questioned China's place as the middle kingdom amounted to heresy. In *Yi Jiao Cong Bian* he responded,

Of course the world is round, and that there is a so-called middle and a division of four corners. But is there not a division between east and west? Asia is in the southeastern part of the world, of which China occupies the central part. The four seasons all come in order starting with the spring and summers, and the five elements [metal, wood, fire, water, earth] all originated from the south east, so obviously China occupies a place of first importance. Since a foreigner laughs at China's arrogance, how can one expect to speak such sense with him?⁶⁴

One of the key insights from this statement comes from Ye's observation at the very end, where he observes that much of the West's engagement with China derived

⁶³ Zhang Jingping, *Shou Wang Si Wen: Ye Dehui de shengming licheng he sixiang shijie* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2011), 69.

⁶⁴ Zhang Jingping, "Shi shi fei fei Ye Dehui," (China Academic Journal Publishing House, 1994-2012), 33.

from a sense of arrogance, especially when it concerned intellectual thought. For Ye and other conservatives, since the basis of the West's presence in China during these years also derived from the military and economic hegemonies imposed by the Opium Wars and subsequent series of treaty ports, it is no wonder they remained so staunchly opposed to intellectual trends.

Pi and Ye had collaborated for several years, sharing similar interests in the Confucian classics and collecting old books. They even frequently loaned their books to each other. Many of Pi's own authored works also came courtesy of Ye's own library. In early 1893 Ye returned to Changsha after a long time away, and paid a visit to Pi Xirui's residence. But Pi's appointment to the Southern Study Society associated him with the Kang-Liang school, and soon after it became known that he would be one of the main lecturers, Ye Dehui and Wang Xianqian made their objections known. Ye even went so far as to prevent Pi from serving as a lecturer.⁶⁵

The objections of Ye and other conservatives derived from their own personal interpretations of Confucian scholarship and the proper roles of scholar officials during the late Qing. They were also related to the Qing empire's policy on intellectual debate after the fall of the Ming dynasty. Being fully aware of their status as a foreign ruling power, soon after the Qing came to power they officially banned scholars from publically airing their views. Soon after the fall of the Ming many scholars looked on the past with nostalgia and reminisced about times when there were less restrictions on what could be spoken of in the academy. Gu Yanwu (1613-1682), a noted scholar from that time even

⁶⁵ Zhang, *Ye Dehui sheng ping ji xueshu sixiang yanjiu*, 87-88.

termed this practice as one of writing “books today, but do not speak about them” (*jin ri zhi dang zhu shu, bu dang jiang xue*).⁶⁶

Conclusion

Chang Hao attributes the failure of the Hunan reform movement during the late 1890's to the radicalism of its later stages, and especially the “ill-conceived” model of using Meiji Japan as a guidebook for reform.⁶⁷ But deeper causes for the failure also stemmed from other conservative voices outside Hunan prior to 1898, not only from influential scholar elite like Zhang Zhidong, but even from the father of the reform effort in China. It was actually Li Hongzhang who coined the phrase “self-strengthening.” He also agreed that China needed to implement western science and mathematics, and these remained central to his ideas into a reformed educational curriculum. But also in a very pragmatic sense Li recognized the potential dangers of developing western education into China.⁶⁸ Another reason for the failures of 1898 can also be attributed to hyper bureaucratic structure of the late Qing government, as well as the temperament of the Guangxu emperor. Luke S.K. Kwong notes that by the late Qing the emperor had come to depend on a complex network of memorialists and secretaries—who often had to deal with their own back logs of paperwork to sift through—to get information.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Chang Hao, 316.

⁶⁸ Liu Kwang-ching, “The Confucian as Patriot and Pragmatist: Li Hung-chang's Formative Years, 1823-1866,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 30 (1970), 5-45.

Frustrated with the slow pace at which his policies were being advanced throughout the empire, Guangxu's bad temperment created an atmosphere of fear and resentment within his cabinet, even forcing him to sack all six ministers from the Board of Rites in one stroke. It is easy to understand how bureaucracy could frustrate the plans of any reformer. Even in the modern era, if one does not know how to play politics at the highest levels of government then most often the efforts of the most radical progressives will be hindered.⁶⁹

The center of anti-western thought in China the early part of the same decade, as a new century dawned Hunan was also the site of epistemological confrontation on two fronts. The first of these involved the Changsha's gentry-elite's response to Christianity in the Yangtze region, embodied in Zhou Han's propaganda. By posting inflammatory pamphlets, pictures, and other literature on the walls of western churches for public display and consumption, Zhou and his followers won the hearts and minds of locals in communities small and large throughout the Middle Yangtze region, even in hinterland provinces adjoining Hunan, in Hubei, Guizhou, and Jiangxi. Distribution of this literature was no doubt facilitated by the vast networks of rivers and other waterways in these low land provinces, especially Hunan's main artery, the Xiang River. The widespread distribution of Zhou's literature suggest that he must have had significant resources at his disposal. If Zhou's propaganda was as freely on display inside

⁶⁹ Luke S.K. Kwong, "Chinese Politics at the Crossroads: Reflections on the Hundred Days of Reform of 1898," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (July 2000), 670-672.

Changsha's city walls as British officials believed, then we can speculate that it must have been tolerated and condoned to some degree by local authorities.

The second kind of confrontation occurred when Liang Qichao arrived in Changsha in 1898, bent on promoting his reform minded ideas to independent-minded Hunan students, and others eager to listen. Initially the local gentry also lent their ears to Liang's cause, but when it became obvious that the mores and authority of the Confucian state were under attack, the gentry fought back, crushing the reform movement. In these years China's "modernization" was stopped dead in its tracks. Suppression of the Liang-Kang school in wake of the Hundred Days of Reform paved the way for Changsha's conservative gentry to take complete control of provincial affairs during the waning years of the nineteenth century, and set the stage for the confrontation with western powers by the time Changsha opened as a treaty port in 1904.

But the Hundred Days of Reform were not a complete failure for the reform movement in Hunan. Despite the fact that Liang, Tan, and others were forced out of the province and in Tan's case executed, it was during their stay there that many of them were exposed to even more radical thoughts and ideals. And it was during this time, away from their native province and country that conceptions of national identity emerged. For many of these young reformers such identity remained rooted not in a nationalism for the building of a Chinese nation, but one purely based in their collective identities as Hunanese.

The paradox by which China and Hunan engaged with the West, accepting technology and innovation on the one hand, but suspicious and rejecting anything

associated with democratization or free thought on the other, set the course for China's tumultuous modernization in the first half of the 20th century. These tensions remained dormant during the Mao era, and have continued in the Era of Reform.

3-Riots and Revolutions

One of the characteristics of Hunan's Xiang River Culture (*huxiang wenhua*), has always been a reputation of Hunanese *man*, meaning "rough," "fierce," or even "barbaric." In the spring of 1910 a riot broke out in Changsha that represented the culmination of urban angst precipitated in part by how the unique cultural character of Hunan clashed with the forces of Westernization. The riot was initially caused by a series of incidents involving the purchase of rice outside the south gate of the city. Crowd agitation exploded into a cathartic release of frustrations caused by a variety of urban-related problems: the inflationary price of rice, the increasing number of refugees in the city caused by a flood the previous fall, frustration at the local gentry and government, and resentment toward westerners, primarily missionaries and merchants. Over a three day period crowds in Changsha, many of them carpenters, destroyed the governor's compound, looted rice stores and granaries throughout the city, and ransacked and looted numerous western churches, businesses, and schools.¹

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND ORAL HISTORY

The most concise and thorough English language account of Changsha's rice riot, or *qiangmi* in Chinese, comes from Joseph Esherick's *Reform and Revolution: The 1911*

¹ Portions of this chapter are featured in James J. Hudson, "Confronting Modernization: Rethinking Changsha's 1910 Rice Riot," in *The Journal of Modern Chinese History*. Volume 8, No. 1 (Spring 2014), 43-62.

Revolution in Hunan and Hubei, who discussed the riot within the context of social unrest and revolutionary fervor in the late Qing.² Esherick reoriented the discussion of the Revolution of 1911 not as the conspiracy of a vanguard of revolutionary intellectuals, but rather as a mass uprising brought about through the convergence of various political and socioeconomic problems, or the overall “revolutionary milieu” of social discontent present throughout China at the time.³

One of main purposes of this chapter is to show that in the historiography of the rice riot, too much emphasis has been placed on the role of Changsha’s powerful urban gentry. Not enough scholarship has addressed the other members of society who actually participated in the rioting. The best sources for finding this perspective comes from a series of oral history interviews conducted by Liu Duping in the 1970’s, which mostly cover the riot’s early stages, especially the attack on the Qing government yamen at the city center. According to some of the accounts in these sources, at times the crowd manifested a clear and logical purpose: to punish the government and local officials responsible for the rice shortage in the city, to deface and disgrace symbols of Qing statehood, as well as express frustrations with the build up of western businesses, schools and churches in the city.⁴ Combined with other historical perspectives related to

² In Chinese the term *qiangmi* combines two words. The first, *qiang* (pron. chee-ang), meaning “to fight over,” “grab,” “rob,” or “snatch,” and *mi*, meaning “rice.”

³ Esherick. *Reform and Revolution in China: The 1911 Revolution in Hunan and Hubei* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1976), 144.

⁴ Liu Duping has long been a name associated with the historiography of Changsha’s *qiangmi*. He used the data from his oral history interviews to write his own article about the event. See Liu Duping, “Qingmo Changsha qiangmi fangqiao shimo,” *Changsha wenshi ziliao*, no. 6 (Changsha: Changsha shi xinfeng yinshuanguang, 1988), 31-62. Another important source that provides some clue as to the perspectives of Changsha’s late Qing commoners are seventy-four *zhuzhizi*, or folk ballads, collected from

gender, folklore, crowd violence and agency, as well as theories of urban space, I seek to revisit the Changsha Rice Riot, but not simply as a prelude to the events of 1911, but as a separate event with its own history, causes, and consequences.

Changsha's rice riot lasted only a few days but for those who witnessed it or even lived at the time, it made a powerful impression. Mao Zedong recounted to the American journalist Edgar Snow how as a young man the memory of the riot helped shape his own revolutionary consciousness.⁵ Such was certainly understandable because Mao was a Hunan native. At the time of the riot he was a primary school student a few miles away in his hometown of Shaoshan. His impression of injustice was no doubt compounded by the fact that many who took part in the riot were summarily beheaded and executed. It is also interesting to note how Mao referred to the rioters as "rebels." As a result of his Marxist view of history, in the memory of Mao Zedong the incident assumed a revolutionary flavor. When understood this way, his nostalgia is easy to recognize. But at times one questions the notion if the rioters considered themselves revolutionaries, or even "rebels," but simply angry common folk frustrated

various dairies and other sources, specifically related to the *qiangmi*. Although many of these ballads are invective denunciations of westerners, local officials, and gentry, many also reveal the superstitions and folk beliefs held by Changsha's urban commoners, and as such help us better understand what motivated their actions for rioting, as well as their distrust of westerners. See *Qinhai geming qian hou hunan shishi* (*A History of Events in Hunan Before and After the Revolution of 1911*). While its author Yang Shiji acknowledged their importance, he believed their perspective limited and as such classified them as products of late Qing Changsha's "petty urban bourgeoisie," or *xiaoshimin*, establishing their contribution to Hunan's history within the framework of a revolutionary narrative. Yang Shiji, *Qinhai geming qian hou shishi* (Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 1982), 169. For the oral history interviews, see Tang Ying and Liu Duping, *Changsha Jiyi: Qingmo Changsha qiangmi fangqiao* (Changsha: Hunan wenzhi chubanshe, 2006). In this chapter noted as CSJY.

⁵ Mao stated, "I never forgot it. I felt that there with the rebels were ordinary people like my own family and I deeply resented the injustice of the treatment given to them." In Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*, Revised First Edition (New York: Grove Press, 1968), 135. Also see Joseph Esherick, in *Reform and Revolution in China: The Revolution of 1911 in Hunan and Hubei*, 123.

with the status quo and the local government, who wanted better access to food, quality of life, and to provide for their families. This is especially true when one considers that after 1949 a few of the men interviewed by Liu Duping went on to enjoy high ranking positions in Hunan's communist government, and were already retired by the mid 1970's.⁶ As with Chairman Mao, their testimonies might have been tainted by a more revolutionary understanding of the riot, remembering the events as a part of "class struggle," as a "mass uprising," or an attack against "western imperialism." But theirs were not written accounts, but oral narratives of past events. Thus such jargon is scarce, and seems mainly focused on the events as they occurred. Even recounting these events during the height of Mao's power in China, these men still remembered the *qiangmi* more as part of Changsha's folk or popular history.

Finally, if Liu Duping's oral history narrators seemed nostalgic about anything, it was for old Changsha. Not only were the narrators sometimes eyewitnesses and participants in the riot, but they were former residents of certain areas of the city. In their recollections they remembered the very same places and place names associated with the major events of the riot. For instance, by the time of the riot Zhan Bingsheng's family had lived just outside Changsha's south gate for three generations, in Bixiang alley on the corner opposite from the very same granary where the riot began. During Liu Duping's interview, Liu noted that as Zhan related his memories of the location of

⁶ Zhou Shizhao had been a classmate of Chairman Mao's, had served as the headmaster of Changsha Number 1 Teacher's College, and Vice-Governor of Hunan Province. Yuan Fuqing had been Vice-Chairman of Hunan Province. Xu Jiasheng, whose interview is one of the longest and most detailed, providing useful information not only about the *qiangmi*, but Changsha society in the late Qing, served as a delegate in the Changsha's People's Congress. In Tang Ying, Liu Duping, CSJY, 213ff.

the granary and its pillaging, he “used his finger to point at the alley across the way.”⁷ This suggests that during their interview the two men sat across from the former site of Dai’s store. Despite the passage of time, and whatever had transpired in this man’s life through the tumultuous events of China in the 20th century, even by the early 1970’s Zhan remained a resident of this alley. Liu lists Zhan’s age during the interview at seventy-five, which meant that at the time of the riot he would have been a young boy. Thus his recollection of the event not only relied upon his own memory of what occurred, but most likely depended a great deal upon how people in that community—neighbors, relatives, and friends—also remembered it, and how they in turn narrated their remembrance of the event to him and to each other. Many of Liu Duping’s narrators were former residents of other neighborhoods and communities in Changsha associated with the *qiangmi*, such as Aoshan Temple, also located outside the city’s south wall. Thus throughout these interviews there exists a connection between the memory of local historical events and Changsha’s urban space in the late Qing.

With the exception of major conflicts such as the Taiping Rebellion, observers at the time noted that never in China’s modern history had a Qing government compound been attacked and destroyed. At the time the event itself was significant, and throughout the empire reportage in the media was widespread. One of the most contemporary and concise accounts of the riot came from the periodical “Eastern Miscellany” (*Dongfang Zazhi*). This journal’s detailed coverage and analysis of the

⁷ CSJY, Interview with Zhan Bingsheng, 231ff. Another interviewee, Wang Yulin, also lived on Bixiang St. during the riot., 243.

event suggests that its author was most likely from Hunan. At times equally critical of the Hunan and Qing governments, Changsha's gentry, and even the rioting crowds, the author lamented that at least from Ming times, for a period of five to six hundred years, and in twenty or more provinces throughout the empire, a government yamen had never been attacked in such fashion.⁸ The Changsha newspaper, "L'Impartial," (*Da Gongbao*) criticized the harsh repression of the riot by Hunan's governor, Cen Chunming, and that hopefully the imperial government would learn from such disturbances, and "assume responsibility" for what had occurred.⁹ More recent scholarship by Li Xizhu suggests that news of the unrest in Changsha enjoyed wide circulation in newspapers such as *Shenbao*, greatly influencing public opinion in cities and towns throughout the empire, further solidifying already existing negative perceptions of the Qing government, and sowing seeds of discontent. The editorials in *Shenbao* were intensely critical of government corruption and Changsha's conservative gentry, as well as Cen Chunming's mismanagement.¹⁰ Another important source for understanding the events of the *qiangmi* and the role of the gentry is Arthur Rosenbaum's article, "Gentry Power and the Changsha Rice Riot of 1910." Similar in some ways to Joseph Esherick, Rosenbaum

⁸ Rao Huaimin and Fujiya Koetsu, eds., "Hunansheng cheng luanshi shuji," *Dongfang Zazhi*, vol. 5. In *Changsha qiangmi fangqiao ziliao huibian* (Changsha: Yuelu Shushe, 2001), 267.

⁹ "Hunan," *Dagongbao*, Xuantong ernian sanyue qiri (Tianjin ban), Vol. 11 (Renmin chubanshe chuban, faxing. Xian xinhua yinshuachang yinshua, 1982), 497.

¹⁰ Li Xizhu, "Panguanzhe guancha qingmo minbian de shidian yu fanying," *Shenbao*, you guan Changsha qiangmi fangqiao de yulun quxiang," *Shehui kexue yanjiu* (March 2010), 153ff.

emphasized the leadership of Changsha's gentry in both inciting and leading the rioters during the riot.¹¹

HUNAN'S ECOLOGY AND RICE ECONOMY

To fully comprehend the significance of Changsha's urban society and commercial life, we must first note the obvious fact that Hunan, like most other provinces in China, was predominantly rural. The city itself was served by its proximity to a major waterway, the Xiang River, and served as a marketing and trade center for grain and other goods to be shipped to other ports in the region. This requires some discussion on the unique ecology of Hunan, and how management of its rice and grain economy provisioned the Qing Empire. Although Hunan's wetlands allowed for abundant rice production, it also created constant problems for officials tasked with disaster and famine relief. When disaster struck refugees fled to cities and smaller towns in search of shelter and work. Following the Taiping Rebellion the imperial granary system often used to distribute emergency grains to the needy during natural disasters, weakened. This was partly caused by the increase in commercial activity throughout the middle and lower Yangtze regions, impacting Changsha and other market towns.

¹¹ Arthur L. Rosenbaum, "Gentry Power and the Changsha Rice Riot of 1910," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (May, 1975), pp. 689-715.

As a city in late imperial China, Changsha must be understood within the context of its relationships with two key trades at the time. One of these was rice. Hunan lies at sea level, with a subtropical climate and an ecosystem uniquely conditioned for rice cultivation and other crops, but also prone to frequent flooding. Dongting Lake borders Hubei in the north part of the province, with the Xiang River flowing from it southward. There is also a vast network of adjoining of smaller rivers. Counties occupying these areas of the province have always been among the ripest for cultivation. Thus most of the arable land remains concentrated among the basins surrounding Dongting Lake and the Xiang River. But this accounts for roughly twenty percent of all provincial land. Relying on numerous county gazetteers and agricultural surveys, Zhang Pengyuan's analysis of Hunan's rice economy in the late Qing, specifically in the eighty-year span of 1821-1911, reveals that frequent heavy rainy seasons in the summer often resulted in flooding.¹² With most of Hunan's early rainfall concentrated in the spring and summer months of April through June, the timing of such rainfall conflicted with harvest rotation. Faced with the constant threat of natural disaster, flood prevention and dike construction were often the top priority of peasants and officials in the countryside.¹³

As the largest market town of Hunan Province during the late Qing Dynasty, Changsha was the seat of county and local governments. A center for commerce and trade, it was the major port city for the Xiang River, a vital north-south waterway connected to the Yangtze River in Hubei Province, just north of Hunan. Changsha

¹² Zhang Pengyuan, *Hunan xiandaihua de zaoqi jinzhuan*, 38-39.

¹³ Peter Purdue, *Exhausting the Earth: State and Peasant in Hunan, 1500-1850* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 26-27.

occupied a unique place not only through the flow of good and services, but also through its bureaucratic function as a center for government, where “a given capital city fitted into two empirically distinct spatial structures, what G. William Skinner refers to as “field administration” on the one hand, and “the non official structure of societal management,” on the other.¹⁴

Peasant hardships in early 20th century China were exacerbated by several factors, one of which concerned increasing numbers of mouths to feed. Others included the failure of the Qing state to control flooding. Combined with population growth, during the late Qing commercial activity in Hunan intensified. Thus the number of wealthy households and landowners increased, as did the number of tenants. As market activity in the region also increased, peasants became inexorably tied to the whims of the market. Tax increases became a problem. The regional power vacuum created by the Taiping Rebellion loosened state forms of control such as the *baojia* and *lijia* household registration systems, and landlords became free to extract whatever tax or deposits they saw fit. By the mid nineteenth century the pressure on Hunan’s tenant farmers had become so intense it is no surprise that so many of them willingly joined the Taiping rebels, who promised land reform, redistribution and freedom from exploitation by wealthy landowners. By 1852 as many as 20,000 peasants had joined the cause.¹⁵

By the spring of 1910 natural disasters, population growth, and increased commercialization created a perfect storm of socio-economic problems for Hunan in the

¹⁴ G. William Skinner, “Cities and the Hierarchy of Local Systems,” in G. William Skinner ed., *The City in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977), 275.

¹⁵ Perdue, *Exhausting the Earth*, 237ff.

early twentieth century. Little industry had developed in the province, and wages were low. Indigent peasants could find work in mines, or on the newly developing railroad, but such work was mainly seasonal, and paid little. Villages throughout the province had been stricken with poverty, with only one to two percent of all rural households owning land. Since tenant farmers were required to pay out much of their harvests for the increasing rice trade, little was often left over for their own consumption. A portion of what remained had still to be paid to the landlord as rent. Peasants were also required to pay a deposit for their land, at an amount fixed by the landlord. There was also the burdens of other expenses, such as festivals, required ancestral sacrifices, weddings, as well as the buying of cattle, seed, and fertilizer.¹⁶

The state of Hunan's currency was also extremely chaotic and unstable. At the time, every province in China issued its own currency, and types varied within each province or region. There was Hunan currency (*changyang*), Mexican currency (*xiongyang*), as well as the various types of paper money (*piao*): Changsha bills (*chaopiao*), Hunan bills (*shengpiao*), as well as western bills (*yangpiao*). For peasants the most commonly used form of currency was copper cash, or *wen*. If one wanted to exchange silver or copper coins the best they could hope for was a ninety percent rate of return. Those who suffered most from this were petty merchants and businessmen, as well as servants and women responsible for buying rice.¹⁷

¹⁶ Rao Huaimin, ed., "Hunan zhaoxin zhiyou," *Shibao, Lunshuo, Gengshu sanyue*. In *Changsha qiangmi fangqiao ziliao huibian* (Changsha: Yuelu Shushe, 2001), 222-224.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

After Changsha opened as a western trading port in 1904 the export of rice increased substantially. Table 4-1 shows that beginning in 1902, when the city of Yuzhou just to the north opened, the provincial economy witnessed a dramatic increase in rice exports. After Changsha officially opened, within a few years it began to surpass Yuzhou's rice economy, so that by 1907 the capital city became the center for commerce in the province. It is worth noting the significant drops of output in flood years, 1906 and 1910 respectively. In 1906 heavy rains flooded most of Changsha. Whole parts of the city became submerged, with residents and shop owners forced to dwell for a time in attics or the roofs of their houses, and even on the city walls. Reserves in public and private granaries were ruined.¹⁸

Table 4-1. 1904-1910 Hunan Rice Exports (In Piculs).¹⁹

City	Year	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910
Yuzhou		100,759	344,212	257,653	31,473	288	—	—	—	—
Changsha		—	—	121,561	301,075	37,534	353,208	911,124	668,632	35,952

What is interesting to note is the pattern of flooding in one year followed by a bumper harvest the next. Rice exports from 1907, at 353,208 piculs, suggest as much. Such a pattern is related to the unique condition of Hunan's ecology. When the Xiang

¹⁸ Oliver G. Ready, "Changsha Trade Report, 1907," 119. *China: The Maritime Customs. Decennial Reports on the Trade, Industries, etc. of the Ports Open to Foreign Commerce, and on the Condition and Development of the Treaty Port Provinces.* Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, Ltd., 1904. In *Zhongguo jiu haiguan shiliao* (1859-1948). (Beijing: Jinhua chubanshe), 119.

¹⁹ Alfred Harris, "Changsha Trade Statistics, IV.-Exports (Not Including Re-exports)." *China: The Maritime Customs. Decennial Reports on the Trade, Industries, etc. of the Ports Open to Foreign Commerce, and on the Condition and Development of the Treaty Port Provinces.* Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, Ltd., 1904. In *Zhongguo jiu haiguan shiliao* (1859-1948). (Beijing: Jinhua chubanshe), 272.

River flooded it may have wreaked havoc on peasant daily life and dwellings, but when the flood waters receded vital nutrients had been deposited on the top soil, making the land more suitable for cultivation. The trade data for 1910 reveals a much different story, indicating a dramatic decline in rice exports. This was because another flood in 1909 resulted in another bad harvest. The Changsha Customs Commissioner at the time, C.E.S. Wakefield, writing after the Revolution of 1911, noted the rebellion's influence on the regional economy, literally bringing it to a halt.²⁰ This data on Hunan's rice trade helps contextualize the events which caused the rioting in 1910.

LOCAL POLITICS AT PLAY

During the rice riot Cen Chunming governed Hunan. His ascension to the highest seat of authority in Hunan mainly derived from family connections. His brother, Cen Chunxuan was a "favored minister" to the Empress Dowager Cixi. Cen Chunming had also studied under Zhang Zhidong, the former Governor-General of Hubei, who founded Wuhan University. Cen had been a staunch supporter and defender of the new reforms (*xinzheng*) of the late Qing, a last gasp effort by Empress Dowager to improve the failing empire's weak infrastructure, abolishing the centuries old imperial examination system, and establishing China's first western universities. These reforms were essentially a repeat of those proposed back in 1898. Though this time the Qing

²⁰ C.E.S. Wakefield, "Changsha Trade Report, 1911," In *Zhongguo Jiu Haiguan Shike (1859-1948)*, *Jinghua Chubanshe*, No. 55.

government was serious about modernization, they came too little and too late. In the hinterland these new reforms called for local investment in various public works projects, such as railroad construction, new schools with western-based curricula, and the formation of a new western-style military. But especially during the economic and social crisis surrounding the rice riot, Changsha's gentry used the new reform projects as an excuse to attack Governor Cen, arguing that these programs exerted a considerable drain on public resources.

In his five-year tenure as governor Cen also failed to win the hearts and minds of the public. He seldom venturing outside the confines the yamen, and distrusted the revolutionary activity happening in the city caused by newly returned students from Japan. In the spring of 1910 when the shortage of rice came to a head, magistrates from Changsha and neighboring Shanhua county pleaded with Cen to lower the price of rice, and to put an embargo on all shipments of grain out of the province. But by the time he gave this order it was too late. Once Cen ordered the prohibition, it took almost a month to fully enforce such a policy, and rice continued to be exported. To save face with the local population Changsha's gentry completely supported the ban yet privately continued to hoard and maintain their private rice stores. Wang Xianqian and Ye Dehui also vetoed an effort by the city's prefect Yu Pingyuan that called on Changsha's wealthy citizens to give up seventy percent of their own grain stores to government granaries.²¹

Cen remained completely out of touch with the situation in the city. He reportedly believing that Changsha's commoners lived luxuriously, and acquiesced to the

²¹ *Ibid*, 702.

British demand to have gunboats stationed in the city as a check on repeated instances of anti-foreign agitation that had erupted the year before.²² As such, in a relatively short span of time, and under Cen's watch, the city had quickly become the center of what Keith Schoppa has termed as the three "M's" of imperialism—missionaries, merchants, and the military.²³

After the riot broke out the popular choice to succeed Cen was Hunan's vice-governor Zhuang Gengliang. The enmity between the two men was no secret to the public. In contrast to Cen's perception as an outsider and reformer, Zhuang was a forty-year veteran of Hunan officialdom. As a conservative he enjoyed patronage with Changsha's gentry.²⁴ Over the years Zhuang's public displays of reverence and charity curried favor with Changsha's residents, earning the nickname "Zhuang Qingtian," likening him to Bao Qingtian, a Song Dynasty official known for his honesty and hatred of corruption.²⁵ But as far as the reform movement was concerned, Zhuang was something of a tyrant, suppressing it viciously at every turn. He was responsible for the capture, torture, and execution of Liu Daoyi and Yu Zhimo, members of the "Revolutionary Alliance" (an underground revolutionary organization that supported the overthrow of the Qing and the establishment of a republic) in Changsha.²⁶

²² Rao Huaimin and Fujiya Koetsu, eds., "Hunansheng cheng luanshi shuji," *Dongfang Zazhi*, vol. 5. In *Changsha qiangmi fangqiao ziliao huibian* (Changsha: Yuelu Shushe, 2001), 260. Esherick, *Reform and Revolution*, 123.

²³ R. Keith Schoppa, *The Columbia Guide to Modern Chinese History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 21.

²⁴ Yang Shiji, *Xianhai geming qianhou shishi*, 153. Esherick, 129.

²⁵ Kong Xianjiao also earned the moniker, "Kong Qingtian." See Rao Huaimin, 268.

²⁶ Liu Duping, *Changsha wenshi ziliao*, 44.

From the time Cen assumed office, the gentry sought to have him removed from power, and the rice riot represented the perfect opportunity. While they may have outwardly supported the embargo on rice exports, as businessmen it was gentry such as Ye Dehui and Wang Xianqian who most benefited from the rice trade. Thus placing an embargo on rice would have conflicted with their interests. Cen also lay at the mercy of Qing governance in the region, both from the Governor General of Hunan, Hubei, and Guangdong provinces, as well as the regional superintendent. On the foreign side, he faced pressure from the British, and was bound by the provisions of the 1902 MacKay Treaty. This treaty not only allowed for the substantial increase in rice trade throughout the Yangtze region, but more importantly called for the opening of more treaty ports, one of them being Changsha.

THE QIANGMI

On the morning of April 11, 1910, a water carrier named Huang Guisun gave his wife money to buy rice from Dai Yishun's granary, on Bixiang Street just outside Changsha's south gate. Prior to the riot Dai had a rather nefarious reputation throughout the city, and established a considerable reputation for himself as a local gentry. Along with other community leaders, his name had been inscribed on the stele of a local temple. Townsfolk often called upon him to settle local disputes. He was frequently seen within the large compound of government buildings, or *yamen*, talking with important officials, and his large granary also contained a teahouse, a place where Dai courted local tax

collectors to drink and chat.²⁷ Huang Guikun, a former resident of south Changsha near Aoshan Temple, noted that to his face local people referred to Dai Yishun as “Father Dai,” but behind his back he was known as “Dai the harsh (*Dai kebo*).”²⁸

Huang Guisun gave his wife 80 copper cash pieces, enough to buy one pint of rice. But after arriving Wife Huang discovered that the price of rice had risen to 85 copper cash, and she did not have enough to buy. Her family had been hungry for many days, so in an act of desperation, she went to a nearby pond called Laolong Tan, and took her own life by jumping into the water. Upon hearing of his wife’s fate a few hours later, Huang Guisun collected his two children and jumped into the same pond. The desperate act of a whole family taking their own lives caused rage and indignation throughout Changsha, and that night it became the talk of the town in alleys, shops, and teahouses throughout the city. Many believed tragic events such as the Huang family suicide were bad omens. In the days after the suicide, the area around Laolong pond became a place of mourning, and it was said that “every night angry currents” could be heard there.²⁹

During the late Qing period, water carriers such as Huang Guisun were a common sight in Changsha. Edward Hume, an American doctor from Yale-in-China, based in Changsha, noted that the carriers hauled water from the Xiang River into the city with bamboo poles across their shoulders, carrying a bucket on each end. When the current was slower in the wintertime the water was clearer and cleaner, whereas in the summer

²⁷ CSJY, Interview with Xu Jiasheng, 223.

²⁸ Rao Huaimin and Fujiya Koetsu eds., “Huang Guisun chun jia tou shui de qian qian hou hou, Huang Guikun kou shu,” In *Changsha qiangmi fangqiao ziliao huibian* (Changsha: Yuelu Shushe, 2001), 323.

²⁹ Yang Shiji, 170???

months, due to the rising levels of the river, often as much as “six to ten feet in a day” the water was murkier. Hume also observed that “We could tell just how far it was down to the river by watching the path they left behind them: the wetter their tracks, the nearer we were to the river.”³⁰



Image 4-1. “Porters Carrying Pails up Steps, Changsha,” 1900. These men are seen carrying water from the banks of the Xiang River, as described by Edward Hume. Photo Courtesy of Bristol University.

While Dai Yishun and other wealthy officials dined on succulent delicacies like shark fin and sea slugs in high-end local eateries, peasants in Changsha starved. As a result of flooding and other recent natural disasters, many destitute peasants from the countryside lived in shanties along a small hill outside the city’s south gate, an area known as “Hungry Stomach Ridge.” (E Du Ling). It was here that a small community had formed, of water carriers, clay diggers, waste collectors, and others who hoped to find work in numerous odd jobs around the city. Kang Guihe, with his wife and two

³⁰ Hume, Edward H. *Doctors East, Doctors West: An American Physician’s Life in China* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1946), 96-97.

children, also lived on the ridge, and like Huang Guisun, found work hauling buckets of water around the city. The previous winter brought heavy snow, and Kang's family lacked sufficient food and clothing to survive. One day after the snow settled, Wife Kang went out to beg for food. Hours later her body was found near the south gate. Thus corpses of starved, frozen peasants were a common sight on city streets and alleys at the time.³¹ A famine the previous winter had been particularly tough on peasants who migrated to the city, many forced to eat tree bark and bamboo. Another peasant noted that there were many cases that winter of urban peasants starving to death.³² Many of the peasants on Hungry Stomach Ridge had migrated to the city in search of work, their villages and homes swept away by the flood of 1909. At the time, the kind of tragedies experienced by the Kang and Huang families were becoming increasingly common throughout the region.

The day after the Huang family suicide, another older woman also went to Dai Yishun's grain store to buy rice. Upon seeing this woman's collection of tattered coins, Dai informed her that some of her money was no good, and that she needed to exchange two of the coins for better currency. The woman complied and later returned with more usable coins. But Dai then informed her that the price had risen again, and so this old woman also did not have enough to purchase rice. But this woman, instead of doing something desperate, began to quarrel with Dai, and their argument became so fierce that

³¹ CSJY, Interview with Huang Guikun, 235.

³² Ibid, 234.

bystanders nearby started to stop, and eventually a crowd gathered. Dai was badly beaten and his rice stores pillaged.

The day after the Huang family suicide a crowd gathered at the South Gate district police station to demand that the price of rice to be lowered. The area of Changsha's south gate, as well as the surrounding community, served as a focal point for the causal events of the *qiangmi*. Dai Yishun's rice store was located on Bixiang Street, just outside the south gate. The Huang family committed suicide in Laolong Tan, also located near the south gate, as was Hungry Stomach Ridge. Aoshan Temple, a popular local temple, was located not far away, outside the southeast corner of the city wall, near a popular well, called Baisha Jing. It was considered a popular meeting place for peasants, erected as a commemoration to the memory of the bodhisattva Ding Aoshan, an official from Sichuan during the Jin Dynasty known for his benevolence and charity.³³ Every June, peasants celebrated his birthday with a festival, and the temple was considered a popular gathering place for civic events. It contained a large outdoor stage and adjoining lawn that could hold as many as a thousand people. Public performances were often held there.³⁴ Thus, South Gate was the part of the old walled city associated with the everyday life of the common people. This was in contrast to the north gate of the city, known then as Xiang Chun Men, more associated with public buildings related to governance, as well as a concentration of ancestral temples and sacrificial altars.

³⁴ CSJY, Interview with Li Zhengting, 270.

When the magistrates of Shanhua and Changsha counties arrived at the South Gate to dismiss the crowd, they posted a notice stating that rice would be sold at a normal price the next day, and the crowd dispersed. But a carpenter named Liu Yongfu was arrested for making slanderous remarks about the Hunan governor. He may have also been one of the ringleaders during the pillaging of Dai Yishun's rice store. The following day another crowd gathered, still demanding that the price of rice to be lowered. They were further incensed by the arrest of Liu, and demanded his release. A police commissioner from Fujian named Lai Chengyu arrived to dismiss them.³⁵ The Huang family suicide and the arrest of Liu Yongfu still fresh on their minds, the crowd flew into a rage, seizing Lai and beating him severely. They tied him and his queue to a temple post, pulled out his beard, and even stuffed pig manure into his mouth. The crowd then proceeded to the city center, where they surrounded and burned the main government yamen. In the days that followed, rice shops and granaries throughout the city were looted, and crowds attacked western homes, schools, businesses, and churches, in some cases burning them to the ground.

In part the riot was spawned by the actions of two different women. Wife Huang's suicide not only prompted the suicide of her husband and children, but it incensed Changsha's residents. When combined with another woman's fierce argument with Dai Yishun, a local gentry with a bad reputation, the result was crowd action. One of the most influential monographs on the role of women in food riots comes from E.P. Thompson's essay, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth

³⁵ Ibid, *CSJY*, 218.

Century.” Much of Thompson’s argument for crowd agency in England’s eighteenth century grain riots relied upon a wealth of preserved pamphlets, booklets, letters, and other public documents, which suggested that grain riots of this period were much more coordinated and organized by members of the working class than previously thought. Some points of similarity can be found in his method of analysis, especially concerning crowd psychology as well as the role of women.

According to Thompson, food riots in eighteenth century England were often started by women, because they were the members of the household “most involved in face-to-face marketing, most sensitive to price significancies, most experienced in detecting short-weight or inferior quality. It is probable that the women most frequently precipitated the spontaneous actions.” Another similarity to grain riots in the European context is what Thompson refers to as the “motif of intimidation,” or that grain riots often broke out with the intent to punish unscrupulous or corrupt grain merchants.³⁶ Such was also the case during Changsha’s rice riot, where granary owners such as Dai Yishun, or officials such as Lai Chengyu were severely beaten.

This comparison also fits well with analysis of riots by modern China historians. In his study of rural China Kung-Chuan Hsiao noted that hunger riots in imperial China were ones usually “occasioned by the inability of the government to cope with the situation[s] created by famine.” Kung also corroborates the pervasive role of local

³⁶ E.P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the Crowd,” *Past and Present*, 114, 116. Although Thompson’s article has been frequently cited through the years, it has also come under criticism. See Mark Harrison, *Crowds and History: Mass Phenomena in English Towns, 1790-1835* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 12. One point made by Harrison worth noting is that contrary to what Thompson argues, grain riots in eighteenth century England were actually quite rare.

gentry in many food riots. Although during the nineteenth century food riots in Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Hunan, and Hubei, gentry were often the target of mob violence, in other instances they served as the prime organizers and instigators.³⁷ Elizabeth Perry has characterized such riots during the late Qing as incidents of “anti-foreign terrorism,” which included food riots, but also involved mass action against foreign missionaries, businesses, and schools. In the case of Changsha there was an equal amount of anger directed against both the local government and foreigners.³⁸ A few years later, in 1918, nationwide riots erupted throughout Japan. In part these were also related to the high price of rice. Michael Lewis suggests that these riots in particular reflected the diversity of popular protest in Japan, and also revealed “the patently false stereotype of the bland uniformity of Japanese society.”³⁹ Similar to Lewis, I also mean to suggest that Changsha’s rioters were more than an unruly mob, but were comprised of certain disenfranchised members of society with very specific grievances.

The suicide of the Huang family, as well as the common occurrence of suicides in the area of Changsha’s south gate, also merits further attention. During the late Qing the Laolong pond outside the south gate of the city was a common place for peasants to commit suicide, and many peasants, including the Huang family, were reported to have died there.⁴⁰ And in the days following the Changsha riot, it was said that many more

³⁷ Kung-Chun Hsiao, *Rural China: Imperial Control in the Nineteenth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1960), 444, 448.

³⁸ Elizabeth Perry, “Collective Violence in China, 1880-1980,” in *Theory and Society*, 13 (1984), 427-454. 437.

³⁹ Michael Lewis, *Rioters and Citizens: Mass Protest in Imperial Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), xix.

⁴⁰ CSJY. Interview with Li Zhengting, 270.

peasants committed suicide by jumping into different wells throughout the city.⁴¹

Edward Hume also observed the practice of jumping in wells to commit suicide. When women in Changsha often took their own life this way, sometimes it was to express their spite toward an abusive husband or his family. If her attempt was successful, the husband and his whole family lost face in the entire community.⁴²

The adversity of daily peasant life was not only felt in Changsha. Just to the north in Hankou, during the same period as the Changsha riots, “the perils of flood, fire, and epidemic were unusually severe, even by Chinese standards, and the general ambiance of death was compounded by the ever-present threat of business failure and market reversal, which led in alarming numbers of cases to suicide.”⁴³ Throughout Chinese history suicide has often been associated with social protest or unrest. Obviously in the case of common peasants, seldom were such actions intended to spark protest or mass action. But the conditions precipitating their choice to commit suicide often resulted in some form of public outrage, protest, or other acts intent on commemorating what the deceased stood for or hoped to achieve. To protest the invasion of Chu by a neighboring rival state, during the Warring States period the poet Qu Yuan committed suicide by jumping in the Miluo River near Dongting Lake. His act is commemorated each year during one of China’s most popular public holidays, the Dragon Boat Festival. By the late Qing it remained one of Changsha’s most important

⁴¹ Yang Shiji, 171.

⁴² Hume, 152.

⁴³ William Rowe, *Hankow: Conflict and Community in a Chinese City, 1796-1895*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 20.

and celebrated public festivals.⁴⁴ After the Japanese government restricted the number of Chinese studying in Japan in 1905, Chen Tianhua, one of Hunan's most notable and influential reformers, committed suicide by jumping into Tokyo's Omori Bay. One of his compatriots, Yao Hongye, also did the same in Shanghai. The remains of Chen and Yao were later returned to Changsha for public burial on Yuelu Mountain on the west side of the Xiang River in Changsha. Thousands of students mourned the two men in a funeral procession. At the time, these two were considered by many, especially within the expatriate community of exiled intellectuals in Japan during the late Qing, to be among the founding fathers of Hunanese nationalism and the national movement for statehood in China.⁴⁵ Thus suicides often occurred for political reasons, or was often an act of desperation among the lower classes. When such events are combined with what we already know about the suicides of the Huang family and others during the rice riot, we can appreciate the influence these types of suicides exerted on Changsha society.

The adverse socio-economic conditions of the time also burdened many of Changsha's petty laborers, carpenters in particular. Among the crowd that stormed government buildings in Changsha during the rice riot were members of carpenter's guilds. Since the incursion of foreigners into the city after it opened as a treaty port in 1902 masons and carpenter's groups became frustrated with local officials and gentry, but more importantly the British authorities for outsourcing carpenters from Hankou to build the new western style buildings—missions, customs houses, consulates, and

⁴⁴ C.E.S. Wakefield, July 31, 1912, "Changsha, Report, 1904-1911," In *Zhongguo Jiu Haiguan Shike (1859-1948)*, (*Jinghua Chubanshe*).

⁴⁵ Stephen Platt, *Provincial Patriots: The Hunanese and Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 138.

schools—putting them out of work. Yu Changchun worked as a caulker at the time of the riots, and was among the crowd that burned the government yamen. According to Yu, more than half of those who stormed the yamen that day were masons or carpenters, some of them shirtless, despite the cold weather.⁴⁶

Another carpenter surnamed Liu Shaoming, is also prominent character in many of the oral history interviews. In addition to being skilled at carpentry, sculpting mud, and bricklaying, according to the narrators Liu was adept at Chinese kungfu. He was seen leading a charge of peasants into the government compound, located in the center of the walled city. Zhang Liansheng, a twenty-year old resident of Changsha at the time of the riot, was along with Liu, a member of the same carpenter's guild. Zhang was also among the peasants that stormed into the yamen, and vividly recalled how Liu led them through the outer gate of the government compound:

At twilight I was standing on the old screen wall opening near the ceremonial archway bearing the inscription “Protect the country, Aid the people” with Wu Shousong and I happened to see that there were many people outside the Futai yamen. They were all yelling and cursing: “Dog government officials, so wicked that common people have no rice to eat”. Everyone was crying out and the emotion of the crowd was explosive, everyone rushed towards the outer gate of the yamen. Suddenly I saw a short and stout fellow rush out from among the crowd, in his hand he brandished a shining saw and flew as fast as an arrow towards the east facing part of the yuanmen. “Ah!, shorty Liu the third!” Liu Shaoming charged forward to the yuanmen where the sentry guards were using guns to block the crowd. One of Liu Shaoming's legs flew up and he kicked a guard to the ground, and after a few more swift steps he charged to the base of the mast located in front of the screen wall, lifted the saw high and started cutting.

⁴⁶ *CSJY*, Interview with Yu Changchun, 253-254.

When the crowd saw Liu Shaoming, they charged in, already extremely excited, all yelling, crowding through the archway.⁴⁷

Some of Zhang's testimony exemplifies the tendency for oral histories to seem too dramatic. Although skeptics might doubt the possibility of Liu Shaoming using kungfu to disable government sentries, Zhang's memory of the event confirms that Liu was clearly involved in the incident, and played a significant role in leading the crowd. Gongfu practitioners like Liu Shaoming were common in Changsha at this time, their skills figuring prominently in the mythology of peasants who joined the Boxer movement in northern China the previous decade. In fact, it is possible that Liu and others may have been among a small group of former Boxers rumored to have taken part in the riot. As the third of eight brothers, and known for his short stature, he was nicknamed "shorty Liu the third." Liu was also known as a kungfu teacher, holding classes and teaching students at night. He was considered by many as "a forthright and hot-tempered man who loved to defend others from injustice and hated corrupt officials."⁴⁸

Another former eyewitness noted that at the time the Qing government compound contained two very tall and prominent imperial masts:

There were two, located at the two ends of the screen wall, one of them had a flag, the other had a square shaped object [on top] which displayed the rank of the imperial inspector. It was this one [the one that displayed the rank] that was sawed down. Sawing down the mast was making a statement to the imperial inspector: I am going to saw you down!⁴⁹

⁴⁷ *CSJY*, Interview with Zhang Liansheng, 216.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *CSJY*, Interview with Ling Shaomei, 268.

Thus by sawing down the imperial mast carpenters such as Liu Shaoming castrated state power. At this time government compounds of provincial capital cities were barricaded behind walls, sealed off and isolated from the public. This was also true for government personnel. Since all cities in imperial China were thus surrounded on all sides by walls, the government *yamen* represented a walled city within a walled city, and according to G. William Skinner, represented the “quintessence of urbanism.”⁵⁰ Not only did the peasants use kerosene to burn the government building, and cut down the imperial mast, but they also destroyed the screen barriers and walls, and turned over the ceremonial lions flanking the entrance.⁵¹ These stone lions were quite large and heavy, and meant to have special protective powers, from the time of the Han Dynasty appeared outside all imperial palaces, tombs, government temples, and homes of the wealthy. After passing by the lions, when entering a traditional building or residence in imperial China, a guest would then come upon a screen or stone wall, known as the *yuanmen*, placed as obstructions to outsiders. Through entering buildings with these types of screen barriers one was supposed to be intimidated by the power and influence of those inside. The power associated with these symbols, of the Qing’s imperial urban space, the burning of the government yamen by Changsha’s carpenters was a deliberate attack against state power and authority. Since in the city of imperial China the government yamen was one of the most important urban structures, we can begin to

⁵⁰ G. William Skinner, “Introduction: Urban and Rural in Chinese Society,” in G. William Skinner ed., *The City in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977), 254.

⁵¹ CSJY, Interview with Yu Changchun, 253.

recognize the magnitude of such an event, and how it influenced not only the local situation in Changsha, but also resonated throughout the empire.

Other carpenters, such as Fan Yuanquan and Tan Chunsheng also witnessed the burning of the yamen. Tan noted the precarious situation that Changsha's carpenters faced at the time, that "the first, second, and third months of every year were the slow season for carpenters and caulkers; it was the hardest time of year to make it through."⁵² This coupled with the fact that many of the carpentry jobs were being outsourced to workers from Hubei, added to the carpenter's stressful conditions. Another carpenter involved in leading the attack was a certain He Wenqing, also "very skilled at martial arts," and something of a local tough man, known for his brute strength.⁵³ He was also at the front of the crowd that led peasants into the yamen. After Liu Shaoming cut down the government mast, He Wenqing was seen carrying a bottle of kerosene.⁵⁴ Other peasants participated in the spreading of kerosene around the compound, often exposing themselves to gunfire from government soldiers. According to another eyewitness, "more than half of these people were craftsmen. Some of them were shirtless, but even as cold as it was they were still sweating profusely. The patrol soldiers stood below firing towards the direction of the roof, and shots whizzed by, but the rioters were not afraid at all."⁵⁵ Such testimony confirms those who attacked Changsha's government buildings were led by robust and charismatic personalities such as Liu Shaoming and He

⁵² *CSJY*, Interviews with Fan Yuanquan and Tan Chunsheng, 260ff.

⁵³ *CSJY*, Interview with Zhang Liansheng, 218.

⁵⁴ *CSJY*, Interview with Zhang Liansheng, 218.

⁵⁵ *CSJY*, Interview with Yu Changchun, 253-254.

Wenqing. These out of work urban laborers expressed their frustrations at the Qing government.

Another body of work that contributes to our knowledge of the rice riot are several folk ballads. The form and meaning of destroying symbols associated with state power inspired their composition, designed to remind the reader or listener that imperial authority had, in effect, been feminized and stripped of its dignity. One of them reads:

The lions in front of the yuanmen gate roar,
long showing their sharp teeth and claws.
But how can they get up after being pushed over?
How can something so masculine become so feminine? ⁵⁶

Composed after the riot, such ballads still perform an important function related to how the event was recounted and interpreted in local memory. During the attack, government troops shot and killed at least ten rioters, and wounded several others. In the aftermath of the riot, perpetrators were executed by firing squad on the other side of the river. Likely invoking the tradition of in Chinese culture, of ghosts and spirits of ones who have died unjustly (*yuanhun*), another ballad reads:

The ghosts of the dead howl and curse in front of the gate to the yamen,
and the sound of the governor is muddled.
How can a man of such small stature kill so many,
and why shouldn't the ghosts cry out? ⁵⁷

Another folk ballad proclaimed that the wrath of Hunan's "fire god," *zhurong*, had come upon the foreign businesses and churches (*zhurong yu xing fu yang yang, fen*

⁵⁶ Yang Shiji, 171.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

ba yanghang you jiaotang).⁵⁸ Since antiquity the fire god played an important role in Changsha's folk culture. The peak of nearby Heng Mountain contains a temple dedicated to him, and it is considered one of China's "five sacred peaks." Since the Ming Dynasty, one of Changsha's most famous temples, Huo Gong Dian, or the "Fire Palace," served as a site for *zhurong* worship. Destruction of state symbols of authority informed by such folk beliefs suggests that despite having been led and incited by Yang Gong or Zhuang Gengliang, that at least some of the men who rioted in Changsha that spring day possessed a sense of justice, purpose, and direction. This is also confirmed by the oral testimony of many former carpenters discussed above. Since many of these men were members of carpenter's guilds, this challenges the perception that the rioters were simply a "misorganized mob," easily swayed by gentry leadership.⁵⁹ Perhaps it is better to suggest that the carpenter's interests dovetailed with the Changsha gentry, and having shared interests, became more agreeable to what places the gentry wanted them to attack.

Conclusion

Because it lacked an intellectual or true revolutionary base the Changsha Rice Riot of 1910 was not a true revolutionary uprising. By relying upon the testimonies of eyewitnesses and participants, the above discussion has attempted to suggest that the riot

⁵⁸ Ibid, 173.

⁵⁹ Arthur L. Rosenbaum, "Gentry Power and the Changsha Rice Riot of 1910," *JAS*, 698.

was also more than simply a prelude to the 1911 revolution. It was in the classic sense, a late Qing urban uprising, but one led by common people with very specific names, beliefs, and occupations. By attacking both symbols of state power and foreign imperialism, carpenters and other peasants from the areas surrounding Changsha's south gate expressed their own sense of justice and motivations for rioting. Responding to allegations by the Qing government that revolutionary conspirators planned the *qiangmi*, one newspaper commentary noted that since it occurred spontaneously, the uprising obviously could not have been planned or preconceived by any of the revolutionary parties.⁶⁰ Perhaps the most profound effect of the riot came through its coverage in media throughout China, influencing public opinion and setting the stage for the events of the Wuchang Uprising in 1911.

The recollections of former participants and other Changsha residents also help us paint a picture of Changsha's urban landscape in the late Qing, and the specific sites and locations they valued. Life for South Gate Changsha residents in the late Qing was often adverse, and the riot represented an opportunity for various disenfranchised elements of society, such as local carpenters, to vent their frustrations with local leadership and the forces of westernization. In many respects, the causes of the riot lay at the feet of gentry such as Ye Dehui, and the inaction of Governor Cen Cunming. But placing too much emphasis on their roles diminishes the stories and narratives of those who actually participated in the rioting. Characters such as Ye Dehui also need to be understood within the broader context of elite society in late Qing Changsha. Their

⁶⁰ Rao Huaimin, "Xiang luan wei yan," *Shibao*, in *Changsha qiangmi fangqiao ziliao huibian*, 245.

influence over urban life during this period requires further scrutiny, a topic I turn to in the next chapter.

4-The Refined Watchman

As a member of Changsha's gentry elite and a major character in the intellectual and political life of the city, Ye Dehui (1864-1927), has gained little attention from contemporary historians. His role in suppressing the Hundred Days of Reform in 1898 has already been discussed with some detail in Chapter 2. But his body of intellectual work, business and commercial interests, as well as his role in Changsha's cultural and social life, all merit further attention.¹

Ye was despised by many of his contemporaries and even after his death in 1927 continued to be the subject of disdain within communist interpretations of modern Chinese history. Even Western historians followed suit. For his crimes of hoarding grain during the 1910 rice riot, as well as his overall contempt for Changsha's peasant class, Joseph Esherick noted that Ye's execution in 1927 was a "just reward," for crimes committed against the masses.² Chinese language materials published in the early years of the post-Mao era generally shared this assessment as well, identifying Ye as one of late Qing Changsha's "wicked gentry" (*lie shen*). The opening sentences in the introduction of *Ye Dehui Ping Zhuan*, published in 1985, reads, "Ye Dehui represents modern Chinese history's faction of conservative feudalism, and was Hunan's most infamous wicked gentry. During the reform movement of 1898 he attacked all the leaders of the reform

¹ Portions of this chapter are featured in James J. Hudson, "Confronting Modernization: Rethinking Changsha's 1910 Rice Riot," in *The Journal of Modern Chinese History*. Volume 8, No. 1 (Spring 2014), 43-62.

² Joseph Esherick, *Reform and Revolution in China: The 1911 Revolution in Hunan and Hubei* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 125.

movement, Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, Tan Sitong, and achieved short-lived fame.”³ Another source of Hunan historical materials published in the early 1980’s contains an article on Ye simply titled “The Wicked Gentry Ye Dehui,” in which among other things he is referred to as an “unscrupulous businessman and profiteer” (*shikuai*), “a local tyrant and bully” (*di tou she*), the tiger who lived on the mountain (*zuo shan hu*, in reference to his status as the local head of Pozi Street), and one who “most foully consorted with” (*chou wei xiang tou*) Wang Xianqian and other local gentry to oppose the reform movement of 1898.⁴ Even Angus McDonald, who to date has provided the only somewhat appreciative English language assessment of Ye, described him as a “loser,” “imperialist lackey,” “wealthy bibliophile, arrogant reactionary, and greedy rice merchant.”⁵ Fortunately contemporary scholars in main land China, such as Zhang Jingping, have begun to rethink Ye’s life and extensive scholarship, as well as the role he played Changsha’s social and economic scene during his lifetime. The title of this chapter, “Refined Watchman,” comes from Professor Zhang’s four-character phrase, “Shou Wang Si Wen,” translated from the title of her work on Ye Dehui.⁶

When combined with what we already know from the work of other scholars who have studied the gentry merchant class during the late Qing, we can recognize the importance in rethinking Ye’s role and legacy to not only Changsha’s but to China’s

³ Du Maizhi and Zhang Chengzong, *Ye Dehui Ping Zhuan* (Changsha: Yuelu Shushe, 1985), 1.

⁴ Wen Ganzhi, “Da lie shen Ye Dehui,” *Hunan wen shi zi liao xuan ji*, no. 4 (Changsha: Hunan ren min chu ban she, 1982), 189-203.

⁵ Angus McDonald, *The Urban Origins of Rural Revolution: Elites and the Masses in Hunan Province, China, 1911-1927* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 64.

⁶ Zhang Jingping, *Shou Wang Si Wen: Ye Dehui de sheng ming li cheng he si xiang shi jie* (Beijing: zhong guo she hui ke xue chu ban she, 2011).

intellectual history. During these years he personified Hunan's intense conservatism, and his influence in local affairs intensified the ideological hubris associated with Hunan and Changsha. Before discussing his early years, background, and other exploits, I will first continue the discussion from the previous chapter by noting Ye's own particular role in the rice riot of 1910.

ROLE IN THE RICE RIOT

A consistent theme in both English and Chinese language accounts of the *qiangmi* concerns the role of Changsha's gentry elite in inciting and sometimes even leading the rioters.⁷ Well-known instances of direct gentry involvement include Kong Xianjiao and Yang Gong. Before the crowds stormed into the government yamen and while it was still surrounded, the crowd's anger was reportedly aroused by Kong, who came out from the *yamen* to address them, saying that while Changsha's people starved in the streets the city's government spent spending money on railroad and school construction, part of the new reform projects initiated in the first decade of the new century. His remarks were met with applause and praise. Soon after the crowd stormed into the compound.⁸ Later Kong even reportedly dispatched his three sons to set a middle school on fire, piling desks and chairs up and setting them ablaze with pieces of their clothing doused with gasoline.

⁷According to Joseph Esherick "The most convincing evidence of gentry direction is the pattern of destruction." Esherick also lists the specific buildings/institutions destroyed during the riot which included: the governor's *yamen*, 5 government schools, 7 missions, 2 British steam boats, and 2 owned in part by foreigners. Other buildings had their interiors looted and destroyed. See Esherick, *Reform and Revolution*, 134–136.

⁸Liu Duping, "Qingmo Changsha qiangmi fengchao shimo," in *Changsha wenshi ziliao* No. 6. 1988, 45.

Yang Gong controlled the city's fire brigade. When Western buildings throughout the city were burned, Yang used his influence to prevent the brigade from putting out the fires.⁹ Because of their control of Changsha's rice market, other powerful gentry such as Ye Dehui and Wang Xianqian also bear responsibility for the *qiangmi*.



Image 5-1. Image believed to be Ye Dehui.
One of late Qing Changsha's most influential gentry.

Rather than directly leading or inciting the unrest, Ye's biggest offense during the *qiangmi* involved "possessing grain without selling it" (*yougu bushou*), hoarding at least

⁹ Rao Huaimin and Fujiya Koetsu eds., "Hunan shengcheng luanshi yu ji," in *Changsha qiangmi fengchao ziliao huibian* (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 2001), 268.

ten tons of grain.¹⁰ Yi Ren'gai, a former Changsha middle school teacher, recalled that Ye Dehui manipulated *zhanpiao*, or “store tickets,” used for grain purchase:

Grain speculation, investment according to market fluctuations, and trading in *zhanpiao*, were all just like buying stocks. Some bosses bought and sold grain that didn't exist and used the *zhanpiao* to make money. At the time there was something known as “wealthy man, fake customer” [*zhencaizhu, jiakeren*]. Those that issued “store tickets” had to rely on landlords to become wealthy. These landlords [the gentry] controlled a large amount of *zhanpiao* and caused trouble in the grain market, always taking advantage of crop irregularities to raise the price of grain.¹¹

This suggests that gentry such as Ye pretended to be customers of the granaries as renters, but in fact they actually managed the granaries. They became quite wealthy because they also owned the granaries. Thus Ye Dehui clearly exploited the local grain market at the expense of the poor. Some of the exact details of his involvement and prominent role in Changsha's commercial life bear further thought. In an alley in central Changsha called Fan Xi Xiang, Ye owned a rice shop and warehouse called Dechang he Qiandian. This alley lay in the heart of Changsha's old city, perpendicular to one of its most famous and active commercial thoroughfares, Pozi Street. During the late Qing Ye Dehui's family managed and controlled Pozi Street, which also happened to be the location of Huo Gong Dian, the “Fire Palace.” Not only was this a site for worshipping *zhurong*, the fire god, but it was also an active civic center where one could go to eat local snacks, watch an opera, or drink tea.¹² Pozi Street ran directly to the Xiang River and derived its name *po* meaning “sloping,” or “slanting” from the fact that it

¹⁰ Yang Shiji, *Xinhai geming qianhou shi shi*, 153, 177.

¹¹ Interview with Yi Ren'gai, in Liu Duping and Tang Ying, *Changsha jiyi*, 265.

¹² Zhang Jingping. *Ye Dehui shengping ji xueshu sixiang yanjiu* (YDSP) (Changsha: Hunan shifan daxue chubanshe, 2008), 246ff. Also see Yang Shiji, *Xinhai geming qianhou shishi*, 177.

sloped down to the riverfront, giving merchants and dockworkers easy access to the docks on the west bank of the river, where goods could be offloaded and carted up into the city center.

Through his influence on Pozi Street Ye gained wealth through his business ventures and invested in Japanese shipping companies in Changsha. This explains in large part the seemingly favorable attitude that Japanese merchants displayed toward him. Angus McDonald remarked that for wealthy gentry such as Ye, “one way to deal with the ongoing invasion from the west was to enjoy it.”¹³ Arthur Rosenbaum’s study of Changsha’s gentry during the riot notes that by the late Qing and especially after the city became a treaty port, the gentry’s wealth in the city was augmented by increased involvement in commercial ventures, making them “commercial capitalists.”¹⁴

Many late Qing reformers, beginning with Liang Qichao, Kang Youwei, and others, embraced western philosophy, but were often critical and skeptical of the negative influence capitalism exerted on Chinese society. With Ye we find the opposite. His firm opposition to western philosophy and thinking on the one hand and his eagerness to engage in business with foreigners on the other, placed Ye Dehui at one side of a recurring paradox. Amidst China’s contact with the West, these enigmatic men often struggled with how to cope with western modernization. As a pragmatic businessman it is no wonder that Ye took precautions to safeguard his business interests when the *qiangmi*

¹³ McDonald, *Urban Origins of Rural Revolution*, 66–67.

¹⁴ Rosenbaum, “Gentry Power,” 692.

broke out. His pro business ideals were similar to the kind of Confucian pragmatism discussed by Kwang-ching Liu.¹⁵

Ye Dehui's speculation of the market, grain hoarding, and generally enigmatic and nefarious reputation in local society may have further incited contempt of the gentry from urban commoners. But local carpenters like Liu Shaoming and He Wenqing, discussed in the previous chapter, displayed their own rationale for participating in the unrest, irrespective of the gentry. Though not an admission of guilt Ye later tried to account for his actions during the *qiangmi* in a letter to Zhang Zhidong's advisor Miao Quansun:

The riot in Hunan was an unprecedented tragedy (*qianggu weiyou*). Wang Xianqian and I did not dare go out, and the gentry were very worried. Because of the disorder, I anonymously telegraphed the Hunan governor, because I did not know what else to do. Kong Xianjiao, Yang Gong, and Zhuang Gengliang all tried to tell the crowds to go home, but their efforts were in vain, so there was some trouble, and there were signs of confusion (*diandao zhiji*). This is why I did not sell grain, and so people blamed me for the trouble. But I still do not understand why everyone thought I was at fault.¹⁶

That the riot was tragic and an “unprecedented” event in Hunan's history and that there were definite “signs of confusion” was the closest Ye ever came to acknowledging guilt or regret over the affair. His comments also need to be understood within the context of how he perceived himself as a member of elite society. But how did he attain

¹⁵ Liu, Kwang-ching “Confucian as Patriot,” 5–45.

¹⁶ Ye Dehui to Miao Quansun in Zhang Jingping, *Ye Dehui shengping*, 223–224. For the full text of the letter see also, Ye Dehui zhi Miao Quansun, “Shisan/Guting long zhengli,” *Yi feng tang youpeng shuzha*, 542.

this status? A deeper look into Ye's past reveals both how he rose to prominence in the Changsha and how he exerted his influence on urban life.

EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

The Taiping Rebellion caused a flood of refugees to flee to urban centers, many to Shanghai, contributing to its growth as a commercial and trading port. But others, such as the family of Ye Dehui, fled into China's hinterland, allowing for smaller yet important river towns in the lower and middle Yangtze regions to grow and prosper commercially. This explains the rise of Hankou's commercial development during the late nineteenth century, and to a lesser degree Changsha's. The Ye's originally hailed from Wu County in Jiangsu province, directly descended from the famous Song Dynasty scholar Ye Mengde (1077-1148). But the Ye's immigrated to Changsha during the mass migrations following the rebellion. After settling in Changsha Ye's father, Ye Junlan, opened a dyehouse on Pozi Street near the city center, and also made money as a salt merchant. One of the main reasons for opening up of business at that specific location was its proximity to the Suzhou Guild House, or the *huiguan*, for the large number of Suzhou migrants living in Changsha following the Taiping. The family also owned a residence in nearby Xiangtan, which Ye often claimed as his hometown. Dehui was born in 1864 at the Ye family residence near the "Small West Gate," or Xiao

Xi Men, the very same area and alley where in later years he eventually became a dominating figure in local business and politics.

In 1880 Ye Dehui began his studies at the Yuelu Academy located at the foot of Yuelu Mountain on the western side of Changsha's Xiang River, where he studied under the school of Neo-Confucianism. The Yuelu Academy was founded during the Northern Song Dynasty. At its height was one of the four most influential Confucian academies in the entire empire. Neo-Confucianism dominated the intellectual life of the empire, owing to the thought of Zhu Xi (1130-1200). Considered one of the fathers of the Neo-Confucian school during the Ming and Qing periods his commentaries on and interpretations of the Confucian classics became the basis for imperial examinations. During these dynasties Confucianism not only was considered the standard rubric for intellectual life, but also as a form of statecraft. The generation ruled under this school produced a new class of educated gentry elites, who enjoyed power and prestige on par with county magistrates and high-ranking officials. Thus students of any imperial academy in the empire would have been quite familiar or influenced by Zhu Xi's teachings. Following the end of the Southern Song the influence of the academy waned, but Zhu Xi's teachings continued to influence the academy's curriculum.¹⁷

By the late nineteenth century the academy reestablished itself as a center of Confucian learning, and such was the intellectual climate Ye Dehui and his contemporaries became reared. While there he studied under Liu Peiheng, and a famous

¹⁷ Zhang Jingping, *YDSP*, 39ff.

scholar from Ningxiang County named Cui Shi.¹⁸ In February 1884 Ye took part in the county-level examinations for Xiangtan, near Changsha, placing seventh. The following May he advanced to become the prefectural magistrate for Changsha county.

In November 1884 Ye Dehui married the second daughter of Lao Deyang, of Shanhua County, whose family was also originally from Wu County in Jiangsu. From Ming times the sons and fathers from the Ye and Lao clans transacted in business and frequently intermarried. The Lao family were also the original founders and proprietors of the Jiu Zhi Tang medicine shop on Changsha's Pozi Street, most of which was controlled by the Ye family. Thus, Ye's marriage to one of Lao's daughters solidified his ties and control within the city's most important commercial area.¹⁹

Following his marriage Ye sat for the imperial examinations and passed, but soon came at odds with some of his elder contemporaries, notably Wang Kaiyun (1832-1916) and Guo Songtao. In June 1886 Wang Kaiyun founded a poetry society, called the Bihushe, at Changsha's Kaifu Temple north of the city's main gate, comprised of nineteen members. In 1888 the society invited Ye to join, but later he recalled his lack of interest in joining at the time, feeling that the society's philosophy was nothing more than a jumbled mix of some good and some bad ideas. Thus even as a young scholar and early in his career, Ye established himself as an opponent of the reform school.²⁰

In May of 1892 Ye successfully passed the *dianshi* exam, qualifying him to serve at the imperial court in Beijing, and to become a *jingguan*, or imperial court official.

¹⁸ Zhang Jingping, *Shou Wang Si Wen*, 25.

¹⁹ Zhang Jingping, *Shou Wang Si Wen*, 26.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

His life in Beijing during these years primarily consisted of collecting books and working on the preservation of classical texts such as the *Erya*, the first dictionary of the Chinese language ever written. While at court Ye collected various versions of the *Shuowen jiezi*, another Chinese language dictionary, and moved these texts to back to his home in Jiangsu. Reflecting on his experiences in these years Ye noted, “When I was working in Beijing, the scholar officials were still abundant in the teachings from the times of Qianlong and Jiaqing. Everyday when returning home from work or when resting, I worked on collecting my books. I often bore many books with tattered covers back to my home.”²¹

INTELLECTUAL LIFE, WORKS, AND THE ARTS

Ye spent much of his life collecting manuscripts and books. From 1895 until 1919, he edited and compiled the *Guan Gu Tang Shu Mu Cong Ke*, a collection of various writings from his fifteen most important predecessors. In *Cang Shu Shi Yue*, “Ten Rules for Collecting Books,” Ye identified the ten most basic problems of book preservation. These involved purchase, sorting/distinguishing, decoration and packaging, display, copying and repairing, transcribing/copying, collating, making comments on, collecting, and finally, imprinting and tracing. The legacy of this book remained important despite Ye’s negative reputation among Communists, as it was

²¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

reprinted in 1957.²² This was especially true following the Wuchang Uprising, which he associated with the peasant rebellions of the late Ming and the Taiping Rebellion of the Qing. One of his most important and enduring works came out of the debate between Ye and reformers in 1898, when he was the leading voice of opposition against Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao's thought and the Southern Study Society in Changsha. In *Yi Jiao Cong Bian*, he criticized not only Kang and Liang, but also Viceroy Zhang Zhidong as well. The *yi* in the title is the character used for "different," "other," "unusual," or "strange," and was obviously indented to emphasize the unorthodox character of the teachings of the Kang-Liang reform faction.

From *Yi Jiao Cong Bian*, in the "The Superiority of China and Confucianism," Ye stated his views on the differences of China and the West, claiming there were many good things about Western philosophy and thought. But the Chinese intellectual tradition was far superior. He argued that the traditions of the imperial monarchy, rule by elites, and civil service examination system, each in their own ways were superior to western learning:

[Mencius said:] "The people are the most important element in a nation," not because people consider themselves important, but because the sovereign regards them as important. And it is not people's rights that are important. Since the founding of the Ch'ing [Qing] dynasty our revered rulers have loved the people as their own children. Whenever the nation has suffered from calamity such as famine, flood and war, the emperor has immediately given generous relief upon its being reported to provincial officials.²³

²² McDonald, *Urban Origins*, 64.

²³ Yeh Te-hui, "The Superiority of China and Confucianism," in William Theodore DeBary, et. al. eds., *Sources of Asian Tradition*, Vol. II. New York: Columbia University Press, 1960.

Two things stand out in this statement. First it is obvious that Ye completely rejected western individualism, as well as concepts such as peoples rights and democracy. Following this passage he also remarked that if China were to be governed “by the people,” the result would be “different policies from many groups, and strife and contention will rise.”²⁴ It also reveals some contradictions in light of what we know about his grain hoarding during the rice riot. Perhaps as a businessman he felt it was the state’s duty to provide for public welfare, rather than his own? But his rejection of western modernity should not be completely dismissed. This is especially true given what we know about the chaotic and violent progression of China’s development following the Revolution of 1911. Because the years that followed resulted in the failure of western democracy to be established in China, his views were in some ways prophetic. Ye knew as well as any, that centuries of Confucian statehood could not simply be cast aside in favor of a system alien and foreign to Chinese culture.

Although Ye became known as one of most hardline conservatives of the day, his patronage of the Changsha opera is worth noting. He and his family founded, financed, and managed Changsha’s first modern, Hunan River opera troupe and theater companies, such as the Tong Chun Ban and the Tong Chun Yuan. Prior to his day, Hunan had already established a tradition and culture of local theater and opera, all performed in the local dialect. Due to the fact that the Ye family’s Huo Gong Dian temple complex also housed one of the largest stages and performance venues in the city, naturally Ye’s family took an interest in promoting the arts. The Tong Chun Ban opera troupe was

²⁴ *Ibid.*

divided into four different classes based on quality. The highest were the heaven (*tian*) and the earth (*di*) troupes, who held performances at Huo Gong Dian and other venues throughout the city. Fees for admission for these shows ranged between twenty and twenty-four copper cash. The lower quality troupes were known as black (*xuan*), and yellow (*huang*). These troops usually performed in private residences, charging a cheaper fare of twelve or sixteen copper cash. Performers within each class were responsible for making and maintaining their own costumes.²⁵

Viewing opera was an activity that Ye Dehui frequently engaged in with his contemporaries and mentors among the local scholar gentry, Wang Xianqian and Wang Kaiyun in particular, and they were often seen together at performances. During the winter of 1901 Wang Kaiyun invited Ye to his residence to see a special performance of opera, but was disappointed that his protégé did not attend. This suggests that not only was local opera an important component of the leisure life of the gentry elite, but that it served as a kind of signifier of the bonds between mentors and their students. One of the main contributions Ye made to Changsha's opera scene was through his compiling, editing, and writing of standard opera classics.²⁶

It was said that Ye Dehui even participated and acted in some Xiang Opera performances, even playing female roles. The *dan jue* was one of the four main characters in traditional Chinese opera, and a typically female role. Similar to Shakespeare's time, female parts in opera or dramatic performances were also usually

²⁵ Yuan Qinshu, "Xiang ju gong gong chen Ye Dehui," *Zhongguo wen xue yan jiu*, *Huxiang wen hua*, no. 2 (China Academic Journal Electronic Publishing House, 2008), 113-116.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

played by men. But in the world of traditional China, associating with actors, or even performing as one ranked among the lowest occupations, on par with prostitution.²⁷ A popular traditional idiom about the reputation of actors during Ye's day was literally "Whores have no feeling and actors have no meaning," (*biaozi wuzing, xizi wuyi*) which may have also contributed to Ye's infamous reputation among Changsha's citizenry. He was known for having a hedonistic lifestyle, which probably only reinforced such stereotypes. It was said that he frequented brothels, consorting with both female and male prostitutes, and owned pornography. He was "the wickedest man in Changsha," and "full of disgrace." Another former resident noted, "prostitutes, gambling, a carefree lifestyle; there was nothing he wouldn't do. How could he be called talented?"²⁸

Based upon what we already know from Ye's suppression of the 1898 reform movement in Changsha, coupled with how he was viewed by locals during the time of the rice riot, we now have a better understanding of his influence in Changsha society during the late Qing. His hoarding of grain also makes it clear that he was serious about his business interests, to the point of neglecting the needs of the local population in a time of crisis. In this way one might say that as a powerful intellectual and gentry elite Ye projected his own form of hegemonic masculinity onto Changsha's urban landscape, one fully embedded in the Confucian tradition and distinctly Chinese. Gender studies on Chinese masculinity has argued for understanding the binary opposition between *wen*, translated as "culture" or "civility," and *wu*, meaning the "physical" or "martial," and

²⁷Interview with Xiong Pingsheng. In Liu Duping and Tang Ying, *Changsha jiyi*, 248.

²⁸ Ibid. Ye also owned and operated some of Changsha's opera houses. Also see Interview with Lei Runbai, in *CSJY.*, 259.

usually associated with warfare. Both of these concepts can “be applied to a broad range of classes as a paradigm for conceptualizing maleness.”²⁹ In classical Chinese literature the ideal type of man was often viewed as one who embodied both of these traits; for instance, one who was adept at writing verse and poetry but also displayed prowess on the battlefield. But as with any form there often emerged dichotomies, where “*wu* became associated with non-elite masculinity at various times in China’s past, while *wen* was a more often elite masculine form.”³⁰ It is obvious then that if Ye embodied either of these, it was certainly *wen*, the kind of civility of a Confucian scholar.

THE FIRE PALACE AND POZI STREET CONTROVERSY

From the time the Ye family settled in Changsha in the mid-1860’s, they virtually dominated Pozi Street’s life and commercial activity, much of which was based out of Huogong Dian, and owned half of all the businesses and shops on the street. The Ye family’s connection to their home province of Jiangsu was likely maintained through the Suzhou guild house as well as shops from numerous other provinces, most of which dealt in medicine or herbs. For instance, the East and West Henan Medicine Holding Companies, the Anhui Elegant Writing Shop, the Jiangxi Taihua Jin, the Jiangsu Ye Health and Eye Medicine Shop, the Jiangsu Jiu Zhi Tang Medicine Shop, and the Ye Gong He Dye house. A local money house, the Changsha Yantai Shun Qianzhuang,

²⁹ Kam Louie and Louise Edwards, “Chinese Masculinity: Theorizing Wen and Wu,” in *East Asian History*, No. 8 (December 1994), 135-148, 141.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 146.

was also located on Pozi Street. As noted above, the dye house was started by Ye's father when he first arrived in Changsha sometime in the late 1850's or early 1860's, and by marriage Ye Dehui became associated with the family who owned Jiu Zhi Tang. Because of its name the Ye's also probably owned the eye and medicine shop, also based out of Jiangsu. These businesses comprised Pozi Street's *lao ba jia*, or "eight main shops," as it was then referred to.³¹

First built in 1747 and rebuilt in 1826, Huo Gong Dian served as both a site of patronage and worship for Hunan's fire god *zhurong*, and also as an entertainment venue, teahouse, and host to numerous street vendors, shops, and performances of Hunan River opera. As the street's main temple complex, as well as one of the commercial and civic centers of the entire city. After its reconstruction the temple complex encompassed a large area of old central Changsha, covering approximately sixteen *mu* of urban space (equivalent to 2.5 acres). As with most temples when one entered they passed under a memorial arch and entered a large courtyard. In the center lay not only the Fire God Temple, but also an opera stage, the Amicable Pavilion, The Universal Charity Pavilion, as well as the Temple of the God of Fortune, or Cai Shen Miao.³² Later called Fu Lu Gong, this temple was Changsha's temple for *caishen*, or the "god of wealth," and also the center for the city's *cai shen hui*, or "wealth organization." During the late Qing each old style bank or money house in the city, known as *qian zhuang*, had to pay a special fee of fifty taels *paifei*, or "placard fee," to the Caishen Miao for membership.

³¹ Wen Ganzhi, "Da lie shen Ye Dehui," 190.

³² Liu Guochu and Tang Yifan eds., *Huo miao wen hua: Huo Gong Dian* (Changsha: Changsha yin shi ji tuan huo gong dian you xian gong si, 2004), 8.

In order for a *qianzhuang* to identify itself as a legitimate enterprise and advertise itself as such, it had to place a placard noting so outside its place of business. Thus it gave someone like Ye Dehui a large amount of control over many of the financial and business transactions in the city.³³

In 1896 Caishen Miao officially became Fulu Gong, and as such contributed to Changsha's wealth and commercial activity. The Huo Gong Dian complex, including the temple for the fire god and the god of wealth, made it one of the old city's most important urban centers for business, but also a key center of local power and politics during the late Qing. Its importance was most reflected in the formation of the "Public Security Corps," or *bao an tuan*, or more specifically, the Changsha "Bao an xi zheng gong suo." During the late Qing such organizations played a prominent role in city life, as this particular "corps" (*tuan*) of Fulu Gong became one of Changsha's most influential civic organizations, primarily because its jurisdiction encompassed most of the surrounding streets adjacent to or very near Pozi Street; for instance Xin Pozi Jie, Bao An Jie, Shuang jing jie, etc.³⁴

The formation of community management through "street corps," or *jietuan*, in Changsha dates back to the Taiping Rebellion, begun under the patronage of Zeng Guofan. Also mentioned briefly in the first chapter, the Changsha gazetteer from the reign of the Tongzhi Emperor (1861-1875) distinguished between "village corps" or *duanlian*, and its urban counterpart by noting that the village corps were usually headed

³³ Zhang Jingping, *YDSP*, 247.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 248.

and managed by local gentry while the city corps was managed by local officials, and that it did “not interfere with the daily life of the people though it checks the neighborhood household by household. The village corps must train recruits, yet the urban corps only tightens the *baojia* control.” More importantly was that the two institutions were funded by different agencies, with local militias being financed by contributions from villagers, and the urban organizations with subsidies from the local government.³⁵ It also established the guidelines for the formation of the *jietuan* within each of Changsha’s neighborhood districts, of upper, eastern, middle, western, and lower, totaling eighty-seven corps, and that each corps was responsible for security in their respective districts. For instance, if an individual was arrested for a wrongdoing or suspected of being a local bandit, they would be subject to punishment by the local corps and made to report to a local gentry who usually served as the corps leader. Such would have been the responsibilities of “leaders” such as Ye Dehui. In times of emergency households in each district were required to send able-bodied men “to watch the fortress [the city gate] at night and to register the people who pass. These night watchmen are also paid. In addition each of the city gates is assigned civilian and military officials as well as a guard of soldiers, who check and make inquires of those who pass through.”³⁶ The gazetteer for neighboring Shanhua county during the Guangxu reign (1871-1908), similarly accounted for this kind of neighborhood security, that a city such as Changsha did “not need to train militia, but only need[ed] to strictly implement the *baojia* (the system of

³⁵*Changsha xian zhi*, vol. 15, 22. Cited and translated in He Wenping, “The Street Corps of Changsha around 1920,” in *Journal of Modern Chinese History*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2014), 66.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

household registration common in imperial China) system, which suffices to purge vicious people and to prevent disorder.” He Wenping argues that Changsha’s network of street corps was managed by local gentry and urban elite, and that it represented a “hybrid” of the urban household registration (*baojia*) and the urban militia (*tuanlian*) systems.³⁷

During the late Qing Changsha contained two-hundred and fifty-four “sections” or “wards” (*tuan*), with each having its own *tuanzong* or “community leader.” Each street within a *tuan* also had its own *zhinian*, or “street warden.” Since the headquarters for the Pozi Street *bao an* organization and Huogong Dian were virtually one in the same, both had the same street warden. During the late Qing this post was usually filled by one of the eight most influential households in the community. Although the Ye family had never been among the most wealthy of all the families, for much of Dehui’s life the post of *tuanzong* was held by his father, which upon his death in September 1912 allowed for Dehui to assume the post. The *tuanzong* of Huogong Dian was also the senior community leader, or *zong tuan*, of all Changsha’s *tuan*’s.³⁸ A year after his father’s death Ye’s reflections about his new appointment were printed in the *Changsha Ribao*, under the title “An Announcement from Ye Dehui:”

Since my childhood your humble servant has grown up on Pozi Street, and inherited my father’s business from four previous generations. Since before the time of the Qing, and for the last two dynasties, we have been called the leaders of this community and ward, there have been many

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 67.

³⁸ Zhang, *YDSP*, 248.

arrangements. The Ye family name has always been among the leading candidates for the post of community leader.³⁹

Becoming community leader also allowed for Ye to assume the post of the *zhinian* or street warden for Pozi Street as well as the entire Huo Gong Dian complex. Thus Ye Dehui simultaneously held three key positions of urban governance: senior community leader, community leader, and street warden. Such authority, coupled with his leadership over all of Huo Gong Dian, gave him a significant amount of control over much of Changsha's business and civic related matters.

In his well-known study of Hankou during the same period, William Rowe challenged the theory that cities in imperial China often lacked a clearly defined Central Business District, classifying them as pre-capitalist spaces of urban production. While he notes that sections of Hankou were organized according to trade but were never in one central area, he nonetheless argues that Hankou also “conformed in important respects to the model of land use and land value distribution in the ‘capitalist’ city.”⁴⁰ Thus the significance of Huo Gong Dian, Pozi Street, and Ye Dehui's family for late Qing Changsha's commercial, cultural, and civic prosperity was obvious. His position as senior community leader also granted him a distinct advantage when it came to having a say in affairs related to commerce as well as local governance.

Joseph Esherick and Mary Rankin's edited volume on elite society in the late Qing and early Republican periods suggests a “patterns of dominance” model, that elites

³⁹ “Ye Dehui qishi,” *Changsha Ribao*, March 18, 1913. Quoted in Zhang, *YDSP*, 248-249.

⁴⁰ William Rowe, *Hankou: Conflict and Community in a Chinese City, 1796-1895* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 75-77.

during this period advanced “their political objectives by forming associations, which then become resources in a new structure of political contention.”⁴¹ Thus in the case of Ye Dehui the influence of his family and his role as leader of the *bao an* organization possibly represented a “new structure” of contention and local power, one that emerged in wake of the rapid commercialization and erosion of state power following the Taiping Rebellion—processes that even played out in a isolated hinterland locality such as Changsha. According to Chang Chung-li’s seminal study on the role of the gentry in nineteenth century China, out of all the provinces Hunan contained the highest number of gentry “newcomers,” following the Taiping Rebellion, which he attributed to the influence of Zeng Guofan’s militia army. “Newcomers” were defined as those who achieved gentry status not by virtue of their family but more likely owing to merit or their advanced social position. More importantly is that in wake of the rebellion the entire Qing Empire witnessed a significant growth in the number of gentry.⁴² Chang’s other influential study on gentry income during the same period notes the influence of the salt trade in contributing to and augmenting their wealth and status. The growth of the salt trade also grew in conjunction with increased trade with the West and opening of treaty ports. This necessitated the presence of financial institutions and large capital capable of sustaining the growing market. “Only the privileged gentry,” noted Chang, “especially the upper gentry, had the capital and the connections to handle these mercantile

⁴¹ Joseph Esherick and Mary Baukus Rankin eds., *Chinese Local Elites and Patterns of Dominance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 12.

⁴² Chang Chung-li, *The Chinese Gentry: Studies on Their Role in Nineteenth Century Chinese Society* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1955), 215.

activities.”⁴³ What is also interesting to note is that while the salt trade and involvement with Western merchants may have facilitated the growth of gentry and their financial networks in the coastal provinces as well as other major ports along the Yangtze such as Hankou, locales such as Changsha remained comparatively isolated from such activity. This perhaps explains why local elites such as Ye Dehui became so powerful. In a very large way the Taiping diaspora and his family’s subsequent settlement in central Changsha created the perfect conditions for Ye’s eventual wealth and success.

On late October 31, 1912 one of Changsha’s most famous and notable hometown heroes of the Revolution of 1911, Huang Xing (1874-1916), returned home. As his boat docked Governor Tan Yankai, local officials, and a multitude of the city’s residents presented him with a twenty one-gun salute. Thousands crowded in the streets to get a view of Huang and “raise hats in respect” (*tuomao*). Huang entered the city at Xiao Xi Men, the “Small West Gate,” which ran perpendicular to Pozi Street, where Huang’s welcome parade began. As a gesture of respect city officials decided to change the name of the small west gate to “Huang Xing Men,” and the name of Pozi street to “Huang Xing Road.” Huang himself later politely refused this gesture, but upon his visit signs had already appeared indicating the name change.⁴⁴

While Huang Xing visited Changsha, Ye Dehui was in nearby Xiangtan attending over his father’s funeral. When he returned to Changsha to discover that the placards bearing the name of Pozi Street were replaced by Huang Xing’s, he became incensed. Ye

⁴³ Chang Chung-li, *The Income of the Chinese Gentry: A Sequel To The Chinese Gentry: Studies on Their Role in Nineteenth Century Chinese Society* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), 188.

⁴⁴ “Huang Keqiang hui xiang ji,” *Shenbao*, November 9, 1912. In Zhang, *YDSP*, 253.

promptly had them taken down and replaced them with the original placards, reportedly observing that such gestures represented nothing more than a “foolish gesture of flattery” (*hu mei gong yu*). He composed an essay “On Recovering the Name of Pozi Street,” (*guang fu po zi di ming ji*) viciously criticizing the frenzy aroused by Huang Xing’s visit, calling for the ancient names of many streets, landmarks, and temples throughout Changsha to be renamed in Huang Xing’s honor.

Ye sarcastically observed that if cities in China were to follow the example of the United States and name public places after national leaders, then why not name the ferry that crossed the Xiang River after Huang Xing, or for that matter some of the public pits where residents dumped their trash? One cannot help but note a certain amount of irony in Ye’s sarcasm.⁴⁵ After 1949 the names of public streets and place names in cities throughout China, many of which had existed since antiquity, were changed to reflect the legacy of the communist revolution as well as honor martyred heroes. For instance, in Changsha today one finds streets named “Cai ‘E Road,” and “Huang Xing Road,” named after famous revolutionaries. Most cities all over China today also have streets with names such as “Liberation Road” (Jie Fang Lu), “People’s Road,” (Ren Min Lu) and “May 1 Road,” (Wu Yi Lu). There remains no such road(s) for Ye Dehui. Following the Revolution of 1911 and the fall of the Qing dynasty, such actions represented a direct challenge to Ye’s traditionalism and influence over local society. A local revolutionary

⁴⁵ Cheng Qianfan and Yang Yiqiang, *Ye Dehui guang fu Pozi jie di ming ji, bu zhu* (Zhong guo wen hua, 1996), 191-196.

hero, Huang Xing, was a literal embodiment of the changes that began taking place in cities such as Changsha but also throughout China after the fall of the Qing.

Shortly following the Huang Xing incident, Ye faced an additional challenge from the new reformist currents that emerged after the Revolution of 1911. Not long after he assumed his position as community leader Ye entered into conflict with the Changsha Women's Federation. In the spring of 1913 the leader of Changsha's women's movement, Tang Qunying, made a proposal to rent out the space of the "Protect the Country Temple," or Huguo Si, also located on Pozi Street, as a school for girls. Her proposal even won the praise of Zeng Guofan's relatives. She also petitioned to Tan Yankai, then Hunan's provincial military governor, to provide the funds to convert the temple into a school, who initially approved the measure. The women's organization also notified the street wardens (*zhinian*) of the Pozi Street Public Security Corps (*bao an tuan*) that since the Huoguo Si had been built under the patronage of Zeng Guofan's family in 1850, they should have the right to change it into a school. But the women were unable to produce a contract or deed proving such ownership.⁴⁶

To counter these efforts, Ye Dehui and the wardens also jointly petitioned Tan Yankai, stating that the Huo Guo Si was property of the Pozi Street community organization, and that Zeng Linsheng and the women's union had no right to transform the temple into a school. Ye and the other wardens also argued that arrangements had already been made to convert the same temple into a railroad school, and that students had not yet arrived. Finally, the petition also urged Governor Tan to rescind his

⁴⁶ Zhang, *YDSP*, 250.

approval for the women's school. Shortly after this, Tang Qunying and the women's union issued their own petition, but in the form of leaflets, stating that Ye Dehui had no right to interfere, and that any matter related to Huo Guo Si's future lay in the Zeng family's hands. Tang and other union members even went to some of the *zhinian* directly, pleading for them to reconsider.⁴⁷

Ye became so incensed over the matter that he bitterly and sarcastically attacked the women's movement, but also insinuated a similar dislike for Tan Yankai, calling him a "bully."⁴⁸ After the Revolution of 1911 Ye had cast himself as an enemy of the revolutionary parties and constitutional factions. He and other conservatives also became alarmed by the change that swept over Tan Yankai and other constitutionalists following the revolution. Prior to the revolution Tan served as a *jinshi* and then leader of the provincial assembly. He had been the first scholar from Hunan to earn first place in the *jinshi* exam in two hundred years.⁴⁹ Thus there may have been a degree of envy on the part of Ye and others, who may have held high expectations for Tan, but he disappointed the traditionalists because of his aspirations to serve in the new republican government. He was also the top official in the province. With his scholar background Tan was also a huge advocate of educational reform and the founding of new schools, which explains why he may have had such a keen interest in founding the new girl's school.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 250-251.

⁴⁹ McDonald, *The Urban Origins of Rural Revolution*, 86.

But in the change of power following the Qing's abdication, Ye and others believed Tan became consumed by a lust for power, and in the manner of Yuan Shikai assumed complete military control of Hunan as provincial governor. Since the Changsha Women's Union sought Tan's support and patronage to change a local temple into a school, they obviously drew Ye's suspicions. What is also interesting to note about Ye's editorial in the *Changsha Ribao* was his willingness to adopt to the changing modern conventions of the day. He used a newspaper to air his grievances. Ye and the conservatives also believed that such occasions represented an opportunity for both sides to express their opinions on Hunan's future. Posting of this struggle in the pages of a local newspaper also made the controversy open to the public. For the first time literate residents could become informed about local events, as well as the goings on and thought related to one of the city's most wealthy and powerful residents.

The incidents involving Huang Xing and the Changsha Women's Federation such represented one of the first instances following the Revolution of 1911 that cracks appeared in the foundation of Ye's traditionalist regime and their influence on Changsha's public sphere. The first obvious break emerged during 1910, when Ye and other gentry holed up in their homes in fear of hoarding rioters. But this time the challenge came from a local revolutionary hero, Huang Xing. Tang Qunying, an activist reformer in her own right, was part of the new generation of students after 1898 who received a liberal education abroad in Japan. In this way the Hundred Days of Reform were not a complete failure. More on this will be discussed in Chapter 6. But Tang's dispute with Ye Dehui also represented the changing gender dynamics at work at work in

Changsha following the Revolution of 1911; a confrontation between a reformist woman leader, and Ye Dehui, the hegemonic urban overlord with a nefarious and some would say misogynistic reputation.

In the *Changsha Ribao* the Pozi Street Public Security Corps (*bao an tuan*) also posted an editorial expressing their views, stating that a special meeting had been convened. They certified that Hu Guo Si was property of the street association, and that the family of Zeng Fuofan and the Women's Federation had no authority to convert it into a girl's school.⁵⁰ In Ye's defense another point to consider is that in August 1912 he used temple funds to create one of Changsha's first modern primary schools, the Li Ze School, which remained open well into the 1980s. After it opened children from poor families could attend for free. Thus it is obvious that Ye was an advocate and supporter of education. But his reaction to the women's schools was also a reflection of his conservative opposition towards reform.

⁵⁰ Zhang, *YDSP*, 252.



Image 5-2. Photograph of Ye Dehui.
Photo courtesy of Ren Bo.⁵¹

Image 5-2 is a photograph taken of Ye Dehui sometime after the Revolution of 1911. What a change in appearance revolution makes! Even to the neutral observer this presents a much better likeness of Ye Dehui than Image 5-1, and suggests the character of a man one *might* want to have a drink with in a Changsha teahouse—his reputation notwithstanding. The contrast of the two photographs of Ye could not be more apparent. Image 5-1 was taken of Ye at a time when the standards for men’s fashion in the Qing dynasty were still the established norm. He wears traditional Confucian robes and a cap, and it is apparent that his head is shaved in accordance with

⁵¹ Ren Bo, “Changsha jie tou zeng shi ‘wen yao’ Ye Dehui biaoyan de wutai, ming ren Ye Dehui de Changsha jie dao chengchang shi.” *Changsha Wanbao*, May 10, 2013.
http://cswb.changsha.cn/html/2013-05/10/content_33_1.htm.

the tradition that all men throughout the Qing empire wore their hair in a queue, shaved in front and braided in the back. Image 5-2 depicts Ye much differently. In this photograph, perhaps taken sometime after the revolution of 1911 or in the immediate years prior, he appears more serene and less hostile. He has grown hair on the top of his head and wears eyeglasses. After abdication of the Qing imperial court and establishment of the new republic, the traditional queue was viewed as a representation of China's backwardness and even outlawed. Young men cut their queues off and began growing their hair out as signs of liberation and modernity. But for some, such as those from Ye's generation and older, cutting the queue off was difficult and hard to bear because it amounted to a rejection from their cultural heritage and its traditions. Many in fact were even forced to cut their queues off. These photographs represent the contrasts in Ye's character in this chapter, as they are expressive of the ideological tensions between Confucian orthodoxy and tradition on the one hand, versus reform, revolution, and modernity on the other. In the Introduction I noted the importance of moving beyond the construction of binary oppositions and the need for a "third way," to writing history. In this case oftentimes the individual historical actors we write about often did not have the luxury of "complexity." Rather, their time and place functioned within extremes. Such was the case with figures such as Ye Dehui.

During the midst of all the controversy caused by the rivalries with Tang Qunying, Tan Yankai, and Huang Xing, Ye was obviously worried that his influence over local affairs was being threatened. In late May 1913 he organized a special meeting of all community leaders of Changsha's 254 wards at Huo Gong Dian. But during the

meeting government troops suddenly barged in, seized Ye, and escorted him to the South Gate police station. The sight of soldiers escorting one of Changsha's most wealthy and powerful officials created quite a stir among onlooking bystanders. Some shops even closed their shutters and a crowd of curious locals followed behind. When forced inside the station Ye cried out for help. The small crowd that followed soon turned into several hundred, and some of the bystanders explained that no matter what crime Ye was alleged to have committed, he was still the community leader of Changsha's most powerful Public Security Corps, and the proprietor of Huo Gong Dian, and the matter should be settled by the community organization and not the local police. Alarmed at the sight of such a large crowd and uncertain of how to handle the situation, the chief of police ordered Ye escorted back to Huo Gong Dian. Some of the crowd gathered there called for a citywide boycott and the closing of all businesses, and others for an armed uprising. Tan Yankai ordered government troops to the temple to disperse the crowd, and Ye was spirited away by sedan chair out of the city for his own safety.⁵² Shortly following his arrest and release, a certain battalion commander named Zhang leveled three indictments against Ye Dehui: Failing to discharge his duties as community leader, was responsible for the massacre of many of his countrymen, and that after the Qing government's abdication he went into hiding. Furthermore, he not only sabotaged efforts to found a women's school, but also allegedly humiliated and beat one of the leaders of the local women's federation. Finally, during the rice riot and other grain shortages of previous years Ye took advantage of his power as a prominent leader of

⁵² "Bu ji Ye Dehui bei na zhi zhi xiang," *Shenbao*, June 16, 1913. In Zhang, *YDSP*, 258.

Changsha's Public Security Corps to influence the local rice market and disrupt the distribution of relief grain to the poor and needy.⁵³ Shortly following the Pozi Street women's school controversy he fled Changsha. He first went to Wuhan and eventually to Shanghai, where he met in exile with fellow compatriots sympathetic to the former dynasty who were also weary of the drastic changes brought by reform and the new republic.

The events of spring 1913 also took place within the context of tumultuous national events. In opposition to Yuan Shikai's despotic aims, in March Song Jiaoren and his faction declared the "Second Revolution." In May, the same month of Ye Dehui's arrest, the provincial governors of Hunan, Jiangxi, and Anhui declared their provinces independent, and sent an open telegram to Yuan Shikai. Tan Yankai was the head signee. But in October Yuan Shikai dispatched Tang Xiangming and a army of soldiers to Hunan to not only pacify the province but to establish Tang as the new provincial governor and minister of civil affairs, forcing Tan out of power and to seek refuge in Shanghai.

Within this unstable climate Ye Dehui returned from temporary exile back to Changsha, remaining secluded at his residence in the city center to avoid detection. Soon after arriving Tang had many of Tan Yankai's head ministers executed by firing squad, as well as many as 17,000 loyalists and others somehow affiliated with the government or suspected of sedition. Through this Tang earned the name "Tang the butcher." Though intensely critical of Tan Yankai's tenure and even subject to arrest

⁵³ Zhang, *YDSP*, 261.

and ridicule by his government, he certainly did not support Tang Xiangming. So once again he put ink to paper to express his opinions, this time distaste for Tang's brutality, calling his short period of governance "an era of banditry."⁵⁴ Ye also referred to Tang as "a suckling, sniveling babe who naturally wants to study Zeng Guofan and Zuo Zongtang."⁵⁵ When Tang read Ye's denunciation in the *Ya xi ya bao*, he became furious and ordered for Ye to be seized and arrested at his residence. Late on the evening of January 23, 1914, soldiers surrounded Ye's courtyard home. But getting wind of the situation before he could be apprehended, he fled to the roof of his house to hide. Later he found refuge inside a western bank—no doubt because of his financial connections and business dealings—and by the next morning had fled the city by boat to Wuhan. The next day Tang Xiangming issued a three thousand *jin* reward bounty for Ye's capture.⁵⁶

Luckily for Ye Dehui, Yuan Shikai summoned Tang back to Beijing to reprimand him for not following orders. Later secret agents arrested Tang in Wuhan. By the time of Tang's arrest Yuan guaranteed Ye that there had been a misunderstanding, but it was too late. Despite Yuan Shikai's pardon, Tang had already secretly ordered for Ye Dehui's arrest. He was eventually found in a Changsha opera house and taken into custody. But some of his allies within the gentry and literary communities throughout China quickly rushed to his aide. Even the vice premier of China at the time, Chen

⁵⁴ Zhang, *YDSP*, 263.

⁵⁵ Angus McDonald, *The Urban Origins of Rural Revolution: Elites and the Masses in Hunan Province, China, 1911-1927* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 64.

⁵⁶ "Zhuan dian," *Shenbao*, April 19, 1914. In Zhang, *YDSP*, 264.

Qingying, all petitioned the Beijing government for his release. Ye also called upon an unexpected ally, Tang Hualong, Tang Xiangming's oldest brother, who defended Ye and advocated for his release. Thus not only could Ye count on such friends to help him in a time of need, but it also reveals the extent of his connections outside Changsha. He was eventually set free.⁵⁷

The events of May 1913 also provide an interesting comparison to those of the rice riot three years before, when angry crowds gathered at the South Gate police station demanding the release of a local carpenter, Liu Yongfu. In both cases authorities were swayed by the urging of the crowd, in this case placing more faith in the ability of preexisting institutions to administer justice rather than the city's newer and more "modern" police force. This also casts Ye Dehui in a different light from the testimony of south Changsha residents who seemed to have despised him. Rather the account in *Shenbao* suggests that the crowd sympathized with Ye and demanded for his release. Were residents at the time completely distrustful of the local reform government and its modern manifestations, regardless of who was taken into custody or arrested? While one can never know the thoughts and intentions of the masses, it at least suggests that in late Qing Changsha Ye was indeed a polarizing figure.

Ye Dehui opposed the opening of a women's school at a local temple and the renaming of Pozi Street in honor of Huang Xing in newspaper editorials. These were both moves by Ye to secure his power base in the community at a time when he felt his influence in local society was being challenged. In previous years, the reform

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

movement of 1898 being one example, Ye aired his grievances with reformers through a more scholarly and academic route, typified by his criticism of Liang Qichao, Zhang Zhidong, and others in works such as *Yi Jiao Cong Bian*. But with the advent of the modern newspaper—itsself a marker and symbol of modernization and tool for the building of civic consciousness among emerging nation states during this period—Ye was forced to adapt to the conventions of the day. He now aired his views within a more public and civic venue. Proposing to open a girl’s school in a location other than Pozi Street might not have elicited such a vicious response from Ye, who expressed his disapproval. When leaders of the women’s movement sought to thwart Ye’s efforts to stop the school, they issued leaflets throughout Changsha in rebuttal. The details of the debate were posted in a public newspaper such as *Shenbao*, and suggest that the controversy was given national press coverage, making readers aware of Ye Dehui’s thought and activities. Much of this occurred while Tan Yankai and Tang Xiangming played the role of feuding warlords. In the matter of a few short months Ye managed to earn the wrath of two provincial governors who shared mutual discord, but nonetheless shared a similar dislike of Ye Dehui.

SUPPORTING YUAN SHIKAI

As discussed in the previous chapter on the rice riot of 1910, beginning in the early 1900s Ye maintained a cordial relationship with Japanese businesses interests in Changsha. This began shortly after the Treaty of Shimonoseki. In 1898 a merchant

named Shiraishi Ryuhei was sent on a fifty-day trip through the Yangtze provinces as well as Hunan in order to explore possibilities for future business ventures. Eventually Shiraishi and other merchants helped establish the Hunan Steamship Company, which eventually became the Nisshin Steamship Company. Having been founded by Japanese merchants, most of the shareholders were obviously from Japan. But one-third of the shares were reserved for Chinese investors, and there is strong evidence to suggest that Ye Dehui was one of them.⁵⁸

As Ye's contact with the Japanese intensified, so did their interest in his scholarly background and published works. He used his own private presses to print and send books to colleagues in Japan, gaining for himself a readership among Japanese intellectuals. This also grew out of Ye's cordial relations with the Japanese consulate in Changsha. He also dealt with two of the nine Japanese companies that operated in the city by 1913. By this time dignitaries, high-ranking businessmen, and reporters from Japan were all frequent guests at Ye's residence. During and after the controversy on Pozi Street as well as the Second Revolution, Ye enjoyed safe passage to Shanghai via Japanese merchant ships.⁵⁹ Thus his narrow brush with death in these turbulent years was due in large part to his engagement with an emerging colonial power.

But Yuan's reign also gave Ye an opportunity to redeem himself. In January 1915, Japan issued Yuan's government the Twenty-one Demands, calling for increased colonial rights and territories for the Japanese in northern and coastal China. Students

⁵⁸ McDonald, *Urban Origins of Rural Revolution*, 64-65.

⁵⁹ Du and Zhang, *Ye Dehui Ping Zhuan*, 31.

throughout the country became furious and erupted in protest. In Changsha a young nineteen year-old student named Peng Chao cut off his finger in protest, and issued Tang Xiangming a nine-character a “blood letter” (*xueshu*) expressing one’s determination, hatred, or last wishes. It stated, “I’m determined not to see my country be humiliated.” A few days later Peng committed suicide by jumping in the Xiang River.⁶⁰ In order to pacify such mounting discontent and avoid more suicides, the Hunan government realized the need to act quickly. Shortly following this incident in July 1915, Ye was issued funds to establish an Anti-Japanese society in Changsha, of which Ye was to be the president. All this despite the fact that by this time he had already gained a loyal readership of Japanese intellectuals, as well as his business connections. The organization held its first meeting in August. Behind all this was Yuan Shikai, who, as it turns out secretly funded the founding of Anti-Japan organizations throughout China, to “stave off the most onerous of the Japanese demands in order to maintain the support of patriots while at the same time securing Japanese support for his imperial ambitions.”⁶¹

LATER YEARS AND DEATH

The 1920’s were a tumultuous decade for Changsha and especially for all of China. Sun Yat-sen’s death from cancer in 1925 allowed the Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek to come to power. Shortly thereafter, in the summer of 1926 he launched a

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 35. Peng’s letter stated “*li zhi bu yuan guo po jia wang.*”

⁶¹ McDonald, 65.

full out assault on all of China's provincial and regional warlords. This was the first Northern Expedition (1926-1928). Hunan's main waterway, the Xiang, as well as its provincial capital were one of the three main areas targeted for a military offensive that began in south China and pushed its way north. As for Ye Dehui, his involvement in foreign shipping and the local grain market continued during this period. But his power and local influence began to face a significant challenge at a crucial time in Hunan's history, especially from 1926 to 1927, when Mao Zedong's peasant movement grew in intensity throughout the province. Sentiment against privileged land owning gentry classes increased in large part due to the instability of the times, but also a result of communist activism. The communist's propaganda spelled certain doom for Ye and others like him, and eventually his wit and reputation could no longer save him.

By the 1920's Ye's relationship with Japanese shipping companies in Changsha became so close that by 1926 Ye even planned to travel to Japan. He had been invited to give lectures on his academic thought. As the peasant movement within the province intensified, Ye did not hold back his disdain and hostility.⁶² This made him an easy target for revolutionaries and leaders of peasant organizations. But above all he thought of himself first and foremost as a scholar. Business ventures, accumulated wealth and property, came second. For a man who spent most of his life using his pen to launch attacks or to defend himself from the attacks his critics, it is no wonder that Ye grew incensed by the activism of Hunan's peasant associations, most members of which possessed very little formal education. During the late 1920's in China enough young

⁶² Wen Ganzhi, "Da lie shen Ye Dehui," 210.

intellectuals and radicals came of age to pose a more significant challenge to Ye's old brand of conservatism than Liang Qichao and others had in 1898. The insistence from that era that Confucianism should remain the model for China's nation building was viewed by contemporary scholars such as Lu Xun, Hu Shi, and even Mao Zedong, as backward, outdated, and completely irrelevant. For these reformers and others Confucianism was ill suited to address the numerous social and political problems China faced during the early twentieth century.

For Changsha's unionized and activist masses Ye Dehui embodied all things backward about China's class system, and among the chief causes of peasant exploitation. He was also known as a hedonist and abuser of women. Unfortunately for Ye, Changsha County also served as the nucleus for the formation of peasant associations within surrounding counties in central Hunan—for instance, Xiangtan, Hengshan, Liling, and Xiangxiang—all of which were located relatively near or adjacent to Changsha. Furthermore, targeting gentry for humiliation, banishment, imprisonment, and even execution lay among the "Fourteen Great Achievements" of the peasant associations, as laid out in Mao Zedong's famous "Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan." Execution of landed gentry within these counties became widespread. In his report Mao noted that "every county has these major tyrants, some as many as several dozen and others at least a few, and the only effective way of suppressing the reactionaries is to execute at least a few in each county who are guilty of

the most heinous crimes.”⁶³ Thus for Mao and the other communist vanguard execution of gentry was a natural byproduct of the peasant’s activism and necessary for the spread of revolutionary ideals.

Mao’s famous report in March 1927, detailed the peasant movement at its peak. The following month Ye met his end. On the evening of April 4 a large group from the Changsha peasant association surrounded his home. After seizing Ye they escorted him to detention at the city center to await trial. Friends and relatives visited him in confinement, and noted that despite his circumstances he appeared quite calm. Prior to his trial they made desperate attempts and pleas for his release, but to no avail. On April 11 he was given a large trial by the “Hunan Number One People’s Court for Abolishing Counter-Revolutionary Elements,” and sentenced to death by firing squad on the grounds of the Changsha Education Association. The court charged Ye and made public his most significant crimes: conspiracy to murder and massacre members of the reform party and revolutionary factions during the Wuchang Uprising and during the reform movement of 1898, supporting the plot by Yuan Shikai to become emperor, for supporting Wu Peifu’s show of military force and supporting Zhao Hengti’s governorship, for playing a key role in Hunan’s warlord governments, including disseminating “feudalistic thought,” and other propaganda against the peasant uprising. Finally, Ye was also charged with being the chief leader of conservative factions

⁶³ Mao Zedong, “Fourteen Great Achievements: Hitting the Landlords Politically,” “Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan, March 1927” *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* (<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/index.htm>).

throughout Changsha and Hunan province, and for being the city's most well known *lie shen*, or "evil gentry."⁶⁴

Conclusion

Perhaps one reason why Ye Dehui is such a potentially interesting character for modern historians is because he represented a kind of anachronism. The very year of his birth, 1864, marked the end of a rebellion that wrought drastic changes to Chinese society. The growth of commerce that followed allowed for local elites such as Ye Dehui to not only become politically powerful, but extremely wealthy. Emergence of the Ye family as a powerful force in Changsha's urban life during the late Qing also represents a distinction from other elite families and regions from this period. This concerns the power held by certain lineage groups and their dominance over local and regional political life. In his study of Zhejiang's Yin County, Timothy Brook identified the success of several familial groups through successive generations and centuries.⁶⁵ But in contrast the Ye's were an immigrant family not native to Hunan. Their rise only occurred in wake of the post-Taiping diaspora. In this regard they represented an entirely different class of gentry elites during this period, ones that despite having very little familial roots in their respective localities, nonetheless became successful members

⁶⁴ Zhang, *Shou wang si wen*, 300.

⁶⁵ Timothy Brook, "Family Continuity and Cultural Hegemony: The Gentry of Ningbo, 1368-1911," in Joseph Esherick and Mary Baukus Rankin eds., *Chinese Local Elites and Patterns of Dominance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 27-50.

of the gentry merchant class. The growth of affluent families and lineages, and their exodus from one region to another has also been an occurring trend throughout Chinese history. Such has been the case especially when families were “fleeing military disorder,” associated with the tumultuous transition between dynasties, or other domestic rebellions.⁶⁶

Despite his perceived moral failings and contempt for the lower classes, Ye Dehui was a learned bibliophile, known for his wit and extensive library of Chinese classics, famously saying that the two things he never loaned out were “his wife and his books.” Certainly no figure in late Qing Hunan better combined the ideals of conservatism, anti-reformism and staunch opposition to westernization. After Ye’s execution in 1927 during the Hunan peasant uprising, Liang Qichao, who was severely criticized and essentially banished from Hunan by Ye and other members of the gentry following the reform movement of 1898, spoke of Ye’s passing in a letter to his sister. Liang noted, “Although Ye often showed little respect toward others he possessed great knowledge. One could also say that he was not a totally bad person.”⁶⁷ Amidst the fury of the Cultural Revolution in 1968 Mao Zedong even reflected that Ye had been unjustly executed.⁶⁸

In Ye’s case it is also worth noting that in the historiography of the rice riots, and even much of the scholarship on modern Chinese history, we find terms such as

⁶⁶ William T. Rowe, “Success Stories: Lineage and Elite Status in Hanyang County, Hubei, c. 1368-1949,” in Joseph Esherick and Mary Baukus Rankin eds., *Chinese Local Elites and Patterns of Dominance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

⁶⁷ Ding Wenjiang and Zhao Fengtian, *Liang Qichao nianpu*, 1145.

⁶⁸ Gong Yuzhi, “Cong Ye Dehui zhisi.”

“conservative gentry” casting a diverse group of men and scholars into confined and limited categories. Within this discourse radical reformers are recognized as heroes and victims and conservative gentry as villains. Indeed, much of the current literature on Hunan’s intellectual climate in the late Qing emphasizes the plight of reformers such as Tang Caichang, Tan Sitong, Xiong Xiling, Guo Songtao, and even Liang Qichao during the 1898 reform movement. But hopefully this chapter has provided a better understanding of Ye’s important role as an urban elite during the late Qing. As the forces of reform gained steam after the Revolution of 1911, his traditionalist authority became challenged by the likes of Tan Qunying and Huang Xing.

5-Activism and Urban Identity in the 1920's

On October 7, 1920 Mao Zedong (1893-1976) published an article in the Changsha *Da Gong Bao* ("L'Impartial"), titled, "Appeal to the 300,000 Citizens of Changsha in Favor of Self-Rule for Hunan," arguing that it was the responsibility of the people of Changsha, literally its *shimin*, or townspeople, to establish an independent Hunan government:

Therefore, the responsibility has inevitably fallen on the shoulders of our 300,000 citizens of Changsha. If the citizens of Changsha do not rise up immediately in a self-rule movement there will never be any hope for self-rule in Hunan. Citizens of Changsha! Although your 30 million fellow Hunanese are not aware that they have placed this responsibility on your shoulders, they have already silently done so. If you succeed, 30 million people will benefit. If you fail, 30 million people will suffer. You must know that your responsibility is not light.¹

This appeal reflected the tendency in Mao's early thought that "reasoned from a more Western-centered and urban centered perspective" to advance his developing radicalism.² The "30 million people," he referred to were not merely China's citizens, but all the people of Hunan province. Appealing to Changsha's citizenry contributed to the ongoing discourse of provincial and national mobilization following the May Fourth Movement, that established the city as a center of urban activism during the 1920's. Beginning with articles published in the local press from May 1919, specifically in the Hunan *Da Gong Bao*, this chapter discusses Changsha's local activism during the 1920s.

¹ Mao Zedong, "Appeal to the 300,000 Citizens of Changsha in Favor of Self-Rule for Hunan," in Schram, ed. In Vol. I of *Mao's Road to Power: Revolutionary Writings, 1912-1949*, edited by Stuart Schram. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1992., 572.

² *Ibid.*, xl.

Discussing Changsha's social climate also invites us to explore different pockets of activism in the city. The *Da Gong Bao* chronicled the activities of numerous schools and student organizations from around the province. One of these, the Hsiangya Medical School, was founded and funded by medical missionaries from Yale University. Thus this chapter also discusses western institutions such as Yale in China, one of the wealthiest and influential foreign missions working in China by the 1920's. Through publications such as "Save the Nation Weekly," students from Hsiangya were some of the most vocal anti-foreign elements of the May Fourth era in Changsha. The unpublished writings of Edward Hume, the founder and director of Yale in China and Hsiangya, also reveal the extent of both his and his institution's unsympathetic attitude toward organized labor and student activism in the city. Editorials from the *Da Gong Bao*, student publications such as "Save the Nation Weekly," as well as numerous handbills and leaflets, established Changsha as an urban space of radical thought during the 1920's. The final part of the chapter will discuss the work and writing of Mao Zedong, and his years spent in Changsha as an author and labor organizer.

HUNAN AND THE EARLY REPUBLICAN YEARS

In part the calls for Hunan independence originated in the Republican government's failure to achieve or maintain a unified China following the Revolution of 1911. On January 1, 1912 a new Republic was proclaimed in China. Yuan Shikai (1859-1916), a former general of the Qing army, was appointed as the first president.

But Yuan harbored ambitions of becoming the next emperor. Soon after he proclaimed himself emperor of a new dynasty, provinces and rival factions emerged throughout China. Some of these supported him, while others did not.

As the result of Yuan's rule, during the late 1910's and early 1920's Hunan and other provinces became places of bitter conflicts between competing warlords. In the previous chapter, I briefly discussed the tensions between Tan Yankai and Tang Xiangming. But there were additional warlord governors, such as Zhang Jingyao and Zhao Hengti. From 1911 to 1927 Hunan was controlled by thirteen different provincial governors, each loyal to a different faction, or clique.³ Edward McCord has labeled China's warlord climate during this period as one of *praetorianism*, a situation where "a number of individual military commanders exercise[d] autonomous political power by virtue of the actual or threatened use of the military force under their personal control."⁴ Following Yuan Shikai's attempt to become China's next emperor, he ordered northern forces of his Beiyang army to Hunan commanded by Tang Xiangming, to pacify the province. But after Yuan's death in 1916 Tang's position became compromised, allowing Tan Yankai to resume his post as military governor. Tan then consolidated all military and civil forces garrisoned or working in Changsha by removing commanders appointed by Tang's regime from their posts and replacing them with local Hunanese. One of his ablest aides and comrades at this time was Zhao Hengti. Despite their defeat northern armies loyal to the northern clique returned to Hunan in the spring of 1918,

³ McDonald, *The Urban Origins*, 21.

⁴ Edward A. McCord, *The Power of the Gun: The Emergence of Modern Chinese Warlordism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 4.

commanded by the warlords Wu Peifu and Zhang Jingyao. The native Hunan forces were no match for the invasion, and Changsha was captured on March 26.⁵ Zhang was appointed as the new military governor, but similar to Tang Xiangming was viewed by locals as an outsider and remained unpopular, especially in the provincial capital. Both how Zhang came to power and his subsequent dislike among locals will help us better understand the events surrounding his ouster in the fall of 1919, amidst the fury of the May Fourth Movement, discussed below.

Thus calls for independence in Hunan in 1920 not only occurred due to rising provincialism, but also resulted from the political and social fragmentation caused by warlord politics. The culmination of the independence movement was a mass parade and demonstration through the streets of Changsha on October 10, 1920 commemorating National Day. Representatives from all manner of classes; urban workers, military officers, and students, in total numbering some 20,000, marched in support of Hunan self-government. The National Day march and convention that followed solidified Changsha's place as one of the main centers in China's hinterland of liberal thought and activism during the post May Fourth era. The conference lasted for more than a month, with Cai Yuanpei, the chancellor of Beijing University, giving the introductory lecture. Thinkers and intellectuals from all over China were invited to attend, as were Bertrand Russell and John Dewey, who happened to be on a lecture tour through China at the time.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 227ff, 263.

Both made appearances and lectured. Having been contentious rivals, this also represented the first and only time the two ever met in person.⁶

As a printed document from the time, the formatting and style of the *Hunan Da Gong Bao* symbolized ideological contradictions at play in the city during the May Fourth era. During a time when the city was rife with anti-foreignism, the same newspaper that served as one of the main outlets of urban activism contained numerous advertisements for foreign-invested companies in the city. Butterfield and Swire, Amco, and British-American Tobacco, all paid for advertising space.



Image 6-1. Front matter for the *Hunan Da Gong Bao* (“L’Impartial”), May 20, 1919, pp. 2-8. Advertisement for Butterfield and Swire on left of page (“Tai Gu Gong Si Jian Lun Chuan”).

⁶ Stephen R. Platt, *Provincial Patriots: The Hunanese and Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 204-205.

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Images 6-2-4. All images taken from the *Hunan Da Gong Bao*, May 20, 1919 ("L'Imartial"), pp. 2-8. The top and center images show advertisements with illustrations for British American Tobacco ("Ying Mei Yan Gong Si"). Bottom image shows an advertisement for Amco ("Shanghai Mei Shang," left panel) and the China Nanyang Brother's Tobacco Company (Zhong Guo Nan Yang Xiong Di Yan Cao You Xian Gong Si" right panel).¹ Copied by the author.

Images 6.1-4 show that advertisements for Western tobacco and shipping companies appeared in the same newspaper with articles denouncing foreign imperialism. This made the *Da Gong Bao* a kind of literary space of the competing forces at play in Changsha during the early Republican period. This was the same issue that posted telegrams from student associations from other cities in the province urging the Beijing government to take action in response to the Versailles Treaty of May 4, 1919 (further discussed below). This was also the result of a new generation of urban youth who had come of age during the early twentieth century, those who grew up absent of the rigors of the imperial examination system which had been abolished in 1905. Furthermore, the coexistence of divergent discourses of imperialist power and urban activism in the local press emerged less than two decades after Changsha opened as a treaty port. As early as 1913 at least two-dozen Western companies maintained offices in the city, most them British, German, and Japanese. In addition to Butterfield and Swire, British American Tobacco, and Amco, there were offices for Jardine Matheson, Asiatic Petroleum, and many others.⁷ When Japanese and western businesses arrived in Changsha concessions were built in the north part of the city, and along the western banks for the Xiang River. Along this bank were situated the two “Big” and “Small” western city gates, which according to former residents were the center of western commercial and leisure activity, with opium dens, brothels, and casinos, most of which were Japanese owned and

⁷ Zhang Pengyuan, *Hunan xiandaihua de zaoqi jin Cheng*, 124ff.

operated.⁸ At one time British American Tobacco placed a large, multicolored advertisement along the outside of the western wall, most likely for all the merchant ships and their crews to see as they docked, of a woman holding a cigarette. In large characters it read “Smoke Hatamen Cigarettes,” and “They’re good.”⁹

Robert Bickers describes the condition of British diplomats, merchants, and missionaries in China during the late 19th and early 20th centuries as “pseudo-colonial,” employing a kind of “private enterprise imperialism.” This contrasted with Britain’s colonial projects elsewhere around the globe, most notably in places such as India. Rather, the British presence in China was not overtly colonial, one that sought to enforce rule of law through outright administrative governance through a Raj or military occupation.¹⁰ With the exception of personnel to police the concessions of larger treaty port cities such as Shanghai or Hankou, or with the pervasive presence of gunboats to patrol China’s numerous waterways, there were relatively few British soldiers garrisoned in China. But there were more than a fair share of trading companies, and such was also the case with Changsha. After the Mackay Treaty of 1902 officially allowed for the city to be opened for western trade, Britain’s commercial interests took full advantage of the city’s access to a main waterway, and as the capital city for the Qing Empire’s top rice-exporting province. What remains truly remarkable in the case of Changsha is the rapid

⁸ One of the Japanese brothels at Xiaoximen was called Meinaihe. See Liu Duping and Tang Ying, *Changsha jiyi: Qingmo Changsha qiangmi fengchao changpian jishi* (Changsha: Hunan wenyi chubanshe, 2006), 240.

⁹ Liu Duping, “Qingmo changsha qiangmi fengchao shimo,” *Changsha wenshi ziliao*, vol. 6 (Changsha: Zhongguo renmin zhengzhixie shanghuiyi changsha shi weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuanhui pianyin, June 1988), 34.

¹⁰ Robert Bickers, *Britain in China: Community, Culture, and Colonialism, 1900-1949* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 3-6.

pace of its westernization. Soon after it opened in 1904, numerous western enterprises established factories and concessions along the western banks of the Xiang River.

The first foreign owned enterprises to dominate the local market came from Japan. Under the Treaty of Shimoniseki, and more specifically the McKay Treaty of 1902 (also known as the Anglo-Chinese Commercial Treaty), Japanese businesses were allowed to set up factories and offices in various treaty ports. Through both their economic and cultural influence, the Japanese slowly won the hearts and minds of Changsha's consumers. By 1906 a branch of the Japanese post office had opened near the Japanese consulate, and by the second year of the new republic (1913), there were as many as nine Japanese businesses or shipping companies in the city.¹¹

According to a former Changsha resident named Xie Jusheng, by the time of the Changsha Riot of 1910, Japanese businesses flourished in the city and remained popular with local residents. This was especially evident in the "Small" and "Big" gates located on the western banks of the Xiang River. Xie worked at the Big West Gate General Store, specializing in pickling. His shop's location put him in frequent contact with both western and Japanese businesses, giving him a unique vantage point from which to view the changes the foreign presence exerted on Changsha's market:

The Japanese were the best and they really knew how to do business. The prices of their goods were always a bit lower than other places. Their things were nice looking and there was a label on every item indicating the price, there was no bargaining or evening off prices. Take a bowl for example. Several came bundled together, if you bought you bought the

¹¹ Wang Yayuan, *Changsha gong ren yun dong da shi ji* (Changsha: Hunan da xue chu ban she, 1988), 1-2.

whole bundle. There were no returns. They spoke Chinese with a Changsha accent and spoke it well.¹²

A friend of Xie's named Cao Kechang, owned and operated a prosperous ceramics shop near Da Xi Men that for many years dominated the city's market on ceramic goods, but after a few years Cao went out of business. At night he would go down to the docks to enjoy the cool breeze near the water, but while doing so often became frustrated at the sight of the Japanese merchants and ships, cursing, "Japanese devils raised by a foreign mother's dog! As soon as they came there has been no business left to do!"¹³ Much of Japan's business interests in China came in the form of immigrant merchants, businessmen, traders and shopkeepers. Communities of these sorts gradually emerged in many Yangtze River treatyport cities such as Shanghai, but also as far inland as Hankow, Chongqing, and Changsha. Such anti-Japanese sentiment did not derive from the kind one often encounters in China today, but instead from very practical concerns. It reveals the simple frustrations of a local businessman muscled out by foreign competition. The Japanese also enjoyed a certain advantage over western countries because they made efforts to learn the local customs and even spoke the local dialect.

¹² Liu Duping and Tang Ying. *Changsha jiyi*, 226.

¹³ *Ibid.*

ORGANIZED LABOR AND FOREIGN INFLUENCE

The Hunan branch of the Chinese Communist Party was formally established in Changsha on October 10, 1921. Cities such as Changsha, as well as smaller mining towns such as Anyuan served as smaller centers, separated from the larger metropole, where local activists experimented with organizing workers. The successful strike of coal miners in Anyuan in 1922 was hailed as “one of the major accomplishments” of the CCP’s early years, convincing Mao Zedong, Li Lisan, and Liu Shaoqi that similar strikes could be held elsewhere.¹⁴ Although a smaller and less industrialized city than its other urban counterparts, modern industry first came to Changsha in 1895, with the opening of the Shangshan Ji Match Company. Another enterprise, the Baoshan Machine Company, opened the next year. Several more enterprises opened in the following years. Each of these enterprises opened due to the reformist policies of Hunan governor Chen Baozhen.

Organized labor movements and strikes occurred in Changsha well before the foundation of the CCP, and independently of activists such as Mao, in that they were conceived and organized by the workers themselves. From the end of April to the early part of May 1917 Changsha’s dockworkers, numbering between seven to eight thousand, stopped working to demand higher wages. During the previous year the wages of a dockworker to transport two baskets of coal or grain from one pier to another was approximately forty *wen* copper cash, enough to purchase 1.3 *jin* of medium grade rice. But due to inflation, by the spring of 1917 this sum could only buy .5 *jin*. On April 22,

¹⁴ Elizabeth Perry, *Anyuan: Mining China’s Revolutionary Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 73.

1917 the dockworkers marched from the wharfs at the banks of the Xiang River into the city and surrounded the office of the county magistrate for two days. The government finally capitulated to the worker's demands by agreeing to three conditions: Cost of each load carried would not be subject to the inflation of copper currency. The maximum amount of weight each dockworker should be expected to carry would be reduced by twenty-five percent. Thirdly, each of these new regulations would be posted at each of Changsha's eleven piers.¹⁵ The following year there were additional strikes by the city's rickshaw pullers, as well as by masons and carpenters. Each of these demonstrated the "extent to which a phalanx of local organizations such as the various guilds and merchant organizations had real power," rivaling the warlord government, which not only controlled the province during these years but urban affairs as well.¹⁶ This also shows that labor activism existed in the city prior to May Fourth and the leadership of Mao Zedong.

STUDENT ACTIVISM AND YALE IN CHINA

During the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, Horace Pitkin, a graduate of Yale University's class of 1892, was beheaded. Some of Pitkin's fellow alumni were so moved by his death that they lobbied to establish a mission in China's hinterland, away from the bigger cities with large concentrations of foreigners and their concessions. By

¹⁵ Wang Yayuan, *Changsha gong ren yun dong shi* (Changsha: Guo fang ke ji da xue yin shua guang yin zhuang), 11-13.

¹⁶ McDonald, *Urban Origins*, 146.

1902 they raised several thousand dollars and founded the Yale Foreign Missionary Society and chose Changsha, a city known for its anti-foreignism. The mission was formally established in 1904, the same year that Changsha officially opened as a treaty port. To head the effort they chose Edward Hume (1856-1957), a Yale alumni and graduate of the Johns Hopkins Medical School. Despite encountering initial resistance to the foreign presence in the city, the influence of both the hospital and school proved far-reaching. Its curriculum combined both Chinese and Western learning, and also emphasized that Christianity would not be imposed upon its students.¹⁷ The original locations of both the hospital and school were in the heart of Changsha, in an old rice storehouse near the banks and docks of the Xiang River on West Archway Street (Xi Pai Lou). After extensive renovation the compound included classrooms for the school, a chapel, housing for foreigners, and a dormitory for students. Hume wrote about his experiences in Changsha in *Doctors East, Doctors West, An American Physician's Life in China* (1946). It chronicled his years in Changsha, providing an insightful perspective of a foreigner in residence in the city during the early years of the twentieth century. Despite a rough start Hume endeared himself to the local population through his work as a physician and by making friends with locals.

¹⁷ Jonathan Spence, "Edward Hume: Yale for China," in *To Change China: Western Advisers in China, 1620-1960* (New York: Penguin Books, 1980), 171.

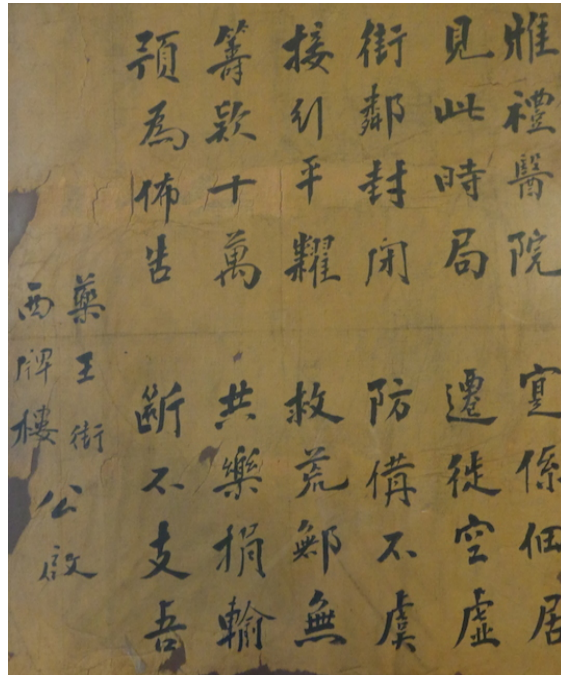


Image 6-5. Notice placed on Yale compound during 1910 riot.¹⁸

Such contacts no doubt served Hume and his family well during the rice riot in 1910 when crowds burned and looted foreign buildings throughout the city. During this incident the Yale facilities, at that time located in the heart of Changsha, were spared. Image 5.1 shows the notice posted on the front gate of the Yale compound at Xi Pai Lou by the local neighborhood association during the riot:

The Yale hospital is a rented building, and insomuch as during this crisis they have abandoned it, the residents of these streets have sealed it to keep it from harm. To relieve the needs of the poor, a fund for purchasing rice has been started which will amount to one hundred thousand and all are gladly contributing. Having given notice under no circumstances must you damage this property.

¹⁸ “Notice posted by neighbors on the Yale Mission Hospital, Changsha, during the Riot of April 1910, when nearly all the foreign places had been destroyed.” Item RU 232 6.6A. Yale University: Manuscripts and Archives. The English translation of the notice appears on the back.

In 1910 Yale's tenure in the city was still in its infancy. During moments of crisis it still had to depend on the support of the local community for protection. In part this may have been attributable to the philanthropic and medical care provided by the institution. But perhaps the residents of Xi Pai Lou also deserve a degree of credit for allowing the compound to remain unharmed during the riot. Yale in China also benefited from the wealth and capital that came with its brand name. In addition to talented physicians such as Hume, it also benefited administratively. From 1909 to 1922 Dickson Leavens, a noted economist and expert on the international silver market, served as the organization's treasurer in Changsha. He compiled weekly reports and letters regarding the financial situations of both the schools and hospitals in monthly letters to the Board of Trustees back in the United States. For instance, according to his own financial report covering the years 1926 to 1927, Leavens reported the Yale in China budget as numbering some 150,000 U.S. dollars. Most of this budget covered the expenses for the hospital. Some 80,000 of this amount came via a grant provided from the "China Medical Board, a possible source of income from the Nationalist government."¹⁹

But for as much as the Yale hospital may have benefited Changsha, by the 1920's its welcome in the city became compromised by rising local resentment toward foreigners caused by international events. In May 1919 events in Europe inaugurated a social and intellectual revolution throughout China. In what became known as the May Fourth

¹⁹ Dickson H. Leavens, "Hsiang Ya Medical College, Financial Report, July 1, 1926 to June 30, 1927," in the Dickson H. and Marjorie B. Leavens Papers, Series II, Box 3, Folders 27-37 (Yale University: Manuscripts and Archives).

Movement, students in cities erupted in protest and outrage at the awarding of German concessions in Shandong province to the Empire of Japan during peace negotiations to end World War I. The Treaty of Versailles may have ended the war in Europe, but its effects were felt in China and continued to resonate well into the next decade.

Following the outbreak of nationwide protests the Changsha *Da Gong Bao*, “L’Impartial,” chronicled the activities of many student groups and organizations, including the students of Hsiangya Medical College, serving as the main source for the response of Changsha’s activist and intellectual community in the city. An editorial from May 15 announced that a meeting of the provincial educational bureau’s executive secretaries convened the night before to address the situation in Qingdao. Delegates and representatives from schools, businesses, and peasant associations throughout Hunan attended. Similar meetings were held in cities throughout China.²⁰ In the days that followed the newspaper also contained the text of important telegraphs sent to Beijing from Paris and other cities in China on the question of Sino-Japanese relations, and emphatically stated that the relationship between the two countries was a matter to be settled between them only, and not a matter of international concern. An issue from May 19th showed the complete text of a telegraph from the Student Union in Changde, another city in Hunan. It was addressed to the president of China, the national committee on foreign affairs, and all military governments in the country, and stated that the Versailles Treaty stipulations amounted to a “forfeiture of national sovereignty, and

²⁰ “Zuo ri jiao yu hui zhi xiao zhang gan shi lian he hui tao lun xie zheng qing dao wen ti,” *Hunan Da Gong Bao*, May 15, 1919, Hunan li shi zi liao (HNLSZL) 1, 1959, 3.

was a humiliation to the country” (*sang quan ru guo*).²¹ By May 28 the next week official associations to protect domestic products had been founded in Hunan’s major cities, calling for student strikes in schools throughout the province on June 3. The day after the strike, on June 4, the “Declaration of Hunan Student’s Strike” appeared, stating, “The conscience of all students in Hunan has been aroused. Considering the demands of the current circumstances, it was resolved that all students in Hunan province declared a strike in obligation to save the nation and pledge their support.”²²

Another article appeared a few days later, titled “The Progress of the Hsiangya School after the Strike,” noting the organization of ten man “Save the Nation Teams” (*jiu guo tuan*) at businesses throughout the city, and that each team drew maps of which establishments in Changsha that could potentially harmed by the influence of Japanese products. The activities of Changsha’s urban Save the Nation Teams were primarily facilitated by students from the Yale University Medical College, or “Hsiangya Yi Xue Yuan” who were studying in Changsha when the movement began. To inform poorer or illiterate residents with little or no education pictures with illustrations were posted in public areas throughout the city, depicting humorous scenes of how foreign products harmed the local economy. More than one thousand handbills were also distributed to residents advertising the Save the Nation Teams and their mission.²³

Chow Tse-tsung chronicled student demonstrations and strikes following May Fourth in Tianjin, Shanghai, Nanjing, and Wuhan, where student groups formed and

²¹ “Changde quan xue suo ji xue quan ti dian,” *Hunan Da Gong Bao*, May 19, 1919, HNLSZL 1, 1959, 5.

²² “Hunan chuan ti xue sheng ba ke xuan yan,” *Hunan Da Gong Bao*, June 4, 1919, *Ibid.*, 8.

²³ “Hsiangya yi xue ba ke hou zhi jin xing,” *Hunan Da Gong Bao*, June 5, 1919, *Ibid.*, 15.

discussed how to best respond to the suppression of demonstrations by authorities in Beijing on May 4. In Wuhan in neighboring Hubei province just north of Hunan, some of the most radicalized student groups were also from a missionary school. On May 11 some two thousand representatives from fifteen colleges and middle schools met at Wenhua University, a U.S. funded institution.²⁴ One of the main sources of activism and debate in these urban centers was the student press. In Changsha periodicals such as the “Save the Nation Weekly,” published by students from Hsiangya, called for a radical approach to dealing with those who advocated or collaborated with foreign interests. The outrage and indignation of Changsha’s student community at the outcome of the Versailles Treaty was expressed in the June 19, 1919 issue. An essay on the front page by Gao Jinglang (1892-1983), titled “Regarding Traitors,” called for punishment by death those who betrayed China to imperial interests, and stated that, “Anyone has the right to punish traitors in our country and put them to death.” It also criticized the “wolves in sheep’s clothing” that betrayed the nation (*mai guo zei*). Prior to his residence in Changsha Gao studied in the United States at Harvard Medical School, helped found the Xinhua School of Medicine, and eventually became a top doctor in Shanghai after 1949. In classrooms in universities all over China, noted Gao, the call to kill such traitors was voiced by students in Beijing, Zhejiang, Anhui, and with equal enthusiasm in southern provinces such as Hubei and Guangzhou. In other cities in Hunan students and educators participated in a nationwide student strike on June 3. Teachers at schools and

²⁴ Chow Tse-tung, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 131.

universities in the city of Hengyang telegraphed the provincial government to have governor Zhang Jingyao (1881-1933) removed from office.²⁵

Zhang had been appointed as governor in March 1918, and was a military man with a warlord background loyal to a faction in northern China led by a general named Duan Qirui. After the protests began in Changsha and in other cities in Hunan, Zhang closed student presses, disbanded the Provincial Assembly, the Provincial Educational Association, and other groups.²⁶ By the fall of 1919 calls appeared in the Changsha press for his removal, especially following the discovery of a large shipment of opium seeds at the Wuhan railway station in December. Once the shipment of some fifty bags was found, and were addressed to Zhang, news spread through student media and other national press agencies. The opium bags were discovered by a young worker named You Yong, a recent graduate of the Railway Management School of the Ministry of Communications. As a member of the Wuhan Student Association, You felt inspired to report the shipment to his friends and colleagues. The opium bags were addressed to the “General Command Headquarters of the Second Route Army,” and were being managed by soldiers from Hunan’s Sixth Mixed Brigade who stated that the bags were to be turned over to the governor of Hunan. One of the news dispatches from the time even contained an excerpt of You’s account of the event:

Zhang Jingyao grows poppy extensively throughout Hunan in order to make a huge profit; in order to provide for his army for five years, he is sowing the seeds of an evil fruit that will hurt China for thousands of

²⁵ Gao Jinglang, “Dui mai guo zei,” *Xue sheng jiu guo bao*, No. 4, June 19, 1919, p. 1. In Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, Yale-China Association Records, Series XVI, Box 5A, in folder titled “Hunan Student Save the Nation Weekly,” 1917, 1919.

²⁶ McDonald, *Urban Origins*, 111.

years, bringing calamity to the country and misery to its people, a crime that must not escape punishment.²⁷

The dispatch also noted that once the Wuhan students arrived at the station to inspect the bags they were immediately confiscated and photographed. The growing of opium had also been practiced by in Shaanxi by a warlord governor named Chen Shufan, making him wealthy in the process. Thus You and the Wuhan students, as well as their classmates in Changsha were completely within reason to demand the removal of corrupt governors such as Chen and Zhang Jingyao, as the law was on their side. A recent treaty had been signed with the British banning the production and shipment of opium throughout China.

On December 27 Mao Zedong and other Hunan activists, now based out of Beijing, submitted a petition to the national government expressing their opposition to Zhang Jingyao's involvement in a mining scandal. They accused Zhang, along with Zhang Rongmei, director of the Hunan Mining Bureau, of selling the rights to a zinc smeltery at an area called Shuikoushan into a joint American and Chinese venture. The deal would have made both men millionaires. Under the arrangement, ore from the mines would be sold to management at a price of ten U.S. dollars per ton. As the largest and most profitable mine in Hunan, the contract would have also given the Shuikoushan joint ownership a complete monopoly over mining operations in the province.²⁸

²⁷ "Zhang Jingyao's Smuggles Opium Seeds (continued)," (People's Agency dispatch, January 4, 1920), in Schram ed., *M RTP*, Vol. I, 469-470.

²⁸ "Petition Opposing Zhang Jingyao's Secret Agreement to Sell the Mines," in Schram ed., *M RTP*, Vol I., 460-461.

The controversy over Zhang Jingyao's opium seeds revealed that even in the early stages of the May Fourth era, matriculation of student activists such as You Yong into the national bureaucracy allowed them to become government whistleblowers. In the months after protests began this was also facilitated by formation of the Save the Nation Teams, created shortly after the first nationwide student boycott on June 3, 1919. In Changsha teams and their representatives were established at various work units throughout the city. For instance, there were three different teams listed at businesses located on Yao Wang Jie, at the main branch of the Changsha post office, and two different businesses at Ba Jiao Ting, located in the city center. There were even teams posted at three different shops on Pozi Street, the city's commercial and business hub, as well as at two different book printing shops. In total there approximately 19 teams stationed at 16 different businesses. Situated within the heart of the city the teams and their representative leaders (*tuan dai biao*) had ready access to promote the ideals of national salvation to local residents by distributing pamphlets and other literature.²⁹ The May Fourth movement also spawned the formation of ten-man Save the Nation Teams in cities throughout China. In Changsha and other cities every ten-man team appointed their own group leader (*tuan zong*). Individual team members carried cards advertising the group's mission on the front and contained all the names of the other group members on the back. These teams used their activism and distribution of printed matter to

²⁹ "Jiao ji bu bao gao, xiang ya yi xue jiao ji bu bao gao, yi cheng li zhi jiu guo shi ren tuan," in *Xue sheng jiu guo bao*, *Ibid.*, 2.

educate Changsha's residents about the importance of national unity in the face of foreign imperialism.

Another essay on the front page of "Save the Nation Weekly" from the June 19 issue was an article written by a Hsiangya medical student named Ying Yuanyue (1896-1991). Ying railed against how Japanese goods dominated the market in cities and towns throughout Hunan since 1915, when China capitulated to the "Twenty-one Demands." Using medical jargon to diagnose China's ills he argued that such dependence on foreign goods was akin to a kind of sickness needing treatment, and that Japanese merchants or locals who conspired with them should be forcefully dealt with. In order to promote the sale of domestic products on the market he recommended that Changsha's shops stop selling Japanese goods and place any remaining items on hand into a communal market where they could be consolidated and sold at a more reasonable price. As with Gao Jinglang, Ying was a top medical student and later achieved success as a physician, studying in the United States at Johns Hopkins University.³⁰ Such essays reveal the extent to which the Yale Medical School in Changsha attracted top students from around the country. Neither Ying nor Gao Jinglang were from there, but nonetheless put their rhetorical skills to use in condemning the Japanese presence in the city.

Discussion of these kinds of regional responses bears similarity to Wen-hsin Yeh's analysis of May Fourth as a regional movement rather than one isolated to commercial and political centers such as Beijing and Shanghai. Her "middle country radicalism," suggests that student movements and activism in cities throughout China

³⁰ Ying Yuanyue, "Wei guo huo qing ming," *Ibid.*

remained “squarely at the center rather than the periphery of the structural transformation of Chinese society in the 20th century.”³¹ The articles from Hsiangya’s “Save the Nation Weekly,” as well as the Hunan *Da Gong Bao*, certainly illustrate that such was also the case in Changsha. Furthermore, the degree to which Gao Jinglang, Ying Yinyue, and other Hsiangya students resented the foreign presence in the city represented an interesting paradox. Regardless of how much Edward Hume and Yale’s other doctors and teachers may have endeared themselves to Changsha’s population owing to their medical work, and even after the hospital and school relocated to their new location outside the north gate of the old city, resentment toward Yale and other foreign institutions in the city continued. Even students from their own medical college joined the protests against the foreign presence in Changsha. This was evident not only in the student activism following May Fourth, but also came to a head following the “May Thirtieth Incident” in 1925.

On May 30, 1925 locals in Shanghai became outraged when news spread that a Chinese employee at a factory had been killed in a Japanese-owned factory. During the ensuing protests police in Shanghai’s foreign concession fired on protesters, killing eleven people. Although it took place in a city in the far eastern coast the incident mobilized student activists in cities all over China, and caused the membership of the Communist Party to grow. The incident, “breathed life into the CCP. In 1925 CCP membership was still slightly under 1,000; two years later, it had grown to more than

³¹ Wen-hsin Yeh, “Middle County Radicalism: The May Fourth Movement in Hangzhou.” *The China Quarterly*, No. 140 (Dec., 1994), 925.

57,000. CCP members had led huge mass movements, both in the city and in the countryside.”³² In Changsha schools printed and distributed handbills on the streets with specific demands and language hostile to foreigners. A June 1925 handbill from the students of Fu Chu’u Middle School read:

Brothers! We must not trust any out-siders. We must rely only on ourselves—help ourselves. Let us use these slogans and go ahead.

1. “Down with the imperialism of Japan and Britain.”
2. Have no business dealings with Britain or Japan.
3. All unequal treaties must be done away with.
4. Kill the murderers.
5. Help the families of those who have been killed.
6. Don’t allow England or Japan’s troops to be stationed in China.
7. Strike down the old traitor Tuan Ch’i-Jui [Duan Qirui].³³

This handbill in particular expressed that the Duan Qirui warlord clique represented just as much of a threat to China as the imperialism of England and Japan, even on par with the troops who fired on bystanders in Shanghai. Handbills were also drawn up and distributed by students from the Chen Ya Middle School and made similar demands. The student activists who authored them not only called for an end to British and Japanese imperial interests in Changsha, but also viewed themselves as part of the larger national discourse on anti-imperialism, calling for the complete cessation of relations with western nations. They demanded that foreign factories be closed, those responsible put to death, and indemnities paid out to the families of those killed.

Furthermore:

³² Hans J. Van De Ven, *From Friend to Comrade: The Founding of the Chinese Communist Party, 1920-1927* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 3.

³³ “Proclamation issued in the form of a handbill by the Fu Ch’u Middle School, June 1925,” *The Edward H. and Lotta Hume Papers*, E.H. Hume Subject Files, Group No. 787, Series II, Box No. 6. Folder 6-119, “Anti-Foreign Disturbances in China: Clippings.” (Yale University: Manuscripts and Archives).

- (3) Boycotting of English goods is not enough. We must eradicate the roots of the British and Japanese in China.
- (a) Let us take back control of the [foreign] customs.
 - (b) We must regulate imports and exports.
 - (c) Help our own capitalists. “Down with the capitalists” is the common cry, but that means foreign capitalists, because they are always taking the strength from our country. . .
 - (d) We must set up a gold standard. Silver is unstable and we must have our currency stable.
 - (e) Down with imperialism (that means foreign imperialism)

If we can accomplish this, we can do without Japanese and British goods and we need not suffer under foreign oppression.³⁴

These handbills reveal the extent of anti-foreignism in Changsha during the 1920’s. It was prevalent even among urban middle schools. Students from a local prestigious girl’s school, the I Fang School, even got into the act:

Wake up! Prepare! Purify!

You Chinese, do you know that the situation of China is? China is not now a closed country paying attention only to herself. She is not one of the nations of the world, but one of the weaker ones and apparently approaching her ruin.

What bad deed could Shanghai students do empty-handed? Who would think that several times the English would fire at and kill them? That men should die is a small matter, but a shame of the country is great.³⁵

Changsha’s IFang School was founded in June 1918 by Zeng Guofan’s granddaughter, Zeng Baosun near the site of her grandfather’s temple. This explains the note beneath the title of the handbill among Edward Hume’s papers, “This school is under the auspices of Miss and Mr. Tseng.”³⁶ These were students who, like their

³⁴ “Proclamation issued in the form of a handbill by the Chen Ya School,” June 1925, *Ibid.*

³⁵ “Proclamation in the form of a handbill by the girls of the I Fang School,” June 1925, in *Ibid.*

³⁶ Huang Zengfu, “Changsha nu zi jiao yu shi hua,” *Changsha wen shi zi liao* (Changsha: Zhong guo ren min zheng fu xie shang hui yi Changsha shi wei yuan hui), 171.

classmates from other schools who distributed handbills, were also acutely aware of China's place in the world and viewed national humiliation as a greater disgrace than the loss of human life.

The rising tide of anti-foreign student movements throughout the 1920's eventually pressured Edward Hume to eventually transfer administration of all Yale facilities in Changsha over to local control. Beginning with the May Fourth student unrest in 1919, and also reaching fever pitch with the death of Sun Yat-sen in 1925 and the May Thirtieth Incident, there were also reports from all over the city that in addition to strikes and other worker's movements local police even ordered foreigners out of their rickshaws and made them walk. Any Chinese seen carrying a foreigner's luggage was beaten up and harassed by students. American women and children were spat at in Changsha's streets. The frequent student strikes and boycotts of the early to mid 1920's made it difficult for both Western and Chinese teachers to maintain discipline.³⁷

Shortly after Sun Yat-sen's death Hume was even informed by one of his female students that at one of the mass rallies held in Sun's honor, "it was moved, seconded and carried by acclamation that all foreigners in Changsha should be brought to the execution ground and shot at dawn the next day," and that Hume was "number one on the list" to be executed. Fortunately Hunan's governor dispatched a detachment of troops to the school to protect Hume and his staff.³⁸ None of this animosity was lost on Hume. In a letter to the Yale-in-China trustees he noted that the Chinese were becoming

³⁷ Spence, *To Change China*, 179.

³⁸ Hume, *Doctors East, Doctors West*, 264.

“increasingly fed up” with the foreign presence in China. He likened it to if Indians or some other outside culture decided to come to America to try and tell how their “education should be formed and developed.”³⁹ Thus as tensions and unrest throughout China increased in these years, so did Hume’s anxiety. Via correspondence he quarreled with the Yale trustees, criticizing the ineptness of his American staff, many of whom had little knowledge of Chinese language or local customs and culture. He also noted that much student resentment was also directed against the American teachers at the Yale Middle School, who showed little appreciation for Chinese history or culture.⁴⁰

Hume and many of the American Yale in China staff also remained suspicious of the Hunan labor movement and communist activity among students. Responding to a strike of 189 Yale students in mid-December 1924 one teacher in Changsha observed:

The background of the disturbance there which resulted in 189 students leaving the school and college appears to involve the following factors prevailing over a great part of China. First among these are the doctrines of Bolshevism which have been fermenting among young students throughout the republic during the last three or four years. Through these teachings they have acquired the old Russian conception of the assumed responsibility of university students for the political welfare of their country. Chinese students are, therefore, much more prominent in propagating revolutionary doctrines than in the Western world . . . Extreme forms of socialistic and communistic bodies with others exhibit special “isms” and more extravagant phases of this radical and almost violent onset against Christianity, capitalism and foreign control.⁴¹

Of further concern to the American staff was the rise, especially after 1919, of nationalism among student populations in cities throughout China. This emergent

³⁹ Letter from Hume, quoted in Spence, *To Change China*, 177.

⁴⁰ Spence, 181.

⁴¹ “The Strike at Yali,” in *The Edward H. and Lotta Hume Papers* (Yale University: Manuscripts and Archives).

nationalism was in many ways directly linked to the rampant degree of anti-foreignism that had been ignited by the intellectual flames of the May Fourth Movement. This increased following the events of 1925 in Shanghai, which also spawned nationwide protests and strikes. In the passage above we can also see how the teachers at Yale in China associated the teachings of Marxism specifically to the mentality of youth in the non-Western world, causing unrest among youth they remained powerless to control. This sentiment was even expressed by Hume in early 1925:

Probably the most potent destructive force at work in Hunan at the moment is the group of agitators who give allegiance to one or another “-ism.” Ninety miles away from the capital [Changsha] are the famous Pinghsiang coal mines, where thousands of the miners have been made members of one or the other two labor organizations there, one the “Ma Tang” or Marxian Group; and the other the “An Tang” or Anarchistic Group. The latter is in reality the Labor party at the most extreme left; the former is the Communistic party.⁴²

Here Hume referred to his alarm over the emergence of anarchism and communism among worker’s movements in the coalmines of eastern Hunan and neighboring Jiangxi. Pingxiang and Anyuan became testing grounds for labor activism during the 1920’s, with Anyuan later becoming known as China’s “little Moscow.” Much of the history of this was actually chronicled by Liu Shaoqi, who along with Mao served as the main organizers of the coal miner’s strike at Anyuan. Following their successful strike in 1922 the workers from Pingxiang and Anyuan issued their own declaration. Similar to the urban handbills distributed by Changsha’s students, some of

⁴² Edward Hume, “Reflections on the Recent Student Strikes in Hunan: Some elements back of the anti-Christian outburst,” in *Ibid.*, 4.

Hume's concern may have originated from the literature generated by the Pingxiang and Anyuan workers that also may have made its way to his desk:

The strike is successful! Our anger has been aroused! Before workers were "beasts of burden," now "long live the workers!" Our first main objective has been achieved, and we can declare our return to work.

Although we have only attained a small victory this time, this is our first, but later our second, third victory will be infinite, so this time our pain cannot be fully resolved, but the second, third it will be resolved; as long as it is our group (*tuan ti*), this organization (*ju le bu*).

Our "method," "heart," and "courage," during this strike, has at last expressed our sacred vitality (*shen sheng jing sheng*). Friends! You should now never say that workers have no sense or intelligence!⁴³

Hume remained completely unsympathetic toward the labor movement, student radicals, and other "agitators," referring to them as the "most destructive force at work in Hunan" during the 1920's. Other Americans working for Yale also experienced hostility from locals. In November 1926 the household servants of the Greene family petitioned them for a twenty-five percent increase in wages, as well as extra pay for working during the Chinese New Year. Most importantly was that all new servants were to be dismissed or hired only on the authority of the local labor union. Again directed by communist labor unions, Chinese nurses at Hsiangya followed suit by presenting their own demands and threatening to go on strike.⁴⁴ Hume's resignation from Yale-in-China in 1926 came not only from local pressure and the anti-foreign feeling felt throughout the city, but also as a result of his own personal conviction that the hospital, school, and medical college should eventually come under local Chinese

⁴³ Liu Xiaoqi and Zhu Xiaolian "Pingxiang Anyuan lu kuang gong ren shang gong xuan yan," HNLSZL 1, 1958, 17.

⁴⁴ Ruth Greene, *Hsiang-Ya Journal* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1977), 52.

administration. When he finally departed the city in January 1927 he was promised his own private compartment by the Hunan governor but in the end he and his family had to find a small space huddled in a mail and baggage car.⁴⁵

But Hume at least indirectly played a part in financing the activities a young radical named Mao Zedong, who was allowed to rent a space owned by Yale to open his cultural bookstore. This eventually became the headquarters for Mao's "Cultural Book Society" founded on December 1, 1920, and listed at 56 Chaozong Street.⁴⁶ Its address was on the same street and address as the press for "Save the Nation Weekly," published by the student union of Hsiangya Medical College, located outside Changsha's north gate. Mao even later collaborated with the Yale students by serving as the editor of the journal *Xin Hunan*, or "New Hunan."

MAO ZEDONG IN CHANGSHA

In June 1912, shortly after enrolling in Changsha's First Normal School, Mao Zedong wrote "Essay on How Shang Yang Established Confidence by Moving of the Pole," where his views regarding the need for a strong government to rule society were already evident. Shang Yang (390-338 B.C.), a founder of the Legalist school, once issued a series of decrees on how to rule properly. According to Sima Qian, Shang once offered gold pieces to anyone who would move a pole he erected at the south gate of his

⁴⁵ Lian Xi, *The Conversion of Missionaries: Liberalism in American Protestant Missions in China, 1907-1932* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 25-59.

⁴⁶ Mao Zedong, "Advertisement of the Cultural Book Society in Changsha," in *M RTP*, Vol. II, 15.

city. At first no one dared move it, but after Shang increased the amount to fifty gold pieces one man finally moved the pole, “to demonstrate that he did not practice deception.” Mao interpreted this as representative of the failures of those in power to rule, especially in China soon after the Revolution of 1911. He saw the sense in authoritarianism but believed the degree to which it existed in China for centuries had failed its people.⁴⁷ His use of Shang Yang also illustrates an important theme in Mao’s writing and from other figures from the May Fourth era, of using classical Chinese thought to criticize China’s present circumstances.

May Fourth writers were also intensely critical of the Confucian tradition and argued for the complete emancipation of the individual. Hu Shi, Chen Duxiu, and others believed that Chinese society remained hindered by antiquated filial traditions.⁴⁸ These and other thinkers also published essays critical of marriage customs, as well as other aspects of society associated with backwardness. Chen Duxiu (1879-1942), one of the main voices of the movement and founder of the influential journal *New Youth* viewed Confucianism as “a product of the feudal ages.” Furthermore, “it did not fit the needs of modern society.” Freedom of women to marry and for widows to remarry were both part of what Chen viewed as the need for total freedom for the individual in China’s new society.⁴⁹ Some of Lu Xun’s most famous essays scathingly rebuked old culture and what he felt was the irreparable harm it exerted on Chinese society, believing

⁴⁷ Mao Zedong, “Essay on How Shang Yang Established Confidence by the Moving of the Pole,” in Schram, *M RTP*, Vol. I, 5-6.

⁴⁸ Edmund S.K. Fung, “The Idea of Freedom in Modern China Revisited: Plural Conceptions and Dual Responsibilities,” in *Modern China*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (October 2006), 459.

⁴⁹ Chow, *The May 4th Movement*, 302-303.

Chinese “should live for themselves instead of for their ancestors. To learn modern science and Western knowledge was more important than to recite the Confucian classics.”⁵⁰ Similar to thinkers such as Hu Shi (1891-1962), Mao possibly sought to “reorganize China’s national heritage,” by infusing it with Western philosophy.⁵¹

Like many of his contemporaries Mao was mainly critical of orthodox Confucianism and was influenced by its more progressive strands. Like Liang Qichao and some of the reformers before him, Mao was influenced by the Neo-Confucian school, the teachings of Wang Fuzhi and Zhu Xi in particular. He was also inspired by more contemporary scholar officials such as Zeng Guofan and Guo Songtao. All of these thinkers had studied in training academies in Changsha. Recognizing Mao’s intellectual heritage, as well as how his ideas compared with the more notable May Fourth thinkers above makes us recognize his place within Hunan’s intellectual tradition, and how he may have viewed himself as one meant to pass on such tradition, albeit with his own distinct perspective, also inspired by Western thought. His time in Changsha also first exposed him to the translated works of Friedrich Paulsen, Bertrand Russell, John Dewey, John Stuart Mill, and many others.

At Beijing University in the winter of 1918 Mao joined a Marxist study group as a librarian and fell under the tutelage of Li Dazhao, one of the founders of Chinese communism. Mao eventually returned to Changsha to write and publish articles for his own journal, the *Xiang River Review*. It provided an intellectual forum to advance his

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 309.

⁵¹ *Fung*, 465.

newly developed understanding of Marxism. The first translations of Karl Marx's works were made available to young scholars at this time, and the influence of the Russian Revolution of 1917 also had a profound impact on the development of communism in China.

Written just a few months after the May 4th protests, on July 14, 1919 in the first issue he published "Manifesto on the Founding of the Xiang River Review," identifying Japan as China's greatest "international oppressor." The most effective means for dealing with such aggression was through the boycotting of Japanese products, students boycotting classes, and through strikes and protests from the merchant and worker's classes.⁵² One week later, on July 21, Mao wrote "The Great Union of the Popular Masses," where some of his earliest conceptions of a Marxist revolution through a mass uprising were elucidated, in particular for unionization of the working classes. His time spent at the Beijing University Marxist study group, as well as the events of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and its success, influenced this three-part essay. In particular this article also "capsulated a dominant element in the thought of the May Fourth Movement: that spontaneously, because of the logic of the situation, great masses of the people could be mobilized for the defense of the nation," which suggested that for Mao "democracy and national salvation went hand in hand."⁵³

Mao's most important writing from this period also reflected his involvement with organized labor, frequently appearing in the *Da Gong Bao*. Published in May 1922

⁵² Mao Zedong, "Manifesto on the Founding of the Xiang River Review," in Schram, *M RTP*, Vol I., 319.

⁵³ Angus McDonald, *The Urban Origins of Rural Revolution*, 105.

“Some Issues That Deserve More Attention,” commemorated May Day on behalf of all of Hunan’s workers, arguing they had the “right to existence, the right to work, and the right to enjoy the fruits of their labor.” The essay declared to Changsha’s readers the rights of local workers and presented a basic presentation of Marxist thought. Mao concluded by referencing Mencius, who once cited the *Book of Poetry* to explain how unjust rulers failed to learn from history: “The beacon of Yin is not remote, It is in the time of the (last) sovereign of Hsia,” which meant that the tyrants of Yin failed to learn from the fate of the tyrants of the Hsia dynasty before them.⁵⁴ In this case the reference critiqued the provincial assembly’s failure to draft a constitution advancing the rights of workers and that those who had come to power in Hunan had failed to learn from China’s past.⁵⁵

By November 1922 factories, businesses, and other manual laborers throughout the city successfully unionized, and Mao founded and was elected head of the All-Hunan Federation of Labor Unions. The local press, the *Da Gong Bao* in particular, published tracts and declarations from certain unions. The “Charter of the Changsha Mason’s and Carpenter’s Union” first appeared in the September 6 and 7 issues. As we may recall, this was the same occupation of low wage urban laborers involved in the rioting over rice twelve years earlier. In 1910 the local masons and carpenters only conceived method of

⁵⁴ A more contemporary translation of the same passage reveals that Mencius was quoting Confucius, and Mencius the *Book of Poetry*: “If a ruler ill-uses his people to an extreme degree, he will be murdered and his state annexed; if he does it to a lesser degree, his person will be in danger and his territory reduced. Such rulers will be given the posthumous names of “Yu” and “Li” and even dutiful sons and grandsons will not be able to have them revoked in a hundred generations. The *Book of Odes* says: The lesson for the Yin was not far to seek: It lay with the age of the Hsia.” (Mencius, translated by D.C. Lau, Penguin Books, 118-119).

⁵⁵ Mao Zedong, “Some Issues that Deserve More Attention,” *M RTP*, Vol. II, 108.

protest was to attack symbols of local and state power, such as the Qing government yamen and Western institutions. But following the founding of the Chinese Communist Party in Shanghai in 1921 a flurry of unionization and labor related activism occurred in cities all over China. Even in places such as Changsha marginalized elements of the urban population who once lacked the means and resources to express their grievances now did so in ways more associated with the mores of modernity.⁵⁶

“Charter of the Changsha Mason’s and Carpenter’s Union” contained eighteen articles, stating that membership was open to “any mason or carpenter in Changsha,” and covered areas such as payment of monthly dues, providing education and healthcare, as well as assistance for the unemployed. Similar to the urban Save the Nation Teams (*jiu guo tuan*) established following May Fourth, the basic unit of organization within the union was the ten man group, with each electing their own representative(s). Organizing by groups of ten was based on the *baojia* system, blending traditional forms of local governance with Marxist conceptions of trade unionism, forming a unique and thoroughly Chinese version of political organization. The following month the *Da Gong Bao* featured the official strike declaration of the masons and carpenters:

We, the masons and carpenters, wish to inform you that for the sake of earning our livelihood, we demand a modest pay increase. Since June 1, we have been paid thirty-four cents for grade A work, and twenty-six cents for grade B work.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ According to Stuart Schram, although in certain cases Mao may not have played a direct role in drafting the specific charters and declarations of certain unionized groups, his degree of involvement with them suggests that his name and influence can remain “legitimately attached to” certain documents, the charter of the masons and carpenters in particular. (Mao Vol. II, xxvii).

⁵⁷ Mao, “Strike Declaration by the Masons and Carpenters of Changsha,” October 6, 1922, *Ibid.*, 127.

As the author of these articles Mao remained at the center of arbitration in the days that followed, between representatives from the union and the Changsha county magistrate. Eventually the strike was successful. All told, of the four major strikes in Hunan during the early 1920's—by the miners at Anyuan and Shuikoushan, the Guangzhou-Hankou rail workers, the Changsha masons and carpenters, and the compositors and printer's strike—only the later two were uniquely urban in character. But organization of these groups need not be characterized as a form of orthodox proletarian Marxism, where urban industrial workers successfully unionized. On the contrary, Mao's and other activist's work in the city were indicative of the fact that local institutions of industry and commerce “were equally as old, and just as traditional, as the landlord-tenant system in the rural areas. Thus the Chinese revolution, even during its early urban phase, often operated within an unorthodox environment and could not escape being shaped by it.” The major strikes in Hunan during this period were also mainly directed against Chinese-owned operations, and not foreign institutions.⁵⁸ Even the strikes of miners and railroad workers fell into a peculiar middle category, because they involved a kind of industrialized work which most often took place within a rural area. Most of these workers hailed from rural villages in Jiangxi and eastern Hunan. As activists who organized successful strikes of these workers, Mao and Liu Shaoqi employed what Elizabeth Perry has referred to as “cultural positioning,” i.e. knowledge

⁵⁸ Lynda Shaffer, *Mao and the Workers: The Hunan Labor Movement, 1920-1923* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1982), 204-205.

and familiarity with the rural way of life to win over the hearts and minds of workers.⁵⁹

This also raises the question of to what degree Mao's account of the Hunan peasant movement was influenced by urban circumstances. Was there such a divide between urban and rural?

“Report on the Peasant Movement in Hunan,” from the winter and spring of 1927 was in part written to correct the negative perception of the peasantry that existed among urban and right-wing party elements in cities such as Changsha. Of the five counties Mao investigated for approximately one month—Xiangtan, Xiangxiang, Hengshan, Liling, and Changsha, most were close to the provincial capital. In his opening remarks of the report, he stated that the information regarding peasant conditions in the countryside was “the exact opposite of what I had heard from the gentry class in Hankou and Changsha.”⁶⁰ The same was true for peasants in the countryside of other provinces, such as Jiangsu and Zhejiang, where in a similar study of villages he noted that, “most people believe that since these two provinces are peaceful and prosperous the peasants do not suffer much.”⁶¹ In early 1927 the CCP was also still technically allied with the KMT and its efforts during the Northern Expedition to drive out regional warlords. Thus Mao's mission also needs to be understood in this regard, since there were high-ranking members of the Nationalist party in Changsha who persisted in the belief that China's peasants were nothing more than “riff-raff” :

⁵⁹ Perry, *Anyuan: Mining China's Revolutionary Tradition*. See Introduction.

⁶⁰ Mao Zedong, “Report on the Peasant Movement in Hunan,” in *M RTP*, Vol. II, 429.

⁶¹ Mao Zedong, “The Bitter Sufferings of the Peasants in Jiangsu and Zhejiang, and Their Movements of Resistance” *M RTP*, Vol. II, 414.

When I first arrived in Changsha, I met all sorts of people and picked up a good deal of gossip. From the middle strata of society upwards to the Guomindang right-wingers, there was not a single person who did not sum it all up in the phrase, "Its terrible!" Even very revolutionary people, influenced by the views of the "Its terrible" school which dominated the climate in the city, became downhearted when they tried to picture the situation in the countryside in their mind's eye and were unable to deny the word "terrible."⁶²

This was a bias against the peasantry among right-wing elements of the KMT. It was also shared by rural gentry elites, who both claimed that the formation of peasant associations may have been a good thing, but that peasants placed in charge of the associations amounted to nothing more than *pizi*, or "riffraff."⁶³ But for Mao the so-called riffraff comprised the most important element of the entire peasant movement. By classifying upper, middle, and lower ranking peasants he believed the latter were key to the movement. This was because, "the poor peasants (especially the portion who are utterly destitute), being the most revolutionary group, have gained leadership of the peasant associations." Furthermore:

This leadership by the poor peasants is extremely necessary. Without the poor peasants there would be no revolution. To deny their role is to deny the revolution. To attack them is to attack the revolution. From the beginning to end, the general direction they have given to the revolution has never been wrong.⁶⁴

Mobilization of the peasantry was also a key objective of the Northern Expedition (1926-1928). Thus Mao's idea of "revolution" was also related to its potential success, in part because it united China's two rival parties, the communists (CCP) and the

⁶² Mao, "Report on the Peasant Movement in Hunan," in *M RTP*, Vol. II, 432.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 435.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 439.

nationalists (KMT). Mao also wrote his report under the assumption that the United Front between the communists and nationalists would continue. When Chiang Kai-shek decided to purge the communists in April 1927 it split the alliance and drove them underground. This betrayal reoriented the focus of their mission and forced them underground to encampments in the mountains of neighboring Jiangxi, east of Hunan.

The rise of labor and trade unionism in Changsha during the 1920's should also be understood within the context of the violent warlord conflicts that raged through Hunan and all of China during this period. This and other disputes in south China, especially Guangdong, caused Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist leadership to make Hunan one of the main objectives of pacification for the Northern Expedition. The basic thesis of Angus McDonald's *The Urban Origins of Rural Revolution* (1978), was that the peasant movement in Hunan cannot be understood without first considering the influence of urban activism—by masses and elites—not only in cities such as Changsha, but in smaller provincial centers such as Hengyang, Lilang, and Pingxiang. As wholesale unionization and anti-imperialist sentiment swept through these cities and towns the emerging party intelligentsia grappled with how best to liberate Hunan's peasants, and also how to incorporate them into the larger goals of the Northern Expedition. But for some scholars the peasant movement was more than a “conscious emergency adaptation to shifting national political circumstances that was subsequently exploited by an opportunistic and ambitious Mao Zedong.”⁶⁵ Stephen Averill argues that one of the

⁶⁵ Stephen Averill, “The Transition from Urban to Rural in the Chinese Revolution.” *The China Journal*, No. 48. (July 2002), 87.

main facilitators of rural activism in the early twentieth century was the abolition of the imperial examination system in 1905. This created a vacuum which led to the “fragmentation” of old gentry elites, also allowing the emergence of Western-styled schools, that “at each level in the educational hierarchy fostered intimate interactions among students drawn from increasingly broad geographical catchment areas, passed some of them on to higher-level institutions, and returned many of the rest to their home areas to seek teaching and other jobs.”⁶⁶ Thus Western ideas of trade unionism and organization trickled down to rural areas.

Ultimately the contentious warlord politics and factionalism of the 1920’s played out in cities such as Changsha, where military and government elites exerted the most influence, forcing Mao and the Party to realize that the key to national revolution lay in the countryside. Following the successful strikes by the miners in Anyuan and Shuikoushan, Hunan’s first peasant organization after the founding of the CCP in 1921 was the Yuebei Peasant Organization, established in 1922.⁶⁷ These and other peasant organizations served as the inspiration for Mao’s report in February 1927. But Chiang Kai-shek’s decision a few months later, in April, to purge the communists, resulted in the imprisonment and mass execution of thousands. The ensuing years were not kind to the people of Changsha, Hunan, and the rest of China.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁶⁷ “Hunan di yi ge nong hui—yue bei nong gong hui,” (*dang shi ren ji ti hui yi*), HNLSZL 1, 1960, 1.

Conclusion

The nationwide demonstrations that swept through China after May 4, 1919 inaugurated an intellectual and cultural enlightenment. In cities all over China, students and workers inspired by anti-foreign nationalism staged protests, boycotts, and published articles in local newspapers, and other journals expressing new found national identity. Changsha's student activists engaged in a variety of progressive activities. They distributed leaflets and handbills on the streets of Changsha. Students from the Hsiangya Medical School wrote for "Save the Nation Weekly," and organized Save the Nation Teams. They were all activists within an emerging urban landscape of national identity and anti-imperialism that swept through China during this period. Despite whatever material funding Yale may have provided Mao and Changsha's student press, Edward Hume and other American teachers became critical of student activists and remained blinded by their disdain for communism and organized labor. Hume's lack of sensitivity to such issues may have contributed to the growing negative perception of Changsha's foreign community after 1919, ultimately forcing them to leave the city in 1926.

In the fall of 1925 Mao penned a famous poem titled "Changsha." Inspired by a famous account from the *Zuo Zhuan*, It represented his intense appreciation for ancient Chinese culture. He wrote of being in Changsha with "a throng of companions, Vivid yet those crowded months and years. Young we were, schoolmates/ At life's full

flowering; Filled with student enthusiasm/ Boldly we cast all restraints aside.”⁶⁸ These experiences with his “companions” may have referred to the work Mao engaged in as an activist author and labor organizer in the city during the 1920’s. His written works in newspapers such as the *Da Gong Bao* also contributed to the city as a center of emerging nationalism in early twentieth century China. Through his use of traditional Chinese literature as a mode of criticism, and his involvement in the Changsha’s labor and peasant movements, placing him back within the context of urban China during the early 1920’s reminds us of why he became so influential and eventually became leader of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Doing so also constructs a narrative in contrast with contemporary understandings which have previously dominated discussions of Mao—author of the famous report about the peasant movement in 1927, “leader” of the Long March and of guerilla movements in Jiangxi and Yanan, and finally as the great Chairman, father of modern China after 1949 and chief architect of economic and social policy that reaped disastrous consequences for millions.

⁶⁸ Mao Zedong, “Changsha,” in *MRTP*, Vol. II, 225.

6-Women in Changsha

This short chapter is a brief account of women's history in Changsha focusing on three specific areas: educational reform, the infamous suicide of a local woman named Zhao Wuzhen in 1919, and a discussion of prostitution in the city during the Republican period. It is more thematically related to the chapter that follows, which covers the story of a woman activist and author named Sophia Zhu Tierong. Although the Hundred Days of Reform may have in many respects failed in the city, it nonetheless initiated some important advancements for women's education. After 1898 women from all over China went to study in Japan. Hopefully this will show that not all women experienced hardship and violence, but became part of a more upwardly mobile generation of emancipated women in China and Changsha.

EDUCATION

The first women's school in China was founded in Shanghai during the Hundred Days of Reform, on June 1, 1898. Women's education was a major priority for reform minded intellectuals, and though the reform movement, it signaled the beginning of a movement to establish schools for young women throughout China.¹ Establishing institutions for female education in Changsha became a priority for young intellectuals

¹ Wang Zheng, *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment: Oral and Textual Histories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 172.

and revolutionaries who either hailed from the city or worked there. Despite the contentious climate of China during the early twentieth century, several girls and women's schools opened in the city during the Republican Period. These consisted of two basic types. The first were middle schools that were divided into senior (*gao*) and junior (*chu*) level grades, and consisted of a core curriculum that taught literature, history, geography, painting, human physiology, math and science, foreign languages, and physical education. There were also schools referred to "professional schools," (*zhi xiao*), also divided into senior and junior schools. Most of these began without their own facilities, usually met in private houses, with the rent paid by private donors. As they attracted more students and increased in wealth, but especially following the Revolution of 1911, many girl's schools received subsidies from the local government, or became official public schools. Those that did received a visit each semester from a "school inspector," (*duxue*) that evaluated the teachers and curriculum, distributed funds to first, second, and third level school staff and administrators, cited violations, and then reported back to the provincial government. By the 1930's Changsha contained one female public middle school, seven private girl's schools, one public professional school, and twelve private professional schools.²

Changsha first primary school for girls, the Hunan Number One People's Girl's School (Hunan Min Li Di Yi Nu Xiao) opened on June 10, 1903. The impetus to open the school came from a former county magistrate named Long Rui, as well as a recently

² Huang Zengfu, "Changsha nu zi jiao yu shi hua," *Changsha Wenshi Ziliao* (Changsha: Zhongguo Renmin Zhengzhi Xieshang huiyi Changsha shi wei yuan hui), No. 8 1989, 165-173.

returned student from Japan named Yu Fan, who petitioned then governor Zhao Erxun to open a school in the city. Their aim was to model such a school on those in Shanghai. For the first semester a total of forty resident and non-resident students enrolled. The two women chosen to head the school were the wife of Long Zhanlin, who was the Vice-President of the Board of Rites at the imperial court in Beijing, as well as a woman named Xu Huang Xuanyou (this was her married name, to someone with the surname “Xu.” She is referred to this way throughout the reference material). The stepmother of Huang Xing, who went on to become one of Hunan’s most famous military leaders during the Revolution of 1911, was also one of the managers of the school.³ It was not mere coincidence that these two women were placed in charge, since the Huang and Long families both hailed from Changsha and had previous dealings with each other. The Long family supervised Changsha’s Ming De School and invited Huang Xing to teach there after he arrived from Shanghai the following fall.⁴ But just over one year after it opened, in the fall of 1904, Changsha’s gentry sent a memorial to Beijing urging that the girl’s school be closed due to excessive “corrupt practices,” and other abuses.⁵ Whether this derived from their opposition to female education or their suspicion of Huang Xing’s underground revolutionary activities is not known.

Despite the closing of Hunan Number One People’s Girl’s School, it later reopened at a secret location east of the city, as the Dong Xiang Private Girl’s School, or more officially the Ying Zhu Xue Tang. Classes were held in the homes of either Xu

³ Huang, “Changsha nu zi jiao yu shi hua,” 166.

⁴ Hsueh Chun-tu, *Huang Hsing and the Chinese Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961), 17.

⁵ Huang, “Changsha nu zi jiao yu shi hua,” 166.

Huang Xuanyou or Huang Ying, near the foothills of a small forest. Its rural location in a private residence likely allowed it to avoid detection by local gentry who could have opposed its creation. Most of the women who headed these schools had connections to the Revolutionary Alliance (Tong Meng Hui) in Changsha. This included Xu Huang, Huang Ying, and other female members of the organization such as Tang Huangqiong. When the school commemorated its twentieth anniversary in 1923 it had begun accepting male students for several years previous, and had graduated two classes of boys from middle school, six different classes from its normal school or teaching college, as well as two different grades of twenty four primary school students. At one time it even served as a trade school for teaching sowing, embroidery, weaving, and dyeing.⁶

During the Revolution of 1911 the Ying Zhu Xue Tang continued to conduct classes in secret, but after the beginning of the new republic it began receiving funding from the provincial government, and relocated to a new facility in the city near a bamboo and pine shop called Zhu Shan Pu. Among its noteworthy pupils were Yang Kaihui, Mao Zedong's first wife, who was executed in Changsha by the Guomindang (KMT) in 1930. By 1949 one of the vice-committee chairs of the Changsha County Peasant Association, Yu Ximai, was a graduate of the school, as was Huang Zemin, who eventually went on to teach there. After the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, it became Changsha's Number Five Middle School.⁷

⁶ *Ibid.*, 168-169.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 169.

By 1904 there were approximately three thousand students from China living and studying in Japan. Many of these students, such as Sun Yatsen, Huang Xing, and others, formed China's first revolutionary organizations. Of these 373 were male students from Hunan, comprising eleven percent of all students in Japan at the time. As a part of the *xinzheng* reforms of 1905, the next year Hunan's governor petitioned the Qing court to allow approximately twenty female students from Hunan to study abroad in Japan. These "new policies" (*xin zheng*), was an effort by the Qing imperial court to finally implement many of the policies that had been proposed during the Hundred Days of Reform in 1898. The most important result of these was western modernization, such as the construction of railroads, telegraphs, establishment of municipal police forces and other western-style urban infrastructure. Special emphasis was also placed on education. The age old imperial examination system, a bedrock of China's education system for centuries was even abolished.

Xu Huang Xuanyou, who had been the headmaster of the first women's school in Changsha, was also chosen to supervise the female students in Tokyo. The tuition and fees of fifteen female students were paid through a joint effort between the Hunan Education Bureau (*Xue Wu Chu*) and local wealthy gentry. Thus although it seems some members of the gentry may have been opposed to women's education in Changsha, they were nonetheless willing to put up the money to pay for their education abroad.⁸ One of the women in the first class was Tang Qunying, who eventually became the head

⁸ *Ibid.*, 167.

of the Changsha Women's Federation, and some years later entered into a bitter dispute with Ye Dehui over the opening of another women's school in Changsha.

Tang Qunying (1871-1937) was one of Hunan's most famous female figures and revolutionaries. Born and raised in a rural area on the outskirts of Changsha, from a young age she stood out as a tomboy and became known for being aggressive and outspoken even among other boys. She was influenced by her father Tang Xingzhao, who had served as a general in Zeng Guofan's Hunan Army, who taught her sword fighting skills as well as how to ride a horse. One of seven siblings, her and her sisters received the same educational training in the Confucian classics as her brothers. She was among the first female students from Hunan to study in Japan, where she joined Sun Yat-sen and Huang Xing's Revolutionary Alliance, and became close friends with Qiu Jin. During the Revolution of 1911 Tang personally led military engagements on horseback against Qing forces. According to historian David Strand, Tang and other women soldiers likened themselves after the famed female heroine Hua Mulan, joining "classical statecraft, revolutionary ideology, and the demolition of male stereotypes about the weaknesses of women."⁹

Some of the women who led this inaugural class abroad became known as the "three aunts," (*san wei bo mu*) placed in charge of the group. These were a certain Lady Nie, aged forty-nine, the mother of a deceased professor from Changsha's Normal School named Guo Dezhong. Xu Huang Xuanyou, aged forty-four, and Wang Yi (who was

⁹ David Strand, *An Unfinished Republic: Leading by Word and Deed in Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 110.

formerly known as Tan Yunsheng, and was the mother of Wang Shize, a deceased counselor and admiral in the Qing Navy). Although many of the classes the students enrolled in were taught by Japanese lecturers who could not speak Chinese, translators were provided. Among the other leaders of the female Chinese students in Japan at this time was Qiu Jin (1875-1907), the eccentric and charismatic young revolutionary from Zhejiang, martyred after attempting an anti-Qing uprising in 1907.¹⁰

Most of the women from Changsha who received their education abroad during this period ended up pursuing careers in education. Xu Huang Xuanyou became Changsha's first female teacher and the headmaster of the first women's school in nearby Changde, investing much of her own money in its founding. Other students helped open women's schools either in Changsha or other parts of Hunan. In addition to being the founder of the city's first women's federation, Tang Cunying and another student named Zhang Hanying founded Changsha's first newspaper for women, the *Nu Quan Ribao*. Wang Changguo founded the Basic School for Women, or the Wu Ben Nu Xiao, and during the governorship of Zhao Hengti was the only female delegate to the provincial assembly.¹¹

This new generation of educated women contributed to Changsha's growing modernity during the early years of the twentieth century. After a time this generation began to challenge the traditionalist regime of Changsha's conservative gentry. The most notable example of this was Tang Qunying's clash with Ye Dehui in 1913,

¹⁰ Huang, "Changsha nu zi jiao yu shi hua," 167.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 168.

regarding the establishment of a girl's school near the Fire Palace on Pozi Street. But although these years were in some ways fruitful for the future status of women in Changsha, there still remained significant problems. In 1919 the suicide of a local woman betrothed in marriage alarmed residents throughout the city, and began a debate in the local press about the status of women in Chinese society.

THE CASE OF MISS ZHAO

On November 14, 1919 a Changsha woman named Zhao Wuzhen committed suicide by cutting her throat and bleeding to death. On her wedding day she slit her throat with a razor while seated in the traditional sedan bridal chair. She had been betrothed to be the second wife of a man named Wu Fenglin, but was against the arrangement since he was considerably older than her and ugly. Thereafter referred to as "Miss Zhao" in the Changsha press, her death shocked the city, moving local writers to respond in the *Hunan Da Gong Bao*. Several of the articles written about Zhao's death were written by Mao Zedong, and many of his non-labor related writings from this period concerned the relationship between the sexes and the family.

Mao wrote approximately ten articles on Miss Zhao's suicide. The incident was also raised in the press by other local scholars such as Xiao Rulin (1890-1926). In "Commentary on the suicide of Miss Zhao," published only two days after Zhao's death, on November 16, 1919, Zhao is identified as a resident of Changsha. Mao noted the three specific circumstances ultimately leading to her death: The first was Chinese

society, the second “the family living in the Zhao residence on Nanyang Street in Changsha,” and the third “the Wu family of the Orange garden in Changsha, the family of the husband she did not want.” For Mao each of these conditions represented “three iron nets,” in traditional Chinese society from which Miss Zhao was unable to escape.¹² The radical anarchist Peng Huang (1896-1921) penned a rebuttal to Mao’s article the next day, to which Mao then issued his counter response. Peng was one of Mao’s closest colleagues and another student activist from Hunan, but blamed Zhao’s death on her own backward thinking. In “‘The Evils of Society’ and Miss Zhao,” Mao answered Peng:

Since society contains ‘causes’ that could bring about Miss Zhao’s death, this society is an extremely dangerous thing. It was able to cause the death of Miss Zhao; it could also cause the death of Miss Qian, Miss Sun, or Miss Li. It can make ‘women die; it can also make ‘men’ die . . . We must protest loudly, warn and awaken those fellow human beings who are not yet dead, and cry out ‘society is evil’!¹³

For Mao ‘society’ was in part represented by his own backward province of Hunan and its capital city, Changsha. To illustrate this point he responded to Peng’s argument that Miss Zhao should have simply run away to liberate herself from her predicament. Doing so would have proved difficult, due to the fact that in a city such as Changsha women lived in a perpetual state of segregation from urban life. Because women were forbidden to go outside the home, peddlers of silk and other cloths in the city had to sell their wares to them from house to house. Public toilets were for men only, and women were never seen frequenting teahouses or staying in hotels. It was always men who shopped at Changsha’s well-known local high-end shops such as

¹² Mao Zedong, “Commentary on the Suicide of Miss Zhao,” *MRTP*, Vol. I, 421.

¹³ Mao Zedong, “‘The Evils of Society’ and Miss Zhao,” *MRTP*, Vol. I, 427.

Taihefeng or Yutaihua and never women. The manual laborers in the city were obviously all men and many of the schools in the city still lacked female students.¹⁴ Women in Changsha and throughout China still lacked genuine status or identity. Many, such as Miss Zhao, even lacked true given names. Her name, “Wuzhen” combines the characters *wu*, meaning “five,” and *zhen*, meaning “chaste,” meaning she was the fifth daughter of a man named Zhao.

In Mao’s “Against Suicide,” published on November 23, he argued that the conditions of an unjust society were the main reason people choose to commit suicide. Although in doing so one’s “spirit of rebellion against oppression should be admired,” he suggested it “is better to be killed in struggle than to die by suicide.” Mao concluded that suicide represented a “revolt” against mankind’s “natural physiological condition,” and that it had “no place in ethics, in psychology, in physiology, or biology. Thus the criminal law of many nations includes prohibitions against suicide.”¹⁵

Mao’s essays on suicide were also supplemented by other articles concerning the status of women, such as “The Marriage Question—An Admonition to Young Men and Women,” “The Question of Reforming the Marriage System,” “The Question of Love—Young People and Old People: Smash the Policy of Parental Arrangement,” “Smash the Matchmaker System,” and “The Problem of Superstition in Marriage.” The last of these criticized the traditions surrounding marriage and matchmaking in Chinese history, again invoking the past to critique the present. Miss Zhao’s death was facilitated by the

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 428.

¹⁵ Mao, “Against Suicide, November 23, 1919,” *M RTP*, Vol. I, 434-437.

tradition of the sedan chair in Chinese weddings. It dated back to King Zhou of the Shang, when the spirit of his concubine Daji was replaced by the spirit of a fox, and thus it became a tradition for brides to be protected by a chair within a locked compartment. Such traditions, concluded Mao, amounted to “so many cheap tricks of marriage and have no other purpose than to be the rope that tightly binds a man and a woman together. Between the matchmaking and the exchange of gifts, the bride and the groom are so tightly bound by the bonds of superstition that they can’t even breathe . . .”¹⁶

Even a few years after the Miss Zhao incident as he became increasingly involved in issues of Hunan’s working class, he continued to criticize the old China and the practice of suicide in particular. In May 1921 a former teacher and intellectual named Yi Baisha (1886-1921) took his life following an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate a warlord in Beijing. He fled to Guangdong and drowned himself during the Dragon Boat Festival, evoking Qu Yuan’s gesture hundreds of years before, in the hopes of “arousing the masses.” Yi had also been a native of Changsha, and again Mao responded in writing, this time in a short poem to honor Yi’s memory, titled “A couplet for the Hero Yi Baisha”:

The useless one died not, the useful one died in anger; I weep
for the future of the Republic.

Last year I mourned Mr. Chen, this year I mourned Mr. Yi;
what can be done now about Changsha’s backwardness?¹⁷

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 439ff, 449.

¹⁷ Mao Zedong, “A Couplet for the Hero Yi Baisha,” in *M RTP*, Vol. II, 87.

The poem also references the death of Chen Tianhua (1875-1905), whose suicide in 1905 moved many in Changsha. This as well as his essays on suicide from 1919 were also a response to a recurring phenomena in the capital city of his home province that represented not only its “backwardness” but of all of China. To Mao the fates of Yi Baisha, Chen Tianhua, Miss Zhao, and possibly others such as the Huang family who collectively took their life during the rice riot of 1910, all represented “Changsha’s backwardness,” and that as such were examples of the failures and backwardness of all of China. For most of the May Fourth intellectuals, as well as activists such as Mao, China was a young fledgling nation trapped by its past traditions. These traditions were not only related to women’s marriage rights, but extended to other well established social practices in Changsha. The best example of this was the trade of prostitution.

PROSTITUTION IN CHANGSHA

Public record dates the existence of prostitution, even in hinterland cities such as Changsha, to the Western Zhou period. Among Hunan’s river towns it was common, as depicted in Shen Congwen’s story, “The Border Town,” about life in a West Hunan river town during the Republican Period. In Shen’s account of the fictional village of Chatong, the prostitutes in that community catered to the numbers of itinerant boatmen, merchants, and other traders, where “the shanties on the waterfront of the small town began to house women of a special type who came in from the surrounding countryside or whose husbands, Sichuanese soldiers had been drafted to Hunan and never returned.”

Such practices, notes Shen, were the direct result of merchant activity in the region.

And although this kind of work may have seemed “parasitic,” to some, the women who worked at these establishments, “were more to be trusted than those gentlemen in the city who talk[ed] of nothing but morality and conscience.”¹⁸

During the late Qing and early Republican Periods numerous brothels existed in Changsha. Some were patroned by wealthy members of the Guomindang, as well as the gentry elite, and were often used as legitimate venues to discuss business. According to a survey conducted in 1947, by that year there were one hundred and fifty-two “entertainment houses,” (*lehu*) in the city, which employed approximately four hundred sixty-three women. There were also two hundred and fifty “brothels”(*jiyuan*), which contained as many as sixty-one stages for performance, and employed as many as eight hundred women.¹⁹

In January 1953 Changsha’s Public Security Bureau arrested twenty-nine individuals, all mostly women, who were suspected of running brothels and other various crimes. The issue of *Changsha Wen Shi Ziliao* from 1989 contains the graphic accounts of five women and one male, and of the twenty-nine detainees were considered the six most disturbing and famous cases of powerful and influential brothel keepers in Changsha during the Republican Period. The nature of these case studies indicates that prostitution was a well-established enterprise, known to both the government and to many among the local population.

¹⁸ Shen Congwen, “The Border Town, Biancheng,” translated by Yang Xianyi and Dai Naidie (Fenghuang: Yilin chubanshe, 2011), 22-24.

¹⁹ Tan Junwen, “Changsha changji zhi xing fei,” *Changsha Wenshi Ziliao* (Changsha: Zhongguo Renmin Zhengzhi Xieshang huiyi Changsha shi wei yuan hui), No. 8 1989, 180-192.

Chen Yuzhen, aged thirty-six at the time of the interview, was originally from the Mi Luo River region near the Hunan/Jiangxi border. In 1941 she opened the Xi Zhan Tang brothel, but owned other ones named “Wild Orchid” (Lan Feng Zi), as well as the “Seven Moderns” (Qi Mo Deng). Lady Chen was the mistress of at least three powerful local officials. A garrison commander named Xu, a local official named Yu Hansheng (who was later executed), and a director of the security bureau named Li Maotou, all notorious for bullying and mistreating prostitutes. They were all accused of enticing young girls from the local urban labor force into prostitution, even paying money to have their names changed. In 1947 two different prostitutes, one named Li Zhen and the other Zhang Zuming, reportedly both contracted syphilis. Lady Chen refused to pay or arrange for either of them to receive medical care and forced them to continue seeing customers. Both of the women died under her employ.²⁰

Zhou Sizhen, was aged fifty-one when detained by the security bureau. In 1935, by way of her connections with a boyfriend who was a former Guomindang officer, known locally as “Pockmarked Gui,” and also the head of a local chapter of a secret society, the “Hong Bang.” She opened her own brothels in partnership with as many as twenty other owners. Some of the bosses were other women named Xu Jishun, Guo Daniang, and another named “Crazy Gui” (Gui Fengzi). Zhou co-owned and operated at least three of the brothels. From 1935 to 1949 she employed as many as a hundred prostitutes. In 1947 at a boarding house near the train station a male customer named Yang Xiaohua allegedly witnessed Zhou beat a young prostitute under her employ.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 185.

Yang felt sorry for the young girl and attempted to secretly take her away to a safe place. But Lady Zhou soon discovered what had happened and ordered some thugs to find Yang. They found him, beat him to death, and hung his body from the Luo Peng Bridge near a local granary. In 1948 Zhou enticed a young girl from Yi Yang, a small city just to the north of Changsha, to one of her private brothels, where she was forced to have sex with and become the concubine of a Guomindang agent named Yu Taosong.²¹

Zhou Suyun, age unknown, was listed as a resident of number 112 Luo Xing Tian. This Lady Zhou was possibly similar in age to the Lady Zhou discussed above, because she was accused of using her oldest son, a local bandit surnamed “Gong,” to entice young women into her employ. She often spent time in the nearby countryside trying to recruit peasant women to work for her using deception. In December 1947 one of her girls developed some kind of medical problem, meaning that her body could not endure sex any longer, so she tried to run away. Lady Zhou tracked her down at the train station and ordered a hired thug to beat her to death. In May of 1945 she allegedly beat another girl severely, and forced her to continue seeing male customers, after which similar problems with the girl’s genitalia developed. The girl was eventually sold to another brothel in Hankou for eighty yuan. The next year she allegedly enticed two other girls from the street and also sold them to an operation in Hankou. In 1944 she kidnapped two war refugees from Guilin, one named Li Cunying, the other Wang Juying, into prostitution, and even had them serve at least eight men in her own family.²²

²¹ *Ibid.*, 185-186.

²² *Ibid.*, 186.

The only male whose case was discussed among the group of former brothel keepers was sixty-five year old Liang Yihe. In 1948 he was accused of kidnapping at least eight different women in collusion with the local security bureau. Liang forced the women into prostitution out of his own residence, where he also repeatedly raped them. Even following the communist revolution Liang continued his practice. On one occasion while entertaining seven known ruffians who wanted prostitutes, Liang enticed one of his girls (?) to perform for the men on a stage, where they gang raped her for several hours, for so long in fact that she was unable to endure. The girl eventually crawled into the street and gave a loud cry to gain the attention of passers by who took pity on her, but she eventually died from the trauma.²³

Possibly the eldest of the arrested group was a sixty-eight year old woman named Zhang Huangzhi, whose well-known brothel catered exclusively to high ranking officials from the Guomindang. Her wealthiest clientele came from the family of Tan Tianyi, who was the director of Changsha's South District Public Security Bureau, and a frequent guest at Lady Zhang's brothel, where some of Changsha's most famous and wealthy prostitutes worked. But she was also accused of extorting some four million yuan from her girls, using the funds to purchase a lavish house.²⁴

The last woman's case discussed was forty-five year old Guo Xiyong. A native of nearby Xiangtan, Lady Guo's husband was one of the directors of the local security bureau (he was executed in 1951). Using his money and influence the couple opened a

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

brothel at number 31 Guan Yuan, where they employed over twenty prostitutes. What is particularly disturbing about this case was that Lady Guo and her husband raised four young girls, whose names were all listed in the case—Yang Huixian, Yang Xuemei, Guo Jinhui, and Yang Zaiyang—who by at least the ages of twelve were already forced into prostitution. During one instance the young Yang Xuemei was forced to have sex with a sixty seven year old elderly official, but when the young girl refused, Lady Guo beat her so badly “until she was black and blue and covered with bruises.” Lady Guo also had at least ten known “sworn sisters” who worked in the same trade as brothel owners, were all associated with local secret societies, Guomindang commanders garrisoned in the city, and were all accused of bullying and mistreating young prostitutes, and of “committing all manner of crimes.”²⁵

The Nationalist Party, or Guomindang (KMT), ruled Changsha and most of China during the 1930s and 1940s. The Communist Party (CCP) had been driven underground following Chiang Kai-shek’s purge in 1927, and essentially remained so until World War II. During the Guomindang’s control of Changsha efforts were made to ban prostitution, or at least address its potential threat to public health. In 1948 the Changsha Municipal Sanitary Commission conducted physical examinations on forty-seven prostitutes detained from a local brothel called Yang Zhou Ban. They diagnosed thirty-four girls with gonorrhea, three with syphilis, and nine with some other form of sickness. One of the most famous cases of prostitution involving a madam brothel owner and her relationship with local officials occurred during the 1920’s under the

²⁵ *Ibid.*

Governorship of Zhao Hengti. The director of the Changsha Police, Zhang Huizhan detained and beheaded a brothel owner and prostitute only known by her nickname, “Pockmarked Liu,” who had apparently earned notoriety for herself through her ability to recruit young girls into prostitution, but in her uncanny ability to “hook and bait,” many clients for herself. It was said that no man was immune to her charms. Like many powerful madams in her trade she mainly worked as a procuress out of her residence in an alley called Fu Yuan, number 20. But likely owing to some disagreement she had with local officials, or perhaps even Zhang Huizhan himself, she was brutally detained and beheaded.

Other than the disturbing and alarming abuse of young girls illustrated in each of the above cases, it is also important to consider that the arrest of these individuals and the detailed reporting of their various crimes occurred within the intense period of political activism and mobilization that characterized China following the Communist Revolution in 1949. From the language and jargon of the cases it is apparent that the arrest of these and other individuals was not only part of a campaign to eradicate prostitution, but also to capture and expose the crimes of those who had collaborated with the Guomindang government. This is seen in the use of the character *wei*, meaning “fake,” “bogus,” or to denote one as a “puppet” or “collaborator,” preceding the titles and positions of high ranking men who had various dealings with the madam brothel owners. For instance, the public security officer named Xu and the former official named Yu Hansheng, were both listed with *wei* before their names, emphasizing they had worked for or collaborated with the Guomindang. This was also the case with Tan Tianyi, the director of

Changsha's South District Public Security Bureau, and also with the husband of Guo Xiuying, who had served as the director of another local security force. Furthermore, in at least two of these instances, the official Yu Hansheng, and the husband of Lady Guo, the term "already suppressed" (*yi zhen ya*) appeared in parenthesis next to their names, meaning they had been executed, likely as a part of "The Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries," which roughly lasted from 1950 to 1952. Began soon after the CCP came to power in 1949, this campaign and others, such as the "Resist America and Aid Korea," as well as the "Three Antis Campaign," aimed to eliminate foreigners and foreign influence in China. It also aimed to completely cleanse the Communist Party and eradicate all previous influence of the Guomindang. Thus thousands of suspected former agents and spies were rounded up and arrested, and in some cases even executed.²⁶ After 1949 the CCP also enacted a swift nationwide campaign to eliminate prostitution. As part of the "Prostitution Reform Campaign" of 1951, prostitution was successfully banned in cities such as Shanghai, Beijing, Tianjin, Suzhou, Yangzhou, Zhenjiang, and Hangzhou. At least in the case of Shanghai, former prostitutes were sent to special "Women's Labor Training Institutes," for reeducation and to help them matriculate back into society.²⁷

One of the main problems with the cited cases above also concerns the degree to which they are part of a dominant discourse of prostitution from this period. In the eyes of communist reformers and later historians influenced by CCP historiography, trades

²⁶ Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1999), 507-509.

²⁷ Gail Hershatter, *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth Century Shanghai* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 304-310.

such as prostitution were viewed as a social ill, and emphasized the exploitation poor prostitutes experienced at the hands of oppressive madam brothel owners. Much of this knowledge comes from Gail Hershatter's work on prostitution in Shanghai during the early years of the twentieth century. She acknowledged the exploitation experienced by lower grade prostitutes, but nonetheless recognized it as a legitimate business-making venture for the more upwardly mobile and affluent classes of prostitutes or courtesans, many of which became very reluctant to leave their way of life when efforts were made after 1949 by the CCP to abolish it entirely. This had to do with differing depictions of prostitutes in the "mosquito press," and the popular press. Within the mosquito press (a magazine akin to a kind of local tabloid on local affairs), notes Hershatter, courtesans in Shanghai were often discussed as subjects "at the top of the hierarchy of prostitution," and as characters within a "literature of nostalgia," that idealized Shanghai's courtesan culture of the 1920's, where not only were prostitutes expected to provide sexual services, but also were expected to exude a certain femininity of high culture, i.e. to dress nicely, sing songs from popular operas, and serve as hostesses during banquets for important officials. Thus they were also viewed as legitimate entertainers and entrepreneurs. But in contrast to this image of the prostitute, newspapers such as *Shenbao* condemned the practice and largely focused on the miserable and degrading conditions in which many prostitutes worked, the abuses they experienced at the hands of their oppressive owners, and the dangers they posed to public health. In 1941 the same

newspaper conducted a popular study that noted at least half of Shanghai's prostitutes had contracted some form of venereal disease.²⁸

In her analysis of Gao Xian, an engineer and cultural theorist writing during the 1920's, Tani Barlow observed that women during this period were reduced to objects of prostitution, and "forced by culture to barter sexual access for food and position. They *are* sex and *have* sex, which why they can alienate or 'sell it.'" Even under "conditions where women are not forced to sell their sexuality, that is, in nature or in a just social world, women are (as they should always be in a state of natural justice), the heart of sexual and social reproduction." Thus the plight of women was not lost on prominent and other intellectuals during the Republican period.²⁹

From the few case studies of prostitution in Changsha one might also recognize the differences within the hierarchy of prostitution noted by Hershtatter. For instance, the case of Zhang Huangzhi, whose brothel almost exclusively provided services to officers from the Guomindang. According to the report Zhang's biggest crime was not abusing her girls but rather extortion of their money to buy her own expensive house. Thus the white-collar nature of the offense possibly indicates the existence of a similar hierarchy of prostitution in Changsha during these years. But most of the cases cited from Changsha definitely fit within the narrative of prostitutes as victims, rather than sophisticated courtesans. Classifying the madam brothel owner's male Guomindang

²⁸ Gail Hershtatter, "Courtesans and Streetwalkers: The Changing Discourses on Shanghai Prostitution, 1890-1949," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol. 3, No. 2. (October 1992), pp. 245-269. See pp. 249, 253, and 262.

²⁹ Tani E. Barlow, *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 84.

collaborators as *wei*, and emphasizing that these men had been “suppressed” (*zhen ya*), or in effect liquidated by the party soon after liberation obviously suggests that as primary sources these accounts remain somewhat tainted with a revolutionary understanding of prostitution as one of the social evils indicative of any bourgeois society. Perhaps more importantly is that historians should also be aware that such sources “were written by men for a male audience.”³⁰ In this regard the poor women depicted in these reports were victimized, objectified, and denied agency on at least two levels. First in the horrible trauma and violence they experienced as prostitutes, and secondly through the means in which their cases were reported as possible tools of political propaganda and mobilization after 1949 that sought to delegitimize the Guomindang and legitimize the more pure and “moral” character of the CCP. But it is also important to note that by detaining brothel owners and reporting their crimes, the Communist Party was at least attempting to eradicate prostitution and improve the daily lives for women in Changsha. It would have been difficult for even the party to fabricate the graphic detail narrated within these cases, thus they serve as authentic sources for understanding the corrupt political and moral climate that characterized Changsha while it was under Guomindang administration during the 1930’s and 1940’s, but more importantly the horrific culture of violence often perpetrated against women who struggled to live among the lower rungs of city life.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 268.

Conclusion

Discussion on women's education in Changsha during the early twentieth century contributes to the discussion of local reform first raised in Chapter 2. Although Liang Qichao's efforts to establish western training academies and newspapers may have failed in 1898, it resulted in some significant achievements for female education. In addition to establishing some of Changsha's first schools for girls, the first generation of students was allowed to study abroad in Japan. Among these was Tang Qunying, who went to to become the leader of Changsha's Women Federation.

The case of Miss Zhao's suicide in 1919 represents a body of Mao's Zedong's literature that has been seldom discussed in English language writing about revolutionary China. By using Changsha as a case study, these articles reveal both his and other activist's legitimate concerns about the rights of women in Chinese society. The case studies of prostitution further suggest the difficulties faced by many women in Changsha who were employed at brothels. Although many of the brothel owners were also women, the cases also reveal the extent to which trades such as prostitution were exploited by the Guomindang government in Changsha during the Republican period. This will help establish more context for understanding the reach of the Guomindang state in local life in the remaining chapters.

7-Iron Lotus

Through her wartime activism, writing, and teaching, Zhu Tierong (1915-2009) lived a life indicative of women's rising social status and position in China during the Republican period. From her own written and unpublished autobiography as well as English and Chinese language versions of her late husband's biography, she recounted the details of a life that contributed to Changsha's history and modernization. She served as a volunteer for the YMCA in Changsha during World War II and became an activist and advocate for the CCP's welfare work in the city following liberation in 1949. As a part of the CCP's campaign against the U.S. war in Korea, during the early 1950's she was one of approximately sixty scholars in Changsha recently returned from America to denounce the war, calling for an end to American imperialism. In a series of English language articles published in *China Monthly Review*, a Shanghai based publication, writing under her English name Sophia Chang, Zhu highlighted the extensive urban reforms that took place in Changsha soon after the communists came to power. These articles not only provided glimpses into the drastic changes that took place in Changsha after 1949, but also established Zhu Tierong as a spokesman for the new China, and a vocal female figure in China following liberation.

As happened with many who suffered under Mao, Zhu and her husband, Zhang Yifan drew suspicions from Party leaders because of their previous work as volunteers under the Nationalist government, but also likely because of their experiences studying abroad in America. By the late 1950's Zhu was accused of being a spy for the U.S.

government and eventually labeled a rightist. Throughout the 1950's and 1960's she endured confinement, imprisonment, and humiliation. Most tragically, after liberation her husband was already serving in top posts within Hunan's provincial government, committed suicide during the summer of 1957 by jumping in the Xiang River. That summer Zhang created controversy for himself during a Party meeting by suggesting that there should be "rule of law" as opposed to "rule of man" in China. In the days that followed the *Changsha Daily* (Changsha Ribao) published a series of articles denouncing Zhang, spelling certain doom for his political future and safety. By the time the articles were published Zhang had been hospitalized due to complications related to diabetes. After reading the articles in the newspaper, and realizing the futility of his situation, he tragically took his own life.

Although Zhu's is but one story of many cases of female achievements during these years, the purpose of this chapter will be to discuss Zhu Tierong's life and legacy as a feminine heroine who exemplified the historical changes and processes that occurred in Changsha during the 1930's and after 1949. For as much as characters such as Ye Dehui represented his own uniquely masculine version of modernization in Changsha, beginning with her relief work during the Republican Period Zhu Tierong represented a newer, idealized, and revolutionary voice for women, modern Changsha, and all of China. Her experiences within the timeframe of the Republican Period, the years following the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, and finally in the era of reform, were all part of a narrative journey that exemplified the transitions and turbulent nature of Changsha's modernization. One additional final episode discussed in this chapter, and

one which makes Zhu's story unique, concerns a series of objections she raised in a private letter to author Mark Salzman concerning his fictional portrayal of her in his famous book, *Iron and Silk*.

ZHU TIERONG AND GENDER HISTORY

Some of the most popular English language memoirs of the Cultural Revolution have been written by women. These of course are *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China*, by Jung Chang (1991), *Life and Death in Shanghai*, by Chung Nian (1987), Yue Daiyun's *To The Storm: the Odyssey of a Revolutionary Chinese Woman* (1987), as well as Jan Wong's *Red China Blues: My Long March from Mao to Now* (1996). Each of these works are autobiographical accounts of the different lived experiences of Chinese women during the Cultural Revolution, and serve as important accounts of how, despite the Communist Party's promise of female liberation, women endured some of the most horrible treatment during these years. The period of political openness following the reform and opening beginning in the late 1970's and 1980's also witnessed a large "literature of the wounded" (*shanghen wenxue*) emerge in mainland China, as numbers of former intellectuals, both men and women recounted the suffering they experienced.¹ This serves as one reason why biography served as such an important tool for each of these formerly persecuted women, because the narration and recounting of one's life

¹ Wendy Larson, "He Yi's The Postman: The Work Space of a New Age Maoist," in Byrna Goodman and Wendy Larson eds., *Gender in Motion: Divisions of Labor and Cultural Change in Late Imperial and Modern China* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 212.

stories are important tools for dealing and coping with past trauma. In this chapter I also argue that such was the case with Zhu Tierong. Both her and her husband's life achievements through the means of historical biography constitutes what Joan Judge has referred to as one's "own experience of epochal change and national crisis," where both male and female subjects who lived through the turbulent years of the Republican period and Communist revolution used their life narratives to cope with trauma they experienced under Mao.²

By the mid to late 1920's, the women's movement in China reached its most active period since the May Fourth era began, and "motivated untold numbers of women from all social classes to participate actively in the revolutionary cause."³ Such activism during these years was also a result of women's rising social status. The influence of May Fourth ideals on the liberation of women, the proliferation of women's periodicals, as well as the emergence of the first women's organizations in Nationalist China during the early twentieth century, makes it likely that Zhu was influenced by the such changing trends in the intellectual climate of her time.

Born and educated in Shanghai, if she had remained there after graduating from university perhaps she would have become active in the women's movement in the Jiangnan area similar to women such as Zhu Su'e, who Wang Zheng discusses in *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment: Oral and Textual Histories* (1999). Zhu Su'e became a

² Joan Judge, *The Precious Raft of History: The Past, The West, and the Woman Question in China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 12.

³ Christina K. Gilmartin, "Gender, Political Culture, and Women's Mobilization in the Chinese Nationalist Revolution, 1924-1927," in Christina K. Gilmartin, et. al. eds., *Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 195.

lawyer in 1930, opened her own practice in Shanghai, and became involved with women's organizations there. But Zhu Tierong's grass roots activism and devotion to her future husband led her to China's hinterland, into Hunan, removing her from the center of politics, as well as the center of the national women's movement. But as with many women and others who were persecuted after 1949, these and other women also shared similar backgrounds in their desire to engage in activism related to aiding refugees during the war, as well as the mistreatment they experienced at the hands of the Party, only to be rehabilitated during the 1980's.⁴ Zhu Tierong's activism also bears some similarity to another of Wang Zheng's oral history narrators, Huang Dinghui, who was actually a native of Liuyang, located just east of Changsha in Hunan. Similar to Zhu Tierong, Huang wrote several versions of an unpublished autobiography. Both women were also members of the Communist Party who sought to have their cases rehabilitated following the Cultural Revolution, and both women also wrote biographical accounts of their late husbands.⁵

Zhu's life and experiences also represent an opportunity to consider her case within our contemporary understanding of women and gender studies. In addition to Joan Judge and Tami Barlow, and although an anthropologist the work of Lisa Rofel also provides a useful tool for analysis. With regards to Chinese history and culture specifically, Rofel defines gender as "contingent, non-foundational differentiations of femininity and masculinity that are mapped onto social relations and bodies, defining the

⁴ Wang Zheng, "Zhu Su'e (1901-): Attorney," in *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment: Oral and Textual Histories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 187-220.

⁵ Wang Zheng, "Huang Dinghui (1907-): Career Revolutionary," in *Ibid.* pp. 287-356.

nexus of power knowledge that permeates social life. Gender categories are not unified or stable but subject to negotiation, conflict, and change.”⁶ Rofel also conceptualizes gender as directly related to our understanding of modernity, where it remains “one of the central modalities through which modernity is imagined and desired. Gender differentiation—the knowledges, relations, meaning, and identities of masculinity and femininity—operates at the heart of modernity’s power. . . Gender, then, is not just “about” women and men, but is about the state, the nation, socialism, and capitalism.”⁷ Understanding gender in this way can also help provide a certain framework for examining how Zhu’s narrative understanding of her own historical experience contributes to recent discussions concerning newer approaches for understanding modern Chinese history. Her husband’s death can make us think about the role of suicide in Chinese history. Finally, her response to Mark Salzman’s book can help us answer certain questions related to how China and the non-Western world are often presented to the public via popular literature, the press, or even film.

EARLY LIFE AND RELIEF WORK

Also known as Sophia Chang by some of her Western colleagues and simply as Zhu Laoshi to her students, Zhu Tierong was born into a relatively well educated family on February 6, 1915 near Shanghai’s south gate. Her father was a college graduate and

⁶ Lisa Rofel, *Other Modernities: Gendered Meanings after Socialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

worked as an engineer, and her mother a schoolteacher. According to her own unpublished autobiography, Zhu noted that “my father was a college graduate, a civil engineer and yet he had such feudal thoughts.” This may have been one of the causes of an eventual separation between the two parents, because when “later on he and mother lived in different places, he would write letters to mother full of grudges and accusations.”⁸ Most of her early influence to become educated and learn English seems to have come from her mother, who worked at the prestigious Mary Farnham School in Shanghai, where in 1925 Zhu enrolled as a fifth-grade student. According to Zhu, her mother was “economically independent,” and “worked as a school teacher and a social worker. When living at home, she used to hire a helper to do the cooking, washing, and cleaning. Sometimes we lived in a school, sometimes in the YWCA or the relief organization where she worked.”⁹ Thus it was likely from her mother that Zhu developed the desire to work in social welfare. Although the surname “Zhu” derived from her father, like many girls in China at the time, upon birth she was born without a given name. Her given name, *tie rong* literally “iron lotus,” was given to her by one of her mother’s friends following a severe fit with whooping cough she suffered as a child. Apparently this friend had two children of her own named *tie ming* and *tie hua*, and when Zhu recovered she was given the name *tie rong*.¹⁰

She enrolled as an undergraduate at Shanghai University in the fall of 1933, majoring in chemistry and minoring in physics and music. With her bobbed haircut she

⁸ Zhu Tierong, “My Autobiography,” in *Sophia Zhu Tierong Papers*, Group Number 1709, Series Number II, Box 2, Folder 1 (Yale University: Manuscripts and Archives), 2.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

stood out even among classmates who often made fun of her, many of which were the children of wealthy Guomintang officials. Because of her haircut and outspokenness she nonetheless became noted for her skills in public speaking and debate. While studying in Shanghai Zhu began relief work for the local chapter of the YMCA, where she met Zhang Yifan (1906-1957), an activist and law student from Hunan, and the two formed a close friendship.

The Japanese invasion of China in 1937 began with the bombing of coastal cities such as Shanghai and caused a mass exodus of war refugees into China's interior. Many fled to smaller cities on the mainland such as Changsha. After plans to study abroad in Hawaii fell through because of the war, Zhang Yifan encouraged her to join him in the war relief effort in Hunan. In 1937 Zhang had been invited back to his home province by the local chapter of the YMCA to organize relief work for war refugees. Even months after the invasion many hinterland cities became overcrowded, and facilities were ill equipped to house, clothe, and feed so many. On January 8, 1938, during the midst of all their volunteer work Zhu and Zhang also found the time to get married, with a simple ceremony in Zhang's hometown along the outskirts of Changsha. Believing that a lavish wedding with guests, gifts, and a large feast would be excessive during such a time of national crisis, they only posted an announcement in the local paper, taking advantage of their time in the countryside to inform locals about the importance of national unification to resist the Japanese invasion.¹¹

¹¹ *Ibid.*

As relief workers in wartime Changsha Zhang Yifan and Zhu Tierong worked as a team, helping lead the local effort to help war refugees who continued to pour in from all over China. From 1937 to 1940 Zhu worked as a chemistry instructor for the Hsiangya Nursing School, the general secretary for the local chapter of the YWCA and a student secretary for the YMCA. She also did relief work both the Hunan and Guizhou International Relief Associations, as well as the Chinese National Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (CNRRA), and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) all in Changsha. She even worked as the liaison officer between the two later organizations.¹² According to Zhu Tierong, from November 1937 to April 1939 Changsha was bombed by the Japanese twelve different times, and each time Zhang worked as a stretcher bearer for the wounded and as an ambulance driver, rescuing and saving the lives of many.¹³ Regarding her work during these years Zhu noted:

Life was difficult in those years. As relief workers, Yifan and I were constantly on the move-around Changsha, Yuanling, Hengyang, Dushan, Guiyang, Chongqing-to help the refugees, conscripts and students . . . I went with the First Aid Team to rescue some residents who were hurt during the bombing by the Japanese . . . As a welfare worker, I gave out money to the refugees whose homes were burnt by the KMT soldiers during the Changsha big fire . . . As a student secretary, I helped the students on their way to some safer places with subsidies for winter clothing, medicines, or mosquito nets . . . As an English secretary, I wrote plans, budgets, and reports . . .¹⁴

¹² Zhu Tierong, "My Autobiography," 7.

¹³ Zhu Tierong, "Zhang Yifan Zhuan Lue," *Changsha Wenshi Ziliao*, No. 8 (Changsha: Zhongguo Renmin zheng zhi xie shang hui yi Changsha shi wei yuan hui, 1989), 109.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Zhang Yifan worked as the General Secretary in charge of the YMCA in Changsha, and Zhu worked as its secretary. As a couple they became two of the most prominent activists in the province, and were in charge of one of Hunan's most influential wartime charitable organizations. The focus of the YMCA relief work was not only centered in the provincial capital, but also extended to Yuanling district in West Hunan, and Lingling districts in the south, with these later two rural branches each having their own affiliate offices. By the late 1930's the YMCA became one of several relief and charity organizations working out of Changsha. There was also the YWCA, the Changsha International Relief Committee, the League of Nations Epidemic Prevention Commission, as well as the Rotary Club. Zhang Yifan was also a member of the international relief committee based in Changsha, which was a joint organization involving the cooperation of local Chinese and members of the international community, British, American, Norwegian, Italian, and German, all living and working in the city.¹⁵

Zhu and Zhang's work with the YMCA in Changsha is what likely brought them into contact with Yale in China, which eventually served as the initial liaison for their study in America. The first hospital and school facilities opened by Yale were originally located on West Archway Street in the city center. Later when the larger hospital, college, and school campuses opened just outside of the old north gate of the city, Yale initially leased their property on West Archway to the YMCA who later

¹⁵ "Report of the Changsha International Relief Committee, July 1-December 31, 1938," in the *Yale-China Association Records, 1900-1976*, Box 14, Folder No. 22 093 (Yale University: Manuscripts and Archives).

purchased it outright in June 1926.¹⁶ In September 1946 the couple journeyed to the United States to study at Yale University, where Zhang studied law and Zhu earned a Master's Degree in Sociology. While enrolled there they openly expressed their opposition to Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government, even once attending a lecture given by one of Chiang's former generals, Feng Yuxiang. They also toured different YMCA's throughout the country, raising money for the war effort by speaking to audiences about the situation in China. They returned to Changsha exactly year prior to the Communist victory, in October 1948.¹⁷



Image 8-1. Zhu Tierong and Zhang Yifan, at Yale University, 1948.
“Zhu Tierong, Zhang Yifan, New Haven, Wall Street, 1946-1948.” In
The Sophia Tierong Zhu Papers, Item MS 1709, Folder 10: Pictures from late 1940s.
(Yale University: Manuscripts and Archives).

¹⁶ “Dickson Leavens to the American Consul in Changsha,” May 12, 1927, in the Dickson H. and Marjorie B. Leavens Papers, Series II, Box 3, Folders 27-37 (Yale University: Manuscripts and Archives).

¹⁷ Zhu Tierong, “Zhang Yifan Zhuan Lue,” *Changsha Wenshi Ziliao*, No. 8, 111.

RETURN TO CHINA AND WORK AFTER 1949

When the couple returned to Changsha, Zhu continued her work with the YMCA in the city, and the following spring Zhang was hired by the Yali School to teach forensics.¹⁸ While doing such work both Zhu and her husband continued to support the Communist revolution through various underground activities, and Zhang Yifan remained adamant that the YMCA should continue its relief work. In fact, according to Zhu Tierong, prior to the liberation of the city it seems that the two organizations in the city that were most involved with pro communist activities were the YMCA and the Yali School. Zhang's reports to the CCP before liberation also stressed the importance of the freedom of religion, which may have been one of the reasons he later endured persecution.¹⁹

In July 1949, approximately one month before liberation, and with communist forces closing in on Changsha, CCP generals Cheng Qian and Chen Mingren sent out an open telegram throughout China to rally support for the coming liberation of Chinese cities. Representatives of the Party underground in Changsha organized a petition drive to support the CCP, and Zhang Yifan was most active in this city, gaining signatures from the principal of the Yali Middle school, the pastors of various Christian churches, and gained signatures from members of the business and industrial community. In

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 112.

August 1949 Zhang also organized the “Changsha Committee to Welcome Liberation” at the Hunan public hospital. When the city was liberated on August 5 and PLA (People’s Liberation Army) troops entered the city, thousands lined the streets to welcome them. Zhu also remarked that Changsha may have been the only city in China whose Christian churches welcomed the army and supported liberation.²⁰ In the Chinese biography of her husband, Zhu Tierong referred to this activity as the *tongdian qiyi*, or *qianming huodong*. In fact, noted Zhu, Zhang Yifan *hao bu you yu*, or “did not hesitate” to communicate these names to the CCP leadership.²¹ After the communists liberated Changsha in August 1949, Zhang and Zhu continued to have contact with the representatives from Yale working there.

Writing under her Western name, “Sophia Chang,” Zhu Tierong also reported on the conditions in Changsha following liberation in John William Powell’s *China Monthly Review*, an English language publication based out of Shanghai. Under its original name, the *China Weekly Review*, founded by Powell’s father, from the early 1920’s it was one of the main English language news magazines in China. Other influential periodicals based in Shanghai at the time were the *Shanghai Evening Post*, *Mercury*, the *North China Daily News*, the *China Daily Press*, and the *China Daily Tribune*.²² But even within China the *Review* enjoyed a wide readership of English speaking Chinese, such as teachers, university professors, government employees, businessmen, and

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 113.

²² Neil L. O’Brien, *An American Editor in Early Revolutionary China: John William Powell and the China Weekly/Monthly Review* (Routledge: New York and London, 2003), 182.

students.²³ Especially during and after World War II, and under Powell's editorial leadership the magazine became increasingly critical of Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist government. Following the war Powell and the magazine strongly supported the formation of a coalition government between the CCP and KMT, as well as Secretary of State George Marshall's attempt to broker a deal between the two. With the communist victory in 1949, and especially following the United States entry into the Korean War, Powell and the various Chinese contributors to the magazine harshly criticized the decision by the U.S. government to enter the war. In September 1954 a Senate Judiciary Committee heard testimony from former American POWs imprisoned in North Korea who stated that the *China Monthly Review* served as one of the main tools used by their captors to indoctrinate them with communist propaganda.²⁴

Zhu's first published piece in the journal, in October 1950, titled "Return Students Protest," opposed U.S. involvement in the Korean War. Sixty-two Changsha residents, all of which had previously studied in America petitioned the U.S. government to demand withdraw all military forces in the Korean peninsula. Ten of these had attended Yale, as well as five each from Harvard and Michigan, as well as numerous other prestigious universities.²⁵ This petition was formed during the the "Resist America, Aid Korea Campaign," where her husband Zhang Yifan, Zhu Tierong, as well as Ling Mingyou organized the petition of returned scholars with the full support of Changsha's

²³ *Ibid.*, 20.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 266ff.

²⁵ Sophia Chang (Zhu Tierong), "Returned Students Protest," in John W. Powell, ed., *China Monthly Review*, October 1950 (Shanghai: John W. Powell), 53. In the *Sophia Tierong Zhu papers*, Group No. 1709, Series II, Box 2, Folder 1 (Yale University: Manuscripts and Archives).

Communist Party Secretary.²⁶ The meeting convened on the campus of the former Yale Medical School where each signee mailed their copy to the same universities they had previously attended. Its text was actually authored by Ling Minyou, the dean of the Xiangya Medical College, and not only called attention to the situation in Korea, but more specifically the U.S. support of the Chiang Kai-shek government in Taiwan, asserting that Taiwan was a part of China, and that the garrisoning of American soldiers there represented a “deliberate armed aggression by the American government against the Chinese people,” and warned the American people that their government was “playing with fire in the Far East.”²⁷

But Zhu’s harshest and most thorough rhetoric against Western, especially American imperialism came in the February 1951 issue, titled “Reply to an American Friend.” The piece was partly written in response to a speech given by Warren R. Austin, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, on the need for supporting armed intervention in Korea. Just one month prior, on January 15, 1951 Austin gave a passionate speech before the U.N. on “Communist Aggression in North Korea,” that the Communist government in Beijing had “rejected efforts to bring about a ceasefire in Korea, and has continued its invasion of Korea and its attacks upon the United Nations forces there.”²⁸ Referencing Austin’s speech throughout, she also used her rebuttal as a platform to narrate in detail the history of U.S./China relations, beginning with the Treaty of Nanking following the conclusion of the first Opium War in 1843, the influence of

²⁶ Zhu Tierong, “Biography of Zhang Yifan,” January 4, 1988, in *Sophia Zhu Tierong Papers*, 8.

²⁷ Zhu Tierong, “Returned Students Protest,” 53.

²⁸ http://www.authentichistory.com/1946-1960/2-korea/1-overview/19510115_Warren_Austin_Speech_to_UN_on_Communist_Aggression_In_Korea.html.

American interests in the treaty that followed the second Opium War, and treaty provisions allowing for special protections for foreigners working in treaty ports. The Boxer Rebellion, the Treaty of Versailles following World War I, as well as U.S. support of the Chiang regime during World War II were other examples she discussed as examples of American imperialism.²⁹ Using the thought of anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, Zhu even presented a table correlating four types of Westerners in China in relation to their exploitive behavior; those who worked in government, church, business, university, and that “there was a thread of continuity between all these institutions in the function of westernizing, invading, exploiting, and numbing the Chinese.” Finally, at the end of the article she concluded:

By reviewing the history of Sino-American relations, we can clearly see that during the short period of 166 years America’s dominant interest in China has been concern with trade, raw materials, investment, and exploitation. . . The American attitude during these years was ostensibly warm and sympathetic and thus deceived many Chinese. The poison was sugar coated.³⁰

Through these kinds of writings Zhu was presenting for both herself and her newly founded country a discourse counter to the one emerging in the anti-Communist American press at the time. These were the beginning days of the Cold War, when the U.S. exerted its military might throughout the globe, especially in Asia, by sending combat troops to fight against communist regimes in Korea then later in Vietnam. Her response to Austin’s remarks at the U.N. bears some similarity to Mao Zedong’s famous

²⁹ Zhu Tierong, “Reply to an American Friend,” *China Monthly Review*, February 1951 (Shanghai: John W. Powell), 91-95.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 94.

essay from August 1949, “Farewell Leighton Stewart.” John Leighton Stewart (1876-1962), born into a missionary family in China, served as the U.S. Ambassador to China during the civil war between the Nationalists and Communists (1945-1949). His support of the Chiang regime and disdain of communism made him one of the main symbols of American imperialism and power in China. Zhu’s response to Austin, though similar, stands unique in its own right for advancing a kind of revolutionary understanding of modern Chinese history apart from Marxism. For Zhu and other intellectuals of her time, one did not have to be a communist to recognize the exploitive nature of U.S./China relations. By using cultural anthropology to interpret Western power and hegemony, Zhu offered her own unique interpretation of this legacy.

Most of the editorials in *China Monthly Review*’s issues from this time also expressed intense opposition to the Korean War, which is why it must have been such an effective form of propaganda for indoctrinating American POWs. The magazine was also one of the few if not the only English language publication at the time to publish the names of the Americans who were being held in North Korea.³¹

Many of Zhu’s articles in *China Monthly Review* also focused on noting the extensive efforts of modernization in Changsha that followed liberation. Her piece “Changsha Roundup,” featured in the November 1950 issue, chronicled the changing social and political climate in Changsha following the founding of the People’s Republic after 1949, that conditions were markedly different from when the city was governed by the KMT: “No one looks down on manual labor. The intelligentsia working in

³¹ O’Brien, *An American Editor*, 266.

government offices are also devoting some time to planting and raising vegetables on nearby plots of land. The girls at Fusiang Middle School, a missionary school, are washing dishes after every meal. Some of the boys attending Yale in China are earning their tuition by working at a milk station.”³² Furthermore, traditional social mores regarding women and marriage had gone by the wayside. Expensive and lavish weddings were a thing of the past. Zhu noted that both she and her husband were Christians, and had worked with the local YMCA. Theirs as well as other religions were all religions were tolerated.

Soon after liberation the Party also began several projects to improve public works. Under the First Five Year Plan (1953-1957), and based on the Soviet model, wholesale industrialization through urbanization began in cities throughout China. By 1956 Premier Zhou Enlai even proudly proclaimed that construction of new cities and the improvement of existing ones was already happening.³³ In the September 1951 Zhu reported on the new waterworks and sewage systems in Changsha, and was prefaced by “Forty years ago the Manchus talked about it—For twenty years the Kuomintang drew up plans—In two years the People’s Government built it.” Prior to liberation Changsha had been one of the major cities in China without public water, but under the CCP she reported that some 30,000 square meters of roads had been “repaired or paved, more than 3,000 new street lights have been installed, eight centralized sewage systems, totaling 14,

³² Zhu Tierong, “Changsha Roundup,” in John W. Powell, ed., *China Monthly Review*, November 1950 (Shanghai: John W. Powell), 83. In the *Sophia Tierong Zhu papers*, Group No. 1709, Series II, Box 2, Folder 1 (Yale University: Manuscripts and Archives).

³³ Maurice Meisner, *Mao’s China and After: A History of the People’s Republic*, 3rd ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1999), 169.

278 meters, have been either reconstructed or built anew.” For years under the rule of the KMT government the city’s residents relied on drinking water from the Xiang River hauled by water carriers, a system that had existed in the city for centuries. According to Zhu this river water sold in the local market at 500 hundred yuan per *tan* (dan), and with wealthier households employing their own private carriers, water remained “a considerable item in calculating household expenses.” At the time of writing the new sewage and water lines were still under construction, but would be finished by October 1, 1951. Upon completion there would be approximately 14 main water supply stations and 40 public fire hydrants, with the stations providing public water at a rate of 15,000 long tons per day, enough to sustain a population of 300,000 with 60 liters of water per day.³⁴

Educational reform was also rapidly implemented. As of November 1950 approximately 31,000 students in Changsha were enrolled in primary schools, of which forty-three percent were supported by the government. Night schools had been opened for uneducated workers, and for the first time children of workers were given the opportunity to attend school. All in all noted Zhu, the attitude among organized labor in the city was one of enthusiasm and celebration, as different work units organized “dramatic clubs, singing groups, and athletic teams.”³⁵

The activism and advocacy for both her city and country expressed in these articles suggests that in the early years following the Communist Revolution, Zhu

³⁴ Zhu Tierong, “Changsha’s New City Waterworks,” *China Monthly Review*, 121-122.

³⁵ Zhu Tierong, “Changsha Roundup,” 83.

Tierong served as an English-speaking advocate of the new China to the West, critical of the same western country she had recently returned from and had even closely collaborated with through her relationship with Yale and relief work, and that responded to the emerging anti-Communist, and largely male dominated discourse in the United States and in other western bloc powers that demonized both China and the Soviet Union. Both Zhu and other members of Changsha's intellectual community who had previously studied in America viewed the entry of the United States into the Korean conflict as an act of imperialist aggression, and an act of betrayal on the part of a former ally. For the Communist Party in Changsha during the early 1950's, activist women such as Zhu Tierong represented their newly promoted stance on gender equality, ones who, "disrupted gender norms and generated new gender dynamics," and were part of a "new public space in socialist China."³⁶ Thus in these articles she became the voice of Changsha's new modernization in the Mao era.

In contrast to the perception of foreigners, according to Zhu Tierong the social conditions in Changsha during liberation, especially the plight of the urban poor, was alarming:

When Changsha was liberated 52 percent of the population needed relief although at that time there were about 30 relief agencies in the city. Because of the complete currency collapse in the last days of the Chiang [Kai-shek] regime, purchasing power in the city was almost nil. Unemployment and poverty were hand in hand. About 20,000 hungry and helpless peasants swarmed into the city from the suburbs and neighboring *hsien* seeking relief. The streets were full of beggars.

³⁶ Wang Zheng, "Gender and Maoist Reorganization," in Byrna Goodman and Wendy Larson eds., *Gender in Motion: Divisions of Labor and Cultural Change in Late Imperial and Modern China* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 202-203.

Since liberation the people's government has done its best to heal the city's wounds.³⁷

Zhu then listed the Changsha government's efforts to provide relief for the city's urban poor through a series of sweeping welfare reforms: Aid was granted to 20,815 unemployed workers and teachers, providing both groups cash relief and reassignment to other jobs. The government reformed the number of local indigent beggars by providing work through labor, mainly by way of constructing the city's new public works system. After December 1949 approximately three hundred million yuan was spent to help relocate some 10,000 displaced war refugees back to their native villages, as well as repatriate 66,453 former KMT prisoners. A government investigation in April 1950 revealed that approximately 25,000 people in Changsha barely lived at a marginal line of subsistence, so the government provided cash relief as well as placement in special nurseries and hospitals to aid the elderly and disabled.³⁸ The CCP in the city completely reformed the defunct welfare system, a topic that several of Zhu Tierong's *China Monthly Review* articles consistently addressed. The subject was personal to her since she had spent much of her time in the two previous decades doing such work and thus was glad to see what she viewed as the once defunct welfare system of the Nationalist government abolished. By the time the city was liberated in August 1950 local charity houses and welfare institutions, most of which worked independently from the state, had become ineffective in addressing the rampant poverty and dislocation resulting from years of war and conflict. Such development by the CCP, she noted, revealed a

³⁷ Zhu Tierong, "Welfare Work in Changsha," in *China Monthly Review*, March 1952, 246.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 247.

“general shift from charity to public welfare, from age-old family relief to organized community relief and from emergency relief to productive training.”

In contrast to the former charity tokens and sugar-coated poison used to mislead the exploited victims of the ruling class, it can be seen that the sum effect and strength of social welfare activities in a community depends greatly on its social system, economic order and political organization. The total cultural configuration of the past was made to function for the welfare of a few and to neglect the interests and well being of the vast majority . . . The previous society [under KMT rule] was a complete failure and only under our new government could the former corrupt configuration be smashed. Today we are on the right road, working toward social betterment and social health.³⁹

To Zhu there was no question that social welfare under the CCP had done a much more efficient job of managing public welfare in Changsha, likening it to the making of completely new and modernized city, with infrastructure and aid from the state to help the poor. Drawing on her previous experiences as an aid worker during World War II and during the civil war between the Nationalists and Communists that followed, she felt that it was often easy for private and outside charity organizations—such as the YMCA for instance—to be too easily swayed and influenced by corruption, graft, and mismanagement. In the public euphoria that swept the country following liberation, it was difficult for her and others to see that these very same problems could plague a government run welfare system as well. Through her opposition to American imperialism as well as her detailed reporting of Changsha’s modernization following liberation, Zhu Tierong spoke for her city and country, conveying a youthful patriotism

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 248.

indicative of the period. Her concluding remarks in “Reply to an American Friend,” best illustrate this point:

Be not worried for us. I am not a Communist, but when I see that our people’s government is asking for the opinions of the different strata of workers, peasants, petty bourgeoisie, and industrialists, that the officials are working for the benefit for the people, that poor peasants are getting land to plow for themselves, that everyone should work for his food, then I know we are on the right track.⁴⁰

Claiming she was “not a Communist,” was certainly another declaration of Zhu’s own independence and individuality. But at this point we must also address the question of how her views expressed in this and other articles from the *China Monthly Review* were indicative of the CCP’s policy toward intellectuals following liberation. For as much as Zhu’s life and work have been positively portrayed thus far, her patriotic rhetoric from the articles should also be framed within the context of the thought reform campaigns which followed liberation. After 1949, and with China’s economy in complete disarray, the Party

Sought the cooperation of urban elites who possessed specialized skills needed for national reconstruction: liberal intellectuals and the technological intelligentsia; bureaucrats and urban administrators left over from the old regime; and the national bourgeoisie. Once political and economic stability had been achieved, the Communists moved quickly to end their reliance on what they regarded as the least politically reliable members of the urban population.⁴¹

These were, namely, the nation’s class of intellectuals, a group of which Zhu and her husband were active members. In order to understand this fully, by late 1951 the CCP began three important campaigns. These were the aforementioned thought reform

⁴⁰ Zhu Tierong, “Reply to an American Friend,” 95.

⁴¹ Meisner, *Mao’s China and After*, 85.

movement, the “three anti campaign” against corruption, waste, and the bureaucratic spirit, and the “five anti campaign” against bribery, tax evasion, fraud, theft of government property, and stealing of state economic secrets. In accordance with Mao’s belief in the fulfillment of an authentic bourgeois democratic revolution, under thought reform all those classified as intellectuals, especially teachers, were required to state their loyalty to Chairman Mao and his teachings, and participate in numerous self-criticisms, where they wrote out their life stories and potential crimes against the revolution, and struggle sessions where they could face criticism from peers.⁴² Evidence of her own personal experience with thought reform specifically do not exist in her autobiography, but based on the experience and recollections of several of Powell’s former contributors, there is little doubt that Zhu Tierong also participated in the thought reform campaigns, which likely influenced her willingness to serve as a mouthpiece for anti-American propaganda.

However, it is also possible that her responses to Western imperialism also derived from her experiences and activism during World War II, as well as the education in sociology she received at Yale. Even under while under control of the CCP after 1949, in China as well as other socialist countries, “the socialist revolution rejected western domination even as it proceeded to invoke the Enlightenment assumptions embedded in socialism,” which made China’s historical situation completely unique.⁴³ Thus in the same token it is possible that her proclivity for narrating the virtues of the

⁴² *Ibid.*, 86.

⁴³ Rofel, *Other Modernities*, 17.

CCP derived from her own education and experience, not purely from communist indoctrination.

Another point to consider is the marked increase in CCP membership after 1937, the year that marked Japan's invasion of the mainland to the end of World War II, where the number of Party members grew twentyfold, from 40,000 to 800,000 respectively. The first thought reform campaigns began in the communist stronghold in Yanan during 1942 as a way to instill Party discipline and cohesiveness.⁴⁴ Although not Party members both Zhu and her husband worked to advance the interests of the Party during the interwar period, and were influenced by its ideals. In Yanan policies on thought reform were part of Mao's "rectification campaigns" or *zheng feng*, primarily aimed at rural level officials who lacked indoctrination in communist ideology. Despite the potential for Zhu's being influenced by the thought reform campaigns of the early 1950's, her activism within the Changsha YMCA, a local organization known for its pro Communist activity, it is also possible that her inclination to extol the mores of the CCP had already been entrenched well before late 1951, when the thought reform campaigns began in earnest.

ENDURING THE 1950'S AND AFTER

Following Changsha's liberation on August 5, 1949 the first people and institutions to fall under the yoke of the CCP's suspicion were former KMT government workers, as well as Westerners and their hosting institutions. Dwight Rugh, the

⁴⁴ Mark Selden, *China in Revolution: The Yanan Way Revisited* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), 153-154.

American missionary who worked for Yale in China discussed above, was the last American worker for Yale to remain in Changsha after 1949. On May 17, 1951 the mass meeting “to expel American imperialist Dwight Rugh” was held on the Yali campus. Students and teachers denounced him as a U.S. spy and agent of imperialism. The principal of the school even added a dramatic gesture by chopping in half the signboard for the Yale school inside the room with an axe, which met with enthusiastic applause. Rugh was found guilty and given permission to leave Changsha after having been detained for several months. At the train station he was made to kneel on the platform and face further criticism from those present. He also had to exit the train at every station at every station on the way to Hong Kong via Guangzhou, and follow the same routine of kneeling to onlookers to be criticized. He finally returned to the U.S. where he took up a position as a university administrator. To this day his case remains a sensitive subject in Changsha, and efforts to clear his name have proved unsuccessful.⁴⁵

Through their associations with institutions such as Yale and the YMCA both Zhu Tierong and Zhang Yifan became the targets of the mass political campaigns and social paranoia that began during the 1950’s. When the city was liberated in August 1949 Zhang organized a committee of underground Party members to welcome the liberating communists. His ambitions and previous experiences with local government while under KMT administration likely served him well, and by 1957 he held several posts in Changsha’s government. Following liberation in 1949 Zhang was elected as the leader

⁴⁵ Nancy E. Chapman and Jessica C. Plumb, *The Yale-China Association: A Centennial History* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2001), 74.

of the non-CCP Democratic Party in Changsha. He was soon appointed as the secretary-general of Changsha's Standing Committee, as well as the Vice secretary general of the Changsha Municipal People's Consultative Conference (PPCC). Zhang served as a "provincial people's representative," and was a member of the Provincial People's Consultative Conference, as well as the Changsha's People's Government. He served on the urban committee to resist the United States and aid Korea, the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in Hunan, as well as numerous local relief agencies and charities.⁴⁶

But as befell many who suffered during Mao's China, the honeymoon and euphoria of liberation soon wore off. In June 1957 during a meeting of the Provincial People's Congress, Zhang Yifan declared that in the new China there should be "rule of law instead of rule of man." Party conservatives viewed this as an excuse to attack him. An article in the July 19, 1957 issue of *Changsha Ribao* (Changsha Daily), titled "Is it good medicine or poison, criticizing Zhang Yifan's absurd theory," voiced the Party's attack and criticism of Zhang's views:

Zhang Yifan says our court system is not the basis for law, and that "freedom is most important." As a result, he demands that there should be "rule of law versus rule of man." Actually this kind of theory intends to terminate (*sha*) the merits our country's newly established law system. In fact, since the revolution our Party and government have acted according to common principle, formulating and promulgating the most important matters related to criminal law . . . Furthermore, if Zhang's unfounded deviation from criminal law unconsciously suggests that we act in accordance with the laws from previous years, condemning the policies

⁴⁶ Zhu Tierong, "Zhang Yifan Zhuan Lue," 114.

of all legal cases concerning the “rule of man,” then what kind of “rule by law” does Zhang seek? Probably the “law” of the bourgeoisie!⁴⁷

The article also states that since the revolution the Party had educated both workers and farmers, and through their individual education had come to know the merits of the law. What use therefore, did Western notions of “rule of law” have in such a country where everyone knew it in the first place? Zhang obviously introduced this philosophy out of his own training and practice in law. As noted in the first part of the paper, Zhang had worked with the underground CCP prior to liberation, and even used his skills as a lawyer to advocate for suspected dissidents who had been imprisoned by the local KMT government.⁴⁸

A few days later, on July 22, another article appeared, titled “Counterattacking the Rightists Attack on Law,” announcing that Party cadres had convened a meeting denouncing Zhang Yifan’s “excessive persistence”, related to his thoughts about rule of law versus rule of man, also aimed at all suspected rightists within Changsha’s party organization:

Our youth has passion, even during their off times they call on the masses, they have visited the central and southern provinces and have received training at the government Party school for cadres, and a small number have successfully been trained, they have even in their spare time successfully learned the basic facts of criminal law. Who then can say that we have no knowledge of the law?

We simply follow the six laws. If some violent classes have some incorrect feelings about criminal cases, and the Party leadership works cautiously and conscientiously, can state power be consolidated and

⁴⁷ “Shi liang yao hai shi du shui,” *Changsha Ribao*, July 19, 1957, in *The Sophia Tierong Zhu Papers*.

⁴⁸ Zhu Tierong, “Biography,” 8.

strengthened? These rightists must advance toward admitting their faults, otherwise the people will not allow it.⁴⁹

Again here the article charges that within a true socialist democracy law as a professional enterprise had no place, and was a remnant of bourgeois society. This kind of emphasis on people's education was indicative of the mobilization campaigns sponsored by the CCP after liberation. It is also quite possible that Zhang's position as an activist both before and after liberation may have aroused jealousy on the part of any potential rivals. Traces of this can be seen during the late 1940's just prior to his and Zhu Tierong's departure for America to study at Yale. In both the Chinese and English biographical accounts of her late husband Zhu noted that one of the reasons they left China in 1946 was because Zhang had made some political enemies, and the situation for them in Changsha had grown unsafe.

The events of summer 1957 in Changsha also need to be understood within the larger context of China's political climate as well as international events. Following the death of Joseph Stalin in February 1956 Nikita Khrushchev, the newly appointed Soviet Premier, criticized Stalin in the now famous "secret speech," for "placing himself above the party," "acting like a dictator," encouraging a national "cult of personality," and instilling a "reign of terror" on Russia's citizens. From the time of its founding in 1921 the CCP acknowledged Stalin as the undisputed leader of international communism. Mao and the Party leadership followed his dictates, but the secret speech left them feeling uneasy about how such news would be viewed in China. If similar criticism were

⁴⁹ "Fan ji you pai fen zi dui si fa gong zuo de jin gong," *Changsha Ribao*, July 19, 1957, in *Ibid.*

allowed in Chinese social and political circles the results could have been disastrous. In response Mao launched the “Hundred Flowers Campaign,” in May 1956. Scientists and other intellectuals were encouraged to freely air their criticisms of both Mao and the CCP. Then in February 1957 Mao then gave his famous speech, “On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People,” considered “one of the most significant theoretical expressions of ‘Maoism’ in the post revolutionary era.”⁵⁰ The speech served as the cornerstone and guiding ideology of the Hundred Flowers Movement, but also provided the basis and justification for the purges and mass persecutions that followed. Mao emphasized that contradictions in society had always been a “motivating force for social development,” that on the path to true socialism ideological struggles between the leadership and its people, the government and the masses, were inevitable. The problem with this view was its insinuation that even members of the highest echelons of government leadership could be questioned and their views criticized while those of the people or masses deemed correct.⁵¹ By the summer of 1957 universities throughout China held mass rallies, demonstrations, and wrote big character posters denouncing high ranking Party cadres and teachers, who then became targets of struggle sessions.⁵² When considering the fates of Zhang Yifan and Zhu Tierong within the context of such national events, one can better appreciate the reasons why Zhang’s views were so categorically denounced in the Changsha press that same summer. Inspired by international events, as well as the internal struggles within the CCP, the editorials

⁵⁰ Meisner, *Mao’s China and After*, 169.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 179-180.

published in the *Changsha Ribao* appeared at the very time when national politics entered its most contentious and turbulent period in China's modern history.

By the time both of these articles were published and the Party's suspicions became aroused against him, Zhang's physical health had deteriorated due to complications from diabetes. This coupled with Hunan's unbearably hot summer left him in a weakened state. While hospitalized he read the newspaper articles condemning him and Changsha's other rightists, then walked out of the hospital to one of the tail ends of Orange Island, filled his pockets with stones and committed suicide by jumping into the Xiang River. How does one account for such a drastic and tragic turn of events, especially from one so gifted and talented as Zhang Yifan, who worked tirelessly on behalf of the needy and other refugees during the war against Japan and civil war, and who even studied law at one of the most prestigious academic institutions in the world? In doing so Zhang also left behind his eight year old son, Zhang Taiheng. His suicide also returns us to a subject discussed elsewhere in the present work, the role of suicide in modern Chinese history. Was Zhang's a mere act of desperation, as the kind practiced by the Huang family during Changsha's rice riot of 1910, or more of a political act akin to Chen Tianhua's protest of the Japanese government's policy of banning Chinese students in 1906? As the example of the Warring States poet Qu Yuan (340-278 B.C.) suggests, perhaps such actions represented for these men and women a combination of both. With China's entry into the community of nation states beginning in the early twentieth century, the acts of patriots such as Chen Tianhua and Zhang Yifan could be considered political, because they were actions taken in response to the oppressive policy

of a ruling state. But in the case of Chen his death illicited a significant response on the part of Changsha's student community, an outpouring of public grief and sympathy and galvanized rising popular discontent against the ruling Qing dynasty, which fell only a few years later. The same was true for Changsha's commoners who became incensed by the suicide of the Huang family, serving as one of the initial causes of the rice riot. This is perhaps why years such as 1957 represented the end and beginning of a divergent juncture in the narrative of modern Chinese history, when suicides inspired by acts of political oppression carried different meanings than those before. Yue Daiyun, a literature professor from Beijing University, who was also labeled a rightist and wrote about her experiences during the Cultural Revolution, observed that during these years suicide was considered a crime against the state, but functioned as a means "of disconnecting yourself from the people and of threatening the Party with your life," and was "assumed to be committed because you are unable to face your guilt."⁵³

One also reads the patriotism illustrated in the *China Monthly Review* articles written by Zhu Tierong above while experiencing a kind of historical "dissonance," which comes when one learns about and reflects on the horrors Zhu experienced at the hands of the CCP just a few years after she wrote these articles. How are the achievements she wrote of Changsha's post 1949 modernization, as well as her denunciation of American imperialism, to be understood once we learn of the persecution she and others experienced as well as her husband's suicide during the Anti-Rightist

⁵³ Yue Daiyun and Carolyn Wakeman, *To the Storm: The Odyssey of a Revolutionary Chinese Woman* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 45.

campaigns of the late 1950's? For the modern historian this begs the question of how to reconcile her activism immediately following revolution with the ultimate betrayal she and many others from this period endured. It is difficult to read Zhu's articles from the early 1950's without coming to terms with the persecutions and purges of the Party that soon followed.

Similar to the fates which befell many during this period, for Zhu Tierong the late 1950's were certainly the most tragic years of her life. In 1956 her mother passed away at the age of 67, only to be followed by the loss of her husband. Soon after their son was sent to a work camp in Hunan's countryside. In 1959 her father died from tuberculosis. Zhu was eventually officially labeled as an "ultra rightist," because like her husband she advocated Western concepts of democracy and justice such as habeas corpus, fair play, and the freedom of other political parties. She was stripped of her title as chair of her department at Hunan Medical College, given a reduced salary, and was subjected to numerous struggle sessions for self-examination and criticism, as well as long periods of confinement and interrogation. When she was allowed to teach she had to begin each class of the fall term by identifying her rightist status:

During those days I always walked with my head bowed, I was supposed to obey everything the other teachers in the department asked me to do. I was often silent and seldom smiled. It seemed that 'Yesterday I was a guest of honor, today I am a prisoner.'⁵⁴

Zhu also recalled that from 1956 to 1965 she endured adversity by taking solace in her books and music, that "Books gave me knowledge, soothing sympathy and

⁵⁴ Zhu Tierong, "My Autobiography," 13.

unspeakable joy of a wide horizon. I always thought that it was unimportant that people belittled me, for I could swim in an ocean of knowledge if I read more books.” Her music, which she loved to play on the piano, “consoled my bruised heart and gave me the strength to live on.”⁵⁵ As with many from her generation, her personal struggles continued during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). She endured further humiliation and was forced to do manual labor on the campus of Hunan Medical College. On four different occasions her home was searched and ransacked by Red Guards, who confiscated many of her valued personal possessions, such as her husband’s clothes, a platinum ring she had bought in New Haven, as well as Western classical sheet music she loved to play on the piano. For several years she was not allowed to correspond with her son, and was only able to send him money. Posted on the door of her residence was a placard noting that she was a “black devil,” and she was not allowed visitors except for Red Guard students who could harass her anytime they wished. During a mass criticism meeting of school officials and teachers half of her hair was cut off and she was forced to pay half the cost of it. Shortly afterwards one male teacher committed suicide. Once she and other rightists were paraded around the campus in a truck then made to eat their meal on the ground like beggars. For more than one year she was held in confinement in the basement of the Hunan Medical College Foreign Language Building, and was repeatedly interrogated, deprived of sleep, and accused of being a KMT agent or American spy.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 14ff.

Given the intensity of the persecution during these years and her reflections on the horrors she experienced as presented in her autobiography, her outlook on her personal history nonetheless remained optimistic and in the opinion of this author, quite remarkable. She poignantly recognized that she was one of many Chinese who suffered during those years, referring to herself as “only one of the intellectuals, a little nobody, and I experienced this horrible tragedy. So what?”⁵⁷ Those within the highest echelons of the Party such as Deng Xiaoping, also suffered. Liu Xiaoqi and Peng Dehuai suffered so badly that they were unable to bear the strain and died as a result. Changsha’s first Party Secretary remained imprisoned in Beijing for a number of years, a fact that he noted personally to Zhu years later. He was frequently beaten and strong lights remained on within his cell day and night. Changsha’s first mayor also suffered intense persecution.⁵⁸ Thus Zhu viewed her own story within the larger national context of what scores of her countrymen and women experienced as well. Her reflection of “So what?” represented her own unique perspective on how she chose to cope with a traumatic past and the courage she displayed as a woman and human being in a period of great peril and despair. Faced with her husband’s suicide and persecution, she like many others, simply endured.

With the end of the Cultural Revolution and the beginning of the Reform Era, Zhu’s record as a rightist was officially corrected on March 9, 1979. She was invited to be a member of Changsha’s People’s Provincial Consultative Conference (PPCC), and

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

resumed her teaching duties at Hunan Medical College, where she also played an integral part in reestablishing relations between that institution and Yale in China. Among her students were some of the first Americans to study and teach in China since the 1940's. Of great importance to Zhu during these years was that Zhang Yifan's case was reviewed by the Communist Party in Changsha and his reputation rehabilitated. In a letter sent to her from the Changsha City United Front Work Department of the Chinese Communist Party, it was acknowledged that Zhang Yifan had done work "beneficial to the Party and the people," prior to liberation, and afterwards worked and supported the Party. His views published in the *Changsha Ribao* in 1957 on the rule of law were deemed correct. Finally, an article in the October 20, 1984 issue of the Changsha Evening Post announced the rehabilitation of Zhang and other Party members.⁵⁹

EPILOGUE: IRON SHARPENS IRON

By the early 1980's Zhu Tierong was in her seventies but had continued full time work as an English teacher and served as an important faculty liaison between Hunan Medical College and Yale in China. Among the first group of students to work and teach with Zhu in Changsha during these years was a Yale graduate named Mark Salzman (b. 1959). From a young age Salzman became interested in Chinese culture. Encouraged by his parents he later attended Yale where he majored in Chinese literature and graduated with honors. He also gained fluency in Mandarin and Cantonese. From

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

August 1982 to July 1984 he taught English with the Yale-China Association in Changsha at Hunan Medical College.⁶⁰ After returning to the U.S. Salzman achieved notoriety by writing a somewhat autobiographical account of his time spent in China teaching English and studying martial arts. His book *Iron and Silk* (1986) became a New York Times bestseller and was even adapted into a movie of the same name, with Salzman, in the tradition Audie Murphy, playing himself in the lead role.⁶¹ The book's popularity made it one of the first Western accounts written by a foreigner in China following the end of the Mao era. It also placed Changsha at center stage in popular Western literature, giving its readers an intimate glimpse into Chinese society. When his train first arrived there during the late summer of 1982 Salzman observed that construction on Changsha's main train station had been completed near the end of the Cultural Revolution to accommodate for the number of domestic tourists who visited the city in route to Chairman Mao's hometown of Shaoshan, but "by the time construction ended, however, interest in the Chairman had waned, and since Changsha is neither a scenic nor important city, hardly anyone stops there anymore."⁶² He was also shocked to find "how filthy everything looked," and how in Changsha

Dishwater and refuse were thrown casually out of windows, rats the size of squirrels could be seen flattened all over the roads, spittle and mucus lay everywhere, and the dust and ash from coal burning stoves, heaters and

⁶⁰ Mark Salzman, *Iron and Silk* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), 17.

⁶¹ Audie L. Murphy (1925-1971) was an American serviceman and actor who served in the U.S. Army during World War II. He won the Congressional Medal of Honor when he was nineteen years old. He later wrote an account of his experiences in the war, *To Hell and Back*, which was made into a movie of the same name.

⁶² Mark Salzman, *Iron and Silk*, 9.

factories mixed with dirt and rain to stain the entire city an unpleasant grayish-brown.⁶³

This also establishes Salzman's skills as a writer in that it adequately captures his impressions of Changsha and a typical Chinese city during the early stages of the reform era. Later in the book he meets a local man named Zheng who reminded him that "although Changsha was a poor city, its natives were most polite, its food the most peppery, and its dialect the most lively of all of China, so I [Salzman] should feel lucky indeed to have been sent there."⁶⁴ A prominent part of his narrative also describes the various Chinese friends he encountered and worked with while teaching, which included a number of teachers, students, and especially his *gong fu* instructor. Each of these are given fictional names, but one character named "Teacher Wu," introduced in the first part of the book, is one based on Salzman's experiences with Zhu Tierong. We know this because following publication of *Iron and Silk* she obtained a copy, read it, then wrote Salzman a private letter detailing her objections to the portrayal of Teacher Wu. Later this letter along with much of Zhu's other writings and personal correspondence was archived among the Yale in China collection housed at Yale's Sterling Memorial Library.

Not long after his arrival in Changsha, wrote Salzman, he was summoned by a senior member of Hunan Medical College's English Department, Teacher Wu, to help edit an English language application the school was submitting for a World Bank loan. He was asked to report to her office the next morning, which left him uneasy, "wondering if I had done or said something wrong during the past week and was about to be purged

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 105.

or criticized.” (19).⁶⁵ The next day Salzman showed up as requested, where the reader is first introduced to Teacher Wu:

Nearly Seventy years old, Teacher Wu was short and plump, with heavy eyelids above and below her eyes that made her look tired. I had heard that both she and her husband had received advanced degrees from an American university in the 1940’s. When they finished they returned to China, determined to serve their country whatever the outcome of the civil war. Like most Chinese with intellectual backgrounds, they were made to suffer despite their patriotism. Teacher Wu’s husband came under attack during the Anti-Rightist Campaign in the late 1950’s; to protect his family, he apologized to the State for his ‘crimes against Socialism,’ then took his own life. During the Cultural Revolution Teacher Wu became a target and had to endure not only her own public denouncement and humiliation but those of her son, who was ‘sent down’ to the countryside for nearly a decade (20).⁶⁶

Here Salzman not only describes the physical attributes of Teacher Wu, or rather Zhu Tierong, but establishes a back story for the reader’s understanding and interpretation of Wu in the pages that follow. His description of her even closely resembles my own summary of Zhu’s life in the introduction to this chapter. Although Zhu’s own objections to the portrayal of Teacher Wu will be further discussed below, one should also note the context in which both she and other characters in the book are introduced. One of the first characters introduced in the book is actually China itself, revealed to us through Changsha, a city Salzman initially described as a “neither a scenic nor important,” and one where he was shocked to find “how filthy everything looked.” By the time we first meet teacher Wu some pages later, Salzman describes his

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

experiences during the initial days of teaching at the college, and when Teacher Wu first summoned him he became afraid that he might be “purged or criticized.”

It goes without saying that Zhu Tierong would have been sensitive to Salzman’s observations about Changsha, but also his references to the horrors of the Mao era. It is also puzzling that in describing their experiences studying abroad Salzman wrote that Zhu and her husband “had received advanced degrees from an American university in the 1940’s,” but failed to mention that both Zhu and Zhang Yifan attended Yale, the very same institution Salzman graduated from, or that both of them had been involved with Yale in China during World War II.

Edward Said’s *Orientalism* describes the construction in western literature of the non-Western world, one often characterized as backward and illiterate, yet mysterious and forbidding. Under such narratives perceived social backwardness and unconventionality in countries such as China becomes romanticized at the expense of the characters in a story, or even historical subjects. Moreover, it identifies the concept of the “other” in explaining how Western accounts of non-western countries often objectify their subject matter as a way of legitimizing western cultural superiority. Those with the untrained eye or with little experience or exposure to countries such as China often unconsciously engage in such objectifying jargon, be they popular writers, or members of the government or media. Bearing this in mind, one can better appreciate Zhu’s sensitivity to how her character was portrayed in *Iron and Silk*. During her ethnographic fieldwork for her book *Other Modernities: Gendered Meanings after Socialism*, Lisa Rofel recounted an instance about how she was once sternly reprimanded

by a middle-aged woman in Hangzhou after asking her to relate her life story. The woman responded that such questions were akin to American photographers who were often seen wandering around the streets of Hangzhou during the early 1980's (the same period in which Salzman's book is set, and ironically where the events of the film adaptation of *Iron and Silk* are also set) with cameras meaning to capture "the most downtrodden, most poverty stricken scenes in town. What were they doing with these pictures?," the woman asked rhetorically." Rofel then remarked that she interpreted this woman's story "as a warning about the politics of cross-cultural representations and the ways in which China has been made to serve as one of the central markers of those who have not quite reached modernity."⁶⁷

But for Zhu Tierong her biggest bone of contention concerned how Salzman portrayed her husband's suicide. Zhu: "You've presented an incomplete picture of my husband's death. I don't know who told you all these things. Did you check the facts with me?"⁶⁸ She then listed the facts of her husband's case, that he was criticized for stating there should be rule of law rather than rule of man, and that he read the Party's denunciations of his views in the *Changsha Ribao*, and then on July 20, 1957 took his own life by jumping into the Xiang River. But Salzman did not mention anything about Zhang Yifan's political rehabilitation during the early 1980's. Zhu reminded him that the work Zhang had done for China had been "beneficial to the Party and the people," and that "after liberation he cooperated and worked with the Party, he supported the Party

⁶⁷ Rofel, *Other Modernities*, 9.

⁶⁸ Zhu Tierong, "My Letter to Mark Salzman," February 22, 1987. In the *Sophia Tierong Zhu papers*, Group No. 1709, Series I, Box I, (Yale University: Manuscripts and Archives), 2.

and loved the socialist motherland.” Finally, she asked, “After reading the facts, do you think your picture was complete? Talking about suicide without mentioning the redress is incomplete.”⁶⁹ For her there was also no question that her husband’s suicide, subsequent rehabilitation, and how he was portrayed remained of great importance to her.

Concerning the application for the World Bank loan, she also took issue with Salzman’s account of how he helped her correct some perceived errors in its English wording, specifically related to spelling mistakes as well as possible references within the application’s three stated goals and conclusion to the Four Modernizations. According to Salzman both he and Teacher Wu worked on the application together, and “corrected misspellings for about an hour, then took a break for tea.”⁷⁰ But Zhu remembered their exchange differently, and remained confused as to how he could have remembered the exact contents of the World Bank loan, if he had taken the time to jot down its goals and conclusions after their meeting, or whether he “kept the words in memory and then wrote them down just to be dramatic and to appeal to the readers.” Furthermore she asked, “Was there any professional courtesy? Is it proper for a teacher to quote what a student writes and to ridicule it afterwards? . . . As to the statement ‘we corrected misspellings for about an hour’ that was inaccurate.”⁷¹

Zhu then acknowledged her own “weaknesses” in English writing were mostly related to questions of style and the appropriate use of specific expressions. During the course of her association with other teachers from Yale none of them had ever pointed to

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷⁰ Salzman, *Iron and Silk*, 21.

⁷¹ Zhu Tierong, “My Letter to Mark Salzman,” 4.

her errors in her spelling, and if any of her Chinese students were to read Salzman's account they might think that Zhu was ill equipped to be an English teacher. She then pointed out that she still retained in her possession the original document with the English wording for the loan he helped her with, dated September 1, 1982 and that she could "not find one single misspelling on the two sheets," and then stating, "What a discrepancy between fact and your imagination!"⁷²

Zhu also pointed out certain factual errors in Salzman's account of when Teacher Wu asked him to help tune the piano in her home. After finishing the corrections for the World Bank loan, Teacher Wu invited Salzman to her house, because it was located near his apartment. After stating this was "the first time I had entered a Chinese person's home," he then wondered how she would have been able to acquire a piano, to which she replied that, "she grew up playing and had continued to study when she was America. She bought the piano there, and brought it back to China when she returned with her husband."⁷³ But according to Zhu this was also inaccurate:

Fact: I bought the piano in Changsha after liberation at the cost of 400 silver yuan. The receipt is in my son's hands. I returned from the states in October 1948 by plane. The transportation between Shanghai and Changsha was in confusion already.⁷⁴

The state of "confusion" she referred to was that given the wartime climate of China at the time it would have been difficult to transport something as large as a piano from the United States to China, let alone over land from Shanghai to Changsha. After

⁷² *Ibid.*, 5.

⁷³ Salzman, *Iron and Silk*, 22.

⁷⁴ Zhu Tierong, "My Letter to Mark Salzman," 5.

observing the ragged appearance of Teacher Wu's piano as well as the poor quality of its sound the two then attempted to play a duet together, but soon had to "give up," because, sighed Teacher Wu:

One night the Red Guards came. They took everything in the house and burned it. They wanted to take the piano, but—and here she smiled at the floor—it was too heavy for them to throw out the window! So they just hit it for a while and left. I haven't been able to find anyone to fix it since then.⁷⁵

It then seems that Salzman was the one person in Changsha who could have saved her piano from its plight, and accepted her offer to help tune it. But the story of the piano and the Red Guards also contained distortions. Zhu then explained that when the Red Guards did visit her home they took some items, such as her husbands clothes, noted above, but not everything. They in fact did not burn anything or attempt to throw any of her possessions out the window, and that she even "offered them the piano, they said they would not take it that time, later on when they wanted it, they would come. But they never did."⁷⁶

Her statement noting the difference between facts and imagination above touches to the core of what Zhu argues throughout her letter concerning her perception of how both her caricature and China are represented in Western literature. Her rebuttal also serves as example of the pride she took in as a writer and teacher of English, which were also very important to her. One also sees here the same China centered view of history

⁷⁵ Salzman, *Iron and Silk*, 22-23.

⁷⁶ Zhu Tierong, "My Letter to Mark Salzman," 5-6.

displayed in the articles she wrote for the *China Monthly Review* during the 1950's, despite the fact that she had benefited from an education abroad.

The publication of *Iron and Silk* also came at a very sensitive period in the relationship between China and the United States. It was published during the 1980's when the anti-Communism of the Reagan era was in full swing and this was one of the first accounts written by a foreigner living in China during the era of reform. At the same time China had just opened its economy after years of political oppression, and its social and political climate was pregnant with its own mounting civil unrest related to the question of democratic reforms. Many survivors who lived through the horrors of the Mao years were coming to terms with what they had experienced then, and were voicing their criticisms of the CCP. At the same time she wrote the biographies of herself and her husband, Zhu Tierong began to have contact with a new generation of Westerners— young Americans such as Mark Salzman who had never been to China before, and despite what they may have read in books published in the West, possessed very little knowledge of what ordinary Chinese people experienced during The Great Leap Forward, anti Rightist Campaign, or the Cultural Revolution. But perhaps the most telling statement of criticism in Zhu's letter to Salzman comes at its end:

In short, you have given me the impression that you feel it fun to imagine, to exaggerate, to dramatize, and to appeal to the readers at my expense. Have you ever thought of the adverse effects that might be produced by your imagination, overstatement or by your incomplete picture? I AM AN INDIVIDUAL IN A COMMUNITY, NOT A CHARACTER IN A MOVIE [emphasis Zhu Tierong].⁷⁷

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 7.

Although she never specifically mentioned that she saw the film version of *Iron and Silk*, Zhu then explained how her feelings had been hurt by Salzman's portrayal of her as Teacher Wu, and that if anyone in China who knew her had read the story, they would assume this character was intended to represent Zhu Tierong. She concluded by admonishing him that "you are writing about a concrete institution and concrete person, then you must be accurate in presenting the situation and facts and be fair to the person concerned. A writer must be honest." Finally she even suggested that Salzman revise the book to reflect her concerns, and that he should "change the untrue things in the second printing of the book."⁷⁸ More importantly, stating her individuality served as a kind of declaration of her own agency, both as a citizen of China and as a modern Chinese woman. Even as one who had experienced significant trauma and persecution, she remained devoted to her country and remained sensitive to not only her portrayal, but to how China, her "community," was presented as well.

The influence of Lisa Rofel on my understanding of Zhu Tierong's experience also invites a kind of comparison between the thought of a professionally trained scholar such as Rofel versus the observations of Mark Salzman in 1986, a young college graduate. For Salzman and others in the general public with an untrained eye or lack of sensitivity to history, colonialism, gender, or basic understandings of difference, the description of China in the first part of *Iron and Silk* provides a vivid description of a mysterious and as yet undeveloped and seemingly backward country. Remarking on the

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 7.

strict “practice” of China’s state security apparatus and their scrutiny of her fieldwork during her stay in Hangzhou, Rofel observed that she

Never lost my sense of how seriously the Chinese state weighs westerners’ words and the force with which that realization struck me. Regardless of what one thinks about the state’s practice, we would do well to remember that it exists within a context that includes recurrent memories of a colonial past, the barely fading traces of over thirty years of virulent anticommunist U.S. rhetoric about ‘Red China,’ and China’s desire to become a nondependent, formidable player within global networks of political and cultural economies.”⁷⁹

Thus Zhu’s admonition of Salzman was informed by the same kind of cultural and political sensitivity, one fully aware of China’s contentious history with the West. Her statement above that discussing her husband’s suicide without noting the redress of his case was incomplete also adds insight concerning the perception of history, reminding us how the events which took place during the 1950’s and 1960’s in China were remembered by those who experienced them. For them there remained a connection between when the events occurred and the praxis of writing about the trauma during the initial years of the reform and opening of the 1980’s. For her and many others one period cannot be discussed without its legacy and remembrance in another. Similar to analyzing the role of suicide, this is perhaps another way of rethinking characters and events from the Mao era, as a way to challenge our different approaches to modern Chinese history.

How China is depicted in the Western world, be it in the popular press or other media continues to be a relevant topic today, and was one that Zhu Tierong was acutely

⁷⁹ Rofel, *Other Modernities*, 36.

aware of in the 1950's, and still aware of even in the very early years of the post Mao era. Especially beginning with the thought reform campaigns of the early 1950's, the means of narrating one's life story was a practice intellectuals in Mao's China became acutely adept at, as they were constantly required to write down the events of their life within the framework of a Marxist understanding of history, and if their experiences had made a lasting contribution to the development of Chinese Communism, and what faults they committed in doing so. In sum, such narration was constantly bound to the interests of the state, and was "a political activity with serious consequences for one's relationship to state power,"⁸⁰ and not merely a simple story of one's experiences about living in a foreign country after graduating from college.

As for the film version of the book, one main problem with devoting any great amount of attention to it within a dissertation exclusively focused on Changsha is that the movie *Iron and Silk* was actually filmed and takes place in Hangzhou. Changing the setting was likely due in part to the appeal of Hangzhou, known in China as a popular site for domestic tourism. Though not a blockbuster, and made more in the style of an independent film, the movie was well received by some critics, and it devotes much time to Salzman's experiences studying *gong fu*. In similar fashion to the book characters such as Teacher Wu function as supporting characters and are not an important part of the story.

In March 1987 Salzman wrote to Zhu Tierong apologizing for having offended her through his portrayal of Teacher Wu. He admitted that all the points she made in

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 27.

her letter were indeed were correct, but he was attempting to write an artistic representation, or “impressionistic portrait,” of his time spent in China. He also stated that, “The character of Teacher Wu is someone who has had a very difficult life, a life that few Americans could imagine, but she is nevertheless an artist and a gracious, touching person.” He expressed both his admiration and sensitivity to Zhu’s feelings, and ended the letter by asking for forgiveness and hoped they could still remain friends.⁸¹

Conclusion

Through her relief work, writing, and activism this chapter has established Zhu Tierong as an important member of the historical narrative of modern China and chronicled her contribution to Changsha’s modernization. I have attempted to give her the voice and seat at the table that her life’s work and writings prove she so richly deserves. For Zhu Tierong preserving the legacy of her husband’s work with the YMCA and his contributions to war relief effort in Changsha were perhaps even more important than telling her own story. The evidence for this can be found in the fact that she went through the effort of writing both English and Chinese language versions of Zhang Yifan’s biography, as well as another article detailing his work with the YMCA in Changsha, of which Zhang’s leadership of the organization was a prominent part of the narrative. Establishing a narrative of Zhang Yifan’s life and contributions has also been a focus of this chapter, as I have attempted to situate both his and Zhu’s wartime activism

⁸¹ Zhu Tierong, “Letter from Mark Salzman.”

in Changsha, as well as Zhang's fate during the late 1950's within the larger context of the World War II and liberation experience in China during these years.

The story of Zhu Tierong, Zhang Yifan, and others from their generation also provide a kind of litmus test for evaluating what historian Huaiyin Li refers to as “within time” and “open ended” approaches to studying modern Chinese history.⁸² Under a “within time” approach historians focus on the era in which certain events occurred, and not with the assumption of an end point or teleology. An “open ended” approach encourages us to think of history by not imposing a fixed chronology on the events we discuss. For instance if one considers the events of the Changsha rice riot of 1910 absent of the foreknowledge of the Xinhai Uprising which occurred just over one year later, we can better recognize it as event resulting from various socioeconomic conditions and inequalities which had accumulated in Hunan during the intervening years, culminating in a late Qing uprising of urban commoners and peasant activists. A “within time” approach also allows us to view Zhu Tierong's literary activism in the articles from *China Monthly Review* as pieces reflective of the new optimism that swept through China following the Communist Revolution, and of the vast potential which existed for social and political change. These writings also reflect the sense of betrayal many Chinese felt when the United States entered the Korean War. As difficult as it might be for American audiences to understand, that her articles served as propaganda for the indoctrination of American POWs should also be understood in this regard.

⁸² Huaiyin Li, *Reinventing Modern China: Imagination and Authenticity in Chinese Historical Writing* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press). See conclusion.

However, it is almost impossible to read her optimism about Changsha's modernization these articles absent of any sense of tragedy and with a kind of "dissonance" discussed above. During the Mao era she was betrayed by the very system and Party she so strongly supported. Ultimately, perhaps the appropriate response to such historical questions should come from Zhu herself, who reflected on the hardships she experienced by simply remarking, "So what?"

8-Fire Gods and Benevolent Angels

During the early morning hours of November 13, 1938 a massive fire swept through central Changsha, leaving thousands dead and homeless in its wake. Homes, businesses, and ancient relics were all destroyed. Known as the “Wenxi Dahuo,” in Chinese, the fire was actually planned and carried out by officials of the Nationalist government working in Changsha. They acted on direct orders from Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975), leader of China’s Nationalist Party (KMT) during World War II, also known as the Anti-Japanese War (1937-1945). This chapter shows that Chiang ordered the fire as part of his “scorched earth policy,” and although he ordered Changsha be burned days in advance of an anticipated Japanese occupation of the city, local officials were blamed for the destruction of the fire and subsequently executed as punishment. The fire harmed Chiang’s reputation in the national press and among those who worked under him. Evidence for this comes from accounts of former Nationalist Party workers, civil servants, and residents, as well as other high-ranking members of the military and civil bureaucracy who lived and worked in Changsha during World War II.

But the story of the 1938 fire is also one of those who served as volunteers in Changsha. Both government and non-government agencies such as the YMCA, provided emergency aid and relief by organizing shelter, medical care, food, and housing for thousands of displaced refugees. By analyzing the conditions of wartime Changsha we can also better understand the reach of the Nationalist state in a specific locality during the war, and how the experience of the war shaped the formation of charitable

organizations. Changsha was also one of the first major world cities to experience mass destruction and devastation during World War II, yet to date discussion of the 1938 fire remains largely overlooked by scholars, making a construction of its particular historical narrative more important than merely a local “micro-history” but one that serves as an important part of the larger story of contemporary global history as well.

INTRODUCTION: WARTIME CHINA

For most countries outside the United States World War II began much earlier than 1941. This was also true for China, whose people endured an invasion and subsequent occupation by the empire of Japan during the summer of 1937. Following the Meiji Restoration (1868), Japan’s territorial aims increased with its industrial growth and economic prosperity, as it modeled itself as a colonial power based on the British model. Fully aware of western colonial interests in Asia, Japan also viewed itself as a civilizing power in the region, whose responsibility it was to “liberate” neighboring East Asian countries from Western colonial oppression.

Japan’s relationship with China dates back centuries, as dynasties such as the Tang inspired generations of Japanese culture. By the late nineteenth century Japan was already several years into a social and political “restoration,” that abolished the centuries long feudal system of shogunates, restored the imperial monarchy along constitutional lines, and established an industrial economy. The success of this program was first seen during their stunning defeat of the Chinese navy during the first Sino-Japanese War in

1894. Following this war Japan's colonial interests in main land China increased. As discussed in Chapter 5, under the Treaty of Shimoniseki (1895), Changsha opened as a Japanese trading port. The city's access to a main water route, the Xiang River, connected to Yangtze port of Hankou to the north, made it attractive to Japanese merchants. Later, with the construction of a main rail line from northern China to the south, provincial capitals such as Changsha became vital transportation hubs in the country's isolated and rugged interior.

After the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911, Nanjing was established as the national capital and seat of government for the Guomindang, or Nationalist Party (KMT). Initially led by its founder, Sun Yatsen, his death from cancer in 1925 allowed his protégé, a young military officer named Chiang Kai-shek to become China's de facto president. Beginning with Guangdong province in China's southern coast in 1924, during the Northern Expedition (1926-1928) Chiang and his army successfully subdued the southern provinces from almost a decade of warlordism. But by the 1920's another party had emerged. The Communist Party (CCP), emphasized the rights of the working class, and promoted a proletarian revolution. Both Chiang and his wife, Soong Mayling, educated at Wellesley in the United States and fluent in English, despised communism. Though the two parties shared similar Leninist organizational structure and philosophy their views differed about China's future. The Chiang's and the Nationalists had deep connections in the business world, especially financial centers such as Shanghai. As a part of the international Comintern, by the early 1920's communist cells appeared in cities throughout China, promoting worker's rights and the formation of

labor unions. Further advancing the communist's cause were events surrounding the end of World War I.

The Japanese government wasted no time in taking advantage of their newly acquired territory. Throughout the 1920's businesses and immigrants began occupying areas in north China.¹ Then in what came to be known as the "Mukden Incident," on September 18, 1931 the detonation of explosives near the present day city of Shenyang was staged as a pretext for a full scale military invasion of northeast China, intensifying Japan's colonial presence. The pretext for the Japanese invasion of China proper came following the "Marco Polo Bridge Incident," near Beijing on July 7, 1937. This resulted in "the removal of population, government, schools, and factories from coastal areas to the interior."² Wartime Changsha served as a perfect example of this policy.

Accompanying this intense mobilization of population and industrial capital were two distinct wartime policies advanced by Chiang Kai-shek, "trading space for time," and the "scorched earth policy." Even before the outbreak of war, Chiang and his military advisors knew that China's army was no match for Japan's, and thus began formulating a strategy allowing for a tactical retreat into the interior, forcing a war of attrition. Chiang also did not want factories, supplies, and weapons falling into the hands of the Japanese army. In many cases he ordered the destruction of facilities, as well as other potentially useful elements of infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, and telegraph lines.

¹ Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

² Lloyd Eastman, *The Abortive Revolution: China under Nationalist rule, 1927-1937* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University Press, 1990), 130.

After sharing an alliance during the Northern Expedition, known as the United Front, in 1927 Chiang turned on the communists, staging a coup and purging their party members in Shanghai, executing thousands. The communists then moved underground. The dispute between the two parties continued into the 1930's, but by 1937 the Japanese invasion forced another tenuous alliance. Following the "Xian Incident," of December 1936, Chiang was betrayed and kidnaped and forced to negotiate with communist leaders for a truce, establishing an alliance between the two parties so efforts could be focused on fighting Japan. Under the "Second United Front," all communist military forces technically fell under Chiang's leadership.

Exactly one month after the war began, on August 7, 1937 in a decision determining the course of the war and the fate of millions, Chiang moved the main theater of combat from North China where hostilities had begun, to southern China near Shanghai. Attacking Japanese concessions there allowed the potential for gaining the sympathy of the western community.³ Another obvious reason for this is that the bulk of the Japanese resources in China, its colonized population and military forces was stationed in Manchuria. Chiang knew that his army would be no match if a major battle was fought there. This may have been effective for eventually winning American support, but in many ways it proved a giant failure. By November Japanese forces routed the Nationalist army near Shanghai. After three months approximately 270,000 Chinese troops had been killed, some sixty percent of Chiang's main army. In

³ *Ibid.*, 119.

December the Japanese took Nanjing, where they raped and slaughtered the city's civilian population.⁴

Chiang's gamble to force the fight against Japan in the south paid off, with the most important battle in the early stages of the war fought at Xuzhou, where the Nationalist Army was ultimately defeated in May 1938.⁵ The loss of Xuzhou was devastating for Chiang's forces, as they had invested some 200,000 troops as well as additional reinforcements to defend the city.⁶ For the Japanese, victory at Xuzhou paved the way for their advance to Wuhan, where despite being held at bay by Nationalist troops for ten months, they captured the city in October 1938. By early November the enemy had advanced into northern Hunan.

PANIC

During the time of the fire Changsha's population numbered roughly 300,000, but from the beginning of the war in summer 1937 refugees from the eastern coastal provinces as well as other cities that had fallen to the Japanese poured into the city. On November 9, 1938 the city of Yueyang in northern Hunan fell to the Japanese, causing panic. Poor urban infrastructure was ill equipped to cope, and military checkpoints throughout made it difficult for anyone to go in and out. While longtime residents fled

⁴ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁵ Hans J. van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China: 1925-1945* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 292. For the positive reviews of van de Ven's book, see John Fitzgerald, *The China Journal*, No. 53, pp. 243-244, and Diana Lary, *The China Quarterly*, No. 178, pp. 525-526.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 218.

to the countryside, wharfs near the Big and Small West gates along the Xiang River became overcrowded with people trying to secure passage on boats. Many slipped into the water and drowned. Possessions and luggage were left behind. Some boats and other ships became so overloaded with passengers that they capsized. There was also some problem with people trying to cross the river from the west side to get the banks on the east side, but the ferrymen piloting the boats charged high fees.⁷ Many ships dropped their gangplanks even after only a few boarded. Such was the case with.

A former eyewitness named Sun Jintang, claimed that a ship attached to the firm Jardine Matheson retracted its plank while people were trying to board, and many fell into the river and drowned. Not long after there were reportedly dead corpses of men and women left floating in the river. By that evening the fire had started somewhere around the South Gate, near the Tianxin Pavilion. In a matter of hours the entire city became engulfed in a sea of fire.⁸

Since the Tianxin Pavilion was considered the highest vantage point Changsha and then known as the tallest building in the province, some former eyewitnesses recalled that an initial fire lit from this location was meant to signal groups of “fire teams” (*fang huo dui*) to begin dispersing throughout the city and begin setting buildings on fire. Additional word went out that the enemy would soon be occupying the city and further panic ensued. People left their homes in the middle of the night to leave, and roads

⁷ Shi zheng xie wen shi ban zheng li, “Wen xi da huo shou zai qing kuang ji lue,” *Changsha Wenshi Ziliao*, No. 1 (CSWSZL). (Zhong guo ren min zheng zhi xie shang hui yi Changsha shi wei yuan hui, July 1984), 37.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

became congested with traffic.⁹ At the train station throngs of people fought desperately to board trains, fighting and trampling over each other, a sight that one “could not bear to look at.” Some of those who were trampled over were injured soldiers from the front lines. The insides, front, back, and top of the trains leaving the station were all packed with people hanging on for a ride.¹⁰

Crime, looting, and robbery ensued. A shop owner named Wu Guangzhao, apparently after successfully leaving the city, could not bear the thought of losing his shop or his possessions, so he went back to check on them only to discover that most of his possessions were looted or stolen. He was later beaten to death by thugs. Such activity, along with robbing and looting continued into the second and third day of the fire. According to one eyewitness, by the third day of the fire a whole street, called Ba Ba Jie (literally “Cake Street,” where there were many local bakeries), located outside the city’s East Gate (then called Liuyang Men), was totally gone.¹¹ By this time most of the old city lay in ruins. Most of the destruction was concentrated in the business and financial centers, from Nan Zheng Jie (today’s Huang Xing Road) which entered the the city from the South Gate, and served as a main thoroughfare into the city center, including Po Zi Street, Taiping Street, and to the Big West Gate along the river. Pozi Steet, along with the customs houses and foreign owned buildings along the river, all completely burned down or were badly damaged. Afterwards many took particular notice to the fact that public and government buildings in the north part of the old city

⁹ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 40.

remained relatively undamaged, later conveying the impression that certain buildings and areas were selectively burned. During and after the fire a former railway worker named Dai Zheming worked at a China made goods store, located on present day Zhong Shan road. Behind this store was a restaurant opened by a famous local chef named Liu Sanhe, who owned his own restaurant or tavern called the “Sanhe Restaurant.” Dai claimed that during the time of the fire, the fire team for the north city area lived in Liu’s restaurant, who apparently cooked for and fed some of these men.¹²

A missionary doctor from Yale in China’s Hsiangya Hospital, Phil Greene, remarked in a letter to his wife that following the fall of Wuhan there were early indicators in Changsha that it was going to be an example of the scorched earth policy. During the late morning of October 25 he heard an explosion. A weapons arsenal located behind the hospital suddenly blew up: “Just one big bang and the whole place was gone.”¹³ Three days later Greene noted the number of refugees swarming into the city fleeing areas already occupied by the Japanese, and then the following day, on October 29 many people had already begun evacuating. By early November it was easy to notice the stream of people leaving by any means available, using trains, buses, rickshaws, and even wheelbarrows. By November 12 he wrote, “Places of businesses and homes are securely padlocked! . . . uncanny stillness in the usually busy thoroughfares . . . a deserted and evidently doomed city. Toward nightfall soldiers with

¹² *Ibid.*, 40-41.

¹³ Ruth Altman Greene, *Hsiang-Ya Journal* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1977), 111.

rifles and fixed bayonets took positions along the silent streets.”¹⁴ Later that same evening, another Yale in China staff member, Frank Hutchins, recalled that then Governor Zhang Zhizhong invited several members of Changsha’s foreign missions community to his personal residence for dinner:

We had a delightful dinner with the Governor. As we left, he said to a doctor and his wife, who lived in the heart of the city, ‘You must move tomorrow.’ That was about 9:30 p.m. When asked if they could stay on in the hospital, the Governor again said that they must move the following day, the 13th. They agreed that they would move as soon as the Governor sent cars to take away the wounded men who had been in their care in the adjoining buildings (military hospitals). As we left, the Governor said to them again, ‘You must move tomorrow.’¹⁵

A few hours later, soon after midnight a British gunboat reported seeing the first signs of fire, and that “no one seemed to be fighting them.” In his diary and own account of the fire, Zhang Zhizhong also mentioned his dinner with local foreign missionaries that same evening and that he urged them to leave the city.¹⁶ During the panic that ensued during the early morning hours of November 13, Greene observed in a fashion similar to many Chinese eyewitness accounts, of fire teams from Military Police Headquarters who were going to set fire to the house of one of his servants. According to Greene these men

Evidently had orders not to burn foreign property deliberately and left, making no trouble. Another squad with oil and cotton came along a minute or two later, smashing in doors of private houses and building an oil and cotton fire under the stairs, then opening the windows and leaving. I threatened to smash the skull of the first one who started a fire windward of us no matter whose house it was. Three or more groups came along

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 112.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹⁶ Yu Zhanbang, “Zhang Zhizhong sheng qian kou shu,” *CSWSZL*, No. 2 (July 1985), 18.

the next hour—all from the Military Police; then an officer, and after some talk with him no new fires were started near the hospital.¹⁷

All of this testimony suggests the plan to burn Changsha had been conveyed days in advance. Feng Yuxiang (1882-1948), an infamous warlord during the Republican period reportedly known for his criticism of Chiang Kai-shek, claimed that in the early days of the November prior to the fire, KMT officials, as well as their families began leaving the city. Days before the fire Chiang flew from nearby Nanyue Mountain to Changsha, to meet with Feng and Tang Shengzhi in the home of Changsha's mayor, He Jian. During the meeting Chiang relayed to Feng and others present that the city be burned.¹⁸ Whatever the degree of Feng's experience with Chiang during the fire, his disapproval of the Generalissimo was widely known. When Zhu Tierong and her husband journeyed to the United States in 1946 to study at Yale, they travelled with Feng on the same boat from Shanghai. He even joined them for a time in New Haven and lectured to a large gathering of Yale students denouncing Chiang Kai-shek.¹⁹

During the fire, Zhang Wenxin (1904-1995) was the regimental commander and section chief for the Changsha branch of the KMT officer's school. He was responsible for training provincial police and military officers from Hunan's countryside, and also a younger sibling of the provincial governor Zhang Zhizhong. Zhang Wenxin also confirmed that during early November 1938 Chiang Kai-shek convened a secret meeting of his top generals at Nanyue Mountain, where he directed that based on his "scorched

¹⁷ Greene., 114.

¹⁸ "Feng Yuxiang jiang jun tan Changsha da huo," *CSWSZL*, No. 1, 1984, 55-56.

¹⁹ Zhu Tierong, "Autobiography of Zhang Yifan," *Sophia Zhu Tierong Papers*, 5.

earth policy,” if the Japanese army were to advance on the city, then it should be burned. The following decisions were made in the meeting: first, prior to the fire all government facilities would be relocated to Yuanling in West Hunan, where it would serve as the wartime provincial capital. Second, wounded soldiers, permanent residents, as well as all necessary goods and materials in Changsha would be evacuated.²⁰ Zhang also noted that at the time the “scorched earth policy” was a top-secret policy only Chiang and his top staff knew of, and was a “closely guarded secret.” During the meeting Governor Zhang Zhizhong raised objections that burning the city was not a good method for hindering the enemy’s advance. But Chiang would not listen to any objections. Days after the meeting he sent a telegraph to Zhang Zhizhong stating: “To Changsha Chairman Zhang: Changsha cannot be defended, as to the matter of burning the entire city, by no means hesitate.”²¹

Another reason for the destructive force of the fire was that local police failed to stop many instances of spontaneous arson committed by ordinary citizens. This was also a result of the widespread degree of panic that spread in Changsha, once word spread that the Japanese were advancing. Thus in addition to the “fire teams” sent out by local officials, ordinary citizens participated in the destruction. Many local policemen also left their posts without proper authorization. Local police and fire brigade members were actually told to burn selected areas by the chief of police, Wen Zhongfu. Changde had been cut off. The garrison commander for the KMT’s Second Regiment, Xu Kun,

²⁰ Zhang Wenxin, “Changsha da huo zhen xiang,” *CSWSZL*, No. 1, 1984, 80.

²¹ *Ibid.*

supposedly lost his composure, acted hastily, and failed to warn residents prior to the city of the need to evacuate.²²

During the 1930's Liu Feizhang was a member of Changsha's Number Six Theatrical Team. Both he and members of his team participated in relief efforts to look after refugees following the fire. Reflecting on the events of that fall, Liu directly blamed the KMT for the fire, emphatically stating that Chiang Kai-shek gave the orders for Changsha to be burned. He also remembered seeing two-man fire teams, who were sent to every corner of the city—south, north, east, and west, one bearing the torch, the other a vat of gasoline or kerosene: “The great Changsha fire occurred on November 12, 1938 and lasted for approximately two days. It began precisely during the early hours of the morning. The fire was started by the Guomindang (KMT). The order to start it was given by Chiang Kai-shek.”²³

In his popular biography of Chiang Kai-shek, Jay Taylor claims that the Generalissimo could not have given the order to burn the city, because “he had not before called for such a total destruction of a city about to be lost nor did he afterward.” Taylor also adds that on November 14 Zhang Zhizhong issued a formal apology, but saying he had not given the order to burn the city. Phil Greene even later received a letter from Soong Mayling saying that her husband was not responsible. On November 16 Chiang arrived to investigate, and the missionaries soon learned that the garrison commander, and the chief of police had been executed. Governor Zhang, considered “a trusted

²² *Ibid*, 82.

²³ Liu Feizhang, “Zhou Enlai tong zhi can xie zu zhi ling yi Changsha da huo hou de jiu zai huo dong,” *CSWSZL*, No. 1, 1984, 57.

follower of the Generalissimo,” was dismissed from office but was allowed to remain in Changsha.²⁴ Since Zhang eventually joined the CCP in 1949, out of loyalty to the Party he could have blamed Chiang for the fire.

Although Taylor suggests that Chiang Kai-shek could not have ordered the fire, Zhang Zhizhong’s diary and own oral account suggests that he was ordered by Chiang to burn the city. Around nine o’clock on the morning of November 12, Chiang sent him a confidential telegram ordering him to “make preparations” and to “not delay” in carrying out his orders. Shortly after he received a phone call from one of Chiang’s aides iterating the same order.²⁵ Zhang was also baffled by the fact that he kept receiving reports that different work units of the public security bureau throughout Changsha had been dismissed, and were even seen marching out of the city. When he tried to confirm this with Wen Zhongfu, the director of Changsha’s Public Security Bureau, he was informed that personnel from non-essential areas had been evacuated, but work units in the important areas of the city were still occupied. Later in the evening, on his way to a local radio station to give a broadcast commemorating the birthday of Chiang Kai-shek, Zhang witnessed this first hand:

On the way to the radio station I noticed that regardless if they were essential or non-essential, all work units were deserted. After arriving at the radio station, I ordered my adjutant Wang Jiancheng to call Director Wen, to inform him that all personnel should be returned to their work

²⁴ Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo*, 160. He also cites MacKinnon, “Defense of the Central Yangtze,” p. 39, who quotes the Zhang memoir. In the footnotes of his book Taylor adds that in Zhang’s memoirs, published in 1985, he claimed that Chiang ordered the burning of Changsha “in a panic” because he had just fled Wuhan, where he “ordered the destruction of key facilities, but not the burning down of the city.” See Taylor Notes on p. 628.

²⁵ Yu Zhanbang, “Zhang Zhizhong sheng qian kou shu,” *CSWSZL*, No. 2, 1985, 17.

units within two hours, and that both him and I would inspect every street to see that it is done.²⁶

Later when Zhang attempted to get in touch with Director Wen to inspect the various work units, he noticed that the phone lines had been cut.²⁷ In this way Zhang placed a degree of blame upon the KMT generals and other officials garrisoned in Changsha for the destruction of the fire. Similar to the accounts above, some of these officials met with the Generalissimo in Changsha soon after the fall of Wuhan, and decided that the city should be burned to prevent its important facilities and infrastructure from falling into enemy hands. Although he placed some blame on others and he was under Chiang's orders, Zhang also reflected that "The burning of Changsha was my responsibility, moreover, after reflecting on it today, I have a guilty conscience." He also admitted that the fire "was completely my mistake." But Zhang also stated that he would not have burned the city unless ordered by Chiang.²⁸ Other recent studies also acknowledge Chiang's orders to burn Changsha as historical fact. He acted under poor judgment and with strong objections from his top generals.²⁹ It is also ironic that in the hours leading up to the burning of Changsha's facilities and historical relics, and for those fortunate enough to own a radio, amidst the eerie stillness accompanying the city's empty streets they would have heard a broadcast commemorating the birthday of a national leader who had ordered their destruction.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 19. Chiang's birthday was on October 31.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁹ Stephen Mackinnon, "The Defense of the Central Yangtze," in Mark Peattie et. al. eds, *The Battle for China: Essays on the Military History of the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 200.

During World War II, Chen Zheng was an assistant with the plain clothed division of the Nationalist Army's field headquarters based out of Wuhan. In October 1938 he was posted at Nanyue Mountain to handle security for Chiang Kai-shek's arrival to meet with his top commanders. According to Chen, Chiang flew to Nanyue on October 26 and convened the special meeting with his top generals on November 2nd or 3rd, which included Feng Yuxiang, Wang Jingwei, Bai Chongxi, Governor Zhang Zhidong, Chen Cheng, and others. During this conference Chiang, and these high-ranking members of the military cabinet in Nationalist China, all put themselves at risk. The mountain was bombed at least three different times by Japanese planes. On one occasion the forested area near a small temple at the base of the mountain was bombed, killing more than ten people and injuring many others, among them women, children, and the elderly.³⁰ A few days after the meeting, on November 9 Chen and others journeyed back to Changsha by truck. A journey that should have taken a mere two hours instead took the entire day, because an endless stream of refugees crowded the roads. By the time they arrived back to the city, most of the streets and urban markets were completely empty, and there were all kinds of rumors going about:

Some people said that the enemy was attacking as nearby as the Mi Luo River [a river in northern Hunan, not far from Yue Yang], and some said they would soon be in Changsha. In short, people were in a constant state of anxiety (*ren xin huang huang bu ke zhong ri*). Where the enemy would attack, we really did not know. We also did not have a lot of accurate information . . . but only knew that if our army could not hold the Mi Luo River, then in two or three days time they could advance on

³⁰ Yang Jixuan zheng li, "Changsha da huo qian hou de jing li he jian wen, Chen Zheng kou shu," *CSWSZL*, No. 1, 1984, 107-108.

Changsha. So at that time I knew the situation for Changsha did not bode well (*xiong duo ji shao*).³¹

Chen Zheng's experience during the fire is important because it provides the perspective of both a government insider and yet one who also witnessed the carnage of the fire and lived through it. As with other accounts he recalled seeing the large fire lit atop the Tian Xin Pavilion during the early morning hours of November 13, serving as a signal fire for teams to begin torching the city. He witnessed both high ranking officers as well as ordinary rank and file soldiers use kerosene and torches to set fire to buildings. Dai Liqin, the officer temporarily placed in charge of the train station and managing the evacuation of government personnel, ordered two separate groups of trains to leave the city. One train departed for Yuan Ling in West Hunan that would go on to Chongqing (the wartime capital). Another southbound train that would pass through Hengyang (just to the south of Changsha) and make its way to Guangxi, then Guizhou, but would also end up in Chongqing.³²

Chen was on the train bound for Hengyang, and recalled a terrifying sight: the train station filled with chaos and panic, as scores of people attempted to board trains that could not hold enough passengers. Soon after the city was ablaze much of the station and the area of the tracks where their car was situated became surrounded by a sea of flame, and all on board feared for their lives. Many of the rail cars had ammunition attached to the outside, so Chen and the other passengers feared the fire would cause it to ignite and explode. They also were forced to wait some time for a locomotive to attach

³¹ *Ibid.*, 108-109.

³² *Ibid.*, 110.

to the car, compounding their distress as the fire grew in intensity. Many rode on top of the train, and other injured were strapped to the side, but unsecured. Once the train finally did start moving many fell off, and many were crushed by the train or perished from the flames. The urban areas surrounding Changsha's main East Gate, were in a part of the city most affected by the fire, and unfortunately the train tracks led straight through this area. Those inside had to cover themselves with blankets to avoid being burned. Once the train finally made it through the flames to a safer area outside the city, they still were not safe. To make matters worse, around 4 a.m., after stopping to allow the passengers to go to the toilet, they were even strafed by machine gun fire from Japanese planes!³³

In addition to providing an eyewitness account of the fire, Chen Zheng's experience both at the Nanyue meeting and during the fire itself shows how quickly Chiang Kai-shek's orders were issued to burn the city. By the time Chen and his party set out to return to Changsha on November 9, the main roads were already flooded with evacuating refugees. Coupled with the power of rumor and gossip news of the fire plan quickly made its way into the street, causing panic and chaos. Moreover, it also confirms much of what has been said thus far, that members of the local military and police force, many of which were in uniform, were seen torching specific areas of Changsha.

³³ *Ibid.*

AFTERMATH

The KMT government's official report and conclusions related to the Changsha fire, dated November 20, 1938, begins: "Following is the explanation of the disastrous fire at Changsha given by the Central Publicity Board and the Board of Political Affairs of the National Military Council." According to the report, one of the causes was due to "erroneous reports which misled the local soldiers and police," and their "failure of previously mapping out the plan to meet all emergencies and their hasty and thoughtless action upon hearing baseless rumors." The second cause of the fire was "due to the indignation of the persons who had been entrusted with the task of making preparations for the carrying out of the destruction plan," as well as local officials who panicked once Yueyang and other cities in northern Hunan fell to the Japanese. The report then listed the various measures the government took to punish those responsible, which included arresting and punishing local officials and the appropriation of relief funds to the homeless and needy.³⁴

The testimony of the former governor, as well as the Changsha KMT government's own officials report illustrates there was a definite plan to "carry out" the destruction of the city. During the fire Gao Yihan served as a security officer for the Hunan and Hubei region, and following the fire investigated the chief reasons and causes of the Changsha fire. The three men held most responsible were Hunan's provincial garrison commander Feng Ti, the second regimental commander Xu Kun, and the chief

³⁴ "November 20, 1938, Changsha," in Yale-China Association Records, 1900-1976, Record unit 232, YRG: 37, Series 1, Box 14. Yale University: Manuscripts and Archives.

of the public security bureau Wen Zhongfu. Each were blamed for the fire and summarily executed, but according to Gao were simply “scapegoats.” Gao fled his post in Wuhan after the Japanese took the city in late October, where he and many others fled to Zhijiang, a city in Western Hunan. Once they received the news of the Changsha fire, Gao was ordered to go to the city to investigate what had happened, and concluded that during the early days of November 1938 Changsha became a place governed by high-ranking KMT bureaucrats where one could “barely secure their own personal safety in such troubled times” (*gou quan xingming yu luanshi*). According to Gao, all KMT officials who worked in Changsha during the war with Japan were all well aware of Chiang’s signature policies of “scorched earth,” “buying space for time,” and that the state of international affairs and its impact on China was cause for drastic measures. These policies, noted Gao, were not subject to change.³⁵

Following the fire the communist press took full advantage of the tragedy by criticizing the decision to burn Changsha. An article appearing in the Chongqing *Xinhua Ribao* dated November 21, 1938, criticizing the scorched earth policy. This paper was a communist publication, which the KMT allowed as a result of the Second United Front, and mostly discussed the KMT’s policy of *jian bi qing ye*, which translates as “strengthening defense works, evacuating noncombatants, hiding provisions and livestock, and strengthening the defenses and clearing the fields,” but also can be understood as the “scorched earth policy.” The article is mostly a summary of this

³⁵ Gao Yihan, “Changsha Da Huo Nei Mu,” *CSWSZL*, No. 1, 1984, 73-78.

policy in the nationwide campaign to resist and fight the invading Japanese army. But at the end it denounced the scorched earth policy apparently approved by Changsha city authorities to burn the entire city:

After the recent fire in Changsha public opinion is very unsettled there (*feinan*). Soon after the defeat at Yueyang, cities throughout Hunan were put to the torch and people fled. (Some text omitted), Part of this is understandable, but is definitely not the appropriate means to implement the “scorched earth policy.” We (the newspaper) absolutely praise the efforts of different districts throughout Hunan in adopting this policy to attack the enemy, even if it means a drastic loss of material goods, which we will not even balk at to do (*zai suo bu xi*)! But we completely cannot agree with a kind of policy that does not mobilize the masses, and depends on a method of “burning” that causes the masses to suffer many hardships. This misses the original intent of the strengthening and provisioning policy, is completely baffling, and is a scheme that could be used by the enemy to deceive us.

The improper implementation of this policy has resulted in a serious mistake. This kind of necessary denial to the enemy of the strengthening and provisioning policy, is a method that is being used in battlefields throughout China during the war, and is a serious attack on the enemy. . .

The lesson from the Changsha fire is that such is not suitable method for engaging in the people’s war, and we should not use the scorched earth policy in this fashion.³⁶

Thus the communist press used the Changsha fire as an opportunity to criticize the KMT’s wartime “scorched earth” policy and make it known that public opinion in the city was very unsettled following the fire. More importantly is that for both the CCP and its readership it politicized the event, possibly contributing to the negative perception of Chiang and the Nationalist party fomenting throughout China at the time. In this way Changsha became an example to many of failed Nationalist wartime policies during the early stages of the War of Resistance against Japan. The events surrounding the fire

³⁶“Lun jian bi qing ye, Xinhua Ribao, she lun,” *CSWSZL*, No. 1, 1984, 48.

also contributed to the growing negative sentiment against the Chiang regime among the general public. This was especially in Changsha, whose residents suffered the consequences of their president's orders.

The written accounts of former officials working in Changsha during the fire also reveal the degree of mismanagement on the part of the KMT government in carrying out the plan to torch the city, as well as the distrust on the part of those who formerly worked under Chiang's administration. Obviously the burning of Changsha was a catastrophic failure for the enormous toll it exerted in lives lost and the cost of damage to public property. But it also serves as an example of the reach of the Nationalist state in Changsha during the Republican period. Since the order to burn the city originated from the highest echelon of state power, the Generalissimo, the fire represented his influence over local affairs and his failure to act in the best interests of his people. Not to mention that the notion of burning an entire city in order to "save" it from an invading enemy, was quite senseless. Scorched earth campaigns were also used by both Hitler and Stalin. In U.S. history the most famous exemplar was William Tecumseh Sherman's adoption of the policy in his campaign through the southern states during the later months of the American Civil War. In the minds of Feng Yuxiang, Zhang Wenxin, Gao Yihan, and Hunan's former Governor, the orders to burn Changsha were given by Chiang, who they all held ultimately responsible for the tragedy of the fire. For these high-ranking leaders it also seriously undermined Chiang's credibility as their leader.

Chiang's decision to burn Changsha, as well as the defeats at Wuhan in Guangzhou during the fall of 1938 also cost him politically, causing the defection of

Wang Jingwei and other KMT leaders.³⁷ Phil Greene, the doctor from Yale's Hsiang-ya Hospital, also noted that on Thursday, November 17, Chiang Kai-shek arrived in Changsha on a personal tour of inspection, and met for tea with assembled guests at the Hunan Bible Institute. He told his guests there in fact had been a plan to burn the city, but only to "Destroy certain buildings of military importance when the Japanese really arrived. This that has happened was not planned and is being investigated. Please help us in any way you can to help the people and move them on out care for them, etc."³⁸

The total damage of Changsha's Wenxi Fire resulted in some 20,000 urban buildings totally destroyed. Most of these consisted of businesses and private residences located in the central and southern areas of the city surrounded by the old wall. A number of prominent temples and monuments were also completely lost or destroyed, as well as many rice warehouses, resulting in the loss of some 1.9 million *shi* of grain. Approximately 200,000 people were left homeless, with a rough estimate of casualties at 20,000, many of whom were buried in mass graves outside the city.³⁹

For as much as the destruction of Changsha in 1938 can be catalogued as a human tragedy and a failure by the Nationalist government, Japan's failure to capture Hunan meant that the province and its capital city remained a part of unoccupied China for the most of duration of the war. In some ways this bears similarity to when the Taiping Army laid siege to Changsha almost one hundred years before. But perhaps the fire

³⁷ Mackinnon, "The Defense of the Central Yangtze," 204-205.

³⁸ Letter from Dr. Phillips F. Greene to Mr. Robert Ashton Smith, The Burning of Changsha: Nov. 13-16, 1938, in Yale-China Association Records, 1900-1976, Record unit 232, YRG: 37, Series 1, Box 14. Yale University: Manuscripts and Archives.

³⁹ Liang Xiaojing and Chen Xianshu, *1938: 11.13, Changsha da huo* (Wuhan: Hebei renmin chubanshe, 2005), 11-13. See also Diana Lary, *Chinese People at War*, 63-64.

may be catalogued as a pyrrhic victory for Chiang's war of attrition. It also meant that efforts would have to be made to take the province again, which was attempted during the "Second Changsha Offensive," from late December to early January 1942, when Nationalist troops fought mounted stiff resistance and held the city.⁴⁰ But following this battle the outcome of the Sino-Japanese War in China became further influenced by the war against the United States in the Pacific. Again in April 1944 Hunan and Changsha became another important theater of combat, as part of one of the most massive offensives by any army during World War II. Known as "Operation Ichigo," it involved the advance of some 500,000 Japanese troops into China's interior. Strategically the pacification of Hunan was vital because the central, Xiang River cities of Yuzhou, Changsha, and Hengyang were each situated along the railway line connecting the Beijing-Wuhan line in the north to the one coming south from Guangzhou. Wang Qisheng, an historian and native of Hunan, argues against much of the traditional PRC scholarship on the Sino-Japanese War, which suggests that Chiang Kai-shek failed to deploy enough troops during the Ichigo campaign to Hunan because he wished to preserve troop strength for an eventual confrontation with communist forces.⁴¹ Actually Wang notes, the main reason for the Nationalists eventual defeat was due significant decline in combat effectiveness. The Nationalist Army had an ineffective officer corps. Common soldiers were malnourished, illiterate, often too weak to march long distances, and were improperly trained. Despite all this however, "Nationalist soldiers were tough

⁴⁰ Tohmatsu Haruo, "The Strategic Correlation between the Sino-Japanese and Pacific Wars," in *The Battle for China*, 426.

⁴¹ Wang Qisheng, "The Battle for Hunan and the Chinese Military's Response to Operation Ichigo," in *The Battle for China*, 415.

and had high morale,” which may explain in part why the battle for Hunan during Ichigo was one of the most fiercely fought from the Chinese side. The defense of Hengyang became known as one of the most courageously fought engagements of the entire war.⁴² Although Hunan finally fell in September of 1944 for the first time in its modern history to an invading army, the Japanese victory was hard earned and obviously short-lived.

RELIEF

Following the Japanese invasion, cities in China’s hinterland became centers for war refugees fleeing the north and eastern parts of the country. Such was the case for Changsha before, during, and after the fire of 1938. Relief agencies such as the YMCA and Changsha International Relief Committee, with funding from the Nationalist government but also from outside donations, were integral to urban recovery and provided assistance to thousands of homeless residents as well as war refugees.

The YMCA in China gained distinction during the 1920’s due to the work of James Yen’s Mass Education Movement in Ding County, in North China’s Henan Province.⁴³ In Changsha its founding and existence paralleled the years of the city’s modernization. First established in 1911, and for several years located near West Archway Street, it became one of Changsha’s most active civic organizations. It was financed by the national committee for the YMCA in China and served as a center for

⁴² *Ibid.*, 415-417.

⁴³ See Charles Hayford, *To the People: James Yen and Village China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

education and recreation. The Board of Directors included some of Hunan's most notable figures, such as the famed revolutionary hero Huang Xing, philanthropist Xiong Xiling, Governor Tan Yankai, and others. Zhu Tierong and her husband Zhang Yifan, discussed in chapter seven, both worked for the YMCA during the war. With his wife by his side, by the late 1930's Zhang Yifan served as the Y's Secretary General in Changsha, and worked closely with its other branch facilities in Hunan. With the beginning of World War II in China, and under Zhang's direction the Y became a center of anti-Japanese propaganda. Shortly after the war began, Zhang often posted banners on every door inside the Y, with slogans such as, "We have been at war for one year, what contribution have you made to resist Japan?" As a popular entertainment venue the theatre inside the Y frequently hosted plays, speeches, and debates, all aimed at mobilizing popular support against the Japanese invasion, and featured entertainers or other local celebrities. Zhang himself often gave patriotic speeches. Agnes Smedley (1892-1950), the American feminist, journalist, and CCP advocate, was invited by the local branch to speak there. Smedley's involvement with the Y also reveals that the YMCA in Changsha became one of the first civic institutions to actively support the growth of the Communist Party in the city. As a journalist Smedley spent a good part of the war travelling with the Eighth Route Army, the communists' primary military outfit, which maintained branch offices in many of the major cities in China's hinterland. The branch office in Changsha was supervised by Xu Teli (1877-1968) and Wang Yuanbo. Zhu Tierong recalled very clearly that at least on one occasion Xu, the noted teacher and mentor of Mao Zedong and CCP activist, gave a rousing speech to a packed house at the

YMCA and his remarks were met with “thunderous applause.” When Zhang Zhizhong became Hunan’s Governor in 1937 he ardently supported the Y’s activities in Changsha. Zhu Tierong worked closely with his daughter, Zhang Suwo, who frequented there.⁴⁴

After Japanese bombing raids began on the city, the YMCA also organized an urban “ambulance corps,” (Jiu Hu Dui). In mid November 1937 the eastern section of the city near the old Xiaowu Gate and East Train Station was bombed, injuring and killing many residents. Since many of the shops and houses in the old city were constructed so close together and in such close proximity, even a few bombs dropped on such a small area could inflict enormous damage. This coupled with the city’s narrow streets and alleyways, often made it difficult for rescuers to enter the affected areas. Segments of the local police force, often believed to be KMT “collaborators” (*wei*) with the enemy in many instances failed to respond or act appropriately. In this regard aid workers from the YMCA served as a substitute. Their facilities maintained a steady supply of field dressings, stretchers, and emergency lamps, which the ambulance corps often relied upon.⁴⁵

Following the fall of Xuzhou in Jiangsu province in May 1938, scores of displaced people, most commonly referred to as *nanmin* (literally, “people with difficulty”) fled from China’s northern and eastern coastal provinces into the hinterland, to cities such as Wuhan and Changsha, where “Most refugees had no definite destination; they were moving away from danger, not towards any particular place. Many moved

⁴⁴ Zhu Tierong, “Kang zhan shi qi de Changsha ji du jiao qing nian hui,” *Changsha Kang Zhan*, No. 7 (Changsha: wen shi zi liao zhuan ji, 1995), 114-121.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

repeatedly, never certain where they were or how long they would stay there.”⁴⁶ A recently published study on wartime Wuhan in 1938 shows that the first six-months of the Anti-Japanese War (1937-1945), “produced the greatest forced migration in Chinese history,” when some 95 million people, approximately 26 percent of the population, were forced from their homes. Numbered at just over 13 million, Hunan had one of the highest refugee populations.⁴⁷ In his study on Russian refugees during World War I, Peter Gatrell defines refugees as those who “have left their homes involuntarily as a result of war, famine, or some such calamity,” and that the condition of refugeedom “remained synonymous with spatial mobility and uncertainty.”⁴⁸ Although the character of China’s refugees differed in composition from the millions in Russia in Europe who were forced from their homes also due to policies of racial cleansing, such as Gypsies and Jews, some comparison can be made in that in both cases of wartime Russia and China, the national governments remained powerless as how to best address the crisis. Tsarist officials in Russia’s interior had no accurate information about how many refugees moved from province to province or town to town, and “had very little accurate information about the numbers, condition, and destination of refugees.”⁴⁹

As with wartime Russia the Nationalist government donated the funds that were in turn used by local relief agencies such as the YMCA. The government’s monetary

⁴⁶ Diana Lary, *The Chinese People at War: Human Suffering and Social Transformation, 1937-1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 27.

⁴⁷ Stephen Mackinnon, *Wuhan, 1938: War, Refugees, and the Making of Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 46-48.

⁴⁸ Peter Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking: Refugees in Russia During World War I* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1999), 9, 56.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 53, 61.

donation to the relief effort was facilitated through the Ministry of Finance for Rire-relief, and included the rationing of rice, fuel, and salt, distributed to various “refugee stations” established throughout Changsha. Some of these stations were foreign missions, such as the Hunan Bible Institute, the Roman Catholic Mission, as well as the Yale in China compound north of the city. The locations of these missions facilitated their efficient functioning as refugee centers following the fire. The Catholic mission as well as the Yale compound were both located near each other on property just outside Changsha’s north gate. With its compound located just outside the city’s eastern wall, and on the opposite side of the city, the Hunan Bible Institute also served as an ideal location for refugee relief. Each of these missions, outside the confines of the old wall, would have been relatively unaffected by the fire. At the time of the fire the second largest mission hospital in Changsha was the Hudson Taylor Hospital, named after the missionary James Hudson-Taylor. Most of its facilities were destroyed during the fire. Its equipment and staff were all moved to the Hunan Bible Institute, making both it and Hsiang-ya hospitals and relief shelters. A fourth refugee center, located at the Liebenzeller Mission, was established not far from the gates of the south wall, making the total number of foreign mission-based relief centers at four, creating a kind of circumference around the old city of relief stations. There was also a relief center set up at Changsha’s north train station, located outside the north wall and not far from the Yale and Catholic relief centers. Additional relief measures included special stations for burn victims, homes for the elderly, other types of shelters that included heat and bedding, much of which was donated by the “Red Swastika Society.” Gruel kitchens and the distribution

of free rice tickets for feeding refugees were also established. Some of the additional major financial donors to the relief effort were the International Red Cross Committee for Central China, who donated forty-eight thousand U.S. dollars. The “American Advisory Committee” donated thirty thousand dollars.⁵⁰ Soon after the fire a special loan committee was formed and allocated fourteen thousand dollars to “assist those who returned to the city and had practically lost all their possessions,” and approximately one thousand personal loans were given out to individuals who had lost private possessions or property. Most of these were paid back in full within a year, and the aid continued in subsequent years.⁵¹ The 1939 to 1940 yearly report for the International Committee also listed the Nationalist government’s contribution to local welfare at 83,000 and a substantial increase in the American Advisory Committee’s contribution at 115,000. In addition to providing for the material needs of refugees in wake of the fire, funding was also allocated for occupational needs. Factories for soap making, spinning and weaving, shoe and sandal making were all constructed after the fire, in addition to three poor schools for destitute and refugee children. By 1940 these facilities, the soap factory in particular, still functioned.⁵²

Although the Japanese did not capture Changsha during the fall of 1938, it as well as many other cities in Hunan and throughout China suffered from the onslaught of bombing from Japanese planes. Following the invasion of the eastern coast in the

⁵⁰ “Report of Changsha International Relief Committee,” July 1 to December 31, 1938. In *Yale-China Association Records, 1900-1976*. Record Unit 232, YRG 37, Series II, Box 17 (Yale University: Manuscripts and Archives)

⁵¹ “Report of the Changsha International Relief Committee,” January 1, 1939 to August 1, 1940, in *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

summer of 1937, bombing sorties commenced in China's interior. Beginning from November 24, 1937 to August the following year, table 9.1 summarizes the YMCA's relief and rescue activities. In the Chinese version of the table, the column titled "Nature of Work," or *gongzuo qingxing*, provides extensive detail, but for the sake of space only the number of casualties and number of injured treated is shown. In addition to treating the wounded and transporting them to hospitals, on August 18, 1938 teams from the Y gave out 2,000 loaves of steamed bread, as well as approximately 100 Jintan mouth lozenges (ironically made in Japan), as well as hot tea. Following the first recorded bombing near Changsha's East Train Station on November 24, 1939, relief workers dug through the rubble of a wall near an area called Luoxin Tian Kou to help rescue approximately eleven trapped children from a local school. Rescuing victims buried beneath rubble was a common following many of the bombings. After a bombing on August 26, 1938 the principal of a vocational school was rescued beneath the fallen rubble by a YMCA "excavation team" (*wa jue dui*). More than 100 people were also given temporary shelter inside the YMCA on the same day.

Table 9-1. YMCA Sino-Japanese War Bombing Recovery Work in Changsha⁵³

Date of Incident	Location	No. of YMCA personnel involved	Nature of work	Remarks
November 24, 1937	Xiao Wu Gate, East Train Station	All staff, secretaries, and workers. 122 total.	24 people treated for wounds. 15 transported to Xiangya Hosp.	Three enemy planes appeared. Many killed.
February 8, 1938	Xinhe Train Station, steel bridge at airport.	Secretaries-6 Staff-7 General workers-12 Wartime service team-48. 73 total.	Stretcher and bandage teams evacuated 7 people to hospital.	8 enemy planes dropped bombs with negligible damage (?).
April 8, 1938	? and Hunan University	Secretaries-6 Staff-7 General workers-18 Wartime service team-62. 93 total.	Stretcher and bandage teams treated 16 people. 10 seriously wounded moved to Xiangya hospital.	More than 20 enemy planes, dropped more than 100(?) bombs. Hunan U. Library totally destroyed.
July 23, 1938	Areas outside north and east gates.	Secretaries-6 Staff-5 General workers-16 Wartime service team-68. 95 total.	Stretcher and bandage teams treated 25 people, 18 transported to hospital.	Nine enemy planes. More than 100 bombs dropped. More than 300 people killed.

⁵³ “Ben hui zai Changsha zhi jiu hu gong zuo,” *Kang zhan liang nian lai zhi Changsha qing nian hui* (Changsha zhong hua ji du jiao qing nian hui, zhong hua min guo nian ba nian shi er yue, December 1939), 37. In *Yale-China Association Records, 1900-1976*, Record Unit 232, YRG 37, Series XIV, Box 195 (Yale University: Manuscripts and Archives).

August 18, 1938	Tianxin Rd. East Train Station Rd. Jingwu Rd.	Secretaries-7 Staff-8 General Workers-18 Wartime service team-64. 97 total.	Three ambulance, stretcher teams sent out. 20 wounded. 20 sent to hospital.	18 enemy planes. Over 100 bombs dropped. More than 60 people killed.
August 26, 1938	East, South, and north districts.	Secretaries-7 Staff-8 General Workers-18 Wartime service team-81. 114 total.	Three ambulance and stretcher teams. 22 wounded. 21 sent to hospital. Loaves of bread and tea distributed.	18 enemy planes, 200 bombs dropped. Approx. 700 people killed.
August 27, 1938	Airfield at Guihua Yuan, Fushou Bridge, north of city	Secreteries-5 Staff-4 General Workers-12 Wartime service team-43. 64 total.	Three ambulances used, donated by local Bank of China. Treated 12 people for injuries, 5 taken to hospital.	18 enemy planes, more than 100 bombs dropped, causing many to flee.

Table 9-1 (cont.) YMCA Sino-Japanese War Bombing Recovery Work in Changsha.

In the days immediately following the fire in mid November 1938 Japanese planes dropped propaganda leaflets in and around Changsha: “See what a rotten

government you have; we will never burn you.”⁵⁴ For the Japanese army successful air and bombing campaigns were essential to their wartime strategy in China during World War II. Attacks aimed to terrorize civilian populations in cities, destroy urban infrastructure, and “to strike at China’s military bases so as to weaken its resistance and to support Japanese army ground operations.”⁵⁵ Coupled with the war on the ground these attacks could eventually pressure the Nationalist government into a swift surrender. The large scale bombing of cities in China’s interior was also a direct result of the stalemate following the fall of Wuhan and Guangzhou in the autumn of 1938. With Changsha now a pile of rubble, Chinese forces stiffened their resistance, forcing the war of attrition that Chiang Kai-shek began planning for after the invasion began. Relocating the seat of government to Chongqing also allowed further time for the Chinese army to strengthen its defenses, no doubt aided by the rough, mountainous geography of south central China. Thus air power became more important as the war drew on. The data from table 9.1 also reveals the extent to which how certain areas in Changsha were selected for destruction prior to the fire: roads, bridges, and the train station, as well as the narrow areas surrounding the city’s gates. In all cities the main targets of Japanese bombers were mainly military installations and bases, as well as the new capital of Chongqing. The bombing and destruction of Hunan University in April 1938 is further evidence of the fact that educational institutions were also targeted, not

⁵⁴ “Letter from Dr. Phillips F. Greene to Mr. Robert Ashton Smith,” *The Burning of Changsha: Nov. 13-16, 1938*, in *Yale-China Association Records, 1900-1976*, Record unit 232, YRG: 37, Series 1, Box 14. (Yale University: Manuscripts and Archives).

⁵⁵ Hagiwara Mitsuru, “The Japanese Air Campaigns in China, 1937-1945,” in *The Battle for China*, 237.

only in Changsha but in cities throughout China.⁵⁶ Especially following the introduction of the Mitsubishi A6M, or “Zero,” fighter into China’s theater of combat the Japanese maintained aerial dominance until American entry into the war in 1941 saw the bulk of Japan’s air forces concentrated in the Pacific, allowing the stalemate in China to continue.⁵⁷

Conclusion

The tragedy of the Changsha fire has been compared to the equally disastrous decision by Chiang Kai-shek in June 1938 to break the dykes of the Yellow River at Huayuankou in Henan province. The resulting flood caused one of the first mass killings of World War II, drowning approximately 800,000 people. Some 70,000 square kilometers of the North China Plain were consumed by floodwaters, causing an exodus of refugees to the west across north China. Many refugees even remained in their place of flight at the war’s end in 1945. In similar fashion, Changsha was one of the first major cities in the world to experience the mass destruction and carnage of global war.⁵⁸

When comparing the Changsha fire of 1938 with other events in the history of the city’s modernization, such as the Rice Riot of 1910, there are certain notable comparisons, specifically related to the reach of the state. In both cases local leadership took part in orchestrating violence upon the city. But despite its place as a provincial capital and the

⁵⁶ Lary, *The Chinese People at War*, 24.

⁵⁷ Mitsuru, “The Japanese Air Campaigns in China, 1937-1945,” 248.

⁵⁸ Lary, 24.

presence of the imperial government as a prominent fixture of urban space, the events of the riot in 1910 suggest that the ability of the Qing government to exert control over local affairs was negligible. Urban life and governance was dominated by groups such as street corps, community organizations, and local gentry elites who hoarded grain such as Ye Dehui. But by 1938 the new Republican government, under direct orders from their president, managed to burn down much of the city. Establishing Chiang Kai-shek and other urban leaders as ultimately responsible for the carrying out of a scorched earth policy demonstrates that at least in the case of the Anti-Japanese War (1937-1945) the wartime climate allowed for the reach of the Nationalist state to achieve destructive ends at the expense of Changsha's citizens.

It also remains difficult not to place a large degree of the blame for the destruction of the fire upon Chiang Kai-shek. In making the case for the reach of the state, he in all respects represented and even personified Nationalist China during the war. When it concerned wartime policy and major combat decisions Chiang *was* the state. More recent scholarship on the role of the Generalissimo during World War II substantiates this argument. It is well known the Chiang was an intense micromanager, often issuing orders not only to commanding generals in the field but to every head along the chain of command: company, brigade, and platoon leaders as well. For as much as he wanted to personally control and dictate the outcome of a battle or engagement, this often resulted in confusion and eventual mistrust.

The practice of using "personal directives," or *shouling*, has a long history among ruling leadership in China, dating as far back as the Qin dynasty. Chang Jui-te has

argued that Chiang's wartime management in part derives from this tradition. For as much as one might consider such supervision admirable, it was chaotic for Chiang's subordinates to function under such a system. He often used personal telegrams to issue orders to directly to regimental commanders at the war front, often bypassing the higher chains of command at the division and corps levels. One example Chang discusses comes from the battle of Xinkou in northern Shanxi in 1937, when the Generalissimo used a personal directive to bypass the orders of Yan Xishan, the Commander of the Second War Zone. When troops heard conflicting orders both from Yan and Chiang, confusion ensued.⁵⁹ Other scholars such as Wang Qisheng have also argued that Chiang's intense micromanagement often reaped negative consequences for the war effort. Commanders such as Xu Yongchang, and provincial governors such as Zhang Zhizhong both privately blamed Chiang for causing confusion during the war, that because unit commanders often waited to hear from him for direction, they often shied away from taking the initiative, resulting in inaction and tactical failure.⁶⁰

The case of the Changsha fire serves as yet another example of Chiang's style of management during the war. He personally flew to Nanyue not far from Changsha in the days before the fire, issuing orders to local commanders. He later sent personal telegrams to Zhang Zhidong confirming the order to implement the scorched earth policy. Chiang even toured the city in the aftermath and made sure that local officials were held responsible and punished for the destruction. Although in so doing he placed himself at

⁵⁹ Chang Jue-te, "Chiang Kai-shek's Personal Directives," in Stephen R. Mackinnon et al. eds., *China at War: Regions of China, 1937-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 71.

⁶⁰ Wang Qisheng, "Battle for Hunan and Operation Ichigo," 413.

great personal risk, his actions before and after the fire are but one example among many of how his personal style of leadership was detrimental to the Nationalist's war effort. It is also worth noting the irony of Chiang's visit to Nanyue Mountain in November 1938. That fall Chiang assumed the role of the very deity commemorated in a temple atop the mountain, of *huo shen*, or *zhu rong*, Hunan's "fire god."

This chapter has also shown how the efforts of non-government agencies such as the YMCA to aid wartime refugees exerted their own influence over local affairs in Changsha. By helping lead the urban relief effort, with a ready staff of willing and able volunteers, and along with the aid of local mission hospitals such as the Hsiangya and Hunan Bible Institute, the city became an important center for humanitarian relief in unoccupied China during World War II. Even in the face of frequent bombing raids that began soon after the Japanese invasion, the people of Changsha remained undaunted in their efforts to resist and endure, with volunteers such as Zhang Yifan organizing propaganda activities that aroused patriotism and national pride. Zhang and others also risked their lives following the bombing raids to tend to and evacuate the wounded, as well as rescue victims buried beneath debris. The YMCA and International Relief Committees received large subsidies from the KMT, meaning that even while focusing on the Japanese occupation and maintaining a stable wartime economy, the state did not turn a complete blind eye to the plight of ordinary citizens. Although Chiang Kai-shek's military and political apparatus may have failed the people of Changsha, its monetary contribution subsidized much of the relief effort, leaving a complicated legacy

of the Wenxi Fire's impact on Changsha's modernization both for the historian and those who lived through it.

Conclusion

At this point we can return to the original question posed in the introduction. Why were Changsha and Hunan province so particularly anti-western and anti-reformist, and how did these sentiments shape its modernization during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? In the case of Changsha the record shows that during the post Taiping years the number of temples and sacrificial altars in the city grew. When combined with the conservative intellectual tradition espoused by the ruling gentry and by the legacy of the Taiping Rebellion upon urban life, during the 1890's Changsha became a center of an intense anti-foreign xenophobia. Zhou Han's inflammatory literature incited riots throughout China. Later the same decade, the Hundred Days of Reform failed in Changsha in part because of the local gentry's domination over the intellectual life of the city. In this way that 1890's was the beginning of a period of ideological warfare that shaped Changsha's modernization for the next half century.

As conservative as they were, in their own way characters such as Zhou Han and Ye Dehui represented their own manifestations of Hunan nationalism during the late Qing. Their version of anti-foreignism made them bedfellows of a conservative mentality unique to Hunan and Changsha. Mao Zedong and other student activists who protested against the foreign presence in Changsha during the 1920's represented a kind of realignment of this mentality. This was a new kind of consciousness that continued to resist the foreign presence in the city, but one reimagined as a new form of modernity.

An unfortunate consequence of this was the execution of Ye Dehui in 1927, where one brand of local extremism was eliminated by another.

Despite her experiences studying abroad at Yale and subsequent close collaboration with the foreign community in Changsha during World War II, Zhu Tierong also adopted a China centered, nationalist, and patriotic worldview that intensified after the United States entered the Korean conflict during the early 1950's. She represented a new generation of activist women that continued to question the West's influence in China and in global affairs. Her experiences following the Communist Revolution in 1949 were unique in their own right, as was the defiant courage and heroism that she displayed enduring the horrors of the Anti-Rightist Campaign and the Cultural Revolution.

But the fierce confrontations between tradition and modernity, or between the indigenous and foreign, were certainly not the dominating characteristics of urban life in Changsha. According to William Rowe, Hankou during the same period “was a violent and contentious place. That does not mean, however, that the local population easily accepted violence of a premeditated ideological sort.”¹ As with other cities during the Republican period, there were pockets of civic activity, commerce, and philanthropy, clearly present activities in Changsha in places such as Huo Gong Dian, as well as in the propaganda work, refugee relief, and other humanitarian efforts of organizations such as the YMCA during World War II. The city's revered intellectual traditions spawned great minds and future leaders. Although the reforms of 1898 may have failed in the

¹ Rowe, *Hankou*, 280.

short term, they resulted in the first generation of women from Changsha being sent to study abroad in Japan. Several girl's schools were established throughout the city. Liberated women such as Tang Qunying became outspoken opponents of Ye Dehui's control over local affairs, even defying his objection to opening a girl's school near Huo Gong Dian by distributing pamphlets and other literature in support of female emancipation. By the 1920's newspapers such as the *Hunan Da Gong Bao*, as well as numerous student pamphlets and publications, such as those from the Hsiangya Medical College, were indicative of a growing civic consciousness that was inexorably linked to China's growing national identity and role in the growing community of nation-states of the early twentieth century.

The previous writings on the 1910 riot, specifically by Joseph Esherick and Arthur Rosenbaum, focused on the role of Changsha's urban gentry in hoarding grain and inciting the unrest. But Liu Duping's oral histories provide a better picture of what specific types of urban commoners—specifically carpenters—were involved in the riot. They directed their anger at both the local Qing government and the western community in the city. The specificity of my own account, noting the names, occupations, and backgrounds of the oral history interviewees represents a kind of “people's history” approach that has attempted to understand the make and mentality of Changsha's subaltern working class. Sources such as the oral histories and bamboo poems also suggest that to those who either witnessed or participated in the rioting, the memory of the event was just as meaningful than the riot itself. The same perhaps rings true for the other major turbulent event in Changsha's history, the fire of 1938.

The events of 1910 also teach us something about the reach of a Qing imperial state literally on the eve of its collapse. Centuries of imperial tradition had finally begun to outlive their effectiveness. Specifically, “the rule of avoidance,” required local or provincial officials to be posted outside their place of origin. The Qing yamen at the city center was a walled city within a walled city, with its occupants and most notably the governor himself existing in complete segregation from the rest of urban society. Governors such as Cen Chunming were not native to Hunan, and remained out of touch with the harsh realities around them—how the city also functioned as a place of refuge for displaced peasants from the surrounding countryside, driven from their homes by flood or famine. Indeed the events of the riot suggest that local elites such as Ye Dehui and vice-governor Zhuang Gengliang played more prominent roles in orchestrating—and in Zhuang’s case even pacifying the riot.

I have also shown the unique character of the area of the city surrounding Changsha’s southern gate (“Nan Men Kou”). In 1852 this entire area had been ground zero for one of the fiercest battles in the city’s history. On the southeastern corner of the south wall was the Tianxin Pavilion, where a canon killed one of the Taiping army’s top generals, Xiao Chaogui. Following the rebellion this canon was worshipped as a kind of deity. This object and its surrounding physical space became sites associated with Changsha’s folk culture and tradition of resistance. It was just a few hundred yards outside South Gate that the Huang family committed suicide in April 1910. They took their lives in Lao Long Pond, where many peasants frequently committed suicide. Dai Yishun’s granary was located just outside South Gate. It was also at the South Gate

police station where the carpenter Liu Shaoming was detained by local police, and rioting ensued when a crowd demanded his release. Also outside the South Gate and wall was Aoshan Temple, where a local magistrate was assaulted and beaten by a crowd. Hungry Stomach Ridge, a collection of shanty huts where indigent peasants congregated and lived, was located on the slopes of Miao Gao Peak, the very same small hill from where the Taipings had shelled the city years before. South Gate was also a popular gathering place and market for locals and travellers entering the city.

Changsha's modernization was just as much if not more a byproduct of its regional and local conservatism as one of radical reform. Recent scholarship by Stephen Platt and Liu Liyan are valuable contributions to the historiography of modern Hunan. But these have focused mainly on the reform narrative, such as the roles of notable intellectuals Wang Fuzhi and Guo Songtao, as well as the founding of Hunan First Normal School. Figures such as Ye Dehui are scarcely mentioned in either of these studies. There is obviously a reason for this. If the observations of local residents from Liu Duping's oral histories are any indication, there were elements of Changsha's population who utterly despised Ye Dehui. His headquarters, the "Fire Palace," was an influential part of the city's commercial and civic life. But despite his wealth and power, Ye's nefarious reputation earned the disrespect of many, which explains in part why he was executed by the communists in 1927. His bad reputation was also written into Changsha's modern historiography by both Chinese and western historians. In the end Ye Dehui's brand of radical conservatism and masculinity called for an equally radical and violent response. This was the unique condition of Hunan and

Changsha during the 1920's, and one of the reasons it was such a space of contentious and turbulent politics.

I have also noted the consistent presence of infamous suicides in Changsha during the twentieth century. The most significant early examples were the deaths by suicide of Chen Tianhua and Yao Hongye in 1905, whose funeral processions in Changsha became a public spectacle. The riot of 1910 was inspired by the suicide of an entire family. Numerous people also took their lives by jumping into some of Changsha's local wells. Following the Revolution of 1911 activists such as Peng Chao wrote blood letters to the governor and committed suicide by jumping into the Xiang River in protest of the contentious warlord politics of the time. The gruesome suicide of Zhao Wuzhen in 1919 spawned similar public indignation and outrage. It served as an exemplar to urban activists such as Mao Zedong of women's subjugated status in Chinese society.

While researching at Yale during the summer of 2014 I learned the story of Zhang Yifan's suicide during the Anti-Rightist campaign in 1956, and was deeply moved. For some reason the story of his death and Zhu Tierong's subsequent hardships made me comprehend the gravity and horror experienced by their generation. Her own story also serves as an example of the conflicted relationship activists and intellectuals from her generation maintained with the West. Though she obviously benefited from her studies abroad at Yale, earning a Master's degree in sociology, she retained a China centered worldview, one that still viewed the West's involvement in China with criticism and suspicion, especially after the United States entered the Korean War. Zhu's articles in

the *China Monthly Review* also provide us with first hand information on the scale of modernizing reforms by the CCP in Changsha following liberation in 1949.

Many of the instances of crowd violence discussed in the preceding chapters did not originate with the state, but from the ordinary rank and file, or masses. This was the case with the riots inspired by Zhou Han's literature in the early 1890's, as well as with the rioting carpenters and other urban commoners in 1910. The anarchism espoused by Mao and medical students from Hsiangya Medical College was in part even directed *towards* the state, viewing the government's capitulation to the conditions of the Versailles Treaty of 1919 as an act of treason. The case studies of prostitution during the 1920's and 1930's also show that state actors, specifically local officials of the municipal police, actually condoned the existence of, participated in, and even benefited from the trade. State sanctioned violence came in the form of orders given by Chiang Kai-shek to burn Changsha to the ground during World War II, fearing a possible occupation by the Japanese.

Finally, my discussion of the anti-Christian riots of the early 1890's discussed the influence of Zhou Han's published literature from the Bao Shan Charity Hall near Changsha's Xiao Xi Men, or Small West Gate. But he was by no means the sole proprietor and instigator of anti-Christian activity in the middle Yangtze region or throughout China during this period. There were similar riots during the late 1800's, such as the death of the French missionaries in Tianjin. However, the riots of 1891 represented "the cathartic climax of the first phase of central China's response to the West." They were also intrinsically tied to the anti-Qing activity of secret societies such

as the “Elder Brother Society,” (Ge Lao Hui) as well as other “fundamentalist Confucian literati” in communities throughout the middle Yangtze.²

Rowe’s description of “fundamentalist Confucian literati,” also strikes a familiar chord. Does this label remind us of anyone in particular? It of course perfectly describes characters such as Ye Dehui. One speculates as to his possible patronage of Zhou Han because of the Bao Shan Hall’s proximity to Pozi Street near the Small West Gate in the old city. But I have also tried to show how Ye himself was a complex and enigmatic figure. Despite his opposition to the Hundred Days of Reform and Liang Qichao’s educational endeavors in Changsha, the late 1890’s were also a period when Ye invested in Japanese shipping and commercial interests in the city. Following the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895, cities opened as a treaty port to Japan. Changsha’s “Fire Palace,” served as his seat of Ye’s influence, where he assumed the guise of not only a wealthy businessman and local literati, but as perhaps the most powerful community leader in the city. Controversy ensued after the attempt to rename public streets and other landmarks after Huang Xing, a hero of the 1911 revolution. It prompted a public and even satirical response from Ye Dehui in the local press. To his credit Ye did even show some remorse about the events of 1910. In later years his death was viewed by Liang Qichao and even Mao Zedong as a mistake.

The presence of certain western institutions during the late Qing and early Republican years in Changsha also left complex legacies in their wake. This leaves us with even more questions related to their potential contributions to the city vis-a-vis how

² Rowe, 276-277.

they were perceived by locals. Much of my discussion has focused on the influence of Yale in China, and its affiliated institutions—Hsiangya Medical College and the Yale Hospital. Certainly more research needs to be done on the equally significant influence of other institutions, especially Western business interests, such as British American Tobacco, Butterfield and Swire, Jardine Matheson, and others. The American doctors and teachers who worked in Changsha from Yale, such as Edward Hume, Frank Hutchins, and others not discussed up to this point, such as Winston and Maude Pettus, cared for the sick and needy and saved many lives. The notice placed by locals on the front gate of the Yale compound, referenced in Chapter 5, during the 1910 riot reflected of a nuanced relationship between Changsha and the West. That the Yale facilities, (where today ironically sits a Starbucks and large shopping mall), were spared the wrath of rioting crowds speaks to the degree to which street associations who controlled the Xi Pai Lou area, also yielded their control over local affairs.

Following the intense anti-foreignism that followed the May Fourth period of the early 1920's, and the Shanghai Incident of 1925, even Yale in China was not immune to the growing negative attitude and perception toward westerners in Changsha. I have also called attention to Edward Hume's intense antagonism and complete distrust of student activism and unionized labor in Changsha during this period. This was also reflective of Yale's own institutional bias towards communism and socialism that emerged in the United States following the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the founding of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1921. In this way Hume did not do himself or Yale, any favors. He was forced to leave the city in 1926 and never returned.

Another important issue concerns the Hunan labor movement. Despite a more traditional Marxist understanding of a distinct separation between town and countryside, the study of Changsha shows that cities in China have been defined as much by their relationship to the periphery—the surrounding countryside—rather than existing as completely separate and autonomous entities. Works by both Schaffer (1982) and McDonald (1978) have discussed the relationship of Changsha’s urban activists with the labor movements in the surrounding countryside. Places such as Shui Kou Shan and Anyuan each maintained active unionized labor groups. In the case of the Anyuan coal mines the unions were more active than in Changsha. This somewhat blurs the distinctions between urban and rural, town and country, which so often characterize more conventional interpretations of labor or rural history. Mao and other activists journeyed back to the provincial capital and reported on the growing number of peasant associations in part to correct the perception among the urban elite that rural peasants were backward and illiterate.

How the residents of Changsha endured the fire of 1938 makes an important contribution to the history of the Second World War. I have also argued that the historical evidence makes a compelling case for Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek ordering Changsha’s destruction as a part of his scorched earth policy. How will introducing this newer narrative of Chiang’s actions during the war affect his historical legacy, especially at a time when many scholars have attempted to vindicate his reputation? Only time will tell.

Times of trouble and carnage also possess the possibility to activate the human potential for kindness, empathy, and humanitarian endeavor. The patriotism and courage of YMCA and other volunteers who worked in Changsha during the war should not be forgotten, and their names and exploits should be memorialized alongside those who served or lost their lives. Even prior to the fire volunteers in the city went on numerous trips to bombed areas to rescue those buried in debris, and to care for the injured and wounded. In Changsha there was a concerted multinational effort and humanitarian relief fund for countless numbers of war refugees who poured into the city. Mission hospitals, such as Hsiangya (Yale), the Liebenzeller Missions, and the Hudson-Taylor hospital all did their part as well.

The narrative of this dissertation is bookended with two violent and formative events in the city's modern history, when the city was sieged by the Taiping army and with a fire that destroyed much of Changsha and its cultural relics. Urban life was turbulent for commoners, such as the carpenters who rioted in 1910 and ransacked Cen Chunming's government yamen, or the beggars who lived a precarious existence on Hungry Stomach Ridge outside the city's south gate. The execution of Ye Dehui in 1927 was an extreme response on the part of the urban masses to the legacy and influence of the gentry classes' dominance over local life. Many other gentry met the same fate.

Urban life was also capricious and cruel for young women who worked as prostitutes during the 1920's and 1930's. For those betrothed in marriage such as Zhao Wuzhen, a defiant deterrent was suicide. According to some historians the horrors experienced by Zhu Tierong and others during the 1950's and 1960's should be

understood within the context of what Chinese people experienced during World War II, in that it conditioned its people, and perhaps more tellingly, its ruling elites, to the idea that violence was a necessary component of social reform and revolution (see Diana Lary). Indeed, Changsha's modern history was often the result of hostile battles between opposing forces. Much of this was related to its relationship to western countries, and the city's struggle to adopt conventions of western modernity. But we should not ever discount the incredible capacity for Chinese people through the ages to *chi ku*, or "bear hardships." The ideology and language of oppressive governments and individuals, or even economic conditions may often provoke violence. But language can also be a tool for liberation and empowerment.

The sand of Changsha's Orange Island was deposited there by the Xiang River ages ago, and like history its river always remains in motion. River and island divides the city into two opposite banks, perhaps symbolic of the divisions and struggles Changsha has experienced throughout its history.

Glossary of Chinese Names and Terms

Ao Shan Miao	鳌山庙
Bai Sha Jing	白沙井
bao jia	保甲
bao an tuan	保安团
Bao Qingtian	包青天
Bi Xiang Jie	碧湘街
Cen Chunming	岑春蓂
Chen Tianhua	陈天华
<i>Changsha wen shi zi liao</i>	长沙文史资料
chi ku	吃苦
<i>Da gong bao</i>	大公报
Dai Yishun	戴义顺
ke bo	刻薄
dan jue	旦角
dao tai	道台
De Chang He Qian Dian	德昌和钱店
dian dao zhi ji	颠倒之迹
<i>Dong Fang Za Zhi</i>	东方杂志
Dong Ting Hu	洞庭湖
Fan Xi Xiang	樊西巷
Fan Yuanquan	范远泉
gong suo	公所
E Du Ling	饿肚岭
He Wenqing	何文清
Heng Shan	衡山
hu xiang wen hua	湖湘文化
Huang dao men	黄道门
Huang Guisun	黄桂荪
hui guan	会馆
Huo Gong Dian	火公殿
hui yi	回忆
ji yi	记忆
ji yuan	妓院
jiao an	教案
jin shi	进士

Kang Guihe	康桂和
Kong Qianjiao	孔宪教
kou shu li shi	口述历史
Lai Chengyu	赖承裕
Lao Long Tan	老龙潭
Ling Shaomei	凌少梅
Liu Daoyi	刘道一
Liu Duping	刘笃平
Liu Shaoming	刘少明
Liu Yongfu	刘永福
Mao Zedong	毛泽东
man	蛮
Mi Luo Jiang	汨罗江
Miao Quansun	缪荃孙
Nan Men Kou	南门口
Po Zi Jie	坡子街
qian gu wei you	千古未有
qiangmi	抢米
Qu Yuan	屈原
Rui Zheng	瑞澄
Shan Hua Xian	善化县
<i>Shen bao</i>	申报
shi ren jiu guo tuan	十人救国团
Tan Chunsheng	谭春生
Tan Sitong	谭嗣同
Tang Caichang	唐才常
tian zhu	天主
Tong Meng Hui	同盟会
tong xiang hui	同乡会
tuan zong	团总
Wang Xianqian	王先谦
wei	伪
xin zheng	新政
Xiong Xiling	熊希龄
ya men	衙门
Yang Gong	杨巩
Yao Hongyue	姚洪业
Ye Dehui	叶德辉

Yi Rengai	易仁菱
you gu bu shou	有谷不售
Yue Lu Shan	岳麓山
Yu Changchun	余长春
Yu Zhimo	余之谟
yuan hun	冤魂
yuan men	辕门
Zhan Bingsheng	湛炳生
Zhao Wuzhen	赵五贞
zhan piao	栈票
zhen cai zhu, jia ke ren	真财主，假客人
Zhang Liansheng	张连生
Zhang Yifan	张以藩
Zhang Zhidong	张之洞
zhi nian	之年
Zhou Han	周汉
zhu	猪
Zhu Rong	祝融
Zhu Tierong	朱铁荣
Zhuang Gengliang	庄赓良
zi liao	资料

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