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LIANG QICHAO

For the people we have studied so far and their Chinese contemporaries, China was very much the center of the world, and Chinese culture was the only true high culture. The world that mattered was the *tian xia*, "All Under Heaven," and the emperor as *tian zi*, "Son of Heaven," was at least ceremonially the superior of all other rulers. The commercial connections with the world of Islam and the coming of European traders and missionaries remained marginal. Consciousness of the Indian origins of Buddhism, for a long time an important reason for the hostility to it of some Chinese intellectuals, faded as names, texts, and images became more thoroughly Chinese in style. Mongol and Manchu conquerors, while by no means abandoning their original cultures, represented themselves to their Chinese subjects as Chinese emperors and defenders of the Chinese tradition. The Taipings had believed in a God of all humankind whose relation to human beings previously had focused on the Jews, not the Chinese, but their vision had been rejected and their movement crushed.

Liang Qichao was an eminent member of the first generation of the Chinese elite who came to see China as one country, *guo*, among many, not as the center of All Under Heaven. In a stream of clear, powerful writings he articulated to the Chinese people the immense consequences of China's membership in a society of competitive nation-states and the new moral and organizational demands this placed on them. Beginning life with ambitions and a curriculum of study not basically different from Su Dongpo's, he spent much of his adult life struggling to interpret non-Chinese ideas of history and government in ways that would make it possible for Chinese to draw on them, and integrate them with the best of their own tradition, in building a new China. In the process he experimented with new roles, new ways of life, suitable for that new nation. His efforts in building parties and engaging in parliamentary politics were not very successful. His great contribution was in his writing, which took the new form of editing and writing for periodical reviews. He turned the great tradition of the politically

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committed literary man into the powerful modern form of political and cultural journalism.

The rulers and generals who crushed the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom in 1864 were just beginning to confront the reality of an intrusive outside world that would make the decline of the Qing not just a dynastic crisis but the end of a world. The Qing rulers and almost all their ministers had thought that they had ended the Opium War of 1839–42 by successfully managing and buying off the foreigners. It was much harder to take that view of conflicts with Britain and France between 1856 and 1860. The incidents that provoked these attacks were not major; the real cause was the refusal of the Western powers to accept Chinese rejection of Western forms of diplomacy and restrictions of foreign trade and missionary activity. In 1860 British and French troops occupied Beijing, burned and looted the Summer Palaces, and insisted that the court, which had fled to the summer estate at Rehe, accept the presence in Beijing of resident envoys of foreign nations and deal with them according to Western diplomatic norms. For the next ten years or so, Qing officials learned to make good use of the rules of diplomacy and international law. They sought to acquire and learn to use some of the modern weapons they would need if diplomacy failed, and much more tentatively to develop some of the modern means of production and transportation that modern warfare and arms production required. The same officials and others, as they finished the long, brutal suppression of the Taipings and the other rebellions, sought to restore the agrarian economy, revive traditional education, eliminate corruption, and in general revive the morale and effectiveness of traditional Chinese statecraft. There were some very intelligent and dedicated statesmen involved in these efforts, but they could not undo the effects of the civil wars and of the failure of the state to keep pace with growth of the society and economy since Qianlong times. Also, the efforts in foreign relations and modern arms clearly were viewed even by their advocates as disagreeable necessities, peripheral to the main concerns of statesmen, requiring no fundamental reorientation of politics, and there were many who bitterly opposed even these modest changes.

The result was that the modernizing efforts of the "self-strengthening" statesmen of the 1860s and 1870s were halting at best, often undercut by corruption, by transfers of key officials, and by inadequate coordination among provinces. Conflicts over Vietnam led to humiliating defeats in a brief war with France, 1884–85. A far greater shock was the result of the rise of Japan, building a new and dynamic political order as China strove to patch the old one together. Japan's long confrontation with China over hegemony in Korea led to open war in 1894–95, disaster for Chinese arms,

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and a peace treaty dictated by Japan. The Qing was forced to open China to foreign-owned manufacturing, to recognize a Japanese sphere of interest and investment in Fujian, and to cede Taiwan outright to the Japanese. This was shock enough; the Chinese had had little official contact with Japan or reason to think much about it since the days of Zheng Chenggong, and they tended to view it as some kind of crude and distorted reflection of China, certainly not a rival. And after 1895 Britain, France, Germany, and Russia, impressed by what Japan had gained by bullying the Qing Empire and anxious to get their own leased ports and zones for trade and investment, took turns in extorting concessions from China. It was in these desperate days, when it finally was clear to every thinking Chinese that the Qing Empire could not go on doing business as usual, that Liang Qichao appeared on the national political scene as a member of a powerless but prestigious and deeply engaged movement of young scholars.

Liang Qichao was born in 1873 in Xinhui, Guangdong, not far from Guangzhou, where foreign merchants had bought tea in Qianlong's time and where Hong Xiuquan had failed the examinations. This area had been deeply involved in foreign trade for hundreds of years and now was sending thousands of emigrants to settle in Southeast Asia, Australia, California, and so on. Liang's family had been farmers for many generations. His grandfather, who had received his *shengyuan* degree and had been a local director of studies, was the only member of the family even to begin the long climb toward officialdom. The grandfather was the boy's first teacher, and we can imagine his delight when the boy turned out to be a child prodigy, winning his *juren* degree at the age of sixteen, roughly comparable to getting a master's degree at that age today. The brilliant young man spent the next few years studying at an important academy in Guangzhou that combined Neo-Confucian studies with the detailed and critical research on classical texts that had flourished in the Qing but had no place in its curriculum for learning about the world outside China. In the spring of 1890 he went to Beijing, where he failed the *jinshi* examination, and on his way back south he stopped in Shanghai, where he acquired some Chinese books about the Western world and the sources of its daunting strength. Later in the same year he and a friend called on the older Cantonese scholar Kang Youwei. His first interview with Kang began early in the morning and lasted until evening. "It was like cold water poured down my back, like being hit on the head with a club. . . . I was both shocked and delighted, embittered and remorseful, frightened and uncertain." Their eyes opened to new worlds of ideas, the two young men talked all night and then went the next day to beg Kang Youwei to accept them as his pupils.

This drama of sudden intellectual awakening and ardent discipleship was not all that different from the experiences of Wang Yangming's disci-

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ples, or Hui Neng's, or Confucius's. The content of Kang's teachings was very Confucian, but they also were very much of their time. In the late 1880s and early 1890s there was a slow but effective spread of knowledge of the outside world in the Chinese elite, especially through the journals and translations of missionary-connected organizations. Several scholars had begun to write about the need for some kind of advisory assembly; here knowledge of Western parliamentary institutions fused with Confucian ideals of open consultation between ruler and ministers, but with little or no concept of citizens wielding power or defending their rights against the ruler.

Kang's position among these advanced thinkers was not a prominent one, but his ideas were unusual and adventurous, and many would come to regard them as dangerous. For him, reforms were not necessary adjustments of a fundamentally sound Confucian tradition, but part of an effort to recover the true teaching of Confucius, lost 1,900 years before in the days of Wang Mang. Kang taught that Confucius had been, despite his own insistence that he was "a transmitter and not a creator," the creator and founder of this teaching, an "uncrowned king." He drew on the New Text (*jinwen*) tradition of classical scholarship, which had its roots in early Han times. The New Text school had revived in Qing times partly because of the impact of textual scholars' criticisms of Old Text (*guwen*) versions of the Classics. It favored an activist, practical approach to the life of the scholar-official over the more moralistic, contemplative orientation of some representatives of the Neo-Confucian tradition. This in turn linked with the revival of interest in "statecraft" studies that had begun in the late Ming. Kang's New Text teaching went much further, claiming that all the Old Text versions had been forged to support Wang Mang's usurpation. Confucius had been the creator of a great new teaching that also had been lost in later times. One key element in that teaching was a vision of progressive change in human history, from disorder to "small order" to "great harmony" (*da tong*) or great peace (*tai ping*), in which all the usual barriers and differentiations of human society would be swept away. Theories of this kind had in fact been popular in the decades of Wang Mang's rise to power. Such a teaching depended for its transmission not on the teaching, administration, and exemplary personal behavior of the rulers but on the faith and determination of those who understood it and sought to "preserve the teaching." It is easy to understand how these amazing teachings could have such an impact on an impressionable young scholar; it also is easy to understand how thoroughly they would horrify many in the years to come.

Liang and Kang both went to Beijing in 1895 for the *jinshi* examinations. Kang passed; Liang did not. More important, they mobilized their fellow

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candidates to petition the Qing court to reject the peace treaty imposed by the Japanese and to begin the basic institutional reforms needed to save China from foreign aggression. The mobilization of the political convictions of students and scholars was in a tradition reaching back at least to the Han. Although the court paid no attention to their protests, the consequences of their collective action were immense. The scholars' sense of the urgency of their cause was sustained by one incident after another of imperialist bullying and Qing acquiescence. Kang, Liang, and their allies planned to arouse elite public opinion all over the empire by forming a network of study societies, which among other activities would publish journals to urge reform and to spread the knowledge of the modern world that it would require. The first of these societies and its newspaper, begun in Beijing in 1895, quickly withered in the face of government hostility. Liang and others had more success in Shanghai in 1896, founding the famous journal *Shiwu bao*, literally meaning "Reports on Contemporary Affairs," but carrying the English title *Chinese Progress* on its masthead. The publishing and wide distribution of a journal by a reform society was a strategic breakthrough, making possible regular transmission of new ideas to many centers in the provinces, and later the maintenance of influence from exile.

Liang's essays in *Chinese Progress* were very important and influential. He also managed to find time in 1897 to publish a book on "Western government." He now was arguing explicitly that China had to learn from the successes of Western (including Japanese) political life, not just Western technology. But he still adhered to Kang Youwei's desire to "protect the teaching" of Confucianism, and although his wide-ranging interests and fluent style made him a successful and influential journalist, he was not yet ready to identify himself completely with that novel vocation or to forsake his more traditional ambitions to be an advisor of rulers and a teacher of eager disciples.

In 1897 Liang turned down several invitations from prominent officials to join their personal staffs. The most notable of those who sought his services was Zhang Zhidong, governor-general of Hunan and Hubei, the most capable of the provincial officials who still were trying to realize the moderate "self-strengthening" reform programs. Zhang soon would be horrified by the radical ideas of Kang and Liang and become one of their most influential opponents.

Late in 1897, however, Liang accepted an invitation to move to Changsha, capital of Hunan, where a reform-minded provincial governor was encouraging the modernization of the city, the forming of reformist academies and societies, and the publication of a startling range of old and new opinions. In addition to advising the officials and contributing to provin-

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cial journals and other publishing projects, Liang became the head teacher at a new Academy of Current Affairs, where his intensely moral and personal style of teaching gave full expression to the millennial continuity of the master–disciple relation.

Shanghai was by far the best place in China to get news from the rest of the world and to talk to foreigners who were anxious to disseminate modern Western ideas and knowledge among the Chinese. Changsha in 1897 was a rare pocket of official commitment to learning from foreign experience in nontechnological ways. In these places, amid the unending reports of foreign designs on Chinese territory, it is not surprising that Liang's ideas developed rapidly, both in their political radicalism and in the depth of their criticisms of the moral foundations of Chinese civilization. He was not alone; his writing articulated changes with which many of his contemporaries were struggling. Already anticipated in his writings and actions of this period, and fully articulated in the essays of Liang and others in the next six or seven years, was the dissolution of the system of political roles and public morality followed in this book through so many changes since the time of Confucius. It no longer was enough for officials to rule over the common people with paternal kindness and to urge their rulers, selflessly and fearlessly, to rule with benevolence. It no longer was enough for local scholars to aspire to become officials. They had to go beyond the network of one-to-one relations implied by the Way of the Ruler and the Minister and the fundamental dependency of the minister's role. They had to take the fate of the nation in their own hands, discussing, organizing, mobilizing power, taking action. Even the common people, traditionally passive except in crises of the change of the Mandate of Heaven, had to become constantly involved citizens.

These basic transformations were necessary because China had been forced to recognize that it was part of a world of competitive nation-states. It had to mobilize its human and material resources not just to defend itself but to increase its wealth and power as other nation-states did. The Chinese had to conceive of themselves as one people among many, comparable and competing, if they were to learn the secrets of foreign wealth and power. The necessary transformations of politics and values were possible, or at least conceivable, because, although when taken together they represented a fundamental break with the past, they could be linked to many disparate elements in the theory and practice of traditional Chinese politics. The idea that people make their own history, sometimes by recognizing the necessity for fundamental change, was a recurring one in Chinese historical thought, and as early as the 1860s a few thinkers had begun to ask if China might be on the brink of a transformation comparable to the founding of dynastic rule after the death of Yu and to the bureaucratic

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unification under Qin. Despite the structural dependency of their role, officials were expected to be morally autonomous individuals and vigorous and effective administrators, like Su Dongpo or Wang Yangming; the stress on the moral autonomy and social effectiveness of the individual could easily become part of a new ideal of active citizenship.

Parliaments and other forms of expression of informed opinion made some sense in a tradition where channels of communication with the throne were supposed to remain open, and superior and inferior should be of one mind. In Ming times fearless criticism of abuses of government by officials had been supported by debates in academies and by the formation of politically active literary societies; this kind of organized private discussion of politics had been quickly suppressed in the first years of the Qing. But the increasing thinness of the formal bureaucracy had made the cooperation and informal organization of the local elite essential for orderly and effective government, so that in the nineteenth century the local elite was more involved in something like local self-government but less involved in discussing imperial politics than the late Ming elite had been.

In his essays for *Chinese Progress* and in his teaching and writing in Hunan, Liang asked why China was having such difficulty making the reforms that were needed to defend itself against the aggressors, and he began to make really searching use of the contrasting case of Japan. The reason for Japan's great success, Liang said, was that it had reformed its political order first, instead of attempting to make technological changes within an inappropriate political order, as Qing China had. The new order in Japan was much more effective in exploiting the tendency of human beings toward *qun*, "grouping" or social solidarity, which has in its written form something of a link to the herd instinct of animals. Already in 1897 Liang was developing this concept, finding throughout the universe a tendency of beings to form into enduring groups. Beginning to absorb the "social Darwinist" ideas of a struggle among individuals for survival that were so influential in the West at this time, he saw that only those peoples who developed effective forms of social solidarity would survive in the modern world of competitive nation states. The consciousness and commitment Liang had in mind here were focused on the identity and common fate of all members of a group, and on their need to work together in competing with other groups. "It is not enough to have rulers, officials, students, farmers, laborers, merchants, and soldiers. We must have ten thousand eyes with one sight, ten thousand hands and feet with only one mind, ten thousand ears with one hearing, ten thousand powers with only one purpose of life; then the state is established ten-thousandfold strong. . . . When mind touches mind, when power is linked to power, cog

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to cog, strand around strand, and ten thousand roads meet in one center, this will be a nation-state."

The Japanese had been so successful in establishing a strong nation state, Liang said, because they had had such an abundance of energetic, determined, and unselfish "gentlemen with great goals" (*zhishi*). This phrase, pronounced *shishi* in Japanese, had been used in late nineteenth-century Japan to refer to men who had acted boldly, often at great personal risk, to seek to realize changes that they believed were vital for the future of the Japanese nation. In an essay commenting on Sima Qian's collective biography, "The Money-Makers," Liang already had shared the Han historian's admiration of those who became wealthy by cleverness and hard work and had moved away from the Confucian wariness of pleasure and human desire, finding in them sources of the energy needed to survive in the modern world. He was more and more suspicious of the ideals associated with the Confucian concept of benevolence and of a kind of "public spirit" that excluded any consideration of "private" gain; what was needed was a dynamic solidarity in which public and private goals were pursued at the same time. He now was on the brink of articulating a vision of a society of actively participating individuals, united in seeking personal benefit for each and strength and prosperity for the whole collectivity. He began to use phrases like "revolution" and "people's rights" in his writing and his teaching. Thus already in 1897 we can see very clearly the fundamentals of Liang's dramatic break with the Way of the Ruler and the Minister.

Liang and his friends printed thousands of copies of a banned account of the famous Manchu massacre of the people of Yangzhou in 1645. Intrigued by the way the great changes in Japan had begun with reforms in semi-independent outlying feudal domains, they suggested to the governor that he might consider declaring Hunan's independence from the Beijing government. Liang taught about forty young men at the Academy of Current Affairs. The content of his teaching was very radical, with much about people's rights, the solidarity of the nation, and even revolution. European, American, and Japanese ideas and institutions dominated students' reading. But in form and spirit, education at the academy owed a great deal to the Confucian tradition. The syllabus began with the need of each student to "establish his life goal," in a moral and political, not a careerist, sense. Very much in the spirit of Wang Yangming, students were urged to spend part of every day in "quiet sitting" and to "cultivate their minds." The students were not allowed to leave the school and were required to write voluminous notes on their reading and their responses to it. Liang sometimes stayed up all night to write long comments on the students' notes, which he discussed with each individual. Since students

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were not allowed to leave the academy, awareness of Liang's radical teachings was not widespread until the students went home on vacation for Chinese New Year of 1898 and showed their essays to their fathers.

Hunan had a very active and politically involved elite, but it also was the elite that had produced many of the leaders of the suppression of the Taipings and the revival of traditional government in the 1860s. The province had remained culturally conservative and strongly opposed to any foreign presence, and it is not surprising that the radical ideas of Liang and his friends aroused heated opposition. Moreover, many of the reformers were, like Liang, natives of other provinces. For all of them, despite occasional thoughts of the secession of a province, the relevant political unit was not a province but the whole empire. Regional allegiances were as unstable a foundation for politics as they had been in late Zhou times two thousand years before. Many local scholars and retired officials complained to the officials about the radical influences over the province's youth. A final blow to the reformers' hopes was the hostility of Governor-General Zhang Zhidong, who wrote and distributed widely a famous and powerful essay entitled "Exhortation to Study," which emphasized the need for thorough reforms in the self-strengthening mode but made it clear that reforms must never be allowed to undermine the basic relationships of husband and wife, father and son, and ruler and minister. The reform newspapers were shut down, the Academy of Current Affairs was closed, and most of the reformers left Hunan.

In 1898 attention again was focused on the capital. At the end of 1897 the Germans had occupied Jiaozhou Bay and the island of Qingdao on the south side of the Shandong peninsula. (Perhaps the most enduring consequence of this episode was the establishment of the brewery that still produces Qingdao beer.) Germany soon obtained concessions of railroad-building and mining rights in Shandong. Tsarist Russia, claiming that it sought to defend China against German aggression, occupied the ports of Dalian and Port Arthur (Lüshun) on the Liaodong peninsula, which the Chinese had paid a large indemnity to recover from the Japanese after the 1894–95 war. In March 1898 the Qing court agreed to a twenty-five-year lease of these ports and to extensive Russian railroad-building in "Manchuria," the usual Western name at that time for the northeast part of the Qing Empire. A great many Chinese were convinced that the empire was about to be "carved up like a melon."

In this crisis atmosphere, many officials recognized that major changes in policy were needed to strengthen the Qing state and insure its survival. The Guangxu emperor, twenty-six years old, was generally sympathetic to reform proposals. His aunt, the Dowager Empress Cixi (more familiar in the old Romanization: Tz'u-hsi), had ruled until he came of age. No

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longer involved in day-to-day decision making, she was kept informed of all court discussions and retained great prestige and formidable influence in the bureaucracy and the inner court. She was a highly astute political manipulator, and the descriptions of her as a corrupt enemy of effective government are very much overdrawn, but she was a creature of the traditional system, and her own survival in power was her most important goal. None of this made reform impossible, but in the Chinese tradition emperors did not normally take the initiative in policy making; in any case, this one was not experienced or talented enough to do so. No one minister had sufficient power to make things happen as Wang Anshi had; if one had emerged, he probably would have found his position undercut by the dowager empress.

The most widespread conceptions of the reforms needed were based on the "self-strengthening" ideas of the 1860s, which saw changes as defensive additions to a fundamentally sound system of morals and government. Moreover, even the reform measures that fit these preconceptions proved to be hard to put into practice. The huge bureaucracy was in many ways designed to keep things from happening, and it contained quite a few vehement opponents of reform and many more who regarded it as a disagreeable and difficult necessity.

The politics of reform in 1898 were very much complicated by the new assertiveness of elite opinion, first seen in the examination candidates' agitation in 1895. Kang and Liang were among the key organizers of a new wave of activity before and after the concessions to Russia. On March 17, 1898, in Beijing, Kang called the first meeting of a Protect the Country Society (Bao Guo Hui). He made a rousing patriotic speech, but there were things in his speech and in the statement of principles he had written that alarmed many people. The purpose of the society, he wrote, was to promote policies that would protect the rights of the nation (*guo quan*), the territory of the nation (*guo di*), and the teaching of the nation (*guo jiao*). "Teaching" here was in Kang's conception something very much like a religion, with Confucius as the founder, much less closely tied to the current state order than more conventional Confucianism. The use of the word *guo* in these phrases and in the name of the society was explosive. We will recall its use to refer to the pre-Qin Warring States (*zhan guo*); the ambiguous use of *guojia* by a general supporting Empress Wu against the Tang imperial house; and the phrase Yue Fei's mother carved on his back, where *bao guo* clearly meant "repay your debt to the ruling dynasty." The formal title of the Qing imperial state used in its communication with other states in the late nineteenth century was Da Qing Guo, Great Qing Dynasty; the nation had no identity apart from the legitimate dynastic succession of its rulers. But here the elite of the empire was being urged to

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take action to protect the *guo*, which was conceived of as having rights, land, and even a teaching quite distinguishable from, and more fundamental than, the power, territorial extent, and Confucian orthodoxy of its rulers. The *guo* here was something very close to the nation-state formed by the solidarity of its citizens conceived by Liang Qichao. To some critics it was clear that Kang intended to "protect China, not protect the Great Qing."

Several groups of fellow provincials formed their own societies in Beijing to "protect Zhejiang," "protect Sichuan," and so on, indicating that Kang's advocacy of protection of native soil would not always take an empirewide form. Censors took steps to inform the emperor of these alarming movements. Written attacks on the Protect the Country Society were circulated. Few now wanted to be associated with a movement of such dangerous reputation, and after about a month the society disbanded. More and more news reached Beijing of the condemnations of the reformers in Hunan, and Zhang Zhidong's "Exhortation to Study" was reprinted in the capital. Worst of all, it was just at this time, in the spring of 1898, that Kang Youwei published a book entitled *Kongzi gaizhi kao* (A Study of Confucius as a Reformer), the most comprehensive statement he had yet made of his New Text views and his radical reinterpretation of the Confucian tradition. Thus just when the need for reform was most widely accepted and when the court was taking more and more serious steps to make changes, Kang gave a perfect opportunity to any conservative who wanted to argue that reform would lead to perversion of the tradition. Many who had supported him now drew away, including a senior imperial tutor who had urged the emperor to read Kang's essays.

The reaction against Kang Youwei was not in itself crucial to the prospects for reform, for Kang, Liang, and their allies had only modest positions in the capital bureaucracy, where they prepared position papers for the emperor and the high officials to study. The real impetus for reform came from a broad revival of moderate reform programs in the spirit of the self-strengthening reforms of the 1860s. The emperor was determined that reforms be pushed through and that the channels of opinion be kept open so that all good ideas reached him. The result was that the court's apparatus of communication and decision making was completely overloaded, many proposals never received coherent consideration, little was done to implement or enforce those that were adopted, and in the provinces even capable supporters of moderate reform like Zhang Zhidong simply ignored most of the reform measures proclaimed in Beijing. The emperor became increasingly impatient and imposed harsh punishments on anyone he saw blocking channels of discussion or dragging his feet on implementation.

On June 11 the emperor approved an edict committing the court to

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basic changes, including an imperial college in the capital and the promotion of extensive borrowing of "Western learning." In the weeks that followed, the tests of prose and poetic style in the examinations were replaced by essays on practical affairs; an imperial college, translation bureau, and government gazette were established; modern schools with practical curricula were ordered set up in the provinces; associations to increase production and improve quality of Chinese export goods were encouraged; bureaucratic rules were simplified and many redundant posts and useless agencies abolished. The fate of these reforms was decided not by debate on their merits but by political infighting between those in favor of them and those opposed. On September 5 four young scholars, including Tan Sitong, a close ally of Kang and Liang, were appointed to serve in modest but potentially influential positions in the Grand Council. But the court also took steps to get Kang out of Beijing, ordering him to go to Shanghai and take over the *Chinese Progress* newspaper as a government gazette.

Kang clearly had been doing everything he could to increase his own influence and attack the conservatives. He and Liang tended to admire the accomplishments of Japan and portrayed Japan to their readers and to the emperor as an example of successful reform on a non-Western cultural base. They feared the growing power of Russia and looked to Japan and Great Britain as counterweights to it. All this was known and magnified in the Beijing rumor mill. It was just at this time that Prince Itō Hirobumi, the greatest architect of Japan's reforms, at the moment out of office as a result of the workings of the parliamentary system he had done so much to create, arrived in Beijing on a private visit. Kang sometimes dreamed of taking the role of a great Itō-like reforming prime minister, the Guangxu emperor taking the part of the Meiji emperor. In the overheated imaginations of their opponents, Itō's arrival at this time looked like a plot to turn the administration of the country over to him. The dowager empress returned from her usual residence at the Summer Palace outside the city to the inner palaces, and on September 21 she promulgated in the emperor's name his edict beseeching her to return to active supervision of government. The emperor was deprived of power and kept confined in a remote palace until he died in 1908. The "Hundred Days" of reform were over. Almost all the innovative measures were canceled, and orders were issued for the arrest of the leading reform agitators. Tan Sitong and five others were executed without trial a few days later. Kang Youwei managed to flee into exile with the help of the British. Liang turned up, ashen and trembling, at the Japanese Legation in Beijing, where he had an interview with Itō. He then somehow made his way to a Japanese warship off the coast and went into exile in the Tokyo–Yokohama area.

For China, the consequences of the collapse of these reform efforts were

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immense. Moderate reformers lost influence, and many of them were driven from office. The dowager empress and her high officials, stimulated by a rising tide of popular hostility to Christian missionaries in the northern provinces, shifted their attention away from the threats of economic and strategic penetration. Antimissionary feeling had been an important facet of Chinese foreign relations since missionaries gained access to the interior of China in the 1860s. It was fueled by memories of Taiping Christianity; by missionary interference in local affairs on behalf of their converts; and by local scholars' and commoners' resentment of Christian converts who did not participate in local festivals and who preferred the protection and education offered by the missionaries to those of the local elite. In Shandong, especially, these angers combined with traditions of subversive folk religion and of martial arts exercises and trances, supposed to confer immunity to gunfire, to produce the movement called the Righteous and Harmonious Fists, known to foreigners as the Boxers.

In 1899 the court and most of its high officials in the north actively supported the Boxers as their attacks on churches and massacres of missionaries and converts spread. In 1900 the dowager empress formally authorized the presence of Boxer units in Beijing. The "Legation Quarter," which contained the foreign diplomatic establishments, was besieged for fifty-five days in June and July, but then a foreign expeditionary force fought its way up from the coast and occupied the capital. The dowager empress and her captive emperor fled to Xi'an, once the glorious capital of the Tang but now the center of an impoverished and backward area. The foreign occupiers spread out to "pacify" north China and execute Boxers where they could catch them, and imposed a huge indemnity on the Qing court.

In January 1901, still in Xi'an, the dowager empress directed the emperor to issue an edict calling for thoroughgoing reforms of the government, including the military and educational systems. The most vehement opponents of the 1898 reforms were dead or discredited; the moderate reformers like Zhang Zhidong had kept their distance from the court and the Boxers. The dowager empress now saw that the opponents of reform had no answer to the foreign menace and was ready to give reform a chance. From 1902 to 1910 the Qing rulers presided over a host of serious and energetic efforts to convert their empire into a modern nation-state, adopting many of the basic principles and the specific reforms advocated by Liang Qichao and his fellow radicals in 1897–98. Liang and the other reformers of 1898, however, still were regarded as rebels with prices on their heads and had to keep track of these changes from foreign exile. The consequences of the Qing reform efforts in many ways marked the beginnings of a modern Chinese society and culture. But the energies they un-

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leashed, as Liang had insisted they must be, turned out to be centrifugal, leading to the end in 1911 of the imperial order founded by the Qin 2,100 years before, and to a period of civil war and foreign encroachment. This, of course, was not at all what Liang had had in mind.

The first area in which the Qing undertook serious reforms was education. The heritages of Confucian teaching and of the examination system made Chinese statesmen more self-conscious about the political and cultural importance of education than those of any other civilization. The rigid forms prescribed for examination essays were abolished, the provincial governments were ordered to turn academies into schools with modern curricula, and young Chinese were encouraged to study abroad, particularly in Japan, where living was relatively cheap and the use of Chinese characters lowered the language barrier somewhat. Plans for modern primary and secondary schools followed in 1904. Many young men still preferred the modified classical examinations to the new forms of schooling, since everyone knew how to prepare for the examinations and they had the prestige of a millennial continuity behind them. The examinations always had been criticized by some of the most thoughtful Confucians as a routinization and perversion of the Master's teachings. Wang Yangming, for example, had found them extremely distasteful. In 1905 the government decided that young men would go to the modern schools in adequate numbers only if the examination system was completely abolished; this epochal measure took effect the next year.

I have suggested that since Song times the examination system had been the glue that held the enormous, single-centered empire together, channeling elite ambitions away from local mobilizations of power and into study and aspiration to bureaucratic service. Now all at once that glue dissolved. Moreover, in the old system young men had been able to continue memorizing the Classics and practicing writing model essays no matter where they lived. But modern schools were to be found only in the provincial capitals and other larger cities. In those modern schools, students discussed politics, passed around copies of Liang Qichao's latest magazine and other subversive literature, and discovered the power of the demonstration and the school boycott. Numbers of students abroad, especially in Japan, grew rapidly, and everywhere they started their own societies and periodicals and debated the merits of various forms of reform and revolution.

In 1901 the court also had taken the first steps to reform the military system, abolishing the old military examinations and ordering provincial governors to reform the military units in their provinces. Further measures for reform of the central military administration and the forming of "New Army" units with modern training and weapons throughout the empire

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were decreed in 1903. Some very promising units and commanders emerged. After the abolition of the examinations, army service and army schools attracted many ambitious poor youths. The trouble was that some of the greatest successes were in the provincial capitals, and central government control over these new forms of power was doubtful. In the Beijing area, the most prominent and effective builder of the New Army was one Yuan Shikai, who already had played an ambiguous role in the politics of the 1898 reforms. As the new-style military forces began to build up, the Manchu princes sought to keep control over them by instituting a highly centralized structure of Ministry of War and Imperial General Staff, modeled on the Japanese system which in turn was modeled on the Prussian. These changes accomplished little except to heighten mutual mistrust between Manchu princes and Chinese military men. In 1908 Yuan Shikai was dismissed from all his posts and retired to his native place, but he retained the loyalty of many younger officers who had risen under his patronage, and he would return as a central figure in the drama of the end of the empire in 1911.

In 1904–1905 Japan and Russia went to war as a result of long-simmering conflicts over the desire of each to dominate Korea and Manchuria. In the Straits of Tsushima Japan annihilated the Russian Baltic fleet, which had steamed all the way around Eurasia and Africa to its fate. Japan also won one land battle after another over Russian forces, on the territory of a Qing Empire that was a passive spectator. To the Chinese political elite, the lesson of this astonishing victory was clear: An East Asian monarchy with a modernized constitutional government could defeat a European one with an out-of-date autocratic system. In 1906–1907 the Qing court sent high ministers to Japan and Europe to study various constitutional forms of government. These missions clearly were most interested in constitutional models like those of Japan and of Germany, which limited parliamentary sovereignty and left large autonomous spheres for the military establishment and for the imperial house. But their interest in a constitutional order that would widen the sphere of consultation and discussion and would establish a firm legal foundation for the state was genuine. In 1908 the court announced a series of steps spread out over the next nine years that would lead to the adoption of a constitutional regime quite similar to that adopted by Japan under the Meiji Constitution of 1890.

The Japanese had taken nine years to implement their system, starting with an imperial grant in 1881. The Qing, however, did not have that much time. Provincial assemblies, a first step toward constitutional government, became hotbeds of agitation for a speedup of the constitutional timetable. Leaders of New Army units in the provinces, students returning from abroad or graduating from the new modern schools, and members of

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chambers of commerce and many other new voluntary associations joined in the clamor. There were many abortive attempts to start a revolution; when one finally had a local success in October 1911, coalitions of provincial assemblymen and military men took several provinces over to the revolutionary side. Yuan Shikai, summoned back to power in Beijing, told the Qing court it would have to abdicate. The old empire disappeared like snow on a sunny Beijing winter day.

Liang Qichao, of course, had to watch all this from a distance. He and other revolutionaries and radical reformers would return in 1912 to play important roles in the new Chinese Republic. Between 1898 and 1911 they argued among themselves over strategies and goals, articulated issues for the elements of the Chinese political elite that were looking beyond the Qing state's cautious nation-building efforts, and sought without much success some organizational leverage over events inside China. Liang's relations with Kang Youwei became more distant, as Liang lost interest in Kang's desire to "protect the teaching." But he and Kang distinguished themselves from the revolutionaries who sought to overthrow the Qing Empire, claiming that their goal was a constitutional monarchy under the Guangxu emperor. In 1898 and 1899 they elaborated a picture of themselves as loyal ministers of the Guangxu emperor, his key advisers in the Hundred Days of reform in the summer of 1898, now seeking ways to rescue him from oblivion, deposition, and death at the hands of the empress dowager. Their inflated account of their influence in 1898 has been generally accepted by scholars until recently, even though Liang himself wrote of his account of 1898 that "to claim what it contains to be all reliable history is a view I no longer dare entertain. Why is it so? It is because I became so emotionally involved and consequently exaggerated what had really happened." The traditional echoes of his emotional involvement should be obvious to anyone who has come this far in this book; the images of the beleaguered sovereign, the loyal ministers, the selfless martyrs to principle and loyalty must have done much to maintain his resolve in exile and to enhance his standing among the exiles and inside China.

From late in 1898 to early in 1912, Liang spent most of his time in Japan. Between 1899 and 1903 he made several trips to seek funds and support among the overseas Chinese for the Protect the Emperor Society that he and Kang had founded: to Hawaii in early 1900, to Singapore, Australia, and the Philippines in 1900–1901, and to the United States in 1903. In 1900 he drew very close to the revolutionary groups who were plotting to overthrow the Qing, and he encouraged an abortive revolt in the middle Yangzi. As numbers of Chinese students in Japan grew, organization efforts among them and journals published there became central in the struggles over China's political destiny, and Liang found himself very

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much on the front lines. In Japan he received financial support from local Chinese merchants and from Japanese politicians who combined a relative liberalism in Japanese domestic politics with a desire to spread enlightenment and modernization among their backward brethren in the Far East, very much including the Chinese. The support and example of the great Ōkuma Shigenobu, ardent patriot, founder of Waseda University, and leader of a loyal opposition in the Japanese Diet, who on one occasion had put together a majority and moved peacefully and legitimately from opposition to the prime minister's office, must have been especially important to Liang. If only such things could happen in China! If opposition intellectuals like Liang might be allowed to participate in building the nation, and even on occasion to direct its government!

Liang already had recognized the importance of the Japanese example in his writings of 1897. Now, in addition to seeing its political system in operation, he could travel widely by railroad, get around the cities of Tokyo and Yokohama by electric tram, admire the modern docks and shipping, shop in department stores, and gaze at a twelve-story tower of shops and exhibits, its floors glowing with electric lights. Policing was very thorough, and the legal system had been so completely transformed and codified that just at this time, in 1899, the foreign powers were content to abandon their extraterritorial rights and subject their nationals to Japanese jurisdiction; China would not gain the same right until the 1930s. An even more striking recognition of Japan's new membership in the modern world system was the signing in 1902 of a treaty of alliance and mutual assistance with Great Britain, the world's greatest maritime and colonial power.

Liang, always the scholar and writer, was especially impressed by Japan's universities, both public and private, and by its vigorous daily press and many journals of scholarship and controversy. In 1899 Liang wrote, "I have made several Japanese friends who are as close to me as my own brothers. . . . I have read Japanese newspapers daily, becoming so involved in Japanese political affairs that they seem to be those of my own country." Many of Liang's generation of political and intellectual leaders could have said the same thing, but not all of them were so frank about the effects of Japan on their ideas, and in retrospect, as Japan has been experienced as the great enemy and aggressor, the whole subject of Japanese influence on the reform and revolutionary movements has become a very sensitive one. Liang learned much from the Japanese example and quoted many Japanese books, but his balance and breadth of vision made him less susceptible than some others to Japanese ways of thinking that could not be naturalized in Chinese thought. For example, although he showed interest in the racist pseudo-biology that the Japanese adopted so readily from the European and American thought of the time, it was less important to him than to some of the revolutionaries, especially the famous scholar Zhang Binglin.

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Liang used Japanese books and journals primarily as a mode of access to the ideas and institutions of the entire world. He made several attempts to learn European languages, but never read or spoke one with any ease. On the warship on which he escaped from China he had discovered that the Japanese use of Chinese characters made it possible for him to start reading with a tutor or helper. The Japanese had been hard at work for decades translating and summarizing the knowledge of the Western world; in the process they invented many new compounds of Chinese characters to translate Western concepts: science, civilization, society, socialism, anarchism, objectivity, subjectivity, self-government, constitution, and so on. Liang and his generation simply adopted most of these compounds for use in the modern intellectual Chinese they were creating.

Exile never is easy. But for Liang it made possible far greater productivity and influence than either his earlier or his later years in China. Even in exile he was drawn over and over again into futile political activity, but it did not consume his life as it did earlier and later in China, and there were intervals when he could spend all his time reading, writing, and talking with his Chinese and Japanese friends. He was in no personal danger. He had reasonably stable funding for his periodicals. The Japanese censors rarely paid attention to Chinese journals published in Japan. From 1899 to 1901 he edited the *Qing yi bao—qing yi*, "pure discussion," being a traditional term for the politics of moralistic opposition in China. From 1902 to 1907 he published his most famous and influential journal, the *Xin min congbao* (New People's Miscellany). *Xin min*, another profoundly Confucian expression, takes some explaining.

In his writings from 1899 on, Liang drew on his widening reading and experience to incessantly reexamine and refine basic ideas he had arrived at in 1896–97. The central ideas were those of *qun*, grouping or solidarity, and of the active individual *zhishi* "gentleman with a great goal," committed to the advancement of the group and identified with its fate. For the nature of the individual participant, Liang now frequently used the phrase *xin min*. *Min* is the word for the common people encountered from Confucius on; *xin*, "new," implies that now they must be something quite different from the usually passive people of the traditional conception. Well aware of how much Liang was learning from reading about Western politics and political thought in these years, some have translated the phrase as "new citizen." Certainly the activism and solidarity implied by the word "citizen" all the way from its Roman origins does convey a great deal of the new values Liang was promoting. But the expression *xin min* also carried strong Confucian echoes. It is found in the opening section of the *Great Learning*: "The Way of the Great Learning is to illuminate illustrious virtue; to renovate the people [*xin min*]; to rest in the highest good. . . ." (Classical Chinese has no parts of speech in the Western sense; the phrase

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can be read as a verb-object compound as well as an adjective and noun.) But some versions of the text read *qin min*, "to be parentally close to the people." Wang Yangming had preferred this version, in scholarship and more ambivalently in his work as a local official. Liang, a bookish aspirant to elite status now in exile, had little opportunity to be parentally close to the Chinese people. In his writings he had little to say about the terrible injustices and insecurities of livelihood experienced by ordinary Chinese. And although ordinary Chinese could and did respond to appeals for patriotic dedication and solidarity, the real thrust of Liang's exhortations was that the Chinese *elite* should renovate itself and guide the renovation of the common people.

Although the very idiom of moral appeal and self-renovation owed much to the Confucian tradition, Liang was more and more convinced that traditional Confucian ethics provided inadequate guidance for the renovation that now was needed. Traditional concepts of personal relationships were useful as far as they went; Liang was no critic of the traditional family system, and he sometimes thought that filial piety might help to reinforce wider political loyalties. But traditional political ethics, confined within the ruler–minister–common people concepts, were woefully inadequate. In his new writings on "public morality" in 1902, Liang became much clearer about the solidarity and activism that now was required of everyone if China was to survive as one among many competitive nation-states:

> The present-day international competitions among European and American countries are not like the imperialistic aggrandizements launched by the First Emperor of Qin or Alexander the Great or Chinggis Khan or Napoleon. . . . The motivating force stems from the citizenry's struggle for survival which is irrepressible according to the laws of natural selection and survival of the fittest. Therefore the current international competitions are not something which only concerns the state, they concern the entire population. In the present-day international struggles in which the whole citizenry participate [and compete] for their very lives and properties, people are united as if they have one mind. . . . How dangerous this is![1]

Most of Liang's examples of the kinds of public virtues the Chinese needed to cultivate were foreign. He was especially impressed with the Anglo-Saxon peoples:

> Those who excel at making compromises become a great people, such as the Anglo-Saxons, who, in a manner of speaking, make their way with one foot on the ground and one foot going forward, or who hold

[1] Hao Chang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition in China*, 1890–1907 (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), p. 163.

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> fast to things with one hand and pick up things with another. Thus, what I mean by "a new people" is not those who are infatuated with Western ways and, in order to keep company with other, throw away our morals, learning, and customs of several thousand years' standing. Nor are they those who stick to old paper and say that merely embracing the morals, learning and customs of those thousands of years will be sufficient to enable us to stand upon the great earth.[2]

The point was, of course, that the Anglo-Saxon peoples, by their cultural and political moderation and continuity, had become the most dynamic and progressive peoples of the world of the turn of the century. Liang's faith in progress as an unqualified good, his conviction of the need for individual dynamism and struggle to advance, now were at their peak. Certainly this was a sharp break with the recent Confucian tradition, but Liang remained convinced that original Confucianism, with its optimism about human nature and its faith in the efficacy of moral exhortation, example, and action, was quite congruent with his new values. If we recall the great appeal of Wang Yangming's focus on the gap between moral knowledge and action, we can see Liang and others of his generation seizing on the new ideals, institutions, and examples of the Western tradition, and on the promise of abundance through science and technology, not to overthrow the Confucian heritage but to break out of the moral and political predicaments of the traditional order and to give new reality to the deepest hopes and promises of their own tradition.

Liang's new moralism glorified the human will, effort, and struggle. Sometimes he attacked head-on the fatalist elements in the Chinese tradition; sometimes he argued that they were the results of misunderstandings of Confucian or Buddhist teachings. Still, many of his examples of the kind of ceaseless struggle the Chinese people needed to engage in were Western, and his best biographer has commented that his concept of effort "is much closer to the modern Western concept of 'rational mastery over the world' than to the Confucian ideal of 'rational adjustment to the world.'" Certainly Liang sounds "Faustian" when he writes, "Human effort has been constantly battling against the course of nature, engaged in a process of struggle. The course of nature has often been at odds with the expectations of human beings. So its resistance to human effort is very great and intense. However, the admirable tendency of human beings to progress will never rest content with the status quo. So the whole life of a man is like sailing against the currents in a river for several decades without being able to rest for one day." But we might also hear echoes here of the Confucian disciple who knew that the gentleman's burden is heavy and his road is

[2] W. T. de Bary et al., eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition* (New York, 1964), 2: 95.

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long, for only with death does it come to an end. Certainly, we also will hear echoes of Liang in Mao Zedong's exhortations to effort and struggle.

Liang's writings from 1897 on had had a great deal to say in favor of Western concepts of freedom and of the rights of the people. Close examination of these writings has led many scholars to the conclusion that Liang never really accepted the idea of the fundamental and inviolable rights of the individual, that for him human rights were to be asserted and human freedom defended in order to overcome the passivity of the old order, that solidarity was more fundamental than individual rights. The same understanding of liberal ideas can be found in some of the Japanese writers who most influenced him and in some of his most distinguished Chinese contemporaries, such as the great translator Yan Fu. Liang also eventually drew on German theorists of the state as an entity above individual wills. Some have suggested that Liang and his generation, as a result of their preoccupations with the building and defense of a modern nation, did not so much distort classic liberalism as perceive and develop some latent "collectivist" tendencies in it. In any case, the issues Liang grappled with here are enduring ones. People in the West still are arguing about the limits of a negative conception of liberty, about the need for community and solidarity in postmodern society. And of course the future of liberty and human rights in China remains uncertain.

Liang's views of the process that would lead to the emergence of a modern Chinese nation were changeable, some would say confused or opportunistic. But surely it was sensible not to get locked into a particular program when trying to influence from exile the immense and many-sided transformation now beginning in China. Liang's broad reading and open mind kept him aware both of the dynamic energy that could be released by the quest for freedom, by the people taking power in their own hands, and of the advantages for nation-building and defense against aggression of a broad-based and orderly transition if one could be managed. In 1902, in a journal for new kinds of fiction he had started, he published several installments of a novel of his own entitled *Xin Zhonggao weilai ji* (A Record of the Future of the New China). Looking back from sixty years in the future, it records a series of discussions between an anti-Manchu revolutionary and a moderate who hoped to work out a peaceful transition guided by a "sage ruler" and a group of outstanding ministers. The moderate argues that the disorder of revolution would give the foreign powers an excuse to intervene again. But how, asks the revolutionary, can you trust the present rulers to relinquish their power? Both concede that the Chinese people are not ready to be effective citizens of either a republic or a constitutional monarchy. The moderate concedes that revolutionary energy at least will help to offset the dead weight of reaction, making constitutional monarchy

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a feasible compromise. Both the revolutionary firebrand and the careful statesman will be needed, as both Mazzini and Cavour were needed in the making of a united Italy a few decades before. Liang never finished the novel; it seems clear that the debate was one going on in his own mind in 1902, and that he was attracted both by radical activism and by the role of a cautious, constructive statesman.

Liang spent much of 1903 touring the United States, seeing most of its major cities, meeting important people (even if only five minutes with J. P. Morgan), and attempting to raise funds for the Protect the Emperor Society. He came to understand that American democracy was built on local representative institutions dating from before the American Revolution; this gradual building of democracy from the bottom up seemed far more workable than a sudden imposition from above. In any case, he was not much impressed with the present state of American politics, with its constant campaigns, its mediocre leaders, and its spoils system. He was awed by the sense of limitless economic potential, and he saw clearly how it could be mobilized to dominate other countries, especially under leaders like Theodore Roosevelt, then in the White House. The great trusts, he wrote, were far beyond the dreams of power of Napoleon or Alexander the Great. Visiting Chinese communities, he found them not very generous with donations and full of feuds between families and between natives of different places. San Francisco's Chinatown particularly depressed him; despite its high rate of literacy and its six newspapers and journals, factional fighting and corruption were endemic. If these Chinese could not govern themselves, how could the people of China be expected to cope with democracy?

Back in Japan, Liang found his pessimism about Chinese ability to create an effective democratic government turning his writings in two directions. One was away from revolution and toward an insistence on the supremacy of a state standing above individual wills. The other was a conviction that the Chinese could find important resources in the Confucian tradition for the moral revival they so badly needed. Individuals had to learn to look within themselves, to distinguish sincerity from hypocrisy, to demand of themselves the most perfect selflessness. He drew a great deal from the writings of Wang Yangming and his followers. The examples of heroic conduct in Liang's writings were more frequently drawn from Chinese history, less from Western.

Just as Liang was turning away from revolution, the young intellectuals in China and abroad who had been learning so much from him were drawn in the opposite direction. In 1903 agitation over the weakness of the Qing in the face of continuing foreign pressure was growing, and some were beginning to argue that the Qing must be overthrown if China was to

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survive. The fervent arguments and organizing efforts of these revolutionaries are described in the next chapter. In 1905 the revolutionaries met in Japan to form a united Revolutionary Alliance (Tongmeng Hui). The Qing pressed the Japanese government to bring the situation under control, and Tokyo issued a new set of regulations, requiring Qing approval of every application from a Chinese student and much closer supervision of all Chinese students. After the students called a strike, a Japanese newspaper commented on their "self-indulgence and boorishness." One of the young leaders of the Revolutionary Alliance drowned himself in the ocean to protest the insult to his people.

Liang responded to all this fervor with a confused and legalistic condemnation of the student strike. He went on, in 1906 and 1907, to engage in a long print duel with the *Min bao* (People's Report), the organ of the Revolutionary Alliance. He called revolutionary anti-Manchuism a diversion from the goals of nation-building. China needed a change of system, not an overthrow of dynasty. The Manchus were almost completely assimilated, in any case. The revolutionaries were advocating a "small China" just for the Han people, rather than a "large China" to be built by and for all the peoples of the Qing Empire. He condemned the proposals for social justice, equalization of wealth, "socialism" in a variety of senses, that were popular among the revolutionaries, saying they were unnecessary and divisive.

All this was not just an intellectual result of Liang's growing conservatism and authoritarianism since 1903. Serious discussions were under way in Beijing late in 1905 to explore the possibility of evolution toward a constitutional monarchy more or less on the model of Meiji Japan. Liang was in touch with the high Manchu official Duanfang and even drafted state papers for him to submit to the court. In September 1906 the court announced the dispatch of high commissioners to study the constitutional systems of various countries. Liang's vision of a gradualist, broad-based path toward the political transformation of China seemingly legitimized, he now sought to form a broad coalition of Qing statesmen and private opinion-leaders to arouse public opinion in favor of the rapid establishment of a constitutional order with representative institutions. Liang and his close associates, still viewed as traitors by the Qing court, would participate secretly. The resulting organization, with the neutral-sounding name Political Information Society (Zheng Wen She), was inaugurated in Tokyo in November 1907. Liang hoped to gain the support of the powerful general Yuan Shikai but was rebuffed. Thousands of signatures calling for rapid steps toward constitutional government were collected. Then in August 1908 the court banned the Political Information Society and ordered the arrest of its members.

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The Society may have helped to stimulate growing political consciousness and organization in the provinces, but by 1908 the new politics had taken on a life of its own that did not depend on any single center of organization. Provincial associations for constitutional government, the new provincial assemblies, the leaders of the new army units, students in the new schools, chambers of commerce, and the publishers of an amazing number of new journals all joined in the agitation for rapid progress toward constitutional government. The revolutionaries under Sun Yat-sen mounted one abortive revolt after another. Finally it was revolutionary activity within the new army units that made possible the first successful revolt, at Wuchang on October 10, 1911, still celebrated by the Republic of China on Taiwan as its National Day. Various coalitions of revolutionaries, provincial assembly leaders, and army commanders declared the southern provinces for the revolution, and Sun Yat-sen was inaugurated as first president of the Republic of China. In the north, revolts to the east and west of Beijing made the court's situation untenable, and Yuan Shikai was recalled to office with full powers to manage the situation as best he could. He soon informed the court, now presided over by the six-year-old "last emperor," that there was no alternative to abdication. Yuan now made it brutally clear that he expected Sun to step aside and allow him to become president of the Republic in his place. Unable to match Yuan's military power and fearful of foreign intervention in the case of civil war, Sun did so.

Liang Qichao had watched this amazing drama from Japan, powerless. He had tried to build connections with some Manchu princes who he thought might be sympathetic to the constitutional cause, but he had been rebuffed. By March 1911 he was writing in favor of overthrow of the Qing. He seems to have had some influence, through personal connections with the officers involved and the kinds of changes they demanded, on the revolt east of the capital in November 1911 that led the court to recall Yuan. He now sought to participate in the practical work of building the kind of stable constitutional government he had witnessed in Japan and other countries and had so long dreamed of for China. He lingered for months in Dalian in the northeast. He could not bring himself to consider cooperating with the revolutionary forces; there were too many memories of old fights, too many differences of principle. Yuan Shikai had rejected the overtures of the Political Information Society, and later Liang had urged the Manchu princes to keep Yuan out of power, but now Liang turned to Yuan, addressing him as "enlightened ruler," presenting himself as a potentially valuable adviser.

In the confused politics of the first years of the Republic, the abstract question was that of the relation between the executive and the legislative

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power; it translated into a confrontation between Yuan Shikai and the provincial activists who had dominated the provincial assemblies and the provisional National Assembly, among whom the revolutionary forces, now called the Kuomintang (National People's Party), were by far the strongest and best organized. In elections at the end of 1912, the Kuomintang emerged with a majority in the National Assembly, and its capable parliamentary leader, Song Jiaoren, began to talk as if his majority was going to take full charge, as in a parliamentary system, or have Yuan removed and a new president elected. On March 20, 1913, Song was assassinated by Yuan's agents. Military commanders loyal to the Kuomintang revolted in the southern provinces but were crushed.

In the parliamentary maneuvering of 1912–13, Liang experienced the consequences of his years of exile. He was a famous and popular political intellectual; everyone wanted to be associated with him, on good terms with him. But he was only one of several important politicians who had come out of the constitutionalist movement, and unlike the others he had no base of power in one of China's provinces. And he still could not stand the thought of cooperating with the "rowdy" radicals of the Kuomintang. After Yuan crushed the Kuomintang resistance, he turned to a coalition of constitutionalist politicians that called itself the Progressive Party. Liang became minister of justice. Working to improve the administration of justice and seeking a measure of autonomy for the courts, he was overtaken by events in 1913–14, as Yuan banned the Kuomintang, dissolved the National Assembly, and took dictatorial powers for himself. Still Liang stayed on in Yuan's government, now as director of the Bureau of Currency. Liang, in his role of would-be scholarly statesman, had studied and written about China's complex currency problems for years, but the office had little power.

In 1915 it became more and more clear that Yuan intended to make himself emperor. Liang made his opposition clear, and by the end of the year he had resigned and was lending his support to a coalition of military and other forces opposing Yuan's monarchical plans, in which one of his students from the 1897 Academy of Current Affairs played a key role. Yuan backed away from his imperial pretensions and died early in 1916. But the real victors were neither the Kuomintang nor the old constitutionalists but the military men who had not wanted Yuan to concentrate so much power and legitimacy in his own person. The political influence of military men had been growing since the late Qing reforms, and now China was entering a decade when the only real power was that of the "warlords." For a year or two the generals restored and manipulated the National Assembly elected in 1913, but from then on to 1928 they

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simply allied with each other and fought each other for control of provinces or the capital.

In 1917 Liang participated in the first of these warlord-dominated governments, when the National Assembly still seemed to have a role to play, as minister of finance. But his efforts to stabilize the currency were doomed by the military expenses of the generals, and he resigned by the end of the year. That was the end of his political career. His early optimism about the merging of the best of Western political values with the best of China's moral traditions was mocked by the savagery and cynicism of the warlord era. He spent the rest of his life in scholarly pursuits. He was above all a reader and a writer, and the most enduring part of his inheritance from the Confucian past was his continuing faith that the scholar, the student and critic of culture, must somehow play a key role in creating a viable new China.

Liang had traveled widely in North America, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific, but he had never been to Europe. Now he went, arriving in London in February 1919. Here, amid memories of the senseless carnage of trench warfare, the collapse of the old order, the revolutions in Germany and Russia, the fear that nothing had been settled and Europe was simply between two wars, he encountered disillusion with progress, democracy, and science that at least matched his own. Still anxious to tap the latest currents in Western intellectual life, he met people who told him that Western thought was bankrupt, that it had ignored people's spiritual needs, that the West was now looking to the Eastern civilizations for revitalization. One French writer praised the profundity of the Chinese philosophers he had read in translation and urged that each people should develop the unique virtues of its own culture.

These encounters encouraged changes that already were under way in Liang's thinking, and they were very important for some of the younger intellectuals who accompanied him and interpreted for him. In the 1920s Liang taught at Nankai University in Tianjin, did a great deal of historical and literary research, and wrote several important books. As many of China's intellectuals were seized by new visions of progress through science, democracy, and radical social change, Liang and his younger associates were major contributors to the critique of excessive faith in science, insisting that the Chinese tradition had much to offer to a coherent philosophy of life. Trying to summarize the core of the tradition and to show how it combined social activism and inward self-cultivation, making a sort of middle way between Indian otherworldliness and Western materialism, he finally turned back to that core mystery and moral demand of the teachings of Confucius, the concept of benevolence. He died in 1929.

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A failure in politics, bitterly disappointed in his early hopes for a rapid transition to a new China, Liang Qichao had contributed immensely to the long and still problematic struggle of the Chinese people for effective participation in the modern world by his translations and explanations of Western ideas and by his participation in the invention of modern Chinese intellectual journalism. Above all, his discovery, already in 1897, of the links among social solidarity, individual liberation, and nation-building had defined an epochal break with the Way of the Ruler and Minister and shaped the crucial first stages of modern China's search for a viable political form.

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