

@ct:Introduction

@st:The Political Transformation of 1911

@tol:China today declares itself a republic. From 1912 onward, notwithstanding political turmoil, assassinations, factionalism, civil wars, invasions, and revolutions, the polity of China has remained, in name, republican. Whether it was the Beiyang warlords, the Nationalists, or the Communists in power, the selection of the head of state has invariably been "by the people," and the "popular will" of the nation has steadfastly remained the basis of state sovereignty. Nevertheless, despite the succession of eleven central government constitutions and constitutional drafts written between 1908 and 1982, China has yet to attain constitutionalism. Since 1908 when the Qing government promulgated the Principles of the Constitution, four different regimes--one monarchical and three republican--have each regarded a constitution as the preeminent foundation of political life. Nonetheless, Chinese constitutions have not carried actual authority, the rule of law has yet to gain real purchase in the political system, and officials exercising governmental powers have not been amply bound to observe the

limitations on power which are set out in the ostensibly supreme, constitutional law.

@tx:Indeed, the perseverance of republican rhetoric and the failure of constitutional practice seem to be the very hallmark of modern Chinese politics. Looking back at the first years of the republic, one can see these defining features already in place. As we will see, the rise of republicanism and the failure of constitutionalism in early republican China had much to do with the way the 1911 Revolution took shape. This book tells the story of the political transformation that created modern Chinese politics: How did the old, imperial order collapse and the new, modern politics, with the distinctive characteristics described above, come into being? In answering this question, it offers a reinterpretation of the 1911 Revolution that emphasizes the significance of a new political culture of “rights” (quan, quanli, minquan and guoquan), “equality” (pingdeng), and “popular sovereignty” (minzhu).¹

@h1:Rereading the Events of 1911

@to:In the summer of 1911, an unprecedented popular movement suddenly sprang to life, shaking the status quo in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province. The Qing court’s announcement of its

intent to nationalize the privately owned Chuan-Han (Chengdu-Hankow) Railway Company and take out foreign loans to pay for it agitated the entire city. For the first time, commoners and elites joined together into a single, unified political organization--the Sichuan Railway Protection Association (Sichuan baolu tongzhihui)--in opposition to the court. A proliferation of branches of the association organized by neighborhood, occupation, gender, and social group mushroomed at an astonishing rate. The Children's Street Branch, the Women's Branch, the Students' Branch, the Mechanical Workers and Printers' Branch, the Silk Guild Branch, and even the Beggars' Branch were set up in less than a month's time. Chengdu residents eagerly joined the branches, attended their public meetings, listened to speeches, read newsletters, and contributed money. Painters, elementary-school children, sedan-chair carriers, rickshaw pullers, policemen, artisans, blind performers, and prostitutes donated their savings. Buddhist and Daoist monks, Christians, Muslims, chieftains of the Qiang ethnic group, and even Manchus, the ruling ethnic elite of the Qing, all participated with zeal.²

@tx:The gentry-led Railway Protection Association stepped up to provide direction, setting the common objective for all participants expressed in the rallying cry, "To protect the railway and break the [foreign-loan] treaty" (baolu poyue). Its

official publication, the Newsletter of the Sichuan Railway Protection Association, was printed daily. Sold at the price of one cent and often given away for free, it achieved a circulation of nearly fifteen thousand copies.³ The newsletter's rhetoric was driven by three novel political concepts: the rights of the nation (guoquan), constitutionalism (lixian), and the rights of the people (minquan), which served as the key ideological justification for the movement's anti-Qing stance. Using new political repertoires such as newspapers, pictorials, vernacular poems, and public speeches, movement leaders instilled new political ideas in their followers and assembled a broad coalition of supporters. Even some local officials sympathized with the movement and offered their support. A sedan-chair carrier donated his hard-earned money to the Railway Protection Association, proudly proclaiming that "coolies are citizens too" (lifu yi xi guomin fenzi).⁴

Remarkable for the times, and no doubt from the perspective of the court, the masterminds of the movement were not among the usual troublemakers for the dynasty. The 1911 Sichuan movement leaders were no common rioters (luanmin), rebel bandits (panzei), or revolutionary gangsters (gefei). They were instead, by and large, renowned members of the gentry (shi), who, created by the state through the civil service examination system, had been

willing to partner with the state for centuries in Chinese history. The backbone of the movement was a group of Sichuan provincial assemblymen who secured powerful political standing with their assembly activities, controlled the cities' lucrative and respectable businesses, and enjoyed exalted status stemming from both their imperial examination degrees and their knowledge of "new learning" (see Chapter Two). Many of them had studied in Japan and held important official posts in the government.⁵ However, rather than conforming to the conventional role of Confucian gentlemen--that is, helping the monarchy solve problems and maintain the imperial order--these gentry took a confrontational stand. By mobilizing a novel political discourse, they forged a broad, new political community of supporters and mounted a serious challenge to the authority of the Qing. It was here, in Sichuan, that the 1911 Revolution began.

The betrayal by the gentry and the uniting of gentry, officials, and commoners against the Qing under a shared new agenda was, however, not unique to Sichuan. In fact, in all fourteen provinces that declared independence from the Qing in 1911, the gentry and officials--the key constituents of the infrastructure of imperial rule--turned their back on the monarchy. With their defection, the fall of the dynasty became inevitable. Consider, for instance, the fast-moving chain of

events that occurred across all the fourteen provinces in the critical months of October and November, beginning with the province of Hubei.

On October 10, junior officers in the Hubei New Army rose up in a mutiny. Encountering little resistance, they occupied the administrative office of the governor-general in Wuchang, besieged the city, and declared the province independent. Senior New Army officers sided with the rebels, and the leading constitutionalist and chairman of the Hubei Provincial Assembly, Tang Hualong, joined the new government and appealed to other provinces to support the revolution.⁶

By October 22, the revolutionary fire had spread to Hunan province. New Army officers rioted. The Qing governor hastily abandoned his post, and Tan Yankai, chairman of the Hunan Provincial Assembly, emerged as a key supporter of the revolution. After the original rebel leader was killed in a factional conflict, Tan took over the governorship. On the same day, the New Army officers in Shaanxi province also rose up. With backing from the Elder Brothers Society (Gelaohui), the rebelling officers quickly took over the Manchu garrison and occupied the provincial capital. The new revolutionary government meanwhile relied upon local gentry and students who had studied in Japan to maintain order.⁷

The next day, on October 23, in Jiujiang city in Jiangxi province, New Army officers rose up against the court; a week later, the gentry in the provincial capital, Nanchang, followed suit, conceiving a plan for independence.⁸ In Shanxi province, on October 29, a group of junior officers in the New Army revolted. They killed the Qing governor and turned to their Japan-trained commander, Yan Xishan, for help. Working closely with the chairman of the Shanxi Provincial Assembly, Yan secured his post as the new governor, from which he supported the revolutionary cause.⁹ On October 30, in Yunnan, revolutionary officers in the New Army struck a swift blow against the Qing. Though not as deeply involved as their counterparts in other provinces, Yunnan provincial assemblymen offered indispensable administrative help to the new regime after independence was declared.¹⁰ Thus, in the first six provinces to revolt against the Qing, the initial actors were anti-Manchu revolutionaries in the New Army.¹¹ Revolutionaries activated the uprisings, but the spark ignited by their mutiny would not have developed into a full-scale prairie fire had it not attracted support from other important elite players such as senior army officers and provincial assemblymen, both belonging to the gentry class.

The subversion by the gentry--the assemblymen being the most active among them--and the acquiescence of officials were all the

more obvious in the following three provinces. In Guizhou, provincial assemblymen almost single-handedly established a democratic republic.¹² In Zhejiang and Fujian, assemblymen and revolutionaries jointly led the revolt. On November 4, the vice-chairman of the Zhejiang Provincial Assembly, Shen Junru, appealed to the Qing governor for independence. Meanwhile, revolutionaries in the Zhejiang New Army mutinied. One day later, provincial assemblymen, together with the revolutionaries, declared Zhejiang independent from the Qing.¹³ Likewise, on November 8, Fujian provincial assemblymen passed a motion calling for "peaceful independence" from the Qing.¹⁴ Under the joint leadership of the assemblymen and the revolutionaries, Fujian became independent and republican on November 9.¹⁵

Most curious of all are the cases of Jiangsu, Guangxi, Anhui, Guangdong, and Sichuan, where independence was achieved entirely by gentry and officials, with little or no help from the revolutionaries. On November 4, in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, gentry and merchants (shenshang) petitioned the Qing governor of Jiangsu, Cheng Dequan, to declare independence. One day later, Cheng openly defected, and he subsequently played a crucial role in the nationwide 1911 Revolution.¹⁶ On November 7, provincial assemblymen in Guangxi decided to sever their ties with the Qing.¹⁷ On November 8, Anhui, after painstaking deliberation by

the provincial assembly leaders, declared independence from the Qing.¹⁸ On November 9, Guangdong's gentry and merchants gathered at the provincial assembly hall and declared independence. After numerous meetings following the Wuchang uprising, they agreed that "autocracy has lost influence and republicanism is the trend of the future," and aimed at building a regime in which all people "will enjoy the happiness of equality and republicanism."¹⁹ Finally, Sichuan declared independence on November 22. On November 14, Acting Governor-General Zhao Erfeng had released the railway movement leaders whom he had earlier arrested. Persuaded by pro-gentry officials, Zhao turned his power over to Pu Dianjun, the Provincial Assembly chairman.²⁰

By the latter half of November of 1911, China's most powerful elites had defected from the Qing. Their leaders, the dominant constitutionalists from Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces, had proposed a plan for uniting all of the southern forces into one polity under the principle of republicanism. Believing that "republicanism had been accepted by the public opinion (yulun) in China," they took the federalist system of the United States of America as their model, vowing to "immediately emulate the United States of America in calling upon a national convention, regarding it as our temporary authoritative legislature."²¹ It was this group of elites, Zhao Fengchang, Zhang Jian, and Zhuang

Yunkuan in particular, who initiated the truce between the Qing Beiyang army and the revolutionary armies in Wuchang, elected the southern delegates to negotiate with the northern leader Yuan Shikai, supported Sun Yat-sen to be the first provisional president of the republic, and penned the abdication edict for the Manchu Qing court.²² The edict, claiming that "the power to govern is now transferred to all in the country" and that "a constitutional republic is now the state system of our country (gonghe lixian guoti)," signaled the end of the monarchy and the birth of the Chinese republic.

A contemporary observer, contrasting the loyalty of officials and gentry during the Taiping Rebellion (1850<->1864) with their complete lack of loyalty in 1911, offered this insight:

@ext:When Wuchang was lost, from the provincial governor, treasurer, and surveillance commissioner, to the prefect and the magistrate, all officials in the city committed suicide. Countless gentry and commoners followed suit. This signified merely that the officials knew the meaning of a righteous death, and the gentry and commoners repaid the officials with gratitude. Because so many people had died for justice, order was easily restored after the Taiping Rebellion. Today, however, we have

heard too many stories of officials and gentry running away and too few stories of them dying for justice. This is an immeasurable disgrace to the dynasty.²³

@taei:Indeed, Sun Yat-sen's Revolutionary Alliance (Tongmenghui) and other anti-Manchu revolutionary groups had been laboring for years to bring down the Qing. But a critical question remains: Why did the Qing collapse so utterly in a mere four months' time after an impressive 267 years of rule? As the eminent late Qing scholar Zhang Jian lamented, "Not from ancient times until the present day has a dynasty ever been so easily lost."²⁴ The complete betrayal by the political elite explains the speed and ease with which the dynasty fell, and also reveals the extent to which the old forms of legitimacy had lost their power.

@tx:Clearly, 1911 represented a major rupture in Chinese politics. The end of the Qing signaled not just the end of a dynasty, but the collapse of the old political system and the emergence of new ways of thinking about the nature of government. As noted by the above observer, it was because so many people were willing to die for the old order that it was quickly restored after the Taiping Rebellion. In 1911, by contrast, faith in the old regime, which had so powerfully motivated officials, gentry, and commoners, was nowhere to be found. Between 1860 and

1911, something fundamental had changed in the minds of the Chinese people. This book explores that fundamental change in political ideas and culture, and in particular, how that change informs the question of how and why the revolution took place.

@h1:Engaging the 1911 Revolution Historiography

@to:More than a hundred years have passed since the revolution first broke out in China. In that time, China scholars have produced numerous works on the subject and offered various explanations of the event. Having focused on the anti-Manchu revolutionaries, the urban elite, modern state-builders, or luminary thinkers, these previous studies form a foundation for the analysis presented here. However, the core revolutionary experience, that is, key features concerning the revolutionary politics, still require serious study.

@tx:Early interpretations that appeared shortly after the revolution attributed the revolution to the radicals in the New Army, as well as to the Beiyang Army Commander, Yuan Shikai.²⁵ Beginning in the 1920s, explanations offered by supporters of Sun Yat-sen stressing the leading role of the Tongmenghui, and in particular of Sun Yat-sen, eventually became orthodox.²⁶ The Communists inherited the Nationalist interpretation of the

revolution and also emphasized Sun's importance. In the past one hundred years, official writings have persistently foregrounded the role of Sun even though he and his organizations primarily limited their activities to overseas Chinese and had only partial infiltration into China.²⁷ In more recent years, scholars have challenged this Sun-centric argument and studies of revolutionary groups other than the Tongmenghui have also appeared.²⁸ However, confining the focus of their inquiry to the beliefs and behavior of revolutionary leaders eclipses the more broadly shared and longer-lasting experience of the revolution itself.

A second and also pervasive approach to the study of the revolution is social interpretation, including both Marxist and non-Marxist analyses. In Marxist accounts, the 1911 Revolution is described as a class struggle in which the bourgeoisie led the masses to topple the Qing ruling house, with both the Tongmenghui and the constitutionalists regarded as political representatives of the growing bourgeoisie.²⁹ As the most influential defender of the Marxist account, Zhang Kaiyuan, historian and chair of the 1911 Revolution Research Group, regularly maintains that the revolution was "a revolution of the bourgeois class." Led by Zhang's superb research team in Wuhan, a series of empirical studies has emerged regarding to role of industrialists, merchants, and other urban elites in the revolutionary era.³⁰

The non-Marxist social interpretations come mainly from non-Chinese scholars, who argue that the revolution was rooted in long-term changes in society, and in particular, in the expanded functions of the local elite after the Taiping Rebellion.³¹ Synthesizing various analyses that focus on the local elite, Mary Rankin gives arguably the most complete social interpretation.³² Deploying a state-society dichotomy as the main analytical framework, Rankin summarizes the history of the late Qing as "a revolutionary movement of society out from under the old state control, the emergence of new social classes, the redefinition of political relationship, and the creation of a new state structure and ideology."³³ The non-Marxist position challenges the Marxist focus on the bourgeois class but for the most part implicitly accepts the central premise of the Marxist argument, that is, that an interpretation of the revolution consists of an account of social origins and outcomes. Taking the two together, we see that by focusing on prior economic and social factors, social interpretations tend to overlook the realm of ideas and downplay the innovative revolutionary process itself, wherein a new political consciousness and new political identities took shape.

A third and increasingly influential position is that of modernization theory, in which scholars revive Alexis de Tocqueville's theme of the aggrandizement of state power.³⁴ The

focus here is no longer on a specific social group that led the revolution, but rather on the modernization of the state. Philip Kuhn, for example, traces the origins of the revolution to the practice of the absolute monarchy and emphasizes the role of the "established literati," that is, those who held a provincial-level degree and, by virtue of their regular gatherings in Beijing, could be considered a "national out-of-office elite."³⁵

The standard modernization account argues that the reluctance of the Qing to expand in size and function to anywhere near modern standards of government--measured, for example, by the ratio of the number of officials to the overall population--created enormous pressure for a statist solution and serious conflicts between the central officials and the "established literati."³⁶

This account considers the revolution a brief interruption of the more fundamental process of modern state-building. This approach has been extremely valuable in helping us understand the pressure the state faced before the revolution. It is less successful, however, as an explanation of why the revolution broke out in the way it did and how it developed as it did, once it had begun; that is, the revolutionary experience itself gets lost.

Lastly, on the margins of the debate stands the intellectual and cultural history of the revolution. Beginning with Joseph Levenson's Confucian China and Its Modern Fate in 1958,

intellectual historians have explored the changes that occurred in the late Qing and have argued that there was a deep-seated shift in Chinese thinking.³⁷ A key proponent of the intellectual interpretation is Zhang Pengyuan, who convincingly points out the critical role played in the revolution by the constitutionalists and, above all, Liang Qichao.³⁸ In recent years, there has been a cultural turn in the study of late Qing history, and a key emphasis has been placed on the emergence of the new-style intellectuals in the last decades of the Qing. We now understand a lot more about what educated Chinese were reading and learning, and the environment of their study.³⁹ To further demonstrate the changes in political culture that followed the revolution, Henrietta Harrison and David Strand have vividly exhibited the emergence of a new, republican political life in early twentieth-century China through meetings, speeches, rituals, customs, and symbols.⁴⁰ While this intellectual and cultural history has greatly enhanced our understanding of the values and sentiments in the years immediately surrounding the revolution and has directly inspired the present work, it does not engage with the revolutionary process itself. There is a disconnect between intellectual concepts and how they were implemented in actual revolutionary actions. How and in what concrete ways ideas contributed to the process of revolution remain to be explained.

Each of the above interpretations has made a valuable contribution to elucidating the origins of the revolution. However, the core of the revolutionary experience, that is, how and why the revolution happened in the ways that it did, is still unclear. There has been insufficient discussion of revolutionary intentions and ideologies, their origins and development, as well as the overlapping interests, the rhetoric, the common purpose, and the political values and repertoires created and utilized in mobilizing the masses. The transformation in political legitimacy, the broader participation and shared cultural experience, the building of solidarity between the elite and the commoners, and the explanation for why such collective action endured in the revolution--all have, until now, remained obscure.

@h1:Reinterpreting the Revolution

@to:This book aims to rehabilitate the political and cultural experience of the 1911 Revolution. It conceptualizes the character of the revolutionary experience, explains how and why the revolution happened in the ways that it did, and evaluates the legacy of the revolution beyond a reductive focus on immediate outcomes. In this book, I argue that the 1911 Revolution was not just an important political event in Chinese

history, but heralded the very birth of modern Chinese political culture. The revolution was a political transformation spearheaded by new ideas, in particular, the notions of rights, equality, and popular sovereignty, which stimulated the Chinese elite into changing the old political order. The main force behind that change was the late Qing constitutionalists. Together with the officials they influenced and the masses they encouraged, they brought down the old regime and ended the Manchu dynasty. The revolutionary process they set in motion created a republican political culture that enshrined popular sovereignty as the fundamental principle. However, key modern constitutional concepts, particularly, "the separation of powers" and "limited government," were by no means implemented in any serious fashion. Impassioned public opinion via mass propaganda--newspapers, pamphlets, public speeches, demonstrations, and meetings--rather than careful institutional design became the main mechanism for realizing political change, a key feature that impacted Chinese politics throughout the entire twentieth century.

@tx:To determine the nature of the revolutionary experience, I have clarified my focus and sharpened my methodologies. First, this book persistently situates ideas and culture in concrete events and social context. Political practices were not simply the expression of underlying economic and social interests. The

revolutionary experience was related to both the logic of political-cultural innovations and to the people who practiced them. In other words, revolutionary politics was the dialectic interaction between structure and ideas within the revolutionary process. At heart, my analysis is an untangling of this multiplicity of forces that eventuated in the revolution.⁴¹ In doing so, Joseph Esherick's Reform and Revolution, though published forty years ago, still influences my study of the revolution. Like Esherick, my approach is multidimensional. My difference from him lies in the fact that his lens "has scanned the realm of social structure and has focused on the social content of political movements and the social consequences of articulated politics," while mine has focused on determining the discursive and practical unity in the revolutionary process and on theorizing the nature of the long-lasting political culture that was invented in the revolution.⁴² While Esherick stresses the alienation of the elite from the masses, I see the solidarity and shared cultural practices between them. In my study, it was the elite that created the constitutional-turned-revolutionary movement by mobilizing the masses with a new political rhetoric and repertoire, whose impact and legacy were much greater than we have previously known.

It is important to recognize that political culture was not just a matter of slogans or abstract theorizing. The emergent political culture was made possible by the leaders, but it took definitive shape only in the midst of revolution, when it was given voice and form by a larger political alliance, which itself was molded by its responses to the new rhetoric and ideas. Drawing upon Lynn Hunt's formulation of "political culture," namely, "the values, expectations, and implicit rules that expressed and shaped collective intentions and actions," this book calls attention to the general principles of revolutionary language, the common political impulse of movement leaders, and the dominant attitudes in society at large.⁴³ This book also emphasizes the new forms of subjectivities engendered by the revolution. As Michel Foucault notes, "it matters little if [the revolutionary upheaval] succeeds or fails."⁴⁴ What is significant is the manner in which the revolution turns into a "spectacle" and "the way in which it is received all around by spectators" who let themselves "be dragged along by it."⁴⁵ The larger masses in the 1911 Revolution were often, and more importantly, not mere spectators but also participants and dreamers. Even though the result of the movement--severing ties with the Qing and the founding of the Republic--was not what the constitutionalist elites originally had in mind, the democratic political culture

they helped create and that was then shaped by the larger masses in the process of the revolution was conducive to the birth of the republic.

Methodologically, my investigation concentrates on one province to showcase the interplay between structure and ideas in the revolutionary event. On the one hand, China had a unique elite class, the "established literati," who, by studying the same curriculum and passing the same examinations, shared similar political aspirations. The protagonists of my story--the Sichuan constitutionalists--belonged to this group. In the late Qing, they were also influenced by Western political concepts. Through studying in Japan and through reading modern periodical presses, they, whether in Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu, other counties in Sichuan or elsewhere in China, became both fervent students and key disseminators of these ideas. On the other hand, each province had its particular socioeconomic structure. Many provinces were building railways, but in no province was railway construction as urgent as in Sichuan. In 1911, four provinces were affected by the nationalization policy, but only in Sichuan did a revolution break out. This had much to do with Sichuan's geographical isolation, its relative wealth and high level of urbanization, the strong presence of its secret sworn brotherhood, the Gowned Brothers (Paoge) (see Chapter One), and

the specific ways in which the New Policies reform (1901-1911) was carried out in the province (see Chapters Three and Four). In this sense, although the focus of this book is on Sichuan, it is not a history of the 1911 Revolution of Sichuan per se. The struggles in Sichuan were emblematic of wider conflicts despite their local uniqueness. By focusing on Sichuan, I am able to look at all of the relevant factors--cultural, socioeconomic, and political--and pay careful attention to their interactions.

@h1:The Choice of Sichuan and the Narrative Framework

@to:The choice of Sichuan as the focus of my case study is a conscious one. As the first province to seriously challenge the Qing regime in 1911, Sichuan set in motion the nationwide revolution. On September 14, 1911, the important Tongmenghui leader Song Jiaoren praised the fortitude and solidarity demonstrated by Sichuan: "Ever since [the Railway Protection movement] began, the Sichuan people have persisted. They have been opposing the government for over two months. The strength of their will and the power of their determination are extraordinary. The people in Hunan, Hubei, and Guangdong have showed us nothing comparable." Song then encouraged revolutionaries in these provinces to take up arms and join the

people of Sichuan "to overturn the evils of despotism and build a republic."⁴⁶ The impact of Sichuan was widely noted and well documented in sources on revolutionary movements in neighboring provinces such as Yunnan, Shaanxi, Hubei, and Hunan.

Equally important, primary sources on the revolution in Sichuan are both rich and colorful, opening a window on the changes in political culture and structure as they occurred. The Sichuan Provincial Archive, the Sichuan Provincial Library, and more than a dozen county archives have preserved a large number of documents covering various aspects of the movement. In particular, Dai Zhili's three-volume Collection of Historical Materials on the Sichuan Railway Protection Movement, which contains 1,910 documents collected from 750 monographs, pamphlets, and posters, serves as a solid foundation for reconstructing the 1911 Revolution to the fullest extent possible. The abundance of Sichuan republican gazetteers has vividly demonstrated the fundamental change of political culture and structure that the 1911 Revolution brought to the local people. In Da county in eastern Sichuan, for example, 1911 led to "much talk about freedom (ziyou) and a fashion of advocating equal rights (pingquan)."⁴⁷ In Luzhou prefecture in southern Sichuan, the Republican era ushered in a new society: "since the establishment of the republic, people of the traditional four

classes [gentry, peasants, artisans, and merchants] have come to be equal to one another (simin pingdeng); society has been fundamentally transformed."⁴⁸ The relationship between the ruler and the ruled was also altered. "Nowadays, as county chief executives try a case, people stand rather than kneel. The executives thus have no authority that keeps the ruled in awe (wuwei kewei)."⁴⁹ Gazetteers reveal that a significant number of people in Sichuan embraced the new political values of republicanism. When President Yuan Shikai tried to make himself emperor in 1915, "Sichuanese eagerly joined the Anti-Yuan Army to defend republicanism. They contributed decidedly to bringing down the monarchy of Yuan, just as the soldiers from Yunnan did."⁵⁰ Indeed, Sichuan is an excellent locale for examining how politics changed in 1911, in ways that were irrevocable.

My narrative structure has a close relationship to my methodology, which is, examining the interaction between structure and ideas in the process of revolutionary events. Chapter One articulates the nature of the old regime and its collaborative model of relations between the elite and the state in Sichuan. A rich and self-sufficient region, Sichuan was only fully incorporated into the Qing empire in the 1850s. Soon after that, the collaborative model was called into question as

population growth, rebellions, and foreign invasion eroded the established power structure and destabilized the old regime.

Chapter Two examines the most formative intellectual influences on the Sichuan constitutionalists and Chapters Three and Four explore their economic and political activities before the 1911 Revolution. Like their cohorts from other provinces, the Sichuan constitutionalists took Liang Qichao as their spiritual leader. Most of them had studied at Hosei University in Japan, where they were also heavily influenced by the French legal tradition, especially its key concepts of rights, equality, and popular sovereignty. Their exposure to radical political thought while studying in Japan, in addition to reinforcing a tradition of elite activism, created a Chinese constitutionalism that was full of contradictions: while claiming to represent the people, these constitutionalists were at the same time the most aggressive agents in imposing state-building projects on local communities. Missing from their thinking was an understanding of the virtues of "limited government" (Chapter Two). Acting on the discourse of rights, the constitutionalists of Sichuan took over the Chuan-Han Railway Company, but ended up exacting even more taxes from the common people (Chapter Three). Legitimized by the late Qing constitutional reform and using the same discourse of rights, they strove to be the real power holders in the newly

enhanced state. Via provincial assembly debates, they obtained both a solid organizational foundation and a political reputation that was unmatched by any other group (Chapter Four).

Chapters Five, Six, and Seven investigate the experience of the 1911 Revolution in Sichuan. Chapter Five scrutinizes the rhetoric created by the Sichuan constitutionalists as they took their struggle to the streets. By deploying political concepts like the rights of the nation, constitutionalism, and the rights of the people, and by creating a common purpose "to protect the railway and break the treaty," the movement leaders drew ordinary people into collective action. Combining a new political repertoire with old cultural symbols, they effectively mobilized people from different walks of life against powerful opponents. Chapter Six analyzes the mechanisms by which the movement spread beyond the provincial capital and throughout the entire province. Chapter Seven chronicles the expansion and division of the revolution. During the revolution, the newly crafted political culture with rights at its core was practiced by a large group of activists; this lent the revolution strength and legitimacy.

Chapter Eight explores the end of the revolution. In Sichuan, the emergence of popular sovereignty as a new source of power created opportunities for nonactivists to join the revolution and control its politics. This chapter suggests that

it was precisely the valorization of the people and the public opinion that prevented the creation of a stable constitutional order. The Conclusion evaluates the long-term impact of the revolution. Marking the rise of a new political consciousness, thousands of men and women gained firsthand experience in the public arena: they talked, read, and listened in new ways; they voted, protested, and joined political parties. After 1911, the old, imperial political culture was abandoned in favor of a popular republicanism in which elected assemblymen, students, intellectuals, and other members of society collaborated and competed in creating a new Chinese nation. The 1911 Revolution inaugurated China's modern era: it was through this revolution that modern Chinese politics came into being.