

# Introduction: Interpreting Chinese Modernity, 1900–1950

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One of the most active fields of academic research in recent years concerns the history of modern China, especially China's experience with modernity during the first half of the twentieth century. From a modest start in the 1970s, with a relatively small number of researchers working on a limited range of topics, the field has grown exponentially over the past two decades to encompass more than a dozen active research centers, scores of doctoral students, several academic journals, numerous research workshops and conferences, a large number of collaborative projects with scholars based in China, and an international network of researchers who bring to the field a diversity of perspectives.<sup>1</sup>

Several factors contribute to the extraordinary concentration of scholarly interest and energy focused on this period. With Deng Xiaoping's policies of modernization and the reopening of China to the West after 1979, scholars have gained, for the first time since the 1940s, significant access to archival materials and library collections on the Chinese mainland. These collections range from central government archives (the Number Two State Historical Archives in Nanjing), provincial and municipal papers (the Shanghai Municipal Archives and the Sichuan Provincial Archives, for example), and local county holdings (the Baxian Archives in Sichuan and the Wujiang Archives in Jiangsu) to materials held at research institutions, labor unions, factories, financial institutions, film studios, writers' associations, schools, colleges, universities, libraries, Communist Party branches, military headquarters, museums, and local history bureaus. In addition, published collections of newspapers, periodicals, memoirs, biographies, letters, diaries, and photographs are available, along with films, documentaries, and the results of oral history projects. A growing number of Western researchers travel to China to visit libraries and archives, to carry out interviews, and to conduct fieldwork. Chinese custodians of source materials, meanwhile, have enhanced the availability of sources not only by reproducing them using copying machines and

printing presses but also by storing them on microfilm and posting them on the Internet. The wealth of information, the richness of research experience, and the dynamics of interaction with Chinese intellectuals have combined to permit the exploration of a much broader range of modern historical topics from fresher perspectives than ever before.

A second source of intellectual energy comes from recent developments in social science theories and cultural studies, especially in the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, and literature. Until fairly recently, Chinese historical research in the United States tended to be dominated by a Weberian sociological conception as interpreted by Talcott Parsons and his followers. Scholars influenced by this conception of social change paid special attention to the study of late imperial Chinese politics and institutions, and their work was by and large characterized by a functional and structural approach to historical problems. These research projects, inspired largely by Max Weber's seminal text *The Religion of China*, have gone a long way toward explaining long-term institutional features of Chinese society. They have also contributed enormously to a practical understanding of how the late imperial Chinese political system "worked." The functional approach, as it deals with social categories rather than individuals, tends to marginalize the import of human agency and overlook factors of contingency. Not only were models of rationality constructed at the expense of a more supple and sophisticated appreciation of culture, but much of the analysis was predicated upon a linear conception of universal historical progress.

These characteristics have come under sharp review in recent years, as China scholars gained exposure to a broad range of new writings in the social sciences and humanities. The sources of inspiration ranged from Foucault, Bourdieu, Barthes, de Certeau, Ricoeur, and Habermas to Anderson, Gellner, Said, Chatterjee, and Jameson, among others. The rise of new sensitivities led to the problematization of new issues as well as the reconceptualization of old ones. It also led to a critical reflection on some of the unexamined assumptions embedded in the intellectual frameworks of an earlier time.

The availability of source materials and the development of social science theories did not in themselves, of course, lead to the articulation of a new research agenda. For years, scholarly interest regarding the first half of twentieth-century China had been guided by a desire to explain the rise of the Chinese Communist movement and the founding of the People's Republic in 1949. The explanations provided tend to be informed by both an unquestioning acceptance of a centralized, hierarchically arranged, and unified political system—*Da yitong* (grand unification)—as the normative imperative of the Chinese world order and a placement of the Chinese nation-state as the implied subject in a linear scheme of historical evolution. This leads, on the one hand, to a narrative convention that treats the first half of the century as a transient period between the fall of the Qing and the creation of the People's Republic and, on the other, to an interpretive understanding of modern Chinese history via the lens of "stages of revolu-

tion” that culminated in the resurrection of a centralized political authority in Beijing nearly four decades after the fall of the imperial government.<sup>2</sup>

The revolutionary paradigm of modern Chinese history was certainly not without earlier detractors.<sup>3</sup> In the late 1980s, especially in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square Incident in June 1989, the paradigm became a focus of critical review and radical reconceptualization. Few scholars these days would continue to embrace the Chinese Communist revolution as the key to a structural solution to all of China’s problems in modern times. In response to the profound changes taking place in the Chinese world, many have turned their attention to a new set of research problems that range from urban society, civic politics, migrant laborers, and income disparity to business practices, legal culture, technology transfer, and global capitalism, all set against the backdrop of a reevaluation of China’s encounter with the modern West. Furthermore, as research contacts have increased between scholarly communities in and outside China, Western and Chinese scholars become fellow participants in debates over a broad range of historical issues that promise to radically revise our earlier understanding of fundamental questions such as the nature of Chinese revolution, the promises of Chinese modernity, and the dynamics of Sino-Western interaction.

Two general trends deserve special attention in this regard. Instead of a focus exclusively on a territorially bounded “China” that manifested itself through the institutionalized means of a centralized state, there now emerges in scholarly conception a view of a culturally defined Chinese universe with negotiated boundaries, in which the attributes of “Chineseness” are not culturally predetermined and immutable, but are the products of an ongoing historical process of nation building dating back to the recent past. And, instead of an unqualified acceptance of a linear conception of progress through historical time, there has now developed in scholarly approaches a heightened sensitivity to the differential attributes of a variety of spatial domains and to a multiplicity of historical subjects in the discourse of Chinese modernity. Instead of grand narratives and comprehensive explanations, scholars break down conventional divisions, such as those separating the Nationalist from the Communist era, and examine structural tension, spatial fragmentation, temporal duality, and unintended consequences, along with unsuspected links of continuity. While attention to China’s quest for wealth and power—the birth of the Chinese nation and the rise of the modern state—remains high on the scholarly agenda, there has developed, at the same time, a critical approach to structures of authority and the patterns of material culture in individual lives on an everyday basis.

Each essay in this volume represents an effort to treat Chinese experience in the first half of the twentieth century in a new way.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the volume highlights the city and the nation as the twin loci for the construction of a Chinese modernity. There is a growing literature on the urban culture and commerce in Shanghai in recent years, which has laid the foundation of scholarly understanding of the Chinese modern.<sup>5</sup> The essays in this volume, in contrast, go beyond a focused

examination of Shanghai to engage the issue of urban network and civic culture in Republican China. They recount the politics of the Westernized educated professionals, along with the transnational orientation of an emerging bourgeois class, and draw attention to the transformative capacity of the modernizing state as well as the expanding new business enterprise.

What, then, becomes of the self and the individual in the context of Chinese modernity? Beyond the cosmopolitan flair and the professional finish, what does it mean to be Chinese under the discipline of the new state and emerging economy, with their open border and industrializing technology? How did the individual fare in a century of violence and mobilization, war and revolution? Did the rise of the city and the nation, in the final analysis, set the condition for an epistemic shift in established systems of knowledge and power, in discourse as well as in institutions? How did patriotism and consumerism, for example, conjoin to rearrange social relationships and undermine patriarchal authority?

The essays collected here each stem from larger projects with their own integrity. But when read as a collection, they reveal points of convergence that lie at a deeper level; these points become clear as we approach the essays as both a dialogue among themselves and a set of revisions against conventional wisdom. The volume, revolving around discussions of the city and the nation, raises questions about the condition of the modern Chinese self in a rapidly changing society. The goal of this introductory essay is not, then, merely to present a synopsis of individual essays, but also to offer an interpretive reading of all the pieces together. The objective is to help highlight the connections among these diverse projects, as well as to stimulate reflection upon both the sum and the parts as we sketch the contour of Chinese modernity.

## THE CITY AND THE MODERN

In his interpretive reading of the Shanghai publishing culture in the opening chapter of this volume, Leo Lee tackles the problematic of Chinese modernity. He examines the production and consumption of print culture in Shanghai from the late Qing through the 1930s, and identifies a mode of urban modernity at the popular level that linked the project of intellectual enlightenment to the rise of a new style of urban life.

It was in Shanghai, Lee argues, that Chinese modernity was born. This modernity was the product of a print culture launched in the first decades of the century by a handful of Westernized publishing houses. The new publishers sought to call into being a new Chinese nation at the same time as they defined a new reading public. Propelled by the wheels of commerce, this print-mediated modernity was subsequently transformed into a popular culture of images and styles that, according to Lee, “do not necessarily enter into the depth of thought but nevertheless conjure up a collective imaginary” in the visual culture and surface glamour of urban life. Shanghai modernity thus connected an elitist project of enlighten-

ment with a populist commodification and consumption of images of a Westernized cosmopolitan style of life. The publishing industry and the printing technology that facilitated the education of a new citizenship thus simultaneously served the goals of a new urban consumerism.

Shanghai modernity, by Lee's descriptive analysis, was operative on at least two different levels. It encompassed, as the publishing enterprises of the Commercial Press suggest, a conscious effort by an emerging class of professional writers, editors, publishers, and translators—cultural mediators and interpreters in a broad sense—to map out a new system of intellectual categorization and construct a new genealogy of knowledge. This project of enlightenment was the product of complex dynamics of cultural encounters between China and the modern West. It was instrumental, within the Chinese context, both in the opening up of the spatial horizon that let in the outside world and in the celebration of a Western-engineered material culture of machines, gramophones, moving pictures, neon lights, steamboats, trains, automated vehicles, and telegraphs—the energy, dynamism, light, and power of *sheng, guang, dian, hua* that concretely altered everyday experiences with time and space.

A second dimension of Shanghai modernity concerns, in Lee's analysis, the collective surfaces and the semiotics of daily life—the daily practices that became a desired way of life for a growing number of urbanites in the 1930s. Modernity, in this sense, was epitomized by the commercially produced images of modern women that adorned, for example, the cover pages of pictorial magazines such as *Liangyou*. The open circulation and public display of these images, often based on photographs of real individuals, featured realism as well as glamour. These women, shown to combine classic charm with a Westernized touch and depicted in a variety of styles of clothing, further introduced into daily life a dress-consciousness that was indexed, Lee observes, to a functional division of domestic versus public spaces. The commodification of the female images not only was part of a larger commodification of daily practices that extended to a consciousness of interior decoration and furniture but was the most tangible expression of modernity as consumerism.

Modernity at this collective, popular level, as Lee shows, did not necessarily have much to do with ideas, knowledge, reflection, or understanding. As the product of the commercial packaging of a whole way of life (whether concerning the rise of the nuclear family, the discovery of childhood, the attention to personal hygiene, the near obsession with individual well-being, or the renegotiation of gender boundaries between men and women), these mechanically reproducible images were not only the medium of advertising but also themselves products of a commercialized print culture for visual entertainment.

Commerce and commercialization do not in themselves, one might argue, produce conditions of modernity; otherwise we might be obliged to discover modernity in the urban culture of, say, Kaifeng and Hangzhou during the Song dynasty. Nor is modernity simply a function of enlightenment, whether in the form of a re-

categorization of knowledge, the refashioning of women, the redistribution of cultural authority, the reconstitution of social space, or the rearrangement of everyday life. Significant as these changes were, radical reorganizations of knowledge were not without precedents, such as during the coming of Buddhism in the fifth century. But, in Lee's presentation, early-twentieth-century Chinese modernity did break new ground, precisely insofar as it blurred the distinctions between the elitist and the popular, the reflective and the unself-conscious. "Enlightenment" in this sense was, to be sure, commodified and promoted for a profit. Commercial imperatives, meanwhile, became the engine propelling the rise of a new culture. Shanghai modernity thus went well beyond the pet projects and cultural defiance of a handful of intellectuals to become a materially based way of life with its own logic and economy.

In his discussion of Shanghai modernity, Lee emphatically rejects the conventional bifurcation that opposes "tradition" and "modernity." Instead, he sees "tradition within modernity" and points to the poster calendars of the 1930s as tangible artifacts of this modernity. Two sets of time markers—Chinese and Western, lunar and solar, traditional and modern—invariably came together on Shanghai poster calendars of this period. The coexistence of the dual marking systems suggests how a modern scheme of temporal organization has been inscribed on the traditional and vice versa. Even as the Shanghai urbanites timed their comings and goings to the ticking of the mechanical clock, they also punctuated their seasonal temporal rhythm with the observation of religious festivals and communal holidays. Time was simultaneously "emptied," with the value of each unit of time seen as being equal to the others in a commodified scheme of exchange, and "charged," with no two moments endowed with the same significance derived from custom and faith. Chinese modernity, in Lee's conclusion, was far from a simple break with the Chinese past.

To sum up, several points stand out in Lee's characterization of Chinese modernity. First of all, it was embedded in an urban-based print culture responsive to the logic of the marketplace. Furthermore, it was by no means exclusive of a continued involvement with the Chinese past, either in content or in form. It was tangible in its celebration of a new form of material culture—the utility rather than the rationality of science and technology. It was about a new scheme of demarcation of space, private as well as public, and a new coding system of time, socially as well as culturally. Finally, it was the product of a commodified culture of consumption that had profoundly changed the semiotics of everyday practices at the popular level.

The full revisionist implication of Lee's approach is thrown into sharp relief once it is set against the established historiography on the May Fourth Movement, even though Lee himself does not engage in this comparison. The May Fourth Movement, in this established view, has often been presented as a moment of cultural iconoclasm and intellectual enlightenment.<sup>6</sup> It has often served, in historical writings produced in English as well as in Chinese, as the point of initiation in a

narrative convention that links this unprecedented “cultural revolution” to the revolutionary politics of the succeeding half century. For decades, textbooks have taught that the May Fourth Movement, with its unqualified acceptance of Western values of science and democracy and its commitment to political activism, ushered in Chinese modernity.

By naming Shanghai instead of Beijing as the birthplace of a new culture and by focusing on styles and images instead of ideas and ideologies, Lee has outlined an alternative to the conventional view of Chinese modernity. Implicit in his approach is the argument that modernity was about business rather than politics, the quest for a good life rather than a just society, the transformative capacity of private enterprises rather than collective action. Modernity came into being not by the committed break with the past effected by a handful of the awakened mobilizing themselves for revolutionary politics, but as the sum total of the daily practices by ordinary people going about their business as publishers and readers, advertisers and consumers, innovators and entrepreneurs, and so forth. Modernity was about the material transformation of everyday life for the hundreds of thousands, rather than the organizational mobilization of an elitist few for a well-articulated cause.

Lee’s implicit critique of an interpretive tradition that privileged the political over the economic, the ideological over the imagined, as the agents of Chinese modernity is further developed in chapter 2 by Sherman Cochran, who offers a close examination of the marketing and advertising practices of the new drug business of Huang Chujiu (1872–1931), the founder of Shanghai’s Great China-France Drug Store and a leader of the city’s New Medicine Trade Association.

Huang was a resourceful entrepreneur and a self-made man who built one of Shanghai’s largest new medicine businesses from scratch. His two leading products, Ailuo Brain Tonic and Human Elixir, were both indigenous formulas that pretended to be imports. The drugs offered unproven medicinal benefits. Huang promoted them nonetheless as inspired, cutting-edge Western cures for age-old Chinese ailments and built a major enterprise out of their sale on the basis of marketing prowess. He put together a distribution system featuring scores of franchised outlets in central and south China, and promoted sales with vigorous advertising campaigns, both in print and on the radio. His advertising team churned out tens of thousands of calendar posters featuring close-ups of modernized city women who nonetheless maintained traditional poses of modesty and compliance. These poster images of “beauties” (*meiren*) followed the set formulas masterminded by a handful of artisan painters (e.g., Zheng Mantuo and Hang Zhiying) and were routinely executed with minor variations by a hired team of studio painters. The machine-reproduced copies of these drawings were then liberally distributed throughout middle Yangzi townships and cities. With the relentless push of their merchandising operations, Cochran shows, private entrepreneurs such as Huang Chujiu contributed significantly to the transformation of the visual culture at a popular level that reached well beyond Shanghai’s urban boundaries.

Cochran's essay raises important questions about the outer reach of Shanghai's commercialized culture of modernity. What, for instance, was its capacity either to transform or form the foundation of a whole way of life beyond the city? What about the urban-rural dichotomy and the socioeconomic gap between the coastal cities and the inland villages, so well developed in left-wing Chinese social criticisms of the 1930s that they were accepted as incontestable points in subsequent Chinese historiography? Cochran's essay strongly implies that these issues deserve a careful reexamination.

While Cochran analyzes the transformative dynamics of Shanghai and challenges the rigidity of the rural-urban dichotomy, in chapter 3 David Strand reconsiders the major attributes of modern Chinese cities and explores the making of an urban China. What, Strand asks, was the meaning of the "urban" in places beyond Shanghai? Was there an urban network in Republican China that facilitated the flow among cities? Strand draws attention to Lanzhou, the northwestern center of camel-caravan trade and the spot marking the geographical center of China. By the 1930s, Lanzhou was linked to Shanghai by cross-continental railroads that cut across several regions and connected other major stops, including Nanjing, Guangzhou, Beijing, and Wuhan. The railroad lines, along with telegraph wires, printed media, and paper currency, helped to engender a heightened sense of connection among cities and between urban China and the rest of the country. With these means of communication in place, separate cities supplied a common perspective derived from interactive and circulating publics, movements, markets, and models of reform.

But even as Lanzhou's prosperity showed its ties to distant markets and its dependency on the regional as well as the national economy, there was, Strand argues, no national urban network that patterned itself after a hierarchy. What the material connections and mobility among the cities had promoted was, first of all, a mental picture rather than a physical reality of city life as one of continuous and simultaneous activity. The "conscious," "systematic" use of urban China referred, therefore, less to a realized vision and more to a cultural or polemical artifact of processes that were no doubt diffuse and uneven. There was, on the one hand, metropolitan Shanghai, busily keeping pace with other urban centers around the world. There were, on the other hand, cities that revealed a "counterfeit localism" as they projected the appearance of keeping up with the coastal urban complex. Too many factors, ranging from a reality of unevenness imposed by political upheaval, staggered treaty-port openings, and the vagaries of global economic change to the progressive modernization of transport, intervened to permit the configuration of a hierarchically patterned urban system within the national boundary.

Strand, then, departs from the Skinnerian model of an urban hierarchy of late imperial Chinese cities. He problematizes the conventional bifurcation of the local versus the global and the rural versus the urban, and redefines the cities as nodal points of an ongoing relationship of exchange—of reciprocal patterns of interaction involving merchandise, population, images, and ideas.



Modernity in Strand's conception is not, however, only about a cosmopolitan way of life or a technology-powered form of material culture that distanced the country from the city. It is also about the organizational power of the state and the technology of control. The private entrepreneurs and the urban consumers described by Lee and Cochran shared time and space with a municipal administration of bureaucrats and technocrats, engineers and planners, who take center stage in Strand's discussion. Strand's essay thus not only raises new questions about the role of the modernizing city in modern Chinese politics—the classic issue that had concerned Weber in a different context—but also draws attention to questions of power, technology, and the darker side of modernity.

In his earlier work Strand has shown that the late imperial Chinese city “supplied a tradition of self-management of urban society and a sense of balance between state and society that encouraged cost-effective approaches to urban problems.” After the turn of the century, amid the gathering social crises, modernity “provided an impulse to mobilize and deploy resources beyond the limits imposed or assumed by the old urban order and in ways that were both creative and destructive.”<sup>7</sup> All three sectors of municipal politics—the city administration, the trade and professional associations, and the urban labor force—were profoundly affected by this new condition. The workers discovered a new form of power through populist movements, while the urban professionals gained new means to facilitate the formation of social networks. Among the municipal administrators, meanwhile, there emerged in the 1920s and 1930s a statist ideology that looked toward bureaucratic initiatives and technological means to regulate public life and to reform urban society. This new ideology was accompanied by the creation of new institutions that enabled such changes to take place from above.

The central theme of Republican civic politics, in Strand's view, was thus not the democratization of municipal polity but the rise of municipal administrative absolutism. The rise of the modern city could not have failed to assert an overall liberalizing effect on Chinese political system. However, the liberalization went only so far, as municipal administrators resisted central government authority and strove to operate with a higher degree of municipal autonomy. The rise of the city thus led to a decentralization of political power. But while urban political participation and state building both picked up momentum in the first half of the century, Strand believes the development of electoral institutions and representative assemblies lagged behind after the early republic. In fact, the peak of institutional commitment to elections and assemblies in Shanghai may have come in 1909 under Qing reformers. The Republican trend in municipal governance, in contrast to that of the late Qing, was toward a less accountable, more authoritarian administration. If there were any particular trajectories in modern Chinese political life to be spoken of, they surely did not follow a pattern of linear progression, nor did they ever take the form of democratic liberalization of civic politics.

Strand's essay defines the nature of Republican polity from the perspective of municipal governance. In chapter 4, which continues the discussion of technology

and organization in modern politics, William Kirby approaches this question by examining the very nature of the Nationalist party-state. The landscapes outlined and the sources consulted differ significantly between these two essays, which nonetheless converge on the common theme of the rise of a statist ideology driven by technology.

In a direct challenge to one of the most basic assumptions in the revolutionary paradigm, Kirby argues that in the longer perspective of a larger history, the twentieth century is better understood as a century of global industrialization rather than permanent revolution, of international technology rather than international communism, of the “Tekhintern” rather than the Comintern. In the case of China, the early Republican years witnessed the birth of a transformative Chinese state that would be the leading agent of industrialization.<sup>8</sup> In policies as well as in political vision, technology and industrialization were at the heart of the nation-building strategy of the Nationalist government during the critical decade of relative peace, 1928–1937. The young Chinese Republic, following an ambitious blueprint of “national reconstruction” laid down by its revolutionary leader Sun Yat-sen, sought to erect a state-of-the-art modern national capital, electrify the country, dam the Three Gorges, tie the country together in networks of railroads, motor roads, and even air routes, and build overnight China’s heavy industries. It emphasized the nurturing of a pool of technocratic talent. Driven by a self-imposed expectation to guide and manage the nation’s industrial transformation “scientifically,” it also organized its governmental agencies, allocated its economic resources, set its educational agendas, and forged its collaborative relationships with advanced industrial nations accordingly, all on the basis of the nation-building tasks thus defined.

Despite the right-wing social effects of many of its policies, the Nationalist government, according to Kirby, was thus the first modernizing Chinese state to plot out the integrated economic and industrial development of a reunified China, and was the institutional and even ideological forerunner of its socialist successor, which later featured the world’s largest Soviet-style economic bureaucracy. The Nationalists, to be sure, observed a form of “mixed economy” in public and private ownership of industrial projects. They also used the state industrial planning agencies more for bureaucratic regulating, technological advising, resource allocation, and deal-making than for downright state ownership.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, they shared with their Communist foes and successors comparable practices in large areas of economic and industrial policy, ranging from planning, standardizing, engineering, zoning, funding, and allocating to technology transfer and control over joint enterprises. Both regimes placed a high priority on China’s industrial-military self-sufficiency and displayed a firm determination to achieve this goal as soon as possible.

The prime movers of this Republican vision of industrial modernity were neither ideologues nor activists but engineers and bureaucrats of elite background and advanced Western technological training. These men’s political standing and work conditions, Kirby shows, were far more dramatically affected by the cen-

ture's warfare—especially the wartime economy of control—than the turmoil of the socialist revolution. The Chinese Engineering Association, which had insisted on a certain professional autonomy and self-regulation in the earlier years of the Republic, became progressively nationalistic and reliant upon the state as the century wore on. The National Resources Commission, one of the largest state employers of engineering experts, emerged from the Sino-Japanese War serving the immediate interest of the state leadership, although it became, at the same time, a highly professional, bureaucratized, and politically insulated entity. The commission managed to steer clear of ideological bickering over its social agenda, but it was seldom ever really above the fray in bureaucratic infighting. Its technocratic claim and unchallengeable expertise nonetheless assured the strength and endurance of this elite bureaucratic agency over two decades—straddling the birth of “New China” in 1949 that has so often been seen as such a decisive divide between autocratic reaction and revolutionary breakthrough.

Several key points inform Kirby's overall argument, which lays the foundation of a new interpretive framework. First, it locates the sources of China's long-term transformative capacity in visions of industrial modernity rather than in strategies of socialist revolution. It sees continuous state formation and nation building, rather than continuous revolution, as the more significant trends in twentieth-century Chinese political history. It draws attention to policies and institutions rather than politics and movements, and highlights the role of total warfare rather than total revolution as the agency of enduring social change. Above all, it challenges a simpleminded opposition between the Nationalists and the Communists, thereby sketching the outlines of an alternative historical narrative that breaks the constraints of the revolutionary chronology.

Kirby and Strand both draw attention to a modernizing elite that did little to liberalize China's political system. By the intellectual tenets of the 1930s, science and politics were not expected to mix. Indeed, it was almost imperative for the Western-educated technical bureaucrats of the National Resources Commission to detach themselves from political concerns in order to safeguard the “purity” of the agency's technical expertise and scientific rationality.

But the politics of these newly emergent urban entrepreneurs and professionals was clearly a factor of critical importance in Republican politics. Richard Madsen in chapter 5 and Helen Siu in chapter 6 each take up this same question from a different set of perspectives.

Madsen's essay, which devotes considerable attention to French Jesuit missionary activities in north China, considers the educational formation of a key sector of Tianjin's industrial and commercial elite—those individuals of affluent family background who acquired their technical training in engineering and business in the Catholic Gong Shang College (*L'Institut des Hautes Etudes Industrielles et Commerciales de Tientsin*).

The French Catholic founders of Gong Shang College, according to Madsen, had two goals in mind for the school: to train French-speaking Chinese managers

and engineers for French businesses in China and to serve as “the best agent of French propaganda in China.” However, they were soon forced by changing circumstances to retreat from these objectives—so much so as to redefine, time and again, what it meant for the school to be either “Catholic” or “French.” A growing number of non-Catholics within the student body ensured the development of a secular, Chinese campus culture in extracurricular activities that was markedly patriotic. The school meanwhile retained a hierarchical, clerically controlled quality that, as it demanded deference and docility, reflected the organizational characteristics of the Catholic Church and discouraged student activism. Students who came to Gong Shang College in the 1930s, Madsen observes, appeared to be mostly those willing to submit to such hierarchical Jesuit attitudes. This produced an apolitical school atmosphere in a decade of warm-blooded student nationalism elsewhere in north China, where students of Qinghua, Beida, and Nankai mobilized to demand immediate armed resistance against the Japanese by the Nationalist government.<sup>10</sup>

It came as no surprise, then, that the Jesuits of Gong Shang College were quick to collaborate with the Japanese once the War of Resistance broke out. Most of the students went along with it, and Gong Shang alumni came to occupy key positions in Tianjin’s financial, industrial, and commercial enterprises in the 1940s. The implications are clear: professional training under the auspices of the French Jesuits had prepared middle-class Chinese youth well for positions in the ranks of the city’s businesses and industries. Their exposure to a Western curriculum, however, did little to either prepare them for active engagement in public affairs or challenge old-fashioned regard for hierarchy and community. Indeed, Jesuit respect for church hierarchy buttressed rather than vitiated established Confucian habits vis-à-vis paternalistic authority, communal bonds, and social subordination.

The merchants of the Pearl River delta were no more engaged in Republican politics than Tianjin professional elites, says Siu, although for a different reason. Siu examines historical records concerning merchant groups in the delta in the Ming and Qing and concludes that leading merchants in those years “were able to create vigorous dialogues with the state by engaging in a language of orthodoxy. The dialogues took place in the local arenas of lineage, temple, guild, and academy.” Siu takes issue with the stereotypical characterization of the merchants as apolitical, and she presents them as critical linchpins in communications between the country and the city, between the center, the region, and the locale. As adherents of orthodox cultural practices and as participants in rituals as well as festivals in late imperial China, the merchants mediated between the urban-centered political culture of the imperial bureaucracy and the village-based popular practices of the locale. They were cosmopolitan in cultural outlook and political visions within the Chinese context.

Things changed, however, after 1900. On the margins of the delta and from the fringes of the rural society there emerged a class of local bosses who did not mind realizing their goals through the use of brute force and sheer violence. This took

place against the backdrop of the rise of regional militarism. In the early years of the century, the rule of Confucian bureaucrats gave way to that of modernized militarists, and the warlords took charge of the provincial capitals. The contention among rival militarists signaled the disintegration of the old Chinese empire and undercut the merchant elite's ability to maintain its ties to the rural community. The urban-based merchants, who had been busily forming business ties that crisscrossed the South China Sea, were able, meanwhile, to reach out to a cultural horizon that was cosmopolitan in a new and different way.

Mercantile cultural cosmopolitanism of maritime China, in Siu's analysis, rose in tandem with the decline of the sovereign power of the old continental empire. The Republican merchants in the Pearl River delta, unlike their Ming and Qing predecessors, were no longer facilitators of communications up and down the imperial hierarchy via orthodox cultural practices. They became, instead, vectors of new cultural norms as well as agents of differential rates of social change. They were drawn to the Nationalist government and local society, Siu observes, in vastly different but equally intense ways. The challenge that they faced in the twentieth century was thus in part a challenge to construct a new language of the nation-state that accommodated merchant interests, and to create alternative territorial bonds that attached local regions to the Republican state. Neither set of tasks, however, was satisfactorily accomplished. Republican merchants thus found themselves ungrounded in the Chinese political universe despite their cultural cosmopolitanism.

The essays discussed above focus our attention on the activities of a broad spectrum of the urban educated across the country. These included the publishers and advertisers (Lee), the private entrepreneurs and consumers (Cochran), the municipal planners and administrators (Strand), the engineers and bureaucrats (Kirby), the managerial and industrial experts (Madsen), and the mercantile elites (Siu). These individuals built railroads and industries, developed commercial networks, transformed styles and mentality, planned cities, and dreamt up a modernized Chinese nation.

Their daily activities, whether at work or at home, transformed the physical landscape, the material foundation, the institutional framework, and the technological arrangement of modern Chinese lives. Yet with the exception perhaps of the municipal administrators mentioned in Strand's essay, few of these elites appeared to have developed strong commitments; nor did they appear to have taken it upon themselves to articulate a new set of social or cultural values.

This is certainly not to suggest that urban-educated Chinese in the Republican years were simply apolitical or morally unconcerned. It does, however, raise questions about culture and politics in the context of Chinese modernity. Specifically, Madsen's essay notes that the acquisition of modern technical knowledge bore little relevance in challenging the authoritarian and hierarchical nature of Chinese social relationships. Similarly, Strand's essay suggests that blueprints of industrial modernity facilitated rather than discouraged the rise of a municipal form of administrative absolutism. Kirby's essay hardly encourages the hope that highly

placed American-trained technocrats in the Nationalist government would necessarily have a liberalizing impact upon Republican political life. Nor do the essays by Lee, Siu, and Cochran suggest connections between commercial practices and the regeneration of values, especially liberal democratic values, despite all the freedom and sophistication that accompanied the flow of capital and goods. What, then, was the political significance of the emergence of an urban professional class of technocrats and managers against the backdrop of a culture of consumerism? In what way did the rise of the cities interact with the constitution of the modern Chinese nation-state?

### THE NATION AND THE SELF

Many have noted the authoritarian and hierarchical character of Chinese social relationships. Such characteristics have often been traced to the Confucian political order of late imperial days. The political scientist Lucian Pye, for instance, holds the view that in the Chinese mentality there was special sensitivity to the importance of authority, which was evidenced in familial as well as political relationships.<sup>11</sup> The literary critic Fredric Jameson observes that in Chinese texts, just as in other Third World texts, “the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society.” But unlike Pye, Jameson does not see this as the product of Chinese cultural traits. He attributes it instead to the oppositional relationships between the First and Third Worlds.<sup>12</sup> The fusion of individual experience with that of the nation-state and an absence of a distinct sense of the self nonetheless remain key characteristics of modern Chinese intellectual identity.

In his essay reexamining the political and philosophical ideas of Zhang Taiyan, Wang Hui takes on the question of the place of the individual in modern Chinese political thinking. Wang focuses on the crucial period between 1906 and 1908, when many of Zhang’s most influential ideas—such as his call for a Han ethnic revolution against the Manchus and his unique brand of ethnically based modern Chinese nationalism—were taking shape. Wang goes about his task through a close analysis of the discursive mode in Zhang’s writings and argues that Zhang’s affirmation of the individual was the product of a process of negative reasoning. It stemmed from his rejection of the ontological reality of collective entities such as the “nation,” the “state,” and the “people,” all seen as constructs in abstraction. Furthermore, the autonomy of the individual was seen as actualizing itself not in terms of inalienable rights but in terms of an ability to stand apart and say no—to resist collective demands on individual allegiance as misplaced, denounce universal principles as partial, reject the imperatives of social norms as coercive, and place the individual above and beyond the collectivity.

Implicit in Zhang’s rejection of the collectivity, Wang Hui suggests, was thus a much broader rejection of the ontological assumptions and epistemological positions that naturalized the rise of nation-states as a universal historical process for

all people. In his effort to affirm the absolute existence of the individual, Zhang had thus rejected, according to Wang, the scientism of material determinism and universal law, on the one hand, and the ethic of evolutionary progress and linear historical time, on the other. Zhang's affirmation of the individuated subject—which was not the “self” in a corporal, material sense but a participant in a collective stream of subjectivity—was accomplished ultimately with the help of Buddhist metaphysics that denied the ontological reality of the self. In the final analysis, Zhang's concept of the individual was intended as both a substitute and an opposition to rival subjects such as the “public” and the “community” in a Chinese discourse of modernity. In its rejection of an evolutionary scheme of time, it was opposed to power as well as modernity. By rescuing the individuated subject from the materially determined collectivity, Zhang had sought, according to Wang, to reestablish a foundation of moral choices and action.

Wang's objective in this essay, however, was not to rewrite intellectual history so that Zhang could be presented as a champion of indigenous Chinese notions about the absolute autonomy of the individual. On the contrary, Wang goes on to show that Zhang's individuated self was freed from the materially determined collectivity only to be subsumed in a broader stream of subjectivity. Zhang's ultimate concern did not, according to Wang, rest either with issues of metaphysics or individuality, but with the revolutionary politics of the late Qing. To the extent that his treatises on Buddhism were meant to supplement his political pronouncements, his espousal of the concept of the individual was delimited, conversely, by the discursive practices that defined the burning political issues of his day.

Zhang's concept of the absolute autonomy of the individual, Wang Hui argues, thus did not necessarily exhaust the full logical potential of the notion. Instead of a three-way consideration of relationships among self, society, and the nation-state, Zhang followed a binary logic that opposed the individual exclusively against the nation-state. This particular positioning of the self, Wang believes, was a direct result of Zhang's intellectual rivalry with his political opponents, chiefly Yan Fu and Liang Qichao. The latter, as they sought the wealth and power of the Chinese nation, had accepted the political legitimacy of the Qing state. They pressed for reform rather than revolution, and were willing to strengthen the political center at the expense of the locale, despite the fact that the ruling house was ethnically Manchu. The debates between Zhang and Liang were thus not only debates over fundamental philosophical principles but also manifestations of tangible political struggles between the Constitutionalists (Liang) and the Revolutionaries (Zhang). It was a contest between two different strategies of mobilization: a top-down model that would enhance the state's capacity to extract resources and tighten up control, and a bottom-up model that would call into being, in the process of revolutionary change, the power of the people consisting of a multitude of individuals.

May Fourth individualism, which had played such a crucial role in the iconoclastic attack against China's cultural past, was, according to Wang Hui, different from Zhang's individualism, and the product of a different genealogy. Zhang's concept of

the individual, as it was defined in opposition to the veneration of the modern nation-state, could not enter the mainstream of May Fourth intellectual current, for the latter was, in the final analysis, patriotic and nationalistic. Nonetheless, Zhang's ideas did serve as the foundation of a new moral criticism in the new literature—especially in the works of Zhang's leading disciple, Lu Xun. Although Zhang's may seem to be the case of a lone voice and a solitary enterprise far removed from the main scenes of political action, its significance should not be understated.

But even more important, Zhang's intellectual biography speaks directly to a number of critical issues. It demonstrates, first of all, that modern Chinese acceptance of the authority of the collectivity, far from being a matter of tradition, was a relatively recent development spurred by the quest for national wealth and power. Second, it shows that this acceptance was the product of specific historical circumstances rather than essentialized cultural attributes. The binary opposition between the collectivity and the individual, between the nation-state and the individuated subject, Wang shows, followed no logical necessity, let alone cultural imperatives. It was the product not only of the political goals and intellectual tasks that Zhang had set for himself—a matter of strategic choice rather than logical necessity—but also of the linguistic constraints and discursive mode of the moment, which were themselves shaped in time.<sup>13</sup>

The implications of Wang Hui's critical and revisionist interpretive position within the current Chinese intellectual context can hardly be exaggerated. In rereading Zhang, Wang has identified, in the intellectual life of the 1900s, an alternative conception of the individual in the formation of modern Chinese identity. This discovery helps to throw into sharp relief the intellectual genealogy of the much celebrated May Fourth conception of the individual, exposing the latter's materialistically deterministic foundation and its politically coercive nature at the same time. The ontological issues raised in the essay thus help to denaturalize the primacy of the nation-state as the one and only uncontested and conceivable subject of modern Chinese history.<sup>14</sup> In that sense, the essay delivers a forceful critique of a misplaced ardor for the wealth and power of the nation-state, a willingness to sacrifice the individual for the sake of the collectivity, and a tendency to compromise the moral for the expediency of the political.

Wang Hui does not deny the authoritarian and hierarchical nature of modern Chinese social relationships. Nor does he deny that Zhang Taiyan's conception of the individual was instrumental in nature. A recognition of these characteristics serves, in fact, as a point of departure in his search for an alternative genealogy of Chinese modernity. The conclusion that he offers points to viable strategies for escaping that past.

It is worthwhile to note that the critical spirit, which informs Wang's essay, is in itself a product of China's intellectual climate in the 1980s. In the post-Cultural Revolution decade, a whole new generation of Chinese scholars and intellectuals has come forward, willing to reexamine China's revolutionary history in this century from a critical perspective.



Much of this critical reflection has resulted in an intense search for the place of the individual and the meaning of human existence in Chinese society. Wang Hui's work, along with that of many others, including the philosopher Li Zehou, the literary critic Liu Zaifu, and the Marxist thinker Wang Ruoshui, is a fine example along these lines. How the individual has fared in China's twentieth century is, of course, a function not merely of metaphysical thinking, but also of discursive practices and cultural politics. The fate of the individual in this century of war and revolution has been inextricably bound to, above all, the rise of nationalism and socialism as hegemonic discourses, to the disciplining of a modern citizenship by the power of the party-state, and to the growth of a political culture of violence that these practices have spawned.

This culture, as chapter 8 by David Wang and chapter 9 by Frederic Wakeman illustrate, has been expressed in manifold ways, ranging from a festive celebration of bloodshed in class struggles against the landlords to the citizen patriots' cult of "blood, sweat, and tears" during the War of Resistance against the Japanese. Wang and Wakeman explore this culture from different perspectives—by rereading some of the most celebrated fictional works conventionally honored in standard literary history textbooks published in post-1949 China, and by an archival reconstruction of the lives of Shanghai's proresistance assassins who set upon Chinese collaborators. These essays take us beyond the charmed circles of municipal reformers, urban professionals, ingenious entrepreneurs, and sophisticated urbanites into the minds of comrade revolutionaries and citizen patriots. They permit us a glimpse into the darker side of Chinese modernity, where the political parties and the state, with the help of print media and new technology, worked toward disciplining the masses.

David Wang's essay, which examines scenes of crime and punishment in Chinese literary works from the late Qing to the late 1940s, addresses the issue of critical intellectual stances vis-à-vis the state and outlines a literary trajectory that progressed from a representation of violence to the transformation of literature into sites of violence. Wang begins with an analysis of Liu E's turn-of-the-century novel *Lao Can's Travels*, and notes the appearance of a modern consciousness of violence and injustice in its pages. Violence and injustice sprang from where they were least suspected, in the ostensibly impartial courtroom presided over by the incorruptible judge Gang Yi. This disparity opens up a literary space that enabled the author to set up a contest between poetic justice and legal justice, displacing the latter with the former and thereby renegotiating the terms of justice and violence in real lives as well as in literary representation.

A major thrust in the writing of modern Chinese literature, Wang notes, has been this compulsion to address social justice—a "high-strung, contentious call for justice" that turned the printed pages into veritable courtrooms of public appeal. This impulse to expose wrongs and this self-assigned mission to indict injustice in China's modern literature had much to do with its moment of birth in the midst of the May Fourth Movement, Wang suggests, as well as with May Fourth propo-

nents' unrelenting assault on all traditional norms and relationships as systems of coercion.

In the 1930s, as sparks of cultural iconoclasm gave way to a full-blown ideology of socialist revolution, left-wing literary attacks on the past grew increasingly violent in imagery and imagination. Social justice became progressively fused with literary violence. Chinese literature under the auspices of leftist aesthetics, which began as a literary crusade against social injustice, evolved into a form that embraced violence.

After the outbreak of the War of Resistance, many left-wing writers joined the Chinese Communist Party in its wartime base areas in the various border regions of north and northwestern China. In the Communist capital of Yan'an, under the governance of the party, many lent their voices to the service of the Chinese Communist Party. The pen was mobilized not only to serve the politics of opposition in a war of resistance but also to launch attacks in party-led class warfare. With the transformation of the writers from critics into champions, poetic justice was subsumed by revolutionary justice.

Through a rereading of Ding Ling's *The Sun Shines over the Sanggan River*, David Wang makes his case about the total identification of the authorial voice with the grand narrative of a Communist-led socialist revolution. In the pages of Ding Ling's much celebrated contribution to the genre of revolutionary literature, class enemies were subjected to "the arbitrary will of the newly empowered," and "punishments are performed with an aim to arouse bloody festivity." Ding Ling's novel on land reform fuses the theater, the courtroom, and the site of punishment. The animal instincts exhibited by the newly empowered in this piece of fiction are shown "as a *logical* outcome rather than a momentary human reversion to the bestial." The ink, in other words, was spilled not to lament, but to demand bloodshed as a historical necessity. Modern Chinese literature in this sense has espoused the socialist revolution as a final and total solution of all the crimes and injustices that deserved punishment. It fused poetic justice with class struggle and celebrated violence as justice. As the writers blended their voices with that of the party, their writings lost the critical dimension of self-reflection.

The new revolutionary literature of the left wing, David Wang argues, ultimately facilitated the disciplining of a new citizenship by reducing the role of "the *man* of the new era" to "the role of the *woman* of the prerevolutionary era." The "hero" becomes, at best, an emasculated male—someone who earns his place in the master narrative through continuous acts of self-sacrifice, self-denial, and selfless penitence for the higher goals of the collectivity; in other words, he displays virtues conventionally gendered female rather than male. Such a hero is honored for his willingness to permit the loss of his individuality and humanity to the inexorable forces of the law of history. With protagonists such as these taking center stage, literary crusades against social injustice came to an end, and violence in modern Chinese literature was finally stabilized, Wang concludes, "in the form of self-imposed crimes and self-inflicted punishments."

The crime and punishment in Wang's essay, which tested the mettle of the revolutionary hero, were the exploitative deeds of one's class and ensuing fire and death in the purgatory of class warfare. The crime and punishment in Wakeman's essay, which explores the phenomenon of *hanjian* in the context of the War of Resistance, were fused with collaboration and resistance, and the hero, who loved his country instead of the people, fought the collaborators instead of the landlords. However, the war hero was no more a master of his own deeds in the patriotic campaigns of resistance than was the revolutionary hero in the struggles for justice, as Wakeman so aptly shows with his analysis of the discursive context of *hanjian*.

A *hanjian* in the twentieth century, Wakeman tells us, is an ethnic Chinese who had gone over to the enemy and betrayed his own people. The term combined ethnic transgression with political betrayal: it connected "ethnocultural treachery and the crossing of boundaries by collusion with foreigners," which was "linked in turn with bestiality, sexual violation, and demonic behavior." In other words, popular attacks on *hanjian* were grounded in two sets of understanding. The term suggested, first, the primacy of a communal identity that was ethnocultural, instead of socio-economic, ethical-religious, or political. Second, as it fused deeds of treachery and transgression, it blurred the distinctions between issues of citizenship and identity.

Identity, in the discursive practices centered upon the campaigns against *hanjian*, was, as Wakeman demonstrates, not only a matter of communal belonging on the basis of ethnicity but also the very foundation of one's claim to humanity. Those who had transgressed the bounds had gone beyond the pale of the civilized world and were no longer human, and thus were the rightful targets of elimination. Conversely, those who remained within the ethnic bounds not only were the cherished members of a blood brotherhood, but they could claim superior human understanding.

Chinese citizenship in this discourse of *hanjian* was, by Wakeman's analysis, thus a product of one's ethnic identity. Ethnic allegiance not only determined one's civic obligations but also functioned as a substitute for the latter. Meanwhile, to the extent that those within the ethnic bounds could claim superior human understanding, the duties of citizenship necessarily entailed a moral imperative to launch attacks on the traitors, since by committing treason the latter had forfeited their claims to humanity. "*Hanjian*," Wakeman writes, "did not deserve to be killed only because they were 'treacherous merchants' smuggling black market rice and driving up the price for decent Chinese; or because they opened up opium supply bureaus to 'poison' (*duhua*) their compatriots; or because they heedlessly 'extorted' (*souguo*) higher and higher taxes from the farmers the Japanese permitted them to govern; or because they sold out Chinese economic interests to their masters in Tokyo. They deserved to be killed just because they were *hanjian*, and that was all there was to it."

Those who performed deeds of patriotism, as they followed a logic of ethnic identity couched in terms of moral obligation, thus could hardly claim moral agency and individual autonomy. But the heroes of resistance, Wakeman argues, were products of larger forces in yet another sense.

The term *hanjian*, Wakeman shows, did not originate with the twentieth century. Its first usage can be traced back to the Song dynasty, when it described Han Chinese officials who spied for the Jurchen Jin dynasty. In the twentieth century, as a matter of discursive practice the meaning of the term did not stabilize until after the retreat of the Nationalist government from Wuhan in December 1938—in an atmosphere of loss and defeat—when many Chinese appeared to have wavered on their resolution to fight the Japanese. The Nationalists and the Communists, allies in the United Front, consciously resolved to polarize the distinction between the “traitors” and the “heroes” in an effort to mobilize popular support for armed resistance. Under the orchestration of the state and the two major political parties, resistance fighters were portrayed in the press as good heroes, while pacifists, would-be collaborators, and collaborators alike were branded as villains. This stark opposition between the heroes and the villains grew out of a willful determination to overlook the complexity and ambivalence of collaboration. The good and the evil, once separated, were then accorded sharply dichotomized treatments. “Those who continued to be traitors to the people (*minzu pantu*), who continued to act publicly as puppets or to behave clandestinely as *hanjian*, not only risked the wrath of Heaven, but they also faced public elimination by their fellow citizens.” A whole generation of young men were taught, meanwhile, not only to love their country, but also to set upon the traitors.

In a richly textured account based on the files of the Shanghai Municipal Police, Wakeman offers a close look at patriotic deeds on the streets of Shanghai as wild-eyed young men were recruited as assassins for the military intelligence service of the Nationalist government in Chongqing. There was a certain glamour to the deeds of violence and the lore of heroic assassins in popular culture on Shanghai streets, Wakeman shows. The committed killers included a destitute printer completely dependent upon relatives, a teenager unable to find a job since graduating from primary school, a waiter with a friend in the guerrillas, a laid-off clothing salesman, and a number of country folks in the city who shared an attic with bosom friends. These men gunned down, hacked open, chopped up, clubbed to death doctors, writers, journalists, financiers, industrialists, politicians—eliminating anyone suspected of dealings with the enemy. Most of these assassins also died young themselves, captured, tortured, and killed either by the Japanese military police or agents in the service of Chinese collaborators.

Even as these young men were spilling blood to defend the community’s ethnic integrity, the top leaders of the war in Chongqing, Nanjing, northern Jiangsu, and Tokyo were subtly adjusting themselves to the changing dynamics in the battlefields. The leaders struck deals and formed tactical alliances that redrew political boundaries. The firm lines drawn between the hero and the traitor, the good and the evil, Wakeman concludes, were fully subject to redefinition by expediency.<sup>15</sup>

Wang Hui’s essay, as we have seen, is a search for the standing of the individual vis-à-vis the collectivity in modern Chinese life. The essays by David Wang and Wakeman underscore, in contrast, the largely collective and authoritarian charac-

teristics in Chinese social relationships, which are seen as the products of modern discursive practices as much as inherited practices from the old. Wang and Wakeman recognize that, for the multitude who lived through this century's wars and revolutions, the constitution of the self was both a function of the possible ranges of their own actions and a matter of ontological assumptions. They sketch a social space in which not only did the "hero" depend on his opposition to the "villain" for self-definition, but heroism entailed, on the one hand, a willingness to submit to emasculation by party discipline, and, on the other, resulted in betrayal by pragmatism and political contingencies.

Not everyone, of course, strove to be a hero. Few, however, could elude the disciplining power of the hegemonic discourse. Socialist revolution and nationalist resistance, according to the analysis by Wang and Wakeman, each produced its version of a tragic hero. But modern hegemonic discourse shaped public as well as private lives, and reconfigured domestic as well as civic spaces. Both socialism and nationalism demanded undivided allegiance of all Chinese. The emergence of such discursive practices not only forcefully rearranged the distribution of symbolic resources but also—much as did the power of commodification analyzed by Leo Lee—altered the semiotics of everyday life. The modern nation-state, working through a variety of means at its disposal, not only posed a powerful challenge to all established forms of corporatist power and authority; it structured a whole system of representation and set the terms of individual self-representation. It was within this context that the traditional patriarchal system of authority, as Prasenjit Duara in chapter 10 and Paul Pickowicz in chapter 11 suggest, was significantly reconfigured in modern times. The new nationalist discourse had a large part to play not only in the lives of men but also of women.

Duara's essay, which explores the representation of women in modern Chinese nationalist discourse, examines at the same time the subversion of such discourse by the women themselves. Two very different nationalistic representations of women have emerged in China, according to Duara. On the one hand, there was the May Fourth representation of the radically anti-Confucian, antifamilial, nationalist woman, and on the other, the varieties of more conservative constructions of woman as the representative of the soul of tradition. Politically, the former was associated with the Communists, while the latter was more commonly aligned with the Nationalist and social reformers. The iconoclastic woman, liberated as she appeared to be, turned out to be a political liability: communism itself was delegitimized by its association with such representations in the 1920s and 1930s, because radical women and their behavior threatened to corrupt the inner purity of Chinese culture. By contrast, conservative women, tradition-bound as they seemed to be, were brought into the modern world and established at the center of a "new nationalist patriarchy."

Why did the political fallout from these two female representations sort itself out as it did? The answer, Duara suggests, lies in the larger question of the construction of national identity, especially the authentication of an interior space

that was stable and inviolable, in the context of modernity. Modernity, as we know it, is predicated on a sense of time that is linear and progressive, ceaselessly changing and perpetually forward-moving. For the self to recognize itself in this stream of time, it is logically imperative that there be a space of authenticity—an unchanging essence from the past that serves the necessary function as the subject of a linear history. This interior space consists of “a repeatedly reconstituted representation whose historicity is concealed by its pace of change, which is not synchronous with change in other spheres.” “All nations and societies that see themselves as subjects progressing or evolving through linear time need to constitute an ‘unchanging core’ in order to recognize themselves in their ever-changing circumstances,” according to Duara. In the case of Republican China, the aporia of having to be “of the past and also not of it” happened to overlap the spatial question about being both Eastern and Western. The result was “an imbrication between Easternness, national or cultural essence, and the space of authenticity, each functionally different, but each authorizing the other.” Since the Chinese space of authenticity had to be a space off-limits to Westernizing influence, it was necessarily constituted as the feminine, domestic, spiritual, and traditional. In the new discourse of nationalist patriarchy that subsequently emerged, women were thus “to participate as modern citizens in the public sphere of the nation, but they were also expected to personify the essence of the nation or civilization.”

Just how exactly were Chinese women supposed to personify the essence of the national tradition? This, Duara shows, was of course a matter of many pragmatic possibilities and diverse political ramifications. Leading Republican figures, from Sun Yat-sen and Wang Jingwei to Lu Xun, each had their thoughts on the subject. The critical consideration in this context, Duara notes, was how nationalist patriarchy came into being by appropriating the categories of traditional patriarchy to serve the nation. Thus a woman might be able to affirm her traditional attributes—steadfastness and compassion (qualities that Chinese men presumably did not have), hence public-mindedness and patriotism—in the new discursive context of the nation-building project.

How the categories of traditional patriarchy were appropriated to serve the purposes of the new nationalist patriarchy was examined further at close range in the context of the emergence of the Morality Society, a middle-class elite association, as it operated in Manzhouguo under Japanese sponsorship in the 1930s. An elite association closely supervised by the Japanese authorities, the Morality Society boasted a membership including top officials, merchants, and landowners at all levels of Manzhouguo society from the major cities to the subcounty townships. It was, Duara acknowledges, a *jiaohua* (moral education) agency with a strong propagandizing urge, spreading messages of peace, morality, and spiritual salvation of the world by Confucian East Asia. It countered the West, characterized as material, with an East that was moral rather than spiritual in the sectarian tradition, in part as a result of its close relation with the state. It sought no radical break with the cults of chaste widows and virtuous wives. Its middle-class patriarchal

sponsors made common cause with the Manzhouguo state by representing the family as strong, the husbands as righteous, and the wives as obedient. Women as a constituted subject were represented as repositories of the essence of tradition—of the virtues of filiality, devotion, self-sacrifice, and even obedience to patriarchs.

Duara agrees that this pedagogy was far from meaningless. Buttressed by the educational institutions and the propaganda machinery at the command of the state and the middle-class patriarchy, nationalist patriarchy placed constraints on the permissible for women and gave them the terms in which to think of their own subjectivity. Not all was lost, however. Through a close reading of over three hundred pages of personal narratives and testimonials—of the female leaders and teachers of the Morality Society who taught in its charitable schools and went around the country in the mid-1930s giving lectures on morality—Duara shows that a gap existed between women as the constituted subject and the enunciating subject. The very fact that these women participated in the Morality Society, Duara argues, was itself an ideal way to “control their activities outside the home.” Furthermore, the positive evaluation of the realm of the social or public in modern ideologies created opportunities for women to define as their proper space of action an expanded community of moral service. Women as enunciating subjects were thereby able to construct a sphere of autonomous activity outside the prescribed traditional feminine domain, even as they were represented in these terms once again in the new nationalist patriarchy. The women lecturers of Manzhouguo’s Morality Society were thus people who maneuvered the language in the same moment as they were constituted by it, successfully defying the latter even as the bonds remained.

The construction of women in modern Chinese nationalist discourse, by Duara’s analysis, thus cuts both ways. While the logic of national identity and nationalistic patriarchy demanded that women be represented as the repository of female virtues according to the categories generated in the traditional system of patriarchal authority, the very valorization of the nation in a patriarchal discourse opened up a new space for female action and autonomy. This inner connection between nationalism and patriarchy, which, in Duara’s presentation, was simultaneously a product of the opposition between the First and the Third Worlds and of the imperatives of nation building, resulted in new dynamics that defied simple dichotomized divisions phrased either as “tradition versus modernity” or as “progressive versus conservative.”

The historical connection between modern nationalism and traditional patriarchy was, of course, operative in a variety of contexts. While Duara sees it in the representation of women by the morality associations of the Manzhouguo middle-class elite, Pickowicz finds it in the popular Shanghai films made in the late 1940s on China’s wartime experience. Duara, as has been noted, sees in this connection certain irreducible psychological imperatives plus an epistemological necessity—he argues, in other words, that the connections are *necessary* so that the national subject recognizes himself or herself in an evolutionary scheme of time,

authenticating a space of interiority that is off-limits to the West. Pickowicz, by contrast, does not make a case about either the functional or the contextual necessity of this connection. He sees, instead, a *pragmatic* isomorphism between the nation and the family—in how family narratives functioned as national allegories in the popular films of the 1940s. The films, to be sure, were meaningful fabrications that corresponded to certain lived experiences while contributing to their representation. Between the contextual necessity and the cultural pragmatics of such linkages, Duara and Pickowicz map out the deeper psychological terrain of Chinese modernity.

Disillusionment and despair were facts of postwar life in China, Pickowicz shows. The majority of Chinese endured utter devastation, which occurred over large parts of China during the War of Resistance. They emerged from the battlefields feeling dislocated and defeated, despite China's final victory over Japan.

A series of postwar films appeared in the late 1940s that confronted the problem of such malaise in the Shanghai area. Following a formulaic representation that recounted China's war experience in the form of epic narratives about how Chinese families endured, these films were immediate box office successes that sold out to full house capacity for months on end. The films, which captured a pervasive urban mood in the late 1940s, helped to articulate a sense of injustice and dislocation in postwar China that turned victory into an experience of defeat. Although the Nationalist government was not blamed, many negative characters in the films were Chongqing-bound wartime profiteers. Thus the films most likely contributed to the mounting criticism of the Nationalist regime and its eventual collapse. For this reason they have conventionally been labeled as politically "progressive" in film histories produced after 1949.

Pickowicz's close analysis of the classics in this genre—notably *Far Away Love*, *Eight Thousand Miles of Cloud and Moon*, and *A Spring River Flows East*—shows, however, that there was nothing revolutionary in them when it comes to the representation of the family. The family values and cultural politics expressed in them were in fact decidedly conservative. The patriotism and unselfish public-spiritedness of all the positive characters were natural extensions of their old-fashioned, neo-Confucian cultural orientation. All negative characters, however, were simply the ones who had betrayed these time-honored family values. The villains had transgressed cultural boundaries, become corrupted by Western styles and alien ways, and given themselves to greed, decadence, callousness, and selfishness that virtually prepared them for collaboration with the enemy—much as the *hanjian* traitors described in Wakeman's essay. There was, Pickowicz notes, an unmistakable anti-mercantile and antibourgeois thrust that informed all these films. All the positive characters, by contrast, had endured and persevered through thick and thin, their sense of self and of Chineseness remaining intact whether in life or at the moment of death, thanks to the traditional norms that authenticated their sense of worth and being. Thus, instead of spearheading cultural iconoclasm, these postwar "progressive" films had in fact aligned themselves with a nationalist discourse that



used traditional symbols and norms to constitute its national subject as well as safeguard its purity.

We should note, however, that the postwar films about families in war were not simply allegories about the nation; they were allegories about a nation in distress. The family relationships that the films depicted were not simple expressions of traditional patriarchal norms either, but showed the patriarchal order in disarray. War films capture the crisis by showing a redistribution of attributes between men and women. In the examples offered by Pickowicz, decency, strength, loyalty, and dedication were often exhibited by women but not men. Moral degeneration, emotional weakness, failure to resist colonialism, and evidence of wavering and withdrawal were the sins of men but not women. The war, Pickowicz notes, appeared to have brought out the best in Chinese women and the worst in Chinese men.

The strain placed on patriarchal order in moments of national distress might have brought forth admirable heroines, discredited male characters, and disrupted the familial institutions. But it did not necessarily delegitimize patriarchal authority, nor did it endow women with greater autonomy. Those who survived the war by drawing strength from traditional feminine virtues such as patience, endurance, self-sacrifice, and caring for others, Pickowicz shows, were not rewarded with triumph at the end of the war. These women emerged from trial and tribulation heroic in moral stature, only to be betrayed and rejected by their impure spouses. Heroines who denounced the immorality of their kin and broke the bonds of their bourgeois families fared no better, if a higher degree of autonomy was among the objectives. The logic of their own moral superiority dictated that they join a new patriotic collective and submit themselves to its patriarchal authority. Their virtue thus won them an expanded space for selfless service and total dedication. As much as they appeared to have stepped out of the confines of the home to join the public, the communal, and the collective, women as the constituted subject in a positive role continued to be represented by those very qualities traditionally gendered as feminine.

Whether Chinese women had fared better or worse with the emergence of a nationalistic patriarchal system of authority is, of course, an issue for further research and debate. Pickowicz and Duara, through examinations of different sets of materials under separate circumstances, have mapped out comparable sets of problems. Both essays offer the suggestion that, with the rise of a new nationalist discourse, women's space for action had expanded beyond the domestic confines traditionally prescribed. The valorization of the nation and public opened up new spheres for women's activities. The disruption of the family and the rise of the collectives, however, also placed them under the patriarchal authority of the state in an unprecedented way. Unlike the middle-class Manzhouguo women lecturers in Morality Society, women in collectives depicted in the films were no longer housewives endeavoring to extend the bounds of their prescribed space. They were, through their devotion to the fatherland, desexualized women comrades and war-

rriors who had earned for themselves a place in public, as well as in the master narrative.

The discursive practices that Pickowicz has exposed shed light on the representation of the female subject as pedagogically constituted. They raise questions about how the three-way realignment of power relationships among the nation, the patriarch, and the woman played themselves out in China's century of war and revolution. Whether the realignment resulted in a regendering of the feminine and a recoding of social spaces in the context of Chinese modernity is a question, as Leo Lee's essay suggests, that awaits further exploration. What Duara and Pickowicz have eloquently shown, along with Wang Hui, David Wang, and Wakeman, is the steady and unrelenting rise—whether by logical necessity or by sheer happenstance, with benevolent intent or authoritarian command—of the power of the nation-state and its ever-expanding capacity to intervene in the production of modern Chinese identity.

The expanding state, as we learn from Kirby and Strand, was able, on its way up, to muster the service of a whole generation of modern professional elites while claiming their allegiance. These individuals built the institutional foundation of the modern Chinese polity. Yet despite the overseas exposure and maritime contacts in their social and educational background, they were far less effective in articulating an alternative set of principles that posed a challenge to entrenched cultural and political norms.

In Shanghai and other coastal cities, meanwhile, forces unleashed by the trade of goods and ideas worked steadily to redefine social relationships and the material foundation of everyday life. The cosmopolitan flair and the entrepreneurial drive, so central to a vision of Shanghai modernity in the 1930s, brought to life a new era of public culture and civic activism in the years leading up to the War of Resistance. Yet barely a decade later, the energy and sophistication of this prewar urban efflorescence seemed, from the perspective of a war-torn China, remote and removed indeed. Nonetheless, as the chapters in this volume will show, the high hopes for enlightenment as well as the deep despair over war, the street-corner poetry as well as the state-sponsored violence, were irreducible parts of modern Chinese historical experience. As we follow the passages of middle-class elites sojourning across a fragmented landscape from the coast to the interior and back, we can explore both the meaning of becoming Chinese and the legacies of that quest.

## NOTES

1. As this is a volume that seeks to problematize Chinese modernity and does not purport to be a comprehensive treatment of modern Chinese history in the first half of the twentieth century, it is organized with a certain selectivity and does not attempt to engage all issues of historical importance. Specifically, recent scholarship has made significant contributions to a better understanding of the early history of the socialist revolutionary move-

ment; political economy and mobilization in the hinterland; urban working-class collective action; issues of gender, class, and ethnicity; and questions of legal reform and institutional change. These issues are not highlighted in this volume.

2. For a succinct, classic, paradigmatic statement of the thesis of "stages of revolution" in modern Chinese history, see Mary C. Wright, "Introduction: The Rising Tide of Change," in *China in Revolution: The First Phase, 1900–1913*, ed. Mary C. Wright (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

3. There were lively debates over the nature of the Chinese revolutions of 1911 and 1927, as well as that of 1949, along with competing interpretations of their relative success and failure at each stage. For an overview of relevant research results, see John K. Fairbank and Albert Feuerwerker, eds., *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 13, *Republican China, 1912–1949*, pt. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), especially chapters 3, 11, and 12.

4. Modernity is seen in this volume as multifarious and complex. It operates simultaneously on several levels. The topics include projects of intellectual enlightenment, urban cosmopolitanism and consumerism, global enterprises and transnational capitalism, bureaucratic rationalization and industrial technology, the transformation of material culture, municipal planning, urbanization, professionalization, the rise of the nation-state, the disciplining of a new citizenry, and the emergence of a nationalist discourse.

5. For a discussion of the prominent themes and wealth of information in this area of research, see Wen-hsin Yeh, "Shanghai Modernity: Commerce and Culture in a Republican City," *China Quarterly*, no. 150 (June 1997): 375–94.

6. There is a large body of scholarship on the May Fourth Movement. Standard texts on the subject include Chow Tse-tsung's groundbreaking work, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), and more recently, Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986).

7. David Strand, *Rickshaw Beijing: City People and Politics in the 1920s* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 2. See also Strand, "Conclusion: Historical Perspectives," in *Urban Spaces in Contemporary China: The Potential for Autonomy and Community in Post-Mao China*, ed. Deborah S. Davis, Richard Kraus, Barry Naughton, and Elizabeth J. Perry (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars; and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 394–426.

8. On the state as a transformative force in modern Chinese political structure, see the seminal work by Philip Kuhn, "Local Self-Government under the Republic: Problems of Control, Autonomy, and Mobilization," in *Conflict and Control in Late Imperial China*, ed. Frederic Wakeman Jr. and Carolyn Grant (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975), 257–98. See also Prasenjit Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State: Rural North China, 1900–1942* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

9. William C. Kirby, *Germany and Republican China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984). For related discussion, see Thomas B. Gold, *State and Society in the Taiwan Miracle* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1986).

10. See John Israel, *Student Nationalism in China, 1927–1937* (Stanford: Hoover Institution, 1966); and John Israel and Donald W. Klein, *Rebels and Bureaucrats: China's December 9th* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976).

11. Lucian W. Pye, *The Spirit of Chinese Politics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968), xviii.

12. Fredric Jameson, "Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text* 15 (1986): 69.

13. Note that Wang Hui's treatment of authoritarianism in Chinese culture is different from Madsen's, which postulates respect for authority as a traditional Chinese cultural trait.

14. See also Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Peter Zarrow, *Anarchism and Chinese Political Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); and Arif Dirlik, *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991).

15. Frederic Wakeman Jr., *The Shanghai Badlands: Wartime Terrorism and Urban Crime, 1937-1941* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).