
THE ALIENATED ACADEMY
Culture and Politics in Republican China,
1919–1937

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Introduction

Western-style colleges and universities arose in China upon the ruins of traditional Confucian academies. The transition, which took place towards the turn of the century, was abrupt. Within the space of seven or eight years, an elaborate hierarchy of local schools, academies, and directorates of study that had been linked with the civil service examination system for centuries was displaced by a new set of educational institutions partly imposed by the state and partly initiated by gentry society.¹ The new schools appeared first in urban centers and at other points of contact with the West and then penetrated into the hinterland, representing a delayed but critical response to the dynasty's political failures after the Opium War and to the profound sense of intellectual failure stemming from that defeat.

Despite inherited practices and residual attitudes, Republican schools were scarcely functional replacements for the imperial academies. Not only was the Neo-Confucian curriculum of classical moral learning reconstituted to include Western subjects in the sciences and modern languages; the modern academic enterprise incorporated contradictory political impulses from its very inception. The Qing state sought to protect itself against Western imperialism by imposing educational reforms that were intended to defend the nation's cultural essence with foreign means. While the reforms themselves were designed to centralize the new and potentially radical learning under familiar conservative auspices, the new schools at

the same time became vehicles for progressive members of the provincial gentry elite who sought to capture the educational arena for decentralizing purposes of their own.

These progressive gentry members, who formed educational associations in many provinces and experimented with a wide range of educational programs, in turn found that the graduates of the new schools, many of whom went on to study abroad in Japan and Europe, were also busily seeking to transform the new academies and normal schools into hotbeds of radical politics. Thus the makers of the 1911 Revolution plotted their conspiracies out of the secondary and normal schools of the reformists of 1898 and 1901. When the Nationalist Party came to power in Nanjing in 1927, it found in turn that the Communists of the 1920s had created their own institutions—indeed, their own university—to rally revolutionary energies and disseminate socialism. The Nationalists succeeded in breaking up the urban cells of the Chinese Communist Party and banishing the Red Army to the barren regions of northern Shaanxi after years of harsh military campaigns and counter-intelligence operations. The Ministry of Education in Nanjing, meanwhile, endeavored to “partify” education by prescribing a new cultural orthodoxy in the service of the Party-state. As if to bring matters to a full circle, three decades after the promulgation of the first imperial edicts of educational reform, one of the principal points of difficulty that complicated the relationship between the regime and universities was whether institutions of higher learning were meant to serve the interests of the established order or to spearhead radical changes.

Republican institutions of higher education had, in fact, developed in a laissez-faire environment until 1927, when the Nationalist Party re-established the central government. The Nanjing Ministry of Education promulgated—and enforced—a series of rules and regulations that were aimed both at the indoctrination of the students and the standardization of university administrations, and harnessed the various colleges and universities into the semblance of a system of higher education. But because Nanjing’s goals and means were often overtly ideological and political, the most salient

feature of higher education in the 1930s was not so much a consensus on cultural beliefs and educational ideals as a concession to Nanjing’s political and ideological authority. Institutions that were unable or refused to acknowledge the new system were either closed down or denied an accredited standing, as in the cases of Shanghai and St. John’s Universities.

In spite of the spread to the provinces of new-style primary and secondary schools under the aegis of gentry reformers, the spatial distribution of institutes of higher education in the 1920s was geographically unbalanced. Initiated from above and launched in urban centers, 60 percent of these institutions were concentrated in Beijing and Shanghai, the former the old imperial capital and seat of classical learning, the latter a Sino-Western metropolis of trade, finance, and industry and rapidly becoming the largest city in China. The remaining two dozen institutions were scattered in 18 cities that spread across 12 provinces. In Beijing, a quarter of the city’s population was directly or indirectly connected with attending, working in, or servicing educational organizations of all levels. In Shanghai, that ratio was about 1 in every 10. Elsewhere in China the percentage fell sharply to an average of 1 in just under 100 in the hinterland.

Roughly speaking, there were four major types of Republican higher educational institutions: state-sponsored universities created under the Qing, Western (principally American) missionary colleges, private Chinese colleges, and government-sponsored institutions supported by the Nationalist Party. Each category was distinguished by the unique political histories and academic traditions of the schools within it, and these in turn translated into specific cultural orientations that were associated with particular social profiles. Beijing University, which grew out of the former Imperial Academy of the Qing, was the seat of time-honored philological scholarship as well as the fountainhead of the iconoclastic New Culture Movement. St. John’s University in Shanghai was an American Episcopalian school that arose in tandem with the success of the comprador bourgeoisie of the treaty port. Fudan University, founded at the turn of the century by Jiangnan gentry and bureaucratic re-

formers, developed in the 1930s into a major private institution that emphasized practical professional subjects. Zhongshan University in Guangzhou (Canton), molded by the Guomindang in the mid-1920s, was intended to be the embodiment of the Party-prescribed pedagogy that combined political training with a heavy emphasis on science and technology.

One may speak of a certain hierarchy of quality and prestige among Republican colleges and universities that divided national from regional, and regional from purely provincial institutions. Beijing University, Qinghua University, and Yenching University in the north were among the elite national institutions that drew students from all over China. Privately endowed Fudan, Daxia, and St. John's Universities in Shanghai were inter-regional institutions whose geographical base encompassed many parts of Central and South China. The public institutions sponsored by the Nationalist Party in the 1920s—Zhongshan University in Guangzhou, Zhongyang University in Nanjing, Wuhan University in Wuhan, Sichuan University in Chengdu—were regional institutions that drew students from several provinces. Private and public provincial institutions outside the Beiping-Tianjin and the Jiangnan core zones—Amoy University in Fujian, Guangxi University in Wuzhou, Henan University in Kaifeng, for example—attracted the offspring of the locally eminent.

Yet another rung down in this hierarchy of quality and prestige in educational institutions were public provincial institutions such as the normal schools and a variety of institutes of specialized subjects. Here, both the spatial and temporal indices must be observed, and distinctions have to be drawn between the higher normal schools in provincial capitals of the early Republic, and the lesser prefectural institutions of secondary-school level of the 1920s and 1930s. The former, by the Nanjing decade, had either evolved into provincial and regional institutions of higher education, or were downgraded by provincial authorities to become secondary institutions, had they not, indeed, fallen casualties in the political turmoils of the 1920s.² The latter, meanwhile, made little effort to pass themselves off as institutes of higher education. Nor were they so treated

by the successive Republican Ministries of Education. More often than not these institutions trained elementary- and secondary-school teachers and prepared technical and clerical personnel for local employment. Because little or no tuition was collected, the social composition of the student body tended to be sharply different from colleges and universities. The highest provincial elite with metropolitan connections, along with the commercial and professional elites of major cities, sent their children to colleges and universities in Beijing and Shanghai, where Western subjects were often stressed along with mathematics and sciences. The progeny of the intermediate levels of prefectural societies and rural towns—former members of the lower degree-holding gentry and aspiring landlord households, petty rice brokers and rentiers, and so forth—attended provincial institutions which stressed Chinese subjects and imparted the outlook of the traditional lower-gentry now in decline. Yet, while these lesser institutions of the hinterland continued to spawn county elites by certifying lower layers of provincial society, locally drawn and locally dispersed,³ the prestigious colleges and universities in Beijing and Shanghai consistently drew members of the provincial notability away from home into a larger world, alienating them from native place and rural roots.

An alienated academy need not be a sterile one. Nor was it ever reduced to silence. Indeed, it is arguable that, as the comfortable assumptions of the scholar-officials were sundered, this radical disjuncture released energy for creative pursuits to take place not only in art, science, scholarship and professional expertise but also in the formation of independent political views outside the domain of official ideology. It is in this peculiarly twentieth-century sense of estrangement—neither the “externalization” (*Entausserung*) of Hegel nor the institutionalized and systemic “alienation” (*Entfremdung*) of Marx, but rather the “disenchantment” or “demystification” (*Entzauberung*) of Weber—that student culture in Chinese universities in the interwar years stemmed from a profound sense of alienation.⁴

As George Lichtheim has pointed out, “These problems are related, in an obscure and mystifying fashion, to permanent human

concerns which assert themselves whenever a particular social and cultural integration fails to satisfy the elites of a given society."⁵ Where history and value part, alienation, as a sensitivity to stimuli existing outside the established order, arises among those who experienced a loss of traditional authority and a tension between past status and present declass  reality.⁶ In these years of critical social change, that particular sense of estrangement in China found expression in a fusion of cultural and political forms whose style and content were dialectically intertwined. To gain a fuller appreciation of the intricate relationship between culture and politics as reflected in the Republican history of higher education, let us begin with an examination of the highly politicized problem of language and learning in early twentieth-century Chinese universities.

 ONE

Language and Learning

The Chinese had little reason to suspect that their universe was less than self-sufficient until the mid-nineteenth century, when the Qing Empire suffered a series of humiliating military losses and diplomatic debacles at the hands of the British and the French. From the defeats of the Opium War (1839–1842) to the Sino-Japanese War in 1894, it was a painful and protracted process before the Qing Court finally exhausted the political wisdom of the Neo-Confucian order, and acknowledged the necessity of a comprehensive reform which combined "Chinese learning as substance, Western learning as application."¹ Although the social and cultural dynamics unleashed by the coming of the West in this period of dynastic decline remain a subject of scholarly inquiry, the contour of Qing political history in that century of Western imperialism is a familiar one.² Equally well known are the conservative reactions engendered by the programs of political reform. When the first Court-sponsored institution for training in Western languages and learning, the College of Foreign Languages (Tongwen Guan), opened in Beijing in 1862, it encountered the vigorous opposition of conservative opinion led by Woren, the Mongol Neo-Confucian moralist, tutor to the Emperor, head of the Hanlin Academy, and president of several of the Six Boards in succession.³ Western barbarian subjects were unfit for teaching in Court-sanctioned institutions, Woren argued, where attention should be focused exclusively on sagely learnings of ritual sanctity intended to rectify the mind and pacify the realm.

as St. John's University, which used English as the primary medium of instruction and offered "a Christian education of commerce and science," rose to considerable regional eminence, propelled by the rise of a Shanghai financial and professional elite who built their influence upon their knowledge of the modern West.

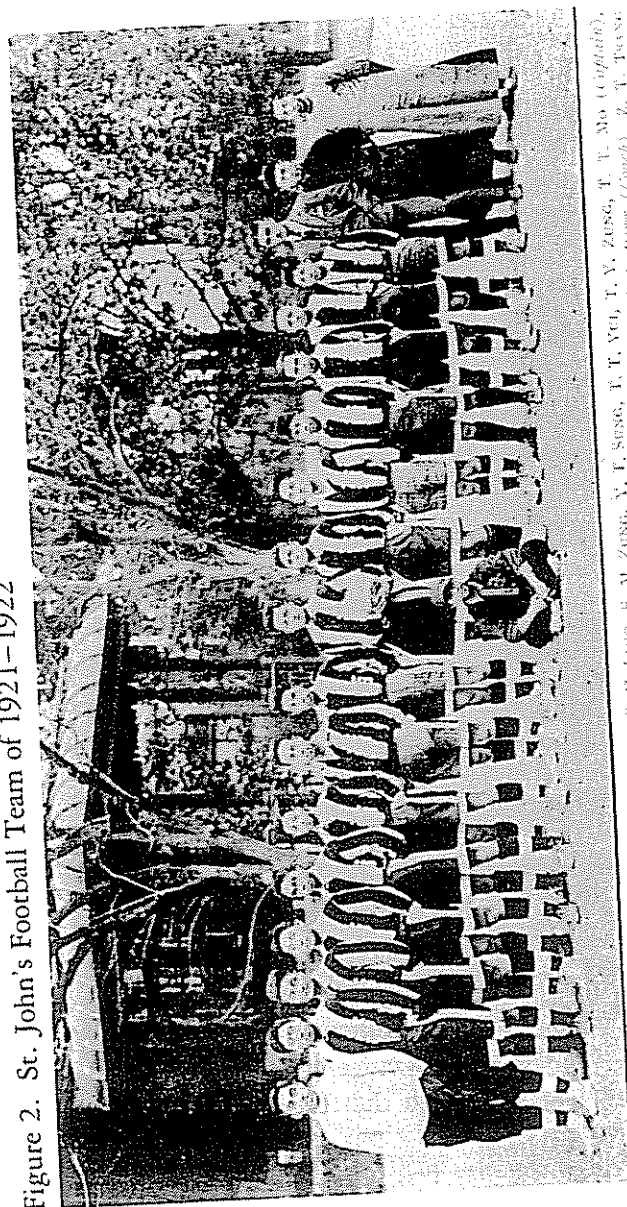
TWO

*St. John's University and the Culture of the
Shanghai Bourgeoisie*

Shanghai rose to become China's leading metropolis in the century after the Opium War (1839–1842). Its spectacular growth from a largely agrarian county of less than 400,000 people to a national center of finance, industry, and trade with a population of over 5,400,000 in 1949 was inextricably connected with its development as a treaty port. This 10-fold increase of population and incalculable increment of wealth drastically altered the social and economic character of the region. It was here that Western traders met with their Chinese counterparts, and through their symbiotic activities the inland trade was linked to a world trading system of silk, tea, silver, opium, and cotton. The growth of commercial wealth gave rise to new social formations towards the end of nineteenth century. In the interwar years (1919–1937) in the twentieth century, social tension markedly rose with the development of light industry. Textile mills, tobacco plants, match factories, and flour mills sprang up around the city. These factories employed a large number of contract laborers and uprooted peasants from the countryside. Labor strikes and disputes punctuated the city's industrial life in the 1920s and 1930s, just as entrepreneurs speculated in war bonds and stock shares, adding to the fever of the city's volatile economic atmosphere.¹

The rapid growth of the city had significant social and cultural

Figure 2. St. John's Football Team of 1921–1922



(From left to right) K. L. Oo, D. H. Zi, F. S. TRASS, Z. H. LING, S. M. ZENG, Y. T. SUNG, F. T. YU, T. Y. ZENG, T. T. MO (Captain), S. L. MO, C. T. MUNG, S. B. TONG, R. O. ZENG, F. T. LEE, Y. L. TUNG, Professor W. S. A. POTT (Coach), Z. T. TUNG (Manager), Z. W. DAY (Referee).

Front Row: Z. W. DAY (Referee).

Source: *The Johnian*, 1922, p. 234.

Note: This St. John's team boasted a "walk-over" against the team of the National Southeastern University in Nanjing by 10 goals to nil and finished the intercollegiate season tied for first place with Nanyang (Communications) University and Shanghai College.

consequences. Shanghai in the Republican period was a society that had lost its center of gravity. The elite were estranged from the masses, first, by its Western-style cosmopolitanism. As Joseph Levenson once observed, Westernization compromised middle-class political power in the national arena, because urban elites were culturally alienated from the Chinese hinterland and the Chinese past.² The urban elite was caught, furthermore, in socialist agitations against capitalism, led by radical intellectuals driven out of their hometowns by provincial militarists. Divided as the society appeared to be, on the other hand, the political history of Shanghai shows that the elites, the middle classes, and the lower orders of the city came together time and again in the 1920s and 1930s—from the general strikes of the May Fourth Movement to the anti-Japanese protests leading to the War of Resistance.³ The Chinese of Shanghai rallied around the slogans of revolutionary nationalism. Their protests were directed against imperialistic privileges as well as conservative Chinese political authority.

Culturally and socially divided, Shanghai in the Republican period was at the same time a highly charged political environment. Against this backdrop a wide range of institutes of higher education were developed, each with its distinct values, goals, cultural styles, social foundations, and political leanings.

SHANGHAI: THE SOCIAL LANDSCAPE

Shanghai was formally opened to foreign trade on 17 November 1843. When the first party of English traders arrived, they saw the future International Settlement—a strip of land to the north of the Chinese city bordering the riverine area where Suzhou Creek ran into the Huangpu before entering the sea—"in the shape of sundry reed-beds, swamps, ponds and other malarious constituents."⁴ These Englishmen were soon joined by an ever-increasing number of Western traders and missionaries, of whom many were French and American. After the turn of the century, many others arrived—Japanese, White Russians, Indians, Vietnamese, Prussians, Portuguese, Italians, Spanish, Poles, Greeks, and so forth. Shanghai's

foreign community in its heyday was said to represent no less than 58 nations. But the size of this foreign community never seemed to have exceeded a total of 150,000 people.⁵

The 10-fold increase of Shanghai's population between 1842 and 1949 was largely a result of Chinese immigration from the countryside into the city, especially into the International Settlement and the French Concession. From the 1850s on, each new occurrence of social disturbance sent tens of thousands of Chinese refugees to Shanghai, seeking protection under the English and French flags. In the late 1850s, the rebel troops of the Kingdom of Heavenly Peace (the Taipings), which ravaged eighteen provinces in fourteen years (1850–1864), swept through the lower Yangzi Valley, taking such major cities as Nanjing, Suzhou, and Hangzhou. The Taipings did not take Shanghai, but the Chinese part of the city was occupied by the Cantonese and Fukienese dock workers and sailors of the Small Swords Society. Between 1855 and 1865, the population of the International Settlement surged from approximately 20,000 to 90,000. The French Concession at the same time gained about 40,000. The foreign consuls and residents viewed this influx of Chinese with alarm, and set up the first Municipal Council of the International Settlement on 22 July 1854 to deal with the emergency and to stem the tide. Crowding and poor accommodations apparently led to an outbreak of cholera and other epidemic diseases.⁶

The newcomers to Shanghai in the 1860s included a large number of Chinese gentry from leading Jiangnan cities such as Suzhou, Nanjing, Songjiang, and Hangzhou—cities that had been occupied by the Taipings. When these people fled to Shanghai, they brought their wealth and tastes with them. New styles of cultured life began to appear in Shanghai's concessions, and, by the time the Taipings were put down, many had come to regard Shanghai as a new home. Movements of this sort, along with the changing patterns of trade and transportation, were largely responsible for the long-term shifts in Jiangnan's regional geography. By the third quarter of the nineteenth century, Shanghai had become the leading metropolis of the lower Yangzi Valley. The splendor of the traditional Jiangnan cities

faded as traders went elsewhere, artisans emigrated, and the gentry were attracted to the new cosmopolitanism of Shanghai.

Commerce expanded and light industry developed in Shanghai at the turn of the century. In the early stage, many firms on Nanjing Road and cotton mills along Yangshupu were financed with foreign capital. Although the first Chinese-owned machine-powered rice-grinding concern was founded in 1863, indigenous industrial capitalism was repeatedly hampered by structural weaknesses in the investment environment, which led to major recessions such as the one caused by the credit crisis of 1883.⁷ Between 1915 and 1919, when the European powers were engaged in war, however, Shanghai's light industry enjoyed a major boom. The benefit was shared between Japanese and Chinese investors. Flour mills, shipping concerns, textile mills, silk filatures, paper mills, coal mining concerns, and facilities for the making and dealing of tobacco, matches, cement, light bulbs, and so forth multiplied in the ensuing decades.⁸ The fortune amassed by wealthy entrepreneurs and shareholders in the Nanjing decade was impressive. The leading members of this bourgeoisie, the Rong brothers, for example, opened a total of 9 textile mills and 12 flour mills between 1902 and 1932, and accumulated no less than 2,913,000 silver dollars in capital.⁹ The size of this urban bourgeoisie was insignificant, but the financial power it wielded in the Republican period was disproportionate to its size.¹⁰

The development of light industry and commerce induced a second type of immigration from the countryside. Tens of thousands of village able-bodied from Jiangnan, Subei, Anhui, and Zhejiang were drawn to the city in search of opportunities. Women and youngsters were brought in as contract laborers, domestic helpers, apprentices, and prostitutes. Many arrived with the help of kinsmen and fellow villagers. The use of these ties profoundly shaped the recruitment patterns of labor.¹¹ In the work place, labor was cheap and job security hardly existed. Wages were low and living conditions were poor. War, inflation, and recession further disrupted the lives of average people. While the census taken by the new government in 1949 showed that Shanghai employed a total of 840,000

artisans and industrial, construction, and transportation workers in addition to 370,000 shop clerks and apprentices, the authorities also unveiled 400,000 cases of adult male unemployment.¹²

Because many could not afford urban expenses, single male workers often went home to their villages to marry, and the majority left their wives behind where living standards were much lower. The demographic composition of Shanghai reflected these patterns of immigrants' lives. During the Nanjing decade, less than 30 percent of Shanghai's population was native to the area. The ratio between male and female averaged 142 men for every 100 women in the early 1930s. Because few unskilled laborers were accompanied by their families, less than a quarter of Shanghai's pre-socialist population was younger than 14.¹³ Many of the neighborhoods that were spawned in the back alleys around the city, meanwhile, retained village characteristics of their residents' hometowns.

The third and most dramatic increase in Shanghai population took place between 1937 and 1941, when war broke out and Japanese troops took coastal China. The foreign concessions became "lone islets" (*gudao*) in a sea of Japanese occupying forces, used by Chinese resistors to launch sniper attacks on enemies and collaborators alike. While the population of the Chinese portion of Shanghai declined during the war, that in the foreign concessions reached a total of 2,430,000, a gain of 780,000 from 1937.¹⁴ The push of social disturbances and the pull of economic opportunities combined to alter the social geography and demographic profile of Shanghai in the century after the Opium War. While, in the 1840s, less than 1 percent of Shanghai's population lay outside the Chinese city and its suburbs, in the 1940s no less than 65 percent sought security and employment in the two foreign concessions, which together comprised less than 6 percent of the total area of metropolitan Shanghai.

The spectacular growth of population and wealth Shanghai experienced between 1842 and 1949 resulted in a city of extreme complexity, often divided along cultural, national, and class lines. The concessions, ever growing and expanding, nearly displaced the former Chinese magistrate's seat (referred to as the "native city" in

Settlement English) as a metropolitan center. Chinese political authority and police power, until 1945, were completely kept out of the concessions by the foreigners' treaty rights of extraterritoriality.¹⁵ After the Nationalists took power in 1927, it became a point of national pride to revive the Chinese city and build it into a rival civic center to the foreign concessions. But the very notion of a civic center itself, paradoxically, was taken from the West. The city hall, the courthouse, the auditorium, the library, the square, the museum, the hospital, and other public buildings were all admittedly inspired by Western examples. The very model of a modern municipal government, as opposed to the old district magistrate's *yamen*, indeed, was taken from the English example.¹⁶

Socially and economically, a small number of financiers and entrepreneurs, foreign as well as Chinese, controlled a disproportionately large share of resources, and led a style of life that contrasted sharply with the conditions in the urban slums. Such disparity aroused the indignation of social critics and intellectuals alike. In films, plays, and fiction, the 1930s was a decade of prolific representations of social tension, exploitation, and injustice. The most gripping image of Shanghai capitalism and private ownership in its prime was captured perhaps by Xia Yan, the writer and journalist, in his classic reportage of the system of teenage women contract labor in the city's cotton mills. Shanghai, wrote Xia Yan, was "a city of forty-eight-storied skyscrapers built upon twenty-four layers of hell"—a Western-style material construct laid on the foundation of a sea of suffering and agonizing humanity, redeemable only through the compassion and mercy of the Buddha.¹⁷

SHANGHAI: THE CULTURAL SETTING

Culture was a highly politicized and socially problematic issue in Shanghai, because norms were fluid, statuses were permeable, the languages were diverse, and nationalist claims were constantly pitted against colonial privileges. Nearly all aspects of Shanghai life—social, cultural, and political—were characterized less by consensus than by strife. New cultural forms were created, on the one hand,

as new social groups came to the fore. Old cultural norms were purposefully reaffirmed, on the other hand, as the entrenched interest sought to hold on to its advantages. A variety of strategies were employed and a mixture of symbols manipulated, when communication took place across the barriers of nationality, class, and culture in public and collective settings: ceremonies, parades, festivals, protests, strikes, church services, public garden concerts, and so forth. Cultural cleavages were exploited to assert statuses as well as achieve political mobilization.

The presence of an English "model settlement" helped bring forth a hybrid culture among its Chinese affiliates and dependents. Republican Shanghai was the scene of a unique urban middlebrow culture of department-store consumerism, cafes, night clubs, casinos, movie houses, amusement halls, racecourses, charity balls, and other forms of activities inspired by Western examples on the one hand, and, on the other, of popular films, dramas, fiction, newspapers, and magazines that contained adaptations of traditional motifs.¹⁸ The unconventional character of the Shanghai scene led conservative critics to denigrate it as the *Hai pai*, or "Shanghai style," as opposed to the *Jing pai* or "Beijing style." While Beijing stood for the refined and distilled high culture of the gentry-official-literati, Shanghai was the emporium of the trendy, the gaudy, the decorative, the conspicuous, and the city of the newly rising bourgeoisie. Unlike the rich merchants of late imperial China—such as the salt merchants of eighteenth-century Yangzhou—the Shanghai bourgeoisie did not seek to emulate the style of life of the landed literati, nor did it try to gain admission into the state bureaucracy.¹⁹ The upper-middle classes of the city flaunted their commercial wealth as well as Westernized cosmopolitanism. It was in this sense that Shanghai had truly become a cultural rival to Beijing.

When the *Shanghai Mercury* published a collection of articles in 1902 to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the English presence in Shanghai, it painted the portrait of a model settlement in the British Empire conquered from reeds and swamps. The articles drew attention to the span between two generations of English couples

who had courted each other under the branches of Public Garden sycamores and who now lay in the 2,000 English graves that had been dug in the cemeteries of Pudong. "Earth to earth, dust to dust," the author mused; ". . . if any foreign land has a right to a voice in the affairs of China, that land is Great Britain, who has given with no niggard hand her sons for the good of the world at large."²⁰

The Model Settlement in Shanghai was intended to be home to those Britishers who did not head home to the United Kingdom. The account conjured up images of a civic order with secular and sacred institutions: an elected Municipal Council, a Trinity Cathedral of the Church of England, a broadly based Union Church of the London Missionary Society, fire brigade, courthouse, reformed jail, municipal waterworks, paved and lit streets, public gardens, free concerts, and a social register of who's who—much as it would have been back home in England. Manly English sports such as racing, cricket, and polo were favored over games such as tennis, where the "softness of the ball" suggested that something was lacking. Indeed, "[W]hat it is that lures the sport loving Briton from his home in all weathers and into all dangers, difficulties, and climates is the sporting instinct which is essentially competitive."²¹ The avid pursuit of these sports was interrupted only by news such as the Tianjin Massacre of 1870 and the Boxers Uprising of 1900. On these occasions, much was made of the collective memories of moments of military glory against the Chinese, which invariably led to redoubled efforts in the drilling of the Volunteer Corps.²²

The *Mercury* accounts were unabashed in imparting a distinct sense of national hierarchy. The French were scorned for their inability, on most occasions, to put their house in order.²³ The Americans were frowned upon for their uncouth chauvinism and profanity.²⁴ The Chinese appeared either as residents of the slums, dishonest servants, petty-minded sycophants who knew which side their bread was buttered on, timid soldiers led by cowardly generals, or as crowds of rioting mobs. In cricket matches at least, all these other elements of Shanghai society faded out of sight, and the International Settlement played against Britain and its colonies within the Empire. The

Settlement cricket team was "Shanghai," to visiting teams of "England," "Scotland," and "Ireland" as well as the colonialists of "Hong Kong" and "Kobe" of Japan.²⁵

Even though it was through trade that the Chinese and Westerners became partners in joint ventures,²⁶ the *Mercury* account stressed the cultural imprint made by English ministers and officers on the Model Settlement to the virtual neglect of English merchants and brokers. The confident semi-colonialists of the turn of the century,²⁷ writing with a distinct air of superiority in a year when China was barely recovering from the Boxers debacle, preferred—ostensibly—to reach the natives through Christian proselytization rather than trade, and pinned their hopes on converting Chinese children through education. The results of past efforts of proselytization, however, were far from encouraging. Dozens of missionary schools had been in operation since the late-nineteenth century. But the "wily natives," according to an experienced missionary, seemed to have found ways to take good care that a pupil's old beliefs were not upset while receiving the benefit of the secular teaching of a missionary school. The public opinion of the Settlement concurred in this view while still hoping for Western cultural dominion in the end:

Doubtless this is the case. And quite naturally. Yet the mission school is none the less forwarding the cause of missions. It is smoothing the way, preparing the ground, and in some cases sowing the seed. A boy educated at the missions school is not in after life likely to be a rabid anti-foreign, anti-Christian zealot. His better education should raise him somewhat in intellectual status above his neighbors, and this gives him an influence which ought to be on the right side. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump, and there are many signs both in the press and the public that western education has already made a mark sufficient to ensure its more rapid development in the near future.²⁸

But the result, at best, could only be ambivalence on the part of the Chinese educated in their schools. As we shall see in the history of the Episcopalian St. John's University in Shanghai, the encounter between missionary educational goals and nascent Chinese nation-

alism severely tested the loyalty of Shanghai's bicultural elites to the Chinese nation at large.

THE FOUNDING OF ST. JOHN'S: SACRED OR SECULAR?

St. John's was founded in 1879 by Bishop I. J. Schereschewsky, a Lithuanian Jew who had come to China as a member of the American Episcopal Mission. It was launched by a small endowment raised by the church in America, with which the school purchased 14 acres of land in Jessfield in the western suburbs of Shanghai as its campus. Its first group of 39 students were drawn without exception from poor Christian families from the lower Yangzi region. To prepare them to receive an education with a strong religious emphasis, the boys were given free clothing, food, books, pens, and note sheets. The purpose of the school was to spread the Christian faith in China.²⁹

St. John's was not registered as a university in the United States until 1906. Still, it was among the earliest institutions of Western-style higher education in China. The university bore the mark of the changing city that hosted it as well as the missionary society that funded it. Just as the rise of Shanghai, with its foreign concessions, represented the emergence of a new type of city that posed such sharp contrasts with the old imperial capital of Beijing, the founding of St. John's marked the creation of a new breed of institutes of higher education unconnected with the Chinese educational tradition.

St. John's in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was a foreign institution that drew its clientele mainly from the lower strata of Chinese society. The debates that led to the founding of St. John's involved issues that were hardly central Chinese concerns. St. John's was born in the midst of furious missionary controversies over whether, in order to spread the word of God, the missions would do better to proselytize or to educate, to use Chinese or to use English. The significance of the founding of St. John's therefore contrasted sharply with that of the Tongwen Guan. While the latter signified the Qing Court's interest in acquiring a knowledge of

Western languages, sciences, and technology necessary to defend its minence, the former stood for the missionary society's determined efforts to gain entry into the Chinese world.

Although the evangelization of heathen China had been the shared goal of all missionaries in China, in the 1860s and 1870s disagreements arose over the question of how most effectively to achieve this end. Early pioneering evangelists in the coastal ports—the Presbyterians in Ningbo, the Congregationalists in Tongzhou (Tungchow), the Methodists in Beijing—adhered to the principle of direct preaching to any size of gathering, and measured their achievement by the number of converts. The Chefoo Convention of 1876 opened up the interior to missionaries. The newly formed China Inland Mission, soon to become the largest single mission in China, held high hopes for saving the souls of the simpler folk of the interior.³⁰ The size of the Chinese Christian community, however, remained embarrassingly small after years of dedicated efforts, and converts tended to be drawn from the lower levels of society. The North China Mission of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions (Congregational) operated small schools in Beijing, Tongzhou, and Kalgan (Zhangjiakou) in the 1860s. "Each of the schools taught no more than a handful of beggar children, and much of the work was still makeshift, sporadic and irregular, with instruction at the lowest primary level and largely confined to religion and elementary Chinese."³¹ Rev. Devello Z. Sheffield, the leading evangelist of ABCFM stationed in Tongzhou, reported to his Board in New York in 1877 that, although he preached every single day in Tongzhou "in large audiences," his efforts produced few results, like "sowing seeds on the water."³²

Meanwhile, the example of the Presbyterian W. A. P. Martin (1827–1916) in Beijing and, slightly later, of the Methodist Young J. Allen in Shanghai suggested that the conversion of China might effectively begin with the upper reaches of Chinese society.³³ Martin saw that instruction of Western secular subjects in areas that corresponded to the needs of the Chinese state promised to secure for the foreign missionaries a respectable audience among the gentry-reformers. To him, as to the Jesuit Matteo Ricci before him, the

primary stage for evangelical endeavours was the Court and not the street. Martin had considerable success first as an instructor and later as president of the Tongwen Guan, the school of foreign languages sponsored by the Imperial Court in Beijing. By the 1870s, the school offered a full range of subjects from English, international law, and political economy, to mathematics, physics, chemistry, physiology, medicine, and astronomy,³⁴ and prepared a large number of students of gentry background for newly created government positions as interpreters, consuls, and engineers.³⁵

In the very year that St. John's was conceived, in May of 1877, the goals and methods of the missionary endeavour in China were the subject of intense debate in the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China held at Shanghai. Griffith John, a veteran missionary, expounded the conservative position by declaring that

the purpose of our mission is to discipline, or make Christians of, this great nation. Whatever others may do, this is our work. We are here, not to develop the resources of the country, not for the advancement of commerce, not for the mere promotion of civilization; but to do battle with the powers of darkness, to save men from sin, and conquer China for Christ.³⁶

Regardless of how commerce and science might develop in China a new and higher form of civilization, Griffith John saw that "the Gospel alone is the power of God unto salvation, and salvation from the guilt and domination of sin . . . is the great need of the Chinese."³⁷ The encounter between the West and China was thus that between light and darkness, good and evil. Griffith John denounced the adoption of secular measures with utilitarian benefits. The heathens must not be enticed and persuaded by material rewards to enter the Kingdom of Christ. They must be conquered spiritually for the global celebration of the glory of the true Father.

Griffith John's viewpoint was shared by others, such as the Rev. Sheffield of the ABCFM, who warned against the danger of considerably diluting the religious nature of the missionary endeavor in China in the instruction of secular subjects.³⁸ The schools the ABCFM could be persuaded to support in the 1870s therefore offered no

more than elementary training in Christian catechism to older boy helpers in the field, prepared to serve the goal of proselytization in China.³⁹

In contrast, St. John's moved rapidly beyond the doctrinarian training of Chinese converts. It built a Christian college that offered education in sciences and liberal arts taught in English and attracted a large number of students from non-Christian backgrounds.⁴⁰ In its first years, it offered instruction in elementary chemistry, physics, astronomy, geology, classical Chinese, and a vigorous program in English language.⁴¹ The declared goal from the very beginning was to build St. John's into a college "in the true sense of the word," to build a major "center of learning" comparable to Yale University that would serve as "a beacon of light and truth in China."⁴² "Light and Truth" was adopted as the college motto in 1894, four years after the formal opening of the collegiate department.⁴³

The scholarly orientation of St. John's University was reflected in the language used to justify the academic program. Whereas Rev. Sheffield and others spoke of bringing the light of faith to shine upon the dark corners of China's vast hinterland, the curriculum of St. John's was justified in the rhetoric of utilitarianism, universalism, and practical benefits to mankind. Where Rev. Sheffield stressed the will of God, Rev. Pott of St. John's spoke of the broadening of the human mind as a meaningful goal in itself and confidently advanced the prospect of a cosmopolitan universe of shared values and truth.⁴⁴ The study of the English language and literature "will conduce to the broadening of the mental horizon of our students," wrote Dr. Pott. "By teaching English we are doing something of the same character in training the Chinese mind, as the teaching of Greek and Latin accomplishes for the foreign boy."⁴⁵ And sciences were taught "not only because they have a utilitarian value but because the truth of science comes, as all truth does, from God, and the study of these truths must aid in the advancement of mankind."⁴⁶

Even the claim that Christianity should have a place in the educational program was argued more in moral than religious terms, with emphasis on the beneficial impact in the formation of human

character, instead of on its instrumental value to the advancement of the Church in China. "The religion of Christ has produced the highest form of character the world has yet seen," wrote Dr. Pott in an official statement of the goals of St. John's. What St. John's aimed to achieve, with the formation of a true college of Christian humanism in arts and sciences, was to bring Christianity to China through firmly established cultural—as opposed to religious—programs. The strategy was "to earn respectability of the English language" by associating English taught by Christians with learning.⁴⁷ The goals were no less than a Renaissance in China in the European fashion. St. John's would not only permit Christian faith to strike roots in Chinese soil, Rev. Pott believed; it would introduce enough foreign stimulation to revitalize Chinese culture.⁴⁸

ENGLISH OVER CHINESE: "A CHRISTIAN CIVILIZATION OF COMMERCE AND SCIENCE"

Pott's hopes for a viable humanistic Christian alternative on Chinese soil were soon rendered hollow by the social reality in which these cosmopolitan pretensions were put into practice. The impressive growth of St. John's was nurtured more by utilitarian expectations about the vocational value of English proficiency than by the appeal of a Christian-inspired cultural Renaissance. The mundane character of this program in English was not lost upon the missionary community in the late-nineteenth century.⁴⁹ The question of whether English should be adopted as the primary medium of instruction was a point of much debate in the second General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China in 1890, even though support for missionary educational enterprises had grown considerably since the first General Conference of 1877. Rev. Sheffield warned that an English program served no larger purpose than as a stepping-stone to students interested in secular employment in business.⁵⁰ From the viewpoint of the devout evangelists, whatever advantages there were to a program that held enormous appeal for a large number of non-Christians were more than offset by the further secularization of the young minds drawn into it.

Under the presidency of Rev. Sheffield, the North China College of ABCFM at Tongzhou outside Beijing was in many ways an institutional antithesis to St. John's. Founded in 1893, the Congregational College taught very little English, offered science subjects only at an elementary level, used Chinese as the medium of instruction, and emphasized the role of Christian religion in campus life. The primary goal of the school was to train field preachers for missionary work. The program therefore stressed biblical instruction.⁵¹ The graduates were encouraged to dedicate themselves to a life of service and religion by becoming teachers in mission schools, by going on into the theological seminary, or by studying medicine to serve the native church.⁵² While the rhetoric of St. John's reverberated with words like *benefits* and *utility*, North China College eulogized *duty*, *gratitude*, and *Christian zeal*.

Under the firm guidance of Rev. Sheffield, student life on the campus of North China College was governed by a strong emphasis on "harmony with the principles of Christianity."⁵³ The school opened at 8:00 every morning with Scripture readings, singing, and prayer. Evening prayers were held at 7:00. All students were expected to attend the regular Sunday morning sermon and the afternoon Sunday school, "unless detailed for Christian work in the city or country by the YMCA."⁵⁴ The YMCA was a very active organization on campus. "It held meetings for prayer, discussion and extra-curricular Bible study, did evangelistic work among men who came to the Sunday services of the Church, and sent its members to proselytize at the street chapel in Tongzhou and in the villages in the countryside."⁵⁵

Though prayer, service, choir, and the YMCA were important features of campus life at St. John's, rarely, if ever, were students sent out to preach.⁵⁶ While northern colleges such as North China College and Shandong Christian College—colleges that emphasized religious teaching and used Chinese—developed into institutions with a strong rural base, St. John's grew by building upon the social basis of an affluent clientele in the upwardly mobile commercial and professional classes of Shanghai. The literal words of God were thus heard undiluted only at street chapels and village crossroads in com-

munities that dotted the rural landscape of Northern China, whereas the St. John's ideal of Christian humanism was inevitably dissipated by the urban bourgeoisie's eagerness to gain admission to a Western-oriented environment dominated by a concern for business profits. Scientific literacy and Christian belief were valued largely as symbols of cosmopolitanism and enlightenment. The ideals of a Renaissance Christian humanism continued to be invoked, but in reality what lay at the heart of the rise of St. John's as one of Central China's most exclusive and prestigious academic institutions was the program of "a Christian civilization of commerce and science," in the apt words of Griffith John, voiced at a time contemporaneous with the founding of St. John's. The symbols, styles and values of this Christian civilization were propelled to a new height of social respectability in the 1920s, along with the rise of many of the university's alumni into the circles of Shanghai's financial and industrial leadership.

THE SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF ST. JOHN'S

From a modest start, with secondary students drawn almost without exception from Christian families in the Jiangnan area, St. John's grew into the leading Chinese Christian university in the 1920s, with a total enrollment of 449 in the university proper (419 in the Schools of Arts and Science, 4 in Theology, and 26 in Medicine) in the spring of 1925, the peak year of enrollment before 1937.⁵⁷ The earlier predominance of the Secondary Department was reversed for the first time in 1916, when enrollment in the Collegiate Department surpassed that of the Secondary by 24.⁵⁸ The increase began in the early 1900s, and gathered momentum in the next two decades. For the decade 1900–1909 a total of 561 students had studied in the university. That figure was tripled in the next ten years to reach a total of 1,836, and was again significantly increased during 1919–1929, reaching a total of 2,863. The growth in the 1920s, as reflected in the last figure, was particularly impressive, because it took place despite two major setbacks for St. John's connected with the rise of Chinese nationalism. There was a sharp decline of

enrollment in the fall of 1925 (from 449 to 265), when a significant portion of the students severed their ties with St. John's in the wake of the May Thirtieth Movement and formed a separate university of their own; and there was the total shutdown of St. John's in 1927-1928, in anticipation of disturbances accompanying the Northern Expedition.⁵⁹ The university that emerged in the Nanjing decade thus contained a student body that had by and large cleansed itself of active concern with issues of nationalism.

This growth in enrollment was accompanied by changes in composition. Although secularization of the student body was a general trend among urban Protestant institutions that offered a general curriculum with broad appeal, secularization at St. John's advanced ahead of other major institutions both in time and in degree. The proportion of Christian students at Yenching University fell from 72.7 percent in 1924 to 32 percent in 1934; at Lingnan University from 71.6 percent in 1924 to 26 percent in 1934; at Hangchow University from 86.3 percent in 1924 to 27 percent in 1936.⁶⁰ At St. John's, as early as 1920, about 50 percent of its students were drawn from an affluent mercantile background instead of the typical Christian poor. By 1920, a decade before secularization set in motion in other institutions, only 20 to 25 percent of St. John's students were Christians or from a Christian background.⁶¹

Though a majority of students were still from the Shanghai area, in the Republican years St. John's was able to draw around 40 percent of its students from other provinces, especially South and Central China.⁶² There were co-provincial associations on the campus of St. John's for students from southern and central provinces such as Guangdong, Anhui, Fujian, and Sichuan, in addition to clubs for those from the nearby Jiangnan counties such as Ningbo, Wuxi, and Pudong.⁶³ Such geographical spread contrasted with conditions in the early years, when the appeal of St. John's was limited to those from the Wu-dialect region. This broadening of the socio-geographical base of the university, however, was accompanied by an increase in homogeneity in the pre-collegiate educational experience of St. John's freshman class. Between 1914 and 1919, as the number of applicants increased, and in order to assure a high level of

English proficiency of its students, St. John's created special links with the middle schools of the Mission and a few other well-known schools in Shanghai where English was also used as the medium of instruction. Graduates of these accredited schools—St. John's University YMCA School, the Shanghai YMCA High School, the Shanghai Minli School, St. Peter's Parish School, the Mahan School, and St. Mary's Hall and McTyeire School in the case of women students—along with graduates of St. John's Middle School, were admitted to the freshman class without examination.⁶⁴ As St. John's gained in prestige in the Republican period, its academic program also advanced in sophistication. Competition for admission grew keener each year. To prepare for a place in its undergraduate program, a student began as early as the junior secondary level, if not sooner, by entering one of St. John's feeder schools.

This was by and large true of other missionary institutions as well. The majority of Christian colleges where English was used drew a preponderant percentage of each freshman class from Christian secondary schools where English was also the medium of instruction.⁶⁵ It was the teaching of English rather than the teaching of Christianity that contributed to such homogeneity in the vertical educational experience and the overall secularization of St. John's student body.

Because English in treaty-port Shanghai was the language of the Municipal Council, the Mixed Court, the financial institutions, the compradore bourgeoisie and the Concessions' high society, for young Chinese of affluent Concessions background it was also the language of status and education. St. John's prepared its students for "positions in business," wrote Dr. Pott.⁶⁶ St. John's also entered its students "into relationship with foreigners," and launched them upon "useful lives in the community."⁶⁷ St. John's trained its Chinese pupils in the language, value, and manners of the Anglo-American colonialists, and placed its graduates in a network of connections that drew together the "East" and the "West." The university itself benefited financially from the support of the treaty-port network. Funding from the Mission Board showed modest increases over the year, while income from student fees and private contributions,

from both the United States and China, rose sharply.⁶⁸ Income from contributions constituted over three-fourths of the total income of St. John's in the early 1920s, before its image was tarnished by direct confrontations with the forces of Chinese nationalism in mid-decade.⁶⁹

In retrospect, the network that proved to be of critical importance to St. John's—the network that preserved the influence of St. John's among urban and national notables of the Republican period, and to which the University owed its very ability to defy the power of the Nationalist Party during the Nanjing decade—was the set of social ties that centered upon the Alumni Association. Founded in 1900 as one of the first of its kind in China, the Alumni Association of St. John's quickly grew into a sizable organization with branch associations in Tianjin, Beijing, Nanjing, Hankou, Hangzhou, and Ningbo, as well as in England, Western Europe, and the United States.⁷⁰ This well-knit organization maintained close ties with the university through an Advisory Council of the alumni, which consisted of “a group of loyal and active members.” The association coordinated activities of branch organizations and kept in regular and close touch with the administration of St. John's. In the early years, the Alumni Association served primarily as a booster group to drum up financial support for the university in China and contribute gifts, which materialized in the form of new buildings and athletic fields.⁷¹ Like alumni elsewhere, former students of St. John's also demonstrated their loyalty to the university with enthusiastic support of the alma mater in intercollegiate sports.

The social composition of the Alumni Association, as reflected in a set of data prepared for its members, was indicative of the areas in which old-boy ties were particularly strong.⁷² A preliminary count in 1929 showed that, of 780 former St. John's students, 200 were engaged in educational work, another 200 in commercial activities; 20 were employed in industry,⁷³ 100 in government service,⁷⁴ and 80 in the medical profession;⁷⁵ another 80 were pursuing advanced study in China and abroad, 30 were in the field of religious and social services, and 70 were of unknown occupation.⁷⁶ The distribution suggested, first, the eminence and preponderance of St. John's

alumni in fields in which knowledge of English and the West were of particular value: diplomatic service, commerce, and, to a lesser extent, industrial entrepreneurship. It was, second, a measure of the considerable contribution made by the university in pioneering advanced professional training in Central China, especially in the field of medicine, and to a lesser extent in civil engineering, journalism, and business administration. It showed, third, how important St. John's alumni were in the creation of new kinds of social organs which grew out of Christian field service—institutions such as the YMCA and other relief and welfare organizations.⁷⁷

Although these figures are far from complete in mapping the placement of St. John's students, the pattern that emerges is nonetheless suggestive. It underscores the financial, commercial, metropolitan, and Westernized biases of an education at St. John's while serving as a measure of secularization on its campus. The vocational composition of the active membership of the Alumni Association also reflected the social basis of the university's main support in China. St. John's took its students into a web of social relationships that reached into the top echelon of the financial, commercial, industrial, and professional elites of Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s. This network of personal relationships, drawn from social and educational backgrounds of a considerable degree of homogeneity, was reinforced, above all, by the shared cultural style of undergraduate life on the campus.

“ESPRIT DE CORPS”: THE CULTURAL STYLE OF THE SHANGHAI BOURGEOISIE

College life at St. John's laid emphasis on the creation of a unique collegial spirit; each class of students graduated with an *esprit de corps*. There were some marked advantages to the class system (“Class of '23,” “Class of '35,” and so on), which was considered a peculiar feature of the American college, wrote Dr. Pott, despite criticisms made by those who favored the English and the German ways. “A student becomes closely associated with the members of his own class and feels that they are in a peculiar sense his closest friends.

All through life he remembers them and takes pride in their achievements. He also feels it an honor to his class if some of the members become distinguished in future life."⁷⁸ St. John's fostered this *esprit* through a wide range of extracurricular activities which brought together the predominantly American faculty and the Chinese students.⁷⁹ There were several distinct components of such activities: music, drama, sports, charity and social events.

Beginning with the singing of psalms in the church choir, there were numerous extracurricular activities at St. John's that involved the presentation and appreciation of some form of music. The Drum and Fife Corps and the Glee Club, both the earliest of their kind in China, were created before 1900. Music—vocal as well as instrumental, Chinese as well as Western banjo, violin, harp, piano, flute, fife, orchestra, and band—was prominent both on the school's social and ceremonial calendar and in the daily life in student dormitories.⁸⁰

There were many connoisseurs and performers of Western and Chinese music among St. John's students. Cheu Be-sing (Qiu Peixun), BA in Political Science, President of the Class of '22, a native of Zhejiang and a man with "the right flair for politics," was also a "great musician" who would lose himself in music, especially the flute and the fife. Yui Oong-zung (Yu Hongrun), BA in Economics, '22, "a great talker, a 'loafer,' a 'dreamer'" who "went to bed late and got up late on ordinary days and went to sleep early and got up late at examination time," a man who miraculously passed his examinations though he was "never absorbed in his studies," had his mind perpetually "distracted" by the music and singing at the "matinee" on Saturdays and Sundays. Koo Sung-pak (Gu Senbo), BS '22, was a "husky and cheerful gentleman who sings beautiful[sic] as the skylark." When he sings on stage in falsetto, exclaimed his yearbook biographer, "certainly you will be charmed when he gives a solo!" "We made a display of our love of St. John's in giving a variety entertainment at the Olympic Theatre on the evenings of December 20 and 21, 1921," recorded Waung Kyiun-li, recreation secretary of the class. The evening of entertainment was a success, and "(we) restored the old reputation of St. John's

students' entertainment." The University Chinese Orchestra, composed of 18 members of the Class of '22, contributed to that success as well. Their classmates were pleased because the performance not only reflected how these students "recognized the value of music as one of the fundamental upkeeps of the beautiful side of life"; it also helped raise money "for the extension of the University ground."⁸¹

Some of St. John's associates were important in introducing certain aspects of the Western musical tradition to China as a result of their experiences abroad. When the son of Yan Yongjing (d. 1898), co-founder of St. John's, returned from Kenyon College, he brought home a guitar, a bicycle, and the habit of taking long walks in the moonlight with his fiancée.⁸² The instruments aroused much curiosity, while the walks shocked the villagers around the campus. When the American-educated engineer Niu Shangzhou, father of the future St. John's alumni and physicians Niu Huilin and Niu Huisheng and an uncle of T. V. Soong (1894–1971) got married, a Christian ceremony was followed by a reception and entertainment at the Lyceum Theatre during which, for celebration, a group of Niu's friends organized a 4-man chorus and sang the English songs that they had learned in the United States.⁸³

St. John's performances helped popularize musical appreciation on other missionary college campuses. In 1927, a banjo group from St. John's visited the Baptist Hujiang College and earned much admiration. Similar groups were formed at Hujiang as a result of this memorable visit. Hujiang developed, during the Nanjing decade, into an institution with numerous extracurricular musical activities, compulsory music courses, and glee clubs that toured Eastern China on performance engagements—just like St. John's.⁸⁴

Missionary colleges appeared to provide a campus environment more conducive than Chinese public and private institutions to the appreciation of Western music. Yenching University presented Handel's *Messiah* every year when its music program was under the direction of Dr. Bliss Wiant. But there were other public performances. Shanghai, after all, was the city where visitors such as Sergei Rachmaninoff, Jacques Thibaut, Jascha Heifetz, and Fritz Kreisler frequently gave concerts. Shanghai was also the city in which the

Shanghai Municipal Orchestra, with Arrigo Foa as conductor and concert master, gave regular Sunday performances. To be sure, few Chinese were to be found among the audiences of serious concerts; the symphonies and concertos were simply too abstruse for cross-cultural popular appreciation. But a small number appeared on such occasions. Those who had seats in the back rows at the Lyceum Theatre tended to be of high social background with educational experience in Europe and America. Those in the balcony, who paid less for their admission, were students from missionary colleges such as St. John's and Huijiang.⁸⁵

The Athletic Association of St. John's dated its founding from the late 1890s. A wide range of sports and games were pursued: tennis, swimming, track and field, football, basketball, and so forth, all of Western origin. Many students went in for athletics for exercise and sport, and for the cheering crowd and the medals. The Class of '24 often boasted of the presence of two kinds of talents in its midst—musicians and athletes. There were several "prominent runners and football players" ("football" being soccer), including Y. L. Tsung, H. L. Ho, and K. V. Lien. "Mr. Tsung is famous throughout the college for his long-distance running," wrote the secretary of the class; and Tsung and Ho were both on the football team. The Class of '23 "occupied a unique position" in the school's history of athletics, because it had popularized and had remained forever victorious in all matches of a game called "small football," played with simpler rules and fewer players than a regular soccer match. "We are very much interested in athletics because we fully realize the soundness of Roosevelt's advice that a boy must study hard and play hard," said the class yearbook. The Class of '25 reported that it met daily after lunch for a game of "small football." Ling Zien-hwe (Lin Quanhui), BS '22, "the greatest violinist the University has ever produced," who sang with a "tenor voice which is exceedingly fascinating and taking, though not very loud," whose study was never quite tidy, and who was always the last man to appear before a roll call of any sort, was, nonetheless, "the best swimmer in the college team" and a player on the football and basketball teams. Benjamin T. H. Hsu (Xu Tenghui), BA '22, a

native of Guangdong, was "a social worker of great enthusiasm," a theologian of ardent religious zeal," and also captain of St. John's track-and-field team.⁸⁶

One of the most important events on the social calendar was the annual intercollegiate football match held under the auspices of the East China Intercollegiate Athletic Association. For over a decade—till St. John's was ostracized by the Association in 1925 in the wake of the May Thirtieth Incident—championship in football was contested between the teams of St. John's and Nanyang. Winners of the game sometimes traveled to Beijing and Hong Kong to compete for national titles—when these regions appeared ready to send forth a team that could stand a match with the Central China teams. The St. John's-Nanyang game, referred to as the "Harvard-Yale Game of East Asia," was invariably the occasion for many social activities. The women students of St. Mary's, a sister institution of St. John's, would appear at the game to cheer for a St. John's victory—much to the envy of the rivals from Chinese institutions.⁸⁷

Drama and debates were other Western-style activities introduced through St. John's to Chinese college campuses. Cicero Clubs, which featured "public speaking in English through individual orations and team debates," were organized each year.⁸⁸ A Shakespeare Club, which met on Saturday evenings for the reading of one of Shakespeare's plays, was formed around 1900.⁸⁹ On the eve of commencement in July 1896, the trial scene from *The Merchant of Venice* was acted by the graduating class. Performance of sections of Shakespeare's plays became a school tradition.⁹⁰ With the backing of an increasingly wealthy and influential body of alumni, this event received extensive coverage in the social pages of the Shanghai papers as well. Friends and families of students and alumni eagerly attended the performances, arriving in private chauffeured vehicles and dressed in fashionable clothing, each paying several yuan for admission and donation.

Social occasions of this sort gravitated towards conspicuous consumption as the Shanghai upper bourgeoisie gained both in wealth and confidence of their mastery of Western social etiquette and customs. Nowhere was the tyranny of fashion and social codes exercised

with greater attention to detail than in the leading missionary women's schools such as the Methodist McTyeire, a feeder school to St. John's which included Madame Chiang Kai-shek in its roster of illustrious graduates. In addition to courses in music, art, literature, home economics, and management skills, McTyeire women studied the improvement of personal appearance, the beautification of the home environment, the mastery of social etiquette, and other skills befitting an accomplished upper-middle class hostess. McTyeire seniors spent lavishly on their stage costumes for the English-language drama performed on the eve of the commencement exercise. For the exercise itself, a graduate might have as many as seven new outfits for the various farewell parties held on campus—so as to avoid the embarrassment of appearing in the same jewelry and clothing for more than one occasion.⁹¹

Social life at St. John's in the Republican period linked the status symbols of upper-middle-class Shanghai with the manners and styles of the West. Western cultural influence permeated the daily existence of many Chinese families within the orbit of St. John's. The rhythm of life in the household of Rev. Yan Yongjing, a professor of mathematics and natural philosophy at St. John's, an early headmaster and also a co-founder, was regulated by Christian rituals and expressed in American symbols.⁹² Y. K. Yan was educated in missionary schools in Shanghai and then at Kenyon College (Gambier, Ohio). He returned to China in 1861, engaged in trade for a while, then served as a clerk in the Shanghai Municipal Council before becoming a preacher and ordained minister. Although quite conscious of being Chinese, Y. K. showed a preference for Western styles and chose to retain the habits he had acquired in his undergraduate days at Kenyon. He consulted his collection of English-language theological works for spiritual guidance and wisdom. Every Sunday he rode in a horse-drawn open cart—the kind more commonly seen in the American midwest than in China—from his residence at St. John's to his pulpit at Hongkew (Hongkou).

The Yan family lived in a Western-style house on campus. Yan Yongjing's son, Huiqing, played with other children—nearly all Americans—in the faculty quarters. On holidays, his father would

take him to visit American battleships that called at the port of Shanghai, to tour American paper mills, and to attend performances at the amateur English drama club and the circus. The Yan children wore Chinese gowns but were taught Western manners. Mrs. Yan, Huiqing's mother, had studied English at a missionary school in Hong Kong and was proud of her ability to convert servants to the Christian faith. She led the family prayer at the dinner table, taught the children Western table manners, and instructed the servants to serve Western-style food. Christmas was celebrated with candles, gifts, greeting cards, sermons, and prayers. All major Christian holidays on the calendar were observed, in addition to the 4th of July.⁹³

For a preponderantly Chinese student body, there was an unmistakable air of cultivated foreignness about life on the St. John's campus. The first issue of the *St. John's Echo*, the student paper founded in 1890, announced: "This paper claims to be the first paper published in the Orient by Chinese students in a tongue foreign to them, and only acquired after years of hard study."⁹⁴ In this sense, an education at St. John's hardly prepared its students for a culturally central role in Chinese society. Instead, the aspirations were necessarily phrased in cosmopolitan terms: "to bring the West and the East into sympathetic touch."⁹⁵ The enormous success of St. John's in the context of the rise of Shanghai bourgeoisie in the 1920s and 1930s was thus an important measure of the cultural distance that had set these treaty-port upper classes apart from the rest of the country.

What St. John's had accomplished in the hybrid environment of semi-colonial Shanghai was to offer young Chinese from affluent financial, commercial, industrial, and professional backgrounds an unabashedly Western-oriented education, which became part of the treaty-port elites' self-definition. This gift of "Christian civilization of commerce and science," however, was not without a price. The principal form of Chinese-language instruction that received the blessing of the university was translation: Milton and Shakespeare into Chinese prose, and vice versa. The Class of '22, however, organized a Chinese Literary Club, which required its members to

practice Chinese calligraphy, to recite Chinese classical essays, and to compose in Chinese. Some students "felt the need of preserving and developing our own language and literature, so often neglected in this institution."⁹⁶ Even though some seemed to have developed a capacity for cultural eclecticism, joining the Abacus Club while taking courses in economics with American professors,⁹⁷ others discovered, in the tumultuous decade of the 1920s, that a Chinese student paid a certain price for receiving the sort of education that St. John's had to offer.

The Class of '22 also sent, as freshmen, delegates to the Shanghai Students' Union in support of the May Fourth Movement in 1919. Lieu Tsoo-hwe (Liu Zuhui), BA in political science, '22, was remembered as the chief editor of *St. John's Echo* who "worked hard day and night to make a success of the Shanghai Students' Union entertainment" for much-needed famine relief in North China. Four members of the class actually traveled north for that purpose.⁹⁸ To the extent that the university administration permitted these student-initiated activities to take place, no conflicts erupted on campus.

College education at St. John's during the Republican period was increasingly monopolized by the upper-middle bourgeoisie of Shanghai. Whether the family still regarded its native place as Ningbo, Guangdong, or elsewhere, the predominant elements in the student body comprised the children of the elite of the Shanghai commercial world. With Zung Seu-moh (Chen Shoumo), the front-liner of the 1919 inter-collegiate match, lauded as "a star on the football field; a lover of Western music; an economist and a Shakespearean!"⁹⁹ student life at St. John's was indeed remote from the concerns of Beijing scholars and urban revolutionaries, not to speak of provincial elites and the rural masses in China's vast hinterland. Throughout the Republican period, however, class-based criticisms rarely had much impact on the overall development of St. John's, well established as the university was in the privileged and exclusive environment of colonial Shanghai. Attacks made from the angle of nationalism, however, were a different matter. It was over the issue of nationalism that the fabric of the university was torn asunder in

the summer of 1925, during the high point of the May Thirtieth Movement. In anticipation of the "disturbance" that might accompany the entrance of the victorious Northern Expedition Army into Shanghai, riding on the tide of swelling nationalistic sentiment, St. John's closed down for the entire academic year 1927-1928. Sustained and intense criticisms were launched against St. John's both from within and without. Those who attacked from outside charged its faculty and administration with blatant cultural imperialism. Those who chose to remain within the university—the Chinese student body in particular—were not without some cultural ambivalence at the very least.

THE CHALLENGE OF NATIONALISM

When Rev. Pott first advocated the adoption of English as the primary medium of instruction, the arguments he used included the belief that English would facilitate the teaching of science on an advanced level.¹⁰⁰ Pott pointed out in the late 1890s that there was a shortage of suitable reference materials in Chinese on scientific subjects. Instructors were compelled to teach chemistry, physics, astronomy, and geology only at an elementary level and through the medium of Chinese, because the students' command of English was limited. Pott argued that it was possible to offer a thorough education in English first, and to elevate the level of instruction in science later. He also believed that English instruction would not jeopardize the teaching of Chinese history and literature in the native language of the students.¹⁰¹

Later developments showed that, in this last respect, Dr. Pott's optimism was ill-founded. St. John's University enjoyed no special renown for the strength of its science program. Its alumni occupied important positions in the financial world of Shanghai and the medical profession of the country, the latter the contribution of a separate medical school. And no matter how much the affluence of Shanghai bourgeoisie propelled their hybrid cultural style to new heights of social respectability in urban circles, these Westernized elites were unable to escape the criticisms of being "illiterate" in

their own language and culture.¹⁰² Such criticisms were connected with the Chinese program at St. John's.

Missionary colleges in general had weak Chinese programs. Not until Yenching University succeeded in inviting distinguished Chinese scholars such as Gu Jiegang, Rong Geng, and Hong Ye (William Hong) to the Harvard-Yenching Institute under the directorship of Chen Yuan did missionary colleges succeed in attracting eminent classicists to their faculty.¹⁰³ In the 1900s, while Yan Fu, Ma Liang, Liang Qichao, and other reformers lectured at Fudan University, the Chinese Department of St. John's held classes in the conventional style, conducted by old-fashioned holders of lower civil-service degrees.¹⁰⁴ The Chinese Department of St. John's was thus weak in the sense that it was isolated from the principal cultural and intellectual concerns informing the Chinese Departments of universities such as Beida, Qinghua, Fudan, and Zhongshan: questions regarding the culture's ability to regenerate itself and searches for China's political future.

Within St. John's itself, furthermore, the Chinese Department was weak and isolated as a result of rivalry with the English Department and its inability to communicate with the science departments and the professional schools. The barrier had cultural, educational, religious, and linguistic dimensions. Faculty meetings at St. John's had always been conducted in English, since they grew out of the departmental meetings of the English Department in the 1890s. Chinese instructors were prevented from full participation in these professional gatherings by their linguistic disadvantage.¹⁰⁵ Chinese teachers, furthermore, shared little in common style, outlook, background, or training with teachers of sciences and professional subjects, a predominant percentage of whom were educated in the West. Although numerically not an insignificant presence, ethnic Chinese instructors in missionary colleges tended to be treated as second-class employees. Those Chinese who taught English, sciences, and professional subjects received much less pay than their American colleagues. Those who taught Chinese subjects received even smaller salaries than their Chinese colleagues of Western subjects. Chinese faculty members were also discriminated against in

matters of housing, promotion, voice in faculty meetings, and tenure of employment.¹⁰⁶

While the treatment of St. John's Chinese faculty gave little evidence of efforts by the college's predominantly American administration to elevate the standing of Chinese in its program, other observers pointed out that it was the utilitarianism of the predominantly Chinese student body that led to the decline of the program. "It appeared to be practically impossible to get many of the young men to take a real interest in the study of Chinese Literature and Philosophy," wrote an official chronicler of the university, "because they saw the greater direct value of their studies in the Western department."¹⁰⁷ The Chinese program of St. John's was reduced, in the Republican period, to the token gesture of requiring all students to spend two hours a week on translation work of English into Chinese and vice versa. All other courses in Chinese were made electives. The School of Chinese, which carried traditionalist connotations even in its official Chinese title, the Guoxue Yuan (the School of National Learning), was abolished as a distinct college-level department in 1917.¹⁰⁸

When the pressure finally came for a fundamental reform of the Chinese program at St. John's, it predictably originated from outside the University. The May Fourth Movement of 1919 ushered in a decade of rising nationalist sentiment. In an increasingly anti-foreign and anti-Christian climate, criticisms intensified against St. John's students' illiteracy in their native culture and language. Huang Yanpei (1878–1965), head of the Jiangsu Provincial Educational Association, the recipient of an honorary doctorate from St. John's in 1923, and a prominent gentry leader with extensive connections in Shanghai's manufacturing and financial circles, was a leader of such critical opinion.¹⁰⁹

In its description of Shanghai society in the Republican period, Chinese Marxian historiography often draws a distinction between a "national bourgeoisie" and a "compradore bourgeoisie." These categories trace their origins to the editorial commentaries written by Chen Duxiu and Qu Qiubai, the first and second Secretaries General of the Chinese Communist Party, in the immediate after-

math of the May Thirtieth Incident of 1925. Qu and Chen used these categories primarily to describe certain perceived differences in the political attitudes of Shanghai's mercantile community towards the British authorities of the International Settlement during the ensuing strikes and negotiations. The small merchants of neighborhood associations were less conciliatory towards the British and more aggressive in their support for rallies and strikes than the leaders of Shanghai's Chamber of Commerce, according to these early Party writings, because the self-employed saw little conflict between their national and class interest. The rich merchants, as members of the compradore bourgeoisie, on the other hand, inevitably sought to defend their class interest by compromising that of their nation.¹¹⁰ The dichotomy of "national" versus "compradore" bourgeoisie thus was an attempt to link differences in political attitudes towards the imperialist powers to an analysis from the perspective of class interest.

Dictionary definition, however, reserves the term *compradore* for those Chinese who acted as agents of foreign trading and banking concerns. In the days of the Canton system, members of the cohong acted as the foreign traders' legal guarantors. In the decades of expanding trade in the late nineteenth century, the compradores typically handled up-country purchases, inland sales, Chinese money guilds, and bureaucracy, both as agents in the employment of foreign firms and as dealers in their own right. In Republican Shanghai, the head comprador of a foreign firm was often a wealthy merchant and general manager in dealings involving the foreign firm and the Chinese, who had in his employment a team of clerks, accountants, and others.¹¹¹ Meanwhile, the comprador class also included those Chinese of insignificant social origin who owed their rise into Shanghai's upper-middle bourgeoisie primarily to their long service in the employment of foreign firms. Yu Xiaqing, for example, perhaps one of the best known compradores of the Republican period, arrived in Shanghai in the third quarter of the nineteenth century as a poor Ningbo teenager apprenticed to a foreign firm. He rose to become the head agent of four foreign banks, amassed a large personal fortune in shipping, and became an independent

investor with powerful business and political connections.¹¹² In 1925, as President of Shanghai's General Chamber of Commerce, Yu was also a principal negotiator with the British during the May Thirtieth strikes and earned the radical nationalists' denunciation as a compradore who compromised China's national interest.¹¹³

Chinese ownership of modern enterprises emerged in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Because of the landed wealth and bureaucratic connection of the early investors, these activities were often described by Chinese historians as "bureaucratic capitalism" (*guanliao zibenzhuyi*). The social origins of the first investors were diverse. Some, in fact, emerged from the ranks of wealthy compradores. These private entrepreneurs were hard hit, however, by the 1883 banking crisis in Shanghai. The ensuing economic crisis marked a turning point that paved the way for the rise of bureaucratic capitalism.¹¹⁴ Under the guidelines of "official supervision, merchant management," the late nineteenth century saw the channeling of bureaucratic and gentry capital into industrial and transportation concerns such as steamships, railways, and mines, and the rise of gentry-merchants and gentry-industrialists with the blessing of officialdom. "National bourgeoisie" of this description, therefore, were distinguished by their gentry status, bureaucratic connections, rootedness in landed wealth, and involvement in industries and finance, and were different from the "national bourgeoisie" in 1925 of neighborhood merchants in style, interest, and status. In the twentieth century, as light industry developed and commercial activities expanded, opportunities opened up for industrious and enterprising individuals, including some overseas Chinese, to rise to fortune from humble origins—as in the case of the founders of the Yongan Department Store on Nanjing Road.¹¹⁵

Although the conventional distinction between "compradores" and "bureaucratic capitalists" points to certain tangible features about their genesis, the two groups became socially less and less distinguishable in the Republican period. The simple bifurcation of the bourgeoisie into "compradore" and "national" as a formulation to describe divergent political inclinations and class interests does not permit consideration for the existence of the "bureaucratic capi-

talists," nor does it adequately describe the enormous complexity of Shanghai society. One may very well argue that culturally the business environment as a whole contributed to the rise of a hybrid culture, in which no group could afford the insularity of a tradition-bound cultural nationalism.

But, although the need for a cosmopolitan outlook was commonly recognized, there were important differences in the ordering of social as well as cultural priorities. These differences come into sharp focus when key educational institutions such as St. John's University and the Jiangsu Provincial Educational Association are compared. As we have seen, success of St. John's was built upon a cosmopolitan effort "to bring the West and the East into sympathetic touch," the sort of program that appealed to the upper-middle classes in a broad sense.¹¹⁶ The Jiangsu Provincial Educational Association—the principal mover of modern educational reforms in Jiangsu and vocational education in the Jiangnan area—on the other hand, was guided by the gentry-elite's efforts to bring about China's modernization. The Jiangsu Provincial Educational Association originated in 1906 as a gentry advisory body to the office of the Governor General, and was charged broadly with the rectification of local customs and promotion of schools in the province.¹¹⁷ The association was a champion of pragmatic knowledge and vocational education in the Republican period. It encouraged the teaching of bookkeeping, accounting, English business correspondence, industrial technology, and so forth. While St. John's higher costs and heavier imprints of Westernization restricted admissions to a small number of the very wealthy, most of whom were "compradores" in cultural makeup if not in social origin and political allegiance, the Jiangsu Provincial Educational Association's much more accessible programs opened doors wide for a large number of "national bourgeoisie" of the middle and lower-middle classes, preparing their entry into the lower rungs of Shanghai's business and industrial world.

When the May Fourth Movement erupted in Shanghai in 1919, Huang Yanpei, head of the Jiangsu Provincial Educational Association, was prominently involved. The patriotic movement in Shanghai

was vigorously supported by the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of clerks, apprentices, and industrial employees swelled the ranks of the protestors by joining college and secondary-school students in street parades and patriotic assemblies. Unlike the movement in Beijing, the patriotic protests in Shanghai developed into a general strike which shut down the city. Huang Yanpei was an active participant in the rallies and strikes throughout May and June. He presided over Citizens' Association meetings. He urged that the commercial and educational circles of Shanghai take joint steps. He spoke about China's lack of unity and emphasized the importance of organization and harmony.¹¹⁸ Huang not only responded to the immediate political sentiment of the city; he also gave voice to the city's middle- and lower-rung national bourgeoisie.

Huang Yanpei's criticism of St. John's was therefore indicative of how the university was generally regarded. Upon Huang Yanpei's persistent prodding, St. John's appointed, two years after the abolition of the School of National Learning, a Director of University Studies and a staff of new teachers at higher salaries. The new Director of St. John's Chinese program was Meng Xiancheng (1893–), of St. John's, Class of '18. Meng had studied education in the United States, and, as a frequent contributor to the Chinese Educational Review (*Jiaoyu zazhi*), a Shanghai-based journal for professional educators and teachers of secondary schools founded in 1909 with the support of the gentry leaders of the Jiangsu Provincial Educational Association, was a strong advocate of curricular reform in the spirit of May Fourth enlightenment.¹¹⁹ The reform of the Chinese program and the introduction of a new pedagogical orientation under Meng's direction took place during the six years enclosed by the May Fourth and May Thirtieth Movements, and coincided with the general rise of student political activism and the awakening of cultural and national consciousness on college campuses across the nation. St. John's was forced to close down three times during 1919–1920 as a result of Shanghai student agitation in the wake of the May Fourth Incident in Beijing.¹²⁰ Coming on top of that, the reformation of the Chinese Department, which re-

introduced concerns for national interest to the students of St. John's, proved to have highly divisive consequences for St. John's.

Every effort to strengthen the ability of St. John's students to tap into their own high culture accentuated the enormous gap developing between comfortable Western assumptions about the future of Shanghai and justifiable Chinese nationalist claims that China had to be returned to the Chinese, sooner or later. As the "anti-warlord, anti-imperialism" commotion continued into the 1920s and as the administration of St. John's was increasingly the target of accusations of cultural imperialism, tension mounted between the administration and the students over the question of pure national loyalty. That tension finally culminated in an open confrontation between the students and Rev. Pott over an incident involving the Chinese national flag during the high point of the May Thirtieth protests.¹²¹ The student body was incensed by what it perceived to be arbitrary and unfriendly attitudes towards China on the part of the President and some members of the faculty. Two hundred and sixty-two college students (58 percent of the total) and 290 secondary-school students (roughly 75 percent) chose to sever their ties with the university, along with nearly the entire Chinese Department. This was the core group which, financially supported by members of Shanghai's national bourgeoisie in the manufacturing sector, founded Guanghua University—the name Guanghua meaning, literally, "glory to China."¹²²

The creation of Guanghua University damaged the reputation of the faculty and administration of St. John's in the eyes of Chinese nationalists. In the subsequent "campaign to regain national right of education" (*shoubui jiaoquan yundong*), St. John's was portrayed as the archetypal creation of "cultural imperialism": both an institution advanced by foreign missionaries to serve as the vanguard of imperialistic penetration, and a cultural enticement used to prevent Chinese students from developing an appropriate national consciousness. In the face of mounting hostility St. John's paid the price of collegial ostracism. In the fall of 1925, for instance, St. John's was forced to give up its membership in the East China Inter-Collegiate Athletic Association to its secessionist rival, Guanghua

University. And, even when the nationalist agitation finally subsided in the fall of 1928, the university—in the words of William Sung (Shen Siliang), Dean of College of Letters and Science—still "found it necessary to limit our athletic activities to within the institution itself and to refrain from any formal outside competition."¹²³ As long as Guanghua continued to be received by other Shanghai colleges as their peer institution, students of St. John's had to be content with intramural sports by themselves during the Nanjing decade.

With the May Thirtieth encounter so recent in memory, St. John's closed down for over a year during 1927–1928, in anticipation of a difficult time following the victories of the Nationalist Army. The Northern Expedition campaign moved swiftly through the Yangzi Valley. Fighting broke out in Jiangxi, Fujian, and Zhejiang in September 1926. In December, the Nationalists moved through Hunan and took Hankou. Military conflicts shook the missionary enclaves in many parts of China. In Western China, all Americans beyond Chongqing were advised by their consuls to leave. The death of Dr. John Williams of Nanjing University, caused by the bullets of looting soldiers, sent shock waves throughout the missionary institutions in China.¹²⁴ When order was re-established with the founding of the Nationalist Government in Nanjing, the majority of public as well as private colleges and universities found themselves facing an uncertain future of increased pressures from the new government.

The *North China Daily News* reported in June 1928 that "an effort is being made by the enemies of St. John's University to prevent its reopening and, indeed, to persuade the Nationalist University Council to take over its control."¹²⁵ The report turned out to be a mere rumor. The circulation of such rumors, however, was indicative of the general climate. Insecurity and isolation in the midst of hostility led to a renewed emphasis on institutional loyalty and an effort to strengthen existing ties. When St. John's reopened in the fall of 1928, registration was limited to former students, to students from accredited and affiliated schools, and to those recommended by members of the alumni as being "young men of good character."¹²⁶

Under the onslaught of nationalism, the university turned inward, drawing support from a social network cultivated in the earlier decades of the century that had survived the division over nationalist issues. In the appointment of faculty, St. John's also turned to former graduates in the hope of achieving a higher degree of homogeneity in outlook and educational experience on campus. The result was an even smaller body of students—194—than in the years between 1925 and 1927, after the secession of Guanghua, yet “a carefully selected one” with proven loyalty to the university, who shared much in social background and cultural style. St. John's thus entered the 1930s with a much reduced enrollment, totaling less than 300 in the early years. Only gradually did it regain the enrollment achieved in the mid-1920s.¹²⁷

In this mood of retrenchment the university came under sudden and unexpected pressure from the Nanjing government to register with its Ministry of Education. What was involved, on the surface, was the university's freedom from the interference of the Chinese state, which sought to forbid the practice of Christianity on the St. John's campus. The new Nationalist Government in Nanjing banned the practice of making Christian belief—and the teaching of any religion—a requirement in Chinese colleges and universities. To register with Nanjing—to acquire legal status as a university under the new Chinese government—thus entailed putting attendance at religious courses and church service on a voluntary rather than a compulsory basis. Although spontaneous student interest in matters of religion had already declined precipitously in the 1910s, Dr. Pott, President of St. John's, was confident that the university would be able “to maintain its Christian character and to carry on Christian work on a voluntary basis” under these new circumstances.¹²⁸ But among the bishops and American clergy of the American Church Mission in China, Pott's position was in the minority.¹²⁹ At a meeting of the Council of Advice on 27 May 1928, it was announced that the Board of Trustees of St. John's would not permit registration under the government regulations as they stood. The Council sought, instead, to secure more “liberal” regulations from the Chinese government, and the right to exempt St. John's from compliance

with such regulations. It intended to do so through the influence of the Chinese members on the Board of Directors of the university.¹³⁰

Negotiations with the Nanjing Government went on for the next two years, conducted on behalf of St. John's by such prominent Chinese as the Shanghai industrialist Liu Hongsheng, the General Secretary of the YMCA Yu Rizhang, and the Finance Minister T. V. Soong, all former students who served as members of the Board of Directors.¹³¹ On 7 October 1930, the National Council of the Episcopal Church adopted a resolution in which it flatly rejected registration under regulations that would “forbid an open declaration of the Christian character and purpose of the school,” “impair the right of the Church to teach the Christian religion and to provide Christian services for the pupils of the school,” and, above all, “involve the surrender of the title to or control of the property.” As a further insult to the Chinese authorities it defied, the Council also expressed skepticism about the ability of the Nationalist Government to maintain political stability and stay in power, calling attention to “the continuous change in the conditions in the different areas of that country.”¹³² Consequently, after a half-hearted gesture to register in 1931, St. John's ignored all further notifications from the Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education and remained unregistered till 1948.¹³³

Freedom of conscience was seemingly preserved, and the power and claims of the Chinese state were kept out of the university. The victory of the bishops, however, was political rather than religious. The tendency towards secularization, inherent in the programs that brought St. John's its rapid growth and expansion, had become so pronounced on its campus that, within a few years after the quarrels with the Nationalist Government, church attendance at St. John's was made voluntary, religious courses were made electives, and the School of Theology was finally closed down in 1934 for want of sufficient enrollment.

What the bishops had rejected were not so much attempts to politicize higher education, as the claims of Chinese nationalism embodied in the regulations of the new Nationalist Government. By refusing to register under the terms laid down by that govern-

ment, St. John's placed itself apart from the system of higher education the Chinese state deemed acceptable on Chinese soil. The refusal to register was thus a blatant assertion of imperialistic prerogatives backed by the power of a foreign church and mediated by the compradore elite. St. John's' continued existence during the Nanjing decade delineated the boundaries of the Nationalists' effective claims to sovereignty as well as the limits of nationalism in higher education under the Republic.

St. John's not only flouted the legitimate claims of Chinese nationalism; it flourished in spite of its opposition, gaining in size and prestige as the Nanjing decade progressed. The college continued to be the alma mater of the upper bourgeoisie in Shanghai's foreign concessions, whose economic influence penetrated coastal urban centers and provincial capitals alike. This upper bourgeoisie owed much of its social definition to a hybrid social outlook and a Westernized cultural bearing. A Western-style education authenticated its training and enhanced its social prestige, propelling it from a marginal to an essential place in Chinese society along with the rise of Shanghai in national economic life. The history of St. John's University was integral to this new elite formation. But the clash between the ideal of St. John's religious and political autonomy and the claims of Chinese nationalism also resonated in the ringing condemnation of these bourgeois elites, heard throughout the twentieth century, for their loss of cultural identity and abnegation of social responsibility.

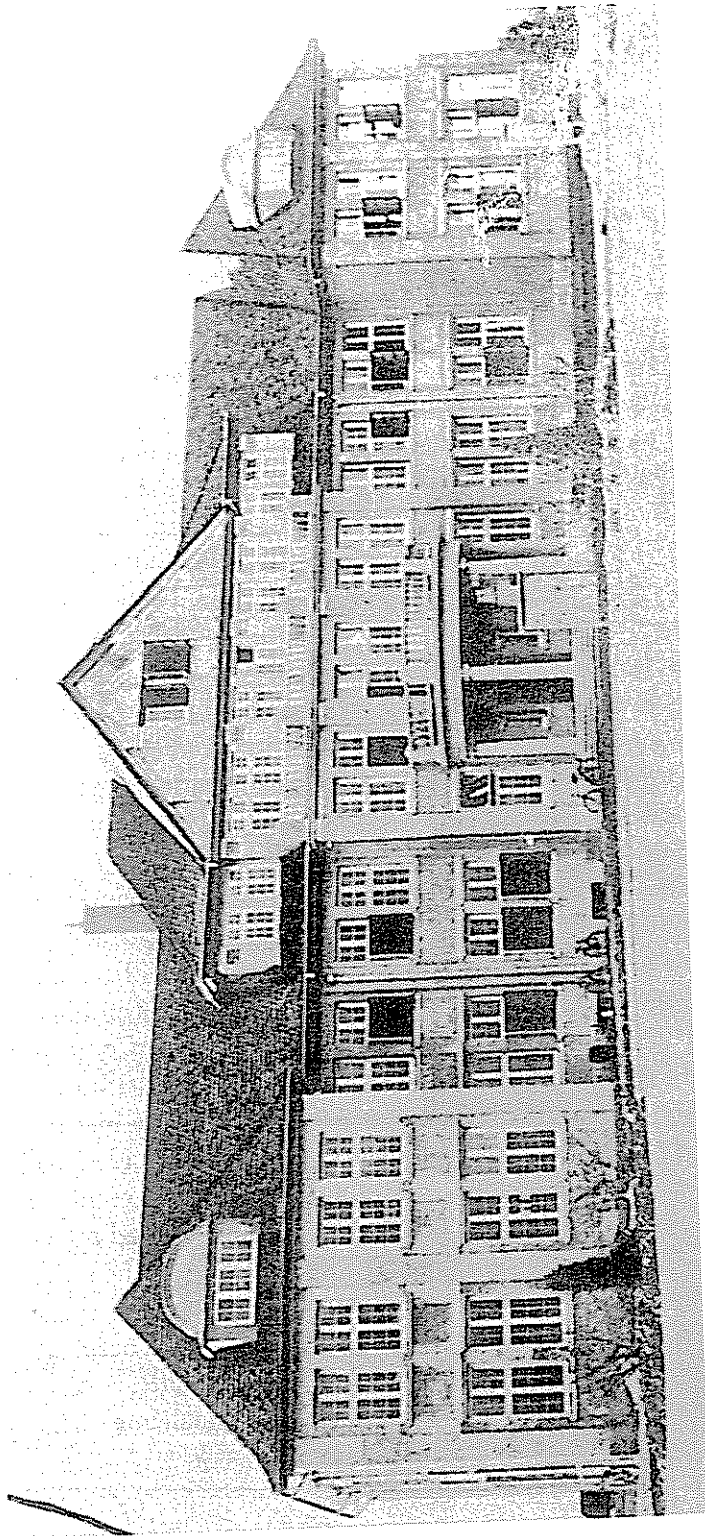
THREE

From Gentry Academies to Middle-Class Colleges

The reform of the country's academic curriculum, which began in the 1860s under the auspices of the Qing Court and was induced by China's military defeats at the hands of the British and the French, escalated into a major overhaul of the nation's educational institutions after the turn of the century. The Imperial Court ordered, in 1905, the immediate and permanent cessation of the civil-service examinations which, as the principal institution that brought the educated into the state bureaucracy, was also a pillar of the Chinese social system. The system of public academies sponsored jointly by the officials and local gentry leaders in the provinces, which since the early Qing had nurtured successful examination candidates and had sanctified the civil community through the reenactment of Confucian rituals, was displaced by a system of public elementary and intermediate schools of Western style. The Court also directed resources into the creation of technological institutes such as the Nanyang College in Shanghai and the Tangshan Institute of Technology in Hebei. Although the classical literary ideal had not been completely abandoned, the state emphasized technological and managerial training as keys to China's survival and regeneration.

The changes sanctioned by the Court unleashed the reformist energy of the urban gentry elite. These reformers, alarmed by the deepening national crisis since the 1890s, had been agitating for major institutional reforms which, in the 1900s, finally congealed into demands for monarchical constitutionalism.¹ The reformist

Figure 3 The Main Classroom Building of Fudan University, Shanghai, 1926



Source: *Fudan daxue lingyin nianjian*, 1926.

gentry's response to the overhaul of the educational system at the turn of the century was generally quite positive. In many central and southern Chinese cities from Nanjing, Zhenjiang, Jiujiang, Wuhu, Changsha, Wuhan, Chengdu, Chongqing, Hangzhou, Fuzhou, and Amoy to Canton, gentry reformers took the initiative in bringing forth elementary and secondary schools and special institutes that offered new subjects such as mathematics, science, foreign languages, law, political studies, and physical education in their curriculum.

Non-official efforts at the founding of institutes of higher education, meanwhile, were concentrated in Shanghai in the 1900s. Shanghai's unique social and cultural environment contributed to such developments. First, there was the presence of foreign institutions such as St. John's and the French Jesuit Université L'Aurore. Although Chinese intellectuals viewed these institutions with reservations, missionary colleges nonetheless served as a sort of stimulant to the creation of Chinese colleges. Among the first groups of administrators, teachers, and students of the private Fudan College, for example, were many Chinese formerly associated with L'Aurore.²

Shanghai had seen the teaching of Western subjects since the 1860s under the auspices of Li Hongzhang, the Governor General, in institutions such as the Jiangnan Arsenal and the Shanghai Translation Bureau. But, more important, the city, by the 1900s, commanded the talents and institutions that pooled the resources of the wealthy Jiangnan core zone. With its foreign banks, trading concerns, Chinese- and English-language presses, printing houses, steam lines, and interlocking trading and academic networks with Jiangsu and Zhejiang, Shanghai was the nodal point of a network of politically active gentry elite that had earlier expanded the sphere of its provincial activities through the management of local rehabilitation and relief efforts.³ These Jiangnan notables found in Shanghai a central stage of activity that drew them out of their provincial enclaves and put them in touch with national events.

Shanghai was, at the same time, the hub of a patronage network that encompassed expectant officials, treaty-port intellectuals, pri-

late secretaries, compradore financiers and managers, political advisers, and foreign-affairs experts who managed the bureaus and offices of modernizing enterprises spawned by the "tent government" and the "official supervision, merchant management" policies of the powerful Governor General Li Hongzhang. These two groups, the provincial gentry-activists and the regional scholar-officials, became socially mixed towards the late nineteenth century. The three leading Chinese institutes of higher education in Shanghai in the 1900s—Nanyang, Fudan, and China Colleges—in different ways embodied the educational aspirations of this Jiangnan-based, gentry-official network bent upon modernizing China.

The joint gentry-official sponsorship of these institutions was reflected, first, in the naming of these colleges in the 1900s. Nanyang, Fudan, and China were all referred to as *gongxue*, or "public schools," as opposed to the strictly private gentry undertaking of a *sixue* (private school), on the one hand, and the official bureaucratic creation of a *guanxue* (official school), on the other.⁴ Although far from being a classical bourgeoisie in terms of social origins and cultural outlook, these gentry-officials, nonetheless, had been dealing increasingly with matters of finance, trade, and industry since the 1870s, and had developed many connections with compradore and merchant interests.⁵ In the Republican years, these gentry-official institutes of new learning were to become middle-class colleges, offering a curriculum that stressed business, law, journalism, education, and other professional subjects.

Insofar as Shanghai's rich and influential were diverse in social constitution, the schools they founded reflected a considerable range in composition. Of the three leading Chinese colleges in Shanghai founded in the 1900s, Nanyang College was much more "official" than Fudan and China, since it was founded by Sheng Xuanhuai, Governor General Li Hongzhang's trusted manager of modern enterprises in Shanghai, with a steady supply of funding from government sources. Nanyang College eventually became a politically conservative state university under the Republic, offering courses in science and technology.

Fudan and China, on the other hand, were much more immedi-

ately related to the initiatives of the urban reformist elites of the 1890s and the constitutionalists of the following decade, including Yan Fu, Liang Qichao, Ma Liang, and Cai Yuanpei. During the 1900s, these two colleges offered courses on subjects such as Western political thought, social Darwinism, and the constitutional history of European nations, while functioning at the same time as forums for highly politicized discussions of current affairs and social problems. If Nanyang seemed to reflect the aspirations of a conservative reformist bureaucracy, the early Fudan and China embodied the vision of the progressive urban gentry reformers. The reformist bureaucrats and the progressive gentry-intellectuals were able to join efforts on issues of reform, although the gentry-intellectuals tended to hold a far more radical view than the bureaucrats about the desirability of a political revolution to overthrow the Qing.

COMMUNICATIONS UNIVERSITY AND THE RISE OF A TECHNOCRATIC ELITE

The enormous prestige of St. John's University in the lower Yangzi Delta in the Republican years was matched, in many ways, only by that of Nanyang College, later renamed the Communications University (Jiaotong Daxue). Founded in 1896 by the Imperial Government on the recommendation of Sheng Xuanhuai, it was an important institutional embodiment of the late nineteenth-century doctrine of "Chinese learning as substance, Western learning as application" (*Zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong*). It was conceived primarily as a technical institute and offered in the early years such fields of concentration as "railroads," "machinery" and "steamships."⁶ An officially sponsored institution, Nanyang received funding from the Bureaus of Commerce and Technology in Shanghai—newly established bureaucratic organs of the modernizing sort—and later, during the Republican period, from the Ministry of Communications. Adequately endowed by contemporary standards, Nanyang was able to build up a campus over 100 *mu* in size with modern classrooms, offices, libraries, laboratories, and residential halls. In the Republican period Nanyang was secure from the financial un-

certainty plaguing nearly all other state-sponsored institutions funded by the Ministry of Education. It enjoyed decades of steady growth, unlike a majority of Republican public colleges that were plagued by faculty discontent, student unrest, and disruption of academic work. In 1930, with a total enrollment of 1,074, what was by then known as Communications University held in laboratory facilities and equipment a total worth of 316,627 yuan, which put it in third place nationwide in terms of assets.⁷

Despite the fact that one was funded by the Chinese government and the other by an American church, Communications and St. John's were in fact quite comparable in certain aspects, especially the language and the style of extracurricular life on their campuses. Since few of the engineering subjects were of Chinese origin, academic work at Communications was carried out principally in English. Many of the early instructors were Americans, including the influential Dean, John C. Ferguson, who set up the technical curriculum. A large number of the Chinese faculty members held American degrees. Just like students at Qinghua College in Beijing in the early 1920s, graduates of Nanyang College were offered opportunities to pursue further study in the United States on Chinese government fellowships before taking up positions of responsibility in the modern enterprises controlled by the Ministry of Communications. To prepare for their study abroad, Nanyang students were early initiated to the use of knives and forks as well as to the games of soccer and basketball.⁸

Entrance examinations in all subjects except Chinese were in English. The entrance examination of Communications University in 1931, for example, was entirely in English in all subjects except "Chinese" and "Party doctrines," although the university administration was appointed by a Nationalist Government that stressed the general importance of using the native language. The Chinese questions, in line with the school's tradition since the turn of the century, contained a large section on "basic knowledge in national learning" (*guoxue changshi*). The history questions read as follows: "I. Distinguish between the three stages of savagery, barbarism, and civilization, and give instances of existing peoples in each stage.

II. Why is feudalism called a decentralized system of government? III. Describe briefly the intellectual and commercial results of the Crusades. IV. Mention the leading causes of European wars during the last century. V. Explain the present organization and functions of the League of Nations." The geography examination consisted of 5 questions. China was mentioned only in question I: "Locate the Chinese Eastern and the South Manchurian Railways and point out their connections with other lines."⁹ So much emphasis in these examinations was placed on world history and geography that, between the fall of the Roman Empire and the opening of the Suez Canal, the destiny of the Chinese nation became a mere provincial concern of local significance.

The examinations of Communications University contrasted sharply with those of Party-sponsored institutions such as the National Wuhan University. Wuhan's examinations in 1930, for example, were given entirely in Chinese in all subjects except English. Themes of nationalist overtone were clearly emphasized. History and geography questions were divided up into two even halves: China, and the world. For Chinese history, applicants of 1930 were asked to write on the following: "I. What were the leading intellectual schools of Song, Ming, and Qing? Summarize the contents of the major schools and name their leading scholars. II. When was Western science first introduced to China? By whom and how? What has been the impact of Western science on the Chinese intellectual world? III. What was the impact of the Opium War on the pattern of trade between China and the West?" For Chinese geography, students were asked to write on the following: "I. Describe Manchuria: mountains, rivers, railroads, and towns. II. Name the lost Chinese territories and the foreign concessions since the time of the Opium War. Mark the areas that have already been recovered by us. III. Identify some of the plateaus and basins of China, and describe the climate, ethnicity, and economic conditions of one of these regions of your choice."¹⁰ At Wuhan, as in the case of other Party-sponsored institutions at provincial centers such as Hangzhou, Nanjing, Guangzhou, and Chengdu, examinations in history and geography were exercises in nationalist sentiments.

At Communications, the emphasis on technological expertise and managerial efficiency knew no national and cultural boundaries, just as St. John's preoccupations with commerce and utility led to a similar disregard for such distinctions. While, after the major outburst of 1925, the remaining students of St. John's were self-selected to be impervious to concerns of imperialism, the students of Nanyang were rarely aroused politically after the 1911 Revolution, fully absorbed as they were in the search for technical solutions to China's enormous problems.¹¹ The future engineers and technical managers of Nanyang were serious students who put in long hours of hard work in libraries, laboratories, and workshops. Their service as private tutors in English and mathematics to college applicants of affluent background was much in demand, a measure of their reputation for academic excellence. The university, meanwhile, adopted measures, such as frequent tests and examinations, to ensure that all students focused their attention on academic work. Those who withdrew from Nanyang's high-pressure program not infrequently transferred to St. John's. The future technocrats of Nanyang, unlike the future financiers and industrialists of St. John's, had to demonstrate their diligence and competence in academic work. While the heirs of compradore bourgeois fortunes had their family ties and social connections to fall back on, Nanyang's meritocracy, compared with St. John's, offered the sons of the less well-to-do an opportunity to move up.

Communications and St. John's enjoyed remarkable prestige in the 1930s, although a completely different sort from the prestige of Beida. Beida was venerated as China's oldest academic institution, which traced its origin back to the Imperial Academy of the Former Han Dynasty (221 B.C.–A.D. 220). It was also eulogized as the fountainhead of the May Fourth protests and the New Culture Movement, celebrated for the breadth and erudition of its scholars, as well as the fervor, audacity, patriotism, social commitment, iconoclasm, and revolutionary consciousness of its students. The status of Communications and St. John's, by comparison, derived from their large assets, financial stability, firm administration, clearly defined goals, and, above all, their close ties with established sources

of wealth and Anglo-American influence. Both institutions grew in prestige with the rise of non-political elites whose careers were advanced by these pragmatic and technological curricula. In the context of the 1930s, Communications and St. John's were both elitist in the exclusiveness of their programs and in their social composition. While St. John's drew its students primarily from the established commercial and industrial wealth of Shanghai, Communications, as a meritocracy, drew its students primarily from its own affiliated Secondary Department, which was among the handful of elite secondary schools in Shanghai. Many Communications' students were from Shanghai and its vicinity. Some came from a highly selective section of private provincial secondary schools, where Communications' high level of English and mathematics requirements were met.¹² What an education at Communications bestowed upon the future technocratic elites of the nation was a cultural style and a dependency upon English socially no less exclusive than the style and fashion of the compradore bourgeoisie who converged upon the missionary St. John's University in Shanghai.

THE PLACE OF NATIONAL LEARNING IN AN ENGINEERING PROGRAM

The parallels between St. John's and Communications appear to end when attention is turned to the systems of beliefs promoted on their campuses. St. John's was meant to be Christian, despite irreversible trends towards secularization. Communications was intended to be Neo-Confucian in the tradition of the official Zhu Xi School of the Qing, despite the uncontrollable influence of iconoclasm. President Tang Weizhi, a shaping influence on Nanyang College who held the reins of the school during a long tenure that bridged the years from the old Empire to the new Republic (1907–1921), was not only a Hanlin scholar and former Vice-President of the Board of Agriculture, Industry, and Commerce during the reign of the Guangxu Emperor (1875–1908); he was also a famed scholar of *The Book of Changes* in the tradition of Song and Ming Neo-Confucianism and was determined to build Nanyang into an "ex-

emplary school of the Southeast" (*Dongnan biao shuai*) in the full meaning of that phrase.¹³

The moral dimension was not to be neglected if the college was to be "exemplary" in a proper Confucian sense. Tang Weizhi introduced the requirement that all Nanyang students attend a daily hour-long lecture on ethical dicta and moral philosophy. Much of the teaching material was taken from the works of Song and Ming Neo-Confucian masters—moral philosophers rather than philologists and classicists, whose teaching formerly constituted an important part of the official curriculum of the traditional academies sponsored jointly by the state and the gentry. There were, for example, lessons on "sincerity" (*cheng*) and the need to carefully scrutinize incipient inner desires (*yu*)—themes and practices that had long been associated with the official Neo-Confucianism of the Qing period. The standard format of these lectures was to have the lecturer read out loud, word for word, from a prepared text. Much like the *dang bagu* (eight-legged essays on Party doctrine) that critics of the Nationalist Government complained about in the 1930s, these moralistic texts typically began by taking a line or two from one of the standard collections of sagely sayings to wander on, with much predictability, to an expectedly hortatory conclusion. Not unlike a Christian Sunday sermon, the lecturers also freely injected comments and asides of situational relevance. President Tang often took advantage of the opportunity presented by the lectures to pass judgment on the moral character of contemporary political figures. The test of a student's moral understanding of these hortatory lessons was a written set of examination essays. Although the final grades assigned probably reflected more truthfully one's mastery of formulaic essay composition than one's moral character, the ethics course, still, was only to be ignored at the student's own expense. University tuition waivers were granted entirely upon the recommendation of the ethics instructor, who was very often also the professor of Chinese. Despite the overwhelming emphasis on English and a student culture oriented towards the West, Communications University was able to force student attention to Chinese subjects dispro-

portionate to what its program otherwise suggested, partly due to the intrusive use of administrative power.¹⁴

To bestow upon the new institute of technology the aura and prestige once associated with the state-sponsored academies, Tang Weizhi retained the Confucian rituals that formerly sanctified the traditional curriculum and bound the scholars to the state. While the high point of St. John's calendar fell on the eve of commencement, when students performed Shakespeare's plays, at Nanyang College it was the birthday of Confucius, when President Tang personally led members of the administration, faculty, and students in a full ceremony of worship.¹⁵ Until the onslaught of the May Fourth Movement, these ceremonies brought together members of the university in moments of shared formality, if not of spirit.

To invoke traditional symbols of state sponsorship, Tang Weizhi also gave a university-wide Chinese examination each fall around the time formerly designated for the Court examination under the Qing. The ritual quality of these examinations was perhaps their most important aspect. On this annual occasion, Tang Weizhi assembled the entire student body in the auditorium and personally proctored the examination. The old examination rules were enforced with full regalia and pomposity. The results of the examinations were publicly announced with a clear order of ranking, just as in the olden days.¹⁶

Communications University's forced Confucian theatricals may remind us of the Levensonian theme that the modern political use of traditional symbols has rendered authentic cultural expressions farcical.¹⁷ But the task set in front of the president of China's leading technical institute was undoubtedly an authentic one of how to bestow significance—apart from what an argument of technological utilitarianism may produce—upon a technical curriculum using the established symbols and vocabulary of a traditional political culture. The tactics adopted by President Tang exposed him to charges of traditionalistic petrification. However, the use of tradition in the hands of Tang Weizhi was different from its employment by President Yuan Shikai. The Republic President Yuan sought to displace

n 1916, wrote Levenson, may have been a failure but it was certainly no mistake.¹⁸ There were, therefore, no authentic values, only sentimental attachments, that the antique symbols might evoke in defense of the old political order. The Neo-Confucian facade of a technical program, however, served a less reactionary purpose. The Confucian moral lectures and the stately ceremonies of examinations indicated both the traditional state's willingness to incorporate science and technology into its cultural universe and an effort to harness such pursuits and give them direction. Tang Weizhi's attempts to manipulate traditional symbols of cultural legitimacy to serve new purposes were therefore meaningful exercises before utilitarianism, naked, came into its own, even though the symbols themselves were at the same time being corroded of substance.

But the implications of a Western-inspired technological curriculum could not readily be contained by such Neo-Confucian rhetoric and rituals. As the student culture on the campus of Communications became increasingly Westernized, Confucian ceremonies, as symbols of a particularistic attachment, provided the vehicle for the expression of nationalist sentiments. An assigned composition topic in one of the examinations of 1916 was the phrase *Handan xuebu* (learning to walk the Handan way), taken from *Zhuangzi*, which alluded to the story of a certain young man of Shouling who left his home town to go to Handan, the capital city of Zhao, to learn the way the Zhao people walked. The student who won first prize that year later recalled: "I was not certain about the relevant passages in the *Zhuangzi* at the time I took the examination. . . . I remembered, however, how our Chinese teacher, who was himself a favorite disciple of President Tang, had advised us not to seek advanced study abroad; I also remembered how he had criticized the 'returned students' for neglecting their classical studies. I decided to read the topic as in fact an analogy of the modern situation: 'Handan' was the United States, and 'scholar Yu of Shouling' one of those Chinese students who lost their cultural identity while seeking instructions abroad. I lamented how these students had neglected moral self-cultivation while studying Western technology; I concluded with the warning that this path led nowhere but to failure

and self-destruction. My tactics worked and President Tang was very much pleased!"¹⁹

The expression of nationalist sentiments did not have to rely upon languages and ceremonies of the past. It was legendary how President Tang Weizhi turned the soccer matches between the Nanyang and St. John's teams into a battle in defense of national honor. Between 1914 and 1925, these two teams met nearly annually to compete for the championship title of the East China Inter-Collegiate Association. When the athletes met in the field, Tang Weizhi would headquarter himself (since it was beneath his dignity to be seen on the athletic field in a scholar's gown) in his presidential office and personally monitor the progress of the game by phone. He would cheer and applaud wildly when Nanyang scored, and wail and curse when St. John's won. Nanyang athletes in turn were rewarded or scolded after the game, depending on the outcome of the match.²⁰

As Neo-Confucian moral philosophy and traditional rituals were manipulated as symbols of legitimacy as well as rallying points of nationalist sentiment, they were correspondingly deprived of vitality. Because the teaching of Neo-Confucian moral philosophy was designed to remind the new technological elites of the cultural loyalty they owed to China's past, these teachings became vulnerable to contemporary intellectual challenge. The alliance of Western technology and Confucian moral philosophy that Tang Weizhi presided over was shattered not by challenges of nationalism, as Dr. Pott's comfortable assumptions about a Christian Renaissance in China were shattered at St. John's, but by the cultural iconoclasm of the May Fourth Movement, which rendered the letters and rituals of Neo-Confucianism hollow.

Tang Weizhi resigned in angry disappointment in 1920 when the iconoclastic audacity of the May Fourth Movement gripped the student body of Nanyang College.²¹ The young iconoclasts attacked the moral tenets that President Tang adhered to in his weekly lectures in the university auditorium on *Mencius* and *The Book of Changes*. Yet, despite their campus radicalism in this vein, these same students were not politically very active outside Communications Uni-

versity. During the peak of radical student agitation in the 1920s, left-wing critics observed how students of Communications, along with those of St. John's, were invariably the last to join social-protest movements. Leadership in these activities in Shanghai, as police records showed, was firmly in the hands of students of such private Chinese colleges and universities as Fudan, China, Daxia, Guanghua, Chizhi, and Shanghai Universities and a host of other institutions of lesser academic renown. The technological elites nurtured by the state commanded no more political presence in Republican society than the commercial elites of compradore background. While the latter were compromised by their cultural affinity to Western imperialism, the former were hampered by their ties to the authoritarian state that trained them.

THE GENESIS OF PRIVATE CHINESE COLLEGES IN SHANGHAI

Unlike state-sponsored institutes of technology, private Chinese colleges at the turn of the century were products of political protest and intellectual discontent on the part of gentry-scholars. The earliest two, China and Fudan, founded in Shanghai in 1905–1906, were both immediate results of massive student discontent. China College (*Zhongguo Gongxue*) originated with the large number of Chinese students who studied in Japan on the eve of the Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905. They were actively engaged in the political debates between China's exiled political reformers and revolutionists. In the winter of 1905, over 1,000 of these students disembarked in Shanghai, giving up their study in Japan in protest against the latest Japanese Ministry of Education's regulations governing Chinese students. With 1,000 taels of silver donated to their cause by Zheng Xiaoxu (1860–1938), these students rented a few buildings in the spring of 1906, invited Wang Tuansha (*Jingfang*) to be their president, and announced the birth of China College.²² Similarly, Fudan College in 1905 originated in the protest of a group of students of the Catholic Université L'Aurore over the proposed restructuring of the administration of that school. These students perceived the change as an attempt on the

part of the French Jesuits to gain control of Université L'Aurore. They severed their ties with L'Aurore, established Fudan College, and elected a president of their own.²³

Gentry-scholar initiatives in the creation of academies in the past had resulted, in the early nineteenth century, in the founding of institutions such as the Gujing Academy of Hangzhou (1801) and the Xuehaitang Academy of Guangzhou (1820). With the support of Governor General Ruan Yuan, classicists of the Han School and practical statecraft scholars converged on these institutions and pursued scholarly activities that departed from the official curriculum of Neo-Confucian moral philosophy prescribed by the state and followed in the Qing system of public academies. The scholastic orientation of these locally sponsored institutions placed them outside the civil service examination system. It was in this sense that gentry and local initiatives in matters of scholarship represented a degree of autonomy from the prescription of the state.²⁴

Gentry-scholar educational initiatives at the turn of the century, which resulted in the creation of private Chinese colleges in the Republican period, differed from earlier Qing precedents in a number of ways. There was, first, a distinct element of group protest in the genesis of these institutions, a pattern that continued into the 1920s. The founding of Daxia University in 1924 was the result of disputes within Amoy University in Fujian between the President and a group of protesting faculty and students. The founding of Guanghua University in the fall of 1925 was an immediate consequence of quarrels at St. John's between President Pott and angry Chinese students over the question of whether the American president had shown enough respect to the Chinese national flag.²⁵ The founding of the radical Shanghai University in 1922, similarly, resulted from quarrels between the administrators and students of Southeastern Normal School over the content of the curriculum.²⁶

Although none of the cases mentioned above involved protests directed at the political authority of the state, student unrest of this order was symptomatic of serious intellectual discontent. At the source of this discontent lay the students' resistance to certain claims

of authority: to the authority of the Japanese Ministry of Education or the missionary administrators of L'Aurore and St. John's, to the traditional authoritarianism and favoritism of Amoy and Southeastern. Meanwhile, major changes took place in the relationship between the state and the educated, and the gentry became increasingly ready to take matters into their own hands.

Unlike their eighteenth-century predecessors, these gentry-initiated private institutions sought beyond the resource of classical scholarship for scientific knowledge and political insight. Western languages, English in particular, were emphasized in the curriculum of China as well as of Fudan. Western civilization, world geography, science, law, and Western philosophy were all taught with the use of English texts. Yan Fu, President of Fudan from 1906 to 1907 and a shaping influence on the academic curriculum of the school, believed that "Western Learning can only be mastered through the medium of Western languages." By "Western Learning" Yan Fu had in mind in particular English social and political thinking from the Enlightenment on. Yan Fu was among the most influential political thinkers and commentators of his time. By 1910 he had translated into Chinese a number of important works including Thomas Henry Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics*; Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*; John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, and *Logic*; C. L. Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des lois*; Edward Jenks, *History of Politics*; and Herbert Spencer, *A Study of Sociology*. Still, he considered Chinese translations inadequate and necessarily distorted, and regarded human knowledge as an ever expanding body accessible only to those who commanded the ability to operate directly in Western languages.²⁷

Private gentry-initiated colleges of the turn of the century were deeply involved in such intellectual pursuits as Yan Fu's "Society for the Study of J. S. Mill's *Logic*." They were also directly engaged in the agitation for political reform and revolution which culminated in the 1911 Revolution. Constitutional government, current affairs, and China's industrialization were the main themes of the weekly student Chinese composition exercises at Fudan during the first decade of the century. Unlike the missionary colleges, where

English was emphasized at the expense of Chinese, Fudan threatened its students with "immediate expulsion" should anyone be found guilty of "deprecating the national learning."²⁸ Unlike the state-sponsored Nanyang College, "national learning" at Fudan was understood not as the preservation of an orthodox Neo-Confucian moral philosophy, but the articulation, in Chinese, of ideas that addressed Chinese concerns and facilitated social and political changes in China. Many of the student essays of Fudan were printed as editorials in private newspapers agitating for revolution, such as *Shen-zhou ribao* (China daily), *Min bu bao* (The cry of the people), *Min xu bao* (The sigh of the people), and *Min li bao* (The power of the people), edited by Yu Youren (1879–1964), a member of the Tokyo-based Revolutionary Alliance Society and a student at Fudan.²⁹ To prepare the educated for constitutional government and for major responsibility in local self-rule, Fudan students were given opportunities to improve verbal skills in political debates. In anticipation of a broad-based gentry participation in the political process of the nation, Fudan encouraged student participation in the administrative affairs of the school.³⁰

China College, similarly, operated with an informal style of student participation in the early years. The office of college president did not even exist for the first year, and the appointment was made purely to meet the demand of the Jiangsu provincial government as part of its conditions for financial support. The "residential," "academic," and "financial" affairs of the college were assumed by three officers elected by the students from among themselves. A strong element of student participation in the administration of the college continued through to the very end of the school in 1932.³¹

One of the best known graduates of China College in the 1900s was Hu Shi. His recollections convey a vivid sense of the intellectual atmosphere on campus at a time when Liang Qichao's political constitutionalism and Yan Fu's social Darwinism were eagerly taken up and debated. Faculty members and students were directly involved in political activities leading to the 1911 Revolution. According to Hu Shi:

China College was the headquarters of many revolutionary activities. . . . Among my classmates who died for the great cause were Liao Defan, who was executed by order of Duan Fang, and Rao Kequan, killed in the third month of 1911 during the Canton Uprising, hence among the "Seventy-Two Martyrs" of that campaign. Our teacher, Song Yaoru, was an early supporter of Dr. Sun Yat-sen. Also on the staff of the college were Ma Junwu, Shen Xiangyun, Yu Youren, and Peng Shidi, who were among the early supporters of the Revolution. The residential quarters of the college had been used more than once by the revolutionaries as temporary shelters. That was where Zhang Binglin stayed after his release from prison. That was what Dai Tianchou and Chen Qimei used as a safe house. Sometimes a student would suddenly drop out of sight from school. The rest of us would find out only much later that he had gone on a secret mission for the Revolution. Ren Hongjun suddenly departed for Japan and took up chemistry; he had gone to learn how to make bombs. Dan Maoxin also dropped out of sight rather suddenly; he traveled to Beijing with Wang Jingwei and Huang Fusheng to plot the assassination of the Prince Regent.³²

Unlike the early St. John's, where foreign missionaries brought church beneficiaries into the school's program, trained them in pragmatic skills, and placed them in a network of business contacts, the early Fudan and China Colleges were points of convergence for mature gentry scholars with established social standing, who were intent upon broadening the Chinese intellectual horizon and widening its political channels. Many of the early administrators and faculty members were prominent intellectuals and gentry leaders of national stature. Among the early presidents of Fudan were Ma Liang, Yan Fu, Xia Jingguan, and Gao Fengqian. Among the early instructors were Li Denghui, Yuan Guanlan, Zhou Yichun, and Zhao Guocai. Yuan Guanlan, for example, was among the leaders of the powerful Jiangsu Provincial Educational Association, a gentry association which dominated educational matters in that province until the coming of the Nationalists in 1927.

The foundings of these private colleges in Shanghai were national events of considerable significance. When Yao Hongye, the chief fund-raiser of China College, drowned himself in October 1906 in angry protest over the lack of societal support for the enterprise, his death drew wide attention, and, in subsequent months, gentry and

official contributions flowed in.³³ In 1905, when Fudan held its first entrance examinations, over 500 scholars applied. The standards for admission, especially in Chinese, were high. After a close scrutiny conducted personally by Ma Liang and Yan Fu, only 50 of the 500 applicants were admitted.³⁴ Fifty-seven students graduated from Fudan's program during the seven years between 1905 and 1911. Quite a few later acquired fame as Republican political leaders, educators, scientists, and engineers, including Hu Dunfu, Yu Youren, Shao Lizi, Li Zhaolian, Li Qianruo, and Zhu Kezhen.³⁵

Although available information is sketchy, there is evidence to suggest that strong ties existed between Fudan and a number of notable Qing local academies in the lower Yangzi provinces—academies founded to pursue scholarship and knowledge of statecraft instead of advancement in the civil service examinations. The Nanjing Academy of Jiangyin county, Jiangsu province, was founded by Huang Tifang (1832–1899) in 1884 during Huang's tenure as the Provincial Educational Commissioner. Nanjing Academy was famed for producing in print under the editorship of Wang Xianqian *Huang-chao jingshi xubian* (Collected writings on statecraft of the Qing dynasty: second compilation), a major collection of essays on statecraft and a sequel to the *Huang-chao jingshi wenbian* (Collected writings on statecraft during the Qing dynasty) edited by He Changling and Wei Yuan. The Academy also produced under the editorship of Miao Quansun, the Director in 1888, the *Nanjing shuyuan congshu* (Collectanea of the Nanjing Academy) which contained 41 works by Qing scholars.³⁶ Nanjing Academy became a public school, the Nanjing High School of Jiangyin, at the turn of the century with the overhaul of the traditional academic system. The administrators and teaching staff were all drawn from the ranks of the local gentry; the students were of gentry background as well. The school was a major source of influence in local politics during the critical years 1911, 1919, and 1925. The ties between Nanjing and Fudan hinged upon the fact that a few influential individuals in the school, including Nanjing's Principal, Dong Bohao, its English instructor Qian Haocheng, and its Western Civilization instructor, a certain Mr. Wu, were all among the early graduates of

Fudan College. In the Republican period, a two-way traffic thus linked private Chinese colleges in Shanghai to prominent gentry-supported public schools in provincial centers. Nanjing High School continued to channel its best graduates to Fudan University. It then welcomed Fudan graduates back to take up positions as teachers and administrators.³⁷

True to the spirit of intellectual discontent and political protest that had inspired the gentry elites at the turn of the century, students of Fudan and China continued to constitute a major presence in the political and social movements of Shanghai in 1919, 1925, and 1927. "Intellectual autonomy," "freedom of thought," and "defiance of political and doctrinarian constraints" were among the slogans of Fudan scholars throughout this period. Marxism, anarchism, and ultra-statism—which openly embraced the view of a powerful national leadership pursuing fervently nationalistic goals—were all advocated in the classrooms of Fudan University in the 1920s,³⁸ in line with its tradition of reaching out beyond China's traditional intellectual universe in search of politically pertinent values and knowledge.³⁹

Private Chinese colleges of the Republican period, since they traced their genesis to the dissatisfaction of elite local reformers and their agitation for political change, rose and fell on the strength of gentry support. Once old literati elites began to disappear in the Republican period as a result of social change, private colleges were transformed accordingly, emerging in the 1930s as colleges of the middle classes.

CHINA COLLEGE AND THE COMMERCIALIZATION OF PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS

Despite their support of the revolutionary movement which culminated in the overthrow of the Qing dynasty in 1911, private Chinese colleges in Shanghai were hard hit financially once the Imperial Government was gone. The financial state of Fudan and China had never been put on firm ground since their establishment in 1905. No substantial endowment was ever made; both institutions

relied upon government subsidies and student tuition for their operating budgets. In 1907, Governor General Duan Fang allotted to China College the use of 100 *mu* of public land in the Paotai Bay area near the town of Wusong and promised an annual budget of 12,000 yuan from the provincial treasury. The Imperial Bank (Da Qing Yinhang) subsequently extended credit of 100,000 taels for the construction of school buildings.⁴⁰

In 1911, all subsidies from the provincial coffer stopped. A reserve of 20,000 yuan, which the college had built up with funds contributed by the provincial governments of Hubei, Zhejiang, Sichuan, and Jiangxi in the previous years, was soon depleted.⁴¹ The military moved onto the campus and occupied the school buildings twice: in 1911, in the immediate aftermath of the Revolution; and in 1913, during the Second Revolution against Yuan Shikai. The students, the majority of whom lived on campus, were scattered. The provisional government of the new Republic, with Cai Yuanpei as Minister of Education, offered China College a government bond of 400,000 yuan face value, which was worthless on the market.⁴² China College ground to a halt in 1917. It remained closed until Liang Qichao, leader of the Constitutionalists of 1900s and head of the Progressive Party (Jinbu Dang) in Republican politics, came to its rescue in 1919. The former Constitutionalists had hoped to enlarge the base of their political support and to bring new members to their Party through the use of master-disciple relationships in an educational institution, in the time-honored fashion that grew out of the tradition of the civil service examination system. Through the medium of the Progressive Party, the Fuzhong Company of Henan province, a former British mining concern and a joint venture with the gentry of that province, agreed to commit an annual operating budget of 20,000 yuan.⁴³

Earlier, in the depth of its financial stress and upon the urging of Sun Yat-sen and Huang Xing, newly appointed members of the Board of Trustees, China College began to offer courses in business, law, and political studies in 1912 in the hope of attracting sons of the urban affluent willing to bear the cost of tuition and fees.⁴⁴ As the "business" majors of urban background made their presence

felt, the college's informal structure of student government quickly degenerated into a state of idle unruliness. Visitors remarked on how students turned their dormitories into gambling casinos and smoking dens. The campus of China College presented a dismal sight of broken furniture and peeling paint.⁴⁵

When the appointees of Liang Qichao attempted to take control of the school's administration in 1919, and newly appointed faculty members (many of them recent graduates of the Beijing Higher Normal School) sought to reform the curriculum and introduce the students to the social and cultural messages of the May Fourth Movement, conflicts developed, and these teachers and administrators encountered stiff resistance from the Business School. Campus riots broke out between rival student factions supporting either the newcomers or the entrenched. General disorder followed as students struck classes, and the curricular reform was finally called off.⁴⁶

Though expecting a college nominally with four departments (Philosophy, Business, Political Studies, and Economics), the inspectors of the Ministry of Education who visited the campus of China College in 1926 found that there were 140 students enrolled in Business, 170 in Economics and Political Studies, and none whatsoever in the Department of Philosophy.⁴⁷ With the support of the Progressive Party lagging, China College ran up a deficit of 22,000 yuan in 1930, on an annual budget of 90,792 yuan. To compensate for inadequate income from other sources, China College lowered its admissions standards, expanded the size of its student body, cut the cost of faculty and staff, and took necessary measures to keep expenditures under the level of income derived from tuitions and fees. Its classrooms were crowded. Some of the buildings were rented out. Its laboratory equipment was dated and inadequate. Its teaching staff, 64 in all, the majority of whom were part-time, were paid on an hourly basis. Meanwhile, student enrollment jumped from 448 in 1928 to 1,002 in 1930.⁴⁸

Even though loyal supporters of the school insisted that China College's emphasis on business and law courses was a measure of how seriously the school had taken the London School of Economics

and Political Science as its model, the locals derisively referred to it as a diploma-mill and a "wild-pheasant college" or *yeji daxue*, for its erratic quality. It had succumbed to the financial pressure for survival, and, in its effort to cater to the commercial craving for courses in accounting, bookkeeping, business correspondence and commercial English, had allowed the founding spirit of the institution to suffer corrosion from within.⁴⁹

When Hu Shi assumed the presidency of China College, his alma mater, in April 1928, what he presided over was an institution in sore need of a redefinition of its institutional purpose. Hu launched a major overhaul of its programs. He sought to strengthen the liberal arts program of the college by bringing into the faculty prominent figures of the May Fourth Movement.⁵⁰ It was difficult to obliterate the fact, however, that the core of the college continued to be a School of "Social Sciences" that offered courses in "sociology, political science, economics, and commerce," which admitted students by lowering admissions standards, and which advertised in the Shanghai newspapers giving an inflated profile of the faculty.⁵¹

It is significant that Hu Shi's recollection of the early history of China College, in which he highlighted the college's gentry past and its contribution to the 1911 Revolution, was written in 1929.⁵² By invoking an era of intellectual ferment and political activism at the turn of the century, Hu Shi sought to alter the image of China College as a commercialized diploma-mill for the local wealthy who could afford the price. The late 1920s were years when Hu Shi himself came under the attack of Nationalist ideologues for speaking up in defiance of the absolute authority of the official doctrine of the regime, the *Three Principles of the People*, and the teaching of Dr. Sun Yat-sen.⁵³ Because the Nationalists were actively seeking to gain total control over higher education, and since they claimed to have derived their legitimacy from the success of the 1911 Revolution, Hu Shi's narrative, which linked China College to the 1911 Revolution, contained an implicit political statement. Hu Shi's accounts were part of a political dialogue with the Nationalists couched in the language of history. It gave expression to the polit-

icized nature of the academic environment during the Nationalist era (1927–1949) and underscored the vulnerability of any institution whose *raison d'être* seemed no grander than commercial utility.

China College, as it turned out, was not going to survive beyond the spring of 1932. In 1930, Hu Shi was forced out of the college presidency by the Nanjing Ministry of Education's repeated refusal to grant the college's accreditation—application for which was required of all institutes of higher education. Hu Shi's resignation, indeed, was one of the Ministry's conditions for the approval of China College's application.⁵⁴ In January 1932, in the wake of the Manchurian Incident of the previous September, fighting broke out in Shanghai between Chinese and Japanese troops. The campus of China College was left in ruins, destroyed by Japanese military attacks. With few resources, under the hostile pressure of the Nationalists in Nanjing, deprived of leadership and devoid of any clear institutional purpose, China College announced its permanent closing in April 1932. The demise of China College was among the first casualties of a comprehensive Nationalist attempt to reassert the control of the state over matters of education.

THE CASE OF FUDAN

As in the case of China College, Fudan University was thrown into financial distress once the Imperial Government was overthrown in 1912. The Republican years represented a period of financial stress, political uncertainty, structural change, and institutional reorientation in response to major changes in the larger environment.⁵⁵

Like China College, Fudan endured the military occupation of its campus in both 1911 and 1913. It witnessed student restlessness in the tumultuous decade of the 1920s, finding its campus in the midst of the cultural and social agitations of the May Fourth Movement of 1919, the anti-imperialist protests of 1925, and the Northern Expedition of 1927. It survived the political turmoil of the early Republican era by cultivating the support of the emerging Nation-

alist Party, which, until 1927, was headquartered in Canton. It responded to financial crisis with a high degree of cost-consciousness: cutting expenditures, enlarging enrollments, offering a wide range of courses with pragmatic appeal, as well as cultivating the favor and contributions of members of a national bourgeoisie based both in Shanghai and Southeast Asia.

Business courses were added to the curriculum as early as 1917. In 1924, over two-thirds of Fudan's students were enrolled in the four departments of Banking, Business Management, Accounting, and International Trade. In the 1920s, Fudan introduced the Departments of Law, Journalism, Urban Planning, and Civil Engineering. With the entire curriculum oriented towards the "applied sciences," Fudan received subsidies from the commercial community of Shanghai to launch programs that dispensed such useful knowledge about scientific ways as how to bake tea leaves and operate branch banks.⁵⁶

Of the major private Chinese colleges in Shanghai, Fudan was arguably the one most favored by the Chinese financiers and manufacturers who were the upper classes of the "national bourgeoisie." Li Denghui (1873–1947), President of Fudan University, was himself a scion of wealthy overseas Chinese merchants in Malaysia. Li's numerous fund-raising trips to Southeast Asia resulted in a larger campus and more buildings for Fudan.⁵⁷ Li garnered 150,000 yuan from overseas Chinese in 1918, which he used to purchase an additional 70 *m²* of land in the town of Jiangwan. The first building erected there was Jian Hall, a 2-story brick classroom building completed in 1921 with moneys donated by Jian Zhaonan (1875–1923), the founder and major shareholder of the Southeast Asia (Nanyang) Tobacco Company.⁵⁸ A 4-story concrete and steel building was constructed in 1925 which housed the laboratories of the Civil Engineering, Chemistry, Physics, Psychology and Biology Departments, a gift of another member on the board of directors, Guo Zibin. The main buildings of the library were built with the contribution of director Huang Yizhu, executive officer and major shareholder of the commercial Zhongnan Bank of Shanghai. The

10-mu athletic field was a gift in 1931 from Fudan's director, Du Yuesheng, a man with extensive business connections but better known as the leader of Shanghai's Green Gang.⁵⁹

While Fudan strengthened its ties with the Chinese business community of Shanghai in the 1920s, it was able, at the same time, to remain attractive to graduates of secondary schools in provincial towns in Central China. Secondary-school graduates of public schools in former prefectural seats from the coastal provinces of Zhejiang and Jiangsu to midstream Yangzi Valley areas such as Hunan faced very limited choices in higher education. While a number of cities had higher normal schools and institutes on specialized subjects, Shanghai in the 1920s was virtually the only city in central China with reputable colleges and universities. With China College in decline, and before the founding of Daxia and Guanghua in the mid-1920s, Fudan was the only choice for students of provincial background who favored the school for its relative proximity (as opposed to the universities in Beijing), its less competitive admissions requirement (as opposed to Communications University), its lower requirement in English proficiency (as opposed to St. John's and other missionary colleges in the lower Yangzi region), and its pragmatic yet non-technological course offerings. Fudan tended, therefore, to attract students who were more competent in Chinese composition than in English conversation and advanced calculus—a profile that differed from what was to be found at St. John's and Communications. Many of Fudan's graduates found employment in the Chinese banking, manufacturing, and journalism enterprises in the city. The pragmatic education of Fudan in that sense served as a conduit that channeled members of the provincial affluent to the ranks of the urban middle classes.⁶⁰

The dominant lifestyle on the Fudan campus in the early 1920s reflected the provincial origins of its student body. The long blue gown of the traditional scholars was the most common attire. Some, in fact, cultivated the untidy appearance of careless literati of imperial times.⁶¹ The favorite pastimes were games like chess and ping-pong, and walks. Western influence had made its inroads, but soccer and other field sports were the games of the overseas Chinese,

who were also the students on campus most likely to wear Western attire. For the majority at Fudan, campus residence meant a quiet life punctuated by nights out at the theatres featuring Peking opera in the city and occasional visits to Chinese restaurants in the International Settlement. Fudan undergraduates also shared an enthusiasm for post-May Fourth Chinese drama that carried social messages—the plays by Hong Shen and Tian Han, for example—and a general interest in history and society combined with a fair share of political activism.⁶²

Fudan continued to be at the forefront of radical student politics through the May Fourth Movement. Fudan students organized night schools and literacy classes for adults and children in the areas adjacent to their campus. They visited Shanghai factories, newspapers, and printing houses. They attended public lectures such as the ones given by John Dewey and translated by Hu Shi in the auditorium of the Jiangsu Provincial Educational Association in Shanghai in 1918. Like the generation of 1911, they continued the debates on anarchism and socialism, adding their own political viewpoints along the way. They organized and led the activities of organs such as the Federation of all Circles of Shanghai (Shanghai Gejie Lianhe Hui) and the Shanghai Student Association, which were at the head of the May Fourth agitation in Shanghai.⁶³

The activities of Fudan students during the May Fourth period won the special endorsement of the Nationalist Party during the First United Front with the Communists. In retrospect, Fudan was displaced as the leading center of student activism only with the outbreak of the May Thirtieth Movement, when the radical students at Shanghai University became leaders in the organization of laborers and shop apprentices. It was a measure of the radical leaning of Fudan in the early 1920s that Chen Wangdao, who produced the first Chinese version of the "Communist Manifesto," was able to join its Chinese faculty in 1920, having been ousted earlier that year from his teaching position in Hangzhou by the military authorities hostile to his politics.

A subtle shift in student culture and academic orientation at Fudan took place sometime between 1925 and the years of the Great

Depression, during a period of expanded enrollment in pragmatic subjects such as law, business, education, and journalism, and when higher tuition and expenditures gradually tilted admissions in favor of Shanghai students from commercial backgrounds.⁶⁴ As Fudan was increasingly identified with the pursuit of applied knowledge that suited the needs of the urban world of business and industry, and, to a lesser extent, journalism, civil administration, and other middle-class professions, it became less and less a center of political activism for students originally from the provinces.

Fudan University in the 1930s relied heavily upon the collection of tuition and fees as the principal source of its operating budget—up to an average of 80 percent according to published official figures.⁶⁵ Fudan administrators reported larger and larger enrollment figures and lower and lower per-student expenditures. The library holdings were small; laboratory equipment was inadequate; faculty and staff were cut back in order to save on expenses. Meanwhile, Fudan's campus culture became increasingly Westernized. More and more students were drawn from the urbanized middle classes, just as more and more Fudan students were preparing themselves for careers as self-sufficient members of these classes. By the 1930s, Fudan had become a preserve of the urban middle classes, where soccer games, Hollywood films, and Western-style suits had overtaken the traditional theatres and progressive politics of the provincial scholars in their blue gowns. The institutional growth of Fudan University in the 1930s depended upon the school's ability to cater to the needs and interests of the affluent of Shanghai—not so much those of compradore wealth and independent means, who tended to converge at St. John's, as those who sought responsible positions in Shanghai's newly developed business concerns, civil organs, and social and cultural enterprises. As these educated men of solid occupations came into their own in urban Shanghai, displacing their gentry predecessors, so did Fudan depart from the agenda of protest and cultural reexamination which prompted the first generation of gentry reformers to create their own institutions.

NANJING AND THE POLITICAL CLIMATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Private Chinese colleges of the 1930s were rarely able to steer clear of politics, although the financial struggles and institutional reorientations of the 1920s dissipated much of the intellectual and political energy of these schools. The founding of the Nanjing Government in 1927 ushered in a new era in the political environment of higher education. For the first time since the fall of the Imperial Government in 1911, a new political order had proclaimed itself the legitimate government of China, and, despite what the Episcopalian bishops of St. John's University would have preferred to believe, the Nationalist Government in Nanjing was there to stay.

The Nationalist regime was able to establish uncontested control only of Central China proper, and it had to continue to cope with the political challenges posed by remnant militarists in North China, rival factions of the Nationalist Party in the south, the expansion of Chinese Communists from their mountain soviets in Jiangxi and northern Jiangsu, the intrigue of local satraps in Yunnan and Sichuan, and the pressure from Western interests in the treaty ports, in addition to the Japanese militarists' keen interest in Manchuria and North China. Scholars and polemicists have long quibbled over whether this regime should be viewed as just another phase of unabashed warlord rule, propped up with a large military force and a growing secret service, or a genuine national state with sovereign legitimacy in its own right. Viewed from the perspective of the time, our contemporary debate seems jejune. However limited its direct military control in the early years of the Nanjing decade (1927–1937), the new regime sought to cast itself as the historic embodiment of a enlightened and revolutionary state. When the Nationalist Government pronounced on matters of culture and education, it was able to invoke the legacy of the 1911 Revolution and the *Three Principles of the People* of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, which included doctrines of Chinese nationalism, promises of constitutional democracy, and plans for an active state role in social welfare and the development of the economy. Reminiscent of the old Neo-Confucian synthesis which was both a state ideology and a personal moral

philosophy, the *Three Principles of the People* prescribed personal values and cultural styles in addition to social norms and political ideals.

The totalistic prescription of all aspects of national life by the Nationalists was challenged only later by an equally totalistic prescription advanced by the Communists. During the period from 1925 to 1927, the right-wing architects of revolutionary armies and the left-wing organizers of revolutionary mass movements struggled for hegemony within the camp of the United Front in Canton.⁶⁶ While the revolutionaries, with their armies and mass movements, eventually succeeded in their struggles against the reactionary northern warlords, the bloody purge by the Right of the Left that ensued marked a turning point in the political history of the century. After July 1927, both the Guomindang and the Chinese Communist Party, each molded along Leninist lines, demanded from their followers the unconditional acceptance of a systemic doctrine. The struggles between the Right and the Left polarized intellectual choices. These debates at the same time eclipsed the significance of liberal and middle-class political aspirations which were typically expressed as specific values and demands: whether the legal protection of human rights, freedom of speech, or a policy of armed resistance against Japanese encroachment. In the universe of political dialogue dominated by the ideological struggles of the Right and the Left, issue-oriented liberal political ideals and aspirations were dismissed as the political machinations and devices of self-serving intellectual networks. Private Chinese colleges of the 1930s, unlike St. John's and Communications, did serve in this context as forums for the expression of political opinion. But their social idealism was compromised by urban wealth, and the grandeur of their political vision was eclipsed by the righteous rhetoric of cultural nationalism. By the end of the Nanjing decade, the middle-class colleges of Shanghai had lost much of their social autonomy and most of their political confidence, retaining only memories of the fierce independence of their founders at the turn of the twentieth century.

THE POLITICS OF INTELLECTUAL NETWORKS

In 1927, a large number of intellectuals without firm connections to the new Nationalist Government converged on the private universities of Shanghai, seeking shelter from direct Party control and some degree of protection from an uncertain political future. Many of these individuals had previously distinguished themselves nationally with their cultural and political views. As we noted earlier, Hu Shi assumed the presidency of China College in 1928, bringing along a significant group of New Culture poets, novelists, and political commentators. And Zhang Dongsun, former chief editor of the Shanghai newspaper *Shishi xinbao* and leader of the Progressive Party after the death of Liang Qichao in January 1928, became Dean of Letters of Guanghai University.⁶⁷ Others' claims to social importance could be traced back to the late Qing, and their very presence served as a constant reminder that the Nationalist Party was a newcomer to the political stage of Jiangnan society. Professor Fei Gong, who was educated in England and taught the history of the English constitution at Guanghai, was a scion of a prominent gentry line that had produced several Hanlin scholars in the nineteenth century. Fei Gong's family had for several generations formed marriage alliances with other gentry lineages of national renown, and Fei Gong himself was married to a granddaughter of President Yuan Shikai.⁶⁸ Many of these individuals had intricate social connections which tied them to old gentry networks of the region. Indeed, the founding of Guanghai University had from its inception engaged the attention and assistance of the Jiangsu Provincial Educational Association, a gentry organization of the 1900s, which had for decades been a prime mover in the modern school system in Jiangsu.

Founded in the 1900s by such prominent local leaders as Zhang Qian and Yuan Guanlan, who favored political and economic reform, the Jiangsu Provincial Educational Association had been one of the best organized and most influential gentry societies of the province, advocating educational modernization as a function of industrialization and economic reform. Its influence had been partic-

ularly pronounced at the secondary-school level, where the concept of "vocational education," as opposed to the more conventional notion of "moral education," advocated by Jing Ziyuan of the Zhejiang Provincial Educational Association, had been vigorously advanced. Under the auspices of the Jiangsu Provincial Educational Association, a Chinese Vocational Society (Zhonghua Zhiye Jiaoyu She) was founded in 1913, which published self-help tracts and offered lessons on bookkeeping and the reprocessing of agricultural products. By the mid-1920s, the Jiangsu Provincial Educational Association, presided over by the famed vocational educator Huang Yanpei, had forged extensive ties with the native commercial and industrial interests of Shanghai. It was so powerful and prestigious that—so its opponents accused—it practically controlled all administrative and academic appointments of the National Southeastern University in Nanjing, which was financed by the Jiangsu provincial government. Southeastern University, which originated in the Jiangsu and Zhejiang Normal School (Liangjiang Shifan) of the late Qing, had been reorganized as the Nanjing Higher Normal School (Nanjing Gaodeng Shifan Xuexiao) during the early Republican years. The Higher Normal was chartered as a university in 1923 and was financed principally by the Jiangsu provincial government. Contemporaries believed that the Jiangsu Provincial Educational Association intended to build this new Southeastern University into a center of learning that would compete with Beida, not so much for academic excellence, but as a bastion of cultural conservatism. Jiangsu Provincial Educational Association was in turn viewed as in close touch with the "Study Clique" (*yanjin xi*) and the Progressive Party of Liang Qichao, which exercised important political influence on the campus of Southeastern University, as it had earlier at China College.⁶⁹

When the Nationalists moved into Nanjing in 1927, they briefly closed down National Southeastern University before reopening it as the National Central University under the direct sponsorship of the Guomindang. At the same time, the Nationalists made moves in Shanghai to ban the Jiangsu Provincial Educational Association from all future activities. Few politically informed contemporaries,

therefore, missed the significance of so many former Southeastern faculty members and students suddenly being received by Guanghai University, whose President, Zhang Shouyong, had been a colleague of Huang Yanpei (leader of the Jiangsu Provincial Educational Association) when both served in the 1920s in Cabinet positions in the Beijing government. Liao Shicheng, who was to become Chairman of Guanghai's Department of Education in the early 1930s, was a former Southeastern professor and director of the secondary school affiliated with the university. Lu Qian had received his undergraduate education at Southeastern University, where Wu Mei, the famous scholar of *ci* (a classical form of rhyming verses of irregular length perfected in the Song dynasty, 960–1279), was his teacher. And Zhang Shouyong himself was a former head of the Jiangsu Provincial Bureau of Finance, the office that oversaw the budget of Southeastern University.

While "cliques" and "factions," loosely defined and widely suspected, could thus be identified and linked to specific private universities, the relationship between personal networks and educational institutions was often less than hard and fast. Social ties tended to be thick and multifarious, personal obligations reached out in all directions, and the nature of personal relationships changed under shifting circumstances. On one level, one could speak of an intellectual community with shared concerns over certain issues, united not so much by its ability to build an intellectual consensus as by a common refusal to pledge primary allegiance to the Nationalist Party. Many of the faculty members of private colleges in Shanghai taught at more than one institution: The greater the scholar's renown, the greater the demand for his presence. Many of these faculty members, furthermore, were known to each other through earlier ties ranging from kinship and common locale to friendship and shared political party membership. But the shared past contained seeds of animosity as well as of camaraderie. To what extent these people with certain shared concerns and entangled pasts were able to mobilize their social ties to serve concerted political purposes was undoubtedly an open question.

Political divisions, in fact, cut deep into this community of

Shanghai intellectuals who defied Nationalist authority. The magazine *Chinese Youth*, the official organ of the Youth Corps of the Chinese Communist Party, complained loudly in the mid-1920s that Daxia University had come under the influence of ultra-nationalists led by Zeng Qi (1892–1951), with membership drawn from the right wing of the Young China Study Society (Shaonian Zhongguo Xuehui), which had been formed in Beijing in 1918 and had broken up following quarrels between the Right and the Communist Left.⁷⁰ During the May Thirtieth Incident, the left wing decried the “shameful behavior” of the faculty and administration of Daxia, because it believed that Zeng Qi’s ultra-nationalist followers, as teachers and administrators, prohibited students from active participation in public protests and meetings and later expelled left-wing students from the school. The left wing also charged that it was the college administration that repeatedly called onto campus the police force of the International Settlement to quell potential student unrest. The Daxia administration, in the eyes of the left wing, had long been controlled by “statists” or “ultra-nationalists” who believed in a strong, though democratic, political center, a unified nation, and the expulsion of foreign influences; who regarded themselves above all as “patriots”; and who were members of the Young China Party (Zhongguo Qingnian Dang).⁷¹

Although the core group of ultra-nationalists eventually formed the Young China Party, the “patriots” and “statists” in Shanghai academia in the 1930s were far from unified in organization.⁷² There was the Great River Society (Dajiang She) of Wen Yiduo (1899–1946), Luo Longji (1896–1965), and Liang Shiqiu (1902–), which brought together a number of ardent nationalists educated in the United States.⁷³ Wen Yiduo was later to die under the Nationalist assassins’ bullets in Kunming in 1945, and to be celebrated by the Communists as a patriot, a progressive, and a martyr.⁷⁴ There was also the Society of the Awakened Lion (Xingshi She) of Zeng Qi, Li Huang, Yu Jiaju, and Chen Qitian, who traced their friendship back to common places of birth and student days in Beijing, Shanghai, and France.⁷⁵ The relationship between the two groups was at best one of a loose confederation, although they shared a passionate

nationalism and an ardent fervor for a strong, centralized political power. The former, with the American education and keen interest in literature and art, were socially at odds with the latter, whose foreign experience tended to be in Japan and France, and whose professional interest was focused on education. It was socially congenial, though politically inconsistent, therefore, for these American-educated ultra-nationalists to mingle with members of the Crescent Moon Society such as Hu Shi, Xu Zhimo, and Ye Gongchao, political liberals educated in the United States who had acquired their taste in art and literature in the West, who had achieved fame during the New Culture Movement, and who had nothing but disdain for middle-class utilitarianism.⁷⁶

CONFRONTATION WITH NANJING: MIDDLE CLASS COLLEGES AND LIBERAL POLITICS

From the viewpoint of Nanjing, whether these intellectuals were primarily political liberals, Communists, Trotskyites, or ultra-nationalists was of secondary importance. Their affiliation to the Nationalist Party was marginal. Their professed loyalty to the interests of the Nationalists—hence to the nation—was therefore suspect. The 1930s, after all, were years when guidelines such as “no party beside the Party, no faction within the Party” (*Dang wai wu dang, Dang nei wu pai*) were widely believed to be enforced.⁷⁷ These were also years when the Nationalist Party openly promoted the “Participation of education” (*danghua jiaoyu*), which increasingly meant Nanjing’s direct interference in academic appointments.

With the triumphant Nationalists closing in upon them, non-Party intellectuals in the private colleges of Shanghai found themselves operating on the fringes of legality in a highly volatile political environment. It was not just a matter of expressing one’s social viewpoint in classroom lectures; these dissident college professors were often also editors and publishers of journals that printed their political commentaries. Wang Zaoshi (1903–196?), who earned his PhD in political science from the University of Wisconsin and who had taught at Guanghai and China since his return in 1930, con-

tributed regularly to *Crescent Moon Monthly*.⁷⁸ His articles trumpeted an anti-Japanese position, and he founded his own political bi-weekly, *Viewpoints and Commentaries* (*Zhuzhang yu pinglun*), in November 1932. The magazine was closed down by the authorities after only three issues, and Wang was forced to resign from his teaching positions at the same time.⁷⁹

Wang Zaoshi's experience was hardly atypical. His friend Luo Longji, who recommended Wang to those teaching positions in the first place, was also forced to resign from Guanghai University. Though a member of the Great River Society, Luo Longji also contributed to *Crescent Moon Magazine*, thereby attracting the attention of the authorities. Wang and Luo, however, were not prepared to give in. Luo Longji moved to the foreign concession of Tianjin, where he became the chief editorial writer for the newspaper *Yishi bao*. Luo Longji continued to irritate the Nationalist Government with his criticisms of Nanjing's policies of non-resistance to the Japanese.⁸⁰ As he had placed himself in the foreign concessions and beyond the legal reach of the Nationalist police, Luo Longji was marked for assassination and narrowly escaped a death squad's bullets. It was not uncommon during the Nanjing decade, indeed, for politically outspoken Chinese in Shanghai and Tianjin's foreign concessions to be abducted or even assassinated by the Nationalist secret police.⁸¹

Although these acts of defiance and protest received wide national attention, the protests made by individual faculty members provoked political responses but rarely derailed the academic program of the private colleges that employed them. On specific issues, dissident intellectuals like Wang Zaoshi, Luo Longji, Wen Yiduo, Zhang Dongsun, and Zeng Qi, who taught in the middle-class colleges of Shanghai, often struck a political stance that won middle-class sympathy. Wang and Luo's advocacy of armed resistance to Japan was perhaps the best example of this sort, although it must be noted at the same time that intellectuals were by no means of one mind on any single given issue, as attested to in this case by Hu Shi's persistent hope for a negotiated peace.⁸² It should also be noted that, although dissident intellectuals taught in middle-class

institutions that appeared to be tolerant of their political activities, they were not, strictly speaking, spokesmen of middle-class values. This was both because of the diverse nature of middle-class interest itself and because of the intellectuals' ultimate disdain for bourgeois philistinism and utilitarianism. Consequently, most of the intellectuals' political dissension was expressed in individually financed journals edited out of private residences in the foreign concessions, while school journals as such mostly devoted their pages to celebrations of career achievement and descriptions of fashionable urban life, illustrated with colorful photographs. College campuses were places where the new urban middle classes and liberal intellectuals were thrown together in the hazardous political environment of the 1930s, joining forces from time to time over specific issues directed against the Nationalist Party. But, while the intellectuals protested, often at great personal risk, their academic employers busily curried favor with Party officials and tended to the concerns of local magnates and trustees who sat on their college boards.

THE DILEMMA OF MIDDLE-CLASS COLLEGES

The considerable growth experienced by these private institutions in the mid-1920s proved to be a mixed blessing. Once the very survival of these institutions became a consideration, it introduced a wholly different set of constraints upon the latitude of their political options. What the history of private universities in Shanghai highlighted was, in a sense, the unsolvable conflict between these institutions' socially progressive aspirations, which endowed their early history with meaning, and their need to cultivate the good will of the rich and powerful in the environment of the 1930s. The progressive push for sociopolitical change in the 1910s and 1920s was increasingly compromised as these institutions matured and bent, under financial and political pressure, towards greater conformity. The heirs of the progressive gentry of the turn of the century became members of Shanghai's middle classes during the Republican period. Middle-class support then redirected institutional concern to areas of practical and applied interest.

Both the middle classes and the intellectuals could claim social ancestry in the gentry elites of the turn of the century. It was the reformist bureaucrats who championed Western technology and China's industrialization, the managerial elites of provincial gentry background who responded to the challenges of new types of financial and public activities, and the treaty-port intellectuals who rumpeted the urgency of social and political change. The development of industry and commerce was linked to the ideas of social and political change current at the turn of the century among all these groups, which also overlapped. The graduates of the new institutes of higher education that these gentry and scholars created with the blessing of reformist officials became bankers, financiers, manufacturers, stockholders, business managers, accountants—bona fide members of the national bourgeoisie, as well as public administrators, journalists, and educators in the Republican period.

While gentry-merchants, official-industrialists, elite-managers, scholars, and intellectuals were drawn from an undifferentiable late nineteenth-century milieu and stood at the beginning of decades of social transformation, those in industry and commerce and those who regarded themselves primarily as intellectuals had parted ways in the 1930s. The support of commercial and industrial wealth spared Shanghai private middle-class colleges from depending upon state funding, thus giving these institutions a certain degree of autonomy from state control. This autonomy permitted middle-class colleges to become, no matter how ineffectually, a political haven for liberal intellectuals and their political dissent. But the social differentiations within the middle classes had become so pronounced that urban professional educational interests and liberal political aspirations were separate matters in the 1930s. Middle-class concerns were expressed in terms of utility, technology, urban careers, and Westernized lifestyles. Liberal intellectuals by and large continued to press for the May Fourth agenda of science and democracy, based on a firm belief in human rationality.

As the Right and the Left dictated the agenda of political debates, the high-sounding rhetoric with which the first generation of students admonished society at large was now reversed and re-

dounded against the private universities. In the 1900s, reform-minded gentry scholars, critical of China's past, had reached out to the West, taking as models a whole range of Western features from capital structure, industrial development, constitutional government, to an Enlightenment belief in human reason and social Darwinism, in order to revive Chinese social and political vitality. In the 1930s, the scholars of these schools, teachers and students alike, were chided by the ideologues of the New Life Movement for the Westernized nature of their urban existence and attacked by the radical Left for their failure, as members of a burgeoning middle class, to reach out to the masses.

Political criticism in the 1930s took on cultural as well as class dimensions. Middle-class colleges were condemned for both their material comfort and their receptiveness to foreign influence. The Nationalists equated middle-class openness to the West with cultural betrayal. The socialists condemned Shanghai wealth as class exploitation. But it is ironic that the variegated, complex, and manifold middle classes of Shanghai should even have been attacked as a class. The affluent, influential, educated and respectable of Shanghai in the 1930s ranged from the highly Westernized to the recently cosmopolitan, from major capitalists to salaried employees. The political aspirations of liberal intellectuals employed by bourgeois institutions, meanwhile, had focused on human values in general rather than on the interest of any given social group. The intellectuals, in kindred spirit with the classicists of Beijing, held in contempt the pragmatic utilitarianism of the commercial establishment that gave them shelter. The middle classes of Shanghai were not only under attack from the Right and the Left. They were themselves a loose alliance without a forcibly articulated core of values and identities of their own.

The particular political tensions and dilemmas, unique to private Chinese middle-class colleges, were largely absent in the institutional history of St. John's and Communications Universities. These smaller private Chinese colleges were alone among educational enterprises in their struggle under financial stress and political pressure. The loose and volatile alliance of national bourgeoisie and

alighted intellectuals was a weak counterweight to the power of the state. At least in Shanghai, the history of these private Chinese colleges shows how they had grown from societal initiatives that flourished during the years when the power of the Qing state was in decline. Those who stepped forward to stand in the place of the old imperial gentry were, from the start, divided among themselves. They were quickly reduced to an ineffectual political opposition as soon as a new power center declared itself in Nanjing.

Although China College was to be closed down in 1932, most of the private Chinese universities of Shanghai managed to survive the early years of the Nanjing decade. But the price for survival was a certain institutional fragility. Urban-bound and increasingly identified with the pragmatic values of commerce and finance, these academic institutions succeeded only by placing themselves outside the reach of their own hinterland. The capitulation to utilitarianism—despite the presence of a liberal intellectual faculty—cut so deep into their social and cultural roots that nearly all these institutions fell easy prey to the power of the state once the war with Japan broke out in 1937 and they were torn loose from their new urban attachments. Daxia and Fudan would return to Shanghai after 1945, but, by then, they would have been transformed into government-dominated national universities, and the moment to preserve an autonomous private educational sector for the urban middle classes would long since have passed.

 FOUR

Shanghai University and the Ideal of Revolution

One of the turning points in the history of Shanghai's semi-colonialism was the period from 1915 to 1919, when Western imperialist influence peaked on the eve of World War I and then gradually declined. Although the changes were subtle, certain trends were set in motion as a result of the West's waning influence on the East Asian continent. The steady increase in number and activities of the Japanese, first, gradually eclipsed the European dominance of the treaty port. The ascendancy of Japanese influence was not to level off until after the outbreak of the Pacific War (1941). Western preoccupation with World War I in Europe, furthermore, gave the Chinese trading and industrial interests of Shanghai a much-needed breathing space for development. Chinese manufacturing enjoyed a period of unprecedented boom, and Chinese economic interests came to compete with Japanese commercial and manufacturing operations in Shanghai.

The new economic prosperity, however, was attended by considerable social costs. The development of light industry attracted a large number of urban immigrants. As tens of thousands from the countryside converged upon the city in search of employment, social tension escalated, and the 1920s proved to be one of the most turbulent decades in Shanghai's social history. Labor disputes erupted. Strikes and protests of all magnitudes punctuated the industrial relationships of the city in the late 1910s and 1920s.

In the schools, the end of World War I marked the beginning of

a new era in Chinese student political activism.¹ The May Fourth Incident in Beijing touched off a national movement of student protests.² When news about the Beijing incident spread, college and secondary students in other cities followed suit. As in Beijing, students marched through the streets shouting patriotic slogans that attacked the Japanese along with the Chinese "traitors" (*hanjian*) who had signed away national rights in exchange for loans and credits. Student activists distributed handbills and delivered patriotic speeches at street corners in provincial capitals all over the country, and in the lower Yangzi region in particular they organized a boycott of Japanese goods and raided uncooperative stores. In Shanghai, the visiting student delegates from Beijing joined the local Student Union, the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce, and the Jiangsu Provincial Educational Association to form ad hoc committees with other civilian groups to coordinate their protests. Mass meetings were held, attended by tens of thousands of students, merchants, clerks, apprentices, artisans, textile workers, printers, metal workers, public utility workers, bus drivers, and so forth. A general strike was called, which nearly shut down the city except for the facilities owned and operated by the foreign communities. The immediate objectives everywhere of these patriotic assemblies were the rejection of the Treaty of Versailles and the punishment of supporters of the Treaty in the Chinese government. In provincial towns where there were no colleges and universities, students from secondary schools and higher normal schools assumed leadership. In remote district towns, it was often the senior classes of elementary schools that led the crowd. Beida and Fudan sent numerous student delegates into the provinces to stir up the organization of anti-Japanese protests. College students during the May Fourth Movement thus took national leadership in the mobilization of these patriotic movements, receiving for the most part the sympathy and support of merchants and manufacturers who had profited from the boom during World War I.³

The political events of 1919 fed the students' self-perception as vanguards of the nation and as a source of political power. It was no small feat after all that, in a city like Shanghai with a population

of over 1.5 million, 13,000 students were able to call a commercial strike within a few hours, hastily organized as they were.⁴ Earlier, the New Culture Movement, championed by the faculty and students of Beida, had already unleashed considerable iconoclastic energy against many aspects of Chinese culture and society. Now the demonstrations and rallies of the May Fourth Movement put the students once again in the limelight of national attention, with much sympathy and support for their defiance of the authorities. The taste of power, however, was corrosive of discipline within the existing framework. Encouraged by their experience during the May Fourth Movement, many students, especially those in secondary schools in provincial towns, became ready to take matters into their own hands and challenged school authorities and discipline.

In 1921–1922, hundreds of cases of campus unrest were reported in the lower Yangzi region. The majority took place in junior high schools during the two peak periods of September–October, shortly after the beginning of the new academic year, and of May–June, right before the final examinations. At these times of the year, when the campus atmosphere was restless and volatile, students would sooner resort to riots than submit to the authority of teachers and administrators with regard to curriculum and examinations requirements.⁵

Although the May Fourth Movement was significant as a moment when college students acted as the nation's political conscience, events in the following decade showed that students could be made to respond to baser motives. Partisan political interests were present on most college campuses in the 1920s, and the students, oftentimes emotional and credulous, became instruments in campus power struggles. Students were incited to take stands on school personnel issues. Fist fights would break out between opposing camps, and wooden clubs and ropes were not uncommon in these confrontations. Hu Dunfu, the American-trained geologist, was barred from the campus and beaten up by students when he tried, with the support of his student followers, to assume the presidency of Southeastern University in Nanjing in fall 1925. Hu was appointed with the support of the Guomindang in Canton, while

his predecessor, the American-trained economist Guo Bingwen, was encouraged to stay on by the Jiangsu Provincial Educational Association.⁶ In a separate controversy in 1925–1926 at Beijing's Women's Normal University, students barred their President, Yang Yingyu, from entering her office, and demanded that she be dismissed. Madame Yang was supported by the Ministry of Education, while the students were supported by the majority of the faculty. After several months of fierce confrontations, the Ministry ordered that the school be shut down. The students refused to comply. Soldiers were called in, and the women students were forcibly evicted from their dormitories. As the controversy raged on, academic work ground to a halt and classrooms were deserted. Students, meanwhile, were busily occupied, calling meetings, collecting signatures, and drafting denunciatory statements.⁷

The breakdown of school discipline and the infiltration of partisan interests cost the students much of the public support they enjoyed for their stance on public issues. Meanwhile, a minority of faculty and students, mostly of elite institutions, became genuinely radicalized. These academic intellectuals in northern universities took up the cause of urban laborers and openly espoused the ideals of socialist revolution, setting themselves even further apart from the general public by virtue of their beliefs.⁸

The warlord government of Beijing resorted to violence in its response to student protests. In the infamous massacre of 18 March 1926, the guards of the Anhui militarist and Prime Minister Duan Qirui opened fire right on the steps of Beijing's government building into a group of petitioning college students led by Li Dazhao, the prominent New Culture intellectual leader and founder of the North China branch of the Chinese Communist Party.⁹

But it was precisely the political activities of these radical members of the educated elite joined up with the aspirations of the urban proletariat that proved to be the most potent combination in political protests. The Chinese Communist Party, which grew out of the Marxism study societies of teachers and students, was formally launched in Shanghai in 1921. The Party was active in the organization of the urban labor movement. Skilled laborers, especially

those of Jiangnan artisan background working as machinists in Shanghai's arsenals, shipyards, tramways, tobacco companies, and printing houses, along with those working in the highly skilled occupations of woodworking and silk-weaving, proved to be the most receptive to the political messages of the young radicals.¹⁰ It was in strikes organized among laborers and supported by Shanghai's college students that outcries against industrial exploitation were blended with an aroused Chinese nationalism, such as in the May Thirtieth Movement of 1925.¹¹ The urban protests of the mid-1920s linked sentiments of anti-imperialism to anti-warlordism. When the Nationalists launched the Northern Expedition in 1926, the revolutionary army and its political workers, riding the tide of urban political protests, marched to the tune of these twin battle cries.¹²

Against the backdrop of mounting social tension and political agitation, Shanghai University was founded in 1922, with the blessing of the Nationalist Party. The birth of Shanghai University contrasted sharply with the founding of St. John's in the 1870s and the creation of gentry colleges at the turn of the century. Those who taught and studied at Shanghai University were by and large radical activists from provincial cities who had been driven out of their hometowns in the aftermath of the May Fourth Movement. The declared goal of the founders of Shanghai University was "to nurture human talent for the construction of the nation in accordance with the *Three Principles of the People*," a revolutionary ideology which attacked, not embraced, the interests of Shanghai's colonial rulers and business leaders.¹³ The Zhejiang Students' Association of Shanghai University, led by Yang Zhihua (disciple and wife of Qu Qiubai, General Secretary of the Communist Party from 1927 to 1928), was to distinguish itself during the May Thirtieth Movement as one of the most active student groups in Shanghai's labor movement, especially among the women tobacco workers at the British-American Tobacco Company.¹⁴ The university's active involvement in the May Thirtieth Incident was attested to both by the deaths of some students and the arrests of others, including Qu Qiubai's brother Qu Jingbai.¹⁵ Unlike other institutions, Shanghai University repre-

sented the activists' attempts to use higher education to spearhead sociopolitical changes. Despite its brief existence from 1922 to 1927, the university thus held a place of special significance in Shanghai's history of higher education.

SHANGHAI UNIVERSITY AS MYTH AND REALITY

In the spectrum of higher education in Shanghai, Shanghai University stood in stark contrast to St. John's University. The differences between the two are well evidenced in the different sorts of accounts they inspired. The chronicles of St. John's history are replete with routine and credible information on the mundane details of academic and social life on campus; Shanghai University's annals are filled with historical drama, part myth and part truth, part recollection and part fictitious invention. Distortions and exaggerations abound in accounts of Shanghai University. But these fervent statements about what came to be seen as a unique and glowing moment in the history of revolutionary education are by no means diminished in significance by their shaky factual foundation. On the contrary, they represent the radicals' own view of their ideal university.

While many portraits of St. John's are preserved in photographs in the pages of elegantly printed yearbooks, student magazines, and glossy anniversary albums, images of Shanghai University are more likely to be glimpsed in police reports filed with the authorities of the International Settlement, in newspaper advertisements of upcoming events, in journalists' reports of protests and arrests, and in radical writings on the role of the educated youth in a semi-colonial society. St. John's sat in the middle of "a pleasant old-world garden, with its well-kept lawn and shady trees," protected and shut off from the commotions of the world outside.¹⁶ Shanghai University was all concrete and brick, never far from the streets and alleys of the city in which it was embedded. Recollections of student days at St. John's were permeated with nostalgia. They depicted youthful days of promise and hope, of a schedule of learning dotted with plays, parties, and sports. Memoirs of student days at Shanghai

University, however, were far less concerned with what had happened than with the historical moment itself. College life at St. John's was remembered largely in personal terms. Life at Shanghai University, by contrast, was reconstructed from the viewpoint of social significance. Students at Shanghai University were not merely going to college; they reminisced as if they were consciously making their debut on the historical stage.

The contrast is partly owing to documentary differences. Because Shanghai University was in constant difficulty with the political authorities, its papers and records were scattered and destroyed with each new wave of official hostility. In the wake of the May Thirtieth Incident, the campus was twice raided by British police and American Marines, and, after the Nationalist victory in the Northern Expedition, General Bai Chongxi's army shut down the university altogether.¹⁷ Most of the administrative files were then deposited with the university's attorney. In the mid-1930s, a full-scale effort was undertaken to re-open the files when the Central Executive Committee of the Nationalist Party retroactively awarded Shanghai University the status of a national university.¹⁸ Attention was focused on student records and files, because the certified former students and alumni of Shanghai University would then become eligible, as national university graduates, for the full privileges that graduates of other national universities enjoyed, including preferential treatment in entering the civil service. The outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in July 1937 and the fall of Shanghai to Japanese forces shortly thereafter forced the evacuation of the central government to the interior of China. The papers and documents of Shanghai University were packed into seven large wooden crates and deposited with the Alumni Association at this juncture. These crates were subsequently transported to the countryside of Dangtu, Anhui, to escape air raids by the Japanese. In November 1937, with the fall of Nanjing in sight, the documents of Shanghai University were transported to Xuancheng in Anhui, in the hope of reaching safety in the south via the Nanjing-Jiangxi rail lines. At the train station, crowded with hysterical refugees, only three of the seven crates were taken aboard the southbound train before it pulled out

of the station. The other four, while awaiting cargo space, were reduced to ashes by Japanese air raids the next morning, 26 November 1937. The surviving three crates were eventually taken by boat first to Jiangxi, then through Hunan and Wuhan, and finally to Sichuan. Wartime devastation thus destroyed most of the papers of Shanghai University and, with them, the possibility of reconstructing a complete history of the university based on archival sources.¹⁹

The loss of the papers symbolizes the university's one-and-a-half decades of fledgling existence in the vortex of China's war, civil conflicts, and revolution. Driven by the vision and ideological fervor of some of its faculty members and students, Shanghai University in the mid-1920s emerged as an important rallying point for Marxist intellectuals who provided leadership and inspiration to a whole generation of aroused youth. To the extent that a university embodied the collective passion and convictions of those who stood behind it, Shanghai University was a university built to overthrow the treaty-port system and foment social revolution. As an institution pioneering that ideal, however, Shanghai University also sought shelter and financial support in an environment hostile to its aspirations. The case of Shanghai University thus re-opened the question of the relationship between higher education and revolutionary politics in the 1920s, in a decade when the former gentry academies, which contributed to the 1911 Revolution, were undergoing subtle transformations of their own into middle-class colleges. How far could a university go before radical politics brought about its institutional demise? Was it inevitable that institutional considerations compromise the ideological thrust in the beliefs of those who gave the university purpose and direction? The radical provincial youth who converged on Shanghai University tested their case in its extreme. The weaving of myth and reality, of facts and assertions, in the history of Shanghai University thus seems to have had its origin in the inherent contradictions of an enterprise in which ideals and reality clashed almost from the very beginning.

THE GENESIS OF A RADICAL INSTITUTION

Shanghai University had its origin in a profit-oriented private operation that was hardly able to make intellectual claims. Although 23 October 1922 was given as the date the university was founded, the inception of the school actually dated back to the late 1910s, when Southeast Higher Normal School (Dongnan Gaodeng Shifan Zhuanke Xuexiao) was established.²⁰ Founded by three natives of Anhui province before the outbreak of the May Fourth Movement, Southeast Higher Normal enjoyed a quiet existence in the cultural backwater of industrial Zhabei, where it occupied a small number of rented and refurbished residential buildings on Quingyun Road, smack in the middle of the factory zone. With over half their students drawn from Anhui, the administrators of Southeast Normal envisioned no greater a task for themselves than the collection of tuition and fees for the provision of room and board and the offering of a number of classes on Chinese, English, and drawing.²¹

In the aftermath of the May Fourth Movement, during 1920–1921, many radical secondary students were forced to leave their hometowns because of their involvement in the local student movement. The majority of these students were previously enrolled in the public senior-high and normal schools in former prefectural seats in the lower and mid-Yangzi regions and the south. These students arrived in Shanghai and, partly through provincial ties and partly lured by advertisements in Shanghai newspapers that stressed easy admissions and trendy subjects, they converged upon schools such as Southeast Normal.²²

In this particular case, no sooner had instruction begun in the fall of 1921 than it was discovered that much of the newspaper advertising about Southeast Normal was at best gross exaggeration. Students were particularly exasperated by the conservative and stubborn attitude of the school administration, which seemed totally incompatible with the iconoclastic spirit of the new youth. A group of these students with experience in organizing protests during the May Fourth Movement back home decided to take matters into

their own hands. A student association was formed which forcibly took over the school's buildings and detained the administrative staff, including the cashier. In the ensuing months, while the President and the Trustees turned to the police and legal authorities for help in attempts to regain control of their property, students traded insults and mutual denunciations with their former administrators in the advertisement pages of local newspapers. The students also began an active search for a new head of the institution in hopes of bringing in outside support to reorganize the school.²³

Although the 1922 dispute at the Southeast Normal received much public attention, including that of the Shanghai branch of the Nationalist Party, ten whole months elapsed before Yu Youren, an eminent member of the Party, finally gave in to students' pleading and agreed to direct the reorganization of the school. Aside from the national stature Yu enjoyed, the Guomindang Party connection was undoubtedly an important factor recommending him to the revolting students. During the early contacts with the students, Yu's comrades in the Nationalist Party had urged him to step in on behalf of the rebels. Ye Chucang (1883–1946) and Shao Lizi (1882–1967), the chief editors of the Party organ *Republic Daily* (*Minguo ribao*) in Shanghai, saw this as an opportunity to broaden student support for the Nationalist Revolution.²⁴ Later, as President of Shanghai University, Yu was able to persuade the Central Committee of the Nationalist Party in Canton to contribute to the university's operating budget.²⁵

Although much was made of this Party connection in later accounts, including claims that Shanghai University was founded by Sun Yat-sen himself and was intended as one of Sun's revolutionary vanguard units, it is arguable whether the Central Committee in Canton was committed to Shanghai University as one of its major educational enterprises. That distinction was reserved for the Whampoa Military Academy and Guangdong University, both founded a year later in Canton under the direct supervision of the Party. Later developments would also show that it was Guangdong University, not Shanghai University, that pioneered the institu-

tional prototype for higher education in Party-sponsored universities of the Nanjing decade.²⁶

The Communists, on the other hand, appeared to have shown a much more active interest in Shanghai University from the very start. Mao Dun's post-1950 recollection of the early history of Shanghai University, where he taught briefly in the Chinese Department, recalls that, as soon as the students rebelled against the school administration, student representatives immediately went to the Shanghai units of the CCP for guidance and support. It was the Communist Party, according to Mao Dun, that recommended Yu Youren for the presidency of Shanghai University. The Party's choice was supposedly based upon the reasoning that fund-raising campaigns on behalf of the university would meet with greater success when launched openly with a GMD rather than a CCP connection.²⁷

Many left-wing intellectuals joined the faculty and administration of Shanghai University after Yu Youren assumed the presidency. Although the Communist Party as such never claimed the existence of branch organizations within the university, Communists seem to have joined through networks of personal recommendations. Li Dazhao, above all, was instrumental in bringing about the appointment of a critical number of intellectuals with Marxist leanings. It was Li's recommendation, for instance, that brought Deng Zhongxia (1897–1933), a recent graduate from the College of Letters of Beida and a cadre in the CCP's Labor Bureau in Shanghai, to the faculty of Shanghai University.²⁸ Li was also instrumental in the appointment of Qu Qiubai (1899–1935) as an instructor in the Sociology Department.²⁹ Other prominent Marxist intellectuals who joined the faculty of Shanghai University included Cai Hesen (1890–1931), Yun Daiying (1895–1931), Zhang Tailei (1898–1927), Peng Shuzhi (1896–197?), Li Ji, Li Da, Gao Ersong, and Gao Erbo. Most of these left-wing faculty also served on the editorial boards of *New Youth* (*Xin qingnian*) and *The Guide* (*Xiangdao*).³⁰ Not all these individuals had Party affiliations, however. And, given the twists and turns in the early history of the CCP,

quite a few of these Marxist intellectuals were later denounced by the Party as Trotskyists. Others earned a place in post-1949 Communist hagiography partly because they perished young (Cai Hesen and Deng Zhongxia, to name the most obvious), or died a martyr's death (Yun Daiying, Zhang Tailei, and Li Dazhao).

The influence of radical intellectuals at Shanghai University reached a high point during the May Thirtieth Incident, when Marxist idealists designed the academic curriculum and shaped the political attitudes of the students. But earlier, during the institutional transition from Southeast Normal to Shanghai University, the primary concerns of the new university's leaders were mundane and down-to-earth. It was money, not ideology, that explained Yu Youren's initial reluctance to assume the responsibility of the presidency. It was the prospect of gaining financial assistance through the Party connections of a senior GMD leader that recommended Yu to the young radicals' serious consideration.

THE FUNDING OF A REVOLUTIONARY EXPERIMENT IN A PRE-REVOLUTIONARY SOCIETY

While most of the post-1949 recollections of Shanghai University generated in China place exclusive emphasis on the revolutionary ideology of the Sociology Department and the martyrdom of Shanghai students in anti-imperialist struggles, sources from the 1920s and the archives of the Ministry of Education suggest that, throughout its brief existence, much of the energy of its faculty and administration was consumed by the chronic financial distress in which the university found itself. Despite left-wing intellectuals' scorn for money-conscious measures and despite the students' early rebellion against the profit-oriented operation of the former Southeast Normal, the administration of Shanghai University bowed to the reality that it operated in a commercially oriented capitalist society. The university never quite succeeded in shaking off the image of being erratic and irregular, a "wild-pheasant college," or *yeji daxue* in the local slang. And, with the exception of the last year of its existence, Shanghai University remained in locals' eyes a

"back-alley college" (*nongtang daxue*), a shadowy operation off the main thoroughfare tucked away in the factory zone.

There were, after all, no dormitories, no auditorium, no library, no laboratory, no social hall, no athletic fields, and no gymnasium. Like other private foundations with meager financial sources, the school charged a wide range of miscellaneous levies and instituted measures to extract tuition and fees from the students with appropriate punctuality. It ran advertisements, offered courses with popular and commercial appeal, and organized fund-raising campaigns. There was, in short, a pecuniary side to Shanghai University that was altogether incongruent with its idealized image as a place of radical social learning. This aspect of its institutional history has been persistently overshadowed by later rhetorical glorifications of Shanghai University's heroic revolutionary past.

The problem of adequate endowment plagued all private institutions of learning that sprang up in Shanghai during the decades of laissez-faire in higher education. The 1920s, furthermore, had been unusually lean years for advanced learning. Even the Acting President of the prestigious Beijing University was at a loss about how to face up to his 600 hungry faculty and staff members and 3,000 riotous students when government funding was half a year in arrears.³¹ It was quite understandable, then, that Yu Youren should feel reluctant when students of Southeast Normal approached him in early 1922 with pleas to transform their school into "a genuine university infused with the spirit of national revolution" so as to save them from "throwing away our youthful years bereft of guidance and instruction." After he finally assumed the presidency of Shanghai University, Yu Youren turned immediately to Zhang Ji (1882–1947), the senior member of the Revolutionary Alliance best known for his ability to raise funds for Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary uprisings.³² Zhang's actual contribution to the financial health of Shanghai University is unknown. But he was, with others, instrumental in persuading the GMD Central Committee in Canton to commit a monthly subsidy of 2,000 yuan to the operating budget of the school.

Subsidy notwithstanding, Shanghai University was dependent upon

tuition and student fees for financial survival. Though lacking a solid academic foundation, and with only meager facilities to offer, the university nonetheless charged tuition and fees comparable to those of such well-established and major institutions as St. John's and Beida, and at a level reached by Yenching, Daxia, and Guanghua only a few years later.³³ Moreover, the rules of the university stipulated that students should punctually pay the full due on the day of registration in order to attend classes at all. Admission to the lecture rooms was permitted only upon presentation of a certificate issued by the cashier's office.³⁴ In this regard, the practice at Shanghai University contrasted sharply with that at a true public institution such as Beida, where classroom lectures were open to the public at large.

Miscellaneous and ad hoc fees abounded. Although the university did not operate residential units, it still charged the students for managing their room and board. Though no formal instructions or facilities were offered in physical education, students were nevertheless assessed 1 yuan per semester for athletic activities. For the privilege of using the small number of books and periodicals in the reading room, students paid 2 yuan every year. For "miscellaneous" services, another 2 yuan was added to the total charge of tuition and fees. The cost of lecture notes was announced separately each semester, varying from subject to subject. And all routine transactions with the university required yet additional fees: 10 yuan to petition to change academic major or 5 yuan to take a make-up examination. Regular tuition and fees paid to the university thus totaled no less than 180 yuan annually; and irregular charges and fines for damage to school property, breaking of school rules, and late payment of school bills increased the students' financial burden even further.³⁵

Since the income from student tuition and fees was of such importance in the operating budget of Shanghai University, an increase in enrollment was bound to improve the short-term financial condition of the university. However, the introduction of flexible but erratic admissions practices to permit a rapid growth in the size of the student body during its brief life span stretched the curricular

resources of the university beyond respectable limits. In the fall of 1923, one year after the formal establishment of Shanghai University, enrollment doubled to a total of 312 students. A significant increase again took place in the next half year. By February 1924, the total figure climbed to nearly 400.³⁶ Much of this increase was attributable not so much to an expansion of the formal program as to arrangements that permitted a larger number of students to affiliate with Shanghai University informally. Students were allowed to take a minimum of 10 units of courses, for example, for 2 yuan per unit. Some were also admitted with the understanding that they would take the full load of requirements for the degree program in any given year and pay the full amount of tuition.³⁷

Shanghai University also introduced, in 1924, a large number of courses designed to prepare students for jobs in law offices, public service, trading companies, and secondary schools "in order to meet the demands of society."³⁸ Some of these courses were offered through the Sociology Department, the stronghold of radical thinking to which the university owed much of its reputation.³⁹ Two sub-fields were offered through the sociology curriculum. For those interested in a career in trade and finance, there were courses in banking systems, bookkeeping, monetary theories, and social and economic policies. For those who were interested in law and civil service, the department offered "current events," "political parties," "civil and criminal codes," and "socioeconomic policies."⁴⁰ Courses such as "modern Chinese diplomatic history," "scientific socialism" and "history of socialist revolutions" were, of course, taught in the Sociology Department as well. These courses introduced Shanghai students to Marx, Engels, class struggle, class consciousness, capitalism, imperialism, socialism, the October Revolution, the Communist Party and the Third International. The Sociology Department thus appeared to have operated as much as a trade school as a dispenser of revolutionary ideas.⁴¹

The pragmatic orientation was even more pronounced in the English Department. While much was said about the importance of training students to read socialist works in English, the emphasis was in fact on training students in English for business transactions.

Seniors were taught "letters and memos" (*gongwen chengshi*), "introductory journalism," and "education" in addition to accounting and bookkeeping that were required from the sophomore year on.⁴²

Despite subsequent left-wing and Communist attempts to claim the school as exclusively their own, it appeared that two conflicting tendencies were simultaneously at work in Shanghai University. It was, after all, a radical experiment carried out in a pre-revolutionary society. Although many of its faculty members trumpeted an ideology that called for the overthrow of the existing social order, the school nonetheless needed to attract financial support in order to continue its existence. In their criticisms of the existing educational system, radical intellectuals often decried the fee-collecting practices of middle-class colleges and denounced the social biases introduced into the admissions process of higher education.⁴³ Shanghai University nevertheless resorted to a measure similar to other private institutions to maximize their revenues from students, despite the high-sounding rhetoric that called for true equality of access to education regardless of a student's financial means.

It can be argued, of course, that these practical measures were adopted as mere tactical means that never compromised the radical dedication to revolutionary goals. It is quite possible, furthermore, that the two different sets of course offerings were in fact promoted by two different groups of individuals within the university who disagreed.⁴⁴ The vocational branch of Shanghai University, after all, never succeeded in gaining much credibility with the commercial wealth of the city. And, although education at Shanghai University fell short of a pure immersion in revolutionary ideals, it was still widely perceived as a politically radical curriculum that many of the cosmopolitan middle classes shunned.

Whether the radical intellectuals were thinking tactically or were merely compromised by the pragmatists in their midst, they put in sustained efforts to improve upon the physical conditions of the institution. Though the students' spartan existence in the back alleys of the factory zone was made a point of much pride in later literature about the university, the persistent goal of the 1920s was to build a regular campus in the fashion of other established Shang-

hai educational institutions. The effort to acquire 22 *mu* of open land in Jiangwan as the site of a permanent campus gathered momentum after the May Thirtieth Movement, when the premises and properties of Shanghai University were occupied by U.S. Marines sent to stop the spread of Bolshevism in China. The National Party in Canton contributed 20,000 yuan on this occasion. Faculty, students, and administration subsequently worked together on a campaign to raise the necessary funds for the construction of their campus.

Students organized themselves into fund-raising units that summer. The Acting President, Shao Lizi, and two faculty members, Gao Yuhan and Hou Shaoqiu, coordinated three separate fund-raising committees. Gao had the reputation of an anarchist and Shao and Hou both belonged to the left wing of the Nationalist Party. Yet the three seemed remarkably dedicated as institution builders.⁴⁵ In the fall of 1925, a new campus, with 2 three-storied Western-style dormitories, 2 classroom buildings, an auditorium, dining hall, kitchens, and 13 other one-story buildings, was completed. Among the teachers who helped negotiate loans with 2 construction firms to help finish up the project was Chen Wangdao, Professor of Chinese and translator of the first Chinese version of the "Communist Manifesto."⁴⁶

TO LINK CLASSROOMS TO THE STREETS

Precisely because of the disparity between ideal social ends and material economic means, even after the campus was opened Shanghai University remained a bimodal institution. Even though radical professors helped build the physical core of Shanghai University, they could only facilitate their revolutionary goals by removing themselves from the formal structure and program of the school. It was in the extension programs rather than the conventional degree programs that Shanghai University came closest to fulfilling its radical ideals in higher education. The overall student body of Shanghai University was much augmented and its social composition (or at least the perception of its composition) significantly altered in 1924, when the university opened two affiliated operations. The

Commoners' School of Shanghai University (Shanghai Daxue Pinnin Xuexiao) and the English Night School of Shanghai University (Shanghai Daxue Fushe Yingwen Yexiao) both attracted a large number of skilled factory workers, shop clerks, trade apprentices, bookstore and printing-house employees, newspaper proofreaders, elementary-school teachers, and lower-level Party workers, who were taught English and "revolutionary thought and class-consciousness" by student volunteers of Shanghai University. No tuition was charged, and books, pens and pencils were provided free of charge. The total enrollment of these two schools soon exceeded 600, while the regular student body of Shanghai University remained steady at around 400.⁴⁷

In these new volunteer extension programs, factory workers and college students rubbed shoulders as they studied together. University classrooms by day were used as meeting places for workers and apprentices in the evenings.⁴⁸ Here students engaged in earnest discussions of contemporary events and mobilized themselves for action in social movements. It was these extension programs, along with the Middle School affiliated with the university, that swelled the ranks of protestors following the banner of Shanghai University in the bloody summer months of 1925.⁴⁹

The visibility of Shanghai University was also much enhanced by the public lectures organized under its auspices, trumpeting themes advanced by the New Culture Movement of Beijing as well as by the Nationalist in Canton. The names associated with these lectures ranged from Li Dazhao and Hu Shi, leaders of the New Culture Movement, to Zhang Taiyan, the classicist, and Wu Zhihui, anarchist and veteran figure of the 1911 Revolution. Leading figures of the GMD and CCP, radicals as well as conservatives, then joined together in the First United Front, were equally well represented. The lectures featured Yun Daiying, chief editor of the propaganda organ of the Socialist Youth Corps, as well as Hu Hanmin (1879–1936), whose Party seniority in the Guomindang surpassed that of Chiang Kai-shek, and Dai Jitao (1891–1949), a socialist in the 1920s who later became the most prominent ideologue of the purged Nationalist Party under Chiang after 1925.⁵⁰

The lectures, given between 1923 and 1925, were open to the public without charge. They covered subjects ranging from "Evolution and Progress," "An Introduction to History" (expounded by Li Dazhao in a Marxian vein), to "The Structure of the Chinese Language" (by Zhang Taiyan), "East Asia and the World" (by Dai Jitao), and "Science and the Philosophy of Life," offered as a liberal treatise by Hu Shi.⁵¹ The series thus enhanced the image of Shanghai University as a center where timely social and political concerns were addressed by the most eminent of contemporary progressive intellectuals.

Shanghai University thus consisted of two quite separate arenas. One was a formally laid-out institution with buildings and curricula designed to meet the needs of the urban commercial society of one of the world's greatest entrepôts. The other was a more informal space—far less well-defined—linking classrooms and streets through a program of summer sessions, extension courses, and public lectures that both projected the image of the university as a trend-setting center of radical social thought, and brought together social theory and practice in the demonstrations and processions that attended these ostensibly academic activities. The two arenas overlapped at points, but they were essentially quite divergent in their views of the place of education in society-at-large. It was in the informal arena that issues from the political world of warlords, capitalists, imperialists, the urban proletariat, and revolutionaries were thrust upon the students, often through no choice of their own. It was here that students simplified complex ideas to suit pragmatic formulas of social and political action. It was here, in the informal arena, that "theory" and "practice" were eagerly connected, and where moral passions were stirred up while students of Shanghai University played out their roles as radicals and revolutionaries. When Mao Dun (1896–1985) recalled with nostalgia his own life of learning at Shanghai University, which was characterized by the circulation of radical publications, the free discussion of cultural concerns and political events, and a heightened awareness of the plights of the workers and the peasantry, he invoked a concept of learning that was so much oriented towards political activism that

it was scarcely containable within the institutional framework of formal academic work at the school.⁵²

A RADICAL CRITIQUE OF LEARNING

One of the characteristics of the legendary style of learning associated with Shanghai University—a theme that received particular attention in radical treatments of the concept of education—was the notion that learning consisted of a process of struggle for self-improvement, which was manifested in immediate social engagement. True learning necessarily entailed social action, which in turn eventually led to the remaking of society itself. This notion was accompanied by a disdain for academic units, grades, requirements, examinations, and degrees, viewed as institutional devices designed to impose standards of academic excellence derived from biased class interest. Yun Daiying, Editor-in-Chief of the Socialist Youth Corp's weekly *Chinese Youth* (*Zhongguo qingnian*), told his sociology students that modern schools offered instruction only in such useless subjects as English, mathematics, physics, and chemistry, while failing to impart real knowledge about sociopolitical actuality. Modern educational institutions, according to Yun, also held their students in passive obedience by the use of examinations, which were instruments of coercion that compelled students to spend their energies memorizing the contents of lectures and reference materials. Examinations prevented students from the quest for true learning, which resided only in the experience of direct social engagement.⁵³

Parallel to this disdain for the academic establishment was the idealization of progressive professors as warm and eager teachers, affable and approachable to their students, who had no use for the dignified and stuffy appearance too often assumed by degree-holding academic lectures. These instructors were hailed both for the ideological guidance and for the revolutionary camaraderie they offered. Xiao Pu, the philosophy professor who lectured on dialectical materialism, was remembered for being always ready to chat and to joke with students before he began his lectures. His lecture style was described as "well-organized" and "presented with clarity,"

combining lucid explanations of abstruse notions with vivid illustrations taken from reality. Xiao Pu cared about whether his students could follow his lectures without difficulty: He always wrote down on the blackboard the main points of his talk, to which he would repeatedly return in the course of the lecture. Xiao was also willing to entertain questions any time, any place, with dedication and without condescension.⁵⁴

Cai Hesen's lecture style in the course called "The History of Social Evolution" was also said to be lively, lucid, interspersed with vivid illustrations taken from real life, and easy to follow.⁵⁵ Nor did his eagerness to teach and share insights end with the lecture hour itself. As early as 1923, students of Shanghai University were already writing articles eulogizing the "unique" teacher-disciple relationship of their university, which extended beyond the classroom to encompass other aspects of life.⁵⁶ Their image of the ideal teacher strongly implied a preference for knowledge set out in simple and clear terms, free of rhetorical embellishment and conceptual ambivalence, stated with certainty and claims of scientific validity, schematized and translatable into programs of immediate social action. Ideas were not valued as objects of detached consideration, nor was scholarship as such of particular social value. Ideas must not merely represent social reality. More important, ideas must become instruments to help transform social reality.

Implicit in this concept of learning was a radical critique of the educational experience offered in the majority of China's Western-style colleges and universities: an educational experience seemingly devoid of moral and political content. All these other institutions, it would seem, engaged mindlessly in producing large numbers of holders of academic degrees whose bookish training, in classical as well as in imported subjects, separated them from real issues of importance to their culture and society. College education in these respectable institutions severed linkages between knowledge and action, self-cultivation and public responsibility. These institutions brought forth an educated elite which advanced personal careers at the expense of public well-being.

Westernized institutions, furthermore, depersonalized the rela-

ionship between students and teachers. These modern schools, housed in large and impressive buildings with expensive equipment and facilities, were seen as impersonal places of rigid hierarchy which offered no community and no direction—none of the sort of engaging and inspiring guidance and support that infused intellectual transmission with moral meaning.⁵⁷

From the perspective of Shanghai University's radical members, conventional academic institutions were not to be taken too seriously. The failure of Shanghai University to stabilize its institutional foundation was a blessing rather than a misfortune, because the school's ideological drift, combined with its financial penury, created considerable fluidity in the academic program. Classes were constantly being introduced, canceled, and then reinstated, especially in the Sociology Department. The tenure of faculty in all three major disciplines—Chinese, English, and Social Sciences—tended to be brief, so that a large number of individuals passed through short stints at Shanghai University, momentarily affiliated with the school whenever personal fortune and the vicissitudes of the national revolution happened to bring them to Shanghai. Much of this lent substance to the radicals' claim that at Shanghai University their vision of learning found its utmost institutional expression in a kind of spontaneous improvisation. So much was made of the Spartan conditions of its material existence and the volatile state of the academic program, so much was made of the aspects in which Shanghai University departed from the practices of other reputable institutions, that the sheer ephemerality of Shanghai University became a strength rather than a weakness, epitomizing the ideal of anti-institutionalism in higher education.

THE INTELLECTUAL AGENDA OF THE REVOLUTION

The real question, however, was where the reality ended and the myth began. Or, to put the matter differently, how much of the vaunted anti-institutionalism was by default and how much by design. The declared intentions of those who shaped the academic program of Shanghai University, said Qu Qiubai, was to build "a

center of New Culture in the south," which meant taking as their model the National Beijing University.⁵⁸ The charter of the school, promulgated in October 1922, stated that the objectives of the university were "to nurture talent for the construction of the nation in accordance with the *Three Principles of the People*, and to elevate the level of cultural life."⁵⁹ Although the blueprint for the curriculum, drafted by Qu Qiubai and adopted by the Faculty Executive Committee, was informed by a radical reading of the kind of human talent needed in campaigns of national revolution and iconoclastic cultural development, it nonetheless sidestepped the question of immediate engagement in revolutionary activities. Qu Qiubai defined the academic goals of the university as twofold: "to lay a solid foundation in the study of social sciences," and "to formulate new systems of literature and art." In both cases, books and ideas had an important role to play, even though students were to confront the crisis of warlordism, capitalism, and imperialism in action.

Qu Qiubai linked the study of social sciences directly to the task of national salvation. He argued that studying the social sciences was a natural extension of the self-strengthening effort that began with the study of Western military and industrial technology during the late Qing period. As the Chinese acquired knowledge about the West, he argued, intellectual attention was drawn to the political and social values that supported the growth of Western technology in its native environment. The discovery of this general relationship between technology and values led to a revolution in Chinese thinking that found expression in the New Culture Movement of the May Fourth era. But now a new stage had been reached, in which the prime oppressor of China, the system of world capitalism as such, had become a social phenomenon far too complex for those uninitiated in the science of sociology to comprehend, let alone resist. Qu therefore viewed the social sciences as an instrument both to represent and to unmask contemporary social reality. The sociology curriculum he designed emphasized two approaches. Students were taught, on the one hand, general social science theory and the history of social movements in the West. In these studies a strong emphasis was placed upon the most advanced form of West-

ern scientific socialism, which promised to predict accurately the future course of historical evolution. On the other hand, students were required to investigate contemporary social problems and study the social history of China. Theoretical training in Western social sciences would thus help to shed light on the social, economic, and political configurations of China, past and present, as well as on China's relationship with the outside world, yielding insights critically important to the formulation of a program of revolutionary action.

Qu Qiubai's enthusiasm for universally applicable principles of social sciences was accompanied by a keen interest in problems of language and culture. He endorsed certain approaches that were bound to incur the wrath of the prominent classicists of his day. Qu noted that the corroding influence of Western capitalism had vitiating China's literary culture, and that foreign phrases and alien motifs had distorted Chinese literary and artistic expressions. Like the classicists, he stressed the study of the Chinese language in all its aspects: ideographic, grammatical, philological, phonological, syntactic, and so on. Unlike the classicists, however, Qu had no intention of continuing the philological and scholastic traditions of the high Qing. Whereas leading classicists like Chen Yinke and Wang Li demanded a profound respect for the integrity of Chinese language and culture as a unique system—a system to be understood only in its own terms—Qu Qiubai proposed to dissect the structure of the Chinese language in accordance with the latest Western linguistic theories.⁶⁰ Since language *was* the embodiment of cultural values, linguistic study was to form the foundation of a comprehensive criticism of Chinese culture as one among world cultures, described and analyzed in a scientific language that was universally applicable.

Qu Qiubai thus encouraged his students to explore new forms of artistic and literary expression, to borrow from Western theories of literary criticism, and to strive for a critical reevaluation of the cultural heritage of the gentry-scholar past. The curriculum he designed placed equal emphasis on traditional poetry, prose, drama, and fiction, on the one hand, and on Western linguistic, aesthetic,

and literary theories, on the other.⁶¹ On the whole, Qu Qiubai's attitude toward China's literary past was quite compatible with that of the iconoclastic May Fourth intellectuals. The true value of the literati high culture, Qu believed, could be ascertained only by a critical examination placed in the context of global patterns of historical development. But such critical re-evaluation of the past was only a first step. What engaged Qu Qiubai's true interest was the process of defining the new artistic and literary forms of modern China that would give voice to the voiceless, and impart meaning to experiences that were otherwise errant and aimless, in a culture cut adrift from its ancient moorings by the forces of modern capitalism.⁶²

On an ideal plane, it was the intellectual mission of Shanghai University both to guide the course of political action and to create new cultural values. Qu Qiubai, in other words, wished his students to take revolution to heart as an intellectual—and not merely political—enterprise. Shanghai University was not to be a Western-style college of liberal arts and sciences like St. John's, nor a technological institute like Communications. Like Beida, it would take the study of Chinese culture and language seriously. Like the private Chinese universities in the earlier decades, it proposed to chart the nation's destiny. But, although Western social science and literary criticism were to be studied, the point of reference remained the internal dynamics of Chinese culture and society. Though the classics were taught, the past was studied in light of present concerns and used as a foundation for the creation of new values. Both the modern West and traditional China were studied, in other words, only to be transcended.

Even when fully subscribing to the view that true learning served to make social revolution, Qu Qiubai recognized that, within the revolutionary camp, there was a necessary division of labor between those who shape consciousness and those who lead action. To build Shanghai University into a center of revolutionary undertaking, Qu Qiubai laid out ambitious course programs and set up demanding academic standards. Students were required to take a wide range of courses, and the bylaws of Shanghai University contained an elab-

rate system of tests and awards to guarantee eligibility for admission, to assure continuous diligence, and to distinguish the intellectually superior.⁶³ Performance was calculated in grade points and class percentile. Honors, awards, and prizes were not intended for those who led street protests but for those who excelled in examinations. Whether or not such an examination system was fully instituted, its existence suggested that, despite the activism for which Shanghai University was later remembered, the faculty and administration had envisaged a much more encompassing role for Shanghai University in the revolutionary struggle than simply collective activism.⁶⁴

POPULAR SOCIALISM AND ITS RADICAL FOLLOWING

Shanghai University managed to attract radical youths from far and wide precisely because of its reputation for political activism. A higher percentage of its students came from the non-contiguous provinces of Sichuan, Shanxi, Anhui, Guangdong, and Hunan than in any other Shanghai institution of higher learning. There was also a handful from Manchuria, Shandong, Northwestern China, Southeast Asia, and Korea.⁶⁵ Shanghai University, unlike the majority of colleges and universities in the area, was not so much a regional institution as a national one. Its students were strangers to the big city. Many were also exiles from their hometowns, alienated from provincial society by their radical politics and iconoclastic views. Among secondary-school students in Canton in the mid-1920s, Shanghai University was referred to not only as the place where no examinations were required but also as the school that taught the chemistry of bomb-making.⁶⁶ The appeal of Shanghai University to these students lay not only in its revolutionary ideology but also in its liberating style.

Many of the courses offered in the sociological disciplines at Shanghai University showed the predominant influence of socialism and communism, as interpreted by early Chinese Marxist intellectuals who were mindful of the popular appeal of their teachings. The popularization of scientific socialism was high on the agenda of

these intellectuals, and for a while Shanghai University was a center of such enterprise. Li Ji, who taught political economy and pioneered the translation of classics like *Das Kapital* and *Anti-Dühring* into Chinese, was the editor of an abridged and annotated volume entitled *Tongsu ziben lun* (*Das Kapital: A popularized edition*), which he assigned as a required text to his class. He was also the author of *Ziben lun qianshuo* (*Elementary Das Kapital*) and an essay collection entitled *Makesi zhuan* (*Marx: A biography*).⁶⁷ Shi Cuntong, a former student at the Zhejiang First Normal School at Hangzhou and the author of "A Critique of Filial Piety" ("Feixiao"), which won the acclaim of Mao Zedong in the pages of the magazine *Xiangjiang pinglun* (*The Xiang River review*), lectured at Shanghai University on the history of social sciences and the rise of the Communist International. Li Jun taught a course called "The History of Social Revolution," and used *Shehui jinhua shi* (*A history of social evolution*) written by Cai Hesen, Mao Zedong's close associate from the May Fourth days in Changsha, as the required text.⁶⁸ A large number of works on socialism, including *Shehui kexue shijiang* (*Ten lectures on social science*) by An Ticheng, *Xin shehuixue* (*New sociology*) by Li Da (1890–1966, one of the seven original members of the Marxism Study Society of 1921 in Shanghai),⁶⁹ *Diguo zhuyi tieti xia de Zhongguo* (*China under the iron hoof of imperialism*) by Qi Shufen, and *Kexue shehui zhuyi* (*Scientific socialism*) by Xiong Deshan, all had a wide circulation among the students. Moreover, Shanghai Bookstore, an outlet for left-wing publications, operated a branch office on the Shanghai University campus, so that periodicals such as *Xiangdao* (*The guide*), the Communist Party organ, *Xin qingnian* (*New youth*), edited by prominent left-wing intellectuals, and *Zhongguo qingnian* (*Chinese youth*), the organ of the Socialist Youth Corps, were also readily available.⁷⁰

There was so much popular interest in social-science subjects and social theories among students, workers, and clerks that publishers competed with each other in the printing of these materials. The market was not limited to Shanghai either. Many of the printed materials were distributed by mail to provincial outlets. The mid-1920s and early 1930s was a period of particularly feverish activity

in the printing of social-science subjects of this sort. Dozens of small publishing houses in Shanghai catered to the upsurge of such an interest. The initiative for the writing of Shi Cuntong's book, *Shehui kexue de yanjiu* (A study of the social sciences), for example, came not from the author but from the publisher. In early February 1930, the publishers of Yuehua Books sent an advance to Guo Zhen, who used to be on the faculty of Shanghai University, with the request that Guo prepare a manuscript on the social sciences "for general readers." Guo Zhen took the money. Having little time for the writing, he turned the project over to his friend Shi Cuntong, who composed the main body of the book within a month's time. Guo Zhen wrote a preface to the manuscript on 4 March 1930, and made a small addition to the text. The first printing of this book, 1,500 copies at the retail price of .45 yuan each, appeared on bookstands 10 April of the same year, only about two months after the work was commissioned.⁷¹

Publishing houses in the late 1920s repeated each others' efforts in their competition to bring out lists of social-science books with pretentious titles. Pingfan Books of Shanghai, for example, advertised titles such as *An Outline of the Social Sciences* (*Shehui kexue dagang*), *An Outline of Social Problems* (*Shehui wenti dagang*), *An Outline of Socialism* (*Shehui zhuyi dagang*), *An Outline of Historical Materialism* (*Weiwu shiguan dagang*), *An Outline of the Social History of the World* (*Shijie shehui shigang*), *Complete History of Social Movements* (*Shehui yundong quanshi*), *Complete History of Social Thought* (*Shehui sixiang quanshi*), *History of Chinese Social Thought* (*Zhongguo shehui sixiang shi*), *The Iron Law of Social Progress* (*Shehui jinhua tieze*), *Foundation of Socialism* (*Shehui zhuyi de jichu*), *Socialist Ethics* (*Shehui zhuyi lunli xue*), *Socialist Sociology* (*Shehui zhuyi shehui xue*), *Socialist History of China* (*Shehui zhuyi Zhongguo shi*), and numerous other publications ranging in subject matter from the state of the Soviet Union to the condition of the peasantry in China. Of the 37 titles published by Wo Sing Bookstore at Shanghai and suppressed by the Shanghai Municipal Police Department, over one-third concerned the Soviet Union, Lenin, and Trotsky; another one-third dealt with revolutionary movements in colonies such as India and Korea, strategies

for military uprisings, and warfare; and the remaining third concerned labor, rural economy, and elementary social science.⁷² Duplication in subject matter with minor variations in titles was a common phenomenon. When dialectical materialism was the fashion, one bookstore printed *A General Guide to Dialectical Materialism* (*Weiwu bianzhengfa gailun*), another printed *An Introduction to Dialectical Materialism* (*Weiwu shiguan jianshuo*), and a third published *Dialectical Materialism ABC* (*Weiwu shiguan ABC*).⁷³

It is a measure of the popularity of such publications, which claimed to be serious works in scientific socialism, that bookstores engaged writers such as Gao Xisheng and Guo Zhen to "edit and translate" multi-volume sets on such subjects as social movements, social problems, socialism, social thought, the new economics, the new political science, the new sociology, history of international movements, and history of social progress. The publishers of Gao and Guo advertised their works as ideal choices for college textbooks. The books were touted as being "inexpensive" and "popular," "assigned by many professors as texts and standard reference materials," "rapidly sold out," and "already reprinted several times since first publication." In the publishers' advertising hyperbole, these volumes also offered an explanation of the entirety of human social experience. They were, in short, presented as authoritative to eager readers who wished to learn about the latest social thinking in unequivocal language and in one capsulated package. The association of these publications with Shanghai University was obviously regarded as an asset in the book market at least in the eyes of the publishers, even though the institution was closed down by the new government in 1927. Volume III of Guo Zhen's complete set, *An Outline of Social Problems*, was advertised as based on Guo's lecture notes prepared in the spring of 1925 at Shanghai University. Readers were assured that, by reading these 600,000 characters penned by a certified radical intellectual, one learned everything on labor, the peasantry, women, nationalism, social policies, and socialism that a modern progressive youth needed to know.

Some of the publishers' advertisements were certainly compatible with the authors' own beliefs. Shi Cuntong, for example, saw the

task of materialistic scientific socialism as providing unequivocal explanations for all social phenomena and human experience. Sociology is a study of social process and underlying principles, Shi wrote. Sociological knowledge points the way to social progress and social reform.⁷⁴ As he elevated the study of sociology and accepted the necessity to learn economics, Shi also dismissed the distinctly American and "bourgeois" disciplines of political science and law. The essence of politics is coercion and hierarchical organization, Shi stated. Power is evil, and governments are tolerated only till the dawn of the socialist utopia when equality is brought to all.⁷⁵ Law, meanwhile, is both an embodiment of the class relationships of exploitation and an instrument of political oppression. Legislation is needed only in capitalist societies, Shi argued, because in a capitalist system one's social status depends upon one's financial standing, and the ruling class therefore needs to employ the coercive power of the state to ensure private self-interest.⁷⁶ Shi Cuntong did not regard crime or poverty as a reflection of failure on the part of the individual. He laid the blame, instead, squarely on a social system characterized by the unequal distribution of property and by class exploitation. Neither moral teachings nor religious doctrines were needed to regulate human relationships in a truly classless society where complete freedom reigned and where there was no antagonism between rich and poor.⁷⁷

Shi Cuntong's discussions of poverty and the lack of moral legitimacy of the existing order had strong appeal for those who shared his background: the large number of newcomers from provincial towns who eked out a marginal existence in the shadow of Shanghai's bourgeois splendor and colonial power, living precariously as disgruntled intellectuals in the back alleys of the factory zones. Social science in this vein was a far cry from sociology as practiced in China's leading sociology departments in missionary colleges in the 1920s. While research in the Sociology Department of Yenching University, backed by the Rockefeller Foundation, was focused on concrete social problems and guided by the idea of social service, in Shanghai the pursuit of sociological knowledge was driven by a passion for political activism and a desire to remake society in the

image of a socialist utopia.⁷⁸ The demand for sociopolitical relevance was accompanied by an eagerness for action. As a consequence, the academic standards of intellectual excellence that Qu Qiubai sought to erect were undermined by the students' zealous commitment to realizing the full implications of the teachings they had received.

THE JUXTAPOSITION OF MEMORY AND PROCESS

As early as 1923, students at Shanghai University spoke consciously of the uniqueness of their classmates' commitment to national salvation and programs of social action.⁷⁹ Blood was shed and violent deaths occurred among these students in the course of the May Thirtieth Movement. More perished in the spring of 1927, when the soldiers of General Bai Chongxi shut down the university and purged the school of students suspected of radical sympathies. These events left an indelible imprint on the collective memory of the students. Their earlier confidence in their role as vanguards of national salvation and social revolution was now combined with the ethos of adversity, and images of suffering and heroism were paraded in later writings to give substance to the acclaimed tradition of Shanghai University.

By the mid-1930s, the images congealed and hagiographers who eulogized its memory insisted that the spirit of Shanghai University inspired awe, respect, and profound emotional stirring. The name of Shanghai University called to mind images of youth filled with revolutionary fervor; it evoked scenes of large crowds electrified by intense emotion ready to break forth into action, sights of handbills that flew in the sky "like snow flakes," sounds of incendiary rhetoric and deafening shouts of slogans, as well as machine guns, imprisonment, deaths, and sufferings, and the unbending will to pursue struggle to the very end. The life of learning at Shanghai University was thus a life of "enthusiastic discussion of current events in the classrooms, to the point of exhaustion," of "fiery performance at street corners, with every word of love for the country uttered with blood and tears, pouring forth from the bottom of the heart," and

of "busy work at the printing press that poured forth messages to unite the hearts of the people."⁸⁰

The images preserved and accentuated by the pens of hagiographers idealized a form of experience quite different from what Qu Qiubai had hoped for the university. Youthful impulse for action and engagement, as eulogized by the hagiographers, had brushed aside the call for cool, deep reflection on the shape of the future. Passion was romanticized to a point of such intensity that structure was brought to the brink of bursting. On the one hand, student political activism permitted Shanghai University to claim roles on the social and historical stage that transcended the boundary of the campus and survived the demise of the institution. On the other hand, it was precisely this kind of activism that brought upon the university the political and military repression that doomed Qu's intellectualist attempt to combine university and revolution in the creation of a truly new socialist culture.

The legacy that was principally associated with the history of Shanghai University stemmed, therefore, only partly from the formal and intended aspects of its institutional arrangements. Like Fudan, China, Daxia, and Guanghua, Shanghai University originated with a student revolt, and was largely shaped by the aspirations of its early students. While the others were tamed into middle-class colleges, Shanghai University remained erratic—forever a *yeji daxue*—in the eyes of the affluent and respectable. The character of student life was determined not so much by what the university had planned and prescribed as by what evolved and occurred around it. It is only to be expected, therefore, that the realm in which the radical nature of Shanghai University's academic culture found fullest expression should be in the personal lifestyle of students informally affiliated with it. Half a century later, Ding Ling, the famous woman writer, recalled her days as an auditor at Shanghai University from 1924 to 1925.

Ding Ling (1902–1986) arrived at Shanghai estranged both from her family and the larger environment of her hometown.⁸¹ Drawn by the reputation of the instructors, Ding Ling audited courses in literature at Shanghai University.⁸² The student life described in

her recollections was a life taken up by creative writing, lecture attendance, semi-collective living arrangements—all amid a state of chronic financial distress in the crowded back alleys of Shanghai. Frequent debates on current events and literary theories punctuated daily life. Relationships between friends and comrades, both intellectual and personal, were intense. There was much passion and idealism. There was also, however, tension, discord, and instability in relationships. It was a life dedicated to public issues and to ideas and actions with national import. It was also a life of enclosure, of small groups of comrades acutely aware of their minority standing politically, who turned inward for mutual support. Romance, revolution, personal liberation, and the quest for social justice became one entangled theme in the style of life associated with Shanghai University and described in personal memoirs and biographies.⁸³

The archival materials stored in the spare buildings of the former Nanjing Ministry of Education, now in Taipei, remind us, of course, that the reality of Shanghai University could be seen in a much less idealistic light. The university was unable, but not necessarily unwilling, to establish a firm institutional foundation. Even though Shanghai University offered courses designed to capitalize on the vocational needs of Shanghai's treaty-port environment, and even though considerable effort was put into fund-raising, the university was unable to attract the kind of private contribution received by other reputable private institutions in the area. Universities such as Guanghua and Daxia also had their origin in student revolts against existing school administrations in the 1920s. While these universities were launched with generous private gifts and continued to enjoy substantial donations into the next decade, individuals representing commercial wealth, based either in Shanghai, the lower Yangzi or Southeast Asia, were conspicuously absent from the board of trustees of Shanghai University. Just as radicals like Ding Ling eulogized the disorderly and anarchic state of university governance and attributed purposefulness to its making, so do the archival sources present Shanghai University as a case of one failed attempt after another to impose strong administrative control and curricular guidance.

Both versions of the university's history have their significance. While the official papers were records of what had taken place, the private recollections were declarations of belief in the significance of what had happened.⁸⁴ And, in the end, with the university's demise, both forms of evidence necessarily converged. The muffled tone and terse treatment of the last days of the university in the official papers amount to an implicit concession to the validity of the radical claim. Despite the Guomindang connections of the university, radicals and revolutionaries had captured a critical following among the students, and their social vision and pedagogical philosophy had come to assert a major influence over them all.

A VIOLENT END

In the spring of 1927, Shanghai University purchased a permanent site in an open area to the west of the town of Jiangwan, a rural region northeast of Shanghai. When instruction began, 400 students waded through muddy water in the spring rain as they moved into the residential quarters on the new campus, the construction of the road leading to the school entrance having hardly been completed at the time. The accommodations were inadequate, and those who arrived late were compelled to seek lodging in the nearby villages.⁸⁵

Then one afternoon in mid-April 1927, just weeks after the new campus had opened. Xue Shangshi, a senior from Canton, glanced out of the window of a second-floor meeting room and saw a company of soldiers in gray uniform approaching rapidly from the direction of the railroad station in Jiangwan. Word spread instantly, and within minutes most teachers and students had fled, dispersing through the open fields behind the school buildings. The soldiers—under the command of General Bai Chongxi, General Commander of the Eastern Division of the Northern Expedition Army, which had reached Shanghai by moving up the coastal provinces of Fujian and Zhejiang—arrested the few who remained and closed down the university.⁸⁶ Search for Communist Party members and political sympathizers continued. Youth thrown into the Songlin Bridge

headquarters of the Wusong-Shanghai Military Garrison Command were given a summary trial, and many were put to death. The "purification campaign" to rid the Nationalist Party of Communist members (*qingdang*) had begun.⁸⁷

Hujiang, or Baptist Shanghai College, and Datong, to name a few) derived over half their income from student payments. Increases in income from the students themselves were typically achieved both by an increase in the amount of miscellaneous fees collected, and in a major expansion in the size of enrollment. The heavy reliance upon income from tuition and fees on the part of a majority of private colleges in Shanghai thus coincided with outcries against the commercialization of higher education as well as outraged criticism of the proliferation of diploma mills.

DIPLOMA MILLS

While the more richly endowed missionary colleges, with their better structured curriculum and well organized student activities on campus, managed to convey enough of a sense of institutional purpose to be shielded somewhat from cynical charges of money worship, private Chinese colleges provoked denunciations for their "profit-mindedness" and their preoccupation with financial matters. These institutions bore the brunt of charges against the "commercialization" of Chinese higher education. Public cynicism towards the pecuniary bias of private colleges in Shanghai was captured in contemporary novels like Wan Dihe's *Zhongguo daxuesheng riji* (Diary of a Chinese college student). In the first-person voice of a college student from a provincial background, the diarist described how he was left penniless the second day after his arrival on campus, having paid tuition and miscellaneous charges. Books, theatre tickets, cultural events, and other activities were quite beyond his means; he reached for his last penny to pay for the first month's boarding fee and had to write home pleading for more money. When autumn leaves fell and letters from home brought tidings of poor harvests and dropping grain prices, he brought his scholar's gowns one by one to the local pawn shop. At the time of mid-term examinations, he spoke to a senior student about what to expect. He was told not to worry about the mid-terms but to watch out for the finals. The explanation for this anomaly connected the assignment of academic

grades to university administrators' desire to extract more money from the students:

"This is the 'applied economics' of our board of directors at work, you see," he explained. "Mid-terms do not weigh much in our final grades, hence these tests do not merit the precious time and attention of our busy directors. Mid-term grades are assigned by the instructors. These instructors are part-time employees on hourly pay; they see no personal gain in assigning poor grades. For mid-terms, therefore, we can cheat any way we choose to: Copy the fellow next to you, copy from the book, and so forth. No one cares. Finals are a different story. The questions are hard and the president himself presides over the exam. Just one glance sideways and you will be promptly expelled from the examination hall. With no final grade, you will just have to repeat the exam again the following year." "How does one repeat an exam?" "You pay 2 yuan for each course." "Suppose I were in the graduating class?" "Then you will have to repeat the course. The charge is 30 yuan. Last year 40 students were made to repeat some courses."⁴⁸

Diary of a Chinese College Student vented scorn on a system at its worst. The board of trustees and university administrators were vilified as petty-minded peddlers of academic degrees who ran the academic shop solely to make a profit. The professors were depicted both as part-time wage-earners who delivered the lectures for the hourly pay and as insensitive reactionaries totally incapable of sympathy for the concerns of the students. College students were portrayed alternately as vain, fun-loving, irresponsible (and thus responsible for creating their own plight), and as rightfully feeling restless and victimized by circumstances beyond their control.

For these commercialized operations to continue making a profit, the criticisms continued, purposeful deception was necessary. It was essential that the schools project enough sense of academic seriousness to continue attracting a large number of applicants to fill their classrooms. Attention was thus drawn to the promotion efforts made by private colleges and universities in Shanghai newspapers at the beginning of the academic year. These advertising pieces followed certain formulas to project an image of academic credibility, noted Gu Mei, Professor of Education of Zhongshan University. The directors and administrators—those who put together the financial arrangements of the institution—were invariably praised for their

dedication to public service and higher education. The roster of faculty members was filled with the names of intellectual and literary celebrities purely for the purpose of attracting students. There would always be some mention of the modern conveniences offered by the school dormitories, as well as the architectural grandeur and physical elegance of the campus. According to Gu Mei:

Newcomers to Shanghai have often been impressed by the public interest and support for higher education. If one were to take promotional pieces in newspapers at face value, one would certainly be impressed by the large number of centers of learning with high academic standards in the city. But a closer examination reveals that too many of these institutions are in fact of highly questionable credibility. . . . One soon notices how Shanghai schools routinely pay for publicity and promotion schemes in the local media, not unlike the way merchants advertise their goods.⁴⁹

Even though it is understandable why the board and administration of private institutions resorted to certain practices, in popular thinking much was attributed to the moral degeneration of the "they" who held the purse strings. It was "they," the mercantilistic academic entrepreneurs, who, out of greed and self-interest, turned academic institutions into diploma mills and rendered farcical the sacred claims to intellectual seriousness. The transparent preoccupation with institutional finance in these years of depression cost many private colleges their claim to academic integrity and respectability. The administration and boards of these private colleges were depicted in popular writings as villains who permitted the intrusion of the power of money into the academy, who misled young students with false promises in their advertisements, and who turned the transmission of knowledge into a commercial transaction.

In real life, the cynical attitude of students corroded institutional discipline. Academic work suffered a major disruption at Nankai University in Tianjin in the spring of 1926 over an article entitled "Money Worship" ("Baijin zhuyi") published in the campus student paper, the *Nankai Weekly* (*Nankai zhoukan*). The anonymous author of the article, a student at Nankai, ridiculed the President of the university, Zhang Boling, for his preoccupation with fundraising activities and other pecuniary matters and vaguely suggested

that Zhang's interest in money was motivated by personal gains. Zhang Boling was infuriated. He brought his complaint before a full faculty meeting, impressed those present with his selfless dedication to the financial health of the institution, and won faculty sympathy for the insult and injury that he had received from the students. The faculty of Nankai University adopted a resolution to strike in support of the university President, a strike that was concluded only after the students handed in their formal apologies.⁵⁰

Where worship of money was the issue, Republican colleges and universities were divided into two kinds: public, supported by the state and the Party; and private, both missionary and Chinese, where income from students maintained the institution. It was not merely a question of the actual levels of expenses. In the 1930s, the public and private institutes of higher education were often seen to be operating on different principles. Private institutions were attacked as "bourgeois" and "commercialized" and denigrated as "diploma mills," not so much for the tuition collected as for the seeming greediness with which the miscellaneous fees were assessed, the rigidly imposed payment schedules, and the vigorous collection of debts. In apparent contrast to this "bourgeois greed," public institutions moved steadily on a separate track towards a free education provided by the state. Full state support of students of public universities (much in the spirit of state support of the military) took a major step forward only after war broke out in 1937 and higher education was uprooted from its coastal urban base. But, during the Nanjing decade, public institutions gave enough signs of subvention by providing dormitory rooms, school uniforms, and lecture notes, all free of charge, to perpetuate the old expectation of a scholar's right to a monthly "lamp fee," awarded purely on the basis of intellectual merit.

STYLE AS A CULTURAL AND POLITICAL QUESTION

The expenses of college attendance did not end with the payment of tuition and fees. The preponderant proportion of expenses during academic residence was typically incurred in connection with cloth-

ing, books, travel, and extra-curricular activities. Student expenditure for these items often went beyond the bare necessities of basic room and board to reflect their deliberate choices of value and style.

What characterized student experience in the 1930s was a sheer diversity in styles of life that prevailed on college campuses, and the absence of a national student culture. The fragmentation of the Republican ideal of higher education found its most concrete expression in the actual differences in college life. Religious services, choir singing, musical societies, team sports, English-language drama performances, social parties and dances, school yearbooks, celebration of Christmas, New Year's and other Christian dates all originated with missionary colleges in China, and spread to Chinese institutions in Shanghai. Literati pastimes, Beijing opera visits, the reading of traditional novels, the sharing of tea and conversation, on the other hand, tended to punctuate student life in the Chinese institutions of Beijing and the provinces. Generally speaking, the administrators of missionary colleges assumed an active role in structuring the day-to-day life of their students, consciously kindling an *esprit de corps* and shielding their students from noxious outside influences. Chinese university authorities, in contrast, adopted a *laissez-faire* attitude towards student life and by and large adhered to the traditional view that academies were the gathering places of mature and independent scholars. The consequent differences in campus culture were striking, whether expressed in clothing styles or housing patterns.

Nearly all Republican colleges and universities operated housing accommodations for their students. These housing arrangements were invariably major determinants structuring the subtext of student life on college campuses, both as a function of cost and style. Public institutions, with few exceptions, provided students with rooms at nominal charges. Private institutions, on the other hand, charged an average of 20 yuan per annum in the mid-1920s, and raised these fees to somewhere between 40 and 60 yuan a decade later.⁵¹ Dormitory rooms were almost always offered furnished.⁵² Conditions in these rooms varied, however, from campus to campus. Private Shanghai colleges, mindful of economy, often put 4 to 6 students

in a room instead of 2 or 3. Power was turned off early in the evening and hot water was available only for a few hours during the day.⁵³ Student handbooks at these private institutions abounded in reminders and regulations about the importance of cutting waste.⁵⁴ It was not uncommon for detailed attention to be paid, for example, to the exact wattage of the electric light bulb to be used on a student's desktop.⁵⁵

Life in the dormitory rooms of these private Shanghai colleges (Fudan, Guanghua, Daxia, Hujiang) was dismally cramped compared with life at Yenching and St. John's. Yenching students were housed 2 to a room; their dormitory buildings received high praise as models of structural elegance, modern comfort, and practical utility. In addition to the baths, showers, hot and cold running water, drinking fountains, telephones, newspaper reading rooms, laundry facilities, and small kitchens on every floor, there were servants hired by the university at the student's beck and call. These buildings, ablaze at night, with reflections shimmering in Weiming Lake (Lake Without a Name), the centerpiece of Yenching's 200-acre landscaped campus, were elegant symbols of the life of ease and tranquility enjoyed by the privileged and Westernized cosmopolitan elite of the Nanjing decade.⁵⁶

Differences in architectural design and physical appearance of college campuses accentuated the general stylistic contrasts among institutions. On the campuses of well-financed missionary colleges like Yenching and St. John's there were libraries, laboratories, social halls, auditoriums, athletic fields, swimming pools, gymnasiums, and dormitories, in addition to administration and classroom buildings. Qinghua University, financially secure with the endowment of the U.S. portion of the Boxer Indemnity Fund, incurred much envy for the granite exterior and wood floor of its half-million-dollar library, the pianos and violins in its neo-classical-style auditorium, the imported equipment in its gymnasium, laboratory, and observatory. Every piece of building material in these structures was shipped directly from the United States.⁵⁷

The majority of Chinese universities, meanwhile, made do with offices and classrooms converted from former Buddhist temples and

mansions of imperial kinsmen, as at Beida; from public shrines and government offices, as at Fudan; from civil service examination halls and Qing academies, as at many regional institutions; and from refurbished residential buildings, as at numerous private urban colleges. Remodeling took place as dictated by necessity, using whatever was conveniently at hand. The ad hoc and jumbled quality of Chinese institutions, public and private, contrasted with the stylistic coherence of missionary colleges, such as Yenching and St. John's, both designed by the American architectural firm Murphy and Dana.⁵⁸

Visible differences in physical quality were often accompanied by overall differences in patterns of life on campus. On some campuses, life revolved around a common set of schedules, while on others individuals went their separate ways. Some institutions fostered a strong sense of campus community apart from their urban or suburban surroundings; others permitted free and open interaction between town and gown. While life around Beida embodied the openness of the public institutions, life on the campus of Yenching was in many ways a fine example of a structured academic existence utterly centered upon itself.

THE STRUCTURED LIFE ON AN ENCLOSED CAMPUS: YENCHING AND QINGHUA

Yenching University, along with its neighbor Qinghua, was located in the relative isolation of the western suburbs of Beijing. Dormitory residence was not an option but a requirement. In the 1930s, Yenching consistently limited its enrollment to 800 to assure the quality of campus life within the limits of existing facilities, even though the university was attracting an ever-increasing pool of applicants.⁵⁹

With virtually the entire body of students in residence, Yenching was an enclosed community with the weight of its social life within itself. Student associations, formed under the guidance and support of the university administration, played an active role in knitting the campus into a community. The standing committees of the student association, reconstituted annually through campus elec-

tions, edited and published the campus dailies, weekly journals, and yearbooks, organized social events and athletic meets, supervised meal services in the residence halls, and engaged in good works (literacy classes, famine relief, social surveys) in the villages lying around the university.⁶⁰ Yenching students had numerous occasions to interact at dances, picnics, and lectures, or while attending chapel, studying in the library, and dining in the refectory. When classes were in session, students followed the rhythm of a common schedule centered on the university. On weekends, Yenching students went into the city in groups.

The isolation of Qinghua University from urban diversions was measured by the amount of time it required for Qinghua students to cover the 40 *li* that separated the campus from the West Gate of Beijing. Although the 1-dime (*yi mao*) train ride was supposed to take only about 10 minutes, trains seldom ran on schedule in those days. One-way by ricksha took a whole hour (at about 25 *fen*) and a ride on the back of a donkey (for 5 *mao*) was to be avoided by anyone with an appointment to keep. Those who took the bus were advised to allow 45 minutes; those who walked, one and a half hours.⁶¹

As at Yenching, Qinghua students lived on campus. Distance from the city imposed a style of life which in later recollections took on a bucolic quality.⁶² Some likened the campus to a private garden set aside for strolls, poetry, and romance.⁶³ Among the favorite campus recreations were fishing, ice-skating, picnics, and movies. Although many Qinghua students were eager to clamber onto the bus on Saturday afternoons and head for the shopping, theatre, and restaurant districts of downtown Beijing, just as many city youths drifted out to the Qinghua campus, cameras in hand, for their weekend outings.⁶⁴ Quantities of tea, coffee, ice cream, chocolate, pastries, and desserts were consumed in the various dining facilities and cafes operated by the cooperative societies on campus, where friends and lovers met.⁶⁵

To the extent that Yenching was open to the outside at all, it was open to Qinghua. Since the two universities were within walking distance of each other, considerable social interaction took place between students who got together to print poetry collections, pub-

lish journals, rehearse for concerts and drama performances, and take part in organized sports.⁶⁶ There were faculty members who taught in both universities at different points of their careers. Public lectures, seminars, theatricals, and athletic meets drew crowds from both institutions. Foreign films were regularly shown on alternate evenings in the auditoriums on the two campuses to avoid a conflict of schedule.⁶⁷ When Yang Buwei, wife of Qinghua Professor Zhao Yuanren (Y. R. Chao), the renowned linguist and polymath, opened a small restaurant called Little Bridge Dining Club by the gate of Qinghua with the help of a group of faculty wives, it drew a torrent of customers from both Yenching and Qinghua.⁶⁸

IN LOCO PARENTIS: STUDENT LIFE IN PRIVATE SHANGHAI COLLEGES

The self-contained quality of the Yenching-Qinghua community owed much to its location and natural environment. Colleges and universities located in Shanghai, by contrast, felt the need to erect boundaries between campus and city. The dormitory regulations of some private institutions in Shanghai suggested college officials' battle to shelter their students from the lure of the larger urban environment. These concerns found expression both in a systematic effort to monitor the whereabouts of students during after-class hours and in attempts to assert parietal control over their behavior.⁶⁹

Fudan University's response to the urban pull of Shanghai was to insist upon university supervision of the housing arrangements of all students. Students were assigned rooms in residential halls in accordance with their classes: juniors and seniors in the two buildings a few blocks off the main campus, and freshmen, sophomores, and women students in the buildings on campus. To house oneself differently a student had to go through a slow and complicated process of petitioning. Permission for off-campus residence was granted only if a student was to stay with a parent or a legal guardian.⁷⁰

Life within the dormitory units was organized in a fashion reminiscent of the *baojia*, or the neighborhood responsibility system, of late imperial China. Each unit elected its representative who was

responsible to the university for keeping tidiness within the immediate area of the room, for maintaining proper peace and order, for reporting cases of illness and leaves without absence, and, above all, for guaranteeing the condition of school furniture and property used in the room. These representatives in turn elected a dormitory representative who communicated with the school administration on behalf of the dormitory occupants. In the place of resident procurators and deans, Fudan students were organized to take collective responsibility for order and appearance in their living quarters.⁷¹

These rules and regulations bound Fudan students to each other. They did not, however, prevent the growth of a campus culture that directed its attention to larger national issues. With the reform movement of the gentry elite of the 1900s a prominent chapter in the school's past, Fudan students were actively involved in the May Fourth Movement of 1919 and the May Thirtieth Movement of 1925.⁷² It was missionary colleges like Hujiang and St. John's that actively sought to erect barriers between the city and the campus that created an inward-directed student culture in the midst of urban distraction, that imposed values and activities prescribed by the college administration.

The parietal rules of Hujiang Daxue (Baptist Shanghai College) prescribed in painstaking details exactly under what circumstances students might be allowed to cross beyond the campus boundary.⁷³ These rules, elaborately drawn, reflected as much student ingenuity in evading the supervision of the college as the administration's determination to maintain tight control. Other "musts" and "must nots" abounded in Hujiang's student handbooks, which were also prominently displayed on visible spots around the campus.⁷⁴

The administration of Hujiang did not confine itself to legislating the limits of permissible behavior. It actively structured student extracurricular activities through the use of a system of credit points. Students were awarded certain credit points in accordance with the type of activities they engaged in and the degree of their involvement. The system functioned, on the one hand, to encourage and even to compel participation in extracurricular activities. A minimal accumulation of 10 points was required as partial fulfillment

for the bachelor's degree. It functioned, on the other hand, to channel student energy into particular kinds of value-laden activities. But college authorities apparently did not wish to see classroom work completely ignored. They decreed that students might earn a maximum of only 15 such extracurricular points per semester.

Under the credit-point system, extracurricular activities were divided into 3 categories. Strong encouragement was given to active involvement in the two Christian organizations of the YMCA and YWCA, the student association, and the athletic associations.⁷⁵ Students were also encouraged to take part in clubs and societies with specialized interests: science, education, international studies, business, journalism, music, drama, and art.⁷⁶ Service as class leaders earned points.⁷⁷ Those who brought honor to the college name in intercollegiate competitions were especially rewarded.⁷⁸

The credit-point system was intended to guide students to a balanced interest in social and academic pursuits as well as to an equal emphasis on spiritual and physical development. But, since social and athletic skills were recognized as being of equal importance to academic competence, the credit-point system on the campus of Hujiang was actually responsible for generating an atmosphere in which games and sports were allowed to become much more absorbing than academic work. The implications were twofold. First, there were obvious financial consequences as sports gained a central place in undergraduate life. It created the awareness of a need, for example, for tennis rackets and swimming suits. Because sports goods were imported items, a baseball set including bat, glove, and ball represented a considerable sum, between 10 and 20 yuan.⁷⁹ And besides the average expense of 1 yuan for a single ticket of admission to a sports event, there was also the necessity to dress suitably for the party given after the game. Expenses of this sort, though flexible, were all the harder to avoid precisely because they were a function of peer-group pressure and signified a particular way of life.⁸⁰

Intercollegiate sports spawned a student culture on Shanghai's college campuses, furthermore, that evolved around the figures of athletic stars and college beauty queens. Popular Shanghai maga-

zines such as *Zhongguo qingnian* (Chinese youth) and *Liangyou* (Beneficial company) specialized in photographs of dashing youths in Western-style suits and smiling beauties dressed in silk and jewelry, alongside feature stories about the "tigers" of the various college sports teams and the illustrious ancestries of each season's new queens.⁸¹ These publications, which distributed news and gossip of events, personalities, and romances, enjoyed wide circulation among the students as well as the general public. As these stories captured the students in a mood of self-admiration, they also fired the imagination of the public about the glamour and glitter behind the high walls of the college.

SPORTS

Qinghua University, like some of the missionary colleges of Shanghai, had long placed an emphasis on physical education. A preparatory school in the 1910s and 1920s, Qinghua in those days annually sent 100 students to the United States for college education under the Boxers Indemnity Fund. From very early on, considerable emphasis was placed on sports and physical exercise in Qinghua's programs, because school officials were loath to perpetuate the stereotype of the Chinese being the weakly "Sick Man of East Asia" once their students reached the American shore.⁸² Qinghua administrators were determined to instill in their students an interest in sports and physical exercise. Students were required to set aside their books every afternoon at 4:00 p.m. to spend an hour in the gymnasium.⁸³ School officials locked up dormitories, libraries, laboratories, and classrooms during this period so that students had nowhere else to go but the gym and the athletic fields.⁸⁴ To ensure that students strived to build up their physiques, qualifying tests in swimming, in the 100-meter and 400-meter runs, in the shot-put, and in high jump were introduced as part of the hurdle to pass on the eve of graduation. Knowledge of soccer and basketball and some competence in archery were also required.⁸⁵ The classical scholar Wu Mi had to postpone his study trip to Harvard for six months and exercise hard to improve the distance of his long jump because

of these requirements: On the eve of his Qinghua graduation, Wu Mi's long jump was a mere 11 feet, a whole foot short of the minimum requirement.⁸⁶

American influence dominated Qinghua's physical-education program, even though it was Chinese patriotism that invigorated the program. Most of Qinghua's early instructors of physical education were Americans.⁸⁷ Ma Yuehan, the Chinese who headed Qinghua's Physical Education Department for nearly four decades, earned his BS in biology in 1911 from St. John's University in Shanghai.⁸⁸ Much of Qinghua's sports equipment was imported from the United States. The training concepts and methods were also predominantly American.⁸⁹ "The Theodore Roosevelt Gymnasium" of Qinghua was completed in 1919 with building materials, except for bricks and tiles, shipped in from the United States. A copper plate of the silhouette of President Roosevelt graced the center of the gym's granite wall, with words of gratitude engraved in the stone.⁹⁰

Ma Yuehan strived to demonstrate at Qinghua how physical education could lay the cornerstone of a student culture which, though Westernized, was not frivolous. Ma changed the public image of athletes by persuading the academically competent to join the sports teams. Jiang Nanxiang, for example, who later served as Minister of Education of the People's Republic of China in the 1980s, was a member of Qinghua's soccer team. Ma Yuehan elevated the notion of sportsmanship, furthermore, and stressed that winning was not as important as the spirit of "Fight to the finish and never give in." The academically competent sportsmen of Qinghua nonetheless proved to be good soccer players: Qinghua's teams held the intercollegiate championships of North China for over a whole decade before the war broke out in 1937. In 1925, Qinghua even won triple championships in soccer, basketball, and baseball for all of North China.⁹¹

Sportsmanship and physical fitness introduced new dimensions into Chinese student culture of the Republican period. Feng Youlan recalled how, during the years he was a graduate student at Columbia, he would instantly spot the considerable differences in personal appearance between the alumni of Beida and Qinghua. Qinghua graduates tended to be aware of their physical selves and attentive

to their personal appearance, according to Feng. They walked briskly. They seemed at ease in Western-style clothing. They were younger looking and cheerful. Beida graduates, by contrast, were laggardly, solemn, and gray. Feng Youlan's observations were corroborated by these famous lines widely circulated among women students of Beijing in the 1930s: "Beida students show their age; Shida students are poor. For an ideal match find yourself a Qinghua man." (*Beida lao, Shida qiong, wei you Qinghua ke tongrong.*)⁹²

The athletic teams of Beida and Shida, as might be expected, never won themselves much distinction in the intercollegiate matches of North China. Ma Yuehan recalled how, earlier, before the example set by Qinghua had any impact, the physical education instructors of "certain major universities" were not very enthusiastic about their duties. These instructors, in Ma's descriptions, were a sloppy sort. They stayed in bed till late in the morning and rushed to their sessions without even washing up, smoking in the field as if not interested in the students' performances at all.⁹³ The students, for their part, appeared on the athletic field in their long gowns and shunned team sports and physical matches in general.⁹⁴

Part of the explanation lay in the financial situation of public Chinese universities. There was no adequate funding for the development of ambitious athletic programs. But, more important, sports and athletic meets on college campuses in the Republican period were so clearly a matter of American influence that spontaneous enthusiasm for these activities tended to be weak where the scholarly tradition remained strong. And, third, where sports and athletic meets played an important role in knitting together the campus community, they seemed so central a part of the particular cultural style of the treaty-port bourgeoisie that, when public Chinese institutions turned to the physical training of their students, military drills were often preferred in place of sports.

BEIJING UNIVERSITY AND THE POOR SCHOLAR IN CHINESE GOWN

Whether in style or in spirit, the student culture of Beijing University contrasted sharply with the Westernized style that prevailed on a majority of Republican college campuses. The building in 1935

of a 4-story dormitory of concrete and cement typically epitomized such contrasts. The erection of this rather insignificant building, with 8 separate entrances and 30 self-contained single rooms, which might have passed quite unnoticed on the campus of Yenching or St. John's, was an epoch-making event for Beida because it became the university's first housing unit with modern sanitary facilities and hot running water. The style of the structure was utterly incompatible with the rest of the campus. As a metaphor for its social place in the university, this modern construction stood alone in an open area at some remove from the rest of the buildings.⁹⁵ The privilege of occupancy was first offered to that year's graduating seniors, who were invited to move in as a class. But the invitation almost touched off a riot in the West Studio, where seniors converged and protested angrily that for the use of those nonessential modern conveniences the university intended to collect extra payments from the student body.⁹⁶

A certain pride in genteel poverty, as opposed to Western-style comfort, informed the recollection of this episode by Li Ji, Class of '35, a self-styled "poor scholar" who later became known as a socialist thinker. Li Ji insisted that the extra expenses for the modern facilities of the new dorm would completely upset his precariously balanced budget.⁹⁷ Dormitory rooms at Beida, inherited from the former Imperial Academy of the late nineteenth century, were expected to be cold in winter and hot in summer. The water closets were decades old, and there was, of course, no hot water. As befitting the educated elite in the olden days, whatever was lacking in material culture was compensated for by a generous supply of human labor. There was an abundance of servants hired by the university at the students' disposal, though hot water had to be boiled and carried in and out of the rooms, and the public latrine stank.⁹⁸

Beida's characteristic residential quarters consisted of 3 units: the East Studio (Dongzhai), the West Studio (Xizhai) and the Third Court (Sanyuan), housing a total of about 600 male students, or between one-half and one-third of Beida's student body. The East and West Studios were rows of small double rooms which looked out into an open space decorated along the borders with an assort-

ment of large and small plants. Although the rooms were quite small, roommates partitioned their shared space, using bookcases and bed sheets to create "two narrow strips of space with barely enough room for anyone to turn in it."⁹⁹

Beida students were famous for their quest of personal space. Where doors and locks existed, as in the new dormitory of 1935, students were quick to disappear into their self-sufficient units to live mutually incommunicado. Where there were no doors, as in the Third Court, which featured large rooms that were formerly used as classrooms, Beida students were keen to enclose their space with bed sheets and bookcases.¹⁰⁰ There was little privacy in an arrangement like the Third Court, since linens and books were no barrier to noises. But the appearance of privacy and the illusion of space were important, because the privatization of communal space was the spatial embodiment of the idea of individual autonomy and intellectual diversity, principles with which Cai Yuanpei, Beida's President, led the university to the height of its prestige in the New Culture Movement.

In the 1930s, when iconoclastic fervor had cooled and revolutionary passion had dissipated, Beida students complained about a sense of chilling loneliness in the midst of a campus without a community.¹⁰¹ During the late 1910s and early 1920s, when the New Culture Movement was gathering momentum, the absence of communal norms permitted individuals to spend their bubbling intellectual energy in different ways. Fu Sinian, the prominent student leader of the New Culture Movement, lived in no. 4 West Studio, between 1915 and 1918. Fu shared his room with three roommates, Gu Jiegang, Di Junwu, and Zhou Lieya. As the chief editor of the leading iconoclastic journal of the time, Fu Sinian was daily visited by his friend and co-editor Luo Jialun. The two friends edited the journal *Xinchao* (Renaissance) out of Fu's corner of the room. Even at the height of the seductive fame and influence of *Renaissance*, however, Fu Sinian's three roommates each persisted along his own course. Gu Jiegang, who later became the leading historian of ancient China with the publication of the multiple-volume *Gushi bian* in the late 1920s, immersed himself in philological studies of an-

cient historical texts.¹⁰² Di Junwu, whose interest was in drama and literature, continued to savor the poetic images and lyrical rhythms of such classical genres as the *kunqu*. Zhou Lieya, who eventually took Buddhist vows and became a monk at Mt. Tianmu in Zhejiang, devoted himself solely to meditation and the study of Buddhist sutras, utterly unperturbed by the heated debates on China's destiny carried out noisily in his close vicinity.¹⁰³

The Beida style, ideally, was a hybrid of the free-flowing traditional Chinese imperial academies and the highly intellectual German universities of the late nineteenth century.¹⁰⁴ Life in Beida's residential quarters followed no common schedule. Dinner bells were unheard of. If so inclined, a student could dispatch a servant to order a simple meal from a nearby restaurant and enjoy it in the solitude of his room. A whole day was sometimes spent in the dormitory. The Beida library permitted students to withdraw large numbers of materials for an extended period of time. With electric lamps on and coals glowing in the furnace, dormitory rooms were the favorite place for study during Beijing's long winter nights. Lecture attendance, unlike elsewhere, was not compulsory. There were no roll calls to be answered; the only requirement for a student was to appear for his examinations.¹⁰⁵

The university handed down few "musts" and "must nots" governing student behavior. In the few cases where rules existed, they were often ignored with impunity. The front gate of the Third Court, which housed freshmen, was to be locked at 1:00 a.m., but the lockup posed no hindrance to the enjoyment of a late theatre show and midnight snack, since the gatekeeper was always ready to be tipped for a favor.¹⁰⁶

Unlike the missionary colleges, there were no resident proctors in Beida's residential quarters. Nor were there serious attempts to monitor students' comings and goings.¹⁰⁷ With laissez-faire indulgence on the part of the administration and with literati disdain for conformity on the part of the students, rules and regulations were often rendered inoperative. When a student left, he sometimes transferred his room to an incoming friend through private arrange-

ment. Many of these transactions were not reported to the housing office of the university. As the "feudal" system perpetuated itself through private networks, before long the university lost its grip on the roster of tenancy in its property. A freshman arriving without a friend in the senior class thus found himself applying in vain for a room on campus. Some of the best rooms were, in fact, occupied by non-students who did not hesitate to make themselves feel at home.¹⁰⁸

The very notion of a "campus," an enclosed space of central planning and stylistic coherence, did not apply in the case of Beida. The university was the dominant presence in a unique "sphere of influence" (*shili fanwei*) that reached Han Garden (Han huayuan) to the east, Jing Hill (Jingshan) to the west, Three Bridges (Sandao qiao) to the north and Dongan Gate (Dongan men) to the south.¹⁰⁹ City buildings were interspersed with university buildings, and students daily traversed public streets to go from one part of the university to another. The boundary between the campus and the city was by no means clearly drawn. Commercial sectors intersected with the university in the outskirts of Beida's "sphere of influence" in particular, as students patronized the restaurants and rented rooms from the apartments.

It was in this setting where town met gown that landlords featured prominently in campus novels and student writings about student life. The landlords were often portrayed as petty-minded penny-savers who were unable to appreciate the value of true scholarship.¹¹⁰ A classic in this genre was Lao She's novel *Zhao Ziyue*, which vividly conveyed the flavor of daily life in the "Latin quarter of China." The watchful eyes of the landladies were forever searching for electric lamps that seemed to be brighter than necessary. Power was shut off early in the evening to save on the electricity bill. The apartment servants' eagerness to respond to summons was keyed to the exact amount of tips they had received. And there was always the hardship of having a next-door neighbor who stayed up all night singing Peking opera, playing *majiang*, getting drunk, or simply coughing. These petty townsmen, utterly blind to the value

of true scholarship, drove home for the "poor scholar" of Beida the reality that a price tag was perpetually attached to comfort, respect, service, and loyalty.¹¹¹

Though boarding on campus in the West Studio and the Third Court was only 7 yuan a month, the majority of Beida students seemed reluctant to enter into long-term arrangements of this kind.¹¹² They frequented the small restaurants in the apartment complex nearby, where a variety of food was available: Northern, Southern, Sichuanese, Hunanese, Cantonese, as well as what was advertised as "European." For 20 fen, one could enjoy two seasonal dishes and one soup in a quiet restaurant; and for 80 fen, a full-course banquet for six, including dessert. Those who had established themselves as regular customers could direct the chef to prepare their specials: "*Doufu* à la Professor Zhang," for example, with soup and rice, for about 15 fen. Those who wished to enrich their social experience chose to eat at the food stands in Han Garden, where wheat cakes (*bing*) for a few copper cash were the staple of Beijing ricksha pullers and other laborers. For some, on the other hand, dining was yet another occasion to remind them of the hardship of being a "poor scholar." Li Ji, the socialist thinker and translator of *Das Kapital*, completed his undergraduate years at Beida on a tight budget. He ate daily in a very small restaurant, always ordering a small bowl of cabbage-*doufu* soup and 2 pieces of plain flour cake, spending a total of less than 7 pieces in copper cash. Since Li never ordered any meat dishes, the restaurant owner grew bold enough to be openly contemptuous of him, ridiculing Li Ji to the waiters and cooks in the kitchen in a voice loud enough for Li to hear.¹¹³

Some restaurants took pride in being on the fringe of the nation's center of intellectual life. Haiquan Ju (House of the Ocean Spring) boasted a pair of scrolls in calligraphy signed in the name of Hu Shi that gave high praise to the restaurant. The calligraphy was, in fact, a forgery by Beida students. The owners of the restaurant treasured it, nonetheless, as authentic. The restaurants of the area earned distinction of local importance. Yitiaolong (Single Dragon) was famed for the freshness and the delicate texture of its noodles. Yuelai Ju (House of Happy Customers) was known for its service and the large

selection on its menu. Freshmen customers were often lectured by restaurant owners about the culture of dining around Beida. Old-timers, meanwhile, did business on credit. When the War of Resistance broke out in 1937 and Beida students left en masse in a great hurry, many of these students also left behind unpaid bills.¹¹⁴

Evening chats, chess in teahouses, traditional drama, poetry contests, discussions of current events, and leisurely trips to the hills in the countryside punctuated student life on the campus of Beida. Jin Shibin, a senior in 1928, spent Chinese New Year's Eve that year with a few fellow students at the house of Liu Tianhua, the famed virtuoso of the *erhu* (2-stringed fiddle), who taught Chinese music at the Beida-based Association for the Advancement of Chinese Music. Jin and his friends were not "music majors" in the late twentieth-century American sense. They were at best connoisseurs. In the course of the evening, these friends imbibed sweet wine, drank in the fragrance of the plum blossoms in the air, chatted about the fine points of various editions of a number of old books, and listened to a few passages of traditional music (as opposed to the mere "folk songs") on the gramophone. The party broke up at 3:00 the next morning after the evening had culminated in Liu Tianhua's composition of a new piece on the *erhu* helped with suggestions and improvisations by his guests. The guests, meanwhile, eagerly tried out the melody with amateurish performances of their own on the traditional two-stringed fiddle.¹¹⁵

Unlike the student associations of missionary colleges that were organized under the supervision of the college authorities and concerned primarily with matters of immediate and exclusive interest to the students, associations attached to Beida were typically voluntary organizations that included members of the faculty as well as students, and extended membership even to those without certified Beida affiliations. The more important ones among these voluntary associations in the 1930s traced their origins to the May Fourth period. The Association for the Advancement of Chinese Music, for example, originated with the Musical Society of Beijing University inaugurated by President Cai Yuanpei in 1920 and was joined by "all music-lovers" in the Beijing area. The editorial board

of the *Independent Review* (*Duli pinglun*), one of the most influential forums of political commentary during the Nanjing decade, remained the core members of some of the major journals of the previous two decades: *New Youth*, *Renaissance*, *Nuli Weekly*, *Weekend Review*, and the literary section of the *Beijing Morning News* (*Chenbao*).¹¹⁶ Shen Shousheng, a frequent contributor to *Independent Review* and highly regarded by its editor, Hu Shi, was neither on the faculty nor a student at Beida. Shen's only claim to Beida affiliation was his long-time residence in the apartments near the university.¹¹⁷

The vitality of these associations underscored Beida's characteristically open campus and, conversely, the absence of an inward-directed campus community. The dominant Beida image was the 'poor scholar' in Chinese gown who worked stoically under spartan conditions.

THE GOWN, THE SUIT, AND THE UNIFORM

College students in the Republican period had available to them three styles of clothing: the Chinese gown, the Western suit, and the Party uniform. The loose-fitting gown, usually in blue cotton, was the traditional garb of the educated. The suit, with leather shoes, clothed the financial and professional elites of the treaty ports. The uniform, at first referred to as the Sun Yat-sen suit and known today as the Mao suit, was urged upon all college students by the Ministry of Education during the Nanjing decade. The popularity of the Party uniform rose on college campuses in the mid-1920s, when the Nationalist revolution was gathering steam. But the atmosphere on most campuses changed drastically in the late 1920s. Whether or not political disillusionment and emotional indulgence went hand-in-hand, the late 1920s and the 1930s saw societal concerns give way to sentimental attachments. Since the collapse of the United Front happened to coincide with the introduction of coeducation on many campuses, university protest movements momentarily waned while college romances waxed and flourished. Typical attire changed accordingly. Since neither the scholar's gown nor the

cadre's uniform seemed the right outfit for courtship and romance, Western-style suits perceptibly rose in favor on college campuses despite their prohibitive cost.¹¹⁸

The scholarly gown had early been attacked in the Republican period on two fronts. To socialists and anarchists of the late 1910s and early 1920s, the gown, with its full length and loose fit, was a symbol of leisure, of freedom from manual labor, and of lack of social responsibility. Common laborers, in tight-fitting undershirts, sweated in hard work. Gentry scholars, in flapping gowns, folded their arms and indulged themselves in empty rhetoric and material comfort.¹¹⁹

With the rise of the Nationalist Party and the Whampoa Military Academy in the 1920s, the gown fell out of favor for different reasons. To the extent that military uniforms invoked power, discipline, ideological vigor, and collective resolve, scholarly gowns stood for the feeble and the indecisive: symbols of the old literati in decline, as opposed to the rising military and its might.¹²⁰

When Cai Yuanpei, President of Beida, created a Student Military Corps in the university, it was both a response to the militarization of the larger society and a reflection of the educated elite's growing awareness of the importance of physical strength. The Student Military Corps was formed in 1924—a year when armed conflicts among warlord factions posed serious threats to civil order in North China. The corps was intended partly, therefore, as Beida's self-defense in the time-honored fashion of the local militia. Cai Yuanpei believed, furthermore, that military drills, by forcing students out of their studies, would help strengthen their physiques. The Student Military Corps was, in this sense, a substitute for American-style programs in physical education, which entailed considerable expense and changes in campus atmosphere of a particular kind.¹²¹

Cai Yuanpei's idea of the Student Military Corps proved to be popular. One hundred and seventy students—nearly one quarter of Beida's total enrollment—signed up. In *Zhao Ziyue*, Lao She's famous campus novel of the 1920s, the uniformed Li Jingchun is portrayed as the model of an ideal university man. Disciplined and

dedicated, Li is a filial son, a truthful friend, a fearless opponent to corruption, and an uncompromising foe of injustice. Li's fellow classmates, Zhao Ziyue, who wears the scholar's gown, and Wu Duan, who wears a Western-style suit, are portrayed in contrast as decadent literati and self-indulgent snobs who lead aimless lives of pleasure and irresponsibility. Zhao and Wu stay up all night playing *majiang* and singing Peking opera. As the wastrels slumber away their morning hours, Li Jingchun gets up early every day, even in the winter chill of Beijing, to do physical exercise and review English lessons in the park. Squandering time and money in wild pursuit of the latest fad advertised in the entertainment pages of the newspaper, Zhao and Wu fall into the snare of Beijing's treacherous warlord politics. It is Li Jingchun who brings them enlightenment and points out to them the way to a brighter future.¹²²

Lao She's fictional portraits succinctly delineate what the gown, the suit, and the uniform symbolized to readers of the 1920s, when paramilitary associations were popular. Beida's Student Military Corps was soon emulated by other colleges and universities, and a corresponding shift in the style of student clothing took place. Earlier, during the May Fourth Movement, the slogans and banners of Beida were carried down the capital's streets by students dressed in long gowns.¹²³ Blue cotton gowns and dark cloth shoes were commonly seen in Beida's lecture halls and libraries, punctuated by an occasional silk, fur, or gaberdine. By the mid-1920s, however, contemporaries reported that at least one-half of Beida's students had changed into dark green or light beige military-style uniforms.¹²⁴

The training and funding of these Student Military Corps ground to a halt around 1927, when the Nationalists came to power in Nanjing. The Purification Campaigns launched that year brought confusion to the country's colleges, whose students grew profoundly disillusioned about revolutionary politics. The decade of zeal and activism had clearly come to an end. In Lao She's campus novel, Li Jingchun, the exemplary university man dies a martyr's death in a futile attempt to assassinate a warlord. His two friends, Zhao Ziyue and Wu Duan, are left stricken and confused.

The Manchurian Incident in September 1931 marked a turning

point in revolutionary nationalism. As part of the patriotic response to Japanese aggression, college students demanded that they be given military training on campus, so that they might help prepare for China's armed resistance. Their demands stemmed from experience with the earlier voluntary associations, but the new regime moved swiftly to co-opt the students and "nationalize" their patriotism. The Nanjing Government quickly introduced compulsory military instruction of college students along with political training in the Nationalist Party doctrines. The operation was placed under the command of the Military Affairs Commission, chaired by Chiang Kai-shek. During their hours of weekly drill, the students were required to wear military-style uniforms. What had begun in the mid-1920s as a matter of choice thus became under the Nationalists a matter of requirement.¹²⁵

The uniforms, which leveled social distinctions and erased individuality, became a requirement at a time when women began to appear in men's colleges. There were a small number of women's institutions in the 1920s, including Beijing Women's Normal University, where Lu Xun taught Chinese literature in the dark days of the March Eighteenth Massacre in 1924. Although coeducation began at Beida on an experimental basis in 1920, Chinese women made their presence felt in men's colleges only in the late 1920s.¹²⁶ Qinghua University admitted its first group of women students in the fall of 1929.¹²⁷ After that date most institutions went coed.

In the early 1930s, the "numerical superiority" of Yenching on three counts was widely recognized: its plethora of beautiful young women; the number of Western-style suits owned by its men; and the variety of social parties held on its campus.¹²⁸ Yenching's "superiority" in these interrelated areas suggested how coeducation profoundly altered the social atmosphere on campus. The admission of women enlivened a pattern of life in which students intermingled on numerous occasions: at church services, athletic meets, public lectures, association meetings, editorial reviews, concerts, movies, drama performances, and so forth. Aside from receptions and parties, there were summer boating and winter ice-skating on Weiming Lake.¹²⁹ All these activities meant dressing for the occasion,

even if one could hardly afford it. Western-style suits were thus necessary, according to one contemporary guide book, if one were to enjoy college. In this atmosphere, some deemed it important to dress up fully just to loiter around after dinner in the library.¹³⁰

A certain eclecticism in college dress prevailed in the Nanjing decade. While the uniform became strongly identified with the rule of the Party and the suit with the light-hearted urban affluent, the gown returned in the 1930s as the remaining symbol of cultural identity. To demonstrate that Qinghua, one of the most highly Westernized schools among public universities, was an authentic Chinese institution instead of a mere American cultural colony, Qinghua students pointed to the dominance of the blue cotton gown on their campus. The uniforms prescribed by the state were worn to fulfill requirements during military drill sessions and freshmen orientations. Western-style suits were put on for social occasions on weekends.¹³¹ But the blue cotton gown was for every day, an integral part of the life of a Chinese college man.¹³²

THE JUXTAPOSITION OF IMAGES

Status and costs were not mechanically linked. Judged on the basis of tuition alone, Yenching and St. John's appeared to be the most expensive Republican universities. But, when fees and living expenses were also considered, it cost more to attend the less prestigious private colleges like Fudan, Daxia, Guanghua, Hujiang in Shanghai, Nankai in Tianjin, and Amoy in Fujian. Private institutions collected substantial fees on a variety of miscellaneous items. Public institutions fixed the tuition at a much lower rate and offered free of charge many other services, including the use of a dormitory room. General dining costs were also far from uniform. While annual expenditure for meals and snacks in Shanghai colleges totaled no less than 130 yuan, boarding at Beida and Central University ranged from 60 to 90. In the more indulgent atmosphere of Qinghua, expenditure for meals was between 80 and 100.

The actual expenses of a college education on any single campus varied considerably from student to student. A survey conducted in

1930 on the campus of National Zhongyang University in Nanjing, based on questionnaires distributed to 182 students, showed that expenses incurred in connection with college attendance ranged from a low of 107 to a high of 800 yuan per year. The average annual expenditure in this survey was 426 yuan. Most students spent between 300 and 450; no fewer than 103 students were within this range.¹³³ Tuition and fees (for medical care, physical education, student associations, and *jiangyi*, or lecture notes prepared by professors) and dormitory room charges paid to the university came to a total of around 70 yuan for the whole year. Payments of this sort were excused in a small number of cases when the student was able to demonstrate academic merit and financial need to the university administration's satisfaction. The major item of expenditure in the Central University students' budgets, therefore, was the cost of meals and snacks. Those who kept their total expenditure under 200 a year spent an average of 64 yuan, or over one-third of their total budget, on food, while those who spent between 400 and 500 a year spent 104.90 yuan, or between 20 and 25 percent on food. But the most significant difference in expenditure was money for clothing, laundry, shampoos and haircuts, tobacco, candy, cosmetics, school supplies, shoes, hats, accessories, transportation, recreation, travel, and social activities. Those who kept their expenses under 200 yuan curtailed their social life, travel, entertainment, style, and gave up dining, drinking, and smoking. Those who ran up considerable bills typically did so with heavy spending on social activities, entertainment, and transportation.¹³⁴

As a guide to students and their parents, colleges and universities routinely published the school administration's estimate of the necessary total individual expenditure. These figures tended to be lower than the actual cost, since the dictates of style, the lure of urban pastimes, and pressure from peer groups were considerably discounted. An estimate by an independent critic, no doubt exaggerating the impact of the factors the school administrators chose to ignore, highlighted a Shanghai student's expenses on Western-style clothing, sumptuous meals, travel, modern transportation, sports, entertainment, social engagements, and courtship.¹³⁵ Biographical

accounts and personal recollections show that a considerable number of students completed their college education under financial stress and exercised admirable self-discipline, especially in public Chinese institutions. The hostility contained in those exaggerated reports of college expenses thus represented attacks directed not only against the waste and extravagance that were perceived but also against expenses associated with a particular lifestyle. The self-styled "poor scholars" of Beida, who complained loudly about the philistines and their insufficient respect for true intellectual worth, and the uniformed cadets of the Party-sponsored institutions, who prepared for their careers as middle-ranking administrative bureaucrats, certainly incurred their share of public criticism. But it was the private automobiles and carriages waiting by the gate of St. John's,¹³⁶ the sports teams and college queens of Hujiang, the 1-yuan admission tickets for the annual Shakespearean performances at McTyeire,¹³⁷ the Western-style suits and the social gatherings at Yenching, the swimming pool and the gymnasium, the tradition of pursuing advanced study abroad at Qinghua and Communications, and private Chinese colleges' envy and attempt to emulate them all that both captured the public's imagination and shaped most contemporaries' ambivalent perception of the nature of college spending and student culture during the turbulent 1930s.

SEVEN

*"This Alien Place": Student Culture beyond the
May Fourth Movement*

Yang Zhu lost his lamb and followed its trail until he came to an intersection where the road forked. Yang Zhu covered his face and wept. When asked why, he replied: "A lamb is lost when one comes to a three-way intersection. How many more divergent paths there are in the course of one's journey through one's life!"

—an ancient tale as retold by Hu Sheng, Class of '37, Beijing University¹

John Israel opens his pioneering study of Chinese student nationalists by observing that, in comparison with the scholarly gentry of earlier times, "nearly all were, psychologically and socially, displaced persons."² Israel's observation rings true with particular force for college students of the 1930s. Unlike the generation of the May Fourth Movement, students in the 1930s were skeptical about their ability to change reality, uncertain about their personal future, confused by conflicting views governing personal relationships, and bewildered by ideological controversies. Not only had they lost the social composure and confidence of the gentry reformers of the 1890s; the iconoclasm of the New Culture Movement, the campaigns of the Nationalist Revolution, and the economic recession of the early 1930s seemed to have driven many of them deep into confusion and despondency.

Much of this malaise can be traced to the experience of the student political movement between 1919 and 1937. Three crucial events, according to Israel, played critical roles in the pivotal years

of the mid-1920s: the birth of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921; the reorganization of the Nationalist Party in 1923; and the May Thirtieth Incident of 1925.³ Each represented a further politicization of what went before, so that, as revolutionary protests spread from city to city on the eve of the Northern Expedition, the student political movement paradoxically lost its spontaneity, and its demonstrations increasingly became "forums for interested minorities of political activists."⁴

When the Nationalist Party came to power in 1927, it inherited the legacy of a highly politicized and aroused student body. The new government, divided internally, vacillated between different policies on student political activism. While one school of opinion, led by the respected educator Cai Yuanpei, favored the restoration of college campuses to purely academic and intellectual concerns, another faction, led by Chen Guofu, favored the continuing use of students as political participants under the control of the Party. The Nationalists introduced, meanwhile, mandatory student political training, and created campus organs to control student political expression.⁵

As a result both of manipulation and suppression, there was a marked decline in spontaneous mass participation in student political movements in the 1930s. Such movements during the Nanjing decade, in sharp contrast with the May Fourth era, were characterized by erratic patriotic outbursts manipulated skillfully by contending political parties. Although, in a population of nearly half a billion Chinese, college and middle-school students formed an educated elite of nearly half a million in the 1930s, "the course of student political activities was plotted by a mere handful of leaders." While "an extraordinary national crisis or an imperialist affront could rally youths by the thousands to demonstrate in the streets and public squares, young scholars usually remained at their desks." Israel estimated that "less than 10 percent led an active political life in school, and perhaps less than 1 per cent (often GMD or CCP cadres) controlled city, provincial, and national organizations."⁶

Israel has also demonstrated with eloquent persuasiveness that

the student movements of the 1930s, despite their erratic and restricted nature, "exerted a disproportionately strong influence on the course of China's history." College students were largely disappointed with the Nationalist Government and indignant with Nanjing's repeated efforts to appease the Japanese militarists.⁷ Their political awareness, shaped by the liberal Western-style education they received, cost the high-handed military regime in Nanjing its credibility and popularity. Student nationalism thus presented a true challenge to the legitimacy of the Nationalist Government. Despite Nationalist suppression, college students in the mid-1930s turned to leftist writings. The December Ninth Movement of 1935–1936, begun by students of the American missionary Yenching University, offered a prominent example of the shaping influence of student nationalism on a whole generation of Chinese Communist Party leaders.⁸ The confluence of nationalist outbursts and socialist appeals, mediated by the liberal Western values dominant then in student political culture, soon led Chiang Kai-shek to discover that to "sit on" the students instead of winning them over was like sitting on a volcano.⁹

But the cultural ramifications of student political disenchantment extended far beyond the immediate political outcome of the movement. Disillusionment with the Nationalist Revolution depressed the atmosphere on university and college campuses. During the Nanjing decade, pessimism, passivity, and a sense of helplessness and meaninglessness replaced the earlier celebration of activism and spontaneity associated with the May Fourth Movement. "The dominant mood among youth was by no means militant," wrote Israel. Most students chose "pessimistic," "drifting," and "romantic" as the adjectives most descriptive of their view of life. Others admitted that they were "confused and despondent" and asked such questions as "Why do young men like to join the Communist party?" and "Should a young man kill himself when he cannot find any interest in life?"¹⁰

College students of the 1930s wrote in a language of popularized social Darwinism and depicted themselves as striving to survive in a vast and cheerless universe that stripped human effort of its moral

and worldly significance. A precipitate drop in the overall emotional climate of students' lives had clearly taken place on China's college campuses during the Nanjing decade, compared with the May Fourth outburst of euphoria centering upon the boundless possibilities inherent in the liberation of youthful energy.¹¹ If the political experience of the late 1920s cooled youthful romantic infatuation with revolutionary change, the bewilderment and disillusionment of the next decade constantly drained away the sanguine energy of once-robust liberal protests. For every youth who turned left to flee the seeming oppressiveness of reality, many others were left drifting. For every effort made to search for an alternative political solution, there were numerous other attempts either to escape into private concerns (including frivolity and romance) or to seek a cultural solution for China's social problems. During this decade of the New Life Movement and the League of Left-Wing Writers, culture was itself politicized. The full significance of the political disenchantment of the Nanjing years must be assessed, therefore, not only in terms of the quest for particular political alternatives and specific cultural solutions; the climate of the decade calls for a fundamental reexamination of the relationship between culture and politics.

Although collective moods, by their very nature, tend to be fluid and abstract and defy simple description and analysis, contemporaries of the 1930s—educators, politicians, intellectuals, and students themselves—agreed that there was a widespread problem of college morale beneath the surface of campus life during the Nanjing decade. As in the case of public discussions on the question of educated unemployment, comments on student morale in many cases were politicized, and the very nature of student discontent was cast and nuanced from time to time to suit the prescriptions of particular political agenda. Left-wing social critics, for example, spoke readily of a deep sense of frustration and impatience (*fanmen*) on college campuses that grew out of student discontent with the systemic problems of unemployment and political deadlock (*meiyou chulu*), while the ideologues of the New Life Movement decried lethargy

and melancholy and blamed the Westernized style of life and the bourgeois self-indulgence of college students for their unhappiness.

Politicized as they were, these comments and charges, by invoking "melancholy," "frustration," "disillusionment," and "despondency," nonetheless lent form and substance to the elusive moods of the youths. Leading writers of the 1930s, such as Mao Dun, Ba Jin, and Ye Shengtao, played an important role not only in giving literary articulation to the widespread political disillusionment but also in chronicling the steep decline of campus mood from the height of idealism and activism of the early 1920s to the depth of despair a decade later. The vernacular writings of college students of the 1930s, unconventional in their revelations and introspections, on the other hand, laid bare, in their own voices, the depths reached by individuals in their inner thoughts. It was against the backdrop of this melancholic and dismal mood that educators and intellectuals offered their advice to college students of the Nanjing decade—advice proffered with a keen appreciation of the disillusioned and passive withdrawal that had set in as educated youth moved beyond the era of the May Fourth Movement, and as the sociopolitical revolution receded from the high tide reached in the mid-1920s.

TO THE DEPTH OF DESPONDENCY: A LITERARY PERSPECTIVE

Written in 1936 and published in 1938, Ye Shengtao's short story "The English Professor" ("Yingwen jiaoshou") was among the first works that treated the major turning points in the emotional odyssey of Chinese intellectuals in the years between 1919 and the mid-1930s. When Dong Wugou, the protagonist of the story, first appears on the scene in the early 1920s in Shanghai, he is an impeccably dressed young scholar freshly returned from Harvard, armed with a master's degree in Western philosophy and ready to embark upon a college teaching career which promises higher prestige and gratification. He teaches Western ideas to large numbers of eager students. He finds support in a small group of friends with whom he shares ideas, wine, imported cigarettes, and hours of leisure in

movie houses, drama clubs, and concert halls. He soon gets married to a literate woman of traditional feminine virtues, and finds conjugal happiness in the domestic delight of exquisitely prepared food, embroidered silk, classical music, and poetry and fiction of romance. In the early 1920s, in short, Dong works hopefully for the future, leading a quiet life of books and ideas and saturated in the bliss of family, friends, and an intellectual community.

The killing of students and workers on Nanjing Road on 30 May 1925 by Sikh policemen of the International Settlement jolts him out of the peaceful tranquillity of his private study. Transformed overnight into a political activist and social organizer by his patriotic fervor, Dong shouts slogans, writes editorials, leads fundraising drives, interviews workers, avidly consumes socialist literature, and joins the political underground against the imperialists. Just as he becomes fully engaged on the public stage—just as his hopes for China's future regeneration reach a point of frenzied intensity—political purges break out within the revolutionary party. He witnesses his fellow patriots being killed in the streets by the soldiers of revolution. He reads about his comrades jumping off second-floor balconies to their deaths, fleeing persecutors. Terrified by such violence and paralyzed by confusion, Dong falls into the depths of despair. General conditions deteriorate in subsequent years. The Nationalist Government's tightened political grip on college campuses costs Dong his teaching position. The economic recession of the early 1930s further erodes his financial standing. Fighting breaks out between Chinese and Japanese troops in Shanghai in 1932. As a metaphor for the larger significance of the war, Dong's house is caught in the crossfire and consumed by flames. In anguish and sorrow Dong watches his wife dying shortly afterwards of fright, grief, and illness. Death, however, is accepted with resignation. At the deathbed he chants his belief in the reunion of loved ones in death.

In the mid-1930s Dong returns to his college campus to offer part-time instruction in English. This time he teaches to make a living, uninspired by hope, beliefs, or enthusiasm. Echoing the escape in contemporary writings into an aestheticism of pessimism,

he sees ideas and idealism as "moonlight shining on the pond, flowers casting shadows on the wall": eye-catching and engrossing, yet also ephemeral and irrelevant.¹² He turns his back on reality. He sees no friends. He stops reading newspapers. He gives up personal pleasures such as drinking and smoking. Removed from thoughts of the here and now and impervious to worldly hardships and ridicule, he takes up Buddhism and withdraws into the solitude of an inner existence. He dons the garb of a Buddhist monk. He spends his mornings meditating. He attains inner tranquillity by banishing thoughts of politics at large. Don Wugou's inner composure, in other words, is attained at the price of renouncing any attempts whatsoever to be effective in the realm of practical affairs.

Ye Shengtao's "The English Professor" shows the Western-style educated elite in Shanghai withdrawing to their private lives on the eve of the Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945). The intimate connection, in norm if not in reality, between public events and personal choices in the intellectual life of the 1920s was sundered, Ye suggests, when patriotic youths were awakened to the crude reality of power and politics. In the aftermath of that shock, these disillusioned intellectuals moved about unobtrusively and inconspicuously in a time-honored semi-hermetic style of existence. "Only the young branches of the evergreen tree peep into his window to steal a look from time to time." The rest of the world moves on and beyond him, leaving the English professor and others like him utterly cut off from the world around them.

THE CLASS NATURE OF DISILLUSIONMENT AND LONELINESS: A DEBATE

Disillusion and loneliness as themes in modern Chinese literature can be traced at least as far back as Lu Xun. Some of his short stories, such as "In the Tavern" ("Zai jiulou shang") and "The Loner" ("Guduzhe"), convey the solitary mood of progressive intellectuals, who felt caught in the position of a beleaguered minority. Lu Xun's enlightened youths spend their energy striving to realize a better society. Frustrated in their attempts, defeated in their repeated struggles, and overwhelmed by a sense of futility, the once progres-

sive-minded eventually become dispirited and disillusioned, succumbing under the weight of general apathy and public hostility, as much victims of their own limitations as of social obstacles.¹³

Anxiety, frustration, and melancholy had also been the dominant mood in a series of works by Yu Dafu, from *The Sinking (Chenlun)*, published in 1921, to *The Lost Lamb (Miyang)*, in 1928.¹⁴ These works were popular among the educated youth of the post-May Fourth period for giving voice to their own anomie. Much of the melancholy and self-indulgence expressed in Yu's works centers upon problems of poverty and frustrated attempts in the quest for personal fulfillment in love. Though without explicit sociopolitical reference, Yu Dafu nevertheless blamed society for the individual's loss and feelings of futility.

As part of the legacy of the May Fourth Movement in the 1920s, images of progressive and independent-minded youths as lonely individuals standing in opposition to the whole society became familiar in Chinese literature. That society was alternately portrayed as harsh, rigid, cruel, hostile, indifferent, inhibiting, mocking, persecuting, victimizing, and corrupting. The individuals, as they searched in vain for a point of constructive engagement with their society, ranged in reactions from open admission of defeat to indulgence in self-pity and sensual pleasures, from passive submission to a stubborn defiance that led to isolation.

The anti-warlord and anti-imperialist campaigns of the mid-1920s served for a while as a mobilizing cause for the patriotic energy of the nation's educated youth. By the early 1930s, when intellectuals were again portrayed as being in the grip of loneliness and disillusion, their disillusionment was not that of the earlier generation, dismayed by the impenetrability and indifference of the traditional order. Rather, they were disillusioned by the betrayal of their revolutionary ideals in the late 1920s by one-time comrades-in-arms. The haunting image of despair for the earlier generation was that of a "Silent China" as developed by Lu Xun, where arrows of protests were swallowed up in an overwhelming, drowning ocean of silence without showing as much as a ripple. The youth of the 1930s, however, stood disillusioned and internally riven, shaken by the

dynamic process of the political revolution itself and by the splits within the revolutionary camp. The former intellectuals were self-righteous and self-contained in their anger, directing their attacks outward against a structure that was unfeeling. The latter were shattered from within, tormented as much by their self-doubts as by the co-opting and corrupting power of the old society.

It is significant that Mao Dun's three-part work, *Eclipse (Shi)*, enjoyed enormous popularity in the immediate aftermath of the political debacles of the 1920s. The trilogy's popularity was an important measure of how the state of mind described in the work struck a responsive chord. Much of the insight contained in the book appeared to have been based on Mao Dun's personal experience and first-hand observation. In an autobiographical essay, he wrote that he himself was thrown into a mood of depression, loneliness, and withdrawal by the trauma of revolutionary events. It was in profound sorrow and disillusion that he turned to writing. The creation of *The Eclipse* was "the result of literary labor kindled by a last flicker of energy" sent forth from "the ashes of (my) life history." It was intended as "a dim illumination fueled by the agony of my inner being, enshrouded in this impenetrable gray."¹⁵

Like Ye Shengtao, Mao Dun saw the Northern Expedition of 1927 as a pivotal point of transformation, marking the moment the revolutionary 1920s began to change into the disillusioned 1930s. "On the eve of the Revolution there was pent-up hope and expectation, as if utopia were to dawn the next day. The next day came and passed. The day after that came and passed. And the day after that day. Hopes for happiness vanished. New forms of suffering appeared. Disillusion began to set in."¹⁶ While Ye Shengtao saw the disillusionment as a response to political failure, Mao Dun saw it as inextricably a part of the emotional dynamics of the revolutionary process itself. For the patriotic youths of the mid-1920s determined to battle warlordism and imperialism, nowhere did they find fuller revolutionary promise than in mass scenes of participation and discipline. Mao Dun describes this ceremony launching the military campaigns in Wuchang: "Tens of thousands of youth were assembled. There were sounds of military bands. There was

the roar of thundering applause. There were shouts of slogans and commands. Sounds of the footsteps of the marching brigades drew nearer and nearer, and then faded away. Everything proceeded in order, in accordance with the ceremonial schedule." Then, as a metaphor for the collective will unleashing powerful forces of unpredictable nature, a storm burst over the revolutionaries' ranks and the rain poured down, "as if a hole had been opened up in the sky." The assembled members of the crowd, however, were undaunted. The rain soon reduced the paper flags carrying revolutionary symbols to mere bare sticks. Still, "when the speeches drew to an end and when the time came for slogans to be shouted, hundreds and thousands of arms were raised up high, wielding the bare sticks. Above the crowd arose the deafening shouts of slogans, all the voices announcing their will in unison."¹⁷ Such was the Revolution, embodied in the military ceremony as a moment of realization of the collective will, group discipline, and patriotic fervor, inspiring a great sense of purpose, strength, and community. Yet it was precisely the intensity of this engaged dedication and revolutionary fervor that was emotionally exhausting. On the heel of frenzy came fatigue, and in the fervent demonstration of collective will and strength lay the seeds of tension and discord. In Mao Dun's words it did not take long for the voices shouting slogans "to sound hoarse and spent."¹⁸

Meanwhile, for the youth in the rank and file of the revolutionary forces, the movement represented something else, quite different from Revolution perceived in the abstract as a body of noble principles and an object of passionate commitment. Mao Dun's characters soon grew bored and impatient as they routinely discharged their daily duties behind the desks, repeating revolutionary slogans endlessly in one propaganda session after another. Revolution experienced from the perspective of a uniformed follower was not a matter for expansive romanticism but a reality of drudgery. As these youths came to realize the magnitude of their revolutionary tasks, furthermore, they began to despair of the efficacy and relevance of their organizational efforts.¹⁹ Passions cooled when idealism confronted reality. Even in the full swing of the revolutionary move-

ment, the young cadres were unable to sustain the high emotional pitch reached in the Wuchang celebrations. Fluctuating between frenzy and fatigue, sobered by the discrepancy between vision and reality, revolutionary youths found themselves rapidly losing their emotional foothold as the revolution progressed. The final betrayal of the Revolution from within its own camp thus dealt a shattering blow to minds already precariously balanced between impulsive engagement and guarded skepticism.

Critics praised Mao Dun for "holding up a camera of realism to the crowd of revolutionary youth" and for "capturing the revolutionary movement at a low point when it was besieged by pessimism, passiveness, and disillusionment."²⁰ Mao Dun's readers, many with personal experiences from the campaigns of 1927, wrote to express their appreciation.²¹ The responsiveness of educated youth to the trilogy can be measured by the loud critical warnings that soon arose, cautioning youth against the contagion of the mood described in it. With the publication of the trilogy, Mao Dun found himself embroiled in controversies over the role of literature in revolution, and attacked by prominent left-wing critics. One of them was Qian Xingcun, who also wrote under the pen name of Aying.

Qian Xingcun agreed with Mao Dun that there was a strong element of impetuosity in youthful dedication to revolutionary goals, and that wavering and disillusionment were widespread among the youth of the 1930s.²² The revolution was "a crucible for the heart" (*xin yu*), Qian affirmed, and the revolution had been an emotionally tormenting experience for its young followers. The truly committed and courageous were admittedly a very small minority. Qian believed, however, that the process of history was inexorable and irreversible, and that, if the future was to be theirs, they would have to move along with the forces of historical progress. It was here that Qian Xingcun parted company with Mao Dun by attaching class labels to the wavering and disillusioned. Qian called these youth members of a petty bourgeoisie in decline. He treated their disillusion not as a general response to the revolutionary experience, but as anxiety on the part of one particular social class that trailed behind in the great movement that facilitated historical change. Dis-

illusionment was only for those without a political future. Qian Xingcun saw the kind of temperament described by Mao Dun as politically suicidal, and insisted, not without some contradiction, that the only way for Chinese youth to regain their footing was by persisting (had they not been thoroughly incapacitated by their class origin) on the course of political revolution.²³

Qian Xingcun declared his faith in scientific socialism and was quick to assert that the ultimate arbiter of meaning and value in individual existence continued to lie in the realm of political action. While Mao Dun attacked those who used the notion of "historical necessity" to promise future happiness and to entice youth to join the revolutionary movement, Qian Xingcun attacked those who were so traumatized and disillusioned by events as to be on the verge of complete incapacitation. Mao Dun's response to these charges in turn was essentially a moral rejoinder. He argued that, if one ignored the harshness of the reality of the here and now, then that stripped individual political actions—taken despite of and in the face of that harshness—of much of their moral significance. But Qian Xingcun's arguments were pinned upon the political future, not the present or past. Despair and disillusionment, no matter how well justified by experiences of the immediate past, hindered the progress of history. Qian saw despondency as a sign of weakness of a social class in decline. Such bleak moods prefaced the social class's ultimate doom.

THE HOPE IN LOVE: BA JIN'S *EXTINCTION*

The bleakness in Mao Dun's work was much less extreme than the despair of Ba Jin's *Extinction* (*Miewang*). Scenes of death, violence, cruelty, and wretched poverty were interspersed with descriptions of a society in a state of high tension. The injustice was overwhelming; the corruption beyond redemption. The grip of the political structure is implicitly seen as unshakable, since social evil and suffering are shown to be the expression of human nature encouraged by an oppressive system. *Extinction* shows scenes of an old woman beating up a small hungry boy for stealing food; a police-

man bowing and smiling courteously to the powerful secretary of the revolutionary Nationalist Party, even while the latter is responsible for the wanton loss of a life; onlookers witnessing violent death with indifference; revolutionists giving up their lives only to have their decapitated heads stared at by the ignorant and jeering at the public crossroads. Unlike the earlier characters in Lu Xun's works, who are self-possessed while rising against society, Du Daxin, the protagonist of *Extinction*, vacillates between bitterly uncompromising hatred of existing injustices and weeping recognition of the futility of his actions. Emotionally choked to the point of incoherence, he writes disturbingly pessimistic poems that are greeted with scorn and skepticism by the polite and respectable. He wins the love of a woman. He then chooses to die a martyr's death in an assassination attempt to revenge the death of a comrade. His plot, needless to say, accomplishes nothing. As his severed head rots on public display, the system of coercion and corruption persists in full force. Du Daxin and his deeds soon recede into a mere recollection in the mind of the woman who loves him. While meaningful relationships can be found in the private sphere of love and friendship, Ba Jin seems to be saying that, beyond the immediately personal, individual actions are totally ineffectual. Those who rebel out of disillusionment and view assassination as a legitimate revolutionary tactic have undertaken destructive actions without constructive ends. In *Extinction*, public political engagement through such means brings the young revolutionists nothing but death.²⁴

Novels like *The Eclipse* and *Extinction* were widely circulated in educated circles in the 1930s. Their general appeal continued into the 1940s, especially in the Nationalist areas during the war.²⁵ To left-wing critics like Qian Xingcun, *The Eclipse* was objectionable precisely because the disillusionment it portrayed would lead to the crippling despair of *Extinction*, lending tacit support to the urban educated elite's withdrawal from political activism. By naming disillusionment and despair as the predominant themes in youth's experience with revolutionary mobilization during the 1920s, *The Eclipse* and *Extinction* portrayed the realm of political action as devoid of meaning. Because of this overwhelming sense of barrenness, it was

not until the flamboyant portraits of the Eighth Route Army peasant soldiers and Communist cadres in homespun cloth burst upon the literary scene in Yan'an in the 1940s that the politically engaged were again shown as heroes on the center stage. For the urban educated audience of the 1930s, Mao Dun summed up the wavering disillusionment of revolutionary youth, while Ba Jin insisted that true significance was to be found only in the private realm of love. His notes of anguish and skepticism about the efficacy of political activism helped cool the passion of an entire generation of students for political engagement while lending justification to a life of private withdrawal.

THE SHAPE OF THEIR DISMAY: TWO VIEWS

Even the victors of the Northern Expedition found it difficult to conjure up heroic images that glorified the triumph of the Nationalists in 1927. Dai Jitao was the most prominent ideologue of the Nationalist Party and a close associate of its leader, Chiang Kai-shek. In an open letter to the youth of the country in December 1927, Dai Jitao, as President of National Zhongshan University in Canton, spoke of China as in total disintegration and full-scale devastation. He shared the prevailing sentiment, he said, that "those of our generation are beyond hope."²⁶ Dai Jitao pointed out that the mutual suspicion and cruelty leading towards the Nationalist purge of members of the Communist Party had rent the fabric of the student community on many campuses. Students were demoralized by this traumatic experience, and there was a serious crisis in political belief.²⁷ China's youth, Dai felt, had slipped away from their commitment to the revolutionary ideology of the *Three Principles of the People*, while the Party itself had become divided on the true meaning of Sun Yat-sen's teachings.²⁸ Far from restoring the political confidence of Chinese college students, the military triumph of the Nationalists left in its trail, it would seem, a generation of despondent revolutionaries overwhelmed by their own attempts to bring changes.

College students continued to be "bewildered, confused, and

frustrated" up to the eve of the war.²⁹ It was against this backdrop that Hu Sheng, the future editor of *Red Flag*, President of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in the 1980s, and a senior in Beida's Department of Philosophy in 1937, undertook a full analysis of the views of life of his fellow students.³⁰

Hu Sheng saw four types of attitudes towards life (*renshengguan*) among his contemporaries, which he described as nihilism, hedonism, fatalism, and pessimism. The "nihilists" were the ones who defied social, political, as well as ethical norms, according to Hu.³¹ These youths rejected society as imbued with misery and hypocrisy and turned inward instead to preserve their equanimity. Since they were full of hostility towards the larger world, their social thinking stressed destruction instead of constructive engagement. Hu Sheng believed that many of these youths came from oppressive families with acute generational conflicts. Their nihilist tendency, he speculated, was in fact a struggle to gain breathing space for themselves.³²

Nihilism, in Hu Sheng's rather mechanical analysis derived from his newly acquired Marxian categories, was a purely subjective and voluntaristic attitude, because the nihilists attempted to take on the world alone and failed to devise means to cope with the objective reality. It was neither pragmatic nor realistic, and it doomed its practitioners to despair and disillusionment.³³

Sons and daughters of the well-to-do, on the other hand, tended to become hedonists.³⁴ Echoing Qian Xingcun's disapproval of the weeping scions of bourgeois households in *The Eclipse*, Hu Sheng frowned upon the pursuit of pleasure and saw the hedonists as members of "a social stratum in decline" who sought instant gratification in sensory stimulation.³⁵ The ethos that informed their hedonistic impulses, Hu Sheng wrote, was not so much a robust interest in sensual delight as confusion and sorrow. Far from being the expression of an expansive mood, the songs and laughter on college campuses of the mid-1930s in fact sounded an undertone of profound melancholy.³⁶

In Hu Sheng's dialectical analysis, the nihilists and the hedonists sought escape from the world by willing away its unpleasant as-

pects, while the fatalists and the pessimists, by contrast, allowed themselves to be dominated by circumstances without giving so much as a struggle.³⁷ The latter were to be faulted just as much as the former, because they dwelled upon the oppressiveness of the existing structure and the futility of individual efforts.

Hu Sheng's description of the mood on college campuses in the 1930s was corroborated by a large number of contemporary writings.³⁸ The malaise of Chinese youth and the influence of nihilistic, hedonistic, fatalistic, and pessimistic tendencies on college campuses were duly taken note of in a broad range of publications, from professional educators' serious discussion of student mental health to popular journals' editorial comments intended for the consumption of petty urbanites and secondary-school students. Hu Sheng's contribution was to offer the dialectical method as a new conceptual tool, which he hoped would lead to new solutions to his contemporaries' dilemma. He pointed out that neither "subjective voluntarism" nor "materialistic determinism" fully delineated the range of possible choices in life. The "subjective" and the "objective," he argued, were in fact "mutually transformative," and his fellow students ought to view "ideal" and "reality" dialectically.

Dai Jitao's advice and Hu Sheng's analysis threw light on different aspects of the problem with student morale in the Nanjing decade. Their responses, though different, indicated that, even when political engagement seemed to have lost its appeal and justification, politics continued to be urged upon the educated as their public responsibility. Dai Jitao, speaking as the President of Zhongshan University, addressed the devastating confusion which hit the young educated in the immediate aftermath of the Nationalists' Purification Campaigns against the Communists. His hope was to rebuild youth's political beliefs through the teaching of the Three Principles of the People. But the Party's programs of indoctrination had obviously failed to achieve what the ideologues had wished. Hu Sheng, writing a decade later in the mid-1930s as a college student himself, inserted, on the other hand, a defiant note at the same time that he conveyed the deepening mood of helplessness and despair among his fellow nihilists, hedonists, fatalists, and

pessimists. Hu Sheng felt that, unlike the others, he alone had discovered the Marxist dialectic and was consequently able to escape the debilitating bifurcation of "ideal" and "reality," or "subjectivity" and "objectivity." His urgings that his fellow students assert the power of their "subjective will" to transform "objective reality" was, therefore, a strenuous call to action. It was also an unambiguous statement that, short of self-help through action, there were no other means for the young educated to rise above their sense of despair.

THE ABSENCE OF A MORAL COMMUNITY

Hu Sheng's reflection on college students' sense of isolation and lack of recourse was corroborated by the observation of his professor Zhu Guangqian (1898–). Zhu saw the majority of those who came under his instruction in the 1930s as "pure and noble-minded," sensitive, idealistic and deeply moral.³⁹ But these young men and women, at the same time, lacked firm beliefs and a "cool, reflective self-confidence." They were quick to make moral judgments yet unable to hold to their views. They were therefore readily swayed by the prevailing moods and arguments of the moment, "as if infected with emotional malaria."⁴⁰

Zhu Guangqian further linked the morale problem on college campuses to the breakdown of the traditional infrastructure of guidance and support for youth. The iconoclastic attacks during the May Fourth Movement on filial piety for the first time in one thousand years made openly expressed generational conflicts socially acceptable in China. The urban quality of higher education imparted values and concerns that alienated the educated from their elders and kinsmen back home. Those who had adopted the new styles of urban life, meanwhile, did not refrain from expressing their contempt for the customs and values of the older generation.⁴¹

Zhu Guangqian did not see the rise of a professorial authority, however, which could fill the vacuum of moral guidance left by diminishing parental influence. In Zhu's view, contemporary pedagogical emphasis was on inculcation and not on inspiration, on

comprehensiveness of coverage and not depth of understanding, and on imitation and not creativity. Consequently, the transmission of knowledge in the classroom contributed little to the nurturing of wisdom about life.⁴² So much emphasis was placed on the teaching of vocational and utilitarian subjects in middle-class colleges, furthermore, that the study of humanistic values in art and literature was ignored. What a student heard in the classroom bore little relevance to his quest for meaning and purpose in life. The end result, Zhu noted, was the complete absence of a true sense of engagement that knitted a community together. "Teachers and students view each other as strangers. Fellow students view each other as strangers. There has, indeed, never been a more lonesome, introverted assemblage of individuals as China's university professors and students!"⁴³ The sense of loneliness of college students in the 1930s, in this view, was not only a function of college students' political disillusionment with society-at-large; it was also, in the case of non-missionary institutions in particular, a result of the educated feeling estranged among themselves in the absence of a campus community of guidance, support, social engagement, and core cultural values.

Whether or not all Chinese college students actually remained persistently disillusioned throughout the Nanjing decade, it is significant that among contemporaries there seemed to be ready acceptance of the notion that they *ought* to feel unhappy. In a culture that, since the time of Fan Zhongyan (989–1052) of the Northern Song, had instructed its educated elite to relax in happy repose only after all others under heaven had already found happiness, it was morally imperative for the enlightened few to feel despondent when times were bad.⁴⁴ Literati melancholy in days of political disorder, furthermore, was in itself a venerable gesture of political protest, as epitomized in the lore of Qu Yuan, which was revived and reinterpreted with a populist reading in the Republican period.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the translation and introduction of Western literature, such as Guo Moruo's works on Goethe, brought new associations to the idea of youthful suffering.⁴⁶

Most contemporary observers—whether Mao Dun, Dai Jitao, Hu Sheng, or Zhu Guangqian—invoked major upheavals to diagnose

youthful malaise. Revolutionary defeat, economic insecurity, social dislocation, intellectual turmoil, and Japanese imperialism were at one time or another blamed for student anomie. Commentators could generally agree that young educated men and women of the 1930s, born in an age of war and revolution to a civilization that had fallen from its memorable heights of glory, had good cause for despair. Even though some college youths who dwelled upon their melancholy might merely be striking a pose, there were still powerful historical imperatives that called for the expression of sorrow and despondency in a time of such severe political disorder.

The writings of college students themselves, meanwhile, suggested that the intellectual ferment of the past half century had left its mark. The vocabulary college students employed reflected the influence of a popularized Darwinian view of the cosmos that diminished the significance of human endeavor. Whether there were intrinsic intellectual imperatives for their depression, college students of the 1930s certainly grafted their melancholy and disillusionment onto a "scientific" basis, describing their sense of the disjuncture between the self and society as they invoked the transient quality of individual existence in a continuous chain of Darwinian being.

IN THE MIDST OF A CHEERLESS UNIVERSE: COLLEGE STUDENTS' VIEWS OF LIFE

Historians of the West have long commented on the profound changes that took place in the intellectual landscape of the twentieth century after the arrival of Darwin, Marx, and Freud.⁴⁷ Though Marx was to have his impact felt in a quite different context, and Freud—some argue—has yet to make his debut on China's intellectual scene, it would be difficult indeed to exaggerate the impact of Darwinian theories on the thinking of the educated in the Republican period. Even before the 1911 Revolution, the depiction of nature red in tooth and claw, the notions of natural selection and the survival of the fittest, and the image of Prometheus unbound made an extraordinary intellectual impression on educated Chinese

through Yan Fu's turn-of-the-century classical translation and commentary of Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*.⁴⁸ Under the Republic, the teaching of Darwinian theories began in the secondary curriculum. Though operating on different intellectual assumptions, it was a revelation for many Chinese students, like their Western counterparts, to ponder the system that linked human beings to other creatures.⁴⁹ The lessons were repeated in senior high school, and, by the time of college, many had not only accepted the theories as scientifically unassailable but had also proceeded to build their view of life upon this foundation.

When a group of students of the Class of '34 at Daxia University were asked by their Chinese professor to write about their view of life, almost without exception the Darwinian cosmos was taken as the point of departure. It was the sense of the vastness of the cosmos and the endless links among beings, implicit in Yan Fu's rendering of the Darwinian view of the evolution of species, that made the greatest impression. Human beings were seen as just another species in this long chain of organic evolution, a process that began from time indeterminable and would continue into the unforeseeable future, long after present generations were gone. Individual existence, when set against such a background, was seen as quite negligible and inconsequential: "like a single kernel in a sea of grains," said one;⁵⁰ "like an electron in a copper cable of infinite length and magnitude," said another.⁵¹ Human beings obeyed the laws of nature and went through cycles of life and death, survival and extinction, just like any other living species. "Who is to say that heaven has distinguished man from other animals and endowed human beings with superior intelligence?" asked one student, who exclaimed: "What conceit! What self-deception!"⁵²

Many accepted Wu Zhihui's formulation, first expressed in the context of the "science" versus "metaphysics" controversy about world views that took place in the early 1920s, that being human was no more than being an animal with a round head on its shoulders, an erect spine, four limbs, and an advanced nervous system.⁵³ Human beings, like other organic creatures, were but entities consisting of live cells, which were reducible to chemical components that obeyed

physical laws. As the cells were seen as ceaselessly undergoing a necessary process of regeneration, individual human beings, as the collective expression of these cells, were regarded in this sense as constantly undergoing death and regeneration from moment to moment. Human actions, thoughts, feelings, and intelligence were viewed as physical reactions of the chemical-organic entity to external stimuli such as sound, light, touch, and other sensory stimulations in the environment.⁵⁴ In this view, not only was individual existence a matter of little specific significance; it was undistinguishable from the cosmic flow of life and death. Individual life itself was devoid of larger and higher meaning, except for the perpetuation of the life of the species. Death, on the other hand, was equally undistinguished. It was but cellular dissipation governed by physical laws, when the chemical components of individual existence reentered the cosmic flow of unperishable matter. Life, therefore, was no occasion for celebration. Nor was death an occasion for mourning.⁵⁵

There were echoes of dominant traditional philosophy in such views of life and death. In the philosophical universe of the Song Neo-Confucian master Zhu Xi, death meant that the individualized *qi* of discrete living beings dispersed and reentered the cosmic flow of the all-pervasive pneuma (*qi*).⁵⁶ Similar conceptions in student thinking in the 1930s, however, accentuated the implied obliteration of the individuality of each human being at death. In political thinking, while social Darwinism contributed to the exaltation of state power in an earlier generation of elites' search for national wealth and power, Darwinian influence in the 1930s contributed to the diminution of individual value, the rise of an environmental determinism, and the adoration of collective power.⁵⁷

THE RESURGENCE OF AN AESTHETICISM OF MELANCHOLY

The strong emphasis in students' writing on the ultimate insignificance of human deeds resonated with particular strains of Daoist and Buddhist thinking, which, in turn, was enhanced by an understanding of the Darwinian concept of evolutionary change.⁵⁸ The

name of Darwin was invoked to confer "scientific" authority on views of life which held that human endeavors were futile.⁵⁹ In an era of "scientism" such as the Republican period, the invocation of science much enhanced the persuasiveness of this philosophy of melancholy.⁶⁰ As in some other intellectual traditions, Darwinian cosmology in China in the 1930s undermined the centrality of man's ontological standing as well as its teleological foundations.

In student writings, individuals living their lives in this world were repeatedly compared to fallen leaves carried off by the water or to seeds blown away by the wind, drifting along and scattered about in chilling loneliness by the forces of nature. The recurrent use of these images underscored a sense of fatalistic resignation to the helpless state of being.⁶¹

Such feelings found expression, on one level, in quotations from kindred spirits in the literary past. "We are but travelers passing through this universe, with fleeting moments in our hands in this alien place," wrote one, echoing the famous lines of the Tang poet Li Bai (705–762).⁶² "The full moon does not last, all blossoms fade," wrote another. "Life is short, and old age is upon us even before we become aware of the value of our lives."⁶³ A third student quoted the story of Zhuang Zhou and the butterfly in the book of *Zhuangzi* to demonstrate that life is indeed ephemeral and illusory.⁶⁴ A fourth wrote, "life is no more lasting than the morning dew in the sun," quoting the song of the hero of the Three Kingdoms, Cao Cao.⁶⁵ In a frame of mind tuned to melancholic thoughts of life and death in timeless nature, human ambition and worldly accomplishments paled into matters of illusory significance. "Where are the heroes and beauties of the past, thousands of years after their time? What is left standing of their fame and deeds, but the water of the same river, flowing endlessly eastward?" wrote a fifth, quoting the Song poet Su Shi, who lamented the passing of the heroes of the Three Kingdoms.⁶⁶

Ancient poets sang these lyrics purposefully to distance themselves from an involved pursuit of worldly wealth and power. When college students of the 1930s quoted these lines, they were invoking venerable and traditional gestures of pensive withdrawal. But these

lines were quoted and savored after the vehement attacks launched precisely on this eremitic genre during the May Fourth Movement. Chen Duxiu, a founder of the Chinese Communist Party and the chief editor of *New Youth* magazine, had lashed out against poetry and rhymed prose that eulogized idyllic withdrawal, transposing the mind to a state of tranquil renunciation of worldly concerns. His article "On Literary Revolution" ("Wenxue geming lun")⁶⁷ sounded the clarion call, along with Hu Shi's "Preliminary Thoughts on the Reform of Literature" ("Wenxue gailiang chuyi"),⁶⁸ which ushered in the New Culture Movement. The idyllic and contemplative poems of Tao Qian of the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317–420) were dismissed as backward-looking and unrelated to contemporary concerns by other leading literary critics and writers as Zhu Ziqing, Ye Shengtao, and Xia Mianzun. These criticisms were extensively incorporated into textbooks used in contemporary secondary schools.⁶⁹ Tao Qian's six idyllic poems, collectively entitled "On Returning to My Home in the Countryside" ("Gui tianyuan ju"), for example, were taught to Republican students by their teachers of the May Fourth generation with words of caution that the poems invoked sentiments that had no place in contemporary reality. The politically engaged critics of the 1920 praised, instead, works by Soviet poets who sang the rhythm of work in a modern factory and who eulogized the machinery and the efficiency of the industrial process. A fine poem that celebrates its time, in these critics' view, ought to celebrate vibrant energy and sing praises to the making of iron and steel.⁷⁰

Student interest in idyllic withdrawal and philosophical melancholy in the 1930s thus contrasted sharply with the literary prescriptions of the May Fourth generation. The revival of literary interest in Tao Qian and Su Shi was a significant indicator of how the assertive and expansive energy of the May Fourth Movement—of Li Dazhao eulogizing the creative vitality of youth and spring—had receded to permit the resurgence of the voice of somber reflection of a disenchanted past. The simple harmonious existence of communal hospitality and agrarian bounty described in Tao Qian's "Tao hua yuan ji" ("Peach blossom spring"), deemed "unrealistic" and

"irrelevant" a decade earlier, summed up for many students a state of utopia outside the relentless march of history and the harsh exercise of political power. Along with Tao Qian, the Northern Song (960–1126) poet Su Shi's prose-poem on the Red Cliffs ("Chibi fu"), as it lingered over human sorrow and lamented the lack of constancy in human affairs, also found among the student generation of the 1930s a most receptive audience.

A DIFFERENT KIND OF ICONOCLASM

The literati eremites of the past expressed their protest through political withdrawal. The college students of the 1930s expressed their political discontent by turning themselves into skeptics and cynics. These students decried the Confucian tradition by embracing literary works such as *Diary of a Madman* and *Family*. They deemed the Confucian classics irrelevant to contemporary concerns and sneered at hagiographic portraits of heroes of the past. Traditional norms were seen as inhibitive and stifling. Traditional notions of virtue and accomplishment were viewed as facades of a hierarchy of exploitation.

When Shi Cuntong published his controversial essay "A Critique of the Concept of Filial Piety" ("Feixiao") as a higher-normal student in 1919—an essay that raised the curtain on the May Fourth Movement in Hangzhou—the thrust of his denunciation of traditional moral teachings was aimed not so much at Confucian moral values for their own sake as at the petrification of these values in the social practice that had evolved in history.⁷¹ Shi Cuntong did not wish to denounce the feelings of filial piety. His anger was directed, rather, at the instrumental use of moral injunctions to manipulate personal relationships. Shi Cuntong's cultural iconoclasm was thus moralistic in its source of inspiration. He insisted upon the revitalization of moral visions in their uncorrupted form,⁷² and this could be done only by liberating moral teachings from their use as instruments of social control that stifled the expression of genuine ethical feelings.

In contrast, the iconoclasm of the students of the 1930s went

further than that of the May Fourth protestors. Iconoclasm continued to mean hostility to the moral hypocrisy embodied in the traditional order. But the ethically corrosive influence of social Darwinism was pervasive in the 1930s. Biology had taught that all human beings were born equal insofar as they were organic beings with physical needs for food and sexual gratification. There was nothing intrinsically noble and moral, therefore, in a social order built for the satisfaction of these needs. On the contrary, it was immoral and hypocritical for the stronger and more rapacious to add a moral aura to the unequal distribution of life's opportunities as part of the system of control.

College students of the 1930s, in that sense, were much more skeptical than their iconoclastic predecessors of the May Fourth era. Biology taught that human behavior could not be adequately understood apart from the instinct for survival. Moral teachings were necessarily hypocritical, therefore, since no man could truly claim to be free from the selfish impulse of the flesh for biological self-preservation. In sharp contrast to the passionate iconoclasm of Shi Cuntong, prompted by an insistence upon uncompromised morality, college students of the 1930s harbored cynicisms built upon a disbelief in man's basic moral capacity. This biological bent of thinking cast heroism in doubt and demolished ethical claims as they have been traditionally presented.

The students of the 1930s did not just reject the traditional society with its particular values. Rather, through a combination of philosophical melancholy, political disillusionment, cultural iconoclasm, and scientific materialism, this generation had arrived at a profound weariness with nearly *all* sociopolitical formulations that involved power and authority, accompanied by a general skepticism towards a wide range of human endeavor. Youth culture of the May Fourth period had been passionately committed to the regeneration of social values; it exalted activism and energy in its revolutionary struggles. Student culture of the 1930s, by contrast, was permeated by a sense of fatigue, weariness, skepticism, and passive withdrawal, and paralyzed by an inability to believe. The writings of students show that, within a decade after the outbreak of the May

Fourth Movement, a powerful counter-current was set in motion on college campuses. In the wake of the youthful optimism for unbounded possibilities of the early 1920s came a sudden realization of restricted horizons, accompanied by a reawakening of philosophical interest in the relationship between man and nature, and a chilling of that earlier passion for political activism and public concern.

UNHAPPY FAMILIES

When Qiu Zhushi, a junior at Daxia University, wrote that "this world was never intended for men . . . it was purely by accident that human beings were born into it,"⁷³ he was not alone in finding his world an alien place. Student writings of this period contain numerous self-portraits that highlight confusion and despair. Gao Liepeng, another "tender-hearted" senior of Daxia University who was "puzzled and perplexed by this world," borrowed words from Mao Dun's *Wavering* to describe his bewilderment: "I have lost my sense of what is right and what is wrong. This world changes with such rapidity, such complexity, such contradictions! I am truly lost in the midst of this all!" Gao captured the sense of bleak loneliness of his generation when he wrote: "What life has shown me is like a silent puzzle, set against a background of impenetrable darkness."⁷⁴

Other examples abound.⁷⁵ As already discussed, it was common in contemporary newspapers and magazines to categorize college students as "hedonists," "pessimists," "nihilists," and "fatalists." It was also common in contemporary literature to feature despondent young intellectuals such as Shi Chun, the philosophy student who attempted to kill himself in Mao Dun's novel, *Disillusionment* (*Huanmie*), or the arrogant and aloof philosophy student in Wan Dihe's campus novel, *Diary of a College Student* (*Yige daxuesheng de riji*). College students themselves spoke freely of suicides and deaths in their writings. Eight of the 30-some essays on views of life composed by students of Daxia University contained explicit references to suicide and death.⁷⁶ Two recounted actual experiences of at-

tempted suicide, one wrote sympathetically of the death of Qu Yuan⁷⁷, and two pleaded earnestly with their fellow students not to rush to their death impulsively.⁷⁸

"The frustration and despair of youth reached the extreme in the wake of the Great Revolution (1927)," wrote Hu Sheng, the future ideologue of the Communist Party. "This despair was definitively different from a shallow sentimental melancholy . . . and contained profound social meanings with economic, intellectual, and political dimensions. This sense of angst and anomie was widespread among youth, especially the propertied and educated. It was a phenomena no one could afford to overlook."⁷⁹ While observers like Hu Sheng pointed to radical changes in the Republican sociopolitical environment, college students found out from experience that hearth and house, families, and relatives in the 1930s provided no safe haven from the turmoils of the larger world. Indeed, the same cultural iconoclasm and political revolution that disrupted the public domain brought changing sexual and ethical mores and a widening gap between urban and provincial outlooks on private life. It is difficult to ascertain whether, in reality, most familiar relationships were as oppressive as described in Ba Jin's novel *Family*. But parental affection and familiar accord were too often maintained, judging by contemporary evidence, only at the cost of lost individual autonomy. Chen Xuexin, a young Fujianese who studied in a Shanghai college, staunchly refused to marry the bride of his father's choice, after having spent a few years in urban schools where he acquired notions of romantic love.⁸⁰ "I have come to the belief that there must be love in a marriage," Chen wrote. "There must be absolute freedom in the choice of one's marriage partner." Chen therefore annulled the marriage agreement entered into by his deceased father, to the anguish of his mother and the wrath of his elder brother. For many, the "family" was an extended and complicated network of tension, obligation, and bondage,⁸¹ characterized more by quarrels, gossips, and peevish comments than by support and understanding, which bound together through prescribed norms a large number of individuals with diverse outlooks. Jiang Zhichun, another student of Daxia's Class of '34, considered himself to be mak-

ing a daring and revolutionary statement when he suggested that the size of families ought to be limited to 20 individuals.⁸²

Changing mores of sexual and ethical behavior sanctioned by the urban student culture, on the other hand, were untested in practice and recent and foreign in origin. Far from delivering the students from the inhibitions of traditional families, therefore, such newly acquired notions often enhanced the awkwardness and anxiety in personal relationships. Courtship, for example, was a tension-ridden process confounded by conflicting sets of social codes. Many were drawn to the ideal of romantic love without being initiated into the social graces needed for the implementation of such ideals. Fictional writing, journalistic reports, and personal biographies of this period gave ample evidence of the emotional cost accompanying such protracted anxiety.⁸³ The history of changing sexual mores in this period is a subject for a separate study. It is enough to note that discrepancies between the written law code and customary social practices, between educated outlooks and traditional expectations, introduced a high degree of fluidity to marital and inheritance practices at this time. Such fluidity brought forth a new genre of counseling and advice, treating subjects that in the past tended to be reserved for private discussions within the family. How this genre thrived in the publishing industry was a suitable measure of the changing nature of familial relationships and the youthful anxiety that accompanied such change.

THE ESCAPE TO LOVE AND SCIENCE

It was in this context that the peace and tranquillity of Tao Qian's poetic world beckoned to the students of the 1930s. Qian Tongwen, like his classmates, wished to build himself a simple abode by clear water, to cultivate a few acres of land, to enjoy a life with wife and children in harmony and music, to spend his time in fishing, boating, taking leisurely walks in nature, and singing under the moonlight. The idealized life of natural beauty, agrarian bounty, and the simple pleasure of a couple's life together amidst song and

poetry was predicated, however, upon eschewing public involvement.⁸⁴

Though city-bound, the college-educated of the 1930s sought in some ways a more private existence than the literati hermits who roamed the mountains and woods of the past. When Qu Yuan, the poet of the Warring States period (440–220 B.C.), climbed the hills and waded the waters of Chu, his thoughts, ideally, remained with the well-being of the Prince and the Court that had banished him. When the urban-educated of the 1930s turned their thoughts to the nation and the people, they found themselves confronting ideologies, policies, and propaganda rhetoric generated by the political parties and unsympathetic to their concerns. The college generation of the 1930s embraced values such as love and honest labor, the significance of which was much more apparent in private than public lives. The public-minded among them envisioned an order of happiness and equality for all that was to be realized through communal sharing and honest work. This ideal was often thought to be attainable, however, only when society would rid itself of its own past—as well as of its political present.

Tao Zhi's vision of an ideal society required for its realization none of the Neo-Confucian emphasis on benevolence and sincerity. It required, instead, advances in scientific knowledge and technological invention. Tao believed that science and technology offered the solution to all the problems that had historically plagued human societies. He had no use either for history or for morality. In his ideal society there were to be no devices of constraint, whether legal, social, or ritual. Like Qian Tongwen, who idealized a simple existence in the harmony and tranquility of nature, Tao Zhi idealized love and honest labor and was opposed to the use of power and hypocrisy, coercion and deceit. There would be no leaders, no followers, no social competition, no political interference. With the help of science and technology, Tao believed, human beings would finally be able to create a society in which mankind could live in a state of peace and equality once attained in an earlier state of nature.⁸⁵

While power and hypocrisy summed up for many what had gone

wrong in history, love and science held for many the key to mankind's redemption and regeneration. The yearning for an ideal society based upon love intensified as weariness grew over the tension and conflict in actual human relationships. The insistent belief in scientific truth, meanwhile, represented a search for both an intellectual and a moral anchor in an era of confusion and disbelief. Love offered the hope that a genuine human community could be built. Science, on the other hand, stood for true knowledge and social benefit.

Implicit in the ideal landscape envisioned by students was, first of all, a longing for open space, in nature as well as society. Such longing mirrored the perception of an overcrowded social space, whether in the form of ideological control, parental authority, societal interference, or financial pressure. Individuals were seen as immobilized by a thick entangling web of personal relationships, a rigidly structured and interwoven society that denied private space and stifled spontaneity. Norms of personal behavior in such a society imposed obligations and licensed intrusion into personal space without bringing an accompanying sense of sharing and intimacy. "We move through stages of our lives as if moving through a prescribed chain of iron circles," wrote Ye Yunsheng. "We live under constant pressure of the expectations, judgments, and subtle hints of preferences expressed by others. We taste our own frustration, anxiety, and confusion in loneliness."⁸⁶

Love was exalted as a cardinal social virtue in the hope that it might soften the tone of human interaction and reduce the level of tension. However, when the students professed their faith in love, they appealed to an all-encompassing brotherly love rather than the much more discriminating and excluding passion of romantic attachment. It was not so much love as an intimate and profound private engagement as love as a social instrument that permitted the healing and reknitting of the social fabric in a society strained by tension and conflict. That kind of love would bring comfort and support; it would provide a haven from emotional turbulence and remove uncertainty and ambivalence in personal relationships. "The Confucian notions of loyalty and forbearance, the Christian notion

of love, and the Buddhist notion of benevolence all convey essential truths in life," wrote Lai Jian.⁸⁷ The emphasis in the rhetoric that exalted love was not so much on a passionate plunge into a personal relationship as on the creation of a community with emotional bonds that would rescue men from their overwhelming sense of tension and loneliness.

While love led to the creation of a true community, scientific knowledge offered the only possibility for men to penetrate the seeming void of the cosmos. Though some were not so positivistic (or idealistic, in the Kantian sense), the majority of students in the 1930s voiced their admiration for modern scientific and technological progress. Admiration for science found expression in a number of ways. The sight of railroads, airplanes, steam engines, automobiles, and modern engineering projects such as dams and bridges rarely ceased to excite amazement and enthusiasm, raising hopes for man's ultimate ability to overcome harsh conditions in the natural environment.⁸⁸ Some believed, indeed, that it was out of the need for food and shelter that civilization was born. Scientific discoveries and engineering innovations were equated with progress in material culture and viewed as tangible evidence of human ability to create lasting artifacts in the ever changing flow of time.⁸⁹ Scientific achievements therefore defied the ephemeral nature of individual life and connected the present generation to those of the past and of the future.⁹⁰ Participation in the collective advancement of scientific knowledge and technology hence constituted an individual's one major defense against the overwhelming sense of existential insignificance.⁹¹

THE POLARIZATION OF SELF AND SOCIETY

While science and technology were the means, the collective survival of the species constituted the end. The sense of the insignificance of individual existence was so overwhelming, indeed, that many could see only in the collective survival of the species goals worthy of sustained endeavor.⁹² As with their intellectual predecessors of the 1890s, students in the 1930s did not espouse individu-

alism as an end in itself. This similarity between the two generations, however, veiled a significant difference. Intellectual leaders of Liang Qichao's generation saw in the release of the energy and potential of the individual a key to the greater strength of the collectivity. The power of the state was the aggregate sum of its individual constituents; individual worth contributed incrementally to the collective good. For the students of the 1930s, the polarization between an all-powerful and all-significant collectivity and an utterly insignificant and irrelevant individual reached such a degree of intensity that a qualitative break in the chain of meaning took place between the self and society. The collectivity was not a mere aggregate of individual wills. It was the abstract, absolute, and autonomous embodiment of power and action, a source of meaning and direction above and beyond the will and action of the multitude of transitory individual existences. At the same time, the qualitative differences between power and love, coercion and pacifism, the immoral and moral had been so sharply drawn and so insistently contrasted that the political realm was seen as at best dubious, and the private realm was perceived as aesthetically pleasing and ethically intact only when uncontaminated by the use of power.

These polarized viewpoints were aligned with the larger changes that had taken place in the social and political circumstances of the urban educated elite since the turn of the century. The gentry elite of the late nineteenth century were able to enunciate their political vision with the full confidence of the leading members of society. They were consciously the principal arbiters of the nation's cultural and political values, even though the social foundation that sustained such a self-perception had already begun to corrode. The college students of the 1930s, in contrast, were powerless in attempts to define the ground rules of the nation's political life. The cultural styles they adopted were under constant criticism. Urban-bound, Westernized, trained in pragmatic subjects and versed in English, threatened with the prospect of unemployment, they were divided among themselves by the diversity of cultural outlooks and social backgrounds that characterized student culture of the Republican period. Who, after all, were these college students against the

backdrop of a rapidly changing society? What qualified their standing as the nation's elite, if they could speak neither with cultural authority nor with the support of a mass following? And what was their relationship with the Party and the state, were they to resist ideological conformity? Compressed in the 1930s between a rising military Right and an organized revolutionary Left, the social and political standing of the civilian center of the urban educated had caved in. Youthful melancholy and despondency in this sense amounted to a tacit recognition that the college students of the 1930s were unable to generate their own social and political visions. Both the Right and the Left, meanwhile, had their political blueprints in which the role of the urban educated was sharply prescribed. The dilemmas the college generation of the 1930s faced were thus without intermediate ground. The choices between a private versus a public life were also choices between autonomy and conformity, ethical value and political power. The imperial literati's comfortable assumption of a smooth continuation from self-cultivation to the pacification of the realm, it would seem, was finally shattered.

SELF, SOCIETY, TECHNOLOGY, AND MODERNIZATION: THE NATIONALIST SOLUTION

It was, in fact, the Nationalist ideologues who harangued college students about the direct linkage between individual self-cultivation and the Nationalist version of the "pacification of the realm." Communist Party organizers, in a voice no less strident, tirelessly instructed the students on the significance and rewards of an individual's selfless dedication to collective goals. A third voice, that of liberals and intellectuals such as the Beida professor Zhu Guangqian, addressed the individual's quest for meaning in life, and guided students to cultivate fine ethical discrimination and aesthetic insight. Ineffectual as Zhu Guangqian's approach to nurturing the inner self may have seemed in the political environment of the day, it was of enormous appeal. In fact, after the 1949 Revolution, the new Communist regime deemed it necessary, from 1956 to 1958,

to launch a full-scale campaign of criticism to attack this brand of "subjective aestheticism" that had been "poisoning" the minds of hundreds and thousands of youths since pre-liberation days.⁹³

The Nationalists saw science and technical expertise as the principal areas in which the college-educated were to make a significant contribution to the collective goal of national construction, in accordance with the blueprints laid down by Sun Yat-sen. From the Party's point of view, individual self-cultivation consisted of two dimensions. Self-cultivation required, first, a correct understanding of the teachings of Dr. Sun Yat-sen and the *Three Principles of the People*. And, second, it demanded diligence in the acquisition of useful knowledge about everything from taxation to farming tools. There was no place in the Nationalist vision of construction for student political activism, except the government's interest in the orchestration and manipulation of such movements.

The leading ideologue of this position was Dai Jitao, President of Sun Yat-sen University in Canton in 1928 and one of the chief architects of the system of higher education in the Nanjing decade. Dai Jitao linked an inner state of turmoil and disillusion on the part of individual students to the outer reality of a nation in upheaval and devastation in the wake of an aborted revolution.⁹⁴ The solutions for both difficulties—for the individual as well as for the nation—must be connected. Continuing the fight he had conducted against the left wing since the mid-1920s, Dai Jitao pointed out that the dichotomy that had been set up between "revolution" and "study" was a false one.⁹⁵ The Nationalists' failure to bring the revolutionary process to a successful culmination in the 1920s was the result not of insufficient revolutionary commitment but rather of inadequate attention paid to practical matters. There was too little real understanding of the teachings of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, and there was too little pragmatic expertise about matters of importance, such as taxation, finance, judicial procedures, agricultural economy, military affairs, and so forth.⁹⁶ The young revolutionaries of the 1920s were ill-prepared for the actual management of the state, and in that sense they had failed to come to grips with the true nature of a successful revolution. The great enterprise of the

Nationalist Revolution was thus consumed by endless bickering, mindless repetition of slogans, and wanton use of violence, which led only to destruction without constructive ends.⁹⁷

To the Nationalists in the years after 1927, as to the Communists in the years after 1949, the term *revolution* no longer denoted the mere seizure of political power, but was expanded to include the realization of long-term social aims. The goals of revolutionary change, wrote Dai Jitao, were the final attainment of peace, prosperity, and progress for the nation and people as a whole.⁹⁸ Realization of these goals for China under Nationalist rule meant paying attention to the nation's material construction as well as to the reconstitution of the moral fabric of society. Priority was given to the creation of tangible infrastructures of a modern state—telegraphs, railroads, fiscal administration, a monetary system, banking, police, and so forth. It was believed that social justice would follow on the heels of successful material construction. Colleges and universities would therefore be training grounds for the technically competent who were also ideologically correct.

Coming in the wake of a decade's enthusiastic belief in the instant achievement of revolutionary changes, however, this emphasis on pragmatic learning and technological expertise amounted to an attempt to slow down the pace of change and adjust expectations accordingly. Economic development led to improvements in living conditions for all men, Dai wrote, while revolutionary violence played havoc in the country. Since it was material prosperity that nurtured the multitude, successful revolution required that individuals put in dedicated efforts over a long period of time. Life, then, was not to be lived in constant expectation of instant transportation into the new era. Rather, the benefits of significant revolutionary change might not be measurable in terms of an individual's lifetime at all.⁹⁹

Dai Jitao thus redrew the profile of individual contributors to the revolutionary process. It was no longer a question of how noble-minded and devoted a revolutionary one might be, but whether or not individuals were capable of sustained self-sacrifice and dedication to a historic mission. Nor was it a question of one's own revo-

lutionary understanding, but whether one might dutifully carry out the responsibility that now was supposed to fall upon the shoulders of the educated elite in accordance with the Nationalist blueprint. The focus of revolutionary changes was shifted from the realization of an order of social justice to the attainment of material prosperity for all. The sign of serious revolutionary commitment was not even to be sought in a general political awareness but rather in individual work ethic and moral attitudes that contributed to prosperity and peace. The Party-state, meanwhile, was absolved of the responsibility of demonstrating to the present generation its immediate responsiveness to demands for change, even if it were ultimately answerable to posterity.

This prosaic view of a technocratic route to peace and prosperity placed a heavy emphasis upon the communal discipline and technological expertise of the individual citizen. Dai's rejection of the possibilities of an instant change for the better also suggested a rather ambivalent judgment on the worth of individual being. If the future of the nation depended upon a steady material progress taking place under the supervision of the state, then dedication and collective discipline were the principal virtues demanded from a dutiful citizenry. There was no place either for personal heroism or elated voluntarism. The technocratic approach of the Nationalists turned the rise of a modern state into the managerial problem of introducing a system of productivity and stability. It addressed individuals on the level of gratification of their needs for food, sex, and security. The historic destiny for the Chinese in the Nationalist system was thus an arduous journey of little glamour, of undramatic tasks steadily performed in anonymity, all for the material benefit of the multitude and posterity.

*THE FUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRIVATE:
THE REVOLUTIONISTS' VIEW*

While the Nationalist prescription was emphatically built into an educational system supervised by the state, the socialists' ideas depended for dissemination upon the creation of secret cells among

students. The state indoctrinated through the departments of political training on college and university campuses. The radicals, however, relied upon the students themselves to study the theoretical and historical problems such as the student movement, feminism, labor organization, colonialism, imperialism, Fascism, and China's place in the world.¹⁰⁰ Ideally, members of these secret study societies would combine a high moral standard with a firm ideological commitment, much like the idealized May Fourth activists who went on to create the various Marxism study societies of the early 1920s. They were to dedicate themselves selflessly to the revolutionary movement, to insist upon socialist light and truth, and to fight the forces of injustice uncompromisingly, however difficult the times might be.

But major differences existed between the study societies of the May Fourth period and of the mid-1930s. Students of the later decade were not entrusted with the independent search for their own political beliefs. The small leadership of student activists tended to be Communist Party members. Their assigned task was to build Party cells and carry out political actions as instructed. Political protest in the mid-1930s, in other words, had a Party line to follow.¹⁰¹ The majority of college students responded readily enough to the rallying cries of nationalism. Political "progressiveness," however, required additional commitment to views of scientific socialism, which was to be distinguished from mere patriotism.¹⁰² Individuals were to be "drilled," "melted," and "perfected" in the "crucible" of the great historical process of socialist revolution—wrote Liu Qun—in a way that infused existence with a meaning above moral judgment in any conventional sense.¹⁰³

Revolutionary martyrdom cleansed individuals of their worldly imperfections, including breaches of personal integrity and the lack of worldly success. The honor and reputation of a young man who had not been able to pay off his debtors would not be tarnished, Liu Qun assured his audience, were he to offer his life to the revolutionary movement.¹⁰⁴ Revolution promised solace even to youth caught in the agony of unsuccessful love affairs. So many of their difficulties had been caused by social inhibitions, Liu believed, that a total

solution had to await the final victory of the revolution.¹⁰⁵ Meanwhile, revolutionary dedication would help alleviate sexual tension and frustration.¹⁰⁶

Liu Qun's advice coupled a diagnosis of youthful unhappiness in the private domain (money, job, love, marriage, family life) with a prescription of solutions taking place in the public domain: salvation campaigns for the country, for the Chinese people, for mankind, for truth and justice. Not only were individual lives to be lived for collective good; the solution to private problems demanded the adoption of public and political actions. There were, henceforth, no "personal" concerns in a strict sense. Personal discontent was simply grounds for social action, which endowed private thoughts and feelings with political significance.

The identification of personal discontent with symptoms of a social malaise that called for the making of a new society absolved individuals of immediate responsibility for their personal circumstances in the society of here and now. By the mid-1930s, socialist rhetoric had given accusations of exploitation, injustice, corruption, and dehumanization in existing society such wide currency and intellectual respectability that it practically succeeded in undermining the moral foundation of most suggestions for a positive attitude towards social engagement short of a major revolution. On the question of a work ethic, for example, there were within the progressive camp problems with morale and problems with rhetorical devices to help boost morale. Urban progressive youths considered themselves well justified in expressing impatience with hard work and contempt for social discipline. These youths were quick to accuse, ready to complain, and all too prone to relapse into a mood of sullen lethargy. Revolutionary rhetoric exonerated these individuals of responsibilities for their personal failures in the present society. Socialist rhetoric also made it difficult for so-called progressive elements to co-exist quietly with the less enlightened members of the present society, such as the patriots among the urban middle classes.¹⁰⁷

The portraits of revolutionary youth that emerged from Liu Qun's writings were hardly flattering. Full of conceit and pretense, these

impatient and contemptuous youths alienated the serious-minded with their empty rhetoric and angered the scrupulous with their casual attitude towards money and sex, dressed up by some as an expression of the "communal" spirit of the truly liberated.¹⁰⁸ The self-styled political progressives were, in fact, hardly among the most popular with their fellow students; nor did radicalism enjoy a strong organizational base and a large following on school campuses. The majority of college youth, Liu Qun observed, remained uninvolved in organized student movements in the 1930s.¹⁰⁹ Those who did belong fell into three categories. Youth organizations under the guidance of the ruling Guomindang appeared to be by far the most influential on college campuses, significant at least in terms of sheer numbers. Christian youth associations, based mainly in missionary colleges, were also well organized and commanded a considerable following. The stronghold of progressive youth organizations, by contrast, was confined to the Tianjin-Beiping area. Student patriotism in this region reached a high point during the mid-1930s, when Japanese militarism threatened North China. And yet, even in 1935, during the famed December Ninth Movement, progressive elements on these northern campuses found themselves a beleaguered minority. Liu Qun reported actual cases in which students who had gone south to participate in political protests in Shanghai and Nanjing found themselves, upon returning to Beiping, ostracized by their fellow students. Instead of a hero's triumph the protestors were greeted with hostility. Their personal belongings were thrown out of their rooms and desks by former roommates and classmates, in strong disapproval of their political stance.¹¹⁰

Instead of blaming the hired agents of the government for ostracising the progressives, as organizers of student movements in the 1940s were prone to do, Liu Qun analyzed the unfavorable public image of progressive youth, and urged that they reform their behavior. To broaden the basis of support and to win friends, Liu wrote, it was necessary for revolutionary youth to be patient and polite with those who held different views, to earn trust and credibility, to be scrupulous with money and sex, to form a "united front" with family and friends regardless of differences in social and

political beliefs. Good conduct was called for, then, for strategic reasons. Progressive students were urged to win support and to form solidarities based upon kinship and friendship, not for their own sake, but as instruments towards the realization of the larger goals of socialist revolution.

Liu Qun's advice to Chinese youth "at the crossroads" was offered in the mid-1930s, when the political fortune of the Chinese Communist Party was at a low ebb. Until the Xi'an Incident of 12 December 1936, Chiang Kai-shek appeared determined—and able—to exterminate the Communist forces before he led the Nationalist troops to face the Japanese. The Nationalist secret services—both the Juntong (Junshi Weiyuan Hui Diaocha Tongji Ju) led by Dai Li and the Zhongtong (Zhongyang Dangbu Diaocha Tongji Ju) run by Chen Lifu were able to score major victories in urban underground confrontations with the Communists, and to deliver swift terror in areas under government control.¹¹¹ Open gestures of revolutionary defiance and political martyrdom might be morally gratifying. Yet, as the urban cells of the Communist Party were decimated and forced to flee in city after city and as the Central Soviet recuperated in northern Shaanxi in the aftermath of the Long March, there appeared to be an urgent need for the revolutionary movement to nurture popular support and rebuild its political base. This situation dictated that strategic and tactical considerations be given priority over symbolic gestures and gratifications.

Liu Qun was not alone as a left-wing mentor and advisor to young radicals of the 1930s. He was joined in the Shanghai publishing circles in the mid-decade by comrades such as Hu Sheng, the Beida graduate who was to emerge in the 1950s and 1960s as a leading Communist ideologue; Li Da, a prominent Marxist thinker of his day; Chen Boda, the Party's leading spokesmen on international Communist affairs and chief of the research section of the Central Committee's Department of Propaganda (1937–1949); Lin Mohan, later a Vice-Minister of Culture (1959–1966); and Xue Muqiao, the economist and specialist on China's agrarian problems.¹¹² Nor did they limit their publishing activities to pamphlets and tracts. All five were editors and frequent contributors, for example, to the

Shanghai-based weekly *Zixin daxue* (The university of self-study), which advocated the idea of a self-prescribed program of study as opposed to the prescribed school curriculum, and addressed the upward-aspiring lower middle classes as well as the students as its intended audience.

Liu Qun's advice to Chinese youth summed up some of the central dilemmas of a program of political activism and socialist revolution. Like the technocrats in Dai Jitao's writings, the revolutionists lived not for the present but for the future, not for the self but for the collectivity. The ideal future of the revolutionists, however, was not to be realized through piecemeal constructive efforts, but through a thorough and fundamental repudiation and destruction of what the present stood for. The search for a holistic solution to mankind's problems in the future forced a revolutionary living in the pre-revolutionary present to compartmentalize his thinking as well as his existence. Ideally, all efforts were dedicated to the creation of a new order in the future, which would be the embodiment of moral good and substantive justice. Strategic expediency in the process of revolutionary struggle, nonetheless, dictated certain compromises with the targets of that conflict. Class enemies and feudal ties—human beings and human relationships of the existing sort—were to be exploited for tactical gains, even though the freedom and dignity of all men were among the ultimate goals of the revolution. While the revolutionaries ideally prized themselves for an ability both to deal ruthless blows to their enemies and to care compassionately for their comrades, their life in reality was experienced as a series of attempts to form united fronts aiming at the largest possible political support through the manipulation of the lowest common denominators in shared concerns and interest: whether temporary alliances with the merely patriotic, with the social bandits among the peasantry, or with the middling sort in urban society. Consequently, technocrats and revolutionaries alike purported to bring happiness to mankind, but neither approach accorded individual human existence in the here and now much respect for its intrinsic worth.

AN ETHIC OF AESTHETICISM

The liberals addressed political problems as a cultural issue. By doing so, they engaged the question of human value. The liberal approach was conceivably the best known on college campuses during the Nanjing decade, since its principal advocates were humanities professors of leading northern universities. Zhu Guangqian's writings on aestheticism, which began to appear in 1929, went through several reissues within a short span after first publication. One of these volumes—*Twelve Letters to Youth*—sold over 50,000 copies by 1936 and was the best-selling book ever published by Kaiming Bookstore, a major Shanghai publishing house. Many of Zhu's writings were widely read as textbooks in secondary schools as well as colleges. Zhu's enormous influence among youths was duly noted by contemporaries and promptly denounced by socialist critics. Hu Sheng dismissed Zhu's aestheticism as "shallow sentimentalism," "cheap hedonism," and "cheap escapism."¹¹³ But Zhu's appeal continued. It took a two-year campaign of full-scale criticism under the new Communist government in the 1950s, indeed, to remove Zhu Guangqian as a mentor and presence among that generation.

For Zhu, as well as for his fellow humanists, the burning intellectual issue of the day was Chinese society's seeming inability for substantial self-regeneration in the present. "The present-day society is corrupted beyond repair," wrote Zhu, "Where is the source of constructive energy for reform and revitalization?"¹¹⁴

Zhu Guangqian linked the social chaos of his day to moral confusion.¹¹⁵ But, while traditional thinkers placed faith in the exemplary and persuasive influence of a small moral elite, Zhu Guangqian gave the notion of "self-cultivation" a populist dimension. He argued that only by carefully nurturing and regulating the feelings and emotions of *every* member of the society—through the cultivation of the inner landscape of the majority—would there be a cure for such widespread social malaise.¹¹⁶

That kind of self-cultivation had to begin not with moral concerns but with artistic appreciation. The sight of a pond, a brook,

a bird, a frog, a blade of grass, the stem of a rose, the colors of the rainbow, the changes of the four seasons—all these contributed to the rise of an inner sensibility, when approached with the right frame of mind.¹¹⁷ Zhu stressed the aesthetic appreciation of objects *in themselves* as opposed to reflections associated with the objects' functional context or logical significance. "Aesthetic experience is the intuitive, immediate experiencing of the unique characteristics of an object that one is confronted with, experienced without reference either to utilitarian functions or to rational categories," Zhu wrote.¹¹⁸ Since the object of an aesthetic experience was appreciated in absolute isolation, completely taken out of the context of the many other systems and relationships of meaning in which it was a part, aesthetic experience was uniquely capable of liberating the human mind from external considerations created by social constraints. Aestheticism thus permitted individuals to divest themselves of extraneous concerns, to regain mastery over the mind as such, to be in tune with their own inner feelings, and to reach a higher level of freedom from secular entanglements.¹¹⁹

While the Nationalist ideology contained strong ambivalence about human feelings as such, Zhu Guangqian encouraged emotional expressiveness and responsiveness on the part of individuals through the mediation of aestheticism. While the revolutionaries called for an emotional plunge into and a romantic embrace of collective tasks, Zhu Guangqian cautioned against unreflective fervor and hysteria. Although aesthetic experience involved the projection of subjective feelings, true appreciation, in Zhu's view, was attainable only with considerable detachment of the self from the object of appreciation. It was the mind's ability to savor, in an unperturbed state, the niceties of an experience, rather than an immediate and direct engagement of the self in the immediacy of the situation, that constituted true aesthetic appreciation.¹²⁰

The "cool, reflective cast of mind" that Zhu Guangqian sought to nurture among college students was an attempt to open up an avenue to a higher order of reality. Artistic creation and appreciation involved a series of efforts to elevate the presentation of reality above the mundane to the sublime. It also meant constant regen-

eration of creative insights and an unrelenting effort to free oneself from self-centeredness.¹²¹ Aesthetic experience began with the projection of subjective feelings but was completed only in the liberation from subjectivism as the self entered a spiritual communion with kindred souls in a community of artistic representation.

Zhu Guangqian readily saw the cosmopolitan potential of his vision of a community of aesthetic insight. His list of cultural heroes ranged from Beethoven, Mozart, Berlioz, Darwin, Newton, Kant, Hegel, Michelangelo, Rodin, Shakespeare, and Goethe to Du Fu and Wang Xizhi.¹²² Aestheticism not only cut across the artificial boundaries of nations and societies. It obliterated human divisions and was at the center of yet another holistic vision concerning life and man. "When life and art are one," wrote Zhu Guangqian, "life becomes a multi-faceted and yet harmonious oneness."¹²³ Art was the expression of life's vitality and creativity. There was no life without art; nor was there art without life. Art penetrated beneath the seeming divisiveness in reality, and revealed the inner-connectedness in the deeper structure of human existence.¹²⁴

Aestheticism in this sense encompassed ethics. Since life was a series of aesthetic encounters of genuine vitality and spontaneity, it was also a process of utmost and sincere striving towards the truth. In the oneness and harmony of aesthetic vision there were both beauty and good. In hypocrisy there was ugliness as well as evil.¹²⁵ "A fresh glimpse of the aesthetic reality that is everywhere with us is always an experience with the true meaning of life itself, a life that is forever evolving, unfolding, changing, regenerating," wrote Zhu. The aesthetic vision thus liberated men from the suffocating constraints of bigotry, petrification, corruption, rigidity, and tradition.¹²⁶ Zhu Guangqian linked the seriousness of an aesthetic experience to scrupulous sincerity in personal behavior and the ability to transcend and defy existing norms. The proper choice of a word in a poem, a punctilious attitude towards money, an utmost seriousness in keeping one's word, and the proper discipline and careful arrangement of the detailed matters of one's daily existence were all manifestations of an attitude towards life that approached each fleeting moment with a profound sense of reverence.¹²⁷ Such scrupulous

conduct, however, was no conformity to prescribed norms and obligations. Since aestheticism permitted individuals an insight into an order of absolute truth and beauty, this access enabled individual man to participate in the doing of good and beauty effortlessly, transcending the structures of established norms without deviating from the way.

With a view of life built upon an inner state of aesthetic appreciation, Zhu Guangqian placed the responsibility to locate meaning and significance in life squarely upon the shoulders of individual man. The shape and content of the life of every individual was solely his own creation, Zhu believed. The meaning of individual existence was directly related to the individual's ability to nurture enough sensitivity and to exercise sufficient self-discipline to participate in the community of aesthetic insight. Zhu Guangqian harshly criticized youth who blamed their unhappiness on social arrangements and who held the view that true history did not begin till the dawn of an ideal future.¹²⁸ To live for the future was to evade moral responsibility at the present time; to persist in a mood of pessimism and lethargy was only to reflect the barrenness of one's inner life.

A view of life centered upon aestheticism suggested, furthermore, a presentist emphasis on a life of the here and now. To the humanists, individual life was not perceived as part of an abstract scheme of historical progress, leading unerringly towards the next stage of material growth and social change. It was experienced, rather, as a sequence of discrete moments enriched and fully realized with each instance's regeneration of fresh insights and genuine feelings: in the invocation of visual images, in the mind's eye, of sound, light and color resonating with truth and harmony. There were, then, at least two critical concepts in Zhu's thinking: an appreciation of the here and now, and the will to be.¹²⁹

Like many college students' *Weltanschauungen* in the 1930s, Zhu Guangqian's notion of the universe suggested the influence of social Darwinism. He, too, saw human existence as bereft of endowed ontological significance, but he did not succumb to the cosmic gloom as so many of his students did.¹³⁰ Rather, Zhu believed in the assertion of human will, and saw meaning in the creative activities of

individual thinkers and artists whose insights "create spots of illumination that permit mankind to catch a glimpse of the texture and contour of this enveloping darkness in which we all find ourselves."¹³¹ His assessment of the sociopolitical reality and the ontological status of man was by no means sanguine. Nor was he oblivious to the prevailing mood of doom and despair. Instead of finding comfort in the assured final triumph through the working of large and abstract historical forces which were beyond the grip of individual man, however, Zhu Guangqian insisted upon the creation of value and meaning through the active assertion of sheer individual will. Instead of eulogizing the transformative potential of the collective will, Zhu Guangqian urged the individual's reflective detachment and emotional restraint.

The convergence of a keen sense of adversity, a profound awareness of human limitation and cosmic indifference, and an insistent belief in the significance of the moral will of the individual man contributed to Zhu Guangqian's appreciative portrait of Confucius as a great man of unusual stature. Zhu found the Confucian ethos deeply moving, especially as it had been captured in Confucius's brief encounter with the two recluses Chang Ju and Jie Ni.¹³² The encounter, as recorded in *The Analects*, highlighted for Zhu the Confucian perception of the world as having deviated from the Way, and the great man's unyielding resolve to pursue his moral vision despite a sense of futility. The central task of being human, Zhu wrote, was to nurture and exercise both the will and the courage to struggle and overcome.¹³³ Life derived meaning from a series of relentless moral struggles, directed both inwardly at selfish desires and outwardly at external adversity. Although the exercise of will in action promised no impact on some fundamental aspects of human condition, without it there would only be apathy, lethargy, chaos, and decay, and virtually no life at all.

THE ULTIMATE TRAGEDY

Left-wing critics were quick to point out that the aesthetic and ethical approach to life represented by Zhu Guangqian's writings

could not stand the test of actual confrontation with reality. Hu Sheng, perhaps the most astute of them all, not only charged that Zhu Guangqian trivialized the social significance of malaise, but also pointed out that Zhu's vision contained serious contradictions when it was invoked to guide action. Zhu Guangqian's cosmology was "pluralistic," "chaotic," and "without unifying criteria," wrote Hu Sheng; it could offer no better than ad hoc suggestions on individuated situations as the occasion arose. Zhu's views were thus found to be lacking both in prescriptive power and explanatory persuasiveness. These views, therefore, represented the philosophy "of a social class in decline," "which had lost its nerve and ability to articulate a holistic system of understanding."¹³⁴

Zhu Guangqian's differences with Hu Sheng in the mid-1930s were reminiscent of Hu Shi's debate with Li Dazhao over the issue of "problems and isms" in 1919-1920. "Lurking in the background of the 'problems-and-isms' debate," wrote Maurice Meisner, the intellectual biographer of Li Dazhao, "was the problem of choosing between two irreconcilably opposed maxims of conduct that have been defined by Max Weber as the 'ethic of ultimate ends' and the 'ethic of responsibility.'"¹³⁵ Zhu Guangqian's approach to sociopolitical problems was vulnerable to criticism, because what it embodied was more an ethic of ultimate ends than an ethic of responsibility. On political issues, humanism was at its best not in organized resistance but in individual protests, not in articulating an all-encompassing ideological line but in taking stands on particular issues—precisely the kind of politics of dissent engaged in by intellectuals of urban middle-class colleges in the 1930s.¹³⁶ Political struggles then gave occasion to the exercise of will and moral courage, as exemplified by liberals like Hu Shi over the issue of human rights.

While Zhu Guangqian, writing mainly in the intellectual context of the 1930s, saw the articulation of a humanistic-aesthetic position as a critique of Chinese communism, Hu Shi's writings in defense of individual freedom of thought and speech earlier in that decade were, by comparison, a protest against the authoritarian control attempted by the newly established Nationalist Government. Hu

Shi knew that he risked imprisonment when he published his collection of essays, along with those written by his friends, on constitutional guarantees of fundamental human rights and freedom. After *Collected Essays on Human Rights* (*Renquan lunji*) appeared in print in 1930, Hu was denounced in official news campaigns and forced to resign as President of China College. In addition, *Crescent Moon Magazine* was shut down by the authorities simply because Hu Shi served on the prestigious journal's editorial board.¹³⁷

In these essays on human rights, Hu Shi took issue with the imposition of a political ideology by the Nationalists. His defiance was based upon a humanistic affirmation of the rational faculty of man, and an ethical rejection of arbitrary authority. "In an age when even the existence of God is called into question, on what claims rests the insistence that the Nationalist Party and the thought of Sun Yat-sen must be placed above criticism?" Hu wrote.¹³⁸ In a reflective mood and with mythical metaphors Hu Shi described the significance of his single-handed undertaking to challenge the power of the political authority.

A parrot used to rest on the top of Mt. Jituo. One day the mountain caught fire. The parrot, seeing the fire at a distance, dipped its feathers in the ocean, flew over the mountain, and sprinkled drops of water into the fire. The deity said to the parrot: "Your attempt is admirable. But how much difference can you possibly make?" The parrot replied: "This mountain once gave me a spot to rest. I cannot bear to see it being reduced to ashes."¹³⁹

Hu Shi entertained no illusions about one individual's ability to extinguish the fires all across a land engulfed in conflagration. He insisted, nonetheless, on the intrinsic moral significance of taking political action, even to the point of calling upon oneself the risks of the policeman's lash or the assassin's bullet. In this regard, political effectiveness mattered less than individual dignity. The "cool, reflective cast of mind" that Zhu Guangqian sought to nurture among college students was exemplified in the humanists' struggle over human rights by quiet acts of defiance, by a firm emotional commitment moderated with detachment, and by an unbending will of steel asserted in a language of unadorned simplicity.

It was a measure of how cultural iconoclasm and political radicalism unleashed by the coming of the West had shattered the intellectual frameworks and the particular patterns of social integration of an earlier time, that, in the 1930s, college students were called upon, each for himself, to choose among fundamentally different intellectual and political positions. In that sense, the melancholy that was among young students was not so much an indication of their social and cultural isolation as a reflection of how deeply involved they were in a multiplicity of drastically contrasted choices. Yet they had no choice, as it were, but to choose. The seemingly cloistered academic environment of urban affluence and comfort was at the same time squarely in the vortex of the political struggles and intellectual controversies of the time. While the social standing of the college-educated was compromised by middle-class higher education's increasingly exclusive reliance upon commercial wealth and the interference of the state, universities and colleges remained, in norm if not in reality, places where the future of China was to be mapped out for others to follow. As Liu Qun summed it up for them, the youth of the 1930s stood at a crossroads, and it was up to each of them to select the correct path to take.

The humanists, in their striving for the individual's autonomy, were prepared to accept, with a quiet dignity, their tragic sense of man's solitude in the cosmos. But this was hardly solace enough as the times worsened, and they lacked no reminder of their political impotence from critics on the Left. The revolutionaries were cuttingly scornful of the total powerlessness of the aesthetic vision in real life. Those who pursued subjective ideals in total isolation from their social context, those who took flight from the dark side of life through the aesthetic vision of art and poetry, wrote Hu Sheng, were doomed to failure and despair over their own ineffectiveness.¹⁴⁰ "Yang Zhu lost his lamb and followed its trail until he came to an intersection where the road forked. Yang Zhu covered his face and wept"¹⁴¹ As Hu Sheng retold the ancient story with scorn, the humanists could not in the end but agree, sharing Hu Sheng's impatience with those who simply "covered [their] faces and wept." What was important, after all, was an ability to change

reality. "The present-day society is corrupted beyond repair," wrote Zhu Guangqian. "Where is the a source of constructive energy for reform and revitalization?"¹⁴²

Hu Sheng certainly had an answer for that question, but those who espoused "subjective aestheticism" rejected his solution in the 1930s.¹⁴³ As the national crisis intensified in the 1940s, however, alternatives diminished. The polarization between cultural and political values, between individual worth and collective goals, which had begun in the last years of the Chinese empire, was reaching a breaking point. Subsequent Chinese history was to show the ultimate tragedy, that those who sought to infuse their lives with meaning through action in the troubled decades ahead had to sacrifice the one to choose the other.

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