

Reframing Yuan Shikai: The Institutional, Rhetorical, and Religious Foundations of the
Monarchical Attempt, 1915-1916

THESIS

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts in the
Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Francesco P. DiMarco

Graduate Program in East Asian Studies

The Ohio State University

2017

Thesis Committee:

Christopher A. Reed, Advisor

Meow Hui Goh

Ying Zhang

Copyrighted by
Francesco Paolo DiMarco
2017

Abstract

In June 1915, the president of the Republic of China, Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 (1859-1916), attempted to reform China's state system into a constitutional monarchy, and assume the title of Emperor of the Empire of China. Although Yuan Shikai's "monarchical attempt" has been often cited in historical scholarship on the early Republican period (1912-1916), it has been oversimplified, and characterized as reactionary and conservative. Often, it is presented as part of a teleological account of the origins of the Warlord Period (1916-1928) in early Republican China.

This thesis demonstrates that rather than a historical aberration, Yuan's monarchical attempt should be viewed as one of several efforts to reform Chinese political culture along constitutional lines during the early Republican period. It was rooted in late Qing and early Republican (1895-1916) reformist discourses and developments in religion and political ethics. An examination of contemporary government proclamations, polemical essays, and periodical articles illuminates the institutional, rhetorical, and religious foundations utilized by Yuan to enact the monarchical attempt. This analysis reveals that the monarchical attempt was influenced by republican-style institutional models, populist rhetoric, and the religious ethics of late-Qing Confucian populism rather than imperial tradition.

Acknowledgments

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor, Professor Christopher A. Reed, whose patient guidance, knowledge, and attention to detail have helped me to achieve my academic goals and grow as a scholar. I also would like to thank my thesis committee members, Professor Meow Hui Goh and Professor Ying Zhang, for their insightful comments and suggestions, without which this project would not have been possible.

Vita

May 2013B.A. History, Utica College of Syracuse
University

June 2015 to August 2016.....International Chinese Language Program
(ICLP), National Taiwan University

Summer 2014 and June 2015 to presentFLAS Fellow, The Ohio State University

Publications

Francesco P. DiMarco. 2013. "Hard Work, Ingenuity, and Faith: The Formation of
Utica's Vietnamese Community," vol. XIV *Upstate Frontiers*, in *The History
Project*, edited by Sherri Goldstein Cash, 65-89. Utica, NY: Utica College Center
for Historical Research.

Fields of Study

Major Field: East Asian Studies

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Vita.....	iv
Introduction: Yuan Shikai's Monarchical Attempt.....	1
Chapter 1: The Institutional Foundation of the Monarchical Attempt	16
Chapter 2: The Rhetorical Foundation of the Monarchical Attempt	39
Chapter 3: The Religious Foundation of the Monarchical Attempt	60
Conclusion	78
Bibliography	83

Introduction: Yuan Shikai's Monarchical Attempt

By May 1916, it was clear that Yuan Shikai's 袁世凱 (1859-1916) attempt to install himself as Emperor of China, a process that had formally begun in August 1915, was an abject failure, and would likely result in his ejection from national politics at large. Though Yuan had already formally abandoned his imperial ambitions in March of that year, his opponents in the south, especially Cai E 蔡鍔 (1882-1916) and Tang Jiyao 唐繼堯 (1883-1927), were not satisfied, and demanded he retire from politics completely. As the military situation in the battleground provinces of Sichuan and Hunan deteriorated, Yuan attempted to placate his rapidly multiplying enemies and maintain some semblance of his former office of President. He provided a self-deprecating, yet defensive, account of his decision to assume the title of Emperor of the Chinese Empire (*Zhonghua diguo huangdi* 中華帝國皇帝) in a government proclamation (*zhengfu gongbao* 政府公報).¹

¹ Yuan Shikai, "Yuan Shikai xuanbu dizhi an zhi shimo [Yuan Shikai announces the whole story of the case of the monarchical system]," 29 May 1916, vol. 1916, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui, ed. (Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin, 1952), 359-360. For a historical narrative of Yuan's monarchical attempt, see the final section of this introduction.

In this face-saving proclamation, Yuan explained his original decision to take the throne in exhausting detail, taking care to give the impression that it was not arbitrary, but the result of a documented institutional process, propelled by public sentiment:²

The President's [Yuan's] reply [to the original push for constitutional monarchy claimed that] deciding the [form of] the constitution was the prerogative of the National Assembly (*Guomin huiyi* 國民會議)...in order to carry out the true will of the people...[the] Legislative Yuan (*Lifa yuan* 立法院), in response to petitions...determined to convene a Plenary Session of National Assembly Representatives (*Guomin daibiao dahui* 國民代表大會) to decide the state system...[it was] unanimously stated [that] the support or opposition of public sentiment (*minxin* 民心) was the basis for accepting or rejecting a state system....³

Not only was the decision to enact a monarchical state system not his own, he claimed, it was the will of the people expressed through formal representative institutions such as the National Assembly and Advisory Yuan (*Canzheng yuan* 參政院). Yuan's coalition of opponents, led by the southern militarists Cai E and Tang Jiyao, proved intractable, and continued to push for Yuan's complete removal, an eventuality prevented only by his sudden death on June 6, 1916.

² During the monarchical attempt, *minxin* and *renxin* 人心, both of which I translate as public sentiment, served a normative function similar to public opinion (*yulun* 輿論). In Yuan's mind, they represented the people's wishes, which a political leader was obliged to abide by, and against which his actions could be measured. Unlike public opinion, however, which was expressed through the press, public sentiment was to be directly interpreted by the leader. Alternative English-language translations of *minxin* and *renxin* may include popular will or popular feelings. For a detailed discussion of public opinion and public sentiment, see chapter two.

³ Ibid. For an explanation of the relationship between the National Assembly and the Plenary Session of National Assembly Representatives, as well as of the submission of petitions requesting the alteration of the state system, see the fourth section of chapter one, "The Institutional Foundation of the Monarchical Attempt," 29.

The above statement, offered by Yuan in his own defense, raises some important questions. It is indicative of three important aspects of what Ernest P. Young has called Yuan's "monarchical attempt,"⁴ the identification and contextualized analysis of which will allow us to move some distance toward a historicized assessment of Yuan's maneuvering. Ironically, Yuan's monarchical movement was built upon representative bodies (clearly padded with his loyal supporters) modeled on republican-style institutions, populist rhetoric expounded by Yuan and his supporters, as well as on the religious underpinnings of late-Qing Confucian political ethics.

This study will argue that Yuan's monarchical attempt, rather than a historical aberration, naked ambition, or a last stand of conservatism, must be viewed as one of several attempts to reform Chinese political culture along constitutional lines during the early Republican period.⁵ Closer examination of the above mentioned three foundations of Yuan's political agenda will reveal that the movement's origins lie in late Qing and early Republican (1895-1916) transformations in Chinese political culture, not simply "imperial precedent."⁶

⁴ Young's original observations of the originality of many aspects of Yuan's political behavior were an inspiration for me to examine these issues more deeply. Ernest P. Young, *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k'ai: Liberalism and Dictatorship in Early Republican China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1977), 210.

⁵ Edward McCord's account of the origins of warlordism has been instrumental to my understanding of the atmosphere of contestation and essential disagreements regarding which form a constitutional, modern Chinese nation should take during the early Republican period. Edward McCord, *The Power of the Gun: The Emergence of Modern Chinese Warlordism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 161-163.

⁶ Jerome Chen's excellent biography of Yuan Shikai has provided me with many of the details of Yuan's political career, especially regarding his early days in Korea and the chronological trajectory of the monarchical attempt. Chen attributed Yuan's gambit to a desire to unify the nation under the influence of "imperial precedent," and generally views the monarchical attempt from the outside, through the lens of political history. Jerome Chen, *Yuan Shih-k'ai* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1972), 166-167.

Nuancing our understanding of the monarchical attempt by problematizing its institutional, rhetorical, and religious foundations affords us the opportunity to gauge just how deeply contemporaneous transformations in political culture truly ran during the early Republican period (1911-1927). During this period of fundamental changes, republican cultural and political forms, from representative governmental bodies to small study groups, became embedded in Chinese society, and were utilized to both support and challenge the state.⁷ The rhetorical, institutional, and religious foundations Yuan Shikai utilized to overturn the Republic of China's state system should be located within, not in contrast or opposition to, the development of China's new republican political culture. By highlighting these aspects of Yuan's constitutional monarchism and placing the monarchical attempt, often neglected or oversimplified in previous scholarship, within its proper historical context, this thesis will allow us to form a more complete picture of essential transformations in early Republican political culture, and modern Chinese history in general.

What should historians of modern China make of Yuan's seemingly bizarre course of action in attempting to become emperor? By what means did Yuan enact his monarchical movement? What can his monarchical attempt tell us about change and

⁷ David Strand has made an important distinction between "Republican" and "republican." Other than a specific political system (Republican), (r)epublicanism denoted a set of politico-cultural values and normative behaviors, such as citizenship and popular participation in politics. After the Xinhai Revolution, Strand argues, political leaders were obliged "to speak to the people as if their opinions actually mattered." Especially in the absence of genuine democracy, "claims to represent the nation...made public displays of authority and authenticity even more important as continuous tests and proofs of legitimacy." Thus, even during periods of authoritarian rule, "Republican China was republican." I believe this statement may be pushed even further, that even during the monarchical attempt, China remained, in many ways, republican. David Strand, *An Unfinished Republic: Leading by Word and Deed in Modern China* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 4-7.

continuity in the context of the grand narrative of Chinese history? In pursuing answers to these questions, how can historians offer a historically contextualized and de-mystified view of the monarchical attempt, avoiding pre-emptive value judgements, and the tendency to view it as merely an obstructive footnote to the inevitable triumph of the Chinese revolution and party politics in China?⁸ This thesis seeks to answer these essential questions. To locate our discussion within a scholarly conversation, we will examine some previous influential scholarship on Yuan's reign that address the monarchical attempt in some detail.

Both Jerome Chen and Ernest P. Young have addressed Yuan's monarchical attempt in their biographies of Yuan Shikai. Chen's monograph, published in 1972, employed a political narrative to relate the evolution of Yuan's imperial ambitions and the ensuing National Protection War (*Huguo zhanzheng* 護國戰爭 1915-1916). He argued that Yuan's actions are best understood as part of his long-standing desire to unify and centralize China; Yuan believed that China could only be unified under a strong and charismatic ruler, since the Chinese people were, ostensibly, unfamiliar with the concept of loyalty to a nation over loyalty to a man. As such, Chen argued, Yuan's restoration of the monarchy is "best understood in terms of loyalty and national unity."⁹

⁸ Tobie Meyer-Fong has expressed similar concerns regarding the historiography of the Taiping Rebellion in her monograph *What Remains: Coming to Terms with Civil War in 19th Century China*. "The Taiping," she argues, "took on enormous explanatory power as the origin point of the revolutionary trajectory leading to Communist victory in 1949..." Thus, the Taiping Rebellion was not studied for its own sake. I believe that Yuan Shikai's monarchical attempt has been similarly treated by scholars of the early Republican period in search of a starting point for the Warlord Period. Tobie Meyer-Fong, *What Remains: Coming to Terms with Civil War in 19th Century China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), 12-13.

⁹ Chen, *Yuan Shih-k'ai*, 166-167.

Chen further claimed that Yuan's desire to "rally the people around him" stemmed from "the imperial experience... which was all he had to draw on."¹⁰ This statement would seem to indicate that Chen saw Yuan's restoration of the monarchy as reactionary and conservative. Chen did not offer a nuanced analysis of the institutional, rhetorical, and religious tactics involved in Yuan's strategy of self-legitimation during the monarchical attempt. Hence, while it provided a detailed account of the political history of the period, and a negative assessment of Yuan's legacy as the forerunner of warlordism, Chen's account has left us with little in the way of historical context.

In his 1977 book, *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k'ai: Liberalism and Dictatorship in Early Republican China*, Ernest P. Young analyzed Yuan's "monarchical attempt" thematically in terms of motivation, procedure, and timing. Young implied that Yuan was primarily motivated by a desire to cement the "public power of China's ruler" in the face of imperialist pressure (especially Japan's Twenty-One Demands) and China's continued internal instability. Young further argued that Yuan's strategy hinged on an appeal to "public will," and the idea that China was a nation unsuited to republican government. In many ways, Young argued, Yuan's monarchy resembled the "modern West" rather than its Qing predecessors.¹¹ Indeed, Young accurately classified Yuan's monarchism as different from previous Chinese imperial tradition in one important respect; in contrast to Qing imperial tradition, Yuan understood the importance of paying lip service to populism.¹² While Young superseded Chen's assessment by

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Young, *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k'ai*, 213.

¹² Ibid., 212-214.

acknowledging the innovative aspects of Yuan's rhetoric, especially his appeal to populism, he failed to contextualize Yuan's populist rhetoric within contemporaneous transformations in Chinese political culture.

Since the venerable monographs of Chen and Young first appeared, a wealth of innovative new scholarship on what historian Liu Yi has called the Transformation Period (1900-1920's)¹³ has appeared, especially within the fields of cultural and intellectual history. Thus, a chronological narrative of the political history of Yuan's rise to the office of president in 1912 and his death in 1916 is no longer adequate. To illuminate the historical implications of the monarchical attempt, it is necessary to examine Yuan's movement on its own terms, in a historicized context, without ascribing positivist value judgements regarding his responsibility for the rise of warlordism in China following his death. As Edward McCord has demonstrated, the origins of that phenomenon are more complex than one man's, even a man as powerful as Yuan Shikai, political hubris.¹⁴

Yuan Shikai's monarchical attempt's linkages to contemporary efforts to transform Chinese political culture during the early 20th century have yet to be fully explained by historians of early Republican China. Nor, as Hao Chang has aptly

¹³ I believe that Liu Yi's term "Transformation Period," which I will use throughout this study to refer to the late Qing and early Republican era as a single period, more accurately describes the continued processes of change and continuity that spanned the late Qing and early Republican periods than the phrase "late Qing and early Republican." Liu Yi, "Confucianism, Christianity, and Religious Freedom: Debates in the Transformation Period of Modern China," in *Confucianism and Spiritual Traditions in Modern China and Beyond*, by Fenggang Yang and Joseph Tamney ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 247.

¹⁴ McCord has argued that the warlordism in early Republican China "emerged from a specific historical context," in which politicians of all stripes increasingly resorted to military force to solve questions governmental authority, rather than an immediate breakdown of central authority following the Xinhai Revolution or autonomous military commanders during the late Qing. McCord, *The Power of the Gun*, 309-311.

demonstrated in another context, are dichotomies of “modern” and “traditional,” or labels such as “nationalist” and “revolutionary,” sufficient to provide us with an accurate understanding of the political and cultural milieu of the Transformation Period.¹⁵

Ultimately, the purpose of this thesis is not to tarnish or restore the legacy of Yuan Shikai and his bid for the throne, nor to ascribe responsibility for the failure of liberal democracy in early Republican China. Rather, my goal is to historicize the monarchical attempt by examining it on its own terms, thereby improving our overall understanding of the intricacies of the historical development of early Republican China.

The body of this thesis will be divided into four sections: following the summary of relevant political history with which this introduction ends, three thematic chapters will examine essential aspects of the monarchical attempt, followed by a conclusion. In chapter one, we will discuss the institutional foundation of Yuan’s monarchical attempt. Yuan utilized several republican-style institutions, both governmental and non-governmental, such as the Advisory Yuan and Peace Planning Society (*Chou’an hui* 籌安會), as critical elements of his rise to power. Such organizations, though no longer acting in service to the Republican government, still reflected the impact of republican ideals on Chinese society.¹⁶ The formal proposition and acceptance of the enactment of constitutional monarchy proceeded through these institutions, which lent Yuan’s rule an

¹⁵ Hao Chang’s essential work on modern Chinese intellectual history has been essential to my understanding of the intellectual milieu of the late Qing and early Republican periods. Chinese intellectuals faced critical decisions brought on by rapid changes in their environment, incorporating a dizzying array of provocative ideas, in addition to their participation in long-standing Chinese philosophical debates. Hao Chang, *Chinese Intellectuals in Crisis: Search for Order and Meaning (1890-1911)* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), 1-3.

¹⁶ Strand, *An Unfinished Republic*, 8-11.

air of legitimacy in an era when popular approval, or at least a façade of popular support, was ascendant in national politics.

Perhaps more obviously than other tactics that comprised Yuan's strategy of self-legitimation, the institutional foundation behind the monarchical attempt, the first that we will examine, was influenced by contemporary developments in political culture and ethics. These developments demanded that the state embrace the constitutional separation of powers, as well as account for public opinion and sentiment. Chapter one will call mainly upon official government proclamations regarding the constitution-drafting process and the proceedings of such institutions as the Advisory Yuan, Provisional Constitution Committee, and Peace Planning Society.

Such institutions, though, were only as valuable as their concomitant contributions to the politico-cultural discourses in which they engaged. To this end, what sort of rhetorical tactics were employed by Yuan and his supporters? Chapter two will examine the political rhetoric deployed by Yuan Shikai and his supporters during the monarchical attempt, the second of our above-mentioned foundations. Although several historians have noted the creation of syncretic political rhetoric during the Transformation Period, the rhetorical tactics of Yuan Shikai's monarchical attempt in 1915 and 1916 have not been included extensively in these discussions. Joan Judge's *Print and Politics* and Barbara Mittler's *A Newspaper for China?* have both addressed public opinion and the late-Qing reformist press, but their periodizations do not extend past 1912. Similarly, David Strand's *An Unfinished Republic* and Eugenia Lean's *Public Passions* discuss changes in early Republican political culture, but do not cover the

monarchical attempt.¹⁷ As we have seen in the previously cited example of Yuan's publicly declared defense of constitutional monarchy, the would-be emperor carefully laid out the rhetorical justification for his attempt to claim the throne.

From the first official proclamation of the monarchy to its formal abandonment and its aftermath, Yuan employed populist rhetoric that closely mirrored, but also developed, the late-Qing reformist tendency to draw on a multiplicity of terminology couched in classical literary significance to describe the relationship between the state and the people and justify political action. Hence, we will observe that Yuan's political rhetoric was more beholden to late-Qing reformism and republicanism than imperial tradition. This chapter will draw on the published proclamations of Yuan's government, as well as on polemical essays and letters of support from prominent supporters such as Yang Du 楊度 (1875-1931), as well as address oppositional discourses among Yuan's opponents.

Naturally, this analysis of political rhetoric leads us into a discussion of the religious and philosophical underpinnings of Yuan's political ideology, the third

¹⁷ See Joan Judge, *Print and Politics: 'Shibao' and the Culture of Reform in Late Qing China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 68-75. In *Print and Politics*, Judge describes the creation of a composite political rhetoric by late Qing reformist journalists. As the title suggests, however, this volume does not cover Yuan Shikai's reign. See also Barbara Mittler, *A Newspaper for China? Power, Identity, and Change in Shanghai's News Media, 1872-1912* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 237-239. Mittler's *A Newspaper for China?*, focusing on the *Shenbao* newspaper, similarly discusses the relationship between leaders and led in the late Qing and early Republican press, even touching upon Yuan Shikai's periodical *Beiyang Guanbao* 北洋官報, but her account ends in 1912. See also Eugenia Lean, *Public Passion: The Trial of Shi Jianqiao and the Rise of Popular Sympathy in Republican China* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 5-9. Lean's *Public Passions* links the ascendance of public sympathy during the 1930s to the rhetoric of public opinion during the late Qing, but makes no mention of the monarchical attempt. See also Strand, *An Unfinished Republic*, 173-174. David Strand, while pointing out that Yuan claimed to be acting in service of the people rather than himself during the monarchical attempt, does not go into detail regarding its institutional, rhetorical, or religious foundations.

foundation of the monarchical attempt and the subject of chapter three. Yuan and his surrogates supported their arguments with citations of the Confucian literary canon, especially the classical philosophical works of the pre-Imperial thinkers Confucius (*Kongzi* 孔子) and Mencius (*Mengzi* 孟子). The content of their rhetoric, however, was more in line with radical reinterpretations of Confucian political ethics that occurred during the Transformation Period than with imperial tradition. As we will observe, some proponents of monarchy, such as the commissioner of education of Hunan province, did utilize orthodox Confucian principles to justify a traditional imperial worldview. In contrast, Yuan and those closest to him employed Confucianism in service of a more progressive belief system that implied the state derived its legitimacy directly from the support of Chinese citizens.

These competing voices echoed a wider debate during the Transformation Period regarding the role Confucianism ought to play in Chinese society and political culture. Both Hao Chang and Rebecca Nedostup have investigated religious transformations during late Qing and Republican China, paying special attention to the relationship between religion and the state. The concept of Confucianism as a state religion was hotly debated as part of efforts to re-imagine society in a “modern” China.¹⁸

A fresh consideration incorporating the above-mentioned points of analysis is necessary to attain a historicized understanding of Yuan’s monarchical attempt. Having laid out the organization of this study, our discussion will now proceed to a brief

¹⁸ Chang, *Chinese Intellectuals in Crisis*, 3-5; Rebecca Nedostup, *Superstitious Regimes: Religion and the Politics of Chinese Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 1-3; Liu Yi, “Confucianism, Christianity, and Religious Freedom,” 247-277.

narrative of relevant political history to provide a frame of reference for the events of the monarchical attempt.

Historical Background and Narrative of Yuan's Monarchical Attempt

In February of 1912, the Qing, China's last imperial dynasty, begrudgingly surrendered power in the face of the Xinhai Revolution. The revolutionaries, a coalition including the Tongmenghui (同盟會 Chinese Revolutionary Alliance), had organized uprisings across the country after the initial mutiny of New Army units in Wuchang on October 10th, 1911. Finding themselves unable to oust the Qing from the province of Hubei, let alone the capital of Beijing, the revolutionaries were forced to negotiate with China's most powerful military leader at the time, *Neige zongli dachen* 內閣總理大臣, Prime Minister of the Imperial Cabinet, Yuan Shikai.

In exchange for compelling the regent, Empress Dowager Longyu 隆裕 (1868-1913), to abdicate on behalf of China's last Manchu monarch, the boy emperor Xuantong 宣統 (Puyi, 1906-1967), Yuan demanded the position of *Linshi zongtong* (臨時總統 Provisional President) of the newly founded Republic. Having no recourse with which to counter Yuan's military power, and seeking to preserve the fragile unity of the new Republic of China, Provisional President Sun Zhongshan 孫中山 (1866-1925) accepted

Yuan's demands and yielded his post to Yuan with the understanding that he would serve in this capacity until formal elections were held.¹⁹

When the Republic's historic first democratic election took place in 1913, however, Yuan proved unwilling to accept the prospect of turning over control of the government to his rivals in the Kuomintang (國民黨). In March of 1913, Song Jiaoren 宋教仁 (1882-1913), a charismatic political leader and the KMT's likely candidate for Prime Minister, was gunned down by an assassin at the Shanghai Railway Station while on-route to Beijing after the 1913 national elections. For the most part, historians now agree that Yuan's underlings, and probably Yuan himself, were directly responsible for the assassination plot.²⁰ Song had earlier made known his intention to limit the powers of the presidency, making him the greatest threat to Yuan's power. Following the assassination, the KMT launched the abortive "Second Revolution" in an unsuccessful effort to oust Yuan from power. Seizing upon this opportunity, Yuan formally dissolved the KMT in November 1913, its members largely purged from the government, bribed, or having fled. Since the KMT held a strong majority in the bicameral Republican parliament (*Guohui* 國會), Yuan also dissolved it in 1914.²¹

With his grip on power cemented, Yuan made the fateful decision to restore a monarchical system to China, styling himself the Hongxian, "Greatly Constitutional" Emperor 洪憲皇帝. Young has argued that this may have been an effort to shore up

¹⁹ Chen, *Yuan Shih-k'ai*, 104-108.

²⁰ Chen, *Yuan Shih-k'ai*, 129-131; McCord, *The Power of the Gun*, 165; Young, *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k'ai*, 117-118.

²¹ McCord, *Power of the Gun*, 173.

public power in the face of imperialist pressure, especially Japan's Twenty-One Demands.²² In August 1915, he convened the Peace Planning Society, a pseudo-scholarly committee with prominent monarchist Yang Du as director general. Sun Yuyun 孫毓筠 (1869-1924), who had formerly served as the speaker (*yizhang* 議長) of Yuan's Provisional Constitutional Congress (*Yuefa huiyi* 約法會議), served as assistant director.²³ Both men were also members of China's premier government body at the time, the Advisory Yuan. Nominally, the Society was meant to determine through deliberation which form of government was most suited to China. Unsurprisingly, the Society declared in favor of constitutional monarchy, and recommended that Yuan take the throne. Following this recommendation, Yuan's hastily convened Plenary Session of National Assembly Representatives "voted unanimously" for Yuan to assume the title of Emperor of the Empire of China in November 1915.²⁴

²² Young, *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k'ai*, 212.

²³ Zhengfu gongbao, "Yang Du, Sun Yuyun, Yan Fu, Liu Shipai, Li Xiehe, Hu Ying deng liu ren, zai Beijing faqi Chou'an hui, wei Yuan Shikai tuidong dizhi [Yang Du, Sun Yuyun, Yan Fu, Liu Shipai, Li Xiehe, and Hu Ying form the Peace Planning Society in Beijing, and promote the monarchical system for Yuan Shikai]," 13 August 1915, vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, 616-617; Zhengfu gongbao, "Yuefa huiyi shenyi guomin huiyi zuzhifa [The Provisional Constitutional Committee reviews the organizational methods of the National Assembly]," 26 February 1915, vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, 204-205. The Provisional Constitution Committee, of which Sun Yuyun was chairman and Yan Fu a member, drafted the 1914 constitution that created the Advisory Yuan, in which both men later served. The Committee also oversaw the formation of a National Assembly in 1915, the very organization that recommended to the Advisory Yuan that Yuan Shikai assume the throne that year. Both men also served on the Peace Planning Society. Hence, Sun and Yan were members of nearly every institution involved in Yuan's ascension; it may be that Yuan had been laying the institutional framework for his monarchical attempt since 1914 in cooperation with supporters such as Sun and Yan. However, Jerome Chen has argued that Yan may have been coerced into joining the Peace Planning Society. Chen, *Yuan Shih-k'ai*, 168.

²⁴ Zhengfu gongbao, "Guomin daibiao quanti yizhi zancheng junzhu lixian, tuidai Yuan Shikai wei huangdi, Canzheng yuan yi zongdaibiao mingyi, shang tuidai shu quanjin [The National Assembly representatives unanimously endorse constitutional monarchy, recommend that Yuan Shikai become emperor, the Advisory Yuan, in the capacity of general representatives, submit a letter of recommendation advising action]," 11 December 1915, vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, 904-906.

Ultimately, Yuan's plan was a catastrophic failure. Many of his closest allies in the Beiyang Army abandoned him. Beginning on December 25th, he was faced with a coup led by Yunnan military commander Cai E that was championed by prominent intellectual Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873-1929). Both were his former supporters and former members of the Advisory Yuan. Tang Jiyao, the military governor (*dudu* 都督) of Yunnan, also joined the coup. In Shanghai, an article in the *North China Daily News* (1850-1941) speculated as to whether Yuan and his supporters were not in fact a cast of characters in a satirical play.²⁵ As one province after another declared its independence and his armies suffered a series of reverses, Yuan was forced to delay his ascension and ultimately abandon the monarchical attempt completely on March 22nd, 1916, reoccupying instead the office of President of the Republic. Many opponents, however, were not satisfied, and called for his complete removal from power (as well as for the execution of Yang Du and other prominent supporters).²⁶ In the end, Yuan was saved from the prospect of deposition only by his sudden death from uremia in June 1916.

²⁵ Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui, ed., "Shanghai zilin xibao, yi dizhi yundong, er xi guoshi, fabiao 'xiiju yu, yi huajiju yu' zhi shelun chi zhi [The *North China Daily News* regards the monarchist movement as children playing at national affairs, publishes editorial '[is it] satire? [is it] comedy?' to ridicule it]," 20 October 1915, vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, 805.

²⁶ Chen, *Yuan Shih k'ai*, 181.

Chapter 1: The Institutional Foundation of the Monarchical Attempt

In late 1915, when open hostilities finally broke out between Yuan Shikai and his detractors in southern China over the monarchical attempt, the anti-Yuan forces authored a communique calling for the execution of several prominent monarchists. The accused were those whose crimes were most grievous among Yuan's various supporters. Among the names listed were both Yang Du and Sun Yuyun. What critical purpose did these men serve during the monarchical attempt to warrant capital punishment in the eyes of their estranged countrymen? They were not powerful militarists, or even particularly prominent statesmen. Rather, they contributed to the construction of the monarchical attempt's institutional foundation. This contribution was, evidently, deemed significant enough by Yuan's enemies to warrant their deaths for betraying the Republic.²⁷ We can conclude, then, that the monarchical attempt's institutional foundation was considered contemporarily to be of paramount importance. Yuan's enemies recognized that the republican-style institutions in which Yang and Sun participated were the operational fulcrum of the monarchical attempt.

The institutional foundation of the monarchical attempt was mainly composed of several governmental bodies and the pseudo-academic Peace Planning Society. These institutions, while, clearly populated by Yuan's loyal supporters and beholden to his

²⁷ Ernest P. Young, *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k'ai: Liberalism and Dictatorship in Early Republican China* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1977), 223-224.

political agenda, reflected contemporary transformations in Chinese political culture by their very nature. Representative governmental bodies and study societies, after all, were not part of the repertoire of the political ethics of cosmological kingship and orthodox Confucianism,²⁸ but belonged to the new language of divided powers and republicanism that dominated Chinese politico-cultural discourse after 1911. In the view of David Strand, early Republican political culture was marked by the proliferation of “political organizations like parties, clubs, and societies,” which “floated ‘like duckweed’” across the surface of society.²⁹

Even as Yuan planned to abandon the Republic in favor of the Empire of China, the mark of the republican spirit upon Chinese political culture was indelible, as it continued to be during successive authoritarian governments in China.³⁰ Thus, insofar as it utilized republican-style institutional foundations and engaged with citizens on a basis of political equality, the monarchical attempt represents an attempt to participate in the contemporary transformation of Chinese political culture, not a regression to orthodoxy or imperial precedent.

In this chapter, we will examine the institutional foundation of Yuan’s monarchical attempt to demonstrate historical continuity between republican-style institutionalism and the constitutional monarchism of Yuan Shikai in 1916. These

²⁸ Hao Chang has described the gradual abandonment of the ideal of cosmological kingship in the philosophical worldviews of Chinese intellectuals on the eve of the Revolution. Chang, *Chinese Intellectuals in Crisis*, 5-7, 99, 100, 165. For a discussion of the political and ritual import of traditional Chinese notions of cosmological kingship, see Yuri Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire: Chinese Political Thought of the Warring States Era* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009).

²⁹ David Strand, *An Unfinished Republic: Leading by Word and Deed in Modern China* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 8-11.

institutions are divided into governmental and non-governmental subgroups, the former being composed of the Provisional Constitutional Congress, the National Assembly (and its derivative plenary session), the Advisory Yuan, and the Legislative Yuan. The Peace Planning Society represents the latter categorization. This chapter will investigate how these institutions interacted to support Yuan's efforts to institute constitutional monarchy, and to ameliorate the effects of his failure. This chapter will demonstrate how these institutions dynamically interacted with one another on an administrative level, revealing their centrality to the complex process of the monarchical attempt and their republican style.

Laying the Groundwork: The Provisional Constitution of 1914

The Provisional Constitution of the Republic of China (*Zhonghua minguo yuefa* 中華民國約法) had been drafted by the Provisional Constitutional Congress (*Yuefa huiyi* 約法會議) in Winter 1914 and approved by Provisional President Yuan Shikai in May of that year. This document laid out the governmental institutional foundation utilized by Yuan during the monarchical attempt. In 1913, following the assassination of Song Jiaoren and the abortive Second Revolution, Yuan had forced the old bicameral parliament formally approve his assumption of the office of President. He then dissolved that representative body entirely when the liquidation of the KMT left it unable to form a quorum. While similar to the previous temporary constitution (*Zhonghua minguo linshi yuefa* 臨時約法 1911) under which Yuan had operated as Provisional President, this revised Provisional Constitution greatly expanded the President's executive power and

did away with the cabinet system, thereby cementing Yuan's new position as President (*Da zongtong* 大總統).

The institutions provided for by the new Provisional Constitution, including the National Assembly, the Advisory Yuan, and the Legislative Yuan, proved critical to Yuan Shikai's execution of the monarchical attempt. A further non-governmental institution, the Peace Planning Society, nominally a study society of academic inquiry, was convened to lend an air of erudition and modernity to the enterprise. Ostensibly, the Society's function was to determine the state system best suited to China's needs.³¹ The hastily convened Plenary Session of National Assembly Representatives, a manifestation of the above-mentioned National Assembly, voted unanimously to recommend Yuan's ascendance, and petitioned the Advisory Yuan to approve the motion.³²

To emphasize the essential role of these institutions, we will trace the historical trajectory of the institutional aspects of the monarchical attempt. Our analysis, however, must begin with the body that drafted the Provisional Constitution and administered the formation of the abovementioned governmental institutions, the Provisional Constitutional Congress.

Establishing Governmental Bodies: The Provisional Constitutional Congress

³¹ McCord, *The Power of the Gun*, 199-202.

³² Although the National Assembly per se did not participate in the monarchical attempt, as it had yet to be formally convened, the provincial representatives elected to the National Assembly in late 1915 held a special plenary session to vote on the state system question prior to the Assembly's formal convention. For a complete explanation of the Plenary Session of National Assembly Representatives, see the fourth section of this chapter.

Yuan began setting the governmental institutional foundation that later propelled the monarchical attempt early in 1915. On February 26th, 1915, the Provisional Constitutional Congress, led by chairman Sun Yuyun, a great nephew of Sun Jianai 孫家鼐 (1827-1909), reconvened the previous winter's session to discuss organizational regulations for the yet-to-be established National Assembly.³³ Sun, like many of Yuan's supporters, was a veteran revolutionary. A native of Anhui province, he originally joined the Chinese Revolutionary Alliance in Tokyo, a hotbed of revolutionary activity, in 1906. Following the Xinhai Revolution, he temporarily served as military governor of Anhui, before returning to Beijing to serve in Yuan Shikai's government in June 1912 and, subsequently, in the Provisional Constitutional Congress.

Chairman Sun announced the business of the day to the assembled members, and constitution-drafting committee member Gu Ao 顧鼐 (1879-1956) took the floor to outline the proposed measures for the organization of subsequent government bodies such as the National Assembly, which would naturally be formed in accordance with the Provisional Constitution (as well as with Yuan Shikai's suggestions, of course).³⁴ With this, convention of the National Assembly, the foundation of another governmental body critical to the Yuan's monarchical attempt was initiated.

³³ Zhengfu gongbao, "Yuefa huiyi shenyi guomin huiyi zuzhifa [The Provisional Constitutional Congress deliberates organizational methods for the National Assembly]," 26 February 1915, vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, 204. After hostilities broke out between Yuan and his detractors in the south, Gu Ao was named as one of the chief conspirators in the monarchical attempt by the anti-monarchical forces. We may conclude, then, that Yuan's enemies recognized the significance of the institutional framework of the monarchical attempt, and Sun's participation in it. For a discussion of this communication, see Young, *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k'ai*, 223-224.

³⁴ Ibid.

Only one month later, on March 14th, with its immediate task completed, President Yuan announced that the Provisional Constitutional Congress would conclude its current session in a matter of days. Even at this early stage, before the announcement of the monarchy, Yuan emphasized the procedural, non-arbitrary nature of the Constitutional Congress's operation. Since he had cooperated with the Provisional Constitutional Congress in 1914 to draft the Provisional Constitution, the same procedure would be followed from then on. "The nation's basic legal codes and statutes," he declared, "are basically already set. From now on, [we will] observe established practices (*xun tu shou zhe* 循途守轍)." All the young nation's new governing bodies, Yuan claimed, would operate under this institutionalized political process, with the President and various government bodies "naturally obligated to represent the whole of the people."³⁵

The Provisional Constitutional Congress echoed Yuan's sentiments in a proclamation issued to mark the adjournment of their session, and expounded upon their "great accomplishments" in stabilizing China in the wake of the upheavals of the Second Revolution. The young Republic had been in dire straits, the statement claimed, and public sentiment was apprehensive and suspicious. If one traced this "disaster" to its source, the previous Temporary Constitution of the Republic of China (*Zhonghua minguo linshi yuefa* 中華民國臨時約法) of 1911, associated with Yuan's contemporary political

³⁵ Zhengfu gongbao, "Beijing zhengfu yi yuefa huiyi ding san yue shiba ri bihui, te yu xuangao, xian shi wenzhi [The Beijing government, regarding the Provisional Constitutional Congress deciding to adjourn on March 18th, especially gives a declaration, making all informed]," 14 March 1915, vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, 255.

adversaries, the KMT, was surely a crucial step on the road to ruin. With the enactment of the new Provisional Constitution, however, the people once again had hope. With the formal convening of the National Assembly and Legislative Yuan on the immediate horizon, the nation was surely headed toward a stable and prosperous future.³⁶

Importantly, Sun Yuyun's remarks at the closing ceremony set the tone for later rhetorical features of the monarchical attempt. All the essential differences between the Temporary and Provisional Constitutions, he claimed, were rooted in the acknowledgement (in the latter document) of China's history and "national conditions *guoqing* 國情." "[When] speaking of creating laws," he argued, "[one] must hope [that the laws] are suitable [to]...political history and national conditions. This is something that is not disputed in China or abroad." The authors of the previous constitution, it was argued, more motivated by greed and partisan favoritism than political realities, had brought disorder to the nation. Now, just as President Washington had for the United States at Philadelphia, President Yuan would bring order, strength, and prosperity to China through constitutional government.³⁷

Thus, Yuan and his supporters in the Provisional Constitutional Congress formally completed the institutional foundation for the monarchical attempt, and formalized the language of adjusting the state system to *guoqing* that would later become a central feature of constitutional monarchist rhetoric. The most prominent of these

³⁶ Zhengfu gongbao, "Beijing zhengfu yuyong zhi yuefa huiyi bimu [Beijing government's Provisional Constitutional Congress adjourns]," 18 March 1915, vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, 265-267.

³⁷ Ibid. Sun's remarks clearly indicate that the rhetoric of national conditions pervaded Chinese political discourse prior to the Frank J. Goodnow's essay published in support of constitutional monarchy, in which he made similar claims. The issue of national conditions will be addressed in greater detail in chapter two.

institutions was the Advisory Yuan, which, as we will see, also assumed the constitutional authority of the Legislative Yuan.

The Advisory Yuan and The Legislative Yuan

According to the Provisional Constitution, the President was advised on the exercise of administrative authority by the Advisory Yuan. Established in May 1914, this governmental body, in addition to providing political guidance to the president, was also vested by article fifty-nine of the Provisional Constitution with the authority to draft a permanent constitution (a process that began in July 1915, but was never completed).³⁸

Li Yuanhong 黎元洪 (1864-1928) acted as the Advisory Yuan's chairman from its establishment until December 1915, when he was replaced by Pulun 溥伦 (1874-1927).³⁹

³⁸ Zhengfu gongbao, "Beijing zhengfu shenling Canzheng yuan tuixuan weiyuan, zuzhi xianfa qicao weiyuanhui, yi li jinxing [The Beijing government announces the Advisory Yuan's election of committee members, forms a constitution-drafting committee, in order to assist the progress [of drafting a constitution]]," 1 July 1915, vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, 547; Six days after the announcement of their intention to form the committee in accordance with the Provisional Constitution, the Advisory Yuan announced the selection of a ten-member constitutional drafting committee, including Liang Qichao, as well as future Peace Planning Society members Yan Fu and Yang Du. Liang "attended two or three meetings," and afterwards elected to simply receive reports of the progress, feigning illness. He was likely already suspicious of Yuan Shikai's intentions after an earlier meeting on June 22nd, when Liang and Feng Guozhang confronted Yuan regarding rumors of his monarchical ambitions. Stories of that encounter was later reported in the newspaper *Shenbao*. Unlike Feng, Liang was not convinced by Yuan's noncommittal, self-deprecating denial of the allegations. Zhengfu gongbao, "Beijing zhengfu Canzheng yuan tuixuan Li Jiaju, Wang Rongbao, Da Shou, Liang Qichao, Shi Yu, Yang Du, Yan Fu, Ma Liang, Wang Shicheng, Zeng Yijin wei xianfa qicao weiyuan [The Beijing government's Advisory Yuan elects Li Jiaju, Wang Rongbao, Da Shou, Liang Qichao, Shi Yu, Yang Du, Yan Fu, Ma Liang, Wang Shicheng, and Zeng Yijin as constitution-drafting committee members]," 7 July 1915, vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, 558; *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui* ed., "Feng Guozhang zai jing wei dizhi yindong piyao [Feng Guozhang refutes the rumors of the monarchical movement in Beijing]," 6 July 1915, vol. 1915 in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, 556.

³⁹ Li Yuanhong, perhaps doubting the monarchical attempt's chances for success, or objecting to it on principle, resigned as Chairman of the Advisory Yuan, and was replaced by Pulun, a Manchu prince of the Aisin Gioro clan (the Qing imperial family), and the Bordered Red Banner. In what may have been a *quid pro quo*, the Beijing government announced the very same day that the articles of "favorable treatment" for the Qing court, enacted at the founding of the Republic in 1912, would never change. Zhengfu gongbao, "Beijing zhengfu teren Pulun wei Canzheng yuan yuanzhang [The Beijing government specially appoints

Importantly, the Advisory Yuan, in accordance with the regulations of the Provisional Constitution, also served in the capacity of the Legislative Yuan throughout the monarchical attempt, since the latter had yet to be formally convened.⁴⁰ However, due to the failure of the monarchical attempt and Yuan's sudden death in June 1916, an independent Legislative Yuan was ultimately never convened. Thus, the Advisory Yuan fulfilled a dual role in the institutional infrastructure of Yuan Shikai's monarchical attempt.

On August 31, 1915, the Beijing government began to pursue the Peace Planning Society's recommendation of altering the state system to constitutional monarchy in earnest.⁴¹ That day, the government firmly restated the Advisory Yuan's constitutionally mandated prerogative to assume the authority of the Legislative Yuan while the latter body was not yet established. Conveniently, the Provisional Constitution also stipulated September 1st as the first day of the Legislative Yuan's annual session, a date that coincided perfectly with the simultaneous progress of the monarchical movement.⁴²

After convening, in the capacity of the Legislative Yuan (*daixing Lifa yuan* 代行立法院) on September 1st, the Advisory Yuan received the petitions of signatories from various provinces requesting the adoption of constitutional monarchy as the state system. In the

Pulun as chairman of the Advisory Yuan];” Zhengfu gongbao, “Beijing zhengfu chongshen Qingshi youdai tiaojian, yong bu biangeng [The Beijing government reiterates that the articles of favorable treatment of the Qing court will never change],” 16 December, 1915, vol. 1915 in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, 927-928.

⁴⁰ Zhengfu gongbao, “Beijing zhengfu ling Canzheng yuan daixing Lifa yuan zhiquan [The Beijing government announces the Advisory Yuan's assumption of the Legislative Yuan's authority],” 31 August 1915, vol. 1915 in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, 652.

⁴¹ For information on the Peace Planning Society's formation and recommendations, see the historical narrative of the monarchical attempt in the introduction, or the final substantive section of this chapter.

⁴² Zhengfu gongbao, “Beijing zhengfu ling Canzheng yuan daixing Lifa yuan zhiquan [The Beijing government announces the Advisory Yuan's assumption of the Legislative Yuan's authority],” 31 August 1915, vol. 1915 in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, 652.

government proclamation announcing the formal reception of the petitions, we may also observe the conspicuous use of the institutionalized language of the movement, especially the claim that republican democracy was “incompatible with China’s national character.”⁴³ With the dual jurisdiction of the Advisory Yuan clearly established by its reception of petitions in the capacity of the Legislative Yuan, this governmental organ was set to play a crucial role in the institutional foundation of the monarchical attempt.

One of the Advisory Yuan’s essential functions was, of course, to advise the President, engaging in constructive dialogue over national affairs. As noted above, after receiving the recommendation of the Peace Planning Society, various citizens and citizen organizations (*gongmin tuanti* 公民團體) supportive of Yuan Shikai’s monarchical attempt petitioned the Advisory Yuan to investigate the possible alteration of the state system, *gai guoti* 改國體. In response to these inquiries, likely a part of his choreographed tactic of publicly professing his doubts regarding monarchy prior to his eventual assumption of the throne, Yuan Shikai dispatched his deputy, Yang Shiqi 楊士琦 (1862-1918), to express his views on the state system question to the Advisory Yuan on September 6th.⁴⁴

In addition to espousing populist rhetoric, Yuan’s statement presented to the Advisory Yuan by Yang Shiqi also emphasized the procedural institutional, non-arbitrary

⁴³ Zhengfu gongbao, “Beijing zhengfu Canzheng yuan daixing Lifa yuan kaihui [The Beijing government’s Advisory Yuan convenes in the capacity of the Legislative Yuan],” 1 September 1915, vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, 655.

⁴⁴ Zhengfu gongbao, “Beijing zhengfu qianpai Yang Shiqi zhi Canzheng yuan, xuanbu duiyu biangeng guoti zhi yijian [The Beijing government dispatches Yang Shiqi to the Advisory Yuan to declare [Yuan Shikai’s] stance on the alteration of the state system],” 6 September 1915, vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, 682-683.

foundation of his decision-making process.⁴⁵ “Furthermore,” he stated, “the Legislative Yuan is an independent institution; all along, it has received no outside impediments *waijie qianche* 外界牽掣.” Indeed, the President “should not advocate anything [regarding his opinion on the state system issue] to the people, and should not express anything to the Legislative Yuan.” Altering the state system was, of course, a matter of foremost gravity in governance, a process with “multifarious ins and outs *jingwei wanduan* 經緯萬端.” Although the Chinese people (to whom Yuan was supposedly beholden) had the nation’s best interests at heart, a theme to which Yuan would later return after his assumption of the throne, he reminded the members of the Advisory Yuan, the time was not right to alter the state system, and the current state system had to be upheld. For the time being, then, he rejected the “demands” that he assume the title of emperor.⁴⁶

Of course, the movement continued to gather steam despite Yuan Shikai’s display of trepidation. As he had reminded the members of the Advisory Yuan, altering the state system was a matter of the utmost seriousness, and could not be pursued lightly. Thus, the Advisory Yuan took the necessary steps to demonstrate wide-ranging public support for the monarchical attempt.

⁴⁵ The fashion in which the institutional foundation of the monarchical attempt was laid is significant. For example, the Advisory Yuan did not assume the authority of the Legislative Yuan simply because Yuan Shikai wished it to do so. That prerogative was clearly provided for by the Provisional Constitution of 1914. Also, rather than convening the National Assembly ahead of schedule in violation of constitutional regulation, a special Plenary Session of National Assembly representatives was convened instead. Yuan and his supporters stressed the by-the-book procedure of these institutional processes.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

The sponsors and signatories of the petitions to adopt constitutional monarchy included religious societies, educational societies, chambers of commerce, as well as representatives of the Republic of China's officially recognized ethnic minority groups, including the Manchu Banners. In response to the petitions, the Advisory Yuan initiated a dialogue with the executive. On September 26th, the Advisory Yuan recommended that President Yuan convene the National Assembly months ahead of schedule (within the year) as an "appropriate method of verifying public opinion" regarding constitutional monarchy.⁴⁷

The President's reply to the Advisory Yuan's inquiry regarding the petition movement again appeared to urge caution. If one referenced the Provisional Constitution, the President reminded the members of the Advisory Yuan, one would find that final approval of any constitutional amendments fell to the National Assembly. Thus, the Advisory Yuan was correct in assuming that any efforts to alter the state system were obliged to proceed through that institution. Elections for National Assembly representatives were not scheduled to take place until November, making a formal 1915 convention impractical. To advance the date of these provincial elections for National Assembly representatives, the President pointed out, the Advisory Yuan had to proceed through the special bureau tasked with organizing the National Assembly.⁴⁸ Seeking to avoid breaking constitutional regulations regarding the official convention of the National

⁴⁷ Zhengfu gongbao, "Beijing zhengfu Canzheng yuan daixing Lifa yuan, ju ge difang renmin tuanti qingyuan biangeng guoti, ziqing zhengfu zhaoji guomin huiyi [The Beijing government's Advisory Yuan, acting in the capacity of the Legislative Yuan, requests that the government convene the National Assembly in response to the petitions of citizen organizations from various areas to alter the state system]," 26 September 1915, vol. 1915 in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, 718-721.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Assembly, Yuan convened a special plenary session of the National Assembly representatives mere days after their election, to cast votes on the state system question.⁴⁹

Following the unanimous approval of the Plenary Session of National Assembly Representatives, which will be discussed in greater detail in the next section, the Advisory Yuan formally recommended that President Yuan assume the title of emperor of the new constitutional monarchy on December 11th, 1915. In the name of all the provinces, as well as ethnic and religious groups, that comprised China (*Zhonghua* 中華), the Advisory Yuan hoped that President Yuan, who had worked since the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1912 to bring peace and stability to the “anxious” Chinese people, would claim the title of Emperor of the Empire of China.⁵⁰ Thus, the Advisory Yuan, including its action in the capacity of the Legislative Yuan, acted as the primary administrative tool utilized by Yuan throughout the monarchical attempt. Also essential, however, was the air of popular participation offered by the representatives of the National Assembly.

An Air of Popular Participation: The National Assembly and the Plenary Session of National Assembly Representatives

⁴⁹ The same provincial representatives elected to the National Assembly voted in the Plenary Session of the National Assembly Representatives, avoiding the red tape of an ahead-of-schedule convention of the National Assembly. See Deng Shujie 邓书杰, Li Mei 李梅, Wu Xiaoli 吴晓莉, Su Jihong 苏继红 ed., *Xinchao Yongdong* 新潮涌动 (1910-1919) (*Zhongguo lishi dashi xiangjie congshu* 中国历史大事详解丛书 2) (Jilin: Jilin yinxiang chubanshe 吉林音像出版社: 2013), 405.

⁵⁰ Zhengfu gongbao, “Beijing zhengfu Canzheng yuan daixing Lifa yuan, ju ge difang renmin tuanti qingyuan biangeng guoti, ziqing zhengfu zhaoji guomin huiyi [The Beijing government’s Advisory Yuan, acting in the capacity of the Legislative Yuan, requests that the government convene the National Assembly in response to the petitions of citizen organizations from various areas to alter the state system],” 26 September 1915, 718-721.

According to the Provisional Constitution of the Republic of China, a draft constitution, after passing through the ten-member committee formed by the Advisory Yuan, required the approval of the National Assembly. The National Assembly was intended as a representative body convened independently of the bicameral legislature comprised of the Advisory and Legislative Yuans. The National Assembly, especially its derivative Plenary Session of National Representatives, found great utility during the monarchical attempt. In addition to its authority to review draft constitutions, Yuan Shikai and his supporters argued that holding a vote on the “state system issue” (*guoti wenti* 國體問題) in the National Assembly was the only effective way to “ascertain public sentiment.”⁵¹ Hence, efforts to adopt constitutional monarchy as the state system were obliged to proceed through this body. Had the monarchical attempt not ended abruptly in early 1916, we may presume that the formally convened National Assembly would have institutionalized Yuan’s monarchy in a formal constitutional document.

Originally, the Advisory Yuan had requested that the President formally convene the National Assembly ahead of schedule, in late 1915 rather than early 1916. However, due to procedural complexities, President Yuan and his supporters in the Advisory Yuan decided to convene a special Plenary Session of National Assembly Representatives in early November after the National Assembly elections. It was to be composed of the provincial representatives elected to the National Assembly in November, and was convened for the express purpose of resolving the state system issue. The organization of

⁵¹ Ibid.

this session was handled by the same bureau tasked with the formation of the National Assembly.⁵²

In early November 1915, Gu Ao (formerly of the Provisional Constitutional Congress), as chairman of the bureau charged with organizing the National Assembly, communicated with provincial officials regarding the upcoming representative elections for the National Assembly. In addition to confirming the dates of upcoming representative elections in each province, it was also decided that the elected provincial representatives, would cast votes to decide the “state system issue” in a special plenary session only days after their election.⁵³

It was reported on November 8th that provincial representatives had voted unanimously to approve the adoption of constitutional monarchy as the state system.⁵⁴ This recommendation was forwarded to the Advisory Yuan, which subsequently lodged an official recommendation for President Yuan to assume the throne, finally bringing the monarchical attempt to fruition. At this point, few had any reservations about the intentions of Yuan’s supporters, and lines in the sand began to form. Only three days after the announcement of the unanimous approval of constitutional monarchy by the

⁵² Zhengfu gongbao, “Beijing zhengfu xuanbu guomin daibiao dahui chengli, bing gongbu qi zuzhifa [The Beijing government announces the establishment of the Plenary Session of the National Assembly representatives, and its organizational methods],” 8 November 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, 773-774.

⁵³ Zhengfu gongbao, “Zhili deng sheng jubian suowei guomin daibiao xuanju, bing dingqi jueding guoti toupiao [Zhili and other provinces hold so-called National Assembly elections, and set date for vote on state system],” 1 November 1915, vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, 833.

⁵⁴ Zhengfu gongbao, “Beijing zhengfu choubei guomin dahui shiwu banli guomin huiyi shiwuju, tonggao ge shengqu yifa juxing jueding guoti toupiao piaoshu [The Beijing government’s bureau for the preparation of the Plenary Session of National Assembly Representatives and the National Assembly, announces the poll counts for the lawful elections to decide the state system in each province],” 8 December 1915, vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, 850-851.

provincial representatives, on November 11th, Cai E resigned from his position in the Beijing government, and left the capital.⁵⁵ Ten days later, Liang Qichao followed suit.⁵⁶

In a demonstration of humility that had a long precedent in Chinese culture, President Yuan refused the initial offers of imperial power, insisting that, for the time being, he would “maintain his original title, and continue at his current post.”⁵⁷ After receiving two petitions from the Advisory Yuan at the behest of the national representatives, Yuan finally proclaimed his acceptance of the title of emperor on December 12th, 1915.⁵⁸

An Academic Touch: The Peace Planning Society

One of the main arguments of this thesis is that the politics of Yuan’s monarchical attempt was influenced by Transformation Period politico-cultural discourses rather than imperial tradition or Confucian orthodoxy. A closer examination of the political background of one of the more prominent members of the Peace Planning Society will

⁵⁵ Cai E, who later became a central figure in the resistance movement against Yuan’s monarchical attempt, feigned illness to leave Beijing without raising suspicion. He initially travelled to the Japanese concession in Tianjin, then to Japan (ostensibly for treatment), from whence he fled to Hong Kong, and finally on to Yunnan, the center of anti-Yuan resistance. Zhengfu gongbao, “Beijing zhengfu jingjie ju duban Cai E, qi zhi li jing [The Beijing government’s land affairs bureau superintendent Cai E resigns his position and leaves Beijing],” 11 November, vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, 856-858.

⁵⁶ Zhongfu gongbao, “Canzheng Liang Qichao chengqing cizhi, Beijing zhengfu gei jia liang yue [Advisory Yuan member Liang Qichao requests to resign, the Beijing government grants two months leave],” 21 November 1915, vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, 877-878.

⁵⁷ Zhengfu gongbao, “Dizhi yuyong jiguan guomin daibio dahui, tou piao jueding junzhu lixian, yizhi tuidai Yuan Shikai wei huangdi, Shikai yang que zhi [The Plenary Session of National Assembly Representatives casts votes deciding on constitutional monarchy, unanimously recommends that Yuan Shikai become emperor, Yuan Shikai feigns rejection],” vol. 1915 in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, 907-909.

⁵⁸ Zhengfu gongbao, “Yuan Shikai jing dizhi yuyong jiguan Canzheng yuan daixing Lifa Yuan er du tuidai, jieshou diwei bing tongdian quanguo zhouzhi [Yuan Shikai, via the second recommendation of the Advisory Yuan acting in the capacity of the Legislative Yuan, accepts the position of emperor, telegrams the entire nation to make it known to all],” 12 December 1915, vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, 911-917.

allow us to illustrate this process more clearly by connecting this organization with contemporary efforts to reform China's political culture. Ernest Young's observations in this regard are particularly relevant. "They were not," he said of Yuan's core supporters, "the most traditionally oriented or the oldest. Several had spent time abroad. They were generally under fifty years of age."⁵⁹ Yang Du's political career presents a particularly interesting case.

Yuan's most articulate (and maligned) supporters were Yang Du and his colleagues in the Peace Planning Society. The Peace Planning Society, formed in mid-August 1915, was a political study society comprised of "six leading gentry figures," ostensibly in order to determine which state system best suited China's needs.⁶⁰ The Society, in addition to adding a veneer of academic objectivity and erudition to Yuan's monarchical attempt, was also responsible for drumming up local support for the movement in the provinces and overseas, with offices in both China and Japan.⁶¹ The official recommendation of the Peace Planning Society, which referenced the prominent American political scientist and advisor to President Yuan, Frank J. Goodnow's, essay espousing the necessity of the adoption of a monarchical system in China, was touted by the Advisory Yuan in its petition to Yuan Shikai requesting his assumption of the throne.

⁵⁹ Young, *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k'ai*, 224.

⁶⁰ McCord, *The Power of the Gun*, 199.

⁶¹ The Peace Planning Society's efforts were not well-received in Tokyo, traditionally a hotbed of Chinese revolutionary activity. On October 10th, 1915, the Tokyo branch office was attacked by anti-Yuan gunmen. Zhonghua minguo bianji weiyuanhui ed., "Chou'an Hui dongjing zhibu zhugan Jiang Shili, bei qiangji zhongshang [The Peace Planning Society's Tokyo branch office head Jiang Shili seriously injured in gun attack]," 10 October 1915, vol. 1915 in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, 800.

Why did Yuan choose to assemble his most articulate supporters to form the Peace Planning Society? The calculated utilization of the study-society institutional model to further his goals is significant when placed in context. A rapid proliferation of such organizations, whose names often contained the character *hui* 會 (a society, organization or association) began during the national crisis brought about by China's catastrophic defeat in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). They continued to grow in popularity throughout the Transformation Period. Such societies were characterized by a concern with a specific sociopolitical issue. In the case of the Peace Planning Society, the issue was the determination of the most appropriate state system for China based on its national characteristics. Study societies founded throughout the Transformation Period were devoted to a wide range of issues, from erotic fiction, to constitutional reform, opposition to foot-binding, and women's liberation. Importantly, they also reflected the new citizen's prerogative and duty to participate actively in deciding questions of national significance on a theoretical basis of political equality.⁶²

The founding members of the Peace Planning Society were Yang Du, Yan Fu 嚴復 (1853-1921), Sun Yuyun, Liu Shipai 劉師培 (1884-1919), Li Xiehe 李燮和 (1873-1927), and Hu Ying 胡瑛 (1884-1933). The Society's inaugural statement advocating constitutional monarchy and questioning the merits of Republican government provides us with insight into the nature of the organization. The Xinhai Revolution, it was

⁶² For a description of the growth of study societies in late Qing society, see Frank Dikotter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 38-39; Edward J.M. Rhoads, *Manchus and Han: Ethnic Relations and Political Power in Late Qing and Early Republican China, 1861-1928* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 87, 115, 159, 215, 267.

claimed, “merely removed ethnic barriers,” but did not pave the way for genuine political progress. In rashness and haste, revolutionaries had founded a republican government without considering its suitability to China’s national conditions. The statement argued that many nations, based on certain domestic factors, were not suited to liberal democracy. The nations of Central and South America, suffering from domestic instability, were presented as examples of what dangers the “politics of contestation”⁶³ may hold for nations unsuited to the party politics inherent in such systems. Thus, if China wanted to avoid the same fate after its own political revolution, it must carefully “consider the advantages and disadvantages of republicanism.”⁶⁴

Yang Du, the premier ideological backer of the monarchical attempt, was already “a veteran of several political movements” by 1915. He was *not*, however, as his continued refusal to renounce his participation in the monarchical attempt after Yuan Shikai’s death proves, a mere opportunist. A Hunan native, Yang, was only forty years old at the time of the monarchical attempt. Like many contemporary reformists and revolutionaries, he was educated abroad, in his case at Waseda University in Tokyo. He excelled in the “special examination” for the civil service in economics in 1903, and had associated with Liang Qichao during the Hundred Days Reform in 1898.⁶⁵

Prior to his 1907 return to China, Yang was based in Tokyo, and organized the Seminar on Constitutional Government (Xianzheng jiangxi hui 憲政講習會). By his

⁶³ Baker, “Politics and Public Opinion Under the Old Regime,” 213-214.

⁶⁴ Zhengfu gongbao, “Yang Du, Sun Yuyun, Yan Fu, Liu Shiwei, Li Xiehe, Hu Ying deng liu ren, zai Beijing faqi Chou’an hui, wei Yuan Shikai tuidong dizhi [Yang Du, Sun Yuyun, Yan Fu, and Liu Shiwei found the Peace Planning Society in Beijing to support the monarchical system for Yuan Shikai],” 13 August 1915, 616-617.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 222-223.

own assessment, his political beliefs were closely in line with the periodical *Great Harmony Journal* 大同報, a publication that advocated liberal reform of the Qing government.⁶⁶ As he would later reemphasize in his polemical essay “Constitutional Monarchy to Save the Nation *Junxian jiu guo lun* 君憲救國論,” to be discussed in greater detail in chapter two, Yang felt that a constitutional monarchical government informed by public sentiment via representative institutions was the only solution to despotism.⁶⁷

Yang’s seminar, renamed the Association for Constitutional Government (Xianzheng gonghui 憲政公會) in 1907, was only one of a multitude of politically oriented associations and societies that emerged during the Transformation Period.⁶⁸ Many of these organizations still held out hope for ameliorating the crisis that gripped the dynasty, and were reformists rather than revolutionaries. The Qing Empress Dowager, Cixi 慈禧 (1835-1908), attempted unsuccessfully to crack down on the political agitations of these groups, which she viewed as inappropriate “meddling in national affairs.” When simple coercion failed, Cixi opted for a carrot and stick approach. The more egregious offenders, especially those associated with Liang Qichao, the architect of the Hundred Days Reform and political adversary of Cixi, were ordered arrested and their organizations disbanded. At the same time, she also appointed Yang Du to a government

⁶⁶ *Great Harmony Journal* (Datong bao) began publication in Tokyo in 1907 and ceased publication in 1908. In contrast to other contemporary reformist journals, *Great Harmony Journal* was published by Manchus dedicated to enacting constitutional government and examining Manchu-Han relations. Rhoads, *Manchus and Han*, 114.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 115, 127.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

post, and nominally yielded to some reformist demands in late December 1907.⁶⁹ When anti-Manchu discontent finally boiled over during the Xinhai Revolution, by which time he “had become a trusted member of Yuan’s political entourage,” Yang participated in Yuan’s mediation between the Qing and revolutionary camps.⁷⁰

In January 1912, when it was clear the Qing Dynasty would not survive the Xinhai Revolution, Yang agitated for republicanism by forming the Society for the Advancement of Republicanism (Gonghe cuijin hui 共和促進會).⁷¹ After the success of the revolution, Yang held no important positions in the new Republican government, and appears to have stayed out of the spotlight until emerging as Yuan Shikai’s most articulate supporter and publishing his famous polemical essay in support of constitutional monarchy. After the failure of the monarchical attempt, Yang refused to renounce his participation in the movement.⁷² He later joined the Guomindang in 1922, and finally the Chinese Communist Party in 1929 before his death in 1931.

Yang’s drastic shifts in political alignment are not easily explained, but such departures from previously articulated beliefs were by no means uncommon during the late Qing and Republican eras. During this era of rapid change, innovative ideas proliferated widely and found many adherents. Commitment to any single sociopolitical ideology, however, was often ephemeral. An individual might switch political parties often, or claim membership in several parties simultaneously.⁷³

⁶⁹ Ibid., 128-129.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 207.

⁷¹ Rhoads, *Manchus and Han*, 222.

⁷² Young, *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k'ai*, 222-223.

⁷³ During the early Republican period, there existed at least 300 “political groups” and almost 700 “public organizations,” mostly concentrated in urban areas. Considering that China had only recently emerged

Conclusions

The monarchical attempt, rather than a historical aberration, should be viewed as one of several competing visions for reform of China's political culture during the Transformation Period. The institutional foundation laid out in this chapter, composed of the Provisional Constitutional Congress, the Advisory/Legislative Yuan, and National Assembly and National Assembly Representative General Assembly, and the Peace Planning Society, demonstrates that Yuan's monarchical attempt should be viewed as a development of late-Qing reform efforts rather than a return to "imperial tradition."⁷⁴

The Advisory Yuan, its procedures emphasized by all parties, made a point of communicating directly with private citizen groups and political, religious, and ethnic organizations. In keeping with early Republican developments in political culture, these organizations sought to publicly express their views on national affairs. These recommendations were then transmitted directly to President Yuan, who, in cooperation with the Advisory Yuan, ordered the elected representatives of the National Assembly to convene a special plenary session. The Peace Planning Society, in the tradition of previous Transformation Period study societies aimed at important sociopolitical issues, offered a scholarly, progressive air to the movement. Yuan's supporters sought to give the appearance of communicating with the people on a basis of citizenship-based political equality.

from the late imperial period, these figures are striking. According to David Strand, the Nationalist leader Huang Xing 黃興 (1874-1916), for example, was at one time a member of eleven political parties. Although Yuan cracked down on organizations that opposed him, such as the KMT, he and his supporters certainly recognized the usefulness and popularity of the study society institutional model. Strand, *An Unfinished Republic*, 147-150.

⁷⁴ Chen, *Yuan Shih-k'ai*, 166.

My aim here is not to claim that Yuan's monarchical attempt was genuinely democratic; indeed, Yuan Shikai, like subsequent Chinese political leaders, relied on authoritarian methods either to suppress their domestic competitors or force their cooperation. His election on November 8th, 1915 was, as Young noted, likely "blatantly rigged."⁷⁵ Qualitative judgements of Yuan's reign, however, are not valuable for the purposes of the present study; our purpose is to examine the issue at hand for its own sake, thereby improving our understanding of historical political culture. Our analysis of these institutional foundations, which bore hallmarks of late-Qing reformism and republican political ethics, helps us to historicize the monarchical attempt as part of an ongoing struggle to reform China's political culture along constitutional lines. If these institutions represented the form of the monarchical attempt, though, then what of its content? Having examined the institutions that enacted the monarchical attempt, we now turn to a close textual analysis of their concomitant political rhetoric.

⁷⁵ Young, *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k'ai*, 215.

Chapter 2: The Rhetorical Foundation of the Monarchical Attempt

Not unaware of the inherent irony of violating the principles he had sworn to uphold as President of the Republic of China, Yuan Shikai and his supporters posited various ethical justifications for their controversial agenda. Repurposing concepts laden with classical authority and normative authority, such as *yulun* 輿論, *renxin* 人心, and *minxin* 民心,⁷⁶ Yang Du and Yuan Shikai argued that Yuan's right to become emperor derived from the support of public opinion and sentiment, not simply cosmological authority.

I have translated *renxin* and *minxin* as public sentiment. By acknowledging the normative capacity of public opinion, he was influenced more by late-Qing reformism and republican political culture than by orthodox Confucianist sources of monarchical authority.⁷⁷ During the late Qing, reformist journalists of the *Shibao* 時報 newspaper postulated public opinion, interpreted by the press, as a method of holding the Qing government accountable.⁷⁸ Unlike from previous journalists and reformist officials,

⁷⁶ Yang Du, "Yang Du fabiao junxian jiu guo lun, guchui dizhi [Yang Du publishes 'constitutional monarchy to save the nation,' advocates a monarchical system]," 13 August 1915, vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui, ed. (Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin, 1952), 630-640; Yuan Shikai, "Yuan Shikai yanling chafang geming fenzi zunao dizhi [Yuan Shikai issues strict orders to investigate revolutionaries' obstruction of the monarchy]," 13 December 1915, vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, 919.

⁷⁷ Traditionally, imperial authority had been based on cosmological kingship in harmony with Heaven. See Yuri Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire: Chinese Political Thought of the Warring States Era* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009), 46-47.

⁷⁸ Joan Judge, *Print and Politics: 'Shibao' and the Culture of Reform in Late Qing China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996) 68-69.

however, Yuan developed the relationship between citizen and state further, and claimed the ability to tap directly into the currents sentiment. Thus, public sentiment, like public opinion, represented the people's wishes. A political leader is obliged to abide by public sentiment, and his actions may be measured against it. Unlike public opinion, however, public sentiment was directly interpreted by the leader, not the press.

By focusing on a close textual analysis of political rhetoric in government proclamations, polemical essays, and periodicals addressing Yuan's monarchical attempt, this chapter will reveal the essential nuances of Yuan's understanding of political ethics. Yuan emphasized populism and citizenship-based political equality, which set his rhetoric apart from imperial tradition.

In this chapter, we will discuss general and specific conceptualizations of "public opinion" in previous historical scholarship on Old Regime France and early twentieth century China. Then, we will examine the function of public opinion and sentiment within the rhetoric of Yuan and his supporters, contextualizing it within a transformational process that began during the late Qing. Finally, we will examine contemporary responses to Yuan's rhetoric to illustrate a more complete picture of the discourse of public opinion and sentiment. Previous scholarship, while providing us with the necessary tools to conceptualize public opinion as a rhetorical construct, excludes Yuan's reign from the periodization of their analyses. Hence, it is hoped that this chapter will expand our understanding of the function of public opinion during the Transformation Period in general.

Conceptualizing Public Opinion

To provide a theoretical basis for our analysis, we will now turn to a discussion of some general and specific conceptualizations of public opinion. In *Public Passions: The Trial of Shi Jianqiao and the Rise of Popular Sympathy in Republican China*, Eugenia Lean has argued that the concept of “public opinion” was ascendant during the early Republican period. Lean also claimed that publics need not only be understood in only sociological and spatial terms, and that they may be understood “less in terms of place, and more in terms of process and practice.”⁷⁹ In making this argument, she echoed the recent work of Keith Michael Baker, claiming that publics “should be understood in their normative capacities,” not just their spatial ones, and “should be understood as ‘imagined authorities,’” rather than simply sociological phenomena.⁸⁰

Baker’s analysis of the development of the concepts of publics and public opinion during the twilight of the Old Regime is instructive for our purposes as well, and will assist us in forming a general definition of public opinion. Departing from previous assumptions in social science scholarship, Baker claims “we should resist the temptation to understand ‘the public’ simply in sociological terms.” Rather than a strictly spatial or sociocultural phenomenon, for Baker the “public” existed as an ill-defined conceptual feature of political rhetoric, a nebulous arbiter of political disputes, and, perhaps most importantly, a new source of political legitimacy in Enlightenment-era Europe to which all political actors felt obliged appeal.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Lean, *Public Passions*, 6-11.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Baker, “Politics and Public Opinion Under the Old Regime,” 213-214.

According to Baker, both critics of absolutist government and ardent supporters of the French monarchy, who realized absolutism was no longer a tenable ideology in the late eighteenth century, pressed King Louis XVI to engage in this new “politics of contestation,” in which all parties engaged in domestic politics were obliged to appeal this powerful, if mysterious, new authority. “Having lost public support to the *parlements*,” Baker writes, “the government was now obliged to appropriate the ideological strategies of the opposition for its own purposes.”⁸² The public, then, is understood as an “imagined authority,” fulfilling a crucial normative role in domestic politics. “Public opinion,” in turn, is viewed as a normative force exerted by the public upon executive authority. By voluntarily channeling the pressures of public opinion into a constructive, normative force, a polity may avoid the political chaos inherent in excessive democracy or the complete collapse of central authority. “Public opinion,” Baker argues, “functions as a mean between despotism and extreme liberty,” which guards against despotism, but “implies none of the divisions...of a completely free government.” Once these powerful new normative forces were released, all actors upon the political stage were obliged to take them into account.⁸³

The development of Chinese history during the late Qing bears some similarities to, as well as differences from, Baker’s description of French domestic politics on the eve of the 1789 French Revolution. In both cases, reformers sought to reign in the arbitrary power of monarchy by holding political leaders accountable for their actions in the court

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid., 244-246.

of public opinion. Similar sociopolitical and intellectual phenomena may be observed within the rhetoric of China's domestic politics during Yuan's restoration of monarchy. Like the monarchists of the Old Regime and late Qing periods, Yuan and his supporters argued that a monarchy informed and recognized by public opinion was an effective antidote to the excessive, anarchic democracy of republican systems. Thus, they appropriated the political strategies of late-Qing reformists, while also going a step farther by addressing public sentiment without journalistic go-betweens.⁸⁴ In all cases, a basically normative conceptualization of public opinion and sentiment is appropriate for our discussion of the late Qing and early Republican periods.

The concept of public opinion in late-Qing discourse, while possessing a politically normative capacity, also had uniquely Chinese features. As Joan Judge has pointed out, "theorizing public opinion by embedding it in a classical constellation of meanings was unique to China." In Europe, conversely, this aspect of theorization was lacking; unlike the French, late-Qing reformists located themselves within a unique Chinese historical tradition of "opposition to declining regimes that had lost their moral authority."⁸⁵ Thus, in addition to adhering to newly developed republican politico-cultural mores, public opinion and sentiment within Yuan's rhetoric was also loaded with positive Classical authority. Having provided a general definition of public opinion, we will now examine the concept within the historical context Transformation Period China.

⁸⁴ Yang, "Yang Du fabiao junxian jiu guo lun, guchui dizhi [Yang Du publishes 'constitutional monarchy to save the nation,' advocates a monarchical system]," 630-640.

⁸⁵ Judge, *Print and Politics*, 71.

Functions of Public Opinion and Sentiment in the Late Qing and Early Republican Context

Within an atmosphere of contradiction and contestation, the late-Qing reformists published their ideas. This “middle realm,” as Judge has described *Shibao*, of reformist politics was personified by reformist intellectuals, journalists, and publishers.⁸⁶

Intellectuals such as Liang Qichao occupied a middle ground between the “common people” and the Qing political elite, and claimed to interpret the will of the common people. These reformers crafted a composite rhetorical vocabulary, a synthesis of classical and Western influences. Classical Chinese terms such as *yulun* (public opinion), were retooled during the late Qing to introduce newly domesticated, Western-influenced concepts into Chinese political culture. This ancient concept, originally referring to the opinions of elite officials, was redefined as “the collective opinion of the common people.” It was hoped that by utilizing a term steeped in classical meaning, these concepts could be domesticated and made more palatable to the Chinese audience.⁸⁷

It was hoped that public opinion would exert a normative influence on Qing policy makers, encouraging much needed reforms and simultaneously serving as a vehicle for the introduction of innovative ideas. Although, as constitutional monarchists, they did not call for the outright overthrow of the Qing, the journalists attacked the dynasty’s heavy-handed statecraft and lack of attention to public opinion. The journalists, as the interlocutors of the middle realm, were entitled to interpret public opinion. For

⁸⁶ Ibid., 32-35.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 68-69.

example, when the Qing government borrowed capital from foreign governments for railway construction, the reformists deployed the concept of public opinion as part of their criticism.⁸⁸ Like the political actors of Old Regime France, the late-Qing reformists used and manipulated the concept of public opinion to suit their political agendas.

The response of the Qing government to the new principles of governance espoused by reformists was neither timely nor sincere enough to be effective; the dynasty was overthrown in 1911 after a series of failed reform efforts hamstrung by internal division. Following the Xinhai Revolution, however, the obligation of political leaders rhetorically to acknowledge the politically normative power of public opinion became entrenched in Chinese political culture; for the first time, politicians were obliged to interact with the masses on the basis of political equality, and “speak to them as if their opinions mattered.”⁸⁹

It should come as no surprise, then, that Yuan and his supporters, having witnessed the failure of the Qing, appropriated these powerful new concepts and politico-cultural mores into their own arsenal of rhetorical tactics. Indeed, Yang Du, Yuan’s chief supporter, had associated with Liang Qichao in previous reform movements.⁹⁰ In an ideological and rhetorical sense, Yuan and his supporters sought to answer the question posed by late-Qing reformists about what form a modern, progressive monarchy should take.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 70-71.

⁸⁹ Strand, *An Unfinished Republic*, 8.

⁹⁰ Young, *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k'ai*, 223.

Like the late-Qing reformists, Yuan's political rhetoric was syncretic, drawing on classical terminology, presumably to make seemingly radical reformist concepts and political agendas more palatable to their Chinese audience.⁹¹ As we will see, however, Yuan's usage of *renxin* and *minxin*, public sentiment, differed from public opinion. Though public sentiment possessed the same normative quality as public opinion, it differed by virtue of being interpreted directly by the leader rather than the press. Having established general and specific definitions of public opinion, and precedents for its usage as a rhetorical construct, we will now proceed to a close textual analysis of the political rhetoric of Yuan and his supporters.

The Constitutional Monarchist Rhetoric of Yuan Shikai and His Supporters

In a rhetorical sense, Yuan claimed to found his new government based on the wishes and needs of China's politically voiceless masses. Yuan was not necessarily dishonest in pointing out that most of the "intensely conservative and monarchical" Chinese people, for various reasons, did not understand or believe in republican ideals.⁹² The existence of a "inarticulate, politically inert majority"⁹³ was indeed possible in early Republican China, where the nature and even the existence of a public sphere is still debated by scholars.⁹⁴ In order to achieve his own ends, Yuan in fact may have believed

⁹¹ Yang, "Yang Du fabiao junxian jiu guo lun, guchui dizhi [Yang Du publishes 'constitutional monarchy to save the nation,' advocates a monarchical system]," 630-640; Yuan, "Yuan Shikai yanling chafang geming fenzi zunao dizhi [Yuan Shikai issues strict orders to investigate revolutionaries' obstruction of the monarchy]," 919.

⁹² Young, *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k'ai*, 214.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Lean, *Public Passions*, 5-8.

he could impose *any* opinions he wished upon the politically voiceless people.⁹⁵

Nonetheless, we may say, then, that it would be inappropriate in more ways than one to classify the Yuan Shikai's institution of monarchy as a mere continuation of imperial tradition. Indeed, Yuan and his supporters used the phrase *gai guoti* 改國體, implying the change and transformation of the current state system, rather than restoration of a previous tradition.⁹⁶

Yuan's surrogate and prominent monarchist Yang Du, who was involved in reformist activities during the late Qing, published a lengthy polemic on August 13th, 1915.⁹⁷ Espousing the virtues of constitutional monarchy, the essay was originally published in *Asia* (*Yaxiya bao* 亞細亞報, 1912-1916), a newspaper widely considered the mouthpiece of Yuan's monarchist movement.⁹⁸

Constitutional monarchy, he claimed, was the only way to make China a "rich and powerful" nation, on par with contemporary Germany and Japan, and establish a strong constitution. If the nation was to be rich and powerful (*fuqiang* 富強), it must have a strong constitution to ensure stability and the longevity of government policies. For, if not, successive Republican leaders could simply undo the work of their predecessors on a whim, leading to shortsightedness in government. If the nation was to have a strong constitution, it had to rely on a monarch to restore domestic order before a constitution

⁹⁵ Young, *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k'ai*, 214.

⁹⁶ Yuan, "Yuan Shikai yanling chafang geming fenzi zunao dizhi [Yuan Shikai issues strict orders to investigate revolutionaries' obstruction of the monarchy]," 919.

⁹⁷ Yuan Shikai and Yang Du had been acquainted since at least 1907, when the former, along with Zhang Zhidong, personally recommended to Empress Dowager Cixi that the latter be appointed to a government post. Rhoads, *Manchus and Han*, 127.

⁹⁸ Chen, *Yuan Shih-k'ai*, 167.

could be ratified. Unlike France and America, two nations that Yang recognized as successful republics, China's people supposedly lacked the moral and intellectual "level of development *chengdu* 程度," to participate constructively in direct democracy. Yuan Shikai, whom Yang called only an unnamed "President" to maintain an air of objectivity, was the only person with the power to unite the country.⁹⁹

To make the notion of uniting the country by force more palatable at a time when many in China called for federalism and greater provincial autonomy,¹⁰⁰ Yang cited the Confucian philosopher Mengzi (372-289 BCE) to legitimize his stance on domestic politics. "Mengzi said of stabilizing the disorder of the Warring States," Yang claimed, "unite it [China] as one. When I speak of stabilizing China's [contemporary] disorder, I say unite it as one." By casting opposition to unification under a strong central government in the same light as the disparate polities of the Warring States period, Yang, like Yuan, called into question the patriotism of recalcitrant elements, implying that they sought personal power at the cost of national unity. Every election season, Yang claimed, the country would be thrown into chaos by the machinations of "*yexin zhe* 野心者" (ambitious people), who sought the fame of the presidency and delighted in disorder. Worse yet, once such disorder had begun, even good citizens will have no choice but to participate to protect their own interests in national politics. The "politics of

⁹⁹ Yang, "Yang Du fabiao junxian jiu guo lun, guchui dizhi [Yang Du publishes 'constitutional monarchy to save the nation,' advocates a monarchical system]," 630-640.

¹⁰⁰ McCord, *The Power of the Gun*, 161-165.

contestation,”¹⁰¹ supposedly inherent to republicanism, was cast as corrupting and counter-productive. It was, as Young has noted, an “ingenious and self-serving argument.”¹⁰²

Like contemporary reformists, Yang also simultaneously belittled and empowered the people.¹⁰³ Only by establishing a constitutional government could the head of state “account for public sentiment,” referred to here as *renxin*. When the Qing attempted to deceive the people with an insincere constitution, the Xinhai Revolution (which Yang appears to regret) resulted. Although the will of the people had to be accounted for, their supposed ignorance rendered them vulnerable to deception. “*Wo yumei zhi guomin* 我愚昧之國民,” “Our benighted people,” he claimed, were being deceived by politicians who sought to cling to the name of the Republic of China for their personal benefit, while it had already lost purchase in both domestic and international politics. While on the one hand stating that the people were not mature enough for direct democracy, on the other he stated that the monarch, in uniting the country and establishing a constitutional monarchy, acted at the behest of the people’s will. What the people wanted was not democracy, but unity and stability under a constitutional monarchy.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Baker, *Politics and Public Opinion Under the Old Regime*, 245; Yuan, “Yuan Shikai yanling chafang geming fenzi zunao dizhi [Yuan Shikai issues strict orders to investigate revolutionaries’ obstruction of the monarchy],” 919.

¹⁰² Young, *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k’ai*, 216.

¹⁰³ Joan Judge, “Publicists and Populists: Including the People in the Late Qing New Citizen Ideal,” in *Imagining the People: Chinese Intellectuals and the Concept of Citizenship, 1890-1920*, by Joshua A. Fogel and Peter G. Zarrow, ed. (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc. 1997), 165.

¹⁰⁴ Yang, “Yang Du fabiao junxian jiu guo lun, guchui dizhi [Yang Du publishes ‘constitutional monarchy to save the nation,’ advocates a monarchical system],” 630-640.

Herein lies the main difference between the narrowly conceived public opinion (*yulun*) of the late-Qing reformists, and the developed usage of Yuan Shikai's monarchical attempt. The implication was that, since the people were not mature enough to express themselves through Western-style liberal democracy, but their will must nonetheless be the driving force behind politics, a constitutionally bound monarch needed to take responsibility for enacting that will. Elite journalists were no longer necessary to interpret the will of the people.¹⁰⁵

In keeping with Yang's previous reference to Mengzi, the term *renxin* is also located in within the eponymous work *Mengzi*, one of the Four Books of Neo-Confucianism, specifically the chapter "Teng Wen Gong 滕文公." Like the *minxin* of Yuan Shikai's usage discussed in the introduction, *renxin* lacked the elite sociocultural connotations of *yulun*. As in Yuan's reckoning of public sentiment, Yang sees no need for a middle realm with a wise constitutional monarch upon the throne. When Yang Du uses the term *yulun*, it is in a slightly different context. "[The] trends of the world daily tend towards the new...so the support of public opinion within the nation must finally embrace all new people [and an] innovative sovereign."¹⁰⁶

On December 11th, 1915, after receiving the recommendation of the Peace Planning Society, Yuan's hastily convened a special Plenary Session of National Assembly Representatives held a vote regarding the proposed adoption of constitutional

¹⁰⁵ This sentiment echoes the opinions of American political scientist Frank J. Goodnow, an American political advisor to the Yuan government from 1913 to 1915, who infamously penned an essay describing China's inherent need for monarchy based on "the necessities of practical life." Young, *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k'ai*, 221.

¹⁰⁶ Yang, "Yang Du fabiao junxian jiu guo lun, guchui dizhi [Yang Du publishes 'constitutional monarchy to save the nation,' advocates a monarchical system]," 630-640.

monarchy (*junzhu lixian* 君主立憲) as China's new state system. Predictably, all 1,993 representatives voted unanimously in favor of the motion, and the motion was passed through the Advisory Yuan on the very same day with the help of members Yang Du and Sun Yuyun. A statement formally announcing the decision was quickly drafted and read aloud to the assembled members. Having been "urged by all the people of the nation, to securing the nation's essential foundations," to take the throne, the Senate recommended that Yuan Shikai, the "sagacious sovereign *shengzhu* 聖主", assume the title of emperor. The statement declared that Yuan had the complete backing of China's people, as well as the approval of various interest groups, such as the Mongolian, Hui, and Tibetan ethnic minorities, the Eight Banners, chambers of commerce, and overseas Chinese communities.¹⁰⁷

The statement detailed Yuan's rise to power in a flattering teleological narrative, treating his ascension as a *fait accompli* beginning from the political upheavals of the late Qing. "The Will of Heaven *tianming* 天命," it was stated, began to favor Yuan at the fall of the Qing, whereupon he delivered the nation from disorder. However, due to his great humility, Yuan "possessed [the ability to hold the title of emperor], but did not occupy [the post]." ¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Zhengfu gongbao, "Guomin daibiao quanti yizhi zancheng junzhu lixian, tuidai Yuan Shikai wei huangdi, Canzheng yuan yi zongdaibiao mingyi, shang tuidai shu quanjin [The National Assembly Representatives unanimously endorse constitutional monarchy, recommend that Yuan Shikai become emperor, the Advisory Yuan, in the capacity of general representatives, submit a letter of recommendation advising action]," 904-906.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. The original passage reads "有而弗居".

The statement went on to say that, when the Republican government of Nanjing proved unequal to the task, Yuan graciously assumed the office of Provisional President, whereupon he enjoyed the full backing of public sentiment. The people again supported him upon his assumption of the office of President in 1914. Finally, the people now wholeheartedly supported his ascension of the imperial throne, as evidenced by a clear show of support from the representative bodies. The statement also referenced the chapter “Marquis Lu on Punishments *Lu xing* 呂刑,” from the *Book of History* to lend support to these assertions. “The *Book of History* says the moral excellence of the sovereign is depended upon by the people...only by obeying heaven and abiding by [the wishes of] the people, therefore the people will follow and heaven will favor [us].”¹⁰⁹ Clearly, this statement suggested that the fortunes and desires of the common people are directly connected to the actions of the sovereign.

Further, by not immediately assuming the throne when he was favored by Heaven (and not yet, perhaps, the people), Yuan affirmed the primacy of public sentiment over Heaven’s Mandate (*tianming* 天命). This choice was indicative of Transformation Period changes in political ethics, in which rulers derived legitimacy from the approval of the people rather than Heaven. The increasing polarization of the will of the people and the will of Heaven within the context of “Confucian populism” will be further addressed in chapter three. For now, we note that Yuan’s rhetoric presented public sentiment as the driving force behind national politics; he did simply acknowledge the Mandate of Heaven, but awaited the approval of public sentiment.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

Two days later, on December 13th, Yuan issued a government bulletin to military and civilian officials throughout the country to “investigate revolutionaries interfering with the monarchy.” In this bulletin, Yuan too carefully detailed the process that led him to institute monarchical government in China. After the fall of the Qing, Yuan claimed, he assumed the office of President to “save the nation and people” as his only aim. Since then, the “entire nation wholeheartedly” beseeched him to assume the throne. Yuan was also careful to point out his moral conundrum at the idea of betraying his responsibilities as President. “In accordance with my former position,” he wrote, “I should have the responsibility of upholding the [Republican] state system...but the people would not forgive [my failure to take the throne].” He portrayed himself as torn between fulfilling his legal responsibility as President of the Republic of China, which would cause him to ignore the people’s demand for constitutional monarchy, and acknowledging public sentiment, which would amount to dereliction of his duties as President.¹¹⁰ In short, President Yuan believed himself to be caught between a rock and a hard place.

Though effectively admitting that his actions were technically illegal, Yuan argued that since the power of the government was ultimately derived from the will of the people, that will must be upheld regardless. To justify his illegal action, Yuan cited a passage from the *Book of History*, one of the Five Classics of Confucianism. “Heaven sees from what the people see, Heaven hears from what the people hear; Heaven must abide by that which the people desire....”¹¹¹ Since “heaven cannot be seen [by us],”

¹¹⁰ Yuan, “Yuan Shikai yanling chafang geming fenzi zunao dizhi [Yuan Shikai issues strict orders to investigate revolutionaries’ obstruction of the monarchy],” 919.

¹¹¹ Ibid. The original passage reads, “天視自我民視, 天聽自我民聽, 民之所欲, 天必從之.”

Yuan says, “[it is] seen in public sentiment.” Adherence to public sentiment, then, was not just sound politics, but the Will of Heaven itself. Since Heaven’s will was invisible to human beings, politics had first and foremost to be subordinate to public opinion and sentiment. Throughout, Yuan minimized his own agency, reminding us that, his having initially refused the title of emperor, the question was then decided by the Advisory Yuan. In the end, having seen the truth of public sentiment, he claimed, he was powerless to ignore it.¹¹²

Like late-Qing reformists, Yuan justified his political agenda by locating the rhetorical construct of public sentiment and opinion within a classical context. However, his terminology also differed from the late-Qing discourse. In addition to his reference to the *Book of History*, Yuan deployed the term *minxin* in this document, which I also translate as “public sentiment,” to express the will of the people in forcing his hand to accept the throne.¹¹³ One *locus classicus* of this term is the *Er jing fu* 二京賦, or *Rhapsody of Two Capitals* authored by Zhang Heng 張珩 (AD 78-139), a renowned official and polymath of the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD). This work was later included in the *Wen Xuan* (文選), or *Selections of Refined Literature*, an influential compilation of early Chinese literature and poetry widely read by educated people. Yuan continued the trend begun by late-Qing reformists by acknowledging the normative power of public opinion and sentiment, but surpassed them in establishing direct linkages between the state and the people to account for their will.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

Having discussed the rhetorical tactics of Yuan and his supporters, we are left with the question of the universality of acceptance of the normative function of public opinion and sentiment. Was the normative function of public opinion simply resurrected by Yuan in late 1915 opportunistically to serve his immediate interests? Regardless of whether it was interpreted by the head of state or reformist journalists, how widely was the regulatory power of public opinion accepted?

Wider Discourse of Public Opinion

During the monarchical attempt, how widely was the politically normative conception of public opinion and sentiment recognized? Yuan's opponents were, of course, quick to accuse him of "fabricating public opinion *weizao minyi* 偽造民意." One such claim, published in early 1916 in the Yunnan daily paper *Voice of Justice* (*Yisheng ribao* 義聲日報) came from Yuan's former supporter and erstwhile member of the Advisory Yuan, Liang Qichao. In this document, Liang recalled a public exchange between Yuan Shikai and his enemies in Yunnan.

"In the Yunnan military government's declaration of opposition to Yuan," Liang recalled, "there was [the accusation that] Yuan fabricated public opinion...." In a public response to that allegation, President Yuan highlighted the institutional procedures, driven entirely by public opinion and sentiment, that led to his "election" as emperor. "When I came [upon Yuan Shikai's reply to the accusations], I could not help but sigh," Liang said. Liang's recollection of the dialogue between Yuan Shikai and his enemies went on to expound upon how Yuan influenced this institutional process. Provincial

votes held to decide the state system, Liang claimed, were overseen by officials loyal to Yuan with orders to push the representatives to decide in favor of constitutional monarchy and tampered with the votes.¹¹⁴

Importantly, throughout his lengthy condemnation of Yuan's malfeasance, Liang does not question the capacity of public opinion, expressed through institutional processes, to exert a normative influence on politics; his complaint was that the institutions were disingenuous and the processes were rigged. Rather than the membership of those institutions, Liang claimed that his objections represent the true sentiments of the people. "Although I am not literarily refined," he stated with false humility, "my writing...can detail the sentiment of the people of the whole nation."¹¹⁵ Clearly, the general theoretical conception of public opinion and sentiment as a normative force, endorsed by both Yuan and his critics, was not at issue in the discourse of the monarchical attempt.

Conclusions

Considering our text-based discussion of political rhetoric during the monarchical attempt, we may draw several important conclusions. Yuan's rhetorical tactics were not simply a rehash of old-fashioned Qing imperial traditions. Rather, they were a product of their temporal context, and should be properly located within it. Like the late-Qing

¹¹⁴ Liang Qichao 梁啟超, "Yuan Shikai weizao minyi tiezheng shu hou [Documentation of concrete evidence that Yuan Shikai fabricated public opinion]," *Yisheng ribao huikan* 義聲日報匯刊, no. 1 (1916): 19, <http://www.cnbkcy.cn/search/detail/e2dc773b4bc513933982daac1d465f3b/7/4166893>.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 36.

reformists, Yuan and his supporters did not simply call for wide-ranging political reform, but actively courted contemporary developments in the rhetoric of political ethics. They located their agenda linguistically within a constellation of classical expressions that were familiar to their classically educated audience, retooling those expressions to serve innovative political ends. In a historical context where the accurate measurement of public opinion and sentiment would have proven impossible, analyzing the transformation of political rhetoric provides us with important insights into contemporary political culture.

By openly embracing the importance of public opinion and sentiment, perhaps the first head of state in the history of modern China to do so, Yuan made an important statement regarding China's changing political culture.¹¹⁶ The *Shibao* journalists had functioned as a middle realm between the people and the state during the late Qing, whose prerogative it was to interpret and give voice to public opinion.¹¹⁷ By engaging the people on a basis of political equality and acknowledging their political opinions, Yuan could undercut journalistic middlemen, and simultaneously achieve the stated goal of the late-Qing reformists who believed that state acknowledgement of public sentiment was an antidote to Qing absolutism.¹¹⁸

The usage of public sentiment (*renxin* and *minxin*) by Yuan and his supporters differed significantly from the narrowly conceived *yulun*, public opinion, of late-Qing

¹¹⁶ The Ming Dynasty 明朝 [1368-1644] founder Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 [1328-1398] is a notable exception to this statement.

¹¹⁷ Judge, *Print and Politics*, 32-33.

¹¹⁸ Lean, *Public Passion*, 5-6.

reformists. It needed not be distilled through a middle-realm from the people up to the head of state. After the Xinhai Revolution, it was the leader's prerogative, not the journalist's, to interpret the will of the people. Given Yuan's penchant for censorship of the press and other media, making the claim of personal knowledge of public opinion and sentiment was critical to early Republican statecraft.¹¹⁹

The concept of public sentiment represented the unarticulated wishes of China's silent majority, too immature to express themselves through Western-style liberal democracy, whom Yuan claimed were still "intensely conservative."¹²⁰ All of these terms, however, still served a rhetorical function, if not form, like that prescribed by our general definition of public opinion. That is, they represented the "imagined authority" of the people, and a standard against which political action was weighed and measured.¹²¹

Yuan hoped to embody the ideal monarch-that-never-was of the late-Qing as envisioned by the reformists, who saw a constitutional monarchy working in harmony with public opinion.¹²² Indeed, as Yang Du stated in his polemic, "there could be no logic in reverting from new to old." Constitutional monarchy was viewed as the progressive ideology of the future, having been recently adopted by Japan and Prussia to

¹¹⁹ Shi Fu "Zuijin zhi Yuan Shikai [The latest on Yuan Shikai]," *Minkou* 2, no. 10 (1915): 35-49, <http://www.cnbkysy.com/search/detail/5f914afee7c499a36ef72831ab120f4a/7/2129856>; Su Ya, "Yuan Shikai duinei zhengce [Yuan Shikai's domestic policies]," *Minguo* 1, no. 2 (1914): 1-9, <http://www.cnbkysy.com/search/detail/3e3c1a1f8322a25ac539112348d9029d/7/2129846>.

¹²⁰ Young, *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k'ai*, 213.

¹²¹ Baker, "Politics and Public Opinion Under the Old Regime," 246.

¹²² Judge, *Print and Politics*, 68-75.

wonderful effect.¹²³ If our goal is to historicize Yuan's politics, to classify it as an imitation of Qing imperial tradition, as Jerome Chen did, would be inaccurate.¹²⁴

Yuan's emphasis on the normative capacity of public opinion and political equality was indicative of a shift in Confucian political ethics from the previously prevailing orthodoxy. Monarchical authority no longer stemmed solely from religious, cosmological justifications. Rather, the people's consent was now as essential a precondition for political legitimacy as the approval of Heaven. To contextualize Yuan's political ethics within contemporary patterns of change during the Transformation Period, we now turn to a discussion of the religious underpinnings of the monarchical attempt.

¹²³ Yang, "Yang Du fabiao junxian jiu guo lun, guchui dizhi [Yang Du publishes 'constitutional monarchy to save the nation,' advocates a monarchical system]," 630-640.

¹²⁴ Chen, *Yuan Shih-k'ai*, 166-167.

Chapter 3: The Religious Foundation of the Monarchical Attempt

On December 1st, 1916, seven months after the death of Yuan Shikai, Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 (1879-1942), an educator, future revolutionary socialist, and founding member of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921, published an essay in *New Youth* (*Xin qingnian* 新青年) (1916-1926) attacking Confucianism as part of the New Culture Movement's wider assault against traditional culture. The essay was titled "Yuan Shikai Resurrected," *Yuan Shikai fuhuo* 袁世凱復活. "Recently," Chen exclaimed, "the Chinese and Western newspapers of Shanghai have abounded with rumors that Yuan Shikai is not dead." Although a great deal of loose talk passed through Shanghai, this hearsay required no intense scrutiny to confirm. "Every day," Chen explained, "my ears hear Yuan Shikai's speech. Every day, my eyes see Yuan Shikai's actions." The evil despot Yuan Shikai had only just died, and his reincarnations, the "muddleheaded Confucians *maoru* 瞽儒," were born at the very same moment. In schools, people once again read the Classics. Sacrifices were made at the Temple of Heaven. Like the original Yuan Shikai, these new Yuans were also "short, fat...[and] mustachioed." Worse yet, they "praise[d] Heaven and venerate[d] Confucius to deceive the people."¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀, "Yuan Shikai fuhuo [Yuan Shikai resurrected] 袁世凱復活," *New Youth* 2, no. 4 (1916): 22-24, <http://www.cnbkysy.cn/search/detail/dfb1bcabc6f1d214757d787a611fc22f/7/4166867>.

Chen Duxiu's unflattering usage of Yuan Shikai's legacy as a metaphor for the sociocultural conservatism he witnessed and sought to dismantle during the New Culture Movement, while anything but impartial, illustrated a crucial aspect of the monarchical attempt, its religious underpinnings. While Chen clearly associated Yuan with what he viewed as harmful, stifling tradition, he specifically chose religious symbolism in his attack on Yuan's character. Clearly, religious practices were, only months after the fact, for better or worse, considered a crucial aspect of the monarchical attempt. This chapter will illustrate the essential function of religion, especially Confucianism, in the monarchical attempt.

What role did religion play in Yuan Shikai's monarchical attempt, and why is this question relevant to our discussion? The question of the proper role of religion in a modern society was of paramount importance to the state-building efforts of the Transformation Period. If the KMT government of the Nanjing Decade (1927-1937) attempted to fully divorce politics from religion in favor of populism and party leadership, and historical imperial tradition privileged cosmological kingship,¹²⁶ the Confucian political ethics of Yuan Shikai's Constitutional monarchy was somewhere in between.

Yuan supported state-sponsored Confucian rituals, personally took part in religious rituals to honor Heaven, and endorsed sacrifices to the religious folk heroes Guan Yu 關羽 and Yue Fei 岳飛, all manifestations of orthodox religious symbolism, to be sure. Meanwhile, however, he and his supporters also emphasized the ability of a just

¹²⁶ Nedostup, *Superstitious Regimes*, 3-4.

and moral monarch to have a transformative effect upon the nation. Throughout, their commitment to the rhetoric of populism also never wavered. Institutionally, Yuan affirmed the political equality of citizens through his orchestrated use of the petition campaign in support of the monarchical attempt. Rhetorically, Yuan and his supporters professed the belief that political legitimacy was derived from the backing of public sentiment. These tactical elements of Yuan's strategy of legitimation were both influenced by the religious underpinnings of "Confucian populism."¹²⁷

This chapter will utilize a wide variety of sources, including government proclamations and published periodicals, to illustrate the religious foundation of the monarchical attempt. First, we will briefly discuss some events and issues characteristic of debates regarding religion and its political implications during the Transformation Period, as well as Yuan Shikai's relationship with Confucianism prior to the monarchical attempt. Then, we will discuss the Confucian-inspired populism of Yuan Shikai and his supporters in greater detail through the lens of Peace Planning Society member Liu Shipei's political ethics, which influenced the institutional and rhetorical foundations of the monarchical attempt, especially concerning political equality and popular consent.

Religion and Statecraft in Late Qing and Early Republican China

To contextualize our discussion, it is necessary to provide some context regarding the evolution of debates surrounding religion during in Transformation Period Chinese society. The late Qing and Republican periods witnessed vigorous debate regarding the

¹²⁷ Chang, *Chinese Intellectuals in Crisis*, 164-166.

role of religion in Chinese society and political culture. In her landmark study, *Superstitious Regimes: Religion and the Politics of Chinese Modernity*, Rebecca Nedostup has examined how secularism, nationalism, and religion interacted within the KMT state-building process during the Nanjing Decade. What role should religion assume in the state-building process of a modern, constitutional nation? Should some Chinese belief systems, especially Confucianism, be classified as religions at all?¹²⁸ Such questions were essential facets of Guomindang efforts to reform Chinese political culture. Such questions, though, were not new to the Nanjing decade. They had been a facet of Chinese politico-cultural discourse since the Xinhai Revolution. To contextualize our discussion of the religious framework of the monarchical attempt, we now turn to a discussion of Nedostup's analysis of these essential questions regarding religion.

According to Nedostup, if post-Imperial China was to become “modern” in the contemporary Western sense, “religion *zongjiao* 宗教,” must be separated from “superstition *mixin* 迷信,” and compartmentalized away from the “economic, social, and political aspects of public life” to create a secular government. The KMT also assigned new meanings to old religious symbols, rebranding religious leaders and folk heroes such as Confucius, Guan Yu 關羽, and Yue Fei 岳飛 as “former worthies *xianzhe* 先哲.” Though there was frequent resistance to the KMT's imperatives of secularization, the party came down firmly on the side of divorcing religion from political culture, replacing it with (in theory) popular sovereignty and party leadership. The KMT's anti-superstition

¹²⁸ Nedostup, *Superstitious Regimes*, 38.

imperatives meshed well with longstanding elite hostility toward “heterodox” religious sects and practices, and the development of corporatist religious organizations that continued after the Xinhai Revolution.¹²⁹

Debate over the appropriate relationship between religion and statecraft, however, was not new to the Nanjing Decade; the discussion had been ongoing since the late-Qing reform movements raised the issue. Beginning in the 1870s, following the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864), China witnessed a widespread religious revival, in which “religions...as a natural category, competed for hearts and minds,” thus giving rise “to an extremely fertile cultural and political scene” during the Transformation Period. This religious revival, which occurred in all the major religions in China, corresponded with the growth of nationalistic reform movements and elite modernization programs, such as the Self-Strengthening Movement. Both modernizers and religious revivalists, who also participated in political reform movements, shared an emphasis on combating superstition, which was unfavorably juxtaposed with properly categorized religion.¹³⁰

As Yuan assumed the presidency in 1912, a vigorous debate regarding the classification of Confucianism as a religious doctrine (*Kongjiao* 孔教), and its possible adoption as China’s official state religion, was already underway. Although the debate’s origins can be traced to the late-Qing constitutionalist movement, the debate did not cease with the fall of the Qing. The Republic of China’s first Provisional Constitution guaranteed equality for all citizens “regardless of race, class, and religion...” and

¹²⁹ Ibid., *Superstitious Regimes*, 7-8, 81-86.

¹³⁰ Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, 23; Nedostup, *Superstitious Regimes*, 11

guaranteed freedom of religion. While on the surface a seemingly sensible measure for the new republic, the decision was hotly contested by traditionalists and reformers who, like Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858-1927), believed China needed to reform Confucianism along the lines of Protestant Christianity to revitalize its national essence.¹³¹

Beneath the surface, the debate more closely resembled a contest between adherents of Christianity and state Confucianism. Confucian traditionalists insisted that Christianity, commonly associated with Western imperialist encroachment, posed a threat to China's sociocultural survival, and saw the adoption of Confucianism, China's indigenous teaching, as a panacea for national crisis.¹³² Adopting Confucianism as the state religion was equated with preserving China's national characteristics. Christians, a numerically insignificant, relatively vulnerable religious minority, were hardly able to demand the adoption of Christianity as the state cult. Further, politically guaranteed religious freedom was viewed as a critical element in modernization along Western lines. Thus, Chinese Christian groups demanded the constitution include a religious freedom clause, while the advocates of state Confucianism demanded the establishment of their doctrine to revitalize the nation and "save society."¹³³

In August 1913, members of the Confucian Society (Kongjiao hui 孔教會), founded by Kang Youwei's former student Chen Huanzhang 陳煥彰 (1880-1933), along with prominent scholars Yan Fu and Liang Qichao petitioned the Republican *Guohui*

¹³¹ Liu, "Confucianism, Christianity, and Religious Freedom," 248-250.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ The Christian group the Association for Religious Freedom (Zongjiao ziyou qingyuan hui 宗教自由請願會) opposed the adoption of Confucianism as the state religion. Ibid., 251-252.

(prior to its dissolution by Yuan Shikai) to adopt Confucianism as the state religion of the Republic of China. Although President Yuan reinstated the practice of state-sponsored Confucian rituals in June 1913, the constitutional question of its adoption as the state religion remained unresolved. His death in 1916 and the subsequent collapse of central authority following the monarchical attempt rendered the issue of a state religion backed by the central government largely beside the point.¹³⁴

Religion and statecraft increasingly came into conflict as the century progressed, and a growing intellectual movement challenged the role of religion in modern China. When the Xinhai Revolution “failed to produce a strong Chinese nation-state,” Nedostup has argued, radical intellectuals scapegoated China’s religious cultural heritage. In the context of the New Culture Movement, Chen Duxiu and others associated religion with the concept of “divine authority *shenquan* 神權,” which, along with autocracy and superstition, was negatively juxtaposed against atheism, republicanism, and science.¹³⁵

The Nanjing Decade marked the first instance in which a Chinese state attempted to divorce cosmological legitimacy *completely* from the state-building project. During the 1915-1916 monarchical attempt, however, Yuan Shikai clearly chose to maintain a cosmological-political connection between the realms of religion and statecraft, maintaining state-sponsored Confucian rituals and the worship of religious folk heroes such as Guan Yu and Yue Fei. At the same time, Yuan’s Provisional Constitution maintained protections against religious discrimination, and he continued to use the

¹³⁴ Liu, “Confucianism, Christianity, and Religious Freedom,” 252-254.

¹³⁵ Nedostup, *Superstitious Regimes*, 14-15, 57, 81-87, 280-281.

support of ethno-religious minorities, such as the Hui,¹³⁶ as a rhetorical device in defense of constitutional monarchy.

Thus, the monarchical attempt represented an essential stage of development between the cosmological kingship and state-sponsored religious orthodoxy of the late imperial period on one hand, and the secularizing imperatives of the Guomindang and, later, the Chinese Communist Party on the other. We will now turn to a closer examination of the religious foundation of the monarchical attempt, which will afford us a more complete understanding of the transition between late imperial cosmological kingship and KMT secular nationalism.

Yuan Shikai and Confucianism Prior to the Monarchical Attempt

Even after President Yuan readopted state-sponsored worship of Confucianism in 1913, the issue continued to be vigorously debated during the constitution-drafting process. Such squabbles over the draft constitution in the old National Assembly, though, became a moot point when President Yuan's clash with the Nationalist Party, the known as the Second Revolution, led to the dissolution of the KMT and the shuttering of parliament due to lack of a quorum. After the Second Revolution was crushed, President Yuan returned to the issue. On November 26th, 1913, the president issued a decree

¹³⁶ Historically, this term was used to refer to all Muslims in China, making no distinction between, for example, Uighurs and other Muslim populations. Liu, "Confucianism, Christianity, and Religious Freedom," 18.

weighing on the importance of Confucianism to China's national character and the debate over religious freedom.¹³⁷

For millennia, Yuan explained, Confucianism had formed the basis of Chinese state-building (*liguo genben* 立國根本), not to mention familial relations and social norms. The prominence of these moral teachings reached its peak during the Han Dynasty 漢 (206 BC-220 AD). During the Sui 隋 (581-618) and Tang 唐 (618-907) dynasties, the Confucian tradition degenerated into “empty talk” among scholars in pursuit of civil examination degrees, and no longer saw practical implementation. In the current age of ignorant elements (the KMT) who “misunderstand freedom and equality,” let their passions run amok, and ran the risk of plunging the nation into chaos. During this time of uncertainty, Confucian teachings were more necessary than ever. The problem was not one of politics, but of self-cultivation. As such, officials should undertake Confucian ceremonies at local temples to disseminate the moral teachings of Confucius to the people.¹³⁸ On January 14, 1914, Yuan Shikai's temporary political council (*zhengzhi huiyi* 政治會議) approved the official offering of sacrifices to Confucius.¹³⁹

Other religious groups, especially China's Protestant Christians, rallied against this perceived threat to their religious freedom. Representatives of Protestantism, Catholicism, Islam, Buddhism, and Daoism united to form the United Petition League of

¹³⁷ Hu Shi 胡適, “Yuan Shikai si kong ling (minguo san nian) 袁世凱祀孔令 (民國三年) [Yuan Shikai's order to venerate Confucius (1913)],” *Independent Commentary*, no. 149 (1935): 19-20, <http://www.cnbkcsy.cn/search/detail/a43acb083d942cb2faff08d5d2cc3150/7/4166879>.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Liu, “Confucianism, Christianity, and Religious Freedom,” 257.

All Religions (Zongjiao lianhe qingyuan tuan 宗教聯合請願團). Confucianism, the petitioners charged, was *not* a religion, and, in any case, the concept of a state religion was incompatible with modern constitutional government.¹⁴⁰ To allay the petitioners' concerns, Yuan Shikai affirmed on February 7, 1914, that "religious freedom is the general principle of the contemporary world," but pivoted by claiming that Confucian rituals were merely social customs, not religious rites. Thus, state-sponsored Confucian ceremonies were upheld, but the Republic of China had no state religion.¹⁴¹

Such was Yuan's relationship with Confucianism on the eve of the monarchical attempt in 1915. Had Yuan Shikai sought to change the status quo by adopting a state religion, the adoption of the Provisional Constitution of 1914 presented a golden opportunity of which he did not avail himself. The Provisional Constitution also maintained the previous protections against religious discrimination. At the same time, Yuan continued to embrace Confucian ceremony throughout the monarchical attempt. Hence, Yuan continued to pursue his previous strategy of embracing Confucian ritual for political and religious reasons, without going so far as to adopt it as the official state cult. Since Yuan was neither a scholar nor a prolific writer, though, tracing the religious foundation of the monarchical attempt through his decrees alone is problematic. Hence, to trace the intellectual developments that eventually became the religious foundation of the monarchical attempt, we now turn to a discussion of the religious thought of Liu Shipei.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 257-258.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 261.

Liu Shipai, Confucian Populism, and the Spiritual Backbone of the Monarchical Attempt

As noted above, the monarchical attempt represented an intermediary stage of development between the golden age of cosmological kingship, China's dynastic history that ended with the fall of the Qing in 1911, and the near-complete bifurcation of religious and political authority in favor of populism that occurred during the Nanjing Decade. As our discussion of the rhetorical tactics of monarchical attempt has shown, Yuan claimed to be acting in the name of the public sentiment, which, in his reckoning, was tantamount to the will of Heaven.

Although Yuan's previous presidential decrees on Confucianism do not express such sentiments, that is not to say they appeared from nowhere during the monarchical attempt. To elucidate the Confucian underpinnings of Yuan Shikai's constitutional monarchism, we turn to Liu Shipai, one of his most prominent supporters. Liu's ideology, especially regarding Confucian justifications for populism and ethnic consciousness, may act as a lens allowing us to view the religious and philosophical underpinnings of the monarchical attempt.

Liu was born in Yangzhou 揚州 Prefecture, Jiangsu Province, to a prominent family of scholar-officials who had contributed to the intellectual tradition of Han Learning (*Han xue* 漢學), which emphasized evidential research on the Confucian classics. Although he acquired a provincial examination degree (*juren* 舉人), at eighteen in 1902, he failed the metropolitan examination the following year. Not long after his

misfortune in Beijing, he became involved with revolutionary radicalism in Shanghai. In 1907, he operated as a “radical publicist” in Tokyo in the employ of several revolutionary periodicals. Liu advocated various radical ideas principally informed by indigenous Chinese intellectual tradition, but also influenced by Western ideologies such as anarchism. For reasons unclear, Liu returned to China in 1908 to serve the Qing government. In 1915, he supported Yuan Shikai’s monarchical attempt as one of the “six gentlemen” of the Peace Planning Society.¹⁴²

From an early age, Liu’s environment conditioned the development of a Han Chinese ethnic consciousness. During the Qing conquest of the Ming in 1645, Yangzhou had been the scene of a large-scale massacre carried out by Qing forces against the Ming-loyalist defenders and civilian populace as punishment for the staunch defense of the city. Hundreds of thousands were reported to have been killed. Liu’s family, furthermore, were renowned historiographers of China’s past confrontations with non-Chinese “barbarians.” Finally, Liu’s upbringing in the Yangzi River Valley, which was penetrated by Western material and intellectual influences, as well as his travel to the relatively cosmopolitan cities of Beijing and Shanghai, exposed him to Western learning.¹⁴³

We have previously stated that the rhetoric of Yuan Shikai’s monarchical attempt privileged claims political of legitimacy based on populism over those based on cosmological kingship. The gradual devaluation of traditional cosmological symbolism

¹⁴² Chang, *Chinese Intellectuals in Crisis*, 146-147.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 148-149.

occurred over the late 19th and early 20th centuries in response to the national and intellectual crises experienced by Chinese thinkers; in the wake of repeated military defeats and loss of national prestige, Chinese intellectuals were forced to renegotiate their worldviews. Liu's intellectual development, and the monarchical attempt in which he later took part, are both reflective of this trend. In 1905, he published a philosophical treatise on *Li xue* 理學, the Neo-Confucian school of rationalism. The treatise was heavily influenced by the work of Dai Zhen 戴震 (1724-1777), an influential scholar of the Han Learning tradition. Interestingly, although the treatise is influenced by Dai Zhen's "moral philosophy of self-cultivation," Liu abandoned the cosmological symbolism, such as *yin* and *yang*, favored by Dai. This tendency, Chang Hao has argued, is indicative of a larger trend among Chinese intellectuals to abandon the traditional Chinese cosmological worldview in favor of Western learning while maintaining Confucian moral insights.¹⁴⁴

Liu also authored a book entitled *Zhongguo min yue jingyi* 中國民約精義, The Essential Meaning of Chinese Doctrines of Social Contract, in 1904, in which he criticized the Chinese political tradition. Liu examined the concept of *gong* 公, which may be loosely translated as "public-mindedness...a moral commitment to the social whole and common good." This true meaning of *gong*, Liu argued, had been subverted by various dynastic governments to serve their own interests, as opposed to genuine public interests (*gong*). Liu also connected *gong* to other essential concepts. First among

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 5.

these was that public sentiment serves as a “terrestrial surrogate” for the will of Heaven. Heeding public sentiment is demanded by Heaven. These ideas cooperate to form a politico-ethical ideology that Hao Chang terms “Confucian populism.”¹⁴⁵

Speaking from the point of view of Confucian orthodoxy, this idea was also intertwined with the claim that a monarch was still required to ensure human order. Although all people had the *potential* to attain moral perfection and reflect the will of heaven, only a small minority succeeded, and only these were fit to participate in politics. Confucian populism, then, was traditionally tempered by the realist assumption that only individuals of exceptional moral quality would rise to be leaders and serve as paragons of virtue to the masses.

In Liu’s radical analyses, however, there was no such caveat. His re-conception of Confucian populism was not only informed by elements of Confucian tradition, but also resembled Rousseau’s social contract. Like Rousseau, Liu believed that people, owing to their innate goodness, could create just and good government through popular participation in politics. Liu did away with the idea that only individuals of exceptional moral quality were fit to participate in political expression in favor of the concept of political equality for all. In Liu’s reckoning, public sentiment would ideally resemble Rousseau’s “general will,” which controlled political power rather than simply counterbalancing it. Thus, Liu found the traditional system of cosmological kingship unacceptable.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 164-165.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 166.

Liu Shipai was not, certainly, the only voice advising Yuan on the religious aspects of statecraft; Confucian traditionalists also offered their justifications for monarchy. On January 11th, 1916, for example, Ye Dehui 葉德輝 (1864-1927), chairman of the education committee and local Peace Planning Society branch office in Changsha, Hunan, telegraphed Yuan Shikai together with other committee members. He urged President Yuan to move up the date of his formal ascension. Chairman Ye opened his telegram by proclaiming that “Chinese culture rests heavily on the Three Rules and Five Constant Virtues.¹⁴⁷ Heaven creates the people and enthrones [for] them a monarch; [this] exposition of the Classics has been clearly handed down, [and] has not changed from ancient [times] to the present....”¹⁴⁸ Thus, Chairman Ye concluded, the people’s representatives were right to support the adoption of constitutional monarchy. In accordance with classical religious foundations of Chinese political culture, authority should be centralized in the person of an omnipotent monarch.

We should note that the claim that Heaven creates monarchs to manage the people is not simply a legitimation of monarchical authority. From a traditional standpoint, it is also indicative of the ruler’s responsibilities as custodian of “all under Heaven *tianxia* 天下.” Such caveats were meant to restrain monarchs from abusing their autocratic power.¹⁴⁹ Chairman Ye’s comments lack the emphasis placed upon institutional process

¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁸ Zhengfu gongbao, “Hunan Changsha jiaoyu huihang Ye Dehui deng dian qing Yuan Shikai zao deng diwei [The education commissioner of Changsha, Hunan, Ye Dehui, and others telegram Yuan Shikai requesting that he assume the position of emperor early],” 11 January 1916, vol. 1916 in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao* (Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin, 1959), 67-68.

¹⁴⁹ Yuri Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire*, 46-47.

and populism by Yuan Shikai and his supporters. Though the national representatives were correct to support the monarchical attempt, the righteousness of the monarchical system ultimately derived from the politico-religious authority laid down in the Classics, not the people's consent.

Ye's traditionalist viewpoint demonstrates precisely the sort of political ethics that Liu Shipei criticized as inadequate in his reimagination of Confucian populism in *The Essential Meaning of Chinese Doctrines of Social Contract*, in which he implied that political momentum must ultimately be derived from the will of the people. Traditional Confucian odes to politics in service of the masses, in Liu's view, did not go far enough. Given the salient differences between Ye's and Liu's Confucian political ethics, a comparison of their positions in the monarchical attempt is warranted here. Liu was a founding member of the Peace Planning Society, while Ye merely managed a provincial branch office. Further, the institutional and rhetorical tactics of the monarchical attempt more closely resemble Liu's views than Ye's. Yuan claimed repeatedly that the impetus for the monarchical attempt derived from public sentiment (*renxin* and *minxin*), and, through his institutional foundation, orchestrated a petition movement based on the concept of citizenship and political equality. Clearly, Yuan believed it necessary to lend the monarchical attempt a more progressive flavor than a traditionalist interpretation of Confucian populism would have allowed.

Conclusions on Religion

Yuan Shikai and Liu Shipei certainly made strange bedfellows. Liu's support for the monarchical attempt, however, is not so shocking when placed in context. The

populist rhetoric espoused by Yuan and his supporters, as well as the embrace of citizen participation in the petition movement during the preparation phase of the monarchical attempt, while certainly not a wholesale adaptations of Liu's vision, bear a close resemblance to the principles of Confucian populism and political equality discussed above. Liu, like Rousseau, believed that politics must reflect the will of the people. Similar principles were reflected in the institutional and rhetorical foundations of the monarchical attempt. Yuan Shikai claimed that he was driven solely by the will of the people, inasmuch as he violated the Republican constitution he was legally sworn to uphold. By making a show of acceptance of citizens' petitions, he affirmed the newly ascended republican principle of political equality also espoused by Liu.

After all, Chinese intellectuals of the Transformation Period, as we have previously discussed, rapidly altered their convictions in the face of unpredictable conditions, and participated in political movements seemingly contrary to their previously held beliefs. Both Kang Youwei and Liu Shipei supported the Qing Dynasty's reform efforts, though their religious and philosophical visions for the future ultimately diverged greatly with the court's; perhaps they viewed cooperation with dynastic reform as a means to an end of achieving their utopian visions for the future. There seems little reason to believe Liu may not do the same for Yuan Shikai, whose vision of reform along the lines of constitutional monarchy more closely resembled his own ideals than late-Qing reform efforts had.

Although Yuan Shikai revived certain elements of Confucian ritual, and received advise from more traditionalist supporters, he was not, as Chen Duxiu would have us

believe, a staunch traditionalist. Yuan and his supporters all along espoused a form of Confucian populism influenced by radical thought formulated during the Transformation Period, especially by his prominent supporter Liu Shipei. The religious foundation of the monarchical attempt, like his institutional and rhetorical strategies, represented an alternative vision for the transformation of Chinese political culture along constitutional lines that stemmed from late Qing and early Republican reform movements, not a return to imperial tradition.

Conclusion

Yuan Shikai's monarchical attempt has been addressed in various historiographies, but has not been properly historicized. Jerome Chen and Ernest Young, writing in the 1970s prior to the publication of a great deal of recent scholarship on public opinion and the public sphere, spoke mostly in conventional political terms. While both agreed that Yuan sought to lend a modern air to his monarchy, neither went into detail regarding the tactics of Yuan's strategy of legitimation. Likewise, more recent scholarship on political culture, the function of public opinion, and religion in Transformation-Period China has largely overlooked the monarchical attempt. A more thoroughgoing analysis of the movement is necessary to improve our overall understanding of contemporary political culture.

This thesis has historicized the monarchical attempt by highlighting its institutional, rhetorical, and religious foundations to locate it within a process of change in Chinese political culture during the Transformation Period. Working off the governmental structure established by the 1914 Provisional Constitution, President Yuan and his supporters constructed a foundation of republican-style of institutions, including the Provisional Constitutional Congress, Advisory and Legislative Yuans, and the National Assembly. Further, the Peace Planning Society has been shown to have been established along the lines of the study society model, which enjoyed great popularity

during Transformation Period. Importantly, these institutions interacted with citizens, on a basis of political participation and equality, and with each other.

The Provisional Constitutional Congress, led by Sun Yuyun, began laying the groundwork for the monarchical attempt in early 1915. It determined the organizational methods for the institutions through which the monarchical attempt was to be enacted, including the Advisory Yuan, Legislative Yuan, and National Assembly. By the time it adjourned in March of 1915, Yuan Shikai and the Provisional Constitutional Congress had institutionalized the organizational procedures of the above-mentioned governmental bodies. From that point on, Yuan and his supporters emphasized the “observation of established practice (*xun tu shou zhe* 循途守轍),” and acknowledgement of *guoqing* that had been initiated by the congress.

The Advisory Yuan, which also assumed the Legislative Yuan’s authority in accordance with constitutional regulations, received petitions from private citizens and citizen groups requesting that the constitutional monarchy be adopted as the new state system. Having received these petitions, the Advisory Yuan initiated a dialogue with Yuan Shikai, urging him to reform the state system and assume the title of Emperor of the Empire of China. This process was indicative of the emergent concept of citizenship-based political equality in Chinese political culture, in which the people participated actively in national affairs.

Unwilling to violate the Provisional Constitution by convening the National Assembly ahead of schedule, Yuan’s supporters convened a special Plenary Session of National Assembly Representatives to vote on the state system issue. This was indicative

of both Yuan's desire to follow institutional procedure, and lend an air of popular approval to the monarchical attempt.

The Peace Planning Society, led by Yang Du, represented a tactical usage of the study society model that had been popularized during the late Qing. Such societies reflected the citizen's newly acquired prerogative to form and express opinions on national affairs, rather than passively accepting the state's decrees. Staffed with veteran reformers and revolutionaries, it lent the monarchical attempt a forward-thinking, academic air.

Rhetorically, Yuan spoke in his own defense, as well as through his supporters in the Peace Planning Society and governmental institutions. Yuan and Yang Du claimed that China's history and national conditions made monarchy a necessity. China's common people, they claimed, were uneducated and too unaccustomed to liberal democracy. Yang Du cited cases in South and Central America as examples of the failure of democracy, brought on by the partisan bickering inherent in the politics of contestation, in developing nations.

Further, to support their reformist political agenda, Yuan and his supporters appropriated and developed the rhetorical strategy of late-Qing journalists, to deploy terminology couched in a constellation of classical literary significance and normative loading. This rhetoric often stressed the ignorance of the common people, while simultaneously proclaiming deference to public sentiment and opinion. In addition to public opinion (*yulun*), Yuan and his supporters also stressed public sentiment (*renxin* and *minxin*). Unlike public opinion, the expression of which had been the prerogative of

elite journalists during the late Qing, public sentiment needed no interpretation by middlemen. Yuan initiated a direct dialogue with the people through rhetoric and institutional procedure, and claimed the right to interpret public sentiment for himself.

Although Heaven was often mentioned, it was clear that Yuan wished to present the movement as stemming solely from the will of the people rather than from Heaven's, undercutting the need for a "middle realm" in the process. The emphasis on populism over cosmological kingship sets Yuan apart from orthodox Confucian imperial tradition, which stressed the primacy of the Mandate of Heaven. Yuan's supporters in the Advisory Yuan specifically stated that, though he had enjoyed Heaven's approval since the Xinhai Revolution, Yuan Shikai only assumed the throne with the approval of public sentiment.

Our discussions of the institutional and rhetorical foundations of the monarchical attempt led us to examine the development of its religious underpinnings, the political ethics and cosmological symbolism of Confucianism. As president, Yuan had supported the continuation of state-sponsored Confucian rituals in 1913, though he stopped short of adopting it as the state religion. Although Yuan paid homage to Confucianism prior to 1915, the rhetoric and institutional tactics employed thereafter indicate further development in his understanding of political ethics.

To trace the origins of these ideas, we examined the intellectual history of one of Yuan's key supporters, Liu Shipei. Like Yang Du, Liu was by no means an old-fashioned Confucian fuddy-duddy. Liu radically reinterpreted Confucian doctrine in *The Essential Meaning of Chinese Doctrines Social Contract*, and claimed that political

action must ultimately flow from the will of the people. Yuan Shikai had access to both traditionalist (Ye Dehui's) and progressive (Liu's) interpretations of Confucian political ethics, and clearly chose the latter. Liu's innovative interpretations of Confucian populism fundamentally influenced Yuan's tactics in enacting and marketing his political agenda.

The monarchical attempt should not merely be viewed as the starting point of warlordism, evidence of Yuan Shikai's hubris, or an aberrational return to imperial tradition along the road to revolutionary triumph. Such teleological approaches prevent us from historicizing the monarchical attempt, and analyzing it for its own sake. Casting off those assumptions allows us to paint a more complete picture of the development of Chinese political culture during the Transformation Period. By locating the institutional, rhetorical, and religious foundations of the movement within contemporary patterns of development, we may contextualize the monarchical attempt within a wider discourse on the transformation of Chinese political culture.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Chen, Duxiu. 1916. "Yuan Shikai fuhuo [Yuan Shikai resurrected]." *New Youth*, 22-24. Accessed April 1, 2017.
<http://www.cnbkisy.cn/search/detail/dfb1bcabc6f1d214757d787a611fc22f/7/4166867>.
- Fu, Shi. 1915. "Zuijin zhi Yuan Shikai [The latest on Yuan Shikai]." *Minkou*, 35-49. Accessed June 4, 2017.
<http://www.cnbkisy.com/search/detail/5f914afee7c499a36ef72831ab120f4a/7/2129856>;
- Guan, Hai. 1916. "Lun Yuan Shikai weizao minyi [Yuan Shikai's fabrication of public sentiment]." *Minkou*, 20-25. Accessed April 1, 2017.
<http://www.cnbkisy.cn/search/detail/0b7e6c22532e39fb2413246d848732dd/7/4166893>.
- Hu, Shi. 1935. "Yuan Shikai si kong ling (minguo san nian) [Yuan Shikai's order to venerate Confucius (1913)]." *Independant Commentary*, 19-20. Accessed April 1, 2017.
<http://www.cnbkisy.cn/search/detail/a43acb083d942cb2faff08d5d2cc3150/7/4166879>.
- Liang, Qichao. 1916. "Yuan Shikai weizao minyi tiezheng shu hou [Documented conclusive evidence of Yuan Shikai's fabrication of public sentiment]." *Yi sheng ribao huikan* 義聲日報匯刊, 232-251. Accessed April 1, 2017.
<http://www.cnbkisy.cn/search/detail/e2dc773b4bc513933982daac1d465f3b/7/4166893>.
- Ya, Su. 1914. "Yuan Shikai duinei zhengce [Yuan Shikai's domestic policies]." *Minguo*, 1-9.
<http://www.cnbkisy.com/search/detail/3e3c1a1f8322a25ac539112348d9029d/7/2129846>.
- Yang, Du. 1915. *Yang Du fabiao junxian jiu guo lun, guchui dizi* [Yang Du publishes 'constitutional monarchy to save the nation,' advocates monarchical system]. Vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, edited by Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui, 630-640. Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin.

- Yuan, Shikai. 1952. *Yuan Shikai xuanbu dizhi an zhi shimo [Yuan Shikai announces the whole story of the case of the monarchical system]*. Vol. 1916, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, edited by Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui, 359-360. Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin.
- Yuan, Shikai. 1952. *Yuan Shikai yanling chafang geming fenzi zunao dizhi [Yuan Shikai issues strict orders to investigate revolutionaries' obstruction of the monarchy]*. Vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, edited by Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui, 919. Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin.
- Zhengfu gongbao. 1952. *Beijing zhengfu Canzheng yuan daixing Lifa yuan kaihui [The Beijing government's Advisory Yuan convenes in the capacity of the Legislative Yuan]*. Vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, edited by Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui, 655. Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin.
- Zhengfu gongbao. 1952. *Beijing zhengfu Canzheng yuan daixing Lifa yuan, ju ge difang renmin tuanti, qingyuan bianheng guoti, ziqing zhengfu zhaoji guomin huiyi [The Beijing government's Advisory Yuan, acting in the capacity of the Legislative Yuan, requests the government convene the National Assembly early]*. Vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, edited by Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui, 718-721. Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin.
- Zhengfu gongbao. 1952. *Beijing zhengfu Canzheng yuan tuixuan Li Jiaju, Wang Rongbao, Da Shou, Liang Qichao, Shi Yu, Yang Du, Yan Fu, Ma Liang, Wang Shicheng, yu Zeng Yijin wei xianfa qicao weiyuan [The Beijing government elects Li Jiaju, Wang Rongbao, Da Shou, Liang Qichao, Shi Yu, Yang Du, Yan Fu, Ma Liang, Wang Shicheng, and Zeng Yijin as constitution-drafting committee members]*. Vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, edited by Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui, 558. Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin.
- Zhengfu gongbao. 1952. *Beijing zhengfu chongshen qingshi youdai tiaojian, yong bu bianheng [The Beijing government reiterates that the articles of favorable treatment of the Qing court will never change]*. Vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, edited by Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui, 927-928. Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin.
- Zhengfu gongbao. 1952. *Beijing zhengfu choubei guomin dahui shiwu banli guomin huiyi shiwuju, tonggao ge shengqu yifa juxing jueding guoti toupiao piaoshu [The Beijing government's bureau for the preparation of the Plenary Session of National Assembly Representatives and the National Assembly, announces the poll counts for the lawful elections to decide the state system in each province]*. Vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, edited by Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui, 850-851. Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin.

Zhengfu gongbao. 1952. *Beijing zhengfu jingjie ju duban, Cai E, qi zhi li jing* [The Beijing government's Land Affairs Bureau superintendent, Cai E, resigns his position and leaves Beijing]. Vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, edited by Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui, 856-858. Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin.

Zhengfu gongbao. 1952. *Beijing zhengfu ling Canzheng yuan daixing Lifa yuan zhiquan* [The Beijing government orders the Advisory Yuan's assumption of the Legislative Yuan's authority]. Vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, edited by Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui, 652. Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin.

Zhengfu gongbao. 1952. *Beijing zhengfu shenling Canzheng yuan tuixian weiyuan, zuzhi xianfa qicao weiyuanhui, yi li jinxing* [The Beijing government announces the Advisory Yuan's election of committee members, forms a constitutional-drafting committee, in order to assist progress]. Vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, edited by Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui, 547. Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin.

Zhengfu gongbao. 1952. *Beijing zhengfu teren Pulun wei Canzheng yuan yuanzhang* [The Beijing government specially appoints Pulun as chairman of the Advisory Yuan]. Vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, edited by Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui, 558. Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin.

Zhengfu gongbao. 1952. *Beijing zhengfu xuanbu guomin daibiao dahui chengli, bing gongbu qi zuzhifa* [The Beijing government announces the establishment of the Plenary Session of the National Assembly Representatives, and its organizational methods]. Vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, edited by Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui, 773-774. Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin.

Zhengfu gongbao. 1952. *Beijing zhengfu yi yuefa huiyi ding san yue shiba ri bihui, te yu xuangao, xian shi wenzhi* [The Beijing government, regarding the Provisional Constitutional Congress deciding to adjourn on March 18th, specially gives a declaration, making all informed]. Vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, edited by Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui, 255. Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin.

Zhengfu gongbao. 1952. *Beijing zhengfu yuyong zhi yuefa huiyi bimu* [Beijing government's Provisional Constitutional Congress adjourns]. Vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, edited by Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui, 265-267. Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin.

- Zhengfu gongbao. 1952. *Canzheng Liang Qichao chengqing cizhi, Beijing zhengfu gei jia liang yue [Advisory Yuan member Liang Qichao requests to resign, the Beijing government grants two months leave]*. Vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, edited by Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui, 877-878. Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin.
- Zhengfu gongbao. 1952. *Dizhi yuyong jiguan guomin daibiao dahui, tou piao jue ding junzhu lixian, yizhi tuidai Yuan Shikai wei huangdi, Shikai yang que zhi [The Plenary Session of National Assembly Representatives casts votes deciding on constitutional Monarchy, unanimously recommends Yuan Shikai become emperor, Yuan Shikai feigns rejection]*. Vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, edited by Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui, 907-909. Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin.
- Zhengfu gongbao. 1952. *Guomin daibiao quanti yizhi zancheng junzhu lixian, tuidai Yuan Shikai wei huangdi, Canzheng yuan yi zongdaibiao mingyi, shang tuidai shu quanjin [The National Assembly Representatives unanimously endorse constitutional monarchy, and recommend that Yuan Shikai become emperor, the Advisory Yuan, in capacity of general representative, submits a letter of recommendation advising action]*. Vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, edited by Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui, 904-906. Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin.
- Zhengfu gongbao. 1952. *Hunan Changsha jiaoyu huizhang Ye Dehui deng dian qing Yuan Shikai zao deng diwei [The education commissioner of Changsha, Hunan, Ye Dehui, and others telegram Yuan Shikai requesting he assume the position of emperor early]*. Vol. 1916, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, edited by Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui, 67-68. Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin.
- Zhengfu gongbao. 1952. *Yang Du, Sun Yuyun, Yan Fu, Liu Shipai, Li Xiehe, Hu Ying deng liu ren, zai Beijing faqi Chou'an hui, wei Yuan Shikai tuidong dizhi [Yang Du, Sun Yuyun, Yan Fu, Liu Shipai, Li Xiehe, and Hu Ying form the Peace Planning Society in Beijing, and promote monarchical system for Yuan Shikai]*. Vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, edited by Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui, 616-617. Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin.
- Zhengfu gongbao. 1952. *Yuefa huiyi shenya guomin huiyi zuzhifa [The Provisional Constitutional Committee reviews the organizational methods of the National Assembly]*. Vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, edited by Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui, 204-205. Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin.

- Zhengfu gongbao. 1952. *Zhili deng sheng jubian suowei guomin daibiao xuanju, bing dingqi jueding guoti toupiao* [*Zhili and other provinces hold so-called people's representative elections, and set date for vote on state system*]. Vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, edited by Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui, 833. Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin.
- Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui. 1952. *Chou'an hui dongjing zhibu zhugan Jiang Shili, bei qiangji zhongshang* [*The Peace Planning Society's Tokyo branch office head Jiang Shili seriously injured in gun attack*]. Vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, edited by Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui, 800. Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin.
- Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui. 1952. *Feng Guozhang zai jing wei dizhi yundong piyao* [*Feng Guozhang refutes the rumors of the monarchical movement in Beijing*]. Vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, edited by Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui, 556. Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin.
- Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui. 1952. *Shanghai zilin xibao, yi dizhi yundong, er xi guoshi, fabiao 'xiju yu, yi huajiju yu' zhi shelun chi zhi* [*The North China Daily News regards the monarchist movement as children playing at national affairs, publishes editorial '[is it] satire? [is it] comedy?' to ridicule it*]. Vol. 1915, in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*, edited by Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao bianji weiyuanhui, 805. Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin.

Secondary Sources

- Baker, Keith Michael. 1987. "Politics and Public Opinion Under the Old Regime: Some Reflections." In *Press and Politics in Pre-Revolutionary France*, by Jack R. Cesner and Jeremy D. Popkin, 204-246. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Chang, Hao. 1987. *Chinese Intellectuals in Crisis: Search for order and Meaning (1890-1911)*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press .
- Chen, Jerome. 1972. *Yuan Shih-k'ai*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press .
- Deng Shujie 邓书杰, Li Mei 李梅, Wu Xiaoli 吴晓莉, and Su Jihong 苏继红 ed. 2013. *Xinchao Yongdong 新潮涌动 (1910-1919) (Zhongguo lishi dashi xiangjie congshu 中国历史大事详解丛书 2)* Jilin: Jilin yinxiang chubanshe 吉林音像出版社.
- Dikotter, Frank. 2015. *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Esherick, Joseph W. 1968. *Reform and Revolution in China: The 1911 Revolution in Hunan and Hubei*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Fitzgerald, John. 1996. *Awakening China: Politics, Culture, and Class in the Nationalist Revolution*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Judge, Joan. 1996. *Print and Politics: 'Shibao' and the Culture of Reform in Late Qing China*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Judge, Joan. 1997. "Publicists and Populists: Including the Common People in the Late Qing New Citizen Ideal." In *Imagining the People: Chinese Intellectuals and the Concept of Citizenship, 1890-1920*, by Joshua A. Fogel and Peter G. Zarrow, 142-165. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe .
- . 2015. *Republican Lens: Gender, Visuality, and Experience in the Early Chinese Periodical Press* . Oakland, CA: University of California Press.
- Lean, Eugenia. 2007. *Public Passions: The Trial of Shi Jianqiao and the Rise of Popular Sympathy in Republican China*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- MacKinnon, Stephen R. 1980. *Power and Politics in Late Imperial China: Yuan Shi-kai in Beijing and Tianjin, 1901-1908*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press .
- McCord, Edward A. 1993. *The Power of the Gun: The Emergence of Modern Chinese Wardlordism*. Berkeley, CA: Univeristy Of California Press .

- Meyer-Fong, Tobie. 2013. *What Remains: Coming to Terms with Civil War in 19th Century China*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press .
- Mittler, Barbara. 2004. *A Newspaper for China? Power, Identity, and Change in Shanghai's News Media, 1872-1912*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Nedostup, Rebecca. 2009. *Superstitious Regimes: Religion and the Politics of Chinese Modernity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Pines, Yuri. 2008. *Envisioning Eternal Empire: Chinese Political Thought of the Warring States Era*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Rhoads, Edward J.M. 2000. *Manchus and Han: Ethnic Relations and Political Power in late Qing and Early Republican China, 1861-1928*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Strand, David. 2011. *An Unfinished Republic: Leading by Word and Deed in Modern China*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Yi, Liu. 2012. "Confucianism, Christianity, and Religious Freedom: Debates in the Transformation Period of Modern China (1900-1920s)." In *Confucianism and Spiritual Traditions in Modern China and Beyond*, edited by Fenggang Yang and Joseph Tamney. Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV.
- Young, Ernest P. 1977. *The Presidency of Yuan Shikai: Liberalism and Dictatorship in Early Republican China* . Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.