

Chapter 1

Reform in Hunan, 1895–1900

On October 1, 1949, following the Communist victory in the Chinese civil war, Mao Zedong proclaimed the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) at Tiananmen Square. Education played an important role in shaping the man who then stood at the pinnacle of power. Just as communist cadres would have a profound influence on subsequent Chinese history, so they themselves had been influenced by their schooling. During their youth, in a period of political upheaval and intellectual ferment, a “modernized” school system had supplanted the traditional Chinese educational system, which had been centered on the classical canon and directed toward the civil service examinations. Many important communist leaders, including Cai Hesen and Mao Zedong, had been educated at the Hunan First Normal School in Changsha, the capital city of Hunan province, in the second decade of the twentieth century. How could this apparently ordinary normal school have fostered so many radical intellectuals who became early leaders of Chinese Communism? How had the end of the old examination system and the emergence of this new “modern” school system in the early part of that century affected both mentors and students?

To answer these questions, we must explore the link between the reorganization of the educational system and the growth of communism. We must examine the backgrounds not only of those radical students who formed the first generation of communist leadership but also of their teachers, the intellectual reformers, the curriculum of the school, its environment, the political and social forces in the school and in the surrounding city, and the contribution of these factors to the transformation in the thinking of radical students. Long before Mao stood at his moment of triumph in 1949, he and many of his allies had

been heavily influenced by the First Normal School and their mentors there. The effect of that educational experience would have worldwide ramifications.

The origins of that educational experience lay in the reform movement in Hunan during the last decade of the nineteenth century, in the conservative opposition to reformist ideas, and in the nationalism that developed in response to the intrusion of foreign influence into Hunan.

Reform Reaches Hunan, 1895–1896

The Chinese people are well known for their great cultural pride. China, with its vast territory, large population, and long history, was the core civilization in East Asia for centuries. It served as a role model for its neighboring nations in cultural affairs, politics, institutions, and economics. In the middle of the nineteenth century, however, Chinese pride was seriously shaken by a series of humiliating foreign military incursions, beginning with the Opium War of 1839–1842. Worse came when China was defeated by Japan, seen by the Chinese populace as a “petty oriental barbarian,” in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895. As a result, China was forced to sign the humiliating Treaty of Shimonoseki, which clearly exposed the weakness of the Qing regime, and infuriated the nation. It also greatly shattered national prestige and traditional self-confidence. Externally, these setbacks invited further encroachment in the “scramble” for concessions, and internally they encouraged movements for reform and revolution. They made Chinese intellectuals pay serious attention to the reform of their country with the goal of standing up to the imperialist powers. Chinese intellectuals realized that if China were to survive in the modern world, it would have to relinquish some of the old and assimilate some of the new.¹ What to keep and what to change was the subject of considerable controversy, not least in the field of education.

In Hunan, the reforms began in 1895, three years before the Hundred Days Reform. Joseph Esherick, in his *Reform and Revolution in China*, argues that the late Qing reform program catered chiefly to elite interests whom he characterizes as the “urban reformist elite” and that the new local government institutions strengthened gentry power. The reforms in Hunan were encouraged, as Charlton M. Lewis points out, by a fortunate combination of reform-minded officials. First, Zhang Zhidong (1837–1909), the governor-general of Hunan and Hubei from 1889 to

1897 promoted educational, railway, mining, and industrial projects. In 1895, he supported Kang Youwei's (1858–1927) Society for National Strengthening (*Qiangxue hui*) and his newspaper, the *Qiangxue bao*. He had close connections with a number of reform-minded officials and elites in Hunan. He worked closely with Chen Baozhen (1831–1900), who served as the governor of Hunan between the years of 1895 and 1898. The third important official was the education commissioner, Jiang Biao (1860–1899). A native of Suzhou, Jiang received the highest *jinsi* degree in 1889. Deeply versed in classics, Jiang was also familiar with Western learning. He was interested in foreign affairs and had studied at the Interpreters College (*Tongwen guan*) in Beijing. He was a founding member of the Society for National Strengthening in 1895.²

Early reforms in Hunan accorded with the national atmosphere of the Self-Strengthening Movement (1861–1894). In 1895, Gov. Chen Baozhen established a mining bureau to exploit Hunan's extensive mineral resources. In the following years, Hunan also established a telegraph line between Changsha and Hankou, a police bureau, an arsenal, a chemical company, and a company that provided electric lighting for schools and examination halls. The electric company, however, lasted only until 1899, when it went bankrupt.³

More impressive was the attempt made to reform the educational system. As soon as Jiang Biao took the position of education commissioner of Hunan in 1894, he began to reform the traditional Confucian academies by emphasizing *jingshi zhiyong* (bureaucratic statecraft). He added geography and mathematics to the classical subjects required in the civil service examinations for the lowest *shengyuan* degree.⁴ Jiang also introduced classes in foreign languages, and purchased instruments for the study of chemistry and electricity. He established the Hunan Reform Study Society (*Xiangxue hui*), and a reform newspaper, *Hunan Reform News* (*Xiangxue bao*), to promote a cautious program of reform. *Hunan Reform News* mainly introduced Western politics, laws, and culture, which included news and knowledge of history, geography, mathematics, business, diplomacy, and science.⁵

By 1897, the reform movements in Hunan were flourishing and Gov. Chen Baozhen diligently sought to implement a thoroughgoing program of reform in the province. At first, his reforms received a broad consensus of support. Even the senior Hunanese elites welcomed the approval of young activists like Tan Sitong and Tang Caichang (1867–1900). However, those senior Hunanese elites, the “conservative” faction in provincial politics, later adhered to the traditional pragmatic

conservatism of Hunan that emphasized *jingshi*. Pragmatic conservatism had revived and enjoyed considerable success under the leadership of Zeng Guofan during the Tongzhi Restoration.⁶ Since then, *jingshi* had remained a very important element in the culture of Hunan and its Confucian tradition. Those senior elites followed the statecraft theorists in stressing the importance of increased gentry involvement and power in local government. For instance, they invested heavily in new industrial enterprises.

Wang Xianqian (1842–1917) was the most prominent member of this group. He was a former compiler of Hanlin Academy and Jiangsu education commissioner. He had held posts in the State Historiographer's Office (*Guoshi guan*). In 1889, he retired from government service and returned to Hunan to be president of the famous Yuelu Academy in Changsha.⁷ Although he was a famous scholar, known for his classical commentaries, massive compilations, and extensive private library, Wang energetically advocated commercial investment by the gentry. He personally invested in commercial enterprises. Wang even supported the initial moderate educational reforms of Jiang Biao. He encouraged his students to read the reformist *Current Affairs News* (*Shiwu bao*), edited in Shanghai by Liang Qichao.⁸

The Climax and Failure of Reform, 1897–1898

Marianne Bastid claims that the “modern gentry” effectively initiated and played a vital role in educational reform. Paul Bailey agrees with Bastid's argument and states that the Confucian legacy fostered support for educational modernization among the gentry.⁹ The Chinese placed great emphasis on the transformative power of education.

The reform movement in Hunan reached its climax in September 1897, with the opening of the Current Affairs School (*Shiwu xuetang*). Wealthy Hunanese financed the school's buildings and equipment, and the government mines were expected to provide additional funds for the school. The Hunanese literati widely supported the school, as is evident from its endowment (an annual fund of \$20,000 was subscribed by early July) and the keen competition for admission. In the initial round of entrance examinations, more than four thousand candidates applied, although only forty were accepted for the first class.¹⁰

The goal of the Current Affairs School was to train students to become “capable men” of an entirely new type. Students were educated in traditional Chinese as well as Western subjects. Because the phi-

losophy and the curriculum of the Current Affairs School was totally new at that time, the school played an enlightening role in Hunan's educational reform.

It was also in 1897 that the Hunanese gentry began to perceive a radical dimension in the educational reform program; this in turn destroyed the elites' support for reform one year later. The first radical shift apparent to the gentry was the appointment of Huang Zunxian (1848–1905) in 1897 as salt intendant and later as the judicial commissioner. A native of Guangdong, Huang was a distinguished diplomat. He had twelve years of government service in Tokyo, San Francisco, London, and Singapore. Deeply impressed with Japan's success in the Meiji period, he was eager to apply the lessons to China. He wrote a book on Meiji Japan that was widely read in Hunan. This book later helped to inspire the Guangxu Emperor's Hundred Days Reform of 1898.¹¹

In fall 1897, Huang suggested that Xu Renzhu (1863–1900) replace Jiang Biao as educational commissioner. Xu, then 34 years old, was a son of a prominent Hanlin compiler and a good friend of Tan Sitong. An active reform advocate in Beijing, Xu took Jiang Biao's place as educational commissioner in fall 1897, and introduced Kang Youwei's teachings to Hunan. Xu also was a good friend of Liang Qichao; he was able to mobilize considerable government support of Liang's work at the Current Affairs School.¹²

Huang Zunxian, the judicial commissioner of Hunan, was also a good friend of Liang Qichao. In 1896, Huang and Liang worked together to set up the Current Affairs News (*Shiwu bao*) in Shanghai. Soon after he arrived in Changsha, Huang suggested that Liang Qichao be invited to accept the post of dean of Chinese Studies at the new Current Affairs School; he also proposed that Li Weige,¹³ a translator for the *Current Affairs News* be appointed as dean of Western Studies.¹⁴ When Liang arrived in Changsha, he brought with him three of Kang Youwei's students, Han Wenju (1855–1937), Ou Jujia, and Ye Juemai, who became assistant deans at the school.¹⁵ The appointments of the faculty at the Current Affairs School were approved by the provincial elites. The school was soon dominated by Liang Qichao's Cantonese friends and his Hunanese followers, a group of young Hunanese gentry activists such as Tan Sitong, Tang Caichang, and Xiong Xiling (1870–1942). These people were remarkably young. In 1897, Tan, the oldest, was 32; Tang was 30; Xiong was 27; and Liang Qichao was only 24.

Xiong Xiling, a native of Fenghuang, Hunan, was the son of a military officer. Called the "boy genius of Hunan," he obtained the high-level *jinshi* degree in 1895 at the remarkably early age of 24. Xiong had

entered the political life of Beijing with a three-year appointment to the Hanlin Academy in 1894, but he was obliged to return to Hunan because of his series of memorials opposing peace with Japan.¹⁶

Tan Sitong and Tang Caichang were the most radical reformers among the Hunanese activists. Both were brilliant scholars and ardent reformers. They represented a new type of patriotic idealist that was just starting to appear in China. Tan was born into a leading Hunanese gentry family in Beijing in 1864. He had a traditional education but was attracted to knight errant ideals. Although his native town was the turbulent district of Liuyang, in Hunan, most of Tan's time was spent outside Hunan. He traveled extensively throughout China. Shocked by China's defeat in the 1894–1895 war with Japan, he began to read works on Western science and technology; he also contacted Kang Youwei and began to study Buddhism. He wrote his best-known work, *Renxue* (*On Benevolence*), as an attempt to synthesize Confucianism, Buddhism, and Western science into a worldview. Tan believed that *ren* (benevolence) was the source of everything. He saw the inequality of traditional society, the “three bonds and five relationships,” and the autocratic system of government as being in basic conflict with *ren*. His views were among the most extreme of the reformist group.¹⁷

Tan took the civil service examination several times, but earned only the first, or *shengyuan*, degree. He did not receive an official position in the government until the last three years of his life. In 1896, he received a supernumerary appointment in the local government at Nanjing. The following year, he returned to Hunan at the invitation of the governor Chen Baozhen to take part in a reform program.¹⁸

Tang Caichang had a background similar to that of Tan Sitong. Also from Liuyang, both he and Tan studied under a local scholar, Ouyang Zhonggu, who was a devotee of the Han learning and of the late-Ming Hunanese Confucian scholar, Wang Fuzhi.¹⁹ Tang, too, spent a great deal of time traveling outside Hunan and was exposed to the New Text scholarship.²⁰ In 1896, Tang and Tan launched study societies in their home districts, where they earned a reputation as the “two heroes of Liuyang.” In 1897, Tang went back to Changsha to join the provincial reform movement. In Changsha, the two worked together in setting up the new-style Current Affairs School. They also cooperated in establishing a military academy and a newspaper, *Hunan News* (*Xiangbao*) in Changsha.²¹

By November 1897, Hunan's reform movement had new leadership, headed by Tan Sitong, Tang Caichang, Liang Qichao, Huang Zunxian, and Xu Renzhu. Changsha was now ready for more radical reform.

Their movement coincided with the German occupation of Qingdao and Jiaozhou Bay in Shandong in November 1897 and the beginning of the “scramble for concessions” by the foreign powers. The weakness of the Qing government during these events fostered a sense of crisis. The fear that China was about to be sliced up “like a melon” and partitioned among the great powers haunted the reformers and strengthened the belief of these young patriots that radical solutions would be needed if China were to be saved.²²

As this new patriotism swept through Hunan, a sense of alienation from the Qing government spread quickly. At the Current Affairs School, Liang Qichao conducted lectures on current events and “new learning.” Liang and his colleagues also distributed literary materials revived from the Ming resistance to the Manchu conquest in the seventeenth century. Although racial consciousness began to appear frequently as Liang reminded the Chinese race of the alien rule of the present dynasty and called for “people’s rights” (*minquan*), Charlton M. Lewis argues that it is misleading to insist that the main goal of these radical reformers was to overthrow the Qing dynasty. The proof was that as soon as the Guangxu emperor attempted a national reform, Liang and his Hunanese friends immediately rallied around him, and continued to do so even after the Hundred Days Reform ended.²³

The most striking radicalization was Liang Qichao’s suggestion to Gov. Chen Baozhen in December 1897 that in order to preserve a base from which to secure the future regeneration of China, one or two centrally located and prosperous provinces should declare their independence (*xili*) and reform themselves as an example to the rest of the nation.²⁴ Liang held that once Hunan was reorganized independently it could become a catalyst for the recovery of China. Liang argued that although this advice might sound disloyal or rebellious, it was a necessary action to prepare for the day when all other provinces would be ceded to or stolen by foreign powers. Thus, it was China’s only hope.²⁵ Liang was not promoting provincial independence on the romantic ground of “Hunan for the Hunanese.” He believed that the province was a perfect place to implement ideas that could eventually save the nation. Liang’s proposal for provincial autonomy and local self-government was never opposed to by the provincial elites, although they soon attacked his radical teachings at the Current Affairs School. The proposal for provincial independence echoed in Hunanese politics for nearly thirty years.²⁶

Liang hoped to popularize radical reform. As soon as he arrived at the Current Affairs School, Liang began to teach Kang Youwei’s interpretation of Confucianism. He emphasized the origins of the Chinese

political reform in ancient times. His lectures were based on the *Mencius*, the *Gongyang Commentary* (a New Text document), and Kang Youwei's book, *Datongshu* (The Book on the Ideal of Grand Unity), which regarded Confucius as a reformer. When students showed their notes to relatives and friends during the New Year vacation, a great stir was set off throughout the entire province. People were shocked by the radical ideas taught at the Current Affairs School.²⁷

About the same time, Tan Sitong, Tang Caichang, and their literati friends were urging the governor to approve the creation of a study society of a new type: the South China Study Society (*Nan xuehui*). The South China Study Society started as an officially sanctioned gentry debating society. To Liang Qichao, study societies embodied the secrets of national power and wealth in the West, where scholarly organizations existed in each different field. Liang observed that they had also appeared in ancient China during Confucius' time. Because they were not new to either China or the West, study societies were the places to cultivate an eclectic search for knowledge and the kind of egalitarian philosophy that represented the main threads of Kang Youwei's writings.²⁸

The South China Study Society also was regarded by Liang as the predecessor of a provincial legislature, which would help protect the independence of Hunan. He later recalled:

As the theory that the great powers were partitioning China arose, Hunanese men of purpose all made plans for the period after the disaster. They thought to preserve Hunan's independence, but the independence movement could not be simply empty talk. It was first necessary that the people be versed in the art of politics and experienced in self-government. Thus, we established this society to discuss the matter and as a foundation for the future. Later [its example] could be spread to the other provinces of the South so that even in the event of future partition, South China would escape destruction.²⁹

Many of the debates of the South China Study Society were published in the *Hunan News*, a new daily newspaper. Planned by Xiong Xiling in 1897, it was launched in March 1898 under the editorship of Tang Caichang and Tan Sitong, with subsidies from Gov. Chen Baozhen. Newspapers were crucial to the educational mission of the reformers, and the *Hunan News* became an important addition to such organs as *Current Affairs News* in Shanghai and the *Hunan Reform News* (*Xiangxue*

bao) in Changsha. The *Hunan News* was distributed throughout the province and its stated purpose was to “spread the new trends and expand awareness.”³⁰

The *Hunan News* published theories linking parliamentary government, political parties, and people’s rights to ideas in the classics and the examples of the ancient sage-kings. *Hunan News* also published some more moderate and concrete proposals by Tang Caichang, Tan Sitong, and others for military academies, a modern Western-equipped army and navy, and improved training of government officials.³¹

Stimulated by the newspapers and the South China Study Society, other reform institutions proliferated in Hunan during the spring of 1898. New associations with more specific reformist objectives advocated marriage reform, a ban on foot binding, and a kind of program for women’s liberation. Another urged people to simplify the wedding ceremony and to end fancy forms of dress and expensive ways of entertaining guests.³² The young reformers were questioning basic social norms and the very style of gentry life.

Clearly, Liang Qichao, Tan Sitong, Tang Caichang, and the young reformers were using the new-style schools, study societies, and newspapers as instruments to launch a major reform movement. At the time, there were fifty-one new-style schools, study societies, and newspaper publishing houses in China, and sixteen were in Hunan.³³ The formation of the Current Affairs School especially inspired the enlightened intellectuals and young students. Gentry elites in the province vied with each other to reform the old system of Confucian academies into modern schools and to create new-style schools in Hunan. In this regard, the Current Affairs School was a pioneering experiment in Hunan’s educational reform.

In the thrilling atmosphere of the day, students and faculty at the Current Affairs School were occasionally allowed to criticize the autocracy and misgovernment of the Qing dynasty. Some forbidden works of the long-deceased Ming loyalists were reprinted. “The atmosphere in the school,” Liang wrote later, “became more radical day by day.”³⁴

In the South China Study Society, Liang Qichao and his reformer colleagues were talking about “equality” among all members of the study society and within the elite. The South China Study Society became part of the grand plan that Liang was preparing for Hunan. In a letter he sent to Gov. Chen Baozhen in January 1898, Liang defined the goal of reform and outlined his ideal institutions. The Current Affairs School and the South China Study Society made the people enlightened; this

popular knowledge (*minzhi*) should be extended as a basis for the people's political rights (*minquan*), and the people should share equal power with the local elite and government officials under a system of American-style checks and balances.³⁵ These young reformers, especially Tan Sitong, exhaustively studied the ancient writings of *Mencius*, the *Gongyang Commentary*, the *Six Classics*, and other classics, to show that people's rights really were inherent in the Chinese tradition.³⁶

Although the young reformers worked hard to search Chinese antiquity for reform precedents, some of their radical theories and ideas began to alarm the powerful and more orthodox members of the Hunanese elite. Originally supporters of reform, when they realized how fundamentally Kang's ideas and the radical theories of the young reformers threatened the core values and institutions of the social order, opposition began to form. According to these critics, the reforms and the theories of these radicals were not aimed at a defensive self-strengthening of China, but were aggressively subverting Chinese tradition and making revolutionary changes in the social order. They saw the ideas, institutions, and traditional sociopolitical structure under attack.

In summer 1898, the opposition was headed by Wang Xianqian and Ye Dehui (1864–1927). They gradually gained the support of reform-minded officials like Zhang Zhidong and Chen Baozhen. A good friend of Gov. Chen Baozhen, Wang had done much to support the initial moderate reforms in Hunan. According to Wang himself, it was only in February 1898, when he attended the inauguration of the South China Study Society that he began to doubt the course of the reform movement. The event took place at the Changsha Hall of Filial Purity (*Xiaolian tang*)³⁷ on February 21, 1898. More than three hundred people attended: commoners as well as provincial officials and gentry.³⁸ The opening address was given by the new chairman, Pi Xirui (1850–1908). Huang Zunxian, Tan Sitong, and Gov. Chen Baozhen also spoke. Wang was alarmed by the unorthodox tone of the speeches. Articles subsequently published in the *Hunan News* sounded even more threatening. Later, when Ye Dehui brought him materials from the curriculum of the Current Affairs School, Wang was completely convinced that Kang Youwei and his followers were plotting rebellion.³⁹

Ye Dehui, a native of Xiangtan, Hunan, was only 34 years old in 1898. He was quite different from Wang Xianqian but equally important. Ye was a brilliant scholar and bibliophile and had earned the highest *jinshi* degree in 1889.⁴⁰ He had served on the Board of Civil Appointments before he retired on a large inheritance. He spent much of his wealth

on books, and he was also a connoisseur of painting. He firmly believed that study was the gateway to moral cultivation. As for the nation, Ye believed that China's best hope was to avoid all kinds of Western influence, so he had never taken any part in the self-strengthening projects in Hunan's reforms. His extreme rightist views, which conflicted with those of the young reformers, forced the Hunanese gentry to find a middle ground, a quest that became the conservative reaction of 1898.

Actually, when the radical reformers spoke of "equality" in the South China Study Society, they meant equality within the elite. Their explicit goal was to expand gentry power. Many of them were influenced by such early Qing thinkers as Gu Yanwu (1613–1682), who had suggested that hereditary magistrates serve in their own provinces. Kang, Liang, and the young reformers often expressed opposition to the "law of avoidance" that prohibited it, which clearly showed their attempt to extend local gentry influence.⁴¹

Wang Xianqian and the senior Hunanese elite sought to preserve the gentry's position and also to fight the radical reformers' theory of "equality" within the elite. They found utterly unacceptable the idea that young men like Tan Sitong and Tang Caichang should be treated the same as the senior Hanlin scholars. The emerging conservative gentry felt the essence of Confucianism was opposed to such new theories that challenged the hierarchic order of society. Wang and the senior gentry were also disturbed by the young reformers' new interpretations of the classics. However, they were also inclined to defend Confucian orthodoxy on the basis of pure self-interest. With Kang Youwei rising to pre-eminence in Beijing and Liang Qichao uniting young Hunanese in schools and study societies in Changsha, the long-established gentry domination of Hunanese society and politics was threatened. They were also concerned that the prominence of the Hunanese in the imperial bureaucracy would end. Even worse to Wang and the conservative elite was the likelihood that Kang, Liang, and their new Cantonese group already controlled the youth of Hunan. As one Hunan conservative put it, "Above, they [the reformers] have Cantonese support; below, they have a factional mob."⁴² Wang Xianqian himself also warned Gov. Chen Baozhen:

Kang Youwei's sentiments are perverse and rebellious. This everyone knows. His sworn partisans from Guangdong province support him most strongly. The situation is particularly difficult to fathom. They use Western studies to make themselves

cultured and contact Western individuals to make themselves important. Their basic intention is to move north into Hunan, and their activities (to this end) have not changed.⁴³

It was clear that the Western learning that Kang, Liang, and their devotees from Guangdong advocated also threatened the Hunanese conservatives and enhanced their resistance. First, conservative gentry like Ye Dehui firmly believed that keeping Chinese learning untainted by Western influences was the best hope for China. Second, the conservative Hunanese gentry never forgot how fiercely Hunan had resisted the pseudo-Christian Taiping rebels from Guangdong and Guangxi provinces half a century before and how courageously the *Xiang jun* (Hunan Army) under the leadership of Zeng Guofan had finally put down the rebellion. They often seemed to see a reincarnation of the Taiping rebellion in Kang and Liang. Although charges that the reformers were spreading both Western learning and Christianity were somewhat paranoid, it was plausible that a “factional gang” of New Text scholars from Guangdong could gain control of the educational apparatus of Hunan. If Kang’s or Liang’s theories eclipsed the conservative orthodoxy, Wang and his colleagues and students would be cut off from participation in the educational or political bureaucracy. The relationship between scholarship and political power in China had been institutionalized through the civil service examination system for centuries, and the linkage was strong.

Tensions and accusations gradually increased in Changsha. In early June 1898, a group of students at the Yuelu Academy petitioned Wang Xianqian to request that Gov. Chen dismiss Liang Qichao as dean at the Current Affairs School. They condemned Liang’s unorthodox ideas of “people’s rights” and political “equality.” “If the authority (of the emperor) is brought down, who will govern?” the students petitioned. “If the people can govern themselves, what is the function of the emperor? These (political ideas) will lead the empire to chaos.” “[These radicals] will mislead the students to become rebels with no respect to their fathers and the emperor.”⁴⁴

The petition from the students at the Yuelu Academy elicited an angry response from students at the Current Affairs School. Xu Renzhu, the educational commissioner, initially supported the students at the Current Affairs School and attacked those at Yuelu. But Wang Xianqian sided with Yuelu and Xu’s voice was suppressed. Wang Xianqian, Ye Dehui, Zhang Zhidong, and seven others petitioned Gov. Chen to replace Liang Qichao.⁴⁵ The Hunanese gentry not only petitioned the

governor but took their protests to Beijing. Xiong Xiling, therefore, recommended replacing all the conservatives (academic heads) with “enlightened, upright, universal scholars” so as to keep the conservatives “out of touch with current affairs.”⁴⁶

Xiong’s suggestion was not adopted. Bitter debates continued, but the conservatives soon increased the pressure, and the radical reform leadership began to fall apart. One by one, the young reformers left Hunan. Some were virtually driven out; some, like Liang Qichao and Tan Sitong, found that even as reform sputtered in Hunan, greater opportunities were available in Beijing, where the imperial Hundred Days Reform was just starting.⁴⁷ On June 8, 1898, Pi Xirui resigned his chairmanship of the South China Study Society and left Hunan for his native Nanchang. In the middle of June, Xiong Xiling resigned his directorship at the Current Affairs School, and the assistant deans who came to the school with Liang Qichao also left for Guangdong. Later, Gov. Chen Baozhen enforced stricter censorship of the *Hunan News*, at the insistence of Zhang Zhidong. Late in summer 1898, Tang Caichang also headed for Beijing, at the invitation of Tan Sitong, but he had only just arrived in Hankou when he learned of the death of his friend. Tan had obtained a job in the Grand Council and played a key role in the Hundred Days Reform: He was one of six reformers executed when the reform movement was suppressed by the Empress Dowager Cixi’s coup d’état in September.

After the coup, the imperial court wiped out the remnants of radical reform in Hunan, bringing changes in the province to an abrupt end. The imperial government then appointed the conservative lieutenant governor, Yu Liansan, to replace Chen Baozhen as governor of Hunan.⁴⁸ The Empress Dowager Cixi issued a decree on October 6, 1898 in which she ordered Zhang Zhidong to close down the South China Study Society and the Police Bureau (*Baoweiju*) and to burn all reform documents from the Study Society.⁴⁹ The Current Affairs School lingered for a short time under the supervision of Wang Xianqian. However, only about forty students remained, and all the progressive faculty and students left or were expelled. In 1899, the school was moved to another location in Changsha, and its name was changed to the Academy for Practical Learning (*Qiushi shuyuan*). The *Hunan News* had already ceased publication in August. Of the important reform institutions, only the Police Bureau (*Baoweiju*) was maintained intact: The new governor explained that actually it was only a different name for *baojia*, the traditional system of neighborhood security.⁵⁰

Aftermath of Reform: Division and Revolution

It was easy to expel the radical reformers of 1898 from Hunan and to close down the institutions they established in the province, but the reform controversy over Confucian doctrine persisted. The province became divided into two groups, conventionally known as the “new faction” (the radicals) and the “old faction” (the conservatives).

The controversy over doctrine hardened into political divisions. Influential senior gentry like Wang Xianqian and Zhang Zhidong, who had supported the initial stage of the reform movement, now joined with those conservatives who believed that the change had gone too far. They pledged their loyalty to the Empress Dowager Cixi after her coup and took up the task of reaffirming Confucian orthodoxy while strengthening the traditional social and political order.

Although exiled and suppressed, the young Hunanese radical reformers of 1898 held onto their vision of sociopolitical progress and national power. The young patriots with new ideas were determined to break into or destroy the established gentry domination of local social and political power. However, repudiation of reform by the Qing court made the radical reformers rebel against the legitimate government. Their political status was now no different from that of the revolutionary, Sun Yat-sen, or from the more powerful leaders of illegal secret societies. Because their regular road to advancement and their usual access to legitimate sources of political influence were cut off, the radical reformers of 1898 joined Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, and other Cantonese as exiles in Japan.⁵¹

In 1900, Tang Caichang and other Hunanese radical reformers of 1898 recruited a large army from the secret societies in Hunan and Hubei provinces for a revolt against the Qing government, with the encouragement of Kang Youwei's *Baohuang hui* (Protect the Emperor Society). Lewis argues that the cooperation between the radical reformers and the secret societies helped to attract the masses' participation in the movement for change.⁵² Tang's uprising was suppressed. He and his followers were beheaded on the Wuchang execution grounds. Tang died a martyr to reform as had his friend, Tan Sitong. Tang's head was displayed outside a Wuchang gate the following day, on Zhang Zhidong's orders. It was reported that his eyes remained open, staring outward.⁵³

The hope of many young Hunanese reformers to establish a strong and reformed imperial China died with Tang Caichang. The surviving Hunanese reformers were disheartened and turned toward a revolutionary

violent overthrow of the political system. On the other hand, the conservative Hunanese gentry, threatened by Kang-Liang heterodoxy, backed up the provincial officials in their effort to maintain the conventional social political order and to cultivate orthodox values.

The Opening of Hunan

After 1898, foreigners began to penetrate into Hunan. Hunan was a province long known for its anti-foreignism. Throughout the nineteenth century, Hunanese had fought fiercely and successfully to prevent any foreigners from entering the province. However, conservative forces could not overcome the impact of the British belligerence of 1891, the Japanese victory in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895, and the scramble for concessions in 1897–1898. Traditional Hunanese xenophobia was clearly out of date. Even in the early 1890s, Hunan's provincial officials were able to moderate the xenophobia of the Hunanese literati. During the reform controversy of 1898, xenophobia was rationalized intellectually by both radicals and conservatives. As anti-foreignism began to break down, imperialist penetration into Hunan proceeded rapidly. Missionaries hoped to convert the Hunanese and save their souls, while merchants were eager to open the resources and markets of central China.

In the eight years from 1899 to 1906, four treaty ports, Yuezhou (1899), Changsha (1904), Changde (1906), and Xiangtan (1906), were opened in Hunan.⁵⁴ The opening of Changsha was the key to Hunan, not because of Changsha's economic importance, but because it was the political and cultural center of the province. The Hunanese resistance to foreign entry was based on political and cultural xenophobia; thus, the opening of the capital city signified an overcoming or at least a neutralizing of Hunanese anti-foreign influence.

Meanwhile, foreign commercial interest in Hunan increased rapidly. As foreign commercial expansion got underway, it accompanied and assisted the missionary intrusion into the province. Powerful gunboats on the rivers of Hunan protected and reinforced the privileges and the treaty rights of the Western merchants and missionaries. Large amounts of cheap manufactured goods were imported to Hunan, which interrupted the traditional pattern of trade and threatened the authority of the local gentry. More important, it helped to awaken Hunanese consciousness of their economic rights. However, the expansion of foreign interests did not meet the traditional hostilities in Hunan, which were confined to remote areas of the province after 1900. Instead, expansion

was facilitated by the protection and cooperation of government officials and provincial elites.

The earlier absolute anti-foreignism, based on faith in orthodox Confucian doctrines, gave way to political nationalism. The Hunanese realized that the security of China did not depend on doctrinal orthodoxy but on industrial changes, on demands for material power patterned on the West, and on the recovery of Chinese economic rights. The new China would not be built on moral principles but on railways and mines. Unlike the old literati-based anti-foreign movement, the emerging political nationalism that tried to turn back the imperialist tide called for a different response to confronting the foreigners. Instead of fearing and injuring the foreigners, the political nationalists advocated that the Chinese argue with them in a friendly way to recover their rights. Unlike the reform movement of 1898, which was confined to radical patriots, the newly emerging nationalism involved many varied groups of people.

As foreign penetration extended into Hunan, the provincial elite strengthened reform programs that had begun in the 1890s. The provincial elite had to embark on industrial and commercial activities, which in many aspects were identical with the goals of the imperial court. By 1907, a strong reform movement led and dominated by the provincial elite partially restrained foreign expansion in Hunan. This next wave of reform fit right into the atmosphere of the new nationalism.