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## *Popular Unrest and the 1911 Revolution in Jiangsu*

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What is the nature of the Chinese revolution of 1911? Who took part in it and why? How do historians interpret it? These questions still beg further consideration. What seems indisputable at this stage of research, however, is that the small groups of revolutionaries and their loosely organized alliance, the Tongmenghui, did not play a solo in the concert of the 1911 Revolution. Recent scholarship on the subject, which tends to study the revolution on the provincial level, confirms that a variety of social classes participated in the revolution—a picture far more complicated than we once believed. When all provincial pictures emerge, they may well challenge and modify some of the generalizations and hypotheses derived from the general studies of the revolution. My study proposes to take a closer look at the situation in Jiangsu province. However, this short paper can only focus on one specific aspect: the significance of the province's unrest for the Revolution of 1911.

The success of the revolution—that is, the downfall of the Qing dynasty—owed much to the defection of the province's urban and rural elite, particularly the gentry and the merchants (shen shang). Thanks to their endorsement and support,

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Jiangsu's independence from the Qing was first declared on November 3, 1911 and secured in December after the battle of Nanjing. They did so not because they were converted to the revolutionary cause, rather because they were fearful of it. Then why did they declare independence at the expense of the imperial court? To be sure, the relationship between the elite and the court had not been going well for sometime. For example, the court's repeated denials of their requests for the early convening of a parliament, as well as its ruthless measures to "nationalize" the railroads in many provinces, created a conflict between the two (Chi, 1973). But none of these unhappy encounters immediately ended the provincial elite's loyalty to the court. The overriding concern of Jiangsu's elite was to protect themselves against still greater sociopolitical unrest and violence. It is true that since the end of the Boxer uprising there had been no large-scale rebellion in China. But regional small riots, plotted by the members of revolutionary societies and engineered by local secret societies and by angry peasants, never died off (Chesneaux 1971: 135-139, 144). Then, following the Wuchang insurrection of October 10, 1911, the unrest escalated. When the imperial court showed little determination in suppressing the unrest, the provincial elite, sensitive to threats against their lives and properties, opted for independence from the court, thus placing their security under their own control. Indeed, there might have been no revolution in Jiangsu in 1911 if the provincial elite, without worrying about the unrest, had stiffened their loyalty to the dynasty. Nonetheless, the imperial government offered no resolute leadership. Thus, the elite had little choice but to take grasp of events.

#### *SOURCES OF UNREST*

Jiangsu was the richest province of the Qing dynasty, but its wealth was distributed unequally, socially as well as geographically. In the Huai River valley, for example, thousands of miserable fishermen and poor peasants were forced to subsist

on the most menial, unstable employment and on the most unreliable government relief programs. The situation of the poor in the province had worsened since the turn of the century. First, Jiangsu's economy—the old as well as the new sectors—was hit by the further penetration of foreign economic forces stemming from China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894. The postwar treaties, which secured most favorable terms for foreign businessmen, destroyed much of the old sector of the economy and made it virtually impossible for the infant new sector to compete with foreign enterprises. Second, after the Boxer catastrophe of 1900, Jiangsu was required to bear the heaviest burden for the payment of the indemnity—an allotment of 2.5 million taels a year (Wang Shu-huai, 1974: 140). This extra burden resulted in an increase in various taxes on land, salt, opium, commerce, and so on (Yeh-chien Wang, 1973: 62). Needless to say, the gentry and the merchants had to pay a higher rate of taxation, but the hardest hit were the poor. Landlords, for example, could shift their burden onto their tenants' shoulders, since there were no definite rent rates. It is not surprising to find that land rents in Jiangsu in the 1900s were much higher than land taxes (Jiangsu, 1903: 161). Third, unchecked population growth and a constant rise of food prices delivered yet another major blow to the poor. Finally, various reformist programs initiated after 1905 placed additional financial burden on the population at large (Lust, 1972: 168). In order to finance these programs many new taxes and compulsory donations were imposed. Some oppressive gentry, taking advantage of the reform, collected money for their own benefit. The common people's hostility toward the reform programs is evident. Wherever local riots spontaneously broke out, school houses, private mansions, and public buildings often fell prey to the fury of the rioters (Chen, 1955: 63-65). For instance, during a violent demonstration in Songjiang in March 1911, a dozen local self-rule offices (*zizhi gongsuo*) and 21 elementary schools were burnt down (Yangzhou shifanxueyuan, 1963: 10). All in all, the unbearable living conditions of the common people created serious social tension and conflicts.

Popular unrest was exacerbated by threats of revolutionary subversion. The revolutionaries and their organizations were by no means strong, but their propaganda and terrorism created a legend and disturbed stability. Zhang Yu-ping, a tutor at a Suzhou merchant's residence, testified that while traveling aboard a ship on the Yangzi River, he saw people gathered talking about the revolutionaries with wonder and admiration. One story he overheard was that a revolutionary who had swallowed a bomb jumped on his enemies and blew up (Yangzhou shifanxueyuan, 1963: 301).

In 1910 Cheng De-quan, who had proven his administrative skills in Manchuria, was transferred to Jiangsu as its governor. He soon found himself faced with great unrest. In November, a multitude of starving people in northern Jiangsu swarmed into Yangzhou and Suzhou for relief. This situation was given added poignancy by the invasions of similar groups of refugees from neighboring provinces such as Jiangsi and Anhui. As a result, reports of theft, robbery, rape, and murder increased dramatically. Then came the terrible flood of June 1911, which drove thousands to open revolt (Brown, 1912: 3-4). Rice depots were looted, residences of the rich were attacked, and public buildings were set afire. In his urgent messages to the governor-general in Nanjing and to the members of the Grand Council in Beijing [Peking], Governor Cheng clearly indicated the extent of the crisis and requested immediate assistance (Yangzhou shifanxueyuan, 1963: 1-2, 22-24, 38-39).

Help was slow in coming or did not come at all. The problem was thus left to the governor. But he had little administrative means to end the trouble. He complained that most officials were more interested in profit and promotion than in their jobs and duties. Nor did the public security forces function appropriately. A large number of police officers were opium addicts, and neglected their duties by avoiding direct confrontation with bandits and rioters. Other government forces, like the reserve squads and the salt patrols, were also weak and ineffective (Yangzhou shifanxueyuan, 1963: 17-19).

As social disorder mounted and the government failed to react, the elite, for self protection, began purchasing more rifles and

expanding the militia forces. The Shanghai "merchant militia" (*shangtuan*), for example, had 5,000 troopers and hundreds of modern rifles (Chai et al., 1957, vol. 7: 87). This sort of local militarization was approved and even supported by the government as militias were helpful in suppressing crime and maintaining order (vol. 7: 86). Yet, there is no doubt that militarization gave the elite the power to take independent action.

#### *POPULAR UNREST AND THE DECISION OF INDEPENDENCE*

The outbreak of the Wuchang insurrection on October 10, 1911 escalated fears and uncertainty in Jiangsu. The significance of the insurrection was clear to the province's elite. It encouraged lawbreakers and rebels (*fumang biandi*), indeed, similarly armed insurrections broke out in other regions. The Qing government's handling of the situation was incompetent. There was no doubt in the minds of the elite that the new Manchu throne failed to provide resolute leadership. Thus, in late October, panic and rumors spread among the Jiangsu elite. In an effort to calm the situation, Governor Cheng, in addition to sending urgent messages to Beijing, held a parade and displayed his wife in a sedan chair in order to quell the rumor that the governor's family had fled (*Yangzhou shifanxueyuan*, 1963: 54). All the while, the merchant militia in the provincial capital actively sought new rifles to improve its strength (p. 100).

Nevertheless, for some time, the elite in Jiangsu still hoped that the imperial court could restore order. Zhang Jian, president of the Jiangsu Assembly, called on the Manchu general Tie-liang in Nanjing and urged him to send troops to Wuchang to put down the insurrection (Zhang Peng-yuan, 1969: 214-215). Apparently, for Zhang and his constitutionist colleagues, there was still a chance for the dynasty to survive, that is, to proclaim full constitutionalism at once. Then, in late October, Zhang Jian and two representatives of the Jiangsu Assembly, Lei Fen and Yang Ting-dong, held an urgent meeting with Governor Cheng in

Suzhou. In a hotel at midnight the group drafted a secret memorial (known as the "Qiuye caoshu") to the imperial court in which, aside from recommending quick suppression of the revolution, they requested the court to end the source of trouble by declaring a full-fledged constitutional monarchy.<sup>1</sup>

When the Manchu court failed to respond to their request and the situation deteriorated, the Jiangsu elite decided to preserve themselves by taking control of the province's security by disassociating themselves from the dynasty. On November 3, 1911, with the support of the Shanghai gentry and the merchant militias, the revolutionary Chen Qi-mei proclaimed the province independent and founded the Shanghai Military Government (Farjanel, 1916: 71). His minister of civil affairs was the noted Shanghai gentry, Li Ping-shu. The transfer of power in Shanghai was remarkably smooth and nonviolent, and order in the city was quickly restored and effectively maintained by the militia forces of the gentry and merchants (Chai et al., 1957, 7: 1-5; Rankin, 1971: 72-125).

More important was the proclamation of Suzhou's independence by the governor himself on November 5, 1911. After the news of the Wuchang rising reached Suzhou the local elite had met regularly and discussed the situation with great concern. The November 3 defiance in Shanghai helped them to make a quick decision. Pan Zhu-jian, chairman of the Suzhou Militia, You Xian-jia, chairman of Suzhou's Chamber of Commerce, and two representatives of the Suzhou Assembly paid the governor a visit and formally delivered their consensus on independence (Guo, 1912: 86-87). The governor, who supported constitutionalism and had had good working relations with the provincial elite, promptly accepted the request and proclaimed independence on November 5 (Chai et al., 1957, 7: 7). Security and order were clearly the main concerns. In their talks and correspondence with the governor, the local elite had strongly emphasized the avoidance of chaos and bloodshed. These phrases came up again and again: "independence for self-protection" (*duli wei baosu zhice*), "keep Suzhou out of peril" (*baosu mianhuo*), and "save the people from disaster" (*mian shenglin tutan*);

Zhonghua minguo, 1963, 2, 4: 5-6). The governor, too, stressed the theme of stability in his general order to the public: (a) those who illegally possess weapons and munitions will be punished by death according to the martial law; (b) while Jiangsu has now declared independence, the law should be strictly observed by all; (c) all residents in Suzhou should help prevent violence; (d) those who attempt to hide criminals will be subject to severe punishment (Yangzhou shifanxueyuan, 1963: 63). Moreover, as a gesture of revolution, the governor broke a piece of tile from the roof of his office building and replaced the yamen sign board with that of the military government (p. 125).

The Suzhou elite's appreciation of the governor's endorsement and support is perfectly understandable. Not only was there no breakdown in authority and order, but in winning over the governor the elite had forestalled government retaliation against their defiance. On November 3, a rumor was rife in Shanghai that Governor Cheng had ordered his troops to Shanghai to punish the "rebels" (Chai et al., 1957; 7: 44-45). The governor's expeditious change of allegiance, of course, quickly squelched the rumor. Moreover, thanks to the governor's instructions to the prefectures (fu) and the counties (xian), the respective local administrations and assemblies made speedy decisions to join the independence movement; the only exception was Nanjing (Yangzhou shifanxueyuan, 1963: 149, 151-163, 207-214). The Nanjing elite used the same argument of nonviolence to pressure the officials of Nanjing. However, the governor-general, Zhang Ren-jun, who was supported by the loyalist general, Zhang Xun, rejected independence.

The loyalist stance of the two Zhangs worried the provincial elite who had already announced their commitment to independence by issuing the proclamation (p. 145). But this common concern united the provincial elite and provided them with an acknowledged motive to defend independence. Their strong support of the Jiangsu-Zhejiang allied forces against Nanjing showed their fear of reprisal by the loyalists and their determination to eliminate the danger. The 25-day battle of Nanjing was

bloody, but the rebels' victory not only secured the independence of the province, but further consolidated elite control (Chai et al., 1957, 7: 23-24; Mao, 1957, 1: 61-98). Cheng De-quan and his elite constituency had little difficulty in reestablishing law and order throughout Jiangsu. According to the reminiscence of a Suzhou resident, after independence Cheng De-quan became a popular hero of the elite.<sup>2</sup>

In short, the fear of unrest and uncertainty made the provincial elite choose the alternative of independence, which of course was not without some calculated risks. However, so far as peaceful transition was concerned, the elite had achieved their basic goal. With independence and the republic, their political influence and social standing were strengthened. Almost everywhere throughout the province, landlords, officials, and assembly representatives continued to predominate in key positions of the Republic's prefecture and county administrations. To be sure, a few revolutionary leaders, namely, Chen Qi-mei of the Tongmenghui, and Li Xiao-he and Lin Shu-qing, both of the Guangfuhui, played commanding roles in Shanghai, Wusong, and Zhenjiang respectively. But their strength was based on their connections with the local elite. In some other areas they assumed power without the support of the elite. In some other regions, such as Kunshan and Rugao, revolutionaries who lacked both a political base and financial resources had to talk the local elite into participating in the new administration and allow them to take control (Yangzhou shifanxueyuan, 1963: 130, 230-231). By seeking cooperation and support from the elite, however, revolutionaries had to adjust their policy to the elite's taste. For instance, both the Tongmenghui and the Guangfuhui had a program of land equalization; the latter's appeared even more radical than the former's. But land reform was hardly mentioned by revolutionaries after provincial independence. Apparently, the idea was dropped in order not to offend the elite (Li Shi-yue, 1973: 70). After the fall of the Manchu regime, the majority in the Guangfuhui became allied with the provincial elite. Li Xiao-he voluntarily subordinated himself to Governor Cheng De-quan after Suzhou's independence (Guo, 1912: 85).

Zhang Bing-lin, another key member of the Guangfuhui, joined the Constitutionists to create a new political party (Chai et al., 1957, 7: 49). The revolutionary leaders of the Tongmenghui were interested in making compromises as well. Wang Jing-wei, a right-hand man of Sun Yat-sen, entreated his fellow revolutionaries to accept Yuan Shi-kai as the President of the Republic. In addition, the revolutionary camp was weakened by the internal and often bloody struggles between the Tongmenghui and the Guangfuhui (Zhang Yu-fa, 1975: 524-526). As a result, the revolutionaries had only one major accomplishment to their credit: the toppling of the Manchu regime. Indeed, for many revolutionary leaders, the end of the regime meant the completion of the revolution. As Zhang Bing-lin noted, "the revolutionary organizations should cease to exist as the Republic is born" (Chai et al., 1957, 7: 49).

#### *URBAN UNREST, 1911-1912*

The provincial elite did not quickly eliminate unrest after the proclamation of the independence and even after the official founding of the Republic on January 1, 1912. In the cities, in addition to banditry and common crimes, there were two major problems: subversive activities engineered by certain revolutionaries and mutinies staged by the officers and soldiers of various armed forces (Fung, 1975: 113-114).

Mutinies often arose from such minor matters as quarrels, revenge, mistreatment, greed, and the like. The March 1912 mutiny in Suzhou city, which caused "enormous property losses," started with an accidental clash between some soldiers and the city police (Yangzhou shifanxueyuan, 1963: 109-112; Guo, 1912: 90-92). Of the numerous mutinies in northern Jiangsu, two appeared the most destructive. In early November 1911, in Huaian prefecture, due to uncertainties and restlessness, the soldiers of the new-style Thirteenth Regiment of the Seventh Division staged a large-scale armed robbery. Reportedly, the soldiers wanted to "steal enough money before deserting the

army to return home to enjoy a good life." In the wake of this disturbance, the Huaian gentry made Jiang Yen-xing, a conservative, the Military Governor of Northern Jiangsu and charged him with the task of restoring order and stability (pp. 334, 336). Further to the north, in Xuzhou, soldiers and bandits (most of whom were army deserters), according to the local history, raided and looted frequently in the urban sections of the prefecture (pp. 585-587). The *North China Daily News* printed this description of the February 9, 1912 looting of Xuzhou city: "the whole population seemed to go crazy at once" (Bland, 1912: 39). The problem of mutiny and banditry was basically resolved after the implementation of more vigorous local self-rule programs, such as *baojia* style household checkups and strict military disciplinary measures which had been introduced by the elite since November, 1912 (Yangzhou shifanxueyuan, 1963: 588).

Those who were engaged in subversion were often little-known members of the revolutionary societies. Presumably, they came from the lower social spectrum: tenants, artisans, poor scholars, petty merchants, unemployed city-dwellers and the like. Their vision of the revolution must have been significantly different from that of many revolutionary leaders. The difficulty, however, is that those with low social standing were often obscure and less colorful, and thus little known in the revolutionary movement. Some of their known acts of subversion may nonetheless suggest the diversity in the course of the revolution. Not even these revolutionaries really worked for mass mobilization, although after the province became independent and the Republic was founded they appeared to be more sympathetic to the sufferings of the poor and less tolerant of elite control.

In southern Jiangsu, before and after Suzhou's independence, some revolutionaries were very active in the urban areas of Wuxi and Kunshan. Although they were quickly overpowered by the elite forces in the cities, the interesting question is whether they had anything to do with the nearby village riots of 1911. No evidence suggests that they had made any significant effort to organize the rioting peasants for their revolutionary cause.

However, a native of Kunshan city disclosed that on November 5, 1911, a number of revolutionaries who identified themselves as the representatives of the new military governor of Shanghai, Chen Qi-mei, went to Yangxiangqin village in Kunshan county and proclaimed null and void all farm rents. Since the Kunshan tenants had long been resisting high rents, the revolutionaries' proclamation brought forth great euphoria in the region. The tenants' enthusiasm, however, was soon dissipated after Cheng De-quan had declared independence and sent his agents to the villages on behalf of the landlords. When urban Kunshan was under the elite's control, the riots of rural Kunshan were suppressed by force (Yangzhou shifanxueyuan, 1963: 133-134). (The rural unrest will be discussed fully later in this paper). Clearly, Cheng's order reintroducing rent payment overpowered Chen's order nullifying the payment. We cannot, however, determine if Chen Qi-mei, an urbanite and friend of the gentry, had indeed given the null and void order to his fellow revolutionaries. It seems unlikely that he intended to create a disturbance at the expense of the elite. It appears more likely that the Kunshan revolutionaries who were familiar with local injustice, sympathetic with the tenants' plight, and dissatisfied with the urban elite in Kunshan, took the liberty of borrowing Chen's authority.

In Suzhou, a group of revolutionaries launched the "Vanguard Corps for the Northern Expedition" (*Beifa xianfengdui*) after the declaration of independence. As the name of this organization indicates, it was composed of the most enthusiastic advocates of the continuation of the revolution by military conquest. When the South-North negotiations for peaceful reunification of the nation took place, the Vanguard Corps was under heavy pressure from both Cheng De-quan and many revolutionary leaders to restrict their activities. Unhappy with Cheng's reactionary measures, the Vanguard Corps organized the secret "Oust Cheng Society" (*Xichenghui*) in Suzhou city. The plot, however, was exposed. Cheng deliberately misrepresented the plotters' intention by calling the group the "City Massacre Society" (*Xichenghui*) and by declaring that they intended

to plunge Suzhou into a bloodbath.<sup>3</sup> He executed two of them—both obscure members of the Tongmenghui—like common criminals and abruptly dissolved the Vanguard Corps by force. Its commander, Zhu Bao-cheng, a former platoon leader of a new style army in Suzhou and a secret member of the Guangfuhui, was also arrested, even though he apparently did not participate in the conspiracy to oust Cheng. Zhu was judged guilty by association and soon died in prison. A key conspirator, Liu Bo-ying, member of the Tongmenghui, somehow managed to escape after hiding himself on a roof for three days (Yangzhou shifanxueyuan, 1963: 126-128).

In northern Jiangsu, where the grip of the provincial elite was tighter still, certain revolutionaries had made similar vain attempts to seize power. In Yangzhou, the most prosperous region north of the Yangzi, there were numerous disturbances after the Wuchang insurrection. A breakout from two xian prisons that sent hundreds of prisoners to the streets further dramatized the instability (p. 295). Against this background, Sun Tian-sheng, a hitherto unknown member of the Tongmenghui, emerged and declared himself Yangzhou's military governor. He seized the treasury of the Salt Administration in Yangzhou city and announced that the poor should not pay taxes and rents for three years (p. 315). But two members of the elite, Fang Er-wei, a merchant, and Zhou Gu-ren, a gentry, called an urgent meeting of the city's Chamber of Commerce which organized a self-defense force (*ziweidui*). With this force the Yangzhou elite acted quickly to send the Manchu subprefect out of the city, to proclaim independence, and to suppress the riots. After these were accomplished, Zhou Gu-ren invited his friend "Tiger Xu," or Xu Bao-shan, to Yangzhou city to become the military governor. Xu was an ex-salt smuggler and an underworld boss. Before the revolution he had joined the elite circle in Zhenjiang after surrendering to Duan-fang, the governor-general of Liangjiang. His salt and secret society connections, however, had remained unbroken.

The morning after Xu arrived in Yangzhou to take up the post of military governor, he had Sun Tian-sheng arrested,

thrown in prison, and soon murdered (Yangzhou shifanxueyuan, 1963: 303-305, 311-319). Reportedly, over seventy of Sun's followers were executed with him. They were condemned by the elite as "bandits" (*tufei*) and "false revolutionaries" (*jiageming*) (Chai et al., 1957, 7: 22-23).

About a month after Sun Tian-sheng's death, Xu Bao-shan authorized the execution of four more "bandits" in Dongtai xian (Yangzhou shifanxueyuan, 1963: 320). The victims also might well have been "radical revolutionaries." The suppression of revolutionary activity was successful in Yangzhou, and Xu's case amply illustrates that secret societies and their leaders could be counterrevolutionary.

Further to the north, in Huaiying city, Chen Xing-zhi, a low-ranking officer of a new-style army and secret member of the Tongmenghui, first proclaimed independence after the Wuchang insurrection. But the Huaian gentry soon set about filling the power gap. They supported Jiang Yen-xing as military governor. Jiang openly executed Chen Xing-zhi on the charge of subversion. Two of Chen's friends, Zhou Shi and Yuan Shi, both young student revolutionaries, were brutally killed by a former xian magistrate with the support of the conservative gentry. The two were accused of inciting the poor to kill ex-Manchu officials and to rob the rich (*shaguan jiasheng*; Yangzhou shifanxueyuan, 1963: 341-342, 354-359).

These revolutionary activities in northern and southern Jiangsu caused barely a ripple. The radical revolutionaries' resources were extremely limited; they did not even receive significant support from their own leaders, who were more interested in seeking cooperation with the elite. Nor did they develop a meaningful link with the masses. The peasants, the majority of Jiangsu's 24 million inhabitants, were left on their own.<sup>4</sup>

#### RURAL UNREST, 1911-1912

The peasant world in Jiangsu, though agitated, was not significantly changed by the revolution and the downfall of the

Manchu regime. Thus, rural unrest that had taken place before the revolution continued in the Republic (Gong and Chen, 1962). Following independence and even after the establishment of a new republican government, complaints by the Jiangsu elite, ranging from tenants' resistance to rent payments to village rioters' destruction of homes and shops, continued to flood the Office of Civil Affairs in Nanjing and Beijing. One of these numerous documents was a report filed by the Chamber of Commerce of Suzhou in January 1912 which stated that a large rice shop and a dozen "money shops" (*qianzhuang*) in the prefecture had been attacked by "rioting people" (*luanmin*). The report urgently requested that the police adopt effective measures to cope with the situation (Yangzhou shifanxueyuan, 1963: 107-110). These were primarily spontaneous riots, though secret societies, common thieves, and robbers could well have taken advantage of the disturbances (Lust, 1972: 200). The rioting villagers were mainly responding in a traditional way to unbearable living conditions. The frequency of reports of "rice robbery" (*qiangmi*) and violent protests against rents and taxes confirmed that the revolution had not solved fundamental rural problems. Nearly everywhere throughout the countryside peasants appeared not to welcome the birth of the Republic.

The unrest which occurred in rural Jiangsu before the revolution was inspired by the old land question and was aggravated by the disastrous 1911 flood in the Yangzi valley. Following the revolution, the land question remained unresolved. The rural poor faced the same landlords, the same high rents, and the same exploitation. Moreover, the new republican government in Jiangsu, highly dependent on the financial support of the landlord class and under strong elite influence, actually wielded its political authority and military muscle to suppress peasant resistance. Governor Cheng De-quan took stern measures to crush village riots after the founding of the Republic. So far as the peasants were concerned, the situation, if not worse, was certainly no better than under the empire.

The core of Jiangsu's land problem, particularly in the south, was the age-old conflict between landlords and tenants.

As Kojima's study of Suzhou prefecture (which included in its jurisdiction Suzhou, Kunshan, Changshou, and Wujiang) has indicated, this conflict had been turning from bad to worse since the Taiping Revolution. After that movement, the conflict was further complicated by the so-called "double ownership of the land system" (*yitian liangzhu zhi*), that is, landlords owned title to the land, while tenants "owned" the privilege of using the land. The landlords were entitled to the lion's share of the harvest—often 60%—despite the fact that the tenants not only furnished the labor but also made the larger contribution to improving the land. In addition, the tenants' right of usufruct was so precarious that they often tolerated or were forced to give in to the landlords' harsh demands. Worse still, when tenants were unable to pay the high rent, they had to yield their right to use the land as the payment. On the other hand, tenants had a sense of being united in a common struggle which derived from their large numbers—they were about 90% of the population in southern Jiangsu—and from their "class and property consciousness" based on their "partial ownership" of the land, to use Kojima's words. From time to time, they not only resisted high rents but refused to pay rents at all. This caused the landlords to solicit government help and resulted in the creation of "rent implementation bureaus" (*zhuzuju*). When it became difficult to collect rents, these bureaus served as instruments of persecution and intimidation. In 1887, for example, thousands of tenants in Suzhou prefecture were tortured and imprisoned for failing to pay rents to their landlords. There were, of course, also cases where rent collectors were harassed and beaten up by the angry tenants. On the eve of the revolution, in view of the ineffectiveness of these bureaus and the mounting crisis, more than 200 Suzhou landlords organized the so-called "land business association" (*tianyehui*) in the fall of 1910. Under the leadership of Tao Zhi-yuan, a *juren* degree holder and representative of the Suzhou Assembly, this association intended to defuse the situation by introducing reforms such as the improvement of farm working conditions and the adoption of fair and uniform rent rates. But the situation was already too

violent to allow reform to succeed. The antirent movement was spreading widely during the 1910-1911 period. After the revolution, some tenants went so far as to declare that since the dynasty had now changed, land should no longer belong to the original owners. Thus, landlords had to collect their rents by force. The local assemblies and the ministries of civil affairs in the province all came to the assistance of the landlords. According to the *Minlibao*, four tenants who steadfastly refused to pay any rent were executed by a firing squad on January 6, 1912 by the order of Governor Cheng De-quan. There were also reports that the old-time constables and the old methods of torture were used in rent collection (Kojima, 1967; 1971; Muramatsu, 1966: 585-591).

The largest and most vigorous tenant revolt was the so-called "thousand-men uprising" in the triangle between Changshou, Wuxi, and Jiangying, with the city of Suzhou at the center of the base. The terrible summer flood in 1911 strengthened the thousand-Men Society (*Qianrenhui*). Judging from their slogans and activities, there can be no doubt that the purpose of their movement was to resist rents. The principal leaders of whom we know had poor rural backgrounds. For instance, both Zhou Tian-bao and Du Hai-yun were tenants and active in Changshou *xian*, the Sun brothers were of peasant-tailor background and active in Wuxi *xian*, and Fan Wen-tao was a poor school teacher. Fan, perhaps the only literate leader, was made the "master advisor" (*junshi*) of the Society. Their sphere of action covered a seven-square-mile region in the triangular area between Changshou, Wuxi, and Jiangying. The Society's public gatherings had become more frequent since the outbreak of the Wuchang uprising. There is no evidence, however, to indicate that it was directly responding to the revolution. Its attention still focused exclusively on rents, the prime interest of the tenants. Nonetheless, the political uncertainties and social disturbances stimulated by the Wuchang rising further facilitated the action of the Society (Yangzhou shifanxueyuan, 1963: 163).

Tension mounted quickly in the triangle region in November, 1911, as the Changshou landlords were ready to collect rents following the proclamation of independence. An uprising erupted on November 28 at a small village near Wangzhuang, a town west of Changshou city, when soldiers and policemen from Changshou arrived and arrested Zhou Tian-bao. Angry tenants, armed with swords, spears, and carrying flags gathered and attempted to rescue Zhou. When they failed to do so, they took a landlord named Cheng Lao-jin hostage. Before the day was over, they raided at least four big landlords' residences. In the following three days, large groups of peasants, led by the Thousand-Men Society, marched to Wangzhuang from Wuxi and Jiangying to support the local rioters. The Sun brothers, Sun Er and Sun San, also came. Obviously following the example of the existing military government which was founded after provincial independence, the brothers declared themselves to be military governors. It seems that they intended to challenge the legitimacy of the military government controlled by the elite. But they did not actually formulate a government as such. Instead they continued to concentrate their energy on resisting rent collections (Yangzhou shifanxueyuan, 1963: 164-165). Moreover, before they could consolidate their forces in the region, the Changshou authorities sent in troops. The well-armed soldiers shot into the crowd in order to disperse the rioters and arrested some of their leaders.

According to Xu Zhao-wei, a former Hanlin Compiler and gentry in Changshou, rent resistance at Wangzhuang continued even after this military expedition. On December 30, Changshou's defense chief, Zhou Shi-xi, led another expedition into the region, which resulted in the death of 30 villagers. Then, in January 1912, two captured peasant rioters were shot to death by a firing squad and Zhou Tian-bao, leader of the Thousand-Men Society, was decapitated publicly in downtown Changshou. There is no doubt that the new republican government was as determined as the imperial court had been to deter rural unrest. But rural order was not fully restored in the triangle region until after the defense chief Zhou Shi-xi and his armed forces had been

stationed at Wangzhuang for nine months (Yangzhou shifanxueyuan, 1963: 83, 120).

A similar struggle between landlords and tenants can be found in the 1912 riot at Siyugang, one of Tongzhou's numerous river ports. The landlords of Siyugang, in the wake of the collapse of the river banks and the destruction of the farm lands behind the banks, proposed to build a bamboo floodgate. But they insisted that the tenants should pay half the cost. This stirred up the tenants, who had long been angered by the unreasonable demands of landlords. In the summer of 1912, Zheng Jian-rong, once a member of the Red Gang (*Hongbang*), Xia Kun-wu, a discharged soldier, and a certain Lin Jiu led the tenants in revolt against the landlords. While the Siyugang rioters apparently had no connections with the revolutionaries, they followed the example set by the independence movement in Tongzhou in the preceding year—independence there was first proclaimed by the Tongmenghui revolutionaries and then power was seized by the Constitutionals—founding a new military government. Zheng assumed the post of commander-in-chief, Xia became military minister, and Lin financial minister. Presumably because of his secret society connections, Zheng Jian-rong declared that Xu Bao-shan, known as "Tiger Xu" and then military governor of Yangzhou, would come to fight on his side. This was untrue, of course. Xu was already a leading member of the Jiangsu elite. Nor did the revolutionary leaders come to the assistance of the Siyugang rioters. Thus, the riot remained an isolated instance of local resistance. The tenant-rebels burned down landlords' residences and made many weapons such as swords, spears, and old-type cannons. Resistance, however, collapsed when the government in Tongzhou sent in two platoons of soldiers. The three leaders escaped, and the tenants abandoned their struggle when they were assured that the "bank protection fees" would not be collected (Yangzhou shifanxueyuan, 1963: 223-226).

In northern Jiangsu peasant revolts were perhaps even more violent, though far less well organized, than those in the south. In Haizhou, one of a few "commandaries" (*zhou*) in Jiangsu,

enraged peasants shouted such slogans as "attack the officials" (*daguan*) and "kidnap the rich" (*xiafu*). In November 1911, the peasant leader Li Qi led a 3,000-strong rebel throng. However, they had little discipline. Thus, the militia forces organized by the local elite quickly suppressed the revolt. Similarly, the elite in Huaian prefecture used their well-financed militia to put down rural riots and "to cut the heads of the rebels like grass" (Yangzhou shifanxueyuan, 1963: 373, 364).

Throughout Jiangsu the elite had achieved comfortable control of the rural areas by the end of 1912, but not until 1917 did the rural unrest finally come to its end (Shenbao, December 29, 1917).

### CONCLUSION

Rural riots, urban disturbances, and revolutionary activities before November 1911 were the ingredients of popular unrest which contributed significantly to the province's independence and eventually to the fall of the Qing dynasty. On one hand, the unrest weakened the resolve of provincial and local officials to defend the crumbling regime. As Cheng De-quan testified in 1910, officials of all ranks generally suffered from low morale and had lost confidence in the government and in themselves. Governor Cheng himself deserted the old regime eventually. On the other hand, the unrest caused the elite, particularly the gentry and the merchants, to opt for independence from the Qing court. Their overriding concern was order and stability. The most candid were perhaps the gentry in Haizhou, who openly stated in early November 1911 that they would choose independence if the revolutionaries should assist them in suppressing the "bandits" (Yangzhou shifanxueyuan, 1963: 370). Once they opted for independence, the provincial elite captured the revolution. This development determined the nature of the revolution in Jiangsu. The outcome was quite like that of the French Revolution in 1830: "after the revolution the landed proprietors, the official class, and the professional

men continued to predominate in key offices of state as they had under the Empire" (Pinkney, 1972: 295).

Was there a chance for the bona-fide revolutionaries to win the revolution? The answer appears to be negative. The revolutionaries under the ineffective leadership of the Tongmenghui and the Guangfuhui only had a few bastions in which to operate. Despite the fact that they tirelessly attempted to undermine the old regime, they were no match for the elite's social influence and financial strength. In many places—for example, in Kunshan, Tongzhou, and Shanghai—the revolutionaries had to rely on the elite's political and financial support for independence. Since many revolutionaries regarded the Manchu regime as the key enemy, they had no compunction about cooperating with, and even subordinating themselves to, the provincial elite. It comes as no surprise that many prominent revolutionaries joined the elite after the dynasty was overthrown. Moreover, "the end of hostilities against the Qing, provided an opportunity for the revolutionaries to fight among themselves" (Esherick, 1976b: 229). In Jiangsu, the struggle between the Tongmenghui and the Guangfuhui was fierce and bloody (Zhang Yu-fa, 1975: 524). This of course further weakened the revolutionary camp. Still more fundamentally, the revolutionaries failed to politicize the masses in any significant way, let alone to mobilize them. Even the most radical revolutionaries—who themselves had a low social standing, and who showed sympathy for the underprivileged classes—did not realize the importance of organizing the rioting peasants. By not taking advantage of the peasant revolts, they lost the last opportunity to resist the counterrevolutionary forces after the revolution. Conversely, without revolutionary guidance, rural riots often became short-lived uprisings against social injustice like many similar uprisings in Chinese history. The best organized riots during and after the revolution were the tenants' struggles against the landlords in southern Jiangsu. However, their activities, after November 1911 continued to focus on the narrow issue of rent resistance, a struggle which their predecessors in the area had waged for so long.

The unrest did not come to an end after the establishment of the Republic. In fact, urban and rural disorders intensified in some localities. But by this time the province's elite had already enjoyed an advantageous position. They had under their control the provincial administration, the local self-governments, much of the armed forces, and even many former revolutionaries. They quickly waged vigorous campaigns to suppress the "law breakers." Their success in this endeavor suggests that the old regime might have survived if the elite in Jiangsu and elsewhere had not wavered in their loyalty. To put it differently, the provincial elite who were able to restore order for themselves would certainly have been able to do so for the dynasty.

With the end of the dynasty and its imperial control, the elite of Jiangsu found themselves in an even more advantageous position. Before the revolution, in March 1911, Governor Cheng De-quan reported to the imperial court that provincial officials found it difficult to restrain some "vicious gentry" from squeezing the common people (Yangzhou shifanxueyuan, 1963: 10-11). After the revolution, the republican administration in the province, which totally relied on the elite for financial support, simply could not afford to offend the gentry, including the "vicious" ones. For many poor peasants, the new Republic appeared even more oppressive than the old Monarchy. An incident in Wujiang xian, where angry villagers raised the Manchu banner in their confrontation with the troops sent by the military government of Suzhou city, demonstrated just that (Shenbao, January 12, 1912).

While enjoying their increasing power in the province, the Jiangsu elite also sought a strong national government (Fincher, 1968: 187). Although this seems contradictory, provincial interests could not really be secured if there was no effective central government, as was proven during the last years of the old regime. Troubles in neighboring provinces, for example, would almost certainly affect order in their own province. Thus, after provincial independence, they worked energetically for peaceful reunification of the nation and searched for a strong national leadership which would provide them with order and

stability. A foreigner's observation in 1912 may well reflect the elite's view: "the one thing needful for the restoration and maintainance of internal order is the hand of a strong ruler" (Bland, 1912: 40). In 1912, the Jiangsu elite joined hands with their colleagues in many other provinces and found a strong ruler.<sup>5</sup> He was Yuan Shi-kai, an ex-imperial official and counterrevolutionary.

## NOTES

1. This unpublished document is now in the possession of Taipei Lishibowuguan (Taipei Historical Museum). A photographic text of this document can be found in Xue Guang-qian, (1971) and in Shen Yun-long (1971: 282-288).

2. Interview with Dr. Hung Y. Loh, Professor of Physics, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, May 25, 1974. As a child, Dr. Loh was a participant in the lantern parade in Suzhou in 1911. According to Qian Wei-qing, a private tutor at the governor's mansion, the governor had contacts with the revolutionaries from Shanghai before the declaration of independence (Chai et al., 1957, 7: 5-10, 125). But whether the governor's decision was made primarily because of the influence exerted by revolutionaries is something else. It seems that the governor would not have chosen independence if a majority of the local elite had opposed this decision.

3. Incidentally, the governor's surname is phonetically identical to the character, "cheng," meaning city.

4. The figure of 23,980,235 was based on the record of the Board of Finance (Jiangsu, 1903, 1: 167).

5. Ichiko's assertion that the conservative gentry became an anti-Yuan Shi-kai force in 1913 (Ichiko, 1968: 307) is questionable. It seems quite clear that both conservative and progressive gentry, as well as merchants, supported Yuan's military campaign to put down the "second revolution" of 1913. After this event, when Yuan tried to tighten up his central control, then provincial gentry began worrying. However, not until 1915-1916 when Yuan wanted to become emperor did the gentry turn to oppose him. The situation in Guangdong province was similar. "The defeat of the Canton revolutionary regime clearly had been facilitated by the defection of the merchants and the army, whose support it had enjoyed during the first revolution" (Rhoads, 1975: 262). The Guangdong elite, like their counterpart in Jiangsu, seemed to have never really converted to the revolutionary cause. They participated in the first revolution as a matter of expedience. Once the revolutionary storm was over, they joined Yuan for stability. In this sense, there is every reason for them to have become counterrevolutionaries in the second revolution.

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