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Editor's Foreword

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Editor's Foreword

One major concern of *Modern China* is to provide a forum for critical reassessments of our field—to urge members of our profession to take stock of what has been done, reexamine past assumptions, and raise new questions. Thus *Modern China* indicated from the start that we would especially welcome “substantial review articles on particular areas of scholarship.” This special symposium on the 1911 Revolution is the first of what I hope will be a series of such discussions on major topics. I would like to take this opportunity to invite other such reviews from colleagues in the field.

Joseph Esherick, whose own *Reform and Revolution in China The 1911 Revolution in Hunan and Hubei* will shortly be published by the University of California Press, made this symposium possible. His provocative and wide-ranging review of nearly all major works in England on 1911 served as an excellent starting point for a dialogue among specialists on 1911. I simply invited all reviewed authors to comment (in five pages or less) on the issues raised. The eight responses I received are published here without editorial change. They have added a great deal to Esherick's discussion; several also provide a preview of important new work in progress. The summary discussion by Ernest Young highlights the central question of the social content of the Revolution (and contains some ideas from Young's own soon-to-appear *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k'ai Liberalism and Dictatorship in Early Republican China*).

As Esherick's review makes clear, English-language studies of 1911 have progressed from political and intellectual biographies to considerations of the larger social context. In this respect, the field of 1911 has reflected developments in English-language studies of modern and contemporary Chinese history as a whole. In the 1950s and early 1960s, it sometimes

seemed that every dissertation was biographical; in the last ten years, however, we are much more apt to encounter theses on a social group, a class, a province, or a county.

Attention to social developments brings us closer to the work of many of our Japanese and contemporary Chinese colleagues. As Ernest Young notes in his summary, Japanese and Chinese research on social history has been far more advanced than ours. The questions raised in this symposium—about changes in the class configuration of Chinese society, the development and role of the bourgeoisie, the class basis of the New Army and of the secret societies, changes in the ruling gentry class, and so on—have occupied Japanese and Chinese historians for some time. The fact that this symposium fails to take fuller account of such work is certainly a major flaw, and is perhaps a sign of our continued parochialism. While I am delighted that *Modern China* is able to present this exciting symposium, I also hope that our future symposiums will be able to be broader still and assess the Anglo-American state-of-the-field in the larger context of the work of Japanese and contemporary Chinese researchers.

—Philip C.C. Huang