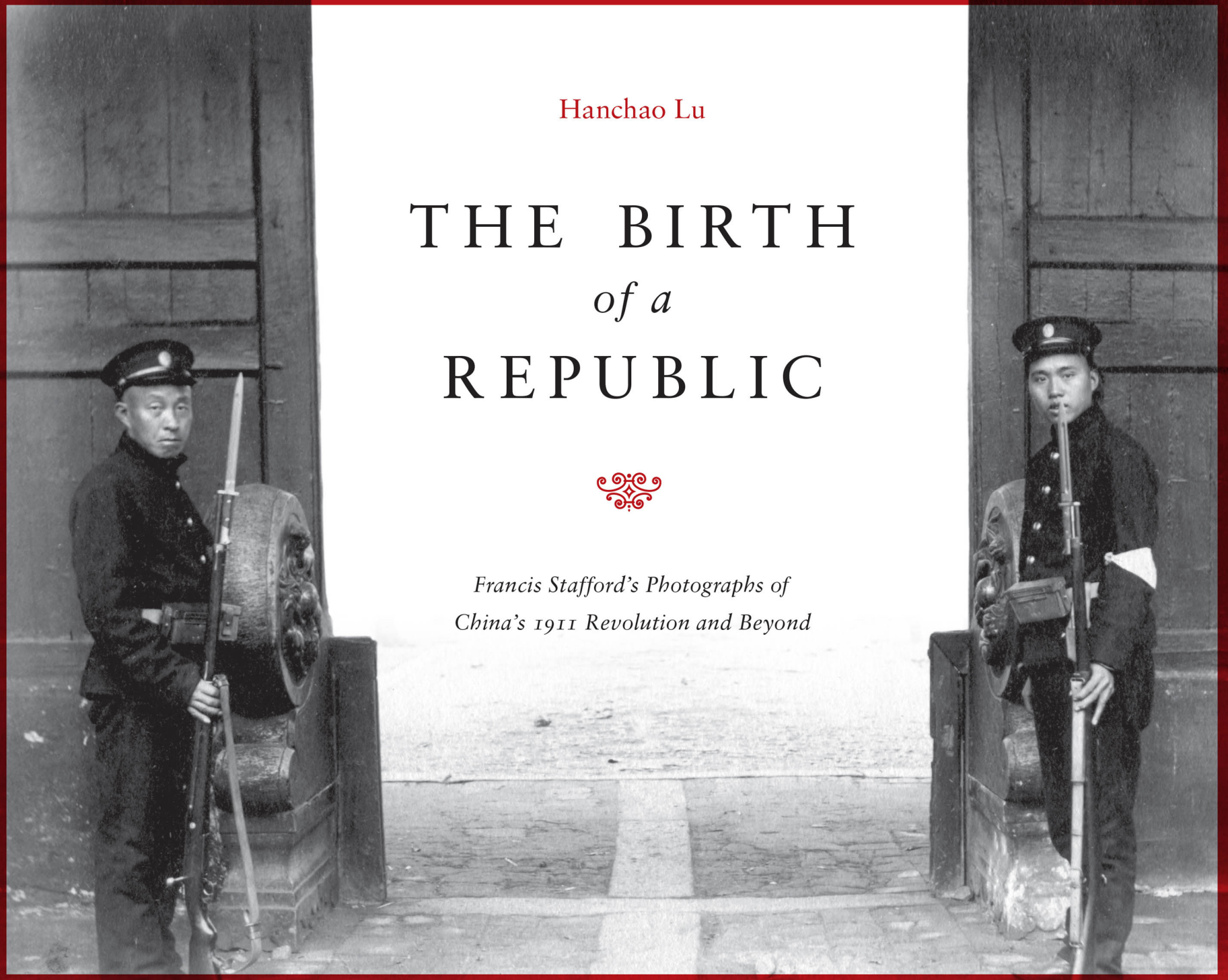

Hanchao Lu

THE BIRTH *of a* REPUBLIC

Francis Stafford's Photographs of China's 1911 Revolution and Beyond

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FRONTISPIECE Francis Stafford sits atop the city wall of Wutang.

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Dedicated to Frances Eleanor Stafford Anderson

The Francis E. Stafford collection of photographs is held
by Stafford's grandson, Ronald E. Anderson,
who has generously provided a selection for use in this volume.

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Acknowledgments

This book would not have been possible without the generosity of Ronald E. Anderson, who inherited the photographic collection of his grandfather, Francis E. Stafford, and digitized it before the technology became common. Ron and I first met in Singapore in 2001 and we started the project soon afterwards. I thank him for his thoughtfulness, patience, and goodwill during the lengthy process of making this book. I would also like to thank my brother, Hanlong, and his collaborator, Yanjie Bian, for introducing me to Ron.

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This slender book has taken much longer to craft than I had expected, although that is not uncommon in today's world of academic publishing. A positive note is that during its prepara-

tion, as my children grew up they also grew helpful. Much to my pride, and sometimes embarrassment, Frederic was able to suggest better wording and Jeffrey became my computer guru at home. I thank Linlin for her love and support, especially at times when life can be stressful or mundane.

Finally, Frances Eleanor Stafford Anderson, Francis Stafford's daughter born in Shanghai in the wake of the revolution, carefully kept her father's photograph collection for well over half a century. Without her vision and care, a piece of Chinese history might have been lost. It is in admiration of her and in her honor that this book is dedicated.

THE BIRTH OF A REPUBLIC


CHINA, 1911
Major cities
County or prefecture seats
HEILONGJIANG
Harbin
JILIN
WULIYASUTAI
(MONGOLIA)
FENGTIAN
ZHILI
XINJIANG
VARIOUS BANNER TERRITORIES
(INNER MONGOLIA)
Baotou
Beijing
Tianjin
SHANXI
Taiyuan
Jinan
SHANDONG
QINGHAI
Lanzhou
GANSU
Xi'an
Kaifeng
JIANGSU
Zhenjiang
Suzhou
HENAN
Nanjing
SHAANXI
ANHUI
Shangmai
Wuhu
TIBET
HUBEI
Hankou
(Wuhan)
Ningbo
Lhasa
SICHUAN
Chengdu
Chongqing
ZHEJIANG
Changsha
Nanchang
HUNAN
JIANGXI
Fuzhou
Taipei
GUIZHOU
FUJIAN
Kunming
Guilin
Taichung
GUANGDONG
YUNNAN
GUANGXI
Guangzhou

Introduction

Few revolutions in world history were more dramatic and paradoxical than the 1911 Revolution of China, also known as the Nationalist or Republican Revolution. The specific chain of events that led to the revolution was set in motion by an accidental bomb explosion in the city of Hankou in central China late in the afternoon of October 9, 1911. By the next day a full-fledged uprising in the adjacent city of Wuchang had broken out, and before long it engulfed the rest of the country. In less than three months, the 267-year-old Manchu Qing dynasty was overthrown and the Republic of China was born. Most significantly, China's 2,000-year-old imperial system came to an end. Despite several farcical episodes of attempted restoration after the revolution, the monarchy in China was gone forever; and despite its feebleness, the Republic of China entered into history as Asia's first republic. In that regard, the 1911 Revolution was truly epoch-making.

The blast in Wuchang was fortuitous; the revolution was not. The downfall of the Qing dynasty was the outcome of decades of political and social crises. Since China's defeat by the British in the Opium War of 1839–42, the country had suffered a series of foreign encroachments and domestic uprisings. As a result, the ruling Manchu court, which had come across the Great Wall from Manchuria and established the Qing empire in 1644, found it increasingly difficult to maintain its grip on power. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Manchu dynasty had slipped into a terminal crisis. A series of anti-Christian peasant riots that began in rural Shandong province, through bizarre twists and turns—some of which were orchestrated by Chinese officials, including the Empress Dowager Cixi (1835–1908)—developed into a xenophobic movement, known as the Boxer Rebellion, that swept across north China. After much carnage, the Boxers were crushed by an allied force consisting of troops of eight nations. The allied troops occupied Beijing in 1900 and the Qing court fled to the ancient capital of Xi'an, about 750 miles to the southwest. To end the Boxer calamity, China signed a twelve-clause protocol with eleven foreign powers on September 7, 1901, allowing each power to maintain a permanent military guard in the foreign legation quarters in Beijing and establishing a foreign-controlled corridor from Beijing to the seaside fort of Shanhaiguan. It agreed as well to pay an indem-

nity of 450 million taels ($333 million), an amount equal to nearly twice the annual income of the Qing government.

By this time many Chinese had come to believe that major political reforms were imperative if the country was going to avoid being carved up by the foreign powers. The Qing court, headed by the aging Empress Dowager, who had been suspicious of previous reforms, launched a major reform movement, called the "New Policies" or "New Polity" (Xinzheng), aiming at extricating the court from its protracted crisis of legitimacy and saving the dynasty. The New Policies Reform put into action programs and ideas that had been proclaimed during the ill-fated Hundred Days' Reform of 1898 in which Emperor Guangxu (1871–1908) issued over forty edicts in support of broad changes in the country's political, economic, and educational institutions. That reform, however, ended abruptly with a court coup d'état and the house arrest of the emperor, staged by the Empress Dowager, who saw the reform as a threat to her power. Nonetheless, in the aftermath of the Boxer fiasco, the Qing court recognized that major reforms were inevitable. The New Policies did much more than revitalize the 1898 reform; they introduced new ideas and implemented sweeping changes that, to the consternation of the Qing rulers, undermined the already precarious foundation of the monarchy. Historian Douglas R. Reynolds has called the New Policies a "revolution." Whether or not the reform amounted to a revolution is arguable, but there is no doubt that, completely unintended, it helped pave the way for the 1911 Revolution and several crucial government policies in the early Republican period.

In 1905, as part of the New Policies Reform, the Qing government took the bold step of abolishing the civil service examination system in favor of a new school system based on Western educational standards and, more directly, on Japanese models. Historian R. Keith Schoppa has called this "the most revolutionary act of the twentieth century,"[1] as the civil service examination system had been a keystone of China's Confucian order for at least thirteen centuries. The next year, the court sent two missions led by five senior leaders abroad to observe political systems in Japan and the West and, in particular, to learn more about the model of constitutional monarchy. Suddenly, in this ancient empire, constitutionalism and self-government became the slogan of the day. Local assemblies and self-governing bodies were set up nationwide. All provinces, except for Xinjiang, established provincial-level assemblies in 1909, and a proto-national parliament was convened in the capital in October 1910, just a year before the revolution. The establishment of local assemblies as an apparatus for constitutional self-government soon proved to be momentous. In the months immediately after the Wuchang uprising, when the political situation was murky and the fate of the ruling court uncertain, many provincial assemblies declared independence from Beijing and thus played an important role in the final downfall of the Qing.

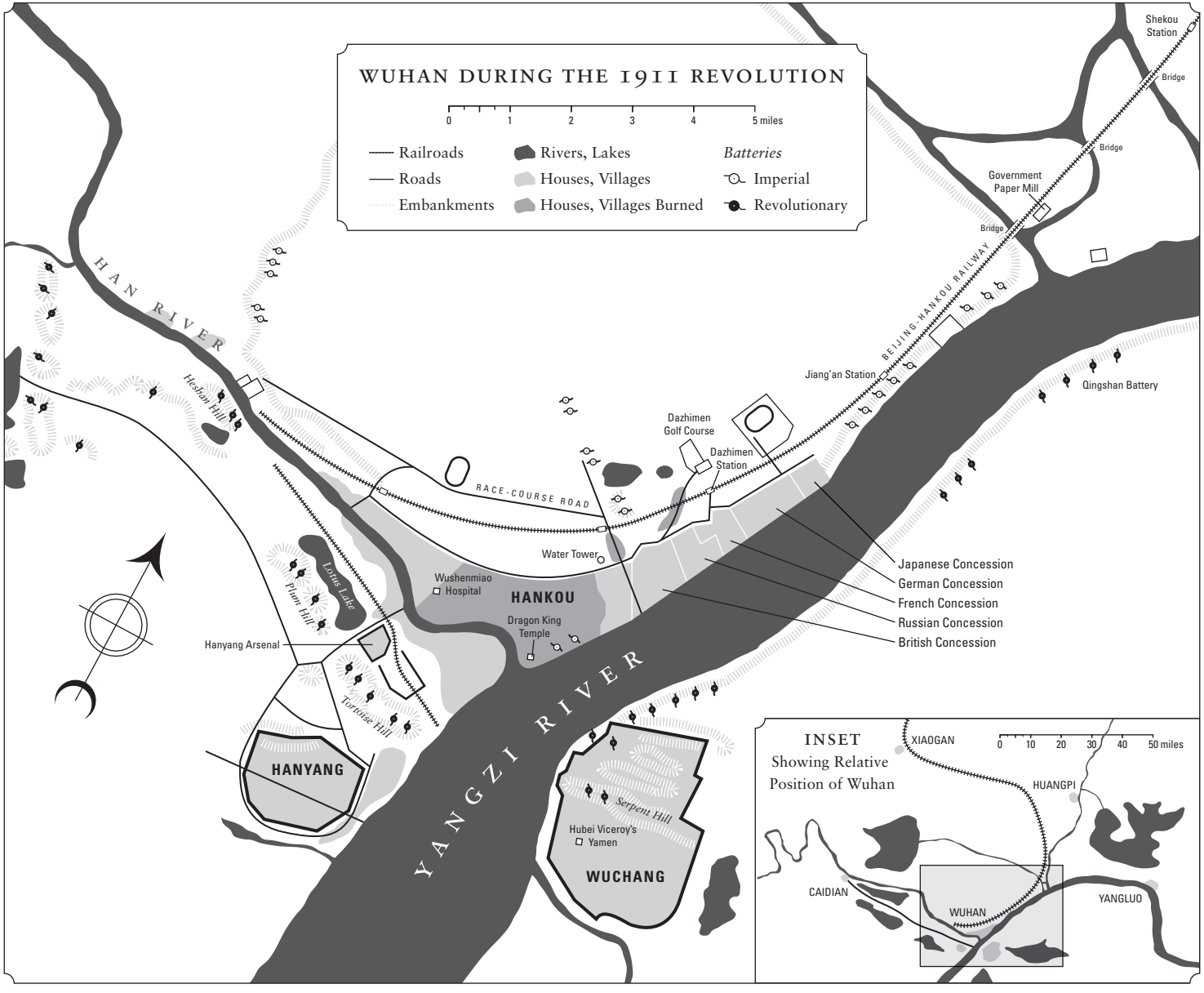
Two institutions that developed under the New Policies Reform had direct links to the outbreak of the Wuchang uprising: the New Army and the new railway system. The New Army, established in the mid-1890s as part of the Qing government's "self-strengthening" program to cope with the mounting challenges of the foreign powers, was reorganized with new vigor in 1902 under the leadership of reform-minded Yuan Shikai (1859–1916) and Zhang Zhidong (1837–1909). To modernize the military, it was planned to create thirty-six divisions of the New Army across the country; by the time of the revolution, fourteen—commonly known as the Beiyang Army, a name taken from the official title of its commander, Yuan Shikai—had materialized. The New Army was equipped, trained, and to

some extent indoctrinated according to Western standards. In the minds of those who joined the army, liberalism and nationalism were connected with modern weapons. Many soldiers and officers became sympathetic to the revolutionary ideas of Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925) and secretly joined cells of Sun's Revolutionary Alliance (United League), a coalition of anti-Qing societies founded in Tokyo in 1905. Ultimately, it was the New Army regiment stationed in Wuchang that fired the first shot of the 1911 Revolution.

The railway project under the New Policies Reform provided yet another fuse for the revolution. Between 1900 and 1905, more than 3,200 miles of railways were completed, compared to just a few hundred miles constructed in the nineteenth century. The Qing court, which regarded a centralized railway network as essential to economic development and political stability, in May 1911 announced it was going to nationalize China's railroads. This decision proved to be political suicide, since it attacked the interests of private investors in the fast-growing railway business. To make matters worse, the government ran up huge loans from Western banking consortia to finance railway construction. The Chinese people saw the Manchu government as scrambling for profits from its own people and selling out national resources to foreigners. From May to September, furious and massive rallies and demonstrations, some of which turned violent, occurred in the provinces of Hunan, Hubei, Guangdong, Henan, and, in particular, Sichuan, where the railway nationalization policy hit private investors' interests the most. The Railway Agitation, as it was called, served as a prelude to the Wuchang uprising.

On top of the reforms and the social unrest they engendered, intellectual trends turned against the Qing regime. Dissent arose from virtually every political and intellectual camp: those who advocated constitutionalism, nationalism, liberalism, anarchism, socialism, and others denounced the dynasty. Many new and radical ideas that originated in modern Europe came to China via Japan, where Chinese students, intellectuals, and sojourners of various sorts were craving an answer to the question of how this island nation, once China's disciple, rose from feudal lethargy to become within decades rich and powerful—recall that Japan had defeated the Russian empire in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5. In China, modern nationalism became intertwined with old anti-Manchu sentiments as reflected in the outcry "Expel the Manchu barbarians and restore the Chinese nation" (*quzhu Dalu, huifu Zhonghua*), a slogan that in 1906 became the guiding principle of the Revolutionary Alliance. Although the court proclaimed in 1908 that it would establish a constitutional government within nine years, the revolutionaries and radical intellectuals derided the claim as utterly insincere.

The most influential figure of the time was the revolutionary Sun Yat-sen. Sun had called for the overthrow of the dynasty long before the Wuchang uprising, and his dream of replacing the Manchu dynasty with a particularly Chinese republican polity had caught fire. It was in Japan in 1905 that Sun proclaimed the Three Principles of the People, namely, nationalism (*minzu*, or "nationhood"), democracy (*minquan*, or "people's rights"), and socialism (*minsheng*, or "people's livelihood"), as the foundation of his revolutionary program. Despite their ambiguity, the Three Principles of the People were the most systematic Chinese political theory of the time. While Sun's reputation as the "father of the Republic" might be a product of later developments in Chinese politics, as recent scholarship has indicated (see, for example, Marie-Claire Bergère's biography of Sun), Sun's pioneering blueprint for a new China inspired and to some extent catalyzed the revolution.


WUHAN DURING THE 1911 REVOLUTION
0 1 2 3 4 5 miles
Railroads
Roads
Embankments
Rivers, Lakes
Houses, Villages
Houses, Villages Burned
Batteries
Imperial
Revolutionary
HAN RIVER
YANGZI RIVER
BEIJING-HANKOU RAILWAY
RACE-COURSE ROAD
Shekou Station
Bridge
Bridge
Government Paper Mill
Bridge
Jiang'an Station
Qingshan Battery
Dazhimen Golf Course
Dazhimen Station
Water Tower
Wushenmiao Hospital
HANKOU
Dragon King Temple
Japanese Concession
German Concession
French Concession
Russian Concession
British Concession
Hanyang Arsenal
Heshan Hill
Lotus Lake
Plum Hill
Tortoise Hill
HANYANG
Serpent Hill
Hubei Viceroy's Yamen
WUCHANG
INSET
Showing Relative Position of Wuhan
XIAOGAN
0 10 20 30 40 50 miles
HUANGPI
CAIDIAN
WUHAN
YANGLUO

The 1911 Revolution, however, had a congenital deficiency, so to speak: it created little sense of mass participation and grassroots-level awareness of citizenship. The republic it established was merely a shell that lacked a truly representative government. As historian Joseph Esherick has pointed out, "Nineteen eleven scarcely touched the villages of China, except to demand more taxes. To a degree, the same was true of all the governments of the Republican era, up to and including Chiang Kai-shek's most promising years in Nanjing during the 1930s."[2] In a vast agrarian country like China, no revolution can be real and fundamental without significantly touching or transforming the peasantry. Consequently, the impact of the revolution on China's cultural landscape was limited and superficial. Several major movements that evolved in the years after 1911, notably the New Cultural Movement of 1915 to 1921 and the Communist Revolution, were in part efforts to complete the unfinished work of the newborn Republic. But the warlord domination of 1916–27, Chiang Kai-shek's dictatorship of 1928–49, and Mao Zedong's virtual monarchy of 1949–76 have proved that the task of the 1911 Revolution—that is, to establish an actual, not nominal, republic—remains a major challenge for the Chinese.

Nearly a century has passed. In every textbook on modern China, the 1911 Revolution occupies a significant place. Most treatments of the revolution focus on its political and intellectual foundations. There is also a good amount of scholarly work that deals with a variety of subjects related to the revolution (see Further Readings at the end of this volume). But we have very little visual material left from that era. Because war correspondence was not an established profession and the camera was a rare apparatus in China at the time, very few photographs of the revolution were taken. For years, Edwin J. Dingle's *China's Revolution, 1911 to 1912*, which has thirty-six illustrations, was the major source of wartime pictures, although only a third of the illustrations are directly related to the war. Frederick McCormick, the correspondent sent to China by the Associated Press immediately after the revolution broke out, offers only six war-related photographs in his book *The Flowery Republic*, published in 1913. But we now know that Francis Eugene Stafford (1884–1938), an American photographer, was there and took and collected hundreds of photographs that have survived to this day.

Stafford was born in Boulder, Colorado, and from the age of seventeen he worked as a litho photographer for the Pacific Press in Mountain View, California. He arrived in China in 1909, two years before the revolution, and lived there until 1915, four years after the revolution. As a senior photographer for the Commercial Press, then Asia's largest publishing house, headquartered in Shanghai, Stafford was responsible for introducing color printing technology to China, as noted in Mary Gamewell's *The Gateway to China*.[3] His photographs were also published with captions in a 1911 textbook, *Geography of China*, edited by Horatio Hawkins, a work that went through no fewer than fourteen editions by 1924.[4]

As a professional photographer, Stafford took numerous pictures of scenes of the revolution from Shanghai to Wuchang, the heartland of the revolution, and beyond. Because he was a Westerner without political ties to either side of the conflict and because he represented a publisher that disseminated news to a large number of readers, Stafford was allowed access to the military of both sides. His images therefore bring us to a critical juncture in modern Chinese history to witness everything from horrific encounters on bloody killing grounds to staid scenes that reflect the politics behind the clash. Given the fact that the

uprising in Wuchang was hasty and largely unplanned, and that very few foreigners were there with a camera in hand, his photographs of the uprising could well be the only such collection that has survived to this day.

Moreover, during his sojourn in China, Stafford traveled extensively in the country, taking pictures wherever he went. The photographs he took cover a wide range of social and cultural scenes from that turbulent time. His lens recorded scenes from the gleaming streets of Shanghai to muddy trails through unknown inland villages and beyond. Viewers are taken back a century to witness rice paddy fields, factory workshops, imposing government buildings, common residential quarters, contemporary festivals, historical resorts and relics, the floors of retail stores, the grounds of open-air food markets, the inner chambers of Buddhist temples, and so on. Through his photographs, we can thus gaze on Chinese of all walks of life during this transformative era. Famous statesmen, politicians, generals, and diplomats came before Stafford's lens in private settings, but ordinary people in both ordinary and extraordinary circumstances were also his subject: farmers, coolies, porters, factory workers, carpenters, mechanics, artisans, soldiers, policemen, firefighters, shopkeepers, street peddlers, barbers, rickshaw pullers, sedan-chair carriers, beggars, fortunetellers, schoolteachers, clergymen, actors and actresses, office managers and clerks, typesetters, and many others. In other words, Stafford's diverse and wide-ranging photographs provide not only a rare visual documentation of this important revolution but also a panorama of life in China during that era.

The rich component of "social pictures" in the Stafford Collection confirms the assessment that the immediate impact of the revolution on Chinese society was limited and asymmetrical to its sweeping political impact. Through these pictures one can observe the enormous political changes brought by the revolution, while also scrutinizing the nuances and distinctions that reflected the tenacity and continuity of Chinese culture and society. This was an era of transition, progress, and confusion. Through the Stafford Collection, readers can take a virtual tour of Chinese culture and institutions and get a sense of how the revolution that dramatically changed the political scene in China at the top may or may not have affected the nation's time-honored traditions and customs at the grassroots level.

Francis Stafford's grandson, Ronald Anderson, a sociologist at the University of Minnesota, inherited his grandfather's photo collection. As a historian of modern China at the Georgia Institute of Technology, I collaborated with Anderson in selecting and captioning 162 photographs from the Stafford Collection. Part 1, "On the Eve of the Revolution," features high-ranking Qing officials who were in large measure responsible for the collapse of the dynasty, the imperial New Army, imprisoned rebels, the destitute in both urban and rural areas, and the signs of social reforms. Together they depict a nation in crisis. Part 2, "The Wuchang Uprising," consists of pictures taken at the heart of the revolution: the revolutionaries and their enemies, soldiers of both sides of the conflict, battlefield scenes, the presence of foreigners, expressions of humanity in the midst of war, destruction in the cities of Hankou and Wuchang, and so on. Part 3, "The Politics of Chaos," presents images of the revolution beyond its birthplace in Wuchang, including revolts in Shanghai and other cities, key players in the negotiations between the government and the rebels, the arrival of Sun Yat-sen, and the activities of Yuan Shikai, the prominent late Qing official who dexterously played the dynasty off against the revolutionaries. Together, parts 2 and 3 constitute the essence of the book. Part 4, "A Society in Transition," contains scenes of the daily life

of the common people in towns and the countryside across the country at the time of the revolution. In part 5, "Stafford in China," a few pictures with the photographer in the scene provide further images of Chinese society in the age of revolution.

To contextualize these photographs, a map (p. 6) of the three cities that constituted modern Wuhan (Wuhan is a generic name, referring to the three linked mid-Yangzi River cities of Wuchang, Hankou, and Hanyang) and a detailed chronology of the 1911 Revolution are provided. The section on Further Readings at the end of the book lists major works in English on the Republican Revolution for readers who are interested in pursuing further study.

NOTES

1 R. Keith Schoppa, *Revolution and Its Past: Identities and Change in Modern Chinese History* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2002), 129.

2 Joseph Esherick, *Reform and Revolution in China: The 1911 Revolution in Hunan and Hubei* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 259.

3 Mary Gamewell, *The Gateway to China: Pictures of Shanghai* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1916), 132–33.

4 Horatio B. Hawkins, *Geography of China* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1911–27).

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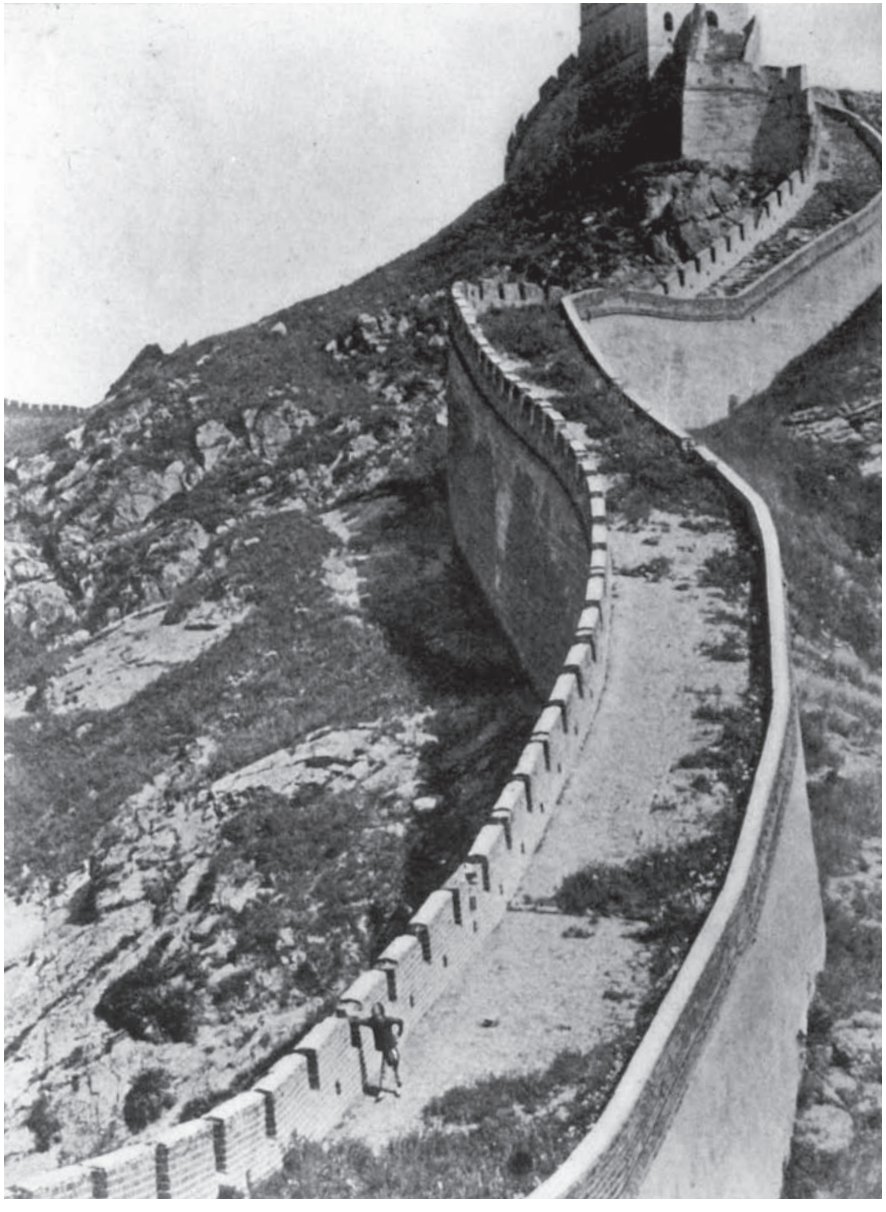
1

ON THE EVE OF REVOLUTION



The Great Wall was built in the third century BCE, connecting and consolidating segments of walls previous rival kingdoms had built to keep the northern nomads out of China proper (that is, lands where the majority of ethnic Han Chinese had traditionally lived). It has been renovated, rebuilt, and extended many times since then. This part of the Great Wall, near Beijing, was reconstructed in the fifteenth century during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), the last dynasty ruled by the Han majority ethnic group. The Great Wall never functioned well in protecting the country. Indeed, this picture reveals a certain irony in this regard. Note the man standing on the wall with his right arm leaning on the battlements. His shaved head and braid were symbols of submission to the Manchus, the northern nomads who crossed the Great Wall to overthrow the Ming and found the Qing dynasty (1644–1911).