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Toward the Minjiu Incident

Militarist Conflict in Guizhou, 1911-1921

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This article analyzes the struggle that occurred from 1911 to 1921 between two militarists in Guizhou province, Liu Xianshi and his nephew Wang Wenhua, to shed light on the diversity of China's warlords and the complexity of their relationships. Although members of the same family, Liu and Wang represented two different generations of militarists, one from the 1911 era and one from the May Fourth era; as a result they became embroiled in a power struggle and a violent coup known as the Minjiu (1920) Incident. The article also examines the various methods and tactics that Guizhou militarists employed in their power struggle, paying particular attention to militarist attempts to control the student movement to serve their own needs. An understanding of these various methods of struggle enhances our insight into the varied nature of warlordism and militarist competition in China during the early twentieth century.

Keywords: *China; Guizhou; warlord; militarism*

In a 1968 article on Chinese warlords and their factions between 1912 and 1928, Jerome Ch'en described alliances between warlords[1] as typically based on personal or school ties, locality or regional affiliation, or marriage or sworn brotherhood. The first two of these ties could be broken, and warlords "united" in either way often fought against each other. Only blood relations between warlords and their factions, asserted Ch'en, prevented fighting, because "filial sentiments overrode factional interests" (Ch'en, 1968: 577). In a lengthy appendix, he listed the various warlords and their factions, identifying Liu Xianshi as warlord of Guizhou and his nephew Wang Wenhua as commander in chief of the Guizhou army. Ch'en made no mention of the fact that in 1920 Wang ousted his uncle from power in a brief but violent coup known as the Minjiu (1920) Incident.

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That this coup contradicts Ch'en's assertion about warlord alliances is hardly noteworthy, as he sought to paint a broad picture: his article attempts to draw general conclusions about some 1,300 Chinese warlords and their factions in twenty-three pages of text. Yet the contradiction underscores the diversity of China's warlords and the complexity of their relationships within their cliques. Warlords are often all treated as reactionary, regional military commanders who fought each other with private armies to preserve territorial autonomy. Such stereotyping obscures the fact that warlords came in numerous forms and employed diverse tactics in their struggles against one another. Historians have long noted variety among the major warlords, such as Feng Yuxiang, the "Christian General," and Yan Xishan, who advocated progressive social policies (Sheridan, 1966; Gillin, 1960). More recently, Leslie Chen has argued that Chen Jiongming, one of southern China's most notorious warlords, sought not so much regional autonomy as a federal democratic republic (L. Chen, 1999). Yet despite these studies suggesting the complex nature of China's warlords, their political views, and the methods they employed to achieve their goals, this important topic remains understudied. Particularly neglected have been smaller and less well-known regional militarists, who are as much a part of China's "warlord era" as the more recognized figures mentioned above.

To address such points, this article analyzes the struggle between two militarists in Guizhou province, Liu Xianshi and Wang Wenhua, between 1911 and 1921. These two men are significant because they differed greatly in their political convictions and ultimately clashed despite their close family ties, which typically formed the strongest of bonds between militarists. The conflict between Liu and Wang clearly reveals the diversity among China's warlords. Although from the same region and family, they represented two different generations of militarists, one from the 1911 era and one from the May Fourth era; as a result, they held divergent political views. Their contrasting political views and clashing personal ambitions led to a prolonged struggle for control of Guizhou's provincial government and ultimately to a military coup.

The case study of Guizhou also illustrates the various methods and tactics that smaller militarists adopted as they competed for local power. Beyond traditional military confrontation, Guizhou militarists competed in political, economic, and even educational spheres. In what follows, this article examines particularly closely their involvement in the student movement in Guizhou and their attempts to use student organizations to bolster their political positions. An understanding of these various methods of struggle enhances our insight into the varied nature of warlordism and

militarist competition in China. Moreover, such an analysis contributes to our knowledge of the history of Guizhou province during this critical period of transition following the 1911 Revolution. Guizhou has often been presented as a minor player in China's southwest, and scholars have been more attentive to its neighbors Yunnan, Sichuan, and Guangxi (Sutton, 1980; Kapp, 1973; Lary, 1975). But the province offers an important snapshot of lesser-known militarists and their activities that supplements studies of more celebrated warlords. A nuanced understanding of China's provincial militarists requires as wide a sampling as possible, not an exclusive focus on those who are more powerful and better known. Thus, a case study of Guizhou usefully contributes to our knowledge of both the local history of Guizhou and the larger issue of warlordism in China.

Militarism in Guizhou: The Rise of Liu Xianshi

Militarist rule in Guizhou grew out of the factional struggle before and after the 1911 Revolution. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, two distinct political groups emerged in Guizhou, each pursuing its own agenda and each contending for political influence. The Self-Government Study Society (or the Revolutionists), under the leadership of Zhang Bailin, backed Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary program, advocating the overthrow of the imperial government and the establishment of a republic. Zhang and the Revolutionists enjoyed the support of military cadets and many members of the Guizhou army. The Constitutional Preparation Society (or the Constitutionalists), led by Tang Eryong, favored Liang Qichao's program of constitutional monarchy (Chen Xianqiu, n.d.: 144-45; McCord, 1990: 180). In the waning years of the Qing dynasty, the Revolutionists in particular sought dramatic change that would sweep them into power; the Constitutionalists, many of whom came from families with political connections and had served in the provincial government, showed less interest in radical change, hoping instead for gradual reform. Though differing in long-term political goals, the two factions shared a desire to wield political authority by taking control of local government from Qing authorities. The 1911 Revolution in Guizhou, as William Johnson put it, amounted to a "struggle for particular national goals, but also, and perhaps equally so, a struggle for power on the local level" (Johnson, 1962: 153).

Their struggle remained muted in the years leading up to 1911, but when the revolt broke out at Wuchang in October of that year, both sides saw an opportunity to seize local power. Qing officials such as Governor Shen

Yuqing worried that a similar revolutionary outburst might take place in Guiyang. In particular, he feared that a revolutionary movement might begin within the army, which included significant numbers of Self-Government Study Society supporters. Like many other provincial "new armies," the modern Guizhou army had attracted some young men who embraced Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary program.

Ren Kecheng, a leading member of the Constitutional Preparation Society, advised Shen to strengthen his position against the Revolutionists by requesting military support from Liu Xianshi, a member of a prominent family from Xingyi county in southwest Guizhou and a supporter of the Constitutionalists. Liu had no formal military training, but his family had a tradition of leading local militia and he commanded several hundred soldiers. Shen therefore sent word to Liu Xianshi, offering to provide his troops with weapons from the provincial arsenal if Liu agreed to march north to the capital to help guard against revolutionary activity. Perhaps sensing an opportunity for advancement beyond Xingyi county,[2] Liu accepted and began the trek toward Guiyang with 500 militiamen (Chen Xianqiu, n.d.: 145).

When Zhang Bailin heard of this plan, he acted without delay. With support from the Guizhou army and military cadets, the revolutionary forces took control of the capital on 3 November as Qing authority in Guizhou swiftly collapsed. As word of the unfolding events began to spread throughout the city, Yuan Yubao, commander of the army, sent one of his subordinates, Yang Jincheng, to investigate. Yang joined the revolutionaries and did not return, while Yuan himself fled at the sound of rifle fire within the city (Chen Xianqiu, n.d.: 145; Johnson, 1962: 159). By this time Governor Shen Yuqing had also started to realize that the Revolutionists had begun to seize power and he immediately sent a messenger to make contact with Zhang Bailin. On learning that Zhang intended no harm to those Qing officials who did not oppose the revolution, Shen found it expedient to express his support for the movement and return to his native village with Zhang's promise of protection and safe conduct. Zhang Bailin took control of the provincial cabinet, but with little military experience of his own, he appointed Yang Jincheng, a drill instructor, military commander (Chen Xianqiu, n.d.: 146). Indeed, the lack of political and military experience among the revolutionaries who took the capital created instability that set the stage for the rise of a single individual wielding military power.

As Zhang and his supporters among the Revolutionists began patching together plans for a new government, Liu Xianshi had reached the halfway point between Xingyi and Guiyang. When news of events in the capital reached him, he had to make a quick decision. Should he return to Xingyi, now that Shen's invitation to march on the capital was irrelevant, or go

forward? He decided to continue his march to Guiyang and, once there, declare his support for the revolutionary forces. He prepared the way by sending ahead his nephew, Wang Wenhua—who had ties to the Self-Government Study Society—to inform Zhang Bailin and Yang Jincheng of his arrival.

Zhang may have had well-grounded suspicions of a declaration of loyalty from the former Constitutionalist, but he also had reasons for accepting Liu Xianshi's offer. First, Zhang knew that he needed to bring capable people over to his side to help rebuild Guizhou. Rather optimistically, he thought that he could unite the Revolutionists, who mostly came from the lower gentry, with the Constitutionalists, who tended to have more experience in governing. Second, and perhaps of more immediate importance, Zhang understood that Liu's 500 militiamen could either support or oppose the revolutionary government. His acceptance of Liu Xianshi's offer to join the new government would strengthen the revolutionary forces and perhaps help to heal the rift between the two factions. Zhang therefore welcomed Liu to Guiyang and even gave him the weapons promised by Shen Yuqing. Liu then began serving as head of military affairs, lending military backing to the new Guizhou revolutionary government (McCord, 1990: 182).

Zhang's goal of bringing the two factions together remained elusive, as factional struggle between Constitutionalists and Revolutionists prevented a stable government from forming under Zhang Bailin and Yang Jincheng. Serious trouble began in December 1911, when Zhang and Yang left for Sichuan and Hunan, respectively, to support revolutionary forces fighting against Yuan Shikai. Each took along substantial numbers of Guizhou troops, whose departure weakened the position of the new government. As few as 200 or 300 soldiers remained in the capital (Chen Xianqiu, n.d.: 146; Johnson, 1962: 172).

Liu Xianshi, who had already displayed a willingness to switch political camps, saw an opportunity to improve his own position. He suggested to the leaders of the Constitutionalist faction that they seek military assistance from Yunnan's governor, Cai E, to oust Zhang and his supporters from power. With Yunnan's help, Liu argued, the Constitutionalists could take advantage of the low troop levels to quickly purge the Guizhou government of Self-Government Study Society supporters and take exclusive control. Liu could broker such an alliance because his family enjoyed close relationships with several elite families of Yunnan. In fact, his younger brother, Liu Xianzhi, had been an aide to the Yunnan governor before 1911 and later served on Cai's staff (Johnson, 1962: 178; McCord, 1990: 179, 181). Cai proved willing to embrace Liu Xianshi's plan and directed his subordinate Tang Jiyao to lead a force of Yunnan troops into Guizhou. To avoid arousing

suspicion, Tang claimed that his troops were simply passing through Guizhou on their way to support revolutionary forces fighting in Hunan (Chen Xianqiu, n.d.: 146-47; Sutton, 1980: 130).

Tang arrived at the outskirts of Guiyang in late February 1912, at the head of a regiment of Yunnan troops. Liu Xianshi welcomed him and together they planned to launch a military coup on 2 March.[3] Zhang Bailin attempted to organize a defense, but his meager forces proved no match for the combined strength of the Yunnan troops and Guizhou forces loyal to Liu. Within ten days, the remaining government officials associated with the Self-Government Study Society had fled the province, leaving Guiyang under the military control of Tang Jiyao and Liu Xianshi (Chen Xianqiu, n.d.: 147; McCord, 1990: 183; Johnson, 1962: 181).

This coup marked Liu Xianshi's assumption of power in Guizhou. At first, Tang Jiyao served as military governor while Liu Xianshi held the post of provincial minister of war. This arrangement lasted until late October 1913, when Cai E left Yunnan to take a position in Yuan Shikai's government in Beijing. Cai recalled Tang Jiyao from Guizhou to become Yunnan's governor, leaving Liu Xianshi alone in control of Guizhou. Liu then emerged as Guizhou's warlord, assuming personal and independent authority, supported by the Guizhou army and the powerful leader of neighboring Yunnan. In 1916, he formalized his position by taking the titles *dujun* (military governor) and *shengzhang* (provincial governor), fusing his civil and military authority within Guizhou (Chen Xianqiu, n.d.: 148).

While Yunnanese military support proved essential to Liu's rise to power in Guizhou, as his military base of 500-odd militiamen would not have been sufficient on its own, the political conditions in Guizhou also played a critical role. Divided and unprepared for the military and political challenges that followed the revolutionary changes of late 1911, the leadership of the new revolutionary government took few meaningful steps toward establishing effective rule. Taking advantage of the disorder and of his connections with the Yunnan military, Liu Xianshi positioned himself to seize control of Guizhou. Liu's rise followed a pattern repeated in many provinces where local elites from both military and civilian backgrounds assumed authority in the weeks and months after the events of October 1911.

The Liu-Wang Conflict

After taking control of Guizhou in 1913, Liu Xianshi remained conscious of the limits on his political and military power. Uncertain which of

the various contenders for national dominance would triumph, he avoided antagonizing other powerful regional authorities. He retained ties with Tang Jiyao, his benefactor in Yunnan; sent representatives to make contact with northern authorities such as Yuan Shikai and later Duan Qirui; and even sent a representative to open communications with Sun Yat-sen. Liu showed little interest in any major reform—constitutional, monarchist, or republican—and sought to carefully feel his way through this time of transition, preserving his relationship with any power that might achieve national prominence. As a result, he took no steps to institute substantial political, economic, or social changes within Guizhou.

Liu's civilian administration relied heavily on reformers of the 1911 Revolution era, mostly former members of the Constitutional Preparation Society, who likewise seemed content with local power until the national political picture clarified. Liu's closest supporters and subordinate officials included Xiong Fanyu, his chief secretary; He Linshu, his head of military affairs; Zhang Xielu, his director of public finance; and Guo Chongguang, the head of a local society of landlords, merchants, and prominent citizens called the Qilaohui (Chen Xianqiu, n.d.: 149-51; Xiong, 1986: 11).

Within the Guizhou military, Liu placed significant authority in the hands of his nephew, Wang Wenhua. As Liu's power grew, so did Wang's, as he became a division commander and then commander in chief of the Guizhou army, second only to Liu himself. Despite his title, Wang had no formal military training (he had attended a teacher's college). Liu and Wang worked closely together in the years after 1911, but some evidence suggests that relations between the Liu and Wang clans had been strained a generation earlier. According to Chen Xianqiu, a dispute led to the murder of one of Wang Wenhua's ancestors by a member of the Liu family. As part of a peace agreement, the two families later arranged a marriage alliance that ultimately made Wang Wenhua and Liu Xianshi nephew and uncle. Wang's own marriage to one of Liu Xianshi's nieces reinforced the family ties (Zhang, n.d.: 53; Chen Xianqiu, n.d.: 149).

Though they belonged to the same family, the two men—as noted above—held different political views. Wang had quietly supported the Self-Government Study Society and favored the progressive and republican politics of Sun Yat-sen. After Tang and Liu seized control of Guizhou in 1912, Wang had to be careful about openly espousing his political views, yet he occasionally showed his enthusiasm for the revolutionary cause. For example, in early 1916, Cai E began a military campaign to resist Yuan Shikai's attempt to restore the monarchy. Liu Xianshi joined Cai's Huguojun (National Protection Army), but in keeping with his strategy of not taking

sides he refused to fully commit to the cause, fearing that in the long run Yuan Shikai's forces would prevail. Wang Wenhua, on the other hand, advocated full support for the anti-Yuan movement and pressed Liu to be more aggressive in deploying Guizhou troops. Chen Xianqiu reported that Wang even told Liu that he would personally lead troops into Sichuan to oppose Yuan while Liu could protect himself by claiming that Wang had "rebelled" and operated without Liu's approval. Liu eventually agreed to send Wang into Sichuan, where his able fighting against Yuan's forces helped to pave the way for his rise to the position of commander in chief of the Guizhou army (Chen Xianqiu, n.d.: 149-51; Guizhou daxue lishixi, n.d.: 196).

Both men seemed to be able to look beyond their political differences, but as time passed Wang found serving under his uncle increasingly difficult. Important generational and ideological differences lay just beneath the surface of their relationship. Wang's belief in republicanism led him to join Sun Yat-sen's Zhonghua gemingdang (Chinese Revolutionary Party) while on a trip to Shanghai in 1917 (Ni, 1984: 5). According to Gui Baizhu, who worked in the provincial government, Wang remained mindful of his uncle, but he grew unhappy with the political situation in Guizhou. Perhaps aware of Wang's discontent and republican leanings, other members of the Liu family complained about Liu Xianshi's tolerance of Wang and expressed their fear that he had acquired too much military power (Gui, n.d.: 102). Liu tended to turn aside these warnings, allowing his nephew considerable control over Guizhou military forces as commander in chief. What some saw as Wang's care in playing the part of the "filial son" in front of Liu may have kept his uncle from fully appreciating the strength of his political convictions (Zhang, n.d.: 53). Still, Liu made sure to keep a separate military force under the command of his cousin Liu Xianqian, suggesting that he did not completely trust Wang (Chen Xianqiu, n.d.: 151).

As commander in chief, Wang chose subordinates whose political views mirrored his own. While his uncle relied on the support of the Constitutionalists and men from Guizhou's traditional elite, Wang specifically sought out men with professional military training and experience and others who could help him to reform the Guizhou military and modernize the province's political and economic structures. Working together with his brother Wang Boqun, Wang Wenhua gathered a group of young Guizhou natives who had attended the Nihon Rikugun Shikan Gakkō, an elite Japanese military academy. These young officers had already embraced the political ideals of Sun Yat-sen while studying in Japan and naturally gravitated toward Wang Wenhua on their return to Guizhou. They included He Yingqin (who would marry Wang Wenhua's sister and go on to national prominence as Jiang

Jieshi's chief of staff and minister of war), Gu Zhenglun, and Zhu Shaoliang (Ni, 1984: 3; Xiong, 2001: 33-34). While Liu surrounded himself with reformers associated with the 1911 Revolution, Wang gathered about him a group of military professionals of the May Fourth era.

The approaches of both men were representative of the paths to power taken by Chinese warlords. That Liu Xianshi and Wang Wenhua owed their positions not so much to military skill as to their reputations as prominent civilians was not at all unusual for this period (Waldron, 1991: 1075). The Liu family did have a history of commanding local militia in southwestern Guizhou, but one can just as easily attribute Liu Xianshi's rise to power to his family reputation and his relationship to other elites in Yunnan. More reformer than revolutionary, once in power Liu showed little desire for change and concentrated on maintaining the status quo—that is, preserving his own authority in a time of political and military instability. Wang Wenhua likewise rose to power as a local civilian elite, given an early boost by his relationship to Liu Xianshi. Yet he aspired to something more than wielding power locally, as his desire for revolutionary change fed his military and political ambitions.

Wang saw a strong and professional military as the key to reforming both his home province and China as a whole. As Edward McCord has pointed out, at the turn of the twentieth century young men whose patriotism drew them to the military began to play greater roles in politics, as evidenced by the "new army" participation in the 1911 revolt (McCord, 1996: 799). While Liu eschewed major change and waited to see which figure emerged at the center of power, Wang resembled the "New Youth" of his generation as he attempted to use his base in the Guizhou military to implement Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary program. This difference led some to describe Liu and his supporters as the "Civilian Faction," as opposed to the "Military Faction" of Wang and his young officers, but their differences lay more in generation and ideology than in profession (Gui, n.d.: 101).

Familial associations, particularly close relations such as those between father and son or uncle and nephew, were generally among the strongest of bonds among Chinese warlords. In their research on warlord politics, Jerome Ch'en and Hsi-sheng Ch'i have both described family ties as the most important influence on the commander-subordinate relationship (Ch'en, 1968: 577; Ch'i, 1976: 37-38). Likewise, Odoric Wou described the Zhili militarist clique under Wu Peifu as a clan-based organization. To apply Wou's terminology to the case of Guizhou, Liu Xianshi served as the "elder" and Wang Wenhua took the role of the "stem," or family member of the younger generation. There could be no stronger bond between

militarists (Wou, 1978: 88-92). Yet this case also illustrates the complicated nature of some militarist relationships. Despite their family ties, differences in generation and ideology drove Liu and Wang slowly apart and eventually led to a violent coup.

The Guizhou Military Academy, founded in the late Qing period but never an effective institution, served as the centerpiece of Wang's plan to strengthen the Guizhou military. Wang Wenhua hoped to attract to it talented young men who might later serve as officers in the Guizhou army. To reform the academy, Wang assembled his core group of young, Japanese-trained, professional military men who would train future officers and support his own efforts to rise to political power (HYQJJ, 29). Wang's success over the course of 1917 in recruiting capable young officer candidates clearly exacerbated fears within the Liu family that Wang had indeed grown too powerful. Liu Xianshi came to feel, with some justice, that Wang and his supporters intended to create their own power base at the reformed Guizhou Military Academy. Such motives became especially clear when Wang and He Yingqin, the academy's commandant, rejected the applications of candidates related or otherwise closely linked to Liu Xianshi. In response to this emerging threat to his authority, in August 1917 Liu and his cousin Liu Xianqian established a separate military academy in Xingyi called the Suiying xuexiao (Xiong, 2001: 49-51)—an act that marked a new stage in the struggle between the two factions.

Liu Xianshi hoped to compete with Wang and He in attracting and training young recruits who would become loyal officers, but the two academies differed dramatically in the quality and preparation of their cadets. He Yingqin followed the model familiar to him from his own schooling in Japan: one year of preparatory training followed by formal instruction in weapons, tactics, geography, and transport. By contrast, most instructors at Liu Xianqian's Suiying xuexiao had neither attended military academies in China or Japan nor gained battlefield experience. Under the control of Wang and He, the Guizhou Military Academy not only drew the best local candidates but also began to accept applications from students from several neighboring provinces. Ever vigilant against possible spies and informants from Liu Xianqian's Suiying xuexiao, Wang and He carefully scrutinized all applicants and even expelled several cadets they discovered passing on information to Liu about the academy's operation (Xiong, 2001: 51-53).

With the support of this group of young Japanese-trained military officers, Wang Wenhua slowly developed a power base within the Guizhou Military Academy. Wang and his followers tended to feel that Liu Xianshi represented the now outdated civilian elites of Guizhou politics who relied too heavily on

connections to Yunnan and remained too close to the Beijing government. Outwardly loyal to Liu, Wang organized a group of young professional officers supportive of Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary program whose aim was to oust Liu and acquire local civilian and military power (Zhang, n.d.: 53). In the early phase of the power struggle between Liu and Wang, carried out through the dueling military academies, Wang clearly held the advantage by virtue of the superior military training of his cadre of subordinates.

The Student Movement: The YGA and the PSA

The developing rivalry between Liu and Wang soon spilled over into unexpected areas of Guizhou society, as Wang Wenhua realized that he might take advantage of a burgeoning student movement to direct an attack on his uncle. Moving the struggle into this new arena, Wang and his supporters played a critical role in organizing and directing student activism in Guiyang. The result was somewhat curious, as Guizhou military authorities controlled student organizations and linked the student movement to the militarist power struggle between Liu and Wang.

Student activism in Guizhou grew as the influence of the New Culture Movement spread from Beijing, Shanghai, and other major cities to the more remote areas of China. Spurred in part by the experience of Japanese imperialism and the Twenty-one Demands of 1915, popular periodicals such as *New Youth* and *Weekly Critic* published essays that inspired young, educated Chinese to consider new ideas, practices, and institutions. In 1917, Guizhou newspapers had started to print articles on such topics as Western-style democracy, the Bolshevik Revolution, literary reform, and other "modern" ideas and practices that might help to revive and strengthen China. Schools and groups of students in Guiyang initiated active discussions of the "isms" of the day, such as nationalism, materialism, and socialism. Others began to demand educational reform, arguing that foreign languages, science, and mathematics should be added to school curricula (Xiong, 1986: 22-23).

In its initial stages, the student movement in Guizhou showed little coherence or coordination, perhaps because of the relatively small number of students in Guiyang attending the six schools most likely to produce activists.[4] Moreover, although one might indeed describe Liu Xianshi as a warlord, his rule might not appear overly oppressive when compared to other provincial militarists. He did not maintain a particularly large army or exact exorbitant sums from the relatively poor people of Guizhou. His use of Guizhou military forces usually came in conjunction with larger forces from

Yunnan, and the fighting typically took place outside Guizhou. As a result, the students tended at least initially to concentrate on new ideas and topics of study rather than on immediate local political change. When the students did turn to political protest, they generally targeted the Beijing government and Japanese imperialism.

Wang Wenhua came to see that changing conditions in Guizhou might work to his advantage and that this New Culture Movement critical of traditional authority could be useful in his struggle with his uncle. Therefore, in late 1918 he and He Yingqin discussed creating a new youth organization, undoubtedly inspired by progressive student organizations then sprouting up elsewhere in China—such as in Beijing, where in June students had created a Young China Students' Association (Xiong, 1986: 26). Wang and He decided to call their organization the Young Guizhou Association (YGA), modeled on the Young Italy Movement led by the nineteenth-century Italian nationalist Giuseppe Mazzini.

The new organization called on the young people of Guizhou to join together in an effort to modernize the province (HYQJJ, 35; Ni, 1984: 6; Xiong, 2001: 59). Wang and his supporters believed that if properly developed, this organization could be an effective tool for advocating their republican program, strengthening their own political base, and undermining the authority of Liu Xianshi, who represented the old style of warlord politics that May Fourth-era intellectuals criticized. With the creation of the YGA, the militarist power struggle began to spread from the military academies into the larger realm of students and educators in Guizhou.

Seeking to disguise his role in this new organization, Wang operated behind the scenes while his subordinate He Yingqin took the nominal lead in organizing and directing the YGA (Xiong, 2001: 60). He Yingqin built on a core group of cadets from the Guizhou Military Academy by inviting representatives from other schools and organizations to join the YGA; membership quickly expanded to seventy individuals. The guiding principles of the YGA reflected those of intellectuals and young people engaged in the New Culture Movement elsewhere in China. Advocating patriotism and humanitarianism, the YGA urged its members to "sacrifice themselves for the country, to unite with the masses to protect the country, to advance learning and knowledge, and to exercise and develop their bodies" (Xiong, 2001: 61). At YGA functions, He Yingqin used language typical of the period, describing China as well as Guizhou as a sick old man who needed to be revived and reinvigorated through the actions of young people (Xiong, 1986: 25-26).

A critical part of this "reinvigoration" involved a program of reform to make Guizhou province militarily strong and politically progressive

(Li, 1996: 23). The YGA consistently pushed a revolutionary agenda that contrasted with Liu Xianshi's cautious rule. For example, in a standard speech to YGA members in November 1918, He Yingqin declared that the answers to China's problems lay in revolution, republic, and constitution. Local newspapers and wall posters spread the rhetoric of this new organization, and its membership swelled to more than 2,000 by the end of 1918 (Xiong, 2001: 61-62).

As the YGA focused more attention on political issues in Guizhou, the power struggle between Liu Xianshi and Wang Wenhua grew more intense. Liu Xianshi undoubtedly recognized the danger of allowing Wang and He to control the student movement, which they might use to incite criticism of his rule. Yet he refrained from seeking directly to curb its activities or expansion. Instead, he attempted to offset its impact by once again creating a rival to counteract the influence of Wang's new organization. Liu formed the Republic of China Patriotic Students' Association (PSA), hoping to lure capable young people away from the YGA. The guiding principles of the PSA resembled those of the YGA and its members sometimes even criticized provincial authorities (Xiong, 2001: 67).

Like the rival military academy that Liu Xianshi established, the PSA proved no match for the superior organizational skills of Wang's Japanese-trained subordinates. In early March 1919, the YGA began publishing a newspaper in Guiyang, the *Young Guizhou Association Daily*, which served as the organization's mouthpiece. Articles dealt with issues typical of the New Culture Movement, such as opium suppression, women's short haircuts, and opposition to Japanese imperialism. Guizhou students and military cadets who had emerged as a base of support for Wang's faction penned a stream of articles in the *YGA Daily* advocating political and social change (HYQJJ, 35). The *YGA Daily* quickly became the leading voice of activism and helped to spread ideas about reform and revolution in Guizhou province.

Though YGA members mainly targeted the Beijing government and did not specifically criticize Liu Xianshi, he saw the student movement as a potential threat. For example, in March 1919, Liu Xianshi and other local dignitaries attended a rally sponsored by both the YGA and PSA at which a student speaker addressed an enthusiastic crowd on the virtues of modernization, democracy, and freedom. "Old people think about the past," he told the audience, "while young people think about the future. Old people are conservative, while young people are aggressive." He concluded, "The past belongs to old people, but the future belongs to the young!" (Xiong, 1986: 29-30). Almost fifty years old at the time, Liu Xianshi likely interpreted these remarks as directed at him (old) and Wang (young). The

rhetoric may have reflected that of other youth organizations of the time, but the specific goal of the YGA under Wang's control remained purely local: to weaken Liu Xianshi's political standing. By the spring of 1919, the YGA, and therefore Wang Wenhua, had come to dominate the student movement in Guizhou.

The dramatic political protests that took place in Beijing in May 1919 fueled the intensity of the students' agitation across China. The Versailles Peace Conference, at which the victorious powers of World War I decided to award control of Germany's former territorial concessions in Shandong to Japan, changed the nature of the student movement in China in general and in Guizhou in particular. In Beijing, students launched the famous demonstration of 4 May 1919, resulting in arrests that outraged young people around China. Information about these events reached Guiyang slowly, initially from the letters to friends and family of Guizhou students studying in Beijing. For example, Xu Tingzhong learned of events of May and June through a letter from a former classmate who had gone to study in Beijing. The correspondent, who had been arrested, described the ordeal of the students in police custody (Xu, n.d.: 64-65). As word spread through such letters, Guizhou newspapers began printing detailed stories on the Versailles Conference and on the activities of students in other cities. For three straight days, *Guizhou gongbao* reported on the activities of Guizhou students in Beijing (Xiong, 1986: 37-38).

The news from Beijing sparked more student activity in Guizhou. The numbers involved remained small, but student organization in Guiyang improved in part through the work of Guizhou students studying in other provinces. For example, Guizhou students in Hunan organized a National Salvation Association with some 600 members. Emboldened by the actions of students elsewhere in China and seeking to unite with other student organizations, students at the Institute of Law and Politics in Guiyang called a meeting to discuss the creation of a Guizhou branch of the National Student Alliance (Xiong, 1986: 45-46).

Wang Wenhua and his supporters in the YGA increased their political activities and demands for reform in the wake of the 4 May 1919 demonstrations. In late May 1919, the leaders of the YGA met with representatives from eighty-one counties to prepare to create a new representative body called the Guizhou National People's Assembly. Wall posters throughout Guiyang described the assembly and its purpose, calling on the people of Guizhou to fight for the return of Shandong province, the abolition of the Twenty-one Demands, and an end to Japanese imperialism. More than 1,000 people attended the assembly's opening session at Meng Cao Park in

June. In the keynote address, He Yingqin described the events at Versailles and reviewed the history of Japanese imperialism in China and the suffering of colonial peoples in Korea and Vietnam. He concluded by urging everyone to send telegrams to the delegates in France and to the Beijing government demanding that Chinese representatives refuse to sign the treaty and that they abrogate all "unequal treaties" between China and foreign powers. He also urged those present to insist on the release of the imprisoned Beijing students and the removal of six "pro-Japanese" ministers from the cabinet. Afterward, He Yingqin led the students in a march through the streets (Xiong, 2001: 74-75).

During the summer of 1919, Guizhou students and military cadets, guided by Wang Wenhua and He Yingqin, continued to actively engage in the unfolding patriotic, anti-imperialist movement. In June, representatives from national student organizations seeking to unite various regional student organizations into a national alliance began to filter into Guiyang. As the leader of the YGA, He Yingqin welcomed these connections and helped to create the Guizhou branch of the National Student Alliance (Xiong, 2001: 77-78).

The growth of the YGA and its connections with students beyond Guizhou's borders, combined with Wang's influence over the organization, exacerbated Liu Xianshi's concerns that the student movement could pose a serious political threat. Since the PSA showed little vitality or popularity, Liu made several attempts to weaken the influence of Wang and the YGA by curtailing all activities of Guiyang students. First, he called on his supporters among educators to exert their influence over the students. Zhang Pengnian—the brother of Liu's director of public finance, Zhang Xielu, and principal of the Nanming Middle School—convened a meeting of the student body to warn them against rash deeds and political activism. If they truly wished to "save the nation" as they claimed, Zhang scolded, then they should concentrate on their studies and not cut class to demonstrate. He ended the assembly by banning all student activities undertaken without his personal approval. Liu Jingwu, Liu Xianshi's cousin and the president of the Institute of Law and Politics, gave a similar lecture to his students, rebuking them for endangering public order with demonstrations and protests (Xu, n.d.: 65; Xiong, 1986: 53-55).

When the students failed to take these warnings seriously, Liu Xianshi sought instead to blunt the impact of their activities. He sent Zhang Pengnian to suggest that the Guizhou branch of the National Student Alliance change its name to the Guizhou Academic Alliance and admit local teachers and educational leaders. Zhang also proposed creating a

"Discussion Office" to serve as an editorial board in charge of monitoring student articles and essays. These measures would enable Liu Xianshi to position some of his own supporters where they could soften the tone of the YGA's criticisms. The YGA, no doubt reflecting Wang's unwillingness to allow Liu to influence an organization that sought his removal, rejected Zhang's proposal (Xiong, 2001: 78).

Unable to deflect the movement away from political activism, Liu Xianshi then took more stringent measures against the students by ordering his chief of police, Li Yingxue, to prohibit protests and marches. Some students hesitated to defy this order until cadets from He Yingqin's Guizhou Military Academy promised protection. Emboldened by the cadets' support, a large group of students from other schools organized a demonstration in front of Li Yingxue's office. The mob so intimidated Li that he slipped through the back door of his office and sent a subordinate out to explain to the students that the prohibition was the result of a "misunderstanding" and that protests and demonstrations were indeed "patriotic" activities. Liu's attempts to weaken the YGA failed, and it remained a powerful political force. Wang successfully incorporated the developing student activism in Guiyang into his efforts to challenge his uncle (Xiong, 1986: 56-58; 2001: 79).

The Railroad Controversy

Working through the YGA to turn student activists against Liu's faction benefited Wang and his supporters, but his true power base remained the Guizhou army and the military academy. As commander in chief, Wang had substantial authority over the army, but Liu Xianshi and his officials controlled the provincial purse strings. Thus, as Wang sought to acquire additional funds for the army and to begin his program to modernize the province, the struggle with his uncle spread into the economic sphere. In early 1919, the two factions debated a plan for a foreign loan to build a railroad across Guizhou, and the controversy propelled their confrontation into a new and more violent stage.

As a part of his plan to maintain contact with political authorities outside his province, Liu Xianshi periodically sent Wang Boqun to Guangzhou, Shanghai, or Beijing to serve as Guizhou's representative in talks with Sun Yat-sen's government, the Beijing government, or other provincial leaders. In the course of his travels he met Zhao Shijin, a *huaqiao* (overseas Chinese) who had helped Sun Yat-sen solicit money from other overseas

Chinese for building railroads in China. Wang approached Zhao with a plan to raise money to build a new railroad from Chongqing to Liuzhou, through Guiyang. Zhao agreed and promised to assist in raising $5 million for the project. In March 1919, Wang Boqun signed a preliminary agreement with Zhao that required the authorization of the Guizhou provincial assembly within three months (Xiong, 2001: 84-85).

When the provincial assembly began discussing the loan and railroad project back in Guiyang, Liu Xianshi initially supported the plan. Others suggested taking the loan but using the money for different projects that might benefit Guizhou more, such as developing silver mines or constructing roads (Zhang, n.d.: 54). Seeing an opportunity to strengthen his own position, Wang Wenhua proposed that the assembly set aside $1 million of the loan for the exclusive use of Guizhou army troops. Several officials of Liu's provincial government dissented, most notably Zhang Xielu, the director of public finance, and Chen Tingce, the director of political affairs (Ding, n.d.: 125).

Both supporters of Liu Xianshi, Zhang and Chen opposed Wang's proposal not only because it would add to Wang's power but also because they believed a large loan would saddle the province with too much debt. Nor did they approve of borrowing money from abroad, even from overseas Chinese like Zhao Shijin. Furthermore, they recognized that if they failed to use the money wisely and to demonstrably better the condition of the people of Guizhou, they would be held responsible, while Wang Wenhua would reap the rewards of any success. Zhang Xielu therefore demanded that the assembly restrict the loan amount to a maximum of $2 million and not allow any part of it to be applied to special purposes. Zhang explained his opposition to both the loan and the railroad project in writing (Zhang, n.d.: 55-56; Xiong, 2001: 86-87). Zhang's report, which ran several hundred pages, persuaded Liu Xianshi to withdraw his support, and his reversal scuttled the project and denied Wang access to these funds. The three-month window for approving the loan passed, and the deal fell apart.

The controversy over the loan and railroad project heightened the power struggle and led Wang Wenhua and He Yingqin to increase the pressure for political change in Guizhou. As a first step they formed a committee that advocated "renovation" (*shuaxin*) of the Guizhou provincial government by separating military and civilian affairs. Taking advantage of growing discontent with Liu's rule, they persuaded Ren Kecheng, a member of the Constitutional Preparation Society and Wang's former teacher, to chair the committee (Gui, n.d.: 105). The committee requested that Liu Xianshi resign his position as military governor (*dujun*) and appoint Wang Wenhua,

already commander in chief of the Guizhou army, as his replacement. This would leave civilian power in the hands of Liu, who would retain his position as provincial governor (*shengzhang*), and give complete provincial military authority to Wang Wenhua. Not surprisingly, the proposal enraged Liu Xianshi, who rejected this direct challenge to his authority (Xiong, 2001: 93).

Unable to peacefully "renovate" Liu's government, in the fall of 1919 Wang became more aggressive, organizing attacks on those who had opposed the loan and railroad project and thereby blocked his attempt to acquire additional funding for his troops. By now Wang had clearly demonstrated his desire to remove his uncle from power, but he still took an indirect approach, hoping to undercut Liu's political base by moving against his key supporters. Probably Wang's filial piety, or his wish to avoid the condemnation that a direct assault might bring, or some combination of the two factors prevented him from launching such an attack. It seems clear that familial ties kept the two men from an open confrontation.

At Wang's direction, the YGA mobilized for a campaign against Zhang Xielu, who handled the finances for Liu's government. In response to the generally poor economic situation in Guizhou in late 1919, YGA members staged a demonstration denouncing Zhang Xielu as a criminal: they accused him of exacerbating inflation and thereby making the lives of the people more difficult. Demonstrators also claimed that Zhang's opposition to the loan and railroad project proved that he had no interest in modernizing Guizhou or helping its people. Several hundred soldiers and cadets joined student protestors outside Zhang's office, and a smaller number ransacked his home (Xiong, 2001: 88-89).

In addition, Wang devised a violent plot against Chen Tingce, Liu Xianshi's director of political affairs and another leading opponent of the loan and railroad project. On 26 November 1919, Wang Wenhua invited Liu Xianshi and several members of his faction to a banquet to discuss provincial affairs, perhaps under the pretense of mending fences after the bitter debate over the railroad. Along with the other guests, Chen Tingce spent several hours at Wang's home, eating, drinking, and smoking opium. At approximately 11 p.m., as Chen made his way home, an assassin fired two shots at him, which left him wounded but still alive. Although the would-be assassin escaped, astute observers saw Wang Wenhua's hand behind this attempt to murder one of Liu's supporters (Xiong, 2001: 90).

Following the attack on Chen Tingce, Wang intensified the campaign against Zhang Xielu. Once again working through the YGA, He Yingqin, Gu Zhenglun, and Sun Jianfeng organized students and cadets for a public

demonstration against Zhang on 3 December 1919. They planned to increase the number of participants by handing out surplus uniforms from an army warehouse to local toughs and beggars. This mob would hold a "Poor People's Conference" at which the "masses" would demand that Zhang Xielu stand trial for his "crimes" (Zhang, n.d.: 58). In preparation, the *YGA Daily* published several articles attacking Zhang Xielu for his alleged misdeeds in the office of public finance (Xiong, 2001: 89). Word of the planned demonstration leaked out to Zhang, who found himself in a hopeless position. The public campaign to vilify him left Zhang in a state of despair, and undoubtedly the attempt on Chen Tingce's life suggested that even greater dangers might be in store. Furthermore, he saw little help forthcoming from Liu Xianshi, who preferred not to defend Zhang and risk turning the "masses" against him. Zhang Xielu committed suicide by taking poison on 2 December, the day before the planned demonstration (Zhang, n.d.: 109-10). By the end of 1919, the struggle between Liu Xianshi and Wang Wenhua had moved from the military academy to the student movement, the economic sphere, and violence, leaving one man dead and another wounded.

The Minjiu Incident

The attacks on Zhang and Chen left Liu Xianshi with no doubt that his nephew sought his removal and would stop at nothing to achieve his goals. The increasingly intense student movement, driven by Wang Wenhua and the YGA, showed no sign of abating. Faced with this direct challenge to his rule and perhaps his life, Liu began plotting to remove Wang as commander in chief, thereby triggering a series of events that led to the Minjiu Incident.

Convinced that his nephew had turned against him but still wary of Wang's military strength, Liu Xianshi tried to take advantage of a renewed bout of fighting in Sichuan to eliminate the danger. In early 1920, troops from Guizhou allied with those from Yunnan under the command of Tang Jiyao and marched into Sichuan province to deal with its military governor, Xiong Kewu, who had rejected the influence of Yunnan and Guizhou and asserted Sichuan's independence from its neighbors. Wang Wenhua led the Guizhou troops, which spent the next several months in Sichuan (Sutton, 1980: 232-33). Wang's absence provided Liu Xianshi with an opportunity to oust Wang from his command. He found support in this endeavor from Tang Jiyao, who had taken note of the internal struggles in Guizhou and

evidently decided that Wang Wenhua posed a threat to stability in Guizhou and to his own alliance with Liu Xianshi. According to some sources, Tang secretly sent Liu a cable describing Wang as unfit for command, pointing out that he had no formal military education and relied heavily on his Japanese-trained subordinates, such as He Yingqin and Gu Zhenglun (Chen Xianqiu, n.d.: 153). Others claim that Liu Xianshi initiated the plot, requesting that Tang use his authority as commander of the combined force to remove Wang from command of his troops and replace him with another officer (Guizhou daxue lishixi, n.d.: 196). However it began, Wang Wenhua discovered the plot and drew up his own plan to overthrow Liu.

Wang met secretly with two subordinates, Zhu Shaoliang and Gu Zhenglun, to devise a counteraction. Following his plan, Wang first reported to Liu Xianshi that Guizhou forces intended to leave Sichuan because Yunnan forces were withdrawing. Rather than lead the troops back to Guizhou himself, Wang ordered his deputy commander, Lu Tao, to return to Guiyang at the head of his troops to "sweep out the princes," a euphemism for removing Liu Xianshi's key supporters and forcing him to step down. Even at this point Wang showed no interest in doing his uncle physical harm, as he confined the attacks to Liu's close supporters. To avoid suspicion and to distance himself from the plot against his uncle, Wang Wenhua did not return to Guiyang; instead, he boarded a ship and traveled to Shanghai (Lin, n.d.: 116; Chen Xianqiu, n.d.: 152-53). Zhang Pengnian, a member of Liu's circle and a witness of the power struggle, claimed that before Wang left he and Gu drew up two lists of names: one group slated for immediate assassination and another group to be placed under close observation and perhaps killed later[5] (Zhang, n.d.: 60).

In October 1920, all Guizhou forces left Sichuan and returned to Guiyang via Zunyi, north of the capital. Gu Zhenglun set the coup in motion by ordering Sun Jianfeng to lead troops south to Guiyang, and Sun arrived in the capital in early November. On 10 November, he met with He Yingqin to again go over the list of those targeted for assassination. According to Xiong Zongren, He Yingqin favored keeping the list short, while Sun argued for including ten or more names so that they might utterly destroy Liu's faction. After consulting another supporter, provincial assembly member Zhang Shiren, they agreed that excess bloodshed might turn the people of Guiyang against them, and therefore settled on four men, all key supporters of Liu Xianshi: Guo Chongguang, leader of the local Qilaohui, which supported Liu; Xiong Fanyu, Liu's chief secretary; He Linshu, who had replaced Chen Tingce as director of political affairs; and Ding Yizhong, who had replaced He Linshu as head of military affairs (Xiong, 2001: 101;

Zhang, n.d.: 61-62). After these assassinations, Wang planned to force Liu Xianshi to resign.

Liu Xianshi knew no specifics of this plot, but rumors of a possible coup had reached him through his spies. As a precaution, he sent orders to his cousin Liu Xianqian in Xingyi to return to the capital with his independent military force. He also, according to Lin Zixian, got in touch with one of his own supporters who remained on Wang's staff, Yuan Zuming, telling him to agitate against Wang from inside and perhaps seek to turn Wang's troops against their commander (Lin, n.d.: 116). Late on the night of the tenth, random shots rang out in various parts of Guiyang, signaling that the coup had begun. Wang's troops blocked the streets, restricting movements of the public and trying to prevent the escape of anyone on the assassination list.

The most detailed account of the coup comes from Zhang Pengnian, and other sources corroborate its basic outline. Sun Jianfeng, who led the actual coup, designated individual squads to capture the four men targeted for assassination. As planned, a squad of soldiers arrived at the home of Guo Chongguang, claiming that Liu Xianshi wished to see him. Guo agreed to go with the soldiers to Liu's compound, but Guo's son cried when they took his father away. According to Zhang, one of the soldiers drew his pistol and shot the boy in the head. They led Guo to a bridge outside of the north gate of the city, where they stretched him out on a butcher's table and cut off his head. In another part of the city, a separate group of soldiers approached the gate at the home of Xiong Fanyu. Mistakenly believing that the soldiers had come to rob his home, Xiong asked them to take what they wanted but not to hurt anyone. One soldier replied that they came not for his goods but for his life. They escorted Xiong into his own courtyard, where he, too, lost his head (Zhang, n.d.: 62; Gui, n.d.: 110).

The two other targets managed to escape their assassins. Hearing a commotion in the streets, He Linshu realized the danger and slipped over a wall into his neighbor's yard, where he hid when the assassination squad arrived at his home. Unable to find him, they dragged his two sons and his nephew into the street and beheaded them. He later returned to his house, and then slipped out of Guiyang in a palanquin by pretending to be a sick man. Ding Yizhong also escaped death by first hiding in his expansive compound and then fleeing the city. At the end of the night's bloodshed, Sun Jianfeng placed the severed heads of Guo Chongguang and Xiong Fanyu in a barrel and sent them to Gu Zhenglun as evidence of his success. Gu ordered the heads displayed to the public along with proclamations of their "crimes" against the people of Guizhou (Zhang, n.d.: 62; Gui, n.d.: 110; Lin, n.d.: 118).

While his close supporters lost their heads or fled the city, Liu Xianshi spent a sleepless night in his compound, surrounded by his private guard. Clearly something had happened and people likely had been killed, but Liu knew neither who nor how many. Over the next few days he discovered what had happened to four of his key supporters. Seeing the handwriting on the wall and realizing that his own life was in danger, Liu resigned his positions as both provincial and military governor (Xiong, 2001: 101-3).

Liu Xianshi decided to leave Guiyang and return to his home in Xingyi city, but with only two squads to protect him he feared for his safety outside the walls of his compound. At first the leaders of the coup proved unwilling to let him depart, causing Liu to threaten to commit suicide unless permitted to go. Perhaps realizing the emptiness of his threat, Liu then turned to his elder sister, Wang Wenhua's mother, for protection. Familial relations once again came into play, as she helped persuade the plotters to allow Liu to leave; and on 18 November, she personally escorted him from Guiyang to Anshun. At Anshun, Liu Xianshi met up with his cousin Liu Xianqian and his detachment of soldiers. They continued together to Xingyi, while Madame Wang returned to the capital. Evidently, Liu's fears for his safety had some foundation. Lin Zixian later reported that Sun Jianfeng had ordered him to accompany Liu Xianshi and Madame Wang to Anshun and had urged him to set up an ambush to kill Liu along the way. Lin refused, allowing Liu and the others to reach Xingyi unharmed (Lin, n.d.: 118-19; Xiong, 2001: 104-5).

The plotters still did not know if they had succeeded. Rumors circulated throughout the city that Yunnan forces were approaching Guizhou together with troops loyal to Liu Xianqian to put down the coup and restore Liu Xianshi to power. He Yingqin quickly moved to implement the second part of the plan, which called for Ren Kecheng to serve as acting provincial governor until the return of Wang Wenhua. Though critical of Liu Xianshi, Ren wanted no part of the coup and fled to Anshun. A detachment of soldiers found him and escorted him back to Guiyang, but he quickly fled again; he then took refuge in a Catholic church with other refugees of the coup, including Xiong Fanyu's brother and Chen Tingce (Gui, n.d.: 110-11). In the absence of Ren's cooperation, the post of acting provincial governor passed to the acting director of political affairs, Zhou Hongbin[6] (Xiong, 2001: 103).

While the violence of the Minjiu Incident reached its climax in Guizhou, Wang Wenhua deliberately stayed away, perhaps in the hopes of avoiding public condemnation for the overthrow of his uncle and the murder of prominent officials. At the same time, he had brought funds to Shanghai so

that he might buy weapons to equip and strengthen the Guizhou army (Chen Xianqiu, n.d.: 153). In the end, distance won him little protection, as Liu's supporters followed Wang to Shanghai. In March 1921, as Wang left the hotel he frequented and stepped into a waiting car, assassins intent on revenge shot him dead (Zhang, n.d.: 63-65; Guizhou daxue lishixi, n.d.: 197; Gui, n.d.: 111). Wang's death ended the rivalry between uncle and nephew, but it did little to settle the issue of who would rule Guizhou. After seeking refuge in Kunming, Liu Xianshi returned to Guiyang in April 1923, supported by troops from Yunnan. Liu's second stint as governor lasted only two years; in 1925 a combined Guizhou military force drove Liu back into exile in Yunnan, where he died of illness in 1927.

The power struggle that led to the Minjiu Incident reflects the complex relationships within and varied nature of militarist conflict during China's warlord era. The elder militarist, Liu Xianshi, held his position as *dujun* by virtue of his family's local status and his connections with elite families in Yunnan. He and his faction represented the "civilian elite" of Guizhou at the time of the 1911 Revolution, and Liu took advantage of his personal connections and the situation in Guizhou to gain civilian and military authority in Guizhou. Liu's political program proved modest, offering little hope for meaningful change, as he sought to maintain the status quo—at least until the national political situation clarified. The younger militarist, Liu's nephew Wang Wenhua, also rose by virtue of family connections rather than military prowess. Wang himself had learned his military profession on the job, fighting against Yuan Shikai's forces in Sichuan, but he surrounded himself with young, professionally trained military officers who shared his political views. His faction represented the "military professionals" of the May Fourth generation as distinct from his uncle's civilians of the 1911 Revolution generation. In many respects, this conflict can be seen as a generational struggle typical of the May Fourth era (1917-21).[7] Familial ties played an important role in the relationship between these two militarists but did not prevent them from turning on each other. The struggle between Liu Xianshi and Wang Wenhua serves to warn us against oversimplifying generalizations about China's warlords and their relationships.

Events in Guizhou also illustrate the various methods of struggle employed by smaller militarists. Rather than putting large private armies in the field, Liu and Wang used more subtle and creative tactics. Their confrontation began in the rival military academies, spread to the student organizations of the New Culture and May Fourth movements, shifted to provincial economic policy, and then culminated in the Minjiu Incident, a

more traditional display of military force used for political ends. Such tactics and forms of struggle cannot be compared in scale and consequence to the larger conflicts of the northern warlords, but they provide an example of regional variation that clearly indicates the diversity of China's warlords. Liu and Wang represent an important part of the warlord experience that has been obscured by an exclusive concentration on traditional military combat between larger regional militarists. By examining Guizhou and its militarist conflict during this period, we can achieve a better understanding of the varied nature of regional militarism and thus gain new insights into a critical period of China's modern history.

Notes

1. Although some prefer the term "militarist" to "warlord," the latter is still commonly used in academic circles. In this article the two words are synonyms: both refer to an individual who sought to establish independent political and military authority over a designated territory, relying primarily on personal command of a military force.

2. On the rise of the Liu family in Xingyi county, see McCord, 1990.

3. Johnson (1962: 181) gives the date as 3 March 1912.

4. Student activists in Guiyang tended to come from the Nanming Middle School, the Dade Middle School, the Model (Mofan) Middle School, the Institute of Law and Politics, the Teacher's College, and the Guizhou Military Academy.

5. According to Gui Baizhu, many people at the time believed that Wang wanted to arrest the men on the list and briefly detain them rather than kill them (Gui, n.d.: 109). If this is accurate (a point that remains unclear), we do not know when and how the plan became murderous.

6. Gui Baizhu (n.d.: 110) claims that Lu Tao, not Zhou Hongbin, served as acting provincial governor.

7. The term "May Fourth era" reflects Chow Tse-tsung's broad definition of the May Fourth Movement as occurring between the years 1917 and 1921 and incorporating what many call the New Culture Movement as well as the political and nationalist activities surrounding the events of 4 May 1919 (Chow, 1960: 5-6).

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