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Chen Jiongming and the Federalist Movement: Regional Leadership and Nation Building in Early Republican China

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doctrine in late-imperial China, Gedalecia's book will be important to anyone interested in the intellectual history of China between the Song and the Ming dynasties. Perhaps just as important, implicit within the book is evidence of a great deal of continuity, in terms of social and intellectual history, between the Song and Ming dynasties. This is an important argument in its own right. For all of these reasons, Gedalecia's book is an important contribution to the field.

University of Wyoming

Michael C. Brose

Chen, Leslie H. Dingyan: *Chen Jiongming and the Federalist Movement: Regional Leadership and Nation Building in Early Republican China*, Michigan Monographs in Chinese Studies, 86. (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1999), xx + 357 pp., \$ 50.00. ISBN 0-89264-135-5.

This book is a straightforward attempt to rehabilitate the memory and reputation of the author's father, Chen Jiongming. Chen (1878–1933) is most often remembered as an anti-Manchu revolutionary before 1911 and warlord of Guangdong Province during the warlord period (1916–1926). Most accounts of early 20th century China refer to him obliquely, typically as a threat to Sun Yat-sen's position in Guangdong in the early 1920s, not as a significant national leader in his own right with a base of power and a political program that bore the potential to form the centerpiece of a new political dispensation for China. In mainstream accounts he often comes across as a rather reactionary, perhaps even malevolent, militarist whose personal ambitions led him to stand as an obstacle athwart the road to progress of Sun's nationalist revolution. His activities are commonly portrayed at least implicitly in less than altruistic terms, his behavior being shaded by his private ambitions. Howard L. Boorman, for example, asserts that Chen's break with Sun was essentially over personal ambition. While Sun was devoted to creating a strong, centralized national government in the service of a broad national agenda, Chen was interested primarily in consolidating his grip on Guangdong, "his chief concern being the development of his native province under his own leadership." (Boorman, *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China*, I: 177). Even James E. Sheridan, an expert on warlord behavior who presents a short but relatively well-balanced summary of Chen's career, considered him "at heart a benevolent despot." (*China in Disintegration*, p. 70)

Leslie Chen's goal is explicitly to turn the table on this version of events. He asserts that this negative image of Chen is the product of a campaign of character assassination waged by both Nationalist and Communist historians who treasure the memory of Sun Yat-sen as the father of the Chinese revolution and are accustomed to portraying one of Sun's enemies in the most dismal hues possible, i. e., as a ruthless warlord who betrayed the revolution. Much of the book is, in fact, an effort to reverse the verdict of history by presenting Chen as a man with liberal and progressive ideas who sacrificed his personal fortunes rather than yield on matters of principle. Sun, by contrast, is shown to be a self-serving dilettante whose commitment to liberal values was shallow, and who upon occasion was willing to sell out China's sovereignty to the Japanese or the Russians in order to slake his thirst for power.

The image of Chen Jiongming that is presented here is that of a dedicated modernizer whose commitment to reform predates the 1911 Revolution. He was a member of a constellation of what Leslie Chen calls "homegrown" reformers (p. 13) who had little by way of anti-dynastic ambitions but saw revolution as a means to achieve the immediate goal of alleviating misery and social injustice. He was a strong advocate and practitioner of local government-led development, and in territories under his control, both before and after 1911, he compiled a substantial record of achievement in such areas as education, public morality (*gambling and opium consumption*), industry, communication and transportation.

According to Leslie Chen, Chen Jiongming was alienated from Sun Yat-sen less because of a clash between their private interests than because he found himself deeply at odds with Sun's efforts to build a one-party state that he himself could control. Indeed, it was Chen's strenuous opposition to the loyalty oath that Dr. Sun attempted to impose upon his followers in 1914 that led to the first break between the pair, and during the subsequent decade, Leslie Chen reveals, there was a pattern of resistance on the part of Chen Jiongming to the efforts of Sun and his party to assert their authority over various aspects of Guangdong's development. One noteworthy example is the case of education, wherein Chen strove to create an independent system free from political interference on the grounds that such a system was crucial for the construction of a democratic society. When during the late 1920s the Nationalist Party tried to take control of it (in the name of party-ized or party-guided education), Chen opposed the party vigorously even though he was no longer in power.

Chen was also disturbed by Sun Yat-sen's associations with the Soviet Union and the Chinese Communists. While he himself flirted with socialism and explored contacts with the USSR, ultimately he rejected both aid from Russia and notions of class struggle and militant nationalism. He was particularly incensed by Sun's efforts to refashion the Nationalist Party into a Soviet-style organization, and he saw Sun's attempt to propel himself into the position of paramount leader as a serious threat to constitutional rule.

Confident that China's long experience with self-government at the local level provided a foundation for democratic government, by 1922 he crafted for the leaders of the southwestern provinces a proposal for a national constitution that amounted to a platform for a federal republic organized essentially along American lines. Any hope Chen had of carrying out such a program, however, was crushed by the fall of 1925 when Chiang Kai-shek defeated Chen's Guangdong Army and forced him to leave Canton. Thenceforward, Chen was kept on the fringes of South China's political world. He organized a federalist political party in Hong Kong, the *Zhigongdang*, but for the rest of his life he was excluded from the corridors of power.

Although handicapped by the dearth of sources, especially concerning Chen Jiongming's early years, Leslie Chen does a creditable job mining press accounts and United States Department of State records for statements by Chen and evidence of his public activities. The total is sufficient to demonstrate that there is a sizeable body of public comments, proposals and activities that support the author's claims that Chen had democratic and federalist leanings. Late in Chen's life, by the late 1920s, the record is made substantially clearer due to the publica-

tion of a book by Chen (*Chungguó tungyi chuyi* [*Proposal for the Unification of China*]) in which he developed his political philosophy, articulating a point of view clearly in favor of federalist principles. Essentially, the book outlines a system of government that rests on a platform of village-based democracy. As the primary units of the Chinese federation, villages would be managed by self-governing councils elected directly by the villagers. These village councils would choose representatives to serve on councils governing the next level of administration, the districts; district councils would select representatives to county councils; county councils would choose representatives to provincial assemblies; and provincial assemblies would elect delegates to a national parliament. There would also be an independent judiciary and a national conference elected directly by voters at the provincial level to serve as a counterweight to the parliament. The constitution and by-laws of the Zhigong Party also stipulated that there should be tolerance of multiparty competition at the ballot box, and freedom of enterprise and the press. In a nutshell, in Leslie Chen's opinion it was a program that reflected Chen Jiongming's belief in an open political system and his confidence in the sustainability of democracy, at least at the grassroots level.

Most historians pay little attention to Chen's *Zhigongdang* on the grounds that without an army or a territorial base Chen and his political allies were marginalized to the point of irrelevance. Leslie Chen himself shows that from 1926 until his death in 1933 Chen Jiongming had little influence over events in south China; he spent much of his time either in Hong Kong or in north China conferring with northern leaders about either peaceful reunification or the Japanese threat. The author, however, still appears to believe that there was during the 1920s a real chance for Chen's federalist movement, one that was destroyed by the political and military intrigues of Sun Yat-sen. Leslie Chen's revision of the record concerning Chen Jiongming's idealism and his effort to bring to light some of Sun Yat-sen's less attractive qualities (e. g., his unbridled ambition and his willingness to compromise with foreign powers — Japan and Russia — in order to secure their support for his revolution) are well documented and on target (if not necessarily original in the case of Sun Yat-sen). Less convincing, however, is his suggestion that but for Dr. Sun's machinations China might have peacefully developed a federal system of government. Perhaps in his enthusiasm to clean up his father's image, a job that he does very well, he has reached a bit too far. That, however, is a minor, and perhaps understandable, flaw that does not fatally detract from what otherwise is a well-researched and competently argued piece of scholarship.

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Lan, Hua R., and Vanessa L. Fong (eds): *Women in Republican China: A Sourcebook*. (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1999), xi + 239 pp., \$ 69.95. ISBN 0-7656-0342-X.

The title of this work is not entirely apt, for this is not a sourcebook on women themselves so much as it is one on the views of people of both genders concerning women's place and role in Chinese society during the May Fourth era. It is a collection of 43 pieces written by Chinese men and women from 1916 to 1930