



Chang P'eng-yüan (Zhang Pengyuan), *Cong minquan dao weiquan. Sun Zhongshan di xunzheng sixiang yu zhuanzhe jian lun dangren jizhi shushi* (From tutelage to authoritarianism: Sun Yat-sen's thoughts on tutelage, its transformation, and the accomplishment of his project by Guomintang members),

Taipei, Academia Sinica, Institute of Modern History, 2015, VII + 184 pages.

Marie-Claire Bergère

Translator: N. Jayaram



Electronic version

URL: <http://chinaperspectives.revues.org/7234>
ISSN: 1996-4617

Publisher

Centre d'étude français sur la Chine contemporaine

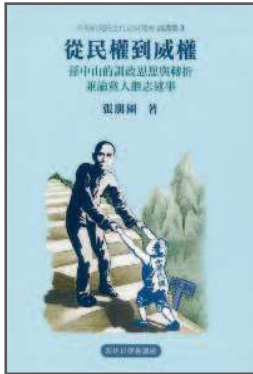
Printed version

Date of publication: 1 March 2017
Number of pages: 102-103
ISSN: 2070-3449

Electronic reference

Marie-Claire Bergère, « Chang P'eng-yüan (Zhang Pengyuan), *Cong minquan dao weiquan. Sun Zhongshan di xunzheng sixiang yu zhuanzhe jian lun dangren jizhi shushi* (From tutelage to authoritarianism: Sun Yat-sen's thoughts on tutelage, its transformation, and the accomplishment of his project by Guomintang members) », *China Perspectives* [Online], 2017/1 | 2017, Online since 01 March 2017, connection on 01 November 2017. URL : <http://chinaperspectives.revues.org/7234>

Book reviews



Chang P'eng-yüan (Zhang Pengyuan),
Cong minquan dao weiquan. Sun Zhongshan di xunzheng sixiang yu zhuanzhe jian lun dangren jizhi shushi (From tutelage to authoritarianism: Sun Yat-sen's thoughts on tutelage, its transformation, and the accomplishment of his project by Guomintang members), Taipei, Academia Sinica, Institute of Modern History, 2015, VII + 184 pp.

MARIE-CLAIRE BERGÈRE

At age 80, a reputed historian with Taiwan's Academia Sinica, Chang P'eng-yüan, has turned his back on the Sun Yat-sen cult that had been instilled into him from primary school onwards, to now read or reread the body of works of the father of the nation in order to arrive at a personal impression. An amazing enterprise, as for decades Sun Yat-sen's thoughts and legacy have been the subject of unconditional admiration and respect on the part of Chinese authorities and historians, whereas the West has always adopted a much more critical attitude towards the revolutionary leader. It is also a difficult enterprise, as Sun's doctrine – Tridemism or Three Principles of the People – and his political interventions were characterised by numerous contradictions, abrupt reversals, and inexplicable somersaults.

In tracing this trajectory, Chang has chosen to highlight the notion of "tutelage" (*xunzheng*), which first emerged in 1905 in Sun's programme and which reappeared with multiple content variations in several later speeches and writings. It re-emerged in his presentation of Tridemism in 1924, the leader's premature death the following year imparting definitiveness to this final formulation and leaving his successors the task of translating their chief's vision into reality.

Tutelage represents a supple running thread that allows the author to explore the sources and modulations of the revolutionary ideology of Sun and his disciples and to pinpoint their changing relationship to democracy, but it is a solid thread that confers unity to this slim volume.

What is tutelage? It is the second of the phases Sun conceptualised to describe the development of the revolutionary process, falling between the military phase that helps to oust the *ancien régime* and the constitutional phase, in which popular sovereignty is exercised. Sun liked to compare it to the eighteenth-century European Enlightenment, in which elites guided the people to become aware of their rights and ready to exercise them. Although conceived to help establish democracy, tutelage ended up serving to legitimise the installation of Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist and authoritarian regime. This evolution started in Sun's lifetime, during the reorganisation of the Guomintang on the Leninist model in 1924, and continued under Hu Hanmin, Wang Jingwei, and Chiang Kai-shek, Sun's successors as heads of the party. The victory of the *Beifa* (Northern Expedition) in 1928 was supposed to put an end to the revolution's military phase and inau-

gurate the tutelage period. Gradually devoid of all content, tutelage turned into a simple label and completely exited the political vocabulary by the late 1930s.

Chang traces tutelage's history relying on both analyses of texts and lessons drawn from the political engagements of Sun and his successors. The introductory chapter and the second, highlighting the birth of the concept and the young Sun's pro-democratic tendencies, underline the role of Western influences in the intellectual formation of the revolutionary theoretician, who was keen on enlightened despotism and the American and French revolutions, and began to favour the parliamentary system and political parties. However, the defects of the corruption-tainted American electoral system as well as the disappointing experience of parliamentarism in the first years of the Chinese Republic soon led Sun to harbour reservations towards the functioning of representative democracy.

Given these growing reservations, Sun sought reinforcements to the electoral system, such as "oversight power" exercised by the government in validating the mandate of elected deputies, and began advocating recourse to direct democracy from 1916 onward. Aware that such a system would be difficult to apply in a country as vast as China, he thought of aligning it with the development of local autonomy. Within districts (*xian*), some elite citizens, the "farsighted," would ensure improvement of people's material life as well as their political education and participation in public life through locally elected assemblies. Sun however did not set out clearly whether these were to be two simultaneous or successive phases, and this ambiguity later led Hu Hanmin and Chiang Kai-shek to accord priority to material reconstruction of the *xian* and reject the election of local people's assemblies indefinitely, thus paving the way for an authoritarian regime.

In Chapter 3, the author traces Sun's gradual orientation towards authoritarianism. Soviet influence in the twilight of his career and life is well known. More originally, the chapter's first part underlines the thus far ignored or neglected role of the German social-democratic model. From 1914, a reading of Robert Michels had revealed to Sun the hierarchical and strict disciplinary structure of the party of Liebknecht and Bebel and convinced him that an essential place must be reserved for a ruling elite. Chang's arguments are persuasive, but the hypothesis of this German influence deserves deeper examination.

The last two chapters deal with the adoption of tutelage starting in 1928, the hurdles encountered and distortions inflicted on the primitive project, and its ultimate abandonment.

The early decades of Nanjing are more often studied from the perspective of rivalries between military and political chiefs, and Chiang's ascent to supreme power is highlighted. Chang notes in Chapter 4 how lively the ideological debates were inside the Guomindang at that time, and how real some people's efforts were to realise Sun's ideals.

The measures adopted by the government in consonance with the Party's decisions to apply tutelage from 1929 onward remained a dead letter. The only experiments to survive this aborted attempt were some *xian* in Guangdong, Jiangxi, and Zhejiang, as described in Chapter 4. These experiments were generally frustrated thanks to lack of resources, personnel, and conviction. The most advanced laid stress on material reconstruction, setting aside the convocation of local assemblies. Some tended to mix up tutelage and local autonomy with the traditional *baojia* (household collective responsibility) system, meant to control the population and maintain order, thus going against Sun's democratic aspirations.

What was Sun's successors' role in this failure? Chapter 5 deals with this question. The author makes a clear distinction between Hu Hanmin and Wang Jingwei, brilliant Cantonese intellectuals from Sun's inner circle since their youth while studying in Tokyo, and Chiang, a late-comer whose relations with Sun were more that of subordinate-superior and protégé-patron.

Hu, a difficult disciple very hostile to rapprochement with Soviet Russia, was shorn of power after Sun's death but returned to active politics in 1928 as head of the Legislative Yuan. In this capacity he oversaw the adoption of measures leading to tutelage. Giving free rein to authoritarian tendencies, he conceived of local autonomy as a form of military organisation of the people to foster nationalism. Chiang went on to adopt many of his ideas.

Wang, a sincere democrat and leader of the Guomindang's left wing, became head of the party and government after Sun's death. After his rupture with the Soviet and Chinese Communists in June 1927, he confronted Chiang, denouncing his dictatorial tendencies. In September 1930 he unveiled a draft Constitution that meticulously elaborated modalities for local autonomy and people's participation in public life. Rivalries among military chiefs and the Japanese threat in Manchuria quickly forced Wang to compromise and abandon democratic aspirations, but his speeches, legislative texts, and media articles published in 1930-1931 fleshed out and enriched the theory of tutelage and local autonomy.

Recalling the tortuous beginnings of Chiang's career and the decisive moment of his nomination as head of the Whampoa Military Academy in 1924, the author stresses the "sincere" interest Chiang showed in tutelage during the years 1928-1931. Chiang lost no time transforming this tutelage into an instrument of political struggle. Witness the 1931 *baojia* regulation on Communist extermination zones. As it proved difficult to marry a local autonomy meant to "enhance people's happiness" with *baojia*, which sought to maintain order, the application of autonomy was condemned *sine die*.

Chang's essay is impeccably documented, drawing on an abundance of writings, well-known or little-known, of the principal actors, including the most authentic version of Chiang's diaries (that in the Hoover Library), as well as official Chinese documents and Comintern archives on China between 1920 and 1925, all of this enriched by a bibliography of Chinese and Western studies.

But the essay evokes two minor reservations and a question. Based on the political stands of various actors in analysing their ideological evolution, the

author has sought to trace – often at excessive length – the tormented political history of the years 1910-1930. Moreover, with Chinese readers in mind, he provides much information on the Enlightenment, the American and French Revolutions, the German social-democratic movement, etc. – which would appear too detailed for Western readers familiar with the themes from their own general culture.

More important: has Chang fulfilled the task he set himself of reassessing without prejudice the thoughts and actions of Sun and his successors? Yes and no. He has repeatedly criticised the superficial character of Sun's political culture, but he partially absolves him of brusque about-turns, especially his rejection of democracy in favour of one-party dictatorship by invoking contemporary evolution in Europe: "China dominated by the West followed the retreat of the democracy wave and was carried up by the totalitarian wind" (p. 153). This was even more true in his successors' case. Chang nevertheless regards Sun's orientation towards totalitarianism as "unfortunate," and its consequences on the history of the Republic of China as disastrous. He is nevertheless somewhat uncomfortable with the severity of this verdict: in extremis (p. 155) he seeks to interpret Sun's final trip to Beijing in the winter of 1924-1925 and his proposal to convene a national assembly as expressions of renewed confidence in democracy. The more generally accepted opinion is that this surprising demarche going against the advice of Guomindang leaders and Soviet advisers was just a last-ditch and vain attempt by Sun to impose his will on the Northern military leaders and to retrieve his position as national leader.

That said, this book provides a serious, synthesised, and original study bringing together the viewpoints of Chinese and Western historiography and is an important contribution towards a more objective view of the personality and role of Sun Yat-sen.

■ Translated by N. Jayaram

■ Marie-Claire Bergère is professor emeritus at the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INALCO) (bergere.feugeas@gmail.com).