

Province and Nation: The Chekiang Provincial Autonomy Movement, 1917–1927

R. KEITH SCHOPPA

HUMILIATED and shaken by the depredations of the imperialist nations, early twentieth-century Chinese leaders sought the establishment of a strong nation-state. Bitter struggles over the means to reach that goal—primarily over the distribution of political power—ended in the demise of the Ch'ing, the defeat of Yuan Shih-k'ai, and the turmoil of the "warlord" period. After Yuan's death in 1916, the dispute over distribution of power thrust into serious consideration the model of a federation for building a nation out of China's disparate regions and interests. Some felt that a federation was perhaps a more effective integrating form than the centralized bureaucratic model the late Ch'ing and Yuan Shih-k'ai had supported.¹ The debate was not new in China. However, during the empire, proponents of centralization (*chün-hsien*) and decentralization (*feng-chien*) had been concerned with finding the form that would produce the greatest stability and administrative efficiency; now the Chinese were obsessed with the issue for life-and-death reasons.² Rapid national integration seemed imperative for China's survival. In 1901, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao had discussed the possibilities of a Chinese federation;³ but, until 1916, federalism was effectively submerged by the centralizers. Amid increasing turmoil after Yuan's death, federalism seemed to provide an answer to chaotic instability.

The concept of a federation composed of autonomous provinces implicitly raises the complex question of the relationship between loyalty to province and loyalty to nation. Since the early years of the Ming dynasty—when provincial boundaries had been drawn as they generally existed in the early twentieth century—provincial loyalty and fellow-feeling had been a strong, often determinative, force in Chinese goals and decision-making.⁴ But the development in the late Ch'ing of supra-provincial nationalism raised the issue of the relationship between the two forces.

For most historians of modern China, as with most twentieth-century Chinese, nation-building has been the central interest; as a result, provincialism has been seen as subordinate in value to nationalism. Joseph Levenson has contended that provin-

R. Keith Schoppa is Assistant Professor of History at Valparaiso University.

¹ For an excellent account of Yuan Shih-k'ai's bureaucratic centralization, see Ernest P. Young, *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k'ai: Liberalism and Dictatorship in Early Republican China* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1977), pp. 105–06 and 148–68.

² For an account of this debate between propo-

nents of the *chün-hsien* and *feng-chien* systems, see Yang Lien-sheng, "Ming Local Administration" in Charles Hucker (ed.), *Chinese Government in Ming Times* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 1–21.

³ See Young (n. 1 above), p. 22.

⁴ Chang Ch'i-yün, *Che-chiang sheng shih-ti chi-yao* (Shanghai: Shang-wu yin-shu-kuan, 1925), p. 60.

cialism inhibits, aborts, or perhaps indirectly abets nationalism.⁵ Some historians have stressed the first two aspects, contending that loyalty to province was parochial, inferior, pre-modern, and, in effect, antithetical to and preclusive of nationalism.⁶ Others have suggested that provincialism abetted and aided the growth of nationalism by serving as an intermediate stage in its maturation and by serving, in the 1920s federalist movement, as a "tactical retreat" until full-blown nationalism could develop.⁷ A serious consequence of such views is that provincialism as an integral, functionally positive, and independent value in the Chinese outlook is overlooked and that important dynamics of Chinese political development are disregarded.

This paper discusses the relationship between nationalism and provincialism, with special reference to the provincial autonomy and federalist movements in Chekiang from 1917 to 1927. It reveals that commitment to nation and province were intertwined in continually varying patterns, dependent in large part upon changing degrees of political integration at each level. By integration, I mean the disposition to act collectively to advance common interests. Produced by, but differentiated from, such factors as interactions among people or groups and mutual functional interests, integration results in perceiving a certain community as a cohesive unit in relation to other communities.⁸ In the early Republic, large political and institutional shifts affected provincial and national integration by altering those factors that produced it. As a result, strength of commitment to the two levels varied. Provincialism and nationalism could exist with equal degrees of intensity at any point in time, could merge into any combination of commitment, and could theoretically exist discretely.⁹ Provincialism thus ceases to be an always negative and subordinate concept.

Whether loyalty to nation or province was predominant, decisions concerning

⁵ "The Province, the Nation, and the World" in A. Feuerwerker, R. Murphey, and M. Wright (eds.), *Approaches to Modern Chinese History* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1967), p. 270.

⁶ These ideas are inherent in the school of historians who trace strong regionalist or provincialist developments from the period of the Taiping rebellion when provincial officials gained significant power. For example, see Franz Michael, "Introduction" to Stanley Spector, *Li Hung-chang and the Huai Army* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1964). Levenson's article (n. 5 above) also is filled with a sense of the pejorative nature of provincialism. This idea is also implied in such writing as Ichiko Chūzō, "The Role of the Gentry: An Hypothesis" in Mary Wright (ed.), *China in Revolution* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1968), p. 300: gentry "were more deeply concerned with provincial matters and their own businesses than with national interests."

⁷ For the intermediate stage, see John Fincher, "Political Provincialism and National Revolution" (p. 220) and Yoshihiro Hatano, "The New Armies" (p. 302) in Wright (n. 6 above). For the "tactical retreat" idea in the federalist movement, see Jean Chesneaux, "The Federalist Movement in China, 1920-3" in Jack Gray (ed.), *Modern China's Search for a Political Form* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), p. 104; it is stated somewhat differently in Diana Lary, *Region and Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1974), p. 8.

⁸ In my discussion of integration, I am generally

following Philip E. Jacob and Henry Teune, "The Integrative Process: Guidelines for Analysis of the Bases of Political Community" in Jacob and James V. Toscano (eds.), *The Integration of Political Communities* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1964), pp. 1-45. They describe ten integrative factors cited by social scientists: geographic proximity, homogeneity, interactions among persons or groups, knowledge of each other, shared functional interests, the "motive" pattern of a group, the structural frame or system of power and decision-making, the sovereignty-dependence status of the community, governmental effectiveness, and previous integrative experiences. See also Frederick W. Frey, "Communications and Development" in Ithiel de Sola Pool and Wilbur Schramm (eds.), *Handbook of Communication* (Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishing Co., 1973), p. 382.

⁹ For a discussion of these possibilities, see Sidney Verba, "Comparative Political Culture" in Verba and Lucian W. Pye (eds.), *Political Culture and Political Development* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 529-37. An intriguing account suggesting that lower group loyalties and nationalism are compatible is found in R. William Liddle, *Ethnicity, Party, and National Integration* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1970). For stimulating theoretical presentations of the method by which higher-level developmental units exist discretely, apart from lower levels of integration, see H. Teune, "Development and Territorial Political Systems," *International Review of Community Development*, 33-34 (1975), pp. 159-74; also Teune and

them were those of the political elite, men and women who performed official and nonofficial leadership functions in provincial affairs, specifically elected and informal civilian leaders and military men from the Peiyang and Chekiang cliques.¹⁰ Elected civilian bodies included provincial assemblies (meeting from 1909 to 1927, with the exception of 1914 to 1916) and constitutional conventions (from 1921 to 1925). The informal civilian elite encompassed leaders of important commercial organizations, and Chekiangese who had served many years in Peking and returned in the 1920s to play an important role in provincial affairs. Militarists both from outside and within the province determined in large measure the context within which province and nation vied for loyalty. To place these issues of nationalism and provincialism in the early Republic in proper perspective, it is necessary in the beginning to survey their relationship from the last years of the Ch'ing.

Province as Vehicle for Nationalism

The Ch'ing modernization program that attempted to establish firmer vertical political linkages in order to integrate the nation from the top was undertaken in the name of nationalism. The program failed because growing numbers of Chinese did not view Manchu centralization as compatible with Chinese nationalism. Amid a surge of national feeling in reference to imperialist depredations, and in the wake of Peking's perceived inability or unwillingness to fend off imperialist demands, many among the elite saw the province as the proper vehicle for attaining national goals. In *Tides of Chekiang* (*Che-chiang ch'ao*), for example, students in Japan rhapsodized about Chekiang's potential for carrying out the nation's work.¹¹

In the last years of the Ch'ing, this sense of provincial cohesion was heightened by shared functional interests in reaction to a 1907 proposed British loan for the construction of the Shanghai-Hangchow-Ningpo railway. Perceived by the Chekiangese civilian elite as a maneuver to gain control of the railroad and usurp Chinese rights, the episode ignited a widespread provincial movement against British imperialism, attesting to the nationalist dynamic of provincial feelings.¹² The late Ch'ing Provincial Assembly played a key role in asserting Chinese sovereignty in the railroad struggle and in various claims vis-à-vis foreigners or foreign interests in the province.¹³ At this time, provincialism was "fully nationalist in its inspiration and goals."¹⁴

Zdravko Mlinar, "Development and Participation" in G. Bruhns, J. Wiatr, and F. Cazzola (eds.), *Development, Participation and Local Politics* (Pittsburgh: Center for International Studies, 1974), pp. 114–36.

¹⁰ The civilian administrative leadership would usually be included among the elite; but because of their relative unimportance in these issues, I exclude them.

¹¹ See, for example, Fei Shih, "Che-feng p'ien," *Che-chiang ch'ao*, IV (Apr 1903), pp. 1–12.

¹² For accounts of the railroad movement, see *Chiang-Che t'ieh-lu feng-ch'ao* (reprint, Taipei: Chung-kuo kuo-min-tang chung-yang wei-yuan-hui tang-shih shih-liao pien-tsuai wei-yuan hui, 1968; Chao Chin-yü, "Su-Hang-Yung t'ieh-lu chieh-k'uan ho Chiang-Che jen-min ti chü-k'uan yün-tung," *Li-shih yen-chiu*, IX (1959); Fujii Masao, "Shinmatsu Kōsetsu ni okeru tetsudo mondai to burujawa seiryoku no ichi sokumen," *Rekishigaku Kenkyū*, CLXXXIII (1955). In English, see E-tu Zen Sun, "The Shanghai-Hangchow-

Ningpo Railway Loan of 1908," *Far Eastern Quarterly*, X (Feb 1951), pp. 136–50; also Madeleine Chi, "Shanghai-Hangchow-Ningpo Railway Loan: A Case Study of the Rights Recovery Movement," *Modern Asian Studies*, VII (Jan 1973), pp. 85–106.

¹³ For claims against foreigners involving commercial rights in the province, and claims against missionaries at the Mogan Hills retreat, see *Shih Pao* [hereafter *S*], HT 1/11/9 and 1/12/25. [Dates of the *S* until 1 Jan 1912 are given according to reign title and year (Hsuan-t'ung = HT 1), followed by lunar month and day.] See also *North China Herald* [hereafter *NCH*], 1911/4/22, p. 220 and 1911/5/6, p. 346; *Returns of Trade and Trade Reports* [hereafter *TR*] (Shanghai: Inspectorate General of the Maritime Customs, 1899), p. 391; and the summation by Shanghai Consul-General Cunningham to Dept. of State, 30 Sept 1925, National Archives [hereafter *NA*] 893.00/6767, pp. 9–10.

¹⁴ The phrase is Ernest Young's (n. 1 above), p. 261, n. 29; he propounds this point of view most

In the early Republican flush of national feeling, provincial assemblies also argued that the province could serve national aspirations better than could the central government, specifically in opposing British claims of the right to import opium.¹⁵ In the summer of 1912, the assembly—following the lead of Civil Commissioner Ch'u Fu-ch'eng—asserted that, even in Chinese internal affairs, the province could interpret the national interest better than the central government. Ch'u annulled Peking's order for permanent provincial assembly elections, contending that provincial laws should clearly be subordinate to national laws and that a provincial election could thus not be held until uniform national regulations were set down by Peking. In the name of the nation, the province denounced and invalidated orders from the national government. Only a few Chekiangese contended at this time that Chekiang had its own particularity which should be preserved from overly general central government pronouncements.¹⁶

While provincial assemblymen and administrators generally assumed that nationalism was to be reached by provincial means, Chekiang's military governors denigrated the role of provinces and emphasized centralization as the key to building China's strength. Chiang Tsun-kuei, military governor from December 1911 to August 1912, called for abolition of provinces, with all power to be vested in the central government.¹⁷ Chu Jui, who served in the same post from August 1912 to April 1916, contended that China could strengthen itself effectively only if the government were weighted so strongly at the center that provinces could not assert themselves against it.¹⁸ In this period, for most Chekiangese, provincial integration served as the foundation for nation-building, while the province's Chekiangese military governors perceived provincial integration as a potential threat to national integration.

The Emergence of Provincialism as Provincialism

Chu Jui's fawning acquiescence to the Peking government throughout the administration of Yuan Shih-k'ai had assured that the control of Chekiang would remain in the hands of Chekiangese.¹⁹ As long as this was the case, any assertion of provincialism qua provincialism was highly unlikely. However, since, to most, the province was the highest territorial level of integration with long-standing and pervasive common interests, the possibility existed that nationalism—more a commitment to a projected integrated community than to an existing one—could be subordinated to it. Beginning in 1913, there were intimations of provincial feeling divorced from nationalism. The aborted revolt of 1913 had surrounded a neutral Chekiang with provinces involved in the anti-Yuan movement. Out of the geographical isolation that Chekiang experienced grew a sense of provincial vulnerabil-

persuasively. In my unpublished dissertation, "Politics and Society in Chekiang, 1907-1927: Elite Power, Social Control, and the Making of a Province" [hereafter "P & S"] (Univ. of Michigan, 1975), I have argued essentially the same point of view, at least for the situation until 1913.

¹⁵ A provisional assembly of thirty-eight met from Dec 1911 to Feb 1913, when the first regularly elected assembly met. The latter was abolished by Yuan in Feb 1914. *NCH*, 1912/7/20, p. 240.

¹⁶ *S*, 1912/8/15, 17, and 25.

¹⁷ *S*, 1912/4/16.

¹⁸ See statements in *S*, 1912/10/30, 1913/1/15, 1913/3/1; also *Min-li Pao* [hereafter *MLP*], 1912/11/12.

¹⁹ For example, Chu acted the sycophant before Yuan's conferral upon him of title of marquis (*hou*); see Ssu Tao-ch'ing, "Che-chün shih-pa nien ti hui-i-lu" in *Chin-tai shih tzu-liao*, 2 (1957), p. 84 and *S*, 1915/12/25.

ity. The military leadership and civilian elites, especially in northern Chekiang, feared attacks from Kiangsu. Chu Jui, speaking before military men in Hangchow, noted Chekiang's predicament and called for "protect[ing] our local area as a heaven-ordained duty."²⁰

Furthermore, the Shanghai-Hangchow-Ningpo railroad company—earlier the most prominent symbol of Chekiangese nationalistic determination to retain its economic sovereignty—had fallen into serious financial difficulties. In early 1914, its stockholders decided by a seven-to-one margin to approve the nationalization of the railroad, despite arguments that this decision, given the central government's foreign indebtedness, was tantamount to handing the company over to foreigners. Its nationalization can be taken as a symbol of growing provincial interest and concern, as many stockholders were willing to abandon their former nationalistic stance to assure their own financial security. As if to underline the province-centered viewpoint, the complaints heard in the aftermath of nationalization concerned not fear of foreign influence but rather bitterness that Kiangsu stockholders of the Shanghai-Nanking line had received more from nationalization than Chekiang stockholders were receiving.²¹

In April 1916, during the campaign against Yuan, Chu Jui was overthrown. His ouster led to increased feuding between two Chekiang military factions, which neared armed struggle in late 1916. In response, the Peking government ordered Peiyang forces to take control of the province—action which ignited the smoldering provincialism.²² Telegrams from members of Chekiang's political, military, and commercial elites who saw Chekiangese control over the province slipping away pleaded to Peking to refrain from acting. Speakers at public meetings in early January 1917 argued that Chekiang belonged to the people of Chekiang; that under Chekiangese control, the province had known only peace; that the central government did not understand provincial problems; and that, in essence, the issue was Chekiang's self-government.²³ Initial reports indicated that the Chekiangese would militarily resist the entrance into the province of Peiyang commander Yang Shan-te; however, no violence occurred, thanks to Yang's care in mollifying the Chekiangese military.²⁴

By the beginning of 1917, the existing fragile network of national integration had begun to collapse. Following Yuan's death, the national system of decision-making had been largely immobilized; governmental effectiveness deteriorated; as cliques proliferated, functional interests clashed and motives collided. In this context, the elite of Chekiang came to feel all the more deeply about provincial integration. In the face of outside force installed from the north, commitment to the nation was subordinated to provincialism. Titles of organizations formed in the early Republic provide an index of this growing provincial spirit: from 1912 to 1914, they

²⁰ *S*, 1915/8/6. See, as indications of this feeling from 1913, *MLP*, 1913/8/27; *S*, 1913/9/14, 18 and 10/20.

²¹ For the story of the railroad nationalization and subsequent financial disputes, see *S*, 1914/5/2, 3, 5, 8, 15, 19. Also *NCH*: 1914/3/7, p. 704; 3/28, p. 969; 4/4, p. 52; 4/18, p. 230; 5/9, pp. 485–86.

²² Chu's ouster stemmed from provincial anger at his policies and at his obsequious support for Yuan. Lü Kung-wang, the head of one faction and

a staunch nationalist, became military and civil governor in May 1916. During his tenure of office, he attempted to fill important positions with men of his own clique, hoping to destroy the opposition. Such action in Dec 1916 brought on the crisis.

²³ For the telegrams and accounts of the meetings, see *S*, 1917/1/5, 1/7, 1/11.

²⁴ *S*, 1917/1/10, 11; *NCH*, 1917/1/6, p. 11.

were almost always prefaced by "China" (*Chung-kuo*, *Chung-hua*) or simply by "national" (*kuo*); but after 1917, the most common designations were "all-Chekiang" (*ch'üan-Che*) or simply "Chekiang."²⁵

The 1917 Coup Attempt: Autonomy for Federalism

In the decade after 1917, a provincialist spirit nurtured by shared antagonism against Peiyang intruders gave rise to a series of coups and constitutional movements for provincial autonomy—both for federalism and for autonomy per se. The attempted military coup in late November 1917, less than a year after the entrance of Peiyang forces into the province, was the first tangible indication of the federalist impulse in Chekiang. Chiang Tsun-kuei, former military governor, led the Third Brigade of the Chekiang army stationed at Ningpo in revolt against Yang Shan-te.²⁶ Chiang contended that Yang had helped overthrow the national constitution when he declared independence following Tuan Ch'i-jui's dismissal as premier in May 1917. It was, he said, the duty of Chekiangese to restore the constitution and, in the process, assert the right of provincial self-government. He stressed that self-government was not anti-national; on the contrary, in order to protect the nation, a union of autonomous (*tzu-chih*) provinces must first be built.

Rebel troops under the slogan "Chekiang is the Chekiang of the Chekiangese" marched west from Ningpo, the center of the autonomist movement. The Peiyang military governor dispatched two battalions under a Chekiangese general who, not wishing to battle his fellow provincials, tried to forestall a military clash. A skirmish, however, broke out at the Ts'ao-o river on November 29; the rebels were routed. Within a day or so, the movement ended—having failed primarily because it had insufficient military strength and had received little civilian support.²⁷ Yü Hsia-ch'ing, the important Chekiangese merchant leader of Shanghai (who had played a major role in keeping Chekiang neutral in 1913), had used his influence to support Yang and oppose the rebels. He persuaded provincial commercial and educational leaders that Yang had kept the peace, and that nothing would be gained by upsetting provincial stability.²⁸

Nevertheless, this abortive coup suggests the increasing attraction of greater provincial sovereignty or autonomy. Political scientists have suggested a correlation between the degree of autonomy and the degree of integration of a political community. It has been noted that often a community's consciousness of autonomy, rather than its actual autonomy, promotes integration and instigates political action.²⁹ The perception of Chekiang's capability for autonomy depended in large part on the increase of provincial integrative factors in the late 1910s and early 1920s. In these years, the development of an organizational and communications network began to bind the province together: provincial professional and common-interest groups,

²⁵ See *S*, passim; for a few specific examples, see 1912/9/15; 1913/3/1, 9, 27; 1924/3/22; 1926/12/21.

²⁶ Chiang was joined by Chekiangese military leaders Chou Feng-ch'i and Ku Nai-pin.

²⁷ For the account of the coup and its results, see *TR*, 1917, pp. 951, 973, 998. *Chung-hua hsün-pao*, 1917/11/27–30; 12/3, 22. *S*, 1917/11/28–30; 12/1–5, 15. *NCH*, 1917/12/1, pp. 513–14 and 8, pp. 577, 587–88; 1918/1/5, p. 18 and 12, p. 59.

²⁸ For Yü's role, see *S*, 1917/12/14. The

Chekiang rebel leaders were treated leniently. Chou Feng-ch'i fled, but through the pressure of Chekiang military men, he was allowed to return to the province by mid-1920; see *S*, 1920/8/9. Ku Nai-pin retired from the military, became head of the Hang district assembly of the 1920s, and was one of the respected "elder-statesmen" of the province.

²⁹ For a discussion of autonomy and its relationship to integration, see Jacob and Teune (n. 8 above), pp. 38–42.

such as Chambers of Commerce, Education Associations, and Lawyers Associations; province-wide ad hoc organizations established in outbursts of anti-foreign agitation, such as May Fourth, May Thirtieth, and during the Washington Conference of 1921 and 1922; irregularly held events such as intra-provincial athletic meets; a province-wide telegraph system begun in 1913; a province-wide network of roads begun in the early 1920s; and increased mail flow. In Hangchow, for example, nearly eight million articles of mail were handled in 1911, but the number in 1921 had skyrocketed to some eighty-six million.³⁰ In other words, factors were at work to integrate the province, an integration that lent support to autonomist moves.

The Constitutional Movement: Federation or Autonomy?

If the first hint of a federation came from the Chekiangese military in 1917, the initial proposal for a constitutionally autonomous province came from the Chekiang Assembly in December 1920.³¹ Unlike that brought by military force, autonomy based upon a constitution would, according to the assembly, be legitimate. The persistence of the Chekiang constitutional movement during the 1920s gives evidence of the belief among many of the Chinese elite in the value of political liberalism as epitomized in constitutionalism.

In the early twentieth century, constitutionalism had been seen, especially in light of the rise of Meiji Japan, as an important means for the attainment of a strong nation-state.³² It drew support from both the Ch'ing regime and its opponents, though its espousal by the Ch'ing was embedded in a desire for increased control over the decaying administrative machinery of the empire. After the establishment of the Republic, Yuan Shih-k'ai gave lip service to constitutionalism, even as he abolished all constitutional bodies. The militarists who vied for power after 1916 often did so with the catchword of "upholding the Republic." Yet many Chinese sincerely believed that Western constitutionalism could be borrowed and adapted, and that it could provide the basis for gradual, orderly development. At its roots, this belief was grounded in classical Western liberal thought: man can establish rational legal constitutional forms by which the powers of government can be limited and the rights of people protected.³³ The Chekiang Assembly's proposal called for such a constitution to protect the province.

During the next six years, three constitutional drafts were written, each envisioning different political goals for the province. The first, promulgated on 9 September 1921 (known subsequently as the 9/9 Constitution), revealed the federalist

³⁰ For a detailed study of Chekiang's developing integration, see especially the Introduction and Chap. 7 of "P & S." The mail statistics are found in *Decennial Reports, 1912-1921* (Shanghai: Inspectorate General of the Maritime Customs, 1921), p. 76. My argument relies heavily upon the ideas of Karl Deutsch. See his presentations "Communication Theory and Political Integration" and "Transaction Flows as Indicators of Political Cohesion" in Jacob and Toscano (n. 8 above). See also Frey (n. 8 above), pp. 377-89.

³¹ Juan Hsing-ts'un, a leading provincial lawyer, has been given credit for making the proposal in the Provincial Assembly on 8 Dec 1920. See Juan I-ch'eng (ed.), *Hsien-chün Hsün-po kung nien-p'u* [hereafter *HCHP*] in *Juan Hsün-po hsien-sheng*

i-chi, vol. 1 (Taipei: Wen-hai ch'u-p'an she, 1970), p. 27.

³² For an insightful view of the inherent clash between the goal of nation-building based upon wealth and power and the values of liberalism, see Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1964), pp. 237-47.

³³ See the account of liberalism in William T. Bluhm, *Ideologies and Attitudes: Modern Political Culture* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Co., 1974), pp. 50-65. For the best statement of the meaning of liberalism in the early Republican context, see Jerome B. Grieder, *Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970), p. 344.

goals of its sponsor, Military Governor Lu Yung-hsiang. The second, the "three-color" draft of 1922–1923, underscored an increasing amount of provincial assertiveness. The third, set forth in 1926, although eventually federalist in tone, was originally inclined toward complete provincial sovereignty. Although these drafts were never put into effect, the seriousness of purpose and approach of the constitutionalists, and the degree to which they were willing to move toward provincial autonomy, make these largely overlooked political episodes worth examining in more detail.

Although the Assembly was heartened by Lu Yung-hsiang's announcement of support for a provincial constitution in June 1921, it very quickly became apparent that Lu and most Chekiangese leaders held different conceptions of the meaning of provincial constitutional autonomy. Lu, the last important survivor of the Anfu clique, saw autonomy as a foil to use against the Chihli-dominated central government; he hoped to establish a federation of autonomous provinces with Chekiang as the cornerstone.³⁴ For many of Chekiang's elite, however, autonomy was a method of regaining control of their province, of protecting Chekiang from involvement in warlord struggles, and thereby of preventing the social unrest so often spawned during periods of political instability.³⁵ In other words, Lu saw a constitution primarily in terms of the national scene; many Chekiangese were primarily interested in it for its provincial significance.

The heads of the committee he appointed to draft the constitution were five "national" Chekiangese who had served in the first Republican National Assembly and Senate, among them C. T. Wang and Ch'u Fu-ch'eng. Most of the drafters returned from their residences in Peking specifically to lead their fellow provincials to constitutional autonomy as the first step toward a federation; highly nationalistic, they had generally had little direct involvement in Chekiang provincial affairs for many years.³⁶

When the full constitutional convention met in late July 1921, bitter disputes arose over the significance of the constitution and of autonomy.³⁷ Many of the provincial elite feared that Lu supported a constitution simply as a scheme to make himself civil as well as military governor.³⁸ The Hangchow Chamber of Commerce met to oppose the draft, as did elite-organized self-government discussion societies (*tzu-chih t'ao-lun hui*). These groups attacked national Chekiangese like Wang and Ch'u as tools of Lu in his play for power.³⁹ They also took exception to the federalist ideals espoused by the framers of the 9/9 constitution. The failure of the constitution to be effectuated has been blamed on Lu's duplicity.⁴⁰ Indeed, Lu did stir up

³⁴ *Shun-t'ien shih-pao* [hereafter *ST*], 1921/6/7, 8, 9, 13, 21; 7/2. Lu also conceived of autonomy as a way to appeal for provincial support. His proposal followed that of militarists from Hunan, Szechwan, and Kwangtung. For an account of the federalist movement in other provinces, see Chesneau (n. 7 above). This article must be used with care, however; not only is his interpretation of the movement in Chekiang misleading, but his single page on Chekiang has two factual errors: he writes that Chekiang had 30 districts (it has 75) and he calls Lu Jung-t'ing (rather than Lu Yung-hsiang) the military governor of Chekiang.

³⁵ Social chaos had erupted in Chekiang in the aftermath of the 1911 revolt, and on a large scale

following the 1913 revolt; see "P & S," chaps. 1 and 3.

³⁶ *ST*, 1921/6/26.

³⁷ Neither the *Shih Pao* nor *Shen Pao* are available for 1921–1922; compilation and analysis of constitutional participants are not possible from available material. The convention was composed of 207 men and women: 55 chosen by the Provincial Assembly; 75 chosen by the seventy-five districts; and 77 representatives of commercial, educational, and legal organizations as well as of the provincial women's organization (*fu-nu t'uan*).

³⁸ *HCHP*, p. 30; *ST*, 1921/7/7.

³⁹ *ST*, 1921/8/6, 11, 12; 9/11, 14; 12/19.

⁴⁰ *HCHP*, p. 43.

provincial interest by encouraging the establishment of district societies to work for its adoption, only to refuse in December 1922 to put the constitution into effect.⁴¹

All the responsibility for the defeat of the 9/9 constitution was not Lu's, however. Almost before it was announced, the Provincial Assembly and other leaders, resentful of Lu and the national elite who had drafted it, had objected to the constitution's being foisted on the province. The Provincial Assembly argued that, because the province had never voted on the draft, it was simply one of many that should be considered. In an attempt to take charge of the drafting, they established a thirty-six man commission to examine all constitutional proposals and to submit a number of drafts to be voted on.⁴² Significantly, only one commission member, Ch'u Fu-ch'eng, had been involved in drafting the 9/9 constitution; and he was the only member who could be considered one of the national Chekiang elite. Fifteen of the thirty-six had served in Chekiang provincial assemblies; the backgrounds of the remaining twenty cannot be ascertained, and it is logical to assume that they were not national or even important provincial leaders. By the commission maneuver, the Provincial Assembly had gained control of the constitution-making process. It was clear that the commission would steer a strongly provincialist course.

The commission set down three drafts, denoted as "red," "yellow," and "white." Even though only one of the three drafts was to be chosen by the electorate, their work became known as the "three-color constitution." The drafts differed primarily in their delineation of provincial government organization.⁴³ Despite the commission's 1 August 1923 deadline for selecting the appropriate draft, the specified election was not held as scheduled.⁴⁴ However, as the threat of war with Kiangsu increased in the summer and fall of 1923, many groups demanded the adoption of some constitution—either the 9/9 or one of the three-color drafts—to bring autonomy "in order to save the people of Chekiang" (*i chiu Che-jen*).⁴⁵

But Military Governor Lu balked, contending that any moves toward establishing a constitution must be deliberate and that much study was required before any decision could be made.⁴⁶ Lu had not interfered in the setting up of the commission or its work. He was increasingly involved in preparations for fighting Kiangsu. In addition, he recognized the significant political force he had unleashed in his declared support for a constitution and the fact that civilian power was relatively strong in Chekiang—considerably stronger than in many militarist-controlled provinces.⁴⁷ However, he retained and ultimately used the veto power.

In contrast to the 9/9 constitution, which only gave the province powers that did "not conflict with the provisions of the National Constitution" (and thus which severely diminished provincial autonomy), the three-color draft was written less as a basis for federation than as an expression of civilian autonomist goals.⁴⁸ While no

⁴¹ ST, 1922/12/21. Lu stipulated that two conditions had to be met before the constitution could be adopted: a statement inserted into the draft positively forswearing interference with the military and a requirement that autonomy (*tzu-chih*) at the town and township levels must precede the adoption of the constitution.

⁴² William L. Tung, *The Political Institutions of Modern China* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968), fn. on pp. 84–85. The list of commission members is found in ST, 1922/9/29.

⁴³ *Shen Pao* [hereafter SP], 1923/1/27; and Chang Ch'i-yün (n. 4 above), pp. 61, 64. The red

specified a commission of deputies; the yellow, an appointed cabinet system; and the white, a commission under a civil governor. The last two called for an elected civil governor.

⁴⁴ Chang Ch'i-yün (n. 4 above), p. 133; and Tung (n. 42 above), p. 85, fn.

⁴⁵ S: 1923/7/1, 8, 12, 16, 17, 19, 31; 8/7, 8; 10/12, 18, 24, 26, 29; 11/5, 15, 19; 12/3.

⁴⁶ S, 1923/8/9.

⁴⁷ See Chap. 5 of "P & S."

⁴⁸ The quote is from the translated 9/9 constitution, p. 118. See Stewart Yui and Harold S. Quigley (trans.), "The Provincial Constitution of

apparent mention was made of powers retained by the nationalist government, stipulations about provincial interests—ranging from preservation of historical landmarks to governmental support and protection of Chekiangese products—were set down with care. Additionally, in contrast to the 9/9 draft, which avoided any mention of the military, the three-color constitution specified the maximum percentage of the budget to be allocated for military purposes and included a section on provincial government control of military forces within the province.

That those involved in the constitutional movement were moving rapidly toward greater emphasis upon civilian and provincial rights is borne out by the significant debate—recorded in considerable detail by newspapers—at yet another constitutional meeting in 1924 and 1925. The very attempt to establish a constitution after failure to adopt the first two drafts indicates the belief during this period in the almost transcendent efficacy of constitutionalism. The conviction that constitutional government would inevitably succeed stemmed from a firm belief in the power of man's reason and the effectiveness of law in society, as well as from a perception that it was the trend of *world* politics.⁴⁹ The hope that a successful formula could at last be agreed upon led men to continue to work for the correct draft that would insure peace and provincial autonomy.⁵⁰

The third constitutional convention, which opened in August 1924, was a convergence of many of the important figures of Chekiang Republican politics.⁵¹ It quickly developed into a clash between provincialists and nationalists—continuing the dispute between the proponents of the federalistic 9/9 constitution and those of the more provincialist three-color drafts. Both groups agreed that it was inappropriate at that time to recognize either Peking or its constitution. The nationalist or federalist group, however, believed that sooner or later Chekiang had to become a province in a federated republic, as well as an administrative division (*hsing-cheng ch'ü-yü*) of the national government. Therefore, this faction contended that the provincial constitution must follow the national constitution so that there would be no later collision of administrative rights and duties. The provincialists argued that Chekiang's needs were paramount and that they must be written down without any regard for a future with the national government. After rancorous debate, the

Chekiang," *The Chinese Social and Political Science Review*, VI (1921–23), pp. 114–42. Because a complete draft of the three-color "constitution" is not available, a complete comparison with the 9/9 is difficult. Chang Ch'i-yün has given a sketch of its outstanding points in his *Historical Geography of the Province of Chekiang* (*Che-chiang sheng shih-ti chi-yao*) (Shanghai: Shang-wu yin-shu-kuan, 1925), pp. 62–66. In Chang's description, there is no mention of powers retained by Peking, and the most detailed portion is entitled "provincial powers."

⁴⁹ See the passages from the first issue (Feb 1921) of *New Chekiang* (*Hsin Che-chiang*) in *Wu-ssu shih-chi chi-k'an chieh-shao*, vol. III (Peking: Jen-min ch'u-p'an she, 1959), p. 424. In addition, see the statement at the opening of the 9/9 constitutional convention, *ST*, 1921/6/13.

⁵⁰ Only a few provincial assemblymen scoffed at the idea of yet another convention when the drafts of the earlier assemblies had not been adopted. *S*, 1923/12/20.

⁵¹ Although there is no complete listing of those

who served in the 1924 constitutional convention, I can identify 132 of the participants. Of these, 76 represented district assemblies (which had been elected in 1921) and district professional organizations; 9 had served in the Ch'ing assembly; 7 had been national assemblymen in 1913; 32 had served in one of the four Republican provincial assemblies; 8 had been Chekiang officials, and at least 2 were powerful informal advisory elite at Hangchow, often involved in provincial decision-making.

The list of participants is obtained from *S*, 1924/8/7–10, 12, 19–20. The specific numbers of each group do not add up to 132 because there is overlapping in categories. The total number of convention participants is not given in any available source. The 9/9 convention had 207 delegates, and it is logical to assume (since delegates were elected in the same manner) that the 1924 convention also had that number. I cannot, however, verify that assumption.

majority ruled that for the present Chekiang was an independent, self-governing province, *not* an administrative unit under central government control.⁵²

While the majority provincialists were generally merchants, representatives from professional groups, and district assembly members, most federalists had served in the national government or as provincial military and civil officials of the older generation. The federalist spokesman was Ch'u Fu-ch'eng, who, from the very opening of the convention, showed his irritation with the Provincial Assembly for not ratifying the 9/9 constitution and for appointing the commission which had drawn up the more provincialist three-color draft. While other opening day speakers discussed in generalities such subjects as the meaning of self-government, Ch'u launched a blistering attack on the power of the Provincial Assembly, suggesting that the constitutional convention must diminish the assembly's power.⁵³ Furthermore, when war erupted in early September between Chekiang's Lu Yung-hsiang and Chihli-clique military governors Ch'i Hsieh-yuan and Sun Ch'uan-fang, Ch'u tried to circumvent the constitutional assembly by advocating adoption of the 9/9 constitution in the emergency situation.⁵⁴

The 1924 war turned the constitutional tide to the federalists. The convention's early October decision to frame a draft within the scope of the national constitution resulted from the new provincial power situation following the victory of Sun Ch'uan-fang and the Chihli clique.⁵⁵ After the victory, Ts'ao K'un, the head of both the national government and the Chihli clique, could more easily insure provincial cooperation and at least superficial respect for the national constitution of 1923, which stipulated that provincial self-government laws "shall not conflict with the Constitution and the national laws."⁵⁶ The result was a federalist triumph, ironically assisted by the military actions of the Chihli centralizers. The federalist success was apparent in the new constitution announced in 1926, for its section on provincial powers is identical to that in the 9/9 constitution.⁵⁷

In sum, the three constitutional drafts from 1921 to 1926 reveal a continuing struggle between federalists and autonomists and a rapid movement toward greater provincial autonomy. If war had not intervened in September 1924, the constitution announced in January 1926 *might* have declared Chekiang an independent autonomous unit as this had been the consensus in mid-August 1924. With Sun's victory, however, the futility of any such action was apparent.

The Fight Against Militarism: Autonomy, 1924 and 1926

The last attempts at establishing provincial autonomy came with an attempted Chekiangese military coup against Sun Ch'uan-fang in 1924 and a hasty last-ditch constitutional effort in late 1926 to preserve provincial integrity against military efforts of Sun and the KMT. They were both frantic bids to assert provincial autonomy in the face of a more potent militarism than the province had previously faced. The first failed because military strength was insufficient to challenge Sun; the sec-

⁵² For the debate, see *S*, 1924/8/18 and 21.

⁵³ *S*, 1924/8/2.

⁵⁴ *S*, 1924/9/23.

⁵⁵ *S*, 1924/10/1.

⁵⁶ See Tung (n. 42 above), pp. 70–72, 341.

⁵⁷ For the third Chekiang constitution, promulgated on 1 Jan 1926, see *Tung-fang ts'a-chih*, XXII, 2 (25 Jan 1926), pp. 129–38. A convention

telegram to all provinces in Dec 1924 (after Ts'ao's overthrow) made clear the new position that a *federation* was the only method for China's salvation. *S*, 1924/12/9.

Sun Ch'uan-fang and his military ambitions were responsible for killing any possibility of putting the constitution into effect. See *SP*: 1925/10/23; 12/11; 12/30; 1926/1/3, 5.

ond, because it was basically a civilian effort to counter war with a constitution.

Even though the actors were, in the main, different, and there was in the beginning a confusing scramble for leadership, the 1924 coup attempt was almost a carbon copy of the 1917 effort. The movement was centered in eastern Chekiang at Ningpo; a Chekiangese commander was dispatched by the military governor to quell his fellow provincials; there was a skirmish at the Ts'ao-o river; and the attempt rapidly disintegrated.⁵⁸ It differed notably from the 1917 attempt, however, when the military leaders established the Autonomous Government of Chekiang, with a "constitution" setting up an administrative council to rule until provincial self-government laws could be promulgated and adopted. The council was only a facade, for its members gave no indication of their support. However, the military's recourse to constitutional means illustrates the significant degree to which elements of political liberalism—especially the perceived legitimizing effects of constitutionalism—had begun to pervade military elite thought.

Despite the constitutional thrust, the civilian elite did not generally support the coup attempt. Outright disdain for military action appeared in the open telegram of an unidentified provincial assemblyman, who argued that provincial autonomy should be gained only by orthodox (i.e., constitutional) methods, not by military force.⁵⁹ This civilian aversion to military means, together with the superior force of Peiyang, helped spell doom for the attempted coups, both in 1917 and 1924. Significantly, the 1924 coup attempt, like the 1924 convention, emphasized province qua province rather than province as part of a federation, as the 1917 coup and the 9/9 constitution had done.

In December 1926, as the KMT advanced into Chekiang, the provincial civilian elite made a last frantic attempt to declare autonomy.⁶⁰ They believed that such a provincial declaration might spare the province from becoming a battleground between Sun and Chiang Kai-shek (who was rumored to have promised not to enter an autonomous province). The major impetus for autonomy came from the Provincial Assembly and Chamber of Commerce. Recognizing in the emergency situation a need for the support of some military leader, the group sought and gained the support of the former military governor Chiang Tsun-kuei.

Civil Governor Ch'en I, a Chekiangese left by Sun in charge of provincial matters as war with the KMT began, agreed under duress to declare Chekiang's independence, to put a constitution into effect, and to forbid the KMT from entering Chekiang. Ch'en contended, however, that it was a futile exercise, for the KMT had already invaded the province; "autonomy," he argued, had become an empty word (*k'ung-ming*). Chiang Tsun-kuei, speaking for the autonomists, insisted it was the last hope for preserving provincial integrity.

By mid-December, scattered KMT units were already nearing Hangchow; im-

⁵⁸ For the story of this attempted coup, see NCH: 1924/9/27, pp. 489–99 passim; 10/11, p. 50; 10/18, pp. 91, 107; 10/25, pp. 134, 136; S: 1924/9/29; 10/4, 5, 11, 16, 18, 20–22; Wen Kung-chih, *Tsui-chin san-shih nien Chung-kuo chün-shih-shih*, vol. I (Taipei: Wen-hsing shu-tien, 1962), pp. 197–98; Cunningham to Secretary of State, 11 Oct 1924, NA 893.00/5720, pp. 3–4, and *North China Daily News* clipping of interview between Cunningham and Sun, 20 Oct 1924, NA 893.00/5757.

After a confusing beginning, when some of the initial leaders (for still unknown reasons) fled, former Military Governors Chiang Tsun-kuei and

Lü Kung-wang emerged as the movement's leaders. The Chekiangese commander dispatched by Sun, Chou Feng-ch'i, followed Sun's bidding because he felt that fighting Sun was futile. Later military clashes at Ningpo between Chou's forces and forces loyal to Sun support this interpretation. S: 1924/11/16, 17; 12/7.

⁵⁹ S, 1924/10/22.

⁶⁰ The following account is based on S, 1926/12/13–24, and C. E. Gauss's reports to Peking and the Dept. of State in Dec 1926 and Jan 1927 (numbered NA 893.00/7990, 8036, 8037, 8108, 8109, 8265).

pressment horrors in both northern Chekiang (by Sun) and southwestern Chekiang (by the KMT) were being reported. In this atmosphere an ad hoc organization made up of key civilian political, professional, and commercial leaders declared autonomy the only means of provincial protection and shortly thereafter drafted the Organizational Principles of the Chekiang Provincial Government. The document stipulated, among other things, that only Chekiangese rule Chekiang; that every militarist, including the KMT leadership, be opposed; that all Chekiang military forces remain in the province and follow orders of a provincial committee; and that the people (*jen-min*) meet in provincial conventions to establish the people's autonomous government (*jen-min tzu-chih cheng-fu*).⁶¹

The draft organized a provincial committee of nine deputies and a censorate (*chien-ch'a-yuan*) of twenty-nine to protect the yet-to-be enumerated powers of the people. The deputies who were named were all either inimical to or uninterested in the movement and were obviously designated only to lend prestige to the movement. Some were federalists, others supported the KMT, and still others scoffed at the effort as useless.⁶² The composition of the censorate clearly revealed the provincialist and mercantile thrust of the autonomist action: of the thirteen whose backgrounds can be ascertained, six were Chamber of Commerce figures and four were former provincial assemblymen. If the system had ever been adopted, presumably the provincialist censors would have provided the actual leadership.

This last desperate attempt to establish provincial autonomy, divorced from reality amid crumbling provincial defense and without effective military support, was the dying gasp of political elite liberalism. The proposed institutions, jerry-built in December 1926, were those of a provincial elite who hoped that they could provide the legal framework for a new, rationally operating government. But by mid-February 1927, military force had destroyed these hopes. Many among the Chekiangese elite wanted the presence of the KMT no more than they wanted Sun Ch'uan-fang; in fact, by 1929, they were expressing preference for Sun's regime.⁶³ The KMT's centralized administration smothered the elite's decade-long struggle for provincial autonomy.

Conclusion

Some historians have contended that the "federalist" movement and the provincial or regional autonomy movement, which has usually been interpreted as aimed eventually toward federalism, developed from the individual efforts of May Fourth intellectuals, provincial militarists, and ambitious "rural notables"—the first group being nationalistic federalists; the second, self-seeking military expansionists; and the third, self-interested parochial conservatives.⁶⁴ The federalists in Chekiang included the first two groups. Federalism for Lu Yung-hsiang was a weapon against Chihli centralizers; and for the national Chekiangese framers of the 9/9 constitution

⁶¹ S, 1926/12/21. The elite probably did not mean the call for a people's autonomous government (*jen-min tzu-chih cheng-fu*) as an expression of democratic thought; rather, "people" (*jen-min*) in the phrase was simply being contrasted to the "warlord" (*chün-fa*) autonomy proposed in 1921 by Lu Yung-hsiang.

⁶² Only three of the chosen deputies were associated in any way with Chekiangese provincialism: Ch'en I (who had already scoffed at autonomy), Chou Feng-ch'i (already fighting for the KMT), and Chang Tsai-yang (who showed no interest in a

provincial regime). Among the remaining was Ch'u Fu-ch'eng, who had supported the federation. Others were military men Chou Ch'eng-t'an and Huang Fu, educator Ts'ai Yuan-p'ei, and banker Ch'en Ch'i-ts'ai.

⁶³ A U.S. State Department report noted numerous "longings expressed for the good old days of Sun Ch'uan-fang." See Report of Consul-General of Shanghai Consular region, Apr 1929, NA 893.00 Political Reports.

⁶⁴ See especially Chesneaux (n. 7 above) and Lary (n. 7 above).

and various intellectuals who contributed to federalist journals, it was the proper route to nationhood. For the federalists, the province was an integral part of the projected national structure and thus played a positive role in nationalism, just as it had in the late Ch'ing movement to restore national sovereignty.

But the major dynamic, the force that kept the movement alive until 1927, was not "federalism" but autonomy. Its proponents were not Lu, "national" Chekiangese, or intellectuals, but members of the Chekiangese provincial and local elite—politicians, merchants, representatives of professional groups, women, and "rural notables" as well—who were not generally narrow-minded conservatives. The policy of autonomy was a pragmatic response to the provincial situation. Although defensive in impulse, it developed and thrived on the increasingly integrated nature of the province. After 1917, the province had rapidly become a vehicle for provincial, not national, interests; and, in the 1920s, it was a predominant, even positive, force for political loyalty. This provincialism can more accurately be described as *a*-nationalistic than *anti*-nationalistic: undertaken without concern for the nation, it was neither a commitment to a federation nor a denial of the possibility of the nation's subsequent development. This relative unconcern with future national development reached the point in August 1924 when elite constitutional representatives accepted—at least temporarily—provincial independence. Provincial autonomy was sought as the means to provincial security and integrity, to prevent Chekiang from being sucked into warlord struggles and—an important corollary—to prevent consequent social disturbances. The constitutional drafts were pragmatic political responses, seriously undertaken by the elite to solve the particular problems facing Chekiang.⁶⁵ The attempted coups were military responses to the same situation.

The persistence and sophistication of the constitutional autonomy movement in Chekiang call for more provincial studies of this period to probe similar elite-inspired and initiated movements. The coexistence but lack of cooperation between civilian and military autonomist movements suggests the inability of civilians in this period to see the efficacy of using military means for political goals; and it points out the basically apolitical military stance which overlooked the necessity of cultivating widespread civilian support. The movement's futility in the face of military power underlines Jerome Grieder's conclusions about elite liberalism in his study of Hu Shih.

Its futility, however, does not detract from its implications concerning provincialism and nationalism. The relationship between these two forces varied considerably in the early Republic as a result of shifting elite perceptions of the integration of each level of the polity. As significant political, military, and institutional changes affected the various integrative elements, perspectives of province and nation changed. Thus, Chekiang's early Republican experience gives evidence that provincialism could be a full-fledged alternative to nationalism as well as a vehicle for it. It suggests that provincialism as an alternative to nationalism was not ipso facto retrogressive or necessarily a variety of retrograde conservatism. And it reminds us that—despite historians' generalizations about the seemingly ineluctable historical "pattern" of Chinese centripetal political force, and despite the powerful twentieth-century phenomenon of nationalism—the establishment of a modern centralized Chinese nation-state was not inevitable.

⁶⁵ Lary's contention (n. 7 above), p. 9, that proponents of "regionalist attachments" were "sel-dom members of the elite" and that they were "un-

sophisticated, incoherent, and unsystematic" is a misreading of history, at least as seen in Chekiang.