Sociology in Times of Crisis:
Chen Da, National Salvation and the Indigenization of Knowledge♦

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Abstract

Chen Da was one of the foremost sociologists of China from the 1920s to the 1940s. His intellectual habitus took shape from the long crisis that defined Chinese intellectual life from the mid-19th to mid-20th centuries, a period of continuous imperial assault on Chinese sovereignty. As China integrated into the capitalist world-system, neo-Confucian structures of knowledge came into question. Intellectuals took up sociology to guide China's transition from an empire to a nation-state. Through his studies on labor, migration, and population, Chen Da contributed to the institutionalization of sociology in China. Chen sought to craft a theory of Chinese development that followed universal trajectories of progress but was also attuned to the complexity of Chinese society on the ground. Through his efforts to indigenize sociology, Chen developed a non-Marxist historical materialism, a deterritorialized and pluralistic conceptualization of China as a nation, and a theory of eugenic transformation centered on the concept of "mode of living." The questions which Chen Da confronted are emblematic of the predicament faced by Chinese social scientists today, who again struggle with the dynamics of a deterritorialzied "Greater China," rising social fragmentation, and refigured eugenic discourses and policies that aim to craft the Chinese people into ideal national subjects fit for post-socialist development.

Keywords: World-System Biography, China, History of Sociology, Knowledge Production, Nation-Making

In 1946, after two decades of toiling to produce facts about Chinese society to shape Guomindang-led national development projects and to secure China's national survival, Chen Da denounced the party-state. The state-orchestrated assassination of Wen Yiduo, a prominent poet, classics scholar and close friend, prompted Chen's break with the Guomindang. On the morning of the assassination, Wen and Chen had strolled together as they left their homes. That afternoon Chen Da watched his son streaked in blood carrying Wen's dead body home. Wen and Chen had recently supported the December 1st student pro-democracy movement in Kunming (Yuan and Chen 1981:72-73). In 1944, Wen had joined the China Democratic League, a leftist-leaning Third Force party that sought political alternatives beyond the Guomindang and the Chinese Communist Party. He had also published a series of articles denouncing the Guomindang for corruption.

Wen's assassination marked a turning point for Chen Da, who grew vociferous in his political denunciations of the party-state. In 1947 Chen and thirteen colleagues from Tsinghua University signed a petition condemning the government's disregard for human rights. When defeat in the Civil War seemed imminent, the Guomindang made arrangements to transfer intellectuals to Taiwan. Chen refused to go and opted to take his chances with the Communists. Chen's decision to stay was not an avowal of Communist revolutionary politics. Rather, he recognized that his intellectual project to use sociology to guide nation-making was no longer possible under the Guomindang party-state, which prioritized its own survival over the progress of the people and the nation.

Chen Da's engagement with sociology was produced from a singular time and defined by a particular way of being, a crisis-ridden habitus that shaped late-19th to mid-20th century Chinese intellectual life. For Gopal Balakrishnan, late-19th to mid-20th century Europe was marked by a political habitus in which "several overlapping eras in…history [arrived] at an explosive convergence of turning points" (2000:268). Transformations in the nature of European statehood furnished new forms of political subjectivity and action. The decline of the liberal state expanded the terrain of the political to include civil society. New notions of national sovereignty thrust "the people" onto the historical stage. The rise of mass politics and class struggle sharpened the lines of political conflict along the friend-enemy divide. These changes left society without a political center, persistently on the brink of civil war, and mired in an ongoing struggle for hegemony (2000:2-3, 262-263).

This habitus was not unique to Europe. Analogous forms of political subjectivity and action shaped Chinese intellectual life as the Qing Empire collapsed. In addition, the persistence of foreign imperial and colonial aggressions produced the perpetual fear that China might perish as a nation (*wangguo*) (Karl 2002) and was in need of being saved (*jiuguo*). This political type of habitus in China was a "habitus of crisis," deeply imbued with the sentiments of an era

remembered as China's "century of national humiliation" (Cohen 2002; Callahan 2004b; Wang 2012). By producing sociological facts about Chinese society as a form of political praxis (Lam 2011:2), late Qing and Republican Era intellectuals engaged in the "practical sense" of this new period. As Bourdieu points out, social action "is not the mere carrying out of a rule, or obedience to a rule. Social agents…are not automata regulated like clocks, in accordance with laws which they do not understand. In the most complex games...they put into action dispositions acquired through experience….[which] enables an infinite number of 'moves' to be made, adapted to the infinite number of possible situations" (Bourdieu 1990:9). For Chinese intellectuals thinking and working from a habitus of crisis, their strategic engagement with sociology was both structured by this habitus as well as a disposition of "generative spontaneity" (Bourdieu 1990:78) that sought to transform their world.

During this period China was restructured from a core empire in the intra-Asian tribute trade system to a semi-peripheral region in the capitalist world-system (Arrighi and Silver 1999:217-263; Hamashita 2008:114-144; Frank 1998:258-320; Arrighi 2007:307-344). As closer integration with the capitalist world-economy transformed the foundations of the Chinese state and society, preexisting neo-Confucian structures of knowledge lost the ability to explain the world and guide social action. Intellectuals sought new ways of knowing. Sociology entered China in this moment, becoming one of many tools to guide the transition from empire to nation state. The overlapping national and international discursive communities (Nystrand 1982) within which Chen Da developed his intellectual position all grappled with the question of China's changing place in the world. Chen closely associated with American missionary sociology in China, the YMCA-centered progressive cosmopolitan community of experts on China that spanned the Pacific, and the first generation of U.S.-trained professional Chinese sociologists.

In this article I provide an intertextual reading (Balakrishnan 2000:3-6) of Chen Da's major intellectual works to highlight his unique and enduring contributions to contemporary China. Scholars who have considered Chen Da's contributions to the sociological fields of labor, migration and population often overlook his broader theoretical influence on modern Chinese thought (Yang 2001; Yan 2004). Chen sought to craft a theory of Chinese development situated between universalism and pluralism that followed universal trajectories of progress but was also attuned to the social and cultural complexities of Chinese society on the ground. Drawing on Lamarckian ideas that improving the environmental conditions of the people could secure racial and national progress, Chen Da identified Chinese populations, cultural traits, and modes of living to formulate particular Chinese trajectories of eugenic development within a broader global modernity.

The questions Chen Da grappled with are emblematic of the predicament faced today by Chinese social scientists who again struggle with the dynamics of a deterritorialized "Greater

China" (Harding 1993; Wang 1993; Callahan 2004a), rising social fragmentation within China, deepening uneven spatial development, and refigured eugenic discourses and policies that aim to craft the Chinese people into ideal national subjects fit for post-socialist development (Jacka 2009; Yan 2008). Like social scientists of Chen's generation, contemporary Chinese intellectuals also search for solutions to deepening social and spatial inequalities occasioned by the country's closer integration with the capitalist world-economy and pursuit of a development pathway out of the semi-periphery. Like Chen, contemporary Chinese social scientists work to define trajectories of development situated between pluralism and universalism. Likewise, they must work under the oversight of the communist party-state, which increasingly embraces authoritarian solutions to China's deepening social and political contradictions to secure its own survival. Rethinking Chen Da helps elucidate dimensions of intellectual Chinese life in the present conjuncture.

Intellectual Formation and the Habitus of Crisis

The nineteenth century was a period of turmoil in China. From within, rural rebellions undermined the legitimacy of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), particularly the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864) when rebels seized control of large parts of southern China and established an independent kingdom. From outside, Euro-American powers launched the Opium Wars (1839-1842, 1856-1860) and imposed on the Qing state a series of unequal treaties granting foreign nations control over ports, extraterritorial rights, and indemnity payments. The Opium Wars and resulting treaties radically altered the social, cultural and material foundations of Chinese society. They undermined Qing sovereignty, accelerated the decline of the Sino-centric intra-Asian tribute trade system, and incorporated China into the capitalist world-system on unequal terms. These developments also destabilized China's neo-Confucian structures of knowledge and led Qing intellectuals to reconfigure the epistemological foundations of Chinese thought.

Chinese intellectuals looked to other nations to understand and respond to these mounting crises. Growing numbers traveled abroad to study, particularly after Japan's victory over Qing forces during the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and again after allied foreign powers occupied Beijing to suppress the Boxer Rebellion (1900-1901). Late Qing intellectuals selectively evaluated, reworked, and combined western and Chinese concepts in order to define and transform Chinese society and politics (Wang 2014; Dirlik 1985). In an expression of this emerging habitus of crisis, they refigured the concept of *wangguo,* a term indicating the loss of state sovereignty associated with the transition between dynasties, to capture colonization, where

the loss of state sovereignty is coupled with racial, linguistic and cultural decimation (Karl 2002:15).

This habitus of crisis "obeys a *practical logic… which defines ones relation to the ordinary world*" (Bourdieu 1990:77-78, original emphasis). Chinese intellectuals embodied and enacted this habitus by improvising within historical constraints. Some intellectuals found revolutionary solutions to *wangguo*. Combining revolution with ideas drawn from Buddhism, Confucianism, and even a Cantonese identity, Zhang Taiyan, Ou Jujia and Zou Rong fashioned radical Chinese responses to mounting crises (Karl 2002:83-115). Others, like Yan Fu, turned to sociology, which promised to save China and provide "an antidote to political radicalism" (Wong 1979:10; Dirlik 2012:2). For Yan, who translated the works of Herbert Spencer, Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill and Thomas Huxley, the ideas of universal progress drawn from social Darwinism offered a trajectory of change grounded in reform and modernization.[1] At the heart of these late Qing thinkers' efforts, whether revolutionary or reformist, was the habitus of crisis and the desire to find uniquely "Chinese" solutions to the problem of colonial peripheralization.

These efforts did not attempt to preserve reified understandings of an unchanging Chinese cultural essence. Rather, late Qing intellectuals drew upon varied social and cultural elements of China's past as resources for fashioning a new, independent and modern China (Dirlik 1985:5-6). Chen Da, as a member of the subsequent generation of intellectuals, worked within this well-formed intellectual habitus. As one of the first professionally trained sociologists, he attempted to indigenize sociology, or "make sociology Chinese" (*zhongguohua shehuixue*), by identifying local possibilities for universal progress suitable to China's social and historical conditions.

Born in Zhejiang Province in 1892, education inscribed a habitus of crisis for Chen. In 1911, the year that revolution toppled the Qing dynasty, he gained admission to Beijing's Tsinghua College. Established with U.S. funds from the Boxer Indemnity imposed on China, the school and its scholarship program promoted Western learning and prepared students for study in the United States. Chen studied in Tsinghua from 1912-16, when "American missionary sociology" was being introduced in Chinese universities. This field fused missionary desires to save Chinese souls with U.S. desires to keep China from being carved up by European imperial powers, and it arrived in China through the establishment of classes and programs in private U.S. Christian colleges (Wong 1979; Garrett 1970).

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[1] Yan Fu's translation of Herbert Spencer's *The Study of Sociology* in 1904 introduced the concepts of society (*shehui*) and sociology (*shehuixue*) into the Chinese vernacular. He initially translated society as *qun* (grouping) and sociology as *qunxue* (the study of groups). It was only after 1895, as Euro-American concepts were more frequently derived from their Japanese translations due to the growing number of Qing intellectuals studying in Japan, that the terms *shehui* and *shehuixue* emerged as preferred designations (Dirlik 2012:2-3; Schwartz 1964).

U.S. missionary schools recruited social science teachers through the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). John Stuart Burgess, one of the first Americans to teach at Tsinghua College, advocated empirical studies to clarify China's social problems and formulate modern solutions. He introduced students to survey research methods and involved them in China's first social survey, a 1914-15 study of Beijing rickshaw coolies. After pursuing advanced degrees in the United States and Europe, students often returned to launch their own studies, giving rise to a "social survey movement" in the 1920s-30s (Wong 1979:11-14; Garrett 1984; Lam 2011).

The habitus of crisis was thus partly animated by a missionary zeal and a faith in empirical social science as a rational tool of social transformation. These early social science initiatives produced a "culture of facts," where social facts "construct[ed] new organizing principles for cultural production and political life" (Lam 2011:2). For Chen Da and other young Chinese social scientists, this "culture of facts" would become a critical mechanism for "retraining the habitus" (Steinmetz 2011:52). By classifying and identifying social problems, the social survey would inform policies to improve Chinese social and cultural conditions that would in turn secure the survival of the Chinese people and nation.

In 1916, Chen Da went to the United States to study sociology. He obtained his B.A. from Reed College in Portland, Oregon in 1918 and continued on to Columbia University for graduate studies. There he specialized in labor and demography under the supervision of Franklin Giddings, a seminal figure in the development of statistical methodologies.[2] While in the United States, Chen Da remained closely associated with the discursive community situated around the YMCA. He became an active member of the Chinese Students' Alliance (CSA), a YMCA affiliated organization established by Chinese students in California in 1902. From 1919-20, Chen edited *Chinese Students' Quarterly* (*Liu Mei xuesheng libao*), and from 1920-21 he managed the personal news for the *Chinese Students' Monthly*, two CSA publications. The journals published Chinese, American and European intellectuals, diplomats and missionaries. These constituted a cosmopolitan community of experts working to improve China's position in the world.

Although published in the United States, the journals reflected the "ideological cosmopolitanism" of the New Culture Movement of the 1910s and 1920s. Like their counterparts in China, the CSA youth were disappointed by the failure of the 1911 Revolution. They also

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[2]Giddings had a great impact in the early development of Chinese sociology. Not only was his work among the earliest translated from English to Chinese, but he also helped to train many Chinese students of sociology in the United States, the majority of whom chose to study at Columbia University up until the 1920s (Meng 1931:8; Chiang 2001:17).

rejected traditional values and institutions, calling instead for social transformation and the use of science to address China's social problems. For this New Culture generation, finding solutions required understanding China's problems in a global context (Dirlik 1989:8-9). The habitus of crisis did not simply push these young intellectuals to craft social facts for the purpose of reforming China. It also engendered strategic acts of social and political activism to save China on the world stage, such as James Yen's literacy and education project among Chinese wartime laborers in France (Hayford 1990:22-30). Chen Da participated in this global activism as a member of the CSA-organized student advisory group sent to assist Chinese officials during the 1921 Washington Conference on naval disarmament in the Pacific. The group contested Japan's colonial privileges in the Shandong Peninsula gained during the 1919 Versailles Conference (Boorman 1967:236).

Chen Da and other Chinese students living in the United States during the era of Chinese exclusion (1882-1943) experienced the denigration of China every day through their inferior racial status in a society that harbored deep anti-Chinese sentiments (Ye 2001:83). Chen decried this racism in the article "Listen to Me Pouring Forth My Bitterness," where he described being repeatedly subjected to racial taunts and being refused service in an Oregon restaurant (Chen 1920b). These anti-racist commitments led him to affiliate with the internationalist Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR), a YMCA-funded initiative. Formed in 1925 in the shadow of World War I, the IPR sought to transform international relations by cultivating the open exchange of knowledge among intellectuals from nations across the Pacific. That same year, Chen Da participated in the first IPR conference as an expert on Chinese migrations and labor. The conference countered racialized views of the world as a hierarchy of civilizations (Akami 1994). The brutality of war, the continuous disregard for Chinese sovereignty, and the anti-Chinese racism convinced Chen Da and many others affiliated with the IPR that China had been incorporated into an unequal world order in which a racial-civilizational hierarchy underpinned the interstate system and axial division of labor.

Indigenizing Sociology

In 1923 Chen Da returned to China and took a position at Tsinghua College. He helped establish a sociology department in 1926 and chaired the department after the college became a university in 1929. In 1930, he helped launch the All China Sociological Association and served as a member of its standing council. Chen also co-founded the Beijing Institute of Social Investigation and served as a member of Academia Sinica. Through such efforts, Chen Da helped institutionalize sociology and fostered the creation of a new discursive community made

up of foreign-educated Chinese liberal social scientists. Their early research exploring how social problems manifested in China revealed the limits of foreign social scientific concepts and drove Chinese social scientists during the 1930s to "make sociology Chinese" by developing indigenous concepts and theories (Dirlik 2012:17; Lam 2011:94-98).

Chen's concern with a Chinese trajectory of development grew out of a rejection of Euro-American social scientific understandings of a linear and universal development in which societies progressed from backwardness to modernity. According to Western theories, China was stagnant, stuck in a lower position within a global hierarchy of nations and races. Rejecting this image as uninformed and biased, Chinese social scientists indigenized (*bentuhua*), or nationalized (*zhongguohua*), the social sciences by producing research that revealed the specific social conditions experienced in China (Lam 2011:151-152). As part of this shift, Chinese intellectuals looked increasingly to the nation's rural past as the source of its social and cultural foundations (Lam 2011:18, 142-170).

Chen Da's commitment to formulating a Chinese trajectory of eugenic development was part of his contribution to the indigenization of the social sciences. In the following reading of Chen Da's work, I reveal two important points. First, his preoccupation with theorizing a Chinese trajectory of eugenic development grew out of the habitus of crisis that defined intellectual life during the late Qing and Republican eras. This is evidenced by the intellectual dispositions he shared with late Qing intellectuals who first took up sociology out of a political commitment to save China. Second, Chen's theorization of a Chinese trajectory of eugenic development simultaneously sought to transform the habitus of crisis by securing the eugenic transformation of the Chinese people, who were the embodiment of the deepening *wangguo* crisis of the Chinese race and nation.

Sinicizing Labor Problems

On May 4th 1919, students protested in response to the Treaty of Versailles. Upon entering World War I in support of the Allies, China sent around 100,000 laborers to aid the war effort in France. Chinese statesmen hoped the post-war resolution would include the return of German-occupied territories in the Shandong Peninsula to China. Instead the treaty granted these territories to Japan. Students in Beijing University took to the streets. The protests spread rapidly, drawing together a broad sector of urban social classes angered by the latest "national humiliation." To the students' surprise, workers joined the demonstrations. Taking note of the laborers as new political actors, anarchists began studying the laborers' living and working conditions (Kwan 1997:16-19).

These protests blossomed into the May Fourth Movement and signaled a new conjuncture characterized by mass politics and class struggle. Labor unrest had been rising in China for some time, especially as the war gave way to global recession and steep jumps in the cost of living (Chesneaux 1968:131). In China, where factories were concentrated in foreign-dominated semi-colonial treaty ports, the rise of working class struggle imbued a new set of historical contradictions into the habitus of crisis. Chinese workers were critical actors in the development of industrial capitalism, which promised to advance China's development on the world stage. As the most exploited subjects within an expanding mode of production dominated by foreigners, however, these workers were an unstable social sector that threatened to derail China's industrial progress.

To understand the May Fourth Movement, Chinese intellectuals became interested in labor and Marxism. Reflecting these new concerns, the Beijing-based magazine *New Youth* (*Xin Qingnian*) published a special issue on Chinese labor.[3] Radical intellectuals, like Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu, who would establish the Chinese Communist Party in 1921, discovered Marxism as a new way of understanding China's social problems (Dirlik 1979:37-40; Kwan 1997:15-28). This intellectual nationalism radicalized into a commitment to Communism (Kwan1997:9-28). Class struggle recast Chinese workers as agents of a national revolution with implications for the global struggle against capitalism. Marxism offered a new revolutionary trajectory for resolving the conjoined crises of China's growing social instability and flagging sovereignty.

The May Fourth conjuncture and, in particular, the special issue of *New Youth* led Chen Da to seriously reckon with the plight of workers. For Chen Da, however, the May Fourth mass mobilization of Chinese workers was a cause of concern for different reasons. Chen envisioned China becoming an industrial democracy. He feared that poor social conditions and worker militancy would hinder progress. Employing new statistical technologies and analytic methods developed by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Chen Da crafted labor data culled from Chinese publications into a new understanding of labor as a social problem. In the US, the professionalizing social sciences developed technologies for scientifically assessing and managing the social conditions within industrial capitalism. Charged with bureaucratic management of labor relations during World War I economic planning and post-war rising inflation and escalating labor unrest, US economists and statisticians developed new tabulation methodologies as well as concepts of a "living wage," "basic commodities," "cost of living," and "standard of living" for assessing the social conditions of workers. These concepts proved

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[3]*New Youth* or *La Jeunesse* was a foundational magazine of the New Culture and May Fourth Movements of the 1910s and 1920s, which espoused the need for social and cultural transformation. The magazine was initially established in 1915 in Shanghai by Chen Duxiu.

integral to new liberal modes of governance in the U.S., which accepted that industrialization inherently generated social inequality (Lam 2011:149; Stappleford 2009).

Using these new concepts, Chen Da translated the data produced by May Fourth intellectuals into the language of liberal US-based social science. He published a series of labor articles in the pages of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' *Monthly Labor Review* (Chen 1920a; Chen 1921a; Chen 1921b; Chen 1921c; Chen 1922a; Chen 1922b; Chen 1924). His analyses produced data on wages, working hours, factory safety conditions, strikes, strike resolutions, union organization, gendered divisions in the labor force, and the spatial distributions of industries across China (Chen 1921c). In 1923, when Chen Da returned to China to assume a teaching position at Tsinghua College, he introduced his students to the new labor studies methods and put them to work gathering data on Chinese labor conditions. During the late 1920s, Chen also travelled widely and collected comparative data on labor conditions. His labor research and teaching culminated in the publication in 1929 of his textbook *China's Labor Problems* (*Zhongguo laogong wenti*), which helped lay the foundation for labor studies in China.

Chen Da's labor studies brought a new type of empirical legibility to the Chinese labor problem. In identifying laborers as a category of analysis and introducing new concepts for assessing workers' conditions, Chen made a messy social reality legible and governable by reducing it into standardized measurable categories (see Scott 1998). One of the central analytic categories Chen introduced was the "cost of living." By producing cost of living analyses, Chen argued that post-WWI inflation, decreasing wages, and rent exploitation produced labor unrest among workers as they struggled to provide for large families (Chen 1920a:207; Chen, 1921a:17-20; Chen, 1921b:5). To diffuse labor agitation, Chen proposed raising workers' standard of living, which would increase social happiness and foster social stability (Chen 1927:362-363).

Chen identified economic solutions to China's labor problems to oppose the political solutions offered by young communists encouraging class-consciousness and worker agitation. Chen regarded such efforts as "unnecessary Bolshevist propaganda that further aggravated an already precarious situation" (1921a:17). By finding ways to provide the workers with basic needs, Chen felt that the Chinese government and capitalists could avoid the chaos of a class-stratified society and attain the stability necessary to secure China's successful transformation into an industrial democracy (Chen 1920a:207).[4] Like the young communists, Chen Da approached China's labor problem from within a habitus of crisis but, unlike his revolutionary colleagues, Chen advocated a measured transition to an industrial democracy. In doing so, Chen

[4]His idea of an industrial democracy was one in which cooperation among a broad sector of social groups aimed to improve the conditions of the most vulnerable members of society, whom Chen Da identified as the workers.

echoed the broader sentiments of liberal and U.S.-centered intellectual communities that had shaped his own development. Workers, according to Chen, were the newest, poorest and most vulnerable social class emerging from this transformation, a process further defined by the transition from a rural mode of living to an urban mode of living. By analyzing workers' conditions as they underwent these changes, sociologists could better gauge China's progress along its own trajectory of development. (Chen 1921a:16).

To assess workers' conditions during their rural to urban transition, Chen Da added newspaper surveys as a way to gain insight into the collective "Chinese social mind." In crafting this concept, Chen merged the work of U.S. sociologists Franklin H. Giddings and Lester F. Ward, who introduced the idea of the "social mind" as a mechanism for empirically assessing culture and other collective social phenomena, with the American educator Abbott Lawrence Lowell's research on newspapers and public opinion (Chriss 2006). Regarding newspapers as mediums that revealed and shaped public opinion, Chen used them to gain insight into Chinese social psychology (Chen 1920a:212). Chen concluded that radicals had awakened the Chinese worker and advanced labor organizing beyond the traditional craft guild (Chen 1924:48-49). Chen bemoaned the establishment of modern labor unions, which he argued were too advanced for the conditions of Chinese labor and industry. Cautioning the labor movement against mimicking the West, he called for the "Sinicizing of Labor Problems" (Chen 1927:361). The best option for Chinese workers, he argued, was a modified guild system that selectively incorporated modern labor union organizing strategies alongside the mutual aid practices of guilds. With this synthesis, workers could supplement mutual aid strategies with modern labor organizing to demand industrial hygiene, child labor laws, worker lodging and factory safety.

Sinicizing labor problems meant recognizing the indigenous social and cultural dynamics affecting proletarianization in China. It also entailed searching Chinese history for solutions that could advance workers' progress. In Chen's conceptualization, the guild could be an intermediary mechanism, drawn from the Chinese rural past but made to serve the needs of the industrializing present. As such, the guild matched the specificities of China's nascent working class transitioning from the rural and imperial past to the urban and modern present. Chen feared that if these indigenous dynamics were not recognized, the Communists would lead China down an ill-suited developmental trajectory, impeding the full formation of a Chinese working class and hindering the nation's transformation into an industrial democracy.

Migrations, Uneven Development and China's Territorial Pluralism

In addition to the nascent industrial working class, Chinese social scientists also became concerned with Chinese migrants, particularly contract labor. Chen Da's attention to this sector grew out of his habitus of crisis. Overseas Chinese students encountered racism and witnessed Chinese laborers' deplorable working and living conditions. These experiences drove these elite students to identify racially and nationally with Chinese workers (Ye 2001:95). For the students, the poor condition of the workers was a symptom of the weak global position of the Chinese state. To save China, the students worked to improve the laborers' conditions (Ye 2001:19, 83). As part of this political ferment, Chen Da took up the study of Chinese migrations in relation to the question of uneven development. "China" was as a complex social and territorial reality defined by the expansion and fragmentation of Chinese spaces and peoples at home and across its "vast emigrant world" (Celarent 2011:1026). This realization led Chen to revive the efforts of late-Qing elites, such as Zou Rong, Liang Qichao and Lin Xie, to reclaim China's deterritorialized populations as national subjects and agents of progress that could help China overcome its *wangguo* crisis (Karl 2002:53-82).

Chen Da first took up the study of Chinese migrant communities in *Chinese Migrations with Special Reference to Labor Conditions*, which examined three periods of migration: Formosa (Taiwan) beginning in the 7th century, the Nanyang (South Seas) region dating back to the 15th century, and mid-19th to early-20th century contract labor migrations. Pivoting around the mid-19th century when the contract labor trade began, Chen's study told a story of contrasts. The first half of the book examined the early periods of free migration. Chen combated racist representations of Chinese migrants as poor and uneducated by demonstrating their contributions to the development of the Nanyang region and countered the idea that miscegenation with Chinese produced racial degeneration. The second half of the book focused on the period of contract labor migration and examined the deterioration of migrant conditions after the end of the Second Opium War (1856-1860). Suddenly, Chinese migrants were mostly poor and uneducated, which heightened tensions between the migrants and local populations. Anti-Chinese racism and exclusion acts proliferated, contract conditions became more exploitative, and inept administrators overseeing migrant recruitment and working conditions facilitated the exploitation of Chinese workers (Chen 1923:137-140).

By connecting these deteriorating conditions with the unequal treaties, Chen traced the root of migrant problems to China's subjugation by foreign powers and the empire's incorporation into a racialized axial division of labor. Chinese contract workers' miserable conditions attested to the persistence of China's subjugation in the broader global order and the absence of a strong state to address abuses. The contract migrant workers were, in essence, the very embodiment of

China's mid-19th century crisis, which the nation had yet to overcome. At the same time, Chen viewed the migrants with a certain liberal paternalism. He blamed the workers for rising racial tensions. He argued that the workers' cultural practices, including their excessive gambling, tendency to migrate without their wives, and custom of sending remittances back to their families in China produced tensions with foreigners who did not understand these practices. The migration process exacerbated these vices by leaving Chinese workers without access to social welfare and education and thus condemning them to poverty (Chen 1923:140).

Strong government action, Chen felt, could prevent the problems. He upheld the Chinese laborers in France as a model migrant community. Because the governments of China, France, and Britain supervised the recruitment, travel, living and employment conditions of Chinese workers in France, excessive abuses did not occur. The workers also benefited from the activist initiatives of James Yen, a member of the CSA and YMCA who organized recreation activities, savings clubs, evening schools, reading circles, self-government clubs, and anti-gambling clubs run for and by workers (Chen 1923:142-158). Chen also urged the state to draft a model labor contract that secured greater benefits for migrants, to develop a migration program that prevented abusive recruitment practices, and to fight exclusion acts (Chen 1923:161-162). For Chen, China's migration problems were closely associated with the absence of a strong state, a critical element of China's crisis. By "calling the state in" to take an active role in regulating migrations on the world stage, Chen expressed his anxiety regarding the persisting *wangguo* crisis and a demand that the state assert itself (Mitchell 1991; Lam 2011:119).

Chen Da also called the state in to address the Malthusian struggle unfolding in China, which was generating the massive emigration problem that underpinned contract labor migrations (Chen 1923:162). Chen argued that excessive population growth in China's coastal region, an area with limited resources, created an acute struggle for existence that led to rapid outmigration (Chen 1923:163). These conditions impeded progressive development because people had little time to devote to cultural uplift (Chen 1923:1). Chen suggested the state improve conditions in the region by raising wages, increasing the food supply, and expanding the nation's infrastructure (Chen 1923:163-164). He advocated state action to encourage large-scale interprovincial migration from the densely populated coastal regions to the less populated Inner Asian borderland provinces of Xinjiang, Mongolia and Tibet (Chen 1923:163). In this way, China could address population pressures without exporting labor overseas under poor conditions.

In 1938, Chen Da returned to the question of Chinese migrations in *Emigrant Communities in South China*, an ethnographic study examining the role of migration in shaping a unique mode of living in migrant communities (Chen 1938; Chen 1940). This time, the focus was not on comparing free versus contracted and exploited migrants, but on the positive effects of free

migrants on their native villages. Chen's intermixing of analytic frameworks in this book demonstrates his non-Marxist historical materialist approach, through which he developed a methodology for investigating and understanding China's pluralistic landscape. In *Emigrant Communities,* Chen incorporated two wider intellectual movements, the Syncretic School and Community Studies, which emerged as responses to the indigenization of the social sciences. The Syncretic School, led by Sun Benwen, encouraged interdisciplinary social research and emphasized culture and social psychology (Dirlik 2012:7; Li 2012). The Community Studies school, exemplified by the work of Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict's student Wu Wenzao, emphasized ethnographic research and social survey studies of rural and urban communities.

Emigrant Communities was an ethnographic social survey that compared three types of migrant communities: *qiaoxiang* (migrant villages) in Guangdong and Fujian provinces, non-migrant villages in the same area, and overseas Chinese communities in the Nanyang region. The book offered a rich ethnographic comparison of religion, social organization, enterprise, health, habits, the family, food, clothing, shelter, livelihood, nature, and education. Chen conclude that long-standing migration patterns between the South China region and the outside world produced a unique and progressive mode of living in South China (Chen 1940:11), which he described as the "three-fold environment": natural environment, socio-economic conditions, and psychic conditions (Chen 1940:11-12). The three-fold environment was Chen Da's contribution to a non-Marxist historical materialism. As he described, "There are materialists who contend that the cost of living is indicative, by itself, of the mode of living. This concept is too narrow and, therefore, does not explain those differences in modes of living which characterize whole peoples as well as groups within a given community" (Chen 1940:12). A critical factor shaping this unique mode of living was the "striking and unmistakable" progressive influence of overseas Chinese from the Nanyang region (Chen 1940:11).

Chinese migrants, by going out into the world, acquired new modes of living that they brought back home, which transformed their native place communities. This transmission of progressive culture and material benefits through migration, when repeated over the course of centuries, had revolutionary effects on society, improving the cultural, economic, political, social, health and hygienic conditions of the region. Through this analysis, *Emigrant Communities* presented development as an uneven process that unfolded across China at different rates in different places. Progress, rather than a top-down process of modern nation-making, appeared in this study as a grassroots process forged through individuals' ties to the outside world.

This conceptualization of development pluralized and fragmented the idea of a Chinese nation. It also reterritorialized overseas Chinese individuals by claiming them as agents of China's progress and development. According to Chen, kinship and economic ties that bound

migrants to the homeland made them into long-term patriotic agents of development who could be used to advance the nation's progress (Chen 1940:256-257). Like the craft guilds in his labor analyses, free Chinese migrations to the Nanyang region appeared in *Emigrant Communities* as mechanisms of development drawn from the Chinese past that could be made to serve the needs of the present. It was a type of migration that promised to retrain a national habitus of crisis, by introducing modes of living at the ground level that would enable Chinese society to progress.

Population, Race and Culture in China's Frontier

The outbreak of resistance against Japan in 1937 pushed China's national crisis to an acute point. Universities moved to China's borderland provinces along with the national government, major industries, and vast numbers of refugees. Chen Da moved with Tsinghua University to Changsha in Hunan Province at the end of 1937, then to Kunming in Yunnan Province in the spring of 1938, where Tsinghua, Nankai and Beijing universities joined to form Lianda University. Embracing Spencerian understandings of war, Chen Da, and other eugenicists, regarded the war as a total mobilization of the Chinese race in a collective struggle for survival that demanded harsh population policies and new conceptualizations of the ethnic nation and racial body (Chung 2002:141-143). Working through a habitus of crisis in the wartime frontier, Chen's social scientific praxis shifted. Rather than produce sociological facts to assess the progress of distinct social sectors or localities, the war offered the opportunity to shape a population policy that could facilitate "the country's salvation through improvement of the race" (Chen 1946:38). The primary objective of Chen's wartime work was to save China through racial regeneration.

Chen Da's early engagement with demography was related to labor. By tracking the "gainfully employed," demography, according to Chen, shed light on China's transition from a rural to an urban mode of living. After assuming his teaching position at Tsinghua College, Chen began gathering population statistics and taught China's first course on population studies in 1926. In 1935 Chen published *The Population Problem (Renkou wenti)*, a textbook that provided an overview of demographic methods and theory. Chen's work on population revolved around Thomas Malthus, who argued in 1798 that China required four times its territory to comfortably support its outsized population (Chen 1934:11). For Chen, overpopulation intensified the struggle for existence, inhibited the paths for achievement, hindered cultural advancement, and resulted in famine, misery, war and foreign invasion (Chen 1934:6-8). Rejecting Sun Yatsen's calls for increasing population quantity and quality to enhance the power of the Chinese people, a perspective embraced by many Republican-era intellectuals, Chen advocated birth control

policies to limit population growth, and even proposed a one-child policy (Zheng et al. 2003:150; Yuan and Quan1981:63).

Eugenic concern with racial rejuvenation had been present since the late 19th century. After Japan defeated China during the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-95), late Qing intellectuals embraced eugenics and social Darwinism as tools for securing national survival and overcoming racial degeneration (Chung 2002:6, 141-164). Reflecting intellectuals' growing understanding of China's habitus of crisis as racially embodied, Pang Guangdang popularized eugenics in the 1920s. But, it was the intensification of fears that deepening racial degeneration contributed to the acute *wangguo* crisis during the War of Resistance (1937-45) that provided eugenics greater legitimacy as a tool for national salvation.

In 1941, the Central Statistics Bureau asked Chen Da to design a census for the Kunming Lake region to be used for military conscription (Chung 2002:160).[5] Chen established the Institute of Census Research and applied modern census methodologies to examine China's transition from a rural to an urban mode of living. (Chen 1946:7). Kunming offered an exceptional test case because this rural region underwent rapid industrialization and urbanization through wartime mobilization (Chen 1946:13). Chen measured demographic changes that accompanied Kunming's material transformation to identify social forces producing positive eugenic effects. Through Chen's scientific gaze, the frontier appeared as a eugenic contact zone where an underdeveloped western region met a developed urban coast. Chen sought out dynamics contributing to racial regeneration and national survival.

For Chen, the Kunming census revealed the overwhelmingly positive eugenic effects coastal refugees had on the frontier. According to Chen, the "migrants" promoted new habits among frontier populations and brought civic improvements, including the modernization of city infrastructures and the expansion of commerce. Ignoring the critical role of the state in shaping the wartime frontier buildup, Chen attributed the rapid urbanization and industrialization to the migrants, who for the first time were urban, Han elites with high levels of education. Chen commended these migrants for transporting their "repositories of knowledge," in the form of libraries, schools, universities and research laboratories to the region and contributing to the cultural uplift of the local population (Chen 1946:65). Looking beyond quantifiable measures of progress, Chen also argued that migrants fostered national unity. In their travels across the national landscape, migrants worked collectively, practiced military discipline to survive the wartime environment, and developed a patriotic collective spirit as they traveled to the frontier.

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[5]Chen had designed a modern national census for the Guomindang in 1928, but the project failed because the state lacked control over most localities beyond a few lower-Yangzi River provinces (Ho 1959:79-86).

Once there, the migrants broke down the ethnocentrism of frontier peoples and facilitated positive eugenic exchanges.

Chen Da also expressed particular interest in the role of folkways in the frontier encounter. Folkways, according to Chen, are the psychosocial elements of human culture. They encompass the ideals, values and beliefs expressed in social relations. Folkways structure social hierarchies and cultural practices. Chen concluded that Chinese folkways were maladjusted to overpopulation. Population pressures intensified the struggle for existence, leaving limited time for social uplift and producing people that clung to tradition (Chen 1934:3; Chen 1946:4-5). The resultant maladjustment left society unable to adapt to changing social or environmental conditions, such as the shift towards an industrial mode of living (Chen 1934:5).[6]   However, the wartime struggle for national and racial survival transformed folkways. Frontier people preserved rural folkways and passed them along to urban coastal refugees. Coastal refugees, in turn, taught an urban industrial mode of living to frontier people. According to Chen:

> The war has certainly taught the Chinese to be more nation-conscious by breaking down provincial barriers and by eliminating bigoted ethnocentrism…The Yunnanese today is not so self-centered as he used to be before the war. He takes from the immigrant what is best for the changed and changing social life and gives in return the tradition of the rural society which is generally disappearing in many parts of China. Intercommunication and interaction result in the mutual readjustment between the immigrant and the local man for which the new socioeconomic situation calls. (Chen 1946:68)

The positive eugenic effects of these encounters preserved Chinese culture, while advancing the urban mode of living, fostering national unity and ensuring the survival of the Chinese nation, race and culture.

The Kunming Lake census was closely aligned with the Guomindang's National Reconstruction agenda to secure political unity and economic development. In a facile manner, the habitus of crisis linked Chen Da's eugenic population theories and the development imperatives of the state, endowing his work with greater political force. As a technology of state

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[6]Chen Da's discussion of maladjustment drew on Franklin Giddings and William Ogburn's ideas of "cultural lag," which reflected the impact of the Anthropologist Fran Boaz's critique of Spencer's biologically determined social evolution theories and his work on culture in the field of Sociology and theories of social change (Clark 1954:5-6; Turner 1990:40).

"seeing," the census produced political effects in two significant ways. First, it called the state into the frontier, facilitating the transformation of a wartime rear base area into an internal colony. Chen Da's vision of the frontier as aboriginal, structurally underdeveloped, ethnocentric and trapped in backward folkways legitimized a top-down development agenda best conceptualized as "internal colonialism."

Internal colonialism, like colonialism, peripheralizes internal frontier regions to meet the needs of the core spaces of the national economy (Hechter 1975). During the War of Resistance, the quest for frontier resources took a unique turn as the frontier became the country's core because of Japan's occupation of the coastal industrial areas and flight of coastal institutions to Western provinces. As Yen Hsiao-Pei has observed, intellectuals like Chen Da would never have imagined themselves as involved in a colonization project because they viewed their frontier work as part of nation-making against foreign imperialism (Yen 2012:155). Nonetheless, an internal colonial development project unfolded in practice, driven by the state's need to turn Kunming into a rear base area that would secure the survival of the nation.

The Kunming census also called for state regulation of people's bodies to secure racial regeneration. The Population Policy Research Committee organized by the Ministry of Social Affairs, of which Chen Da was a member, produced suggestions for a national population policy (Chung 2002:160-161). The committee advocated marriage and reproduction between people with superior physical and mental abilities, encouraged coastal to frontier migrations, promoted transportation infrastructure development in the frontier regions, and advocated for marriage between Chinese and people of "aboriginal stock" to boost population in the borderlands (Chen 1946:75-77). Drawing on Mendelian eugenic approaches, the report also promoted segregating and sterilizing people with physical or mental defects who would further degenerate the race.

The use of Chen's census research and theories of eugenic development to shape a top-down population policy that called for strong state intervention into people's lives and bodies ran counter to his longstanding advocacy for governance adapted to the conditions of the people. In 1946, reflecting on the demographic work of Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, Chen argued that they had failed to change in their population dynamics because they embraced top-down state-driven policies disconnected from popular sentiments (Chen 1946:70). How do we explain Chen's endorsement of a similar top-down Chinese population policy? The War of Resistance sharpened the historical contradictions embedded in the habitus of crisis. The wartime turn to authoritarian nationalism, development, and governance overtook the drive to produce sociological knowledge for the purposes of nation-making. As China's *wangguo* crisis appeared to reach a terminal paroxysm, Chen and his collaborators endorsed drastic measures.

Chen Da and China in the World-System

After the rise to power of the Chinese Communist Party in 1949, Chen Da settled into life under the new regime by taking up labor research. When the state restructured universities in 1952 and closed down all sociology departments, Chen Da began teaching labor and economics at the Central College of Finance and Economics and at Renmin University in Beijing. He became the vice-president of the labor cadre school run by the Central Ministry of Labor, the deputy bureau chief of the Bureau of Labor Welfare within the Ministry of Labor, a member of the Committee of Cultural Historical Materials, a people's deputy for the municipality of Beijing, and a member of the People's Political Consultative Conference. In 1957, during the Hundred Flowers Campaign, Chen joined social scientists calling for the reestablishment of sociology and was subsequently denounced as a rightist for his population theories. Although he continued to conduct labor research, Chen appears to have settled into the praxis of producing sociological facts as way to survive the upheavals of the Mao era. He died in 1975 at the age of 84, and was posthumously rehabilitated.

Situating Chen Da in the world-system requires a broader *long durée* historical view. Chen embodied and enacted China's habitus of crisis. This way of being and living shaped intellectual life from the mid-19th to the mid-20th centuries and left an indelible mark on modern Chinese thought. During this period, China was restructured from the core empire in the Asian tribute-trade system into a sovereign semi-peripheral nation in the capitalist world-economy. Foreign imperial aggression repeatedly undermined Chinese sovereignty as the nation confronted what intellectuals called the *wangguo* crisis, a struggle for national survival. A habitus of crisis took root and redefined intellectual life, transforming knowledge production into a political act defined in relation to the conjoined struggles of nation-making and securing China's sovereignty by ensuring the Chinese people's survival as a nation, race and culture. The act of producing sociological facts about Chinese society as a form of political praxis emerged through this habitus of crisis.

Chen Da's sociological research agendas connected to the May Fourth generation's concern with social and cultural transformation set against the failure of political revolution. The ties he established with American missionary sociology-affiliated institutions and communities, which pursued liberal cosmopolitan political agendas that embraced social reform and rejected revolution, further defined his personal intellectual trajectory. As a member of the first generation of professionally trained social scientists, he indigenized sociology by uncovering social forces of progressive change within Chinese history. An intertextual reading of Chen's major studies on labor, migration and population reveal his gradual crafting of a theory of eugenic development defined by China's transition from a rural mode of living towards an urban

mode of living. He recovered craft guilds, Chinese migrants, and minority populations in the frontiers as forces of progressive change that could be used to shape a uniquely Chinese trajectory of development, suited to the conditions of Chinese society and culture but directed toward universal ends. This theory of eugenic development was based on a pluralistic conceptualization of China, one that recognized the multitude of modes of living that made up Chinese society, each defined by a unique set of social, material, cultural and environmental conditions and by a distinct set of relations to the outside world.

In the World War II conjuncture, a moment of acute national crisis, Chen Da's theory of eugenic development became closely associated with securing the survival of the Chinese race and the Guomindang's national development agendas. The outcome of that conjuncture was a population policy with strange parallels to projects from across the world that promoted national survival through racial regeneration, fascist or otherwise. Once the national sovereignty crisis was over and the struggle for survival shifted from the survival of the nation state to the survival of the Guomindang party-state during the Civil War (1945-1949), the authoritarian tendencies of the Guomindang intensified, prompting a determined break in Chen's wartime relationship to the state. The conditions that underpinned the habitus of crisis had come to an end. Intellectual life was no longer defined by the struggle to save China against foreign imperialism. China would survive as a nation in the Cold War era either under communism or an authoritarian Guomindang regime, and the forces of top-down modernization would eclipse the possibilities of the liberal reform project that had defined Chen Da's work.

In recent decades, with the opening of China to global capitalism, Chen Da's work has been revived and seems uncannily pertinent to the nation-making agendas of the contemporary moment in which labor, migration, population and frontier development have again appeared at the forefront of party-state development agendas and social scientific concerns. This time, however, development strategies are not driven by a habitus of crisis underpinned by the threat of *wangguo*. Rather, they are defined within the context of China's 21st century rise. Here, the residual desire to overcome past national humiliations justifies a renewed moment of state-driven top-down modernization agendas and the intensification of party-state authoritarian rule. Again, it is a moment defined by efforts to restructure China's position within the world system and to address conditions of uneven development within China, this time driven by hopes of escaping the semi-periphery into a core world-economic position. The afterlife of Chen Da's intellectual contributions make sense in our moment, where questions of charting a Chinese trajectory of capitalist development between pluralism and universalism, today's so-called "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics," are again of pressing political concern. And, it is no surprise that Chen's demography research and suggestions for a one-child policy helped to lay the foundations of the reform era Single-Child Policy, which aimed to secure China's economic

development by overcoming the resource drain caused by China's large population (Sun and Wei 1987:312).

Chen's life and work are also deeply pertinent to thinking about the conditions of intellectual life in China today, a moment in which social scientists are working in the shadow of a party-state increasingly embracing authoritarian modes of rule to manage the contradictions of today's accelerated development. The arrest, trial, and sentencing in 2014 of Ilham Tohti, a prominent Uyghur economist and advocate of Uyghur autonomy who wrote critically about the impact of the PRC's development agendas on Uyghur populations in China's western frontier province of Xinjiang, and seven of his students is one of the most egregious recent examples of the ends to which the party-state will go to simultaneously secure its top-down development agendas and its own survival. Tohti's political imprisonment is also eerily reminiscent of Wen Yiduo's demise, and may signal the emergence of a new habitus of crisis, one marked not by the rise of new ways of being and embodying the political, but by their foreclosure.

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