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Published on H-Asia (May, 2023)

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The struggles between the Nationalist Party (GMD) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) dominate the narrative of the political history of China of the first half of the twentieth century. If the CCP registers as a political force on the left, by contrast, scholars in the past often placed the GMD on the right of the spectrum based on its political agendas and ideological aspirations. In this new study of Chinese political movements from 1918 to 1951, Nagatomi Hirayama complicates the binary paradigm and introduces the story of the Chinese Youth Party (CYP), once the third largest political party occupying a position further to the right of the GMD. The making, and unmaking, of this “radical right” political party, as he argues, helps us to appreciate the dynamic relationship between the local and the global in the radicalization of mass party politics in China during the republican period as well as in the contemporary world (p. 18).

In recent years, historians of political thought have become increasingly uneasy about the appropriation of such Western political concepts as “left” and “right” in modern Chinese historiography. While still insisting on placing this left-right divide at the center of his analysis, Hirayama makes a convincing effort to show that China’s “radical right” had its root in the global national socialist movements during the interwar period. To him, “right” was an ideological stance, and China’s “radical right” registers “a dedication to violent politics as a fundamental solution to political disagreements based on extreme principled antagonism” (p. 7). This is significant. For, although recent scholarship, such as Maggie Clinton’s *Revolutionary Nativism: Fascism and Culture in China, 1925-1937* (2017) and Brian Tsui’s *China’s Conservative Revolution: The Quest for a New Order, 1927-1949* (2018), has reminded us of the conversative turn within GMD politics in the 1930s with one focusing on its nativist origins and the other its global comparisons, Hirayama helps us to further understand that this radical right movement was beyond one political party and was unfolding within both local and global contexts.

This book is divided into six chapters, following three stages of the CYP’s development. The
first two chapters discuss its origins not only in China’s Confucian tradition but also in the iconoclastic May Fourth Movement. In the 1910s and 1920s, young students and scholars, such as Zeng Qi and Wang Guangqi, founded the Young China Association (YCA). They were inspired by the ideas of Liang Qichao and Zhang Taiyan, who were known for their conservative cultural views in the wake of the Great War in Europe. But Li Dazhao, a later cofounder of the CCP, was also a founding member of this organization. Therefore, Hirayama points out the bifurcated May Fourth legacy radicalizing political movements on both the left and the right.

If the CYP was rooted in the local, it was the transnational experience that transformed this organization from a loose association of young students and aspiring intellectuals into a mass political party under the leadership of career politicians. Chapter 3 documents the process in which YCA leaders radicalized while studying in Europe and the founding of the CYP in 1923. They turned against their old friends and allies in the CCP and embraced an anti-communist agenda in the decades leading to the civil war in the 1940s. China’s third-party radical right movement, as chapter 4 outlines, returned to its local connections in the mid-1920s. Its leaders, like Zeng Qi and Li Huang, traveled in China and worked with warlords in such places as Sichuan, Shanxi, Guangxi, and Manchuria between 1924 and 1937. While they introduced mass organizations to warlord armies, Hirayama argues, the party failed to institutionalize their collaboration with these local military leaders. At the same time, as argued in chapter 5, the CYP gained support from students and influenced public opinion especially in Manchuria and Sichuan, and the party was able to establish youth military organizations when the country was facing the increasing pressure of Japanese invasion. Party leaders were also involved with insurgents in Hunan and Fujian against the Nationalist government in the 1930s. The CYP thus became a noticeable political force. To many young students in the areas of its influence, the CYP and its proposed nationalist socialist path remained viable alternatives to the communist revolution and GMD nation-building projects.

Yet China’s third-party radical right movement ran out of steam during the war period. Chapter 7 records its transformation into a democratic force by abandoning its rhetoric of violent struggles through mass politics. It started to adopt the means of civic engagement and joined the Democratic League in collaboration with other political forces in competing with the GMD and the CCP. The CYP’s “farewell to revolution” makes sense in the historical context. The war with Japan called for a national unity against foreign aggressions. CYP leaders were first and foremost patriotic nationalists. They supported the joint effort among Chinese political forces during the war and found a role in postwar political negotiations and elections. The concluding chapter further places the CYP’s history within the landscape of Chinese political movements of the twentieth century. It reminds us of the contingency of these movements as well as the significance of rethinking alternative visions in China’s revolutionary century.

The Making and Unmaking of the Chinese Radical Right exemplifies the study of Chinese political movements through both local and transnational lenses. Hirayama strikes a great balance between these two approaches by carefully examining a wide range of primary sources, including oral history interviews; secret Japanese military reports; local, national, and international archives; and published newspaper and journal articles. The sheer scope of research is impressive. He also uncovers some forgotten figures, such as Zeng and Li, who, due to their anti-communist political stance, have been long silenced in the historiography in the People’s Republic of China. Therefore, this book is an important addition to studies of political movements, revolutionary history, and identity formations in the Chinese history of the republican period. It will also be a use-
ful reference for scholars who are interested in
the dynamics between the local and the global in
the rise of mass politics in the twentieth century.

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