

书评

Book Review

*Sun Yat-Sen,  
Nanyang and the 1911 Revolution*

《孙中山、南洋与辛亥革命》

Edited by Lee Lai To and Lee Hock Guan,  
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Studies on Sun Yat-Sen today are voluminous. Almost all facets and aspects of his life, legacy, and thought have been subject to scholarly scrutiny. Increasingly it will be harder for scholars to come up with something new and refreshing. It is therefore not a small challenge for the editors of this volume to organize and edit this volume, which includes essays by both high-caliber scholars and young and upcoming junior academics. Specifically, this volume aims to examine the Nanyang dimension of the 1911 Revolution and its principal leader, Sun Yat-Sen.

After the editors' introduction, the book begins with a chapter by the eminent historian Wang Gungwu. Wang again demonstrated his masterly grasp of historical details and ability to interpret them with refreshing ideas. He noticed

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how Sun Yat-Sen differed from many in his generation who, despite receiving and encountering western education and modernity, failed to become modern politicians and became only "functionaries of the Qing Court," by looking at the upbringing and the adolescence years of Sun, which were heavily influenced by Chinese traditional institutions, including secret societies. It was Sun's ability to utilize and mobilize these traditional institutions and combine them with western ideals in order to serve his revolutionary purposes that truly distinguished him from the others. In Wang's own words, "[what Sun] proposed was to choose a number of western political ideals, including concepts like sovereignty, democracy, republic, citizen-state, and concerns about people's welfare and livelihood, and combine them with some of China's own popular ideas of legitimate authority and governance" (14). This, according to Wang, was what made Sun's brand of politics exceptional and successful.

Following Wang's introductory chapter is Part I of the book, which covers interpretations of Sun Yat-Sen's political thought. The first chapter in this Part I is John Y. Wong's examination of the British model in Sun's vision of China's modernization. Wong, being the quintessential chronicler and biographer of Sun's life, contended that many ideas of Sun's Three Principles of the People can be traced back to what he read and seen during his days in London, concluded that the Three Principles of People owed much to the British Model, which, as Wong himself recognized, will not go well with the nationalists of today. Wong's chapter is followed by Tony See's theoretical analysis of the Three Principles. See departed from others in trying to look at the theoretical, and not just the historical, value of Sun's discourse on politics. See sensed that Sun's political thought was actually quite consistent. However, the consistency part stems from recognizing that among the three principles, nationalism undoubtedly to stand as the highest principle or value, because Sun on numerous occasions, was willing to sacrifice other values, including liberty and cosmopolitanism, for the sake of national unity. Sun's political thinking therefore remained problematic in many

other aspects, such as the practical question of how to achieve national unity with multiple nationalities.

Baogang He and Yoko Miyakawa both looked at Sun's idea of regionalism, especially through the speech on Pan-Asianism he gave in Kobe, Japan in 1924. He recounted the intellectual sources that influenced Sun's Pan-Asianism, such as Indian intellectual Tagore's discourse on the moral superiority of the "spiritual" Asiatic civilizations, Japanese pan-Asianism that stressed Asiatic racial unity against Western races, and Marxist Li Dazhao's emphasis on national self-determination equality between nations, and independence. Sun Yat-Sen in a way synthesized these various streams of thought. Miyakawa, on the other hand, looked upon the Japanese political context of the speech, including the activities various Japanese collaborators with Sun and the way Japanese scholars interpreted Sun's speech. Ultimately, both He and Miyakawa concluded that Sun's idea of regionalism or Pan-Asianism was unfortunately unable to consolidate Sino-Japanese friendship. Rather, it became a justification for Japanese imperialist actions in China, despite Sun's intention. He, however, noted that despite its failure Sun's idea of regionalism may still be relevant in today's context of East Asian regional integration.

Part II of the book covers relationships between Sun Yat-Sen, overseas Chinese and the 1911 Revolution. Huang Jianli began with a masterful analysis of how the often repeated epithet "Overseas Chinese is the Mother of Revolution" was invented, constructed and framed, to assert the historical importance, or even the mythologization, of Sun Yat-Sen's movement and the overseas Chinese who contributed to it, against the newer interpretations that discounted both Sun's leadership and the role of the overseas Chinese. Adding to this was the PRC-ROC ideological split, in which case both sides affirmed the epithet in order to serve their own nationalist agenda. In his chapter, Wasana Wongsurawat focused on the impact of Sun's movement and the 1911 Revolution in Thailand, especially through the journalistic writings of progressive newspapers and Thai-Chinese



journalists. On the other hand, fearing the anti-monarchical revolution might inspire a similar revolution in Thailand, King Vajiravudh was also devoted to attacking and rebutting the revolutionary and republican ideals, and in the process also provided acute analysis of China's conditions and predicaments. Ching-Fatt Yong's chapter on Singapore, on the other hand, analyzed the processes of uniting and fragmenting the Chinese community leadership in Singapore as the fortune of the revolutionary movement went up and down in China. Sun was able to provide much inspiration for leadership unity (not totally, though) among the Chinese community in Singapore, but the subsequent Yuan Shikai's rule significantly divided and fragmented the community, which also left a legacy in the rise of the new nonpartisan movement led principally by Tan Kah Kee.

James Cook's chapter recounts the Hokkienese (Fujianese) transnationalism between Xiamen and Southeast Asia that aimed to modernize China. The Hokkienese migrants in the Southeast Asian colonies, having been exposed to modern industrial system, and yet facing discrimination from the colonial administrators, found political inspiration in Sun's revolutionary movement, and began to participate in it directly and indirectly. Such revolution-inspired transnationalism was interesting in the sense that these transnationalists were utilizing their knowledge and skills learned from colonial territories in the construction of their homeland, which required sufficient amount of provincial autonomy realizable only during the Warlord era. With the revolution consolidated by the centralizing Chiang Kai-Shek's Nanking regime, however, such autonomy and the room for maneuver were increasingly restricted. Finally, Julia Martinez examined the lives of Sun's followers in Darwin, Australia, in particular the life of a young lady named Lena Lee. Her political life basically was a reflection of the larger societal struggle pitting the old conservative and patriarchal forces against Sun's revolutionary movement that upheld women's rights as well, thus drawing our attention to the gender dimension of the republican revolution.

Part III of the book examines the ways Sun Yat-Sen and the 1911 Revolution

were commemorated and remembered. Ceren Ergenc began this part with her chapter on the "selective remembering" as part of the state-led "collective memory" of Sun Yat-Sen in post-Mao China, which helps in the legitimization of the new order in China. By and large, Ergenc argued, collective memory of Sun in the public sphere was a carefully top-down constructed memory that legitimized the policy goals of the leadership in different eras. Hence, Sun's ideas were neatly repackaged as to affirm the policies of reform-era China. On the other hand, there is also the bottom-up process of remembering, which sometimes do "challenge or modify the visible top-down versions" (222). The bottom-up processes include popular TV series and museums that highlight aspects of Sun's legacy that may not be the preferred focus in the official discourse. In conclusion, Ergenc noted the "incompleteness" of Sun's image in history, which ironically also continued to allow openness in interpreting this historical figure. Wu Xiao An's chapter echoes the "selective remembering" theme of Ergenc's chapter, but extends this line of analysis to more foreign connections, especially Southeast Asia. Like Ceren Ergenc and Huang Jianli, Wu Xiao An noted that much of the popular or official commemorations and representations of Sun's movement in Southeast Asia and his relationship with the overseas Chinese could not withstand scholarly historical analysis. Much of these commemorations were originated by overseas Chinese community, but at official level, some Southeast Asian governments had also begun to look at this Sun-overseas Chinese relationship positively, in contrast to the past negative attitude towards such relationship. Wu argued that it was China's rise and the eagerness of some Southeast Asian governments to stress friendship and mutual interests with China that celebrating Sun's ties with ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia no longer became problematic.

The closing chapter in this part features Alexander Major, who examined two French newspapers, one conservative and one intellectually progressive, in their reports on Sun and China. While both newspapers were supportive of a change of regime from Manchu China, the conservative paper was much more critical



of Sun and was supportive of Yuan Shikai, while in contrast, the intellectual newspaper supported Sun. Again, similar to Wasana Wongsurawat's contribution in this volume, examining the ways the Sun's revolutionary movement were reported, analyzed, criticized, or praised in foreign presses allows the readers to understand the Revolution from a different perspective. What is interesting is that, even though those who criticized (or praised) Sun had their own agenda, the analysis they made about Sun's activities or plans also revealed a kind of perceptive and sharp understanding of Chinese issues at that time and the quality of their journalistic writings.

Finally, famed historian Prasenjit Duara closed off this volume with a short concluding chapter that reflects upon the themes "Nanyang," "Sun Yat-Sen" and "1911 Revolution." Duara noted the different meanings of "revolution" historically, but for the Chinese, what "revolution" entailed generally was not emancipation for the people, but the strengthening of the state. The "statist" dimension of Chinese revolutions therefore became the greatest continuity between the successive regimes governing China. As for "Nanyang" and "Sun Yat-Sen," Duara returned to his favorite theme of "insiders versus outsiders in China's history." For Duara, both Nanyang and Sun Yat-Sen exemplify what he called the "outsiders" in China. It is interesting that the concluding remarks of this volume from Duara offer observations like this: "the problems of Sun Yat-Sen were the problems of an outsider trying to become an insider to translate the new categories into action within China...Nanyang Chinese also have very much sense of being outsiders with the possibility of influencing the insiders...[which make them] want to say 'We are the Mother of the Revolution'... [or] 'we are the strong modernizing force in China.' So that it then produces a certain irritant. We see this irritation most of all in Mao Zedong's China where Overseas Chinese were very suspect, especially during the Cultural Revolution" (317).

All in all, this is a good read. The book offers realistic assessment of the complex relationships between Sun and Nanyang Chinese and all their follies

and achievements as well as the ways such relationships were remembered. This is a much better way to commemorate the centenary of the 1911 Revolution than the hagiographical writings that have been pouring in recent years in some of the Chinese newspapers.