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《大公报》与中国近代高等教育 [*Ta Kung Pao and modern higher education in China*]. 洪芳 [Hong Fang]. 福州, 中国: 福建教育出版社 [Fuzhou, China: Fujian Education Press], 2013. 170pp., (paperback), 25¥, ISBN: 978-7-5334-6203-1.

Hong Fang's study on the relationship between Tianjin-based *Ta Kung Pao* (L'Impartial) and the evolution of Chinese higher education in the early 20th century encourages us to think about higher education as both a product and shaper of Chinese modernity. Hong believes the field of higher education history has been focused too narrowly on universities and official charters to the neglect of its connections to broader society. As a way of addressing this weakness, she emphasizes that higher education and the modern press developed in tandem and mutually influenced one another and that it is fruitful to study instances when the two overlapped and interacted. As the intellectual's newspaper par excellence, *Ta Kung Pao*, founded in 1902 and published through the Republican period, offers an ideal case for the study of this subject.

As Hong exhaustively shows, *Ta Kung Pao* constitutes a rich archive on subjects related to higher education; student movements, student life, intra-faculty relations, faculty behavior, relations between the state and universities, intellectuals' views on higher education, and so forth. She argues that the interest in attracting readers led newspapers to offer more colorful information about their subjects than other textual documents, and that their daily production enabled newspapers to construct more detailed and complete narratives than other sources could provide. Hong backs her claim by mining *Ta Kung Pao* for a voluminous amount of interesting detail on a wide range of subjects. She does not, however, make clear how much of the information she brings to light is in fact new to us or, if it is new, how it fundamentally changes what we already think. In this respect, it would be useful if Hong provided a fuller explanation as to where her findings augment the existing historiography.

This is not to say that what Hong culls from *Ta Kung Pao* is not fascinating and important. One of her findings that I appreciate the most, and which we probably could not see as clearly through any other type of historical document, is that below the surface of the supposedly highly dignified and idealistic world

of higher education were ongoing and often bitter disputes, rivalries, and political intrigues, as well as a great deal of selfish and narrow-minded behavior. In paying attention to this sort of subject matter Hong challenges the romantic notion that intellectuals were above the messiness of their time and the pressures that came with their profession. This is a believable and honest picture, and is very interesting precisely because it is so.

Hong's focus on *Ta Kung Pao* goes far beyond the paper's role as an archive. She is equally interested in what to me is a far more important and original point, namely, that the newspaper provided a public space wherein various parties—professors, students, officials—could discuss and debate issues related to higher education and through which the importance of higher education to Chinese society as a whole could be made known to a wide audience. The paper went out of its way to publish different perspectives and in so doing encouraged open and constructive discussion.

In addition to arguing that the newspaper served as public forum in which various parties aired views and exchanged opinions, Hong states that *Ta Kung Pao* itself strongly promoted certain positions with regard to higher education that had an impact on public opinion. The paper editorialized on all manner of topics, and while it was generally inclusive, it did shape the discussion by focusing on subject matter that comported with its editors' views as to what was important and relevant. Given this, it is disappointing that Hong does not say more about the personnel behind the paper, the way they drafted editorials, the process by which contributed articles made it into the paper, and the ways *Ta Kung Pao* changed over time. Hong collects and analyzes a vast amount of material from the newspaper but says relatively little about it as a day-to-day, real-world commercial institution.

Hong Fang's study is rich and highly illuminating. It demonstrates the value of linking the history of Chinese higher education with the social history of the time and points to the need to place the intertwined histories of education and the media in the broader context of emergent Chinese modernity.

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