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The Power of Position: Beijing University, Intellectuals and Chinese Political Culture 1898-1929 by Timothy B. Weston

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*The China Quarterly*, No. 179 (Sep., 2004), pp. 841-843

Published by: [Cambridge University Press](#) on behalf of the [School of Oriental and African Studies](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20192400>

Accessed: 05/04/2013 15:06

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the creation of a “nationalistic visuality.” Part four discusses the issue of gender, as well as the role of “patriotic capitalists” in forming a nationalized consumer culture.

One major problem of this volume is that it lacks ‘consumers.’ Although in the introduction the author argues vigorously for dynamic tensions between nationalism and consumerism, the study itself is one sided. It is concerned only with nationalism as the defining force of consumerism in China, and barely discusses the roles of consumers in shaping consumer culture. Even in chapter seven under the heading “Nationalizing female consumers,” the author argues only how various national movements helped to construct an image of female consumers in China. There is no discussion of the interests of female consumers themselves, or their role as active agents in defining and shaping a consumer culture in modern China. One is left with the impression that consumers were merely passive creations of nationalism and their only role was to spread nationalism, rather than to consume. Furthermore, by labelling them as “patriotic producers” or “capitalists with Chinese characteristics,” the book undermines the fact that by monopolizing the nationalistic sentiment and using it to recruit customers (by making consumers “Chinese citizens”), companies, producers and entrepreneurs in modern China – both Chinese and non-Chinese – were able to turn consumers into loyal customers. Not unlike today’s supermarket loyalty schemes.

One other defect of the book is the author’s bias in selecting source material. Despite an extensive bibliography, source material is clearly centred on institutional history, concerned mainly with ideologies and politics. The author ignores a huge amount of literature in modern China on what people consumed, how and why. Even more problematic is to use a fictional story (*The Lin’s Family Shop*) as the starting point and as evidence for the author’s central argument (p. 1), confusing representation and reality.

Nevertheless, for students and readers interested in Chinese nationalism, the book adds a different dimension and shows a varied approach to the subject. It is also worth mentioning that in part three, “The exhibitionary complex,” the book offers for the first time a detailed study on the relationship between industry exhibitions and creation of a national identity in modern China. It shows the importance of visual culture in nation building in the 20th century. For readers interested in visual history in 20th-century China, it is a book not to be missed.

ZHOU XUN

*The Power of Position: Beijing University, Intellectuals and Chinese Political Culture 1898–1929.* By TIMOTHY B. WESTON. [Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2004. xiv + 325 pp. \$60.00; £39.95. ISBN 0-520-23767-6.]

Timothy Weston’s study of Beijing University (hereafter, “Beida”)

spotlights how modern Chinese intellectuals positioned themselves politically and socially in the early 20th century. Weston relies on the Beida archives, dailies, journals, and many other sources, to make four contributions. First, Beida's early history shows how literati humanists repositioned themselves during a period of great uncertainty. New style intellectuals had influence because they mastered Western and classical learning. Secondly, Beida's complex history did not break sharply with the past. Earlier accounts of the May Fourth movement obscure the efforts of intellectuals since 1898 to redefine their role. Weston suggests that May Fourth amplified a continuing progression of new and old ways of doing things. Thirdly, political tensions emerged when the university increasingly radicalized after 1911. No more than 20 per cent of Beida students were involved in the New Culture movement. A strong conservative undertow continually challenged radical agendas. Often we hear only the voices of the latter. Finally, Weston assesses Beida's history in light of how the May Fourth movement played out in different locations. In the 1920s, Shanghai replaced Beijing as the leading venue for urban China's cultural and intellectual leaders. Beijing increasingly lost status under warlordism, and the Nationalist shift of the capital to Nanjing refocused Chinese intellectual life on the Chang (Yangtze) delta.

Weston describes how conservatives and radicals informed May Fourth political culture. Drawing on Lynn Hunt's work, he stresses collective practices and social context. May Fourth was not simply an intellectual event but more a series of moves by intellectuals to create a system of meanings, practices, values, and implicit rules that would condition political power in new ways. This effort climaxed at Beida under the leadership of Cai Yuanpei and other university directors, where the nucleus of the New Culture network took shape.

Along the way, Weston describes the scholarly luminaries that Cai's hiring policy brought to Beida. Cai appointed a New Culture community of progressive-minded professors, which encouraged an explosion of student societies, some in favour of anarchism, others nostalgic for the Imperial period and Confucian values. The communist movement also turned Beida into a centre for the northern revolutionary movement.

Until the 1920s, then, Beida was the leading voice of elite Chinese public opinion. "Movement fatigue" set in after May Fourth, however. Warlordism and financial crises forced the university to close. The faculty and students moved to Shanghai to work and teach in a more commercialized intellectual context. By 1927, the warlord Zhang Zuolin had destroyed Beida as a location for intellectual activity and political activism. When the Kuomintang revived the university in 1929, they turned it into a utilitarian national school focusing on science and technology. Even in Beijing, Beida now took a back seat to Qinghua and Yanjing universities, which both had American support.

Weston argues that in their struggle to maintain their elite status, Chinese intellectuals maintained a dialectical relation between older and newer ways of thinking that informed revolutionary political change after 1898. This useful contention, however, would have more explanatory power if Weston had not under-theorized the notion of "intellectuals" in

modern Chinese history. To explain how late Imperial Chinese literati elites transformed themselves into a nascent intelligentsia that eventually became modern Chinese intellectuals (*zhishifenzi*) requires some “splitting” as well as “lumping.”

By using “intellectual” to encompass both the pre-modern and modern, Weston underestimates the degree to which the modern socio-political role of the intellectual in China was an invention and not simply an echo of older literati roles. Beida’s status was analogous to the Imperial College (*taixue*) and School for the Sons of the Empire (*guozijian*). Under the late Imperial educational regime, the Qing state certainly sanctioned classical knowledge reproduced through Imperial civil examinations. But Beida’s role in inventing the Chinese nation after 1911 required constructing a national past and a new relationship between citizens and the state. They went further than earlier negotiations between literati elites and the Imperial government to share political power and social prestige – however much such negotiations still mattered in the 1890s.

To historicize Beida, Weston presents the standard account of conservatives versus dynastic reformers after 1865. Unable to reconcile the cultural battle between Chinese and Western learning, the Qing dynasty failed to graft science to the Chinese educational system. Copying Tokyo Imperial University after the Sino-Japanese War, the new reformers sought to encompass all learning at the Imperial University (*jingshi daxuetang*), Chinese and Western, which now included advanced science and mathematics. This tired narrative represents a post-1895 view of earlier reformers as failures. Readers should take a closer look at recent scholarship on the new journalism (Rudolph Wagner, Natascha Vittinghoff) and abundant science translations (David Wright, Michael Lackner et. al.) from the 1860s to the 1890s to get beyond the 1898 reformers and their invention of themselves as the generators of modern intellectual change.

Despite my caveats, Weston successfully locates Beida in its own educational history as part of the urban history of Beijing. He also fruitfully places the May Fourth movement in that local history. As the first modern Imperial university, Beida was the product of Imperial reformers who tried to establish a new-style institution at the pinnacle of an unprecedented nationwide system of public schools. Later, educators in the early Republic used its late Imperial status to turn Beida into an autonomous university whose graduates as modern intellectuals superseded the Imperial mandarin ideal.

BENJAMIN A. ELMAN

*English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China.* By JAMES L. HEVIA. [Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003. xviii + 387 pp. £18.50. ISBN: 0-8223-3188-8.]

Cloaking its bullying of China in high morality, Britain in the 19th