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Modern Chinese History Studies

专题研究

五四运动前之公布"中日密约"问题	唐启	华(4)
欧事研究会成员对一战的观察、分析与预测	郭双	.林(18)
抗日战争期间日本对中国共产党的情报调查及对策	祁建	民(34)
战后日本渔船越界侵渔与国民政府的因应	刘利	民(55)
科学、商业与政治:走向世界的中国大熊猫(1869—1948)	姜	鸿(74)
清末废科举后科举经费体系的转型	蒋宝	麟(90)

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路径依赖与新兴宗教在地化:民国时期县级道院微观研究 …… 刘宝吉(106)

问题讨论

近代中国地权分配基尼系数研究中若干问题的讨论 …… 胡英泽(124)

读史札记

英文目录与提要 (160)

书讯 《新语往还:中日近代语言交涉史》(17) ◇ 《从计量、叙事到文本解读:社会

史实证研究的方法转向》(54) ◇ 《困局与应对:抗战时期中共精兵简政研究》(73)

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Modern Chinese History Studies

No. 1, 2021

The Publicity of the Sino-Japanese Secret Treaties before the May Fourth Movement

..... Tang Qihua(4)

During the First World War, Japan dominated East Asia and signed a series of secret treaties with China. After the war, at the Paris Peace Conference, China and Japan were fighting for the issue of Shandong. The Beijing government had planned to publicize all the Sino-Japanese secret treaties and let the Powers to rule, but the Chinese delegation in Paris only publicized the treaties related to Shandong. Meanwhile, the South-North negotiation was held in Shanghai and the group of Beijing officials advocating peaceful unification collaborated with the representatives of the South, so they wanted to force the group of Beijing officials advocating military unification to publicize all the Sino-Japanese secret treaties to uncover the close relationship between the Anhui Clique of warlords and Japan. However, the most sensitive two contracts of weapon purchase were not publicized and the controversy of the Britain and the United States with Japan ended up with a compromise among them.

After the breakout of the First World War, some of the Nationalist Party members following Huang Xing or agreeing with his standpoint of reconciliation in national affairs organized the European Affairs Study Group in 1914. While opposing Yuan Shikai's restoration of the imperial system, they systematically observed and analyzed the First World War. They thought that the war was sparked by the Sarajevo Incident, but the fundamental reason was the formation of and the conflicts between the two military blocs, the Allied Powers and the Central Powers. They pointed out that this war was actually the challenge of the rising German Empire to the British Empire, which had dominated the world for several decades. They estimated that if the war was ended within a year, the Central Powers would win, but if the war lasted for two years or longer, then the Allied Powers would win. Moreover, they anticipated that the prolongation of the war would trigger revolution or independence of colonies in some of the belligerent nations, and after the war six major powers in the world would reduce to three powers. Some members analyzed the strength of the countries in the two warring blocs and predicted that the Central Powers would eventually win. Others analyzed Japan's motives for declaring war on Germany and criticized the policy of "partial neutrality" of the Beijing government. In short, the research on the First World War by the European Affairs Study Group had made some substantial results.

In the all-out War of Resistance against the Japanese Aggression, the Communist Party of China (CPC) led the Chinese people to fight against the Japanese army, so the Japanese regarded the CPC as their "real enemies." The Japanese investigated the CPC and their armies on a wide scale regarding the relationship between the CPC and the Soviet Union, the future of the United Front, the anti-Japanese activities of the CPC in North China and so on. However, the Japanese army had the tradition of "Military First," so they lacked the systematic strategic analysis of information. In particular, the Japanese army selectively used information in order to invade China with force. Therefore, although they discovered the power of the CPC and their political work, and predicted the anti-Japanese fighting led by the CPC would accelerate the development of the Chinese society, the Japanese army as invaders did not understand the CPC and the Chinese society sufficiently, nor realized that the CPC had become more mature during the War of Resistance. The plan of the Japanese army to establish a regime in North China was not suitable for the local reality and incompatible with the

progress of the Chinese thought in the modern time. The Japanese army gathered a large amount of information and proposed various reactions to the CPC, but they were doomed to failure.

The rise of modern natural history changed the way how the Westerners understand the nature. The production and circulation of knowledge about various species also triggered transnational chain effects in commerce, ecology, politics, and culture. Panda, a new species identified after the rise of the natural history, was gradually gaining attention from Western countries. The demand for exposition from institutions of natural history also prompted the commercialization of pandas. When the large-scale hunting had impact on the panda population, the Nationalist government shifted the focus of administration from the control of foreigners to the protection of the species, so foreigners' hunting pandas in China became outlawed. After the commercial channels to obtain pandas had been cut off, zoos in Europe and America directly requested the Chinese government to give pandas to them as gifts. The Nationalist government also realized the special function of pandas, and thus the "Panda Diplomacy" started afterwards. The exchange of species under control also provided favorable condition for the protection of pandas in China. With the global prevalence of natural history knowledge, wild animals in China were gradually known by the world, and became important "envoys" for the Chinese diplomacy.

In the Qing dynasty, the government had a funding system directly serving for the Civil Service Examination at all levels and students at government schools. After the abolition of the Civil Service Examination, this funding system didn't end along with the Examination; instead, this funding was used in new style education. Although the function and expenditure of the previous funding for the Civil Service Examination had been changed in the government at all levels, the sources of the funding basically remained the same, and even continued until the end of the Qing dynasty. In the process of transformation, the Qing court, the government at all levels and local gentry had numerous discussions, conflicts and negotiations regarding how to distribute this funding. The distribution of this funding between the Ministry of Education and provincial government thus set up the rudimentary demarcation of educational funding between the central and provincial (including subordinate prefectures and counties) government.

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