

Max Ko-wu Huang, *Above and Apart: Gu Mengyu and His Search for an Alternative Path in Modern Chinese History* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2020). 372 pp. Hardcover \$35.00.

Gu mengyu (Ku Mengyu, 1889–1972) leader of the leftist Kuomintang (KMT) from 1924 to 1931 and German-trained economist, was a staunch nationalist, who emphasized democratic forces in his academic thought and Kuomintang affairs. He served as the Minister of Railways later and was the mastermind of the Third Force Movement in Hong Kong and Japan during the Cold War. After the death of Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925), Gu became the decision-maker of the Wang Ching-wei (1883–1944) which contended with Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975) among the Chinese revolutionary forces. However, Gu Mengyu consistently stood against Chiang and the more totalitarian aspects of Communist forces for most of his political career, which obscured him in orthodox discourses of the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). It is for this reason that Max Ko-wu Huang, Distinguished Research Fellow at the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, tries to re-discover Gu Mengyu.

Huang Ko-wu hints that Gu Mengyu intended to regard himself as a kind of “Chinese Trotsky” in his early years in the Kuomintang left (127). Although the Trotskyists of the Russian Communist Party advocated a world revolution and criticized the united front of the KMT and the CCP, Gu’s position did not reflect that view. In this book, Huang Ko-wu follows the research approach of Yamada Tatsuo and So Wai-chor in order to understand the Kuomintang left. That is to say, the author situates Gu Mengyu into the middle ground between Chiang Kai-shek’s Kuomintang and Mao Zedong’s Communist Party. This kind of middle road is precisely the political line of Gu Mengyu, who followed the Wang Ching-wei before Wang’s compromise telegram (Yan Dian) with Japan in 1938.

Huang breaks new ground by showing that is Gu Mengyu directly influenced Wang Ching-wei’s decision on the Wuhan–Communist split, while abandoning Soviet Union’s military and financial aid, terminating cooperation with the Chinese Communists and returning to the Sun Yat-sen’s Three People’s Principles (109–113). Huang argues that Gu Mengyu’s role in the Wuhan–Communist split was influenced by Gu’s unique understanding of communism. Gu Mengyu, even though he studied political economy in Germany and previously served as a professor in the Department of Economics at Peking University, opposed Marxian theories of dialectical materialism, class struggle, and the land question. Meanwhile, Gu denied the possibility of the peasant revolution becoming a proletarian revolution, thinking that China’s main pursuits were tariff autonomy and, subsequently, national indus-

trialization (127). Gu was unwilling to follow Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT to Taiwan after the Chinese Civil War in 1949, even though he refused and critiqued communism. Gu, instead, went to Hong Kong and worked with Chang Fa-kuei and Carson Chang to establish the Grand League of Liberal Democracy and the China Liberal Democratic Fighting Alliance. From 1951 to 1953, the United States assisted the Third Force Movement in Hong Kong, with the hopes that Titoism would diffuse to Mainland China. The China Liberal Democratic Fighting Alliance launched several raids and military airdrops on the coastal areas of the mainland. Gu Mengyu, then a political and organizational leader, published in liberal journals *Da Dao* and *Voice of China*, with an output touching on the topics of freedom and democracy, the rule of law, economic democracy, national independence, and national force (238–258). These journals were a lasting cultural space of Hong Kong's exiled intellectuals.

Huang Ko-wu has expended a great deal of scholarly effort, intermittently for 12 years, collecting and sorting out Gu Mengyu's historical materials in Nanjing, Chongqing, Hong Kong, and Taipei. Since Gu did not leave behind an autobiography, diary, or memoir, the author was required to search for Gu Mengyu's whereabouts in various other spectators' diaries, archives, books, and newspapers in order to reconstruct his life. New historical materials discovered in the last ten years – Chou Te-wei memoirs, the diary of Chen Ko-wen, Wang Ching-wei Archives at Academia Historica, Taipei, and the books, periodicals and newspaper digital databases – made the research on Gu Mengyu possible. The author believes that these new materials and the development of digital databases have contributed to this book's challenge to the historical discourse hegemony of the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party.

While *Above and Apart: Gu Mengyu and His Search for an Alternative Path in Modern Chinese History* is an academically detailed and rigorous work, the author sometimes directs analytical attention to places other than Gu Mengyu's activities. To begin, the author describes Gu Mengyu's early career in the era of China's modernization so as to situate Gu Mengyu into this process. However, it focuses, quite heavily, on the political rise of Wang Ching-wei and Chiang Kai Shek, the development of the Three Major Policies, and the growth of factionalism in Kuomintang in the 1920s. Additionally, although the author wants to revitalize a forgotten figure in the in the first chapter, he evades a linear narrative and jumps back in time to Gu Mengyu's childhood and youth, which is not linked to the description of political movements.

It is the first academic biography of Gu Mengyu, which was selected as the winner of the 2021 International Convention of Asia Scholars Book Prize Shortlist in the Chinese Language. Huang Ko-wu argues that Gu Mengyu was a crucial figure in non-mainstream history, and “only by stepping out of the victor's glare can we see the gray of history clearly” (cover page). Gu Mengyu's life and theory symbolized a challenge to the shadow created by Chinese Communist Party and their labelling of “Traitors.” Huang's research on Gu Mengyu represents one part of Wang

Ching-wei's mobilization for China's future, not just of Gu Mengyu himself, but that of a group of people associated with Wang Ching-wei. Although Gu Mengyu was cautious and timid, he was a scholar who had a concrete impact on freedom, democracy, and constitutional politics into political capital, which represented an alternative project of Chinese modernization.

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