

[FREE] Shanghai Splendor: Economic Sentiments and the Making of Modern China, 1843-1949

Shanghai Splendor: Economic Sentiments and the Making of Modern China, 1843-1949

Wen-hsin Yeh

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Wen-hsin Yeh : Shanghai Splendor: Economic Sentiments and the Making of Modern China, 1843-1949 before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Shanghai Splendor: Economic Sentiments and the Making of Modern China, 1843-1949:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Mis-leading sub-title By John Jeffery Rabb I was disappointed by this book as the sub-title says it covered the period from about 1843-1949. However, precious little is even mentioned for the time period of 1843-roughly the 1880's, some mention from the 1880's-1920's, and only from the 1920's onward

does the book really cover. So if all you are interested in is the post-WW1 period in Shanghai, great. But anything else, you'll need to look elsewhere. 25 of 25 people found the following review helpful. A fascinating historical study of economism and urban life culture in Shanghai by Hubert Shea. This book is a social history of Shanghai between 1843 and 1949. Professor Yeh, an eminent historian from UC Berkeley, maintains that Shanghai's modernity in the first half of the twentieth century is full of "pride and shame with infinite glamour and unequalled squalor". She has carefully garnered and researched into primary documents including pictorial magazines, journals, newspapers, novels, and biographies to reconstruct Shanghai in an era that represents the rise and fall of merchant class and corporate elites and the emergence and growth of petty urbanities. Chinese merchants gained their social respectability when senior imperial officials such as Sheng Xuanhui and Li Hongzhang espoused the use of machine-related science and commerce to modernize the state in the late nineteenth century. The comprador merchants were branded as people who amassed wealth, promoted fashions and trends, and enriched the nation. They became a paragon who possessed new knowledge, virtues, and patriotism. To Professor Yeh, the process of Shanghai's modernity in the 1920s and 30s involves the indigenization of foreign products and urban lifestyles, the dominance of merchants and corporate elites in political, educational, and charitable activities, the prevalence of political strife, wars, and social turbulence, and circumstances surrounding aspirations and frustration of petty urbanities. Nanjing Road in the international settlement area occupied top notch shops and restaurants and the assortment of advertising signs and banners that represented consumption of the glamour and abundance of modernity. Wealthy families sent their daughters to schools and women wore diamonds, dressed in western-style clothing, and killed time with frivolous pursuits. People rushed to western-style colleges and universities, business schools, and vocational schools because possession of knowledge in commerce and technology became an entry to social advancement and better living in the city. Corporate elites build networks and established civic associations such as YMCA and Shanghai General Chamber of Commerce to promote commercial activities and to build their social influence and reputation in the city. Professor Yeh maintains that Shanghai's modernity in the first half of twentieth century created a new social class that contributed to the rise of Communism in Shanghai. The petty urbanities represented a diverse work force that included clerks and apprentices and they were the audience and consumers of the city's image and products of modernity. As key occupants of Shanghai's *sikumen* residences, they believed that continuous learning, diligence, and unquestionable obedience to their employers could result in better living and good career prospect. However, their lives were filled with work boredom, material hardship, and tales of woes (Chapter 6). Professor Yeh researched into working life of clerks in Shanghai's Bank of China (Chapter 4) and employees in Wing On Department Store (Chapter 7) to demystify the highly disciplined *'danwei'* (work unit) corporate culture that created work boredom and job dissatisfaction and the failure of enlightened paternalism that motivated employees to rebel against the merchant class and corporate elites. Merchant class and corporate elites lost their social respectability and image of patriotism in the 1940s due to political turbulence and more importantly, paucity of confidence and reliance from petty urbanities when CCP (Chinese Communist Party) promised to uphold the principles of social justice to them. The epilogue of this book is both illuminating and insightful. Between 1950s and 80s, the Communist government reorganized Shanghai as a center of manufacturing and the inhabitants were workers instead of capitalists and consumers because the history of pre-Communist Shanghai symbolized colonialism, non-Chinese, and structural injustice in the social relationships of production under capitalism. Since the 1990s Shanghai's municipal authorities has determined to transform the city into "an international center for economy, finance, and trade" in the twenty-first century. Scholars and officials from The Shanghai Academy of Social Science and the Shanghai Propaganda Department use history as a handmaiden to the justification of their new urban identity and current development ideology. They rewrite the history of pre-Communist Shanghai and claim that the process of Shanghai's modernity was the work of the petty urbanities and Chinese people from all parts of the lower Yanzi in order to arrive at the "weightless" state free of the burden of their past. This book is highly recommended to readers who are interested in social history and urban culture and identity of Shanghai before 1949.

Rich with details of everyday life, this multifaceted social and cultural history of China's leading metropolis in the twentieth century offers a kaleidoscopic view of Shanghai as the major site of Chinese modernization. Engaging the entire span of Shanghai's modern history from the Opium War to the eve of the Communist takeover in 1949, Wen-hsin Yeh traces the evolution of a dazzling urban culture that became alternately isolated from and intertwined with China's tumultuous history. Looking in particular at Shanghai's leading banks, publishing enterprises, and department stores, she sketches the rise of a new maritime and capitalist economic culture among the city's middle class. Making extensive use of urban tales and visual representations, the book captures urbanite voices as it uncovers the sociocultural dynamics that shaped the people and their politics.