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Shanghai: From Market Town to Treaty Port, 1074-1858 (Book review)

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departure in terms of broader intellectual and/or socio-political change than merely Huang's personal preference for a “doctrinal pluralism” (pp. 243–249).

Wilson has made a convincing argument about the importance of writing practice in the construction of the Dao School's genealogy. His study has enhanced our understanding of the complex process through which Cheng-Zhu 道学 was canonized as the state orthodoxy in late imperial China. The book is well-researched and is an important contribution to the study of Confucian thought of the late imperial period.

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Most of the work that has been done on the history of Shanghai has concentrated on the modern, post-treaty-port period. According to Professor Johnson that has produced a misapprehension: the development of Shanghai was primarily a function of the Western impact; it emerged as an artificial or alien creation linked firmly to the international economy, but only weakly connected to the mass of Chinese society. Johnson shows instead that long before the Opium War the city was already a major commercial center deeply involved in China's internal trade. That trade was “massive,” and Johnson uses Ming and Qing dynasty gazetteers to show that Shanghai's position within it was substantial.

In the process of measuring the dimensions of that position (which Johnson does in part by indexing economic growth to the rate of change in guild activities such as temple construction) she reviews the complex behavior of business organizations in Shanghai, adding to the taxonomy of Chinese guilds that has been developed by others. To categories of guild organization that distinguish primarily between native place and economic function, she adds the dimension of locality: guilds may be classified according to whether they maintained premises inside or outside the city walls. “Insiders” were residents of Shanghai with interests in local commercial services; “outsiders” were sojourners whose principal residences lay elsewhere, and whose financial interests tended to lie in activities associated with long-distance commerce.

While the city had for centuries sustained a modest link to overseas commercial networks, its orientation toward international markets intensified markedly with the arrival of the British. At first, their activities in Shanghai fit neatly within well-established patterns of “outsider” behavior. Indeed, one of the most interesting aspects of the book is its demonstration of the degree to which Western behavior duplicated or paralleled the activities of outsider guilds. Much like them, British traders in the 1840s and 1850s built public facilities such as cemeteries, churches; roads, docks and charitable institutions, all on their own initiative and as an expression of their private interests. As Johnson shows, such public/private amenities had well-established antecedents, and the success of both the guilds and the foreigners in this regard is a measure of the degree to
which an autonomous urban community life was possible within a 19th-century Chinese city.

The final chapters of the book survey the emergence of the foreign community at Shanghai until 1858, a date at which time Johnson believes Shanghai had become in effect two cities: the old city and the new foreign-settlement, the latter gradually becoming an independent and essentially self-governing entity. While resting on foundations laid by native merchant organizations it proceeded to introduce Western practices that would eventually have a profound effect upon China. An example to which Johnson devotes a great deal of attention is the Foreign Inspectorate of Customs, a hybrid institution that combined elements of both Chinese and British administrative practices.

In summary, the core of the book is an analysis of Shanghai's urban and economic history, based upon native materials, followed by a survey of the city's development during the first fifteen years after the Opium War, based primarily on British Foreign Office files. The result is a well-conceived and very interesting account of the history of a Chinese city that, because of its unique position as a center of China's domestic and foreign trade, offers an extraordinary opportunity to address some important questions pertaining to Chinese urban history.

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The bustling port of Shanghai was a unique urban environment in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was a hybrid – a relatively recent creation that was neither completely Chinese nor Western in its origins or nature. Shanghai was a city of immigrants and sojourners not only from Europe, Japan and America, but also from China's southern coastal provinces. The new Chinese arrivals, primarily from Guangzhou province, formed native-place associations (huiguan) to help them overcome their feelings of isolation, loneliness and loss of identity. Native-place associations performed an incredible number of services for their members including: arranging burials and travel back home, organizing guilds and other labour/commercial groups, maintaining temples and holding seasonal festivals and celebrations. Through the numerous provincial, and even county-level huiguan, Chinese from Guangzhou, Fujian and other southern provinces were 'integrated' into Shanghai's cosmopolitan society.

In recent years a new genre of historical scholarship has emerged that focuses on what was perhaps the most "modern" of all Chinese cities during the Republican era. Shanghai was a haven for many of China's dissident intellectuals in the 1910s and 1920s. During the first half of the century it was the nation's principle trading port and industrial centre. Shanghai was also, as demonstrated by the 1905 anti-American boycott and later the 1919 and 1925 anti-Japanese movements, one of the primary centres of early Chinese nationalism. Despite all of these 'modern' elements, Bryna Goodman, in her analysis of local huiguan, demonstrates how 'traditional' methods of social organization were not replaced.