

biography. Past fighters like Norman Assing 袁生, Ng Poon Chew 伍盤照, and Walter U. Lum 林華耀 and others deserve to be recognized and remembered as well.

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***The Lius of Shanghai.*** By Sherman Cochran and Andrew Hsieh. Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2013. Pp. xiii + 431. \$39.95/£25.0.

In his heydays before 1949, Liu Hongsheng 劉鴻生 (1888–1956) was a household name in Shanghai as one of the city's most eminent and successful industrialists. Tall, hardworking, and fluent in English, he married up, through family arrangement, at the age of nineteen to Ye Suzhen 葉素貞 (1888–1960), the wealthy granddaughter of a leading Ningbo merchant. The couple professed love on first sight, and proceeded to raise a family of twelve children (nine boys and three girls) in the next two decades. The sons grew up to earn engineering and business degrees from prestigious institutions (Cambridge, Harvard Business School, Wharton, MIT, Tokyo Institute of Technology, St. John's in Shanghai, and so forth). They also built lives as senior executives in Liu's various enterprises. The daughters went to college and worked on marriage alliances. In the midst of all this family planning, the Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) intervened. Liu Hongsheng fled, unannounced even to Ye Suzhen, first to Hong Kong then to Chongqing, where assisted by two sons he built new enterprises. Left behind in Shanghai, Ye and the eldest sons nonetheless carried on the family's businesses under the collaboration regimes of Wang Jingwei 汪精衛 and the Japanese occupation forces. Then the war ended, and the long years of separation were over. All returned; the family reunited in Shanghai, inclusive of the extramarital members that Liu had acquired. The Lius had survived the war, one might say, unscathed. During that time one son had secretly joined the Communist Party. The rest of the family had strengthened their ties with the Nationalist secret service and gained invaluable access to state-controlled commodities. By 1947, Liu and Ye, who had married without the patronage of a father on either side, had successfully built, over four decades, a large and prosperous family. But there was no escape from the upheavals. The Liu-Ye joint enterprise unravelled in the final decade of their lives, thanks both to the presence of a younger woman who had given Liu a new son during the war, and the rise of the Chinese Communist Party that was poised to rewrite the rules of doing business in China.

Liu Hongsheng is no stranger to Western readers who have followed Cochran's earlier research on Liu's business networks and career as a producer of matches,

woollens, cotton textiles, cements, and briquettes. In this fascinating new book, Cochran and Hsieh draw on an exceptional collection of letters exchanged between Liu and his family to shed light on the dynasty behind the business empire. How did the family make decisions about education, marriage, business, and politics? How did the patriarch's plans for his sons complement those for his businesses? How much autonomy was there for anyone born as Liu Hongsheng's son? And what was it like to be Liu's wife through the long years between the fall of the Qing and the rise of the People's Republic? The first half of the book is arranged by the education—triumphs and travails—of each of the children. The second half of the book details family responses to the challenges presented by the Sino-Japanese war and the Communist revolution. Throughout, Cochran and Hsieh have performed a tremendous service by quoting extensively from the letters. They seek, whenever the sources would permit, to give each family member a share of space and voice. They argue that patriarchal norms and assumptions notwithstanding, the Lius of Shanghai offer yet another example showing that modern Chinese patriarchs do not preside over domestic regimes of power and control over their women and children. Under Liu Hongsheng, the Lius rallied at critical junctures either to come to each other's assistance or to debate joint decisions. Grown-up sons, indeed, wielded decisive influence in the late 1940s over critical matters such as whether the parents would separate, or the family should remain in Shanghai after 1949. The Liu family letters gave evidence that twentieth-century Chinese patriarchy, despite autobiographical fiction such as *The Family* (1931–33) by the author Ba Jin 巴金 (Li Feigan 李芾甘, 1904–2005), was no tyranny.

To tell a potentially sprawling story about an emerging business dynasty, the authors of *The Lius of Shanghai* have exercised remarkable discipline. They present a chronologically organized narrative that is closely focused on the couple and their children. The result is the portrait of an enlightened family that had come together with impressive coherence and mutual loyalty. But no self-made luminaries are entirely without their inconsistencies, and the Lius offer no exception. Cochran and Hsieh offer such rich materials in this multi-layered account; even its secondary themes and lesser episodes promise to reward a close reading.

The primary sources for the book are the family letters that had initially been “archived,” so to speak, by Liu Hongsheng's private accounts office responsible for the management of his affairs. There were over 2,000 items in this collection by 1949, held either in the original or as a copy, in English as well as in Chinese. Cochran and Hsieh devoted long hours over multiple years reading the letters. I find it just as rewarding to ponder the archive they have entered and the working of the accounts office. It is simply remarkable that for the archival record, the illiterate Ye Suzhen “writes” only in English, accomplished through the typing and translation of a blind secretary and former English tutor (a Mr Song Guanlin 宋觀麟) who also read

(or heard) her incoming mails. One can only speculate how Ye might have sounded in person, and her grasp of the letters bearing her name. The writing arrangement also suggested that the family had functioned through the regular presence of non-members who were privy to its private affairs. To what extent was the Liu family, enmeshed in this web of assistance, a product of these relations? And how did the accounts office function as a centralizing institution of familial ties? The office, in all probability, also generated or maintained legal notes, financial records, gifts lists, banquet rosters, greetings notes, newspaper clippings, and so forth. How might these other papers complement the family letters to document an overseas travel, a college education, a wedding, or an extramarital affair? How responsive was the accounts office to the shifting dynamics within the family? Did money speak in a way that complemented the debates and consultations as captured in the family letters? Or did ownership and control, modulated perhaps by standing or talent, give some individuals a larger share of power over others?

Cochran and Hsieh have productively mined the letters for historical information. I find it just as interesting to consider the issue of family letters as a genre, with its silences and exclusions. Did the Lius write their letters in ways that conform to established genre expectations in either English or Chinese, with proper textual performance of deference and rituals? Or did the mixed use of the two languages offer a sort of “division of labour” that served to broaden the family’s repertoire for communication? Liu Hongsheng gave his sons conventional-sounding personal names (*ren* 仁 “benevolence,” *yi* 義 “righteousness,” *li* 禮 “rites,” *zhi* 智 “wisdom,” *xiao* 孝 “filial piety,” *ti* 悌 “brotherly love,” etc.) that conformed to Confucian ideas of propriety. The sons also adopted formal-sounding Western first names (“Julius,” “Hannibal,” “Alexander,” “Leonardo,” and so forth). What indeed were the symbolic rules and codes that might have worked to produce the various cultural meanings in the Liu family?

Letters by nature were of greater value documenting family exchanges across distance than the routines at home. As sources for family history, the letters privileged the representation of some subjects over others. We learn much, for instance, about the formal schooling of the Liu children on the watch of their father. But we do not learn nearly as much about their informal upbringing, in the company of nannies, maids, and servants, under the management of their mother. We learn of Ye Suzhen’s long years of childbearing and bouts of depression. We meet members of her family, but we do not see much of her home either in terms of its spatial and material dimensions or as a working unit with rhythms and routines. We learn of the early deaths and serious illnesses of several of the Liu children. We do not know much, however, about how health concerns might have exacted a toll on the rest of the family, or how the material aspects of everyday life might have structured the household politics centring on the matriarch. Ye Suzhen died a miserable death, Cochran and Hsieh

tell us, in 1960. Did she ever live a happy life as Liu Hongsheng's wife? Several women had played significant roles in Ye's marriage: a demanding mother-in-law who squeezed her for money, a glamorous daughter-in-law raised in the West to challenge Chinese conventions of female propriety, and a series of women who vied for Liu Hongsheng's loyalty and affection. Might there not be some resonance, then, between Ye's life and the dark and brooding matriarchy in the Shanghai tales of Zhang Ailing 張愛玲 (Eileen Chang, 1920–1995)? Might it be plausible that behind Liu Hongsheng's enlightened patriarchy, there lay the psychological dramas comparable to those canonized in *Jinsuo ji* 金鎖記 (The Golden Cangue), *Yuannü* 怨女 (The Rouge of the North), and *Liuyan* 流言 (Words on Water)? It is not Cochran and Hsieh's project to write about women and the Shanghai bourgeois family. But it complements the Liu Hongsheng story for the readers to consider the power politics of money and sex in Liu's household.

*The Lius in Shanghai* ends with a commemorative event on October 14, 2006, when twenty-four members of the Liu family assembled in Shanghai to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Liu Hongsheng's death. They travelled by bus "to a new and very grand cemetery" (p. 363) outside the city that was opened in 1995. Of the Liu children only his youngest daughter, aged seventy-seven, was able to be present. She unveiled a bust for Father and a cameo for Mother. After hearing several eulogies at the site of the new monuments, the descendants moved to a nearby pavilion to share a meal. "At first they all praised and paid deference to Father as the patriarch of their family. But before long they brought up controversial points about the roles each of their ancestors had played in their family's history, and then many of them—men and women, young and old—began to argue" (p. 364). It's never an easy task making sense of family matters. *The Lius of Shanghai* offers a carefully researched history that seeks to do justice to the best intent of all voices in the family. The most critical business for the Lius as successful entrepreneurs, as the book shows, is none other than the proper ordering of the affairs of the family. Yet for much of the first half of China's twentieth century the tools available for such ordering, consisting primarily of Confucian moral injunctions, were limited; and the challenges from the larger environment had been radical and momentous. When the semblance of peaceful co-existence came between Liu and Ye, it is poignant for the peace to be in the silences on the ground of the state approved reconstructions of their memories, in bust and cameo, a whole half century after the tumult of real-life ends. *The Lius in Shanghai* is a thought-provoking book that deserves to be read widely by students as well as practitioners of Chinese capitalism past and present.

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