

Communications

May 12, 1971

Editor, *Journal of Asian Studies*:

I read with interest the review by Ernest P. Young of Immanuel C. Y. Hsü's new book, *The Rise of Modern China* (*JAS*, February 1971). I had read this book with care when it was first published last year, and I consider it a major accomplishment in historical narration as well as a cogent summation of the forces that have impelled the emergence of China as a modern nation. In fact, I have adopted it as required basic text for my own course on nineteenth-century China.

Mr. Young's carefully written review contains several valid points. However, I must take exception to his charge that Hsü's treatment of the Republican era as following the KMT party line. My objection is based on two reasons. First, this appears to me an unfair evaluation of Hsü and his analysis of the political history of 20th-century China, as the work itself clearly shows a consistent attempt to present an objective view of the developments in this period; Hsü's well-established reputation as a scholar and historian has been enhanced, rather than weakened, by this new book. Considering the depth of KMT-CCP enmity and its repercussions in international politics, it seems to me that in discussing works of this kind a reviewer would be wise to avoid applying political labels in so care-free a fashion to a substantial scholarly volume. Secondly, one needs not agree with all of Hsü's conclusions to realize that the Nationalist government did have an historical role to fill in the prolonged process of the transformation of China from tradition to modernity. Here a political reading of the book is as misleading as would be the case if someone had tried to give a political (or partisan) interpretation of the events. As an historian I feel that I must speak out concerning the undesirability of such categorizing of historical works.

The Pennsylvania State University

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Editor's Note: Other letters, expressing substantially the same points as Professor Sun's, have been received at this office.

Reviewer's response . . .

June 11, 1971

Editor, *Journal of Asian Studies*:

All students of modern China have been influenced by the KMT version of modern Chinese history. Communist Chinese historians have adopted considerable portions of it regarding the pre-May Fourth period. Its impact is discernible in virtually all American writing on twentieth-century China. That this should be so is not surprising, since the bulk of historical research and writing on the twentieth century has, at least until the 1950's, been done by Chinese scholars working within the framework of KMT interpretations, and the work continues now in Taipei. Hence, one succinct way to characterize the interpretive schema of a broad-ranging textbook on modern China is the *degree* to which it adopts the KMT framework. The point about Professor Hsü's *The Rise of Modern China* is that, in my judgment, it adopts more of that framework than most scholarly

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writing on modern China recently published in America. For the American specialist, this statement economically conveys much information about the book. As I pointed out in the review, Professor Hsü also departs from that framework in major instances. He is obviously not simply following a party line. But we are not thereby freed of the need to understand the interpretive tendencies that emerge from this major textbook effort.

A further question is whether a piece of historical scholarship is improved by discarding any particular KMT position. I should think it is not automatically so. Professor Hsü's book is made more lively and instructive for the American student by its retrieval of certain assertions about nineteenth-century China that the KMT version contains but that have been abandoned or modified by many other specialists in America. By contrast, it is my feeling that the treatment of the twentieth century suffers from similar retrievals. Of course, Professor Hsü's sincerity and scholarly integrity are in no way at issue.

Tokyo

ERNEST P. YOUNG

June 14, 1971

Editor, *Journal of Asian Studies*:

A Correction:

In the first paragraph on page 9 and the fourth paragraph of page 10 of "Ramayana: An Instrument of Historical Contact and Cultural Transmission Between India and Asia" (published in the *JAS*, Vol. XXX, Number 1, November 1970), it is stated that the Ramayana reliefs depicted at Prambanan in Central Java are incomplete. Professor Edward Treloar of the University of Melbourne, Parkville, Australia, has kindly drawn my attention to the fact that the Rama-reliefs continue in the adjoining Brahma temple, although they still remain unrestored.

St. John's University

SANTOSH N. DESAI