

of eighteenth-century France. There are even French quotes untranslated in the text. Though non-French historians will be able to follow Livesay's larger argument, such additions are warranted given the wide audience who would benefit from this innovative work.

One problem with the book is Livesay's use of the term "subaltern." While "subaltern" can be defined broadly as non-elites, Livesay's explicit citation of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's now classic article "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) leads the reader to believe that Livesay is using her definition. Spivak has gone on record imploring scholars to avoid using "subaltern" as "a classy word for oppressed, for Other," maintaining that "subaltern" refers only to those with "limited or no access to the cultural imperialism" ("Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak," *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* [1992]). Yet Livesay uses the term in a general sense, associating it variously with "ordinary people," "amateurs," the "popular," "subordinate," and "artisanal" (pp. 18, 87, 103, 117). Engaging with Spivak should entail explicitly establishing a working definition of "subaltern," even if that definition differs from Spivak's. Doing so would not have undermined the importance or coherence of his argument, for the actors he describes as "subaltern" remain largely excluded from works studying the origins of globalization.

Livesay's embrace of popular knowledge and search for centers of learning and growth outside of Paris is a welcome and useful intervention. He engages deeply with the specialists whose topics are part of his larger narrative and expertly guides the reader from one field of study to the next. Global historians and metropolitan French historians alike will benefit enormously from this extensively researched and thought-provoking work.

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Taking Flight: The Foundations of American Commercial Aviation, 1918–1938. By *M. Houston Johnson*. V. Centennial of Flight Series, no. 21. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2019. x + 287 pp. Photographs, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$45.00. ISBN: 978-1-62349-721-7.

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Reviewed by Richard Byers

M. Houston Johnson's new work, *Taking Flight: The Foundations of American Commercial Aviation, 1918–1938*, is a welcome addition to

scholarship charting the early development of commercial aviation in the United States. Johnson expands and enriches the narratives of scholars such as R. E. G. Davies, Robert Van der Linden, Henry Ladd Smith, Carl Solberg, and T. E. Heppenheimer by expertly blending original archival scholarship with well-written and engaging institutional, political, and microhistorical analysis.

In tracing the evolution of commercial flying in the United States from the U.S. Army's trial mail services in 1918 to the passage of the Civil Aeronautics Act (CAA) of 1938, Johnson also revises these earlier interpretations (and those of most U.S. business histories of this period) considerably, arguing that U.S. commercial aviation's interwar development demonstrated remarkable—and previously unmentioned—policy continuity between the Hoover and Roosevelt administrations.

Johnson also constructs a corollary thesis: that government involvement in the fostering and development of U.S. aviation technologies and infrastructure, including airports and aviation safety and communications technologies, have produced what are today the most lasting and tangible examples of beneficial New Deal infrastructure development. Simultaneously, they successfully facilitated and encouraged a myriad of wider economic opportunities and successes at local, regional, and national levels of the American economy. To make his case, Johnson draws upon large volumes of previously unused official correspondence, media accounts, congressional investigative testimonies, and visual materials. He also judiciously employs secondary scholarship—including, notably, many unpublished dissertations—that reveals significant patterns of personnel and policy continuities that helped guide the interwar growth of U.S. commercial aviation.

Airlines themselves do not figure prominently in this narrative; instead, Johnson reveals many of the most significant “hidden figures” within government who successfully employed public support for aviation to shape federal aviation policies that used subsidies and airmail contracts to protect and grow U.S. commercial aviation without nationalizing it. These figures, including Postmaster General Walter Forger Brown, Democratic Senator Hugo Black, William MacCracken, and Commerce Secretary Daniel Roper, as well as both Herbert Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt, actively and consistently helped articulate and codify a remarkably consensual vision of U.S. commercial aviation.

This consensual, bipartisan, and exceptionalist vision rejected European statist models of outright nationalization and instead intervened benevolently through state subsidies and airmail contracts to shield U.S. manufacturers and airline operators from the turbulent economic and financial winds of the late 1920s and 1930s. Johnson argues that

these ideas emerged out of Hoover's ideas of associationalism—defined by the author as “a pragmatic, progressive utopianism, a type of liberal corporatism . . . a dedication to administrative reorganization and decentralization and the desire for voluntary cooperation between government and business” (p. 21). They endured throughout the onset of the global depression and then accelerated into reality through the New Deal's WPA and CWA initiatives, which built thousands of new airports, expanded and upgraded existing ones, and made possible the enormous expansion of U.S. military, general, and commercial aviation after 1940. Johnson convincingly charts how these policymakers' initiatives transcended party and ideological differences and paved the way for a future that resulted in the creation of the world's largest and most efficient commercial aviation network by 1960. “These men's explicit connection of aviation to the country's well-being suggests that by 1934 interested parties understood aviation's policy to have implications far beyond air mail and routes,” he states. “[They] understood the ongoing development of American aeronautics—in large part dictated by federal policy—to have implications for national security and social, political and commercial progress; indeed, virtually every aspect of the country's future” (p. 174).

Johnson's account reaches its height with the passage of the 1938 Civil Aeronautics Act, which created the regulatory framework that controlled American commercial aviation until 1978. This “Magna Carta of the Air . . . represented an unequivocal sign that the federal government was fully committed to the development of U.S. aviation, a commitment that would be richly rewarded in the coming years and decades” (p. 188). He concludes by briefly but effectively tracing the major developments within American commercial aviation after deregulation in 1978, a period interestingly defined by increased industrial unrest, airline mergers and failures, and a decline in the popular public perceptions of commercial air travel—ironically, the same conditions that prevailed before 1938 and the passage of the CAA.

This work adds greatly to ongoing debates about the role of the twentieth-century U.S. state in private industries and markets, as well as the role aviation and airports played in twentieth-century American local, regional, and overall economic growth. *Taking Flight* deserves a wide audience and includes many previously unpublished images. The book has a few minor but forgivable editing issues. Johnson's work is required reading for anyone interested in the origins and emergence of commercial aviation, aviation regulatory structures, and aviation infrastructure development in the United States. At a time when U.S. infrastructure development and regulatory reform are again high on the

federal and public agenda, it is a persuasive reminder of past precedents of successful public-private engagement that benefited all.

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Vernacular Industrialism in China: Local Innovation and Translated Technologies in the Making of a Cosmetics Empire, 1900–1940. *By Eugenia Lean.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2020. 416 pp. Glossary, notes, references, index. Hardcover, \$65.00. ISBN: 978-0-231-19348-1.

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Reviewed by Fei-Hsien Wang

Tracing the fascinating career of Chen Diexian (1879–1940), a cultural entrepreneur, self-made inventor, and industrialist, Eugenia Lean tells a riveting microhistory with broader historiographical ambitions in her new book. As its title indicates, “vernacular industrialism” is the key concept Lean employs to approach and analyze Chen’s industrious activities and the making of his cosmetic empire, the Association for Household Industries Co., Ltd. By focusing on the local, homegrown, informal, and unconventional pursuits Chen and his contemporaries shared in manufacturing and technologies (especially chemistry), Lean challenges our conventional understandings of Chinese industrialization and modern science on multiple fronts. This book shows that China’s traditional men of letters—a group so stigmatized by the New Culture Movement as hopeless book-learning connoisseurs—were in fact willing and able to assume hands-on experimental and manufacturing activities. They also used existing intuitions and new media to explore and expand epistemological boundaries. Moving beyond the formal, professional, state-endorsed industrialization (heavy industry, transportation, etc.), Lean uses Chen’s case to highlight the informal industry and science’s contribution to cultural and economic development in modern China. It further illustrates how clever and bold vernacular industrialists like Chen used unorthodox marketing strategies and manufacturing practices to utilize print media, patriotic consumerism, and local raw materials to overcome the lack of substantial state support and to navigate and survive in global capitalism. The core of Chen’s vernacular industrialism is what Lean calls “tinkering” (pp. 26–27). Chen’s “tinkering” process might be easily categorized and dismissed as