

Duara initiated new scholarship in conceptually reflective historical comparisons between China and India. Mark Frazier's book comes as a defining way forward.

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International Migrants in China's Global City: The New Shanghailanders

JAMES FARRER

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Based on extensive ethnographic research, using participant observation, interviews and conversations to collect data over two decades, James Farrer's book is a convergence of his longitudinal research on expatriates in Shanghai since the early 1990s. Methodologically, Farrer views the expatriate community as a collective resource and shared identity. Theoretically, he engages with current debates on intersectionality and critical expatriate studies, and questions the suitability of postcolonial discourse to analyse these international immigrants in Shanghai. In addition, he uses Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) capital theory and field theory as analytical tools. Empirically, the book examines expatriates in the fields of social connections, economy, sexuality and culture. Farrer is not only able to trace the transient life experiences of expatriates, but also the changing landscape of expatriate community.

Farrer engages with Shanghai's history of past colonialism and the creation of the present cosmopolitan nostalgia. Both expatriates and rich local Chinese have co-constructed postcolonial cosmopolitanism through gentrification and "re-globalization," echoing the mythologized and colonized cosmopolitan image in the 1920s and 1930s. This co-construction has crafted their transnational identity and created their sense of belonging.

The analysis in the book is structured and coherent, and the language is accessible. Three of the six empirical chapters begin with Shanghai events that Farrer participated in, and then weave this experience with theory-informed analysis. Focussing strongly on Western expatriates, the large communities of Japanese, Koreans and Taiwanese were not included in Farrer's study. Although small in population size, Western expatriates have been actively engaging in creating public spaces and cosmopolitan culture in Shanghai. The book focuses on the roles immigrants played as individuals and as a community in the making of Shanghai as a global city, and how expatriates and the community are gradually losing their power during China's rise. The fields that were once created by and exclusively for expatriates are now dominated by Chinese citizens, including restaurants and bars, international schools, clubs and transnational corporations.

The transition of the expatriate community in Shanghai challenges Western hegemony. Through each chapter, Farrer consistently explicates the "deinstitutionalization of expatriate power" (p. 12) and declining Western hegemony. The shrinking job opportunities for corporate expatriates and the rising financial power of local Chinese and returnee Chinese together alter the landscape of expatriate experience in Shanghai, reflecting the changing dynamics in global power. Expatriates have been losing privilege in areas including professional career, sexual mobilities and urban consumer space. For example, children of white expatriates are no longer

the majority in international schools. Rather, children of rich Chinese predominate in these schools, which creates tensions between Chinese educational ideals, which emphasize competition and hard work, and Western ideals that put a strong emphasis on extracurricular activities.

The book is among the first studies to examine the power dynamics in international schools in Shanghai. The unintended consequences of expensive tuition fees push lower-middle-income expatriates with children out of Shanghai. The educational policies in China “reinforce a migration regime that situates Shanghai as a destination for elite foreign talents” (p. 195), which is in line with its attitude toward domestic migrants. The stratified policies and systematic exclusion indicate that Shanghai only intends to attract migrant elites, whether they are overseas immigrants or migrants from other parts of China.

Farrer convincingly records the rise and fall of expatriate labour force participation in Shanghai. Interestingly, the Western food and beverage sector becomes the only area where expatriates have continued to lead, due to a lack of professional knowledge of Western food and a reluctance to learn Western gastronomy among Chinese restaurant workers. Unlike the prestigious middle-class chefs from the West, almost all of the local chefs and waiting staff in the catering sector are poorly educated rural migrants. The disparity in skills makes the Chinese workers non-threatening to Western chefs working in Western gastronomy.

As a Shanghai returnee who is teaching social policy to international students in Shanghai and living in a cosmopolitan neighbourhood described by Farrer, I have some exposure to expatriate life and therefore can relate to his accounts. Overall, the book compellingly documents different aspects of expatriate life in the global city. But I would like to point out two small issues. First, the book’s credibility would have been further enhanced if Farrer had reflected his own privilege and how his positionality affected the data collection and data analysis. The characteristics of the author as a white middle-class heterosexual man from the US and his engagement in interracial marriage arguably informed the process of data collection and analysis.

Second, Farrer argues that his female informant Weixin’s appeal to foreign men is partly explained by her motivation to escape patriarchal Confucian culture, characterized by early marriage and early childbirth (p. 145). However, the quotes of Weixin (pp. 133–135) did not imply the influence of Confucianism on her lifestyle. Rather, it seems to me that her preference for white men was based on her perception that self-cultivation could be achieved through intimate relationships with white men who possessed mobility capital. Confucianism has easily become a “scapegoat” for Western scholars to account for women’s life in East Asia. The author runs the risk of over-interpreting the informant’s accounts and overemphasizing the influence of the Confucian culture. After all, most societies in the world have witnessed both marriage delay and childbirth delay in recent decades. The escape from Confucian impacts cannot explain universal demographic changes.

Despite some minor issues, Farrer’s book enriches our understanding of expatriates’ adaptation in the global city and the co-construction of urban space by expatriates and Chinese elites. It can be an essential read for scholars and students in migration studies, Chinese studies and urban geography. It may also attract general audiences who are interested in transnational life.

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