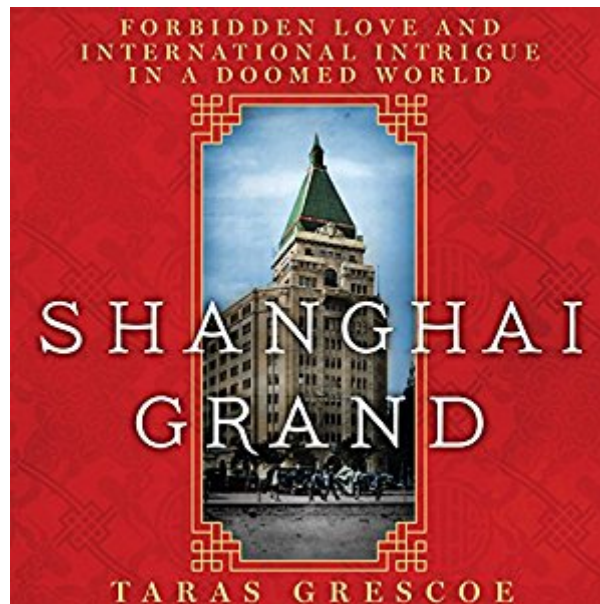


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Shanghai Grand: Forbidden Love And International Intrigue On The Eve Of The Second World War



Synopsis

On the eve of WWII, the foreign-controlled port of Shanghai was the rendezvous for the 20th century's most outlandish adventurers, all under the watchful eye of the fabulously wealthy Sir Victor Sassoon. Emily Hahn was a legendary New Yorker writer who would cover China for nearly 50 years, and play an integral part in opening Asia up to the West. But at the height of the Depression, "Mickey" Hahn, had just arrived in Shanghai nursing a broken heart after a disappointing affair with an alcoholic Hollywood screenwriter, convinced she would never love again. After entering Sassoon's glamorous Cathay Hotel, Hahn is absorbed into the social swirl of the expats drawn to pre-war China, among them Ernest Hemingway, Martha Gellhorn, Harold Acton, and the colourful gangster named Morris "Two-Gun" Cohen. But when she meets Zau Sinmay, a Chinese poet from an illustrious family, she discovers the real Shanghai through his eyes: the city of rich colonials, triple agents, opium-smokers, displaced Chinese peasants, and increasingly desperate White Russian and Jewish refugees - a place her innate curiosity will lead her to discover first hand. But danger lurks on the horizon and Mickey barely makes it out alive as the brutal Japanese occupation destroys the seductive world of pre-war Shanghai and Mao Tse-tung's Communists come to power in China.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Shanghai Grand is a history of a short period of time in Shanghai, China, as experienced by the American journalist and writer Emily "Mickey" Hahn and the big personalities who were close to her, while she lived in China from 1935 to 1943. Taras Grescoe's history actually spans

1932 to 1949, when Chairman Mao's communists took control of the city, but the focus is on the last years of the city's heyday and the experiences of its residents during World War II. Shanghai's Municipal Council was a unique form of government in human history – "unique even among China's Treaty Ports- and the mix of Western Colonial, Chinese, Japanese inhabitants and visa-free entry made the city an extraordinary dynamic cultural mélange between the Wars. There are more comprehensive histories of Shanghai in the interwar years, my favorite being Harriet Sergeant's now out-of-print "Shanghai: Collision Point of Cultures, 1918-1939", but "Shanghai Grand" combines the experiences of a few Shanghailanders, some of whom have written their own memoirs, to create a picture of life in the city for adventurers, business magnates, and Chinese intellectuals. Specifically, Grescoe focuses on the intrepid Miss Hahn, who traveled to every corner of the globe and wrote 52 books and 181 articles for The New Yorker alone in her lifetime. While in Shanghai, she wrote for the North-China Daily News, taught school, became an opium addict, and had a Chinese lover, the Western-educated poet and publisher Zau Sinmay (Shao Xunmei). The inclusion of Zau Sinmay's story, to the extent that it is known, in "Shanghai Grand" distinguishes the book from the many Western memoirs of the era.

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