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Stateless In Shanghai: 1



Synopsis

With vivid firsthand descriptions of Asia's most cosmopolitan city from the 1920s to the 1950s, this recollection chronicles Liliane Willens' life and trials in Shanghai as China collapsed under the weight of foreign invaders and civil war. Engaging and often humorous, this unique memoir relates Willens' experiences as a Jewish Russian living in early Communist China.

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Customer Reviews

Shanghai, as did all of China, had a very difficult first several decades of the 20th century. The author lived through it all. The glory of early Shanghai, then the overthrow of the last Empire in 1911, the fight among the different factions of Chinese, the Japanese invade with tremendous cruelty inflicted upon the Chinese. Then comes World War II. After the war there is the debilitating war between the Communists and the Nationalist. Then the beginning of Mao's terribly oppressive reign. All this told by a person living it, and she is not Chinese but as a girl born in Shanghai of Jewish parents who for political considerations could not claim their Russian heritage. She grows up in this environment and tells the story of her family's tireless efforts to flee China. But through it all

the author never loses her love for Shanghai.

I found the book interesting, however the beginning was rather tedious. It read like the diary of a preteen/teen girl. There were too many details about her school and her school friends. I found myself skipping over pages. Where the book really got interesting was when she discussed her relationship with her Amah and the Chinese servants. Her descriptions of the Markets were interesting. However, her awakening to the disparities between the European and Chinese population would have benefited from more detail. From a life in colonialism to a life under communism is an interesting read.

A very comprehensive, informative book about China and Shanghai's history. If only I had read this book before visiting China, it would have made my trip so much more meaningful as I visited today's impressive Shanghai. This very well researched story told by a Jewish girl growing up in the International sector of Shanghai made my reading more personal, especially with supporting photographs. The time line at the end of the book was a wonderful crash course in China's history. Thank you Liliane Willens for writing this treasure.

A warm, human account by an author with a unique perspective, a white person of privilege in "colonial" China, but stateless and Jewish at the same time, subject to her own discrimination. She writes with warmth and conviction, describing fairly all sides of the issues among Chinese, foreign concessionaires, Japanese conquerors, Kuomintang and Red China. I hated to put the book down and eagerly resumed reading later.

Liliane Willens has written an excellent accounting of a history that few of us know about. I had visited Shanghai a year ago and was eager to read more about that city and its history after walking about the French Concession...an area in stark contrast to the rest of the city... and Ms. Willens' book explained the beginnings to present of this Shanghai enclave in vivid detail in between the book's main story line, which is a memoir of her Jewish family and their place in the world. This book is a wonderful mix of travel, history, and family. Loved it.

The author provides an outstanding description of life in Shanghai during western imperialism, Japanese rule, Nationalist dominance, and Communist rule. She tells the story from her perspective, as a citizen of Shanghai, living under each political rule. What a great story!!!! You

must read.

One of the best Kindle reads I have had! If you have any knowledge of China and Shanghai in particular, you will find this historically correct novel about the transition of Shanghai to communist China fascinating reading.

An excellent read and an insight into a world that will not be seen again. The authors life in Shanghai at the pinnacle of extraterritoriality and Western privilege in Asia makes for an enlightening journey back to a fascinating period of China's past. The authors experiences in Shanghai during the peak of the Western imperialist era, the coming of the Second World War, the erosion of Western influence in China and the ultimate communist victory in the Chinese Civil War offer a fist hand glimpse into that turbulent time by one who experienced it first hand. This is a must read book for all those with an interest in Chinese history and the West's often controversial role in that history.

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