

(Download free ebook) Chinese Roundabout: Essays in History and Culture

## Chinese Roundabout: Essays in History and Culture

*Jonathan D. Spence*

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#3448794 in Books 1992-06 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.75 x 6.50 x 1.50l, #File Name: 0393033554400 pages | File size: 18.Mb

**Jonathan D. Spence : Chinese Roundabout: Essays in History and Culture** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Chinese Roundabout: Essays in History and Culture:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. If you only read one book on China, this ...By wulfkityIf you only read one book on China, this should be it. His deep knowledge informs every elegant essay, but never overwhelms them. The essays are short, but nuanced and vivid.2 of 15 people found the following review helpful. Okay for Spence fansBy Thomas F. OgaraTypical Jonathan Spence fare, if that's your pleasure. If you're a fan of his (and I happen to think he's very good) or you're interested in the broader perspectives of Chinese-Western culture exchanges over the centuries, then you'll enjoy it. Otherwise you'll probably find it either abstruse or boring. Suit yourself.

In the work of twenty-five years, Jonathan Spence has established himself as an interpreter of modern Chinese history. His most recent book was "The Search for Modern China". Spence recreates the historical character and setting in the moving story of Arcadio Huang's odyssey from south China to Enlightenment Paris, where he briefly gains a foothold in an alien culture but then is tragically undermined; takes a Shakespearean approach to the life of the great Qing emperor K'ang-hsi; informs the reader on China's tragic experience with opium; and describes the splendours of food in Chinese culture.

From Publishers WeeklySpence's intellectually adventurous essays help us understand the dynamics of China's past

and the dormant promise of its future. He reviews the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989 with reference to the symbolism of public spaces. He boldly interprets the life of Qing emperor K'anghsi (1654-1722) in terms of Shakespeare's seven ages of man. The tragic odyssey of Arcadio Huang, a Chinese scholar in Paris who briefly befriended Montesquieu, serves as a parable of missed opportunities in contact between China and the West. Spence ( *The Search for Modern China* ) shows how opium smoking radically affected all levels of society and contrasts the diet of China's poor with that of gourmets. This miscellany of previously published essays and reviews includes profiles of John Fairbank and Arthur Waley as well as lively explorations of Chinese films and medicine, the fall of the Ming dynasty and the longevity of Confucianism. Photos not seen by PW. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Spence may now be the most important Sinologist writing in the West. A master of both breadth and detail, he writes in a vivid, free-flowing style that produces critically acclaimed masterpieces ( *The Search for Modern China* , LJ 4/15/90, is the most recent) one after another. This welcome collection contains reprints from more than a score of Spence's earlier books and other writings. He likes the word roundabout , he tells us, because it suggests "meandering that is yet somehow purposeful"--precisely the effect achieved here in a gathering of diverse perspectives on China's history and culture, from the Jesuit presence in the Middle Kingdom four centuries ago to the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989, including such topics as opium smoking, poetry, movie criticism, and cuisine. A delight to read, ponder, and enjoy, *Chinese Roundabout* offers scholarship for the scholars and intellectual enjoyment for most general readers as well.- John H. Boyle, California State Univ., Chico Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus s More erudite history and eminently readable scholarship from Yale Sinologist Spence (*The Search for Modern China*, 1990, etc.). Many of these essays and reviews, previously published in both scholarly and nonscholarly journals, were inspired by Western inquirers of yore like 16th-century Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci and novelist Andr Malraux, both subjects of essays in an opening section entitled "Crossing the Cultures." In "Looking East: The Long View," Spence concedes that Western confusion about China began with accounts by Ricci and other missionaries, but, still, he relishes these reports' delicate balance and appreciation for culture. A second, scholarly and vigorous group of essays, "The Confucian Impulse," surveys a range of topics from the Mings to the Manchus. Outstanding is Spence's recovery of the Ming painter Tao-chi, member of a brilliant artistic circle that Spence brings to life with remarkable color. A third section consists of a hodgepodge of essays on topics from food to opium. While exhaustively detailing Chinese culinary pleasures, Spence notes that, through much of Chinese history, "it was the danger of famine that gave such urgency to agriculture and such joy to eating." He describes the crucial economic function of opium in late-19th-century China and measures political swings in the country according to its use. Other highlights include a penetrating analysis of Chinese director Bai Hua's controversial 1980 film, *Bitter Love*, and an admiring essay on eminent Harvard Sinologist John Fairbank. Spence conveys vast knowledge with a style and grace unique in academic writing. A pure pleasure cruise through the Middle Kingdom. (Photos--not seen.) -- Copyright 1992, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.