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近代建研究

Modern Chinese History Studies

博览会与近代中国物质文化变迁

问道于器:中国近代的物质文化与社会变迁

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Modern Chinese History Studies

No. 5, 2020

From the perspective of material cultural history, this research focuses on the Nanyang Exposition in 1910 and the West Lake Exposition in 1929 to examine the changes of material culture reflected in Chinese modern expositions and their broad social impacts. This article investigates the following aspects: first, the spatial layout of expositions and the rise of new modern urban public space; second, the collection, categorization, and display of Chinese modern commodities shown in the expositions; third, the improvement and evolution of Chinese modern commodities illustrated by the items displayed in the expositions. This article argues that Chinese modern expositions linked the material existence of commodities to their functions, so as to facilitate the transformation of "things" from material entities to social/cultural ones, and also facilitate the overall transformation of the Chinese modern knowledge system.

Since the turn of the twentieth century, the Chinese clothing styles had been inevitably Westernized gradually. This trend was related to the anti-Manchu revolutionaries' efforts to promote "cutting queues, changing clothing styles, and altering the reign title." It was also shaped by the modern era, because the loose Manchu-style clothes and the strict official regulations on clothing styles could not fit in with the development of modern society. Even before the 1911 Revolution, the Qing court had permitted military men and students to change to Western style clothes. Paradoxically, after the establishment of the Republic of China, Sun Yat-sen, who advocated the Westernization of clothing styles, did not promulgate any policy to change clothing styles. Instead, Yuan Shikai issued the first government order in Chinese history to Westernize clothing styles. However, in 1929, the regulations of clothing styles promulgated by the Nationalist government plainly intended to stick to the Chinese tradition and refuse the Westernization. It stipulated the Manchu-style long gown and mandarin jacket as the formal dress for citizens, or the so-called "national dress".

In the mid-nineteenth century, Western Christian medical missionaries used the surgical techniques to open the door for Western medicine to China and showed Chinese a new approach to curing illnesses with surgeries. Western knowledge and techniques related to surgeries, such as anaesthesia and asepsis, were introduced into China and continuously updated, and thus lay the foundation for the idea that Western medicine was superior in terms of surgeries. In the debates between Chinese and Western medicine in the first half of the twentieth century, Western surgical medicine became evidence to argue the superiority and advantages of Western medicine. Western surgical techniques transcended the material level and involved the development of various branches of medicine. They were used to criticize the "backwardness" of Chinese traditional medicine. While advocates of Chinese medicine disputed the superiority of Western surgical medicine, Chinese medicine also underwent a process of self-reconfiguration. In the new space of medical care represented by modern hospitals, Western surgeries, at first associated with horrible images of cutting off human bodies alive, were gradually 160

accepted by Chinese patients, who experienced both horror and pain in surgeries and complicated interactions with doctors there. Western surgical medicine not only cured Chinese people's bodies, but also shaped their idea about body and instilled a new medical ideal into them.

Newspaper boards on street, newspaper-reading societies and news-narrating societies were important components in the enlightening movement for the middle and lower classes of late Qing Beijing. In 1905 and 1906, there was a surge of the establishment of newspaper-reading societies, which promoted vernacular newspapers and vernacular language among common people on street, in teahouses, temples, and people's everyday life. As new media for public culture, newspaper-reading societies were often located in places affiliated to the existing urban system of Beijing, and thus illustrated the unique ethnic spatial structure of Qing Beijing. Newspaper-reading societies were associations of middle and lower people of Beijing, transcending their original social boundaries. These societies also represented their attempts to reassemble new social forces after the traditional social fabrics were getting loose. In particular, speeches given by many who posted newspaper and narrated news for the public showed the broad participation and intimate collaboration of the Manchus and the Han Chinese.

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In the War of Resistance against the Japanese Aggression, the Eighth Route Army persisted in the guerrilla warfare behind the front line and this was crucial for them to get stable sources of ammunition. Their four major sources of ammunition were spoils of war, manufacturing, collection and purchase from civilians, and supplies from the Nationalist government. In different stages of the war, the contributions from the four sources also varied. In general, in the early stage, the Eighth Route Army obtained more ammunition than they used, while in 1941 – 1942, they used more than they obtained. After 1943, with efforts in many ways, the stocks of their ammunition increased again. The complicated sources and endeavor of the Eighth Route Army to obtain ammunition demostrated the backdrop of the United Front in the War of Resistance, and also showed the extremely strong ability of the Communist Party of China in social mobilization and implementation, as well as their flexible policies and strategies.

The Summary of the Eighth Symposium of Modern Chinese History Jiang Lingnan (151)

English abstracts translated by Liu Wennan

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JINDAISHI YANJI

主管 中国社会科学院

主办 中国社会科学院近代史研究所

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