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0521822211 - In the Shadow of the Rising Sun: Shanghai under Japanese Occupation

Edited by Christian Henriot and Wen-hsin Yeh

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In the Shadow of the Rising Sun

Shanghai under Japanese Occupation

The authors of this volume consult newly available Chinese and Western archival materials to examine the Chinese War of Resistance against the Japanese in the Shanghai area. They argue that the war in China was a nationalistic endeavor carried out without an effective national leadership. Wartime Chinese activities in Shanghai drew upon social networks rather than ideological positions, and these activities cut across lines of military and political divisions. Instead of the stark contrast between heroic resistance and shameful collaboration, wartime experience in the city is more aptly summed up in terms of bloody struggles between those committed to normalcy in everyday life and those determined to bring about its disruption through terrorist violence and economic control. The volume offers an evaluation of the strategic significance of the Shanghai economy in the Pacific War. It also draws attention to the feminization of urban public discourse against the backdrop of intensified violence. The essays capture the last moments of European settlements in Shanghai under Japanese occupation. This is the first serious scholarly endeavor to examine the Sino-Japanese War from a regional as well as international perspective.

Professor Christian Henriot is professor of history at Lumière-Lyon 2 University and director at the Institut d'Asie Orientale (Institute of East Asian Studies). He is the editor of *New Frontiers: Imperialism's New Communities in East Asia, 1842–1952* (1999), and the author of *Prostitution in Shanghai: A Social History* (Cambridge, 2001); *Shanghai 1927–1937: Municipal Power, Locality, and Modernization* (1993); and *Atlas de Shanghai: Espace et représentations de 1849 à nos jours* (1999).

Professor Wen-hsin Yeh is professor of history at the University of California, Berkeley, and the former chair of the Center for Chinese Studies. She is the editor of *Wartime Shanghai* and *Becoming Chinese: Passages to Modernity and Beyond* and the author of *The Alienated Academy* (1990, 2000) and *Provincial Passages* (1996). Professor Yeh has published articles in *The American Historical Review*, *The China Quarterly*, and the *Journal of Asian Studies*.

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Preface

With the end of the Cold War and the passing of an earlier generation, historical research on the Chinese War of Resistance (1937–1945) against the Japanese has entered a new era. Archives have opened up while films and photographs appeared. Changing political circumstances, both in China and on Taiwan, have made it possible for new perspectives to emerge. The rise of the right wing in Japanese politics and its refusal to acknowledge wartime atrocities have turned issues of history and memory into flash points in contemporary East Asian international politics. The government of China's Communist Party, meanwhile, finds itself caught between opposing forces. On the one hand, nationalistic sentiments run high when people recall wartime hardships. On the other hand, practical considerations, especially those in connection with China's preeminent goal to achieve economic modernizations, dictate Chinese restraint in response to hard memories. Despite an enhanced capacity to record and recall the war, it is in China's economic interest in the 1990s to let bygones be bygones.

More than a half century has elapsed, meanwhile, since the end of the war. A new generation has come to the fore, wanting to learn about their parents' or even grandparents' war. Mo Yan's gripping tale, *Red Sorghum*, is artfully framed as a child's account of episodes of invasion that had become family lore. More than one English-language fiction have appeared, including some that made it to the *New York Times* bestseller list, with the formulaic framing of a young Asian-American woman's desire to learn about her grandmother's life in the old world. These new voices raise new questions and introduce new perspectives. The diasporic dispersal of the Chinese in the post-1945 world means that war memories are refracted through divergent trajectories of later experiences. These remembrances, sometimes represented with borrowed idioms and from comparative perspectives, also become embroiled in later-day cultural politics.

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Earlier in the century, Chinese authorities, under both the Nationalists and the Communists, had maintained that there had been a national war of Chinese resistance against the Japanese. The two parties, rivals of a subsequent civil war (1946–1949), disagreed over issues such as who had borne the brunt of enemy forces and who had betrayed the joint cause. There was consensus, nonetheless, that the war was a hard-earned Chinese victory, and that there were shameful collaborators as well as patriotic resisters among the Chinese.

In the 1990s, researchers gained access to previously closed government archives, especially to Chiang Kai-shek's pre-1949 papers held at the Academia Historica on Taiwan. These materials made it possible for scholars to reconstruct, for the first time, critical moments in Republican political history that shaped the course of the larger events. They permit a better view of how the War of Resistance had occurred after decades of regional arming and civil conflicts in China, and that there were, besides the Nationalists and the Communists, many more regionally based actors who fought in this mosaic of Chinese struggles against the Japanese. The War of Resistance, in other words, was a nationwide Chinese endeavor that was conducted without an effective national leadership. It was a watershed event for the country as a whole. Yet, without the mediation of national institutions, it became a series of struggles of pronounced regional characteristics.

This insight placed the Chinese war experience in a new light. We now realize that several wars and multiple fronts engulfed the land for nearly a decade. Conventional accounts had built upon a “master narrative” about a single Chinese nation-state at war. This narrative, we find, hardly does justice to the complexity of the events and the differences in experience. The scope and intensity of the organized violence had rallied the Chinese people to reflect upon the shape of a unified nation and their common destiny. But these aspirations were articulated in local contexts. The time has come for us to adopt a regional rather than a national perspective in the design of new research questions.

The present volume traces its origin to a conversation one afternoon on a late spring day in Berkeley, when talk turned to issues of collaboration and resistance and the research challenge it represents, both when reconstructing war experience from wartime propaganda and when separating this war from the Cold War. The chapters in this volume examine the war as experienced in just one city, Shanghai. Broadly speaking, we pose three sets of questions.

Shanghai was one of the first modern cities to come under attack in the 1930s. What did it mean, we ask, when a civilian population of more than three million, drawn from multiple nations, found itself relentlessly subjected to the harshness of armed hostility for years? How did the brutality of siege and occupation distort or disrupt the civic patterns of authority and association of

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prewar days? In what way did the violence reconfigure the material landscape of the city?

A modern city like Shanghai was a nexus of relationships reaching beyond its territorial boundaries. Yet as soon as Nationalist Chinese troops withdrew toward the hinterland, Shanghai's foreign concessions became "lone islets" (*gudao*) of commerce and modernity in the midst of vast expanses of Japanese-occupied towns and villages. A second question thus has to do with Shanghai's strategic place in the conduct of war. How "local" or "regional" did Shanghai become when coming under siege? Did the military checkpoints stop the flow of goods and people in and out of the city? What sorts of resources were mobilized to enable alternative channels of communication?

For much of the war, the Shanghaiese coexisted with allies and enemies right in their midst. Struggles like these afforded fewer opportunities for heroism than messy compromises or protracted negotiations. These were not, in other words, materials that lent themselves to tall tales of clear-cut solutions and furious struggle. Our third question thus has to do with the ambivalence of resistance and collaboration and the overall question of political allegiance and patriotic commitment. If neither willing collaboration nor overt resistance, then what was the spectrum of viable political choices in the occupied city? What were the issues that ultimately defined the meaning of human struggle in the city?

Instead of an exclusive focus on politics and warfare, the authors of this volume examine culture and economy, two areas that defined the city and made Shanghai unique in the Chinese context. It begins with a paradox, that in Shanghai, where nearly 200,000 lives were lost within the first three months of the armed conflict, the population essentially endured the war as both a siege and an occupation. Wartime Shanghai was neither Chongqing nor Yan'an, where Chinese authorities, whether Nationalist or Communist, mobilized the civilians for resistance. Despite the intensity of the initial fighting, business in Shanghai resumed as usual and entertainment went on as if there were neither memories nor remembrances. Underground agents used the foreign concessions of the city, to be sure, to stage assassinations, especially during the first four years of the war. Yet sounds and signs on the airwaves and from the film screens directed the minds not to lofty heroism but to simple bliss at home.

What this volume seeks to offer, then, is not only a first study of the Sino-Japanese War in a local context; it is also a ground-level perspective of an international city of commerce and culture caught in the midst of a national war. Few of Shanghai's urbanites earned credentials as war heroes. Yet what they lived through were not times of peace. It remains an essential chapter in the larger Chinese story of war and how the people in that city went on with their lives and defined the terms of their triumphs as well as losses.

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Each author in this volume has intellectual debts that he or she may wish to acknowledge. For the volume as a whole, a preliminary workshop was held in April 1996 at the Center for Chinese Studies, University of California at Berkeley. A conference was subsequently held in October 1997, in Lyon. The editors wish to acknowledge the support of the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchanges and the Région Rhône-Alpes. Funding from these sources made it possible to pay for the travel and other expenses associated with these gatherings. In addition, we wish to acknowledge the support of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of Lumière-Lyon 2 University. The faculty, staff, and students in modern Chinese studies at Berkeley and Lyon generously contributed their time and thoughts. This volume would have been much impoverished without their active participation.