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# The Jacquinet Safe Zone: Wartime Refugees in Shanghai

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of erstwhile nomads. Sven Hedin and Owen Lattimore among others, described the nomads' reluctance to disturb that which was in the earth, preserving thereby the material remains of early Nestorianism. A great number of modern anecdotes about Olon Sume still warn against visiting the city, let alone the appropriation of objects from the site. The author cites an interview made in July 2004 with a Han Chinese guard according to whom "people in Olon Sume can't sleep alone at night... There are ghosts in Olon Sume." (p. 280). "A number of herders allocate a mythical, almost superhuman quality to the original inhabitants of Olon Sume." (p. 286). Other anecdotes relate to battles between Mongol and Muslim forces for the possession of the city.

The more intense documentation of the Nestorian heritage in Inner Mongolia began with the arrival of the Belgian missionaries of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (C.I.C.M.) and was seen by them as evidence of the earlier Christian presence of the land they now tried to convert to Roman Catholicism.

The richness of the material presented by the author does not allow an answer to the basic question which I have been vainly asking for most of my scholarly life: what is the explanation of the essentially one-way travel of ideas – and their carriers, namely men – between the West and East? The admirable results of the research undertaken by Joseph Needham and his followers notwithstanding, it is quite clear that western ideas, carried by western men, vastly outnumber those that traveled in the opposite - east to west - direction. This splendid book provides further, massive documentation for this question to be asked, and yet remain unanswered.

A splendid bibliography, a series of rubbings of Christian of funeral decorations and 122 color-plates complete the book.

Indiana University

Denis Sinor

Ristaino, Marcia R.: *The Jacquinet Safe Zone: Wartime Refugees in Shanghai*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), xviii + 206pp., \$27.95. ISBN 978-0-8047-5793-5

The unprecedentedly brutal treatment of civilians during World War II prompted an international effort after the war to construct a legal framework for the protection of civilians under occupation by a foreign power. The result was the Fourth Geneva Convention, Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, which was signed on August 12, 1949. The agreement provides for the formation of neutralized zones to shelter civilians who take no part in military activities, and Marcia Ristaino believes that the safety zone built by the French Jesuit Robert Jacquinet de Besange in Shanghai during the Second Sino-Japanese War provided the conferees at Geneva with a valuable model to consider as they conducted their deliberations.

The evidence Ristaino brings to bear to demonstrate the impact of the Jacquinet model on the conferees' thinking is thin, a detail which Ristaino herself acknowledges. Her study of the Jacquinet Zone, in which she claims that Jacquinet's efforts saved more than half a million Chinese from certain death during the Japanese invasion and occupation of Shanghai and other Yangtze River cities, is nevertheless important and interesting. It reveals what might be accomplished by a devotedly neutral party determined to implement a large-scale

humanitarian program even in a city divided both by belligerents and by international powers who have their own, often conflicting, interests to protect. Jacquinet created a neutral sector in Shanghai that was capable of housing and providing for the basic nutritional, medical, and other needs of hundreds of thousands of refugees, and given wartime conditions and the international and domestic political complexities he faced his accomplishment is certainly striking.

One is tempted to wonder why Chinese themselves did not make similar arrangements. Ristaino's answer to this question is unconvincing: while Chinese "networks of guilds and native-place societies were effective locally" the scale of Japanese operations, involving entire cities and provinces, presented to them challenges that required a new type of response (p. 151). Research published recently in an anthology by Mara Dillon and Jean C. Oi suggests that Chinese elites in the Republican period were quite capable of organizing for philanthropic activity on a large scale, exploiting both traditional and new forms of association and crossing boundaries between socioeconomic classes as well as civil and state authorities.<sup>3</sup> The conclusion one might draw is that while Ristaino's scholarship and the studies collected by Dillon and Oi all shed important light on modes of civic mobilization in Republican China there is still some work to be done before a complete picture of Chinese urban organization can be drawn.

Perhaps the story of the Jacquinet Safe Zone that Ristaino presents contains part of the answer to our question. What we see here is a fascinating account of the efforts of one man to accomplish something quite extraordinary, and Ristaino asserts that Jacquinet's story demonstrates the important role that "human agency" can play in history. Jacquinet appears to have been a very unusual individual whose diplomatic skills and personal charisma; courage, and integrity gave him advantages that perhaps few other philanthropists had. Also, the fact that he was a priest and a citizen of a power that was either neutral or friendly to the Japanese could not but have had an impact on the way he was received by the Japanese authorities without whose cooperation, after all, Jacquinet's project could not have survived.

The author's tone is at times excessively hagiographic, but on balance this is a minor point. A researcher at the Library of Congress, Ristaino has made abundant and fruitful use of archival and published sources to cover her topic, and in the process she has revealed much about life in wartime and occupied Shanghai. The book shows the good father navigating a complex set of pathways between Japanese, Chinese, and Western powers, and it presents a brief but detailed account of conditions in the city and the humanitarian activities that the Safe Zone authorities under Father Jacquinet's leadership were able to sustain. It is a significant addition to the growing body of scholarship on pre-Communist Shanghai, and in the final analysis it is hard to find fault with Parks Coble's statement, to be found on the book's jacket, that the book is "one of the best sources in English I have seen on the human costs of the Sino-Japanese War."

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3 Mara Dillon and Jean C. Oi, eds., *At the Crossroads of Empires: Middlemen, Social Networks, and State-Building in Republican Shanghai* (Stanford University Press, 2008).