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In the Shadow of the Rising Sun: Shanghai Under Japanese Occupation

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that the Party used to enforce Communist ideological orthodoxy. Now, public security is often a private matter; security forces commonly lie in the hands of profit-seeking enterprises, many of which are wholly owned subsidiaries of public security agencies themselves including, ironically, the Ministry of Public Security. These private police organizations serve the financial interests of their owners rather than the ideological goals of the party-state, and Dutton’s coverage of them sheds important light on this aspect of the nation’s post-Mao development.

The scholarship presented here appears to be based upon solid primary research, including at times interviews with confidential sources; presumably they are individuals within the public security apparatus whose identities the author wants to protect. Readers will find the book thought-provoking, informative, and a welcome addition to any collection of titles that deal with CCP history and recent Chinese politics.

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This anthology brings together scholarship that exploits archival and other sources (memoirs, films, photos, etc.) that have become available in China and Taiwan since the early 1990s in order to conduct a wide-ranging review of conditions in Shanghai under Japanese occupation from 1937 to 1945. The conventional view of wartime Shanghai is that after Chinese forces left the city in November 1937, and especially after the Japanese occupied the foreign concessions in late 1941, the city became a solitary island, isolated from the interior and, in Sherman Cochran’s apt words, “marooned both culturally and commercially.” [67] The contributors to this volume have substantially revised this interpretation. Their findings strongly suggest that although war, occupation, and the politics of resistance and collaboration affected conditions in Shanghai dramatically the city never became an island: its people and institutions responded flexibly to the new environment, and life reached a state of “quasi-normalcy” that belies the narrative of dislocation that dominated the scholarship from 1945 until the end of the Cold War.

Several contributors who deal with the economic life of the city and its environs (Coble, Cochran, Rottmann, and Wakeman) find that while tactical adjustments often had to be made, in many cases business was conducted more or less as usual. Pre-existing commercial networks often survived the occupation, and capitalists found various sorts of connections to the interior—family, native place, school tie, etc.—still to be quite functional. When conventional mechanisms failed, money often simply took their place, corruption serving as a reasonably effective lubricant with which to smooth out the rough spots imposed by the various political pressures that impinged upon commerce. Indeed, many entrepreneurs seem to have prospered by working all sides of what grew into a multi-polar system linking the Japanese, the Nanjing and Chungking regimes, and the Chinese Communists. Thus, not only were links between the city and its hinterland preserved, and sometimes manufactured, but the exchange of goods, personnel, contraband, and even political partisans flowed relatively
freely across the lines between occupied and non-occupied territory. Even the Communist Party’s Central Base Area maintained important links to Shanghai that enabled it to draw material and recruits from the city during the course of the war (Rottmann).

As for political life within the city, with the exception of the French, whose position in Shanghai was complicated by their alliance with the Japanese (Comet), many pre-existing local networks, political relationships (Brook, Martin), and social cleavages (Roux) survived as well: Even processes of political change that were already underway before 1937, such as the weakening of the British colonial enterprise that had been taking place since about 1925, continued apace (Bickers).

Within the realm of culture there were significant new developments. Especially well covered in this volume was the emergence of women and women’s issues as major factors in the worlds of publishing and entertainment (Glosser, Huang, and Pickowicz). While these particular industries flourished (Benson), Japanese suppression had the effect of forcing them into politically innocuous channels, and they responded partly by concentrating on themes involving women, such as the family, marriage, and homemaking. Interestingly, the effect of this may have been to elevate the self-conscious celebration of normalcy to the level of an act of resistance (Glosser). Nevertheless, here too the message is that for the most part life proceeded as normally as possible.

Generally speaking, the fourteen essays that comprise this collection probe the grey areas that characterized life in Shanghai during the occupation, and grey areas there surely were—between, for example, collaboration and resistance, or hero and traitor. As Paul Pickowicz suggests, “the vast majority of people ... were in no position to leave Shanghai and ... were forced to devise elaborate and sometimes painful survival strategies.” [359] Most of them did so by relying on resources that already constituted serviceable components of the social landscape. Most people inhabited the space between extremes, and it is here, in the realm of the ordinary, that these essays make their mark. Well-researched, cogently presented, and generally quite readable, they add texture and depth to our understanding of the ways by which Chinese living in their nation’s most important metropolitan center dealt with the dislocations imposed by the war and occupation. Adding to scholarship that has already done a great deal to shed light upon the history of Shanghai during the Republican period, this collection is a most welcome addition to the field.

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The editor “unearthed,” revised, enlarged, typed, prepared the layout of, and compiled the indices to, three unedited lexicographical bibliographies. The first (pp. 9–112, over 320 entries) is a survey of Mongol dictionaries listed by Krueger and updated by Taube; the second (pp. 113–159, over 200 entries) lists the Tungusic dictionaries described by Clark and updated by Walravens; the third one, compiled by Walter and updated by Taube,