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China's War with Japan, 1937–1945: The Struggle for Survival. RANA MITTER. London: Allen Lane, 2013. xxi + 458 pp. £25.00. ISBN978-1-846-14010-5

Konrad M. Lawson

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motivated by a desire to replace amateur mining with established companies in order to generate more profit?

Despite these criticisms, *Spoiling Tibet* is full of interesting details, insider stories and geographical information which are not otherwise easily accessible. This is because for many years Lafitte has been assiduously tapping into the impressive amount of literature collected in Australian university libraries on China, which host a wealth of titles on mining. Internet research on the companies involved has added more details. This makes *Spoiling Tibet* a rewarding book, at least for the lay reader.

Yet the problem lies in the selective presentation of this data, the lack of an adequate analytical framework and Lafitte's agenda to expose rather than explain. This leads to bizarre outcomes. For instance, the book suggests an imminent ecological catastrophe due to mining activities in Tibet, but Lafitte must admit that there are only a handful of large operating mines there, since, except for a few extremely valuable minerals, the very high costs of mining in Tibet have so far hampered the development of any industry of scale (and will likely continue to do so in the foreseeable future).

In the same vein, Lafitte seems obsessed with state involvement in the development of mining and suggests a hidden agenda. There is no need to speculate about agendas when the state explicitly acknowledges economic development as the fundamental vector of political "stability," and hence logically seeks to develop mining in a mineral-rich region like Tibet. Again, this policy feeds into a swamp of speculation where mining projects – no matter how promising they may be (many exist merely on paper) – are bought and sold for the sole purpose of enriching speculators, who then seek to take their money abroad for more secure investments. This says a lot about the nature of the mining industry in Tibet.

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When historians of East Asia are asked to recommend an English-language book on China's long war with Japan, whether that is defined as the series of Japanese invasions beginning in 1931 or the Sino-Japanese war dated from the skirmish at Marco Polo bridge in July 1937, the works that come to mind have always been less than ideal. There are several edited volumes with superb essays on many aspects of the conflict; there are over half a dozen strong works debating the role of the conflict in the rise of Communist power; there are histories that focus on Nationalist party rule and its role in the war, as well as a growing number of more thematically focused volumes that explore everything from the issues of collaboration to refugees. Most recently, Diana Lary's excellent *Chinese People at War: Human Suffering and Social Transformation* (Cambridge University Press, 2010) is ideal for teaching, with its innovative combination of short narrative summaries, thematic essays, case studies and primary-source readings. But this war, which so profoundly impacted

China in the 20th century, is surely remarkable for the lack of a worthy general survey in English. Rana Mitter has brought this unfortunate state of affairs to an end.

This work builds on the author's own historical research and publications on the war as well as his mastery of the art of effective synthesis. Most of all, however, *China's War with Japan* benefits from following closely on the completion of a 2007–12 Leverhulme Trust project of the same name that allowed Mitter to bring together a talented team of historians working on a wide range of issues related to the conflict. The result is a work that is deeply immersed in the recent literature, including new scholarship in Chinese, but which also frequently consults primary archival evidence, diaries and published documentary collections.

We are offered three strong background chapters that set the context, including one chapter which covers the invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and the complex history of Japan's continued move into north China up until 1937. The chapters that follow strike an excellent balance between coverage of the broader developments and the depiction of specific key scenes. One way it accomplishes this is the effective use of contemporary voices, most frequently in the form of excerpts from the diaries of Chiang Kai-shek and Zhou Fohai, who followed Chiang's political rival Wang Jingwei into Japanese-controlled territories to establish a new Nanjing regime with the occupier's support. We also hear from many others, including Western missionaries and wartime correspondents like Theodore White; we see the Nanjing massacre through the diary of relief worker Chen Ruifang; reports on the depths of the famine in Henan from the bureaucrat Zhang Zhonglu, and a range of astute observations from the prominent wartime journalist Du Zhongyuan.

A survey history is not merely a neutral summary, and the choices made by an author in determining the division of coverage and emphasis can have an important impact on readers as well as shape the historiography to come. In this respect, it is impressive to see several important but often neglected aspects of the war get considerable attention. Chiang Kai-shek's breaching of Yellow River dykes in 1938, a horrendous atrocity that led to the death of some half a million people, gets an important chapter. So too does the famine in Henan from 1942, which is intriguingly compared with the famine in Bengal that would begin not long after. Another area where Mitter has set an important, if underdeveloped, example is in his chapter, "States of terror" which juxtaposes the roles played by chill-inducing figures Dai Li (under Chiang Kai-shek), Li Shiqun (under Wang Jingwei's Nanjing regime) and Kang Sheng (for the Communists) in maintaining wartime "terror states." This opens the possibility of an interesting evaluation of the institutional continuities and differences in the practices of surveillance, violence and social control on each side.

With any survey, there are naturally topics that get less attention. Students of Chinese history who are familiar with the scholarship on rural areas during the war and on various Communist base areas will lament the relative lack of material on the experiences of millions of Chinese in the nominally occupied territories in reality contested by a host of Japanese, resistance, collaborationist and other local forces. However, perhaps precisely because so much has been written on these areas, Rana Mitter has chosen to predominantly centre his focus on the leaders in Chongqing, Yan'an and Nanjing – alone an ambitious project of synthesis that is impressively carried out. Somewhat more regrettable is the fact that Japanese primary sources and the rich Japanese-language historiography on the war are not mined for insights and alternative perspectives. Though the book's focus is on the Chinese experience of the war, the result is a work in which the rocky relationship between the Chinese and their American allies remains in clear focus throughout, while the Chinese interactions with the Japanese enemy are seen primarily through the smoke of the

battlefield. However, only so much can be asked of a historian who has taken on a work of this tremendous scope. We are indeed fortunate to have a history of the Sino-Japanese war of 1937–45 that is able to move so smoothly between the killing fields of Nanjing to the jungles of Burma and from the diplomatic dance of the Cairo Conference of 1943 to the Nationalist regime's aspirations for a post-war welfare state.

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The Formation of the Chinese Communist Party

ISHIKAWA YOSHIHIRO, translated by JOSHUA A. FOGEL

New York: Columbia University Press, 2013

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This careful study rightly emphasizes the international aspects of the birth of the Chinese communist movement. Before the October revolution, Chinese intellectuals “did not even know of Marx and Engels” (p. 7). In the wake of May Fourth, they discovered the latter's works, along with Kautsky's, in Japanese translations, as well as in the writings of Japanese Socialists. About as essential as the role of Japan in the reception of Marxism was that of Russia and the Comintern in the organization of the first Marxist Study (or other) groups – more later on designations – that eventually coalesced into the CCP. After Japanese authorities clamped down on leftist activities, Chinese radicals turned to American and British sources. Japanese documents had taught them the rudiments of Marxism, English language texts provided an introduction to Leninism and the organization of a communist movement. All this happened in quick succession in the matter of two years (1919–21). The book adds a few glimpses of events in 1922, and concentrates on what a few dozen radical intellectuals translated, read, thought and did during those epochal years.

The book checks and often invalidates the reliability of long-used sources, such as memoirs by Chinese actors, by comparing them with Japanese (or English) publications and data from Russian archives. This enables the author to clarify quite a few received ideas, such as the role of Li Dazhao as “the father of Marxism in China.” While Li was indeed the first Chinese intellectual to proclaim himself a Marxist (in his famous essay “My Marxist views,” published in *Xinqingnian* in the fall of 1919), he based all he knew of Marxism not even on Japanese publications, but on Chinese translations from Japanese. From 1 April 1919, his friend Chen Puxian (1891–1957), who had studied with him at Waseda University in 1915–16, provided serialized translations of Japanese Marxist manuals and translations in *Chenbao fukan*, the cultural supplement of the Beijing daily *Chenbao*.

The Introduction and chapter one, which document the reception of Marxism through Japan, form in my eyes the most interesting part of the book. Three chapters follow, mainly devoted to a more familiar story, namely the Comintern role in helping radical intellectuals to finance and organize proto-communist groups, then the CCP. They basically confirm the immense influence of both the Voitinsky mission and the activities of Chen Duxiu and Shanghai radicals close to him. As in chapter one, the book rectifies long-held assumptions or supplements our knowledge. It shows that Soviet activities toward China were not yet unified. Grigori Voitinsky was sent to China by the Vladivostok Branch of the Far Eastern Bureau of the Russian Communist Party, other operational units functioned (and sent directives