

Second and more importantly, Gu Cheng 顧誠 has concluded that the Xingyang Conclave simply did not happen. According to Gu, it was a mistake made by Wu Weiye 吳偉業 in his *Suikou jilue* 綏寇紀略, and perpetuated by *Mingshi*, the official history compiled by the Qing government. Wu Weiye claimed that major rebel leaders got wind of the Ming government's plan for a large-scale military offensive and therefore held a conclave in Xingyang to work out a counter-strategy. Gu Cheng examines Ming government archives and concludes that the Ming government did work out a plan, but that this happened after, not before the date of the Xingyang Conclave.<sup>3</sup> Gu Cheng's work is also open to criticism. Wu Weiye's *Suikou jilue* 綏寇紀略, being a work of private history, could be easily excused for including erroneous dates and places. However, since it so happened that the major rebels were gathering in Henan, in the center of the Ming proper, they did not have to be exceedingly smart to realize the danger of being encircled by government forces and the need for strategic coordination. Whether or not they knew that Beijing was preparing a new round of attack, it was fairly reasonable that they met and discussed what to do next. In any case, since Swope has mentioned the Xingyang Conclave, some reference to Gu Cheng's view would have been in order.

In any case, this book is a welcome and timely contribution to the studies of both the Ming–Qing transition and seventeenth-century global history. Finally, a note on notes. The importance of annotation and biography in scholarly is indisputable. Moving all notes to the rear of the book seriously compromises the pleasure of academic reading. The footnote format is much preferred.

*China at War: Triumph and Tragedy in the Emergence of the New China.* By HANS VAN DE VEN. Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2018. xvi + 352 pp. \$35.00 (cloth).

REVIEWED BY DIANA LARY, University of British Columbia ([lary@mail.ubc.ca](mailto:lary@mail.ubc.ca))  
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The sub-title of this outstanding study starts with the words triumph and tragedy. These were the outcomes of the twelve years of wars that wracked China between 1937 and 1949, from the start of the Resistance War to the end of the Civil War. Triumph and tragedy did not come in equal parts. For China there was more tragedy than triumph. In the political world the triumph switched from the Nationalist government at the start of the war years to the Communists in 1949. No one could have forecast this outcome—so much of what happened depended on “chance and contingency” (226).

<sup>3</sup>Gu Cheng 顧誠, *Mingmo nongmin zhanzhengshi* 明末農民戰爭史 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1984), 71–76.

The Japanese justifications for invading China are hard to fathom. The first justification was economic, to give crowded Japan *Lebensraum*. The second was the containment of Soviet communism. The third was Pan Asianism, the destruction of Western imperialism in Asia. The first of these was achieved, but only briefly. The third was achieved, but it brought with it Japan's own demise as an imperialist power. The second was always contradictory. It led to the attack not on the Chinese Communists but on the anti-Communist Nationalists. After General Zhukov's victory at Nomonhan in 1939, the Soviet Union was never a Japanese target. Instead Japan, by continuing to attack the Nationalists, helped the eventual triumph of the Chinese Communists.

The contradiction between aims and actions was evident again, quite starkly, in the Ichigo Campaign (1944–45). While the other Axis powers were on the defensive, and the Allies were fighting the last great battles in the European theatre, Japan launched a huge offensive campaign. The justification for the campaign was to link South China with Singapore by road—an aim that a cursory look at a map shows to be misguided. Half a million Japanese soldiers went into action in central China, against a similar number of Nationalist troops. The fighting brought victory for Japan and the ruination of the Nationalist armies. The Nationalist disaster in the campaign allowed the Communists, whose armies were not involved, to feel able to launch into civil war as soon as the Japanese were defeated in the Pacific War. For Chinese who knew their history there was a powerful analogy: exactly three centuries before the Manchus had taken control over China and founded the Qing Dynasty after the Ming Dynasty was brought down by peasant rebels. The analogy was that the Japanese helped to bring the Communists to power.

Van de Ven offers clear analyses of the complex wartime international relations. At the start of the Anti-Japanese War China had sympathy but very little support from other countries. They had to fight the war on their own—and there was no option but to fight. Japanese brutality in 1937–38—the Nanjing and other massacres—convinced most Chinese that there could be no surrender. Van de Ven describes some of the failed attempts to prevent or stop what was an avoidable war, but he shows that those who did not resist were doomed to be seen later on as traitors. During the war, China won international prestige, and the end of the Unequal Treaties established China as a member of the Allied leadership. But the Allies gave little direct help to China. Only the United States was in a position to help; its greatest contribution was the strategic bombing of Japanese-occupied Wuhan in 1944, *before* the bombing of Dresden or of Japanese cities—almost a practice run for the later raids. The US role during the civil war was equivocal. General George Marshall's imposed cease fire in 1946, when Communist armies in Manchuria were on the run, is still contentious. The cease fire gave General Lin Biao's armies the opportunity to regroup and retrain. Marshall was blamed in the US for being pro-Communist; in Nationalist military circles he has been blamed for costing them the war.

Van de Ven's descriptions of the two Chinese leaders are excellent pictures of two diametrically different men. Chiang Kai-shek was stiff and chilly, a martinet, unable to inspire unity; Mao was earthy, uncouth, and unpredictable. Both were ruthless, though Chiang was no match for Mao in terms of brutality: Mao was the "master technician of violence" (133).

*China at War* has a strong human touch. It is interleaved with the memoirs of two people, one a Nationalist official, Chen Kewen, the other a student, Chi Pang-yuan. These memoirs show the effects of the war on civilians, the trauma and the hardship of war, and the shifts in emotion, from powerful nationalism to depression and eventually despair. Both memoirs were published outside China; if there were such memoirs on the Mainland, they were most likely destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, when reference to the Nationalists was forbidden and dangerous.

Van de Ven's study emphasizes the length of the wars and their much longer impact, far beyond 1949. China's economy was set back decades; it did not reach prewar levels for more than four decades. The flowering of cultural life that China saw in the 1920s and 1930s has not been matched since. Politically Taiwan is still separate from the Mainland, and the Mainland is stuck under the authoritarian rule of the Communist Party, which has little in common, in ideology or size, with the one that took over China in 1949. The personal costs for many Chinese may be even greater. As a European, van de Ven understands from his own family's history that wars do not end with an armistice. Intergenerational trauma continues for decades, even past personal memory. He was born long after his grandfather was killed by the Nazis at the end of the European War, but his family was haunted by his loss. To read the account of this death, at the beginning of this moving book, is to understand the tragedy of war. The years 1937 to 1949 have shaped and distorted China and Asia for more than half a century.

*Luxurious Networks: Salt Merchants, Status and Statecraft in Eighteenth Century China.*

By WU YULIAN. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007. \$65.00.

*Living the Good Life: Consumption in the Qing and Ottoman Empires of the Eighteenth Century.* Edited by ELIF AKÇETIN and SURAIYA FAROQHI. Leiden: Brill, 2018. \$180.00.

REVIEWED BY R. KENT GUY, University of Washington ([qing@uw.edu](mailto:qing@uw.edu))

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What do we know of the Chinese concept of luxury, a commentator at an Association for Asian Studies panel asked a few years ago. Not as much as we should: we are frequently treated in the primary sources to descriptions of frugality, both on the state and personal levels, but for both ideological and practical reasons, we don't hear much of indulgence. If we didn't know much of luxury a few years ago, we certainly do now, largely through the work of authors represented in the two rich volumes under review here. Yulian Wu's book is a monographic study of the salt merchants of Huizhou in the eighteenth century; the Akçetin's and Faroqhi's is an edited collection, the product of a conference on material culture and "the good life" that was held in Istanbul in 2013.

*Luxurious Networks* is a study of how the salt merchants of Huizhou got their money, but more significantly, how they spent it. Wu shows how salt merchants, when they became head merchants (a new position created in the Qing), became involved in a