
Reviews

The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere: When Total Empire Met Total War. By Jeremy A. Yellen. (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2019. xiv + 292 pp.)

In this outstanding new study of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, Jeremy Yellen challenges the longstanding view that the Sphere was little more than a facade for Japan's predatory imperialism and that Asian leaders who collaborated with Japan were traitors to their countries. Divided into two major sections, the book first presents the Sphere as an evolving and highly contested project with input from a wide range of factions within Japanese intellectual and government circles. It then examines how Burmese and Filipino leaders both cooperated with Japan's imperialist agenda and coopted that agenda for their own anti-colonial and nationalist ends. Throughout the book, the author seeks to understand the complex ideological and practical motivations of both Japanese expansionists and the local leaders who collaborated with them.

Part I looks at how the concept of the Co-Prosperity Sphere developed among Japanese government officials and intellectuals from early 1940. "Total War" thinking had convinced military planners after the First World War that economic self-sufficiency was essential to prevail in modern warfare. The rise of fascism in Europe seemed to confirm a world trend toward regional economic blocs. Expansionists within Japan looked to Southeast Asia for resources and territory to support a new order. Beginning with foreign minister Matsuoka Yosuke's vision of a regional sphere of influence under Japanese leadership, the narrative traces the Co-Prosperity Sphere's evolution as military needs for resources became acute in the Pacific War and Japanese intellectuals began thinking about how to build a legitimate postwar international order in East Asia.

Part II turns to the diplomacy within the Sphere itself and argues that leaders of member countries actively used Japan's imperial project for what

should be interpreted as patriotic ends. At the Greater East Asia Conference of 1943, for example, Ba Maw supported the Co-Prosperity Sphere as a path to Burma's independence from Britain. Jose P. Laurel appealed to Japan's cooperative rhetoric to criticize abuses perpetrated by Japanese troops occupying the Philippines. By examining the cases of nominally independent Burma and the Philippines, the book offers a perspective on the Japanese empire different from studies of areas under direct Japanese control like Korea and Taiwan. Challenging binary views of patriotism and collaboration, Yellen argues that the actions of many Asian leaders should be understood as "patriotic collaboration" (p. 20).

This study is based on impressive research which ties together material from archives in India, Japan, Myanmar, the Philippines, the United Kingdom, and the United States, as well as a wide range of published sources in Japanese and English. It makes an important contribution to our understanding of how the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere emerged from Japanese visions of a new international order and evolved in response to opportunities created by the outbreak of the Second World War.

This book is essential reading for anyone interested in the inner workings of the Japanese empire and its enduring legacy in Southeast Asia.

Linfield College

JOHN H. SAGERS

Dead Souls. By Wang Bing. (Brooklyn, Icarus Films, 2018. Mandarin/English subtitles. 495 min.)

Between 1957 and 1961, the Chinese government sent 3,200 accused rightists to the Jiabiangou reeducation camp in the desert northwest. While some had ties to the nationalists, many had spoken too openly during the Hundred Flowers Campaign or offended the wrong people. Approximately 2,700 would starve amidst overcrowding and famine, their bodies left unceremoniously in the dunes of Mingshui. After fictionalized and factual accounts of these long-suppressed events began appearing in the 2000s, the renowned documentarian Wang Bing became interested, producing *Fengming: A Chinese Memoir* (*He Fengming*, 2007) and the docudrama *The Ditch* (*Jiabiangou*, 2010). *Dead Souls* is the culmination of his decade of research, a nine-hour epic told primarily through oral histories.

Dead Souls is an extension of Wang's unique documentary style. Lengthy, minimally edited interviews intersect with carefully paced observational