

Introduction

Five days after the minor firefight at the Marco Polo Bridge (Lugou-qiao/Rokōkyō) outside Peking, a noted Japanese left-wing intellectual and China watcher, Ozaki Hotsumi, wrote that he was “convinced that [the incident] can hardly fail to develop on such a scale as to prove of utmost significance in world history.” Ozaki was to expand on this prediction and, until the day of his death in 1943, insisted that the critical theater in World War II was not the Pacific but China. Certainly, the Sino-Japanese War of 1937–1945 had titanic and tragic consequences for both countries and has shaped postwar Asia in ways that continue to be obvious today.

Yet it is clear that, despite its scale and import, the Sino-Japanese War has long been overshadowed by the European and Pacific theaters in Western military history, while issues such as the Chinese Revolution, economic modernization, and cultural change have dominated histories of China and Japan. A few specialized studies of the conflict exist, largely centered on diplomatic and political matters, mass mobilization in China, major incidents such as the Nanjing Massacre, and Japanese counterinsurgency efforts in China. But a general history of military operations during the war based on Japanese, Chinese, and Western sources does not exist in English. Only when our ignorance is repaired will the basis exist for a more balanced understanding of World War II, for nuanced and textured analyses of the significance of the conflict in East Asia, and for an accurate assessment of Ozaki’s claim.

This was the central motivation of the organizers of a general project on the history of the war. Ezra Vogel of Harvard University sponsored the first stage of a long-range effort to subject the war to broad scholarly investigation. Two China specialists, Steven MacKinnon of the Arizona State University and Diana Lary of the University of British Columbia, organized an international conference at Harvard University as the first step in the reassessment. The papers from that conference are published by the Stanford University Press.

Vogel approached the general editor of this volume to organize an inter-

national conference on the military dimension of the conflict. With the counsel and assistance of Edward J. Drea, an authority on the Japanese army, and Hans van de Ven, a specialist in Chinese military history, and working with Yang Tianshi of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Yamada Tatsuo of Waseda University, Hatano Sumio of Tsukuba University, and a number of Western scholars of China and Japan, the structure of the project took shape. The result was a four-day conference on the military dimension of the war, sponsored by the Asia Center of Harvard University and held at the Sheraton Hotel on the island of Maui in Hawaii in January 2004.

In organizing the conference the members of the editorial committee made several decisions that were critical to the atmosphere of the discussions and the composition of the subsequent volume. The first two are easily stated. First, the organizers asked the participants to focus their papers on military operations because a military history of the war did not exist and would have enduring value. Second, they believed the emphasis on military operations and strategy would not only sharpen the focus of the study but also illustrate that, in this period, warfare drove much of what happened in the political, economic, social, and cultural spheres in China and Japan.

Third, the organizers believed that a volume of high caliber could result only from close collaboration between Chinese, Japanese, and Western scholars. Much of the best scholarship on World War II in East Asia is naturally produced in China and Japan. To bring the fruits of Chinese and Japanese work to the attention of a wider public is one of the aims of this volume. At the same time, opportunities for productive collaboration between Chinese and Japanese scholars have been limited for many years due to historical and political reasons, and also because of the enormous sensitivity that the Sino-Japanese War holds in East Asia. The organization of the conference out of which this volume has grown was driven by the commitment to scholarly dialogue and debate, and by the belief that advances in understanding and interpretation will come from that.

It was only natural that occasionally Chinese participants would become vexed at flat-footed comments by some Japanese participants and that some Japanese would become irritated with Chinese insistence on fuller Japanese apologies for Japanese wartime behavior. Perhaps more surprising was the irritation of some American scholars when the significance or the purpose of the U.S. role in China, especially as embodied by General Joseph Stilwell, was questioned. Nonetheless, the forty-plus scholars from several nations who were brought to Maui all shared a basic commitment to cooperative scholarship. Of benefit also was the salubrious atmosphere of the conference venue. The result was the production of a set of conference papers that collectively provide an authoritative introduction to the military course of one of the greatest conflicts of the twentieth century.

As with all such collaborative efforts, not all topics of obvious interest in such a history could find a place in these pages. To a large extent this was due to the inability of the organizers to find specialists qualified and willing to write essays on such subjects. To an extent, we have been able to bridge these gaps by providing a general overview of the military campaigns, an accompanying chronology, and introductions to the several sections into which the chapters are grouped.

Although Japan's record of war crimes is a topic of great current interest, Japanese atrocities are mentioned only if pertinent to a particular campaign or strategy. Thus, no paper specifically addresses war crimes, in part because the topic is a subject unto itself that has been dealt with in a range of books, monographs, and journals. The recently published National Archives and Records Administration report to Congress on the subject is a good place to start for those interested in Japanese war crimes.

The editors of this volume are aware that the beginning date of World War II in East Asia is subject to debate. Recently, most scholars in China have taken the Japanese occupation of Manchuria in 1931 as the beginning of what they refer to as the War of Resistance against Japan. The United States became involved after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. It was only after this that China officially declared war on Japan, not having done so until then for diplomatic and legal reasons. Most American scholarship has focused on the period after 1941. As to the end date of the war, on 15 August 1945 Emperor Hirohito of Japan announced the Japanese acceptance of the Declaration of Potsdam, demanding unconditional surrender. In China today, the formal commemoration of the ending of the war takes place on 2 September, when Japanese representatives signed the surrender instrument aboard the USS *Missouri* anchored in Tokyo Bay. This volume takes the Marco Polo bridge Incident of 7 July 1937 as the beginning date of the Sino-Japanese War. For the purposes of this volume, whether the end date is defined as 15 August or 2 September 1945 is irrelevant.

The bibliography, like the volume, is not exhaustive. Instead, it provides an entry for students interested in pursuing a long-neglected topic that merits careful research and study.

This book uses the pinyin transliteration system, with a few arbitrary exceptions. In the case of the few well-known Chinese proper and place names, we have used commonly accepted English usage such as Peking, Chiang Kai-shek, Whampoa, and Kwantung Army. In the case of Japanese, we have used the Hepburn system.