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Review of Rana Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth: Nationalism, Resistance, and Collaboration in Modern China*

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At the time of publication, author Christopher P. Atwood was affiliated with Indiana University. Currently, he is a faculty member in the East Asian Languages and Civilizations Department at the University of Pennsylvania.

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Disciplines

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Comments

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detailed earlier, it is now possible to teach dedicated courses on Hong Kong cinema. The only remaining problem to resolve is to make more pre-1975 Hong Kong films readily available with English subtitles for classroom use.

University of California, Berkeley

Chris Berry

Mitter, Rana. *The Manchurian Myth: Nationalism, Resistance, and Collaboration in Modern China*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), xii + 295 pp. \$ 45.00. ISBN 0-520-22111-7.

In recent years, Manchuria and the Japanese-created state of Manchukuo from 1931–1945 have become the subject of significant new research in both Chinese and English. As the memories of World War II have faded and the historiography of the Republican period has progressed from “party history” and “revolutionary history” to an interest in wider and less ideologically-charged themes, studies of Manchuria have begun to look beyond the questions of war-guilt and blame and explore the events of 1931 and after as something approaching “normal” history.

Rana Mitter’s study, *The Manchurian Myth*, promises to take this trend further by deliberate confronting what he calls “the Manchurian myth” of savage Japanese imperialism and unremitting Chinese resistance that has formed the master narrative of Chinese (and many post-war Western) accounts of Manchukuo. After surveying the few strengths and many weaknesses of the Zhang Xueliang regime (1928–1931) that preceded Japan’s 1931 occupation of Manchuria (chapter 2), Mitter, University Lecturer at Oxford, examines collaborators (chapters 3 and 4), civilian resistance organizations in China proper (chapters 5 and 6), and those actually fighting in Manchuria against Japan (chapter 7). Limiting his study to the first three years of the occupation (1931–1933), he aims to explain first why it is that some resisted but most did not, and second, how the civilian resistance organizations based in Beiping (modern Beijing) used the military resistance to create what he calls, borrowing Henry Rousso’s term in *Vichy Syndrome*, “resistancialism.” In this discourse, small number of active fighters are represented as something vastly more significant than their actual numbers and indeed identified with the nation itself.

Mitter used a wide variety of sources including the No. 2 Historical Archives in Nanjing, the Liaoning Provincial Archives, and contemporary newspapers, as well as recently published memoirs and document collections. The extensive use of archival material and periodical literature and his only sparing use of memoirs contributes to the reliability of this study of what is still a controversial topic. Despite their appearance of giving the “behind-the-scenes” picture of information in the Republican period, memoirs published after 1979 are still heavily influenced both by the PRC’s official historical line and in more subtle ways by the individual author’s later experiences.

Despite Mitter’s good historical judgement and the reliability of his conclusions, *The Manchurian Myth* does not entirely fulfill the expectations raised by the dust-jacket blurbs. Numerous important themes of historical memory, of dilemmas of collaboration and resistance, of the sociology of nationalism, and of military-civilian relations in the Republican period are introduced but not ad-

dressed with the kind of finely-textured detail that would really tell us something about these issues that we do not already know. Those readers wanting to know about the names and places of the Chinese response to the Japanese occupation will get accurate information from *The Manchurian Myth*, and those wondering if occupied China presented broadly similar issues to Vichy France, for example, will get their answers as well. Yet Mitter's data is still too thin to satisfy the reader hoping for an in-depth understanding of the particularities of collaboration or nationalist discourse in China. The lack of maps and the very inadequate character glossary, covering relatively few names and places (in simplified characters, no less!) adds, perhaps unfairly, to the impression of a somewhat schematic narrative.

While generally well-written, the latter half of *The Manchurian Myth* has a somewhat confusing organization. The order of chapters 5, 6, and 7, would better have been reversed. As it is we learn first about the effect of resistancialist propaganda, then about its content, and finally about the ambiguous reality on the ground in Manchuria behind it. Since chapters 3 and 4 had dealt with Japanese moves to win over local elites and the conclusion considers the long term effect of the nationalist discourse, a reverse order would have flowed more smoothly.

In sum, *The Manchurian Myth* is a ground-breaking study of both the founding of Manchukuo and its place in the Chinese narrative of resistance, yet much remains to be said about both of these topics.

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Christopher P. Atwood

Korsunskiyev, Tseren K.: *Ancient Oirat Books about Oriental Medicine*, translated and edited by John R. Krueger, Papers on Inner Asia, No. 36. (Bloomington: Indiana University, Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 2001), ii + 33 pp., pbk \$ 5.50. ISSN 0893-1860.

The history of medicine in Central Eurasia has long been neglected in spite of the availability of texts in the numerous languages of the region. This spare volume – a most welcome translation of a paper presented by Korsunskiyev at a conference celebrating the 320th anniversary of the use of the Oirat “Clear Script” held in Elistä, Kalmyk Republic (Russian Federation, USSR) in 1968 – challenges scholars to participate more actively in working on medical history. Korsunskiyev summarizes the contents of two extant volumes of a late 17th or early 18th century Oirat medical work entitled, *A General Textbook (Manual) on Acupuncture and Moxibustion (in Six Books or Volumes)* [*Xadxaxu tö:nö terigiiü-teni yeke xuraqsan nom debter zurγa:n bui*]. Facsimiles of both of these volumes appear in the *Corpus Scriptorum Mongolorum* series (V, 6–7), published in 1968 with a different ordering of the volumes, corrected by the editor to Books I and II.

Volume One (= Book II) discusses the various organs of the human body and where acupuncture or moxibustion operations are performed at points of nerve channels. Syndromes for needle therapy are discussed with examples. Chinese elements in the text suggest a strong influence if not the original source for the text with, perhaps, borrowings from other medical traditions as well as the inclusion of traditional Kalmyk medical practices. Volume Four (= Book I) discusses