

## Book Reviews

### *Economies under Occupation: The Hegemony of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan in World War II*

By Marcel BOLDORF and Tetsuji OKAZAKI  
New York: Routledge, 2015. xiv + 335 pp.  
ISBN: 978-0-415-83533-6 (Hardcover)

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doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.12773/arwh.2016.4.2.270>

This collective book is a rare attempt to make a thorough comparison of the wartime empires of the two Axis powers, Germany and Japan. Considered as natural allies because they shared common enemies during World War II, Germany and Japan are often assumed to have carried out similar occupation policies. Yet specialists of these two countries, of both the European and Pacific fronts, generally work separately and these two “Co-prosperity spheres” have seldom been compared in detail. Moreover, this book is particularly valuable to those unfamiliar with East Asian history, since studies on the Japanese economic policy during the conflict—such as those by Chihiro Hosoya, Shinya Sugiyama, Yoshio Andō and Hideo Kobayashi—have rarely been presented in western languages.

A French and a Japanese historian, Marcel Boldorf and Tetsuji Okazaki, started this project at the Paris International Business

History Conference in 2012. They felt that comparisons between Europe and Asia were lacking concerning the economies of the occupied regions during the Second World War. To find a way to embrace such a large subject, they decided to structure most of the book as a dialogue between chapters on German and Japanese occupations, one chapter on Japan replying generally to one chapter on Germany.

The book is organized into five parts, organized topically: (I) the system of occupation, (II) war financing, (III) the exploitation of the labor force, (IV) the incorporation of territories in the war economy, and (V) the role of multinationals. These parts are not equal in size and in interest, though the quality of the various case studies in part IV avoid generalities and approach the very substance of the occupation economic policies, as well as the way local populations responded to them.

The second and third chapters – by Boldorf and Okazaki respectively – constitute the foundation of the book by presenting the German and Japanese occupation systems. Okazaki explains not only the general system but also the differences among the various regions occupied by Japan, the successes and the failures encountered by this country in trying to use East Asia to build a war economy. The following chapters of the second and third parts consist of case studies, with a chapter on war financing in Southeast Asia and labor in Manchukuo.

Part IV is the heart and soul of the book. With 147 pages, it is almost half of the entire book and brings contributions from specialists of France, Belgium, Norway, Germany, Japan, the Philippines, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Concerning Asia, the chapters on Manchuria by Okazaki, the Philippines by Gerardo P. Sicut, Indonesia by J. Thomas Linblad, Burma by Michael W. Carney and Atsuko Naono, and French Indochina by Delphine Boissarie are invaluable.

Part V, the last of the book, seems less relevant, first, because the economies were for a large part administered by the state, the army, or other institutions like the SS, and, second, because these

last four chapters do not address in detail the role played by the German and Japanese conglomerates in occupation policies.

The conclusion is quite informative and useful. The book insists on the more cooperative attitude of the local populations in Asia compared to Europe, but omits to state that this difference is strongly linked to the substantial differences of purpose and means between the two occupation policies. While Japanese occupation goals – even if based on a clear hierarchy of people where the Japanese were at the top and Asian populations much lower – were to build a region where the latter would take their part, German occupation goals seldom gave any further choice to those local populations they perceived as “non-Germanic” than the alternative between dying or serving.

No book is perfect. Of course, this is an economic history book, but more links to politics would have been useful. More important, the comparative approach between Germany and Japan can be problematic, because the two countries’ participations in World War II started at different times, for different reasons, without any kind of synchronization. Furthermore, it is difficult to fix a consensual date for the start of the world conflict in Asia and the Pacific. Is it December 8, 1941? July 7, 1937? September 18, 1931? The book being edited by a specialist of Manchukuo, this Japanese puppet state takes an important place in the book, despite the fact that the occupation of Manchuria in 1931 can hardly be considered as the start of the Second World War in Asia, and that the expression of “Co-prosperity Sphere” was used for the first time in Japan only in August 1940. One can, indeed, argue that the Sino-Japanese War that started in 1937 (or 1931) and the Pacific War that began in 1941 were linked, but remained different conflicts.

In conclusion, this book is an innovative and valuable work that will meet the needs of the specialists of World War II, as well as nonspecialists interested in this period. It is certainly the kind of comparative approach we would like to see more in the future to bring more detailed historical studies on Europe and Asia, the Atlantic and the Pacific.