

*Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from
Central Europe: Survival, Co-existence,
and Identity in a Multi-ethnic City*

by Irene Eber

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There is no shortage of books on the subject of Jewish refugees in wartime Shanghai. This most recent volume, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe: Survival, Co-existence, and Identity in a Multi-ethnic City* by Irene Eber, stands out, however. What makes this book different from others on this topic is its impressive research across multiple archives and languages.

Placing the work within a part of Holocaust history, Eber poses important questions that many other scholars working on Jewish communities in China have failed to ask. Throughout the book she explores the complex question of who Jews are, demonstrating that there was not a single group of Jewish refugees who went to Shanghai. While some came from Germany, others were from Poland, Austria, and many other corners of central Europe. Such refugees arrived in Shanghai by different routes and means. Although they themselves identified, and were identified, as Jews, they spoke different languages. Furthermore, they shared little with each other in terms of culture. Based on arrays of archival material, Eber goes further to make a convincing argument that different Jewish organizations conflicted over matters of evacuation and

aid. This book possesses the further strengths of presenting a detailed and meticulous study of German Jewish policies, which forced Jewish emigration, and covering German-Chinese and German-Japanese diplomacy in the late 1930s.

In addition, this book includes several useful appendices which provide a list of journals and newspapers published in Shanghai for the Jewish communities between 1939 and 1946 (Appendix 2), a partial list of German- and English-language autobiographies and memoirs of wartime Shanghai (Appendix 4), and a list of documentary films about wartime Shanghai (Appendix 3). Such information makes the book a valuable resource for students interested in the subject.

There are a few shortcomings in this otherwise excellent book. The text contains numerous spelling errors in Chinese and Japanese personal names. For example, on page 43, in footnote 14, Song Qingling's name is spelled incorrectly. Nevertheless, Eber has authored an important study of Holocaust history and Jewish history by shifting the focus away from the conventional Eurocentric lenses. Being an accomplished scholar of Chinese studies, Eber's illuminating account of wartime Shanghai and its unique history and multi-ethnic cultural diversity makes the book an important and welcome contribution to the existing scholarship on Shanghai as well as on the repercussions of World War II on the city.