Surviving involved everyday negotiations with the occupying force which brought with it wrenching moral conflicts and life-and-death consequences. In the occupied cities along the eastern seaboard, for example, Chinese were required to wear new Japanese-style clothing. As noted elsewhere, this was posted at every street corner. If they did not “properly” shave their faces or wear the correct clothing, they were slapped in the face, hit with a rifle butt, or forced to kneel for the day. To bow ‘properly’ to the enemy was a symbol of humiliation? What should they have bowed ‘improperly’? These kinds of moral quandaries were everywhere in occupied cities. This tendency is important as well as understandable as occupied China was made up of all the major cities that had played significant roles in China’s harrowing negotiation with colonialism and modernity in the last century, and many of these cities had been subjected to massacre, terrorism, and all kinds of atrocity by the Japanese army. Also, archival materials on the histories of these occupied cities are more easily available. However, we know that only part of occupied China was urban. An urban focus obscures the vast territories made up of small cities, townships and villages under Japanese control. How did landownership patterns and local leadership structures change? To what specific ways did the occupying forces squeeze local resources and control the circulation of goods? Was there resistance by local communities and how was it organized and mobilized? How did the Chinese Communist Party and the Nationalist Party operate there?

How did the Japanese organization of intelligence information and oppression in villages differ from the cities? In what ways did the experiences of occupation in rural China differ from urban experiences? These questions point to the need for more studies on the histories of the Japanese-ruled countryside and its multi-level connections with the cities.

Third, research on occupied China has tended to focus largely on men, public life, and elite culture. These are important subjects, but equally important are the subjects of women, domestic life, gender relationships, and popular cultures. New studies by, for example, Norman Smith, Susan Glosser and Allison Rottmann open new perspectives on the ways in which literary discourses in occupied China were shaped and redefin ed by women (e.g., Zhang Ailing and Su Qing), and on the changing functions and cultural meanings of cinema in the everyday life of Chinese living under occupation. But we still know little, for example, about any changes in the roles of women (e.g., the idea of ‘new woman’) and the ways in which domestic life was organized in occupied cities, or in what ways the struggle of ordinary people, men and women, to create normality in the midst of Japanese terror changed the discourses and practices of urban popular cultures. We need to expand into these important subjects in order to push our understanding of occupied China to another level of complexity and multiplicity.

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