and Society in Hong Kong would have been merited.

Clearly a book into which Gillian has put a great deal of effort.

PETER HALLIDAY


Philip Snow has done historians of Hong Kong a great service in producing this generally excellent book. His grasp of the sources for the period 1940-1946 is wide. He has consulted archives in London, Hong Kong, Tokyo, and Taipei (although he seems to have missed the Harcourt archive, and the unpublished war-diaries in the Muniments of the Imperial War Museum, in London), and has read very widely, consulting both collections of original documents and secondary material, in Chinese and Japanese as well as in English. The index to the book is excellent - indeed, rather better than merely excellent. The result is a book which will be a standard for many years to come. The plates included, however, are relatively ordinary: more plates, and plates more tightly connected with the text, would have been valuable. More photographs of the major figures of the Occupation period, both Japanese and local Chinese, would have been very welcome. As so often, alas, better maps would have benefited the book greatly.

Despite the title, the book has relatively little to say on the Battle of Hong Kong, the actual progress of the fighting in Hong Kong, or the fall of Hong Kong: presumably because there are other books which cover the actual fighting well. What the book does above all is illustrate in detail, and very convincingly, the months leading up to the Battle (the Governorship of Sir Mark Young), the developments in Hong Kong under the Japanese, and the post-war period of the Harcourt and restored Mark Young administrations. None of these periods has been entirely adequately covered elsewhere, and this book is the more valuable in consequence.

The book is particularly valuable in clearly identifying the changes which took place in Japanese attitudes to Hong Kong in the 3 years and
8 months of their occupation, and their view of their role here, and putting this into a satisfying chronological framework, while at the same time casting light on the internal politics and disputes within the Japanese administration. While not attempting an analysis in depth of the internal bureaucratic structures in place under the Japanese, the book in fact gives a great deal of information on this as well, incidentally showing why the Japanese administration was so grossly ineffective and inefficient in almost everything it undertook. It is also of great value in clarifying the involved and tangled politics among the various parties involved in the restoration of British rule - the Nationalist and Communist Chinese, the British, the Americans, and the Japanese. For the first time, a book puts flesh on the major figures of the Japanese period, especially Governor Isogai, so that they cease to appear as the cardboard cut-outs they have normally been seen as, and can be seen as real people. Much the same goes for the book’s excellent delineation of the major Chinese elite figures and the role they played under the Japanese, especially Sir Robert Kotewall and Sir Shouson Chow. Also of the greatest value and interest is the careful discussion of the role and changing attitudes of the Chinese elite to the Japanese and the British (although this could, perhaps, have been still more nuanced than it is), and the detailed, and very satisfying, analysis of exactly how the period of the Japanese Occupation shaped and changed British attitudes to Hong Kong and its citizens in the post-War period. Fascinating stuff, and all of it immensely useful and valuable.

That is not, however, to say that the book is without flaws. Unfortunately, the first half of the first chapter, and most of the concluding Epilogue chapter, are caricatures. These sections cover Hong Kong in the 1930s, and after 1947. These give a sketch of the British in Hong Kong as lethargic, “troglodytic,” stupid, third-rate, racist, status-seeking, arrogant, selfish and self-centred - colonialists in the comic-book tradition, in other words - and assume that, having said so much, little else requires to be said. The account of Governor Grantham and his administration in particular cannot be said to be in any way a well-rounded portrait. Snow seems to have taken the “Gin and Bridge all day” description of 1930s Hong Kong at face value, which is a very great pity. There is, of course, some truth in this sketch of the British, as there is in all good caricature, but it is not the truth, but a distortion of the truth. For this reviewer, reading the first Chapter almost led me to give up reading the rest, fearing that the book would be throughout
lacking in balance and discrimination: luckily, this is not true of the vital central three-quarters of the book. But readers should beware of the lack of balance in these two sections.

There are a few other minor flaws as well. Thus, while, of the two main Hong Kong Chinese-language newspapers, one is spoken of as the Wah Kiu Yat Po, the other is spoken of as the Xing Dao Ribao (Star Isle Daily), thus disguising (very effectively) the Sing Tao. It is difficult to discern any pattern here. There are also a few errors of fact, particularly in the first and last chapters. Thus, inter alia, nowhere near 20,000 villagers were displaced for the Japanese extension of the Airport - there were no more than a tenth of that number living in Po Kong, Sha Tei Yuen, and Kak Hang. The demolished tenements in the Kowloon City area in the 1930s were not inside the Walled City, but outside, in the Kowloon Market area. Sir Thomas Jackson was not the founder of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank (1864): he was its General Manager from 1876-1902.

These flaws, however, are minor, in comparison with the immense value and interest of the bulk of the book. It is, despite the flaws, confidently and wholeheartedly recommended to anyone interested in the history of Hong Kong.

PATRICK H. HASE


This book delivers. Its coverage is broad but deep, it has the right mix of passion and detachment, with impish but biting humour, and is quietly but cleverly constructed by the author who, for five years from 1995, was the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s correspondent in China.

The author is well-suited to her task. A “China-coast” back-ground on both sides of her family over several generations, her Hong Kong birth and upbringing, her family’s devotion to journalism, plus a genuine interest in China and its people, combine with her own independent and questing spirit to make this a memorable account of their recent and current history. It is, indeed, a tale of ‘China’s wrestle with