



## My Shanghai, 1942-46

A Novel

Keiko Itoh

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*“Where would my loyalties lie if Britain suddenly went to war with Japan?”*

The question of divided loyalties inspired Keiko Itoh to research her mother’s experiences as a British-educated, young Christian Japanese woman living in occupied Shanghai during the **Second World War**. Despite the background of deprivation and fear, everything she had ever heard from her mother about **that period in her life** made it sound an overwhelmingly positive experience. Drawing on family memories, Keiko explores how **her mother’s story** might have **unfolded** in her debut novel, *My Shanghai, 1942-1946*.

Written in diary form, *My Shanghai, 1942-46* is the story of Eiko Kishimoto who arrives, as a newly-wed twenty-year-old London-educated housewife, to settle into a privileged existence in the French Concession in one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world. For a sheltered young woman, Shanghai offers a heady social mix and Eiko finds herself **amongst** not only Japanese but Chinese, Russians, German nationalists and Jewish refugees, British Catholics and Quakers. As a member of the community of the Occupying Power, at first Eiko is hardly touched by the War and her days are filled with high-society lunches and open-air concerts, race-course and night-club visits.

However, as Japan tightens its control within China, tensions mount, relationships unravel, and allegiances are questioned. The Japanese official line escalates from calls for restraint, to dictates about traditional dress and celebrations of the sacrifice of young soldiers. There are increasing shortages, curfews and power cuts. The streets become chaotic with beggars and the dispossessed and Eiko’s English friends are interned. When Japan’s war efforts become more desperate and degenerate, the official statements contrast with the information that seeps through to Eiko and her international friends. Caught between her Christian values and loyalty to her country, Eiko turns to the Quakers to find peace.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Keiko Itoh, writer and interpreter, was born in Kobe, Japan. She has an MA from Yale University and a PhD in history from the London School of Economics. She has worked for the United Nations in New York and as a public relations officer for the World Bank in London. She is the author of a social history of the small Japanese community in London in the 1920s and 1930s to which her grandfather and mother belonged; *The Japanese Community in Pre-war Britain: From Integration to Disintegration* (Curzon Press 2001). She fictionalised her mother's experience in occupied China for this, her first novel, *My Shanghai, 1942-1946* and like the narrator of her story, her aunt and uncle discovered the Quaker faith at this time.

Keiko Itoh is married to an Englishman and has two grown daughters. She lives in Fulham and Petworth.

## NOTES FOR EDITORS

- Details of the photographs: the jacket shows the Itoh family in Shanghai, the bride and groom are Keiko's parents on their wedding day, and the photograph of the author is credited to Shane Lin.
- Keiko Itoh is available for interview.
- She will be speaking about *My Shanghai, 1942-46* at various venues in Britain, USA and Japan. Details can be found on her website.
- For further information and more photographs, see [www.keikoitoh.com](http://www.keikoitoh.com)

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