

## Pan-Asianism and Japan's War 1931–1945

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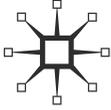
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# Pan-Asianism and Japan's War 1931–1945

Eri Hotta

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*To my parents,  
Kimiko and Kensuke Hotta*

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# Preface

Unlike some defeated ideologies, such as fascism, Pan-Asianism has faded from the contemporary historical imagination. Yet in the early twentieth century, it had a powerful hold on elites around Asia, especially in Japan, India, and to some extent in China. Fuelled by a powerful idea of community between Asian nations defining themselves against the colonialist West, Pan-Asianism appeared to have immense cultural power a century ago. Yet just a few decades later, the “spiritual” concepts defined by works such as Okakura Tenshin’s *Ideals of the East* were distorted by the Japanese militarist government into a brutal ideology of imperialism that seemed fixated on conquering, rather than liberating, Asia.

Despite this disturbing past, the present day has seen a revival of interest in the concept of “Asia.” From the “Asian Values” debate of the 1990s to the rapprochement between China, India, and Japan in the early twenty-first century, the idea that this region has values and aims in common has once more gained currency. What better time, then, to explore again an earlier attempt to understand “Asia” across the boundaries of its nation-states and to understand how the ideals of an earlier age had gone so very wrong?

Eri Hotta’s book is a powerful addition to this series in transnational history. Using a theoretically sophisticated approach and a wealth of evidence, she makes a claim crucial to understanding Pan-Asianism: that it was not one idea, but at least three. A core of ideas ran through Pan-Asianism throughout its life, in particular, a vision that a regional identity could somehow mediate between emergent nationalisms and provide a convincing counterargument to the challenge of western dominance. Yet among its Japanese exponents, the ideas of cooperation central to the concept’s founders gave way to a racially charged politics of dominance in which Pan-Asianism became a tool to deny, rather than to encourage, the freedom of many of its Asian neighbors. Yet, at the same time, many Asian peoples did find the rhetoric of Pan-Asianism had potency as well, drawing on its assumptions to forge their own ideas of liberation. These ambiguities are explored with brilliance and subtlety in this book.

Hotta’s work, like all the best history, also opens up as many questions as it answers. Pan-Asianism, as she observes, has been followed by other

attempts to forge cross-regional, transnational communities. This book has significant implications not just for understanding imperialism and its ideologies in the receding past, but also for understanding the nature of international society beyond the nation-state today.

*Rana Mitter  
Akira Iriye  
Oxford, May 2007*

# A Note on Names, Translations, and Sources

This book follows the Japanese convention of placing the surname before the given name in referring to Japanese names. For example, Prime Minister Tōjō's full name is expressed as Tōjō Hideki. As an exception, this convention is reversed when identifying the Japanese authors of publications written in English. For example, Ogata Sadako, when she is cited in the context of her English publication, is referred to as Sadako Ogata.

For Japanese words, macrons are used to indicate long vowels, with a long vowel approximately constituting twice the length of the short one in pronunciation. Notable exceptions to this rule are such widely recognized names as Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto, which could be spelled Tōkyō, Ōsaka, and Kyōto. In addition, the spellings of Japanese names and words in book titles are preserved as in the original even when macrons are applicable.

Well-known historical Chinese names and terms, such as Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek, Chiang Tso-lin, Pu Yi, Kwantung Army, and Kuomintang are spelled as they most frequently appear in contemporaneous English literature.

The translations of Japanese sources are all mine unless otherwise specified.

The place of publication for all the Japanese sources cited and consulted is Tokyo, except when indicated otherwise.

# Acknowledgments

It is with much pleasure that I express my thanks to those who helped and inspired me during the writing of this book. First of all, I am indebted to the series editors Akira Iriye and Rana Mitter for taking on my book. The former is an historian whom I have always admired. The latter supervised my doctoral dissertation, from which this book heavily draws. I have cherished the opportunity to work with them both.

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The late Haruko Sumitomo was instrumental in bringing my attention to the life of her elder brother Saionji Kinkazu. Both Masako Saitō and Muneo Ōhashi kindly shared with me their private collections of papers and books on two people featured in the book: Saito Hiroshi and Hamaguchi Osachi, their father and grandfather, respectively. Conversations with them enriched my overall understanding of these fascinating characters.

Friends and colleagues, such as Ikumi Okamoto, Fuyubi Nakamura, Tokiko Nakamura, Christopher Szpilman, Christopher Goto-Jones, Robert J. C. Young, Ankhi Mukherjee, Jacqueline Atkins, and Gwen Robinson, all helped me in this endeavor at various times when I needed their support. I would also like to thank Alessandra Bastagli, Christopher Chappell, and Brigitte Shull at Palgrave Macmillan for their help in finishing the manuscript.

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