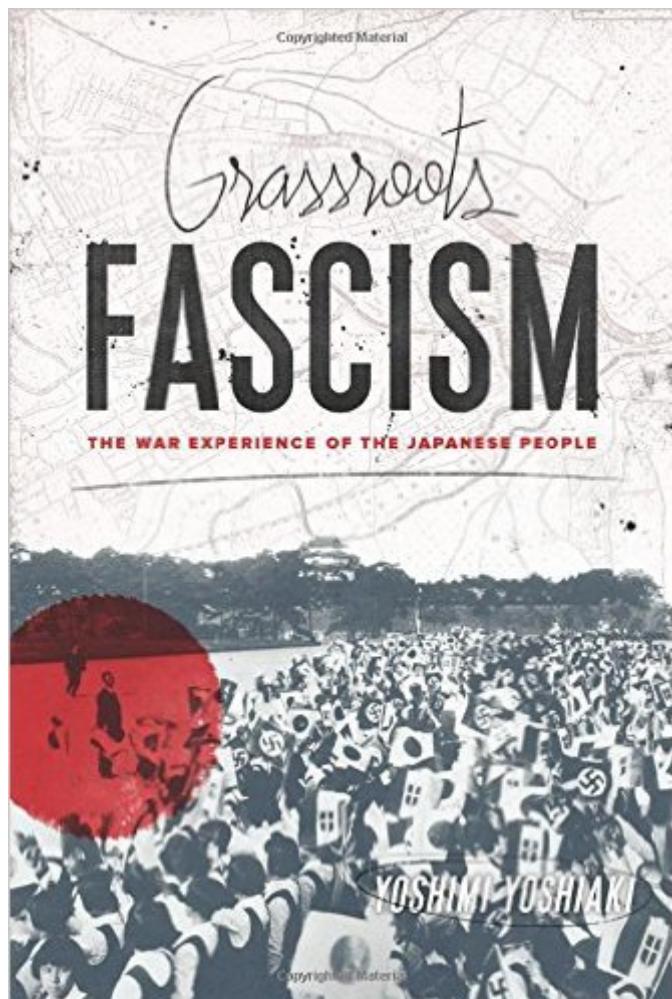


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Grassroots Fascism: The War Experience Of The Japanese People (Weatherhead Books On Asia)



Synopsis

Grassroots Fascism profiles the Asia Pacific War (1937â€”1945)â€”the most important though least understood experience of Japan's modern historyâ€”through the lens of ordinary Japanese life. Moving deftly from the struggles of the home front to the occupied territories to the ravages of the front line, the book offers rare insights into popular experiences from the war's troubled beginnings through Japan's disastrous defeat in 1945 and the new beginning it heralded. Yoshimi Yoshiaki mobilizes diaries, letters, memoirs, and government documents to portray the ambivalent position of ordinary Japanese as both wartime victims and active participants. He also provides penetrating accounts of the war experiences of Japan's minorities and imperial subjects, including Koreans and Taiwanese. His book challenges the idea that the Japanese people operated as a mere conduit for the military during the war, passively accepting an imperial ideology imposed upon them by the political elite. Viewed from the bottom up, wartime Japan unfolds as a complex modern mass society, with a corresponding variety of popular roles and agendas. In chronicling the diversity of wartime Japanese social experience, Yoshimi's account elevates our understanding of "Japanese Fascism." In its relation of World War II to the evolutionâ€”and destructionâ€”of empire, it makes a fresh contribution to the global history of the war. Ethan Mark's translation supplements the Japanese original with explanatory notes and an in-depth introduction that situates the work within Japanese studies and global history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Kusa no ne no fashizumu: Nihon minshu no senso taiken (Atarashii sekaishi) (Japanese Edition) Receiving this new book from .ca (Canada) on Friday, September 18, I have almost read through all the four chapters and the translator's introduction today, September 22. This translation by Ethan Mark of the 1987 Japanese original by Yoshimi Yoshiaki (surname first) should help dispel or even debunk the usual view, held even by some Chinese, that the Sino-Japanese War 1931/1937 and the broadened Asia-Pacific War of 1941-1945 was the product of a handful of militarist Japanese generals and politicians. Actually it was a total war fought wholeheartedly by the soldiers in the battlefields and supported fully and voluntarily by the people of Japan, female and male, old and young. For China, it was a total war involving all of her combatants and civilians; for Japan, it was at the same level and of the same calibre. Chapter 4, "Democracy from the Battlefield", is particularly illuminating. The present trend of historical revisionism in Japan may be understood better through reading these pages. This trend has its roots right after the war, as I see it. What is amazing is that the common Japanese soldiers and common people could write so eagerly in the form of diaries and letters. Comparatively, China's soldiers (excluding officers) of the time were not as literate since many of them were actually illiterate (Cf. "The Battle for China" (Stanford University Press, 2011), page 102). (This high rate of illiteracy was probably not due to the so-called "difficulty" of writing Chinese characters. It is probably due to the lack of general education in China. Japan at the time was probably using more Chinese characters (kanji, in the full form) than now. Even now, Japan still places emphasis on calligraphy, and vertical text is still evident in her many publications.) Chinese army officers did keep many battle diaries, as I subsequently learnt from a quick reading of some pages of the book "Writing War: Soldiers Record the Japanese Empire" (2013) by Aaron Moore. I rarely found a hint of, or allusion to, any question of justness, moral rightness or ethical doubt regarding the waging of this aggressive invasion of the mainland in any of the letters, diaries or survey results quoted in the book. An exception may be the case on pages 194-200; but that happened in 1944, towards the defeat of Japan by the USA. This is an important book that should have come sooner after the original came out. It is exceedingly informative and it reshapes one's thinking. But it is good that the book came this year which marks the 70th anniversary of the ending of the two wars.

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