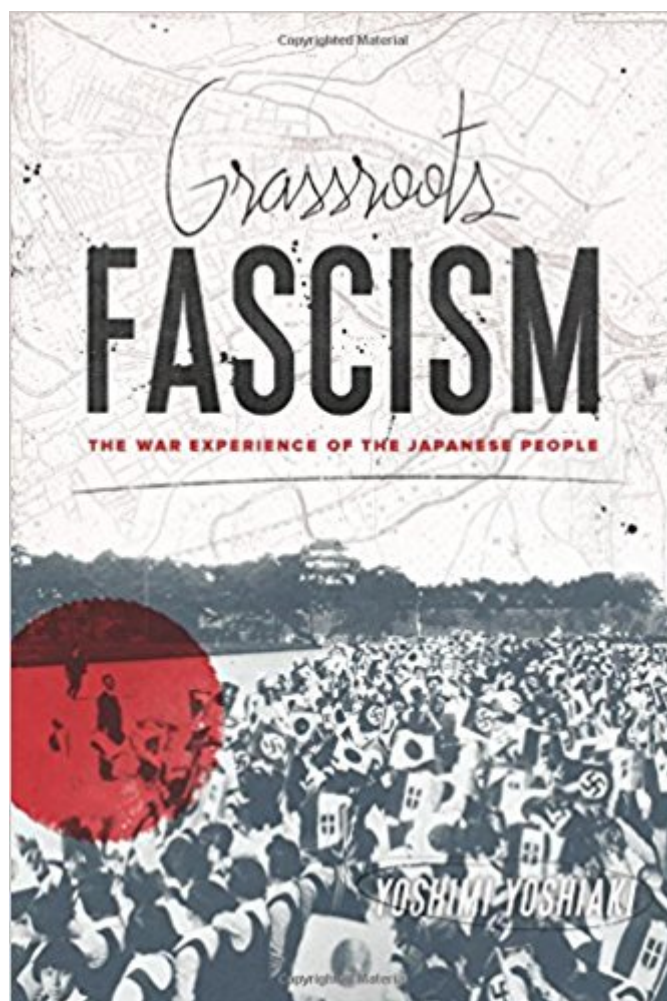


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# Grassroots Fascism: The War Experience Of The Japanese People (Weatherhead Books On Asia)



## Synopsis

Grassroots Fascism profiles the Asia Pacific War (1937–1945) 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 evolution and destruction 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

Grassroots Fascism reveals, through the careful culling, instructive reading, and lucid contextualizing of an array of documents, a broad range of Japanese voices speaking of their experiences in wartime. It is a necessary book for understanding how life was lived and felt and articulated during these difficult years. (Alan Tansman, University of California, Berkeley) The translation of Yoshiaki Yoshimi's unprecedented Grassroots Fascism makes available his compelling narrative of popular participation in the actuality of Japanese fascism before and during the Pacific War. Although this classic work concentrates on how ordinary people were enlisted into Japan's fascist project, it also shows in rich detail the role they were willing to play as agents at the level of everyday life. Yoshimi's book joins a post-Cold War historiographical tradition that once more recognizes the necessity to take fascism seriously as a global conjunctural event. (Harry Harootunian, Columbia University) These searing and honest accounts drawn from the diaries and memoirs of ordinary Japanese soldiers and civilians make abundantly clear the brutality of the Japanese Imperial Army. They also reveal the suffering, the blind devotion, the gradually emerging seeds of doubt, and finally both the catharsis and the disillusionment that came with the collapse of the empire. Ethan Mark's excellent historiographic introduction places Yoshimi's work in the context of postwar Japan's long process of coming to terms with its imperialist past. A crucial contribution to our understanding of modern Japan. (Jordan Sand, Georgetown University) Yoshimi skillfully shows how people, who were initially opposed to the military government's policies, ultimately became fervent collaborators with the fascists and committed atrocities in various parts of the Asia Pacific during World War II. Yoshimi also challenges the difficult question of why the Japanese failed to develop a strong sense of war responsibility for victims of the Asian war despite their dire experiences. A valuable volume for comprehending why Japan as a nation is still unable to resolve the problem of war responsibility. (Toshi Yuki Tanaka, author of Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II) Ethan Mark's elegant translation... is sure to add a crucial level of complexity to the global scholarly discourse on the nature of Japan's war, and indeed on the social mechanics of war in general... Insightful, eminently readable. (H-Net Japan) This is an important work that anyone with an interest in historical disputes in East Asia should read. (Lanxin Xiang Survival) [Grassroots Fascism] offers a comprehensive narrative of the situation from the beginning of the war in Asia to the early days following surrender to the Allied forces. (Eric Brittingham The Japan Times) Drawing from an impressive array of primary sources... the book provides one of the richest articulations of the voices, beliefs, and attitudes developed by million of Japanese as they moved from their villages to the expanding boundaries of the wartime empire. (Japanese Studies) Ethan Mark deserves praise for translating this seminal work and for supplying a valuable

introductory essay setting it in the broader context of Japanese scholarship. (Asian Affairs) This chronicle of wartime mentalities from the bottom up is essential reading for anyone interested in fascism conceptually and the Asia-Pacific Theater of World War II. It testifies to Yoshimi's unflinching scholarship and his ongoing quest to promote serious debate about Japan's wartime past. (Eri Hotta World War II) This book will enliven our classrooms and enrich historiographical discourses on war, empire, and fascism both within and beyond Japanese history (Pacific Historical Review)

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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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