

Best, Antony: *The International History of East Asia, 1900–1968. Trade, Ideology and the Quest for Order*. London: Routledge 2009. ISBN: 978-0-415-40124-1; 224 S.

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Antony Best's edited volume reflects an ongoing effort by scholars to bring out the richness of the interactions experienced by East Asian countries, both among themselves and with the outside world. Empirically grounded in archival and other primary sources, this work of multinational collaboration brings together eleven articles – in addition to an introduction by the editor and concluding remarks by Akira Iriye – mainly dealing with Anglo-Japanese geopolitical and trade relations from 1900 to 1968, but set within a broad, multilateral context. While the topics covered are conventional, this volume nevertheless adds subtlety and depth to existing scholarship. This is a step forward indeed.

Ian Nish's essay is a well-structured account of the Anglo-Japanese History Project of 1995-2003, the fruits of which can be seen in the ten volumes of findings, published by Palgrave-Macmillan, which comprehensively discuss the history of the relationship between Britain and Japan from 1600 to 2000. Within East Asia, the Japan-South Korea and China-Japan joint projects on their common histories, launched within the last ten years, are also proving to be important vehicles for peoples of different nationalities to dialogue with one another about vastly different interpretations of their shared history. Revisiting the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902-22 – a „flagship policy,“ as Nish terms it – Antony Best argues that it grew out of the Anglo-American „open door“ ideology in China in an attempt to counter Russian influence and preserve the regional balance of power in East Asia. Anglo-Japanese differences over these very issues, however, led to the demise of the alliance in 1922.

Robert Bickers throws interesting light on Japanese involvement in the British-dominated Chinese Maritime Customs Service, skillfully giving a new twist to a presumably well-trodden topic. Bickers cuts to

the heart of the entangled interests and loyalties of the Service's Japanese, British, and Chinese employees at different times toward Qing China, Britain, Japan, and the Maritime Customs Service itself. Harumi Goto-Shibata takes a close look at the interplay between the British Empire, the U.S., Japan and China as reflected in the vicissitudes of the Opium Advisory Committee of the League of Nations. Joseph A. Maiolo examines the origins and collapse in 1939 of the international naval armaments limitation system, instituted by the Washington Conference treaties of 1922. He suggests that, rather than London simply acting as a poodle of Washington, both Britain and Japan responded to American naval superiority with rational calculations of the strategic realities involved, a process which was intimately linked with the management of warship construction through international treaties.

Masataka Matsuura contextualizes the rise of pan-Asianism in Japan as inaugurated and bolstered by Japanese social, economic and foreign policies in the 1930s. Among the many factors contributing to Japan's justification for war in East and Southeast Asia, anti-British independence refugees from India, particularly those residing in Kobe, made use of the rhetoric related to the Greater Asia Co-prosperity Sphere and contributed strongly to its influence in the political arena. Further to Matsuura's discussion, Hans van de Ven discusses the Japanese bombing of Canton and Shanghai and its effects on people's perceptions of both China and Japan.

Arriving at a similar conclusion to most of the authors in this volume, Tomoki Kuniyoshi highlights the significant contribution of Britain in influencing the formulation of and modifications to the San Francisco system, usually seen as an attempt to create a Cold War international order in East Asia molded by the United States. Shifting focus to South and Southeast Asia, Peter Rowe's article details British initiatives in the region to improve economic and social conditions – in hopes of containing Communism – through organizations such as the Colombo Plan and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation. The last two chapters, by Shigeru Akita and Nicholas J. White respectively, are

devoted to Anglo-British trade and geopolitics in Japan and Southeast Asia. Through an analysis of the development and influence of the Sterling Payment Agreements with Japan, Akita reminds readers that Britain still exerted an influence in East and Southeast Asia in the 1950s, despite its decline as a world power. In his study, White unravels the symbiotic relationship between Britain and Japan in the 1950s-60s – for instance in Malaya, Borneo, Singapore, and Thailand – a relationship based mainly on geopolitical rather than exclusively business considerations. Furthermore, Britain's role in helping expand Japan's links with Southeast Asia after the Second World War should not be overlooked.

Two common themes are prominent throughout this edited volume: the waning but still influential role of Britain and the ascendancy of the United States in East and Southeast Asia in the first sixty years of the twentieth century. As researchers in the field of international history move forward, new and unconventional topics – including the study of transnational phenomena and agents with blurred state and non-state identities – as well as the expanded use of multi-language sources, are being undertaken. Just like what this volume indicates, this will be a challenging but worthwhile task.

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