

Kelly A. Hammond. *China's Muslims and Japan's Empire: Centering Islam in World War II.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020. 314 pp. \$29.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-4696-5965-7.

Reviewed by Seok-Won Lee (Rhodes College)

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Commissioned by Margaret Sankey (Air University)

Hammond's book is an important contribution to the study of the cultural and intellectual history of the Japanese Empire. Acknowledging recent works on Pan-Asianism in Japanese history, *China's Muslims and Japan's Empire* probes the question of how Islamic communities in China encountered Japan and its empire building in the 1930s and 1940s. Hammond's narrative powerfully engages the audience since this book is not confined to a conventional institutionalist approach—that is, how a colonial empire integrated the colonized through top-down policies. Instead, this work first pays attention to the hybrid identity and culture of the Muslim population in China and then focuses on the tense and provocative relations between Muslim communities in China and Southeast Asia and imperial Japan. Through this, the author attempts to challenge the perception of Asian culture and religion in which the presence of Islamic believers has been largely neglected.

Throughout the book, the author well demonstrates the intertwined presence of Muslim communities in twentieth-century Asian history. The author acknowledges that “Islam and Muslims were never central to imperial Japan's initiatives and decision making,” and that they were considered as part of an “add-on” (p. 149) in Japan's grand Pan-Asian strategy. However, Hammond's

work reveals the subtle and crucial presence of Sino-Muslims and Islamic believers in Southeast Asia during the tumultuous time period of 1931-45.

Hammond offers two different groups of Muslims within Asia. According to the author, Sino-Muslims had undergone a dynamic identity formation. While they were under the influence of Han Chinese-oriented politics and culture championed by Sino-centrism, they also showed their religious adherence to Arabic language and culture. This hybridity is well described in this book, and the author makes the convincing point that Sino-Muslims maintained cooperative and conflicting relations with both the Nationalist government in China and imperial Japan. The Japanese Empire constantly approached a small but important number of Sino-Muslim communities to make them a showcase of Japan's Pan-Asian empire building. Imperial Japan offered several “inclusive” gestures to Sino-Muslims, including educational opportunities in China and Japan, while imperial policymakers in wartime Japan were reluctant to instill Japanese identity into the minds and culture of Sino-Muslims.

The nuanced relation between Sino-Muslims and imperial Japan became increasingly complex, as most Southeast Asian countries were under Japan's control in the early 1940s. Hammond argues

that Muslims in Southeast Asia showed less intensive national identities, and this provided Japan with a different basis from which to propagandize its Pan-Asian rhetoric. The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was logically associated with Pan-Islamism, and imperial Japan disseminated its deceptive but highly tempting rhetoric of the “liberation of Southeast Asia” from European colonialism, which had been hostile to Islamic culture. Hammond makes the point that the logic of liberation was not simply empty rhetoric, since a number of Muslims in Southeast Asia accepted Japan as a liberator. Nevertheless, Muslim communities in Southeast Asia still cast a dubious eye on the Japanese Empire, perceiving its real nature. Malaysian Islamic believers, for example, still maintained close ties to the Nationalist government in mainland China. Under these circumstances, imperial Japan revealed its explicit motivation to integrate Southeast Asia into the Japanese Empire. As is well known, the wartime economy of oil necessitated Japan’s bold moves to put Southeast Asia under its control in the early 1940s.

In chapters 4 and 5, the author provides interesting stories about how Muslims in Southeast Asia were approached quite differently from Sino-Muslims by the Japanese Empire. While opportunities for Sino-Muslims were confined to supporting their businesses or helping them visit the Middle East, imperial Japan became increasingly aggressive in dealing with Muslim communities in Southeast Asia. Offering Japanese-language education was an obvious example of this, indicating that Muslim communities in Southeast Asia had to take the question of becoming “Japanese” more seriously than Sino-Muslims. In addition to education and cultural policies, Japan also utilized its existing tea trade network to penetrate the everyday life of Muslim communities in Southeast Asia. Here, the author argues that Sino-Muslims played an important role in linking imperial Japan to Muslims in Southeast Asia through the tea business. The tea connection between Sino and Southeast Asian Muslims and imperial Japan provides

an important insight for a more intertwined history of tea in modern East Asia. The final chapter of this book attempts to draw a broader picture of how Muslim communities in China and Inner Asia, Afghans in particular, emerged as a crucial geopolitical factor amid the ideological and cultural conflicts between Caucasian states and fascist regimes, including imperial Japan.

All in all, anyone interested in the history of Muslim communities in wartime Asia will find this work valuable. As the author shares in her epilogue the contemporary aspect of the marginalization of Islamic believers in China in the name of “Islamophobia,” this book is a must-read for those eager to develop a critical perspective concerning how war and politics first appropriated minority religious communities and how these communities responded to state power and imperial violence.

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