

MEARC Lecture

# Taking Fascism Globally: Assessing Yoshimi's Grass-Roots Fascism

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Tuesday February 19th, 2008

15.00 - 17.00

Lipsius building, LUF room (148)



## Abstract

Written in Japanese and now in the final stages of translation into English, Yoshimi Yoshiaki's classic 1987 study *Grass-Roots Fascism: The War Experience of the Japanese People* (Kusa no ne no fashizumu: Nihon minshū no sensō taiken) reveals the dynamics of Japan's aggressive expansion into North- and Southeast Asia in the 1930s and 40s, and its concurrent mission of national renewal, as a popular phenomenon. Its astonishingly researched social "view from below" places it in the company of some of the best recent historiography of fascism in the West. Focusing on the changing experiences and moods of ordinary people as revealed in primary sources, *Grass-Roots Fascism* is not meant to offer a new theorization of fascism as such. But more than just a story that should simply be read "in supplement to" or "in comparison with" studies of fascism in Europe, I would submit that the empire-wide framework of the narrative, its focus on ordinary citizens, and its very location "outside" of the usual Eurocentric field of vision, raises provocative questions regarding intersections of fascism, imperialism and nationalism as phenomena of a global interwar social and cultural milieu. My talk will focus on this reading of Grass-roots fascism and of "Japanese fascism" in general.

Dr. Ethan Mark is lecturer in modern Japanese history in the Department of Japanese and Korean Studies at Leiden University.

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