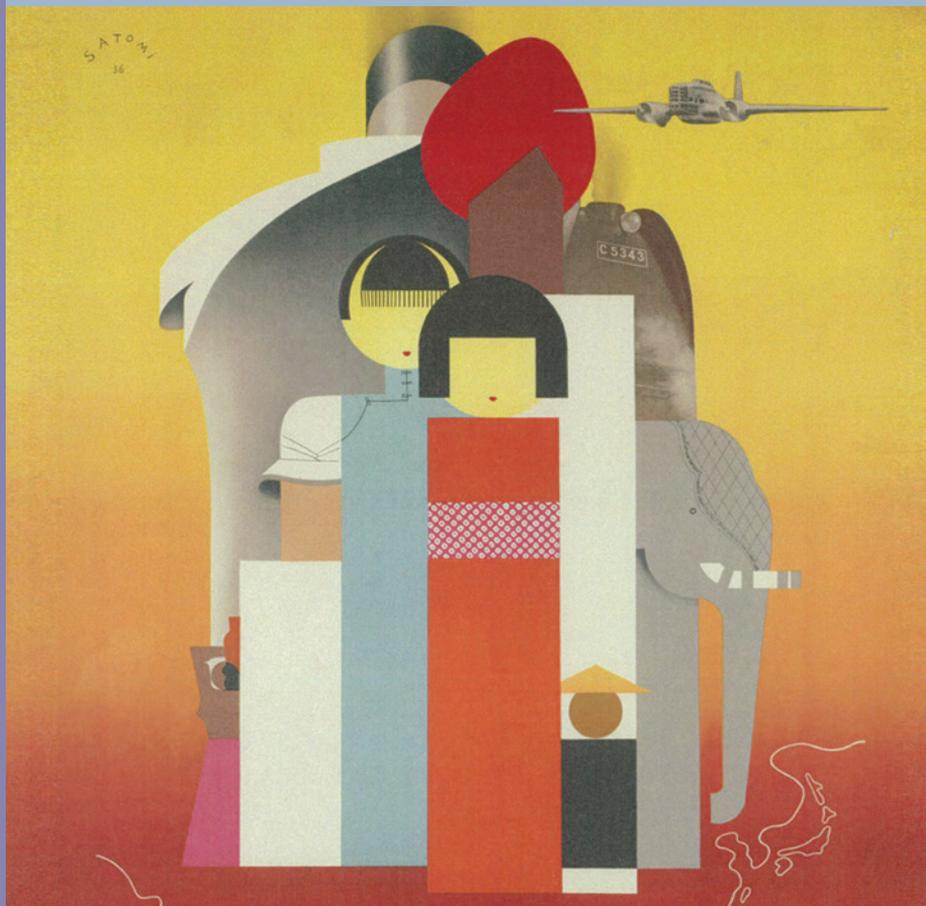


ASIAN HERITAGES



Edited by Carolien Stolte and Yoshiyuki Kikuchi

Eurasian Encounters

Museums, Missions, Modernities

Amsterdam
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IIAS
International Institute
for Asian Studies

Eurasian Encounters



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1 Eurasian Encounters

Cross-border Intellectual and Cultural Exchange, 1900-1950

Carolien Stolte and Yoshiyuki Kikuchi

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Introduction

The chapters in this volume were first presented at a joint IIAS-ISEAS international conference entitled *Asia-Europe Encounters: Intellectual and cultural exchanges 1900-1950*, which was held at the Museum of Asian Civilizations in Singapore. The conference attracted a particularly interesting mix of scholars – junior and senior academics, from universities across the globe, whose research covered the length and breadth of Europe and Asia. The present collection of essays builds on the results of this conference. The editors hope to have succeeded in maintaining the diversity that made the conference so dynamic. This volume therefore contains chapters by leading researchers in the field as well as early-career scholars, and covers a range of countries from India and Sri Lanka to China, Japan, Russia, Uzbekistan, Germany, and France.

The conference had been convened to explore the intellectual and cultural flows between Asia and Europe that occurred during, and were formative of, the political and social changes over the first half of the twentieth century. As the original call for papers stated, the first half of the twentieth century saw some of the most intense political and social changes experienced thus far in world history. Shiraishi Takashi's coinage of the 1910s and 1920s as an 'age in motion' in Southeast Asia might be extended as a reference to Asia-Europe relations during the half-century more generally.¹ It was an age in which high imperialism began to unravel

1 Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion*.

and global power shifted. The period around 1950 marked the ending of one age of Asia-Europe interactions and the beginning of another.

This volume explores the intellectual and cultural flows between Asia and Europe during the momentous political and social changes of the first half of the twentieth century. More specifically, it situates those flows in a context of an increased mobility of artists, writers, educators, and missionaries, as well as an increasingly global consciousness among those who worked or wrote from home. While cultural and intellectual exchange in the larger area of Eurasia was by no means a new phenomenon, it was in the first half of the twentieth century that these interactions were marked by an unprecedented increase in transnational traffic and in the development of cosmopolitan subjects, resulting in new collocations of ideas and cross-cultural influences. None of the authors of this volume arrest these flows into a frame of impact and response, a persistent historiographical model that is clearly a product of imperialism and nationalism.² The narratives presented here all focus on human agencies, interactions, and hybridities. Collectively, they show how all corners of Eurasia interacted in artistic, academic, and religious spheres through new cosmopolitanisms and subjectivities.

Earlier studies in the field of internationalism and global associational life in the early twentieth century have tended to focus on individuals and groups in Asia who sought inclusion in forums such as the League of Nations, the International Labour Organization and other Western-dominated institutions.³ These studies tended to overlook individuals and groups who rejected or acted outside of that particular international stage, seeking either to change the terms of interaction or to change the international stage itself by creating new religious, educational, and artistic institutions. In this sense, the volume connects to the most recent work in the field, which sees the early twentieth century as a polycentric and multi-layered world. The proliferation of highly mobile organizations (and their members and ideologies) in this era has been well documented in recent scholarship.⁴

2 For the impact-response model, especially in the context of modern Chinese history, see Teng and Fairbank, *China's responses to the West*. For a critique of this framework, see Cohen, *Discovering History in China*.

3 These studies are particularly important for demonstrating that these institutions were, in fact, global ones. For recent examples, Laqua (ed.), *Internationalism Reconfigured*; Herren (ed.), *Networking the International System*; De Haan et al. (eds.), *Women's Activism*; Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*.

4 Raza, Roy and Zachariah (eds.), *The Internationalist Moment*, 2014; Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia*; Aydin, *Politics of Anti-Westernism*; Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*.

Mindful of the fact that the years after the First World War can also be regarded as a period of de-globalization, we note that the chapters presented here focus primarily on the increase of mobilities of people and ideas at the non-state level.⁵ They highlight spaces in which these multiple layers were particularly visible (artistic, religious, and intellectual spaces respectively) and which reached far across the borders of empires and nation states.

The papers presented at the conference clearly demonstrated that the intellectual and cultural currents of this age affected all corners of both continents, and that people and ideas often moved to (or took root in) unexpected places.⁶ The editors therefore decided to use the term 'Eurasia' in its broadest possible sense: as a physio-geographical expression indicating a large zone of interaction, rather than the more narrow definition common in international relations and security studies.⁷ The use of this term invites the inclusion of historical connections that were lateral rather than hierarchical. It also accommodates the inclusion of areas that are not normally incorporated in analyses of the late colonial period, as well as the inclusion of interactions that took place, self-consciously or not, outside of imperial frames. The chapters by Boram Shin, Helena Čapková, and Andrea Germer for instance, who bring this analytical framework to bear on Russian-Uzbek and German-Japanese interactions respectively, demonstrate that the dynamics of Eurasian interaction in the first half of the twentieth century were certainly not limited to or determined by the networks and communication lines of colonial empires alone. The setting of Eurasia is inspired, in part, by Tim Harper and Sunil Amrith's call to think about interaction in an Asian setting broadly, and to interrogate assumptions about the symbolism and substance of regions and sub-regions.⁸ The long dominance of oceanic perspectives, for instance, has tended to obscure Central and North Asian connections and links. Thinking broadly about the geographic zone in which these interactions took place allows us to include both the highroads of empire and the less conspicuous routes.

5 On post-1914 deglobalization, see Bayly, *Birth of the Modern World*, pp. 464-487. On the point that this does not exclude a contemporaneous growing sense of interconnectivity, see Arsan, Lewis and Richard, 'Editorial', p. 157.

6 For a sample of an increasing body of inspiring work, see Framke, *Delhi-Rom-Berlin*; Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*; Pennybacker, *Scottsboro to Munich*.

7 On varying definitions of Eurasia, see Lewis and Wigen, *Myth of Continents*.

8 Harper and Amrith, 'Introduction', p. 2.