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**Why did the China War Spread Southward?**Masataka MATSUURA<sup>1</sup>

An academic debate continues to rage over whether or not the Manchurian Incident was the beginning of the so-called Greater East Asia War. Recently, research arguing that the path to the war uncertain rather than direct, and that there were a number of opportunities that could have led to peace has gained the upper-hand. Historians such as Kaoru Sugihara, Shigeru Akita, and Naoto Kagotani have focused on possibilities of economic cooperation in Asia between the Japan and Britain. Up to now, I, too, have argued that there were opportunities to avoid the Sino-Japanese War and military conflict between Japan and Britain through the efforts of business people such as Shigeaki Ikeda and Anglophile diplomats such as Shigeru Yoshida. In the end, though, the China War moved southward and resulted in the Japanese war with Britain, the United States, France, and Holland. Why? The actors who broadened the war by moving it south have been branded as war-mongering aggressors or fascists, but what were the choices that faced these so-called outlaws, and how were the attempts by the “peace-lovers” defeated? These questions have never been adequately answered.

This essay argues that the ideology of pan-Asianism guided Japan to spread the China War southward and toward the “Greater East Asia War.” This ideology, an evolved form of earlier Japanese Asianism, contributed to the outbreak of

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Manchurian Incident, Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations, the country's recovery from the worldwide depression, and to the resulting commercial friction with Britain. Imperative to an analysis of pan-Asianism is a focus on the Great Asia Society that was founded in 1933 and on its leader, Iwane Matsui, the army's top commander in China. Until now, historians have only paid attention to Matsui in the context of his central role in the Nanjing Massacre. He is either the "Tragic General" and the "Shōwa Saint-General" (*Shōwa no seishō*) or the bloodstained mastermind of the massacre. This essay will explore the actual relationship that Matsui and his colleagues in the Great Asia Society had with the war and politics and how they engaged domestic political rivals by illuminating the role of pan-Asianism and by looking at the political situation in detail.

This paper is divided into three parts. Section one describes how Matsui, who had retired from active service after a career in which he had established himself as a top China-hand and rose to become chief of the intelligence and propaganda division at staff headquarters and commander of the army in Taiwan, returned as the top military commander in China in 1937. Then, it will examine how Matsui devised a military strategy in Shanghai and Nanjing that relied heavily on an intelligence and propaganda campaign based on pan-Asianism and how he tried to fracture the Nationalist government. Finally, it will investigate Matsui's temporary fall from grace. Section two tells of the establishment of the Great Asia Society, introduces the arguments made by Matsui and the group's other leaders, and explores the immense influence of the organization. Section three analyzes how Matsui, after his "triumphant but frustrating return" from the China War, collaborated with the Great Asia Society and other organizations to boost public support for the pan-Asian movement and guided Japan down a pathway to the Greater East Asia War.