

## Pan-Asianism as an Ideal of Asian Identity and Solidarity, 1850-Present アジアの主体性・団結の理想としての汎アジア主義—1850年から今日まで

Christopher W. A. Szpilman, Sven Saaler

### Pan-Asianism as an Ideal of Asian Identity and Solidarity, 1850-Present

Sven Saaler and Christopher W. A. Szpilman

This is a revised, updated and abbreviated version of the introduction to the two volume collection by the authors of *Pan-Asianism. A Documentary History* Vol. 1 covers the years 1850-1920; Vol. 2 covers the years 1850-present, [link](#).

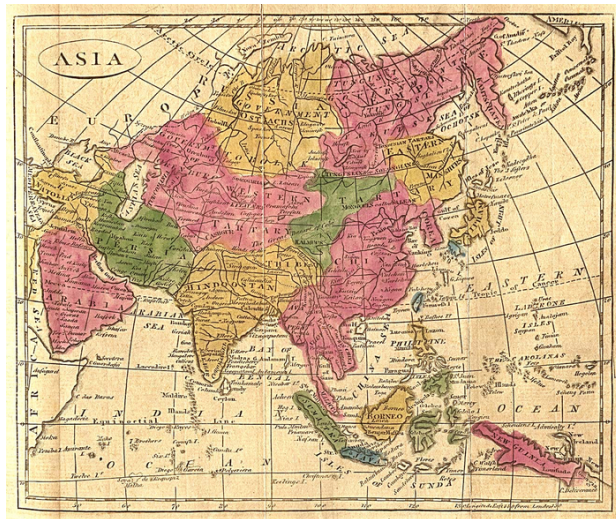
The economic and political power of Asia, the world's largest continent, is increasing rapidly. According to the latest projections, the gross domestic products of China and India, the world's most populous nations, will each surpass that of the United States in the not-too-distant future. China's economy, like Japan's, is already larger than that of any single European country. With this new economic might comes growing diplomatic influence. The twenty-first century, many pundits agree, will be an Asian century. This undisputed Asian success story, together with its accompanying tensions and discontents, has attracted much media and scholarly attention. Yet for all this talk of Asia, there is no consensus on what Asia actually stands for as a whole. Is the vast Asian landmass a single entity? There has never been—and perhaps never will be—universal agreement on this question.

**Where is Asia?**

Attempts to define Asia are almost as old as the term itself. The word “Asia” originated in ancient Greece in the fifth century BC. It originally denoted the lands of the Persian Empire extending east of the Bosphorus Straits but subsequently developed into a general term used by Europeans to describe all the lands lying to the east of Europe. (The point where Europe ended and Asia began was, however, never clearly defined.) Often, this usage connoted a threat, real or perceived, by Asia to Europe—a region smaller in area, much less populous, poorer, and far less significant than Asia in terms of global history.

The term “Asia” arrived in East Asia relatively late, being introduced by Jesuit missionaries in the sixteenth century. The term is found, written in Chinese characters (亜細亞), on Chinese maps of the world made around 1600 under the supervision of Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), one of the founders of the Jesuit mission in China. However, it took two more centuries before the name gained wide currency in the region. For it was only with the resumption of European colonialist expansion in the nineteenth century that “Asia” ceased to be a technical term used by East Asian cartographers and, in reaction to the threat of Western colonialism, came to represent a specific geopolitical space bound together by such commonalities as a shared history, close cultural links, a long record of diplomatic relations, trade exchanges, and the notion of a “common destiny.” Although the definitions of Asia were diverse and often contradictory, the real or perceived Western threat caused an

increasing number of intellectuals, politicians, and activists throughout Asia to argue for strengthening “Asian” solidarity in relation to “the West.”



**1808 map of Asia**

These arguments about the definition and nature of Asia in reaction to the impending Western threat marked the beginnings of Pan-Asianism as an ideology and a movement. Vague sentiments about strengthening Asian solidarity were gradually developed into concrete policy proposals for a united defense of Asia against the encroachments of Western imperialism. In many cases, such calls for Asian solidarity, integration, and unity were accompanied by endeavors to create an Asian identity by postulating commonalities and identifying traditions of interaction and interrelationship. Some thinkers took for granted the existence of an Asian identity. Others argued that such an identity must be deliberately forged as a necessary condition for realizing the ultimate objective of unifying Asia. Although individual writers in different places and at different times advocated a wide variety of strategies and views on the nature of Asian unity, we can nonetheless observe a certain degree of uniformity in the development of pan-Asian rhetoric from the nineteenth century

down to the present—a pattern discussed below.

In this way, then, a pan-Asian worldview or “style of thought” became established and diffused throughout the region. It can be identified in the writings of intellectuals, political statements, popular slogans, and even in songs and poems in a number of Asian states and nations. A representative selection of such texts, all of which are of great significance in the history of Pan-Asianism and Asian regionalism, are included in this collection. They were written or collected in various parts of Asia, from Japan, through Korea, China, Indonesia, and India to the Ottoman Empire, over the past 150 years. These texts, most of which have been translated into English from a number of Asian languages, are brought to the Western reader for the first time in an easily accessible form. Each source is accompanied by a commentary that provides essential information, such as a biographical sketch of the author and the historical context of the document under consideration.

A number of collections of pan-Asian texts have been published in Japanese. The most important of these is Takeuchi Yoshimi’s (1910–1977) volume *Asianism*, which, in addition to providing a selection of sources, examines the significance of Pan-Asianism and attempts to place it in its historical context. Much less useful is the recently published three-volume anthology, *Ajishugishatachi no Koe* (Pan-Asianist Voices), which merely reproduces snippets of texts seemingly at random without any critical contextualization. Pan-Asianism, however, receives scant attention in widely available English-language source collections on Asia such as the volumes in the Introduction to Asian Civilizations series—*Sources of Japanese Tradition*, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, *Sources of Korean Tradition* and *Sources of Indian Tradition*.

The end of the Cold War in 1989 produced a

surge of interest in issues of regionalism and transnational identity in contemporary East Asia. This new interest in contemporary regionalism was followed only a decade later by the recognition of the long-term historical developments underlying the geopolitical formation of the East Asian region and the idea of Asian solidarity (i.e., the ideology of Pan-Asianism) as important research subjects. Few works on Pan-Asianism were published before 2000 in any language. But since the beginning of the twenty-first century there has been an upsurge of interest in the historical development of Pan-Asianism, reflected in a stream of book-length publications on various aspects of Pan-Asianism. In addition, a number of important articles have been published on the subject over the years. Notwithstanding these publications, however, knowledge of Pan-Asianism and its role in modern Asia remains fragmented, unsystematic, and unbalanced.

This collection aims to remedy the situation by providing readers with the seminal documents of Pan-Asianism and thus a comprehensive overview of the development of the ideals of Asian solidarity and regionalism in the hope of stimulating further research and providing the foundations for a synthesis of earlier work. The major difficulty with researching Pan-Asianism is a linguistic one, for it would be very difficult, if not impossible, for any one scholar to master all the languages necessary for a comprehensive study of the subject. So, while the community of scholars interested in issues of Asian regionalism continues to grow, linguistic difficulties and the barriers of specialization have prevented them from studying Pan-Asianism as an ideology that transcends linguistic boundaries and national narratives and examining the processes of regional integration in East Asia from the perspective of the *longue durée*. We hope that this collection, with its comprehensive approach, will help scholars to look beyond the scope of their narrow specializations and open new possibilities for transnational cooperation

in research on Asian regionalism.

### **The Origins of Pan-Asianism: Macronationalism and Transnationalism**

The term “Asia” came into common use in East Asia only in the mid-nineteenth century in response to the increasing diplomatic, military, and economic presence of the Western powers, and their territorial expansion in East Asia. The Opium War of 1839–1842 was a watershed in the history of Asian–European encounters. The British victory led to the recognition, throughout East Asia, of Europe as a common threat, and it was at that time that intellectuals and politicians throughout the region began to consider the questions of “Asia” and Asian solidarity. With a view to giving the concept of solidarity substance, they began exploring Asian cultural commonalities and the common historical heritage of the continent. It is of course true that, as Hamashita Takeshi and other scholars have pointed out, East Asian countries had a long history of interaction before the nineteenth century. This took the form of an interstate system, centered on China. It was this Sinocentric system (sometimes also known as the tributary system) to which the Western powers had to accommodate when they first came into contact with East Asian states. But it was the acute sense of crisis brought about by the Chinese defeat in the Opium War that forced Asian writers and thinkers actively to pursue the agenda of a united Asia, an Asia with a common goal—the struggle against Western imperialism.

Ideas of Asian solidarity came in a large variety of forms, as did the geographical definitions underlying claims for regional solidarity. Some forms of the concept were based on assumptions of racial unity, following, curiously enough, racial notions that had originated in the West (Hannaford 1996; Dikötter 1997). Others tended to emphasize commonalities in culture and language (more accurately written

language). This was especially the case in East Asia, often referred to in the West as the “Orient” (Japanese: *Tōyō*; Korean: *Tong’yang*; Chinese: *Dongyang*), a region which, for thousands of years, had been under the powerful influence of Chinese civilization. (The term “East Asia” was used from the late nineteenth century on [Japanese: *Tōa*; Korean: *Dong-a*; Chinese: *Dong-ya*].) In this context, some thinkers saw the new quest for solidarity as a strengthening of the existing networks of economic and cultural exchange. Others were inspired by pan-movements emerging almost simultaneously in Europe and America. The various approaches to Pan-Asianism, however, all shared a common emphasis on transnationalism and Asian unity.

Pan-Asianism was at times used to legitimize Japan’s territorial aggrandizement and colonial expansion. One of the few detailed studies of pan-movements in general, Louis Snyder’s *Macro-Nationalisms*, characterizes pan-movements as “Nationalism Writ Large” or “extended nationalisms.” However, as the present volume shows, advocacy of Pan-Asianism also reflected reservations about the concepts of nation and nationalism, which were also imported in their modern forms to Asia from the West in the nineteenth century. The popularity of a transnational Pan-Asianism and the transnational political activities of revolutionaries show that the nation was not, as is often believed, an absolute and unquestioned value in Asia. (The rise of pan-movements in other parts of the world, too, has been seen as an expression of skepticism over the absolute character of the “nation.”) To be sure, in a number of Asian countries protonationalism had already developed before the arrival of the European powers in the region. Within the Sinocentric international order, the elites of tributary states in East Asia had developed their own sense of nationhood. However, in the nineteenth century new forms of nationalism developed in East Asia. In the same way as Pan-Asianism, they represented a reaction to

Western colonialism and over time developed into national independence movements. Yet again, these nationalist aspirations and the independence movements they spawned were characterized by strong *transnational* links, alliances that were apparent in the activities of Asian revolutionaries described in this volume: Indians, Vietnamese, Indonesians, Filipinos, and activists from other Asian countries who went into exile in Japan, where they exchanged ideas, promoted pan-Asian solidarity, developed networks, and worked together to achieve national independence. Benedict Anderson has brilliantly traced the process by which the elites of colonized nations developed a sense of national identity and a desire for independence from their colonial masters during periods of residence in the metropole. It could be argued that a similar process was at work in the case of the revolutionary members of Asian elites. Particularly those who found themselves in Japan, whether as students or exiles, interacted with other Asians and in this way developed a common Asian consciousness.

In Japan they came also into contact with Japanese pan-Asianists, many of whom supported independence movements throughout Asia. The Japanese triumph in the war with Russia in 1904–1905 was an important turning point, an event that accelerated the spread of pan-Asian ideas throughout the continent. Many Asians now believed that Japan would soon assume leadership in the struggle against the tyranny of the Western imperialist powers. Even in distant Egypt, a delighted Arab announced the news of the Russian defeat to the Chinese revolutionary leader Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925), who was traveling by boat through the Suez Canal. “The joy of this Arab, as a member of the great Asiatic race,” Sun recalled many years later, “seemed to know no bounds”. However, disillusionment with Japan soon set in when it embarked on a program of carving out its own colonial empire at the expense of other Asian nations and justified these expansionist policies

with pan-Asian rhetoric.

Pan-Asian cooperation was institutionalized in the form of numerous pan-Asian associations founded all over Asia and was also reflected in pan-Asian conferences that took place in Japan, China, and Afghanistan in the 1920s and 1930s. These developments showed the diversity and interconnectedness of anti-Western movements throughout Asia. A few examples will suffice to illustrate this phenomenon. In 1907, socialists and anarchists from China, Japan, and India joined forces to found the Asiatic Humanitarian Brotherhood in Tokyo. In 1909 Japanese and Muslim pan-Asianists in Japan established the Ajia Gikai (Asian Congress) with the goal of promoting the cause of Asian solidarity and liberation. It was almost certainly this Ajia Gikai that a British intelligence report referred to when it mentioned “an Oriental Association in Tokyo attended by Japanese, Filipinos, Siamese, Indians, Koreans, and Chinese, where Count Okuma [Shigenobu, 1838-1922] once delivered an anti-American lecture”. In 1921, the Pan-Turanian Association was founded in Tokyo to rally Japanese support for the unification of the Turks of Central Asia and their liberation from Russian rule. The association cooperated closely with the Greater Asia Association (Dai Ajia Kyōkai) and other Japanese pan-Asian organizations.

The transnational character of Pan-Asianism was also apparent in its publishing activities. Indian pan-Asianists published material in Japan, China, the United States, and Germany; Japanese pan-Asianists published in China, India, and the United States. Koreans, too, such as the court noble An Kyongsu (1853-1900), published their works in Japan. Journals with a clear pan-Asian message—the source of many of the documents in this collection—were published in Japan, China, and Southeast Asia.

Although such writings might be dismissed as mere “propaganda”, there is no doubt that a significant number of Westerners were

sympathetic to the ideals of Asian solidarity and Pan-Asianism. At the center of pan-Asian activities in Japan at the end of World War I stood the now obscure French mystic, Paul Richard (1874-1967), whose works were published in Japan, India, and the United States and certainly widely read, at least in Japan. In the 1920s and 1930s, the famous editor of the *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*, Karl Haushofer (1869-1946), paid tribute to the pan-Asian movement, seeing it as proof of his theory that international relations would come to be dominated by regional blocs. Haushofer introduced to his readers the writings and activities of pan-Asianists such as Sun Yat-sen, Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), and Benoy Kumar Sarkar (1887-1949). These Asian activists and revolutionaries, Haushofer was convinced, reflected a trend toward a future world order that would be dominated by large, regional blocs, replacing the existing order characterized by the sovereign nation-state. Another proponent of pan-ideas, Richard Nikolaus Count von Coudenhove-Kalergi (1894-1972), the founder of the pan-European movement and the publisher of the journal *Pan-Europa*, also praised the pan-Asian movement; a Japanese translation of an enthusiastic article by him appeared in the journal *Dai Ajiashugi* (Greater Asianism).

As a final striking example of the appeal of Pan-Asianism to Westerners, in 1934 an anonymous Greek wrote a letter addressed “to the Eastern Asiatic people of the Mongolian race and colour,” which he sent to the Japanese consulate at Surabaya in the Dutch East Indies (present-day Indonesia). The letter called on Asians to

cultivate the Pan-Mongolian consciousness, in feeling, in thought and above all in action; harmonize, cultivate and facilitate in every possible way the Inter-Mongolian race intercourse and

understanding by adopting an official and compulsory taught and used Inter-Mongolian language composed of Words of Chinese, Japanese and Siamese languages; Eliminate from your mind and from your dictionaries the word FOREIGNER, and cultivate the Inter-Mongolian fellowship and community of interest; Harmonize your national, political, social, economic and religious life. . . . [F]orm and organize THE INTER-MONGOLIAN AND INTER-CONTINENTAL HARMONIZED AWAKENING, in every city, town, village and hamlet.

This bizarre letter was apparently inspired by the Japanese Foreign Ministry's so-called Amau Statement, which declared "special responsibilities for Japan in East Asia" and which was often interpreted as a declaration by Japan of an "Asian Monroe Doctrine," that is, a call for noninterference by Western powers in China. As far as one can tell, this appeal to an inter-Asian consciousness elicited no reaction either in Japan or elsewhere in Asia. Nevertheless, Pan-Asianism was stimulated, both positively and negatively, by Western influences. For example, the Japanese politician Koderu Kenkichi (1877–1949), who had studied international relations in Europe and the United States for almost a decade, justified his advocacy of Pan-Asianism by constantly referring to the positive role of pan-movements in the West. In contrast to Koderu, Prince Konoe Fumimaro (1891–1945) chose to stress the negative aspects of the West by rejecting the universalist pretensions of the League of Nations (founded 1919) when he proclaimed the need for Asian solidarity under Japanese leadership. Both Kanokogi Kazunobu (1884–1949) and Hirano Yoshitarō (1897–1980) were strongly influenced by German ideas, as were the 1930s proponents of a regional bloc in

East Asia such as the political scientist Rōyama Masamichi (1895–1980) and Kada Tetsuji (1895–1964).

While the West was important as a reference point, Pan-Asianism as an ideology also posed a significant challenge to the earlier Sinocentric order—an order not limited to China proper but also appropriated by the nomadic conquerors of China and by states on the periphery such as Korea and Japan. In this context, the seemingly "more modern" ideology of Pan-Asianism served as an integrating force, helping to fulfill the requirement for the "de-centering of China."

Arguably, in many cases the Sinocentric hierarchical view of the world influenced the thinking of some Japanese pan-Asianists who appropriated it faithfully with one significant change. For them it was Japan, not China, that was to be the new "Middle Kingdom" and the leader of Asia. Although, as we show, early forms of Pan-Asianism often envisioned cooperation on equal terms, insistence on Japanese leadership (*meishu*) in Asia increased in proportion to the growth and expansion of Japan's power in East Asia.

For advocates of this "Meishuron" Asianism, Japan's leadership was justified on moral grounds as well as by the realities of international relations. Japan qualified as the leader of Asia because it was morally superior to China, which was in political turmoil, and had always been as a result of its frequent dynastic changes. In contrast, Japan, many Japanese elites believed, was qualified to lead Asia because of its divine imperial dynasty that was "unbroken through ages immemorial." Japan, in this view, was a "chosen" country, the "Land of the Gods"—qualities that uniquely fitted it for a special "mission" to liberate Asia from Western oppression, become the leader of the region, and, as its more imaginative supporters asserted, unite the whole world under the benevolent rule of the Japanese

emperor, following the ancient slogan *hakkō ichiu*, or “The Eight Corners of the World [United] under One Roof.” Rather than drawing on the foundational myths, other pan-Asian writers justified Japan’s leadership of Asia on the grounds of Japan’s successful modernization program, an effort they contrasted with the failure of the rest of Asia in this regard. From this perspective, Japan’s technological advances served as evidence of Japanese superiority. But whatever the grounds for such claims, the fact remains that many Japanese pan-Asianists, in various ways, consciously or unconsciously, provided justification for Japan’s colonial rule and territorial expansion in Asia.

### **Pan-Asianism and Empire**

One of the reasons why, for a long time after 1945, Pan-Asianism was largely ignored by researchers—not to mention politicians and diplomats—was its fateful connection to Japanese imperialism and the role it played as an ideology that legitimized Japan’s empire-building project in the first half of the twentieth century. While some commentators insist that Japan never officially pursued a pan-Asian foreign policy before or even during the Asia-Pacific War (1931–1945), it is undeniable that the Japanese government frequently utilized pan-Asian rhetoric in the 1930s and 1940s in order to bolster claims to Japanese leadership in East Asia and legitimize its colonial rule over parts of Asia.

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt suggested a close link between nineteenth-century Pan-Germanism and Pan-Slavism and twentieth-century totalitarianism and expansionism. “Nazism and Bolshevism,” she contended, “owe more to Pan-Germanism and Pan-Slavism (respectively) than to any other ideology or political movement. This is most evident in foreign policies, where the strategies of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia have followed so closely the well-known

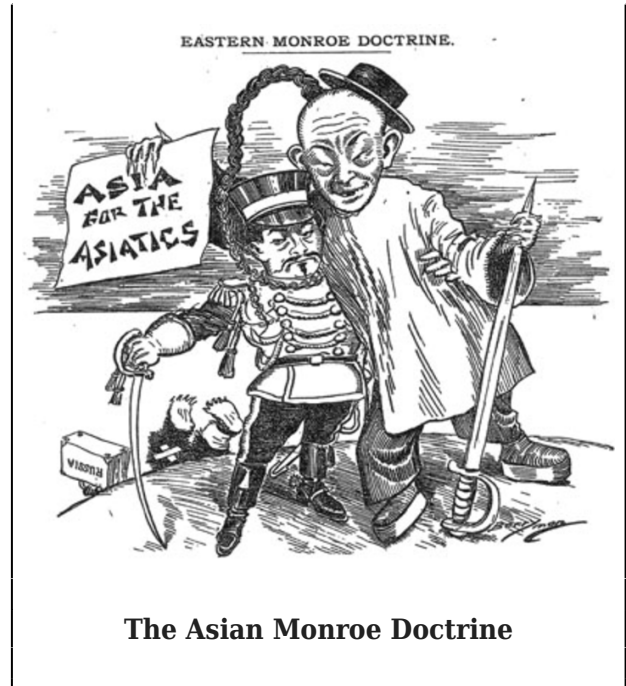
programs of conquest outlined by the pan-movements before and during the First World War . . .”. Although it would be an exaggeration to claim that Pan-Asianism formed an important component of any totalitarian developments in modern Asia, one cannot overlook the connection between Pan-Asianism and Japanese ultranationalism (discussed below) and also the contribution of this ideology to the legitimization of Japanese colonial rule and empire building in Asia in the first half of the twentieth century.

As early as 1910, pan-Asian rhetoric was used by the Japanese government to legitimize the annexation of Korea. The Annexation Treaty referred specifically to commonalities between Japanese and Koreans, such as racial origins, a common history and culture, and a shared destiny. This remained the orthodox way of justifying and legitimizing Japanese rule in Korea throughout the colonial period and was reiterated time and again in both public and private statements. The same pan-Asian rhetoric was continuously reaffirmed and applied to other colonial territories. For example, in 1939, in the semi-official journal *Contemporary Japan*, a writer insisted that

contrary to the general assumption held abroad, and even entertained by some Japanese, Chosen [Korea], Taiwan, and even Manchukuo are not Japanese colonies according to the Western way of thinking. . . . “To make the world one household” is an expression used by the Japanese to indicate their moral principle of co-existence and co-prosperity. . . . Although their languages and customs are now different, Japan and Korea were especially close to each other until about thirteen centuries ago, there having been a large intermixture of both blood and culture before that

time. . . . Japan’s annexation of the peninsula might be taken as a reversion of the two countries to their ancient status of being one homogeneous whole.

The assertion of racial and cultural commonalities presented here went hand in hand with the legitimization of Japanese superiority on the grounds that Japan was a country chosen by the gods. As early as the late 1910s, a number of writers, such as Kanokogi Kazunobu, Kita Ikki, and Ōkawa Shūmei, spoke of a divine Japanese “mission” to liberate Asia. This high-sounding objective was often difficult to distinguish from the substitution of one form of colonial oppression (by Europeans) for another (by fellow Asian Japanese). And a belief in Japan’s divine mission was by no means limited to radical reformists. Even mainstream writers who eschewed ideologically driven rhetoric and sought to explain international relations in terms of Realpolitik, such as Tokutomi Sohō (1863-1957), urged Japan to establish an “Asian Monroe Doctrine.” In doing so, Tokutomi may have been applying an idea of Western provenance to international relations in East Asia, but he still believed, like Kita and Kanokogi, that Japan had a special “mission” to accomplish in East Asia.



In the 1930s, claims that Japan’s empire was an embodiment of pan-Asian ideals were voiced more frequently and openly than before. This was due to the impact of “regional bloc thinking” that was highly influential at the time. For example, Rōyama Masamichi insisted in 1934 that “the Pan-Asiatic movement” was a “decisive influence responsible for the establishment of the Empire.” Though he lamented that this movement lacked “any coherent programme under any prominent leader,” he nevertheless regarded it as full of promise for the future. As evidence, he noted with satisfaction that “many small groups of so-called Pan-Asianists loosely affiliated through study organizations . . . have sprung up like mushrooms during the past two years in both Japan and Manchuria”. Rōyama’s notion of an “East Asian bloc” gained wide prominence in Japan in the late 1930s, amplified by a fusion with the geopolitical ideas of Karl Haushofer and Carl Schmidt (1888–1985) and with earlier concepts of an “Asian Monroe Doctrine.” The notion of an “East Asian bloc” was also popular with Marxists and socialists, as can be seen in the writings of Takahashi Kamekichi (1894–1977) and some members of the Shōwa Kenkyūkai, the brain trust founded by Prince



Konoe Fumimaro, prime minister in 1937–1939 and 1940–1941.

The intimate connection of Pan-Asianism with Japan's empire-building ambitions leads to another central problem of Pan-Asianism—the inherent ambiguity of the concepts involved. It is clear that, from the outset, pan-Asian thought was riddled with ambiguity and contradictions that made this ideology capable of being used to legitimize both the anticolonial struggle against the West and the domination of one Asian nation by another. This ambiguity is also inherent in the terminology used to describe the ideology.

### Problems of Terminology

As stated at the start of this introduction, Pan-Asianism poses a problem as a topic of scholarly inquiry even at the level of terminology. The object of inquiry is hard to define and is almost as elusive as a continuously shifting target. There is no scholarly consensus on the definition of “Asia,” on pan-movements, or on ideologies with a transnational focus that have evolved over time. Likewise, the question of how Pan-Asianism is related to other pan-movements is far from settled.

As we have seen, the emergence of Pan-Asianism was inseparable from the rise of Japan as a major power and Japan's struggle with China for leadership in Asia. But Pan-Asianism also reflected attempts by East Asian elites to forge Asian unity by bringing Japan and China together. Thus, early manifestations of the movement were characterized by the close cooperation of ideologues, activists, and politicians from Japan, China, and Korea. But the need for cooperation and, thus, compromise resulted in pan-Asian ideas being characterized by a marked lack of specific content. Although the concept of Pan-Asianism can be traced from the mid-nineteenth century on, the term “Pan-Asianism” (or Asianism, Greater Asianism) was not in use in China, Korea, and Japan before

the 1890s and occurs only infrequently prior to the 1910s.

Around the turn of the century, Western writers who were clamoring about the threat of the Yellow Peril occasionally used the terms “Pan-Asianism” or “pan-Asiatic league” in warning of the dangers a united Asia would pose for Western supremacy. The Japanese government was quick to lay any Western suspicions on this score to rest, particularly after the start of the war with Russia, a Western power, in 1904. It took this popular Western agitation so seriously that on many occasions it officially disclaimed any interest in promoting closer relations with its (weak) Asian neighbors. Japanese diplomats were dispatched to Europe and the United States expressly to dispel any Western suspicions as to Japan's pan-Asian ambitions. For example, in the United States, Harvard-educated Baron Kaneko Kentarō (1853–1942) dismissed rumors voiced in the “yellow” press that Japan was aiming to form an Asian federation, as did diplomat Suematsu Kenchō (1855–1920) in Europe. As late as 1919, Takekoshi Yosaburō (1865–1950) ridiculed the idea of a Japanese-led Asian alliance against the West in a publication funded by the Japanese government:

Among our own people, there are some who do not rightly interpret the history of their own country, and who do not take their national strength into proper consideration and who, being prompted by certain fanatical ideas, advocate the alliance of the yellow races against the white, an alliance of which Japan should be the leader, and with that object in view, they favour the partition of China. Those who argue in this strain have evidently lost their mental balance.

Just as the government went to great lengths to deny any association with Pan-Asianism, the opposition placed a strong emphasis on Pan-Asianism, calling for the unification of the “yellow race,” that is, the Asian peoples. As early as 1874, Ueki Emori (1857–1892), a prominent member of the opposition freedom and peoples’ rights movement (*jiyū minken undō*), had attacked what he considered the pro-Western policy of the government and, insisting that the West was Japan’s enemy, called for the formation of an Asian League (*Ajia rengō*). Ueki held a version of Pan-Asianism that assumed equality among Asian nations. He even advocated independence for the Ryukyu archipelago (present-day Okinawa Prefecture), a previously independent kingdom that was annexed by Japan in the 1870s. An anonymous writer in the journal *Ajia* (Asia) and the antigovernment activist and politician Tarui Tōkichi (1850–1922) made similar proposals in the 1880s. It was not until 1903 that the first acknowledgment of the potential of Pan-Asianism as a significant factor in international relations was made, when the art critic Okakura Tenshin (1862–1913), famous for coining the phrase “Asia is one,” stated in his book *The Awakening of the East* that a “Pan-Asiatic Alliance” would “in itself constitute an immense force.” However, the impact of this statement may have been somewhat reduced in Japan by the fact that Okakura had written his book in English for an Indian and not a Japanese audience.

While the term “Pan-Asianism” entered the mainstream political vocabulary only in the 1910s, in the nineteenth century advocates of Asian unity could draw on a number of terms and slogans when propagating their ideals. In the 1880s, the term *Kōa*, or “Raising (or Developing) Asia,” was the most widely used slogan, implying the need for Asia to modernize in order to catch up with the technologically advanced West. The term was not without problems, however. For example, an organization called the *Kōakai* (Raising Asia

Society) was founded in Tokyo in 1880. Its membership was predominantly Japanese—they had chosen the group’s name—but it included some Koreans and Chinese who objected to the name on the grounds that it implied—in contrast to successful, modern Japan—that Asia was backward, oppressed, and downtrodden, and could be saved only by “raising” it through Japanese leadership and advice. Following such criticism, the *Kōakai* was renamed *Ajia Kyōkai* (Asia Association) in 1883. But it was not only Japanese pan-Asianists who believed in Japanese superiority; many Asians also acknowledged their political and economic backwardness in relation to Japan. Many Chinese recognized the failure of modernization, at least implicitly, in their nation, accounting for the formation of political associations with names such as the Raise China Society (*Xingzhonghui*), founded by Sun Yat-sen in 1894, and the China Revival Society (*Huaxinghui*), founded in Hunan 1904.

Another early term used to describe pan-Asian solidarity was the classical Chinese phrase *fuche chunchi* (Japanese: *hōsha shinshi*; Korean: *poch’a sonch’i*), which means “mutual dependence” or, literally, “a relationship as close as that between the lips and the teeth or between the chassis and the wheels of a cart.” This image implied a high degree of interdependence, but, in contrast to the potentially hierarchical *Kōa*, it presumed equal relations among Asian nations. Its origin also indicates the influence of Chinese classical scholarship on early Pan-Asianism. This phrase was used by early pan-Asianists particularly in the 1870s and 1880s, but it can be found in many of the texts presented in this collection well into the twentieth century.

A third influential slogan used to express pan-Asian sentiment and activism that was very popular at the turn of the century was “Same Culture, Same Race” (Japanese: *dōbun dōshu*; Chinese: *tongwen tongzhong*; Korean: *tongmun tongjong*), which likewise did not imply

hierarchical relations between Asian nations or make claim to the superiority of any one country. In Japan, the term was used particularly often by Prince Konoe Atsumaro (1863–1904), who, uncharacteristically for an early pan-Asianist, was a member of Japan's ruling elite, and by the Tōa Dōbunkai (East Asian Common Culture Society). The term also appears frequently in Japanese journals of the day and seems to have received some acceptance in other Asian countries. Closely related to the rise of racial thinking in Japan and East Asia, this slogan also has to be seen as an expression of the growing fear in Japan of a future “clash of races,” that is, a war fought along racial lines in which Japan would have no choice but to side with the Asian, or “colored,” peoples against the white powers of the West. Parallel with the development of this kind of racial thinking in Asia, the idea of the “White Peril” also gained ground. It was an inversion of the “Yellow Peril” hysteria that affected Europe at the time. The proponents of the “White Peril,” including some Europeans (e.g., Gulick 1905), believed that the threat to civilization came not from the “yellow” peoples of Asia but from the predatory European powers.

It was only in the 1910s that the term “Pan-Asianism” made its debut in intellectual discourse. Japanese political scientist Ōyama Ikuo (1880–1955) used the term for the first time to describe Chinese political associations which were promoting “Greater Asianism” (Da Yazhouzhuyi) “in secretly published pamphlets” with the intention of spreading anti-Western sentiment in China”. Ōyama himself rejected Asianism because he saw the emergence of this ideology as a sign of increasing nationalistic and xenophobic tendencies in Japan. While Ōyama criticized Asianism from his position as a liberal intellectual, the Japanese government remained wary of pan-Asian proposals because it feared that such tendencies might undermine Japan's good relations with the Western powers. Between its signing in 1902 and

1921–1922, when it was superseded by the Washington treaty system, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was always at the heart of Japan's foreign policy. The alliance, however, would be in jeopardy if it transpired that Japan was supporting an independence movement in India as part of a pan-Asian foreign policy. On several occasions, Britain showed suspicion over Indian-Japanese relations, particularly during World War I when members of the Indian independence movement were cooperating with Germany. For example, the visit of the celebrated poet and first Asian Nobel laureate, Rabindranath Tagore, to Japan in 1916 caused “considerable uneasiness in London” over “a Japanese-Indian understanding that could eventually take a political and anti-British form”. The British intelligence service kept close tabs on Indian independence activists in Japan (and China) and their Japanese sympathizers.

If only to avoid alienating its British ally and other Western powers, both the Japanese government and the press tended to be highly critical of pan-Asian schemes. The hostile tone adopted by Japanese newspapers during a public debate on Pan-Asianism in 1913 well illustrates this point. In a debate with the British journalist and diplomat Sir Valentine Chirol (1852–1929), the celebrated American naval strategist Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840–1914) defended the 1913 California “Alien Land Bill”, which would prevent Asian immigrants from owning land or property in the state on the grounds that America would not be able to “digest and assimilate the strong national and racial characteristics which distinguish the Japanese.” Mahan seemed moreover to believe that in excluding the Japanese, Californians were acting in the interests not only of the United States but also of “the whole community of European civilization”. In the debate Chirol, who had retired from his position at *The Times* two years before and joined the Foreign Office, criticized the Land Bill. However, it appears

that he was a voice in the wilderness. Even the editors of *The Times* seemed to support Mahan when they criticized Japan for what they regarded as contradictions in its foreign policy:

On the one hand, she [Japan] demands recognition because her people are not as other Asiatics. On the other hand, . . . her publicists are now asserting that “to Japan is assigned the leadership in the claim of the ‘coloured’ races against the ‘non-coloured.’” These two sets are mutually destructive. Japan cannot have it both ways. . . . She must make up her mind whether she wishes to present herself as aloof from other Asiatic races, or as the avowed champion of Pan-Asiatic ideals.

Such criticisms clearly struck a sensitive chord in Japan. Throughout June and July 1913, these statements were discussed at great length by Japan’s leading newspapers, including the *Osaka Asahi Shinbun*, the *Osaka Mainichi Shinbun*, and the *Tokyo Nichinichi Shinbun*. The *Asahi* unequivocally declared that it considered “Pan-Asianism an illusion (*kūsō*),” while the *Nichinichi* ridiculed the notion that Japan would “lead the Asian peoples to fight against the Euro-American white powers” as “useless and reckless.” It was in these articles dismissing the accusations made by Mahan and the *Times* that the terms Han-Ajiashugi (“Pan-Asianism,” *Mainichi* and *Nichinichi*) and Zen-Ajiashugi (“All-Asianism,” *Asahi*) made their first appearance in the Japanese language. They were coined specifically to express the English term “Pan-Asianism,” which previously had had no exact Japanese equivalent. At this stage, as indicated by the critical, derisory tone of the newspaper articles, these neologisms were used in a derogatory sense.

Yet, little by little, the negative connotations of the term “Asianism” were lost in the aftermath of World War I. The bloodbath in Europe made Japan the dominant power in East Asia and brought about an upsurge in Japan’s self-confidence. At the same time, it stimulated international attempts to establish a new world order after the war, an order that would guarantee peace—if not permanent peace, then at least peace for the foreseeable future. Within these developments, Japan’s newly found self-confidence resulted in an outpouring of pan-Asian writings during the last two years of the war. These writings should be seen as a Japanese contribution to the debate on how a new international order could guarantee peace. But Japanese writers were not alone in arguing for the necessity of regional integration. There were also notably some Chinese commentators who, while critical of Japanese Pan-Asianism, nonetheless advocated regional integration on the grounds that only a regional, pan-Asian order would result in the achievement of a permanent peace. When the idea of a League of Nations surfaced during World War I, pan-Asian writers in Japan reacted by proposing an East Asian League (*Tōa renmei*) that would guarantee peace on a regional basis.

By the war’s end, pan-Asianist visions of regional integration had thus come to be accepted, at least by public opinion and some politicians, as a realistic scenario for future international relations in East Asia. Certainly, in contrast to the vague professions of pan-Asian unity that had been the norm up until the beginning of the twentieth century, the ideology of Pan-Asianism had by 1918 become concrete and well defined. It had gained recognition in public discourse and was no longer confined to the political fringes. Terms such as Pan-Asianism (*Han Ajiashugi*), Greater Asianism (*Dai Ajiashugi*), All-Asianism (*Zen Ajiashugi*), and the “Asian Monroe Doctrine” (*Ajia Monrōshugi*), largely absent from public discourse until then, now began to appear frequently in newspapers and journals. This

proliferation of neologisms reflected a growth of diverse and sophisticated approaches to the issue of Asian solidarity in all its ramifications. The wide range of responses can be gleaned from the flood of articles on Pan-Asianism that appeared during and after the war. While these works indicated the spread and acceptance of the term “Pan-Asianism” in Japanese discourse, perhaps more important they also defined Asianism in concrete terms and demanded that Japan act in accordance with pan-Asian principles in international relations.

The new popularity of Pan-Asianism in Japanese intellectual discourse and politics received a boost when news of a new immigration law that would bar Japanese from immigration to the United States (part of the 1924 Immigration or Johnson-Reed Act) reached Japan. Protests against the act were held through the length and breadth of Japan, events that in many cases turned into demonstrations of pan-Asian solidarity.

In this climate of anti-American agitation a number of new associations sprang up whose names—such as the Federation of East Asian Races (*Ajia Minzoku Gikai*, founded in 1923) or the Oriental Co-Existence Society (*Tōyō Kyōzonkai*)—proclaimed their pan-Asian orientation. The invigoration of popular interest in Pan-Asianism as a result of America’s exclusionist policies was also attested to by a slew of articles on the subject in the Japanese press. For example, the influential journal *Nihon oyobi Nihonjin* (Japan and the Japanese) brought out a special issue on “Greater Asianism” (*Dai Ajiashugi*) in October 1924, and the Asian Newspaper Company published a call for the “Foundation of a Greater East Asian Federation”.

Not all pan-Asian slogans and catchphrases—like some of the new associations—survived. Many enjoyed a brief popularity and then quickly disappeared from public discourse. Some terms, however,

resurfaced in later years, often in different contexts. The notion of an “East Asian League,” for example, exemplified the entrenchment of the term “East Asia” in Japanese public discourse around the turn of the century. However, after the wave of anti-American protests subsided in 1924, “East Asia” receded from public discourse, only to return to the mainstream discussion in the late 1930s, in somewhat modified form, as the “East Asian Cooperative Community” (*tōa kyōdōtai or tōyō kyōdōtai*). The formation of a “Greater Asian League” (*Dai Ajia rengō*) was also proposed in the founding manifesto of the *Dai Ajia Kyōkai* (Greater Asia Association) in 1933. This manifesto, drafted a year after Japan had left the League of Nations, insisted that such a league was necessary given the global trend toward the formation of regional blocs.

“All-Asianism” (*Zen Ajiashugi*), another term for Asianism or Pan-Asianism, was launched by Ōkawa Shūmei in the wake of the 1913 Chirol-Mahan debate in articles he contributed to *Tairiku* (The Continent). However, the term did not catch on and vanished from public discourse in the early 1920s. In any event, all these terms were used largely interchangeably. Even Ōkawa on occasion used *Han Ajiashugi* in the same context as *Zen Ajiashugi*, and he appears to have made no distinction between the two.

The term “Kōa” perhaps enjoyed the most remarkable career of any pan-Asian term. *Kōa* first appeared in the 1880s, when it was used as the main slogan to express pan-Asian solidarity. However, it was quickly discarded because it implied Japanese leadership of the pan-Asian movement. But the term was not forgotten completely, as it reappeared in the 1930s at a time when Japan was adopting a form of Pan-Asianism in its foreign policy. By then, Japan had begun to abandon its policy of cooperation with the Anglo-American powers and was openly pursuing a strategy of destroying the political status quo in East Asia.

The unity of Asia and, at the same time, the establishment of Japanese hegemony in East Asia had become Japan's ultimate objective. Although no government decrees contained the terms "Asianism" or "Pan-Asianism" even in the 1930s, the Japanese government demonstrated its commitment to the pan-Asian cause in 1938 by creating the Kōa-in, the Agency for the Development of Asia (sometimes also known in English as the East Asia Development Board). The Kōa-in was a cabinet-level agency with the primary task of coordinating political, economic, and cultural activities in regard to China. While it engaged in research on Chinese affairs and published its findings in the *Kōa-in Chōsa Geppō* (Kōa-in Monthly Research Bulletin), some scholars argue that it was also involved in the recruitment and management of forced labor and even in the opium trade in China. Such were the powers of this agency that only formal diplomatic relations with China remained within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Kōa-in was integrated into the Ministry of Greater East Asia (Daitōa-shō) in 1942, which from that time on directed Japan's political and diplomatic relations with the members of the newly declared Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere.

This official endorsement of what is probably the oldest pan-Asian term caused a veritable boom in the use of Kōa. Newspapers used the term frequently; journals incorporating it in their title—such as *Kōa Kyōiku* (Education to Raise Asia) or simply *Kōa*—were founded, while politicians, diplomats, and intellectuals discussed the new Kōa policy. These figures included a foreign minister, and a prime minister who proclaimed the "Raising of Asia" a "holy task". Under the circumstances it is no surprise to learn that, in Japanese schools, children were taught from a "Colonial Kōa Textbook". Newly founded political organizations and a number of political conferences held in the late 1930s and early 1940s also were characterized as contributing to the policy of "Raising Asia." In 1941, the Dai

Nihon Kōa Dōmei (Greater Japanese League for Raising Asia) was founded. Its members and advisers included venerable pan-Asianists such as Tōyama Mitsuru (1855–1944) and Kuzuu Yoshihisa (1874–1958), party politicians well known for their pan-Asian sympathies such as Nagai Ryūtarō (1881–1944), as well as a large number of senior military figures, such as Araki Sadao (1877–1966), Yanagawa Heisuke (1879–1945), Koiso Kuniaki (1880–1950), Ōi Shigemoto (1863–1951), Hayashi Senjūrō (1876–1943), Honjō Shigeru (1876–1945), Matsui Iwane (1878–1948), and Abe Nobuyuki (1875–1943). This impressive lineup, which included two former (Hayashi and Abe) and one future prime minister (Koiso), reflected a growing interest in the potential of Pan-Asianism in military circles. In the atmosphere of social mobilization that thickened as the war escalated, the League became a central organization, incorporating fifty-three associations and institutions of pan-Asian character under its umbrella. These included the Tōa Dōbunkai, the Dōjinkai (Comrades' Society), the Tōa Renmei Kyōkai (East Asian League Association), the Tōa Kensetsu Kyōkai (Association for Constructing East Asia), the Tōa Kyōkai (East Asia Association), and the Tōyō Kyōkai (Oriental Association), in addition to think tanks engaged in research on East Asia, such as the Dōmei Tōa Kenkyūkai (Alliance East Asia Research Association), the Tōa Chōsakai (East Asia Investigation Association), the Tōa Kenkyūjo (East Asia Research Institute), and the Tōa Chitsujo Kenkyūkai (East Asian Order Research Association).

These wartime efforts to "raise Asia" had also an international dimension. A year before the founding of the League, a "Raising Asia Welfare Congress" (Kōa kōsei taikai) was held in Osaka in October 1940 that was attended by representatives of eleven countries, including Japan's Asian and also its two European allies, Germany and Italy. Even today, the name of a Japanese insurance company, Nippon Kōa

Sonpo, which was founded in 1944, reminds us of the former popularity of this pan-Asian term.

Another term pan-Asianists began to use in the late 1920s was “Kingly Way” (Chinese: *wangdao*; Japanese: *ōdō*). In the 1930s it was used with increasing frequency as a way of emphasizing the region’s legacy of Confucian values and the significance of Confucianism as a potential basis for the unification of Asians. The “Kingly Way” implied benevolent rule and was used as a fundamental concept to help legitimize Japan’s construction of the new state of Manchukuo after 1932. Japanese “guidance” of this new, ostensibly independent state—in reality it was a puppet state—was seen in paternalistic, Confucian terms as the kindly direction and advice offered to a younger brother (Manchukuo) by his elder brother (Japan). In fact, as is well known, under Japan’s “benevolent” guidance Manchukuo became a cornerstone of the Japanese Empire. It was ruthlessly exploited to provide materiel for the Japanese war effort, and this economic exploitation, carried out under the cloak of paternalistic benevolence, contributed significantly to the discrediting of pan-Asian ideology—the subject to which we turn next.

### Pan-Asianism and the Asians

As we have argued, Pan-Asianism was particularly important in the framework of intellectual debate and policy formulation in Japan, but other Asians also made an important contribution to the discussion—comment that was sometimes supportive, sometimes critical. While in China the term apparently made its debut in the 1910s, in Korea similar terms were used to express similar sets of ideas a decade or so earlier. At the turn of the century, the term “Easternism” (Tong’yangjuyi) was first found in Korean writings on the subject to describe the idea of close cooperation between Korea, China, and Japan. Although Koreans were on the whole suspicious of Pan-Asianism as a concept that served to cloak Japanese

attempts to establish their leadership of East Asia, anxiety over a future “race war” with the West was just as widespread in Korea as in Japan. In fact, one of the first concrete pan-Asian policy proposals was penned by a Korean, An Chung-gŭn (Ahn Choong Kun, 1879–1910), a member of the anti-Japanese movement in Korea. In 1910, while imprisoned on death row for assassinating Prince Itō Hirobumi (1841–1909), Japan’s minister-resident in Korea, he wrote a visionary essay in which he talked of a united Asia facing the reality of a coming war between the yellow and white races. In order to prepare for this conflict, An advocated a transnational military force and even a single currency for an East Asian political union. However unrealistic in the climate of the time, An’s vision testified to the increasing importance of Pan-Asianism in international relations in East Asia.



An Chung-gŭn

As official and public support for Pan-Asianism as a tool for establishing Japanese hegemony in East Asia grew stronger in Japan, the likelihood of the acceptance of pan-Asian ideals waned in other Asian countries. This distrust of Pan-Asianism was particularly pronounced in East Asia, where the Japanese threat was most palpable. In Korea, for example, Pan-Asianism was marginalized. Korea was a special case because of its geographical proximity to Japan. Most Korean intellectuals and political activists had been fairly skeptical about the idea of Asian solidarity even in the nineteenth century, even if some pro-Japanese modernizers, such as Kim Ok-kyun (1851–1894), had promoted Pan-Asianism as a useful tool for cooperation with Japan against the threat posed by imperial Russia. In spite of Korean suspicions over Japanese ambitions for the Korean peninsula, many Korean intellectuals, strongly influenced by social Darwinism during the final years of the nineteenth century, were convinced that for historical reasons the Koreans—“a backward and thus inferior race”—had no choice but to form an alliance with China and Japan as a result of Korea’s proximity to its two neighbors. Others, who feared the much-trumpeted Western peril much more than any alleged racial inferiority, reached the same conclusions.

After Korea became a Japanese protectorate in 1905 and a Japanese colony in 1910, Korean writers naturally became highly suspicious of their powerful neighbor and advocated resistance and “self-strengthening” as a way of regaining their independence. Under Japanese rule, the appeal of Pan-Asianism to Koreans was greatly limited. But it was not extinguished completely. Some Korean pan-Asianists continued to advocate a more or less equal “union of the Korean and Japanese cultures within the context of a broader Asian alliance,” or within “a pan-Asian community,” until the end of Japanese colonial rule in 1945. Some Koreans who continued to adhere to the ideal of pan-Asian solidarity even interpreted the

outbreak of war with the United States in 1941 (or the “Greater East Asian War,” as it was officially called in the Japanese Empire) as the beginning of “a real war of races—the Yellow against the White”. For these Koreans it was clear that Korea, as an Asian nation, had to side (temporarily at least) with Japan in this war of the races, even though Koreans were unhappy with Japanese colonial rule.

Some Chinese intellectuals and activists also continued to adhere to Pan-Asianism in the first decades of the twentieth century, as is evident from the quotation by Sun Yat-sen discussed above. However, open criticism of Japanese Pan-Asianism as a tool of Japanese expansionism was voiced as early as 1907, when the scholar and revolutionary Zhang Taiyan (1868–1936) described Japan as the “public enemy” (*kōteki*) of Asia. Zhang gave vent to his conviction that Japan was an imperialist predator rather than a victim of imperialist oppression to which calls for Asian solidarity could properly be directed. Zhang also questioned the validity of pan-Asian discourse in general. Rejecting the simplistic scheme of “oppressed yellow Asians” and “white oppressors,” he stressed the “double enslavement of the Chinese”—bondage by Western imperialism and by “foreign,” that is, Manchu, rule. His argument led him to emphasize the urgent need to establish Chinese nationalism as a counterforce to Manchu rule. However, these views did not prevent him from forming the Asiatic Humanitarian Brotherhood to promote cooperation with other Asian peoples.

Another revolutionary leader of modern China, Li Dazhao (1888–1927), also rejected Pan-Asianism as advocated by its Japanese exponents. In 1919, he harshly criticized Japanese pan-Asian writings as an expression of Japanese expansionism. However, while rejecting Japanese forms of Asianism, Li nevertheless conceded that some kind of regional cooperation was necessary to counter

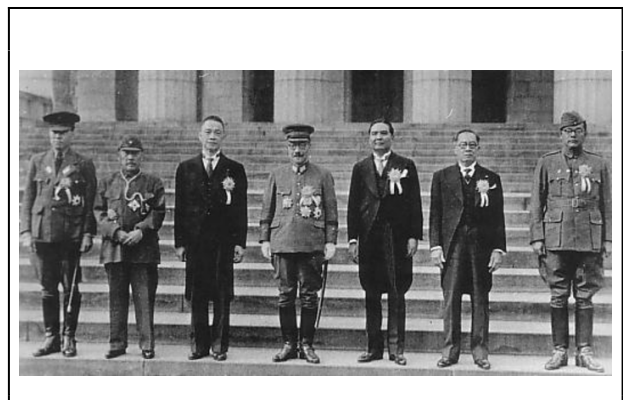


the threat of Western imperialism and called for the formulation of a “New Asianism” that presumably would be untainted by Japanese distortions. The tense atmosphere of pan-Asian conferences organized by Japanese and Chinese groups in Nagasaki in 1926 and Shanghai in 1927, however, clearly demonstrated that Chinese hostility to Japanese versions of Pan-Asianism had undermined any realistic expectation of close Sino-Japanese cooperation in an atmosphere of true solidarity.

Some Chinese, such as Sun Yat-sen (until his death in 1925) and his confidant Wang Ching-wei (1883–1944), remained hopeful that Pan-Asianism might yet play a constructive role in Asia’s fight against Anglo-Saxon imperialism, and a group of Chinese pan-Asianists published a journal, *Asiatic Asia*, in Shanghai from 1941. However, in the end Japanese efforts to legitimize its various forms of aggression, including the war against China (1937–1945), as a pan-Asian “holy war” completely discredited the idea of Asian solidarity in China for many years to come.

In India, by contrast, Pan-Asianism left few negative legacies, probably because, unlike Korea and China, that country had never come under Japanese rule. In India, attempts to secure Japanese support for the national independence movement had a long tradition and resulted in close connections with Japan. A number of Indian revolutionaries found asylum there, and some even used Japan as a base for their pan-Asian activities. Among them was Taraknath Das (1884–1958), who frequently published in Japan under the pseudonym “An Asian.” In works published in Japan and China, Das called on “Asian Youth” to resist the West: “Every Asian youth . . . who possesses even a tiny bit of the feeling of self-respect should strive to achieve the goal of assertion of Asia to the fullest sense of its meaning.” Clearly Japan’s invasion of China did nothing to dampen Das’s hopes for Japan as the liberator

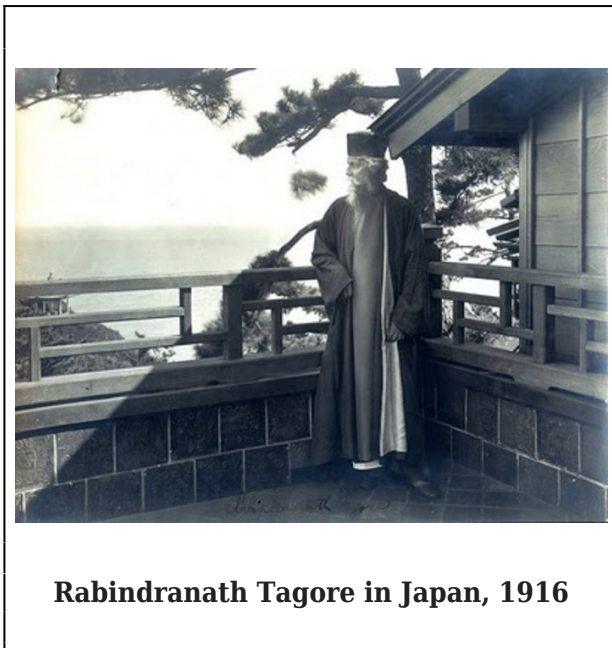
of Asia, for as late as 1941 he insisted that Japan was “the only Eastern Power which can challenge the mighty forces of the West. . . . People of the East . . . have set their eyes on [Japan] as their possible saviour.” Rash Behari Bose (1886–1945), who was naturalized as a Japanese subject in 1923, also used his Japanese contacts to campaign on behalf of Pan-Asianism and Indian independence. He was an influential advocate of a Japan-centered Pan-Asianism and remained so until his death in 1944. His compatriot Subhas Chandra Bose (no relation, 1897–1945), who met Hitler in his attempt to marshal support for Indian independence, also entertained great hopes for Japan as Asia’s savior. He held meetings with Japanese leaders to encourage their support for his nationalist cause and participated in the Assembly of the Greater East Asiatic Nations in 1943.



**Greater East Asia Conference, 1943. Tojo Hideki (center), Subhas Chandra Bose (right), Wang Ching-wei (third left), José Laurel (third right)**

The celebrated writer and cultural nationalist Rabindranath Tagore was a longtime friend of Okakura Tenshin and visited Japan several times in the 1910s and 1920s. During his first visit, Tagore condemned Japanese nationalism as an imitation of Western practices. However, in 1924, when demonstrations against the United States Asian Exclusion Act erupted in Japan, Tagore spoke out on a number of

occasions in favor of pan-Asian unity to audiences of several thousand. Announced at these rallies as “The Pride of the Orient,” Tagore called on his fellow Asians to “awake, arise, agitate, agitate and agitate against this monstrous and inhuman insult which America has heaped upon us.” He hoped that the discriminatory U.S. immigration law would “unite the Asiatic races who will awake from their long sleep and . . . prove invulnerable against the attacks of the White Races” and motivate them to erect an “Empire of Asia . . . [that would] spring roaring into the arena of the world’s politics.”



**Rabindranath Tagore in Japan, 1916**

South East Asians became suspicious of Japanese Pan-Asianism only in the late 1930s—much later than the Koreans and Chinese. The main reason for this was, unlike in Korea and China, the Japanese were not perceived as a threat to a region dominated by the Western powers. Consequently, Japanese-directed Pan-Asianism enjoyed great appeal throughout Southeast Asia. In the Philippines, Japanese pan-Asianists had already supported the independence movement under Emilio Aguinaldo (1869–1964) as early as 1898. In 1915, a Pan-Oriental Society was formed in Manila. The society was headed by General

Jose Alejandrino (1870–1951), who had gained his rank in the struggle against the United States and, after surrendering in 1901, went on to enjoy a career as a senator. British intelligence reported that “he speaks and writes Japanese and speaks with the authority of the Japanese Foreign Office.” To the British, the anti-Western position of the Pan-Oriental Society was clear. At its meetings “speeches are made favoring an ‘Oriental Monroeism’ headed by Japan.” But it would be wrong to dismiss the society as nothing more than a front for Japanese propaganda. Alejandrino took a wider interest in Asian affairs and wrote newspaper articles in which he mentioned the Indian Independence Party and even discussed the possibility of a free India. And there was some evidence of contacts with other Asian pro-independence movements. According to the British intelligence report, “an intercepted letter, written by a Filipino student returned from Tokyo, shows that there might be a danger of a connection between these Filipino students and disaffected Indians in Japan.” In Malaya, too, some looked to Japan as a liberating force. For example, the nationalist journalist Ibrahim bin Haji Yaacob (1911–1979) founded, with Japanese support, the pro-Japanese and pan-Malay (if not pan-Asian) *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* (League of Malay Youth). Its members cooperated with the Japanese forces during the invasion of the Malay Peninsula against the British and continued to do so throughout the Japanese occupation.

The Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia in the wake of Pearl Harbor and the economic exploitation of the region that followed called into question the sincerity of pan-Asian rhetoric. However, even under the Japanese occupation, Pan-Asianism remained an important factor in Japan’s relations with Southeast Asia. The Japanese certainly milked pan-Asian sentiment to help mobilize the region’s resources for the war effort. At the same time some Southeast Asians, such as the

contributors to the Greater Asia newspaper in Indonesia embraced the anti-Western component of pan-Asian rhetoric.

However, relations between Japan and the leaders of independence movements in Southeast Asia remain a controversial subject in Asian historiography. The position of those Southeast Asians who supported the Japanese war effort was much more ambivalent than is generally believed. The Indonesian independence activist Mohammed Hatta (1902–1980) is a case in point. Hatta is known for his collaboration with the Japanese occupation authorities during the war, but even at that time he was no Japanese puppet. And even before the war, in the 1930s, he was capable of a sober critique of the problems inherent in the Japanese version of Pan-Asianism. This is made clear by an article that he published in 1934, shortly after returning from a visit to Japan, where he was wined and dined by members of the Dai Aija Kyōkai. In the article, pointedly titled “Does Japan Desire to Return to Asia?,” Hatta predicted the failure of Japanese Pan-Asianism because, in his view, the two conditions necessary to ensure its success—a permanent peace between Japan and China and the achievement of perfect equality between the Asian nations—could not be realized in the foreseeable future. Indeed, notwithstanding his enthusiastic reception in Japan, Hatta regarded Asianism as tainted by fascist tendencies, among which he included Japan’s ambition to become the leader of Asia.

In western Asia, hopes for Japanese leadership in the struggle against Western imperialism were growing, but in the end no significant cooperation between Japan and any western Asian nation materialized. Japanese contacts with the Ottoman Empire, official and unofficial, went back to the late nineteenth century. In the first decades of the twentieth century, pan-Islamic activists came to Japan, where (among other things) they cooperated with Japanese pan-Asianists in founding the

Aija Gikai discussed here. During World War II, hopes for Japanese support were strongly expressed throughout the Arab world; they were fueled by the founding of the Greater Japan Islamic League (Dai Nippon Kaikyō Kyōkai) in Japan in 1938. However, although a number of influential individuals, including Ōkawa Shūmei and General Hayashi Senjūrō, were sympathetic to the Arab cause, the failure of the Japanese to advance west of India during the course of the war precluded any effective cooperation.

### The “Greater East Asian War” and Pan-Asianism



**Pan-Asian gathering in Tokyo in the late 1930s (participants include Tōyama Mitsuru, a central figure in the Japanese nationalist movement, General Hayashi Senjūrō and Tatar pan-Islamist Abdurreşid Ibrahim)**

The use of pan-Asian ideology to legitimize war and Japanese colonial rule discredited the movement. As a result, Pan-Asianism came to be widely identified as an ideology of colonial rule—specifically, Japan’s colonial rule over Asian countries and peoples, which, the Japanese rulers insisted, was more “benevolent” than Western colonial rule because Japanese were fellow Asians. Yet, as

much recent research has shown, Japanese colonial rule was as oppressive as that of any European power. Like the European imperialists, the Japanese ruthlessly exploited the territories they ruled. They mobilized their subject populations for the Japanese war effort, and, unlike most Western powers, they made efforts to assimilate the populations of at least some of the colonial territories they controlled. For the populations of Japanese-controlled territories, Japanese colonial rule was not substantially different from Western colonial rule, even if the Japanese proclaimed pan-Asian “brotherhood” and professed to save them from the evils of colonial rule by non-Asians.

Many prominent Asians, however—politicians, diplomats, intellectuals, and writers alike—were forced to choose sides, particularly after the outbreak of the “Greater East Asian War.” China, where people were also forced to choose sides, was a special case. For the overwhelming number of Chinese “the war” meant not an “Asian” war of liberation against “the West” but a war against Japanese aggression in which Western countries including the United States and Britain were allies. The war in China had started much earlier than in the rest of Asia: it had broken out in 1931 in northeastern China (Manchuria), spreading to the rest of China by 1937. The different terms to name the conflict that were used by the opposing sides are instructive. While the Japanese term “Greater East Asian War,” used for the war against the United States and Britain from December 1941, implied some pan-Asian notion of liberation of the whole region, the Chinese term rejected the notion that this was a racial war and had anything to do with pan-Asian ideals. It was—and still is—simply the “War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression” (*kangri zhanzheng*).

The Japanese government made concerted efforts to stress the pan-Asian character of the war. Numerous government statements during

the war emphasized the pan-Asian character of the conflict. However, it should be noted that it was only several months after the outbreak of hostilities that the Japanese government officially included the “liberation of Asia from Western imperialism” in its list of war objectives. Pan-Asian propaganda intensified as the war continued. In 1942, the Ministry of Greater East Asia was founded in order to coordinate and strengthen intra-Asian cooperation. This move was intended primarily to underline the rhetoric of pan-Asian liberation—but, at this point in the war, “strengthened cooperation” meant, above all, the mobilization of resources for Japan’s war effort. The worse the military situation became for Japan, the more the Japanese government tended to draw on pan-Asian rhetoric. In this context, the declaration of the “Assembly of the Greater East Asiatic Nations” issued in 1943 sounds like a last, desperate appeal for pan-Asian unity.



**The Assembly of the Greater East Asiatic Nations, 1943, with Japanese Prime Minister General Tōjō Hideki in the center and representatives from China, Manchukuo, Thailand, India, the Philippines and Burma.**

At that time even a liberal intellectual like Hasegawa Nyozeikan (1875–1969), seemingly oblivious to the looming disaster ahead, was still insisting that the “Greater East Asian War” must be the starting point for the establishment

of “a united cultural sphere [by] the races of East Asia.” In similar vein, Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945), one of Japan’s leading philosophers, in 1943 characterized the war as a holy, pan-Asian struggle to liberate and unify Asia:

The Great East Asian War is a sacred war, because it is the culmination of the historical progress of Asia. . . . The task of the liberated peoples is now to win the war and establish the Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, in co-operation with the Germans, Italians, and other peoples in Europe, who are engaged in a heroic struggle to create a new order in Europe. . . . Japan’s victory will save Asia and will offer a new hope for mankind.

So, even though schemes for pan-Asian unity became more and more unrealistic as the fortunes of war turned against Japan, the official espousal of Pan-Asianism by the Japanese government and military resulted in a further wave of publications on Asian solidarity and brotherhood.

### **Pan-Asian Solidarity and the Legacies of Pan-Asianism in the Postwar Period**

Japan’s surrender and the advent of the Cold War resulted in the disappearance of pan-Asian ideals from the international relations arena. Japanese proponents of Pan-Asianism were purged from office, and pan-Asian associations were disbanded by the occupation authorities. Pan-Asianism no longer figured in debates on foreign relations, in Japan or elsewhere. Clearly, there was no room for pan-Asian schemes in the new bipolar world order. This situation did not change even after the estrangement between China and the Soviet Union in the 1950s because Japan, once again

an important Asian nation, was now closely allied to the United States and thus in effect part of “the West.” In the 1960s, however, the emergence of the nonaligned movement (NAM) led to the resurgence of pan-Asian ideals. The NAM was founded in 1961 under the leadership of India’s Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964), President Gamal Abdul Nasser (1918–1970) of Egypt, and Yugoslav President Josip Tito (1892–1980). However, Asian and African countries played the central role in the activities of the movement, which had its roots in the 1955 Bandung Conference. The Bandung Conference and the NAM assumed a firmly anti-imperialist stance and objected strongly to the domination of international relations by the United States, just as the pan-Asian movement before 1945 had opposed (and even fought) Anglo-American world hegemony.

Although Japan did not play a leading role in these developments, in Japan the sense of a pan-Asian “mission” was preserved in other forms. After the devastation wrought by the war had nullified the achievements of the prewar era and, as some suggested, turned Japan into an agricultural economy, intellectuals like Shimizu Ikutarō (1907–1988) felt impelled to proclaim that “now, once again, the Japanese are Asians”. Pan-Asian themes also survived in leftist critiques of Western modernity and in the related claims that Japan must side with the oppressed nations of Asia in their resistance to the continuing Western imperialist domination of the non-European world. Variations on the pan-Asian theme have continued to inform ideas of solidarity, both in left-wing circles and among those who became ultranationalists after giving up hope in the possibilities of socialism, such as the writer Hayashi Fusao (1903–75).

However, postwar Pan-Asianism was tainted by its association with Japanese imperialism and aggression. Indeed it became synonymous with it. For the most prominent political scientist of the postwar period, Maruyama Masao

(1914–1996), Pan-Asianism, together with “familism” (*kazokushugi*) and “agrarianism” (*nōhonshugi*), was one of the three fundamental components of Japanese ultranationalism. Perhaps because of this association, there was no serious scholarly attempt to deal with Pan-Asianism as a subject of historical inquiry in the 1950s and the 1960s. One scarcely need mention that in Korea and China Pan-Asianism was completely discredited as an ideology of collaboration with the enemy and the colonizers. This was the direct consequence of the use of pan-Asian rhetoric to justify Japanese colonial rule in Korea, and (in wartime China) to justify Japanese aggression and legitimize the Nanjing puppet government. There are signs, however, that this situation is changing, as indicated by recent efforts by high-level Chinese diplomats to present Pan-Asianism in a more positive light.

In Japan, the first serious attempt to grapple with the thorny question of the legacy of Asianism was made by the Sinologist and literary critic Takeuchi Yoshimi. Takeuchi, who in his youth had enthusiastically embraced pan-Asian ideals, had his beliefs shaken by Japan’s defeat. Yet although some aspects of Takeuchi’s faith were undermined, he had no doubt that there were positive features that were worth preserving. Pan-Asianism, he never ceased to believe, was much more than mere window dressing for Japan’s Greater Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. In Takeuchi’s view, there was a core of pan-Asian ideals that retained validity and therefore needed to be remembered and even cherished. Interestingly, Takeuchi regarded Japan’s aggression in China not as a consequence of Pan-Asianism but rather as Japan’s “shedding” of Asia (*datsu-A*), a concept that emerged in the 1880s and became highly influential as the antithesis to Pan-Asianism throughout the course of modern Japanese history. From this perspective, Japan’s aggression was in effect an application of inauthentic (and therefore culpable) Western methods to Asia and thus had nothing to do

with the “Eastern spirit” or Eastern cultural practices or political norms. It was a natural, if deplorable, consequence of the westernization of Japan. This misguided attempt by Japan to depart from pan-Asian principles was corrected, to some extent at least, by the war Japan waged from December 1941 on the colonial powers of the United States, Britain, and the Netherlands. It was little wonder that Takeuchi welcomed this war enthusiastically. Takeuchi is difficult to locate on the ideological spectrum. Although he would not classify himself as a rightist, his attempts to restore legitimacy to the discredited term Pan-Asianism were unusual. Those on the left preferred to talk of Asian solidarity, brotherhood, or cooperation, which often overlapped with socialist or communist forms of international solidarity, or the solidarity of the nonaligned movement. For the Japanese left, the term “Pan-Asianism” was (and perhaps still is) practically synonymous with Japanese colonialism and aggression.

Yet, whether or not they eschewed the term itself, in postwar Japan the left incorporated pan-Asian elements into its own views. And the continuity between prewar pan-Asian rightists and postwar left-wing circles should not be overlooked in this context. This (at first sight) surprising continuity has only rarely been discussed in previous research. The prewar flirtation with national socialism and Japanism by socialists like Asanuma Inejirō (1898–1960) is well known. It is less widely known, however, that Marquis Tokugawa Yoshichika (1886–1976), one of the major sponsors of the rightist movement in the prewar period and a close friend of pan-Asianists such as Ōkawa Shūmei, became a benefactor of the newly founded Socialist Party of Japan after the war. It appears that Tokugawa’s support for the Socialist Party was motivated to some extent, at least, by pan-Asian motives. These motives were also apparent in an extraordinary statement by Tokugawa’s erstwhile comrade in the rightist movement, Ōkawa, who in 1949

detected a “close resemblance between today’s communists and the early Muslims” and wished for “a second battle of Tours-Poitiers” to be fought between the communists and the West, which this time would result in victory for the communists (i.e., Asia).

Another right-wing Pan-Asianist, Tsukui Tatsuo (1901–1989), well known in the postwar period as an “ultranationalist historian,” is known to have lavished praise on communist China. In the mid-1950s, a U.S. counterintelligence report accused Tsukui of bringing a large sum of money from mainland China, funds that were eventually given to the National Diet member and former army colonel, Tsuji Masanobu (1902–1961?), “for safe keeping.”

It should be noted that, like Tsukui, the recipient of this unspecified largesse, Colonel Tsuji, who had achieved notoriety during the war, made no secret of his pan-Asian sympathies in the postwar period. According to Tsuji, on matters of regional solidarity ideological differences were less important than blood ties. At a gathering of former generals on 20 November 1954, Tsuji is reported as arguing that Japan should work with India to achieve neutrality and with communist China to maintain peace. Noting his friendship with Chinese Communist Party officials such as Zhou Enlai (1898–1976), he explained that, communist or not, “[a]fter all, they’re Asians.” An American intelligence analyst concluded, “Tsuji, head of the neutralist Self-Defense League (Jiei Dōmei), has long been a vigorous exponent of ‘the Asia for Asiatics,’ doctrine of the late Ishihara Kanji. Like right wing critic Tsukui Tatsuo, who also returned from Communist China, Tsuji considers the ties that bind Asians together stronger than those between Communist China and the USSR”. A Japanese biographer of Tsuji agreed that he was “harsh on the Soviet Union and soft on communist China.” For members of the Japanese left, Tsuji, as an army colonel blamed for a number of wartime atrocities, was

beyond the pale. However, they would no doubt agree with his support for the downtrodden peoples of Asia.

Leftists might find the case of the politician and parliamentarian Utsunomiya Tokuma (1906–2000) even more ambiguous. The son of General Utsunomiya Tarō (1861–1922), commander of the Japanese army in colonial Korea, Utsunomiya was one of the founding members of the Liberal Democratic Party in 1955 but cannot be categorized simply as a conservative politician. In the 1980s Utsunomiya emerged as a stern critic of the party he had helped to found but no longer supported, and, on a number of occasions, he appeared to be closely allied with the Socialist Party. He was a fervent proponent of disarmament and ran successfully in elections against the retired Self-Defense Forces general, Kurisu Hiroomi (1920–2004), an advocate of rearmament. In the 1960s Utsunomiya had been a prominent supporter of Algeria’s struggle for independence. He went out of his way to support all expressions of “Asian and African nationalism” and never hid his pan-Asianist sympathies. It could be argued that Utsunomiya’s pro-Asian attitudes were inseparable from his anti-Western and, more specifically, anti-American, sentiments.

This same set of attitudes has characterized many on the left, one of whose major criticisms of the Japanese government is its pro-American, pro-Western stance. Most left-wing commentators would never admit to entertaining pan-Asian sentiments, for, as we have seen, in their view Pan-Asianism was irredeemably besmirched by Japan’s wartime aggression. But whether they recognize it or not, the political left in Japan is heir to the pan-Asian tradition. This is abundantly clear both from the activities of the Japanese pacifist movement in general and the movement against the Vietnam War (organized by the Citizens’ League for Peace in Vietnam; Japanese: Betonamu ni Heiwa o! Shimin Rengō,

Beheiren) in particular. Numerous statements by members of these movements condemning American imperialism and American aggression have been issued over the years and continue today.

The pan-Asian undertones of these criticisms are generally revealed in their appeals to Asian brotherhood and Asian solidarity. This tendency is also seen in gestures made by prominent left-wing politicians such as Doi Takako (1928–), the one-time leader of the Japan Socialist Party; in statements by activists such as Dr. Nakamura Tetsu (1946–), who has devoted his life to the cause of helping the needy and sick in Afghanistan; and in lawsuits challenging Japanese logistical assistance to U.S. military activities in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere. Most recently, in a remarkable example of this tendency to pan-Asian solidarity, in late 2009 the Japanese cabinet, led by Hatoyama Yukio (1947–), the leader of the Democratic Party of Japan in coalition with the Social Democratic Party, halted Japanese military support for American-led operations in Afghanistan and recalled the Maritime Self-Defense Forces from the Indian Ocean.

### Recent Developments

As stated at the outset, issues of regionalism and regional integration in East Asia have received considerable attention since the 1990s. In Korea, for example, pan-Asian unity is identified as a promising path to avoid domination not only by Japan but also by China. In 2002, for example, former South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun (1946–2009) declared that “the age of Northeast Asia is arriving.” At the same time, regional approaches in East Asia, especially since the beginning of the present century, have been an expression of increasing discontent with American-led globalization and a developing unilateral world system. In South Korea, pan-Asianist regionalism is thus “seen as an attractive alternative to Korea’s dependence on America.”

South Korean and Japanese interests seem to have converged in these respects. In Japan, from as early as the 1980s, a “New Asianism” has begun to resurface, partly as an offshoot of the so-called Asian values debate of the 1980s, a discussion initiated by Malaysia’s Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad (1925–) and the prime minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew (1923–), supported by the xenophobic populist politician, writer and governor of Tokyo Ishihara Shintarō (1932–). Despite his frequent “Asian-bashing” outbursts, Ishihara is also known for his advocacy of pan-Asian views—which, essentially, are an expression of his strong anti-Americanism.

In the 1980s these politicians—and others like them—advocated a set of common “Asian values” (always vaguely defined), based on Confucian virtues, as a counter to the universalist claims of liberalism, democracy, and human rights, values that were dismissed as alien to the region and inauthentic for Asians on account of their allegedly Western provenance. However, many Asian politicians and writers, such as the future president of South Korea, Kim Dae-jung (1925–2009), strongly rejected the idea of a common set of “Asian” values, and the debate has made little headway since. Recent work by Chinese scholars suggests an attempt to find some kernel of truth in the legacy of Pan-Asianism with the objective of criticizing “Western” (i.e., United States) policies or the West’s claim to the universality of democratic values. The recent trend in Chinese academia to deal more openly with the once completely discredited ideology of Pan-Asianism, in combination with statements by high-ranking diplomats acknowledging the potential of the region’s pan-Asian legacy, arguably reflects a change in attitudes in China.

In Japan, the rise of a “New Asianism” has reflected diplomatic and economic efforts to stimulate regionalist approaches. These efforts were, however, always placed under strain by



the strong priority given by the Japanese government to the US-Japan Security Treaty. Nonetheless, Japan, as a recent study notes, “has been a driving force of Asian regionalism throughout the post-war period,” particularly in the economic sphere. Notable in this regard was Japan’s involvement in the founding of the Asian Development Fund in 1957 and the proposal for an Asian Monetary Fund in 1997. In addition, Japan has also been relatively active in the ASEAN+3 cooperative network, involving the ASEAN nations plus China, Japan, and South Korea. But as the acronym indicates, the driving force of this new body is ASEAN—the only effective organization working for regional integration in Asia, which has brought a considerable degree of stability and economic growth to Southeast Asia. Japan also has been rather passive and reactive with regard to the development of a Free Trade Agreement network in East Asia, and, given its continuing dependence on the security treaty with the United States, it remains questionable whether Japan can play a leading role in the integration of the region in the immediate future—notwithstanding the outspoken advocacy of Pan-Asianism by some leading politicians.

Nor should one forget the historical legacies of World War II and of Pan-Asianism as an ideology. As late as the 1990s, partly because of the difficulties Japan experienced in coming to terms with its past, writers in Asia as well as in the West warned that Japanese regionalist initiatives could be interpreted as a resurgence of claims for Japan’s leadership in East Asia, with the objective of creating “a new version of the Greater East-Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere of World War II.” In recent years, the issue of historical memory has become less contentious in Japan, but persistent elements of “retrospective Pan-Asianism”—the rehabilitation of wartime pan-Asian rhetoric to whitewash Japan’s wars of aggression and colonial rule in Asia—continue to hinder attempts to promote regional integration.

On the academic level, however, considerable progress has been made over the past two decades, as witnessed by drafts for an “Asian Constitution,” proposals for an East Asian Common House and a myriad of academic conferences dealing with (and not infrequently advocating) regional integration. This suggests that attention to the historical legacies of Pan-Asianism and the identification of positive examples of pan-Asian solidarity and regional integration in the past will play an increasingly significant role in the years to come.

### Recurrent Pan-Asian Themes

Pan-Asian styles of thought have always come most to the fore in debates on foreign policy and on Asian identity. If the many varieties of Pan-Asianism had anything in common, it was their opposition to the West: opposition to the West’s presence in Asia (i.e., Western imperialism), opposition to Western culture and values, and, conversely, an emphasis on the importance (and in many cases, the superiority) of Asian culture and Asian values. In fact, it could be argued that anti-Westernism was central to Pan-Asianism. In opposition to the “West”—which was, to a large degree, an invented concept—pan-Asian writers constructed their own “Asia.” Images of this constructed Asia varied greatly. They changed over time and took particular forms in different places and in the works of different authors. But all pan-Asianists assumed the existence of “one Asia” and based this assumption on one or more of the following categories:

- Geography (Asia, East Asia, the Orient)
- Cultural unity (influence of Indian and Chinese civilization, religions)
- Historical interconnectedness (Sinocentric system, tribute relations, trade networks)

- Racial kinship (the yellow race, races of color)
- The unity of Asian civilization in terms of its values and spiritual character (Confucianism, justice and benevolence vs. Western materialism and rationalism)
- A common destiny (the fight against Western imperialism and colonial rule)

Nevertheless, there was never a consensus on the geographical definition of Asia and that pan-Asian writers constantly revised their definitions of “Asia,” blurring geographical exactitude with interpretations that allowed them to extend their definition of Asia even to some European and African nations.

The perception and creation of cultural unity, brought to an extreme of simplification in the slogan “Asia is one,” also remains an important theme of pan-Asian writers over the past one and a half centuries—and down to the present day. In 2010, an Internet search (google.com) of the term generates a large number of hits. Although it is clear that any particular assertion of what constitutes cultural commonalities (or differences) is highly arbitrary and subjective, it is important to acknowledge that such a particularized insistence on the existence of commonalities has played an important role in the construction of Pan-Asianism, as the texts reproduced in this collection show.

Recent research has stressed the importance of historical interconnectedness as an authentic foundation for forces encouraging the development of regional integration. The notion of a world system that connected the various states of East and Southeast Asia for centuries, before the imposition of Western-based international law, had sufficient cogency to bind indigenous forces against the threat of

external domination. In recent years, these approaches have once again been attracting attention as a reaction to the emergence of a unipolar world order.

Enough has already been said about the incorporation of the Western ideas of race into pan-Asianist rhetoric. References to “racial kinship” were frequent, as the documents in this collection make clear. However, the Western provenance of the concept of race made it highly questionable that such an ideology could serve as the basis for a regional identity—not least since a Pan-Asianism based on racial motives limited “Asia” to East Asia and tended to exclude India, western Asia, and other areas. Further, the ideal of racial equality and the reality of racial discrimination within Asia eventually thoroughly discredited the racial component within Pan-Asianism, particularly in Korea (after 1910) and other territories under Japanese colonial rule.

The complex notion of Asian values—Asian “spirituality” versus the “materialism” of Western civilization—is also highly contested and riddled with contradictions. As we have already noted in the discussion of geographical definitions, the “Asia” of the pan-Asianists sometimes included territories that are generally classified as “Western” countries, such as Germany, Italy, or even Ireland. The 1920s saw a wave of sympathy for the cause of Irish independence in Asian publications, and in the 1930s, Japan allied itself with Germany and Italy—ostensibly since Germany and Italy had chosen to join the fight against “Western” materialism, now limited to Anglo-Saxon civilization.

Notwithstanding the various contradictions generated by any definition of Asia or the West, pan-Asianists have generally regarded “the West” as the alien Other. Time and again, as this collection shows, for pan-Asianists Asia represents the *antithesis* of the West. Indeed, these writers regularly define Asia in terms of

the West. This is true of such diverse figures as Okakura Tenshin, Ōkawa Shūmei and, in the postwar period, Takeuchi Yoshimi, Ishihara Shintarō, and Nakamura Tetsu. The corollary to this vision of the West as the Other is the assumption that there exists a coherent set of Asian values and that these values, *ex definitione* shared by all Asians, are superior to Western values. This idea is often linked to an emphasis on the antiquity of Asian culture, which is often presented by pan-Asianists as the cradle of civilization, including European civilization. In this connection, much has been made of the fact that all major religions of the world, including Christianity, originated in what is geographically considered Asia. On these grounds, it is often argued that only “Asian” civilization has the potential to ultimately save mankind, including the West. In the words of Tagore, “If Asian civilization constituted a great reservoir of spiritual power, and if modern civilization was about to destroy humanity itself, then it must be from a regenerated Asia that man’s salvation would come.” Tagore was an outspoken critic of nationalism in at least some of his writings. There is no doubt that the kind of Pan-Asianism to which he subscribed was “a vision of community that sought to transcend the territorial nation-state and redeem and regenerate the world through Eastern spiritual morality.”

Yet, for all this cultural tension, the material advantages of the West and of modernity in general became obvious to most Asians, except for a very small number of reactionary obscurantists. Western-style modernity was an indispensable condition for success in the nineteenth-century world. For that reason, along with the majority of Asians, most pan-Asianists never rejected modernity as such. Many ancient Asian customs and practices were patently useless or anachronistic in the modern world, and, under the circumstances, the chief problem that had to be overcome was the antiquated structure of state and society.

But was everything distinctive about the East to be denied? Initially there was a tendency to discard the whole culture, lock, stock, and barrel. In an excess of modernizing enthusiasm, some Japanese even wanted to give up their native tongue in favor of English. Needless to say, such proposals were at best impractical. But were there aspects of Eastern tradition still of relevance in this Western-dominated world? Above all in the realms of ethics, morals, and philosophical and religious thought, convincing arguments could be made for the relevance, if not the superiority, of Eastern traditions—arguments that the reader will encounter time and again throughout this collection.

While the meaning—and even the existence—of “Asian values” remains debatable, the notion of commonly held Asian values and a common culture and racial identity, which together constitute the basis of Pan-Asianism, is closely related to the sentiment of a “common destiny” for Asian peoples. This latter notion represents another recurrent theme in Pan-Asianism—one that perhaps retains much of its appeal even today, if recent statements by Asian governments (e.g., the initiative of former Japanese Prime Minister Hatoyama Yukio to prioritize East Asian community) or declarations by transnational organizations such as ASEAN, are anything to go by. It is impossible to gauge whether such sentiments will contribute to the realization of closer transnational cooperation or even regional integration in the future. To be sure, obstacles to regional cooperation in East Asia remain numerous. They include not only strong expressions of nationalism and the negative legacies of World War II but also the geography and demographics of Asia. Unlike in the case of European countries, the “Other,” or the “enemy,” for many smaller Asian nations is to be found within Asia, not somewhere outside. While Asia will certainly never be “one,” we may anticipate continued progress in the areas of regional cooperation and integration,

developments that can contribute to the stability and the prosperity of the region.

*About the book: The sources collected are arranged in chronological order. This allows the reader to trace the development of Pan-Asianism and Asian regionalism from the mid-nineteenth century down to the present day and provides an insider's view of intra-Asian debates. The material discussed in each chapter falls roughly into three often overlapping and never mutually exclusive categories: 1) attempts to define Asia and assess the region's contribution to world civilization; 2) calls for Asian solidarity, integration, and unity; and 3) debates about Asia's role in world politics and, above all, about Asia's relations with Europe.*

*Sven Saaler is Associate Professor of Modern Japanese History at Sophia University. He was formerly Head of the Humanities Section of the German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ) and Associate Professor at The University of Tokyo. His book Politics, Memory and Public Opinion examines recent history debates in Japan. Together with J. Victor Koschmann, he edited [Pan-Asianism in Modern Japanese History](#), with Wolfgang Schwentker [The Power of Memory in Modern Japan](#) and with Christopher W. A. Szpilman [Pan-Asianism: A Documentary History](#) (Rowman & Littlefield, 2011).*

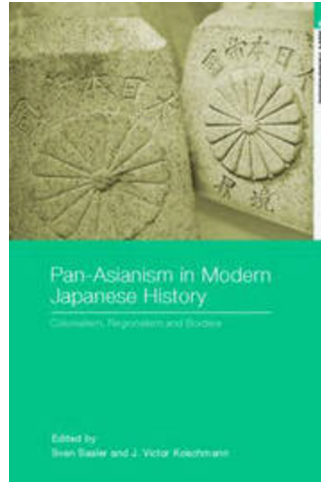
*Christopher W. A. Szpilman is professor of modern Japanese history and international relations at Kyushu Sangyo University. He is co-editor of *Kita Ikki's Kokutairon oyobi junseishakaishugi (On National Polity and Pure Socialism)*, Mitsukawa Kametarô nikki (*Mitsukawa Kametaro Diaries*, Ronsôsha 2011)*

and [Pan-Asianism: a Documentary History](#).

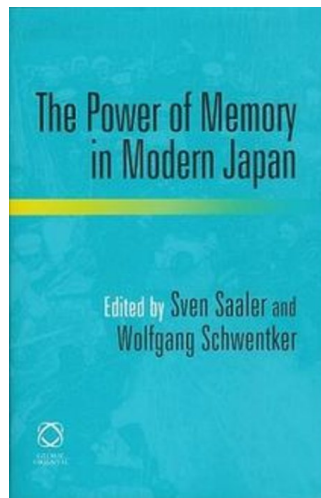
*Recommended citation: Sven Saaler and Christopher W. A. Szpilman, [Pan-Asianism as an Ideal of Asian Identity and Solidarity, 1850–Present](#), *The Asia-Pacific Journal* Vol 9, Issue 17 No 1, April 25, 2011.*

Articles on related themes:

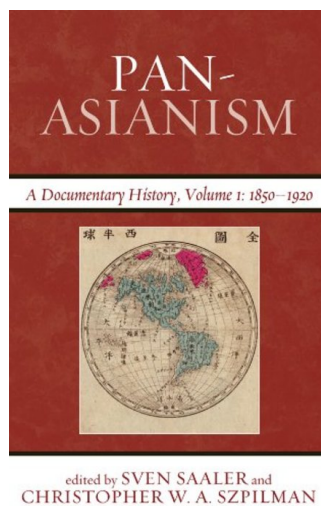
- [Mark Selden](#), Nation, Region and the Global in East Asia: Conflict and Cooperation
- [Isabel Hilton](#), Andreas Schild, Mohan Munasinghe, and Dipak Gyawali, Regional Cooperation at the Third Pole: The Himalayan-Tibetan Plateau and Climate Change
- [Mark Selden](#), East Asian Regionalism and its Enemies in Three Epochs: Political Economy and Geopolitics, 16th to 21st Centuries
- [H. H. Michael Hsiao and Alan Yang](#), Soft Power Politics in the Asia Pacific: Chinese and Japanese Quests for Regional Leadership
- [Mark Beeson](#), East Asian Regionalism and the End of the Asia-Pacific: After American Hegemony
- [Hamish McDonald](#), Beyond the Hub-and-Spoke Security System in East Asia: Australian and American Perspectives on East Asian Regionalism
- [Guillaume Gaulier, Françoise Lemoine and Deniz Ünal-Kesenci](#), China's Rise and the Reorganization of the Asian Regional and World Economy
- [Wang Hui](#), The Politics of Imagining Asia: Empires, Nations, Regional and Global Orders



Click on the cover to order.



Click on the cover to order.





Click on the cover to order.