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Postwar Japanese Intellectuals' Changing Perspectives on "Asia" and Modernity

Eiji Oguma

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By Oguma Eiji
Translated by Roger Brown

Japan's critical intellectuals, whose views on Asia Oguma Eiji analyzes in the context of Japan's postwar history, were quite influential at least through the 1970s. They regularly published not only in books but in monthly magazines read by hundreds of thousands and newspapers with circulations in the millions. As Oguma shows, their perspectives on Asia and modernity have fluctuated in response to a variety of factors, including most prominently Japan's relations with the U.S. but also in response to the changing course of Asian revolutions.

In 1950, Shimizu Ikutaro, one of Japan's most popular intellectuals, commented that, "now, once again, the Japanese are Asians." [1] For intellectuals disoriented by defeat in World War II and reduced to economic impoverishment, Japan was no longer one of the Western powers but merely one of the minor countries of "Asia." From that point forward there emerged in modern Japanese history a repeated confrontation between competing inclinations to learn from the West and to reassess "Asia" and tradition. Having until now researched post-Meiji theories of Japanese ethnicity (*minzoku*) and colonial policies, in this paper I wish to concentrate on what "Asia" meant to postwar Japan's "progressive intellectuals."

In the wake of defeat

In recently defeated Japan, the most compelling issues of the day were modernization and democratization. These, in turn, were matters indivisible from the problem of how to represent the "West" and "Asia." As one might expect, contemporary intellectuals advocated democratization and modernization modeled on "Western modernity," and were inclined to look askance toward "backward Asia." This inclination, however, was related in a number of ways to the historical context of the day.

To begin with, during the war criticism of "Western modernity" was severe. The Pacific War cast Western imperialism as the enemy and touted "Asian liberation." Moreover, during the 1930s it had become common currency among intellectuals to criticize the modern ideal of "civil society" that, following Hegelian philosophy and Marxism, they viewed as essentially synonymous with "capitalist society." For this reason, former Marxists who converted to supporting the war joined others during the conflict to criticize "Western modernity" in the name of "world historical philosophy" and to advocate the "overcoming of modernity." [2] For this reason, phenomena such as authoritarianism with the emperor at the apex and a controlled economy were praised as evidence of the "overcoming" of "modern individualism."

However, the actual conditions of the war revealed the shallowness of Japan's modernization. Nor was this simply a matter of Japan's scientific, technological and productive capacity being inferior to that of the United States and the countries of Europe. Total war clearly exposed problems of organization and mentality, as well, beginning with intense rivalry among, and nepotism within, the Army, Navy, and civilian bureaucracy. These realities of wartime society were a far cry from the ideal types of modern rationalism that were envisioned by intellectuals. Moreover, owing to the democratization policies of American occupation forces under the command of General Douglas MacArthur, the supposedly "overcome" ideal of liberal democracy experienced a revival.

Maruyama Masao, 1959

On the basis of these wartime experiences, defeat was followed by the call for a reevaluation of "modernity." One of postwar Japan's representative intellectuals, Maruyama Masao, had in 1936, under the influence of Marxism, written an essay highlighting the limits of "modern civil society." However, in a short essay on "modern thought" published in January 1946, he asserted that, "in our country modern thought is far

from being 'overcome,' for truly we have not even achieved it." Maruyama continued,

> For years, supposedly respectable scholars, men of letters, and critics, were captivated by an epochal atmosphere wherein the so-called modern spirit was most notorious, as if that word were the fundamental root of all contemporary evil, and all that remained was to "overcome" it. One can only with difficulty imagine these men's feelings of wretchedness and absurdity as in present-day Japan we are being initiated into the ABCs of modern civilization by General Douglas MacArthur …. Under the spell of a vulgar historicism which dictates that what comes later is always more progressive than anything that had appeared earlier, our intellectuals bowed before the "world historical" significance of fascism. And now they stand perplexed before the "world historical" victory of the democratic ideal that was supposed to have been overcome. [3]

Maruyama was not the only one to note such a change. Literary critic Hirano Ken, who in 1942 had advocated "overcoming modernity," after the war participated in the founding of the journal *Kindai Bungaku* (Modern Literature) out of the "desire to make a fresh start premised on the establishment of modernity." [4]

The second contextual factor has to do with reactions against the Japan Communist Party (JCP). Hewing to Marxist theory, the party's line of criticism regarding "modernity" remained the same after defeat. Formally, the party stipulated that contemporary Japan was in the stage of absolutism centered on the emperor system. Accordingly, it adhered to a "two stage revolutionary theory," calling for bourgeois-democratic revolution corresponding to the French Revolution, to be followed by a transition toward socialist revolution. For this reason, the party succeeded in attracting the cooperation even of liberal intellectuals who were uncomfortable with Marxism. However, the party criticized these same intellectuals for "modernism" whenever they advocated modernization and democratization in ways that conflicted with the party line. [5]

The executive committee of the JCP was comprised of people who had resisted the war and even spent more than a decade in prison without renouncing their beliefs. Liberated after Japan's defeat, they garnered wide respect. However, the party also included many intellectuals who had committed "apostasy" *(tenko)* during the war and cooperated with the war effort through their criticism of "Western modernity." Their postwar return to the party produced a tendency to avoid the issue of war responsibility. For that reason, when intellectuals such as Maruyama Masao and those associated with *Kindai Bungaku* engaged in a reappraisal of "Western modernity," they did so in reaction against the Communist Party.

The third factor concerns opposition between the cities and the villages. As in many developing countries, prior to the accelerated economic growth of the 1960s, the gap between cities and the countryside was extreme, and only members of the urban middle and upper classes were able to enjoy to a Western-style way of life. In this regard, it is noteworthy that most intellectuals hailed from those very classes.

However, during the period of war and recovery, the urban middle class suffered the combined impact of the bombing, food shortages, and inflation while the position of villagers, who grew their own food and whose homes were not destroyed by bombing, was relatively improved. In the wake of the war, members of the urban middle class were forced to travel to the villages and attempt to barter clothing and other belongings for food. The farmers, who had little use for city dwellers, drove hard bargains. In the barracks, meanwhile, student soldiers of urban middle class origin were often subjected to violence at the hands of resentful rural and lower class soldiers.

Moreover, the antipathy they felt for the wealthy Western lifestyle of the urban middle classes meant that during the war farmers and members of the lower classes were inclined to support the government's slogan of "driving out Western culture." The government, as well, criticized "soft" Western-style urban culture while praising farmers and laborers as "working warriors" who had conquered "modern individualism." Consequently, in the transition from war to defeat the resentment harbored by members of the urban middle classes toward the wartime government and military was accompanied by resentment toward the villages. In 1946, a newspaper reported that people departing from the city to the rural villages "all feel extreme bitterness toward government officials and farmers, unanimously stating that when the time of their death by starvation arrives they will expire either at the entrance to a cabinet minister's house or on the doorstep of a farmer." [6] Thus, "government officials" and "farmers" were loathed as the highest and lowest manifestations of "feudal" authoritarianism.

During the same period, economist Otsuka Hisao drew on the work of German sociologist Max Weber to call for the cultivation of a "modern human type" of personality, asserting that the mentality of Japan's farmers resided in a state of "Asiatic feudalism." [7] By the same token, Maruyama Masao, whose studies of Edo thought were at once a product of his academic specialty and a critique of contemporary affairs, strongly criticized the "feudal consciousness" of farmers, while advancing the idea that Tokugawa thought, having developed differently from Chinese Confucianism, had come to resemble that of the modern West. [8]

This orientation toward modernization also produced the label of "progressive faction," a generic term used to designate the various forces that criticized those who were blamed for the war, including the military authorities and conservative politicians, and sought to promote democratization. The "faction" included not only communists and social democrats but, as with Maruyama and Otsuka, liberals who in order to promote democratization cooperated with the JCP and the Socialist Party (which brought together various non-communist left-wing organizations). The Communist Party and Socialist Party (wherein gathered numerous non-communist left-wing organizations) served as the core of this "progressive faction" (*shinpo-ha*) or "reformist force" (*kakushin seiryoku*). Meanwhile, Maruyama, who sometimes refrained from criticizing the Communist Party, was widely viewed as the typical "progressive intellectual."

In general, for early postwar "progressive intellectuals" the term "Western modernity" expressed a reaction against wartime conditions. For them, emperor-centered authoritarianism and the wartime criticism of "modernity" by intellectuals, as well as the farmers who (from the intellectuals' perspective) fell in line with military authoritarianism and the assault on Western culture, were to be loathed. In contrast, what they agreed on was a "modern Western" society divorced from authoritarianism and united on the basis of equality. The more miserable the wartime experience of an intellectual and the stronger their reaction against the war and authoritarianism, the more apt they were to idealize "Western modernity" and, in contrast, to lump together the negative elements of Japanese society and generalize them as "Asiatic."

The 1950s

This pejorative view of "Asia" was thoroughly transformed by the 1949 Chinese Revolution. In general, following the 1868 Meiji Restoration and especially after Japan's victory in the 1895 Sino-Japanese War, Japanese intellectuals had disdained China as a more backward country than Japan. Most Marxists were no exception. For these Japanese intellectuals, it was thus a great shock that China had succeeded in realizing a socialist revolution before Japan, as that was taken as an indication that China must be more advanced. Moreover, the late 1940s witnessed the repeated success of Asian independence movements such as those in India and Egypt.

In 1953, historian and Communist Party member Ishimoda Sho, a longtime critic of Otsuka Hisao, wrote, "democracy, socialism, and communism – these words no longer belong solely to Europe. The Chinese Revolution has born witness to the arrival of an age in which the Asian masses – long thought to be governed by different principles from Europeans – are creating these systems through their own efforts." [9]

About the same time, China scholar Takeuchi Yoshimi gained prominence and, in 1953, Maruyama Masao published an article criticizing his own previous views on China. [10]

This transformation in the image of "Asia" occurred in tandem with changes in the domestic and international conditions of the 1950s. One of these conditions was the intensification of the Cold War and American pressure on Japan. At the outset of the occupation, the United States sought to implement policies that would democratize and demilitarize Japan, and it was under American leadership that the principle of renouncing military force and war that is embodied in Article Nine of the new constitution was enshrined. However, with the intensification of the Cold War and the onset of the Korean War, the United States pressed for remilitarizing Japan as an anti-communist ally. In August 1950, under the direction of United States forces, a "military police reserve" – so called in an effort to avoid contradicting the constitution's prohibition of a military – was organized. In 1954, this unit was expanded into the Self-Defense Forces.

In September 1951, during the Korean War, the San Francisco Peace Conference was held and the end of the occupation of Japan by American forces followed. However, the peace treaty concluded under American leadership was spurned by the Soviet Union, China and North Korea, as well as by countries of Eastern Europe. Moreover, the US-Japan Security Treaty, signed on the same day as the Peace Treaty, stipulated that the stationing of American forces in Japan would continue after the end of the occupation. At about the same time that the peace treaty went into effect, a secret treaty further provided that in times of emergency Japan's defense capabilities could be placed under the direction of the United States military.

Japan's conservative political regime accepted these American demands and, on the basis of participation in the U.S. camp, sought both to obtain security and bring to an end the occupation. Among conservative politicians were some who aimed for an expansion of military capabilities and a return to the old order, and others who sought security and a suitable response to American demands for an enhanced military capacity while devoting themselves to economic growth. The two groups were at odds within the conservative regime but, basically, the policies of the latter group dominated in practice. [11]

However, American pressure generated strong negative reaction from Japanese communists and liberals inclined toward pacifism. In the midst of an expanding opposition movement directed against the San Francisco Peace Treaty and rearmament, these individuals became known for their sympathy with anti-American and anti-Western views and their sympathetic reevaluation of those Asian countries then winning independence from Western control. Other intellectuals of the day reacted against American pressure for rearmament by sympathizing with Europe. Conservatives were inclined to favor the English royal house on account of their interest in defending the Emperor. People avoided Germany because of its strong association with Nazism and the Axis, but some were attracted to the French anti-German resistance. The novelist and future Nobel laureate Oe Kenzaburo, who became well known as a pacifist defender of Article Nine, relates that upon becoming a college student in 1953 he chose to major in French literature in reaction against the United States. [12] However, in general the United States and Europe tended to be conflated through the use of terms such as "the West" and "Euro-American." Reaction against the United States quickly and easily became bound up with reaction against "the West" and with a re-evaluation of "Asia."

A second development of the 1950s was a new fascination with "the people" *(minshu)* that emerged in reaction to the apparent elitism of the early-postwar Enlightenment activities through which intellectuals had sought to instill democracy and modernization. Such efforts had been welcomed as a breath of fresh air in the aftermath of liberation from wartime censorship; however, by around 1948 the popularity of Enlightenment discourse had declined. Leftwing intellectuals then criticized the paternalistic attitudes of the Enlightenment publicists, who had adopted the stance of instructor to the masses. As time went on, Enlightenment activities not only failed to garner the sympathy of the masses, but elicited the self-reflection among intellectuals themselves that such activities constituted a rebirth of the very authoritarianism they were supposed to be criticizing.

Thus, from around 1950 intellectuals began to reflect on a style of Enlightenment that appeared one-sided in embracing Western thought and to take a new interest in mass culture. The influence of the Chinese Revolution resulted in the slogan, "Intellectuals must learn from the masses!" Consequently, although having until then served as an object of criticism for the Enlightenment movement, traditional Japanese culture underwent a reevaluation and such areas as folklore studies attracted newfound attention. In the same way, culture once termed "Asian" and "feudal" also experienced a reassessment.

A third issue shaping these changes was Japan's poverty at the time. Defeat in the war, both the destruction, root and branch, if Japan's cities and the loss of empire, delivered a tremendous blow to Japan's economy. According to the United Nations' 1948 Economic Survey of East Asia, the per capita income of the Japanese people was 100 dollars, whereas for Americans the figure was 1,269 dollars. By way of comparison, in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and the Philippines, the numbers were 91 and 88 dollars, respectively.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Japanese intellectuals were apt to think of Japan as a "backward Asian country," particularly vis-á-vis their American occupiers. Still, the strong inclination to view "Asian" conditions critically in comparison with a "Western" ideal remained strong in the immediate postwar period. From around 1950, however, amidst burgeoning anti-American sentiment and an increasing impulse to idealize "the people," skepticism toward "Western modernity" spread and the image of "Asia" improved. Of course, reevaluation of "Asia" did not mean that modernization itself was rejected. Instead, the preference during this period was to argue for the existence in "Asia" of a type of modernization that differed from that of the West.

For example, in a 1948 essay on "Chinese Modernity and Japanese Modernity," the scholar of Chinese literature, Takeuchi Yoshimi, contrasted China's modernization with that of Japan. [13] According to Takeuchi, Japan had never since ancient times possessed its own culture. Rather, the elite had always imported culture from outside (whether from China or the West) and forced the masses to conform. Characteristic of Japan, therefore, were a repetitive process of "conversion" (*tenko)*, in which the existing culture was discarded in favor of a newly imported culture, and an authoritarian system of blind obedience to elites, who in turn blindly followed the authority of foreign cultures. The modernization of Japan since the Meiji era (1868-1912) was none other than a conversion from the stance of "expel the barbarians" (*joi*) to "civilization and enlightenment" (*bunmei kaika*), and the political changes from prewar to wartime and from wartime to postwar – that is, from liberalism to totalitarianism and from totalitarianism to democracy – were nothing more than repeated cases of apostasy and conversion. In contrast, the strength of tradition in China, while barriing the kind of easy modernization carried out in Japan, posed the necessity of modernization from the level of the masses and was resulting in a successful form of modernization that made use of tradition.

Takeuchi Yoshimi

Just as in the immediate postwar years when Maruyama and Otsuka had idealized "Western modernity," Takeuchi doubtless idealized China. However, his argument drew a sympathetic response from intellectuals confronting the success of the Chinese Revolution and the impasse of Enlightenment activism. In 1964, the influential monthly *Chuo Koron* named Takeuchi's "Chinese Modernity and Japanese Modernity" one of the "Ten Most Influential Essays of Postwar Japan."

In line with this discourse, "Asia" also served as a standard by which to reflect on the war. In the wake of defeat, Japan's plunge into war was thought to have resulted from a failure to democratize and consolidate the individual ego *(jiga)* in the same manner as the "modern West." However, Takeuchi's essay portrayed modern Japan as having become a "slave" of modern Western civilization which, riding the coattails of Western imperialism, carried out aggression against "Asia." In 1951, under the influence of Takeuchi, Maruyama joined in arguing that even though Japan had modernized faster than the rest of "Asia," it had blindly imitated European imperialism and gone from being "Asia's hope to Asia's betrayer." [14]

Paralleling these activities, moreover, from around 1950 the JCP began to place major emphasis on "national independence" (*minzoku dokuritsu)*. Immediately after the war, the JCP welcomed American occupation forces as "liberating troops" and argued for the possibility of realizing a peaceful revolution while cooperating with the democratization policies of the occupation forces. However, in January 1950 the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) published a treatise criticizing the JCP and demanding a confrontation with American occupation forces. The article was unsigned, but was written by Stalin.

When the Korean War broke out in June of the same year, having decided that Japan was now in a state of semi-colonialism under American occupation, the JCP followed the Chinese Communist Party in proclaiming the war to be a struggle for national independence *(minzoku dokuritsu toso)*. The party then proceeded to confront occupation authorities through such issues as the anti-US base struggles and opposition to the San Francisco Peace Treaty, while also adopting a line of armed struggle against illegal militarization as a means to foment revolution by sowing dissension between American forces and the Japanese government.

Accordingly, intellectuals linked to the Communist Party extolled the national independence struggle in China and elsewhere and, while criticizing "Western modernity," rehabilitated the value of Japan's traditional culture. Although Takeuchi, Maruyama and their contemporaries did not necessarily conform to the thinking of the Communist Party, the party line and their own views were consistent with one another, thereby contributing to the 1950s' reassessment of Asia.

As the various processes mentioned above intertwined and reinforced one another, Japan's return to "Asia" proceeded apace. This was perfectly symbolized in Shimizu Ikutaro's proclamation in the January 1950 edition of *Chuo Koron* that "now, once again, the Japanese are Asians." Among the factors Shimizu emphasized were Japan's poverty compared with the United States and the deep-rooted American racial prejudice toward Japanese. Moreover, he continued, through American pressure Japan was being forced to rearm while at the same time Japanese land was being stolen for American military bases.

However, the reevaluation of "Asia" did not necessarily entail thoroughgoing reassessment of Japan's war responsibility toward Asian countries. From the end of the war until the 1950s, discussion of war responsibility had for the most part focused on the responsibility of politicians, bureaucrats, militarists, and the emperor for carrying out a reckless war and victimizing the Japanese people, both soldiers and civilians. Such inquiries were carried out solely on behalf of everyday Japanese who, together with those Japanese who were killed in battle, were defined as victims of the war. No thought was given to "Asian" victims who might have suffered at the hands of these very same Japanese.

On the occasion of the San Francisco Peace Conference in September 1951, the monthly, *Sekai* (The World), which was an important organ for progressive intellectuals not affiliated with the Communist Party, published a special issue on problems related to the treaty. The 120 contributors opposed the American-dominated peace conference and criticized the fact that Asian countries – particularly China – were not invited. However, with the exception of a roundtable discussion among economists, only two writers mentioned postwar reparations to Asian countries. Moreover, even participants in the economists' roundtable argued that, given the contemporary state of its economy, Japan was incapable of paying such reparations. [15] Ultimately, as a consequence of America's international political power, those Asian countries which signed the treaty were forced to renounce the right to seek reparations.

The 1960s and beyond

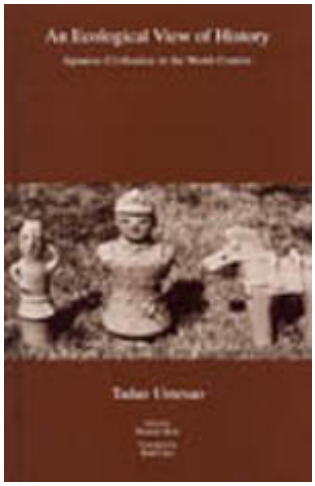
In the 1960s, domestic conditions within Japan changed dramatically. Of course, Japan's accelerated economic growth was the major factor. Having recovered to prewar levels by around 1955, Japan's economy then embarked upon the full-scale growth of the 1960s. The urban population expanded from 28 percent in 1945 to 72 percent in 1972. In 1963 Japan joined the OECD, signaling its admission to the ranks of developed nations. Lifestyle changes were likewise dramatic. Household appliances such as televisions, washing machines, and refrigerators spread rapidly from the late 1950s while changes in daily life and food culture continued apace. The homogenizing effects of mass media and

mass culture, too, became increasingly obvious.

Disappearing in the course of this process was the schema, common until the late 1950s, that highlighted Japan's peculiar coexistence of a small, "Westernized urban middle class" with a large, "Asiatic peasantry." The sociologist Yamamoto Akira noted that until the 1950s, "if one went from the city to the village things were so different that one wondered if this was the same Japan. … [I]t was not until after 1960 that the hinterlands developed and people began thinking of cities and farming villages as part of the same country." [16]

Economic growth also changed Japan's self-image of its international standing. In 1951, responding to a question regarding the superiority or inferiority of Japanese in comparison to Westerners put to them by the Broadcast Opinion Research bureau of the Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK), 28 percent of respondents believed that "Japanese are superior" while 47 percent felt the Japanese were "inferior." In contrast, by 1963 these replies had reversed, with 33 percent answering that Japanese were "superior" and 14 percent perceiving them as "inferior." By 1968, those affirming Japanese superiority had risen to 47 percent. [17]

Accompanying the rise in Japanese self-confidence was anthropologist Umesao Tadao's publication in 1957 of "A Historical View of the Ecology of Civilization," which divided the world into "first tier" and "second tier" regions. [18] According to Umesao, the "first tier" consisted of "wet, forested regions" and corresponded to Western Europe and Japan, both of which had passed through feudalism and subsequently built modern civilizations. The "second tier" of "dry, continental regions" referred to Russia and China, which had transformed themselves from authoritarian empires into socialist states. Umesao's point was that Japan, even in regard to its indigenous culture, belonged to a different category than that of China and the other regions of Asia. Rather, Japan more closely resembled Western Europe and, for this reason, had succeeded in modernizing. These assertions by Umesao were welcomed warmly in a Japan flush with economic growth.



An Ecological View of History

Among leftists, too, Japan's standing changed. In the late 1950s, the Japan Communist Party began expelling student members who were dissatisfied with the party line, and various New Left factions began to be formed. One point of contention between these new factions and the Communist Party concerned Japan's international standing. Since 1950, the party had defined Japan as a semi-colonized "Asian" state subordinate to the United States However, the nascent New Left maintained that Japan was already an advanced imperialist state at the same level as countries of the West and that it was advancing economically into "Asia."

Paralleling this argument was the new critique of "Western modernity." Environmental degradation had accompanied high economic growth, and by the late 1960s the result was full-blown criticism of modernization and industrial society. Meanwhile, rural and traditional culture, as well as "Asia," again underwent a reevaluation. As noted earlier, a reassessment of rural and traditional culture had also occurred in the middle to late 1950s. That discourse, conducted by literati opposing American military pressure, had defined Japan as an "Asian" country while affirming rural and traditional culture and the Japanese masses as well. Moreover, rather than disavowing modernization, that view had proclaimed a unique "Asian" modernization that drew on traditional culture. However, the criticism of modernity and reassessment of "Asia" that occurred in the late 1960s identified all of Japan, including the masses, with the modern West. Therefore, all aspects of modernization became the object of criticism, while praise of rural and traditional culture turned increasingly to nostalgia for a lost rural landscape.

The same period witnessed the rise of a generation born in the postwar period. While the wartime generation was inclined to impress upon the young the bitterness of their wartime suffering, this postwar generation responded by emphasizing the damage their elders had inflicted on "Asia." Previous discussions of war responsibility had indicted political leaders for the harm they had done to the Japanese people, while treating the majority of the people as victims. However, with the rise of a younger generation who had not experienced the war came a tendency to treat the entire older generation, ordinary citizens and political leaders alike, as victimizers of "Asia."

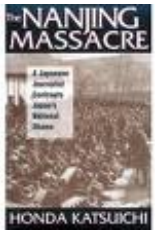
Accelerating that tendency was the Vietnam War. American "special procurements" of war materiel for that conflict accounted for ten to twenty percent of total exports. Although this fell short of the sixty percent of total exports that had been accounted for by procurements during the Korean War, it nonetheless served to support Japanese economic growth.

After 1965, when there arose in Japan, as elsewhere, a student-led movement opposed to the Vietnam War, that movement emphasized the suffering of other "Asians." During the Korean War, opponents of the war had emphasized the dangers of Japan being caught up in the war and American pressure to rearm. By contrast, opponents of the Vietnam War, the New Left projected an image of Japan standing shoulder to shoulder with Western countries as an advanced imperialist state, assaulting "Asia."

Amidst the emphasis placed on the suffering of "Asia" by the anti-Vietnam War movement, attention also began to focus on damage Japan had wrought during the Sino-Japanese and Pacific Wars. In 1967, Honda Katsuichi from the daily newspaper *Asahi Shinbun* wrote *Senji no mura* (Battlefield Village), detailing the realities of the Vietnam War and in the process exposing the brutal conduct of American soldiers and the racial prejudice that underlay it. Honda also indicted the Japanese government for cooperating with the United States military. Moreover, after publishing *Amerika gasshukoku* (The United States of America), in which he laid bare racial discrimination in the American South, Honda visited China in 1971. In *Chugoku no tabi* (China Travels), he investigated the massacres carried out by Japanese soldiers in Nanjing and elsewhere. In his preface to *China Travels*, Honda related how he was inspired to investigate what had happened in China by American

journalists who had brought to light the Mai Lai massacre perpetrated by American soldiers in Vietnam. [19]

Although events such as the Nanjing Massacre had been exposed and garnered attention as a result of the Tokyo trials immediately after the war, [20] with the passage of time they had faded from memory. Now, however, provoked by reports of the brutal behavior of American soldiers in Vietnam and a sense of guilt for Japan's cooperation in the war, the historical precedents for victimization of "Asia" were again recalled. This time it was Japanese journalists and researchers, not American victors, who documented Japanese war crimes and atrocities in China and throughout Asia. Also prompted by the Vietnam War were some late-1960s novels that dealt with war memories, including Ooka Shohei's *Leite Senki* (Leyte War Diary) and Ibuse Masuji's *Kuroi Ame* (Black Rain).



The Nanking Massacre

In March 1967, Japanese Christian organizations released a report exposing their complicity in the Asia-Pacific War. Philosopher Tsurumi Shunsuke, who was involved with the anti-Vietnam War movement, commented that, "if one wonders why this report appears now, twenty-two years after the end of the war, [the answer] is that the Vietnam War is demonstrating its worth as a catalyst." [21] American peace activist Howard Zinn revealed that during his visit to Tokyo in June 1966, which came at the behest of the Japanese citizens' groups in the "Peace for Vietnam! Citizens' Alliance" (Betonamu ni heiwa o! Shimin rendo, or Beheiren), he repeatedly heard the criticism that "you Americans are behaving in Asia today just as we once behaved." [22]

Accompanying news of the Vietnam War came reports from the United States of movements seeking justice for the Indians, African-Americans, and other oppressed groups. In Japan, attention turned to the indigenous Ainu of the north and to resident Koreans descended from Koreans brought to Japan under colonial rule, as well as to Okinawans integrated into the country when Japan subjugated and annexed the Ryukyu islands during the nineteenth century. These minorities were defined as an element of "Asia" which suffered aggression at the hands of the modern Japanese imperialist state. In the context of controversy over environmental destruction and discrimination against minorities, the Ainu and the Okinawans, as well as native Americans, were pictured as people who coexisted with nature.

At one extreme of this discourse lay the "East Asian Anti-Japanese Armed Front" *(Higashi Ajia Hannichi Buso Sensen)*. This extremist left-wing group was composed of youths who came out of and eventually split off from the student uprisings of the late-1960s. They criticized the economic advance into "Asia" by Japanese corporations and in 1974 bombed trading companies and facilities related to the armaments industry. These radicals emphasized Japan's historical aggression toward the Ainu, Okinawans and others who had lived in a "primitive communist system" in close touch with nature. [23] In a sense, the Ainu and Okinawans were being rediscovered as Japan's "internal Asia" *(uchi naru Ajia)*.

Conclusion

The image of "Asia" for postwar intellectuals provides not only a mirror of Japanese national identity, but a reflection of domestic conditions. For many Japanese, "Asia" is limited to East and Southeast Asia, i.e. China and Korea, or Indonesia and Malaysia. However, for Western Europeans, "Asia" seems to refer above all to the Middle East and India, followed by China. Opinions differ as to whether such border areas as Greece and Russia fall within "Asia" or the "West." There are even anecdotal instances of Poles calling Russians "Asian," Germans labeling the Poland as "Asian," and French branding Germans as "Asian."

Thus, "Asia" frequently evokes images of the "Other" that are constructed in opposition to the "Self" in the process of national identity formation. This was the case for Japanese intellectuals, too. For them, "Asia" was the medium through which they expressed reactions and attitudes including anti-Western emotions and desires for modernization, complex feelings toward the masses and traditional culture, and conflict between generations and the issue of war responsibility. Above all, their constructions of Asian nations reflected a Japanese national identity that changed amidst shifts in domestic political and economic conditions. The same is, of course, true of "Western modernity."

This affinity for "Asia" has been apparent among both progressive and conservatives. If one were to construct a very simple sketch in order to show how "Asia" has served as an anti-Western and anti-modern symbol, it would look something like the following:

I	II
III	IV

In this diagram the perpendicular axis covers the spectrum from progressive to conservative, while the horizontal axis, running from left to right, represents a continuum from anti-Asian to pro-Asian sentiment. Therefore, Area I demarcates those "anti-Asia progressives" who called for democratization in line with the criteria of the "modern West." Area II represents "pro-Asia progressives" who, inspired by Asian independence movements and perhaps keenly aware of Japan's war responsibility toward Asia, criticized American military pressures and "Western modernity." Area III encompasses the "anti-Asia conservatives" who disdained Asia and promoted cooperation with America and Europe while working toward industrial modernization. Area IV then, is for the "pro-Asia conservatives" who, while reacting against America and "Western modernity," insisted that the Pacific War was fought for the "liberation of Asia."

Of course, this is only a simplified diagram presenting an idealized typology. As will be evident from the historical changes outlined above, actual trends cannot be simplified in this manner. Moreover, as can be seen with Maruyama Masao, the same person sometimes takes more than one position. However, such a scheme does provide a way to display the broad range of variation that occurred in Japanese views of "Asia."

Similar views of "Asia" also continue to exist in contemporary Japan. In recent years, the well-known right-wing group, "Society to Create New Textbooks" (Atarashii kyokasho o tsukuru kai), has hewed to the view that the Pacific War was fought against the West to liberate Asia; however, at the same time they support the US-Japan Security Treaty and are in sync on fundamentals with both "pro-Asia conservatives" and "anti-Asia conservatives." Likewise, Tokyo governor Ishihara Shintaro, known for his rightist utterances, makes discriminatory statements about Asia while co-authoring with Malaysian Prime Minister Mohammad Mahathir, *The Asia that Can Say 'No'*, a book filled with anti-American views. [24]

The peculiar characteristics of this discourse originate primarily in relations with the West, which in turn determine views of “Asia” as the dependent variable. For example, Ishihara Shintaro is typical of conservative critics who generally are ignorant of the realities in Asian countries and who change their views of “Asia” depending upon the state of relations with the West. In other words, if relations with the West are threatening, they extol ties with “Asia,” but when relations with the West settle into the background they revert to denunciations of “Asia.” Needless to say, the object of the “no” in Ishihara’s book is the United States

In sum, Japanese perceptions of “Asia” mirror the conflicts and contradictions in Japanese national identity and reflect domestic political and economic conditions. As a result, to inquire into Japan’s “Asia,” is also to interrogate Japan itself.

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Notes

[1] Shimizu Ikutaro, “Nihonjin,” first published in *Chuo Koron*, January 1951, reprinted in *Shimizu Ikutaro chosakushu*, vol. 10, Kodansha, 1992-93, p. 10.

[2] The symposium, “Overcoming Modernity” was first carried in the October 1942 edition of the literary journal, *Bungakkai* (Literary World) and then in paperback form by Sogensha in July 1943. This roundtable discussion included some thirteen well-known Japanese philosophers, literary critics, poets, scientists, historians, musicians, movie critics, and others, including a number of apostate Marxists (*tenko marukusushigisha*). While the content of the symposium was not really considered to be that substantial, it came to be widely known by intellectuals of the day as a discourse symbolizing wartime intellectual trends.

[3] *Maruyama Masao shu* no. 3, vol. 3, Iwanami Shoten, 1995-97, p. 4.

[4] Hotta Yoshie, Ito Hiroshi, Takeuchi Yoshimi, Hirano Ken, Hanada Kiyoteru, “Nihon no kindai to kokumin bungaku,” in *Shin-Nihon Bungaku*, December 1953, p. 152.

[5] The August 1948 edition of the Communist Party organ *Zen’ei* carried a special issue titled *Kindaishugi hihan* (A Critique of Modernism), criticizing the magazine *Kindai Bungaku* and individuals such as Otsuka Hisao.

[6] Cited in *Uchida Yoshihiko chosakushu* vol. 10, Iwanami Shoten, 1988-89, p. 22.

[7] *Otsuka Hisao chosakushu* vol. 8, Iwanami Shoten, 1969-70, p. 171.

[8] See the essays in *Maruyama Masao shu*, vol. 2.

[9] Ishimoda Sho, *Zoku rekishi to minzoku no hakken*, Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1953, p. 411.

[10] *Maruyama Masao shu*, vol. 2, pp. 289-90.

[11] Representative of those attaching great importance to limiting Japan’s expenditures for rearmament and prioritizing the US Security Treaty and economic growth is Yoshida Shigeru, the prime minister at the time the peace treaty was concluded. Yoshida’s ties to “progressives” were subtle. In January 1951, for example, in order to resist increased American pressure to rearm, Yoshida secretly asked the left-wing faction of the Socialist Party to start an anti-rearmament movement. He then used the strength of domestic opposition as a reason to try and blunt American demands.

[12] Eto Jun and Oe Kenzaburo, “Gendai o do ikiru ka,” in *Gunzo*, January 1968, p. 176.

[13] *Takeuchi Yoshimi zenshu*, vol. 4, Chikuma Shobo, 1980-82.

[14] *Maruyama Masao shu* no 5, vol. 8, p. 3.

[15] Ouchi Hyoe, Arisawa Hiromi, Minobe Ryokichi, Inaba Shuzo, “Tandoku kowa to Nihon keizai,” in *Sekai*, October 1950.

16 Yamamoto Akira, *Sengo fuzoku shi*, Osaka: Osaka Shoseki, 1986, p. 97.

[17] NHK Hoso Yoron Chosajo, ed., *Zusetsu: sengo yoron shi*, Nihon Hoso Shuppan Kyokai, 1975, p. 14.

[18] Umesao Tadao, “Bunmei no seitai shikan yosetsu,” in *Chuo Koron*, February 1957.

[19] Honda Katsuichi, *Chugoku no tabi*, Asahi Shinbunsha, 1972.

[20] International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE), 1946-48.

[21] *Tsurumi Shunsuke chosakushu* vol. 5, no. 1, Chikuma Shobo, 1975, p. 131.

[22] Howard Zinn, “Sakana to gyoshi”, first published in *Sekai heiwa undo shiryo*, July 1967, reprinted in *Shiryo “Beheiren” undo*, Chikuma Shobo, 1974, p. 89.

[23] *Hannichi kakumei sengen*, Higashi Ajia Hannichi Buso Sensen, 1979.

[24] Mahathir bin Mohamad and Ishihara Shintaro, *“No” to ieru Ajia*, Kobunsha, 1994.