

## Session I

### “The Idea of Asia and Modernity”

In Session I, speakers from different parts of Asia, such as Japan, China, and Indonesia, will speak about their views on Asia, based on their academic interest and profession in visual arts, history and philosophy, and journalism to examine the concept of Asia from a cross-disciplinary position. Disparate perspectives on Asia based on different historical and cultural experiences, which reflect individual reception of and resistance against Western modernity, colonialism, and war will be presented, while discussing, at the same time, historical and common issues of Asia.

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Moderator: Mizusawa Tsutomu

1. Koizumi Shinya  
“Tenshin (Okakura Kakuzo)’s View of Asia and the Position of *The Ideals of the East*”
2. Wang Hui  
“Imagining Asia: A Genealogical Analysis”
3. Goenawan Mohamad  
“Indonesia’s ‘Asia’”

Discussion

## Opening Comment for Session I

Mizusawa Tsutomu

Chief Curator, Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura

I would like to start Session I.

This current international symposium is the fourth organized by the Japan Foundation Asia Center in a span of eight years to discuss issues on Asia. I was part of the audience in the very first symposium, but since the second one, I have taken part in the discussions as moderator or commentator.

Professor Sakai mentioned the word, "Asian values." Our focus in past discussions was the positive aspect of Asian values, an issue that was being raised all over the world in the 1990s. We believed there were such values and concentrated on defining exactly what they were.

At the time, we were interested in finding out what kind of contemporary artists worked in Asia. We wanted to find and meet them. We were highly motivated to discover Asia through this process. But since the last symposium (1999), we began to question what Asia really is, and whether or not we were losing sight of this reality as we persisted in talking about "Asia." So in considering this current symposium, we found it important to take this issue into account as we constructed the program. However, if we go as far as possible in rigorously criticizing Asia instead of finding eloquent ways to describe it, we could end up not being able to say anything about Asia, or reach a stage where Asia becomes impossible. Nevertheless, there is value in examining different ways of speaking about Asia with full awareness that it might lead to such an impasse.

Why is this so? As Professor Sakai asserted in his presentation, the idea of Asia emerged through its cultural clash with the West at the end of the 19th century. Nationalism and Asian self-awareness came together over a century ago and, as it were, caught fire, leading to the formation of many theories of the



Mizusawa Tsutomu



identity of Asia. The existence of these theories, besides raising the question of what Asia is in real terms, demonstrates the historical fact that Asia has been a form of discourse.

We must first closely study this discourse itself. Otherwise, we may be carried away by our feelings in discussing Asia and repeatedly do so. Can't we speak about Asia a little more rationally? We need to talk about how we have talked about it. I believe that is what the people who planned this symposium wanted to do this time. Of course, as we consider this in greater depth, you may question our approach, but I believe the time has come to have this sort of a discussion.

Previous symposiums organized by the Japan Foundation Asia Center usually focused on contemporary art, Asian art, and aesthetics. Of course, in contemporary art, discussing aesthetic qualities is not an ultimate goal, since it has moved away from aesthetics and involves a wider set of issues. The members of the planning committee for this symposium thought that it would be better to change the point of view this time. Hence, instead of gathering people who are interested in the latest information about the arts and giving a series of presentation with information on what is happening where, we wanted to take a closer look at the history and the essential qualities of Asia this time. Session I was designed to achieve this goal.

Of course, we need to touch on a wide range of issues in order to achieve our goal. Professor Sakai has just spoken about the emergence of Asia in history, and we will begin by considering the position of Okakura Kakuzo, a "superstar" of Japanese art during that period. Then we will move on to a discussion of China, a critical issue in Asia, and the problem of Asia in the Chinese context. The third topic will be the issue of Asia in Indonesia under Japanese colonial rule after the Japanese military invaded the Dutch colony of Indonesia in 1942. These three presentations will not cover all the issues pertaining to the concept of Asia, but they entail some of the most critical ones, and I believe that by sharing the information presented here, both panelists and audience will have a larger context for discussion.

The first presentation will be by Professor Koizumi Shinya

from Ibaraki University, and the title of his presentation is "Tenshin (Okakura Kakuzo)'s View of Asia and the Position of *The Ideals of the East*." Next, we will have Professor Wang Hui from Tsinghua University, China to present his paper entitled, "Imagining Asia: A Genealogical Analysis." The last presentation will be by Mr. Goenawan Mohamad from Indonesia on "Indonesia's 'Asia'."



## Tenshin (Okakura Kakuzo)'s View of Asia and the Position of *The Ideals of the East*

Koizumi Shinya

Professor, Faculty of Education, Ibaraki University  
Director, Izura Institute of Art and Culture



Koizumi Shinya

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*The Asahi Shimbun*, evening edition, Oct. 4, 2002.

2

Okakura Koshiro, *Sofu Okakura Tenshin* (My Grandfather Okakura Kakuzo), Chuo Koron Bijutsu Shuppan, 1999. Here Okakura Koshiro develops an idea found in Kevin Nute, *Frank Lloyd Wright and Japan*, Chapman and Hall, 1993. Okakura Koshiro (1912-2001), a grandson of Okakura Kakuzo, witnessed the process of transforming Okakura's sentiment, "Asia is one," into the militaristic slogan, "Eight Corners of the World Under One Roof." Like other intellectuals, he was placed in a difficult position during the war years and was incarcerated for two years for suspected infringement of the Peace Preservation Law. After the war, he served as director of the Afro-Asian Institute of Japan, and became known as a scholar of international politics who

Okakura Kakuzo, also known as Tenshin (1862-1912), was a director of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts and the Imperial Museum (today's Tokyo National Museum), and helped found *Kokka*, an art magazine that is still published today. He played a central role in art administration in early modern Japan when the study of art history was in its infancy. His lectures on "*Nihon Bijutsushi* (Japanese Art History)" at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, begun in September 1890, were the first lectures on this subject by a Japanese. His book, *The Ideals of the East*, published in London in 1903, explained the relationship of Japanese art to that of India and China and extolled the original qualities of Asian art.

This book began with the statement, "Asia is one," which was later misused by the Japanese militarists who invaded Asia, starting the Fifteen-Year War. Because of this, Tenshin was mistakenly considered to be an ultra-nationalist in the period after World War II. There are still many people who regard him as a "dangerous thinker" or suggest care in approaching ideas that Tenshin is known to have enthusiastically supported.<sup>1</sup> In this paper, I will draw on the most recent studies of Tenshin in discussing the view of Asia promulgated by him in *The Ideals of the East*, *The Awakening of Japan*, and *The Book of Tea*, and comment on its contemporary meaning. I hope to show that Tenshin's thought went beyond a simple-minded boosting of national prestige and had much in common with contemporary ideas of anti-globalism.

It would be reasonable to accept the importance of the role played by Ernest Fenellosa in the development of Tenshin's thinking. Tenshin was 16 when he first met Fenellosa, a man ten years his elder who served as his mentor and then worked with him as a colleague during a ten-year period. It was through Fenellosa that Tenshin learned of the ideas of Western philosophers like Kant, Hegel, Spencer, and Emerson.<sup>2</sup> Tenshin had studied literati painting, so he

had some practical knowledge of art, but it is thought that he formed his systematic theory of Japanese art through comparative studies informed by Western thought. In *The Awakening of Japan*, he recalls, "I read the essay on international law with great respect as if making contact with the rites of the Chou dynasty," and this statement is probably indicative of his attitude as a student.

The group of Boston intellectuals standing behind Fenellosa made his influence on Tenshin greater than the influence of a single person. Fenellosa, who was only 25 at the time, was recommended as a teacher at Tokyo University by Charles Eliot Norton, a professor at Harvard University, in response to a request by Edward S. Morse, another Boston intellectual who was living in Japan. Norton was a professor of history, especially art history, and a central figure in the Boston estheticist movement.<sup>3</sup> This movement, based on the ideas of Ruskin and Emerson, called for the elevation of social morality through art. It had a mystical side since its proponents believed that esthetic experience was akin to religion and advocated the importance of art in a healthy democratic society. This philosophy was passed on by Fenellosa and also by the American painter, John La Farge, who gave advice to Tenshin and Fenellosa prior to their study tour of Europe, since neither of them knew much about European art at the time. They guided La Farge during his three-month tour of Japan and also accompanied him on the month-long voyage back to the United States. As a result, it has been suggested that Tenshin and Fenellosa saw Europe "through La Farge's eyes."<sup>4</sup> The importance of La Farge's influence on Tenshin is demonstrated by the fact the *The Book of Tea* is dedicated "To La Farge."

It was on the basis of the ideas he absorbed from these Americans and an extended study tour in China and India that Tenshin went on to construct his history of Japanese art. His tripartite division of periods, ancient (classical), medieval (symbolic), and modern (romantic), was derived from Hegel, and this was the system he used in *The Ideals of the East* (1903). In his lecture on "*Taito Kogeishi* (The History of Aesthetics Works in the East)" (1910) at Tokyo University, he expanded his thinking on the basis of experience of actual works, saying, "In art, any tendency can coexist with another in the same period."<sup>5</sup> It has been pointed out that in a survey of ancient art in Kyoto and Nara in 1886, he followed the scheme of eastward movement of Western culture from Greece to India to China to

advocated neutralism and anti-imperialism. His career was reported with a posthumous collection of his writings in *Izura Ronso* (Bulletin of the Izura Institute of Art and Culture, Ibaraki University), no. 9, 2002.

3

Okakura Koshiro, "*Fenellosa to Tenshin* (Fenellosa and Okakura)," *Sofu Okakura Tenshin* (My Grandfather Okakura Kakuzo), Chuo Koron Bijutsu Shuppan, 1999, pp. 153-193.

4

Kuwahara Sumio, "*John La Farge to Okakura Tenshin — sono shisoteki sogo eikyo ni tsuite* (John La Farge and Okakura Kakuzo — On the Mutual Influences in Their Thinking)," *Geijutsu Kenkyuho 1*, Tsukuba Daigaku Kenkyu Houkokusho (Institute of Art and Design, University of Tsukuba Report), 1980.

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Kumada Yumiko, "*Okakura Tenshin no Kodai Chokokurou* (Okakura Kakuzo's View of Ancient Sculpture)," *Izura Ronso* (Bulletin of the Izura Institute of Art and Culture, Ibaraki University), no. 7, 2000, pp. 79-112.



Japan, but in his lectures on "Japanese Art History" in Tokyo School of Fine Arts, starting in 1890, he came to avoid looking for the origin of Buddhist sculpture in Greece. Ten years later, in *The Ideals of the East*, he did not refer to a Greco-Indian influence on the sculptural style of the Nara period but identified it with the Gupta style of central India. It became common for historians of Japanese art to regard the Gupta art of central India as being more important than Greco-Indian art in the teens of this century, after Tenshin's death.

Tenshin became aware of the importance of central Indian art because of his actual experience of visiting Ajanta and Ellora in 1905. In a letter that has been preserved, he writes, "In general, the greatness of the remains of Indian civilization exceeds that of Rome, and London and Paris are like child's play in comparison." It has been shown that Josephine McCloud, an American follower of Vivekananda, religious reformer and founder of the Ramakrishna Mission, was instrumental in bringing Tenshin to India for this nine-month tour.<sup>6</sup> In India, he became acquainted with Vivekananda and his important English disciple, Sister Nivedita (originally Margaret E. Noble, *nivedita* means "devotion" in Bengali). Nivedita, who was revered as the Joan of Arc of India, played an important role in getting Tenshin's *The Ideals of the East* published in English. She proofread and typed the English manuscript, then added a long preface, and even negotiated with the publisher in London. Tenshin had prepared the initial manuscript for this book in Japan, but he expanded and refined it in India on the basis of his experiences and discussions with collaborators there. It has been conjectured that in these discussions, Tenshin's views of Asian art, which connected Japan with China and India, overlapped with Vivekananda's ideas of religion and nationality.<sup>7</sup>

The group with which Tenshin associated in India was closely connected to the radical faction of the Indian National Congress. It included Surendranath Tagore (nephew of the poet, Rabindranath Tagore), the treasurer of the secret society, Anushilan Samiti (Self-Culture Society), a revolutionary nationalist organization organized in 1902. Sister Nivedita donated thousands of books on European revolutionary movements to the cause, including discussions of the Irish Home Rule movement and the works of Kropotkin. Tenshin visited India during the period when they were organizing secret branches of the society all over the country. It has been confirmed

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Horioka Yasuko, "Okakura Tenshin — *Ajia Bunka Senyou no Senkusha*" (Okakura Kakuzo — Pioneering Advocate of Asian Culture)," Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 1974.

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Okakura Koshiro, "Tenshin to Bengaru no Kakumeikatachi (Okakura Kakuzo and the Revolutionaries of Bengal)," *Touyou Kenkyu* (Oriental Studies) No.81, Daito Bunka Daigaku Touyou Kenkyujo (Center for Oriental Studies, Daito Bunka University) 1987, pp.1-45. (Reprinted in Okakura Koshiro, *Sofu Okakura Tenshin* (My Grandfather Okakura Kakuzo), Chuo Koron Bijutsu Shuppan, 1999, pp.87-148.)

that the criminal investigation officer of the Anglo-Indian government of the time recorded that “a Japanese by the name of Okakura” attended the founding meeting of this clandestine organization. In several memoirs, it is reported that Tenshin participated in organizing activities for the revolutionary movement while touring Ajanta and Ellora.

As a result of Tenshin’s involvement with the nationalist cause, the Indian authorities refused entry to the country by his followers, Yokayama Taikan and Hishida Shunso. During this period, Tenshin was writing the English manuscript for a book that was later published in Japan under the title, *The Awakening of the East*. Okakura Koshiro, who discovered this manuscript, suggests that the manuscript was probably written jointly by Tenshin and Nivedita. A number of proposals for titles are listed side by side. Nivedita wrote, “Asia is One,” and Tenshin proposed, “Om! To the Spirit of Asia” and “The Spirit.” These suggestions were erased and replaced with, “We are One.” This is a work of propaganda designed to stir people to rebellion, and it deals with the effectiveness of guerilla warfare. Tenshin took the manuscript back to Japan without printing it, perhaps because it was the product of a joint effort by him and other members of the group. *The Awakening of Japan*, which was published next after *The Ideals of the East*, retains traces of its message, and this book can also be seen as making a strong appeal for ethnic nationalism.

What is the art historical significance of *The Ideals of the East*? There is much to commend the thesis of Kumada Yumiko that *The Ideals of the East* should be seen as a challenge to the sort of Japanese art history that was aligned with the imperialist view of history that was being formed at the time. Tenshin was originally the managing editor for the *Kobon Nihon Teikoku Bijutsu Ryakushi* (Manuscript Short History of the Art of the Japanese Empire=*Histoire de L’Art du Japon*) (1901), first published in French for the Paris Universal Exposition, but he was later removed from the editorial board. This “manuscript history,” which is considered the first written history of Japanese art, was published under his successor, Fukuchi Mataichi, who took the lead in criticizing Tenshin. Its contents differed at many points from the *Nihon Bijutsushi* (Japanese Art History) that Tenshin prepared after an on-site survey of Chinese and Korean art. In contrast with his discussion of national origins in *The Ideals of the*



*East*, the “manuscript history” states “this great nation of Japan was a gift received from the sun goddess, Amaterasu Omikami.” Where Tenshin had noted that something was “made by Korean artisans,” it refers to them as “naturalized subjects of Korean origin.” Where Tenshin sees a source in Ajanta, it identifies the influence as Greco-Indian. The historical periods in the “manuscript history” were divided into imperial reigns, for example, the period of Empress Suiko, the period of Emperor Tenchi, the period of Emperor Shomu, the period of Emperor Kammu, and so on, while in *The Ideals of the East*, Tenshin adopted a more general scheme of divisions: prehistoric, Asuka, Nara, Heian, and Fujiwara.

Even after Tenshin was removed from the “manuscript history” editorial board, he lectured on Japanese art history at the Nihon Bijutsuin (Japan Art Institute) and felt it necessary to visit India to further develop his ideas. Three years after the “manuscript history” was distributed in Paris, *The Ideals of the East* was published in London. Kumada speculates:

It is thought that he was demonstrating his own viewpoint and standards in opposition to the *Kohon Nihon Teikoku Bijutsu Ryakushi* (“manuscript history”), making a conscious attempt to “recover his honor” personally and publicly as an intellectual representing the intellectual authority of the nation. This book clearly expresses all of Tenshin’s views that were not sufficiently reflected in the “manuscript history,” including his nomenclature of historical periods, methods of division, basic ideas about history, viewpoint toward neighboring countries, comparative dating of works, and discovery of new stylistic trends.<sup>8</sup>

8

Kumada Yumiko, “Okakura Tenshin no Kodai Chokokuron (Okakura Kakuzo’s Theory on Ancient Sculptures),” p. 105.

The last of Tenshin’s three English books, *The Book of Tea*, was published in New York, making him an immediate celebrity. The Eastern intellectuals who surrounded him in the United States were supporters of the anti-imperialist movement that emerged in response to the Spanish-American War, opposing the colonial occupation of the territories of Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines, which had been ceded to the United States by Spain. This group included the mayor of Boston and the head of the Boston Chamber of Commerce as well as the president of Harvard, Charles Eliot Norton, Fenellosa’s mentor, and Edward S. Morse. Because of the anti-colonialist stance

Tenshin had taken in India, one can imagine that he responded positively to their views, and this suggests that it might be possible to find political implications in *The Book of Tea*. Perhaps Tenshin wanted to bring together the anti-imperialists of East and West for a cup of tea.

It should be possible to consider Tenshin's view of Asia in terms of the way he constructed his own identity. Tenshin's image has been determined to a large extent by photographs showing him wearing the uniform of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts (fig. 1), a fisherman's costume (fig. 2), and Taoist robes as evening wear in Boston (fig. 3). These costumes were all personally chosen by Tenshin, and the bold poses he strikes show that he had confidence in his appearance in the photographs. I have discussed the meaning of these costumes elsewhere, but I would like to recapitulate my thoughts here.<sup>9</sup>

The uniform of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts shown in fig. 1 was designed after the clothing worn by government officials during the sixth and seventh centuries, the Nara period. An example of the costume of this period, when a new political system was established under the *ritsuryō* legal codes by the emperor of the time, is shown in fig. 4. It was revived by Tenshin as appropriate to the Meiji period, beginning in the late 19th century, when the Meiji emperor established a new constitutional system with the emperor as head of state. When Tenshin retired from his positions at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts and the Imperial Museum, he took up fishing, wearing the outfit shown in fig. 2. The idea for fishing in a sheepskin cloak probably came from an image of Yan Ziling, a Chinese literati who was known for firmly refusing emperor's demands to the official position to become a fisherman. It is hard to imagine that Tenshin would have dressed like this without knowledge of the picture of Ziling found in the well-known *Kaishi En Gaden* (Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting) (fig. 5). When he dressed as a Taoist in Boston, he was probably emulating Tao Yuanming, another alienated Chinese intellectual who asked in verse, "When shall I return?" when he lost his government post. Tenshin must have seen many paintings representing Tao Yuanming (fig. 6) while researching classical Japanese and Chinese art. Also, the painters of the Japan Art Institute produced many paintings using episodes from the life of Tao Yuanming.

It is clear that Tenshin's manner of dress in all these photographs

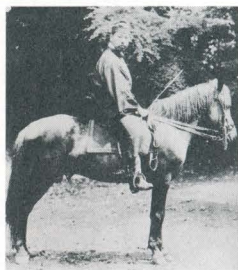


fig. 1

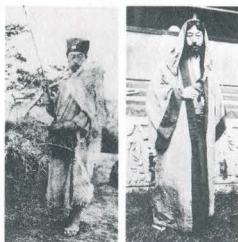


fig. 2

fig. 3



fig. 4



fig. 5



fig. 6



Koizumi Shinya, "Tenshin Ikonogurafi — Tenshinzo no Seiritsu (Okakura Kakuzo Iconography — The Making of Okakura's Image)," *Okakura Tenshin Album*, Chuo Koron Shuppan, 2000, pp. 206-211.

Okakura Kakuzo, *The Book of Tea*, Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1956, p.45.

Okakura Kakuzo, *The Book of Tea*, Charles E. Tuttle Co., pp.66-67.

Okakura Kakuzo, *The Ideals of the East*, Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1970, pp. 8-9.

was borrowed from an ancient model. How should we interpret this tendency of Tenshin's to construct his identity through such images. Let us look at something he wrote in *The Book of Tea*.

[Laotze] claimed that only in vacuum lay the truly essential. The reality of a room, for instance, was to be found in the vacant space enclosed by the roof and the walls, not in the roof and walls themselves....One who could make of himself a vacuum into which others might freely enter would become master of all situations. The whole can always dominate the part.<sup>10</sup>

Another passage reads,

The body itself was but as a hut in the wilderness, a flimsy shelter made by tying together the grasses that grew around, — when these ceased to be bound together they again became resolved into the original waste.<sup>11</sup>

Did Tenshin see his own essence as an empty space where various forces could operate? If so, the first sentence of *The Ideals of the East*, "Asia is one," takes on new meaning.

The person who said of Japanese art, "the beach where each successive wave of Eastern thought has left its sand-ripple as it beat against the national consciousness,"<sup>12</sup> is not likely to have envisaged "one" as a simple identity. This "one" probably implies the empty space that is the essence of the room. With "Arab chivalry, Persian poetry, Chinese ethics, and Indian philosophy" as the ceiling, walls, and floor, a room called "the harmony of a unified Asian" can come into being.

In his later years, Tenshin rarely stayed in one place for more than a year, continually moving between Japan, the United States, and Asia. This condition of passage between different places may have been this active thinker's essence. I believe that Tenshin conceived of Asia itself as being a place of passage between different cultures, and in this sense defined it as "one."

[Translated by Stanley N. Anderson]

Figs.

1. Okakura as Director of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts
2. Okakura fishing at Izura
3. Okakura dressed for an evening party in Boston
4. Portrait of Shotoku Taishi (detail)
5. Yan Ziling, from the *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*
6. Attributed to Den Shubun, *Tao Yuanming Viewing Chrysanthemums* (detail)



## Imagining Asia: A Genealogical Analysis

Wang Hui

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Wang Hui

1

I need to add a special note on Marx's argument. In the preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, he regarded the history of Western Europe as "epochs marking progress in the economic development of society." See Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Yuri Sdobnikov et al., ed. Victor Schittke, vol. 29, *The Collected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1987), p. 263. After 1859, this preface was never reprinted during Marx's lifetime. In 1877, Russian scholar Nicolai K. Mikhailovski used Marxism to argue that Russia should establish capitalism in order to abolish feudalism. Marx commented that his work merely attempted to describe the path that Western capitalism developed from within feudalism, and that one should not "transform his historical sketch of the development of Western European capitalism into

### I. The Derivativeness of Asia

Historically speaking, the idea of Asia is not an Asian but a European notion. European Enlightenment and colonialism provided preconditions for the pursuit of knowledge in the 18th and 19th centuries. The branches of learning — historical linguistics, modern geography, philosophy of rights, theories of state and race, historiography, and political economy — developed quickly along with natural sciences, and together they drew a new world map. The ideas of Europe and Asia were integrated into the notion of "world history" under such new knowledge conditions. Montesquieu, Adam Smith, Hegel, and Marx constructed the idea of Asia in contrast with Europe and incorporated Asia in a teleological vision of history.<sup>1</sup>

The core elements of this European characterization of Asia could be summed up as follows: multi-ethnic empire as opposed to European sovereign/monarchical state, political despotism as opposed to European legal and political system, the nomadic and agrarian mode of production completely different from European urban life and trade, etc. Since the European nation-state and the expansion of the capitalist market system were considered as the advanced stage and the end or telos of world history, Asia and its above-mentioned characteristics were consequently designated to a lower stage of history. In this context, Asia was not only a geographic category, but also a form of civilization: Asia was a political form in opposition to European state, a social form in opposition to European capitalism, and a transitional stage between an unhistorical stage and a historical stage. This derivative discourse on Asia provided a framework for European intellectuals, Asian revolutionaries and reformists, and historians to represent world history and Asian societies, to establish revolution and reform policies, and to describe the past and future of Asia. In most of the 19th and 20th centuries, the idea of Asia was contained in a universal discourse of European modernity that

provided a similar narrative framework for both colonists and revolutionaries, who produced two opposing blueprints of history. This narrative framework had three key concepts: empire, nation-state and capitalism (market economy).

## II. Revolution and Asia

Against the background of colonialism and imperialist wars, Asian intellectuals basically followed the East/West dichotomy to understand history. Nationalism and capitalism, two categories of knowledge that are different and yet closely affiliated, deeply affected their conception of Asia. The primacy of Euro-centrism in historical studies was based on the inherent relation of modernity with these two categories. In the Asian national liberation movement of the 19th and 20th centuries, new forms were acquired by the pattern of antithesis between empire and state that was closely associated with the idea of Asia in European political thought. For instance, in the discourses on "Departure from Asia and Joining" in Japan, "National Autonomy" by Russian revolutionaries, and "Pan-Asianism" by Chinese revolutionaries, the idea of Asia invariably had an internal connection with "ethnically complicated empire and its culture." These notions can be regarded as emblems revealing that the different forms of Asian nationalism, although historically opposed in substance, all constructed visions of national imaginaries within the antithesis between nation-state and empire, variously integrating the appeal to establish nation-state with the appeal to transcend nation-state—the resultant forms were imperialism and internationalism.

Twenty-seven years after Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901) brought out his *On Departure from Asia*, and soon after the Republican Revolution erupted and the Provisional Government of the Chinese Republic was established, Lenin published a series of articles — "Democracy and Narodism (from Russian: "populism") in China" (1912), "The Awakening of Asia" (1913), and "Backward Europe and Advanced Asia" (1913). He applauded that "[today] China is a land of seething political activity, the scene of a virile social movement and of a democratic upsurge,"<sup>2</sup> and condemned the civilized and advanced Europe, "with its highly developed machine industry, its rich multiform culture and its constitutions," came out to "support of everything backward, moribund, and medieval" under the command of the bourgeoisie.<sup>3</sup> Lenin's judgment is a constituent

historical-philosophical theory of universal development predetermined by fate for all nations, whatever their historic circumstances in which they find themselves may be." He stated that "[that view] does me at the same time too much honor and too much insult." See ed. Saul K. Pandover, *The Letters of Karl Marx* (Englewoodcliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1979), p. 321.

2

V. I. Lenin, "The Awakening of Asia," in vol. 19, *Collected Works*, ed. Robert Daglish (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1963), p. 85.

3

Lenin, "Backward Europe and Advanced Asia," in vol. 19, *Collected Works*, p. 99.



4

Karl Marx, "Revolution in China and in Europe," in vol. 12, *The Collected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1980), pp. 93-99.

5

Lenin, "Democracy and Narodism in Asia," in vol. 18, *Collected Works*, ed. Clemens Dutt (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1963), pp. 163-164.

of his theories on imperialism and proletarian revolution. According to him, as capitalism entered the stage of imperialism, the social struggle of the oppressed races all over the world would be integrated into the category of world proletarian revolution. This method of connecting European and Asian revolutions in analysis can be traced back to Marx's article "Revolution in China and in Europe" written for the *New York Daily Tribune* in 1853.<sup>4</sup> Lenin and Fukuzawa's opposing views are based on a common basic understanding, i.e., Asian modernity was the outcome of European modernity, and regardless of Asia's status and fate, the significance of its modernity manifested itself only in its relationship with the advanced Europe. For instance, Lenin regarded Russia as an Asian country, but this orientation was not defined from the perspective of geography but based on the degree of capitalist development and the process of Russian history. In "Democracy and Narodism in China," he says, "Russia is undoubtedly an Asian country and, what is more, one of the most benighted, medieval, and shamefully backward of Asian countries."<sup>5</sup> Although he was warmly sympathetic to the Chinese revolution, Lenin's position was "Western European" when the issue switched from Asian revolution to the changes within the Russian society. In the 19th and 20th centuries, Russian intellectuals regarded the spirit of Russia as the struggle and collision of two forces: the East and the West, Asia and Europe. In the quotation above, Asia is a category connected with notions such as barbarity, the Medieval, and backwardness. It is for this reason that the Russian revolution had a prominent Asian character, i.e., this revolution was directed against the characteristic benighted, medieval, and shamefully backward social relations of Russia as an Asian country, and at the same time, the revolution has a global significance.

The October Revolution in 1917 arose in the immediate background of European wars and influenced the Chinese Revolution profoundly. Yet two facts are seldom noticed. First, the October Revolution took place after the Chinese Republican Revolution of 1911. The method of socialism building after the October Revolution can to a great extent be regarded as a response to Asian revolution (i.e., the Chinese Revolution of 1911). Lenin's theory of national self-determination and his interpretation of the significance of revolution in backward countries in the imperialistic era were both introduced after the Chinese Revolution of 1911, and were theoretically

connected with his analysis of the Chinese Revolution. Second, the Russian Revolution greatly shocked and profoundly influenced Europe and can be regarded as the historical event that separated Russia from Europe. Like Smith or Hegel's idea of Asia, Lenin's revolutionary judgment perceived the history of capitalism as an evolutionary process from the ancient Orient or Asia to modern Europe, from hunting, nomadism and agriculture to trade or industry.

The special position of Asia in the rhetoric of world history decided how the socialists understood the task and direction of modern revolution in Asia. When he reviewed the democratic and socialist programs proposed by Chinese revolutionaries that transcended capitalism, Lenin criticized that it had profound utopian characteristics, and that it rather should be regarded as populist. Lenin observed, "The chief representative, or the chief social bulwark, of this Asian bourgeoisie that is still capable of supporting a historically progressive cause, is the peasant."<sup>6</sup> Therefore before the Asian bourgeoisie accomplished the revolutionary task that European bourgeoisie had accomplished, socialism was out of question. He used historical dialectics adeptly and asserted Sun Yat-sen's "Land Reform Outline" was "reactionary" because it went against or beyond the historical stage. He also pointed out that because of the "Asian" character of the Chinese society, it was exactly this "reactionary outline" that could accomplish the task of capitalism in China: "[populism], under the disguise of 'combating capitalism' in agriculture, champions an agrarian programme that, if fully carried out, would mean the *most* rapid development of capitalism in agriculture"<sup>7</sup> Evidently, the understanding of Asia partly decided how they understood the task and direction of revolution. In addition to capitalism and revolutionary logic, Hegel's view of world history and the particular designation of Asia as medieval, barbarian, and non-historical was also a premise of Lenin's idea of Asia. This Hegel-plus-revolution idea of Asia embraced the pattern of historical development from the ancient (feudalism), to the medieval (capitalism), and to the modern (proletarian revolution or socialism). It provided a framework joined with temporality and temporal periodization for the capitalist era to comprehend the history of other regions.

Why did the revolution aiming at internationalism and socialism

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Lenin, "Democracy and Narodism in Asia," p.165.

7

Ibid., p.168.



lead to the historical form of nation-state as well? Lenin argued in 1914:

The national state is *typical* and normal for the capitalist world. ... This does not mean, of course, that such a state, which is based on bourgeois relations, can eliminate the exploitation and oppression of nations. It only means that Marxists cannot lose sight of the powerful *economic* factors that give rise to the urge to create national states. It means that "self-determination of nations" in the Marxists' Programme *cannot*, from a historico-economic point of view, have any other meaning than political self-determination, state independence, and the formation of a national state.<sup>8</sup>

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Lenin, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination," in vol. 18, *Collected Works* (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1963), pp.397 and 400.

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Nowadays, leftist and rightist intellectuals tend to regard this view as the myopia of revolutionaries, and refuse to recognize nation-state as the best safeguard for the development of modern capitalism. Discussions concerning the ideas of Asia or Europe show such a tendency. For Lenin, the question of Asia was closely connected with nation-state. He said that "in Asia itself the conditions for the most complete development of commodity production and the freest, widest and speediest growth of capitalism have been created only in Japan, i.e., only in an independent national state. ... The latter is a bourgeois state, and for that reason has itself begun to oppress other nations and to enslave colonies." See Lenin, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination," p. 399.

10

On November 28, 1924, Sun attended the welcome party held under the auspice of five organizations including the Kobe Chamber of Commerce, and gave the speech. See Sun Yat-sen, "*Dui Shenhu shangye huiyisuo deng tuanti de yanshuo* (Talk to Organizations including the Kobe Chamber of Commerce)," in *Sun Zhongshan Quanji* (Complete Works of Sun Zhongshan) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), pp. 401-409.

Hence when he discussed the awakening of Asia, Lenin was not concerned with the issue of socialism, but how the political prerequisites of capitalist development could be created, that is, how to create the national state system. Here national states and "multi-national states", or empires, are antithetical. The former is the normal condition of capitalism, and the latter the antithesis of nation-state. National self-determination is political self-determination. Yet this idea does not mean a simplistic identification of national self-determination with politics. Self-determination is exercised in political practice, and subsequently creates the political conditions for bourgeois economy, or the political structure of political nations or nation-states, to develop. Lenin plainly pointed out the inherent connection between nationalism and capitalism. "[Capitalism], having awakened Asia, has called forth national movements everywhere in that continent, too; ... the tendency of these movements is towards the creation of national states in Asia; ... it is such states that ensure the best conditions for the development of capitalism."<sup>9</sup> It was neither revolution nor Asia's peculiar civilization but the development of capitalism that demanded a revolution.

Lenin's arguments provide us with an outline to understand the relationship between modern Chinese nationalism and the idea of Asia. When he visited Kobe in 1924, Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925) made his famous speech entitled "Great Asianism."<sup>10</sup> He generally distinguished two ideas of Asia: one had no independent states and was the origin of the most ancient civilization; the other was about to

rejuvenate. The former has inherent connections with ethnically complex states in Lenin's argument, but what does the starting point of Asian rejuvenation or rejuvenated Asia mean? Sun claimed that the starting point was Japan, since it abolished a number of unequal treaties and became the first independent state in Asia. In other words, we can say this starting point is nation-state rather than Japan. Sun applauded the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war and subsequently the Japanese triumph:

The Japanese triumph over the Russian is the first triumph of Asian nations over the European in the past several hundred years. ... All Asian nations are exhilarated and start to hold a great hope. ... They therefore hope to defeat Europe and start movements for independence. ... The great hope of national independence in Asia is born.<sup>11</sup>

Sun called attention to a subtle notion — all Asian nations. This notion is not only Asia as the origin of the most ancient civilization, but also an Asia that contains independent nation-states; it is not only East Asia within the Confucian cultural sphere, but also a multi-cultural Asia. The unity of Asia was based on the independence of sovereign states. “All Asian nations” are the outcome of national independence movement and not an awkward imitation of European nation-states. Sun insisted that Asia had its own culture and principles — what he called “the culture of the kingly way” as opposed to “the culture of the hegemonic way” of European nation-states. He entitled his speech “Great Asianism” partly because he connected the idea of Asia with the notion of “the kingly way.” If we compare his speech with the imperialist idea of Asia, it becomes the most clear that Sun's notion of Asia is not Confucian Asia, whose core is cultural homogeneity. It is instead an Asia consisting of equal nation-states. According to this notion of Asia, the inherent unity of Asia is not Confucianism or any other homogeneous culture, but a political culture that accommodates different religions, beliefs, nations, and societies. Within this category of political culture, Sun talked about China, Japan, India, Persia, Afghanistan, Arab, Turkey, Bhutan, and Nepal, and the tributary system of the Chinese empire. Cultural heterogeneity is one of the main characteristics of this idea of Asia, and the category of nation provides the vehicle for the heterogeneity

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Ibid., pp.402-403.

12

Sun said in his conversation with news reporters in Kobe:  
“Unification is the hope of all Chinese citizens. If China is unified, people all over the country can live in ease and comfort, but if not, they will suffer. If the Japanese people will not be able to do business in China, they will also suffer indirectly. We Chinese believe that the Japanese people sincerely hope China be united. But the possibility of China's unification is not decided by China domestic (internal) affairs. Since the outbreak of the Chinese revolution, violent upheavals have continued to arise for years. China can't be unified not because of Chinese powers but completely because of foreign powers. Why can't China unify? The foreigners solely cause it. The reason is that China and foreign countries signed unequal treaties, and every foreigner uses those treaties to enjoy special rights in China. Recent people from the West are not only using unequal treaties to enjoy special rights but also abuse those treaties in outrageous ways.”  
See Sun Yat-sen, “*Zai shenbu yu*



*riben jizhe de tanhua*

(Conversation with Japanese News Reporters in Kobe),” in *Sun Zhongshan Quanji* (Complete Works of Sun Zhongshan), pp.373-374. Because Asia had not undergone complete transition to nation-states, “Great Asianism” was not able to design a whole apparatus for such regional groups. But Sun’s idea of Asia is closely related to the thought that respects nation-state’s sovereignty. His “Great Asianism” is somewhat analogous to what Coudenhove-Kalergi put forward in *Pan-Europe* — the thesis of Pan-Europe based on the sovereignty of nation-states — and to the Pan-American organization that came into existence earlier. This type of regional construct can be regarded as a regional organization of the League of Nations, whose function was to adjudicate verdict over conflicts between regional groups such as “Pan-Europe,” “Pan-America,” North America, South America, the UK, the USSR, and the Far East. C.f. Pierre Gerbet, *La Construction de l’Europe, Notre Siècle* (Paris: Impr. nationale, 1983), p. 34; Richard N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Pan-Europe* (New York: Knopf, 1926).

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Sun, “*Dui Shenhu shangye huiyisuo deng tuanti de yanshuo* (Talk to Organizations including the Kobe Chamber of Commerce),” pp. 408-409.

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*Ibid.*, p. 409.

inherent in the idea of Asia.

In Sun Yat-sen’s usage, cultural heterogeneity supplied the historical basis for nation-state’s internal unity and resistance against external interference.<sup>12</sup> He hoped that the multiplism of dynastic culture could be united with the new relations between nation-states so as to obviate the imperialist cultural colonization and the tendency of high-degree cultural homogenization in nation-states. His vision of Asia was: Japan in the east, Turkey in the west, and nations-states that have as their foundation Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Confucianism, and other cultures in the inner areas. He said, “We must insist on Great Asianism and recover the status of Asian nations. If we use only benevolence, righteousness and morality as the basis to unite all nations, all nations of Asia, [when united], will become powerful.”<sup>13</sup> According to Sun, the culture of the kingly way defended the oppressed nations, rebelled against the hegemonic way, and pursued the equality and liberation of all peoples.<sup>14</sup> Sun discerned the relationship between nationalism and the concept of race, and recognized that nationalism’s resistance logic contained the logic that would lead to its opposite side, i.e., the logic of oppression and hegemony. When he appealed to the notion of race to legitimize national independence, therefore, he proposed “Great Asianism.” “Great Asianism”, or “Pan-Asianism”, is antithetical to the proposal of “Great East Asianism” in modern Japan. As a form of multiculturalism, it criticized the notion of “East Asia,” which was highly homogenized, and regarded Asian states’ national self-determination as the path to surpass colonialist logic. This notion contains a self-deconstructive mechanism and logic because its validity rests on the resistance to the colonial culture of the hegemonic way.

This self-deconstructive logic is the very basis of the close connection between “Great Asianism” and internationalism. Sun’s idea of Asia has ostensible racist marks, but it attempted to transcend the historical limits of racism by introducing a more basic standard: to surpass national oppression. For instance, he defined the Russian as European, but regarded the new liberation movement in Russia as allied with “Great Asianism.” He said:

There is a new state in Europe, which is discriminated against by all white Europeans. The European regards it as a venomous



snake or a violent beast and dares not approach it. Some people in Asia hold the same view. Which state is this? Russia. Russia is breaking up with the white Europeans. Why does it do so? Because Russia advocates the kingly way and not the hegemonic way; it wants to insist on benevolence, righteousness, and morality and is not willing to talk about right and might. It upholds justice to the utmost, and objects to the oppression of the majority by the few. Hence the new culture of Russia is extremely compatible with the old culture of ours, the East. Russia will therefore come to befriend the East, and break up with the West.<sup>15</sup>

15  
Ibid.

The new culture of Russian refers to its socialism after the October Revolution. Sun's idea of Asia contains a socialist dynamic that opposes capitalism and imperialism. Urged by this socialist dynamic, he attempted to interpret the essence of the kingly way embodied in the tributary practice as a new type of internationalism.

It is probably the connection of this socialist value with Chinese traditions that have inspired contemporary scholars to reconstruct the idea of Asia. Mizoguchi Yuzo argues that the categories such as "heavenly principles" (*tianli*), "public/private" (*gong/lsi*) ran through Chinese intellectual and social history from the Song to the Qing, and that therefore there is an inherent continuity between some themes of modern Chinese revolution — for instance, Sun's principle of people's livelihood and socialist land policy — and the ideas of land regulations, monarch and their values in the 16th to 17th century. As historical notions, the relationship between categories such as "public" (*gong*), "Heaven" (*tian*), "heavenly principles" and modern revolution and equalitarianism needs to be critiqued with care. But the attempt to use values such as "principles of Heaven," "public principles" (*gongli*) or equality to define Asian culture indubitably contains a resistance and criticism of modern capitalism and colonialism.<sup>16</sup> In other words, in the waves of nationalism and colonialism, we can discover the sharp opposition between socialist and colonialist ideas of Asia.

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c.f. Mizoguchi Yuzo, *Chugoku no Shiso* (Chinese Thinking) (Tokyo: Hoso Daigaku Kyoiku Shinkokai, 1991), Mizoguchi Yuzo, *Chugoku Zen Kindai Shiso no Kussetsu to Tenkai* (The Turns and Changes in Chinese Pre-Modern Thinking) (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1980).

### III. The Idea of Asia and Modernity in Historical Studies

"The East Asian world" as a relatively self-contained "cultural sphere" was a modern construct based on intra-regional historical

17

Nishijima Sadao, "*Toyo Seikai no Seitei* (The Formation of the East Asian World)," in *Chugoku Kodai Kokka to Higashi Ajia Sekai* (The Ancient State of China and the East Asian World) (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1983).

connections. Nishijima Sadao described "the East Asian world" as a self-completing cultural sphere: it centered on China geographically, surrounded by Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and the area between the Mongolian and the Tibetan plateaus; its cultural characteristics were Chinese characters, Confucianism, system of laws and decrees, and Buddhism.<sup>17</sup> The effort to establish the connection between geographic regions and culture aimed to construct East Asia as an organic unity, but this argument did not come by itself. It was instead the production of specific historical conditions. According to Maeda Naonori, the traditional view of Japanese scholars did not include Japan in the East Asian world:

It is generally believed that before modernity, before history of different regions in the world attained commonality, China was a world, and India was yet another world. From the perspective of cultural history, the world of China can be regarded as including Manchuria, Korea, Annam, and etc. This is what people used to believe. Although we considered the possibility, we were hesitant to include Japan in this world. However, this is only a question of cultural history. We know almost nothing about whether the inner development of Korean or Manchurian societies, not to mention Japan, were connected or parallel to China. We know that in the European world, the growth of the British society, for instance, was parallel to and inter-related with that of the European continent. But whether a similar phenomenon existed in East Asia, especially between Japan and China, was still not clear except for the period of modern history. Moreover, the question itself has not yet been taken seriously. The accepted idea has been that Japan's development in social structures since the ancient times to the medieval and the modern period has been completely unrelated to those of the continent.<sup>18</sup>

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Maeda Naonori, "*Higashi Ajia ni Okeru Kodai no Shumatu* (The End of Antiquity in East Asia)" in Suzuki Shun and Nishijima Sadao, *Chugoku Shi no Jidai Kubun* (The Periodization of Chinese History) (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1957).

The view that set Japan apart from Asia was closely associated with the unique historical circumstances before Japan opened its ports and with the notion of Japan's particularity that arose after the ports were opened. Connection and distinction, departure from Asia and joining Asia, these antitheses formed the opposing and coordinated characters of the narrative of Asia in modern Japanese nationalism.

The driving force to construct the organicity or self-containment



of the East Asian world has always been the idea of the nationalistic, industrial, and capitalistic West. The notion "East Asian civilization sphere" was an organic constituent of modern Asian nationalistic knowledge, and people were seeking behind it not only cultural particularity but also the "inherent" and "universal" dynamic of nationalism, industrialism, and capitalism that coordinated with this cultural particularity. Hence the effort to search for modernity in Asia destroyed the Hegelian framework of world history, but the inherent standards of the Hegelian world order were not abolished but reconstructed: nationalism, capitalism, and theories of state set up a meta-history of the narrative of East Asian history. Miyazaki Ichisada asserted "one could perceive in the Song society obvious capitalist tendencies and phenomena that differed drastically from those of the medieval society."<sup>19</sup> He also said:

The political unification of the Song after the Five Dynasties, was at the same time economic reunification of the domestic market. ... The capitals of the kingdoms of the Five Dynasties lost their significance as political centers, but they continued to exist as commercial centers. Especially, the commercial cities that appeared along the Grand Canal since the Tang grew gradually and accumulated wealth, and in addition secured the prosperity of modern culture. Such a circumstance inevitably led to the gradual acceptance of the tendency to place the Song society under the control of a sort of capitalism.<sup>20</sup>

Miyazaki connected the history of different regions together through the notion of "transportation," and elaborated on "capitalism in the Song," "the modernity of East Asia," and "nationalism" from this perspective. This method evinces the possibility of transcending the disputes between universalism and particularism in historical study. In the section on "The nationalism of modern East Asia," he analyzed the ethnic relations from the Qin till the Qing. He believed that during the Song dynasties, "nationalist upsurges" appeared, national contacts went beyond tributary relations, and the Yue Kingdom and the Dali Kingdom were nominally China's tributary states but actually "independent and unrestrained nation-states."<sup>21</sup> In this sense, the development of nationalism in Asia is treated as parallel to that in the West. Although the Yuan interrupted this process, it later

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Miyazaki Ichisada, "*Toyo teki Kinsei* (East Asia's Modern Age)," in vol. 2, *Miyazaki Ichisada Zenshu* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1992), p.157.

20

*Ibid.*, p.156.

21

*Ibid.*, pp. 195-211.

22

*Ibid.*, pp.195-211. Miyazaki's view is echoed in contemporary historical studies too. James Hevia, for instance, shunned the standard division of tradition and modernity under the influence of western imperial and colonial studies. He advocated treating the conflicts between Britain and the Qing Empire since 1793 as that



between two expanding empires, each with its own strategies and concerns, and constructing sovereignty in drastically different ways. Hevia's description of the conflicts between Britain and the Qing shows that he regarded the Qing as an empire that came into existence in conquering and national conflicts. In his words, "The 17th- and 18th-century foreign policies of the Qing were not drawn up by Han-Chinese Confucian officials but Manchu rulers. The Manchus were not satisfied with conquering China, but continued to conquer non-Chinese populations, and extended its borders to far more beyond the historical borders of the Chinese Empire. ... Therefore when we discuss the Qing diplomacy, we confront a basic question, that is, there were no such people as the Chinese' concerning the issues of diplomacy. It is more complex when we look at these issues from the perspective of Qing monarchy: the issue of 'China,' like Inner Asian and Central Asia, should be regarded as an issue of diplomacy for the Manchus." See James Hevia, "*Cong Chaogong Tizhi Dao Zhiming Yanjiu* (From the Tributary System to Colonial Studies)," *Dushu* 8 (1998): p.65. However, if we regard the Qing simply as an expanding empire and neglect its self-transformation during the process of inheriting the historical heritages of the Ming, it will be difficult to state the characteristics of the Qing clearly. A more complex account of the instability and stability of the notion of China seems to be in need.

23

See Hamashita Takeshi, *Kindai Chugoku no Kokusaiteki Keiki: Chokoboeki Shisutemu to Kindai Ajia* (The International Opportunity of Modern China: The Tributary Trade System and Modern Asia) (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1990).

stimulated the "Han-Chinese-centered nationalism." According to this line of thought, the rise of the Qing Dynasty was also regarded as resulting from the upsurges of Manchu nationalism, which first urged the Manchurians to establish equal diplomatic relations with the Ming and afterwards to conquer the Han Chinese. The notion of periphery in this argument reminds us of later accounts of Sino-Japanese relations by later scholars. According to Miyazaki, nationalism led to the great unification of modern East Asia.<sup>22</sup> Miyazaki used various European concepts daringly. His understanding of the Tang-Song transition and particularly the Song dynasty were based on the notions of capitalism and nation-state. Such an effort to search for history/modernity in Asia was inevitably affected by teleology. We can see the presence of the dualism of empire/state in European ideas of Asia by examining the inherent connections between East Asian modernity and theories of nation-state.

Hence Hamashita's discussion of Asian tributary system is a criticism of both "Departing from Asia" and peculiarism. He reconstructed in the field of economic history an Asian world order that centered on China and was connected through the tributary system, and thereon recognized the historical connection within Asia (including that between Japan and China). Although Hamashita similarly emphasized the modernizing dynamic coming from within Asia, unlike Miyazaki, whose notion of East Asian modernity was based on the European idea of nationalism, he based the inner unity of Asia on the network of the tributary system.<sup>23</sup> Hamashita's account was inspiring. He discovered an inner theme to connect Asian states and used it as a clue to envision the contemporary world. He also used the perspective of the periphery to expose the continent-centrism and the principle of dynastic orthodoxy in official Chinese historiography. This is a forceful criticism of advocates of particularism who refuse to recognize the historical communications between Japan and Asia. For Chinese scholars who are used to look at China from within, this theory provides them with a perspective to look at China from the periphery. This effort to search for East Asian modernity based on tributary system (system of the empire) also overthrew the Euro-centric views based on the dichotomy of empire/state and tribute/trade.

The assumption of Asia's organic unity was based on the category

of East Asia, and Hamashita's study stressed the aspect of trade in the tributary system, especially the marine trade relations which overlapped with internal relations of Asia. If we join Hamashita's inspiring and innovative study with studies of the interaction between Asia and Europe, we will be able to better understand Asia's "modern opportunity" centered on the tributary system when examining Chinese history from the 17th century on.

First, to use the tributary trade network to define the unity of Asia provided a historical account of regional economic interactions and criticized the Euro-centric account of modernity.<sup>24</sup> The so-called tributary system, however, was in fact the result of the interaction between the subjects that participated in this system. The practice of tribute was therefore a historical product and not a self-contained or complete structure. In this sense, the tribute practice was a continuously changing relationship between multiple power centers. Whenever a new power joined in, the internal power relationship would change. An overly steady framework of center/periphery will not be able to reveal how the tribute practice changed continuously in history. Historically, the continuous shift of the center-margin relation is one of the most important characteristics that distinguish the modern capitalist world from conventional empires. Hence the construct of center-periphery relationship with China as the center cannot reveal the transformations of power relations within Asia since the 19th century. Because of the European Industrial Revolution, rapid progress in naval technology, and the formation of nation-states, the traditional continental-marine relationship underwent tremendous structural changes. European colonialism forcefully transformed the traditional historical relations through navy, long-distance trade, and international labor division. Continental historical connections and social relations were devaluated and subjected to marine hegemony and economic relations connected by marine passages. If we apply the framework of center-periphery to 19th- and 20th-century power relations within Asia, it will inevitably conceal the actual central status of some traditionally peripheral categories in the new world system. This framework cannot explain the role of Japan in modern Asia, or explain why exactly the periphery (Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, etc.) became the center or sub-center of 19th- and 20th-century Asian capitalism, while continental areas such as mainland China, India, and inner Asia

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Hamashita defined six types of suzerain-vassal relationships. *Ibid.*, p. 32.



declined and became the real “margins” (After all the great growth of Chinese economy is a recent and open-ended event). It also cannot explain great differentiation between coastal regions and inland, especially the north-west, and the dominance of coastal economy over inland economy.

Second, in the vision of “maritime East Asia” brought together by the tributary network, historical communications within the Asian continent and their changes were reduced to a subordinate and marginal status. Hamashita’s idea of Asia came into existence in opposition with Euro-centrism. His description focused on aspects such as trade and the circulation of silver and stressed the historical communication between China and East Asia and Southeast Asia, i.e. the trading exchanges enabled mainly through marine communication. Therefore this narrative responded to the economicism logic and the framework of maritime theory in European capitalist narrative. For the same reason, this “historical world that had its own inner unity” centered on East Asia and Southeast Asia and stressed the importance of culture, ocean, and political structure for the formation of regional relations, especially regional trade relations. But this idea of Asia that emphasizes unity lacks a thorough analysis of continental communications — between China and Inner Asia, West Asia, South Asia, and Russia — that dominated the tribute system for a long period, and seldom touches the relation between the formation of the maritime trade sphere and the dynamic from within the continent.

Third, the theory of the tributary system was created by opposition with that of European nation-states and their treaty system. It overthrew the earlier idea that regarded nation-state as the only driving force for modernity, but the dichotomy of the tributary system and the treaty system is also derived from that of empire and state. Yet in as early as the 17th century, the Qing state was already using the form of treaty to define borders in certain frontier regions (e.g., the Sino-Russian border), create regular frontier patrols, determine custom-duty rates and trade mechanism, exert sovereign rights over residents in its administrative sphere, and establish tributary/treaty relationship with European countries. Hence the Qing was not only an empire of mixed national composition, but a political entity with advanced state systems as well. Its well-developed tributary network included treaty relations. If we interpret the Qing



society through the simple opposition between state and empire, treaty and tribute, we will not be able to see how empire construction and state construction were two overlapping processes, and we will not be able to understand the basic characteristics of modern Chinese nationalism. It is because of the composite relationship between the tributary system and the state system that we cannot describe the tributary system simply as a ranked center/periphery relationship.

Just as the tributary system and the treaty system were not two opposing categories in Chinese history, so could the tributary system be a form of state relations since the European countries established different forms of relations between states when they were setting up bilateral trade, political, and military relations. Hamashita defined an "interchange of trade (*bushi*)" type of tributary relations, which was more similar than other types to the so-called "diplomatic relations" and "international trade relations." Within the tributary sphere, there existed the relationship of tribute and bestowment of return gift. The two were sometimes of equal value, and sometime the return gift valued more than the tribute. Therefore the tributary relationship contained a duality: it was both an economic and a ritual system. Accordingly, the ritualistic inequality and the actual reciprocity, the ritual character of the tributary relationship and the actual substance of tributary trade overlapped with each other. If it is an inherent characteristic of the tributary practice that the relationship between states and the tributary relationship overlapped, shall we not observe European states' domestic and international relations from another perspective, i.e., regard the treaty system not as a structural form but a result of the historical interactions between different powers and forms? As Hamashita argued powerfully when he analyses the opium trade between Britain and China, the formal equality of the European treaty system cannot conceal its actual inequality. Therefore, if one bases one's argument on the dichotomy of tribute and treaty, empire and state, and attacks such Euro-centric ideas by inverting the relations between the two, the complexity of historical relations within Asia are simplified.

The question of Asia's modernity must eventually deal with the relationship between Asia and European colonialism and modern capitalism. In as early as the 1940s, Miyazaki started to explore the "beginning of Song capitalism" by studying the history of wide-ranging communications of different regions. He argued "[those] who

25

Miyazaki, "Toyo teki Kinsei (East Asia's Modern Age)," p.240.

26

Ibid., pp.151-154.

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Miyazaki concluded logically, "The European Industrial Revolution was definitely not an independent history of Europe, because it was not only a problem of machinery but also an issue of the whole social structure. To make the Industrial Revolution take place, the prosperity of the bourgeois was necessary, and moreover, the capital accumulation from trading with East Asia was also indispensable. To make the machines work not only required power but also cotton as raw material. In fact, East Asia provided raw material and market. If there had not been communications with East Asia, the Industrial Revolution might not have taken place." Ibid., p. 238.

regard the history since the Song as the growth of modernity have arrived at the time to reflect on western modern history in the light of the developments in modern East Asian history."<sup>25</sup> That his theory of East Asian modernity overlapped with the Japanese idea of "Great East Asian Sphere" does not obscure Miyazaki's insightful observations. He observed that in a kind of world-history framework, how the digging of the Grand Canal, the migrating of metropolises, and commodities such as spice and tea connected the European and the Asian trade network, and how the expansion of the Mongolian Empire promoted the artistic and cultural exchanges between Europe and Asia not only changed the internal relations in China and Asian societies, but also connected Europe and Asia internally by land and by sea.<sup>26</sup> If the political, economic, and cultural features of "the Asian Modernity" appeared in as early as the 10th or the 11th century — three or four centuries earlier than the appearance of comparable features in Europe, were the historical development of these two worlds parallel or associated? Miyazaki propounded that East Asia, especially China, not only provided the necessary market and material for the Industrial revolution, but also nurtured the growth of humanism in the French Revolution.<sup>27</sup>

Discussions on the changes of the Chinese society, forced or voluntary, and its communications with surrounding regions enrich our understanding of the modern world. The movement of the world does not simply operate around the capitalist system that centers on Europe; its operation is the process in which multiply worlds of history communicate and fight with each other, permeate into each other, and mould each other. When historians located Asia in global relations, they realized first that the issue of modernity was not an issue of a certain society, but the result of interaction between different regions and civilizations. Hence the validity of the idea of Asia diminishes, since it is neither a self-contained entity nor a set of relations. It is neither the beginning of a linear world history nor its end. This idea of Asia, which is neither starting point nor end, neither self-sufficient subject nor subordinating object, provides an opportunity to reconstruct "world history."

When we correct the errors in the idea of Asia, we must also reexamine the idea of Europe. If the account of Asia continues to be based on the self-explanatory notion of Europe, and the dynamism that produced the idea of Europe is not thoroughly reexamined in the

context of European historical development, the ambiguity of the idea of Asia will be hard to eliminate. I'd like to support Dipesh Chakrabarty's call for "provincializing Europe" here: in a period when European history itself has localized, perhaps no one will believe in the Hegelian myth of history, but the Europe as meta-history is a ghost that still wonders behind various contemporary historical narratives.<sup>28</sup>

#### IV. The Problem of "World History": Asia, Empire, and Nation-state

The accounts of Asia that we have discussed above reveal less the autonomy of Asia than the ambiguity and contradictions in the idea of Asia. This idea is at the same time colonialist and anti-colonialist, conservative and revolutionary, nationalist and internationalist, originated in Europe and shaping the self-interpretation of Europe, closely related to the issue of national state and overlapping with the vision of empire, a concept of civilization as opposed to that of Europe and a geographic category established in geo-political relations. We must take seriously the derivativeness, ambiguity, and inconsistency of how the idea of Asia emerged as we explore the political, economic, and cultural independence of Asia. The keys to transcend or overcome such derivativeness, ambiguity, and inconsistency can be discovered only in specific historical relations that gave rise to them.

First, the idea of Asia was created in close relation to the issue of modernity or capitalism, and the core of the modernity issue was the development of the relationship between nation-state and market. The tension between nationalism and super-nationalism is closely related to the dual reliance of capitalist market on state and cross-state relations. Discussions on the early modernity of Asia and Asian capitalism strongly impacted the use of the notion of Asia today. Since such discussions often focus on issues such as nation-state and capitalism, the diverse historical relations, policies and governance, customs, and cultural structure of Asian societies nested in the narrative of modernity. Values, policies, and rituals independent of this narrative of modernity were suppressed and marginalized. One goal of my analysis has been to redefine these suppressed historical heritages and examine whether some of them — values, policies, rituals, and economic relations, etc. — can be utilized under new historical circumstances.

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Chakrabarty Dipesh,  
"Postcoloniality and the Artifice of  
History: Who Speaks for Indian  
'Pasts?'" *Representations* 37 (1992):  
pp.1-26.



Second, the dominance of nation-state in Asian imaginations arose from the dichotomy of empire and nation-state created in modern Europe. The historical implication of this dichotomy was: nation-state was the single modern political form and the principal precondition for the development of Capitalism. This dichotomy, however, underestimated the diversity of political and economic relations that were summarized as belonging to the category of empire, and underestimated the diversity of internal relations within nation-states. Nowadays national states remain the main driving force of regional communications in Asia. Therefore regional problems often take the form of the extension of national relations. Because new ideas of Asia aim to create a protective and constructive regional network to counter-balance the mono-dominance and upheavals resulting from the process of globalization, the issue of state still occupies a central position of the issue of Asia. The question is: as nation-state has become a dominant political structure, will the traditional experiences of communication, co-existence, and policies and regulations of Asia provide ways and opportunities to overcome the internal and external dilemmas brought about by the nation-state system?

Third, the unity of Asia as a category was established as opposed to Europe. It encompasses various heterogeneous cultures, religions, and other social elements. Whether we base our judgment on historical traditions or current circumstances, one does not see the possibility or conditions in Asia to create a European Union-style super-state. Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Sikism, Zoroastrianism, Daoism, and Confucianism all originated in this continent we call Asia, on which three fifths of the world's landmass lie and over half of the world's population live. Any attempt to summarize the characteristics of Asia with one unitary culture will fail. The idea of Confucian Asia cannot even fully represent the characteristics of China. Even if the idea of Asia is reduced to the idea of East Asia, the cultural multiplicity in Asia still cannot be avoided. At the same time, the religious, commercial, cultural, military and political relations between Asia and Europe, Africa and America, have long-lasting and inseparable historical connections. It is not adequate to describe Asia with the inner/outer mode of nation-state, nor to envision Asia as an enlarged nation-state. The idea of Asia has never been a self-definition. It is rather the result of the interaction between

this region and other regions. The criticism of Euro-centrism does not seek to confirm Asia-centrism but to eliminate the self-centered, exclusivist, and expansionist logic of dominance. In this sense, to discern the internal disorder and diversity of "new empires" and to reject the self-explanatory idea of Europe is not only the premise to reconstruct the idea of Asia and of Europe, but the inevitable route to break through the "logic of new empires."

Fourth, the commonality of Asian imaginaries partly came from the imaginations' common subordinating status in colonialism, the Cold War period, and the global order, and the trends of national self-determination movement, socialist movement, decolonization movement, and democratization. We will not be able to understand the modern significance of Asia or the origin of disunion and war crisis in Asia if we forget these historical conditions and movements. In this sense, new Asian imaginations need to surpass the goals and projects of 20th-century national liberation and socialist movements. Under the new historical circumstances, they must explore and reflect on these unaccomplished historical projects of these movements. It is not to create a new Cold War but to abolish the old Cold War and its derivative forms; it is not to reconstruct the colonial relationship but to eliminate the remnant and new-born colonizing possibilities. I emphasize again what I have conveyed: the issue of Asia is not simply an issue in Asia; it is an issue of "world history." To reconsider the "Asian history" is a reconstruction of 19th-century European "world history" and an attempt to break through 21st-century "new empire" order and its logic.

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[Translated by Gao Jin]



## Indonesia's 'Asia'

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[1]

'Asia' is like God; you cannot categorically deny or affirm its existence. No one knows where it begins, where it ends, or whether there is a way to define it. Maybe it is, to use John Lennon's line about God, 'a concept by which we measure our pain.'

The pain varies. Sometimes it renders 'Asia' the outcome of a 'universalizing' scheme that, in the end, self-aborts; other times it is part of an agonizing cultivation of the self in search of a deeper meaning. In Indonesia, the idea of 'Asia' is generally linked to a haphazard political agenda that, in the early 20th century, was shaped by the need to respond to a Janus-faced modernity.

Predictably, the first face of modernity is 'Europe' as a promise of emancipation. In the beginning of the 20th century, when Java was under the Dutch colonial system, a twenty-one year old woman wrote a letter to her pen friend in Holland with a passionate opening: 'To go to Europe! Till my last breath that shall be my ideal.'<sup>1</sup>

That woman was Kartini, the daughter of a chief of a Javanese administrative district. She was born in 1879 and died at a very young age in 1904. Today, she is known as the first Indonesian feminist as well as the forerunner of the nationalist movement for freedom; her birthday is a national day. She is an exceptional figure, but her case is by no means untypical of a colonial setting in which every day bore witness to European supremacy. She came from a Javanese aristocratic family, but her grandfather had a young tutor brought into the family from Holland, at a time when there were very few European schools in Java. Kartini's father, who became the regent of Jepara, was one of the three native district administrators who spoke Dutch fluently and read Western literature extensively. He encouraged his sons and daughters to learn not only Dutch, but also German, French and English. Kartini's brother graduated with honors from a colonial



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<sup>1</sup>  
All Kartini's quotes are from Raden Adjeng Kartini, *Letters of A Javanese Princess*, edited and with an introduction by Hildred Geertz (W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York: 1964).