

REVIEW ARTICLE

PAN-ASIANISM AND ITS DISCONTENTS

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The Politics of Anti-Westernism: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought in Asia.

By Cemil Aydin. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007. Pp. 320. ISBN 10: 0231137788; 13: 9780231137782.

In his recent book on Pan-Islamism and Pan-Asianism, Cemil Aydin ventures to treat the topic of Pan-Asianism and Pan Islam's twentieth-century history from the perspective of intellectual history, as the politics of anti-Westernism in Asia. Aydin, who has worked on the intellectual history of Japanese Pan-Asianism through a study of the writings of Ōkawa Shūmei, the major Pan-Asianist thinker of pre-war Japan, analyzes Japanese Pan-Asianism in comparison with the currents of Pan-Islamism in the same period. The volume presently under review reflects Aydin's background as a specialist of Ottoman and Japanese intellectual histories, as well as his prior studies of the thought of Ōkawa Shūmei. It is a noteworthy attempt to offer a global historical interpretation of the historiography debates in both Japanese history and Middle Eastern history, and is meritorious in that it rejects the simplistic "clash of civilizations" approach toward the politics of Islam.

Aydin's work primarily relies on an extensive survey of a rich bibliography of recent studies in Ottoman, Middle Eastern, and Japanese Studies. His main argument is that both Ottoman Pan-Islamism and Japanese Pan-Asianism constituted revolt against the West that emerged from the crisis of legitimacy in the international order. He finds both currents to have been as exponentially significant during the twentieth century as nationalism and Bolshevism, and as having contributed to the end of Western imperialism and decolonization. The argument incorporates non-Western intellectual debates into the global history of modern thought by way of positing Pan-Islamism and Pan-Asianism as products of modernism. In this way, Aydin aims to go beyond the standard historical narrative of modern intellectual history that privileges Western intellectual currents over non-Western interpretations of modernity. In short, he argues that Japanese Pan-Asianist and Muslim Pan-Islamic discourses were products of modernity.

The book discusses the trajectory of both Japanese Pan-Asianism and Pan-Islamism (relying mostly on the Ottoman Turkish debates) as a global history of anti-Westernism in Asia, charted upon a chronology of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century shared experience of confronting the specter of the West. The chapters in the book are arranged in the

order of such an argument. Aydin argues that the first half of the nineteenth century was an optimistic age, as non-Western intellectuals (meaning Ottoman Muslims and Japanese) accepted the concept of a universal Western civilization – in early modern Japan, the vision of *bunmei kaika* 文明開化. However, by the 1880s Western high imperialism and its racist-Christian ideology rejected non-Western cultures and peoples as equals. For non-Western intellectuals, the universalism of Western civilization subsequently became a shattered idea that created a legitimacy crisis in their vision of world order. The conflict that ensued gave birth to an anti-Western critical vision that took the form of Pan-Asianism and Pan-Islamism. The Russo-Japanese War in 1905 acted as a turning point for inspiring the non-West in a new optimism, a self-reliant awakening that included visions of alternative civilizations. European self-doubt, as seen in such works as the publication of Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West* (first published in 1918), reinforced this anti-Western trend, a trend that translated into two major challenges to the Western world. First, during World War I Ottoman Young Turk Pan-Islamism briefly became a realist foreign policy, contemporary to Wilsonianism and the Bolshevism that challenged the West. But with the defeat and destruction of the Ottoman Empire came the “triumph of nationalism” – here Aydin provocatively places a question mark in his chapter title. The establishment of the Turkish Republic by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the subsequent controversial staunch secularist and westernist regime in Turkey abolished the Islamic Caliphate and the Ottoman dynasty. These measures ended the prospects for a Pan-Islamist challenge to the West. Second, the Japanese revival of Pan-Asianism during the 1930s led to a similar practice of anti-Westernism as a realist foreign policy option, which ultimately led to the quagmire of the Pacific War. Japan's defeat ended that challenge too. Aydin posits both intellectual currents into the same shared time frame, seeking a parallel analogy of universalism, anti-Westernism, and realism in international relations. In doing so, he sees a common significance in the visions of world order presented by Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian thought. Again, the argument benefits from the author's in-depth knowledge of Ōkawa Shūmei, who actually envisioned the collaboration of Japanese Pan-Asianism with a global Muslim Pan-Islamist awakening as necessary to challenge Western colonialism in Asia.

A few comments should be made to evaluate the intellectual contribution of Aydin's work to our understanding of modern Japanese encounters with the world of Islam and the politics of anti-Westernism. The author is on firm ground in regard to his argument about the controversial but significant role of Japan's Pan-Asianist vision, its politics in challenging the West in Asia and its contribution to ending Western colonial regimes. In post-war Japan, the socialist intellectual Takeuchi Yoshimi wrote on the importance of *Ajia shugi* アジア主義, “Asianism”, as furnishing a critique of the Western hegemonic modern. Takeuchi's remarks came in an era in which Asianism had been totally rejected by Japanese leftist and progressive democratic opinion due to its close associations with the *Ajia shugi* rhetoric of pre-war Japanese militarism and wartime propaganda. Yet the surge in the study of the pre-war legacy of Japanese *Ajia shugi* in the Japanese academy since the 1990s demonstrates that scholars are reexamining with new interest Japan's relations with Asia and Asianism. Furuya Tetsuo's edited volume *Kindai Nihon no Ajia ninshiki* 近代日本のアジア認識, which included the participation of historians Ishikawa Yoshihiro and Mizuno Naoki, focused on the Asian consciousness of modern Japan.

Chin Tokujin and Yasui Sankichi have published the documents of Sun Yat-sen's relations with Kokuryūkai 黒竜会 Asianists. Harada Kōkichi has published on the life of Ōkawa Shūmei, the major figure in the analysis of Asianism's intellectual legacy in modern Japan. An important primary source has been the post-war publication of the Ōkawa Shūmei collected works and related documents, which has created an impetus in the expansion of Pan-Asianism studies. The literary critic and writer Matsumoto Kenichi, who has published numerous essays and historical studies that address the topic of Asia and Asianism in the Japanese experience, represents the recent turn of the Japanese public toward Asia as a question of modern Japanese identity. Matsumoto has captured readers' imagination, and garnered considerable recognition, for his extensive study of Kita Ikki 北一輝, the other major figure in the political and intellectual trajectory of pre-war Japan's problematic history of militarism and the Asianist vision. Nakajima Takeshi has published on the Indian nationalist Rash Behar Bose. Like others, Aydin's study benefits from this recent revival of interest in Ōkawa Shūmei and the history of pre-war Japanese Asianism.¹

A number of Japan experts in the United States such as Tetsuo Najita, Harry Harootunian, and Stephan Tanaka have looked at pre-war intellectual debates of Asianism and overcoming modernity, and likely would agree with some of Aydin's conclusions that Asianism contributed to the making of pre-war Japanese history, essentially as a "revolt" against the West that advocated an alternate vision of Asian modernity as an emancipated nationalist modern. John Dower has concluded that Japan's plunge into the imperialist game as a "rough player" brought down the Western colonial empires in Asia. In recent years, Kevin Doak, Victor Koschman, Sven Saaler, Eri Hotta, Brij Tankha, Naoko Shimazu, Sheldon Garon, Sandra Wilson, Stephan Large, Christopher Szpilman, and many others have published extensively on Japanese nationalism and the critical intellectual role of Asianism in the twentieth-century history of Japanese nationalism and imperialism.²

Aydin's study of Japanese Pan-Asianism and the comparable vision of Ottoman Pan-Islamism argues that both views resulted from a crisis in the legitimacy of the West as a universal civilization in the eyes of non-Western intellectuals. For late nineteenth-century Ottoman Turks and the Meiji Japanese, the West reconstructed its identity not on the principles of Enlightenment universalism but rather in terms of aggressive imperialism, racism, and Christianity. Having violated its own standards, the West is argued thus

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- 1 Takeuchi 1993; Ōkawa 1961–1974; Ōkawa Shūmei Kankei Monjo Kankōkai, ed. 1998; Furuya 1994; Chin and Sankichi 1989 provide the documents on Japanese Pan-Asianists and Sun Yat-sen; Harada 1982; Nakajima 2005; Miura Tōru has published on Islamic Studies in Japan – see Miura 2004; Matsumoto 2004; Matsumoto 1994; Matsumoto 1996.
 - 2 Najita *et al.* 1998 and the magnum opus of Harootunian (Harootunian 2000) on the Japanese tortured discourse on modernity are seminal studies that paved the way; Najita and Harootunian 1995; Tanaka 1993; Dower 1993; Doak 2007; Doak 1994; Koschmann 1997; Hotta 2007; Szpilman 1998; Tankha 2006; Saaler and Koschmann 2007, with articles by Sven Saaler, Miwa Kimitada, Kuroki Morifumi, Li Narangoa, Kato Yoko, Christopher W. A. Szpilman, Dick Stegewerns, Michael A. Schneider, Roger H. Brown, John Namjun Kim, Kevin M. Doak, Victor J. Koschmann, Oguma Eiji, Kristine Dennehy, Hatsuse Ryuhei; Wilson, ed. 2002, with articles by Sandra Wilson, J. Charles Schencking, Vera Mackie, Stephen S. Large, Stewart Lone, Elise K. Tipton, Sheldon Garon, Beatrice Trefalt, Kosaku Yoshino, Frank B. Tipton; Shimazu 2006, with articles by Naoko Shimazu, Erica Benner, Harumi Goto-Shibata, Richard Siddle, Caroline Rose, Tetsuya Takahashi, and Stephan S. Large, again shows the wide spectrum of recent work on various facets of Japanese nationalism and Asianism.

to have given birth to the anti-Western vision of a new world order. In principle this thesis is a convincing intellectual argument, and an ample number of Japanese and Ottoman thinkers are invoked by Aydin to prove the point.

But in the latter half of the book, the same thesis becomes less explanatory of the political and military application of both Pan-Asianism and Pan-Islamism as a historical process. Although Aydin acknowledges the shift from Meiji romantic Asianism to the military vision of the 1930s, the strong anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist stance of early Meiji Pan-Asianists, who readily adopted the Italian, Polish, Finnish, Irish, and Latin American nationalist causes of the “West”, gets lost in the argument that Pan-Asianism was primarily anti-Western. Aydin’s thesis makes World War I and World War II a product of a legitimacy crisis in the *idea* of the West for non-Western intellectuals, which is then adopted by governments. This perspective also makes it hard to differentiate between various meanings of Pan-Asianism and Pan-Islamism to different people at different times in concrete terms. For example, the Japanese state’s use of Pan-Asianism in the context of Japanese imperialism and the Pacific War, or the Ottoman military engagement with Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism during World War I, are correlated with non-state social and political currents of nationalism and anti-colonial, anti-imperialist movements that opposed imperialism and colonialism. In such a narrative, all parties are transformed into anti-Western modernists.

Even a few references on the topic exhibit the different meanings of Pan-Asianism. Marius Jansen’s brilliant 1954 study of the relations between Kokuryūkai, the Amur River society of ultra-nationalists known popularly as the Black Dragons, and Sun Yat-sen pioneered, in a sense, the study of Japanese Asianism’s early phase, when it was still connected with nationalist movements in Asia. Subsequent to Jansen, Harry Benda, Joyce Lebra, Grant Goodman, and more recently Brij Tanka and Michael Laffan, all have pursued the intimate connections between Japanese Asianism, Indian nationalism, Indonesian nationalism, and Pan-Islam. Li Narangoa has illuminated pre-war Japanese Buddhist propaganda and education policies in Inner Mongolia. Finally, my studies on Japan’s Pan-Asianist collaboration with Muslim nationalists as well as Pan-Islamists from Eurasia between 1900 and 1945 take into account the transformation of these shared intellectual visions of anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism and the alternate modernity to propaganda in the service of the Japanese empire on the continent.³ There is a difference between intellectual debates and propaganda.

A politically charged topic such as Pan-Asianism, therefore, begs an acknowledgement of its connections to nationalism and imperialism beyond the realm of the textual. The study under review would have benefited from archival investigations that could have linked Pan Asianism’s intellectual ideas to relevant Japanese political circles, economic and business interests in the Middle East oil and opium trades intelligence operations, as well as anti-Soviet anti-Communism propaganda activities in the geo-historical matrix of twentieth-century Asia. But this does not detract from the contribution of the book as a well-timed argument stating that neither Pan-Asianism nor Pan-Islamism represented

3 Jansen 1954; Benda 1958; Lebra 1971; Goodman 1991; Esenbel 2004.

crude Occidentalism and anti-modern reaction. The problem lies with the difficulty of writing the intellectual history of a very political topic.

One problem facing anyone studying Pan-Asianism or any such transcendental idea is that these writings were very general frames that were employed as tropes to represent ideas, aspirations, or policies in a symbolic manner, and did not in themselves explain more than a utopian and visionary imagination. Nationalism is in itself a very weak ideology, theoretically. “Pan-” ideas, which were the universalistic visions of nationalists such as early twentieth-century Pan-Slavism, Pan-Germanism, Pan-Turkism and Pan Arabism, were, as concepts, even weaker.⁴ Yet both of these so-called “weak” conceptual modes have been very potent for real political and social movements of many countries, Japan being one of them, which shows that there was more at stake than what the ideas represented as visions of an anti-Western world order.

How these Pan concepts were “filled” with nationalist objectives is what made all the difference. Pan-Asianism in Japan may have been for Asian emancipation, but above all else it served the Japanese empire. During the Meiji period the Pan-Asianist organizations like the Gen'yōsha 玄洋社 supported revolutionaries and nationalists in Asia, but after World War I the same concept now meant, for the Army and cabinet of Baron Hiranuma Kiichirō 平沼騏一郎, anti-Communism – an important turning point that Aydin does not greatly emphasize. Yet, Japanese Asianism’s anti-Communism agenda forged the alliance with the Pan-Islam of diaspora Muslim Tatars in the Japanese empire during the 1930s, and survived as an important legacy in the post-war period. In 1939, the Baron Hiranuma cabinet and General Araki Sadao 荒木貞夫 supported the law to recognize Islam as one of the official religions of Japan in the Diet and advocated a religion law reform measure (*shūkyōhō* 宗教法), which passed because, in the words of the General, “with respect to the use of religion as an international policy against the Soviet Union, Islam in the mainland constitutes the base from which to form an international movement.”⁵

By the 1930s the visions of Pan-Asianism purveyed by Kita Ikki and Ōkawa Shūmei – even though both argued in favor of the empowerment of Japan’s leadership in Asia – were different: Kita Ikki saw Asianism as an anti-Russian and anti-Communist agenda. Ōkawa Shūmei saw Asianism as the emancipation of British, Dutch, and French colonial subjects. And in the final analysis, even though they might at times have supported Japan, the Pan-Asianism of Asian actors such as Sun Yat-sen, Tagore, or Chinese socialists was diametrically opposed to the imperialist agenda of Japan. Their global Asia was the means to emancipate a national entity and create Asian solidarity against all empires. Was all of this simply anti-Western?⁶

Another question concerns whether the Pan-Islamic arguments of the nineteenth-century transnational Muslim intelligentsia, who gave rise to an anti-Western imperialist platform, are comparable to Japanese Pan-Asianism in terms of their impact. The views of major Muslim intellectual political activists such as Jama al-Din Al-Afgani of Iran and of

4 Duara 2001, pp. 99–130 for a discussion of this weakness.

5 Shakai mondai shiryō kenkyūkai 1975–1979; *Teikoku gikaishi* 1939, pp. 216–17; Kampō Kizokuin 1939, p. 281; Kampō Shūgiin 1939, pp. 64–68.

6 Karl 1998.

Muhammed Rashid Rida and Muhammad Abdu of Egypt, both pioneer visionaries of Pan-Islamism, appealed to Muslim potentates of their day in Iran, Afghanistan, Egypt, and the Ottoman empire in considering whether to undertake modern reforms that would revive Islam proper from its fallen state. They also saw it as a means to modernize Muslim states and societies by incorporating the better elements of Western civilization, and thus challenge the aggression of Western empires. Sultan Abdulhamid II also made effective use of the idea of Islamic unity as an Ottoman foreign policy toward Asian Muslims. However, among Aydin's conclusions (p. 11) is the claim that Pan-Islamism and Pan-Asianism played similar roles in the collapse of the imperial world order. Comparing the Ottoman government's use of Pan-Islamist propaganda during World War I toward Muslim India, Indonesia, and the Turkic world (the product of an Ottoman–German propaganda collaboration) with Japanese Pan-Asianist internationalism during World War II is rather unconvincing. While one can see how Pan-Asianism, as the ideology of the Japanese military attack on the United States, Britain, Holland, and France, *did* contribute to the downfall of the British empire and the end to European imperial colonial regimes in Asia, it would be very difficult to extrapolate a similarly “successful” role for Ottoman Pan-Islamism, which disappeared from the scene after the loss of the Ottoman empire's territories to the French and British mandates in the Near East.

The Aydin argument tones down the global importance of the “triumph of nationalism”, and of the Kemalist revolution of Turkish nationalism that resulted both in the founding of the secular republic in 1923 and in a policy of total Westernization in rejection of political Islam. Yet, as is well known, these events made their mark in the Muslim (and non-Muslim) narrative of anti-imperialism and nationalism in Asia. Unlike some intellectuals today, many Asian intellectuals and indeed Asian public opinion did not see the contradiction between Pan-Islam ideals and a nationalist secular revolution. Even Ōkawa himself noted the Kemalist secular revolution as part of the construction of new Asia, although he was critical of the “Europeanization” that the Turkish and Indian nationalists preferred. The Ottoman Turkish cadres who, against the terms of surrender, organized the independence war may have used the idea of Islamic unity to mobilize the remaining population of Turkish, Circassian, Kurdish, or Georgian origins in Anatolia against the occupying Western forces. But as Halide Edip, the brilliant woman writer and political intellect of the age who participated in the independence struggle, noted in her memoirs, this battle became the opportunity for the “Turkish test with fire” to forge a Turkish national identity in the midst of the conflict. An invention to be sure, but one that survived in contrast to Pan-Islamist visions that concluded with the end to empire or remained only as diaspora utopias.

Aydin's book inadvertently elevates Pan-Islamism to the status of having the same political and intellectual trajectory as that of Pan-Asianism in Japan. To be sure, the cooperation and mutual dialogue between some Japanese Pan-Asianists such as Ōkawa and some Pan-Islamists such as Abdurreshid Ibrahim, the Tatar Turk political émigré in Japan who played a very important role in helping the Japanese authorities develop their Islam policy *kaikyō seisaku* 回教政策 during the 1930s, make these arguments seem similar. But in addition to the more famous Pan-Asianist Ōkawa, also active during the pre-war period were the Ottoman historian and diplomat Naitō Chishū 内藤知周, Central Asia and Turkic studies expert Ōkubo Kōji 大久保幸次, Arabist Kobayashi Hajime 小林元, and

Keio University Islamic philosophy expert Izutsu Toshihiko 井筒俊彦. Their efforts in Islamic Studies, combined with Ōkawa's *Kaikyō gairon* 回教概論 (A Survey of Islam), pioneered the field in Japan. These are but a few of the well-known scholars and language experts who focused on the potential cooperation between Muslims and Japanese Asianism.

Ōkawa himself developed pre-war Islamic Studies in Japan in order to help the military strategies of Islam policy during the 1930s – part of the reason that this legacy was forgotten or avoided during Japan's post-war period. Ultimately, Islamic Studies and interest in Islam were irrevocably linked to the training of special Japanese Muslim agents such as Omar Yamaoka Kōtarō 山岡光太郎, Hadji Nur Tanaka Ippei 田中一平, Wakabayashi Han 若林半, Kobayashi Hajime 小林元, and Hadji Saleh Suzuki Tsuyomi 鈴木強, all of whom took part in Japanese intelligence activities among Muslims in Asia.⁷ A former member of Japan's pre-war experts in Islamic affairs, Komura Fujio, who had served as an agent in Inner Mongolia, authored a book on Japan and the World of Islam, which remained for some considerable time during the post-war period the only detailed account on this intriguing relationship. Recently scholars from Japan, Turkey, the United States, Morocco, and other countries have been working on different characteristics of this little-known aspect of pre-war history. Komatsu Kaori and Komatsu Hisao, Nadir Özbek, Mertan Dündar, Sakamoto Tsutomu, Matsunaga Akira, El Mostafa Rezzazi, Michael Penn, Renee Worringer, and myself have brought to light the cooperation between Pan-Asianism in Japan and Pan-Islamist Muslim actors. Yet the relationship was not an equal one. Japanese Pan-Asianist cabinets and military institutions were making use of vulnerable stateless diaspora communities for the primary purpose of helping Japanese interests in Asia. Abdurresid Ibrahim, a seasoned Pan-Islamist activist-journalist-religious scholar from Russia and later Ottoman Turkey, found himself no longer welcome in the secularist Republic of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. As an elderly, distinguished political leader of a previous generation, he had found haven in the Pan-Asianist Japan of the 1930s. Ibrahim became the imam of the Tokyo mosque and, like other stateless Muslim émigrés in the territories of the Japanese empire, helped the Asianist activities of the war-ridden era. Ibrahim taught Ōkawa classical Arabic in Japan, but in no way could he venture to have the same level of power and influence as Ōkawa in Japan or the Kemalist regime in Turkey.⁸

Finally, in his conclusion, Aydin appeals to the need for policy makers to consult with Muslim intellectuals in order to solve the present crisis – the result of anti-Americanism – in the international order, ominously similar, according to Aydin, to the anti-Westernism of the pre-war era. This is of course a fine ideal for world peace. But, given the dangerous anti-American components of contemporary Islamism in the Iranian revolution's ideological claims, as well as in the rhetoric of radical terrorist groups such as the Taliban and Al Qaeda, intellectual advice inspired by modernist interpretations of early twentieth-century Pan-Islamic thinkers may not be relevant for helping to reach peace and stability in today's world. Pre-war Pan-Islamist thinkers, before they became diaspora elements in the hands of

7 Kawamura 1987, pp. 409–39 discuss the military links to pre-war Islamic studies in Japan.

8 For a selection on studies of Japan and Islam with emphasis on Pan Asian cooperation with Pan-Islam agendas, see Komura 1988; Worringer 2001; Worringer 2004; Esenbel *et al.* 1995; Komatsu and Komatsu 1991; Rezzazi 1997; Ikei and Sakamoto 1999; Esenbel and Inaba 2003; Sakamoto 2008.

the Japanese Army, were true political liberals who advocated the adoption of the better elements of Western civilization. To the end they were constitutionalists, despite their criticisms of the West. Even so, despite these debatable points, Aydin's book stands as an interesting interpretation of the topic of Japanese Pan-Asianism and Pan-Islamism, and is a salutary corrective to the negative polemics about the "clash of civilizations". It surely will encourage new research and lively debate.

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