Chapter Five

Tarui Tōkichi’s Arguments on Behalf of the Union of the Great East, 1893

Kyu Hyun Kim

Tarui Tōkichi (1850–1922), the author of Arguments on Behalf of the Union of the Great East (Daitō gappōron), was an activist, journalist, and, later, politician whose career was devoted to the causes of antigovernment activism, continental expansionism, and socialism.

Tarui was born on 25 May 1850 in Reianji Village (today’s Gojō City, Nara Prefecture) to the household of timber merchant Tarui Yōsuke. By his late childhood, his father’s business seems to have gone into decline as a result of the flooding of the Yoshino River. As a youth Tarui was attracted to the “Revere the Emperor and Expel the Barbarians” (sonnō jōi) movement, inspired by the proimperial (i.e. anti-Shogunate) terrorist activities of the loyalist group Tenchūgumi (1863). He moved to Tokyo following the overthrow of the Tokugawa Shogunate and the Meiji Restoration of 1868, but instead of seeking a job in the new government, he enrolled in the private academy run by Inoue Yorikuni (1839–1914), a well-known Kokugaku (nativism) scholar. In 1875, Tarui and a group of like-minded young journalists founded Hyōron Shinbun, a journal highly critical of the new government. Two years later, the Satsuma
Rebellion under Saigō Takamori spurred Tarui to travel around the northeastern region of Japan in an effort to recruit volunteers to rise up against the government. Little came of these efforts, however.

In 1879, Tarui embarked on a fanciful trip to locate a deserted island near the southern coast of Japan off the Korean peninsula, allegedly with the intention of establishing a political base from which to attack the Korean court—an action that he hoped would lead to the formation of a reformist government in Korea. After nearly three years of fruitless wandering, Tarui returned to political activism in Japan and founded the Tōyō Shakaitō (Oriental Socialist Party) in Nagasaki in 1883. Although its membership was small, Tarui and other party leaders immediately became the target of government suspicions. Within a month of its formation, the party was ordered to disband. Later—ostensibly to “aid” Kim Ok-kyun (1851–1894), the Korean reformist exiled in Japan—Tarui, Tōyama Mitsuru of the Genyōsha (Black Ocean Society, see I:3), and other advocates of adventurism abroad hatched various clandestine schemes to intervene in Korean politics. These machinations eventually ensnared Tarui in the so-called Osaka Affair (1885), along with the renowned champion of the Popular Rights Movement, Ōi Kentarō (1843–1922). Tarui was arrested, but he pleaded not guilty to the charge of aiding Ōi’s party to prepare explosive devices, and was acquitted.

Arrested again in 1887 for joining a populist campaign opposed to Foreign Minister Inoue Kaoru’s (1836–1915) plans to revise Japan’s unequal treaties with the Western powers, Tarui was pardoned by the Meiji Emperor on the occasion of the promulgation of the Imperial Constitution in
1889. In 1892, he won a seat in the newly created Imperial Diet. A year later he published Daitō gappōron. Tarui is nowadays best known for this work, written in classical Chinese (kanbun), which since its first publication has appeared in several editions, including a translation into modern Japanese (in Takeuchi 1963a). By the mid-1890s Tarui’s political career appears to have petered out—although the second edition of Daitō gappōron came out only one month prior to the annexation of Korea in 1910, endorsing Japanese policy there. Afterwards, he tried his hand at various business ventures, including mining interests in Manchuria and Korea and investment in the development of Mongolia, but none of them seems to have been successful. He died in 1922 in poverty and mostly forgotten by the public.

The life and thought of Tarui Tōkichi has never experienced the revival of interest in postwar Japanese academic circles akin to that accorded, say, to Ueki Emori (1857–1892)—although, like Ōi Kentarō, his credentials as a pioneer of socialism kept his star from fading into total obscurity. Tanaka Sōgorō’s book Tōyō Shakaitō-kō (Tanaka 1930), which is focused largely on Tarui’s role in the introduction of socialist thought in late nineteenth-century Japan, remains the most detailed biographical study of Tarui. The noted Marxist historian Hirano Yoshitarō (1897–1980) championed Tarui Tōkichi as one of the Asianist visionaries who anticipated the ideology of the Greater Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere (see II:30), used to justify the Pacific War as the struggle for the liberation of Asia from Western colonial domination (Hirano 1945).

In contrast, in his influential essay on Asianism, the noted Sinologue Takeuchi Yoshimi (1910–1977, see II:35)
denounced the ideology underlying the Co-Prosperity Sphere as a charade, distinguishing it from early forms of Pan-Asianism as represented by the writings of Tarui. While acknowledging that Asianism in Japan ultimately embraced expansionism and the promotion of war against fellow Asians, Takeuchi nonetheless found hints of egalitarian solidarity in Tarui’s campaign for the union of Japan and Korea (Takeuchi 1963b; see also II:35). On the other hand, Hatada Takashi, a specialist in Korean history, while acknowledging the germ of egalitarian solidarity among Asian peoples in Tarui’s thought, rejects the view that this could have served as a counterideology to the Meiji state’s imperialist designs; he points to the Daitō gappōron’s unconditional acceptance of the Treaty of Ganghwa (Kanghwa, 1875), enforced by Japan’s gunboat diplomacy, as an act of “benevolent guidance” (Hatada 1969).

To some extent, it is not surprising that the Daitō gappōron has given rise to such divergent interpretations since the text is hardly a model of coherent argumentation. Indeed, his contemporaries noted that Tarui’s life showed a pattern of ideological inconsistency. Despite his close association with activists from the Popular Rights Movement, for example, one of his earliest appeals to the Meiji government rejected democratic elections as a means of constituting the national legislature (Tanaka 1930: 82). Tarui begins Daitō gappōron with a general discussion of the historical evolution of nation-states, a process through which the superiority of independent, sovereign nations with constitutional governments over other forms of political community has in his view been unquestionably demonstrated. Here, his language and ideas fit quite well with the mainstream views espoused by the Popular Rights Movement in the
1880s—characterized by unquestioning support for the idea of historical progress from barbarism to civilization, an emphasis on the “independent spirit of the people” as the determining qualification for building a nation-state, and “despotism” as an absolute evil to be overcome by any means.

Having established that Japan had successfully transformed itself into a constitutional state, Tarui delineates his main point—that Meiji Japan should form a union (gappō) with Chosŏn Korea, a country still under monarchical rule and having only recently gained “independence” (via Japan’s intervention) from Qing (Ch’ing) China. He painstakingly refutes potential objections to such a union. Yes, Tarui acknowledges, the Korean court is weak, its politics chaotic and the Korean people ignorant and lacking in the spirit of independence. However, none of these problems is insurmountable. If the Koreans were to live with the Japanese under the same roof, they would have much to learn from them, and their customs, habits, and predispositions would be improved accordingly. They would soon be able to make a positive contribution of their own—for instance, as superb soldiers protecting their borders against Russian aggression, given their large physiques and physical strength (Tarui 1975: 120).

Tarui, however, has few concrete proposals on the mechanics of a Japan–Korea union. After listing European and American examples of the federal system of government—from ancient Greece to Germany, Switzerland, and the United States—he merely notes that matters relating to the union between Korea and Japan should be recorded in a federal constitution, that there should be provisions for its amicable dissolution, and
that such a union would be consistent with the global trend toward larger alliances of sovereign nations, perhaps one day resulting in a world government. In the final section of Daitō gappōron, Tarui expands his argument to propose an alliance between a unified Japan–Korea and China—an important step toward the construction of a pan-Asian federation he dubs the “Great East (Daitō).” In the terminology he uses, Tarui is careful to distinguish union (gappō) from alliance (gasshō)—a term apparently derived from a classical Chinese reference to the alliance of six states against Qin Shi Huang (259–210 BC) during the Warring States period (476–221 BC). The same term was also adopted by some later pan-Asian writers (see introduction). In other respects, however, Tarui is inconsistent in his naming of the unified Japan and Korea, as well as the larger entity proposed to incorporate Japan, Korea, and China—he regularly employs the term “Eastern Nation” (tōkoku), for instance, to designate Japan–Korea in contradistinction to Qing China.

In this section of the book, Tarui draws heavily on concepts of race and ethnicity as well as on social Darwinist notions of conflict and competition as engines of progress. At one point he chastises the Chinese for giving the cold shoulder to the Japanese, who are of the “same race,” in favor of the British. His argument for a Sino–Japanese alliance is also marked by a certain geopolitical mind-set, stressing the strategic advantages Qing China could gain with Japan as its ally against the might of the British and Russian naval forces.

Takeuchi is probably correct in claiming that Tarui (along with other former Popular Rights activists with a strong Asianist bent) genuinely struggled to formulate a type of political relationship based on solidarity and fraternity and
thus should not be dismissed as a mere stooge of the Meiji imperialists. The real question, however, is whether such a formulation was ever successful. If Tarui’s Daitō gappōron is to serve as evidence, we must conclude that the enterprise was a failure.

The issue is not, as is sometimes construed, whether Tarui’s intentions were good—whether he was genuinely idealistic and not concealing the cold calculations of Realpolitik behind talk of “international public law (bankoku kōhō),” that is, Western-style international law. The real issue is that Tarui’s text lacks any attempt to understand the perspective of the Koreans. His repeated emphasis on the equality of Japan and Korea cannot disguise the unquestioning supremacy of Japan as an a priori assumption. Tarui simply states that Koreans should be grateful for the chance to claim Japan as their own country—a nation far superior to Korea in terms of climate, the fertility of the land, and the beauty of the landscape, not to mention Japan’s international status and the superior qualities of its government (Tarui 1975: 122). Despite the text’s stated purpose of persuading Koreans of the necessity for union, it makes little effort to regard them as active subjects; a few “exceptional” individuals like Kim Ok-kyun notwithstanding, Koreans are seen as “uncivilized people in need of Japanese help” to achieve modernization and political autonomy. In Tarui’s text, Koreans come packaged in racial stereotypes (“big bodies, fit for soldiering”), notions reinforced through unflattering comparisons with Western modernity. In other words, Daitō gappōron is essentially a monologue: an inward-looking text of reflection and strategy building by a Japanese political activist seeking the means to strengthen his fledgling modern nation by finding the least morally objectionable and costly way of “dealing with” the “Korea
problem.” It is hardly helpful, whether in terms of the perspectives of the 1890s or today, to view the possibilities inherent in the Japan–Korea relationship of that era exclusively as the “Korea problem.”

Source (translation from the classical Chinese [kanbun] original by Kyu Hyun Kim)

Tarui Tōkichi (1893), Daitō Gappōron (Arguments on Behalf of the Union of the Great East), reprinted in Fukkoku Daitō Gappōron (Chōryō Shorin/Wakatsuki Shoten, 1975); the translation into modern Japanese by Takeuchi Yoshimi (in Takeuchi 1963a: 106–29) has been consulted.

Introduction

From the East rises the Sun. It is the source of growth and harmony. The Guardian of the East is the Blue Dragon. Its Virtue is Benevolence. In terms of the quarters of the day, it corresponds to the morning. In terms of the four seasons, it represents spring. The Five Elements originate from the East. So do the Seven Constellations. If we divide the Earth into East and West, the Western hemisphere contains North and South America, two great continents, whereas in the Eastern hemisphere reside three great continents, Asia, Africa and Europe. Asia is located to the east of Europe and Africa, and Japan and Korea in turn are at its easternmost limits. This is the reason why Japanese and Koreans are endowed with temperaments rich in generosity and love, as well as with a spirit of directness and innovation. It is only natural that their characters and customs are free from the autumnal gloom typical of the Northwestern peoples. Japan has always cherished harmony and indeed established it as its major
principle of statecraft. Korea has done the same with benevolence. Harmony means sharing the needs of others; benevolence is the virtue of treating others as one treats oneself. Given this, friendship between Japan and Korea should arise naturally out of their respective temperaments, and nothing should be able to stop it.

Then why is it that such a relationship of friendship between Japan and Korea remains unrealized? A Westerner once claimed, “A nation is a person without the physical form.” Immature youngsters cannot grasp the feelings of love between man and woman. Such is the case with nations as well. Without attaining a certain level of enlightenment, true feelings of friendship cannot arise between nations. Even if the general atmosphere is favorable, their peoples cannot dispel mutual suspicion and unease. This is why Japan and Korea are still estranged from one another.

Today, the world is going through a constant process of renewal. A trip of a thousand li takes only a day to complete, while messages can be delivered from one country to another in a matter of moments. An immeasurable distance during ancient times is, today, nothing more than a stone’s throw. Countries with mutually incompatible customs in ancient times can, today, become close associates. The territories of Japan and Korea are as close to each other as the lips are to the teeth, while their respective attributes are like the two wheels of a cart. Their feelings toward each other are like those of siblings, while their moral relationship resembles that of close friends. Moreover, the two nations are moving into the realm of enlightenment. Why should we still be suspicious of each other? The dawning light of Eastern Civilization already shines upon these two nations, yet they have not quite
awakened from their confused dreams. Those who cling to the old habits have not understood the duties of those living in the present era. They must work toward fulfilling their duties by pursuing cooperation and mutual aid between the two nations. One finger cannot grasp an object. One leg cannot walk on its own. If we truly seek to enlarge our knowledge and enter into the realm of enlightenment, there is no better way [to achieve this] than by both nations binding themselves to an agreement and becoming a single united entity.

Changes in the World Order

The origins of human society are to be found in the coming together of barbarous peoples. Likewise, the current competition among powerful nations is a sign of the forthcoming unification of the world into a single nation. Today, the White race is the one possessing poisoned talons and sharp fangs. It aspires to be the First Emperor of Qin [the dynasty that first unified China in 221 BC] in today’s world. We, the Yellow race, in comparison, are merely satisfied with being relegated to the position of the Six Nations [of pre-Qin China]. What can I say about this situation? I say we should not be satisfied with the status of the Six Nations. We must actively develop plans to overcome this new Qin.

Fundamentals of National Politics

In order for a state (kokka) to be a complete entity, it must possess four essential elements: territorial boundaries, fixed residences for its people, institutions of governance, and autonomous sovereignty. The lack of any of the above elements disqualifies an area from being a state. Sovereignty refers to a state’s ability to deal with both
internal and external affairs on its own, without subordinating itself to the dictates of another state. Autonomy or independence refers to the ability of a state to fully claim its sovereignty. Even if a state pays tribute to another, as long as its sovereignty is intact it should be considered independent. Conversely, if a state is not bound to a tributary relationship but is forced to rely on another nation to exercise its rights, it is only semi-independent. This is one of the basic rules of international relations.

Our country, Japan, has reflected on the history of the world and established a constitutional government for itself. Its administration has been put in proper order, and its culture is flourishing. Yet, even now, we Japanese are not always free from suffering and shame. This is because our abilities are not sufficiently advanced, nor has the power of our nation yet grown strong enough. For a people, there is no greater source of suffering than poverty. For a nation, there is no greater shame than being insignificant. The suffering and shame felt by the Korean people, still living under monarchical despotism, are familiar to us Japanese. If we can share these same feelings with the Koreans, what could stop us from being their sympathetic allies?

Take a look at the Western nations, by way of comparison. Those who refer to the most powerful nation in today’s world always point to Britain. Britain consists of a union of three countries. Those who refer to the most morally upright government point to the United States of America. The United States is likewise formed of forty-four states [sic]. It is only natural that people hate oppression and love freedom. A Western saying goes, “Freedom is the wind that blows down from the mountains of Germany.” Not surprisingly, Germany
is a constitutional federation as well. The Korean government is like a field of grain eaten by worms and overrun by weeds. It goes without saying that a union (gappō) with our constitutional government will eliminate their accumulated vices and ultimately guarantee the safety of the country and the happiness of its people. A union is achieved through the mutual harmony (kyōwa) of two nations. A union of constitutional governments, in particular, is energized by the sense of honor and superior morality of both parties. Among all forms of government, therefore, nothing is better and more beautiful than a constitutional federation.

Advantages and Disadvantages of a Union

There are those in Japan who would object to a union between their own nation and Korea. They cite many reasons. First, they argue that Korea is poor and weak. Uniting with Korea would mean loss of wealth and prestige for the Japanese. Second, Korean culture remains underdeveloped: its industry has not thrived and the education of its people has failed to advance. To form a union with such a country is akin to making friends with an ignorant person. Third, Korea shares a border with Russia and Qing China. Any union with Korea would result in Japan having to pay for the defense of the border regions. Fourth, leading Korea into a state of enlightenment may well benefit the Koreans but will be a thankless burden for the Japanese. Fifth, Korea is cursed with a harsh and unpredictable climate, prone to droughts, flood and poor harvests. Japan will have to provide relief and rescue operations for these annual disasters once the two countries join together. Sixth, there is at present no political order in Korea, and its government is likely to experience a major upheaval in the immediate future; Japan will end up
being entangled in it once it has merged with Korea. Seventh, Koreans lack the spirit of independence, and uniting with them will introduce elements of weakness into the Japanese character.

While all these critiques contain grains of truth, they ignore the obvious advantages of the union. Although Korea may be poor, it is around half the size of Japan. Its poverty results from the evils of its institutions. After union with Japan removes these drawbacks, Koreans will recover their ability to gain wealth for themselves. Examples from the past of poor nations which have reversed their fortunes are too numerous to mention. We must not allow our current prejudices to discount future possibilities. A nation’s lack of cultural sophistication, as well as the stagnation of industry and education, are all matters subject to change. It was not long ago that we were ourselves pupils of the Korean literati, acquiring from them the knowledge on which our current success is based. For us to lead them toward enlightenment now would be nothing more than returning the favor—an act further justified by the fact that, half of the time, teaching is itself learning. The defense of the Korean territories is not only necessary for their own protection, but also critical for us. If Korea were to be invaded by another nation, we would not stand idly by, even if we had not yet formed a union with them. . . . Again, if the Koreans were to be struck by famine and death by starvation became commonplace, Japan would have to come to their aid, even if no formal union existed. A more rational course would be for Japanese and Koreans to jointly explore means of protecting the latter from natural disasters. Such action will ultimately reduce the cost of relief operations and add to the wealth of both [nations]. It is true that Korea shows signs of rebellion and other political
troubles. However, such difficulties are always man-made. Reforming the political system through a union will result in the natural disappearance of these problems. The lack of a spirit of independence is merely a symptom of living in a small and weak nation. Joining us will make Korea strong and great again. In such circumstances, it is only natural that the spirit of independence will emerge among the Korean people.

A union with Korea will greatly benefit trade relations with Russia and Qing China. This is the first advantage of such a union. Koreans are large-bodied and physically strong. Trained by our military, and taught to use our weapons, they would defend us from the Russian bandits. This is the second advantage. In any case, Japan and Korea are geographically close. There is no good reason for remaining separate from one another. Now, some Japanese have been clamoring for a military expedition to Korea (seikanron). Subjugating Korea through warfare would not only result in the depletion of national strength on our part, but would also give rise to feelings of vengeful resentment by the Koreans. Despite being well aware of this, some continue to advocate this path, afraid that some other nation might occupy Korea in Japan’s stead. The outcome of a peaceful union would be so much more favorable than any military conquest. By means of the grand public act known as a union, we could obtain Korea without employing military means. The Koreans, too, would gain Japan without any fighting. The lives of many soldiers would be spared, with only the glory of a single general diminished. All the resources set aside for war could now be used to develop Korea. Korean resentment would be replaced by a deep feeling of gratitude. How can anyone say that this union would not be beneficial to Japan?
I am not yet aware of Korean opinion regarding a union with Japan. Considering the current state of affairs in Korea, the notion would probably be rejected outright. At one time, the Koreans put up a manifesto in each province stating, “Foreign invaders must be met with armed struggle. Those who advocate peace are traitors.” With an attitude like this, any discussion of a union with a foreign nation is likely to fall on deaf ears. However, the real meaning of these statements is that a foreign enemy must be fought, and a foreign friend given a friendly welcome. Japan is certainly not an enemy of Korea. We have no reason to fight Korea. How could seeking peace with Japan then be regarded as treason? . . . In terms of its climate, the fertility of the soil, the beauty of the landscape and international status, Japan is far superior to Korea. To be united with such a nation can only benefit Koreans. When we consider the standard of government, there is simply no comparison between the two nations. The benefits that would result from the union for the Koreans are too great to enumerate adequately. . . .

Why Qing China Should Form an Alliance with the Eastern Nation
[The United Japan and Korea]

. . . A federation can only work if the participant nations maintain their independence, and their peoples participate equally in the greater government of the united national entity. The union between Japan and Korea must follow this principle. Any union with Qing China should also be nothing less than this. However, in the case of China, this is not feasible. If the Qing court were to form a union with the Eastern Nation [the united Japan and Korea], it must give not only Han Chinese but also Tartars, Mongolians and Tibetans
independent status, so that they can participate in federal politics on an equal basis. . . . Otherwise, the principle of equal participation will be undermined, resulting in movements for secession among the aggrieved parties. In the current situation, it is clear that the present Qing court will never allow the independence of these ethnic groups. Given that this is not the right time to seek union with Qing China, we should proceed to build an alliance (gasshō) with it, in order to defend our dignity against other races. . . .

If Qing China rejects the path of friendship with the Eastern Nation, both parties will fall prey to terrible consequences. Westerners recognize two powerful nations in East Asia: Japan and China. It is fortunate that Japan and China exist in East Asia to maintain the dignity of the Yellow race. Without them, the White race would have violated the whole of Asia and made slaves out of our yellow-skinned brethren, just as they have done with the African blacks. . . . Sadly, the Qing court has been forced to endure intolerable indignities from the British ever since the Opium War. Australia and Canada levy poll taxes on the Chinese upon entry to their ports. And yet the Qing court does not question these practices. It simply defies commonsense: why would the Qing court show such friendliness to the British, an alien race, and such hostility to the Japanese, who belong to the same race as them? . . .

Provided that Qing China comes to share our objective [to liberate Asians from the domination of the white race], then together we can plan the colonization of the islands of the South Pacific, showering the indigenous peoples with the benefits of civilization. Within only a few decades, we will come to form a great federation of the Yellow race. Then, we, the Yellow race—blessed with fertile soil and many times
more numerous than the White race—will become the most formidable force in the world.
Chapter Six

Konoe Atsumaro and the Idea of an Alliance of the Yellow Race, 1898

Urs Matthias Zachmann

In the New Year issue of 1898, the popular magazine Taiyō (The Sun) published a short piece titled “Dō-jinshu dōmei, tsuketari Shina mondai kenkyū no hitsuyō” (An Alliance of the Same Race and the Necessity of Studying the Chinese Question), authored by one of the most illustrious figures of late Meiji society, the president of the House of Peers and principal of the Gakushūin, Prince Konoe Atsumaro (1863–1904). In the first part of this article, Konoe evoked the apocalyptic vision of a final battle between the “white” and the “yellow” races, which the latter—including Japan—could survive only by forming a racial alliance. In the second, much shorter part, Konoe argued for the necessity of gathering intelligence and strengthening personal ties with the political elite in China. Today, the article is celebrated for its idea of a racial alliance and, in fact, has almost assumed canonical status as a text of Japanese Pan-Asianism. However, considering the circumstances of its origin, the immediate reception of the text, and Konoe’s further conduct, it is safe to say that the pragmatic program of the article outlined in the latter part was much more characteristic of (institutional) Japanese Pan-Asianism than the visionary first part of the document.
The international background for Konoe’s text was formed by two major developments—the so-called Triple Intervention of 1895, in which Russia, Germany, and France prevented Japan from annexing the strategically important Liaodong (Liaotung) peninsula as spoils of its victory in the Sino-Japanese War, and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1897–1898, which began with Germany’s occupation of Jiaozhou (Kiaochow) and Russia’s taking possession of Port Arthur (present Lushun) and Dalian (Dairen), the two most important bases on the Liaodong peninsula. These events led to momentary tensions among the Western powers, but the situation was resolved by Britain and France securing their own share of concessions on Chinese soil in 1898. Apart from obtaining a nonalienation commitment for Fujian (Fukien) province, the Japanese government held back in this scramble for concessions and, much to the real or feigned indignation of the opposition, also failed to protest against the Western powers’ rapacious conduct. At the same time, the crisis had the effect of facilitating a rapprochement between China and Japan that, however, the Japanese government, the Foreign Ministry, and the military were intent on keeping on an informal level lest the Western powers should suspect a potentially threatening alliance between China and Japan that, in turn, would jeopardize Japan’s relations with the West and prevent its recognition as a free and equal member of the comity of nations.

Konoe’s was certainly not the only voice among the clamor of protest that, in this situation, called for a racial alliance of Asian nations against the Western powers. However, his was certainly the most prominent and contentious expression of this idea. Despite his young age of thirty-four, Prince Konoe owed his high standing to the illustrious lineage of his family
and his proximity to the emperor. In fact, he was marked out for the premiership by the emperor, a position he would probably have attained had not death intervened at the age of forty. However, in the short time between the publication of this text in 1898 and his death in 1904, Konoe emerged as the leading figure in the Japanese pan-Asianist movement and, later, as the leader of pro-British and anti-Russian activism.

The immediate circumstances of the text can be traced through entries in Konoe’s diary. Thus, on 25 November 1897, shortly after Germany’s occupation of Jiaozhou became known in Japan, Toyabe Sentarō (Shuntei, 1865–1908), an editor of Taiyō, asked Konoe for a contribution to the magazine. On 9 December 1897, Toyabe visited the prince again, and together they drafted the text, Konoe dictating it to Toyabe. At around the same time, in August 1897, Konoe had two conversations that probably provided the intellectual stimulus for the two separate parts of the article. The first of these was with his new secretary, Ōuchi Yōzō (1874–1944), who had just come back from the United States, where he had studied law and politics. During the interview, as Konoe recorded, they talked about the “Eastern Question (Tōhō mondai) and the projects he [Ōuchi] is going to carry out.” Decades later, Ōuchi recalled that, in this interview, he wanted to impress Konoe with the new ideas he had brought back from his studies abroad, especially with the notion of an ultimate racial contest (jinshu kyōsō) between East and West and “race (reesu) antagonism” in the Pacific (Ōuchi 1934: 145). Ōuchi had even written an essay on the subject and wanted to publish it. Curiously enough, Ōuchi recalled that at the time, Konoe had rejected the idea, insisting that there was only a “competition of cultures” and nothing else and even warning Ōuchi that no such thing should be published. There
is always a possibility that Ōuchi fabricated this story after Konoe’s death to take the brunt of the censure that the article elicited from the public, as we shall see; however, if this was not the case, Konoe very quickly changed his mind and published the idea of “race antagonism” under his own name.

Less problematic is the intellectual source of the second part of the article. On 26 November 1897, just a day after Konoe had been asked to write an article for Taiyō, he received a visit from Shiraiwa Ryūhei (1867–1942), a minor railway entrepreneur in China who was a disciple and devoted follower of Arao Sei (Kiyoshi) (see I:4). Shiraiwa had returned a few months earlier from China, where he had observed the political situation and recent attempts at reform. As a China hand more interested in Sino-Japanese economic cooperation in a gradually developing political environment rather than in drastic political reform, Shiraiwa favored working with influential local politicians such as the governor-general of Hubei (Hopei) and Hunan, Zhang Zhidong (Chang Chih-tung, 1837–1909). Thus, it is very likely that the person who, in the second part of Konoe’s text, is described as “somebody who has lately come back from China” and who comments extensively on the Chinese political situation, extolling especially Zhang as China’s hope, is, in fact, Shiraiwa Ryūhei.

The two parts of Konoe’s article met with different responses in Japan. Konoe’s idea of a racial alliance elicited harsh protest. The newly launched magazine Tenchijin (Heaven, Earth, and Man), for example, severely criticized Konoe’s “poetic” but pernicious sentiments in favor of China: rather than elevating China to a superior level of civilization, a racial alliance would invariably drag Japan back into the
quagmire of Oriental stagnation (Tenchijin, 2 February 1898, 7–11). Ōkuma Shigenobu (1838–1922) in the same issue of the magazine derided the concept of a racial alliance as a “stupid idea” (guron) and, instead, strongly argued for an alliance with Britain. Finally, even Taiyō had to concede that the real criterion for alliances was strategy, not race.

However, even more damaging was the article’s reception abroad. Konoe’s thesis became known throughout Europe, and even local German newspapers published accurate accounts of it. For example, Nakamura Shingo (1870–1939), one of Konoe’s most devoted followers who was studying law in Heidelberg at the time, sent Konoe news clippings from local and national newspapers and warned him about the negative impression that his article had created in Europe (Konoe Atsumaro Nikki Kankōkai 1968–1969, 2:47–52). Hence, in Europe, Konoe’s name came to be invariably associated with the idea of an anti-Western racial alliance. For the Japanese government, the attention that the article received as an official statement by one of the most distinguished public figures in Japan seemed so damaging that it saw no other way than to publicly distance itself from Konoe. In Paris, the Japanese minister in France, Kurino Shin’ichirō (1851–1937), publicly declared that Konoe was “well known in Japan for the eccentricity of his political ideas. He is very young, very fanatical, has always sided with the opposition and belongs to the small chauvinist party which is hostile to foreigners. For the very reason of his noble birth and his family ties, the government has always treated him with the utmost respect and he is indeed the President of the House of Peers. However, one should not . . . overestimate his political influence” (Konoe Atsumaro Nikki Kankōkai 1968–1969, 2:49f). Thus, given a choice between slandering
the emperor’s protégé and prospective future prime minister and jeopardizing Japan’s standing with the Western powers, the Japanese government chose the former as the lesser evil.

In addition, Konoe’s text was also circulated in China. A translation appeared under the title “The Theory of a Same-Race Union” (Tongzhong liameng-shuo) in the Shanghai-based newspaper Subao in May 1898. Although the translation on the whole renders Konoe’s arguments faithfully, the translator clearly tried to make it more palatable to Chinese readers. Thus, the most damning remarks on China are glossed over, and China’s difficulties are presented merely as a temporary impasse. Moreover, the deliberate omission in the translation of Zhang Zhidong’s name suggests that the translator was of a different political stripe. In fact, although the Subao was owned by a conservative, its contract authors had nationalist, revolutionary sympathies. How the paper’s Chinese readership reacted to Konoe’s proposition remains unknown.

Konoe soon seemed to have regretted his blunder and repeatedly recanted the idea of a racial alliance. Thus, already during his conversation with the exile Kang Youwei (1858–1927) in November 1898, Konoe made the famous (if somewhat tautological) declaration that “East Asia is the East Asia of East Asia” (Tōyō wa Tōyō no Tōyō nari) but immediately added that this should be understood as a sort of East Asian Monroe Doctrine—that is, in a geostrategic, not racial, sense. (By coincidence, 1898 was also the year of the Spanish-American War, which was seen in Japan as a parallel to the East Asian situation; hence, the Monroe Doctrine would become a catchphrase of Japanese Pan-Asianism; see I:28.) However, even more explicitly, Konoe disavowed his
original idea on the occasion of the founding of the East Asia Common Culture Association (Tōa Dōbunkai), also in November 1898. As president of the new society, Konoe published an essay in the inaugural issue of the society’s organ Tōa Jiron (The East Asian Times) in which he declared, “Today, I no longer claim that, because our empire and China share a common culture and a common race (dōbun dōshu), our empire should volunteer to shoulder China’s fate by itself. I say that we should merely consider our own empire’s destiny, decide an appropriate policy with a sense of urgency, respond to the opportunities and watch the changes around us, act with swift determination and thereby secure the advantages of the moment” (Konoe 1898b: 6).

The newly founded Tōa Dōbunkai (see I:9) adhered closely to Konoe’s new political pragmatism regarding China and concentrated on those objectives that Konoe, probably on Shiraiwa Ryūhei’s advice, had proposed in the second part of his original text—gathering intelligence and creating personal networks with the Chinese elite. In fact, together with Konoe, Shiraiwa had been instrumental in founding one of the society’s predecessors, the Same Culture Society (Dōbunkai), in June 1898 (Reynolds 1989: 224). In this sense, Konoe’s vision of a pragmatic China strategy proved much more durable than his vision of a pan-Asiatic racial alliance.

Source (translation from the Japanese original by Urs Matthias Zachmann)

Konoe Atsumaro, “Dōjinshu Dōmei, Tsuketari Shina Mondai Kenkyū no Hitsuyō” (An alliance of the same race and the necessity of studying the Chinese question). Taiyō, 24:1 (1 January 1898), reprinted in Konoe Atsumaro Nikkī Kankōkai
A Same-Race Alliance and on the Necessity of Studying the Chinese Question

In recent times, our brilliant victory in the [Sino-Japanese] war has made the Japanese proud in their hearts, and their contempt for the Chinese has become more and more extreme. In particular, the Japanese who reside in the various parts of China treat the Chinese with the same attitude as Western people display towards the Chinese. They believe that “Japan is the only civilized country in East Asia, and a more advanced country than China.” Now, it is true that Japan is more advanced than China in that it has established civilized institutions and has a civilized education system. Therefore, it is very well placed to guide China and assist it by means of its advanced civilization. However, if we are mightily pleased with ourselves and boast of being such an advanced country, if we mock the Chinese people and put them to shame and, in return, earn their hostility, apart from the fact that such behavior runs counter to the generosity expected of an advanced country, does it not also create a massive impediment to the advancement of our China policy, and will the trouble this stores up for the future not also be very great? As I see it, in the future East Asia cannot avoid becoming a stage for a contest between the races (jinshu kyōsō no butai). Even if fleeting considerations of foreign policy should produce a different environment, this will yield no more than a temporary result. The final outcome will be a contest between the yellow and white races (kōhaku ryō-jinshu no kyōsō), and in this contest the Chinese people and the Japanese people will be placed in the same position,
being both considered as the sworn enemy of the white race (hakujinshu no kyūteki). Those who are considering a long-term strategy will do well to consider these facts.

If we think about it, the policies of the European powers in recent times have been principally formulated to accomplish the subjugation of other races. Whether it is their strategy in Africa, or the colonization of Australia and the South Seas, or the opening up of South America—all these ventures bear evidence of racial subjugation. However, from the beginning the penetration of the Western powers into these undeveloped areas was characterized by an extreme imbalance of power. Thus, conquest was easy, just like felling a rotten tree or kicking someone who is down. This was almost tantamount to taking over uninhabited territory and does not represent the situation where we could speak of a contest between races. The European powers in this case vied with one another over the extent of their conquests and occupations, without investing much effort into subjugating the natives. Consequently, any such contest must be seen as one between the powers themselves, originating in European politics, rather than as a contest between races. This is the situation today. However, the position of the [Western] powers regarding the yellow race differs significantly from their attitude towards other undeveloped countries. On the one hand, they look down upon the countries of the yellow race, but at the same time they are deeply suspicious of the yellow race. In particular, seeing the prowess of the Japanese in the Sino-Japanese war, they have suddenly come to realize the difficulties of continuing to look down upon the yellow race, and, on the contrary, they are even showing signs that they fear it very much. In terms of material civilization, the yellow race is still lagging far behind the European powers and can,
of course, in no way compete with them on this point. However, when it comes to the question of superiority in physical power and mental ability, this point cannot be so easily decided. After all, this is what the Europeans frequently say, too. Therefore, there is simply no way that the [Western] powers can confront the countries of the yellow race with the same attitudes they display when subjugating other undeveloped regions.

Some people say that the time for the partition of China (Shina bunkatsu) has come. Whether or not the [Western] powers intend to divide up China is a separate question which I will not discuss here. However, even if we assume that the danger of a partition of China is not immediately pressing, I believe that the process has already been set in motion and all the countries of the yellow race must set themselves to devise a strategy for the protection of their race. In other undeveloped regions, the [European] powers do not need to form alliances in response to racial competition, but in China they cannot exercise their powers as freely as they would in other undeveloped regions. Each power can easily subjugate such regions using no more than its own resources. However, if any country wished to subjugate China on its own, this would no doubt be much less easy than taking over some uninhabited territory. Therefore, the day on which the division of China becomes a reality will be the moment when an alliance between the [Western] powers comes into existence. The moment these powers form an alliance and divide up China, the final contest between the yellow and white races will have begun and, in this final confrontation, will the Japanese alone be able stay outside this dramatic struggle of racial competition?
I grieve at the frivolousness of the Japanese who, in unison with the Europeans, recklessly strike up the tune of China’s demise (midari ni Ōshūjin to gassō shite Shina bōkoku o utau keifu). In principle, the fate of the government in Beijing need not unduly trouble the Japanese. However, the survival of the Chinese is certainly not somebody else’s business, and touches on the vital interests of the Japanese. Therefore, the Japanese must make it a habit to treat the Chinese in a friendly manner, advance their progress through offers of help and guidance, concentrate on promoting their development and thus find ways of dispelling their suspicions and allaying their hostility as much as possible. Then the Chinese, too, will gradually draw closer to us and will find a heart to trust us, and in the process, I predict, an unspoken contract about the protection of [our] race will come to bind the two peoples.

A person who has recently returned from China told me: “As always, the government in Beijing stubbornly persists in its ignorance, and its hubris and conceit have not changed at all since former times. Not only has it not learnt from its defeat and shows no indication of reforming the civil and military systems, but, not yet having awakened from the old dream of China as the center of the world, apparently it is also oblivious to the danger which the state presently faces. However, powerful people outside Beijing have finally seen through the machinations of the tripartite alliance [sangoku dōmei; i.e., Russia, Germany, and France] and see that the retrocession of Liaodong has brought even greater misfortune for their country. The willingness of the Beijing government to fulfill the demands of Russia without the slightest resistance causes them no small grief. Zhang Zhidong is among those who are most unhappy about the situation. He is most intent on reforming China and talks about again setting
up a partisan newspaper to alert the government and the people to what is happening [Zhang Zhidong financed the founding of the reformist newspaper Shiwubao in Shanghai]. His influence, too, is not to be underestimated. However, people living around Shanghai especially fear the ambition of the three powers, and their affinity with the Japanese grows stronger by the day.” I believe that what this person says is not far from the truth. After all, this is what I foresaw as the inevitable course that matters would take a long time ago.

Therefore the Japanese now must take care about their response and determine a long-term policy through careful attention to the true nature of the Chinese Question (Shina mondai). They absolutely must not yield to the persuasions of the great powers and as a result lightly decide to turn their back on China. The important task today is, first of all, to study the Chinese Question. If we want to take this task seriously, all of us—whether politicians or other interested parties (yūshika)—should visit China, mingle with the country’s elite and so reconcile the differences between the two countries. Or people should observe the customs and beliefs [of the people in general] while exploring the interior and thereby learn to understand the Chinese and conditions in China. It is not unusual for Japanese to visit Europe and become knowledgeable in European affairs, but scarcely anyone visits China to become well-informed in Chinese matters. Now, attempting to solve the Chinese problem without a proper knowledge of China would be extremely dangerous. Given this situation, how could I be free of concerns for the future?
Chapter Seven

Okakura Tenshin: “Asia Is One,” 1903

Brij Tankha

Okakura Tenshin’s (1863–1913, also known as Kakuzō) writings represent an early attempt to search for and define Japan’s past. Asia, for Okakura, becomes the frame that represents the colonial order, and Japan’s successful transition to modernity points the way for the liberation of Asia. Okakura’s explorations do not present a tightly articulated agenda but partake of the ambiguities and contradictions inherent in the situation he faced. His contribution lies not only in defining the artistic heritage of Japan and linking Asia through Buddhism and art but also in laying the boundaries of what it means to be Japanese. In effect, even as Okakura talked of a common Asia, he was, through a shared aesthetic past anchored in Buddhism, as well as through the progress of Japanese history, identifying the intellectual inheritances and heroes that created modern Japan. His analysis of Japanese and Asian history contributed to the intellectual discourse and became the core of ideas subsumed under the rubric of Pan-Asianism that played and continue to play a vital role in shaping the way the Japanese define themselves and their relationship to the Asian region.
In 1873, Okakura entered the Kaisei Gakkō (after 1877, Tokyo Imperial University), where, in addition to Western philosophy and foreign languages, he also pursued his interests in Chinese philosophy and Japanese art, in which Ernest Fenollosa (1853–1908) played an important role. After graduating in 1880, he joined the Ministry of Education, where he established his power and influence in crafting the government’s art policies.

In his capacity as a Ministry of Education official, Okakura undertook many trips to identify and catalog Japanese art, a process that helped in identifying “national treasures.” In the 1890s, he traveled to China, where he carried out extensive surveys of Chinese art and wrote widely on Chinese culture.

Back in Japan, Okakura was appointed as the head of the Tokyo Fine Arts Academy (Tokyo Bijutsu Gakkō) in 1890 as well as the head of the art section in the Tokyo Imperial Museum. Meanwhile, he and Fenollosa launched the art history journal Kokka (State Flower). By the age of twenty-seven, Okakura had reached a powerful position in which he shaped government policy and played a crucial role in contributing to the formation of wider intellectual debates. The books, in English, that brought him an international reputation were written after he resigned from his position at the Academy in 1898. The notes for The Awakening of the East were written in English during Okakura’s stay in India (December 1901–October 1902). It was a powerful indictment of Western imperialism and the “White Peril” (hakka), but by the time it was published in Japanese in 1940, the intellectual climate had changed, and Okakura’s ideas were used in ways that may have been contrary to his intentions.
Okakura Tenshin’s cultural critique of Western civilization found its expression both in the books he wrote in English (The Awakening of the East, The Ideals of the East, and The Awakening of Japan) and in his activities as an art historian and art administrator. These need to be placed in the context of contemporary Japanese writing, as they are part of a process of creating a body of professional knowledge to establish Japanese credentials in the West, a process supported by the state. In this process, Okakura was but one of many Japanese who traveled abroad, not only to Europe but also to Asia, to trace the roots of Japanese culture and to establish a firm academic basis to identify the lineaments of this culture and the basis for its superiority and its equivalence with the West. These writings also served to “explain” Japan to the outside world. It is significant that Okakura’s English books were written mostly during or shortly after his trip to India, but his long stay in the United States did not lead to any major publication in English.

Okakura, famous for his proclamation that “Asia is one,” distinguishes between the Orient and Asia, as can be seen in source 1 here. The Orient for him represented all that was backward and decayed, namely, India and China, while Japan was developed and Asiatic. How did he explain Japan’s strength and the reasons why it alone could represent Asia? For him, Japan was historically uniquely placed, for it represented the best in Asian civilization, as Japan’s “Indo-Tartaric blood was itself a heritage which qualified it to imbibe from two sources, and so mirrors the whole of Asian consciousness” (Okakura 1920: 4–5).

Okakura also argued that Japan’s unique position derived from its Imperial house and its unbroken lineage. These two
elements, the Imperial House and a protected insularity, allowed Japan to preserve the traditions of Asia and made Japan into a “museum of Asiatic civilisation” (Okakura 1920: 7). But what made Japan strong was the “expenditure of thought” that it had spent in assimilating ideas and culture from other parts of Asia. This experience, more than anything else, had given Japan an intellectual strength that allowed it to “face the terrible exigencies of modern existence.” A similar sentiment was voiced by the Nobel Prize for Literature laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), who saw Japan’s strength in its aesthetic discipline.

Japan, because it has preserved its independence and is the repository of Asian culture, has, he argued, a responsibility to lead Asia. “The task of Asia today,” he wrote, “then becomes that of protecting and restoring Asiatic modes. But to do this she must successfully recognize and develop consciousness of these modes” (Okakura 1920: 224). This was the task of developing the modes of Asian consciousness that Okakura set for himself. He sought to make of himself a “man who can ponder and dream at pleasure—a highly cultivated man” (Okakura 1981: 184). He defines these modes in the following manner: for India, the religious life is the essence of nationality, China is a moral civilization, and Japan has the spiritual purity of the sword soul. He wrote that “in our history lies the secret of our future” (Okakura 1920: 131). Asia having been equated with Japan, it became the destiny of Japan to formulate the program for defining Asiatic modes of consciousness, identifying the essential characteristics of each part of the Orient, and integrating these within the framework of Japan.
Even though he titled his book Ideals of the East, Okakura was in search of what he defined as reality, for even as Asia needed to return to its traditions, these modes of consciousness could be developed only through an understanding of the actual. He wrote, “We have wandered among ideals, let us awaken once more to the actual” (Okakura 1940a: 131). Opposition, therefore, had to be based on an understanding of the power of the Western countries.

How is one to understand the power of European civilization and its hold over the world? Okakura saw this as the central question around which Asia can be reborn. European civilization, he argued, despite its powerful position in the world, was based on narrow principles and so was in a historically inferior position. Yet, despite this inferiority, it had emerged as a powerful force, and this was because of nationalism. The lack of sufficient land in Europe, Okakura argued, had led to the development of a very strong sense of nationality that allowed the Europeans to overrun the East. Further, he asserted, Asian civilization was one of tolerance, but this tolerance proved a weakness, as it prevented effective resistance to Western aggression (Okakura 1940a: 157–58).

Western countries established their superiority so that “steam and electricity in encircling the globe impose the London tailor and the Paris milliner in every continent,—symbolic of the single garment which their genius of combination weaves for all their race” (Okakura 1940a: 137), but mutual isolation has prevented Asian countries from comprehending their common plight. “It’s wonderful how little we know of each other,” he writes (Okakura 1940a: 144). Asia derives its knowledge today from European sources so that “a Fifth Avenue scandal causes greater excitement amongst us then a
rebellion in Honan, a Boulevard accident a deeper emotion than the defeat of Arabi Bey.”

It is, he argues, European technology that allows the unification of the nation-state and asserts that “their very language, in which I am enabled to appeal to you, that signifies the unification of the east” (Okakura 1940a: 160). How did he see the regeneration of Asia? The importance of national strength for Japan’s successful modernization is often stressed as underlying his thinking, but in the Awakening of the East, even though it was a poetic ode to the nation, written under the spell of the radical nationalism then prevalent in Calcutta, he underlined that each nation must develop its strength through an understanding of its history and culture and that this will provide the basis for a pan-Asian alliance. Japanese leadership was not the crucial element. The essential factor was individual national strength and strength defined not in military or even economic terms but in culture and ideas, what today would be called soft power. The idea that the nation was a powerful force able to resist colonial domination and patriotism took on a different coloring in the Japanese environment as Japan’s empire expanded, but at the time Okakura was writing, the revival of national strength was the main aim of independence movements fighting colonial rule (see the source reproduced here).

Okakura Tenshin died in 1913, and the way his writings were used later has come to color interpretations of Okakura’s thought, but Okakura can hardly be blamed if the Patriotic Association for Japanese Literature (Nihon Bungaku Hōkokukai) used his phrase “Asia is one” to commemorate 8 December 1941, the day of the Pearl Harbor attack (Kaneko 2002: 1).
Some scholars have accused Okakura of espousing a vision of Asia within Japan’s imperial project, but they have done so only by glossing over his call for resistance to the West, a call that was for preserving, sustaining, and developing alternative modes of conceptualizing the world based on an awareness of cultural and philosophical traditions. Okakura’s project carried the ambiguities and limitations of his time, but it would be wrong to dismiss it merely as a justification for Japanese leadership (and domination) of Asia. Orientalism and Western colonialism often seem to be given an absolute power that molds and shapes all debates, but Okakura’s writings and his engagement with Indian nationalists point to the importance of another circuit of engagement.

Source 1 (English in the original)

Okakura Kakuzō [Tenshin], Ideals of the East with Special Reference to the Art of Japan, London: J. Murray, 1920 (originally published in 1903), 1–5, 16.

Asia is one. The Himalayas divide, only to accentuate, two mighty civilisations, the Chinese with its communism of Confucius, and the Indian with its individualism of the Vedas. But not even the snowy barriers can interrupt for one moment that broad expanse of love for the Ultimate and Universal, which is the common thought-inheritance of every Asiatic race, enabling them to produce all the great religions of the world, and distinguishing them from those maritime peoples of the Mediterranean and the Baltic, who love to dwell on the particular, and to search out the means, not the end, of life. . .
For if Asia be one, it is also true that the Asiatic races form a single mighty web. We forget, in an age of classification, that types are after all but shining points of distinction in an ocean of approximations, false gods deliberately set up to be worshipped, for the sake of mental convenience, but having no more ultimate or mutually exclusive validity than the separate existence of two inter-changeable sciences. . . . Arab chivalry, Persian poetry, Chinese ethics and Indian thought, all speak of a single Asiatic peace, in which there grew up a common life, bearing in different regions different characteristic blossoms, but nowhere capable of a hard and fast dividing line. Islam itself may be described as Confucianism on horseback, sword in hand.

Or, to turn again to Eastern Asia from the West, Buddhism—that great ocean of idealism, in which merge all the river systems of eastern Asiatic thought—is not coloured only by the pure water of the Ganges, for the Tartaric nations that joined it made their genius tributary, bringing new symbolism, new organisation, new powers of devotion, to add to the treasures of the Faith.

It has been, however, the great privilege of Japan to realize this unity-in-complexity with a special clearness. The Indo-Tartaric blood of this race was in itself a heritage which qualified it to imbibe from the two sources, and so mirrors the whole consciousness. The unique blessing of unbroken sovereignty, the proud self-reliance of an unconquered race, and the insular isolation which protected ancestral ideas and instincts at the cost of expansion, made Japan the real repository of the trust of Asiatic thought and culture. . . .

Source 2 (English in the original)

Great was the difficulty involved in the struggle for a national reawakening, a still harder task confronted Japan in her effort to bring an Oriental nation to face the terrible exigencies of modern existence. Until the moment we shook off it off, the same lethargy lay upon us which now lies on China and India. Over our country brooded the Night of Asia, enveloping all spontaneity within its mysterious folds. Intellectual activity and social progress became stifled in the atmosphere of apathy. Religion could but soothe, not cure, the suffering of the wounded soul. The weight of our burden can never be understood without a knowledge of the dark background from which we emerged to the light. . . .

Since the earliest dawn of history our national patriotism and devotion to the Mikado shows a consistent tenacity of ancient ideals, while the fact that we have preserved the arts and customs of ancient China and India long after they have become lost in the lands of their birth is sufficient testimony to our reverence for traditions. . . .

The expenditure of thought involved in synthesizing the different elements of Asiatic culture has given Japanese philosophy and art a freedom and virility unknown in India and China. It is thus due to past training that we are able to comprehend and appreciate more easily than our neighbours those elements of Western civilization which it is desirable that we should acquire.

Source 3 (English in the original)

Brothers and sisters of Asia!

We have wandered long amongst ideals, let us awaken once more to the actual. We have drifted on the river of apathy, let us land once more on the cruel shore of reality. We have isolated ourselves from one another, in pride of a crystalline, containedness. Let us dissolve ourselves now in the ocean of common misery. The guilty conscience of the West has often conjured up the spectre of a Yellow Peril, let the tranquil gaze of the east turn itself on the White Disaster. I call you not to violence but to manhood. I call you not to aggression but to self consciousness. . . .

They speak much of Chinese diplomacy,—woe to the nation that has to rely on its tongue, not the sword. They speak much of Indian subtlety,—woe to the nation that has to mask its thought in words, instead of casing the body in mail. They speak of Arabian faith,—woe to the nation that waits for providence and marches not with God. . . .

The imitation and worship of Europe has at last become our natural regime. The gilded youths of Calcutta or Tokio who flaunt the newest London fashions with all the sadness of the ridiculous, are only an expression of the pervading idea. They seek in dress that protective colouring which our fashionable scholars seek in the borrowed phrases of modern philosophy. Sanskrit is barbarous if not Germanic, the Taj a blot if not Italian. . . . Gowri-Shankar did not exist till Everest
discovered the Himalayas. Tibet was a myth before Landor invented Lhasa’ . . .

Shameful as it is our impression of neighbouring countries is mostly derived form European sources, and are naturally coloured with their interpretation, if not indeed intentionally distorted . . . , above all the exuberant imagination of the literary traveller clothe the east in colours bizarre in their abomination, absurd in their inhumanity . . .

But what does the West know of the East? The Europeans claim to oriental scholarship is shadows indeed! Who in Oxford or Heidelberg can compete with a second rate pundit in his knowledge of Brahmanical lore? Who of Berlin or Sorbonne can compare with a third-rate mandarin in his grasp of Confucian classics? . . .

Each nation must seek within itself the seed of its regeneration. The Pan-Asiatic Alliance is in itself an immense force but the individual factors must feel their own strength. . . . History must be written so presenting our past glories and our present woes that every student shall burn with the longing to avenge and save. Songs must be sung by the people through which the cry of shame and revolt may rise . . . The spell of white prestige must be completely broken that we may learn our own possibilities and resources. . . .