

THE DREAM OF ONE ASIA: ŌKAWA SHŪMEI AND JAPANESE PAN-ASIANISM

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This paper examines the career and views of Ōkawa Shūmei, political activist, best-selling writer, and advocate of Japan's divine mission on the Asian continent. Though, in its most obvious manifestations, this pan-Asian mission came to an end with Japan's defeat in the Second World War, Ōkawa's quest for uniquely Asian values, which was an integral part of this mission, appears still to have adherents in Japan today. Take, for example, the declaration, which, in 1994, the then Prime Minister Hosokawa Morihiro made to his Chinese counterpart Li Peng. "The Western concept of human rights," he asserted, "should not be blindly applied to all nations."¹ If Ōkawa were alive today, he no doubt would have approved of this statement made by the grandson of his two prominent pan-Asianist contemporaries, Marquis Hosokawa Moritatsu and Prince Konoë Fumimaro. After all, he dedicated his life to proving this proposition in a more explicit form, namely, that Western values of democracy, equality, and human rights do not apply to Asia. This fierce opposition to Western values, as I shall argue below, constituted the essence of Ōkawa's dream of one Asia.

At first sight, Ōkawa is difficult to classify. He was a man of seeming contradictions, a paradox. Though he clearly belonged in the right wing camp, he nevertheless sympathized with Bolshevik Russia and admired Lenin.² Though he denounced democracy, he was on friendly terms with Yoshino Sakuzō, the most influential proponent of democracy in Japan.³

¹ "Looking Casual, Japan's Prime Minister Flies Home," *New York Times*, 22 March 1994, A6. The recent dialogue between Japanese novelist-turned-politician Ishihara Shintarō and the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamad, indicates that the Japanese form of pan-Asianism has supporters also outside Japan; see Mahathir Mohamad and Ishihara Shintarō, "No" to *ieru Ajia* (Tōkyō: Kōbunsha, 1994).

² See, for example, his glowing account of the Bolsheviks in chapter 7 of Ōkawa Shūmei, *Fukkō Ajia no shomondai* (Tōkyō: Chūō Kōronsha, 1993), 162–79; also *Nihonteki genkō*, in vol. 1 of Ōkawa Shūmei zenshū kankōkai, ed., *Ōkawa Shūmei zenshū* (Tōkyō: Iwasaki Shoten, 1961; hereafter OSZ), 384.

³ See letter from Yoshino to Ōkawa, dated 7 July 1926, reproduced in Ōtsuka Takehiro, *Ōkawa Shūmei* (Tōkyō: Chūō Kōronsha, 1995), 97.

He ardently supported the imperial institution,⁴ but his best-selling books were censored for lese majesty.⁵ He professed utter contempt for the *narikin* (*nouveaux riches*) businessmen of Taishō Japan, while accepting financial support from one of the most notorious of these *narikin*, Ishihara Hiroichirō.⁶ He was implicated in the terrorist incidents of the thirties, yet remained on friendly terms with Count Makino Nobuaki, whom this terror aimed to dislodge from power.⁷ It would be tedious to multiply such contradictions, but they certainly have deterred historians from tackling him.⁸

Historians have largely neglected to study Ōkawa but they agree that he was a pan-Asianist and a radical. Ōkawa owes his reputation as a pan-Asianist to his research activities and his writings. He owes his reputation as a radical to his membership in right wing organizations, his prison sentence, and his arraignment as a class A war criminal. To both he also owes his neglect by historians, who tend to avoid these two troublesome, yet seemingly related themes.

The neglect suffered by Ōkawa is curious when one considers that his one-time pan-Asianist partner Kita Ikki basks in the spotlight of academic attention. Kita Ikki's charisma, his socialist views, and his execution for his involvement in the February 26, 1936, putsch made him a popular figure for both the right and left wing after the war. Perhaps as a result, he has been the subject of many studies in both Japanese and English. Yet Ki-

⁴ For example, see *Nihon oyobi Nihonjin no michi*, vol. 1, OSZ, 49–52; see also Furu-ya Tetsuo, "Nihon fuashizumu ron," vol. 20 of *Iwanami kōza Nihon rekishi* (Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 1976), 89.

⁵ Ōtsuka, *Ōkawa*, 140.

⁶ On the connection between Ōkawa and Ishihara, see Awaya Kentarō et al., *Ishihara Hiroichirō kankai monjo* (Tōkyō: Kashiwa Shobō, 1994) vol. 1, 302.

⁷ Itō Takashi, ed., *Makino Nobuaki nikki* (Tōkyō: Chūō Kōronsha, 1991), entries for 10 July 1924, 146; 13 July 1924, 147; and 27 February 1931, 431; see also, for example, Hashikawa Bunsō, "Kaisetsu," in *Ōkawa Shūmei shū*, ed., Hashikawa Bunsō, vol. 21 of *Kindai Nihon shisō taikai* (Tōkyō: Chikuma Shobō, 1982), 430 (hereafter *Ōkawa Shūmei shū*).

⁸ There are signs that this situation is changing, at least, in Japan. In this connection, the two recent books by Ōtsuka Takehiro must be mentioned: *Ōkawa Shūmei to kindai Nihon* (Tōkyō: Mokutakusha, 1990), and *Ōkawa Shūmei* (Tōkyō: Chūō Kōronsha, 1995). In English there is Mary Esthes Liebermann, "Ōkawa Shūmei and Japan's 'Divine Mission,'" Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1956, and two articles, one by Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Ōkawa Shūmei: Profile of Asian Minded Man," *The Developing Economies* 7, no. 3 (September 1969) (hereafter "Profile"), the other by George M. Wilson, "Kita Ikki, Ōkawa Shūmei and the Yūzonsha: A Study in the Genesis of Shōwa Nationalism," *Papers on Japan* 2, East Asian Research Center, Harvard University (August 1963). These, and scattered references to him in passing, represent the sum-total of the scholarship on Ōkawa in English.

ta's postwar reputation tends to exaggerate his actual prewar influence. Before the war most of his books were banned and those that were not were usually out of print. Consequently, few readers had access to them. Kita, moreover, never held an official position of any kind; he never taught at a university; he never even graduated from one. His much vaunted influence in the army was limited to "simple, junior grade officers, ignorant of social realities."⁹

Quite the opposite with Ōkawa. The near-oblivion he has been consigned to after the war downplays his prewar importance. Ōkawa wrote influential best-sellers; he received a doctorate from the Faculty of Law, Tōkyō Imperial University; he taught at prestigious universities; he headed the highly regarded research institute of the Southern Manchurian Railway; he had connections to leading politicians (e.g., Viscount Gotō Shinpei),¹⁰ the highest nobility (e.g., Marquis Tokugawa Yoshichika),¹¹ the Imperial Court (e.g., Count Makino Nobuaki), the highest ranks of the army (e.g., Nagata Tetsuzan, Tōjō Hideki);¹² Colonel Hashimoto Kingorō and other officers in the Sakurakai (Cherry Society) regarded him practically as their ideologue in residence.¹³ Ōkawa rather than Kita provided a blueprint (or at least an inspiration) for the military architects of the annexation of Manchuria. Already in 1926, for example, Ōkawa argued for the necessity of creating an independent Manchuria-Mongolia before an audience consisting of Itagaki Seishirō, Nagata Tetsuzan, Tōjō Hideki, Anami Korechika, and several other mid-ranking staff officers.¹⁴ In contrast to postwar historians, his contemporaries felt no doubt as to the greatness of Ōkawa's achievements. Even after Japan's defeat, senior Japanese foreign ministry officials believed "he was the most eminent theoretician and greatest expert on Anglo-American aggression of all the accused [at the Tōkyō Tribunal]." Since he was "no man to succumb to

⁹ Tanaka Ryūkichi, *Nihon gunbatsu antōshi* (Tōkyō: Chūō Kōronsha, 1988), 25; on Kita, see George M. Wilson, *Radical Nationalist in Japan, Kita Ikki, 1883–1937* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969).

¹⁰ "Ōkawa Shūmei ryakuden," OSZ, vol. 1, 5; see also Ōtsuka, *Ōkawa*, 115.

¹¹ See Tokugawa Yoshichika, *Saigo no tonosama: Tokugawa Yoshichika den* (Tōkyō: Kōdansha, 1973), 122–67; also Otabe Yūji, *Tokugawa Yoshichika no jūgonen sensō* (Tōkyō: Aoki Shoten, 1988), especially chap. 3.

¹² See, for example, Tanaka, *Nihon gunbatsu antōshi*, 25.

¹³ On some aspects of Colonel Hashimoto's close friendship with Ōkawa, see, for example, Ōkawa Shūmei Kenshōkai, ed., *Ōkawa Shūmei nikki: Meiji 36 nen Shōwa 24 nen* (Tōkyō: Iwasaki Gakujutsu Shuppansha, 1986) (hereafter *Ōkawa nikki*), entries for 10 and 11 August 1922, 125–26 (It seems the two were on such friendly terms that they even went to brothels together.); see also a popular account in Matsumoto Seichō, "Sakurakai no yabō," vol. 4 of *Shōwashi hakkutsu* (Tōkyō: Bungei Shunjū, 1994), 102–3.

¹⁴ Hata Ikuhiko, *Shōwa no gunjintachi* (Tōkyō: Bungei shunjū, 1982), 93.

mental illness," they informed the young son of Marquis Hosokawa, "Americans poisoned him out of fear of the power of his arguments."¹⁵

Ōkawa was born in 1886 in Sakata, Yamagata Prefecture, son of a doctor. As a young boy, he received an education typical of a member of the local elite. In addition to the usual curriculum, he studied Chinese classics and modern foreign languages. Like so many other young middle-class Japanese in the Meiji period, Ōkawa came into contact with Christianity.¹⁶ Though he never became a Christian—he found the church hypocritical—Ōkawa was impressed by the universalistic claims of Christianity. It was probably as a result of this fleeting encounter with Western religion that Ōkawa developed a desire to discover a set of Asian values that would match the universalism of Christianity.

In search of some great universal truth, Ōkawa, as a middle school student, flirted for a while with the socialism of Kōtoku Shūsui¹⁷ but he rejected it, angered by the socialists' pacifist stance during the Russo-Japanese War. He found the universalism of socialism, as he had found the universalism of Christianity, too Western for his taste. Instead, he would dedicate his life to the quest for a Japanese, that is, an Asian alternative to the universalistic values of the West. For that reason, when, after graduating from the prestigious Fifth Higher School in Kumamoto, Ōkawa entered Tōkyō Imperial University, he did not enroll at the Faculty of Law as most ambitious young men would have done in his place. Instead, he chose to read Oriental philosophy and religion at the Faculty of Letters with Anesaki Masaharu, the famous historian of religion. It was at the Faculty of Letters that he acquired a theoretical foundation for his already pronounced pan-Asianist sentiments when attending the lectures of the well-known art historian and author, Okakura Kakuzō (Tenshin), one of the precursors of Japanese pan-Asianism.¹⁸

After graduating from the university in 1911, Ōkawa continued his study of Asian, and especially Indian, philosophy as an independent scholar. But his interest shifted to current affairs in 1913 when, by chance,

¹⁵ Hosokawa Morisada, *Hosokawa nikki*, vol. 2 (Tōkyō: Chūō Kōronsha, 1993), 479 (199), entry for 23 May 1946.

¹⁶ *Anraku no mon*, vol. 1 of OSZ, 773–74.

¹⁷ Like Kita Ikki, Ōkawa subscribed to the anarchist *Heimin Shinbun* as a middle school student. Immediately after graduating from middle school and before he entered the Fifth Higher School, Ōkawa spent some time in Tōkyō where he attended lectures by Kōtoku Shūsui, Sakai Toshihiko, Abe Isoo, and other socialists and anarchists. Details of Ōkawa's early interest in socialism, in Ōtsuka, *Ōkawa Shūmei to kindai Nihon*, 22–24.

¹⁸ On Okakura Tenshin and his significance, see, for example, Umehara Takeshi, ed., *Okakura Tenshin shū*, vol. 7 of *Kindai Nihon shisō taikai* (Tōkyō: Chikuma Shobō, 1976), 378–412.

in a second-hand book store, he came across Sir Henry Cotton's New India. That book made him realize "the tragedy of India under British rule"¹⁹ and, as he recalls in his autobiography, transformed him "from a complete cosmopolitan (*sekaijin*) into an Asianist."²⁰

The transformed Ōkawa sought out the company of like-minded men. One of them was the right wing pan-Asianist journalist Mitsukawa Kame-tarō, who introduced Ōkawa to Kita Ikki. By 1920 the three pan-Asianists were active in the Yūzonsha, an organization, founded a year before by Mitsukawa and Ōkawa, and dedicated to domestic reform, the liberation of Asia, and discovery of an Asian, or more specifically a Japanese, alternative to Western universalistic values.²¹ To this end, the Yūzonsha published a monthly journal, *Otakebi*, with Ōkawa as a major contributor. But, though Ōkawa and Kita may have agreed on the importance of Japan's mission in Asia, their personalities were quite incompatible. They quarreled and, by 1923, the Yūzonsha had disintegrated without any concrete achievement.²²

Ōkawa, however, remained in the mainstream of Japan's right wing movement and pursued his quest for uniquely Asian values. He was a principal figure in two right wing organizations, the Gyōchisha (after 1925) and the Jinmukai (after 1931). He wrote editorials and articles for the Gyōchisha's monthly *Nihon*. But his writing for that periodical constituted only a small fraction of his literary output. Throughout the twenties and the thirties, Ōkawa published several popular books and essays on Asian and Japanese history, politics, and culture, in which he propounded the uniqueness of Japan and Asia. With these publications, he had established himself, by the late 1920s, as a leading rightist theoretician of his day. Nor did his success as a popular writer prevent him from pursuing an impressive professional and academic career.

In 1919 Ōkawa entered the research institute of the South Manchurian Railway, which in interwar Japan played an important role in gathering and analyzing information on Asia.²³ In 1927 Ōkawa was appointed director of the (now independent) institute and editor of its monthly publication, *Tōa*, which, under his editorship, served as a forum for pan-Asian ideas.

¹⁹ *Anraku no mon*, 788–89; Nojima Yoshiaki, *Ōkawa Shūmei* (Tōkyō: Shinjinbutsu Ōraisha, 1972), 47.

²⁰ *Anraku no mon*, 804.

²¹ Takeuchi, "Profile," 368–69.

²² For a sympathetic account of the Yūzonsha, see Doi Tadashi, "Taishō ishin no yakata: Yūzonsha no hitobito," *Shinseiryoku* 23, no. 6, (15 August 1979): 20–28; in English see Wilson's "Kita Ikki, Ōkawa Shūmei and the Yūzonsha."

²³ Unless otherwise stated, the following paragraphs are based on Ōtsuka, *Ōkawa*.

In 1921 Ōkawa's appointment as a professor at Takushoku Daigaku (Colonial University) launched his formal academic career that would continue intermittently until 1945.²⁴ Concurrently with his professorship, Ōkawa also cooperated in running a private center for the study of social education, Shakai Kyōiku Kenkyūjo (later known as Daigakuryō), housed within the grounds of the Imperial Palace. In 1926, he crowned his academic career with a doctorate from the Law Faculty of Tōkyō Imperial University for a dissertation on the origins and development of chartered colonial companies in the West.²⁵

At the same time Ōkawa managed to reconcile his theoretical academic pursuits with more "applied," active political involvement on behalf of pan-Asianist ideals. In the numerous public lectures he delivered throughout Japan in the late 1920s, Ōkawa advocated Japanese military expansion in China and castigated the Minseitō government for its intention to sign the London Naval Treaty that imposed limitations on the build-up of Japan's imperial navy.²⁶

Ōkawa followed his words with deeds. He participated in an abortive coup d'état in 1931, known as the March Incident, and, in May 1932, he aided and abetted the assassination of Premier Inukai Tsuyoshi by providing the plotters with "guns, ammunition, and a certain amount of money."²⁷ Though he received a fifteen-year prison sentence for his role in the assassination, he actually spent only sixteen months in prison.²⁸ Ōkawa certainly was no exception to the judicial tolerance which Japanese rightists enjoyed in the early thirties.²⁹

Far from harming his career, his criminal record even improved

²⁴ Ōkawa owed his first academic job to Viscount Gotō Shinpei, President of Takushoku University, "Ōkawa Shūmei ryakuden," vol. 1 of OSZ, 5.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁶ Hashikawa Bunsō, *Chōkokkashugi* (Tōkyō: Chikuma Shobō, 1964), 369.

²⁷ "Jiken jinmon chōsho," in *Ōkawa Shūmei shū*, 348.

²⁸ Ōkawa was initially sentenced to 15 years in prison (on 3 February 1934). On appeal, this term was leniently reduced to five years (24 October 1935). The authorities' generosity did not stop there, and Ōkawa was allowed to choose when he would start serving his sentence. He remained free for another six months, entering Tama Prison only on 16 June 1936. But he was not left there for very long. Due to efforts by Marquis Tokugawa and Shimizu Kōnosuke, he was released on parole on 13 October 1937. Ōtsuka, *Ōkawa Shūmei to kindai Nihon*, 220, Ōtsuka, *Ōkawa*, 160.

²⁹ Between 1920 and 1935 three Japanese prime ministers were assassinated: Hara Takashi (1921), Hamaguchi Osachi (shot 1930, died the following year as a result of the inflicted wounds) and Inukai Tsuyoshi (1932). None of the assassins nor their instigators received capital punishment and most emerged from prison relatively quickly, thanks to various amnesties, as did the assassins of Inoue Junnosuke and Dan Takuma.

Ōkawa's professional standing. In October 1937, that is, immediately after he had come out of prison, he became dean of colonial studies at Hōsei, one of Tōkyō's most prestigious private universities. He wrote more best-selling books, such as *Nihon 2600-nen shi* (1939). And he even began to play a minor role as a behind-the-scenes political broker. He enjoyed direct access to several cabinet ministers and occasionally even prime ministers required his services.³⁰ He was the moving spirit behind the Japanese government's bizarre and ultimately unsuccessful scheme to improve American-Japanese relations by obtaining American capital for investment in China (1939–40).³¹

After Japan's defeat, his connections with high-ranking government officials as well as with the radical Right led to his indictment as a class A war criminal, but he avoided a trial for reasons of mental incompetence. Diagnosed with syphilis of the brain, Ōkawa was released from prison,³² and, after he had recovered, he spent the rest of his life in seclusion, translating the Koran into Japanese (1949) and working on his autobiography, *Anraku no mon* (The Gate to Serenity). He died in 1957.

Ōkawa professed to be a pan-Asianist. Roughly put, pan-Asianism is a doctrine claiming that "Asia is one," the slogan coined by Okakura Tenshin, whom Ōkawa readily recognized as a major intellectual influence.³³ Okakura may perhaps be the best-known Japanese pan-Asianist, but he certainly was not the first. The pan-Asian tradition in Japan has been traced to the writings of such people's rights advocates as Ueki Emori and Tarui Tōkichi in the 1870s. In the 1880s, pan-Asianism was taken up by Tōyama Mitsuru and his Fukuoka-based Gen'yōsha, many of whose members, led by Uchida Ryōhei, subsequently (1901) formed the notori-

³⁰ For example, on 30 January 1939, Hiranuma Kiichirō, the newly appointed prime minister (5 January), sent a message to Ōkawa asking him to persuade Admiral Kabayama Sukehide to accept a position in his cabinet; *Ōkawa nikki*, 198; on 1 February 1939, Ōkawa called on the Education Minister, General Araki Sadao, at his official residence; *ibid.*, 199; on 16 February 1939 he visited the Justice Minister, Shiono Suehiko, at his official residence to intercede on somebody's behalf, *ibid.*, 201.

³¹ Kusunoki Seiichirō, "Ōkawa Shūmei to tai-Bei seisaku," *Nihon Rekishi*, no. 474 (November 1987): 54–70.

³² Ōtsuka, *Ōkawa*, 186–87; Kobayashi Masaki's documentary movie entitled *Tōkyō saiban*, captures the moment when Ōkawa, shown sitting in the dock directly behind General Tōjō, all of a sudden hits the latter in the head with a rolled-up sheet of paper. It was this behavior that led to a psychiatric examination, which revealed syphilitic dementia.

³³ See, for example, Ōkawa Shūmei's preface to his *Nihon seishin kenkyū* (Tōkyō: Meiji Shobō, 1939), 8; also Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Ōkawa Shūmei no Ajia kenkyū," in *Ōkawa Shūmei shū*, 403.

ous Kokuryūkai (Amur River Society), which remained active as a pan-Asian organization well into the 1930s.³⁴

All pan-Asianists had to confront the obvious linguistic, cultural, and political diversity of Asia that belied the purported unity of that vast continent. Most Japanese pan-Asianists evaded this contradiction by focusing only on East Asia and neglecting the rest.³⁵ Ōkawa's Asia, however, covered an area greater than the geographic Asia, including Egypt and even the Muslim-inhabited parts of the Balkan Peninsula.³⁶ Ōkawa was of course well aware of the tremendous linguistic, cultural, and political diversity of Asia, but did not think that it contradicted his vision of Asian unity. He believed that all Asian nations shared certain underlying characteristics that the West lacked. These traits were spiritual or moral in character, and they, rather than any linguistic, cultural or political features, defined the "Asianness" of Asia. "Asia," Ōkawa wrote, "is where the soul of mankind resides ... Asian history has been in essence spiritual."³⁷ For Ōkawa, the spirituality of Asia made it timeless and immutable, intuitive, and introspective. This spirituality, above all, accounted for the Asian attachment to culture and tradition, an attachment, which, he stressed, was no mere romantic nostalgia for the past. It provided Asians, he believed, with penetrating insights into the nature of things. By dint of some intuitive process, which Ōkawa never fully explained, "Asia" was capable of "distinguishing the eternal elements from the transitory ephemeral fluff in all kinds of cultural phenomena, whether in religion, customs, or morality."³⁸

If this concept of Asian spirituality appears vague, it is because Ōkawa's Asia cannot be grasped properly without understanding his position on the West. The West, for Ōkawa, was the Other, in opposition to which Asia (the Self?) acquired its identity and significance as Asia. Asia and the West had distinct (though intertwined) histories. "Asia's history," he insisted, "has been essentially spiritual;" Western history materialis-

³⁴ On the genesis of Japanese pan-Asianism, see, for example, Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Nihon no Ajia-shugi," vol. 3 of *Takeuchi Hyōronshū* (Tōkyō: Chikuma Shobō, 1969), 256–317.

³⁵ For example, Prince Konoe Atsumaro's Tō-A Dōbunkai and Uchida Ryōhei's Kokuryūkai; on Prince Konoe, see Marius Jansen, "Konoe Atsumaro," *The Chinese and the Japanese: Essays in Political and Cultural Interactions* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), 107–23; on Uchida Ryōhei, see Takizawa Makoto, *Hyōden Uchida Ryōhei* (Tōkyō: Yamato Shobō, 1976), esp. 149–78.

³⁶ For example, in *Fukkō Ajia no shomondai*, Ōkawa devoted chapter 9, 223–54, to Egypt and chapter 10, 255–88, to Muslims in Europe.

³⁷ Ōkawa Shūmei, *Shin Ajia shōron* (Tōkyō: Nihon Hyōronsha, 1944), 85.

³⁸ *Nihon oyobi Nihonjin no michi*, 73.

tic.³⁹ "Asia is the training ground of mankind's spirit; Europe is mankind's source of [practical] knowledge."⁴⁰ The separateness of historical experience, Ōkawa believed, meant that Western ideas and methods could not be applied mechanically to solve Asian problems. The French revolution, for example, may have been appropriate in France, but it would be wrong to imitate it in Asia.⁴¹ Reform in Asia, Ōkawa insisted, must accord with the principles of its underlying nature. It must be first and foremost spiritual, not materialistic as in the West.⁴²

Ōkawa's philosophy of history was closely related to his pan-Asianism and his concept of Asia. Ōkawa regarded war as a positive historical factor: the dynamic creative force behind civilization and progress. "Everything in nature always struggles ... Since the days of ancient Homer until the present day, ... world history has been a history of war."⁴³ This quasi-Mussolini emphasis on the "creative aspect" of war foreshadowed the infamous October 1934 army pamphlet "Cardinal Principles of National Defense and Proposals for Their Strengthening" (*Kokubō no hongī to sono kyōka no teishō*) which opened with the words "War is the father of creation, the mother of culture."⁴⁴ The central theme in world history, Ōkawa believed, was the incessant conflict between Asia and the West (Europe). "Of all wars in world history, the most heroic in scope, the most profound in significance is the recurrent war between East and West, Asia and Europe."⁴⁵

But Ōkawa did not reject Western civilization. Far from it. In his outline of world history, he insisted that Asia and Europe complemented each other. Through a kind of synthesis, the East-West conflict enriched both European and Asian civilizations and elevated them to a higher historical stage. In short, war generated progress and civilization. If this view of history smacks of Hegel, it is not by coincidence. Ōkawa's philosophy of history bears Hegel's signature all over it. And like Hegel's, Ōkawa's philosophy of history was teleological. That is, Ōkawa maintained, progress

³⁹ *Ajia, Yoroppa, Nihon*, vol. 2 of OSZ, 870.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Nojima, *Ōkawa Shūmei*, 97.

⁴² The reforms proposed by Ōkawa included: "The construction of 'a restoration Japan,' the establishment of national ideals; the realization of freedom in spiritual life; the realization of equality in political life; the realization of fraternity (*yūiai*) in economic life." After the realization of these "reforms," "the moral unification of the world," Ōkawa hoped, would follow presumably automatically. See the 1925 platform of the Gyōchisha, drafted by Ōkawa cited in Takeuchi, "Profile," 377.

⁴³ *Ajia, Yoroppa, Nihon*, 841.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Eguchi Keiichi, *Jūgonen sensō no kaimaku*, vol. 4 of *Shōwa no rekishi* (Tōkyō: Shōgakukan, 1989), 311.

⁴⁵ *Ajia, Yoroppa, Nihon*, 841.

produced by the dialectical clash of Europe and Asia inexorably led toward history's ultimate goal—the unification of the world by one state. This unification, he foretold in 1925, would come about in the near future as a result of another great war. Various symptoms, according to Ōkawa, heralded the approach of this final stage of world history. They included the decline of Western civilization in the aftermath of the First World War and the stirrings of nationalism throughout Asia.⁴⁶ In the approaching war, Ōkawa prophesied, Japan, “the strongest nation of Asia” would “make its first positive contribution to world history” by defeating America, the strongest nation of the West.⁴⁷ From this perspective, Japan's “2600-year-long” history had been simply a process of preparation for this dramatic duel. By achieving this ultimate victory, Japan would “oust darkness from the world and light it up with a radiant sun.”⁴⁸ After the end of the war, Ōkawa predicted in a Hegelian fashion, Japan would unify the world, thus no doubt bringing history to an end.

Naturally, this final war would also liberate Asia from the “enslavement” of Western colonialism. Japan would “become a Lincoln for the 900 million of Asian slaves.”⁴⁹ Japan, Ōkawa insisted, was uniquely qualified to carry out this mission, because it embodied Asian virtues better than any other Asian nation. After all, Japan alone in Asia managed to preserve complete independence due to its superior morality. This was in stark contrast to China, a pale shadow of its former self, where, Ōkawa noted, “the half-educated literary elite, [who] lead the half-educated masses ... in circles, will certainly never save China from its present turmoil.”⁵⁰ Given such an immoral mess, Ōkawa concluded, Japan had a duty to help Asians save themselves. But, Ōkawa noted, it would be a thankless task. Asians were “peoples without their own states” who “must not be regard-

⁴⁶ *Ajia, Yoroppa, Nihon*, 865, on the decline of Western civilization; *ibid.*, 866, on the stirrings of Asian nationalism; on the latter see Ōkawa, *Fukkō Ajia no shomondai*, *passim*.

⁴⁷ *Ajia, Yoroppa, Nihon*, 873. There is a striking similarity between these and the ideas of Ishiwara Kanji. But it seems that Ōkawa arrived at his views independently of Ishiwara. Ōkawa's work had already been published before Ishiwara's return in October 1925 from Germany where he had developed his ideas under the influence of the Nichiren form of Buddhism. A more likely, if unacknowledged, source for Ōkawa was his erstwhile associate, Kita Ikki, who like Ishiwara was an earnest follower of Nichiren. On Ishiwara, see Mark Peattie, *Ishiwara Kanji and Japan's Confrontation with the West* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), 49. On Kita Ikki's views, see, for example, Wilson, *Kita Ikki*.

⁴⁸ *Ajia, Yoroppa, Nihon*, 873.

⁴⁹ Ōkawa Shūmei and Mitsukawa Kametarō, “Sengen,” *Otakebi* 1, no. 3. (October 1920): 1.

⁵⁰ Ōkawa Shūmei, “Arasou koto o yamete manabe,” *Tōa* 2, no. 5, (May 1929): 1.

ed as equal to the Japanese." They had lost their national independence precisely because of their moral inferiority. Likewise, they were bound to misunderstand Japan's efforts to help them.⁵¹ In short, from this perspective, Asians, especially Chinese, seemed like children who resented having to go to school, though education was to benefit them. Just as individuals on reaching maturity appreciated the value of their education, Ōkawa reasoned, so would Asians eventually learn to appreciate Japan's continental mission.

Concerned as he was about Asian ingratitude towards Japan, Ōkawa was far more worried about the obstacles to Japan's pan-Asian mission within Japan. He may have thought Japan superior to other Asian nations, but he realized it was far from perfect. "No true Japanese," Ōkawa lamented, "can be satisfied with the Japan of today." Japan, in his opinion, no longer deserved to have a national flag adorned with a divine "red sun," because "Japan is not any more an objective realization of national morality."⁵²

The decline of Japan as a state, Ōkawa pointed out, had started as early as the Russo-Japanese War,⁵³ but it assumed alarming proportions only as a result of the First World War. There were several factors that contributed to this regrettable phenomenon. First, there was "moral corruption," whose symptoms were materialism and selfishness. Second, there was factionalism and lack of public spirit among the ruling elites that, in turn, resulted in "the oppression of the common man" and "the decline of loyalty and patriotism." Third, the great war prosperity brought about class hostility as a result of rising prices, shortages, and the appearance of the so-called war *narikin*. Fourth, there was an "unhealthy and abstract" debate about "the concept of the state" between the pro-democracy scholars who "sold their souls to the West" and the "ultra-conservatives" who "protected the national polity" with "divine wind arguments."⁵⁴ To make things even worse, the geopolitical situation was also clearly to Japan's disadvantage. Poring over the map of the world, Ōkawa noted with great grief how "small" the territory of the Japanese Empire was in comparison with the "vast expanse" of the British possessions.⁵⁵ The powerful "Anglo-Saxons," having defeated Germany, were now free to carry out their expansion in Asia, or at least maintain the status quo at the expense of Japan.

⁵¹ Ōkawa *nikki*, entry for 4 August 1937, 142.

⁵² *Nihon oyobi Nihonjin no michi*, 6.

⁵³ Hashikawa, *Chōkokkashugi*, 358.

⁵⁴ "Dai-ni ishin no hatsujōki," *Nihon bunmeishi*, vol. 4 of OSZ, 427, (hereafter "Dai-ni ishin").

⁵⁵ Ōkawa *nikki*, January 1937, 138.

In short, Ōkawa had no doubt that the great war had ushered in a “dark night” for Japan. Not only Japan’s mission, but also its survival was apparently at stake. Without undergoing a series of fundamental reforms, to be more specific, without a Taishō restoration, Ōkawa despaired, “Japan will share the fate of Germany.”⁵⁶

The Taishō restoration⁵⁷ espoused by Ōkawa opposed “all ideas that deny the state, which at present surround us like dark clouds.”⁵⁸ Thus it was anti-party-political, anti-democratic, anti-individualist, anti-hedonistic, and anti-socialist.⁵⁹ It was also anti-capitalist and anti-finance. Ōkawa stressed that the “Taishō restoration” necessitated “destruction of money rule” just as the Meiji restoration had necessitated the “abolition of the feudal structure of the shogunate.”⁶⁰ Nevertheless, he explicitly opposed the concept of class struggle, which in his view did not apply to Japan. His restoration, instead of erecting class barriers, would “fuse the ruler and the people into one whole”.⁶¹ Only this totalitarian fusion of sacred and secular, of the civil and political state, of the private and the public domain could lead to “the realization of the true foundational spirit” and enable Japan to become “the true savior of the world.” The Japanese state, in his view, was “capable of no evil.”⁶²

Only a reformed spiritual Asia led by a reformed spiritual Japan, Ōkawa believed, had the potential to stand up to the West with its own authentic Asian values. As a precedent, Ōkawa cited the early Islamic state, which, by fusing state and church, had successfully challenged the West with its uniquely Asian values.⁶³ Islam, however, failed in the end because it had succumbed to corruption and decadence. A reformed Japan would be immune to such decay and complete the task of unifying the world on behalf of Asia, which Islam had begun centuries before.

Even after the defeat of Japan, Ōkawa did not give up his hope for an ultimate victory of Asia over the Occident. True, on 15 August 1945, after listening to the Emperor’s surrender speech, he feared that 40 years of work “toward the revival of Asia has vanished like a soap bubble,”⁶⁴ but he

⁵⁶ “Dai-ni ishin,” 427–30.

⁵⁷ After Hirohito succeeded his father as emperor of Japan in December 1926, the Taishō restoration became naturally the Shōwa restoration, but without any perceptible change in its content.

⁵⁸ *Nihon oyobi Nihonjin no michi*, vol. 1 of OSZ, 4.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ “Dai-ni ishin,” 427.

⁶² Takeuchi, “Profile,” 377.

⁶³ On Ōkawa’s views on Islam, see his *Kaikyō gairon* (Tōkyō: Keiō Shobō, 1942).

⁶⁴ *Ōkawa nikki*, 15 August 1945, 391.

quickly got over his initial worries. In 1949, after the defeat of Chang Kai-shek, for example, Ōkawa perceived a “close resemblance” between “today’s devotees of communism and the early Muslims” and wished for “a second battle of Tours-Poitiers,” which this time would no doubt end in victory for Asia.⁶⁵

These, in short, are the pan-Asianist views of Ōkawa Shūmei. Throughout his whole career, Ōkawa put the greatest stress on the liberation of Asia, which, he believed, was Japan’s sacred duty. His liberation of Asia was, of course, contingent on Japan’s victorious war to unify the world. This war was predetermined by a Hegelian process of historical development. In order to prevail, Japan had to reform domestically, i.e., it had to become increasingly statist and totalitarian. Small wonder that the senior army officers found his views congenial. After all, he expressed in eloquent words their innermost thoughts.

In spite of this emphasis upon pan-Asianism, it is striking how little concrete Asia there is in Ōkawa’s writings. He travelled to Southeast Asia and China several times, but his diary affords little insight into his sentiments toward Asia or Asians. On a down-to-earth level, the man who made a life-long career of condemning British colonialism, could, on his visit to the British colony of Hong Kong, write the following: “Buildings are solid, roads perfect, goods plentiful, people numerous, ... a wealthy city indeed. [By comparison,] Japan’s cities are just like large villages. Prices are low, surprisingly so compared with Tōkyō ... [Procurers] come to the ship to sell women; in department stores pictures of nude women are on sale, and after dark white streetwalkers hang out in public parks. Cannot detect any hypocritical restrictions. I would like to stay in Hong Kong for two or three weeks with plenty of money and have some fun.”⁶⁶ One cannot detect moral indignation at the outrages of British imperialism in this passage or, for that matter, elsewhere in the diary.

For all his emphasis on Asian authenticity, Ōkawa derived his inspiration as much from Western as from native Japanese or Asian sources. He made no secret of his intellectual debt to Plato⁶⁷ (elitism and idealism); Hegel (his philosophy of history); neo-Hegelian Russian philosopher

⁶⁵ Takeuchi, “Profile,” 374. Ōkawa’s views were by no means isolated. Takeuchi Yoshimi, one of the foremost Japanese Sinologists, regarded the above statement of Ōkawa’s as “a profoundly interesting prophecy.” According to Takeuchi, “in the long run of history, we cannot say that the day of this prophecy will not come. We cannot conclude that some day ... the believers in the civilization which judged Ōkawa will not themselves be judged by him.” Ibid.

⁶⁶ *Ōkawa nikki*, entry for 15 October 1921, 98–99.

⁶⁷ For a reference to Plato, see, for example, *Nihon oyobi Nihonjin no michi*, 4.

Soloviev⁶⁸ (the significance of war in history and situational ethics); the now obscure French mystic, Paul Richard,⁶⁹ who confirmed his view of Japan's moral superiority; Lothrop Stoddard and Oswald Spengler, the pessimists, who proclaimed the decline of the West, etc.

Like these Western sources of his inspiration, Ōkawa was essentially a conservative thinker, even if he occasionally sounded and behaved like a radical. Certainly, Ōkawa's much-vaunted pan-Asianism is hardly a radical doctrine, but merely appears to be a disguised anti-Westernism. His Asia, after all, is not an independent entity; it acquires an identity only as a reaction to the West. While the West is the Other, Asia is just an imperfect extension of Japan, to be molded by Japan in its own image.

Much more palpable than Ōkawa's vision of Asia is his reaction to the domestic change in Japan, which closely parallels his vision of Asia. Just as Asia failed to live up to his ideal of "Asianness," so the Japanese masses failed to live up to his ideal of "true Japan." In his emphasis on the strengthening of the state and the Japanese spirit by "moral reform," Ōkawa echoed the conservative lament over the declining morals, social upheavals, and thought confusion to which allegedly the Japanese succumbed in the aftermath of the First World War. At the root of this degeneration and chaos lay pernicious Western influences. To fend off the perceived Western threat, he recommended a variety of more or less radical measures, which taken together did not detract in any way from the essentially conservative character of his thought.

Certainly Ōkawa, unlike his erstwhile collaborator Kita Ikki, never proposed any radical changes to the imperial institution or the Meiji political system as a whole. Unlike the radical (some even would say fascist)⁷⁰ Kita, Ōkawa was also pusillanimous as regards economics and labor relations. Take, for example, his proposal for "the realization of fraternity (yūai) in economic life" included in his program for the Gyōchisha in 1925. This proposal is a mere reiteration of traditional paternalism. In fact, the whole of the Ōkawa-drafted Gyōchisha program, which also advocated, for example, "the realization of freedom in spiritual life" and of "equality in po-

⁶⁸ Ōkawa translated sections of Soloviev pertaining to war as "Sorobiefu no sensō ron", in vol. 4 of OSZ, 543–60 (originally published in *Gekkan Nihon*, June 1928). In his postwar autobiography Ōkawa wrote: "Soloviev ... has been my intellectual sustenance for many years ...," *Anraku no mon*, 736; see also *Ōkawa Shūmei shū*, 248.

⁶⁹ See Ōkawa's introduction to Richard's *Eien no chie*, vol. 4 of OSZ, 866–67.

⁷⁰ In an article, which rejects the applicability of the concept of fascism to Japanese history, Duus and Okimoto specifically identify Kita Ikki as a fascist. See Peter Duus and Daniel I. Okimoto, "Fascism and the History of Pre-War Japan: The Failure of a Concept," *Journal of Asian Studies* 39 (November 1979): 65–76; esp. 67.

litical life," contained nothing to which a conservative politician or bureaucrat would object.

If we consider Ōkawa as a conservative (rather than a radical) thinker, some of the apparent contradictions in his thought disappear. His admiration for Lenin and the Bolsheviks, for example, is not necessarily evidence of the radicalism of his views or even sympathy for communism as an ideology. Rather, it is a consequence of his anti-Westernism and is an expression of hope that communism as an Asian ideology [*sic!*] would destroy Western civilization and the menacing liberal values it represents. By classifying Ōkawa as a conservative, it is also easier to understand his cordial relations with various senior government officials. There was really no contradiction between those friendships and Ōkawa's involvement in various conspiracies and putsches. After all, none of Ōkawa's friends in high places came to any harm. Nor does his indirect involvement in the assassination of Prime Minister Inukai Tsuyoshi, a party politician *par excellence*, necessarily prove the radicalism of his views, at least on the spectrum of Japanese politics. Like many other Japanese conservatives, Ōkawa hated the established political parties, regarding them as a radical menace to his ideal of Japan and the help he gave the murderers of Inukai stemmed from his hatred of parliamentarism, rather than from the radical nature of his views.

The conservative nature of Ōkawa's pan-Asianism does not diminish in any way his responsibility for his contribution to bringing Japan closer to war, for, after all, it was the, now largely forgotten, conservative reaction of the 1920s that paved the way for the tragic events of the 1930s and 1940s. From this perspective, the neglect of Ōkawa and his dream of one Asia is symptomatic of a broader issue, namely, Japan's unwillingness to come to terms with its own past.

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