

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)

DIJ History and Humanities Study Group



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Leaving Japan and Leading the Oppressed: Chinese Intellectuals' Engagement with Asianist Organizations in the late-1920s

In recent years, research into Japanese Pan-Asianism has featured prominently in academic books and journals. However, aside from a number of researchers interested in Sun Yat-sen, scholars have largely avoided discussing the numerous Chinese Asianist writings to appear in the decades leading up to World War II. Chinese Asianism was an important conceptual tool during this period, but research into this anti-imperialist strategy is complicated by its relationship with Japanese imperialism, Chinese nationalism, and the intricacies of intellectuals' engagement with Sun Yat-sen's writings.

Sun Yat-sen's premature death in 1925 accelerated his deification in China. His *Three Principles of the People* quickly became an ideological base for the Kuomintang's Republic of China. However, the issue of Japan remained a divisive problem for Chinese intellectuals interpreting his "Nationalism" and "Great Asianism," the last speech made before his death. In the years following Sun's death, intellectuals created a number of Chinese Asianist organizations, hoping to establish Asian unity in the fight against Western imperialism. This talk concentrates upon the history of two of these organizations, the Pan-Asiatic League of Beijing, and the Shanghai Asiatic Society. Although the Chinese intellectuals who established these organizations initially focused upon uniting with Indians and Koreans to further the fight against imperialism, Japanese members of the organizations soon brought them into contact with Tokyo's Pan-Asiatic Society. Due to their cooperation with Japanese Asianists, the organizations and their members were highly criticized by the Chinese media. However, these events and the subsequent critical responses would set the stage for wartime Chinese Asianism and the belief that China had a duty to lead the oppressed nations of the world in the struggle with imperialism.

Craig A. Smith is an American Council of Learned Societies' postdoctoral research fellow based at Kyoto University. In 2014 he completed his doctoral studies at Canada's University of British Columbia. His dissertation is titled *Constructing Chinese Asianism: Intellectual Writings on East Asian Regionalism (1896-1924)*.

The DIJ History and Humanities Study Group is organized by Miki Aoyama-Olschina and Torsten Weber. All are welcome to attend, but prior registration (weber@dijtokyo.org) is greatly appreciated.

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