

王屏『近代日本の亚细亚主义』商务印书馆 2004.

Wang, Ping: *Jindai Riben de Yaxiya zhuyi* [Modern Japanese Asianism]. Beijing: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 2004, 388 pp., 22 Renminbi

Reviewed by Torsten Weber

In a recent volume of the publishing house Iwanami's well-received "Intellectual Frontier" series, simply titled *Ajia/Nihon* [Asia/Japan], Yonetani Masafumi suggests to re-visit "Japan's entangled relationship with Asia" by starting from Sun Yat-sen's famous "Greater Asianism" address of 1924. Given in Kōbe to a mainly Japanese audience, Sun's speech highlights "the ambiguity of solidarity (*rentai*) and invasion (*shinryaku*) contained in the Asian solidarity thesis (*Ajia Rentai Ron*)",¹ Yonetani states. Owing to its wide circulation in Japan until 1945, Sun's "Greater Asianism" has become an important part of modern Japanese consciousness of Asia. While in large sections of his speech Sun praised the Japanese for their civilisational achievements and successful resistance against Western aggression, towards the end he warned Japan not to become "the watchdog of Western rule of might" (*badao*, Jp. *hadō*) but to function as "the stronghold of Eastern rule of virtue" (*wangdao*, Jp. *ōdō*) instead.² Indeed Japan, as having to choose between joining "the West" and adopting Western imperialism on the one hand or opting for "the East" and promoting Eastern solidarity on the other is a pre-dominant topic in Japanese discourse on Asia, most famously expressed by Fukuzawa Yukichi's "Leaving Asia"-thesis (*Datsu A Ron*). Whereas Fukuzawa in 1885 had strongly rejected Japanese attempts to revive Asia together with its neighbours, which he denounced as the "bad company of East Asia", Sun in 1924 appealed to the Japanese for a "Greater Asianism to restore the status of the Asian peoples". Between both statements, but also after and before them, many debates on Japan's relationship with Asia, on Japanese 'Asianity', and on Asia's significance for Japan and vice versa, arose in Japan. In the past decades the diversity of such expressions of Asia consciousness (*Ajia ninshiki*) has received much attention by

¹ See Yonetani Masafumi, *Shikō no furontia: Ajia/Nihon*, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2006, p. iii. Yonetani identifies *Ajia Rentai* as an ideal inherent in Asianism (*Ajiashugi*); see p. v.

² For Sun's speech and contemporary reactions see Chin Tokujin and Yasui Sankichi (eds.), *Son Bun kōen 'Dai Ajiashugi' shiryō shū*, Kyoto: Hōritsu Bunkasha, 1989; quotes from p. 80.

Japanese scholars of modern history. Similarly to Yonetani, many of them have attributed particular significance to the concept of Asianism (*Ajiashugi*).³ In fact, from a Japanese perspective modern Asia appears unthinkable without thinking of Asianism at the same time.

Unlike Anglophone scholarship, which only of late has embarked on discussing Asianism as a part of modern Japanese Asia consciousness,⁴ scholars on mainland China have long shared with their counterparts in Japan this interest in Asianism and its implications for modern Japan's relationship with Asia, in particular with China. However, until relatively recently, the political function of studying Japanese Asianism as a mere jargon for imperialism and aggression could hardly be overlooked. This position was fundamentally challenged when, in 2000, Sheng Banghe, history professor at Shanghai's East China Normal University, argued in the prestigious *Lishi Yanjiu* [History Research] journal for a more refined interpretation of Japanese Asianism. Before Asianism "turned right" to become the ideology behind Japan's continental policy of expansionism, he contended, it had aimed at promoting an "Asian alliance" (*Yazhou tongmeng*, Jp. *Ajia dōmei*) and proposed "Sino-Japanese mutual help and guidance" (*Zhong-Ri lianxie*, Jp. *Chū-Nichi renkei*) as a means of resistance against the Western powers.⁵ This partially "positive" interpretation of Japanese Asianism, which Sheng supported by extensive references to pro-Chinese Japanese writings from the early- and mid-Meiji periods, met with fierce criticism from some Chinese scholars who re-iterated the orthodox view of Asianism as being nothing but "Greater Japanism"⁶ and a "product of Japan's march towards im-

³ See Furuya Tetsuo's praised edited volume *Kindai Nihon no Ajia ninshiki*, Tokyo: Ryokuin Shobō, 1996, which contains a separate chapter by the editor on "Asianism and its circumference", and Yamamuro Shin'ichi's state-of-the-art *Shisō kadai toshite no Ajia*, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2001, which dedicates one third of the book to "Asianism as *Entwurf*" (*Tōki toshite no Ajiashugi*). Many additional references to Asianism and the Asia solidarity thesis can be found in both books.

⁴ Sven Saaler and J. Victor Koschmann (eds.), *Pan-Asianism in Modern Japanese History: Colonialism, Regionalism and Borders*, London and New York: Routledge, 2007, is the first book in English entirely dedicated to Japanese Asianism.

⁵ Sheng Banghe, "19 shiji yu 20 shiji zhi jiaode Riben Yazhou zhuyi" [Japanese Asianism in the Transitional Period from the 19th to the 20th century], in: *Lishi Yanjiu*, 3/2000, 125–35; here p. 125.

⁶ Wang Xiangyuan, "Cong 'he bang', 'yi ti' dao 'da yaxiya zhuyi': Jindai Riben qinhua lilun de yi zhong xingtai" [From 'merged states', 'an integral whole' to 'Greater Asianism': A theoretical form for Japanese invasion of China in modern times], in: *Huaqiao Daxue Xuebao (Zhhexue shehui kexue ban)*, 2/2005, 77–84; here: 77. See also Wang Xiangyuan, *Riben dui Zhongguo de Wenhua qinlüe: Xuezhe, Wenhua ren de qinhua zhanzheng* [Japan's cultural invasion of China: The Invasive war of scholars and intellectuals against China]. Beijing: Kunlun Chubanshe, 2005.

perialism”, providing Japan with “a theory for invasion”.⁷ However, Sheng’s progressive interpretation marked the start of a gradual re-evaluation of Japanese Asianism by Chinese scholars of which the book under review can be regarded as representing a current peak.

Wang Ping’s meticulous study, for which she undertook research at the University of Tokyo in 2000/2001, deserves particular attention mainly for three reasons. Firstly, while articles on Asianism have been published in China in great number, Wang’s study constitutes the first Chinese monograph on Japanese Asianism. In fact, it may well be one of the first monographs ever published on this subject outside of Japan. Secondly, unlike many other Chinese works on modern Japan history, her study is well informed by recent Japanese scholarship, and she supports her analysis with extensive references to Japanese (not Chinese) secondary literature. Thirdly, and most importantly, the overall tone of her study is “relatively rational and extremely neutral”, as one Chinese reviewer criticised.⁸ This is all the more noteworthy as Wang is by no means a pariah in her field but a member of the Institute of Japanese Studies at the state-run Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and also a frequent commentator of Sino-Japanese relations for the central organ of the Chinese Communist Party, the People’s Daily newspaper (*Renmin Ribao*). Although it may be too much to conclude that her book marks the beginning of a paradigm shift in official Chinese historiography of modern Japan, it doubtlessly stands out as a powerful renunciation of orthodox Chinese study of modern Japanese history (which Wang largely ignores) and as a timely contribution to international scholarship on Japanese Asianism.

Wang’s choice of the term *Yaxiya zhuyi* [“Asianism”] in the title and throughout her book may already be regarded as an act of political incorrectness, from a Chinese point of view. In China, Japanese Asianism is traditionally referred to as *Da Yaxiya zhuyi* or *Da Yazhou zhuyi* (both meaning “Greater Asianism”) in a negative sense, stressing Japanese ambitions to create and rule a “Greater Asia”.⁹ Wang clings to the negative connota-

⁷ Qi Qizhang, “Ribei Da Yaxiya zhuyi tanxi: Jianyu Sheng Banghe Xiansheng shangque” [Exploring Japanese Greater Asianism: A Discussion with Mr. Sheng Banghe], in: *Lishi Yanjiu*, 3/2004, 132–45; here p. 132.

⁸ Online-Review by Liu Jingyu (Northeast Normal University, Changchun), <http://sohac.nenu.edu.cn/asia/dsypl/text-3/liujingyu.htm> (last access 7 June 2007).

⁹ Sun Yat-sen’s Kobe speech is treated as an exception because it was originally published under the title “Greater Asianism”. Wang, too, hastens to explain that Sun’s “Greater Asianism” is not to be confused with Japanese “Greater Asianism” but rather belongs to the category of Japanese “Classical Asianism” (for definition see below); see Wang, p. 20.

tions of “Greater Asianism”, but she only uses the term for a specific sort of Asianism – “expansive Asianism” – whereas she chooses the more neutral “Asianism” as her overall term. Historically, a strict division between “Asianism” and “Greater Asianism” is arguable because both terms (and a third, “Pan-Asianism”) were mostly used synonymously by contemporaries. At any rate, Wang’s message is clear: “Asianism cannot indiscriminately be called invasionism” (17) and, from a scholarly point of view, is not to be used in a “praising” or “downgrading” sense but as a “neutral term” (25).

Wang’s elaborate definition of Asianism underlines her de-politicised understanding of historical Asianism further. According to Wang,

[M]odern Japanese ‘Asianism’ means a sort of representative political thought and its corresponding behaviour that is related to Japanese views on Asia. It took shape during a time of crisis due to intensified aggression by Western powers against the East and revolved around the question of how to understand concepts of ‘East’ and ‘West’. As a result of the complicated and particular historical development process which modern Japanese Asianism underwent, it displays the three forms of *Classical Asianism* (*Gudian Yaxiya zhuyi*, Jp. *Koten Ajiashugi*) emphasizing equal cooperation in Asia, of *Greater Asianism* (*Da Yaxiya zhuyi*, Jp. *Dai Ajiashugi*) emphasizing expansion, and of the “*Greater East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere*” which implemented the invasion of Asia. In the course of its formation, development, and extinction, modern Japanese Asianism completed its historical process as a qualitative transformation from “Reviving Asia” (*Xing Ya*, Jp. *Kō A*) to “Invading Asia” (*Qin Ya*, Jp. *Shin A*). (15)

Similarly to Sheng, Wang emphasises that Asianism cannot be studied detached from its historical context of a “Western threat” which did not automatically lead to a Japanese formulation of a blueprint for Japanese aggression. Rather, for Wang as for Sheng, in the early period “Classical Asianism” stood for cooperation and representatively expressed itself in the Asian Solidarity thesis (*Ajia Rentai Ron*). This interpretation is reminiscent of the minimal definition of Asianism as “solidarity of the Asian countries” (*Ajia shokoku no rentai*)¹⁰ by Takeuchi Yoshimi who, more explicitly

¹⁰ Takeuchi Yoshimi, “Ajiashugi no tenbō”, in: *Ajiashugi (Gendai Nihon shisō taikai, Vol. 9)*, ed. by Takeuchi Yoshimi, Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1963, p. 14. There is still no published English translation of this classical text. An excellently annotated German translation is now available in *Japan in Asien: Geschichtsdenken und Kulturkritik nach 1945*, edited and translated by Wolfgang Seifert and Christian Uhl, München: Iudicium, 2005.

than Wang, linked early Asianist thought to the Freedom and Popular Rights Movement of the 1880s.

Not entirely in accordance with her chronological definition, Wang's study nominally falls into three larger topical parts: Asianism as "thought", as "behaviour", and as "diplomatic strategy". However, Wang understands these divisions non-exclusively and ultimately gives preference to a historical narrative along the above-mentioned temporal units (formation, development, extinction) rather than clinging to her thematic structure. It should further be emphasised that Wang, even where she discusses Asianist action and diplomacy, generally comprehends Asianism as intellectual (not social or diplomatic) history and therefore studies, with few exceptions, writings by intellectuals expressing a particular consciousness of Asia.

In the first part ("Asianism as thought") she focuses on the time between the foundation of the *Shin A Sha* [Rouse Asia Society] in 1878, assumedly the first Asianist organisation, and the foundation of the *Tōa Dōbunkai* [East Asia Common Culture Association] by Konoe Atsumaro in 1898 (chapter 2). In chapter 3, we are reminded of Okakura Tenshin's views of Oriental and Occidental civilizations and his formulation of "Asia is one", which Wang regards as the "solid theoretical base of Asianism" (84). The fourth chapter is concerned with Asianist plans for "concrete action" and studies Tarui Tōkichi's proposed solution of the Korea problem (*Dai Tō Gappō Ron*) and Miyazaki Tōten's commitment to a Chinese revolution. Wang regards this "formative period of Asianism" (1878–1898) as representing "Classical Asianism".

The second part ("Asianism as behaviour"), examines how the work of groups such as the Gen'yōsha and the Kokuryūkai (chapter 6), which Wang classifies as the national essentialist branch (*guocui pai*, Jp. *kokusui ha*) of Asianism, together with Kita Ikki's "reformist" Asianism (chapter 7) and Ishiwara Kanji's *Tōa Renmei* movement (chapter 8) replaced solitary "Classical Asianism" with aggressive "Greater Asianism" in the developmental period of Asianism (1898–1928).

In the last part ("Asianism as diplomatic strategy"), Wang announces her intention to study Japan's mainland policy, but effectively analyses Rōyama Masamichi's geopolitical theory and Ōkawa Shūmei's writings about establishing a new order in East Asia (chapter 10) as leading to "the extinction of Asianism" (*Yaxixa zhuyi de xiaowang*, Jp. *Ajiashugi no shōbō*) between 1928 and 1945. While 1945 appears as an obvious terminus for the study of historical Asianism, the choice of 1928 as the turning point from expansive to invasive Asianism remains somewhat opaque. Perhaps 1938 would have been a more convincing choice, in particular as Wang, in the third part, focuses on the declaration of the "New Order in East Asia" (*Tōa*

Shin Chitsujo) of 1938 and the following debates on the “East Asian Common Body” (*Tōa Kyōdōtai Ron*), the “East Asian League” (*Tōa Renmei Ron*), and the “Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere” (1940). Indirectly, Wang herself admits her inconsistency regarding temporal divisions when she states that “with the appearance of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere policy, Asianism too changed into an empty slogan void of any thought but completely overlapping with the mainland policy of the Japanese government” (209).

As can be seen from this brief overview of the contents of her book, Wang chronologically covers the “usual suspects” of Asianist thought and, to a lesser extent, behaviour. Although she must be credited for introducing some hitherto little-studied contemporary writings, such as pro and anti-Asianist contributions to a special “Greater Asianism” edition of the journal *Nihon oyobi Nihonjin* (October 1924), the bulk of her sources is well-known and has been studied in some depth by Japanese scholars and frequently, albeit dispersed, appear in Anglophone scholarship, too. Unfortunately, some major primary writings that obviously influenced the understanding of “Asianism” by contemporary Japanese, such as Kōdera Kenkichi’s *Dai Ajiashugi Ron* [On Greater Asianism, 1916]¹¹ or Ukita Kazutami’s “Shin Ajiashugi” [New Asianism, 1918]¹² are neglected. Similarly, Wang omits important non-Japanese or international contributions to Asianist thought and behaviour, such as the revolutionary efforts of the Asian Solidarity Society (*Yazhou Heqinhui/Ashū Washinkai*), Rabindranath Tagore’s and Rash Bihari Bose’s pan-Asian writings, and Chinese affirmations of Asianism after 1940 (Wang Jingwei, Lin Baisheng, Zhou Fohai) despite their wide publication and reception in contemporary Japan. While Sun Yat-sen’s “Greater Asianism” is discussed in brief (22–24), the reception of his speech in Japan and various claims to the prerogative of its interpretation in the decades after Sun’s death (1925) are completely excluded.

Intellectually most stimulating are Wang’s brief excursus in four sub-chapters to discuss Asianism versus “Europeanism” (*Ōkashugi*), versus Japanism (*Nihonshugi*), versus National Essentialism (*Kokusuishugi*), and

¹¹ For the first in-depth discussion of Kōdera’s book in English see Sven Saaler, “The Construction of Regionalism in Modern Japan: Kōdera Kenkichi and his ‘Treatise on Greater Asianism’ (1916)”, in: *Modern Asian Studies* 41, 2007 (forthcoming).

¹² Among the numerous studies of Ukita, Hiraishi Naoaki’s “Kindai Nihon no Kokusai Chitsujo kan to ‘Ajiashugi’”, in: Tokyo Daigaku Shakai Kagaku Kenkyūjō (ed.), *20 seiki shisutemu 1: Kōsō to keisei*, Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1998, pp. 176–211, provides the most detailed analysis of Ukita’s theory of Asianism in relation to that of his contemporaries.

versus Militarism (*Gunkokushugi*). In these short digressions from her historical narrative Wang re-visits Asianism in its contemporary intellectual context and examines differences between and similarities with prevailing ideas in Meiji-, Taishō- and early Shōwa-Japan. “Classical Asianism” à la *Ajia Rentai Ron* and Japanism as advocated by Takayama Chogyū (1871–1902), for example, “had nothing in common”, Wang concludes, while later expressions of *Nihonshugi* and appeals to the “Japanese spirit” in early Shōwa were “one and the same with expansive and invasive Greater Asianism and the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere” (148). In spite of the fact that such comparisons are useful to remind us that Asianism itself had different meanings at different times and that Asianism was contested by and developed in relation to other common ideas at the time, Wang’s approach is prone to generalisations and somewhat limited by her definitions of the respective terms. As controversial debates in contemporary journals show, *Asianism* (and *Nihonshugi* or *Kokusuishugi*, for example) did not only have one meaning at one time, but had several different meanings argued for by different debaters at the same time. Wang’s case would have been stronger if she had referred directly to debates between Japanese who argued, for example, for Internationalism and against Asianism or for Asianism and against *Nihonshugi*.

The conclusion of the book provides an insight into the continuous appeal that “Asianism” as a concept still exerts today. Positioning herself against a “New Asianism” put forth by Tokyo’s governor Ishihara Shintarō and the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamad,¹³ Wang herself argues for a “New Classical Asianism”. In a passionate statement she rejects any particularistic claims for “Asian values” and “Asian thought”, or hegemonic hopes for an “Asian century”, but argues instead for non-exclusive regional cooperation based on “horizontal contacts” (*hengxiang xiaowang*, Jp. *yokomuki kōdō*, 367). If common interests, common terminology, and a “neutral” approach are essential for such contacts and cooperation, Wang’s book itself may be seen as one step towards a partial realisation of a “New Classical Asianism” by bringing international – in particular East Asian – scholarship of modern Japanese history closer together.

¹³ Wang refers to Mahathir Mohamad and Ishihara Shintarō, *No’ to ieru Ajia*, Tokyo: Kōbunsha, 1994. For this and alternative versions of “New Asianism” or “Neo Asianism” see also Sven Saaler, “Pan-Asianism in modern Japanese history: Overcoming the Nation, Creating a Region, Forging an Empire”, in: Saaler and Koschmann (2007), pp. 1–18, here pp. 16–18 (see footnote 4 of this review).

Both in the context of conventional Chinese scholarship on modern Japan and of international scholarship on Japanese Asia consciousness, Wang's book stands out as a milestone. As such and as an up-to-date and detailed compendium of more than a century of Asianist thought and behaviour her painstaking *Modern Japanese Asianism* deserves a wide readership among scholars of modern Japan.