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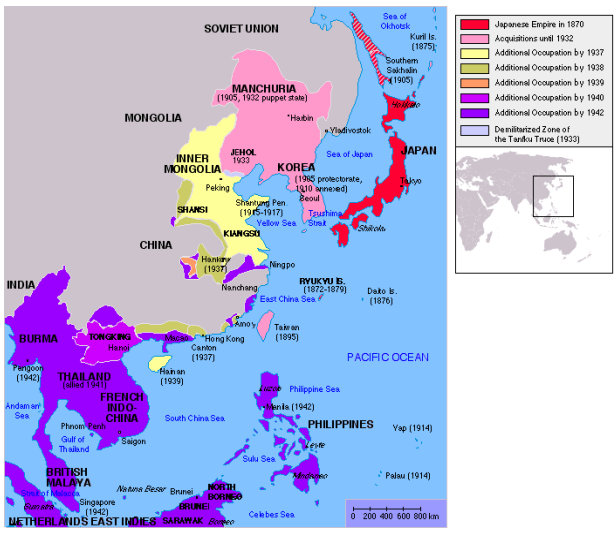
James Orr

A 1942 Declaration for Greater East Asian Co-operation

Translation by Yayoi KOIZUMI and Zeljko Cipris
Introduction by James Orr

The "Declaration for Greater East Asian Co-operation" was a wartime booklet and elementary text published for use in Japan's Asian and Pacific colonies and occupied territories. Through the presentation of attractive images of children and people of many lands and cultures, the images convey the noble mission that informed Japanese wartime propaganda—that Japan would unite fellow Asians under its leadership to throw off the yoke of exploitive Western imperialism. The text also reveals the imperialist assumptions that Japan shared with those same imperialist powers, but here cloaked in a rhetoric evocative of Confucian benevolence.

For example, a Japanese military officer on horseback is shown as a smiling agent of change with Asian brothers and children as eager recipients of Japanese guidance in the advance of civilization. As the metropole in the imagined Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, Japan naturally takes the lead in organizing and marshalling the energies and talents of this region's peoples as well as their territories' natural wealth. Japanese is imagined as the lingua franca of the region. Japanese universities are the citadels of learning where future Asian leaders are mentored by Japanese teachers. And an implicit division of labor identifies former Western colonies as suppliers of raw materials for the advanced industrial power that is Japan. It is a vision of an autarkic utopian community of harmony in which Japan would lead the way in smashing the old colonial order symbolized by Churchill and Roosevelt. Now, with the cooperation of the once colonized and occupied people across Asia, a new zone of cooperation and prosperity can emerge under the watchful gaze of the benevolent Japanese military: "Now, with ringing footsteps, let us all advance together."



Map showing stages of formation of the Japanese empire

Yet the story of Japanese imperialism in Asia differs from that of Western imperialism precisely because, in addition to seeing themselves as mentors on the path toward advanced civilization, Japanese understood themselves to be culturally, racially, and historically linked with Asians. And rather than the bilateral ties that European powers sought to establish with their Asian colonies, Japan sought to create multilateral relations in an East Asian community, albeit ones that it would

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dominate. How does this wartime Japanese imperialist propaganda reflect this difference from the Western prototype? Does the message of Asian brotherhood and Japanese benevolence mitigate or exacerbate the exploitive reality of Japanese imperial leadership/rule? How are these concepts conveyed in the printed image? What expectations does the Confucian idiom of brotherhood and benevolence raise, and how might these expectations alter perceptions of Japanese hegemony in a culturally diverse Asia? Are the contradictions in the domestic Japanese discourse on Japanese national identity—a discourse that harbored extremely divergent visions from Fukuzawa Yukichi's "Escape from Asia, Join Europe" modernism to Okakura Tenshin's "Asia is One" traditionalism, to borrow slogans from Japan's earlier Meiji era—reflected in this wartime propaganda? And finally, given the utterly central role of the Japanese Emperor in modern Japanese national aspirations, how can we explain his apparent absence from these images?

James Orr



Declaration of Greater East Asian Co-operation [Publisher:] Dai Nihon Yubenkai (Great Japan Debate Society), Kodansha



[From left:] Burma, Rangoon; Thailand, Bangkok; Indochina, Hanoi

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Look! America, England, the Netherlands and others have been keeping us down with military force and doing bad things to us in Greater East Asia.

[From left:] India, Indian Ocean, Burma, Sumatra, Bangkok, Thailand, rubber, petroleum, sugar, Indochina, Saigon, Malaya, Singapore, Java, Chinese Republic, Manchuria, Nanjing, Shanghai, Borneo, Japan, Makassar, Celebes, Philippines, Australia, New Guinea.

[Note: A lone Japanese soldier is shown protecting the Chinese Republic and squaring off against ships, tanks, artillery, and planes of the Euro-American colonial powers while British and American capitalists resembling Churchill and Roosevelt look on from the top. (The Chinese Republic under Wang Jingwei broke away from the Guomindang and collaborated with Imperial Japan).]



Japan stood up to take back Greater East Asia into our hands. Japan's powerful army drove away the enemy from the Greater East Asia region. [Japanese flags are shown in China, Malaya, Indochina, Borneo, Sumatra, Java, the Philippines and New Guinea.]

[Japanese soldiers help local people while Churchill and Roosevelt look on in despair as their ships and planes are destroyed.]

The Great Story of Independence



[Right page, top right:] Mighty Japan, [Top left:] The Chinese Republic allied with Japan, [bottom right:] Flourishing Manzhouguo, [Bottom left:] Independent Philippines
[Left page, Top right:] Expanded Thailand, [Top left:] Happy Javanese and Malays, [Bottom right:] Independent Burma, [Bottom left:] Indian Army driving away the British

Right now in Manchuria, all the peoples have joined their strength in working together. Japan and the Chinese Republic have formed an alliance. The Philippines and Burma have become independent. Thailand has expanded its territory. The people of Java and Malaya have also taken up important tasks and are working at them. India is trying to drive out the British. From now on, each country of Greater East Asia will grow great and live in friendship with one another.

Our Commander

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Our commander, strong Japanese commander, is riding on horseback, clip-clop, clip-clop. When we saluted him, the commander returned our salute, smiling brightly from atop his horse. Our commander, kindhearted Japanese commander.

Contribution to the World's New Movements

We of the Greater East Asia will combine our power to destroy America and England. However, we will be friends with the good countries of the world. We will study very hard and spread our wonderful culture throughout the world.

We will also send necessary products to the countries that need them. We will make the whole world much, much better. Our hearts are one. Now, with ringing footsteps, let us all advance together.



[Flags left to right: 1. Philippines 2. Thailand 3. Japan. 4. The Chinese Republic 5. Manzhouguo 6. Burma . . . all under Japanese direct or indirect control from 1942]

Cultural Benefits



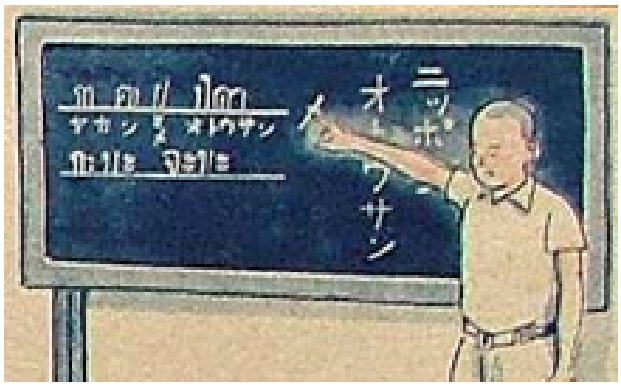
[Next to blackboard:] Studying Japanese
[Lower left picture:] Going to Japan to study
[Sign on gate in round picture:] Japanese language school

America, England, the Netherlands and others did not make us happy no matter how hard we studied or worked. However, from now on, the more we work, and the more we study, the happier we will become.

Let's study hard. Let's work hard.

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Let's make the culture of Greater East Asia flourish more and more. In order that the peoples of Greater East Asia can communicate with each other, let's learn Japanese.



[Behind teacher's arm:] Japan, father

Co-existence and Co-prosperity



The peoples of Greater East Asia have had honest hearts since ancient times. Each has a wonderful language and a wonderful religion. Although our languages and our religions differ, let us use our honest hearts to live in harmony like brothers and sisters. Let's share both pleasures and hardships. We must not forget that America, England and the Netherlands made us quarrel with one another because they feared that Greater East Asia would prosper. If we are good to one another and help one another, we are sure to become happy.

James Orr specializes in remembrance of World War II in the formation of Japanese national identity, with particular interest in the overlap between politics and culture. He is the author of The Victim as Hero: Ideologies of Peace and National Identity in Postwar Japan (University of Hawaii Press, 2001), a study of how "victim consciousness" came to dominate the politics of war remembrance and support the popular image of Japan as a demilitarized, peace state. He is an associate professor and Chair of the Department of East Asian Studies at Bucknell University and a Japan Focus associate.

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