Tagore's *Nihonjinron* and International Opinion on Asia in the Inter-War Period

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Introduction

When Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) criticized Western nationalism in the early twentieth century, a main reference for his argumentation was an Eastern country, Japan. By examining Tagore's comments on Japanese culture and politics against the genre of *Nihonjinron* 日本人論 (theory of Japaneseness),[1] this paper explores Japan's ambiguous image in the modern world. To this end, it is necessary to compare the views of Japan and its subtle relationship with the idea of Asia held by other contemporary luminaries, such as John Dewey (1859–1952) and Bertrand Russell (1872–1970).

Nihonjinron is not an inclusive term. It refers to a specific genre that aims to portray the "Japanese character" and stress its uniqueness. Tagore never had any intention to develop this genre. However, the style of his expression is reminiscent of the *Nihonjinron* prevalent at the time, and as such, demands inquiry into their similarities and differences, as well as the circumstances that prompted the genre to thrive.

Historically speaking, Tagore's *Nihonjinron* was a conscious echo of the ideal of "Asia is one" proposed by Okakura Kakuzō 岡倉覚三 (1863–1913).[2] In *The Ideal of the East*, a book that drew inspiration from the author's sojourn in India in 1902 and was published in 1903, Okakura gives Asian history a shape by narrating how the thought and artistic styles of India and China had developed, and how they had been fused together and raised to a new height in Japan. With the passage of time, Okakura's original ideal—nostalgic as well as nationalistic—had strayed into imperialist pan-Asianism when Tagore visited Japan in 1916. The Indian poet was aware of the development and tried to caution his Japanese audiences against it. Therefore, although Tagore hailed Japan's significant role in the expected rise of Asia, his speeches were no less warnings against Japanese militarization.[3] To illuminate Tagore's particular formulation of *Nihonjinron*, with its deliberate linkage to the ideal of Asia, Dewey's and Russell's remarks will be drawn in comparison.

Tagore, Dewey, and Russell all visited Japan and China within a few years around the end of WWI. It was a period when Japan was rising rapidly to an international power but still many years away from its full-scale invasion of China. Intellectual activities were thriving in both countries, with foreign ideas imported and foreign thinkers invited; among the visitors were Tagore, Dewey, and Russell. Besides expounding their philosophical thought, they travelled around and formulated their civilizational observations as well. Critically, Japan's ambiguous position in the

East-West dichotomy finds very different interpretations in the three luminaries' portraits of world civilizations. The differences, as I will argue, reflect how the idea of Asia was characterized in the early twentieth century from different political stances.

1. Intellectual basis of *Nihonjinron* and Tagore's view of Japan

To better understand Tagore's view of Japan in the context of early-twentieth-century world politics, a review of the intellectual foundation of *Nihonjinron* and Tagore's semi-missionary overseas tours is necessary.

In *An Introduction to Japanese Society*, Sugimoto Yoshio describes *Nihonjinron* as "a discourse that … has persisted as the long-lasting paradigm that regards Japan as a uniquely homogeneous society."[4] Dependence on superiors, group orientation, and "consensus society" are among the features that are said to underlie Japan's homogeneity.[5] *Nihonjinron* presumes "that *all* Japanese share the attribute in question," and regards it as existing only marginally in other societies. Furthermore, there "is an ahistorical assumption that the trait has prevailed in Japan for an unspecified period of time, independently of historical circumstances."[6] In a monograph of *Nihonjinron* studies, Harumi Befu also characterizes this genre as "hegemony of homogeneity" and explains that "*Nihonjinron* writings share a singular objective: to demonstrate unique qualities of Japanese culture, Japanese society, and the Japanese people … As such, little or no attention is given in writings of this genre to internal variation."[7]

As a sociologist, Sugimoto adopts statistical methods to demythologize the *Nihonjinron* paradigm without examining it in historical terms. Befu's anthropologic studies mainly focus on the reproduction of this literature in the post-war period. In this regard, Minami Hiroshi's 南博 (1914–2001) *Nihonjinron: From the Meiji Era to the Present* critically reviews the development of the genre over a much longer time span. Minami declared: "This book attempts to trace objectively the development of *Nihonjinron* from the Meiji Restoration until the present day [i.e. the passing away of the Showa Emperor in 1989]. It can be said that the outcome is equivalent to a modern history of self-consciousness possessed by the Japanese."[8] After examining hundreds of representative works, Minami concluded:

> *Nihonjinron* rose to prominence concomitant to great social transformations from the Meiji era … With the intent to catch up with and surpass advanced countries, there emerged a self-understanding and self-reflection on the part of the Japanese people based on comparisons with Western countries.[9]

Miyake Setsurei's 三宅雪嶺 (1860–1945) remarks exemplify this statement. Addressing a Meiji Japan that was confronted with increasing Western challenges, he published both *The True, Good, and Beautiful Japanese* and *The False, Bad, Ugly Japanese* in 1891. The two books emphasize contrasting characteristics of the Japanese people, but their purposes converge. As a nationalistic traditionalist, Miyake expected the Japanese sense of the true, the good, and the beautiful to contribute to a more harmonious world, while reminding the Japanese people of their less favorable aspects that might prevent that expectation from being fulfilled. He concluded that

"Even if we tried our best to imitate, our country would become nothing more than an inferior Western country, and our people an inferior Western people. The result would be a mere increase in inferior Western races. Ah! Is this what Nature, which fosters both heaven and earth, really intends?"[10] In a 1907 work, Haga Yaichi 芳賀矢一 (1867–1927) also enumerated ten virtues of the Japanese people—loyalty to the emperor and the nation, respect for ancestors and family reputation, realism, love of nature, optimism, candidness, subtlety, neatness, courtesy and etiquette, and being kind and forgiving—and hoped for their preservation in the process of Japan's interaction with other cultures.[11]

Nihonjinron became a major genre during the Meiji era, but this period is not to be mistaken for its inception. Indeed, one of the earliest authors of *Nihonjinron* mentioned by Minami is the Edo period scholar Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730–1801), who, by contrasting the Japanese temperament with the Chinese, claimed a uniquely aesthetic psychology of the Japanese.[12] However far back its historical roots may lie, it can be observed that *Nihonjinron* is a discourse that differentiates Japan from others, whether China or the West, while assuming little self-differentiation within Japan. Admittedly, the idea of Japanese homogeneity has greater historical nuances and not every scholar agrees on the established view of *Nihonjinron*.[13] Nevertheless, concerning the ideological ground of this genre, the delineation above is sufficient to introduce us to the world that Tagore addressed.

Rabindranath Tagore received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913. Born to an aristocratic family in Calcutta (known as Kolkata from 2001), the cultural capital of British India, Tagore was well educated in both Indian classics and modern Western disciplines from an early age. Keen awareness of the conflict between Eastern and Western civilizations was deeply rooted in his mind. Given the circumstances, the Nobel Prize gave him worldwide fame and allowed him unprecedented opportunities to travel around the world and exchange ideas with contemporary intellectuals.

Tagore's first overseas tour after becoming the Nobel laureate took place in 1916. The United States was his destination but he stayed in Japan for three months en route.[14] Of the three public lectures Tagore gave there, the last two later became part of his famous *Nationalism*. Besides, in another series of lectures published in 1922, Tagore in his articulation of "East and West" refers to Japan as accommodating the traditional and modern worlds simultaneously, with the latter gradually gaining the upper hand.[15] Hence, it can be said that Japan played a crucial role in shaping Tagore's civilizational discourse.

It is not without precedent to characterize Tagore's depiction of Japan as *Nihonjinron*. It has been suggested that his *Japan Travelogue* "can be counted as one of the early examples of *Nihonjinron* authored by foreign intellectuals."[16] While *Japan Travelogue* consists of private letters, it does not differ from Tagore's public lectures in its attempt to discover the uniqueness of Japan and to weave it into his overarching discourse whenever appropriate. In fact, Tagore could hardly claim any genuine knowledge of Japan; as Stephen Hay points out, Tagore mainly described Japan in preconceived terms that fit his East-West framework.[17] Nonetheless, deeper exploration indicates that what obliged Tagore to forge his discourse was the same trend that fueled the proliferation of *Nihonjinron*, albeit the intentions to foreground

Japan's uniqueness differed. In view of Japan's successful modernization, Tagore charged the country with the dual responsibility of moderating the materialistic aspect of the West and endowing the East with a reinvigorated spirit. On the other hand, the East-West dialectics was also visible in both Miyake's and Haga's *Nihonjinron* cited above, but it was addressed more in terms of the tension between the nationalistic and the universalistic. Historically, this tension persisted through the 1910s and the 1920s, and the nationalistic bent emerged into fascist *Nihonjinron* later.[18] For example, in 1930 Ōkawa Shūmei 大川周明 (1886–1957) appealed to his audiences that "what I would like to see is the revival of an upright and strong Japan, which will defeat the evil [i.e. Western influences] that dominates the world."[19]

2. Tagore's "Nationalism in Japan" and beyond

When Tagore paid his first visit to Japan in 1916, Japan had already become the strongest non-Western country in terms of economic and military prowess. Addressing an audience of inflating self-confidence, Tagore's message was clear and he organized his three public lectures into a coherent argument.

The first public speech, delivered in Osaka on June 1, was introductory but only partly complimentary. Tagore said he had been dreaming of visiting Japan, "where the East and the West found their meeting place and carried on their courtship far enough to give assurance of a wedding."[20] This voyage reminded him of the adventures of ancient Buddhist monks who brought the truths of life from India, through China, to Japan. While those scriptures were transmitted with great difficulty, they retained their simplicity in full wisdom and love. In contrast, modern technology, which shortened both spatial and temporal distance, simply multiplied things without facilitating access to their cores. Tagore complained that what greeted his eyes when his ship was docking in Kobe was not different from what he had seen in major Western cities. "But this is not Japan,"[21] thus claimed the poet with his determination to discover the uniqueness of the country.

The second lecture, "The Message of India to Japan," was given at Tokyo Imperial University on June 11. Tagore started with words of gratitude to Japan for rejuvenating Asia. He then adapted this rejuvenation to an overarching framework, in which both Eastern and Western civilizations have lifecycles. After contributing to humanistic ideals, Eastern civilizations became inactive and bound in tradition. In this sense, Japan's phenomenal rise since the late nineteenth century was expected to herald the awakening of the East into its next cycle of vigor. Tagore praised modern Japan as coming "out of the immemorial East like a lotus blossoming in an easy grace … [it] has also fearlessly claimed all the gifts of the modern age for herself."[22] Nonetheless, he argued, "I, for myself, cannot believe that Japan has become what she is by imitating the West … The real truth is that science is not man's nature, it is mere knowledge and training."[23] Here Tagore attributed Japan's modern achievements to a spiritual source traceable to a time immemorial. He not only defended Japan's uniqueness against accusations of its imitation of the West, but extrapolated to the East in general this capability for self-transformation. Since Japan assumed the leading role in this round of awakening, Tagore claimed: "Therefore your responsibility is all the greater, for in your voice Asia shall answer the questions that

Europe has submitted to the conference of Man."[24]

The last public lecture, "The Spirit of Japan," was delivered at Keio University in Tokyo on July 2. Tagore was effusive in his commendations: "I have travelled in many countries and have met with men of all classes, but never in my travels did I feel the presence of the human so distinctly as in this land."[25] What follows is an observation that captures the outer features—if not the "spirit"—of Japan:

> You see a people, whose heart has come out and scattered itself in profusion in its commonest utensils of everyday life, in its social institutions, in its manners, that are carefully perfect, and in its dealings with things that are not only deft, but graceful in every movement.[26]

Tagore went further to assert that:

> This opening of the heart to the soul of the world is not confined to a section of your privileged classes … but it belongs to all your men and women of all conditions.[27]

Moreover, he also depicted Japan as a "civilisation of human relationship[s]," and the nation became "one family with your Emperor as its head."[28] Not only did Tagore stress the uniqueness of Japan, but all assumptions underlying *Nihonjinron* feature prominently here. A turning point came, however, immediately after Tagore's praise: "And this had made me all the more apprehensive of the change … For the huge heterogeneity of the modern age, whose only common bond is usefulness, is nowhere so pitifully exposed against the dignity and hidden power of reticent beauty, as in Japan."[29]

As mentioned above, the two Tokyo lectures constitute (with slight abridgement) "Nationalism in Japan," one of the chapters of *Nationalism* that was published in 1917. It is thus reasonable to ask what "nationalism" meant for Tagore, and why it would do so much harm to the Japanese sensibility of beauty. An explanation can be culled from these lectures:

> The genius of Europe has given her people the power of organisation, which has specially made itself manifest in politics and commerce and in coordinating scientific knowledge.[30]

Europe has a great tradition of humanity as Tagore acknowledged, but its inclination for organization with the help of modern scientific knowledge had made it narrowly focused on efficiency and profit-making, which resulted in nationalism and materialism.[31] Furthermore, "[t]he political civilisation … is based upon exclusiveness … It is always afraid of other races achieving their eminence, naming it as a peril."[32] As Tagore understood, Japan had tried hard to prove itself as aggressive as Western nations to win their respect, but it also fell prey to their exclusiveness. The "Immigration Act of 1924" in the United States was a good example, towards which Tagore was to share indignation with the Japanese.

It is noted that the third speech was much more critical than the second because Tagore had spent some time experiencing Japan.[33] Nevertheless, as the two lectures were too close for extensive exploration of Japan in between, and there is an argumentative logic tying them together, perhaps it can be said that Tagore was more preoccupied with drawing Japan into his framework than with understanding Japan's history and culture for their own sake.

Critically, Tagore did not show much historical knowledge in his grand narrative. Neither the socio-political conditions of the emergence of nationalism in the West nor its impact on Japan receives satisfactory explication. Nonetheless, Tagore's critique of nationalism changes the discourse from the categories of historical, social, and political studies into civilizational discourse, which Uma Das Gupta designates as "a cultural nationalism."[34] Although Tagore was no less a strong supporter of national independence, his *Nationalism* is essentially an anti-nationalist discourse that aims to upset the paradigm of Western modernity and crown the East with supreme humanity. For Tagore, only with such a spiritual tradition could Japan, a newly modernized Eastern country, lead the world into an era of cultural fusion.

To conclude Tagore's view of nationalism, one must consider the overall structure of the book, as well as what is missing from it. The volume deals with nationalism in the West, in Japan, and in India, respectively. Tagore showed unusual perception in pointing out the problems and opportunities that were facing India and America, but the chapter on Japan is the most theoretically complicated because of the pivotal position Japan occupied in the East-West dichotomy. However, while Tagore said in Tokyo that "[t]he whole world waits to see what this great Eastern nation is going to do with the opportunities and responsibilities she has accepted from the hands of the modern time,"[35] he was not optimistic. Before sailing for Japan, Tagore expressed his concerns in a letter: "Japan is the youngest disciple of Europe—she has no soul—she is all science—and she has no sentiment to spare for other people than her own."[36] The three-month stay in Japan modified Tagore's view, but his suspicion persisted.

There is subtle evidence for this suspicion. In 1905, Tagore so rejoiced at the victory of Japan over Russia that he personally organized a parade in Calcutta, but he mentioned nothing about this victory in his 1916 lectures, probably to avoid instigating Japanese imperialist pride. Years later, Tagore revealed his disappointment at Japan in China in 1924, saying that "the East should not be humble when it had come into sudden good fortune."[37] Here Japan claimed no more the great tradition of the East, but became a Westernized parvenu, whose expansionism in the interwar period threatened not only China but also India.

Indeed, Tagore valued China over Japan in terms of cultural ties with India. When in China, he mentioned frequently the millenia-long cultural interaction between China and India, and alluded to the disadvantages shared by the two countries at the time to arouse sympathy from his audience. Nevertheless, despite this strong affinity, China could hardly contribute to Tagore's grand narrative about an Asia that he hoped could modify Western modernity. He mentioned no historical influences of China on Japan in his Tokyo lectures, taking "Japaneseness" as naturally coming from an abstract East, which, through the example of Japan, proved it-

self capable of catching up with the modern West. Therefore, in Tagore's discourse, "Asia" was more theoretical than real, with tradition *versus* modernity being the core issue, the greatest barrier to a desired cultural unity being West-originated nationalism.

3. China, Japan, and Asia in the eyes of Western luminaries

In an essay commemorating Tagore's centenary in 1961, Takeuchi Yoshimi 竹内好 (1910–1977) states that "in Japan, generally speaking, Tagore was regarded as a poet from a ruined country; in China, he roused sympathy as a resistant poet by singing songs of national independence." While this judgment is simplistic, Takeuchi was perceptive in pointing out that "if we do not take Tagore's relationship with China into consideration, we cannot fully understand his relationship with Japan."[38] Furthermore, he also noted that other foreign figures such as Dewey and Russell must be involved in the comparison.[39]

However, as will be demonstrated, this comparison renders the idea of Asia problematic. While they all considered China an Asian country, it is a totally different issue when Japan was taken into consideration. The fortunes of Japan and China in the modern world were so different, one might wonder if the geographical designation of Asia was appropriate for accommodating such contrasting historical experiences. Given the immensity of Asia, Tagore consciously divided it into eastern and western parts,[40] and claimed that in the past "the whole of eastern Asia from Burma to Japan was united with India in the closest tie of friendship."[41] What Tagore was referring to was the influence of Buddhism. This cultural bond, despite its historicity, does not seem to have dovetailed with the realpolitik of the time, as observed by Dewey and Russell.

John Dewey stayed in China from May 1919 to July 1921. During this period and slightly afterwards, he wrote several essays and published them as *China, Japan, and the U.S.A.* at the end of 1921. The booklet aims to illustrate the complicated international relationships at the time. As Dewey headed for China by way of Japan, he made a comparison between the two countries:

> It is three days' easy journey from Japan to China. It is doubtful whether anywhere in the world another journey of the same length brings with it such a complete change of political temper and belief … The difference … concerns the ideas, beliefs and alleged information current about one and the same fact: the status of Japan in the international world and especially its attitude toward China.[42]

Dewey observed that the talkative and straightforward Chinese were unanimous in "the feeling of … the domination of Chinese politics and industry by Japan with a view to its final absorption."[43] To the contrary, in Japan, "the land of reserves and reticences," Dewey found "a subtle nervous tension in the atmosphere as of a country on the verge of change but not knowing where the change will take it."[44] Tagore sensed a similar uncertainty in 1916 and interpreted it as a tension between traditional Asian ideals and modern European utility. Dewey focused instead on the

economic and political problems that were facing Japan, both domestically and internationally. Afterwards Dewey contrasted the Japanese and German treatments of Shandong Province. While Germany took possession only of the port city of Qingdao and let the Chinese people lead their daily lives unhindered, Japan not only took over Germany's previous rights but also monopolized Shandong's economy and militarized virtually the entire province.[45] Here he touched upon the issue of the Twenty-One Demands upon China in 1915, by which Japan attempted to subsume the northern part of China under its control. Such ambitions produced an unexpected result, however.

> But Asia has come to consciousness, and … it will force itself upon the reluctant consciousness of the west, and lie heavily upon its conscience. And for this fact, China and the western world are indebted to Japan.[46]

Then, what did Asia signify for Dewey?

> For continental Asia is, for practical purposes, India and China, representing two of the oldest civilizations of the globe … Asia is really here after all … And in the future, so to speak, it is going to be even more here, with its awakened national consciousness of about half the population of the whole globe.[47]

For Dewey, "continental Asia" seems to entail a set of long-standing conditions of civilization totally different from those of the modern West, thus excluding Japan for reasons that were more complicated than simply geographical or political. In the early twentieth century, Japan constituted a European-like power that sought to maximize profits in continental Asia. Under the circumstances, from Dewey's point of view, the only force to preserve the integrity of Asia—territorially and economically—was America. He directed many of his arguments to a single prospect: the important role that America was to assume at the Washington Conference. Not only must the "open door policy" to China be insisted upon, but "the door [should] be opened to light, to knowledge and understanding." What really mattered was "the need of China and the Orient in general for freer and fuller communications with the rest of the world." Dewey ended his book with the following caution: "To shirk this responsibility on the alleged ground that economic imperialism and organized greed will surely bring the Conference to failure is supine and snobbish."[48]

Clearly, Dewey's concern about China was no less intense than that of Tagore. They criticized Western civilization in similar language such as "economic imperialism" and "organized greed," and they were both waiting for the revival of Asia. Nonetheless, we observe in Tagore, as an Asian, a desire to see Asia stand on its own feet, which accounts for the significance he attached to Japan. Dewey, by contrast, wanted to see Asia rise under the auspices of America.

Now let's turn to Bertrand Russell for a European perspective of Asia in the interwar period. He arrived in China in October 1920 and left the country in July 1921. He made a brief visit to Japan on the way back to England and published *The Problems of China* in 1922. Russell understood that the problems of China were

significant on account of their vast scale: "all the world will be vitally affected by the development of Chinese affairs, which may well prove a decisive factor, for good or evil, during the next two centuries."[49]

On a deeper level, however, it seems that Russell expected China to provide an alternative civilizational paradigm to the modern West, against parts of which he nursed strong resentment. He valued China highly for the pervasiveness of its folk art, intuitive happiness, and human relations. These qualities, claimed Russell, had long disappeared in the modern West, which mostly gained its property "by widespread oppression and exploitation."[50] Indeed, China had its own cultural predicaments, and Russell had witnessed there the struggle between pro-Westernization forces and the traditionalists. But he believed that China would be more capable of achieving an organic growth from its own tradition while assimilating what was good from the West if time permitted, an expectation that Tagore placed on Japan.

Interestingly, Russell's perception of Japan is also tinged with *Nihonjinron*. However, unlike Tagore, this uniqueness of Japan was for Russell a source of misgivings, and did not have inherent potential to mitigate its borrowed vices:

> Japan is an extraordinarily interesting country. The synthesis of East and West … is of a most peculiar kind. There is far more of the East than appears on the surface; but there is everything of the West that tends to national efficiency.[51]

This particularity, as Russell noted, derived from Japan's rather confused self-identity within a larger context of Asia:

> Asia, including Russia, may be regarded as a unity; but from this unity Japan must be excluded. Russia, China, and India … could be self-subsistent economically … Japan, like Great Britain, must depend upon commerce for power and prosperity. As yet, Japan has not developed the Liberal mentality appropriate to a commercial nation, and is still bent upon Asiatic conquest and military prowess.[52]

For both Dewey and Russell, Asia was basically "continental Asia," whose pillars were China and India. Whether Russia was included or not, Japan did not seem compatible with this unity. Russell pointed out that the vast plains of China, India, and Russia could afford them independence of commerce and indifference to progress. Japan, notwithstanding its geographical proximity, was characterized by two incompatible ambitions: "On the one hand, they wish to pose as the champions of Asia against the oppression of the white man; on the other hand, they wish to be admitted to equality by the white Powers."[53] Although Tagore was conscious of the dilemma, he could not afford this division between continental Asia and Japan, at least at the beginning of his international career, because it would undermine his ideal of an Asia that was very much in need of modern transformation that Japan had achieved.

Both Dewey and Russell visited China and Japan during the inter-war period. They both showed admiration for Chinese tradition and repugnance toward the ag-

gression of modern Japan.[54] They were also both in a position to predict the future of the Far East after WWI. Their views differ on the Washington Conference. While Dewey expected America to take a moral stance, Russell, whose book was written after the conference, regarded America as a mere great power that supported China on the Shandong problem out of political considerations. Nevertheless, when it came to Asia, what figured in their minds was China in terms of its fundamental difference with the West. On the contrary, "modern Japan must count as a Western product."[55]

Conclusion

This paper contextualizes Tagore's view of Japan into the discursive space of *Nihonjinron*. Through his comments, Tagore was actually addressing the unbalanced power structure of the modern world. Although Tagore did not claim any authority on the issue of Japan, he involved himself in modern Japanese intellectual history by participating in the country's efforts of defining "Japaneseness." Minami Hiroshi claimed, "[t]here are no other peoples comparable to the Japanese in terms of the fondness for defining their national character."[56] Such an inclination is not a modern product as Edwin Reischauer (1910–1990) attested:

> Early in their history the Japanese developed the habit of cataloguing foreign influences and contrasting them with "native" characteristics. One result has been a frequent emphasis in Japanese history on primitive and therefore supposedly native Japanese traits.[57]

Despite the early roots of this tendency of defining the "national character," the modern period witnessed the proliferation of *Nihonjinron* with Japan's growing necessity for self-definition in a fiercely competitive world. What Tagore appealed to was a Japan seeking to secure its identity and profits by growing imperialistic; both a unified Asia against the West and the idea of "surpassing modernity" were of great interest to lecturer and audience; only the purposes to stress the uniqueness and mission of Japan were opposite.

As Takeuchi Yoshimi noted, one cannot separate Tagore's Japanese experiences from his Chinese experiences. The reason is simple: Japan and China stood for successful modernization and great tradition respectively, and were indispensable to the revival of Asia along with Tagore's native India. However, even though Tagore showed stronger affinity toward China, it was the tremendous achievements of modern Japan that received most articulation in his pan-Asian discourse. In contrast, for Western intellectuals such as Dewey and Russell, the issue of a unified Asia did not weigh heavily and they were comfortable with an idea of Asia without Japan.

Compared with Dewey and Russell, Tagore focused less on historical specifics and political conditions in Japan and China. Being culturally oriented, he praised the Meiji Restoration as "the most wonderful revolution that the world has ever seen."[58] Interestingly, to the 1911 revolution that overturned China's two-millennia long imperial system, Tagore gave not even a passing mention, whether in Japan in 1916 or in China in 1924. Apparently, this was not ignorance but choice out of his

humanistic concern. In China, he paid a visit to the former emperor Puyi 溥儀 (1906–1967) in the Forbidden City and showed much appreciation for the architecture and gardening of traditional China, an action much criticized by progressive-minded Chinese intellectuals at the time.[59]

In sharp contrast to Tagore's sentimental culturalism, Russell, who was apparently more read than Tagore in Japanese and Chinese histories, had much to say about the neo-traditionalist and centralist nature of the Meiji Restoration.[60] Dewey also expressed his suspicion of Japan straightforwardly: "[Japan] has modern military weapons, a newly developed commerce, and efficient transportation; but she still has not changed her old concepts, her old morals, her old habits. As a result of this failure, Japan is paying the price both of the old civilization and of the new, without being able to reap a full measure of profit from either."[61]

Tagore's cultural-mindedness is all the more conspicuous in comparison with Sun Yat-sen 孫逸仙 (1866–1925), the father of modern China. Sun invited Tagore to Guangzhou during the latter's 1924 trip. Although the visit could not be scheduled into Tagore's itinerary, it is reasonable to assume that Sun was well informed of the content of Tagore's lectures in China. Months later, Sun also gave a speech in Japan on "Great Asianism." Like Tagore, he tried to address the issue in cultural terms:

> What kind of problem is it for the "Great Asianism" we are speaking of? In brief, it is a cultural problem, a problem of comparison and conflict between Eastern and Western cultures.[62]

This "cultural problem" of "Great Asianism," according to Sun, was to commit Japan and China to an Asian unity. As to Europe, he emphasized that only military means were feasible to reclaim the rights of Asian countries.[63] As Dewey noted, Sun remained a revolutionist type of nationalist throughout.[64] Sun reminded his Japanese audiences of the victory over Russia in 1905 and remembered how the Westerners were shocked by Russia's defeat. The anxiety of the "yellow peril" had risen in Europe again as Tagore also observed. The difference lies in that Tagore was too worried about the militarization of Japan to mention this victory and only proposed a self-defensive armed force.[65] The advice fell on deaf ears at the time. However, after World War II, Tagore's cordial warnings have been remembered and frequently cited by many Japanese.

A final note. As suggested previously, *Nihonjinron* and pan-Asianism are two intertwined discourses from the early twentieth century. Despite changes of historical contents, Sugimoto Yoshio critically points out that the propagation of "Asian values" today as "almost a pan-Asian version of *Nihonjinron*."[66] Both discourses of Asianess and Japaneseness assume a Western other and are premised on considerable economic and political maturity. Such an ideology already took root when Japan tried to assert its entitlement in the world a century ago.

Notes

1) Sugimoto Yoshio's translation of the term is adopted here. See *An Introduction to Japanese Society, Third Edition*, (Melbourne: Cambridge UP, 2010), 2. Here the original plural form is changed into

the singular.

2) Okakura Kakuzō, *The Ideals of the East*, in *Okakura Kakuzo: Collected English Writings*, (Tokyo: Heibonsha Limited, Publishers, 1984), vol. 1, 13. For detailed analyses of the exchanges of ideas between Tagore and Okakura, see: Rustom Bharucha, *Another Asia: Rabindranath Tagore & Okakura Tenshin*, (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2006); Okamoto Yoshiko 岡本佳子compares their views of nationalism in "Rabindoranāto Tagōru to Okakura Kakuzō (Tenshin): nashonarizumu o megutte" ラビンドラナート・タゴールと岡倉覚三（天心）―ナショナリズムをめぐって [Rabindranath Tagore and Okakura Kakuzō (Tenshin) on Nationalism], in *Asian Cultural Studies, Special Issue*, 17 (2008), 49–75.
3) Imaginably, Tagore's remarks cooled down the Japanese enthusiasm for him immediately, which has received extensive discussions. The changing perspectives on Tagore in modern Japanese intellectual history to the present day constitute another story, which I explore in another article.
4) Sugimoto, *An Introduction to Japanese Society*, 2.
5) *Ibid*., 3.
6) *Ibid*., 4.
7) Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2001), 4.
8) Minami Hiroshi, *Nihonjinron: Meiji kara konnichi made* 日本人論――明治から今日まで [*Nihonjinron*: From the Meiji Era to the Present], (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1994), v.
9) *Ibid*., 391.
10) Miyake Setsurei, *Gi, aku, shū Nihonjin* 偽悪醜日本人 [The False, Bad, Ugly Japanese], in Ikumatsu Keizō 生松敬三 ed., *Nihonjinron* 日本人論 [Theories of Japaneseness], (Tokyo: Fuzambō, 1977), 123.
11) Haga Yaichi, *Kokuminsei jūron* 国民性十論 [Ten Theses on the Japanese Character], in Ikumatsu Keizō, ed., *Nihonjinron*, 262–263.
12) Minami, *Nihonjinron*, 5.
13) Cf. Oguma Eiji 小熊英二, *Tanitsu minzoku shinwa no kigen: Nihonjin no jigazou no keifu* 単一民族神話の起源――日本人の自画像の系譜 [The Myth of the Homogeneous Nation] [*sic*.], (Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 1995).
14) For a review of this Japan-America trip, see Morimoto Tatsuo 森本達雄, "Tagōru no daiikkai sekai junrei: Nihon-Amerika hōmon tenmatsuki" タゴールの第一回世界巡礼――日本=アメリカ訪問顛末記 [Tagore's First World Tour: A Description of His Visits to Japan and America], in *Tagōru chosakushū, bekkan: Tagōru kenkyū* タゴール著作集・別巻――タゴール研究 [Collected Works of Tagore, Supplementary Volume: Tagore Studies], (Tokyo: Daisan Bunmeisha, 1993), 309–343.
15) Rabindranath Tagore, "East and West," in *Creative Unity*, (London: Macmillan, 1922), 97.
16) Morimoto Tatsuo, "Kaidai" 解題 [Explanatory Note], in *Tagōru chosakushū daijukkan: jiden, kaisō, ryokōki* タゴール著作集・第十巻――自伝・回想・旅行記 [Collected Works of Tagore, Volume 10: Autobiographies, Reminiscences, and Travelogues], (Tokyo: Daisan Bunmeisha, 1987), 606. There is another publication in 1987 regarding Tagore's *Nationalism* as a *Nihonron* 日本論 [theory of Japan]; see Saeki Shōichi and Haga Tōru 佐伯彰一・芳賀徹 eds., *Gaikokujin ni yoru Nihonron no meicho* 外国人による日本論の名著 [Masterpieces of Theory of Japan by Foreigners], (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1987), 120–125.
17) Stephen Hay, *Asian Ideas of East and West: Tagore and His Critics in Japan, China, and India*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1970), 122.
18) Minami, *Nihonjinron*, 391. Harumi Befu divides the history of *Nihonjinron* into five clear-cut periods, see: "Nationalism and *Nihonjinron*," collected in Stephen S. Large, ed., *Shōwa Japan: Political, Economic, and Social History, 1926–1989, vol.3*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 310.
19) Ōkawa Shūmei, *Nihon no genkō* 日本の言行 [Japan's Words and Deeds], in *Ōkawa Shūmei zenshū: daiikkan* 大川周明全集・第一巻 [Complete Works of Ōkawa Shūmei, vol. 1], (Tokyo: Iwazaki Shobō, 1962), 401.
20) Rabindranath Tagore, "India and Japan," in Supriya Roy, ed., *Talks in Japan*, (Kolkata: Shizen, 2007), 29.
21) *Ibid*., 31.

22) Rabindranath Tagore, *The Message of India to Japan: A Lecture*, (New York: Macmillan, 1916), 11.
23) *Ibid*., 12.
24) *Ibid*., 17.
25) Rabindranath Tagore, *The Spirit of Japan: A Lecture*, (Tokyo: The Indo-Japanese Association, 1916), 5.
26) *Ibid*., 6.
27) *Ibid*., 9–10.
28) *Ibid*., 10.
29) *Ibid*., 11.
30) *Ibid*., 8.
31) Tagore does not define "nationalism" throughout his lectures in Japan, but he gave a definition for "nation" later in America as follows: "A nation, in the sense of the political and economic union of a people, is that aspect which a whole population assumes when organized for a mechanical purpose. Society as such has no ulterior purpose. It is an end in itself." See Rabindranath Tagore, "Nationalism in the West," in *Nationalism*, (San Francisco: The Book Club of California, 1917), 19.
32) Tagore, *The Message of India to Japan*, 21.
33) Rōyama Yoshirō 蝋山芳郎, "Tagōru to Nihon e no keikoku" タゴールと日本への警告 [Tagore and His Warning to Japan], in *Tagōru seitan hyakunensai kinen ronbunshū* タゴール生誕百年祭記念論文集 [Rabindranath Tagore: Commemorative Essays to [*sic*.] Rabindranath Centenary Festival], (Tokyo: Tagore Memorial Association, 1961), 273.
34) Uma Das Gupta, "A Cultural Nationalism," in *The Visvabharati Quarterly*, 48.1-4 (May 1982-April 1983), 47.
35) Tagore, *The Message of India to Japan*, 14.
36) Cited from Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson, *Rabindranath Tagore: The Myriad-Minded Man*, (London and New York: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2009), 200.
37) Rabindranath Tagore, "Talks in China," in Mohit K. Ray, ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume IV: Essays*, (New Delhi: Atlantic, 2007), 752.
38) Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Tagōru to Chūgoku" タゴールと中国 [Tagore and China], in *Takeuchi Yoshimi zenshū* 竹内好全集 [Complete Works of Takeuchi Yoshimi], (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1981), vol. 5, 220.
39) *Ibid.* In a famous 1960 lecture, Takeuchi had roughly compared Dewey's view of modern Japan and China with those of Russell and Tagore. See "Hōhō toshite no Ajia" 方法としてのアジア [Asia as a Method], in *ibid*., 90–115.
40) See Feng Youlan 馮友蘭, "Yu Indu Taiguer tanhua: dongxi wenming zhi bijiaoguan" 與印度泰古爾談話——東西文明之比較觀 [Conversation with Tagore from India: A Comparative View of Eastern and Western Civilizations] in *Sansongtang quanji* 三松堂全集 [Complete Works of Sansong Chamber], (Zhengzhou: Henan People's Publishing House, 2001), vol. 11, 4.
41) Tagore, *The Message of India to Japan*, 17.
42) John Dewey, *China, Japan and the U.S.A: Present-day Conditions in the Far East and Their Bearing on the Washington Conference*, (New York: Republic Publishing Co., Inc., 1921), 3.
43) *Ibid.*
44) *Ibid*., 3–4.
45) *Ibid*., 9–12.
46) *Ibid*., 17.
47) *Ibid*., 16.
48) *Ibid*., 64.
49) Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of China*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1922), 9.
50) *Ibid*., 12.
51) *Ibid*., 98.
52) *Ibid*., 119.
53) *Ibid*., 120.
54) These, of course, are their opinions during the inter-war period. Furthermore, personal feelings expressed in private correspondences and outlooks on civilization published in book forms do not

necessarily coincide.

55) Russell, *The Problems of China*, 14.

56) Minami, *Nihonjinron*, v.

57) Edwin Reischauer, "Early Japan: The Absorption of Chinese Civilization," in John Fairbank, Edwin Reischauer, and Albert Craig, *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation, Revised Edition*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989), 325.

58) Tagore, *The Message of India to Japan*, 18.

59) See Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀, "Taigeer shi yige sheme dongxi" 太戈爾是一個什麼東西！ [What is Tagore!], in Ren Jianshu 任建樹 et al., eds., *Chen Duxiu zhuzuoxuan* 陳獨秀著作選 [Selected Works of Chen Duxiu], (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1993), vol. 2, 683.

60) Russell, *The Problems of China*, 86–116.

61) John Dewey, Robert W. Clopton and Tsuin-chen Ou trs. eds., *Lectures in China, 1919–1920*, (Honolulu: UP of Hawaii, 1973), 238.

62) Sun Yat-sen 孫逸仙, "Dui Shenhu shangyiehuiyisuo deng tuanti de yanshuo" 對神戶商業會議所等團體的演説 [Lecture to the Kobe Commercial Association], in *Sun Zhongshan quanji* 孫中山全集 [Complete Works of Sun Yat-sen], (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1984), vol. 11, 407.

63) *Ibid*., 408.

64) Dewey, *China, Japan and the U.S.A*., 41.

65) Tagore, *The Spirit of Japan*, 14–15.

66) Sugimoto, *An Introduction to Japanese Society*, 20.