

# Toten Miyazaki and Sakuzo Yoshino: Thoughts on Asian Solidarity and Universalism in Pre-war Japan

Ichiro Fujimura<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Research Fellow of the Japan Society for The Promotion of Science, Japan

<sup>2</sup> Graduate School of Arts and Science, The University of Tokyo, Japan

Correspondence: Ichiro Fujimura, Research Fellow of the Japan Society for The Promotion of Science, Japan. Graduate School of Arts and Science, The University of Tokyo, Japan. E-mail: sonicblue1972@yahoo.co.jp

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## Abstract

This study focuses on the theory of Asian solidarity of another genealogy that did not support the fascist regime and World War II to understand more accurately the discussion on thoughts of Asian solidarity in the 21st century. These include the thoughts of Miyazaki Toten and Yoshino Sakuzo and are characterized by the following: (1) they involved universalism and Christianity, (2) they were critical to Japan leader theory (3) and they argued for universalism as a way to build Asia.

**Keywords:** Asian Solidarity, Toten Miyazaki, Sakuzo Yoshino, Transnationalism

## 1. Introduction

Yoshimi Takeuchi (竹内好), reborn at the beginning of this century (Note 1), is an essential figure in thought on solidarity in Asia. This is shown by the fact that he is often referred to in Sun Ge's book (Sun, 2005) (Note 2). Why has he continued to attract attention in Asia? It may be due to his empirically developed point of view that Asian solidarity in modern Japan was closely related to Japan's aggression in Asia. He also had a perspective on Asia allowing for criticism of conservative modernization, the social science of the *Kozaha* (a group of Marxists) and his former positions during the Cold War. Unlike his close friend Masao Maruyama (丸山眞男), he did not use the terminology of social science, in his important works and as a result there are some incomprehensible portions; however, this fact is also part of his personal attraction. In other words, it is attractive to have parts that are not yet understood.

Some such incomprehensible language occurred in his writing about the relationship between Sakuzo Yoshino (吉野作造) and Toten Miyazaki (宮崎滔天). Takeuchi authored 'Outlook on Asianism'(アジア主義の展望), a bibliographical essay, in *Contemporary Japanese Thought*(現代日本思想体系) (Takeuchi, 1963). Section 9 of this paper was entitled

'Toten Miyazaki and Sakuzo Yoshino'. Takeuchi did not refer to their ideological linkage, but instead wrote about how and when Yoshino was introduced to Toten Miyazaki. Takeuchi published *Modern Japan and China*, a joint work with Bunzo Hashikawa (橋川文三), published in 1974 (Takeuchi & Hashikawa, 1974). At the time, Takeuchi also assisted Masamichi Asukai (飛鳥井正道) in writing on the theme of Toten Miyazaki and Sakuzo Yoshino. However, on this occasion, Asukai had no choice but to describe these two as contrasting characters. After all, Takeuchi, having determined an ideological proximity between Sakuzo Yoshino and Toten Miyazaki, did not explicitly reveal this. In this essay, from an indication of Takeuchi, I attempt to search for the connection between Toten Miyazaki and Yoshino Sakuzo in an approach to Asian solidarity theory.

## 2. Sakuzo Yoshino (1878–1933)

Yoshino was well-known as a Democrat of pre-war Japan and a political scholar the Imperial University of Tokyo who continues to appear in history textbooks in present Japan. Yoshino was an intellectual leader of the 'Taisho Democracy' (Note 3). When Yoshino explained democracy, he used the term *minponshugi* (民本主義), a coined word meaning people-centrism; however, he lacked a theory of sovereignty (Jung-Sun, 2012). Yoshino was forced to use a coined word thanks to the 'High Treason Incident' (大逆事件), in which the government oppressed

socialists in 1910. If Yoshino ventured into sovereignty theory, he would have had the same fate as the anarchist Shusui Kotoku (幸徳秋水), who was hanged. In recent years, Yoshino has come to be regarded as a social democrat.

Yoshino has not yet been situated in the trend of Asian solidarity. Thanks to the work of Takayoshi Matsuo (松尾尊兌) and others in the 1970s, it became clear that Yoshino supported the Korean anti-Japanese independence movement (the Three-One Independence Movement/三一独立運動) and the Chinese May Fourth Movement (五四運動), just after

World War I (Matsuo, 1998). However, Yoshino had been exclusively described as following internationalist Wilsonian principles (Mitani, 1995). It is only recently that a full-fledged discussion has begun about Yoshino's Asian solidarity theory (Yonetani, 2006).

With regard to the characteristics of Yoshino's theory of Asian solidarity, he had the vision of an equal partnership between Japan and China at the end of the 1910s. To build equal cooperation, China first needed to implement a nationalist revolution while Japan had to give up its imperialistic policies. Yoshino's argument was therefore a radical policy. However, his argument was not liberated from diplomatic actuality as he kept Japanese national interests in mind. To build an equal partnership, Yoshino argued that Japan should discard most of its aggressive policy and abandon its unfair contracts with China at the end of the 1920s.

After the Manchurian Incident (満洲事変) in 1931, Yoshino was very anxious for Japanese diplomacy, from the point of view of an equal partnership between Japan and China, and he criticised the Japanese military. Yoshino proposed to delay the formal recognition of the Manchu Empire, which was a deadlock for Japanese diplomacy, until the Japanese Empire collapsed in 1945. China could not permit 'Manchukuo' (『満洲国』) to exist, so he argued that the cooperation of the three powers of Japan, 'Manchukuo' and China was impossible (Fujimura, 2012).

Yoshino also insisted on the 'autonomy' of Korea, before the Three-One Independence Movement, in which there was an explosion of nationalism in Korea. His assertions with regard to Korean autonomy did not change significantly before and after the Three-One Independence Movement. Authorities and intellectuals began to speak of policies of 'good government', 'cultural governance' and 'autonomy' to deal with the Three-One Independence Movement. Yoshino distinguished his thinking from this process. Yoshino did not allow for an immediate independence of Korea, but did say that Korean independence was 'justice'. His reply to the independent revolutionary Yo Un-hyung (呂運亨) is evidence. I should discuss this subject separately. In short, Yoshino insisted on autonomism, not excluding the future independence of Korea.

In summary, the East Asian outlook of Yoshino included the cooperation of the three nations: an 'autonomous' Korea, a National-Revolutionary China, a democratized Japan and their solidarity. However, Yoshino's actual policy was gradual, including on the Korean question. His policy was not a revolutionary one, intended to drastically change the situation. Further, as Gordon has shown, no matter how democratic his language was, Yoshino's project did not break the shell of the 'Imperial Democracy' (Gordon, 1991).

### 3. Toten Miyazaki (1871–1922)

Toten Miyazaki is a forerunner whom Yoshino respected. Yoshino reprinted *My Thirty-Three-Year Dream* (『三十三年の夢』), written by Toten, and published an 'Annotated Bibliography' of Toten in *the Imperial University Newspaper* (『帝国大学新聞』).

Yoshino described this book in his bibliography as follows:

This book has great value for his history of the Xinhai Revolution period. What I admire is that his attitude is extremely innocent. He has failed many times and committed sin. Nevertheless, we feel unlimited sympathy, sometimes we are greatly impressed and we can take a number of lessons from this work. I respect him very much, because he preserved a purity of heart about the Chinese Revolution; he is fair and full of the spirit of self-sacrifice. I must confess here that I was able to understand not only the early stages of Chinese

Revolution, but also the true spirit of the real Chinese Revolution through this book. If I recommend 10 books, I am sure to include this book (Yoshino, May 1926).

After Yoshino wrote the above, he inserted Toten's work 'Song of the Falling Blossom' at the end of the 'Annotated Bibliography'. 'Song of the Falling Blossom' was not included in *My Thirty-Three-Year Dream*. He resigned from his position as a professor at Tokyo Imperial University, to become relatively free. In any case, Yoshino praised Toten. Toten's real name was Torazo Miyazaki (宮崎寅藏). He was born in Arao Village (now Arao city, 荒尾市), Kumamoto Prefecture in 1871. He was the youngest of his four brothers. As is well known, Toten dedicated his efforts to assisting Sun Yat-sen (孫逸仙), who led the Chinese revolutionary movement. Toten

studied at Soho Tokutomi (徳富蘇峰) and Oe Private School (大江義塾), and he was interested in the Freedom and People's Rights Movement (自由民権運動) of Meiji Japan. Toten, at this time, was a believer in Christianity. He travelled in Shanghai before and after the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-5. He interacted with Kim Ok-gyun (金玉均) outside Japan. Having learned from such experiences, Toten gradually deepened his interest in East Asia, interacting with the main members of the Revive China society (興中会) founded by Sun Yat-sen. Sympathising with the ideals of their revolution, he began to aid the revolutionary movement. His revolutionary goal was the establishment of an 'Asian Federation' (アジア連盟) of oppressed peoples, such as China, Korea, Taiwan, Siam (Thailand) and the Philippines. Toten, unlike the nationalist Ryohei Uchida (内田良平), was not able to take advantage of the national interests of the revolutionary movement.

#### 4. Japan is not Asia's Leading Power

As already shown in the 'Annotated Bibliography' of Yoshino, the two figures had ideological ties or some common points. They found themselves in the trend of thought of Asian solidarity. There is a distance between their ideas and the idea of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (大東亜共栄圏), which dragged Asia into World War II. Needless to say, the spirit of Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was the keynote of Japan's leadership (Maruyama, 1964). At the end of World War I, Yoshino criticised Japan's leadership as follows.

First, we must abandon our attitude of arrogance, that we could direct the nations of Asia. We should become modest ourselves, and should contribute to them as far as is in our ability. (Yoshino, 1918)

Yoshino advised abandoning the 'arrogant' attitude to Asia. Yoshino thought that Japan did not have the qualifications to lead, in the mental side in particular. It was the same for Toten. He said this in the following manner.

I think that Japan has no strength to move the five continents, even if it becomes very grand. At the same time, if China becomes the ideal state, it would be possible for it to command the whole world in morality. (Miyazaki, 1919)

Toten clearly envisioned a focus on China for Asian solidarity. According to his view, Japan alone was not the leading power in Asia. That is, he had not bought into the thought of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

We will discuss the similarity between the two of them a little longer. They were both under the influence of Christianity. Yoshino went to Sendai church (仙台教会) of Masayoshi Oshikawa (押川方義) from around the age of 17. When he was 19 years old, he was admitted to Sendai, a secondary high school college preparatory course of law, in 1897. In the following year, 1898, Yoshino joined the English Bible class of Shokei Girl's School (尚綱女学校), where Mrs. Buzzell was principal, and he became a Baptist. After this Yoshino lived as a Christian for the rest of his life. In the Sendai era, Yoshino belonged to the Baptist Church. However, while studying at the Imperial University of Tokyo (東京帝国大学), he was attracted to the preacher Danjo Ebina (海老名弾正), who was a central figure in the new theology movement (新神学運動). He became a member of Hongo Church (本郷教会) of Ebina in 1900. (Mitani, 1995)

Toten Miyazaki was admitted to the Tokyo College English Department (now Waseda University) in 1886, was baptised at Bancho Church (番町教会), organized by Hiromichi Kozaki (小崎弘道) when he was 17 years old. After he heard the preaching of Danjo Ebina at the Kumamoto English School (熊本英学校), he was admitted to Cobleigh Seminary Nagasaki (長崎カプリー校 / 現鎮西学院), in order to learn more about theology. At 19 years of age, in 1889, it is thought that he met the anarchist Isak Ben Abraham, about whom little is known. As a result, Toten's revolutionary philosophy was thought not to fit the framework of 'religion', and he became an apostate. (Takeda, 1974).

The Christian faith of these two men valued respect for individuals and equality. The personalism of Christianity led to their political and social views. Christian personalism was also applied to their domestic politics as well as their international politics. Christian personalism can be linked to their antipathy to power politics in international relations. Yoshino and Toten respected the freedom and equality of other nations.

#### 5. Universalism and Asian solidarity

For freedom and the development of the 'personality' of each nation in the international community, Yoshino advocated *Shikai Doho* (四海同胞), which means Universal Brotherhood, to demand freedom and equality between nations. At first, Yoshino, in his international studies, was directed to theoretical considerations of centralised international mechanisms. However, later Yoshino came to consider the reality of international relations and Japan's diplomacy, and to focus on the East Asian situation around the time of World War I. At that time, he created an equal partnership between Japan and China and began to think respectfully about Korean nationalism. In short, Yoshino moved gradually to a point of view focusing on how to achieve solidarity in East Asia from the

abstract logic of universalism and humanism. In the above-mentioned paper, Yoshino discussed, in the context of criticism of Japan's leadership, Japan's 'cultural' mission as follows.

Japan must be aware of its higher mission to eventually contribute to world civilization. But we must limit our activities to the East for a while. If we do not succeed in this region, Japan's world mission will end in smoke. (Yoshino, 1918)

In the context of criticising Japan's leadership in Asian solidarity, Yoshino argued that Japan should play a role in East Asia, in order that it could come to play a universal role. In other words, Japan should come to have a cultural value for East Asia, and it does not have to become a military power. Moreover, according to Yoshino, Japan is not qualified to teach other nations of the East, because Japan lacks inner qualities. In its effort to carry out the cultural development of Asia, Japan first must commit itself to self-reform. Precisely because Yoshino had a universalistic tendency, he emphasised the importance of Japan's role in East Asia. He had a very different view of such a role.

Toten also showed a strong universal tendency. For example, he spoke in the following manner in *My Thirty-Three-Year Dream*.

I believe the *Jinrui Doho* (人類同胞), and therefore I hate the law of the jungle. I admit the world is one family, and therefore I hate national competition as we know it today. I will destroy or remove those hatreds. If this is not done, it will end the dream. Therefore, I recognize the need for violence. I have finally become a world revolutionary. (Miyazaki, 1902)

*Jinrui Doho* means Universal Brotherhood. Toten has a striking profile in modern history as an Asian solidarity theorist, but he actually had a strongly universal tendency. The problem was neither the White Peril nor the Yellow Peril. He did not change his universal tendency. However, this universal tendency, in the real politics of the world, shifted in the following manner.

My initial starting point was the principle of the humanity of the world, so I thought to be based in China, where there was power. Thus I had an urgency to downplay the partial problem. (Miyazaki, 1902).

'The partial problem' referred to here is the remodelling of Japan. Toten had a universal tendency, so he placed a priority on the transformation of China as the centre of Asia. In sum, Yoshino and Toten, despite the difference in their practical expedients, had a similar thought process. In other words, as they respected the ideals of universalism, they tried to solve a real problem for East Asia. They had the attitude to respond to the universal challenge by resolution of a real problem in East Asia. As Western countries continued their colonial and imperial policies in Asia while flying the flag of freedom and equality. Yoshino and Toten caught on to nationalism as a keyword of the era, and attempted to free was for universalism as a way to build Asia. Their argument was for universalism as a way to build Asia.

## 6. Conclusion

As we have seen, Yoshino and Toten had similarities and common points. On policy, 1. They advocated or supported the Chinese Nationalist Revolution; 2. they therefore had severe criticism for Japan's aggressive policies in East Asia; 3. they were opposed to Japan's leadership in Asia. In their thought, 1. they were influenced by Christianity; 2. they believed in universalism; 3. they argued for universalism as a way to build Asia.

After confirming the similarities and common points between them, we must return to the discovery of Yoshimi Takeuchi mentioned at the beginning of this article. Takeuchi discussed the idea of 'Asia as method' in the following manner.

In order to realise, on a much larger scale, superior cultural value of Western Europe, we will re-wrap the West once again by the East, and we will transform the West from the East in an opposite manner. We will create a universality by this resumed cultural offensive or resumed offensive on values. Oriental strength will transform the West in order to enhance universal values produced by the West (Takeuchi, 1963).

Takeuchi's concept of 'Asia as method' had many elements in common with Yoshino and Toten. It was once thought that 'Asia as method' as interpreted by Takeuchi had reference to the path of modernisation. Some examples of this interpretation include 'modernisation of western style', the 'modernisation of non-European and American style', 'Japanese style' or 'Chinese style'. However, Takeuchi, it has been suggested, did not intend to remain at 'modernisation', thinking of something on a grander scale.

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## Notes

Note 1. Yoshimi Takeuchi (1910-1977) was a Sinologist, a cultural critic and translator. He studied Chinese author Lu Xun (鲁迅) and translated Lu's works into Japanese. He set to reviewing Japanese modern history through Asian solidarity.

Note 2. Sun Ge (孫歌): A professor at the Institute of Literature in the Chinese Academy of Social Science.

Note 3. 'Taisho Democracy' refers to the movements that emerged in Japan's Taisho period (1912–1926), urging greater freedom and democracy in politics, society and culture. But, according to some researchers, we should not be using Taisho as an era name, a year of the reign of an Emperor, in consideration of the independence movement and the democratisation movement in East Asian Nations around this time.

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