

# 犬養毅（1855～1932年）の「自由主義的アジア主義」：機会主義、現実主義と理想主義に挟まれた日本・大陸関係

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The Liberal Asianism of Inukai Tsuyoshi (1855-1932) : Japanese Relations with the Mainland between Opportunism, Pragmatism and Idealism

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## 要 旨

戦前の日本におけるアジア主義は、明治初期の政治および思想の状況までルーツを遡ることなく全体像が見えてこない。同じ時期に、自由民権運動の隆盛が見受けられるのだが、これは決して偶然ではない。揺籃期のアジア主義と民権思想は、表裏一体であり、日本のリベラリズムの伝統と、アジア主義の系譜とは離れがたく溶け込んでいる。アジアとの連携をオープンで、両方通行の交流と考え、一生その交流に尽力して過ごした犬養毅の死は、自由主義を基盤に成立していた政党政治の終焉を意味するだけでなく、このような自由主義的アジア主義の可能性にも致命的な打撃であった、とする。犬養の死は、政党政治への不満の表れとしてのみ理解するのではなく、アジアに対する接し方との決別としても考えるべきであり、そうすることによって初めてその真の意味が語れるのであるのが、この論文の核心である。

キーワード：アジア主義、自由主義、犬養毅、日中関係

## Abstract

Asianism in prewar Japan can only be assessed in its totality when the early Meiji period is taken into consideration. During this same period, Japan experienced the rise of the Movement for Freedom and Popular Rights. This was not a coincidence. I contend that early Asianism and the thought of the Movement were not just connected, but that the history of liberalism in Japan and the lineage of Asianist thought are closely intertwined. The assassination of Inukai Tsuyoshi put an end not just to liberal politics, and party-political cabinets, but to the potential of an opener and more equal exchange between Japan and Asia.

Key words: Asianism, liberalism, Inukai Tsuyoshi, Sino-Japanese relations

## 1. Introduction

It may seem strange, or even unwise, to combine “liberal” and “Asianism” in a modern Japanese political context: both terms can be defined so broadly that all specificity, and therewith all explanatory power, vanishes. Conversely, when a narrow definition is used, pinning both down on a set of actors and their openly professed political ideals, any overlapping seems improbable: Japanese liberals romanced Mill and Britain, not Mencius and China. Asianists advocated revolution and empire, not polls and tolerance.

On the one hand, it was Takeuchi Yoshimi, authority in the research on Asianism, who stated that “there

are as many definitions as there are dictionaries” and “any attempt at anchoring Asianism as a category is bound to fail.”<sup>1</sup> Recent research does offer more specific definitions, be it in reference to *Pan-Asianism*, in which strong emphasis is put on nationalist and expansionist aims (although not exclusively). Again, however, when defined in this manner, most politicians of the modern period – ‘liberal’ Taisho years included – were indeed “Asianists”: nationalist, in favour of some degree of expansion and quite proud of Japan’s leading role in Asia. Put briefly: the range remains too wide.

As for liberalism itself, Nancy Rosenblum has argued that “it is clear enough what liberalism opposed in the past and must stand opposed to still [...] liberalism’s positive promise, especially its moral purposes and justifications, is more elusive.”<sup>2</sup> This is not the place to dwell on a case history of political movements being regarded as “liberal”. Let it suffice to point out here that few would oppose calling the late Ienaga Saburō, who fought protracted legal battles against the Ministry of Education concerning the freedom to use history textbooks that are critical of Japan’s wartime actions in Asia, a “liberal”, while at the other end of the political spectrum, those groups who wished to see many more of the passages critical of Japan’s past being removed from existing textbooks had no qualms whatsoever about calling themselves ... “liberal”.

On the other hand, as far as concerns the narrow definition: those rare cases found in prewar intellectual discourse seem to have had no lasting impact on political practice. Yoshino Sakuzō, for instance, increasingly sympathetic towards Asia<sup>3</sup>, was recognized as an important liberal opinion leader and did join a political party (the *Shakai Minshūtō*) but failed to captivate the crowds. At an earlier stage, Nakae Chōmin had combined liberal political ideas with Asianist sympathies, but he too ended up in an obscure corner of the political field: one of the last people to meet him at his deathbed was Tōyama Mitsuru, the godfather of the Pan-Asianist right-wing, and Nakae never ceased to proclaim his respect for Japan’s “incomparable” imperial tradition.<sup>4</sup>

What is the problem?

First of all, it can be argued that liberalism – and what we generally recognize as its political outcome in prewar Japan: Taisho democracy – fell victim to the authoritarianism of the military, who did not refrain of using Asianism as an ideological tool for aggressive expansion on the Asian mainland. Before long, the harsh reality of protracted war in China and the Pacific would tear this cloak to shreds. Asianism, that once so shining ideal of solidarity of the weak against imperialism, was discredited as a veil, and after the war’s end, as a valid framework at all. Indeed, a revival of the discourse (‘Asian values’) in the late 1980ies was quickly identified with – and condemned as – a reappraisal of the prewar imperialist project itself.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the observation that liberalism was crushed by the military seems to go hand in hand with the observation that it was unable to stop militarism, lacking in popular support, or a power base (or both). Also, one could accuse Asianism – as an ideal, a value to be fulfilled, a political discourse – to have been too weak, too prone to abuse and usurpation, too easily tuned to the needs of expansionists.

But is the worth of an ideal to be reduced to its historical manifestations, and the promises of its youth discarded as vain illusions? In the domain of intellectual history meaning is not a function of probability, let

<sup>1</sup> Matsumoto 2001, pp. 3-9.

<sup>2</sup> Rosenblum 1989, p.5.

<sup>3</sup> Matsuo 1998, pp 3-230.

<sup>4</sup> Kano 1999, pp.72-9; Matsumoto 1974, pp. 93-107.

<sup>5</sup> Stevens 1995, pp. 5-29.

alone substantiality or success. Much more than a tidy cemetery harboring the tombstones of glorious prophets and patriarchs, it is a necropolis of wasted chances and probabilities, a maze of moss-grown crypts and cryptic epitaphs that presagefully whisper 'if only'. To put it as Hegel did: "*Der Weg des Geistes ist der Umweg.*"<sup>6</sup> Once upon a time both liberalism and Asianism hoisted their resplendent flags, billowing side by side in the winds of change that blew in Meiji Japan, and many gathered around them, and certainly not the least of minds.

In this article I wish to focus on Inukai Tsuyoshi (1855-1932), more particularly his stance in terms of liberal thought and action, and his Asianist commitment. Although his death is commonly equated with the end of pre-war democracy and although he entertained amicable relations with many Chinese leaders until the day of his death, few would hold that Inukai played a leading part in either of both lineages. Nonetheless, little was achieved in them in which he was not involved. Further scrutiny into the life and thought of Inukai is therefore warranted and even necessary. For one, as an active politician who was able to embody – however imperfect and frail – an idea, an ideal even, that was eliminated by eliminating the man himself, he deserves our attention. As it happens, Inukai was not a political thinker per se: he never occupied a chair in academia and published little. What we know about his ideas comes mainly from speeches written down by his followers, letters and the reminiscences of fellow-politicians or siblings.

Not only as a person he is noteworthy, however, but also as a 'knot' of apparently divergent currents: the liberal discourse with its stress on political freedoms, the current of 'Taisho democracy' with its stress on expanding the suffrage and party cabinets, the 'colonial' mindset with its stress on boldly defined national interests, the 'Asianist' filament with its ambitious, non-official projects rooted in a sense of commonality, the anti-militarism that cost him his life. I will try to shed light – not without a pinch of optimism – on a connection that tends to get little attention: how and at what level did liberal politics connect to the 'world' of Asianism, including political agency on the mainland? This question is not meant as an evaluation of Taisho liberalism as such but rather as the starting point for a short expose on one of its 'faces' and facets.

## 2. Liberalism and Asianism

Hoston has argued that the true weakness of Japanese liberalism lies in its "traditionalist conflation of nation and state,"<sup>7</sup> in other words in its inability to escape a fundamental identification with the state in terms of means as well as ends. That observation can be turned on its head: for quite a while, the Japanese state was such that it did incorporate liberal ideas. Indeed, it should not be overlooked that until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, few countries east of the *Oder* had a modern constitution and a working parliament, or were able to avoid being colonized by the West in the first place.

But is liberal success to be considered proportionate to Western influence, to a 'true' understanding of Western ideas, and its failure the result of a lack thereof? It can be assumed that the conflation of nation and state – and the 'imperial tradition' as an outstanding tool to weld them together – made the initial effort of construing a modern nation, with all its coercion and artificial identities, much easier for Japan, or possible at

<sup>6</sup> Beiser 1993, p. 277.

<sup>7</sup> Hoston 1992, p. 310.

all. Or as Dipesh Chakrabarty put it: “European thought is at once both indispensable and inadequate in helping us to think through the experiences of political modernity in non-Western nations.”<sup>8</sup>

Be that as it may, liberalism was more than a body of translated texts in Japan. It was a tortuous search, with as many setbacks as achievements, its progress hampered by the shrewd flexibility of its authoritarian (and no less Westernized) opponents rather than a lack of active energy or intellectual capacity at the popular level.

There seems to be less room for interpretation concerning the extent to which ‘Asianism’ was successful. In terms of discourse – liberating Asia – it acquired the status of official orthodoxy in the 1930ies, and especially after 1938 when Prime Minister Kono’e publicly announced his project of a “new order in East Asia” (*tōa shin-chitsujo*). As such, that is contrasted to colonial reality, and after the ‘successes’ of late Meiji, culminating in the annexation of Korea, in particular, it proved far from untainted by colonialism and imperialism.

‘Westernization’ and the ‘nationalization’ of many aspects of Japanese social life in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century took place at the expense of ‘Asia’ – culturally (within Japan) and territorially. And yet Asia was bulky, in both respects, and hard to delineate. The process of ‘orientalizing’ Asia was not a smooth nor an uncontested one, in academics and politics alike, as has been shown by Stephan Tanaka or Joshua Fogel in the past.<sup>9</sup> Asianism comprised an idealistic core that transcended the limits of one nation/state. As such it withstood the ‘orientalization’ or marginalization of Asia, as undertaken by a Western-focused mainstream in Japan. Taking part, and often taking a lead in Japan’s colonial projects, it forsook that moral high ground. Within less than a generation it was basically transformed from a theory of ‘Asian solidarity’ (*rentai-ron*), as still found with Tarui Tōkichi’s *Tōyō Shakai-tō* into a vehicle for conquest, as *pan*-Asianism (*han-ajia-shugi*) is commonly identified.<sup>10</sup>

For many years, however, Asian solidarity was an ideal around which at some point or another many great minds gathered: pacifists, socialists, and radicals as well as moderate liberals. Although in the *ménage à trois* of Japanism, ‘Westernism’ and Asianism – ‘the great frontline against feudal clique government’<sup>11</sup> – three soon became a crowd, for a certain while at least, ‘Asianism’ continued operating at a certain distance from the state in a legal-political sense, not unlike liberalism. In that respect, both were objective allies, struggling against authoritarian government policy, domestically and internationally: one could learn from the West, or not, but its presence in Asia was rejected by both. For liberalism, such alliance was only possible to the extent that it realized that its essence, the quest for freedom, was not to be found in Western theory alone, but in Eastern practice too. The ideal of an Asia free from Western colonialism (and Unequal Treaties) offered a common ground, even and in particular for the most progressive of political thinkers.

To give one example: there was more involved than geography when liberal activist Ueki Emori called his October 1877 proposal for a constitution the *Proposal for a Constitution for the Great Country of Japan in the*

<sup>8</sup> Chakrabarty 2000, p.16.

<sup>9</sup> See Tanaka 1992, for the case of Shiratori Kurakichi, or Fogel 1984, for Naitō Konan – well-acquainted with Inukai by the way – in particular.

<sup>10</sup> For a recent treatment on Tarui, see Suzuki & Li 2007, pp.20-57; for a recent overview concerning pan-Asianism, see Saaler & Koschmann 2007, pp 1-18.

<sup>11</sup> Maruyama 1947, p.104.

*East (tōyō dai nipponkoku kokken'an)*.<sup>12</sup> Ueki's best-received work, *On Popular Rights and Freedom (Minken jiyūron)*<sup>13</sup>, was published in March 1879, after a three-months stay at the *Kōyō Sha* (向陽社) in Fukuoka, a precursor of the notorious *Genyō-sha*. E.H. Norman's judgment that the *Kōyō-sha* only paid "lip-service"<sup>14</sup> to liberal ideals sounds, as far as concerns its first years at least, rather harsh, if we are to believe other historians.<sup>15</sup> One of the first groups within the national Movement for Freedom that presented a petition for the establishment of a parliament (*kokkai kensetsu kenpaku* 国会建設建白) to the central government, sometime after a first initiative in *Bizen* (Okayama) but months before Itagaki Taisuke did, was the *Chikuzen Kyōai Kōshū Kai*, an association founded by *Kōyō-sha* members.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, even if it included many liberal stipulations, the proposal for a constitution written by Ueki two years earlier attributed very considerable executive powers to the emperor (to whom Ueki referred as *kōtei*). Here too, rather than as an idealistic recapitulation of Western liberal ideals, the draft has to be seen as a practical tool to enable armed revolt against an oppressive Meiji government<sup>17</sup>. Its identification as a precursor of the postwar constitution has to a considerable extent to be considered a postwar construct by scholars such as Suzuki Yasuzō or Ienaga Saburō who wanted to position it in such manner after the war<sup>18</sup>. In 1882 already he renounced his earlier Christian faith, not because he had handily "used" the Christian faith, as Ienaga argued<sup>19</sup>, to build a spiritual base for his theory, but because he realized that equivalent objects of true faith could be found in oriental tradition.<sup>20</sup>

At the 'radical' liberalist *Jiyū-tō* side such commitment was not uncommon (Ōi Kentarō is another example), but at the *Rikken Kaishin-tō* side – with many Fukuzawa disciples in it – few people were found with similar perspectives, especially after 1884 (the failure of the *Gapsin* coup in Korea). Nonetheless, Fukuzawa Yukichi's appeal to 'leave Asia' almost two decades after the Restoration has to be understood not a frivolous recapitulation of the obvious, but a succinct expression of an urgent wish.<sup>21</sup>

Generally speaking, at a time when the national government was focusing all its energy on internal reform, and concomitantly on Westernization (the *Rokumeikan* period), 'Asia' was a legacy, a topic and an ideal left available for mobilization by the opposition – a symbol somewhere between nostalgia and utopia. It was in the 1890ies when more clarity arose regarding Japanese imperial interests and aspirations on the mainland (for instance, the friction with China regarding political control over the Korean peninsula) that the first steps for an officialization of support for Asian modernizers and Asianist activists (in line with Japan's interests) were taken. Even if this development was not a simple reflection of public and even official opinion in Japan, Reynold's referral to the ten years after the failing of the Hundred Days Reform in China as a "golden decade" in Sino-Japanese relations is not unfounded.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Ueki 1990, vol VI pp. 96-122.

<sup>13</sup> Ueki 1990, vol I pp. 1-36.

<sup>14</sup> Norman 1945, pp. 103-4.

<sup>15</sup> Umahara 1956, pp. 48-64.

<sup>16</sup> Ishitaki 1981, pp. 68-89; *Genyō Sha* 1917, 213-22.

<sup>17</sup> Obata 2007, pp. 471-525.

<sup>18</sup> As found in Suzuki 1947 or Ienaga 1960.

<sup>19</sup> Ienaga 1960, p. 91.

<sup>20</sup> Obata 2004, pp. 49-69.

<sup>21</sup> See Fukuzawa 1885, pp. 221-4; Banno 1985, 55-74.

<sup>22</sup> Reynolds 1987, pp. 93-153.

When asked in 1899 what his further plans were, Miyazaki Tōten could answer, casually almost: “we’re just going to try to implement J.S. Mill’s *On Liberty* in China” – as it turns out, he was met with loud laughter and the reply that that was “going to take a lot of capital.”<sup>23</sup> In 1906 still, a Protestant missionary in China remarked that “Japan’s true policy is not to force China into a sham similitude of western civilization and ideals, but to use the accessories of the Occident for the preservation of the fundamentals of Oriental life and policy.”<sup>24</sup>

In the intellectual domain, the ideal lived on for quite a while: Yoshino Sakuzō was able to link his domestic programme for democratic government (*minpon-shugi*) to a sympathy for the anti-authoritarianism of Chinese students in and after May 1919 – although he had supported the 21 Demands some years earlier. Yoshino recognized that the target of Chinese vexation was not ‘Japan’ as such, but that the anger was directed at ‘Japanese authoritarianism’, the same *hanbatsu* authoritarianism that marred Japanese political life at home.<sup>25</sup>

Many other intellectual leaders, men such as Tokutomi Sohō for instance, were not willing to share that perspective – the more so when active in right-wing politics. It is at the point that those who cherished hopes for Asian solidarity relinquished the ideal of ‘freedom’ for the realities of empire, and liberals abandoned their dreams for Asia for the same reason, that the duet broke off. An inversion occurred: the more stress on Asia, the more Japan’s leadership was emphasized or presupposed.<sup>26</sup> And yet, however weak, some politicians proved willing to continue to see more in Asia than a horizon for conquest. It is in this respect I wish to draw attention to Inukai.

First of all, I will focus on the early career of Inukai, during which he established his fame as a liberal journalist and evolved into a thoroughbred party politician. The premise hereby will be that his liberal formation was grafted on an outspokenly non-European mindset. In section two I will focus on the second half of his career, during which he paired increasing success as a parliamentarian to an outspoken commitment to ‘Asianist’ causes. In the third and last part, I will shed light on the inherent deficiencies and external crises that catapulted Inukai into power but left him grappling – in vain – for a grip on affairs that would seal his fate, that of Japan and perhaps East Asia as a whole.

### 3. Inukai – journalist, politician, liberal

How can we value Inukai’s qualities as a liberal? In a Meiji context, liberalism can be thought of as a generic term for all those who challenged authoritarianism as embodied by the Chōshū and Satsuma cliques, be it advocating voluntarism (Fukuzawa Yukichi), the establishment of democratic institutions (Ueki Emori, Ono Azusa) or equitable participation in state power (Itagaki Taisuke, Ōkuma Shigenobu). Once the Diet established and the gradual development toward Taisho Democracy underway, the focus shifted toward creating as much space as possible for a party (i.e., popular) voice within the institutionalized decision making process, up against *hanbatsu* dominated, extra-constitutional institutions in particular – including, to some extent, the Army. Although rarely in a leading position, Inukai played an important part in both periods. Even

<sup>23</sup> Miyazaki 1926, p. 195.

<sup>24</sup> Reynolds, p. 96.

<sup>25</sup> Mitani 1972, pp. 236-41.

<sup>26</sup> Furuya 1984, pp. 47-9.

if he chose to participate in government-led projects at more than one occasion, compromising on crucial issues, he should be counted among Japan's foremost opposition leaders and influential liberals, lest a multitude of men of lesser merit be excluded.

At the same time, it is clear that Inukai's political style was not fashioned after Western models. This is surprising and yet again, not. Obviously, in both Meiji and Taisho, Western theories played a considerable part in triggering new dynamics, and progress was more often than not measured in terms of a Western standard. Often, it was by studying abroad that liberals kept abreast of new developments and translating a major work out of English, French or German was a rite of passage for many – including Inukai. Reading Rousseau was one thing, getting elected, however, another.

Even though he studied at Fukuzawa's *Keiō Gijyuku* (1876 onwards), translated American works on economy and parliamentary procedures (Carey, Cushing) and did not refrain from using occidental models (“civilized nations”) as a point of reference, Inukai never visited a Western country. When still in Okayama, he acquired his first knowledge on Western theories through Chinese or Sino-Japanese sources, not an uncommon route in that day: Martin's 1864 *Wanguo kungfa* (Jp. *bankoku kōhō*) on international law, Hobson's 1864 *Hakubutsu shinpen* on natural sciences, Aochi Rinshū's 1826 *Kikai kanran* on physics.<sup>27</sup> Ever since the start of his national political career, he appears to have given up reading Western works at all.<sup>28</sup> As for his appearance, he fashioned himself not as a modern gentleman flaunting his Western tastes – as anglophile Ozaki Yukio for instance did – but rather as a ‘wise man’ of oriental cast and confucianist inspiration. He was a passionate collector of swords and inkstones and an accomplished calligrapher, an avid reader of Chinese classics, and his great examples were Saigō Takamori, Nogi Maresuke, and Ogyū Sorai.<sup>29</sup> In fact, Korea and China were the only places Inukai visited outside of Japan, on relatively short trips with circumscribed purposes. He made use of a machinery to collect votes in his rural bailiwick that, as Sutton puts it, was successful in utilizing ‘organs which predated the party system by a thousand years.’<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, it was Inukai who, together with Ozaki, was given the title ‘god of constitutional government’ in his struggle against the Katsura cabinet, who played a considerable role in achieving universal male suffrage and whose death heralded ‘the collapse of Taisho Democracy.’<sup>31</sup>

So how did Inukai formulate his liberal c.q. democratic ideas? In his memoirs, Ozaki Yukio remembers Inukai as his oldest friend and as a ‘man of action’<sup>32</sup> rather than intellectual debate. Abstract freedom was not an ultimate (nor a useful) ideal for Inukai. Certainly, in his early writings, he placed very high importance on transparency, moderation and the freedom to discuss political affairs, but even at that time, only as a means to the fulfillment of a greater cause. While, as mentioned, he frequently spoke of ‘civilization’, he did not fail to put stress on the domestic-economic route towards it. Later on, it was the good of the nation (*kokumin*) that became a dominant touchstone for political propriety in national and international (China in particular) affairs. Throughout it was internal stability and a feasible balance of power abroad that was his highest ideal. His

<sup>27</sup> Koyama 1965, pp. 199-204. See also Yamamuro 2001.

<sup>28</sup> Najita 1968, p. 500.

<sup>29</sup> Tokitō 2002, pp. 185-210; Inukai 1922, pp. 147-158.

<sup>30</sup> Sutton 1954, p. 136.

<sup>31</sup> Sims 2001, pp. 123-78.

<sup>32</sup> Ozaki 1952, p. 277.

vision was *sangyō rikkoku*, or a “Japan Inc.” *avant-la-lettre* and it would remain unchanged until the very last. In a speech delivered in December 1929 he clarifies the ‘essence of *sangyō rikkoku*-ism’ as the enhancing of scientific knowledge among the people through international cooperation, acquiring raw materials for Japan’s industry by peaceful means and decreasing the military budget – hardly different from what he had said almost 4 decades before.<sup>33</sup>

In 1881 already, Inukai gathered fame as a man of intellectual prowess in the debates he carried on with Taguchi Ukichi about the desirability of protectionism (Inukai, in the short-lived *Tōkyō Keizai Shinpō*, which he established himself) or free trade (Taguchi in the *Tōkyō Keizai Zasshi*). Articles and reactions were written back and forth in the second half of the same year.<sup>34</sup> It has been suggested that Inukai won the debate, being able to make use of recent Western works, allegedly provided by the *Mitsubishi group*.<sup>35</sup> Not coincidentally, in 1884 in the wake of this debate, he would publish a translation of Henry Charles Carey’s 1860 *Principles of Social Science*. And yet, even when quoting John Stuart Mill and Adam Smith, he did not base the validity of the argument on its being Western. Inukai argued that international society could not be treated as ‘one big land’ and that local differences resulted in different accents and levels of industrial specialty. Ignoring such diversity and allowing free trade would result in the subservience of a still weak Japanese economy to foreign powers, as had happened in India, Turkey, China. Inukai opposed what he considered the ‘misguided’ ideal of ‘freedom of trade’ to that of the freedom of economic activity for all people in our nation (*zenkoku jinmin mina*).<sup>36</sup>

It was his profound wish to see the whole of Japanese society engaging in trade and industry – but not at every price. Freedom was understood as a very important value, one of the motive forces behind any kind of progress, but was paired to a keen sense of national interest. Two other writings by Inukai in the same period offer similar arguments, pleading for firm control over custom rights, and urging Japan to develop into a mercantile nation, rather than one led by military logic (*tsūshō* vs. *seiryaku*). Inukai criticized the Korea campaign idea of 1873, for instance, not as ‘precocious’ but rather as a typical tool of out-of-date and uncivilized ‘strategic’ thinking. At a time when the revision of the Unequal Treaties continued rousing heated debate, Inukai did not fail to add that “it goes without saying that in the event that a foreign country disgraces our *kokutai*, tarnishes our nation’s splendour or harms the interests of its people, we shall be the first to castigate it.”<sup>37</sup>

These sort of remarks were more than trivial additions: in 1889 Ōkuma lost a leg in an attack by a *Genyō Sha* member for a too compromising attitude in the same matter. Just as he had managed to escape government suppression, despite his criticism, Inukai was able to avoid similar assaults. More even, while the 1917 History of the *Genyō-sha* (*Genyō Sha Shashi*) offers grim details of the attack on Ōkuma, with hardly veiled pride, it mentions Inukai as the Okayama ‘*minken*’ (people’s rights) equivalent of its own ‘*kokken*’ (national interest) oriented struggle in Fukuoka, without the slightest trace of irony.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Inukai 1929, 106-114.

<sup>34</sup> Nihon Rekishi Gakkai 2000, pp. 89-117.

<sup>35</sup> Uzaki 1932, p. 71.

<sup>36</sup> Inukai 1913, p. 12. The original publication dates from 1887.

<sup>37</sup> Inukai 1913, p. 68.

<sup>38</sup> *Genyō Sha* 1917, pp. 370-400, 589-91.

Be that as it may, given his moderate tone and economy focused argumentation, it is not surprising that Inukai chose to side with Ōkuma's *Rikken Kaishin-tō*, rather than accepting the offer made by Gotō Shōjirō to join the more radical *Jiyū Tō*, in spite of his sympathy for Gotō.<sup>39</sup> It is against the backdrop of this divide between moderate and radical action – in view of the prospect of the establishment of a parliament – that he published what may be considered his most representative writing of this period (Nov. 1887): *A Lighthouse in the Sea of Politics* (*Seikai no tōdai*), partly consisting of pieces he wrote in the turbulent years before the 1886 attempt to blow new life into the opposition movement, a period also characterized by the so-called 'radical incidents' (*gekka jiken*), mainly uprisings in poverty-struck rural areas, as described by Bowen.<sup>40</sup>

Not coincidentally, its first words are (literally) '*festina lente*'. The whole document can be read as a statement – a manual almost – regarding sound political practice. It contains pleas for restraint on the part of the 'lower echelons' when challenging government policy, more specifically the need to distinguish between the bureaucrats as persons and the policy they try to enforce 'mechanically' – the way of civilized nations. At the same time, he demands transparency at the upper levels. Decisions should not only be made and enforced, but also explained – Inukai warned for the counterproductive effect of violently stifling resistance against them. Here again, he upheld the ideal of freedom of speech and association, arguing that no discourse that is 'intelligent and based on experience and neutral and pertinent' should ever be declared unlawful, be it with a tactical warning that extreme expressions will only alarm the government unneededly and should be refrained from.<sup>41</sup>

Elaborating on the preconditions for 'peaceful and smooth competition' (meaning: non-violent political discussion) he referred to the ideal of the neutral politician, knowledgeable and able to incorporate both official and non-official viewpoints (*chūritsu no tokugi*). Inukai rejected 'unlearned' audaciousness – the *inoshishi musha* unadapted to an advanced civilized nation – in favour of learned 'cowardice'. He held that 'one should realize that to govern means to start out from boring figures based on calculations, and that political power rests in a combination of intellectual powers, a formless force, hidden but present like an enemy country lurking at the border.'<sup>42</sup>

Inukai's arguments were not radical nor strictly theoretical: they avoided fundamental issues such as imperial vs popular sovereignty, the legitimacy of protest etc. Indeed, the means described, the targets mentioned, the examples used all pertain to the domain of political practice. Moreover, they were not meant to challenge two major premises: the given of a national arena, and the leading role of a class of learned men. Of course – Koyama calls it 'a self-evidence' for Inukai<sup>43</sup> – the learned men to which politics should be entrusted are to be found in political parties, and there alone.

The importance of a national perspective also becomes clear in his description of political theory as a whole, using the metaphorical illustration of a tree as found in Carey's work.<sup>44</sup> Whereas Carey uses the illustration to explain the structural relation between matter (the roots), man (the stem) and the five main branches of

<sup>39</sup> Uzaki 1932, pp. 58-63.

<sup>40</sup> Bowen 1980.

<sup>41</sup> Inukai 1887, p. 35.

<sup>42</sup> Inukai 1887, pp. 46-8.

<sup>43</sup> Koyama 1965, p. 203.

<sup>44</sup> Inukai 1887, p. 40; McKean 1864, p. 26.

knowledge, Inukai replaces them in his version with patriotism (*aikoku-shin*) as the root, political discourse (*seiron*) as the stem and foreign politics (*gaisei*), domestic politics (*naisei*), discussions on national power (*kokkenron*), discussions on form of government (*seitairon*) and a fifth, bifurcated into radical conservatism and radical reformism, respectively. Inukai explains how the main root of patriotism splits out into the smaller roots of experience, courage, morals, wisdom, self-confidence, knowledge – all providing the tree with necessary nutrition. Inukai belittles the fierce clash between natural right (*tenpu jinkenron*) and divine (theocratic) right (*shinkenron*) theory, as products of an early stage, ‘infantile and vague’. He values, on the other hand, discussions on financial politics or industrial development as the outcome of the most advanced development, requiring most (deepest rooted) knowledge and experience. Even while recognizing that strong politicians are needed in times of trouble, he allows for personal ambition as a driving force only when it is paired to responsibility and “true patriotism.”<sup>45</sup>

These remarks are more than a theoretical refutation of radicalism. The above-mentioned work consists to a considerable extent of excerpts previously published in the *Chōya Shinbun*. As said, in the context of the 1880ies, it is significant – and telling of his awakening political aspirations – that Inukai puts himself at an equal distance from Hirata-esque appeals for direct imperial rule and, on the other hand, Rousseau-based calls for egalitarianism and activism. In the last decade of his life, Inukai would find himself caught in a similar position, between right-wing conservatives and militarists on the one and a looming mass party (*musan-seitō*) at the other end of the political spectrum. Actually, Sutton identifies Inukai’s stint as an editor for the *Chōya Shinbun* as a learning school during which, despite the Peace Preservation Ordinances of 1886, he ‘was able to continue his attacks on the government without running afoul of this new law, a tribute to his circumspection and caution.’<sup>46</sup>

It can be argued that his stress on economic practicality and moderation derives from educational precedents on the one, and regional circumstances on the other hand, predating his days in Tokyo.

Born in a family of local landowners (*bushi* reverted to commoner [minseki] status), Inukai got a rather traditional education, under the wings of a local Confucian scholar, Morita Gesse, and later in the *San’yo Juku* of Inukai Shōsō – a far relative who was a follower of the precepts of Satō Issai, combining orthodox *Shushigaku* with certain *Yōmeigaku* influences.<sup>47</sup> It was Confucianism with a practical aim, and a clear patriotic inclination, albeit without the nativistic, let alone, revolutionary undertones of other currents.<sup>48</sup>

Also the particular political environment of his local Okayama helps to explain why Inukai decided to join the moderates at the height of the Movement for Freedom and Popular Rights. Although Inukai remained in Tokyo for most of the time between 1874 and his first election campaign, he did not lose touch with his hometown. The southern part of what now is Okayama prefecture (Bizen and parts of Bitchū) was traditionally a wealthy region, with a relatively broad class of bigger and smaller landowners, merchants and craftsmen.<sup>49</sup> Bitchū in particular was a patchwork of smaller fiefs, whose tradition of small-scale adaptability and reliance on personal ties would be grafted on the tree of the modern practice of elections and party formation.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Inukai, p. 32.

<sup>46</sup> Sutton 1954, 45.

<sup>47</sup> Sagara 1980, p. 709-725.

<sup>48</sup> Washio 1932, vol. 1, pp. 27-32; see also Inukai Shōsō 1981.

<sup>49</sup> For an extensive treatment on pre-Edo Okayama, see Hall 1966.

<sup>50</sup> Sutton 1954, p. 100-36.

In the process leading towards the actual establishment of the Diet, it were these ‘middle’ groups that formed the core of the Freedom Movement in Okayama. Having been spared almost any fierce fighting, southern Okayama offered no fertile base for radical activities or – after 1881 – Jiyū Tō support, more often than not based on feelings of revenge rather than liberal idealism. Most of the discontent (e.g. concerning land tax)<sup>51</sup> found an outlet at the level of prefectural government, for instance through the active promotion of trade and industrial activity, or financial structures erected at a local level: in 1877 already, a local bank had been founded and a Chamber of Commerce was established soon after with – and here Okayama differed greatly from the Tosa pattern, for instance – the support of many (former) samurai. It was the pragmatism of local men such as Komatsubara Eitarō (1852-1919) or Nishi Kiichi, a close disciple of Morita Sessai (Gesse’s elder brother) and prefectural governor between 1869 and 1879, that mitigated disruptive tension, radicalism or violent protest in the southern parts of the prefecture at an early stage. Although it relied far less upon Western theory in terms of ‘pure politics’, the Movement for Freedom in Okayama managed to come up with a proposal for the erection of a national assembly in December 1879, months before Itagaki’s *Kokkai Kisei Dōmei* did – much to the discontent of the latter and his band, and to the effect of causing a definitive rupture between his nationally organized *Aikoku Sha* and the Friendship Association of Bizen, Bichū and Mimasaka (*Ryōbisaku Sankoku Shinbokuikai*). This flagbearing organization for freedom and popular rights in Okayama had been erected some six months before, mainly by members of the prefectural assembly. Komatsubara explained its main aims as follows:<sup>52</sup>

The spirit of a country rests in its commerce. The enterprise of acquiring wealth and strengthening the army and enlightenment mostly depend on the effort of traders. And so, one can talk about freedom and popular rights, about enlightenment and national strength, but in the end, it is all based on wealth and knowledge.

Although he was in Tokyo at the time of these events, Inukai’s name does figure on the list of members of the Friendship Association, and Komatsubara’s commendation certainly played a role in his victory in the Diet election of 1891,<sup>53</sup> but apart from that there is little to suggest that there was an intensive exchange between the two of them. This observation, however, only makes the resemblance with Inukai’s economy focused liberalism more striking.

While enrolled at Keiō Gijuku, Inukai for a short while led his own small circle, the *Yūkō-sha*, independent from mainstream debating groups such as Ozaki Yukio’s *Kyōgi-sha*. Fukuzawa spoke of Inukai and his companions denigratingly as “the youngsters of the Popular Rights village” (*minken mura no wakashu*).<sup>54</sup> Apparently, blending in was not Inukai’s strongest point – even while at Keiō he enrolled in a school of Chinese learning (that of Hayashi Kakuryō), only to be expelled when his Keiō affiliation became known to Hayashi who forbade any contact with any sort of Western knowledge.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Okayama-ken 1968, pp. 512-526.

<sup>52</sup> Kondō 1990, pp. 226-30.

<sup>53</sup> Inukai Takeru 1936, p. 18.

<sup>54</sup> Washio 1932, pp. 122-3.

<sup>55</sup> Washio, pp. 123-4.

Inukai's sharp eye, pen and tongue would soon make up for that. By the time he decided to leave Keiō, Inukai had already found another outlet – journalism. It was Inukai, as an 'embedded' correspondent (at the government side: his sympathies for Saigō were a product of later encounters with Takamori's younger brother) for the *Yūbin Hōchi Shinbun*, who provided the Tokyo readership with up-to-date reports, and in a captivating style at that, of the events in faraway Kyushu.<sup>56</sup> It earned him considerable fame and a free enrollment at the Gijuku, and probably opened perspectives for his expanding ambition elsewhere: the political world.

He got elected into the first 'city council' (*fukai*) of Tokyo as early as 1882<sup>57</sup> and Sutton emphasizes the importance of that experience for his further career,<sup>58</sup> but clearly, at this point, it was journalism to which he would devote most of his time, for instance as the main editor for the *Akita Nippō* in 1883, but also as an editor for the Mita based *Kōjun Sha Zasshi*, *Chōya Shinbun* and others, until his election into the first Diet in 1891. Although Inukai had spend some time a short while in local and national bureaucracy<sup>59</sup>, a solid position within officialdom was and would never be a prime target – at a later stage in his career, he is known to have turned down an ambassadorship in China, 'preferring' to stay in opposition.

It took a while before Inukai's political predeliction fully developed into a clear direction. At the earliest stage, reportedly, he stood on a good footing with Gotō, and could just as well have joined the latter's Jiyūtō – much later, his son Takeru, a *Shirakabaha* novelist before turning to politics, would marry a granddaughter of Gotō's. His decision to join Ōkuma's party had – as many decisions in Inukai's further career – a personal dimension: Fukuzawa and many *Mita-ha* figures had a liking for Gotō, and it was not sure from the start to what party the latter would ally himself. Reportedly, it was Yano Fumio, who convinced Inukai to follow Ōkuma, even though his project had less of an 'oriental hue' than Gotō's.<sup>60</sup> Together with Ono, Baba and many prominent intellectuals, Inukai stood at the cradle of the *Rikken Kaishin Tō* (立憲改進黨), known for its more moderate approach. They refused, for instance, to voice support, let alone actually give it, to the violent protests against government policy (the "Matsukata deflation") that marked the early 1880ies – contrary to Itagaki and Gotō who first endorsed them and then backed out.

The early eighties were for Inukai also a time of some scholarly activity as well, namely the translation of Western (American) works on politics: in 1884 the abovementioned one by Carey, following one of a work by Cushing on parliamentary procedures in 1882. 'Scholarly' here does not mean 'void of political intent'. Inukai was a practical man, his translations stood in a clear relation to the political future of Japan as a constitutional monarchy. Parliamentary procedures were not to be "dead letter" (*shisho*), he argued, but rather a nation-wide exercise: "not only the national legislative assembly, but all assemblies, be they of politicians, farmers, merchants or craftsmen, have to rely upon certain proceedings to deliberate on their business."<sup>61</sup>

I will not venture here into a detailed account of Inukai's career after his first election: previous research, even in English, has shed sufficient light on the main political-tactical aspects of his career.<sup>62</sup> Recurrent

<sup>56</sup> Washio, pp. 74-85.

<sup>57</sup> Washio 1932, pp. 236-44.

<sup>58</sup> Sutton 1954, pp. 29-32.

<sup>59</sup> Inukai worked more than a year as a statistics official at a local administration (Oda prefecture) before coming to Tokyo (1873), and again a few months as a *gonshō shoki-kan* at the *Tōkei-in*, Japan's first Bureau of Statistics (1881).

<sup>60</sup> Uzaki 1932, pp. 58-60.

<sup>61</sup> Inukai 1882, p. 3.

<sup>62</sup> See Oka 1986, Najita 1968, Sutton 1954.

themes in the four decades separating his first election and his inauguration as Japan's 29<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister in 1931 are his ambiguous relation to big political parties (even Ōkuma's at one point) and central power in general. Partly because of circumstances, partly because of specific decisions, Inukai's path was a thorny one, and for every success a mishap, retreat or stagger can be found. As such Inukai's career path was symbolic of the destiny of liberal democracy in prewar Japan.

Although he participated in the Ōkuma cabinet of 1898, the first (partly) party-based cabinet ever in modern Japan, his term in power was extremely short: from 28 October till 8 November – much as the cabinet itself. Even if mostly active as an influential member or the head of smaller parties in opposition, he refused to participate in the Ōkuma cabinet of 1914 (till 1916), because of what Inukai saw as its compromising attitude toward the *hanbatsu* clique-dominated *Rikken Seiyū Kai*. Still, he accepted to participate in the *Gaikō Chōsa Inukai*, an advisory commission on foreign policy under the Terauchi cabinet in 1917. As a major leader of the first constitutional movement (*goken undō*), together with Ozaki, he earned the nickname 'god of constitutionalism' (*kensei no kami*), but he was not able to form a party big enough to control the Diet or influence the formation of cabinets. He joined the second Yamamoto cabinet in 1923, and had to deal with the Great Kanto Earthquake as a minister of Communications, allowing victims of the disaster to withdraw money from their accounts at the post office even if having lost the necessary documents.<sup>63</sup> During his term (continued into the Katō cabinet, after a short interval – i.e. the intermediate Kiyo'ura cabinet, target of the second "constitutional movement") Japan got its first public radio station<sup>64</sup> and the road was paved for the adoption of universal male suffrage – two milestones that contributed greatly in the 'massification' of Japanese democracy. Soon after, however, his incumbency was broken off abruptly by the *Tora-no-mon* Incident of 7 January 1924, a failed attempt to shoot the regent-crown-prince (the later Showa emperor), leading to the resignation of the cabinet – obviously not a measure justified in terms of democratic procedure. Moreover, once universal male suffrage achieved, Inukai arranged a much-contested merger of his small political party, the *Kakushin Kurabu* with its former 'archenemy', the *Seiyūkai*, backing the notorious Peace Preservation Law (1925). Immediately after he resigned from politics altogether, retiring to a villa in the province of Shinano – not his native Okayama. Although officially retired, he was reelected by his supporters in Okayama, practically against his own will.<sup>65</sup> At a point when the tension between factions in the *Seiyūkai* had become untenable after the death of Tanaka Gi'ichi, Inukai was called back into the national political arena, as the leader of the party. On December 13 1931, he would become Prime Minister and six months later he was dead.

This is not even an approximation of all the events, the actions and reactions, the opinions and volte-faces that mark the career of Inukai. It are just the most remarkable instances of success paired to failure, or projects versus unintended outcomes.

Surely, these could be interpreted as just as many examples of his opportunism, and in the end, his failure to become a truly successful party politician. Najita, who turns Inukai into what may almost seem as an 'anti-Hara',<sup>66</sup> attempts to draw a clear distinction between the requirements of party-political organization, and

<sup>63</sup> Washio 1932, vol. 2, pp. 557-60.

<sup>64</sup> Nihon fūzoku-shi gakkai 2002, p. 120.

<sup>65</sup> Washio 1932, vol.2, pp. 698-701.

<sup>66</sup> Najita 1965, pp. 174-5, 218.

Inukai's fatal reliance on personal ties and codes of conduct cloaked in an unmistakable Confucian discourse, 'de-emphasizing political structure to the point of self-deception.'<sup>67</sup>

What I would like to stress here is that it was this 'personal' emphasis in the first place that allowed Inukai – relying on an 'iron constituency' – to win election after election, even if he was not able to service his home region as he might have, had he been member of a greater party or had he held offices with greater steadfastness.<sup>68</sup> Although in constant need of money, like any democratic politician anywhere anytime, he did not have to rely on donations aimed at direct return to secure his position every two or three years. I am convinced that the 'raditional' element cannot be cut loose from his success as a politician, or from the overall success of liberal parties in Japan, from the start right till the end. In this respect, I will bring into view Inukai's Asianist commitment, and explain it as more than opportunism or, as Oka valued it, 'an Oriental quality.'<sup>69</sup>

#### 4. Inukai and Asianism

Inukai was an Asianist, a man who believed not only in the possibility, desirability and even probability of a mutual relation of trust and support between Japan and other Asian countries, but also in the need for Japan to stay in much closer touch with its Chinese past. On the other hand, he was a nationalist and had himself assisted in defending, or at least defining the interests of his nation – as an empire – on the Asian mainland. Much in the vein of his domestic approach to politics, Inukai's connections with China and other countries were based on personal contacts rather than structural organization – Tokitō has called it an 'informal supplementation' of Japan's policies.<sup>70</sup> Depending on the perspective, it was an element of strength or weakness. Whatever his limitations, what is certain is that in Inukai's style of dealing with Asia, the Asian other still had a face, and a voice.

By the time Inukai ascended to power, Japan – the Kwantung Army that is – had taken the first steps to break through a two-decade old status quo in Asia. It was the start of a series of confrontations that would be justified as an assault against Western colonialism and the establishing of a new order. Whereas the domestic component of the Showa Restoration ideal ended in failure (February 1936) or partial cooptation (Konoe) at most, the foreign component of the drive for radical reform was carried out vigorously. In September 1931 Japanese troops had poured into Manchuria, and hardly six months later, the Shanghai Incident made clear that it would be extremely difficult to contain military conflict to the northeastern regions of China.

Limited as it was – basically: by its confidence in the justifiability of the Japanese empire itself, as much as the British in the eyes of John Stuart Mill – the 'Asianist' commitment of Inukai got caught in a complicated field of incongruent tensions. There was an increasing gap between the old ideal of a common Asian struggle against Western dominance and the reality of Asian distrust of and resistance against the Japanese empire. Moreover, a thug-of-war arose between those Japanese leaders who wanted to safeguard the empire in terms of international respectability (a-la-Shidehara, or even Saionji) and those who had other, grander plans (Ishiwara, or within the Seiyūkai: Kuhara, Mori, Suzuki).

<sup>67</sup> Najita 1968, p. 501.

<sup>68</sup> Sutton 1954, p. 133.

<sup>69</sup> Oka 1986, p. 125.

<sup>70</sup> Tokitō 1991, p. 81.

To appreciate Inukai's particular 'Asianism', we have to go back to the days of the first Ōkuma cabinet (1898), or even further. His first encounter with Tōyama Mitsuru for instance is reported to have taken place at the house of Gotō in 1878, where Tōyama and Inukai are told to have shared three *mon* worth of sweet potatoes.<sup>71</sup> Inukai's first visited Asia in 1884, when he was sent to Korea as a correspondent for the *Chōya Shinbun*. He got acquainted with Gim Okgyun (1851-1894) in 1885, and worked behind the scenes to provide for him. In the following years he also met with Japanese who had been active on the Korean peninsula – not in the least the members of the *Genyō Sha*, Hirayama Shū for instance. His encounter with Miyazaki Tōten (1870-1922), who many years later recounted it as his 'spiritual rebirth'<sup>72</sup> and referred to him as 'a man of utmost valiance'<sup>73</sup> came in 1897. It was Miyazaki who introduced him a short while later to Sun Yat-sen<sup>74</sup> and other Chinese activists and reformers, such as K'ang Yu-wei. Inukai would make 4 visits to China during his lifetime: a first time in 1903 together with Ōishi Masami, a second time in 1907 through Manchuria, once more immediately after the occurrence of the 1911 revolution led by Sun, and a last time together with Tōyama Mitsuru in 1929 to attend the reburial of Sun in Nanjing.<sup>75</sup>

Inukai's commitment can be traced back to a period before Asianism became a vehicle for the justification of expansionism. First of all, his own education had been thoroughly 'confucian' and even though studying English at Keiō his main focus did not rest in Western thought for its own sake – the foreword to his translation of Carey was put in deft classical Chinese. In that sense, surely, Inukai stood at a clear distance from the orthodox-official discourses of his time – indiscriminate Westernization first, increasingly self-sufficient (ideologically speaking) Japanism later. Even within the opposition, he did not conform: it is suggested that he spoiled the chance of being sent to Europe in 1884 because of his standoffish stance – his moderation in fact – vis-à-vis the strongly anti-government attitude of the united opposition movement (*daidō danketsu undō*) and it was one of the fervent supporters of that movement who would take his place, namely Ozaki Yukio.<sup>76</sup>

Moreover, when Inukai entertained ties with activists from China, the Philippines (Ponse), Vietnam (Phan Boi Chau) and India (R.B. Bose), he had to do so mostly at personal expense, and risk.<sup>77</sup> Still, Inukai played an important part in harboring refugees from various parts of Asia, even Tatars (Ibrahim)<sup>78</sup>, finding them houses, establishing networks and gathering funds. Exactly because revolutionary movements had not yet grown into mass movements, personal ties and what may seem very small-scale projects of assistance did play a considerable role. The attitude of one man could tip the balance. Success was rare, however, and many projects failed because of bad timing and deceit – as exemplified by the *Nunobiki-maru* debacle, a failed attempt to ship arms to the Philippines to help the uprising against colonial rule there.<sup>79</sup> Another failure was his attempt to forge an alliance between Sun and K'ang Yu-wei while both were in Tokyo – contrary to the K'ang, Inukai believed that republicanism was a viable option for China. Still, K'ang did not hesitate to write (in

<sup>71</sup> Yanagida 1932, pp. 34-44.

<sup>72</sup> Miyazaki 1926, p. 119

<sup>73</sup> Eto 1968, p. 19.

<sup>74</sup> Jansen 1954, p. 67.

<sup>75</sup> Washio 1932, vol.2, pp. 707-67.

<sup>76</sup> Tokitō 1996, pp. 100-01.

<sup>77</sup> Washio 1932, vol.2, pp. 715-27; for a detailed account on the case of R.B. Bose, see Nakajima 2005, pp. 105-94.

<sup>78</sup> Komatsu 1991, pp. 314-8; for a detailed study in English, see Ezenbel 2004, pp. 1140-70.

<sup>79</sup> Miyazaki 1926, 173-83; Washio 1932, vol.2, pp. 782-93.

1899) that “Bokudō is the K’ang Yu-wei of Japan, and I am the Bokudō of China.”<sup>80</sup>

Although Inukai was a practical man who had a keen eye for Japanese interests, for instance when visiting China in 1911 and playing an active role in Sun’s revolutionary campaign,<sup>81</sup> he did not set apart Japan and China in terms of values or tradition, as was starting to become common practice, especially during and after the Sino-Japanese War (1894-5).<sup>82</sup> At an initial stage, this may seem not unusual, it was after all an age that has been considered the ‘golden decade’ of cultural relations between China and Japan. In this context, Inukai’s role in the *Tōa Dōbunkai* springs to mind. As a matter of fact, by following the *Tōa-kai* (East Asia Society) into a merger with that organization in 1898, Inukai stood at the cradle of a project that would continue cherishing its educational ideals well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, before being turned into yet another tool of empire.<sup>83</sup>

In fact, education was one of Inukai’s pet subjects. In 1922, Inukai suggested that a national library be established for the study of the Chinese classics, advising the acquisition of the 79.000 volume *Sikù quǎnshū*, amongst others.<sup>84</sup> He did not separate Japanese from Chinese values: Inukai stated that a continued stress on formal, empty ‘loyalty and filial piety’ would jeopardize the moral quality of Japan’s future generations: he referred to *Wang Yang-ming* as one source of moral purpose (*risshi*), Buddhism or even *Tenrikyō*, to fill the void left by post-Meiji’s neglect of popular religion.<sup>85</sup> This interpretation resonates with the contents of Inukai’s first speech (*shisei hōshin enzetsu*) before the Diet as a Prime Minister, on January 21<sup>st</sup> 1932, proclaiming that<sup>86</sup>:

“of course, educators should abide by the gist of the Imperial Rescript on education but [...] one can only give educational guidance by committing one’s whole person [...] each educator should acquire his own ideal (*shinnen*), not one and the same for all, but each for himself, and thus reach childrens’ minds”

These remarks were made against the backdrop of a much-lamented ‘thought problem’ (*shisō mondai*), by which was meant the worrying rise of socialism – in academia, but most of all, as a potential political force. Interestingly enough, Inukai tried to downplay the threatening aspect, again referring to Chinese classical thought, as a precedent for socialism. He therefore did not consider it fundamentally radical, new nor dangerous – but rather the symptom of a malaise that could be solved by welfare politics and virtuous rule.<sup>87</sup> In 1928 still, after the first general election under the universal suffrage set-up, Inukai would not refrain from declaring that ‘democratic thought was a product not of Greece, but of Central Asia [...] among the peoples living in the Yangtze valley this thought has developed since olden times’ – it is clear that by ‘*demokurashii no*

<sup>80</sup> Washio 1932, vol.2, pp. 727.

<sup>81</sup> Zhai 2001, pp. 194-5.

<sup>82</sup> Zachmann 2006, pp. 57-94.

<sup>83</sup> Zhai 2001, pp. 3-34.

<sup>84</sup> Inukai 1922, pp. 237-9.

<sup>85</sup> Inukai 1922, pp. 210-39.

<sup>86</sup> Inukai 1932.

<sup>87</sup> Inukai 1922, pp. 72-91.

*shisō* Inukai did not exclude socialism.<sup>88</sup>

There is little doubt that he saw contemporary China as a society in the process of decay, but he never spoke of China's traditions, let alone 'the Chinese race', as inferior or its nation as incapable of self-governance. Quite on the contrary, as late as 1922 he voiced admiration for the atmosphere of free inquiry (*jiyū tōkyū*) among students at Beijing University<sup>89</sup> and recognized China's internal divisions as temporary. As Inukai saw it, given the diligence and inquisitiveness of its people, surely China would develop into a feared industrial competitor in the near future.<sup>90</sup> As late as 1927, he had Dài Jítáo, who belonged to the right wing of the *Guomindang*, over as his guest,<sup>91</sup> and on invitation by Chang Kai-shek himself Inukai visited Nanjing and Confucius' shrine in Qufu in May 1929.<sup>92</sup>

Obviously, by that time, however, the golden era was over. A rupture had already occurred between Inukai and Sun, when the latter visited Japan without visiting Inukai in the days of the second Ōkuma cabinet. Men such as Kita Ikki had given up on Inukai (or even Tōyama, and Sun for that matter) by that time, despite initial 'expectations', calling their actions 'monkey theater.' (*saru shibai*)<sup>93</sup>

Inukai's position at the time of the 21 Demands epitomizes his ambiguous attitude: while criticizing Foreign Minister Katō Taka'aki's handling of the affair,<sup>94</sup> he did not question the idea itself of safeguarding Japanese interests, in particular the commercial ones. He saw no qualms in justifying the Japanese presence in Korea, Taiwan and Manchuria as inspired or even necessitated by economical circumstances – and the same for China proper, for instance in Qingdao (Shandong Peninsula).<sup>95</sup> When Sun delivered his famous 'Great-Asianism' speech in Kobe in October 1923, again, there was no contact. Sun wrote a letter, directly appealing to Inukai for more peaceful relations, but the latter – Minister of Communications at that time, and an avid writer of letters throughout his career – did not respond.<sup>96</sup> Although he believed that China could be helped by Japan, he was reluctant to go beyond a certain line: as Inukai saw it, at that stage – i.e. once the revolution over – it did not really matter who would lead China, Sun or his rival Yuan Shi-kai, as long as chaos could be avoided. Turmoil in China was not in the interest of China nor that of Japan. Not entirely surprisingly, Inukai criticized Uchida Ryōhei, foremost right-wing activist on the mainland, for his views on China, as representing a minor opinion within the Army and fatally blind to the 'peculiar ways in which [the *hozen-ron*<sup>97</sup>] could be used.'<sup>98</sup>

No need to say, it was the sudden expansion of the Japanese presence in China after 1931 that put to the test Inukai's respect for China and his belief in the national and international order as it had existed after 1919, yes even after 1889.

<sup>88</sup> Washio 1932, vol.2, p. 630.

<sup>89</sup> Inukai 1922, pp. 221.

<sup>90</sup> Inukai 1922 pp. 136-7.

<sup>91</sup> Inukai Michiko 1974, pp. 102-11.

<sup>92</sup> Washio, vol.2, pp. 742-67.

<sup>93</sup> Tanaka 1971, p. 120.

<sup>94</sup> Many of Inukai's speeches are found in Dai Nippon Yūben Kai 1927, the one relating to the 21 Demands on pp. 106-30.

<sup>95</sup> Dai Nippon Yūben Kai, pp. 275-81.

<sup>96</sup> Jin & Yasui 1989, pp. 327-32; Usui 1972: 192-3.

<sup>97</sup> The idea that China's territorial integrity (保全, *hozen*) would be beneficial to China as well as Japan, was often paired to the idea that Japan should develop its interests southwards, as opposed to the *bunkatsu-ron* (分割論), a *divide et impera* strategy that implied a secession of Manchuria under Japanese tutelage; for an introduction, see Shimizu 1993, pp. 85-112.

<sup>98</sup> Koyama 1997, p. 16.

## 5. Inukai, Manchuria, Imperial Tradition

The last months of the year 1929 and the first year and a half of the 1930ies were very turbulent for Inukai: from the quiet days of an almost reclusive life in the Shinano mountains, he was catapulted back into the national political arena in the autumn of 1929, taking the helm of the Seiyūkai. Hardly more than a year later, he became Prime Minister, and again half a year later, Inukai fell victim to the bullets of young officers, as the figurehead of a reviled – ‘this gang, which systematically devastates our country in the name of liberalism’<sup>99</sup> – political cast.

Clearly, his decision to accept the position of party leader was motivated by ambition, the fulfillment of a life-long quest made possible by the sudden death of Tanaka Gi’ichi – regardless of the likelihood of success.<sup>100</sup> The main focus of Inukai’s projects lay at the domestic level: the economic crisis hit Japan hard, and the Hamaguchi and Wakatsuki cabinets were not able to turn the tide. Of course, ever since his stay in Akita in the early 1880ies, he had had a network of supporters there. Inukai travelled to the north upon becoming party leader of the Seiyūkai: he knew what was going on in the hard-hit northeastern provinces.

At the same time, foreign issues played a large part in his speeches and statements. Much noted was his criticism on the government’s involvement in the London Disarmament Conference of 1930. He attacked PM Hamaguchi for his ‘refusal to heed the advice of military specialists and actually questioning the cabinet’s patriotism,’<sup>101</sup> or more fundamentally, for the fact that diplomats had committed to a naval treaty without consultation with the Navy General Staff – a disregard for the constitutional stipulation concerning supreme command by the Emperor, as he saw it (art.11).<sup>102</sup> In general, however, he had always put great emphasis on the principle of civilian control and the active participation of the *kokumin* ([political] nation) in issues of national defense.<sup>103</sup>

The Manchurian crisis greatly altered the political context, and indirectly was one of the reasons why Inukai would end up as a Prime Minister some time later. I will not go into details here on how that incident occurred and developed. I wish to focus on how Inukai tried to solve it within the framework of diplomatic and constitutional respectability on the one hand, and his Asianist network on the other.

When Inukai assumed power in December 1931, the Manchurian Incident had developed into a major crisis. It was clear that not only Japan’s armies would not withdraw, but were busy creating an independent state, in spite of Chinese and international criticism. The decision of ‘king-makers’ – above all, Saionji Kinmochi, a former Seiyū-kai leader himself – at the palace to set up a cabinet with Inukai has to be understood against this backdrop.<sup>104</sup> Any other candidates within the Seiyūkai (Mori, Kuhara, Suzuki) would stand too close to the military, who were weighing increasingly on the domestic agenda as well.<sup>105</sup> Inukai’s respectable track record included attacks on expansion of the military budget in the early days of Taisho democracy and a reputation of sincerity. At the same time, he was not a pacifist, and did not go against the Army per se – national defense

<sup>99</sup> Shillony 1973, p. 11.

<sup>100</sup> Najita 1968, pp. 508-10. Also: Duus 1968, pp. 218-20.

<sup>101</sup> Scalapino 1975, p. 237.

<sup>102</sup> Oka 1986, p. 168.

<sup>103</sup> Inukai 1914, pp. 105-8.

<sup>104</sup> Titus 1974, pp. 210-1; Oka, pp. 167-71.

<sup>105</sup> Connors 1987, pp. 134-6.

(*kokubō*) was one of his pet subjects. Still, he thought that problems could be solved within the existing domestical and international set-up. For instance, in November 1931 still, one month after the outbreak of the Manchurian Incident, he seemed convinced that all could be settled within the League of Nations if only Japan would do a better job at explaining its position.<sup>106</sup>

By the time Inukai was asked to form his own cabinet, however, the situation had deteriorated dramatically: it was clear now that the Kantō Army would carry out its plans to turn Manchuria into an independent state, *Manshūkoku*, under the rule of the last emperor of the former Chin (Manchu) dynasty. One can imagine that Inukai, who played a considerable part in the 1911 revolution which had done away with that dynasty in the first place, found it hard to agree, and realized that the Chinese would never recognize independence. From that point on, Inukai would start his own secret initiative. His public stance was one that stood firm as far as the right for Japanese 'self-defence' was concerned.<sup>107</sup> At the same time, he tried to work out a compromise with the Chinese: military presence, yes, but no independence.<sup>108</sup>

Inukai had already tried to take the brunt out of the Army's discontent vis-à-vis his cabinet by appointing Araki Sadao, more or less the ideological leader of those with militarist and or 'fascist' aspirations, as his Army Minister, and a reluctant Mori Tadashi as his Chief Cabinet Secretary.

Then he asked men such as Kayano Nagatomo and Yamamoto Jōtarō, former president of the Manchuria Railway Company, to go to China, and negotiate an agreement. There was no lack of goodwill: Inukai and his envoys shared a history of befriending activists that had played a role in the 1911 revolution. Kayano even fought in it.<sup>109</sup> Just as the Chinese they had helped, by this time, they had acquired positions of influence, as well as the financial means to afford the secret trips to the mainland.<sup>110</sup> Apart from the personal qualities of Inukai and his companions, there was another reason for optimism: previous incidents (often involving an [alleged] infraction upon Japanese interests, or citizens, and Japanese armed forces moving in) had been or were in the process of being resolved through negotiations. And in many of these recent cases, it had been none else than Inukai's Foreign Minister (and son-in-law) who had led the negotiations.

The Shanghai Incident was the most recent example. The outburst of a military conflict in Shanghai in the early weeks of 1932 had, considering the events that had been taking place in Manchuria, the potential of dragging China and Japan into a conflict on a nation-wide scale. International criticism arose, once more, against Japan and all seemed set for further escalation. This time, however, the government could rely on the mediation of foreign powers to prevent such escalation. Even if the whole affair led to a growing concern among the latter about Japan's dealings in China, Inukai and his government, with the backing of the palace, were able to work out a cease-fire and realize a withdrawal of Japanese troops – the need to involve the emperor directly was narrowly avoided but, as Titus remarked, the events showed that 'key palace officials were able to determine whether or not the emperor and extraordinary political advisory bodies should be activated to cope with a political emergency.'<sup>111</sup> At a time when the palace could be considered a

<sup>106</sup> Washio 1932, vol.2, pp. 899-903.

<sup>107</sup> Yu 1986, p. 308.

<sup>108</sup> Ogata 1964, p. 139.

<sup>109</sup> Inukai Takeru 1960, pp. 27-8.

<sup>110</sup> Ogata 1964, pp. 139-40.

<sup>111</sup> Titus 1974, p. 217.

'constitutional' force (by sheer inertia perhaps) opposed against the rise of fascism and Inukai seemed, even in palace circles, a more reliable option than ever, this turn of events has to be considered a success for those opposing military adventurism.

Still, it would be too simplistic to assume that this was an unmitigated success. Although the leader of Japan's largest political party, there was not much that Inukai could do to stop the military. In March 1932, without cabinet approval, the independence of Manchuria was declared. The best the government could come up with at this point was to "acknowledge receipt of the notification" of such development, while putting off *de jure* recognition. Party politics and militarism were not as easy to set apart as it may seem: it is suggested that the landslide victory his party won in February 1932 was due to popular support for the army's actions in Manchuria, and the announcement of the independence of Manshūkoku just before the polls.<sup>112</sup> Inukai's reluctance to recognize Manchuria caused frustration among the 'ambitious' men in his cabinet: Mori offered his resignation but Inukai rejected it. In the event, the Shanghai incident would act as a catalyst – through the exploitation of the *bakudan san'yūshi* myth for instance – for popular support for the military, and the removal of any remaining civilian or democratic checks on further military undertakings.

Even if caught by surprise time and again by events on the mainland, Inukai is known to have opposed such actions. In fact, Inukai had tried to allow for a more varied composition of the Lytton Commission, and as it turned out, the Lytton report did condemn the rash and brutal nature of Japanese intervention in Manchuria, but – being composed mainly of representatives of the great colonial powers of that time – not the idea itself that Japan had interests on the mainland that it wished and was allowed to defend. And the Chinese themselves had shown in the Shanghai Incident negotiation process that their stance was not one of all or nothing. Add to this that the financial policy of his cabinet (and Takahashi Korekiyo in particular – he would get killed in 1936) is considered to have pulled Japan faster out of the post-1929 crisis than any other country. His Foreign Minister, Yoshizawa Kenkichi, his son-in-law and a man of considerable achievement in the diplomatic field, stood fully behind Inukai: it was he for instance who in 1925 succeeded in concluding a treaty with the Soviet-Union, communist threat par excellence (he published his memoirs with the *Jiyū Ajia Sha* in 1958)<sup>113</sup>. Is it too improbable to assume that there was a genuine fear that his approach may actually work?

From a 'postwar' point of view, Inukai represents hardly more than the weakness of the political class, whatever their Asianist ideals, in dealing with the military. Seen from the perspective of prewar military leaders, however, with their boundless ambitions on the mainland and their conviction that the acquisition of Manchuria would give Japan what it was entitled to, namely breathing space (or "life line"), and an easy solution to the agricultural crisis in the northern provinces, Inukai was a nuisance. That Tōyama Mitsuru's own son was among the conspirators that planned Inukai's murder – less than a year and a half after Inukai and Tōyama's trip to China – shows that he had fallen from grace in the eyes of pan-Asianism as well.

The true achilles heel in Inukai's approach to politics, however, was not his traditionalism nor his opportunism as such. It is what lay behind almost all of his most contested moves on and across the political chess board, and what he considered a core value that he could not but and had to rely upon: the imperial

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112 Hattori 1956, p. 189.

113 Yoshizawa 1958, pp. 129-147.

tradition. As Chigino Michiko puts it: “for him, an imperial edict was supreme.”<sup>114</sup> It is clear that from an early point on Inukai did not refrain from pointing at his ancestry with pride: a general supposed to have served under imperial command to subdue the region of Kibi in the earliest days of Yamato court rule, and worshipped in the nearby Kibitsu shrine.<sup>115</sup> Famous is the case in which he refused to take orders from Sun, when he was in China to contribute to the revolution there (ousting the imperial dynasty), commenting that he “could only take orders from the emperor of Japan”. His decision to join the foreign policy advisory board during WWI can be explained as the outcome of an appeal issued directly from the palace.<sup>116</sup> Even if opportunism must have played a role, it was Inukai who attacked the Katsura cabinet in the first months of 1911 on the issue of the orthodoxy of the northern vs. southern imperial court (13<sup>th</sup> century) in a history textbook – not refraining of comparing Kida Sadakichi’s 1904 attempt to qualify the traditional condemnation of the northern court to the Great Treason Incident that had recently shook Japan,<sup>117</sup> challenging the attitude of the then Minister of Education, none else than Komatsubara Eitarō. Although he received his first education in a school in the tradition of Yamazaki Ansai, he was an admirer of Sorai and repeatedly stated the wish to have Sorai included in the (long) list of Edo scholars who received posthumous ‘court’ ranks – his vigorous attempts proved futile, but it is telling that he sought this form of imperial acknowledgment.<sup>118</sup>

Inukai resigned his post as a Minister of Communications in the second Yamamoto cabinet after the Sakurada-mon-gai Incident of 1924, refusing to consider measures to prevent reoccurrence of such attacks arguing that no Japanese in his right mind would consider doing that.<sup>119</sup> On the other hand, he stayed on as a Prime Minister in January 1932 after the similar Tora-no-mon Incident (this time the perpetrator was Korean) as the emperor himself is reported<sup>120</sup> to have requested (in a show of what was commonly referred to as *yōjō* or ‘magnanimous consideration’) that he reconsider his resignation, which he did and for which he was severely criticized in the media, and by the Minsei-tō in particular – including Minobe Tatsukichi and Sasaki Sōichi.<sup>121</sup> His support of the Peace Preservation Law (1925), in spite of strong resistance within his party, was explained as a measure of responsibility, to be taken after the passing of the Universal Suffrage Bill, so as to avoid unthinkable dangers: more specifically, a mass socialist party advocating the abolishment of the monarchy – not an unrealistic prospect in the wake of the end of WWI in Europe and the Chinese and Russian revolutions.<sup>122</sup>

In the final analysis, it was Inukai’s inability to go against the constitution that prevented him from fundamentally criticizing the military – the constitution stipulated that they stood under direct imperial command, and Inukai never challenged that idea. There is no trace to be found in his speeches and writings of theocratic or even family-state ideas concerning the imperial house. The blood lineage argument played a role,

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114 Chigono 1984, p. 158.

115 Sutton 1954, pp. 115-6.; Iwama 1991, pp. 193-4.

116 Itō 1931, pp. 348-9.

117 Washio 1932, vol.1, p. 841.

118 Maruyama 1978, pp. 35-74.

119 Washio 1932, vol.2, p. 568.

120 Bix 2001, p. 248.

121 Azuma 1932, pp. 1-2.

122 Washio, vol.2, pp. 485-93.

obviously – the emperor was more than a political symbol alone – but he rejected an absolutist interpretation of the imperial authority and its use in the settling of petty political feuds. When he felt that certain ideas, parties and action could threaten the sacrosanct nature of the throne, he tended to react without hesitation. At the same time, his allegiance was not a tense, fanatic one, which he mobilized arbitrarily. It was one based on a deep-rooted confidence in the strength of the imperial lineage and the appropriateness of Asian moral ideas to give substance to political life under imperial ‘tutelage’. It is ironical that the death of Yamagata Aritomo, the one politician Inukai is said to have never visited, allowed for more liberal forces to take over in the Diet, and within the palace walls, while at the same time, it removed the last pin that had held – at an informal but all-important level – the Army, the palace and ‘civil’ government tied together under a Meiji Constitution that proved inadequate when it came to civilian control over the most important decisions, that is those concerning war and peace.

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