

Introduction

Anti-Imperialism in Japan: From Theory to Social Movement

*O Lord our Father, our young patriots, idols of our hearts, go forth to battle
. . . O Lord our God, help us to tear their soldiers to bloody shreds with our
shells; help us to cover their smiling fields with the pale forms of their patriot
dead; help us to drown the thunder of the guns with the shrieks of their
wounded, writhing in pain; help us to lay waste their humble homes with a
hurricane of fire; help us to wring the hearts of their unoffending widows
with unavailing grief.*

—MARK TWAIN, “THE WAR PRAYER”

Monster of the Twentieth Century is an analysis of Japan’s first anti-imperialist movement and centers on Kōtoku Shūsui, its intellectual leader and the author of *Imperialism* (1901).¹ Kōtoku’s book was among the first general studies of imperialism to be published anywhere in the world, preceding J. A. Hobson’s *Imperialism: A Study* by one year. Unlike Hobson’s study and Vladimir Ilyich Lenin’s *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916), Kōtoku treats imperialism primarily as a pathology of the nation-state, a “plague” caused by patriotism and exacerbated by militarism. He also offers the contemporary reader a fresh view of imperialism from the perspective of an observer situated in a peripheral nation then emerging from semicolonial dependency to imperialist world power. *Imperialism* is virtually unknown in the English-speaking world because, until recently, Japan has occupied a marginal and barely visible place in general histories of empire. As a non-Western empire, Japan was “unmarked as a colonizer in Euro-American eyes,” although East Asians have long perceived it as a major imperialist power.² Accordingly, it is not surprising to learn that a Chinese translation of *Imperialism* came out in 1902, a year after its publication in Japanese, and that a partial translation into Korean appeared in 1906. Recently, the book has been translated into French.³ In the third part of this book, I have made available to the English reader an annotated translation of Kōtoku’s work.

Besides authoring the main analysis of imperialism, Kōtoku was the undisputed leader of the political movement to oppose it, particularly during the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5) when he coedited with Sakai Toshihiko the *Heimin* (*Commoners' Newspaper*), Japan's first radical, pacifist newspaper.⁴ His 1901 book marks the start of a cosmopolitan and democratic anti-imperialist movement in Japan and his editorship of the *Heimin Newspaper* the peak of that movement's sway. Notwithstanding his role as a leader of Japan's first anti-imperialist movement, Kōtoku is best known today as a radical anarchist who was executed after the High Treason incident.⁵ In this book, I focus on his role as the major thinker on imperialism rather than on his advocacy of direct action and his translations of Marx or Kropotkin.⁶ I do not play down his important role in the early Japanese anarchist and socialist movement, but suggest that his most enduring legacy was his leadership role in the movement to oppose imperialism and his status as a forerunner of the modern Japanese pacifist movement. Kōtoku was not the only Japanese writer to write a study of imperialism, but his theses on its causes and his courageous leadership had the greatest influence on the anti-imperialist movement.

Kōtoku also wrote one of the earliest introductions of socialism (*Essence of Socialism*, 1903) in Japan, but he conceptualized socialism first as the “solution” to the problem of imperialism. During the first decade of the twentieth century the socialist movement encountered many obstacles that stymied its efforts to gain adherents and organize workers within Japan. Provisions of the 1900 Public Peace Police Law prohibited the recruitment of students, teachers, and women, while others rendered the organization of trade unions all but impossible. When a group of six Japanese socialists launched the Social Democratic Party (Shakai Minshutō) in May 1901, the party was outlawed the same day. While the party platform called for public ownership of industry, its founders included not a single representative of a workers' movement, but only intellectuals who were concerned with worsening inequality in Japanese society and favored a redistribution of wealth. Masumichi Asukai claims that the socialist movement essentially died out for a time with the banning of the party.⁷ Even after the government of Saionji Kinmochi briefly legalized the Japan Socialist Party (Nihon Shakaitō) in 1906, it failed to elect a single diet representative, enjoyed negligible influence among the Japanese working class, and, within one year, returned to illegality.

Kōtoku initially expected that socialists could achieve their goal of ending imperialism if they followed a parliamentary strategy modeled after the German Social Democratic Party, the most successful socialist party in the world. He switched to anarchism and advocacy of direct action as a means of struggle after his imprisonment in 1905, his exile to the United States and his encounter with the works of Kropotkin. In “The Tendencies of the Worldwide Revolutionary Movement,” one of his first speeches upon returning to Japan in 1906, he urged the socialist party to adopt the general strike as a weapon “to strike terror into the rul-

ing class,” while he criticized the fragility of electoral and parliamentary gains that could be easily reversed by government diktat.⁸ In a speech before the Second Congress of the Japan Socialist Party, he advocated that the party support direct action as the most effective method to achieve its goals of “fundamental revolution in economic organization: the abolition of the wage system.”⁹ His championing of direct action led to a split in Japan’s nascent socialist party in which a minority faction continued to support a legal, parliamentary strategy and a larger group favored more radical tactics of anarcho-syndicalism. The government cracked down on both factions from 1907 and effectively drove the entire socialist movement underground during the High Treason incident (1910–11), an alleged plot to assassinate the Meiji emperor. Without denying Kōtoku’s importance as an early Japanese socialist or anarchist (the *Heimin Newspaper* is, among other things, the first socialist newspaper in Japan), I believe that a study of this figure as the leader of the anti-imperialist movement is warranted and long overdue.

Like contemporary anti-imperialist movements in Europe or the United States, the Japanese movement introduced into contemporary discourse a new understanding of the global system and a new social project. It was a heterogeneous coalition of different social groups that united in condemning imperialism on largely moral grounds. Like its counterparts, it suffered from shortcomings that greatly limited its potential effectiveness. To understand both its strengths and weaknesses, one must place Kōtoku’s analysis in the discursive context of debates on imperialism not long after the term “imperialism” (*teikokushugi*) and its cognates entered the Japanese language and Japanese political debate. On the one hand, Kōtoku crafted a cosmopolitan critique of imperialism that differed radically from prevalent nationalistic anti-imperialism in Japan that opposed only Western varieties of imperialism. On the other hand, he made only limited gestures to create a wider anti-imperialist front with the colonized. Postwar critics have argued that he misunderstood the economic underpinnings of imperialism and he underrated the importance of ethnic nationalism as the inspiration for anti-imperialist struggles. In general, socialists were unsympathetic to patriotic movements against Japanese imperialism in Korea, Japan’s most important colony, and Korean nationalists returned the favor, entertaining few ties with the socialists.

Notwithstanding these shortcomings, I believe that a study of principled opposition to imperialism will deepen our understanding of Japan’s modern history. Scholars of Japanese history and literature have written important studies of Japan’s culture of empire. Although there has been some interest in individual critics of empire, there exist no general studies of the anti-imperial movement within Japan. Historians have neglected the movement because it was a small effort of intellectuals, writers, and journalists, had little impact on Japanese foreign policies, and failed to achieve any of its goals before it was decimated by repression. However, the significance of this movement should not be evaluated solely on the

basis of its size or efficacy. The *Heimin Newspaper* had a modest readership and did not shorten the Russo-Japanese War even by a day; its significance lies in the fact that it existed at all and continued to publish throughout most of the war. In the same way, the significance of the early anti-imperialist movement far exceeds the limited range of its activities or the number of its adherents.¹⁰

KÔTOKU SHÛSUI'S IMPERIALISM

Kôtoku was thirty years of age when he published *Imperialism: Monster of the Twentieth Century*. He was already a rising star in the world of journalism, best known for his editorials on current affairs or investigative studies of social problems in the popular newspaper *Yorozu Chōhō* (The morning news), but he contributed to other journals of opinion, including *Nihonjin* edited by Miyake Setsurei, and wrote humorous pieces in the satirical journal *Dandanchinbun* under the pen name Iroha-an. *Imperialism*, his first book, is a short, polemical work that consists of a preface by Uchimura Kanzō and five chapters. Prior to publishing the book, Kôtoku wrote a series of forty articles between November 24, 1900, and February 14, 1901, in the *Chiyoda Maiyū Shinbun* (Chiyoda evening news), in which he rehearsed the main arguments of his book.¹¹ The article “Records of Treason and Immorality” (Taigyaku mudōroku) is a draft of his chapter on patriotism. “His Sword Will Crumble into Dust” (Tojindandanroku) is an early version of his chapter on militarism.¹² Finally, “Imperialism” (Teikokushugi) is a forerunner of chapter four. In addition to reworking these articles into a book, he added a synopsis, an introduction, and a conclusion. Uchimura, his colleague at *Yorozu Chōhō*, hailed the appearance of the book in a short preface. In effect, the famous Christian allied himself with the atheist Kôtoku, and the latter benefited from having a well-known figure patronize his first book. Keiseisha Shoten, a publisher of works on social problems and Christianity, published *Imperialism*.¹³

The book is an important intervention in Japanese debates on imperialism that began only in the 1890s. Kôtoku argues that the popularity of imperialism is tied to the ideologies of the modern Meiji nation-state. He famously states that patriotism and militarism “are the woof and the warp from which the whole cloth of imperialism is woven.” He also contends that the state channels popular affect to support expansion overseas by manipulating the bogeyman of foreign enemies but also to divert the attention of citizens from domestic injustice and inequality. Although nation-states proclaim that imperialism benefits all, the real beneficiaries are members of the political elite, businessmen, financiers, and military officers. For this reason, Kôtoku denounces imperialism as the hijacking of politics by small economic and political cliques.¹⁴ In general, he lays stress on the political, ideological, and psychological causes of imperialism rather than its economic causes.

During the first decade of the twentieth century, *Imperialism* was printed in several editions; the third edition was preceded by sixteen different reviews that appeared in major periodicals, suggesting that the study was widely read and had a significant impact on its readers. However, the author was arrested in 1910 and later tried and convicted for participating in an alleged conspiracy on the life of the Japanese emperor. After Kōtoku's execution in 1911 under the High Treason statute, the government banned *Imperialism* along with his other works. This ban restricted the circulation of Kōtoku's works until 1945, but it was not strictly enforced during the late 1920s, when various anthologies of his works appeared in print. By that time, readers, who were separated from Kōtoku by a full generation, became interested in him as an early Japanese socialist and rebel who resisted the absolutism of the Meiji state.¹⁵

At the end of the Second World War, the emperor declared that he was "only a human being" and became a symbol of "the unity of the Japanese people" under the terms of the 1947 Japanese Constitution. From this point, the High Treason statute under which Kōtoku and others had been convicted ceased to exist. With the postwar democratization and legalization of socialist and communist parties, writers began to unearth new information about the High Treason incident that suggested the trial was not held to punish a conspiracy to kill the Japanese emperor but rather was itself a government strategy to crush the nascent Japanese socialist and anarchist movements by eliminating their most important leaders. Fifty years after the trial, Sakamoto Seima, the last living prisoner, and the wife of Morichika Unpei, one of those executed, launched a legal motion to demand a retrial and overturn the original verdict.¹⁶ In 1965 the Tokyo High Court dismissed the case on the grounds that there was not sufficient evidence to determine whether the defendants were innocent, a decision upheld by the Japanese Supreme Court two years later. In 1975, the Ministry of Justice affirmed that the written records of the High Treason case had vanished either in the 1923 earthquake or during the 1945 fire bombings of Tokyo, making any further appeal of the case impossible. In effect, the guilty verdict against the twenty-six stood in perpetuity.

In the absence of judicial remedies, scholars and citizens groups have pursued different avenues to win public vindication of the convicted in the 1911 trial, including municipal assemblies throughout Japan. In December 2000, the assembly of Nakamura (now part of Shimanto City) in Kōchi Prefecture "commended" their native son Kōtoku in a resolution intended to dispel the shadow of suspicion that hovered over his name.¹⁷ "Over the past ninety years, Kōtoku Shūsui's name has been shrouded in darkness as the mastermind behind the alleged High Treason case. During this final year of the twentieth century, we must understand the actions of Kōtoku and of all others connected in the case . . . and act to restore their honor. Accordingly the city council of Nakamura passes this resolution praising and honoring the great accomplishments of its hometown pioneer, Kōtoku Shūsui."

Similarly, the assemblies of Shingū city and Tanabe City passed resolutions to honor the so-called Shingū group and the brothers Naruishi, respectively.¹⁸ The failure to reverse the verdict in the High Treason case and the continuing reverence for the Japanese emperor ensure that their names remain “shrouded in darkness.” Newspaper reporters today refer to the 1911 trial as one based on “false charges” (*enzai*) in a bow to postwar scholarship but they invariably hedge their bets with the caveat that “it is generally thought so” (*to omowareru*). It is inconceivable that the Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) would produce a historical drama consecrating Kōtoku as it has recently done with Sakamoto Ryōma, his fellow revolutionary from Kōchi, who is now ubiquitous as a mascot for Kōchi Prefecture and has given his name to its major airport.

In the postwar period, scholars began to assess the significance of Kōtoku Shūsui’s writings, leading to a “Kōtoku boom” in publications that lasted from 1945 to 1955. Just as he enjoyed a reputation of a rebel against state absolutism in the 1920s, he gained popularity as a writer by his status as a martyr murdered by the Meiji government after the war.¹⁹ At the same time, a group of scholars planned to publish a complete edition of his works. An early version of the first volume in this series would have included *Imperialism*, but U.S. Occupation censors wrote “forbidden for publication” on its cover. On the interior of the cover, editors wrote by hand: “The contents of the first volume of the complete works of Kōtoku Shūsui cannot be authorized for publication by the GHQ, so we will preserve them in the state of galleys in the expectation that they will see the light of day at a future date, August 1947.” This volume was also to have included *The Essence of Socialism* (Shakaishugi shinzui), the joint translation of the *Communist Manifesto* by Sakai Toshihiko and Kōtoku Shūsui, in addition to *Imperialism*. As the first two works were already available in paperback format in 1947, it is reasonable to conclude that the volume was banned because of the third work. In his introduction to the 2004 edition of *Imperialism*, Yamaizumi Susumu speculates that U.S. Occupation authorities might have vetoed the planned publication since Kōtoku unequivocally condemned U.S. imperialism and his critique was not welcome as the cold war was already underway. Wittingly or not, the U.S. authorities extended the pre-war ban on Kōtoku’s book by a further seven years.²⁰ As soon as the American Occupation of Japan ended in 1952, *Imperialism* saw the light of day, and it is now available in a cheap, well-annotated Iwanami paperback edition.

KŌTOKU’S IMPERIALISM IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

From the early part of the twentieth century, anti-imperialist thinkers have proposed different explanations of the causes of modern imperialism. The theories of J. A. Hobson and Vladimir Ilyich Lenin stressed economic determinants that led

nations to acquire colonies. Hobson held that under-consumption and excess savings led capitalists to pursue profits in foreign markets, resulting in an imperialist struggle to control markets and territories overseas. While imperialism harmed the welfare of the nation's citizens because of its military and administrative expenses, "strong organized industrial and financial interests that stand to gain from imperialism find ways to charge this expense to the general public."²¹ More than a decade later, Lenin blamed imperialism on the monopoly (i.e., the "highest") stage of capitalism itself: concentration of industrial production, merger of banking and industrial capital, export of capital overseas, and division of the world into spheres of influence by the great capitalist powers.²²

By contrast, Joseph Schumpeter, the third major figure in the early critique of imperialism, stressed the political and social causes of imperialism. Imperialism, he held, was an atavism that reflected the emotional disposition of earlier historical periods, but served no useful purpose in the modern world. Warrior castes are the key champions of imperialist policies, which in turn express "the inherited disposition of the ruling class rather than the immediate advantages to be derived from conquest"; as capitalism develops, he predicted that there would be less energy available for imperial conquest.²³

Both of these approaches seem questionable when applied to the case of Japan's early imperialism. Theories of economic causation hardly seem relevant to Japan's case. In 1901 Japan had no advanced industrial sector or surplus capital available for export.²⁴ Indeed, the nation needed to borrow vast sums from the United States and England to finance its industrialization and to pay for its foreign wars. Contrary to Lenin's thesis, monopoly capital, epitomized by the *zaibatsu* (family-owned industrial and financial conglomerates), was still in its infancy in the early twentieth century. Indeed, Japanese imperialism preceded the development of a strong capitalist sector or the accumulation of surplus capital, reversing the order of the Hobson/Lenin hypothesis. As Japanese capitalists were at first reluctant to invest in colonies overseas, small and middle merchants constituted the vanguard of the nation's advance into colonial markets.²⁵ By contrast with theories of economic causation, Schumpeter seems to overlap with Kōtoku when he stresses the political and social causes that lead nations to embark on imperialism. However, his argument that imperialism is an atavism tied to a dying warrior caste fails to offer a satisfactory explanation for Japan's modern imperialism. Japan became an imperialist state only after it established a modern army and navy, whereas it pursued a policy of national isolation during two previous centuries of rule by a warrior caste. In addition, the growth of modern capitalism in Japan, far from serving as a brake on Japan's expansionism, actually accelerated it during the later stages of the empire.

Where are we to situate Kōtoku's book in this general intellectual context and particularly in postwar Japanese scholarship? Although scholars have done much

to burnish Kōtoku reputation as a major twentieth-century thinker, they have generally tended to dismiss *Imperialism* as a flawed and limited work. Invariably, they have criticized Kōtoku for condemning only military imperialism and ignoring the economic causes of the Japanese imperialist push into Asian countries, which is inimical to orthodox Marxist approaches to the subject. While making Kōtoku's theory the ostensible target of their criticism, they have indirectly taken Japan's imperialism to task for failing to abide by Leninist norms.²⁶ In his afterword to *Imperialism*, Ōkōchi Kazuo writes that Kōtoku identifies imperialism with "patriotism and militarism" but fails to treat it as the latest stage of capitalism, an omission that reflects the "limitations of the time in which he lived." In addition, he calls on a small group of intellectuals to launch a socialist revolution from above, but ignores that only an organized proletarian movement can defeat capitalism.²⁷ Itoya Toshio also writes that the book fails to understand the imperialism as a particular stage in the development of modern capitalism but praises Kōtoku for his "transcendent" foresight in pointing out the "backwardness of Japanese capitalism" and the particular traits of its "military imperialism." Nevertheless, Kōtoku overlooks the fact that "imperialism results from the expansion of monopoly capital by means of the acquisition of colonies, the securing of sources of raw materials, the exercise of military force, and the attendant changes to the domestic political and economic system, including the development of military industry and increased centralization of power."²⁸

These writers rely on Lenin's later work as an evaluative yardstick to measure Kōtoku's study, an approach that limits the questions they ask of the work and the answers they can obtain. Since Kōtoku does not trace imperialism back to the expansion of Japanese monopoly and finance capitalism, his *Imperialism* is "immature." While they refer to Lenin's thesis, however, they do not engage with Lenin's arguments; rather, their reference to Lenin has more to do with the acceptance of Lenin's established authority in doctrinal matters than with the cogency of his theories or their specific pertinence to Japan. At this time, Lenin's thesis was widely accepted as the definitive work on imperialism; in addition, imperialism was viewed as a closed subject after World War Two had, for all practical purposes, effectively ended it.²⁹

For a reader today, Leninist dismissals of *Imperialism* are the curious relics of a bygone time. While critics insist on the book's limitations to a particular period and to the case of Japan, these limitations paradoxically constitute the book's forte: Kōtoku offers a non-Eurocentric account of imperialism at a time when Japan was establishing colonies in East Asia and renegotiating the unequal treaties that joined it to the West. Kōtoku lays great stress on political factors precisely because he was writing from the perspective of a citizen of Japan, where such factors had a preponderant influence on government decisions.³⁰ That said, however, the sharp distinction between the economic and the political is simplistic since the two were

inextricably intertwined. Much like the British East India Company, the Oriental Development Company or the Manchurian Railroad (Mantetsu), both of which served as a spearhead for the invasion by Japanese economic interests in Korea and Manchuria respectively, were at once quasi-governmental organizations and profitable business enterprises; they symbolized Japanese political and economic control.

While critics accuse Kōtoku of laying too much stress on patriotism and militarism, forces that are merely “symptoms” of imperialism, one could counter that these ideologies were blind spots for the European socialist movement. Despite opposition to war and imperialism, the Second International dissolved at the start of the First World War when separate workers’ parties failed to maintain a unified front against the war and, instead, rallied to the flag and the cause of their respective nations. The splintering of the working class rendered the socialist movement impotent throughout the war. By contrast, Kōtoku consistently held to an antiwar position throughout the Russo-Japanese War in part because he understood the intoxicating power of patriotism and had a clear grasp of the dire effects imperialism had on the domestic society of the imperialist metropole, including costly arms budgets, tax increases, growing indebtedness, worsening inequality and oligarchic rule.

If Marxists have by and large rejected Kōtoku’s thesis in *Imperialism*, members of the peace movement in postwar Japan have hailed the book and rediscovered its author as a forerunner who introduced pacifist thought in Japan and led the first important antiwar movement in Japanese history. In “A Sketch of Japan’s Antiwar Literature,” Odagiri Hideo wrote: “One can find superlative many examples of antiwar prose in the essays of Kōtoku Shūsui, Sakai Toshihiko, and Uchimura Kanzō.”³¹ In particular, writers associated with Shin Nihon Bungakukai (New Japanese Literature Association) were among the first to rediscover Kōtoku and his 1901 *Imperialism* in the context of their campaign to condemn the war complicity and moral responsibility of writers in the prewar period. Kōtoku’s condemnation of militarism and aggressive expansionism in *Imperialism* ensured him a permanent place in the pantheon of the later Japanese peace movement.³² Ienaga Saburō, editor of the twenty-volume series *Nihon Heiwaron Taikei* (The Compendium of Japanese Pacifism) devotes most of the second volume to the writings of Kōtoku, including the entire text of *Imperialism* and editorials from the *Heimin Newspaper*.

In addition, Kōtoku’s book seems less dated today than when it was rediscovered after the Second World War. Since 9/11, American politicians and journalists no longer hesitate to call the United States a global empire and to extol its “benevolent hegemony.” Indeed, imperialism has made a spectacular comeback as a geopolitical reality and as a conceptual frame of analysis for international politics. In his theory, Kōtoku demystifies the ideology of patriotism by showing how governments use it to manufacture consent to policies that actually harm the interests of

the overwhelming majority of the population. His critique seems startlingly prescient and relevant for our times. It offers a cogent explanation for the 2003 invasion of Iraq under President George W. Bush and for the recent posturing by China, Korea, and Japan over uninhabited islands of no intrinsic value to anyone. As in the early twentieth century, imperialism offers a tool that governments use to unify citizens against rivals overseas and to distract them from growing inequalities and social divisions at home. In addition, most earlier studies of Kōtoku were written before the establishment of postcolonial studies and do not problematize empire and imperialism, colonies and nations. Just as postcolonialism has allowed us to reread long-forgotten texts by writers in the West, it enables a fresh approaches to Kōtoku's *Imperialism*.³³ In this study of *Imperialism*, I offer an analysis that relates Kōtoku's work to our current highly ambivalent relationship with empire.

CHARTING THE COURSE OF JAPAN'S EARLY ANTI- IMPERIALISM MOVEMENT

Imperialism foreshadows Kōtoku's later views and the evolution of the movement he led. After arguing that only a socialist revolution could save humankind from disaster, Kōtoku became a founding member of Japan's first Socialist Party and an important theorist of socialism. He played a central part in the *Yorozu Chōhō*'s press campaign against the Japanese army's plundering of Chinese treasures and later led the anti-imperialist and socialist movement as it developed into a movement of national scope during the Russo-Japanese War. Both his conversion to socialism and his rejection of militarism and war are prefigured in *Imperialism*.

In addition, the Japanese anti-imperialist movement has a significance that transcends the nation of Japan or the Japanese Empire. The movement was an integral part of a global crusade that sought to reform modern capitalism and the international state system. From 1898, following the U.S. colonization of the Philippines, the Anti-Imperial League in the United States organized chapters in major American cities, held hundreds of public meetings, and launched a campaign to pressure the U.S. Senate to veto the annexation of the Philippines. In England as well, socialist and liberal parties mobilized against the Boer War; Hobson's 1902 book and J. M. Robertson's *Patriotism and Empire* (1899), both classical studies of imperialism, date from this time. The coeval Japanese movement remained in close dialogue with similar movements overseas and Kōtoku adopted an idiom shared by anti-imperialist thinkers in Europe and the United States when he penned his critique.

For Kōtoku, who translated *The Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels and Peter Kropotkin's *Conquest of Bread* into Japanese, the encounter with European thinkers and political movements was a crucial factor in his intellectual develop-

ment. In addition, the significance of his translations into Japanese transcends the national boundaries of Japan. Most of Kōtoku's works, including *Imperialism*, were written in *kundokubun*, an adaptation of classical Chinese, the lingua franca of Japanese intellectuals and accessible as well to literate East Asians because of the classical Chinese grammatical structures and allusions to Chinese history. Since his Sino-Japanese translations of canonical socialist and anarchist works were the first to appear in any East Asian language, they exerted a strong influence on Chinese and Korean intellectuals as well. Paradoxically, the same linguistic factors that made the book accessible to educated Chinese in 1901 render it difficult to negotiate for contemporary Japanese readers. Endō Toshikuni recently translated *Imperialism* into colloquial Japanese.³⁴

However, one should not reduce Kōtoku's intellectual contribution to his role as a conveyer of Western ideas to Japanese or other East Asian intellectuals. When Kōtoku and Sakai Toshihiko cofounded the Heiminsha (Common Man's Association), they inaugurated a new type of political organization in Japan. The Heiminsha was a decentralized organization that established local associations and branches and continued to be active after the newspaper disappeared. It was also a global organization with a branch in San Francisco, which continued after the parent organization was forced out of existence by the Japanese government.

For most historians, the main significance of Japan's victory in the war with Russia was that Japan became one of the five great powers in the international imperialist system. Yet, for the Japanese associated with the pacifist movement, the same war represented an enormous step backward for human progress and justice. By pitting the people (*heimin*) against the state-centered citizens (*kokumin*), the editors of the *Heimin Newspaper* introduced a new historical agent and new social project into contemporary discourse. Appealing to people outside the framework of the nation-state, they articulated a vision of justice and international peace that offered an alternative to the world imperialism. Not long after the *Heimin Newspaper* folded, it inspired others to continue the experiment of a radical opposition press for the next several years. In the longer run, its vision of a society beyond the nation has continued to influence political and cultural life until the present.

Furthermore, Kōtoku cultivated ties with Asian revolutionary movements after the Russo-Japanese War, the first major victory by a non-Western power over a putatively Western one, when thousands of Asian students and revolutionaries flocked to the Japanese capital. At this time, Japan's socialist movement had split into two separate groups, with Kōtoku leading faction rejecting parliamentary tactics and embracing a strategy of direct action. Socialists close to the Kōtoku faction established ties with Asian students, intellectuals, and revolutionaries and lectured to Chinese students in Tokyo as part of the Socialist Lecture Series. They were also among the founding members of the Asian Solidarity Association, organized in Tokyo in 1907 by Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Philippine, and Indian anticolonial activists.

Although the activities of this latter organization were short-lived, it represented an unprecedented attempt to create a concept of anti-imperialist Asia that was based on solidarity among colonized peoples. Breaking with long-standing pan-Asian organizations, this movement was neither state-centered nor based on cultural essentialism or racial identity.³⁵

While one should not understate the historical importance of the first anti-imperialist movement, one must acknowledge that it constitutes only the prehistory of socialism in Japan. The early socialist party established by intellectuals, the antiwar movement of the *Heimin Newspaper* (1903–5), and the later adoption of the strategy of direct action all ended in failure. In his early career, Kōtoku was mistaken to believe that the Japanese government would accommodate a socialist party and countenance a radical press. Later, he grossly overestimated the effectiveness of direct action as a strategy to bring down capitalism in Japan and end imperialism. In the end, the Japanese state staged the High Treason trial to eliminate the leaders of radical left and tightened censorship to stop the spread of their “dangerous” ideas. With its principal leaders in prison or dead and the rank and file scattered and leaderless, the anti-imperialist movement entered a long period of hibernation, known as the “winter period,” until it reemerged as a broader social movement several years later. Immediately after the end of the First World War, tenant and labor protests multiplied in Japan, culminating in the Rice Riots of 1918, which involved nearly one million protestors and led to the start of party politics in the country.³⁶ In 1920, socialists and labor leaders founded the Socialist League (Shakaishugi Dōmei) to transform the working class into a political force, and two years later, the Japan Communist Party was established illegally with Sakai Toshihiko as its first chairman.

Japan’s first anti-imperialist movement planted the seeds for later anti-imperialist movements, but the latter have tended to overshadow the former in historical memory. Like the Russo-Japanese War, Japan’s Twenty-One Demands on China in 1915 and her dispatch of troops to Siberia in 1918 awakened Japanese intellectuals to the dangers of militarism and imperialism. Globally, the imperialist system lost its legitimacy throughout the world after Wilson’s Fourteen Points and Lenin’s appeals to national liberation movements, ushering in a sustained period of anti-colonial activism around the world.³⁷ In East Asia, the movement against imperialism was symbolized by the March 1, 1919, Independence Movement in Korea, when millions of Koreans demonstrated against Japan’s colonial rule, and the May 4 Movement in China, in which Chinese students protesting the government’s weak response to the Treaty of Versailles and Japan’s seizure of Shandong Province gave birth to modern Chinese nationalism.