

# The Journal of Asian Studies

<http://journals.cambridge.org/JAS>

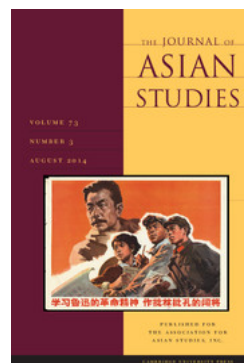
Additional services for *The Journal of Asian Studies*:

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)



---

## Pan-Asianism's Religious Undercurrents: The Reception of Islam and Translation of the Qur'ān in Twentieth-Century Japan

Hans Martin Krämer

The Journal of Asian Studies / Volume 73 / Issue 03 / August 2014, pp 619 - 640

DOI: 10.1017/S0021911814000989, Published online: 16 September 2014

**Link to this article:** [http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract\\_S0021911814000989](http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0021911814000989)

### How to cite this article:

Hans Martin Krämer (2014). Pan-Asianism's Religious Undercurrents: The Reception of Islam and Translation of the Qur'ān in Twentieth-Century Japan. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 73, pp 619-640 doi:10.1017/S0021911814000989

**Request Permissions :** [Click here](#)

# Pan-Asianism's Religious Undercurrents: The Reception of Islam and Translation of the Qur'ān in Twentieth-Century Japan

HANS MARTIN KRÄMER

*Recent scholarship has highlighted the importance of Islam for prewar Japanese pan-Asianists. Yet, by considering Islam solely as a political factor, this strand of scholarship has largely overlooked the religious dimension of Japanese pan-Asianism. The existence of six different complete translations of the Qur'ān into Japanese, however, amply bespeaks a genuinely religious interest in Islam, an impression that is corroborated by a look at the sociopolitical contexts of the translations and the biographical backgrounds of the translators. While explicitly anti-modern, anti-Western, and anti-Christian notions were at work in these broadly pan-Asianist Japanese appropriations of Islam, an analysis of the terminology used in the translations shows that, ironically, Christian precedents were not easily overcome.*

IN THE 1930s, JAPAN witnessed a dramatic increase in interest in Islam. Japan's first mosque was erected in 1931 in Nagoya. A second mosque was built in Kōbe in 1935, with money from Indian immigrants based in western Japan. The country's most prominent mosque, however, was founded in Tokyo in 1938; it was not only supported by the Japanese government but also financed by Japanese companies, most notably Mitsubishi, and its opening ceremony was attended by dignitaries and diplomats from both Japan and the Islamic world. The Japanese government was, in fact, increasingly turning towards Islam during this period. An Islamic Culture Association (*Isurāmu Bunka Kyōkai* イスラーム文化協会) was founded with state sponsorship in 1937, the Foreign Ministry began to publish its own journal *Islamic Affairs* (*Kaikyō jijō* 回教事情) in 1938, and the same year saw the establishment of both the government- and military-sponsored Greater Japan Muslim League (*Dai Nihon Kaikyō Kyōkai* 大日本回教協会) as a comprehensive research institute for Islamic studies and the East Asia Research Institute (*Tōa Kenkyūjo* 東亜研究所) directly subordinate to the Cabinet Planning Office and responsible for a great number of studies on the Near East and Islam over the next few years (Esenbel 2004; Kawamura 1987, 425–27; Tanada 2007). Without doubt, the government's new interest in Islam reflected a change of attitude towards the pan-Asian movement, which came to be increasingly appropriated by the Japanese state in those years, culminating in the declaration of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere in 1940.

Japanese interest in Islam in the 1930s stands out even more when compared to the indifference of the preceding and following periods. Historical contacts between Japanese and Muslims, or between Japan and Islamic countries, had been virtually nonexistent, and after World War II, Islam quickly faded from public view. Today, about 70,000 Muslims live in Japan, a country with a population of 125 million people, and the vast majority of them are labor migrants from Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Iran, who came to Japan since the 1980s (Sakurai 2003, 29–36). The official religion statistics of the Ministry of Education do not even have a category for Islam. Yet, no fewer than six complete translations of the Qurʾān into Japanese were produced in the course of the twentieth century. Given the marginal importance of Islam before and after the 1930s, it might come as little surprise that four of these six translations are directly or indirectly traceable to Japanese pan-Asianism.

Previous scholarship, however, has tended to ignore the religious nature of Japanese pan-Asianism, largely discounting religious factors in a secularist reading of modern Japanese history.<sup>1</sup> As late as 2007, a whole monograph on pan-Asianism in 1930s Japan did not even mention Islam (Hotta 2007). Other authors, most notably Selçuk Esenbel (2002, 2004, 2007) and Cemil Aydin (2007), have greatly advanced our understanding of how Islam was used by politicians, diplomats, spies, and political theorists in imperial Japan. Yet, in these recent works, “Islam” is hardly more than shorthand for Islamic countries in geographical or political terms. For Aydin, pan-Asian connections between East Asia and Islamic countries were successful not because of, but despite religion. In the final analysis, pan-Asian identities encompassing West and East Asia were “transreligious”: they were shaped “not by religion but by the [shared] historical experience with Western expansionism” (Aydin 2007, 86–87). Similarly, Esenbel has made her standpoint clear by arguing that while pan-Asianists in Islamic countries had a religious motive for being interested in Japan, their Japanese counterparts in the 1930s pursued “purely political visions of an Asian awakening that would serve the Japanese Empire” (Esenbel 2011, 200–201).<sup>2</sup>

Yet how can one explain the existence of six complete Qurʾān translations into Japanese—estimated to have sold over 100,000 copies taken together (Morimoto 1976, 18)—without admitting a religious dimension within Japanese interest in Islam? I will argue that a genuine religious interest was crucial for the Japanese understanding of Islam in the twentieth century, a point that has repercussions also for our understanding of pan-Asianism. Pan-Asianism was not simply the product of a handful of high-minded thinkers sitting at their desks in Tokyo proclaiming lofty ideals. Rather, for some Japanese living in Asian countries, pan-Asianism was a reality that was part of

<sup>1</sup>When employing the term “religion” in this article, I do not presuppose a specific analytic concept of religion. Instead, “religion” serves as a point of contrast to political expediency, thus stressing that the historical actors under investigation here took Islam seriously as a system of faith, a body of ideas, or a philosophy.

<sup>2</sup>Equally, Matsuura Masataka, who treats Islam frequently in his 1,000-page monograph on Japanese pan-Asianism, acknowledges Islam as a religious factor only when talking about activists from South or West Asia, while it remains strictly a strategic instrument for foreign policy purposes in the hands of Japanese historical actors (Matsuura 2010, 181–82, 213, 239–40, 366–69). The only exception to this view of the role of Islam in non-Japanese scholarship is the brief treatment of Tanaka Ippei by Eddy Dufourmont (2011).

their biography. These people engaged seriously with the ideas and philosophies offered to them by their hosts, and one of these systems of thought or faith was Islam. The genuine support of Islam by these people, and I will introduce several of them in this paper, offers a glimpse at grassroots-level pan-Asianism; their remoteness from high politics also explains how an interest in Islam colored by pan-Asianism was able to endure throughout the twentieth century, a point to which I will return.

That the Qur'ān translations, a significant product of this encounter, reflect more than a curiosity in foreign cultures becomes obvious in light of a philological analysis of some of the terminology used in them. Generally speaking, the degree to which choosing the right words becomes central to the task of a translator depends on how much authority is ascribed to a text. Word choice is most important when this authority is thought to be divine, as in the case of revealed scriptures such as the Qur'ān. The main problem, then, is how to deal with theologically charged concepts: should translators make use of preexisting religious terminology to facilitate understanding and to evoke religious associations, should they resort to seemingly neutral terms to avoid such associations, or should they even try to invent new words not tainted with potentially misleading earlier notions?

A look at both the biographical backgrounds of the translators and an analysis of the translations themselves will show that while all of them approached the act of translating the Qur'ān with great care, some form of synthesis with Japanese religious traditions was aimed at: Islam was appropriated through the lens of Japanese traditions of thought and religion. Ironically, actual terminological choices strongly reflected Christian influences, adding Islam to the many cases where Christianity has had an impact on modern Japanese religious thought. An analysis of Islam in Japan might thus, counterintuitively, help us understand in new ways the extent to which Christian language and concepts had come to affect the framing of other religions in Japan by the twentieth century. This is true even in the case of the four translations that were connected with the (anti-Western and anti-Christian) pan-Asian movement, and these four will form the core of the analysis in the rest of this essay, with passing references to the remaining two translations.

#### JAPANESE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT ISLAM AND THE QUR'ĀN UP TO THE 1930S

Historical Japanese contacts with Muslims or Islamic countries prior to the twentieth century were sparse, to say the least. Despite possible earlier contacts with Muslims in China, Islam was not consciously described in Japanese sources until Arai Hakuseki's *Seiyō kibun* 西洋紀聞 (Tidings from the West) of 1715, and knowledge about Islam remained sketchy until the middle of the nineteenth century (Komura 1988, 32–35). Even after that, interest in Islam only slowly gained pace. The first biography of Muhammad was translated in 1876—albeit the antiquated and polemic *Life of Mohamet* by Humphrey Prideaux, written in 1697. The first original biographies of Muhammad in Japanese were penned in 1899 and 1905; they were followed by the first academic articles on the Qur'ān after 1905 and the first monograph exclusively devoted to Islam in 1918. The 1899 biography of Muhammad was authored by Sakamoto Ken'ichi 坂本健一, who was also the first Japanese to translate the Qur'ān in 1920 (Sakamoto 1920). He did

not, however, translate from the Arabic original, but rather from existing European translations. Not only did Sakamoto not read Arabic, he was also no expert in the Arab world. Instead, he had published several works on European history of note and was particularly well known for his 2,500-page *World History* (*Sekai shi* 世界史), published from 1903 to 1905. His primary motive may have been to introduce Muhammad as a figure of world history to the Japanese public. In his 1899 biography, Sakamoto literally called Muhammad a hero who carried the Qurʾān in his left hand and a sword in his right hand. This kind of image of Muhammad was first introduced in Japan through Thomas Carlyle's 1841 *Hero Worship*, which was translated into Japanese no fewer than three times in the course of the 1890s.

Sakamoto's Qurʾān translation appeared as volumes 14 and 15 of a series entitled "Complete Collection of Holy Scriptures of the World" (*Sekai seiten zenshū* 世界聖典全集), a series that also included the foundational texts of other Asian and European religions. Clearly, the aim of the series was to provide the educated Japanese middle class with knowledge about the (religious) world. This attitude is reflected to some degree in the choices Sakamoto made for the actual translation. It seems that he was careful to avoid resorting to a vocabulary that would have been tainted by clear association with preexisting Japanese religions. He preferred secular terms for theologically rich concepts, such as *tokusha* 特赦 ("amnesty") for *faḍl* ("grace") or *jōtei* 上帝 ("Emperor") for *rabb* ("Lord").<sup>3</sup> Unlike the majority of his successors, Sakamoto also universalized *Allāh* by translating it as *kami* 神, which had by Sakamoto's times become the standard term for the Christian God among Japanese Protestants, but also referred to Shintō deities.<sup>4</sup>

### SHINTŌIST APPROPRIATIONS OF ISLAM

A second edition of the Sakamoto translation was published in 1929–30, at the beginning of the increase in interest in Islam described above. While this blossoming interest in Islam was made possible by powerful political and economic interest groups, its main carriers were Japanese who had been active for the cause of Islam since much earlier. Three of these key figures were Yamaoka Mitsutarō, Tanaka Ippei, and Ariga Amado, all of whom had more than just a political or strategic interest in Islam.

Yamaoka Mitsutarō 山岡光太郎 (1880–1959) is known as the first Japanese *hajji*, having completed his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1909. Yamaoka, about whose early life little is known, came into contact with Islam as a member of the pan-Asianist political association Kokuryūkai 黒龍会, which was founded in 1901 and went on to become the most influential Japanese organization advocating a "Greater Asianism" against the "threat of the White people." As part of its wide-ranging activities, the Kokuryūkai arranged an extended visit to Japan by the Russian Tatar Abdürreşid İbrahim (1853–1944) in 1908–9, and it was İbrahim who convinced Yamaoka to adopt the Islamic

<sup>3</sup>English translations are taken from Pickthall (1930).

<sup>4</sup>In contrast to the view offered here, the Zen Buddhist author Azuma Ryūshin has stressed how Sakamoto has illegitimately usurped Buddhist concepts to translate central religious notions of Islam, thereby insinuating similarities where none exist (Azuma 2002, 176–95).

faith. İbrahim was both a cleric (he became first imam of the new Tokyo mosque in 1938) and a political activist, who continued to maintain close ties to military and secret service circles in Japan until his death in 1944. Parallel to his diplomatic and political endeavors, he believed in the advisability and feasibility of the Islamic conversion of Japan, and he took it upon himself to individually convert Japanese.<sup>5</sup>

Yamaoka would remain a close ally of İbrahim and work for the pan-Asian cause in China, the country with a sizable Muslim population that was politically most important to Japan. As is typical for much of Islam-oriented Japanese pan-Asianism, however, Yamaoka was not content with mere political maneuvering but also had a religious vision of Muslim-Japanese cooperation, a vision which he formulated shortly after his *hajj* in the preface to his travel book *A Mirror of the World's Mysteries: A Record of Crossing Arabia* (*Sekai no shinpikyō: Arabiya jūdanki* 世界乃神秘鏡アラビヤ縦断記, 1912):

We, as members of our immaculate imperial nation, have the duty to fulfill our heavenly task towards the pitiful peoples in East and West. . . . If we consider that the main deity our people revere [Amaterasu Ōmikami] most highly harmonizes in a most miraculous fashion with the main deity that has highest authority in West Asia, can we then ignore the peoples newly arising there? To the contrary: It is indeed the heavenly task of our people, the long-range plan of our imperial nation, to transmit the belief that the one they worship is no one but the ancestress of our emperor, to spread our steadfast and immovable Shintō, to teach this Shintō, and to let them partake of the virtuous rule of our emperor. (quoted in Sugita 1995, 156)

Yamaoka's views on the proximity of Shintō and Islam were shared by his close friend Tanaka Ippei 田中逸平 (1882–1934), who would, however, also develop his own view of the place of Islam in Japan's religious landscape.<sup>6</sup> Tanaka was a member of the first graduating class at Taiwan kyōkai gakkō 台湾協会学校, better known by its later name Colonial University (Takushoku Daigaku 拓殖大学), in 1903. Thus prepared for life on the continent, he spent the next twenty years in China, where he became acquainted with Islam, eventually converting in 1924. Throughout the 1920s, until his early death in 1934, Tanaka combined the life of a pan-Asian political activist, working on the ground in China, with that of a scholar, teaching and lecturing at academies in Tokyo and throughout Japan.

Having witnessed in China syncretism between Confucianism and Islam, Tanaka became convinced that Shintō would be an even better ground to form a synthesis with Islam, a view he advocated forcefully even before his conversion to Islam in his 1920 essay “The Future of the Problem of Islam in China and the Shintō of Our Imperial Nation” (*Shina Kaikyō mondai no shōrai to kōkoku Shintō* 支那回教問題の将来と皇国神道):

You stupid Japan! You blind people! Do you not know the goal that is thrust before you? I cannot help but shout: Are you not aware of the fate that

<sup>5</sup>Detailed information on İbrahim may be found in Esenbel (2004) and Sugita (1995, 220–32).

<sup>6</sup>The following information on Tanaka is summarized from Tsubouchi (2001, 6–14) and Dufourmont (2011).

heaven has accorded you? I lay out the problem of the Chinese Muslims and discuss the current state of Muslims in the world, but I also explain that the Japanese way of the Gods (*Nihon Shintō* 日本神道) and the Islamic Way of God (*Kaikyō Shintō* 回教神道) are identical to an extraordinary degree, and I declare that the path to pursue for our Imperial Nation lies in fulfilling the fate of our Imperial nation, in contributing to world culture. (Tanaka [1920] 2003, 5)

Different from Yamaoka, Tanaka identified Allah with the Shintō deity Amenominakanushi later in 1925 (Mori 2009, 107). Tanaka was surely aware of the precedents of Hirata Atsutane (1776–1843) and Ōkuni Takamasa (1793–1871), the prominent nineteenth-century nativist scholars, who had both postulated Amenominakanushi as a monotheistic deity, drawing on the knowledge of Christianity available to them (Breen 1996; Devine 1981). Amenominakanushi lends itself to this kind of portrayal, as it is mentioned as the first “solitary” deity in the *Kojiki* 古事記, Japan’s oldest book of myths, has no gender, and immediately hides itself, not to be mentioned again. More broadly, Tanaka was convinced that Islam, as he understood it, was compatible with “the Japanese spirit,” and it was here that he was able to link his religious mission with his political vision, as he articulated it in his 1925 essay series “Islam and Greater Asianism” (*Isu-reamu to dai Ajia shugi* イスレアムと大亜細亜主義):

Thus, in a period of decadence such as the present, we urgently need the temper of rigor and vitality found in the moral discipline of our Japanese spirit. And if we want to find it elsewhere – since “Jesus preached with love, Muhammad with severity,” as the Westerners say—I have no hesitation in affirming that the austere message of Islam will not only be very useful in the restoration of our country but will also prove indispensable both to the establishment of Pan-Asianism and to the completion of Japan’s imperial mission. (translation in Dufourmont 2011, 91)

Towards the end of his life, Tanaka broadened the scope of his religious synthesis even further. In 1931, he founded the Five One Association (*Go-Ichi-Kai* 五一会) with the declared aim to promote the unity of the Great Way (*daidō* 大道) consisting of Shintō, Confucianism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. He called upon a shared consciousness of victimization by the West, but at the same time stressed what he considered the strength of Eastern religiosity vis-à-vis the modern West, namely its anti-materialism. This he found ideally embodied in Islam. The traditional Japanese spirit could be strengthened by adopting Islam; the Japanese culture of religious syncretism meant that there were no serious obstacles to adopting that creed (Tsubouchi 2001, 15, 20–22).

These obstacles were felt much more keenly by Ariga Amado 有賀阿馬土, another Japanese Muslim, who was also to be the co-translator and main force behind the second translation of the Qur’ān into Japanese (Takahashi and Ariga 1938). This translation, co-authored with Takahashi Gorō 高橋五郎, was published in 1938, arguably a peak year of Islam-related activities in Japan, marked by the opening of the Tokyo mosque, the start of the Foreign Ministry journal *Situation of Islam*, and the founding of the East Asia Research Institute within the Cabinet Planning Board.

This heightened interest of the government, already referred to above, was transparently motivated by geopolitical concerns, which became more acute as the war in East Asia expanded. It was basically an expression of political preparations for integrating Muslims into the “Greater Japanese Empire.” Both major military strategies proposed during the 1930s, that of the army, aiming at the continent, and that of the navy, aimed at Southeast Asia, went hand in hand with the expectation of encountering numerous Muslims in the areas to be conquered: either in northwestern China (today's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in the People's Republic of China) or in the Dutch East Indies (today's Indonesia), on the Malay Peninsula, and in parts of British India. These expectations kicked off research generously sponsored by the Japanese government and also political overtures to Islamic countries, the most transparent one being the attempt to include Islam in the 1940 Religious Corporations Law (*Shūkyō Dantai Hō* 宗教団体会法) as one of Japan's officially recognized religions next to Sect Shintō, Buddhism, and Christianity. Although Islam was eventually left out of the law, the debate about it in the Imperial Diet shows what steps the government was willing to take to make a purely diplomatic point.<sup>7</sup> Islam was in fact included as an equal partner, next to the three established religions, in the Religious Alliance for the Development of Asia (*Kōa Shūkyō Dōmei* 興亜宗教同盟), founded in 1942 in order to whip up support for the government's war efforts among members of the large religious organizations (Hara 1997, 283–84).

It was in the midst of this heightened official interest in Islam that Takahashi Gorō and Ariga Amado published their translation of the Qur'ān, entitled *The Holy Koran: The Scripture of Islam* (*Sei Kōrankyō: Isuramu kyōten* 聖香蘭經:イスラム教典). As the title implies, this translation was quite different from the one authored by Sakamoto eighteen years earlier, in that it was directed toward believers. It is thus surprising that the man whose name is given as the first of the two translators was actually a prominent Christian. Takahashi Gorō (1856–1935) had been baptized in 1876 and had participated in the first interdenominational translation of the New Testament, realized between 1874 and 1879 under the auspices of the American Bible Society. Takahashi was also involved in the first Catholic translation of the four gospels, undertaken from 1895 to 1897 (Schneider 2003, 210, 217).

Takahashi was a prolific translator working with various European languages, producing Japanese versions of the works of Goethe, Francis Bacon, Thomas Carlyle, and Montaigne. He was also known as a vocal Christian essayist, taking sides in the debate on education and religion instigated by Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 in 1893 (Thelle 1987, 127, 130–31). How did the prominent Christian Takahashi become involved in an effort to translate the Qur'ān? He had taken on a contract job, initiated by the person given as his co-translator in the eventual publication, Ariga Amado, who remarked in an essay in 1933:

A translation of the Koran has been successfully completed by Sakamoto Ken'ichi in 1920. This edition, however, is somewhat difficult to understand and also expensive, so that there is reason to worry that it cannot serve general use. This is why I have commissioned a scholar with long experience

<sup>7</sup>Selçuk Esenbel (2011, 198) erroneously states that the Diet did recognize Islam as one of Japan's officially authorized faith communities in 1939.



in translating holy scriptures; this man has begun a new translation in August of this year and is already done with half of the text, so that the translation should be completed by May of next year. (Ariga 1935, 21)

Ariga Amado (1868–1946) was born Ariga Bunhachirō 有賀文八郎 and took on the first name Amado—a Japanized reading of “Ahmad”—when he converted to Islam.<sup>8</sup> Like his co-translator, Ariga had become a Christian in early life, at about the age of twenty, when he was an elementary school teacher. At age twenty-five, however, he quit that job to become a foreign trade representative of a Japanese company in Mumbai, where he encountered Islam. He converted sometime before 1928 when he withdrew from business at the age of sixty and decided to devote the rest of his life to doing missionary work for Islam in Japan. He played an active role in the construction of the three mosques in Nagoya, Kōbe, and Tokyo and also published several pamphlets to further Japanese understanding of Islam, bearing the publication costs out of his own pocket.

As with Yamaoka and Tanaka, Ariga advocated a type of nationalism that was informed by a pan-Asianism that included a sense of religious mission. In 1933, he spelled out a plan detailing how Japan could conquer the world with the help of Islam, a plan that also provided a logical place for a Japanese translation of the Qur’ān. Islam, argued Tanaka, was clearly the best religion for Japan:

If we look at the overall picture of religions in our country, we are under the impression that it is all idolatry, just as 1,350 years ago in Arabia. Buddhism has the most adherents among our people, but although there are some who believe strongly, the majority of monks lose themselves in theories, and there are hardly any who possess a real belief. In this way, however, you cannot maintain a belief for the masses. This is why the monks, against their true intent, have always erected idols in their temples and maintain the little belief their adherents have by directing it towards the idols. (Ariga 1935, 19)

The Buddhist principle of nonviolence, continued Ariga, did not match the Japanese national character, nor did the Christian principle of love: “Only our Islam naturally matches the spirit of our nation as it has existed since its foundation because it is a religion that does not yield in battle and does not fear death” (22). Ariga proposed spreading Islam in Japan, necessitating an appropriate Qur’ān translation, and founding an organization of Japanese Muslims, destined to lead the world’s Muslim population: “90 percent of these 700 million Muslims are members of the yellow race, and most of them suffer from oppression by the Europeans. . . . In this way, Japan can become the leader of the yellow race, and our Imperial Household the object of veneration of the whole yellow race.” In the coming world war of the yellow against the white race, the former would prevail, upon which “the world will be united under the leadership of our Imperial Household” (22–23).

<sup>8</sup>Other possible readings of his name, found in secondary literature, include Aruga for his last name and Bunpachirō for his first name. Detailed biographical information on Ariga can be found in Komura (1988, 151–66) and Shinohe (2004).

What is curiously missing in Ariga's diatribe against Buddhist icon worship and ridicule of Christian ethics is a mention of Shintō. Ariga's strategy of accommodation was two-pronged. On the one hand, he downplayed the religious dimension of Shintō by defining it as an essentially areligious cult of venerating the Imperial Household and national heroes, a strategy that was consistent with the fundamental logic of State Shintō. On the other hand, he, like Tanaka before him, identified Allah with Amenominakanushi (24, 29).

Not much of this syncretic effort is visible in the 1938 Qur'ān translation, possibly due to the fact that Shintō simply offers little systematic theology or vocabulary that Ariga could have drawn upon. One curious characteristic of the translation, which is based on earlier European translations, is its choice of *ōkami* 大神 ("Great God") for *Allāh*. Not exactly a very common term in Japanese, *ōkami* may refer to particularly important Shintō deities, such as the sun goddess Amaterasu Ōmikami 天照大神, whose title of honor bears the same characters. In all likelihood, Ariga was thinking of Amenominakanushi when choosing *ōkami* to render *Allāh*, as seems clear from the following argument in a 1938 essay of his: "In our country's Shintō we believe in the Great God Amenominakanushi; this deity is identical to the only God in which we [Muslims] believe. For this reason I think that those people who believe in Amenominakanushi are by nature identical to us believers" (quoted in Rezrazi 1997, 110).

While Shintōist readings of Islam and the Qur'ān were thus seriously considered by some prior to 1945, they were certainly not mainstream. Instead, appropriations of Islam colored by a Buddhist understanding of religion were to become more significant in the Japanese cultural context. This is exemplified both before 1945 by Ōkawa Shūmei and after 1945 by Izutsu Toshihiko, to both of whom I will turn in the following two sections.

### ŌKAWA SHŪMEI: A BUDDHIST APPROPRIATION OF ISLAM IN THE PAN-ASIAN CONTEXT

Ōkawa Shūmei 大川周明 (1886–1957) was without doubt the most influential pan-Asianist thinker and activist in 1930s and wartime Japan. Ōkawa's rise to prominence coincided with a shift in the importance of pan-Asianism, which gradually became official government doctrine and found its fulfillment in the era of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, a euphemism intended to document the communality of interests of all Asians. For Ōkawa, the establishment of the Co-Prosperity Sphere was an incentive to renew a long-standing interest in Islam. As he wrote in the preface to his 1942 *Outline of Islam* (*Kaikyō gairon* 回教概論): "Lately it has come about that a great number of Muslims have become part of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, so that knowledge of Islam has become a must for our people" (Ōkawa Shūmei 1942, 13). Although Ōkawa had a marked interest in Islam, his portfolio was in fact much broader.

Ōkawa studied Indian philosophy and religious studies under Anesaki Masaharu, the pioneer of the discipline of religious studies in Japan. Obtaining his degree from the University of Tokyo in 1911 with a thesis on Nāgārjuna, he took up a professorship at Taku-shoku University, the same school from which Tanaka Ippei had graduated two decades earlier, in 1920. The main base for his manifold activities, however, was the Institute for the Investigation of the Economy of East Asia (*Tōa Keizai Chōsa Kyoku* 東亞經濟調査局; self-designated in English at that time as the East-Asiatic Commercial Intelligence

Institute at Tokyo); he became the head of the Institute in 1921. It had been founded as a Tokyo branch of the research division of the South Manchurian Railway Company in 1908, but became independent under Ōkawa's leadership in 1929. The Institute was a veritable think tank under Ōkawa, and most of the figures featuring in the history of Japanese relations with Islam in the 1930s were at one time or another affiliated either with the Institute itself or with the elite academy *Zuikōryō* 瑞光寮 that Ōkawa founded in 1938 for the training of young Asianists and that was funded by the Army, the Foreign Ministry, and the South Manchurian Railway Company (Tazawa 1998, 131).

Despite his academic background, Ōkawa was less a theoretician than a practical man who did not shy away from involving himself in politics. In fact, he was involved in several coup d'état attempts at the beginning of the 1930s and eventually indicted as a participant in the failed revolt of young officers on May 15, 1932, which led to the death of the prime minister. Sentenced to five years in prison (of which he served only a fraction), Ōkawa remained politically active throughout the 1930s and advanced to become one of the most popular authors of chauvinistic nonfiction books of the late 1930s and early 1940s. Ōkawa's prominence as a leading ultranationalist ensured that he was singled out as the only civilian to face the International Military Tribunal for the Far East in 1946. He was, however, judged not fit to stand trial due to a certified mental illness and moved to a Tokyo facility for the mentally ill. It was while recuperating here that he penned his translation of the Qur'ān, the third complete translation into Japanese (Ōkawa Shūmei 1950).

Ōkawa's interest in Islam, however, was older than his postwar occupation with its holy book or his wartime introduction of its basic tenets to the Japanese people. In his 1951 autobiography, he recounted how he was confronted with the reality of the colonization of Asia in 1913, and how religion seemed to him to offer a way to counter the West's influence in Asia:

The necessary result of [the colonization of India] was a division between the interior, individual life and the exterior, social life, which resulted in a hardening of spiritual principles on the one hand and the decline of the social system on the other. Asia must first of all liberate itself from this dualistic life and become a Mahāyāna Asia, in which the fine dharma will be realized within this world. We must therefore give our social life, and, as its utmost concretization, our national life, a system and organization that matches our spiritual ideals. This is how I thought back then [in 1913]. And because I thought this way, I began to develop a deep interest in politics in the broad sense. It was around this time that for the first time I felt drawn to the faith of Muhammad, in which not a single hair will fit between religion and politics. (Ōkawa Shūmei 1961, 789)<sup>9</sup>

Ōkawa's actual engagement with Islam predates this encounter, as he had already published a number of short essays on Islam while he was still enrolled as a student at

<sup>9</sup>If Ōkawa made up this claim to have discovered Islam thus in 1913, he did not wait until 1951 to do so. A very similar passage to the one quoted here is already contained in the preface to his 1922 "Various Problems Concerning the Rising Asia" (*Fukkō Ajia no sho-mondai* 復興亜細亜の諸問題) (see Usuki 2010, 99–100).

Tokyo University. As Ōkawa himself intimates, however, his interest in Islam was less of an academic nature. His early Islam-related publications appeared not in academic journals but in the journal of the *Nihon kyōkai* 日本教会 (later *Dōkai* 道会), a small syncretic religious association founded by a former Protestant preacher in 1907. Nevertheless, the mainstream opinion among writers on Ōkawa today seems to deny that he had a genuinely religious interest in Islam. This is true not only for recent English-language scholarship, such as Selçuk Esenbel (2011, 200–201) and Christopher W. Szpilman (2011, 69–72), but also for Japanese Islamic studies scholars, such as Shimamoto Takamitsu, who holds that while Ōkawa revered Muhammad as a great historical sage, he never went beyond a rational approach to Islam (Shimamoto 2008, 5; see also Sekioka 2007, 44). It is true that Ōkawa himself equated the Qurʾān with Muhammad in the preface to his translation, further clarifying: “The reason for the Koran’s greatness is that it faithfully mirrors the character and life of one of the greatest men who have ever breathed on earth” (Ōkawa Shūmei 1950, 2).

At the same time, the unity of Asia was for Ōkawa not merely a political endeavor but had a clearly spiritual dimension, certainly visible in his Qurʾān translation, in which Ōkawa attempted to achieve a curious fusion between West and East Asia.<sup>10</sup> Already in the first *sura*, “The Opening,” where *Allāh* is characterized as the “Lord of the Worlds,” Ōkawa renders the plural *ālamīn* as *sangai* 三界 (“the three worlds”) (see Ōkawa Reiko 2004, 219). While the original refers to the myriad worlds that are made up of parts of the creation over the generations, all of which are subject to *Allāh*, Ōkawa’s term of choice is common in Buddhism (Skt. *trailokya*) to refer to the entirety of the three realms of *samsāra*, the cycle of birth and death that all beings undergo. The main concern of the category *sangai* is with karmic improvement, as the three realms (subdivided into further hells, heavens, etc.) are thought to be associated with different stages of enlightenment.

Other terminological choices by Ōkawa seem to reflect the same intention of a Buddhist-inspired reading of the Qurʾān. Thus, Ōkawa translates *rahīm* (“merciful”), one of the central attributes of *Allāh* in the Qurʾān, not with *jihī* 慈悲 (“mercy”), as the majority of other translators do, but with *daiji* 大慈 (“great mercy”), a rather rare Buddhist term for a kind of mercy without distinction, thought to be available only to those having achieved Buddhahood. Both *ṣadaqat* (“alms”) and *zakāt* (“poor-due”, i.e., obligatory alms) are given as *kisha* 喜捨 (“joyful relinquishment”), again a term with exclusively Buddhist connotations, and, perhaps most conspicuously, *aflaḥa* (“to succeed”), a frequent promise to the upright believer in the Qurʾān, is rendered by the rather elaborate phrase *hongan seishū* 本願成就 (“fulfillment of a bodhisattva’s past vows”).

With explicit reference to his Qurʾān translation, the significance of religion for Ōkawa has been judged by some of his contemporaries in a rather different light than in the assessments prevalent today. Maejima Shinji 前嶋信次 (1903–83) and Naitō Chishū 内藤智秀 (1886–1984), both lecturers at Ōkawa’s Zuikōryō before 1945 and professors for Islamic studies at Keiō University after the war, respectively attested that

<sup>10</sup>Ōkawa had learned Arabic as a university student, but although he claims to have consulted the Arabic original when working on his translation, he freely admitted that he used several existing translations into Japanese and European languages (Ōkawa Shūmei 1961, 740; Usuki 2010, 122, 306).

Ōkawa wrote his translation “with the same passion and the same religious earnestness as Muhammad once wielded,” and that his work “has great similarity to Luther’s first translation of the holy scripture of Christianity into German” (both quoted in Usuki 2010, 127–28). While one motive for these judgments was certainly to deny Ōkawa the status of a serious scholar of Islam, they were at the same time an endorsement of his achievements in the religious field. Attempts to reduce Ōkawa’s motives to the political arena overlook how intimately interwoven for him the political was with the religious. Ōkawa’s stance has been convincingly summarized by postwar intellectual Hashikawa Bunzō as follows: “Ōkawa had less interest in Islam as an isolated religion, but it was rather his burning desire for a world in which religion and politics are one that led him to Islam” (quoted in Usuki 2008, 144). As Middle East scholar Usuki Akira has pointed out, a high estimation of the close identification of religion and politics was characteristic of the early Ōkawa in the 1920s, and informed by his understanding of the Osman sultanate-caliphate. After the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, however, Ōkawa came to admire Kemal Atatürk’s successful efforts at nation-building, the strong secularist overtones of which led Ōkawa to reevaluate the role of Islam vis-à-vis politics. One expression of this new attitude was, according to Usuki, the rather scholarly and apolitical stance of his 1942 *Outline of Islam* (Usuki 2010, 144, 194, 272–73).

Yet at the same time, Ōkawa still in 1942 referred to Muslims as “a nation” (*kokumin* 国民) and to the *Umma*, the spiritual community of Muslims, as “their national territory” (*karera no kokudo* 彼等の国土) (Ōkawa Shūmei 1942, 1, 8), thus articulating his view of the conflation of politics and religion in Islam. More importantly, within the context of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere, Ōkawa’s *Outline of Islam* entailed an appeal not only to treat “the Muslim world” as a geopolitical entity, but also to take Islam seriously as a religion, as a form of spirituality that offered points of connection to the practices more prevalent in Japan. His attempt at a Buddhist rendering of the Qur’ān was his postwar expression of this notion.

Ōkawa’s Qur’ān translation was but one sign that an interest in Islam colored by pan-Asianism did not immediately vanish with the end of World War II. Although the wartime official interest in Islam had of course made it much more visible in Japan, for people like Tanaka Ippei or Ariga Amado, mentioned above, or like Mita Ryōichi, to be treated below, who had actually lived in Muslim countries Islam was a lived reality not easily extinguished from their lives, and as such it was able to survive the war. Ōkawa Shūmei, although in one sense the typical theoretician who never left his research bureau in Tokyo, played his part in making possible many of the encounters on the ground through his wide-ranging sponsorship of Japanese Islam-related activities until 1945, and it was indeed partly through Ōkawa’s activities that the most eminent Japanese translator of the Qur’ān was able to find an academic foothold in his early career.

#### IZUTSU TOSHIHIKO: A BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHICAL READING OF THE QUR’ĀN

Another Keiō professor, erstwhile researcher at Ōkawa’s Institute for the Investigation of the Economy of East Asia, and lecturer at his Zuikōryō was to publish the fourth complete translation of the Qur’ān into Japanese just seven years after Ōkawa. Not only was Izutsu Toshihiko 井筒俊彦 (1914–93) the foremost Japanese authority on

Islam of his generation, but the enormous breadth of his scholarship allowed him to author specialized books on entirely unrelated subjects, such as modern Russian literature, Daoism, and Zen Buddhism. He laid the foundation for his career during the 1930s, when he studied Hebrew, Arabic, Greek, Latin, and Russian along with a few other European languages. His Arabic was in fact self-taught, although he also took private lessons with the Tatar imam and political activist Abdürreşid İbrahim (discussed above) in 1937 (Wakamatsu 2011, 72).

Although Izutsu was employed by Keiō University immediately after his graduation from there in 1937, he had a close working relationship with Ōkawa Shūmei, like many other postwar scholars of Islamic studies. Besides Izutsu and Maejima Shinji, Ōkawa had also successfully enlisted the services of the first two university teachers who started regular classes on Islam at their universities in 1939, Naitō Chishū (at the state-run Tokyo University of Arts and Sciences) and Ōkubo Kōji 大久保幸次 (1888–1949) (at the private Waseda University). Ōkubo was also notable for having co-founded the first, small and short-lived, Japanese research institute on Islam in 1932 (*Isuramu bunka kenkyū-jo* イスラム文化研究所); heading the first substantial research institute on Islam in 1938 (*Kaikyō-ken kenkyū-jo* 回教圏研究所); and beginning the first translation of the Qurʾān into Japanese from Arabic in 1941, which was, however, to remain unfinished due to Ōkubo's untimely death in 1949 (Ōkawa Reiko 2004, 208–11).

Instead, it was Izutsu who in 1950 reached an agreement with Japan's most renowned publisher, Iwanami, to produce the first complete Japanese translation of the Qurʾān from the Arabic original. His finished work, published in 1957 and 1958 (Izutsu [1957–58] 1964), was marked by a stylistic novelty: it was the first Japanese Qurʾān to be written in colloquial Japanese (*kōgo* 口語) instead of the more formal literary Japanese (*bungo* 文語), previously considered *de rigueur* for sacred texts.<sup>11</sup> His terminological choices also reflect a similar conscious attempt at a more neutral or less divinely charged language. Thus, Izutsu elected to translate *tauba* (“repentance”) as *kaishun* 改悛 (“contrition”), a word culled from decidedly secular contexts, such as criminal law,<sup>12</sup> and *aflaha* (“to succeed”) as *eitatsu* 栄達 (“worldly success”), a term associated with career advancement.

This tendency towards religious indifference is particularly surprising in light of Izutsu's 1980 claim: “I have never had an interest in objective research on the thought of people to whom I do not have a subjective, existential relationship” (Izutsu 1992, 336). Indeed, since the late 1960s, and particularly during the 1980s, Izutsu not only published specialized studies of Islam-related topics, but also worked on his original large-scale synthesis of religious traditions to which he referred using the umbrella term “Oriental Philosophy” (*Tōyō tetsugaku* 東洋哲学). In his late philosophy, Izutsu essentially combined Buddhist consciousness philosophy with semantic theory, formulating a three-layered description of consciousness based on the Buddhist Yogācāra

<sup>11</sup>Indeed, this decision of Izutsu's was openly criticized as inappropriate by his colleague Maejima shortly after the publication of the revised second edition of Izutsu's translation in 1964 (see Azuma 2002, 156).

<sup>12</sup>Written with these characters, *kaishun* was used in Japan's 1907 Criminal Code to express a criminal's remorse for his deed. Written differently, *kaishun* 悔悛 is used in Japanese Christianity in the sense of penance or repentance.

tradition. In its East Asian variant, known as *Yuishiki* 唯識 (“Consciousness Only”) in Japan, the deepest layer of consciousness, “store-house consciousness” (Skt. *ālaya*), is understood to be the location at which being comes into life and dies. Izutsu reinterpreted this idealistic philosophy semantically, grasping the store-house consciousness as the place where latent meaning based upon human experience comes into being and disappears again; in this model, human languages are nothing but the uppermost, superficial layer of meaning of this deeper structure, and things thus exist not by themselves or before us, but only as the result of the production of meaning in our consciousness (Makino 1998, 255–57).

The role of Islam in Izutsu’s scheme of “Oriental Philosophy” is not entirely clear. On the one hand, Izutsu hardly mentioned Islam in his Eranos Lectures, which he held upon invitation to the annual discussion groups in Ascona, Switzerland, between 1969 and 1982, and where he first sketched his ambitious plan of a philosophical synthesis. Instead, the bulk of his presentations there were devoted to East Asian traditions, especially Mahāyāna Buddhism, and more specifically Zen Buddhism, with Islam only serving the marginal function of providing parallels to the main points he drew from Buddhism. Indeed, a recent introduction to a collection of the papers Izutsu gave at the Eranos meetings does not even mention Islam (Sawai 2008). On the other hand, Islamic studies scholar Ikeuchi Satoshi 池内恵 has pointed out continuities between Izutsu’s emphasis on Sufism in his studies of Islam and the way he highlighted mystical elements in his later “Oriental Philosophy”—both, claims Ikeuchi, ultimately rest upon Izutsu’s upbringing in a home where he was trained in a special meditation technique loosely based upon Zen Buddhism (Ikeuchi 2007, 114). Ikeuchi criticizes the fact that Izutsu’s “history of ideas propositions stemming from the unshaken premises based upon his own experience of the essential intuition towards ‘nothingness’ and its verbalization” led him to “find evidence for the affinity of Islam and Japanese thought from a Buddhist perspective.” Ikeuchi concludes that it was only this—problematic—identification of Islam and Buddhism that made Izutsu so popular as an interpreter of Islam in Japan, where earlier authors had prepared the scene through similar identifications of Islam with Shintō (Ikeuchi 2009, 179).

Although Ikeuchi highlights the continuities between Izutsu’s childhood experiences; his years as a college student; his studies of Islam, which were skewed towards Sufism; and his later philosophy, it is doubtful whether Izutsu in the 1950s and early 1960s, when he was working on the first and then the revised edition of his Qur’ān translation, was already preoccupied with these concerns. His terminological choices in producing this translation seem to speak against this suggestion, as does his declaration in 1964 that he wanted to “approach the Koran as the record of Muhammad, an extraordinarily great human being having lived in this world, from the aspect of his humanity” (quoted in Morimoto 1977, 25), thus suggesting a continuity of motives with Sakamoto and Ōkawa.

### MITA RYŌICHI: A JAPANESE MUSLIM’S TRANSLATION

A second translation from Arabic into Japanese appeared in 1970, co-authored by Ban Kōsai and Ikeda Osamu, with an introduction by Fujimoto Katsuji (Fujimoto, Ban, and Ikeda 1970). This was a popular version, presenting the Qur’ān less as a religious

text but rather as an item of general education, and accordingly it appeared in a series entitled “Great Books of the World” (*Sekai no meicho* 世界の名著) put out by one of Japan's largest publishers, Chūō Kōron. Predating this translation, however, another one had been underway. Although it was only published in 1972, the decision to produce what was to become the sixth translation had been reached much earlier out of dissatisfaction with Izutsu's translation. What prompted Mita Ryōichi 三田了一 (1892–1983) to embark on yet another Japanese rendering of the Qur'ān (Mita [1972] 1982) was not discontent with a philological lack of precision in Izutsu's work, but rather its inappropriateness as the translation of the holy scripture of a lived religion.

Like other translators before him, Mita was socialized in the milieu of prewar Pan-Asianism, and like Tanaka Ippei or Ariga Amado, he actually lived the pan-Asianism that was preached by people like Ōkawa Shūmei.<sup>13</sup> Mita moved to China at the age of twenty-four and spent almost thirty years there, where his interest in Islam was kindled from early on, although he was not to convert until 1941. Returning to Japan in 1921, Mita met Yamaoka Mitsutarō (discussed above), but quickly returned to China early in the following year, where he took up employment with the South Manchurian Railway Company and later the North China Railway. After being employed for propaganda work in Tianjin after 1937, he became the main Japanese consultant for Islam-related questions in Beijing between 1941 and 1945. Throughout this time, Mita was also in close contact with Ōkawa Shūmei; even before becoming an employee at the South Manchurian Railway Company, Mita had published an article on Chinese Islam in *Tōa keizai kenkyū*, the journal of the institute affiliated with the South Manchurian Railway Company whose head Ōkawa was to become one year later.

Mita's activities on the continent can without hesitation be summarized as those of a spy. In 1924, he investigated the factory of an English food export company in Harbin together with a Russian and submitted his detailed report to his employer, the South Manchurian Railway Company (Mita 1924). In 1940, he published a book entitled *The Erection of the New Order and Propaganda Work* (*Shin-chitsujo kensetsu to senbu kōsaku* 新秩序建設と宣撫工作), in which he laid out how appropriate propaganda enlightening the Chinese about “the true spirit of our Imperial Army” would be necessary in North China in order to complement the military's efforts there (Mita 1940, 501). At about the same time, he produced a secret 500-page report, likely in his function as the resident Islam expert in Beijing, with the title *The Situation of Islam in North China* (*Kita Shina Kaikyō jijō* 北支那回教事情), in which he portrayed Chinese Muslims as disaffected with being ruled by the Han Chinese majority and thus ripe victims for Japanese propaganda work (Mita, n.d., 7).<sup>14</sup>

Having returned to Japan after the end of World War II, Mita decided to devote his life wholly to Islam in 1952. He joined the newly founded Association of Japanese Muslims (*Nihon Musurimu kyōkai* 日本ムスリム協会), of which he became the head in 1960. He stepped down from that position in 1962 to be able to commit himself entirely to working on a new translation of the Qur'ān, moving to Pakistan to learn from local experts. The Islamic World League soon invited him to Saudi Arabia, where he spent

<sup>13</sup>The following brief summary of Mita's life is based on Morimoto (1977, 53–57).

<sup>14</sup>For more information on the Japanese espionage and propaganda activities towards Chinese Muslims in the 1930s and 1940s, see Matsuura (2010, 448–50).



three years studying the Qur'an in more depth. It was only after returning to Japan in 1965 that Mita began the actual work of translation.

In choosing terms of translation, Mita took pains to avoid associations with established religions, especially Buddhism. Instead, he favored simple terms, such as *megumi* 恵み (“blessedness”) for *faḍl* or *hodokoshi* 施し (“charity”) for *ṣadaqat*, from a linguistic register so far largely untouched by the high religious language associated with sacred scriptures. Yet at the same time, in many instances Mita did rely on religious terminological precedents, namely Christian ones, apparently feeling that any alternative would sound too artificial. He thus chose *shu* 主 for *rabb*, *shinja* 信者 for *mū'min* (“believer”), and, as a sometime alternative to *megumi*, *onkei* 恩恵 (“blessing”) for *faḍl*. Surprisingly, the Christian precedent seems to have been inescapable even for a consciously Muslim translator, who literally spent years to carefully choose his words. Surely, this persistence of Christianity begs explanation.

#### RELIGIOUS PAN-ASIANISM AND THE INEVITABILITY OF CHRISTIAN INTERFERENCES

The Japanese reception of Islam, as expressed in the translations of the Qur'an, was part of the long and convoluted process of finding a cultural identity in modern Japan. Crucially, this process found expression in discourses of selfing and othering, and Islam was attractive in such discourses because it provided an alternative to European modernity as a point of reference. Viewed from Japan, Islam, with its long shared history with Europe and its common roots with Christianity, bore unmistakably “Western” features, first and foremost its monotheism, but also, as Ōkawa Shūmei (1942, 5) has argued, due to its common ancestry in the Hellenistic cultural sphere. At the same time, Islam was in the twentieth century viewed as an anti-Western force, offering an alternative societal model to capitalist and secularist Euro-America, which had increasingly come to be negatively viewed as a “materialistic civilization” by the 1920s. This was the main reason why Islam was eagerly taken up by Japanese pan-Asianists in the first half of the twentieth century, but it also explains why the interest in Islam did not abate after 1945, as it was not simply a tactic orchestrated by the wartime government. That interest in Islam endured the demise of the government-sponsored Greater East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere clearly indicates that Islam was more than a political expedient for at least some Japanese.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the authors of three of the four postwar translations had been socialized in pan-Asianist contexts and shared the urgent concern to provide Japan with a cultural alternative to Western-style modernity, one that would also provide for a different place for religion within modern society.

<sup>15</sup>It might help explain why the reluctance of historical scholarship to take the religious dimension of pan-Asianism seriously has endured to this very day that Islam was indeed little more than a tool of foreign policy for some of the more prominent pan-Asianist organizations in Japan, especially during the 1930s. A case in point is the Greater Asia Association, “probably the single most influential organization to propagate Pan-Asianism between 1933 and 1945” (Weber 2011, 137). Nakatani Takeyo 中谷武世 (1898–1990), acting president of the Association, which was founded in 1933, clearly viewed Islam as no more than a geopolitical force (see Usuki 2013, 276–79).

As other recent studies have shown (e.g., Azegami 2009), forces critical of modern Japan's secularist orientation did exist in prewar Japan, although they have rarely been the focus of scholarship. The religious dimension of culture was also at the heart of the anti-Western reaction occurring via the medium of Islam and the Qur'ān. This was most certainly the case with Ariga, Ōkawa, and Mita, but also with Izutsu, whose "Oriental Philosophy" was an attempt at synthesizing specifically Eastern traditions of thought with a decidedly religious flavor. Ironically, no matter how much these attempts at cultural innovation were anti-Western and anti-Christian, they could not escape from the long shadow Western culture and Christianity had already cast over modern Japan. The terminology available to the translators in rendering Islamic concepts into Japanese in many cases reflected the legacy of the Japanese Bible translations, which predated the Qur'ān translations by several decades and had already contributed to shaping the Japanese language (see Ebisawa 1989; Suzuki 2006).

Accordingly, all or most of the translators saw either no necessity or no realistic possibility to find different terms for rendering *rahma* or *faḍl* than *jihī*, *onkei*, or *onchō* 恩寵, which had already been established in Christian contexts to translate οἰκτιρμός and χάρις even before Sakamoto's first Qur'ān translation.<sup>16</sup> This tendency to follow the Christian precedent arguably extends not only to calques (or loanblends, i.e., words newly formed in the Meiji period), but also to loanshifts (change of meaning in preexisting words). While most of the words used for "God" or "Lord," such as *kami* or *shu*, obviously predate the introduction of Christianity, they were clearly subject to a Christian inflection since the middle of the nineteenth century. As Christianity's monotheism, the most important point of convergence of Islam and Christianity from the Japanese point of view, is reflected in these terms, it is not unreasonable to interpret their use in the Qur'ān translations as a borrowing from Christian terminology, as it had been established principally through translations of the Bible. Christian interferences are also obvious biographically: Takahashi was a professed Christian, and, like him, Ariga and Ōkawa had a Christian background in their youths. Sakamoto, through his translations of European literature, and Izutsu, through his study of ancient and medieval Western culture, were steeped in Christian culture.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, the case of Ōkawa shows how Japanese appropriations of Islam more broadly could not escape Western frames of reference: as Usuki Akira has shown, Ōkawa relied heavily on European and North American scholarship throughout his writings on Islam (Usuki 2010, 150–51), just as Izutsu did, of course, in his scholarly works on Islam. If Izutsu can be said to have come up with a genuinely new synthesis of "Oriental Philosophy," then this occurred at a stage at which Islam had become much less important for him and is a product rather of his engagement with East Asian traditions of thought.

Previous scholarship has highlighted the general role of the West as the "unforgettable other" (Mitani 1997) of modern Japan, just as it has pointed out the irony that

<sup>16</sup>*Onkei* is a term frequently used for χάρις in the 1917 revised interdenominational Protestant translation of the Christian Bible's New Testament (e.g., John 1:14). *Onchō* appears in the 1910 Catholic Bible translation (e.g., Luke 1:30).

<sup>17</sup>Izutsu engaged in an in-depth study of medieval Christian philosophy, especially Bernard of Clairvaux, for his second major work, "The Mystical Philosophy" (*Shinpi tetsugaku* 神秘哲学) (see Wakamatsu 2011, 175–78).

attempts at “resistance to modernity in Japan [constituted] one of the principal conditions of what it meant to become modern” (Harootunian 2001, xxxi), and, more specifically within the context of pan-Asianism, that “a [modern Western] standard of civilization” persisted “in the anti-Western critiques of Ottoman and Japanese intellectuals” (Aydin 2007, 192). The history of the Japanese reception of Islam shows that this same kind of structure is also applicable to religion, where Christianity was the unavoidable point of reference. The same logic can be seen at work in those Japanese theories of Judaism that display an explicitly religious interest (in contrast to the predominant practice of using “Jew” as a code for certain, usually undesirable, traits): be it Uchimura Kanzō 内村鑑三 (1861–1930), Nakada Jūji 中田重治 (1870–1939), or Yamamoto Shichihei 山本七平 (1921–91), all important Japanese authors of texts on Judaism as a religion were Christians and introduced Judaism from a Christian perspective and for Christian purposes (Goodman and Miyazawa 2000, 37–75, 159–60, 179–81; Kubota 2002; Rots 2010).<sup>18</sup> Discourses of the self that made use of an other that differed from the Christian West, among them the appropriations of Islam in the context of pan-Asianism broadly defined, were numerous in modern Japan. Yet they were inadvertently faced with the legacy of the West and Christianity that could not simply be left behind, but that more often than not defined the terms of their expression.

### Acknowledgments

The author wishes to thank the two anonymous referees as well as Hartmut Bobzin, Doron Cohen, Frederick W. Dickinson, Martin Dusinberre, Dennitza Gabrakova, Reinhold Gleis, Inaga Shigemi, Jason Ananda Josephson, Kanahara Noriko, and Matsuura Masataka for their generous and precious comments on previous versions of this paper.

### List of References

- ARIGA BUNHACHIRŌ 有賀文八郎. 1935. “Nihon ni okeru Isuramu-kyō” 日本に於けるイスラム教 [Islam in Japan]. In *Nihon shūkyō kōza* 日本宗教講座 [Course in Japanese religions], vol. 13. Tokyo: Tōhō Shoin.
- AYDIN, CEMIL. 2007. *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- AZEGAMI NAOKI 畔上直樹. 2009. “Mura no chinju” to senzen Nihon: “Kokka Shintō” no chīki shakaishi 「村の鎮守」と戦前日本: 「国家神道」の地域社会史 [“Rural protective deities” and prewar Japan: A local social history of “State Shintō”]. Tokyo: Yūshisha.
- AZUMA RYŪSHIN 東隆眞. 2002. *Nihon no Bukkyō to Isurāmu* 日本の仏教とイスラーム [Japanese Buddhism and Islam]. Tokyo: Shunjūsha.

<sup>18</sup>It should be noted, though, that, as pointed out in this article, while concern about Islam in Japan was historically fueled by concrete interests in the politics and economies of the Islamic world, the level of actual Japanese engagement with Jews, Judaism, or Israel has never been as intense.

- BREEN, JOHN. 1996. "Accommodating the Alien: Ōkuni Takamasa and the Religion of the Lord of Heaven." In *Religion in Japan: Arrows to Heaven and Earth*, eds. Ian J. McMullen and Peter Kornicki, 179–97. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- DEVINE, RICHARD. 1981. "Hirata Atsutane and Christian Sources." *Monumenta Nipponica* 36(1):37–54.
- DUFOURMONT, EDDY. 2011. "Tanaka Ippei: 'Islam and Pan-Asianism,' 1924." In *Pan-Asianism: A Documentary History, Volume 2: 1920–Present*, eds. Sven Saaler and Christopher W. A. Szpilman, 87–91. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.
- EBISAWA ARIMICHI 海老沢有道. 1989. *Nihon no Seisho: Seisho wayaku no rekishi* 日本の聖書—聖書和訳の歴史 [The Japanese Bible: A history of the Japanese translations of the Bible]. Tokyo: Kōdansha.
- ESENBEL, SELÇUK. 2002. "Japan and Islam Policy during the 1930s." In *Turning Points in Japanese History*, ed. Bert Edström, 180–214. London: Japan Library.
- . 2004. "Japan's Global Claim to Asia and the World of Islam: Transnational Nationalism and World Power, 1900–1945." *American Historical Review* 109(4):1140–70.
- . 2007. "The Legacy of the War and the World of Islam in Japanese Pan-Asianist Discourse: Wakabayashi Han's Kaikyō Sekai to Nihon." In *Rethinking the Russo-Japanese War 1904–05*, vol. 1, ed. Rotem Kowner, 263–80. Folkestone: Global Oriental.
- . 2011. "Abdürreşid İbrahim: 'The World of Islam and the Spread of Islam in Japan,' 1910." In *Pan-Asianism: A Documentary History, Volume 1: 1850–1920*, eds. Sven Saaler and Christopher W. A. Szpilman, 195–203. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.
- FUJIMOTO KATSUJI 藤本勝次, BAN KŌSAI 伴康哉, and IKEDA OSAMU 池田修, trans. 1970. *Sekai no meicho* 世界の名著 [Great books of the world], vol. 15: *Kōran* コーラン [Koran]. Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha.
- GOODMAN, DAVID G., and MASANORI MIYAZAWA. 2000. *Jews in the Japanese Mind: The History and Uses of a Cultural Stereotype*. 2nd ed. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books.
- HARA MAKOTO 原誠. 1997. "Senjika no shūkyō seisaku: 'Senji Hōkokukai' to Nihon Kirisuto Kyōdan" 戦時下の宗教政策—「戦時報国会」と日本基督教団 [Religious policy during the war: The "Patriotic War Association" and the United Church of Christ in Japan]. In *Kirisutokyō to rekishi* キリスト教と歴史 [Christianity and history], ed. Dohi Akio kyōju taishoku kinen ronbunshū henshū iinkai 土肥昭夫教授退職記念論文集編集委員会, 275–98. Tokyo: Shinkyō Shuppansha.
- HAROOTUNIAN, HARRY D. 2001. *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- HOTTA, ERI. 2007. *Pan-Asianism and Japan's War 1931–1945*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- IKEUCHI SATOSHI 池内恵. 2007. "Izutsu Toshihiko no shuyō chosaku ni miru Nihonteki Isurāmu rikai" 井筒俊彦の主要著作に見る日本のイスラーム理解 [Izutsu Toshihiko's Japanese understanding of Islam as visible in his major works]. *Nihon kenkyū* 日本研究 36:109–20.
- . 2009. "Izutsu Toshihiko no Nihonteki Isurāmu ron" 井筒俊彦の日本のイスラーム論 [Izutsu Toshihiko's Japanese Islam discourse]. *Asuteion* アステイオン 70:172–79.
- IZUTSU TOSHIHIKO 井筒俊彦, trans. [1957–58] 1964. *Kōran* コーラン [Koran]. 3 vols. 2nd ed. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten.
- . 井筒俊彦. 1992. *Izutsu Toshihiko chosakushū* 井筒俊彦著作集 [Works of Izutsu Toshihiko], vol. 5: *Isurāmu tetsugaku* イスラーム哲学 [Islamic philosophy]. Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha.

- KAWAMURA MITSUO 川村光郎. 1987. “Senzen Nihon no Isuramu, Chūtō kenkyū shōshi: Shōwa 10 nendai o chūshin ni” 戦前日本のイスラム・中東研究小史—昭和 10 年代を中心に [A short history of research on Islam and the Middle East in prewar Japan: Centering on the period from 1935 to 1944]. *Annals of Japan Association for Middle East Studies* 2:409–39.
- KOMURA FUJIO 小村不二男. 1988. *Nihon Isurāmu shi* 日本イスラーム史 [History of Islam in Japan]. Tokyo: Nihon Isurāmu Yūkō Renmei.
- KUBOTA HIROSHI 久保田浩. 2002. “The Quest for Religious and National Identity of Japanese Protestants before 1945: Anti-, or Philo-Semitism as the Framework of Reference.” In *Religion and National Identity in the Japanese Context*, eds. Klaus Antoni et al., 51–74. Münster: Lit.
- MAKINO SHIN’YA 牧野信也. 1998. “On the Originality of ‘Izutsu’ Oriental Philosophy.” In *Consciousness and Reality: Studies in Memory of Toshihiko Izutsu*, eds. Sayyid Jalāl al-Din Āshṭiyāni et al., 251–58. Tokyo: Iwanami.
- MATSUURA MASATAKA 松浦正孝. 2010. “*Daitōa sensō*” wa naze okita no ka: *Han Ajia shugi no seiji keizai shi* 「大東亜戦争」はなぜ起きたのか—汎アジア主義の政治経済史 [Why did the “Greater East Asian War” occur? A political and economic history of pan-Asianism]. Nagoya: Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai.
- MITA RYŌICHI 三田了一. 1924. “*Zaiha eikoku shokuryōhin yushutsu kaisha kōjō chōsasho*” 在哈英国食糧品輸出会社工場調査書 [Report on the factory of an English food export company in Harbin]. In *Gendaishi shiryō* 現代史資料 [Sources on contemporary history], vol. 32 eds. Itō Takeo 伊藤武雄 et al., 773–79. Tokyo: Misuzu Shobō.
- . 1940. *Shin-chūsūjo kensetsu to senbu kōsaku* 新秩序建設と宣撫工作 [The erection of the new order and propaganda work]. Tokyo: Kaizōsha.
- , trans. [1972] 1982. *Sei Kurān: Nichia taiyaku, chūkai* 聖クラーン: 日亜対訳・注解 [The Holy Qur’ān: Bilingual Japanese Arabic version and annotations]. Rev. ed. Tokyo: Nichiyaku Kurān Kankōkai.
- . n.d. *Kita Shina Kaikyō jijō* 北支那回教事情 [The situation of Islam in North China]. n.p.: Minami Manshū Tetsudō Hokushi Keizai Chōsasho. Available in the National Diet Library, call no. 167-M494 k.
- MITANI HIROSHI 三谷博. 1997. “A Protonation-State and Its ‘Unforgettable Other’: The Prerequisites for Meiji International Relations.” In *New Directions in the Study of Meiji Japan*, ed. Helen Hardacre, 293–310. Leiden: Brill.
- MORI NOBUO 森伸生. 2009. “Kindai Nihon no Isurāmu ninshiki: Tanaka Ippei no Isurāmu shinkō” 近代日本のイスラーム認識—田中逸平のイスラーム信仰 [The knowledge of Islam in modern Japan: Tanaka Ippei’s belief in Islam]. In *Kindai Nihon no Isurāmu ninshiki: Musurimu Tanaka Ippei no kiseki kara* 近代日本のイスラーム認識—田中逸平の軌跡から [The knowledge of Islam in modern Japan: From the trajectory of Tanaka Ippei], ed. Tanaka Ippei Kenkyūkai 田中逸平研究会, 81–123. Tokyo: Jiyūsha.
- MORIMOTO ABU BAKR TAKEO 森本武夫. 1976–78. “Sei Kurān nichiyaku no rekishi” 聖クラーン日訳の歴史 [A history of the Japanese translations of the Holy Qur’ān]. *Assarāmu* アッサラーム 6 (1976):18–23; 7 (1977):20–25; 9 (1977):50–57; 10 (1978):54–56.
- ŌKAWA REIKO 大川玲子. 2004. *Seiten “Kuruān” no shisō: Isurāmu no sekaikan* 聖典「クラーン」の思想—イスラームの世界観 [The thought of the holy scripture “Qur’ān”: The world view of Islam]. Tokyo: Kōdansha.
- ŌKAWA SHŪMEI 大川周明. 1942. *Kaikyō gairon* 回教概論 [Outline of Islam]. Tokyo: Keiō Shobō.
- , trans. 1950. *Kōran* 古蘭 [Koran]. Tokyo: Iwasaki Shoten.

- . 1961. *Ōkawa Shūmei zenshū* 大川周明全集 [Complete works of Ōkawa Shūmei]. Vol. 1. Tokyo: Ōkawa Shūmei Zenshū Kankōkai.
- PICKTHALL, MARMADUKE WILLIAM. 1930. *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran: An Explanatory Translation by Marmaduke Pickthall*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- REZRAZI, EL MOSTAFA. 1997. “Dai Ajishugi to Nihon Isurāmukyō: Hatano Uhō no ‘chōhō kara Isurāmu’ e no tabi” 大亜細亜主義と日本イスラーム教: 波多野烏峰の「諜報からイスラーム」への旅 [Pan-Asianism and Japanese Islam: Hatano Uhō's travel “from espionage to Islam”]. *Annals of Japan Association for Middle East Studies* 12:89–112.
- ROTS, AIKE. 2010. “Japan, the Jews, and Divine Election: Nakada Jūji's Christian Nationalism.” *The Newsletter (International Institute for Asian Studies)* 54:31.
- SAKAMOTO KEN'ICHI 坂本健一, trans. 1920. *Sekai seiten zenshū* 世界聖典全集 [Complete collection of holy scriptures of the world]. Vols. 14–15: *Kōrankyō* コーラン経 [The Koran scripture]. Tokyo: Sekai Seiten Zenshū Kankōkai.
- SAKURAI KEIKO 桜井啓子. 2003. *Nihon no Musurimu Shakai* 日本のムスリム社会 [The Muslim Society of Japan]. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō.
- SAWAI, YOSHITSUGU 澤井義次. 2008. “Izutsu's Creative ‘Reading’ of Oriental Thought and Its Development.” In *The Structure of Oriental Philosophy: Collected Papers of the Eranos Conference*, ed. Toshihiko Izutsu, 215–23. Tokyo: Keiō University Press.
- SCHNEIDER, BERNARDIN. 2003. “Bible Translations.” In *Handbook of Christianity in Japan (Handbuch der Orientalistik* 5, 10), ed. Mark Mullins, 205–25. Leiden: Brill.
- SEKIOKA HIDEYUKI 関岡英之. 2007. *Ōkawa Shūmei no dai Aja shugi* 大川周明の大アジア主義 [The greater Asianism of Ōkawa Shūmei]. Tokyo: Kōdansha.
- SHIMAMOTO TAKAMITSU 嶋本隆光. 2008. “Ōkawa Shūmei no shūkyō kenkyū: Isurāmu kenkyū e no michi” 大川周明の宗教研究—イスラーム研究への道 [Ōkawa Shūmei's research on religion: His path to research on Islam]. *Nihongo, Nihon bunka* 日本語・日本文化 34:1–22.
- SHINOHE JUN'YA 四戸潤弥. 2004. “Afumado Ariga Bunpachirō (Amado): Nihon ni okeru Isurāmu hōgaku no senkusha toshite no ichizuke” アフマド有賀文八郎 (阿馬土) —日本におけるイスラーム法学の先駆者としての位置づけ [Ahmad Ariga Bunpachirō (Amado): His position as pioneer of Islamic jurisprudence in Japan]. *Shūkyō kenkyū* 宗教研究 78:301–23.
- SUGITA HIDEAKI 杉田英明. 1995. *Nihonjin no Chūtō hakken: Gyaku-enkinhō no hikaku bunka shi* 日本人の中東発見—逆遠近法の比較文化史 [The Japanese discovery of the Middle East: A cultural history in reverse perspective]. Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppan.
- SUZUKI NORIHISA 鈴木範久. 2006. *Seisho no Nihongo: Hon'yaku no rekishi* 聖書の日本語—翻訳の歴史 [The Japanese of the Bible: A history of its translation]. Tokyo: Iwanami.
- SZPILMAN, CHRISTOPHER W. A. 2011. “Ōkawa Shūmei: ‘Various Problems of Asia in Revival,’ 1922.” In *Pan-Asianism: A Documentary History, Volume 2: 1920–Present*, eds. Sven Saaler and Christopher W. A. Szpilmann, 69–74. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.
- TAKAHASHI GORŌ 高橋五郎 and ARIGA AMADO 有賀阿馬土, trans. 1938. *Sei Kōrankyō: Isuramu kyōten* 聖香蘭経: イスラム教典 [The Holy Koran: The scripture of Islam]. Tokyo: Sei Kōrankyō Kankōkai.
- TANADA HIROFUMI 店田廣文. 2007. “Islamic Studies in Wartime Japan: An Analysis of Historical Materials of the Greater Japan Muslim League.” *Annals of Japan Association for Middle East Studies* 23(2):215–36.
- TANAKA IPPEI 田中逸平. [1920] 2003. “Shina Kaikyō mondai no shōrai to kōkoku Shintō” 支那回教問題の将来と皇国神道 [The future of the problem of Islam in China and the

- Shintō of our imperial nation]. In *Tanaka Ippei sono 3: Nihon ron/Nihon Musurimu kara mita Shintō* 田中逸平その3—日本論 / 日本ムスリムから見た神道 [Tanaka Ippei, part 3: Japan theory/Shintō as viewed by a Japanese Muslim], ed. Takushoku Daigaku Sōritsu Hyakunenshi Hensanshitsu 拓殖大学創立百年史編纂室, 3–11. Tokyo: Takushoku Daigaku.
- TAZAWA TAKUYA 田澤拓也. 1998. *Musurimu Nippon* ムスリム・ニッポン [Muslim Japan]. Tokyo: Shōgakukan.
- THELLE, NOTTO R. 1987. *Buddhism and Christianity in Japan: From Conflict to Dialogue, 1854–1899*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- TSUBOUCHI TAKAHIKO 坪内隆彦. 2001. “Isurāmu senkusha Tanaka Ippei shiron” イスラーム先駆者田中逸平・試論 [Explorative discussion of Tanaka Ippei, pioneer of Islam]. *Takushoku daigaku hyakunen-shi kenkyū* 拓殖大学百年史研究 8:1–56.
- USUKI AKIRA 臼杵陽. 2008. “Ōkawa Shūmei no Isurāmu kenkyū: Nihonteki Orientalisute no manazashi” 大川周明のイスラーム研究—日本的オリエンタリストのまなざし [Ōkawa Shūmei's Islam research: A Japanese Orientalist look]. *Kikan Nihon shisō-shi* 季刊日本思想史 72:130–52.
- . 2010. *Ōkawa Shūmei: Isurāmu to Tennō no hazama de* 大川周明：イスラームと天皇のはざままで [Ōkawa Shūmei: Between Islam and Tennō]. Tokyo: Seidosha.
- . 2013. “Han Isurāmu shugi to han Arabu shugi no shin-dankai: 1931-nen Erusar-emu han Isurāmu Kaigi kara no kōsatsu” 汎イスラーム主義と汎アラブ主義の新段階—1931年エルサレム・汎イスラーム会議からの考察 [A new phase of pan-Islamism and pan-Arabism: An examination setting out from the 1931 Pan-Islamic Conference in Jerusalem]. In *Ajia shugi wa nani o kataru no ka: Kioku, kenryoku, kachi* アジア主義は何を語るのか—記憶・権力・価値 [What stories does Asianism tell us? Memory, power, values], ed. Matsuura Masataka 松浦正孝, 274–91. Kyoto: Mineruva Shobō.
- WAKAMATSU EISUKE 若松英輔. 2011. *Izutsu Toshihiko: Eichi no tetsugaku* 井筒俊彦—叡智の哲学 [Izutsu Toshihiko: Philosophy of wisdom]. Tokyo: Keiō Gijuku Daigaku Shuppankai.
- WEBER, TORSTEN. 2011. “The Greater Asia Association and Matsui Iwane, 1933.” In *Pan-Asianism: A Documentary History, Volume 2: 1920–Present*, eds. Sven Saaler and Christopher W. A. Szpilman, 137–47. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.