Japan’s Central Eurasian Policy: A Focus on Turkic Muslim Minorities

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This article examines the contacts and plans made by Japanese military authorities with Turkic Muslim leaders from Central Eurasia, as well as the Japan–Germany collaboration against the White Russians prior to Japan’s defeat in World War II. With international issues taking on increasing importance following the Paris Conference of 1919, Japanese policy makers attempted to make Tokyo an émigré spot, much like Berlin, Paris, and Istanbul.

Following the Manchurian Invasion in 1931 and Japan’s secession from the League of Nations in 1933, Japanese military authorities and civilian Pan-Asianists began to consider their policies toward Turkic Muslim minorities in Central Eurasia within the context of Japan’s alliance with Germany and tried to form a Japan-backed Muslim puppet state in the region, which would also join Tokyo to Berlin.

Keywords: Japanese Central Eurasian Policy; Turkic Muslim minorities; Japanese Islam Policy; Japanese–German collaboration.

1. Introduction

Imperial Japan always saw opposition groups of different origins in Russia as potential allies for the benefit of the Northern Advance Doctrine (Hokushin-ron).1 While local nationalists and socialists in the Balkan and Baltic regions were supported by Japan during the Russo–Japanese War against the Tsarist government, the same socialists became their enemies following the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, during the period of Soviet rule in Russia. However, the Turkic Muslims in Russia were positioned as potential collaborators against the Russian government regardless of the existing regime there. The subject of this study is the Japanese interest in and politics toward the Turkic Muslim migrant minorities in Central Eurasia.

There are some previous studies conducted in this field. Their findings suggest two main themes. The subject of Turkic Muslim minorities has been discussed in detail from the perspective of Turkish–Japanese relations, and the policy of Imperial Japan toward Islam has been analyzed using the specialized perspectives of individuals’ biographies and descriptions of their activities in Japan and Turkey.

In a concrete way, the works of Komatsu (1992), Sakamoto and Ieki (1999) and Worringer (2001) mainly analyze Ottoman Turkey–Meiji Japan relations and serve to give an overview of the early

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1. This was form of political thought of the Japanese Empire in the post-Meiji era up to 1945, aiming at the acquisition of Korea, Chinese Manchuria and Inner Mongolia, Russian Siberia and Outer Mongolia. In Bukh’s work, it is defined as the impetus for the northward advance plan of the Japanese military to occupy Russian territories in Far East (Bukh 2010: 25). Basically, the historical and conceptual background of this thinking dates back to the Edo period and was grounded in blocking the Russian threat of southern expansion and defending Japan’s northern borders against Russia before Meiji era (Ikuta 2008: 14–15).

The wartime relations of Turkish–Japanese and Japanese contacts with some Turkic Muslim élite members are analyzed in a collection of 13 essays edited by Esenbel and Inaba (2003). It explores the diplomatic, economic and cultural dimensions of Turkish–Japanese relations and provides a general survey on relations of the world of Türk and Imperial Japan. Among the essays, the chapter by Matsunaga Akira examines the history of the Turkic Tatar communities in Japan and Manchukuo. The history of the Russian Tatars in northeast Asia, especially those in Harbin, is also explored by Usmanova (2007).

As mentioned above, one survey theme has been Japanese Islam policy. These studies tend to focus on émigrés of Turkic Tatar origin, such as Abdurresid Ibrahim and Ayaz Ishaki, and their contacts with Japanese people. Along these lines, works by Komatsu (2008), Türkoğlu (1997) and Özbek (1994) are considered part of Abdurresid Ibrahim’s biography. They address how his relations with the Japanese Army authorities came about and also his activities in Japan after settling down in Tokyo, as one part of his long life stretching from Russia and Ottoman Turkey to Japan. Apart from the studies related to Ibrahim cited above, Misawa (2002) is also a noteworthy piece of evidence since it sheds light on Ajia Gikai, the Asian justice society that Ibrahim founded along with Japanese civil ultranationalists in Tokyo in the late Meiji era. Finally, there is no doubt that the works of Esenbel (2012) and Dündar (2006) are useful reference books to explore relations between the Ottoman Empire and Japan in the context of Japan’s Islam policy. These studies put forward points of intersection and conflict between the two empires in their policies toward Turkic Muslims.

Sakamoto (2008) provides a particularly helpful understanding of the interactions of other Turkic Muslim leaders, such as Muhammed Abdulhay Kurbanali and Prince Abdulkerim, with Japanese Army officials in the Asian Mainland and Tokyo. He connects these interactions with the Japanese–Chinese War in 1937 and the Russian rivalry. He also discusses how leaders of Turkic origin viewed Japan, how the Japanese military authorities initiated and developed their Islam policy and what caused them to become interested in the Turkic Muslims.

Based on the above research evidence, this study focuses on Japanese interests and policies toward Turkic Muslims colonialized in Central Eurasia in the context of the Axis alliance, rather than emphasizing the Pan-Asianist army connections on the Asian mainland and Tokyo. He connects these interactions with the Japanese–Chinese War in 1937 and the Russian rivalry. He also discusses how leaders of Turkic origin viewed Japan, how the Japanese military authorities initiated and developed their Islam policy and what caused them to become interested in the Turkic Muslims.

In particular, articles published by Imaoka in the prewar monthly journal Dai Ajia Shugi provide significant background, unseen in previous studies. This article also helps revise our understanding of Japanese–German relations before 1945 from the perspective of Japan’s Islam policy and offers a new point of view on Japanese foreign policy, considering that this was a time of strong utopian belief.
in Japan, when the idea of ruling Central Eurasia and building a new world order with Germany was not considered theoretically impossible.

2. The First Generation of Turkic Muslim Émigrées from Russia to Northeast China

Construction on the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER) as a link of the Trans-Siberian Railway began in 1900 and was completed in 1902. Along with this construction, many merchants and workers moved from western and central parts of Russia to northeast China (Nakashima 2011: 124). Many of them were Turkic Muslims from the Penza and Tambov regions of Russia. Especially under the supervision of Dmitrii Horvath, the director of the railway from 1903 to 1924, many merchants moved into the northeast part of China and became concentrated in the Harbin and Hailar regions (Tahir 1970: 14). According to Ōkubo Kōji (1887–1950), who was familiar with the first-generation Turkic Muslims in the Far East, they rode horses and sold different kinds of goods to officials working on the railway (Ōkubo 1924a: 56–57). In 1900, the first émigré generation of Turkic Muslims was given a great deal of land in Pristane, Harbin by the executive board of the CER to establish a mosque to pray and for observances such as Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr. On this land, a wooden mosque was first built in 1901 and then a cement version in 1906–1907 (Tahir 1970: 38–39). Along with the establishment of the mosque, Turkic Muslims came to densely populate the vicinity of the mosque in Harbin. An imam, Ahund Ginayetullah Seli-Ahmed (1888–1926), came to Harbin to lead the community formed in northeast China. Imam Ginayetullah both led the Muslim Turkic people in northeast China and educated their children at the mosque in accordance with Islamic rituals (Ōkubo 1924a: 8; 1924b: 61).

In addition to Pristane in Harbin, Hailar in Inner Mongolia was another spot where a first-generation Turkic Muslim community was formed in the Far East. The Hailar community was mostly comprised small-scale traders operating between Russia and Inner Mongolia. The Turkic Muslims in Hailar rented a house and converted it into a mosque which also served as an education facility for the children, as in Harbin. Imam Ginayetullah, who settled in Pristane, Harbin, regularly visited the Turkic Muslim community in Hailar and acted as a community leader (Tahir 1974: 35–37).

Thus, the Turkic Muslim communities in northeast China formed just before the Russo–Japanese War. When Abdurrestit Ibrahim (1857–1944), who was Tatar by ethnicity and a Pan-Islamic activist in Tsarist Russia, visited Pristane in 1909; after the war, he said that it was ‘as if it were Tataristan’ (Ibrahim 2003: 227–228). Up to the time of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, several hundred Turkic Muslims lived in northeast China, centered around Harbin. As a concrete example, a census taken in Harbin in 1913 found 234 Turkic Muslims (Bakich 2000: 53).

3. Abdurrestit Ibrahim, a Turkic Pan-Islamist in Japan before World War I

Abdurrestit Ibrahim supposedly contacted the Japanese for the first time via Colonel Akashi Motojirō in Russia around the time of the Russo–Japanese War, according to US Office of Strategic Services

2. Ginayetullah, who was a young imam in his twenties, came to Harbin in 1907 (Agi 1976: 23–24; Ōkubo 1924a: 8).
3. Akashi Motojirō became the army military officer in charge of the Japanese legation in Tsarist Russia on 1 November 1902. Akashi played a substantial role in anti-Russian intelligence activities during his posting in Russia (Inaba 1987: 90; Inaba 1995: 26–27).
(OSS) reports (August 1944b: 25, 51–52, 63). Although it is well known by researchers that the information in these reports should be read with caution, we can still deduce from Akashi (1938) that there may have been contact between Ibrahim and Akashi (Figure 1).

It is thought that Ibrahim came to Japan for the first time in 1909. During his journey, which began in Siberia in 1908 and ended in Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire, in 1910, he spent much time in Japan. During his stay, he attempted to obtain Japanese support and consideration for his Turkic Muslim brethren in Central Eurasia who were being suppressed by Russia. He met many Japanese policy makers and influential figures, such as Itō Hirobumi, Ōkuma Shigenobu, and Inukai Tsuyoshi (a.k.a. Inukai Bokudō), civil leaders and active politicians of the Meiji and Taishō periods, as well as Tōyama Mitsuru and Uchida Ryōhei, who played significant roles in Japanese Pan-Asianism in prewar Japan through public diplomacy, and Ōyama Iwao (1842–1916), a military authority figure famous for his anti-Russian tendencies.

Ibrahim expressed in his memoirs that the aim of his visit to Japan was to cooperate with Japan, a rising Asian power, against the suppression of Asian nations by Western countries. This is expressed especially well in his dialogue with Itō Hirobumi, who was one of the pioneers of the Meiji Restoration and the first prime minister of modern Japan (Ibrahim 2003: 400–410).

Essentially, Ibrahim’s aim in visiting Japan was to gain support from the Japanese government for the Turkic Muslims’ independence movement against Tsarist Russia (Komatsu 2008: 79). Tarō

Figure 1. Abdurreşid Ibrahim meets in Tokyo with Shiōten Nobutaka, the head (1942–1945) of the Greater Japan Muslim League (Dai Nihon Kaikyō Kyōkai) (JSPS/ROAS Photography Database 2006).

4. In Rorlich (1986: 236) and Türkoğlu (1997: 22), it is alleged that Ibrahim went to Japan twice just prior to the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War. Since we could not verify this argument through Japanese materials or even Ibrahim’s memoirs Âlem-i Islam, we consider 1909 to be the date of his first visit to Japan.
Utsunomiya’s memoirs and military archival documents in Ebisu, Tokyo also verify that this was Ibrahim’s aim.

The Japanese military authorities and civil activists focused on two projects in approaching Turkic Muslims via Ibrahim during his stay in Japan in 1909. One of these was the establishment of a mosque in Tokyo, which would have been the first-ever Islamic prayer house in Japan, had the project been completed. The other was the founding of a joint association between the Muslim world and Japan to enhance mutual perceptions and to publish a periodical as part of expanding propaganda against their common rivals in Asia. The latter project came to fruition under the auspices of the *Ajia Gikai*, which means ‘Association for the Defence of Asia’; its periodical, *Daitō*, means ‘Greater East’ (*Tōyō Daigaku Ajia Bunka Kenkyūjo 2008*).

Essentially, Ibrahim’s visit to Japan can be summed up as serving two goals. One was to enhance mutual recognition between Japanese policy makers and the Turkic Muslim intelligentsia. Ibrahim’s dialogue with the Japanese also showed Japanese policy makers and ultranationalists that Japan was perceived as a leading state after defeating Russia and recognized as a power by Asian Muslim nations seeking independence, especially the Turkic Muslims under Russian suppression. In other words, the Japanese discovered a potential new ‘ally’ to collaborate with against the Russian menace on the Asian mainland and also a potential means to insinuate their influence through Eastern Russia (Levent 2014: 62–64).

Finally, Ibrahim’s interaction with the Japanese officials did not last too long. From 1910 onward, Japanese civilian and military policy makers were compelled to shift focus to the Korean annexation and China questions, setting aside the Muslim issue in Central Eurasia for a decade. *Ajia Gikai*, which was the fruit of Ibrahim’s interaction with Japan, was renamed *Daia Gikai* (meaning ‘Greater Asian Defence’), and its home base was moved to Mukden in Manchuria following the Chinese Revolution in 1911. Most of the members also changed their priorities to regional issues in East Asia (Komatsu 2008: 92). Furthermore, Japanese–Russian relations improved considerably after the war, and four Russo–Japanese conventions were concluded in 1907, 1910, 1912 and 1916 (Ferguson 2008: 12–13). In this regard, Ibrahim’s first sojourn to Japan and the activities he undertook by his own initiative during ‘the golden age’ of Russo–Japanese relations did not really bear fruit, since they contradicted Japan’s mainstream policy. However, few deny that this helped to open a doorway to Islam in Japanese foreign policy in later years, as will be seen.

**4. Muhammed Abdulhay Kurbanali and the Formation of a Turkic Muslim Community in Japan**

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 caused a second wave of Turkic Muslims to emigrate from Russia to Northeast Asia. The émigrés in this second wave, like the first, fled to northeast China; however, they then moved to Japan and settled in Tokyo. Muhammed Abdulhay Kurbanali and Alimcan Tagan (1892–1948) led this second wave to Japan.
As in the case of Ibrahim’s 1909 arrival in Japan, Muhammed Abdulhay Kurbanali, Alimcan Tagan, and the Bashkirs and Tatars who took refuge in Japan expected to be supported by the Japanese in their cause to liberate the Turkic peoples from Bolshevik Russian suppression. These second-wave Turkic Muslims played active roles in the formation of Japanese Islamic politics during the interwar period, and most of them spent the rest of their lives in Japan.

Following the Bolshevik Revolution, the Japanese Siberian Intervention in 1918 against the American and European armies led to a greater focus on Russia and its minorities. Thus, the Japanese military authorities strengthened their anti-Russian stratagems in Central Eurasia, considering the Turkic Muslims more for their utility. White Russians, such as Muhammed Abdulhay Kurbanali (1889–1972), who was a Turkic Muslim, Grigory Semenov (1890–1946), who was of Cossack and Buryat descent, General Dmitri Horvath, who was a Ukrainian-born Russian noble family member, and others were supported by Japanese Army officials in Siberia. On the one hand, this was a great opportunity for Japan to extend its influence in the region. On the other hand, the anti-Bolshevik leaders in Transbaikal and beyond were looking for an appropriate base from which to run their activities against the Bolshevik Revolution, and Japan shone as the sole ‘Asian Great Power’, having made a great leap forward in terms of international issues since the Russo–Japanese War (Hosoya 2005: 33–119). Subsequently, some of the movement’s leaders who were in touch with the Japanese army became refugees in Tokyo. Kurbanali’s case in particular has drawn the attention of researchers in Japan over the last 10 years (Nishiyama 2004, 2006; Matsunaga 2008).

Kurbanali, who was a Bashkir Muslim, was closely associated with Alexander Kolchak (1874–1920) and Grigory Semenov during his years of exile in Siberia after the Bolshevik Revolution. When the Bashkir Army was divided into two factions (the Red Army and the White Army) at the end of 1918, Kurbanali and a group of Bashkirs under his leadership first joined Alexander Kolchak’s White Army and then acted in concert with Semenov after February 1920 (Levent 2014: 75).

Kurbanali was introduced to Semenov by Captain Hirasa Jirō, a Japanese army official in China (Nishiyama 2004: 43). Kurbanali and his Bashkir White Army worked and fought together with Semenov’s army against the Red Army around Transbaikal region in Siberia for almost nine months, until November 1920. During this period, the Kurbanali and Bashkir army authorities, like Tagan, kept closely in touch with Japanese Army officials in China aside from Hirasa Jirō, which allowed them to gain military advice and aid. They had contacts with Nobutaka Shiōten (1879–1962), who was the head of the secret military agency in Harbin (Tokumu Kikan), and Kurosawa Jun (1878–1927), the head of the secret military agency (Tokumu Kikan) in Chita in Eastern Siberia (Shiōten 1964: 118; Levent 2014: 76). Both the Bashkir Army led by Kurbanali and the Japanese Army in the Asian mainland gained mutual benefits from this relationship. While the Japanese Army authorities appealed to Kurbanali’s influence among the Turkic Muslim community in Northeast Asia and his international network for collecting information about Russia in order to infiltrate Russian territories in Siberia, Kurbanali and the Bashkirs intended to turn their Japanese back-up to their advantage as support for the anti-revolutionary independence movement of Turkic Muslims in Russia (Matsunaga 2008: 183–184).

Following the irresistible advance of the Russian Revolutionary Army into the Far East and the extension of its military and political influence into every corner of the eastern Baikal region, Kurbanali and Tagan were compelled to find a new base further east to continue their anti-revolutionary

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8. According to the Sanbō Honbu (1972: 143), the actual strategic intelligence activities of the Japanese army date back to August 1916, prior to the Siberian Intervention.
activities. Via close and sincere connections with the aforementioned Japanese officers in northeast China, Kurbanali, along with Tagan, managed to settle down in Japan. At the end of November 1920, they received a recommendation letter from the Japanese Consulate General in Harbin, and a month later they arrived in Japan (Levent 2014: 77). It is assumed that they reached Japan that first time by traveling through Manchuria in December 1920. Asahi Shim bun (19 December 1920: 4) reported that Kurbanali and some other White Russian attendants, including Tagan, had come to Japan in order to gain Japanese economic and political support to found an independent republic in Central Eurasia, consisting of groups of Turkic Muslim of different origins, such as Tatars, Kirgiz, Bashkir etc. Kurbanali, with some Turkic Muslims under his leadership in northeast China, traveled to Japan twice more in 1921, in January and October (Asahi 29 January 1921; 1 October 1921). Each time, Kurbanali and Tagan, as representatives of the Turkic Muslim White Russians in northeast China fleeing the ‘Bolshevik Purge’, met with influential Japanese in Tokyo and asked for support for the Turkic Muslim liberation movement in Central Eurasia. Ōkuma Shigenobu (1838–1922), a former prime minister, was one of the dignitaries who met with Kurbanali and the Turkic Muslim group in 1921 (Ōkuma Kō Hachi Jū Go Nenshi Hensankai 1926: 488).

Kurbanali’s close relations with Japanese Army officials in both Siberia and Japan allowed him to be employed part-time at the investigative division of Mantetsu, the South Manchurian Railway Company, in Dalian, northeast China, in January 1922. For two years at Mantetsu, Kurbanali was in conflict with the Christians working for the same company. Kurbanali, as a conservative Islamist, was always in dispute with his Christian colleagues and finally made up his mind to leave Manchuria and settle down in Tokyo at the end of 1924, beginning a new page in his life (Nishiyama 2006: 81).

When Kurbanali reached Tokyo, a small number of Turkic Muslims who had fled from the Bolshevik Revolution were living there, as well as Nagoya, Kobe and Kumamoto. Kurbanali was expected to gather these Muslims, including those who came from China under his leadership. First of all, he consecutively made courtesy visits to Japanese dignitaries such as Matsuoka Yōsuke, Tanaka Giichi, Goto Shinpei, Tōyama Mitsuru, Uchida Ryōhei, Sugiyama Shigemaru, Ioki Ryōzō and Inukai Tsuyoshi. Kurbanali, who was accompanied by Shimano Saburō on all these visits, asked the Japanese authorities to support himself and Turkic Muslims both in Japan and abroad, mainly those living in Russia. According to Shimano, Japanese ultra-nationalist non-state actors, such as Tōyama Mitsuru, Sugiyama Shigemaru, Kita Ikki and Inukai Tsuyoshi (a future prime minister and influential politician of the early Showa period), had interest in Kurbanali and his movement (Figure 2).

Shimano also reported that some 200–300 Turkic Muslims in total were located in Japan in the first half of 1920 (Mantetsukai-Shimano Saburō Denki Kankōkai 1984: 450–451). The Turkic Muslims under Kurbanali’s leadership formally established the Tokyo Turkic Muslim Community (Maballe-i İslamiye) on 3 October 1928. Thereafter, Kurbanali and the Tokyo Turkic Muslim Community founded the Tokyo Muslim School (Mekteb-i İslamiye) in Tomigaya, Shibuya district, and then the Muslim Printing Center (Matbaa-i İslamiye) in 1930 (Naimushō Keihokkyoku 1987: 158–159). The Muslim Printing Center served two aims: to publish books and copies of the Kuran for Turkic Muslim children’s education and to provide information and propaganda on Imperial Japan to international

9. Shimano, who was a specialist on Russia working for the Manchurian Railway Company, was introduced to Kurbanali by Ioki Ryōzō, chief editor of Nihon Oyobi Nihonjin, a nationalist periodical published in Japan before 1945 (Mantetsukai-Shimano Saburō Denki Kankōkai 1984: 450–451).
10. Sugiyama Shigemaru and Inukai Tsuyoshi were introduced to Shimano and Kurbanali by Tōyama Mitsuru. Among the above-mentioned names, Sugiyama particularly provided financial support to Kurbanali and his friends (Mantetsukai-Shimano Saburō Denki Kankōkai 1984: 460).
Muslim society. In particular, periodicals like *Yapon Muhbiri* (The Japan Report) and *İlân-i Hakikat* (The Promotion of Truth), published by Matbaa-i İslamiye, were sent to Muslim minorities in India, Korea, China and elsewhere. Kurbanali played quite an important role in the formation of the Turkic Muslim community in Japan and cooperation between Japan and White Russian Turkic Muslims in Siberia, northeast China and finally Japan, up until 1938 (Matsunaga 2008: 185–187).

5. The Chinese Factor in Japan’s Islam Policy

Kurbanali, who had conflicts with some members of the Muslim community, was replaced by Abdurresid Ibrahim in 1938. The latter had come to Tokyo for a long-term stay in 1933 and passed away there in 1944. No sooner had Ibrahim begun to lead the Turkic Muslim community in Japan than the first mosque was established in Tokyo in 1938 (*Naimushō Keihokkyoku 1980a*: 150). This mosque meant a new page in Japanese policies toward the Turkic Muslim world. It was financed by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ultra-nationalist organizations like *Kokuryūkai* and *Genyōsha*, and leading *zaibatsu* (industrial and financial conglomerates) such as Mitsubishi.11

Essentially, Japan began to take its policies toward Muslims more seriously from 1938 onward. It founded the Committee for the Question of Muslim and Jewish People under the supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with the Japanese Army (JACAR Ref. B04012533600). Then, it established a public organization, the Greater Japan Muslim League (Dai Nippon Kaikyō...
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Kyōkai), presided over by former Prime Minister Hayashi Senjūrō (1876–1943). Since the Meiji era, Japan’s Islam policy had been closely related to Japanese national interests in China, as well as its rivalry with Russia and its army’s advance into the Chinese mainland in later years.

As is well known, Japanese expansionist interest in China dated back to the second half of the 19th century. Since the mid-19th century, Japan and China had encountered threats of invasion from Western imperialist powers. These two East Asian powers had to open their domestic markets to Westerners by giving them concessions. As a result, China had suffered a great loss of power in international and regional politics and economics. China was in decline and suffered not only at the hands of Western powers, but also newly transformed, expansionist Japan (Rose 1998: 9–10). On the other hand, Japan developed economically and militarily based on the motto ‘enrich the country and strengthen the military (Fukoku Kyōhei)’. Japan steadily built a path toward a modern state and democracy. At the end of 19th century, Japan had diplomatic equality and military strength, which led it to assert its military power on the continent, as Iriye describes it (Iriye 1992: 24, 27, 71).

The Sino-Japanese War in 1894 was a turning point in these relations, causing Japanese imperialist ambitions in Asia to grow rapidly. The Japanese triumph against Qing China encouraged the army and government authorities in Tokyo to challenge China more and to acquire more and more territory and rights through a series of wars in the name of ‘incidents’ (Jiken or Jihen) in later years. By ‘the Manchurian Incident’ of 1931, Japan had expanded its imperial territory to the Ryukyu Islands, Taiwan, Korea, Liaodong, South Manchuria, Sakhalin and the Micronesian islands. Japan was also granted the same rights and privileges as the Western powers had in treaty ports and concessions. In 1930, Japan’s ambition reached its peak with a military invasion of China. It seized most of the main cities, founded puppet governments and benefited from not only Chinese raw materials such as cotton, coal and iron ore, but also the huge Chinese market for Japan’s exports of manufactured goods (Rose 1998: 10–14).

At its peak in China following ‘the Manchurian Incident’, the Japanese Army extended its influence into Inner Mongolia. The military authorities in China realized that thousands of Muslims lived in the region and that the further west the army advanced, the greater the concentration of Muslims. Thus, the senior officers inevitably adopted the Land Advance Doctrine (Tairikushugi) and took steps to successfully expand their control into Western Asia, a predominantly Muslim region (Sakamoto 2008: 37–49).

Hui Muslims, who spoke Chinese and lived in Inner Mongolia, had been indirectly ruled by Japan since 1934. They numbered some 37,000 people (Manmō Shin bunsha 1944: 104–105). In other words, Muslims were the third most populous group in Inner Mongolia following the Han Chinese and Mongolians when the Kwantung Army (the Japanese Army on the Asian mainland) first established Mōkyō Rengō Inkai on 22 November 1937 and then Mōko Rengō Jichi Seifu two years later on 1 September 1939. This was the Mongolian United Autonomous Government, the

12. The collection of the Greater Japan Muslim League is stored at the Central Library of Waseda University (see Tanada Hirofumi 2006 for detailed information on the collection).

13. For instance, Tanaka (2009: 2–3) asserts that the 1939 military confrontation in China between Japanese-Manchurian and Soviet-Mongolian armies, called the ‘Nomonhan Incident’ in Japan, was actually a ‘Nomonhan War’. Furthermore, the Second Sino-Japanese War, which broke out in 1937, was known in Japan as the ‘Shina Jihen’ until 1945 (Gaimushō 2011: 93).

14. Up to December 1937, the Kwantung Army was responsible for policies toward Muslims in the mainland. From January 1938 onward, the Kwantung Army’s mission shifted focus to developing anti-Soviet Russian military plans, so the responsibility for Muslim policy was transferred to the Mongolia Garrison Army (Chūmōgun) (Sakamoto 2008: 55–56).
second formal puppet state of Imperial Japan in the Asian Mainland after the Manchukuo state was founded in 1932.\footnote{Mōko Rengō Jichi Seifu, the Mongolian puppet government, is abbreviated as Mōkyō Seiken. The Japanese army appointed a Mongolian prince named Tokū (Demchudongrub in Mongolian language, 1902–1966) as the leader of this puppet administration (Mori 2000: 94–193).}

As a matter of fact, the Japanese Army officials did not take Hui Muslims into consideration separately from the Uyghurs of East Turkestan. They considered all Muslim groups as a whole and saw the Muslims governed under Mōkyō Seiken as a bridge to link with their coreligionists in northwest China and further west. The Japanese Army officials firmly believed that Islamic solidarity was the best leverage to apply to gain the allegiance of Muslims in East Turkestan and other Central Eurasian regions. The Japanese military authorities successively founded three organizations—Seihoku Kaikyō Minzoku Bunka Kyōkai\footnote{It is apparently defined in one of the archival documents at JACAR that this organization was established to keep Muslims in China out of communism and Soviet influence (JACAR Ref. B04012396100).} in December 1937, Chūgoku Kaikyō Sōrenkōkai\footnote{The military authorities’ expectation from this organization was to gather Muslims in north China and keep them in close touch with Muslims in the northwest part of the country (JACAR Ref. B10070456800).} in February 1938 and Seihoku Kaikyō Rengōkai\footnote{This organization had a more comprehensive purpose, which was to help Muslims to promote their cultural and economic development, and so enable Muslims all over the world to build a unique mechanism to defend their own profits for the final aim of freeing all Muslims from Western exploitation (JACAR Ref. C04120632300). The same organization was also inclined to hold activities to support the anti-Western movements of other Muslims aside from those living in China (JACAR Ref. B04012552000).} in December 1938. Among these, Chūgoku Kaikyō Sōrenkōkai and Seihoku Kaikyō Rengōkai played active and crucial roles in winning the support of Muslims in Inner Mongolia. For example, in the case of Seihoku Kaikyō Rengōkai, they set up schools, educated Muslim children and supported Muslim families with economic aid. In particular, education via Seihoku Kaikyō Rengōkai was one of the most effective means for Japanese Army officials to spread their influence into the Muslim community. In 1944, there were 15 schools for Muslim children in Japan-controlled Inner Mongolia. Although the attendance rate of Muslim children at school was around 10% in 1939, by 1944 it had reached 60% as a consequence of the programs of Seihoku Kaikyō Rengōkai. In 1944, it was estimated that about 1,600 Muslim children were attending schools in Mōkyō Seiken territory; this number exceeded that of Han Chinese children in the same zone (Shinbo 2000: 5).

Regarding Seihoku Kaikyō Rengōkai, in his memoirs Komura (1988: 449) recalled the following:

This association would be the matrix of a probable East Turkestan Islamic state in the future. In other words, it was seen as the predecessor of a prospective independent Islamic state in northwest China. Basically, its mission and responsibilities regarding Muslims were totally different from the similar organizations in the mainland. For instance, there were also the Manchurian Muslim Association, the Mongolian Muslim Association and the Chinese Muslim Federation etc., and they all specifically focused on Muslims living in the areas already occupied by the Japanese Army. Although northwest China, in other words, the East Turkestan region, was not controlled by the Japanese yet, there were already two associations founded in the Inner Mongolia region, using the name of Seihoku Musurimu, which indicates the Muslims in East Turkestan. One can easily deduce that the Japanese Army authorities were highly ambitious to control the East Turkestan Turkic Muslims.

Tanaka Shinichi (1893–1976), who was the chief of the Mongolia Garrison Army Staff Office (Chūmōgun Sanbōcho) in Mōkyō Seiken territory, sent an eight-page report about the policies toward Muslims to the under-secretary of the army in Tokyo on 3 April 1939. This report explicitly expressed concern that the Muslim maneuvers and politics conducted in Inner Mongolia would ultimately lead
to an independent revival of Turkic Muslims in East Turkestan, depending on the anti-communist sympathies of Imperial Japan (Rikugunshō 3 April 1939).

6. The Clandestine Plan of Former Ottoman Prince Abdulkerim and the Japanese Army: A Turkic Muslim Puppet State

The Japanese interactions with the Turkic Muslims, which were initiated and led by the army authorities, increased in the 1920s following the Siberian Intervention (1918–1922) and peaked after the Manchurian Incident in 1931. Subsequently, the Japanese Army’s further advance into the west part of China whetted the authorities’ appetite for information on the control of the Turkic Muslims, and they put their plans into practice in the field for the first time in 1933. They envisaged an East Turkestan Uyghur puppet state. Essentially, this was the first-ever practical trial of the Japanese Army’s influence over the Turkic Muslim region in Central Eurasia.

Turmoil in the East Turkestan region at the time encouraged the Japanese to join ‘the Great Game’ in northwest China, in which Russia was also an active player. At the outset of 1931, Jin Shuren (1879–1941), a Han Chinese governor of the East Turkestan region, applied oppressive policies on Muslim inhabitants in the region. He first abolished the Komul (or ‘Hami’) Khanate, which was a semi-autonomous feudal Turkic zone with khanate origins in northwest China dating from the Qing dynasty, and then he revoked the privileges of Turkic Muslim people under this khanate. He also tried to make use of the subsequent power vacuum left in the region and arranged to purge the Turkic Muslims from the area and replace them with Han Chinese immigrants from other parts of northwest China, such as Gansu. The harsh purges of Jin Shuren’s administration sparked a Muslim rebellion in mid-1931. Finally, the rebellion bore fruit for the Turkic Muslims, and the first Turkic Islamic Republic of East Turkestan was founded by Khoja Niyaz Haji and his comrades in 1933 (see Forbes 1986; Shinmen 2001; Klimes 2015 for further details on the East Turkestan Islamic Republic and the political history of Uyghur-Muslims).

The Japanese Army on the Asian Mainland also tried to take advantage of this power vacuum by sponsoring Prince Abdulkerim in order to found a Japanese-backed satellite state. Prince Abdulkerim, a descendant of Abdulhamid II, the Ottoman Empire Sultan from 1876 to 1909, was compelled to leave his homeland, Turkey, for Aleppo in Syria. Secular Turkey under Mustafâ Kemal Atatürk deported Ottoman Imperial family members to foreign countries as a state policy for fear that they might rebel against the regime (see Mısıroğlu 1990: 365–366; Öztuna 1996: 328 for more detail on Prince Abdulkerim).

Prince Abdulkerim reached Japan on 22 June 1933, after a long journey with Muhsin Çapanoğlu, who was his mediator in the dialogue with the Japanese Army authorities (concerning Muhsin Çapanoğlu, see Dündar 2008: 154–155). He stayed in Japan for almost four months. Although most of the Japanese newspapers reported that he just came to Japan to visit Muslims in Tokyo as part of his journey to visit his Muslim brethren all over Asia (Asahi Shimbun 6 July 1933a: 2; Yomiuri Shimbun 13 July 1933: 4), it can be deduced from the interview with Prince Abdulkerim in Asahi Shimbun that international media organs closely associated his arrival with the East Turkestan uprising (Asahi Shimbun 10 September 1933b: 2). In this interview, it was discussed that Prince Abdulkerim was in Tokyo to arrange and negotiate all details so that he could lead the East Turkestan rebellion on behalf of the Japanese Army. If everything succeeded, the ultimate aim would be to establish a Japanese-sponsored satellite state in northwest China (Figure 3).
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Cumhuriyet, a daily newspaper in Turkey, also verified the international press report on Abdulkerim, basing its argument on an interview published on An-Nahar, an Arabic-language daily newspaper in Lebanon. In this newspaper report, a man named Nizameddin Bey, a former Turkish national and representative for Prince Abdulkerim, revealed that ‘Prince Abdulkerim was on his way to the Far East. He had a letter recently and immediately set off to join the rebellion in East Turkestan. It was written in this letter that he would lead the new Islamic state of East Turkestan in the future’ (Cumhuriyet 23 September 1933a: 5; 11 October 1933b: 4).

His aim, as reported in the international press and also in an OSS document, was to lead the Turkic Muslim rebellion and the subsequent probable puppet state sponsored by Japan. In Tokyo, Abdulkerim contacted the Japanese Army and civil policy makers in relation to the East Turkestan rebellion. According to OSS records, he departed Yokohama Port for East Turkestan in September along with Muhsin and three Japanese Army officials. They first reached Shangai and then journeyed by land, finally managing to arrive at Gansu in northwest China. However, they were reportedly detained in the vicinity of Lanzhou city by supposed soldiers of Chiang Kai-shek and could not reach their final destination (OSS documents, May and August 1944a, 1944b: 115–116, 83).

As the political conjuncture in northwest China began to turn in favor of Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist Administration from mid-1934, the dreams of Prince Abdulkerim and the Japanese Army authorities about an East Turkestan rebellion went unrealized. Consequently, cooperation between Prince Abdulkerim and the Japanese Army fell apart, and the Prince secluded himself in the Turkic Muslim communities of Harbin and Hailar in northeast China. He stayed there as an ordinary member of the community up to August 1934 and then settled down in New York City in September 1934 (OSS 1944b: 118–119). He committed suicide at the Cadillac Hotel on 5 August 1935, according to US newspapers (The Times 5 August 1935: 12; The New York Times 7 August 1935: 10).

Figure 3. Prince Abdulkerim with Kurbanali and Muhsin Çapanoğlu meeting with Japanese officials in Japan. The person who is holding some papers and giving a speech is Kurbanali. The person who is wearing a fez and sitting among Japanese officials right across from him is Prince Abdulkerim (Asahi Shim bun 6 July 1933a: 2).
7. The Furthest Western Frontier of Greater Asianism: East Turkestan

It is assumed that Japan planned a takeover of Greater Mongolia after taking control of most of Inner Mongolia. Thus, Outer Mongolia was logically the next step toward this goal. Especially from 1935 to the outset of World War II in Europe, the general opinion of international observers was that Japan would annex Outer Mongolia to its sphere of influence. In that case, the Soviet Union seemed to present their biggest menace (Togay 1 September 1933: 2, see also Tanaka 2009). The fact that Japan and Germany signed the Anti-Comintern Pact (aimed directly against international communism, but indirectly against Russia) signified another development in Japanese diplomacy which brought the two states closer together (Imaoka March 1936: 7–8). In this regard, East Turkestan (Xinjiang) occupied a very strategic position in Japanese expansionism, or so-called ‘Greater Asianism’, especially from the second half of 1930. Besides, if Japan managed to ally with the Turkic Muslims in northwestern China and specifically East Turkestan, then both Indian-Muslims under British influence and Turkic Muslims minorities in Central Asia under Soviet Russian authority would be motivated to fight for their independence, which would be a promising development for Greater Asianism.

Imaoka Jūichirō, the first-ever Japanese Turanist and also a part-time employee reporting on Turanists and Muslims to the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs before and during World War II, keenly understood the significance of the Turkic Muslims and their lands in Central Eurasia. Imaoka associated their existence with the Axis alliance and grasped that they would be an indispensable factor in creating a new world order led by Japan and Germany. In his view, Japan should cooperate with the Turkic Muslims residing from Manchuria all the way west through northwestern China and central Xinjiang. If this had been achieved, then it would have built a breakwater between Asian culture and materialist Bolshevism. This was the only way to preserve the cultures unique to Asia (Imaoka 1936: 7–8).

Essentially, the Turkic Muslims were also considered in the context of the Turanic notion and seen as one of the most effective bulwarks against international communism, which threatened the Far East and managed to infiltrate into China to some extent during 1930. Furthermore, the existence of the Turkic Muslims in Central Eurasia was seen to play an intermediary role in connecting Japan to Germany, so that a new world order would be formed by these two powers in the near future. This is clearly seen in one of Imaoka’s contributions to *Dai Ajia Shugi* (Imaoka 1939: 9):

> I received a letter from one of the Hungarian Turanists a few years ago, just after the Manchurian Incident. Part of the letter read as follows: ‘To break the castle of Bolshevism, which was the enemy of culture of mankind, there were two powers: Germanism in the West and Sumerism, namely Imperial Japan, in the East’. I myself added Turanism, which was just in between. If these three ideologies collaborate with one another very closely, then it is possible to annihilate Russia. Honestly, neither Japan nor Germany could destroy such a huge country on its own. That is to say, Turanism should be utilized to foment a separatist rebellion domestically among the minorities of the Soviet Union. Sumerism (Japan) and Germanism (Germany) should attack from outside afterwards. Then Bolshevism can easily be subjugated.

The significance of East Turkestan for Greater Asia was clearly emphasized by the articles in *Dai Ajia Shugi*, especially after 1935. This is probably because it was regarded as a frontier post in the West for both the Japan-Manchuria-China Economic Bloc in the near future and the Greater East Asia

19. This section mainly examines the works of Imaoka Jūichirō, especially articles concerning Turkic Muslims in the monthly journal *Dai Ajia Shugi* (Greater Asianism), which was a symbolic organ of Pan-Asianism published from May 1933 to April 1942. In the process, it illuminates the position of Turkic Muslims in Japanese expansionist Pan-Asianism (see Gotō and Matsuura 2008–2009 for reprinted editions of *Dai Ajia Shugi*).

20. East Turkestan and Xinjiang are used as interchangeable terms in this study.
One article explained the historical background of the territory as the heart of Asia, adding that if Japan was to be accepted as the leader of Asia, as soon as possible it had to reign over East Turkestan which was the heart of Asia and the center of the Greater Asia, and which would play a key role in the fate of all Asian nations. Furthermore, it was suggested that Japan should develop the route traversing Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang, called the Turan–Anti-Comintern–Islam triple line. To keep this line under control, Japan needed to carry out three state policies simultaneously: Turanism, Anti-Cominternism and Islamism.

East Turkestan remained significant in terms of policies against the Soviet Union, China and the British Empire. To give an idea of this, Japan could have restrained China from the rear and hit the Soviet Union from two points in Siberia—the weakest point in the east and Central Asia. Also in dealing with the British Empire, Xinjiang provided a very important position to check India, which was the heart of the British Empire, and to paralyze the defense of the Singapore naval base, called the furthest impregnable fortress of British India. Japanese strategists expected that the independence of East Turkestan would arouse the same feelings among Asian minorities, both Muslim and Turanian, against the European powers. So it would put both the Soviet Union and the British Empire in a perilous position. Shortly, it began to seem possible for Japan to hit three birds (Russia, Britain and China) with one stone (the Turan–Anti-Comintern–Islam triple line) (Imaoka 1938: 32).

In particular, the Second Sino-Japanese War, which broke out in 1937, weakened the influence of Chiang Kai-shek’s national government in northwestern China and brought about an opportunity for the non-Han Chinese, namely Muslims, to riot against the central administration. This provided a chance for Japan, which was maneuvering to advance further west into the Asian mainland (Imaoka 1939: 8):

Muslims have been living in China for nearly 3 thousands years. The Muslims in China can be divided into three groups: the Han-Chinese Muslims, also called ‘Kaikai’; the Dungan, who are originally a Turkic people, but Sinicized and also called Han-Chinese Muslims; and finally the turban-wrapped people who were originally Turkic and live in southern Xinjiang. The Dungan people are also part of this group, they live in Ningxia, Gansu, Qinghai, Xinjiang. There are turban-wrapped people also in southern Xinjiang; they are considered the most nationalistic. Thus they are innately against the Soviet Union and the Han Chinese in terms of religion, race and even politics. Actually this is a common point they share with Japan. Finally, the anti-Han Chinese Muslims have been fighting to found an independent Islamic government in northwestern China.

There was another reason why Japan wanted to keep the northwestern region of China under control: Soviet aid to Chiang Kai-shek’s national government. The Japanese Army flung back the Chinese National Army and spread through South China. But it still could not break down the resistance of Chiang Kai-shek. Army writers thought that Soviet assistance via the northwestern China route to Chinese soldiers played a vital role in this holdout. Thus, dominance of the ‘Chiang Aid Route’ was indispensable (Imaoka 1939: 8). The Japanese army authorities believed that there were two external means of material support to Chiang Kai-shek. One was conducted by the British and the French via French Indo-China, and the other one was conducted by the Soviet Union via Central Asia and Xinjiang. The latter was called the ‘Communist Route’ (Red Aid Route). Soviet aid consisted of not only munitions, but also an ideological ‘toxin’ called communism, which already and gradually began to spread into East Asia. To remove this threat, Imaoka suggested controlling East Turkestan, which served the Turan, Anti-Comintern and Islam policies at the same time, and founding a Northwestern

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21. Another contribution in Dai Ajia Shinji shows that Xinjiang was regarded to be the frontier in the west by Japan: Chûma February 1934: 47.
Self-Governing Islamic State following the Manchukuo Empire and the Mongolia-Xinjiang Self-Governing State. Hence, there would emerge an East Asian Anti-Comintern Federation, which would enclose the Greater East Asia Community conceived by Japan (Imaoka 1939: 5). In this way, it was also possible to make direct contacts with both Central and Western Asian Muslims. The so-called Northwestern Self-Governing Islamic State, centered in East Turkestan, was assumed to be the best-situated territory to connect Tokyo and Berlin (Imaoka, date of publication unknown: 6).

In sum, it can be explicitly inferred from columns in the Dai Ajia Shugi monthly journal that Japan aimed to establish an autonomous government under its influence in northwestern China. This would not only hinder communism from infiltrating into East Asia, but also give Japan close relations with Muslims in Central Eurasia in the future and finally link Tokyo to Berlin.

8. The Utopian Concept of Imperial Japan, Encouraged by Cooperation with Nazi Germany to ‘Rule Central Eurasia’

Archival evidence from the Japanese National Institute for Defence Studies suggests that Japanese army policies and maneuvers toward Muslims would not have been restricted to those living in Inner Mongolia and East Turkestan. The policies also proposed to attract those people who shared common origins with the Uyghurs of East Turkestan, namely the Turkic Muslims in Soviet Central Asia. The same document also stated that with the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, the significance of the Muslim question had increased, and from the perspective of the East Asia Union, control of Central Asia was not only the ambition and desire of Imperial Japan but also necessary and inevitable (Sugiyama Butai Honbu Senbuhan 1939).

The document proposed that Japan should follow the following policy toward this region: (a) to establish independent states as best suited for Islamic characteristics by freeing the Turkic Muslims from the oppression of the Soviet Union–England–France and (b) to form an anti-communist zone consisting of these puppet states, supported by Japan. It also implied that those living in Soviet Central Asia shared a common racial origin with Manchus, Japanese and Mongolians, namely Ural-Altaic. The Turkic Muslims were considered to occupy a strategic position on the Eurasian continent, and their movement and attitudes were reported to the Japanese authorities in Tokyo as the determining factor for the Japanese Asian continental policy. It explicitly stated that the urgent priority of the Japanese army in north China was to establish a Turkic Muslim satellite state in Central Eurasia after Manchukuo and the Mongolian United Autonomous Government. This third prospective puppet state was associated with the anti-communist alliance with Germany. The probable Turkic Muslim state, along with Japan, Manchukuo and the Mongolian Autonomous Government, was considered indispensable to connecting an anti-communist line between Asia and Europe led successively by Japan and Germany, one that could represent a new world order (Sugiyama Butai Honbu Senbuhan 1939).

Essentially, senior leaders in the Japanese Army of Tokyo began to associate the existence of Turkic Muslims in Japan and northeast China with the German factor earlier than the above-mentioned time, as Germany was already being isolated by ‘the same enemies’: the US, Great Britain and France.

22 See ‘Kaikyō Shina Sankō Shiryō 23’ in Kitashi no Shūkyō Kirisutokyō-Kaikyō. This report was made by the Sugiyama Pacification Unit (Sugiyama Senbu Butai) in 1939. This was a Japanese military operational unit in north China assigned to win the support of the masses in the region. This unit was established during Sugiyama Hajime’s term as commander (December 1938–September 1939) of the Japanese North China Area Army. Sugiyama was the war minister in the Hayashi Senjūro Cabinet and the first Konoe Fumimaro administration (Sugiyama Gensui Denki Kankōkai 1969: 87–90).
One of the aims in moving toward Germany was to form a convenient basis for gathering Soviet intelligence (Saitō 1955: 130) (Figure 4).

On the other hand, the German military authorities in Berlin were also informed about Japanese ambitions and actions in Central Eurasia to some extent. Eugen Ott (1889–1977), who became German ambassador to Tokyo from 1938 to 1942, first came to Japan in the summer of 1933 and traveled to Manchuria for a month-long military expedition in August 1933. Once he temporarily returned to Germany in December 1933, he met Hitler and some authorities at the Ministry of Defence and gave them a briefing on recent situation in East Asia. Based on Ott’s report, Karl Heinrich von Stülpnagel, an official in the Third Section of the Army General Staff Office responsible for foreign army affairs, presented a written report on 29 March 1934 about Japanese politics in Asia. Stülpnagel’s report clearly expressed that Japanese influence into Mongolia increased day by day, and Japanese emissaries had already infiltrated into East Turkestan, where Russian and British secret agents were also taking action. The Japanese had greater influence than the others, especially in Kashgar. Stülpnagel also stated that Japanese influence was crossing further west into Soviet Central Asia and Afghanistan (Tajima 2017: 60–62). This intelligence on Japanese politics caused those in the German Military Intelligence Department to initiate a secret joint political project with the Japanese Army.

First of all, the military organizations of Japan and Germany both saw Russia and its ideology as a common threat and the largest barrier to their expansionist policies. Thus, the two powers began to focus on sharing intelligence against the Bolshevik government in Moscow. In 1937, two agreements were made between the Japanese military attaché, Ōshima Hiroshi (1886–1975), and the German rear admiral, Wilhelm Franz Canaris (1887–1945). One of these concerned the exchange of information between the two militaries, and the other concerned strategic collaboration against Soviet Russia (Sanbō Honbu 11 May 1937b; 11 May 1937c). The first agreement was closely related to the Anti-Comintern Pact of 1936, as has been argued in many studies. The second is discussed here.

In February 1937, just after the signing of the Anti-Comintern Pact, Ōshima took an order from the Chief of the Army General Staff, stating that Ōshima himself, as the Japanese military attaché,

Figure 4. Students at the Tokyo Muslim School, praying for the realization of the Anti-Comintern Pact between Germany and Japan in 1936 (Tōyō University 2011: 12).
should evaluate in detail the White Russians factor in Berlin with the objective of gathering information concerning Soviet Russia for propaganda and counter-intelligence purposes, in case of war between Japan and Russia (Sanbō Honbu 5 February 1937a). Following the order, Ōshima met Wilhelm Franz Canaris from the German Army on 11 May 1937 and made two agreements with him on behalf of the German Army, as mentioned above. In accordance with Ōshima’s affidavit at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, these were memoranda rather than formal agreements like the Anti-Comintern Pact (Pritchard and Zaide 1981a: 6022). Four articles from the second memorandum, entitled ‘Taiso Bōryaku ni Kan Suru Nichidoku Fuzoku Kyōtei’, are shown below (Sanbō Honbu 11 May 1937c):

1. To work in collaboration with the German Army to support independence movements of minorities in the Soviet Union and anti-communist propaganda. We should consider that war with Russia may occur at any time, and so we should be fully prepared. It will be to Japan’s advantage to grasp deficiencies and move accordingly in case of war.

2. Collaboration against the entire Soviet sphere, ranging from Finland to Hungary in the eastern part of Europe. Soviet lands in Eastern Europe are in the sphere of German interest. The southwest frontiers (Turkey and Iran) are common spheres of both Japanese and German interest. Finally, the frontier of East Asia is within the sphere of Japanese interest.

3. The maneuvers of this collaboration between the two militaries shall constitute a five-year project, from 1937 to 1941.

4. The expenses related to the common sphere of interest of both countries will be met fifty–fifty by the signatories to the agreement, namely Germany and Japan.

The agreement above was formally signed on 7 October 1938 by Ōshima and Lieutenant General Wilhelm Bodewin Johann Gustav Keitel (1882–1946). In Germany, the governmental association for such anti-Soviet and pro-Russian minority-involved activities was the Intelligence Department of the Ministry of Defense, whose head was Wilhelm Franz Canaris. The General Army Staff Office played the same role in Japan (Suzuki 1979: 91–92).

Although agreement talks were underway between Ōshima and the German authorities, these had not been formally finalized when the Japanese Army General Staff Office began pro-White Russian activities and posted Lieutenant Colonel Usui Shigeki (1898–1941) as a Soviet expert from May 1937 onward. Usui was based in Berlin and carried out anti-Soviet activities for six months before handing the post over to Colonel Manaki Takanobu (1894–1979) in January 1938. In accordance with Kawabe Torashirō’s (1890–1960) affidavit at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, the Headquarters of the Army General Staff in Tokyo allocated an annual figure of 30,000 yen for this plan (Pritchard and Zaide 1981b: 33, 764–765). However, in 1939, the forward momentum of the German–Japanese plans reversed. First, the Japanese Army clashed with the Soviet Army at Nomonhan on the Mongolian border. The Soviets were badly defeated, and as a consequence, a Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact was signed between Moscow and Berlin, leaving most of the Japanese Army officials feeling betrayed. These two events also caused authorities of the Army General Staff in Tokyo and the Kwantung Army on the Asian mainland to reconsider war plans and military priorities (Tajima 2017: 163–167). It also struck a big blow to Japanese Central Eurasian policy. Finally, the Japanese Army was convinced to expand its sphere of influence to Southeast Asia and Asia Pacific waters, which meant putting an end to the expansionist visionary plans of the Japanese toward the Turkic Muslims and their territories.
9. Conclusion

With victory against Russia in 1905, Japan began claiming leadership of all people oppressed by Western nations in Asia. Russia was naturally considered a menace to Japanese expansionism, especially in Central Eurasia. Correspondingly, some Turkic Muslim opposition leaders in Russia thought of appealing to Japan’s rising power for their independence. Despite the fact that Japanese–Russian relations flourished following the Russo–Japanese War up to 1917, the Japanese General Army Staff continued to consider Russia a potential enemy, and the Japanese military looked for secret allies in their effort to weaken the Russia Empire even after the war. Thus, Japan’s secret contacts and plans with its Turkic Muslim ‘allies’ were always kept handy, virtually up to the last moment before the decision to attack Pearl Harbor and expand its sphere of influence in Southeast Asia and Asia Pacific waters.

Up to Ibrahim’s arrival in 1909, Japan mainly focused on enhancing its sphere of influence only among East Asian countries such as Korea, Taiwan and China. But Ibrahim’s own remarks and actions instructed Japanese policy makers that Central Eurasian Muslims could also be an objective of Pan-Asiatic expansion. Ibrahim’s arrival in 1909 should be seen as the link to this change in state policy. No one denies that his arrival was a preliminary and concrete step toward the development of Muslim policy by Imperial Japan in the interwar period.

Military leaders took action in terms of collaboration with Turkic Muslims minorities following the Siberian Intervention in 1917. They thought of winning minorities over to their side to enhance the Japanese sphere of influence in Siberia. From their perspective, Siberia, as far as Lake Baikal, should all be Japanese territory. Thus, they got in touch with Alimcan Tagan, Abdulhay Kurbanali and other Turkic Muslim White Russians. This relationship was not unilateral. These Turkic Muslims led by Kurbanali were also seeking an exile base for their political ambitions to free their people from Russian influence. Contacts between Turkic Muslims and Japanese after the Siberian Intervention created the Turkic Muslim community in Japan under Kurbanali’s leadership in the second half of the 1920s, enabling a Muslim policy as a sub-policy of the expansionist state policy following the Manchurian Incident. No one denies that Kurbanali played a main and substantial role in forming the Turkic Muslim community in Japan under Kurbanali’s leadership in the second half of the 1920s, enabling a Muslim policy as a sub-policy of the expansionist state policy following the Manchurian Incident. No one denies that Kurbanali played a main and substantial role in forming the Turkic Muslim community in Japan under Kurbanali’s leadership in the second half of the 1920s, enabling a Muslim policy as a sub-policy of the expansionist state policy following the Manchurian Incident. No one denies that Kurbanali played a main and substantial role in forming the Turkic Muslim community in Japan under Kurbanali’s leadership in the second half of the 1920s, enabling a Muslim policy as a sub-policy of the expansionist state policy following the Manchurian Incident. No one denies that Kurbanali played a main and substantial role in forming the Turkic Muslim community in Japan under Kurbanali’s leadership in the second half of the 1920s, enabling a Muslim policy as a sub-policy of the expansionist state policy following the Manchurian Incident. No one denies that Kurbanali played a main and substantial role in forming the Turkic Muslim community in Japan under Kurbanali’s leadership in the second half of the 1920s, enabling a Muslim policy as a sub-policy of the expansionist state policy following the Manchurian Incident. No one denies that Kurbanali played a main and substantial role in forming the Turkic Muslim community in Japan under Kurbanali’s leadership in the second half of the 1920s, enabling a Muslim policy as a sub-policy of the expansionist state policy following the Manchurian Incident. No one denies that Kurbanali played a main and substantial role in forming the Turkic Muslim community in Japan under Kurbanali’s leadership in the second half of the 1920s, enabling a Muslim policy as a sub-policy of the expansionist state policy following the Manchurian Incident. No one denies that Kurbanali played a main and substantial role in forming the Turkic Muslim community in Japan under Kurbanali’s leadership in the second half of the 1920s, enabling a Muslim policy as a sub-policy of the expansionist state policy following the Manchurian Incident. No one denies that Kurbanali played a main and substantial role in forming the Turkic Muslim community in Japan under Kurbanali’s leadership in the second half of the 1920s, enabling a Muslim policy as a sub-policy of the expansionist state policy following the Manchurian Incident. No one denies that Kurbanali played a main and substantial role in forming the Turkic Muslim community in Japan under Kurbanali’s leadership in the second half of the 1920s, enabling a Muslim policy as a sub-policy of the expansionist state policy following the Manchurian Incident. No one denies that Kurbanali played a main and substantial role in forming the Turkic Muslim community in Japan under Kurbanali’s leadership in the second half of the 1920s, enabling a Muslim policy as a sub-policy of the expansionist state policy following the Manchurian Incident. No one denies that Kurbanali played a main and substantial role in forming the Turkic Muslim community in Japan under Kurbanali’s leadership in the second half of the 1920s, enabling a Muslim policy as a sub-policy of the expansionist state policy following the Manchurian Incident.
the Caspian Sea, following Manchukuo and the Mongolian United Autonomous Government, which would have joined Tokyo to Berlin.

In conclusion, Japan in the interwar period saw Russia and its political ideology, communism, as a primary threat, and saw Muslims in Central Eurasia as potential collaborators until 1940–1941, when it refocused on its Southern Expansion Doctrine (Nanshin-ron). From the time of the Siberian Intervention, senior staff in the Japanese military always kept an anti-Russian plan handy, creating alternative projects to weaken this threat. These included forming a Turkic Muslim community in Japan and also sending orders to representative offices abroad, such as the Berlin example in this article, to approach anti-revolutionary elements like the White Russians. The German and Japanese military authorities discovered that they had a common enemy in Russia, and so both countries became places of exile for White Russians. For example, Turkic leaders such as Ayaz Ishaki, A. Zeki Velidi Togan and others lived in exile in Germany before and during World War II. Considering the relations of Russian minorities with Germany before and during the war, the German Army did not hesitate to cooperate with the Japanese concerning the White Russian movement in Eurasia, in spite of opposition, especially by civil policy makers.

Essentially, the mutual benefit to both Germany and Japan found them at the same spot, namely, Russia. As for the collaboration between the two countries toward Russian Muslims, this did not really result in success. By way of explanation, it must be considered that Germany was not as enthusiastic as Japan in this area, and additionally, the long distance between the two countries and the differences in their foreign policy priorities played havoc on the creation of an efficient joint project for the White Russian movement.

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