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A Topos and Its Dissolution: Japan in Some 20th-Century Iranian Texts*

Introduction

TOWARDS THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY, DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE ISLAMIC world, occupied with various attempts to cope with the European power play, became aware of a country that seemed to have "made it": Japan, remote and in self-imposed, almost complete isolation from the Western world for more than 200 years up to 1853, fascinated Muslim viewers. In different aspects, Japan's situation lent itself to comparison. It had been a military confrontation with economic incentives that had forced Japan to come into contact with the West. In the first military confrontation with the American warships sent to force the opening of Japanese ports in 1853, Japan could not withstand the Western threat and thus confirmed the stereotype of the inferior traditional Oriental country retreating in the face of the superior, advanced West. The reversal of roles in the Russo-Japanese War of 1903–1905, with Japan defeating Russia in the spectacular naval battle of Tsushima no more than five decades after the opening of the country, aroused widespread attention in publications in the Ottoman Empire (mainly in Istanbul and Cairo), in the Turkish-speaking southern parts of the Russian Empire (Baku), and in Persian publications (especially in the Persian press printed in Istanbul, Cairo and Calcutta).[1] This phenomenon has been studied by Klaus Kreiser and Hashem Rajabzadeh.[2]

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1. A vivid contemporary summary account is given in F. Farjenel, "Le Japon et l'Islam," *Revue du monde musulman* 1 (1907): 101–114.

2. Klaus Kreiser, "Der japanische Sieg über Rußland (1905) und sein Echo unter den Muslimen," *Die Welt des Islams* 21 (1981): 209–239; Hashem Rajabzadeh, "Russo-Japanese War As Told By Iranians," *Annals of Japan Association for Middle East Studies* (JAMES) 3, no. 2 (1988): 144–66. For a bibliography of comparative studies on Japan and the Muslim world up to 1980 see Kreiser, "Der japanische Sieg," 212, n. 6. Additionally, see also Akbar S. Ahmed, "Can Pakistan Be Japan? Social Factors in Economic Development," *Asian Affairs* (London) 16 (o.s. 72/1985): 145–62; J. Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1982), 5 (comparisons between Japan and Turkey, Turkey and China, 211–15); Abdul-Hadi Hairi, "Euro-

Kreiser states in his study that the theme of Japan in Muslim countries, although ubiquitous in religious and scientific writings in the beginning of the century, is treated in rather simplistic fashion, and he refers to the Japanese model and its instrumentalization in the Muslim debate.[3] The crucial point is that in the Muslim world, Japan is found far less often in scientific treatises than in the political discussion; in Iran, especially around the Constitutional movement. The use of historical knowledge as evidence or argument in political debates and decision-making has been described as directly linked to the effect on the public,[4] and "Japan" was an eminent historical argument in the public political debate of those days. The main interest in this paper is to elucidate the techniques of this instrumentalization in the political debate of the Constitutional movement in Iran. The second part will try to show how this once instrumentalized notion is transformed against the background of a historically different situation. The third section contains a short characterization of some references to Japan after World War II found in political publications and the media of Iran.

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pean and Asian Influences on the Persian Revolution of 1906," *Asian Affairs* 62 (n.s. 6, 1975): 155–64; T. Hayashi, "The Modernisation of Japan and Turkey: Some Comparisons" in A. Kazancigil and E. Özbudun, eds., *Atatürk, Founder of A Modern State* (London: Hurst, 1981), 221–34; M. Sasagawa, "Japan and the Middle East" in S. L. Spiegel, ed., *The Middle East and the Western Alliance* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1982), 33–46; Alexander Schölch, "Ägypten in der ersten und Japan in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts: ein entwicklungsgeschichtlicher Vergleich," *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 33 (1982): 333–46.

3. ". . . das japanische 'Modell' mit seinem in der muslimischen Diskussion sehr 'instrumentalen' Einsatz. . . . Das Thema Japan zieht sich wie ein roter Faden durch das wissenschaftliche und religiöse Schrifttum. Doch die Ebene, auf der es behandelt wird, bleibt anspruchslos" ("Der japanische Sieg," 234, 238).

4. "Es handelt sich mehr um die Simulation eines politischen Entscheidungsprozesses unter den Augen der Öffentlichkeit als um die Entscheidungsfindung selbst" (Hans-Georg Faber, "Zur Instrumentalisierung historischen Wissens in der politischen Diskussion" in Reinhart Koselleck, Wolfgang J. Mommsen, and Jörn Rüsen, eds., *Objektivität und Parteilichkeit in der Geschichtswissenschaft* [Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1977], 276). Kreiser refers to this article, but explicitly does not apply its findings to the case of Japan in the frame of his article, since the "original voices" had to be assessed first ("Der japanische Sieg," 238, n. 105). Faber analyzes different modes of instrumentalized historical knowledge and their application in German parliamentary debates, distinguishing mainly between "history as a collection of examples," dealing with famous historical "events," and "(hi)stories as coherence of meaning and effect" ("Geschichten als Sinn- und Wirkungszusammenhang"), and dealing with the presentation of historical processes. The present article applies Faber's methods and findings, but only in limited fashion, because Faber's subject is German or German-related history in German parliamentary debates, whereas our case is characterized by the local distance and largely mutual historical irrelevance between Iran and Japan.

The Making of a Topos

As mentioned above, the early "Japan fever" reached its peak during the Russo-Japanese war. In Persian publications, the positive presentation of Japan seems to be comprehensive and consistent. There seems to have been no exception to the applause, which came mainly from backers of the Constitutional movement.[5]

Contacts between the two countries were impossible during the age of Japan's closure (1639–1853). Information about Japan from this period, gathered towards the end of the 17th century by a member of the Safavid embassy to Siam and based on accounts "from merchants who recently returned from the splendid island" is enclosed in Ebn Mohammad Ebrahim's travelogue *Safīneh-ye Solaymānī*.[6] But even after Japan had opened its ports, direct contact remained rare. In 1880, a Japanese delegation visited the court of Naser al-Din Shah,[7] but Japan seems to have preferred to develop Ottoman contacts.[8] Few Iranians visited Japan in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The first to have brought first-hand information about the country to Iran was Hajj Mohammad 'Ali Sayyah Mahallati, an early Iranian globetrotter who visited Japan on his round-the-world tour (1859–77),[9] followed twenty years later by the merchant Ebrahim Sahhafbashi who toured the globe in a much shorter time (1897–98).[10] The most prominent of the early visitors to Japan was Prime Minister 'Ali Asghar Khan Amin al-Soltan Atabak-e A'zam, who, having been dismissed in September 1903, headed for Japan via Russia immediately afterwards, accompanied by Mahdiqoli Hedayat Mokhber al-Saltaneh, who included a travelogue in his memoirs.[11]

The sources suggest that "until the eve of the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, Iranians had little knowledge about Japan" (Rajabzadeh calls it "rumors"), and knowledge was scarce even afterwards. From the very beginning, these

5. In contrast to the Tatar publicist Gaspïralï in Russia and and some critics in the Ottoman Empire. Cf. Kreiser, "Der japanische Sieg," 335–38.

6. Ebn Mohammad Ebrahim, *The Ship of Sulaiman,* trans. John O'Kane, Persian Heritage Series, 11 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 188–98.

7. Hashem Rajabzadeh, "Īrān va Īrānīān az negāh-e Yūshīdā, nakhostīn ferestādeh-ye Zhāpūn be darbār-e Qājār," *Iranshenasi* 5, no. 2 (Summer 1372 Sh./1993): 381–97 and 5, no. 3 (Autumn 1372 Sh./1993): 566–79 (in two parts).

8. Kreiser, "Der japanische Sieg," 213.

9. Mohammad 'Ali b. Aqa Mohammad Reza Mahallati Hajj Sayyah, *Khāṭerāt-e Ḥājj Sayyāḥ yā dawreh-ye khawf va vaḥshat,* ed. Hamid Sayyah and Sayfollah Golkar (Tehran: Ebn-e Sina, 1346 Sh./1967–68), containing his travels in Iran and his political involvement. Hajj Sayyah's travelogue about his world tour has been only partially edited as *Safarnāmeh-ye Ḥājj Sayyāḥ be Farang,* ed. 'Ali Dehbashi (Tehran: Nasher, 1363 Sh./1984).

10. Ebrahim Sahhafbashi, *Safarnāmeh,* ed. M. Moshiri (Tehran, 1357 Sh./1978).

11. Rajabzadeh, "Russo-Japanese War," 145.

"rumors" and their propagation had political contents and functions. They referred to the political system and its functionaries, the military and education in Japan, but rarely for their own sake. Whenever the subject "Japan" was brought up, relation to and comparison with the situation in Iran was an integral part of it.

Up to the first decade of the 20th century, the perception of Japan took place in various ways and on different levels. Until the Russo-Japanese war, there were newspaper essays and commentaries, travelogues, and poems on Japan.[12] During the Russo-Japanese war, the sporadic articles and commentaries turned into a permanent flow of information on the war situation. The Calcutta *Ḥabl al-matīn* "follows its reports in detail," even inserting "a special survey on 'The History of Japanese War'" in its 1904–1905 issues.[13] Notwithstanding the fact that the surveys in the Calcutta *Ḥabl al-matīn* were again second-hand reports which had been borrowed from the international press circulating in the British crown colony, reports on the course of a war and its strategic movements always smack of authenticity and first-hand factual transmission. The coverage of the strategic movements in this war and of the Japanese success can be interpreted as retrospective substantiation of what had been spread before as "rumors."

Some years later in Iran these war reports on Japanese successes and the other information about Japan had turned into condensed historical material for the political argumentation of the Constitutionalists. If we look at some newspaper texts dating from the year 1907, we discover the main ingredients of this political instrumentalization. The texts are taken from the Tehran *Ḥabl al-matīn,* which appeared as a four-page daily in support of the Constitutional movement.[14] The greater part of it was usually devoted to an editorial-style commentary on certain events or the general situation. In an early issue of the newspaper, this main article begins in praise of the Enlightenment and the consequent establishment of freedom, human rights and a constitutional government in the West. After having entrusted an efficient leader with this constitutional government,

12. See, for example, the travelogue of Mahdiqoli Hedayat (Mokhber al-Saltaneh), *Safarnāmeh-ye tasharrof be Makkeh-ye mo'aẓẓameh az ṭarīq-e Chīn, Zhāpon va Emrikā* (Tehran, n.d.), and Mirza Hosayn 'Ali's *Shāhnāmeh*-type poem, *Mikādo-nāmeh,* lithograph (Calcutta, 1323/1905–1906); cf. Kreiser, "Der japanische Sieg," which gives a vast bibliography of sources from the Muslim world, encompassing the Ottoman Empire and Egypt, the Caucasus, Iran, Afghanistan and India.

13. Rajabzadeh, "Russo-Japanese War," 148. See also Kreiser, "Der japanische Sieg," 222, which mentions the high number of war reports.

14. This newspaper (its main period being 29 April 1907 to 27 July 1908, when the Majles was bombed) was headed by Mirza Sayyed Hasan Kashani, the younger brother of the famous Calcutta *Ḥabl al-matīn* editor. E. G. Browne calls it "the most important daily newspaper of the Constitutional period" (*The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia* [Cambridge, 1914; repr. Los Angeles: Kalimat, 1983], nos. 137, 74). See also Mohammad Sadr Hashemi, *Tārīkh-e jarāyed va majallāt-e Īrān,* 4 vols. (2nd ed. Isfahan: Kamal, 1363 Sh./1984), 2:208–213, no. 468; Mangol Bayat, *Iran's First Revolution* (New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991), 71, 168, 231.

Westerners could indulge themselves in the study of the sciences and "prepared themselves in every respect" (*khʷod rā az har ḥayṣ āmādeh sākhtand*). Turning to the East and Asia, the Westerners discovered people living "in the complete darkness of ignorance" (*be kollī tārīkī-ye jahl gerefteh*); "they are completely asleep" (*tamām khofteh-and*) and "drunk with the wine of negligence" (*mast-e bādeh-ye ghaflat-and*).[15] They awoke only after the process of colonization had advanced considerably. These remarks lead to the following passage:

> The first state (*dawlat*) to be awakened by this tumult and clamor and to become aware of these events was the noble people (*mellat*) of Japan, who saw themselves about to become captives of strangers and humbled by Europeans. They saw that their honor would crumble into dust, their grandeur would have been futile, their state would perish and their name be forgotten (*sharaf-e-shān habā va 'ezzat-e-shān hadar khʷāhad shod dawlat-e-shān bar bād va nām-e-shān az yād khʷāhad raft*). They began to think about repairing the damage and eliminating the evil. So they fought courageously to their last breath with the unity and patriotism of the state and the people (*etteḥād va vaṭan-parastī-ye dawlat va mellat*). And by the strength of these two powerful arms they drew the sun of science from the West to Asia until they brought it to its zenith in their country. . . . By virtue of their manly efforts and the endeavor of unity they traversed the path, which had taken the Europeans so many years, in no time and have reached their goal. It has become well known in the world that a 30-year endeavor (*hemmat*) of a humble constitutional state (*dawlat-e mostaḥqareh-ye mashrūṭeh*) destroyed the one hundred years of effort of a powerful despotic state.[16]

The application of the preceding images to the Iranian situation in May 1907, six months after Mozaffar al-Din Shah had signed the Constitution, is accomplished in a swift turn: "To sum up, after the star of guidance and the sun of science and humanity (*āftāb-e 'elm va ensāniyyat*) had risen in Asia, one of its rays also fell on the dominion of Iran, which is its true and real center. The exalted stature of the kingdom was embellished with the honorific robe of the Constitution, and the foundations of the empire (*mamlakat*) were laid on the firm basis of consultation (*mashvarat*) so that we, the Iranian people (*mellat*), with the strength of these two powerful arms, may achieve the goal."[17] For the Tehran *Ḥabl al-matīn* there could be no doubt that reason, science, constitutionalism and progress, adopted from the West, were the necessary conditions for an independent and powerful existence. Pleading for rationalism, the author again used Japan as the evidence in a later issue of the newspaper: "The events of the age also confirm the historical experience. What spiritual force has carried Japan from the deepest misery to the acme of power and magnificence? No invisible hand took that idolatrous people by the hand, and it was not supported by a heavenly sign.

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15. *Ḥabl al-matīn* (Tehran), 8 May 1907, 1.

16. Ibid., 1 f.

17. Ibid., 2.

Only God-given reason has led them to find the path of salvation (*rāh-e najāt*). From the bottom of their hearts, in true unanimity, all the individuals of the nation, from the king and the minister to the merchant and the farmer, displayed determination (*hemmat*) and turned over the page of history in very little time—exactly the opposite of the Ottoman and Russian states."[18]

The first mention of Japan in this passage is for purely chronological reasons. The Japanese—rather incidentally—were the first in Asia to awaken. Thus, Japan plays a mediating role between the West and the East, which is elaborated in the frame of a metaphorical astronomy: after Japan has drawn "the sun of science over to Asia" with the "two powerful arms" of unity and patriotism, natural law makes its rays fall on Iran as well. The course of events seems to be as inevitable as sunrise and sunset. Japan has the chronological lead and initiative in this process, but the precedence of the Japanese development does not imply its superiority. On the contrary, the presentation of Iran as "the true and real center" of Asia relegates Japan again to the periphery and makes its achievements appear to be mere preliminaries to the anticipated Iranian achievements.

The passages quoted above can in no way be read as historical analysis. They are almost completely devoid of empirical data. But they provide quite expressive examples of the use of history in political debate. In a dualistic world view, the cultural and political geography is split up into an Eastern and Western bloc. Japan is clearly handled as part of the Eastern world. In regard to the historical implications, there is a striking teleological trait in the text: the implicit aim is reaching or surpassing the European standard. The Japanese had achieved this goal (*be sar-manzel-e maqṣūd rasīdand*),[19] and could thus be historicized and isolated from other contexts than the present argumentation.[20] The metaphorical expressions which characterize Japan, such as the "honorific robe of the constitution" and the "two powerful arms," are re-employed in reference to Iran. The main divergence in the otherwise parallel courses outlined in the text relates to the goal, which is not expressed in a clause of statement, but in a final clause: "so that we, the Iranian people . . . may achieve the goal" (*keh mā mellat-e Īrānī . . . dāman-e maqṣūd rā beh kaf ārīm*).[21]

Thus, we may recognize two basic elements which facilitate instrumentalizing "Japan" as a topos in the discussion of the constitutional period:

1. Japan is part of the Oriental world; it is "one of us." To subsume Japan into the Oriental (*sharqī*) world means to choose the most unspecific common

18. *Ḥabl al-matīn* (Tehran), 8 February 1908, 1.

19. *Ḥabl al-matīn* (Tehran), 8 May 1907, 2.

20. "Was dem Historiker oft schmerzhaft bewußt ist, daß nämlich 'Ereignis'-Namen, indem sie ein Stück Geschichte als Ganzes repräsentieren, den wissenschaftlichen Aussagen leicht etwas Definitives gibt und damit die weitere Beschäftigung mit den bezeichneten Sachverhalten abblockt, das wird in der politischen Debatte ein Vorzug" (Faber, "Zur Instrumentalisierung," 290 f.).

21. *Ḥabl al-matīn* (Tehran), 8 May 1907, 2.

denominator. Another approach, labeled "Islam," vacillates between the need for missionary activities to propagate Islam in Japan and the rather tricky insight that the Japanese display all the principal Muslim virtues and are merely lacking the confession of God's unity.[22] In the Persian texts examined, the Islamic track is rarely pursued. In 1906, the prominent *mojtahed* Sayyed Mohammad Tabataba'i sent a telegram to the Japanese Emperor because of the obvious importance of Japan. Asking the Emperor in short lines to direct his royal attention (*tavajjoh-e molūkāneh*) to the Muslim community in Japan, he does little more than drop his visiting card as the "leader of the Muslim community in Iran."[23]

2. The historical development in question can be taken as completed (the final point and the evidence of success being manifested in the victory over Russia) and then isolated as a closed unit, thus allowing a set of connotations to arise, which endows the name Japan with a historical superstructure. The historical milestones quoted in the first passage, European Enlightenment and colonialism, modernization and constitutionalism in Japan, Japan's victory over Russia, and constitutionalism in Iran, are presented in a metaphorical system of binary oppositions: darkness versus sun/brightness (*tārīkī–āftāb/rawshanā'ī*), asleep versus awake (*khofteh–bīdār*), drunk with the wine of negligence versus alert/informed (*mast-e bādeh-ye ghaflat–khabardār*), and in this context, even the political terms despotic and constitutional state (*dawlat-e mostabeddeh–dawlat-e mashrūṭeh*) acquire metaphorical connotations. Japan is the pivotal point of these reflections.

Other recurrent keywords in this scheme are unity (*vaḥdat*) and patriotism (*vaṭan-parastī*), which quickly (*bā sor'at*) lead to achieving the goals of progress (*taraqqī*), science (*'elm*), humanity (*ensāniyyat*) and preparedness (*āmādegī*), by virtue of reason (*'aql*), determination (*hemmat*), and endeavor (*kūshesh*). Some of the terms like preparedness and rapidity, while referring to military items, are embedded in the idealistic context of general progress.

With a vague allusion to historical developments in a crude system of historical evolutionism, Japan is not presented as a model that can be followed in detail. The real value of a name like Japan in the debate lies in its rhetorical reduction to the dichotomous presentation of simple oppositions, combined with a set of key words. They form the body of fixed connotations clustering around its name and making it into a topos, a notion with a clear cognitive function.[24] As a

22. Cf. Kreiser, "Der japanische Sieg," 209 f., the poem of Mehmed 'Aqif. Mehmed 'Aqif has been influenced by the Tatar author 'Abd al-Rashid Ibrahim, whose "main interest was the conversion of the Japanese to Islam" (ibid., 332) and who considered them, notwithstanding the question of religion, to be the leaders of the Orientals (*sharqlılar*) (ibid., 234). Kreiser sees in 'Abd al-Rashid Ibrahim's attitude different allegiances: pan-Turanian, pan-Islamic and pan-Asiatic (ibid., 233). For Muslim activities in Japan see Farjenel, "Le Japon et l'Islam," 105–108.

23. Nazem al-Eslam Kermani, *Tārīkh-e bīdārī-ye Īrāniyān yā tārīkh-e mashrūḥ va ḥaqīqī-ye mashrūṭīyat-e Īrān*, 4th repr. (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1371 Sh./1992), 392.

24. Cf. Faber's analysis of historical items used in German political discussions, in

topos, "Japan" inevitably evoked this body of connotations in the Constitutional period. The repeated stress on the rapidity of Japan's modernization, the swift and apparently unimpeded passage through this thorny process, is an integral element of the implementation of the topos. Rapidity does not only mean speed, it also alludes to straightness and the lack of diversion, both of which are favorable for developing a topos with its lack of historical complexity.[25]

Also conducive to the topos-making process was the scarcity of information about the country and its geographical remoteness. Faber notes that with growing temporal distance, the density of the historical material employed in political debates decreases, that the "historical field" is only "sporadically filled, with occasional cumulations."[26] This observation can be transferred to the local distance and the absense of direct historical influence in our case.

"Japan" contains and embodies the above-mentioned oppositions and the process of development from one extreme to the other as well as a selection of factors in this process. Certain aspects of Japanese history are presented as the coherent structure of a historical process. In a next step, this process is boiled down to a single "event."[27] "Japan" contains the past development of an enlightened West and the future development of the East in crystallized form as a teleological conception, and can thus be used as irrefutable evidence of the validity of the author's arguments. When it became clear that the development in Iran would differ greatly from the Japanese experience, the high-spirited metaphors vanished, and reflecting on the subject "What is the difference?" there is only a small psychological annotation: They [the Japanese] did not make much noise (*kasī ṣadā'ī az īshān nashenīd*), so they were able to build up their strength without their

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which he calls them metaphors: "Die Metaphernfunktion von wertbesetzten Ereignisnamen, ohne die auch der Historiker nicht auskommt, weil sie einen kognitiven Wert besitzen, erleichtert ihre Verwendung im politischen Wortstreit" ("Zur Instrumentalisierung," 292).

25. Nazem al-Eslam Kermani quotes a letter written by Naser al-Molk to Sayyed Mohammad Tabataba'i to convince him not to fight for the Constitution before the implementation of a functioning educational system. He evolves his argumentation around a historical survey of the modern history of Japan, displaying good knowledge on the Meiji restauration. In his argumentation, he stresses especially the first element of the dualism, backwardness-progress: "Turning to history, there is no country more savage than Japan" (*mellatī vaḥshītar az Zhāpon dīdeh nemīshavad*). This grievance is remedied by the immediate, split-second implementation of an effective educational system, initiated by the emperor immediately (*fawran*), with utmost haste (*bā kamāl-e 'ajalleh*) and with lightning speed (*beh sor'at-e barq*) (Kermani, *Tārīkh-e bīdārī*, 385 f.).

26. ". . . das Ereignisfeld 'Geschichte' [ist] im Bereich der engeren und weiteren Vorgeschichte des zur Entscheidung anstehenden Komplexes sehr dicht, darüber hinaus immer sporadischer, wenn auch mit gelegentlichen, von der 'Sache' her gegebenen Kumulationen besetzt" (Faber, "Zur Instrumentalisierung," 281).

27. Terminology according to Faber, "Zur Instrumentalisierung"; cf. above, n. 3.

neighbors noticing it.[28] With this rather helpless remark, the topos of "Japan" is dismissed from the discussion. The integrated system of notions described above could not be transferred and applied to the Iranian political scene any longer, so the topos lost its rhetorical attraction.

The Topos Disintegrates

Twenty-five years after the Constitutional movement, Iran was within the first Pahlavi decade and the people witnessed major changes in their political, social, and cultural situation, while Japan had taken further steps in military and economic expansion to become the leading nation in East Asia. Newspapers covering the Japanese issue in the context of the world history of that time were Ahmad Kasravi's *Paymān* (1933–42) and his subsequent *Parcham* (1942–44). Again, military crises and war directed public attention to Japan. *Paymān* contains a rather detailed column on world politics under changing headlines, the initial title "Account of East and West" (*gozāresh-e sharq va gharb*) changing later, in the seventh year of *Paymān* (1320 Sh./1941), to "On Knowing the World" (*dar bāreh-ye shenākhtan-e jahān*) and "World Report" (*gozāresh-e jahān*). The change of the heading is programmatic. With the outbreak of World War II, the categories of East and West dissolved. But in the first years of the newspaper, the division into East and West, Europe and Asia was still used as an organizing principle, as a means of intellectual allocation. For example, in the early numbers, Japan is often mentioned with the attributes "the Eastern state" or "the Asian state" (*dawlat-e sharqī-ye/dawlat-e Āsīyā'ī-ye Zhāpūn*). In a commentary on the Japanese-German collaboration against Russia, Kasravi employs these categories several times: "According to what the European journalists say, the Asian state of Japan has joined hands with the European state of Germany in order to wage war against the Soviet state of Russia—Japan from one side and Germany from the other, and they are preparing the armament in great haste. . . . Let us not lose the thread: We talked about the collaboration of Japan and Germany and their plan, which is detrimental to the Soviet state, stating that a series of other events will confirm the existence of such a plan between the two Asian and European states."[29]

Designated a *dawlat-e sharqī,* Japan again inhabits the same conceptual realm as Iran. But as the concept had eroded meanwhile, the attributes "Asian" and "European" are attached somewhat awkwardly, and the basic antagonism contained in the two terms is transferred to the merely geostrategic level: Eastern and

28. *Ḥabl al-matīn* (Tehran), 25 March 1908, 2.

29. *Paymān* 1, no. 13 (Khordad 1313/1934): 3, 9. Dated before the Anti-Comintern Pact, the commentary may be connected to the visit of a Japanese naval squadron to Germany. After this visit there were rumors about a German-Japanese entente. See Ernst L. Presseisen, *Germany and Japan: A Study in Totalitarian Diplomacy, 1933–1941* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1958), 62 f.

Western states menace the Soviet state, "Japan from one side and Germany from the other." Considering other terms related to "Japan" as a topos of modernization, some of them reappear, but we see that they have undergone a similar process. The "goal" (*maqṣūd*), generally used in our *Ḥabl al-matīn* texts to refer to the foundation of an advanced modern state (which contains military strength), denotes here the Japanese vision of an East Asian imperium under Japanese domination: ". . . and on the way to the achievment of this goal, they will not be hindered by any international agreement or treaty incompatible with it." Preparedness or readiness (*āmādegī*) now refers exclusively to war preparations: "Japan has prepared itself in every respect (*Zhāpūn az har bāreh khʷod rā āmādeh sākhteh*) and assembled awesome forces."[30] Another article mentions "the preparedness of Japan to reach the goal" (*mohayyā būdan-e Zhāpūn . . . barāye bedast āvardan-e maqṣūd*), this goal again being strictly confined to strategic aims.[31]

Another central term in the Constitutional discussion was "progress." In reference to Japan, the term *pīshraft* is used mostly in the sense of military advance, while the Arabic term *taraqqī* stands for the progress of civilization. In the *Paymān* texts referring to Japan, the reader looks almost in vain for *taraqqī* (or, taking Kasravi's linguistic concepts into account, for *pīshraft* in the general sense).[32] Combined with the military advance, we find another attribute associated with Japan since the early discussions of modernization transfer: rapidity. In *Paymān* and *Parcham* this attribute refers to military action alone. The "quick progress" (*pīshraft-e sarī'*) of the Japanese on the peninsula of Malaka or the fact that "the Japanese executed their longstanding plan [for expansion in Indochina] in the quickest possible way" (*bā sor'at-e harcheh tamāmtar*) corroborates this argument.[33] The context of the general progress in civilization is missing; Japan is nothing but a belligerent state (in an early article: *dawlat-e sharqī-ye Zhāpūn jangjūyāneh raftār mīkonad*).[34]

The much admired "unity and patriotism of the state and the people" (*etteḥād va vaṭan-parastī-ye dawlat va mellat*) is no longer mentioned; in fact, in texts from Kasravi's *Paymān* no reference to the *mellat-e Zhāpūn* can be found. Statements about Japan refer exclusivley to *dawlat-e Zhāpūn*.[35]

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30. *Paymān* 3, no. 3 (Farvardin 1315/1936): 199–200.

31. *Paymān* 7, no. 2 (Mordad 1320/1941): 141.

32. One of the rare exceptions is an interview with the foreign minister of Japan, Admiral Teijiro Toyoda, given to some Italian and German reporters and published in 1942 in *Paymān* in Persian translation. These words, however, come from Toyoda himself, and again the civilization-related *taraqqī* is closely linked to military *pīshraft*. Toyoda states: "Japan . . . is determined to make complete progress in the war in China (*jang rā dar Chīn pīshraft-e kāmel dahad*) by any means and to create in East Asia a common zone of welfare and progress (*rafāhiyyat va taraqqī*)."

33. *Paymān* 7, no. 6 (Azar 1320/1941): 422 and no. 3 (Shahrivar 1320/1941): 210.

34. *Paymān* 1, no. 6 (Bahman 1312/1944): 2.

35. This is a general feature of the writings of Kasravi, who "put the blame not on

Two issues of *Paymān* in 1935 provide a curious exception to the above-stated observations. We reencounter an old acquaintance in the Japan discussion: a two-part series on Islam in Japan, originally published in the Afghan magazine *Kābol*. Having been discussed in the early publications from a missionary perspective ("invitation to embrace Islam"), these articles deal with a concrete, given object, namely the history, description and activities of the Muslim community in Tokyo, founded in 1925 by Tatar immigrants from West Turkestan.[36] The introduction to the articles states that because of the importance of Japan in the Eastern world nowadays, the spread of Islam among the Japanese would change the future of Asia. Among the other reports on Japan in *Paymān* exclusively concerned with war activities and strategic discussions, these articles form an isolated textual body which reanimates several of the earlier images and attributes. One should learn from the "awakened nation of Japan" (*mellat-e bīdār-e Zhāpūn*), the state and the people of Japan are addressed in one breath, and the Eastern government of Japan is again part of the Oriental world, "and this shows the good feelings and inclinations of the Eastern government of Japan towards the aspirations of the Easterners and the case of the Muslims."[37]

The inclusion of such texts on Japan in the otherwise rather cool presentation of the "belligerent" state in *Paymān,* without commenting on the obvious discrepancy, demands an explanation. It can only be understood as a change of paradigm. Whereas the image of Japan as the country of miraculous progress lost its innocence, the old-track "Islam-Japan" remained intact. Only with the Islamic notion in the center could the "East" be reactivated as the common denominator. This paradigmatic framework, borrowed from the public discourse on Japan in the 19th and early 20th centuries, justifies and calls for the same connotations. What we witness in the other texts, however, is the dissolution of the topos of Japan. A set of longstanding terms linked to this topos is used, but is stripped of the historical superstructure and strictly rooted in empirical (here, strategic and military) grounds again.

Japan As A Reference Point after World War II

The period after World War II is not examined here. After Japan's defeat in the war, it was no longer used as a historical example or political argument. Up to the present day, however, Japan continues to be a preferential object of comparison and a reference point—this time as a technological miracle. The references are not devoid of some of the old standards and fragments of a still surviving

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the masses but on their leaders." See M. Reza Afshari, "The Historians of the Constitutional Movement and the Making of the Iranian Populist Tradition," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25 (1993): 481.

36. Kreiser, "Der japanische Sieg," 234. According to Kreiser, the Tatars emigrated only in 1938.

37. *Paymān* 2, no. 7 (Tir 1314/1935): 404 and no. 8 (Mordad 1314/1935): 508.

image. For example, neither of the Iranian critics of harmful modernization, 'Ali Shari'ati and Jalal Al-e Ahmad, could disregard Japan. Shari'ati presents it as a society that has mastered technology while preserving its identity (*shakhṣīyat*): "How can a society which lacks identity possess technology and become independent of Western technology? . . . Japan has technology since she has identity."[38]

These remarks recall a longstanding assumption, voiced in the beginning of the 20th century, that the Japanese had learned how to progress in the sciences from the Europeans, but retained their own ethics and customs.[39] Al-e Ahmad recommends sending students only to Japan and India, "in order to learn how they finally came to grips with the machine and how they have assimilated technology (especially in the case of Japan) and how they have coped with problems with which we are now plagued."[40] In the 1980s, we find the subject of the different technological levels of Iran and Japan treated in a satirical column published in the daily *Eṭṭelā'āt*. The author states under the heading "The Technology of the Matchstick" (*teknolozhī-ye kebrīt*): ". . . for a long time, they advertised that Japan had constructed a television the size of a matchbox, and this was presented as the progress of Japanese technology. Now, after a long period of effort and planning, we have constructed a matchstick the size of a television."[41]

The first foreign telvision series after the Islamic revolution with a huge public following was the Japanese production *Ushin,* a soap opera about the life of a woman who remains strong but humble, friendly and chaste in spite of merciless strokes of fate and constant misfortune. The tradition of praising Japanese women and setting them up as shining examples of virtue reaches back to the first decade of our century: Zayn al-'Abedin Maragheh'i, who takes up the comparison between Iran and Japan several times in his fictitious travelogue *Siyāḥatnāmeh-ye Ebrāhīm Beg,* praises Japanese women for their social dedication.[42]

In the Islamic Republic of Iran Japan has gained a presence and prominence

38. 'Ali Shari'ati, *Man and Islam,* trans. Fatollah Marjani (Houston: Free Islamic Lit., 1981), 261.

39. Kreiser, "Der japanische Sieg," 228 f. Kasravi voices the same thing in the 1930s: "Take the sciences and inventions from Europe but don't follow them in their way of life and their laws" (*Paymān* 1, no. 8 [Esfand 1312/1934]: 6).

40. Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Plagued by the West (Gharbzadegi),* trans. Paul Sprachman (Delmar, N.Y.: Caravan Books, 1982), 95.

41. *Eṭṭelā'āt,* 20 Mehr 1366/12 October 1987, 3. For the column "Do kalameh ḥarf-e ḥesāb" ("Gol Āqā") see Mitra Sharifi and Roxane Haag-Higuchi, "Leserbriefe und Satire: Die Kolumne von 'Gol Āqā' in der iranischen Tageszeitung *Eṭṭelā'āt* 1363–1371 (1985–1992)," in Christoph Herzog, Raoul Motika and Anja Pistor-Hatam, eds., *Presse und Öffentlichkeit im Nahen Osten* (Heidelberg: Heidelberger Orientverlag, 1995), 131–42.

42. Zayn al-'Abedin Maragheh'i, *Siyāḥat-nāmeh-ye Ebrāhīm Beg yā balā-ye ta'aṣṣob-e ū,* 3 vols., vol. 1 (Cairo, n.d.); vol. 2 written 1905, pub. Calcutta 1907; vol. 3 (Istanbul, 1909), 3:190, cited in Kreiser, "Der japanische Sieg," 219, 225.

in the media that it did not have in the Pahlavi era. Due to the abstinence of Japanese politicians in condemnations of the Islamic regime of Iran and a greater economic involvement, bilateral relations have become stronger. Information and reports have diversified: they range from intellectual interests or discussions of women's labor legislation and working situation in Japan to first-hand information from the Iranian workers who have migrated to Japan.[43] In the politico-cultural field, the discussions about cultural alienation have often included the question of the Japanese way, but the subject has been amplified by a variety of voices and no longer lends itself to rhetorical isolation and political instrumentalization.

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43. The literary periodical *Gardūn* published a survey of Japanese literature in its first year, nos. 19–20 (Mehr 1370/Sept. 1991): 32–39. *Kelk* is planning to dedicate a complete number to Japan in 1996 (information from editor 'Ali Dehbashi). On Japanese women see "Zan-e Zhāponī va moshkel-e eshteghāl," *Zan-e rūz* (14 Bahman 1368/3 February 1980): 12–13, 51.