
UNIT 12 JAPAN: SUPPORTING ANTI-COLONIAL MOVEMENTS AGAINST THE WEST

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12.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to understand:

- Japan's relations to neighbouring Asian countries,
- Ideas of Race, Nationalism and civilizing mission in the Japanese state,
- Role of Pan-Asianism for legitimating Japanese imperial ambitions, and
- Japanese role in supporting national movements against the Western Powers.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit we will look at how the Japanese, even as they built a colonial empire, also argued against Western colonialism and projected themselves as the liberators of Asia. We will examine some key ideas about race, pan-Asianism, the societies established to promote the government's policies to build a co-prosperity sphere, and how people in China, Burma and Indonesia, examples of countries occupied by Japan, responded to them.

We will look at cases where local leaders, Wang Jingwei, Subhas Chandra Bose, Aung San worked with the Japanese in the belief that it was good for their country to see how successful or not the Japanese were in winning support for their role as liberators of Asia.

The power of the Japanese appeal as liberators of Asia lay in the fact that they, like the countries they occupied, were both fighting Western power. The colonised people of Asia saw that they held this in common with the Japanese.

Moreover, the victories of the Japanese over Western powers starting with their defeat of Russia marked a turning point in shattering the myth of Western superiority. In the years leading up to World War-II, and during the war, particularly the Japanese defeat of Britain, France, Australia and the Dutch in Southeast Asia confirmed their position as an alternative to Western imperialism. Japanese arguments for Asian unity were critical of imperialism and global capital but moderate in criticising social and cultural practices. This appealed to the rising middle classes in many of the countries they occupied.

In the end the call for Asian unity turned out to be a myth and Japan appeared not very different from the other colonial powers.

12.2 JAPANESE IDEAS ABOUT ASIA

The idea of an Asian unity drew on many former ideas and changed over time. In the early years it was largely an idealistic call for Asian unity, usually meaning unity between Japan, Korea and China to combat Western powers and the culture they brought. The argument was that their cultures were being swamped and they lacked the power to individually confront the West. So they had to ally together to fight the West. Many Japanese saw Japan as the natural leader of such an alliance. Japan was not colonized; it had fought Western powers, and by the early twentieth century had achieved equality with the Western powers.

These ideas and policies are grouped under the label of Pan-Asianism or Asianism (ajiashugi), as it is known in Japan. This became a major argument for supporting anti-colonial movements. It was argued that Japan was a part of Asia and only by allying with Asian countries could Japan oppose Western imperialism. The danger of being swamped by Western culture and losing all indigenous elements was a major motivation for this type of thinking. Another dominant idea was that Japan, as it had never been colonized, best preserved the main elements of Asian culture and so was best suited to lead the other nations. This is a broad characterization and it is important to remember that there were many nuanced versions of these ideas for why Japan should ally with Asian countries.

12.2.1 Race and the Civilizing Mission

The justification of imperialism and colonial rule was similar to arguments used by Western powers of their 'civilizing mission'. The modern racial classification systems which defined some as undeveloped, or even sub-human, underlay this 'civilizing mission'. It became the right, and obligation, of the so-called 'civilized and superior races' to teach these 'inferior' people.

Racial equality was Japan's way of seeking equality for itself. The idea of human beings being split into different races, and this difference marking their level of intelligence and civilization, was a modern concept that came to Japan in the 1880s. The 'othering' of Koreans, Taiwanese, Chinese, and other Asians was not just around the idea of race, though that did play an important role, but also through a variety of strategies that drew upon ideas of civilization, culture and development. These ideas were used to underline Japan's superiority even while emphasizing the syncretic nature of Japanese civilization and its shared commonalities with Asians.

The idea of race was not uniformly accepted in the same way. Some scholars like Shinmei Masamichi (1898-1984) and Kada Tetsuji (1895-1964) even rejected the idea of racial superiority and argued that Japan must lead Asia because it was the most developed. Indeed in the 1930s and 1940s the anarchist poet and writer, Takamura Itsue (1894-1964), who supported Asian expansion, pointed to the lack of racial hierarchies as a sign of Japan's strength.

12.2.2 Japanese Societies Working to Promote Asian Unity

A number of societies were formed, usually with government aid or encouragement, even as Japan extended her control over the region, to support this expansion: 1877 the New Asia Shinajia (in 1880 it became Koakai), established by Okubo Toshimichi (1830-1878) and others; 1883 Asia Society (Ajia kyokai); 1898 East Asian Common Culture Society (Higasia dobunkai) under Prince Konoe Fumimaro (1891-1945).

Many arguments were deployed in support of Japan's role. One of the major arguments advanced was that a new intellectual order could be created based on the spirit of science (kagaku seishin). It was the responsibility of larger ethnic groupings that had a historically progressive character to assist the progress of smaller and more backward ethnic groups.

The other fundamental premise was that Japan is, historically and culturally, the first nation to achieve modernization among non-Western countries. This allows Japanese intellectuals and policy makers to think that Japan is qualified to ask for its equality with the West but, at the same time, it can proclaim its superiority over Asia.

12.3 STUDENTS, NATIONALISTS AND BUSINESS PEOPLE FROM ASIA COME TO JAPAN

The Chinese and Koreans, Japan's closest neighbours, shared language and cultural affinities, and were the first to look towards Japan as the place to learn about the modern world to transform their own countries. Japan became a model for them but their hopes soured as Japan's colonial empire expanded and turned the idea of Asian unity into a justification for Japan's colonial rule.

Meiji Japan became a source of modern learning and for business for many from China, Korea, Vietnam and other Asian countries. South Asians were comparatively few but from the early twentieth century they went there as traders and as students. A number of exiled revolutionaries found refuge and formed nationalist organisations to work for Indian independence. Students came to learn

but also became politically active, forming societies for the liberation of their own countries. Many came into contact with Japanese intellectuals and activists. Societies, such as the Asian Solidarity Society where Indians, Chinese, Japanese, and people from other parts of Asia, came together to debate strategies for national independence and modern development. They began to learn about each others' problems and to see that they faced a common struggle. The transnational character of these societies meant that the international linkages exposed members to the idea that imperialism was a global problem and had to be tackled at a global level as well.

12.3.1 Chinese in Japan: Working for a Republican China

The Chinese who came in large numbers by the end of the twentieth century saw Japan as a place to learn and study but even more importantly as a place to escape Qing oppression and work to form groups to bring about a revolution in China. They met and debated, published journals and newspapers and raised money to finance their work in China. The Japanese had in the classical period borrowed the Chinese written language to write their own language now the Chinese took the new words that the Japanese had created to write concepts they learnt from the West. Even the modern Chinese word for revolution was taken from the Japanese at this time.

The influx of foreign students led to interactions between people from the region that was not state directed. The metropolitan centres of the colonial powers became breeding grounds for anti-colonial organizations with trans-national linkages. The India Home Rule Society was established in 1905 in London, in 1906 Indians in New York began organizing and allied with Irish nationalists, and in 1907 the Asia Solidarity Society was formed in Tokyo, which brought together Indians, Chinese and Japanese and people from Southeast Asia.

Liu Shiwei, one of the Chinese founders of the Asian Solidarity Society wrote "On the Recent Trends in Asia" (Nov. 1907) where he argued that today Asia is united by its shared cultural experience: the Chinese language for Japan, Korea and Vietnam; of Buddhism from India which has spread all over Asia; of Islam, which has spread from the Arabs to Persia, and India; the presence of Muslims and Indian Brahmins in the Southern Seas (*nanyang*); and to the familiarity of Indians and Filipinos with British and American culture.

This pointed to a unity based not on the dominance of one cultural or political model but rather seems to be an attempt to forge a unity based on the existing interactions and shared beliefs and practices, and one that sees unity in the shared experience of Western modernity as well. Rebecca Karl argues that there was an emerging Asia that had both historical dynamism and contemporary relevance, it de-emphasised the state and elevated the people and sought to establish a contemporary political identity while accepting diversity of race and culture and seeking to bridge this by formulating a political programme based on these ideals.

12.3.2 Manchuko: The Laboratory of Pan-Asianism

As the historian of China, Prasenjit Duara writes that Manchukou was the first major laboratory of pan-Asianism where the rhetoric of pan-Asianism was taken seriously and some idealists tried to find ways to legitimise their rule by winning over the Chinese to their side.

One such idea was ‘cooperation of the races’ spread by organizations such as the Concordia Society (Kyowakai). This society advocated cooperation among different people, and even supported anti-imperialism to argue for a new type of anti-colonial state. Duara sees this as the beginning of the political ideology of pan-Asianism which later the government carried forward by creating institutions to create regional organizations under Japanese leadership, these were the East Asian League Association founded in 1939 by Ishiwara Kanji. Ishihara was an influential general in the Japanese army who was inspired by the writings of the militant Buddhist Tanaka Chigaku to advocate a ‘final war’ against the West. Later other organizations were created by the government, the East Asian Community, and finally the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere.

There were many variations in the idea of an East Asian community; some based it on racial, historical and cultural affinities. One leading intellectual Royama Masamichi (1895-1980) put forward a different argument for cooperation between Japan and China. He did not take race or culture as binding Japan and China but argued that economic development and the international situation required the two to cooperate as a regional bloc. Like the others his ideas failed to evoke any support among the Chinese. Royama failed to understand the power of national aspirations and he never opposed Japanese colonization.

12.4 CHINA AND JAPAN’S ATTEMPTS TO WIN LEGITIMACY FOR THE EMPIRE

Japan’s wars against China, in 1894-5 and then the second in 1937, and the occupation of Manchuria, revealed the contradictions of Japan’s Aziashugi or Asianism but Japan pressed on to try and legitimise its empire. In 1938 the agency for Raising Asia (Koa ajia) was established and a New Order was proclaimed. Along these lines new societies were formed such as the greater Japanese League for Rising Asia. The government’s backing brought large memberships making these societies very influential in spreading the official discourse.

In Manchukou the Japanese placed Pu Y, the last Qing emperor on the throne and though he had no authority he served to signal that Manchukou was a state in its own right. In China they attempted to work with local lords to legitimise their rule. The Guomindang and the Communist Party fought them but some Chinese argued that they could work with Japan.

Wang Jingwei (1883-1944) a Guomindang politician who was close to the Sun Yatsen emerged as a leader who saw an advantage in working with Japan. Today he is condemned as a collaborator. Wang was a major figure in the Guomindang. He worked with Sun Yatsen for over a quarter of a century. The death of Sun Yatsen led to a tussle over who would lead the party. Wang opposed Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kaishek) for control of the party but Jiang took over. Wang even though he had opposed Jiang and differed in his approach he remained in the Guomindang. The Japanese used the sidelining of Wang to their advantage and offered to make him premier after the Sino-Japanese war began in 1937. Wang accepted the offer and headed a government, controlled by the Japanese, till he died. This tarnished his reputation, even though Wang played an important role in the 1911 revolution, these contributions have been ignored and he has been called a traitor for his collaboration.

12.4.1 Wang Jingwei and Jiang Jieshi

Wang Jingwei differed from Jiang Jieshi. In the 1920s Wang, even though he opposed the ideas of the communists, worked to cooperate with them. Jiang Jieshi opposed the communists and launched the Northern expedition and moved the capital to Nanjing. Wang, and the left Guomindang, set up an alternative capital in Wuhan working closely with the Chinese Communist Party but failed to counter Jiang. Jiang launched the white terror, massacring communists. Wang in fear fled to Europe for a while.

Wang's efforts to collaborate with other groups failed and he again made his peace with Jiang Jieshi in 1931. Wang was given important posts in the party. Wang and Jiang Jieshi had different views on the question of fighting Japan. Jiang was clear that his major goal was to fight Japan, and he would willingly ally with the Soviet Union to do this. Wang thought China was too weak militarily to oppose Japan. Japan had modernised successfully and was a powerful economic force. Wang argued that the main enemy was Western imperialism and China should ally with Japan to oppose Western imperialism.

12.4.2 Wang Jingwei Collaborates with the Japanese Military

Wang went to Indo-China and began negotiations with the Japanese to seek their support. He returned to Shanghai in 1938 and in 1940 established the Reorganized National Government of the Republic of China. Later in the year he signed a treaty with Japan, which gave it concessions equal to the infamous Twenty-One Demands the Japanese had made earlier. Wang Jingwei's government was based on the ideas of Asian unity, anti-communism and opposition to Jiang Jieshi. Wang, during his stay in Europe, had been influenced by fascism and made friends with Italian and German fascists. After returning to China he remained in touch with them.

12.4.3 Was Wang Jingwei a Traitor?

The Japanese tried to keep strict control over the areas they controlled. The Japanese police worked with their collaborators among the Chinese to gather intelligence, censor and imprison those who posed a threat to them. Wang faced assassination attempts as he became the focal point of the people's resistance to the Japanese. He died in 1944 in Japan where he had gone for medical treatment.

Wang Jingwei collaboration with the Japanese has branded him a traitor to China and his earlier work forgotten. An elaborate tomb was erected for him in Nanjing, near the mausoleum for Sun Yat-sen, but Jiang Jieshi, after Japan's defeat, occupied Nanjing and destroyed the tomb and burned his body. There is now a simple structure indicating that Wang was a traitor to the Chinese. In the Chinese imagination, in mainland China and Taiwan, Wang has become a synonym for a traitor.

This view is today being questioned by historians who argue that Wang should not just be dismissed as a traitor. The historian Torsten Weber argues that Wang's Pan-Asianism was neither an invention for propaganda purposes nor a mere adoption of Japanese wartime rhetoric. It was an attempt to establish political legitimacy by claiming the legacy of Sun Yatsen. Wang drew on Sun's Asianism.

This balancing act, while claiming Sun's legacy to attack the communists and nationalists and use Japanese pan-Asianism, failed.

Wang built his political programme on peace, anti-communism, and national reconstruction and linked his acts to Sun Yatsen's ideals by visiting his tomb. Wang Jingwei based his thinking on Sun Yatsen's idea of Asianism rather than on Japanese ideas. Wang argued, as did Sun, that history and race, culture and geography bound China and Japan despite differences and problems. He stressed that both should work together, and both should work for a Greater Asianism. Wang also advocated the Three Principles that were the core ideas of Sun Yatsen.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) What do you understand by term 'Pan-Asianism'? How did Japan use it for their Imperial interests?

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- 2) Evaluate the role of Wang Jingwei in Sino-Japanese War.

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12.5 JAPAN'S ADVANCE INTO SOUTH-EAST ASIA AND INDIA

By 1941, as the war progressed, shortages grew and rising prices and inflation outstripped rising wages. Basic goods became increasingly difficult to buy or were of bad quality. An indicator of the pervasive worry was the disappearance of silver coins. German victories increased and they launched Operation Barbarosa against Russia, and on December 7, 1941 the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour. This would transform the war for India

The threat of a Japanese invasion grew as Japanese troops took the Malaya peninsula, destroyed British ships, invaded Burma, Hong Kong and took Singapore on 15 February 1942. The British feared a Japanese landing in eastern India

The fear of a Japanese invasion spread among the British in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. A police report says, "The disaster of Malaya and Singapore and

Burma transformed the Japanese from a threat beyond the horizon to an enemy battering at the gates..." There were one million Indians in Burma so news filtered quickly and widely throughout the country. The immigrant population was a major source of revenue. Remittances were higher than land revenue collections in some areas. This money dried up and refugees began returning.

The news of the retreat of the British and the sight of weary and wounded soldiers was demoralizing. Rumours began to spread of an invasion, of towns falling, secret deals causing people to flee to the countryside. In this climate of fear investments fell and, despite pressure to increase war contributions, people began hoarding silver coins. In actual fact the impact was limited. A few air raids and 484 deaths, but the image of British rule suffered damage. The 'credibility of the state', writes the historian Indivar Kamtekar, was brought into question.

12.5.1 Burmese Nationalism and Japanese Support

The Burmese leader Aung San (1915-1947), a nationalist leader went to China to seek the support of the Guomindang but was caught by the Japanese and convinced to go to Japan. The Japanese government helped him and gave him and others military training. In 1941 with Japanese help he founded the Burma Independence Army in Bangkok. The Japanese captured Rangoon in 1942 and established a Burmese government under their control. In 1943 Burma was declared an independent state under Ba Maw (1893-1977) and Aung San became War Minister. Real power, however, lay with the Japanese military administration. Aung San gradually was disillusioned, saying that if the British sucked our blood, then the Japanese ground our bones. He turned to the British for help. Later he would help negotiate Burma's independence from the British but was assassinated in 1947.

12.5.2 Japan Moderates its Policies in Asia

In 1943, Japan organized a meeting of the Assembly of the Greater East Asiatic Nations. This marked a point where Japan tried to moderate its role as leader of Asia with the aim to successfully carry the war forward and rebuild the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Japanese advances had been halted and they were being pushed back, their access to resources was diminishing and the Allies had published the Atlantic Charter to lay down how they would re-build the world order after the war. Japan needed to counter this and outline its own agenda

In 1943 they issued the Greater Asiatic Guidelines. These conceded some rights to leaders under their control, such as they had with the Wang government. They abolished their extra-territorial rights, recognised the independence of the Philippines and Burma, returned some territories to Thailand and the Malay states. The Provisional Government of Free India was recognised by Japan and since the Indians held no territory, General Tojo announced that the Andamans Nicobar Islands would be transferred to them.

12.6 JAPAN AND THE INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY

It is in this context that Japan support for Indian fighting for Indian independence took place. India was never part of the core conception of the Greater Co-Prosperity Sphere. The Japanese wanted the British removed and so supported Indian anti-colonial groups.

Subhash Chandra Bose had a long career in the Indian National Congress. Bose qualified for the Indian Civil Service but resigned after qualifying in 1921. His desire to work for Indian independence led him to join the Indian National Congress. In the 1940s as fascism grew more powerful globally the danger of war led many to agree to cooperate with the British to fight fascism and postpone demands for independence. Bose decided this was the time to attack the British Empire. He escaped to Peshawar and reached Berlin in 1941 to seek German support, after having failed to get Soviet help. Bose argued in the Plan of the Indian Revolution that the Axis powers could help to start a revolution in India. The country was ripe and ready.

The Germans were not very helpful and Bose was invited by the India Independence League to Bangkok to take over the leadership. He reached in 1942 and took over the Indian National Army and declared the formation of the Azad Hind Government. The Japanese recognized it in 1943. Bose as commander of the INA, or the Azad Hind Fauj established his headquarters in Burma in early 1943 moving the INA division from Malaya to Burma to aid the Japanese thrust into Manipur.

12.6.1 The INA sets up its HQ in Rangoon

Burma had the largest Indian population in the region so it offered a vast pool of possible recruits and supporters. Many had fled as the Japanese advanced but a large population still remained. The Burmese had begun to resent the Indian presence as they controlled a large part of the trade and land, and were major money lenders. The Japanese allowed the Indians to retain control over property despite Burmese objections.

There were an estimated 2 million Indians in Southeast Asia and Bose managed to raise enough funds from the community to make the INA financially independent. In 1944 he raised \$15 million Straits dollars in Malaya alone. He not only paid off German loans but was not totally dependent on the Japanese. The financial strength allowed him to increase the troop strength of the INA from 12,000 to around 40,000.

Bose was successful in recruiting soldiers because of his charisma and stature as a well known leader of the independence movement. Bose was very successful in raising financial support from the Indian community. Bose significantly established a women's unit, and used Hindustani to make the group more cohesive and reduce sectarian differences.

How far did he support the fascist programme? His interest was in getting their support and not necessarily in their ideas. In 1937 he wrote critically against Japanese policies in China, as well as against the idea that Manchuria was 'autonomous'.

The Japanese were happy to support Indian independence to threaten the British empire. The colonization of India was not part of the greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere. The INA failed in its objective defeated by a lack of resources but also by disease yet it had a major impact on the people and British authorities in India.

12.6.2 The INA and the Red Fort Trials

In 1945-1946, after Japan's defeat, the captured INA soldiers were tried in Delhi. They were defended by the leading lawyers of the Congress and the Muslim League. The trial had a great impact bringing communities together and even supporters in the armed forces began to mutiny, for example, in the Royal Indian Navy in 1946. The British Viceroy described conditions as 'on the edge of a volcano'. The British fear of the effect of the trials was so strong that the BBC was not allowed to broadcast the INA story as it was seen as highly inflammatory. It was a blow to the prestige of the white man.

12.7 THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION OF INDONESIA

The Japanese occupied Indonesia driven by the need for raw materials like petroleum, as they were embroiled in the war in north China. In Southeast Asia they had been negotiating with the Dutch and the Germans for the supply of raw materials but finally the Dutch froze Japanese assets and put an embargo on the export of oil to Japan, just as the U.S. had done already. The U.S. supplied over 50 per cent of the world's oil at that time. Indonesia supplied 25 per cent. That is why Indonesia was so important for the Japanese.

In 1941 the Japanese signed a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union, this protected them in the Manchukuo and they had already taken control of French Indo-China. Now they could fix their sites on Malaya and Indonesia. The Japanese achieved phenomenal success defeating the superior British forces, and the combined armies of the Dutch, Australian and United States. They projected their move as undertaken in the interests of Asia. The Japanese proclaimed that they would lead Asian countries to fight Western colonialism and unite them in a mutually beneficial and non-exploitative relationship.

The call to fight Western imperialism had a strong appeal in Indonesia where the Dutch had been cruel exploiters running a regime that kept the local population under a very repressive system. The Japanese defeat of the Western powers, particularly the British and the Dutch had a profound effect. The British defeat created a stir in India and the Indonesians saw that the Dutch superiority was a myth.

12.7.1 Japanese Occupation: Authorities Promote Local Culture

The Japanese abolished the use of Dutch and used Malay and Japanese, but also promoted Bahasa Indonesia. The Japanese also promoted Indonesian themes in literature and encouraged writing against Dutch rule, even sponsoring the destruction of symbols of Dutch rule such as statues of leading Dutch colonial figures. Unlike in Korea or Taiwan they promoted local culture rather than seeking to abolish it. They usually cooperated with the local elites. However, they usually treated the Chinese communities spread over Southeast Asia worse than the local populations.

Japanese initially faced problems as Muslim Indonesians refused to follow the practice of bowing towards the Japanese imperial palace but slowly the Japanese

built loyal organisations using religious leaders who had been ignored. They also managed to get the support of politicians with mass following such as Sukarno (1901-1970), who became the first president of independent Indonesia, and Mohammad Hatta (1902-1980), who was his vice-president. Both were important leaders during the Japanese occupation with a mass following and their cooperation was important for the Japanese.

12.7.2 Indonesians Lose Hope in the Japanese as Liberators

The local population, however, soon lost whatever hope they held in the beginning. The Japanese turned out to be equally ruthless exploiters as the Dutch. The Japanese mobilized a large part of the population – between 4-10 million according to different estimates – for labour. Most of this labour force was put to work on defence installations in Java but also sent to other islands.

The disillusionment with Japanese rule is best represented by the leading Indonesian novelist Promoedaya Anant Toer (1925-2006). Promoedaya worked for the Japanese and came to see them at close quarters when they occupied Indonesia during World War-II. In his memoirs, *The Mute's Soliloquy* he writes,

“I couldn't help but admire the Japanese for having broken the centuries-old colonial chains that had kept Southeast Asia bound to the French, the British, and the Dutch. As if Dai Nippon Teikoku, the kingdom of Greater Japan, were really a heavenly power, it had only to exhale a single breath to blow the past away. With my own eyes I had seen vanish in an instant the nobility, authority, and respect that had once been accorded to Western people in the land of my birth.

“As with many of my fellow Indonesians I had initially held great hopes for the freedom from colonization that our “older brother” brought to us. But as with many others, my feelings had turned to disgust when I gained awareness, knowledge, understanding that Japan was another colonizer, one that was even greedier and less civilized than the previous ones. At the Chuoo Sangi-in I myself had taken down in my notes Japanese promises of freedom “at a Later day”, a day that was far too long in coming. The Japanese promised independence but they divided Indonesia: Java and Madura, were put under the Japanese army, Sumatra, Bali and the other islands under the navy, much as if they were ‘foreign countries, and only one radio station was allowed to broadcast, privately owned sets were sealed and their frequencies set to that one station, and all newspapers were closed down.’ The Japanese treated Indonesians, not ‘as a lowly race so much as a herd of animals they owned and could do as they pleased.’ They attempted to unite the nationalists, nobility and religious leaders but kept all power in their hands.” (*The Mute's Soliloquy*, pp181-182).

12.8 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit we have seen that Japanese ideas about building a co-prosperity sphere were initially met with support and the local populations looked to the Japanese as liberators. This was true in many parts of Southeast Asia where the Japanese were careful not to attack local cultures initially. But in Korea they followed a policy of trying to wipe out Korean culture and language. They even made them change their names. In China their repressive measures were met

overall resistance and the few, like Wang Jingwei, who initially saw the Japanese as allies, grew disillusioned. The local populations turned against those who collaborated with the Japanese. Promoedaya, the Indonesian novelist, best sums up the experience of Japanese occupation when he says that people placed their hopes in them, but the Japanese turned out to be as cruel and repressive as the earlier Dutch colonialists.

Some collaborators, like Aung San and Subhash Chandra Bose seemed to have had problems with the Japanese but collaborated to achieve their ends, which was national liberation. Aung San had to go back to the British and negotiate once he lost hope with the Japanese. The rhetoric of pan-Asianism never really managed to overcome the demand of empire. The political leaders who worked with the Japanese had different motives but often it was not just political expedience that drove them. Rather they saw Western imperialism as the threat they had to confront first before they could develop independently.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Describe the relationship of Indian National army with Japanese military authorities.

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- 2) Why did the Japanese succeed in Indonesia initially?

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12.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Section 12.2 and Sub-section 12.2.2
- 2) See Sub-sections 12.4.1, 12.4.2 and 12.4.3

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Section 12.6 and see its Sub-sections
- 2) Section 12.7 and see its Sub-sections