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Brill Primary Sources
The East Asia Archive

Mobilizing East Asia Online Newspapers, Magazines and Books from the 1900s-1950s

Presenting a major new Collection from the Brill East Asia Archive. Essential English-language publications from the first half of the 20th Century, reporting at first hand from the Russo-Japanese War to the Manchurian Crisis, the Fifteen-Year War and the Chinese Post-War, systemic change in mainland China and the prelude to the Cold War in East Asia.

Mobilizing East Asia Online offers a tightly organised series of pivotal English-language newspapers, books and magazines reporting and commenting on developments in East and South-East Asia from the turn of the century to the early 1950s.

This exciting collection of carefully selected newspapers and magazines shows the route from the first defeat of a major European power by an Asian nation to the calamitous defeat of that nation, Japan, systemic change in China and the onset of seismic upheaval in Asia.

Mobilizing East Asia Online offers scholars a rich variety of perspectives and sources and exciting new research directions. With materials sourced from hard-to-find and in some cases unique originals, this collection is now presented online in full text-searchable format for the first time. *Mobilizing East Asia Online* can rightly be called both a unique and an invaluable resource for scholars of East and South-East Asia in the modern period.

The Scramble for China

The 19th century 'scramble' for economic, commercial and geopolitical power in China was supported by a raft of treaties set up to protect these powers and to entrench western interests, rights and investments in the Treaty Ports. Elsewhere in Asia, gunboat diplomacy ensured the acceptance of similar treaties protecting the flag, the cross, and the investments of Britain, Europe, the US and, catching up fast, Japan.

For Japan, Asia was both an opportunity and a dilemma. National mobilization for the control of Korea had been on the table since Saigō Takamori argued for the occupation of Korea in 1873. Following the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5, Japan significantly raised its investment in Manchuria, establishing a dynamic presence with the South Manchuria Railway Company and, between 1905-10, negotiating the full colonization of Korea.



The half-century surveyed here runs from early mobilizations for the war with Russia to the Korean conflagration and the early rumblings of the Cold War in Asia in the 1950s, with despatches and reports from *Israel's Messenger* and the *Manchuria Daily News* to the 'Farewell Issue' of the *China Monthly Review* in 1953 and the 1954 issues of *Contemporary Japan*.

Mobilizing East Asia Online shows an entire region riven by an interlapping series of undeclared wars, bloody skirmishes and full-blown wars, intercut with a series of fragile truces, *ballons d'essai*, shifting alliances, and hard-fought urban and regional wars. With Japan's defeat in August 1945, China resumed civil war until the Communist Party of China ousted the Western favourite, the Guomindang, in October 1949. With this setback for Western aspirations, Occupied Japan became the key US ally in East Asia and the Korean War laid the way clear for the fractious equilibrium of the Cold War in East Asia.

As the reports and features in *Mobilizing East Asia Online* attest, few journalists or scholars, still less the unfortunates struggling between multiple hostile interests, had a clear overview of these events at the time.

This was not for want of trying. The mobilizations and confrontations reported here raised more fundamental questions than anyone could answer.

Where did the pre-war end or the post-war begin? When did peace break out and when and where did war end? Which China was waving and which China was drowning? Who started the 'present hostilities' of the 'undeclared war' and which party stood most to gain from the status quo? Who was the greater threat to the security of East Asia, Communist China or the West's sometime ally, Japan?

For Asian studies, the first half of the Asian century still constitutes a battlefield, as much for propaganda as for scholarship, with both taught and broadcast on all sides. With *Mobilizing East Asia Online* the intention is to enrich the debate and broaden the research base with the trove of contemporary English-language primary sources presented here, all written, published and despatched from contested ground in East Asia.

Israel's Messenger April 22 1904-17 October 1941 (suspended February 1910 - September 1918)

Known in Chinese as *Youtai Yuebao*, published fortnightly and from the early 1930s monthly in Shanghai in a wrapped, magazine format, *Israel's Messenger* was founded in April 1904 by Nissim Elias Benjamin 'N.E.B' Ezra (1883–1936), a Sephardi Jewish businessman with roots in Baghdad, as the organ of the Shanghai Zionist Association, set up by Ezra the year before. Under the masthead, the *Messenger* set out its stall as 'A fearless exponent of traditional Judaism and Jewish Nationalism.'



Ezra served as Editor-in-Chief until his death in 1936. *Israel's Messenger* grew a healthy circulation in the US but encountered some criticism when, in July 1933 *Israel's Messenger* championed Japan as the leader of Greater Asia and N.E.B. Ezra called on the Japanese Minister to Shanghai to say so.¹ Later in the decade, a circle at the Gaimushō led by Inuzuka Koreshige (1890-1965), head of the Japanese Navy's Advisory Bureau on Jewish Affairs in 1939-42, became convinced of the influence of Jewish interests and opinions on the formation of US foreign policy.²

Financial problems caused a suspension of publication between February 1910 and September 1918, but *Israel's Messenger* resumed in that month and kept going until 17 October 1941. Thus in the fully searchable, high resolution volumes made available in *Mobilizing East Asia Online*, this holding of *Israel's Messenger* is complete.

Manchuria: Reporting from the cradle of conflict

The Manchuria Daily News, 19 October 1912 – May 1940, Dalian (Japanese, Dairen), daily, complete (SOAS, London University)

Manchuria Daily News Souvenir Enthronement Supplement 1 March 1934 (SOAS, London University)

Manchuria magazine: select issues, July 1936 to February 1941, Vol. 1, No.1 to Vol. 6, No.1, fortnightly, incomplete (SOAS, London University).

Manchuria Information Bulletin, September 19 1932 to January 15 1935 (No. 1 to No. 123 and (new series) No. 1 to No.65)

Manchuria Month: Dairen, January-September 1930, (private collection) and No.151: May 1936 (SOAS, London University)

Established in 1908 and published in Dalian (Japanese, Dairen) by Japan's South Manchuria Railway Company, the *Manchuria Daily News* presented the case for Japan's presence in China from all angles. By 1912, with this run of the *The Manchuria Daily News*, Japan's commitment to its future in Manchuria and its newly annexed colony in Korea had tilted the balance of power in East Asia.

Twenty years after the Qing Revolution set off the train of Chinese nationalism, Japan's diplomatically contentious but militarily effortless entrenchment in of Manchuria, then North China, were followed by the first war on Shanghai and the establishment of Manchukuo, its showcase state in China. September 1931 saw the bold execution of long-laid plans. From the Manchurian Crisis of 1931-33 until the outbreak of all-out war in July 1937, East Asia was convulsed by a series of on-off military and naval actions between Japan and China.

When Japanese troops marched and entrained to their long offensive in North



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China, the *Manchuria Daily News* and its sister publications, *Manchuria*, *Manchuria Month* and the *Manchuria Information Bulletin* cheered from the sidelines as Japanese forces drove forward into the China Quagmire and the calamitous reversals of 1944-1945.

Voices from the narrowing centre

Contemporary Japan, September 1932 to December 1954, Tokyo: The Foreign Affairs Association of Japan

Vol. 1, No.2, 1932 to Vol. X, 1954. Lacking Vol. 9, No.3 (1940) and Vol. 12, No.1, 1943 (SOAS, London University)

In the highly topical yet remarkably even-handed quarterly journal, *Contemporary Japan*, Japanese and occasional Western commentators followed the cycle of events in East and South-east Asia, from the autumn of 1932 to the winter of 1954.

Although it opened with a powerful defence of Japanese activities in Manchuria and Shanghai from Foreign Minister Kenkichi Yoshizawa, and proclaimed that where national priorities were concerned it could 'be taken for granted that our contributors will defend, expound, and do their utmost to propagate, the Japanese view', to the world at large *Contemporary Japan* was a relative beacon of rationality in a chaotic and confusing times.

Published by the semi-official Foreign Affairs Association of Japan and advised by such luminaries as Rōyama Masamichi, head of the Shōwa Kenkyūkai, *Contemporary Japan* commissioned a huge archive of topical commentary from the increasingly narrow political centre, many of its authors genuine Pan-Asianists disillusioned by heated rhetoric in the public sphere and in official circles. Such writers despaired on the road to war against China, and later still saw their dreams jettisoned during the 'reverse course' of 1947-52.³

The economic narrative

The Trans-Pacific, Tokyo, October 5 1933 to June 9 1938

Vol. 21, Issue 40 to Vol. 26, Issue 23. Lacking Vol. 26, Issue 21 (SOAS, London University).

The Japan Advertiser Annual Review of Finance, Industry and Commerce, Tokyo, 1930-1931, 1931-1932, 1938-39 (private collection)

These wars were as much about economic power and material consumption as they were about transnational relations, rivalries and military incursions.

Illustrating the financial and market picture from a Tokyo, but not a Japanese national perspective, these holdings of the *Trans-Pacific* and *Japan Advertiser Review* show an economy increasingly geared to war *materiel*, while shortening contract terms on essential gasoline and steel supplies as Allied sanctions limited Japan's options.

The *Trans-Pacific*, 1933-1938, discusses and illustrates the painful progress of East



and South-East Asia towards financially unsustainable crunch-points to which war seemed the only response.

From the same Tokyo-based American publisher, *The Japan Advertiser*, *Mobilising East Asia Online* offers a representative selection of *The Japan Advertiser Annual Review of Finance, Industry and Commerce* right at the beginning of the ‘Devil’s Decade’ and towards its end, in 1939, with war breaking out in Europe and Japan about to commit to the Axis powers in the Tripartite Pact.

Reporting from Tokyo

Japan News-Week, Tokyo, November 11 1938 to June 14, 1941

Vol. 1, No.1 to Vol. 3, No.32, without gaps but lacking June 21-November 30 1941 (Wills Family Collection and private collection)

The Straits Times Annual, 1941 (The Straits Times, Singapore, minus pp.3-14)

From the second Shanghai War of 1937, through rapidly deteriorating relations between Japan and the Western Powers on the road to Pearl Harbor, the press of East Asia stayed with their story in all its manifestations.

Feisty, independent, cynical and proud, *Japan News-Week* began publication in November 1938, just as the other English-language newspapers in East Asia were increasingly supplementing their meagre sales with funds from Japan’s Foreign Ministry. Following the buy-out of the *Japan Advertiser* in October 1940 and of the *Japan Chronicle* two months later, both financed by the Foreign Ministry of Japan, *Japan News-Week* became the last surviving, foreign-owned newspaper in Tokyo. Under the very watchful eye of the Cabinet Information Board (*Naikaku Jōhōkyoku*), dancing between threats to withdraw advertising revenue and offers from both the Board and the German Embassy to buy the title, *Japan News-Week* kept on publishing. In 1940, the founding editor, W.R. ‘Bud’ Wills took objectivity and the principle of giving both sides an equal say to a new standard with the publication of parallel columns of news on the war in Europe, with accounts of the progress of the war prepared by the British Embassy and the German embassy in parallel columns headed ‘British Version’ and ‘German Version’.

This outspoken American weekly and its capable and fearless editorial team kept writing, editorialising and printing until the night before Pearl Harbor, when its managing editor, Phyllis Argall and its founding editor, W.R. Wills, were imprisoned and tortured for a year until their repatriation to the US. They would marry on their return to Missouri, US, where they started up another newspaper, steadfastly resisting lucrative invitations to return to Japan.



Brill East Asia Archive Online has been extremely fortunate to obtain, mainly from the Wills family collection, an almost complete run of *Japan News-Week* that will be completed in due course. This is a uniquely comprehensive holding that holds new and fascinating material for scholars of East Asia across disciplines and at all levels.

Alongside this weekly record, we also offer here an illustration of the consequences of not taking Japan as seriously as *Japan News-Week* obviously did: *The Straits Times Annual, 1941*, illustrating the determination and brittle calm of Singapore just before Japanese ground troops sensibly avoided a costly assault on the defences of the 'Gibraltar of the East', and invaded by the Malay Peninsula.

The Axis in Wartime China

The XXth Century, Shanghai, October 12 1941 to July 11 1944

Vol. 1, No.1 to Vol. 7, No.5.

On 27 September 1940, Japan joined the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy. The following summer, on 22 June 1941, Germany broke its Non-Aggression Pact with Russia by launching an attack on Soviet positions in Eastern Poland.

Japan's *entente* with the Reich was dealt a severe blow by the lack of advance warning of the June 1941 attack on Russia. Tokyo had grown closer to Berlin in many respects, with the *Japan Times* celebrating German culture in its pages and Berlin publishing solemn academic tomes on the mutual and special cultures of the Axis nations.

Much of this admiration was paper-thin as there was little trust or common ground between the prospective masters of Europe and Asia. Possibly to redress this problem, Shanghai saw the launch in October 1941 of *The XXth Century*, a German fortnightly (later monthly) edited by Klaus Mehnert and published from October 1941 to July 1944.

The XXth Century was a superbly edited, calmly pro-German publication which advanced the mutual interests of Germany and Japan in Europe and East Asia from October 1941 to July 1944. Its scope was enormous and growing: commentary, cultural and historical features on the war in Europe and on Russia's Western front and, following the attack on Pearl Harbor, on Japan's ever-expanding Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in China, the Philippines, French Indo-China, Singapore, Malaya, the Dutch East Indies and New Guinea.

This holding, which is complete and scanned in full colour from originals sourced from Waseda University Library, is also remarkable in offering the last works of the great cartoonist of Shanghai, 'Sapajou' (Georgii Avksent'ievich Sapojnikoff, 1893-1949).

In these cartoons, 'Sapajou', once the star attraction of the *North-China Daily News* from 1923-1949, turned on all the sentiments of his old employers and celebrated the triumphs of the Tripartite Pact, mocking Britain and the United States and tilting repeatedly



viciously against Russia and Stalin, a *bête noire* for all and this White Russian in particular.

The Hongkong News: December 31, 1941 to August 17 1945

Vol. 30, No.126 to Vol. 72, No.1,347

Six months after German tanks rumbled into the Soviet Union, barely two months after the *XXth Century* launched in Shanghai, and barely a week after the Christmas Day surrender of the British Crown Colony, the *Hongkong News* published its first issue on presses in the Wyndham Road premises of the *South China Morning Post*.

Edited by E.G. Ogura, with the help of former *South China Morning Post* staff writers and technicians, the *Hongkong News* stayed in print as the voice of Japan in Hongkong until the Crown Colony was liberated in August 1945. With *Hongkong News* the *Mobilising East Asia Online* Collection offers scholars an inside view of the recolonizing mind-set of the new masters in East Asia.

Publicity warriors

***The Japan Times Weekly* magazine**, Tokyo, September 8 1938 to November 26 1942

Vol.1, Issue 2 - to Vol. 13, Issue 13, incomplete (SOAS, London University and private collection).

***The Nippon Times Weekly* magazine**, Tokyo, January 1, 1943 to January 27, 1944.

Vol. 14, No.1 to Vol. 17, No.4, incomplete (private collection)

Related publications

Japan in 1939 (Japan Times, Tokyo, 1939)

The Commercial Code of Japan (Japan Times, 1941)

The Companies Act (Japan Times, Tokyo, 1941)

***Nippon* magazine, ca. 1943** (Japan Government Railways Board)

J.P. Napier, *A Survey of The Japan Communist Party*, (Nippon Times, Tokyo, 1952)

With Japan's astonishing series of victories following the assault on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the much-diminished press of East Asia and South-East Asia fell into line behind the new masters of Asia. Following in the wake of their conquering forces, Japanese journalists established new newspapers and suborned and re-staffed or closed down and replaced the English-language and vernacular newspapers of Hong Kong, Shanghai, Beijing, Manchuria, the Philippines, Vietnam, Singapore, Penang and Batavia.

The *Japan Times Weekly* magazine and its successor, the *Nippon Times Weekly*, given here in superb full-colour editions, became the flagship organs of the Greater East Asia



Co-Prosperity Sphere.

Offered here alongside the two Weekly magazines, is a representative issue of the magazine *Nippon*, in a 'Special Issue' on the theme 'Nippon is advancing', published on behalf of the Tourist Industry, Japanese Government Railways. We also offer here a selection of books from the *Japan Times* and *Nippon Times* press, illustrating the significant role played by this sometime government flagship in disseminating official information. *Japan in 1939* (Japan Times, Tokyo, 1939) is a fascinating account of the state of play in Tokyo on the eve of hostilities in Europe. Two books, *The Commercial Code of Japan* and *The Companies Act*, both published by The Japan Times, Tokyo, 1941, set out the rules for wartime commerce with a thoroughness that could border on the absurd but usefully illustrates the degree of 'normalcy' prevailing in early wartime Japan.

In August 1945, Japan's calamitous defeat and staggered withdrawal from its overstretched supremacy in East and South-East Asia did not lead to the closure of the *Nippon Times* but rather to a complete reversal of its editorial line, a *bouleversement* most clearly influenced by the requirements of General MacArthur in Tokyo.

In *Mobilizing East Asia Online* we have followed Japan's progress from the tolerated would-be coloniser of 1904 to the triumphant Imperial power of 1932, 1937 and 1941-2, and followed the nation's terrible downfall to US satellite and near-vassal status in the late 1940s. By then, the *Nippon Times*, whose wartime weekend colour magazine we publish here, had become the US Occupation's organ of choice, and the last significant survivor of the networks of the English-language press in East Asia. The addition of J.P. Napier's study, *A Survey of The Japan Communist Party* (Nippon Times, Tokyo, 1952) attests to the role of the *Nippon Times* (as it would stay until 1956) in the prelude to the Cold War in East Asia.

Last views from Shanghai

The China Weekly Review, 5 July 1947 to 8 January 1949, incomplete (private collection)

The China Monthly Review, January 1952 to July 1953, (incomplete)



Related publications

Alley, Rewi (1952) *Yo Banfa!* (Shanghai, China Monthly Review)

Powell, John W. (1955) *Formosa, fact and fiction* (San Francisco, 1955),

Schuman, Julian (1956) *Assignment China: An American Journalist's Report of Four Years in Red China* (New York: Whittier Books)

Editors on Trial (San Francisco: China Monthly Review, July 1957)

Home to gathering swarms of the 'mosquito' press, the major irritant on the chaotic body politic of China and its dysfunctional relations with the Western powers, Shanghai housed all shades of opinion from anarchy and furious dissent through fastidious neutrality to last-ditch extraterritoriality, and attracted a colourful posse of journalists and media entrepreneurs to express them.

Among the more professional and pragmatic Shanghai publications was the English-language *China Weekly Review*. Born in 1923 from the closure of Thomas Millard's *Review of the Far East*, the *China Weekly Review* kept a watchful eye on developments in East Asia and, under its canny editor, John Benjamin 'JB' Powell, steered a delicate course between outright sponsorship of Chinese nationalism, Japanese outrage, the growing Communist threat and the long-term interests of the US in China.

In 1941, the *Review* was closed down and J.B. Powell imprisoned and tortured by the Japanese, then repatriated. Late in 1945, JB's son, John William Powell, returned to Shanghai and revived the *Review*, running it first as a weekly then, as circulation dropped, as a monthly. Even before the Communist victory of October 1949, John William Powell's editorial stance had swung full circle to outright support for the Communist cause. When funds ran out in 1953, Powell and his family and his co-editor Julian Schumann, whose Memoir is also offered here, returned to the US to face sedition charges for publishing exposés of germ warfare in the Korean War that remain controversial today. The charges failed to hold up in court, but Powell never worked in US journalism again.

Brill offers in *Mobilizing East Asia Online* a selection of the *China Weekly Review's* post-war editions from 1947 and of its short-lived and hard-to-find successor, the *China Monthly Review*, to illustrate the extent of the leftward swing in the *Review's* editorial stance under John William Powell both as China's future hung in the balance and as soldiers of the Chinese Communist Party, quietly and in good order, took possession of Shanghai.

Alongside these rare inside views of the Chinese Post-War, Brill also offers three related *China Monthly Review* pamphlets: *Yo Banfa!* by Rewi Alley (Shanghai, *China Monthly Review* 1952), *Editors on Trial* (the sedition trial issue of July 1957), *Formosa fact and fiction* (John W. Powell, San Francisco, 1955), and *Assignment China, An American Journalist's Report*



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of *Four Years in Red China* (New York: Whittier Books 1956), a memoir by the Associate Editor of the *China Monthly Review*, Julian Schuman.

The English-language press networks of East Asia, 1918-1945

Finally, as a guide to scholars using the *Mobilizing East Asia Online* archive and to the history and affiliations of these and many other English-language publications in East Asia, Brill offers Peter O'Connor's landmark study, first published in 2010.

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¹ See "Jews and 'Great Asia' – Shanghai Ezras as Enthusiasts" in the *Japan Chronicle Weekly*, 5 July 1933. See also 'Confessions of Ezras' in the *Japan Chronicle* of 23 July 1933, on the involvement of the N.E.B Ezra's s twin sons in opium smuggling to the United States. Available online at <http://primarysources.brillonline.com/browse/japan-chronicle>

See also O'Connor, Peter, *The English-Language Press Networks of East Asia, 1918-1945* (Global Oriental and Brill, Folkestone and Leiden 2010), 380n15.

² Goldstein, Benjamin (ed.) and Schwartz, Benjamin, (1998) *The Jews of China: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, Vol. 1 (London and New York: Routledge), 252.

³ Note that in this Collection the Contemporary Japan holding terminates in 1954, but will be continued in a future East Asia Archive Collection from Brill.