

## The East Asian Dimension of the First World War

# Eigene und Fremde Welten

Edited by Jörg Baberowski, Stefan Rinke and Michael Wildt

Volume 35

*Jan Schmidt* is Associate Professor of Modern History of Japan at Katholieke Universiteit (KU) Leuven in Belgium.

*Katja Schmidt-pott* is Professor of Japanese History at Ruhr-Universität Bochum in Germany.

Jan Schmidt, Katja Schmidtpott (eds.)

# The East Asian Dimension of the First World War

Global Entanglements and Japan, China, and Korea,  
1914–1919

Campus Verlag  
Frankfurt/New York

This volume has been printed with subsidy from the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Japan Foundation – Japanisches Kulturinstitut Köln, the Stiftung zur Förderung japanisch-deutscher Wissenschafts- und Kulturbeziehungen (JaDe-Stiftung) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft der JSPS-Stipendiaten e. V. (JSPS-Club).



Distribution throughout the world except Germany, Austria and Switzerland by  
The University of Chicago Press  
1427 East 60<sup>th</sup> Street  
Chicago, IL 60637

ISBN 978-3-593-50751-4 Print  
ISBN 978-3-593-43749-1 E-Book (EPDF)  
ISBN 978-3-593-44460-4 E-Book (EPUB)

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Copyright © 2020 Campus Verlag GmbH, Frankfurt-on-Main

Cover design: Campus Verlag GmbH, Frankfurt-on-Main

Cover illustration: Cover of magazine *Rekishi Shashin* (July 1918), p. 7; private collection of Jan Schmidt (KU Leuven).

Typesetting: publish4you, Engelskirchen

Printing office and bookbinder: Beltz Grafische Betriebe GmbH, Bad Langensalza

Printed on acid free paper.

Printed in Germany

For further information:  
[www.campus.de](http://www.campus.de)  
[www.press.uchicago.edu](http://www.press.uchicago.edu)

# Contents

Acknowledgements . . . . .	9
The East Asian Dimension of the First World War: An Introduction . . . . .	11
<i>Jan Schmidt and Katja Schmidpott</i>	
I. The First World War and East Asian Thought	
The First World War in East Asian Thought: As Seen from Japan . .	39
<i>Yamamuro Shin'ichi (translated by David De Cooman)</i>	
The First World War and Its Impact on Chinese Concepts of Modernity. . . . .	81
<i>Eugene W. Chiu</i>	
II. The War and East Asia in the Mass Media	
The Japanese Press and Japan's Entrance into the First World War. .	101
<i>Morohashi Eiichi and Tamai Kiyoshi Seminar</i>	
The "Yellow Monkey": Japan's Image during the First World War as Seen on German Picture Postcards . . . . .	125
<i>Sepp Linhart</i>	
The First World War and Japanese Cinema: From Actuality to Propaganda . . . . .	159
<i>Ogawa Sawako</i>	

### III. Political and Economic Entanglements

The Outbreak of the First World War and the Korean Independence Movement: Two Strategies Regarding the Twenty-One Demands on China. . . . .	185
<i>Ono Yasuteru</i>	

Japanese Loan Policy to China during the First World War: Shōda Kazue and the Domestic Political Background of the Nishihara Loans . . . . .	209
<i>Kubota Yūji (translated by David De Cooman)</i>	

The First World War and Chinese-American Economic Networks . . . . .	231
<i>Wu Lin-chun</i>	

German-Japanese-US Mutual Perceptions and Diplomatic Initiatives over Mexico: New Perspectives on the Zimmermann Telegram . . . . .	247
<i>Gerhard Krebs</i>	

### IV. Warfare and Mobilisation in Europe and in the US as Studied in Japan

Lessons Learned: Japanese Bureaucrats and the First World War . . . . .	271
<i>Shimizu Yuichirō (translated by Angelika Koch)</i>	

The Japanese Army's Studies of Germany during the First World War and Its Preparations of a System of General National Mobilisation . . . . .	291
<i>Kudō Akira (translated by Angelika Koch)</i>	

Japanese Army Artillery and Engineering Officers' Study Visits to Europe and the "Japanese-German War" . . . . .	313
<i>Suzuki Jun (translated by David De Cooman)</i>	

---

V. Individual Experiences: POWs, Civilian Internees and Chinese Workers	
The Treatment of German Prisoners of War in Japan in the Global Context of the First World War . . . . .	333
<i>Mahon Murphy</i>	
The Prisoner-Of-War Camp at Aonogahara near Kōbe: The Austro-Hungarian Empire in Miniature . . . . .	349
<i>Ôtsuru Atsushi</i>	
Japanese Civilians in Germany at the Outbreak of the First World War. . . . .	365
<i>Naraoka Sōchi</i>	
The British Recruitment Campaign for the Chinese Labour Corps during the First World War and the Shandong Workers' Motives to Enroll . . . . .	385
<i>Zhang Yan (translated by Ernest Leung)</i>	
Authors and Editors . . . . .	409





# Acknowledgements

For this edited volume we would, of course, first and foremost like to give thanks to our authors. This publication is the result of the international symposium “The East Asian Dimension of the First World War: The German-Japanese War and China, 1914–1919”, which was held at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum in 2014 and was attended by more than 100 historians from Germany, Austria, Great Britain, Japan, the People’s Republic of China and Taiwan. Most of the authors featured in this book gave presentations at the symposium. We furthermore invested considerable time in trying to secure the participation of a small number of additional authors as this would enable us to consider the topic from further, important angles. To all of the authors we owe thanks for their trust and their endless patience, with which they dealt with our frequent queries and requests during the extended period it took for this book to take shape.

Some contributions needed to be translated from Japanese into English, which was executed by Angelika Koch (Ghent) and David de Cooman (Leuven) with great linguistic and subject-specific competence. Maren Barton was in charge of the copy editing and completed a number of translations from German into English, with Iain Sinclair also contributing translations.

At the KU Leuven the doctoral candidates Maj Hartmann, Eline Mennens and Lieven Sommen as well as the student assistant Bert Colin contributed considerably to the completion of this volume.

Our colleagues from the Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Rüdiger Breuer (Sinology) and Thorsten Traulsen (Korean Studies) were always available with help and advice when we needed to solve problems with the transcription from Chinese and Korean. Should there be any errors in this regard, however, they are ours alone.

Furthermore we would like to express our gratitude to everyone who enabled our project financially: the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Japan Foundation – Japanisches Kulturinstitut, the Stif-

tung zur Förderung japanisch-deutscher Wissenschafts- und Kulturbeziehungen (JaDe-Stiftung), the Deutsche Gesellschaft der JSPS-Stipendiaten e. V. (JSPS-Club) and the National Museum of Japanese History. Without their support the symposium, from which this volume of articles eventually grew, would not have been able to happen. The Freie Universität Berlin and the Ruhr-Universität Bochum, where we were working at the time, supported the symposium in many ways, both financially and in terms of staffing resources. Our special thanks go to Regine Mathias, the then professor of Japanese History at the Department of East Asian Studies at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum, who became the patron-in-chief of the symposium, as well as our then research assistants Juliane Böhm (Berlin) and Teelka Groeneveld (Bochum), who took on most of the organisational duties. The team of interpreters around Yoko Shinohe produced outstanding work covering German, English, Japanese and Chinese. We also would like to thank Susanne Formanek, Gerhard Hirschfeld, Oliver Janz, Kataoka Ichirō, Hans-Joachim Schmidt, Tajima Nobuo and Matthias Zachmann for their contributions to the conference.

Last but not least we would like to thank Jürgen Hotz, who oversaw the publication of this volume at Campus patiently and enthusiastically and always gave us valuable advice, and the editors of the series “Eigene und Fremde Welten” for including this volume.

# The East Asian Dimension of the First World War: An Introduction

*Jan Schmidt and Katja Schmidtpott*

In December 1914, about three months after the start of the First World War, the new Tokyo central railway station opened. Just a few weeks later it was the scene of a triumphal welcoming celebration for the Japanese troops that were returning from the German-leased area around the Chinese port of Qingdao on the Shandong peninsula, which the Japanese army had managed to take following several weeks of besieging the city and heavy fighting. Then, in the summer of 1918, the square in front of the station served as the site for exhibiting a British tank, as can be seen on the cover of this volume.<sup>1</sup> This tank was a wooden model of a slightly smaller scale than the real early tanks that had been used in increasing numbers on the European Western front. Just like gas masks, submarines and fighter planes, the tanks had long since become a familiar sight even in East Asia due to their manifold representations in the media. The wooden tank, as the Japanese daily newspaper *Tōkyō Asahi Shinbun* reported, formed part of a so-called “tank week”, a global publicity campaign by the allied power Great Britain for the purchase of British government bonds. The tank therefore was exhibited in a variety of public places throughout Tokyo and Yokohama from July 1, 1918 onwards. Over the course of just six days almost 3,000,000 Yen’s worth of bonds were sold, which at the time was a huge sum. During the spring of the same year a similar “tank week” had taken place in Shanghai.<sup>2</sup>

The previous year, on February 25, 1917, the *Tōkyō Asahi Shinbun* had run a report on the sinking of the French troop carrier *Athos*, which had been torpedoed by a German submarine in the Mediterranean a few days earlier.<sup>3</sup> The ship had been on its way back from East Asia to Europe after carrying 40 Japanese war volunteers in the opposite direction, from France to Japan, in December 1916. These war volunteers—originally work migrants from

---

1 Original source: *Rekishi Shashin* (July 1918), p. 7.

2 *Tōkyō Asahi Shinbun* (1.7.1918), p. 5.

3 *Tōkyō Asahi Shinbun* (25.2.1917), p. 3.

New Caledonia—had been denied permission to participate in the war by the Japanese Foreign Ministry (Gaimusho). On its return journey to Europe the *Athos* was carrying not just African colonial troops but also hundreds of Chinese workers from Shandong, who formed part of the 145,000 Chinese who had been recruited by France and Great Britain to support the Entente's military machine behind the Western front. The sinking of the *Athos* cost the lives of 543 Chinese workers, and the news of this event was one of the factors that made China renounce its neutrality and declare war on the Central Powers.<sup>4</sup>

Both the wooden tank outside Tokyo train station and the fate of the ship *Athos* represent aspects of the East Asian dimension of the First World War. Nonetheless, although these individual events seem tiny compared to the large-scale battles raging in Europe, they are not marginalia of history. Rather, they exemplify the manyfold entanglements of East Asia and East Asians with the First World War—what we call its East Asian Dimension.

Different aspects of this East Asian dimension, which scholarship has often overlooked so far, will be examined in this volume. In so doing, it is a central aim of this volume to include new studies that have been published by historians from the East Asian region over the last decade, largely as part of the global centennial of the First World War. Most of their work has so far barely been considered in English-language research as it had generally been published in East Asian languages only.

To help the reader situate the topics of the 16 contributions of this volume, this introduction will first give a short overview of the East Asian Dimension of the First World War on the basis of the body of already existing scholarship and then discuss problems of historiography, especially in the East Asian countries. Finally all contributions will be briefly introduced, followed by a critical evaluation of the desiderata of current scholarship, including this volume, that might remain with regard to the East Asian dimension of the First World War.

---

<sup>4</sup> Mühlhahn, Klaus, "China", in *1914–1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, hosted by Freie Universität Berlin, 2016, <https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/china> (accessed March 4, 2019); more generally regarding the debates preceding China's entry into the war: Xu, Guoqi, *China and the Great War. China's Pursuit of a New National Identity and Internationalism*, Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press 2005, pp. 155–199, 204–212.

## The First World War and East Asia

East Asia emerged already early on as part of the global dimension of the First World War. On the side of the Entente Powers, the Japanese Empire declared war on the German Empire on August 23, 1914 and subsequently also on Austria-Hungary. This happened only a few weeks after fighting had broken out across large parts of Europe following a whole cascade of declarations of war. Subsequently, the empires of the major European powers also became part of the mobilisation efforts for the war. Japan engaged in outright military action against Germany in the Asia-Pacific region, later it supported British naval forces in the Mediterranean, and then joined the Siberian intervention from 1918 to 1922 as a major force. The war against Germany, which in Japan is remembered as the “Japanese-German War” (*Nichi-Doku sensō*) of 1914,<sup>5</sup> resulted in the acquisition of the German-leased territory of Qingdao in China and the German colonies in the South Pacific. However, as a result of the Western powers’ interference it had to hand back Qingdao to China in 1922 and received the former German colonies in the Pacific as a mandate by the League of Nations in 1919. The Siberian Intervention ended in a domestically highly unpopular political disaster, with no tangible outcome in terms of territorial acquisitions and a comparatively high number of Japanese casualties. While Japan finished the war as one of the five major powers at the Paris Peace Conference as a result of its engagement in the war, the long-term outcome for Japan has been described as ambiguous by many historians, as tensions with China heightened over the issues of Japan’s expansionist policy in China as reflected in the so-called Twenty-One Demands of 1915, and also with the United States over the issue of competing spheres of influence in the Pacific. At the same time the Japanese public was outraged by the decision in Paris not to include in the Covenant of the League of Nations a “Racial Equality” clause that Japan had submitted.<sup>6</sup> The outbreak of the war in Europe led to a relative absence in China of the major

---

5 For an extensive coverage of the military engagements of the “Japanese-German War” in this narrower sense, see the introductory volume by Saitō Seiji to a reprint of the official Imperial Japanese Army General Staff war history. Idem, *Hi Taishō 3nen Nichi-Doku senshi bekkan 2: Kaisetsu “Nichi-Doku Seitō sensō”* (Secret—History of the 1914 Japanese-German War, supplementary vol. 2: Commentary “The Japanese-German Qingdao War”), Tōkyō: Yumani Shobō 2001.

6 Shimazu, Naoko, *Japan, Race and Equality. The Racial Equality Proposal of 1919*, London: Routledge 1998, passim. Cf. the chapter by Morohashi Eiichi and the Tamai Kiyoshi Seminar in this volume.

European powers, who had had a strong position there before. Japan decided to capitalise on this situation by confronting the young Republic of China with the notorious Twenty-One Demands. They were intended to transfer the rights to the German-leased area of Qingdao to Japan, to ensure the renewal of existing Japanese rights that had been bestowed between 1895 and 1905, and to force the granting of extensive privileges for Japan in China.<sup>7</sup>

Korea had been a part of the Japanese Empire since its annexation in 1910. Koreans striving to regain Korean independence were hoping—in vain, as it turned out—to be able to use the war and the subsequent Paris Peace Conference for their aims.

China remained neutral until August 1917 when it declared war on the Central Powers. China's intention was that at the peace conference, which it was expecting to take place at the end of the war, it would be able to raise the Chinese position in the world and in East Asia. In particular it wanted the German privileges on the Shandong peninsula to be annulled. Ideally China also wanted to retract other privileges of different major powers that had been granted under duress during the time of 19<sup>th</sup> century informal imperialism and during the Boxer Rebellion. However, although China remained a neutral state until 1917, the largest active participation from East Asia in the military conflict in a wider sense came from there, in the form of 145,000 Chinese workers recruited by Great Britain and France. The majority of these workers came from the Shandong peninsula which was under de facto Japanese domination after the occupation of Qingdao and the former German railway network, with the Japanese actively supporting the English and French recruitment effort. Around an additional 150,000 Chinese workers migrated to Russia during the First World War, with many of them becoming embroiled in the Russian Revolution and the subsequent civil war.<sup>8</sup>

---

7 Naraoka, Sōchi, *Taika nijūikkajō yōkyū to wa nan datta no ka. Daiichiji sekai taisen to Nitshū tairitsu no genten* (What were the Twenty-One Demands? The First World War and the Origin of the Japanese-Chinese Antagonism), Nagoya: Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai 2015.

8 Xu, Guoqi, *China and the Great War*; idem, *Strangers on the Western Front. Chinese Workers in the Great War*, Harvard et al.: Harvard University Press 2011; Schmidt, Jan, "La quête japonaise pour la suprématie dans le contexte de la contribution de l'Asie orientale à la Grande Guerre: Infirmières japonaises contre 'coolies' chinois" (Japan's Quest for Supremacy in East Asia's Contribution to the Great War. Japanese Nurses versus Chinese 'Coolies'), in Ma, Li (ed.), *Les travailleurs chinois en France dans la Première Guerre mondiale*. Paris: CNRS Éditions 2012, pp. 131–154; Alexeeva, Olga V., "Experi-

After a short period of strong uncertainty on the East Asian markets due to shortages and cancellations of imports from Europe and the consequent price rises, from 1915 onwards the war resulted in economic growth that was strong in the Japanese Empire and significant in China. Within a few months Japanese companies were receiving a continually increasing number of orders from Entente countries. These orders were for the production of goods that were needed for the war effort but also to replace other products that could no longer be made in sufficient amounts in the Entente nations due to their shift towards a war economy. In parallel to this and similar to US companies, Japanese and, partially at least, Chinese companies were able successfully to fill those gaps on the large Chinese market, as well as in South and South East Asia in general, that had been created on the one hand by the British blockades of German ports and the resulting absence of deliveries from Germany and, on the other hand, by the Entente countries' focus on the production of essential war goods instead of their former strong export orientation.<sup>9</sup>

The strong growth in exports gave a boost to Japan's internal economy, especially in the cities where heavy industry expanded. It also provided the Japanese state with record-breaking tax revenues which enabled it to transform itself on the international capital markets from a major debtor to a creditor nation. The late phase of the war, however, saw a steep rise in price levels in the country that undid, in real terms, the wage increases from the beginning of the boom period. In 1917 and 1918 this led to a massive crisis that culminated in the Rice Riots of the summer of 1918. These Rice Riots and the extremely harsh way they were dealt with brought about a political crisis that resulted in the fall of Terauchi Masatake's cabinet in September 1918 and led to the cabinet of Hara Takashi, which was the first of the so-

---

encing War: Chinese Workers in Russia During the First World War", *The Chinese Historical Review* 25/1 (2018), pp. 46–66.

9 Nakamura, Takafusa/Odaka, Kōnosuke, "The Inter-War Period: 1914–1937", in *idd.* (eds.), *The Economic History of Japan: 1600–1990, vol. 3: Economic History of Japan 1914–1955. A Dual Structure*, transl. by Noah S. Brannen, Oxford et al.: Oxford University Press 2003, pp. 1–54; Schiltz, Michael, "Wartime and Post-war Economies (Japan)", in *1914–1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, hosted by Freie Universität Berlin, 2017, [https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/wartime\\_and\\_post-war\\_economies\\_japan](https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/wartime_and_post-war_economies_japan) (accessed August 4, 2019).

called “era of party cabinets” (1918–1932), a period of democratisation and liberalisation.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the fact that a post-war economic crisis had been anticipated by political, economic and academic elites since the beginning of the strong economic growth in 1915, this bust initially did not materialise in the immediate aftermath of the armistice in Europe in 1918. This resulted in a period of massive speculation throughout 1919 and the spring of 1920 that ended abruptly when the speculation bubble burst. The economic crisis of 1920 can be considered one of the most severe in Japan’s economic history even though it was overshadowed by the later Shōwa Financial Crisis of 1927 and the global Great Depression from 1929 onwards.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, the First World War ultimately consummated the industrialisation of Japan and brought about a dual structure in the economy.<sup>12</sup> This structure comprises two distinct groupings: On the one hand, there is a relatively small number of extremely large conglomerates called *zaibatsu*, such as Mitsubishi, Mitsui and Sumitomo, that had strong innovative potential and wielded influence on large parts of the Japanese economy via a network of contracts awarded to myriad smaller businesses.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand there was a multitude of medium-sized and small companies that employed the vast majority of workers and—in increasing numbers—salary men.

Although to a lesser extent than the Japanese one, the Chinese economy nonetheless enjoyed a post-war period of booming demand—especially in the large port cities such as Shanghai. The strong slump in European exports due to the war also assisted individual parts of the light industry in securing higher sales on the large Chinese market for their home-produced products alongside US and Japanese products as well as aiding exports, for example of foodstuffs produced in China. The resulting profits were one factor that

---

10 Duus, Peter, *Party Rivalry and Political Change in Taishō Japan*, Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press 1968; Gordon, Andrew, “Social Conflict and Control, Protest and Repression (Japan)”, in *1914–1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, hosted by Freie Universität Berlin, 2018, [https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/social\\_conflict\\_and\\_control\\_protest\\_and\\_repression\\_japan](https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/social_conflict_and_control_protest_and_repression_japan) (accessed August 4, 2019).

11 Metzler, Mark, *Lever of Empire. The International Gold Standard and the Crisis of Liberalism in Prewar Japan*, Berkeley et al.: University of California Press 2006, pp. 138–158.

12 Odaka, Kōnosuke, “The Dual Structure of the Japanese Economy”, in Nakamura/Odaka (eds.), *The Economic History of Japan: 1600–1990*, vol. 3, pp. 111–136.

13 Hashimoto, Jurō, “The Rise of Big Business”, in Nakamura/Odaka (eds.), *The Economic History of Japan: 1600–1990*, vol. 3, pp. 190–222.



brought about the start of a “Golden Age of Chinese Bourgeoisie”, as Marie-Claire Bergère called it.<sup>14</sup> This economic boom imploded at least in some regions due to political instability after the war.

## Recent Trends in the Historiography on the East Asian Dimension of the First World War

Considering the East Asian involvement in the First World War outlined above, it may come as a surprise that historiography long worked on the assumption that between 1914 and 1918 ordinary people in East Asian countries perceived the war as merely a “fire on the far side of the river”,<sup>15</sup> which means that whilst they acknowledged that it was a major event, they considered themselves as only marginally involved.

This perception may—superficially at least—have been conveyed not least by the terminology that was used for the war at the time. One of the more common appellations throughout the war was “European War” (Japanese: *Ōshū sensō*, Chinese: *Ouzhan*, Korean: *Kuju chōnjaeng*). For the Japanese conflict with Germany and the battles for Qingdao the term “Japanese-German War” (Japanese: *Nichi-Doku sensō*) was used. These two facts could lead to the assumption that even just the terminology either created a sense of distance to the war or that it only focused on the parts of the conflict with Germany in which they were directly militarily participating and thus reduced the feeling of involvement in the war as a whole. In 2010, however, the historian Yamamuro Shin’ichi, who was leading the research project “A Trans-Disciplinary Study of the First World War” at Kyoto University, pointed out that commentators in Japan and China described the war as a potential “world war” immediately when it broke out and that in Japan it was even occasionally assumed already during the war years that this was a “first world war” that would very probably be followed by a “second” one.<sup>16</sup> In ad-

---

14 Bergère, Marie-Claire, *The Golden Age of the Chinese Bourgeoisie, 1911–1937*, Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press 1989.

15 The Japanese expression *taigan no kaji* is used to describe a danger that does not impact on oneself as one is sufficiently far away to be safe.

16 Yamamuro, Shin’ichi, “Der Erste Weltkrieg und das japanische Empire” (The First World War and the Japanese Empire), transl. by Jan Schmidt, *Bochumer Jahrbuch zur Ostasienforschung* 34 (2010) (= Special Issue 1917–1919 als globaler Moment: Ostasiens und

dition, it also needs to be clarified that whilst the term “European” limited the war to its geographical origin, it becomes clear from reading Japanese, Chinese and Korean texts dating from 1914 to 1918 that in the vast majority of cases there was definitely a direct sense of East Asian involvement due to the events of the war and also that there was an assumption that there would be far-reaching implications for their own future as well as the future of the world as a whole.<sup>17</sup>

Looking at the historical sources, it is clear that the war’s global repercussions were felt in the region in various respects, even apart from the fields of military and diplomacy. The war changed worldviews and perceptions of modernity; it made the economies of the Japanese Empire and of significant parts of China flourish; it served as a projection screen for the dreams of Korean independence activists and was at the same time consumed as an unprecedented spectacle via the mass media in China and Japan. Moreover, its various aspects were also thoroughly studied by, for instance, Japanese military officers, by bureaucrats and academics and interpreted in a seemingly endless stream of texts in the media and in speeches at various venues. The war was appropriated into all kinds of discourses and became as much part of the various versions of 1920s global postwar modernity as in parts of the world that were much more affected by actual military fighting. Therefore, this volume as a whole argues that the impact of the First World War on East Asia as well as East Asian feelings of participation in the war were much more extensive than has long been assumed. As such, this volume joins the ranks of recent efforts to re-evaluate the global dimension of the First World War that have been taking place in the context of its centenary.

One major new trend in the latest historiography on the First World War is to explore the global character of the war more extensively than before, which is not least due to the growing influence of global history and transnational approaches in historical studies. This is immediately evident in overviews of the First World War published in Western languages.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore

---

*der Beginn des Zeitalters der Extreme*), pp. 21–51, here pp. 21–24. For a longer elaboration on this in Japanese by Yamamuro, see *Fukugō sensō to sōryokusen no dansō. Nihon ni totte no daiichiji sekai taisen* (The Rift between a Composite War and a Total War: The First World War for Japan), Kyōto: Jinbun Shoin 2011, pp. 15–28.

17 Ibid.; see also Yamamuro’s arguments in this regard in his contribution to this volume.

18 To name just a few examples: Segesser, Daniel Marc, *Der Erste Weltkrieg in globaler Perspektive*, Wiesbaden: Marix 2010; Janz, Oliver, *14 – Der große Krieg*, Frankfurt/New York: Campus 2013; Winter, Jay (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, especially vol. 1: *Global War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2014; Bley,

it is striking that area historians have also taken on this topic in numerous publications. They reflect upon the war from the perspective of certain world regions or countries outside Europe and the United States.<sup>19</sup>

It is striking, however, that when it comes to the global dimension of the First World War, even the latest historiography has focused mainly on the empires with strong military involvement as well as the participation of their colonies.<sup>20</sup> The situation of neutral states, however, and of states that joined the war but had only scant military involvement has been examined much less.<sup>21</sup> Japan and its then colonial Empire including Korea as well as the young Chinese Republic are in the latter category.

It is only recently that some new research on East Asia has been published in Western languages. It was Frederick Dickinson with his 1999 monograph on *War and National Reinvention. Japan in the Great War, 1914–1919*, who first in English language scholarship emphasized the importance and impact that the First World War had on Japanese politics and politicians and

---

Helmut/Kremers, Anorthe (eds.), *The World During the First World War*, Essen: Klartext 2014; Bromber, Katrin/Lange, Katharina/Liebau, Heike (eds.), *The Long End of the First World War. Ruptures, Continuities and Memories*, Frankfurt/New York: Campus 2018; see also the public-access online encyclopedia *1914–1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War* (<http://www.1914-1918-online.net>), hosted by Freie Universität Berlin.

19 For example: Rinke, Stefan, *Latin America and the First World War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2017; Streets-Salter, Heather, *World War One in Southeast Asia. Colonialism and Anticolonialism in an Era of Global Conflict*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2017; Gerwarth, Robert/Manela, Erez, *Empires at War. 1911–1923*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2014; Gingeras, Ryan, *Fall of the Sultanate. The Great War and the End of the Ottoman Empire 1908–1922*, Oxford et al.: Oxford University Press 2016.

20 For a useful overview on recent publications on the global scale of the First World War, see Compagnon, Olivier/Purseigle, Pierre, “Geographies of Mobilization and Territories of Belligerence during the First World War”, *Annales HSS (English Edition)* 71/1 (2016), pp. 37–60.

21 For a summary of a new wave of research starting to change this see e.g. Den Hertog, Johan/Kruizinga, Samuël (eds.), *Caught in the Middle: Neutrals, Neutrality and the First World War*, Amsterdam et al.: Amsterdam University Press 2011; Rinke, Stefan, *Latin America and the First World War*; Garcíá Sanz, Carolina/Tato, María Inés, “Neutralist Crossroads: Spain and Argentina Facing the Great War”, *First World War Studies* 8/2–3 (2017), pp. 115–132; Ahlund, Claes (ed.), *Scandinavia in the First World War. Studies in the War Experience of the Northern Neutrals*, Lund: Nordic Academic Press 2012; Nordic Academic Press; Ruiz Sánchez, José-Leonardo/Oliviero, Inmaculada Cordero (eds.), *Shaping Neutrality Throughout the First World War*. Sevilla: Editorial Universidad de Sevilla 2015.

who later also forcefully argued to take Japan as an important example that further enables a “global perspective of the Great War”.<sup>22</sup> In a second monograph on *World War I and the Triumph of a New Japan, 1919–1930* on the verge of the centennial in 2013 he postulated that the war served as an “anchor” that encouraged “policy-makers and opinion leaders in the 1920s” to embark “upon a monumental effort at national reconstruction” and to embrace “what they perceived to be the new standards of ‘civilization’: democracy, internationalism and peace”.<sup>23</sup> He thereby revisited the 1920s as having been more a postwar era of a complex synchronic developments than merely the prewar era for the Asia-Pacific War of 1937 to 1945 and postulated the relative openness of this dynamic period that in many ways had been ushered in by the First World War. Two edited volumes in 2014 further enriched the extant scholarship that dealt with the impact of the war on Japan and its role in it: In *The Decade of the Great War. Japan and the Wider World in the 1910s* the wider context of the war in the general currents of Japanese political, social and cultural history of the 1910s was elaborated on, while the eight contributions in *Japan and the Great War* edited by Oliviero Frattolillo and Antony Best are more directly concerned with international and domestic aspects of the war with regard to Japan and to a lesser extent China.<sup>24</sup>

Of course, the number of studies on the First World War published by East Asian historians in their own respective languages naturally far outstrips that available in Western languages. This being said, it has to be noted that similar to historiography elsewhere, East Asian historians paid far less attention to the First World War than to the other modern wars that were fought in East Asia, in which greater numbers of East Asians were directly involved—the Sino-Japanese War (1894/95), the Russo-Japanese War (1904/05), the Second Sino-Japanese War and the Asia-Pacific War (1937–1945) or the Korean War (1950–1953). The high numbers of casualties and the immense material destruction caused by these wars led by necessity to—in their social dimension—far deeper and far longer-lasting memories which

22 Dickinson, Frederick, *War and National Reinvention. Japan and the Great War, 1914–1919*, Cambridge (Mass.)/London: Harvard University Press 1999; idem, “Toward a Global Perspective of the Great War: Japan and the Foundations of a Twentieth-Century World”, *American Historical Review* 119/4 (2014), pp. 1154–1183.

23 Dickinson, Frederick, *World War I and the Triumph of a New Japan, 1919–1930*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2013, p. 36.

24 Minohara, Tosh/Hon, Tze-ki/Dawley, Evan (eds.), *The Decade of the Great War. Japan and the Wider World in the 1910s*, Leiden: Brill 2014; Frattolillo, Oliviero/Best, Antony (eds.), *Japan and the Great War*, Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2015.

cast such a large shadow that they nearly obliterated those of the First World War. This is especially true for the Second Sino-Japanese War and the Asia-Pacific War as part of the overall nexus that was the First World War. This is why the Japanese historian Yamanoue Shōtarō, while trying to integrate Japan better into the overall context of the First World War, was still able to describe the war to his Japanese readers as a “forgotten war” (*wasurerareta sensō*) in his short introduction to the history of the First World War published in 1988.<sup>25</sup> In the same vein the Chinese historian Xu Guoqi, who teaches in Hong Kong, was able to break new ground, or rather break the ground anew, with his monographs on *China and the Great War* and on the Chinese workers in 2005 and 2011 in a research area that had been neglected almost entirely since the Second World War.<sup>26</sup> In Japan, a turning point was reached in the run-up to the centennial of the First World War, with the large-scale research project “A Trans-Disciplinary Study of the First World War” (2007–2014) at the Institute for Research in Humanities at Kyoto University. The project, which included more than 90 scholars, resulted in four major edited volumes and a 12 volume monograph “Lecture Series” for the general reader, as well as in hundreds of academic papers. Several papers in this volume were written by prominent members of this research network, some of whom had never had their works published for an international audience before. After Xu Guoqi had been almost the only researcher on China and the First World War in the 2000s, others such as the Taiwanese historian Eugene Chiu joined in to argue that the First World War was of major importance for the history of ideas in China and was widely perceived and discussed there. A major international conference on the Chinese labour corps organized by Ma Li and Dominiek Dendooven in Boulogne-sur-Mer and Ypres in 2010 resulted in a voluminous French publication, which soon after was translated into Chinese.<sup>27</sup> But as was the case with the Japanese research, Chiu’s research and the mentioned French/Chinese volume were not made available to an English-language audience. This is similar for the edited volume that came out of the so far most comprehensive conference on

---

25 Yamanoue, Shōtarō, *Daiichiji sekai taisen. Wasurerareta sensō* (The First World War. A Forgotten War), 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Tōkyō: Shakai Shisōsha 1988.

26 Xu, Guoqi, *China and the Great War*; idem, *Strangers on the Western Front*; idem, *Asia and the Great War. A Shared History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2016.

27 Ma, Li (ed.), *Les travailleurs chinois dans la première guerre mondiale*, Paris: CNRS editions 2012; idem (ed.), *Yizhan huagong zai Faguo* (Chinese Workers in France in the First World War), Beijing: Jilin Publishing Group 2015.

China and the First World that was organized by historian of modern China Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik at University of Vienna in Austria in 2014. It was published in Chinese in 2015.<sup>28</sup>

While it is clear that important findings produced by research in East Asian languages have long been reflected insufficiently in international studies, a quick look at developments in historiography in East Asia also shows that it was only recently that a more holistic view of the impact the war had *in* East Asia and its entanglements *with* East Asia even became possible. In Japan between the 1950s and 1970s historiography was dominated by very influential groups of Marxist historians who, on the one hand, stressed the significance of the First World War for the emergence of a “monopoly capitalism” that in turn fed the aggressive expansion policies of the Japanese Empire in the 1930s. On the other hand, these historians rejected a political history that was centred on individuals. This may have frequently resulted in the results of non-Marxist historians’ detailed studies on the impact of the war on Japanese foreign politics not being incorporated into syntheses on Japan and the First World War as a whole. Furthermore, cultural historical perspectives of the First World War have only very recently become usable. While research in a more classical history of ideas has often dealt with the time period of the First World War and sometimes even referred to the war in its title, it has by and large paid little or no attention to the possibilities of the war having a direct influence on Japanese thought, with the exception of the reform discourses after the end of the war in Europe and after the peace conference.

As a topic in its own right and one that is massively entangled with global events, the First World War was only picked up by Xu Guoqi, in his aforementioned publications during the 2000s such as *China and the Great War* and in 2016 *Asia and the Great War. A Shared History*. These reverberated strongly throughout Chinese-language research and over the last few years there appears to have been an overall reappraisal also concerning the political history of the war years. This is evident for example regarding the character of Yuan Shikai, who has been the subject of numerous new publications in Chinese.

---

28 The conference featured 31 speakers, including 24 from the People’s Republic of China and Taiwan, most of whose research is yet to be introduced or translated in Western languages. Of these, Wu Lin-chun and Eugene Chiu contributed also to this volume. See Wei, Gelin [Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, Susanne]/Zhu, Jiaming (eds.), *Yizhan yu Zhongguo. Yizhan bainian huiyi lunwen ji* (China and the First World War. Edited Volume of Contributions to the Conference on China and the First World War), Shanghai: Renmin Dongfang Chubanshe 2015.