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JAPANESE IMAGES OF TURKEY IN TAIYŌ (THE SUN)¹

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ABSTRACT

Until the 19th century very little is known about Turkey in Japan. With the beginning of the Meiji Era (1868-1912), Japan ended her seclusion and attempted to learn about Western countries and take them as a model in order to catch up with the modern world; the Ottoman Empire was also part of this investigation. During these times, Taiyō (The Sun), which was widely read by different parts of Japanese society provided first-hand knowledge of Turkey. Herein, the Japanese image of Turkey is taken into consideration through the news, photos and pictures in The Sun.

Keywords: Taiyō (The Sun), Meiji Era, Image of Turkey, Yamada Torajirō, Asahina Chisen.

JAPONYA'DA TAIYŌ (THE SUN) ADLI DERGİDE TÜRKİYE İMGELERİ

ÖZET

Japonya'daki Türkiye bilgisi 19. yüzyıla dek çok sınırlıydı. Meiji Dönemi (1868-1912) ile Japonya kapalılık politikasını sona erdirdi ve modern devletlerden biri olmak üzere Batılı devletleri model olarak incelemeye aldı, Osmanlı Devleti de bu yabancı ülkelerden biriydi. Bu yıllarda Japonya'da çok okunan tarih, toplum, kültür ve sanat dergilerinden biri olan Taiyō (The Sun) adlı dergide Japonya'ya Türkiye hakkında ilk elden bilgiler de ulaşmaya başladı. Bu makalede adı geçen dergide ele alınan haber, fotoğraf ve resimler üzerinden Türkiye ile bilgilerin genel bir değerlendirmesi yapılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Taiyō (The Sun), Meiji Dönemi, Türkiye imgesi, Yamada Torajirō, Asahina Chisen

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I. Introduction

Acknowledgement of Turkey in Japan did not begin until the early Meiji Era (1868-1912) and was mainly due to Turkey's geographical distance from Japan. Before this, very little was known in Japan about Turkey. It should be noted that, due to the seclusion of Japan during the Edo Era (1603-1867), the country only had access to limited information about world politics and culture which was provided by the Dutch and Chinese at Dejima, Nagasaki.

During the early Meiji Period, Japan and Turkey attempted to further their knowledge of each other. As a result, the first original Turkish images started to arrive in Japan. Japan could now get information on Turkey from the accounts of Japanese travellers, the works of essayists and the analyses of political and military figures. Translations from Western languages also enriched the news.

This paper investigates the images of Turkey presented in the Japanese magazine *Taiyō* during the Meiji Era. Material from the magazine is analysed including major photographs which show various aspects of Turkey and articles written by Japanese travellers, Western essayists and army officers.

II. *Taiyō* (The Sun)

After almost 260 years of isolation, Japan attempted to trace modern Western countries during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During the era under discussion, communication and transportation facilities were very limited compared to today. People could only access information about foreign countries through printed materials. This is one of the reasons why the publication of *Aziyade* (1879), published by the French author Pierre Loti, reached over than three hundred copies (Koloğlu, 1999, p. 49). Though France is geographically closer to Turkey than Japan, common people preferred to learn about Turkey via novels as well as magazines.

As for Japan, the Japanese magazine *Taiyō* (The Sun) provided Japanese readers with news and information not only about world politics and the economy but also about natural science, art and customs. *Taiyō* was published between 1895 and 1928 by Hakubunkan. It was one of the representative literary works of the Meiji and Taishō Eras. Suzuki (2001, i) claims that *Taiyō* is highly important for the public who is eager to learn about the movements of thought and culture in Japan, especially during the late Meiji Period. In other words, the Japanese magazine *Taiyō* enabled Japanese people of every class to access knowledge about overseas countries. A far away country Turkey, was one of them.

This study deals with the articles written during the Meiji Era (1868-1912). The word "Turkey,"² which is 土耳其、土耳其、トルコ in the Japanese language, was searched. A great deal of articles were published in the magazine.

² What is meant by this word is the geographical territory of the Ottoman Empire, not the contemporary Republic of Turkey.

As it is not possible to include them all in this paper, the content was restricted to three main themes, namely general culture, customs, and politics.



The Sun, Volume 1, No.7

Figure 1: An example of the Taiyō (*The Sun*)

III. General Information About Turkey

As mentioned above, due to the limited media and transportation facilities in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, geographical distance was a serious obstacle to attain information from distant countries. This is precisely the case for Japan regarding its relationship with Turkey. The Japanese statesman Makino Nobuaki states in his article that “we cannot get new facts about the change in government of Turkey at this time, because it is a very distant country (Vol. 15, No. 8, p. 81).” Impressions of the Ottoman Empire can be seen in the following fragments: “Turkey, once a powerful nation, is now in decline”³ (Vol. 3, No. 20, p. 254) and a country “exactly like China” (Vol. 15, No. 10, p. 182). Both imply the decay of a country.

³ The quotations were all translated from Japanese into English by the author.

The following photo which is found in Volume 14, issue No. 8 shows Istanbul⁴ from four different perspectives.



Figure 2: The City of Constantinople

The following photos illustrate the image of Turkish people from different classes of society. The former were published in the magazine on June 5, 1897 (Volume 3, No. 11) and the latter, "The Turkish Players" was published on February 5, 1896 (Volume 2, No. 3). Apart from the photos of women and political characters, these photos are important to see the image of Ottoman society, especially Turkish men, during the late nineteenth century.

⁴ In this paper, the original word in the reference, namely Constantinople, is used, elsewhere, the more common, modern name of Istanbul is preferred.



The Sun, Volume 3, No.11

Figure 3: Turkish customs



Turkish Players, The Sun, Volume 2, No.3

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Although Turkey was a distant country, Japan still managed to get some information about it. For example, Japanese lawyer Iijima Kametarō⁵ wrote the following (Vol. 15, No. 10, p. 186):

The Emperor of Turkey is the head of the country and of Islam. This is just the same as in the case of the Tsar of Russia, who is not only the head of the country but also of Orthodox Christianity. Namely, the Sultan is the khalif, the first man of power, whom Muslims respect as the shadow of God and the King of Kings.

Iijima's explanation of the position of the "sultan" by giving the example of Russia's "tsar" is noteworthy. Western countries and the Ottoman Empire had enjoyed diplomatic relations and cultural exchange for centuries. On the other hand, Japan's awareness of the Tsar of Russia and giving it as an example to explain the Sultan's status shows that geographical distance affected international relationships and cultural understanding during the nineteenth century. Therefore the information given above is not alien to Europe but new to Japan.

Yamada Torajirō⁶ gives information about the theatre, commenting that "the Turkish theatre, compared to those of Japan and Western countries, is still at a very primitive stage of development."

Yamada (Vol. 1, No. 12) made observations about Turkish women and their status in society. The following excerpt is worth reading at this point:

Those, who do not know much about Turkish women claim that they are unthinking and uninformed, no more than machines that produce children and grandchildren. This is a big mistake. Turkish women are restricted in their associations with men, and they cannot exchange ideas with them. However, among elegant women, many of them are respected as individuals. In addition, there are also very sociable women; their speech is fluent, and the words they use are refined. You are speechless with admiration of those who have come back from Paris. Furthermore, as for artistic skills such as needlework and music, they do not fall behind European ladies. Moreover, you can see that there are many ladies who make contributions to newspapers anonymously.⁷

⁵ (1865-1919) Lawyer; Japan's consul general in 1913. He visited Istanbul in July, 1904.

⁶ Yamada Torajirō was born to the Nakamura family in Numata city. His father was the chief retainer of the feudal domain. He moved to Tokyo at the age of 7 and was adopted as the lawful son of Sōju Yamada, the 7th Master of the Sōhenryū Tea Ceremony. As Yamada was to be the new Master, he needed to learn foreign languages to allow him to explain the traditional Japanese tea culture to foreigners, which prompted him learn Chinese, English, German and French at schools in Yokohama and Tokyo. He also wrote articles to Nihon Newspaper, and Tokyo Nichinichi Newspaper, and had the chance to become friends with the intellectuals of his time such as Rohan Kōda, Nichinan Fukumoto and Ōichi Fukuchi. In sum, when he set foot in Istanbul, he was already an international intellectual, which enabled him to communicate with educated and privileged members of society.

⁷Torajirō Yamada, Taiyō, Volume 1, No. 12, "Toruko Fujin Osman's Harem," May 12, 1895.



THE OTTOMAN LADY
The Sun, Volume 1, No. 12

Figure 5: *The Ottoman Lady*

The photo below (Vol. 6, No. 14) is an example that shows the exotic image of the harem dweller, a woman who is lazy, beautiful and passionate, which was very famous in Europe during the nineteenth century.



The Sun, Volume 6, No. 14

Figure 6: *A Beauty of Turkey*

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IV. Political Affairs of Turkey

In addition to this knowledge, day-to-day information about Turkey was also published in the magazine:

Many people (in Japan) know that Turkey had a political assembly on 27 October last year. However, not much is known about the content, so we take the following excerpt that explains the recent information from a foreign journal. (Vol. 15, No. 5, Sekai no Jikyoku, p. 89).

The name of the source was not given but mentioned as gaiji zasshi, which means foreign journal in Japanese. Taiyō published reports of Armenian incidents in Istanbul and the attitude of the Great Powers as follows:

Various European countries, without any exception, are united in their strategy against Turkey and its policy towards the Armenian problem. In addition, it is said that France, as usual, has had to dispatch some (troops) to the Levant (October 9, Paris) (Vol. 1, No. 12, p. 186).

The following sentences notably show Japan's or at least the writer's interest in starting diplomatic relations with Turkey:

Whoever holds Constantinople will be the leader of Turkey. (...) If our Empire makes progress and hopes to stand among the Great Powers, it must have relations with European Powers. Namely, we should put an intelligent ambassador in Constantinople as a priority (Vol. 2, No.3, p. 23).

Taiyō did not fail to give news on Balkan matters. Colonel Matsuishi Yasuji⁸ reports the following information:

Finally, the Balkan matters which were originally problems between the Muslims and the Christians now seem to have changed into matters relating to the profits of the Great Powers (Vol. 15, No. 10, p. 180).

Matsuishi continues to give further information in his article. He writes that Balkan matters are problems between the Muslims and the Christians:

Briefly speaking, the problems with the Great Powers related to the chaos in the Balkans are, after all, due to the disestablishment of the country called Turkey. If Turkey could stand firmly, there would be no such problems (Vol. 15, No. 10, p. 180).

⁸ An army general staff officer who urged expansion first on the Asian continent, then into the Southeast Asia and the South Seas, and finally into South and Central America. (Kōkubō daishōshin ni kansuru iden", December 26, 1906, in the Cambridge History of Japan, Vol. 6, p. 275).

The disappointment of the colonel can be read between the lines, as the image of the Turkish army was positive in Japan. The Young Turks movement was also referred in the magazine. Makino reports this as follows:

Unless everything necessary is done to build a new power and break down the abuses which occurred under the contemporary system, the future of Turkey is one of complete despair. The Young Turks Party has a great deal of power. Most of its members received their education in London and Paris. The wholesome parts of the government, part of the army, and those who had no interest in the abuses, all have sympathy for this Young Turks Party (Vol. 15, No. 8, pp. 82-83).

The Japanese journalist Asahina Chisen⁹, on the other hand, writes about Young Turks political situation and their Party:

First of all, the matters I am mostly interested in concerning Turkey are those related to politics. Talking about the backbone of political matters, they are the so-called abolishment of the emperor, that is to say, a coalition between the party of the previous emperor and the Young Turks Party (Vol. 15, No. 10, p. 182).

Asahina is careful when speaking about the far away country's state of affairs. On the other hand, he is confident in stating the general aspects. He informs Japan on Turkish affairs with the general information above. Asahina also shows his sympathy for the Young Turks. He says: "As I observed, I believe that the Young Turks have considerable prestige and sympathy which would allow Turkey to progress greatly (Vol. 15, No. 10, p. 182).

Makino Nobuaki¹⁰ compares the political situation of the Ottoman Empire to other countries and says:

I think the political situation in Turkey at this time is similar to the political changes which have happened in various countries until now. (...) In the case of Turkey, the differences are that the oppression was excessive and there were a great number of abuses; the extent of the despotism that the people felt was great. (Vol. 15, No. 8, p. 81).

The 31st March Incident against the Parliamentary system occurred in Istanbul and was subdued in several days. Sultan Abdulhamid II was found to be responsible for the rebellion and lost his crown. These matters were interpreted in Taiyō as follows:

⁹ (1862~1939) Journalist. Worked as the chief editor of Tokyo Nichinichi Newspaper. Chisen Asahina spent twelve days in Turkey in 1896. He wrote his Turkey memoirs in *Rōkisha no Omoide*, 1938. There are two sections about Turkey, "Tōō Mondai" and "Toruko", in *Asahina Chisen Bunshū*. 1927, and also in *Taiyō* as well.

¹⁰ (1861-1949) Japanese statesman. He was ambassador to the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, and Italy. He was also active as Minister of Education, Minister of Agriculture and Commerce and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Even though half a year has still not passed since the Turkish parliamentary system was at last founded by the revolution, the second revolution broke out and the streets of Constantinople again saw scenes of carnage and a display of bloodshed. Regarding the siege of the Parliament, and the slaughter of the ministers, this is truly the greatest political tragedy since the French Revolution. The sad scene of Constantinople is unimaginably horrible. (Vol. 15, No. 6, p. 82) May 1, 1909.

As Japan established a parliamentary system during the Meiji Era, the writer's opinion here is affirmative for the parliamentary system.

V. Conclusion

The first views and image of Turkey created in *Taiyō*, the most popular magazine in Japan during the Meiji and Taisho Eras, have different aspects. First of all, image of Turkey is presented via photographs and pictures. The photographs of Turkey can be considered to have created an exotic image of another culture through pictures of mosques, romantic places in Istanbul and the traditional costumes of theatre players. Some of the stereotypical images of the country were created in those days, such as the impression that all Turkish men had moustaches. As for the photographs of Ottoman women, they represent the Western image of Turkish women as lazy, beautiful and passionate women, which is noteworthy. Moreover, there was a tendency for the Ottoman women of Istanbul to be considered as Turkish women. Briefly, while some of the photos depict realistic scenes, some of them show imaginary scenes.

As for the political affairs of Turkey, the reports presented in *Taiyō* have two characteristics. Information is based on either first-hand knowledge or taken from Western sources. The information and news taken from the West is far from fact but is nevertheless interpreted as fact. As Carr (1990) states: "the facts of history never come to us 'pure', since they do not and cannot exist in a pure form: they are always reflected through the mind of the reader." When the information was provided by Japanese visitors, it had the tendency to present a positive image of Turkey. When it was from the West, it was mostly against Turkey's claims.

One final point is that Japanese writers had the notion that Japan was a more advanced country than Turkey. The Ottoman Empire was in the process of disintegration, so it is not surprising that the economy was corrupt and some people in the nation tried to take advantages of this corruption. Consequently, such conditions formed the general bases for Japanese writers' thoughts.

Lastly, the photographs and articles in *Taiyō* provided images of Turkey in Japanese media. The photographs show the different sides of Turkey's culture, which can be considered as exotic in this sense. Research on the Japanese images of Turkey also revealed the following common and important points. The Ottoman people were accepted as Turks.

The three or four provinces of Istanbul, in which travellers of the nineteenth century were particularly interested, were used to represent the whole of Turkey. Finally, the contact experienced by Japanese people in Turkey was limited to upper-class society such as pashas and intellectuals who spoke French, then was the common foreign language of the Ottoman bureaucracy and intelligentsia during the nineteenth century. This was also true for the case of Yamada Torajirō who had first-hand experience of Turkish politics while he was in Istanbul. He met upper-class people from Turkish and foreign publics in Istanbul.

Taken together, the writings of the Japanese who visited Istanbul during the final days of the Ottoman Empire and the photographs and writings about Turkey in *Taiyō* indicated that due to overgeneralization the Ottoman Empire was misrepresented.

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