

An East Asian Community and Advocates of "Koa-ron"

By YAMASHITA Eiji

After Japan defeated Russia in Japanese-Russo War in the early 20th century, leaders of independence movements of almost all countries of Asia came in a stream to Japan. And it was advocates of "Koa-ron (Stay-with-Asia doctrine)" such as TOHYAMA Mitsuru, OHKAWA Shumei and UCHIDA Ryohei, who gave them very warm reception and hospitality in Japan. Because these advocates of "Koa-ron" in those days championed the cause of liberating Asian countries from the colonial rules of major Western powers.

In November 2008, TSUBOUCHI Takahiko's "Stories of Heroes in Asia; 25 Asian Patriots Japanese Should Know (Ajia Eiyu-den; Nihonjin Nara Shitte Okitai 25nin No Shishitachi)" (Publisher: Tenden-sha) was published which is a dynamic portrayal of the strong ties of Japanese advocates of "Koa-ron" and Asian leaders of independence movements. This book is full of stirring episodes between Japanese advocates of "Koa-ron" and leaders of independence movements from China, Korea, Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Myanmar, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Turkey. Among 25 Asian Patriots, there are SUN Yat-sen, Aung San, Sukarno, Suharto, Plaek Pibulsongkram and Mahathir who eventually became the top leaders of their respective countries.

In today's Japan, there are those who descended from this school of "Koa-ron." But most of them, for some reason, take hostile views against the current tide of an East Asian community building. Basically, this hostility comes from Japan's sense of distrust of today's China. In other words, they cannot accept the process of community building so far as they think it is an enterprise directed by China. Strangely enough, these descendents of "Koa-ron" are no different from those in the main stream of Japan' politics, who cannot take confidence in their own country.

On the other hand, these descendents of "Koa-ron" are of one mind in considering that Japan is not yet an independent country in its true sense, and therefore must call for independence. I could not disagree with them in this regard. Needless to say, today's Japan should be independent from the United States. But Japan could never achieve this if Japan keeps its back on Asia, especially on China. I believe these descendents of "Koa-ron" and those who advocate Asian integration

should be united to become a driving force for an East Asian Community building.

(This is the English translation of an article written by Dr. YAMASHITA Eiji, Professor of Osaka City University, which originally appeared on the BBS “Hyakka-Somei” of CEAC on June 27, 2009.)