Historicising Japan-Africa relations

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Abstract

This article was motivated by the rising influence of Japan in Africa's development affairs. Most studies on Japan-Africa relations, which flourished after Japan introduced the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) in 1993, do not adequately historicise the relations between the two. With few exceptions, they uncritically treat Japan as a new or late comer in Africa compared to other global powers. In contrast, this article argues that the Japanese contact with Africa and Africans probably predates the accidental landing of the Portuguese traders on the Japanese shores in 1542/43. Importantly, after the Meiji Restoration in 1868, the Japanese government, politicians and intellectuals started showing great interest in Africa. During the Scramble for Africa by European powers, influential Japanese intellectuals encouraged their government to take part too, but this advice was not heeded. The Japanese also showed keen interest in Africa during the British-Zulu war of 1879, the South African war of 1899, the Italo-Ethiopian conflicts of 1895/96 and 1935/36, and at the Bandung Conference in 1955. Like the Chinese, the Japanese have an age-old interest in Africa.

Key words: Japan-Africa Relations, Africa, Japanese economic interests

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Introduction

This article was motivated by the rising influence of Japan in Africa's development affairs, especially after it introduced the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) in 1993. Mainly funded by Japan, the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) summits, which are held every five years, promote "high-level policy dialogue between African leaders and development partners on issues facing Africa, such as economic development, poverty and conflict" (TICAD V, 2013:2). Most studies on Japan-Africa relations concur that "China's appetite for African raw materials and minerals has sparked a self-conscious attempt by the Japanese government to demarcate its interests" (Cornelissen, 2012:210). Since TICAD, Japan has firmly asserted its position in global affairs. Before then, Japan, a loyal ally of the United States of America (USA), was cautious not to enmesh itself in the explosive Cold War politics. Its foreign policy was defined by its alliance with the USA (Stein, 1998). Between 1945 and 1990, Japan reluctantly engaged Africa, a battle field between the capitalists and communists.

Osei-Hwedie and Osei-Hwedie (2010:124) argue that "From the outset, Japanese policy towards Africa was informed by its philosophy of separating 'politics from the economy' (*seikei bunri*)". This was coined by Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida (1948-1954). He insisted that post war Japan should primarily focus on economic development and leave its security to the USA. Therefore, hiding behind *seikei bunri,* Japan maintained lucrative trade relations with apartheid South Africa despite strong opposition from the international community, including liberation movements in Africa and elsewhere (Morikawa, 1997; Osada, 2002; Ampiah, 2005). Expectedly, Japan's rising interest in Africa since TICAD has elicited a sustained academic inquiry (Yamada, 2011; Hirano, 2012; Manatsha, 2018). But its presence in Africa is low-key compared to China, whose "approach has been described as 'action oriented' at best, irresponsible and roguish at worst" (Rose, 2012:220). Some attribute this to what they term the Japanese "blank historical memory about Africa" (Adem, 2001, 2010; Hideo, 2002). Studies on Japan's relations with individual African states also exist (Morikawa, 1997; Ampiah, 2005; Manatsha & Malebang, 2016; Carvalho, 2016). However, these studies are mainly ahistorical, and primarily focus on TICAD. Before TICAD, few studies on Japan-Africa relations existed. For example, Agbi (1981) historically examines the Japanese knowledge about Africa and their contact with Africans during the Meiji era (1868-1912). Agbi (1982) also critically looks at the Japanese involvement in the Italo-Ethiopian conflict of 1935/36.

Having said so, this article historically traces Japanese-African contact which it argues dates back centuries. It argues that the Japan-Africa relations predate Japan's introduction of the Official Development Assistance (ODA) in 1954 (Sato, 2005) or TICAD in 1993 (Yamada, 2011). To support its thesis, it uses the following examples: Japanese contact with African slaves before and during the sixteenth century; Japanese interest in Africa during the Meiji era (1868-1912); Scramble for Africa in the 1880s; Japanese interest in Egypt in the 1870s; British-Zulu war of 1879; South African war of 1899; Italo-Ethiopian conflicts of 1895/96 and 1935/36; and the Bandung Conference in 1955, among others. The article adds another dimension to Japan-Africa relations.

Japanese-African contact before 1542

The suggested views that the Japanese-African contact began in the sixteenth century (Brinkley & Kikuchi, 1915; Tsujiuchi, 1998) or nineteenth century (Agbi, 1981), and even twentieth century (Ohta, 2008) have been challenged. Thus, some scholars argue that Africans were possibly present in Japan around the ninth and tenth centuries (Weiner, 2009; Russell, 2007). Clarke III (2011) even suggests the seventh century. These scholars maintain that the Arabs began trading African slaves with the Chinese in the ninth century. In turn, the Chinese are believed to have re-traded them with the Japanese and Koreans (Duyendak, 1949 cited in Russell, 2007). The Arab-African-Chinese contact with Africa predates the European-Chinese contact by over five centuries. Unofficial Chinese-African contact predates the European-African contact by centuries too. It began during the Han (206 B.C-A.D 20) until the Qin dynasty (221 B.C-420 A.D) (Russell, 2007; Clark III, 2011). Official Chinese-African contact began during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), when Zheng He (1371-1433) sailed to East Africa (Russell, 2007:20). Zheng was a Chinese mariner, explorer, diplomat, fleet admiral and court eunuch.

One Sinologist claims that "In 1976 a great sensation was produced at the court of Tang Emperor by the arrival of an Arab envoy with a 'negro slave' in his suite" (quoted in Russell, 2007:24). During the Qin dynasty, Arab slave traders brought African slaves to China, and 'thousands of them [were] sold as foreign slaves' (Russell, 2007:24 citing Duyendak, 1949). The Chinese possibly sold some to the Koreans and Japanese, their trading neighbours for centuries. The Japanese word '*kurombo*' refers to dark-skinned/black people. It was derived from the Chinese word '*kunlun*', which originally referred to the dark-skinned people, mainly from South Asia, who were slaves during the Qin and Tang dynasties (Tsujiuchi, 1998; Wyatt, 2010; Welsh, 2012). *Kunlun* is also written as '*kurung*'/'*gurong*'/'*gulong*'/'*gulun*'. During the Tang dynasty, '*kunlun*' incorporated African slaves (Wayatt, 2009). The Japanese first knew of dark-skinned people, including Africans, through the Chinese, not Europeans. The Japanese also refer to Africans and other dark-skinned people as '*kurombo-jin*'. '*Kuro*' means black and '*jin*' a person. The syllable '*bo*' "served as diminutive/derogatory function" (Welsh, 2012:155). They also refer to all dark-skinned people as '*kokujin/kokudo*' (Tsujiuchi, 1998).

It is widely believed that the first *shogun*, great warrior of Japan, Sakanoue Tamuramaro (758-811), had African roots. Academic works emotively describe him as a "Negro who distinguished himself abroad" (Russell, 2007:16). But his 'African roots' remain contentious. Some suggest that he was Chinese (Brinkley & Kikuchi, 1915) or Ainu (Japanese) (Russell, 2007). His disputed 'African ancestry' "raise[s] the possibility that Africans arrived on Japanese shores prior to the arrival of Europeans and suggests that their presence in Asia was not confined to the role of man servant and slave" (Russell, 2007:20). Russell maintains that "It is not inconceivable that Africans had arrived on Japanese shores via China as early as the tenth century" (2007:24). Yet, it was only at the beginning of the sixteenth century that their presence was widely recorded by Europeans, following the accidental 'discovery' of Japan by the Portuguese in 1542/43. Europeans had reached and lived in China before going to Japan.

Japanese-African contact, 1542-1850s

Three Portuguese traders, accompanied by a Chinese guide and travelling on a Chinese junk, accidentally landed at Tanegashima, an island south of Kyushu, Japan, in 1542/43. They had been traveling from Spain to Macao (Brinkley & Kikuchi, 1915). Thereafter, the Portuguese started shipping African slaves, porters, interpreters, gunners and entertainers from Africa to Japan (Tsujiuchi, 1998; Russell, 2007). Other European sailors, traders, adventurers and

missionaries reached Japan too. Copying the Portuguese, the Dutch, Italians and Spaniards started shipping Africans (mainly slaves) to Japan from mainland Africa and Madagascar. In the sixteenth century, hundreds of Africans resided in Japan (Russell, 2007; Welsh, 2012).

The Japanese referred to the Portuguese and other Whites as 'barbarians' (uncivilised) or '*komojin*' (red-haired men) or "long-nosed gobbling or giant monsters" (Tsujiuchi, 1998:96). Showing disparagement, they also collectively referred to the Whites and Africans as '*oni*' (demons) (Tsujiuchi, 1998:95-96; Welsh, 2012:155). It was through the biased Westerners that the Japanese came to know Africa as a 'dark continent'. Their views about Africa and Africans slowly changed to derision (Agbi, 1981:154; Okada, 2011:186). In 1695, a Japanese scholar, Nishikawa Joken, stated that the Dutch at Deshima, Nagasaki, had told him that they purchased slaves from a cannibalistic tribe in central Africa (cited in Tsujiuchi, 1998). The Japanese were often shocked and saddened by the Dutch merchants' ill-treatment of their African servants, consisting of slaves, artisans, interpreters, gunners, entertainers and sailors (Russell, 2007).

In 1546, a Portuguese priest, Jorge Alvarez, sailed with few Africans (mainly slaves) from Africa to Japan (Tsujiuchi, 1998). The missionaries had encouraged their colleagues to purchase slaves in Africa. In 1547, Alvarez wrote to his colleague that the Japanese "like seeing black people especially Africans, and they will come 15 leagues just to see them and entertain them for three to four days" (quoted in Russell, 2007:24). Between 1579 and 1581, Alessandro Valignano, a Jesuit missionary, brought an impressively built 27-year-old young man from Mozambique to Kyoto, Japan. His presence caused a stampede as local Japanese, eager to see him, "broke down the doors of a Jesuit residence […] resulting in the death and injuring of several participants" (Tsujiuchi, 1998:95; also Russell, 2007:24; Weiner, 2009:87).

The presence of an African man in Kyoto forced even the most feared Japanese warlord, Oda Nobunaga, to quicken his meeting with Valignano. The African was finally presented to Nobunaga, who instructed that he be stripped half-naked and bathed "to determine for himself if his skin colour was natural" (Weiner, 2009:87). Nobunaga was impressed by the well-built African man such that he requested Valignano to leave him in his care. He gave him a Japanese name, Yasuke. He was described as "black as a bull and of fine character" (Russell, 2007:24). Some writers described him as "stronger than ten powerful men" (Tsujiuchi, 1998:95). Nobunaga appointed him his body guard and allowed him to dine with him at his table. Yasuke also received some payment from Nobunaga and his brothers. He was later promoted to a *samurai* (warrior), and stationed at Nobunaga's Azuchi Castle, where he distinguished himself by gallantly fighting to defend his new master (Tsujiuchi, 1998; Russell, 2007; Weiner, 2009).

In 1582, Nobunaga was betrayed by his right-hand man, Akechi Mitsuhide. After being cornered in a violent battle, he committed *harakiri* ('honour' suicide). Yasuke escaped and joined Nobunaga's son, Odo Nobutada, who also committed *harakiri* upon being cornered by Mitsuhide. Yasuke surrendered to Mitsuhide, who described him as a 'beast' not worth killing. He was handed back to the Jesuits missionaries in Kyoto (Tsujiuchi, 1998; Russell, 2007). Russell (2007) also narrates the capture of a black man, likely an African, during the Japanese-Korean war (1592-1598). This suggests long contact between Koreans, Japanese and Africans.

The first known Japanese to reach Africa did so in 1582. It was a team of four Japanese Christian boys travelling to Rome, Italy, via Africa, to meet Pope Gregory XIII (Tsujiuchi, 1998). They were sent by Valignano, and spent few years touring Spain, Portugal and Italy. This was "to demonstrate the success of the Jesuit mission in Japan as well as demonstrating the grandeurs of European Catholic civilisation to the Japanese" (Welsh, 2012:159). The boys returned in 1590, and began preaching to the Japanese the grandeurs of European civilisation. Highly indoctrinated, they described Africans as "incompetent, uncivilised and barbarous" people (Russell, 2007:27). In 1587, Emperor Toyotomi Hideyoshi had asked the Jesuits to leave Japan after accusing them of arming the Christians in Kyushu to undermine his authority. In 1591, before finally leaving in 1624, Valignano had travelled to Kyoto to display European

civilisation and Catholicism. He was accompanied by the Jesuits from Nagasaki, 12 Portuguese laymen, the four Christian boys, Indian attendants and African slaves (Welsh, 2012).

The Tokugawa Shogunate imposed *sakoku* policy (isolationism/closed country) from 1633 to 1853. It expelled Westerners from Japan, but spared the Dutch for showing little interest in religious matters. The Tokugawa monopolised trade and the flow of information. It allowed the Dutch to keep African slaves, artisans, interpreters, gunners and entertainers. Privileged Africans were also freely allowed to leave and return to Japan (Tsujiuchi, 1998; Russell, 2007).

Meiji restoration and the changing Japanese worldview

In 1853, Japan was forced, through gunboat diplomacy, to open up to international trade by the USA and European powers (ending the *sakoku* policy). Initially hesitant and ambivalent, Japan finally embraced this new development with unrivalled vigour. In 1868, it embarked on radical reforms under the Meiji Restoration (1868-1912). This period also changed how the Japanese viewed Africa/Africans. The Meiji government issued the Charter Oath in 1868 outlining the principles of its administration. The Charter stated that "knowledge shall be sought throughout the world" (Segal, 2015: nd). The first English-Japanese dictionary was published in 1862, and reprinted in 1869. Following the Meiji reforms, Japan started contact with Egypt and Ethiopia. Both Japan and Egypt had "modernized and introduced European science and technology to counter European expansion. In both cases this modernization began by giving priority to the military aspect before subsequently opening up to civilian applications" (Crozet, 2004:52).

The Meiji government sent eminent officials and experts worldwide for benchmarking purposes. For instance, from 1871 to 1873, the Iwakura Mission, comprising diplomats and prominent figures, toured the USA and Europe. Its mission was to learn from the West by touring industries, courts, universities and studying social customs. On their trip to Europe, the members of this mission passed via Africa, and had direct conversations with few Africans they met in Angola. They obtained first-hand information about Africa and Africans. It is said that they did not display any racist attitudes towards Africans (Tsujiuchi, 1998; Segal, 2015).

Japanese interest in Egypt- 1868-1912

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, "The Japanese displayed an extraordinary interest in Egypt" (Bradshaw & Ndzesop, 2009:143). In 1871, Shibusawa Eichi, a Japanese government official who had travelled to Europe in 1867, published a detailed account of his historic trip. He mentioned Egypt, specifically the Suez Canal, which was under construction (Agbi, 1981). The Suez Canal was opened in 1869 to provide "steamships, but not sail ships, a shortcut to Asia" (Sichko, 2011:1). Shibusawa praised the European technology used in the construction of the Suez Canal. He was so impressed such that he "paid little attention or no attention to the Egyptians" (Agbi, 1981:155). Shibusawa only mentioned the Egyptians' polygamous lifestyle, which he dismissed as "a sign of their backwardness" (Agbi, 1981:155). Between 1871 and 1873, the Meiji government sent a mission to Egypt to study its mixed court system after advice from Britain. Hoyle explains the origins of Egypt's mixed court system:

> Egypt was, from 1517 to 1914, under the legal sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire. Although this sovereignty was often nominal, especially towards the end of the nineteenth century after the British Occupation of 1882, it had a considerable effect on Egypt. It led to the extension to Egypt of treaties, known as Capitulations between the Ottoman Empire and foreign Christian states, and forced Egypt's leaders, in their negotiations with foreign countries, to keep within limits permitted

> by the Ottoman rulers in Constantinople. It also gave rise to the enforcement of some Turkish-based laws in Egypt (Hoyle, 1986:220).

Japan rejected this dual court system, arguing that it would prevent it from achieving equality with Western powers. The French are said to have advised Japan against it. The French were driven out of Egypt by the British in 1801 (Sichko, 2011:3). Japan argued that the dual court system would prevent it from abolishing the extra territorial rights that the USA and some Western powers held over it (a product of unequal treaties signed in the 1850s). In 1894, Japan achieved extra-territorial rights by signing the "Anglo-Japanese Commercial and Navigation Treaty which abolished the extra-territorial rights" (Agbi, 1981:157). Japan's interest in Egypt did not end with its rejection of the dual court system; it further forged economic relations.

In 1869, Japan Mail Steamship Company "began regular service to Europe through the Suez Canal […]. Stopping at Port Said in Egypt, Japanese merchant ships established direct trade connections with Africa for the first time" (Clarke III, 2011:2). After World War I, Japan's Consular reports began to place special focus on the "number and tonnage of ships passing through the Suez Canal" (Kitagawa, 1990:125). Between 1898 and 1913, Japan's small trade had gained foothold in north and east Africa. Egypt also played a vital role in linking Japanese trade with Europe and Africa (Kitagawa, 1990; Howe, 1996; Clarke III, 2011). Importantly, "The Suez Canal caused roughly a 178 per cent increase in steamship use on Asian routes from 1869 until 1874" (Sichko, 2011:1). Egypt remained precious to Japan such that in 1922, it became the first African country to establish formal relations with Japan.

British-Zulu war of 1879 and Japanese interests

Japan sent a military attaché to South Africa during the British-Zulu war of 1879 (de Jong, 1976; Agbi, 1981). This was mainly in line with its '*fukoku-kyohei*' (arms and wealth) national strategy and '*fukoku*' policy (national prosperity), both adopted under the Meiji Restoration in 1868. Military attachés were neutral observers who sent detailed reports about the war to their governments and militaries. The Japanese military attaché was granted permission by Britain, which Japan had a military alliance with. Japan wanted to closely observe the British Navy in action. Its navy was modelled on the British Navy, and Japan was "aware of the great and glorious reputation which the British Navy possessed throughout the world" (Agbi, 1981:157). Japan was also concerned about Western colonialism and imperialism, which it greatly resented. The 1,500-strong British battalion "was annihilated by a Zulu force armed with spears" (Lieven, 1998:420). The Japanese military attaché produced a report praising the Zulu, and describing them as the victims of British imperialism. Ironically, the British too praised the Zulu as exceptional warriors. However, the Japanese attaché insisted that there was no way that Japan could adopt the archaic bows and arrows used by the Zulu (Agbi, 1981).

Scramble for Africa and Japanese interests

Japan keenly followed the infamous Berlin Conference in 1884. It also started seeing Africa as having great economic potential. A young prominent pro-Meiji lawyer, Professor Hirondo Tomizu, became the leading advocate of the 'Japan conquer Africa strategy'. Tomizu was first educated at the Imperial University of Tokyo (IUT) (now Tokyo University) and later in Europe. He returned to Japan and taught Law at IUT (Agbi, 1981). In 1897, the articulate and persuasive Tomizu wrote an instructive pamphlet entitled '*Afurika no Zento*' ('The Future of Africa'). In it, he expressed his radical opinions about Western colonialism and imperialism in Africa. He also praised Cecil John Rhodes as a visionary man who turned Africa's jungles into modern cities. Fondly calling him 'the Napoleon of Africa', Tomizu marvelled at how Rhodes

had two African countries named after him. He saw Rhodes as a visionary leader that Japan should emulate. Tomizu also praised the Portuguese, French and King Leopold II as "good administrators" (Agbi, 1981:158). He urged his government to exploit Africa's wealth too.

The analytic Tomizu did not see Africa as a 'dark continent', but the land of fortunes. He argued that in the twentieth century, the same Europeans, who saw Africa as a 'dark continent', would refer to it as the 'golden continent'. He lamented that only the "whites, not the yellow race" would "share all the benefits" of Africa (Agbi, 1981:158). Evoking emotions, he "warned that if the Yellow race did not work hard and catch up with whites, they would also be enslaved" (Agbi, 1981:158). As this article argues later, Japan saw the Italo-Ethiopian conflicts from racial lenses. During World War II, it justified its invasion and occupation of some Asian countries on the basis of protecting the 'Yellow Race' from Western colonialism and imperialism (Gebrekidan, 1995; Clarke III, 2011). Despite Tomizu's persuasiveness, it was impractical for Japan to colonise Africa. But his imperialistic views resonated well with the Japanese intelligentsia and some in the army (Adem, 2010; Clarke III, 2011). When he died in 1935, Tomizu "had been elected five times to the House of Representatives" (Agbi, 1981:158).

Tomizu inspired Japanese scholars such that many visited Africa or translated books on Africa into Japanese (Agbi, 1981). During World War I, his views were 'revived' by radical Japanese, who implored their government to "send troops to occupy Germany's territories in Africa" (Clarke III, 2011:2), but this did not happen. The Imperial Japanese Army commander, General Shigeru Honjo, boasted about his victories in Asia. In 1937, he informed Japan's Minister of War that his intention was to "subjugate the whole continent of Europe as well as that of Africa" (Adem, 2010:872). African soldiers fought his men in the Southeast Asian jungles on behalf of the British during World War II. A Japanese prisoner of war praised them:

> The enemy soldiers are not from Britain but are from AFRICA. Because of their beliefs they are not afraid to die; so even if their commanders have fallen they keep on advancing as if nothing had happened. It makes things rather difficult. They have an excellent physique and are very brave, so fighting against these soldiers is somewhat troublesome (quoted in Killingray & Plaut, 2010:151).

Italo-Ethiopian conflict of 1895/96 and Japanese interests

Japan's reaction to the first Italo-Ethiopian conflict was influenced by its rising military power. In 1895, it had defeated China and occupied the Republic of Formosa (Taiwan) following the Treaty of Shimonoseki signed with the Qing leaders. Like Italy, Japan was an imperial power (Clarke III, 2011; Hofmann, 2015). Ethiopia appeared in Japan's Foreign Ministry documents for the first time on 6 April 1896, after it had defeated Italy on 1 March 1896. Japan's Ministers of War and Foreign Affairs developed close interest in Italy's colonial war in Africa. The latter proposed to send "an officer, a doctor, and an accountant to follow Italy's expeditionary forces. Rome, however, refused Tokyo's request" (Clarke III, 2011:2). Ethiopia was also economically important to the Japanese. For instance, "By 1899, silk thread from Japan was entering Ethiopia […], and by 1918, Japanese cloth had superseded American unbleached muslin, which had dominated Ethiopian imports until then" (Clarke III, 2011:2). Italy's defeat by Ethiopia aroused more Japanese interest. Young educated and radical Ethiopians saw Japan as a model to be emulated. They denounced fascist Italy, and became known as the 'Japanizers' (Levine, 2007:44). The Japanese government, including its public, supported the Ethiopian cause. Apart from Ethiopia's natural riches, which Japan also wanted, the Ethiopian ancient monarchy fascinated the Japanese, who were/are a monarchical dynasty.

South African war of 1899-1902 and Japanese interests

The widely studied second South African/Anglo-Boer war (1899-1902) attracted military observers and attachés worldwide. One of the global powers, the British Empire, was involved. In 1881, the Boers had defeated the British at Majuba (de Jong, 1976). In 1879, the Zulu had also defeated and embarrassed the British. In 1895, Japan defeated China, and became a formidable military force. It seized the opportunity and sent a military attaché, Captain Hiraoka Hachiro, to South Africa (de Jong, 1976; Agbi, 1981). Like during the British-Zulu war, Japan's military attaché was attached to the British Army. In October 1900, the war turned into a guerrilla war. Most attachés left as they found it taxing and exhausting to observe an unconventional war (de Jong, 1976). Hachiro returned too. Denouncing Western imperialism, the Japanese officials, intellectuals and academics sympathised with the Boers.

Hachiro's presence helped Japan to evaluate the limitations and effectiveness of modern weapon systems. Japan had already adopted the Prussian model for its Imperial Army and was content with it. It had no intention of adopting the British model (Agbi, 1981). Japan's motive was to forge closer relations with the British in order to isolate Russia in East Asia. Britain and Japan finally signed a military alliance in 1902. In 1905, the militaristic Imperial Japanese Army defeated Russia. The resource-hungry Japan then colonised Korea from 1910 until 1945 following Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty of 1910. Following the second South African war, Japanese academics and intellectuals paid greater attention to Cecil Rhodes' activities in Africa, suggesting that the Meiji administration was preoccupied with national prosperity (Agbi, 1981).

Hachiro's detailed report probably influenced the Japanese economic interest in South Africa or the region. In 1903, the Japanese government published an economic research report on South Africa. The experts employed to draft this report had stayed in South Africa three months after the second South African war. Around that time, the Japanese government constituted a team to "investigate the possibility of sending Japanese immigrants to Southern Africa, as well as more Japanese merchandise" (Kitagawa, 1990:131). Japan's economic interests in Africa intensified after the second South African war, as this article reveals.

Italo-Ethiopian crisis of 1935/36 and Japanese interests

When the second Italo-Ethiopian crisis started, Japan had proclaimed itself the defender of the coloured race against Western imperialism (Asante, 1973; Levine, 2007; Du Bois, nd). It was at loggerheads with the West over its (Japan's) aggressive colonial policies in East Asia. In 1934, Japan was expelled from the League of Nations after invading Manchuria, China, in 1931. It went ahead and formed a puppet government in Manchuria. Facing pressure, Japan dismissed the League of Nations as "a tool of Western imperialism in Asia and beyond" (Hofmann, 2015:216). Italy supported the League of Nations' position against Japan. It even dispatched a warship to the Far East to protect its economic interests. In 1933, Italy and China forged an alliance further angering Japan. In 1934, Japan issued the Amu Declaration declaring war on Western powers for aiding China. The stalemate "profoundly affect[ed] the Japanese reactions to the Italo-Ethiopian crisis" (Agbi, 1982:132). Japan saw Italy as a fascist bully.

In 1931, Japanese diplomats had visited Ethiopia to negotiate favourable trade deals and access to its natural resources. Emperor Haile Selassie "promised to make a concession for 50[0],000 hectares of land to the Japanese immigrants for the purposes of growing cotton" (Agbi, 1982:131). Japan had hoped to send 150,000 immigrants to Ethiopia to grow rice and cotton. But this failed after Italy opposed the deal. In 1930, Prince Lij Araya Abebe, a nephew of Haile Selassie, had proposed to marry Masako Kuroda, a daughter of Viscount Kuroda of Tokyo. Italy had swiftly opposed the marriage, further straining the relations between Italy and Ethiopia. The marriage would have strengthened the Japanese-Ethiopian relations. The Italian

media began to vilify Japan, denouncing it as a rogue and imperialist state (Agbi, 1982; Clarke III, 2011).

Frustrated, Japan clandestinely shipped weapons and medical equipment to Ethiopia. Italy demanded confirmation, but Japan denied any involvement. In early 1935, Ethiopia openly requested Japan to supply it with arms. The Japanese ambassador to Italy diplomatically rebuffed Ethiopia stating that Japan was only interested in expanding economic interests (Agbi, 1982). Yet, in August 1935, Ato Birru, Ethiopia's top official in the Ministry of External Affairs, flew to Tokyo to directly negotiate the sale of arms. Ethiopia was ready to pay in cash or exchange them with coffee, hides, bees wax, honey and many more. In the same month, a Japanese ship left for Ethiopia, but "the Japanese claimed that most of the items the ship was carrying were textile and household utensils" (Agbi, 1982:133). But Gebrekidan (1995:160-161) insists that "About 1200 swords, relics from the 1895 Sino-Japanese and the 1905 Russo-Japanese wars, were sent to Ethiopia along with some medical supplies…"

The Japanese public also joined their government in defence of Ethiopia. For instance, the Japan-Ethiopian Association was launched in Osaka following a symposium on the Ethiopian crisis. Other pressure groups/associations were also formed across Japan. For example, the Consultation Committee on Ethiopia, Defence Ally of Ethiopia, Patriotic Youth Movement, State Foundation Society, and Youth Volunteers Nationalist Popular Party. The Japanese volunteers were ready to fight Italy in Ethiopia and had registered in large numbers. Japan gave "sufficient warning to Western Europe not to allow Italy to carry out any military operations in Ethiopia" (Agbi, 1982:135-136). But the West knew that Japan would face practical difficulties should she get directly involved in the conflict. Italy attacked Ethiopia on 3 October 1935.

Across Japan, "large numbers of Japanese activists and ordinary people protested against Mussolini's invasion" (Hofmann, 2015:218). Even Japanese pupils and students are said to have hated Italy and adored Ethiopia. Yet, when Italy invaded, Japan adopted a wait-and-see approach. It wanted to safeguard its "trade and commercial interests" (Sbacchi, 1975:58). The conflict assumed racial dimensions when Japan insistently claimed that it was defending the coloured race from Western imperialism. This was instantly 'bought' by leading black activists in America such as Du Bois and Marcus Garvey (Asante, 1973; Gebrekidan, 1995; Du Bois, n.d). Japan later compromised its principled stand on defending the coloured race. Thus, after the crisis, it joined Italy to amass Ethiopia's wealth. Italy even guaranteed protection for Japan's vast economic interests in Ethiopia. Japan upgraded its Consulate in Ethiopia to a Legation in 1936 (Agbi, 1981). Clearly, "Ethiopia was fundamentally about imperial powers trying to secure resources" (Hofmann, 2015:226). In 1955, Haile Selassie became the first African Head of State to visit Japan.

Japan-Africa economic diplomacy: 1900-1945

Between 1900 and 1930, Japan intensified its economic diplomacy in Africa by "setting up consular offices, and using the information networks created by shipping companies and trading houses" (Clarke III, 2011:1). It also sent out economic-focused research missions to Africa. Valuable information was collected, distilled, analysed, published and finally "passed on to small and middle-sized industrialists, traders and farmers" (Kitagawa, 1990:130). Japan opened its first Consulate in Africa in Cape Town in August 1918. This Consul collected information on Africa's economic conditions during World War I. In Southern Africa, it mainly focused on the Union of South Africa, Northern and Southern Rhodesia (Zambia and Zimbabwe), and South West Africa (Namibia). In North Africa, the focus was on Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco (Kitagawa, 1990). In 1916, Shosen Kaisha, a Japanese Shipping Company, opened its first line to South Africa, followed by the East African line in 1926. This bolstered Japan-Africa trade links (Kitagawa, 1990:125). In 1919, Japan opened another

Consulate in Port Said and a Consulate General in Alexandria in 1926. In 1932, the Mombasa Consulate was opened, so were Legations in Cairo in 1936 and Cape Town in 1937. Two more Consulates were opened in Addis Ababa and Casablanca in 1936 (Kitagawa, 1990; Clarke III, 2011). "[A] branch of the Japanese trading company, Mikado Shokai, was set-up in Cape Town" (Ampiah, 2011:269), also indicating the significance of this region to Japan.

Japan also grouped Africa into four special economic zones. Group A consisted of Egypt, Algeria, Sudan, French and Spanish Morocco, Tunis, Tripoli and Eretria. Group B was made of Somaliland, Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, Zanzibar, Madagascar, Portuguese East Africa, Ethiopia and Nyasaland (now Malawi). Group C included the Union of South Africa, Northern and Southern Rhodesia and South West Africa. Group D countries were Belgian Congo, Angola, and French and British West Africa (Kitagawa, 1990). Nonetheless, Japan regarded Groups A and B "as the most important". It established consulates, commercial museums and marketing agencies in the two regions "to promote the development of trade" (Kitagawa, 1990:136). In the Group B region, much attention was directed to cotton crop prospects and securing markets for Japanese goods. As for Group C, it was seen as "so promising" since the demand for Japanese goods was high. The Japanese government "worked especially hard to eliminate various difficulties which hindered the development of trade" in this region (Kitagawa, 1990:136).

Racial discrimination against Asians in South Africa, following the 1913 Immigration Act, frustrated Japan's growing economic interest in the Group C region (Osada, 2002:37). Nonetheless, Japan's Consulate in Cape Town worked hard and expanded "its activities year by year" (Kitagawa, 1990:136). The Group D region was new to Japan. It was only in the Belgian Congo that Japanese goods, mainly cotton products, were "more or less handled by European merchants" (Kitagawa, 1990:136). In this region, Japan faced stiff competition and opposition from European countries. Slowly, few Japanese businesses got attracted to the Gold Coast, Belgian Congo, Nigeria and French West Africa. But European countries maintained a strong economic presence in West Africa. They imposed anti-competitive/protectionist policies such as high tariffs and quotas. These frustrated Japan's economic interests in the region. Japan used low pricing as a form of economic diplomacy (Kitagawa, 1990; Howe, 1996; Ampiah, 2011).

Japanese economic commissions and research in Africa, 1903-1945

In 1903, Japan's Consul in Singapore published an economic research report on South Africa. In 1917, Japan's Department of Agriculture and Commerce published a report on foreign trade in South Africa too, written by Maguichi Nunokawa. He was tasked with investigating "the possibility of sending Japanese immigrants to Southern Africa, as well as more Japanese merchandise" (Kitagawa, 1990:131). Japan's Bureau of Trade and Commerce, under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also published research report on South Africa. The report provided commercial information "to traders and industrialists who wished to develop ties with counterparts in South Africa" (Kitagawa, 1990:131). It also discussed opportunities and challenges facing Japanese trade in Africa. In 1924, the Japanese Consul in Cape Town produced a similar report for East Africa. In 1927, the Japanese government sent the Ujiro Oyama investigative commission to East Africa. It conducted intensive research on economic conditions. It recommended the establishment of a Japanese Consul and business banks in East Africa. Japan also conducted economic research and produced reports on Portuguese East Africa. Another critical report focused on the maritime products industries in Africa (Kitagawa, 1990). Japan's economic interests in Africa were briefly disrupted by her defeat in 1945.

Bandung conference and Japan-Africa relations

The Afro-Asian/Bandung Conference was held in Bandung, Indonesia, in April 1955. It was an initiative of the leaders of Indonesia, India, Pakistan and Burma (now Myanmar). Twenty-nine Asian and African countries attended. The conference focused on decolonisation, economic-cooperation, self-determination and peace. The participants declared that "colonialism in all its manifestations is an evil which should be speedily brought to an end" (Lumumba-Kasongo, 2015:7). The conference took place three years after the occupation of Japan by the USA ended in 1952. Despite this, Japan's invitation to Bandung Conference aroused tense debate since she had been an imperial power. She reluctantly attended after being persuaded by the USA. Pakistan invited Japan after India had invited China. Pakistan belonged to the liberal camp, and was opposed to India. Thus, Pakistan "schemed to invite Japan, an important figure as an anti-communist, in order to put a check on the India-China leadership in this conference" (Lumumba-Kasongo, 2015:8). Japan maintained a low profile at the conference, which talked about the 'third way', yet she was in the 'first way'. Japan's delegates "had some difficulties locating themselves in the discourse of the conference" (Lumumba-Kasongo, 2015:8).

Japan was unfriendly to the Non-Aligned Movement, formed in 1960. Yet, at the Bandung Conference and thereafter, she was compelled to work with the countries which had "adopted non-alignment as their policy guidelines in international relations" (Lumumba-Kasongo, 2015:13). Moreover, being in the 'first way', Japan did not want the West and USA to see it "as giving succour to decolonisation, even though it did not want European colonial rule to persist in either Asia or Africa" (Ampiah, 2011:273). In preparation for the Bandung Conference, Japan constituted a task team made of senior officers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It advised that Japan "should adopt a reticent attitude on the issue of decolonisation" (Ampiah, 2011:274). It argued that Japan's support for decolonisation would "prejudice our [Japanese] relationship with the colonial powers, so these should be avoided" (Ampiah, 2011:274). It seems Japan had abandoned its once admired position against Western imperialism.

Nonetheless, Japan deserves credit for the commitment it made at the Bandung Conference. It committed to assist in the development of Asia and Africa. In the 1960s, Japan requested Britain to assist it on how to approach African affairs (Ampiah, 2011). In 1954, a year before the conference, Japan had introduced ODA in South East Asia, which was extended to Africa in the 1960s (Sato, 2005). It also introduced TICAD, in 1993, still in the spirit of Bandung.

Africa's decolonisation and Japanese interests: 1960s-1970s

Japan re-connected with Africa in the 1960s mainly through its ODA. Initially, many African leaders shunned it because of their socialist, communist and pan-Africanist ideologies. They distrusted global powers. Yet, Africa's decolonisation aroused great interest among Japanese intellectuals, academics and politicians. They implored their leaders to learn from Africa and end overreliance on the USA for foreign policy and security. Intellectuals such as Terutaro Nishino (1914-1993), Kanjiro Noma (1912-1975) and Koshiro Okakura (1912-2001) conducted intensive research on Africa during and after decolonisation. They also translated books on/about Africa into Japanese, and founded African studies in Japan (Kitagawa, 2003).

In 1974, Kimura Toshio, Japan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, visited Africa, being the first incumbent Minister of Foreign Affairs to do so. He visited Ghana, Nigeria, Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo), Tanzania and Egypt. The 1973 the oil crisis had exposed Japan's energy insecurity (Manatsha, 2018). Therefore, resource and energy diplomacy was Toshio's mission. Interestingly, he informed Africans about "Japan's opposition to colonialism and racial discrimination", and "pledged [his] country's moral support for struggles toward national liberation" (Hideo, 2002:43). Ironically, at the Bandung Conference Japan had opted

to remain neutral on the issue of colonialism and decolonisation. A few months before Toshio's visit, Japan suspended "sporting and cultural exchange with [apartheid] South Africa" (Hideo, 2002:43). In August 1974, it became the first country "in the western camp to recognise the government of Guinea Bissau" after its intense struggle against Portuguese rule (Hideo, 2002:43).

TICAD: A paradigm shift in Japan-Africa relations

The post-Cold War era heralded a paradigm shift in Japan-Africa relations. Japan started seeing Africa as deserving special attention for global stability and peace to be realised. The new generation of Japanese politicians and bureaucrats resented the USA "domineering attitude" (Stein, 1998:41). They criticised the USA-led development policy towards Africa, especially the Structural Adjustment Programmes of the 1980s. Japan then introduced TICAD, in 1993, which defines its intervention in Africa's development agenda (Yamada, 2011). It co-organised TICAD I with the United Nations (UN), UN Development Programme and the World Bank. The African Union became a co-organiser much later (TICAD V, 2013). TICAD I organisers "pledged to reverse the decline in development assistance for Africa that had followed the end of the Cold War" (TICAD V, 2013:3). But Japan arguably used TICAD summits as resource diplomacy forums. China used the Forum for China-Africa Cooperation for the same objective. In 2001, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori visited Africa, and toured three countries. His visit boosted Japan-Africa relations. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited in 2013. In 2016, TICAD summit was held in Kenya. Since TICAD, African countries have seen an increase of Japanese investments, especially in the mineral and energy sectors (Manatsha, 2018:2-3).

Conclusion

This article has attempted to historicise Japan-Africa relations. Most studies on this subject focus on the post-Cold War era, and treat the relations as ahistorical. Yet, Japan-Africa relations predate TICAD by centuries even though the Japanese are said to have "a blank historical memory about Africa" (Adem, 2001, 2010). Between 1945 and 1990, the Japanese maintained a low-key approach to international affairs. For this reason, some think that they are 'new or late comers' in Africa yet this article has prove otherwise, and has shown that Japan has had long ties with the African continent. The article has provided a historical foundation for future research on Japan –Africa relations.

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