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This image depicts the "Declaration of Greater East Asian Co-operation." It was published by Dai Nihon Yubenkai (Great Japan Debate Society), Kodansha. The "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" was among the early steps Japan took to build an empire.

During World War II, and for centuries before, the Japanese people (whose name for their country is *Nihon* [or, *Nippon*] which means "source of the sun country" or "land of the rising sun") believed their Emperor was descended from the sun-goddess *Amaterasu*. He was, in other words, divine. Until Japan's surrender, the common people had never heard their leader's voice.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the people who carried out the Emperor's will changed from a civilian-based government to a military-controlled government. Those military leaders wanted to remedy their home islands' lack of natural resources by expanding their country's territory.

How could Japan be a world power - the goal of the generals - if it had to import so many raw materials? The natural resources of other lands proved too tempting to resist.

What method did Japan's leaders use to convince their population it was acceptable to invade other countries in order to prosper their own? They created the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere," a seemingly beneficial

concept, to make “Asia for Asians.”

Its ostensible objective was to rid East Asia of all white, colonial control. Its actual purpose was to allow Japan to build an empire.

To help carry out the real goals of the “Co-Prosperity Sphere,” Japan’s leaders had to alter what children learned in school and constrain what adults thought at large. Militaristic concepts were substituted for free thought as leaders prepared the country “for a war with England and America.”



Contemporary cartoon depicting Japanese children carrying military items like swords and rifles. Part of the militaristic effort to change how Japanese people, including children, viewed themselves. Here the children are marching over Asia. For more details about the cartoon, see World War II Multimedia DataBase.

People who questioned authority were imprisoned, or worse. Instead of encouraging students to think for themselves, teachers were required to run a kind of national boot camp. According to Iris Chang, author of *The Rape of Nanking*:

It was commonplace for teachers to behave like sadistic drill sergeants, slapping children across the cheeks, hitting them with their fists, or bludgeoning them with bamboo or wooden swords. Students were forced to hold heavy objects, sit on their knees, stand barefoot in the snow, or run around the playground until they collapsed from exhaustion. (The Rape of Nanking, page 31.)

Young boys raised in such an environment could become hardened soldiers, unafraid to die for their emperor.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/A-PACIFIC-EMPIRE-Flags-Of-Our-Fathers>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/A-PACIFIC-EMPIRE-Flags-Of-Our-Fathers>

Media Stream



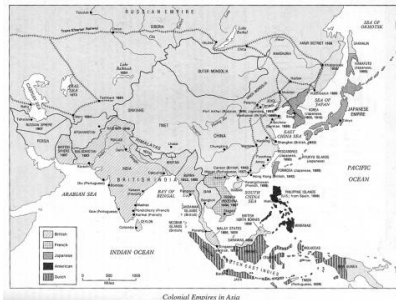
Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess

Mythology image online, courtesy [Windows to the Universe](#), from the National Earth Science Teachers Association (NESTA).

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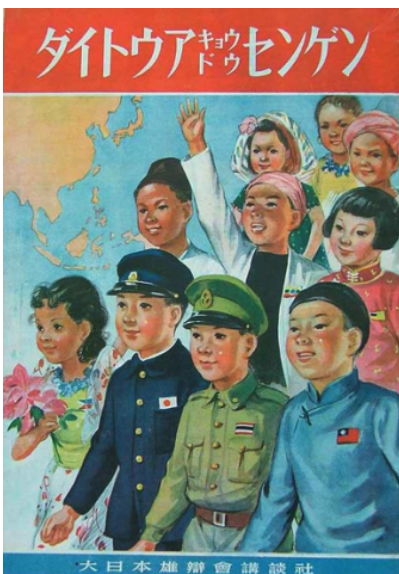
Map of Colonial Empires in Asia

Map image online, courtesy [Reed College](#).

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