The Reconstruction of Self and Society in Early Postwar Japan 1945-1949

by

Owen Griffiths

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Department of History

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

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Abstract

This dissertation examines a moment of unprecedented crisis in Japan's modern history - the crisis of defeat - and the impact it had on the Japanese self-image. Defeat unleashed a wide range of responses, from profound despair (kyodatsu) to a sense of new life (shinsei). Just as the material destruction of defeat defined the landscape of Japan's cities, so too did the coexistence of these two emotions create the psychological ground from which public discussion about Japan's past, present, and future emerged. From these discussions arose two interrelated debates, one concerning who was responsible for war and defeat, and the other focusing on the defects in the national character. In both cases, many Japanese believed that the resolution of these debates was a necessary first step in constructing a peace-loving, democratic nation.

The deconstruction of the national character was akin to the process of negation through which many Japanese people believed they could discard the "sins of the past" and move smoothly forward into the new postwar world order. It is in this context that Tanabe Hajime's "philosophy of repentance" (zangedō) is relevant, both as a model and a metaphor for the Japanese attempt to overcome the past. Ultimately, however, Tanabe's road to salvation was not taken by many, partly due to the intellectual difficulty of his message, but also due to the re-emergence of the Emperor whose reconstruction as a symbol of new life circumscribed the public debates over war responsibility and the deconstruction of the national character, leaving unresolved fundamental questions concerning the Japanese peoples' relationship with their own past.

Drawing on a broad variety of primary sources, this study explores these debates and the Emperor's resurrection in a brief but intense four-year period after Japan's defeat. Any appreciation of later postwar history must begin from this era. Through the experiences and memories of the "generation of the scorched earth" (yakeato jidai) we can gain new insights into Japan's re-emergence as an economic power, the preoccupation with "new," and the enduring sense of particularism that predominates in Japan today.
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Introduction: Self and Society in the Turning Point

A Statement on History and the Past

Some years ago in an introductory anthropology course, a few months before my first Japanese adventure, the instructor offered a working definition of culture as "the arbitrary imposition of symbols upon a natural environment."¹ This became the touchstone for our subsequent explorations into the world of cultural anthropology. For many years this lesson remained dormant in my memory, locked away in that dark place reserved for forgotten experiences. It was only when I began a more intensive study of history that the dark place was illuminated and the memory revived. Since then, and despite a certain uneasiness about the degree to which symbolic construction is arbitrary,² I have grown to appreciate this definition of culture because it is central to an

¹This definition came from the introductory lecture given by Bruce Smith, a sessional instructor in Anthropology 100 at the University of Victoria in January 1985.

²The term arbitrary refers to the fact that the use and manipulation of symbols is a human act in that we actively participate in the production of symbolic meaning rather than, as Socrates would argue, have symbolic meaning emerge naturally from the inherent properties of the things themselves. For Socrates' discussion on the origins of language, see the "Cratylus," in Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (eds), The Collected Dialogues of Plato, Princeton University Press, 1963, pp. 421-74.
appreciation of historical interpretation as a culturally-mediated project, and one
that addresses two fundamental issues of human existence: the creation of
meaning and the definition of self.

The imposition of symbols, be they oral, visual, or material, represents the
process by which humans make sense of the world around them.\(^3\) It is the way
we "know" the world. But constructing knowledge of and giving meaning to the
world is not objective in any absolute sense because the performer of the action
cannot separate him or herself from the performance. To know the world is to
possess it but it is also to be possessed by it.\(^4\) When we impose meaning on the
world through the utilization of symbols we create a structure into which we,
ourselves, are incorporated. This is true whether we speak of historians

\(^3\)Oral symbols are utterances while visual symbols are textualizations of those utterances
(words on a page) as well as any two-dimensional rendering such as a photograph or an image
projected on a television screen. Physical symbols are similar to their visual counterparts with the
difference being that the former are three-dimensional. A reproduction of a work of art in a book is
a visual symbol whereas the actual piece of art as well as the book itself are physical symbols.

dissertation about a particular moment of Japan's past by selecting and combining various symbolic
forms - documents and my own written words - I take possession of it in the sense that I choose the
symbols and the manner in which they are organized. I possess it because I am the one who made it.
At the same time, I am possessed by it because the choices I make and the product I create also
define me. If accepted by my committee, this dissertation will define me as a professional historian
whose speciality is Japan. More fundamentally, however, in the process of constructing this work I
have created an identity by locating myself not only in the world of professional historians but in
the larger world of which my history of Japan is a part. I impose order on the world with symbolic
forms which in turn defines my relationship with, and position in, that larger world.
interpreting the past or historical subjects acting in the past. Self-identity is therefore inexorably tied to the symbols we use, just as historical writing is inseparably linked to identifying and interpreting the myriad symbolic forms employed by people in the past.

In the discipline of history we find that creating and ordering the past through the use of symbols and defining one’s relationship to that constructed past are both the cause and effect of historical inquiry. Given the “insurmountable gulf between the actual past [the past as it was for those who lived it] and any account of that past [the past as constructed through historical writing],” the degree to which we can “know” the past depends on the efficacy of the symbols with which we construct it. Put more bluntly, we can only know the past by creatively selecting and combining certain symbols in textual form - a history book, novel, or film for example - and then offering them as a representation of the past. The engagement between past and present, however, is a mediated one. On the one hand, the symbols with which we construct the past are all grounded in the present, as is the historian who performs the action. In this sense history is as

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much a product of the present as it is of those who actually lived it. On the other hand, the constructed past is actually imposed on the present in the form of the text so that the engagement between the past and present plays itself out in dialectic fashion with the constructed text mediating between the actual past and our understanding of it. Rather than simply claim that the past continually weighs on the present, it is more accurate, and more to the point, to say that the past is both the cause and effect of the present insofar as the interpretations that we construct define our location in the present as well as delimit the relational space between past and present themselves.

There are basically three symbolic forms historians use to construct interpretations of the past: memory - oral recollections of the past; history - written words and two-dimensional images about and from the past; and relics - three-dimensional objects or "material residues" constructed in the past and

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6 This is a paraphrase of Ibn Khaldun's famous statement that men are more a product of their times than they are of their fathers.

7 After writing this I came across a similar statement by Henri Bergson who said that "the present contains nothing more than the past, and what is found in the effect was already in the cause." Henri Bergson, Creative Evolution (L'Evolution Créatrice), 1907.
handed down to the present. Since we cannot know the past in a direct experiential sense, we are forced to rely on memory, artifacts and, above all, written documents from which we fashion our understanding of what has preceded us. It is in this sense that historical writing is metaphorical insofar as all interpretations of the past utilize symbols to describe, analyze, or bring to life a world that is beyond our ability to know directly. In addition to the comprehensive use of primary sources and convincing logical construction, the persuasive power of historical writing therefore depends on the selection of evocative metaphors, grounded in the present and imposed on the past. History is a dynamic project, one that is constantly being reformed as the past and the present relentlessly pursue the future.

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8 Lowenthal, pp. 185-259. Hybridized material symbols should also be included in the third category (relics) because over time the distinction between the original structure and any subsequent additions or restorations becomes blurred to the degree that the hybrid structure itself takes on an authoritative unity. Louisbourg and Port Royal in Canada and Osaka Castle in Japan are but three examples of such hybridized symbols. Osaka Castle, for example, includes structures that did not exist in the original plans but have been incorporated into the “history” of the castle as if they had always been there. A slightly different example from the “relic” of Port Royal will further illustrate my point. We can travel to this reconstruction in Nova Scotia’s Annapolis Valley for a glimpse of how the early French explorers lived in those first difficult years after arriving in the new world. However, a glance at the door frames and especially the beds will reveal that these men were extremely short by today’s standards, yet the actors who recreate their roles for summer tourists are of average height. This does not necessarily make a “lie” of Port Royal as a historical relic, but it does demonstrate the degree to which the present impinges on the past through historical representation.
Identity, History, and Early Postwar Japan

In this dissertation I explore the relationship between defeat and the reconstruction of Japanese identity by focusing on the language the Japanese used to comprehend what had happened to them. I begin from the premise that identity formation can be understood as a historical process and that it can be analyzed by examining both the continuities and changes in the language and other symbolic forms used to describe the world and one’s location in it. Ever since the foreigner’s reappearance in Japanese waters in the late eighteenth century, successive generations of Japanese have struggled to define themselves in relation to a rapidly changing world. The Meiji Restoration further complicated these efforts as people gradually, and at times reluctantly, sought to locate themselves in relation to the larger world and also to their newly-emerging nation-state. As the nation grew so too did the plurality of voices, all laying claim to a special understanding of the relationship between the subjects (shimin) and the state that claimed to represent them. This gave rise to a series of crises over the definition of self and society and of individual and nation. The political upheavals of the Bakumatsu/Meiji era, the social debates over the

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9 For an excellent discussion of the diversity of ideological production in the Meiji era, see Carol Gluck, Japan’s Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period, Princeton University Press, 1985.
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individual and the state in the Meiji/Taishō transition, and the “denaturing of politics”¹⁰ and public debate with the rise of Shōwa militarism are all examples of an emerging crisis consciousness in which questions about what it meant to be Japanese took central stage.

In each case, discussions of Japanese selfhood were undertaken with reference to an external “other,” either in the form of the state itself from which all individual identity was to be derived, or a foreign nation to which Japanese selfhood was counterpoised - and frequently found wanting. The increasing recognition of and engagement with the external world is itself evidence that the debates over Japanese identity represented a distinctly modern project. Sociologist Anthony Giddens has argued that one of the principal features of modernity is reflexivity: “the susceptibility of most aspects of social activity, and material relations with nature, to chronic revision in the light of new information or knowledge.”¹¹ Giddens was speaking principally about North American society in the late twentieth century, but his comments are equally applicable to Japan at any point in its modern era. The Japanese have always been

¹⁰The phrase is Gluck’s. Ibid., pp. 49-60.

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a reflexive people in the sense that religious and spiritual matters have been
infused with the language of rebirth (saisei), reconstruction (saiken), and
restoration (saikō). Accompanying this language was the belief that renovation
or new life could be achieved through the process of negation. One of the earliest
modern examples of the power of negation, both for the individual and for the
nation, was Japanese Christian leader and founder of the “non-church”
(mukyōkai) Uchimura Kanzō who stated in 1897 that negation through
repentance was the “humble acknowledgement of the supremacy of the Eternal
Law of Justice, from which no man or nation - not even Japan - can be
exempt...”12 Nearly one hundred years later Ienaga Saburō echoed this sentiment
from a secular perspective, arguing that “historical progress that follows the
universal principle of mankind becomes possible only through actual practice
grounded in an infinite repetition of self-negation.”13 Whether understood as a
path to spiritual enlightenment or a law of historical change, negation has

12Uchimura Kanzō Chosakushû (The Collected Works of Uchimura Kanzō), vol. 3,
Iwanami Shoten, 1954, cited in Ienaga Saburō, “The Historical Significance of the Tokyo Trial,” in
Hosoya Chiharu et. al., The Tokyo War Crimes Trials: An International Symposium, Kodansha,

13Ibid., p. 165. Another example of negation as a catalyst for change is filmmaker and
critic Oshima Nagisa who in 1961 stated that “...the law of self-negating movement is not merely
a law of production or of the filmmaker, but a law of human growth and of the development of the
Cinema Biweekly, April 1961, reprinted in Cinema, Censorship, and the State: The Writings of
Nagisa Oshima, 1956-1978, translated by Dawn Larson and edited by Annette Michleson, MIT
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figured prominently throughout Japanese history as the means by which new life could be created. The most profound expression of this idea, however, emerged from the ruins of the yake ato jidai, the era of scorched earth.

The early postwar years were an intensely reflexive period when defeat compelled the Japanese to engage their past as an "other" and then negate it as a means of constructing a new sense of self. Defeat initiated a crisis of unprecedented magnitude and created a sense of disruption so acute that many Japanese believed that their world had irrevocably changed. As such, defeat functioned as a discourse in the sense that it became a structure the Japanese people were compelled to act in rather than one they simply acted with. One of the clearest articulations of the discourse of defeat was the "turning point" (tenkanki), a phrase that reverberated throughout Japan in the early postwar years. For some the turning point was marked by the Emperor's "end of war" speech on August 15, 1945; others linked it with his "Declaration of Humanity" on January 1, 1946; still others identified it in the executions of Tōjō Hideki and the other six Class "A" war criminals on December 23, 1948. Regardless of the moment at which it was invoked, however, the central question in each instance

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14I have taken this definition from Said whose own understanding of discourse came from Michel Foucault. Orientalism, pp. 3, 14, 94.
became, in the words of Hanada Kiyoteru, "How do we live in the turning point?" (Fukkeiki ni ika ni ikiru ka).¹⁵

The responses to this question were varied. Some people were plunged into the abyss of despair (kyodatsu), while others revelled in a sense of liberation and new life (shinsei). These two extremes formed the basic structure of the discourse of defeat; within them were contained all possible responses available in early postwar Japan. The polar extremes of kyodatsu and shinsei were not mere binary opposites where the appearance of one precluded the existence of the other. Nor were they causally linked in a temporal sense with one necessarily giving way to the other. They were in fact a coexistential pair whereby the presence of one necessitated the appearance of the other. The interplay of kyodatsu and shinsei functioned as a dialectic process whereby one element (kyodatsu/thesis) called into existence its other (shinsei/antithesis). Shinsei also functioned as the negation of kyodatsu, as manifested in the numerous attempts to eradicate all vestiges of the dark valley (kurai taniwa). With these two extremes as its defining structures, defeat became both the ground from which new life sprang.

and a narrative structure in which the Japanese people attempted to reinvent themselves as peace-loving and democratic by shedding their "irrational" past and adopting the language of rationality and science borrowed from their former enemy "other." To paraphrase Racine, the Japanese peoples' only hope lay in their despair. Defeat may have been imposed on the Japanese people but, in its wake, they incorporated it into their own narrative as a symbol of postwar identity.

The immediate physical manifestation of *kyodatsu* was the charred rubble of Japan's cities. Amid these urban wastelands were the ubiquitous black markets (*yami ichi*) which dotted the countryside like a social disease. Given the paucity of statistics about Japan's economy in the early years following defeat, it is difficult to gauge accurately the extent of the black market or assess in any quantitative manner its impact on the Japanese people. However, I have used newspaper accounts and personal recollections to illustrate the importance of the black markets to the daily life of the Japanese people and the extent to which these memories have remained part of the identity of the *yake ato sedai* (the generation of the scorched earth). While the black market became the ultimate symbol of moral decay for most, it was also the site of new life for some, one of the few outlets of entrepreneurial creativity in a world of economic stagnation.
and hardship. Together, the black market and the destruction of Japan's cities defined the landscape of early postwar Japan and became enshrined in historical memory long after the material residue of defeat had vanished.

As daily life was played out in the litter of Japan's urban spaces, the discourse of defeat initiated an intense debate over who was responsible for this tragedy. Originally articulated as a debate over war responsibility (sensô sekininron), it quickly devolved into a discussion about who was responsible for Japan's defeat (haisen sekininron). I explore the evolution of this debate, from the government's initial calls for collective repentance in the name of the Emperor and the media's angry response, through its transformation from responsibility for war to defeat, to finally absolution of Hirohito and the executions of Japan's war criminals - an event that for some marked the complete negation of Japanese militarism. In the course of this debate the Japanese people were inescapably drawn into a prolonged re-examination of their own identity which turned the debate inward, away from questions about the war's origins and its prosecution. As a product of the discourse of defeat, this preoccupation with self created a closed system from which escape was virtually impossible. Ultimately, the Japanese people were trapped by the logic of their own self-reflection and remorse so that they became both the subject of the debate as well as the object of
its resolution. This became the starting point for a new construction of Japanese particularism which coexisted paradoxically with the widespread calls for universality in the form of democracy and science.

The internalization of the debates surrounding the reconstruction of self and the evolution of a new postwar Japanese particularism began with the issue of war responsibility, but then fed into a prolonged discussion of the Japanese national character. Two positions emerged from the former: one arguing that the Japanese people had been deceived by their leaders, and the other maintaining that the people had in fact supported them, at least passively. Regardless of where one stood on this issue, all participants agreed that the irrationality of the Japanese character lay at the root of the problem. Defeat was thus understood as a product of Japanese servility, imitativeness, and blind obedience - all wrapped in the cloying mantle of feudalistic familialism. Japan’s past became an “other,” to be discarded, overcome, or negated with the tools of rationality and science which were themselves viewed as universal and absolute. In the end, however, the Japanese people simply exchanged one particularism for another; the degree to which universalism was advocated in the early postwar years was matched only by the extent to which the Japanese people understood the “sins of the past” (kako no zaiaku) to be unique to themselves. Here I concur with anthropologist
Aoki Tamotsu who described the early postwar years as the era of "recognizing negative distinctiveness (hiteiteki tokushu no ninshiki)."\(^{16}\)

For many Japanese, the journey from despair to new life demanded reflection (hansei), repentance (zange), and atonement (tsugunau) for the sins of the past. One individual who exemplified this process was Kyoto University philosopher Tanabe Hajime whose own spiritual rebirth in the fires of defeat became the starting point for the construction of a new religious philosophy that would overcome reason and allow individuals to live in social solidarity with each other. He called it "The Way of Repentance as Philosophy" (Zangedō toshite no tetsugaku).\(^{17}\) Zangedō represented an ideal type of salvation, and one that was ultimately not chosen. At the same time that Tanabe was advocating the negation of the reason-based self, most other Japanese were embracing reason as the only alternative to prewar irrational particularism.

Despite Zangedō's failure to attract many adherents, it does stand as a metaphor


\(^{17}\)Zangedō can be translated as "the way of repentance" and as "metanoetics" meaning beyond cognition. For a more detailed discussion of the significance of these two meanings see Chapter Three.
for Japan's engagement with modernity itself. With its language of crisis, despair, and rebirth, Zangedô represents one man's answer to Japan's ongoing struggle to define and redefine itself within the rapidly changing world of the twentieth century. The Japanese did indeed try to reinvent themselves in the early postwar years, as have many others throughout the modern world in times of crisis, and they clearly did so, in John Dower's phrase, "with the materials at hand." They simply did not do it in the way that Tanabe had hoped. Rather than using the spiritual means of faith (shin) and witness (shô) that drove the self's negation and subsequent rebirth in Tanabe's religious philosophy, most Japanese people employed the language of rationality (gorisei) and science (kagaku) which they believed would purge the irrational from the Japanese character and permit the resurrection of a truly peace-loving, democratic nation. However, both efforts were predicated on the belief that redefinition or reinvention was possible and indeed necessary if Japan was to again take its place in the new postwar world. In this context, we should see Tanabe himself as a synecdoche for the Japanese people's engagement with the modern world. His lifelong attempt to synthesize various elements of classical and European philosophy with traditional modes of Japanese thought highlights one of the defining problems of modern Japan since

the days of bunmei kaika (civilization and enlightenment) and wakon/yōsai (Japanese Spirit/Western Learning).

Tanabe’s path to personal salvation was clearly a road not taken by many in the early postwar years, but there was another, more potent example of resurrection for the Japanese people. This was of course the Emperor himself whose own phoenix-like emergence from ashes of defeat was unquestionably a case of a constructed symbol being imposed on a natural environment. To illustrate the transformative power of rationality and science in the early postwar years I examine in the last chapter the manner in which the Emperor himself was resurrected as the quintessential “postwar new man” (sengo shinjin): tracing his reincarnation from his end of war message and his “Declaration of Humanity” speech, to his absolution from war responsibility and war crimes, and his enshrinement in the new constitution as the “symbol of the State and of the unity of the people.”¹⁹

Although defeat symbolized an absolute disruption between past and present for

¹⁹The new postwar constitution was promulgated on November 3, 1946 and went into effect on May 3rd the following year. Article One specifically concerned the Emperor and reads in full: “The Emperor shall be the symbol of the State and of the unity of the people, deriving his power from the will of the people, in whom resides sovereign power.” For a full English reprint of the constitution, see David John Lu, Sources of Japanese History: Volume Two, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1974, p. 193-97.
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many Japanese, the perdurance of the imperial institution became a medium of temporal and spacial continuity linking past and present and uniting all Japanese in their drive to reconstruct a brighter future. That the Emperor endured despite the destruction of his empire also helped to reinforce a renewed sense of Japanese particularism. He became, in effect, virtually the only remnant of *wakon* that remained standing in the early postwar years, to which the *yōsai* of rationality and science could be conjoined to create new life.

Throughout this process the very visible hand of the occupation was operative, beginning with the American government’s decision not to prosecute Hirohito as a war criminal, since, in Joseph Keenan’s words, he “had been in the power of ‘gangsters’.”\(^\text{20}\) This decision not only absolved the Emperor of any responsibility for war or defeat, but it also helped to unite him and the Japanese people as victims by perpetuating the fiction that both had been “deceived and misled... into embarking on world conquest.”\(^\text{21}\) The wartime attempts of Japanese political

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\(^{20}\)This phrase is attributed to Chief Prosecutor George Keenan in reply to a question by tribunal President Sir William Webb. The source is a *New York Times* article of January 14, 1949, although Richard Minear states that he was unable to find this conversation in the trial records. Minear, *Victor’s Justice: The Tokyo War Crimes Trial*, Princeton University Press, 1972, p. 117.

\(^{21}\)This phrase comes from Article Six of the Potsdam Declaration, reprinted in Lu, *Sources of Japanese History*, p. 173. While the declaration did not specifically state that the Emperor had been misled, Keenan’s statement, together with other evidence I shall introduce later, clearly suggest that he too was intentionally presented as one of the deceived.
elites to protect the Emperor and preserve the *kokutai* paralleled the efforts of American politicians and planners who sought to use the Emperor as a political tool with which occupation reforms could be enforced peacefully. Even when it seemed to Japanese authorities early in the occupation that the Americans were trying to paint Japan red, both sides were in reality on the same page when it came to the Emperor’s political utility and his future.

A consideration of these parallel processes naturally leads to a discussion of the American occupation itself. In bringing to life a collection of disparate voices which illustrate the concern over Japanese selfhood, I have discussed GHQ only insofar as it is directly relevant to specific issues in my own narrative.\(^2\) The policies enacted by GHQ to demilitarize, democratize, and then to repoliticize Japan under the umbrella of containment have been covered in many studies and there is now large body of literature in Japanese and English relating to this

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\(^2\)Since this dissertation is principally concerned with the Japanese voice in the early postwar years, I have chosen to use GHQ, rather than SCAP, as the designation for the occupation administration because it is the one used overwhelmingly by Japanese writers. John Dower has recently published a new study of this era (*Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, W. W. Norton & Co/The New Press, 1999) which intersects with my own argument in a number of areas, especially in its concerns with the Japanese voice. However, where my argument focuses specifically on the reconstruction of self with reference to two particular public debates - war responsibility and the national character - Dower’s is a sweeping examination of virtually all aspects of early postwar Japanese society.
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subject. It is not my intent to downplay the American impact on the history of early postwar Japan, but I do wish to shift the focus so that the Japanese voice predominates. For my purposes the importance of the American side of postwar Japanese history lies first in American power to define the very contours of defeat through its aerial bombing campaigns during the war. The sheer extent of urban destruction must be appreciated in order to understand the milieu in which the Japanese people discussed their past and their future. Secondly, I am specifically interested in the physical presence of the occupation forces as a stark contrast to the defeated world they created. Healthy, well-dressed and well-fed with a seemingly inexhaustible supply of food, cigarettes and money, American troops were a painful reminder to the Japanese people of just how far the Japanese had fallen. In that same capacity, however, the Americans were also a model to which the Japanese could aspire to create new life. I do not argue that the Japanese people wanted to become like Americans, but American power in victory and presence in occupation validated the universal truth of rationality and science for many Japanese.

Part of my reason for becoming interested in the Japanese peoples' side of the occupation stemmed from the fact that, while the quality and scope of the writings on this topic are quite high, most works tend to focus on the occupation as a political event, highlighting only the words and deeds of Japanese and American elites. I originally conceived this project as an examination of economic reconstruction issues, but as I began my research I discovered that there was much more going on in these years than just discussions of the economy. I am indebted, however, to Dr. Joe Moore of the University of Victoria for making me aware of the dynamism of the early postwar years in the first place.
Finally, GHQ and the American government were instrumental in the
Emperor's absolution from war crimes. In doing so, they permitted the pillar of
prewar Japanese particularism to emerge unscathed while all around him people
"burned with indignation over who was responsible" or engaged in self-loathing
at their own pitifulness. Here, I agree with Herbert Bix that the American
decision to absolve the Emperor was the most important and lasting legacy of the
occupation.24

Coverage and Periodization

Recent years have witnessed the appearance of some excellent scholarship on
postwar intellectual history, in particular on the debates over subjectivity
(shutaiseiron).25 I have drawn on some of this material for my own story, but my
principal intent has been to bring to life the voices of the Japanese people

24See Herbert Bix's excellent essay "Inventing the 'Symbol Monarchy' in Japan, 1945-52,"

25See, for example, J. Victor Koschmann, Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan,
The University of Chicago Press, 1996; "The Debate on Subjectivity in Postwar Japan: Foundations
Barshay, State and Intellectual in Imperial Japan: The Public Man in Crisis, University of
California Press, 1988; and Naoki Sakai, Translation and Subjectivity: On 'Japan' and Cultural
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themselves - the everyman and woman - which have been a neglected aspect of the English-language literature on Japan. In this sense, my work represents an amalgam of intellectual and social history. I have utilized personal interviews, diaries, and retrospective accounts about people’s experiences of Japan’s defeat. However, the single largest primary source for my narrative is Japan’s print media. This of course begs the question of whether media, in any form, can be considered to represent the voice of the people - an important issue but one that I will not address here. Because my dissertation is a study of the language of early postwar Japan, an analysis of this language as a collection of symbols which represented the world of a defeated nation is more germane to my purpose than the motives and intentions underlying the language itself.

Taken as a whole, my sources represent a wide cross-section of the Japanese public in the early postwar years. Newspaper editorials are balanced by letters to the editor and personal interviews. The opinions of Japan’s intellectual and scholarly elite are counterpoised with myriad small publications from youth groups, labour unions, and bereaved family and soldiers associations. Accounts from the mainstream urban print media are augmented with opinions from local publications throughout Japan. While they are by no means exhaustive, my sources do have sufficient breadth and depth to provide an accurate
representation of the language used by the Japanese people to articulate their understanding of the world and to redefine their location in it.\textsuperscript{26}

With the exception of the first chapter which describes the impact of American aerial warfare on the Japanese islands, my story covers the period from Japan’s surrender on August 15, 1945 to the execution of the seven Class “A” war criminals on December 23, 1948. Using Japan’s surrender as a starting point is fairly straightforward, but my choice of ending may be less so. By the time Tōjō and his comrades were put to death, three and a half years had passed and much had changed. Most cities and towns still bore the scars of war and belated reconstruction, and millions still struggled to eke out a living. But there were also unmistakable signs of new life. Food accessibility had improved considerably, with the fears of widespread starvation now only a bad memory. Magazines advertized all manner of consumer products in stark contrast to a few years earlier when penicillin and vitamin supplements were about the only marketable products. Production, too, had improved comparatively, especially

\textsuperscript{26}In gathering these materials, I have benefitted from the work of a number of fine Japanese scholars, especially Yoshimi Yoshiaki, Yoshida Yutaka, and Nakamura Masanori. I am also grateful to Dr. Moore who not only introduced me to the documents of GHQ’s Allied Translator and Interpreter Service (ATIS) but also purchased microfilm copies and deposited them in the Macpherson Library at the University of Victoria. It is somewhat surprising that these documents have been neglected by historians given that they cover both Japan’s mainstream print media as well as local publications from every region in Japan.
once inflation began to subside. All these signs provide evidence that life, while a long way from good, was getting better.

An even more powerful example of change, however, was the language itself. Whereas in the early years the public domain was replete with the language of responsibility, repentance, and remorse, by the late 1940s most discussions centred on economic reconstruction and the peace treaty. The debates over responsibility and the national character did not simply die away; they remained part of the currency of the public domain, although their value diminished considerably. The executions of Japan's war criminals witnessed a brief reflowering of the language of remorse and repentance, as well as a flurry of discussion about the Emperor's own war guilt. By 1949, however, most people's attention, and that of the press, turned toward reconstruction. It is in this sense that I argue that the executions closed the book on one phase of postwar history.

The complete history of the reconstruction of Japanese self and society in the postwar years has yet to be written. Here, I will highlight certain aspects of that history which have not been well covered to date. In doing so, I want to

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27I wrote this before reading Dower's new study which unquestionably comes closest to achieving completeness in terms of Japan's postwar social reconstruction. It is also the best example to date of an occupation-era history written with the Japanese people at the centre.
contribute to the story of modern Japan which places the Japanese people themselves squarely at the centre of their own history. The early postwar years remain unparalleled in intensity and dynamism, yet much of the language used to describe experiences of this time resonates throughout Japan’s entire modern era. Therefore, this era can function as a metaphor for Japan’s one hundred and fifty-year engagement with modernity. Despite the disruption of defeat, the early postwar years remain continuous with the past and the future as discussions of Japanese identity still flow into and out of the era of scorched earth.
The Reconstruction of Self and Society in Postwar Japan, 1945-1949

PART ONE:

*KYODATSU AND SHINSEI*
Chapter One: The Yakeato Jidai

On September 12, 1945, ten days after Japan’s official surrender aboard the USS Missouri, Japan’s major dailies carried the story of Tōjō Hideki’s attempted suicide at his home in the Setagaya ward Tokyo.¹ Accompanying the story was a grainy photograph of a blood-stained Tōjō recovering from his ill-fated attempt to shoot himself in the heart. Looking weak and helpless, he hardly resembled the allegedly evil mastermind of Japan’s Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. He had instead become an unwitting symbol of post-surrender Japan: exhausted, disillusioned and, most of all, defeated.

On the same day, printed directly below Tōjō’s photograph in the Asahi newspaper was a small advertisement announcing the upcoming publication of Japan’s first postwar magazine called Shinsei (New Life). The creation of publisher Aoyama Konosuke and editor Murofuchi Takenobu, Shinsei was founded to publish the work of such writers as Nagai Kafū, Miki Kiyoshi, and Masamune Shiratori whose work had been banned by the government during

¹Tōjō’s suicide attempt on September 11th followed directly on the heels of SCAP’s announcement that he would be tried as a Class “A” war criminal. See Asahi Shimbun, September 9, 1945 for the story and photograph.
the war. Murofuchi also wanted to use the magazine as a forum for discussing and advancing democratic ideals which he fervently hoped would become the foundation of a new postwar society. Shinsei came to life using paper from the Kaizô publishing house and the high-speed presses of the Nikkei newspaper company. The inaugural issue hit the streets on November 1, 1945 under the dual title of *Vita Nova* and *Shinsei*, the former name apparently taken from Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. It sold out in one day at the per copy price of one yen and twenty sen, about the cost of three sweet potatoes or two cups of milk.

The juxtaposition of these two images on the front page of the *Asahi* newspaper - the near-death Tôjô and the new life magazine - symbolized the very essence of early postwar Japan. While Tôjô represented a past that most Japanese wanted to

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2 Kimoto Itaru, *Zasshi de yomu sengoshi* (Postwar History Through Magazines), Shinchô Sensho, 1985, p. 12. Murofuchi had previously been the editor of *Kaizô* and *Nihon Hyöron*. According to the recollections of writer Nagao Kazuo, Murofuchi and economic analyst Miyake Seiki planned the publication of *Shinsei* at Murofuchi’s home only a week before, with Miyake taking an advisory role. Ibid, p. 13.

3 Although Kimoto says the magazine’s title came from the *Divine Comedy*, it is more likely that Murofuchi borrowed the name from Dante’s 1292 vernacular work, *La Vita Nuova*, which he wrote to celebrate his love for Beatrice Portinari.

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forget in a present that was painfully inescapable, Murofuchi’s magazine offered the promise, however small, of a better, brighter future. War, defeat, and occupation had brought unprecedented misery, humiliation, and despair (kyodatsu) to the Japanese people, many of whom feared that their nation would never again rise beyond the ranks of a third- or fourth-rate power. At the same time, these same epoch-making events became the catalysts for Japan’s phoenix-like rebirth and, therefore, of new life (shinsei) itself.

Even as Japan emerged from the early postwar years, the shared memory of both despair and liberation continued to temper and shape Japanese attitudes about the past, present, and future. To use philosopher Tanabe Hajime’s description of repentance (zange) as a metaphor, kyodatsu and shinsei became “the site of an absolute light source that shone without extinguishing the darkness.”\(^5\) The sense of new life emerged directly out of the very site of despair, without ever eradicating the traces of its origins. Perhaps for this reason the early postwar years are called the yake ato jidai (the era of scorched earth), refering both to the generation which came of age during that time and to the era itself.\(^6\) The shared

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\(^6\)The yake ato jidai is also called the yake ato sedai when referring to the generation which came of age in the early postwar years.
experience of the *yake ato jidai* defined the very nature of early postwar Japan and created the physical and psychological context in which the debates over the reconstruction of self and society occurred. This experience also evolved into a collective memory which continued to inform future action long after the physical remnants and conditions of defeated Japan had disappeared.

This story begins with an account of Japan in the dark valley. In order to understand how the debates about self and society emerged and progressed throughout the early postwar years and how they affected later developments in postwar Japanese society, it is necessary to fully grasp the situation in which the Japanese people found themselves at the end of the war. This chapter will discuss the extreme manifestations of *kyodatsu* and *shinsei* by examining the physical and psychological impact of two particular “events”: the American aerial warfare campaign and the Emperor’s “end of war” announcement. Chapter two will then examine the ubiquitous presence of the black market (*yami ichi*) as a defining structure of Japan’s degraded status.
Descent into Hell: July 1944 - December 1945

In August 1945 Japan’s major urban centres were wastelands of rubble. For more than a year they had borne the brunt of the American civilian bombing campaign, first by conventional high explosives, then by incendiary firebombing, and, finally, by the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Civilian bombing strategies had of course been employed by both Japan and Germany in the 1930’s, a practice which had initially shocked the moral sensibilities of the peacetime American public and had resulted in a series of presidential condemnations, including the following 1939 speech by Franklin Roosevelt:

The ruthless bombing from the air of civilians in unfortified centers of population during the course of the hostilities that have raged in various quarters of the earth during the past few years, which has resulted in the maiming and in the death of thousands of defenceless men, women, and children... has sickened the hearts of every civilized man and woman, and has profoundly shocked the conscience of humanity.

With astonishing speed, however, Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbour on December

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7 According to the United Stated Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS), from the fall of the Marianas in July 1944 until February 1945 American bombing strategy focussed on daylight bombing from high altitude (30,000 feet), using high explosives and targeting mainly aircraft production facilities. Opposition was heavy, losses ran about 3.6%, and target accuracy was only 10%. From March to August 1945, the Americans shifted to nighttime bombing at low attitude (7,000 feet), targeting urban areas with incendiary bombs. This information comes from http://www.anesi.com/ussbs01.htm, pp. 16-17.

7/8, 1941 transformed civilian bombing from an object of horror and loathing into a lethal weapon in the American government's wartime policy of unconditional surrender. In retrospect, it appears that the American leaders took Joseph Grew’s 1942 pronouncement literally when he stated that “only by utter physical destruction or utter exhaustion can [Japan] be defeated.”

Grew had been the American ambassador to Japan for ten years and was probably the United States’ most respected expert on that country. In his first six months back home, he hammered away in fire and brimstone fashion at the dangers of taking the “utterly ruthless foe” too lightly, once going so far as to state that Japan eventually intended to “bivouac on the White House lawn.”

Grew began to modify his yellow peril rhetoric by the summer of 1943, arguing that there were reasonable men among the Japanese, the so-called “liberal elements” with whom the American government might be able to negotiate a peace.

By this time, however, the American public had been gripped by a visceral hatred of the Japanese: partly a legacy of decades of anti-Oriental sentiment, but more

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immediately of the dastardly attack on Pearl Harbor and the years of brutal jungle warfare that followed. Slogans like “Remember Pearl Harbor - keep ‘em dying” and “Kill Japs, kill Japs, kill more Japs” fueled the flames of racial hatred and, after the fall of Saipan in July 1944, the American air force was finally able to act on Grew’s 1942 statement with a vengeance.\(^{12}\) About the same time that the civilian bombing campaigns began, the US Marine magazine \textit{Leatherneck} captured perfectly the American wartime mood. Under a cartoon of a buck-toothed, slant-eyed insect with the title of “Louseous Japanicas,” the caption carried the following message:

\begin{quote}
The first serious outbreak of this lice epidemic was officially noted on December 7, 1941... To the Marine Corps... was assigned the gigantic task of extermination... But before a complete cure may be effected the origin of the plague, the breeding grounds around the Tokyo area, must be completely annihilated.\(^{13}\)
\end{quote}

It very nearly happened. In the last twelve months of the war, the Americans dropped 160,800 tons of bombs on Japan’s four main islands. This was a tiny fraction of the bombing that Germany had sustained but, given the prevalence and density of wooden buildings in Japan, the results were similarly

\(^{12}\)Quoted in Dower, \textit{War Without Mercy}, p. 36. The latter phrase is attributed to Admiral William Halsey, commander of the South Pacific Force, and the former is a US Marine motto from 1942.

\(^{13}\)Ibid, p. 185. See also Gar Alperovitz, \textit{The Decision to Use the Bomb}, Vintage Books, 1995, p. 428.
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destructive. In the last six months of the war the Americans dropped 104,000 tons of bombs on Japan’s cities, destroying almost half of the total urban areas targeted and thirty to forty percent of all private homes. On the night of March 10th alone, 250 B-29s obliterated fifteen square miles of Tokyo, destroyed one million buildings, and killed or wounded 185,000 people, all in two and half hours. In the final two acts of what Dwight MacDonald called “Gotterdammerung without the gods,” the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki destroyed both cities and killed or wounded over 200,000 people, including Korean labourers and American prisoners of war. The prophecy of

14The total bomb tonnage dropped on Germany was 1,360,000, more than eight times the amount dropped on Japan. Figures are taken from http://www.anesi.com/ussbs01.htm, p. 16.

15Ibid. About fifty-five percent, or 100,000, were deaths. See Hara Akira, “Kūshū to kokumin seisakus,” in Arisawa Hiromi (ed), Shōwa keizaishi (Shōwa Economic History), Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha, 1976, p. 237.

16Dwight MacDonald, “The Decline to Barbarism,” Politics II (August-September 1945), reprinted in Paul R. Baker (ed), The Atomic Bomb: The Great Decision, The Dryden Press, 1976, p. 142. MacDonald, a radical intellectual and the founder of Politics, was one of the first and most vociferous critics of America’s deployment of the atomic bombs. He believed that their use demonstrated the complete lack of humanity in American society. Unfortunately, given MacDonald’s marginal status in that society, his writings reached only a small number of people, mostly other like-minded individuals. For a brief discussion of his role in the American intellectual community and his vehement anti-war stance see William L. O’Neill, A Better World - The Great Schism: Stalinism and the American Intellectuals, Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1982, pp. 76-81.

17http://www.anesi.com/ussbs01.htm, p. 23-24. Calculating the number of deaths from the two bombs is problematic due the lack of accurate statistics from this time and also due to the insidious, creeping effects of radiation poisoning. For example, between September 1956 and August 1965 the Hiroshima A-Bomb Hospital alone recorded 210,954 outpatient visits. The Committee for
aerial warfare proponent, Giulo Douhet, some twenty years earlier that "[t]here will be no distinction any longer between soldiers and civilians" had become horrific reality for the hundreds of thousands of Japanese people who were killed or injured in the bombings.\textsuperscript{18} This systematic destruction of Japan's sixty-six major urban centres by aerial bombing marked the horrific beginnings of the \textit{yake ato jidai}.

In 1949, the Economic Stabilization Board (\textit{Keizai Antei Honbu}) reported that approximately one quarter of Japan's national wealth (¥64.3 billion) had been

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\textsuperscript{18}Quoted in Sherry, \textit{The Rise of American Air Power}, p. 9. Estimates of civilian casualties range from 690,000 to 806,000. The former figure is from the USSBS and the latter comes from a 1949 Keizai Antei Honbu (Economic Stabilization Board, ESB), quoted in Andō Yoshitake, \textit{Jūgonen sensō no isan} (The Legacy of the Fifteen-Year War), in Arisawa (ed), \textit{Shōwa keizaishi}, p. 241. The USSBS placed the number of Japanese combat casualties at 780,000 but this figure seems much too low. The ESB calculated the total Japanese military deaths since 1937 as 1,740,955, quoted in Dower, \textit{War Without Mercy}, p. 298.
destroyed during the war, most of which was due to the bombing campaigns.\textsuperscript{19} Effectively, this meant that Japan’s national wealth in 1945 was the same that it had been in 1935, leading economist Nakamura Takafusa to conclude some years later that “the accumulation of... ten years was wiped out in one stroke.”\textsuperscript{20} It is hard to appreciate exactly what it meant for the Japanese to lose a decade of national wealth; macro-economic statistics of this sort cannot accurately convey the impact that aerial warfare had on the lives of the Japanese people. In its most immediate sense, however, it meant that one in four Japanese families were homeless and roughly the same percentage of small shops or stores destroyed. Moreover, about twenty percent of all consumer goods and personal belongings perished in the bombing raids. It must be stressed here that aerial warfare was primarily an urban tragedy. Of the more than two million buildings damaged or destroyed, over ninety-five percent were in Japan’s sixty-six major urban centres.\textsuperscript{21} Virtually no one in Japan’s cities escaped the ravages of war unscathed.

\textsuperscript{19} Nakamura Takafusa, \textit{Nihon keizai: Sono seichō to kōzō} (The Growth and Development of the Japanese Economy), Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1978, p. 143. Again, readers should be reminded that obtaining accurate statistics for this period is extremely difficult, partly due to the lack of verifiable records and partly due to rampant inflation which skewed the value of the yen. Arisawa Hiromi, using the 1945 yen value, placed the total of Japan’s economic losses at ¥49.3 billion. Arisawa and Inaba Hidezo (eds) \textit{Shiryō: Sengo nijūnenshi} (Documents Relating to Twenty Years of the Postwar Era), vol. 2, Nihon Hyōronsha, 1966, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{20} Nakamura, \textit{Nihon Keizai}, p. 143.

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Even those who fled the cities returned only to find the world they knew reduced to rubble.

The bombings caused an estimated out-migration of between 8.5 and 10 million people from the cities to the countryside, resulting in the massive de-population of Japan’s major urban centres. The government never enacted a forced evacuation plan for adults during the war but it did for children, beginning in June 30, 1944 when the cabinet announced its “Outline Encouraging the Evacuation of Schoolchildren” program. During the next twelve months, nearly half a million school children from grades one to six were evacuated from a dozen different cities according to school group.\(^{22}\) Once the bombings began in earnest, however, adults fled the cities like blood pouring from a dying soldier. By the summer of 1945, the population of Japan’s six major cities was less than half of what it had been in 1940.\(^{23}\) With the war’s end, this trend then reversed itself as many returned to the cities in search of their homes and their loved ones. Shanty towns and make-shift shelters of every description sprang up among the rubble of Japan’s cities but chronic food shortages resulted in daily


\(^{23}\)United States Strategic Bombing Survey used the figure of 8.5 million, but Thomas Havens claims that it was closer to 10 million, although he did not provide a source. *Valley of Darkness*, p. 167.
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pilgrimages to the country to beg, barter, and sometimes steal, food from the local farmers. One of the more common sights in those days were trains - those that still ran - leaving the cities, jammed with people clinging to the sides, balancing on the roofs, and hanging out the windows.\textsuperscript{24} One report estimated that as many as 900,000 people made the trek from Tokyo to the countryside in search of food.\textsuperscript{25} Along the tracks children scoured the area for discarded bits of coal and anything else that would burn. The rural areas had escaped the bombings for the most part but were now hardpressed to support the masses of people fleeing daily from the cities. In the two years following surrender, rural Japan would have to find food, shelter, and employment for over six million repatriated soldiers and civilians returning from abroad under the orders of the Allied Occupation.\textsuperscript{26}

In its comparison of the effects of civilian bombing on German and Japanese cities during the war, the US Strategic Bombing Survey concluded that the

\textsuperscript{24} According to the ESB report, approximately thirty percent of Japan's transportation infrastructure was destroyed during the last year of the war. Uchino, \textit{Sengo nihon keizaishi}, p. 25.


\textsuperscript{26} Yoshimi Yoshiaki says that 3.51 million soldiers and 3.55 million civilians were repatriated after the war. \textit{Kusa no ne no fashizumu: Nihon minshū no sensō taiken} (The Roots of Fascism: The War Experiences of the Japanese People), Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 5th edition, 1988, p. 267. Havens uses similar figures in \textit{Valley of Darkness}, p. 172. See also Uchino, \textit{Sengo nihon keizaishi}, p. 27.
firebombings in Japan had unintendedly wiped out rats and vermin and purified drinking water more effectively than they had done in Germany: incendiaries as wrathful, divine cleansing agents. These claims notwithstanding, death from disease exacted a heavy toll. The continual movement of people, resulting in a massive transient population, unwashed and underfed, created a fertile environment for the spread of disease. In the first eighteen months following Japan’s surrender the Japanese people were wracked by a series of epidemics. In March 1946 alone smallpox and eruptive typhus epidemics raged throughout Japan with over 62,000 reported cases. Altogether, between August 1945 and December 1946 there were 239,872 cases of dysentery reported with 44,714 deaths. Diphtheria accounted for 229,971 cases and 12,870 deaths, while typhus and paratyphoid fever claimed 193,559 victims and 25,106 lives.\textsuperscript{27} Tuberculosis was also a serious problem, especially among those who worked in munitions factories and coal mines, many of whom were Korean and Chinese labourers.\textsuperscript{28} Severe shortages of medicine, equipment, trained staff, and facilities hindered

\textsuperscript{27}Kawaide Shobō Shinshahen (eds), \textit{Shōwa yon’nen umare}, cited in \textit{Shōwa kazokushi nenpyō}, p. 167.

\textsuperscript{28}In my neighbourhood of Ichikawa called Kōnodai, there is a Korean community whose presence dates back to late 1945. Kōnodai was originally an army training ground but after the war the government established a tuberculosis sanatorium for the Koreans who had worked the coal mines. Those who survived were permitted to stay in the area and eventually received title to small plots of land near the site of the old sanatorium. This information comes from an interview with Suzuki Hideo, December 14, 1995.
the war on disease but it was again lack of food that loomed as early postwar Japan’s most pressing problem.

The food problem, or shokuryō mondai as it was called, was actually a legacy of Japan’s war with China. Well before Pearl Harbor, government rationing of scarce resources, including food, and official price controls became commonplace. In three short years, from the outbreak of the war with China in 1937 until 1940, Japan’s rice situation deteriorated from surplus to shortage, largely due to the dramatic reduction in imported rice from Korea and Taiwan.29 The government responded by initiating a program of rice rationing in 1940 which was so unpopular that the short-lived government of Admiral Yonai Mitsumasa (January-July 1940) was sarcastically dubbed the “no-rice cabinet.” The “no-rice” label was a pun on the prime minister’s name, but the origins of the joke demonstrate that food shortages were a pressing concern long before Japan’s

29In 1938 Japan imported about 15 million koku of rice. This figure dropped to about 10 million in 1939 and then plummeted to 3 million in 1940. One koku of rice was generally considered to be sufficient to feed one adult for one year which meant that the number of Japanese who could be fed by imported rice fell from 15 million people (about 20% of the population) to only 3 million (4%) in the space of just three years. Arisawa argued that severe drought in Korea, rising colonial administrative costs, and the reluctance of colonial farmers to sell their rice in Japan were the main reasons for such a precipitous decline. See Arisawa (ed), Shōwa keizaishi, pp. 228-29. Of course, once the Americans went on the offensive in the war, food importation was further hampered by massive shipping losses.
When rice rationing began in 1940, each person was permitted only 330 grams of rice per day, but wheat and potatoes were still freely available. Under the 1940 Food Administration Law (Shokuryō Kanrihō), however, potatoes and all grains were also rationed and were often used as substitutes, along with beans, to fill the per diem rice ration. At the time of the Pearl Harbor attack in December 1941 daily caloric intakes for Japanese adults stood at 2105 calories, most of which came from official rations. This declined slightly to 1927 calories in 1944, but only 1405 calories came from official rations. By the end of the war, urban Japanese were averaging somewhere between 1300 and 1750 calories per day, a good portion of which had to obtained on the black market.\footnote{Ouchi Tsutomu, “Shokuryō sōsan’ (Increasing Food Production) in Arisawa (ed), Shōwa keizaishi, pp. 229-30 and Havens, pp. 129-32.}

The tragic irony for the Japanese people was that their physical ability to perform ever greater feats of sacrifice for the sake of the nation, as the government was consistently urging them to do, was inversely proportional to the steady decline in the availability and quality of food. Shortages became even more acute once

\footnote{Admiral Yonai’s name was made up of two characters: “yo” meaning rice; and “nai” meaning inside. However, the sound of the last character could also mean no or not; hence, the prime minister became known as Admiral “No-Rice.” Havens, Valley of Darkness, p. 50.}
American bombing began in earnest and in the last three months of the war about half of the daily staple ration was being substituted with potatoes and grains other than rice.\textsuperscript{32} Compounding the problem was the fact that the bombings together with the mass exodus of people from the cities threw the food distribution system into a state of chaos from which it did not emerge until 1947. In those last, desperate days a slogan of protest seeped through the cracks of the government censorship and policing agencies which typified the mood of the time: "Empty bellies can’t fight a war" (Hara ga hette wa sensô dekinu).\textsuperscript{33}

With Japan’s defeat the food problem became even more severe. Official rations provided a paltry 1200 calories per day as the rice ration itself fell another ten percent to 297 grams, about the equivalent of one cup. Frequently, even this meagre offering was replaced by potatoes or beans.\textsuperscript{34} Like other statistics of this era, the accuracy of caloric intake figures are problematic. Some studies have argued that caloric intakes were as low as 1050 calories while still others claim

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{32}Despite the government’s efforts to increase rice production, it declined precipitously from 1942. By 1945 it had plummeted by almost half from 1942 levels (1937=100; 1942=100.6; 1945=59). Nakamura, Nihon keizai, p. 141.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{33}Quoted in Andô Yoshitake, “Kitoku zetsubô sengen” (Proclamation [of Japan] on the Verge of Despair and Death) in Arisawa (ed), Shôwa keizaishi, p. 231.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{34}Uchino, Sengo nihon keizaishi, p. 44. See also Rôyama Masamichi, Nihon no rekishi (The History of Japan), vol. 26, Yomigaeru nihon (Japan Restored to Life), Chûô Kôronsha, 1971, pp. 66-67.
\end{quote}

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that they ranged somewhere between 1170 and 1290 calories per day.\textsuperscript{35} Regardless of which set of numbers one takes, however, it seems clear that the fears of an empty rice bowl were as commonplace as the rubble which defined Japan’s cities.

In December 1945, the Welfare Ministry’s Central Wage Committee worked out a minimum monthly wage program of ¥450 that would provide the following caloric intake standards for a family of five: husband - 2160; wife - 1900; first child - 2000; second child - 1800; third child - 1350.\textsuperscript{36} Even with these new standards, however, the committee acknowledged that families would still have to buy food on the black market in order to maintain the daily nutritional requirements. This effectively drove up the cost of living to about ¥1000 per month, more than double the planned minimum, which in turn drove many

\textsuperscript{35}Mikiso Hane said that official rations provided only 1050 calories per day, but provided no source. See Peasants, Rebels, and Outcasts: The Underside of Modern Japan, Pantheon Books, 1982, p. 247, and Modern Japan: A Historical Survey, Westview Press, 1992, p. 343. Uchino used the figure of 1170 calories for 1945 and 1290 for 1946 but he did not provide a source either. “Infure to shokyuryō kiki” (Inflation and the Food Crisis), in Arisawa (ed), Showa keizaishi, p. 258. Cohen said that Tokyo residents were averaging 1352 calories per day in November 1945, in contrast to rural dwellers who were consuming around 2000 calories per day. Japan’s Economy in War and Reconstruction, p. 477.

\textsuperscript{36} The caloric standards for the children were based on age: the first child between 11 and 14, the second child between 8 and 10, and the third child between 2-4. Reported in Nagasaki Shimbun, February 5, 1946 and translated by the Allied Translator and Interpreter Service (ATIS), Press Translations and Summaries, reel 62, social series 247, item 4, University of Victoria, MacPherson Library, Microfilm Department. ATIS operated from September 1945 to August 1949, providing English translations and summaries of Japanese newspapers and magazines to all departments under the command of GHQ. All citations taken from these records will hereafter be referred to as ATIS.
Japanese into the arms of black marketeers in search of their “daily bread.” At any rate, the plan’s life span proved to be as short-lived as a cup of rice in the hands of a hungry Japanese. Rampant inflation, another legacy of the war, rendered all such plans inoperative in the early years following Japan’s defeat. The food problem was especially hard on children.\(^{37}\) One study done in 1946 concluded that the average grade six student in that year was the approximate height and weight of the average grade four or five student in 1937.\(^{38}\) Another study conducted by the Physical Education Section of the Tokyo Metropolitan Office in December 1946 reported that fourteen-year old boys weighed on average six kilograms less that their counterparts in 1939.\(^{39}\) The survey covered 19,000 boys and 18,000 girls in the Tokyo area between the ages of seven and fourteen. The oldest boys were hardest hit but every age group not surprisingly showed weight reduction. The survey also urged the resumption of the school lunch program, suspended since April due to the lack of fuel, and pegged the cost of a hot lunch at about 50 sen (100 sen = ¥1). A year earlier the ministries of Forestry

\(^{37}\)Despite the relatively decent nutritional standards for most of the war, infants born in 1942 were lighter and shorter than those born just two years earlier because of deteriorating diets for women. Boys were 1.8 centimetres shorter and 209.4 grams lighter while girls were 2.3 centimetres shorter and 235.3 grams lighter than babies born in 1940. Havens, *Valley of Darkness*, p. 137.

\(^{38}\)Arisawa and Inaba (eds), *Shiryô: Sengo nijûnenshi*, vol 2, p. 8.

\(^{39}\)Reported in the *Mainichi Shimbun*, December 11, 1946.
and Agriculture and Education had tried another tack. Having recognized that the food problem would worsen significantly, they created a plan to increase food production (*Shokuryō Sōsan Keikaku*) whereby all national schools would grow their own food for school lunches. The plan, which was largely a continuation of a similar wartime program begun in 1941, met with mixed results due to the shortage of fertilizer, tools and labour. In the months following Japan's surrender school attendance declined precipitously as many students were pressed into family service in the daily search for food. Various municipal governments as well as the Ministry of Welfare continued their surveys of child health throughout the postwar years but it was not until the early 1950s that Japanese children began to recover from the nutritional deprivations of the "dark valley." War and defeat had literally stunted the growth of an entire generation of Japanese children.

By the end of 1945, fears of mass starvation were heightened by the daily coexistence with the spectre of death. Historian Irokawa Daikichi recalled seeing trucks on their way to the crematorium, piled high with the corpses of those who

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had starved to death.\footnote{Irokawa Daikichi, \textit{The Age of Hirohito: In Search of Modern Japan} (trans, Mikiso Hane and John K. Urda), The Free Press, 1995, p. 37.} Newspapers fuelled these fears by regularly providing grisly details of the number of deaths from starvation in Japan's major cities. Periodically, sensational events would occur that reinforced the fragility of life in the \textit{yake ato jidai}. On October 12, 1945, the \textit{Mainichi Shimbun} reported that Kameo Hideshirô, a German language teacher at the Tokyo Higher School, had died of starvation. Under the headline of “The Sacrifice of One Who Refused to Eat on the Black Market” (\textit{Yami o kuwanai gisei}), the article explained that Kameo died because he had tried to subsist on official rations alone. The article reprinted an entry from Kameo’s diary which read, “I can no longer understand the way of our nation. With controlled wages and food rations, I simply cannot get by.”\footnote{\textit{Mainichi Shimbun}, October 12, 1945. Reproduced in Iwasaki and Katô (eds) \textit{Shôwa sesôshi}, 1971, p. 40.} Kameo’s death was played up in the press as a sort of tragic morality play designed to highlight the plight of the Japanese people in the face of evil government policy.

This tragedy was rerun again in 1947 with more sensational results when the media reported the starvation death of Tokyo District Court judge Yamaguchi Yoshitada who also refused to buy food from the black market. In Socratic
fashion, he argued that even bad laws (in this case, the Emergency Countermeasures Act which fixed staple food rations) must be obeyed by the people. In his diary, written shortly before his death, he vowed to “fight the black market and die of starvation.” “My daily life,” he wrote, “is a march toward certain death.”  

Another, more bizarre death over food occurred in March 1946 when the famous Kabuki actor Kataoka Nizaemon, his wife, and two children were hacked to death with a hatchet wielded by twenty-two year old Iida Toshiaki who had been staying on the family property. According to one newspaper account, Iida thought he was being cheated on his food rations by Kataoka’s wife. He claimed that he was receiving only two meals a day instead of three and that one of these meals was only rice gruel (kayu). After being scolded by Kataoka’s wife for his behaviour, Iida apparently grabbed an axe and, in a rage, killed the entire family.  

Events such as these illustrate the extremes of despair, both moral and immoral,
to which some people were driven in the chaos of early postwar Japan. As such, they are not necessarily representative of the people at large. However, it is often by examining the extremes of a given situation that we can better appreciate the conditions with which most people struggled on a daily basis. As mentioned earlier, in late 1945 the press was awash with rumours of mass starvation and wild speculation that as many as ten million would perish.\textsuperscript{45} These, too, were extreme exaggerations, fuelled by media criticism and public anger, both directed toward government incompetence and corruption. But the ubiquity with which the fear spread indicates the degree to which food, or the lack of it, was foremost in the minds of countless Japanese.

Many did die in that first year after the war but mass starvation was averted by the large-scale importation of staple foodstuffs from the United States beginning in the spring of 1946.\textsuperscript{46} These food imports were particularly crucial since only a

\textsuperscript{45}Uchino, "\textit{Infure to shokuryo kiki,}" in Arisawa (ed), \textit{Shōwa keizaishi}, p. 257.

\textsuperscript{46}The exact amount of food shipped from the US to Japan is uncertain. Using a Foreign Ministry report, Uchino said that 1.42 million tons of food were imported from the United States in 1946, \textit{Sengo nihon keizaishi}, p. 63. However, according to a magazine account of the time, shipments of 2,250,000 tons of wheat and rice began in March 1946, following MacArthur's request for emergency food imports from the American government. \textit{Contemporary Japan} (May-August 1946), vol. xv, pp. 294-95. Kawai Kazuo claimed that over 800,000 tons of food were sent to Japan over a one-year period beginning in the spring of 1946, but Rōyama said that 1,613,315 tons of staple foods and 43,474 tons of canned goods were shipped between November 1946 and October 1947. Kawai, \textit{Japan's American Interlude}, University of Chicago Press, 1960, pp. 137-38; and Rōyama, \textit{Nihon no rekishi}, p. 67.
few months earlier in December 1945 the government had announced the worst rice harvest in forty-two years. Japan’s population was about seventy-two million in 1946 but the rice crop was sufficient to feed only thirty-nine million. Tatami maker, Akiya Tetsu, remembered scouring the fields outside of Tokyo for rice grains and rice straw. "Ichikawa had mostly escaped the bombings," he said, "but we never had enough to eat and I could never find enough rice straw to make the tatami mats to sell for food... Today, no matter how full I am, I still like to eat a bowl of white rice at the end of a meal." In the spring of 1946, NHK began its "man on the street" (gaitō rōkun) interview series; not surprisingly, the first question posed was, "How are you eating?"

Their Master’s Voice: Enduring the Unendurable

Eight years of wartime deprivation and one year of intensive destruction transformed not only the urban landscape of the Japanese home islands but the

47Reported in Contemporary Japan (January-April 1946), vol. xv, p. 145.

48Personal Interview with Akiya Tetsu, Ichikawa City, Chiba Prefecture, September 14, 1990.

49Cited in Iwasaki and Katō (eds), Shōwa sesōshi, p. 47.
lives of its residents as well. This was kyodatsu in its most immediate, physical form, the era of scorched earth in which an entire generation came of age and for which the memories of this era still linger. Like Akiya Tetsu who still delights in his bowl of rice, when many of the scorched earth generation indulge in such small pleasures as a good meal today, they often do so with these images firmly imprinted on their memories.\(^50\)

Compounding the trauma of such a miserable daily existence was the psychological shock of Emperor Hirohito’s “end of war” radio broadcast at noon on August 15, 1945 when the Japanese learned for the first time that they were a defeated people. The Imperial Rescript was actually produced over a four-day period beginning on August 10th. It was drafted by Sakomizu Hisatsune and “cleaned up” by two scholars of classical Chinese, Kawada Mizuho and Yasuoka Masaatsu. Hirohito then recorded it on the evening of August 14th.\(^51\) Making no direct reference to defeat (haisen) or surrender (kōfuku), the Emperor stated only that Japan had accepted the Joint Declaration of America, England, China and the

\(^{50}\) In the years I lived in Japan, I spoke to dozens, perhaps hundreds, of elderly Japanese about their memories of this time. Whatever else they recalled, virtually everyone began with memories of being hungry and cold.

To our good and loyal subjects: After pondering deeply the general trends of the world and the actual conditions obtaining to Our Empire today, We have... ordered Our Government to communicate to the Governments of the United States, Great Britain, China and the Soviet Union that *Our Empire accepts the provisions of the Joint Declaration*... Despite the best that has been done by everyone - the gallant fighting of our military and naval forces, the diligence and assiduity of Our servants of the State and the devoted service of Our *one hundred million* people - the war situation has developed not necessarily to Japan’s advantage, while the general trends of the world have all turned against her interest... The hardships and sufferings to which our nation is to be subjected hereafter will certainly be great. We are keenly aware of the inmost feelings of all ye, Our subjects. However, it is according to the dictates of time and fate that We have resolved to pave the way for a grand peace for all the generations to come by *enduring the unendurable and suffering the insufferable.*

The ambiguity of the Emperor’s words, the archaic, stilted court language, and the scratchy quality of the recording, however, did not obscure for most Japanese what the Emperor could not put into words: Japan was a defeated nation for the first time in its history.

The Emperor’s broadcast unleashed a torrent of emotions, the two most extreme

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52The Emperor never mentioned the Potsdam Declaration by name, referring to it only as the “Joint Declaration” (kyōdō sengen). My reading of the original comes from the reprint published in the *Asahi Shimbun*, August 15, 1945.

of which were incredulity and death. In the early morning hours of August 15th, before the speech was broadcast to the nation, War Minister Anami Korechika, unable to either suffer or endure the ignominy of defeat, took his own life by the ritual performance of *seppuku*. In the days that followed, more than five hundred military men committed suicide, including Generals Sugiyama Gen, Tanaka Seiichi, Honjō Shigeru, Yoshimoto Sadaichi and Vice Admiral Onishi Takijirō, the creator of the Special Attack Force (*Tokkōtai*), better known as the *kamikaze*. Former Welfare Minister Koizumi Chikahiko and former Education Minister Hashida Kunihiro also took their lives. These deaths, it was reported, were acts of remorse and atonement to the Emperor for “the great crime” (*daizai*) of having lost the war.

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54 *Asahi Shimbun*, August 16, 1945. Anami, together with Army Chief of Staff Umezu Yoshijirō and Navy Chief of Staff Toyoda Soemu, were the three members of the Supreme Council who opposed Japan’s acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration. Those in favour were Prime Minister Suzuki Kantarō, Foreign and Greater East Asia Minister Tōgō Shigenori, and Navy Minister Admiral Yonai Mitsumasa. The Emperor cast the deciding vote in favour of acceptance, an action that contributed to his postwar reincarnation as a man of peace. For further discussion on the Emperor’s own reconstruction, see Chapter Six.

55 Every major daily carried the stories of these suicides. See, for example, *Mainichi Shimbun*, August 14-16, 1945.

56 Both men were ministers in the Tōjō cabinet. Koizumi held his post for the entire duration of the Tōjō government (10/18/41 - 7/22/44) but Hashida was replaced in April 1943, briefly by Tōjō himself and then by Okabe Nagakage.

57 The phrase is General Anami’s who wrote in his will, “With my death I wish to humbly apologize to his Majesty for the great crime.” *Asahi Shimbun*, August 16, 1945.
Unlike Anami and others who took their own lives in the name of the Emperor, some military men refused to believe that Japan’s surrender was the true manifestation of the Imperial Will. Mogami Sadao, an air force captain and fighter pilot stationed at Ichigaya in Tokyo, recalled listening to the radio with an air of resignation, his first thought being the phrase *mei fa*, the Chinese version of *shō ga nai* or it can’t be helped. Suddenly, a group of young officers rushed into his room shouting, “What are you doing! Accept the Potsdam Declaration! The evil subordinates of the Emperor are thinking this. That cannot be the true mind of His Imperial Majesty!” Visibly shaken by their menacing tone, Mogami calmly suggested that they go to the general staff headquarters for clarification. On arriving there, however, Mogami found the same scenario being played out with young officers screaming, “We’ll behead the evil subordinates of the Emperor.” After finally receiving confirmation from Prince Mikasa, the Emperor’s younger brother and air force staff officer, Mogami spent the rest of the day convincing other units that accepting the Potsdam Declaration was indeed the will of the Emperor.\(^{58}\)

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Disbelief and denial also manifest themselves in an attempted coup, planned by other fanatical young officers who believed that Japan's plight was the fault of a coterie of individuals surrounding the Emperor. Even before the speech was aired, these radicals plotted to assassinate the Emperor's "evil advisers" and to prevent the rescript from being broadcast. The plot was foiled when military leaders refused to go along but not before Mori Takeshi, commander of the First Imperial Guard Division, was murdered by the conspirators. General Anami was sympathetic to the conspirators but even he refused to go against the Emperor's wishes. His only way out was death.

The reactions of the Japanese people also included acts of atonement through death. According to the *Mainichi Shimbun*, thirty-five civilians killed themselves in the two weeks following the Emperor's speech, mostly young men. The newspaper stated that these men, like their military counterparts, felt they had not done enough and so wanted to apologize to the Emperor with their lives. The suicides and the attempted coup, however, were acts involving only a small percentage of the Japanese people. For the majority, shock and remorse were far more common responses. In November and December of 1945, the

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USSBS polled many Japanese about how they felt on hearing that Japan had lost the war (Nihon ga sensō ni maketa toki, anata wa dō kanjimashita ka). The most common responses were remorse (kōkai), sorrow (hitani), and regret (zannen), followed by surprise (odoroki), shock (shōgeki), confusion (konwaku), and relief (kyūsai).61

Former Toyota president, Toyoda Eiji recalled translating the Emperor’s speech to bewildered workers because they could not understand what he was saying. Having grasped, in translation, the significance of the broadcast, the workers simply dropped what they were doing and silently left the building.62 Shinsei magazine editor, Murofuchi Takenobu, also found himself having to explain the meaning of the message to his younger friends and colleagues, many of whom just sat immobile, staring at the walls.63 Yoshioka Genji, later a bureaucrat specializing in Japan-China relations, was a boy at the time of the Emperor’s speech and, like many younger Japanese, could not understand the meaning of the words crackling and hissing from the radio in his home. He knew it was

61The survey results are reproduced in Yoshimi, Kusa no ne no fashizumu, pp. 262-63.


63Murofuchi Takenobu, “Aratanu nicho no tame ni” (For the Sake of a New Day), Shinsei (November 1945), p. 2.
serious, though, because all the adults around him were crying. Confused and uncertain over what had happened, Yoshioka decided it was best to cry along with them. For eighteen-year old Yamamoto Mitsuo, the Emperor's speech created conflicting emotions. Elation at being alive and despair over Japan's future mingled inside him, leading to a prolonged sense of spiritlessness or apathy (mukiryoku).

In a newspaper article written on the first anniversary of Japan's defeat, even Shidehara Kijûrõ, Japan's second postwar prime minister, recalled standing at attention in the Nihon Club crying "in spite of myself." Whether these were tears of joy or sorrow is difficult to say. Perhaps they were both. Like the Emperor, Shidehara referred only to the war's end (sensô shûketsu) so it is possible that he shed tears of joy for this and tears of sorrow for the defeat he could not bring himself to mention.


65Quoted in Yoshimi, Kusa no ne no fashizumu, p. 263. Matsumoto was a student in Shiga, but like many teenagers was recruited into factory work at the end of the war. At the time of Hirohito's broadcast, he was working at Sumitomo Metals in Shiga.

66Jiji Shimpô, August 15, 1946, translated and reprinted in ATIS, Reel, Political Series, Item 1.
Not all responses were acts of atonement or apology, however. There were some for whom despair was displayed as anger, sometimes directed toward the Emperor himself. After listening to Hirohito's speech one old man cried out bitterly: "This is stupid. If the war could be stopped by the emperor simply raising his hands and surrendering, why didn't he end the war sooner for us? Your Majesty, because of this my sons have all died in vain, a dog's death." The old man likely echoed the thoughts of thousands of Japanese people who had lost sons and fathers in battle. Many of those people did not give voice to their thoughts as he did, but they carried such sentiments in their hearts nonetheless.

Naturally, public accounts of that day dwelt not on anger but on the "bitter tears" (ketsurui) being shed in remorse for defeat. Drawing on the Emperor's invocation of the "one hundred million people" (ichioku shûshô), an Asahi Shimbun editorial the following day led with the headline, "The Autumn of One Hundred Million Tears." The next day the Mainichi Shimbun described the mournful gathering of Tokyo residents in front of the Imperial Palace, in tears with hearts torn asunder, prostrating themselves before the Emperor in remorse for Japan's defeat. Like the young men who would take their own lives

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67 Quoted in Irokawa, The Age of Hirohito, p. 35. For the Japanese original, see Mainichi Shimbun (ed) Nagoya daikôshû (The Great Nagoya Air Raid), Mainichi Shimbunsha, 1971.

68 Asahi Shimbun, August 15, 1945.
soon thereafter, many in the crowd were heard begging the Emperor’s forgiveness, as if convinced that simply more effort on their part would have led to a different outcome. One man sobbingly proclaimed, “I was bad. I didn’t really exert myself to the utmost. I am to blame.” A woman in the same crowd could only choke out, “I am so sorry.” Even the trees wept.69

The bitter tears of the one hundred million (ichioku no ketsurui) was of course an exaggeration, matched only by the understatement of saying that the war had simply ended. The one hundred million (ichioku) itself was a legacy of wartime propaganda designed to inculcate a sense of unity among the Japanese people, despite the fact that the population of Japan was only about seventy million at the time. In the heady days following Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 the Tōjō government introduced the phrase, “one hundred million hearts beating as one” (ichioku isshin), as a demonstration of the glorious Japanese spirit, and designed to spur the people on to ever greater feats of sacrifice for the nation. As the war turned badly for Japan a new phrase was proposed in the Diet by the army and navy in late 1944: ichioku tokkō, the one hundred million as a suicide squad. Lauded in the press and recommended as a major policy by the Tōjō cabinet, ichioku tokkō promoted the idea of collective sacrifice unto

69Mainichi Shimbun, August 16, 1945.
death.\textsuperscript{70} With slogans such as this, the Japanese government made it clear that there would be no civilians in the Pacific War, just as Douhet had predicted.

In those last, desperate days as the Japanese military were arming the people with little more than bamboo spears in anticipation of an American invasion, yet another slogan was born from the government’s propaganda machine: \textit{ichioku gyokusai} (one hundred million as a shattered jewel).\textsuperscript{71} The phrase “shattered jewel,” little known at the time, was drawn from classical literature urging warriors to die in a final blaze of honourable glory; that is, to choose death over dishonour.\textsuperscript{72} Like \textit{ichioku tokkō}, \textit{ichioku gyokusai} was simply a euphemism for group suicide (\textit{shūdan jiketsu}). The latter term was never used during the war, lacking as it did any patriotic reference to honour or glory. In his recollections of the war years, Kinjō Shigeaki painfully remembered how as a teenager in Okinawa he was given two hand grenades by an army sergeant who instructed

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\textsuperscript{70}Dower, \textit{War Without Mercy}, pp. 232, 352-53. For the media’s promotion of this idea see, for example, \textit{Asahi Shimbun}, December 28, 1944.


him to “throw one of them at the enemy and use the other to engage in gyokusai.” As it was, he never had the chance to use the grenades. An even worse fate awaited. He and his older brother, caught up in the insanity of family members killing each other during the Battle of Okinawa, strangled their mother, younger brother, and younger sister out of fear of them being captured by the enemy. For Kinjô, August 15th reinforced the nightmare of that day. The more I recovered my normal mind,” he said, “the more strongly the abnormal came back to me.”

Judging from newspaper accounts of the time, the one hundred million were shattered, not by dying in a blaze of glory, but from drowning in a river of tears shed in response to Japan’s defeat. There was neither honour in the charred ruins of Japan’s cities nor glory in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of civilians. The Emperor’s speech, when it finally came, was not so much a surprise - the physical destruction of Japan had seen to that - as it was a shock to find that all the effort and all the sacrifice had been wasted. It certainly evoked no surprise for journalist Okada Satoshi who was stuck thousands of miles away on Irian Jaya with the Japanese army. Having heard of the war’s progress on his friend’s shortwave radio and having been deluged with pamphlets dropped from

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73Kinjô Shigeaki, “Now they call it ‘Group Suicide’,“ in Cook, et. al. (eds), Japan at War, pp. 363-66.
American planes informing him of Japan's defeat, Okada felt only bitterness. On the day he finally did hear the Emperor's speech (August 17th), read to him and his comrades by their commander, Okada called it "the day of despondency" (kyodatsu jōtai no hi). Watching his comrades sobbing at the news, he reflected on what it was everyone had been fighting for. "Who would have imagined," he thought, "that it would have come to this." 74

New Life Among the Ruins: "Now I Have Interest"

The events of August 15th and its immediate aftermath marked the second major turning point in Japan's modern history, and in both cases the United States figured prominently as catalyst. However, unlike the Meiji Restoration, Japan's first turning point, war, defeat, and occupation had a direct and palpable impact on the entire nation which, as we have seen, expressed itself as shock and despair. 75 August 15th, in particular, became the day of despondency for many,


the day that bitter tears were shed and the day that bitter memories were formed. This is a common image of a world at war: destruction, death, privation and, ultimately, defeat. For the victors, of course, August 15th was a day of jubilation, the images of which are familiar to all of us who have viewed that day vicariously through the lens of peace.

Yet, for many of the defeated as well, August 15th was also a day of liberation. Even before MacArthur swept into Japan like a latter-day divine wind, many Japanese saw their nation’s defeat as the symbol of a new beginning. The image of August 15th as the day of one hundred million bitter tears (ichioku ketsurui) is indeed a powerful one and it has endured throughout the postwar years in various forms. It is also an exaggeration of the same magnitude as saying that one hundred million or even seventy million hearts beat as one during the war. In truth, tears of the bitter variety were not the only ones being shed; tears of joy and of relief also fell like rain on that August afternoon. And it is the existence of both the bitter and the joyful tears that demonstrates the dynamic interplay between abject despondency (kyodatsu) on the one hand and the sense of new beginning or new life (shinsei) on the other.

In light of the many public displays of remorse reported in the press, some Japanese were cautious about how to express their pleasure. Sutō Ryōsaku
captured the feelings of many Japanese when she recorded in her diary that “[a]lthough most people think that defeat is extremely unfortunate, in their hearts they generally seem relieved.” Tanaka Chiharu echoed this sentiment, recalling that she cried upon hearing the Emperor’s speech but only because everyone else was crying too. “Secretly I was elated. It just didn’t seem proper to show it at the time.”

Never one to concern himself with appropriate behaviour, Yoshida Shigeru showed no compunction to be circumspect. Nor was his response to Japan’s surrender as equivocal as that of his former boss in the Foreign Ministry, Baron Shidehara. After hearing the Emperor’s speech, Yoshida celebrated at the home of his friend Konoe Fuminarô, drinking so much whiskey that he passed out on the train home and missed his stop. In retrospect, it is clear that Yoshida had more reason to celebrate than did Konoe. He went on to become the most powerful political figure in the early postwar years, forming five different cabinets between 1946 and 1953. Konoe’s joy, on the other hand, was short-lived.


77Interview with Tanaka Chiharu, Narashino City, Chiba Prefecture, November, 17, 1994.

In December 1945 he committed suicide at his home the night before he was to be arrested as a Class “A” war criminal. In a rather bizarre ending to the story, Yoshida rented Konoe’s former house in 1946, choosing to sleep in the same room in which his old friend had committed suicide.\textsuperscript{79}

These examples suggest that the Emperor’s broadcast on August 15th represented not only an end but a new beginning as well, one that symbolized a radical break with the past, a turning point (tenkanki) where the past had collapsed into the singularity of the present which in turn offered boundless possibilities for the future. Saitô Mutsuo captured poignantly the sense of ending and beginning, of kyodatsu and shinsei, in his recollections of August 15th and its immediate aftermath:

I felt full of regret and bitterness, but at the same time I also thought: ‘Perhaps I am going to survive. Perhaps this thing they call peace is going to come...’ The next day...[w]hen I arrived in Kiryu, I suddenly understood for the first time that peace had come. Every window was lit up, and along every street stretched great lines of light. I just stood and stared, as if I was seeing it for the first time in my life. I had never realized that electric lights could be so beautiful.\textsuperscript{80}

This sense of ending and beginning, of death and rebirth, became a recurrent


\textsuperscript{80}Morris-Suzuki, \textit{Shōwa: An Inside History of Hirohito’s Japan}, p. 186.
theme in the early postwar years. The New Year’s editorial in the *Hokkoku Shimbun*, for example, characterized 1945 as a cursed and a blessed year, while journalist Matsumura Tamotsu pronounced that August 15, 1945 was both Japan saddest and happiest day. Such sentiments were a clear recognition that, whatever else defeat and occupation might mean, Japan had finally emerged from the dark valley into the light of a new age (*shin jidai*). This sense of transformation was also manifest in the frequent calls for the Emperor to proclaim a new era beginning on August 15th. One man even argued that the entire sweep of Japan’s history should be rewritten with defeat and the Emperor’s speech as the starting point of a new era (*shin jidai no shuppatsuten*). For a number of years following the war, calls for a new era would be resurrected in the press, particularly on the yearly anniversaries of Japan’s defeat.

The spirit of new life accompanying Hirohito’s broadcast was also manifest in the speed with which people attempted to resume some semblance of normal life.

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82 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, August 8, 1946.

Chapter One: The Yakeato Jidai

Writing two months after Japan's surrender, Murofuchi Takanobu remembered that in the days following the radio broadcast a new saying - "Now I have interest" (Ima, kyōmi o motte) - spread throughout the country. For the first time in many years the Japanese people had reason to live beyond the strenuous tasks of "air defense... fire prevention drills, [and] the heavy job of digging air raid shelters..." The immense task of climbing out from under the rubble still loomed ahead but this time many Japanese people believed that they would toil for a peaceful future rather than merely digging themselves deeper into the dark valley of war.

To this end, a small group of scholars, journalists, and bureaucrats gathered in Tokyo on August 16th to discuss the prospects for Japan's future. Ten men attended that first meeting, including Tokyo University economist Ouchi Hyōe who recalled:

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84 Murofuchi Takanobu, "Aratanaru hi no tame ni," p. 2.

85 Havens, Valley of Darkness, p. 192.

86 These men became known as the Special Survey Committee, or SSC (Tokubetsu Chōsa linkai). The committee produced Japan's first postwar reconstruction plan published in March 1946 under the title of Nihon keizai saiken no kihon mondai (The Basic Problems for the Reconstruction of Japan's Economy). A complete reprint plus meeting records and other related documents can be found in Nakamura Taka'usa (ed) Shiryō: Sengo nihon no keizai seisaku kōsō (Japan's Postwar Economic Policy Plans: Selected Documents), vol. 1, Nihon keizai saiken no kihon mondai, Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1991. Hereafter referred to as Shiryō. The importance of this document and the influence of the SSC members will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

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Part One: Kyodatsu and Shinsei

...that for about a year after the war I often went to this burnt-out South Manchurian Railway building and in that cold, unheated place we discussed Japan's future... [w]ith all the elan of patriots of the Meiji Restoration.87

Arisawa Hiromi, a colleague of Ouchi's and one of the central figures in Japan's economic recovery remembered the sense of freedom evident at the meetings:

...[t]here were no restriction on what people could say and everyone was enthusiastic and serious in their efforts to gather information and make plans for a new Japanese economy.88

One of the group's founders, Okita Saburô, best captured the shinsei spirit, illustrating both the sense of freedom and the excitement of a new beginning:

A cheerful atmosphere was also engendered by the feeling of liberation as wartime proclamations and restrictions were ended; everyone was eager to build a new society upon the ashes of the

87Quoted in Okita Saburô, Tôhon seisô: Watakushi no rirekisho (My Life: A Hurried Mission between East and West), Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha, 1981, pp. 59-60. Ouchi was a prominent member of many postwar reconstruction research groups and was even touted as finance minister in the first Yoshida cabinet. In the early postwar years he wrote extensively on the need for Japan to rejoin the global community through membership in the IMF, and he was also an advocate for the establishment of some kind of a world federal state. For a personal account of Ouchi's prewar and postwar associations, see his Watakushi no rirekisho (My Life), Chikutosha Shoten, 1951.

88Arisawa Hiromi, Gakumon to shisô to ningen to (Scholarship, Thought, and People), Mainichi Shimbunsha, 1957, p. 203. Arisawa was one of the most influential and enigmatic figures in the economic reconstruction debates. He was a key member of Yoshida's economic advisory body, known widely in the early postwar years as the Professor's Group (Kyôshi Kumon Gurupu), which later became the Coal Committee where priority production (keisha seisan hoshiki) was born. For more information on this, see his interview in Nihon Keizai Kikakucho, Sengo keizai fukko to keizai antei honbu (The Economic Stabilization Board and Japan's Postwar Economic Reconstruction), Okurashô Insatsukyoku, 1988, pp. 77-99. For his influence on economic planning and Japan's postwar energy policy see Laura Hein, Fueling Growth: The Energy Revolution and Economic Policy in Postwar Japan, Council of Japanese Studies, Harvard University, 1990, and Bai Gao, "Arisawa Hiromi and His Theory for a Managed Economy," Journal of Japanese Studies, 20:1, 1994, pp. 115-53.
While many of Japan’s intellectual elite were making plans for Japan’s future, and trying to secure their position in that future, others expressed the spirit of shinsei in a more indulgent but no less profound manner. For many urban women, August 15th became known as “the day fashion resumed” (oshare saikai no hi). In reaction to the drab, colourless war years, women suddenly began to wear lipstick and brightly patterned kimonos, both of which had been frowned on as examples of self-indulgent luxury during the war but were now symbols of freedom with which Japanese women indulged with abandon (kaihōkan o hitaru).

Along with the shedding of tears, whether bitter or joyful, came the shedding of the hated monpe, the peasant pantaloons that women had been forced to wear during the war. Ever since the spiritual mobilization campaigns began in earnest in 1937-38, successive Japanese governments had attempted to curb luxury and extravagance by urging the wearing of monpe for women and civilian uniforms

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89 Tōhon seisō, pp. 60-61. Originally trained as hydro-electric engineer, Okita later became know as an “economic bureaucrat” (kanryo ekonomisuto) and wrote extensively on reparations and Japan/Asia relations. For an account of his attitudes concerning the role of economists in Japanese society, see Okita Saburō, Ekonomisuto no yakuwari (The Role of the Economist), Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha, 1973.

90 Shōwa kazokushi nenpyō, p. 159.
for men. In addition, cosmetics and permanent waves were banned in 1940, the same year that the National Defense Women’s Association began posting middle-aged matrons on street corners to shame well-dressed women into exercising greater self-restraint in their daily life. The dreaded evils of luxury and extravagance were never fully eradicated and the government never went so far as to pass Tokugawa-style sumptuary laws on fashion. Nonetheless, what the government could not do by fiat was largely accomplished by the growing textile shortages as the war progressed. As Thomas Havens has astutely pointed out, the only law that forced men to don civilian uniforms or women to wear monpe was the “law of supply and demand.”

There were some who attempted to continue the wartime campaigns following Japan’s surrender, arguing that luxury and extravagance were every bit as dangerous to the “New Japan” as they had been to Japan at war. Ten days after the Emperor’s broadcast, one of the nation’s leading female activists and a prominent member of the wartime Greater Japan Women’s Association, Ichikawa Fusae, established the Women’s Committee on Postwar Countermeasures (Sengo Taisaku Fujin Iinkai). At its first general meeting on September 11th, the Committee drafted a five-point plan which included the

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91Havens, *Valley of Darkness*, p. 20.
commitment to “continue wearing monpe... on a daily basis as the functional clothes best suited to [re]building.” In the end, Ichikawa was purged by SCAP in 1947, not for her monpe advocacy, but for her alleged militaristic activities during the war.

It is doubtful whether the postwar campaigns were any more effective than those of wartime. Most likely, “economic laws” were just as crucial in determining what people wore after the war as they had been before surrender. If media reports are any indication of the state of early postwar women’s fashion, then it seems that women who could wear patterned kimonos and dresses did so. Magazines and newspapers were filled with pictures of well-dressed urban women, buying the latest magazines, or shopping at the black market. A 1946 New Year’s Mainichi Shimbun article reported to its readers that nary a monpe-clad women could be seen on the streets of Tokyo. Women also exercised their subjective preferences and expressed their new-found sense of freedom through

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93Mainichi Shimbun, January 1, 1946. Reprinted in Mainichi Shimbunsha (ed), Ichikoku no shōwashi (The Shōwa History of the One Hundred Million), vol. 5, “Senryō kara kōwa e” (From Occupation to the Peace Treaty), 1975, p. 52. The newspaper’s comment was a clear exaggeration, designed to reinforce its disdain at conspicuous consumption on the part of postwar women. The monpe-clad women was a common sight during the early postwar years but increasingly so were their well-dressed counterparts.
the purchase and wearing of heretofore unavailable items. In Osaka shortly after
the emperor’s speech, accessories flew off the shelves as women adorned their
hair with colourful nets, ribbons and berets, all of which signified a sense of
release and liberation. The colour of choice was, of course, red: the symbol of
good fortune.

Manifestations of new life were also found in other consumer products,
particularly in the choice of brand names for one of postwar Japan’s most
valuable commodities: tobacco. At the end of 1945, Japan’s first postwar cigarette
was marketed under the very name of Shinsei. The white package adorned with
pretty flowers and emblazoned with the red characters for “New Life”
symbolized the new age in much the same way that women’s red-coloured hair
accessories represented a release from the grey realities of war and defeat.

Shinsei cigarettes were followed quickly by three other brands in early 1946
carrying the names Peace, Hope, and Hikari (Light). Lining up these four cigarette
brands in any order, one would have a concise but accurate dictionary of Japan’s
new postwar language. These words became something of a postwar mantra,

94 Shōwa kazokushi nenpyō, p. 159.

95 A photograph of Shinsei cigarettes can be found in Mainichi mukku: Sengo gojūnen
(Mainichi Mook: Fifty Years of Postwar History), Mainichi Shimbunsha, 1995, p. 21. Mook
represents the Japanese habit of borrowing foreign words and then rendering them into katakana
(one of the phonetic syllabaries). In this case, mook is a combination of magazine book.
signifying a break with the past and the dawn of a new era, as if through the mere consumption of the names one could imbibe the very values the products symbolized.  

A useful supplement to this leafy postwar lexicon was also found in the magazine industry, especially after the enactment of the Civil Liberties Directive in October 1945. In the eighteen months following the war hundreds of new magazines came into existence, while still more were resurrected from wartime banishment. According to the Japan Publishing Association, there were only about 500 magazines receiving paper allocations at the end of the war. This number then exploded to 1737 in 1946 and 1882 in 1947. The actual figure was probably much higher since official figures did not include the myriad small publications and broadsheets which purchased their paper on the black market or the equally ubiquitous “pulp” magazines called kasutori bunka after the moonshine of the same name (kasutori). Sales and publication figures for even official publications are sketchy at best but press runs for many magazines often

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96 Peace and Hope are still sold in Japan today, as premium brands costing ¥30 more than regular brands, and are consumed primarily by men of the yake ato jidai.

ran into the tens of thousands. When the first issue of *Shinsei* went on sale in November 1945, for example, the queue of eager buyers stretched from the magazine's sixth floor office all the way out into the street and around the corner.\(^{98}\)

Like the *Shinsei* magazine and cigarette, the titles of these publications provide us with further linguistic evidence of Japan's new postwar vocabulary. Titles like *Shin Jidai* (New Age), *Shinjin* (New Person), and *Shin Seinen* (New Youth) flooded kiosks throughout Japan's cities, all of which reflected a profound sense of having broken with the past. Other titles like *Ho-pu* (Hope), *Kibô* (Hope), *Riberaru* (Liberal), *Jiyû* (Freedom), and of course *Shakaishugi* (Socialism) and *Demokurashii* (Democracy) openly expressed the aspirations of a people starved for the very ideals contained in the titles of these publications.\(^{99}\) After years of oppression and enforced conformity the Japanese people had again found their voice. Amid the despair, hunger and hardship a path to a new world lay open and, for a time, anything seemed possible.

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\(^{98}\)Kimoto, *Zasshi de yomu no sengoshi*, p. 17. Somewhere between 130,000 and 360,000 copies of the first issue were sold. Kimoto offers both figures, the former coming from the recollections of Aoyama Konosuke and the latter from anecdotal evidence at the time. Kimoto, p. 12. *Shôwa kazokushi nenpyô* (p. 163) also uses the figure of 130,000, although no source is given.

Chapter One: The Yakeato Jidai

There were many other expressions of new life in the popular culture of early postwar Japan, yet each was tinged with the world of sorrow and despair from which they had sprung. On October 10, 1945, not two months after Hirohito’s words stunned the nation, Japan’s first postwar movie, Soyo Kaze (Zephyr), was released and immediately became a smash hit. A simple story about the relationship between a young woman and a young repatriated soldier who had shaved his head to become a monk, Soyo Kaze was actually planned in June before the war ended. The theme song for the movie, the “Apple Song” (Ringo no uta), written by Saitō Hachiro with music composed by Mashiro Mokutada, also became a huge hit, selling 125,000 copies by the end of 1947.

Akai ringo ni
kuchibiru yosete
Damate mite iru
aozora
Ringo wa nanimo
Iwanai keredo
Ringo no kimochi wa
Yoku wakaru
Ringo kawai ya
Kawai ya ringo

To the red apple
My lips draw near
The blue sky watches
In silence
The apple, too
is silent, yet
I know how it feels
What a lovely apple
Oh, what a lovely apple


101 I am indebted to Sugita Michiko for teaching me the words to this song. The translation is mine but a slightly different version can be found in Seidensticker, Tokyo Rising, p. 180, and Dower, Embracing Defeat, pp. 172-73.
The simple lyrics and lively melody helped to make the song so popular that it became something of an anthem of the early postwar years, describing a prosaic world of primary colours and small, but exquisite pleasures. Seidensticker has argued that its popularity may have been due to the “utter want of a message, and indeed of meaning.”\textsuperscript{102} However, it would be a mistake to dismiss the powerful symbolism of the song, especially given the context in which it was created and the experience of Namiki Michiko who made it famous.

Like the movie itself, the “Apple Song” was the product of the last, desperate days of the Pacific War. Lyricist Saitô recalled that “under the intolerable gloom of the air raids, I wanted to write a bright cheerful song.”\textsuperscript{103} Amid the destruction of early postwar Japan, the “Apple Song” became a symbol mediating between the extremes of liberation and despair. Born from the bleak underground world of the air raid shelters, it represented people’s cherished but unfulfilled dreams; communing with nature in a peaceful world of bright, vivid colours. The apple itself was deeply symbolic. Its colour of course represented good fortune, but even more significant was possession of the thing itself. By the end of the war apples had become prohibitively expensive luxuries. In late 1945 one apple cost

\textsuperscript{102}Ibid., p. 180.

\textsuperscript{103}Quoted in Oshima, Ningen kiroku, p. 216.
about ¥5 on the black market, the equivalent of about two kilograms of rice.\textsuperscript{104} The popularity of the song was therefore due in part to the difficulty of acting out the image it invoked. Sitting under a blue sky eating an apple was an extravagance that few Japanese could enjoy, yet anyone could experience it vicariously through the simple, dream-like world created by the song.

The significance of the apple and its rarity was captured through two events, both involving Namiki Michiko. There is a scene in the movie where the female protagonist throws an apple into the river, which of course was not actually done in rehearsal. During the shooting, however, Namiki did inadvertently throw a real apple into the river, but then immediately dove in the moment filming was over to retrieve the precious treasure. Following the movie’s release, Japan’s National Broadcasting Network (NHK) held its first popular song contest in Tokyo and Namiki was one of the performers. As she sang \textit{Ringo no uta}, she tossed small apples into the packed crowd which swarmed to catch the little prizes.

Like lyricist Saitô, Namiki herself embodied the interplay of \textit{kyodatsu} and

\textsuperscript{104}Five yen represented about two and a half percent of an office worker’s monthly wages in November 1945 (¥200). In terms of today’s yen, that would be about ¥7000, based on a monthly wage of ¥300,000. A single ¥5 apple, therefore, would be about equal to one week’s groceries today.
shinsei. She experienced the horror of the March 10th firebombing of Tokyo, narrowly escaping death by being resuscitated by a stranger after she jumped into the near-boiling Sumida river to escape the searing heat of the firestorm. For the rest of her life she carried with her the facial scars of that night, as she did the memory of her mother who died in the river. The following May she joined the Overseas Condolence Association (Jōkai Imondan) with the vague hope of seeing her brothers who had been away fighting for many years. She never saw her brothers while in Asia. And her father, she later learned, died when the boat evacuating him from Saipan was sunk en route to Japan. After returning to Tokyo in July, Namiki renewed her contact with Shōchiku, and it was there that she met director Sasaki Yasushi and composer Mashiro who got her the movie role and the song that briefly propelled her to stardom.105

There are perhaps many like Namiki whose stories, great and small, exemplify the emergence from the dark valley of war into the light of a new day. Namiki is particularly significant, however, not only for what she experienced but also for what she represented to millions of Japanese people. Through the pleasing melody of the “Apple Song,” Namiki became synonymous with the aspirations of early postwar Japan where despair not only dictated the terms of daily

105 Sasaki was the director of Soyo kaze. Oshima, Ningen kiroku, p. 216.
existence but which also became the ground from which new life would spring. Japan is a land with a long tradition of tragic endings, but Namiki’s story closes for now on a happy note. In the fall of 1946, a young soldier being repatriated to Japan heard the “Apple Song” for the first time on the ship’s radio. Asking a friend who the singer was, he was astonished to learn that it was none other than his sister, Michiko. He somehow managed to send a telegram to her at Shōchiku Studios saying that he was coming home. After disembarking, Namiki’s brother rushed to his sister. There, on the sound stage of an old ocean liner, very similar to the one used to film Soyo kaze, they embraced in tearful reunion.¹⁰⁶ This emotional meeting of brother and sister illustrates dramatically the extremes of life in the twentieth year of the Shōwa era: truly Japan’s most cursed and most blessed year.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 217.
Namiki Michiko’s trial by firebombing and subsequent rise to fame demonstrates the dialectic interplay of kyodatsu and shinsei in the context of an individual life. This chapter will explore that interplay more intensively at a broader socio-economic level. No account of this period can ignore the economic problems and controversies that raged in the years immediately following surrender, since the resolution of these debates determined the course of Japan’s subsequent economic recovery. It is not my intention, however, to provide a direct analysis of the early postwar economic debates or of economic reconstruction itself.¹ This has been done by numerous Japanese and non-Japanese scholars, and there is now an extensive literature dealing with Japan’s rise from the ashes of defeat to the pinnacle of economic stardom.² Rather, in keeping with the theme of

¹In an earlier paper (“Japanese Capitalism and Postwar Reconstruction Policy, 1945-1950: The Roads Not Taken”), delivered at the Tōhō Gakkai in Tokyo in 1991, I argued that the economic reconstruction debates essentially boiled down to two debates: stability first or production first; and heavy industry versus light industry. This analysis was in part based on Chalmers Johnson’s groundbreaking work MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy, 1925-1975, Stanford University Press, 1982. Unlike Johnson, however, I chose to focus on what was not done as opposed to what was.

²See, for example, Arisawa and Inaba (eds), Shōwa nijūnenshi, Nakamura, Nihon keizai, and Andō Yoshitake (ed) Nihon keizai seisakushiron, Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1976. In English, see Johnson, Tsuru, Japan’s Capitalism, and Hein, Fueling Growth. For a good account of labour’s struggle to secure a share of the benefits from economic reconstruction, see Joe Moore,
identity and the re-creation of self, I want to explore in more detail the relationship between the socio-economic consequences of defeat and the Japanese peoples' daily life. To do this, I will look specifically at the black market (yami ichi) which was the principal social space in which daily life was played out. The interaction of millions of Japanese with the black market became a defining feature of the early postwar years and thus formed an important component of historical memory about those years. Just as physical destruction and the Emperor's speech served to stop time - to periodize - an ending and a beginning, so too did the black market provide a context with which this change or transformation could be identified.

The origins of Japan's postwar economic woes can be found in the war years themselves, but it was within the context of defeat that these problems were magnified with such crippling effect. Inflation, stagnant production and unemployment were the most pressing economic problems in the early postwar years, yet each was intimately linked to the existence of the black market. It is possible to construct a linear narrative in which this sector can be connected causally with the other socio-economic factors that characterized these years. For example, the vibrancy of the black market was inversely proportional to the

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gradual resumption of industrial production. The first two years following Japan’s defeat saw both the peak of black market activity and the nadir of industrial production. Conversely, when production began to pick up in late 1947 there was a corresponding drop in black market activity. However, it may more useful to understand the socio-economic milieu of defeated Japan as an Esher-like phenomenon whereby each element flowed from and into each other. In this sense, the causal links between the black market and the other elements in Japan’s socio-economic structure are less important than the overall impact that the totality of these elements had on people’s daily lives. By drawing the focus away from the black market as a causally-related phenomenon and toward that of a structure embedded in the very fabric of postwar society we can begin to see it as a metaphor which defined early postwar life and then subsequently shaped the memories of those years.

In this sense, the black market functioned like a discourse in which virtually everyone was compelled to act. Like defeat itself, the black market became a

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3Here I am referring to Philip Esher’s famous Mobius strip, the internal and external surfaces of which appear to be the same.

4Discourse had been defined by many commentators as a structure that defines the very thing it seeks to describe. In the early postwar years the black market functioned in a similar manner, defining the limits of what was possible in terms of daily existence. For an understanding of discourse in this sense see Medan Sarap, *An Introductory Guide to Post-structuralism and Postmodernism*, Routledge, 1988 and Frederic Jameson, *The Prisonhouse of Language: A Critical
structure the Japanese people *acted in*, rather than one they *acted with*. The distinction is an important one because it highlights the degree to which people are thrown into a pre-existing environment that is not of their own making and one which demands the utilization of a specific language in order to function and to make that environment intelligible. Here, a comparison with the prewar and wartime ideology of *kokutai* may serve to illustrate my point. The ubiquity of black market activity following Japan’s defeat was so overwhelming that the Japanese people became trapped within its structure in a manner similar to the way in which many had unwittingly become trapped by the discourse of *kokutai* and *tennô-sei* during the war. The Japanese may not necessarily have believed in Japan’s prewar ideology but they were rarely able to extricate themselves from it, and those who did manage to escape often did so at the cost of their lives. The tragic stories of the two men mentioned in the last chapter who starved to death rather than purchase food on black market were, in a moral sense, not unlike those of Japanese dissidents who languished or died in prison during the war for

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5 Even those whose lives were relatively untouched by wartime propaganda still found their behaviour, especially their speech, circumscribed by those who sought out “dangerous thoughts.” For one such account of a wartime university student, see Katô Shûichi, *A Sheep’s Song*, pp. 158-86.
refusing to support an ideology they did not believe in. Just as kokutai countenanced no opposing spiritual viewpoints during the war, neither did the black market allow for alternative means of material support after defeat.

Another way we can understand the black market as a discourse is by examining the language associated with it. In strictly economic terms, the black market was the most direct expression of Japan’s early postwar kyodatsu jōtai, and was therefore linked to the problems of inflation, unemployment, and stagnating production. The black market was also associated with two frequently heard phrases that characterized daily life in early postwar Japan: uridashi and take no ko seikatsu. Uridashi simply means putting something on the market or holding a sale, but in the early postwar years it became associated specifically with the act of putting one’s belongings on the market in order to survive. The take no ko seikatsu (the bamboo shoot life) essentially described the same practice but in a collective rather than individual sense. With rampant inflation and inadequate food rations, Japanese people regularly bartered their clothing, jewellery, and family heirlooms with farmers to buy food or sold those items directly on the black market for hard currency or food. Bamboo shoots are a crisp and tasty

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Conversely, those who recanted their beliefs in prison under coercion and torture, a process known as political apostasy, or tenkō, were often seen as immoral in the early postwar years in the same way as were those who profited from the black market. The process of tenkō has been a controversial issue in postwar Japan. For an exhaustive study of this, see Shisō no Kagaku Kenkyūkaihen (eds), Tenkō, three volumes, Heibonsha, 1969.

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delicacy, one of the favoured flavours of springtime, which can be peeled off layer by layer. Metaphorically, this is what many Japanese people were forced to do: peel off their belongings little by little to buy food. Another way of looking at this phrase is to consider that consumption of the bamboo shoot precluded the possibility that it will grow into a tree to be used for other purposes or simply to be gazed upon through the years. It is in these two senses that the take no ko seikatsu can be understood from a Japanese point of view. The only difference perhaps lies in the fact that the Japanese of the early postwar years parted with their belongings, not for some fleeting but exquisite taste sensation, but simply to fill their empty stomachs.

The black market was not merely a symbol of economic collapse; it was also the manifestation of the moral decay of a defeated nation. In some ways Japan’s moral “descent into hell” was seen as an even more serious problem than economic reconstruction because it wove itself into the very fibre of Japanese society. Selfishness, corruption, and decadence were all linked directly to the existence of the black market and so became intertwined with discussions of the Japanese character which were themselves a product of defeat. Postwar immorality was also connected with two highly controversial issues, hoarding and indemnity payments, both of which were decried in the press as clear evidence of the moral bankruptcy of Japan’s leaders.

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Chapter Two: Kyodatsu and Shinsei in the Black Market

Despite the widespread view that the black market was the evil symbol of Japan's fall from grace, it was also paradoxically the stage on which new life was created. Given the sorry state of Japan's economy, the black market was, by default, one of the only avenues of employment or outlets for entrepreneurial activity in the early postwar years. This was not out of choice, but of out the simple need to survive, particularly for those who had no jobs, no families, or no belongings to sell. Thousands of farmers, repatriated soldiers and civilians, and Korean and Chinese labourers gravitated to the black markets throughout urban Japan. For some it offered the promise of a better life and thus became part of the language of shinsei and the new Japan.

Anada Yoshihachirō, for example, escaped the poverty of tenant farming in Toyama Prefecture during the war and after kicking around at odd jobs in Tokyo finally found his new home at the Ameyokocho black market near Ueno Station selling manjū, a steamed bun with a red bean centre. Morii Sugeo, too, found new life on the black market. A lacquerer conscripted into one of wartime Japan's many factory armies, Morii took his small sum of separation money at the end of the war and began buying up lacquer goods on the black market. In a few months he was back in business: an old job in a new life. Morii unabashedly remembered

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7 Oshima Yukio, Ningen kiroku, pp. 38-40.

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that he was one of the many “opportunists” (jikyoku binjôsha) in the early postwar years. For them, the black market was just the place.\(^8\)

Many children also began their new postwar lives in the *yami ichi*. Ten-year old Fujita Akiko from Osaka recalled how her entire family existed off the black market after her father lost his job at an auto factory at the end of the war.\(^9\) One day her parents received a package of clothes and foodstuffs from their relatives in Aiichi; carefully secreted between the items were layers of huge yellowish-brown tobacco leaves. Initially, Akiko’s parents were frightened since sending and receiving tobacco, a controlled commodity, was illegal. Nonetheless, the precious leaves provided the only means of support for their family of six. As the weeks passed, cigarette production became a family enterprise. Akiko’s mother would finely cut the leaves, while Akiko and her elder brother would practice rolling; after many false starts and ruined cigarettes, they finally got the hang of it. “It was just like rolling *sushi,*” she said.\(^10\) Dad would carefully cut off the ends and then everyone would package the cigarettes in bundles of ten, secured with paper tape: 10 cigarettes, 30 yen. Later, when production began to pick up, they

\(^{8}\)This story comes from Yoshimi, *Kusa no ne no fashizumu*, pp. 281-82.

\(^{9}\)This story comes from Oshima, *Ningen kiroku*, pp. 317-18.

\(^{10}\)Ibid., p. 317.
Chapter Two: Kyodatsu and Shinsei in the Black Market

turned their shop into a legitimate wholesaling business, but in those early years black market tobacco was all that stood between them and possible starvation. "It let us breathe a little," Akiko remembered.11

In his collection of stories about life in the past war years in Japan, Oshima Yukio described the black market "as one of the unmistakable points of origin for postwar peoples' history."12 Enriching few and impoverishing many, the black market was both the scourge of the consumer and the salvation of the entrepreneur. It became the very meeting point for kyodatsu and shinsei, the place where opportunity and hardship came together to define the nature of existence in early postwar Japan.

11 Ibid., p. 318.

12 Ibid., p. 38. Oshima worked for the Mainichi Shimbun for many years in Tokyo and Nagano. Born in 1937 in Minani Senjū, Tokyo and educated at Waseda, Oshima would have seen first hand the power of the black market and the hold it had on the daily lives of the Japanese people.
New Life in the Black Market

A legacy of wartime rationing and material shortages, black market activity exploded at the end of the war.\(^\text{13}\) Within a few months of surrender there were an estimated 17,000 individual black markets scattered throughout Japan’s cities and towns.\(^\text{14}\) By October 1945 Tokyo alone was home to some forty-five thousand open-air street stalls (roten), employing about eighty thousand people.\(^\text{15}\) A mere five yen would purchase a street stall license and quasi-title to about twelve square metres of roped off area in which to do business.\(^\text{16}\) Vendors would periodically have to fork out protection money or "shoba sen" to the gangsters (yakuza) who quickly came to dominate the black market trade. According to one account, nearly ninety percent of all the street stalls in Tokyo were under the control of yakuza gangs through the Street Stall Tradesmen’s

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\(^{13}\)For a good account of wartime black market methods and operations see Maeda Yasuyuki, “Zeitaku wa geki da,” in Arisawa (ed), Shōwa keizaishi, pp. 185-88.

\(^{14}\)Uchino, “Infure to shokuryō kiki,” in Arisawa (ed), Shōwa keizaishi, p. 258.

\(^{15}\)Shōwa kazokushi nenpyō, p. 162.

\(^{16}\)Reported in Yomiuri Hōchi, December 22, 1945. Five yen was the going rate at this time for a street stall in Shimbashi and was probably high compared to the cost in smaller cities and towns. The information on the size of the street stalls comes from Oshima, Ningen kiroku, p. 37.
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Cooperative Union (Roten Dōgyō Kumiai).17

Given the destruction and food and material shortages at this time, many people asked where the immense amount of black market goods came from. Much of the food that found its way into the labyrinth of urban street stalls came from farmers and fishers who could make considerably higher profits selling on the black market than at official prices. This was clearly a powerful incentive for producers to subvert the food distribution system. Farmers would withhold part of their food delivery quota and then sell it later on the black market or sell it directly to the millions of city dwellers who commuted daily to the countryside to buy food. To make matters worse, the distribution system itself was woefully inefficient, even when farmers did sell their food through government channels. In Tokyo, for example, staple food distribution was twenty to thirty days behind in the spring and summer of 1946.18 Regular delays in the food distribution system throughout Japan’s urban centres made black market

17Protection money figures come from Ibid, p. 40. For the yakuza connection see David Kaplan and Alec Dubro, Yakuza: The Explosive Account of Japan’s Criminal Underworld, MacMillian, 1986, p. 53. Until the postwar years, yakuza ran the gambling businesses throughout Japan but were not generally involved in other illegal activities. After Japan’s defeat, yakuza moved into a host of new businesses including protection, construction, drugs, and prostitution. It is likely that many criminal groups, like the average citizen, got started or re-started in the black market after the war.


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shopping even more of a daily necessity. It is in this sense that we can understand the black market as a structure in which people were compelled to act. Whether one was a farmer motivated by gain or an urban consumer driven by survival, the acts of individual Japanese contributed to the further expansion of the black market and ever higher rates of inflation.

While the black market grew out of natural necessity, the policies of the first two postwar governments, headed by Prince Higashikuni and Baron Shidehara respectively, literally breathed new life into it and sent the inflationary spiral to dizzying heights.19 Immediately following Japan’s defeat, both governments proceeded to pay out huge sums in indemnity payments to Japanese companies for their support of the war effort, arguing that these monies would allow companies to resume production which would in turn curb inflation and solve the unemployment problem.20 This issue became one of the first major controversies of the postwar years. Business leaders and bankers naturally supported the government position, maintaining that without the indemnities

19The Higashikuni cabinet was formed two days after surrender and lasted until October 9, 1945. The Shidehara cabinet held power until May 22, 1946, when the first elected postwar government under Yoshida Shigeru came to power.

20See the interviews with Ishibashi in the Asahi Shimbun, January 19, 1946 and February 21, 1946. After his purge, Ishibashi wrote a nine-part series on inflation where he justified his earlier economic policies. Nihon Keizai Shimbun, October 21 - December 5, 1947.
there would be massive bank failures which would bankrupt small and large investors alike. Critics, for their part, charged that the indemnity payments only served to enrich big business at the expense of the people. In a radio program in the winter of 1945 Tokyo University economist Ouchi Hyōe publicly castigated Finance Minister Shibusawa Keizō’s support of the indemnities as nothing more than “reckless valour” (ban-yû o furue). Ultimately GHQ sided with Ouchi, purging in the process Shibusawa’s successor, Ishibashi Tanzan, for his support of the indemnity payments. By July 1947, the indemnity payments had been cancelled, but not before Japan’s first two postwar governments paid out an estimated ¥26.5 billion to dozens of companies, much of it disbursed immediately following Japan’s surrender before GHQ was up and running.

21 Some officials like the Bank of Japan’s Research Bureau chief, Yamamoto Yoneji qualified their support by arguing that indemnity payments should be made contingent upon a complete reorganization of the Japanese business and financial sectors. Others like Reconstruction Finance Bank Vice-President Suehiro Kôjirô wanted to tax away the indemnities and the windfall profits resulting from them and then use that money to stabilize prices for food and other consumer necessities. For these views, see “Zadankai: Nihon keizai wa ika ni seiri sareru ka” (Round Table Discussion: How is Japan’s Economy to be Reorganized?), Jitsugyô no Nihon (September 1946), 49:3, p. 6-13.


24 Uchino Tatsurô, “Infure to shokuryô kiki,” in Arisawa (ed) Shôwa keizaishi, p. 256. Writing a year after GHQ prohibited further indemnity payments, Kimura Kihachirô claimed that, all told, ¥46 billion had been dispersed with the complete blessing of the Bank of Japan.
At the same time, the Higashikuni cabinet relaxed wartime price controls on perishable goods which caused an explosion in the prices of fruits and vegetables. In the first seven months after the war wholesale prices rose an astonishing 295 percent. With an August 1945 base of 100, the wholesale price index rose to 273 in 1946, 874 in 1947, and then ballooned to 2377 in 1948.\textsuperscript{25} Wages, too, rose during this period, driven both by inflation and labour’s new-found political voice. However, they could not keep pace with the rate of inflation; wages were twelve times higher in 1947 than they had been in 1945 but retail prices were fifteen times greater.\textsuperscript{26}

These calculations, however, were based on official prices which were many times cheaper than black market prices. In October 1945, for example, black market prices for miso (soy bean paste) and shōyu (soy sauce) were forty-five times higher than official prices. Satsumaimo (sweet potatoes) were forty times higher than official prices. Satsumaimo (sweet potatoes) were forty times higher than official prices.

\textsuperscript{25}Keizai Kikakuchōhen, \textit{Gendai nihon keizai no hatten}, Okurashō Insatsukyoku, 1976, p. 19. These figures, taken from the IMF’s International Financial Statistics, used 1937 as the base year and 1945 as 442, but I have adjusted the figures to reflect 1945 as the base year. This provides a better understanding of inflation’s progress following Japan’s defeat. See also Nakamura Takafusa, \textit{Nihon keizai}, p. 160. Kimura argued that the rise in the wholesale price index was much more dramatic than most experts admitted. Using Bank of Japan figures, he argued that the wholesale price index had increased six times by June 1946 alone. Kimura, \textit{Infure-shon no kenkyū}, p. 138.

\textsuperscript{26}Jerome B. Cohen, \textit{Japan’s Economy}, p. 459.
and fresh *saba* (mackerel) sixty times higher, while *hakumai* (white rice) was a staggering one hundred and thirty-two times more than official prices.$^{27}$ Prices for services also jumped in the early postwar years. Between 1946 and 1948 the cost of electricity increased twenty-two times, water fifty times, and rail transportation thirty-five times. Not only were Japanese urban residents financially worse off than in the past but they were probably more dishevelled and dirtier than they had ever been in living memory. By 1947 a haircut cost about forty times more than it had done when the war ended while the price of a hot bath, assuming enough soap could be found to make a bubble, was nearly fifty times higher.$^{28}$

Japanese newspapers were filled with letters to the editor documenting the hardships of urban workers. In December 1945 a young elementary school teacher offered her monthly budget to the *Tokyo Shimbun* as evidence of her plight. Her expenses were more than twice her income of ¥126 but even more tragic was the fact that food and fuel either bought on the black market or purchased in the countryside accounted for seventy-five percent of her total


monthly outlay. The following March a Kofu railway dispatcher and father of four told a similar tale. Although his wages were double that of the young school teacher, his expenses were three times higher, with two-thirds of it going to black market purchases. He related how women in his community shared face creams and oils among themselves while men saved money by cutting each others' hair. In reality, these two people were among the lucky ones since they both had jobs and savings, in the case of the Kofu man, or parents on whom to depend in the case of the Tokyo woman. The real sufferers were those who had neither jobs, nor savings, nor family, and for whom live was a daily struggle to find one meal, let alone three.

The final act of the Higashikuni and the Shidehara governments was to increase the amount of yen in circulation which further heightened the inflationary spiral. Finance Ministers Shibusawa and Ishibashi both argued that Japan's inflation was not a true inflation but a distorted form of it, brought about by the shortage of capital and materials. In their view, increased currency circulation would provide the necessary stimulus for companies to resume production which in turn would balance the supply of goods to demand. The end result was

29Tokyo Shimbun, December 6, 1945.

a massive jump in the amount of yen. Between August 1945 and February 1946, the yen notes in circulation doubled from ¥33 billion to ¥65 billion.\(^{31}\)

The flood of new yen had exactly the opposite effect intended by Shibusawa and Ishibashi, eventually forcing the government to act at the insistence of GHQ. In February 1946 the Shidehara cabinet introduced the Emergency Financial Countermeasures Act (Kinyū Kinkyū Sochi Rei) designed to stabilize the economy and bring inflation under control. Among the major changes was a currency conversion plan whereby all notes in denominations of ¥10 and over were to be deposited in financial institutions and then converted into the new currency. This effectively reduced the amount of currency in circulation from ¥62 billion to ¥15 billion. Deposits were also frozen so that only ¥300 per month for the household head and ¥100 for each family member could be withdrawn. In addition, the government instituted a ¥500-yen wage limit per month which became known as the “500 yen life” or “gohyakuen seikatsu.”\(^{32}\)

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\(^{31}\)Uchino, in Arisawa (ed), Shōwa keizaishi, p. 256. See also Jerome B. Cohen, Japan’s Economy, p. 448.

\(^{32}\)Nakamura Takafusa, “Kinyū kinkyū sochi,” in Arisawa (ed), Shōwa keizaishi, pp. 274-77. See also Cohen, Japan’s Economy, pp. 454-58. The other important features of the countermeasures were a 100% tax on war indemnities, a capital levy, the fixing of official prices, and the establishment of the ESB to oversee the implementation of the measures and to seek ways to increase industrial production.
Except for a minor buying spree prior to the currency conversion and a brief drop in prices afterward, however, the countermeasures had no long-term impact on the economy as a whole.\textsuperscript{33} Even the positive short-term impact was partially subverted by Japanese government incompetence and/or corruption. For example, advance news of the conversion was leaked which gave some Japanese the opportunity to convert their old notes into denominations of ¥5 or less. Even more absurd was the fact that the Bank of Japan discovered it did not have enough paper on which to print the notes. GHQ approved the use of stamps that could be affixed to old notes, thereby transforming them into new currency. However, aside from the fact that the stamps were easy to counterfeit, they were all initially identical; anyone could remove a stamp from a ¥10 yen note and place it on a ¥100 note. The stamped notes remained in circulation until November 1946.

Within six months the volume of new currency exceeded that of the old prior to conversion and continued to rise steadily thereafter. Naturally, prices also rose, rendering the “500 yen life” unmanageable. As inflation proceeded apace, the government raised the wage limit to ¥700 and then to ¥1200, and finally to ¥1800

\textsuperscript{33}Cohen contrasted Japan’s currency conversion with that of Belgium around the same time. In the latter case the conversion was announced at noon on a Saturday and put into effect the following Monday. In Japan, the conversion was announced two weeks in advance, ample time for many to convert their notes into small denominations. \textit{Japan's Economy}, p. 455.
Chapter Two: Kyodatsu and Shinsei in the Black Market

before abolishing it altogether in the spring of 1948. More significantly, much of the new currency found its way into the hands of black market dealers. The Bank of Japan estimated that by June 1947 thirty-seven percent of all new yen issued was held by black marketeers while consumers held only ten percent. This was due to the phenomenon of “shin-en kasegi” or “hustling after new currency,” a term applied to those who employed illegal methods of acquiring the new currency.

The countermeasures further impoverished most urban Japanese, bringing them into a more intimate relationship with the take no ko seikatsu. This practice was not caused by the countermeasures but they did make matters worse by limiting monthly savings withdrawals. Contrary to Finance Minister Ishibashi Tanzan’s assertions that prices would stabilize, they actually soared. By December 1946

34Ibid., pp. 457-58.

35“Eben-to: Katayotte ita shin-en no yukikata,” (Event: The One-sided Disposition of the New Yen), in Arisawa (ed), Shōwa keizaishi, p. 277. The BOJ report also stated that another 29% of the new yen was in the hands of farmers and fisherman, further evidence that much of the economic hardship in the early postwar years was confined to the cities.

36Asahi Shimbun, September 12, 1946.

37Media criticisms of the countermeasures were widespread, as were attacks on Ishibashi. See, for example, Yomiuri Shimbun, February 3, 1947; Jiji Shimpō, January 22, 1947; Daiichi Shimbun, January 17, 1947; Tokushima Shimbun, January 26, 1947; Dayamondo Nippō, January 23, 1947; Godō Shimbun, August 6, 1947; Shin Hōchi August 20, 1947.
the retail price index in Tokyo was more than double what it had been in March. With deposits frozen, ever greater numbers of people were forced to barter or sell their personal possessions on the black market. There was simply no other way to live. In February 1947 the Tokyo Metropolitan Office released the findings of a survey conducted on 405 households, based on five different job classifications: public officials (15), teachers (29), office workers (90), light industry (197), and heavy industry (74). In each category expenses exceed income, by as much as fifty percent in some cases. According to the survey, the sale of belongings and the consumption of food grown in backyard gardens made up nearly forty percent of the monthly shortfall, while the rest was covered by savings withdrawals and borrowing.\(^3\) By the end of 1947 reports of fifty percent monthly deficits were widespread throughout Japan. Another teacher, writing in a local weekly magazine, reported that his monthly expenditures exceeded his income by forty percent, with almost sixty percent of those expenditures going to buy food and fuel on the black market. The deficit, he said, was made up by his wife selling her belongings. Bemoaning the lack of books for study or entertainment, the teacher said “if my wife and child are duly fed, my soul must hunger; and if my soul is to be satisfied, my family is bound to starve.” So spoke Oda Ichinosuke whose life,

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\(^3\)Reported in *Jiji Shimpô*, February 24, 1947, translated and reprinted in *ATIS*, Reel 29, Social Series 149, Item 2.
by his own account, faced "imminent collapse."^{39}

The Treasure Trove

The individual stories of gain and impoverishment, like the daily commutes to the countryside and the images of homeless lying in the subways, have been indelibly stamped on the historical memory of the yakeato generation. There are other stories, less well known, but at the time even more significant for having created the conditions in which individual stories were played out. Hoarded goods (intaizô busshi) and industrial sabotage (kigyô sabota-ju) were two such stories which had a tremendous impact on the growth and perpetuation of the black market.

The black market was not simply the primary source of food and household goods; anything could be bought and sold there. The opportunity for huge profits was enormous. Everything from tobacco and alcohol to producers' goods and industrial materials were available at a price. The sources of these latter goods, in

particular, were not farms and fishing villages but military arsenals and munitions companies which had effectively shut down production after August 15th. The following quote by a small-time gambler offers a glimpse of what exactly was at stake in the chaotic days immediately following the Emperor’s speech:

It [the Emperor’s broadcast] started it all off. It made thieves of everyone. There were some who wept, of course, but most people were pleased as punch. Up ’till then you couldn’t as much as fart without written permission... But now there was this treasure trove... waiting to be cleaned out before the Yanks got it.40

The “treasure trove” of which our gambler spoke was none other than the vast stockpile of food and material held by the military at the end of the war. For nearly a year prior to Japan’s defeat, the army had been preparing for an American invasion of the Japanese home islands and had stockpiled huge amounts of military supplies, production goods, and raw materials in anticipation of a long and bloody battle. At the end of the war these supplies remained untouched in arsenals and warehouses scattered throughout Japan. Schools, too, were used to store equipment, as were temples. After learning that the Americans would not bomb Kyoto, for example, the Japanese Army used the Buddhist temple grounds in that city to stash all manner of equipment and supplies, some of which was recovered by the occupation forces but much of

which simply vanished into nothingness.41

The two-week period between Japan’s surrender and the arrival of the American occupation forces offered bureaucrats, military officials and businessmen a small window of opportunity during which they could dispose of the “treasure trove” along with any documented evidence of its existence. The day after the Emperor’s speech, the War Ministry issued an order that all military supplies, except weaponry, be distributed free to prefectural governments or sold at discount prices to private corporations. This violated the principle of unconditional surrender as laid down in the Potsdam Declaration but in the political and social vacuum created by surrender itself there was no one to force compliance with the declaration until the Americans arrived. In that brief period an estimated three quarters of all military stores were disposed of illegally with only a small percentage ever being recovered.42

41See, for example Klaus Pringsheim’s account of his experience working for the occupation after the war. Klaus A. Pringsheim and Victor Boesen, Man of the World: Memoirs of Europe, Asia, and North America (1930s to 1980s), Mosaic Press, 1995, pp. 79-92. Pringsheim was a German national who lived in Japan during and after the war. During the last months before Japan’s surrender, he was jailed for being a spy. Upon his release, he worked for the Japanese and then the Americans. One of his first jobs was acting as translator for American patrols charged with the task of ferreting out concealed military goods.

42GHQ did have some success, however; Mark Gayn recorded a number of cases where occupation officials uncovered stashes of ammunition, gasoline, as well as concrete pillboxes, camouflaged as houses, full of military stores. Japan Diary, William Sloane Associates, Inc., 1948, pp. 45-46.
Rumours of this “treasure trove” were widespread. The army, for example, was said to have buried an untold fortune in gold bullion in Tokyo Bay while another rumour claimed that an equally large motherlode of diamonds was stashed away in a warehouse owned by the Bank of Japan. These valuables were never found but the lack of evidence did nothing to squelch speculation. Some of the rumours were substantiated but most simply floated like cherry blossom petals in an April breeze, buoyed by press accounts that titillated a public desperate for any escape from the drudgery of daily life.

It was not until nearly two years later that evidence supporting the rumours actually came to light in the unlikely person of Liberal Diet member Sekō Kōichi. Described by the press as a “little man” with a “peculiar voice,” Sekō was a five-time Diet member from Wakayama and had once served as vice-

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44 Two of the more fantastic rumours actually proved to be true. In Fukushima Prefecture, millions of dollars worth of machine tools were found stashed at the bottom of Lake Inawashiro. In Okayama Prefecture workshops constructed on top of some eighty tons of aluminum, tin, copper wire, and scrap iron were also uncovered. See Ibid., p. 344.

45 Sekō himself broke the story of the diamonds, the value of which was estimated between ¥10 and ¥18 billion at 1947 prices. About ¥200 million worth was actually recovered from the basement of a Mitsui Trust Company building on April 5, 1946. See *Asahi Shimbun*, July 11, 1947. See also *Seiji*, July 12, 1947 and *Jimmin*, July 13, 1947, both translated and reprinted in *ATIS*, Reel 36, Editorial Series 1812, Item 3, and Reel 37, Political Series 1646, Item 10, respectively.
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minister in the Home Ministry as well as president of the Liberal Party. The story broke as the result of a speech Sekō made at a Liberal Party meeting where he alleged that some ¥100 billion worth of supplies had been hoarded and disposed of by the military in collusion with bureaucrats, politicians, and businessmen. Sekō had in fact uncovered evidence of these wrongdoings in his capacity as vice-chairman of the Hoarded Goods Disposition Committee (Intaizô Busshi Shori Iinkai), chaired by former Finance Minister Ishibashi Tanzan. Sekō’s job was to substantiate the rumours, track down the hoarded goods, and then distribute them through government agencies. In another meeting of Liberal Party members held three days after his initial announcement, Sekō claimed that in order to follow up on rumours of hoarded goods he had issued almost two hundred orders, written on the backs of his calling cards, for the

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46This information comes from a July 29, 1947 profile on Sekō in the Shin Hōchi, translated and reprinted in ATIS, Reel 37, Political Series 1883, Item 5.

47Cohen (Remaking Japan, pp. 334-50) and Dower (Embracing Defeat, pp. 112-19) are the only English-language authors I have encountered who discuss this case in any detail. Mark Gayn related a Tokyo newspaper story which claimed that 5800 railways cars were used to transport concealed military supplies to the hiding places in Kyūshū. Japan Diary, p. 496.

48Sekō was appointed parliamentary vice-minister in the Home Ministry in June 1946. When the Economic Stabilization Board (ESB) was established in August 1946, Prime Minister Yoshida, despite opposition from ESB chief Zen Keinosuke, set up the Hoarded Goods Committee with Sekō at its head. Zen was replaced as ESB head in January 1947 by then Finance Minister Ishibashi Tanzan who remained in that position until he was purged by GHQ in May 1947. In a newspaper interview after his purge, Ishibashi claimed that between ¥50 and ¥100 billion worth of hoarded goods had disappeared. Yomiuri Shim bun, July 29, 1947.
discovery and disposal of nearly ¥5 billion worth of such goods. Despite Seko’s assertion that most of the information he received was true, however, only about ten percent of the goods were recovered. This, he said, was due to collusion between government officials and black marketeers who had obstructed his efforts to uncover the hoarded goods.⁴⁹

Seko claimed that a number of high-ranking government officials, including Chief Cabinet Secretary Nishio Suehiro, were involved in the hoarded goods scandal and were consequently trying to hinder his investigation. He also accused the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Board, which was conducting its own independent investigation, of obstructing justice by jailing his sources.⁵⁰ It seems that Seko, convinced of rampant government corruption, had used a motley assortment of blackmarketeers and brokers as his informants, a number of whom had forged his orders and either absconded with the concealed goods or extorted money from the accused in return for keeping quiet. This, in turn, led to counter-accusations that Seko himself had been profiting from the illegal disposition of hoarded goods. To muddy the waters even further, Nishio then

⁴⁹Quoted in Nihon Keizai Shim bun, July 14, 1947. See also Theodore Cohen, pp. 339.

⁵⁰The Police Board uncovered 3647 cases of hoarded goods in 1946 but only 200 in the first half of 1947, of which only twenty-five were found to be in violation of the law. The dramatic decrease in cases led to speculation that many of Seko’s allegation were unfounded. See Asahi Shim bun, July 27, 1947.
sued Sekō for libel, arguing that his reputation had been irrevocably damaged by Sekō unfounded allegations.

Speaking on behalf of the Katayama cabinet, Nishio said that the government would take no action to investigate Sekō’s claims, but the scandal was simply too big for the government to ignore. Nishio’s statement notwithstanding, the Diet established a special committee (Intaizō Busshi Tokubestu Iinkai) to investigate. In light of his mysterious involvement in the affair and his Liberal Party affiliation, Sekō was shunted aside in favour of Socialist Party member Katō Kanjū who was chosen to head the new committee. Sekō then had to endure interrogation by the Procurator General and was also forced to retract his statements against Nishio due to lack of concrete evidence. After that time, Sekō’s name all but disappeared from the press.

The Katō Committee launched an extensive investigation, aided by men from GHQ’s Economic and Scientific Section (ESS), and issued a report of its findings

51 For the complete text of the interview see Mainichi Shimbun, July 15, 1947. Katō, a staunch labour activist, became the Minister of Labour in the cabinet of Ashida Hitoshi following the collapse of the coalition headed by socialist Katayama Tetsu. Katō’s wife, Shizue, was the former Baroness Ishimoto, whose husband left her for a life of adventure in Manchuria during the war. She was one of the first group of women to be elected to the Diet in 1946, campaigning for the elimination of the old family system (ie no seidō) in which women were mere chattels of their husbands. Information on the Katōs comes from Gayn who knew and admired both of them, Japan Diary, pp. 172-74, 179, 197, 488-89.
in December 1947. The Kato Report told a story of wholesale theft and looting at the end of the war. Overnight vast stockpiles of materials, enough to equip a four million-man army, disappeared without a trace, to be held back until prices rose or to be leaked out piecemeal onto the black market. Goods held as inventory at munitions companies and other factories throughout Japan also disappeared. Through the process of “civilianization” these goods simply reverted to company ownership as if they had never been the property of the military in the first place. Along with the disposal of goods and supplies, mountains of documents were put to the torch within days after the war. For two days after Japan’s surrender bonfires could be seen burning outside military offices throughout the country as men scrambled to destroy any potentially incriminating evidence of these illegal transactions. The sheer volume of materials involved meant that their disappearance was not simply a case of piecemeal theft and hoarding by individuals. Some, like our gambler, undoubtedly partook in looting the “treasure trove” whenever they could but,

52 The full text of the report was published in Mainichi Shimbun, December 21, 1947.


54 Okita Saburō, recalled how he accidentally met Inaba Hidezō, later an ESB official, while both men were sifting through soon to be destroyed documents. Okita discovered to his relief that Inaba was on the same rescue and preservation mission as himself. Okita Saburō, Tōhon seisō, p. 62. A neighbour of mine in Kōnodai, eighty-year old Matsumoto Seiji, told me one day that he and his friends used joke about the fires, saying that they saw more of Tokyo burning after August 15th than before. Personal interview with the author, October 12, 1996.
given the speed with which the material disappeared, the only groups with the
ability to transport and store such large quantities were big manufacturers or
control associations, which were often associated with or headed by the zaibatsu
combines, and the military itself.

Estimates of the total amount of money involved ranged from Sekô's original
figure of between ¥50 and ¥100 million to ¥500 billion. Calculating the
monetary value of these goods is extremely difficult given the absence of
documentation and the ravages of inflation which rendered such calculations
obsolete on an almost daily basis. However, a partial reconstruction of Japan's
wartime expenditures can provide some indication of the amounts involved.
Between 1941 and 1945 government expenditures totalled about ¥260 billion.
With war expenditures accounting for 31% of government outlays in 1941 and
94% in 1945, a figure of ¥190 billion in total war expenditures (based on 1945
prices) for that four-year period is not unreasonable. If even one tenth of this
remained at the end of the war in form of unused stock, the 1947 value of these
materials would exceed ¥2.5 trillion, assuming that wholesale prices in mid-1947

55The Katô report put the figure at "more than ¥50 billion." Sekô's himself had revised
his original figure of ¥100 billion upward to ¥240 billion in August 1947, while Mark Gayn claimed
an amount of ten billion dollars. For the Sekô figure see the Niippo Times, June 23, 1948 and
Theodore Cohen, Remaking Japan, p. 344. For Gayn's figures, see Japan Diary, p. 496.
were 137 times those of August 1945. Aside from the actual amount of money involved, the truth of which will never be known, was the fact that the hoarded goods were the very same materials that Japan so desperately needed for economic reconstruction. Steel, aluminum, pig and scrap iron, copper, rubber, manganese, and zinc were just some of the materials that had vanished, along with clothing, shoes, and foodstuffs.

Throughout the latter half of 1947 and early 1948 GHQ did make a concerted effort to locate and recover these goods with the help of the Procurator General's Office and the ESB. Aside from a few individual successes, however, the bulk of the goods were simply never found. Too much time had passed since the goods had disappeared. Theodore Cohen has written that the sheer enormity of the scandal was lost on the Socialists whose more immediate and narrow concern was to expose corrupt conservative politicians and, more generally, to embarrass the Liberal Party itself. Nor, he stated, did GHQ fully appreciate the significance of finding the concealed goods. Even the Japanese press spent most of its energies

56Government and war expenditures, as well as inflation rates for wholesale prices, come from Jerome B. Cohen, Japan's Economy, pp. 54-5, 88-90, 448. He used a Bank of Japan survey of wholesale prices showing that, with 1931 prices at 100, wholesale prices rose from 584 in 1945 to 14,029 in July 1948. Theodore Cohen used the figure of ¥280 billion for war expenditures but did not quote the source, Remaking Japan, p. 344.

57Theodore Cohen estimated that less than half the total amount of hoarded goods were ever recovered. Remaking Japan, p. 341.
on pious denunciations of postwar immorality or on sensational scandal-mongering, rather than trying to uncover what had actually happened.

Perhaps as Cohen said, no one was fully able to grasp the amount of money involved or that the materials in question were designed to sustain a four million-man army for more than two years of fighting. Although further examination of this issue is beyond the scope of my dissertation, I would like to speculate briefly on some of the other possible reasons why this important issue never received the treatment it deserved. First, as Cohen himself mentioned, many Japanese officials were worried that had the hoarded goods been uncovered they would have been lost as reparations or would have reduced the amount of aid supplied by the Americans. Second, almost two years had passed by the time Sekô made his allegations which made successful recovery of even a small percentage of the hoarded goods extremely unlikely and, at any rate, would have required considerably more resources and manpower than either GHQ or the Japanese government had available. Third, the political will on the Japanese side was weak precisely because many politicians and bureaucrats were directly or indirectly involved. Fourth, by 1947 the Americans were fully committed to

\[58\] In addition to Nishio, a number of other Diet members were implicated but never charged in the case, including ESB chief Wada Hirô. The head of the Arms Disposal Committee, Komatsu Takeshi (vice-president of Nippon Steel Tube) was also suspected of having profited from the sale of military supplies.
supporting these same officials as the vanguard in America's fight against communism.

**Sabotage and the Black Market**

All in all, there were simply too many factors working against the recovery of the hoarded goods. Nonetheless, the impact of this issue on the socio-economic conditions of early postwar Japan was manifold. Specifically, hoarding created artificial material shortages which hindered production and increased unemployment. It also drove up prices, fanning the fires of inflation that raged across the country like the document bonfires themselves. Tsuru Shigeto, vice-minister of the Economic Stabilization Board in 1947 and author of Japan's first postwar economic White Paper, claimed that hoarding of critically scarce materials immediately after the war was the major cause of inflation.\(^{59}\) This opinion was shared by Minobe Ryôkichi, son of the famous "Emperor-as-organ" theorist Minobe Tatsukichi, who argued that an inexorable circular logic had gripped Japan's economy. Hoarding and stagnant production widened the gap between supply and demand which in turn further increased the rate of

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\(^{59}\)Personal interview with Professor Tsuru, February 13, 1991, Nogizaka, Tokyo.
inflation. This state of affairs perpetuated the original problems since sitting on stocks or selling them on the black market “would be far easier and decidedly to their [Japanese business] interests.”\(^6^0\) The centrepoint of that circle was of course the black market itself, since it was both the source of profit for those who had the goods and the source of goods for those who had no other choice.

What Minobe and Tsuru delicately referred to was a business practice known by other more openly critical commentators as “industrial sabotage” (kigyô sabota-ju).\(^6^1\) The industrial community and the zaibatsu in particular, it was alleged, were sitting on their stockpiles of hoarded materials and speculating for enormous profits on the black market while, at the same time, closing factories, laying off workers, and crying poverty in the face of Japan’s postwar economic kyodatsu jôtai. In short, the severe material shortages which Japanese business claimed were the reason for stagnating production were actually the product of a conscious decision on the part of those very same people not to produce.\(^6^2\) They were, in effect, the creators of the kyodatsu jôtai. This was the position of the


\(^6^1\)Industrial sabotage was also referred to as capital sabotage (shihon sabota-ju) and production sabotage (seisan sabota-ju).

\(^6^2\)See, for example, *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, August 15, 1946.
Japan Communist Party (JCP), whose official newspaper, Akahata, left no doubt as to the causes of Japan’s economic problems in a December 1946 editorial.

The present economic crisis is an outcome of the capitalists’ sabotage and the bureaucratic government’s indifferent attitude toward the crisis. As a matter of fact they [the capitalists] have invested all that there is to be invested in production into speculative fields, thereby aggravating inflation. Such is their policy because speculation brings more profits than production.63

Comments such as this were by no means confined to the extreme left, however. Criticism and concern over the effects of industrial sabotage were heard from many quarters. In a June 1946 debate in the economic journal, Jitsugyō no Nihon, moderator Sumida Shōichi argued that industrial sabotage was one of the main causes for the production control initiatives of labour.64 The following month in a round table discussion (zadankai) in the same journal, Ikumi Takaichi of the Japan Manufacturer’s Association echoed Sumida’s opinion. He did not endorse production control but Ikumi’s position is nonetheless surprising in light of


64 Sumida Shōichi, Kawai Yoshinari, Kôno Hisoka, “Tôron: Shihonshugi ka shakaishugi ka - Shokuryô, Infure, Shitsugyô,” Jitsugyō no Nihon, 49:6, June 1, 1946, pp. 6-8. Kawai was the Welfare Minister and member of the Upper House and Kôno was a member of the Socialist Party. Sumida was one of the journal’s staff writers. Although he brought up the issue of sabotage a number of times, neither Kawai nor Kôno address it directly. Both were more concerned with how to find the balance between socialism and capitalism through some combination of planning and free market principles.
whom he represented. In the same discussion Inoue Harumaro, an engineer with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, summarized the problem neatly, saying that sabotage was widening the gap between the capitalists and the people which delayed the establishment of postwar Japan’s new order (shin chitsujo).

Most analyses of industrial sabotage tended to link this phenomena directly with inflation while viewing the black market as a mere end product of immoral business behaviour. In this way, inflation itself came to be understood as the root of all economic evil. This was the line taken by the Foreign Ministry’s Special Survey Committee (SSC), whose 1946 report was one of the most influential commentaries on the state of Japan’s postwar economy.

Inflation is the main factor hindering the resumption of production... Sudden rises in the cost of labour, manufactured goods, and raw materials undermine management planning and, together with the difficulty of obtaining raw materials and a tight money supply, induces industrialists to refrain, consciously or unconsciously, from producing. Rather than paying high wages and processing raw materials, they discover that it is more profitable to sit on their stocks and wait for prices to rise. Given the diminishing appeal of commercial transactions based on sound economic activity, they solely pursue speculative profit... Furthermore, with the collapse of the official price structure, the possibility exists

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65Ikumi Takaichi, Inoue Harumaru, Kimura Kihachirō, “Zadankai: Yoshida naikaku no seizai seisaku,” Jitsugyō no Nihon, 49:7, July 1, 1946, p. 4. Kimura was the chairman of the journal and a member of the editorial board of the Hokkaidō Times. He was also the author of the study on inflation I cited earlier.

66Ibid., p. 3.
Part One: Kyodatsu and Shinsei

whereby firms such as munitions companies, which purchased amounts of raw materials during the war, can make enormous profits. This is one reason for the sabotage of production.67

While recognizing that some companies had indeed stockpiled goods, curtailed production, and dabbled in black market speculation, the authors of the report still presented inflation as a personified entity, creating victims of everyone through the sheer power of its self-sustaining life force. During eight years of all-out war Japan had created an economic monster. Government policies to shift as much of Japan’s productive capacity to war production had all but eviscerated domestic consumption, leading to rationing and shortages and, in turn, black markets and inflation. As long as the economy was producing war materials at the behest of the government, inflation and black market activity were limited by a combination of government controls, police surveillance, “economic laws,” and fear. With the onset of aerial bombing and the virtual disappearance of merchant shipping, Japan’s war economy almost ground to a halt. However, defeat radically changed the situation. Control waned, the police were defanged, and fear was replaced with a combination of despondency and opportunism. One of the few

67 Gaimusho Tokubetsu Inkai, Kaitei nihon keizai saiken no kihon mondai (The Fundamental Issues in the Reconstruction of Japan’s Economy: Revised), reprinted in Nakamura Takafusa (ed), Shiryō, vol. 1, “Nihon Keizai Saiken Kihon Mondai,” pp. 183-84. Italics mine. This edition of the document was published in September 1946 but an earlier draft was published the previous March. The reprint in Nakamura includes the original text where it differs from the revised edition. Both versions of the report used the word “taigyō” instead of the more common “sabota-ju” rendered into katakana. The third edition of the Köjien defines taigyō as sabotage, which carries with it the connotation of intentionality on the part of the doer.
Chapter Two: *Kyodatsu* and *Shinsei* in the Black Market

things the government was able to control was the transfer of war material and money to civilian control “before the Yanks got it.” With the spectre of potentially crippling reparations, wholesale purges, and *zaibatsu* dissolution, government officials and the business community - the so-called “old guard” - simply dug in their heels and waited to see what would happen.

Japanese business, for its part, claimed that material shortages and extensive damage to Japan’s industrial infrastructure made it impossible to resume production without outside - that is, American - assistance. Both were exaggerations. Japan’s industrial infrastructure was not damaged as badly during the war as many people believed. According to the 1949 ESB report on war damages, Japan still retained 75% of all production goods, 66% of machine tools, and 71% of transportation goods at the end of the war. In addition, there were vast stockpiles of metals, textiles and clothing, paper, and cement.\(^{68}\) Moreover, the worst decline in productivity occurred *after the war*, bottoming out at less than 10% of 1935-37 levels by the early fall of 1945.\(^{69}\) It was the civilian


\(^{69}\)Keizai Antei Honbu, “*Keizai jssô hôkokusho* (Report on the Actual Conditions of Japan’s Economy), reprinted by the Okurashô Insatsukyoku, November 1970, p. 14, University of British Columbia Library, Vancouver, BC. This was Japan’s first postwar economic White Paper, published on July 4, 1947 in all Japan’s major dailies, and authored mainly by Tsuru Shigeto. Hereafter referred to as “White Paper.” All citations and page numbers, however, come from the Okurashô
sector that was hardest hit by the war, not the industrial sector. With the remaining productive capacity, the huge injection of money from the government’s indemnity payments, and the enormous stockpile of hoarded materials, Japan’s industrial sector did have the wherewithal to resume production for civilian purposes. The postwar kyodatsu jōtai was real for many Japanese but the business community also used this language as an excuse not to produce. The SSC report was correct in explaining how this situation came about, but by focusing on inflation the committee failed to recognize that it was the self-sustaining force of the black market, rather than that of inflation itself, which made speculative profiteering possible. The black market was so deeply embedded in the structure of early postwar Japanese society that it closed off many other avenues of economic behaviour.

A final example to illustrate my point is unemployment, which combined with inflation and stagnant production to form the triumvirate of Japan’s economic woes in the minds of many Japanese. Immediately following defeat, companies closed shop and laid off their workers, and within a few months approximately two-thirds of all industrial workers were unemployed.\(^7\) Added to this was the

\(^7\)Joe Moore, *Japanese Workers and the Struggle for Power*, p. 88.

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massive influx of repatriated soldiers and civilians in search of employment or any means of survival. In December 1945, the Ministry of Welfare estimated that the number of Japanese unemployed was between five and six million.\(^{71}\) This figure was undoubtedly low since it did not include unemployed not registered at employment offices, black market dealers, those partially unemployed, or the millions who left the cities for the countryside.\(^{72}\) Many were concerned that if Japanese industry did not resume production unemployment would swell to three times or more that figure. By mid-1946, talk of ten to fifteen million unemployed was commonplace, and as late as the summer of 1947 fears of ten million or more unemployed were being expressed in official circles. The ESB's "White Paper" claimed that ten million unemployed was possible even if industrial productivity rose to 1935-37 levels.\(^{73}\)

The connection between unemployment and the black market is an interesting one. With Japanese industrial production slowing to a trickle, many unemployed

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\(^{71}\)This figure comes from a Ministry of Welfare (Kôseishô) study conducted in early 1946. Cited in Arisawa (ed), Shôwa keizaishi, p. 249.

\(^{72}\)Moore has correctly noted that unemployment figures for this period are notoriously unreliable, representing the tip of the iceberg rather than its base. Moore, Japanese Workers and the Struggle for Power, p. 258.

\(^{73}\)White Paper, p. 21.
persons naturally gravitated to the black market in search of work. More lucrative than regular employment, black marketeering was one of the few jobs that promised a decent living and, thus, became an important outlet for Japanese entrepreneurial creativity at a time when the lack of productive employment was one of the most serious barriers to reconstruction. Despite the wage gains made by organized labour, black marketeering still offered a better return on labour, not to mention providing easier access to scarce food and consumer goods.

Paradoxically, however, the black market exacerbated the unemployment problem because it offered both the chance for quick profit as well as an escape from the drudgery of whatever regular employment was available. A study done by the Labour Department of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Bureau in November 1945 reported that there were only 25,913 applicants for 37,000 vacancies in the city, meaning that about one-third of the available jobs had no applicants at all. Even more telling, the total number of applicants actually employed was only 6240, a mere seventeen percent of the total number of job vacancies.\(^{74}\) Although it lacked definitive proof, the study concluded that the majority of those not employed likely moved into the black market since there was really no where else

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\(^{74}\) Cited in the *Yomiuri Hōchi*, November 17, 1945. The situation for female employment was similar. A study done by the employment office of the Welfare Ministry showed that only 19% of jobs vacancies in offices and factories were filled in January 1946. This figure rose to 44% in April. Reported in *Jiji Shimpō*, September 1, 1946, translated and reprinted in *ATIS*, Reel 19, Editorial Series 846, Item 3.
to go. This was also the assessment of the SSC report which stated that the "tendency of workers to engage in business transactions [on the black market] rather than productive work created a contradictory phenomenon" whereby unemployment rose while job vacancies went unfilled.\textsuperscript{75}

Even those who did hold regular jobs frequently took time off to earn extra income in the street stalls that dotted the charred landscape of Japan's cities and towns.\textsuperscript{76} There was also regular, albeit risky, employment to be had as a smuggler, transporting rice and other foodstuffs from the countryside to the cities aboard the trains. These "mules" were frequently women who carried the illegal goods on their backs like babies. Occasionally, unfortunate women would be caught transporting smuggled rice when the bags sprung a leak. Seidensticker relates a story of one hapless women caught by a policeman who informed her that her "baby" was "wetting its pants."\textsuperscript{77} Police did regular spot checks and set up inspection points to stem the flow of these goods onto the black market, but, as with most smuggling operations, those who were caught were likely only a small percentage of the total traffic. Police also carried out frequent raids on known


\textsuperscript{76}Reported in the \textit{Yomiuri Hōchi}, December 22, 1945

\textsuperscript{77}Seidensticker, \textit{Tokyo Rising}, p. 153.
areas of black market activity, but as fast as some stalls were shut down others appeared in their place.\textsuperscript{78}

Black market activity continued to flourish well into 1948; however, rather than succumbing to government crackdowns and police surveillance, the demise of the black market was more a consequence of the same "economic laws" that brought it into existence in the first place. By 1948-49 inflation was slowing, production was increasing, and the worst of the \textit{take no ko seikatsu} was over. Black market activity continued to flourish, especially in luxury and imported items, but it ceased to exert the stranglehold over the Japanese people that it had done in the early years following surrender.\textsuperscript{79} For the first few years after the war, however, the black market functioned as both a monopoly and a monopsony, an economic tyrant that demanded unquestioning obedience.

\textsuperscript{78}In December 1946, Home Minister Omura Seiichi announced that 925,748 arrests for black marketeering had been made nationwide in the first ten months of the year, of which 121,000 were referred to the prosecutor's office (\textit{kenjikyoku}). Reported in \textit{Jiji Shimpō}, December 23 and 27, 1945, translated and reprinted in ATIS, Reel 6, Economic Series 784, Items 1 & 3.

\textsuperscript{79}One elderly woman told me the story of her college days in the late 1950s when she and her friend had to go the infamous Ameyokocho black market in Ueno to illegally purchase American dollars for their vacation to the United States. At that time, Ameyokocho dealers sold mostly currency and rare, imported items, primarily from the United States. Personal interview with Nagatani Michiko, Ichikawa City, Chiba Prefecture, December, 15, 1994.
Chapter Two: Kyodatsu and Shinsei in the Black Market

Daraku and the Black Market

The foregoing discussion has been designed to reinforce the idea that not only were inflation, hoarding, and unemployment inseparable in the early postwar years, but that their interactions can be best understood from the point of view of the people by focusing on the black market as the site of both kyodatsu and shinsei. In this regard, it is also important to recognize that the black market and other related phenomena were not merely manifestations of economic collapse but of moral collapse as well. The Japanese people became both victims and victimizers in what ceased to be an exclusively economic domain; they were in fact actors in what became a national morality play from which the only escape was death. The tragic examples of the Tokyo teacher and the Yokohama judge, discussed in the last chapter, who starved to death on official rations reinforced the idea of the immorality of a defeated nation. Through individual acts of conscience these men had chosen principle over preservation and had died for their beliefs. Their actions were extreme examples but they do illustrate that the dilemma facing the Japanese people was both economic and moral in nature.

It is not surprising that the debates over reconstruction, whether of the self or of the economy, were expressed in the language of morality as well as that of
Economics. One of the most commonly used phrases in discussions of Japan’s economy was “evil inflation” (akusei infure). Economist Tsuchiya Takao certainly used this language to describe the economic woes of a defeated nation. In a fascinating and prophetic March 1946 article where he advocated a Matsukata-style deflationary policy that anticipated the Dodge Line, Tsuchiya made a direct link between “evil inflation” and immorality. Drawing a parallel between the post-Satsuma Rebellion Japan and the early postwar years, Tsuchiya argued that inflation in both eras was characterized by the phenomenon of “moral degeneration” (dōtokuteki taihai). Lying, deception, theft, and decadence among the citizens of Tokyo were, for Tsuchiya, all examples of dishonour spreading throughout society. These were all the acts of a people “thrown into the abyss” (shin-en ni tōzuru) due to the corrupting effects of “evil inflation.” Tsuchiya did not specifically mention the black market but the acts to which he referred were those of the black market.

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80 Reference to “evil inflation” can be found in the SSC report, in the 1947 White Paper, and in the zadankai cited earlier. The press, too, frequently adopted this terms when discussing Japan’s economic problems. See also, Uchino, “Infure to shokuryō kiki,” in Arisawa (ed), Shōwa keizaishi, p. 256.


82 Ibid, p. 3.

83 Ibid., pp. 3-4.
Discussions of Japan's moral degeneracy were not restricted to the specialist, economic or otherwise. The press and the Japanese people too debated this issue almost as much as they did the food problem. A little more than two months after the war, an editorial in the *Tokushima Shimbun* castigated "the shameless attempts of [the] Japanese to live on the sacrifices of others." Referring in part to the profits made by some from the *take no ko seikatsu*, the editorial bitterly proclaimed that "morality has now forsaken Japan."\(^8^4\) The following month a letter to the editor from "a person without a regular occupation" denounced the moral corruption of war profiteers and demanded its eradication.\(^8^5\) At the end of that hard year, a *Tokyo Shimbun* editorial criticized both the government and industry for neglecting their obligations to the people by doing nothing to eliminate black market activity.\(^8^6\) The Sekô Case, too, elicited plenty of moral outrage in the press. The *Mainichi Shimbun*, for example, viewed the significance of the Sekô Case in terms of political morality. Given the atrocious state of Japanese public morals, it said, politicians of strong moral fibre were needed more than ever. In fact, the editorial saw the Sekô Case as a microcosm of

\(^8^4\) *Tokushima Shimbun*, November 27, 1945, translated and reprinted in *ATIS*, Reel 3, Editorial Series 73, Item 1.

\(^8^5\) *Asahi Shimbun*, December 14, 1945.

the moral degeneracy of a defeated nation.\textsuperscript{87}

One of the most influential and widely-read discussions of moral decay came from \textit{burai-ha} writer Sakaguchi Ango in his famous essay "On Depravity" (\textit{Darakuron}).\textsuperscript{88} Sakaguchi offered the example of Japan's young men who willingly offered to die for the Emperor during the war, but who now had become black marketeers.\textsuperscript{89} The world had changed, Sakaguchi said, in only six months, but the change was really only in the thin veneer of social conditions (\textit{kawatta no wa sesō no uwakawa dake}).\textsuperscript{90} People were as they had always been; "the bravery of the young men in the suicide corps was merely an illusion."\textsuperscript{91} In a bizarre twist on the concept of new life (\textit{shinsei}), Sakaguchi asked rhetorically: "Does not human history begin at the place where [the \textit{tokkōtai}] become black

\textsuperscript{87}Mainichi \textit{Shimbun}, July 27, 1947.

\textsuperscript{88}The \textit{burai-ha}, or decadents, was a group of young postwar radicals who rejected traditional Japanese values. Their avant garde style and intentionally hedonistic lifestyle attracted a wide following in the early postwar years, especially among young people. They also came under heavy criticism as the embodiment of defeated Japan's immorality. The writer Dazai Osamu, who committed suicide in 1948, was a friend of Sakaguchi's and a prominent member of this group.


\textsuperscript{90}Ibid., p. 213.

\textsuperscript{91}Ibid., p. 225.

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marketeers?"92 The seemingly smooth transition from dying for the Emperor to black marketeering for oneself illustrated the extent to which Japanese society had become depraved and immoral. With bitter sarcasm, Sakaguchi welcomed this, arguing that only through absolute depravity could Japan’s salvation be effected.

All nations experience at various points in their history a crisis of morality or ethics and Japan is no exception. Generational change, if nothing else, ensures that the coexistence of generations will produce a re-evaluation of habits, customs and morals. The current criticisms of today’s “Generation X” and of the hippies of the 1960s are two North American examples. In Japan we can also see a similar process at work: today, in the 1960s, and during the Taisho era when the emergence of the moga (modern girl) and mobo (modern boy) scandalized Japanese society.93 The early postwar concern about Japanese morality, or the lack of it, was but one example of a society in crisis. What made this crisis unique was defeat itself. The black markets which dotted the urban landscape of Japan like some kind of a social disease were among the most virulent expressions of defeat. The existential world of early postwar Japan was clearly characterized by

92Ibid., p. 225.

Part One: Kyodatsu and Shinsei

destruction, hunger, and depravity, a world where many people believed they were living in a turning point or standing at a crossroads in their history. Defeat was the natural occasion for this outpouring of emotion and therefore can be understood as the “psychological ground” of being in the sense that it was the site or location where the Japanese became aware of themselves as a fallen people. In the same way that the black market functioned as an “existential ground” from which escape on the level of daily life was virtually impossible, defeat too was the inescapable beginning/end from which all discussions of reconstruction, by necessity, originated. The early postwar years were, in the words of two Japanese scholars, “the unconscious point of departure (shuppatsuten) for the postwar generation.”

94 Iwasaki and Katô (eds), Shôwa sesôshi, p. 44.
PART TWO:
REPENTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY
Chapter Three: Tanabe Hajime and the Philosophy of Repentance

As we saw in part one, Japanese responses to defeat ranged from profound despair (kyodatsu) to exhilaration over the chance to build a new life (shinsei). The coexistence of kyodatsu and shinsei created a dynamic, anything goes environment in which the Japanese people struggled to come to grips with the world of destruction, hunger, and impoverishment into which they were thrown. While many people understood defeat as a disruption between past and present, Sakaguchi’s comment that only the veneer of society had changed may have more accurate than he ever imagined. Defeat revealed the poverty of Japan’s prewar and wartime value system and demanded a wholesale rethinking of the principles underlying those values. However, the ubiquity of black market activity exposed the moral bankruptcy of a nation in defeat, one characterized by selfish individualism and the breakdown of traditional forms of social order. Yet, the breakdown of traditional society and the resurrection in its place of (unselfish) individualism was the very goal to which many Japanese aspired in the early postwar years. The Japanese people were thus caught between the “rock” of the past and the “hard place” of the present. To move backward meant a return to the oppressive world that had led to defeat in the first place. To
remain standing in the present, however, meant further decline into the abyss of chaos and disorder. Only the unknown - the future - seemed to offer any real possibility for new life.

An awakening to this dilemma naturally led to the question: “How do we get there (the future) from here (the present)?” The answers to this question were many, the most important of which will be discussed in Chapter Five. In general terms, however, they all began from a recognition of the need for deep reflection (fukai hansei) on the immediate past and, in some cases, repentance (zange), and atonement (tsugunai). While there was little unanimity on the ultimate form Japanese society should take or on the role Japan should play in the new postwar world order, the language of a defeated nation was replete with these notions. Much of it amounted to empty rhetoric or downright deception, as in the case of many postwar leaders who sought to inculcate the idea of “collective repentance” (sōzange) as a strategy of protecting the Emperor and their own positions. Nonetheless, there was a significant number of Japanese for whom the acts of reflection, repentance, and atonement constituted the necessary first steps in their nation’s reconstruction.

These expressions of penance were most clearly articulated in the debate over war responsibility which is the subject of Chapter Four. Actually, the phrase,
"war responsibility," was something of a misnomer. Initially, there were numerous calls for an investigation into war responsibility (senso sekinin), but the debate quickly devolved into a discussion over responsibility for defeat (haisen sekinin). Thus, reflection, repentance, and atonement were not performed in response to the war’s origins or its prosecution; nor were they undertaken in recognition of the suffering inflicted by Japan’s military on the people of other Asian nations and on Allied prisoners of war. This was mostly left to the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE) which, together with the Emperor whose absolution from responsibility and reincarnation into a man of peace, forms the subject of Chapter Six. Rather, reflection, repentance, and atonement squarely focused on the fact of defeat itself. This is why I argue that defeat can be characterized as the psychological ground of being insofar as it was the progenitor of a debate which began the process of

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1The issue of war responsibility continued in the later postwar years but it really took off again in the mid-1970s, particularly through the work of Ienaga Saburō, Inoue Kiyoshi, Yamanaka Hisahi, Takasaki Ryōji, and Sakuramoto Tomio. For a good selection of their writings, see Shunsuke Tsurumi, A Cultural History of Postwar Japan, 1945-1980, Kegan Paul International, 1987, pp. 135-37. In recent years, especially in 1995 on the 50th anniversary of Japan’s defeat, a spate of new books appeared in Japanese bookstores addressing the issue of war responsibility. See, for example, Arai Shinichi, Sensō sekininron (The Debate on War Responsibility), Iwanami Shoten, 1995; Awaya Kentarō, Tanaka Hiroshi, Hiroto Kiyogo, Mishima Keiichi, Nozota Yoshio, Yamaguchi Sada, Sensō sekinin - Sengo sekinin: Nihon to Doitsu wa dō chigau ka (War Responsibility - Postwar Responsibility: How Are Japan and Germany Different?), Asahi Shimbunsha, 1996. Unlike the debate at the end of the war, these books focus primarily on responsibility for the war and its prosecution and often seek to locate the issue of war responsibility in Japan in a more global context. Because my own research suggests that for the Japanese people defeat remains the event that marked a turning point in Japan’s history, we can perhaps also understand these new publications as a collection of attempts to correct this mentality of defeat.
reconstructing the Japanese self, as well as becoming the end product of individual and collective acts of soul-searching and penance.

Amidst this chorus came another voice counselling repentance. It was the voice of Kyoto University philosopher Tanabe Hajime whose 1946 work, *Zangedo toshite no tetsugaku* (The Way of Repentance as Philosophy) provides us with a starting point from which we can analyze the relationship between defeat and identity.\(^2\) The importance of *Zangedo* to the reconstruction of self and society in early postwar Japan is manifold. In a world awash in chaos, *Zangedo* stood as a powerful example of one man's attempt to come to grips with crisis and life in the turning point. Tanabe's emphasis on repentance, remorse, and atonement as a way of reconstructing the self paralleled the efforts of those who sought to perform a similar action through the war responsibility debate. Although he did

\(^{2}\)Tanabe was a member of the *Kyoto-gakuha*, or Kyoto School of philosophers, whose other principal members included Nishida Kitarō and Nishitani Keiji. A second generation of disciples included Takeuchi Yoshinori, Ueda Shizuteru, and Kōsaka Masaaki. Of the three principals, Nishida is best known in Europe and North America. Although James Heisig overstates Tanabe's position as the rightful founder of the school, I do agree that without the philosophical disputes between Tanabe and Nishida there probably would not have been a Kyoto School at all. The phrase, *Kyōto-gakuha*, itself seems to have been coined by the marxist Tosaka Jun who used it as a pejorative epithet to describe the bourgeois ideology underlying much of their work. See James W. Heisig's "Foreword," in *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, University of California Press, 1987, pp. xii-xiii; and Heisig, "The Religious Philosophy of the Kyoto School," in Taitetsu Unno and Heisig (eds), *The Religious Philosophy of Tanabe Hajime: The Metanoetic Imperative*, Asian Humanities Press, 1990, pp. 12-42. This collection of essays will hereafter be cited as *RPT*. For more on the Kyoto School and its critics, see the essays in "Part Four" of James W. Heisig and John C. Maraldo (eds), *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School, & the Question of Nationalism*, University of Hawai'i Press, 1994.
not publicly partake in the debate, his plea for sôzange (collective repentance) was consistent with the language and temper of the times.³ Zangedô offered the promise of liberation from despair (kyodatsu) by placing the Japanese people on the road to new life (shinsei). It was therefore characteristic of a wave of idealism that swept through Japan in the heady years immediately following defeat when intellectuals and ordinary citizens longed for the establishment of a new international world order founded on peace, harmony, and cooperation. As one of many choices available in the early postwar years, Zangedô also represents a road not taken (tadoranakatta michi) or, at least, “one less travelled by.”⁴ As such, it can function as a yardstick against which the actual reconstruction of self and society is measured. Zangedô may also offer some insight into the process by which repentance and atonement were transformed or channelled into the

³Tanabe did venture briefly into the public domain between 1946 and 1949 with magazine articles focussing on politics and political ideology. Ienaga Saburô provides a complete list of publications from what he calls Tanabe’s “political life” (seiji no seikatsu) in Tanabe Hajime no shisô shiteki kenkyû: sensô to tetsugakusha (A Historical Analysis of the Thought of Tanabe Hajime: War and the Philosopher), Hôsei Daigaku Shuppankyoku, 1976, p. 229. These articles are also reproduced in Chikuma Shobôhen (eds), Tanabe Hajime zenshû (The Collected Works of Tanabe Hajime), vol. 8, Chikuma Shobô, 1963, hereafter referred to as THZ. For a brief assessment of Tanabe’s postwar political views, see Koschmann, Revolution and Subjectivity, pp. 88-95.

almost single-minded concern with economic recovery.  

Zangedô: The Way of Repentance

In the summer of 1944 as American B-29s were poised to begin their bombing campaigns on the Japanese home islands, Kyoto University philosopher Tanabe Hajime watched with despair and helplessness as his country slowly began its final, inexorable “descent into hell.” As a citizen, Tanabe shared in the suffering of his countryfolk whose lives had been degraded by the privations of war and by the oppressive weight of government censorship and propaganda. As an intellectual, however, Tanabe experienced a crisis of a different order. His was

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5 This argument has been made by Yoshimi Yoshiaki, “Senryôki nihon no minshû ishiki: Sensô sekinin o megutte” (The Peoples’ Consciousness in Occupied Japan: Thoughts on the War Responsibility Debate), Shisô, 811, January 1992, pp. 73-99; and Yoshida Yutaka, Nihonjin no sensôkan: Sengoshi no naka no henyô, (Japanese Perspectives in the War: Transformations in Postwar History), Iwanami Shoten, 1995.

6 This phrase comes from Michael Sherry who used it to describe the dehumanizing effects civilian bombing had on its advocates, the Americans. However, it also accurately captures the horrified reaction of the Japanese people as they witnessed the complete destruction of their cities and towns. See The Rise of American Air Power, p. 117.

7 Tanabe did not experience directly the horror of incendiary bombing since Kyoto and its shrines, temples and treasures were spared at the direction of the US government. Tanabe was from Tokyo, however, and, although I have no information on his immediate family, it is possible that he still had relatives living there who suffered or died in the raids.
the crisis of a "public man," a civil servant, in fact, whose talents were at all times to be placed in the service of his nation. To remain silent effectively meant repudiating the principles for which he as an intellectual and as an educator stood, not to mention neglecting his duties to the state. To speak out, however, required him to be openly critical of the government's suppression of public opinion and academic freedom, a dangerous course of action that he feared might "expose to the enemy divisions in the national consciousness."  

Unable to decide on the proper course of action, Tanabe was finally driven to the brink of exhaustion (kikon ga tsukihateru shi o nashi) by his own indecision.  

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8 Tanabe was a public man in the sense that as a professor in Japan's imperial university system he was also a civil servant, a public employee whose words and deeds were constrained by the limits imposed by national education policy. His work was also public in the sense that it was available to all, even though it is unlikely that any but a small minority of individuals would have read or understood it. On the public man and the problems facing Japanese academics in the prewar years, see Andrew E. Barshay, *State and Intellectual in Imperial Japan*. See also Byron K. Marshall, *Academic Freedom and the Japanese Imperial University, 1868-1939*, University of California Press, 1992; and John S. Brownlee, *Japanese Historians and the National Myths, 1600-1945: The Age of the Gods and Emperor Jinmu*, University of British Columbia Press, 1997.

9 Tanabe Hajime, "Jo" (Preface) in Zangedō toshite no tetsugaku,, pp. 1-2. Zangedō was first published by Iwanami in April 1946 and again in November 1947. In 1986, Tanabe's student, Takeuchi Yoshinori, published an English translation in collaboration with Valdo Viglielmo and James W. Heisig under the title *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, University of California Press, 1986. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine and are taken from the 1947 Japanese edition. In this version, the Preface written in October 1945, the Table of Contents (Mokuji) and Chapter One (Zangedō no tetsugakukan teki ishiki) are all paginated beginning from page one. Consequently, I will treat the Preface as an essay separate from the body of the text.

10 Ibid, p. 2.
man who could not resolve such a problem, he concluded, did not deserve to be
called a philosopher, much less be qualified to teach such an “exalted subject as
philosophy.”¹¹ There, in the very depths of despair, Tanabe underwent a
personal conversion of such intensity that he felt himself to have died and been
reborn (shi-fukkatsu) through the compassionate grace of other-power (tariki) in
the realm of absolute nothingness (zettai mu).¹²

At the brink of exhaustion..., however, something astounding
occurred. In a state of absolute despair, I surrendered to my own
penance (zange) which unexpectedly turned me inward toward myself
and brought me to a new realization [of my own worthlessness]... By
meekly but persistently examining my own inner self I was brought
face to face with my own powerlessness and lack of freedom.¹³

The task that now confronted Tanabe was nothing less than the creation of a new
universal philosophy that would break through the crisis of reason and also
allow the self to awaken to itself. The product of this death and resurrection was
Zangedō toshite no tetsugaku. It represented the culmination and synthesis of

¹¹Ibid, p. 2.

¹²Ibid., p. 9. I have chosen not to follow Takeuchi’s capitalizations of Other-power and
Absolute Nothingness since Tanabe did not use any highlighting marks or devices in the original
text.

¹³Ibid., p. 2.
more than twenty-five years of philosophical inquiry into the realm of being.\textsuperscript{14} Tanabe called it “a philosophy that is not a philosophy” (\textit{tetsugaku naranu tetsugaku}).\textsuperscript{15} This was an appropriate characterization, for \textit{Zangedö} was at once a philosopher’s attempt to transcend all philosophy based on reason as well as an “ordinary and foolish” man’s offering to those who, like himself, needed to find their way through the crisis of defeat.\textsuperscript{16}

Tanabe worked feverishly to complete his new project, which he first delivered as a series of retirement lectures in November and December 1944 at Kyoto University. As American bombers continued their relentless assaults on Japan’s towns and cities, Tanabe wrote to his student, Takeuchi Yoshinori, shortly after his “conversion”:

> The national mood is extremely sombre, and yet I feel a strange sense of light streaming over me that fills me with an indescribable

\textsuperscript{14}According to his students, Takeuchi and Kôsaka Masaaki, \textit{Zangedö} represented the beginning of the last of four phases in his intellectual development. This followed a four-year hiatus between 1941 and 1944 during which Tanabe, like many other intellectuals, wrote very little. Takeuchi Yoshinori, “Translator’s Introduction,” \textit{Philosophy as Metanoetics}, p. xi, and Kôsaka Masaaki, \textit{Nishida tetsugaku to Tanabe tetsugaku} (The Philosophies of Nishida and Tanabe), Nagoya, Reimei Shobô, 1949, pp. 65-76.

\textsuperscript{15}“Preface,” p. 3.

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid, p. 14. Tanabe stated in the preface that his offer of \textit{Zangedö} to the Japanese people was out of gratitude (\textit{kôdon}) to Shinran Shônin, founder of the True Pure Land Buddhist sect, for his own personal conversion. Tanabe’s references to himself as “ordinary and foolish” (\textit{gûsha bombu}) - that is, as an everyman - can be found throughout the text.
gratitude. It seems to me that there can be no other path toward national rehabilitation than for our people as a whole to engage in repentance. My philosophy of metanoetics may come to have a strange kind of historical objectivity about it...17

While Zangedō was the product of Tanabe’s own personal conversion, he clearly hoped that it would provide a solution for the historically unprecedented crisis that engulfed his country. As such, Zangedō must be understood within the context of Japan’s impending defeat. Tanabe himself maintained that he was fated to construct his new system due to the inevitable limits of reason-based philosophy,18 but it was only in the disruption of war and defeat that Zangedō became truly meaningful.19 Defeat was a disruption in the sense that it revealed the breakdown in the unity between state and individual and therefore raised questions about the very foundations and values of both. Such dire conditions, Tanabe concluded, demanded a new system of thought, one that would break through the current state of diremption (entzweit) which G. W. F. Hegel, on whose work he had laboured for many years, argued was the source and need of

17Quoted in Takeuchi Yoshinori, “Translator’s Introduction,” p. xxxvii. This letter was written to Takeuchi in July, 1944, a few months before Tanabe delivered his retirement lectures at Kyoto University.

18Zangedō, pp. 31, 35.


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all philosophy.\textsuperscript{20} In one of his earliest works Hegel wrote that “[w]hen the might of union vanishes from the life of men and the antitheses lose their living connection and reciprocity and gain independence, the need of philosophy arises.”\textsuperscript{21} This vanishing union was clearly the cause of Tanabe’s distress since neither resistance (teikô) to the state nor cooperation (kyôryoku) with it offered a solution to his dilemma. Only through spiritual death and rebirth was Tanabe able to reestablish the unity which he so desperately sought. Zangedô was a philosophy of and for crisis: a crisis of self, of nation, and of identity.

To appreciate the dual but interrelated meanings of crisis in Tanabe’s philosophy, we must examine in more detail the terms zange and zangedô. Tanabe’s personal crisis occurred when he was brought to the painful recognition of his own utter worthlessness through a frank admission of his past sins (kako no zaiaiku) and

\textsuperscript{20}The word, “diremption,” comes from Michael Gillespie’s translation of entzweit which he said literally means “intwoed” in the sense of bifurcation or estrangement. Hegel, Heidegger, and the Ground of History, University of Chicago Press, 1984, p. 34. In Hegel’s case, the diremption was caused by the internal contradictions in Kant’s system, particularly the binary opposition of noumena and phenomena, the overcoming of which Hegel believed could only be achieved through a renewal of speculative philosophy.

\textsuperscript{21}G.W.F. Hegel, The Difference Between Fichte’s and Schelling’s System of Philosophy (trans. H.S. Harris and Walter Cerf), State University of New York Press, 1977, p. 91. In this version entzweit was translated as dichotomy, but I prefer Gillespie’s rendering because it provides a stronger and more violent sense of disruption which is particularly appropriate to Japan’s condition toward the end of the war.
the fervent wish that they had never been committed.\(^\text{22}\) However, this recognition also carried with it the understanding that those past sins could never be fully expunged. This plunged Tanabe into the depths of despair, the only escape from which was the practice of \textit{zange}.

Tanabe’s understanding of \textit{zange} (repentance forged in despair) came from his interpretation of Shinran Shōnin’s \textit{Kyōgyōshinshō} (Doctrine, Practice, Faith, Witness), to which his student Takeuchi Yoshinori had reintroduced him in early 1944.\(^\text{23}\) Shinran’s own spiritual death and rebirth that resulted in his founding of True Pure Land Buddhism became the model or religious precedent for Tanabe’s own conversion, for which reason he considered Shinran to be his teacher (\textit{kare o shi to suru to iu beki mono de arau}).\(^\text{24}\) In the first chapter of \textit{Zangedō}, Tanabe cited numerous passages from Shinran’s writing to demonstrate that “the key to understanding the \textit{Kyōgyōshinshō} is contained within \textit{zange}.”\(^\text{25}\) He acknowledged that Shinran did not explicitly utilize

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{Zangedō}, p. 4.
\item “Preface,” p. 8.
\item \textit{Zangedō}, p. 22.
\item Ibid., p. 23. For Shinran’s quotes with which Tanabe makes his point, see pp. 22-24.
\end{itemize}
repentance as the foundational discourse of the conversion process.\textsuperscript{26}

Nonetheless, Tanabe's own interpretation of the \textit{Kyōgyōshinshō}, which he claimed had guided the creation of \textit{Zangedō},\textsuperscript{27} led him to believe that \textit{zange} in fact represented the basis for spiritual death and resurrection. Thus, repentance (\textit{zange}) and remorse (\textit{zangi}) were the necessary first steps without which there could be no salvation or transformation of the self.

As the basis or starting point for religious conversion, repentance was the negative side of \textit{Zangedō} (\textit{zange no hiteiteki sokumen}), the performance of which invoked its "other" or positive aspect (\textit{kōteiteki sokumen}: conversion (\textit{kaishin}).\textsuperscript{28} Before examining this latter aspect, however, I want to first explore the process whereby the individual self was brought to the abyss of despair. An appreciation of this is central to understanding Tanabe's philosophy and its relationship and relevance to social order.

Tanabe began from the proposition that all being was relative (\textit{yū wa sōtai de

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{26}Ibid., p. 18. See also pp. 17, 20. Tanabe acknowledged that his reading of the \textit{Kyōgyōshinshō} was unorthodox but still maintained that it was a legitimate interpretation, "Preface," p. 5.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{27}Zangedō, p. 8.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{28}Ibid., p. 7.}
atte) and therefore had to be mediated by something outside itself.\textsuperscript{29} Thus, relative and absolute, finite and infinite, being and nothingness all existed in a state of mutual reciprocity whereby each arose simultaneously with the appearance of its other.\textsuperscript{30} The relative self functioned as the mediatory element of the absolute which defined the self as a finite being in the sense that the absolute permitted it a relative existence. But it was in the self’s own attempts to escape the finitude of its being that Tanabe identified the fundamental negative constituent of human existence. This he called radical evil (kongenzai).\textsuperscript{31} Human sin (zaiaku) was the consequence of the self’s ongoing but ultimately futile struggle to determine and affirm itself in the relative, finite world of being. All humans were self-deluding creatures, he said, who, by stubbornly asserting their own independence, presumed themselves to be absolute.\textsuperscript{32} In Tanabe’s own

\textsuperscript{29}Ibid., p. 24.

\textsuperscript{30}Ibid., pp. 23-24.

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid., p. 5.

\textsuperscript{32}Tanabe’s belief that the capacity for self-delusion lay at the centre of human sin and evil paralleled that of many thinkers in the European tradition. Compare, for example, Adam Smith’s argument that self-deceit or self-love was “the fatal weakness of mankind.” Adam Smith, \textit{The Theory of Moral Sentiments}, D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (eds), Liberty Press, 1982, p. 158. However, Smith maintained that human self-delusion could be overcome by appealing to the approbation or disapprobation of others, whereas Tanabe believed that mitigating self-delusion could only occur through a turn inward by appealing to the absolute. The individual’s striving for self-realization was the root of social conflict in Tanabe’s thinking which rendered the individual incapable of appealing to the judgement of others. Tanabe would have accordingly rejected out of hand the idea that self-delusion could possibly redound to the public benefit without the
words, they “absolutized their own relativity” (*sonzai no ēisei o zettaika shi*).\(^{33}\)

The struggle for self-affirmation could only lead to arrogance, due to the self’s tendency to lose sight of its own relativity, and to despair, due to the self’s inability to transform or transcend itself. Here we can see a parallel with the prewar Japanese state, understood metaphorically as an individual self. The state had presumed itself to be absolute through the ideology of *tennō-sei* and the rhetoric of spiritual superiority, both of which justified its aggressive acts. Only through defeat could the state be awakened to the folly of its self-deluding behaviour.\(^{34}\)

Similarly, when the individual in Tanabe’s philosophy was brought to a realization of its own evil, egotistical presumptions, it was drawn out of this world and thrown it back on its own inferiority. The profound sense of despair engendered by this realization then demanded the practice of *zange* as a means of individual first undergoing conversion through self-negation in the realm of the absolute.

\(^{33}\)Ibid., p. 25. In biology, *ēisei* means sexual reproduction (as in *ēisei seisō*) whereby two cells unite to form a new individual cell. If we consider reproduction, sexual or otherwise, as a means of perpetuating not the species but the individual, then *ēisei* can be understood metaphorically as the self’s attempt to project its relativity in such a way as to absolutize itself through the creation of a new form of being. Tanabe called this tendency radical evil because he believed it was endemic to the human condition and therefore the source of all human suffering.

\(^{34}\)Since *zange* could only be an act of the self, its application in the context of the state may do injustice to Tanabe’s project. However, Tanabe did believe in the principle of collective responsibility which makes the state-as-individual metaphor relevant. This issue will be dealt with more fully later in this, and the next, chapter.
purging the individual of those presumptions. Through zange the self abandoned all pretence of action based on self-power (jiriki) and awoke to the reality of its own utter worthlessness.

In the same way that Hegel argued that individuals were responsible for their own evil acts, the recognition of which results in their downfall and in their submission to the judgement of fate, so too does zange mean the ruin and abandonment of the self.35

To describe the process by which the self was negated and then subsequently reaffirmation through zange, Tanabe drew on the concepts of  Özô (going toward the Pure Land) and gensô (returning from the Pure Land). In True Pure Land Buddhism Özô characterizes an individual’s attempt to shed all worldly desires in an effort to attain Buddhahood. This for Tanabe paralleled the practice of zange whereby the self abandoned all hope of absolutizing itself. Similarly, the gensô phase, or process of returning to this world, was in Tanabe’s philosophy akin to the self’s rebirth and commitment to live in harmony with other selves.36 The importance of Özô and gensô for Tanabe was therefore not simply

35Zangedô, p. 4.

36The process of Özô-gensô is remarkably similar to Arnold Toynbee’s concept of withdrawal and return whereby a “creative minority” remove themselves from the world for a period of contemplation and afterward return to govern with “charm and vitality.” Ironically, in his rather cursory treatment of Japan, Toynbee found no creative minority, arguing rather that the only process that could qualify was puberty! He characterized Japan’s alternating cycles of borrowing and isolation as a kind of national puberty which defined Japan in his scheme as a mimetic society. One wonders whether MacArthur had Toynbee in mind when he called Japan a nation of twelve-year olds. For Toynbee’s depiction of Japan, see A Study of History, Oxford University Press, vol. 3, pp. 330-35.
their role in personal salvation, but their relevance to the idea of "fraternity" (kyōdaisei) which he characterized as an ideal of social order that reestablished unity by mediating the conflict between equality and freedom.\textsuperscript{37} Tanabe believed that the process of returning to this world from the Pure Land enabled the "saved" individual to restore social order much in the same way that the bodhisattva functioned in Mahayana Buddhism (Daijō buddkyō no satsudō).\textsuperscript{38} To invoke the operative power of gensō, however, one first had to leave this world and go toward the Pure Land (ōsō) through a process of negation that Tanabe called "the practice of one's own death" (jiko e no shi no gyōdo).\textsuperscript{39} In other words, one had to die to oneself in order to be reborn.

This was the point at which the positive aspect of zange emerged. Once the despairing individual had exerted itself to the utmost, it had no other recourse

\textsuperscript{37}"Preface," p. 8. The translation of kyōdaisei is a difficult one. Tanabe contrasted it with the Christian egalitarian ideal of loving one's neighbour, arguing that it was better understood as a principle mediating between freedom and equality, leading to a social order of religious love between older and younger siblings. For a further discussion of this and the role played by ōsō and gensō, see Johannes Laube, "The Way of Metanoia and the Way of the Bodhisattva," in RPT, pp. 316-39.

\textsuperscript{38}"Preface," p. 8. In fact, Tanabe claimed that Shinran had returned to the world to enlighten him. Zangedō, p. 32.

\textsuperscript{39}"Preface," p. 4. Among its many meanings, gyōdo refers to particular Buddhist rituals whereby participants chant sutras while walking in single file, clockwise, around a temple and the image of Buddha. The significance of the term lies in the fact that it, like zange, is something to be practiced rather than something to be intuited or revealed.
than to completely annihilate itself so that no trace remained.\textsuperscript{40} Tanabe maintained that this must be a voluntary act in the sense that it could not be urged on by others, at least not before one had practiced it oneself.\textsuperscript{41} Similarly, \textit{zange} could not be a rebellious act like suicide which was not a true negation but the mere negative assertion of the self.\textsuperscript{42} Rather, it had to be an act of "obedient" or submissive despair (\textit{zuijunteki zetsubo}) in the sense that one willingly surrendered oneself.\textsuperscript{43}

However, the process of death and resurrection involved an apparent paradox: \textit{zange} was one's own act insofar as the surrendering of one's self was an act of free will; but, at the same time, it could not be one's own act because, through negation, one's self-power (\textit{jiriki}) had been abandoned in the abyss of despair.\textsuperscript{44}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{40}Zangedo, p. 50.
\item \textsuperscript{41}"Preface," p. 14.
\item \textsuperscript{42}Zangedo, p. 33. Takeuchi said that Tanabe had at one point prior to his conversion actually considered resigning from the university and had even contemplated suicide. It is possible that had Tanabe not rediscovered the compassionate teachings of Shinran, he may well have turned the contemplation of suicide into practice. Takeuchi Yoshinori, "Recollections of Professor Tanabe," RPT, p. 5.
\item \textsuperscript{43}Zangedo, pp. 5, 8-9, 33.
\item \textsuperscript{44}"Preface," p. 3.
\end{itemize}
Chapter Three: Tanabe Hajime and the Philosophy of Repentance

Tanabe resolved this paradox by introducing the True Pure Land concept of other-power (tariki) to describe the process by which the negated self is reborn.\(^{45}\)

The ısśô phase was one characterized by jiriki-qua-tariki (self-power-as-other power) whereby the negation of self invoked the simultaneous appearance of its "other" through what he called "the action of no action" (musa no sa). The gensô phase was the converse of this, or tariki-qua-jiriki, whereby other-power re-called into existence the self that had died.\(^{46}\) Thus, Tanabe spoke of zange (repentance and self-negation) and tariki (other-power) as forming a reciprocal bond of mutual transformation whereby zange was realized in this world through the operation of tariki, while tariki was accomplished by salvation through zange.

Herein lay the importance of "obedient despair." One surrendered oneself to one's own worthlessness and to faith in the compassionate and transformative

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\(^{45}\)Both tariki and zange were relatively new concepts in Tanabe's philosophy, stemming from his wartime rediscovery of Shinran. Although an inkling of them can be uncovered in his earlier writings, they found their full expression in Zangedô. See Makoto Ozaki, Introduction to the Philosophy of Tanabe: According to the English Translation of the Seventh Chapter of the 'Demonstratio of Christianity,' Ph.D. dissertation published as vol. 6, Currents of Encounter: Studies on the Contact Between Christianity and Other Religions, Beliefs, and Cultures, Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V., 1990, pp. 13-15. For a further discussion of Shinran's impact on Tanabe's metanoetics see Zangedô, pp. 223-226. See also the articles by Ueda Yoshifumi, "Tanabe's Metanoetics and Shinran's Thought" (trans. Taitetsu Unno), pp. 134-149, and Jean Higgins "Conversion in Shinran and Tanabe: Undergone or Undertaken," in RPT, pp. 134-49 and 150-60 respectively.

\(^{46}\)Zangedô, pp. 119-22. In this section Tanabe contrasted Nietzsche's Dionysian/Apollonian transformation with his own concept of conversion, arguing that Nietzsche's idea was founded exclusively on the negative aspect of passive nihilism (juddô-teki kyômuron) which accorded with Hinayana but not with Mahayana tradition. In the latter tradition, the negation itself contained a negation which became affirmation (of the self), pp. 120-21.
power of tariki.

Strangely... The power that urges me to abandon myself [tariki] is the very same power that restores my negated self. Once I earnestly repent and obediently submit to the fact of my own utter worthlessness, I am miraculously transformed by the very power that negated my existence. My “self” that had performed zange experiences rebirth and salvation through absolute transformation.47

Once the self’s right to existence had been denied, salvation could be effected through tariki, which Tanabe claimed was the concrete manifestation of absolute nothingness (zettai mu) acting on the self-negating subject.48 The complete denial of self invoked the other-power of absolute nothingness leading to the death of the self. At the very instant of death or self-negation, other-power invoked its "other" - self-power - leading to the resurrection and the reaffirmation of the self. This process did not simply result in a reincarnation of the self as it had been, but in fact led to a newly-created self, one that would now strive to do good in this world.

47Ibid., p. 6. In the English translation, Takeuchi used the pronoun “we,” perhaps to provide a sense of inclusiveness since Tanabe hoped that Zangedo would become a philosophy for all people. However, in the Japanese original, Tanabe himself used the pronoun “I” (watashi). I have followed the original because it helps to convey the personal nature of Tanabe’s own conversion from which his religious philosophy stemmed. For Takeuchi’s English translation, see Philosophy as Metanoetics, p. 5.

48Zangedo, p. 8.
Chapter Three: Tanabe Hajime and the Philosophy of Repentance

Tanabe’s Critique of Reason

To this point I have described the religious aspect of Tanabe’s philosophy: the transformation of the repenting self. Clearly, Zangedō reads like a religious philosophy which Tanabe believed Japan desperately needed to lift itself out of its self-imposed disaster. More specifically, spiritual guidance was essential because defeat had caused the Japanese people to fall into a kind of nihilism from which there was no escape because it provided no hope of transformation. Tanabe worried defeat had led his countryfolk into a preoccupation with culture and selfish materialism, which, of course, it had insofar as material existence was the overriding concern of most people.49 This was clearly evident in the black market which drew people into its orbit to the virtual exclusion of other concerns. It was also evident in the behaviour and writings of men like Sakaguchi and Dazai. For Tanabe, the indulgent, hedonistic pursuits of the burai-ha men would never result in the transformation of self or of society because they were absolutizing acts of the self.

49 “Preface,” pp. 15-16. Tanabe argued that culturalism (bunkashugi/kyōyōshugi) provided no foundation from which spiritual values could be constructed - values that were central to Japan’s rebirth. Tanabe’s antipathy toward culturalism stemmed from his belief that it was fundamentally selfish and individualistic and therefore offered no basis for moral life or social order. This critique was laid out early in his career with the publication of Bunka no gairon (An Outline of Culture) written in 1922 and reproduced in THZ, vol. 1, pp. 425-47. For a good analysis of this work, see Ienaga, Tanabe Hajime no shisō shiteki kenkyū,, pp. 35-38.
However, while the negative effects of Japan's unprecedented disaster were palpable in every waking minute, defeat, like the process of self-negation, contained within itself a positive or transformative element which offered the chance of redemption if only the Japanese people would not stop at despair but would push through to a true negation of their self-affirming negativity. This negation of self, Tanabe argued, had to be accompanied by a complete negation of reason, since it was reason that defined us as humans and at the same time led us astray in our struggle to absolutize ourselves. Seen from this perspective, Zangedō was a passage from philosophy to religion and then back to philosophy again.

Tanabe, like his former teacher Nishida Kitarō, approached philosophy not from a position of the supremacy of being, as he believed was the case in the European tradition, but from a position of nothingness which came from his readings of Zen and True Pure Land Buddhism.\(^{50}\)

All science takes some entity or other as its object of study. The point of contact is always in being, not in nothing. The discipline that has to do with nothingness is philosophy... it is only philosophy that deals with nothingness in knowing from the academic standpoint. Since Aristotle metaphysics has been defined as the study of existence as such, of being itself; but if being is something that can only be known concretely through the mediation of nothingness, it is more fitting that we should define

\(^{50}\text{Heisig, "Foreward," pp. xix-xx.}\)
philosophy in terms of nothingness, paradoxical as this may look at first.\textsuperscript{51} For Tanabe, nothingness did not exist directly; that is, it did not exist in and of itself in any immediate sense. If that were the case nothingness would logically belong to the realm of being. Since nothingness did not exist directly, it required no mediatory element and was therefore an \textit{absolute} nothingness or "unmeditated transcendent."\textsuperscript{52} Nothingness was also absolute because it contained within itself the principle of self-negation or self-emptying. Tanabe called this principle "nothingness-as-love" (\textit{mu-soku-ai}). In Hase Shōtō's words, absolute nothingness showed "a two-fold orientation: that of the Absolute reflecting on itself and perfecting its love by self-emptying and that of the Absolute, having become love, going out of itself to act."\textsuperscript{53} Thus, absolute nothingness was the dynamic ground where the self reflected upon itself rather than upon the world of objects. Once the self denied the right to its own existence, the contingent, historical world - that is, the world of objects - also ceased to exist. In other words, absolute nothingness was "the negation and


\textsuperscript{52}Zangedō, p. 10.

transformation” of all that was relative.\textsuperscript{54}

The dynamic, transformative character of absolute nothingness was manifest through other-power, the self-emptying of absolute nothingness, which arose at the moment of the self’s negation as "an act of absolute nothingness," denying the existence of the relative and allowing absolute nothingness to "realize itself."\textsuperscript{55} This process, which began with the repenting self’s recognition of its own radical evil, could not be achieved through the use of reason (risei) since reason was an act of self-power and therefore of being. To illustrate this Tanabe further defined zange as a cognate of the Greek word, metanoia, meaning an act beyond cognition.\textsuperscript{56} Zangedō, therefore, was both the way (dō) of repentance as well as a “philosophical sweeping away” (tetsugakuteki sōtō) of all reason-based philosophy.\textsuperscript{57}

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\textsuperscript{55}Zangedō, p. 25.

\textsuperscript{56}Ibid., pp. 3-4. Tanabe used both the German spelling, \textit{Metanoetik}, and the Japanese phonetic spelling, \textit{metanoechiku} interchangeably throughout the text.

\textsuperscript{57}“Preface,” p. 8.
\end{flushleft}
Tanabe spent much of his long career in philosophy immersed in the study Kant, Schelling, and Hegel. Indeed, one can read Zangedō as a critique of all the thinkers whose work influenced Tanabe and to whom he believed he owed an intellectual debt. It is also interesting to note that virtually all the men on whose work Tanabe drew were philosophers in an age of crisis. From Plotinus to Augustine, Pascal to Hegel, Nietzsche to Heidegger: each of these men represented an attempt to break through the disruption of their age.\(^\text{58}\) It was fitting, and certainly no coincidence, that Tanabe’s greatest intellectual influences shared with him the experience of living in a world of chaos and disorder.\(^\text{59}\) As such, these men can also be seen as accompanying Tanabe on his long, tortuous journey - his philosophical ôsô - to carry reason to its limits and then dash it on

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\(^{58}\) Kant appears to have been the major exception here since by all accounts he lived a relatively cheerful and modest life. *Kant’s Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics* (translated and edited by Paul Carus), Open Court Publishing, 1967. My understanding of the context in which most of these men operated comes primarily from two sources: A.J. Ayer, *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, Unwin, 1984; and Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, Unwin, 1989. In addition, I have consulted works by and about Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger. My concern here has not been to engage in a philosophical analysis of Tanabe’s interpretations of these thinkers, but rather to highlight particular ideas as Tanabe understood them and relate these, by way of contrast, to his overall project.

\(^{59}\) It is doubtful that any of these men before Fichte would have used the language of crisis to describe their age. Hans Sluga has argued that a sense of historical or political crisis consciousness was largely unknown before Rousseau who was perhaps the first great critic of modernity. Hans Sluga, *Heidegger’s Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany*, Harvard University Press, 1993, p. 69. His ideas paralleled the argument of sociologist Anthony Giddens who characterized crisis as the “continuous state of affairs... [in] high modernity.” Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self Identity*, p. 12. This, in turn, echoed Hermann Glockner who in 1934 claimed that the crisis of philosophy was “the permanent fate of the modern mind.” Quoted in Sluga, pp. 206-07.
the rocks of despair in the face of his fateful meeting with, and rebirth through, Shinran.

The context in which Tanabe undertook his journey is also significant since his own life encompassed most of the major events in Japan’s modern era. He was born in Tokyo in 1889, one year before the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution, and died in 1962, midway between the Ampo Treaty riots and Japan’s postwar “coming out party” at the Tokyo Summer Olympics. He came of age during one of the most formative intellectual periods in Japanese history - the Meiji/Taishō transition - and it was here that he began his long engagement with German idealism. As a young man, Tanabe witnessed the achievement of the Meiji goal of fūkoku kyōhei (rich country, strong army) with Japan’s narrow victory in the Russo-Japanese War, as well as the anticlimax of that victory in the form of disillusionment and uncertainty about what the future would bring.60 It is difficult to know whether the events surrounding the Meiji/Taishō transition affected Tanabe’s thinking directly, but it was during this time that he began to exhibit a profound dissatisfaction with science. At the end of the war Tanabe

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entered Tokyo Imperial University and after a brief, unsatisfying flirtation with mathematics, during which he "lost confidence in his ability as a scientist," he switched to philosophy.\(^61\)

The Taishō era (1912-1926) was a time of intellectual ferment in Japan with socialism, Marxism, German idealism, and romanticism all vying for the attentions of young intellectuals.\(^62\) The writings of Kant and Hegel, in particular, formed the core of philosophical study and it was here that Tanabe became interested in the Kantian critique of reason and Hegelian dialectics.\(^63\) Graduating in 1908, Tanabe taught English for a few years and then secured a position at Tōhoku Imperial University as a lecturer in the philosophy of science in 1913.\(^64\)


\(^{63}\) Ienaga said that after graduating from Tōdai, Tanabe dropped out of Hegelian circles. However, he never lost his interest in metaphysics or the dialectic method. The latter, in particular, was the "crown jewel of philosophy" (\(\text{letsugaku no kanben}\)), without which he believed that a philosophical world view could not be constructed. The quote comes from "\text{Bunka gairon}," reprinted in Ienaga, \textit{Tanabe Hajime no shisō}, pp. 10-11.

\(^{64}\) Takeuchi mistakenly said that Tanabe started teaching at Tōhoku Imperial University in 1915. "Translator's Introduction," p. xxxi. Tanabe initially taught at the Fourth Tokyo Municipal Middle School and then worked at the Kaisei Middle School where his father was principal. Ibid., p. xxxi. Unfortunately, none of the sources I have consulted provide much information about
Part Two: Repentance and Responsibility

It was also during this time that Tanabe attracted the attention of Nishida Kitarō, whose own work was just beginning to thrust him into the forefront of Japanese philosophy. Through Nishida's assistance, Tanabe was able to secure an assistant professorship in the Faculty of Arts and Letters at Kyoto Imperial University (Kyōdai) in 1919.\textsuperscript{65}

In 1922, again with Nishida's assistance, Tanabe was finally able to realize his dream of travelling and studying abroad. With a grant from the Ministry of Education, Tanabe went to Germany, studying first with Alois Riehl in Berlin and then with Edmund Husserl in Freiburg.\textsuperscript{66} It was in Freiburg that Tanabe made the acquaintance of Husserl's assistant, the young Martin Heidegger, who privately tutored him in German philosophy. Heidegger's influence on Tanabe was profound. In addition to introducing him to phenomenology, Heidegger also instilled in him a sense of philosophical crisis consciousness that demanded

\textsuperscript{65}Ienaga, \textit{Tanabe Hajime no shisō}, p. 2. It seems that Nishida had been aware of Tanabe for some time. Takeuchi referred to a 1913 entry in Nishida's diary which recorded the first known meeting between the two. "Translator's Introduction," p. xxxiv. In 1915, Tanabe and Nishida collaborated with a number of other scholars, including Natsume Sōseki, Abe Jirō, and Kuwaki Genyoku, to edit a twelve-volume set of philosophical essays and translations. This information comes from J. Thomas Rimer, "Kurata Hyakuzō and the Origins of Love and Understanding," in Rimer (ed), \textit{Culture and Identity}, p. 32.

\textsuperscript{66}Heisig, "Foreword," p. xi.
an overturning or reevaluation of philosophical modes of inquiry.\textsuperscript{67}

While the Taishō years were a time of active intellectual experimentation in Japan, the Weimar years in Germany were even more so. The fields of art, literature, and science all spawned a dizzying array of new forms, values, and interpretations.\textsuperscript{68} The philosophical world too experienced significant upheaval as neo-Kantians, long the dominant force in German philosophy, found themselves competing with “phenomenologists and existentialists, with philosophers of life and philosophical anthropologists, with realists and positivists, with neo-scholastic Aristotelians and Marxists.”\textsuperscript{69} We have virtually no record of Tanabe’s time in Germany but we do know that while there he began to conceive of constructing a philosophical system that was not only applicable to the real world but one that would be all-encompassing in its

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\textsuperscript{67} Yasuo Yuasa has argued that Heidegger had little influence on Tanabe’s work but I think this is a misrepresentation. Tanabe’s frequent references to his former tutor in Zangedō suggest otherwise. The centrality of death in Heidegger’s philosophy, in particular, was important for Tanabe, if only as a point of departure. For Tanabe, Heidegger, like Hegel, focused on an ontology of life, the transcendence of which became the principle theme in Zangedō and his other postwar writings. For Yuasa’s assessment, see “Modern Japanese Philosophy and Heidegger,” in Graham Parkes (ed), \textit{Heidegger and Asian Thought}, University of Hawaii Press, 1987, pp. 155-174.


\textsuperscript{69} Sluga, \textit{Heidegger’s Crisis}, p. 10.
When Tanabe returned to Japan in 1924 he found himself unexpectedly re-immersed in Kant and then Hegel, on whose *Encyclopedia* and *Phenomenology* he lectured for many years. It was through this intensive study of Hegel's writings that Tanabe was able to develop the dialectic in his own thought to the point where he became convinced that while reason must be given free rein to critique itself, the affirmation of the self could never take place in the realm of reason simply because reason was incapable of freeing itself from itself. Tanabe appreciated Kant's effort to ground religion in a critique of reason but he rejected such an attempt, claiming that Kant never subjected the critique itself to criticism. Similarly, while he drew heavily on the dialectic method, Tanabe ultimately rejected Hegel's theory of religion since it too never departed from the realm of reason and identity. Any philosophy or religion that was based on reason, he concluded, was one of self-power and would therefore fall

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70 His idea of constructing a new philosophical system appears to have been heavily influenced by Heidegger himself. See Heisig, "Foreward," p. xii, and James Fredericks, "Philosophy as Metanoetics: An Analysis," *RPT*, p. 46.

71 The reason for this was the 200th anniversary of Kant's birth in 1924.

72 *Zangedō*, pp. 41-42.

73 Ibid., pp. 49-50.
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into antinomies (niritsu haihan) because it failed to critique itself.

Tanabe believed he had overcome these shortcomings through his development of "absolute critique" (zettai hihan) which he argued was the foundational discourse of zangedō.74 In contrast to Kant who maintained that criticism was the central concern of philosophy, Tanabe argued that self-awareness or self-awakening (jikaku) should be the focus of philosophical inquiry.75 This was not a mere awareness of the self in an everyday existential sense, a consciousness of self in contrast to others. Rather, it was an awakening of the self to itself and to the unity of self and world. This awakening was prompted by the practice of zange, which forced the individual to confront the arrogance of its own self-affirming ego and the futility of attaining unity with the absolute. Thus, jikaku, for Tanabe, began at the very moment that normal self-awareness based on the

74Ibid., p. 40. Tanabe referred to absolute critique as both the "theoretical aspect of metanoetics" (zangedō no riron teki sokumen) and the "logic of metanoetics" (zangedō no ronri). While ronri is usually translated as logic, James Fredericks has argued that Tanabe, like Nishida before him, understood it as a "form of discourse." "Philosophy as Metanoetics: An Analysis," RPT, p. 50. David Dilworth has defined ronri in Nishida's thought as "a predominating tissue of relations between the intellectual variables which it articulates." This is similar to my understanding of discourse, which comes from Medan Sarap, as a practice "that systematically forms the objects of which it speaks." An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism, p. 70. The Dilworth quote, cited in Fredericks, comes from his "Nishida Kitarō [1870-1945]: The Development of his Thought," in Last Writings, Honolulu, 1987, p. 166.

75Heisig has identified self-awareness as "one notion that seems to run like a golden thread through the entire rich tapestry that Kyoto philosophers have woven..." "The Religious Philosophy of the Kyoto School," RPT, p. 18.
use of reason exhausted itself. This was a true self-awakening of the self to its role as a social being, a drawing out, or emergence from, the particularity of self to the universality of selves.

In Tanabe's view, all philosophies based on reason were by definition philosophies of self-power; therefore, only through absolute critique, through the shattering of reason itself, could the antinomies of reason's self-critique be overcome.

When reason criticizes itself, does the reason doing the criticizing stand outside of the critique as a criticizing subject, without becoming an object of criticism? If this is the case, the critique of reason cannot be a thorough critique in its entirety... Just as self-awareness (jikaku) must break through itself by awakening to a consciousness of nothingness, so must the self-criticism of reason run aground on the impassable antinomies (niritsu haihan) of the one and the many, the whole and the individual, infinity and finitude, determinacy and spontaneity, necessity and freedom. Criticism has no alternative but to surrender itself to this crisis of self-disruption, and to overcome it by allowing itself to be shattered into pieces.76

The complete surrender of reason of its own accord, therefore, negated the contradiction of self-critique and paved the way to the reaffirmation of the self and of reason as well. This was the point at which the self awakened to itself and

76This quote comes from Takeuchi's translation, Philosophy as Metanoetics, p. 38. For the Japanese original see Zangedō, pp. 42-43. Tanabe rejected as a matter of principle all forms of binary logic whereby the two elements were irreconcilably opposed to each other. The only exception to this was the radical evil of the self-affirming ego. Even here, however, reconciliation was possible if undertaken in the realm of absolute nothingness.
concomitantly the point at which philosophy began anew. Absolute critique was the necessary condition for the practice of zange because it was only through this process that the reason-based self, or the "self-affirming ego," could be negated. As Tanabe argued early on, "[i]n reality, if one directly affirms one's self, one cannot practice zange."\textsuperscript{77} Through the pursuit of absolute critique and the medium of zange, the self was abandoned and then resurrected through the compassionate grace of other-power. This transformed reason into what Tanabe called "action-faith-witness" (gyō-shin-shō). The action (gyō) of negation bore witness (shō) to a transformation in which the self submitted obediently to the compassion of other-power and through a transcendence of faith (shin) was reborn in the realm of absolute nothingness.\textsuperscript{78} In this way, action-faith-witness functioned in absolute nothingness in the same manner as did reason in the realm of being.

Tanabe maintained that metanoetics was not a philosophy in the sense that it

\textsuperscript{77}\textit{Zangedō}, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{78}Ibid., pp. 103. Here again we seen the guiding hand of Shinran from whose work these concepts were taken. Tanabe argued that the order of action-faith-witness was important. Action had to precede the other two (which arose simultaneously) because unless absolute critique was carried to its logical conclusion there could be no repentance and therefore no rebirth. This can be likened to the \textit{nembutsu}: the invocation of the Buddha through the phrase "\textit{namu amida butsu.}" The action of invoking the name of the Buddha was in fact an admission of one's own worthlessness and thus was the first step in the process of death and rebirth. See also Ibid., pp. 289-90
treated "an object called metanoesis;" rather it "emerged from the ruins of all prior philosophical approaches" which had been destroyed through the practice of absolute critique.\footnote{79} Zangedô was therefore a philosophy based on the principle of negation, or the invocation of the "other."\footnote{80} The dialectical relationships between mutually inclusive pairs such as tariki-jiriki, being-nothingness, and I-Thou were all tools Tanabe utilized to wrench philosophy away from the realm of reason and create a "philosophy that is not a philosophy" whereby the performance of zange would affirm the dialectical unity of the absolute and the relative.\footnote{81}

Zangedô was the culmination of Tanabe's twenty-year effort to "deconstruct" the European philosophical tradition in which he had been trained and to create a universal philosophy or morality that would be relevant to his own world. It is

\footnote{79}Preface," p. 8.

\footnote{80}Tanabe described this as a shift from "both/and" and "either/or" to "neither/nor." Because Tanabe was concerned with the death of the self, a fundamental contradiction arose whereby the self, in preparation for dying, was driven to affirm its existence (radical evil). Tanabe believed that he had overcome this contradiction because, through zange and tariki, the self was brought into the realm of nothingness where it neither lived nor died. Zangedô, pp. 185-99.

\footnote{81}Tanabe, like many Japanese intellectuals, exhibited a paradoxical blend of humanist and poststructural ideas. On the one hand, concern with universal values and scientific truth placed him firmly in the humanist camp. On the other hand, a preoccupation with interiority and the attempt to dissolve the distinction between subject and object exposed a more poststructuralist orientation. These apparently conflicting tendencies suggest that Japan's modern intellectual history is a more complex one than the so-called "modernist/ Marxist" dichotomy allows.
therefore not surprising that Tanabe's project was finally realized amid the horrific destruction of Japan's major cities at the end of the war. The crisis of defeat was a vital component of his philosophy because it created the necessary conditions that made the performance of zange inescapable. Tanabe believed passionately in the collective responsibility of individuals for every event that occurred in society and therefore hoped that Zangedō would offer the Japanese people a religious philosophy on which to base their postwar lives. He intended that Zangedō would not only be a philosophy of individual salvation but also a means by which social solidarity could be continually reaffirmed.82

Given that conflict was endemic to human affairs, however, largely due to the self-affirming ego striving to achieve an unmeditated existence, individuals could never fully rid themselves of their own presumptuous sins. Consequently, zange had to be a never-ending process of death and rebirth (negation and affirmation). Once was simply not enough.

Only by constantly practicing (gyō) zange can we attain continuous resurrection through faith and witness (shin-shō). Through this circular process... zange reveals the eternal and the infinite and affirms the unity of relative and absolute. This is indeed none other than the principle which shapes history... Zangedō is a comprehensive historicism, and continuous repentance provides

82Ibid., p. 8.
the basic principle for the cyclical development of history.\(^{83}\)

Tanabe argued that all individuals were contingent beings in the sense that they were determined by a past which preceded them.\(^{84}\) At the same time, freedom, to which all individuals aspired, properly belonged to the future insofar as it was something to be obtained by each individual's own actions. However, because freedom was an act of the self it was confined to the realm of being which, for Tanabe, doomed the project from the outset. While he believed that the principle driving history was indeed freedom, he also argued that it could only be realized through negation.\(^{85}\) An individual's painful recognition that it was unable to be free, which arose only after repeated attempts to assert that self-same freedom, invoked zange and the mediatory function of other-power which negated the contradiction between freedom and contingency (history). This was

\(^{83}\)Ibid., p. 4.

\(^{84}\)Ibid., pp. 73-77. Tanabe used the word, hitosei, an obvious reference to Heidegger's concept of "thrownness." Among the many meanings of hi (kaburu), the one that best captures Tanabe's meaning is "to be accidently exposed" (as on a piece of film); while, tō (tōjiru) means "to throw" or to "launch into." Tanabe also described this condition as gensonzai no kako (the Dasein of the past), another clear reference to Heidegger. I understand Dasein to mean the site or location where being presents itself (and its negation, non-being) to itself. James F. Ward, *Heidegger's Political Thinking*, University of Massachusetts Press, 1995, pp. 30-45. This is remarkably similar to Tanabe's concept of absolute nothingness as the realm of self-awakening (jikaku) through negation. However, Tanabe rejected Heidegger's idea because it occurred in the existential, contingent world of being rather than in absolute nothingness. For Tanabe's critique of Heidegger's Dasein, see Zangedō, pp. 105-09.

\(^{85}\)Ibid., p. 72. For Tanabe, contingency (gūzensei) defined the fundamental nature of history, while the striving for freedom was the driving force behind the historical process itself: "History is the footprint of freedom" (Rekishi wa jiyū no ashiato de aru). Ibid., p. 76.
the path toward true freedom, and it was only to be found not in the realm of being but in absolute nothingness.

Considered in the context of the early postwar years, the Japanese people were not responsible for the war since they had been "thrown" into a world not of their own making. However, they were responsible in the sense that by supporting, passively or actively, the war effort they had in effect been striving to assert themselves by turning contingency into freedom through an act of their own will. For Tanabe, this futile striving demanded the performance of zange as a way of expunging the sins of the past. Because freedom existed only in the "subject's self-awareness of its own freedom," and further, because true self-awareness (jikaku) could only be realized in absolute nothingness, Zangedō was, in Tanabe's thinking, the only way to achieve true freedom. The negation of the self in absolute nothingness was therefore also the negation of freedom. But by surrendering the self to other-power in absolute nothingness, the self was saved and freedom affirmed.

86ibid., p. 76.

87Throughout the book, Tanabe frequently argued that only "Saints and Sages" were capable of enlightenment and/or salvation in this world, a status that he curiously conferred on Nietzsche and Heidegger. He argued that the end product of their philosophies was unattainable for ignorant and ordinary fools like himself, whose only hope lay in self-negation through zange and the mediation of other-power. See, for example, pp. 104-06 (on Heidegger); 131-32, 134-36 (on Nietzsche).
Part Two: Repentance and Responsibility

Repentance and the Logic of Species (Shu no Ronri)

Through the performance of zange, Tanabe believed that he had established a new ground for history, one that would offer a solid moral foundation for human action in this world based on the principle of never-ending renewal. In the specific milieu of post-surrender Japan, he hoped that his philosophy would provide a release from the despair of defeat as well as an opportunity to lift Japan out of the particularism that had isolated it from the rest of the world.

This tension between particularism and universalism has itself been a recurrent theme throughout Japan’s modern era. Indeed, Sakuma Shôzan’s concept of wakon/yōsaï (uniting the alleged particularity of Japanese ethics with the alleged universality of western science) was not so much a solution to this problem as it was a definition of the problem itself. Zangedo represented Tanabe’s attempt to

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88 This phrase was actually a reworking of “Eastern ethics, Western science” (Toyo no dōtoku, Seiyō no gakugei), originally coined by Sakuma (1811-1864), a reformist samurai from Shinano. While he subscribed to the Bakumatsu era call to “revere the emperor and expel the barbarian” (sonnō joi), Sakuma recognized the importance of learning from the foreigner as well. Sakuma was primarily concerned with Japan’s survival in the modern world; thus, he sought to graft Western technical knowledge onto his neo-Confucian ethical heritage. His phrase was adopted and by successive generations of Meiji leaders, although he never lived to see its practical application or the tensions it created. While on a mission as emissary from the shogunate to the Kyoto court (as part of the kōbu gattai [union of court and camp] movement), Sakuma was assassinated by a group of samurai from Chôshû who violently opposed reconciliation between the two. For a brief selection of his writings, see Tsunoda et al, Sources of Japanese Tradition, vol. II, pp. 96-109.
solve the problem that Sakuma’s posed some eighty years before, and one that
has plagued many thinkers throughout Japan’s modern era. Tanabe sought to
negate the dualism between the particular and the universal by positing a
neither-nor logic whereby the binary opposition between neither particular nor
universal was itself negated and subsequently reconstructed as a unity. In his
attempt to ground Japan in neither one nor the other, Tanabe was representative
of many individuals in the early postwar years who appealed to peace, harmony,
and above all, international cooperation as the only realistic path for their
nation. The sheer number of voices advocating some form of this new triad
evidenced a painful recognition of just how far Japan had sunk into its own
particularity before and during the war.

Tanabe claimed that his conversion or transformation was caused by his inability
to address this problem during the war through the use of reason. Hence, his
own personal absolute critique effected his death and resurrection (shi-fukkatsu),
and demonstrated the importance of defeat as the psychological ground of
despair (kyodatsu) out of which new life (shinsei) arose after negation. However,
since the elevation of Japan’s particularism to absolute status was viewed
through the lens of defeat as a sin to be expunged, it is necessary to examine in

89See Chapter Five for a fuller discussion on the language of reconstruction.
more detail exactly for what repentance was performed. In Tanabe's case especially, repentance was not simply a function of a philosopher's anguish over the impotence of reason. It was in fact related to his placing of reason at the service of the state and therefore at the service of the very particularism which in retrospect he strove to transcend. To explore this question, I want to examine Tanabe's concept of the "logic of species" (shu no ronri) which he developed in the 1930s, ostensibly to provide a moral foundation for national existence. It was a concept that his commentators say comprised his most original contribution to modern Japanese philosophy. It is also one, however, that his critics argue represented his contribution to Japanese nationalism and militarism.

Tanabe became a full professor at Kyoto University in 1927 and the following year acceded to the chair of the philosophy department which he held until his

90See, for example, Heisig, "Foreward;" and Himi, "Tanabe's Theory of the State," and Jamie Hubbard, "The Failure of Absolutism," in RPT, pp. 303-15 and 360-82 respectively.

91Tanabe's most vociferous critics naturally came from the left, particular Tosaka Jun and Miki Kiyoshi. Tanabe and Miki had spent time together in Freiburg in the early 1920s and both studied with Heidegger. For his and Tosaka's criticisms of Tanabe see, Ienaga, Tanabe Hajime no shisō, pp. 17-20, 132-36. Ienaga said that Tanabe's leftist critics forced him to confront more directly the marxist critique of Japanese society. Not surprisingly, Tanabe appreciated Marx's stages of growth theory but rejected it as too linear and devoid of any spiritual component. Ibid., p. 251. See also James W. Heisig, "Tanabe's Logic of the Specific and the Spirit of Nationalism," in Heisig and Maraldo (eds), Rude Awakenings," pp. 255-88. Here, Heisig referred to shu no ronri as "logic of the specific," in contrast to his earlier usage of "logic of species." However, he does not mention his reasons for the change in terminology.
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retirement in early 1945.\textsuperscript{92} Thus, his mature and most influential years as a scholar paralleled the rise and fall of Japanese nationalism and militarism. Although characterized as an intensely private and aloof individual, one who was often criticized for hiding behind the "thick walls of an ivory tower,"\textsuperscript{93} Tanabe was also said to have had a deep social conscience which led him at all times to ground his philosophy in the real world and make it socially useful.\textsuperscript{94} The logic of species, which first appeared in a 1934 essay, represented Tanabe's self-professed effort to provide a logical and moral foundation for Japanese society which would mediate between the anarchy of individualism and the tyranny of the state. After the war Tanabe himself explained:

\textit{The motive of my investigation was to make a philosophical analysis of the nationalism which was coming to the fore ...[in the

\textsuperscript{92}Tanabe succeeded Nishida as chair in 1928, although Nishida did not formally retire until 1930.

\textsuperscript{93}Ienaga, \textit{Tanabe Hajime no shisō}, p. 20. One of the central arguments of Ienaga's book was that Tanabe, for all his social conscience and desire to make philosophy socially useful, was in fact very ignorant of the world around him - a criticism that Ienaga extended to his philosophy. pp. 355-359. For similar criticisms of Tanabe from specific individuals see pp. 139-41 (Nambara Shigeru), pp. 246, 351-52 (Takahashi Satomi), and p. 359 (Tsuda Sōkichi). It should be noted that most of these criticisms applied to the Kyoto philosophers as a whole, p. 146. Japan's defeat precipitated an intense backlash against the Kyoto School, in particular a series of round-table discussions by Nishitani Keiji, Kōsaka Masaaki, Suzuki Shigeta, and Kōyama Iwao, published in \textit{Chūō Kōron} between November 1941 and November 1942. For an excellent discussion on these meetings and the postwar criticisms of them, see Horio Tsutomu, "The Chūōkōron Discussions, Their Background and Meaning," (translated by Thomas Kirchner), in Heisig and Maraldo (eds), \textit{Rude Awakenings}, pp. 289-315.

\textsuperscript{94}Both Heisig and Takeuchi make this point. See Heisig's "Foreward" and Takeuchi's "Translator's Introduction" in \textit{Philosophy as Metanoetics}, pp. vii-xxx and xxxi-xlvii respectively.

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late 1930s]. In doing so I criticized the individualism which had dominated us in the past. At the same time I denied the totalitarianism which was being erected in place of a simple nationalism. By their mutual negation I mediated the former’s concept of the subjective individual and the latter’s fundamental concept of race... I wished to guarantee, on the one hand, the logical foundations of the concept of nation by thoroughly placing it on a moral basis, and to correct, on the other, at least as far as possible, the irrational policy of actualism which was then prominent in Japan.95

The logic of species represented Tanabe’s attempt to find some middle ground between these two extremes by applying the dialectic method to the real world.96 Tanabe defined species as “immediate being” or “society in its immediate state” which stood between the universality of humankind and the particularity of the individual.97 Both the species and the individual were irrational in the sense that each strove to assert itself in the face of the other. The resulting conflict generated by this process led to the alienation of both species and individual and their ultimate synthesis in the genus or universal.98


96Himi Kiyoshi argued that "logic of species" earned Tanabe the reputation as an original thinker. "Tanabe’s Theory of the State," RPT, pp. 304.

97Dilworth, p. 274.

98Himi, pp. 307-08.
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Here, Tanabe utilized Henri Bergson’s concept of “open” and closed” societies which appeared just two years before his first work on the logic of species was published.\textsuperscript{99} As society in its immediate state, the species was a closed “totemic group” based on ethnic particularity and irrational mysticism.\textsuperscript{100} The synthesis occasioned by the conflict between the species and the individuals that comprised it resulted in the establishment of an open society based on law, morality and social justice which brought it into solidarity with other societies. In other words, this movement from irrationality to rationality allowed the species to be united with the totality of humankind by becoming the realization of the universal or genus in this world. At this point, however, the species naturally degenerated back into its particularistic, closed ways, opposing the individual by imposing itself on the individual; thereby, beginning the entire process anew.\textsuperscript{101} As a dialectical process, the logic of species was circular and ongoing, as was the

\textsuperscript{99}Henri Bergson, \textit{The Two Sources of Morality and Religion} (Les deux sources de la morale et la religion), (trans. R.A. Audra and C. Brereton), London, 1935. Although Bergson’s book appeared two years before Tanabe introduced his concept of the "logic of species," the seeds of his own idea were evident as early as 1925 in his essay, “The Logic of Species and the World Scheme.” In a 1951 article Nishitani Keiji said that the "logic of species" represented Tanabe’s attempt to free himself from Nishida’s influence. Nishitani Keiji, "Nishida Kitaro: Sono hito to shiso (Nishida Kitaro: The Man and his Thought), Tokyo, 1985, p. 217. Ienaga echoed this assessment, arguing that Nishida was a “big wall” that loomed in front of Tanabe, \textit{Tanabe Hajime no shiso}, p. 342.

\textsuperscript{100}Himi, “Tanabe’s Theory of the State,” p. 305. See also James Heisig, “Foreward,” p. xvii.

\textsuperscript{101}Himi, “Tanabe’s Theory of the State,” pp. 307-08.
practice of *zange*, and Tanabe came to understand it as both a historical principle and as a manifestation of historical reality. In the same way that the performance of *zange* was a never-ending process of renewal and re-creation of individual identity, so too was the continual conflict and resolution between the individual and the genus (universal) a circular principle of historical development embodied in the waxing and waning of the species.

Seen in this context, Tanabe’s logic of species appears to have been a conscientious effort to wrench Japan out of the particularity of *tennō-sei* and into a universal solidarity with other nations. This is the position of Naoki Sakai who argues that *Shu no ronri* represented Tanabe’s critique of endorsing “the identity of the Japanese nation as a monolithic entity.”¹⁰² Had he been successful in this task, as Himi Kiyoshi has noted, he may have been able to see through “the fictional function of the emperor system and would have been in a position to argue for a pluralistic organization of the modern Japanese state” and therefore could have “contributed greatly to the establishment of Japanese democracy.”¹⁰³ This, of course, was not the case. Instead, Tanabe became an unwitting participant in the deification of the state: specifically, the Japanese


¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 311.
This shift occurred in the late 1930s as Tanabe moved away from the logic of species as a "logic of social existence" toward the species as a "logic of historical reality" itself. With this move, the state came to displace the species as the central element in his thinking. ¹⁰⁴ The state became, for Tanabe, the ground in which historical reality itself was played out, and thus resembled Hegel's idea of the state as a "concrete universal." ¹⁰⁵ Tanabe's conflation of the species with the state and then with the Japanese state in particular was due in large part to his principal concern over conflict between individuals (self-interest as radical evil) and the concomitant breakdown of social order. While the species performed this role in a philosophical sense, the state was the stage on which this conflict was played out in the contingent, historical world. Thus, Tanabe began to see that the species existed through and was actualized by the state. ¹⁰⁶

In 1937, the Ministry of Education issued a small booklet called *Kokutai no*  

¹⁰⁴Ibid., pp. 308-09.  
¹⁰⁶Ienaga, *Tanabe Hajime no shisō*, p. 41.
Hongi (Cardinal Principles of the National Polity). This was the first real attempt to codify the concept of kokutai (national polity) which had existed for many years but which had never been clearly defined.\textsuperscript{107} Consider the following passage:

> Our country is established with the Emperor, who is the descendant of Amaterasu Omikami, as her center, and our ancestors as well as we ourselves constantly have beheld in the Emperor the fountainhead of her life and activities. For this reason, to serve the Emperor and to receive the Emperor's great august Will as one's own is the rationale of making our historical "life" live in the present; and on this is based the morality of the people.\textsuperscript{108}

In this section we can see clearly that the nation's existence was grounded in the historical principle of the Imperial House. Moreover, the individuals subsumed under the Emperor-centred nation-state owed their very existence as historical beings to the state itself. Now, compare this statement with the following passage from Tanabe's "The Logic of National Existence," published in 1939:

> The act of self-denial in which individuals sacrifice themselves for the sake of the nation turns out to be an affirmation of existence. Because the nation to which the individual has been sacrificed bears within itself the source of life of the individual, it is not merely a matter of sacrificing oneself for the other. Quite the contrary, \textit{it is a restoration of the self to the true self}. This is why self-negation is turned to self-affirmation and the whole unites with the

\textsuperscript{107}This booklet also represented the government's attempt to once and for all discredit the "organ theory" of constitutional scholar Minobe Tatsukichi who had argued many years earlier that the emperor was but one of many "organs" of the Japanese state and therefore was not the sole repository of value.

\textsuperscript{108}Mikiso Hane, Modern Japan: A Historical Survey, p. 262.
individual. The free autonomy of ethics is not extinguished in service to the nation and in submission to its orders, but rather made possible thereby.\textsuperscript{109}

A few years later as the tide of war was turning against Japan, Tanabe clarified his idea of the relationship between the state and the individual in another essay called “Life and Death,” written shortly before his own death and resurrection:

In time of crisis country and individual are one; the people dedicate themselves out of necessity to the country. To distance themselves from one’s country means at the same time to destroy the self itself...\textsuperscript{110}

Here, Tanabe’s idea ran parallel to that of Watsuji Tetsujirô who was also absorbed with the concept of totality and the relationships between the individual and the state. Consider the following passage from the second volume of his \textit{Ethics}, published in 1942:

The state is the absolute force for the individual, and demands unconditional devotion from the individual. The individual can return to his or her own ultimate totality through devotion to the state. Therefore, it is said that duty to the state means loyalty (\textit{chûgi}), according to which one devotes everything one owns in order to serve

\textsuperscript{109}Quoted in James W. Heisig, “The 'Self That is Not a Self': Tanabe's Dialectics of Self-Awareness,” \textit{RPT}, p. 283. Italics in the original. Compare this with Heidegger's famous inaugural address at Freiburg University in 1933 where he argued that labour service, military service, and advancing the spiritual mission of the nation were the primary obligations of the German student body. Martin Heidegger, “The Self Assertion of the German University,” delivered May 27, 1933 (trans. Cyril Welch), Twelve Copy Press, 1997, pp. 1-11. I am indebted to Dr. Welch for giving me a copy of his book and for many stimulating discussions about Heidegger and being.

\textsuperscript{110}Heisig, “The Self that is not a Self,” \textit{RPT}, p. 283. This essay was written in 1943, less than a year before Tanabe’s underwent his spiritual conversion.
Part Two: Repentance and Responsibility

the sovereign of the state.\textsuperscript{111}

Despite his deep commitment to rationality and logic, Tanabe, like Watsuji, ended up conflating the species with the state itself and in the process gave the individual who came into conflict with it no ground for establishing its own self-hood beyond the narrow confines of the state.\textsuperscript{112} Ultimately, Tanabe’s logic of species suffered the same fate as did the individual in Zangedô. You will remember that for Tanabe the root of all human evil was the self-affirming ego which arrogantly presumed itself to be absolute.\textsuperscript{113} This brought it into conflict with other selves, the resolution of which could only be found in absolute self-disruption or negation through the grace of other-power. With the logic of species, Tanabe began with the proposition that the species was the mediatory

\textsuperscript{111}Cited in Naoki Sakai, \textit{Translation and Subjectivity}, p. 100. Watsuji was also a student of Heidegger’s in the 1920s, and Sakai argues that he and Heidegger held almost identical ideas about the appropriation of an individual’s death by the state.

\textsuperscript{112}Sakai maintains that Heidegger’s privileging of temporality over spatiality was one of the main differences separating him from Watsuji and Tanabe. At the same time, however, he also argues that this difference also distinguished Watsuji from Tanabe. Ibid, pp. 64-65, 203-205.

\textsuperscript{113}It is important here to understand that Tanabe’s principal concern was not with the state itself but with ameliorating the tension among individuals. His focus on individual conflict was, I believe, what led him to the state as an “absolute solution.” Most modern Japanese thinkers have been concerned with the relationships between individuals which has led them to advance theories of social order that emphasize cooperation and harmony. However, this does not make Japanese society necessarily group-oriented, as many sociological theorists have suggested. Rather, it reveals an appreciation of human society as fundamentally relational. Self-identity simply cannot be understood or analyzed in isolation from the social context into which individuals are thrown. Nonetheless, this should not obscure the fact that the starting point of social analysis has usually been the individual self.
element between the individual and the genus.\textsuperscript{114} The ongoing conflict between both elements was then mediated by the genus which allowed them to be resurrected in the contingent, historical world. The conflict between individuals, however, was only mediated by the species, which Tanabe initially called the "expedient means" (hôben) for individual transformation and salvation. In the context of the late 1930s, Tanabe gradually began to see the state itself as the historical manifestation of the genus or absolute. In other words, he absolutized the state's own relativity. With that move, the state was no longer the mere vehicle or expedient means but the ògensonzai, or actual manifestation of the absolute.

Tanabe became trapped by his own rigorous logic which, in the context of Japan's impending defeat, left him no other recourse than the performance of zange. His philosophy of repentance can therefore be understood as both the unintended consequence of the logic of species and the logical outcome of his own philosophical journey. In the postwar years, Japan's defeat negated the value of utilizing the state as the ground of social existence, while Tanabe's own belief in

\textsuperscript{114} Takeuchi, "Recollections of Professor Tanabe," \textit{RPT}, pp. 8-10. According to Takeuchi, the syllogism of individual-species-genus was one of reciprocal mediation whereby each element functioned as the middle term in an ongoing circular process of absolute mediation leading to self-awareness. However, at some point Tanabe appears to have attributed to the species a special quality which gave it the character of an unmediated absolute, despite the fact that it was grounded in the realm of being.
individual radical evil rendered the resolution of social conflict in this world impossible.\footnote{In the next two chapters I will demonstrate that out of defeat the people (the \textit{min}), emerged as the only group upon which Japan's postwar hopes could be pinned. This group was championed especially by postwar historians who believed that new life could be constructed with the people as the principal agents of historical change, rather than as passive recipients of the state's actions.}

Thus, by a process of elimination, the only move available to Tanabe was to transcend the realm of being altogether.\footnote{Having said this, however, I must concur with Koschmann who shows that Tanabe's postwar political philosophy continued to betray the need for the totality of the state which was the negative mediatory element of individual freedom. See Revolution and Subjectivity, pp. 88-95. For Tanabe's original essay, "Seiji tetsugaku no kyûmu," first published in the March 1946 issue of \textit{Tenbô}, see THZ, vol. 8, pp. 323-95. I have not been able to reconcile this apparent "backtracking" on Tanabe's part with his attempt to transcend reason altogether in \textit{Zangedô}. This will have to be the subject of a separate study. Here, I only want to illustrate some possible reasons for Tanabe's own crisis of defeat and to argue, with Himi, that he is representative of many Japanese attempted to solve the problem of \textit{wakon/yosai} which is, itself, a problem of identity, and therefore a defining feature of Japanese modernity.}

Tanabe's deification of the Japanese state amounted to an absolutization of Hegel's dictum that "the state is actual only when its members had a feeling of their own self-hood and it is stable only when public and private ends are identical."\footnote{Quoted in David Williams, \textit{Japan: Beyond the End of History}, Routledge, 1994, p. 169.} As Tanabe's philosophy shifted from species to state, it gave the Japanese people no means of establishing their self-hood other than through identification with the power of \textit{kokutai}. It was for this reason that Tanabe incurred the ire of many of his contemporaries including his former mentor...
Chapter Three: Tanabe Hajime and the Philosophy of Repentance

Nishida who is said to have remarked to a friend: “This Tanabe stuff is completely fascist!” Tanabe was also criticized for following the intellectual fashions of his day, a position that accords with Himi Kiyoshi’s argument that Tanabe’s failure to extricate himself from the grips of Japanese particularity stemmed from “narrowing of consciousness that is not uncommon to the Japanese, pushing sound reason to one side and putting logic at the service of unquestioned bias.”

Interpreting Tanabe’s intellectual development as an ongoing search for identity - that is, as a struggle to construct a ground for self-awareness that would provide

118 Quoted in Heisig, “The Self that is not a Self,” RPT, p. 283. The relationship between Nishida and Tanabe was itself filled with conflict and their philosophical split is usually dated to an essay Tanabe wrote in memory of Nishida on the occasion of his retirement in 1930. While a full discussion of this split is beyond the scope of my project, I should point out that Tanabe took issue with Nishida at many points in Zangedō but never once mentioned him by name. For a detailed analysis on the Nishida/Tanabe split, see Kosaka Masaaki, Nishida tetsugaku to Tanabe tetsugaku (The Philosophies of Nishida and Tanabe), Nagoya: Remei Shobo, 1949; Nishitani Keiji, Nishida Kitarō - Sono hito to shisō (Nishida Kitarō: The Man and His Work), Tokyo, 1984; and Ienaga, Tanabe Hajime no shisō. In English see Heisig, “The Self that is not a Self,” and Malardo, “Metanoetics and the Crisis of Reason,” both in RPT, pp. 277-90 and 235-55. Malardo suggested that Tanabe’s principal complaint against Nishida was the latter’s use of terminology, although at the end of his article Malardo asked rhetorically whether Tanabe’s criticism might not have stemmed from Nishida’s perceived lack of repentance for having being an accomplice in the government’s wartime propaganda. This might explain Tanabe’s many not so subtle swipes at Nishida in Zangedō, but it would not hold true for Tanabe’s earlier writings since his estrangement from Nishida began well before the era of military oppression.

119 See Ienaga, Tanabe Hajime no shisō, pp. 96, 329.

120 Himi, “Tanabe’s Theory of the State,” p. 311.
the foundation for social order - places him at the heart of a problem that has plagued the Japanese people throughout the modern era. Since the beginning of the Meiji era Japan’s leaders have wrestled with the problem of redefining Japan as a modern nation-state vis-a-vis the Euro-American powers while simultaneously attempting to define their role and that of the state they were creating in relation to civil society. At the same time, the Japanese people were struggling to redefine themselves in the changing context of Japan’s emergent modern status. If we take Himi’s statement about “unquestioned bias” to mean the inability to construct identity without transcending the particular, then Tanabe’s project is characteristic of many attempts to re-locate Japan in the modern world. It is here then Tanabe functions most effectively as a metaphor for the Japanese people and it is also here that we can find both the occasion for and source of his “penitent confession.” As we turn to the next chapter on the debate over war responsibility we will see that the postwar calls for repentance were directly related to the Japanese peoples’ absolute identification with the particular.

All of Tanabe’s recent commentators argue that he did not intentionally set out

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121 Here, Sakai’s chapter on Watsuji is particularly relevant. Translation and Subjectivity, pp. 72-116.
to deify the Japanese state. Nonetheless, the evolution of his ideas in the 1930s demonstrates how easily even a rigorous thinker like Tanabe could be caught up in the hysteria of his times. That it took the reality of impending defeat and the destruction of Japan's cities to bring him to his senses should in no way detract from the effort he made to transform his own thinking and create a program that would shift the focus of social existence toward the universal and away from the particular. Therefore, Zangedô should be understood diachronically as part of an ongoing process to establish self-hood, and synchronically as a historically specific attempt to provide the Japanese people with a ground in which new life could be fashioned out of the chaos and disorder of defeat.

122 Among them, only Ienaga discusses the evolution of Tanabe's ideas in the broader historical context of Japan's engagement with modernity, although the essays in Rude Awakenings do address Tanabe's philosophy, and that of the Kyoto School as a whole, with specific reference to Japanese nationalism. However, none of his commentators have focused on the problem of identity as a defining feature of modernity itself.
Chapter Four: The Debate Over War

Responsibility

Just as Japan's impending defeat drew Tanabe into a confrontation with his own personal demons, so too did the bitter reality of defeat force the Japanese into a similarly torturous self-examination, one that demanded an explanation of how the once-great Japanese nation had been reduced to such a pitiable state. This process became the starting point for a debate over war responsibility which captured the attention of a broad cross-section of Japanese, from intellectuals and politicians to Tanabe's "ordinary and foolish" everyman and woman. Like Tanabe's philosophy of Zangedō, which sought to come to grips with radical evil through individual acts of repentance and atonement, the war responsibility debate began with, and was transformed by, nothingness. This was not the spiritual nothingness of the True Pure Land, but the "material" nothingness of defeat itself: the charred landscapes of Japan's cities and the utter exhaustion of the Japanese people. The following quotation poignantly illustrates the relationship between material destruction, defeat, and the search for those responsible:

The street and the people had changed totally. It was painful to find
Chapter Four: The Debate over War Responsibility

Tokyo's shitamachi\(^1\) transformed into a massive ruin of scrap metal and junk... My family, who normally would have come joyously to greet my return, had perished in the bombings and disappeared from this world... Overcome with the grief welling up inside me on the late afternoon, I stood motionless on the spot where my house had been: speechless. Robbed of my family, my house destroyed, and my treasures lost forever, I burned with indignation at who was responsible. Looking out over the scorched plain, I wondered how the world could be so cruel and pitiless.\(^2\)

So wrote a young soldier returning from the war to the Asakusa area of Tokyo in 1946 - anger, helplessness, and despair encapsulated in a single, painful memory. In the smouldering ruins of the early postwar years many Japanese like our young soldier "burned with indignation" to find those responsible, but their search was quickly clouded by uncertainty over exactly who was responsible and for what.

Of all the controversies to emerge from the dark valley of war and defeat, none is more intimately linked to the reconstruction of self and society than the debate over war responsibility.\(^3\) This chapter and the one that follows trace the

\(^1\)Shitamachi refers to the downtown or working-class areas of Japan's cities, to which is contrasted Yamanote or the uptown, higher class residential neighbourhoods.

\(^2\)Mr. X, "Michitsu motaretu" (Helping Each Other), Shinro, Tōbu Kotsu Jūgyōin Kumiai Honbuhen, August 1948. Quoted in Yoshimi Yoshiaki, "Senryōki nihon no minshū ishiki," p. 73. Translation mine.

\(^3\)As mentioned in the introduction, a number of scholars, including Victor Koschmann and Andrew Barshay, have identified the "debate over subjectivity," or shūtaiseiron, as one of the major intellectual concerns of the early postwar years, particularly its role in the larger debate
Part Two: Repentance and Responsibility

evolution of this debate, from the Emperor’s “end of war” broadcast to the executions of Tōjō Hideki and six other Class “A” war criminals at Sugamo Prison in Tokyo on December 23, 1948. In the course of this debate the Japanese were inescapably drawn into a prolonged re-examination of their own identity, the starting point for which was a single question: “Why did we lose?” This turned the debate inward, leading many to “reflect deeply” (fukai hansei) on about constructing a new democratic Japan. The debate over war responsibility, while integral to the discourse of shūtaiseiron, provides another angle from which to view the reconstruction of self because it was not merely a discussion among intellectual elites; rather, it involved people from all walks of life and was conducted in the public domain of the print media from which most Japanese obtained information about themselves and the world around them. For Japanese discussions on this issue, see Hiraishi Naoaki “Rinen toshite no kindai seiyo - haisengo ninenkan no genron o chushin ni,” (The Modern West as an Ideology: Post-defeat Writings, 1945-1947) and Miyamura Haruo, “Sengo tenmō-sei ron no shosō: [jirō] no naimenka o megatte” (Different Perspectives on the Postwar Debate Over the Emperor System: On the Internalization of “Freedom”), both in Nakamura Masanori et. al., Sengo nihon: senryō to senso kakumei (Postwar Japan: The Occupation and the Postwar Revolution), vol. 3, Sengo shisō to shakai ishiki (Postwar Thought and Social Consciousness), Iwanami Shoten, 1995, pp. 27-86.

While the starting point for the debate over war responsibility is easy to identify, locating its end point is more problematic. To a certain extent, the debate has never really ended. Throughout the postwar years the issue of responsibility has been continually resurrected, particularly on the anniversaries of Pearl Harbor, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and the day of surrender itself. It has also been kept alive in the ongoing school textbook controversy and in periodic foreign criticisms over Japan’s official treatment, or lack thereof, of its militaristic past. Yet, for the children of the yake ato jidai, there was an end point of sorts in the early postwar years, one that press accounts identified as the start of yet another new era (shin jidai): December 23, 1948, the day that Tōjō and six other Class “A” war criminals were executed at Sugamo Prison in Tokyo. If defeat in 1945 marked the beginning of a turning point, the coexistence of kyodatsu and shinsei, then the executions of Tōjō and the others represented the corner turned away from repentance and responsibility and toward reconstruction and a new life.

The word hansei was used synonymously with two other terms, saisei and hanei. These words formed part of the mantra of defeat in the early postwar years.

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what they had done to themselves.\textsuperscript{6}

The forum for the debate over war responsibility was the newly-rejuvenated print media which took up this issue immediately following the Emperor's "\textit{shûsen}" speech. Over the next few years, the Japanese national character - the very essence of what it meant to be Japanese - was placed on trial in every newspaper and magazine throughout the country. The outcome was a complete reversal of values: the land of the gods was now a pitiful little nation unable to feed itself; its unique moral code, a barrier to rational and scientific modernity; its "beautiful customs," the very root of blind obedience and servility.\textsuperscript{7} From the proud strongman of Asia, Japan had in a few short years become its sick man. All that had been noble and honourable was now mean and base. In their attempt to comprehend the enormity of their condition, the Japanese deconstructed themselves trait by trait in the press and laid bare for all to read the essential

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item This focus demonstrates the significance of the war responsibility debate to the issue of subjectivity because the turn inward and the preoccupation with "us" (\textit{wareware no nihonjin}) were both acts of subjective reflection (\textit{shûtaiteki na hansei}).

\item The term "beautiful customs" was used in the prewar years by businessmen and government officials to describe the allegedly reciprocal harmony in Japan's labour-management relations. As such, it was a tool used to undermine the nascent labour union movement, the very existence of which was proof that "beautiful customs" were more rhetoric than reality. For a good discussion of this in the interwar years, see Sheldon Garon, \textit{State and Labor in Modern Japan}, University of California Press, 1987; and Andrew Gordon, \textit{The Evolution of Labor Relations in Japan: Heavy Industry, 1853-1955}, Harvard University Press, 1988.
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flaws of the Japanese character.  

*Ichioku Sôzange - One Hundred Million in Remorse*

The great French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson coined the phrase, “decisive moment,” to describe the point at which both the form and the content of a scene converge in the eye of the photographer to be captured in the single snap of a shutter. This phrase is a useful metaphor for historical interpretation. It highlights the importance of certain events or memories which have the power to shape and animate the historical narrative of a people. It also describes the process by which historians attempt to capture the essential features of a particular era and, in doing so, help to create the very “moments” that

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8This deconstruction process was also carried on by GHQ, especially in its ten-week NHK radio re-education program, “These are the facts!” (Shinsô wa kô da), begun on December 9, 1945. See, Yoshida Yutaka, *Nihonjin no sensôkan* (The Japanese Perspective on the War), pp. 31-35. For a more detailed account of the radio broadcast, see Takeyama Akiko, *Senryô no hōsô: Shinsô wa kô da* (Occupation Broadcasting: These are the Facts!) Nambyakuhen, *Zoku: Shôwa Bunka* (Showa Culture Series), Keiso Shobô, 1990. In Chapter Six, I deal specifically with the American role in Japanese social reconstruction. Here, however, I only want to stress that GHQ’s efforts often fed into, rather than initiating, the process itself.

subsequently become enshrined in historical memory.\textsuperscript{10}

If we look for a starting point or "decisive moment" when collective responsibility and defeat become irrevocable linked, we can find it in the two weeks between August 15th and August 30th. This brief period preceding the arrival of the American occupation forces not only offered a window of opportunity for Japan’s military and civilian leaders to dispose of documents and pillage materiel, it also bought the government precious time to construct an interpretation of Japan’s defeat that would shield the Emperor (and themselves) from criticism and initiate his reconstruction as a man of peace to whom the Japanese owed their allegiance and, indeed, their very lives. While the Emperor’s speech exhorting the "one hundred million" (ichioku) to "endure the unendurable" provided the "form," a radio address by ex-Prime Minister Suzuki Kantarō on that same evening and a media interview by acting Prime Minister Prince Higashikuni Naruhiko on August 28th supplied the "content" for the war responsibility debate’s "decisive moment."

At 7:30 on the evening of August 15th, Suzuki spoke to the Japanese people,

\textsuperscript{10}In this sense, "decisive moments" function in a similar manner to turning points, the use and importance of which I discussed in Chapter One. As such, they are the raw materials of historical periodization, whether the creation of the historian or the experiential memories of the historical subject.
Part Two: Repentance and Responsibility

linking the Emperor’s benevolence in ending the war, the ignominy of defeat, and the collective responsibility of the people to atone for this historically unprecedented disaster.

His Majesty made the sacred decision to end the war in order to save the people and contribute to the welfare and peace of mankind. The illustrious power of His Majesty’s gracious benevolence is itself the protection of our national polity... Needless to say, I am sure that not only the Imperial Army at the front, but the entire nation must find it unbearable to see the war finally ended this way. At the same time, the nation sincerely apologizes to His Majesty [for the way the war ended]... Under any circumstances, whether we live or die, our role as subjects is to assist the imperial destiny which is as eternal as heaven and earth. Only this absolute loyalty can protect our national polity.\(^\text{11}\)

Suzuki’s call for absolute loyalty was an extension of wartime propaganda, now employed in the cause of damage control before the Americans imposed their own will on the Japanese people. Nonetheless, the message remained the same as it had done during the war: the peoples’ lives, or deaths, were meaningful only if they fulfilled “the imperial destiny” and preserved the “national polity” (kokutai).\(^\text{12}\) Suzuki seemed to have taken a page from Watsuji’s book, making

\(^{11}\) Chimoto Hideki, Tennōsei no shinryaku sekinin to senso sekinin, Aoki Shoten, 1990, p. 142. Quoted in Herbert Bix, “The Showa Emperor’s ‘Monologue’ and the Problem of War Responsibility,” p. 302. Bix also says that on the same day, the Ministry of Education issued a directive to all public and private schools to reinforce the idea of collective responsibility for defeat and to stress the need to preserve the kokutai and to protect the Emperor. Ibid., pp. 302-03.

\(^{12}\) The continuity between postwar statements such as this and those of Tanabe and the Japanese government mentioned in the last chapter is striking. In both war and defeat, Japanese selfhood remained inexorably linked to the fortunes of the state, at least as far as the government’s official position was concerned. This was the very relationship that Tanabe, to his credit, attempted to transcend in Zangedō.
on August 17th Japan's first postwar government under Prince Higashikuni attempted to put into practice what Suzuki had only put into words.\textsuperscript{13} Whatever concern the new government had for alleviating the suffering of the people was clearly overridden by the "primary mission of protecting the imperial institution."\textsuperscript{14} To this end, Higashikuni held a public interview with the Japanese media on August 28th, two days before MacArthur arrived at Atsugi airbase.\textsuperscript{15} Unlike the Emperor who announced only that the government had been ordered to comply with the terms of the Potsdam Declaration (\textit{kyōdō sengen ni ōseshimuru}), Higashikuni minced no words when he called on "all Japanese - the \textit{gun}, the \textit{kan}, and the \textit{min} - to reflect on and repent for the causes of Japan's defeat as the necessary first step in the reconstruction of the Japanese

\textsuperscript{13}Herbert Bix, "The Showa Emperor's 'Monologue'," p. 303.

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., p. 303.

\textsuperscript{15}This was the first interview given by a member of the Japanese government following Japan's surrender. I have used the August 30, 1945 accounts of the interview published in the \textit{Mainichi Shimbun} and the \textit{Asahi Shimbun}. 

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nation. This point was further reinforced by the newspapers themselves which carried such bold headlines as "reflect on and repent for the causes of defeat" (hai-in o saisei sôzange) and "collective repentance of the military, the officials, and the people is needed" (gun, kan, min sôzange no yô ari).}

While responsibility for defeat was indeed collective, Higashikuni separated the responsibility of the gun and the kan from that of the min. He first singled out Japan's leaders (the gun and the kan) for having unintentionally or unconsciously led their nation into war. This, he said, was the leaders' public (kôsen na) burden since it was they who had formulated and carried out the policies that had culminated in Japan's defeat. The unintended consequence of these "well-intentioned efforts" was the growth of an unsuitable system of control which had so thoroughly fettered the people that they were unable to

16The triad of gun-kan-min referred to the military (gunbatsu), the government (kanbatsu), and the people (minshû) respectively. Few English histories on this era mention Higashikuni's press interview. Barshay discusses "collective contrition" but does not connect Higashikuni with it. In Japanese, Yoshida Yutaka deals with it in some detail, Nihonjin no sensôkan, pp. 26-29, as does Awaya Kentarô, et. al., Sensô sekinin - Sengo sekinin, pp. 63-66.

17The first phrase comes from the sub-headline of the August 30, 1945 issue of the Yomiuri Shim bun and the second from the Asahi Shimbun of the same date.

18In Japanese the phrase reads, "...seifû, kanshi, gunjin jishin ga kono sensô o shirazushirazu ni senpai no hô ni michibitau no dewa nai ka to omou" ("...did not the government, the bureaucrats, and the military themselves unintentionally lead [the nation] toward defeat in this war?")
accomplish anything. Despite maintaining that Japan’s leaders had acted “for the sake of their nation” (ōkuni no tame ni), Higashikuni likened wartime Japan to a man with arteriosclerosis (domyaku kōka) which resulted, not in death, but in a terminal case of moral decline (kokumin dōgi no heika).

The mixed metaphor notwithstanding, it appeared that Higashikuni was absolving the people of responsibility for Japan’s defeat, given that a dying man could hardly be held accountable for moral laxity. Yet, this was precisely his point. Despite the virulently oppressive system, he maintained that the people were responsible for having allowed moral sclerosis to infect the body politic. Higashikuni never explained exactly how the people had contributed to the disease of Japan’s defeat. He merely linked the peoples’ “private” (hisoka na) responsibility for moral decline with the leaders’ “public” (kōsen na) responsibility for bad policies which conveniently allowed him to indict the whole and then demand “collective repentance of the one hundred million” (ichioku sōzange) as the first step in national reconstruction. By causally linking defeat, repentance, and reconstruction, and by making them the subject of collective action, Higashikuni drew on the Meiji ideal of sacrifice for the sake of

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19The actual phrase reads, “Waga kuni ni teki shinai yō na tōsei ga okonawareta kekka, kokumin wa mottaku shibareta nani mo dekinakatta koto mo senpai no hitotsu no ōki na gen-in to omou." Mainichi Shimbun, August 30, 1945.
the nation which was itself directly tied to the concept of kokutai (national polity). In fact, Higashikuni began the interview by stressing the need for the continued preservation of the kokutai which he said “transcended reason and emotion” as the basic creed of the Japanese people. This reveals the true purpose of the interview: absolution of the Emperor. Thus, collective repentance for defeat was necessary, not simply for economic and political purposes, but for the reconstruction of the kokutai itself.

The appeals of Higashikuni and Suzuki to preserve the kokutai represented another in a long series of attempts on the part of Japan’s rulers to unite the Japanese people in selfless devotion to a common cause. Hence the utilization of the “one hundred million.” They also revealed the unflagging attempts of Japan’s leaders to preserve the Emperor inviolate and keep him “above the clouds.”20 To reinforce this idea and to further the fiction of the Emperor’s benevolence by ending the war, Higashikuni formally thanked Hirohito in a Diet speech, delivered four days after his press interview.

... the gracious feeling of benevolence of His Majesty, who paved the way for the establishment of an eternal peace in order to save the people from hardships. As a matter of fact, we had never been impressed so profoundly by the deep sympathy shown by His

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20This phrase comes from Carol Gluck, Japan’s Modern Myths, p. 78.
Chapter Four: The Debate over War Responsibility

Majesty. We deeply regret to have caused Him so much anxiety.\(^{21}\) Higashikuni’s call to preserve the national polity and subsequent expression of thanks to the Emperor for his latter-day act of *keisei saimin* (preserving the government and saving the people) directly linked the *kokutai* and the Emperor, toward whom the remorse of the “one hundred million” was to be directed.\(^{22}\) As mentioned in Chapter One, this phrase was invoked numerous times during the war to unite the hearts and minds of the people and then more recently in the Imperial broadcast to “endure the unendurable and suffer the insufferable.” Higashikuni’s interview at the end of August took this thread and wove the one hundred million into the very fabric of defeat itself. Now, the one hundred million hearts that had supposedly beat as one during wartime (*ichioku isshin*) were now asked to beat in remorseful contrition for their nation’s defeat.\(^{23}\)

The image of dozens of Japanese prostrating themselves in front of the Imperial


\(^{22}\)*Keisei saimin* is an Edo-era phrase characterizing the ideal of good government. As such, it is also an expression of enlightened self-interest since “saving the people” (*saimin*) would ensure that government (*keisei*) remained intact.

\(^{23}\)Shortly after the war, Kagawa Toyohiko sarcastically characterized Japan’s “descent into hell” as a collapse from “one hundred million balls of fire” (*ichioku hi no tama*) into “one hundred million in remorse” (*ichioku sōzange*). Quoted in Onuma Yasuaki, *Senso sekinin no josetsu* (An Introduction to the War Responsibility Debate), Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1975, p. 293.
Part Two: Repentance and Responsibility

Palace notwithstanding, Higashikuni's statement invoked widespread criticism. Many saw collective repentance as merely another attempt by Japan's leaders to let themselves off the hook. Tanabe himself castigated Japan's leaders for this in the preface to Zangedō, written a few weeks after Higashikuni's interview was published. Urging the people to perform sôzange, he said, was nothing but a shameless attempt on the part of Japan's leaders to evade their own responsibility.24 Tanabe was deeply committed to the idea of collective responsibility in social affairs, but for Japan's leaders to promote sôzange before they had performed zange themselves made them utterly despicable in his eyes (nikumu mono).

The press, too, rejected ichioku sôzange on similar grounds, but not before the major dailies issued their own public statement of repentance for having fallen under the sway of the militarists and for having betrayed the public trust.25 Leading the way was the Asahi Shimbun which offered the following apology in

24Tanabe Hajime, “Preface,” p. 14. Tanabe wrote the preface in October 1945, although it was not made public until Iwanami issued the first edition in April 1946. Nonetheless, his critical stance toward the government, and to the idea of ichioku sôzange in particular, paralleled that of many Japanese at the time.

25The speed with which the press changed its spots and the degree to which this was simply a matter of gratuitous expediency is a fascinating subject, but one that cannot be dealt with here. For the purposes of this study, I am focussing on the language that emerges from defeat and how this language was adopted by a broad cross-section of Japanese people. For an early critical study of the Japanese press, see William J. Coughlin, Conquered Press: The MacArthur Era in Japanese Journalism, Pacific Books, 1952.
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a November 7, 1945 editorial:

In view of the important role played by the *Asahi Shim bun* from the very beginning of the China Incident to the end of the Greater East Asia War, we hereby clarify our responsibility before the nation and will do our utmost for the reconstruction of a new Japan... Hereafter, the *Asahi Shim bun* will be managed on the basis of the universal will of the entire staff and with the collaboration of the nation. At this critical point in the history of our country, the *Asahi Shim bun* wishes to express its intention of becoming an organ of democracy in overcoming the many difficulties which lie in the path of recovery.26

The *Asahi*’s example was soon followed by the *Mainichi* and the *Yomiuri Hôchi*, both of which apologized for their culpability in wartime and subsequently promised to uphold the principles of democratic journalism.27 Despite taking the lead in performing public repentance, however, Japan’s leading dailies were often upstaged by provincial dailies and even by the industry’s trade paper, the *Nihon Shim bun-hô*, in attacking the concept of collective repentance. In the

26 *Asahi Shim bun*, November 7, 1945. As part of the atonement process, President Murayama and Chairman of the Board Ueno both resigned, as did nine other directors. Murayama and Ueno, however, retained ownership of the paper. Similar apologies from the *Yomiuri* and *Mainichi* papers followed quickly on the heels of the *Asahi* announcement. Public statements such as these were part of a nation-wide outpouring of remorse immediately following Japan’s surrender, although it is difficult to gauge the degree to which they were true expressions of contrition or simply acts of political expediency. Certainly, there were many examples of the latter in the early postwar years. Here, however, I am less concerned with the sincerity of these public pronouncements than I am with the statements themselves and the language in which they were written. Through an examination of the language we can gain a clearer insight into what exactly was being repented for and why such acts of contrition were believed to be necessary for the construction of a “new Japan.”

27 See the *Mainichi Shim bun* and the *Yomiuri Shim bun* editorials of November 10th and 12th respectively.
November 19th issue of the *Nihon Shimbun-hô*, an unidentified contributor wrote that he hated the idea of *ichioku sôzange* because it opened the door for those who were really responsible - the leaders - to escape punishment.\(^{28}\)

Writing in the context of reconstructing Japan's newspaper world, the author admitted that finding anyone among Japan's seventy million who had had nothing to do with the war was unlikely. Nonetheless, he believed that Japan's leaders in every field, including those in the media, were morally responsible since they were the ones who had influenced public opinion.

The *Tokushima Shimbun* took a similar position, arguing that the call for collective repentance was a government tactic designed to shift responsibility on to the people.\(^{29}\) This in itself, said the newspaper, demonstrated the immorality of Japan's leaders. A few days later the same paper took up the issue again, this time in outraged response to General Minami Jirô's reported comment to an American journalist that responsibility for the war should not be blamed on

\(^{28}\) *Nihon Shimbun-hô*, November 19, 1945, translated and reprinted in *ATIS*, Reel 1, Editorial Series 321, Item 1.

\(^{29}\) *Tokushima Shimbun*, November 23, 1945, translated and reprinted in *ATIS*, Reel 1, Editorial Series, 430, Item 2.
Chapter Four: The Debate over War Responsibility

Japan’s military leaders but on the entire nation.\textsuperscript{30} The editorial retorted that the “atrocious military” alone bore full responsibility for defeat. Statements like that of General Minami’s, the paper said, were clear examples of how morality had “forsaken Japan.”\textsuperscript{31}

The reaction against \textit{ichioku sōzange} by the press should not be viewed as an attempt to absolve the Japanese people, but rather as a rejection of the very ideology that led the people to follow their leaders during wartime. It was therefore an expression of new life (shinsei) itself; the press criticized the government because they could. In contrast to the oppressive war years, the early years after Japan’s defeat provided unprecedented opportunity for free and open discussion which frequently took the form of government criticism. The language of the discussion with its emphasis on morality, or lack thereof, was not new. Now, however, the people held the moral high ground because whatever penance was required of them was being paid for by hunger,

\textsuperscript{30}General Minami was former army Vice Chief of Staff and briefly War Minister in the second Watatsuki cabinet from April 14, 1931 to December 13, 1931. Between 1934 and 1936 he was Commander-in-Chief of the Kwantung Army and then Governor-General of Korea until 1942. In November 1948 he was convicted of conspiracy to wage war (Count 1) and for waging a war against China (Count 27). A month later he was sentenced to life in prison. For details, see Richard Minear, \textit{Victor’s Justice}, pp. 201-203.

homelessness, and personal loss. The same could not be said of Japan’s leaders. It was as if the old expression “revere the officials, despise the people” (kanson mimpi) had been turned on its head in the early postwar years. The kanson mimpi of the early modern era became the minson kampi of a defeated nation.32

In light of sustained public criticism and GHQ’s efforts to cast an ever-widening net for war criminals,33 some Japanese politicians came to realize that calls for collective responsibility would only further anger the people and would possibly lead to civil unrest which would endanger the very institution they were trying to protect.34 Even so, when the 89th session of the Diet opened on November

32 Kanson mimpi dates back to at least the early years of the Edo era and possibly before. My reworking of the phrase is a simple matter of exchanging the first two characters in each compound. In the early Taishō years, journalist Tokutomi Sohō played with this phrase in an entirely different context. Bemoaning the loss of Meiji-style morality and patriotism among Japan’s youth and the rising class of “newly-moneyed” (narikin), Tokutomi lamented that the once-glorious ethic of kanson mimpi had been perverted into kinson kanpi (revere money, despise the officials).

33 On November 19th, one week before the 89th Diet session was to begin, GHQ arrested generals Araki Sadao, Mazaki Jinzaburō, Koiso Kuniaki, Minami Jirō, Honjo Shigeru, and Mazaki Iwane; diplomats Matsuoka Yōsuke and Shiratori Kazunobu; right wing civilian leaders Kuzuu Yoshihisa and Kanokogi Kazunobu; and former Seiyūkai president Kuhara Fusanosuke. Bix, “The Shōwa Emperor’s ‘Monologue,’” pp. 307-308.

34 See, for example, Ashida Hitoshi’s September 5th comment in the Diet that “if we say that responsibility for defeat rests with the masses, then we will surely invite their anger.” Shūgiin Sangiin (ed), Gikai seidō 70 nenshi - teikoku gikaishi gekan, Okurashō Insatsu Kyoku, 1962, p. 1028. Quoted in Ibid., p. 308. On September 6th, six Diet members (Royama Masanichī, Murazawa Yoshijirō, Takano Magozaemon, Morita Masayoshi, Moriya Shinichī, and Saitō Kenzō) tendered their resignations to atone for their own responsibility. They were later followed by Ikezaki Tadataka, Hara Sōbei, and Takaoka Daisuke. All nine resignations were approved in a
26th the main concern of the new Shidehara government was not war responsibility but electoral reform. Due to pressure from individual Diet members, however, the issue of war responsibility dominated the agenda. On December 1st, after four days of debate, the Diet voted on two bills dealing with war responsibility. The first, sponsored by the Liberal and Socialist parties, was an admission that politicians had been slow in recognizing the importance of this issue, arguing that it was shameful for members to proceed with Diet business “without having clarified [their] own responsibility.” While the language of the bill dealt with war responsibility, it restricted its focus to those who had supported Tōjō, especially those who had participated in the “Imperial Assistance Election” of 1942. This paralleled the position of Progressive Party member Saitō Takao, who argued:

Prime Minister Shidehara has declared that the entire nation bears responsibility for the war [sensō sekinin]. Well then, we’re really perplexed as to what that means... In all frankness, I maintain that General Tōjō and Prince Konoe are the two who bear the fundamental responsibility for war. Although there must have been many others besides them, still, they stood at the forefront of the political situation and bear fundamental responsibility for causing this war. Surely no one will disagree with this... There would not have been a War of Greater East Asia if there had not

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December 1st Diet vote.


36 Ibid., p. 309.
been a China Incident... Therefore if one says that General Tōjō bears responsibility for the War of Greater East Asia, then Prince Konoe who provoked the China Incident, also has to bear responsibility.37

The second, authored by Saito’s own Progressive Party (Shimpotō),38 concerned itself more with defeat than war, maintaining that the latter was in essence a matter of international law for which “ordinary people (ippan kokumin) could not be held responsible.”39 Rather, it sought to,

clarify the causes of defeat, and wherein lies the responsibility for it, and take steps to prevent a future recurrence of this sort of disgraceful event... The cause of this defeat, needless to say, is the single-minded will of the bureaucrats in the military cliques; but it is also the unavoidable responsibility of some from the political, intellectual, and financial worlds who, influenced by the military-clique bureaucrats, drove the state and the people to wage war.40

This bill indicted a broader cross section of Japan’s leaders and echoed the sentiments of some Diet politicians like independent Fukuie Toshikazu whose direct experience as a soldier gave him a unique perspective.

I think that those who bear responsibility are to be found among the senior statesmen, the military cliques, the bureaucrats, the zaibatsu, and the politicians, all of whom had something to do with

37Ibid., p. 309.
38Although Saitō was a member of the Progressive Party which backed the Shidehara government, his statement was much closer to the minority Liberal and Socialist position.
40Quoted in Ibid., p. 310.
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provoking the war... Not only do they bear responsibility, they show no sign of having reflected on their actions. On the contrary, they shift responsibility for the defeat onto the people and go so far as to seek protection for themselves by claiming to have acted in full compliance with the emperor’s orders. I, as one of the demobilized soldiers, find this hard to forgive.41

On December 1st the Diet voted down the first bill and passed the second.42 This bill represented a shift away from the concept of collective responsibility while, at the same time, it neglected to identify the responsibility of specific individuals.43

More importantly, the Bill Concerning War Responsibility concerned itself solely with defeat. This paralleled the media’s treatment of the same issue. By early 1946 even those who had advocated the importance of uncovering the individuals responsible for war admitted that preoccupation with defeat had


42Bix maintains that the passage of the second bill represented a shift in the debate, at least as far as the government was concerned, away from the definition of war responsibility on moral grounds and toward responsibility as a legal matter. Ibid., p. 311. This tactic was undoubtably employed in the interests of self-preservation (of which preserving the kokutai was an important part) in anticipation of GHQ’s purge directive and the upcoming war crimes trials. However, in the press the issue of responsibility remained a moral one. The link between defeat and constructing a moral Japan, which Bix asserts was recognized but never pursued by Japanese politicians, was continually reaffirmed in the media.

43This appears to have been Shidehara’s intent. In his reply to fellow party member Saitō, he argued that it would be “undesirable for the government to announce whether specific politicians bear responsibility for the war.” Quoted in Ibid., p. 309.
become the main trend.\textsuperscript{44}

\textit{Sensō Sekinin versus Haisen Sekinin} \textsuperscript{45}

Initially, the public debate in Japan’s print media openly rejected the government’s preoccupation with uncovering the “causes of defeat.” Numerous early editorials and letters to the editor demonstrate that defeat was not considered to be the appropriate subject of responsibility, collectively or otherwise. Inquiring into the causes of the war and the manner in which it was prosecuted, it was argued, would fully allow the Japanese people to understand their current abject condition. Repentance and atonement were therefore to be performed not for losing the war but for starting it.

Prince Higashikuni may have been the first government leader to expressly link responsibility with defeat but other officials quickly picked up on, and reinforced,

\textsuperscript{44}See, for example, Tokushima Shim bun, December 9, 1945, translated and reprinted in ATIS, Reel 1, Social Series 1023, Item 2.

\textsuperscript{45}In the debates at the time, haisen and sempai were used interchangably for defeat. Both words used the same characters, but in reverse order.
the connection.\textsuperscript{46} At the beginning of November, nearly a month before the Diet debates on war responsibility took place, Minister Without Portfolio in the new Shidehara cabinet, Tsugita Daizaburô, announced in the Diet that the government would soon establish “The Greater East Asia War Inquiry Committee” (\textit{Daitôa Sensô Chôsakai}) to specifically investigate “the causes of our defeat.”\textsuperscript{47} Not surprisingly, Tsugita’s announcement elicited a rapid stream of negative criticism from the press. The \textit{Yomiuri Hôchi}, which only six weeks earlier had carried the bold headline “\textit{Hai-in o sansei sozange}” accompanying the reprint of Higashikuni’s interview, attacked the mandate of the committee, arguing that it would give the appearance that Japan was only interested in learning the causes of defeat so as to avoid them in the future.\textsuperscript{48} The paper’s editorial demanded that the government initiate a “thoroughgoing scientific investigation into the \textit{causes of the war}.”\textsuperscript{49} This, it said, would represent a major step forward in demonstrating Japan’s commitment to establishing a permanent

\textsuperscript{46}The Emperor of course dealt with responsibility and defeat, albeit ambiguously, but Higashikuni was the first official to openly link the two.

\textsuperscript{47}The initial proposal for “investigating the true circumstances and cause of defeat” was announced in the Diet on October 30, 1945. The Greater East Asia War Inquiry Committee was formed on November 24th; its name was changed to the War Inquiry Committee (\textit{Sensô Chôsakai}) in January 1946. Yoshida Yutaka, \textit{Nihon sensôkan}, pp. 30-31.

\textsuperscript{48}\textit{Yomiuri Hôchi}, November 5, 1945.

\textsuperscript{49}Ibid. Italics mine.
Part Two: Repentance and Responsibility

peace. In another editorial ten days later, the Yomiuri used the same argument to support the idea of postwar Japanese democracy - identifying the causes of war and those responsible was necessary in order to ensure a smooth transition to a peaceful democratic form of government.⁵⁰

Not to be outdone, Japan’s leading daily, the Asahi Shimbun also questioned the underlying purpose of the committee in the context of establishing world peace. Like the Yomiuri, the Asahi maintained that focusing on defeat would obscure the more important issue of why the war began. Responsibility for defeat, the editorial insisted, was simply due to “failure of leadership... [and]... need not be investigated.”⁵¹ The real issue was whether the government could be trusted to tell the truth and thereby begin the process of Japan’s peaceful re-entry into the new postwar world.

Will the government, which willingly uses the term “end of the war” [shūsen, shūketsu] and avoids words like “surrender [kōfuku] and “defeat” [haisen], be able to carry out this investigation thoroughly enough to convince the people and the whole world?⁵²

The answer to this question was of course a resounding no. The editorial then

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⁵⁰Yomiuri Hōchi, November 15, 1945.

⁵¹Asahi Shimbun, December 2, 1945.

⁵²Ibid.
Chapter Four: The Debate over War Responsibility

contrasted Japan’s War Inquiry Committee with the American investigation into the Pearl Harbor attack and found it sorely wanting. Without acknowledging the vast difference between investigating the reasons for an enemy attack and inquiring into the internal causes of defeat, the editorial nonetheless praised the Americans for their perceived openness. For the Asahi, the American example demonstrated that public participation in the war responsibility debate, together with free access to all government documents (as was assumed to be the case in the US) was the only way to uncover the truth.53

Japan’s other major dailies also criticized the government’s preoccupation with the cause of defeat. The Tokyo Shimbun, for example, maintained that gaining a clear awareness of the causes of war would not only help to identify those responsible but would also make “an important contribution to mankind which does not desire war.”54 The Osaka Shimbun, while also criticizing the government, took a slightly different tack. It specifically called on Japan’s

53Such effusive (and inaccurate) praise for the American system may be seen as a simple attempt to curry favour with GHQ. This seems unlikely, however, since the Asahi continually ran afoul of the occupation censors. A more realistic explanation may be that many Japanese saw the United States as an ideal type to which their nation was compared and always found wanting. The concept of America-as-ideal will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five and Six. For a retrospective account of the troubles of the Asahi’s weekly magazine with occupation censorship, see Hasebe Tadashi, “Senryō shita no shimbun” (Newspapers Under the Occupation) in Shūkan Asahi no shōwashi (The Shōwa History of the Weekly Asahi), vol. 2, Shōwa 20 nendai, Asahi Shimbunsha, 1989, pp. 39-46.

54Tokyo Shimbun, December 9, 1945.
intellectuals to focus on the war itself rather than on the “causes of defeat.”

According to the newspaper, the intellectual community was the group that could most clearly grasp the concept of democracy as the only reasonable path for Japan’s future.\(^{55}\)

The connection between war responsibility on one hand and peace and democracy on the other suggests that not only would the treatment of the former lead to the establishment of the latter within Japan, but that it would also be the means with which Japan could demonstrate its sincerity toward the rest of the world. Thus, repentance for war on the part of Japan’s leaders would serve two purposes. It would help to regain the trust of the Japanese people as well as act as an apology to those whom Japan had wronged during the war.\(^{56}\) This was what the *Tokyo Shimbun* meant by “an important contribution to mankind.”

\(^{55}\) *Osaka Shimbun*, November 23, 1945, translated and reprinted in ATIS, Reel 45, Editorial Series 17, Item 1. Despite its demand to focus on war, the editorial nonetheless maintained that Japanese democracy would be built on the “real aspects of defeat in war,” once again highlighting the intimate relationship between defeat and a new Japan.

\(^{56}\) It should be pointed out that the “apology to others” was primarily directed toward the United States, rather than the peoples of other Asian countries. There certainly were some calls to direct repentance and atonement toward the people of Asia but this was clearly a minority position. For a sampling of attempts to focus war responsibility on Asia, see *Asahi Shimbun*, December 4, 1945 and *Nagasaki Shimbun*, July 31, 1946. See also the examples in Yoshimi Yoshiaki, “Senryōki nihon no minshū ishiki,” pp. 74-74, 86. According to I Kenji, Hani Goro was one of the few intellectuals who included Japan’s actions in Asia in the context of war responsibility. “Sengo shisō no shuppatsu to ajiakan” (Perspectives on Asia and the Beginning of Postwar Thought), in I and Awakawa Akira (eds), *Sengo nihon: Senryō to sengo kakumei*, vol. 3, *Sengo shisō to shakai ishiki*, Iwanami Shoten, 1995, pp. 128-29.
Emphasizing collective repentance for defeat was immoral because it shifted the blame from those who were truly responsible - Japan’s leaders - and because it incurred the censure of world opinion. As such, war responsibility was a fundamentally moral issue.

This was the main thrust of a December 1945 Mainichi Shimbun editorial which specifically attacked Japan’s political parties for using the issue of war responsibility as a campaign strategy and as a cheap attempt to protect each group’s respective members. To drive this point home, the editorial closed with the following statement:

To be sure, the majority of members [of political parties] were driven toward war by the militarists against their will, with some of them cautiously expressing opinions against war. However, in light of the current defeat, the members, regardless of what their position on the war was, should simultaneously apologize to the people by assuming responsibility for the war. This is the proper moral attitude the members should adopt. Provisions pertaining to war responsibility are not to be found in any legal code, but only in the moral standards of the Japanese people.57

Maintaining these moral standards demanded, in the words of a Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, that Japan’s leaders “wash their faces and come back thoroughly purified.”58 Here again we see evidence of the minson kampi

57Mainichi Shimbun, December 1, 1945. Italics mine.

58Yomiuri Shimbun, December 1, 1945.
mentality at work. Whereas the peoples' responsibility was being expunged through their daily suffering in the burnt-out ruins of postwar Japan, the officials had undergone no such penance.59 This was fundamentally immoral, as was the focus on defeat exhibited by the War Investigation Committee which the newspaper believed would be set up and run by many of the same people who had supported the war in the first place.60

Ultimately, the initial distinction between responsibility for war and responsibility for defeat dissolved into a preoccupation with the latter. The burnt-out cities, the hunger and disease, and the ever-present black markets all pointed to one inescapable reality: defeat. This was further reinforced once the Americans arrived. The crisp uniforms and well-fed, clean-shaven faces of the foreign victors with their seemingly endless supply of cigarettes, food, and money stood in sharp contrast to the tattered, hunger, and utterly exhausted

59See also the New Year's editorial in the Yomiuri Hochi which directly linked defeat and the peoples' atonement for it through their daily suffering. Yomiuri Hochi, January 1, 1946.

60The people's moral high ground was maintained by the entirely justified belief that they had been made to suffer unduly. A USSBS survey at the end of the war, for example, recorded that most people felt that they had shouldered the greatest burden of sacrifice and hardship during the war. Cited in Yoshida, Nihonjin no sensôkan, pp. 27-28. Due to domestic criticism and foreign pressure, mainly from the USSR and England, the Yoshida government shut down the committee in September 1946. See Ibid., p. 29; see also Yui Tadaomi, "Senryôki ni okeru 'taiheiyô sensô' kan no keisei" (The Formation of Views on the Pacific War During the Occupation Era), Shikan, 130, 1994.
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Japanese.\(^{61}\) Given the abject material conditions and the looming food crisis in the winter of 1945/46, it is hardly surprising that the peoples’ attention was focused solely on defeat.\(^{62}\) This was reflected in both newspaper editorials and letters to the editor where phrases like “food first,” “food before democracy,” and “investigating responsibility won’t fill our bellies” became commonplace.\(^{63}\)

At the same time, the food crisis helped to centre the focus of the war responsibility debate on defeat because, in temporal terms, defeat was seen as the most immediate cause of the crisis. This was illustrated in common media phrases identifying the food crisis as one of the “hardships of defeat” or the “poison of defeat.”\(^{64}\) The Mainichi Shimbun captured this idea succinctly in a December 10th editorial: “Last year we had some charcoal and believed in

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\(^{61}\)The role of the occupation in this process will be discussed in detail in the final chapter.

\(^{62}\)For a similar argument, see Furuya, “Dai 89 kai gikai kizokuinm shūgiin kaisetsu.” This perspective is also shared by other Japanese scholars like Yoshida, Nihonjin no sensōkan; Yoshimi, “Senryōki nihon no minshū ishiki,” and Kusa no ne no fashizumu; and Hiraishi Naoaki, “Rinen toshite no kindai seiyō - Haisengo ninenkan no genron o chūshin ni,” in Nakamura Masanori, et al., pp. 53-86. While recognizing the ascendancy of defeat over war, however, none of these scholars satisfactorily link defeat itself to the existential conditions of defeat and its psychological impact on the Japanese people.

\(^{63}\)Mainichi Shimbun, November 6, 1945 and Tokyo Shimbun, November 8, 1945. Phrases like these continued to appear in the press through the summer of 1946. See, for example, Tokyo Shimbun, August 14, 1946.

\(^{64}\)Tokushima Shimbun, December 9th and 14, 1945, translated and reprinted in ATIS, Reel 1, Economic Series 14, Items 3 and 4.
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victory, but this year we have no food and are defeated. 65 Despite its surprisingly bold assertion that even had Japan won the war, the nation would still have been ruined, the newspaper nonetheless asked the Japanese people to never lose sight of the fact that Japan was a defeated nation. It further urged the people to "reflect on" and "make clear the causes of defeat." It is in this sense that I argue that defeat was the ground from which new life sprang. The existential conditions of defeat defined and conditioned all postwar discussions of reconstruction, whether of self, of society, or of polity. 66

_Damasareta ron (We Were Deceived)_

Out of this preoccupation with defeat came two different interpretations of who was responsible. The first held that the Japanese people had been deceived by their leaders who had engaged in a reckless aggressive war and then had lied to

65 _Mainichi Shimbun_, December 10, 1945.

66 Defeat and the victims' consciousness (gisei ishiki) that followed from it remains firmly embedded in collective memory and in the narratives of postwar Japan. The importance of the Japanese peoples' brief flirtation with the issue of war responsibility lies in the fact that such a debate took place at all. Most of the English writing on this era has largely ignored the public debate, focusing primarily on the opinions of political and intellectual elites. I directly encountered this debate when researching the postwar print media but it was Yoshimi Yoshiaki's 1991 _Shisō_ article cited earlier that made me aware of its existence in the first place.

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the people at every turn regarding its prosecution. Japanese historians have termed this the “we were deceived thesis” (*damasareta ron*), and it has become the dominant trope governing the narrative of Japan’s postwar history. The other perspective on responsibility argued that the Japanese people had collaborated, at least passively, with their leaders and therefore were culpable for Japan’s defeat. This was the “collaborators thesis” (*kyôdô ron*). Although the lesser known of the two, *kyôdô ron* was also widely discussed in the media in the early postwar years. It was in fact a variation on the *ichioku sôzange* theme. The difference, however, was that whereas the government maintained that the people were collectively responsible for not having done their utmost for the war effort, the *kyôdô ron* adherents argued that the people had not done enough to oppose war and were therefore responsible for defeat. Regardless of which side of the debate individual Japanese same down on, however, both perspectives led to strikingly similar conclusions about the defects in the national character and


68In an earlier article, “War Responsibility and the Reconstruction of Self and Society in Early Postwar Japan,” in Hugh Millward and James Morrison (eds), *Japan at Century’s End: Changes, Challenges, and Choices*, Halifax, Fernwood Publishing, 1997, pp. 21-33, I used the phrase *iji ron* (the supporter’s thesis) to describe this side of the debate. On further consideration and research, however, *kyôdô ron* seems more appropriate since the word *kyôdô* (cooperation) was widely used at the time to describe those Japanese who had supported the government during war. It was also part of the mantra of reconstruction insofar as cooperation among all levels of Japanese society was seen as the glue that would bind democracy and social justice to rational planning.
about what was needed to place Japan on the path toward new life (shinsei).

The wholesale reaction against the government’s initial call to the “one hundred million” to unite in remorse and repentance over defeat was the most palpable expression of damasareta ron. Japan’s politicians (kanbatsu), as we have seen, were reviled not only for having cooperated with the military during the war but also for failing to admit this fact after defeat.\footnote{Strictly speaking, kanbatsu, refers to the bureaucratic elite, the unelected officials who made policy decisions. However, in the literature of the time, the elected officials and the bureaucrats were often lumped together, especially when made the object of the peoples’ scorn and anger. When a distinction was made between the two it was usually couched in terms of errors of omission and commission. Whereas bureaucrats were vilified for what they had done (collaborate openly with the military), politicians were despised for what they had not done (actively oppose the military).}

Another group singled out for public criticism was the zaibatsu (financial clique), the “war profiteers” whose rapacious policies had led to Japan’s “burglar wars” in Asia.\footnote{The phrase “war profiteers” (rieki sensōsha) comes from an unsigned letter to the editor in the Asahi Shimbun, December 15, 1945. The term “burglar wars” (gōtōteki sensō) is taken from a January 11, 1948 editorial in the Tokyo Mimpō. During the war crimes trial an article in the magazine Jimmin maintained that Tōjō’s claim that Japan had fought a defensive war was nothing more than a “logic of burglary.” Jimmin, January 7, 1948, translated and reprinted in ATIS, Reel 45, Editorial Series 10, Item 12.} At times the two groups were linked and then condemned for their hypocrisy in urging the Japanese people to “sacrifice for the sake of the nation” (waga kuni no tame ni gisei) during wartime. Memories of this wartime perfidy carried over into the early postwar years, leading some to conclude cynically that nothing had really
changed. Hokkai Densan vice-chair Nakagawa, for example, maintained that the politicians and big capitalists who demanded the peoples’ sacrifice for victory in war were same ones who now urged the people to sacrifice for peaceful reconstruction. The cause may have changed but, for Nakagawa, the hypocrisy of the “privileged classes” (tokken kaikyū) remained as virulent as ever.

The lion’s share of criticism, however, was reserved for the “reckless military” (mubō na gunbatsu) whose “Machiavellian scheming” had led the country to ruin. Niigata oil refinery worker Maruyama Susumu likely echoed the sentiments of many Japanese when in a mid-1946 issue of his union magazine he scathingly referred to Japan’s military not as an imperial army but as a “plague of locusts.” Despite Prime Minister Shidehara’s plea to “hate the crime but not

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73 The reference to Machiavelli comes from Sakaguchi Ango, Darakuron, p. 215. For examples of the military as “reckless” and “evil,” see Mainichi Shim bun, November 30, 1945; Tokyo Shimbun, December 9, 1945; Shimane Shimbun, July 30, 1946; Osaka Nichinichi, December 13, 1946; and Mainichi Shim bun, December 27, 1947.

74 Maruyama Susumu, “Kōkoku seinen ni yosu,” (To the Youth of Imperial Japan), in Niigata Sekiyūjohen (ed), Yuwa, June, 1946. Quoted in Yoshimi, “Senryōki no nihon minshū ishiki,” p. 76. Maruyama probably meant this as a pun since “imperial army” (kōgun) and “army of locusts” (kōgun) are homophones.
the criminal,” a steady torrent of invective spewed forth from the press, much of it directed toward individuals like Tōjō and Konoe, even after his death. The public debate mirrored the opinion of Dietmen like Saitō Takao, but the media was far less reserved in its criticisms. A December 18, 1945 editorial from the *Mainichi Shimbun* even held up Konoe’s suicide as a positive example of casting off the old, militaristic ways, maintaining that his death “has given new incentive and direction to the huge task of reforming Japan.”  

While different groups such as the gunbatsu and the zaibatsu were singled out at various times and for different reasons, most *damasareta ron* adherents tended to indict the whole of Japan’s wartime leadership (*shidōsha*) under the rubric of the *gun-kan-zai* triad. When former War Minister Shimomura Sadamu apologized to the Diet on December 1st for the military’s “undue interference in politics,” a Mainichi editorial the next day derided his speech as “nothing more than an utter lack of common sense... [because] the Diet itself was responsible for not opposing the military during the war.” The act of apologizing was itself honourable, but the editorial argued that Shimomura spoke to the wrong group; he should have directed his comments to the Japanese people, for it was they

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75 *Mainichi Shimbun*, December 18, 1945.

76 *Mainichi Shimbun*, December 2, 1945.
who had been deceived by both the military and the politicians in the first place. Anything less than that, the editorial concluded, was meaningless.

The focus on the people as a sort of last chance for the new Japan - because they were the victims of the old Japan - was central to the agenda of the All-Japan War Sufferers Union (Zen Nihon Sensaisha Kyokai). In early November 1945 the union held its first general meeting, attended by thousands and culminating in demonstrations in front of GHQ headquarters and the Prime Minister’s residence. While focusing their eleven-point program on practical problems like housing, medical care, and food, the union also issued a declaration that reflected both the compelling logic of damasareta ron and the preeminent role of the people in Japan’s reconstruction. Defeat, loss of territory, occupation, and impending reparations had made Japan “the most utterly ruined country in the world, ” all because the people had discovered too late that they had been misled by the military and bureaucratic cliques. Thus the salvation of the war sufferers - the min - was paramount. “If they are destroyed,” the declaration warned, “Japan is destroyed.”

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77This account is taken from the Tokyo Shimbun November 5, 1945, translated and reprinted in ATIS, Reel 1, Editorial Series 12, Item 1.
For the *damasareta ron* advocates, Japan's leaders were, to use a Japanese metaphor, the evil ingredients in a conspiratorial elite *nabe-mono*. A popular winter meal in Japan, *nabe-mono* is a communal dish of meat, fish or vegetables cooked in a broth at the dining table. It takes its name from the iron pot (*nabe*) in which the meal is cooked. Diners dip their ladles into the mixture, transferring a slightly different combination of ingredients to their bowls each time.

Metaphorically, then, the early postwar print media where the debate took place was the pot, defeat was the broth, the *gun-kan-zai* triad were the ingredients, and the deceived were the diners. In the course of the debate over who was responsible for Japan's defeat, the deceived "dipped their ladles" into the mixture and came up with a slightly different combination of *gun-kan-zai* ingredients.

But since the principal ingredient in this particular dish was military, the overwhelming "flavour" became *gunbatsu-nabe*. Given the nature of the ingredients and the circumstances under which they were cooked, the meal was not particularly palatable; however, it did nourish the consciences of the hungry diners, absolving them of responsibility for either war or defeat and filling them with a righteous sense of injustice.
Although many Japanese denounced their leaders for having deceived them, others admitted some degree of culpability for defeat and for war. In doing so, they unintentionally lent credence to the propaganda of _ichioke sōzange_ - one hundred million hearts in remorse for losing a war in which the people had collaborated with their leaders. Those who saw themselves as victims of their leaders’ deception may have been more numerous, but the fact that there were others who admitted that they had supported, at least passively, the aims and goals of Japan’s wartime government provides another perspective on the debate over war responsibility. It also suggests that behind the denunciations of “reckless leaders” and “evil military” lay considerable unease over the purity or legitimacy of the deceived themselves.

Iwate school teacher Kamakura Keisuke, for example, roundly criticized Japan’s wartime leaders (sekinin wa shidōshasō ni aru to suru) but also recognized that the people were far from blameless (kokumin toshite sekinin no nakatta mono

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78 Of the materials I have gathered thus far, evidence for the _damasaretara ron_ position clearly outweighs that of the _kyōdō ron_. Further research, however, may reveal that the disparity between the two positions is not as quantitatively as great as it first appears.
Others like Hiroshima Railway public relations officer Miyamoto Shigeyoshi, who believed that war and defeat were the products of the “fascist system of tennō-sei,” admitted that both the war and the system from which it sprang had had the support of the people. For this reason, Miyamoto called on all Japanese to collectively reflect (sōhansei) and repent (sōzange). An even more scathing indictment of the people came from a Nagano girls’ youth group leader in mid-1947.

After our defeat, the press, without exception, wrote about the crimes of the military... Of course the government deceived us with evil acts, but what of the crimes of we the deceived [damasareta watashitachi kokumin no tsumi]? Stupidity. That’s one of our crimes I think. We were born in this country, Japan, and have no choice but to resign ourselves to our miserable fate.

Fatalistic in the extreme, these comments carried with them a recognition that the Japanese people must reap what they had sown. For those like Ms. Yamamizu, the bitter fruit of defeat had been planted by the Japanese themselves. Magazine editor Usui Yoshimi also took up the idea of stupidity as the peoples’ crime in the first postwar issue of Kaizō in early 1946. For Usui,

79 Kamakura Keisuke, “Kyōiku e no hibi no omoi” (Everyday Thoughts on Education), Shoto Kyōiku, Inaugural Issue, Iwate Kyōikukenkyū Dōshikaihen, July 1946. Quoted in Yoshimi, Senryōki nihon no minshū ishiki, p. 75.

80 Miyamoto Shigeyoshi, “Onko chishin” (Learning from the Past), Shinsei (New Life), Hiroshima Kanribu Rōdōkumiai Rengōkaihen, June 1946. Quoted in Ibid., p. 75.

81 Ms. Yamamizu, “Zenaku o shira” (Knowing Right from Wrong), Yosumi, Nagano-ken Jōshiseinendanhen, June 20, 1947. Quoted in Ibid., p. 77.
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wartime Japan was not a world of one hundred million hearts beating as one or advancing like a flaming jewel but an oppressive world of “one hundred million bureaucrats” (ichioku kanryo), a Stalinesque world of one hundred million petty tyrannies that created a fertile environment for both war and defeat. To paraphrase Chinese intellectual Lu Shun, under Japan’s tyrannical wartime system, all Japanese were tyrants. Usui asked his readers to imagine how it was possible for a nation to wage years of total war without at least the tacit support of the majority.

Many people were deceived during the war. But then, who were the deceivers? The military? The bureaucrats? The capitalists? Given that deception came from the top among the military and the bureaucrats, the one or two remaining at the end could not have deceived one hundred million. With the appearance of the last administration at the end of the war, the foolishness in the press, and the idiocy on the radio, how did all the civil organizations like village and neighbourhood associations and women’s and housewives’ clubs zealously and spontaneously cooperate with the deceivers? Who was the first to apply the pressure? It was the housewives, the workers, the shopkeepers, the farmers, the minor

82 This account comes from Usui’s retrospective piece “Sengo chisei no kōzu” (A Sketch of the Postwar Intellect), Kaizō, October 1964. Quoted in Hiraishi Naoaki, “Rinen toshite no kindai seiyō - Haisengo ninenkan no genron o chūshin ni,” in Nakamura Masanori, et al., p. 65.

83 In Japanese the phrase reads, bōkun chika no jinmin, oku no bōkun yori sara ni bō de aru. Quoted in Hiraishi Naoaki, “Rinen toshite no kindai seiyō: Haisengo ninen no genron o chūshin ni,” in Nakamura et al., Sengo shisō to shakai ishiki, p. 65.

84 For a similar assessment of wartime Japan as a world of collective tyranny, see Mr. Shiizaki, “Henshū koki” (Postscript), Rekishi Hyoron, 1 (October 1946), p. 73. Shiizaki did not use his first name and, like many of the contributors to this journal, he wrote his name in the phonetic script (hiragana).
officials, and the school teachers. With this mentality, we were all military, all bureaucrats. One hundred million as bureaucrats! We kept each other under surveillance, gathering secret information. Radio, newspapers, and magazines played a big role by promoting this. Now we pursue those responsible for perpetuating those slave-like conditions only among the military, the police, and the bureaucrats. Did we ourselves not allow them to dominate?... Continuing in this manner without reflecting on our own crimes and stupidity is simply absurd.85

Most intellectuals, however, while accepting the logic of Usui’s argument, maintained that Japan’s oppressive system itself had silenced all voices of opposition and therefore had rendered the people victims.86 They cast the people in the role of the deceived but they could not in all good conscience paint themselves as victims, since this would have amounted to a repudiation of their role as opinion leaders and public figures. Consequently, these individuals formed what Maruyama Masao called “the community of contrition” (kaigo no kyōdōtai),87 but the remorse and guilt they felt was directed at themselves in much the same way that the emotional and physical trauma of defeat itself turned the public debate over responsibility inward. Like Tanabe Hajime, they were bowed by the recognition that they had not done enough to oppose their

85Quoted in Hiraishi Naoaki, “Rinen toshite no kindai seiyō, pp. 64-65. Italics mine.


87Maruyama Masao, Kindai nihon no chishikijin (Modern Japanese Intellectuals), in Maruyama, Kōei no uchi kara (From the Rear Guard), Miraisha, 1982, pp. 113-30.
leaders and, in some cases, had had their ideas distorted by others to unintended ends.\footnote{Historians of China, for example, recognized that their interpretations of Chinese history as backward and stagnant may have been used by civilian and military leaders to justify Japan's invasion of and subsequent war with China. For more on this, see Noriko Kamachi's article "Feudalism or Absolute Monarchism?: Japanese Discourse on the Nature of State and Society in Late Imperial China," \textit{Modern China}, 16:3 (July 1990), pp. 330-70. An excellent account of how prewar Japanese historians had located Japan's past in China (\textit{shina}) and then had constructed their own progressive narrative of Japan's history, similar to that of European orientalists, see Stefan Tanaka, \textit{Japan's Orient: Rendering Pasts into History}, University of California Press, 1993.} Thus, penance for the contrite demanded that they resolve to never make the same mistake again and to dedicate themselves to educating the people in the ways of democracy and freedom.\footnote{Ute Michiari, "\textit{Kaidai}" (Bibliography), in \textit{Maruyama Masao Zenshū}, vol. 3, Iwanami Shoten, 1995, p. 357.} Intellectuals located themselves in the kyōdō ron camp while identifying the people as double victims of their leaders' deception and of the intellectuals' own impotence. This impulse drove many intellectuals, especially younger ones like Maruyama, to enlighten the people, since they believed that the peoples' political immaturity, resulting from an oppressive regime, had made them victims in the first place.
Japanese Intellectuals: Deceivers and Deceived

Some, like Shinsei editor Murofuchi Takenobu, took advantage of the new postwar freedoms to start magazines and journals dedicated to the reconstruction of a democratic Japan. Others in the newspaper world, as we saw earlier, also sought to create a forum for democratic discussion, the starting points for which were the public confessions and apologies for their conduct during wartime. Their statements may have been motivated by a sense of self preservation or by simple political expediency, but these acts did, for the first time in years, provide a domain in which a broad cross-section of people could actively address the pressing issue of what the new Japan should look like. As with other intellectuals, many in the print media saw themselves as leaders in the new postwar democracy movement. This was not only logical, it was also necessary as a means to atone for their culpability in war and defeat.

Many in the academic community also committed themselves to reconstructing the world of higher education. At the end of January 1946, nineteen men

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90 I Kenji, “Senkō shisō no shuppatsu to ajia kan” (Perspectives on Asia and the Beginnings of Postwar Thought), in Nakamura et. al., p. 126-27. I argue that the new “composite magazines” (sōgō zasshi) like Shinsei, Tenbō, and Sekai attempted to shift the postwar debate away from collective repentance (ichioku sōzange) and toward democracy (minshūshugi). A good account of the motivations behind the establishment of many new postwar magazines is Kimoto Itaru, Zasshi de yomu sengoshi.

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gathered in a small office in Tokyo to reorganize the Rekishigaku Kenkyûkai (Historical Research Association: Rekken) whose operations had been suspended since 1944.91 Among the historians in this group were Inoue Kiyoshi, Matsumoto Eiichirô, and the renowned Kôza-ha Marxist scholar Hani Gorô.92 These men, who were both historians and historical actors, truly believed that war and defeat had brought Japan to a major historical turning point and their subsequent writings represented an attempt to redefine the historical profession in light of this new reality.93

To that end, Rekken laid down a set of five cardinal principles which was to

91 The term Rekken comes from Kamachi’s article “Feudalism or Absolute Monarchism?”

92 With the exception of Hani (b. 1910), Mishima Hajime (b. 1897), Nôhara Shirô (b. 1903), and Abe Makoto (b. 1903), all the original members were born between 1912 and 1915. Of those about whom I have biographical information (12), all were graduates of Tôdai (8), Kyodai (2), or Waseda (2). The Waseda connection is important because founding members Matsushima Eiichi and Hayashi Motoi were students of Tsuda Sôkichi (b. 1873) at Waseda. Tsuda was not among the original members but he was a prolific contributor to its journal throughout his career. The list of founding members comes from Rekken “Kaihyô: kôryô oyobi kaisoku no sôan” (An Outline of Rules and General Principles), Rekishigaku Kenkyû, 122 (June 1946), pp. 47-48. Biographical information comes from Nichigai Associates, Jinbutsu refaresu jiten: nihon jinmei koroku, 2 vols; and Gendai nihon jinmeiroku, 3 vols., 1987.

93 The Minshûshugi Kagaku Kyôkai (The Association for Scientific Democracy) and the first Tennô-sei conference, attended by scholars and students were held on the same day as Rekken’s first general meeting. The Minshûshugi Kagaku Kyôkai was the parent organization of the journal Rekishigaku Hyôron. Inoue Kiyoshi remarked some months later that these developments, including the newly reconstituted Rekken, were evidence that “a revolution had come to history... Now we are free to re-create the historical profession.” Inoue Kiyoshi, “Jihyô: Shimpôteki rekishika no danketsu no nozomu” (Comments on the Resolve and Expectations of Progressive Historians), Rekishigaku Kenkyû, 122 (June 1946), pp. 34-35.
Part Two: Repentance and Responsibility

form the methodological core of all their future historical research. Among these was a commitment to centre all historical writing on the people (min) as the principal agents of historical change. This resolution carried with it a recognition that Japanese history had been distorted (kikei sareta) by an excessive emphasis on bureaucratic or political history (kanfu shigaku). It also revealed an understanding of Japan’s recent past that cast the people in the role of victims. Although the Rekken historians did not address the issue of war responsibility directly, the implications of the new peoples’ history were predicated on the belief that the Japanese people had been duped by their leaders.

Here, again, was another powerful manifestation of the early postwar minson kampi mentality. While the concept of the peoples’ history remained an ambiguous ideal, lacking any concrete agreement about what it was or how it was

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94Rekken, “Kaihyō” p. 48. The other principles included “breaking with old national and racial prejudices and promoting a democratic, world historical perspective,” “uniting with progressive students throughout the world and promoting their cultures and home lands,” “making a clean sweep of all previous scholarship by correctly assessing its foundations through the application of scientific methods,” and “recognizing no authority other than the pursuit of scientific truth and advocating freedom of research and the complete independence of scholarship.” The role of scientific history (kagaku rekishi) and its relationship to the creation of a peoples’ history will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

95Hani Gorô made a similar argument in an October 1946 article extolling the importance of mythology which he maintained functioned as a medium of historical awareness. For Hani, Japanese myths had been stripped away, layer by layer, so that all that remained was the myth of the Imperial family which had distorted the peoples’ historical consciousness. Hani Gorô, “Shinwagaku no kadai” (The Problem of Mythology), Rekishigaku Kenkyû, 124 (October 1946), p. 1.
to be written, there was clearly no disagreement over what it was not. Peoples’
history was not the history of the Imperial house, of politicians and bureaucrats,
of wars and militarism, or of the family-state. In short, peoples’ history was
nothing that could be linked to the “sins of the past.” Through this process of
reduction, all that remained was an abstract and idealized image of the people,
upon whom responsibility for Japan’s militaristic folly and defeat could not be
pinned.

This interpretation of Japan’s past paralleled that of another group of influential
scholars, the members of the Special Survey Committee (Tokubetsu Chôsa
Iinkai) whose 1946 report on the problems of Japan’s economic reconstruction
became something of a bible for the Japanese left. Like other proponents of the
people as the deceived, these scholars argued that the Japanese people had been
“blindly controlled by economic forces” unleashed by the collusion of the gun-
kan-zai triad which had isolated Japan from the rest of the world and had
 ushered in an era of militarism, war, and defeat.96 The min had been mere

96Tokubetsu Chôsa Iinkai, Nihon keizai saiken no kihon mondai, reproduced in Nakamura
(ed), Shiryô, vol. 1, p. 146. Although there was no overlap in personnel between this group and the
Rekken historians, the similarities in language and overall tone are strikingly similar. The SSC
report was concerned with economic matters, but it did advocate the democratization of politics in
terms of greater public participation in government decision-making and in the democratization of
business in the sense of greater economic independence for small- and medium-sized business.
Moreover, the SSC’s advocacy of greater respect for the dignity of workers and a minimum standard
of living for all was itself a recognition of the enlarged role the people would play in the new
Japan, as consumers driving the economy and as political actors expanding the limits of postwar
objects of policy during the war; in the new Japan, however, they would become active agents in social and economic reconstruction.

If the min, by virtue of their status as victims, were to become agents of historical change in Japan’s past and its future, then written history would also have to made more accessible to them (rekishi o minshûka). This was the mandate of the new popular historical journal Rekishi Hyôron which began publication in October 1946. In the inaugural issue, the magazine’s editor Tashiro Masao argued that historians had a responsibility to bring history closer to the people. This would lift them out of the particularistic, Japanocentric world to which they had been corrupted. Defeat had left the Japanese people standing at a crossroads (kiro ni tatsu), with one road perpetuating the myth of 2600 years of imperial history and the other offering the promise of peace and democracy. As was the task for the members of Maruyama’s “community of contrition,” the journal dedicated

97 See, for example, “Seisei ruten” (Constant Change) Rekishi Hyôron, 1 (October 1946), p. 70. This journal specifically targeted the general reading public. It was a small-format magazine designed for portability. It also rejected “high-brow language” (kôkôteki na kotoba) in favour a “vernacular style” (nichijô/jinmin no kotoba). See the approving review of the success and innovations of this journal in Rekken, “Zasshihyô: Rekishigaku zasshi no saikin no doko ni tsuite” (Recent Directions in Historical Journals), Rekishigaku Kenkyû, 133 (May 1948), pp. 41-47.

98 Tashiro Masao, “Haisen to rekishi ichiki” (Defeat and Historical Consciousness), Rekishi Hyôron, 1 (October 1946), p. 71.
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itself to educate the people, to "raise their consciousness," so they too would choose the proper path.99

The belief that the people needed to have their consciousness raised has interesting implications on a number of levels. First, it indicates that defeat did nothing to change the unequal relationship between intellectuals and the masses (vulgar ears: zokuji)100 The perpetuation of elitism on the part of intellectuals was demonstrated in the attitude of Rekken historians who argued that they, by virtue of their "superior historical consciousness," must form a vanguard group to teach a "malnourished, overworked, and politically indifferent populace."101 This also helps to explain why intellectuals identified themselves with the deceivers in contrast to the deceived masses. As members of the leading class

99Ibid., p. 72.

100This phrase characterizing the people was attributed to Ouchi Hyôe in Rekken’s "Zasshihyô," p. 45.

101The phrase comes from Rekken, "Zasshihyô," p. 46. This argument is strikingly similar to that of Kôza-ha Marxists in regard to Japan’s socio-economic development. Adhering closely to the 1927 Comintern Thesis, this group maintained that Japanese capitalism was not sufficiently bourgeoisified; therefore, they advocated a two-stage revolution in which a vanguard party would arise initially to lead the people to socialism once capitalism had eliminated entirely the remaining feudal remnants such as the Imperial household, the Privy Council, and kokutai itself. In contrast, Rônô-ha Marxists argued that Japan was an advanced capitalist nation and was therefore ready for a direct transition to socialism. A good account of the Kôza/Rônô debates is Germaine Hoston, Marxism and the Crisis of Capitalism in Prewar Japan, Princeton University Press, 1986. For criticism of historians as a vanguard group, see also Shiizaki, "Henshû koki." p. 73.
(shidō kaikyū), these men could hardly identify themselves with the deceived since this would have been a repudiation of their position as intellectuals. Ironically, however, this attitude tended to push them further away from the very goal they sought: constructing a history of and for the people.¹⁰²

Second, the need for consciousness raising also reinforced the image of the people as ignorant. The people were stupid, as Ms. Yamamizu had said, but only because they had not been educated. Therefore they could not be held accountable for their own stupidity. Nonetheless, this mentality drove the wedge between the people and the intellectuals even deeper. Third, the idea that intellectuals had a duty to educate the people stemmed not only from the intellectuals’ elite self-image but also from a profound sense of guilt over their own wartime role. Whatever responsibility the people shouldered for Japan’s militaristic past was being expunged in the fires of defeat and material hardship. Most intellectuals could make no such claim. Their repentance and atonement could only be effected by a renewed commitment to “the people” around whom Japan’s past and future would be remade. The first step in this process was a

¹⁰²Carol Gluck has argued that the development of people’s history really began in the 1960s due to the dissatisfaction with doctrinaire Marxism on the part of such scholars as Irokawa Daikichi. However, the debate over war responsibility suggests that the attempt to create a people’s history dates back to the earlier postwar years. Further evidence for this can be found in the renewed interest in Yanagita Kunio and folklore and mythology in general. For Gluck’s argument, see “The People in History: Recent Trends in Japanese Historiography,” Journal of Japanese Studies, 38:1 (November 1978), pp. 25-50.
"pathological dissection" (byōrigakuteki kaibō) of Japan's past that would lay bare the defects in Japanese society and then permit the reconstruction process to begin.\textsuperscript{103} This kind of historicism mirrored Tanabe's own belief that philosophy must be socially useful. But unlike Tanabe, who argued for a spiritual reconstruction based on "action-faith-witness," most participants in the war responsibility debate, whether intellectual or average citizen, whether deceiver or deceived, saw the construction of new Japan exclusively in terms of "rationality" and "science." This would become the mantra of new life (shinsei) in early postwar Japan, and it is to this topic that we will now turn.

\textsuperscript{103}The phrase is Tashiro's. Ibid., p. 72.
Chapter Five: The Deconstruction of the Japanese National Character

In his 1990 analysis of the growth and development of postwar nihonjinron\(^1\) literature, anthropologist Aoki Tamotsu characterized the ten-year period following the Pacific War as the era of "recognizing Japan’s negative distinctiveness" (hiteiteki tokushu no ninshiki).\(^2\) This was the first of a four-stage periodization of the postwar era he constructed to analyze the relationship between culture and identity.\(^3\) Writing in the context of the "internationalization boom" (kokusaika bu-mu) promoted by the Nakasone government in the mid-1980s, Aoki sought to explain the changes in the Japanese perception of self by examining the growth and development of

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\(^1\)Loosely translated, nihonjinron means theories of Japanese uniqueness (or theories of “Japaneseness”), a genre of socio-cultural analysis that begins from the assumption that there is something culturally (and ethnically) distinct about Japanese society and then proceeds to demonstrate the validity of that initial premise. Aoki actually used the phrase “discourse on Japanese culture” (nihon bunkaron), but he was essentially talking about the same phenomenon.

\(^2\)Aoki Tamotsu, Nihon bunkaron no hen'yō, p. 28.

\(^3\)In Aoki’s conceptualization, this period (1945-54) was followed by the era of recognizing Japan’s historical relativity [rekishiteki sōtaisei no ninshiki] (1955-63); the era of recognizing Japan’s positive distinctiveness [kōtiteki tokushu no ninshiki] (1964-76); and, finally, the era when the Japanese moved from an awareness of distinctiveness to universality [tokushu kara fuhensei e](1984-).
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nihonjinron literature which addressed these issues. He believed that an analysis of this style of writing would offer important insights into the nature of postwar society, the concept of "postwar Japan" (sengo Nihon) itself, and the perdurance of a Japanese "essence," despite the superficial social changes arising from modernization and Americanization.

Aoki identified self-loathing and excessive criticism as characteristics of the first phase of nihonjin bunkaron, but he did not link them directly to the war responsibility debate. Instead, he viewed them as a consequence of war and the

4Nakasone's proclamation of "internationalization" coincided with the beginning of the "bubble economy," the explosive growth of English-language schools, and the rapid increase in the number of Japanese travelling abroad. It also coincided with the rise in popularity of American consumer products and the appearance of American movie stars (from Sylvester Stallone to Frank Sinatra) flogging products on Japanese television. Whatever else internationalization may have meant, however, it was most frequently expressed by young people through the consumption of American material culture. Many young students in my English classes at this time claimed that drinking bourbon whiskey and smoking Marlboro cigarettes made them feel like "international people" (kokusaijin). The concomitant rise of internationalization and the consumption of American culture was also clearly manifest in the mid-1980s pool hall boom, following on the heels of the popularity of the film The Color of Money, and the growth of jazz bars. This latter phenomenon was a mainstream middle-class, development, distinct from the alternative lifestyle jazz clubs which have existed for many years on the dark and smokey fringes of urban Japan's entertainment quarters.

5Ibid., pp. 12-17. Aoki understood modernization to be the general accretion of structures and symbols associated with contemporary political, economic, and social processes. He distinguished this from "Americanization," which was the more particular impact of the occupation in the socio-cultural sphere of Japanese life. For an elaboration on these terms, see Aoki Tamotsu, "Anthropology and Japan: Attempts at Writing Culture" (trans. Matthew Adkins), The Japan Foundation Newsletter, Vol. xxii, No. 3, October 1994, pp. 1-6.
American occupation itself. In doing so, he understated the importance of defeat as a discourse in which the Japanese people were compelled to act. Out of this discourse emerged the deconstruction of the national character: an identification of a specific set of characteristics believed to be unique to the Japanese past and to the Japanese self-image. These traits, once identified, allowed the Japanese people to answer the questions, “Why did we lose?” and “What have we done to ourselves?” The deconstruction of the national character and the self-loathing

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6 The legacy of the occupation will be discussed in the next chapter and the Epilogue.

7 Part of the reason for this may be due to the fact that Aoki, like many other commentators of this period, focused primarily on what intellectual elites said about the Japanese people, rather than on what the people themselves said.

8 In the discipline of history, deconstruction or deconstructionism usually refers to an approach that focuses on linguistic indeterminacy, the multiple and embedded meanings of text and speech, and, above all, the socially constructed nature of knowledge itself. In turn, this approach rejects the grand narrative, the idea that the past can be known “as it was,” or that there is any objective truth about the past independent of our interpretation of it. Put another way, deconstructionism rejects history as an empirical project and the belief in the individual subject as the principal agent of historical change. Overall, as my comments in the Introduction indicate, I agree with this position. However, in this chapter I use this term as an explanatory device for how the Japanese people attempted to dismantle themselves in order to understand what had happened. While this process resembles the approach of some deconstructionist history, it differs importantly because the Japanese people who participated in this process generally believed that reason and the scientific method would allow them to successfully re-invent themselves. This idea would be anathema to most deconstructionist thinkers because they intentionally criticize the certainty and alleged objectivity of reason and science as a form of hegemonic knowledge. For more on deconstruction in a historical context, see Alun Munslow, *Deconstructing History*, pp. 22-27, 58-75; Dorothy Ross, “Grand Narratives in American Historical Writing: From Romance to Uncertainty,” *American Historical Review*, vol. 100, no. 3 (June 1995), pp. 651-677.; and Hayden White, “The Context in the Text: Method and Ideology in Intellectual History,” in *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representations*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987. For a brief discussion in a Japanese context, see J. Victor Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan*, pp. 1-9.
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that arose from it also helps to explain the process by which the debates were internalized, directing Japanese attention away from aggression, militarism, and war. Through this process the Japanese people re-created themselves as victims: of their leaders, of their past, and of their own self-image. This was the ultimate expression of life in the turning point, escape from which demanded that the past be negated or destroyed. Just as remorse and repentance were necessary for dealing with the kyodatsu of defeat and responsibility, so too was the deconstruction of the national character essential to the process of negating the past and creating new life (shinsei).

Although Aoki did not discuss this process as a feature of the era of “negative distinctiveness,” he did recognize that the act of negation was a defining characteristic of the era itself. He also identified Sakaguchi Ango as the individual who most accurately represented this period. Sakaguchi’s scathing

9Judith Butler has argued that “to deconstruct is not to negate or to dismiss, but to call into question and, perhaps most importantly, to open up a term, like the subject, to a reusage or redeployment that previously had not been authorized.” “Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of ‘Postmodernism’,” in Butler and Joan W. Scott (eds), Feminists Theorize the Political, Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc., 1990. This is a fair assessment of the deconstructionist project, but for the Japanese in the early postwar years negation was in fact central to deconstructing their own national character. They believed that the evil traits of that character had to be eradicated in order for new life to emerge. In this sense, deconstructing the national character was akin to Tanabe’s Zangedō which he called a “philosophical sweeping away” (tetsugakuteki na sōtō) of all previous philosophy.

10Aoki, Nihonjin bunkaron no henyō, pp. 54-57.
critique of early postwar society, as we have seen, demanded that the entirety of Japanese tradition - that is, the Japanese past itself - be destroyed. This could be achieved, however, only if Japan’s “fall” was absolute: a total moral and social collapse into depravity (daraku) through a conscious negation of the present as well as the past.\textsuperscript{11} Defeat provided this opportunity by ushering in a new era of immorality and self-interestedness which, if carried to its logical conclusion, would destroy the old norms and prepare the way for a true rebirth. The widespread condemnations of postwar immorality in the press were, for Sakaguchi, not merely pointless, they were counterproductive. A complete and utter negation through depravity was the only path to social reconstruction.\textsuperscript{12}

Sakaguchi was clearly more interested in decline and depravity than he was in resurrection, but the tone and message of his essay offers an interesting parallel with Tanabe’s Zangedō. Tanabe would have unquestionably rejected Sakaguchi’s “way” because the behaviour advocated in Darakuron was an act of the self and

\textsuperscript{11}Sakaguchi Ango, Darakuron, pp. 227-28. Sakaguchi reiterated this theme in a follow-up article appropriately titled “Zoku darakuron” (Darakuron Continued), written in December 1946. This article is reprinted in Chikuma Nihon Bungaku Zenshū, Sakaguchi Ango, Chikuma Shobō, 1991, pp. 229-44.

\textsuperscript{12}Darakuron, p. 228.
therefore could not lead to a true spiritual negation. Nonetheless, Sakaguchi’s argument did represent a search for, or a passage to, human radical evil (*kongenzai*) which was the very quality that Tanabe identified as the source of all despair. Therefore, Tanabe can be understood as having carried Sakaguchi’s argument to its logical conclusion, at least in a spiritual sense. In one respect *Zangedō* picked up where *Darakuron* left off: dragging down Sakaguchi’s self-affirming behaviour into the realm of abject despair which began the process of the self’s absolute negation.

Linking the work of these two men was the act of negation itself, beginning with the process of repentance and atonement through the war responsibility debate and then moving to Tashirō’s “pathological dissection” of the Japanese character. However, unlike Tanabe’s self-affirming ego which could never fully rid itself of radical evil, those who participated in the deconstruction of the Japanese national character believed that this radical evil could be expunged fully through the process of negation. Moreover, they also assumed that its eradication would be a one-time occurrence rather than an ongoing, circular process. The essential

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13 As far as I can determine, Tanabe never addressed Sakaguchi directly, but his criticism of “culturalism” (*bunkashugi*), which I mentioned earlier was based on his belief that true culture could never be constructed through acts of the self in this world. Sakaguchi’s advocacy of decadence and his own personal efforts to “negate” himself in the floating world of alcohol and drugs, which ultimately led to his untimely death in 1954 at the of 48, were all acts of the self-affirming ego. In Tanabe’s philosophy, Sakaguchi’s chosen path to depravity would never allow him to completely overcome himself.

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difference between these visions of new life can be understood by examining the tools with which this process was to be effected. Whereas Tanabe advocated spiritual reconstruction utilizing the religious principles of “action-faith-witness” (gyō-shin-shō), most participants in the war responsibility debate - whether intellectual or average citizen, deceiver or deceived - focused on material reconstruction using the tools of “rationality” (gōri) and “science” (kagaku).14 Tanabe believed that he had exhausted the limits of reason, leaving him no other recourse than an appeal to the absolute through other-power. For his countryfolk, however, the problem was a complete lack of reason in the first place. This had given prewar Japan its irrational, particularistic character. Therefore, more reason, not less, was the prescription. According to this logic, utilizing the principles of rationality and science would not only expose the irrationality of “the evil traditions of the past,” but would also provide the means with which a new Japan could be constructed as a peaceful, democratic nation.

14For a similar assessment on the neglect of spiritual, as opposed to material and economic, reconstruction see Takeuchi Yoshinori’s “Translator’s Introduction” in Philosophy as Metanoetics, pp. xxxviii-xxxix.
Rationality and Science as “Other”

Early postwar Japan was awash in the language of rationality and science, but the very ease with which these words were invoked suggests that no clear understanding of what they meant existed. Like the peoples’ history discussed in the last chapter, rationality and science were defined most clearly terms of what they were not. It was a classic example of “self” being defined with reference to an external “other.” Rationality and science formed part of a binary construction which included democracy, cooperation, universalism and individualism. Opposed to this were militarism, oppression, particularism, and feudalism. This last term referred particularly to the family system, the very epitome of irrationality which had retarded the development of individual thinking and initiative. Ultimately, rationality and science emerged from a growing awareness that Japan’s past itself was irrational. The present and future, therefore had to be based on rational principles because this was the only way of turning the corner toward new life.

Among historians, for example, recognition of Japan’s irrational past became the starting point for a wholesale reassessment of that profession as well as the past itself. This was the point of departure from which all future work would arise. In
the words of Rekken member Inoue Kiyoshi, "unless historians openly criticize the sins of the past, they cannot say that they are embarking on a new history."\(^\text{15}\)

Among the five principles Rekken identified as constituting Japan's new history, two addressed specifically the need for rationality and science: "making a clean sweep of all previous scholarship by correctly assessing its foundations through the application of scientific methods; and "recognizing no higher authority than the pursuit of scientific truth, and advocating unfettered freedom of research and complete independence of scholarship."\(^\text{16}\) The Rekken historians believed that Japan's past could be successfully confronted by applying the rational and scientific principles of historical inquiry. These principles were not grounded in some kind of value-free objectivity nor on a sense of scholarly detachment. Rather, they were founded on the recognition that socialism and democracy formed the two great trends of the postwar world which historians had to embrace in order to understand the basic historical development of human society.\(^\text{17}\) Rationality was the manifestation of a democratic world view upon which the principles of historiography ought to be based; the scientific approach was the practical application of this new world view to the examination of the


\(^{17}\) Ibid, p. 45.
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Another pressing issue to which the tools of rationality and science were applied, both to critique the past and to construct the future, was Japan’s economic reconstruction. The report of the Special Survey Committee (SSC), discussed in Chapter Two, defined Japan’s prewar economic development as “abnormal” (kikeiteki na hatten), citing oligopolistic capitalism wedded to feudalistic state power as the main cause. This had retarded the growth of Japan’s domestic market, had encouraged militaristic expansion for territory and markets, and had led to war and defeat. In the new postwar world, however, national economies would be guided by the “rational principles” of planning and international cooperation through such institutions as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). These institutions would oversee trade on a multilateral basis to ensure the maintenance of a “globally rational system” (gôriteki na sekai seidô). Rational

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18The definition of rationality is actually Inoue’s. "Jihyô," p. 36.


20Ibid., p. 156.

planning was especially crucial in Japan’s case because its domestic industries could easily be overwhelmed by more powerful foreign competition. Therefore, “government protection of basic industries [would] be necessary in order to avoid the reversion of Japan’s economy to a deformed state.”

The new Japan envisioned by the SSC contained a multiplicity of contradictions. Autarkic government and zaibatsu monopoly would be destroyed as a necessary prerequisite to returning political and economic power to the people, and a democratic government would replace the prewar system with full participation for all. However, this new government would then preside over the planned reconstruction of big business - now in democratized form - which would lift Japan out of its economic despair and allow it to partake in the globally rational system. Meanwhile, Japan’s small and medium business would act as the engines of domestic reconstruction, freely pursuing their own interests while, at the same time, participating, together with labour, in the planning process itself. Thus, a new Japan would be born from the ashes of defeat to participate

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22Ibid., p. 195.

23The idea of having a laissez faire sector of small and medium business embedded in the larger, planned economy was promoted by a broad cross-section of intellectuals, politicians, and businessmen at this time. See, for example, Kono Hisoka and Kawai Yoshinari, “Shakaishugi ka shihonshugi ka” (Socialism or Capitalism?), Jitsugyō no Nihon (June 1, 1946), 49:6, pp. 6-7; Mukai Shikamatsu, “Sengo nihon keizai no kōzō” (The Structure of Japan’s Postwar Economy), reprinted in Pacific Affairs, (March 1946), 19:1, pp. 94-95; Mizutani Chōsaburō, “Shakaitō wa nani o motomeru
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in a “new world order” (shin sekai chitsujo) ruled by cooperation instead of competition.24

The immense appeal of economic planning lay in its rationality, in terms of both economic efficiency and social justice, concepts that were often incompatible. Therefore, planning had to made democratic by permitting the equal participation of all sectors of the economy in the decision-making process. However, this threatened to undermine the planning process because there were too many separate interests to satisfy. The last line of defense was cooperation, which was itself believed to be rational in the sense that economic actors would satisfy their own interests better by cooperating than competing.25 For the SSC

ka” (What Does the Socialist Party Want?), Shinsei, (December 1945), pp. 20-22; and Hoashi Kei, Nihon sangyō fukkō e no michi (The Road to Reconstructing Japanese Industry), Shinsho Shuppansha, 1947.

24This was not only an idealistic vision, but was also a practical imperative. The SSC men believed that cooperation in the new world order was the only alternative to mutual annihilation. Nakamura (ed), Shiryō, p. 151.

25The importance of cooperation as the glue holding everything together reveals a significant degree of uncertainty over exactly how economic reconstruction would be effected. It also illustrates the ambiguous nature of terms like democracy, socialism, and capitalism. The following is a sampling of articles that emphasized the centrality of cooperation in the reconstruction process: Fukumoto Kazuō, “Shin nihon e no kengen” (A Proposal for New Japan), Shinsei, (November 1945), pp. 14-16; Minobe Ryōkichi, “Japan’s Economic Rehabilitation,” Contemporary Japan (August 1946), vol. xv, no. 8., pp. 202-16; Takahashi Masao, “Nihon keizai no saiken to shakaishugi” (Socialism and the Reconstruction of Japan’s Economy), Jitsugyō no Nihon, (May 1, 1946), 49:5, pp. 2-6; Kiga Kenzō, “Keihaku keizai to minshūshugi” (Democracy and a Planned Economy), Jitsugyō no Nihon (April 1, 1946), 49:4, pp. 16-17; and Kagawa Toyohiko, “Musanseitō no saishuppatsu” (A New Beginning for the Proletarian Party), Shinsei (November 1945), pp. 17-19. In
men, the "three sacred regalia" of planning, cooperation, and democracy stood as a tautological trinity: a democratic government would make cooperation and planning possible; but the government and the planning system could only be made more democratic through cooperation.\footnote{This wordplay on the Imperial sacred regalia of the sword, the jewel, and the mirror is my own; however, the idea came from Arisawa Hiromi who referred to iron and steel, anthracite coal, crude oil, rubber, and tractors and buses as the "five regalia of reconstruction" (\textit{saiken no go himoku}). Arisawa, \textit{Gakumon to shisō to ningen to}, p. 210.}

Despite its logical flaws and its idealistic tone, the SSC report highlighted the importance of rationality and science for analyzing the past and for reconstructing the future. It also represented a belief that the "evil traditions of the past" had to be negated in order to move forward into the new world. Whether it was historians lamenting that the earlier scholarship had ignored the trends of the world or economic specialists criticizing Japan's "abnormal" prewar development, Japan's past represented an "other," the emergence of which allowed people to come to grips with life in the turning point by confronting their own "radical evil." Identifying the \textit{kyodatsu} of the irrational past provided the means with which the \textit{shinsei} of Japan's future could be apprehended. This was all part of the discourse of defeat and the debate over responsibility that

\textit{Kagawa's rather fantastic scheme, cooperation would be grounded in a proletarian party centring on an Emperor system that had been purged of the militarism of the \textit{gunbatsu} and the mysticism of \textit{kokutai}.}
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followed. Neither the Rekken historians nor the SSC members dealt directly with this debate, but it did become the vehicle with which the Japanese public could examine themselves in a manner similar to the way in which intellectuals examined Japan’s history and economics.

Cast off “Old Stupid Habits!”

As we have seen, the war responsibility debate in the Japanese press revealed a desire to repudiate absolutely gun-kan-zai militarism and oppression. This was reflected clearly in descriptions of Japan’s leaders as “Machiavellian schemers” whose “reckless” actions had resulted in Japan’s disastrous “burglar wars” and, ultimately, defeat. As the final product of this irrational past, defeat exposed the evil traits which had allowed such folly to flourish in the first place. Chief among the characteristics to be exorcised from the national character were dependence, blind obedience, unquestioning loyalty, and imitativeness, all of which defined the old, irrational Japan. Regardless of whether one subscribed to the deceived thesis (damasareta ron) or to the collaborators thesis (kyôdô ron), most commentators agreed that some combination of these traits were rooted in the national character and therefore were responsible for Japan’s current abject
These traits were often grouped under the rubric of stupidity which further helped to link together the two different interpretations of responsibility. Some Japanese were stupid for allowing themselves to be deceived; others were stupid for not questioning the authorities. An editorial from a local paper in Maebashi, Gumma-ken, for example, castigated the Japanese people for their "old stupid habit" of blindly following their leaders.\textsuperscript{27} Writing a few weeks after the death of H.G. Wells, the article speculated that Wells' lack of popularity in Japan was due to the fact that "the Japanese are frivolous and have no ability to judge for themselves."\textsuperscript{28} The apparent non-sequitur between Japan's defeat and Wells' lack of popularity notwithstanding, the editorial defined stupidity as a cultural trait, fostered by the age-old spirit of dependency and servility.

Just six weeks after the Americans' arrival, a \textit{Nippon Sangyō Keizai} editorial

\textsuperscript{27}\textit{Jomo Shimbun}, August 23, 1946, translated and reprinted in \textit{ATIS}, Reel 19, Social Series 1102, Item 1.

\textsuperscript{28}According to the editorial, Wells' work was not widely read in Japan. His 1909 social novel \textit{Tono Bungay}, for example was translated and introduced by Tsurumi Yusuke but never sold well. Wells died in London on August 13, 1946, three weeks before his eightieth birthday.
lamented that “servility ha[d] become second nature” to the Japanese people.29

The Japanese have been observing the principles of toadyism and subservience which is usual in weak nations, as expressed in Japanese proverbs [like] “crying children and landlords cannot be conquered,” or “it is wise to submit to authority.” We must reflect upon our obsequious spirit which is deep-rooted [sic] in our minds...
The Japanese became so servile that they now regard it as foolish to stand on their own principles, independent of the authorities.30

Another editorial in the same paper took up this issue at the end of December.

Writing in the context of the anniversary of the Taishô Emperor’s death, the paper concluded that the absence of flags hung to commemorate this event was further evidence that the Japanese people “move only by guidance.”31 The flag


30Ibid. Italics mine. In Japanese, this proverb reads, naku ko to jitô niwa katte nu, and can also be translated as “you can’t fight city hall.” The term jitô referred to a class of military land stewards who rose to prominence under the shôen system at the end of the Heian period as rent collectors, police, and arbiters of land disputes. Under Yoritomo, jitô power expanded, taking over many of the civil duties of other shôen managers. Despite protests from the court, the jitô authority grew, with many of the new officials coming directly from the shogun’s vassals. By the time of the civil war era, jitô had, for all intents and purposes, become hereditary vassals of the great lords and continued to perform the functions of tax collection and land use supervision. For further discussion of this group, see Jeffrey P. Mass, “The Early Bakufu and Feudalism,” in Mass (ed), *Court and Bakufu in Japan: Essays in Kamakura History*, Stanford University Press, 1995, pp. 123-42; and John Whitney Hall, *Government and Local Power in Japan, 500 to 1700: A Study Based on Bizen Province*, Princeton University Press, 1966, pp. 113, 152-65, 184-90.

31*Nippon Sangyô Keizai*, December 28, 1945, translated and reprinted in *ATIS*, Reel 6, Editorial Series 27, Item 1. It is somewhat surprising that this article made it past the occupation censors, given its bold assertion of Japan’s 2600 years of tradition and the statement that “we need not be afraid of celebrating [national holidays] in front of the Occupation troops.” Perhaps the censors overlooked the article because the holiday to which it referred was New Year’s. This article is also interesting because it discussed the Japanese flag so soon after surrender. There was considerable discussion of the hinomaru in the press, but most of it occurred later in the postwar years. In early 1949, for example, there were a host of articles and letters to the editor supporting
issue was again linked to the Japanese national character some weeks later by the Mainichi Shimbun. Its February 1946 editorial reported that flags, as well as celebrants, were conspicuously absent in Tokyo and Osaka on National Founding Day (Kigensetsu). In contrast to the Nippon Sangyō Keizai piece, however, this editorial invoked images of both kyodatsu and shinsei, claiming that the lack of flags heralded the beginning of a era in Japan. The display of flags in years past symbolized the kyodatsu of war and oppression, whereas their absence represented a negation of that past and the beginnings of new life (shinsei).

These examples underscored the belief that blind obedience was a product of "the unscientific and irrational character of the Japanese people." They also suggested that the negative qualities of the national character were "bred in the bone" through indoctrination by education and military conscription.

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^Mainichi Shimbun, February 11, 1946, reprinted in Iwasaki and Kato (eds), Showa sesōshi, p. 44. The paper remarked that the five hundred participants in the Tokyo celebration stood in stark contrast to the 9,232 people who took part the previous year. Of course, it did not mention how many of the 1945 celebrants may have been "mobilized" in an artificial show of national patriotism during wartime.

32Mainichi Shimbun, February 11, 1946, reprinted in Iwasaki and Katō (eds), Shōwa sesōshi, p. 44. The paper remarked that the five hundred participants in the Tokyo celebration stood in stark contrast to the 9,232 people who took part the previous year. Of course, it did not mention how many of the 1945 celebrants may have been "mobilized" in an artificial show of national patriotism during wartime.

33This phrase comes from a Shimane Shimbun editorial written on the first anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, August 6, 1946, translated and reprinted in ATIS, Reel 18, Editorial Series 1185, Item 1.
Shimbun article expressed deep concern over the moral degeneration of Japan’s youth, especially that of demobilized soldiers whose training under “the militaristic educational system” had taught them only “blind obedience.” Despite noting evidence of the reconstructive spirit in Hiroshima and elsewhere, the article warned that unless Japan’s youth learned a “self-dependent spirit” reconstruction would amount to nothing more than an “ugly Hiroshima and Japan.”

Accompanying these critiques of stupidity and blind obedience came frequent references to the Japanese as mere animals. This process of dehumanization was integral to deconstruction because the animal imagery reinforced the irrational nature of the Japanese character. It also made jettisoning or rejecting the past

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34 Chūgoku Shimbun, August 6, 1946, translated and reprinted in ATIS, Reel 18, Editorial Series 146, Item 2. Demobilized soldiers were often the targets of civilian anger and scorn because they were living symbols of the same evil past that many were trying to overcome.

35 Ironically, the editorial identified the black market and its ability to draw in young, demobilized soldiers as evidence of young peoples’ lack of an independent spirit, without recognizing that black market activity was an expression of that self-same spirit, at least for the sellers. As I argued in Chapter Two, the black market was one of the few arenas of creativity in early postwar Japan insofar as those who acted in it were thrown back on their own devices and forced to create a livelihood for themselves where none had previously existed. For most observers, however, the black market stood as a symbol of moral decline and then linked directly to the sins of Japan’s prewar and wartime past which was, by definition, immoral.
easier because of the metaphor of animalistic behavior itself. Some likened the people to cows who responded only to the imperative of the Potsdam Declaration and then subsequently to the whip of GHQ initiatives. These commentators argued that the mentality of dependence and the deplorable tendency of submitting to authority had so degraded the Japanese people that they were now nothing more than “domesticated animals.” Others characterized their countryfolk as “birds in a cage.” Having lived so long under an oppressive system that stifled individuality, the people were incapable of stretching their wings even after the cage door of suppression had been opened. An unidentified contributor to Kaizō magazine continued the animal metaphor at the end of 1947, describing the Japanese people as “frogs in a well,” whose ignorance of the trends of the world had led them to launch a “speculative war in an attempt to reverse

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36 John Dower has argued that American dehumanization of the Japanese enemy “other” during the war in government and media propaganda made killing the enemy that much easier for their not being human. A similar process may have been at work in early postwar Japan when the Japanese people confronted their enemy “other” in the form of their own wartime national character. The ease with which many Japanese people believed that they could “discard the sins of the past” suggests that the dehumanization of these sins helped to facilitate this process. For Dower’s discussion of this process during wartime, see War Without Mercy, pp. 77-117.

37 See, for example, Tokyo Shimbun, November 1945.

38 Yomiuri Hōchi, January 1, 1946.

39 Mainichi Shimbun, August 15, 1946.
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the wheels of history." Like Plato's cave-dwellers, the people had mistaken their own reflection for the world itself; prewar Japan had been submerged in the well of its own particularism, unaware of the vast ocean of humanity outside its insular walls.

This position bears a striking resemblance to Tanabe's comment that the Japanese people had conflated their particularistic vision of reality with the world at large and, in doing so, had "absolutized their own relativity." The image of Japanese particularism itself as an evil became a recurrent theme in the early postwar years as many commentators argued that prewar Japan had "neglected the will of the world." This was further reinforced by such dualisms as "Japanese particularism and world rationalism" and the "superiority of the human rational spirit over narrow-minded insularity," all of which emphasized the binary opposition of

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41 The general theme of the article was the need to create a single, unified world based on democracy. Calling for a strengthening of the United Nations as a way of combatting the Communist threat, the writer argued that if the Japanese people studied the great trends of the world they would understand how democracy could become the true foundation for world peace.

42 This phrase comes from the Oita Godô, August 8, 1946, translated and reprinted in ATIS, Reel 18, Social Series 1713, Item 2.
Part Two: Repentance and Responsibility

“us” and “them.” These types of characterizations represented a kind of “reverse orientalism” through which a negative self emerged from the recognition of a positive other. In the context of the debate over the national character, Japanese particularism highlighted and explained the entire pantheon of prewar and wartime evils.

In the process of deconstructing themselves, however, the Japanese people simply exchanged one particularism for another. The absolutization of the Japanese spirit and of the Japanese state during the fifteen-year war was understood in the early postwar years as the overarching defect in the Japanese national character. This defect naturally had to be exorcised in order to build a new democratic Japan, free


44Most observers tended to see these defects as particular to Japan, but there were some who linked Japan’s defects to a larger Asian ethos. Yamazaki Ken, for example argued that stunted growth of the ego in Japan was in fact a unique characteristic of Asiatic people which had resulted in ignorance, barbarism, and an “Asiatic inertia” manifested by the spirit of resignation. Yamazaki actually used the philosophies of Nishida and Tanabe as examples of this trait, maintaining that the fatalism in Tanabe’s writings was simply an expression of the angst of the undeveloped ego disguised as philosophy. Yamazaki Ken, “Minshūshugi kakumei o megutte no ego mondai” (Problems of the Ego in Relation to the Democratic Revolution), Chūō kōron, November 1947, pp. 13-18. Yamazaki’s comments may sound familiar to those who have followed the rise and fall of the “Asian Tigers” in the last few years. Only a few short years ago, North America observers were waxing poetic about the “Asian ethos” and the “neo-confucian work ethic,” while proclaiming the Pacific Century as the wave of the future. After the economic collapse in the fall of 1997, however, these same traits were then regarded as the supreme evils that had led to the collapse in the first place. This was all very self-flattering for us because the “Asian ethos” became, post-crash, mere nepotism and corruption which reinforced the belief that we had had the right way after all.
of its prewar particularistic fetters. Yet, the massive psychological trauma of defeat, coupled with severe material hardship, simply recreated a new form of postwar particularism. The discussion of “evil customs of the past” was so commonplace that Japan’s fallen status, which had been causally linked to these customs, became absolutized. Once again, Japan was a special case.

Critiques of the “Japanese trait” of imitativeness, for example, reinforced this negative image of uniqueness. The Japanese penchant for imitation became the effect of dependence, servility, and blind obedience and, in some cases, helped to further the animal imagery common to other criticisms of the prewar national character. Almost a year after Japan’s defeat, an *Asahi Shimbun* sub-editorial demanded the eradication of “monkey-like imitation” which had incurred the contempt of the world.

The Japanese race has no capacity for creating culture. The people continue to live in an atmosphere of acquired culture. No matter how splendid the Japanese culture may seem to be, it easily declines following the decay of the original.45

Beginning with this statement, drawn incredibily from Adolph Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*,46 the article admitted that the Nazi leader’s disparaging comments,  

45 *Asahi Shimbun*, August 5, 1946.

46 Hitler actually divided humanity into three groups: the founders of culture; the bearers of culture; and the destroyers of culture. He placed Japan in the second category, arguing that the influence of Europe and North America was so great upon Japan that only the “outward” form
knowledge of which the government kept from the Japanese people during the war, had "touched a sore point." "The Japanese are clever imitators," the editorial said. "To imitate a form is easy, but to catch the essence is difficult. Unless the essence is investigated, however, a monkey is a monkey permanently, and creation is therefore inconceivable."

Some months earlier, a local Nagano newspaper wrote on the same theme, quoting from a lecture given at a local normal school by Tokyo University engineering professor Tomizuka Kiyoshi. Tomizuka explained that the graduates of his university were "dull-headed" because the brains of the Japanese people were inferior.

According to psychologists (sic) and other scientists, in the brain of a Japanese a development of the imitation center is seen; but the combination center is small and with less folds on its surface. This is why the Japanese are short of combined judgement. Under such circumstances, it is quite natural that the Japanese have no ability to think.47

remained Japanese. His position is summed up neatly in the following quote: "If beginning today all further Aryan influence on Japan should stop, assuming that Europe and America should perish, Japan's present rise in science and technology might continue for a short time; but even in a few years the well would dry up, the Japanese special character would gain, but the present culture would freeze and sink back into the slumber from which it was awakened seven decades ago by the wave of Aryan culture." Despite the revulsion with which we hold Hitler, his perspective on Japan was striking similar to many people who were absolutely opposed to Hitler on ideological and moral grounds. Hitler's assessment on Japan and the above quote comes from Adolph Hitler, Mein Kampf (trans. Ralph Manheim), Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971, pp. 290-91.

Despite its physiological basis, Tomizuka argued that this incapacity could be treated and "cured" through improved education which would raise the intellectual level of the Japanese to that of other people of the world.\(^{48}\) Presumably, then, improved education for the youth of Japan would induce the growth of more folds on the "combination center" and reduce the size and importance of the "imitation center."\(^{49}\)

The unique Japanese trait of imitativeness was brought to bear on a variety of issues relating to postwar society. In addition to its relevance to education and Japanese physiology, imitativeness also addressed Japanese history, culture, and language. A September 1946 article in the *Tokyo Shimbun* utilized this particular

\(^{48}\)Here, again, was the implication that the particularistic Japanese brain had caused the Japanese people to fall behind the rest of the world (read, the West) intellectually. This in itself was predicated on the assumption that there was a universal standard of intelligence to which Japan could meaningfully be compared - and found wanting.

\(^{49}\)No definition of the "combination center" was given in the article, but it likely referred to that part of the left brain which deals with speech, calculation, and reasoning. Studies of the Japanese brain in the 1940s, to which Tomizuka referred, foreshadowed an explosion of interest in Japanese physiology in the 1970s and 1980s, as part of a general interest in theories of Japanese uniqueness (*nihonjinron*). A classic example of this was *The Japanese Brain* by otologist Dr. Tsunoda Tadanobu. While refusing to pass judgement on the superiority or inferiority of different cultures, Tsunoda claimed that he simply sought to understand the "unique and universal aspects of Japanese culture."(vi) He then went on to detail how brain dominance patterns differed between Japanese and western people. Tsunoda based his research on the belief that language drives culture and that Japanese culture could be understood and differentiated from its western counterpart by observing how language is processed in the brain. This link between language and culture, however, completely ignored the fact that no single western language or culture ever existed to which Japan could be meaningfully compared. Tsunoda Tadanobu, *The Japanese Brain: Uniqueness and Universality* (trans. Yoshinori Oiwa), Taishukan Publishing Company, 1985.
language to illustrate that the progress made by Japan during the last sixty years was based on nothing more than the nation’s ability to skilfully imitate others. Japan’s current fallen state, brought about by defeat, was due to the fact that the people had “imitated the form without grasping the substance.”

A *Yomiuri Shimbun* article from the same month boldly asserted that “no people have imitated foreign countries as we have.” It then went on to deplore the indiscriminate borrowing of foreign literature and ideas which, like bubbles floating on the water, soon vanished from the surface altogether. Later that year, a letter to the editor of the same paper took up the issue, this time in the context of foreign language-learning. The writer, Itabashi Reiko, argued that the recent fashion for learning English would lead to the degradation of the Japanese language itself. Warning that the mastery of a few phrases of English would not lead the Americans to believe that Japan had successfully established democracy, Itabashi asserted that “mere imitation, like coating white powder on yellow faces, will by no means make the Japanese into white men.” Nothing good would come to pass for Japan, Itabashi said, until the Japanese people came to know

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50 *Tokyo Shimbun*, September 1, 1946.

51 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, September 19, 1946.

52 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, December 12, 1946.
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themselves first. Only then could they begin to appreciate others.

While most commentators wrote of imitativeness as a deplorable habit rooted in an obsequious spirit of dependence and servility, others argued that blind obedience in politics and war had to be separated from the cultural realm which had benefited so much from the adoption of foreign forms. An early 1948 article in *Sekai Nippo* took this approach when assessing the previous two years of reconstruction efforts.

We must examine the defects in the national character which have aggravated the situation during the two and a half years since the surrender. The Japanese people were very submissive to the militarists during the war, but now no one wants to take responsibility for bringing about the present situation. Such blind obedience and lack of independence, on one hand, have contributed much to accomplishing marvellous cultural achievements since the Meiji era, manifested in the astonishing capacity for absorption and imitation; however, on the other hand, once the old established power collapsed, there remained nothing but disorder and confusion. We are apt to depend on the Allied Nations for our national reconstruction, neglecting to accomplish it ourselves. What the Allied Nations want from Japan is not blind submission to their directives but the establishment of an independent, truly democratic nation.53

The message of the article was clear: despite Japan’s past cultural achievements, which were due to imitativeness, the lamentable habit of submitting to authority still persisted. The only difference in the early postwar years was that the

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authority had changed; the habit of submissiveness remained constant. This reflected a commonly heard criticism as the 1940s wore on: whatever positive efforts toward reconstruction that had been achieved were attributable, not to the Japanese themselves, but to the directives of GHQ. Some concluded, therefore, that the Japanese people had simply exchanged one master for another, which deepened the connection between submissiveness and imitativeness. Sometimes the press employed this language as a stick with which to beat the government, arguing that the only bright spots to be found in the scarred landscape of defeated Japan were the policies emanating from GHQ headquarters.54 Others, like journalist Akashi Tatsurō, argued that the evil habits of the past, especially dependence on authority was not only the cause of Japan’s defeat, but also the reason that democracy had never taken root in Japanese soil. Democracy had to be generated spontaneously, Akashi said. It could not be imposed from above or from without.55

Ideas like those of Akashi presented something of a paradox in light of the myriad calls for more rationality and science in Japanese life. For most people democracy

54On GHQ’s role in economic reform, see *Tokyo Shimbun*, November 11, 1945; on Japanese political impotence, see *Tokyo Shimbun*, January 1, 1946.

was, by definition, rational and scientific because it was the “other” to which Japanese militarism was opposed. Given Japan’s oppressive past and disastrous defeat, it had to be. However, this also suggested that democracy was foreign to Japanese soil, just as imitativeness was indigenous. Evidence that democracy was being imposed by external forces (gaiatsu) was painfully visible from occupation reforms and directives. The paradox was that if democracy was being imposed from without, then the Japanese were indeed simply exchanging one master for another and thereby perpetuating the traits of imitativeness and submissiveness which had led to the tragedy of defeat in the first place. It was a similar kind of logical paradox that had led Tanabe to the abyss of despair at the end of the war, but one that he believed he had overcome by appealing to self-negation as the path to his true self. Most Japanese, however, had neither the energy nor the intellectual or spiritual tools to accomplish this. They had little choice but to hope that defeat had indeed marked a turning point and, therefore, that life would not continue on as before. For some, the American presence was evidence of this. Others, like Akashi, were much less sanguine.

I will return to this issue later but for now I will let Sakaguchi have the last word on this matter. Like Akashi, he saw servility and its concomitant, imitativeness, as firmly rooted in postwar Japan as it had been in the prewar years.

Among all people, the Japanese muster up the least hatred and
maintain it for the shortest time. Yesterday's enemy is today's friend; this sanguine attitude is a reality and not a false emotion. To cooperate with yesterday's enemy - in fact, to become best friends - is an everyday occurrence. The more bitter the enemy, the more intimate we become as friends. It seems that we are willing to serve a second master just as soon as the first one is gone. We are even willing to serve yesterday's enemy.\textsuperscript{56}

This attitude reflected Sakaguchi's deeper conviction that the Japanese people had to topple into the abyss, not merely stare into it, if they hoped to fundamentally transform themselves. Young men who had vowed to give up their lives for the Emperor "like petals blown by the wind" had now effortlessly floated into new lives as black marketeers; the thoughts of brave women, who had courageously sent their men off to war and then humbly bowed before their graves, were now filled with images of another. These images confirmed for Sakaguchi that the Japanese people changed their attitudes as easily as they donned a new set of clothes.\textsuperscript{57} Such changes were merely ripples on the surface. Only through complete moral collapse which would disinter the deeply-rooted characteristics of the past could the people discover their true selves. Change through such expedient political means as exchanging one master for another would, in actuality, change nothing. For Sakaguchi, the Japanese characteristic of imitativeness reflected both the peoples' desire to submit to a new master and to

\textsuperscript{56}Sakaguchi Ango, \textit{Darakuron}, p. 223.

\textsuperscript{57}These images come from \textit{Darakuron}, pp. 231-32.
follow the new trends of the times. In this sense, Sakaguchi’s depiction of young men as cherry blossom petals was a powerful metaphor for all Japanese. They simply travelled in whichever direction the winds blew.  

The “Shackles and Fetters” of the Family

Under this sustained public critique, the Japanese national character came to resemble a corpse whose internal organs, once laid bare, now required detailed analysis to identify the radical evil lurking within. Given the breadth and scope of the operation it seems that the press had taken to heart Tashiro Masao’s demand for a “pathological dissection” of the national character. While the individual organs came under intense scrutiny, however, it was the body itself and the spirit

58I have been unable to find accurate sales figures for Sakaguchi’s work, but from my discussions with people of the yake ato jidai it seems clear that his writings were widely read in the early postwar years and beyond. Unlike younger Japanese who are generally unfamiliar with him or know only his name, most men and women of the older generation remember him well, especially his essay *Darakuron*. Donald Keene has argued that Sakaguchi’s work languished in obscurity until being “rediscovered” in the 1970s, possibly because the activism of the 1960s left many Japanese disillusioned and Sakaguchi offered a world stripped bare of all pretense. Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era, Fiction*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984, p. 1080. However, Kusanagi Toshikazu, painter and jazz club proprietor, recalled that Sakaguchi’s work was extremely popular among college students in the 1960s, particularly among members of the radical student groups that flourished on university campuses throughout Japan at that time. These recollections come from two interviews I had with Kusanagi-san at his club, *Bonaru*, in Ichikawa on July 7 and August 15, 1995.
that animated it which became the focal point for most analyses. This naturally led the majority of commentators to concentrate on the ultimate structural evil: the feudalistic family system (hōkenteki na ie no seidō). This oppressive structure was seen as the breeding ground of feudalistic thinking based on the Confucian principles of the five relationships (go-rin), filial piety (kō), and loyalty (chū). These principles had retarded the formation of individual thought and initiative, leading to imitation, flattery, and submission to authority. They were, therefore, the very epitome of irrationality. Regardless of which combination of specific traits individual commentators identified with defeat and responsibility, there was general agreement that the feudalistic family system was the irrational “radical evil” of Japan’s past, and therefore had to be amputated from the body

59 Analyses with the body were commonplace in early postwar Japan, regardless of whether the subject matter was the national character or the economy. Tsuru Shigeto employed this metaphor when he wrote the first postwar economic White Paper in July 1947. He introduced his readers to Japan’s economic problems with the following statement: “Our problems are not simply that our fingers have been cut or our legs broken. We are suffering from far more serious physiological effects such as blood poisoning or a disorder of the ductless glands. The fact that honest men are quite often fooled and that those who work sincerely suffer grievously testifies to the physiological malady within the economic organism of our country.” White Paper, p. 13.

60 The five relationships are: master-servant; father-son; husband-wife; elder brother-younger brother; friend-friend. It should be noted, however, that the least important relationship of the five was the single horizontal one between friends. The clearest articulation of filial piety and loyalty in the prewar years came the government’s 1937 publication of Kokutai no hongi, mentioned in Chapter Three in connection with Tanabe’s prewar writings. According to this document, “Loyalty means to revere the Emperor as [our] pivot and to follow him implicitly... The most basic thing that has manifested itself as regards the subject is, in short, this Way of loyalty. On filial piety, it had this to say: “In our country filial piety is a Way of highest importance. Filial piety originates with one’s family as its basis, and in a larger sense has the nation for its foundation.” These citations are taken from Ryusaku Tsunoda, Wm. Theodore de Bary, and Donald Keene, Sources of Japanese Tradition, vol. II, Columbia University Press, 1958, pp. 280-81.
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politc if Japan was ever become a peaceful democratic nation.61

Shortly after the Americans arrived at the end of August 1945, the *Mainichi Shimbun* ran a contest for the best essay on rebuilding a new Japan (*Shin Nihon no saiken*). The paper published the winning entry, "A New Deal for Education" (*Kyōiku no nyū-di-ru*) by Kumazawa Yasusada, in its November 2nd edition. Kumazawa began by contrasting the Reformation, the Renaissance, and the French Revolution, all of which represented a true awakening of the people, with the Meiji Restoration which he viewed as nothing more than "a narrow-minded patriotism based on Oriental feudalism."62 His critique centred on the fact that the changes brought about in the Meiji Restoration were forcibly imposed on the

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61 The vast majority of commentators linked the family system and feudalism causally, but there were a few who argued that the former historically transcended the latter. Chūō University professor Sukeyoshi Michitaka agreed that the family system was, in essence, a system of slavery, but also argued that it predated feudalism by many years. With the advent of feudalism under the samurai class, the family system became enshrined and formalized in law. Sukeyoshi separated the two historically and maintained that "defeat had destroyed the family system." Now what was needed were legal reforms to protect individual family members and promote the growth of the middle class which would foster equality. Sukeyoshi Michitaka, "Reconstruction and the Basis of the Family System," *Chōryū*, November 1946, translated and reprinted in ATIS, Reel 25, Social Series 1310, Item 4.

62 *Mainichi Shimbun*, November 2, 1945. Not all assessments of the Meiji Restoration were negative during this period. Some detached the Restoration from later developments, arguing that the rise of militarism and oppression were a departure from the Meiji ideal to which early postwar Japan must return. See, for example, the lead editorial in the *Tokyo Shimbun*, November 4, 1945. For an example of the Meiji Restoration and subsequent economic development as a positive model for early postwar Japan, see Tsuchiya Takao, "Nihon no injure shi no kyōkun." These attitudes suggest that some Japanese understood, if only intuitively, that modern Japan was a socially constructed entity.
people from above. This had perpetuated feudalistic oppression and had led to the rise of militarism. Supporting this edifice was the irrational neo-Confucian system of education which required students to “imitate truly and perfectly” their teachers, while the teachers themselves stood as the “model for imitation.”

Such an ideology, together with the above mentioned uncritical attitude to learning, has produced flattering people only true to the ways of father and son, and of sovereign and subject. This has given rise to the idea of suppressing research and making learning only a means of serving social purposes without ever questioning why.63

Kumazawa argued that such a mentality, fostered in every sector of society, had produced a technological revolution for Japan, but one that had only resulted in blind adherence to the idea of performing action “for the sake of the nation” (waga kuni no tame ni).64 This demoralized the people, fostered exclusivity and militarism, and stunted the growth of individualism.65 Herein, lay “the grave

63Mainichi Shim bun, November 2, 1945.

64Here, Kumazawa foreshadowed another later postwar argument that Meiji modernization benefitted the state, not the people. This had resulted in a “deformed modernity,” one product of which was the superficial transplantation of democracy. Hani Goro argued this in his book Meiji Ishin (The Meiji Restoration), Iwanami Bunko, 1953. One of the most forceful expressions of this idea in the later postwar years came from Irokawa Daikichi, The Culture of the Meiji Period (trans. Hiraga Noboru), Princeton University Press, 1991, esp. pp. 51-75.

65Kumazawa’s argument that individual relationships had been subordinated to the hierarchical relationship of sovereign and subject was a prophetic foreshadowing of later postwar nihonjinron theories of the “vertical society” (tate shakai), popularized by such scholars as Nakane Chie. The irony is that, in Nakane’s hands, the vertical society became a positive expression of Japanese uniqueness, one that could be used to explain Japan’s rapid economic reconstruction from the perspective of the 1970s. The pejorative tone of Kumazawa’s writing, in contrast to Nakane’s positive assessment twenty-five years later, accords with Aoki Tamotsu’s argument that the early postwar years were a time of identifying negative uniqueness, whereas the
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cause of defeat in war."

Kumazawa’s critique of the Meiji Restoration as a “revolution from above” also carried with it the recognition that while the Restoration provided Japan’s leaders with the modern tools with which to fashion a militaristic state, the fundamental neo-Confucian values of filial piety and unquestioning loyalty had roots far back in Japanese history. Thus, it was not only the recent past that had to be destroyed, it was the long past, back to the days of the daimyō and shogun when such phrases as “the warrior picks his teeth even though his belly is empty” (bushi wa kuwanudo takyōji) characterized the arrogance of the ruling class.66

The Yomiuri Hōchi continued in the same vein in a New Year’s editorial in 1946, discussing the future of postwar democracy. Lamenting the Japanese people’s political immaturity, the editorial maintained that “the mass of people, who have

1970s represented a search for positive uniqueness. In both cases, the tools were the same; only the historical circumstances had changed. For Nakane’s discussion of the vertical society, see Tate shakai no ningen kankei (Human Relationships in a Vertical Society), Tōyō Bunko, 1970; in English, see Japanese Society, Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1973. For a good critique of tate shakai as an analytical tool, see Ross Mouer and Sugimoto Yoshio, Images of Japanese Society: A Study in the Structure of Social Reality, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986.

66This phrase, also translated as “the warrior glories in honourable poverty,” supposedly represented the ideal of samurai austerity and selflessness, but more often was invoked to describe samurai arrogance. In the latter stages of the Edo era the phrase became reality, at least the poverty part, as many samurai found themselves unable to care for themselves, their families, or their retainers out of the ever-decreasing stipends they received from their lords.
been turned into domesticated animals through long ages of feudalistic oppression, are extremely indifferent to politics.\textsuperscript{67} The editorial focused on the need to organize a popular front to lead the coming political revolution, and closed with these words of hope for the Japanese people:

Start anew. Lead a vigorous life as new men. Recognize correctly what a revolution is; face reality positively; then our future will be filled with the light emanating from our newly-made souls.\textsuperscript{68}

Nagayo Yoshiro, writing in a local Oita-ken paper, injected a note of caution into the debate, arguing that the people could not “discard [their] customs, which descended from the feudalistic ages long ago, as easily as abandoning broken shoes.”\textsuperscript{69} Nonetheless, he maintained that it was essential to break with old conventions and “let history advance a step further.” An editorial in a local Kagoshima newspaper made the connection between the defects in the national character and the long past even more forcefully a year after Japan’s surrender. Beginning with the now familiar refrain, “innumerable are the sins for which we should atone,” the editorial then provided the following assessment of Japan’s

\textsuperscript{67}Yomiuri Hôchi, January 1, 1946. Italics mine.

\textsuperscript{68}Such an assertion coming from the Yomiuri Hôchi is not surprising given that the employees of this paper were among the leaders of the “production control movement” popular in labour circles at this time. For more on this and the Yomiuri’s role, see Joe Moore, Japanese Workers and the Struggle for Power, 1945-1947.

\textsuperscript{69}Nagayo Yoshiro, “Break Through the Bonds of Tradition,” Oita Godô Shimbun, August 4, 1946, translated and reprinted in ATIS, Reel 18, Editorial Series 1183, Item 1. Italics mine.
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The net of feudalism and the fetters of blind obedience, unparalleled in the world, were the fundamental cause of Japan's defeat. The cause of defeat lies not only in the sins of the military caste, capitalists and some of the leaders, but also in the state of the Japanese nation after Yoritomo assumed the dictatorship. Therefore, reconstruction of Japan is absolutely impossible without complete elimination of the feudalism which has its roots fastened deep in Japan. All the aspects of the old Japan should now be destroyed.70

Writing one month later, a Nippon Sangyō Keizai editorial picked up on this historical theme, arguing that Japan had been governed despotically from the age of feudal landlords down to the Shōwa era. "This condition lasted so long," the article went on, "that it now seems that servility has become second nature to us."71

Numerous letters to the editor, in both urban and rural newspapers, echoed these same sentiments. Kayahara Kazan of Chōshi deplored the idea that the glorification of death had had such a long and sordid history in Japan. "Since ancient times," said Kayahara, "the Japanese people have only been taught how to

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70 Minami Nippon Shim bun, August 26, 1946, translated and reprinted in ATIS, Reel 19, Social Series 1098, Item 1. Italics mine.

Part Two: Repentance and Responsibility

die."72 Now they had to learn how to live. To accomplish this, the people would have to construct a new morality, devoid of the particularistic notion that everything begins and ends in death. Another letter to the editor in late 1946 by Hotari Ichirō made a similar connection, implying that Japan’s “old morality” of filial piety had its roots in the distant past rather than in the recent prewar militarism.73 Unlike most other assessments, Hotari’s ended on a positive note, revealing his belief that defeat, like some latter-day “divine wind,” had cleansed the nation and had left the Japanese people standing at the crossroads of a new era. Invoking the Christian principle of “do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” Hotari claimed that defeat had destroyed Japan’s old feudalistic morality and therefore had finally paved the way for the construction of a new Japan based on philanthropy and justice.

Not all critiques of Japan’s past included the distant past, but even those that found something positive to hold onto from long ago still identified feudalism

72Mainichi Shim bun, August 27, 1946. Kayahara began his critique of the Japanese glorification of death by quoting a phrase attributed to an unnamed European writer: “If you want to know how to live, go to Greece. If you want to know how to die, go to Japan.” Statements such as these reveal clearly the bipolarity assumed between Japan and the West, which was really code for the rest of the world. The richness with which this comparison was woven into the deconstruction of the national character also illustrates the ease with which irrational Japan could be compared with the rational West - and found wanting.

and the family system as evils to be discarded. A Yukan Kyoto editorial at the end of 1946 recognized the great contributions made to Japanese history by such men as Arai Hakuseki, Kumazawa Banzan, and Uesugi Kenshin. Having tipped its hat to the great statesmen of the past, however, the editorial then declared that new times required new principles and new ethics. "Japan must first of all eliminate feudalistic dictatorship and morals," like that of bushidō, if the nation ever hoped to establish a truly modern society. Another reassessment of Japan's past, this time by Kishida Kunio, came on the second anniversary of Japan's surrender. Kishida criticized the tendency to "attribute all past evil practices to feudalism." This, he said, was a false reading of history since the Japanese of old were nothing like the people of today. Even the Meiji Restoration, despite its flaws, had laid the foundation for a modern progressive state. "Our blood thus has been poisoned, not necessarily by despotism, but rather by deceptive policies which contradicted what they professed to uphold." Nonetheless, Kishida went on to disparage the "feudal habits" of servility and accepting whatever one's leaders say without question.


The attack on feudal habits and the family system that fostered them continued throughout the early postwar years, driven first by defeat and the war responsibility debate that followed, and then by the debates over the future of postwar Japanese democracy. Virtually no aspect of Japanese life emerged unscathed. The fishing industry and agriculture, neighbourhood associations (tonari gumi), landlord/tenant relations, father/son relations, and religion all became targets because all were understood as products of the feudalistic family structure which bred subservience, imitativeness, and toadyism. The irrationality of this system was driven home by an unidentified letter to the editor at the end of 1946 which represented perfectly the binary opposition between the “prewar other” and the “postwar self.” The writer advocated the destruction of the irrational “feudalistic family” as the first and most important step in constructing Japan’s “scientific and rationalized new life.”

The irrationality of the Japanese language itself also came under attack, and there was a concerted movement to abolish completely “feudalistic” Chinese characters

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76 For a sampling of attitudes linking these structures with feudal elements, see Niigata Nippō, January 22, 1946; Tokushima Shimbun, August 6, 1946; Minami Nippon Shimbun, August 12, 1946; Saga Shimbun, January 11, 1947; Jidō Shinri, August 1947; Tokyo Times, January 1, 1948; Seiji, September 8, 1948; Hōchi Shimbun, November 11, 1948.

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(\textit{kanji}) in favour of the more "democratic" phonetic syllabaries (\textit{kana}).\footnote{Essentially, there were three positions in this debate: simplify the \textit{kanji} in terms of number and style of construction; abolish \textit{kanji} and replace it with \textit{kana}; abolish \textit{kanji} and replace it with a combination of \textit{kana} and \textit{romaji} (romanized alphabet). This debate raged most intensely in the first eighteen months following defeat. The American Education Mission, chaired by George D. Stoddard, recommended the third option, arguing that it would contribute "to the growth of democratic citizenship and international understanding." See the Report of the United States Education Mission to Japan, March 30, 1946, reprinted in Mitsuo Kodama (ed), \textit{Educational Documents of Occupied Japan}, vol. 1, "Education in Japan," Meisei University Press, 1983, pp. 22. In the end, the Japanese government opted for the first choice, reducing the number of \textit{kanji} to be taught and simplifying the manner in which they were written. For a sampling of the media debate on this issue, see \textit{Tokyo Shimbun}, January 6 and December 14, 1946; \textit{Yomiuri Hōchi}, November 12, 1945, January 1, February 18 and August 7, 1946. Interestingly, in recent years \textit{romanji} and \textit{kana} have become evermore prevalent due to the market-driven demands of technology and the widespread use of computers. In the future, the Japanese language will continue to change, not necessarily due to specific laws or policies, but probably due to the same laws of supply and demand that Havens argued dictated clothing styles during the war.} Here, the grand old man of Japanese politics, Ozaki Yukio, entered the fray. In a press interview on the first anniversary of Japan's surrender. Ozaki advocated replacing \textit{kanji} with a combination of \textit{kana} and romanized script. This change would make the language easier to understand for the general public and therefore promote popular education.\footnote{\textit{Yomiuri Shimbun}, August 15, 1946. Ozaki also advocated the abolition of eating white rice and sitting on \textit{tatami} because these practices weakened the Japanese physique.} At the end of that year, Ozaki again took up this issue, arguing that because "the Japanese minds are stuffed with \textit{kanji}," the people do not learn to think as other people do.\footnote{Ozaki Yukio, "The True Meaning of an Unpatriotic Person," \textit{Jiyū Kokumin}, December 10, 1946, translated and reprinted in \textit{ATIS}, Reel 9, Social Series 1310, Item 5.} The implications of language reforms were clear: rationality and science could not take root in Japan as long as the
language itself remained irrational.

Another casualty of feudalistic oppression under the family system that came under heavy criticism was the deplorable position of women within that structure. Nakazawa Zennosuke, sounding much like an American antebellum abolitionist, argued that women were not slaves under the family system because they were ignorant; they were ignorant because they were slaves. In the context of the promulgation of the new postwar constitution and the debates over revising the Civil Code, this was an important critique, and one that applied to both men and women. However, while men had been able to move between the spheres of public and private, women had been bound exclusively to the private domain, the very breeding ground of ignorance and irrationality. Women in prewar Japan had been excluded from the public domain because they were seen to be temperamentally unfit for politics and business; that is, they were

81 Sheldon Garon has argued that emancipation for women in the early postwar years meant two different things: liberation from feudal oppression; and liberation from an authoritarian state. However, in the debate at the time, little distinction was made between the two types of oppression because the consequences were the same, regardless of whether it was imposed by the family patriarch (or mother-in-law) or by government policy and propaganda. This was particularly evident in criticisms of the Meiji Civil Code (revised in 1948) which saw the family patriarch and government authoritarianism as structurally the same thing. For Garon’s discussion on women’s groups and the state in the early postwar years, see Molding Japanese Minds, esp. pp. 178-205.


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themselves irrational beings. This was outward manifestation of a zero-sum mentality that saw any movement from the private to the public as being injurious to society and therefore to the state itself. In the postwar years, however, this thinking was overturned as many women were now encouraged to "put the voice of the kitchen into politics." 83

To do this, women required emancipation from the authoritarian family structure, especially from their subservient position to the household patriarch. A 1946 Nagasaki Shimbun editorial, for example, called for the equality of husbands and wives in the household. Recognizing that a "deep scar" remained from the "wounds of defeat," the editorial nonetheless argued that the awakening of women to democracy was essential to Japan's reconstruction. This could be accomplished by tearing out the "vestigial roots of feudalism, militarism and obscurantism." 84 The new constitution and the impending revision of the Civil Code provided the legal means to achieve this, and were thus hailed as harbingers of a new era in Japanese history. A local Iwate paper praised these changes but also warned that legal reform alone did not make for true democracy. Like the Mainichi essay contest winner mentioned earlier, this editorial saw

83Quoted in Garon, Molding Japanese Minds, p. 186.

84Nagasaki Shimbun, August 7, 1946, translated and reprinted in ATIS, Reel 18, Editorial Series 1184, Item 1.
education as the key. Just as the lack of education had left women ignorant in the prewar days, its proper application in the postwar years promised to set women free. It would prepare women for a new life and open their eyes to the connection between a happy home life and "the proper self-awakening of each individual member of the family."\textsuperscript{85} In short, women had to become true individuals, not just mere chattels of the family patriarch. For critic Kawasaki Natsu, this meant eliminating "feudalistic thinking among men." The unequal burdens placed on women to be wives, mothers, educators, and breadwinners were the chief barriers to women becoming full, democratic citizens.\textsuperscript{86} Echoing the idea of Nakagawa Zennosuke, Kawasaki maintained that women remained ignorant because the demands of survival had left them no time to cultivate or educate themselves.

Uchino Shige made a similar argument, but one based on her personal experiences working at a tuberculosis clinic in Tokyo. She saw dozens of overworked, undernourished women unable to extricate themselves from their


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plight because of domineering husbands.\textsuperscript{87} Despite the promulgation of the constitution a year earlier, Uchino argued that women's lives had actually worsened because of the dire material conditions of the early postwar years. Unless social conditions changed, she said, women would never break through "the bonds of feudalism in the home." While not everyone supported the political emancipation of women, virtually all commentators agreed that the feudalistic thinking embedded in the family system of the past had oppressed women and kept them ignorant.\textsuperscript{88}

\textsuperscript{87}Uchino Shige, "The Poor Housewife," \textit{Fujin Kōron}, August 1, 1947, translated and reprinted in ATIS, Reel 38, Social Series 1714, Item 2. While domineering husbands represented one pillar of family feudalism for Uchino, mothers-in-law were the other. To help women extricate themselves from the fetters of oppression, Uchino also advocated establishing a network of maternity hospitals, day care facilities, and cooperative kitchens. In doing so, she envisioned a major role for the state, the very same institution that had sanctioned the oppressive family structure, in women's emancipation. In making this argument, Uchino tapped into a long-held sentiment of many women that improved daily life could be realized through closer cooperation between women and the state.

\textsuperscript{88}The debate over women's issues and gender roles in the early postwar years remains a poorly-covered topic in the English literature of the occupation era, despite the enormous amount of coverage these issues received in the Japanese press. I would argue the women's subordination within the family symbolized the oppression of all Japanese people prior to defeat, while their legal emancipation in the postwar years represented a step toward new life based on equality and individual rights. Women therefore stood as metaphors for Japan's past and its future. They also epitomized the plight of the Japanese people in the present, for it was primarily women who scrounged for food, who sold the family belongings on the black market, and who managed the family's meagre finances. Further discussion of this topic is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it is one to which I will return in future research as part of an ongoing project to illustrate the diversity of voice and opinion in early postwar Japan. For a contemporary critical assessment on the position of Japanese women due to the oppression on the family structure, see Hani Setsuko, \textit{The Japanese Family System: As seen from the standpoint of Japanese women}, The Japanese Institute of Pacific Studies, 1948.
While women issues represented one component in the deconstruction of the family system as the defining element of the national character, most analyses focussed more generally on the structural relationships within that system. The *oyabun/kobun* relationship, in particular, came under intense scrutiny and criticism for having been the main edifice upholding the entire system.\textsuperscript{89} In economic terms, for example, this relationship was seen as having perpetuated Japan’s “abnormal” development. The report of the Special Survey Committee, discussed earlier, maintained that Japan’s transition from feudalism to capitalism had been “abnormal” (*kikeiteki na*) insofar as its leaders sought to make Japan internationally competitive before solving the fundamental contradiction of erecting industrial capitalism upon a feudalistic agrarian base.\textsuperscript{90}

\textsuperscript{89}Oyabun/kobun literally means parent and child, but can be extended to master/servant, boss/worker, and teacher/student (*sempai/kohai*). Traditionally it is an unequal, vertical relationship in which the subordinate’s loyalty is rewarded by the superior’s benevolence, and one that characterized social relationships in Japan’s early modern period, especially that of lord and vassal. In the latter part of the Meiji period, this relationship received legal and political sanction in the Meiji Constitution whereby all sovereignty was located in the Emperor/father whose benevolence was reciprocated through unquestioning loyalty of the children/subjects (*shimin*).

\textsuperscript{90}Nakamura, (ed) Shiryō, vol. 1, “Nihon keizai saiken no mondai,” p. 156. The report also offered an alternative explanation. As a “late-comer” (*koshin shihonshugi koku*), Japan experienced the coexistence of both capitalism and feudalism which, when coupled with the spread of socialist thought, gave rise to a national socialist-style of state control. The difference in these two interpretations was slight, but reflected the two prevailing Marxist views of Japanese development. On the one hand, the rōnō-ha (labour/farmer faction) maintained that the high levels of finance capital, together with Japan’s imperialistic misadventures, proved that Japan was an advanced capitalistic nation and was therefore ready for a direct transition to socialism. On the other hand, the kōza-ha (lecture faction), adhering closely to the 1927 Comintern thesis, argued that the persistence of “feudal remnants” required a two-stage revolution in which a vanguard party would emerge initially to lead the people to socialism once capitalism had
For example, the forced continuation of the family system was a major factor in determining the pattern of Japanese agriculture and the characteristics of small-scale industries. At the same time, this was accompanied politically by the uncritical, blind submission of the people to the feudalistic ruling class and their lack of self-consciousness as citizens.91

The oppressive landlord/tenant relationship (*kosaku jūatsu*) was replicated in industry where labour was subordinated to capital and where small and medium businesses were dominated by large corporations.92 All of these operated on the *oyabun/kobun* principle which was itself a manifestation of the parent/child relationship that defined the family system.

This was certainly the conclusion of legal scholar Kawashima Takeyoshi.93 In

91 Ibid., p. 156.

92 Ibid., pp. 157-58, 161, 193.

93 Kawashima was a professor of law at Tokyo University and worked as a member of the Committee for Revising the Legal Code under the occupation. Barshay identified Kawashima as one leaders of the early postwar "modernists," (*kindaishugisha*) together with Maruyama Masao, economic historian Otsuka Hisao, literary critic Kuwabata Takeo, and sociologists Fukutake Tadashi and Shimizu Ikutarō. The name "modernist" actually came from the Marxists, the second group identified by historians such as Barshay as being engaged in the debate over subjectivity (*shutaiseiron*). Barshay, *State and Intellectual in Imperial Japan*, pp. 233-37. However, as I have argued in Chapter Three, Tanabe represented a third group, perhaps not as well known or widely read as the other two, but one that was certainly deeply immersed in subjectivity and self-identity. I call this group the idealists (*risōshugisha*) and include such members of the Kyoto University philosophy department as Tanabe's students Takeuchi Yoshinori and Ueda Shizuteru. Sakaguchi and fellow *burai-ha* member Osamu Dazai, as well as Kida Minoru, may well comprise a fourth
1948 he published one of the first “scientific” studies of the family in the postwar years: *Nihon shakai no kazokuteki kōsei* (The Familial Structure of Japanese Society). Kawashima defined prewar Japanese society in terms of a familial principle (*kazokuteki no genri*) and distilled it down to four essential characteristics, all of which encapsulated the public debate over the Japanese national character. First, authoritarian control within the family demanded unconditional obedience. This, in turn, created a weak sense of personal responsibility and a lack of individualistic behaviour (*kojinteki kōdō no ketsujo*), resulting in the suppression of self-reflection or criticism. Finally, linking all these together was the *oyabun/kobun* relationship which promoted exclusionism and fostered antipathy toward external “others.” Kawashima argued that democracy could never take root in Japan as long as these characteristics and group engaged in the subjectivity project. In addition to their scathing critiques of postwar society, however, their engagement was “hands-on” in the sense that they lived their subjectivity through alcohol, drugs, and the transitory pleasures of the “floating world.”

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94 Kawashima Takeyoshi, *Nihon shakai no kazokuteki kōsei*, Iwanami Shoten, 1948, cited in Aoki, *Nihon bunkaron no hen'yō*. Kawashima won the Mainichi Literary Culture Award for his book. Michio Nagai and John W. Bennett suggested that intense interest in the family in the early postwar years was the reason he was so honoured, but they fail to point out that this interest was almost wholly negative. They make no reference to the context of Japan’s defeat as the principal catalyst behind early postwar analyses of the family. Kawashima’s book resonated with many Japanese precisely because it addressed the question, “What is wrong with us?” For a brief analysis in English, see Nagai and Bennett, “A Summary and Analysis of ‘The Familial Structure of Japanese Society’, ” in Bernard S. Silberman (ed), *Japanese Character and Culture: A Book of Selected Readings*, University of Arizona Press, 1962, pp. 101-11.

95 Quoted in Aoki, *Nihon bunkaron no hen'yō*, p. 60.
structures, especially the *oyabun/kobun* relationship, endured. "The present problem of the family system is thus a problem in the 'negation' of non-modern attitudes toward the family."^96^ 

Kawashima identified three “ideal types” of family: the patriarchal family as exemplified by the Confucian family in China; the feudal family of medieval England; and the modern family, as represented in the United States. He believed that the Japanese family was a mix of the first two, the evolution of which dated back to the Edō period.^97^ The Japanese family was grounded on the interaction of *kō* (filial piety) and *on* (reciprocal obligations between individuals) which perpetuate unequal relationships and gave it a particularistic colouring.^98^ More importantly, the Japanese “familial principle was diametrically opposed to the principle of democracy” (*minshūshugi no genri*) which he maintained was based on a profound human love that could unite spiritually the individual, the family

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^96^Quoted in Nagai and Bennett, p. 110.

^97^Ibid., pp. 105-06.

^98^Kawashima actually identified two types of Japanese family: the *samurai* and the *heimin*. In the former, *kō* operated much like it did in the Chinese family, whereas in the latter it was continually mediated by *on*. However, the official version of the family in prewar Japan, as seen in the Legal Code and in *kokutai* ideology, adhered to the absolutist nature of the former.
and society.\textsuperscript{99} Thus, a democratic revolution was in fact a revolution of the inner spirit. Here, Kawashima sounded remarkably like Tanabe when he spoke of nothingness-as-love (\textit{mu-soku-ai}) as the transcendant realm where the negated self is reborn and then returns to this world to live in social solidarity with other selves.\textsuperscript{100} However, Tanabe’s critique, had he chosen to write one, would have centred on the fact that Kawashima’s revolution of the spirit took place entirely in this world which doomed the project from the outset. This kind of thinking Tanabe identified as “culturalism” (\textit{bunkashugi}), a superficial embracing of the freedoms received from without.\textsuperscript{101} Culture is born from freedom, he said, but true freedom lies in the grace of the absolute because it is here that true self-awareness begins.\textsuperscript{102} In this sense, self-negation and rebirth had to precede the production of culture, and then had to continually rejuvenate this product through the ongoing and circular process of \textit{zange}.

\textsuperscript{99}Quoted in Aoki, \textit{Nihon bunkaron no henyõ}, pp. 59, 61. Kawashima believed that the American family was based on unconditional love that was grounded in the free will of the individual.

\textsuperscript{100}Tanabe, “Preface,” p. 4. For a good discussion of this principle, see Hase Shoto, “The Structure of Faith,” in \textit{RPT}, pp. 96-105.

\textsuperscript{101}“Preface,” pp. 15-16.

\textsuperscript{102}Zangedõ, pp. 4, 75-76.
Kawashima’s analysis is significant because it encapsulated, and explained, virtually all of the public criticisms of the prewar Japanese family in scientific terms. Simply put, the Japanese family system was particularistic, irrational, and anti-modern (hikindaiteki), everything that the public deconstruction of the national character decried as having led Japan into defeat. Moreover, by contrasting the Japanese family with the ideal American type based on love and free will, Kawashima also represented a powerful example of the importance of negation in overcoming or discarding the evil past. Once again, America stood as the guide and the model for what the Japanese believed they wanted to become. The people may have been deceived by the gun-kan-zai triad who manipulated the characteristics of the family system to construct a family state (kokka) that encroached on every aspect of the peoples’ lives. However, it was deception made easy by the deeply ingrained, irrational structures and mentalities emanating from the family itself. Here, I will give the last word on this issue to Sakaguchi’s friend and fellow decadent, Dazai Osamu.

Family happiness
Family peace
Life’s highest glory
Bah!\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{103}Dazai Osamu, “Kazoku no kōfuku,” (Family Happiness), Chūō Kōron, August 1948, pp. 31. Dazai’s comments should not be surprising given his own troubled life with romance and family responsibility. He had attempted suicide twice in the prewar years and in between became addicted to pabinal and spent time in a mental hospital. He finally succeeded in escaping from this world on June 13, 1948 went he and his lover drowned themselves in the Tamagawa reservoir. Their bodies were found five days later on June 19th - Dazai’s own birthday.
Sick "Maladjusted People": the Victor’s Discourse

Across the Pacific, amid the heady atmosphere of victory in war, another discourse emerged in tandem with the discourse of defeat, one that also assumed the existence of a Japanese national character. This was an American "victor’s discourse," which viewed Japan’s defeat as a political and moral triumph of democracy over totalitarianism, and as a validation of the universal principles of rationality and science. Like the Japanese version, this discourse began with a simple question: "What is wrong with the Japanese?" In Japan, this question arose from the Japanese peoples’ understandable preoccupation with their own defeat. In the United States, its emergence was equally understandable, arising from Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor and American revulsion toward Japanese atrocities committed during the war. In the process of answering this question, however, the victor’s discourse identified the same traits and structures that the public debate over the Japanese national character had targeted for eradication. Moreover, the two sides reached a remarkably similar conclusion: that the new Japan would require liberal doses of individualism, rationality, and science if it was to become a peace-loving democracy like the United States.\textsuperscript{104}

\textsuperscript{104}Here I am not suggesting that the scholars who analyzed Japanese society believed that Japan should or could become like the United States; rather, I argue that the principles inhering in the American self-image were the very same ones that both Americans and Japanese believed were necessary for Japan’s reconstruction.
The parallel nature of the two discourses is fascinating. The wartime and early postwar writings of American academics remained for the most part ignorant of the Japanese public debates; indeed, virtually none of the major participants spoke or read Japanese, had ever travelled to Japan, or had the opportunity to interview native Japanese people. Instead, they relied on a collection of prewar secondary sources and interviews with Japanese prisoners of war and Japanese-Americans. Similarly, the Japanese people themselves were completely unaware of the writings of the American scholars. Aside from the fact that these English-language works were unavailable in Japanese, the people were simply too preoccupied with their own tragedy. Despite this lack of engagement, however, both discourses began from a common premise, employed the same tools, and reached similar conclusions about the past, present, and future of Japanese society.

Understanding these two discourses as parallel developments demonstrates that

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105 One exception was anthropologist Douglas G. Haring who had lived in Japan as a Baptist missionary from 1917 until 1926 when he was recalled by the mission board to stand trial for doctrinal heresy. After being convicted and dismissed, Haring studied anthropology at Columbia under Franz Boaz, Ruth Benedict, and Leslie Spier. This information comes from Richard Minear, "The Wartime Studies of Japanese National Character," Japan Interpreter, Summer 1980, pp. 36-59.

106 The only exception was Ruth Benedict's Chrysanthemum and the Sword which was translated into Japanese in 1948. For more on the impact of this book on Japanese social scientists, see Aoki, Nihonjin bunkaron no henyô, esp. pp. 30-52.
the Japanese people were not merely following a predefined path carved out for them by their former enemy, but were in fact engaged in a reflexive project of their own creation. It also reveals the powerful sense of righteousness and certainty on the part of American writers for whom Japan's defects reinforced the correctness of their own self image. Given that they highlighted Japanese particularism, both discourses also helped to contribute to the rise in popularity of nihonjinron literature in the later postwar years. As such, the discourse of defeat and the victor's discourse represented two sides of Japan's "era of negative distinctiveness," a "Fukuyama-esque" world in which history had ended with the triumph of liberal capitalist democracy over the dark forces of

I will discuss this in more detail in the epilogue. Here, a brief anecdote will suffice to make my point. Many years ago I had a long discussion about Japanese uniqueness with my tutor and friend, Nishiwaki Naoko. She pointed out to me that foreigners were also part of the uniqueness equation. "For years you people (gaijin) have been coming to Japan and telling us how different we are," she said. "This has reinforced our own self-image as a distinct people."

While there is not space here to discuss the impact of these studies on the later development of American scholarship on Japan, I want to point out that their emphasis on absolute difference foreshadowed later analyses which focused on the miracle of Japan's recovery, the uniqueness of its management and political styles, and the enigma of its social structure. All of these approaches tended to highlight Japanese homogeneity and imitativeness while placing Japan outside of the framework of world historical development. The enduring popularity of Benedict's work today is partial evidence for this. In the foreward to the 1989 edition, for example, American sociologist Ezra Vogel said that "Benedict's efforts to get at Japanese patterns of behavior from a distance may have come closer to identifying some enduring features of these people than many field studies that present a far more nuanced, detailed, and human picture of Japan. The mysteries of the Japanese character have been revealed for those who wish to know, and understanding the Japanese is perhaps as critical now, when Japanese progress is made by troops of suited businessmen, as it was when troops of khaki-clad soldiers were advancing." Ezra Volgel, "Foreward," Chrysanthemum and the Sword, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989, p. xii. Italics mine.
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totalitarianism.\(^{109}\)

Shortly after Japan’s defeat, a group of social scientists gathered at Harvard University to probe into the Japanese psyche for the purpose of determining Japan’s future as a democratic nation. They published their findings in 1946 under the title of *Japan’s Prospect*, edited by anthropologist Douglas Haring.\(^{110}\) This book was one of a number of wartime and early postwar studies that posited the existence of a Japanese national character and then went on to demonstrate the validity of this initial premise by identifying a set of characteristics that defined the Japanese people as a whole. In the introductory chapter, the contributors identified the “Japan problem” as one of excessive cultural and psychological

\(^{109}\)Here, I am referring to Francis Fukuyama’s controversial 1989 book in which he advanced the thesis that the collapse of communism had heralded the “end of history” with the absolute victory of liberal capitalist democracy. Fukuyama did not mean that human evolution itself had ended; only that its future unfolding would take place within the liberal capitalist framework. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man Standing*, Princeton University Press, 1989.

\(^{110}\)Contributors to the volume included Edward A. Ackerman, William Henry Chamberlain, Merle Fainsod, Carl J. Friedrich, G. Nye Steiger, Frederick Watkins, Seiyei Wakukawa, and the noted sociologist Talcott Parsons. *Japan’s Prospect*, Harvard University Press, 1946. Although the men who collaborated on this project did help to educate the first wave of occupationaries (they dedicated the book to them), it is still difficult to gauge the impact this work had on occupation attitudes or policy. I have no direct evidence that this work was read and heeded by policy makers, nor have I been able to calculate the number of copies sold and to whom. Nonetheless, given the stature of the scholars involved and given that the book was written with specific reference to the occupation, it is reasonable to assume that the influence of these men was not inconsiderable. At the very least, it is clear that their conclusions regarding what needed to be done in Japan paralleled the ideas of MacArthur, Joseph Grew, and the “Japan Crowd.” For a more detailed discussion of these men, with particular reference to the Emperor, see Chapter Six.
homogeneity due to "inhibiting power of the family system."\textsuperscript{111} This power was manifest throughout Japanese society, but the supreme examples were the zaibatsu. They were described as a group of "feudal" duchies, the most powerful of which was the Imperial Household itself.\textsuperscript{112}

The characteristic of homogeneity and the feudal familialism of the zaibatsu had fostered the idea that the Japanese were superior to other people while, at the same time, rendering the Japanese personality abnormal due to severe emotional stress caused by enforced conformity.

The anomalous combination of sensitive intelligence and sadistic brutality may be understood if the individual Japanese is regarded as emotionally repressed and at war within himself. Insecure persons are both sensitive and cruel. The maladjusted, inwardly tortured individual feels that the world is hostile. Inner conflict heightens his sensitivity to anything that pertains to his ego. His responses are capricious because he acts in terms of his concealed conflict, not in terms of the objective situation. He is secretive, even against is obvious interest, because he fears that his fears will come to light. Such conflict sometimes prods a man into restlessness that promotes achievement.

Maladjusted people have made history - not always pleasant history -

\textsuperscript{111}"Introductory: Japanese Situations as Criteria of Practical Policy," pp. 3-23. In a note to the title of this chapter, the editor commented that, "All contributors - excepting Messrs. Chamberlain and Wakukawa, who were absent from Cambridge - have agreed to this chapter as a joint statement of major problems." Ibid., p. 3. I have not been able to ascertain whether the absence of these two men was directly connected to any disagreement over the stated purpose of the introduction.

\textsuperscript{112}Ibid., pp. 10-11.
but they often start something.\textsuperscript{113}

With this single statement, the book’s contributors identified the principal effect of feudalistic domination as well as outlining the central problem facing American policy makers in Japan’s reconstruction. Recognizing that the “maladjusted” Japanese were the product, “from earliest times,” of repressive social indoctrination and enculturation, the study concluded that “no fundamental transformation of Japanese society is possible unless the family system and the training of infants can be changed completely.”\textsuperscript{114} Here we see the remarkable resonance between this assessment and that of the participants of the Japanese public debate. For both sides, democracy could not flourish without a radical transformation of the family system.

The connection between childhood education and emotional repression was highlighted by other scholars who, like the Harvard group, not only began from the premise that the Japanese were abnormal but also accepted all the apparent paradoxes derived from this premise. Geoffery Gorer, a British psychologist working at Yale University, was one of the first to develop this link in his 1943 study \textit{Themes in Japanese Culture}. Specifically, Gorer sought to provide a

\textsuperscript{113}\textit{iibid.}, pp. 16-17.

\textsuperscript{114}\textit{iibid.}, pp. 17-18.
scientific explanation for both Japan's aggressive war and the brutal, sadistic behaviour of Japanese soldiers. In analyzing the former, he identified a Japanese penchant for "subjugating the feminine" which he claimed was at once "loved, ill-treated and despised." Japan's war against the United States and England could therefore be understood as an attack on "...the democracies [that] still held their feminine role." As for the latter, Japanese brutality, Gorer attributed this to emotionally injurious child-rearing practices and, in particular, to an excessive emphasis on sphincter control during toilet training. Resentment towards one's parents, stemming from the latter's obsession with cleanliness and "right-time-right-place" bowel movements was then transformed into vicious, sadistic behaviour on the battlefield.

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117 Ibid., p. 320. Dower argues that Gorer's piece was the "Single most influential academic analysis" of the war. Dower, War Without Mercy, p. 124. His work also made a substantial impact on American wartime popular culture, as evidenced by Time magazine's August 7, 1944 article "Why are Japs Japs?" which popularized and disseminated the results of his earlier research.
In 1945 Dr. Judith Silberfenning drew on and extended Gorer's analysis, arguing that "overvaluation of the body and the consequent overvaluation of the phallus finds an universal expression in the overvaluation of the race."\textsuperscript{118} In Silberfenning's hands, Japan was a nation that saw itself as divine but, at the same time, was acutely aware of the jealousy this engendered among foreign countries.\textsuperscript{119} Like the collaborators of Japan's Prospect, Silberfenning and Gorer identified abnormal Japanese behaviour as the product of repressive child-rearing practices within the family structure; thereby, lending more credence to the early postwar calls for structural change in Japanese society.

Perhaps the best known and certainly the most enduring work in the national character genre is Ruth Benedict's The Chrysanthemum and the Sword, written in 1944 while she worked at the Office of War Information, and then published in book form in 1946.\textsuperscript{120} Benedict applied her considerable training as an


\textsuperscript{119}\textit{Tōjō Hideki argued along similar lines, minus the Freudian claptrap, during the war crimes trials, maintaining the Japan had fought a defensive war against ABCD encirclement.}

\textsuperscript{120}\textit{Ruth Benedict, The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1946. All citations of this work, however, come from the 1989 Houghton Mifflin reprint. Benedict was a student of Margaret Mead and was best known for her 1934 work \textit{Patterns of Culture}. In 1940 she also published the highly acclaimed \textit{Race: Science and Politics}. In 1943 she co-authored a pamphlet, \textit{The Races of Mankind}, which was subsequently}
anthropologist and as a proponent of cultural relativity in an attempt to explain
how the Japanese saw themselves.

We had to put aside for the moment the premises on which we act as Americans and to keep ourselves as far as possible from leaping to the easy conclusion that what we would do in a given situation was what they would do... The question was how the Japan would behave, not how we would behave if we were in their place.121

To her credit, Benedict was not wedded to any specific theory, be it Freudian psychology, Gestalt, or contemporary child-development theory. Nor did she find incompatible the idea that a "brotherhood of man" could coexist in a world of vast cultural differences. She believed that "differences should exist" and should be respected.122 Indeed, implicitly describing herself as one of the "tough-minded," Benedict dedicated herself to a "world made safe for differences..."123 Nonetheless, in the introductory chapter to her study, Benedict revealed the same inclination to accept Japanese society in all its paradoxical splendor as did Gorer, Haring, and the collaborators on Japan's Prospect.

banned by the United States Army and the USO for allegedly employing communist propaganda techniques. This latter information comes from John Dower, War Without Mercy, p. 120. For further biographical information on Benedict see Minear, "The Wartime Studies of the Japanese National Character," pp. 39, 43-58. For a good assessment of her skills and methodological approach by a colleague, see Maragaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, Columbia University Press, 1974. See also Mead's "Preface" in the 1958 Houghton Mifflin edition of Patterns of Culture, pp. vii-x.

121Benedict, The Chysanthemum and the Sword, pp. 4-5.

122Ibid., p. 15.

The Japanese are, to the highest degree, both aggressive and unaggressive, both militaristic and aesthetic, both insolent and polite, rigid and adaptable, submissive and resentful of being pushed around, loyal and treacherous, brave and timid, conservative and hospitable to new ways. They are terribly concerned about what other people will think of their behavior, and they are also overcome by guilt when other people know nothing of their misstep. Their soldiers are disciplined to the hilt but are also insubordinate.\textsuperscript{124}

Benedict had culled these dichotomous types from prewar English-language literature on Japan and, without ever questioning the validity or methodological soundness of her sources, she accepted these impressionistic images at face value and then went on to explain why the Japanese were exactly as the books described them.\textsuperscript{125} Although Benedict did not condescend to describe the Japanese people as sick or maladjusted, her acceptance of the paradoxical nature of the Japanese character resembled closely the pathological assessments of other “experts.” The Japanese may not have been maladjusted for Benedict as they were for Gorer, Haring and others, but, in her hands, they were certainly not normal either; they had “sinned against an international code of ‘live and let live’.”\textsuperscript{126}

\textsuperscript{124}ibid., pp. 2-3.

\textsuperscript{125}Benedict utilized a variety of well-known secondary sources including George Sansom, E. H. Norman, Etsu Sugimoto, and Nitobe Inazo. However, she frequently spoke in such generalities as “Americans will tell you...” or “Japanese often say that...,” a decidedly subjective and uncritical approach to her subject.

\textsuperscript{126}ibid., p. 21.
The conclusions of these scholars were startlingly similar to those reached by many Japanese participants in the deconstruction of their own national character. Without any engagement with or prompting by these writers, the Japanese people also believed that the national character did indeed exist and that the structures and traits of this character had led Japan into war and defeat. While the Japanese debate did not dwell on emotional repression as a psychological cause of aggression and brutality, it did regard feudalistic structures like the family system as socio-politically repressive in the sense that they had retarded individual expression and had bred docility and imitativeness. In the early postwar Japanese debate over war responsibility, militaristic repression and the subjugation of the individual, all wrapped in the mantle of irrationality, became the paramount cause of the peoples' descent into the "dark valley." In this sense, the Japanese people were double victims: of their "reckless leaders" who had deceived and misled them; and of the repressive structures of Japanese society which had been devised and maintained by those same leaders.

Another important conjecture between the discourses of the defeated and the victors was the emphasis on Japanese homogeneity. This was of course not simply a product of the war years. Just as the racial hatred unleashed by Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor traced its roots to early Japanese/American contact in the nineteenth century, so too did the belief in Japanese homogeneity stem from
foreign writings on Japan during the same period.\footnote{Prior to the war a large body of literature about Japan existed which tended to highlight the essential sameness of the Japanese people. Not all of it represented Japan in a negative light but much of it did portray Japan in monolithic terms. For a sampling of these prewar writings see, Robert A. Rosenstone, “Learning from those ‘Imitative’ Japanese: Another Side of the American Experience in the Mikado’s Empire,” \textit{American Historical Review}, vol. xxxix, no. 3 (May 1980), pp. 572-595; and Ian Littlewood, \textit{The Idea of Japan}. Reinforcing these images were the openly racist attitudes of white North Americans toward Japanese and Chinese immigration since the late nineteenth century. See, for example, Ken Adachi, \textit{The Enemy that Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians}, Toronto, 1976; Peter Ward, \textit{White Canada Forever}, McGill-Queen’s, 1978; Edgar Wickberg (ed) \textit{From China to Canada: A History of the Chinese Communities in Canada}, Toronto, 1982; and Roger Daniels, \textit{Concentration Camps USA: Japanese-Americans and World War II}, Holt, Reinhart & Winston, 1971.} In war and occupation, however, this view, based largely on the impressionistic writings of prewar travellers, missionaries, and businessmen, was legitimized by national character studies which incorporated uncritically the premises of these earlier writings into their own allegedly objective methodological framework. The contributors to \textit{Japan’s Prospect} made this explicit by identifying psychological homogeneity as \"[a]nother subborn fact that set limits to [United Nations] policy.\"\footnote{“Introductory,” p. 6. The introduction frequently referred to the United Nations as if this was the agency charged with the task of reforming Japan. Despite this early postwar linguistic “political correctness,” however, the authors’ recognition that American interests were paramount is revealed clearly in the following statement at the end of the chapter: “America needs friends who understand her way of life, who hate war and love peace. Those friends will not appear spontaneously. \textit{They must be created} from the raw material of crumbling social orders in Asia, in Oceania, in Europe.” Ibid., pp. 22-23. Italics mine.} Although Benedict did not deal so openly with the issue of homogeneity, her book is filled with references to the Japanese as a single unit of analysis, particularly in the sections dealing with child-rearing-practices and reciprocal relations of obligation.
(on) and duty (gimu). The ultimate expression of Japanese homogeneity, however, came from American psychologist James Clark Moloney who argued that Japan was "an animate entity" which could be "conceptualized as an individual," in particular, "an Occidental individual."  

That Japanese society could be profitably viewed as unique, homogeneous, and maladjusted was largely a function of the United States being at war with an evil, enemy "other," a war that John Dower has persuasively argued was "a race war... fueled by racial pride, arrogance, and rage on many sides." The "day of infamy" at Pearl Harbor unleashed a propaganda campaign dehumanizing the Japanese and depicting them as "emotionally disturbed...monkeymen" or "superbogeymen of the jungle." Moreover, all Americans were aware of the litany of Japanese atrocities - from the execution of Doolittle raiders to the Bataan Death March - and the suicidal actions of jungle fighters and kamikaze pilots.

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129 A fascinating aspect of Benedict’s book is that she actually created two monoliths, one Japanese and the other American. Her frequent comparisons of Japan with the United States illustrates the degree to which she was wedded to the idea of cultural totality. See, in particular, pp. 95-98, 181-198.


131 Dower, War Without Mercy, p. 4.

132 These phrase come from Ibid., p. 112.
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This is not to say that the national character scholars were mere victims of their government’s propaganda, but Japan’s prosecution of the war did prompt many to ask the question - reasonable for the times - “What is wrong with the Japanese?” With this hypothesis in hand, it was a relatively simple task to transform the prewar image of the Japanese as childish, blindly obedient, and slavish borrowers into an emotionally disturbed, homogeneous monolith. In doing so, these writers appear, in retrospect, to have been more convinced by the Japanese government’s wartime propaganda of “one hundred million hearts beating as one” and “one hundred million as a shattered jewel” than were the Japanese themselves.

As a “Mirror for Americans,” Japan validated the rectitude of the American cause in war and occupation, creating a black and white world in which Japan as the militaristic aggressor reinforced the American self-image of a peace-loving,

133The phrase “Mirror for Americans” is taken from the title of American journalist Helen Mears’ book, Mirror for Americans: Japan, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948. I use it, however, in an ironic sense since for Mears the title was intended to highlight the fact that American policy in Japan during the occupation was a direct repudiation of the ideals upon which American society was based and upon which the war had been fought. Mears was one of the few dissenting voices toward American foreign policy in the early postwar years. She obtained a contract and funding to write the book from Houghton Mifflin on the strength of the acclaim for her 1935 travelogue, Year of the Wild Boar. MacArthur forbade distribution of Mirror for Americans in Japan, and Mears herself became something of a pariah in the publishing world after this time for her critical and uncompromising stand against the American government. That few people know of Mears and her writings on Japan is sad testimony to the effectiveness with which she was made an outcaste in her own country. For further biographical information on Mears, see Richard Minear, “Helen Mears, Asia, and American Asianists,” Occasional Papers Series no. 7, Asian Studies Committee, International Area Studies Program, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, April 1981.
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democratic nation. This, in turn, reflected what Japan needed to become under American tutelage in the new postwar world order. The work of these scholars formed an important part of the victor’s discourse, reconstructing its enemy “other” as a sick man whose repression and emotional torment produced fear and rage which manifested itself in “destructiveness or destructive intent.”

The persuasiveness of this discourse lay not only in its ability to highlight American righteousness but also in the fact that it explained the roots of Japanese aggression and the origins of the Pacific War. Equally important, it also validated the scientific rationality of national character studies themselves. Beginning from the premise that there was something wrong with the Japanese, these studies assumed the fundamental irrationality of the Japanese national character. This was then “proved” through the utilization of objective and rational principles.

For their part, the Japanese people did not dwell specifically on their own homogeneity, although there were frequent self-disparaging references to

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134 This phrase comes from Moloney, “Selections from Understanding the Japanese Mind,” p. 360. Moloney was an American psychologist who, like Gorer, applied the principles of Freudian analysis to the Japanese nation as a whole. Much of his analysis was based on the writings of Japanese psychologists whose own efforts to apply Freudian principles to Japan predated Moloney’s efforts. Incredibly, while utilizing their work for similar purposes, Moloney dismissed the conclusions of his Japanese counterparts as super abstractions that extended “beyond the tangible limits of reality.” Ibid., p. 384. Given Moloney’s own project, the irony of his criticism was undoubtedly lost on him at the time.
monkeys and other animals, as we have seen in the last chapter. Certainly, the collective stupidity highlighted by the kyōdō-ron adherents implied a oneness of mind (or mindlessness, depending on how one viewed it) that paralleled the homogeneity thesis of American writers. Nonetheless, a sense of homeogeneity was expressed in the new postwar sense of Japanese particularism that emerged from the discourse of defeat. This revealed the poverty behind the idea of Japan’s special status in the world and invalidated the belief in a “holy war” (seisen). The collective experience of defeat became a powerful force uniting many of the yake ato jidai, despite the widespread appeal of universal principles in the early postwar years. Through the deconstruction of the Japanese national character, the collection of traits explaining Japan’s militaristic folly further reinforced the sense of Japan’s “negative distinctiveness” (hiteiteki tokushu).

For the American writers, the distorted and pathological nature of Japanese society was itself evidence of Japanese distinctiveness. Here lay the roots of militarism and naked aggression, which had isolated Japan from the international community of peace-loving nations and removed it (temporarily) from the allegedly universal historical narrative of captialist and democratic progress. Defeat and occupation revealed this to be an absolute truth. It also revealed for many that the narrative of democratic progress was the unquestioned one true way. America had defeated Japan; America now occupied
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Japan; ergo, America became the model for Japan's reconstruction while the occupation became the very "visible hand" of progressive change.

War, defeat, and occupation created the necessary context for the development of national character studies, but the objective, scientific nature of the studies themselves was what made them so persuasively powerful. They provided a rational foundation for understanding Japanese behaviour, from which the cause of militarism and war could be deduced and with which the necessary remedies for this behaviour could be prescribed. Here, again, a parallel emerges between these studies and the deconstruction of the Japanese national character. Both recognized the fundamentally irrational nature of Japanese society which was itself the motive force behind the myriad calls for more rationality and science in the early postwar years. In retrospect, these separate attempts to posit and then deconstruct a Japanese national character resemble two parties looking through opposite sides of a one-way circus mirror. The Japanese gazed into the mirror and saw only a distorted view of themselves, largely unaware that the Americans, peering through the other side of the mirror, saw the same twisted image. It is in this sense that Edwin O. Reischauer's characterization of Japan as a "laboratory" is most apt, in the sense that a laboratory is the temple of science

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and a bastion of rationality. The occupationaires were the "scientists" engaged in a massive experiment of social engineering. The Japanese people were the "objects of study" whose self-reflection on their own prewar irrationality reinforced the validity of American actions and convinced many that constructing a new Japanese identity was possible by utilizing the same tools and language that the American were employing in their own great experiment.

135Edwin O. Reischauer, Japan Past and Present, Alfred A. Knopf, 1960, p. 201. Reischauer maintained that Japan was a laboratory because "never before had one advanced nation attempted to reform, from within, the supposed faults of another advanced nation." Ibid., p. 201. Here, I use the word in a more ironic sense to illustrate the manner in which the language of rationality and science became the mantra of reconstruction for both Americans and Japanese.
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Chapter Six: The Emperor’s New Clothes

Beiseiged from so many sides in the early postwar years, the Japanese national character, like Japan’s cities which were subjected to continuous aerial bombardment during the war, came to resemble a charred landscape of its former self. The discourse of defeat and the victor’s discourse led the onslaught; utilizing rational, scientific methods of analysis, the victor’s discourse exposed the defects of Japanese society, chief among them was its irrational and particularistic nature. The discourse of defeat, while employing the same language of rationality and science in its own self-critique, was an understandably more emotional response in that its participants were the defeated themselves. Yet, in the end they too saw their world as a binary construction with Japanese irrationality darkly opposed to American/Western rationality.

Defeat, like the Tao in Chuang-tzu’s philosophy, was the great leveller in this process, with division and destruction acting as its creative forces.¹ On the

¹Chuang-tzu is actually the name of a written work attributed to Chuang Chou (369-286 BC) whose existence, like that of his predecessor Lao-tzu, is uncertain. The work itself is one of three texts, the other two being Tao te ching and Lieh-tzu, which formed the core of Taoist philosophy. During the late-Chou period (7th to 4th centuries BC), Taoism offered an alternative means of individual self-expression in contrast to rigid Confucian morality which placed severe limits on human freedom and, concomitantly, high value on social conformity. Herein lies its relevance to early postwar Japan when similar forces were at work. My understanding of Taoist philosophy comes from Lin Yutang, The Wisdom of India and China, Modern Library, 1955; Lin
Japanese side, defeat initiated a process of remorse and repentance.\(^2\) This demanded atonement which was expressed through the debate over war responsibility and the subsequent deconstruction of the national character. Such a process of self-loathing, akin to Tanabe’s negation of the self, was an act of creative destruction undertaken, however, not with the spiritual principles of action-faith-witness (gyō-shin-shō), but with the tools of rationality (gōri) and science (kagaku). Defeat led many Japanese to believe that their nation’s fundamental problem was one of irrationality (fugōri). Herein lay the relevance of the victor’s discourse and the importance of the physical presence of the occupation as a model of new life. Applying the tools of rationality and science not only exposed the defects of the national character, and therefore of the Japanese past itself, but also provided the means with which a new future could be built. As one letter to the editor said at the end of 1945, Japanese life was “replete with falsehoods,” chief among them was the fundamental irrationality


\(^2\)Here, I am not suggesting that early postwar Japan was only about remorse and atonement. It was clearly also about liberation and exhilaration. However, the language of the debate over war responsibility and the subsequent deconstruction of the Japanese national character focussed exclusively on remorse and atonement as the first steps in negating past behaviour and constructing a new Japanese self-image.
of the Japanese people.\(^3\)

The characterizations of the Japanese people as submissive, servile, imitative, and, above all, irrational were the natural outcome of a fallen peoples' self-reflection. Such tortuous self-examinations and the process of deconstruction that followed also brought into sharp relief one of the central problems in Japan's eighty-year engagement with modernity, epitomized by the famous Meiji era slogan *wakon/yōsai* (Japanese spirit/Western learning). Since Japan's emergence as a modern state in the late nineteenth century, *wakon/yōsai* had represented an ideal vision of modernity. It became the mantra of the new Meiji government to explain the process by which feudal Japan could be transformed into a modern nation state and, thus, achieve the ideal of another powerful Meiji slogan, *fūkoku/kyōhei* (rich country/strong army). According to this formula, the new nation would be constructed by grafting the best of European science, technology, and political forms onto an indigenous foundation of traditional Japanese ethics, spirit, and aesthetics. The resulting hybrid was to be a new, modern nation-state able to take its rightful place alongside the other Great Powers of the world, but one that remained, at its core, Japanese.

\(^3\) *Asahi Shimbun*, December 17, 1945.
In the 1930s and 1940s that vision had been all but obliterated in law and propaganda, leaving little but a xenophobic and particularistic *wakon* in its wake. While Japan’s military and civilian leaders enthusiastically utilized science and technology to control productive forces and mobilize the nation for war, they rejected all foreign thoughts and ideologies as “dangerous,” appealing instead to the uniqueness of an allegedly timeless Japanese spirit (*yamato damashii*). Defeat ended this experiment and, in the ensuing chaos, the Japanese people rejected the ideals of their leaders and embraced *yōsai* with the same fervour that the wartime government had promoted *wakon*.4

There was, however, one individual who continued to embody the endurance of Japanese spirit despite the widespread repudiation of prewar and wartime Japanese values. This was, of course, the Emperor himself. The Emperor’s role in war and defeat as well as his disposition in the new postwar Japan became the subject of much controversy following Japan’s surrender. For some, he was the benevolent ruler who “ended” the war in order to save his people; for others, he and the system that bore his name (*tennō-sei*) epitomized Japan’s feudal and despotic past which, as we saw in the previous chapter, formed the very core of

4The emphasis on Japanese spirit and the calls for a Shōwa Restoration are usually associated with the *Kōdō-ha* (Imperial Way Faction) which was largely discredited after the 2/26 Incident in 1936. However, much of the government’s propaganda about the Japanese spirit was articulated after this event when the *Tōsei-ha* (Control Faction) was in power. Clearly, this group co-opted the rhetoric of the *Kōdō-ha* and utilized it for its own purposes.
Japanese self-loathing. In the end, however, the Emperor re-emerged phoenix-like from the ashes of defeat, clothed as a man of peace and science, to become the symbol of reconstruction (fukkō no shōchō) and the archetype for the new postwar Japanese who had overcome their past (kako o oikoshite shimatta) and moved forward into a new democratic world.

To illustrate the transformative power of rationality and science in the early postwar years I will examine the manner in which the Emperor himself was resurrected as the quintessential “postwar new man” (sengo shinjin): tracing his reincarnation from his end of war message and his “Declaration of Humanity” speech to his absolution from war responsibility and war crimes and his enshrinement in the new constitution as the “symbol of the State and of the unity of the people.”5 This process was abetted by the Imperial tour, beginning in February 1947, during which the Emperor in his “new clothes” traversed the length and breath of the nation, exhorting the people to once again sacrifice collectively for the sake of Japan’s reconstruction.

5The new postwar constitution was promulgated on November 3, 1946 and went into effect on May 3rd the following year. Article One specifically concerned the Emperor and reads in full: “The Emperor shall be the symbol of the the State and of the unity of the people, deriving his power from the will of the people, in whom resides sovereign power.” For a full English reprint of the constitution, see David John Lu, Sources of Japanese History: Volume Two, pp. 193-97.
I have already discussed the importance of the United States as the model for Japan’s resurrection through rationality and science and as the significant "other" to which the Japanese people compared themselves and their society. In this chapter, I want to link more specifically the American role in the war responsibility debate and the deconstruction of the national character by examining the impact of the occupation in the context of the war crimes trial and the disposition of the Emperor. It is here that I believe we can find the most important legacy of this unprecedented "experiment." In tandem with a discussion of these processes, I will examine Japanese attitudes toward the Emperor in the context of both the war responsibility debate and the deconstruction of the national character. The reconstruction of the Emperor is central to understanding the legacy of the occupation and the Japanese peoples' attempt to construct a new postwar identity. As a symbol uniting early postwar society, the Emperor stands as a bridge between Japan’s past and its future and, as an object of occupation policy, he represents a crucial link in the enforcement of that policy and the unresolved debates over Japanese selfhood.
American Pre-Surrender Planning and the Emperor

The story of the Emperor's role in war and defeat actually began during the war with American pre-surrender planning for the occupation and the attempts of Japanese officials to ensure the preservation of the Imperial House. As such, these separate efforts paralleled each other in a manner similar to the American scholars' analyses of Japanese society and the Japanese peoples' own deconstruction of their national character.

The Potsdam Declaration, signed and issued on July 26, 1945 by President Truman and Prime Minister Clement Attlee, formalized the policy of unconditional surrender (mujōkan kōfuku) which the American government had zealously pursued since at least 1943. It also informed the Japanese

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^Despite a general consensus among Americans that Japan was an evil enemy, there were dissenting voices regarding the government's prosecution of Japan's defeat. American socialist Norman Thomas, for example, called unconditional surrender an "incredibly stupid slogan." Quoted in Sherry, The Rise of American Air Power, pp. 263-64.

The policy of unconditional surrender was the product of the January 1943 Casablanca Conference between President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill. It was formulated partly to reassure Stalin that they had no interest in negotiating a separate peace with Hitler and that a second European front would be launched in the near future. More importantly, unconditional surrender was designed to avoid a repetition of post-World War One German claims that the Allies had not honoured their committment to Germany's surrender in the context of the Fourteen Points. While none of these reasons related specifically to Japan, there is no question that following Pearl Harbor the Americans were committed to nothing less than the complete and unconditional destruction of Japan's military machine. Information on the Casablanca Conference comes from A. W. DePorte, Europe Between the Superpowers: The Enduring Balance, Yale University Press, 1979,
government of the impending occupation and of Japan’s demilitarization and democratization which were to be its chief concerns.\(^8\) Despite the fact that most American policy makers wanted to retain the Emperor and act through the existing Japanese governmental structure, the declaration made no mention of the Emperor, stating only that the occupation would end when its “objectives have been accomplished and there has been established in accordance with the freely expressed will of the Japanese people a peacefully inclined and responsible government.”\(^9\)

As early as 1943, however, former Ambassador to Japan Joseph Grew reversed his annihilation rhetoric and began arguing that the Emperor would be an “asset,

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\(^8\)The declaration was actually a product of the three-power conference held at Potsdam, Germany, between the United States, Britain, and the National Government of China. However, China was clearly the subordinate partner at the conference, as indicated by the wording of the decalration itself which was “Signed... and Issued by” Harry Truman and Clement Attlee but only “Concurred in by” Jiang Jieshi.

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not a liability," in American attempts to reform and reconstruct Japan.\textsuperscript{10} He maintained that American-style democracy was not suitable to Japan because it was essentially a foreign imposition. He suggested, however, that the Emperor could be understood as a kind of "queen bee" (jodbachi no yô ni) who could ensure the stability of postwar Japan, and from which an indigenous form of democracy could be derived.\textsuperscript{11}

His view did not reflect American public opinion and was certainly not shared by Stanley Hornbeck and the so-called "China Crowd" who held sway in the State Department at the time.\textsuperscript{12} Hornbeck believed that China under Jiang Jieshi's Guomindang government would emerge as the major power in the Pacific following Japan's defeat and was therefore utterly opposed to any kind of soft peace with Japan.\textsuperscript{13} A shake-up in the State Department and the removal of

\textsuperscript{10}This statement comes from a Department of State Bulletin, January 1, 1943, reprinted in Schonberger, Aftermath of War, p. 22.

\textsuperscript{11}The "queen bee" metaphor comes from Takeda Kiyoko, Tennôkan no sokoku (Competing Views of the Emperor). Iwanami Shoten, 1978. Quoted in Otabe, "Shôwa tennô," p. 49.

\textsuperscript{12}Otabe says that as early as November 1942 the Emperor's fate was being discussed by the "China Crowd" men, especially Johns Hopkins professor Owen Lattimore who thoroughly opposed Grew's position. "Shôwa tennô," pp. 48-49.

\textsuperscript{13}Hornbeck was convinced that Guomindang China, with American aid and influence, could become an independent nation and an equal to the other great powers. Not all members of the "China Crowd" held this opinion however; some junior members recognized correctly the endemic
Hornbeck as director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs (FE) in early 1944 provided Grew the opportunity to push harder for the Emperor's postwar retention. As the newly-appointed director of the FE, Grew was influential in having the Post-War Programs Committee (PWC) adopt Hugh Borton's memorandum recommending the Emperor's retention, barring a movement from the Japanese people to have the imperial institution abolished. This was by no means the final word on the Emperor, but it did foreshadow the government's eventual decision to retain the Emperor during the occupation. Grew's appointment as Undersecretary of State in November 1944 further strengthened his position as an advocate of the Emperor's retention and, together with other members of the "Japan Crowd" like Eugene Dooman and Robert Feary, as well as former president Herbert Hoover, Grew continued to advocate the political necessity of the Emperor to the upcoming occupation.

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14 Ibid., pp. 24-28. The PWC was the most important body of the State Department in terms of post-surrender planning toward Japan. Borton and Earl Dickover, former first secretary under Grew in Tokyo, prepared papers with opposing viewpoints for the Inter-Divisional Committee on the Far East (IDACFE) and then submitted them for consideration by the PWC. That body adopted Borton's position by a twelve to one vote.

15 Grew was first appointed Undersecretary to Edward Stettinus, following Cordell Hull's resignation, and then under James Byrnes who became Secretary of State on July 3, 1945. Dooman had been Grew's chief aide in Tokyo and Feary had been his private secretary. In addition to opposition by the "China Crowd," others such as T. A. Bission also rejected Grew's position, fearing that even the so-called "liberal elements" in Japan would resist American occupation reforms.
On the Japanese side, the so-called “liberal elements,” which Grew was arguing could be a force for peace on American terms, had been pursuing a similar line since 1942. Convinced by this time of Japan’s defeat, these men, centring around Yoshida Shigeru’s YOHANSEN group, maintained that the greatest threat to the Imperial House and to the kokutai was not defeat at the hands of the Americans but rather a communist revolution from within. Throughout the last years of the war this group attempted to convince the Emperor that, since the war was lost, the only way to avoid a communist revolution lay in accepting unconditional surrender. This position was articulated most clearly in the famous “Konoe Memorial” delivered in the presence of the Emperor on February 4, 1945. Konoe began:

16 The term “liberal elements” is highly misleading, suggesting as it does some kind of enlightened commitment to democratic ideals. In truth, the “liberal elements” to which Grew referred were so only insofar as they opposed the radical right-wing militarists and, in particular, the Tōsei-ha or Control Faction centring around then Prime Minister Tōjō Hideki. Dower points out that Grew’s ideas were heavily influenced by men like Yoshida Shigeru and Count Makino while he was in Japan. They had planted the seeds of the “pendulum theory” of Japanese development whereby periods of intense nationalism alternated with cycles of international cooperation. In fact, these men came to represent the “liberal” swing of the pendulum which Grew openly supported later in the war. Dower, Empire and Aftermath, pp. 108-111.

17 YOHANSEN is an abbreviation of Yoshida Hansen, referring to the group of men around Yoshida who opposed the war with the United States and Britain. According to Dower, the central players in this group were Yoshida, journalist Iwabuchi Tatsuo, former Finance Ministry bureaucrat Ueda Shunkichi, former prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro, Lieutenant General (reserve) Obata Toshishirō, and General (reserve) Mazaki Jinzaburō. These last two men had been placed on reserve in the wake of the February 26, 1936 attempted coup by the Kōdō-ha (Imperial Way Faction), the failure of which paved the way for the ascendency of the Tōsei-ha to which YOHANSEN was opposed. For a complete list of all YOHANSEN members and for an exhaustive account of its attempt to sway the Emperor to their side, see Dower, Empire and Aftermath, pp. 227-273.
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Regrettably, I think that defeat is inevitable. What I shall say is based on this assumption. Defeat will be a blemish on our kokutai, but public opinion in Great Britian and the United States up to now has not gone so far as [to advocate] change in this kokutai (of course there are extremist opinions among some, and it is difficult to guage what sort of change may take place in the future). Thus, if it were only a matter of defeat, I think it would not be necessary to be so concerned about the kokutai. More than defeat itself, what we must be most concerned about from the standpoint of preserving the kokutai is the communist revolution which may accompany defeat.\[18\]

In the discussion with the Emperor that followed, Konoe again made his plea for unconditional surrender as the lesser of two evils:

I think there is no alternative to making peace with the United States. Even if we surrender unconditionally, I feel that in America’s case she would not go so far as to reform Japan’s kokutai or abolish the imperial house. Japan’s territory might decrease to half of what it is at present, but even so, if we can extricate the people from the miserable ravages of war, perserve the kokutai, and plan for the security of the Imperial House, then we should not avoid unconditional surrender.\[19\]

Konoe was right. American unconditional surrender policy proved to be more conditional than originally conceived and, in the end, the Emperor remained,

\[18\]Ibid., p. 260. Okubo Genji recorded this passage in his 1948 English-language work on the Emperor but used the phrase “Emperor system” in place of kokutai. Okubo Genji, The Problems of the Emperor System in Postwar Japan, p. 5. For a complete reprint of the Konoe Memorial, see Dower, Empire and Aftermath, pp. 260-64; see also Lu, Sources of Japanese History: Volume Two, pp. 169-72. For the Japanese version, see Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Shisena shiroku (Records on Ending the War), Shimbun Gekkansha, 1952, pp. 195-98.

\[19\]Dower, Empire and Aftermath, p. 265.
albeit stripped of sovereignty and political power.\textsuperscript{20} Here, again, we see the
development of two parallel narratives, differing in origin and purpose but alike
in conclusion.\textsuperscript{21} For the American government, the Emperor was essential for
the smooth functioning of the occupation. For the Japanese government, his
preservation and that of the \textit{kokutai} was central to maintaining the Japanese
state itself. However, political necessity and expediency, rather than any thought
of “saving the people” (\textit{saimin}) were the key factors in this decision. Despite
Konoe’s professed desire to “extricate the people from the miserable ravages of
war,” preserving the \textit{kokutai} was clearly paramount. Evidence for this can be
found in the actions of the Higashikuni and Shidehara cabinets, in particular,
their calls for collective repentance for defeat in the name of the Emperor
(\textit{ichioku sozange}).

Indeed, it is one of the tragic ironies of the Pacific War that the United States
failed to specify to the Japanese government exactly what would happen to the

\textsuperscript{20}The concept of unconditional surrender remains a controversial issue in both Japan and
the United States. Tsurumi Shunsuke argues that because the Potsdam Declaration included a list
of conditions, Japan’s surrender was indeed conditional. More importantly, he refers to a debate,
beginning in 1978 between Etō Jun and Honda Shūgo over unconditional surrender in the context of
postwar Japanese literature. Others who have taken sides on this issue include Inoue Kiyoshi,
Isoda Kōichi, and Mimura Fumio. For a brief discussion and a list of sources on this debate, see
For an American perspective, see Brian L. Villa, “The U.S. Army, Unconditional Surrender, and the

\textsuperscript{21}For a similar assessment, see Yoshida Yutaka, \textit{Nihonjin no sensōkan}, pp. 36-37.
Emperor, and that the Emperor himself failed to heed the impassioned pleas of Konoe and others in the YOHANSEN group. Had the American government directly addressed the question of the Emperor's disposition, it may have given the YOHANSEN men more ammunition with which to convince the Emperor to end to war sooner.²² Had the Emperor acted on the Konoe memorial immediately, the Japanese people may have escaped the worst ravages of the American aerial attacks, given that the firebombing of Tokyo and other cities, the battle of Okinawa, and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki all occurred after Konoe presented his memorial to the throne following Japan's military defeats in New Guinea on February 14, 1945.²³ This of course did not

²²The power of language, especially in translation, can be illustrated by the tragic incident surrounding the English translation of the Japanese government's public reaction to the Potsdam Declaration, issued on July 25th. Prime Minister Suzuki Kantarō responded publicly with the word mokusatsu which can mean "remain silent," "ignore," or "turn a deaf ear." When the Japanese news agency Domei broadcast the English translation it used "ignore" rather than "remain silent." The following day, the New York Times reported that the Japanese government had "formally rejected the Allied declaration." The American government, outraged at this arrogant response, then proceeded with plans for the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Whether or not a different response or translation would have prevented the atomic bombings is debatable, particularly since Truman was very excited about field testing the new weapon. However, this incident does illustrate the serious and often unintended consequences which emerge from the inherent ambiguity of language. For more on this incident, see Dower, War Without Mercy; Robert Butow, Japan's Decision to Surrender, Stanford Univeristy Press, 1945; and William J. Coughlin, Conquered Press: The MacArthur Era in Japanese Journalism, Pacific Books, 1952.

²³Herbert Bix makes this point forcefully in his analysis of the Emperor's "Monologue," arguing that these tragic events occurred "mainly because the emperor could not exercise the leadership needed to end the war." He also cites Nagasaki Mayor Motoshima who recalled many years later upon reading Marquis Kidô's diary: "I felt that if only the emperor had decided to end the war at the time of the Konoe Memorial... Then there would not have been the tragedy of Okinawa, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki. It is only natural for me, as the mayor of a nuclear bombed city, to think these things." Both quotes come from Bix, "The Showa Emperor's 'Monologue' and the
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happen. Hundreds of thousands more Japanese died and hundreds of thousands more, in the words of the young Asakusa soldier, “burned with indignation over who was responsible” before the Emperor finally decided “to save the millions of Our subjects” on August 15, 1945.  

The Emperor’s Resurrection

Everyone said, loud enough for the others to hear: “look at the Emperor’s new clothes. They’re beautiful!” “What a marvellous train!” And the Colours! The colours of that beautiful fabric! I have never seen anything like it in my life.” They all tried to conceal their disappointment at not being able to see the clothes, and since nobody was willing to admit his own stupidity and incompetence, they all behaved as the two scoundrels had predicted.

A child, however, who had no important job and could only see things as his eyes showed them to him, went up to the carriage.

“The Emperor is naked,” he said. “Fool!” his father reprimanded, running after him. “Don’t talk nonsense!” He grabbed the child and took him away. But the boy’s remark, which had been heard by the bystanders was repeated over and over again until everyone cried: “The boy is right! The Emperor is naked! It’s true.”

The Emperor realized that the people were right but could not admit to that. He thought it better to continue the procession under the illusion that anyone who couldn’t see his clothes was either stupid or incompetent. And he stood stiffly on his carriage, while behind him a page held his imaginary mantle.

Problem of War Responsibility,” p. 302. I agree with both Bix and Motoshima, although I think it is unlikely that Tokyo would have been spared since the firebombing of that city occurred only three weeks after Konoe’s presentation. All of this is of course counterfactual speculation since none of it happened. It is important to consider nonetheless when evaluating the Emperor’s role in war and defeat. It may also be relevant to the recent NATO attacks on Serbia and Kosovo, given the apparent difficulties both sides are having at extricating themselves from their entrenched positions, which have been complicated by the indictment of Slobodan Milosovic as war criminal.

24This phrase comes from the Emperor’s end of war speech, Asahi Shimbun, August 15, 1945. Translation mine.

25This excerpt of the famous story comes from The Brothers Grimm, The Emperor’s New Clothes, www.inform.umd.edu:8080/EbRes/Readingroom/Fiction/FairyTales/.
Chapter Six: The Emperor's New Clothes

There is perhaps no greater testimony to the old adage that "the clothes make the man" than the success with which the newly-clad Emperor emerged after defeat as an "extraordinary natural scientist, a'sage' (tetsujin), a 'personality of great stature' (idai na gojinkaku), and, above all, a 'peace-loving, highly cultured intellectual (heiwa aikō no bunkajin)."²⁶ The cloth was spun, sewn, and fitted by the parallel efforts of GHQ and Japan's conservative elites.²⁷ This was not always a smooth, harmonious collaboration, nor did the Emperor always feel comfortable in his new attire. In the end, however, the clothes had their desired effect in the reconstruction of his postwar image.²⁸

Between GHQ's arrival at the end of August and the execution of Japan's war criminals in later 1948, the newly-attired Emperor engaged in a series of "decisive

²⁶These phrases are quoted in Bix, "Inventing the 'Symbol Monarchy' in Japan, 1945-52," Journal of Japanese Studies, vol. 21, no. 2, 1995, p. 331. Bix cites Ono Noboru's Ningen Tenno (The Human Emperor), Ichiyōsha, 1947 as a typical example of these characterizations. Ibid. p. 331.

²⁷Bix makes this point in the context of the occupation years. Ibid. p. 321. However, these parallel efforts extended far back to the middle of the Pacific War.

²⁸The best English accounts of the Emperor's reconstruction as a man of peace are the two articles cited earlier by Herbert Bix and Nakamura Masanori, The Japanese Monarchy: Ambassador Grew and the Making of the 'Symbol Emperor System,' 1931-1991 (trans. Herbert Bix, Jonathan Baker-Bates, and Derek Bowen), M. E. Sharpe, 1992, all of which argue that Hirohito himself played a major, and not always willing, role in his own transformation. See also Dower, Empire and Aftermath. In Japanese, see Nakamura's orginal work, Shōchō tennōsei e no michi; Arai Shinichi, Sensō sekininron, pp. 151-75; and Awaya Kentarō, "Tokyo saiban ni miru sengo shori," in Awaya et al., Sensō sekinin, sengo sekinin: Nihon to Doitsu wa dō chigau ka, pp. 73-122.
moments,” which contributed to his transformation. The first was his famous (or for Japanese officials, infamous) visit to MacArthur in late September 1945. The second was his equally famous “declaration of humanity” speech (*ningen senden*) on January 1, 1946. This speech and his end of war message, together with his visit to MacArthur, are usually considered to be the definitive acts illustrating the Emperor’s new postwar status. There were, however, two other “moments” central to his reincarnation as a man of peace. In February 1946, the Emperor embarked on the first of a series of imperial tours of the Japanese nation, designed to highlight his new position and to encourage the people to cooperate in the task of reconstruction. These trips provided the first opportunities for the people to take the measure of the man who had supposedly lifted them out of the “dark valley” of despair. There was also another radio broadcast, less known, but the first made by the Emperor-as-man. This occurred following the massive Food May Day demonstrations in May 1946 when Hirohito called on the Japanese people to renounce violence and to work together cooperatively for the new Japan. In all of these, the hand of GHQ can be seen, manipulating events like a *kuromaku* in a *bunraku* play.²⁹

²⁹Traditionally, the *kuromaku* is the puppet master in *bunraku* theatre. Dressed in black, he gives life to the inanimate actor/puppets. In more recent times the *kuromaku* has taken on a more sinister meaning as one who manipulates events behind the scenes in politics or big business. Kodama Yoshio who, together with Kishi Nobusuke, was indicted as a Class “A” war criminal in 1946 and then released in 1948, is considered to be one of the last great *kuromaku* of postwar Japanese conservative politics. This label has also been used to describe former LDP boss and sometime king-maker Shin Kanamori.
Chapter Six: The Emperor’s New Clothes

On September 27, 1945, less than a month after Japan’s surrender on the Missouri, Hirohito in formal morning dress paid an unprecedented call on MacArthur at his home in the American Embassy.  

I come to see you, General MacArthur, to offer myself to the judgement of the powers you represent as the one to bear sole responsibility for every political and military decision taken by my people in the conduct of war.

Before the MacArthur and Hirohito sat down to a private forty-minute discussion, an American photographer snapped three photographs of the two men. Two days later, one of the pictures, depicting a casually-dressed MacArthur towering over a frock-coated Hirohito, appeared on the front pages of Japan’s major dailies. The Japanese government succeeded in preventing publication of the picture the day after the meeting but then GHQ stepped in and forced the government to rescind its earlier order. The photograph was published two days.

30 According to Otabe, Yoshida Shigeru, then Foreign Minister in the Higashikuni government and head of the Central Liaison Office, arranged the meeting between MacArthur and Hirohito. "Shôwa tennô," p. 57. Dower also mentions this in Empire and Aftermath, p. 309.

after Hirohito’s visit to MacArthur on September 29th. This image became an important visual symbol of the new postwar order in Japan. The physical juxtaposition of the two men helped to reinforce to the Japanese people the “visceral reality” of defeat by a powerful foreign nation. It also provided some measure of reassurance to the people that the Emperor’s status, although clearly subordinate to that of MacArthur, would remain intact.

The roles of MacArthur and Hirohito also offer an interesting parallel with the making of Hirohito’s grandfather, the Meiji Emperor, in the first decades of Japan’s emergence as a new nation-state. Altogether, the Meiji Emperor embarked on one hundred and two imperial tours (gyōkō), but it was the six “Great Circuits” (kunkō) between 1872 and 1885 that indelibly stamped his newly-created image on the minds of the Japanese people. These excursions

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32This was the first of eleven meetings between the two men during MacArthur’s six-year reign in Japan. See Kyoko Hirano, Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo, pp. 109-10; and Bix, “Inventing the ‘Symbol Monarchy’ in Japan, 1945-52,” pp. 323-25.

33Hirano, Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo, p. 109.

34Bix argues that the publication of the photograph was intended by MacArthur to have this effect. “Inventing the ‘Symbol Monarchy’ in Japan, 1945-52, p. 322.

35Carol Gluck, Japan’s Modern Myths, pp. 74-75. The Meiji Emperor’s first tour was in 1868 when he and an entourage of 3,300 attendants proceeded with all pomp and circumstance from Kyoto to Tokyo to take up residence in the new Imperial Palace.
were designed both to familiarize the people with his august personage and to legitimize the position of those political leaders who travelled with them.\textsuperscript{36}

After the promulgation of the constitution in 1889, however, the Meiji Emperor was rarely seen in public and then only for specific purposes such as "troop maneuvers, naval reviews, and special ceremonies."\textsuperscript{37} From the late 1880s until his death in 1912, Hirohito’s grandfather became, once again, withdrawn "above the clouds," cloaked in a mantle of myth and mystery.\textsuperscript{38} Replacing his public person was a portrait, portraying him in full military garb, which hung in every government office, university, and elementary school by the early 1890s. This was the public image of the Meiji Emperor, timeless and ageless, with which the Japanese people identified as the supreme symbol and moral anchor of their young nation.

While Hirohito’s visit to MacArthur, his New Year’s speech, and his Imperial tours all represented a process similar to the early making of Mutsuhito, MacArthur’s role as Supreme Commander resembled that of the later Meiji

\textsuperscript{36}Ibid., pp. 74-75.

\textsuperscript{37}Ibid., p. 79.

\textsuperscript{38}According to Gluck, only one third of the Emperor’s visits occurred after 1889 and, in contrast to the earlier tours, few people other than local notables actually ever saw him. Ibid., pp. 78-80.
Emperor. Rarely seen in public and limiting access to his own “august personage” through a small coterie of “Imperial” advisers, MacArthur cultivated a self-image of a ruler “above the clouds.” That some Japanese referred to him as “the blue-eyed Emperor” or “Emperor MacArthur” (Makkasa tennô) is testimony to the success of his own self-creation. Even the Japanese jokes about MacArthur carried with them a dignity not seen in the United States, where his running of the occupation and his presidential ambitions provided plenty of fodder for scathing political satire. One of the more popular jokes in Japan ran as follows:

Why is General MacArthur like a navel?
Because he is above the chin.\(^{39}\)

The punchline was a double entendre: *chin* is the first-person pronoun (the Imperial “We”) used by the Emperor in public pronouncements such as his end of war speech; it is also off-colour slang for penis. The joke appealed to the ribald sensibilities of many Japanese, but it also illustrated the relative positions of MacArthur and Hirohito in early postwar Japan.

After Hirohito’s visit to MacArthur rumours circulated that the Emperor might abdicate in favour of his brother Prince Chichibu or his son Akihito.\(^{40}\) At the

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\(^{39}\text{This anecdote comes from Seidensticker, } \textit{Tokyo Rising}, \text{ p. 172.}\)

\(^{40}\text{This was Joseph Grew’s assessment as early as the winter of 1944. Schonberger, } \textit{Aftermath of War}, \text{ p. 27.}\)
same time, the publication of the following poem in December 1945 led to further speculation that he was ill or had committed suicide.

Thinking of the people dying endlessly in air raid shelters
I ended the war
having no thought of my own fate

The poem reinforced the image of a selfless and benevolent Emperor who had only the peoples' best interests at heart. Cultivated assiduously by both GHQ and the Japanese authorities, this image was projected onto the public domain just as the media began openly discussing the issue of war responsibility. Both sides were no doubt aware of the growing interest in responsibility for war and defeat, which made the Emperor's re-creation all the more pressing. Evidence of the Emperor's own complicity in his own reconstruction comes from another poem, unpublished and unknown to the general public.

Wishing to preserve the national essence
I ended the war
Though I may have to walk a path of thorns

41 Reproduced in Irokawa, *The Age of Hirohito*, p. 97. There were actually four poems published under the title *Thoughts at the End of the War*. Like the one included in the text, the other three all emphasized the Emperor's selfless benevolence toward his people. For the Japanese originals of these poems, see Kinoshita Michio, *Sokkin nisshi*, Bungei Shunjūsha, 1990, p. 77.

42 Ibid., p. 97. According to Irokawa, Vice Grand Chamberlain Kinoshita Michio recorded these poems and two others in his diary on December 15, 1945. He then requested that they be published as long as "they would not be used for propagandistic ends." Only the one poem was published. When the Emperor died on January 7, 1989, another poem, written at the same time and mirroring the sentiments of the first, was broadcast throughout Japan. It reads as follows: Whatever may happen to me/I put a stop to the war/Thinking only of the people who were dying. Reproduced in Ibid., p. 96. The publication of the poem forty some years after the war is testimony to the success of Japanese and American efforts to resurrect him as peace-loving and benevolent, an
The national essence (*kokusui*) was of course nothing less than the Emperor himself and his desire to preserve it is a clear indication that its preservation, not the fate of his people, was his primary motive for ending the war. Moreover, the publishing of the first, but not the second, poem further illustrates his desire, and that of his advisers, to become re-shrouded in a new postwar myth of peace and benevolence.

In those early, uncertain months following Japan's defeat, the actions of both American and Japanese officials, although frequently at odds, combined to secure the future of the Imperial House. Yet, many of GHQ's early reform efforts must have seemed to Japanese conservatives like Yoshida that the Americans were actually encouraging the very revolutionary activity that Konoe had identified as being Japan's greatest threat. On October 4, 1945 GHQ issued its Civil Liberties Directive.⁴³ Among its other requirements, the directive demanded the image Hirohito carried to his grave and beyond.

⁴³This directive was in part a consequence of the Japanese government's attempt to squelch the photo of Hirohito and MacArthur. However, while this incident may have affected the timing of the directive, it did not itself cause the directive to be issued. Earlier on September 10th, GHQ had already ordered the Japanese government to remove restrictions on freedom of speech and of the press, except for "Allied troop movements which have not been officially released, false or destructive criticism of the Allied Powers, and rumors." This was followed by the enactment of the Press Code on September 19th which forbade publishing "destructive criticism of the Allied Forces" or anything that would "disturb the public tranquility." GHQ issued further directives on September 24th and 27th to disentangle the press from government control and to repeal wartime laws relating to government censorship. On this latter point, GHQ ordered the Japanese government to report twice a month on the progress it was making to comply with GHQ's orders. The above information comes from Coughlin, *Conquered Press*, pp. 147-52.
abrogation of all "laws, decrees, orders, ordinances and regulations" which,

Establish or maintain restrictions of freedom of thought, of religion, of assembly and of speech, including the unrestricted discussion of the Emperor, the Imperial Institution and the Imperial Japanese government.44

Thus, while criticism of the Emperor was permitted in principle as long as it did not "disturb the public tranquility," criticism of GHQ was forbidden. This pushed MacArthur further "above the clouds," in what amounted to the exchange of an "American essence" (Bei-sui) for the Japanese "national essence" (kokusui) which GHQ was attempting to eliminate.

The day after the Civil Liberties Directive was issued, GHQ ordered the release of sixteen political prisoners from Fuchû prison in Tokyo, including Tokuda Kyûichi and Shiga Yoshio, both of whom would soon become leading figures in the new postwar Japanese Communist Party.45 To make matters worse, beleaguered Japanese conservatives watched in horror as GHQ passed the Trade Union Law in December 1945 and the Labour Relations Adjustment Law in

44Ibid., p. 153. Italics mine. The directive also ordered the dismantling of those departments in the Home Ministry, the Special Higher Police, and the Metropolitan Police which oversaw the government's wartime censorship policies.

45In all, five hundred political prisoners were released from Japanese prisons. Tragically, it was too late for Miki Kiyoshi who died in jail on September 26, 1945. For a poignant statement of outrage over Miki's death - outrage at the Japanese government for letting him die and outrage at the Japanese press and the people for having done nothing to stop it - see Hidaka Rokurô, Sengo shisō o kangae ru, pp. 1-5. Hidaka also included himself among the guilty. Miki's imprisonment was only made public by an American journalist which brought the matter to GHQ's attention.
September 1946. These laws gave Japanese labour unprecedented freedom to unionize, collectively bargain, and, if necessary, strike. Even more frightening, conservative politicians were forced to enact the so-called “MacArthur Constitution” (Makka-sa- kenpō) as if it was their own after GHQ scuttled an earlier pre-emptive draft by Minister Without Portfolio Matsumoto Jōji. Amidst this whirlwind of changes, GHQ also undertook the purge of alleged wartime militarists as part of its demilitarization and democratization program. By the end of the occupation’s first year Japanese conservative elites had good reason to believe that the position of the Emperor and the fate of the national polity were truly in peril.

46 Baron Shidehara presided over the enactment of the first law, while Yoshida’s first postwar government passed the second. Both men were strongly opposed to these laws but could do nothing in the face of GHQ’s demands. Dower, Empire and Aftermath, pp. 338-39.

The Emperor and the People

They need not have worried. With the exception of the Japanese Communist Party and others on the extreme left, the vast majority of Japanese people supported the Emperor's retention, at least according to early postwar opinion polls. Immediately following the Civil Liberties Directive, a wide variety of independent research firms began surveying people on all manner of topics, including the blackmarket, the constitution, and, of course, the Emperor. One of the first polls, conducted by the Japan Public Opinion Research Centre (Nihon Yoron Kenkyūjo) in early December 1945, reported an overwhelming 94.8% support for the Emperor system.48 Although this survey canvassed mostly men, its findings were consistent with later polls which regularly reported 80-90% support for the Emperor.49

The use of questionnaires (anke-to) was also a popular method of divining attitudes toward the Emperor in businesses and among school students. One

48 Reported in Yomiuri Hōchi, December 9, 1945.

49 The poll received 3,348 responses (75% of them male) aged 8 to 76, of which 4.9% opposed the Emperor system and 0.3% expressed no opinion. There was little difference in the responses in terms of age, with the exception that 9% of men in their thirties opposed the Emperor system. For a good sampling of opinion polls in early postwar Japan, see Yoshimi, "Senryōki nihon no minshū ishiki," pp. 88-91, and Kusa no ne no fashizumu, pp. 272-74.
Tōshiba factory survey in Shizuoka found that 90% of employees over twenty supported the Emperor system. However, nearly one-fifth of those under twenty opposed the system. This suggests that that young people may not have been as wedded to the Emperor system as were their elders. 50 Similar results were obtained by the Students' Cultural Association of Tokyo Technical College at the end of November. It canvassed over two hundred students and teachers with respondents supporting the Emperor four to one over those who opposed. 51 In both surveys those in opposition were a small but not insignificant number; overall, however, the clear majority support for the Emperor accorded with other surveys and public opinion as reported by the Japanese media.

50 Cited in Yoshimi, “Senryōki nihon no minshū ishiki,” p. 89. This discrepancy was even greater as the age gap grew. In contrast to the 18% of those under twenty who opposed the retention of the Emperor system, a full 100% of employees over forty-one supported it. In most cases, but not all, young Japanese tended to be more critical of Hirohito and the Emperor system. This is understandable given that they did not always have the same degree of emotional attachment to the Emperor as did their elders. At the same time, however, it should be remembered that the majority of civilians who committed suicide upon hearing the Emperor’s end of war speech were young men. It seems that this group may have been prone to greater emotional swings of mood than the older generation. Perhaps because they were young, they were not yet as fatalistic as their elders.

51 Reported in the Mainichi Shimbun, November 29, 1945. Unfortunately, the newspaper did not indicate whether the poll broke down responses according to age. Curiously, the survey also revealed that 42% of those same respondents also supported communism which suggests that as many as half of those who voted in favour of the Emperor saw no contradiction in the coexistence of the two. It is possible that both opposition to the Emperor system and support for communism was stronger among the students than among the teachers, although there was no lack of left wing educators in Japan in the early postwar years.
On the eve of the Emperor's renunciation of divinity speech, both editorials and letters to the editor reflected strong but not untroubled support for Hirohito. An early December editorial from the *Asahi Shimbun* argued that defeat was attributable to the fact that Japan's Emperors since the Meiji era had "stepped down" from their position as supreme religious leaders and had become worldly.  

Rather than calling for the Emperor's abdication or worse, however, the editorial maintained that he must resume his position as religious leader, devoid of political power or sovereignty which rightfully rested with the people. The *Kahoku Shimbô* echoed this idea, arguing that GHQ's directive to abolish State Shintô was a positive step in creating a "more universal and rational interpretation of sovereignty," one in which the Emperor's position as symbol of the new state would be determined by the people. These opinions reveal a clear understanding of the distinction between the Emperor as a ruler and as a symbol. They also illustrate that part of the power of the new postwar Emperor would derive from the fact that, as a symbol, he would epitomize the

52 *Asahi Shimbun*, December 2, 1945.

53 The editorial nonetheless revealed its own particularistic bias in stating that Japan became an ordinary empire when the Meiji Emperor assumed worldly duties, with nothing to distinguish it from the other great powers. Implication here was that once the Emperor "stepped back up" to his proper position, Japan would once again regain its unique standing in the world.

scientific and rational qualities which had been lacking in the prewar years.

Others rejected this position out of hand, arguing that regardless of whether Hirohito was a symbol or a ruler all actions were still performed in his name for which he must be held accountable. In mid-December a housewife from Urawa, Kita Michiko, wrote a lengthy letter to the Yomiuri Hôchi, arguing passionately that the Emperor, whether symbol or ruler, was responsible for Japan’s defeat. “It is certain,” she said, “that those soldiers who died in battle did not cry out in their last moments ‘long live the Tôjô militaristic clique!’.”55 Kita’s position was a direct repudiation of the government’s ichioku sôzange line which exhorted the people to apologize to the Emperor. For Kita, the Emperor was the one who should apologize to the people.

In the early days after defeat the most sustained attack on the Emperor came from the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) which was resurrected when GHQ ordered the release of hundreds of political prisoners in October 1945. In early November the JCP sponsored the “People’s Rally Chastizing War Criminals.” Participants drew up a list of war criminals which included the Emperor, the

55Yomiuri Hôchi, December 17, 1945.
Empress, and all male members of the Imperial family over twenty-one.\textsuperscript{56}

Shortly after their release, Shiga Yoshio and Tokuda Kyūichi both made public their positions on the Emperor. Shiga argued in an *Akahata* article that Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor must have been carried out with the Emperor’s full knowledge and consent, for which he should be held responsible. If he truly had not known, said Shiga, then Japan’s national polity was being entrusted to “an imbecile” and should therefore “be destroyed once and for all.”\textsuperscript{57} Tokuda took a similar position but with specific reference to the Emperor system itself which he asserted caused the war and therefore should be held “wholly responsible for the crimes of the war.”\textsuperscript{58} These positions were formalized in the JCP platform at its fourth convention on December 1, 1945 with the first clause of that mandate demanding the abolition of the Emperor system.\textsuperscript{59}

The *Tokyo Shimbun* immediately took issue with Tokuda arguing that the existence of the Emperor was what distinguished the Japanese from other people.

\textsuperscript{56}Okubo Genji, *The Problems of the Emperor System in Postwar Japan*, p. 10. The rally took place in Tokyo on November 7th.

\textsuperscript{57}*Akahata*, November 7, 1945, reprinted in Ibid., pp. 10-11.

\textsuperscript{58}Ibid., p. 30.

\textsuperscript{59}Ibid., pp. 30-31.
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This had been so “for thousands of years” and was therefore the “one true claim of our nation from older times.”\(^{60}\) The editorial likened Tokuda to a blind man who catches an elephant’s tail and concludes that it is only a rope. For the writer, Tokuda was simply being wagged by the elephant of communism which blinded him to the reality of Japan’s historical uniqueness. Others in the media also attacked the communists for their hardline stance toward the Emperor, arguing in a similar vein that the existence of the Emperor provided modern Japan with its unique character and while providing an important element of historical continuity. The JCP’s voice, although definitely in the minority did raise fears that anti-Emperor sentiment was in the ascendancy. This was the position of a Niigata Nippō article that castigated the JCP for its opposition to the throne. Calling the Emperor a “lover of peace and culture” whose virtue was as unbroken as the lineage of the Imperial House, the paper demanded of Tokuda and Shiga, “have you a dignity and morality equal to that of the Emperor?”\(^{61}\)

These examples suggest that public opinion on the Emperor was by no means unanimous in the months following Japan’s defeat. However, it is also evident that those opposed were a small, albeit vocal, minority. Public opinion polls

\(^{60}\)Tokyo Shimbun, December 3, 1945.

consistently demonstrated that most people supported the Emperor because he was the locus of national and individual identity as well as the embodiment of continuity between past and present. As Okubo Genji himself said, it was as if the Japanese people could not conceive of themselves as Japanese without reference to the Emperor.62 This sentiment was echoed by media reports which highlighted the value of the continuity of the Imperial House while, at the same time, advocating that the past be discarded. Similarly, the Emperor was conspicuously absent in the deconstruction of the national character. The negative traits of the Japanese character never seemed to apply to him, nor was there much recognition that the servility, blind obedience, and unquestioning loyalty which were identified as “evil customs of the past” had all been directed toward the throne. Even when the feudalistic family system was elevated to the position of “radical evil,” its creation and perpetuation were never understood as acts of the Emperor himself but of his “evil advisers” and the gun-kan-zai clique which had deceived the people by manipulating the system to their own advantage. The unity of Emperor and the people was thus re-created in the early postwar years through the fiction that both had been deceived.

Despite the widespread rejection of ichioku sōzange and despite the peoples’

demands for repentance and atonement on the part of their leaders, the one individual in whose name all actions had been undertaken - Tennō Heika - emerged largely unscathed from early stages of the debate over war responsibility and the national character. Hirohito’s new clothes may not have been transparent as were those of the Emperor in the Grimm brother’s fable, but they were certainly teflon coated. Without realizing, participants in the public debate played right into the hands of both GHQ and Japan’s leaders. GHQ wanted to expedite their reforms by utilizing the Emperor as a symbol of unity, which is precisely the way most Japanese saw him. Japan’s political elites wanted to forestall any chance of civil disturbance by preserving the fiction of a timeless kokutai, which many Japanese people were quick to grab onto as a drowning man would grab a life preserver.

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63 It is certainly likely that some in the media were active and willing participants in the Emperor’s reconstruction, and given GHQ’s prepublication censorship policy which could forestall overly harsh criticism of the Emperor as a disturbance of “public tranquility,” it is also true that the press initiated its own form of self-censorship at times. However, given the media’s own statement of atonement, their personnel changes, their public commitment to free speech and democracy, and GHQ’s permission to criticize the Emperor, it is unlikely that the press were simply following the line of either GHQ or the Japanese government. Evidence for this lies in the sheer diversity of opinion published in the media regarding the Emperor. My point here is that while the press, the Japanese government, and GHQ were not always on the same page, they did end up, for different reasons, promoting the image of the Emperor as new man and as a symbol of reconstruction. For more on the media under GHQ censorship, see Okuda Satoshi, Senchū - Sengo; and Oshima Yukio, Ningen kiroku.
The *Ningen Senden* and the Emperor as "New Man"

Although the Emperor appeared to be supported by a majority of the Japanese people, Japan's political leaders continued to see revolution around every corner, which led them to employ a variety of damage control strategies in an attempt to counter the worst effects of GHQ's reforms. In this they were aided by the fact that the American government had chosen to work through the existing governmental structure rather than rule directly as they had been doing in Germany. In particular, Japan's early postwar leaders took advantage of the linguistic difficulties of translating Japanese and English. A good example of this was the Emperor's New Year's "declaration of humanity." Originally conceived and initiated on the American side as a means of democratizing the throne and obviating the need for its dissolution, the Emperor's New Year's message contained visible traces of the damage control efforts of his advisers, and of the Emperor himself. It also illustrated the interplay of *kyodatsu* and *shinsei* through its appeal to the moral sensibilities of the Japanese people.

At issue was the language of the rescript which described the Emperor's status, his historical connection with the Imperial House, and his relationship to the people. While GHQ wanted the Emperor to disavow his divinity and the idea of
the Japanese as a chosen people, palace officials and politicians were specifically concerned with protecting the kokutai by preserving the fiction that the throne was a fount of democracy. To that end, the rescript began with a reaffirmation of the five articles of the Charter Oath as the foundation of the modern Japanese state. Placing the Charter Oath at the beginning deflected attention away from GHQ's intended purpose of humanizing the Emperor, but also offered a source of much-needed continuity between past and present.64 This was especially important in the disruptive milieu of early postwar Japan when so many people were attempting to discard, overcome, or negate the past in an effort to create new life. Unlike the Emperor's end of war message, the rescript referred specifically to Japan's defeat (sensō no haiboku) and then linked it directly to "the peoples' tendency to fall into the abyss of immorality and despair (kyodatsu)," a position that mirrored Higashikuni's own comments at the end of the war.65 As the locus of Japanese morality, the Emperor became the embodiment of shinsei who, like Tanabe's compassionate other-power, would lead the people out of the dark valley of defeat and into the light of a new era.

64 All translations from the rescript are my mine, taken from the Asahi Shimbun, January 1, 1946. For a complete English reprint of the "ningen senden," see Lu, Sources of Japanese History, vol 2.

65 The phrase in Japanese reads: Waga kokumin wa yayamosureba shōsō ni nagare, shitsui no fuchi ni chinchin sen to suru no katamuki. Although the relationship between cause and effect is not as explicit, the Emperor's "declaration of humanity" sounds similar to Higashikuni's earlier comments to the press regarding the peoples' responsibility for defeat.
Central to this message was the language of “mutual trust, respect and love” (shinrai to keiai) which bound, for all time, the Emperor and the people in a perfect union. This relationship required no myth or legends for support, nor was it predicated on mistaken ideas of the Emperor’s divinity or on the alleged superiority of the Japanese race. Because love of country and love of family had always been especially strong in Japan, the rescript said, a simple reaffirmation of the ties of mutual love and respect between the Emperor and the people would be sufficient to resurrect Japan from its fallen state and contribute to a bright future for the Japanese people and for all of humanity.

Skillfully buried in the centre of the Rescript was the principle message that GHQ wanted the Emperor to convey: namely, the renunciation of his divinity. However, by focusing first on the ties of love and trust, the rescript rendered GHQ’s message incidental: “We Japanese,” it effectively said, “don’t need myths and legends or living gods because the same love and trust that has united the

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66 This was the famous phrase which was supposed to be the central message in GHQ’s conception. In Japanese it reads: tennô o motte akimitsukami to shi, nihon kokumin o motte hoka no minzoku ni yûetsu seru minzoku ni shite, nobete sekai o shihai subeki unmei o yûsū to no kâkû naru gainen ni motozukumono ni arazu.

67 This was the second time that the Emperor’s benevolence was linked directly to the welfare of humanity. Recall that in his end of war message, Hirohito stated: “To strive for the common prosperity and happiness of all nations as well as the security and well-being of our subjects is the solemn obligation which has been handed down by Our Imperial Ancestors and we take this to heart.”
Emperor and the people since time immemorial will once again burn brightly in the future.” In emphasizing this continuity the rescript also skirted the problematic issue of the unbroken lineage (bansei ikkei) of the Imperial House and of the Emperor’s direct descent from the Sun Goddess Amaterasu Omikami. Here the Emperor’s own hand, and that of Vice Grand Chamberlain Kinoshita Michio, was clearly visible. In reviewing the English translation of the draft, Kinoshita took exception to the passage that read: “the fiction that the Emperor is a descendant of the gods” (Emperor ga kami no sue naru koto o kakû). For this he substituted, “the fiction that the Emperor is a living god” (tennô o akitsumikami to suru koto o kakû naru koto). Hirohito concurred.

Not only was this subtle but important distinction lost on both GHQ and foreign observers but they appeared to have played right into the hands of the Emperor and his advisers. The New York Times called him “one of the great reformers in Japanese history,” while MacArthur himself contributed to this new postwar fiction with a similarly laudatory statement that the Emperor had taken the lead

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68Quoted in Otabe Takeshi, “Shôwa tennô,” p. 68. Otabe included the word “Emperor” in citing Kinoshita’s quote. This exact phrase did not appear in the newspapers, although the one that did carried the same meaning.

69Otabe makes this point in Ibid., p. 68; but Bix argues that, rather than simply agreeing with his advisers, the Emperor himself ordered the necessary changes. “The Showa Emperor’s ‘Monologue’,” p. 321.
in the "democratization of his people." 70 Interestingly, MacArthur’s own New Year’s message to the Japanese people printed just below the rescript in the Asahi Shimbun made no mention of the Emperor’s declaration. Under the adulatory headline "The Shackles Have Been Cast Off From The Citizenry - Rule of Law - The Year of New Life," MacArthur praised the eradication of militarism and feudalism and the establishment of democratic freedoms. 71 With their removal from a state of national slavery (kokkateki dorei no jokyo), the Japanese people were now able spontaneously generate (jihatsuteki) their own freedom. This, MacArthur hoped, would be the first step toward a brighter future.

In the first of his five New Year’s messages MacArthur appears to have been playing two games: one in the foreign media; the other in the Japanese press. For foreign consumption, he highlighted the bold actions of the Emperor in establishing democracy which, no doubt, helped to divert attention away from the efforts of some to try Hirohito as a war criminal. For Japanese consumption, he created the illusion that the people themselves were actively participating in their own demilitarization and democratization when in fact it was a clear case


of revolution from above and from without. At the same time, the Emperor and his advisers were playing a parallel game of their own. By emphasizing the immutable bond between the Emperor and the people they were attempting to re-establish the sense of continuity which had been disrupted by defeat. Taken together with the Emperor's end of war message, the ningen sengen helped to distance Hirohito from any culpability in the debate over war responsibility, while at the same time reinforcing his image as benevolent and peace-loving: the quintessential new man of postwar Japan.

Naturally the press reported the Emperor's ningen senden as "extraordinary" and "unprecedented" and, once again, the image of a turning point was invoked. The lead Mainichi Shimbun editorial on January 1st hailed the New Year's Rescript as marking a new era that saw the Japanese people standing "at the crossroads of their destiny." 72 Three days later the Asahi Shimbun claimed that the rescript "revealed the true character of the Emperor" whose human status had finally been brought "out of the fog of myth and legend." 73 According to the Yomiuri Hōchi, the simple style of language used in the Rescript clearly demonstrated that the Emperor was "neither superhuman nor an incarnation of

72Mainichi Shimbun, January 1, 1946.
73Asahi Shimbun, January 4, 1946.
Chapter Six: The Emperor's New Clothes

sacredness." The use of simplified language, as we saw in the last chapter, was for some a prerequisite for new life, and the Emperor's utilization of the vernacular further reinforced this ideal. The editorial closed with the thought that all Japanese people should feel thankful that they had such good Emperor. The real tragedy, the editorial opined, was that the Emperor himself had been subject to the Emperor system!

With this statement the Yomiuri raised an important question, especially in light of GHQ's ongoing investigation and arrest of suspected war criminals. Was it possible that the Emperor, like the people themselves, could have been a victim of the very system which operated in his name and which derived its power from the Emperor himself? This indeed appears to have been the case, at least as far public discussions of the Emperor were concerned. Two editorials from a local Sendai paper addressed this issue in mid-January. The first asked whether the Emperor system should be kept or abandoned and, if the former, then in what manner would this be decided. The solution, said the editorial, lay

74 Yomiuri Hochi January 5, 1946.

75 GHQ announced the first round of Japanese war criminals on September 10th. This was followed by a directive ordering the dismissal of militaristic teachers on October 22nd, and two more arrest orders for suspected war criminals on December 2nd and 6th. At the same time, some Allied governments and members of the foreign press were demanding the indictment of Hirohito as a war criminal. A good account of how MacArthur silenced these demands is Awaya Kentarô, "Tokyo saiban ni miru senso short," pp. 88-93.
in the establishment of responsible government which would eliminate "the scoundrels who attend the throne" and allow the Emperor as a human being to "represent the nation" from within and without.\textsuperscript{76} This argument clearly separated the Emperor from the system that bore his name, suggesting that he, like the Japanese people, had been deceived by "scoundrels."\textsuperscript{77}

The second editorial made a similar distinction but on historical grounds. It argued that the position of the Emperor, which had existed in Japan for centuries, had to be separated from the Emperor system, which was an imperialistic creation of the Meiji era. The editorial did lump the Emperor together with the gun-kan-zai triad which had "enriched themselves and enjoyed luxuries at the expense of the masses," but then attributed this to the "evils of the Emperor system," not to the Emperor himself.\textsuperscript{78} The central

\textsuperscript{76}Kahoku Shimpô, January 15, 1946, translated and reprinted in ATIS, Reel 4, Editorial Series 274, Item 1.

\textsuperscript{77}It is interesting to note that at the same time the war responsibility debate was devolving into a debate over responsibility for defeat in the media, the issue of the Emperor's responsibility was always discussed in terms of war's origins and prosecution, never defeat. That he was never held responsible for defeat was due largely to his having heroically ended the war on August 15th. But it was also due to the belief that the Emperor was always appraised of the war's beginning or its progress only after the fact. This impression made the Emperor himself appear helpless in the face of his "evil advisers" which contributed to his image as one of the deceived.

\textsuperscript{78}Kahoku Shimpô, January 16, 1946, translated and reprinted in ATIS, Reel 4, Editorial Series 274, Item 2.
message in this piece was the need to study the system “from a scientific and rational point of view” because the “future destiny of the Yamato race as well as the peace of the whole world” depended on the future of the this system. Another local paper made the distinction between the Emperor system and the Emperor even more explicit, arguing that the militaristic clique had separated the Emperor from the people, thereby, created victims of them both.79

As with debates over responsibility for defeat and the national character, discussions of the Emperor and the Emperor system were frequently couched in the language of science and rationality. The Emperor’s own “declaration of humanity” abetted this process by stripping away the irrational myths and legends surrounding the throne. Ki Kimura, writing to the Asahi Shimbun, suggested that the Emperor abandon Tokyo for Kyoto as an act of atonement for having been enshrined as “a living god through the maneuvers of the military clique, the bureaucrats, and the fanatic nationalists.”80 While recognizing that the Emperor himself had much to atone for, Kimura’s argument also implied that Hirohito had been as much a victim of irrational militarism as had the Japanese people. Another letter to the editor in the same paper more explicitly


80 Asahi Shimbun, January 18, 1946.
urged the “scientific study” of the Emperor system because this would reveal the Emperor as an artificially constructed symbol whose origins only dated back to the Meiji Restoration.81

Throughout the early postwar years the link between the Emperor and the people was continually reaffirmed by portraying him as a victim of a system created and manipulated by “evil advisers” (aku no shidōsha). This kind of interpretation helped to re-establish the bond between the Emperor and the people, while further separating him from the Emperor system. Motonaga Akashi, writing to the Mainichi Shimbun a year after Japan’s defeat, argued that the evil traditions of the past could be eradicated by keeping the Emperor and eliminating his advisers.82 Kitsukawa Manabu invoked the image of Hirohito as one of the deceived more clearly, stating that the government had used his name to deceive the people. Writing in the monthly Suisei in July 1947, Kitsukawa argued that the Emperor was the link between past, present, and future and was

81Ibid., January 18, 1946.

82Mainichi Shimbun, August 28, 1946. This argument was essentially the same as that of the young radical military officers in the 1930s who maintained that the relationship between them (and the people) and the Emperor had been defiled by successive layers of advisers, politicians, bureaucrats, and business types. The eradication of this corruptive structure was one of the goals of the Shōwa Restoration Movement. The main difference between the ideas of these radicals and men like Kitsukawa and Akashi was that the former advocated direct imperial rule which for the latter was unthinkable.
therefore essential to Japan’s reconstruction.\textsuperscript{83} This was followed by an editorial in \textit{Akita Sakigake} which stated that Japanese officials must not stand between the people and the Emperor who had become human and thus a symbol of new life.\textsuperscript{84}

Even the JCP, which remained the most uncompromising group opposed to the Emperor system and advocating the prosecution of Hirohito as a war criminal, began to soften its line toward the Emperor. In November 1945 Shiga had stately clearly that “the Emperor is the most responsible war criminal.” Tokuda echoed this later, saying that “the Emperor and his government had become a complete warmonger.” However, he then remarked that “the fundamental cause of the war lies in the Emperor system itself.”\textsuperscript{85} By January 1946, with the return of Nozaka Sanzo from exile in China, the JCP backtracked somewhat, maintaining that the Emperor system should still be abolished but that fate of the Emperor would now be decided by the will of the people. The JCP’s draft constitution,

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\textsuperscript{84}\textit{Akita Sakigake}, August 2, 1947, reprinted and translated in \textit{ATIS}, Reel 37, Editorial Series 1862, Item 8.

\textsuperscript{85}Both quotes come from Okubo, \textit{The Problems of the Emperor System in Postwar Japan}, pp. 10 and 30 respectively.
\end{quote}
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issued in July 1946, mentioned neither the Emperor nor the Emperor system, stating only that "the sovereignty of the Japanese State rests with the people." This is, of course, what the new postwar constitution would state, much to the dismay of Japanese conservatives.

**The Busiest Man in Japan**

Notwithstanding their opposition to constitutional revision and the divesting of sovereignty from the Emperor, the fears of Japanese political elites surrounding the Emperor's fate were largely unfounded. The Emperor's "declaration of humanity" and his enshrinement in the constitution as the symbol of the state helped the Japanese people to identify with Hirohito in defeat much as they had done in war. Throughout 1946 and 1947 public opinion polls consistently showed strong support for the Emperor. Shortly after the Emperor's declaration of humanity, the *Mainichi Shimbun* reported the results of a survey by the *Nihon Yoron Chosa Kenkyůjo* in which 91.2% of those polled supported the Emperor system, with an astonishing 28.4% in favour of joint sovereignty between the

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86 Quoted in Ibid., pp. 31-32. Okubo, writing in 1948 after the fate of the Emperor had been decided, maintained that the JCP saw the Emperor system and despotism as inseparable, but also argued that by this same logic despotism could be eradicated without eliminating the Emperor who was "an unhararmful being at least for democracy." Ibid., p. 31.
Emperor and the people. Even earlier, in November 1945, a survey of an Okayama youth group revealed 64% in favour of the Emperor as a symbol and another 19% supporting his absolute retention. In June 1948, five months before the verdicts on Japan’s war criminals was handed down, an Osaka poll recorded 82% of respondents supporting the Emperor system. Later that summer a survey of Toyota employees showed 79% support, as opposed to 8% for its abolition.

Aiding the peoples’ support for the Emperor was a series of nationwide imperial

87Mainichi Shimbun, February 4, 1946. Of the 5000 questionaires sent out, 2393 responded, with only 9.6% of respondents advocating abolition.

88Nigû Seinenkaihen, Seiun (Blue Sky), September 1946, reproduced in Yoshimi, “Senryôki no nihon minshû ishiki,” p. 90. This was a small poll of only 98 persons but it is interesting because the question to which 64% of those polled responded in the affirmative was, “Do you support an Emperor system with the Emperor as a symbol of the people?” (kokumin no chôshû toshite no tennôsei iji). This attitude indicates that some people understood that making the Emperor a symbol of the people was essentially the same as democratizing him. The other 19% supported no change in the Emperor’s position as it had been laid out in the Meiji Constitution.

89Osaka Yoron Chôsa Kenkyûjôhen, Futatabi tennôsei narabi ni seisî ippan ni tsuite no yoron chôsa: Dai nijûyonkai chôsa (Another Survey Concerning the Emperor System Politics in General: The Twenty-fourth Survey), 1948, reproduced in Ibid., p. 91. The poll canvassed 711 people and, like the others, asked specifically about the retention of the Emperor system.

90Toyota Jidôsha Kôgyô Bunkakahen, Toyota Bunka (Toyota Culture), August 1948, reproduced in Ibid., p. 91. This survey, one of the largest private polls, covered 4046 respondents. The poll also asked about political party support with 44% favouring the Socialist Party, 28% for the Liberal Party. Interestingly, women workers were less inclined to support the Emperor system (73%) and more inclined to support the Socialist Party (52%). Yoshimi argues that these numbers bring into question the stereotype of female conservatism in Japanese politics.
tours beginning in February 1946, two weeks before the Japanese learned that the new postwar constitution would place sovereignty in their hands, not those of the Emperor. Like the Emperor's New Year's broadcast, these tours began on GHQ's initiative with the hope of restoring order, curbing blackmarket activity, and drawing the people and the Emperor closer together. The tours began on February 19, 1946 in Kanagawa Prefecture and ended on August 23, 1952 in Hokkaido, covering almost every prefecture in the nation where the Emperor visited an endless stream of factories, coal mines, farm villages, seniors' homes, bereaved family associations, sporting groups, and schools. They were followed avidly by most Japanese and were reported regularly in the media. For the most

91 An outline of the new constitution was published in all of Japan's major dailies on March 6, 1946, about three weeks after the first Imperial tour to Kanagawa Prefecture.

92 Bix says that the initial impulse for the tours came from a January 13th letter from Reginald Blyth to the Grand Chamberlain, claiming that they might help to counter to horrendous food shortages the Japanese were experiencing. It was also Blyth's idea that the Emperor, on his return, issue a public statement exhorting the people to cooperate and sacrifice for the sake of each other. "Inventing the 'Symbol Monarchy' in Japan, 1945-52," p. 347.

93 This information comes from Ichikunin no shōwashi, vol. 5, "Senryō kara kōwa e," pp. 164-65. The last leg of the tour, postponed for almost three years, took place between August 8 and 23, 1952.

94 The tours were not continuous but were, in fact, punctuated by many interruptions. Bix has broken them down into four specific stages to demonstrate the continued instability of the "symbol monarchy" and the Emperor's own role in limiting the process of democratization. Ibid., pp. 346-59. While I agree with Bix in the main, my intent here is to show how these tours re-created the Emperor as the archetype postwar new man and as a symbol of reconstruction. The "symbol monarchy" may indeed have remained unstable in the eyes of Japan's elites, as Bix argues, but the evidence I offer here suggests that the people themselves had no such thoughts.
part, the public and the press responded positively to the Emperor’s tours. The weekly *Sandei Mainichi*, for example, ran regular features on the Emperor’s tour, describing everyday incidents such as Hirohito laughing at a joke or having his picture taken.\(^95\) In fact, these incidents were decidedly un-everyday in the sense that each was unprecedented in Japanese history. They did serve their purpose, however, by reinforcing the image of Hirohito as a kind of postwar everyman who suffered along with the people.

Everywhere the Emperor went crowds thronged the streets, straining to get a glimpse of Japan’s new postwar man. Ten-year old Ishikawa Keijirō recalled his remarkable conversation with Hirohito during a tour of his school in Yokohama on the first day of the tour. The conversation itself was not remarkable, but the fact that a ten-year old boy spoke to the Emperor certainly was:

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\begin{align*}
\text{H: Your house was destroyed in the bombings was it?} \\
\text{I: Yes sir.} \\
\text{H: I see (A, sō)\(^{96}\)}
\end{align*}
\]

\(^95\)Some of these stories are reproduced in *Ichikunin no showashi*, vol. 5, “*Senryō kara kōwa e*,” pp, 148, 154, 169, 177. This book also contains a wonderful collection of photographs from the tours, showing the Emperor in his new clothes interacting with his people. See, pp. 147-77.

\(^96\)The phrase “A, sō” became associated with Hirohito during his tours and was often used to parody him because of his awkward manner and squeaky voice. It also became a word of common currency associated specifically with 1946. Other words in vogue that year included: “ofurimitto” (off limits), referring to places Japanese people were not permitted to enter; “kamu kamu ebiribi” (come, come everybody), the name of a new English-language program; “pan pan garu” (pan pan girl), meaning a prostitute; and “haba haba” (huba huba), a response to an attractive woman Japanese men learned from their American counterparts. It was also slang for “step on it.” This
Part Two: Repentance and Responsibility

H: Your school supplies weren’t destroyed were they?
I: We were evacuated, so they weren’t destroyed
H: I see. That’s good isn’t it (A, sō. Sore wa yokatta ne)\(^{97}\)

Despite the Emperor’s pedestrian response to the destruction of his home, little Ishikawa was so excited that the Emperor was worried about his school things that he vowed to study hard and never sleep. Afterward, his teacher, Mr. Yamazaki, said to him, “That’s really our Emperor, Ishikawa-kun. Let’s study hard and become exemplary people (Shikkari benkyō shite rippa na hito ni narimashō).\(^{98}\) On February 20th the Mainichi Shimbun carried the story of the Emperor’s trip to Yokohama, accompanied by a large photograph showing Hirohito meeting a group of school students. There, standing to the right of the Emperor, amid his classmates, stood little Ishikawa, at attention, wearing clean white gloves.\(^{99}\)

Not everyone was as lucky to meet and speak with the Emperor as was Ishikawa Keijirō but, for many, the mere sight of Hirohito gave their lives renewed

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information is taken from Iwasaki and Katō, Shōwa sesōshi, p. 347; and Mainichi mukku: Sengo gojūnen, p. 20. If nothing else, Hirohito’s contribution to early postwar linguistic fashion helped to secure his place among the people.

\(^{97}\)This story comes from Oshima Yukio, Ningen kiroku, pp.34-35.

\(^{98}\)Quoted in Ibid., p. 35.

\(^{99}\)Yomiuri Shimbun, February 20, 1946. This picture is also reproduced in Oshima, p. 35.
purpose. Some people wrote poems and songs in his honour, others were moved to tears at seeing him in the flesh.\textsuperscript{100} Fukui refinery worker Wakasugi Iwajirô recalled that seeing the Emperor in person caused him to think more seriously about democracy and Japan’s reconstruction.\textsuperscript{101} Ikeda Pharmaceutical employee Arai Hisako remembered that simply being in his presence inspired her to work harder.\textsuperscript{102} Coal miner Nakamori Kiyosuke perhaps captured these sentiments best when he said that the Emperor was \textit{the symbol of reconstruction} (fukkô no shôchô).\textsuperscript{103}

Here we find the true impact of the imperial tours and the real transformative power of Japan’s new man. Whether urging students to study hard or exhorting miners to dig more coal, Hirohito became the very embodiment of new life in early postwar Japan. Through his research of labour unions and youth groups, Yoshimi Yoshiaki has argued that most Japanese welcomed the Emperor, not as

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{100}For a sampling of poems, see Yoshimi, \textit{"Senryôki nihon no minshû ishiki,"} pp. 94-95.
\item \textsuperscript{101}Wakasugi Iwajirô, \textit{“Gyôkô”} (The Emperor’s Visit), \textit{Shôen} (Spirit Garden), Fukui Seiren Kakô Honsha Kôjôhen, May 1948, reprinted in Ibid., p. 97.
\item \textsuperscript{102}Arai Hisako, \textit{“Tennô heika o mukae shite”} (Meeting the Emperor), \textit{Wa} (Harmony), Ikeda Yakuhin Osaka Kôjôhen, December 12, 1947, reprinted in Ibid., pp. 97-98.
\item \textsuperscript{103}Nakamori Kiyosuke, \textit{“Gokamon no kangeki o kataru”} (The Emotional Tale of the Emperor’s Questions), \textit{Oki no Yama} (Offshore Mountain), Okinoyama Tankô Kôgyôjôhen, March 1948, reprinted in Ibid., p. 97.
\end{itemize}
Part Two: Repentance and Responsibility

a divinity or god (kami), but as a man (ningen). As a man, the Emperor became one of the people, commiserating with them and sharing their sorrow, even though many continued to revere him in the time-honoured fashion. As one of the people, the Emperor also shared in their identification as victims. This was important because as the debate over war responsibility unfolded, the people, their sins being expunged and purified in the fires of defeat, came to represent the one true thing in early postwar Japanese society. The people's embracing of the Emperor made his transformation into a man of peace and benevolence easier. It also facilitated his resurrection as a victim, just like the people. In classic Tanabean style, the Emperor appeared to have negated his prewar self, travelled to the Pure Land (gensō) and then, selflessly foresaking his own enlightenment, returned (ōsō) to do good in this world: a latter-day bodhisattva.

The distinction between the man and the divinity frequently became blurred, but this helps to explain the much clearer distinction the people made between the Emperor and the Emperor system. For most people, the Emperor system was gun-kan-zai militarism of which the Emperor was as much a victim as were the people. As a prewar symbol rooted in the mists of antiquity, the Emperor had had his name taken in vain by the militarists who fostered the myth of his

\[104\] ibid., p. 99.
divinity. This opinion, held by many Japanese, facilitated the Emperor’s reconstruction as a postwar symbol from whom the people could once again derive their own sense of self.

In essence, the Emperor was the point at which change and continuity merged. When Hirohito toured Yamaguchi Prefecture in December 1947, for example, demobilized soldier Yoshimoto Tasuo, recalled his initial disgust at witnessing the rousing three cheers for the Emperor (Tennō Heika, Bazai!). Thinking of his fallen comrades, Yoshimoto found himself shaking violently, the cheer caught in his throat. Then, as he watched the Emperor make his way past the bereaved families and the war sufferers and climb the simple white podium, he was again overcome with emotion. As if in a revelation, Yoshimoto suddenly understood the ties of love that had bound the Emperor and the people for 2600 years. There is our Emperor, he realized, standing amid a tempestous world as the bright hope of the future for the Japanese people (nihonmin no kōmyō), though they walk a path of thorns (keikyoku no michi o iku).105 Yoshimoto’s comments call to mind the Emperor’s own path of thorns he claimed to have selflessly chosen to tread in ending the war which further strengthened the bonds of love between him and the people.

105Yoshimoto Tasuo, “Gofunkan no kangeki” (Five Minutes of Deep Emotion), Junkan Shittsu, December 10, 1947, reprinted in Ibid., pp. 95-96.
Morii Sugeo, the "opportunist" we met in Chapter Two, also felt the intertwining of continuity and change. Earlier that summer, Morii went out to watch the Emperor as he toured his region. Seeing him in person, Morii remarked that "he looked not unlike a salarymen" and that "he acted just like an ordinary person." Inexplicably, Morii was moved to tears and then found himself shouting "three cheers for the Emperor" along with the rest of the crowd. What a strange experience it must have been for Morii, standing there, arms raised, shouting \textit{banzai}! - for a salaryman!\textsuperscript{106}

The sense of continuity was also manifest in the criticisms of the imperial tours. GHQ had given the Japanese people license to criticize the Emperor and some in the media did just that. Two articles from the \textit{Yomiuri Hôchi} in early March 1946 lambasted the tours, the first arguing that they were simply being used as a tool to generate support for conservative political parties. While admitting that the Emperor's travels appeared to have "greatly revived the low spirits of the people and produced a feeling of intimacy between them and the Emperor," the editorial also lamented the fact that the tears of gratitude being shed by the people on seeing the Emperor was clear evidence that the "feudalistic morality of

\textsuperscript{106}Yoshimi, \textit{Kusa no ne no fashizumu}, p. 282. There is discrepancy between Yoshimi's account and the Imperial itinerary printed in \textit{Ichiokunin no shôwashi}. Yoshimi places Morii's recollection during the Emperor's tour on July 6, 1947 but according to the itinerary there were no tours between the Emperor's visit to Osaka and Kyoto on June 14th and his tour of Fukushima Prefecture on August 5th.
servility" still flourished. Until such feudalistic thinking was completely eradicated, the paper said, discussing the future of the Emperor was pointless. In the second piece, the author recounted his astonishment at the peoples' continued reverence for the Emperor during a local neighbourhood association meeting. Amid the whirlwind of rumours surrounding the Emperor's possible abdication, the writer argued that Hirohito should stop touring until that issue had been settled.

Understandably, there was also considerable opposition to the tours on economic grounds. Everywhere the Emperor went roads were improved, buildings repaired and repainted, and rubble cleared away. Everything, even most of the people, had a scrubbed and polished sheen. Numerous articles and letters to the editor pointed out that all the money used to prepare for these visits could be better spent on caring for war sufferers or restarting production. Moreover, others criticized these frantic and costly clean-ups for the simple reason that the Emperor would not see the real conditions as he travelled through the

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107 *Yomiuri Hōchi*, March 5, 1946.

108 See, for example, *Shin Yūkan*, August 8, 1947. Naturally, the JCP's official newspaper, *Akahata*, led the way in these types of criticisms. For two such examples, see the editorials in the August 10 and 20, 1947 issues.
In the first few months of the tours, the Emperor also came under attack as the food crisis grew to staggering proportions. Food demonstrations were commonplace in the first year following Japan’s surrender, reaching their peak in May 1946 just after Yoshida Shigeru’s Liberal Party won the first postwar election and shortly before the Emperor embarked on his June visits to Chiba and Shizuoka prefectures. In the two weeks that followed, as many as twenty food demonstrations per day were held in front of the Imperial Palace and the Prime Minister’s residence. Labour union officials, farmers, and ordinary citizens conducted sit-ins and impromptu political meetings. Their demands ranged from the resignation of the Yoshida government and an increase in the rice ration to a meeting with the Emperor and a detailed itemization of what he was eating.\footnote{Mainichi Shim bun, May 14, 1946.}

A climax of sorts occurred on two fronts in Tokyo during the first two weeks of May. In the first instance, a group of 400 disgruntled residents of Setagaya Ward staged a “Let Us Eat!” demonstration (Kuw asero demo) in front of the Imperial

\footnote{Asahi Shim bun, July 23, 1947.}
Palace on the morning of May 14th, led by the Give Us Rice People’s Ward Council (*Kome Yoseyo Kumin Taikai*). The group demanded an audience with the Emperor, which was refused, but over the next five days some 250,000 people joined in the protest. On May 17th, a group headed by *Asahi* editorial writer Kikunami Katsumi and Communist Party leader Tokuda Kyūichi demanded to meet with the Emperor and, although palace officials again rejected this, they did grudgingly agree to a meeting between a twelve-man delegation and lower-ranking palace officials and an inspection of the imperial kitchens. After emerging from the palace, the delgates regaled the crowd with their discoveries of fresh milk, chickens, pigs, and butter. Exasperated, one incensed delegate cried out, “This is what the emperor and his officials eat. Do you think they understand the meaning of the word ‘hunger’?”

On May 19th Japan held its first May Day rally in eleven years, aptly named “Food May Day” (*Shokuryō medē*). Workers, students and political activists swarmed the streets, merging with the Citizens Committee to Procure Rice for Food (*Hammai Kakutoku Jinmin Taikai*) which was continuing its demonstrations at the Imperial Palace. The crowd swelled to an estimated 500,000

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people.\textsuperscript{112} Between chants of the May Day slogan, "Give Us Rice!" (\textit{Kome Yokose!}) and the singing of the "International," the crowd heard speeches from union organizers and Socialist and Communist Party officials, all of whom condemned the food shortages.\textsuperscript{113} Demands for workers rights and respect for labour were interspersed with denunciations of the Yoshida government and calls for its resignation en masse.\textsuperscript{114} In a scathing parody of Imperial Rescripts, one member of the crowd, machine tool factory worker Matsushim Kôtaro, carried a handwritten placard which read:

\textit{Imperial Edict (Shôsho)}

\begin{quote}
National Polity is Preserved (\textit{Kokutai wa goji sareta zo})
We Eat Well (\textit{Chin wa tarafuku kutte iru zo})
You Subjects Starve and Die (\textit{Nanji jinmin uete shinu})
\end{quote}

\textit{Imperial Seal (Gyomei gyoji)}\textsuperscript{115}

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{112}] Gayn recorded that 250,000 people took part. \textit{Japan Diary}, p. 229. However, the \textit{Shûkan Asahi} placed the number at 500,000. \textit{Shûkan Asahi no Shôwaishi: Sesô, Jinhitsu, Jihen} (The Shôwa History of the Weekly Asahi: Society, People, Events), vol. 2, "Shôwa Nijûnendai" (The Shôwa Twenties [1945-1955]), Asahi Shimbunsha, 1989, p. 489.
\item[\textsuperscript{113}] \textit{Asahi Shimbun}, May 20, 1946.
\item[\textsuperscript{115}] A photograph of Matsushima and his placard is reproduced in \textit{Ichioku nin no shôwashi}, p. 35. See also Rôyama, \textit{Nihon no rekishi}, p. 68; and Masamura Kimihiro, \textit{Sengoshi}, p. 190. According to Bix, Matsushima was arrested and charged with the crime of lese majesty. He was convicted and only released in 1948 when the Emperor again demonstrated his benevolence by granting an imperial pardon. "Inventing the 'Symbol Monarchy' in Japan, 1945-52," pp. 348-49.
\end{itemize}
Chapter Six: The Emperor’s New Clothes

The Japanese people’s new-found freedom to demonstrate and voice their opinions in the public domain was short-lived however. On the following day, General MacArthur, at the request of Yoshida, issued the following stern warning:

I find it necessary to caution the Japanese people that the growing tendency toward mass violence and physical processes of intimidation, under organized leadership, present a grave menace to the future development of Japan... They constitute a grave menace not only to orderly government but to the basic purposes and security of the occupation itself. If minor elements of Japanese society are unable to exercise such restraint and self-respect as the situation and conditions require, I shall be forced to take necessary steps to control and remedy such a deplorable situation.116

Although there was very little violence, especially considering the size of the crowd, MacArthur’s words had a dramatic effect. The participants of the sit-in in front of the premier’s residence who had been demanding his resignation left quietly and all demonstrations were cancelled for the remainder of the week. Later that day,

116Quoted in Gayn, p. 232. Arisawa linked MacArthur’s warning to Dean Acheson’s anti-communism speech earlier in the month, implying that MacArthur saw the May Day demonstrations as a “red” light. His warning should also be seen as more than just a precursor to his banning of the general strike on February 1, 1947. Most historians see this latter event as the end of labour’s political activism and then link it with the beginning of the so-called “reverse course” (gyaku ko-su) later that year. However, if we take May 1946 as the beginning of the end for public demonstrations, then the reverse course must be backed up by at least a year (in light of Acheson’s speech). Alternatively, we may discard the reverse course altogether, arguing that GHQ’s decision to import food in March and MacArthur’s reaction to the May Day demonstrations (the carrot and stick of law and order) represent the crystallization of a heretofore unorganized and unfocussed occupation policy, one in which democratization and demilitarization was little more than an ideal completely at odds with the realities of postwar Japan. This argument cannot be taken up further here, but a re-examination of the reverse course from the perspective of 1946 rather than from 1947 or 1948 may suggest that a reconsideration of the American side of the occupation equation is in order.

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Yoshida announced the formation of his new cabinet.

MacArthur's warning clearly had the desired effect of removing people from the streets, but it did nothing to alleviate the food shortage or solve the distribution problem. Moderating MacArthur's harsh words, however, was the Emperor's own broadcast to the nation on May 24th. Proclaiming that the first step in national reconstruction was the stabilization of people's lives and the food supply, the Emperor called on all Japanese to work together in the spirit of brotherhood. This was the only way to reconstruct a peaceful cultural nation (heiwa na bunka kokka) and contribute to the progress of the world (sekai no shingun ni kiyō). In closing, the Emperor then expressed his hope that all competing interests would unite for the sake of "the beautiful customs of our family state" (kazoku kokka no uruwashii dentō) and for "the dignity of the people and the attainment of their spiritual mind" (waga kokumin no genshuku katsu shinsei na nentō no tassei).

The Emperor's broadcast is a good illustration of change-in-continuity. Gone were

117 The text is reprinted in full in Ichikunin no shōwashi, pp. 34-35. Translation mine.

118 I have not been able to determine whether this broadcast was planned before the tours began, as per Blyth, or whether it was initiated by the demonstrations themselves.

119 Here, for the third time, the Emperor linked Japan's fate with the progress of the world.
the *chin* (the Imperial "We") and the *nanji* (You Subjects), and all the other stilted phrasings that characterized his other public pronouncements. Replacing them was a more understandable vernacular which made the Emperor seem closer to the people with phrases like "our country" (*waga kuni*) and "our people" (*waga kokumin*). The message itself also reflected this change with its emphasis on peaceful cooperation and its demonstration of the Emperor's pain at the condition of the people. Yet, the evidence of continuity is also striking. References to the "family" state, which many were arguing was the structural evil of the past, and to its "beautiful customs," which was being linked to despotism and militarism, reveal a profound desire to preserve the past rather than overcome or negate it. Indeed, the entire pantheon of the Emperor's postwar words and deeds should be understood as an attempt to preserve the past by preserving himself. As paradoxical as it may seem, through his preservation he became a symbol of change and of new life.

The Emperor's broadcast on the food crisis did not mark a turning point in his personal reconstruction, nor did it silence the criticism of the imperial tours or discussion of his war responsibility. The following August, as the Emperor was in

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120In 1948 Okubo Genji argued that the May Day demonstrations, together with the promulgation of the new constitution that same month, represented the climax in opposition sentiment toward the Emperor system. This may have been so among Japan's intellectual elites but, as I will show shortly, it was not the case in the media or among the people who participated in the media debates. *Problems with the Emperor System in Postwar Japan*, p. 86. Okubo's analysis provides an excellent assessment of elite attitudes toward the Emperor but also displays a bias typical of most elites that the people were too politically backward to be able to grasp the
the middle of a four-month break, Terashima Yutaka wrote a lengthy piece in a local Sapporo magazine, again linking the issue of war responsibility with the Emperor’s tours. Terashima recognized the immense popularity of the tours but put this down to “traditional curiosity” while, at the same time, relegating Hirohito to the status of a movie star. He further argued that the tours were not an appropriate way to “stir up national spirit,” especially when the Emperor had not clarified his own moral responsibility. Terashima asked his reader to imagine what Japan’s war criminals must be thinking as they watched, from Sugamo prison, the Emperor being treated as a “mock favourite.”

The most intensive period of touring for the Emperor occurred in the latter half of

significance of the Emperor under the new constitution. Okubo did express legitimate concern that the Emperor system could be manipulated by reactionary groups in the future, but he also said that this could be mitigated against if the peoples’ political consciousness matured. Ibid., pp. 85-87.


Despite the fact that both MacArthur and Chief Prosecutor Keenan had decided not to prosecute Hirohito as a war criminal, the issue of the Emperor’s responsibility in war and defeat and his possible abdication continued to dog him throughout the tours, especially after the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE) opened in May 1946. However, while there was some public criticism in Japan, the most worrisome comments for MacArthur and Hirohito came from foreign countries, especially England, Australia, and New Zealand. For an insightful account of the Emperor’s absolution from responsibility (menseki) in the context of the war crimes trials in Japanese, see Awaaya, “Tokyo saiban ni miru sento shori,” in Awaaya et. al., *Senso sekinin, Sengo sekinin*, pp. 73-122; see also Arai Shinichi, *Senso sekiniron*, pp. 151-175; and Murakami Hyōe, “Tennō no sensō sekinin,” in Ikeda Hiroshi (ed), *Senso sekinin to sengo sekinin*, pp. 99-113. In English see Minear, *Victor’s Justice*, pp. 74-124; and Bix, “Inventing the ‘Symbol Monarchy, in Japan, 1945-52.”

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1947, when he visited twenty-one prefectures as well as Kyoto and Osaka.\(^{123}\)

Curiously, criticism during this period was comparatively mild which suggests that the tours, together with his *ningen senden*, and the food crisis broadcast, were having their desired effect.\(^{124}\) The muted public criticism is nonetheless surprising because the tours were becoming more elaborate affairs characterized by long motorcades and massive staged rallies. These displays, however, incurred the ire of GHQ which ordered the tours discontinued on January 12, 1948.\(^{125}\)

Around this time, Sakaguchi Ango once again took up his pen to add his voice to the satirizations of the Emperor.\(^{126}\) Shortly after some 75,000 people had paid their respects to the Emperor at Nijūbashī on the Imperial Palace grounds during the 1948

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\(^{123}\)This information is taken from the itinerary printed in *Ichōoku nin no shōwashi*, pp. 164-65.

\(^{124}\)Criticism of the tours by no means disappeared during this time but it was comparatively milder than in 1946. In that year the Emperor visited eight prefectures and Toyko in ten months. In 1947, he visited twenty-one prefectures, plus Osaka and Kyoto, in only seven and a half months; thus, criticism of the tours also appears to have been inversely proportional to their frequency, at least as far as 1946 and 1947 are concerned.


\(^{126}\)Satirization of the Emperor actually became prevalent in the latter half of 1947 when the magazine *Shinsō* began lampooning the Emperor in cartoon strips that showed him on a broomstick which was designed to highlight the fact that the Emperor only saw the sanitized version of Japan on his travels. *Shinsō*’s cartoon satires continued through until 1949. For two good examples of the cartoons, see Ibid., pp. 334-35.
New’s Years holiday, Sakaguchi wrote about the imperial tours, lamenting the fact that since the Emperor no longer referred to himself as *chin* or wore “the strange imperial gown,” the Japanese people had lost two of their favourite objects of satire. Fortunately, Sakaguchi said, since he still used the title *Tennō* all was not lost. Respect and dignity, he said, are earned, not bestowed. If the latter, however, then all the better for satirists. Here, he was not only criticizing the Emperor for self-delusions of grandeur but was castigating the Japanese people as well. Their adulation of the Emperor during the imperial visits, their chanting the phrase *Tennō Heika banzai*, and their prostration before his presence were nothing more than hero worship, which like all crazes were temporary. Taking a page from Terashima’s earlier criticism, Sakaguchi likened the Emperor’s popularity to that of the actress Tanaka Kinuyo or the champion swimmer Furuhashi Hironosume, but added that at least they had earned their fame through their own efforts and ability. If the Emperor thought that the crowds lining the streets to see him were

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127The account of New Year’s at Nijūbashi comes from the *Mainichi Shim bun*, January 3, 1948.


129In early January and August 1947 Furuhashi set a world record in the 400 metre freestyle. However, because Japan was banned from international athletic competition at the time, his record was not officially recognized until June 1949. In August 1949 at an international meet in Los Angeles, Furuhashi again stunned the world with a record time in the 1500 metre freestyle. Information on the former comes from *Ichiokunin no shōwash i*, pp. 84-85. For the latter, see Iwasaki.
evidence of popular sentiment, the joke was on him. “If the Tennô,” Sakaguchi cautioned, “does not realize the vanity of his imaginary dignity and that of receiving super-human devotion, cheers, and respect, we cannot help [but] describe his ignorance as imbecility.” Embedded in the satire of Sakaguchi’s writing was a serious message: If the Emperor truly was a man, then he must be evaluated by the standards of men. In essence, Sakaguchi was saying that the Emperor was naked and that his inability, or unwillingness, to admit this fact made him a fool in the eyes of those who saw through the fabric of his new postwar mantle.

Hirohito, Tôtó, and War Crimes

The fourth year of Japan’s occupation witnessed a resurgence of discussion about the Emperor, the Emperor system, and the possibility of his abdication. There were even rumours surrounding his conversion to Christianity.\(^{130}\) As the year wore on, no

\(^{130}\) Tomomatsu Entei, “The Emperor’s Possible Conversion Discussed,” *Shinri* (Psychology), July 1948, translated and reprinted in ATIS, Reel 54, Social Series 2747, Item 5. The writer, a professed Buddhist, appeared to take the rumours seriously, arguing that Hirohito’s conversion would pave the way for a renewal of fascism, and the eradication of Shintô. The only positive outcome he saw was the approbation of the United States which might be accompanied by even greater foreign aid and investment. Another article in a local newspaper took up this issue again in August. While taking no stand either way, it included the views of many Christian, Buddhist, and Shintô religious leaders. *Toyama Shim bun*, August 28, 1948, translated and reprinted in ATIS,
unanimity on the question of the Emperor's disposition emerged, although opinion polls continued to show strong support for Hirohito. One survey of Kagoshima residents revealed an understanding of the distinction between the Emperor, who should be retained, and the Emperor system, which needed to be reformed.\textsuperscript{131} Even in the case of the latter, the newspaper that reported on the poll said that the Japanese people understand that "the Emperor system and the actions of the State are two entirely different matters." Therefore, the system itself did not to be abolished, only purged of the evil "militarists and nationalist bureaucrats." Another poll conducted by the \textit{Asahi Shimbun} the following month reported that 90.3\% of respondents supported retention of the Emperor system and nearly 70\% agreed that Hirohito should stay on the throne.\textsuperscript{132}

Not a few politicians and bureaucrats weighed in on both sides of the issue. In a newspaper interview at the beginning of January, Speaker of the Lower House

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{131} \textit{Minami Nippon}, July 28, 1948, translated and reprinted in \textit{ATIS}, Reel 54, Editorial Series 2515, Item 3. Unfortunately, the translation does not provide the statistical results of the poll.
\item \textsuperscript{132} \textit{Asahi Shimbun}, August 15, 1948. This poll surveyed 3,080 people in the Kantō region and broke down the answers according to age, gender, profession, political affiliation, and education. With the exception of those who openly stated their affiliation with the JCP who voted 89\% in favour of the Emperor's abdication, support for his retention was fairly consistent across the board. Even with those connected to the JCP skewing the stats, however, about one in six still advocated his abdication, with the majority of those being under forty.
\end{itemize}
Matsuoka Komakichi recalled his earlier visits with the Emperor, saying that after each he felt growing confidence that "Japan will be reconstructed under the leadership of the Emperor."\footnote{Shin Yūkan, January 1, 1948, translated and reprinted in ATIS, Reel 45, Social Series 2511, Item 4.} Maintaining that the Emperor was more concerned about the people than they realized, Matsuoka criticized those who belittled the tours which he characterized as "acts of penance" designed to comfort the people. On the other side, Vice-President of the House of Councillors, Matsumoto Jiichirō created a stir when he excused himself from the Emperor’s opening ceremonies in the Diet on January 21st. Standing on principle, Matsumoto then refused an imperial invitation to the annual lectures and poetry readings held at the palace at the end of January. Matsumoto questioned why he needed to be given permission for something he himself had not requested, and further stated that he would consider attending only if the "fence surrounding the human Emperor was taken down."\footnote{Seiji, January 29, 1948, translated and reprinted in ATIS, Reel 46, Editorial Series 1708, Item 3.}

The dismantling of the fence, however, raised another interesting question. Writing on the fourth anniversary of Japan’s surrender, Miyazawa Toshiyoshi, asked whether the Emperor, divested of all the trappings of divinity, could be a true
Emperor. He further questioned whether the Emperor system could itself exist under such conditions. Like Okubo, Miyazawa expressed concern that the people still cherished the Emperor in their hearts, a psychological sentiment that smacked of irrationality. While supporting the idea of a human Emperor, Miyazawa maintained that a clear understanding of that Emperor’s relationship to ordinary men was essential to successful democratization. At about the same time, Oyama Ikuo took a harder stand, saying that the Emperor should abdicate as an act of atonement for his moral responsibility. He also expressed the belief that Emperor would be happier if he stepped down. For Oyama, the only way the Emperor could truly become one of the people was through abdication.

A Ritsumeikan University historian echoed Oyama’s argument, adding that the Emperor’s abdication would help to rid the Japanese people of feudalistic thinking, obliterate their obsessive regard for him, and place Japan another step ahead on the road to true democracy. In contrast, a historian from Kyoto University countered

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136Oyama Ikuo, “Sensō sekinin to Tennō no tai-i” (War Responsibility and the Emperor’s Abdication), Chūō Kōron, August 1948, pp. 53-61.
that abdication would not absolve Hirohito of responsibility.\footnote{Both these opinions come from the 
\textit{Jiji Shimpô}, August 20, 1948, translated and reprinted in \textit{ATIS}, Reel 56, Political Series 1423, Item 7. The historians in question were Drs. Naramoto and Fuji respectively. Unfortunately, the translation did not provide first names and I have been subsequently unable to uncover them.} The development of modern Japan, he said, involved a contradiction insofar as it had not been natural or spontaneous. The resolution of this could therefore only come about through the peoples' repentance. For the Emperor, however, abdication would be an evasion of responsibility. It would therefore be better for him to remain "in repentance on the throne" and devote himself to serving the nation. Here, again we see the invocation of the bodhisattva ideal of selflessly foregoing enlightenment in favour of saving the people. Debate between Japanese intellectuals and academics went back and forth in this manner throughout 1948, but it was a letter by Tokyo University legal scholar Yokota Kisaburô that seemed to spark greater interest among the public.

Yokota argued that the Emperor was responsible for the war on legal grounds because prior to the enactment of the new constitution sovereignty rested in him. Therefore, the Emperor must abdicate "for the sake of reconstructing a new Japan (\textit{shin nihon no saiken no tame ni}) based on peace and democracy."\footnote{\textit{Yomiuri Shimbun}, August 26, 1948. This letter was written in the context of a quasi-public debate between Yokota and Tokyo University president Nambara Shigeru, who had been an early vocal proponent of the Emperor's abdication. For a selection of Nambara's views, see Okubo, \textit{Problems of the Emperor System in Postwar Japan}, pp. 14-15, 17-18. Nambara was also a strong critic of Tanabe's philosophy. See Ienaga Saburo, \textit{Tanabe Hajime no shisô}, pp. 139-41.} Yokota's
Part Two: Repentance and Responsibility

argument prompted a variety of responses, both supporting and opposing his position. University student Kozawa Kamezo agreed that the Emperor’s abdication was a necessary prerequisite for strengthening both Japanese democracy and the Emperor system itself.139 Nichibei Communications section chief Hamano Suetarō made a similar arguing, saying that abdication was the only way to safeguard the Emperor system.140

The need to preserve the Emperor system and reconstruct the nation was also used by supporters of the Emperor’s retention. Characterizing Yokota’s position as the “carping of the intellegensia,” unemployed Iwakoshi Ichiro recalled with profound gratitude the Emperor’s efforts to bring peace to Japan in the closing days of the war.141 This example of benevolence, together with his transformation into a symbol of the state, was proof that the Emperor’s continued existence was crucial to Japan’s reconstruction. In another letter to the editor, Kanamori Tokujirō agreed, saying that if the Emperor was responsible so too were all the Japanese people. However, since the people had been deceived and were therefore not responsible,


140 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, September 2, 1948.

141 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, August 29, 1948. An editor’s note after Iwakoshi’s letter stated that the paper had received eleven other letters opposing Yokota’s argument.
neither was the Emperor. It was, in fact, the Emperor and the people together who would reconstruct a new Japan.

It seems that the Emperor was a symbol of new life regardless of whether one supported or opposed his retention. Abolitionists argued that abdication would be the first step in creating a peace-loving democratic nation which was, for many, the very definition of new life. This was the position of an Ise Shim bun editorial which argued that the Emperor’s abdication would be the first step toward Japan’s spiritual revolution.\(^{142}\) At the same time, those in favour of Hirohito remaining as a symbol claimed that his retention was essential for Japan’s reconstruction by the very same definition. According to a Yôsei Jihyô article, “because it is almost impossible to find another with such a noble heart among mortals, the more we come to know his merciful righteousness, the more our gratitude to the Emperor becomes.”\(^{143}\) For those who supported the Emperor, his declaration of humanity, his enshrinement in the constitution as a “symbol,” and his benevolence and concern for the people as expressed through the imperial tours, were evidence that the Emperor system, and the Emperor himself had become rational. This was further demonstrated by the

\(^{142}\)Ise Shim bun, September 15, 1948, translated and reprinted in ATIS, Reel 57, Editorial Series 2813, Item 1.

\(^{143}\)Yôsei Jihyô, November 1948, translated and reprinted in ATIS, Reel 60, Social Series 3241, Item 10.
many calls to study the Emperor system scientifically, and then reinforced by media characterizations of the Emperor as a man of peace and science.\textsuperscript{144}

One reason for the renewed flurry of interest in the Emperor was the closing arguments of the defense and the prosecution at the Tokyo war crimes trial on April 16th.\textsuperscript{145} By that time, the trial had run for two years, with 417 days of testimony involving 419 witnesses and 779 affidavits. In all the transcripts of the trial totalled 48,412 pages.\textsuperscript{146} After this, the tribunal's eleven judges retired to render verdicts on the accused. A full seven months later, the verdicts were handed down in a 1,218 page-long judgement. Throughout the trial, press reports waxed and waned in intensity, but summaries of the transcripts were carried regularly in every major Japanese daily. The relationship of the Emperor to the war crimes trial is, at once, simple and complex. On the one hand, GHQ's decision not to try Hirohio as a war criminal was made early in the occupation which rendered the public debate over this issue largely academic. On the other hand, the debate itself, as I have shown in the foregoing, was wide-ranging from which a variety of perspectives emerged. The

\textsuperscript{144}For examples of this, see \textit{Jiji Shimpô}, January 7 and July 13, 1947; \textit{Shakai to Gakkô}, November 1947; \textit{Shin Yukan}, January 1, 1948; and \textit{Kahoku Shimpô}, August 1, 1948.


\textsuperscript{146}Ibid., pp. 5, 26.
Chapter Six: The Emperor’s New Clothes

story of the Emperor’s absolution from prosecution has been told by numerous historians and will not be recounted here. For my purposes, the war crimes trial represented a historical singularity into which the debates over war responsibility, the Japanese national character, and the Emperor’s disposition all fed, and from which emerged a renewed commitment to reconstruction.

Overall, there was little criticism of the war crimes trial in the Japanese press.\textsuperscript{147} This was partly due to the fact that GHQ’s censorship regulations were broad enough to interpret such criticism as “disturbing the public tranquility.” However, there was also a strong sentiment, especially among those who admitted their own culpability, that war crimes should be prosecuted entirely by foreigners. As Toshiba Electric employee Mitsui Akira argued, the Japanese people should be cautious about pursuing the issue of war responsibility because “we are not worthy” (jishin no \textit{fushō}).\textsuperscript{148} Thus, another consequence of the blurring of distinction between deceiver and deceived in the war responsibility debate was a feeling that it would be

\textsuperscript{147}For a good discussion on the reception of the trials by the Japanese public, see Hosoya et. al., \textit{The Tokyo War Crimes Trials: An International Symposium}.

inappropriate for the robber to pass judgement on the thief.\textsuperscript{149}

This attitude resurfaced with the executions of the war criminals on December 23, 1948, nearly two months after the tribunal handed down its verdicts.\textsuperscript{150} Some argued that the executions of Tōjō and the other war criminals in no way absolved the Japanese people. Labourer Wazatani Tadashi, for example, argued that it would be a mistake to think that the death of the war criminals ended the age of militarism. "How many," he asked, "still exist wearing the mask of democracy?"\textsuperscript{151} Wazatani articulated an idea that many people believed in throughout the postwar years. Perhaps this was the reason why the executions also unleashed a further round of discussion about reflection, repentance, and atonement. In its "Prayer for Peace," an Asahi Shimbun editorial called on Japanese people to reflect on the war

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\textsuperscript{149}Of course there was no lack of cynicism about the hypocrisy of the trials, some of which occasionally took bizarre form. One Shimane town, for example, held a masquerade festival to parody the trials. Townsmen, dressed as war criminals, American soldiers, and judges, paraded through the streets in decorated jeeps to the delight of the crowd. Shoji Yoshitsugu, Kinsen (Golden Arrow), Yatsugun Shindōchō Seinendanhen, Inagural Issue, December 1946, reprinted in Ibid., p. 81. For other examples, see Ibid., pp. 81-84. See also Seinen no Hata, January 17, 1948 for criticism of Tōjō's prosecution in particular. In general, however, positive commentary outweighed the negative, but it too tended to be fairly moderate. For examples of this, see Kyoto Shimbun, January 26, 1948 and Kokusai Taimusu, September 13, 1948. See also Yoshimi, pp. 81-82.

\textsuperscript{150}See the editorials in Tokyo Shimbun and Daiichi, December 24, 1948. All the defendants had ten days in which to appeal the sentences to GHQ. MacArthur then consulted with the Far Eastern Commision on November 24th. The sentences were confirmed. Minear, Victor's Justice, p. 33.

\textsuperscript{151}Quoted in Yoshimi, "Senryōki no nihon minshū ishiki," p. 84.
and to continue their repentance through peaceful reconstruction.\textsuperscript{152} This message was echoed by the \textit{Mainichi Shimbun} which maintained that the people must recognize their collective responsibility and then channel this emotion into rebuilding the nation.\textsuperscript{153} The \textit{Tokyo Nichinichi} carried the same message but linked the deceivers and the deceived, saying that the Japanese people must continue to repent for allowing their leaders to destroy the peoples’ lives.\textsuperscript{154}

As for the Emperor, he was reported to have been “solemn and grave” on the day of the executions, sequestering himself in prayer at the Imperial Palace with the Empress.\textsuperscript{155} Discussions of his war responsibility were still heard in some quarters, but for most people December 23, 1948 provided closure on three and a half years of intense hardships and debates about Japanese selfhood. One writer believed that Tōjō’s death marked “the final demise of Japanese militarism.”\textsuperscript{156} The Emperor’s

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Asahi Shimbun, December 23, 1948.
\item Mainichi Shimbun, December 23, 1948.
\item Tokyo Nichinichi, December 24, 1948, translated and reprinted in ATIS, Reel 62, Editorial Series 2947, Item 3.
\item This quote come from an unidentified contributor to Sekai Keizai (World Economy), December 24, 1948. Translated and reprinted in ATIS, Reel 62, Editorial Series 2947, Item 2.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
own reconstruction, it seems, was complete, while the reconstruction of the nation in his name was just beginning. From this time, the language of early postwar Japan shifted from responsibility, repentance, and atonement to reconstruction - economic reconstruction in particular. In the words of a Shizuoka woman, the deaths of the seven war criminals had unleashed the pent-up energy for Japan's construction (*nihon no kensetsu no sojikara waku*).  

The Emperor became the symbol of that process and in the course of his resurrection, the Japanese people became, as in the debate over war responsibility, both deceivers and deceived. There is no doubt that the Emperor's transformation into a symbol of peaceful, democratic reconstruction was engineered and imposed on the Japanese people from above. But is also true that their acceptance of him stemmed from both historical conditioning and from the unprecedented disaster into which they had been thrown. Defeat was a unifying force for many Japanese, one that created the conditions for the emergence of *kyodatsu* and *shinsei*. I mentioned earlier that reconstruction was the mediating element between these two but, as the symbol of reconstruction, the Emperor himself became the means by which despair could be transformed into new life. Like absolute nothingness in Tanabe's philosophy, the Emperor was the site or location in which the Japanese

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157Quoted in Yoshimi, "*Senryō no nihon minshū ishiki*," p. 82.
people believed they could transform themselves.
In May 1949, shortly after the Dodge deflationary program went into effect, novelist Hayashi Fusao reflected on his memories of August 15, 1945. On hearing Hirohito’s broadcast, he remembered thinking, “we have been saved” by the Emperor who he called the embodiment of “superhuman unselfishness and courage.” For Hayashi, the broadcast was the starting point for building “a free and peaceful Japan... with the Emperor as its nucleus.”¹ The degree to which Japan has been peaceful and free in the postwar years is a matter of controversy. That reconstruction proceeded with the Emperor as the nucleus is less so. After August 15, 1945 Hirohito was never the same again but he remained, in reconstructed form, a powerful symbol of Japanese identity and continued to be utilized as a tool of political expediency.

This image of the Emperor endured in the minds of many Japanese throughout the postwar years. One did not have to be a warmonger or an ardent supporter of Japanese imperialist aggression to believe that the existence of the Emperor was integral to one’s own sense of self. That his new postwar image was constructed

and imposed on the populace should not obscure the fact that many Japanese truly believed in the Emperor as a symbol of their nation and of themselves. Hirohito and his advisers, despite their paranoia about a communist revolution, knew this and the Americans, despite their glaring lack of knowledge about Japanese society, somehow did too.

In a recent survey I began in the fall of 1998, the respondents, all members of the *yake ato sedai*, remembered the Emperor and the American forces with gratitude: the Emperor for ending the war and suffering with his people; the Americans for wiping away the vestiges of militarism. These responses are not surprising in and of themselves, but they are evidence of the success with which the Emperor was re-invented by his own hand and that of GHQ. They also illustrate the extreme difficulty of separating individual identity from that of nation, just as it was difficult for many to identify those responsible for defeat without indicting themselves. The debate over war responsibility and the national character

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2 I produced the five-page questionnaire with the kind assistance of Miyako Oe of Mount Allison University. With the help of former colleague Tomoko Saitō, I began sending the questionnaire, together with a cover letter introducing myself and describing my project, to elderly people in the Kantō and Kansai regions. To date, I have received only a tiny number of replies (seventeen) but, as part of an ongoing project to record wartime and early postwar memories, I hope to collect sufficient data with which to examine the relationship between personal experiences and historical memory of those experiences. Under separate headings, the questionnaire asked individuals to describe their impressions of the Emperor and America during and after the war. Every respondent acknowledged animosity toward the United States during the war and gratitude afterward. Fifteen of the respondents said that they never believed the Emperor was a god, but they also believed that he had saved the people by ending the war. Sixteen of them saw the Emperor as central to Japan’s reconstruction.
Epilogue: The Corner Turned

blurred the distinction between victimizer and victim and deceiver and deceived, and is therefore central to understanding the development of a postwar Japanese victim's consciousness. The Japanese people may have been deceived in war and in defeat but many recognized that they had participated in their own deception.

The prevalence of a victim's consciousness has been most often linked with the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki which, in the mid 1950s, became the focal point of the peace movement. Identification with these tragedies has been further strengthened by five decades of painful, lingering deaths, yearly memorials, and an endless stream of visitors to the peace museums in both cities. However, the atomic bombings cannot be the starting point for the emergence of a victim's consciousness simply because the Japanese people had no opportunity to discuss publicly these particular events during the first four years of the occupation. Nor were the lawyers for Japan's war criminals able to utilize the bombings in defense of their clients - information that would have

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made its way into the public domain as part of regular reporting on the trial.\textsuperscript{4} The true beginning of the victim’s consciousness must be located in the “conventional” destruction of Japan’s cities and the discourse of defeat that followed. The peace movement with its calls for “no more Hiroshimas” and its anti-nuclear stance drew on this existing discourse and, in the process, further heightened the sense of Japanese particularism that first emerged from the discourse of defeat itself.

The resurrection of the Emperor as the symbol of Japan’s reconstruction abetted the development of postwar particularism because he stood as an example of how the past could be negated in order to create new life. In doing so, he validated the process of negation as a tool with which \textit{kyodatsu} could be transformed into \textit{shinsei}. Of course, his own make-over was skillfully engineered by many hands including his own, but the Japanese people were for the most part unaware of this. They saw only the product, not the process. This product may have been imposed on the people for reasons having little to do with their own welfare, but it nonetheless would be a mistake to conclude that they were merely victims of forces beyond their control. The debates over war responsibility and the national character reveal that many people did participate

\textsuperscript{4}Minear discusses this in \textit{Victor’s Justice}. 375
directly in the construction of a new postwar identity at the same time as the Emperor himself was being remade from above. In each case, however, these reconstructed entities - the national character and the Emperor - were intensely particularistic with one reinforcing the tendencies of the other, and both hindering the creation of an identity that many believed should be founded on universal values. This left unresolved fundamental issues relating to the Japanese peoples’ past and their future. In the end, the Japanese people appear to have needed the Emperor, as a symbol if nothing else, in order to construct a new life that would fall in line with what many perceived to be “the great trends of the world.”

Okubo Genji made this point in 1948. After reviewing all the arguments for and against retention of the Emperor, Okubo concluded that the Japanese people’s emotional ties to Hirohito were simply too strong for them to ever conceive of themselves without him. This need and the manner in which it was satisfied shaped the consciousness of an entire generation and therefore must always be considered when exploring the evolution of modern Japan.

The need for unifying symbols - be they memory, history, or relics - from which a

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5 The use of this phrase was widespread in Japan, in both press and scholarly circles. The Rekken historians and the SSC men, in particular understood the “great trends of the world” to be universality, democracy (regardless of how it was defined), and international cooperation.

6 Okubo Genji, The Problems of the Emperor System in Postwar Japan, pp. 75-82.

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sense of self can be derived is integral to the formation of identity in the modern world. The invention and reinvention of the Emperor as a tradition in Japan’s modern era represents the working through of this process in one particular nation. Defeat added another layer of complexity due to its enormous psychological and physical impact. Despite the unprecedented disruption of defeat, however, the early postwar years represent a “conjuncture” in the construction of self and society throughout modern Japanese history. The issues raised in the wake of defeat and the language used to articulate those issues were part of a larger, ongoing project of identity construction that has continually reinforced the connection between the individual self and the symbols and trappings of the nation-state since the Meiji era. The symbols of defeat and the Emperor performed this function in early postwar Japan, and they both ensured that Japanese identity would be grounded, as before, in exclusivity.

The process by which this new particularism emerged should not be seen as necessarily unique to Japan; rather, it should be understood as something

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8 This is Fernand Braudel’s term to describe the moments of great change in the “longue duree.” See Civilization and Capitalism, 1500-1800, vol. 1, The Structures of Everyday Life, Routledge, Keegan Paul, 1984.
common to the modern world, and therefore something amenable to comparative analysis. Because individual identity is intimately connected to national identity, the tension between the particular (the symbols of self and nation that define difference) and the universal (political, legal, and moral codes ideals that unite us) reveals itself to be a distinctly modern problem. Particular symbols distinguish one nation and its inhabitants from another while universal ideas of freedom and peace create a common ground for human striving. The danger lies in the conflation of the particular with the universal or, to use Tanabe's phrase again, when the particular "absolutizes its own relativity." The result: the emergence of radical human evil. This is what happened to Japan as a nation and to Tanabe as an individual.

However, Japan was not the only nation, nor was Tanabe the only individual, to tread this path. Tanabe himself recognized that radical evil was not a Japanese problem but a human one, and it is perhaps for this reason that he maintained that even the victors in the war - America and the Soviet Union - must perform zange continuously, not necessarily for any specific evils committed such as war crimes, but to guard against the all too human tendency of presuming oneself to
be absolute.\textsuperscript{9} For Tanabe, as for others like Uchimura Kanzô and Ienaga Saburô, this tendency could be held in check through the process of negation whereby one repented for one's sins and then died to oneself, only to be reborn in social solidarity with other selves.\textsuperscript{10} According to this way of thinking, the act of negation was not simply a tool, but in fact functioned as a universal principle or law governing human behaviour.

Since the early postwar years were awash in the language of negation, further examination of this era may prove useful for exploring how the tension between the universal and particular is generated and dealt with in Japanese history as well as that of other nations. If we understand negation as the mediatory element between the universal and the particular, then we can use this structure to examine some of the essential problems in modern history such as the construction of meaning and the frequently uneasy relationship between the past, present, and future. At the very least, we may find that Japan's experience is not as radically different or unique as it is often portrayed.

\textsuperscript{9}"Preface," pp. 15-16. Tanabe's warning was prophetic given that the values we in Canada and America consider to be universal truths (so-called western values) are historically the particular product of one tiny region of the world, and given that we have violated those values as frequently as we extolled their virtues to others.

\textsuperscript{10}See my reference to these men, and to Oshima Nagisa, in page eight of the Introduction.
With this idea in mind, I want to return to the concept of *wakon/yōsai* which I touched on in a number of places earlier as a way of linking thematically the importance of the early postwar years to the entire sweep of modern Japanese history. We have seen that the attempt to overcome the past with the tools of rationality and science was one response to defeat articulated by many Japanese. We have also examined how the Emperor himself represented one of the few threads of continuity with that past. Herein lay the problem: How to jettison the past without discarding the Emperor by utilizing a language that most people acknowledged was not indigenous to Japan. Seen from this perspective, the early postwar debates over the nature of self and society should therefore be understood as one phase in an ongoing attempt to work through the problem posed by *wakon/yōsai* in the late nineteenth century.

The extent to which *wakon/yōsai* was the desired goal of Meiji era and, subsequently, the extent to which it has actually been achieved, has generated tremendous discussion and debate in twentieth century Japan. To a significant degree, the debate over the essence of the Meiji state, as well as the process by which it was constructed, has given rise to a “problem consciousness” (*mondai*...
ishiki) and a “crisis consciousness” (kiki ishiki), both of which have helped to define the nature of modern Japanese society.\(^{11}\) One of the clearest articulations of both the problem and the crisis comes from Natsume Sôseki in his famous lecture “Civilization in Modern-Day Japan” (Gendai nihon no kaika), delivered in Wakayama prefecture as part of a Asahi Shimbun-sponsored lecture tour in 1911.\(^{12}\)

After some digression about his lack of skill as a speaker and the enervating heat - it was August after all - Sôseki began by defining civilization as the “process through which human vitality manifests itself” (ningen katsuryoku no hatsugen no ketsuro).\(^{13}\) As a process, civilization was constantly moving or changing and was therefore grounded historically in time. Human vitality manifested itself through time due to the entanglement of two opposing forces acting on, and in,

\(^{11}\)One can argue that both a crisis consciousness and a problem consciousness arose with the reappearance of the foreigner in the late 18th century and then was further exacerbated by the disruptive transition from Bakumatsu to Meiji. However, insofar as fûkoku kyôhei represented a concrete goal achievable through direct government policy and action, I would argue that the fulfilment of this goal following the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 and the Meiji Emperor’s death six years later actually unleashed these forces because there was no clear articulation of what was to be done once fûkoku kyôhei had been achieved.

\(^{12}\)This lecture was the second of four lectures Sôseki delivered on the Asahi tour in August 1911.

\(^{13}\)Quoted in Aoki, Nihon bunkaron no hen'yô, p. 7. In English, see Jay Rubin’s translation of this essay in Rubin (ed), Kokoro and Selected Essays by Natsume Sôseki, Madison Books, 1992, pp. 257-283. Unless otherwise noted, however, all translations here are mine, taken from Aoki.
the human subject. The first was "positive motion" (sekkyokuteki katsudô) whereby vital energy was consumed or exhausted (shômô shîta), and the second was "negative motion" (shôkyokuteki katsudô) whereby energy was conserved (setsuyaku shîta). The tension generated between "vitality conserving actions" (katsuryoku katsudô) and "vitality consuming devices" (katsuryoku kufû) gave rise to civilization which, for Sôseki, was synonymous with "modernization" (kindaika), "social progress" (shakai hatten), and rationalization (gôrika). The human subject was driven by two seemingly paradoxical impulses; one sought to conserve human vitality by resisting the imposition of external stimuli in order to assert the freedom of the subject itself. These impositions took the form of social norms such as duty and the myriad demands placed on the self by others; the other impulse strove to assert the self by consuming vitality through the pursuit of pleasurable or leisurely pastimes. Thus, one part of civilization gave rise to social structure, government, and productive forms, while the other led to the construction of literature, science, and philosophy.

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14 This is Aoki’s interpretation, but from my reading of the English original, I also agree that these words were all essentially synonyms.

15 Quoted in Aoki, Nihon bunkaron no henjô, pp. 7-8. This impulse was similar to the “culturalism” Tanabe identified some thirty-five years later and which he opposed because it was this-worldly, hedonistic, and ultimately antithetical to the ideal project of social harmony.

16 Sôseki argued that the technological contrivances of modern society such as the automobile, the telegraph, and the telephone were in fact products of humans’ “unabashed desire to avoid effort.” Sôseki’s humorous style comes through clearly when he describes the essential
Having identified the fundamental process by which civilization advances, Sōseki then turned his attention to Japan, and it is here that we find the core of his message. In contrast to Western civilization (seiyō bunka), "that is, civilization in general," which was entirely generated from within (naihatsuteki), Japanese civilization was "forced to assume a certain form as the result of pressure applied from the outside."\(^{17}\) In a word, it was externally generated (gaihatsuteki). Sōseki admitted that during the Edo period Japanese society had developed according to its own internal impulse, but all that came to an abrupt end with the reappearance of the foreigner.

After two hundred years of foreign exclusion, we were jolted awake by the stimulus of Western culture... Suddenly we lost our self-centredness and found that we could not get by without external compulsion.\(^{18}\)

At this point the contradictions in Sōseki’s own argument become glaringly obvious. Having defined civilization as a product of two entangling forces, he then proceeded to explain that the superiority of Western civilization - infinitely laziness of the human race, as in this short passage about the development of technology: "...these marvellous devices are but the sudden transformation of some fairly low-level human instincts: Faced with the need to perform some task in the interest of survival, our first reaction is to try and get by without doing it as long as we can go on living to our satisfaction. Or else we react in anger: 'Get out of here! Life’s too short. I’m not going to break my back!' The next thing we know, we have the telephone. Like magic." "Civilization of Modern-day Japan," in Kokoro and Selected Essays, p. 266.

\(^{17}\)Ibid., p. 272.

\(^{18}\)Quoted in Aoki, p. 8.
more complex than that of Japan - was due entirely to internally generated impulses which resulted in the development of "labour-conserving means many times more powerful than our own." But what of Edo Japan’s two hundred-year period of foreign-free internally generated development? Presumably, this impulse, which manifests itself through vitality conserving devices, leading to creativity in philosophy, science, and the arts, lay dormant in Japan’s case while the West’s own internal impulses became the very embodiment of vitality itself.

Sōseki completely ignored that fact that he had violated his own definition of civilization as the interaction of both internal and external forces. In fact, under that definition, Japan should finally have been on the road to true civilized status due to the belated union of nai and gai. Such was not the case, however. Sōseki’s assessment of Japan’s development at the end of the Meiji era was thoroughly pessimistic (hikanteki) because in place of a flourishing civilization stood a nation characterized by dependence and superficiality.

The country [Japan] is like a man who has been snatched up by a flying monster. The man clings desperately to the monster, afraid of being dropped, hardly aware of the course he is following... A nation, a people that incurs a civilization like this can only feel a sense of emptiness, of dissatisfaction and anxiety. There are those who gloat over this civilization of ours as if it were internally motivated, but they

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are wrong... They are false and shallow, like boys who make a great show of enjoying cigarettes before they even know what tobacco tastes like, This is what the Japanese must do in order to survive, and this is what makes them so pitiful.\textsuperscript{20}

S\=oseki described a world in which vitality consumption had become a slave to vitality conservation, resulting in a society dominated by external forces and exhausted by a vitality-sapping struggle to fend off external impositions. What remained was a superficial society where change was mechanistic and where all attempts to alter that reality would result in nervous breakdown. The superficiality of Japanese civilization stemmed from, and resulted in, a weak society whose citizens rarely rose above mimesis and followership.

If we were stronger, it would be a simple matter for us to take the lead and make them [westerners] imitate us. Instead, we imitate them. And because ago-old customs cannot be changed overnight, all we can do is mechanically memorize Western manners - manners which, on us, look ridiculous.\textsuperscript{21}

After constructing this bleak, Gordian edifice, S\=oseki further blackened the structure by concluding that there was no solution to the problem. “There is really nothing we can do about it. We must go on skimming the surface, fighting

\textsuperscript{20}Ibid., pp. 278-79. Italics mine. I emphasize this phrase to illustrate the extreme degree of fatalism evident in S\=oseki’s words. It also suggests that, despite enjoying a higher degree of material civilization, the Japanese were, in S\=oseki’s view, still living at the subsistence level spiritually or emotionally.

\textsuperscript{21}Ibid., p. 279.
The fatalistic sentiment that characterized Sōseki's view of Japan in 1911 and the contradictions embedded in the argument itself also emerged again in the early postwar critique of the Japanese national character. This is evident in the language of dependency, helplessness and, above all, imitativeness which reflected both Sōseki's perspective and that of the yake ato jidai. In this sense, the similarities between the two views provide an element of thematic continuity in Japan's modern era, insofar as Sōseki's argument and the postwar discourse on the national character focused exclusively on what was wrong with it. Here again we hear the echoes of Tashiro's call for a "pathological dissection" of Japanese society. Despite a gap of some thirty-five years, both views carried with them fundamental concerns over the realization of the Meiji ideal of wakon/yōsai. We cannot say, therefore, that the urge toward self-depreciation was unique to the early postwar era. However, that critique, borne of destruction, defeat, and despair, did represent a significant disruption in the modern reflexive discourse on Japan and what it meant to be Japanese, if only because of the enormity of the crisis itself.

22Ibid. p. 280.
Wakon/yōsai was fundamentally flawed from Sōseki’s perspective because of the backward character of Japanese civilization. This meant that wakon would always be subordinated to yōsai due to the unequal power relationship that existed between Japan and the West. For Sōseki, wakon and yōsai were incompatible because of the glaring inequality between the two. While he did not advocate discarding the former in favour of the latter, Sōseki also offered no means by which the tension between the two could be ameliorated. Between the time of his lecture and Japan’s defeat, this tension was manifest in extreme swings from one pole to the other, not unlike the “pendulum theory” of Japanese politics promoted by the YOHANSEN men and adopted by Joseph Grew toward the end of the war.

Unlike Sōseki’s lament, however, in the early postwar debates wakon represented all that was to be discarded, destroyed, or erased in the frantic drive to build a new Japan. Moreover, the tools with which the dissection and cremation of the national character were to be performed were the very same ones embodied by the concept of yōsai. Yet, like Sōseki, many postwar commentators recognized

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This is an inversion of the central premise of Edward Said’s argument that the emergence of “self” and “other” is a function of unequal power relationships whereby a superior “occidental self” emerges from the discovery of an inferior “oriental self.” In Japan’s case, however, both Sōseki’s critique of late Meiji society and the postwar deconstruction of the Japanese national character were products of the awareness of an inferior “Japanese self” which emerged in tandem with the discovery of a superior “western other.” On the centrality of unequal power relationships in Said’s project, see Orientalism, pp. 8-27.
that culture could not be imposed from without, in the same way that Tanabe argued that repentance could not be urged on by others. Ironically, however, this is exactly what happened, and the tension generated by such a settlement has defined the Japanese discourse on self ever since. The Emperor’s resurrection compounded this problem, because it was imposed from without and because it precluded a complete accounting of the past by perpetuating an unresolved element of *wakon*. Had Sōseki been alive, he may well have agreed with Sakaguchi that nothing but the veneer of society had changed.

While defeat did not create the problem, it did amplify the tension between these two seemingly opposing poles through a torturous process of self-reflection and self-loathing. This is why I argue that the early postwar years should be understood as being continuous with the past and the future. The debates over responsibility, the national character, and the Emperor were all articulations of an earlier unresolved problem. But they also represented the starting point for a new round of discussion over Japanese identity made possible by the collective experiences of an entire generation for whom new life began in the scorched earth of Japan’s cities and the *take no ko seikatsu* of the black market. Tanabe was one individual who attempted to resolve the problem of how to create new life, but his own personal path was not trod by many in the wake of Japan’s defeat. Rather than opting for the negation of the reason-based self through the power of
action-faith-witness in nothingness, most Japanese people understandably chose rationality and science in this world which pulled them right back to the problem of *wakon/yōsai* discussed by Sōseki in 1911. It also pushed them forward into the *nihonjinron* literature of the later postwar years, the source of which, for many Japanese scholars, was defeat and life in the turning point.\(^{24}\) Theories of *nihonjinron* are at least as old as *wakon/yōsai*, but I agree with Aoki that the disruption of defeat was instrumental in creating new ground for these debates. Even when this literature exploded in the 1970s, defeat was still central because it heightened the stark contrast between the hardship of the early postwar years and the material affluence of Japan as an emerging economic superpower.

Even a cursory examination of *nihonjinron* literature reveals that it is based on a particularism usually expressed in the binary opposition of Japan and the West. This orientation, while having its roots in the nineteenth century, found new life in the early postwar years, especially in the debate over the national character. Defeat and the search for who was responsible facilitated the internalization of this debate which produced a specific set of traits, all uniquely Japanese. The Emperor’s resurrection as a man of peace and as a symbol of the people reinforced

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\(^{24}\)Two examples of this are Aoki, *Nihon bunkaron no henyō*, and Sakai Naoaki, *Translation and Subjectivity*. Sakai in fact argues that Watsuji Tetsujirō was the father of *nihonjinron* literature, beginning with his wartime writings on ethics and morality.
this sense of particularism because he was the ultimate expression of Japanese uniqueness. Finally, the victor’s discourse, which also highlighted Japanese particularism, became the starting point for North American scholarship on Japan in the postwar years. This discourse has intersected its Japanese counterpart so frequently over the last fifty years that the two have become parasitic, with each feeding off the other in an interminable feast of “self” and “other.”

Directions for Future Research

One purpose of this dissertation has been to highlight specific debates in early postwar Japanese society that have not been well-documented in the English-language literature. A clearer understanding of these debates may form the basis for new comparative analyses with Japan’s other modern historical conjuncture - the Meiji era, a project that historians of Japan have yet to undertake in any sustained manner. These debates also represent a useful starting point for further examination of postwar social history, particularly now since the so-called “miracle” has become tarnished in the light of Japan’s prolonged economic recession. In a few short years the yake ato sedai will be gone and with them living memory of the early postwar years. Recording these memories and locating
them in the existing documentation of the past is a difficult but important task because they are one of the few available sources of the everyman and woman whose voices often get lost in the better-documented dialogues of the elite.

The early postwar years also represent a moment in the construction of identity as a historical process. This approach offers many opportunities for comparative and interdisciplinary study since, as an attribute of modernity, identity formation is a process common to all modern societies. Because identity is constructed in a manner similar to the way in which history is written, it may also allow the historical profession to reflect on itself and re-examine the meaning of written history as a socially-constructed project. Since much of the theory that drives history comes from outside our discipline, historians face similar problems in the construction of meaning as do the Japanese people when attempting to resolve the tensions between nai and gai that Sōseki recognized so perceptively.

In this regard, the issues articulated in the debate over war responsibility and the national character illustrate a problem that has plagued our ability to understand other countries and cultures, particularly those of Asia, the Middle East, Africa, South America. Simply put, it is the tendency to make comparative statements in the form of binary oppositions. In Japan’s case, the "Japan/West" dichotomy is clearest example of this. The discourse of defeat and the victor’s discourse both
utilized this type of language in assuming a specific self and describing a particular other. It occurred under the extreme conditions of war and defeat, but a cursory reading of today’s English- and Japanese-language histories suggests that this practice continues to be widespread. While the “West” is often shorthand for Western Europe and the United States (or in the hands of many American writers, for America itself), there are many assumptions entangled and embedded in this language that are rarely ever examined, let alone questioned. This is true whether we speak of a Japanese writer comparing his or her country to the United States or a Canadian writer discussing the essence of Japan.

Sōseki’s critique of Japan’s inability to internally generate culture and the postwar lament over Japanese imitativeness and servility mirror almost exactly the victor’s discourse, from which has emerged a litany of stories about Japan’s unique ability to borrow, copy, and adapt. Regardless of whether these accounts are praiseworthy or pejorative, all carry the assumption that Japan-as-copier can be usefully contrasted with the West-as-creator. Both Japanese and non-Japanese have contributed to the “absolute truth” of this binary structure and both should therefore be seen as having, at least unintentionally, contributed to the nihonjinron phenomenon.25 Consequently, analyses of this phenomenon must

25Here, it may be more profitable to understand the Japan/West dichotomy as the unequal balance of two particularisms rather than as a relationship between universal and particular.
incorporate the discourse of defeat and the victor’s discourse, an approach which may demonstrate that our view of Japan as unique and imitative is as central to our sense of self as it is to the Japanese self-image.  

These self/other categorizations did not begin with war and defeat but the intensity of the experience certainly forced the Japanese people to examine themselves in a heretofore unprecedented manner. Ultimately, the Japanese people were no more able to walk away from their past than any other group of people. The crisis of defeat, however, did provide a powerful set of symbols with which they could once again impose order on their shattered environment. The early postwar years were unique in the modern Japanese experience with crisis, but precisely because they were understood by so many to be a symbolic beginning/end, they are ideally suited to provide an entrée into both the past from which they emerged and the future into which they flowed.

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26 This was the ideal to which Tanabe aspired when he encouraged the people of all nations to perform 

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for themselves because the process of negation by which rebirth was effected would strip away all assumptions and pretences and force us to confront ourselves as we really are.

27 One of the few works that has looked at this issue in a comparative context is Ian Buruma, 

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