

JAPAN FOUNDATION 

NEW  
voices

Volume 2:

A Journal for Emerging  
Scholars of Japanese Studies  
in Australia and New Zealand

**NEW**  
**voices**  
**voices**  
**NEW**

**New Voices Volume 2:**  
A Journal for Emerging Scholars of Japanese Studies in Australia

The Japan Foundation, Sydney

*New Voices*

**Volume 2: A Journal for Emerging Scholars of Japanese Studies in Australia**

*New Voices* Volume 2 is available for download from the *New Voices* website: <http://www.jpf.org.au/newvoices>

December 2008

© Copyright The Japan Foundation, Sydney, 2008

All material in *New Voices* is copyright. Copyright of each piece belongs to the author. Copyright of the collection belongs to the editors. Apart from any fair use as permitted under the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part may be reproduced without the prior permission of the author or editors.

The Japan Foundation, Sydney  
Shop 23, Level 1 Chifley Plaza  
2 Chifley Square  
SYDNEY NSW 2000  
Tel. (02) 8239 0055  
Fax. (02) 9222 2168  
[www.jpf.org.au](http://www.jpf.org.au)

**Editorial Advisory Board:**

Professor Kent Anderson, Australian National University  
Dr Tomoko Aoyama, University of Queensland  
Professor William Coaldrake, University of Melbourne  
Dr Misuzu Hanihara-Chow, Macquarie University  
Professor Purnendra Jain, University of Adelaide  
Ms Tomoko Koyama, Macquarie University  
Professor Tessa Morris-Suzuki, Australian National University  
Associate Professor Alison Tokita, Monash University

**Editor, Volume 2**

Dr Matthew Stavros, University of Sydney

**Series Editors**

Wakao Koike, Acting Director, The Japan Foundation, Sydney  
Susan Wake, Program Coordinator, The Japan Foundation, Sydney

The views expressed in this journal are those of the authors, and do not necessarily coincide with those of the editors or members of the Editorial Advisory Board.

Japanese names are written surname first, except where the person concerned has adopted Anglo-European conventions. The long vowel sound in Japanese is indicated by a macron (e.g. *kōtsū*), unless in common use without (e.g. *Tokyo*).

ISSN: 1833-5233

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21159/nv.02>

Printed in Australia by Gotham.

Cover Design by Warren Liang.

© Copyright The Japan Foundation, Sydney, 2008

## Foreword

This is the second issue of *New Voices*, showcasing the work of recent honours graduates who completed their research at Australian Universities from 2005 –2007.

*New Voices* was launched in December 2006 with the aim of supporting early career researchers and postgraduate students in Japanese studies to share their research interests with as wide an audience as possible.

We are delighted with the support and enthusiasm that *New Voices* has received, and for this second issue we are pleased to present 11 articles of outstanding quality and diverse areas of research.

I hope that *New Voices* will contribute to encouraging emerging Japanese studies scholars to continue their research and interest in Japan, while also giving general readers access to the wide breadth and high quality of Japanese studies in Australian universities.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the following people for their assistance on this issue of *New Voices*: our Guest Editor, Dr Matthew Stavros for his invaluable support and advice throughout the entire publication process; members of the editorial advisory board, for kindly offering their time and expertise to review the articles; Susan Wake for editorial assistance; and finally the 11 contributors and their supervisors without whose interest and enthusiasm this project would not have been possible.

Wakao Koike  
Acting Director, The Japan Foundation, Sydney

# Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>iii</b>
Wakao Koike	
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>vi</b>
Matthew Stavros	
<b>Gendered Language in Recent Short Stories by Japanese Women, and English Translation</b>	<b>1</b>
Lucy Fraser	
<b>Transcultural Flow of Demure Aesthetics: Examining Cultural Globalisation through Gothic &amp; Lolita Fashion</b>	<b>21</b>
Masafumi Monden	
<b>Representations of the Japanese in Contemporary Australian Literature and Film</b>	<b>41</b>
Erika K. Smith	
<b>Symbols of State Ideology: The Samurai in Modern Japan</b>	<b>63</b>
Lisa Narroway	
<b>Understanding Samurai Disloyalty</b>	<b>80</b>
Joshua Archer	
<b>Beyond Silence: Giving Voice to Kure Mothers of Japanese-Australian Children</b>	<b>103</b>
Kathleen Cusack	
<b>Who Are the Ianfu (Comfort Women)?</b>	<b>128</b>
Kirsten Orreill	

<b>The Replication and Excess of Disciplinary Power in Sekigun and Aum Shinrikyo - A Foucaultian Approach</b>	<b>153</b>
Philip N. Eate	
<b>The Rise and Decline of Japanese Pacifism</b>	<b>179</b>
Yuan Cai	
<b>After the <i>Ainu Shinpō</i>: The United Nations and the Indigenous People of Japan</b>	<b>201</b>
Crystal Porter	
<b>An Investigation of L1 Influence on Japanese and Chinese Native Speakers' Use of English Tense Forms</b>	<b>220</b>
Rose-Ellen Kesselly	
<b>Notes on Contributors</b>	<b>249</b>

## Preface to the second volume of *New Voices*

This issue of *New Voices* is a monument to the strength, diversity, and maturity of undergraduate Japanese Studies in Australia. The complexity and profundity of the topics tackled by the authors of the essays published here testify to a degree of sophistication that is commendable for any scholar but especially so for undergraduates. The quality of the research and methods used are outstanding, and the level of stylistic refinement and execution is inspiring. Nothing should detract from the individual achievements of the authors featured here. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that their work is the product of a nation-wide curriculum on Japan that, in terms of its enrollment and teaching numbers, range of instruction, and strength in language training is unparalleled in the English-speaking world. In fact, Australia has the world's largest per-capita population of Japanese language learners and in terms of sheer numbers, it is only third behind China and Korea. In a country with a population smaller than California, there are over 1,500 primary and secondary schools teaching Japanese language and 56 universities or colleges that maintain comprehensive Japanese Studies programs. Together, these institutions employ almost 3,000 instructors and scholars who teach and conduct research on Japanese language, literature, linguistics, history, culture, society, and politics. Therefore, while the authors of the essays published here are deserving of commendation in their own right, certain praise is also due the army of teachers, the steady stream of generous funding, and the wealth of library resources that has made their studies possible and Japanese Studies in Australia so strong.

The 'new voices' heard in this issue belong to recent honours graduates who met certain core criteria. First, they all successfully completed an honours program at an Australian university in the past four years and earned top marks on their research theses. Their academic supervisors nominated their work for publication and each engaged in the sometimes heart-rending task of drastically shortening their manuscripts to fit the new format. Finally, each of the essays was blindly reviewed by at least two academics who generously offered input and approved them for publication. This process ensured the highest standards but, inadvertently, excluded the work of some potential candidates. To be sure, there are more than a few recent outstanding Australian honours graduates whose theses became the core of doctoral projects, a challenging endeavor that, no doubt, prevented them from contributing to this collection. Others had their original theses published in academic journals, a great achievement that excluded them from this issue. More still secured jobs upon graduation that made them either too busy or too distant from the field to revisit their honours theses at this time. I mention this here merely to make the point that these eleven essays by no means account for the total body of outstanding honours theses completed over the past several years. Nevertheless,

I do believe that they are a strong and loyal representation of the remarkable level of quality, diversity, and intellectual achievement typical of recent honours-level research in Australia.

There seems to be discrete and identifiable zeitgeist that motivates the interests of each generation of students who choose to study Japan. During the 1950s and 60s, across North America, Europe, and here in Australia, many were enamored by an exoticised and idealised vision of that country as the home of Zen, *haiku* poetry, Cold War pacifism, and other obsessions of the youth progressive movement of that volatile period. My own generation, those of us who ‘discovered’ Japan in the 1970s, 80s, and early 90s, were largely attracted to the country’s extraordinary economic rise. Today, almost without exception, students take to Japan by way of their ubiquitous, voluminous, and all-engrossing consumption of *manga*, *anime*, and other forms of Japanese popular culture. And the result is astounding: Academic interest in Japan, at least in Australia, has never been higher. Moreover, perhaps because students grow up immersed in Japanese popular culture, there seems to be a sense of urgency and obsessiveness in their desire to know the country. Despite these initial impulses, it is striking that recent advanced undergraduate research remains largely conservative. Only one essay in this collection, for example, deals with popular culture. The rest treat more conventional themes and deploy orthodox disciplinary methods. And I find the same general trend among my own advanced undergraduates. But this rift between personal fascination and academic curiosity is hardly new. My own mentors, students of the sixties, went to Japan to meditate. They came home as historians. The would-be bankers of the 1980s moved to Tokyo to get rich. Many came home to take up jobs, usually with significantly less pay, teaching on the Japanese economic miracle (and eventually, its discontents). There is and probably always will be a gulf dividing people’s initial fascinations with Japan and their long-term relationships with that country. The current explosion of Japanese pop-culture is a boon for our industry. Not only has it opened up new vistas for approaching and appreciating the country, it has swelled the numbers of would-be Japan specialists; it is the furnace propelling an exciting field that continues to grow and prosper.

Some words of thanks are in order to the people and institutions that made this publication possible. First, to the members of the editorial advisory board: their role in carefully reviewing each of the submissions and generously taking the time to provide critical feedback was elemental in the refinement of the essays. Susan Wake took on the Herculean task of meticulously editing each of the manuscripts and coordinating the entire publication process. Finally, and most importantly, I wish to thank Wakao Koike and the Japan Foundation for supporting and perpetuating the *New Voices* project. The students whose work is featured here, their teachers, and many thousands more, have



benefited profoundly over the years by the financial and logistical support of the Japan Foundation. On behalf of us all, I happily and energetically convey my thanks.

Matthew Stavros, Ph.D.  
The University of Sydney  
Editor, *New Voices*, vol. 2

### On the Journal's Format

All successful submissions to this issue of *New Voices* are published online and are universally accessible at: <http://www.jpf.org.au/newvoices>. Several of the essays, however, were chosen by the editor and advisory board to also be published in a physical journal format, which was distributed to universities and libraries across Australia and to the Japan Foundation's 19 overseas branch offices. The selection of these essays was based not only on quality but on an attempt to provide readers with representative examples of honours scholarship in several disciplines at a variety of Australian universities.

# Gendered Language in Recent Short Stories by Japanese Women, and in English Translation

Lucy Fraser  
University of Queensland

## Abstract

This article analyses five recent Japanese short stories written by women, with female first person narrators, and the English translations of these stories. I examine how the writers interact with the culturally loaded concept of gendered language to develop characters and themes. The strategies used by translators to render gendered styles into English are also discussed: case-by-case creative solutions appear most effective.

‘Feminine’ and other gendered styles are used to index social identity, to highlight the difference between the social and inner self, and different styles are mixed together for impact. Gendered styles, therefore, are of central importance and translators wishing to adhere closely to the source text should pay close attention to them.

All the narrators of the stories demonstrate an understanding of ‘social sanction and taboo’. Two accustom themselves to a socially acceptable future, another displays an uneasy attitude to language and convention, while others fall into stereotypes imposed on them or chastise themselves for inappropriate behaviour. The stories illustrate the way in which gendered language styles in Japanese can be manipulated, as both the writers and the characters they create deliberately use different styles for effect.

## Keywords

women, gender, language, literature, translation

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The Japanese language is known for having different ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ styles,

---

<sup>1</sup> Notes on Style and Citation: Discussions of short stories and page numbers cited refer to the Japanese source text unless otherwise marked. Translations following Japanese phrases in brackets are my own: they follow basic grammatical conventions but privilege meaning over style. Quotations from published translations are enclosed in quotation marks and followed by page numbers.



which presents a versatile and fascinating device for writers to take advantage of. Furthermore, it may be argued that because English is not similarly demarcated in terms of gender, translating Japanese writing that employs these different gendered styles proves an intriguing challenge.

*Onna kotoba*—women’s language—is a far more intricate issue than simply one of language style. In my analyses of three short stories by Japanese women, I examine how writers interact with the socially complex concept of gendered language to develop characters and themes. The narrators of these stories all seem to exhibit a degree of awareness of the ‘social sanction and taboo’ accorded to them as girls or women, and this awareness is often reflected in their different uses of gendered language. English does not appear to have a similar ‘women’s language’ and I examine translators’ responses to the challenge this cultural difference creates.

Gendered language styles such as *onna kotoba* can be of central importance to recent Japanese fiction, therefore translators wishing to adhere closely to their source text must pay careful attention to such language. My analyses of English translations of Japanese short stories show that translators, as can be expected, employ case-by-case solutions to this challenge. Creative methods are necessary as no single formula can be applied to the various difficulties that arise in conveying the nuances of gendered styles.

### *Methodology*

The texts were selected according to the following criteria:

1. Written (in Japanese) by women: who have experienced the idea of Japanese ‘women’s language’ first-hand in their lives.
2. Incorporates some use of *onna kotoba* or other gendered styles.
3. Short fiction: A wider range of writers are available in English translation in short fiction. It is also often simpler to summarise or describe.
4. First person female narrator: First person narratives give a greater scope for gendered language use and range of reactions/emotions.
5. Published recently: For the sake of further consistency, and for the legitimacy of comparison. The Japanese short stories and their English translations were published between 2000 and 2006.
6. Translated into English: In order that translation strategies can be analysed.
7. Variety of characters/themes: To explore different women’s experiences (unfortunately no stories narrated by older female characters are included).

After a brief introduction to some of the issues of research into gender in

literature, language and translation, I discuss three stories selected according to the criteria listed above <sup>2</sup>. I analyse the language styles and the themes in these stories: my approach is based on a background in literary studies, rather than being linguistic or translation-centred. I also examine the strategies employed by translators. Analyses are based on the texts and the translated texts themselves: because the stories were published and translated relatively recently, and because many of these authors are not widely translated or read in English, there was not a large amount of criticism available. However, any academic criticism of these texts has been used where possible.

This article, then, is an interdisciplinary one, incorporating aspects of Literary Studies, Translation Studies, Gender Studies, and Sociolinguistics.

### *Rationale*

This research brings to the fore selected works by current female Japanese writers, the majority of whom have not been widely published or studied in English. All the writers discussed have won or been nominated for high profile literary prizes, or have received a large amount of media attention in Japan. The stories deal with issues of contemporary Japanese society. Relationships, the process of growing up, working life, and families are some of the topics that are covered; these issues, of course, are all relevant to the English-speaking world and they provide an insight into some of the different experiences of Japanese women today. The stories make accessible diverse and three-dimensional portrayals of Japanese girls and women, and combat conventional Western images of the mysterious oriental female.

Similarly, I am concerned with exploring a variety of images of women, and with the complicated issues of gender in language and literature. I question stereotypes of Japanese women and ‘women’s language’, and examine a diversity of femininities.

This research also addresses a challenge that is often faced by translators working from Japanese to English. It discusses various practical solutions translators have employed to translate gendered language styles, but more importantly, it seeks to highlight the centrality of *onna kotoba* and other gendered styles to the narratives. It is a reminder that these particular uses of language can be of the utmost significance to the story and should therefore be translated with great consideration.

Additionally, the research contributes to a growing and interdisciplinary field

---

<sup>2</sup> All three translations were published in *Inside: Japanese Women by Japanese Women*, commendable in its aim to ‘reflect the experiences of a wide diversity of Japanese women’ (Ozeki ‘Foreword’ p. 9).



of gender-based analysis of translations. Santaemilia encourages more attention to the issue of gender in translation, asserting that ‘we must recognize the immense capabilities of gender/sex and translation studies for generating debates of a fundamentally cross-disciplinary nature within more egalitarian parameters’<sup>3</sup>. As Baumgarten points out, the kind of ‘contrastive linguistic analysis’ such as I undertake is ‘a prime way of investigating the parallel or as it were “co-occurring” ways and strategies of constructing social reality in texts across cultures’<sup>4</sup>. The value of such an investigation, in fact, lies in its social implications.

### *Background*

The language of Japanese women has been variously described by linguists as ‘verbose, repetitive, conservative, concrete, trivial, soft and emotional, polite, pure and syntactically loose’<sup>5</sup>. While some of the supposed features of ‘women’s language’ are discussed in relation to the short stories, my purpose is not to argue that men and women use Japanese differently. Rather I adhere to Inoue’s construction of *onna kotoba* as ‘a socially powerful truth’<sup>6</sup>, what Washi describes as an ‘artificial construct’<sup>7</sup>. As Inoue argues, the concept of women’s language is experienced in the everyday life of many Japanese people, most commonly through the ‘imaginary voices’ of media such as ‘novels, movies, TV shows, drama scripts, animation, and computer games’<sup>8</sup>.

How do writers, who have personally experienced such expectations of women and women’s language, deal with these ‘imaginary voices’ in their own fictional texts? My analysis depends on Butler’s theorisation of gender as ‘a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment’<sup>9</sup>. Rather than being natural, or an inscribed social construct, gender is acted out by the individual. However, as Butler points out, the acts that constitute gender are motivated by social factors: ‘what is called gender identity is a performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo’<sup>10</sup>. Writers, then, in both dialogue and first-person narration, may be said to ‘perform’ character and gender through the medium of language, even as that character herself performs gender within the story. These doubled performances are then re-enacted in another language, performed a third time by the translator.

---

3 ‘Introduction’ p. 7.

4 ‘On the Women’s Service?’ p. 54.

5 Shibamoto, ‘Women’s Speech in Japan’, p. 183.

6 Vicarious Language, p. 1.

7 “‘Japanese Female Speech’ and Language Policy in the World War II Era”, p. 88.

8 ‘Speech without a speaking body’, p. 315.

9 Butler, ‘Performative Acts and Gender Constitution’, p. 402.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 402.

This third performance, the translation of *onna kotoba* and other gendered language into English, may be challenging as, I argue, no similar concept of a women's language exists in English. There are various stereotypes concerning the different communication styles of male and female English speakers: there is the idea that women speak more than men, negative labels for women's talk such as 'bitchy', and the belief that women are more polite than men<sup>11</sup>. However, these differences cannot be introduced into a translation to convey 'femininity' without creating significant deviations from the source text.

Of course, this is only one of the many challenges facing translators of fiction, and that the context and aims of a translation should be taken into account when it is analysed. As Bassnett-McGuire explains, one of the goals of translation theorists is 'to reach an understanding of the processes undertaken in the act of translation and, not, as is so commonly misunderstood, to provide a set of norms for effecting the perfect translation'<sup>12</sup>. Similarly, I do not attempt to judge these translations in terms of their 'success', but instead use them as a means to examine a particular aspect of Japanese writing. The study of translation is a varied and complex field. Of the many possible approaches, this paper is to some extent aligned with feminist translation theories, and their aim to translate works written by women in order to develop a body of work and discover a history of women's literature. The translations I examine certainly contribute to this project.

### *Kotoba de setsumei dekinai*

*Sentence Final Particles, Vocabularies and Youth Language In 'Miruku' by Daidō Tamaki, translated as 'Milk' by Louise Heal.*

Language is both an alienating and an embracing power in Daidō Tamaki's 'Milk'. The school student narrator Komugi uses *wakamono kotoba* or 'youth language' fluently, obviously identifying herself as a teenaged girl as well as belonging to a particular group of friends. On the other hand, Komugi seems uncomfortable with the sexuality of her peers, and unable to express her own sexuality in language. Her attitude to language, sometimes comfortable and sometimes uneasy, reflects her awareness of the 'social sanction and taboo' accorded to her as a teenaged girl. Komugi uses a particular

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, work by sociolinguists Jennifer Coates or Janet Holmes. Additionally, these stereotypes are perhaps most apparent in popular self-help books for heterosexual couples such as John Gray's *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* (HarperCollins 1992), or Deborah Tannen's *You Just Don't Understand* (Ballantine 1991).

<sup>12</sup> Translation Studies, p. 37.



speech style to fit in with her friends, but she cannot find the language to express her socially inappropriate or discomforting feelings and experiences.

Komugi has a distinctly individual voice that is created through a combination of several features. Most predominantly, she uses *wakamono kotoba*<sup>13</sup>, slang words such as *maji de* (11) (really), *dasai* (12, 15) (uncool), *iketeru* (17) (attractive/cool), *bibitta* (6) (got scared), *uzai* (25) (annoying), and *mitai na* (11) (like/similar to). The style is casual and conversational, and words are written as they are pronounced, such as *wakannai* (10) instead of *wakaranai* (I don't understand), and *konaida* (24) for *kono aida* (recently). There is also the lengthening of sounds as seen in *da yo naa* (19) (isn't it). While this extremely casual language and repeated use of particle *na* as in *da yo na* (7) seems slightly masculine, it should be noted that its use by girls and women is considered to be becoming more common<sup>14</sup>. The use of the girlish *atashi* for 'I', on the other hand, makes Komugi seem somewhat deliberately cute when it is used together with the plain and masculine words.

Komugi also uses a mixture of sentence final particles that are considered typically masculine and feminine. Sentence-final particles (SFPs) convey the speaker's feelings or intent: there are those traditionally associated with masculine language: *zo*, *ze*, *sa*, *na*, those associated with feminine language: *wa*, *kashira*, *mono*, and those used by both males and females: *yo*, *ne*, *no*. Some of the particles in the third category are not necessarily neutral, and are said to be used differently by males and females.

Komugi's typically 'feminine' uses of language include frequent use of *ne* as in *namiko wa yamenai ne* (8) (Namiko won't quit), use of *mon* (23) as a shortened form of *mono*, and use of particle *wa* (6). Komugi narrates the story in the same way she speaks with her friends. Her personal style is characterized by brief statements with numerous pauses: Daidō uses a great number of short sentences and commas, which create a blunt, almost staccato effect: *iranai mono wa, kirisuteru* (15) (discard anything unneeded), or again in *ie ni ite ii nara, ite yaru. deteku riyū nai mon. oya to hanareru no, kokorobosoi mon* (16) (if it is ok to be at home, I will be at home. I have no reason to leave. I would be lonely apart from my parents). This may be part of Komugi's attempt at a cool and unruffled persona (25, 30) or point to her troubled relationship with language.

Komugi's fluent use of the 'in' speech seems to give her a sense of belonging within her group of friends; its function is similar to the matching cardigans that the

<sup>13</sup> Described in Maynard's Expressive Japanese.

<sup>14</sup> Reports of the increasing use of 'masculine' styles by girls should be considered in the context of the long tradition of condemnation of females' use of unfeminine language: see Inoue (Vicarious Language p. 163). However, the idea that gender differences in Japanese are becoming less pronounced is a common one.

girls wear in keeping with the latest craze. She is also, however, isolated by language: it is insufficient to truly connect with other people. Although the reader is addressed in a candid voice, the surrounding characters are not privileged with such honesty. The text is scattered with Komugi's vague inability to put her real thoughts or desires into words: she does not want to burden her friend with serious conversations (10), she does not tell her parents what she really wants (18), she does not talk about her family because it will bore her friends (20), and she cannot explain in words what her life is like to anyone (30).

This inability to speak about herself seems to be closely linked to her experience of sexuality as an aggressive and intimidating force. She is frightened by her overtly sexual friend Namiko, who has *muda ni okki na mune* (21) (unnecessarily large breasts) and thinks boys' 'things' are cute (26). Namiko, unlike Komugi, is good at talking about sex<sup>15</sup>; Komugi dislikes hearing about it so much that she cannot even nod during these conversations (33). It is the sheer physicality that seems to overwhelm Komugi, and she envies the remote beauty of her friend Akina who looks far away in photos (6). Her boyfriend, Toshima Ryūji, is also aggressively sexual, bragging about sex and describing it in crude, blunt terms (32). Komugi's reaction to their encounters is described fairly negatively, in physical terms, as in her first kiss: *nama attakai hen na kanshoku na no ni, atashi wa nandemo nai to iu fū na kao o tsukutta. hayaku uchi ni kaeritakatta kara na* (24-5) (it felt warm and strange, but I tried to look like it was nothing. Because I wanted to go home soon). When Komugi kisses Ryūji's neck and he ejaculates, she pulls back and describes the smell, wondering if Ryūji's mother cleans up the tissues he uses to wipe himself (29). She likens his ejaculation to milk: the title of the story, then, also emphasizes the messy physicality of sexual experience. Interestingly, Komugi links sexuality with domesticity again when she compares her vagina to a clam and thinks it would probably look tasty on the dinner table (35). Perhaps this is an attempt to assimilate these new experiences with the familiar domestic world.

*Onna kotoba* is in fact often linked with the domestic world, described as associated with the 'household domain'.<sup>16</sup> 'Men's' words are considered to be more plain or vulgar and 'women's' more standard or polite. For example, *meshi* versus *gohan* for meal/cooked rice<sup>17</sup>. Other expressions described as exclusive to female speech include 'the exclamative *iyaa* "wow"; other words such as *suteki* (nice) and *kawaii* (cute) are associated with femininity.<sup>18</sup> Another apparent difference in male and female speech is the frequency of use of certain words or expressions. Farnsley states that women 'frequently interject adjectival exclamations into their speech (*ii wa* – "that's good", or

15 Frederick notes that this kind of pairing of 'a shy, insecure girl and a spunky friend' has a history in girls' fiction and 'remains a popular combination' in current shōjo manga (girls' comic books) and animated programs for girls ('Not That Innocent: Yoshiya Nobuko's Good Girls', p. 69).

16 Shibamoto, 'The Womanly Woman', p. 28.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 28; Ide, 'Japanese Sociolinguistics: Politeness and Women's Language', p. 379.

18 Maynard, *Expressive Japanese*, p. 24.





*omoshiroi ne* – “interesting”), adding that this may be a deliberate tactic to make speech sound more emotional, or relate to ‘flirtation techniques.’<sup>19</sup>

Komugi, however, does not have such a strong technical control over language. Despite her lack of interest, she eventually promises to have sex with Ryūji because she cannot find the vocabulary to refuse him (25). Komugi may be unable to speak about sexuality because no appropriate language is available to her. Tomioka Taeko argues that women’s language cannot accommodate sexual topics: ‘when it comes to sex, daily speech...uses the language of pornographic fiction or similar reading material...It is a kind of “men’s language”’.<sup>20</sup>

Komugi may feel uncomfortable with the language used to describe sexual matters, but her friend Namiko certainly does not. Perhaps Komugi feels isolated from sexual and gender norms, so she cannot express herself in the mainstream language that she shares with her friends. There are some hints that she does not conform to the feminine school girl image: firstly, she is not interested in owning a mobile phone, the must-have accessory<sup>21</sup>, and she is annoyed when her parents buy her a (feminine) silver-pink one (27). Secondly, she offhandedly decides she might go for the ‘pants look’ rather than skirts or dresses in high school (19).

In her translation of ‘Milk’, Heal deals very well with the contradiction of Komugi’s confident use of her teen-speak and her inability to talk about her feelings and sexuality. Heal translates Komugi’s *wakamono kotoba* into American teenager’s slang, using words such as ‘guy’ (15, 18, 28), ‘huh?’ (25), ‘gross’ (31, 42) ‘lame’ (32) ‘suck’ (38) ‘big deal’ (20, 33), as well as using ‘like’ as a discourse marker or instead of ‘said’ (17, 21, 33). Use of mildly rough language such as ‘crap’ (22), ‘pissed off’ (29) and ‘wetting themselves’ (33) reflects the slightly masculine language in the Japanese. Other phrases that Heal chooses have their origins in the speech of the Californian ‘Valley Girl’, who is known as a ‘superficial teenage girl’, ‘shopping-obsessed and airheaded.’<sup>22</sup> Although words such as ‘totally’ (15, 23, 37), ‘seriously’ (17, 21, 27) ‘max’ (24), ‘whatever’ (28, 31), ‘awesome’ (18, 28, 37) and ‘barf’ (30) are fairly widespread today, they are still associated with Valley Girl, and therefore an effective means of translating the feminine *atashi* and the school girl slang that Komugi uses. This particular slang has the advantage of being widely recognized. Because it originated in the home of Hollywood, the ‘Valley Girl’ style has had international exposure in many movies<sup>23</sup> and it is spreading: mature Australian adults, for example, are increasingly using the emphasized ‘sooo’ (Heal uses this p 16,

19 ‘Women and Language’, p. 2.

20 ‘Women’s Language and the National Language’, p. 144.

21 Buckley, ‘Mobile Telephones’, p. 328.

22 Kemp, ‘Ask A.C. 818’, np.

23 Fought, ‘Do You Speak American?’, np.

25) and other American youth slang.<sup>24</sup> Heal's appropriation of this style is therefore very effective in conveying the gendered styles of the Japanese source text. However, it should be noted that this strategy is not broadly applicable: not all texts are written in such an identifiable style, and not all styles have such a widely recognised English equivalent.

This translation, then, is based on a style 'equivalent' to that used in the source text: however, this does not seem to be the kind of equivalence that translation theorist Goddard criticizes, wherein 'certain cultural traces and also certain self-reflexive elements are eliminated from the text so that the translated text is deprived of its foundation in events.'<sup>25</sup> Goddard emphasizes the role of the translator as 'decoder' and 're-encoder' rather than one simply who domesticates something foreign, suggesting that 'each language classifies and organizes the world and the translator creatively intervenes in such instances.'<sup>26</sup> Heal's adoption of existing American slang does not erase the 'cultural traces' of the source text: rather it works to depict the girlish culture of the narrator. Also, while Heal's translation style is certainly not 'foreignizing', she does attempt to convey some of the Japanese features of the text such as *oden* (16) and the significance of being addressed 'with the respectful *san*' (30). In fact, Heal uses a type of 'equivalence' to produce an English translation that communicates the uniquely Japanese aspects of the source text, rather than 'eliminating' them. Perhaps this is the creative re-encoding that Goddard recommends.

### ***Watashi no kuchibiru wa naze ka***

*Keigo and Rough Language in 'Musuko no kuchibiru' by Uchida Shungiku, Translated as 'My Son's Lips' by Cathy Layne.*

Uchida Shungiku's *Musuko no kuchibiru* (My son's lips) is narrated by a working mother who has a strange encounter with an irritating taxi-driver. The story is constructed around the narrator's knowledge of 'social sanction and taboo' as the reader hears her socially appropriate dialogue as well as her (repressed) informal and often irritated inner voice. The narrator's lifestyle, which involves juggling work, parenting, and running a household, is mirrored when she must juggle two conversations at once (with the taxi-driver and with her son) and when she must hold her baby daughter at the same time as opening a bottle of drinking yoghurt for her son.

The narrator refers to herself neutrally as *watashi* but uses girlish *atashi* when

<sup>24</sup> Gare, 'Airheads', np.

<sup>25</sup> 'Theorizing Feminist Discourse/Translation', p. 91.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.



speaking to her husband. For the most part of the story, there is a great difference between the way this character speaks out loud and her inner monologue. The bulk of the dialogue is made up of the speech of other characters, and when she does speak it is mostly with polite listening noises, or else motherly admonitions such as *arigatō wa?* (7) (say thank you) and *shizuka ni shite nasai* (10) (be quiet please). Much ‘motherese’<sup>27</sup>, including the sentence above, is based on honorific language, or *keigo*. *Keigo* is a distinct mode of language that expresses politeness. *Bikago*, discussed in the next section, is one aspect that ‘beautifies’ words. Women are said to use all types of honorifics more frequently than men.<sup>28</sup>

The narrator’s polite speech in this story is a mixture of different levels of formality. She uses some *keigo*, for example, at the awkward moment when she is invited to the taxi driver’s house and prompted by him to give his wife advice on drying clothes: *pajama o, kansōki ni ... irenai de, hoshite, itadakitai to no koto desu* (17) (would like to receive the favour of [humbling form] you not putting the pyjamas in the dryer, and hanging them out to dry instead). In other instances she uses simpler polite language such as *omutsu, kaete mo ii deshō ka* (15) (do you mind if I change her nappy?). The narrator’s politeness, motherly language, and relative silence represent the ‘appropriate’ behaviour expected of her as a woman and a mother; the fact that she is acting out this role is highlighted by the cynical, humorous, and often angry observation of events of her inner monologue that the reader is privy to.

More frequent use of profanities and vulgar language is said to be a feature of ‘masculine’ speech. Deprecatory verb forms, different word endings and rough words and expressions are all listed as belonging to the ‘masculine’ style.<sup>29</sup> Changing certain words that end in *oi* or *i* sounds to end in a long *ee* sound—‘reduction forms’—are also listed as a feature of male language.<sup>30</sup>

The narrator of *Musuko no kuchibiru* expresses her anger and frustration beneath her polite exterior with slightly rough/informal language in her inner monologue. When she describes her irritation at having to listen to the taxi-driver talk, she uses the verb *[kiite]yaru* (8) for ‘to give [the favour of listening]’ which is usually used when speaking about animals or inferiors, rather than the respectful *ageru*. She also merges the phrase *yanakereba naranai* (must do/give) into a shorter, slangy version. She imagines using a rougher (nevertheless feminine) form of ‘you’, *anta*, to angrily address her subordinates at work: *anta wa, watashi no musuko janai* (29) (you’re not my son). Another imagined

27 See Smith, ‘Women in Charge’ for definition and discussion of ‘motherese’.

28 Shibamoto, ‘The Womanly Woman’, p. 29.

29 Ide, *op. cit.*, p. 381.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 23; Maynard, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

irritated comment to a subordinate is emphasised with the masculine sentence final particle *zo*: *shōgakkō no sensei mo damasenai zo* (30) (you couldn't even fool a primary school teacher with that). Other shortened words, phrases, and short or incomplete sentences also indicate her frustration, as in *damarya shinai* (9) (he won't shut up), shortened from *damari wa shinai*, as well as the incomplete *nan to meiwaku na* (9) (what a pain), and the blunt *dare mo hondai ni furenai* (16) (no-one gets to the point).

Outwardly, the narrator conforms to the expectations of others with polite language, 'motherese', and noises to signal she is listening; it is conforming to images that others have of her, however, that seems to cause her problems. As Butler would explain it, the narrator comes to believe her own performance of gender.<sup>31</sup> When she wonders why she allowed a taxi driver to waste her time with a long detour, she realises that she herself had come to accept his assumptions about her: *nan da ka nee, jibun wa honto wa hima de hima de shō ga nai, tākutsu na shufu datta no kamo shirenai-tte omochatta mono nee, tochū de* (28) (I think I really believed I had nothing but free time, I started to think I really was a very bored housewife). Similarly, kissing one of the young men working under her may imply that she has given up fighting the opinions of others. She feels annoyed that as soon as they find out that she has a young son, these young male subordinates *jibun ni atehametagaru* (29) (tend to apply that to themselves) and act spoilt or sensitive. The narrator fears that the attitudes of these young men are somehow her fault, and that she will raise a son who will give her the same sulky looks that they do: *ano iya na kao o suru yō na otoko ni, musuko mo sodatteiku yō na ki ni naru* (31). In the end, she does fall into the mother-son pattern with her staff: when she gets into (what she suspects is) the same taxi she rode earlier with her son, and kisses her new subordinate, his lips are soft like a child's cheek. The title 'My Son's Lips' is explained.

Although this story is not particularly confronting, the hint of incest in this act, highlighted by the title, is more significant in the context of Uchida's other work, including a novel titled *Fazaa fakkaa* (Father Fucker). Yokota-Murakami describes the author's 'persistent interest in abnormal kinds of sexuality'<sup>32</sup>, concluding that Uchida's textual strategy 'foregrounds conflicting principles: the scandalous and the mundane, the marginal and the ordinary, and the subverting and the conventional'<sup>33</sup>. Orbaugh writes that incest is a common theme in stories by Japanese women published between 1960 and 1975, and that these stories are often 'oddly lacking in any overt dichotomization of "victim" and "victimizer"'.<sup>34</sup> Orbaugh points out that such 'socially disruptive behaviour'<sup>35</sup> can challenge conventional understandings of gender and the binary oppositions they

31 Butler, *op. cit.*, p. 402.

32 'Female Gender and the Father's Abuse', p. 333.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 337.

34 'The Body in Contemporary Japanese Women's Fiction', p. 127.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 127.



entail<sup>36</sup>. Perhaps even Uchida's hints at incest, conflicted with conversations about laundry chores and sewing, go some way to creating the same challenge.

There is something else significant about the kiss that closes the story: *watashi* describes it as an event that she had no control over. She is fully intending to tell the young man she is fine, but instead finds that *watashi no kuchibiru wa, naze ka kare no kuchibiru no hō e chikatzuite iki, sono mama sore ni fureteshimatta* (32) (my lips, for some reason, went closer to his lips, and brushed against them). In kissing this man she has succumbed to a definition of herself as 'motherly' and, importantly, she has lost control of her lips in a way that is reminiscent of her inability to say 'no' or 'shut up' to the taxi-driver.

Translator Cathy Layne deals with the gap between dialogue and narration well, adopting polite formulas like 'Beg your pardon?' (103) and 'I'm sorry?' (105) for speech, and a blunt vernacular for *watashi's* voice, as in 'I want to talk to my own kid, not listen to someone else blather on about theirs' (103). Although the complexities of the mixture of *keigo* and polite language used by the narrator do not exist in English, politeness is similarly associated with femininity.<sup>37</sup> The 'feminine' aspects of the language in this particular story, then, are relatively easy to re-perform in translation.

### ***Hanabira ga adappoku warau***

*Kango and Bikago in 'Museiran' by Hasegawa Junko, Translated as 'The Unfertilized Egg' by Philip Price.*

Hasegawa Junko's *Museiran* (unfertilised egg) is narrated by 36-year-old office worker, Moriko, who is having an affair with her married boss, Aono. Hasegawa combines a range of language styles to produce Moriko's rich and playful style. Moriko negotiates her desire to become pregnant, her loneliness, and her frustrating encounters with others through different feminine, masculine, old-fashioned and informal language. Price's translation cleverly conveys the unique wordplay but can not always reproduce the nuances of femininity.

Ueda writes that the mistress in Japanese literature is traditionally portrayed as 'a flower in the shade', a forlorn beauty 'touched by sadness and loneliness'.<sup>38</sup> Moriko is certainly lonely, and interestingly describes her own vulva as a plant in the shade: *nan'yō*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>37</sup> Cameron and Kulick, *Language and Sexuality*, p. 53.

<sup>38</sup> *The Mother of Dreams*, p. 12.

*no kotō, hi no sasanu shitchi ni ikitzuku sekai saidai no inkashokubutsu* (116) (the world's largest cryptogam/hidden plant growing on damp ground without sunlight on a remote South Pacific island). Although the story is about her wanting to become pregnant, her loneliness does not seem to manifest as envy of Aono's perfect family or a desire for more friends. Rather she wants someone to acknowledge her existence and know her closely: she describes her apartment as *nureta mama no kuroi kabi ga kobiritsuita haisuikan ga nanbon mo wattateiru, dare mo tōranai dokoka no machi no biru no sukima ni niteiru* (111) (like the space between buildings in a town somewhere, crossed by black mouldy sewerage pipes, where nobody goes), and she points out that *aonosan wa watashi no heya ga kitanai no mo shiranai shi, furoba de utau uta mo shiranai. watashi wa aonosan ga neoki no toki no kusai iki mo shiranai shi, neguse no kami o waratta koto mo nai* (117) (Aono doesn't know that my room is messy or the songs I sing in the bath. I have never smelt his bad breath or laughed at his hair when he wakes up).

Hasegawa's story is certainly not a romanticised, 'tragic beauty' rendering of Moriko's role as a (rejected) mistress. Moriko is a messy, interesting character who nevertheless acknowledges 'social sanction and taboo' when she chastises herself for inappropriate behaviour for her age. She comments that *ii otona ga ōru nante suru mon janai* (107) (good adults don't do things like stay out all night), and describes her chaotic lifestyle as *shibuya no puchi iede no kogyarū mitai* (113) (like a naughty Shibuya girl who has run away from home).

Moriko's vocabulary, as might be expected, is much more sophisticated than that of the teenaged protagonist of 'Milk', and in fact is the most complex of all the narrators discussed here. There is an abundance of *kanji* (Chinese characters) and *kango*, which are often seen as more educated and sophisticated, and have a long history of belonging to the masculine sphere. *Kango* are words made up of Chinese characters, with a pronunciation originating in Chinese, as opposed to 'native Japanese' words, *wago*. There is evidence that *kango* words are still used less frequently by women<sup>39</sup>, who have been encouraged to use soft, feminine speech.<sup>40</sup>

Moriko's play on *kanji* and *kango* makes her seem clever, and prevents her from becoming an 'other woman' defined only by her sensual beauty. Her preference for *kango* over *hiragana* words lends formality to her voice: she uses *sobo ga mada zonmei no jibun* (114) where another might use something more friendly like *obaachan ga mada ikiteita toki* for 'when my grandmother was still alive'. Words that are just as often left in *hiragana* are given in *kanji*, including *mabuta* (107) (eyelid), and *hazu* (140) (ought to).

<sup>39</sup> Shibamoto, 'The Womanly Woman', p. 29; Shibamoto, 'Women's Speech in Japan', pp. 56-57.

<sup>40</sup> Abe, 'Stereotype to Context', p. 654.



The title of the story, *Museiran*, is also a scientific *kango* word. Another interesting use of *kango* is 隠花植物 (116, 126) (*inkashokubutsu*), a scientific word meaning ‘cryptogam’, a dated botanical term for ‘a plant with no true flowers or seeds, such as a...moss... alga, or fungus.’<sup>41</sup> This resonates with Moriko’s likening her apartment to the space between mouldy sewerage pipes (111), and her likening her genitals to a plant growing on damp, shady ground (116). The characters that comprise this scientific word are not obscure and also mean ‘hidden flower plant’ when read separately. Price does not use the word ‘cryptogam’, which would not be as self-explanatory in English, choosing to limit his translation to another of the scientific-sounding terms (written in *katakana*), ‘rafflesia’ (181). Moriko uses *inkashokubutsu rafureshia* (116) to describe her own vulva. The *rafflesia* is known as the largest flower in the world: it has rubbery reddish-brown petals and smells like carrion, which attracts the flies that pollinate it<sup>42</sup>; perhaps this is a comment on Moriko’s sexual partners as well as her attitude to her genitals. The neat combination of four-character compound followed by *katakana* word connotes precise, scientific knowledge, while being easily understood by Japanese readers as ‘hidden flower plant’, and it describes a damp fungus as well as an enormous foul-smelling flower that attracts flies.

Moriko also favours *kanji* compound phrases. *ここは私の汚部屋也* (111) (*koko wa watashi no oheya nari*) seems to be one of her own, with the four-*kanji* compound as well as the old-fashioned character for ‘is’, *nari*, lending an air of importance. It is also a play on words: the first character means ‘dirty’ but is read as *o*, formalizing the word for ‘room’ into *oheya*. This pun is, in fact, extremely sharp, as words formalized with the ‘*o*’ prefix are known as ‘beautified’, or *bikago*, and are associated with stereotypically feminine, polite language.<sup>43</sup> In other words, Moriko uses the character for ‘dirty’ to ‘beautify’ her room. Price cleverly translates this phrase using both grandiose and plain language, with ‘Behold the trash heap of my apartment’ (176).

Moriko describes herself with another *kanji* combination, *ださくてだらしない妄想淫夢女* (113-114) (*dasakute darashinai mōsō inmu onna* – uncool, vulgar, delusional, dirty dream woman). Such a varied description cannot be so succinct in English, so Price picks up on the alliteration of *dasakute darashinai* and turns it neatly into ‘a sad, sleazy slut’ (179). There is also a play on the phrase 無銭飲食 (*musen’inshoku* – skip out on paying for drinks and food), which is twisted into 無銭淫食 (125) (*musen’inshoku* – skip out on having sex and paying for food). The *waga* prefix is used repeatedly, creating another contrast between the grandiose and the ordinary or the private. Commonly seen in words like *wagaya* (my/our own house) and *wagasha* (this/

41 Soanes and Stevenson, *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary* [online].

42 *Ibid.*

43 Okamoto, ‘Ideology in Linguistic Practice and Analysis’, p. 40.

my company) it has connotations of formality as well as the importance of family, team, or close belonging, which makes it almost empowering or proud when Moriko uses it to create *wagaki* (116) (my own genitals) and *wagatamago* (135) (my own eggs).

Moriko also often speaks in quite a ‘masculine’ way, which makes her appear angry and cynical rather than a sad beauty. She uses vulgar words like *chikushō* (113, 134), ‘masculine’ sentence final particles as in *da zo* (112) and *nozokikomu na* (138) (don’t peer); she addresses her own genitals with *omae* (116), a rough word for ‘you’, and shortens *naranai* to *naran* (119). Price translates the rough aspect of her voice well, sprinkling the text with swearwords: men, for example, are often referred to as ‘bastard’ (178, 179, 188) and Moriko’s exclamation *ha?* (121) becomes ‘What the fuck...?’ (185).

There is also, however, frequent use of the ‘feminine’ sentence final particle *wa*, as well as some other feminine language, and the contexts in which Moriko uses these feminine styles are significant, as well as difficult to translate. Inoue points out that Japanese ‘women’s language’ is heard most commonly ‘not so much from living bodies of Japanese women, as from imaginary voices’<sup>44</sup>: in this story, Moriko attributes women’s language to imagined or remembered voices, which highlights her alienation from ‘normal’ femininity. She imagines the *gurabia-jō* (model lady) in a magazine speaking to her in formal, feminine style: *okage de kochira mo nemidaremashita wa* (110) (my sleep was also disturbed because of you). Price does not convey the femininity or formality with his translation: ‘she glares up at me accusingly, as if it were my fault that she didn’t sleep properly either’ (176). Moriko also imagines women satisfied in stable relationships saying *sekkusu-tte mendokusai waa* (113) (sex is too much effort), which Price translates simply as ‘say they can’t be bothered with sex’ (178). Price does convey some of the femininity of a conversation Moriko remembers having with her mother and grandmother: *tanoshimi da wa nee* (114) (that is something to look forward to, isn’t it?), which he translates with an adjective thought to be used more by women: ‘wouldn’t it be wonderful?’ (179). In each of these cases Moriko attributes feminine language to an imagined or remembered voice, which emphasizes her feeling of having failed to be properly feminine: she is not a classy magazine model, nor is she a woman properly loved, and she does not have children as her grandmother and mother did. As Price is not always able to convey the feminine nuances of these voices, the effect is not so apparent in his translation.

Moriko also uses feminine *wa* when she nostalgically speaks about ‘first time’ movies, echoing the gentle, romantic nature of the movies as well as the naïve young Moriko who was watching them. Her *saikin nai wa nee* (119) (they don’t exist these

44 ‘Speech without a speaking body’, p. 315.





days) is translated by Price as ‘they never make those first time movies anymore, do they?’ (184), which is slightly softened by ‘do they’. Moriko also comments *hontō ni yume no nai yo no naka ni natta mon da wa* (120) (it really has become a world without dreams), and Philip’s translation emphasizes the sad, wistful, side of her remark with ‘God, nobody dreams anymore’ (184).

Moriko also uses particle *wa* in particularly un-ladylike situations as an ironic reminder of her unrefined behaviour. She describes climbing stairs returning home from all-night drinking as *sasuga ni kitsui wa* (109). Price translates this as ‘the stairs feel extra steep this morning’ (175), but perhaps a more prim expression could have a similar effect to the Japanese of highlighting the un-ladylike situation. When Mikami offers Moriko sex then leaves her with the bar tab, she makes one sarcastically feminine comment: *bushidō ni han suru wa* (125) (that is not the way of samurai). She uses the noble image of samurai to condemn Mikami’s petty behaviour, and also speaks about it in ‘ladylike’ language, highlighting her anger at his un-gentlemanly behaviour even more. Price’s translation, ‘not exactly the way of the samurai’ (188) captures the sarcasm but the femininity is lost.

Price translates Moriko’s wordplay very cleverly, but does not convey the femininity of certain expressions. This does not seem to be due to an urge to remove any feeling of ‘foreignness’ from the text: it likely indicates the difficulty of putting these phrases into English, or perhaps Price does not consider them important to the story. In any case, Price does make it clear that the narrator is female. The writing also abounds in images of female sexuality like shiny eggs and large damp flowers, so if these are taken in conjunction with the often coarse and sarcastic language in the English translation, it may be argued that the contrasts of Hasegawa’s story are nevertheless conveyed.

## Conclusion

This article has suggested that *onna kotoba* and other gendered language styles provide a fascinating tool for writers. *Onna kotoba* in particular is inscribed with a variety of cultural meanings: many speakers are aware of its various associations and deliberately manipulate them for their own expressive purposes. Japanese women writers use language to ‘perform’ the gender of their characters, just as those characters themselves perform gender within these stories. Gender is then re-performed in the medium of another language by the translator. Gendered language styles were examined in the context of specific features of *onna kotoba* through the analysis of three short stories written by Japanese women.

Daidō Tamaki's *Miruku* is narrated in the slangy speech of a teenaged girl who is disturbed by the aggressive sexuality of her boyfriend and by her changing friendships. The girl uses language to fit in, but it also alienates her because she cannot express her feelings and experiences in words.

The narrator of Uchida Shungiku's *Musuko no kuchibiru* is a working mother who speaks with polite/motherly language: other characters assume she is a 'bored housewife', while the reader hears her angry, cynical and often humorous narration. The narrator finds herself unable to control her body, falling into the stereotype that has been forced on her.

Hasegawa Junko's *Museiran* is narrated by a thirty-something woman who dreams of becoming pregnant. She uses a rich mixture of *kango*, *bikago*, and feminine forms; her unique language develops a complicated character who feels that nobody knows the 'real' her.

'Feminine' and other gendered styles are used by the different Japanese authors in a variety of ways: in dialogue, to index social identity, to highlight the difference between the social and inner self, and different styles are mixed together for emphasis. Gendered styles, therefore, are central to the stories and translators wishing to adhere closely to the source text should pay close attention to this issue.

These stories encompass a great variety of language, gender, and translation issues, and should not be tied together into a false cohesion. However, one element that these stories do share is that the narrators demonstrate an understanding of 'social sanction and taboo'. Komugi in *Miruku* displays an uneasy attitude to language and social expectations; the narrator of *Musuko no kuchibiru* falls in with the stereotypes imposed on her, and Moriko in *Museiran* chastises herself for inappropriate behaviour for her age. These stories illustrate the way in which gendered language styles in Japanese can be manipulated in a self-conscious way as both the writers and the characters they create use different styles for effect.

I also argue that because English does not have a similar 'women's language' to Japanese, translation of 'feminine' or other gendered language can prove challenging. *Musuko no kuchibiru*, however, seems to be relatively unchallenging, as motherly and polite 'feminine' aspects of the narrator's voice have similar connotations of femininity in English. Translator of *Museiran* Philip Price enjoys the wordplay, but does not communicate the feminine nuances of certain phrases: as narrator Moriko's feminine styles have different connotations of nostalgia, irony and others, certain aspects of the story are not conveyed in his translation.



The translation in this collection that most clearly conveys the gendered language of the source text is Louise Heal's 'Milk'. Heal adopts a voice that communicates the girlish, vulgar and slangy styles of the source text. Not all the stories feature such an identifiable figure as the confused teenaged girl in *Miruku*, so this method is not always applicable, but in this case Heal's use of an English-speaking equivalent of the Japanese narrator proves very effective. As case-by-case creative solutions such as Heal's appear to be the most successful, specific and widely applicable translation strategies for gendered styles are not identified. However, the analyses of these English translations again highlight the importance of the gendered language in the texts.

The issues of gender in Japanese fiction and English translation are multiple and multidisciplinary. Many aspects of this research would benefit from further exploration. A similar study of 'masculine' styles in writing by Japanese men, interesting in itself, could be compared with these findings. The scope of the research could be broadened, for example, to include writings from different eras, or to examine male narrators in works by female writers and vice versa. These issues could also be analysed in languages other than Japanese or English. In fact, the analysis of the connections between gender, language, literature, translation and society provides unlimited opportunities for research and new insights.

## References

- Abe, H., 'Stereotype to Context: The Study of Japanese Women's Speech', *Feminist Studies*, 21.3 (1995), pp. 647-671.
- Bassnett-McGuire, S., *Translation Studies* (London: Methuen, 1980).
- Baumgarten, N., 'On the Women's Service?: Gender-conscious Language in Dubbed James Bond Movies', in Santaemilia, J. (ed.), *Gender, Sex, and Translation : The Manipulation of Identities* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 2005) pp. 53-70.
- Buckley, S., 'Mobile Telephones', in *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Japanese Culture* (London: Routledge, 2002) pp. 328-329.
- Butler, J., 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory' in Conboy, K., Medina, N., and Stanbury, S. (eds.), *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia UP, 1997) pp. 401-418.
- Cameron, D. and Kulick, D., *Language and Sexuality* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003).
- Daidō, T., 'Miruku', *Miruku* (Tokyo: Chuokoron-shinsha, 2004) pp. 6-36.
- Farnsley, K. W., 'Women and Language', *Urbana*, 13.2 (1995), pp. 1-8.
- Fought, C. Interview. *Do You Speak American?* Episode 3. Writ. Cran, W., MacNeil, R. Dir. Cran, W. PBS, New York. 19

January 2005.

- Frederick, S., 'Not That Innocent: Yoshiya Nobuko's Good Girls', in Bardsley, J., Miller, L. (eds), *Bad Girls of Japan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) pp. 65-79.
- Gare, S., 'Airheads', *Lingua Franca*, ABC Radio National, Melbourne. 3 February 2007.
- Goddard, B., 'Theorizing Feminist Discourse/Translation' in Bassnett, S., Lefevere, A. (eds), *Translation, History and Culture*. (London and New York: Piter Publishers, 1990) pp. 87-96.
- Hasegawa, J., 'Museiran', *Hatsuga* (Tokyo: Magazine House, 2004) pp. 105-142.
- Heal, L. (trans.), 'Milk' by Daidō, T. in Layne, C. (ed), *Inside and Other Short Fiction: Japanese Women by Japanese Women* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2006) pp.13-42.
- Ide, S., 'Japanese Sociolinguistics: Politeness and Women's Language', *Lingua*, 47 (1982), pp. 357-385.
- Inoue, M., 'Speech without a speaking body: "Japanese women's language" in translation', *Language and Communication*, 23.3 (2003), pp. 315-330.
- Inoue, M., *Vicarious Language: Gender and Linguistic Modernity in Japan* (Berkeley: California UP, 2006).
- Kemp, A. C., 'Ask A.C. 818', *Slang City*. Retrieved 15 March 2007, from [http://www.slangcity.com/ask\\_ac\\_archive/818.htm](http://www.slangcity.com/ask_ac_archive/818.htm).
- Layne, C., (trans). 'My Son's Lips' by Uchida, S., in Layne, C. (ed.), *Inside and Other Short Fiction: Japanese Women by Japanese Women* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2006) pp. 101-122.
- Maynard, S., *Expressive Japanese* (Honolulu: Hawaii UP, 2005).
- Okamoto, S., 'Ideology in Linguistic Practice and Analysis: Gender and Politeness in Japanese Revisited', in Okamoto, S., Shibamoto Smith, J. (eds.), *Japanese Language, Gender and Ideology: Cultural Models and Real People* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004) pp. 38-56.
- Orbaugh, S., 'The Body in Contemporary Japanese Women's Fiction', in Schalow, G., Walker, J. A. (eds.), *The Woman's Hand: Gender and Theory in Japanese Women's Writing* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996) pp. 119-164.
- Ozeki, R. 'Foreword', in Layne, C. (ed.), *Inside and Other Short Fiction: Japanese Women by Japanese Women* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2006) pp. 7-11.
- Price, P. (trans), 'The Unfertilized Egg' by Hasegawa, J., in Layne, C. (ed.), *Inside and Other Short Fiction: Japanese Women by Japanese Women* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2006) pp. 171-202.
- Santaemilia, J., 'Introduction', in Santaemilia, J. (ed.), *Gender, Sex, and Translation : The Manipulation of Identities* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 2005) pp. 1-8.
- Shibamoto, J., 'The Womanly Woman: Manipulation of Stereotypical and Nonstereotypical Features of Japanese Female Speech' in Philips, S. U., Steele, S., Tanz, C. (eds.), *Language, Gender and Sex* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987) pp. 26-49.
- Shibamoto, J., 'Women's Speech in Japan', in Tsujimura, N. (ed.), *Japanese Linguistics* (London: Routledge, 2005) pp. 181-190.



- Smith, J. S., 'Women in Charge: Politeness and Directives in the Speech of Japanese Women', *Language in Society*, 21 (1992), pp. 59-82.
- Soanes, C. and Stevenson, A. (eds.), 'Cryptogam n.'; 'Rafflesia n.', *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary: Oxford Reference Online*. Retrieved 18 September 2007, from <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html>
- Tomioka, T., 'Women's Language and the National Language', Trans. Ericson, J.E., Nagaoka, Y., in Copeland, R., *Woman Critiqued: Translated Essays on Japanese Women's Writing* (Honolulu: Hawaii UP, 2006) pp. 135-144.
- Uchida, S., 'Musuko no kuchibiru', *Musuko no kuchibiru* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2000). pp. 5-32.
- Ueda, M., *The Mother of Dreams: Portrayals of Women in Modern Japanese Fiction* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1986).
- Washi, R., "'Japanese Female Speech" and Language Policy in the World War II Era', in Okamoto, S., Shibamoto Smith, J. (eds.), *Japanese Language, Gender and Ideology: Cultural Models and Real People* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004) pp. 76-91.
- Yokota-Murakami, T., 'Female Gender and the Father's Abuse: On the Construction of Femininity in Contemporary Japanese Women's Writings', *Proceedings of the Midwest Association for Japanese Literary Studies*, 5 (1999), pp. 332-338

# **Transcultural Flow of Demure Aesthetics: Examining Cultural Globalisation through Gothic & Lolita Fashion**

Masafumi Monden  
University of Technology, Sydney

## **Abstract**

The process of cultural globalisation does not always imply cultural homogenisation. Rather, it can be seen as a process of cultural ‘glocalisation’ and hybridisation where cultures continuously interact with and interpret each other to engender a hybrid cultural form. As Arjun Appadurai (1993) contends, neither centrality nor peripherality of culture exists in the context of cultural globalisation. Rather, transnational cultural forms are likely to circulate in multiple directions.

This is particularly evident when examining Gothic & Lolita – a Japanese fashion trend which has emerged since the late 1990s. Applying Jan Nederveen Pieterse’s theory of ‘globalisation as hybridisation’ (2004), and Roland Robertson’s concept of ‘glocalisation’ (1995), this article attempts to explore how this fashion trend manifests the process of cultural ‘glocalisation’, hybridisation, and interaction through the localisation of Western Goth subculture and especially, historical European dress styles in Japan. In addition, it explores how the fashion signifies the idea of ‘reverse’ flow of culture through an ethnographic observation of an English-speaking online community devoted to the trend. The analysis of the online community also seeks to establish the idea that this transnational cultural flow serves as an alternative to the local culture.

## **Keywords**

Cultural Globalisation, Japanese Fashion, Goth Subculture, Cross-cultural appropriation, Aesthetics of Cute

## **Introduction**

A young woman is waiting for the traffic light to turn green on a busy street. She is dressed in a white, long-sleeved, frilly blouse, a black pinafore dress trimmed with white lace, black knee length socks, and a white pair of ‘Mary Jane’ shoes. A lacy, white headdress adorns her delicately curled light brown hair, and her black parasol trimmed



with black ribbons protects her from the attack of the ultraviolet rays, which threaten her pallid complexion. Although the girl appears to have slipped out of Lewis Carroll's famous *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, no one around her seems to pay particular attention to her appearance. This is Harajuku, an area known for its striking fashion in Japan.

On the other side of the globe sits a young woman with dyed-black hair, dressed in a punk-styled t-shirt, a red checked high waisted mini skirt with triple frilled hem and white lace, black and white knee-high striped socks, and Dr Martens boots. Her computer monitor displays a site with a picture of a girl in Japanese *manga* style, wearing a small hat, ivory-coloured puff-sleeved blouse, and a black, corseted high waisted skirt. She is browsing an online community; perhaps in hope of finding people who appreciate the same taste in fashion as her. This is Finland. These two women, though separated physically by a great distance, have something in common –they follow the same set of fashion aesthetics, which allows them to dress in lace and frills without seeking the objectifying male gaze. They also read the same Japanese *manga*, and appreciate the gothic aesthetic of Tim Burton's films. This article will discuss these connections in order to examine the processes of transcultural flow, which are likely to circulate in multiple directions.

This article pays particular attention to the theory of 'globalisation as hybridisation' put forward by sociology scholar Jan Nederveen Pieterse. His theory argues that cultural globalisation does not simply involve a dominant culture infiltrating weaker others, but is rather a series of processes that involve cultural hybridisation. Similarly, sociologist Roland Robertson articulates the theory of 'glocalisation', stating that globalisation of culture does not necessarily lead to the homogenisation of (and by implication destruction of) local cultures. This is because the processes of global homogenisation and heterogenisation are 'mutually implicative'<sup>1</sup> because local is defined by global, and 'when one considers them closely, they each have a local, diversifying aspect.'<sup>2</sup> Robertson's argument rejects the notion that globalisation is merely cultural homogenisation, and indicates instead practices of cultural interaction, interface and appropriation, which take place when a cultural form is accepted and then indigenised in another culture. Social-cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai reinforces this idea, arguing that 'at least as rapidly as forces from various metropolises are brought into new societies they tend to become indigenized in one or another way.'<sup>3</sup> In this sense, he contends that when a culture becomes transnational, the process of localisation is likely to be involved. This process makes the transnational culture become more complex than a uniform, global culture.

---

1 Robertson, 'Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity', p. 27.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 34.

3 Appadurai, 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy', p. 274.

Appadurai further argues that '[t]he new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order, which cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models (even those which might account for multiple centers and peripheries).'<sup>4</sup> Similarly, sociologist Zygmunt Bauman argues that although only privileged and wealthy individuals can conceivably celebrate globalisation, the concept represents 'the determinate, unruly and self-propelled character of world affairs: the absence of a centre, of a controlling desk, of a board of directors, a managerial office.'<sup>5</sup> The absence of a centre of cultural globalisation, along with disjuncture and fluidity in the flow of culture, suggests the potential for countercurrents, or 'reverse' flows of culture, as cultural forms seem to circulate in multiple ways. Consequently, this idea refuses the idea of cultural imperialism, which, as cultural sociology scholar John Tomlinson puts it, 'gathers in a number of fairly discrete discourses of domination: of America over Europe, of the "West over the rest" of the world, of the core over the periphery, of the modern world over the fast-disappearing traditional one, of capitalism over more or less everything and everyone.'<sup>6</sup> This denies the centrality of a 'dominant' culture, which in turn suggests the potential of various cultures to in-and-outflow in multiple directions. Thus, these authors indicate the importance of observing the relationship between transnational and local cultures. Indeed, cultural globalisation is likely to involve cultural interaction and appropriation, and is operated in multiple directions.

This idea is particularly important when Western cultural forms such as fashion become transculturally appreciated in the non-West. For instance, it is too narrow to describe a Japanese street fashion as homogenised on the basis of its acceptance of Western dress style as its inspiration, since localisation and interaction with local cultural elements such as aesthetics, preferences or sociality are likely to be reflected in Japanese fashion. By focusing on the Japanese fashion trend Gothic & Lolita, or *GothLoli* as it is known in Japan, I aim to amplify the idea that cultural globalisation is much more complex than cultural homogenisation, and that non-Western cultural formations can also be significant in the context of its growth and establishment. In particular, I apply a communication and cultural studies perspective in order to focus on how this fashion trend is perceived outside Japan.

The first section focuses on *GothLoli* in the context of cultural globalisation. It explains how this fashion trend is a manifestation of the process of cultural hybridisation, interaction through the localisation of Western Goth subculture, and especially, historic European fashion styles. The latter section develops this idea further by conducting a textual analysis of *EGL the Gothic & Lolita Fashion Community*, an English-speaking

---

4 *Ibid.*, p. 275.

5 Bauman, 'On Glocalization: or Globalization for Some, Localization for Some Others', p. 38.

6 Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture*, p. 80.





cyberspace community for *GothLoli* lovers. In particular, by examining the experience and opinion of those who dress in this fashion outside Japan, this section seeks to establish the idea that this transnational cultural flow serves as an alternative to the local culture rather than threatening or infiltrating it.

The example of *GothLoli* is well suited to this topic since this fashion trend has undoubtedly emerged from European and Japanese cultural interactions and hybridisations. Moreover, it is seemingly accepted and understood in various cultures, including Europe and the United States, as an alternative to existing cultural forms. Gothic & Lolita has been interpreted differently in different societies, by individuals from different historical, social, and aesthetical backgrounds, denying its singularity, and challenging notions of cultural imperialism.<sup>7</sup>

### **Gothic & Lolita goes to the World: Globalisation and Hybridisation of *GothLoli***

Gothic & Lolita, or *GothLoli* is a part of a fashion trend called *Lolita* that emerged in Japan in the mid to late 1990s. According to writer Kyshah Hell, this trend is one where young people dress in ‘amazingly elaborate Gothic looking baby doll costumes...French Maid meets Alice in Wonderland style and has expanded gradually to encompass many nuances in a Victorian Gothic look’.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, *Avant Gauche*, a website dedicated to Gothic & Lolita, defines the fashion as a dress style which consists of ‘cute voluminous frilly and lacey [sic] knee length dresses, frill top socks and Mary Janes’.<sup>9</sup> Luv Ishikawa in *Guide to Gothic & Lolita Culture*, argues that it is a gothic subculture distinctively different from the British Goths who emerged in Japan in the mid to late 1980s, and from the mid 1990s the trend was reinvigorated with mainstream breakthroughs of *Visual Rock*.<sup>10</sup> According to Japanese studies scholar Carolyn S. Stevens, *Visual Rock* is a form of Japanese pop rock music that makes a ‘strong visual impact through hair, makeup and costume’<sup>11</sup>. Although it is largely unproven, some believe Gothic & Lolita to have been first practiced by the fans of *Visual Rock* singers to impersonate their favourite stars. This is indicated by the fact that one of the best known icons of this fashion trend and the owner of *GothLoli* clothing brand *Moi-même-Moitié*, is Mana the former guitarist of a *Visual Rock* band *Malice Mizer*. Although there is no clear definition of *GothLoli*,

7 This essay uses Japanese popular culture in order to observe, and in part argue that non-Western culture can be significant to Western culture too.

However, this is not to assume that the West signifies the world as a whole or Japan signifies the non-West as a whole. Rather, as historian Ivan Morris states in *The World of the Shining Prince* (1979), Japan has actively borrowed cultural and political forms from foreign countries, most notably China and Korea in the seventh and eighth centuries. Thus, Japanese culture itself is a result of a long fusion of Asian cultures, which affirms the argument of Nederveen Pieterse that almost all cultures are likely to be cultural *mélanges*.

8 Hell ‘Elegant Gothic Lolita’.

9 *Avant Gauche* [<http://www.avantgauche.co.uk>].

10 Ishikawa, ‘Guide to Gothic & Lolita Culture’, pp. 88-89.

11 Stevens, *Japanese Popular Music*, p. 56.

it functions as a blanket name for varied *Lolita* fashions including Gothic/Black Lolita (black and white), Sweet Lolita (pastel coloured), Classical Lolita ('maiden' style with slightly less lacy and less elaborate clothes) and Gothic Aristocrat (dark but lacy and elaborate 'Count' style for both men and women).<sup>12</sup> This fashion style was somewhat minor until *Shimotsuma Monogatari* (aka Kamikaze Girls), a film adaptation of the best-selling novel by the cult novelist of Japanese 'maiden' subculture Takemoto Novala, was released in 2004 and became a box-office hit in Japan and a cult film in the West. Magazine editor Suzuki Mariko suggests that *GothLoli* style might be modelled upon children's dresses. This fashion style, she argues, attracted girls and young women who were unhappy with mainstream fashion styles. According to Suzuki, at the beginning of the twenty-first century mainstream fashion styles for young women in Japan lacked frills and lace, and not only those who appreciated gothic subcultural elements, but also those females who wished to dress in frilly and lacy clothes embraced *GothLoli*.<sup>13</sup> Their sweet and elegant aesthetics as well as their appreciation of highly 'romanticised' lives of European nobility and upper class girls in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Marie Antoinette of France and Alice in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* are apparent favourites), combined with the fashion style's total lack of functionality, often persuade them to appreciate and adopt (externally) demure mannerisms.

### *Gothic & Lolita and Cuteness: Japanese Aesthetic*

It is easy to dismiss this fashion trend as mere mimicry of Western subculture, and hence describe it as a form of Western cultural homogenisation as both concepts of 'Gothic' and 'Lolita' are derived from the West, and it obviously reflects the influence of dress styles in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe. However, if we consider and observe this trend more closely, its hybridised qualities become clear. One of the most prominent aspects of *GothLoli* as a culturally hybridised form is the interaction between Western gothic/classic fashion and the Japanese aesthetical concept of *kawaii* (cute). The application of the Japanese word *kawaii* is immensely diverse. Film studies scholar Yomota Inuhiko, for instance, argues that the word *kawaii* can be applied in order to describe, for example, an elderly man or a hot spring, which in other languages, he argues, would sound strange if grammatically correct.<sup>14</sup> This illustrates the diverse nature of the word, whose definition is almost impossible to grasp. Although Yomota declines to affirm the idea that this *kawaii* aesthetic originates from Japanese culture, he notes that Japanese aesthetical admiration of anything young, small, fragile and

<sup>12</sup> I use Gothic Lolita as a blanket name to describe various Lolita styles. Although it might not be entirely appropriate, this provides clarity to my points. However, diversity in the fashion trend needs to be acknowledged.

<sup>13</sup> Suzuki, 'Gothic & Lolita wa kansai kara umareta', p. 119.

<sup>14</sup> Yomota, *Kawaii Ron*, p. 42.



cute, which he perceives as reminiscent of the contemporary *kawaii* aesthetics, can be traced back to the Heian period<sup>15</sup>. In general, *kawaii* refers to something childish/girlish and sweet. According to sociologist Merry White, the concept of cuteness is not ‘restricted to children in Japan, though it means childlike and sweet, happy and upbeat—and vulnerable’ and Japanese cute style is defined as ‘bright for boys, lacy for girls.’<sup>16</sup> According to freelance researcher Sharon Kinsella:

Kawaii meaning ‘cute’ in English essentially means childlike, and by association: adorable, innocent, simple, gentle, and vulnerable. Cute style saturated design and the mass media whilst they were expanding rapidly in Japan between the mid seventies and the mid eighties. Cute style reached its height of saccharine intensity in the early 1980s...In the mid-nineties Japanese cute returned as the more kitsch and knowing ‘super- cute’ (chou-kawaii).<sup>17</sup>

The aesthetical concept of cuteness is no doubt part of *GothLoli*, and the extensive use of lace and doll-like knee-length dresses corresponds with the concept.

### *Western Goths vs. Japanese Gothic & Lolita*

Compared to *GothLoli*, Western Goths are generally defined by their embrace of darkness and gloominess. The undertone of dark, gloomy aesthetics are also prominent in *GothLoli*, as many of its fashions feature symbols of bats, coffins, skulls, crosses and blackness. However, as the name Gothic & Lolita itself indicates, it also emphasises sweetness, girlishness, and elaborateness. *GothLoli* is not only considerably distinctive from the Western Gothic in terms of style, but also conceptually. There is a sense that Western Gothic often symbolises rejection of and rebellion against mainstream culture. According to rhetorical and cultural studies scholar Joshua Gunn, Western Goths often see themselves as darker counterparts to mainstream culture, as they:

[C]hoose to embrace the gloomier aspects of life that (they perceive) mainstream society seeks to suppress (death, melancholy, depression, the nontranscendent sublime of confronting the realities of postmodernity).<sup>18</sup>

As a consequence, those who self-identify as Goths often oppose the media’s representation, and its inclusion of such mainstream gothic cultural icons as Marilyn Manson.<sup>19</sup> Sociology scholar Amy C. Wilkins, in her study of American Goth women,

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 33-36.

<sup>16</sup> White, *Material Child*, p. 129.

<sup>17</sup> Kinsella, ‘Japanization of European Youth’.

<sup>18</sup> Gunn, ‘Marilyn Manson is Not Goth: Memorial Struggle and the Rhetoric of Subcultural Identity’ p. 426.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 418-9.

indicates that they often attempt to reject/oppose mainstream portrayals of passive femininity through celebrations of active sexuality.<sup>20</sup> Sociologist Paul Hodkinson notes that the cultural environment of Western Goth subculture is a suitable environment where women challenge the existing, mainstream media's portrayal of passive femininity because the distinction between male and female is blurred by subcultural style.<sup>21</sup> From these studies we can draw the idea that Western Goths often function as models to oppose, reject and rebel against existing fetters imposed by mainstream culture and society, perhaps especially those to do with gender.

The concept of 'Lolita' is perceived quite differently in the West than in Japan. As media scholar Debra Merskin states, it is named after the preadolescent heroine in the novel *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov (1958), and is often used to describe young girls dressed and posed in a highly sexualised way, or middle-aged males' paedophilic attachment to such girls.<sup>22</sup> Merskin expresses her own concern over the current trend in Western media (especially in advertisements) of portraying young girls with highly sexualised looks, as well as the trend for more mature-aged women to dress and look like baby-dolls. She argues that this 'Lolita' look is indeed a multimedia phenomenon. Merskin cites author Judy Steed who argues that this trend is likely to fuel the fantasies of paedophiles who find that their predilections are 'reinforced by mainstream culture, movies and rock videos that glorify violent males who dominate younger, weaker sex objects'.<sup>23</sup> In this sense, she claims that the concept of 'Lolita' operates exclusively for an objectifying male gaze. As a consequence, 'Lolita', or women dressing to achieve 'baby-doll' looks, represents the objectification and sexualisation of women in the mainstream media. This indicates the limitation of media representation of women in the West. Media and communication scholars Karen Ross and Virginia Nightingale, for example, cite media studies scholar Marian Meyers who argues that women are often represented by the media as either 'Madonna' or 'Whore', for 'women are either innocent victims of male lust and violence or guilty of incitement by their own behaviour and conduct'.<sup>24</sup> This dichotomy is also mentioned by Merskin who argues that the concept of (American) 'Lolita' in fashion advertising, and in other media, is to 'appear vampish, but be virginal', which means, she argues, to appear sexually provocative (Whore), but remain non-threatening to men (Madonna).<sup>25</sup> In contrast to their representation of females, the media tend to emphasise male aggressiveness. Music journalist Stuart Berman, for instance, argues that American music reflects wider gender stereotypes in that male singers are assumed to be aggressive while female singers are assumed to be coquettish

20 Wilkins, 'So Full of Myself as a Chick: Goth Women, Sexual Independence, and Gender Egalitarianism'.

21 Hodkinson, *Goth: Identity, Style and Subculture*, p. 53.

22 Merskin, 'Reviving Lolita? A Media Literacy Examination of Sexual Portrayals of Girls in Fashion Advertising' p. 120.

23 Steed, 1994, quoted in Merskin, p. 127.

24 Meyers, 1997 cited in Ross & Nightingale, *Media and Audiences: New Perspectives*, p. 80.

25 Merskin, *op. cit.*, p. 125.



and fragile.<sup>26</sup> Thus, it can be seen that in mainstream Western media, this limited ‘Madonna-Whore’ representation of women and girls as well as the representation of masculinity as aggressive still strongly persists. This limited representation of gender in mainstream media seems to impose a negative conception of femininity and in turn the qualities such as elegance and sweetness that are associated with it.

In contrast to these points, subcultural aspects of *GothLoli* have been fading as Japanese youth who dress in *GothLoli* increasingly perceive it as part of acceptable mainstream fashion, rather than a way to express their resistance to mainstream culture. It is important that despite the emphasis on sweetness and demureness, *GothLoli* does not endorse ‘passive’ femininity or objectification of women. As the *Avant Gauche* website indicates, *GothLoli* has no direct reference to Nabokov and his novel, and generally in relation to the fashion, it has no sexual connotations.<sup>27</sup> This idea is credible because although those who dress in this fashion style often overemphasise demureness and sweetness, which conceivably appeal to some men, Japanese *Lolitas* also tend to endorse the egoism and cruelty associated with childhood rather than its innocence, naiveté or submissiveness. Thus, they do not seem to endorse passivity or vulnerability. Moreover, their emphasis on sweetness and cuteness, both in fashion and manners, does not, at least not intentionally, evoke vulnerability, availability, or willingness to fuel male fantasies as Merskin argues American ‘Lolita’ does. It should be noted that many *Lolitas* differentiate themselves from *maid cosplay* fashion where young women dress in similar, but distinctive styles from *GothLoli* (or French Maid). One possible reason is that the maid style which is strongly associated with maid cafés<sup>28</sup>, tends to operate for the objectifying gaze of men, particularly those who are considered to be *otaku*<sup>29</sup>, and often connotes emphasised (superficial) submissiveness (after all, they are dressed as maids).

The concept of ‘Lolita’ is essentially aesthetic as it is applied to the lacy, elaborate, and girlish doll-like sweetness of the fashion. This idea is reinforced by the interviews with *GothLoli* followers, who refer to its cuteness and sweetness, and its suitability for their taste, as the main reason for dressing in the style.<sup>30</sup> Also, the magazine *Gothic & Lolita Bible* provides a catalogue for clothing brands that distribute *GothLoli*-style clothing. This indicates its mass-marketed nature and its aim to encourage casual participation and enjoyment if it suits an individual.

26 Martin, Brough, & Orrego, *Get It On*.

27 *Avant Gauche*, *op. cit.*

28 A Maid café is where young waitresses are dressed as and play the role of maids. The maids and their customers engage in a pseudo master-servant relationship with ‘definitely no sexual overtones about the whole situation’ [[http://www.japaneselifestyle.com.au/Tokyo/maid\\_cafe.htm](http://www.japaneselifestyle.com.au/Tokyo/maid_cafe.htm)].

29 According to Orbaugh and Buckley (2002), the word *otaku* has connotations similar to ‘nerd’ in English though sometimes it is used to suggest unsociability, and even psychopathy. Outside Japan, the term is generally used to describe devoted fans of manga and anime. In recent times, the word *akiba-kei* (Akihabara-style) has increasingly been used to describe the (*otaku*) subcultures that emerged in the district of Akihabara, and the followers of these subcultures.

30 *Gothic & Lolita Bible*, vol. 5, pp. 83-86.

In order to understand *GothLoli* in the context of cultural globalisation, it is useful to refer to the theory articulated by scholar Okamura Keiko.<sup>31</sup> According to her theory of ‘format’ and ‘product’, historical European fashion styles (the ‘format’) became transnational, and then ‘localised’ in Japanese culture. When the ‘format’ is then hybridised with the local aesthetic notion of cute, it engenders a fashion form peculiar to Japan. The ‘product’ of this transcultural flow reflects the emphasis on the fusion of elaborated sweetness and cuteness, a quality unknown in Western Goth subculture. However, this may support the commonly held notion of cultural globalisation as localisation and subsequent homogenisation of Western culture. This point is summarised in anthropologist Jonathan Friedman’s claim in relation to similarities between cultural globalisation and European colonialism in the eighteenth century. Friedman contends that ‘the things and symbols of Western culture have diffused into the daily lives of many of the world’s people...yet still their mode of appropriating these things is vastly different from our own.’<sup>32</sup> In this idea, the differences between ‘global’ (our) and ‘local’ (their) cultures, and possibly their hierarchal relationships (i.e. global/ dominant, local/ subservient) are sustained even after ‘global’ cultural forms are localised.

What theorists like Friedman tend to disregard, however, is ‘countercurrents - the impact nonwestern cultures have been making on the West.’<sup>33</sup> Those who affirm the direct correlation between cultural globalisation and Westernisation do so by assuming the sole dominance of Western culture, and hence assuming the centrality of Western culture against peripheral non-Western cultures. This idea is challenged by Appadurai who argues that neither the centrality nor the peripherality of culture exist any longer. Moreover, the idea of the countercurrent or ‘reverse’ flow of culture indicates the potential of cultural forms to circulate in multiple directions. Consequently, this suggests the potential of various cultures to become active components of cultural globalisation. One of the ways to compare these impacts or ‘reverse’ flow of *GothLoli* on the West is via different aesthetical conceptions of ‘cuteness’ in the West and Japan. White argues that there is a tendency in the United States to encourage even small girls in elementary school to dress in mature, sexualised clothes. In Japan, in comparison, high school and college-aged girls, and even young women and men are allowed to associate with cute styles without much social objection.<sup>34</sup> Merskin’s concern over the American trend where women ‘dress down’ to achieve a baby-doll look also indicates that in the United States the concept of ‘cuteness’ should only be applied to small children. Moreover, Wilkins cites Sarah Thornton who argues that participants in youth culture denounce femininity as passive, undesirable, and unhip.<sup>35</sup> In other words, American youth tend to reject

31 Okamura, *gurobaru shakai no ibunka-ron*.

32 Friedman, *Cultural Identity & Global Process*, p. 100.

33 Nederveen Pieterse, *Globalization and Culture*, p. 69.

34 White, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

35 Thornton, cited in Wilkins, *op. cit.*, p. 333.



forms of femininity and demureness as undesirable. If these sentiments can be read as reflecting the West in general, it can be assumed that the association of youth/adult with cute and sweet styles may be generally considered inappropriate and unfavourable in the West. On the other hand, Kinsella claims that the Japanese cute style has directly and indirectly influenced Western youth culture since the 1990s, most notably in the 'Riot Grrl' style, where '[r]adical, assertive young women began to wear baby-doll dresses or old-fashioned frilly frocks, with Dr Martin [sic] boots and other macho accessories.'<sup>36</sup> According to her:

The tough but infantile Riot Grrrl style in Britain has been directly and indirectly influenced by Japanese cute culture, especially the sophisticated infantile styles developed around Tokyo's Cutie For Independent Girls magazine.<sup>37</sup>

Kinsella's point is further reinforced by the growing popularity of *GothLoli* outside Japan. For instance, *BABY THE STARS SHINE BRIGHT*, one of the most well known *Lolita* clothing brands, opened its first overseas store in Paris in 2007, indicating the fashion's potential to become accepted outside the context of Japanese culture and aesthetics.<sup>38</sup> It is easy to denounce *GothLoli* as mere mimicry of Western fashion. However, its hybridised qualities in which European classic fashion styles interact with Japanese aesthetic concepts, and its subsequent countercurrents in the West, demonstrate that non-Western culture also influences Western culture. Social/ aesthetic differences between the West and Japan mean there are different interpretations of cuteness in those societies, which explains why this aesthetic concept was accepted without much resistance in Japan while it was, and still is, perceived in a rather negative light in many Western societies. In the next section I turn to *GothLoli* followers outside of Japan with particular attention to their perceptions of the fashion trend, and look at some of the issues in the context of cultural globalisation that surround it.

### **Lives of 'Lolitas' Abroad: *EGL The Gothic & Lolita Fashion Community***

The existence of *EGL*<sup>39</sup>*The Gothic & Lolita Fashion Community* is a notable indication of the growing popularity and recognition of *GothLoli* worldwide.<sup>40</sup> This English-speaking cyberspace community for *GothLoli* lovers provides a place where participants from more than 14 different countries<sup>41</sup> exchange information, sell/ buy *GothLoli* items, discuss

<sup>36</sup> Kinsella, *op. cit.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *BABY THE STARS SHINE BRIGHT* home page.

<sup>39</sup> Gothic & Lolita is sometimes called Elegant Gothic Lolita (EGL). Western followers of the fashion use this term as a blanket term to describe all Lolita fashion, especially in the initial stages of its introduction. In this paper, GothLoli is used as much as possible, in order to avoid confusion.

<sup>40</sup> EGL The elegant Gothic & Lolita A Livejournal Community.

<sup>41</sup> This Internet community was created in the United States and the participants must use English to participate. An analysis of the community identifying

cultural/aesthetic issues, and interact with one another. I monitored and observed this community for seven months (from November 2004 to June 2005) in order to analyse the currency of the fashion trend outside of Japan. Participants ranged in age from twelve to thirty-five years old. It should be understood that this is the analysis of relatively active participants, and the community indeed has a much larger number of members who rarely participate or only visit and view the site. The author did not participate in the forum in any other form than as an informed observer, in order to neither disturb nor influence the flow of communication.<sup>42</sup> Forum comments have been recorded and reproduced in this article as they were posted.

### *GothLoli as an Independent Style*

Interestingly, the rules of the *GothLoli* Community in relation to auctions and direct sales state that '[i]tems must either be authentic Japanese brand Gothic & Lolita clothing and accessories, well made replicas or items that follow the **genuine style** of Gothic & Lolita.'<sup>43</sup> This is reinforced by a comment posted by the site administrator that, referring to the recent trend in which participants increasingly neither post for '*GothLoli*' style nor the Japanese brands:

The reason that we allow sales posts in this community at all is to help people find things that they are not easily attainable outside of Japan and items that are rare. Western style gothic clothing and accessories are easily found by westerners, and there are other more appropriated forums for them.

Thus it is clear that the community treats *GothLoli* as a genuine and independent fashion trend rather than a mere mimicry of either Western Goth or Victorian dress fashion. It also clearly identifies and differentiates *GothLoli* from Western Goth style, which means members are aware of both Western Goth culture and *GothLoli*, and have made a decision to choose *GothLoli* based on their preference.

This point is reinforced further, when a common misconception that *GothLoli* is an 'illegitimate' offspring of Western Goth is mentioned. One Australian participant comments: 'just because it says Gothic in the name it doesn't mean that it's pertaining to Western Gothic subculture'. Another participant laments:

---

active participants' cultural origin reveals that 70 percent are from the USA, 5 percent from the UK, 5 percent from Canada. Other countries represented by a few individuals included Australia, Finland, Germany, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore, and South Korea.

42 The aim here is not to read this observation as reflecting general attitudes of GothLoli followers. Therefore, the author does not profess that the participants of the online community might be representatives of other individuals in their cultural environment, or of international GL followers. It is nevertheless worthwhile to examine how this particular fashion has been established within the lives of the participants. This is because, although this online community is a virtual place, it is likely to represent a partial part of the whole reality, where the actual Lolitas (GL followers) live.

43 EGL The elegant Gothic & Lolita A Livejournal Community.





Sadly EGL is already seen as “one of the bastard stepchildren of Goth” in many places... The problem is also sociological, people need to categorise things to get their head around them it seems, so EGL gets stuffed with Goth instead of with Japanese Street fashion in Europe mostly.

This common misconception contrasts with the way many participants see *GothLoli*. One participant comments ‘it has an interesting look you hardly see in the Western Gothic Subculture’. Despite the common perception of *GothLoli* as an (‘inferior’) part of Western Goth culture in Western societies, the independent identity of *GothLoli* is assumed in this community as participants clearly distinguish it from the Western Goth subculture. Moreover, they have selected *GothLoli* not because they were forced to, but because it suits them for a variety of reasons. This illustrates the possibility that transnational culture and local culture can co-exist without homogenisation. Indeed, both identities of Western Goth and *GothLoli* are acknowledged by the participants, and *GothLoli* is appreciated by the participants precisely because of its qualities which are different from Western Goth.

### *Gothic & Lolita and Social Prejudice*

Although *GothLoli* suits the preference and aesthetic of the participants, prejudice about individuals dressing ‘differently’ from mainstream fashion is mentioned quite frequently in the community. For example, an Australian participant who currently lives in Japan, commenting on the entry of a young British male participant who declares his wish to dress in *GothLoli* style, notes:

Really, unless you can pass for a girl, wearing EGL in public might get you into trouble. In Japan there are guys who dress EGL and hang out in Harajuku, but I don’t think the rest of the world would be too accepting. Maybe at clubs it would be okay, but otherwise I would be wary if I were you. Even girls who dress EGL in most countries get harassed.

In relation to skirts of *metamorphose temps de fille*, a famous Japanese *Lolita* brand known for its elaborate frills and ‘Sweet Lolita’ style,<sup>44</sup> an American participant comments: ‘if it’s super frill metamor, that’s nearly impossible for even a cute girl to wear without being stared at. and, assuming you’re not one, in a really frill dress you may be mistaken for an adult baby fetishist’. Other participants agree, supporting his wish to dress as he likes but warning him by revealing their experiences that all female *Lolitas* have a tough time going out dressed in *GothLoli*, and so for men it will be even harder. Similarly,

<sup>44</sup> Metamorphose Temps de Fille, home page.

one Finnish participant posts a comment asking for fellow Finnish participants. She notes that no one around her dresses in the style, and it is really difficult to dress in *GothLoli* alone in Finland, as ‘over here it’s really harsh. it’s enough to put on a skirt with a ribbon and you’ve got glares on you. But I’m doing my best...’. Thus, prejudice related to teenagers and mature-aged individuals who dress in excessively cute and sweet fashion regardless of gender clearly exists in many countries. The discriminatory treatment of *GothLoli* and its followers in many societies also suggests that even though they adopt a fashion style which is relatively accepted in Japan, their lives are not likely to be standardised or ‘Japanised’. This amplifies Appadurai’s argument; in relation to the widespread popularity of Philippine renditions of American popular songs in the Philippines, he states:

But Americanization is certainly a pallid term to apply to such a situation, for not only are there more Filipinos singing perfect renditions of some American songs (often from the American past) than there are Americans doing so, there is, of course, the fact that the rest of their lives is not in complete synchrony with the referential world which first gave birth to these songs.

In other words, even if individuals adopt a transnational cultural form, this does not necessarily mean that their lives are completely infiltrated and standardised by the culture where the transnational cultural form originated.<sup>45</sup> The experiences of harassment indicate that the participants are reminded constantly that such fashion styles are not favoured where they live. Thus, their lives are inseparable from their local cultures.

### *Negative Conception of Gothic & Lolita and the Western Concept of ‘Lolita’*

Negative conceptions and treatments of *GothLoli* or individuals dressed in cute and elaborate, lacy clothes outside Japan and especially in Western societies seems to be, at least partly, due to the concept of American (Western) Lolita based on Nabokov’s novel, and the deviant sexual connotations associated with it. One Canadian participant, for example, comments: ‘Many people seem to think I look tarty or silly’. Another Canadian participant, in answer to the question of ‘Is there anything you dislike about Lolita fashion?’, notes: ‘I guess the name. Lolita. Whenever people hear it they assume I’m some sort of whore’. This idea is reinforced by another participant from the United States who expresses her anger at such assumption:

[I]t seems that most people’s initial reaction to the style is to be squicked out by the idea of eroticizing pre-adolescence. The Lolita=Pedophilia thing bothers me by itself, but what

---

<sup>45</sup> Appadurai, *op. cit.*, pp. 271-2.



really bothers me is the extent to which people cannot divorce the idea from how men perceive it...Is it really that impossible to imagine that women might occasionally spend a lot of time on their appearance without it being for anyone else's benefit? I've had to answer time and again, "Why do you want to be infantilized/dis-empowered/victimized?" and the answer is of course, that I don't. I want to wear lace trimmed knee length skirts and puffy sleeves and hair ribbons. "shrug" It is fun and makes me feel pretty.

Many participants in the community indeed strongly deny the direct correlation between *GothLoli* and the concept of Western, sexualised 'Lolita' drawn from Nabokov's novel. One participant puts it: 'most girls who wear the style are exactly the opposite as Lolita from the book by Nabokov'. Such negative connotations associated with fashion styles like *GothLoli* in Western societies are explained by theorists like Merskins, who is alarmed by the increase in the eroticised 'Lolita' representation in the media, as such representation enforces sexualisation and exploitation of young girls. Such theorists' criticism of the concept assumes the direct correlation between the concept of 'Lolita' or grown people dressed in 'baby doll-style', and paedophilic fantasies and pornography. However, as I have shown, this is different in Japan where the fashion emerged. As White has noted, the concept of cuteness is not restricted only to children in Japan.<sup>46</sup> This means that young people dressing cutely and sweetly are more accepted in Japan while in many Western cultures, it may be considered to be infantile or unnatural. Therefore, *GothLoli* is received and interpreted differently in Japan than in the West.

It is also noteworthy that some Western participants in these communities say that although teenagers and young people who follow 'mainstream' fashions tend to dislike *GothLoli* fashion, senior citizens and small children admire the fashion. This is indicated by some participants, including a Canadian who comments that '[m]ost older adults, especially women, seem to like the way I dress'. Another participant says 'little girls LOVE it! 'Cause pretty much we're dressed like princess dolls to them'. These comments indicate that although *GothLoli* is generally perceived unfavourably in Western societies, the fashion trend is interpreted differently by individuals of different generations. Thus, Ulf Hedetoft's argument that different interpretations of culture may not only occur trans-nationally, but also between individuals who share the same culture/ nationality, is reinforced.<sup>47</sup> This (re)interpretation of the transnational cultural flow may limit the capacity of the dominant ideology to overshadow the process and also illustrates the hollowness and instability of the dominant ideology – in this case, the Western concept of 'Lolita'.

<sup>46</sup> White, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-7.

<sup>47</sup> Hedetoft, 'Contemporary Cinema: Between cultural globalization and national interpretation', p. 279.

*Gothic & Lolita and Individual Freedom in Western Societies*

Western societies' intolerance of people who dress 'differently' as indicated by the participants' unpleasant experiences problematises a common belief that Western societies value individualism while non-Western societies such as Japan value conformity over individualism. The idea of lack of freedom/individualism is often at the root of how the West describes Japan. For example, Phil Hammond, in his study of the representation of Japan in Western journalistic and scholarly accounts, mentions a report on human rights in Japanese prisons by BBC TV News which notes: 'They're regimented, but they are at least safe. Unlike many prisons in the West, violence among inmates is rare. In that sense Japan's prisons reflect society as a whole: fewer rights than in the West, but more security'.<sup>48</sup> According to Hammond, even the absence of any violence is used by Western media to emphasise how different, strange and exotic Japan is compared to the West. This tendency to exoticise is also prominent in the Western media's coverage of *GothLoli*. Such Western journalists as David Graham<sup>49</sup>, and Mark Schilling<sup>50</sup> attribute *GothLoli* to a rebellion or reaction against Japanese society that imposes conformity. Graham, in fact, notes that 'Tokyo is a massive city dominated by a culture that demands conformity. "The nail that sticks up gets hammered down", was a common admonition toward children who dared to express their individual personality'.<sup>51</sup> It may be true that Japanese society demands conformity. However, participants in the online community I examined see it differently as far as fashion is concerned. One participant from the United Kingdom in fact argues that 'I would say Japan would probably be the only ACCEPTING place where you could run about and no-one blink twice. I've found the UK is probably the worst because we are a very reserved and set-in-our-ways country!'. This argument is reinforced by a participant from the United States who says:

Dressing up should be for special occasions, like conventions, EGL EGA gatherings, Halloween, weekend trips to the shopping areas of your town with other friends dressed up, concerts, or clubbing and if you live in Japan of course... Why? Because society doesn't really understand individuality unfortunately and people might think you're living in a fantasy world, plus it's healthy to keep it on a "play dressup fantasy" level.

As these posts indicate, *GothLoli* followers tend to see Western societies as lacking the freedom of individualism as far as fashion is concerned while idealising Japan as a place where such freedom is preserved. Thus, common conceptions of Japan as a highly conformist society are called into question when we compare Japanese attitudes to this particular fashion with those in the West.

48 Hammond, 'The Mystification of Culture: Western Perception of Japan', p. 312.

49 Graham, 'Gothic Lolita: Goth girls just want to have fun'.

50 Silling, 'Naughty and nice, sugar and spice'.

51 Graham, *op. cit.*



### *Gothic & Lolita and 'Othering' Theory*

Whether or not *GothLoli* is the producer of a specific variant of a national (i.e. Japanese) fashion trend depends on the participants' interpretation of the fashion. As already argued, the online community generally treats Japanese *GothLoli* brand clothing as 'authentic', and the rules of the *GothLoli* online community state that *GothLoli* is a Japanese fashion trend, and differentiates it from Western Goth and other fashion styles that are considered 'Western'. Moreover, a majority of participants consider the fashion trend as Japanese, or at least Japan-oriented. In answer to the question of what 'Lolita' styles are included in the term '*GothLoli*', one participant argues: '[i]t is the Gothic AND Lolita community, meaning it encompasses all of Japanese Gothic and Lolita fashion'. Some participants even express their own concern that *GothLoli* has rather 'inappropriately' been interpreted by Western individuals, as illustrated by an English participant's comment: 'westerners, instead of bringing loli straight from Japan, decided to modify it a bit, so now it looks tarty and sort of kinky, which i believe Lolita clothing is trying to avoid'. The complex history of the fashion –the Rococo and Victorian inspired fashion style developed in Japan which has been re-exported to the West –however, seems to provide the background for different interpretations. Few participants in fact raise objections to the common perception of *GothLoli* as a Japanese fashion trend. For example, following the post by a Dutch participant who notes some Western participants' 'wrong' interpretations of the 'Lolita' aesthetic as what she dislikes about the fashion trend, one participant claims that: '[b]ut the Japanese stole the style original from Europe, so what?'. This comment is followed by one participant from Canada, saying: 'True'. Furthermore, another participant denies the Japanese origin of the fashion trend, saying: '[I]t isn't an original fashion or Japanese fashion at all'. Hedetoft<sup>52</sup> has explained this process of globalisation as one where the 'receivers' (participants) engage with the fashion as either Japanese or European culture, depending on their pre-understanding of the fashion as Japan-oriented or European-influenced. The sender (the Japanese fashion trend) itself has emerged from the hybridisation of European fashion and a Japanese aesthetic, and thus, is likely to be multicultural. In this sense, it can be argued that for Western participants, *GothLoli* seems to represent difference from as well as affirmation of their own cultures.

Although different interpretations of the origin of the fashion trend are seen in the online community, only a few of them, if any, mention its exotic 'Japaneseness' as a main attraction. Thus, most Western participants do not seem to define their own identity by 'othering' Japan and *GothLoli*. Well known stereotypes associated with Japan and Japanese culture such as 'a paradoxical combination of traditionalism – *samurai*,

---

52 Hedetoft, *op. cit.*, pp. 281-2.

*geisha* (Italics theirs) etc. – and high-technology, which can be seen in Hollywood films such as *Bladerunner* or *Black Rain*<sup>53</sup> are in fact not found in this community. Therefore, it may be argued that such Western participants who consider *GothLoli* as a Japanese fashion trend do not emphasise any cultural difference in order to define their own identity as ‘Westerners.’ Rather, those who regard the fashion style as having a foreign origin seem to be aware of their position as ‘absorbers’, actively accepting and participating in the fashion trend. So we can conclude that these participants appreciate the style not because it signifies cultural differences, exoticism or ‘otherness’, but because it simply suits their preference. In this sense, for them, what is important is the content, and suitability for their preference, certainly not where it came from.

### ***Gothic & Lolita* for Eternity?: Future Possibilities and Concluding Thoughts**

#### *GothLoli and Further Hybridisation*

Because of the expense, different physicality, and lack of availability of *GothLoli* clothes outside Japan, many participants purchase what are considered as ‘*GothLoli* –esque’ clothes from local (second hand) shops, or sew them themselves. As a result, some ‘hybrid’ Lolita fashions have emerged. From observing *EGL The Gothic & Lolita Fashion Community*, further hybridisation and ‘glocalisation’ of *GothLoli* is predicted by some online discussion participants. For example, under the topic of the growing popularity of *GothLoli* in Finland, one participant claims that ‘I’m 100 percent positive that lolita fashion as *such*, in it’s authentic Japanese form, will never become a major trend in Finland, but rather, it will more or less influence the already existing styles’. Commenting on that, another participant notes ‘Punkloli is very easy to implement in the pre-existing ‘punk’ trend, and teeniegoths have mainly adapted the more gothic (or generic bxw) version of Lolita into their wardrobes’. Yet another participant claims that so-called Punk Lolita (fusion of hard punk tops and frilly, lacy skirts) has gradually become closer to Japanese style due to the growing popularity of Japanese popular culture in contemporary Finland. These comments indicate that *GothLoli* is again in the process of change, as the likely hybridisation, localisation, interaction as well as appropriation is taking place once it is introduced to other cultures. Women’s studies scholar Lauraine LeBlanc argues that ‘girl punks’ attempt to challenge and subvert passive femininity and its mandated beauty by deploying aggressive behaviour and punk style.<sup>54</sup> From one point of view, *GothLoli* is the antithesis of ‘girl punks’ as the former is defined by its sweetness and cuteness while the latter is defined by aggressiveness and rebelliousness. However, from another point of view, emphasising sweetness, demureness and

53 Iwabuchi, ‘Complicit exoticism: Japan and its other’.

54 LeBlanc, 1999, cited in Wilkins, *op. cit.*, p. 333.



femininity without seeking the objectifying male gaze mirrors the aims of girl punks to reject the mainstream representation of femininity as passive, compliant, and powerless against the sexual objectification of women. This affinity between the two styles, and *GothLoli*'s compatibility with punk style, reinforces Nederveen Pieterse's claim that cultural hybridisation expresses cultural affinities rather than 'exoticism'.<sup>55</sup>

## Conclusion

The emergent popularity of Gothic & Lolita (*GothLoli*) tells us that non-Western cultures can and are being accepted and understood globally. This reinforces Appadurai's idea that there may not be a centre in this transcultural flow, as it is a complex and overlapping process that flows in multiple ways. Despite the fact that the style of *GothLoli* originated from historical Europe, the doll-like elaborateness, sweetness and elegance of the fashion was relatively easily developed in Japan where the concept of cuteness and sweetness is not restricted to children. The fashion's appreciation of demure mannerisms and sweetness without the restrictions of 'passive' femininity and aggressive masculinity have, in turn, attracted individuals in Western countries. The globalisation of *GothLoli* is therefore, not homogenising an already existing culture, in this case Western Goth, but is providing those who prefer something elaborate, sweet and demure as an alternative to their own fashion cultures.

As *GothLoli* is a clear fusion of Western and non-Western cultures, as a historical European dress style which is hybridised with a Japanese aesthetical concept of cute, it has formed a style that is neither European nor Japanese, but at the same time both European and Japanese. Furthermore, Japanese culture itself has always undergone cultural hybridisation: as Morris states, '[t]he seventh and eighth centuries were one of Japan's great "borrowing" periods'.<sup>56</sup> Thus, what we call Japanese culture is the result of centuries of cultural hybridisation. This can certainly be said for almost any culture. Finally, as the participants in the online forum for *GothLoli* indicate, this fashion style is again in the process of change. Assuming that Nederveen Pieterse's theory that globalisation and cultural hybridisation have been taking place throughout world history, it is fair to declare that culture is in fact a process of eternal hybridisation, interaction and appropriation.

---

<sup>55</sup> Nederveen Pieterse, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>56</sup> Morris, *op. cit.*, pp. 11.

## References

- Appadurai, A., 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy' in Robbins, B. (ed.), *The Phantom Public Sphere* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 269-95.
- Avant Gauche* website, <http://www.avantgauche.co.uk/>.
- BABY THE STARS SHINE BRIGHT Home Page, <http://www.babyssb.co.jp>.
- Bauman, Z., 'On Glocalization: Or Globalization for Some, Localization for Some Others', *Thesis Eleven*, no 54 (August 1998), pp. 37-49.
- EGL *The elegant Gothic & Lolita A Livejournal Community*, <http://www.livejournal.com/community/egl/>.
- Friedman, J., *Cultural Identity & Global Process* (London: Sage Publications, 1994), pp. 15-41, 91-101.
- Get It On* (Documentary) 2004, Canada, Chuma Television, produced by Marcia Martin, Brad Brough, and Pedro Orrego.
- Gothic & Lolita Bible* (2002), vol. 5.
- Graham, D., 'Gothic Lolita: Goth Girls just want to have fun', *The Toronto Star*, 23 July 2002, Retrieved from <http://www.geocities.com/gothicunity/gothiclolita.html>.
- Gunn, J., 'Marilyn Manson Is Not Goth: Memorial Struggle and the Rhetoric of Subcultural Identity' *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, vol. 23, no. 4, (1999), pp. 408-431.
- Hammond, P., 'The Mystification of Culture: Western Perception of Japan' *Gazette*, vol. 61, no. 3-4, (1999), pp. 311-325.
- Hannerz, U., 'The cultural role of world cities' in Cohen, A. & Fukui, K. (eds.), *Humanising the City?* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), pp. 127-39.
- Hedetoft, U., 'Contemporary Cinema: Between cultural globalisation and national interpretation' in Hjort, M. and Mackenzie, S. (eds.), *Cinema and Nation* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 278-297.
- Hell, K., (2002) 'Elegant Gothic Lolita' *Morbidoutlook.com*, Retrieved 6 March 2004, from [http://www.morbidoutlook.com/fashion/articles/2002\\_07\\_gothiclolita.html](http://www.morbidoutlook.com/fashion/articles/2002_07_gothiclolita.html).
- Hodkinson, P., *Goth: Identity, Style and Subculture* (New York: Berg, 2002), pp. 35-64
- Ishikawa, L., 'Guide to Gothic & Lolita Culture' *Gothic & Lolita Bible*, vol. 5, (2002), pp. 88-89.
- Iwabuchi, K., 'Complicit exoticism: Japan and its other' *The Australian Journal of Media & Culture* vol. 8, no. 2 (1994).
- Jameson, F., 'Notes on Globalization as a Philosophical Issue' in Jameson, F. and Miyoshi, M. (eds.), *The Cultures of Globalization* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 54-77.
- Kinsella, S., 'Japanization of European Youth' *Nightwave* (1997) Retrieved 26 April 2002, from <http://www.kinsellaresearch.com/Japanization.html>.
- Maid Café article on Japanese Lifestyle Home page, Retrieved 20 October 2008, from <http://www.japaneselifestyle.com>.





au/Tokyo/maid\_cafe.htm

- Merskin, D., 'Reviving Lolita? A Media Literacy Examination of Sexual Portrayals of Girls in fashion Advertising' *American Behavioural Scientist* vol. 48, no. 1, (2004), pp. 119-129.
- Metamorphose Temps de Fille* Home Page, <http://www.metamorphose.gr.jp/english/>.
- Morris, I., *The World of the Shining Prince: Court Life in Ancient Japan* (London: Penguin Books, 1979), pp. 11-24.
- Nederveen Pieterse, J., *Globalization and Culture: Global Mélange* (Maryland: Roman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004).
- Okamura, K., *Gurobaru shakai no ibunka-ron (Cross-cultural Theory in Global Societies)* (Kyoto: Sekaishiso-sha, 2003), pp. 116-154.
- Orbaugh, S. and Buckley, S. 'Otaku' in Buckley, S. (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Japanese Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 379-80.
- Robertson, R., 'Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity' in Featherstone, M., Lash S. and Robertson, R. (eds.), *Global Maternities* (London: Sage Publications, 1995), pp. 25-44.
- Ross, K. and Nightingale, V., *Media and Audiences: New Perspectives* (Berkshire: Open University Press, 2003), pp. 72-94.
- Silling, M., 'Naughty and nice, sugar and spice', *The Japan Times*. Retrieved 23 June 2004, from <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/ff20040623a2.htm>.
- Shimotsuma Monogatari* (motion picture) 2004, Japan, Toho, directed by Tetsuya Nakajima, starring Kyoko Fukada and Anna Tsuchiya, based on the novel by Novala Takemoto.
- Stevens, C. S., *Japanese Popular Music: Culture, authenticity, and power* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 56-8.
- Suzuki, M., 'Gothic & Lolita wa kansaikara umareta' *Yaso # Goth* (2003), pp. 118-9.
- White, M., *The Material Child: Coming of Age in Japan and America* (New York: The Free Press, 1993), pp. 103-139, 169-195.
- Wilkins, A. C., 'So Full of Myself as a Chick: Goth Women, Sexual Independence, and Gender Egalitarianism' *Gender & Society*, vol. 18, no. 3, (2004), pp. 328-349.
- Yomota, I., *Kawaii Ron (Theory of Cuteness)*, (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 2006).

# Representations of the Japanese in Contemporary Australian Literature and Film

Erika Smith  
University of Western Sydney

## Abstract

The objective of this article is to investigate general contemporary Australian perceptions of the Japanese. I will do this by exploring how Australian contemporary literature (2006-2007) and Australian contemporary film (1997-2007) depicts Japanese characters. By analysing the representation of the Japanese characters in these areas I will attempt to gather a broad understanding of how Australians represent, perceive and identify the Japanese today.

## Keywords

Australia, Japan, Literature, Film, World War II

## Introduction

Australians have developed perceptions about Japan and the Japanese from historical, political, social and cultural experiences and relationships. These perceptions can be identified in many areas of Australian culture, including art, literature and film. Additionally, events and experiences of the twentieth century cemented feelings in many Australians that Japan was the 'other' to be most feared.<sup>1</sup> Recently, while visiting Japan in early June 2008, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd described the Australia-Japan relationship 'in first-class working order [...] a relationship [...] based on strategic security and an economic partnership based on enduring friendship.'<sup>2</sup> It will be interesting to assess whether Rudd's view of the Australia-Japan relationship is reflected in the representations of the Japanese in contemporary Australian literature and film.

---

1 The 'other' was used frequently in Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). Although Said's text was focused on the Middle East as the 'other' of the West, the arguments can be used in many other case studies. Said argued the 'other' was something/someone the West used to measure and compare themselves against in a positive light. Similarly, this argument of the 'other' can be understood in our analysis of Australian representations of the Japanese. Said, *Orientalism*.

2 Coorey, 'Japan Relationship is Fine: Rudd'.



This article acknowledges that there are very few texts that have been published on subjects related to Australian perceptions of the Japanese. Most of the analyses have been based on American textual representations. Such writers on American representations of the Japanese include Sheila K. Johnson, Narrelle Morris, Edward Said, Ross Mouer and Sugimoto Yoshio. These authors present key arguments that will be utilised in this article's analysis of Australian representations of the Japanese in contemporary literature and contemporary film. There are only two prominent authors, Alison Broinowski and Megumi Kato, who have analysed Australian specific textual representations of the Japanese.

Diplomat and academic, Alison Broinowski, author of *The Yellow Lady: Australian Impressions of Asia* (1992), presents a complex and deep analysis, via representations in various texts and media, of Australian perceptions of the people and countries that make up Asia. Megumi Kato's PhD thesis, *Representations of Japan and Japanese People in Australian Literature* (2005), is the most recent analysis of the representation of Japan and the Japanese in Australian literature. Kato's thesis examines literary representations of Japan and the Japanese from 1880 to 2005, assessing whether there is any change over a century of historical, political and social events.<sup>3</sup>

### Representations of the Japanese in Contemporary Australian Literature

According to Kato, in the 60 years since WWII there has been a limited amount of literature published that represents contemporary Japanese people.<sup>4</sup> The reality of this representation as one of friendship is challenged, particularly when the issue of WWII is discussed or mentioned.<sup>5</sup> Similarly Dr. Ben McInnes, academic and one of the contributing writers of *New Voices 1*, argues, 'from this point on [post Russo-Japanese War 1904 – 1905...] literature has claimed unanimously that Australian attitudes toward Japan rapidly became negative.'<sup>6</sup> Kato and McInnes are both highlighting sensitivity and the impact conflict (Russo-Japanese War and WWII) has had on the minds of Australians.

This article limits 'contemporary Australian literature' to four literary texts of different forms, written by Australians between 2006 and 2007. The four contemporary texts examined in this paper represent different genres of literature, including Barbara Fisher's poem, 'Rain and Hirohito' (2006), Mark Aird's short story, 'Sleeping Soldiers' (2006), Andrew O'Connor's novel, *Tuvalu* (2006) and Bryce Courtenay's novel, *The*

3 Kato, *Representations of Japan and Japanese People in Australian Literature*, p. 13.

4 Kato, 'Australian Literary Images of Japan: A Japanese Perspective', pp. 195-196.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 202.

6 McInnes, 'Assessing Australian Attitudes to Japan in the Early Twentieth Century – A New Approach', p. 14.

*Persimmon Tree* (2007).

Fisher's 'Rain and Hirohito' is a postmodern poem rich in imagery and metaphors.<sup>7</sup> When analysing Fisher's poem several techniques need to be considered to understand its representation of the Japanese, including the poem's context and subject matter, imagery, style and language. The importance of context and subject is crucial in constructing meaning because of the many different themes threaded through the poem. The poem uses the past tense, reflecting on the Japanese and Japanese society at the end of Hirohito's rule (1926 – 1989).<sup>8</sup> 'Rain and Hirohito' represents two conflicting images of Japan, between traditional and modern Japan. Traditional Japan is represented through references to Hiroshige Ichiyūsai (1797 - 1859), a famous print artist during the Tokugawa period (1603 - 1868).<sup>9</sup> A sense of traditional Japan is further suggested through the subject of cherry trees, and the Emperor's road.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, the contemporary Japanese are described going about their daily routine.<sup>11</sup> 'Rain and Hirohito' depicts the poet's representations of the Japanese (the poem's subject) through contrasting traditional versus modern images.

The imagery of autumn, rain and cherry trees all reinforce a stereotypical romantic image of Japan, what Morris would describe as a technique to link the readers' presumed knowledge of traditional Japan to the poem.<sup>12</sup> This romantic imagery is juxtaposed with the busy lives of modern Japanese who make 'their way to work'<sup>13</sup> and the Emperor's declining health. The poet's view of Japan and Japanese people is made up of these disparate images,

From the hotel coffee shop [...]  
a moving frieze of people  
walking with umbrellas  
under the cherry trees [...]  
travellers on the Emperor's Road.<sup>14</sup>

These lines illustrate an image reminiscent of Hiroshige's print series, *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*. Hiroshige's print series depicts travellers along famous roads and special attractions, against the backdrop of the different seasonal weather. In some of

7 'From the 1950s and 1960s onwards, many writers addressed issues arising from civil rights movement [...] the Vietnam War (1959-1975) and other conflicts, pollution and other environmental issues, ethnic issues, women's rights and gay rights.' Wagner, *Poetry Analysis* 2, p. 35.

8 Bettmann/Corbis, *Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc.*, 'Hirohito'.

9 The (Edo) Tokugawa period refers to the time when Tokugawa shoguns, Ieyasu, Hidetada, Iemitsu and Yoshimune ruled Japan between 1603 – 1868. Edo, now present day Tokyo, was the capital city from the time of Tokugawa rule. Walthall, *Japan a Cultural, Social and Political History*, pp. 94-110.

10 Fisher, 'Rain and Hirohito', in *Quadrant*, p. 45, line 7.

11 *Ibid*, line 8.

12 Morris, "Paradigm Paranoia", pp. 53-54.

13 Fisher, *op. cit.*, line 8.

14 *Ibid*, lines 3, 5, 6, 7, 10.



these prints, figures are seen walking, wearing triangular shaped hats that were common in the period. These hats, known as *amagasa*<sup>15</sup>, are then contrasted with the poet's image of modern Japan, where Japanese people are described with umbrellas, making a direct connection between the past and present through fashion.

Although 'Rain and Hirohito' has no distinct rhyme scheme, it does have a musical flow that makes its reading natural. The poem follows no traditional style, rather it consists of two stanzas of ten lines, in two columns beside one another. By separating the poem into two columns unevenly, it visually reinforces the contrasting images of past and contemporary Japan. This effectively represents the Japanese in a juxtaposition of past and contemporary, society and culture through techniques of context, subject matter, language and style.

Similar to other contemporary poems, 'Rain and Hirohito' employs straightforward, readable language.<sup>16</sup> The language refers to Japanese traditions, stereotypes, cities, eras, history, royalty, art and culture within its twenty lines. Fisher's poem uses words, such as 'Hirohito', 'cherry trees' and 'Emperor', that Morris describes as specific words adopted and adapted in a text to function as a link between the text and the reader's knowledge.<sup>17</sup> The poem's title and subject matter refer to Hirohito clearly. For many Australians, Hirohito draws upon the representations of the Japanese in WWII. Kato asserts the association of WWII in Australian contemporary literature demonstrates a 'lack of cultural crossings between the two countries.'<sup>18</sup> To do so, as 'Rain and Hirohito' does, would force the contemporary Australia-Japan relationship to remain closely tied to the past.

Mark Aird's 'Sleeping Soldiers' (2006) is based on two characters, Kobayashi Keiko, and her son, Tatsuya, who is a *hikikomori*.<sup>19</sup> *Hikikomori* is generally understood to be an individual who isolates themselves from society and family in a single room for six months or longer.<sup>20</sup> The following paragraph is a description of *hikikomori* in Aird's short story, which represents a typical example of sufferers:

He would wait, and she would sleep, so he could skulk silently through the darkened house to the kitchen, just one more shadow sliding down the stairway, before returning to his room to eat. Tatsuya hadn't spoken for 10 months now, since the day he'd locked his bedroom door, separating himself

15 *Amagasa* is a direct translation to 'rain hats.'

16 Other poems published in 2006 include, Jan Dean's *Walking to School* and B. W. Shearer's *The Japanese Lunch*.

17 Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

18 Kato, *Australian Literary Images of Japan*, p. 202.

19 A direct translation is 'hiding'.

20 'Hikikomori', Wikipedia. It must be noted that I recognise *Wikipedia* to be a non-academic publication of information. However, as *hikikomori* is a fairly new social phenomenon there is a gap in the research and publication for me to access and refer to.

from his mother and the world [...] He had his console, and the Internet to order the latest first-person shooter games.<sup>21</sup>

*Hikikomori* is a fairly new phenomenon and the causes are not certain, however it is believed to be linked to the pressure and stresses of the society that the victim withdraws from.<sup>22</sup> *Hikikomori* has been predominantly and popularly associated with Japanese society, even though cases have been identified in Western countries such as the United States, England and Australia.<sup>23</sup>

Contemporary Tokyo is the setting of Aird's short story, drawing emphasis to the pressure and stress associated with city life, particularly on youth. *Hikikomori* individuals often stay in their bedrooms, playing computer games and/or surfing the Internet.<sup>24</sup> Often they become extremely knowledgeable and experienced with particular technology and/or games, as is exemplified in Tatsuya:

in a false world of digital enemies [...] The State's answer was the Sleeping Soldiers, lobotomised life-term prisoners; murderers and rapists, strapped in lightweight military armour, and controlled though fist-sized radio receivers jutting out the base of their skulls. Except for their assault rifles, the Soldiers never made a sound. They never disobeyed, never negotiated, never lost.<sup>25</sup>

Aird offers readers an imaginative construction of what life as a *hikikomori* may be like.

The Sleeping Soldiers are the State's final solution to organised crime, gang warfare, and the increasingly violent and destructive Tokyo Uni riots.<sup>26</sup> In the perspective of the State, the Tokyo university riots are an example of the loss of their power and control of society. It is clear in the final paragraph that the Sleeping Soldiers are the *hikikomori* sufferers who have been recognised and recruited by the State for their 'excellence in online gaming'.<sup>27</sup> The State's solution is thereby two-fold. Firstly, to illuminate the social disruption caused by radical university students. Secondly, to deal with individual *hikikomori* by using them in the State's attempt to regain control. The subject of social disruption and 'the State's final solution'<sup>28</sup> are two extremes of popular Japanese stereotypes. The Sleeping Soldiers are an example of what Mouer and Sugimoto term 'paradoxical representations' of the Japanese in Western texts:

21 Aird, M. 'Sleeping Soldiers'.

22 Wikipedia, *op. cit.*, 'Hikikomori'.

23 *Ibid.*

24 *Ibid.*

25 Aird, *op. cit.*, paragraph 2.

26 *Ibid.*, paragraph 3.

27 *Ibid.*, paragraph 4.

28 *Ibid.*



some of the world's greatest eccentrics are produced by the world's most group-orientated society where a supreme value is placed on conformity. One of the world's most conservative societies somehow also produces some of its most radical student groups.<sup>29</sup>

On the one hand, the social disruption is an example of the radical representation of the Japanese.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, the 'State's final solution' is an example of the conformist stereotype, popularly depicted in textual representations of the Japanese.<sup>31</sup>

Andrew O'Connor's 2005 Vogel Award winning novel *Tuvalu* (2006) focuses on the protagonist, Noah Tuttle, a 20 year old Australian man who goes to Japan to escape responsibilities and relationships in Australia.<sup>32</sup> In Japan, Noah meets and develops a close relationship with another Australian, Matilda "Tilly" North. When Tilly returns briefly to Australia, Noah has an affair with a Japanese woman, Mami Kaketa, the daughter of a wealthy hotel owner. Once the affair is exposed, Tilly and Noah share an on and off friendship until she dies from leukaemia. Similarly, Noah and Mami share an on and off friendship. Mami Kaketa is the main Japanese character in the novel. The reader is introduced to Mami in the first chapter, 'Mami Kaketa Can Have This',<sup>33</sup> where she appears mentally unstable, lonely and destructive.

In the first half of *Tuvalu* there is enough evidence presented to the reader to conclude that Mami is unstable. Especially in the chapter 'Mami Hangs Herself', when Noah describes her, 'standing on a chair completely naked with a noose around her neck'.<sup>34</sup> The representation of Mami is a long way from the archaic stereotypes in early literary texts such as those examined by writer, Karen Ma, 'many Westerners continue to believe Japanese women to be submissive servants to their men'.<sup>35</sup> This stereotypical representation of Japanese women in Western literature is also identified and analysed in the works of key writers, Johnson, Morris, Broinowski and Kato.<sup>36</sup> Australian academic and writer, David Myers, highlights the stereotypical representation of Japanese women, with the exception of a proportion of the generations of women born during the war years, as anachronistic and no longer a correct representation of most Japanese women today.<sup>37</sup>

The descriptions of minor Japanese female characters in *Tuvalu* contribute to a

29 Mouer and Sugimoto, *Japanese Society: Stereotypes and Realities*, p. 6.

30 *Ibid.*

31 *Ibid.*

32 Noah is 20 in the beginning, by the end of the novel he is 21 years old. O'Connor, *Tuvalu*, p. 21.

33 *Ibid.*, pp. 1-27.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 148.

35 Ma, *The Modern Madame Butterfly*, p. 11.

36 Johnson, *The Japanese Through American Eyes*, pp. 80-81; Morris, *op.cit.*, p. 53; Broinowski, *Yellow Lady: Australian Impressions of Asia*, p. 10; Kato, *Representations of Japan and Japanese People*, pp. 5-6.

37 Myers, 'Beyond the Haiku and the Cherry Blossoms', p. xvi.

range of dislikeable character representations, as can be seen in the following excerpts:

more than a few plump, middle-aged women with fixed fuck-the-world glares.<sup>38</sup>  
 when we ordered a second jug of beer, an older girl came to sit with us. She  
 proved to be sour-faced, although Harry got her to smile once or twice. She  
 had narrow eyes which conveyed distrust and maybe contempt.<sup>39</sup>  
 And attractive women scowled as if they would have their looks forever.<sup>40</sup>

In *Tuvalu* the cherry blossom stereotype has transformed into the extreme opposite, including fierce, bitter and crazed. Both Johnson and Morris highlight this change, from the cherry blossom image of the 1970s, to the masculine, aggressive images of the 1980s and 1990s. It is not only representations of Japanese women that present the cherry blossom versus masculine and aggressive comparisons, but also general Asian female representations.<sup>41</sup> Johnson argues that a common occurrence when representing Japanese women is the encapsulation of physicality, personality and cultural practices of Asian women.<sup>42</sup> If both Asian-general and Japanese-specific images are confused in texts they are likely to demonstrate a reliance on hasty and contradictory stereotypes, as seen in *Tuvalu*.

Bryce Courtenay's novel, *The Persimmon Tree* (2007) follows two young lovers, Nick Duncan and Anna Van Heerdan, through their separate experiences during WWII. The novel is set between Japan, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Australia. However, the main focus of the novel is Indonesia, where Anna is during WWII, and Australia, where Nick is during part of WWII. Courtenay's novel demonstrates his extensive knowledge in many subjects, making it a thoroughly convincing narrative for the reader. Unlike the literary texts examined, this novel introduces and develops several key Japanese characters with more depth than those seen in *Tuvalu*. However, Courtenay does revert to stereotyped generalisations of the Japanese, particularly in the Japanese male characters.

The Japanese male characters demonstrate various degrees of fanatical, obsessively disciplined and sadistic behaviour. Even Colonel Konoe Akira, Commander of the Japanese Imperial Army in Tjilatjap (Indonesia), who befriends and protects Anna, is a dislikeable character. Konoe's kindness is occasionally exhibited, but easily dismissed by the reader when he verbally abuses other characters, or when the reader is reminded that 'he made sure she [Anna] understood that without his patronage she

---

38 O'Connor, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 167.

40 *Ibid.*, pp. 274-5.

41 Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

42 *Ibid.*





was in mortal danger.<sup>43</sup> Towards the end of the War and Japan's presence in Indonesia, Colonel Takehashi, 'the executer', replaces Kono's position in Tjilatjap. Takehashi is a far more dislikeable character, embodying sadistic, manipulative and predatory behaviour towards Anna. The only likeable Japanese male is the Radio Communication Officer and amateur artist, Gojo Mura, who is taken prisoner by Nick in Guadalcanal (Papua New Guinea). Unfortunately Gojo is only briefly included, and is the only Japanese Nick regards as, 'a very different Japanese prisoner from the blokes who blew you up.'<sup>44</sup> Despite the inclusion of Gojo, the reader is made to believe he is different from most, if not all Japanese men because there are no other representations of reasonable, humane Japanese men.

The Japanese female characters are given more dialogue and insight into their characters than those in *Tuvalu*. Including:

[s]even *okami-san*, geishas too old for active service, arrived by ship from Japan to set up two brothels. Six of them were required to work as keepers of an *okiya*, the Japanese name for a geisha house, running the establishments and disciplining the comfort women, while the seventh, also a retired geisha, was a woman skilled in every imaginable way of sexually pleasing a male. Her task as the supreme *okami-san* was to instruct the young Dutch women [...] in any sexual proclivity an officer patron might desire.<sup>45</sup>

The *okami-san* represent two extremely opposite female stereotypes seen so far. On the one hand they are the cherry blossom stereotype in front of men, quiet, formal and obedient. Among other women the *okami-san* gossip, insult the Japanese commanders in charge and openly discuss topics otherwise considered inappropriate for women, such as sex, bondage and drugs. *The Persimmon Tree* reiterates the same arguments presented in the previous literary analyses, that the representations of the Japanese female characters are superficial, generalised and repetitive of previous works.

In one of the first descriptions in the novel, Nick recalls his childhood in Japan and his observation of the Japanese:

it was a source of constant bewilderment to me that the Japanese children with whom I'd spent my early childhood and who had seldom quarrelled and never fought, had grown into adults capable of the most unmitigated cruelty, whereas adult Australians, taken overall, are a fairly peaceable and friendly bunch.<sup>46</sup>

43 Courtenay, *The Persimmon Tree*, p. 393.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 583.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 394.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 89.

One only has to examine Australian history and the treatment of the Indigenous people to realise that Nick's understanding of cruelty is ignorant. Nevertheless, the image of the Japanese in WWII is frequently negative, often drawing on sadistic, cruel and fanatical behaviour. This generalised representation of the Japanese is not new in literature or mainstream perceptions of some Australians during WWII. On the one hand it is important for contemporary literature to acknowledge these representations, even if they may be hasty or inaccurate, to offer readers insight into mainstream perceptions of the time. However, it is equally important for texts to develop these representations in a contemporary context. Interestingly, as the most recent literary publication in this article, *The Persimmon Tree* is set over sixty years ago. This novel, as well as Fisher's poem, *Rain and Hirohito*, demonstrates a strong link between contemporary Australian writers and the experiences and impressions of the Japanese in WWII.

Up to now this chapter has offered an examination of four highly relevant examples of Australian literature published in 2006 and 2007. It is evident that WWII still has a prominent effect on writers, as seen in *Rain and Hirohito* and *The Persimmon Tree*. Kato described Australian literature to be symptomatic of stereotypes in its representations of the Japanese.<sup>47</sup> Similarly the contemporary literature discussed in this paper has revealed stereotyped representations of the Japanese. These stereotypes include the representation of the Japanese as conformist, seen in *Rain and Hirohito*, *Sleeping Soldiers* and *Tuvalu*, and sadistic in *The Persimmon Tree*. Another dominant stereotype in *Tuvalu* and *The Persimmon Tree* was the over-stereotyped Japanese male and female characters. It will be interesting to see how contemporary Australian films represent the Japanese in comparison to the representations explored in contemporary Australian literature and whether there is a reiteration of stereotypes seen so far or a noticeable break away from stereotypical Japanese representations.

### **Representations of the Japanese in Contemporary Australian Film**

Films, like literary texts, have mainstream popularity in Australian culture and entertainment. Therefore films, like literary texts, have the potential to be powerful and influential over the viewer's imagination, beliefs and understanding of the world. There are only a handful of contemporary Australian films that represent the Japanese. So far there has been little to no analysis of each film's representation of the Japanese. Broinowski argues that the Australian film industry has a history of perpetrating and investing fears of Asian countries, including Japan.<sup>48</sup> The term 'contemporary' in this paper is restricted to the analysis of four motion pictures within the last decade, from

<sup>47</sup> Kato, *Representations of Japan and Japanese People in Australian Literature*, p. 13.

<sup>48</sup> See Raymond Longford's film *Australia Calls*, 1913; Broinowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19.



1997 to 2006. Additionally, the criteria of the films analysed in this paper include those that are directed, produced and/or written by Australian/s within the scope of the last nine years. The films analysed include *Heaven's Burning* (1997), *The Goddess of 1967* (2000), *Japanese Story* (2003) and *Kokoda* (2006).

There are other forms of Australian visual media that are worthy of study, including documentaries, such as those by Soalrun Hoaas<sup>49</sup>, and mini-series, such as John Doyle's *Changi* (2001). However, these forms go beyond the scope of this paper and will therefore be excluded. In addition, this paper will exclude *Bondi Tsunami* (2005), written and directed by Rachel Lucas. *Bondi Tsunami* is an unconventional, new style of cinematography, promoted as a 'music video motion picture [...to be viewed as a] multiplatform viewing piece [...in a] dream-like escapist way'.<sup>50</sup> It does not structure itself on a linear plot; instead it utilises and relies on sensory elements such as music, lighting, camera techniques and visual effects. It is precisely this new style of creativity and challenge to traditional cinematic conventions that positions *Bondi Tsunami* beyond the scope of this paper.

*Heaven's Burning*, directed by Craig Lahiff, is a film based on a Japanese couple Midori (Kudoh Youki) and Yukiyo (Isomura Kenji) who are on their honeymoon in Sydney. Minor characters in the film offer extreme, but nevertheless common representations of the Japanese, including racial inferiority,<sup>51</sup> role in modern history (as an invading force)<sup>52</sup> and the perpetrators of atrocities committed during WWII.<sup>53</sup> The minor characters function to remind the major characters and viewers of broader Australian perceptions of the Japanese as the 'other'. Nevertheless, the film's representation of the Japanese is predominantly developed through the two main Japanese characters, Midori and Yukiyo. Midori and Yukiyo are introduced as typically boring and conservative, the 1980s and 1990s stereotypes of Japanese people (0:02:51).<sup>54</sup>

Determined to find a more independent and liberated life, Midori fakes her own kidnapping and then accidentally becomes the hostage in a failed bank robbery involving Colin (Russell Crowe). Shortly after the failed bank robbery, Midori and Colin team up as a criminal couple. When Colin asks Midori if she wants to go back to Japan, Midori responds, 'many people in Japan, they have no true life. Everybody has dream but they skip dream [...] because they raised in a certain way'.<sup>55</sup>

49 Soalrun Hoaas has written and directed several documentaries representing the Japanese in Australia.

50 *Bondi Tsunami* (motion picture) 2005.

51 Racial inferiority of the Japanese is represented by the truck driver. *Heaven's Burning*, (motion picture) 1997, 0:27:36.

52 Japanese history as a threat to security during WWII and 1980s economic threat is represented by John, the man in the wheelchair. *Ibid.*, 0:41:54.

53 Japanese atrocities committed during WWII are represented by Colin's father. *Ibid.*, 1:16:28.

54 In the 1980s and 1990s popular stereotypes of the Japanese were linked with their economic and technological success. This paper will hereby bracket time sequences related to the scenes discussed.

55 *Heaven's Burning*, *op. cit.*, 0:29:38.

Midori's response presents to the viewer a representation of the Japanese as not really living because they are forced to conform to unhappy and essentially inhuman lives. This stereotype is later reiterated when Midori has her hair cut and dyed, and stands with her head out of the car sunroof screaming, 'I can breathe. I can breathe' (0:37:30).<sup>56</sup> This memorable scene represents once again the film's portrayal of the Japanese in their conformist society, unable to act upon dreams and therefore not really living, reiterating the stereotype Mouer and Sugimoto's work recognises.<sup>57</sup>

Toward the middle of *Heaven's Burning* both Midori and Yukiyo have their hairstyles changed dramatically (0:40:38).<sup>58</sup> When Yukiyo shaves all his hair off, the background music features a *shakuhachi*,<sup>59</sup> evoking traditional Japanese samurai culture.<sup>60</sup> The film's incorporation of samurai tradition is a technique recognised earlier in the previous section. Morris argues that this technique, 'successfully invoke[s] and naturalise[s] for the reader a connection between the work and the subject matter of the work.'<sup>61</sup> In this case, *Heaven's Burning* represents contemporary Japanese with traditional Japanese samurai culture. The problem that arises from this representation is that the film avoids challenging stereotypes of the 'other' and instead, encourages them.

*The Goddess of 1967*, directed by Clara Law, centres on a blind woman, Deirdre (Rose Byrne), and Yoshio (Kurokawa Rikiya), a young Japanese traveller escaping authorities in Japan. This film involves a combination of contrasts, 'a fragmented feast', not only between the characters but all aspects of the film.<sup>62</sup> The film's title is the popular name of a 1967 model Citroën car, which functions as the physical and metaphorical vessel in which three generations of abused women communicate their stories of suffering.

For Deirdre, her mother and grandmother, the Goddess provides a temporary escape from the abuse that they have experienced. For Yoshio, his obsession with the Goddess is tied with an early French film, in which the villain escaped the authorities by driving the Goddess. It becomes clear that Yoshio sees parallels between himself and the criminal in the French film, and therefore views the Goddess as the only way to successfully escape. Despite several direct visual representations of Japan as a technologically affluent country, *The Goddess of 1967* does not include common representations of the Japanese in reference to WWII or stereotypically traditional

---

56 *Ibid.*, 0:37:35.

57 Mouer and Sugimoto, *op. cit.*, p.6.

58 A blatant and typical symbolic technique representing the characters' mental and emotional transformation.

59 A Japanese traditional woodwind instrument.

60 Stereotypical images of Japanese samurai heads are often represented as shaved on the sides with a top knot.

61 Morris, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-54.

62 Alice Kavanah, "The Goddess of 1967".



Japanese culture.

Modernism and postmodernism are two contrasting periods represented in the film. The Goddess represents modernism as opposed to the more contemporary period of postmodernism, reflecting the film's use of contrasting elements. Modernism is represented as the past, but also in connection to Australia, whereas Japan is represented as the postmodern. Tokyo is visually represented several times in the film, in the beginning, middle (Yoshio's flashback to his past) and at the end. Each of these, besides the middle flashback, represents Japan in a blurred, blue-wash filter. The images of Tokyo are intended to represent a surreal, hi-tech, futuristic, unfriendly, machine-driven 'other-world'.

The postmodern world of Japan, according to Law, is embodied in the representation of Yoshio, 'He's the product of excessive materialism and the taking over of our life by [...] technology and big corporat [ions...] the postmodern existence is cold and inhuman and incomplete.'<sup>63</sup> Yoshio is trying to escape not only his past and commitments, but also a general dissatisfaction with Japan, the postmodernist world. When Deirdre asks Yoshio about Tokyo he responds that 'it's like living in Mars [...] you know Mars? [...] the chocolate bar.'<sup>64</sup> The film's visual and verbal descriptions of Japan emphasise an alien world - where people rarely communicate, their lives revolve around technology and anything deemed socially strange is only exhibited at home.<sup>65</sup> *The Goddess of 1967's* representations of the Japanese is similar to the representations of the Japanese in *Heaven's Burning*, where the Japanese are unable to authentically live. This is a common Western perception of Japan and the Japanese. According to Mouer and Sugimoto's arguments,<sup>66</sup> dominant representations of the Japanese are often inaccurately limited to single dimensional generalisations. In the case of *Heaven's Burning* and *The Goddess of 1967* the majority of the Japanese are presented as conservative and where value is placed on conformity.<sup>67</sup>

On two occasions Yoshio can find no better way to describe himself to Deirdre other than, 'I am a man, a Japanese man.'<sup>68</sup> When we question the purpose of Yoshio being Japanese we recognise that a Japanese character adds to the film's construction of contrasting composites. The characterisation of a lead Japanese man contrasts strikingly to an Australian woman. Despite the 'otherness' that the film places on the character of Yoshio, it presents him as a trustworthy character harbouring only good intentions

63 Law cited in Thompson, 'Film: The Goddess of 1967'.

64 *The Goddess of 1967* (motion picture), 0:42:46.

65 It appears as if the home operates as a release from the social conformity of the outside world.

66 Mouer and Sugimoto, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

67 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

68 *The Goddess of 1967*, *op. cit.*, 0:39:42, 1:37:26.

toward Deirdre. Yoshio's simple description of himself to Deirdre presents interesting self-reflexive moments, and foregrounds how race, as a subjective construction, is inadequate. This is further emphasised when Yoshio says, 'I look like a human being.'<sup>69</sup> The film is about contrasts, but also about deconstructing the significance of these contrasts. By offering a genuine rapprochement between two of the most contrasting characters, an Australian woman and a Japanese man, the film illustrates the potential for characters from different cultures and worlds to be able to develop beyond racial constructions and cultural differences.

*Japanese Story*, directed by Sue Brooks is a cross-cultural physical, mental, economic and emotional exploration. This film centres on two characters, Sandy Edwards (Toni Collette) and Hiromitsu Tachibana (Tsunashima Gotaro), who are thrown together by circumstance, and within a couple of days, develop a relationship and are then separated by death. *Japanese Story* is packed with stereotypical representations of the Japanese, but at times challenges their construction to offer viewers insight into the broader Australian-Japanese relationship.

From the beginning, the film deliberately establishes popular stereotypical representations of the Japanese. By doing so the film creates a framework of the 'other' as a 'compendium of Japanese stereotypes' as seen in previous films. The film can either continue to reiterate these stereotypes or challenge their substance.<sup>70</sup> When Baird (Matthew Dyktynski), Sandy's business partner, tells her she will be guiding Hiromitsu in the outback, the following exchange occurs:

[Sandy:] I'm not traipsing around the bloody desert with some Japanese prick who doesn't know his arse from his elbow and wants a glorified tour guide. I'm a geologist, not a bloody...geisha! What does he want?  
[Baird:] How would I know? Sandy, he's Japanese.<sup>71</sup>

Their dialogue represents the Japanese 'other' as rude, sexist and inscrutable. According to Johnson, this is a common generalisation of Japanese and Asians, making the distinction between the two less definable, and instead encapsulated as a single group.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, the representation of the Japanese becomes less accurate and more often than not, includes incorrect generalisations that are ultimately racist.

It is clear in the first meeting between Sandy and Hiromitsu that they both have different expectations and understandings of each other. When Sandy arrives at the

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 0:39.55.

<sup>70</sup> Capp, 'Romancing the Stone: Outback Adventures of a Different Kind in *Japanese Story*', p. 31.

<sup>71</sup> *Japanese Story* (motion picture), 0:06:12.

<sup>72</sup> Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 165.



airport to pick up Hiromitsu she opens the back passenger door expecting him to put his suitcase away.<sup>73</sup> However, Hiromitsu simply stands there. After several seconds of stillness and staring pass, Sandy demonstrates difficulty putting his suitcase in the car. The viewer can see Hiromitsu awkwardly moving behind her, unsure whether or not he should offer his assistance (0:11:34, 0:11:34, 0:11:38). This scene is particularly important in its representation of the Japanese. As drivers often do when picking up passengers from the airport, they take their suitcases. It appears reasonable then to recognise that Hiromitsu would not volunteer to put his suitcases in the car as he interprets Sandy as his driver. However, Sandy interprets Hiromitsu's attitude to be arrogance, 'the guy's a jerk, a real jerk.'<sup>74</sup> According to Kato, 'it seems intolerable for the stereotypical Westerner that the 'other' should be arrogant.'<sup>75</sup> Despite Sandy's interpretation of Hiromitsu, the camera and techniques offer the viewer insight into the 'other'. This scene clearly attempts to demonstrate how cultural misunderstandings are formed and generated by what is not seen between those who form these misunderstandings.

Film review writer, Rose Capp suggests the main actors in *Japanese Story* fail to convincingly represent their characters.<sup>76</sup> Capp argues that one of the key problems of the film is its reliance on the representation of Japanese cultural differences and stereotypes, 'a series of rather prosaic observations on the subject of cultural difference.'<sup>77</sup> In contrast to Capp's arguments, one could argue *Japanese Story* does not always rely on cultural differences and stereotypes, but instead recognises their presence in popular Australian perceptions and uses them as a technique of familiarity and to develop more accurate representations of the Japanese. The technique of familiarity allows the film to acknowledge the viewer's knowledge of popular stereotypical representations of the Japanese. A second technique of familiarity would be to develop insight into these representations. The film at times offers an extension to the viewers' knowledge and 'insist[s] that cultural difference can be translated and understood' in relation to the 'other.'<sup>78</sup> It does this by taking common or popular perceptions of the Japanese, including stereotypes, and exploring them further.

The film effectively makes the point that most Australians are familiar with the bombardment of electronics and technology that are more often stereotypical representations of the Japanese. For example, when Sandy arrives home, she turns on the computer, plays her answering machine messages, opens the fridge, uses an electronic can opener, turns on the stove, uses the toaster, turns on the jug and turns

---

73 *Japanese Story*, *op. cit.*, 0:10:48.

74 *Ibid.*, 0:19:19.

75 Kato, *Representations of Japan and Japanese People*, p. 7.

76 Capp is a film critic for the Melbourne Times, special feature editor for *Metro Magazine* and a freelance writer on film. Capp, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

77 *Ibid.*

78 Collins, 'Japanese Story A Shift of Heart'.

off the stove, all in less than a minute.<sup>79</sup> On the plane to the Pilbara region Sandy is using her laptop computer, when she exits from the airport arrival gate she is on her mobile phone (0:09:18, 0:09:25).<sup>80</sup> The emphasis on technology is popularly represented with the Japanese, as seen in the previous analysis of *The Goddess of 1967*. The Japanese have often been associated with the most up-to-date and sometimes useless or crazy technology. However, the technological stereotypes associated with the Japanese are no longer specifically representative of the Japanese but representative of people living in prosperous countries, including Australians. The technological emphasis on Sandy's life represents a contemporary and realistic observation of the impact technology has on the everyday Australian, not just the Japanese.

As in *Heaven's Burning*, it is the minor characters in *Japanese Story* who make references to well known WWII representations of the Japanese. The first is an offhand joke by a miner, 'don't mention the War.'<sup>81</sup> After Sandy and Hiromitsu have sex the film explores the perceptions of WWII in more depth. An older man tells them, 'In the War we thought you blokes were coming after us, ridiculous really. Now you blokes own the place. There was a time when nobody would buy anything made in Japan.'<sup>82</sup> The comments by the minor characters demonstrate to the viewer a realistic contemporary context of the impact of WWII on Australian representations of the Japanese. The film draws upon Australian memories of WWII to familiarise, but demonstrate how little these memories represent the Japanese today. It does this by developing a relationship between Sandy and Hiromitsu.

Despite an attempt to develop representations of the Japanese from well-known stereotypes, the film fails to effectively offer new, relevant representations of the Japanese. Other examples of the film's reliance on stereotypes can be seen in the characterisation of Hiromitsu's wife. Her mask-like characterisation is reinforced in her silence and lack of emotion. Additionally, the solo playing *shamisen* is introduced almost every time a Japanese character is in a scene. The *shamisen*, like the *shakuhachi* in *Heaven's Burning* acts as a reinforcement of Japanese-ness. Perhaps *Japanese Story* sought to produce another film that lacks new vision into the Japanese beyond reiterated stereotypes to achieve popularity with a mainstream Australian audience.

*Kokoda* (2006) directed by Alister Grierson, is the most recent film demonstrating Australian representations of the Japanese. Based loosely on some of the events of the Kokoda Track Campaign in 1942 during WWII, the film focuses on the experiences

<sup>79</sup> *Japanese Story*, op. cit., 0:07:03-0:07:49.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 0:09:16-0:09:24.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 0:23:36.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 0:54:57.





of approximately ten soldiers from the 39<sup>th</sup> Battalion Australian Infantry ‘chocos’,<sup>83</sup> intended to ‘get to the heart of the meaning of Kokoda.’<sup>84</sup> The film opens with the voice-over of the protagonist, Jack (Jack Finsterer), ‘the relentless Japanese war machine rolls down through South-East Asia like a deadly virus.’<sup>85</sup> Already the film positions its representation of the Japanese as a ‘deadly virus’, the inhuman ‘other’.<sup>86</sup>

A fascinating aspect of *Kokoda*’s representations of the Japanese is the nonexistent faces of the Japanese soldiers, adding to the film’s representation of the Japanese as inhuman. They are always shown as slightly blurred, covered with jungle foliage or removed from the camera shot (0:27:43, 1:15:56, 1:09:55).<sup>87</sup> American academic and historian John W. Dower argued in 1986 that during WWII the Japanese were represented as animals, a technique of distinctly separating ‘them’ (Japan) from ‘us’ (America).<sup>88</sup> *Kokoda* employs the technique of ‘othering’, this time representing the Japanese as alien and the Australians as human battlers. In the ‘Director’s Commentary’, Grierson identifies a scene between a Japanese soldier and Australian soldier as ‘the alien scene’ (0:27:43).<sup>89</sup> By representing the Japanese as alien, the film is reinforcing the popular stereotype of the Japanese as the inhuman ‘other’.

Unlike the rugged, hungry looking, tattered and unshaven Australians, the Japanese are cleanly dressed, athletic and always appear advantaged over the choccos. The camera focuses on shoes and feet to highlight the difference between the Australians and the Japanese. The camera usually films the Japanese from the knees down, drawing attention to the Japanese soldiers’ shoes, which resemble brand new scuba diver-like, rubber soled shoes. In contrast, the Australians are filmed picking dead skin off their feet, walking through deep mud, wading chest-deep in water and occasionally showing extreme wear or damage to their shoes (1:16:36, 0:03:41, 0:03:16, 0:13:35, 1:04:03, 0:52:51). In contrast, the feet of the Japanese are represented only on dry land, impeccably clean, comfortable and with a brand new appearance (0:26:28). The comparison of the feet and shoes worn by Australian soldiers in contrast to the Japanese is intended to present the Australians as the more disadvantaged of the two, thus reinforcing the heroic Australian battler image.

In reality the film is set in a time period where the Japanese had already marched almost the entire length of the Kokoda Track.<sup>90</sup> According to Reg Markham,

83 Chocos is the shortened version of Chocolate Soldiers, the name given to soldiers who were not part of the Australian Imperial Forces (AIF). As they were not part of the AIF it was believed that they would melt in the heat of battle.

84 In the perspective of WWII on the Kokoda track this was only the beginning of the battle. As the film only represents three days in 1942, there are still three more years of fighting. Maddox, (6th April 2006) ‘Kokoda Revisited’.

85 *Kokoda* (motion picture), 0:00:44.

86 *Ibid.*, 0:00:44.

87 Images of the Japanese are often filmed from the shoulders, hips or knees down, thus removing their face from the camera’s view.

88 John W. Dower, author of *War Without Mercy: Race Power and the Pacific War*, cited in Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

89 *Kokoda*, *op. cit.*, (Director’s Commentary) 0:27:55.

90 The Japanese had advanced almost to Port Moresby, which is close to the opposite side of Papua New Guinea from where they had started. It was the

a former corporal of the Kokoda campaign, 'it was the sheer stretch of the supply lines that killed them.'<sup>91</sup> The Japanese were equally, if not in a more disadvantaged position than the Australians. Nevertheless, the film deliberately represents the Japanese incorrectly in order to achieve a popular and positive nationalistic reception from Australian viewers.

Within the first half hour of the film, a choco hiding under a log is confronted by a Japanese soldier with a bayonet aimed between his eyes (0:27:43). Fifteen silent, still seconds pass before the Japanese soldier stabs the choco, his body convulses while he screams for a couple more seconds before dying (0:27:58).<sup>92</sup> The point of the delayed attack is designed to represent the Japanese as barbaric and sadistic. During the lengthy pause, the viewer is forced to contemplate why the Japanese soldier did not take the choco as a prisoner of war, or kill him instantly with a bullet in a less gruesome and disturbing way. This scene is designed to attach the viewer's sympathy with the Australian soldiers and cast the Japanese soldiers as the inhuman, barbaric and sadistic 'other'.

The next disturbing scene, '06: I Saw Jesus', shows a choco tied upright to a tree, repeatedly stabbed in the abdomen before being decapitated (0:32:47, 0:32:57).<sup>93</sup> The choco is tied up resembling Jesus Christ on the cross, reinforced by the DVD section title. The appropriation of Christ on the cross seems intended to remind viewers to identify the chocos with Christianity and the suffering of Christ at the crucifixion.<sup>94</sup> The murder takes place at night in the open jungle in front of an open fire. The sickly images of the Japanese maintain the film's representation of them as inhuman and cruel.

The film goes beyond representations of brutality by the Japanese into areas of the macabre. Neil Prescott, in a review for the Adelaide ABC, stated:

[...] one of the most interesting things about *Kokoda* is its director's conscious use of techniques drawn from horror films in order to endow this film with its requisite elements of tension, shock and suspense [0:22:16].<sup>95</sup>

Prescott is highlighting the film's use of horror film genre in presenting to 'a young audience an awareness of the complex history of Kokoda from an Australian point of view.'<sup>96</sup> An example of *Kokoda* employing the horror genre can be seen in the scenes that

---

difficulty in transporting food and ammunition that severely disadvantaged them. To represent the Japanese as clean and with new uniforms is a complete fabrication of the conditions that the Japanese actually experienced.

91 Markham cited in Maddox, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

92 *Kokoda*, *op. cit.*, 0:24:43.

93 *Kokoda*, *op. cit.*, 0:32:01.

94 This is not the first film that includes references to Christianity. In *Blood Oath*, Tanaka, the only innocent Japanese character is constantly draped in Christian imagery as a technique of creating sympathy for him.

95 Prescott, 'Kokoda'.

96 *Ibid.*



begin in silence and then there is a sudden, high-pitched noise to emphasise the climax of danger.<sup>97</sup> Another technique of the horror genre is evident in the click-click noises in the jungle,<sup>98</sup> similar to those in John McTieman's film, *Predator* (1987).

Markham argues the film was only 'factual so far as the conditions were concerned, [...t]here's no real story in it except the terrible conditions.'<sup>99</sup> Grierson exchanges historical facts for a nationalistic agenda that can easily mislead the viewer's understanding of the Kokoda Track (in WWII) and the Japanese. *Blood Oath* (1991), like *Kokoda*, claims to be based on true stories and true events. According to Australian historian and academic, Hank Nelson, *Blood Oath* is a combination of fact and fiction, in which most of the characters and aspects of the trial were invented.<sup>100</sup> Nelson suggests that proclaiming something is based on a true story or true events can often disillusion or mislead viewers. A significant problem with *Blood Oath*, according to Nelson, is that many Australians have no real understanding, if any, of the events in Ambon between 1941 and 1945.<sup>101</sup> Likewise the events prior to the AIF arriving on the Kokoda Track are not well known. In general, most Australians are aware of the Kokoda Track and its significance in WWII, but the history of the chocos and their involvement has been largely excluded. This has allowed for Grierson to manipulate the facts, while claiming they are based on truth.

Prescott states that it was Grierson's intention for the film to tell an important part of Australian history to a generation that would generally be unfamiliar with it.<sup>102</sup> However, as Clarke outlines in his review of the film, 'the film claims to be "based" on a true story - that's different from telling the true story. Those looking for a history lesson will have to look elsewhere.'<sup>103</sup> The director's focus on educating younger generations unfamiliar with the chocos and their experiences on the Kokoda Track becomes problematic when viewed in relation to his depiction of the Japanese and how they are represented. *Kokoda* represents only a single dimensional view of the Japanese as a group who are inhuman. There is the probability that *Kokoda* will misinform the current generation (and subsequent generations) to believe the film's representation of the Japanese as totally obsessed with the sadistic slaughter of the enemy (Australians), and with no other redeeming characteristics. *Kokoda* portrays itself as a film 'based on true events.'<sup>104</sup> This is misleading as it more accurately conveys bias for the purposes of nationalism and propaganda.<sup>105</sup> Perhaps the revival of nationalism in *Kokoda*, where

97 For an understanding of the sharp high pitched sounds in *Kokoda* see Wes Craven's *Scream* (1996), or just about any horror/thriller film.

98 Interestingly these noises occur when it appears as though Japanese soldiers are nearby, evoking a sense once again that the Japanese are alien and inhuman, just as the creature in *Predator* was.

99 Markham cited in Maddox, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

100 Nelson, 'Blood Oath: A Reel History', p. 429.

101 *Ibid.*

102 Prescott, *op. cit.*

103 Clarke, 'Kokoda'.

104 *Kokoda*, *op. cit.*, trailer.

105 *Kokoda* was released on Anzac Day, 25 April 2006.

there are no named Japanese characters, and the way the film deliberately dehumanises the Japanese, is reflective of the political atmosphere at the time of its release.

The contemporary Australian films analysed demonstrate many representations of the Japanese. *Heaven's Burning* adopts popular Australian representations of the Japanese as conformist and suppressed. Overall it withdraws from challenging dominant stereotypes of the Japanese 'other', instead reiterating them for mainstream entertainment purposes. *The Goddess of 1967* represented Japan as an alien 'other-world', reiterating the theme of life in Japan as conservative and conformist. Tokyo functions as a representation of the film's intention to create contrasts, specifically contrasting Tokyo with rural New South Wales, Australia. The film is an example of how Japan and the Japanese can be considered Australia's 'other'. *Heaven's Burning*, *The Goddess of 1967* and *Japanese Story* all demonstrate a movement towards reaching a more balanced representation of the Japanese 'other'. However, they overwhelmingly revert to stereotypes in their representations of the Japanese. It is disappointing that the most recent film, *Kokoda*, represents the Japanese with the overshadowing aim of building nationalism. Arguably the most disturbing aspect of the film was its inaccurate portrayal of Japanese hardships suffered on the Kokoda Track and its representation of the Japanese as inhumane, barbaric and sadistic.

## Conclusion

This analysis of Australian literary film and texts has revealed an interesting insight into how the Japanese are represented in the years post WWII.

Australian contemporary literature represents the Japanese as conformist and Japanese women in two extremes, the cherry blossom stereotype, as seen in *The Persimmon Tree*, or as mad, bitter and angry, as seen in *Tuvalu*. This representation has transferred to the opposite extreme in *Tuvalu*. Themes of WWII were still evident in the contemporary literature demonstrating how strongly Australians feel about WWII and their understanding and representations of the Japanese. The overall representations of the Japanese demonstrate a consistent reiteration of several well-known stereotypes.

This representation of the Japanese in contemporary Australian film is reflected in Midori's character in *Heaven's Burning*, in the contrasted setting between Australia and Japan of *The Goddess of 1967*, and the cultural differences in *Japanese Story*. Australian contemporary film demonstrated a gradual progression to more balanced representations of the Japanese. Disappointingly however, the most recent film, *Kokoda*, and its portrayal of the Japanese as sadistic, alien-like and inhuman demonstrate Australian perceptions from more than 60 years ago.



Although each section of this article explored areas of analysis separate from one another, they do demonstrate an overlapping understanding of how Australian texts represent the Japanese from the post WWII years to the contemporary period (2006-2007). Particularly when one takes into account that the two most recent texts analysed, the novel *The Persimmon Tree* and the film *Kokoda*, both based on WWII, represented the Japanese largely as stereotypes. The evidence suggests there is a need for literature to break away from archetypal stereotypes and images of the Japanese, particularly from WWII, in order to strengthen the cultural, historical and social relationships between Japan and Australia. As long as these differences remain consistent with old images and stereotypes, the Australia-Japan relationship will be limited to a friendship based only on economic, diplomatic and military relations. This will encourage both countries to maintain and reiterate representations of one another as the 'other'.

#### References

- Aird, M., 'Sleeping Soldiers.' Retrieved 7 October 2007, from <http://Pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/10063/20060612-0000/www.antisf.com/stories/story04.html>.
- Artelino GmbH., 'Hiroshige 1797-1858'. Retrieved 1 October 2007, from <http://www.artelino.com/articles/hiroshige.asp>.
- Bennett, B., Doyle, J., Nandan, S. (eds.), and Baker, L. (assoc. ed.), *Crossing Cultures: Essays on Literature and Culture of the Asia-Pacific* (Holborn, London: Skoob Books Ltd, 1996).
- Bettmann/Corbis., 'Hirohito', *Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc.* Retrieved 14 September 2007, from <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9040558/Hirohito>.
- Blood Oath* (motion picture) directed by Wallace, S., starring Brown, B., Takei, G., and Crowe, R., (Village Roadshow Pictures, 1991, 108 minutes).
- Bondi Tsunami* (motion picture) directed by Lucas, R., starring Abe, T., Sasaki, M. and Ikeda, N. (Burlesque Productions, 2005, 90 minutes).
- Broinowski, A., *The Yellow Lady: Australian Impressions of Asia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996).
- Capp, R., 'Romancing the Stone: Outback Adventures of a Different Kind in Japanese Story', *Metro Magazine*, vol. 138 (2003), pp. 28 - 32.
- Changi* (six-part television mini series) directed by Woods, K., written by Doyle, J., Curry, S., Ford, L. and Hayes, A., (ABC TV, 2001, 349 minutes).
- Clarke, M., 'Kokoda'. Retrieved 2 June 2007, from <http://www.abc.net.au/northqld/stories/s1628215.htm>.
- Collins, F., 'Japanese Story A Shift of Heart'. Retrieved 24 May 2007, from [http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/03/29/japanese\\_story.html](http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/03/29/japanese_story.html).
- Coorey, P., 'Japan Relationship is Fine: Rudd', *Sydney Morning Herald*. Retrieved 11 June 2008, from <http://www.smh.com.au/news/world/japan-relationship-is-fine-rudd/2008/06/08/1212863458435.html>.

- Courtenay, B., *The Persimmon Tree* (Camberwell: Penguin Group, 2007).
- Dean, J., 'Walking to School', *Southerly*, vol. 66, no. 1 (2006), p. 157.
- Fisher, B., 'Rain and Hirohito' *Quadrant*, (June 2006), p. 45.
- Heaven's Burning* (motion picture) directed by Lahiff, C., starring Crowe, R. and Kudoh, Y. (The Australian Film Finance Corporation, 1997, 99 minutes).
- Internet Movie Database Inc., 'Predator (1987)'. Retrieved 22 September 2007, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0093773/>.
- Internet Movie Database Inc., 'Scream (1996)'. Retrieved 22 September 2007, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0117571/>.
- Japanese Story* (motion picture) directed by Brooks, S., starring Collette, T. and Tsunashima, G. (Film Finance Corporation Australia, 2003, 106 minutes).
- Johnson, S. K., *The Japanese Through American Eyes* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).
- Kato, M., 'Australian Literary Images of Japan: A Japanese Perspective' in Bennett, B., Doyle, J., Nandan, S. (eds.), and Baker, L. (assoc. ed.), *Crossing Cultures: Essays on Literature and Culture of the Asia-Pacific* (Holborn, London: Skoob Books Ltd, 1996), pp. 195-196.
- Kato, M., (PhD thesis) *Representations of Japan and Japanese people in Australian Literature* (University of New South Wales, 2005).
- Kavanagh, A., 'The Goddess of 1967'. Retrieved 2 June 2007, from <http://www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/ReadingRoom/film/database/2003/goddess.htm>.
- Keene, D., *Cho Cho San* (Sydney: Currency Press in association with Playbox Theatre Company Melbourne and Company B at Belvoir Street Sydney, 1987).
- Kokoda* (motion picture) directed by Grierson, A., starring Finsterer, J. (Gen Productions, 2006, 92 minutes).
- Ma, K., *The Modern Madame Butterfly: Fantasy and Reality in Japanese Cross-Cultural Relationships* (Rutland: Charles E. Tuttle Company Inc., 1996).
- Maddox, G., 'Kokoda Revisited'. Retrieved 2 June 2007, from <http://www.smh.com.au/news/film/kokoda-revisited/2006/04/05/1143916591610.html>.
- McInnes, B., 'Assessing Australian Attitudes to Japan in the Early Twentieth Century – A New Approach' in Sone, Y. (ed.), *New Voices 1*, vol. 1, (Sydney: The Japan Foundation, 2007), pp. 13 – 22.
- Morris, N., "Paradigm Paranoia: Images of Japan and the Japanese in American Popular Fiction of the Early 1990s", *Japanese Studies*, vol. 21, no. 1 (May 2001), pp. 45 - 59.
- Mouer, R. and Sugimoto, Y., *Japanese Society: Stereotypes and Realities* (Melbourne: Japanese Studies Centre, 1982).
- Myers, D., 'Beyond the Haiku and the Cherry Blossoms', in Ishido, K. and Myers, D. (eds.), *Japanese Society Today*, (Rockhampton: Central Queensland University Press, 1995), pp. xiii – xxvi.



- Myers, D., *Storms in a Japanese Teacup* (Rockhampton: Central Queensland University Press, 1996).
- Nelson, H., 'Blood Oath: A Reel History' in *Australian Historical Studies*, Richard, J. (ed.), vol. 24, no. 94 - 97 (April 1990 - October 1991), pp. 429 - 441.
- O'Connor, A., *Tuvalu* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2006).
- Prescott, N., 'Kokoda'. Retrieved 2 June 2007, from <http://www.abc.net.au/adelaide/stories/s1625923.htm>.
- Said, E., *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).
- Shearer, B. W., 'The Japanese Lunch', *Eureka Street*, vol. 16, no. 15, 17 (October 2006), p. 28.
- The Goddess of 1967* (motion picture) directed by Law, C., starring Byrne, R. and Kurokawa, R. (The Australian Film Finance Corporation, 2000, 118 minutes).
- Thompson, P., 'Film: The Goddess of 1967'. Retrieved 2 June 2007, from [http://sunday.ninensn.com.au/sunday/film\\_reviews/article\\_796.asp](http://sunday.ninensn.com.au/sunday/film_reviews/article_796.asp).
- Wagner, P., *Poetry Analysis Vol 2* (Clayton, Victoria: Learning Essentials, 2003).
- Walthall, A., *Japan: A Cultural, Social, Political History* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006).
- Wikipedia., 'Hikikomori'. Retrieved 2 October 2007, from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hikikomori>.
- Wikipedia., 'Hiroshige'. Retrieved 10 October 2007, from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hiroshige>.

## Symbols of State Ideology: The Samurai in Modern Japan

Lisa Narroway  
University of Sydney

### Abstract

Between the Meiji period (1868-1912) and the end of the Pacific War in 1945, the Japanese state systematically created and propagated a nationalistic ideology in order to foster a coherent, unified identity among the newly nationalised population and mobilise support for its agenda. This ideology was represented by a series of discursive symbols, of which I examine the particular image of the samurai. Through the deliberate glorification and imbueing of this image with certain moral and behavioural values including the ideals of loyalty, obedience and self-sacrifice, the state elite deployed the samurai symbol to promote its ideology. This symbol was widely disseminated via official indoctrination efforts, but as I will demonstrate, this did not necessarily translate into a profound impact on the popular mindset. Drawing on a range of sources, I investigate the construction, projection and significance of the samurai image in the particular context of pre-war and wartime Japan, and in so doing shed some light on the function of symbols as tools of ideology.

### Keywords

Samurai, ideology, nationalism, symbol, state

### Introduction

In 1913, scholar Nukariya Kaiten (忽滑谷快天) published a study on Zen Buddhism, ‘the religion of the samurai’, in which he wrote:

Bushidō, or the code of chivalry, should be observed not only by the soldier in the battlefield, but by every citizen in the struggle for existence. If a person be a person and not a beast, then he must be a Samurai – brave, generous, upright, faithful and manly, full of self-respect and self-confidence, at the same time full of the spirit of self-sacrifice.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Nukariya, *The Religion of the Samurai: A Study of Zen Philosophy and Discipline on China and Japan*, p. 50.





In this telling excerpt, we see the samurai painted as the ideal national subject and the embodiment of a series of admirable qualities that Nukariya believed all Japanese should strive to emulate. Nor was he the only one. Between the Meiji period (1868-1912) and the end of the Pacific War in 1945, the Japanese state elite deliberately constructed and promoted a nationalistic ideology using a series of symbols including the Emperor and the cherry blossom. In this article, I will focus on one such image that encapsulated all the objectives of the Japanese state during this period – the samurai. The image of the historical warrior was uniquely suited to serve as a symbol due to the particular context in which state ideology was articulated, and the versatility of the samurai image within its ideological function.

Emerging as a nation at a time when Western imperialism was at its peak, Japan's leaders were faced with many choices on the path to becoming a 'great nation'. Searching for inspiration and example across the world and at home, it became clear that Japan would need to modernise, industrialise, militarise and colonise in order to survive in the international arena. To further this agenda, the state required a unified and cooperative population that would support its goals by being loyal, obedient, and willing to make many sacrifices for the good of the nation. It was to achieve these goals that the state elite created and propagated a nationalistic ideology and the various symbols with which to promote and empower it, such as the samurai.

In a variety of media including texts, pictorial sources – both photographs and illustrations - and film, words, images, ideas and values were both used to describe and used in connection to the samurai in official ideological rhetoric. A particular samurai image was constructed, utilised and manipulated in official documents, contemporary media and independently written nationalistic material, presenting the Japanese population with ideological discourse on many levels. Comparing the tone of Imperial Rescripts with state-authored school textbooks; identifying the parallels that can be made between the modern military and the state-created traditional samurai in photographs from this period; and demonstrating the degree to which mass media and nationalistic scholars supported and echoed the official discourse - these methods demonstrate how society was saturated with layers of nationalistic ideology and imagery. In approaching such primary sources, the way in which the state elite – namely the government, national institutions such as the military and education system, public figures, social organisations and the media - systematically constructed and projected an image of the samurai as a heroic warrior steeped in the tradition of *bushidō*, which espoused the values of loyalty, obedience and self-sacrifice, becomes clear.

In order to demonstrate the significance of the samurai symbol, it is necessary to place the creation and promotion of the samurai symbol into the wider context of

modern Japan. During this period, nationalism was articulated as a state-led ideology, requiring the population to conform exclusively to 'official' ideas regarding national identity. Such ideas emphasised national uniqueness and strength, incorporating notions such as the 'family nation' and a mission in Asia into the overall official vision. Through promoting such ideas as part of its ideology, the Japanese state aimed to unify, indoctrinate and to mobilise the national population.

Within official ideological discourse of this period, the figure of the emperor was widely promoted as an image through which the state could command loyalty, obedience and self-sacrifice from the imperial subjects. The populace was expected to love and serve the emperor and sacrifice their lives for him willingly. In effect, they were required to act like samurai, in many ways the ideal servile counterpart to the authority figure of the deified emperor.<sup>2</sup> The image of the samurai as it was constructed in modern Japan, was depicted to exemplify all the idealised qualities the state wanted to promote – absolute loyalty, obedience to authority and self-sacrifice for honour.

As part of the systematic promotion of these qualities, certain words and particular imagery were used in influential texts during this period to create an idealised image of the samurai that consisted of several key elements - that of the warrior, the hero, and the *bushidō* tradition. Among the most widely disseminated and influential texts from the period were *Kokutai no hongī* (國體の本義), a nationalistic text produced by the Department of Education in 1937 and made compulsory reading for all school students and teachers, and the early 18<sup>th</sup> century work *Hagakure* (葉隠れ), by samurai-turned-monk Yamamoto Tsunetomo (山本常朝), which became a favourite among ultra-nationalists in the 1930s for its 'testament to samurai spirit' and something of a disciplinary manual for members of the military. Texts such as these abounded with descriptions and imagery that constructed the samurai as military heroes, glorifying martial skill and war and attributing the alleged samurai prowess and virtue to the *bushidō* concept. *Kokutai no hongī* described *bushidō* as an ancient, unique spirit, 'peculiar' to Japan, and 'an outstanding characteristic of national morality'.<sup>3</sup> Eminent scholars such as Suzuki Daisetz expressed the idea that the samurai tradition had permeated the masses, stating that 'even when they are not particularly trained in the way of the warrior [they] have imbibed his spirit and are ready to sacrifice their lives for any cause they think worthy', while in *The Ideals of the East*, published in 1903, prominent art scholar Okakura Kakuzō (岡倉珣造) wrote of the 'spirit' of invincibility and freedom that had made Japan a nation of martial prowess and preserved it from invasion throughout

<sup>2</sup> The word 'samurai' (侍) derives from 'saburau', meaning 'to serve' for the nobility. Thus, a samurai was, essentially, a servant to his lord. Ikegami, *The Taming of the Samurai*, p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> 「我が国民道徳の上に顯著なる特色を示すもの」Japanese Department of Education, trans. John Owen Gauntlett, *Kokutai no hongī: Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan*, pp. 144-145.



history, arguing that ‘this same heroic spirit’ remained in the modern era.<sup>4</sup> This very concept led the state to promote the martial art of *jūjutsu* (柔術) as a national sport in the 1930s in an effort to emphasise Japan’s uniqueness and the idea of an existing martial tradition; a tradition that was deliberately incorporated into state ideology and linked to the samurai and the *bushidō* concept<sup>5</sup>. In this way, the range of ideological texts, both contemporary and historical, formed a multi-layered ideological discourse, which emanated both from the state elite and from separate influential sources.

Thus, through diverse methods and media, the state imbued the samurai with the aforementioned qualities of loyalty, obedience and self-sacrifice, linking them to the concept of *bushidō* in ideological discourse. By projecting such an idealised image as a model for emulation, the state elite aimed to encourage nationwide observance of these values, essentially transposing the particular behavioural ideals it ascribed to the samurai class into ‘national’ values relevant to the entire population.

State ideology equated the willingness of a samurai to sacrifice his life for his lord with the willingness of an imperial subject to sacrifice his life for his emperor and nation. Prominent Confucian scholar Inoue Tetsujirō (井上哲次郎), when writing the first official commentary on the 1890 *Imperial Rescript on Education* (*kyōiku chokugo* 教育勅語), exhorted the people to ‘have a sense of public duty by which he values his life lightly as dust, advances spiritedly, and is ready to sacrifice himself for the sake of the nation.’<sup>6</sup> Similarly, *bushidō* is described in *Kokutai no hongii* as ‘the way of loyalty, counting life and death as one’, with this same loyalty instructed to the population to mean ‘offering [their] lives for the sake of the Emperor’.<sup>7</sup> Such illustrations of the *bushidō* ideal of honourable self-sacrifice being linked with imperial duty demonstrate the way in which the samurai image served to idealise and promote certain state-serving values. An analysis of a range of key ideological texts such as these demonstrates how the state deliberately constructed an image of the samurai as a heroic warrior who was absolutely loyal to his nation, obeyed authority without question, and perceived self-sacrifice to be the epitome of honour.

In order to promote its ideology effectively, the state relied on multiple channels of influence and methods of indoctrination. The state ideology and its symbols attained dominance in public discourse to a significant extent through censorship and the cooperation of national organisations, the media and public intellectuals. Access to public discourse is crucial to the success of an ideology, and in this respect the state is in

4 Okakura, *Ideals of the East*, in *Collected English Writings 1*, edited by Sunao Nakamura, p. 22; Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture*, p. 85.

5 Inoue, ‘The Invention of the Martial Arts’, p. 172.

6 Inoue Tetsujirō, *Chokugo engi* (勅語演義), cited in De Bary, W. T., et al. (eds.), *Sources of Japanese Tradition Vol. 2: 1600-2000*, pp. 780-782.

7 「生死一如の中に、よく忠の道を全うするのが我が武士道である..(忠は)天皇の御ために身命を捧げること...」Japanese Dept. Ed. trans. Gauntlett, J. O., *Kokutai no hongii*, p. 80, 145.

a uniquely advantageous position, being able to exercise control over mass media and national institutions and organisations – direct channels of communication between the government and the people. It is through such channels that an ideology is repeated and reproduced to influence popular attitudes and beliefs.

Nationalistic social organisations, formed during this period in Japan to mobilise different sectors of the population, ensured that the entire population was speaking the same ‘ideological language’ and inferring similar meanings from the state’s rhetoric. In order to be effective, ideological symbols such as the samurai needed to be ‘seen’ and their nationalistic message understood across society. This message was further reinforced by the state imposing strict censorship over the mass media. In addition to censoring material at odds with its ideology, the government also made conscious efforts to increase nationalistic and patriotic content in the media – newspapers, magazines and radio programs. Particularly following Japan’s entry into the Pacific War, reportage on military conflict was heavily scripted to reflect the state’s nationalistic ideology and to make war ‘accessible and palatable to a general audience’ by turning the experience into a *bidan* (美談), ‘beautiful stories’ of historical heroism and adventure.<sup>8</sup> Such a depiction of war and sacrifice was a vital part of ideological indoctrination and in this way media cooperation and censorship assisted the glorification of state militaristic policies in public discourse.

By examining the writings of many prominent individuals in the intellectual and political fields during this period, we see the samurai image glorified and an abundance of views in support of state ideology, beyond the necessities of conformity. The use of nationalistic discourse by public intellectuals and their engagement with official ideology gave the state additional credibility, thereby assisting it to gain a further foothold in popular mentality. In terms of attaining dominance in public discourse then, these writings demonstrate that state ideology was successful. The ‘public language of ideology’, in Carol Gluck’s words, ‘while in unevenly active use among different members of the population, in the passive sense at least was widely and mutually understood.’<sup>9</sup>

The samurai symbol was also deployed in different ways to target various sectors of the population, namely children, soldiers and women, through the formal institutions of the school and military systems. The state’s indoctrination efforts and influence – evident in textbooks and training manuals, curriculum content, teaching methods, training and regulations - allowed its nationalistic discourse to permeate the daily lives of the Japanese people, turning them into imperial subjects, each with

8 Moore, ‘The Peril of Self-Discipline’, p. 161.

9 Gluck, *Japan’s Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period*, p. 247.



a national duty to fulfil. The samurai symbol was used to transform men into modern samurai, exhort children to aspire to become samurai, and encourage women to follow samurai virtues and fulfil their roles as wives and mothers of the nation's samurai. Not only was it a powerful image, the samurai also possessed a remarkable degree of functional flexibility. This versatility suggests the particular suitability of the samurai as a tool of nationalist ideology.

If we are to believe the nationalistic ideal then, the Japanese population was transformed into a nation of samurai – absolutely loyal and unquestioningly obedient to the state and emperor, and willing to sacrifice their lives for honour. But how close to the reality was the image of the nationalistic subject that the state promoted? To what degree were official efforts to inculcate the population with ‘the samurai spirit’ successful, if at all? The rest of this article addresses this question. Through an examination of personal diaries and oral histories of Japanese people who lived during the pre-war and Pacific War years, I compare what the population was meant to think and believe according to official ideology, with what these individuals actually thought. Was the samurai symbol effective? My findings suggest that we should not overestimate the impact of state ideology, for despite the pervasiveness of ideological discourse, in many cases the samurai symbol failed to impact significantly on the hearts and minds of the people.

### First-Person Accounts – Were All Men Samurai?

Legislative pressures to conform, combined with institutional indoctrination and state influence over the media, meant that individuals almost inevitably came in contact with state ideology, even if they did not agree with its content. Barak Kushner claims that official ideology and indoctrination efforts were effective, turning the Japanese people into ‘active participants and not mere followers’ of the state cause.<sup>10</sup> However, Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, in her study of the wartime diaries of Japanese university students who were conscripted as *tokkōtai* (特攻隊) pilots, conveys a different view. She sympathises with these youthful members of the intellectual elite, stating that they had ‘no choice’ but to participate in the war effort and therefore ‘reproduced the imperial ideology in action while refusing or failing to embrace it in thought.’<sup>11</sup> I have used first-person accounts to find examples or lack thereof, of individuals using ideological rhetoric and believing in the state-created samurai image.

In approaching such sources, we need to be aware of their limitations and

---

<sup>10</sup> Kushner, *The Thought War: Japanese Imperial Propaganda*, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> *Tokkōtai* means ‘special attack force’ and refers to the soldiers who engaged in suicide attacks later in the Pacific War. They are often called *kamikaze* (‘divine wind’) pilots, a term that gained popularity in wartime Japan, linking them with the apparently god-sent winds that forced the Mongol invaders to turn back from Japan’s shores in the 13th century. Ohnuki-Tierney, *Kamikaze Diaries: Reflections of Japanese Student Soldiers*, p. 11.

shortcomings in terms of reliability and usefulness. Edited compilations of post-war recollections, such as the oral histories collected by Haruko and Theodore Cook, must be treated with a degree of scepticism simply due to the nature of the work.<sup>12</sup> The testimonies all come from individuals who survived the war and had ample time to reflect on their experiences in the post-war context. Inevitably, their memories have been influenced by the dominant narrative that absolved the general population of responsibility by laying the blame largely on selected members of the wartime elite.<sup>13</sup> In this respect, diaries are perhaps more reliable, since they are contemporaneous accounts of the experiences and opinions of individuals.<sup>14</sup> However, those that have been published have also been intentionally selected to convey a certain image of Japanese civilians or soldiers in the post-war context. These include the intellectual martyrs, as soldiers are depicted in such volumes as *Kike wadatsumi no koe* (きけわだつみのこえ), published by the Japanese Memorial Society for Students Killed in War as early as 1949, as well as Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney's more recent study, or the 'ordinary' (and thus innocent) individuals in Samuel Hideo Yamashita's edited volume. Such publications are not necessarily entirely accurate representations of the majority. While we must keep these issues in mind when utilising such material, these sources are useful indications of the extent to which certain members of the population absorbed and reproduced the nationalistic ideology and the messages that were conveyed through various symbols. I have attempted to form a balanced picture by drawing on a variety of accounts from soldiers, children and women, which facilitates a comparison between the samurai image in ideology and in practice.

Diaries and accounts of wartime experiences show that many people did actively engage with state ideology and the glorified image of the samurai it promoted. Aaron Moore has argued that diaries can be tools for 'self-mobilisation' in wartime, as individuals reproduce the ideological discourse already pervasive in society to describe their personal experiences, thus subconsciously engaging with state ideology.<sup>15</sup> For example, Kōzu Naoji, a manned-torpedo (*kaiten* 回天) pilot, described the send-off ceremony for military as 'like the departure for battle of a great general and his samurai warriors.'<sup>16</sup> Another pilot described his joy at being able to take part in the 'heroic battle'

12 Haruko and Theodore Cook published *Japan at War: An Oral History* in 1992. Their interviews with survivors from the war era did not take place until the 1980s, four decades after the experiences that were recounted.

13 For example, John Dower sums up the memory of war constructed in Japan from the Occupation era as being that of the nation being 'led into "aggressive militarism" by a small cabal of irresponsible militaristic leaders'. He notes that 'the most ubiquitous passive verb after the surrender was surely *damasareta*, "to have been deceived", which fed the idea that the population itself was a victim of the war and its perpetrators. Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, p. 480, 490.

14 Samuel Hynes argues that diaries have an immediacy and particularity that war memoirs lack due to the lapse in time before the latter are published and the reflection period this provides. Content in personal diaries is not (usually) 'filtered and mediated' by time or by concerns of audience. Hynes, 'Personal Narratives and Commemoration', in Winter, J. and Sivan, E. (eds.), *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 208-209. However, as stated previously, children and soldiers in wartime Japan were subject to diary checks by the relevant authorities and letters from soldiers to the home front also passed through official censors. We therefore need to be aware of potential self-censorship when utilising such sources.

15 Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

16 *Kaiten* (回天), which literally means 'turning the heavens', was the name given to glorify the manned torpedoes used in the Pacific War to attack enemy vessels underwater. Cook (eds.), *Japan at War: An Oral History*, pp. 318-319.



of Pearl Harbour as a ‘warrior’ (*bujin* 武人).<sup>17</sup> Some individuals evidently did absorb the message of state ideology, identifying soldier with samurai and glorifying the nation’s military. In the wartime diary of Lieutenant Sugihara Kinryū, detailed observations of the weather, air raid frequency, casualty rates and the like, are interspersed with bursts of patriotic expression. For example, he wrote a poem describing the army as ‘warriors’ who defend the island of Iwo Jima ‘upon [their] honour’ as ‘the shield of our Emperor’s domain’.<sup>18</sup> The emphasis on responsibility to the emperor and personal honour is a reflection of the idealised samurai image functioning in state ideology. Another diary entry reads ‘What is death! We will fight bravely in the face of certain death’.<sup>19</sup> Such words, which would not be out of place in *Hagakure*, indicate Sugihara’s belief in the idea of glorious self-sacrifice for the nation, which the state elite promoted as a key value of the idealised samurai.

Official ideology established a link between the image of a samurai dying honourably on the battlefield and masculine identity. Turning to first-person accounts, this same idea is implied in the words of one student soldier, who, mourning his comrades’ deaths, nevertheless described them as ‘proper’ and ‘quite satisfactory for them as males’.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, another *tokkōtai* pilot wrote ‘I am a man...destined to die fighting for the country’ and described his fellow pilots as looking like ‘the forty-seven loyal retainers’ (義士の討入), a reference to the famous tale of samurai loyalty and honourable self-sacrifice that was so popular during this period.<sup>21</sup> Such examples indicate some soldiers believed that falling in battle like heroic samurai was a noble death that men should aspire to and feel proud of.

Despite such examples of individuals using and seemingly believing in state ideology, the official ideal that ‘all men are samurai’ did not translate very effectively into reality. In a study of soldiers’ diaries written during the first Sino-Japanese War in 1894-5, Stewart Lone argues that the average soldier was more concerned with food than patriotism, filling their diaries with ‘mundane complaints’.<sup>22</sup> Accounts such as that of the poetic patriot Sugihara, were by far rare exceptions rather than the general rule. In his study, Lone attributes this to the fact that the nationalist ideology was not yet fully developed, implying that in later years the idea of reverence for the nation and the emperor would hold more sway over the minds of the soldiers.<sup>23</sup> However,

17 Arai Yasujirō, cited in Moore, *op. cit.*, p.204.

18 Sugihara, trans. Lofgren, S. J., ‘Diary of First Lieutenant Sugihara Kinryū’, p.130.

19 Sugihara, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

20 「男子として死処を得たるは、本懐だろう。」Diary entry dated October 15, 1944. Takushima (宅島徳光), edited by Takushima, *Ikō Kuchinashi no Hana: Kaigun hikō yobi chūi* (遺稿くちなしの花:海軍飛行予備中尉).

21 「私は...国を負うて信でゆく男です。」Letters to mother, 1945. Hayashi (林市造) edited by Kaga, *Hi nari Tate nari: Nikki, Haha eno tegami, Hayashi Ichizō Ikōshū* (日なり橋なり:日記、母への手紙、林市造遺稿集), p. 58, 68.

22 Lone, *Japan’s First Modern War: Army and Society in the Conflict with China, 1894-95*, pp. 70-71.

23 Lone, *Ibid.*, p. 80.

diaries from during the Pacific War, when both the state ideology and its methods of indoctrination were undeniably institutionalised, offer a similar picture. Many accounts indicate opposition to the state, and even in cases where individuals did express patriotic sentiments, some rejected or digressed from official ideology.

It is in connection to the idea of self-sacrifice for the nation that the conflict between individuals' notions of patriotism and state ideology often emerges. Despite official promotion of the glorified image of a samurai willing, above all, to give up his life for his lord, more often than not, people prioritised their family and friends over the Emperor. For example, Kōzu Naoji saw himself 'dying to defend [his] parents, [his] brothers and sisters', not the Emperor, the government or the nation.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, naval pilot Sahai Saburō defined 'the nation' as 'the land of my parents, younger brothers, and sister', with no mention of the Emperor for whom he was meant to willingly sacrifice his life.<sup>25</sup> Student soldier Nagatanigawa Shin wrote in his diary that he accepted the suffering and imminent deaths of himself and his fellow soldiers, as long as they contributed, 'however little', to 'the happiness of the people [he] love[s]', whom he specified were his parents and siblings.<sup>26</sup> As Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney argues, 'soldiers need to convert an abstract idea... into something personally meaningful' in order to engage with an ideology.<sup>27</sup> Despite official efforts to inculcate in the population a 'personally meaningful' connection and sense of responsibility to the Emperor, in the way a loyal samurai might serve his lord, many did not identify with it.

Diaries tell us that some individuals also saw through the glorified samurai image they were being taught to believe in, and were opposed to state ideology. Student soldier Hayashi Tadao wrote in May 1944 that his cooperation with the national war effort was not due to patriotism but 'a wish not to make waves'.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, 75-year-old Kyoto resident Tamura Tsunejirō wrote that 'complaints and unhappiness are forbidden, so one has to be discreet'.<sup>29</sup> Such statements indicate the pressure that existed to conform to official policy and the inherent risks of expressing opposition, which made many people, like Hayashi, cooperate without believing the ideology. University student and *tokkōtai* pilot Sasaki Hachirō criticised the coverage of war in the media, which praised mothers for raising their sons as splendid soldiers. Sasaki described the media glorification of mothers (*'haha no chikara'* 母の力) as a 'transparent trick' to encourage

24 Cook (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 319.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 142.

26 「俺達の苦しみと死とが、俺達の父や母や弟妹たち、愛する人たちの幸福のために、たとへ僅かでも役立つものならば...」Diary entry dated November 29, 1944. Nagatanigawa Shin (長谷川信) in *Nihon senbetsu gakusei shuki henshu iinkai, Kike Wadatsumi no Ko: Nihon senbetsu gakusei no shuki* (きけわだつみのこえ: 日本戦没学生の手記), p. 175.

27 Ohnuki-Tierney, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

28 「おれを支配するのは *Patriotismus* (祖国愛)...でもなく、無事無難であれ」Diary entry dated May 1, 1944. Hayashi (林尹夫), edited by Hayashi, *Waga Inochi Getsumei ni Moyu: Ichi Senbetsugakuto no Shuki* (わがいのち月明に燃ゆ: 一戦没学徒の手記), p. 131.

29 「愚痴と不満は禁じられているので、憤しまねばならん」Diary entry dated July 19, 1944. Tamura (田村恒次郎), edited by Oka, Shinsan: *Senchū sengo, kyō no ichi shomin no nikki* (辛酸: 戦中戦後、京の一庶民の日記), p. 7; trans. Yamashita, *Leaves from an Autumn of Emergencies*, p. 85.





people to support war and force loyalty upon them.<sup>30</sup> In seeing through the idealised portrayal of women as mothers of warriors, he indicated his refusal to identify with the glorified warrior the state projected to inspire soldiers such as himself. Sasaki was able to see that the idealised samurai was only an image, not a reality. Another student soldier, Hayashi Ichizō, wrote that he ‘cannot say that the wish to die for the emperor is genuine’ but rather that ‘it is decided for [him] that [he] die for the emperor.’<sup>31</sup> Instead of welcoming the chance to sacrifice his life for the nation and the emperor, Hayashi felt ‘despair’ (*zetsubō* 絶望) and ‘tried [his] best to escape’ from his fate as a *tokkōtai* pilot.<sup>32</sup> A picture emerges that clearly conflicts with the ideological symbol of the samurai, who was meant to sacrifice himself willingly for the emperor to whom he was unconditionally loyal. Particularly during wartime, the carefully constructed idealised samurai image was clearly not as effective as one might assume based on the state’s wide-ranging indoctrination efforts and the ubiquity of ideological discourse.

Examining accounts written by women and children, the same varied picture emerges. There are examples of individuals who proffered the ideological discourse, such as Araki Shigeko, wife of a *tokkōtai* pilot, who described herself as ‘the wife of a samurai’ in reference to her soldier husband.<sup>33</sup> One teenage girl proudly declared that Japanese women, in the event of an enemy invasion, ‘intend to follow valiantly in the footsteps’ of soldiers and ‘kill at least one person before [they] die.’<sup>34</sup> However, it is again the case that not all women revelled in their roles as wives and mothers of samurai or were willing to sacrifice themselves for the nation, as was their duty as subjects. One woman described the procession of conscripts as ‘a funeral of living people...youths wearing their red sashes are being sent off with a heavy heart’, an image far removed from the glorious samurai the state portrayed soldiers to be.<sup>35</sup> Following Japan’s defeat at Saipan, she wrote that the news made her ‘angry’ and that the government should have the ‘courage...to give up the fight’, again expressing the opposite to the official ideal.<sup>36</sup>

Diary checks and constant moral supervision by teachers meant that schoolchildren were more likely to be inculcated successfully and prevented from expressing opposition to the state than any other group in the population. In the diary

30 「その手口は見えずにいる...人を戦に導いて行っくた。“忠”を強いるのだ。」Diary entry dated April 7, 1942. Sasaki (佐々木八郎) edited by Fujishiro, *Seishun no Isha: Seimei ni Kaete, Kono Nikki, Ai* (青春の遺書: 生命に代えて、この日記、愛), p. 311.

31 「大君の辺に死ぬ願いは正直の所まだ私の心からのものとはいいたい、だが大君の辺に死ぬことは私にさだめられたことである。」Diary entry dated February 23, 1945. Hayashi Ichizō, *Hi nari Tate nari*, p. 29.

32 「逃げにげた私の生命」Diary entry dated March 21, 1945. Hayashi Ichizō, *Hi nari Tate nari*, p. 42.

33 Cook (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 325.

34 Diary entry dated April 2, 1945. Maeda Shōko in Yamashita, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

35 「生きた人のお葬式...心のいたむ思いで、赤だすきをかけた、わごうどを、見送っています」Diary entry dated June 19, 1943. Takahashi Aiko (高橋愛子), ‘Kaisen kara no nikki’ (開戦からの日記), in Agawa H. et al. (eds.), ‘Shimin no nikki’ (市民の日記), *Shōwa sensō bungaku zenshū* (昭和戦争文学全集), vol. 14, p. 332.

36 「いさぎよく、戦いをあきらむべきだと、奮然とした気持ちにさえなっていました」Diary entry dated July 18, 1944. Takahashi Aiko, ‘Kaisen kara no nikki’, p. 338.

of soldier Takushima Norimitsu, we find a description of how a group of children bowed to him respectfully, indicating the glorification and reverential treatment of the military during the wartime era.<sup>37</sup> Willard Price's observation in 1938 that in Japanese society the army 'wears the mantle of divinity' rings true when we consider this image of a soldier being regarded as elite.<sup>38</sup> In the diaries of children themselves, one girl wrote of her happiness at being 'promoted' to the rank of corporal in the task of collecting firewood, while another child was assigned to the 'special attack force' to prepare sardines for a school meal.<sup>39</sup> These indicate how respect and adulation for the military were inculcated into children through constant exposure to the discourse of state ideology, with teachers even incorporating militaristic terms and ideas into ordinary school activities. The effect is visible in the diary of schoolboy Manabe Ichirō, who wrote that he wished 'to become strong in the way that Japan was victorious at Saipan', reflecting the state's idealisation of military prowess in his aspiration to be like a warrior.<sup>40</sup>

In the accounts of soldiers, we can often identify the discrepancy they felt between a state ideology that glorified the idea of fighting for the nation through the projection of the samurai image, and the brutal reality of military conflict. In many cases, it was the firsthand experience of war that extinguished the nationalistic fervour that had been hitherto carefully inculcated. For example, one former soldier recalled that he 'swaggered a lot' when he passed the military physical examination in 1934 – being a soldier was something special and exciting, 'all [we] talked about', and his call-up was 'a time for celebration'.<sup>41</sup> Of his experiences on the battlefield, however, he stated ironically 'there's not one soldier who ever died saying "Tennō Heika banzai!" (Long live the Emperor!)'.<sup>42</sup> For student soldier Kawashima Tadashi, disillusionment with war came from witnessing an assault by fellow soldiers on a Chinese civilian, which led him to declare that his own children would never be soldiers.<sup>43</sup> Another student soldier, Fukunaka Gorō, also described the brutal, 'de-humanising' nature of life in the military, writing that whilst he put on a brave face for his mother, he felt 'as wretched as the dead' due to harsh treatment from his senior officers.<sup>44</sup> Through these words we can see that the idealised samurai image that was promoted to glorify war was far removed from the reality of military life.

Direct experience of war also made people question the power of the 'samurai

37 Diary entry dated June 11, 1944. Takushima, *Kuchinashi no hana*, p. 48, trans. Ohnuki-Tierney, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

38 Price, *Children of the Rising Sun*, p. 53.

39 Yamashita, *op. cit.*, p. 264, 278-279.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 236. The diary entry is from July 16, 1944, shortly after Saipan was lost to US forces. Manabe evidently did not know of the defeat yet.

41 Cook (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 30-31.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

43 「俺の子供はもう軍人にはしない。軍人だけに...平和だ、平和の世界が一番だ。」Translates as 'I will not let my children be soldiers. Anything but a soldier...peace, a peaceful world is the best thing.' Diary entry dated January 31, 1943. Kawashima Tadashi (川島正), in *Kike Wadatsumi no Koe*, p. 14.

44 「(軍隊生活は)全ての人から人間性を奪ってしまっています...母には元気で張り切っているとは書きましたが、僕の気持は死人同様のと惨なものです。」Letter to brother dated February 1, 1941. Fukunaka Gorō (福中五郎) in *Kike Wadatsumi no Koe*, pp. 42-43.



spirit' in bringing about victory, an idea that soldiers were taught to believe. Though familiar with the environment of self-censorship in the media, which was 'at one with the nation and the army', *Asahi shimbun* war correspondent Hata Shōryū saw the limits of official ideology in a war that inevitably depended on materials and technology. He reasoned that 'no matter how much you asserted *bushidō* [in the air force], if you didn't have the speed you couldn't escape or overtake your opponent.'<sup>45</sup> The actual experience of war made people question state ideology, wherein military prowess was linked to the samurai tradition of *bushidō*. Moore argues that the disjunction in perspective arose because the battlefield sometimes lay physically outside the realm of official censorship, where 'there was effectively no one to tell [the soldiers] what to think.'<sup>46</sup> However, the ideological machine of the state was far-reaching and its samurai symbol ubiquitous. The above examples of individuals dissenting from the samurai ideal call into question not the limits of state authority per se, but the power of ideological indoctrination to endure when faced with the harsh realities of war.

The population at home was also faced with hardships and restrictions on a daily basis as a result of the state's militaristic policies, a situation that demanded the most from the samurai ideal of self-sacrifice. People's experiences impacted on their willingness to emulate the state-created samurai image. For many individuals, patriotism was 'displaced by more immediate troubles' such as shortages of food sources and basic necessities and financial issues resulting from inflated prices and the loss of labour from men going to war.<sup>47</sup> Though noting in February 1942 that many people were happy about Japan's recent victory over Singapore, Takahashi Aiko wrote that she was 'dissatisfied and sad' because of the shortages and oppressions in daily life, which she described on another occasion as a 'heavy burden.'<sup>48</sup> In a similar vein, schoolboy Manabe Ichirō frequently complained about the poor quality of food that was 'dry and tasteless' and the perpetual lack of it, writing 'after I finished eating, I got hungry again', an indication that he was never truly sated.<sup>49</sup> Although the state promoted an image of a courageous samurai who willingly bore sacrifice and hardship, evidently many people failed to match the ideal in practice.

Likewise, Tamura Tsunejirō's diary entries, dating from July 1944 through to the end of the Pacific War, almost always include a reference to food shortages. He wrote ashamedly that 'hunger comes first' - not patriotism, concern for the Emperor, or any of the idealised samurai values we might expect from a member of the Japanese populace

45 Cook (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 208.

46 Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

47 Lone, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

48 「不満に思ったり、悲しく感じたり」, Diary entry dated February 18, 1942. 「大変な負担」, Diary entry dated March 27, 1943. Takahashi Aiko, 'Kaisen kara no nikki', p. 323, p. 330.

49 Diary entry dated July 15, 1944. Yamashita, *op. cit.*, pp. 236-237.

during this period.<sup>50</sup> Tamura's suffering led to increasing disillusionment with the state and its ideology. Whilst he originally believed 'the endurance by a million citizens of the hardships caused by the wartime food situation will mean victory',<sup>51</sup> the continued lack of food caused him to write sarcastically that suicide ('to tie a rope around your neck and die') would alleviate food shortage.<sup>52</sup> He wrote 'to save rice, let's resolve to repay the debt that we owe the country', subverting the state's glorification of heroic self-sacrifice and national duty.<sup>53</sup> Such sentiment also appears in other wartime diaries, with one man wondering if anyone had ever committed suicide due to the lack of food.<sup>54</sup> Tamura is an example of an ordinary citizen who was clearly influenced by the state's idealised samurai image, for he uses words such as 'incomparably loyal and brave' and 'brave warrior' in reference to the military.<sup>55</sup> However he found it increasingly difficult to support the ideal of courageous sacrifice, criticising 'the politicians with their bravado' who nevertheless can 'give us nothing to eat', another indication that his primary concern was finding enough to eat, not acting like a patriotic samurai.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, an examination of wartime diaries and oral histories shows that even though the Japanese people were barraged with nationalistic ideology from all sides, the impact on their hearts and minds was limited. Rather than a unified mass of patriotic subjects willing to sacrifice their lives for the nation and the Emperor, we find many examples of individuals who did *not* follow the example of the idealised samurai promoted by the state. The constant efforts on the part of the state to indoctrinate the population meant that the people understood the ideological discourse, even if they did not support or identify with it. As Aaron Moore points out, the dominance of state ideology in public discourse meant that both nationalist extremists and those who opposed the state's militarist policies often used the same rhetoric that was used to mobilise the Japanese people for 'noble war'.<sup>57</sup> However, despite official efforts to propagate the idea that 'all men are samurai', the Japanese people did not uniformly identify with this image. Rather, many continued to emphasise other, more personal sources of identity such as family over their role as national subject. We find many examples of individuals who were *not* absolutely loyal, unquestioningly obedient or willing to sacrifice their lives for honour. Many people did not believe the ideological rhetoric at all. The differing interpretations and level of engagement with the ideology and the samurai image that appears in wartime diaries, indicates the 'tenuous grasp' the state held on popular mentality, despite the 'impressive and thorough discursive fetters' provided by social, educational, military

50 「食いが先に立つ」 Diary entry dated July 29, 1944. Tamura, *Shinsan*, p. 11, trans. Yamashita, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

51 「戦時食物難は一億国民平等に耐えてこそ勝利となる」 Diary entry dated July 15, 1944. Tamura Tsunejirō, *Shinsan*, p. 3, trans. Yamashita, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

52 「ただ首をくくって死んで」 Tamura, *Shinsan*, p. 9.

53 「節米のために国恩に報ゆる覚悟をしよう。」 Diary entry dated July 26, 1944. Tamura, *Shinsan*, p. 9, trans. Yamashita, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

54 「食うものがなくなったからとして自殺した奴はいないのかな。」 Diary entry dated March 12, 1944. Furukawa (古川緑波), 'Hishoku ki' (悲食記), in Agawa et al. (eds.), *Shimin no nikki* (市民の日記), p. 239.

55 「忠勇無双の皇軍」 「勇士」 Tamura, *Shinsan*, p. 13, 26.

56 「政治家のから威張運中は我々に食うに食無き事をして。」 Diary entry dated March 11, 1945. Tamura, *Shinsan*, p. 72, trans. Yamashita, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

57 Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 186.



and media institutions.<sup>58</sup> Increasing restrictions and hardships in daily life as a result of government policies and the brutal reality of war, made it more and more difficult for people to believe in a samurai image that glorified self-sacrifice and subordinated the individual to the needs of the nation and state by advocating unconditional loyalty and obedience. Expressions of dissatisfaction and scepticism indicate the limited ability of state ideology to mobilise the masses.

The gulf between the official ideal and the reality becomes even clearer when we consider the almost immediate erasure of the image of the nationalistic samurai following Japan's surrender. Suddenly, Japan transformed into a peace-loving nation, and martial valour and loyalty to the emperor were no longer idealised as national values. The people made a remarkably smooth transition from being descendants of samurai to advocates of peace. With startling rapidity, the samurai image evaporated from public discourse and from popular mentality. As Kushner puts it simply, 'most military as well as most civilians accepted defeat and went on with their lives'.<sup>59</sup> This transformation, more than anything, suggests that state ideology was not profoundly ingrained in the popular mindset. The end of military conflict thus brought with it the end of the samurai as an ideological symbol, since the nationalistic values and militaristic agenda it represented were no longer in play.

## Conclusion

This article has focused on discussion of the samurai as one of a multitude of symbols constructed and deployed by the Japanese state to promote its nationalistic ideology between the Meiji period and the end of the Pacific War. The combination of contextual factors and the functional flexibility of the image made the samurai an irresistible choice for the state, and it was an ideal nationalistic symbol to use because it fulfilled all the requirements of official ideology. In the samurai image, the state was able to combine the concepts of national uniqueness, military strength and moral virtue. Furthermore, the samurai image was malleable enough to be used to promote various nationalistic messages depending on the sector of the population that was being mobilised. The suitability of the samurai image was only compounded by the absence of the samurai as a visible social class in modern Japan. The pseudo-historical nature of the image made it more susceptible to manipulation, change and invention to suit the purposes of state ideology, since there were no 'real' samurai against which to compare. The state elite was thus able to reconstruct the samurai as the ideal national subject and the embodiment of state-serving values that could be attributed to the bushidō tradition - a tradition that

---

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Kushner, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

was deliberately transformed from an elite code to apply to the entire nation.

However, as I have demonstrated in this article, the very invented nature of the symbol placed limits on its effectiveness as a mobilising tool. In contrast to the image promoted by the state, Japan never became a nation of samurai. Nationalist ideology dominated public discourse due to the state's extensive efforts, both in terms of institutionalising ideological indoctrination and censorship, and the symbol of the idealised samurai did in fact permeate Japanese society at all levels. Nevertheless, the disjunction between the image promoted in official rhetoric and the real-life experiences of the population led many individuals to question and disbelieve the ideal of the nationalistic warrior.

Although the state attempted to create a unified population modelled on the samurai, the people themselves were far from uniform in their adherence to this vision. During the Tokugawa period (1603-1868), an idealised samurai image was created and propagated to inspire idle warriors to behave in a morally sound manner. It was not a true reflection of samurai behaviour. It is somewhat ironic that this was repeated in modern Japan, when the samurai was again a deliberate construction promoted by the elite to serve its own purposes – neither an accurate depiction of the population itself, nor of the samurai.

A discussion of the samurai image as a symbol of nationalistic state ideology in modern Japan successfully demonstrates both the importance and limitations of the role that symbols play in an ideology. The samurai belonged to a set of discursive tools that the state deployed to transform an ideology consisting of abstract concepts of 'Japaneseness' and the *kokutai* into relevant, concrete, and evocative images that could incite nationalistic fervour and full support for the official agenda. However, as the case of the samurai suggests, the effectiveness of such ideological symbols was limited. As the pressures and demands placed on the wartime population became increasingly onerous, the samurai image could eventually no longer support the state's aims of indoctrination. The idealised samurai was never more than an image built on foundations that lacked real popular resonance, and was therefore unable to be sustained against wartime pressures. The reality that the nationalistic samurai remained unrealisable and irrelevant for many, forces us to question how profound an impact an ideology constructed and disseminated by the state can really have on the masses.

## References

Cook, H. T. and Cook, T. F., *Japan at War: An Oral History* (New York: The New Press, 1992).



- De Bary, W. T., et al., *Sources of Japanese Tradition Vol. 2: 1600-2000*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).
- Dower, J. W., *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co./The New Press, 1999).
- Furukawa, Roppa, 'Hishoku ki' in Agawa H., et al. (eds.), 'Shimin no nikki', *Shōwa sensō bungaku zenshū*, Vol. 14 (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1972), pp. 233-253.
- Gluck, C., *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).
- Hayashi I., edited by Kaga H., *Hi nari Tate nari: Nikki, Haha eno Tegami, Hayashi Ichizō Ikōshū*, (Fukuoka: Tōka Shobō, 1995).
- Hayashi T., edited by Hayashi K., *Waga Inochi Getsumei ni Moyu: Ichi Senbotsugakuto no Shuki*, (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1967).
- Hynes, S., 'Personal Narratives and Commemoration', in Winter, J. and Sivan, E. (eds.), *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 205-220.
- Ikegami, E., *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).
- Inoue, S., 'The Invention of the Martial Arts: Kanō Jigārō and Kōdōkan Jūdō', in Vlastos, S. (ed.), *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 163-173.
- Japanese Department of Education, trans. John Owen Gauntlett, *Kokutai no hongi: Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1949 (1937)).
- Kushner, B., *The Thought War: Japanese Imperial Propaganda* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006).
- Lone, S., *Japan's First Modern War: Army and Society in the Conflict with China, 1894-95* (London: St Martins Press, 1994).
- Moore, A. W., 'The Peril of Self-Discipline: Chinese Nationalist, Japanese, and American Servicemen Record the Rise and Fall of the Japanese Empire, 1937-1945', PhD dissertation, (Princeton University, 2006).
- Nihon senbotsu gakusei shuki henshū iinkai, *Kike Wadatsumi no Koe: Nihon senbotsu gakusei no shuki*, (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1952).
- Nukariya, Kaiten, *The Religion of the Samurai: A Study of Zen Philosophy and Discipline in China and Japan* (London: Luzac, 1913).
- Ohnuki-Tierney, E., *Kamikaze Diaries: Reflections of Japanese Student Soldiers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).
- Okakura K., *Ideals of the East*, in *Collected English Writings 1*, edited by Sunao Nakamura, (Tokyo: Heibonsha Ltd, 1984), pp. 3-132.
- Price, W., *Children of the Rising Sun* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1938).
- Sasaki, H., edited by Fujishiro Hajime, *Seishun no Isho: Seimei ni Kaete, Kono Nikki, Ai*, (Tokyo: Shōwa Shuppan, 1981).
- Sugihara K., trans. Lofgren, S. J., 'Diary of First Lieutenant Sugihara Kinryū: Iwo Jima, January-February 1945', *Journal*

of *Military History* 59, 1 (Jan., 1995), pp. 97-133.

Suzuki, D., *Zen and Japanese Culture*, (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1959).

Takahashi A., 'Kaisen kara no nikki', in Agawa, H. et al. (eds.), 'Shimin no nikki', *Shōwa sensō bungaku zenshū*, vol. 14, (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1972).

Takushima, N., edited by Takushima Norijirō, *Ikō Kuchinashi no Hana: Kaigun hikō yobi chūi*, (Tokyo: Daikōsha, 1967 (c1961)).

Tamura T., edited by Oka M., *Shinsan: Senchū sengo, kyō no ichi shomin no nikki*, (Kyoto: Mineruva Shobō, 1980).

Yamashita, S. H., *Leaves from an Autumn of Emergencies: Selections from the Wartime Diaries of Ordinary Japanese* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005).





## Understanding Samurai Disloyalty

Joshua Archer  
The University of Sydney

### Abstract

Prevailing notions of samurai loyalty remain largely unopposed by Western scholarly literature. This should not be so. Minor efforts in recent scholarship have plainly shown that the stereotypical notion of samurai loyalty is fallacious. However, despite these assertions the myth remains a powerful and popular misconception. Clearly a greater scholarly undertaking is required. Through an in-depth historical analysis of samurai disloyalty, a more realistic conception of samurai behaviour may be achieved.

This article seeks to provide a foundation for further research, arguing that disloyalty was favoured among samurai to further their personal ambitions or interests. Disloyalty between medieval samurai was not always considered morally deplorable, nor was it considered divergent to 'normal' samurai behaviour. Moreover, it is erroneous to argue that the majority of samurai were 'loyal,' when in fact many were often being coerced or manipulated by those in power. Logic suggests that loyalty must be voluntary, thus the use of coercion undermines assertions of samurai loyalty.

Further scholarship should not merely seek to establish the frequency of samurai disloyalty, nor should it condemn such occurrences. It must endeavour to understand how and why disloyalty occurred.

### Keywords

Samurai, Loyalty, Betrayal, Bakufu, Zanshin (残心)

### Introduction

In 1914, Takagi Takeshi, a scholar in Japanese literature, compared 'Western Chivalry' to 'Japanese Bushidō,' summarising bushidō into twenty rather broad doctrines.<sup>1</sup> He wrote that in Western Chivalry, bravery was the highest virtue. Takagi argued that

---

<sup>1</sup> Takagi, *A Comparison of Bushi-do and Chivalry*, pp. 60-61.

whilst bravery was ‘respected’ by Japanese warriors, it was ‘always second to loyalty,’ which meant ‘whole devotion to the [feudal] lord.’<sup>2</sup> This notion of the loyal samurai warrior has remained quite popular, even among some modern scholars. It is however, completely without basis in fact.

## Explaining Disloyalty

One might contend that the most obvious theme to permeate medieval samurai history is not loyalty, but disloyalty. I shall show that lawlessness and treachery were in fact crucial strategic elements used by samurai to establish each military government. Moreover, examples of such behaviour cannot be limited to the few who usurped power for their own ends. Those who took power by force were acutely aware that any of their subordinates might react in kind if allowed too much power and autonomy. This brutal reality challenges popular misconceptions of loyalty, and undermines the contention that the ‘way of the warrior’ is anything like the stereotypical notion in Nitobé’s *Bushidō*.<sup>3</sup> In seeking to correct the stereotypical conception of bushidō, recent scholarship has stressed that it cannot be considered the standard medieval samurai ideology.<sup>4</sup> Frequent examples of betrayal and deceit run contrary to such ideology. The term ‘traitor,’ however, is loaded with negative imagery. One must acknowledge that this is merely a matter of perspective. Thomas Conlan explains that use of the term ‘turncoat’ by James Murdock may be erroneous, because the stigma associated with the word did not necessarily exist for samurai whose ‘loyalties shifted.’<sup>5</sup> Thus we cannot assume that ‘treachery’ among samurai was seen at the time as morally deviant behaviour. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that treachery/defection was at times considered a good strategy in either war or politics. To this regard, Friday clearly asserts that the prevailing ‘notion that certain sorts of tactics might be “fair” while others were “unfair” was... all but extraneous to *bushi* [warrior] culture.’<sup>6</sup> While loyalty is often considered synonymous with the ‘rules’ of bushidō, analysis of historical texts show that such ‘rules’ did not completely manifest until the peacetime of the Tokugawa era, whereupon the subject known as bushidō became one of debate. Moreover, it seems that governing powers found it difficult to inspire loyalty among samurai for any significant period of time until the Tokugawa period. Even then, the bakufu went to considerable effort to enforce ‘loyalty,’ perhaps the most prominent example being the *sankin kōtai* system

---

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

3 Nitobé Inazo, *Bushidō: The Soul of Japan*.

4 Popularised romantic conceptions of the bushidō ideal are fast losing favour with prominent scholars of Japanese history, particularly among medieval historians who, for many years, have been trying to dispel such fallacious notions. Here, I refer particularly to Karl F. Friday, ‘Bushidō or Bull? A Medieval Historian’s Perspective on the Imperial Army and the Japanese Warrior Tradition’, pp. 339-349, and also to G. Cameron Hurst, III, ‘Death, Honour and Loyalty: the Bushidō Ideal’, pp. 511-527.

5 Conlan, *State of War: The Violent Order of Fourteenth-Century Japan*, p. 142.

6 Friday, *Samurai, Warfare and the State in Early Medieval Japan*, p. 145.



(alternate attendance system).<sup>7</sup> This ensured, among other things, that the family and heir of rival *daimyō* (great lords) were kept hostage in Edo by the Tokugawa regime. For this reason, I use the term ‘loyalty’ very loosely, since it makes little sense to say someone complies because they are loyal, when in fact they are being manipulated and controlled. Furthermore, Hurst notes that if loyalty to one’s lord had been held in the extreme, to the point where all warriors were prepared to commit *junshi* (suicide) when their lord died, ‘Japan would soon have been bereft of warriors.’<sup>8</sup> We must therefore temper our conception of samurai loyalty.

In considering incidents of treachery/defection, I shall briefly examine the proposition by Sakaiya Taichi that when the typical sixteenth century warrior switched sides, he was considered in a manner analogous to the modern baseball player who is traded into a new team. This comparison, I will argue, fails to properly acknowledge the political and physical risks involved in defecting, or in betraying one’s lord. It also fails to account for the lack of security for vassals who do maintain loyalty to their lord. This lack of security was sustained by a distinct, and undeniable mistrust among the warrior class. Loyalty may have existed as an ideal, however in reality, samurai leaders did not often trust their subordinates. Since a ‘loyal warrior’ implies by definition, that he is ‘trustworthy,’ we must seriously consider this issue. I will then discuss a warrior practise that is largely ignored by scholars, called *zanshin*.<sup>9</sup> There are good grounds to suggest that the practise of *zanshin* (alertness) indicates that warriors were conditioned to have an important lack of trust in their surroundings, and of the people they encountered. By its very existence then, *zanshin* undermines the theory of warrior loyalty. Samurai were trained to expect betrayal. I shall provide examples from the war tales that, whilst often seen by scholars for their tragic circumstance or celebration of one virtue or another, demonstrate the importance of this crucial alertness, and of maintaining a distinct lack of trust for both friends and enemies. Following this, I will briefly elaborate to include the decisive factors involved in the numerous ‘crisis periods’ in Japan’s history. Starting with the rise of the Kamakura bakufu, I will demonstrate that deception, lawlessness and treachery were considered legitimate means to overthrow the ruling elite at the time, culminating in *gekokujō jidai*, an age of ‘mastery of the high by the low.’<sup>10</sup>

In his essay entitled ‘Debunking the Myth of Loyalty,’ Sakaiya Taichi sums up the code of the sixteenth century samurai as being ‘for the team.’<sup>11</sup> This is to say that samurai loyalties were dictated only by their individual affiliations at the time, which

7 The sankin kōtai system required that daimyō spend alternate years living in Edo and their home province. The daimyō’s family and heir were required to always remain in the capital as hostages.

8 Hurst, ‘Death, Honour and Loyalty: the Bushidō Ideal,’ p. 520.

9 残心 (Often translated as ‘remaining mind.’)

10 Berry, Hideyoshi, p. 26.

11 Sakaiya, ‘Debunking the Myth of Loyalty,’ p. 22.

were constantly subject to change without ‘any ethical premise that one cannot serve two masters.’<sup>12</sup> By this, Sakaiya seems to argue that samurai were interested in serving their own interests, in as much as they served their lord at any given time.<sup>13</sup> In comparing the medieval samurai to a baseball player, Sakaiya fails to consider two things. The first is that samurai were never ‘traded’ as baseball players are, they were either outright traitors or defectors, depending on one’s perspective. The other point is that simply because a samurai switched sides, did not necessarily mean he would ‘give his all to his new team and give no thought to “yesterday’s friends.”’<sup>14</sup> The hesitation of Kobayakawa Hideaki during the battle of Sekigahara (1600) is one such example.<sup>15</sup>

The baseball analogy, though interesting, fails to demonstrate the full point, it fails to illustrate the politics of treachery/defection. A baseball player does not risk his life when being traded to another team. Neither would he have much reason to hesitate in his actions once traded, he merely plays the game. If one would persist with an analogy, a better one may be the position of a modern parliamentarian in a Westminster style parliament who chooses to ‘cross the floor’ of the parliamentary chamber during a crucial division. In most such cases, members who choose to cross the floor may, or may not still be accepted in their own party, nor will they always be supported by the other. The Australian Labor Party, for instance, has set strong precedent for suspending such members.<sup>16</sup> Obviously, this analogy still fails to completely encapsulate the danger. The medieval samurai took big risks whenever they decided to defect, or betray their lord. While a parliamentarian who crosses the floor may well risk his or her career, a samurai risked his land, his status, and possibly his life. Many times, those willing to betray their lord and join another were welcomed. Yet, it remains difficult to trust a traitor, no matter where his current loyalties seem to lie. For example, Oda Nobunaga ‘counselled’ Shibata Katsui on the ‘virtues of being a samurai and on the importance of Shibata’s service to Nobunaga,’ as a warning, based on the fact Shibata had previously ‘betrayed his lord.’<sup>17</sup> Conlan outlines the danger of defection during the fourteenth century as being particularly linked to timing. Conlan shows that when Ashikaga Takauji made offers ‘enticing’ rivals to defect, those who responded, such as Yūki Chikamoto, were received well and rewarded. Not so for those who chose to surrender or defect when they realised too late their defeat was at hand. When one surrendered to another (*kōsan*),

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>13</sup> This point becomes clear in context. Sakaiya goes on to mention the trend among students who are keen to find a job in the civil service, major trading company or financial institution because they are looking for jobs that ensure security and guaranteed lifetime employment. Other jobs are not as sought after because they will not necessarily be as secure. Students appear to think ‘they will be safe as long as their employer does not go broke.’ Ergo, the students are loyal to the company because it offers them lifetime employment, security and wellbeing. Thus they serve two masters, their employer, and themselves. See Sakaiya, ‘Debunking the Myth of Loyalty,’ p. 23.

<sup>14</sup> Sakaiya, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>15</sup> Kobayakawa appeared to side with Ishida Mitsunari, yet had secretly pledged his allegiance to Tokugawa Ieyasu. When the time came for Kobayakawa to act, he was hesitant. He had been promised reward by both sides. Tokugawa Ieyasu had to ‘inspire’ Kobayakawa to attack Ishida’s forces, by firing at Kobayakawa.

<sup>16</sup> Parliament of Australia, Department of Parliamentary Services, Parliamentary Library, *Crossing the Floor in the Federal Parliament 1950 – August 2004*.

<sup>17</sup> See Wakita, ‘The Emergence of the State in Sixteenth-Century Japan: From Oda to Tokugawa,’ p. 363, see also n39 pp. 363-364.



the ‘law of surrender’ (*kōsan no hō*) dictated that the *kōsannin* (one who surrenders) risked losing half of his homelands (*honryō*). This, writes Conlan, was a ‘set rule’ that was ‘more in breach than in practice’ (in other words, whilst tentatively considered a rule, in most circumstances it was rarely followed), yet was applied to Sōma Tanehira, who was denied half of his land when he ‘waited too long to switch sides’ and ‘had not surrendered his weapons in accordance with the custom of *kōsan no hō*’.<sup>18</sup> However, Conlan also points out that the more power a samurai wielded, the more likely that he would be able to switch sides without major consequence.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, while switching sides was not uncommon among medieval samurai, it obviously involved considerable risk. The risk, however, would often be worth it for those who ensured they joined the winning side in a battle.

Being on the winning side, however, should not necessarily be equated with ‘full security.’ Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616), victor of the Battle of Sekigahara, could not feel totally secure in the ‘loyalty’ of his men. As a result of his mistrust, Ōkubo Tadachika, a senior bakufu official whose family had been long-time vassals to the Tokugawa house, was arrested and confined due to ‘close contacts with more powerful daimyō of the west country [these were powerful daimyō in the western regions of Japan, not yet completely under Tokugawa leadership].’<sup>20</sup> Once Ieyasu had established the Tokugawa shogunate, his son Tokugawa Hidetada (1579-1632) and his grandson Tokugawa Iemitsu (1604-1651), continued the Tokugawa reign. They too, held great mistrust for their vassals. In 1619, the ‘purge of rival leaders began,’ ousting powerful rival daimyō houses regardless of the service they had rendered to the Tokugawa.<sup>21</sup> Not even the closest vassals to the shogunate, the *fudai* daimyō, ‘could be confident of evading punishment’ if they incurred the bakufu’s ‘displeasure.’<sup>22</sup> The system of ‘loyalty’ then, could often be very circumstantial, and the Tokugawa bakufu exercised a great deal of effort to manipulate their vassals, aware that even their closest allies may yet turn against them. For example, during the Muromachi period (1336-1467), Imagawa Ryōshun (1326-1430) had attempted to enforce his own harsh brand of loyalty by cutting down Shōni Fuyusuke during a banquet on the charge of ‘duplicity and disloyalty.’<sup>23</sup> This occurred while Ryōshun was leading a military campaign against his enemies. As a result, a number of his supporters defected, adding to the forces

18 Conlan, *State of War*, pp. 160-161. This practise is also dealt with briefly in John Whitney Hall, ‘Japan’s Sixteenth-Century Revolution’, p. 12.

19 Conlan, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

20 Bolitho, *Treasures Among Men: The Fudai Daimyō in Tokugawa Japan*, p. 5.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 9. Even vassal houses that had supported Tokugawa Ieyasu in major battles were targeted, and their houses eliminated as a potential threat, such as Fukushima Masanori and the son of Katō Kiyomasa.

23 Conlan, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

Ryōshun already opposed. Those who remained sought greater compensation for their troubles, and in the end Ryōshun's entire offensive 'collapsed.'<sup>24</sup>

Whilst it was consistently vital (especially during the sixteenth century) for elite samurai to '[surround] himself with skilled strategists and fighters,'<sup>25</sup> it is clear that by at least this time, vassals were often not trusted and that ruling powers sought to control, and curtail their power. During this period, Alessandro Valignano noted that the Japanese people had 'meagre loyalty.'

They rebel... whenever they have a chance, either usurping [their rulers] or joining up with their enemies. Then they about-turn and declare themselves friends again, only to rebel once more when the opportunity presents itself; yet this sort of conduct does not discredit them at all. As a result, none of the lords (or very few of them) are secure in their domains... Japan was divided up among so many usurping barons... each one trying to grab for himself as much territory as he can.<sup>26</sup>

João Rodrigues made similar observations.

The only authority or law was military might... treachery was rampant and nobody trusted his neighbour. Often the most influential servants would murder their own lord and join up in league with other more powerful men in order to be confirmed in the possession of their territory... A man could not trust his neighbour and always kept his weapons close at hand... Every man [remained] in his house like a petty king and recognising no superior so long as he could defend himself.<sup>27</sup>

Thus Katsumata observes, 'the extension and consolidation of military power by Sengoku daimyō, however, was impossible without the establishment of new lord-vassal ties,' which were 'extremely unstable.'<sup>28</sup> Daimyō issued *kahō* (house laws) to address these problems, the most pertinent among these are the *kashindan* (retainer) control laws. In extreme cases, any transgression of the *kashindan* control laws was considered to be disloyalty.<sup>29</sup> Katsumata argues that the daimyō tried to establish an 'authoritarian power structure' by transmuting 'obligations of loyalty felt by retainers' towards the group they belonged,<sup>30</sup> to obligations toward the *kokka* ('state' or 'polity,' in particular the realm

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 141-142.

<sup>25</sup> Hurst, *op. cit.*, p. 518.

<sup>26</sup> Alessandro Valignano, cited in Cooper, (ed.). *They Came to Japan: An Anthology of European Reports on Japan, 1543-1640*, p. 46.

<sup>27</sup> João Rodrigues, cited in Cooper, *They Came to Japan*, p. 31.

<sup>28</sup> Katsumata, 'The Development of Sengoku Law', p. 105.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>30</sup> Traditionally, Japanese have been reared to adhere to a collective mindset. The apparent homogeneous nature of Japanese society has persisted, lending to Japanese assertions of uniqueness, and is today most prominently discussed in the genre called *Nihonjinron* (theories on the Japanese). For an extensive overview of the variety and scope of *Nihonjinron*, see Befu, *Hegemony and Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, especially chapter two,



the daimyō controlled).<sup>31</sup> Using their power over the *kokka*, a daimyō would attempt to manipulate his retainer's loyalties by having them focused on the land he controlled, thus seeking to legitimise his rule by claiming that it is for the *kōgi* (public interest), and that for this sake, retainers should 'sacrifice personal interest.'<sup>32</sup> It is imperative to note that this 'public' good was, according to Berry, 'defined and benevolently bestowed by the powerful upon a subject public.'<sup>33</sup>

The 'unification regimes' of powerful warlords, Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582), Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598), and later Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616), eventually ended the Sengoku, or warring states era. They 'defined security as their mandate,' and they proved to be 'politically aggressive... in only one arena: peacekeeping.'<sup>34</sup> The unifiers introduced laws to achieve such effect, legitimising their rule on the principle of *kōgi*. A comparable term, which had been used by the Ashikaga shoguns and was then appropriated by Oda Nobunaga, was *tenka* ('all under heaven'), meaning the affairs of the realm, of which Nobunaga placed himself in charge.<sup>35</sup> Using the banner *tenka fubu* (the realm subjected to the military), Nobunaga set out to prove that his *tenka* was the prime authority, 'a universal public order under his own aegis, replacing the dilapidated system of the Ashikaga shogunate.'<sup>36</sup> Asao Naohiro notes that, 'subordinate daimyō were well aware that this assertion of "tenka" by Nobunaga served their own interests, and were therefore willing to accept him as the "official ruling authority" (*kōgi*).'<sup>37</sup> Later, Hideyoshi was able to make a similar play, ascribing the terms 'tenka' and 'kōgi' to himself. Berry asserts that Hideyoshi was able to use the mistrust among the daimyō, ruling for the 'public good,' and by punishing traitors on the basis that this made alliances more stable, and thus protected the realm. The 'genius' of *kōgi*, argues Berry, is that it now linked 'self-interest to a new and broad philosophy of rule.'<sup>38</sup> *Kōgi*, then, was not used just for the 'public interest,' but appropriated by the powerful to legitimate and assert their rule. This blurred perceived lines of cleavage between 'public interest,' and the person of the ruler. Thus retainers were asked to sacrifice their own personal interests in 'loyalty' to the *kokka*, for the benefit of the *kōgi*, and this 'kōgi' was the ruler himself.<sup>39</sup>

---

'The Nature of the Beast'

31 Katsumata, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

32 Berry, 'Public Peace and Private attachment: *The Goals and Conduct of Power in Early Modern Japan*', p. 248.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 269. Berry also warns that we should not read into the term 'public' too deeply by contrasting it with ostensibly 'private' interests, yet the distinction is not particularly relevant to this discussion, and so as not to confuse the issue has been omitted.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 242. Due to length constraints, it is not possible to analyse all laws introduced in great detail. However, Berry deals with these laws in the article cited. For discussion of laws and practises that pertain to ranks and titles and their associated authority, see Wakita, 'The Emergence of the State in Sixteenth-Century Japan.' For a good overview of the period, see Katsumata, 'The Development of Sengoku Law.' For a record of the medieval laws in English, see John Carey Hall, *Japanese Feudal Law*.

35 Elison, 'The Cross and the Sword: Patterns of Momoyama History', p. 64.

36 Fujiki, 'The Political Posture of Oda Nobunaga', p. 151.

37 Asao Naohiro, cited in Katsumata, 'The Development of Sengoku Law', p. 120.

38 Berry, *Hideyoshi*, pp. 158-159.

39 It is important to note, however, that authorities did not completely ignore the concept of *kōgi* for the manner it was intended, as the public interest. McClain argues that on the basis of *kōgi*, the Tokugawa bakufu was obliged to respond to the demands of the people in Edobashi after the 1657 fires. The

Before we leave this subject, it is worth noting that Sengoku daimyō were constantly issuing laws against ‘treachery’ in the *kahō*, and were constantly promoting loyalty as an ideal. Sakaiya notes that though ‘a certain quality is considered desirable is no guarantee that it actually prevails.’<sup>40</sup> Hurst leaps on this statement, pointing out that ‘the frequency with which warrior codes stress the virtue of loyalty is due precisely to the fact that it *did not* obtain in the violent “world without center” [a reference to the sengoku era].’<sup>41</sup> As has been shown above, a ‘sure’ loyalty did not exist. Even if a retainer were ostensibly ‘loyal,’ his lord would not necessarily trust him. It remained important that the retainer was completely dependant on his lord, and feared his power.

### **Zanshin: Constant Alertness**

Key to understanding samurai disloyalty is understanding the attitude warriors held towards betrayal. The clear sense of mistrust among samurai is starkly evident through their martial philosophy and exercise. The practise of *zanshin* involves maintaining a high level of awareness at all times. Though a variety of literature on martial philosophy and practise has survived, the practise of *zanshin* is virtually ignored by scholars. This dismissal is a grave mistake. In its very essence, *zanshin* implies a severe mistrust of ones surroundings. Not only has the practise been preserved in writing, but has survived in the teaching of *koryū* (‘ancient’ or ‘classical’) martial arts styles today, such as *Yagyū Shinkage-ryū* and the *Yagyū Shingan-ryū* branches.<sup>42</sup> *Zanshin* has also been incorporated into other *iaijutsu* schools (sword schools), and to some lesser extent, other modern versions of *budō* (modern, often sports-based martial arts).<sup>43</sup> Diane Skoss argues that *koryū* styles ‘can be thought of as living history, preserving principles of combat and details of etiquette of an era long past.’<sup>44</sup> Friday, aware of the lack of scholarly attention given to *bugei ryūha* (martial arts schools), states that ‘in their neglect of samurai martial training, scholars have missed out on an important opportunity.’<sup>45</sup> Friday’s book *Legacies of the Sword* is clearly an attempt to resolve this problem, yet unfortunately

---

shogunate ‘created mechanisms that allowed voices from below to be heard,’ in order to maintain a practical, and legitimated authority. See McClain, ‘Edobashi: Power, Space and Popular Culture in Edo,’ p. 131.

40 Sakaiya, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

41 Hurst, ‘Death, Honour and Loyalty: the Bushidō Ideal,’ p. 518. (Emphasis by Hurst).

42 Traditionally, *koryū* schools are notorious for jealously guarding their traditions and teachings. *Koryū* styles have been kept within close family circles, often select students by invitation only (one cannot simply ‘sign up’), thus limiting the scope for outsiders to alter the art. For example, *Yagyū Shingan-ryū Heihōjutsu* (from the Sendai line of *Yagyū Shingan-ryū*, which still practises armoured techniques) has only very recently extended its normal practise by allowing non-Japanese to practise the art (still by invitation only), as well as supporting overseas schools (in Europe and in Australia). Nevertheless, debates continue to rage as to the validity of certain would-be *koryū* styles, and the question of authenticity is often brought up. Essentially however, it is unlikely that fundamental doctrines have drastically changed in the official *koryū* schools, though one could not deny that techniques may have been slightly altered, as a natural progression of learning and development. Karl Friday offers interesting comments to this debate, see Friday, ‘The Whole Legitimacy Thing,’ see also Friday, *Legacies of the Sword*, pp. 17-18.

43 It is to a ‘lesser extent’ because *zanshin* is more often regarded in modern martial arts as an awareness that is maintained directly after an opponent is struck, thrown down, or defeated. To samurai, *zanshin* implied more than just this.

44 Skoss (ed.), *Koryū Bujutsu*, p. 11. Diane Skoss, and her husband Meik Skoss are authorities on the subject of *koryū*, and are well known in the martial arts community. Meik was a contemporary of the late Donn F. Draeger. They are not scholars per se, yet have a good grasp of the classical martial traditions and should not be ignored.

45 Friday, *Legacies of the Sword*, p. 2.





falls somewhat short of a completely objective analysis. It is focused primarily on the *Kashima-Shinryū*, for which Friday holds a *menkyo kaiden* license (license of total transmission, allowing the bearer to officially teach the style), and is a certified *shihan* (master and model).<sup>46</sup> Whilst *Legacies of the Sword* tries to demonstrate the overall benefit that study of the *koryū* styles can lend to our knowledge of history, it is a volume too tightly focused, and does not explicitly mention the practise of *zanshin* or its wider implications. Friday does mention *zanshin* (although not by name) in his recent work *Samurai, Warfare and the State in Early Medieval Japan*, stating:

The idea that a samurai must be ever on guard, always prepared for, always expecting, an attack is expressed frequently in early modern commentaries on Japanese martial art or *bushidō*; it may be this sort of philosophy that is responsible for the apparent lack of sportsmanship in Japanese warfare.<sup>47</sup>

It is unfortunate that Friday does not capitalise on this issue to say more, since *zanshin* reveals important distinctions in samurai attitude, with wider applications than purely tactical methods. Ursula Lytton does mention *zanshin* once in her article concerning *kyūdō* ('way of the bow,' Japanese archery), yet refers to it only as 'the remaining form of mind and body,' a stage that exists after the arrow has been released.<sup>48</sup> This does not provide a full explanation of what *zanshin* really is, or was thought to be.

Donn F. Draeger and Gordon Warner argue that *happō zanshin*, awareness in all directions, was 'not only a battlefield necessity for the warrior but was also maintained on a round-the-clock basis.'<sup>49</sup> An example of how this was demonstrated while bowing can be seen as follows.

In recognition of proper rules of etiquette in greeting others the warrior might make his bow either in *ritsurei* (standing) or *zarei* (kneeling-sitting) fashion but more likely from a semi-crouching posture. When appearing before a superior, he crouched down with his right knee touching the ground or floor, a posture implying that he had no aggressive intentions, since a sword worn or carried at his left side would be difficult to bring into instant action from that position. But the warrior might also choose to crouch down on his left knee in *iai-goshi* posture [right knee raised slightly, both feet well under buttocks]. This posture announced his mistrust of the person or persons whom he faced

<sup>46</sup> To a large extent, Friday's intention was to focus on the *Kashima-Shinryū*, primarily through participation. Though his close affiliation with the school has no doubt been the cause of his focus, and thus lack of certain objectivity, this is not necessarily a bad thing. It is honestly to be expected, and Friday's close association with the school adds credibility to the book as a study of the *Kashima-Shinryū*. However, *Legacies of the Sword* does not cover as wide an arc as perhaps the work could have done, had Friday investigated *koryū* traditions by incorporating a broader basis to his research.

<sup>47</sup> Friday, *Samurai, Warfare and the State in Early Medieval Japan*, p. 144.

<sup>48</sup> Lytton, 'Aspects of Dual Symbolic Classification: Right and Left in a Japanese Kyū-Dōjō', p. 286.

<sup>49</sup> Draeger and Warner, *Japanese Swordsmanship: Technique and Practice*, p. 56.

and served as fair warning to them that his *zanshin* was unbroken. In all cases, when crouching down, standing, or sitting, the warrior took great care to bow only so low as to maintain visual contact with his surroundings.<sup>50</sup>

It is important to consider the practise of *zanshin* in context. An important tactic used by medieval samurai was to ambush his enemy. This was done by feigning goodwill towards him, showing ‘much affection and familiarity, laughing and joking with him.’ They then wait until their enemy is ‘completely off his guard,’ and attack him with their sword, then calmly acting as if ‘nothing had happened.’<sup>51</sup> João Rodrigues had observed such behaviour:

They reserve treachery for affairs of diplomacy and war in order not to be deceived themselves... when they wish to kill a person by treachery (a strategem [*sic*] often employed to avoid many deaths), they put on a great pretence by entertaining him with ever sign of love and joy—and then in the middle of it all, off comes his head.<sup>52</sup>

The strategy of deception fostered the need for *zanshin*. Deception may seem ‘unfair,’ yet was little different to attitudes concerning actual combat. John Rogers demonstrates that the Western concept of a ‘fair fight,’ where each combatant is purposely armed with exactly the same weapon, did not really exist in Japan. Instead, ‘the Japanese model sees fairness in each swordsman being allowed to maximise his advantages.’<sup>53</sup> Thus, if one warrior decided to enter a duel with a short sword, his opponent may wield a longer sword allowing him to slay the first warrior at a distance. It was either bad luck for the first warrior if he had intended to fight under those circumstances, or poor planning if he had not, and had simply been caught at the disadvantage.

An ambush may occur at any time, thus Yagyū Munenori warns his readers to constantly maintain *zanshin*:

Even when you are sitting indoors, first look up, then look left and right, to see if there is anything that might fall from above. When seated by a door or screen, take note of whether it might not fall over. If you happen to be in attendance near nobles of high rank, be aware of whether something unexpected might happen. Even when you are going in and out a door, don’t neglect attention to the going out and going in, always keeping aware.<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>51</sup> Alessandro Valignano, cited in Cooper (ed.), *They Came to Japan*, p. 45.

<sup>52</sup> João Rodrigues, cited in Cooper (ed.), *They Came to Japan*, p. 45.

<sup>53</sup> Rogers, ‘Arts of War in Times of Peace. Swordsmanship in *Honchō Bugei Shōden*, Chapter 6,’ p. 177.

<sup>54</sup> Yagyū, ‘Martial Arts: the Book of Family Traditions. Book 3: No Sword,’ p. 89. There are a number of stories concerning Yagyū Munenori, praising his flawless *zanshin*. In one such story, the shogun and Yagyū Munenori are among those watching a Noh performance with an actor named Kanze Sakon, who was reputed to have great concentration and *zanshin*. The shogun asked Munenori to observe Kanze’s *zanshin*, to see if it was ever broken. During the play, for



The use of deception and the practise of ‘maximising the advantage’ was considered by the samurai to be valid, fair, and essentially good strategy (*heihō*). Concerning the strategies employed by Miyamoto Musashi, Cleary writes that they ‘are in themselves amoral, from the point of view of the art of war.’<sup>55</sup> Famous stories of Musashi’s duels show that he would often implement ‘deceptive’ strategies. For example, on one occasion he arrived early for a duel and hid in a tree. When his opponent arrived, Musashi ambushed him by jumping down and killing his opponent. On another occasion, Musashi arrived late to a duel, allowing his opponent to grow restless over time and thus, easier to defeat in battle. On both occasions, Musashi attacked when his opponent’s *zanshin* was weak. Similarly, night attacks are commonly found in the war tales. Varley describes a discussion found in the *Hōgen Monogatari*, whereupon the famous warrior Minamoto no Tametomo ‘proclaims that no strategy in warfare is superior to the night attack (*youchi*).’<sup>56</sup> According to Draeger and Warner:

Whether or not the warrior-enemy was ready for combat was immaterial, inasmuch as it was the professional warrior’s duty to be prepared at all times for combat. Any lapse of alertness (*zanshin*) in an enemy was recognised as a just opportunity for dealing him a fatal and deserved blow in retribution for his failure to carry out his manifest professional duty.<sup>57</sup>

As mentioned, it was common practice for samurai to ‘always [keep] his weapons close at hand.’<sup>58</sup> This was both a matter of mistrust, and one of maintaining *zanshin*. It is common to find incidents described in the war tales where a warrior is caught without *zanshin*, though this point is often not the focus of the narrative. In many cases, scholars who have been focused on the more romantic elements in the war tales have failed to read between the lines.

One story worth considering is found in Ihara Saikaku’s *Buke Giri Monogatari*, first published in 1688. The first story from the third volume recounts the travels of two samurai, Takeshima and Takitsu. Travelling home from Edo, the pair rent a boat, and as they cast off, are joined by an older samurai, a child, and a monk. Takeshima insulted Takitsu (for the second time during their journey), and Takitsu challenged Takeshima to a duel right there on the boat. Takeshima accepted the challenge, yet when he reached for his sword, it was gone. Takeshima had been caught without *zanshin*. Takitsu waited

---

a brief moment, Kanze loses his concentration when passing near a pillar, and he sees a man smiling at him in the audience, as if he has seen something that others had not. Of course, he later discovers that it was lord Yagyū, who had noticed this brief lapse. See Yagyū, *The Life Giving Sword*, pp. 55-56.

55 Cleary, *The Japanese Art of War: Understanding the Culture of Strategy*, p. 80.

56 Varley, *Warriors of Japan as Portrayed in the War Tales*, p. 53. In this particular situation, however, Yorinage, a court official, overrules Tametomo and the Sutoku army waits until daybreak to engage. This decision proves to be disastrous, and their enemies, fighting for Goshirakawa (including Taira no Kiyomori) attack the Sutoku army before dawn, defeating them decisively.

57 Draeger and Warner, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

58 João Rodrigues, cited in Cooper, *They Came to Japan*, p. 31.

briefly, yet there was nothing to be done. The sword was lost. Takeshima felt deeply ashamed. He expects the ‘deserved blow in retribution for his failure,’ he even tries to kill himself. The older samurai, however, demonstrates good *zanshin*. He was distinctly aware that the monk was missing a gourd from which he had been eating peppers earlier, and thus proves that the monk had stolen the sword. The gourd was later discovered in some reeds among the shallow waters. Sure enough, hiding beneath the surface of the water was the missing sword, attached to the gourd, which acted as a float. The younger samurai were amazed by his keen awareness, his *zanshin*. By solving this mystery, the older samurai was able to reconcile Takeshima and Takitsu.<sup>59</sup>

The *Heike Monogatari* (written circa early thirteenth century), records numerous accounts where warriors used deception for personal gain, showing the importance of awareness and mistrust. A good example is found in chapter 9.13. ‘The Death of Etchū no Zenji,’ where Etchū no Zenji Moritoshi (from the Heike army) battles Inomata no Koheiroku Noritsuna (from the Genji army). At first Noritsuna is bested by Moritoshi, and is completely at his mercy. Noritsuna employs a tactic that sounds utterly shameful to Moritoshi, he begs for his life. Noritsuna persuades Moritoshi to spare his life, promising to help save Heike men from execution in the future, since the Genji were winning the war. Moritoshi relents, convinced it would be disgraceful to behead Noritsuna after he had already surrendered. Shortly thereafter, Noritsuna’s friend Hitomi no Shirō arrived on horseback.

At first, Moritoshi tried to keep an eye on both men, but the one on horseback engaged his full attention as he gradually approached, and he lost track of Noritsuna. Noritsuna seized his opportunity.<sup>60</sup>

Moritoshi was right to be wary of both men, yet when his *zanshin* was focused only on Shirō, Noritsuna quickly killed him in a surprise attack. Once he had the opportunity to kill his foe, the bargain struck only moments before meant nothing to Noritsuna. For his efforts, ‘his name led that day’s list of exploits,’ and there is little doubt that he would have been well rewarded for taking the head of such an important enemy.<sup>61</sup>

In briefly considering the *Taiheki* (composed during the fourteenth century), scholars have concluded that it does not suggest any overarching theme of loyalty or trust among the warrior class. Varley notes that by the third part of the narrative, ‘Fighting is ceaseless, and those who clash with one another are seldom motivated by lofty goals. They contend for selfish ends, often ignoring the most fundamental standards

<sup>59</sup> This story is paraphrased from Callahan, Ihara Saikaku, ‘Tales of Samurai Honor: Saikaku’s Buke Giri Monogatari,’ pp. 12-15. I have drawn attention to the displays of *zanshin*.

<sup>60</sup> McCullough, *Genji and Heike: Selections from The Tale of the Genji and The Tale of the Heike*, pp. 392-393.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 393.



of civilised behaviour.<sup>62</sup> McMullen differs little in his assessment:

The authors of the *Taiheki* seem, however, less interested in questions of political legitimacy than in the professional ethos of the warrior and his conduct in battle. Loyalty is an important concern, but it is primarily parochial, professional military loyalty on the battlefield, rather than political loyalty. Loyalty may be the highest value for warriors, but the ultimate political ends to which it is extended are not necessarily subject to searching scrutiny or constraint.<sup>63</sup>

Overall, the war tales do not necessarily give the impression that samurai were overtly loyal, or trustworthy in their behaviour. This reflects the pattern of behaviour during the periods of Japanese history where the need for loyalty, in a political, as well as military sense, seems most crucial. During times of crisis, when rulers had to rely on 'loyal' supporters, samurai proved time and again that they could not be trusted to act accordingly, often seeking to gratify their own personal interests.

### Bakufu Origins: Crisis and Control

The very first military government was founded on the basis of rebellion, not on loyalty. The eastern rebel kingdom was called Tōgoku, centred at Kamakura. Tōgoku was established in 1180, and was led by the exiled Genji leader, Minamoto Yoritomo (1147-1199).<sup>64</sup> At the time, the imperial court had been dominated by Taira Kiyomori (1118-1181), who by using his position within the court as a 'personal dictatorship,' succeeded in upsetting the imperial prince, Mochihito. Prince Mochihito issued a 'call to arms' against the Taira, yet Kiyomori quickly defeated him.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, his call 'offered Yoritomo a cause in which to cloak his personal ambitions – an excuse for reasserting what he believed to be his patrimony.'<sup>66</sup> Thus Friday argues,

Yoritomo exploited his outlaw status, declaring a martial law under himself across the eastern provinces, and promising any and all who pledged to his service confirmation (under his personal guarantee) of lands and offices. At the same time, he took pains to style himself as a righteous outlaw, a champion of true justice breaking the law in order to rescue the institutions it was meant to serve.<sup>67</sup>

62 Varley, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

63 McMullen, 'Ashikaga Takauji in Early Tokugawa Thought', p. 330.

64 Hurst, 'The Kōbu Polity: Court-Bakufu Relations in Kamakura Japan', pp. 5-6.

65 Mass, 'The Early Bakufu and Feudalism', p. 124.

66 Friday, *Samurai, Warfare and the State in Early Medieval Japan*, p. 45.

67 *Ibid.*, p. 45.

Yoritomo was not fighting for ‘king and country.’ He was fighting for himself. He brooked no resistance, and even ‘recalcitrant’ family members were not free from Yoritomo’s grasp.<sup>68</sup> When the Genpei War (1180-1185) ended, Yoritomo was the undisputed champion. Those samurai who signed up under Yoritomo’s banner of alliance reaped the rewards of his success. Those who became direct vassals (*gokenin*) to Yoritomo ‘gained a critical advantage within their local communities,’ and with considerable territory conquered, enemy lands were awarded to Yoritomo’s allies as he saw fit.<sup>69</sup> The imperial government gave Yoritomo the right to appoint *shugo* (constables), and *jitō* (land stewards). Yoritomo took the title shogun (*sei-i taishōgun*, meaning ‘barbarian-suppressing general’) in 1192, adding legitimacy to his military regime. Though Mochihito’s call had been of imperial origin, Yoritomo originally showed little interest in affiliating with the court once the Taira were defeated, preferring instead to maintain his base at Kamakura.<sup>70</sup>

After Yoritomo’s death in 1199, the Hōjō family gradually took control of the Kamakura bakufu. Yoritomo’s widow Masako, known as the nun-shogun (*ama shōgun*), decided that the second Kamakura shogun, her own son Yoriie, was unfit to rule. Yoriie was estranged from the Hōjō. At Yoritomo’s insistence he had been raised by the Hiki family, and Yoriie eventually married a Hiki woman. Masako and her father, Hōjō Tokimasa, manoeuvred to have Yoriie ousted, and his allies among the Hiki family massacred.<sup>71</sup> Yoriie was later ‘brutally murdered by Tokimasa’s agents.’<sup>72</sup> In 1203, Masako’s second son, eleven-year-old Sanetomo, was then made shogun, however Tokimasa pulled the strings as a regent (*shikken*) to the shogun. Masako and Tokimasa’s son Yoshitoki, turned on Tokimasa, and in 1205 conspired to remove Tokimasa from power in favour of Yoshitoki. Sanetomo proved to be ineffectual, and was assassinated in 1219 by his ‘deranged’ nephew Kugyō (son of Yoshiie), who in turn, was executed for this crime. Souyri notes that evidence concerning this topic is vague, and aptly poses the question, ‘who manipulated Kugyō?’<sup>73</sup> The question stands, as Varley states that while many historians believe Yoshitoki to be the mastermind, there is as yet, no conclusive evidence either way.<sup>74</sup>

Ultimately in the years that followed, the Hōjō family continued their rise to prominence, establishing themselves as permanent regents to the shogunate. Duus explains that ‘the obligation to serve the “lord of Kamakura” passed from the head of the *gokenin* family to his successor, and it was through this hereditary transmission of loyalty

68 Mass, ‘The Emergence of the Kamakura Bakufu’, p. 141.

69 Ikegami, *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan*, p. 81.

70 Yoritomo did later take an interest in the court, yet his forays into this area proved to be more damaging to his rule than he could afford.

71 Souyri, *The World Turned Upside Down: Medieval Japanese Society*, p. 50.

72 Varley, ‘The Hōjō Family and Succession to Power’, p. 151.

73 Souyri, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

74 Varley, ‘The Hōjō Family and Succession to Power’, p. 158.



that the bakufu maintained the support of its vassals.<sup>75</sup> However, the Hōjō proceeded to ‘pick one *gokenin* family after another that appeared to be a serious competitor or threat, and destroy it.’<sup>76</sup> If the *gokenin* were truly loyal, one should think that the bakufu would trust them. However, the impression we are left with is one of power and manipulation. In this brief outline of the early Hōjō years, the Kamakura bakufu does not stand out as an organisation ruled with an ideology based on ‘loyalty,’ either from within the Hōjō family or without.

In 1331, Emperor Go-Daigo (r. 1318-31, 1333-36) launched a rebellion against the Kamakura bakufu. He failed. Kamakura mobilised a massive number of troops to quell the uprising, and Go-Daigo was exiled. Efforts by Kusunoki Masashige and Prince Moriyoshi, loyalists to Go-Daigo’s cause, continued to agitate on his behalf in Kyoto. Kamakura failed to properly mobilise against the threat, and in 1332 the Rokuhara *tandai* (an arm of the Kamakura bakufu responsible for guarding the capital) was utterly crushed.<sup>77</sup> Ashikaga Takauji, sent by Kamakura with an army to aid the Rokuhara, betrayed the bakufu by siding with Go-Daigo. Like Yoritomo, Takauji sent out messages to other warriors ‘[enticing them] to fight with promises of compensation.’<sup>78</sup> By 1333, the Kamakura bakufu was no more, and Go-Daigo took charge. Three years later, a dissatisfied Ashikaga Takauji turned on Go-Daigo, forcing him to abdicate. Takauji was then appointed the shogun by Kōmyō, the new emperor.

The early fourteenth century was a particularly violent period in Japan. The main reason for this was ‘the intense land hunger of the local warriors, who were under many pressures to increase their holdings.’<sup>79</sup> Warriors who had a number of sons were obliged to bequeath to their sons a reasonable, and equal, proportion of land. Duus explains:

When a warrior died, his property was shared by all his sons... as a result, landholdings were broken into smaller and smaller portions with each generation, and often these parcels were too small to maintain their holders in warrior status. Primogeniture or indivisible inheritance was slow in developing, and local warriors looked for other means to aggrandise their landholdings. The easiest method was to expropriate land from the estate proprietors at Kyoto... the lands of the warrior’s neighbours, or even those of his personal lord.<sup>80</sup>

Warfare was a strategy of survival. Warriors needed something tangible for their efforts.

<sup>75</sup> Duus, *Feudalism in Japan*, p. 55.

<sup>76</sup> Varley, ‘The Hōjō Family and Succession to Power,’ p. 154.

<sup>77</sup> Conlan, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>79</sup> Duus, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

Thus Conlan notes, ‘Promises of reward underpinned fourteenth-century military power.’<sup>81</sup> The extent of ‘loyalty’ became subject to the extent of reward. It is for this reason that Varley states:

In historical reality, pure *kenshin* loyalty [Watsuji Tetsurō’s idea of ‘absolute self-sacrifice’] was impossible – except perhaps in isolated cases – because the lord/vassal relationship in warrior society was not unilateral but bilateral: A vassal served his lord as a fighting man in return for various rewards, including benefices (usually land). Warrior society would not have held together very long if warriors had simply given their existences for their lords without thought of reciprocity for themselves or their families... We can surmise from the nonexclusiveness of the relationship and the frequency of disloyalty and betrayal among warriors over the centuries... that self-sacrificing loyalty was at the very least an oft-violated ethic.<sup>82</sup>

Ashikaga Takauji was not able to dominate the network of warrior families in the same way Yoritomo had. Instead, his power was derived from ‘the network of family and feudal relationships which Takauji and his successors managed to put together.’<sup>83</sup> Takauji established a ‘coalition’ with members of the *shugo* governors who became his ‘chief vassals.’<sup>84</sup> *Shugo* then attempted to recruit as many *kokujiin* families (local samurai) to be their own private vassals as possible.<sup>85</sup> Many *shugo* were Ashikaga family members, who also held the rank of military commander, *taishō*, allowing them sufficient status in order to command *tozama* (autonomous warlords).<sup>86</sup> *Tozama* who were not appointed as *shugo*, operated as freelance warlords who refused to fight under the direction of any commander that did not have higher status than themselves.<sup>87</sup> *Tozama* that were too powerful for Takauji to dominate were recognised, however Takauji made efforts to place either a ‘clansmen or close ally’ next to them, and awarded both with ‘joint powers of military command.’<sup>88</sup> Similarly, the powers of *shugo* may be split between different commanders, in order to weaken their overall authority.<sup>89</sup> Conlan identifies two types of lordship that developed during the fourteenth century. There were those who ‘aspired to regional lordship...[by] attempt[ing] to amass lands and increase their bands of hereditary followers.’<sup>90</sup> Alternatively, there were those who styled themselves as national ‘hegemonic’ lords, by enticing autonomous warriors to serve them in return for

81 Conlan, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

82 Varley, *Warriors of Japan as Portrayed in the War Tales*, p. 32.

83 Hall, ‘The Muromachi Power Structure’, p. 40.

84 Kawai, ‘Shogun and Shugo: The Provincial Aspects of Muromachi Politics’, p. 65.

85 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

86 Conlan, *op. cit.*, p. 146. Eventually, the term *taishō* came to mean essentially the same thing as Ashikaga shugo. However, shugo who were not *taishō* did not command the same power.

87 *Ibid.*, p. 146.

88 Nelson, ‘Bakufu and Shugo Under the Early Ashikaga’, p. 80.

89 *Ibid.*, p. 80.

90 Conlan, *op. cit.*, p. 144.





‘confirmations, grants of lands [*sic*] rights, and other gifts.’<sup>91</sup> The support of autonomous warriors was ‘conditional,’ and depended on the proper rendering of rewards such as land grants, in return for service (*chūsetsu*).<sup>92</sup> However, this system could not be maintained. Hall notes that it was the ‘independent shugo ambitions that destroyed the Muromachi political system.’<sup>93</sup> The *shugo* proved more loyal to their own interests, than to the Ashikaga shogunate. The Ōnin War of 1467-1477, virtually destroyed the *shugo* class, and it was the regional *kokujin* samurai who were able to replace ‘their former shugo masters,’ becoming the daimyō that dominated the sengoku era.<sup>94</sup> Thus began the age of *gekokujō jidai*, mastery of the high by the low.

Daimyō were still required to provide their retainers with rewards, primarily still in the form of land grants. Yet Duus states, ‘treachery was common and often profitable to vassals [who were] promised larger fiefs or stipends by the rival leaders of their lord. Despite the constant protestation that loyalty was the highest virtue, the vassalage tie was tinged with suspicion and uneasiness.’<sup>95</sup> Of the three great ‘unifiers,’ Oda Nobunaga was no exception. Nobunaga used his relationship with the Ashikaga shogun Yoshiaki to his advantage, yet when the affiliation was no longer useful, he did away with him.<sup>96</sup> The mighty Oda Nobunaga himself was felled in 1582 by one of his closest vassals, the famous traitor Akechi Mitsuhide. Berry notes that Nobunaga died ‘unlamented,’ as a kind of poetic justice.<sup>97</sup> In general, there has been a common tendency among scholars, and in popular culture, to deride Nobunaga as a tyrant. This is a gross misunderstanding, not only of Nobunaga, but also of the word ‘tyrant.’<sup>98</sup> Elison’s suggestion that Nobunaga resembles Machiavelli’s ideal prince has since inspired further academic work.<sup>99</sup> Lamers article ‘Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582): A Japanese Tyrant,’ builds on Elison’s suggestion yet seems to remain critical of Nobunaga’s ‘cruel’ policies.<sup>100</sup> Yet since then, Lamers has conducted further research.<sup>101</sup> Lamers states, quite rightly, that Nobunaga is more accurately described as a pragmatist rather than a tyrant.<sup>102</sup> In many ways, Nobunaga epitomised the perfect sengoku samurai. He was as efficient as he was powerful. He was a ruthless winner. Nobunaga’s ruthlessness drew attention to the fact that ‘only one survivor would emerge’ from the number of daimyō who vied for ‘national conquest.’<sup>103</sup>

---

91 *Ibid.*, p. 144.

92 *Ibid.*, p. 144.

93 Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

94 Kawai, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

95 Duus, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-77.

96 See Fujiki, ‘The Political Posture of Oda Nobunaga,’ pp. 149-162.

97 Berry, *Hideyoshi*, p. 41.

98 A tyrant, by definition, is a person who misuses the power at their disposal. Nobunaga had used conquest and brutality to assert his power, yet arguably his life was ended before he had sufficient chance to exercise a ‘tyrannical’ rule.

99 See Elison, ‘The Cross and the Sword: Patterns of Momoyama History,’ p. 58.

100 See Lamers, ‘Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582): A Japanese Tyrant,’ pp. 36-37.

101 See Lamers, *Japonius Tyrannus: The Japanese Warlord Oda Nobunaga Reconsidered*.

102 *Ibid.*, p. 232.

103 Berry, *Hideyoshi*, p. 42.

While Nobunaga's death offered the competing daimyō a reprieve, it was not a long one. His close vassal Hideyoshi Toyotomi soon capitalised on Mitsuhide's betrayal. Hideyoshi vanquished the traitor, presenting 'Mitsuhide's head before Nobunaga's dead body.'<sup>104</sup> Hideyoshi's behaviour indicates that he may have truly held a 'loyal' attitude towards Nobunaga, and his actions to this regard, gave him grounds to 'chastise' Oda rivals.<sup>105</sup> However, we must remember that Nobunaga was now dead. Whether Hideyoshi was truly acting out of 'loyalty' to Nobunaga or not is uncertain. Hideyoshi may have determined that by taking such a stance, his own political prospects may increase. Moreover, we cannot be sure that Hideyoshi would not have harboured disloyalty towards Nobunaga had the ruler yet lived. In any case, Hideyoshi was certainly not loyal to Nobunaga's memory for long. He emphatically blocked Nobunaga's sons from assuming control. Hideyoshi became the guardian of Sambōshi (Oda Hidenobu), Nobunaga's three-year-old grandson. He convinced the Oda vassals to 'take an oath of loyalty to Sambōshi,' which alleviated concerns among them that the balance of power may rapidly start to shift.<sup>106</sup> Ultimately however, it was an oath favourable to Hideyoshi, who was able to maintain control despite pressure from rival warlords Shibata Katsue and Tokugawa Ieyasu. The cadastral land surveys (*kenchi*), and Hideyoshi's policies such as freezing of the social classes, the 'sword-hunt,' prohibiting movement, and removing soldiers from their regional fiefs exemplified Hideyoshi's intentions to limit opposition to his power.<sup>107</sup> These policies made the now landless samurai more dependent upon their daimyō, and thus easier to manipulate. Berry also notes, 'to secure the obedience of his daimyo in times of crisis, Hideyoshi did not simply rely upon the general threat of military reprisal or attainder... He took bodies as sureties of the peace.'<sup>108</sup> Taking hostages was not a new practice, yet it shows that Hideyoshi still viewed many daimyō with mistrust.

After Hideyoshi's death in 1598, the council of regents he had set up to protect his six-year-old son Hideyori collapsed. In this, the regents betrayed Hideyoshi's trust, and oaths they had taken to protect Hideyori. One of the regents, Tokugawa Ieyasu, victor of the Battle of Sekigahara, soon defeated his rivals and established his own government in Edo. As mentioned above, the Tokugawa bakufu did not trust rival daimyō, be they *fudai* or *tozama*. One prominent Tokugawa policy used to maintain the loyalty of the daimyō was the *sankin kōtai* system. The system included a crucial hostage component, and bore a great financial cost to the subservient daimyō. Bolitho records that 'after vassal stipends, expenses related to sankin kōtai obligation accounted for the

---

104 *Ibid.*, p. 76.

105 *Ibid.*, p. 77.

106 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

107 See Berry, *Hideyoshi*, pp. 99-146.

108 *Ibid.*, p. 141.



greatest part of the expenditure of every domain.<sup>109</sup> In many ways, it ensured that rival daimyō would never be sufficiently willing, or practically able, to challenge Tokugawa rule. The bakufu ‘had no wish to allow its permanent hostages – the wives and children of the daimyō – to leave Edo,’ and inspection barriers were set up in order to police this rule.<sup>110</sup> Jennifer Amyx has argued that the *sankin kōtai* system was one of ‘interest convergence’ based on the subsequent economic development, and ‘institutionalised trust.’<sup>111</sup> However, Amyx has neglected to note that the bakufu was a military institution, attempting to enforce military directives in order to maintain its own hegemony. The ‘unilateral coercive power’ theory that Amyx argues against is popular because it acknowledges this point appropriately. Amyx’s argument that *sankin kōtai* ‘spurred a metamorphosis from a feudal economic structure... into a capitalistic economic structure within a feudal system,’<sup>112</sup> goes unexplained, and in any case cannot negate the aforementioned point that the bakufu is, by definition, a military government.<sup>113</sup> *Sankin kōtai* was first and foremost a military directive, any economic developments were of secondary importance to the bakufu, which as explained above, maintained a high level of mistrust for its rivals. The *sankin kōtai* system was a logical step in asserting Tokugawa control, ensuring the nominal ‘loyalty’ of the daimyō.

It was the mistrust held by Hideyoshi, and later the Tokugawa, that also led to the ‘reduction of the castles of the daimyo, [and] the surveillance of their domains by spies and inspectors.’<sup>114</sup> In 1615, ‘the “one castle per province” order was announced, calling upon the daimyo to destroy all fortresses in their domains, with the exception of that in which they resided.’<sup>115</sup> Inspectors in the Tokugawa era, such as *metsuke*, were an obvious reminder of the shogunate’s authority.<sup>116</sup> We also know that the bakufu used samurai as *shinobi* (secret investigators) based on family occupation records.<sup>117</sup> The need for both ‘visible,’ and ‘invisible’ inspectors (albeit the latter were likely fewer in number), serves to highlight the effort required to maintain order post-sengoku. Regardless of how effective inspectors may have been at their job, the possibility of inspection provided a potential deterrent to any daimyō that may have considered trying to violate shogunate law.

109 Bolitho, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14.

110 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

111 Amyx, ‘Sankin Kotai: Institutional Trust as the Foundation for Economic Development in the Tokugawa Era.’

112 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

113 Morris Low argues that by stimulating the growth of cities, the *sankin kōtai* system facilitated the development of ‘merchant capitalism’ based on the three types of production, ‘craft guild production; domestic industry; and the beginnings of a factory system.’ See Low, ‘Stagnation or Development: Japanese Science and Technology Before Perry’, p. 34. In any case, this still offers no direct practical gain for the daimyō who were forced to serve the Tokugawa. In fact, the daimyō often fell into bankruptcy, which undermines Amyx’s argument of ‘interest convergence.’

114 Berry, ‘Public Peace and Private attachment,’ p. 247.

115 Bolitho, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

116 See for example Beerens, ‘Interview with a Bakumatsu Official’ pp. 369-398.

117 Imakita Sakubei was one such samurai, see Roberts, ‘A Petition for a Popularly Chosen Council of Government in Tosa in 1787’, p. 580.

## Conclusion

It is illogical to argue that loyalty developed as a firm ideological base among samurai during the medieval period. I have shown that behaviour to the contrary was the ‘norm’ rather than the exception, and that an undeniable mistrust permeated samurai social relations and political policy. I have argued that the samurai did not arbitrarily switch sides. Rather, switching sides achieved strategic personal and political goals for samurai, who were often keen to ensure their allegiances were personally profitable. Defection or betrayal involved substantial risk, and samurai had to minimise such risks by timing their defection carefully. Moreover, it was not always considered unethical for a warrior to change allegiances, in many cases, a samurai’s ability to switch sides freely depended on the individual power he held. Samurai lords rarely trusted their vassals, and constantly manoeuvred to place greater controls on their behaviour. During the medieval period, laws were constantly issued promoting loyalty under the pretence of *kōgi*, yet instead, it was for the ruler’s sole benefit. Samurai were often not exclusively loyal, so long as political means (i.e. defection) existed as a means to material prosperity, even though it required treachery on their part.

By introducing the combat attitude *zanshin*, I have shown that the typical boundaries of scholarly investigation can logically extend further into martial philosophy. *Zanshin* reveals the importance of a critical, perhaps even cynical state of awareness that makes greater sense of the widespread mistrust within samurai society. I have shown that the term has survived through reliable transmission in the *koryū bugei* schools, and have provided sufficient examples from primary source material where the practical ideology implicated by *zanshin* is demonstrated.

Finally, I have covered the breadth of samurai history, and highlighted that each military government was founded on the basis of rebellion and/or treachery. From the origins of Kamakura to the creation of the Tokugawa hegemony, betrayals were frequently perpetrated by samurai concerned for their own personal interest. Samurai were not always fighting from a position of greed, rather their ‘hunger’ for land was for some, a matter of family survival. As Japan became unified, samurai freedoms were eroded and greater controls were placed on their behaviour. To a large degree, this undermined autonomy that many vassals had previously held. By eroding samurai autonomy, warriors were eventually denied the ability to choose even their place of residence. In principle, this negates the existence of any true ‘loyalty,’ since loyalty inherently requires the existence of autonomous choice. Anything other than this cannot be conceived as true ‘loyalty.’ It is control.



## References

- Amyx, J. A., "Sankin Kotai": Institutional Trust as the Foundation for Economic Development in the Tokugawa Era,' (A/ PARC Working Paper, Asia-Pacific Research Center, Stanford Institute for International Studies, 1997).
- Berens, A., 'Interview with a Bakumatsu Official: A Translation from the Kyūji Shimonroku,' *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 55, No. 3. (Autumn, 2000), pp. 369-398.
- Befu, H., *Hegemony and Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron* (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2001).
- Berry, M. E., *Hideyoshi*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).
- Berry, M. E., 'Public Peace and Private attachment: The Goals and Conduct of Power in Early Modern Japan,' *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2. (Summer, 1986), pp. 237-271.
- Bolitho, H., *Treasures Among Men: The Fudai Daimyō in Tokugawa Japan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).
- Callahan, C. and Ihara, S., 'Tales of Samurai Honor: Saikaku's Buke Giri Monogatari,' *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 34, No. 1. (Spring, 1979), pp. 1-20.
- Cleary, T., *The Japanese Art of War: Understanding the Culture of Strategy* (Boston: Shambhala Publications Inc., 1991).
- Conlan, T. D., *State of War: The Violent Order of Fourteenth-Century Japan* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan, 2003).
- Cooper, M. (ed.), *They Came to Japan: An Anthology of European Reports on Japan, 1543-1640* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965).
- Draeger, D. F. and Warner, G., *Japanese Swordsmanship: Technique and Practice* (New York: Weatherhill, 1982).
- Duus, P., *Feudalism in Japan*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976).
- Elison, G., 'The Cross and the Sword: Patterns of Momoyama History,' in Elison, G. and Smith, B. L. (eds.), *Warlords, Artists, and Commoners: Japan in the Sixteenth Century* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1981).
- Friday, K. F., 'Bushidō or Bull? A Medieval Historian's Perspective on the Imperial Army and the Japanese Warrior Tradition,' *The History Teacher*, Vol. 27, No. 3. (May, 1994), pp. 339-349.
- Friday, K. F., *Legacies of the Sword: The Kashima-Shinryū and Samurai Martial Culture*, with Seki Humitake (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997).
- Friday, K. F., *Samurai, Warfare and the State in Early Medieval Japan* (New York: Routledge, 2004).
- Friday, K. F., 'The Whole Legitimacy Thing,' Retrieved 2 June 2007, from <http://www.koryu.com/library/kfriday1.html>.
- Fujiki, H., 'The Political Posture of Oda Nobunaga,' trans. Elison, G. in Hall, J.W. and Yamamura, K. (eds.), *Japan Before Tokugawa: Political Consolidation and Economic Growth, 1500 to 1650* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).
- Hall, J. C., *Japanese Feudal Law* (Washington: University Publications of America, 1979).

- Hall, J. W., 'The Muromachi Power Structure,' in Hall, J.W. and Toyoda, T. (eds.), *Japan in the Muromachi Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).
- Hall, J. W., 'Japan's Sixteenth-Century Revolution,' in Elison, G. and Smith, B. L. (eds.), *Warlords, Artists, and Commoners: Japan in the Sixteenth Century* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1981).
- Hurst, G. C., III. 'The Kōbu Polity: Court-Bakufu Relations in Kamakura Japan,' in Mass, J. P. (ed.), *Court and Bakufu in Japan: Essays in Kamakura History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).
- Hurst, G. C., III. 'Death, Honour and Loyalty: the Bushidō Ideal,' *Philosophy East and West*, Vol 40, No. 4, Understanding Japanese Values, (Oct., 1990), pp. 511-527.
- Ikegami, E., *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).
- Katsumata, S., 'The Development of Sengoku Law,' trans. Collcutt, M., in Hall, J. W. and Yamamura, K. (eds.), *Japan Before Tokugawa: Political Consolidation and Economic Growth, 1500 to 1650* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).
- Kawai, M., 'Shogun and Shugo: The Provincial Aspects of Muromachi Politics,' trans. Grossberg, K. A., in Hall, J. W. and Toyoda, T. (eds.), *Japan in the Muromachi Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).
- Lamers, J., 'Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582): A Japanese Tyrant,' *IIAS Newsletter No.13*. (Summer, 1997), pp. 36-37.
- Lamers, J., *Japonius Tyrannus: The Japanese Warlord Oda Nobunaga Reconsidered* (Leiden: Hotie Publishing, 2000).
- Low, M., 'Stagnation or Development: Japanese Science and Technology Before Perry,' *Asia-Pacific Magazine*, May 1996, pp. 33-37.
- Lytton, U., 'Aspects of Dual Symbolic Classification: Right and Left in a Japanese Kyū-Dōjō,' *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 2. (1989), pp. 277-291.
- Mass, J. P., 'The Early Bakufu and Feudalism,' in Mass, J.P. (ed.), *Court and Bakufu in Japan: Essays in Kamakura History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).
- Mass, J. P., 'The Emergence of the Kamakura Bakufu,' in Hall, J. W. and Mass, J. P. (eds.), *Medieval Japan: Essays in Institutional History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).
- McClain, J. L., 'Edobashi: Power, Space and Popular Culture in Edo,' in McClain et al (eds.) *Edo & Paris: Urban Life and the State in the Early Modern Era* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994) pp. 105-131.
- McCullough, H. C., *Genji and Heike: Selections from The Tale of the Genji and The Tale of the Heike*, trans. McCullough, H. C. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).
- McMullen, I. J., 'Ashikaga Takauji in Early Tokugawa Thought,' in Mass, J. P. (ed.) *The Origins of Japan's Medieval World: Courtiers, Clerics, Warriors, and Peasants in the Fourteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).
- Nelson, T., 'Bakufu and Shugo Under the Early Ashikaga,' in Mass, J. P. (ed.), *The Origins of Japan's Medieval World: Courtiers, Clerics, Warriors, and Peasants in the Fourteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).
- Nitobé, I., *Bushidō: The Soul of Japan* (Tokyo, Japan: Teibi Publishing Company, 1907).



- Parliament of Australia, Department of Parliamentary Services, Parliamentary Library, *Crossing the Floor in the Federal Parliament 1950 – August 2004*. Research Note, 10 October 2005, no. 11, 2005–06, ISSN 1449-8456. Retrieved 29 May 2007, from <http://www.aph.gov.au/library/Pubs/RN/2005-06/06rn11.pdf>.
- Roberts, L. S., 'A Petition for a Popularly Chosen Council of Government in Tosa in 1787' *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 57, No. 2. (Dec., 1997), pp. 575-596.
- Rogers, J. M., 'Arts of War in Times of Peace. Swordsmanship in *Honchō Bugei Shōden*, Chapter 6: *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 46, No. 2. (Summer, 1991), pp. 173-202.
- Sakaiya, T., 'Debunking the Myth of Loyalty,' *Japan Echo*, Vol. 8, No. 2, (Spring, 1981), pp. 17-29.
- Skoss, D. (ed.), *Koryū Bujutsu: Classical Warrior Traditions of Japan, Vol. 1* (New Jersey: Koryu Books, 1997).
- Souyri, P. F., *The World Turned Upside Down: Medieval Japanese Society*, trans. Käthe Roth. (London: Pimlico, 2002).
- Takagi, T., *A Comparison of Bushi-do and Chivalry*, trans. Tsuneyoshi Matsuno. (Osaka: TM International Academy, 1984).
- Varley, H. P., 'The Hōjō Family and Succession to Power,' in Mass, J. P. (ed.), *Court and Bakufu in Japan: Essays in Kamakura History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).
- Varley, P., *Warriors of Japan as Portrayed in the War Tales* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994).
- Wakita, O., 'The Emergence of the State in Sixteenth-Century Japan: From Oda to Tokugawa,' *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2. (Summer, 1982), pp. 343-367.
- Yagyū, M., 'Martial Arts: the Book of Family Traditions,' trans. Cleary, T., in Cleary, T. (ed.), *Soul of the Samurai: Modern Translations of Three Classic Works of Zen and Bushidō* (Rutland, Vermont: Tuttle Publishing, 2005).
- Yagyū, M., *The Life Giving Sword: Secret Teachings from the House of the Shogun*, trans. Wilson, W. S., (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2003).

## **Beyond Silence: Giving Voice To Kure Mothers of Japanese-Australian Children**

Kathleen Cusack  
University of Wollongong

### **Abstract**

Within the complex process of historical production, silence is created, imposed and fostered. Encountering the existence of a cast of hitherto silent actors within history, therefore, is wholly unsurprising. This article draws focus to a cohort of Japanese women who have been excluded from conventional interpretations. Indeed, the experiences of the Kure women who bore children fathered by Australian servicemen during the occupation have been consistently marginalised to the periphery of existing scholarship on this period.

By applying a gendered perspective to the analysis of a selection of previously unexamined newspaper articles, this article will demonstrate that a meaningful history can be written for those excluded from primary or secondary discourse. This article will show that these women do possess a historically significant past through revealing that they were active participants in the post-war period who influenced the conduct of the military operation. Most importantly, this article will confront some of the imposed barriers of silence through analysing certain aspects of the women's experiences within limited available material. This examination will illuminate prevalent local attitudes towards women involved in relationships with foreign servicemen and the predominance of the socially and culturally derived construct of the feminine role.

### **Keywords**

Gender, Occupation, Fraternisation and Historical Silence

### **Introduction**

Between 1946 and 1954, fifty-one children fathered by Australian military personnel were born in Kure, Japan.<sup>1</sup> Such a figure appears wholly unremarkable particularly given

---

<sup>1</sup> National Archives of Australia (herein referred to as NAA); A1838; 3103/10/12/1 PART 1, 'Social Study of Children of Mixed Ethnic Origin in Kure City,





the rapid population growth of the post-war period but these children were born during the occupation of Japan. More intriguingly, the children were the product of sexual relations between Japanese women and Australian servicemen stationed in the region as part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force and the British Commonwealth Forces, Korea (herein referred to as BCOF and BCFK).<sup>2</sup> This article will focus upon the mothers of the children, not least because they were encumbered with the sole responsibility of their offspring following the withdrawal of the Australian units. Furthermore, their experiences cast light upon previously unexamined factors concerning the impact of the occupation upon Kure citizens as, for example, predominant social attitudes towards those involved in relationships with personnel.

The occupation of Japan commenced immediately upon the cessation of hostilities in August 1945 and concluded upon the ratification of the peace treaty in April 1952. The Australian military presence in Japan, however, extended from February 1946 through to November 1956, as a consequence of the outbreak of the Korean War.<sup>3</sup> The primary purpose of the occupation was to transform the defeated Japanese military dictatorship into a peaceful democracy through the means of an extensive demilitarisation and democratisation program. America alone controlled the formulation and administration of basic policy for the duration of the occupation but the Australian contingent exercised an influential role within the multi-national British Commonwealth Occupation Force.<sup>4</sup> It is this overarching environment of military occupation that framed the relationships formed between personnel and Japanese women.<sup>5</sup>

At its height, the BCOF numbered 40,000 servicemen and women, of whom, 11,500 were Australian. The Australian division was primarily stationed in Kure, which had served as a principal naval base for the Imperial Japanese Navy prior to the destructive air raids in the latter stages of the war.<sup>6</sup> The occupation of Kure was, in fact, largely administered by the BCOF, a feature that distinguishes this area from other regions of Japan that were occupied solely by the American forces.<sup>7</sup> It is the predominance of the Australian contingent within this region that can partially account for this concentration of children with Australian paternity in Kure.<sup>8</sup>

---

Hiroshima-ken, Japan,' 15 September 1958.

2 NAA; A463 (A463/63) 1963/2728, 'Illegitimate Children of Australian Servicemen in Japan,' 27 January 1958.

3 Tamura, *Michi's Memories*, p. 3.

4 Wood, *The Forgotten Force*, p. 51.

5 Carter, *Between War and Peace*, p. 2.

6 Tamura, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

7 Chida, (ed.), *Kure No Ayumi II*, p. 315.

8 This was an outcome of military occupation that was certainly not unique to Japan. As Biddiscombe explains in 'Dangerous Liasons,' more than 37,000 children were born as a result of sexual relations between American personnel and local women during the post-World War II occupation of Germany and Austria. The majority of these children became wards of German and Austrian welfare services and were never adopted.

Addressing such aspects of the occupation contextualise the discussion of women who gave birth to children fathered by Australian servicemen in this period. More importantly, foregrounding the role of the occupiers draws attention to the fact that it has been the victors who have captured attention in historical discourse. As Dower articulates, ‘winning, more than losing, has defined the moment.’<sup>9</sup>

Recently, the military occupation of Japan as an experience for the occupied has provided the focus for much scholarly examination. The parameters of historical significance within this literature have not, however, been extended to include the women who bore children fathered by Australian personnel. Unfortunately, it is not only within past and existing scholarship that the experiences of these women have been marginalised to the periphery. There is also a distinct absence of accessible empirical source material that directly addresses this cohort of women.

The limited acknowledgement of these women can be partly attributed to the function of silence within historical production but silence is neither a neutral nor natural occurrence within this discipline. It can hence be argued that any exclusion of these women is an indication of systematic patriarchal concerns rather than the historical insignificance of their experiences. This article aims to overcome some of the imposed barriers of silence by analysing the experiences of the women within limited available material. Such analysis will help unearth prevalent local attitudes towards women involved in relationships with foreign servicemen and the predominance of the socially and culturally derived construct of the feminine role in this period. This article adopts a gendered perspective based on the proposition that,

Our historical silence is then merely an effect. It is the beginning not the end of our history.<sup>10</sup>

## **Silence and the Production of History**

The discipline of history is established upon the central premise that there is a clear delineation between the past and history itself. The past is conceived to include all that has occurred regardless of whether it was recorded, whereas history, in contrast, is defined as what historians represent the past to have been.<sup>11</sup> What lies between these two constructs are agents of the past that have been silenced, omitted and marginalised by historical discourse.<sup>12</sup> The existence of a cast of hitherto silent actors within history is

---

<sup>9</sup> Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, p. 24.

<sup>10</sup> Allen, ‘Evidence and Silence’, in Pateman and Pateman (eds.), *Feminist Challenges: Social and Political Theory*, p. 189.

<sup>11</sup> Wilkinson, ‘A Choice of Fictions: Historians, Memory, and Evidence’, p. 80.

<sup>12</sup> Trouillet, *Silencing The Past*, p. 26-27.



not wholly unsurprising, as the very act of remembering, enacted in the recording of history, necessarily entails a coalescent act of forgetting.<sup>13</sup> As Finney articulates,

Historical texts are structured representations that...both silence as well as reveal, encode and decode, assign voice and authority to some and deny it to others.<sup>14</sup>

Whilst the list of those excluded from conventional interpretations is extensive, the silence imposed upon Japanese mothers of children born by Australian servicemen reveals the encoding and assignation of both authoritative and submerged voices.

It has only been relatively recent that women have been positioned as distinct subjects of historical inquiry. As Lake argues,

History was, as often as not, the record of men's public work of nation building - through parliaments, politics, commerce and war.<sup>15</sup>

The privileging of public, political activities and the omitting or trivialising of private, subjective experience within the discipline has, in the past, resulted in rendering women historically invisible. Primarily concentrated on the analysis of women and the development of feminist identities in history, the central premise of gender history is to address this absence through reformulating the understanding of the past in terms of the socially and culturally derived constructions of masculinity and femininity.<sup>16</sup> In spite of the implications, however, gender is not a synonym for women nor is gender history able to be equated merely with history of the biological female sex.<sup>17</sup> Rather, it is a means through which the intersection between power, control and domination exercised within the constructs of masculinity and femininity can be identified. As will be examined in the following section, relationships between Japanese women and Australian military personnel were conducted within a framework of a distinct and gendered disparity in power.

The rich and varied experiences of the women who bore children to Australian personnel have been consistently relegated to the periphery of the existing literature. This absence can be attributed to four primary factors. First, historical works concerned solely with the paramount role of America in reforming occupied Japan have dominated both Western and Japanese scholarship since the conclusion of the occupation.<sup>18</sup> The

<sup>13</sup> Roberts, 'History and Memory', p. 515.

<sup>14</sup> Finney, 'Still 'Marking Time'?', p. 298.

<sup>15</sup> Lake, 'Nationalist Historiography, Feminist Scholarship, and the Promise and Problems of New Transnational Histories', p. 180.

<sup>16</sup> Black and MacRaild, *Studying History*, p. 147.

<sup>17</sup> Green and Troup, *Houses of History*, p. 256-257.

<sup>18</sup> See for example: Baerweld, *The Purge of Japanese Leaders under the Occupation*; Reischauer, *Japan: Tradition and Transformation*; Passin, "The Occupation

conservative approach of these policy examinations privilege the masculine public domain and neglect the investigation of subjects that cannot be encompassed within these narrow parameters. Second, there exists a failure within these predominantly American works to address the occupation of Japan in terms of 'its own times and values.'<sup>19</sup> Both Moore and Dower attribute this to a predilection to view the period as an 'American show' rather than a significant moment in Japanese history. Additionally, there is an inclination amongst some Western scholars to concentrate solely upon examining the occupation from the perspective of the victors.<sup>20</sup> It is a propensity that can be partly assigned to limitations presented by language. Finally, the interaction of personnel with Japanese women is most often described only within the context of either prostitution or marriage.<sup>21</sup> This approach excludes discussion of the women addressed in this article who cannot be categorised within these constraints.

The marginalisation of women who bore children to Australian servicemen within existing literature presents a predicament that is best articulated by Passerini,

...very often, especially researching those who lost and were repressed, we have the experience of finding people, ideas, books, which seem to have completely disappeared, which have vanished leaving only scattered and tantalising trace, in spite of all our efforts.<sup>22</sup>

According to Elton, the perceived absence of material compromises the credibility of an historical examination and entirely undermines the necessity for conducting such an investigation at all. Elton proposes that such a quandary can be wholly dismissed with the apparently irrefutable statement, 'it is as they had never been.'<sup>23</sup> As Allen argues, however, examinations of women and their experiences cannot be satisfied by such an arrogant conclusion.<sup>24</sup> It is inexcusable to presume that women do not have a historically significant past merely because they have been silenced in primary or secondary discourse.

Expanding upon research led by such scholars as Chida and Tamura, this article represents an attempt to redress aspects of this silence. In addition to historical fiction, personal memoirs and oral interviews, archival documents have been sourced to elucidate certain aspects of the experience for Kure mothers of Japanese-Australian children. These women receive brief mention within items concerning the welfare of

---

– Some Reflections', p. 107-129.

19 Carter, *Between War and Peace*, p. 7.

20 See for example: Davies, *The Occupation of Japa*; Torney, 'Renegades to Their Country', p. 89-110.

21 See for example: Carter, *Between War and Peace*; Wood, *The Forgotten Force*.

22 Passerini, 'Memories Between Silence and Oblivion,' in Hodgkin and Radstone (eds.), *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory*, p. 250.

23 Elton, 'The Practice of History' in Allen, 'Evidence and Silence,' in Pateman and Pateman (eds.), *Feminist Challenges: Social and Political Theory*, p. 176.

24 Allen, 'Evidence and Silence,' in Pateman and Pateman (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 176.



their children and such documents will be drawn upon to explore how their experiences were framed by the construct of motherhood.

It is a collection of local newspapers archived in the Kure History Office, however, which will form the principal focus of analysis in this examination. The articles published were written for the greater Japanese community and as such, address topical social issues of the period including the fraternisation of women with foreign servicemen.<sup>25</sup> In view of the absence of such material in any other archival institution in Japan, these newspapers, to the best of my knowledge, are also the only accessible records that include details of this particular cohort of women. For this investigation, I translated and examined approximately thirty newspaper articles from the *Chūgoku Nippo* and the *Chūgoku Shinbun*. The articles are drawn from 1946 through to 1956 but even in spite of this breadth, there is only one article that directly addresses the women who bore children to the Australian personnel.<sup>26</sup> There are a significant number, however, that refer indirectly to the women, particularly those concerning their children. As the preceding analysis will demonstrate, moreover, those who are 'silent speak eloquently about the meanings and uses of power'.<sup>27</sup>

## A Historically Significant Past

The Ministry of Welfare in Japan estimated that there were approximately 3,490 'mixed blood' children born in the occupation period, of which 104 had Australian fathers.<sup>28</sup> According to an investigation conducted by the International Social Service of Japan in 1958, there were sixty-seven so-called 'mixed-blood' children born in the Kure area between 1946 and 1954. Of these children, Australian personnel of the BCOF and the BCFK fathered fifty-one.<sup>29</sup>

Associations between the parents of these Japanese-Australian children developed within the framework of a distinct disparity in power. As Dower explains, inequality between the victors and the vanquished is inherent in a military occupation.<sup>30</sup> The responsibilities and obligations assumed by the BCOF confirmed this division but the BCOF authorities sought to foster this disparity even further.<sup>31</sup> Carter attributes the desire to preserve this hierarchical separation to the perceived importance of projecting

25 Chida, 'Japanese Research on the Occupation of Post-War Japan by British and Commonwealth Forces.'

26 See for example: 'Hopeless Mother Committed Theft For Her Two Children; Aware konketsuji no hahaoya 2ji o kakaete nusumi,' *Chūgoku Nippo*, 6 May 1952 (For the purpose of this article, both the English translations and rōmaji titles from the Australia-Japan Research Project database have been used).

27 Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, p. 24.

28 NAA; A463 (A463/63) 1963/2728, 'Department of External Affairs: Inward Savingram,' 29 January 1960.

29 NAA; A1838 3103/10/12/1 PART 1, 'Social Study of Children of Mixed Ethnic Origin in Kure City, Hiroshima-ken, Japan,' 15 September 1958.

30 Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, p. 207.

31 Torney, 'Renegades to Their Country,' *War and Society*, 25, 1, May, 2006, p. 90.

a disciplined and prestigious image of the force within Japan.<sup>32</sup> Such cultivation also served as a means of confronting the subordinate status the BCOF had been assigned within the American occupation.<sup>33</sup>

The attempts of the BCOF authorities to encourage this disparity in power can be partly attributed to the women who form the subject of inquiry in this article. As the BCOF authorities were aware, the majority of personnel were drawn to the particular appeal of the primarily young women.<sup>34</sup> As Keith Boothroyd, a corporal with the 67<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion, suggests, such attraction was premised upon the notion that the women bore little or no responsibility for the destruction perpetuated by the war, ‘You see the Japanese civil population were entirely different to their army’.<sup>35</sup> Attributed to the association of the oriental with the feminine erotic, young women were also viewed to be submissive, graceful and possessing few inhibitions regarding nudity.<sup>36</sup> It was an appeal that was considered to be entirely distinct from that of Australian women and best encapsulated in this excerpt,

The small-boned delicacy and fragility of the more attractive Japanese girls was very appealing to the womanless troops, used to Australian girls who demanded co-partnership, they found the polite submissiveness, the desire to please of the Japanese *musume* intoxicating.<sup>37</sup>

The attraction the women posed for the occupying troops and the possibilities this created for fraternisation had a critical effect upon the division the BCOF authorities hoped to enforce between the victors and the vanquished. Moreover, it awarded this cohort of women a limited agency distinct from the disenfranchised status that encumbered the remaining occupied population.

Most evident of the extent to which the BCOF authorities viewed the women to be a threat to the objectives of the military operation was the introduction of a strict non-fraternisation policy early in the occupation.<sup>38</sup> Issued in the form of a personal instruction from former Commander-In-Chief Lieutenant General Northcott, the policy advised,

Every member of the BCOF must bear in mind that he is present in Japan in dual capacity. He is not only a sailor, a soldier or an airman. He is also a representative of the British Commonwealth of Nations and all that

---

32 Carter, *Between War and Peace*, p. 3.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 229.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 264.

35 Oral Interview with Keith Boothroyd, Film Australia, c.1998.

36 Carter, *op. cit.*, p. 264-265.

37 Carter, *Alien Blossom*, p. 57.

38 Carter, *Between War and Peace*, p. 245-246.



stands for in the world...Your relations with this defeated enemy must be guided largely by your own judgement and your sense of discipline...You must be formal and correct...Your unofficial dealings with the Japanese must be kept to a minimum.<sup>39</sup>

According to Wood, the instruction was largely motivated by the 'deep suffering and loss' sustained throughout the Commonwealth and a desire to protect the health and well being of the troops.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, as Carter explains, it aimed to impede expressions of hostility or violence against the Japanese community, as it was widely viewed that this would affect the prestige of the force.<sup>41</sup> The emphasis upon minimising informal contact with citizens and encouraging troops to adopt a formal attitude in situations where interaction was unavoidable, however, is clearly designed to prevent the development of intimate relations between servicemen and local women.

The desire to deter further interaction can be primarily attributed to the view promulgated by the BCOF authorities that the women were an unwholesome, immoral attraction.<sup>42</sup> It was this attitude that resulted in the enforcement of arbitrary venereal disease examinations amongst females in the region.<sup>43</sup> Whilst the screenings were understandably instituted amongst prostitutes, the examinations were also forced upon any female observed in the company of servicemen regardless of their position.<sup>44</sup> This is exemplified in this excerpt from *Alien Blossom*,

The Jap police have arrested Cherry, a Jap kid who works in our R.A.P. at Hiro. Just because we were walking along the street together. There was nothing wrong in it! I take it as an insult to both of us. Because she was seen with an Australian soldier she's a tramp and a prostitute!<sup>45</sup>

Such visible condemnation of the women as receptacles of venereal disease served to class all as particularly dishonourable and distinguish them further from civilised standards assumed to be embodied in the Western woman.<sup>46</sup>

The majority of personnel viewed the non-fraternisation policy as unnecessary, unreasonable and inconsistent with the aims of the occupation, particularly those regarding the ambiguous process of democratisation.<sup>47</sup> As Coffman contends,

39 NAA; A6006 949/12/31, 'Occupation Force Policy', 30 July 1949.

40 Wood, *The Forgotten Force*, p. 91.

41 Carter, *Between War and Peace*, p. 3.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 240.

43 Tamura, *Michi's Memories*, p. 7.

44 *Ibid.*

45 Carter, *Alien Blossom*, p. 54.

46 Carter, *Between War and Peace*, p. 172.

47 Wood, *The Forgotten Force*, p. 112.

...the senior officers responsible for it were shortsighted and didn't realise the good work from the point of democracies that could be done by associating with the people.<sup>48</sup>

The servicemen, who desired to form relations with Japanese women, of course, particularly resented the policy.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, as Hungerford explains, Australian servicemen were keen to initiate contact with young women in the area immediately upon disembarking,

Leave hadn't been granted but as soon as the men had filled one part of their anatomy, they began thinking about emptying-or at least tapping-another. Before long little groups were flitting off into the uncharted ruins of Kure in search of which, generally they had been deprived of for upward of a couple of years.<sup>50</sup>

This excerpt also implies that the women were viewed as vehicles of sexual release for personnel, which exemplifies the limitations of the agency these women were attributed within the overarching military environment.

The non-fraternisation instruction was not only ineffectual in minimising contact between personnel and local women but it served to drive fraternisation underground and prompt servicemen to seek much more easily available options such as prostitutes.<sup>51</sup> The financial advantage of the foreign personnel coupled with the economic hardship of the post-war period had stimulated the prostitution industry and it was within this context that relationships between personnel and Kure women first emerged.<sup>52</sup> The voracity with which the personnel engaged in casual, sexual encounters early in the occupation is best expressed through the statistical figures concerning venereal disease. From February 1946 to December 1947, 7,937 cases of venereal disease were diagnosed amongst the Australian units.<sup>53</sup> Whilst the figures are not entirely reliable as the cases reported include relapsed infections, the incidence of the disease is still extraordinarily high given that only 12,000 servicemen were stationed in Japan at the peak of Australia's contribution.<sup>54</sup>

Fraternisation between Australian servicemen and Kure women was not, however, limited to such liaisons.<sup>55</sup> The employment of ten percent of the population

48 Oral Interview with John Coffman, Film Australia, c.1998.

49 Carter, *Between War and Peace*, p. 260.

50 Hungerford, *A Knockabout with a Slouch Hat*, p. 66.

51 Carter, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

52 Torney, 'Renegades to Their Country', p. 91.

53 Davies, *The Occupation of Japan*, p. 242.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 120.

55 Wood, *The Forgotten Force*, p. 96; NAA: A1838 3103/10/12/1 PART 1, 'Social Study of Children of Mixed Ethnic Origin in Kure City, Hiroshima-ken, Japan', 15 September 1958.





within the military camps necessarily entailed close and frequent contact, which served to aid the development of amicable relations between the occupiers and the occupied. Although it was in a much lesser capacity, such attitudes were also fostered through the development of the mutually beneficial black market system.<sup>56</sup> It was the gradual progression from the 'stern rigidity of a military occupation to the friendly guidance of a protective force', however, that was most instrumental in encouraging this subsequent divergence in attitudes amongst both parties.<sup>57</sup> As Grant, a member of the Australian contingent, articulates,

...we just simply found you couldn't live among a people and maintain an unbending degree of hatred or even dislike.<sup>58</sup>

According to Tamura, it was inevitable that interactions within common workplace and social environments would eventually develop into sexual relationships.<sup>59</sup> Passmore, a nurse employed within the 130<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital, enigmatically alludes to the close associations that often emerged between officers and their house girl,

...we women, we were allotted a house girl between two who looked after us...But so did the men and they used to get massaged and that sort of thing...They had to make their own amusements and do their own thing, and that's where problems came about.<sup>60</sup>

The emphasis upon the importance of such factors, however, masks the agency the women exerted in their decisions to pursue relationships with personnel. The women employed within the prostitution industry, for example, viewed the establishment of the occupying force in Kure as a means to combat the economic hardship of the post-war period. This sentiment is exemplified in the following description of the arrival of the BCOF in the port, where prostitutes greeted the incoming ships, 'offering their bodies in exchange for practically anything they could smoke, eat or barter'.<sup>61</sup> This mutually beneficial system had been adopted during the earlier American occupation in the area and was willingly continued during the BCOF administration by the vast number of prostitutes residing in Kure.

There were numerous other women, however, who pursued relationships with personnel for reasons that were entirely distinct from this desire for material necessities. Young women, in particular, were attracted to the Western ideals espoused by the

56 Torney, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

57 NAA; A6006 1949/12/31, 'Occupation Force Policy', 30 July 1949.

58 Oral Interview with Mac Grant, Film Australia, c.1998.

59 Tamura, 'An Ordinary Life?', *Meanjin*, 61, 1, March, 2002.

60 Oral Interview with Phyllis Passmore, Film Australia, c.1998.

61 Elliot, *Occupational Hazards*, p. 19.

servicemen. Accustomed to more restrictive male dominance, this cohort of women embraced the notion that the female partner could be regarded equally in a relationship. This is best expressed by the character, Cherry, in *Alien Blossom*,

It had been customary all her life to see Japanese women walking politely in the shadows of their husbands, though, this was one of the small humiliations which new, fresh winds were beginning to sweep out of Japan.<sup>62</sup>

Moreover, many women viewed relationships with Australian servicemen as a means of confronting the unappealing prospect of not merely coping with post-war hardships without a marriage partner but of never marrying at all. This was a very real outlook for women between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine, who had come to outnumber men by more than one million in 1947 through circumstance of war.<sup>63</sup> This fear of remaining unmarried and childless is articulated well in this extract from *Michi's Memories*,

I was already getting old and there was no prospect of marrying a Japanese man and having children with him.<sup>64</sup>

This is not to imply, however, that all women were involved in such relationships for their own economic or social benefit. Many women developed genuine affection and respect for their partners. This was exhibited in the increasing number of couples who lived together as the occupation developed,

Some men had "shacked up" permanently with girls from the dance halls and teahouses, reporting for duty, but hardly making a pretence of living in the barracks.<sup>65</sup>

Regardless of the motivation, the majority of the women involved exerted a degree of agency in the decision to pursue such close associations with the personnel. Furthermore, the relationships that emerged were a 'phenomenal cultural event' as they defied the very inequalities that had been imposed in this occupation.<sup>66</sup>

By the conclusion of 1946, approximately three children of Australian paternity had been born and in the following year, a further thirteen were born.<sup>67</sup> Passmore reflects upon the immediacy with which such children were produced,

---

62 Carter, *Alien Blossom*, p. 31.

63 Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, p. 107.

64 Tamura, *Michi's Memories*, p. 25.

65 Carter, *Alien Blossom*, p. 57.

66 Dower, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

67 NAA; A1838; 3103/10/12/1 PART 1, 'Social Study of Children of Mixed Ethnic Origin in Kure City, Hiroshima-ken, Japan,' 15 September 1958.



...You see, if you saw a brown headed Japanese, you'd think, "Hello, the Yanks or the Aussie's have been around"... That was going on before we left, before I left in '47.<sup>68</sup>

The birth of these children in this very early period of the occupation coupled with the keen involvement of the personnel in the prostitution industry indicates that many of the mothers may certainly have been prostitutes.

It does not transpire, however, that the women who gave birth to children fathered by Australian personnel in subsequent years were also involved in this industry. Indeed, many of the women were married when they gave birth.<sup>69</sup> As the marriages had been contracted through a Shinto or Buddhist ceremony, however, they were not viewed as legally binding by the BCOF authorities. Despite numerous couples expressing a desire to formalise their commitment through marriage, the Australian government actively discouraged this action upon principles adopted by the Ministry of Immigration that forbade the entry of wives 'of Asiatic origin to Australia'.<sup>70</sup> Such opposition was not limited to that of the Australian government; the women were also subject to criticism and disapproval from their families, colleagues and associates. This sentiment is exemplified in this excerpt from *Michi's Memories*,

Yet, they opposed it strongly when I said that I wanted to marry Gus. At the beginning, they talked as if I should be disowned.<sup>71</sup>

Prior to the removal of the prohibition upon marriage in 1952, these couples were confronted with the prospect that the servicemen were unable to remain in Japan following the conclusion of their contracted period and their wives and children were unable to enter Australia. According to Carter, there were numerous servicemen who were forcibly taken aboard ships after attempts to remain in Japan and more tragically, several couples decided to commit suicide rather than separate.<sup>72</sup> Whilst the BCOF policy may have deterred numerous servicemen from providing support for their partners, it can be assumed that there were a number who were simply unwilling to acknowledge responsibility for their offspring.<sup>73</sup> It is a sentiment reiterated by Carter,

...many of them had wives at home in Australia. Few regarded the marriages as binding.<sup>74</sup>

68 Oral Interview with Phyllis Passmore, Film Australia, c.1998.

69 NAA; A463 (A463/63) 1963/2728, 'Australian Asian Association of Victoria,' December 1962.

70 NAA; A816 19/304/405, 'Joint Chief of Staffs in Australia [Subject Policy Regarding Marriages - BCOF]' 23 May 1946; Tamura, *Michi's Memories*, p. 11.

71 Tamura, *Michi's Memories*, p. 24.

72 Carter, *Between War and Peace*, p. 268.

73 *Ibid.*

74 Carter, *Alien Blossom*, p. 57.

Passmore also acknowledges this common occurrence,

...well, most of them, some of them had babies and that, and Australian soldiers, well the Americans did the same, just got up and went home and left them.<sup>75</sup>

The women were essentially encumbered with the sole responsibility of the children and were forced to re-establish their lives in Japan.<sup>76</sup>

The limited acknowledgement of these women in existing literature implies that their experiences are somehow historically irrelevant but this view is entirely incorrect. The women were not only active participants in the post-war period but they also indirectly influenced the procedures of the occupation. Moreover, the women exerted agency in the decisions to become involved in relationships with the personnel. It was an agency, however, that was only available within the larger patriarchal discourse by which they were primarily disadvantaged. By demonstrating that the women do indeed possess a historically significant past, there emerges an incontrovertible necessity for the experiences of these women to be further examined. The analysis of hitherto overlooked regional newspapers will illuminate these experiences with respect to prevalent attitudes towards women involved in relationships with foreign servicemen and the construct of the feminine role.

### Confronting The Silence

Neither the *Chūgoku Nippo* nor the *Chūgoku Shinbun* reported any fraternisation between Japanese women and Australian personnel within the defined occupation period from 1946 through to 1952. This omission can be partially attributed to the elaborate censorship apparatus implemented under American and later Allied control. The censorship laws, fully operating for four years from September 1945 and subsequently imposed in altered forms until Japan regained its sovereignty, forbade the transmission of any information regarding criticism of Australia, prostitution and other incriminating subjects.<sup>77</sup> Somewhat paradoxically, it is the maintenance of this rigid censorship that reveals the extent to which the BCOF authorities feared that any attention drawn to fraternisation amongst servicemen and Japanese women would compromise the disparity in power they sought to enforce.

<sup>75</sup> Oral Interview with Phyllis Passmore, Film Australia, c.1998.

<sup>76</sup> Tamura, *Michi's Memories*, p. 14.

<sup>77</sup> Dower, *op. cit.*, p. 406.



The conclusion of the peace treaty in 1952 and the diminished presence of the Australian military in Kure from the following year enabled an increase in articles concerning previously prohibited and silenced subjects such as fraternisation. These articles provide the opportunity to consider the positions of those women who were actually or perceived to be involved in the prostitution industry as well as those who migrated to Australia after marrying their partners. The categorisation of these women is a revealing testament of the underlying social attitudes in this period towards those in relationships with military personnel. In other words, these articles expose the existing view that women who had not attained a marriage contract were considered as common prostitutes. Such attitudes particularly applied to the women labelled 'only ones' who lived with their foreign partners.<sup>78</sup> It is a sentiment that is best articulated in this excerpt from *Michi's Memories*,

I was aware of the hostility people felt towards the women who were walking with the occupation soldiers. People did not bother to distinguish those ordinary girls from prostitutes and categorised all of us as call girls.<sup>79</sup>

There were, unquestionably, a vast number of prostitutes involved with personnel. Indeed, at a sole brothel in the city, approximately seventy percent of the clientele were estimated to be Australian servicemen.<sup>80</sup> This does not, however, signify that all unmarried women were prostitutes but nevertheless, it is within this cohort that women who bore children to Australian personnel were most often grouped.

In the majority of the articles, the women encapsulated in this category are described in a distinctly derogatory manner. Depictions of the women clustering near the military camps and clamouring for the attention of the personnel, for example, create an image of immorality and degradation.<sup>81</sup> This is reinforced in the publication of surveys that focus upon the youth, poverty and limited education of the women. According to an investigation conducted of approximately 1,200 'streetwalkers', for example, the predominant majority were identified as between the ages of 20 and 25 but there were also eighty-nine who were not yet eighteen.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, a separate examination of 259 prostitutes listed only ninety-seven who had completed both elementary and secondary education. This article also asserts that the principal catalyst for entering this industry was poverty. Indeed, this examination identifies 91 women who became prostitutes as means of confronting

78 'Aspects of Kure, The International City - Secrecy; Kokusai toshi Kure no hyōjō - onri ni onmitsu,' *Chūgoku Nippo*, 21 August 1952.

79 Tamura, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

80 'These Are The Realities of Streetwalkers; Yoruno on'na no jittai wa kō,' *Chūgoku Nippo*, 15 July 1953.

81 'Survey on Prostitutes in Kure (1); Kure no gaishō kansatsu (1) Kanzaki Kiyoshi shi chōsa happyō,' *Chūgoku Nippo*, 24 December 1952; 'First Ray of Hope for Solving the Prostitution Problem in Kure; Kichi Kure fūki mondai kaiketsu e shokō,' *Mainichi Shinbun*, 27 August 1953.

82 'These Are The Realities of Streetwalkers; Yoruno on'na no jittai wa kō,' *Chūgoku Nippo*, 15 July 1953.

poor economic conditions.<sup>83</sup> Concentration upon such aspects within the articles shows the representation of this cohort of women as both pitiful and contemptible and such attitudes were therefore circulated through the general Japanese population, if not produced by them.

Furthermore, these women were viewed as solely motivated by the desire for material necessities. In one such example describing the arrival of the BCOF, the article emphasises that there were an extensive number of prostitutes who prepared to greet the incoming force for the sole purpose of obtaining scarce luxury items. As stated in the article, 'At four or five o'clock, women were leaving from rooms on the warship with chocolate and tobacco.'<sup>84</sup> Such reasons understandably constituted the motivation of those working in the prostitution industry to engage in casual, sexual encounters with the servicemen but this was viewed to be the premise of all unmarried women in relationships with Australian personnel.<sup>85</sup> It was particularly the 'only ones', who were represented as keen to profit from the disposable income of the servicemen, apparently extolling the sentiment, 'The blue-eyed army are generous with their money.'<sup>86</sup> The focus upon this as the sole motivating factor reiterates the degraded image of these women and characterises them even further as exploitative and thus, dishonourable.

The clear distinction between the two cohorts of women – those perceived to be engaged in prostitution and those married to Australian servicemen – becomes apparent in examining the articles concerning the 'war brides'. There is particular emphasis, for example, upon the legally binding union of the couples; the women are only referred to as 'brides' or in conjunction with their married partners as 'couples' or 'pairs.'<sup>87</sup> It is a sentiment that is reiterated in an article describing the marriage between Gordon Parker and Sakuramoto Nobuko. The article subjectively describes their relationship using figurative and poetic language, 'Their dear love was crystallized in the form of their eldest daughter'. In contrast to the women cast as prostitutes, the article emphasises that the premise of this relationship was the mutual affection and respect the couple shared. It is also articulated in the statement, 'The two gave themselves to their love.'<sup>88</sup>

The marriage of women to foreign servicemen was not, however, wholly encouraged. At least one article concentrates upon the annulment sought by a woman

83 'Life of Prostitutes; Baishunfu no seitai,' *Chūgoku Shinbun*, 6 July 1952.

84 'Survey on Prostitutes in Kure (1); Kure no gaishō kansatsu (1) Kanzaki Kiyoshi shi chōsa happyō,' *Chūgoku Nippo*, 24 December 1952.

85 Tamura, 'An Ordinary Life?,' *Meanjin*, 61, 1, March, 2002.

86 'Aspects of Kure, The International City – Secrecy; Kokusai toshi Kure no hyōjō – onrii ni onmitsu,' *Chūgoku Nippo*, 21 August 1952.

87 'War Brides Depart From Australia; Hanayome-san gōshū e shuppatsu,' *Chūgoku Shinbun*, 2 April 1953; 'Departure of 40 Intermarried Couples From Kure on 12th March; Kokusai kekkon 40 kumi 12 nichi Kure kara funade,' *Asahi Shinbun*, 8 March 1953.

88 'First War Bride Arrives In Australia - Sakuramoto Nobuko From Kure; Gōshū iri hanayome dai 1 gō – Kure no Sakuramoto Nobuko san,' *Chūgoku Shinbun*, 10 April 1952.



who was unwilling to migrate to Australia to live with her husband. Whilst the article posits the decision as the woman's own, it is implied that she was prompted to pursue this action at the recommendation of her relatives and acquaintances.<sup>89</sup> Clearly, there still existed certain disapproval even for those women who entered into legal unions with their partners but such condemnation is in direct contrast to the immoral, disrespectful image of the other cohort of women described.

The only article directly addressing the women who bore children to Australian personnel portrays this cohort of women as much more closely associated to the image of those classed as prostitutes than the 'war brides.' Most demonstrably, the article centres upon a woman who committed theft to support her two children of Australian paternity.<sup>90</sup> Such immediate focus upon the societal crime of the mother creates a patently shameful and disrespectful image not indistinct from that of prostitutes engaged in casual, sexual encounters with the servicemen. This is further reinforced in the description of the woman as a 'mistress' of an Australian soldier who had not fulfilled his promise to return to Japan. It implies that the relationship the woman engaged in was much more illicit and furtive than those formalised in marriage. Moreover, the article proposes that the sole reason the woman entered into a liaison with the serviceman was to obtain material necessities. Indeed, as rendered in the following excerpt, material desires were assumed to be the reason for all women who bore children to Australian personnel, 'The Japanese women became mistresses in admiration of the lifestyle of the occupation forces.' Such depictions of the women as immoral and dishonourable are indicative of the social attitudes towards those who bore children to Australian personnel.

Besides the existence of such attitudes in the newspapers, these women were mocked and bullied in the greater Kure community. *Alien Blossom* provides an example of the nature of this prejudice,

Some women to whom Japanese-Australian babies had already been born were shunned and despised. People made loud remarks about them in the streets, about the "ainoko"- the mongrels born to these brazen ones. There was laughing and sniggering behind the hand or even more.<sup>91</sup>

This extract implies that it was the illegitimacy of the children that was the central premise for such antagonism but the personal memoir, *Michi's Memories*, alludes to a separate cause. The relief Michi expresses at the realisation that her Australian partner

<sup>89</sup> 'First Annulment of Marriage Between an Australian Soldier and a Japanese Woman; Gōgunjin to kekkon kaishō dai 1 gō,' *Chūgoku Shinbun*, 9 December 1954.

<sup>90</sup> 'Hopeless Mother Committed Theft For Her Two Mixed-Blood Children; Aware konketsuji no hahaoya 2ji o kakaete nusumi,' *Chūgoku Nippo*, 6 May 1952.

<sup>91</sup> Carter, *Alien Blossom*, p. 72.

did not abandon her and her children suggests that there was a stigma attached to those who were viewed as discarded by the personnel,

I was so relieved to know he had not abandoned us. The children did not need to grow up as fatherless kids. I could not help showing the letter to every visitor and telling them that he did not leave us behind at all.<sup>92</sup>

The limited representation of the women and the negative attitudes within the newspaper articles point to the underlying social prejudice that was an integral part of the experience of those who bore children fathered by Australian personnel.

The analysis of the experiences of these women also draws focus to the socially and culturally derived construct of the feminine role in this period. The concept of *ryosai kenbo* or 'good wife, wise mother' was first articulated in the aftermath of the Sino-Japanese War in 1894-1895 by prominent male figures within the Ministry of Education. Promulgated through mass media and the upper levels of both public and private schools, this construct defined the contribution of women to the Imperial state to be in their dual capacity as 'good wives and wise mothers'.<sup>93</sup> In addition to exhorting the importance of devotion to motherhood and wifeness, the construct emphasised the virtues of modesty, chastity and obedience to parents, husbands and in-laws.<sup>94</sup>

As Uno contends, *ryosai kenbo* did not correspond to the actual experiences of most women.<sup>95</sup> Extensive restructuring of the state and society enacted through the imposition of democracy after 1945 further affected conceptions of womanhood, particularly those championed in this ideal.<sup>96</sup> The association of *ryosai kenbo* with pre-war imperial state militarism contributed further to the decline of the construct as the epitome of Japanese womanhood.<sup>97</sup> *Ryosai kenbo*, however, did not immediately dissipate after 1945 and continued to influence perceived norms of the feminine role in the post-war period.<sup>98</sup> Certainly, the representation of the women who bore children fathered by Australian personnel within regional newspapers was largely framed by this discourse.

Most demonstrably, the women are depicted solely within their perceived roles as mothers to their children. This is exemplified in the article concerning the woman who committed theft, who is referred to only as 'mother' or 'parent'. Furthermore, the article emphasises the effect of committing such a crime upon children,

92 Tamura, *Michi's Memories*, p. 27.

93 Trefalt, 'Waiting Women'; Uno, 'Death of 'Good Wife, Wise Mother?' in Gordon (ed.), *Postwar Japan As History*, p. 294.

94 Uno, 'Death of 'Good Wife, Wise Mother?' in Gordon (ed.), *Postwar Japan As History*, p. 303.

95 *Ibid.*, p. 294.

96 *Ibid.*, p. 303.

97 *Ibid.*, p. 294.

98 Trefalt, *op. cit.*





What kind of future will these children have surrounded by such things?<sup>99</sup>

Defining this cohort of women by their positions as mothers is not limited to this article, it is also apparent in those concerned with the 'mixed-blood' children. In one such example, the women are described as overanxious to ensure that their children would not be subject to bullying in school and keen to secure them a complete education.<sup>100</sup> Such depictions cast the women as actively and positively engaged in their perceived duty as mothers but this is not the uniform image within this selection of articles.

Indeed, the majority are much more concerned with questioning the ability of the women to raise their children. One article, for example, addresses the planning of a discussion concerning the education of Japanese-Australian children,

All concerned education officers, related principals and vice principals will attend a discussion on the points at issue and actual circumstances regarding the education of mixed-blood children.<sup>101</sup>

Whilst the article states that it was an informal meeting, the required attendance of all education personnel implies that the welfare of these children was viewed as a priority in the region. In a separate article, the management of the children is described to be profoundly troubling,

The Parent Teacher Association and others have had deep concerns about how to directly handle the education of these children.

Such concern prompted a proposal to create a special education class solely for children fathered by Australian personnel despite only fourteen entering school in the entire Hiroshima region in that particular year.<sup>102</sup> Certainly, it could be inferred that this focus upon the management of the children was considered positive and necessary for addressing issues that may have developed as a result of their mixed parentage. Concentrating upon such topics, however, also implies that the women are somewhat inadequate in their capacities as mothers.

An investigation conducted by the International Social Service of Japan in 1958 further exemplifies the way in which the construct of motherhood framed the experiences of these women. The purpose of the survey was to ascertain the socio-

99 'Hopeless Mother Committed Theft For Her Two Mixed-Blood Children; Aware konketsuji no hahaoya zji o kakaete nusumi,' *Chūgoku Nippo*, 6 May 1952.

100 '18 Mixed-Blood Children Enter Primary Schools- Kure Education Board Does Its Best; Konketsuji nyūgaku 18 mei, Shiyōi ga banzen o kisu,' *Chūgoku Nippo*, 22 January 1956; 'How To Bring Up Mixed-Blood Children?; Konketsuji o dō sodateru,' *Chūgoku Nippo*, 26 June 1954.

101 'Survey of Mixed-Blood Pupils By The Ministry of Education; Konketsu gakudō jittai chōsa monbushō kara raigo,' *Chūgoku Nippo*, 20 February 1955.

102 'How To Deal With Mixed-Blood Children?; Konketsuji o dō atsukau,' *Chūgoku Nippo*, 27 January 1953.

economic circumstances of the children, which necessarily entailed acquiring details of their parents. The women, however, are addressed only within their capacity to shelter, financially support and provide for their children. The survey, for example, indicated that eighty percent of the women and their children required some form of economic assistance. More indicatively, the investigation focused upon the occupation and income of the women. Almost one-half of the women supported themselves and their families through bar work or other comparable employment but many were clearly not engaged in work at all as monthly incomes were reported to have been between 0 and 9000 yen.<sup>103</sup> The ability of the women to provide materially for their children is further questioned in another investigation, which emphasises that a minor number of children needed to be adopted into homes of relatives or friends. The article describes these women in a particularly derogatory manner,

Some twelve of them have been dumped by their heartless parents.<sup>104</sup>

The experiences of the women who bore children to foreign servicemen cannot be easily encompassed within the narrow parameters of the 'good wife, wise mother' ideal. This discourse, however, framed the representation of these women within regional newspapers, thus also demonstrating the continuation of this construct in the early post-war period.

## Conclusion

This investigation has not only shown that the experiences of these Kure women have been largely relegated to the periphery of existing scholarship but has also sought to demonstrate that a meaningful history can be written for those excluded from conventional interpretations. As demonstrated in this article, moreover, such imposed barriers of silence can be confronted and overcome through the analysis of carefully selected material.

The women were active participants in this period who influenced the conduct of the military operation through the attraction they posed for personnel and the possibilities this created for fraternisation. The introduction of the non-fraternisation policy and the arbitrary venereal disease examinations, for example, can be largely attributed to this cohort of women. More importantly, the women did exercise a certain level of agency, particularly in their decisions to pursue relationships with servicemen. It was an agency that was limited, however, by prevailing patriarchal discourses such as the overarching

<sup>103</sup> NAA; A1838; 3103/10/12/1 PART 1, 'Social Study of Children of Mixed Ethnic Origin in Kure City, Hiroshima-ken, Japan,' 15 September 1958.

<sup>104</sup> 'Mixed Blood Children- A Parting Present From BCOF; Eirenpo-churyugun okimiyage no konketsuji,' *Chūgoku Nippo*, 22 December 1956.



military environment and the construct of the feminine role.

This article has unearthed certain aspects of the experience for women who bore children to Australian personnel. In particular, the examination of a previously overlooked selection of local newspaper articles has illuminated the pervasive social prejudice targeted at women involved with the occupying personnel. Such attitudes attached a certain stigma to these women who were encumbered with the sole responsibility of their children. The women were not only perceived to be indistinct from common prostitutes but they were also viewed to be abandoned, single parents of illegitimate children. This investigation has also conveyed the extent to which the established ideal of Japanese womanhood framed the representation of these women in regional newspapers circulated in this period. Most significantly, the predominance of this construct meant that the ability of the women to adequately care for their children was continually questioned.

#### References

- Baerweld, H., *The Purge of Japanese Leaders under the Occupation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959).
- Beasley, W. G., *The Rise of Modern Japan: Political, Economic and Social Change Since 1850* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).
- Berger, S., Feldner, H., and Passmore, K., *Writing History: Theory and Practice* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2003).
- Biddiscombe, A., 'Dangerous Liaisons: The Anti-Fraternization Movement in the U.S. Occupation Zones of Germany and Austria, 1945-1948', *Journal of Social History*, 34, 3, Spring, 2001, p. 611-647.
- Black, J. and MacRaidl, D. M., *Studying History* (New York: Palgrave, 1997).
- Buckley, R., *Occupation Diplomacy: Britain, the United States and Japan 1945-1952* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
- Carr, E., *What Is History?* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964).
- Carter, I., *Alien Blossom: A Japanese-Australian Love Story* (Melbourne: Lansdowne, 1965).
- Chida, T. (ed.), *Kure No Ayumi II* (Kure: Kure City Office, 1996).
- Chida, T., 'Japanese Research on the Occupation of Post-War Japan by British and Commonwealth Forces: New Developments and Contemporary Source Problems,' *Australia-Japan Research Project*, March, 1999, Available Online: <http://ajrp.awm.gov.au/ajrp/ajrp2.nsf/aa9b3f3247a3c8ae4a25676300078dee/8129b8698952f1414a255f0500221597?OpenDocument>.
- Confino, A., 'Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method,' *American Historical Review*, December, 1997, p. 1386-1403.

- Davies, G., *The Occupation of Japan: The Rhetoric and the Reality of Anglo-Australasian Relations 1939-1952* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2001).
- De Matos, C., 'The Occupiers and the Occupied: A Nexus of Memories,' *New Voices: Cross-Cultural Encounters in the Australia-Japan Relationship*, 1, The Japan Foundation, Sydney, p. 1-12.
- Dennis, P. (ed.), *1945 War and Peace in the Pacific: Selected Essays* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1999).
- Dower, J., *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Aftermath of World War II* (St. Ives: Penguin Books, 2000).
- Elliot, M., *Occupational Hazards: A Doctor in Japan and Elsewhere* (Nathan: Australians in Asia Series, Centre for the Study of Australia-Asia Relations, Griffith University, 1995).
- Evans, R. and Saunders, K., 'Visibility Problems: Concepts of Gender in Australian Historical Discourse,' *Australian Historical Studies*, 106, 1996, p. 142-153.
- Finney, P., 'Still 'Marking Time'? Text, Discourse and Truth in International History,' *Review of International Studies*, 27, 2001, p. 291-308.
- Gordon, A. (ed.), *Postwar Japan as History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
- Green, A. and Troup, K., *The Houses of History: A Critical Reader in Twentieth Century History and Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).
- Grey, J., 'Australia and the Post-War Occupation of Japan,' *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, 30, April 1997.
- Hodgkin, K. and Radstone, S. (eds.), *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory* (London: Routledge, 2003).
- Hopkins, R. N. L., 'History of the Australian occupation in Japan,' *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, XL (2), 1954.
- Hungerford, T. A. G., *A Knockabout with a Slouch Hat: An Autobiographical Collection 1942-1951* (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1990).
- Hutley, F. C., 'Our Occupation of Japan: A Memoir,' *Quadrant*, 28, 1-2, January/February 1984, p. 19-24.
- Jenkins, K., *On What Is History? From Carr and Elton to Rorty and White* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).
- Lake, M., 'Women, Gender and History,' *Australian Feminist Studies*, 7, 8, Summer, 1988, p. 1-9.
- Lake, M., 'Nationalist Historiography, Feminist Scholarship, and the Promise and Problems of New Transnational Histories: The Australian Case,' *Journal of Women's History*, 19, 1, 2007, p. 180-186.
- Long, G., *Australia in the War of 1939-1945: The Final Campaigns* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1963).
- Martin, E., *The Allied Occupation of Japan* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1972).
- Matthews, J., 'Doing Theory or Using Theory: Australian Feminist/Women's History in the 1990's,' *Australian Historical Studies*, 106, 1996, p. 49-58.
- Matthews, J., 'New Challenges For Feminist History,' *Paper Delivered At The Lilith Symposium*, Melbourne University, 11 July 2002, p. 1-5.



- Moloney, B. and Uno, K. (eds.), *Gendering Modern Japanese History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Press, 2005).
- Moore, R., 'Comment: Reflections on the Occupation of Japan,' *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 38, 4, 1979, p. 721-734.
- Moore, R., 'The Occupation of Japan as History: Some Recent Research,' *Monumenta Nipponica*, 36, 3, 1981, p. 317-328.
- Muta, S., 'The Lack of an Archives Tradition in Japan: Issues Surrounding the Planned Centre for Modern Japan-Asia Relations,' *Australia-Japan Research Project*, March, 1999, Available Online: <http://ajrp.awm.gov.au/ajrp/ajrp2.nsf/aa9b3f3247a3c8ae4a25676300078dee/a4a9b7f42f0568434a25677f00221ac4?OpenDocument>.
- O'Neill, R., *Australia and the Korean War* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial and Australian Government Publishing Service, 1981).
- Oliver, P., *Allies, Enemies and Trading Partners: Records on Australia and the Japanese* (Canberra: National Archives of Australia, 2004).
- Passin, H., 'The Occupation – Some Reflections,' *Daedalus*, 119, 3, 1990, p. 107-129.
- Pateman, C. and Pateman, E. (eds.), *Feminist Challenges: Social and Political Theory* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1986).
- Reischauer, E., *Japan: Tradition and Transformation* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989).
- Roberts, R., 'History and Memory: The Power of Statist Narratives,' *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 33, 3, 2000, p. 513-522.
- Russell, P., 'Empathy, Imagination and Feminist History,' *Lilith*, 13, 2004, p. 1-11.
- Scott, J. W., *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).
- Scott, J. W., 'The Evidence of Experience,' *Critical Inquiry*, 17, Summer, 1991, p. 773-797.
- Sodei, R., *Dear General MacArthur: Letters from the Japanese during the American Occupation* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2001).
- Tamura, K., 'Kure City History Project,' *Australia-Japan Research Project*, March, 1997. Available Online: <http://ajrp.awm.gov.au/ajrp/ajrp2.nsf/437f72f8ac2c07238525661a00063aa6/150731ff0bb63b3e852565b000499e7a?OpenDocument>.
- Tamura, K., *Michi's Memories: The Story of a Japanese War Bride* (Australian National University: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, 2001).
- Tamura, K., 'An Ordinary Life?,' *Meanjin*, 61, 1, March, 2002, p. 127- 133.
- Torney, P., 'Renegades to Their Country: The Australian Press and the Allied Occupation of Japan 1946-1950,' *War and Society*, 25, 1, May, 2006, p. 89-110.
- Trefalt, B., 'Waiting Women: The Return of Stragglers and Japanese Constructions of Womanhood in Collective Memories of World War II, 1972-1974,' *Intersections: Gender, History and Culture in the Asian Context*, 5, May, 2001.
- Trouillet, M., *Silencing The Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

Ward, R. and Shulman, F., *The Allied Occupation of Japan 1945-1952: An Annotated Bibliography of Western-Language Materials* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1974).

White, H., *Tropics in Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1978).

Wilkinson, J., 'A Choice of Fictions: Historians, Memory, and Evidence,' *PMLA*, 111, 1, January, 1996, p. 80-92.

Wood, J., *The Forgotten Force: The Australian Military Contribution To The Occupation of Japan 1945-1952* (St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1998).

Wood, J., 'The Forgotten Force: The Australian Military Contribution to the Occupation of Japan 1945-1952,' *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute of Australia*, 23, December 2001, p. 39-41.

### **Dissertations**

Carter, C., *Between War and Peace: The Experience of Occupation for Members of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force 1945-1952*, PhD Dissertation, Australian Defence Force Academy, 2002. Available Online: <http://www.library.unsw.edu.au/~thesis/adt-ADFA/public/adt-ADFA20040827.130536>.

### **Television Program Transcripts**

*Kure Kids*, Foreign Correspondent, ABC TV, 9<sup>th</sup> August 2005.

### **Archival Material**

*Chūgoku Shinbun*, Hiroshima

'BCOF Headquarters Set Up In Kure; Kure ni Eirenpōgen shireibu,' 4 February 1946.

'Stunned Kure Citizens – Treat BCOF With Respect; Menkuratta Kure shimin – Eigōgun niwa sei o motte,' 7 February 1946.

'BCOF Soldiers Gallantly Arrived in Kure Wearing Wide-Brimmed Hats; Sassō tsubahiro bōshi de eigōgun Kure ni,' 15 February 1946.

'Main Forces of BCOF Arrived in Kure on 28 March 1946; Eishuryoku 28 nichi tōchaku,' 29 March 1946.

'Kure and BCOF; Kure to shinchūgun no maki,' 17 April 1949.

'Understanding of Australia Improved Through Occupation; Gō, chūhei de rikai fukamu,' 30 August 1951.

'First War Bride Arrives In Australia-Sakuramoto Nobuko From Kure; Gōshū iri hanayome dai 1 gō – Kure no Sakuramoto Nobuko san,' 10 April 1952.

'Life of Prostitutes; Baishunfu no seitai,' 6 July 1952.

'Marriages Between Australian Servicemen and Japanese Women To Be Permitted After Investigation; Chōsa no ue kyoka suru gō shōhei to nihonjin no kekkon,' 22 June 1952.

'War Brides Depart From Australia; Hanayome-san gōshū e shuppatsu,' 2 April 1953.

'First Annulment of Marriage Between an Australian Soldier and a Japanese Woman; Gōgunjin to kekkon kaishō dai 1



gō,' 9 December 1954.

'Eleven Mixed-Blood Children Start Primary School – Kure Education Board Prevents Discrimination; Shin nyūgaku konketsuji 11 mei Kure shi kyōi futō atsukai bōshi,' 18 March 1956.

'Suggestions for Education for Mixed-Blood Children; Konketsuji kyōiku ni shisa,' 7 May 1956.

*Chūgoku Nippo*, Kure

'Hopeless Mother Committed Theft For Her Two Children; Aware konketsuji no hahahaoya 2ji o kakaete nusumi,' 6 May 1952.

'Aspects of Kure, The International City – Secrecy; Kokusai toshi Kure no hyōjō – onrii ni onmitsu,' 21 August 1952.

'Survey on Prostitutes in Kure (1); Kure no gaishō kansatsu (1) Kanzaki Kiyoshi shi chōsa happyō,' 24 December 1952.

'How To Deal With Mixed-Blood Children?; Konketsuji o dō atsukau,' 27 January 1953.

'Where Have Mixed-Blood Children Gone?; Doko ni kieta no ka konketsuji,' 19 March 1953.

'Too Much Concern About Mixed-Blood Children; Torikoshi gurō ka konketsuji jidō,' 7 May 1953.

'These Are The Realities of Streetwalkers; Yoruno on'na no jittai wa kō,' 15 July 1953.

'How To Bring Up Mixed-Blood Children?; Konketsuji o dō sodateru,' 26 June 1954.

'Survey of Mixed-Blood Pupils By The Ministry of Education; Konketsu gakudō jittai chōsa monbushō kara raigo,' 20 February 1955.

'18 Mixed-Blood Children Enter Primary Schools – Kure Education Board Does Its Best; Konketsuji nyūgaku 18 mei, Shiyōi ga banzen o kisu,' 22 January 1956.

'Mixed-Blood Children – A Parting Present From BCOF; Eirenpōchūryūgun okimiyage no konketsuji,' 22 December 1956.

*Asahi Shinbun*, Japan

'Departure of 40 Intermarried Couples from Kure on 12 March; Kokusai kekkon 40 kumi 12 nichi Kure kara funade,' 8 March 1953.

'Only 10% of 129 Mixed Blood Children In Hiroshima Live With Parents; Kenka ni konketsuji 129 mei fubo to kurasuno wa 1 wari amari,' 29 May 1953.

*Mainichi Shinbun*

'Attempts to Restrict Kure's 3,000 Prostitutes to Red Light District; Akasen chiku ni fūjikomō – me ni amaru 3,000 no on'na,' 24 June 1952.

'First Ray of Hope for Solving the Prostitution Problem in Kure; Kichi Kure fūki mondai kaiketsu e shokō,' 27 August 1953.

*National Archives of Australia*

A816 19/304/405, 'Joint Chief of Staffs in Australia [Subject Policy Regarding Marriages – BCOF]' 23 May 1946.

- A6006 1949/12/31, 'Occupation Force Policy,' 30 July 1949.
- A5799/99/1949, 'Request to the Department of Defence From Lt. Gen. H.C.H. Robertson,' 30 July 1949.
- A445/236/17/11, 'Entry Into Australia – Children of Australian Fathers and Japanese Mothers,' 2 August 1952.
- A463 (A463/17) 1957/1908, 'Children Born in Japan of Japanese Mothers and Australian Servicemen,' 16 July 1957.
- A463 (A463/63) 1963/2728, 'Illegitimate Children of Australian Servicemen in Japan,' 27 January 1958.
- A1838 3103/10/12/1 PART 1, 'Department of External Affairs,' 3 September 1958.
- A1838 3103/10/12/1 PART 1, 'Social Study of Children of Mixed Ethnic Origin in Kure City, Hiroshima-ken, Japan,' 15 September 1958.
- A1838 3103/10/12/1 PART 1, 'Correspondence Between Department of Defence and Air,' 27 January 1959.
- A463 (A463/63) 1963/2728, 'Japan – Illegitimate Children of Australian Servicemen,' 18 January 1960.
- A463 (A463/63) 1963/2728, 'Department of External Affairs: Inward Savingram,' 29 January 1960.
- A463 (A463/63) 1963/2728, 'Japan – Children of Mixed Blood,' 3 February 1960.
- A463 (A463/63) 1963/2728, 'House of Reps. Adjournment Debate,' 29 March, 1960.
- A463 (A463/63) 1963/2728, 'Press Statement by the Minister for Immigration,' 30 November 1962.
- A463 (A463/63) 1963/2728, 'Australian Asian Association of Victoria,' December 1962.
- A463 (A463/63) 1963/2728, 'House of Representatives – Question For This Day,' 12 May 1964.

### **Oral Interviews**

Transcripts of Oral Interviews with Sid Margetts, Mac Grant, John Coffman, Charlie Nation, Dr. Gofman, Keith Boothroyd, Dr. Dunlop, Harold Andrew, Colin East, Maurice May, Phyllis Passmore and Caroline Palmer conducted by Film Australia, c.1998 (In Private Possession of C. de Matos).





## Who are the Ianfu (Comfort Women)?

Kirsten Orreill  
University of Queensland

### Abstract

The aim of this article is to understand who the *Ianfu* are via a social-historical and socio-cultural study. I set out to contextualise the reality of the women's lives as *Ianfu* and as surviving *Ianfu* through the inclusion of recollections of former Korean *Ianfu* and official histories. Who are the *Ianfu*, what did they do, where did they go, why were they created, and what happened to them? These are the questions that I sought to answer in order to frame the *Ianfu* experience through a retelling of their past. Furthermore, there are several reasons why Korean women came to comprise the majority of *Ianfu* which I endeavour to explain in this article.

### Keywords

Comfort Women, *Ianfu*, Pacific War, Rape, Slavery

### Introduction

'A commissioned officer took me to the next room which was partitioned off by a cloth. Even though I did not want to go he dragged me into the room. I resisted but he tore off all of my clothes and in the end he took my virginity. That night, the officer raped me twice.'<sup>1</sup>

This is the testimony of Kim Hak-sun who was among as many as 200,000 women – mainly Korean but also Burmese, Chinese, Dutch, Eurasians, Indians, Indonesian, Japanese, Filipina, Taiwanese, Vietnamese, and Pacific Islanders – who were tricked, coerced, or kidnapped by the Japanese military into a life of forced 'military sexual slavery'<sup>2</sup> during the Asia-Pacific War which is commonly known to the Japanese as

---

<sup>1</sup> Yoshimi, *Jūgun Ianfu (Comfort Women)*, p. 141. All references made to Yoshimi, *Jūgun Ianfu (Comfort Women)*, are translated by the author.

<sup>2</sup> This term is used by McDougall in an investigation conducted on behalf of The United Nations Commission on Human Rights, see McDougall, *Contemporary Forms of Slavery*.

WWII and its preceding conflicts.<sup>3</sup> Up to 80 percent of the women are purported to have been Korean.<sup>4</sup> They were called the Comfort Women.

The term itself is translated from the Japanese abbreviation *Ianfu*,<sup>5</sup> hereafter referred to in this paper. As the Chinese characters 慰安 [i : an ] (comfort or solace) and 婦 [fu] (woman or wife) suggest, the women's literal purpose was to offer solace and comfort to Japan's Imperial Forces. However, the initiation of the *Ianfu* system was primarily a contiguous response to the Nanking massacre where it became evident to the Japanese authorities that future measures needed to be taken to minimise rapes of local women by Japanese soldiers in war zones.<sup>6</sup> Thus, in order to minimise these rapes, the *Ianfu* system was used to procure women for the sexual gratification of the Japanese soldiers.<sup>7</sup>

The *Ianfu* symbolise diverging perspectives to all parties concerned. For Korea, surviving *Ianfu* victims symbolise '... not only the degradation of the Korean people but also the collective wish to reclaim national sovereignty and integrity.'<sup>8</sup> Thus, Korea is making efforts to reclaim this lost national sovereignty through popularisation of the *Ianfu* issue. As such, Korea has utilised surviving *Ianfu* as a symbolic tool to bolster Korean nationalism and to remind Japan of its obligation to the Korean nation. For example, Korea raised the *Ianfu* issue to oppose Japan obtaining a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

While Korea wishes to seek a positive outcome, its raising of the *Ianfu* issue at opportune times (although advantageous) bolsters Japanese speculation about Korea's hidden agenda. By extension, it damages the validity of former *Ianfu* testimonies, seriously injuring the women's honour. Effectively this has distracted Japan from recognising the seriousness of this issue. This in turn affects the status of former *Ianfu* making it difficult for them to gain any real form of closure.

For Japan, *Ianfu* victims symbolise a difficult war past which previously they sought to forget. As a general policy, Japan is still trying to mitigate its actions to the world for the use of thousands of women as military sexual slaves during the war by the Japanese Imperial Forces. This point becomes more apparent when contrasted against the fact that the Japanese government is yet to prosecute and convict any Japanese war

3 Yoshimi, *Jūgun Ianfu (Comfort Women)*, pp. 79-80; Ogawa, *The Difficulty of Apology: Japan's Struggle with Memory and Guilt*, p. 42.

4 Hein and Seldon, *Learning Citizenship from the Past*, p. 10.

5 *Ianfu* is an abbreviated term from the Japanese post-war term *Jūgunianfu* literally meaning Military Comfort Woman. Schmidt, *Ianfu - The Comfort Women of the Japanese Imperial Army of the Pacific War*, p. 2; Soh, 'The Korean "Comfort Women": Movement for Redress', p. 67.

6 Yoshimi, *Jūgun Ianfu (Comfort Women)*, pp. 134-158.

7 *Ibid.*

8 Moon, *South Korean Movements against Militarized Sexual Labor*, p. 318.



criminal or person in relation to military sexual slavery.<sup>9</sup> The Japanese government's lack of action to raise consciousness of the seriousness of these crimes is reflective of Japan's current political stance on the *Ianfu* issue. Previously, this lack of consciousness has led Japan to exclude all mention of *Ianfu* in junior high-school history textbooks and to make claims that *Ianfu* were paid prostitute camp followers for which they received international condemnation.<sup>10</sup>

For former *Ianfu*, they remember their reality as it was: a life of sexual torture and a lifetime of persecution to follow.<sup>11</sup> Today, they want a sincere apology from the Japanese government which may or may not include compensation.<sup>12</sup> They want to tell their story to the public before they die, they want the Japanese government to be made accountable for their actions, and they want their story to be written into the history textbooks so that it will never be forgotten and never repeated again.

### *Aims*

The primary aim of this article is to understand who the *Ianfu* are via a socio-historical and socio-cultural narrative study. I also aim to contextualise the reality of the women's lives as *Ianfu* and as surviving *Ianfu* through the inclusion of recollections of former Korean *Ianfu* and official histories. Furthermore, there are several clear reasons why Korean women came to comprise the majority of *Ianfu* which I intend to explain in this article. My interest lies in personalising the reality of the *Ianfu* and this is coupled with my desire to offer an extensive depiction of their lives under the *Ianfu* system.

### **The Beginning of their Lives as *Ianfu***

[Japanese] officials believed [international] laws were not applicable to Japan's colonies, and this, combined with the belief in the superiority of Japanese women and the suitability of women of other races for prostitution, cemented the decision to use women from colonies and occupied territories as [*Ianfu*].<sup>13</sup>

---

9 Hayashi, *Survey of the Japanese Movement Against Wartime Sexual Violence*, p. 9.

10 Ienaga, *Japan's past, Japan's future: one historian's odyssey*.

11 Soh, *Human Rights and the "Comfort Women"*; Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*.

12 Schellstede, *Comfort Women Speak: Testimony by Sex Slaves of the Japanese Military*.

13 Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II*, p. 97.

## *The Beginning*

Officially, recruitment of *Ianfu* is believed to have originated with the beginning of the second Sino-Japanese War in 1937.<sup>14</sup> However, it has been suggested that *Ianfu* may have been pressed into service as early as 1932 when the first comfort station, hereafter *ianjo*,<sup>15</sup> was established in Shanghai.<sup>16</sup> It was in this year when Lieutenant-General Okamura Yasuji – the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Shanghai Expeditionary Army and the original proponent of *ianjo* for the Japanese Army – in response to the Shanghai Incident proposed the establishment of brothels in Japanese occupied areas to prevent further rapes of Chinese civilians.<sup>17</sup> However, although *ianjo* existed in Shanghai prior to 1937, it appears it was not until the later half of that year that the military implemented systematic expansion of *ianjo* as a contiguous response to the Nanking Massacre.<sup>18</sup> The authorities then in earnest set about sourcing *Ianfu* to make available for the purpose of sexual recreation.<sup>19</sup>

As discussed briefly in the introduction, *Ianfu* recruits were mobilised from many locales (occupied by the Japanese military) in Asia.<sup>20</sup> The precise number of women taken from these areas is unknown, due to many relevant official documents being destroyed or hidden by the Japanese military at the conclusion of the war.<sup>21</sup> Approximations based on available documents put the number of women in the system at somewhere between 80,000 and 200,000, among which most scholars agree up to 80 percent were Korean.<sup>22</sup> However, the private memoirs of Lieutenant-General Okamura Yasuji make it apparent his initial intentions were to use professional Japanese prostitutes for *Ianfu* recruits, rather than non-Japanese women.<sup>23</sup>

## *The Selection of Women*

Initially, recruitment of non-Japanese women was partly because the military leaders realised that the required numbers of *Ianfu* would outstrip the number of professional Japanese prostitutes available to take up the position.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, many Japanese

14 Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 84; Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*.

15 The Japanese term used to refer to comfort stations.

16 Hicks, *op. cit.*; Yoshimi, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II*.

17 Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, p. 101; Hicks, *op. cit.*, p. 19; Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II*, pp. 94-95.

18 Chin, *Korean Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan*, p. 13; Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, pp. 10-15, 94.

19 Thus, it was as a consequence of the Nanking massacre that the *ianjo* system became well entrenched within the Japanese military, *Ibid.*

20 Min, *Korean "Comfort Women": The Intersection of Colonial Power, Gender, and Class*, p. 134; Yoshimi, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II*, p. 189.

21 Chin, *op. cit.*, The Japanese government is currently in the practice of preventing public access to many crucial documents; Yoshimi, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II*, p. 91.

22 Chung cited in Min, *op. cit.*, p. 941.

23 Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, pp. 10, 18.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 10.



prostitutes were older and often infected with venereal disease; as such, they would not do as gifts from the Emperor to his Imperial Forces.<sup>25</sup> Thus, it became clear the exploitation of Japanese women on such a large scale was neither acceptable nor possible. *Ianfu* recruits had to be found elsewhere.

The resulting solution was to source women from Japan's colonies and Japanese occupied territories concentrating particularly on Korean women. This came about as a direct result of Japanese occupation of their lands.<sup>26</sup> After the Russo-Japanese War from 1904-1905, Korea had become a protectorate of Japan although it was not formally colonised until 1910 when it was given the name *Chōsen* by the Japanese.<sup>27</sup> Thus, by the commencement of the war Korea was already a colony of Japan.

This coupled with the Japanese Diet's move in 1938 to pass the National General Mobilization Act – empowering the government to bypass Diet approval in appropriation of resources and labour – meant the government of Japan could now place all resources of the Japanese Imperial Empire – including Korean colonial subjects – at the disposal of the war effort.<sup>28</sup> This allowed Japan's entry and colonisation into Korea to play a significant role in the exploitation of a large portion of Korean women as *Ianfu*.<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, the idea of colonialism suggests that conquest was made by a more powerful and a materially and psychologically advanced empire than that of the colonised. As such, the plight of Korean women can be linked to the failure of their country to avoid colonisation by Japan and by extension the same principle would apply to other Japanese occupied territories.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, Korea's cultural and spatial proximity to Japan made its women more susceptible than women from other Japanese colonies, this was also fundamental to their selection. Evidently, it would seem women who were selected as *Ianfu* were the by-product of historical circumstance brought about by Japanese occupation of their lands.

In spite of the fact that Korea was now a colony of Japan, Japanese sentiment dictated that – even though Korean nationals under colonial rule were assimilated in the Japanese way – they were still considered racially inferior.<sup>31</sup> So much so, that Korean activists and researchers alike assert that Japanese national prejudice against Koreans was

25 Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

26 Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, p. 180.

27 Chung cited in Min, *op. cit.*, p. 941; Yoshimi, *A compilation of documents on the military comfort women issue*, pp. 69-72.

28 Peattie, *Introduction*, p. 20.

29 Howard, *True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women*, p. 2; Nishio, *Atarashi Rekishi Kyōkasha* [New History Textbook], pp. 270-272; Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

30 Peattie, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

31 Hicks, *op. cit.*, p. 22; Peattie, *op. cit.*, p. 13; Soh, *From Imperial Gifts to Sex Slaves: Theorizing Symbolic Representations of the 'Comfort Women'*, p. 66; Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II*, p. 96.

one of the major sources contributing to the victimisation of Korean women.<sup>32</sup>

The belief that soldiers could avoid contracting sexual diseases or at least minimise their chances and thus stay healthy for the war was a further contributing factor in the choice to use Korean women.<sup>33</sup> Japanese journalist Senda Kako<sup>34</sup> posits the report submitted in 1939 by Dr. Asō Tetsuo – a gynaecologist and a probationary medical officer at the Army Communication Hospital in Shanghai at the time – was partly responsible for the idea to use predominantly Korean women for this purpose.<sup>35</sup> This report was based on initial findings the previous year regarding the incidence of venereal disease among women he examined who were soon to become *Ianfu* at a location in Shanghai.<sup>36</sup> In his findings he states:

Among those from the Peninsula [*hanto* – the Japanese term used to refer to Korea as part of Japan] there was very little indication indeed of venereal disease, but those from the Homeland [Japan proper] although free of acute symptoms at present, were all extremely dubious. In age, these were all past 20, some approaching 40, and had already spent a number of years in prostitution. Those from the Peninsula presented a pleasing contrast, being the main younger and unsophisticated.<sup>37</sup>

He goes on in his report saying: ‘Prostitutes are no good for the sacred Imperial Army’ implying only the sacred sacrifice of a virgin would make an appropriate ‘gift’ when it came to an Imperial soldier’s comfort.<sup>38</sup>

As mentioned previously, Japanese women who were used as *Ianfu* were most likely already professional prostitutes before entering *ianjo*, which meant many were already carriers of various sexually transmitted diseases.<sup>39</sup> Many of them were also too old for a life of prostitution and as a result unable to continue earning a living in Japan.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, their younger Korean counterparts on the whole had no sexual experience prior to their employment in *ianjo* and were considerably healthier and therefore more desirable. Their virginity was a result of strong patriarchal customs in Korea before and during the war which called for absolute obeisance to maintaining virginity for unmarried women.<sup>41</sup>

32 Chung; Kang; Yun cited in Min, *op. cit.*, p. 941; Yoshimi, *A compilation of documents on the military comfort women issue*, p. 939.

33 Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, p. 30; Yoshimi, *Jūgun Ianfu (Comfort Women)*, pp. 48, 52.

34 Senda, *Jūgun Ianfu (Military Comfort Women)*.

35 Peattie, *op. cit.*, p. 13; Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

36 Senda, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-30.

37 Suzuki cited in Hicks, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

38 Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 89.

40 *Ibid.*

41 Hicks, *op. cit.*, p. 21; Soh, *From Imperial Gifts to Sex Slaves*, p. 69.



Thus, while exploiting Asian women, the Japanese wartime government did not exploit their own women to the same extent. Non-Japanese women were chosen because of the Japanese belief in their own superiority over and above any other Asian race. In particular, Korean women were chosen because of the strong Japanese belief that they were most suited to a life of prostitution.<sup>42</sup> As many were virgins they served the military's purpose for establishing *ianjo*, making them ideal *Ianfu* candidates for Japan. Furthermore, Yoshimi<sup>43</sup> suggests that the Japanese military chose not to use Japanese virgins as *Ianfu* because of the potential public distrust of the military.

Evidently, historical circumstance, geographical location, and ethnic discrimination contributed equally to the popular choice to use Korean women as *Ianfu* recruits. Thus, the Japanese forces' move to concentrate on selecting *Ianfu* recruits from Korea was as much due to the absence of effective power to resist it as it was to specific policies and planning implemented under Japanese colonisation. For these reasons it would appear Japan's choice of women was equally deliberate as situational in origin.

### *Purpose of Recruitment*

The purpose for procurement of *Ianfu* can be traced back to four factors. First, they were procured to assist in the prevention of wide-spread rape of local women in Japanese occupied areas.<sup>44</sup> It was believed that a steady supply of sex on offer from the military's own women would remedy this.<sup>45</sup> However, this system was not introduced out of concern for the safety of local women in the towns and villages that the Japanese soldiers conquered.<sup>46</sup> Rather, it was introduced as Defence Agency Director of the Secretariat Naoaki Murata claimed in a meeting held in 1992: '... to maintain order [and] to ease the anti-Japanese feeling aroused by the Japanese soldier's deeds.'<sup>47</sup> Thus, the necessity to avoid antagonising the local populace in Japanese occupied areas prompted the authorities to make provision for their own women for the purpose of sexual relations with Japanese soldiers.<sup>48</sup>

Second, the women were procured for Japanese soldiers with the purpose of providing them with a form of leisure.<sup>49</sup> The structure of the Japanese military meant

<sup>42</sup> Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, p. 32.

<sup>43</sup> Yoshimi, *A compilation of documents on the military comfort women issue*.

<sup>44</sup> Howard, *True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women*.

<sup>45</sup> Fukuda Masuo cited in Yoshimi, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II*, p. 78; Hayashi, *Japanese Comfort Women in Southeast Asia*, p. 10.

<sup>46</sup> Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II*, pp. 94-95.

<sup>47</sup> The Japan Times Weekly cited in Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

<sup>48</sup> Chin, *op. cit.*, p. 14; Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, p. 28.

<sup>49</sup> Yoshimi, *Jūgun ianfu (Comfort Women)*.

Japanese soldiers, unlike their Western counterparts, were given little if any time at all for recreational leave which was fundamental in causing poor military morale at the time.<sup>50</sup> The authorities saw in the provision of *ianjo* a potential solution to boost morale and solve the recreational leave problem they faced.<sup>51</sup> The following passage in a War Ministry circular expresses the Japanese rationale:

In particular the [sexual] psychological influence received from [*ianjo*] is most direct and profound and it must be realised how greatly their appropriate direction and supervision affect the raising of morale, the maintenance of discipline and the prevention of crime and venereal disease.<sup>52</sup>

Members of the Japanese military were then allowed to visit these facilities during their recreation time. In fact as Suzuki Yoshio points out – a former sergeant major in the Japanese military – *ianjo* ‘... were effectively the only place the soldiers had to go when given leave’.<sup>53</sup>

It was also thought that sex would adequately relieve soldiers from the stress of combat and give them an outlet from strict military discipline.<sup>54</sup> A soldier who visited an *ianjo* in China reflects frankly on his visit there highlighting the importance of the women to the soldiers:

Even though we had just returned from lengthy military operations at the front the thought of having sex made us leave immediately for the *ianjo*. When we arrived at where the women were, soldiers took their place in line and mulled over life and death while waiting their turn. There was nothing else like the supreme feeling of completeness that the soldiers experienced when engaging in sex with the women. This was the only way for them to whole-heartedly escape from their abnormal existence.<sup>55</sup>

Effectively, the women provided solace and an escape from the war, if only temporary. Thus, instead of seeing to it that their men were provided leave to go home the authorities implemented alternative facilities where the men could take their recreation leave.<sup>56</sup>

Third, the need to contain the rapid increase of venereal disease among Japanese soldiers had become paramount.<sup>57</sup> In his testimony, Suzuki Yoshio asserted that soldiers

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 53, 85; Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II*, p. 95.

<sup>51</sup> Chin, *op. cit.*, p. 14; Hayashi, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>52</sup> Hicks, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>53</sup> Dolgopol and Paranjape, *Comfort Women – an unfinished ordeal: Report of a Mission*, pp. 127-128.

<sup>54</sup> Hicks, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>55</sup> Yoshimi, *Jūgun Ianfu (Comfort Women)*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>56</sup> Hayashi, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>57</sup> Howard, *op. cit.*





who had been in the military for four to five years had a disease rate of 30 to 40 percent and indicated that this was the source of the spread of venereal disease among the women.<sup>58</sup> Apparent to the authorities was that they would be able to restrict the sexual activities of soldiers to a controlled environment to a greater degree in a military style brothel.<sup>59</sup> From this, we can see that the Japanese military saw in the women the solution to decrease incidences of infection.

Fourth, the women were also procured with the idea in mind to prevent espionage within the Japanese military.<sup>60</sup> Ichikawa Ichiro – a member of the military police (commonly known as *kempeitai*)<sup>61</sup> assigned to a regiment in Manchuria – highlights how real this concern was for the military authorities, saying that it was common practice for *ianjo* managers to provide a list of users corresponding to each woman every morning to military police.<sup>62</sup> The *kempeitai* would then check for any irregularities such as a soldier making too many visits to a particular *Ianfu* or to *ianjo* in comparison to his salary.<sup>63</sup>

The fact that *kempeitai* kept regular tabs on *ianjo* highlights how real security concerns and the threat of espionage were for Japanese authorities.<sup>64</sup> By providing *ianjo* facilities for their men, where the women were specially selected and tightly controlled, the authorities believed they could restrict the sexual activities of Japanese soldiers within this environment thus minimising the risk of security breaches.<sup>65</sup>

It was with these four factors in mind that the selection of *Ianfu* was carried out, thus introducing the *Ianfu* system to the Pacific War. The *Ianfu* system was a Japanese strategy to keep Japanese men fighting for longer periods of time and boost their morale through the provision of a military controlled form of sex. The four points listed for the initial establishment of *ianjo* and selection of *Ianfu* demonstrate control of the soldier as well as the women.

### *Ianjo Locations and the Dispersal and Diffusion of Ianfu*

*Ianjo* locations paralleled the movements of Japanese forces, following them into even

58 Dolgopol and Paranjape, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

59 Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II*, p. 96; Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, p. 30.

60 Hicks, *op. cit.*

61 The *kempeitai* were Japan's much feared military police who were trained specifically to control dissent within the military forces often by means such as torture and beating, see Edgerton, *Warriors of the Rising Sun: A History of the Japanese Military*, p. 308; Hicks, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

62 Dolgopol and Paranjape, *op. cit.*, p. 125; Chin, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

63 *Ibid.*

64 Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II*, p. 96.

65 Hayashi, *op. cit.*, p. 11; Yoshimi, *Jūgun Ianfu (Comfort Women)*, p. 52.

the remotest areas of Asia occurring with the expansion of the war after the attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941.<sup>66</sup> This was when *ianjo* became ubiquitous in the Asia-Pacific region bringing with them the omnipresence of *Ianfu*.<sup>67</sup> Japanese, American, and Dutch official documents have confirmed the existence of *ianjo* in China, Hong Kong, French Indochina, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, British Borneo, the Dutch East Indies, Burma, Thailand, New Guinea, the Japanese Okinawan archipelago,<sup>68</sup> the Bonin Islands, Hokkaidō, and Sakhalin.<sup>69</sup> Yoshimi<sup>70</sup> states it is impossible to know the total number of *ianjo*, however even conservative estimates put the number at more than a thousand. For these reasons, during the Pacific War it is fair to assume *Ianfu* were to be found wherever the Japanese flag flew – including Japanese war zones, Japanese occupied territories, Japanese colonies, and Japan proper.<sup>71</sup>

### A Day in the Life of an *Ianfu*

In poor health the women contracted tuberculosis and venereal disease for which they did not receive sufficient treatment. Crippled in body and broken in spirit they awaited their death.<sup>72</sup>

### Arriving at *Ianjo*

Many *ianjo* were converted from abandoned homes, barns, churches, or requisitioned hotels.<sup>73</sup> Dr. Asō depicts the exterior façade of an *ianjo* location somewhere between Shanghai and Nanking describing it as thus:

The stations consisted of ten barrack block-like huts, together with a supervisor's hut, all enclosed by a fence. The huts were divided into ten small rooms, each numbered and with a separate door.<sup>74</sup>

This basic design was to become the prototype for the construction of many subsequent *ianjo*.<sup>75</sup>

66 Hicks, *op. cit.*, p. 69; Soh, *From Imperial Gifts to Sex Slaves*, pp. 64, 69.

67 Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, p. 167; Yoshimi, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II*, p. 77.

68 In Okinawa alone, research conducted in February 1994 identified a total of 126 sites to which Yoshimi adds a further possible 5 sites see Yoshimi, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II*, p. 91.

69 Yoshimi, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II*, p. 91.

70 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

71 *Ibid.*, p. 91. Chin, *op. cit.*, p. 15; Hicks, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

72 Yoshimi, *Jūgun Ianfu (Comfort Women)*, p. 196.

73 Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

74 Hicks, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

75 *Ibid.*



The interior of *ianjo* were mainly simple in design. Tanaka<sup>76</sup> describes each room being divided by thin plywood walls. In some locations where there were no such walls, curtains were used instead to screen off rooms. Each of these rooms consisted of a bed or futon. In bathrooms and toilets a disinfectant solution (made of potassium permanganate solution or cresol soap solution) was made available.<sup>77</sup> Yun Soon-man when asked to describe the conditions at the *ianjo* she was located in depicts a scene common to most saying:

... there were long lines of soldiers and that each soldier was given a very short period of time to be in the room with an individual woman. If any soldier took “too long” there would be banging on the door and other soldiers would be calling for them to come out.<sup>78</sup>

In some *ianjo* locations, women describe conditions where they were forced to sit in chairs lined up in the hallway where Yi Yong-suk<sup>79</sup> remembers:

There was a placard on the wall behind each of the chairs which bore our name and number. We remained seated as the soldiers came in to choose whoever took their fancy to take to bed.

At other *ianjo* locations, descriptions are given of soldiers spontaneously ejaculating or publicly masturbating while waiting in the queue in order not to suffer premature ejaculation when it came to their turn.<sup>80</sup> Even from the perspective of Japanese soldiers, the *ianjo* was a bizarre place where one officer stationed in Nha Trang, Vietnam remarks:

Previously I had heard gossip about the place where the “*pi*”<sup>81</sup> were but when I think about it, it really did not even begin to describe this bizarre world. In broad daylight men boldly stood in line, their coats undone and their pants unfastened waiting one by one to have sex right in front of me. The men advanced anxiously rather than eagerly turned out one by one like a convenience system. I flinched at the sight of this surreal world.<sup>82</sup>

On arriving at *ianjo* some women were assigned Japanese names while others were given a number as in the case of Kim Yoon-shim<sup>83</sup> who was known as number

76 Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, p. 51.

77 *Ibid.*; Dolgopol and Paranjape, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

78 *Ibid.*, p. 80.

79 Yi, *I Will No Longer Harbour Resentment*, pp. 50-57.

80 Hicks, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

81 *Pi* is a Chinese term meaning merchandise or goods and is slang for vagina see Soh, *From Imperial Gifts to Sex Slaves*, p. 59, 71.

82 Yoshimi, *Jūgun Ianfu (Comfort Women)*, p. 142.

83 Kim, *Kim Yoon-shim*, p. 46.

27. There are testimonies of some women being tattooed with an identifying mark on their arm for easy recognition if they escaped.<sup>84</sup> When it came to conversing in their own language Kim Young-shil<sup>85</sup> said she was told by a Japanese soldier on her arrival if she were to speak in Korean she would be killed. When one girl spoke in Korean she describes an officer severing the girl's neck to teach the women a lesson.<sup>86</sup>

On arrival it was common practice for a non-commissioned officer to conduct a registration process checking the women's official documents including personal photographs, family registers, personal declaration forms, guardian consent forms, police permits, and town council identification papers.<sup>87</sup> A copy of the documents was then passed on to the relevant authorities.<sup>88</sup>

Here, many women were put through an initiation process as Hicks<sup>89</sup> portrays in the case of Kim Chun-ja:

Once she was naked, her captor gave her a thorough inspection and pronounced her fit to provide ample comfort to the men of his unit. He then proceeded to break her in with an initiation lasting four hours. He forced her into endless variations as she wept with grief, pain and shame. The same sort of treatment was repeated over the following three days, the girls being rotated among the men.

In order to make the women succumb to their sexual demands, the soldiers beat many women into submission.<sup>90</sup> Many former *Ianfu* testimonies indicate new girls were kept for the express use of officers.<sup>91</sup> In some locations women were instructed in tricks of the trade. For example, first and foremost they were taught in order to maintain their stamina they should not over-exert themselves or become excited while working.<sup>92</sup> Next, it was also forbidden that they form an attachment with a soldier although this rule was frequently broken.<sup>93</sup> The women were then given instructions on what particular style of service they should offer differing clientele which Hicks<sup>94</sup> describes:

They were to take a leisurely approach to older men, to praise the sexual technique of officers, and to bring some suggestion of a less mercenary, more

84 Wang cited in Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

85 Kim, Kim Young-shil, p. 49.

86 Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

87 Yoshimi, *Jūgun Ianfu (Comfort Women)*, p. 135.

88 *Ibid.*, p. 136.

89 Hicks, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

90 Dolgopol and Paranjape, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

91 Kim, *Kim Sang-hi*, p. 31.

92 Hicks, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

93 *Ibid.*

94 *Ibid.*



romantic approach to young and unsophisticated soldiers.

In some locations, it also seems the women were taught limited Japanese phrases such as; *irashaimase* (welcome) which they were to use to greet the soldiers.<sup>95</sup>

### *The Result – Escape, the Use of Narcotics, and Suicide*

As a result of conditions at *ianjo*, many women contemplated escape. Most *ianjo* were heavily patrolled by the Japanese military and the women's activities were severely restricted in order to prevent escape.<sup>96</sup> Furthermore, because many women were taken to serve in foreign lands where they did not know the local language, customs, or area and often had no money once they escaped from *ianjo*, many felt they had nowhere to run and no one to turn to for help.<sup>97</sup> Ha Sun-nyo recounts her attempt at escape:

About one year had passed since I came to Shanghai when I stole away in the snow from the *ianjo*. When the rickshaw arrived at its last stop the night had already fallen. I had nowhere to run and I didn't know the language, I hardly slept. I kept dozing in and out of sleep worrying someone would find me and force me to return to the *ianjo*. Before I knew it, it was dawn. The more I thought about it the more I realised that I had nowhere to run. So I decided to return. I crept back into the kitchen. I cooked some rice and sat down at the table when my manager screamed at me to stop eating. However, I did not stop. I continued eating while the manager beat me violently calling me an escapee.<sup>98</sup>

In some cases the punishment for escape was more severe than in the case depicted above. Kang Soon-ae describes what happened when one woman failed an escape attempt: 'One of the women stabbed an officer but he did not die. They built a mound to bury her up to her neck. They gathered all us and made us watch as she was beheaded.'<sup>99</sup>

Often the difficulties a woman experienced in navigating her way around a foreign land while trying to blend into the crowd proved more difficult than her initial escape. To add to this, local *kempeitai* and authorities were on the lookout for escapees.<sup>100</sup> Escape from *ianjo* was no easy task and the difficulties the women faced on escaping coupled with the

95 Pak, *Hostage to My Past*, p. 162.

96 Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*; Yoshimi, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II*.

97 Schellstede, *Comfort Women Speak: Testimony by Sex Slaves of the Japanese Military*.

98 Yoshimi, *Jūgun Ianfu (Comfort Women)*, p. 145.

99 Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

100 Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, p. 58.

threat of repercussions if they failed were great. No doubt this made many women reconsider an escape attempt.

With physical escape difficult, many women turned to the use of narcotics, usually opium or philopon as a form of psychological escape.<sup>101</sup> It has also been suggested that some *ianjo* managers used narcotics as an incentive, allowing their women to buy them if they worked hard.<sup>102</sup> In *ianjo* locations where it was difficult to obtain narcotics, medics have been documented supplying drug-addicted women with substitute morphine injections.<sup>103</sup> However, many women turned to suicide often by drinking the cresol soap provided to them as a disinfectant while others drank a concoction of drugs and alcohol.<sup>104</sup>

Alternatively, some women were killed when depressed soldiers chose a favourite *Ianfu* to commit double suicide with them.<sup>105</sup> Often this occurred in the face of Japan's inevitable defeat where it was the popular Japanese custom to follow the habitual tradition of *gyokusai* – from the Chinese literally meaning broken jewel.<sup>106</sup> Hicks<sup>107</sup> describes how in one such incident, surviving *Ianfu* were forced by military authorities to participate in this tradition:

[In Lameng the] commanding officer considered evacuating the women while the chance remained [but] he was persuaded by his adjutant [that the women] would prefer to die with the men. However, since it was doubtful that the women would follow in the *gyokusai* tradition he had his sergeant throw down two hand grenades into their dugout late at night while they slept.

As a result of their physical treatment at *ianjo*, some women lost their minds, many women were left crippled in body and others were killed.

## Life after the War

The women managed to survive an extremely harsh life on the battlefields of a foreign war, but the reality they have been forced to face since their return to

---

101 *Ibid.*, p. 59.

102 *Ibid.*

103 Kawada Fumiko cited in Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, p. 59.

104 *Ibid.*

105 *Ibid.*, Chin, *op. cit.*, p. 23; Yoshimi, *Jūgun Ianfu (Comfort Women)*, p. 158.

106 A term for the Japanese tradition where in the face of defeat one would either fight to the death or as an alternative, commit mass suicide. As Hicks states the saying goes: 'it is better to be a jewel and be broken than a tile and remain whole: [meaning] an honourable death is better than a dishonourable life' Hicks, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

107 *Ibid.*, p. 114.



Korea in peacetime has been nothing short of a continuation of their hardship, even though in a different form.<sup>108</sup>

### *Repatriation of Ianfu after the War*

At the end of the war, a considerable number of women were repatriated to their homelands, especially those located in *ianjo* throughout China and from the more stable areas in Southeast Asia.<sup>109</sup> On the other hand, it appears that women from unstable areas often were left to settle where the Japanese forces left them.<sup>110</sup> However, Chin<sup>111</sup> purports that the majority of women were not repatriated.

There are cases where in the absence of an official repatriation policy, soldiers took pity on the women and saw to their return personally, usually smuggling them onboard their own repatriation ships.<sup>112</sup> In some cases, it seems that the repatriation of women was carried out begrudgingly. For example, a nurse protested to soldiers about cramped conditions that *Ianfu* endured in the hold of the ship headed to Japan from Surabaya to which she received the reply: ‘There is no need to treat them as human. They’re less than cattle. They should be thankful we’ve taken them at all.’<sup>113</sup>

However, according to a 1994 U.N. press release, only 30 percent of the initial 80 percent of Korean women are recorded to have survived the war which is a survival rate of less than one in three.<sup>114</sup> This was partly because of methods employed by some units to kill the women at the time of Japan’s defeat, in order to hide evidence of their existence.<sup>115</sup> Former *Ianfu* testimonies support this.<sup>116</sup> The opinion that the women would be an embarrassment to Japan if left alive and that they would be an encumbrance to evacuate with the retreating Japanese troops often led to the conclusion to dispose of them.<sup>117</sup>

Sometimes, methods employed by Japanese soldiers to remove the women extended to torture as Kang<sup>118</sup> indicates saying: ‘... one woman had her breast cut off and another had her stomach cut open by a Japanese soldier.’ This was in response to

108 Chin, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

109 Hicks, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-123.

110 *Ibid.*, p. 122.

111 Chin, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

112 Hicks, *op. cit.*, p. 123; Yoshimi, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II*, p. 92.

113 Hicks, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

114 Soh, *Human Rights and the “Comfort Women”*, pp. 123-124.

115 Chin, *op. cit.*, p. 23; Soh, *From Imperial Gifts to Sex Slaves*, p. 66.

116 *Ibid.*; Tanaka, *Japan’s Comfort Women*, p. 59.

117 Kim Il Myon 1976 cited in Hicks, *op. cit.*, p. 115; Soh, *From Imperial Gifts to Sex Slaves*, p. 66.

118 Dolgopol and Paranjape, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90.

finding out that Japan had lost the war. In her own case, a Japanese soldier attacked her with intent to kill her, stabbing her in the back and striking her on the back of the head with the sword.<sup>119</sup>

However, the practice of abandoning the women was far more common than deliberate elimination.<sup>120</sup> During the time of Japan's surrender to the Allied Powers, many women woke up to find their Japanese captors had vanished. As Hwang Kum-joo explains for example:

One day, when we woke up, we discovered that there were no soldiers' queues and there was nobody in sight. There was no sign of any food ... All the Japanese soldiers had run away. There were just the eight of us girls left behind.<sup>121</sup>

In the face of Japan's defeat, it was Ichikawa Ichiro's belief '... that many of the [Korean] women were lost because the soldiers did not know what to do about them.'<sup>122</sup> He added that even in the end, Korean women in particular were discriminated against when it came to repatriating women back to their homeland, saying that many Japanese soldiers who left on trains would not allow Koreans to board.<sup>123</sup>

### *Home-Coming for Ianfu – Economic Hardship and Abandonment*

For many women, the end of the war and their repatriation to their homelands did not bring relief. Many women and in particular Korean women were ostracised by their friends, relatives, and their local communities because they harboured suspicions about the nature of their employment during their absence.<sup>124</sup> Many of them, in order to survive, tried their hand at anything as Kim Bun-sun<sup>125</sup> explains: '... I made a living by peddling almost everything I could lay my hands on, such as tobacco, vegetables, and rice-crackers.' Some women are suspected to have turned to prostitution.<sup>126</sup>

It is fair to say that wartime experiences affected many women's chances of having a stable family life, greatly affecting their future happiness.<sup>127</sup> Most of these women are bitterly resentful of this.<sup>128</sup> Kang Duk-kyung<sup>129</sup> relays her sorrow:

---

119 *Ibid.*

120 Chin, *op. cit.*, p. 23; Hicks, *op. cit.*, pp. 72, 117.

121 Dolgopol and Paranjape, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

122 *Ibid.*, pp. 126-127.

123 *Ibid.*

124 Chin, *op. cit.*, p. 24; Hicks, *op. cit.*

125 Kim, Kim Bun-sun, p. 23.

126 Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*; Schmidt, *op. cit.*

127 *Ibid.*, p. 125.

128 Chin, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

129 Kang, Kang Duk-kyung, p. 19.





Over the years, I had several marriage proposals. But I did not have enough strength to overcome my low self-esteem, guilt, and past nightmares to get married and raise a family. Completely affected by my past, I could not be happy in my marriage. Korea was liberated, and all the Japanese left from our land, but I couldn't be happy. All these years I have lived in secret, in shame, and in pain.

Also, many former *Ianfu* were left barren as a result of their time in *ianjo* which meant that they could not bear heirs – a serious problem in a patriarchal society.<sup>130</sup> According to published testimonies, these women are deeply saddened by the fact that they could not have children and feel now in their old age that they have no one.<sup>131</sup>

### *The Women's Suffering under Korean Patriarchal Culture*

Many women believed the revelation of their past would bring shame on their family and at a great emotional strain to themselves went to any lengths to keep their past hidden. Patriarchal cultural practices, contemporary to Korea at the time, lie at the heart of their reasoning to choose silence as their course of action.<sup>132</sup> In their reasoning, the women identify with the Korean ideal held at the time that a respectable woman was a virtuous woman. From birth, this idea remained a cultural imprint on the women and is prevalent throughout their testimonies.<sup>133</sup> Howard<sup>134</sup> describes what happened when surviving *Ianfu* came home:

When they returned to Korea, they came back as *hwanghyang nyō*.<sup>135</sup> To the Koreans around them, they were neither faithful nor chaste. They were not exemplary women. The families of *Ianfu* feared the ostracism they would suffer if the shameful past was discovered; the women became an extra burden, and there was little chance to marry them off.

Even today, because of social pressures spawned out of patriarchal culture, many women who have come forward and given testimony use pseudonyms.<sup>136</sup> It is fair to assume too, that many women have yet to come forward because of this pressure.<sup>137</sup>

130 Chin, *op. cit.*, pp. 15, 24; Hicks, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

131 Schellstede, *op. cit.*

132 Chin, *op. cit.*, p. 11; Hicks, *op. cit.*, p. 125; Schellstede, *op. cit.*

133 *Ibid.*

134 Howard, *True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women*, p. 7.

135 The Korean term meaning home-coming woman.

136 Howard, *op. cit.*, p. vii.

137 Chin, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

### *Lingering Physical and Mental Trauma*

Apart from social ostracism, many women are still affected by resulting physical symptoms from venereal disease and physical abuse. One woman told interviewers of how debilitating injuries that she had sustained working as an *Ianfu* in China and Sumatra had affected her health decades later, saying: ‘my abdomen used to hurt terribly, as if my womb was being cut away from me.’<sup>138</sup> Additionally, many women had also developed mental disorders and had nervous breakdowns.<sup>139</sup>

As surviving *Ianfu*, they suffered lingering physical ailments and extended psychosomatic trauma as a result of these experiences. They became victims of patriarchal culture where they were socially ostracised. Many of the women experienced great difficulty establishing normality to their lives and did not achieve financial stability in their lives, leaving them with little support both financially and emotionally. Chin purports<sup>140</sup> there are even women who want to avoid all contact with other human beings. That the women still suffer so profoundly is testament to the level of abuse they were subject to as *Ianfu* and how deeply it has affected them.

### **Conclusion**

Occasionally people come to hear my story of a former [*Ianfu*]. I am reluctant to talk about it because it is my shameful, terrible past. Recollecting such a past is so emotionally draining.<sup>141</sup>

This article has examined the question: ‘Who are the *Ianfu*?’ incorporating the use of a socio-historical and socio-cultural study. It has set out to contextualise the lives of *Ianfu* past and present including official and personal histories. It also sought to explain the reasons behind the inclusion of Korean women and to account for their high percentage as *Ianfu*.

This narrative shows that *Ianfu* were women who were taken by the Japanese military into a life of military sexual slavery during the Pacific War. These women were mainly young and most were virgins (particularly Korean women) who were pressed into service as a result of Japanese occupation of their lands.

With specific reference to Korean women, it was Korea’s spatial and cultural

138 Yi, *Wandering around Manchuria, China and Sumatra*, p. 141.

139 Choe, *Silent Suffering*, p. 176.

140 Chin, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

141 Yi, *Yi Young-sook*, p. 101.



proximity to Japan, coupled with Japanese discriminatory practices against Koreans which contributed to their high numbers in the *Ianfu* system. They were given by the Emperor of Japan as ‘gifts’ to his men with the soldier’s comfort, solace, recreation, health, and morale in mind.

Thus, while the *Ianfu* system provided a solution to the Japanese authorities it also transferred the value of women into a basic commodity for everyday usage. The system constituted sexual, racial, ethnic, economic, and class based discrimination.<sup>142</sup> As *Ianfu*, they were racially, sexually, and socially persecuted. They lived an existence whereby they endured physical abuse and repeated sexual torture and as a result often suffered from psychological and physical illnesses throughout their lives.

### *The Japanese Response*

Contemporary Japan is deeply divided over its post-war responsibility when it comes to the matter of the *Ianfu*. Those on the right believe that the *Ianfu* system was a necessary evil. According to 1998 and 1999 opinion surveys over two-thirds of Japanese military veterans: ‘... replied that Japan should neither apologize nor compensate [*Ianfu*] survivors because they were paid for their services’ says Soh.<sup>143</sup> In June 1996, when the then Ministry of Education (now called the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology) announced its approval of the inclusion of *Ianfu* in middle school history textbooks, sectors of the Japanese public reacted negatively, requesting the removal of them.<sup>144</sup> Descriptions given in the textbooks were brief, listing the women in the order of: ‘Women were made to accompany the military ... and were treated horribly’, making no reference specifically to *Ianfu* or the nature of their conditions.<sup>145</sup>

Furthermore, in some instances *Ianfu* have been intermittently referred to as *kosho* (licensed prostitutes) by Japanese conservatives, including former veteran politicians and cabinet ministers.<sup>146</sup> For instance, in June 1996 Okuno Seisuke, a former cabinet member and Justice Minister, asserted that the women pursued prostitution of their own volition, merely as a commercial activity and all claims suggesting that the women had been coerced were unfounded.<sup>147</sup> The leader of the Liberalist groups – *Liberalist History Research Group* and *Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform*

142 Min, *op. cit.*, p. 939; Soh, *Human Rights and the “Comfort Women”*, pp. 123-124.

143 Soh, *Japan’s National/Asian Women’s Fund for the “Comfort Women”*, p. 232.

144 Kitazawa, *Textbook history repeats itself*, p. 53; Sand, *Historians and Public Memory in Japan*, p. 3; Yoshimi, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II*, p. 25.

145 *Ibid.*

146 Soh, *From Imperial Gifts to Sex Slaves*, p. 60.

147 Minister Okuno has also publicly admitted to his personal involvement in incinerating official documents in advance of the American occupation forces arrival. Sand, *op. cit.*, p. 2; Yoshimi, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II*, p. 12.

or *Council for the Creation of New History Textbooks* established in 1995 and 1996 respectively – Fujioka Nobukatsu, along with his co-founder Nishio Kanji assert that the women were nothing more than professional prostitutes, making a very good living during the war when compared to Japanese soldiers.<sup>148</sup> Kobayashi Yoshinori, a *manga* (Japanese comic book) artist and also a member of the History Textbook Reform group produced *manga* in 1997 and again in 1998 which depicted *Ianfu* as prostitutes.<sup>149</sup> Both were best sellers. Yoshimi<sup>150</sup> notes that their influence can not be underestimated in a society where the young largely no longer read books or newspapers and in which the media of *manga* is immensely popular.

However, there is a growing Japanese awareness of the necessity to come to terms openly and honestly with its war responsibility.<sup>151</sup> The question ‘What do you think about politicians’ and the government’s response to the [*Ianfu*] issue?’ was put to the Japanese public in a telephone survey conducted by a Japanese television network, JNN in February 1997.<sup>152</sup> 50.7 percent of respondents replied saying: ‘{Politicians have} made many thoughtless remarks and should apologize properly to Asian countries and the victims.’<sup>153</sup> These remarks given by members of the Japanese government and Japanese public reaction can provide some insight then, on where Japan currently stands on the *Ianfu* issue in a political and public sense.

### *A Growing International Awareness and Support*

Legally and publicly, the *Ianfu* debate has come as far as it has today largely as a result of increasingly vocal women’s groups campaigning to turn the issue into a greater one over women’s rights.<sup>154</sup> Their push for feminist scholarly research into the *Ianfu* issue and general intensification of it helped change societal attitudes in Korea, preparing the way for former *Ianfu* to make public their stories.<sup>155</sup> As a result of their efforts, they brought to the attention of the Korean public and the world the gravity of the *Ianfu* issue for the first time.<sup>156</sup>

Furthermore, rulings made by international governing bodies such as the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) and the Geneva based International

148 McCormack, *Japan’s uncomfortable past*, p. 6; Sand, *op. cit.*, p. 2; Soh, *From Imperial Gifts to Sex Slaves*, p. 73.

149 Yoshimi, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II*, p. 26.

150 *Ibid.*

151 Soh, *Japan’s National/Asian Women’s Fund for the “Comfort Women”*, p. 216.

152 Yoshimi, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II*, p. 27.

153 *Ibid.*

154 Hicks, *op. cit.*, pp. 133; Soh, *From Imperial Gifts to Sex Slaves*, p. 124.

155 Howard, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4.

156 Hicks, *op. cit.*, pp. 133; Soh, *Human Rights and the “Comfort Women”*, p. 124.



Commission of Jurists (ICJ)<sup>157</sup> have also contributed to the debate in recent years. In investigations conducted on behalf of UNCHR in 1998, the *Ianfu* system was categorised as ‘military sexual slavery’ and *ianjo* were described as ‘rape centres’.<sup>158</sup> It was concluded therefore that the *Ianfu* system constituted military sexual slavery which must be prosecuted as a crime against humanity and in the later report it was also stipulated that the Japanese government must prosecute those responsible and compensate its victims.<sup>159</sup> These rulings have significantly changed public perception and attitudes to women’s rights, empowering the women to address their past.<sup>160</sup> What is more, as Soh<sup>161</sup> points out, these hearings categorically shifted the nature of the *Ianfu* debate:

... from bilateral disputes over Japan’s insufficiently acknowledged post-war responsibility toward Korean victims ... to an international indictment of Japan’s violations of women’s human rights during the War.

Recent years have also seen an international shift to address the dehumanising effects of rape, resulting in a redefinition of rape as a human rights problem, aiding the *Ianfu* debate considerably.<sup>162</sup> With this, the representation of *Ianfu* categorically changed to ‘military sex slaves’.<sup>163</sup> Also, as the international community’s understanding of rape in armed conflict moved into a human rights problem, the *Ianfu* debate developed organically, replicating this in its grounds for legal redress. The actions taken by Korean women’s groups and the international community at large meant that the women were now given an opportunity to channel their energies into attempting to receive recognition and recompense.

Furthermore, the women’s age, the change in social climate, the fact that many of them had no living relatives or were ostracised by them, and the realisation that this was probably going to be their last chance to make public their story, compounded in them a feeling that they had nothing to lose, making it the right time for them to come forward.<sup>164</sup> All these factors provided the right environment and the grounds for the *Ianfu* story to emerge, enabling *Ianfu* plaintiffs to sue the Japanese government for compensation.

In regards to compensation from the Japanese government, over and above

<sup>157</sup> In 1994 the ICJ compiled a report on the *Ianfu* issue in which their findings established, among others, the then Japanese government was directly responsible for the running of the *Ianfu* system and for the women’s suffering under it (Dolgopol and Paranjape, *op. cit.*, pp. 201-202).

<sup>158</sup> McDougall, *Contemporary Forms of Slavery*.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>161</sup> Soh, *From Imperial Gifts to Sex Slaves*, p. 60.

<sup>162</sup> Mackinnon cited in Soh, *From Imperial Gifts to Sex Slaves*, p. 72.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

anything else, to receive a clear apology from the Japanese government appears to be the main form of compensation the women want.<sup>165</sup> However, there are also many women in favour of receiving monetary compensation.<sup>166</sup>

While Japan has issued several public apologies (made by Japanese prime ministers to former *Ianfu* in the 1990s), these apologies were of a private nature rather than of an official nature. Similarly, Japanese government financial contributions have been made to private funds set up to compensate surviving *Ianfu*.<sup>167</sup> However, as of yet, Japan has not compensated any former *Ianfu* through official channels. Kim Soon-duk<sup>168</sup> relays her thoughts on this:

I am very unhappy with the Japanese government today. It was good they finally admitted their past crime. But their apologies are only half-hearted. They try to let civilian organizations pay some compensation. But it was the government's deeds.

Continuing on, Kim Soon-duk<sup>169</sup> explains her annoyance of her own government saying:

I am unhappy with the Korean government also. They asked us to come out from hiding and to speak out to let people know the truth. So I did. I spoke out my past that had been hidden even from my mother. Now I wish the Korean Government would be more forceful in representing our interests, and help us regain our dignity. I wish they would pursue it vigorously until our goals are achieved.

Many women feel the same way and see Korea's actions as being motivated by wishing not to antagonise the Japanese government to the point where Japanese-Korean financial aid may be jeopardised.<sup>170</sup> Thus, Korea will not advance the *Ianfu* issue if it is at the expense of the provision of Japanese funds that improve the Korean economy.<sup>171</sup>

When it comes to just one wish for all of the women I believe Kim II Myon<sup>172</sup> expresses it best saying: 'From what he knew of many, they would prefer to "rub out the past with an eraser, if that were possible."<sup>173</sup> If only this were possible, I am sure all women would choose this as their preferred form of compensation.

165 Howard, *op. cit.*; Schellstede, *op. cit.*

166 *Ibid.*

167 Soh, *Japan's National/Asian Women's Fund for the "Comfort Women"*, p. 221.

168 Kim, *Kim Soon-duk*, p. 40.

169 *Ibid.*

170 Howard, *op. cit.*; Schellstede, *op. cit.*; Soh, *Politics of the Victim/Victor Complex*, p. 158; Yoshimi, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II*, pp. 5-6.

171 *Ibid.*

172 Kim II Myon in Hicks, *The Comfort Women*, p. 127.

173 This was in response to Yoshida Seiji's recommendation that a memorial be erected in the women's honour at Yasukuni Shrine (*Ibid.*).



## References

- Chòe, M.-s., 'Silent Suffering', in Howard, K. (ed.), *True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women* (London: Cassell, 1995), pp. 167-176.
- Chin, S. C., 'Korean Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan', in Howard, K. (ed.), *True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women*, (London: Cassell, 1995), pp. 11-30.
- Dolgopol, U. and Paranjape, S., 'Comfort Women - an unfinished ordeal: Report of a Mission', *International Commission of Jurists Geneva*, 1994.
- Edgerton, R. B., *Warriors of the Rising Sun: A History of the Japanese Military* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1997).
- Hein, L. and Selden, M., 'Learning Citizenship from the Past: Textbook Nationalism, Global Context, and Social Change', *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, vol. 30, no. 2 (1998), pp. 3-15.
- Hicks, G. L., *The Comfort Women* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin Pty Ltd, 1995).
- Hayashi, H., 'Japanese Comfort Women in Southeast Asia', *Japan Forum*, vol. 10, no. 2 (1998), pp. 1-12.
- Howard, K. (ed.), *True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women* (London: Cassell, 1995).
- Kang, Duk-kyung., 'Kang Duk-kyung', in Schellstede, S. C. (ed.), *Comfort Women Speak: Testimony by Sex Slaves of the Japanese Military* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 2000), pp. 15-19.
- Kim, Bun-sun., 'Kim Bun-sun', in Schellstede, S. C. (ed.), *Comfort Women Speak: Testimony by Sex Slaves of the Japanese Military* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 2000), pp. 21-23.
- Kim, Soon-duk., 'Kim Soon-duk', in Schellstede, S. C. (ed.), *Comfort Women Speak: Testimony by Sex Slaves of the Japanese Military* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 2000), pp. 37-41.
- Kim, Sang-hi., 'Kim Sang-hi', in Schellstede, S. C. (ed.), *Comfort Women Speak: Testimony by Sex Slaves of the Japanese Military* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 2000), pp. 29-31.
- Kim, Yoon-shim., 'Kim Yoon-shim', in Schellstede, S. C. (ed.), *Comfort Women Speak: Testimony by Sex Slaves of the Japanese Military* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 2000), pp. 43-47.
- Kim, Young-shil., 'Kim Young-shil', in Schellstede, S. C. (ed.), *Comfort Women Speak: Testimony by Sex Slaves of the Japanese Military* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 2000), pp. 49-51.
- Kitazawa, T., 'Textbook history repeats itself', *Japan Quarterly*, vol. 48, no. 3 (2001), pp. 51-53.
- McCormack, G., 'Japan's uncomfortable past', *History Today*, vol. 48, no. 5 (1998), pp. 5-6.
- McDougall, G. J., 'Contemporary Forms of Slavery: Systematic rape, sexual slavery and slavery-like practices during armed conflict', *The United Nations Commission on Human Rights*, 1998.
- Min, P. G., 'Korean "Comfort Women": The Intersection of Colonial Power, Gender, and Class', *Gender and Society*, vol. 17, no. 6 (2003), pp. 938-957.

- Moon, K. H. S., 'South Korean Movements against Militarized Sexual Labor', *Asian Survey*, vol. 39, no. 2 (1999), pp. 310-327.
- Nishio, K., *Atarashi Rekishi Kyōkasho (New History Textbook)* (Fusō: Fusō, 2001).
- Ogawa, S., 'The Difficulty of Apology: Japan's Struggle with Memory and Guilt', *Harvard International Review*, vol. 22, no. 3 (2000), pp. 42-46.
- Pak, S., 'Hostage to My Past', in Howard, K. (ed.), *True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women* (London: Cassell, 1995), pp. 158-167.
- Peattie, M. R., 'Introduction' in Peattie, M. R. and Myers, R. H. (eds.), *The Japanese Colonial Empire 1895-1945*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 1-52.
- Sand, J., 'Historians and Public Memory in Japan: The "Comfort Women" Controversy', *History and Memory*, vol. 11, no. 2 (1999), pp. 115-126.
- Schellstede, S. C. (ed.), *Comfort Women Speak: Testimony by Sex Slaves of the Japanese Military* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 2000).
- Schmidt, D. A., *Ianfu - The Comfort Women of the Japanese Imperial Army of the Pacific War* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2000).
- Senda, K., *Jugun Ianfu (Military Comfort Women)* (Tokyo: Sanichi Shobo, 1978).
- Shimazu, N., 'Popular Representations of the Past: The Case of Postwar Japan', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 38, no. 1 (2003), pp. 101-116.
- Shuko, O., 'The difficulty of apology', *Harvard International Review*, vol. 22, no. 3(2000), p. 42.
- Soh, C. S., 'The Korean "Comfort Women": Movement for Redress', *Asian Survey*, vol. 36, no. 12 (1996), pp.1226-1240.
- , 'From Imperial Gifts to Sex Slaves: Theorizing Symbolic Representations of the "Comfort Women"', *Social Science Japan Journal*, vol. 3, no. 1 (2000a), pp. 59-76.
- , 'Human Rights and the "Comfort Women"', *Peace Review*, vol. 12, no. 1 (2000b), pp. 123-129.
- , 'Japan's National/Asian Women's Fund for "Comfort Women"', *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 76, no. 2 (2003a), pp. 209-233.
- , 'Politics of the Victim/Victor Complex: Interpreting South Korea's National Furor over Japanese History Textbooks', *American Asian Review*, vol. 21, no. 4 (2003b), pp. 145-178.
- , 'Women's Sexual Labor and State in Korean History', *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 15, no. 4 (2004), pp. 170-177.
- Tanaka, Y., *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996).
- , *Japan's Comfort Women: Sexual slavery and prostitution during World War II and the US occupation* (London: Routledge, 2002).
- Ueno, C., 'The Politics of Memory: Nation, Individual and Self', *History and Memory*, vol. 11, no. 2 (1999), p. 129-145.





- Yi, T., 'Wandering around Manchuria, China and Sumatra', in Howard, K. (ed.), *True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women* (London: Cassell, 1995), pp. 134-142.
- Yi, Young-sook., 'Yi Young-sook', in Schellstede, S. C. (ed.), *Comfort Women Speak: Testimony by Sex Slaves of the Japanese Military* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 2000), pp. 99-101.
- Yi, Yong-suk., 'I Will No Longer Harbour Resentment', In Howard, K. (ed.), *True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women*, (London: Cassell, 1995), pp. 50-57.
- Yoshimi, Y., *A compilation of documents on the military comfort women issue* (Seoul: Sumundang, 1993).
- , *Jūgun Ianfu (Comfort Women)* (Iwanami: Yasue Ryouzuke, 1995)
- , *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

# **The Replication and Excess of Disciplinary Power in Sekigun and Aum Shinrikyo – A Foucaultian Approach**

Philip N. Eate  
University of Adelaide

## **Abstract**

This article aims to explain why both the left wing extremist group Sekigun (Red Army) and the new religious sect Aum Shinrikyo (The Supreme Truth of Aum) adopted violent and deadly forms of disciplinary power in their pursuit of an idealistic society.

The approach in this article differs from the existing literature in that it is mainly concerned with why both groups failed to provide a more preferable alternative to the existing state structure and finally internalised their violence, torturing their own members.

Foucaultian theory will be utilised in order to analyse the role that hierarchy and hierarchical surveillance played in re-enforcing the harsh discipline and training methods used by both groups. In this approach this article will show that despite the efforts of both Sekigun and Aum Shinrikyo to create the antithesis to everything they rejected within Japanese society they each paradoxically reproduced and magnified within their own social organisations the least desirable societal traits of elitism, exclusivity and conformity using the most extreme disciplinary measures to do so.

## **Keywords**

Sekigun, Aum Shinrikyo, Foucault, Discipline, Surveillance

## **Introduction**

This article deals with the replication of modes of disciplinary power in the left-wing extremist group Sekigun (Red Army) and the new religious sect, Aum Shinrikyo (The Supreme Truth of Aum), focusing on the organizational structure of both groups and how they mirrored those found in mainstream Japanese society.



It is the contention of this article that both Sekigun and the Aum Shinrikyo replicated characteristics prominent in Japanese society – such as elitism, competitiveness and the tendency to exclude those who do not conform to the conventions of the group – and perpetuated these further. It will argue that while those who joined either Sekigun or Aum Shinrikyo had their own personal motives for doing so and brought with them certain needs and expectations which they believed the groups could fulfil, both Sekigun and Aum Shinrikyo ultimately failed to produce the sort of societies that their members had hoped for; the torture-killings of a number of members from each group serve as a motif for how far both groups had strayed from their original goals.

Foucaultian theory will be utilized in order to analyze the role that hierarchy and hierarchical surveillance played in re-enforcing the harsh discipline and training methods used by both groups. In this approach this article seeks to illustrate how these young people's efforts to resist the conventional institutions of Japanese society – which they viewed as oppressive, alienating, and exclusive – led them to join new groups which ended up to be more closed and totalitarian than the one they had left.

### The Asama-sanso Incident

In December 1971 Sekigun, a small left-wing extremist organization, retreated to an isolated mountain hideout in the Japanese Alps of Gunma prefecture to take part in joint military exercises with a second revolutionary group. In the aftermath of what was dubbed in the Japanese media as the Asama-sanso<sup>1</sup> Incident, police interrogations revealed the details of violent purges that had been carried out at the hideout.<sup>2</sup> According to those involved, the first death was accidental. Sekigun's leader, Mori Tsuneo, had become displeased with the progress of the training of one member, Ozaki Atsuo, and decided that he needed to engage in a boxing match with a much stronger opponent in order to 'toughen him up' into a real revolutionary fighter.<sup>3</sup> Over the next two days Ozaki was left tied upright to a doorpost and beaten intermittently by the other group members.<sup>4</sup> Mori later checked Ozaki and found him to be unable to make a *sokatsu* – a form of self-assessment summarizing one's personal shortcomings commonly employed by left-wing organizations – as a result of the beatings. He declared that Ozaki had not yet achieved total 'communist transformation'<sup>5</sup> and ordered that Ozaki be beaten again. When Ozaki was checked later to submit his *sokatsu* he was found dead.<sup>6</sup> In the days that followed Ozaki's death, eleven others would be killed in a similar fashion.

1 The name of a holiday lodge located below Mount Asama used as the group's mountain hideout.

2 Igarashi, 'Dead Bodies and Living Guns', p. 122.

3 Steinhoff, 'Death by Defeatism', p. 207.

4 Lifton, 'A Japanese Phenomenon', p. 266.

5 Steinhoff, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

6 Lifton, *op. cit.*, p. 266.

## The Aum Affair

In March 1995, five disciples of the religious sect, Aum Shinrikyo, under order of their guru, Asahara Shoko, released sarin poison gas on the Tokyo Subway killing twelve people and injuring as many as 5,000 more.<sup>7</sup> Police investigation would later reveal, however, that this was neither the first nor the last of such acts committed by the sect. These acts of violence ranged from the murders of public opponents of the group, to beatings of members inside the movement, and the secret disposal of bodies of followers who had died accidentally as a result of Aum's harsh ascetic practices.<sup>8</sup> The first death - that of Aum disciple Majima Terayuki - occurred in mid-1988 as a consequence of one of the group's austere training procedures.<sup>9</sup> The practice undertaken by Majima was that of inverted suspension: having one's legs bound by rope and hung upside down for intervals exceeding 90 minutes<sup>10</sup> interspersed by immersion into extremely cold water, resulting in Majima's case, in shock and subsequent death.<sup>11</sup>

## Commonalities between Sekigun and Aum Shinrikyo

Sekigun represented what was perhaps the most extreme element of the Japanese student movements of the 1960s.<sup>12</sup> The group differentiated itself from other groups in existence at the time through its advocacy of armed revolution as a means to toppling what they perceived to be the combined oppression and exploitation by the Japanese state and the international bourgeoisie.<sup>13</sup> So as to overcome their own latent bourgeois propensities and prove their commitment to the cause of revolution, Sekigun's members took part in Spartan training exercises and self-reflection meetings, which eventually escalated into the torture-killings of twelve of their comrades.<sup>14</sup>

Aum Shinrikyo, on the other hand, was one of the many new religious sects of the 1980s. The group was notable for attracting a high percentage of young people - often idealistic yet frustrated with the pressures and materialistic values of 'progress' and 'rationalism' existent in contemporary Japanese society.<sup>15</sup> Aum also stood apart from most other Japanese religious movements by insisting that its members renounce the world by giving up their material possessions, leaving their families, and joining the Aum

7 Reader, 'A Death in the Culture of Coercive Asceticism', p. 23.

8 *Ibid.*

9 Lifton, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

10 Reader, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

11 Lifton, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

12 Steinhoff, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

13 Kuriyama, 'Terrorism at Tel Aviv Airport and a New Left Group in Japan', p. 341.

14 Igarashi, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

15 McCormack and Box, 'Terror in Japan', *Japan Focus*.



commune.<sup>16</sup> Here they would focus entirely on their spiritual practice and undertake austerities so as to remove from themselves the negative *karma* that was supposedly the cause of their individual suffering but also the source of so many of Japan's social problems.<sup>17</sup> To this end, Aum disciples, under the guidance of the sect's guru, Asahara Shoko, submitted themselves to extremely harsh forms of physical training that often crossed the line between discipline and torture<sup>18</sup> in the hope of becoming spiritually superior to those outside of the commune. These practices, however, would eventually culminate in the deaths of several Aum members.

Both Sekigun and Aum Shinrikyo share a number of commonalities which make studying them within a comparative framework feasible: both groups attracted idealistic young people, usually university students, who were concerned with the deep social, political, and moral problems produced by the narrowly focused, conservative Japanese state;<sup>19</sup> both Sekigun and Aum Shinrikyo featured vertically organized social structures mirroring the elitist hierarchical structuring of contemporary Japanese society; members of both Sekigun and Aum Shinrikyo came to view themselves as revolutionary and spiritual elites respectively, physically isolated themselves from the rest of mainstream society, and undertook harsh corporal training exercises to further confirm their place as the rightful future leaders of Japan;<sup>20</sup> finally, in both groups, violence towards their own members as well as acts of terror directed at the public came to be legitimized by the purity of their purpose.<sup>21</sup>

### **The Organization: Hierarchy, Authority, Discipline and Correct Training**

It is important that we address the origins of the hierarchical organizational structures adopted by both Sekigun and Aum Shinrikyo here because it illustrates the degree to which both groups developed into highly authoritarian organizations that exerted extreme disciplinary measures on their members.

Sekigun and Aum Shinrikyo shared a similar hierarchical organisational structure. While the ideologies behind this organisation might have differed for each group, the end results were very similar: strong vertical links between members representing status within the group, yet at the same time, relatively weak horizontal relations between members.

---

16 Reader, 'Creation, Preservation and Destruction', p. 82.

17 Lifton, 'Crossing the Threshold', p. 204.

18 Lifton, 'The Guru and His Cult', p. 27.

19 McCormack and Box, *op. cit.*

20 Igarashi, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

21 McCormack and Box, *op. cit.*

### *Organisational Structure and Hierarchy in Sekigun - Democratic Centralism*

As a splinter-faction originally associated with the Communist League which itself was initially part of the Japanese Communist Party-dominated Zengakuren,<sup>22</sup> Sekigun based its vertical command structure on the communist system of democratic centralism.<sup>23</sup> This system is an arrangement whereby each level of an organization elects representatives to the decision-making body at the next highest level.<sup>24</sup> As representatives at each level are chosen on the basis of their support at the level beneath them – and hence have a certain established power base behind them – policy conflicts between representatives tend to result in factionalism.<sup>25</sup> It was as a result of this propensity for factionalism that Sekigun was forced to split from the Communist League in 1969.

Immediately after its inception, Sekigun reproduced the same type of communist vertical organisational structure complete with formal representation for regional and local units and final decision-making power concentrated in the hands of the highest level central committee.<sup>26</sup> Thus, from the very beginning there was a clear sense of vertical hierarchy in Sekigun. Although the internal relations of the elected central committee were initially loose and egalitarian with the relationship between the committee and the larger membership beneath not clearly defined,<sup>27</sup> after a series of failed ‘military’ operations which facilitated the arrests of many of the group’s members – including six of the original seven representatives of the central committee – Sekigun came under the leadership of Mori Tsuneo, who would transform it into a highly autocratic organization.<sup>28</sup>

### *Autocratic Organization*

Under Mori, the remaining Sekigun membership was reorganized in an effort to further militarize the group.<sup>29</sup> It still maintained its vertical command structure, however. Mori remained at the head of the group whilst directly beneath him a small circle of his closest associates formed the new central committee.<sup>30</sup> The egalitarian process of debating strategies which had existed previously was also abandoned in favour of a

22 The Zengakuren (an acronym for Zen Nihon Gakusei Jichikai Sourengou or ‘All-Japan Federation of Student Self-Governing Associations’) was the federation of student government associations in Japan. It emerged in 1948 with close ties to the Japanese Communist Party (JCP), however, as a result of conflict over issues of ideology the Zengakuren began to fragment into a number of factions opposed to the JCP throughout the 1960s. For further discussion see for instance Fuse, ‘Student Radicalism in Japan’, pp. 325 – 342 and Steinhoff, ‘Student Conflict’.

23 Steinhoff, ‘Hijackers, Bombers and Bank Robbers’, p. 726.

24 Steinhoff, ‘Student Conflict’, p. 178.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 179.

26 *Ibid.*

27 Steinhoff, ‘Hijackers, Bombers and Bank Robbers’, p. 726.

28 Steinhoff, ‘Three Women Who Loved the Left’, p. 310.

29 Igarashi, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

30 Steinhoff, ‘Death by Defeatism’, p. 197.



more hierarchical flow of orders between different levels – something justified as being appropriate for an ‘army’ in which ‘soldiers’ obey orders.<sup>31</sup> Initially, Mori’s determination to militarize Sekigun led to the group’s undertaking of a series of bank robberies which, though successful, placed them under increasing pressure from police and alienated the general public as well as some of Sekigun’s own members.<sup>32</sup>

### *Merging Two Organizations*

By 1971, in an effort to form an armed revolutionary army, Sekigun was forced into a merger with another left-wing extremist group in operation at the time, the KAK (Keihin Ampo Kyoto, also known as Tokyo-Yokohama Joint Struggle against Japan-U.S. Security Treaty<sup>33</sup>), which had obtained a cache of firearms and ammunition through a series of gun shop robberies and police box raids but was short of money – a commodity which Sekigun now had in abundance.<sup>34</sup> The KAK had moved into an abandoned cabin in the Japanese Alps and asked supporters to join them. While Mori was not interested in retreating into the mountains entirely, he saw the KAK’s weapons and large membership as valuable assets.

### *Group Structure of the KAK*

Just like Sekigun, the KAK was a product of the many schisms common within the student movement at the time, however, the KAK differed from Sekigun in that it was more ideologically Maoist and nationalistically anti-American.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, its radical feminist position had attracted a greater number of women to the group. Compared to Sekigun, the KAK though hierarchical, was also characterized by somewhat stronger horizontal connections between its members.<sup>36</sup> Nonetheless, the group did have a central leadership headed by Nagata Hiroko.<sup>37</sup> As in Mori’s case, leadership of the KAK had fallen into Nagata’s hands as a result of a series of arrests which both decimated the ranks of the organisation and placed its original leader in prison.<sup>38</sup>

---

31 Steinhoff, ‘Hijackers, Bombers and Bank Robbers’, p. 730.

32 Igarashi, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

33 Kuriyama, *op. cit.*, p. 343.

34 Steinhoff, ‘Death by Defeatism’, p. 196.

35 *Ibid.*

36 Igarashi, ‘Dead Bodies and Living Guns’, p. 129.

37 Steinhoff, ‘Three Women Who Loved the Left’, pp. 309 - 310.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 308.

## Organizational Fusion - Rengo Sekigun (United Red Army)

The relatively similar organizational structures enabled the two groups to create a unified leadership between Mori's central committee and Nagata's leadership group.<sup>39</sup> Although Mori attempted to give the illusion that he and Nagata were equals, it was clear from the outset that he was in charge and Nagata willingly deferred to him.

### *The New Hierarchy*

The new group dubbed Rengo Sekigun (United Red Army) was, thus, noticeably hierarchical; Mori was first in command with Nagata just below him. Beneath them, a central committee was formed of their most trusted associates; and under the command of this committee was a core membership which included a number of 'soldiers' from both factions who had been underground for a number of months. Both groups had also brought to Rengo Sekigun a number of members who had had no underground experience. In the KAK's case this included a substantial group of women and even some children,<sup>40</sup> reinforcing a social order founded not only on who could muster the biggest support base, but also on practical 'military' experience. Consequently, those who wanted to become 'real soldiers' had to prove themselves and their commitment to the group – or more specifically, gain Mori's approval. One could be accepted by the Rengo Sekigun leadership and essentially move up the pecking order in a number of ways. These included volunteering for missions or giving a *sokatsu* – a sort of critical self-assessment commonly used in communist organizations. The ability to improve one's status through proving one's commitment to the group will be explored in further detail later.

To briefly summarize, Sekigun had adopted strong vertical organization right from the movement's inception basing its organizational structure on the system of communist democratic centralism. Under Mori's leadership, this command structure only became more autocratic. After Sekigun merged with the KAK – a similarly hierarchically ordered organization – the group retained its vertical chain of command and simply assimilated the KAK membership into the existing organizational structure, albeit under the new name of Rengo Sekigun.

Now this article will turn to the origins of Aum Shinrikyo's organizational structure and how it developed a complex, stratified social hierarchy which mirrored not only the one established within Sekigun, but which can be found in Japanese society generally.

<sup>39</sup> Steinhoff, 'Death by Defeatism', p. 197.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198.





## Spiritual Hierarchy in Aum Shinrikyo - *Shukke* (renunciants) and *Zaike* (lay members)

Similarly to Sekigun, shortly after the establishment of Aum Shinrikyo, the sect adopted a vertical organizational structure which ranked its members according to stages of spiritual attainment. This hierarchical structure began to emerge in September 1986 when Aum's guru Asahara Shoko and his followers formed a *sangha*, a type of Buddhist monastic community in which those who want to commit themselves totally to their religious practice could be 'free of all attachments and worldly ways'.<sup>41</sup> This created an immediate distinction between those who had moved to the *sangha* as *shukke* (renunciants, or literally 'left home') and *zaike* (lay members) those unable or unwilling to do so. Although the sect later provided a special course for *zaike* who still wanted to practice their spiritual beliefs in the secular world and reach a state close to Buddhahood, it was believed within Aum that only those who had truly renounced the world and had become *shukke* could ever reach the highest levels of spiritual enlightenment and attain *gedatsu* (liberation).<sup>42</sup> Thus, while the value that Aum Shinrikyo placed on renunciation of the secular world was founded in their interpretation of Buddhist monasticism<sup>43</sup> it also established the first distinct stratum in the group's internal hierarchical structure by awarding *shukke* a higher social status than *zaike* within Aum.

### *Hierarchy Within the Sangha (Monastic Community)*

The Aum Elite: As more people joined the *sangha* so an increasingly complex hierarchical social structure began to emerge with names, clothing and symbols associated with each rank. At the top of this hierarchy was Asahara himself. As the only person to have attained ultimate liberation, Asahara was regarded by his followers as the 'victor of truth'<sup>44</sup> and consequently held the rank of 'ultimate liberated master'<sup>45</sup> meaning that Asahara alone could wear the purple robes symbolising his level of spiritual perfection. Beneath Asahara were four levels of Aum *shi* (masters): the highest rank was *seitaishi* or sacred grand master who wore green tunics; below these were the *seigoshi* (sacred awakened masters) who wore red tunics; and beneath them the *shi* and *shiho* or teacher and assistant teacher respectively – both ranks wearing different styles of white clothing.<sup>46</sup> The *seitaishi*, *seigoshi* and *shi* constituted Aum's spiritual elite<sup>47</sup> who, as well as being granted the title of 'master', were also bestowed with individual 'holy names'

41 Reader, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

42 Lifton, 'The Guru and His Cult', p. 35.

43 Reader, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

44 Lifton, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

45 Reader, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

46 *Ibid.*

47 Lifton, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

selected by Asahara further marking them as the guru's 'chosen' elite.<sup>48</sup>

Aum's Novices: Just as the highest ranking members of the *sangha* were organized hierarchically according to their level of spiritual attainment, so too were the lowest ranking *shukke*, known in Aum as *samana* – a Sanskrit word for one who has renounced the secular world - divided into ranks.<sup>49</sup> The lowest ranking *samana* tended to be the newest members of the *sangha* and were automatically classed as *samana* novices. This group of junior disciples could be clearly differentiated from the other *samana* by their orange robes. The higher ranking *samana* and *samanacho* (head *samana*) wore the same style of white robes although *samanacho* differed from lower members in that Asahara had given them their own holy name. It is interesting to note the way in which the lowest Aum members, the *samana* novices, were clearly signified as being at the bottom of Aum's spiritual hierarchy by their orange robes. They were at least considered a part of the *sangha* community, however; the *zaike* who had not yet joined the *sangha* on the other hand were eventually viewed by Asahara dismissively as *okyakusama* (guests).<sup>50</sup>

Thus, Aum's hierarchical organizational structure was intrinsically linked to a spiritual hierarchy, which ranked members according to their supposed level of spiritual achievement. On the surface this might seem ironic given that those who chose to join the *sangha* did so to renounce the society they viewed as competitive, status-conscious and materialistic. To understand why these individuals willingly took part in an equally hierarchical and status-conscious culture within the Aum commune, however, we must look at the group's reasoning behind adopting such an organizational system.

### **Aum's Hierarchy as a Process of 'Liberation' - Defining Aum's Objectives**

Aum's primary objective was to bring salvation in the form of *gedatsu* (liberation) to as many people as possible before a final world-ending cataclysm which Asahara had prophesised would take place at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. While many were attracted to Aum by the idea of attaining *gedatsu* it remained a vaguely defined concept. Indeed, for Aum, the difficulty of demonstrating *gedatsu* became a major predicament; the sect had after all encouraged people to give up their families, possessions and social status with the promise that attaining *gedatsu* was possible.<sup>51</sup> Clearly defining what *gedatsu* was and the stages through which one had to proceed in order to attain it became a pressing

48 Reader, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 87.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 86.

51 Susumu, 'The Evolution of Aum Shinrikyo', p. 29.



issue for Asahara as many *shukke* began to feel uncertain about their spiritual progress.<sup>52</sup> Establishing clear guidelines for the process of *gedatsu* therefore was paramount in retaining Aum membership.

### *The Stages of Gedatsu and the Spiritual Hierarchy*

In 1987, Asahara established a hierarchical (loosely Buddhist) cosmology which postulated that above the material world of humans there were two higher realms – the Astral realm and the Causal realm – each of which being subdivided into lower, middle and upper regions. Corresponding to each region of this cosmological system were specific types of yoga, which once mastered, allowed one to ascend through the various realms during meditation.<sup>53</sup> Reaching the highest realm, or Maha Nirvana, correlated to the attainment of *gedatsu*.

Each of these correlative relations between cosmological realms and yogic practices were referred to in Aum as stages (*suteji*)<sup>54</sup> which Asahara claimed one moved up through to achieve ‘the ultimate state.’<sup>55</sup> As each realm had different characteristics, only Asahara – the ‘ultimate liberated master’ – could divine whether a disciple had reached a higher level of practice based on their accounts of what they had *seen* whilst meditating.<sup>56</sup> Completion of each stage meant that the disciple was one step closer to reaching *gedatsu*, however, it also granted more earthly rewards: promotion to a higher rank, different coloured garments or the appellation of a holy name. Thus, Asahara had not only developed a hierarchical cosmology for Aum, but a framework in which disciples could gauge their level of progress up the spiritual hierarchy.<sup>57</sup>

To summarize, Aum’s system of organizational and spiritual stratification actually emerged out of what the sect saw to be the necessity to ‘save’ as many people as possible.<sup>58</sup> Although the spiritual hierarchy which Asahara conceptualised was initially intended to serve as a guide for a process of spiritual development which otherwise would have been difficult to comprehend, the process of liberation itself ultimately perpetuated the existing vertical organization structure.

---

52 *Ibid.*

53 Reader, *op. cit.*, pp. 76 - 77.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 86.

55 *Mahayana* issue 20, pp. 142-43 cited in Shimazono, ‘The Evolution of Aum Shinrikyo’, p. 30.

56 Reader, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

57 Lifton, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

58 Shimazono, ‘The Evolution of Aum Shinrikyo’, p. 29.

## The Duplication of Patterns of Japanese Organisational Structure

Strong vertical organization, social stratification, high status consciousness and competitiveness, and a disregard for outsiders have generally been perceived as the hallmarks of Japanese social organization.<sup>59</sup> Sekigun and Aum Shinrikyo were established to provide an alternative to what those who joined believed were the endemic problems found in Japanese society. The examination of the organisational structures and the ideological/spiritual structures which supported them, however, indicates that clear parallels can be drawn not only between Sekigun and Aum but also between both groups and Japanese society in general. As discussed above, Sekigun was a product of the Japanese student movement – a group which opposed the autocratic, authoritarian power of the Japanese state and cited the hierarchical organization of tertiary education as some of the main reasons for their discontent. Thus, in opposing these power structures which in their view existed solely to benefit the elite members of the ruling ‘bourgeoisie’ class,<sup>60</sup> their fundamental ideological inclinations were towards the pursuit of greater social equality and freedom from oppression.<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, Aum Shinrikyo was supposedly established by those who opposed the emptiness created by the materialistic competitiveness and social stratification of contemporary Japanese society.<sup>62</sup> The analysis of the organizational patterns of Sekigun and Aum presented above, however, suggests that contrary to their oppositionist stances towards various aspects of Japanese society, and especially its hierarchical structure, these groups were indeed rigidly vertically organized, highly stratified, with tendencies towards authoritarianism.

### *The Early Stages of Authoritarian Control*

In addition to establishing complex hierarchical structures that reinforced vertical relations between members of different status, both groups also adopted deliberate strategies to weaken horizontal relations between members of the same status. In both Sekigun and Aum, members were often physically separated from one another or turned against each other in an effort to assure both their loyalty to the greater cause of the group and submission to the hierarchical order. This was certainly the case in Sekigun for Kato Yoshitaka and Kojima Kazuko and the same can be said of former Aum disciple Masutani Hajime. These cases will now be discussed in sequence to illustrate the stringency of the social order adopted by both groups and the extent to which horizontal relations were undermined.

59 For references to social stratification and high status consciousness see for instance Mohwald, ‘Social Stratification’; Bestor, ‘Conflict, Legitimacy and Tradition in a Tokyo Neighbourhood’; Steinhoff, ‘Death by Defeatism and Other Fables’. For references to competition see for instance Vogel, ‘Examination Hell’, pp. 40-67 and Sugimoto, ‘Diversity and Unity in Education’. For reference to the exclusion of outsiders, see Ishida, ‘Conflict and Its Accommodation’.

60 Igarashi, ‘Dead Bodies and Living Guns’, p. 25.

61 Steinhoff, ‘Portrait of a Terrorist’, pp. 830 – 831.

62 Reader, *op. cit.*, p. 86.



*'To select and to levy'<sup>63</sup> - The case of Kato Yoshitaka and Kojima Kazuko*

After retreating to an abandoned cabin deep in the Japanese Alps, Mori decided that the members of Sekigun and the KAK should undergo joint training exercises as a type of 'unification ritual'<sup>64</sup> designed to fuse the separate factions together into one revolutionary militia. Whilst this process was initially envisaged as a sort of team bonding exercise, the result did not so much bring together the members of both groups as divide individual members. An illustration of this can be found in KAK members Kato Yoshitaka and Kojima Kazuko, who Mori decided were not fully committed to the group and thus needed to undergo 'communist transformation.'<sup>65</sup>

Nagata – who later stated that she was ashamed that followers might appear less revolutionary to Mori – fully endorsed whatever measures he proposed in order to bring about Kato's and Kojima's communist transformation. Subsequently, Nagata suggested that Kato and Kojima be put together at a writing desk so that they could prepare their *sokatsu* – a critical self-analysis outlining personal failings and how they intended to correct them. Mori, quickly irritated by their lack of progress, ordered the pair separated and then increased their restrictions further; forcing them to kneel in a formal Japanese posture, denying them food and, most significantly, prohibiting their communication with other group members.<sup>66</sup> Regardless of the intended outcome of these restrictions, Mori effectively isolated Kato and Kojima from one another as well as from others in the group, thus weakening the links between them and their comrades and reiterating the new pecking order within Rengo Sekigun.

*Celibacy as an Act of Revolution*

In the middle of the night, Kojima accused Kato of molesting her whilst she had been sleeping. Although both Nagata and Mori were outraged, they were not so much concerned about the claim of sexual misconduct itself as they were with the fact that Kojima and Kato – who were supposed to be focusing on their communist transformation – were distracted by private emotions.<sup>67</sup> Subsequently, Mori ordered the pair beaten by the rest of the group, Kojima being included in the beating because Mori thought she was attempting to portray herself as a 'martyred heroine'.<sup>68</sup> The beatings ultimately produced further sexual confessions from Kojima and Kato who,

63 Foucault, 'The Means of Correct Training', p. 170.

64 Steinhoff, 'Death by Defeatism and Other Fables', p. 197.

65 *Ibid.*, p. 204.

66 *Ibid.*

67 *Ibid.*

68 *Ibid.*, p. 224.

in giving such candid *sokatsu*, probably thought that they were making progress with their communist transformation. Communist transformation, much like the notion of *gedatsu* for Aum Shinrikyo however, was a vague, poorly defined concept; attainment of which being largely dependent upon Mori's own satisfaction that communisation had been achieved.<sup>69</sup>

Despite Mori's view that romantic relations were a distraction from revolutionary ambitions, marriage between members of Sekigun as well as members of the KAK was not uncommon – Nagata was already married to KAK member Sakaguchi Hiroshi before the group's merger with Sekigun – and nor were such unions prohibited – Mori, most notably, suggested that he and Nagata be married to strengthen the merged group's leadership image. These relationships differed from others, it was argued, because they served to further the cause of revolution rather than personal or selfish (i.e. bourgeois) desires. Consequently, relations between members – that is, horizontal rather than vertical relations – that went beyond simple camaraderie ran the risk of being viewed by Rengo Sekigun's central committee as self-indulgent and not in keeping with the spirit of selfless submission to the cause of revolution required of revolutionary elite.

Similarly, the very nature of Aum Shinrikyo's introspective spiritual practice – aimed at self-transformation and the individual realization of *gedatsu* weakened horizontal relations between *shukke*, strengthening Asahara's authority over the group as a whole.<sup>70</sup> This manifests most clearly in the example of Masutani Hajime.

### 'Making individuals' - The case of Masutani Hajime

On Asahara's return from northern India in 1987 he introduced to Aum's training system what he claimed to be a Tibetan Buddhist ascetic practice known as 'practice in solitary confinement'.<sup>71</sup> According to former sect member Masutani Hajime, solitary confinement was often utilized to isolate those who were 'wavering in their faith or were no longer useful to Aum' but also to discipline *shukke* who had developed relationships with other members which were deemed inappropriate.<sup>72</sup> Masutani claims that in 1993 he was placed in solitary confinement hooked up to a polygraph machine and interrogated about his relationship with another disciple: 'I was...asked all sorts of questions, including some unpleasant ones I couldn't accept'.<sup>73</sup> Before this incident, Masutani had expressed his doubts about some of Aum's practices to fellow members:

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.

<sup>70</sup> Shimazono, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>72</sup> Murakami, *op. cit.*, pp. 256 - 257.

<sup>73</sup> Hajime quoted in Murakami Haruki, *Underground*, p. 256.



I felt that maybe everybody felt the same way...but they'd cut me off saying, 'You think that way because of your uncleanness' or 'That's *karma*', which means that whenever any doubts came to mind everything could be blamed on your own uncleanness. Similarly all good things were 'Thanks to the guru.'<sup>74</sup>

The impression given of life in the *sangha* is one in which personal relationships were policed by higher ranked *shukke* and where it was virtually impossible to confide in fellow disciples without being judged. Thus, we can see from Masutani's testimony, that extreme methods of individualization of personal faults functioned to erode horizontal relations between disciples; physically and socially isolating them from one another by breaking down the camaraderie among members of equal ranking. Moreover, the constant criticism of each other's supposed spiritual imperfections reinforced Aum Shinrikyo's spiritual hierarchy, strengthening the vertical command structure.

### **The Authority Structure of Sekigun and Aum Shinrikyo**

The deliberate and systematic weakening of horizontal ties between individual members in both Sekigun and Aum Shinrikyo also prevented the development of independent groups within both organizations, which could have kept the authority of Mori and Asahara in check. Instead, the organizational structures of both groups fostered a certain degree of incohesiveness among members.<sup>75</sup> These strong vertical command structures coupled with relatively weak horizontal ties between members created the optimum conditions for a system of discipline through surveillance to prevail – a system of power which lends itself well to a Foucaultian analysis.

### **Discipline and Surveillance - a Foucaultian Approach**

Foucault's theory of discipline and surveillance explains the methods by which networks of power are utilized to survey, train and discipline individuals so as to mould them into the desired form.<sup>76</sup> As Foucault writes:

The chief function of the disciplinary power is to train rather than to select and levy; or, no doubt, to train in order to levy and select all the more. It does not link forces together in order to reduce them; it seeks to bind them together in such a way as to multiply and use them...It 'trains' the moving, confused, useless multitudes of bodies and forces into a multiplicity of individual elements – small, separate cells,

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255.

<sup>75</sup> Shimazono, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>76</sup> Foucault, 'The Means of Correct Training', p. 170.

organic autonomies, genetic identities and combinatory segments.<sup>77</sup>

Key to establishing such discipline is 1) ‘the art of distributions’, and 2) ‘hierarchical observation.’<sup>78</sup>

### *The Art of Distributions – Enclosure, Partitioning and Rank*

In the first instance, discipline proceeds from the distribution of individuals in space and achieves this end by employing a number of techniques, including what Foucault refers to as enclosure, partitioning and rank.<sup>79</sup>

Enclosure: Discipline requires ‘enclosure’; the specification of a place heterogeneous to all others and closed in upon itself. It is in Foucault’s words ‘the protected place of disciplinary monotony.’<sup>80</sup> Both Sekigun and Aum possessed such enclosed places in the form of their remote mountain hideout and *sangha* respectively. Enclosure is a necessary but insufficient condition in the institution of the disciplinary structure, however.

Partitioning: Discipline also necessitates *partitioning*; a method of ‘breaking up the collective dispositions’<sup>81</sup> and a tactic of anti-concentration which allows for the supervision of each individual so as that it may be assessed, judged, and have its qualities and merits calculated.<sup>82</sup> Partitioning was used in the disciplining of Kato and Kojima when Mori ordered their separation – from the rest of the group and each other – and then restricted them from communicating with their comrades.<sup>83</sup> It was also utilized by Aum in its ‘solitary confinement training,’<sup>84</sup> as illustrated in the case of Masutani who was isolated so that he may be interrogated and assessed by his superiors.

Rank: Lastly, Foucault argues that discipline is an art of *rank*, a technique for the transformation of arrangements, individualizing bodies by a location that does not give them a fixed position, but distributes them and circulates them in a network of relations.<sup>85</sup> In this social order each individual according to its age, performance, and behaviour occupies sometimes one rank, sometimes another; the individual constantly moving over a series of compartments, some of which may be considered

---

77 *Ibid.*

78 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, pp. 135 - 176.

79 Foucault, ‘Docile Bodies’, p. 141.

80 *Ibid.*

81 *Ibid.*, p. 143.

82 *Ibid.*

83 Steinhoff, ‘Death by Defeatism’, p. 204.

84 Shimazono, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

85 Foucault, ‘Docile Bodies’, p. 146.





ideal compartments, marking a hierarchy of ability or knowledge, whilst others express the distribution of values or merits within the space of an organization. It is a perpetual movement in which individuals replace one another in a space marked off by intervals.<sup>86</sup> In Sekigun, as in Aum, rank was fluid – one’s ranking or status within each organization could be improved according to one’s ability or what one contributed to the group. Rank, however, was also assessed and allocated from above by the respective organizations’ leaders creating a vertical chain of command that allowed for the implementation of control through hierarchy. It should also be acknowledged that rank functioned beyond the perimeter of each group’s respective compounds.

To summarize, the art of distributions specifies the organisation of enclosures, partitions and ranks, creating complex spaces that are simultaneously architectural, functional and hierarchical. As Foucault states: ‘they are mixed spaces: real because they govern the disposition of buildings [and] rooms...but also ideal, because they are projected over this arrangement of characterizations, assessments, [and] hierarchies.’<sup>87</sup> Aspects of this ‘art’ were instrumental in the forms of organizational control implemented in both Sekigun and Aum Shinrikyo. Physical separation from the outside world coupled with the deliberate isolation of individual members enabled the leadership of both organizations to enforce total control over their respective memberships. The arranging of individuals into ranks allowed for even greater control by further eroding relationships between individuals and creating partitions of hierarchy between them that existed beyond the physical confines of the mountain hideout or monastic commune.

## Hierarchical Observation

Foucault also discusses what he terms ‘the means of correct training,’ or, ‘surveillance as a method of discipline through coercion.’<sup>88</sup> This method can be seen to be employed by a range of institutions – prisons, schools, armies, hospitals – and applied to a variety of cultural objects: parents, children, students, soldiers, patients and so forth.<sup>89</sup> It follows from Foucault’s discussion of the art of distributions that surveillance as a method of discipline requires the generation of spaces which are architectural, functional and hierarchical in order to be successful.

Hierarchy as a network of power: surveillance requires the creation of ‘real’ spaces – for instance, the architecture of the school or prison building must be conducive to the continued surveillance of its occupants by the disciplinary power; but inside this real

---

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>88</sup> See Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, pp. 170 - 194.

<sup>89</sup> Barker, ‘To Discipline and Subject,’ pp. 60 - 61.

space, discipline also utilizes relays – integrated into the disciplinary apparatus so as to increase its effects<sup>90</sup> – establishing a system of hierarchical observation. Foucault writes, ‘by means of such a system of surveillance, disciplinary power becomes an integrated system which although resting on the individual, functions as a network of relations from top to bottom, but also to a certain extent from bottom to top and laterally.’<sup>91</sup> This network of power holds the whole together and traverses it in its entirety with effects that derive from one another: the supervisors perpetually supervised.<sup>92</sup>

Hierarchical surveillance as pedagogy: accordingly a form of reciprocal, hierarchized surveillance ‘is inscribed at the heart of teaching, not as an additional or adjacent part, but as a mechanism that is inherent to it and which increases its efficiency.’<sup>93</sup> Foucault gives the example of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century classroom in which the assistant teacher taught the pupils the correct way of holding the pen, corrected mistakes whilst taking note of trouble makers; the head boy in each class would make sure that the pupils recited their lessons and marked down those who did not know them; and above these the intendant supervised all, was in charge of behaviour and also initiated newcomers into the customs of the school<sup>94</sup>. In other words, the functions of surveillance are duplicated by a pedagogical role; three procedures are integrated into a single mechanism: the teaching proper, the acquisition of knowledge by the very nature of the pedagogical activity, and a reciprocal, hierarchical observation.<sup>95</sup>

Hierarchy and pedagogy in Aum: There are clear similarities here with the organisational structure and roles of members in Aum; just as the school in Foucault’s example had its ranks of intendant, assistant teacher and head boy, so too the Aum *sangha* had its *shi* (master/teacher), *shiho* (assistant teacher) and *samanacho* (head *samana*); each position having a pedagogical role but also operating as supervisors and discipliners. As Lifton also notes, ‘Aum had a hierarchy of *mystical manipulators*, each disciple being under another’s authority, reaching up to the guru himself.’<sup>96</sup>

Both groups already featured highly developed hierarchical structures making hierarchical surveillance possible. Let us now turn to another aspect of the social stratification within both Sekigun and Aum Shinrikyo.

It is a common misconception that Sekigun and Aum Shinrikyo were constituted

---

90 Foucault, ‘The Means of Correct Training’, p. 174.

91 *Ibid.*, p. 176.

92 *Ibid.*, pp. 176-177.

93 *Ibid.*, p. 176.

94 *Ibid.*

95 *Ibid.*

96 Lifton, ‘The Guru and his Cult’, p. 25.



only of the nation's 'best and brightest.'<sup>97</sup> In actuality both groups attracted people from a wide range of backgrounds: those on the 'elite track', university drop outs, doctors, office ladies as well as young people alienated from mainstream society – i.e. almost anyone with a serious concern about Japanese societal and world problems. It was as a result of this fact that the clear status stratification found in both Sekigun and Aum tended to replicate that found in contemporary Japanese society. For instance, those who had graduated from elite universities were most likely to enter into the top strata of Sekigun and Aum Shinrikyo's leadership. Women tended to occupy a lower social status to the men in both movements – however, just as in mainstream society there were of course examples of women improving their social standing in Sekigun and Aum.<sup>98</sup> On the other hand, those who had little to contribute to the group or the leadership occupied the lowest strata of both organizations – something also mirrored by the contemporary Japanese social order.

### Meritocracy and Conformity

Despite the social stratification found in both groups replicating almost perfectly the type found in Japanese society, there was a certain degree of status mobility built into the hierarchical organizational structures of Sekigun and Aum Shinrikyo. This created a degree of competition between members within each group – in much the same way that the college entrance exam system creates competition among students. To elaborate, just as Japan has sometimes been referred to as a 'super meritocracy'<sup>99</sup> – a meritocracy which is marked by an 'over heating' of the education system as a result of mass competition for limited university places and, by default, limited positions of status – so too did the highly stratified organizational structures of Sekigun and Aum Shinrikyo combined with the opportunity to improve one's status within their respective organizations cultivate competitiveness. Indeed, this competitive atmosphere played a role in the erosion of horizontal relations between members.

Within Sekigun, it was possible to increase one's status by making a satisfactory self-criticism or by volunteering for dangerous missions thus proving one's commitment to the cause of revolution. An example of this is Okamoto Kozo whose original position within Sekigun was limited to distributing pamphlets for the group. Okamoto's status increased, however, after

97 See Steinhoff, 'Hijackers, Bombers and Bank Robbers', p. 725, and Lifton, 'The Guru and his Cult', p. 28

98 For instance Shigenobu Fusako would eventually rise to become leader of a separate branch of Sekigun in Lebanon, dubbed Nihon Sekigun (Japanese Red Army), however, this was helped by the fact that she had not been in Japan at the time of Rengo Sekigun's purge and that much of the core leadership of Sekigun had been previously arrested. See Steinhoff, 'Three Women Who Loved the Left', p. 313. Similarly, in Aum Shinrikyo, Ishii Hisako was the first of Asahara's disciples to receive a holy name and be initiated into the sect's spiritual elite, although some have claimed that this was a result of her sexual relationship with the guru. See Murakami, *Underground*, p. 291.

99 See for instance Kariya, *Taishu Kyoiku shakai no yukue* and Yoneyama, *The Japanese High School: Silence and Resistance*.

he volunteered for and executed an armed assault on Tel Aviv airport in May 1972.<sup>100</sup> Similarly, in Aum Shinrikyo one could climb the spiritual ladder by accomplishing the various levels of spiritual practice – indeed, one could be considered ‘a god’<sup>101</sup> simply by attaining what Asahara said were the highest stages of spiritual development. It should be acknowledged that although there was at least the outward appearance of meritocracy in both organizations, ‘getting ahead’ was largely dependant on one’s ability to conform to the ideals of perfection held by those in power. In this regard, life inside the Sekigun mountain hideout or the Aum commune was not so different from life in the outside world.

The mechanisms set in place by both groups to discipline, transform and improve their memberships that would ultimately escalate into violence and torture will now be explored in greater detail.

### Communist Transformation

In order to transform the members of Sekigun and the KAK into a cohesive guerrilla unit devoid of the bourgeois tendencies that had weakened the rest of society, Mori developed the idea of ‘communist transformation.’<sup>102</sup> The term had been used previously in Sekigun’s theoretical writings<sup>103</sup> but it had not been made clear as to what methods would be used to achieve this objective. Thus, Mori drew upon a number of sources to formulate the process of communist transformation. These included the self-criticism sessions already used by a number of left-wing groups in the Japanese student movement;<sup>104</sup> Maoist thought reform;<sup>105</sup> Feminist consciousness-raising techniques;<sup>106</sup> and spirit-raising techniques adapted from the Zen Buddhism and bushido<sup>107</sup> elements of kendo – a traditional form of Japanese fencing practiced by Mori<sup>108</sup> and many students in Japan today.

Although most in the group wholeheartedly took part in the process of communist transformation in the hope of being challenged and changed as a result, the process was so poorly defined that former members of Sekigun and the KAK often claim never to have fully understood it.<sup>109</sup> This confusion can be attributed to Mori’s own uncertainty and inconsistency over what the method of transformation actually entailed. There was,

100 BBC News (Asia-Pacific), ‘The Red Army’s Reign of Terror.’

101 Lifton, ‘Clones of the Guru’, p. 92.

102 Lifton, ‘A Japanese Phenomenon?’ p. 266.

103 Mori, *Jugekisen to shukusei*, p. 10.

104 Steinhoff, *op. cit.*, p. 199

105 Robbins & Anthony, ‘Deprogramming, Brainwashing and Medicalization’, p. 284.

106 Steinhoff, *op. cit.*, p. 198

107 Literally ‘The Way of the Warrior’, bushido is the samurai code of ethics and emphasizes, among other things, an unflinching loyalty to the feudal lord or Emperor to the point that one is willing to sacrifice one’s own life, by suicide if necessary. See for instance Hurst, ‘Death, Honor and Loyalty: The Bushido Ideal’, pp. 511-527.

108 Lifton, *op. cit.*, p. 266.

109 Steinhoff, *op. cit.*, p. 201.



however, the vague concept that each member examine their own bourgeois attitudes and behaviour and then eliminate them in order to become a better-prepared revolutionary. This process was accomplished by undergoing a collective examination of each member's weaknesses, followed by individual effort to overcome them.<sup>110</sup>

Compounding the issues arising from the confusion over what communist transformation actually entailed was further ambiguity over what the end result of the process would be. Subsequently, the procedure could easily escalate from collective criticisms of an individual to violent bashings in order to elicit 'honest' self-assessment – as illustrated in the case of Kato and Kojima discussed above.<sup>111</sup> It was not long before increasingly severe measures were taken against those who were deemed to be making insufficient progress in overcoming their 'bourgeois attitudes' culminating in the eventual torture-killings of twelve of the group's members.<sup>112</sup>

The notion that one can be 'toughened up' through physical beatings is not a peculiarity of Sekigun, however. Indeed, such practices can still be found in sporting clubs in Japan today.<sup>113</sup> As a member of a kendo club Mori's methods of disciplining and 'toughening up' his comrades certainly appear to have reflected the sort of training and disciplining he himself possibly would have received as a kendo club member.

### Defining 'bourgeois tendencies'

Confusion also appears to have arisen over what was deemed to be bourgeois attitudes and behaviour. Mori's concept of what constituted 'bourgeois tendencies' or 'ideological deviation' appears to have been simplistically drawn from traditional notions of evil such as greed, envy and self-indulgence.<sup>114</sup> A typical example of what Mori considered to be bourgeois behaviour was illustrated in his reaction to one Sekigun member who asked for a tissue whilst warming himself in his sleeping bag. This was viewed as a form of self-indulgence as well as a deviation from Sekigun's ideology. Accordingly, the individual was beaten for his lack of revolutionary spirit in an effort to toughen him up.<sup>115</sup> On the other hand, those who had been part of the KAK viewed sexual thoughts and behaviour as a sign of bourgeois inclinations. This stemmed from the KAK's original Marxist-Feminist ideological position, which held that revolution must be achieved before women can be liberated.<sup>116</sup> The KAK members had on several occasions brought

---

110 *Ibid.*, p. 199.

111 Lifton, *op. cit.*, p. 266.

112 Kuriyama, 'Terrorism at Tel Aviv', p. 344.

113 See for instance, Yoneyama, 'Control: The Structure of Silence' in *The Japanese High School: Silence and Resistance*, pp. 94-102.

114 Steinhoff, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

115 Kuriyama, *op. cit.*, p. 344.

116 Steinhoff, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

Sekigun's mainly male membership to task over what they deemed to be their 'backward bourgeois mentality' regarding women.<sup>117</sup>

Thus, a situation arose where although each member entered willingly into a process that was designed to stimulate self-improvement, the details of what such a process entailed were poorly defined. While some members might have been able to satisfy Mori by making what he deemed to be an adequate *sokatsu*, others – perhaps confused over what was being asked of them or by what constituted a confessable offence – would be beaten until they had made a satisfactory self-examination. Equally, those that were deemed to be displaying signs of weakness were also beaten.

Aum Shinrikyo was able to avoid some of the problems experienced by Sekigun which had arisen out of confusion over ideology thanks in part to Asahara's conception of a 'stage' process towards spiritual liberation. That, however, did not ensure that the path towards becoming a spiritual elite was not a violent one. Indeed, in Aum Shinrikyo as in Sekigun, the line between training and discipline often blurred<sup>118</sup> as will now be discussed in detail.

### **Dropping *Karma* - Transcendence and Torture in Aum Shinrikyo**

A key aspect taken from Buddhist teachings and integrated into Aum's own belief system was the notion that the physical body had to be purified of bad *karma* – the accumulated debt of past wrong doings which was the source of suffering in one's current lifetime.<sup>119</sup> This purification process entailed the undertaking of severe physical austerities and other extreme practices. It was believed that the physical body was an impediment to the attainment of higher levels of spiritual consciousness – a polluted entity whose influences had to be cast off so that the spirit could attain *gedatsu* (liberation).<sup>120</sup> According to Asahara it was due to one's clinging attachment to the polluted physical body that one acquired the negative *karma* which dragged the spirit down into hell after death; *gedatsu* came from eradicating such attachments to the material body via asceticism.<sup>121</sup>

Another aspect of Buddhism adopted by Aum was its doctrinal position which held that suffering was a product of materialism and desire – this was why there was so much suffering within Japan's materialistic culture. However, Asahara also believed

---

117 *Ibid.*

118 Lifton, 'The Guru and his Cult', p. 27.

119 Reader, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

120 *Ibid.*, p. 71.

121 *Ibid.*



that suffering was an incentive to spiritual practice and a key to attaining *gedatsu*. Subsequently, Asahara proclaimed that one ‘needed’ to suffer in order to achieve liberation and to develop one’s commitment and faith – this was why, he argued, that rigorous, even violent, ascetic practices would have to be engaged in if one hoped to forcibly remove bad *karma* and attain *gedatsu*.<sup>122</sup> Accordingly, Aum developed increasingly harsh methods such as the Black Box solitary confinement training and the inverted suspension procedure discussed previously which were supposedly designed to help disciples to ‘drop *karma*’ and attain higher states of liberation. Just as was the case for members of Sekigun though, Aum disciples often quite willingly subjected themselves to these austere practices in order to achieve the types of spiritual powers that Asahara professed to possess and to create a Utopian society – in order to become an ‘evolved being’<sup>123</sup> one had to undergo the harshest possible training.<sup>124</sup> The willingness of Aum’s disciples’ to subject themselves to seemingly death-defying ascetic practices is exemplified by those who meditated underground for several days without food or water.<sup>125</sup>

### Training as Punishment

The accumulation of bad *karma* was also viewed to be a result of committing wrong deeds. Subsequently, procedures which had been developed as a method of negating bad *karma* were similarly utilized as a form of punishment for transgressing Aum restrictions. Practices such as inverted suspension were prescribed by Asahara as a consequence of what he deemed to be ‘grave karmic sins’.<sup>126</sup> Thus, inverted suspension was considered ‘therapeutic’ in the sense that it was a means of forcibly removing bad *karma*.<sup>127</sup>

In both groups, the methods adopted to improve the quality of their members escalated into torture and killing. The rationale behind using such severe disciplining methods, however, was that it was regarded as a necessary evil in order to overcome the types of individual personal flaws which had led to the larger ‘failure’ of Japanese society. To be sure, in both groups the act of ‘personal struggle’ became an intrinsic part of individual improvement. However, the restrictions placed on members within both organizations and the punishments dealt out for transgressing these restrictions were in many cases far more oppressive and severe than the laws and punishments found in Japanese society.

---

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> Iwai (pseudonym) quoted in Lifton, ‘Forcing the End’, p. 76.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>125</sup> Documented in ‘Aum Supreme Truth’, *Foreign Correspondent*, ABC.

<sup>126</sup> Reader, ‘A Death in the Culture of Coercive Asceticism’, p. 16.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

## Ultra-Elitism

Extreme competitiveness combined with constant pressure to conform – traits of social organizations such as Sekigun and Aum also tend to foster a culture of extreme elitism. In the case of these groups this tendency was only compounded by the fact that the leadership of Sekigun and Aum Shinrikyo consisted predominantly of university students and graduates who perhaps took their leadership roles for granted, naturally assuming that they should also be entrusted as the leaders after establishment of a new social order.<sup>128</sup> Indeed, the perception emerged among members of both groups that they constituted an elite class of individuals who, as a result of their training, had ‘earned’ the right to lead – even to the extent that they felt justified in deciding who should be allowed to live in the ideal societies they hoped to create. Moreover, this sort of logic was also employed to rationalize the torture-killings of people inside both groups; individuals such as Sekigun’s Ozaki Atsuo who did not survive beatings intended to toughen him up and Majima Terayuki who died during austerities designed to help him reach a higher spiritual level were too weak to live in the new world.

## Concluding comments

Throughout this article there has been one recurring theme: that both Sekigun and Aum Shinrikyo replicated the very aspects of Japanese society they were critical of, which constituted, in their opposition, their *raison d'être*, their motivation to be different and to strive for their cause. Sekigun emerged to resist what its members saw to be the autocratic, authoritarian power of the Japanese state. Their members opposed the power structures which in their view existed solely to oppress and exploit the lower classes whilst benefiting society’s elite members of the ruling ‘bourgeoisie’ class. Thus, theoretically, their fundamental ideological inclination was towards the pursuit of greater social equality and freedom from the oppressive, authoritarian state. Aum Shinrikyo, on the other hand, was established by those who supposedly opposed the emptiness created by the materialism, competitiveness and social stratification of contemporary Japan.

Sekigun and Aum Shinrikyo were formed by individuals who had rejected Japanese society and its institutions. Their very rejection of the prevailing social structure was the impetus for creating new social organisations which would be devoid of the social ills that had in their view corrupted Japan. The societies they hoped to create then could be regarded as the antithesis of Japanese society. Yet both Sekigun and Aum Shinrikyo ultimately replicated the same sort of hierarchical organizational

---

128 Kuriyama, *op. cit.*, p. 339.





structure which existed in Japan in their respective eras and subsequently the very same social stratification, high status consciousness and competitiveness which such a system inevitably produces. Despite efforts by both groups to create the antithesis to everything they rejected within the Japanese society of their times, they paradoxically reproduced and magnified within their own social organizations the least desirable societal traits of elitism, exclusivity and conformity using the most extreme measures to discipline and control their members to fit each groups' respective notions of the ideal individual.

Foucault's earlier work *The Thought from Outside*<sup>129</sup> gives us an understanding of the nature of order and why attempts to bring about a new order are doomed to replicate the same sort of power structure: 'Anyone who attempts to oppose the law in order to found a new order, to organise a second police force, to institute a new state, will only encounter the silent and infinitely accommodating welcome of the law.'<sup>130</sup> In other words, any new system based on the same notion of power will inevitably produce similar social institutions. The cases of Sekigun and Aum Shinrikyo examined in this paper present quintessence of this reality; their inescapable dilemma represents their failure to envisage their ideal society on a new paradigm. It signifies the paradox that they were the changelings of the very society they detested, denounced, and wanted to destroy.

## References

- Barker, P., *Michel Foucault – An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998).
- BBC News (Asia-Pacific), 'The Red Army's Reign of Terror', 8 November 2000.
- Bestor, T. C., 'Conflict, Legitimacy and Tradition in a Tokyo Neighbourhood' in Kraus E. S., et al (eds.), *Conflict in Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984).
- Cutts, R. L., *An Empire of Schools – Japan's Universities and the Moulding of a National Power Elite* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1997).
- Foreign Correspondent*, 'Aum Supreme Truth', ABC, 23 June 1995.
- Foucault, M., *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977).
- Foucault, M., 'The Thought from Outside' in *Foucault, Blanchot* (New York: MIT Press, 1987).
- Fuse T., 'Student Radicalism in Japan: A 'Cultural Revolution'?', in *Comparative Education Review*, Vol. 13, No. 3, (Oct, 1969), pp. 325 – 342
- Hurst, G. C., 'Death, Honor and Loyalty: The Bushido Ideal', *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 40, No. 4, Understanding Japanese Values. (Oct., 1990), pp. 511-527.

<sup>129</sup> Foucault, 'The Thought from Outside', p. 38.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

- Igarashi, Y., 'Dead Bodies and Living Guns: The United Red Army and Its Deadly Pursuit of Revolution, 1971-1972', in *Japanese Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 2. (September 2007), pp. 119-137.
- Ishida, T., 'Conflict and Its Accommodation: *Omote-Ura* and *Uchi-Soto* Relations' in Kraus, E. S., et al (eds.), *Conflict in Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984).
- Kariya, T., *Taishu Kyoiku shakai no yukue* (Tokyo: Chuokoron, 1995).
- Kuriyama, Y., 'Terrorism at Tel Aviv Airport and a New Left Group in Japan', in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 13, No. 3, (March, 1973), pp. 336 – 346.
- Lifton, R. J., *Destroying the World to Save It: Aum Shinrikyo, Apocalyptic Violence and the New Global Terrorism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1999).
- March, R. M., 'Safe No More – Aum Shinrikyo, the 1995 Sarin Gas Attacks, and the Future of Japanese Society', in *Working Paper University of Western Sydney*, (Nepean Dept. of Marketing: New South Wales, 1996-1997).
- Matraux, D. A., 'Religious Terrorism in Japan: The Fatal Appeal of Aum Shinrikyo', in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 35, No. 12, (December 1995), pp. 1140 – 1154.
- McCormack, G. and Box, M., "Terror in Japan", *Japan Focus*. Retrieved 1 June 2007, from <http://www.japanfocus.org/products/details/1570>.
- Mohwald, U., 'Social Stratification', in Kreiner, J., Mohwald U. and Olschleger H.D., (eds.), *Modern Japanese Society* (Boston, Leiden: Brill, 2004).
- Mori, T., *Jugekisen to shukusei* (Tokyo: Shigenchosa, 1984).
- Murakami, H., *Underground – The Tokyo Gas Attack and the Japanese Psyche* (London: Vintage, 2003).
- Olson, L., 'Takeuchi Yoshimi and the Vision of a Protest Society in Japan', *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 2, (Summer, 1981), pp. 319 – 348.
- Reader, I., *A Poisonous Cocktail? Aum Shinrikyo's Path to Violence* (Copenhagen: NIAS Books, 1996).
- Reader, I., *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo* (Great Britain: Curzon Press, 2000).
- Robbins, T. and Anthony, D., 'Deprogramming, Brainwashing and the Medicalization of Deviant Religious Groups', *Social Problems*, Vol. 29, No. 3, (February: 1982).
- Rohlen, T. P., 'The Education of the Japanese Banker' in Okimoto, D. I. and Rohlen, T. P. (eds.), *Inside the Japanese System, Readings on Contemporary Society and Political Economy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).
- Sakurai, T., 'The Generation Gap in Japanese Society since the 1960s' in Mathews, G. and White, B., (eds.), *Japan's Changing Generations: Are Young People Creating a New Society* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2004).
- Shimazono, S., 'The Evolution of Aum Shinrikyo as a Religious Movement' in Kisala, R. J. and Mullins, M. R. (eds.), *Religion and Social Crisis in Japan: Understanding Japanese Society through the Aum Affair* (Great Britain: Palgrave Publishers Ltd., 2001).
- Steinhoff, P. G., 'Portrait of a Terrorist: An Interview with Kozo Okamoto', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 16, No. 9 (Sep., 1976), pp. 830 – 845.



- Steinhoff, P. G., "Student Conflict" in Kraus, E. S., et al (eds.), *Conflict in Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984).
- Steinhoff, P. G., 'Hijackers, Bombers and Bank Robbers: Managerial Style in the Japanese Red Army', in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 4, (Nov., 1989), pp. 724 – 740.
- Steinhoff, P. G., 'Death by Defeatism and Other Fables: The Social Dynamics of the Rengo Sekigun Purge', in Sugiyama Lebra, T. (ed.), *Japanese Social Organization* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992).
- Steinhoff, P. G., 'Three Women Who Loved the Left: Radical Woman Leaders in the Japanese Red Army Movement' in Imamura, A. E. (ed.), *Re-Imagining Japanese Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).
- Sugimoto, Y., *An Introduction to Japanese Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
- Vogel, E. F., *Japan's New Middle Class, The Salaryman and His Family in a Tokyo Suburb*, (California: University of California Press, 1971).
- Yoneyama, S., *The Japanese High School: Silence and Resistance* (London: Routledge Press, 1999).

# The Rise and Decline of Japanese Pacifism

Yuan Cai

University of Adelaide

## Abstract

The Japanese pacifist constitution has been a symbol of Japan's commitment to peace and more importantly its renunciation of wartime militarism. There has been strong support for its continuing existence amongst the Japanese populace despite persistent attempts by the Japanese government to amend it. However, the prevalent pacifist sentiment is showing signs of fading vitality in recent times.

This article purports to examine the underlying forces that contributed to the development and the decline of Japanese pacifism. A host of domestic and international factors were responsible for the growth of pacifism and its subsequent decline, but only three important domestic factors will be examined in detail: the concept of victimhood in the development of pacifism and its implication for its continuing strength, the importance of peace education and the role played by the influential Japan's Teachers' Union on the formation of pacifist conscience and finally, the influence of leftist organisations on the organised peace movement.

## Keywords

pacifism, atomic victimhood, Japan's Teachers' Union, Gensuikyo, Japan Socialist Party

## Introduction

The Japanese pacifist constitution, unparalleled in its idealistic vision for the renunciation of war as an instrument of the state, has been the battleground of competing political forces in Japan ever since its conception in 1946. The conservatives' creative interpretation of the constitution largely evaded the spirit of absolute pacifism embedded in the renowned Article IX. The Japanese people have exhibited an admirable allegiance to the ideals of Article IX throughout the post-war period: the conservatives' agenda for outright constitutional amendment was thwarted by the prevalent pacifist sentiment. However, in recent times pacifism is showing signs of fading vitality.



The purpose of this article is to examine the underlying forces that contributed to the development and the decline of Japanese pacifism. A host of domestic and international factors were responsible for the growth of pacifism and its subsequent decline, but only three important domestic factors will be examined in detail: the concept of victimhood in the development of pacifism and its implication for its continuing strength, the importance of peace education and finally the influence of socialism on the organised peace movement.

The study of driving forces behind the rise and decline of pacifism in Japan provides a valuable insight into its past and future. The examination of key concepts such as victimhood, peace education and socialism will lead to an appreciation of what contributed to one of the most dramatic social-political transformations in the twentieth century; the conversion of Japanese society once wedded to militarist cults into that of a peace loving culture. The future sustainability of pacifism could be revealed through the prism of the three important themes mentioned above.

The concept of victimhood is essential to understand the development of pacifism. The horrendous suffering endured by ordinary Japanese citizens and especially that of *Hibakusha* (the atomic bomb victims from the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki) defined the pacifist character of the Japanese post-war society. James Orr regards atomic victimhood as the 'first powerfully unifying national myth after defeat' and the rallying point for the Japanese pacifist movement. However, it must be noted that fear-induced pacifism based on the notion of victimhood is inherently fragile. If the concept of victimhood can be expressed mathematically, this would take the form that suffering equates 'never again'. The question worth considering is what if direct experience of the suffering component of the pacifist equation is disappearing, as the new generation of Japanese grow up in the affluence of post-war prosperity. Would they still find the messages of victimhood, hardship and suffering relevant to the understanding of pacifism?

This article will also explore the central importance of peace education in the development of pacifism. A true pacifist cannot simply justify his identity purely on the basis of experience of suffering without condemning the intrinsic evilness of war. Fear alone cannot sustain the pacifist identity: a genuine recognition of the evil of war is at the heart of true and sustainable pacifism. The fluctuating fortunes of peace education will be examined through the lens of the history textbook controversy and the fortunes of Japan's Teachers' Union.

The leftist forces were instrumental in the organised peace movement throughout the post-war period and they played an especially important role in the anti-nuclear movement. However, their involvement proved to be a double-edged

sword, ideologically-driven disputes between the Socialist Party and the Communist Party compromised the non-partisanship of the movement and hence its appeal and influence. On the other hand, organisational ability and mobilisation power of various leftist forces ensured the continuation of the movement beyond the initial burst of popular zeal.

## **The Mythology of Victimhood and Pacifism**

### *The Nature of Pacifism in Japan*

The birth of Japanese pacifism was a reflection of the extraordinary circumstance of its conception: a war-weary and destitute population eagerly embraced pacifism out of desperation. It could be said that Japanese pacifism is essentially a celebration of its own victimhood, the appalling suffering of Japanese citizens and especially that of Hiroshima and Nagasaki who were considered martyrs, sacrificed on the altar of peace. Hiroshima and Nagasaki's importance to Japanese pacifism could singularly be compared with the significance of Auschwitz to the Zionist movement. This section will explore the gradual development of the myth of victimhood through various mediums such as literature and arts. The future sustainability of pacifism based on the notion of victim conscience will be discussed in the context of generational changes in Japan.

It is important to distinguish between the natures of pacifism in Japan and what it stands for within Western philosophical tradition. According to the historian Henry J. Cadbury, pacifism in the strict sense of absolute and unconditional rejection of war or any form of violence originated with Christianity, primitive Christians believing war or participation in the military is irreconcilable with the teaching of the Gospels.<sup>1</sup> This religion-inspired pacifism was further fused with the liberal political ideals from the European Enlightenment; as a result the most active pacifist groups are to be found in Europe and North America. In the case of Japan, Christians played a leading role in the development of pre-war pacifism, though it remained a much-marginalized movement with few members. Some of the most influential Japanese pacifists at the time were all Christians; their advocacy for pacifism remained largely a literary debate rather than a mass movement that characterized post-war pacifism.<sup>2</sup>

---

1 Brock, *Pacifism: In Europe to 1914*, pp. 3-5.

2 Howes and Bamba, (ed.), *Pacifism in Japan: the Christian and Socialist Tradition*, pp. 3-5.



### *Victim Consciousness: the Ideology of Politics*

The genesis of post-war Japanese pacifism was rooted firmly in the ruins, suffering and hardships inflicted by the prolonged war. The economic deprivation and human suffering caused by the war fundamentally shaped people's understanding of questions of war and peace, and for the ordinary Japanese support for pacifism is an expression of their desire not to relive such horrific experiences. This 'never again' sentiment crystallized in the form of the collective victimhood of the Japanese people, thus the determination to resist war can be understood as a pragmatic move to protect their own well-being. This perception of war and peace differs fundamentally from the western concept of pacifism; Japanese pacifism is not based on religion-inspired ideals of non-violence, moral abhorrence of the barbarism of war, and respect for fundamental human rights. Ian Buruma described Japanese pacifism as the 'Cult of Hiroshima', and its defining characteristics as the 'black corpses' (atomic bomb victims).<sup>3</sup>

The mythology of victimhood was perpetuated in many different forms such as literature, films, arts, and the peace movement. A disproportionate amount of post-war literature on pacifism is devoted to the wartime suffering of the Japanese civilians from atomic bombs, firestorms caused by air raids, and general privations such as hunger. The public dialogue on pacifism reached its zenith in the discussion of the atomic victimhoods of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and according to the information collected by the Hiroshima Prefectural Office, writings on atomic bomb experiences in relation to the city alone numbered 500 published books and articles, and 2,234 written testimonials by 1971.<sup>4</sup> In 1983, major literary writings pertaining to the experiences of atomic victims were published in a massive 15 volume collection entitled *Nihon no Genbaku bungaku* (Japanese atomic bomb literature).<sup>5</sup>

The critically acclaimed novel *Black Rain* (Kuroi Ame) by Ibuse Masuji is arguably the most famous and successful of the atomic bomb literature, well over a million copies were sold according to 1981 figures. A survey of leading Japanese intellectuals in 1987 acknowledged *Black Rain* as the most influential book written on any subject since 1945.<sup>6</sup> *Black Rain* is the story of the odyssey experienced by Shigematsu's family in their attempt to find a prospective husband for Yasuko, the niece of Shigematsu. Unfortunately, the marriage prospects of Yasuko are repeatedly thwarted by the rumour that Yasuko was a victim of radiation sickness as she was working at the kitchen of the Second Middle School Service Corp at the time of the explosion.<sup>7</sup> When Yasuko had the

---

3 Buruma, *Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan*, p. 92.

4 Committee for the Compilation of Materials on Damage caused by the Atomic Bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, p. 586.

5 Dower, *Japan in War and Peace*, p. 131.

6 Whittier Treat, *Writing Ground Zero: Japanese literature and the Atomic Bomb*, p. 264.

7 Ibuse, (translated by John Bester) *Black Rain*, pp. 9-10.

chance of a match, which seemed ‘almost too good to be true’, Shizuma sent a certificate of good health to the go-between in a desperate effort to fend off the insidious rumour. However, this pre-emptive strike disastrously backfires as it arouses suspicion from the go-between; Yasuko’s whereabouts on the day of the explosion became the subject of an investigation. The circumstances inspired Shigematsu to transcribe his niece’s diary from August; to his great astonishment he learnt from Yasuko that she was plagued with radioactive black rain, and then her whole family conspired to cover up this unfortunate episode of Yasuko’s life. However, before he could do his work the rumour became a self-fulfilling prophecy, the onset of symptoms leading to abrupt termination of the marriage talk.

This novel describes the impact of war on the innocent civilian population of the home islands. The main characters are all civilians, men too old for the military, women and children; Ibuse Masuji did not present the suffering of the *hibakusha* as anything unique compared with the misery endured by the population at large; the desperate escape from firestorms induced by the atomic explosion resonating with the experiences of the ordinary Japanese in the firestorms caused by the countless American raids. Shigematsu and Yasuko’s problems though complicated by their status as *hibakusha*, were fundamentally similar to the difficulties encountered by the people after the war.<sup>8</sup> In this regard, *Black Rain* helped to integrate the experience of Hiroshima into the national ideology of victimhood, the vivid depiction of the suffering of civilians that resonated with readers’ own experiences of the horrors of the war helped to build and strengthen the sense of victimization.

The mythology of victimhood also formed the locomotive force behind the Japanese peace movement. From some of the earliest declarations on peace to the latest anti-nuclear resolutions pledged by the pacifists, a sense of unique atomic victimhood was the common denominator. For example, in 1945 when the Organizing Committee for the Hiroshima Assembly to Protect the Peace issued a moving communiqué that declared, ‘We pledge to stand in the front lines of support. To do so is a solemn responsibility laid upon us, who first experienced an atomic bombing. It is also our right to do so.’<sup>9</sup> This victimhood bestowed the Hiroshima citizens with a special sense of mission to campaign for a world free of nuclear weapons. In a letter of protest published by the Nagasaki Council Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs in the *Los Angeles Times* in 1962 against the resumption of nuclear testing by the United States, chief director Kobayashi wrote that ‘we have protested against President Kennedy’s decision to resume nuclear testing because [of] our tragic experiences in Hiroshima, Nagasaki

8 Orr, *The Victim as Hero*, p. 109.

9 Committee for the Compilation of Materials on Damage caused by the Atomic Bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, p. 573.





and Bikini...'<sup>10</sup> In the latest peace resolution at the 2005 World Conference Against A & H Bombs, the declaration commenced with reference to the suffering of *hibakusha*, and it strongly emphasized the fact that 'Japan [is] the only nation that has suffered from the use of nuclear weapon in war.'<sup>11</sup>

### *The Decline of Victim Consciousness and the Future of Pacifism*

If the birthplace of pacifism was among the ruins of an utterly defeated Japan, its ultimate deathbed must be the glittering new Japan built atop the ruins. Japan's meteoric rise as one of the largest economies in the world has been described as an economic miracle; and the Japanese people today enjoy one of the highest living standards in the world. Any first time foreign visitors will be awestricken by the modernity of Japan, its glittering neon lights, high-rise skyscrapers, and the oversized electronic advertising boards. There is very little in Japan to remind foreign visitors and young Japanese of the devastation of the war at the end of 1945. Even visitors to Hiroshima and Nagasaki will be struck by their apparent normalcy. Apart from the A-bomb dome and the peace park, there is very little to differentiate these two cities from other Japanese metropolitan centres. The corporate buildings, neon lights and department stores dominate downtown Hiroshima. The imposing structure of the Hiroshima baseball stadium, home to the celebrated Hiroshima Carp, replete with amplifiers and lights offer little reminder of the hellish landscape it is built on. So complete was the reconstruction in Hiroshima, the *hibakusha* are committed to preserve the physical remnants of the 1945 nuclear holocaust.<sup>12</sup> They fear that with the disappearance of the physical scars of the war, the younger generation will forget the disaster that befell the city 60 years ago.

In a Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) survey in 2002, it revealed that most of the Japanese youth were ignorant of Japan's modern history and had little knowledge of the post-war conditions.<sup>13</sup> The generational change in Japan is undermining the fragile foundation of pacifism in Japan. It is a universal phenomenon that those who had lived through war and its immediate aftermath developed a very different worldview and values from those who had only known prosperity and Japan is no exception. Given the particularly horrible conditions in wartime Japan and its aftermath, the generational perception on war and peace is even more pronounced. The older generation, those who are 50 years old or above generally regard issues on war and rearmament with great suspicion, if not outright resentment, and on the other hand the younger generations

---

10 Naeve, *Friends of Hibakusha*, p. 121.

11 *60 Years since the Atomic Bombing: Time to Develop Actions and Cooperation for a Nuclear Weapon-Free, Peaceful, Just World*, 2005, the 2005 World Conference against A & H Bombs, Hiroshima, Japan.

12 Gerson, *With Hiroshima Eyes: Atomic War, Nuclear Extortion and Moral Imagination*, p. 26.

13 *Generational Change in Japan: Its implication for U.S.-Japan Relations 2002*, p. 6.

born in the peace and prosperity of post-war Japan tend to be much less sensitized to this issue.

The most enduring feature of Japan's wartime suffering and the key rallying point of post-war pacifism and the peace movement are also showing signs of weakening vigour. The peace memorial services at Hiroshima and Nagasaki that were once regarded as sacred touchstone events on the Japanese national calendar are losing their appeal to the Japanese public. The Peace Commemoration event on August 6 at Hiroshima in 2005 drew a crowd of 7000, but it paled in comparison to previous events at this same Mecca of Peace that exerted a pull on tens of thousands of peace pilgrims. Professor Ryuso Tanaka of the Hiroshima Peace Institute noticed that the number of Japanese school children who visit the Peace Park on school excursions had declined sharply in recent years, and the 'oblivion to the Hiroshima memory' is becoming a nationwide phenomenon. Sadako's famous paper cranes, symbols of peace the world over have been set on fire repeatedly by students on their excursion trips. Not even a specially constructed glass screen could save it from vandalism.<sup>14</sup>

A long time resident of Nagasaki also recalled in an interview that the annual commemoration event at Nagasaki no longer makes headlines in the local news over the past few years, even the local residents appear to be more preoccupied with such pressing problems as employment and schooling over peace and war.<sup>15</sup> 'We are faced with the challenge of conveying this experience to the next generations,' said Noriyuki Masuda, associate director of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Association. 'At some point we realized that what we had was a crisis involving young people's consciousness. We have been facing a change in attitudes and a decline of interest in Japan as a nation.'<sup>16</sup> This declining interest in Hiroshima and its compelling story of death and survival is evident to Mrs Setsuko Iwamoto, who is both a *hibakusha* and a lecturer for 18 years to visiting students at the Peace Museum. She said, with each passing year, the stares of the students grow blanker and blanker, and their questions about atomic bombing grow more stilted, appearing more rehearsed than heartfelt.<sup>17</sup> The real challenge for Hiroshima and Nagasaki is how to keep alive the memory of the atomic bomb victims, with the gradual withering of the surviving *hibakusha*. The people of Japan in general and residents of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in particular need to find a way to perpetuate the peace message without the living voice of *hibakusha*.

14 Tanaka, *The Hibakusha Voice and the Future of the Anti-Nuclear Movement*.

15 An interview with a Japanese student from Nagasaki.

16 French, 'Teaching Youth To Start Worrying About The Bomb'.

17 *Ibid.*



## Peace Education and Pacifism

Having explored the significance of the popular desire that never again should they relive the horrors of war as the driving force behind pacifism in Japan, it is also imperative to examine another pillar of the development of pacifism in post-war Japan, namely the importance of peace education in fostering a pacifist spirit among the younger generation. The post-war democratization of Japan's once authoritarian educational system had provided a solid foundation for the growth of pacifism, its emphasis on democracy and peace had imbued a pacifist spirit in a generation of Japanese. However, the changing international geopolitical and domestic political situation witnessed the gradual erosion of peace education in the education system. The conservatives' desire to roll back the post-war education reforms and to re-introduce a more nationalistic curriculum was met with equal determination from the opposition forces. The perpetual battle between the conservative education bureaucrats and the progressive Japan Teachers' Union or Nikkyoso is an excellent example. The gradual corrosion of peace education could be viewed through the lens of the dwindling influence and membership of the Nikkyoso, the guardian angel of peace education, coupled with a general retreat from the post-war educational goals of 'democracy and peace', which contributed to the gradual decay of pacifist sentiment, especially among the younger generation.

### *Peace Education and the Rise of Pacifism*

After Japan's unconditional surrender to the Allies, the American Occupation authority had the messianic belief in the total transformation of Japan from a totalitarian militaristic state into a democratic and peace loving country. This desire was expressed explicitly in the authoritative policy statement titled 'United States Initial Post-Surrender Policy for Japan', some of the primary objectives were 'abolition of militarism and ultra-nationalism in all their forms; the disarmament and demilitarization of Japan, ... and encouragement and support of liberal political tendencies in Japan'.<sup>18</sup> Education reform was considered indispensable for the implementation of the above objectives, and the Americans saw the pre-war Japanese education system as an incubator for a nation of ultra-nationalist samurais and as one of the perennial causes of Japan's war of aggression.<sup>19</sup>

A host of policies were implemented by the Occupation Authority to eliminate militarism and ultra-nationalism from the educational system: right-wing teachers and educators were forced to resign from their jobs, the use of militaristic and nationalistic

---

<sup>18</sup> Beauchamp and Vardaman, *Japanese Education Since 1945: A Documentary Study*, p. 51.

<sup>19</sup> Beauchamp, *Windows on Japanese Education*, p. 29.

textbooks were banned in schools, the teaching of moral education (Shushin), Japanese history and geography were eliminated and all military training at the schools was suspended.<sup>20</sup> The Americans accomplished the demolition of the physical vestiges of the pre-war militaristic education system swiftly; but the creation of a democratic Japan and a nation that ‘would never want to go to war again’ was a far more intricate task to achieve.

In order to democratize the Japanese education system, the United States Education Mission composed of a very distinguished panel of American scholars and educators was sent to Japan to advise General MacArthur on the delicate issue of education reform. The recommendations made by the Mission exerted a great influence on the establishment of the Fundamental Law of Education (FLE) and the School Education Law (SEL). The essence of the Mission’s recommendations was the democratization of Japan’s highly centralized education system, and to transfer power from the mighty Ministry of Education to the local communities and the popularly elected school boards.<sup>21</sup> It must be noted that educational reform was not a unilateral imposition by the victor on the vanquished, the Japanese themselves had engaged in some profound soul-searching after the disastrous war. According to the Educational Policy for the Construction of a New Japan, the first policy paper issued by the Ministry of Education after the war, the primary objective of the post-war Japanese education system was to ‘abolish militaristic attitudes while firmly preserving the national polity and to create in their place attitudes conducive to a peaceful nation’. It also emphasized the need to cultivate ‘a commitment to the love of peace.’<sup>22</sup> The senior members of the Japanese government, including the Education Minister, repeatedly expressed their support for this policy priority. Tanaka Kotaro (MOE) told the Education Reform Committee in 1946 that the objective of education reform was ‘the establishment of a democratic system of education that finds its values in the ideals of truth and peace.’<sup>23</sup>

With the repudiation of the Imperial Rescript on Education, and its associated militaristic and ultra-nationalistic principles, the post-war Japanese educational system was basking in the lights of liberalism and pacifism. The FLE stated in its Aim of Education of the necessity to educate young people to ‘love truth and justice’ and to have a ‘deep sense of responsibility’<sup>24</sup> and various other democratic and pedagogical aspirations; these objectives might seem thoroughly commonsensical to us today or even totally unexceptional, but these goals were absolutely antithetical to everything that Japanese education had stood for. During the initial period of Occupation, when the idealism of Washington to transform Japanese people into a democratic and pacifist people had not

20 Khan, *Japanese Moral Education Past and Present*, p. 97.

21 Tsuchimochi, *Education Reform in Postwar Japan: the 1946 U.S Education Mission*, p. 213.

22 Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, *Japan’s Modern Educational System*.

23 Horio, *Educational Thought and Ideology in Modern Japan*, p. 107.

24 Beauchamp and Vardaman, *op. cit.*



yet been tainted by the realities of the coming Cold War, history textbooks published in this period reflected the above ideals through earnest discussion and reflection of Japan's war responsibility that only ended a few years ago. This position was clearly marked in the Ministry of Education's publication 'Guide to New Education in Japan' for teachers, it states unequivocally 'the responsibility of the war should be borne by the Japanese nation and they must apologize most humbly to the world for the sins they have committed'.<sup>25</sup> This repentant stance was further highlighted in a 1949 Ministry of Education publication, which stated, 'Japan and Germany must accept the greatest responsibility for World War II, which caused vast suffering, distress, and dislocation to the world'.<sup>26</sup> The occupation era textbooks had left no stone unturned, even the role of the emperor was discussed. The emperor was described as an active participant in the war and many people had been sacrificed in his name.<sup>27</sup>

Educational policy, especially in relation to peace education, took an overtly conservative turn after 1950, when the heightened political atmosphere of the Cold War re-oriented the occupation policy from that of democratization to establishing a bulwark against Communism. Under the stewardship of the conservative Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida, an Advisory Committee on Government Laws was established to examine the suitability of American-introduced laws. One of the targeted areas was the education law, the committee recommended reinstating standardized and certified textbooks in schools.<sup>28</sup> The conservatives wanted to downplay and sanitize Japan's aggressive past, to re-introduce patriotic education and to moderate the vigour of post-war democratic and pacifist education.<sup>29</sup> The fluctuating fortunes of the Japanese peace education programme can be best captured through the relentless battle between the conservative LDP government and the progressive Nikkyoso.

### *Nikkyoso: the Waning Guardian Angel of Peace Education*

The Japan Teachers' Union or Nikkyoso was one of the most important articulators of progressive culture in post-war Japanese society and it was also one of the most influential promoters of peace education within the education system. In the post-war decades, Nikkyoso had persistently acted as a countervailing force to the conservative Ministry of Education's agenda to adulterate the progressive reform education policies introduced by the Americans during the Occupation period. The teachers affiliated with Nikkyoso played an important part in educating the Japanese youth about the

<sup>25</sup> Orr, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

<sup>26</sup> Ienaga, *Japan's Last War*, p. 255.

<sup>27</sup> Reedy, *Mechanism of State Control*, p. 86.

<sup>28</sup> Thakur, *History Textbook Reform in Allied occupied Japan, 1945-52*, p. 21.

<sup>29</sup> Nozaki and Inokuchi, *Japanese Education, Nationalism, and Ienaga Saburo's Textbook Lawsuits*, p. 104.

importance of peace, however their influence has been declining over the years due to dwindling membership and other factors.

The Japan Teachers' Union was founded on June 8, 1947 as an amalgamation of a disparate group of leftist teachers' unions across Japan. According to the report compiled by the American occupation authority, the newly founded Nikkyoso embraced nearly all of the 400,000 teachers in Japan, with an overwhelming majority sympathetic to the leftist ideology.<sup>30</sup> The Nikkyoso was created to advance a multitude of objectives: to improve the economic situations of the teachers, and to safeguard against the renewal of militarism and ultra-nationalism in schools. The Nikkyoso announced five platforms on peace in 1950: 'Establishment of democratic rights, opposition to military bases, independence of ethnic groups, signing of the peace treaty, and the establishment of effective peace education.'<sup>31</sup> The promotion of peace education was one of the primary objectives pursued by the Nikkyoso and it was enshrined in its Code of Ethics, Article I of the Code emphasized the 'historical tasks of protecting peace'. This article resonated with one of the most appealing slogans used by the Nikkyoso during the post-war period, 'Never again send children to the battlefield.'<sup>32</sup>

The leftist-oriented teachers frequently introduced peace themes into the classrooms and often outside the standard curriculum, one of the most famous cases of this kind occurred in Ashigaoka, a middle-class suburb of Kyoto. When the local teachers' union introduced a special program of peace education in the schools, a small group of alarmed parents lodged a complaint, and it charged that teachers argued against Japan's rearmament and the presence of U.S military bases during regular class hours. In response to the complaint, the district school superintendent attempted to transfer the teachers most responsible for the peace education. However, the rejection of the transfer orders resulted in their dismissal. The Nikkyoso and a large group of sympathetic parents vehemently opposed the government's action. Subsequently the conservative LDP government introduced new legislation in the Diet to restrict any future occurrence of 'politically-biased' education.<sup>33</sup>

It seemed that a large number of Nikkyoso affiliated teachers engaged in peace education in and out of classrooms. A documentary on Japanese non-governmental organizations supporting lawsuits brought by Chinese and Korean civilians seeking compensation over the wartime atrocities committed by the Japanese government revealed a disproportionately large number of teachers and educators. In an interview,

---

30 Duke, *Japan's Militant Teachers: A History of the Left-Wing Teachers' Movement*, p. 75.

31 Okano and Tsuchiya, *Education in Contemporary Japan: Inequality and Diversity*, p. 32.

32 Thurston, *Teachers and Politics in Japan*, pp. 88-89.

33 Cummings, *Education and Equality in Japan*, pp. 57-58.



two NGO activists, both retired teachers, told the journalist it is their duty to inform the next generation about wartime atrocities and teach them the barbarity of war and the sanctity of peace.<sup>34</sup> In numerous interviews with young Japanese, it was not hard to gain an impression that the supporters of the pacifist constitution were overwhelming and deeply influenced by their teachers. One student from Nagoya recalled a case where his teacher told the class, because of the pacifist constitution that they would never have to go through the horror of war again. Another student remembered when his teacher devoted an entire lesson to Japan's wartime atrocities, a subject that was not normally covered in the curriculum.<sup>35</sup>

The Nikkyoso was engaged in a constant battle against the conservative government's policies that would negatively impact on peace education. One of the extremely controversial issues was the vexing problem of textbook control. In 1956, the government introduced a bill that would not only strictly limit the number of textbooks that could be used throughout the country, but also empowered a prefectural selection committee to choose the book. If this bill were enacted, this would allow significant leverage on the part of the conservative government to influence the content of textbooks and undermine peace education. The Nikkyoso vehemently opposed the bill, and it organized a massive strike of over a half million teachers that successfully forced the government to retreat.<sup>36</sup> This incident amply demonstrated the importance of Nikkyoso in the post-war education system as a counterweight to the conservative government. However, Nikkyoso's victory was largely undermined by the government's strategy to use a textbook screening system to filter its 'undesirable' content.

The influence of Nikkyoso has been declining over the years; one of the clearest indicators is the dwindling membership. The Nikkyoso membership as a percentage of educational personnel had declined from 86.3 % in 1958 to 48.5% in 1987, and this trend is still persisting.<sup>37</sup> A host of factors contributed to this decline in membership, the dramatic improvement in teachers' salary during the post-war period reduced the incentive for the teachers to join the union, which was one of the most important objectives of the Nikkyoso. The rise of an apolitical generation of Japanese teachers who had no experience of the memory of war or the repressive educational system in the pre-war years resulted in a loss of the sense of mission to educate the next generation of the importance of peace.<sup>38</sup> The decline in the influence of Nikkyoso and the increasing adavance of the conservative government to re-introduce a more

---

34 The Chinese victims and their Japanese helpers: Phoenix TV 2005.

35 Author's interviews with Japanese students (30) in Adelaide and Oxford.

36 Aspinall, *Teachers' Unions and the Politics of Education in Japan*, p. 41.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 48.

38 Thurston, "The decline of the Japan Teachers Union", pp. 186-205.

nationalistic education agenda eroded the post-war foundation in peace education and thus impacted negatively on the growth of pacifism.

### **Red Pacifism? The Rise and Fall of Left-wing Influence on the Development of the Japanese Pacifist Movement**

Since the advent of pacifism in Japan, it had a very strong imprint of socialism. Some of its earliest advocates were strongly influenced by Marxist ideals on the solidarity of international proletarians. These early peace pioneers sowed the seeds of peace that would in turn germinate in the fertile soil of post-war democratic reforms. Various left-wing parties and groups became the torchbearers of constitutional pacifism and they provided the organizational backbone for the pacifist movement throughout much of the post-war period. In fact, the left-wing groups and especially the Japan Socialist Party assumed the mantle as the guardian of Japan's pacifist constitution until its disbandment in 1995. However, the infightings of the various left-wing groups and especially the struggle between the JSP and JCP significantly lessened the mass appeal of the movement, and the politicization of an initially non-partisan movement contributed to the relative decline of pacifism in Japan.

#### *JSP and JCP Inter-party Divisions and the Decline of the Anti-nuclear Lobby (Gensuikyō)*

In the aftermath of the catastrophic war that devastated Japan, there was a broad consensus among the groups across the leftist political spectrum in Japan of the need to renounce its militarist past and to embrace democracy and pacifism. Soon after the war, a group of leading socialists from the pre-war era convened together to form the Nihon Shakaito (JSP)<sup>39</sup>. They unanimously agreed on a general policy platform of democracy, socialism and pacifism.<sup>40</sup> The Communist Party of Japan was the only political party with an unblemished record on its principled resistance to the pre-war militarism, and it still strongly adheres to the principles of constitutional pacifism today.<sup>41</sup>

However, the desire to consecrate Japan with the olive crown was not matched by agreement on the pathway to obtain that cherished goal, the socialists believed in the 'positive neutrality' that was in the spirit of the Non-alignment Movement.<sup>42</sup> The

39 It must be noted there is an inconsistency in the usage of the term JSP, it is a direct transliteration of the Japanese words Nihon Shakaito. However, the official English title of the party is actually Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDP). Throughout this paper, the term JSP will be used.

40 Cole, Totten and Uyehara, *Socialist Parties in Postwar Japan*, p. 5.

41 Stockwin, *Dictionary of the Modern Politics of Japan*, p. 123.

42 There was no consensus among the socialists on the pathway to achieve pacifism; there were three major factions within the JSP with conflicting views on the means to achieve pacifism. This ranged from the right-wing socialist's preference for a closer relationship with the West to the left-wing socialist 'Third Road Thesis', the complex interplay of the intra-party differences will be discussed in detail in the next section of this chapter.





Communists and their sympathizers openly advocated the ideologically tainted 'Peace force thesis', which supports the Communist camp as the 'force of peace' against the Americans and their allies. The constant bickering between the two parties significantly damaged the unity and the credibility of the anti-nuclear movement, which eventually resulted in disintegration of the movement into two hostile camps. More importantly, the ideological encroachment of the initially non-partisan anti-nuclear movement by the JSP and JCP significantly lessened its mass appeal to the Japanese public that was weary or even hostile to communism; this fear was strengthened by the gravitation of socialist policy towards the left. However, the organizational skills and determination displayed by the various leftist groups, and especially by the JCP ensured the perpetuation of the movement until the present day.

One of the most prominent expressions of pacifism in Japan during the post-war period was the anti-nuclear movement which was triggered by the 'ashes of death' from the American nuclear tests on the Bikini Atoll. The Japanese fishermen aboard the *Lucky Dragon* were exposed to radioactive fallout from the American nuclear test, and one fisherman suffered fatal injuries. This incident sparked off a nationwide furor, and it was widely covered by the Japanese media.<sup>43</sup> The death of the crewmember also triggered a large-scale protest on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May, with protesters holding signs such as 'Against re-armament and support for pacifism.'<sup>44</sup> Most significantly, in the same month the housewives of the Sugunami Ward of Tokyo organised the famous 'Suginami Appeal', which collected over 30 million signatures.

This groundswell of public protest generated momentum to convene the first ever World Conference against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs and in 1955 on the tenth anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, 30,000 people including a small foreign contingent participated in this conference.<sup>45</sup> This conference was sponsored by many influential Japanese public figures including the former Prime Minister Tetsu Katayama, the President of the Japan Academy of Science Saburo Yamada, the Presidents of Japan YMCA, the All-Japan Buddhist Associations and the International Trade Promotion Commission.<sup>46</sup> During the Conference, three broad goals were announced: prevention of nuclear war, abolition of nuclear weapons, and relief and solidarity for the *Hibakusha*. Building on the success of the conference, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September the organizers of the event established a permanent body called the Japan Council against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs (Gensuikyo) to perpetuate the struggle for the total abolition of nuclear weapons.<sup>47</sup>

---

43 Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, 1954-1970*, p. 8.

44 *Asahi Shimbun Nanken* 1954, p. 9

45 Atomic Bomb Museum 2005, *Pursuit of Peace*.

46 Wittner, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

47 The Official Website of Gensuikyo.

Gensuikyo became one of Japan's most important and enduring mass movements. Its activities were vigorously espoused by the Japanese public, and it drew supporters from every walk of life in Japan. It has been instrumental in keeping Japanese people's 'nuclear allergy' sensitive and is an important pressure group to oppose any attempts by the government to re-arm the Self-Defense Force with advanced offensive capabilities, especially nuclear weapons. In addition, it continuously re-energizes a social movement that is not necessarily self-sustaining. Even though Gensuikyo had a very strong activist base comprised of members of the powerful Socialist Party and its affiliated trade unions and some communists, its initial activities were largely immune from the partisan politics that later stigmatized its reputation throughout the turbulent Cold War period.

The Socialist and Communist Parties both in principle committed to constitutional pacifism and both professed their support for the anti-nuclear movement. However, there was a fundamental difference in their ideological approaches to the understanding of pacifism. As early as 1949, The JSP officially adopted a foreign policy of permanent neutrality. This policy was formally introduced in the following terms. '... Our Party, having regard to the neutral status established by the Constitution, opposes the conclusion of any military or political agreement with a particular country or a particular group of countries.'<sup>48</sup> This JSP policy is also known as the 'Third Road Thesis', which was heavily influenced by Nehru's neutralism and the non-alignment movement. This policy was eventually enshrined and elaborated as the 'three peace principles' of the JSP at its January 1950 convention: (1) conclusion of a comprehensive peace treaty with the countries which were legally still in a state of war with Japan; (2) neutrality in accordance with the Constitution; and (3) opposition to the use of Japanese military bases by any foreign powers. In the following year, a fourth principle of the opposition to rearmament was added.<sup>49</sup> Though there were periodic oscillations in the policies, the spirit of the above policies was generally observed by the Socialists.

The bedrock of JSP's policy was to champion for the cause of 'positive neutrality', and to assume for themselves the mantle of a genuine third force standing between the Communist and Capitalist blocks in order to play a positive and mediating role in encouraging a peaceful co-existence between the two social systems, and to achieve pacifism and national security through the maintenance of neutrality in a bi-polar world. On the other hand, the Communists have adopted a very ideologically oriented and Marxist outlook on the issue of pacifism. For the Communists, in order to realize the biblical dream of bending the sword into ploughs, the 'enemy of peace' must be

<sup>48</sup> Stockwin, *The Japanese Socialist Party and Neutralism*, p. 31.

<sup>49</sup> Cole, Totten and Uyehara, *op. cit.*, p. 200.



eliminated. The Communists and their sympathizers identified American imperialism as the primary enemy of peace in the world, and it must be resisted accordingly. The Communists advocated a so-called 'Peace thesis,' in which the United States was lambasted as the principal threat to world peace and the Soviet Union and Red China were glorified as a 'force of peace.' In addition, the Communists also presented the nuclear disarmament and the pacifist movement in a wider context of struggle against imperialism and the national liberation movement.<sup>50</sup> Given such radically different outlooks on the issue of pacifism, it is not surprising that the Gensuikyo became the ideological battleground for the two parties.

In the initial period of its existence, the Gensuikyo was able to remain above the partisan politics and was not identifiably aligned with the left of the political spectrum. The united front was maintained between the various leading 'progressive forces' and the pacifists without political affiliations on the basis of total prohibition against nuclear weapons and disarmament. However, this united front was short-lived, as the Gensuikyo left wing (essentially the JCP) started to infiltrate the Gensuikyo with its front organizations and started to incorporate ideologically oriented goals such as the struggle against American imperialism and support for the national liberation movement into its agenda.<sup>51</sup>

At the fourth World Conference Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs, the resolution approved by the Gensuikyo became visibly pro-Communist and anti-American, the Soviet Union was praised for its unilateral suspension of nuclear tests, the American and British military policies in the Middle East were vehemently denounced as a threat to world peace, and calls for normalization of diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China were also made.<sup>52</sup> Many moderates and unaffiliated groups were dismayed by the growing Communist control of the Gensuikyo, and they regarded many of the objectives advanced by the resolution as not conducive to the purposes of the movement. Many non-aligned groups felt very alienated by their experiences and lost any enthusiasm to participate in any further activities organized by the Gensuikyo.

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, The Gensuikyo fell increasingly under the control of the Communists. At the 1960 World Conference, the United States was again denounced as the principal enemy of world peace, and the abolition of nuclear weapons was only possible through the struggle against the American imperialists. The first major crisis occurred in 1961, when the Communists wanted to make the struggle against American imperialism the focal point of the movement. The Communists insisted that

---

50 Langer, *Communism in Japan*, pp. 119, 148.

51 DiFilippo, 2003, 'The Politics of Japanese Nuclear Disarmament Initiatives', pp. 4-5.

52 Langer, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

‘enemies of peace’ must be identified; the anti-nuclear movement must be propagated in the context of struggles against American imperialism and neo-colonialism. The JSP attempted to resist the Communist policy onslaught and argued that the close alliance with the Communist block and the relentless attacks on the West would violate its ‘positive neutrality’ principle, and it would antagonize all the moderates and reduce its mass appeal to the people. The Communists had won a Pyrrhic victory due to their superior organizational skills, and the JSP issued a strongly worded protest and asserted ‘We have no confidence in the present Gensuikyo.’<sup>53</sup>

The last straw came only two weeks after the 7<sup>th</sup> World Conference, after the Soviets had conducted a series of nuclear tests. One of the seemingly innocuous resolutions passed by the Gensuikyo during the Conference was that any government that breaches the current nuclear testing moratorium will be ‘denounced as the enemy of peace and of mankind’, and ironically this resolution was suggested by the Soviet delegate at the Conference. The Gensuikyo was immediately engulfed in an uproar; the Communists quickly endorsed the Soviet actions and justified them on the grounds that ‘since the Soviet Union is a peace force, nuclear tests are a natural defensive measure’.<sup>54</sup> The Socialists directed their ammunition at both the United States and the Soviet Union, and demanded absolute opposition to nuclear testing by any country.

After the feeble protest issued by the Gensuikyo at the 7<sup>th</sup> World Conference against the Soviet nuclear tests, the Socialists and their allies were determined to resist Communist dominance of the movement at the 8<sup>th</sup> World Conference and demanded a resolution that would condemn both Soviet and American nuclear tests. Once again, the Communists outmanoeuvred the Socialists and the resolution failed to pass, the infuriated Socialist delegates stormed out of the meeting. As a result of the Socialists withdrawal, the meeting descended into utter chaos. After the disastrous 8<sup>th</sup> World Conference, the JSP and its affiliated unions started to contemplate establishing their own anti-nuclear organization. The Socialists had announced that ‘positive neutrality’ had to be the basis for the peace movement and a one-sided view of the problems of nuclear weapons and disarmament could not be tolerated.<sup>55</sup> After a few interim rallies organized by the Socialists in direct competition with the JCP dominated Gensuikyo Conference, the Japan Congress against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs (Gensuikin) was formally inaugurated in February 1965.<sup>56</sup>

53 *Ibid.*, pp. 117-121, and please also refer to Wittner, *op. cit.*, pp. 321-323.

54 Cole, Totten and Uyehara, *op. cit.*, pp. 212-214.

55 Langer, *op. cit.*, pp. 231-232.

56 DiFilippo, *op. cit.*, p. 5.



### *Anti-nuclear Movement After Gensuikyo Schism*

After the departure of the Socialists and their allies, the Gensuikyo was reduced largely to its Communist constituency, and it became ever more sectarian in its policy orientation. The struggle between the JCP and the JSP over the direction and the policy of the Gensuikyo had a disastrous effect on the Japanese pacifist movement in general and the anti-nuclear movement in particular. Not only did it cause the disintegration of the world's largest anti-nuclear movement, it had done much to discredit the movement in the eyes of the Japanese public. Both movements had to rely on their core constituencies for support, the Communists and the radical left provided the muscle for the Gensuikyo and the Socialists and their allies were the steam behind the Gensuikin. It affirmed the conservatives' allegation in the public mind that the JSP and the JCP had hijacked a sacred mission for its own political gains.<sup>57</sup>

One of the biggest blows to the organised peace movement was the demise of the JSP as the largest and most influential sponsor of the peace movement. Its disbandment more or less spelt the end of the influence of socialism on the peace movement. It could be said that the post-war *raison d'être* of the JSP rested largely on its opposition to the revision of the pacifist constitution and any moves to re-arm Japan by the conservative LDP. However, the Socialists' commitment to this basic article of faith had been slowly eroding throughout the 1980s. In 1984, the party secretary Ishibashi Masashi proposed a tortured formula that recognises the legality but not the constitutionality of the SDF.<sup>58</sup> Though it could be regarded as pragmatic recognition of the *fait accompli*, it was a dramatic departure of vehement and sometimes violent opposition against the SDF by the Socialists. In 1994, the most dramatic moment in JSP's history occurred and it sent a seismic shock throughout the Japanese electorate and the peace movement in particular. The JSP congress voted to renounce its most fundamental principles: the recognition of SDF's constitutionality, support for the US-Japan Security Treaty, the acceptance of the *Kimigayo* and *Hinomaru* as the national anthem and flag respectively, and the abandonment of its reservation on the development of nuclear energy.<sup>59</sup> The JSP itself was soon dissolved as well after it had deserted all its key policies without any articulation of new replacement principles. This spectacular renunciation of faith by the Socialists ended decades long support for the peace movement, and the disappearance of the JSP as the most important political actor in opposition to constitutional amendment cast an ominous shadow on the future of the peace movement in Japan, effectively ending the strong left-wing influence on the peace movement.

---

57 Stockwin, 1986, 'Does Japan Have a Special Attitude to Peace?', p. 6.

58 McCormack, *The Emptiness of Japanese Affluence*, p. 211.

59 *Ibid.*, pp. 213-215.

## Conclusion

The edifice of pacifism in post-war Japan rested largely on three important pillars: the prevailing victim consciousness among the Japanese populace, a thoroughly reformed educational system that repudiated militarism and the strong organisational and political support for the organised peace movement by the leftist forces. The suffering of the Japanese people, especially in the nuclear holocausts of Hiroshima and Nagasaki seared into the national consciousness an abiding enmity to militarism and the collective desire for a future free of war. A myth of victimhood was developed through 'scar' literature, 'never again' became the watchword of pacifism. The democratisation of the Japanese educational system laid the solid foundation for the development of a more enduring pacifism based on a critical appreciation of Japan's past as a victimiser. The unadulterated peace education during the early post-war period was responsible for the creation of a generation of politically-conscious Japanese dedicated to pacifism. Leftists' involvement in the mass peace movement provided it with a more durable character: the discipline and organisational skills of leftist forces institutionalised the anti-nuclear movement after cooling of initial public enthusiasm.

The generational change in Japan slowly eroded the foundation of pacifism built on victimhood. Post-war economic prosperity largely rendered the tales of hardship and sufferings incomprehensible to a youth who had only known affluence. Such an occurrence could have been rectified, if the conservative government did not compromise the peace education initiated in the post-war reforms. The government in favour of a more nationalistic curriculum implicitly censored the more critical appraisal of the war in school textbooks, thus creating a selective historical amnesia that was detrimental to fostering a peace-loving spirit. The ideologically driven involvement of leftist forces in the anti-nuclear campaign compromised its non-partisan reputation, thus reducing its overall mass appeal. The gradual demise of leftist sponsorship of the organised peace movement resulted in the declining activism of the movement.

Generational change is perhaps the greatest enemy of pacifism in Japan, especially in the absence of an effective transmission mechanism that could convey pacifist messages from one generation to another. Generational change in Japan saw not only youth without any sense of a victim consciousness, but also a generation of teachers devoid of the sense of mission to educate the next generation of the barbarism of war that was a characteristic of their predecessors. Unlike western pacifism rooted in religious tradition, Japanese pacifism was built on the shifting sands of fear-induced aversion to war. The root cause of the decline in pacifism is the fragility of its foundation.



## References

- Asahi Shimbun Nanken (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbun, 1954).
- Aspinall, R. W., *Teachers' Unions and the Politics of Education in Japan* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001).
- Atomic Bomb Museum 2005, Pursuit of Peace, Retrieved 26 July 2006, from [http://www.atomicbombmuseum.org/5\\_beggings.shtml](http://www.atomicbombmuseum.org/5_beggings.shtml).
- Beauchamp, E. R. & Vardaman, J. M. Jr. (eds.), *Japanese Education Since 1945: A Documentary Study* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1997).
- Beauchamp, E. R., (ed.) *Windows on Japanese Education* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991).
- Brock, P., *Pacifism: In Europe to 1914*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).
- Buruma, I., *Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan* (London: Vintage, 1994).
- Cole, A. B., Totten, G. O., & Uyehara, C. H., *Socialist Parties in Postwar Japan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).
- Committee for the Compilation of Materials on Damage caused by the Atomic Bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, comp., *Hiroshima and Nagasaki: the Physical, Medical, and Social Effects of the Atomic Bombings* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).
- Cummings, W. K., *Education and Equality in Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).
- DiFilippo, A., 2003, 'The Politics of Japanese Nuclear Disarmament Initiatives: Where Government policies and Civil Society Converge and Diverge', Arms Control and Disarmament Lessons Learned and Future Prospects, Portland, Oregon.
- Dower, J. D., *Japan in War and Peace: Selected Essays* (New York: New Press, 1993).
- Duke, B. C., *Japan's Militant Teachers: A History of the Left-Wing Teachers' Movement* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1973).
- French, H., 'Teaching Youth To Start Worrying About The Bomb', *New York Times*, 29 May 2003.
- Gerson, J., *With Hiroshima Eyes: Atomic War, Nuclear Extortion and Moral Imagination* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1995).
- Horio, T., Edited and Translated by Platzer, S., *Educational Thought and Ideology in Modern Japan: State Authority and Intellectual Freedom* (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1988).
- Howes, J. F. & Bamba, N. (eds.), *Pacifism in Japan: the Christian and Socialist Tradition* (Kyoto: Minerva Press, 1978).
- Ibuse, M., (translated by John Bester) *Black Rain* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1969).
- Ienaga, S., (translated by Frank Baldwin) *Japan's Last War: World War II and the Japanese, 1931-1945* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1979).
- Khan, Y., *Japanese Moral Education Past and Present* (London: Associated University Press, 1997).

- Langer, P. F., *Communism in Japan: A case of Political Naturalization* (Stanford: Hoover Institute Press, 1972).
- McCormack, G., *The Emptiness of Japanese Affluence* (Armonk, New York: M.E.Sharpe, 1996).
- Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (Government of Japan), 'Japan's Modern Educational System: A History of the First Hundred Years', Tokyo, Japan.
- Naeve, V., *Friends of Hibakusha* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1964).
- Nozaki, Y. & Inokuchi, H., *Japanese Education, Nationalism and Ienaga Saburo's Textbook Lawsuits* in Hein, L. & Selden, M., *Censoring History: Citizenship and Memory in Japan, Germany, and the United States* (Armonk, London: M.E.Sharpe, 2000).
- Okano, K. & Tsuchiya, M., *Education in Contemporary Japan: Inequality and Diversity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
- Orr, J., *The Victim as Hero: Ideologies of Peace and National Identity in Post-war Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001).
- Reedy, S. M., *Mechanism of State Control: An Historical Study of the Treatment of the Pacific War in Japanese High School History Books from 1945 to 1995* (unpublished Doctor of Education thesis), the University of San Francisco: California, 1999.
- 60 Years since the Atomic Bombing: Time to Develop Actions and Cooperation for a Nuclear Weapon-Free, Peaceful, Just World*, 2005, the 2005 World Conference against A & H Bombs, Hiroshima, Japan.
- Stockwin, J.A.A., *The Japanese Socialist Party and Neutralism: A Study of a Political Party and Its Foreign Policy* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1968) p. 31.
- Stockwin, J.A.A., 'Does Japan Have a Special Attitude to Peace?' *Oxford Project for Peace Studies*, Occasional Paper No 2, Oxford, UK, 1986.
- Stockwin, J.A.A., *Dictionary of the Modern Politics of Japan* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), p. 123.
- Tanaka, Y., 2005, *The Hibakusha Voice and the Future of the Anti-Nuclear Movement*, Japan Focus. Retrieved 2 February 2005, from [http://japanfocus.org/\\_Yuki\\_TANAKA-\\_The\\_Hibakusha\\_Voice\\_and\\_the\\_Future\\_of\\_the\\_Anti\\_Nuclear\\_Movement](http://japanfocus.org/_Yuki_TANAKA-_The_Hibakusha_Voice_and_the_Future_of_the_Anti_Nuclear_Movement).
- Thakur, Y. H., *History Textbook Reform in Allied occupied Japan, 1945-52* in Beauchamp, E.R., *Dimensions of Contemporary Japan: A Collections of Essays* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998).
- The Centre for Strategic and International Studies, *Generational Change in Japan: Its Implication for U.S-Japan Relations 2002*, Washington.
- The Chinese victims and their Japanese helpers: Phoenix TV 2005, a series to commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of WWII.
- The Official Website of Gensuikyo. Retrieved 5 July 2005, from [http://www10.plala.or.jp/antiatom/html/e/discription\\_gensuikyo.htm](http://www10.plala.or.jp/antiatom/html/e/discription_gensuikyo.htm).
- Thurston D. R., *Teachers and Politics in Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).





Thurston, D. R., "The decline of the Japan Teachers Union" in *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 19 No 2, (1989).

Tsuchimochi, G. H., *Education Reform in Postwar Japan: the 1946 U.S Education Mission* (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1993).

Whittier Treat, J., *Writing Ground Zero: Japanese literature and the Atomic Bomb* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press: 1995).

Wittner, L. S., *Resisting the Bomb: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, 1954-1970* (California: Stanford University Press, 1997).

# After the Ainu Shinpō: The United Nations and the Indigenous People of Japan

Crystal Porter  
Australian National University

## Abstract

The Japanese Government recognised the cultural importance of their minority Ainu population in 1997. They designed a law to help protect the dying culture of the people; however the government has been less forthcoming to acknowledge indigenous aspects of the Ainu. Ten years after the creation of this law, the United Nations brought forward the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, a declaration to strengthen not only cultural rights, but also land and self-determination rights. Japan voted in favour of this declaration even though Japanese representatives have made mostly negative comments on the declaration.

This article explores the significance of indigenous rights in Japan and how the Japanese Government uses the guise of upholding individual rights to ignore indigenous rights in Japan.

## Keywords

Japan, Ainu, indigenous people, United Nations, human rights

## Introduction

For many indigenous people worldwide, distinctive rights have become an important issue. Many have suffered from discrimination, displacement and have poor standards of living. Thus, 2007 was a special year for many people. In September, the United Nations adopted the controversial Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This declaration took more than twelve years to produce and was received by an overwhelming majority of nations. Japan was one of the many countries that endorsed this declaration.<sup>1</sup> This endorsement came exactly ten years after the Japanese

---

<sup>1</sup> United Nations General Assembly, 'General Assembly adopts Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.'



Government enacted the so-called *Ainu Shinpō* (Ainu New Law), an act to protect and promote the culture of Japan's Ainu population.

The Ainu people of Japan consist of a minority group originally from the northernmost areas of Japanese land, as well as the Russian administrated Kuril Islands and Sakhalin. For nearly a hundred years, the Japanese government displaced Ainu people and subjected them to a number of discriminatory practices by controlling Ainu land and education standards.<sup>2</sup> However, in 1997, the Sapporo District Court recognised the indigenous status of the Ainu under the Constitution and international law; this decision is now known as the Nibutani Dam case. The Nibutani Dam Case ruling and the creation of the *Ainu Shinpō* initially appeared to be a breakthrough in securing further rights for the Ainu, but these victories have severe limitations.

The *Ainu Shinpō* aims to diffuse cultural aspects of the Ainu, which is where the law's main shortcoming lies. It makes no reference of other rights, thus having little practical value to the Ainu people. The act also guarantees no collective power and as a result, anyone can use the funds made available to promote Ainu culture. Furthermore, the Act itself avoids any definition of Ainu people and does not give adequate recognition to indigenous status.<sup>3</sup> A mention of indigenes is written in supplementary provisions of the act but this is not legally binding and cannot be utilised in any manner. Unlike the court, the Japanese government has refused to acknowledge the Ainu as being indigenous. The United Nations has released a report challenging notions of indigenes in Japan, recommending that Japan take further steps to acknowledge the Ainu.<sup>4</sup> Despite some progress, little has changed for the Ainu situation. However, as the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples has evolved, the Ainu situation needs to be reassessed.

The Japanese government was active in voicing many opinions about the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples during its drafting. This article aims to use these opinions to put the declaration in context for the Ainu people. It will look at which aspects of the declaration Japan was strongly opposed to and why. By assessing the government's reasoning, likely outcomes of the declaration in Japan can be gauged.

---

<sup>2</sup> Siddle, *Race, Resistance and the Ainu of Japan*, p. 194.

<sup>3</sup> Siddle, "The Limits to Citizenship in Japan", p. 449.

<sup>4</sup> Economic and Social Council, "Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and All Forms of Discrimination", p. 23.

## The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Since the International Year for the World's Indigenous People in 1993, the United Nations has placed emphasis on introducing some form of declaration to recognise the presence of indigenous people around the world. Such a declaration would not be legally binding but the United Nations encourages states to enact consistent domestic legislation.<sup>5</sup>

Three official drafts have been presented for debate. The United Nations' Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP) presented the first public draft to a United Nations sub-commission for debate in 1995. This effort was directed at having a declaration in force to mark the beginning of the first Decade for Indigenous People, which began in 1995.<sup>6</sup>

Some states found the 1995 Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to be too liberal. Thus, a revised draft was presented in 2006. However, the 2006 draft still contained many of the same controversial provisions. Subsequently, two drafts were created in 2007. The final draft was endorsed in September 2007, with Japan being one of the nations in favour of this particular draft. Tellingly, the declaration has been through many changes before its eventual implementation.

### *The 1995 Draft Declaration*

Individuals, who identify as being indigenous, wrote most of the 1995 Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This original 1995 draft was sent to the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, where government representatives of member states scrutinised the proposed declaration. Eventually, the Sub-Commission decided that the draft declaration needed to be revised. This was in response to the criticism that came from these government representatives. Japan was one of the strongest critics<sup>7</sup> as many of the articles contradicted the government's stance on collective rights, which were featured heavily in the 1995 draft declaration. Collective rights form the basis of many essential indigenous rights, self-determination being one of the most important.

5 Cornassel, 'Partnership in Action?', p. 138.

6 Barsh, 'Indigenous People and the UN Commission on Human Rights', p. 788.

7 *Ibid.*



Article 3 of the 1995 draft declaration stated that, 'Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination' and article 31 stated, 'Indigenous people... have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs'.<sup>8</sup> While a clear definition of self-determination is not given, the Japanese representative opposed both articles. The representative argued that these articles would give indigenous people collective political power that is distinct from other Japanese citizens.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the representative declared that collective rights 'cannot be found in international instruments'.<sup>10</sup> In arguing this, Japan seems to be unaware of previous declarations, such as the Declaration on the Rights of National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities that provide for such rights.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to this, the first two articles of the 1995 draft declaration faced objections solely from Japan. The first article provided indigenous people with 'the right to the full and effective enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms recognised in... international human rights law'.<sup>12</sup> The Nibutani Dam Case is an example of how this could influence the Ainu people.

In that decision, the court considered the Ainu as a minority group and also as an indigenous group. The main dispute in this case was whether a government body had sufficiently consulted Ainu people prior to starting construction of a dam. The Sapporo District Court recognised that land is essential to the culture of the Ainu people. Much of this protection stemmed from indigenous recognition in existing international human rights conventions.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the court used international law to guarantee the human rights and freedoms of the indigenous Ainu in the Nibutani Dam Case. However, for the Ainu to fully enjoy current human rights, indigenousness became an important issue. The court decision made the connection to which the proposed article 1 was alluding to, that indigenous people have rights under existing law as an indigenous people.

In opposition to this first article, Japan cited the issue of 'collective dimensions of indigenous rights'.<sup>14</sup> This would suggest that Japan is comfortable with individual indigenous rights but has difficulty treating indigenous rights in a collective manner. However, if the Nibutani Dam Case ruling had only considered individual dimensions of rights, the plaintiffs would have needed to assert that their own land was important enough to stop construction of the Nibutani Dam. They would have had no right to

---

8 Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, 'Draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People', pp. 8 & 19.

9 Barsh, *op. cit.*, p. 800.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 788.

11 United Nations General Assembly, *Declaration on the Rights of National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities*.

12 Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

13 Levin, 'Kayano et. al v. Hokkaido Expropriation Committee (The Nibutani Dam Decision)', p. 395.

14 Barsh, *op. cit.*, p. 804.

assert any kind of right for Ainu people as a whole, even if this particular land was important for the Ainu community.<sup>15</sup> As a result, the case would not have been as successful if the Ainu had not been construed as a group. This United Nations debate on the draft declaration was progressing simultaneously as the Nibutani Dam Case; thus, the connections would have been obvious to the Japanese Government.

There were some concerns shared by Japan and other nations. The most important issue was over the definition of indigenous people.<sup>16</sup> In the debate, Japan was one of many countries that insisted that a definition of indigenesness be included in the declaration. Interestingly, this view was shared by most Asian nations, while the Western nations tended to agree that there were already sufficient definitions in international materials, such as the International Labour Organisations' Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries.<sup>17</sup>

As such, the International Labour Organisation's convention defines indigenous peoples as those 'who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the population which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonisation or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions'.<sup>18</sup> According to this definition, the Ainu would be considered indigenous. They have long inhabited northern Japan before Hokkaido and surrounding areas became part of Japan in the nineteenth century. The Ainu were also subject to colonisation practices at this time as the Japanese government took land from them and forced the Ainu into a different lifestyle.<sup>19</sup> However, Japan is not a signatory to the International Labour Organisation's convention and ignored this convention when protesting that international definitions of indigenesness did not exist.

Insisting on a definition in the declaration can only mean that these Asian states wanted one that was different from the current standards. Tellingly, the Chinese representative was vocal in that indigenous people were to be understood as a product of European colonial practices and therefore no indigenous people exist within Asia.<sup>20</sup> However, by complying with the conventional definitions that currently exist, Japan would have to recognise the Ainu as a colonised indigenous people to whom this declaration could apply.

---

15 Levin, *op. cit.*, p. 395.

16 Barsh, *op. cit.*, pp. 791 & 804.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 793.

18 International Labour Organisation, Convention (No. 169) *Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries*.

19 Morris-Suzuki, 'Collective Memory, Collective Forgetting', p. 602-3.

20 Barsh, *op. cit.*, p. 793-794.



From the 1995 debate, it is apparent that the Japanese government did not want to concede self-determination or collective rights due to the individual nature of the Constitution. The representative also appeared reluctant to admit past colonial practices by the government.

After the comments made by the government representatives were noted, the 1995 draft was sent back to the WGIP. Eleven years later, a revised draft was released and Japan continued to present some of the same opinions when the declaration was presented again. Despite this, Japan voted in favour of forwarding the draft to the General Assembly where it could officially be voted in. Investigation of the revisions between the 1995 and 2006 drafts provide an indication of what the Japanese Government was in fact comfortable with.

### *The Draft Declaration in 2006*

The WGIP made significant alterations between the 1995 and 2006 draft. Japan voted in favour of the draft in 2006 and was part of the majority vote that sent the 2006 draft declaration for consideration to the Third Committee of the United Nations' General Assembly. However, the committee did not approve the draft because of further concerns about self-determination.<sup>21</sup> Japan refrained from this second vote at the Third Committee and continued to reaffirm its stance on the idea of collective rights.

In the first vote of 2006, which took place in the Human Rights Council, the representative from Japan stood firm on the same point of view that was presented eleven years earlier, asserting collective rights could not be recognised within Japan.<sup>22</sup>

In the 2006 Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, collective ideas of self-determination remained intact.<sup>23</sup> This meant that Japan's continuing argument that collective rights cannot exist within Japan compromised a significant portion of the draft declaration. This is despite the inclusion of a paragraph in the declaration's introduction that, 'indigenous peoples possess collective rights which are indispensable for their existence, well-being and integral development as peoples.'<sup>24</sup> This was not present in the 1995 draft and was perhaps included anticipating such a response. However, as international declarations are subordinate to the national Constitutions, this inclusion is unnecessary for Japan.

---

<sup>21</sup> United Nations, 'Namibia: amendments to draft resolution A/C.3/61/L.18/Rev.1', p. 1.

<sup>22</sup> Human Rights Council, 'Human Rights Council adopts texts for protection from forced disappearance, rights of indigenous people', p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> Human Rights Council, 'Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 60/251 of March 15 2006 entitled "Human Rights Council"', p. 6.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Japan pushed for a definition of indigenous people in the 1995 talks. Without an actual definition, recognising indigenous people may have come down to a single article in the 1995 draft, 'Indigenous people have the collective and individual right . . . to identify themselves as indigenous and be recognised as such.'<sup>25</sup> Any question of indigeness would be solved by self-identification, so any Ainu could potentially assert their individual right to be identified as an indigenous person and could use any definition. In 2006, this particular article was removed from the declaration. Thus, indigenous identification is under government control. While the actual rights afforded aren't entirely different in the 2006 draft, the means of how they are applied are. Therefore, the 2006 draft wasn't as strong as the previous 1995 draft.

However, the 2006 draft was rejected by the United Nations' Third Committee, as self-determination was still an important factor in the draft and the nations agreed to review the 2006 draft and look at it again the next year.

### *The Draft Declaration in 2007*

The Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was presented to the General Assembly again in 2007 with many changes made from the previous year.

In May 2007, many African nations put forward their own draft because they believed that self-determination rights in the previous draft could lead to loss of government control and confusion over territorial boundaries.<sup>26</sup> The 2007 African draft reflects these concerns. Instead of having the rights to self-determination, indigenous people would now be able to 'participate in the political affairs of the state and to pursue their economic, social and cultural development on an equal basis with others.'<sup>27</sup> This article suggests little change.

Many of the proposed amendments in the 2007 African Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples allowed states to freely define several important aspects of the declaration. The first such article is in reference to inherent rights of indigenous people, which would have to be respected 'in accordance with the national laws.'<sup>28</sup> By this, the non-existence of collective rights in the Japanese Constitution is crucial. In addition to this, rights to any form of self-government (that is, self-determination) must also be exercised 'in accordance with the provisions of national laws.'<sup>29</sup> Again, Japan can

<sup>25</sup> Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>26</sup> African Group, *Draft Aide Memoir*, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> African Group, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.





use their collective rights argument to deny self-determination. There are several other instances where implementation of the provisions would be subject to laws of the state. Defining indigenous people would have also been placed in the hands of the state.

The African states were concerned that many ethnic groups of people within their nations could be defined as indigenous, so the essential idea of self-determination was problematic for them.<sup>30</sup> This is addressed at the beginning of their draft, 'Recognising that the situation of indigenous peoples varies from region to region, country to country and from community to community, every country or region shall have the prerogative to define who constitutes indigenous people in their respective countries or regions taking into account its national or regional peculiarities.'<sup>31</sup> This provision would be beneficial to not only these African states but also to the Asian nations who wanted a different definition. Japan, also, could have freely defined what indigenous means in Japan. As the government has not used the ILO definition in the past, it is likely that they would have interpreted the definition of indigenous quite differently.

The African Group draft was revised further before being forwarded to the General Assembly in September. This final draft is a combination of the 2006 draft and the African group draft. As such, under this final draft, nations can take into account the aspects of their region when applying the declaration,<sup>32</sup> however, this version of the draft stops short of allowing states to define who is indigenous and still has a degree of self-determination. The issue of self-determination, however, has been slightly revised so that, 'Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as for any state, person, people, group or person the right to engage in any activity . . . which would dismember or impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent states.'<sup>33</sup> This is important as Japan has territorial issues that concern the Ainu people. Furthermore, the second and final 2007 draft still lacked a definition of what it means to be indigenous.

The second 2007 Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was forwarded to the Third Assembly of the United Nations. The revised articles resulted in an overwhelming positive reception, a large change from the 2006 vote. Japan was one of 143 nations who voted in favour of the revised 2007 draft. The United States, Australia, New Zealand and Canada were the only dissenting votes.<sup>34</sup> This draft is now formally implemented as the final declaration.

---

30 African Group, *Draft Aide Memoir*, p. 2.

31 African Group, *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, p. 3.

32 United Nations General Assembly, 'Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples', Document A/61/L.67, p. 3.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

34 *Asahi Shinbun*, 先住民族権利宣言を採択20年以上の議論の末国連 [The Declaration on Indigenous People is adopted at the end of more than 20 years of debates at the United Nations].

After the vote, the Japanese government delegate confirmed Japan's position that self-determination could not be used to assert that indigenous people are separate from their states of residence nor did it impair the sovereignty of a nation's laws.<sup>35</sup> Importantly, the Japanese government representative also stated that the right to self-determination in the declaration 'should not be invoked for the purpose of impairing the sovereignty of a State, its national and political unity, or territorial integrity'.<sup>36</sup> This is a stance that had not been previously presented by the government. However, it may have been a point significant enough to warrant a fresh attitude from the Japanese government.

The Japanese government demonstrated a far more positive reaction to the final 2007 draft by voting in favour of it. However, the denial of collective rights and the protection of territorial boundaries indicates that the Ainu may receive little or no benefits from the United Nations developments. This situation has the potential for change if the lack of rights is due more to government attitude than Constitutional strength. Thus, the actual reasoning behind the rejection of indigenous rights will be considered.

## Collective and Indigenous Rights

At United Nations discussions, the Japanese government displayed no intention of recognising many fundamental rights, so it may be asked why the denial of particular rights is so important to Japan. Is it because of the national laws or because of political motives? An analysis of collective rights in international and domestic Japanese law demonstrates the complex relationship between individual and collective rights.

### *Collective Rights vs. Individual Rights*

Collective rights are a special category of rights that are especially important for indigenous people worldwide. This is due to the nature of how these rights are usually applied and the history that has led to their current status in international law. These rights are collectively held by members of a certain group and cannot be asserted individually. These groups are usually distinct from the majority population in a significant way such as linguistically, religiously or culturally. Thus, for various minority groups, collective rights have become important for preserving culture and resisting discrimination.<sup>37</sup> Inclusion of this type of right is a relatively recent development as individual rights have

---

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> United Nations General Assembly, 'General Assembly adopts Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

<sup>37</sup> Felice, *Taking suffering seriously: the importance of collective human rights*, p. 22.



long been the norm in Western legal systems. Individual rights also feature prominently in the United States inspired post-war Constitution of Japan.<sup>38</sup>

This is a significant difference between Japan's Meiji Constitution and the post-war Constitution. According to the earlier Meiji Constitution, the Emperor granted rights to Japanese citizens as his subjects. Despite the fact that the Constitution was modelled on the Prussian Constitution, the Japanese product differed by excluding notions of individual rights that were otherwise included in the Prussian Constitution.<sup>39</sup> People were more a collective whole rather than individuals.

The post-war Constitution, however, was based largely on the Constitution of the United States, which has many references to individualism and liberalism. Americans wrote this constitution during the occupation and sought to concentrate on individual rights.<sup>40</sup> In this constitution, articles refer to rights that belong to Japanese citizens on an individual level and they are held, rather than granted.<sup>41</sup> In this way, the post-war Constitution is a large shift from the previous Constitution.

Despite this, the Japanese court in the Nibutani Dam Case was able to view individual rights and collective rights as not being mutually exclusive.<sup>42</sup> Viewed in this manner, individual rights do not necessarily render collective rights invalid in Japan. Despite this, in international forums the Japanese government has continually insisted on their interpretation of the constitution that divides collective and individual rights into two separate categories that cannot exist together.<sup>43</sup> In doing so, such an interpretation appears at odds with current popular theories on individual rights.

During the drafting of early constitutions, individuals were seen as important because of the prevalent idea of creating equality through equal and standard rights for everyone.<sup>44</sup> If rights were afforded to one group but not another, this would be considered unfair treatment.<sup>45</sup> However, in reality, shortcomings exist when we live in a world where certain groups are discriminated against for many reasons.<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, liberalism is based upon notions that individuals assert rights. However, many times it is groups, especially majority groups, who are asserting them so

---

38 Oda, *Japanese Law*, p. 112.

39 *Ibid.*

40 *Ibid.*, p. 112.

41 Milhaupt, Ramseyer and Young, *Japanese Law in Context*, p. 613.

42 Levin, *op. cit.*, p. 425.

43 Barsh, *op. cit.*, p. 795.

44 Leiboff and Thomas, *Legal Theories in Principal*, p. 118.

45 Kymlicka, 'Individual and Community Rights', in Baker (ed.), *Groups Rights*, p. 24.

46 Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, p. 110.

that the majority culture is preserved.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, the minority groups of people are not equal because of their membership with a particular group. If people have an advantage because they were born into a particular group then the original ideas of liberalism are undermined due to the abundance of accommodation to the majority group.<sup>48</sup> This imbalance often needs to be rectified to make people equal and this can only be done by implementing some form of collective rights.<sup>49</sup> As a result, collective rights do not necessarily equate to unfair treatment for people not afforded them and can actually assist in ensuring that equality is protected in areas where the group is disadvantaged. The ruling in the Nibutani Dam Case inherently recognised this point in its recognition of the Ainu people as an indigenous group, rather than just a minority group. The rights recognised could be different according to indigenous needs.

The Nibutani Dam Case ruling pointed out that the Ainu had been subject to a number of adverse policies under the Japanese Meiji Government and discrimination still lingered today. The judgement asserted that there was a need to protect the dying culture of the Ainu and that there was an obligation on the part of the legal system to recognise this.<sup>50</sup> Thus, the ruling concluded that collective rights arose from the ongoing discrimination against the Ainu. These collective rights were also necessary to protect Ainu individuals' right to pursue happiness through their unique culture.<sup>51</sup> Some theorists have elaborated on this by arguing that collective identification and protection is important for an individual's pursuit of happiness; thus, the two become intertwined, as one needs a collective dimension of rights to satisfy the fundamental individual right.<sup>52</sup>

For the specific case of the Ainu, if collective rights in the various drafts of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples were to exist in Japan for them, then this would also assist in achieving equality as defined by liberalist principles. The Ainu have been subject to a number of historically discriminatory practices that have deprived them of traditional land and cultural practices. There is an assertion of rights by the majority of Japanese in simple things, such as the right to use the Japanese language rather than the Ainu language. Collective rights would enable some form of protection against further deterioration of the Ainu situation. Inequalities that arise from one being an Ainu need to be addressed in a collective manner for true equality. Collective and individual rights are not distinct from one another and the existence of one does not make the other an invalid concept. Thus, for the Ainu, the recognition in

---

47 Felice, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

48 Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, p. 111.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 116.

50 Levin, *op. cit.*, p. 418-419.

51 *Ibid.*

52 Felice, *op. cit.*, p. 19.



Japan of collective rights should be a possibility in spite of the Japanese government's resistance to the idea. Furthermore, the Japanese government's stance on collective rights is becoming more isolated as collective rights become more mainstream in the international community and are included in more international instruments. The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is the latest material that progresses this trend of including collective rights.

### *International Collective Rights*

Collective rights are widespread in international conventions and declarations. The United Nations' first and most important declaration, the Declaration on Human Rights, was based upon liberalist ideas and deals mostly with individuals as holders of certain rights.<sup>53</sup> However, within the United Nations today there is a wide variety of references to rights held by groups. The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is just one international agreement that makes mentions of rights that are specifically collective.<sup>54</sup> Collective rights also feature prominently in the International Labour Organisation's Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries.<sup>55</sup> Collective rights are found in these agreements because to create equality for indigenous peoples, collective protection is necessary. However, this collective protection of minority rights has not always been prevalent.

The International Convention on Civil and Political Rights was originally specific to individual rights.<sup>56</sup> Yet, it was this convention that was cited in the Nibutani Dam Case to establish the Ainu's rights as collective ones.<sup>57</sup> Article 27 of the convention is relevant to 'persons belonging to' minorities, not the minority groups themselves. The Sapporo District Court referred to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as an instrument to protect the rights of individuals to ensure their equality,<sup>58</sup> much like the original aims of liberalism. Nevertheless, a more expansive understanding was employed in the Nibutani Dam Case ruling, where it found the Ainu, as a minority group, had rights as a whole. They did this by recognising that the Ainu could be defined as a minority group under article 27 because they possess a distinct culture as the article describes.<sup>59</sup> The court went further to investigate the historical relationship between the Ainu and the ethnic Japanese in order to determine that the Ainu were indigenous and needed to be treated in a collective manner. This was important to proving the

---

53 Lerner, *Group Rights and Discrimination in International Law*, p. 13.

54 United Nations General Assembly, A/61/L.67, p. 3.

55 International Labour Organisation, *op. cit.*

56 Pentassuglia, *Minorities in International Law*, p. 48.

57 Levin, *op. cit.*, p. 395.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 416.

59 *Ibid.*, p. 410.

significance of the Nibutani Dam site to the Ainu as a people. The court emphasised the aim to protect minority groups in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and as a result asserted that the use of this convention should not be limited.<sup>60</sup>

Furthermore, the court pointed out that the guarantees of certain rights included in the Japanese Constitution are subject to individual dimensions of rights. However, if individuals were subject to certain limits in their right to their own culture, then their right to pursue happiness was hindered by the majority of individuals who constitute the state. So the rights of these individuals were not being protected on account of their minority group status.<sup>61</sup> Consequently, the court allowed ideas of collective rights to apply to the Ainu. This is a direct example of how collective rights can be used to assist in protecting individual rights and how these collective rights can arise out of individual rights.

Many other legal instruments apply more specifically to indigenous people. Perhaps, one of the most significant of these is the International Labour Organisation's Convention concerning Tribal and Indigenous People in Independent Countries. This convention is important for two main reasons: it provides a definition of what indigenous people are, and it states several rights that arise from a groups' indigenous status. The convention is collective in nature, as is the importance of collective rights for indigenous people.<sup>62</sup>

The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is the next step as collective indigenous rights become more widespread in international instruments. For indigenous rights to have significance in Japan, collective rights need to be recognised. However, for the Ainu people, it is clear that the government controls interpretations of the Constitution and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in a manner contradictory to international standards. Thus, the government's reasons to deny rights are central to furthering the declaration. As a result, possible motives of rejecting rights need to be explored.

### *Japan and the Ainu*

Japan's refusal to protect collectively the rights of the Ainu people has little to do with the strength of the Constitution. Rather, the limitations of collective rights for Ainu can be attributed to the attitude of the Japanese government itself.

---

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 417-418.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> International Labour Organisation, *op. cit.*



One of the most important collective rights for the Ainu is the right to self-determination. As such, the actions of the Japanese government in the past have shown a pattern of opposing self-determination. For example, preliminary talks on the *Ainu Shinpō* did not include any government support for self-determination in spite of calls from Ainu groups for such a provision.<sup>63</sup> Likewise, in 2007, the Japanese representative stressed that self-determination did not mean that indigenous people were in any way separate from the state and asserted that collective self-determination cannot exist.<sup>64</sup> Thus, self-determination has long been a pivotal aspect of indigenous rights that Japan seemingly does not want to concede.

While self-determination may be integral to one's indigenesness, it is not essential to proving one's indigenesness. It plays a more important role because it is a right generally seen as important to those who are indigenous.<sup>65</sup> This is because the right to determine affairs on behalf of a minority group in a particular country must come from a form of disadvantage, mainly one that relates to prior lack of control over affairs. Thus, it has become an essential issue for indigenous groups who demand equal rights.<sup>66</sup>

Furthermore, self-determination can only be furthered in a collective manner, not an individual one. Therefore, the Ainu are asking for collective rights when they demand self-determination. For Japan to deny collective rights, they are not allowing any degree of self-determination. Not allowing a notion of collective rights to exist has a significant impact on other rights as well, most importantly land rights.

Japan has ignored issues of land rights but this is somewhat different in other parts of the world. Compared to various other countries, Japan's Ainu Cultural Promotion Act does relatively little for the population, as indigenous rights are generally comprised of cultural, land and self-determination rights.<sup>67</sup> However, the *Ainu Shinpō* deals solely with cultural aspects of the Ainu.

Japan's attitude to the Ainu may seem surprising when one considers the impact of the Ainu in Japan itself. The Ainu are a relatively small group within Japan. Their official numbers are listed at less than 25,000 (although Ainu lobby groups estimate their numbers larger than this).<sup>68</sup> However, in the 1995 discussions on the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Japan was one of the countries most resistant to the articles contained in the draft. This negative reaction seems at odds with the relatively

---

63 Moriteru, 'Shōsūha no kenri: Ainu shinpō o megutte', [The Rights of Minority Groups: Looking at the Ainu New Law], p. 5.

64 *Asahi Shinbun*, *op. cit.*

65 Falk, 'Self-Determination Under International Law', p. 62.

66 *Ibid.*, p. 61.

67 Morris-Suzuki, 'Henkyō kara nagameru', [Looking from Frontiers], p. 198.

68 Economic and Social Council, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

small number of indigenous people in Japan. Other countries, such as Canada and Australia, with much larger indigenous populations have made efforts to address land rights after landmark court cases.<sup>69</sup> However, Japan has not considered the issue of Ainu receiving any land since the 1899 Former Natives Protection Act, in which land was only given on the condition that Ainu people use it for farming.

The Nibutani Dam Case was essentially a case involving land and its importance to each of the parties. The Ainu declared that the land was an important aspect of their culture as many rituals take place in certain areas that the dam would abolish.<sup>70</sup> The significance of this argument is that a relationship to land is an essential aspect of being indigenous. Internationally accepted definitions of indigenous refer to the land as being an integral part to proving one's indigenesness.

The Japanese government has been very reluctant to accommodate any form of land and self-determination rights for the Ainu; rights which are typically afforded to indigenous groups. The government has attempted to steer the attention of rights for the Ainu into the cultural aspects contained in the 1997 *Ainu Shinpō*. By doing this, the government is effectively able to emphasise the non-indigenous characteristics of the Ainu so that they are treated the same as other minority groups. Furthermore, Japan also had objections to an individual's right to self-identify as indigenous. Why would these be so important to Japan if denying collective rights might leave the Ainu with only the right to be recognised as indigenous but with no further assistance or special treatment?

When considering the *Ainu Shinpō*, the government wrote that the Ainu are only native to Japan's 'inalienable land'.<sup>71</sup> The usage of this term suggests that Ainu and *Ainu Moshir* (traditional Ainu land) have always made up one part of Japan's territorial landscape. It also implies that the Ainu and the ethnic Japanese comprise a single identity of 'Japan', of which they are both a part. This was similar to the stance of the Chinese Government at the discussions of the 1995 draft declaration.

The Chinese representative put forward the suggestion that the indigenous populations identified in Asia were not in fact indigenous because they were not subject to alien values and cultures from overseas. Thus, they are not indigenous, but are rather national minorities.<sup>72</sup> Japan joined in China's call to include a definition of indigenous people that could ignore colonisation in Asia. However, this belief in the existence of simple national minorities is based on a falsehood that these minority groups have always

69 Morris-Suzuki, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

70 Levin, *op. cit.*, p. 411.

71 Siddle, 'An epoch-making event? The 1997 Ainu Cultural Promotion Act and its impact', p. 408.

72 Close and Askew, *Asia Pacific and Human Rights: A Global Political Economy Perspective*, p. 167.





been part of the national boundaries. While the ethnic Japanese are widely considered to be the original inhabitants of most of Japan, they cannot truthfully claim a historical existence of a shared Japanese identity and peaceful co-habitation with the Ainu. To ignore issues of colonisation, Japan is able to manipulate the international definitions of indigenous so that they do not apply to the Ainu. This is because, if it were the case that the Ainu were never subject to colonisation or the taking of land, then international definitions of indigenous do not apply to the Ainu. By minimising the admission of colonisation, Japan can limit claims of land rights and how they relate to being defined as indigenous. This is important for Japan because of several reasons.

The Ainu are in a unique situation as their traditional land is divided by the current borders of Japan and Russia. Hokkaido is part of Japan; however, the Kuril Islands and Sakhalin are Russian Territory. This Russian owned territory has been the source of a lot of debate in Japan, as the government has long been insistent that all of these territories belong to Japan. According to the government, this is because these islands have always been Japan's.<sup>73</sup> Consequently, the government would also need to show that Ainu have always been Japanese. Thus, the limitation of indigenous recognition becomes important.

Japan's unwillingness to accommodate the Ainu may be in part due to what Ainu land represents to the government. Japan's most recent statement at the 2007 discussions of the draft declaration appears to confirm this. In 2007, the Japanese representative specifically noted that indigenous rights would not impair a state's territorial integrity.<sup>74</sup> Thus, the issue of the Northern Territories becomes a central point. If the Ainu were to be recognised as indigenous to the whole of *Ainu Moshir*, this would include not only the area of Hokkaido but also the area that is now known as the Northern Territories. This would contradict Japan's assertion that the area has always been Japanese. However, as little progress is made on both issues the complexities of any relationship cannot fully be explored.

## Conclusion

The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples has undergone many changes. Much like the *Ainu Shinpō*, which started as a radical idea and ended up as an act with limited relief for the Ainu, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples may suffer a similar fate. This declaration has gone from an instrument that promised self-determination and land rights to one that allows state control over interpretations of

---

73 Kimura and Welsh, 'Specifying "Interests": Japan's Claim to the Northern Territories and Its Implications for International Relations Theory', p. 230.

74 United Nations General Assembly, GA/10612.

its provisions and the protection of state unity. For the case of Japan, the inclusion of collective rights has been a central point of contention during the drafting process. Without collective rights, self-determination and land rights are extinguished. Thus, the government is able to focus on more typical minority rights relating to culture, accentuating the Ainu's minority status rather than their indigenous status. This emphasis on minority status is further promoted by the Japanese government's insistence that indigenous definitions do not exist in international instruments.

Thus, in spite of the United Nations adopting the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, indigenous rights may continue to have little influence in Japan. The Japanese government has reacted mostly negatively to the Declaration under the guise of protecting individual rights in Japan. However, an analysis of this stance reveals it to be shallow and unjustified. The Japanese Constitution is clearly not the reason why indigenous rights cannot exist in Japan, nor is the lack of international definitions of indigenous. Therefore, the Japanese government must be held accountable for the denial of these rights. It is clear that the lack of collective and therefore indigenous rights is not due to the provisions within the Japanese Constitution. The Japanese government is very purposefully rejecting indigenous rights and because of this, the implemented Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples will have little impact in Japan. By not allowing collective rights but also indigenous recognition, the government is concentrating largely on any rights that could make the Ainu distinct from other national minorities.

The Japanese government has a strong motive for denying the Ainu the right to call themselves indigenous, namely the Northern Territories issue. Indigenous rights of land and self-determination can only hinder Japan's effort to assert control over the Northern Territories as the issue itself is both a political and land one. Cultural rights, however, have little to do with this issue and therefore can be afforded more readily under the *Ainu Shinpō*. Thus, perhaps until the issue of the Northern Territories is solved, the Ainu will seemingly continue to be denied indigenous recognition that acknowledges colonisation. In spite of significant worldwide progress, the Ainu situation may remain static in the near future.

## References

African Group, *Draft Aide Memoir*, Retrieved 08 August 2007, from <http://www.iwgia.org/graphics/Synkron-Library/Documents/InternationalProcesses/DraftDeclaration/AfricanGroupAideMemoireOnDeclaration.pdf>.

African Group, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, Retrieved 26 July 2007, from [http://www.ishr.ch/hrm/nymonitor/new\\_york\\_updates/african\\_text\\_draft\\_8\\_may\\_2007.pdf](http://www.ishr.ch/hrm/nymonitor/new_york_updates/african_text_draft_8_may_2007.pdf).



- Asahi Shinbun, 'Senjuminzoku kenri sengen wo saitaku', [The Declaration on Indigenous People is adopted at the end of more than 20 years of debates at the United Nations], *Asahi Shinbun*, Retrieved 16 September 2007, from <http://www.asahi.com/international/update/0914/TKY200709140065.html>.
- Barsh, R. L., 'Indigenous People and the UN Commission on Human Rights: A Case of the Immovable Object and the Irresistible Force,' *Human Rights Quarterly*, 18, 4 (1996), pp. 782-808.
- Close, P. and Askew, D., *Asia Pacific and Human Rights: A Global Political Economy Perspective*, (England; USA: Ashgate, 2004).
- Cornstassel, J., 'Partnership in Action? Indigenous Political Mobilisation and Co-optation During the First UN Indigenous Decade (1995-2004)', *Human Rights Quarterly*, 29 (2007), pp. 137-166.
- Economic and Social Council, 'Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and All Forms of Discrimination', *Document E/CN.4/2006/16/Add.2*, Retrieved 5 May 2007, from <http://www.universalhumanrightsindex.org/documents/832/774/document/en/pdf/text.pdf>.
- Falk, R., 'Self-Determination Under International Law', in Danspeckgruber, W. (ed.), *The Self-Determination of Peoples: Community Nation and State in an Independent World*, (London: Lynne Rienner, 2002), pp. 31-66.
- Felice, W., *Taking suffering seriously: the importance of collective human rights*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).
- Human Rights Council, 'Human Rights Council adopts texts for protection from forced disappearance, rights of indigenous people', Release *HRHRC06026E*, Retrieved 10 October 2006, from <http://www.ifg.org/pdf/UN%20human%20rights.pdf>.
- Human Rights Council, 'Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 60/251 of March 15 2006 entitled "Human Rights Council"', annex to United Nations General Assembly document *A/HRC/1/L.3, 23/06/2006*, Retrieved 8 September 2006, from <http://www.un.org>.
- International Labour Organisation, *Convention (No. 169) Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries*, (1989), Retrieved 3 April 2007, from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C107>.
- Kimura, M. and Welsh, D., 'Specifying "Interests": Japan's Claim to the Northern Territories and Its Implications for International Relations Theory', *International Studies Quarterly*, 42 (1998), pp. 213-244.
- Kymlicka, W., 'Individual and Community Rights' in Baker, J. (ed), *Groups Rights*, (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1992).
- Kymlicka, W., *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press, 1995).
- Leiboff, M. and Thomas, M., *Legal Theories in Principal*, (Sydney: Lawbook Co., 2004).
- Lerner, N., *Group Rights and Discrimination in International Law*, (The Hague, London, New York: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2003).
- Levin, M., 'Kayano et. al v. Hokkaido Expropriation Committee (The Nibutani Dam Decision)', *International Legal Materials*, 38 (1999), pp. 394-429.

- Milhaupt, C. J., Ramseyer, J. M., and Young, M. K., *Japanese Law in Context: Readings in Society, the Economy and Politics*, (United States of America: Harvard University Asia Centre, 2001).
- Moriteru, A., 'Shōsūha no kenri: Ainu shinp o megutte', [The Rights of Minority Groups: Looking at the Ainu New Law], *Jurisuto*, 941 (1989), p. 5.
- Morris-Suzuki, T., 'Collective Memory, Collective Forgetting: Indigenous People and the Nation state in Japan and Australia,' *Meanjin*, 53, 4 (1994), pp. 487-612.
- Morris-Suzuki, T., 'Henkyō kara nagameru', [Looking from Frontiers], (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobo, 2000).
- Oda, H., *Japanese Law*, (United Kingdom: Butterworths, 1992).
- Pentassuglia, G., *Minorities in International Law*, (Germany: Council of Europe, 2002).
- Siddle, R., 'An epoch-making event? The 1997 Ainu Cultural Promotion Act and its impact,' *Japan Forum*, 14, 3 (2002), pp. 405-423.
- Siddle, R., 'The Limits to Citizenship in Japan: Multiculturalism, Indigenous Rights and the Ainu,' *Citizenship Studies*, 7, 4 (2003), pp. 447-462.
- Siddle, R., *Race, Resistance and the Ainu of Japan*, (London, New York: Routledge, 1996).
- Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, 'Draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People', annex to document *E/CN.4/Sub.2/1994/56*, Retrieved 24 February 2007, from [http://www.unhcr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/\(Symbol\)/E.CN.4.SUB.2.RES.1994.45.En](http://www.unhcr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/(Symbol)/E.CN.4.SUB.2.RES.1994.45.En).
- United Nations, 'Namibia: amendments to draft resolution A/C.3/61/L.18/Rev.1', document *A/C.3/61/L.57/Rev.1*, Retrieved 25 February 2007, from <http://www.daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/N06/612/32/PDF/N0661232.pdf?OpenElement>.
- United Nations General Assembly, 'Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples', Document *A/61/L.67*, Retrieved 15 September 2007, from <http://www.daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/N07/498/30/PDF/N0749830.pdf?OpenElement>.
- United Nations General Assembly, *Declaration on the Rights of National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities*, Retrieved 5 July 2007, from <http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/minorities.htm>.
- United Nations General Assembly, 'General Assembly adopts Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; 'major step forward' for human rights for all, says President,' Release *GA/10612*, Retrieved 15 September 2007, from <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2007/ga10612.doc.htm>.



# An Investigation of L1 Influence on Japanese and Chinese Native Speakers' Use of English Tense Forms

Rose-Ellen Kesselly  
The University of Queensland

## Abstract

This study investigates L1 influence on Japanese and Chinese native speakers' use of English simple present and simple past tense. A comparative analysis of English simple present and simple past tense and corresponding forms in Japanese and Chinese was conducted through literature review enabling the identification and analysis of L1 influences in Japanese-English and Chinese-English Interlanguages (JIL and CIL).

Samples of JIL and CIL were obtained through guided conversation with four Japanese native speakers and four Chinese native speakers. Tendencies in the use of simple present tense and simple past tense forms produced in the JIL and CIL samples were identified, and through comparison of Interlanguage tendencies to L1 forms, the nature of L1 influence was analysed. It was found that most of the identified tendencies shared features of the speakers' L1 forms. These findings supported the hypothesis that tense and aspect forms produced in JIL and CIL are characterised by features of the speakers' respective L1 forms. Due to limitations on the extent of this study more extensive research is required to confirm these findings.

## Keywords

L1 influence, tense, Japanese, Chinese, English

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This study will investigate how Japanese and Chinese native speakers' usage and understanding of English simple present and simple past tense is affected by their respective L1 (first language) knowledge. This will be achieved by firstly conducting a comparative analysis of English tense forms and corresponding Japanese and Chinese forms, and then applying these findings to Japanese and Chinese native speakers'

English-Interlanguage<sup>1</sup> (JIL and CIL) samples.

## 1.1 Hypothesis

Simple present and simple past tense forms produced in JIL and CIL are characterised by features of the speakers' respective L1 forms. This is observable through the application of comparative analysis findings to JIL and CIL samples.

## 1.2 Objectives

The three objectives of this study are as follows:

- 1- To create a comparative analysis of English simple present and simple past tense and corresponding forms in Japanese and Chinese by drawing together the findings of a number of linguistic studies.
- 2- To identify tendencies in JIL and CIL use of tense forms and to observe how these JIL and CIL tendencies compare to each other and to target English.
- 3- To analyse the extent and nature of L1 influence in the observed JIL and CIL tendencies, utilising the information provided by the comparative analysis of English, Japanese and Chinese forms.

## 1.3 Rationale

The acquisition of tense is considered by many to be one of the most important and most difficult parts of language learning (Shirai & Kuruno 1998; Lee 2001). This study attempts to facilitate the teaching of English tense forms to Japanese and Chinese native speakers.

Prior linguistic knowledge both facilitates and inhibits second language acquisition (Bley-Vroman 1989:52). It is facilitating in that the learner is already tacitly aware of a number of language universals. This makes features of an L2 that

---

<sup>1</sup> The term 'Interlanguage' refers to 'a learner's attempted production of a TL (target language) norm' (Selinker 1972:214). Interlanguages typically contain features of both the learner's L1 and the target language. See section 2.1.



are universal to all languages relatively easy to understand and accept. However, prior linguistic knowledge can also have an inhibiting effect on the acquisition of an L2. This occurs when a learner over generalises and assumes that certain features of his/her L1 are language universals, when in fact they are specific to the learner's L1 (Bley-Vroman 1989).

I hope that by making differences between English tense forms and corresponding L1 forms explicit, and by creating an awareness of how these differences affect the use of tense forms in JIL and CIL, this study will benefit teachers of Japanese and Chinese native speakers. If teachers have an understanding of their students' L1 and the way that L1 grammar affects learners' understanding of L2 grammar, then they are able to effectively identify the root of grammatical difficulties. This enables teachers to address these difficulties with appropriate explanations and teaching strategies.

I hope that this study will promote further research into L1 influence and teaching methods that specifically address difficulties caused by L1 influence.

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Approaches Studying L1 Influence in SLA**

#### *Contrastive Analysis:*

Contrastive Analysis was a method of predicting L1 interference in SLA, popular from 1945 to 1965. By conducting detailed comparisons of L1 grammar and target language grammar, Contrastive Analysis studies attempted to predict errors and areas of difficulty in L2 acquisition. Lado (1957:1) stated, 'In the comparison between native and foreign language lies the key to ease or difficulty in foreign language learning.'

In the 1960s Contrastive Analysis became unpopular as it was found that predictions were not always consistent with learners' actual performance. Not all differences between an L1 and a target language resulted in significant difficulty in acquisition, and not all difficulties in L2 acquisition were the result of L1 and target language differences (Odlin 1985; Ellis 2005). It is now known that L1 influences interact with a number of other factors, such as, complexity of L2 structures, universal tendencies, and instructional influences. This is why Contrastive Analysis studies failed in their attempt to predict hierarchies of difficulty in L2 acquisition.

Despite the shortcomings of Contrastive Analyses, both Fries (1945) and Lado (1957) rightly observed that many learner difficulties appear to be caused by the influence of the learners' L1. Fries (1945) indicated that as a result of L1 influences, learners from different L1 backgrounds often face different difficulties when acquiring the same L2. A number of studies conducted at that time confirmed this assumption, and verified that 'many linguistic distortions heard among bilinguals correspond to describable differences in the languages involved,' (Lado 1957:1). This proposition is still valid and relevant to current research. Fries, Lado and other Contrastive Analysis linguists were also justified in their conviction that such a phenomenon cannot be properly analysed or understood without an understanding of the similarities and the differences between the learner's L1 and the target language.

### *Error Analysis:*

Contrastive Analysis was followed by Error Analysis, an analytical rather than predictive approach to studying difficulties in L2 acquisition. Error Analysis identified errors in learners' productions rather than trying to predict them. Once errors were identified, they were then analysed in terms of the kind of error and their likely cause (L1 influence or other).

Corder (1981) emphasised that errors were significant to researchers in that they provided evidence as to the nature of second language acquisition. It was found that errors were not random, but systematic, and the kinds of errors made by learners represented developmental stages of acquisition.

Despite the contribution that Error Analysis made to the field of second language acquisition, this approach was not without limitations. Error Analysis looked only at errors, a restricted portion of learner production. This caused problems such as avoidance to be overlooked. Error Analysis failed to look at areas where learners were competent and therefore failed to see the whole picture.

### *Interlanguage and Integrative Studies:*

Interlanguage was a term coined by Selinker (1972) that developed on Corder's notion of systematicity and developmental stages in learner errors. Rather than looking only at 'errors,' however, the term 'Interlanguage' covers both non target-like and target-like production of an L2. Selinker (1972:214) described a learner's Interlanguage as 'a separate linguistic system based on the observable output which results from a learner's





attempted production of a TL (Target Language) norm'. The term 'Interlanguage' has allowed linguists to view learner produced language from a new perspective, as languages in their own right with their own systematic grammars.

In order to identify L1 influence in the Interlanguage being examined, many Interlanguage studies adopted methods similar to Contrastive Analysis. Yip's (1995) study of Chinese-English Interlanguage (CIL), for example, examined and compared the 'topic prominence' of Chinese and the 'subject prominence' of English, and then analysed a number of CIL tendencies that resulted from the influence of Chinese topic prominence. Chan's (2004) study of syntactic transfer in CIL also comparatively analysed five syntactic structures in English and in Chinese, then identified discrepancies between CIL and target English that were likely to be the result of L1 influence.

Waibel (2005) noted the importance of comparing the Interlanguages of two L1 groups when investigating L1 influence. German and Italian English-Interlanguages were compared to English to determine non target-like productions. Comparisons of the two varieties of English-Interlanguages to each other, determined whether deviations from target English were likely to be the result of universal tendencies, or whether they were specific to that particular L1 group.

All three studies above (Yip 1995, Chan 2004, and Waibel 2005) found that L1 did have a significant influence on English-Interlanguage tendencies. These three studies proved to be effective as they combined the strengths and avoided the weaknesses of several methods. They comparatively analysed L1 and TL, but took an analytical rather than predictive approach to identifying and understanding areas of L1 influence in learners' production of the L2. They took a holistic approach, examining not only non target-like structures, but also the Interlanguages as whole languages.

### *The Approach of this Study:*

This study will take an integrative approach similar to that of Yip (1995), Chan (2004), and Waibel (2005). Following Contrastive Analysis methods I will develop a structured comparative analysis of English, Japanese, and Chinese forms (Section 2.3). However, in contrast to the Contrastive Analysis approach, I will not attempt to predict errors or areas of difficulty. I will simply use these comparisons as tools in the analysis of Interlanguage samples. Using the Interlanguage approach, I will not only look at 'errors,' but will identify Interlanguage patterns through observation of both target-like and non target-like production of tense forms in JIL and CIL.

## 2.2 Tense

The function of tense is to temporally locate a situation in relation to a deictic centre (or temporal anchoring point) which is usually the moment of speech (Reichenbach 1947; Comrie 1976 and 1985; Smith 1991; Olsen 1997; Xiao & McEnery 2004). Reichenbach (1947) used three time points to describe the temporal relations expressed by tenses: the time of speech (ST); the time of the event (ET); and the time of reference (RT). Using these three time points, simple tenses can be described by the following formulas (a comma indicates temporal simultaneity, and a dash indicates that what is on the left is temporally located prior what is on the right):

ET,RT-ST (simple past)  
 ET,RT,ST (simple present)  
 ST-ET,RT (simple future)

The above formulas proposed by Reichenbach work well for tenses (such as English tenses) that invariably take ST as their deictic centre. These are called ‘absolute tenses’ (Comrie 1985). However, in some languages, such as Japanese, tenses can take some other point in time as their deictic centre. These are called ‘relative tenses’ (Comrie 1985). To make formulas universal to both tense types, recent studies, such as Olsen (1997), use ‘C’ rather than ST to represent the deictic centre.

Another issue regarding tense, raised by Comrie (1985) is whether a tense asserts the temporal location of all, or only part, of a situation. While tense temporally locates a situation, it does not necessarily assert whether or not the situation extends beyond or before that temporal location (Comrie 1985). The following example demonstrates that it is possible for an ET to extend beyond the temporal location asserted by tense.

Mary knew that Susan was a vegetarian. (That’s why she didn’t offer her a sausage at the BBQ yesterday).

There is no indication in the sentence that Mary’s knowledge of Susan being a vegetarian no longer continues. It is also possible for an RT to extend beyond the temporal location asserted by a tense. For example, ‘I baked a cake today.’

In summary, tense temporally locates situations in relation to a deictic center (C), which may be ST or some other point in time. Tenses locate at least part of the ET and RT, prior to, simultaneous with, or after C. If one understands that tense only



necessarily asserts the temporal location of part of the ET and part of the RT, then the following formulas can be used: past (ET,RT\_C); present (ET,RT,C); and future (C\_ET,RT).

### 2.3 Aspect

In many languages, including English and Japanese, the tense category overlaps with the aspect category, as both tense and aspect describe temporality in some way. Some languages, such as Chinese, do not have a tense category, but only an aspect category. For these reasons it is necessary to discuss aspect in this study.

Unlike tense, aspect is not concerned with the temporal location of a situation, it does not relate a situation to a deictic centre (Comrie 1976; Smith 1991; Olsen 1997). Aspect is concerned with the internal temporal structure of a situation, and how much, or what part, of that structure is visible in a sentence (Comrie 1976; Smith 1991). Smith (1991) compares the function of aspect to that of a camera lens that can focus on all or part of the situation. Throughout the literature the most commonly quoted definition of aspect is ‘different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation’ (Holt 1943, translated by Comrie 1976:3).

There are two basic aspectual viewpoints: perfective and imperfective (Comrie 1976, Smith 1991, Olsen 1997; Shang 2004; Xiao & McEnery 2004). Perfectives, according to Comrie (1976:3), present ‘the totality of the situation referred to ... without any reference to its internal temporal constituency: the whole of the situation is presented as a single unanalysable whole, with beginning, middle and end rolled into one.’ Comrie describes Imperfectives on the other hand as viewpoints that ‘make explicit reference to the internal temporal constituency of the situation’ (Comrie 1976:4). Smith (1991), following her camera lens analogy, emphasizes that both end points (start and finish) of a situation must be visible in a perfective viewpoint, and that only an internal phase, excluding endpoints must be visible in an imperfective viewpoint.

### 2.4 Situation Types

As both tense and aspect forms interact differently with different situation types, it is necessary to have an understanding of situation types and their inherent temporal features. This is referred to in the literature as ‘situation aspect’ (Smith 1991; Xiao & McEnery 2004) or ‘lexical aspect’ (Olsen 1997).

Situations can be classified into different types according to their combinations of certain inherent temporal features. Vendler (1967) proposed three binary features

(+/- Dynamic, +/- Telic, and +/- Durative) and identified four situation types (States, Activities, Accomplishments, and Achievements), each with a unique combination of the three features. This system, summarised below, has since been adopted by many modern linguists (for example: Comrie 1976; Smith 1991; Olsen 1997; Xiao and McEnery 2004).

Situation types and their inherent temporal feature combinations can be summarised in the following table:

**Table 1: Temporal Features of Basic Situation Types**

	<b>Dynamic</b>	<b>Telic</b>	<b>Durative</b>
State	-	-	+
Activity	+	-	+
Accomplishment	+	+	+
Achievement	+	+	-

*Dynamic:*

Dynamic situations are situations that involve change and require energy. Since States are unchanging and require no energy they are said to lack the feature of Dynamicity. All other situation types are +Dynamic.

John is playing tennis. (+Dynamic : Activity)  
 John baked a cake. (+Dynamic : Accomplishment)  
 John is tall. (-Dynamic : State)

*Telic:*

Telic situations are those that have a 'final spatial endpoint,' (Xiao & McEnery 2004:46). If uninterrupted, Telic situations naturally come to completion, without the need for arbitrary termination.



John ate a sandwich. (+Telic : Accomplishment)

Mary arrived at school. (+Telic : Achievement)

The –Telic feature is used to distinguish Activities from other Dynamic Situations. Situations that lack telicity (States and Activities) could continue indefinitely as they have no natural final end point.

John has a car. (-Telic : State)

John studies English. (-Telic : Activity)

#### *Durative:*

Durative situations are situations that are lasting or take time to reach completion. The Durative feature is used to separate the two + Telic situation types, Accomplishments and Achievements. Accomplishments are +Durative, as they indicate a process leading up to the final spatial endpoint. Achievements on the other hand, are instantaneous. They are perceived as taking up no space in time at all as the initial endpoint occurs at exactly the same time as the final endpoint.

Mary built a house. (+Durative : Accomplishment)

I watched a movie. (+Durative : Accomplishment)

John finished the cake. (-Durative : Achievement)

Mary decided. (-Durative : Achievement)

#### *Derived Situation Types:*

In addition to these four basic situation types, there are also a number of derived situation types.

Basic States and Activities are not bounded, as they are atelic and lack both spatial and temporal endpoints. However, Xiao & McEnery (2004) observe that temporal endpoints can be provided in the sentence, by delimiting devices such as ‘for three hours’. This makes the situations temporally bounded, producing derived situation types, which are referred to by Xiao & McEnery as ‘bounded States,’ and ‘bounded Activities.’ Examples of temporally bounded States and Activities are provided below:

John lived in London for 20 years. (bounded State)

Mary danced from 3pm to 5pm. (bounded Activity)

When basic Dynamic situation types; Activities, Accomplishments and Achievements refer to situations that are habitual, they become State-like. According to Comrie (1985) a sentence expressing habituality assigns ‘a certain property’ to the subject of the sentence. Rather than a single Dynamic event, a habitual sentence describes a ‘characteristic situation’ that holds indefinitely, like a State (Comrie 1985:39). The original features of Telicity and Dynamicity are lost, producing a derived situation type. In this article I will follow Smith’s (1991) terminology, and refer to this derived situation type as ‘Habitual Stative’. Some examples of Habitual Statives in English are provided below:

I study at university.

I cook dinner every night.

## 2.5 Universal Tendencies in the Acquisition Tense and Aspect forms

Although this study is primarily concerned with Interlanguage tendencies that are specific to learners of particular L1 backgrounds, an understanding of universal tendencies is also important. If universal influences are understood and taken into account, a more thorough and accurate analysis of L1 influences is made possible.

A theory known as ‘the Aspect Hypothesis’ or the ‘Lexical Aspect Effect’ emerged in the late 1980s (Robison 1990; Shirai & Kuruno 1998; Li & Shirai 2000; Collins 2004). This theory suggests that learners from all L1 backgrounds make certain non target-like associations between L2 tense and aspect forms, and situation types. Learners first use L2 tense and aspect forms to redundantly mark the situation type of the sentence, rather than to mark tense or viewpoint aspect. This represents a universal developmental sequence where past tense forms and perfective aspect forms are associated with telic situation types, namely Accomplishments and Achievements, imperfective aspect forms are associated with Activities and present tense forms are associated with States.

In the analysis of JIL and CIL use of tense and aspect forms (Chapter 4) this article will compare identified tendencies to the characteristics of tense and aspect forms in Japanese and Chinese, while also taking the assertions of the Aspect Hypothesis into account. In this way, tendencies will be able to be identified as either resulting from L1 influence, or as resulting from universal influences.



## 2.6 Comparative Analysis of English, Japanese, and Chinese forms

### *English Simple Present Tense:*

The function of English simple present tense is to temporally locate situations, at least partially, simultaneous with Speech Time (Comrie 1985). Any Reference Time in the sentence must also be, at least partially, simultaneous with Speech Time. English present tense is not compatible with a past Reference Time, even if the Event Time of the situation spans both past and present time. This follows the formula for absolute present tense described in section 2.2: ET,RT, C(ST). The interaction of simple present tense with situation types will be discussed below.

States with the simple present tense may extend beyond Speech Time indefinitely into both past and future time. They cannot, however, be used with past or future Reference Times, or contexts. The incompatibility of simple present States with past and future Reference Times is demonstrated in the following examples:

I am sick at the moment. (present tense State with present RT)

\*I am sick yesterday. (present tense State with a past RT)

\*I am sick tomorrow. (present tense State with a future RT)

Leech (1971) refers to the ability of present tense to describe States that extend beyond Speech Time as the ‘unrestrictive use’ of the simple present. He states that the present tense when used with States ‘places no limitation on the extension of the State into past and future time’ (Leech 1971:1).

Except in rare circumstances, English simple present does not occur with Dynamic situation types. When an ordinarily Dynamic predicate takes simple present tense, it is presented as a Habitual Stative rather than a true Dynamic situation (Biber et al 1999). See the example below:

I wash the dishes.

I wake up at 6am.

As with States, Habitual Statives with simple present tense are not restricted to Speech Time. They can extend indefinitely into the past or the future, but are not compatible with past Reference Times.

In summary, English simple present tense can be used with States and Habitual

Statives, described with present Reference Times or in present contexts, temporally locating them partially in the present without restricting their extension into past and future time.

*English Simple Past Tense:*

The function of English simple past tense is to temporally locate situations, at least partially, prior to Speech Time. This follows the formula for absolute past tense described in section 2.2: ET,RT\_C(ST). With Dynamic situations, English Simple Past also has an aspectual function of presenting situations perfectly (Comrie 1976; Smith 1991). The interaction of simple past tense with situation types will be examined below.

With States and Habitual Statives, simple past tense behaves in a similar way to the simple present tense. Simple past tense does not restrict States and Habitual Statives to a past time. Regardless of whether or not a past State or Habitual Stative extends into the present time, past tense must be used if a past Reference Time is given (Comrie 1985). Even if the sentence does not actually provide a past Reference Time, in the context of a past situation, continuing States are usually described with past tense. The examples below demonstrate that past tense is often used for States and Habitual Statives that are still continuing.

I loved drawing when I was a child and I still do.

(continuing State- past RT)

I knew the answer was '6,' but I didn't get time to write it down.

(continuing State- past context)

I always ate bananas when I was little and I still do.

(Continuing Habitual – past RT)

Dynamic situations on the other hand are presented perfectly with English simple past tense and cannot extend beyond past time. In sentences such as, 'I built a house,' the situation is viewed as complete, both initial and final endpoints are visible, and the entire event is located prior to Speech Time (Smith 1991; Comrie 1976). As demonstrated below, the addition of information contradicting the completion of a Telic situation with past tense creates an anomalous sentence (Smith 1991).

\*I built a house but I didn't finish building it.

All Dynamic situations with simple past are either completed or terminated prior to Speech Time (Smith 1991). Accomplishments and Achievements are completed, in that





they have reached their natural final spatial endpoints, and Activities are terminated, in that they have reached arbitrary final temporal endpoints.

In summary, the Event Time of Dynamic situations with English simple past tense cannot extend beyond Speech Time. The Event Time of States and Habitual Statives with simple past, however, is not restricted to past time and may extend into present and future time, as long as the Reference Time or context is located in the past.

### *Japanese Relative Tense:*

Japanese tense is said to be relative. As in English, tenses of main clauses in Japanese temporally locate the Event Time of the situation in relation to Speech Time. However, the tense of a subordinate clause in Japanese, temporally locates the subordinate clause situation, not in relation to Speech Time, but in relation to the Event Time of the main clause situation (Kunihiro 1989; Teramura 1982; Ogihara 1999; Wada 2001).

### *Japanese 'ru':*

Japanese *ru* has overlapping tense and aspect functions. As an aspect, *ru* views a situation at its incomplete or unrealised phase (Teramura 1982; Kunihiro 1989; Soga 1983). As a tense, *ru* temporally locates situations in the relative 'non-past' (Soga 1983), which is either relative present (C,RT,ET) or relative future (C\_RT,ET) (Teramura 1982; Soga 1983; Yoshimoto 1998; Ogihara 1999).

With States, *ru* has only a tense, not an aspect function (Teramura 1982; Yoshimoto 1998; Soga 1983). *Ru* temporally locates States, at least partially, in the relative present. Like States with simple present tense in English, States with *ru* can extend indefinitely into past and future time, but cannot occur with a past Reference Time. For this reason the following example and its literal English translation are both ungrammatical:

\*昨日病気だ。(ru with past RT)  
(Kinou byouki da.)

\*Yesterday I am sick. (simple present with past RT)

Like English simple present, Japanese *ru* can also be used with Habitual Statives. As with States, *ru* temporally locates Habitual Statives, at least partially, in the relative

present and places no restriction on how far they extend into past and future time.

Unlike English simple present, *ru* often occurs with Dynamic situations. *Ru* presents Dynamic situations as unrealised, temporally locating them in the relative future (Teramura 1982).

In summary, Japanese *ru* temporally locates Dynamic situations in the relative future and temporally locates States and Habitual Statives, at least partially, in the relative present.

### Japanese 'ta':

Japanese *ta* is primarily a marker of relative past tense, but can also have aspectual functions.

With States *ta* only has a tense function, namely to locate the State, at least partially, in the past (Teramura 1982; Yoshimoto 1998). Like English simple past, *ta* does not assert that a State has been terminated (Kindaichi 1955 cited in Teramura 1982). *Ta* can be used to refer to a State that is still continuing if it is referred to with a past Reference Time or in a past context. Yoshimoto (1998:52) gives the following example and English translation. The Japanese sentence takes *ta*, just as the English sentence takes simple past, even though the State described was most likely still true at Speech Time:

昨日とまった旅館には庭に大きな松の木があった。

(Kinō tomat-ta ryokan ni wa niwa ni ōkina matsu no ki ga at-ta.)

(In the garden of the hotel we stayed at yesterday, there was a tall pine tree.)

Like English simple past, *ta* can also be used to describe past Habitual Statives.

Dynamic situations with *ta*, like Dynamic situations with English simple past, are presented perfectly. Both end points are visible and located in the past. The same test that was applied to Telic situations with English simple past can also be applied to Telic situations with Japanese *ta*. As shown in the following anomalous sentence, a Telic situation with Japanese *ta* cannot be followed by an assertion that the situation was not completed:

\*ケーキを作ったが終わらなかった。

(Ke-ki wo tsukutta ga owaranakatta.)

\*I made a cake but I didn't finish.



### Chinese 'le':

As Chinese does not have tense forms, here I will examine a Chinese aspect marker, post-verbal *le*. Though primarily a perfective aspect, *le* can also imply relative past tense and is therefore often associated with past tense.

The essential characteristic of *le* is that it asserts actualisation, and focuses on the totality of a situation (Xiao & McEnery 2004). *Le*, like all typical perfective viewpoints, spans both the initial and final end point of a situation (Smith 1991). Xiao & McEnery (2004) observe that the following Telic situation marked with *le* followed by an assertion that the situation was not completed creates an anomalous sentence in Chinese.

\*我昨天写了给张三的新可是没写完。

(\*Wo zuotian xie-le gei Zhangsan de xin, keshi mei xie-wan.)

(\*I wrote a letter to Zhangsan yesterday but I didn't finish writing it.)

In this way, *le* is similar to both Japanese *ta* and English simple past. All three of these forms present Dynamic situations perfectly. Telic situations are invariably completed, and Activities are invariably terminated with English simple past, Japanese *ta*, and Chinese *le*.

However, Chinese *le* differs from Japanese *ta* and English simple past in its presentation of States. In English and Japanese, States are obligatorily tensed. English past tense and Japanese *ta* have a purely tense function with States, asserting partial past location, with no indication of whether the situations are continuing or terminated. Chinese *le* rarely occurs with States. Smith (1991) claimed that *le* only occurs with non-stative situations. Xiao and McEnery's (2004) corpus based study found that *le* does on rare occasions occur with States. Xiao and McEnery (2004:107) attribute the low occurrence of *le* with States to the fact that States are 'open ended' and 'may hold for an indefinite interval'. Their data showed that when *le* does occur with States, these States are temporally bounded and are presented as having reached their final temporal endpoint.

In summary, Chinese *le* is similar to English simple past and Japanese *ta* in that it presents dynamic situations as being completed or terminated. However, Chinese *le* differs to English simple past and Japanese *ru*, in that it rarely occurs with States and does not occur with unbounded States.

### 3 METHOD

The Interlanguage samples used for analysis in this study came from eight participants' spontaneous oral production in guided conversations. I chose to use spontaneous production data rather than prompted production data, obtained through the use of elicitation tasks, so that participants' Interlanguages could be observed in their natural un-directed state.

In two separate groups (a group of four Japanese native speakers and a group of four Chinese native speakers) participants were guided in informal English conversation. These conversations were tape recorded, for approximately 30 minutes, and later transcribed in order to create the JIL and CIL samples to be used as data for observation and analysis in this study. The eight recruited participants were all advanced adult English students aged between 24 and 28. All eight participants had studied English at high school in their home country and at English language schools in Brisbane.

For both groups of participants the topic of conversation was guided to ensure that participants were provided with opportunities to produce each English tense and aspect form. Participants were asked questions regarding past experiences and lifestyle in their home countries as well as past experiences in Australia, inviting the use of simple past tense. They were also asked about their present situation, inviting the use of simple present tense.

In order to balance the two samples it was necessary to omit some sections of the recorded conversations. To enable comparisons of frequencies of tense forms in JIL and CIL the transcribed conversations were cut so that both Interlanguage samples contained approximately the same number of clauses containing simple present or simple past tense.

Target-like and non target-like uses of Simple Present tense and Simple Past tense, along with the situation types that they were used with, were identified, counted and tabulated for each sample.

Using both figures from Tables 2 and 3 and direct observations of the samples, tendencies in the uses of forms were identified. In contrast to Error Analysis methods (discussed in Section 2.1) target-like uses were also included in the analysis. It was necessary to examine the contexts of target-like uses and compare them to the contexts of non target-like uses. In this way the Interlanguage patterns of use could be clearly identified. Differences between JIL and CIL tendencies were examined, and both JIL and CIL tendencies were compared to target English usage.



Evidence of L1 influence was analysed through comparison of the identified Interlanguage tendencies to the characteristics of L1 forms. Correlations were identified, and from this the extent and nature of L1 influence was ascertained. Where the observed tendencies did not appear to have a connection to L1 influence, the patterns of usage were compared to universal tendencies as asserted by the Aspect Hypothesis.

#### **4 DATA AND ANALYSIS**

Table 2 and Table 3 show the distribution of simple present and simple past tense forms across situation types, produced in the JIL and CIL samples. The number on the top left of each cell represents the total number of forms produced with each situation type. The number in the second line of each cell, marked with an asterisk, represents the number of these productions that are non target-like (simple past used rather than simple present, and vice versa).

**Table 2: Distribution of Simple Present and Past across Situation Types in JIL**

(from a total of 306 clauses)

<b>JIL</b>		<b>Simple Present</b>	<b>Simple Past</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>States</b>		161 (53%) 37*	53 (17%) 1*	214 (70%) 38*
<b>Dynamic</b>	<b>Activities</b>	4 (1%)	7 (2%)	11 (4%)
	<b>Accomplishments</b>	-	12 (4%)	12 (4%)
	<b>Achievements</b>	1 (0%) 1*	13 (4%) 1*	14 (5%) 2*
<b>Habitual Statives</b>		42 (14%) 7*	13 (4%) 1*	55 (18%) 8*
<b>Total</b>		208 (68%) 44*	98 (32%) 3*	306 (100%) 47*



**Table 3: Distribution of Simple Present and Past across Situation Types in CIL**

(from a total of 313 clauses)

CIL		Simple Present	Simple Past	Total
<b>States</b>		182 (58%) 22*	28 (9%)	210 (67%) 22*
<b>Dynamic</b>	<b>Activities</b>	2 (1%)	6 (2%)	8 (3%)
	<b>Accomplishments</b>	2 (1%) 1*	15 (5%)	17 (5%) 1*
	<b>Achievements</b>	3 (1%) 1*	20 (6%)	23 (7%) 1*
<b>Habitual Statives</b>		50 (16%) 18*	5 (2%) 1*	55 (18%) 19*
<b>Total</b>		239 (%) 42*	74 (%) 1*	313 (100%) 43*

A common problem, found in both JIL and CIL, was non target-like production of the simple present tense, in other words, failure to use past tense in contexts where past tense was either obligatory or preferable. In this section I will identify two tendencies involving this problem. I will firstly examine failure to use past tense with past Habitual Statives. This was common in CIL. The second tendency that will be examined is failure to use past tense with States. This was evident in both JIL and CIL.

#### 4.1 Failure to use Simple Past Tense with Habitual Statives

A common problem in CIL was failure to use past tense when describing past habitual behavior. Although this did occasionally occur in the JIL sample, it was much more prominent in the CIL sample. Only four target-like past tense Habitual Statives were produced in the entire CIL sample. This contrasts to the twelve target-like past tense Habitual Statives produced in the JIL sample. In JIL only seven present tense Habitual

Statives were non target-like. In the CIL sample however, eighteen present tense Habitual Statives were non target-like, as they were actually describing past Habitual Statives.

The extracts below from the CIL sample demonstrate this tendency. [All Habitual Stative verbs are in bold letters. Habitual Statives with Past Tense are in bold italics. Non target-like uses of tense are followed by asterisks]:

- 1) When I was in China ...um **get\*** up at also, I think, 8 o'clock. Then **play\*** computer games until lunch, then **have\*** lunch, computer games again, and dinner, **have\*** dinner until... midnight.
- 2) When I was in university in Beijing ... one of my room mate, he always... everyday he **go\*** to... he **went** to the computer room... and **wake up\*** at about 8am, and **go\*** there.
- 3) When I was in Taiwan, after the class I always **went** out for shopping or **do\*** something else. I never **stay\*** at home or in my school.

The non target-like uses of present tense with Habitual Statives in the extracts above are non target-like, firstly because they occur with past Reference Times (e.g. 'when I was in China'), and secondly because the Habitual Statives being described do not hold at Speech Time.

#### *Analysis of L1 Influence:*

The reluctance of Chinese native speakers to use past tense with Habitual Statives can be explained by the absence of tense marking in Chinese. Although a Chinese native speaker may associate *le* with past tense, *le* is not a past tense marker but a perfective aspect marker. As discussed in section 2.6, *le* occurs with situations that are bounded and can be presented as a complete whole. Since Habitual Statives are actions that are continuously repeated over an unspecified length of time and are not bounded by spatial endpoints, they do not occur with *le* unless temporal endpoints are explicitly provided in the sentence.

In Chinese, verbs expressing habitual behavior are usually unmarked regardless of temporal location. The temporal location can be specified through lexical means. This is the way temporal location for Habitual Statives was indicated in the CIL sample, e.g. 'when I was in China...'





In English and Japanese, however, Habitual Statives are obligatorily tensed according to their temporal location and Reference Time. Japanese *ta* is used with Habitual Statives to perform the same function as English past tense with Habitual Statives, namely to temporally locate the Habitual Stative in the past. This positive influence from L1 explains why the Japanese participants had less difficulty using past tense with Habitual Statives.

#### 4.2 Failure to use Simple Past Tense with States

Another problem, common in both CIL and JIL, was failure to use past tense with States. It can be seen in the following extract from CIL that production of past tense and failure to produce past tense is not random. The speaker correctly used past tense with Dynamic situations, but failed to use past tense with States. [Simple present tense verbs are in bold letters, and simple past verbs are in bold italics. Verbs of Dynamic situations are underlined. Asterisks placed after verbs mark non target-like uses of tense forms]:

4) I just ***had*** the interview yesterday. But I **think** I can't get the job. I ***didn't do*** good job in the interview. Because the question **is\*** quite complex ... and there **are\*** two interviewer, and one of the interviewer, his English **is\*** ... his pronunciation **is\*** blurred, so **don't understand\***. And the manager ***asked*** me to wait for his call. He ***said*** he will call me at the end of this week. (CIL)

This pattern was common throughout both the CIL and JIL sample. The figures suggest that this is more of a problem in JIL than in CIL as there were 37 non target-like uses of present tense with States in the JIL sample, and only 22 in the CIL sample. However, there is evidence in the CIL sample of avoidance of past tense with States. While 53 past tense States were produced in the JIL sample, only 28 were produced in the CIL sample.

Examination of the samples revealed further evidence that the use of past tense with States was often avoided in the CIL sample without actually making the sentences ungrammatical. This can be seen in a comparison of the JIL and the CIL responses to the question 'What were your original purposes for coming to Australia?'. Despite the fact that for both groups, past tense and the word 'original' was used in the question, the responses from the two groups were quite different in both content and use of tense. Extracts from the CIL responses are provided below. [States are underlined, Present Tense forms are in bold, and Past Tense forms are in bold italics]:

5) I ***m*** here... I ***tried*** to get some experience about Australia. No matter what kind of job I ***have***, I'm just trying to get something, and trying to make some

friends here, because I **know** Australia is kind of a multi-cultures. Yeah that's why... That's one of my purpose. And the other one **is** to travel. That's why I **hope** I can make a lot of money here. (CIL)

6) In my case, I just **want** to improve my English. Because in Taiwan good English (inaudible word) you to get a good job. My major **is** business in Taiwan.

So I **think** to spend almost one year to study English **is** good for me. That's my main purpose. (CIL)

7) I **came** here to further study. Because my ... when I **was** in university my major **was** statistics. But if I **want** to enroll higher university in Taiwan, I cannot... I **think** I **have** no chance. Because my score **was** quite low so that's why I **came** here, because I **know**\* this university **is** a good one. (CIL)

8) Ok ah... I **came** to Australia for... to get, to actually get a certificate and the experience of work. And I **want** to experience different lifestyle in Australia and make friends with people of other culture. (CIL)

Extracts from the JIL responses are provided below:

9) For me, I **was** very interested in teaching Japanese. And also I **was** interested in learning English. Yes, and I **hope** one day I can use English at work. That's why I **came** here. (JIL)

10) Actually I **came** without no purpose. For me living abroad, living in a foreign country for as long as ... not just as a tourist, for me, I **felt** necessary... (JIL)

11) Actually I'm same with Saori, because when I **was** in Japan I **worked** for trading company, and it **was** very hard work, I **have**\* to get up early and I **have**\* to work late into the night. So it **was** very very hard, so I **wanted** to... I **wanna**\* ... at that time I **wanna**\* quit the job... and after that I **have**\* no idea what to do .... so that's why just I **came** here. (JIL)

12) My purpose **was** English. I **wanted** to go to university, for that I **needed** to get 5.5 points for IELTS so that's why... Yeah that **was** the purpose I **guess**, to go to the hospitality course... three month course... I **was** thinking about that, but my .. my... **changed** mean time. First I **was** thinking about hospitality but, but, I **wasn't** interested in anymore and yeah... I **didn't know** what to do.... Just study English and yeah. And the end of the one year I **felt** like I **want** to live in Australia, I **want** to get the permanent visa... I **don't know** why but I **felt** like that. (JIL)



While the Japanese group talked about their past situations and their reasons for wanting to come to Australia, using a combination of past and present tense, the Chinese group appeared to talk more about their present goals, using mostly present tense.

In most cases the use of present tense with States, in the CIL responses to this question, was superficially target-like, however, if the present tense forms were replaced with past tense forms most of these utterances would still be target-like. In Extract 6, for example, the use of present tense is actually unnatural in target English, in the context of the participant's circumstances. The speaker revealed later in conversation that he would be leaving Australia in two weeks, after his eleven-month stay. In the knowledge that his stay is almost over, it is unnatural in target English to state the purpose or goals of his stay in present tense.

A notable difference between JIL and CIL in the use of present tense and past tense with States is their frequencies with States that continue at speech time, and States which have terminated prior to Speech Time. In the CIL sample there were no examples of past tense used with States that were clearly continuing at the moment of speech. All four Japanese participants on the other hand, demonstrated the ability to accurately use past tense with both terminated States and States that were continuing at Speech Time. For example, in Extract 9 above, 'I *was* very interested in teaching Japanese,' and 'I *was* interested in learning English,' there is no indication anywhere in the sample that the speaker is no longer interested in teaching Japanese and learning English. Her use of past tense here is target-like as she is describing the continuing States in reference to a past situation, namely her decision to come to Australia.

JIL and CIL distributions of past tense across States that were terminated, possibly continuing, and continuing are shown in Table 4 below:

**Table 4: Distribution of JIL and CIL****Target-Like Production of Past Tense with States<sup>2</sup>**

	JIL		CIL	
<b>Terminated</b>	31	(60%)	22	(85%)
<b>Possibly Continuing (Past context)</b>	12	(40%)	4	(15%)
<b>Continuing (Past context)</b>	9		-	
<b>Total</b>	52	(100%)	26	(100%)

While the use of past tense with States in CIL was mostly restricted to terminated States, the use of past tense with States in JIL was more evenly distributed across States that were continuing and States that were terminated. It seems that the Chinese native speakers have made a non target-like association between past tense and situations that have terminated. This association does not appear to be as strong among the Japanese native speakers.

*Analysis of L1 Influence:*

The general tendency of using present tense instead of past tense with States is predicted by the Aspect Hypothesis, discussed in section 2.5, and may be a universal tendency rather than a result of L1 influence

The failure and avoidance of marking States with past tense in CIL could also be explained by the rare occurrence of *le* with States in Chinese. As with Habitual Statives, States in Chinese are usually unmarked regardless of temporal location, as they are not inherently bounded spatially or temporally.

The preference in CIL to use past tense with States that have terminated, and present tense with those that are still continuing is likely to be attributable to the transfer of L1 knowledge, namely the influence of the Chinese perfective marker *le*.

<sup>2</sup> Two productions of past tense with States from the JIL sample were excluded from these calculations because of ambiguity.



As discussed in Section 2.6 the function of *le* is to view a situation as a complete whole. This is likely to have caused the association in CIL between past tense and situations, including States, that are complete and have reached their final endpoint prior to the moment of speech. This is different from the tense function of English past tense, as past tense with a State in English does not necessarily assert that a State has terminated.

The competence demonstrated in the JIL sample in using past tense with States that are still continuing is also likely to be the result of positive influence from Japanese tense marking. Japanese *ta* occurs frequently with States to temporally locate them at least partially in the past. As with English past tense, *ta* does not assert that a State no longer holds at the present. This L1 knowledge seems to have been transferred to the JIL understanding of English past tense.

#### 4.3 Data and Analysis Conclusion

The findings presented in this section provide evidence to support the hypothesis of this study. Although some identified Interlanguage tendencies, namely the frequent failure to use past tense with States in JIL, could not be explained by L1 influence, all other tendencies displayed characteristics similar to characteristics of L1 forms.

Chinese perfective *le* and the lack of tense forms in Chinese appear to have a negative influence on CIL. In CIL, past tense is used to mark perfectivity, even with States. Target English tense forms have a purely tense function with States, asserting only partial temporal location. English tense forms with States are not concerned with whether or not the State has terminated. Chinese perfective *le*, on the other hand, presents a situation as a whole and is concerned with the completeness and visible end points of a situation. This perfective function of *le* appears to have been transferred into the CIL understanding of past tense. This transfer causes States, in particular those that are not terminated, and Habitual Statives in CIL to be left unmarked for past tense in contexts where past tense is obligatory or preferable in target English.

The Japanese *ru-ta* tense distinction appears to have had a positive influence on the JIL understanding of English simple present and past tense. Japanese *ru* and *ta*, like English simple present and simple past, have purely tense (not aspectual) functions with States. This explains why the purely tense functions of English simple present and simple past with States and Habitual Statives appear to have been grasped by most Japanese participants. In JIL, past tense is accurately used to indicate partial temporal location of States that are still continuing or possibly continuing at Speech Time. Transfer of L1

knowledge is likely to have facilitated this, as Japanese *ta*, like English simple past, does not restrict a State to past time.

The identification and analysis of JIL and CIL tendencies in this study has provided evidence that L1 knowledge influences Japanese and Chinese native speakers' understanding of English tense forms in both positive and negative ways.

## 5 DISCUSSION

The approach and methods used in this study were successful in fulfilling the objectives and providing some evidence to support the hypothesis. However, the findings were inconclusive as a result of limitations in the scope and design of the study.

The use of spontaneous oral production data provided natural and reliable samples of JIL and CIL. However, it was somewhat difficult to compare tendencies of JIL and CIL use of tense, with such a limited sample of freely produced data. Though some tendencies were identified, more extensive studies are required to verify these tendencies.

The limited number of participants also created some problems. Since competence in an L2 is subject to individual and circumstantial differences, the Interlanguages of four Japanese and four Chinese native speakers were not enough to represent JIL and CIL in general. In the JIL sample one particular participant (who happened to be the most talkative of the group) displayed tendencies in her tense use that were quite different from the other three participants in the group but were similar to the tendencies found in the CIL sample. Due to the limited number of participants in the group her individual tendencies had a significant impact on the quantitative data. More extensive studies with larger numbers of participants are required to determine whether or not these tendencies are common in the Interlanguages of native Japanese speakers.

Identifying non target-like uses of simple present and simple past in the Interlanguage samples enabled areas of difficulty to be observed. Comparisons of the contexts of non target-like, and target-like uses of the same form enabled the precise nature of the Interlanguage patterns to be identified and analysed. For example, the comparison of the contexts in which Chinese participants accurately produced past tense with States and failed to produce past tense with States, revealed that past tense in CIL was accurately used with States that had terminated prior to Speech Time, but was avoided with States that were continuing at Speech Time. This was verified as a tendency specific to CIL, as past tense was accurately produced in JIL with both States that were continuing at Speech Time and States that had terminated prior to Speech Time.



The application of L1 and target language comparisons to Interlanguage tendencies was successful in identifying and analysing areas of L1 influence. A number of correlations between Interlanguage tendencies and the characteristics of L1 forms, described in the comparative analysis in section 2.6, were identified. This provided evidence to support the hypothesis that JIL and CIL use of tense and aspect forms are characterised by features of the speakers' respective L1 forms as a result of L1 influence.

## 6 CONCLUSION

The integrative approach adopted was effective in fulfilling the three objectives of this thesis. Although this study was limited in scope, the findings provided evidence to support the hypothesis that the use of tense and aspect forms in JIL and CIL are characterised by features of the speakers' respective L1 forms.

The identified tendencies in JIL and CIL were found to have similar characteristics to L1 forms. The findings of this study support the view that L1 knowledge significantly impacts learners' understanding of L2 grammar, and suggest that more research in this area is worthwhile. Such research could have valuable pedagogical implications.

The findings of this study indicate that an understanding of JIL and CIL could potentially assist English teachers in bringing their Japanese and Chinese native speaker students closer to target-like competence in the area of tense. This understanding could also be useful in the development of teaching methods and materials.

Chinese native speakers need to be made aware of the difference between English simple past tense and perfectivity. They need to be explicitly taught that when used with States, past tense does not assert that the State has terminated. They also need to be encouraged to use past tense with Habitual Statives temporally located in the past.

More extensive investigations with larger Interlanguage samples and a greater number of participants are required to confirm and expand on the findings of this study. In the area of English language teaching, further research could build on the findings of this study to develop teaching methods and materials that effectively address difficulties caused by L1 influences in the acquisition of English tense forms.

## References

- Biber, D., Johansson, S., Leech, G., Conrad, S., & Finegan, E., *Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (London: Longman, 1999).
- Bley-Vroman, R., 'What is the logical problem of foreign language learning?', in Gass, S. M. and Schachter, J. (eds.), *Linguistic Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
- Chan, A., 'Syntactic Transfer: Evidence from the Interlanguage of Hong Kong Chinese ESL Learners', *Modern Language Journal*, 88(1), 2004, pp. 56-73.
- Collins, L., 'The Particulars on Universals: A Comparison of the Acquisition of Tense-Aspect Morphology among Japanese- and French-Speaking Learners of English', *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 61(2), 2004, pp. 251-274.
- Comrie, B., *Aspect* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).
- Comrie, B., *Tense* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
- Corder, S. P., *Error Analysis and Interlanguage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).
- Dietrich, R., Klein, W. and Nayau, C., *The Acquisition Temporality in a Second Language* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1995).
- Ellis, R., *Understanding Second Language Acquisition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).
- Ellis, R. and Barkhuizen, G., *Analysing Learner Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
- Fries, C., *Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1945).
- Horie, K., 'Form-Meaning Interaction in Diachrony: A Case Study From Japanese', *English Linguistics*, 14, 1997, pp. 428-449.
- Hsu, K., *A Discourse Analysis of Temporal Markers in Written and Spoken Mandarin Chinese* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1998).
- Klien, W., Li, P., & Hendriks, H., 'Aspect and Assertion in Mandarin Chinese', *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory*, 18, 2000, pp. 723-770.
- Kokuritsu Kokugo Kenkyuusho (National Institute for Japanese Language), *Gendai Nihongo D shi no asupekuto to tensu* (Tense and Aspect of Modern Japanese Verbs): (Sh ei Shuppan, 1985).
- Kunihiro, "Tensu to asupekuto: Nihongo / Eigo" (Tense and Aspect: Japanese-English), in Morioka (ed.), *Gaikokugo to no Taish* (Meiji Shoin, 1989).
- Lado, R., *Linguistics Across Cultures* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1957).
- Leech, G., *Meaning and the English Verb* (London: Longman, 1971).





- Li, C. N. and Thompson, S. A., *Mandarin Chinese: A Functional Reference Grammar* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).
- Li, P. and Shirai, Y., *The Acquisition of Lexical and Grammatical Aspect* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2000).
- Odlin, T., *Language Transfer: Cross-linguistic influence in language learning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
- Ogihara, T., *Tense, Attitudes, and Scope* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996).
- Ogihara, T., 'Tense and Aspect', in Tsujimura, N. (ed.), *The Handbook of Japanese Linguistics* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1999).
- Olsen, M., *A Semantic and Pragmatic Model of Lexical and Grammatical Aspect* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997).
- Reichenbach, H., *Elements of Symbolic Logic* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947).
- Robison, R., 'The Primacy of Aspect: Aspectual Marking in English Interlanguage', *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 12, 1990, pp. 315-330.
- Selinker, L., 'Interlanguage', *International Review of Applied Linguistics*, 10(3), 1972, pp. 209-231.
- Shirai, Y. and Kuruno, A., 'The Acquisition of Tense-Aspect Marking in Japanese as a Second Language', *Language Learning*, 48(2), 1998, pp. 245-279.
- Smith, C. S., *The Parameter of Aspect* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991).
- Soga, M., *Tense & Aspect in Modern Colloquial Japanese* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983).
- Spolsky, B., 'Contrastive Analysis, Error Analysis, Interlanguage, and Other Useful fads', *Modern Language Journal*, 63(5/6), 1979, pp. 250-257.
- Teramura, H., *Nihongo no shintakusu to imi II* (Japanese Syntax and Meaning II), (Kuroshio Shuppan, 1982).
- Teramura, H., *Ronbunshū - Nihongo Bunko Hen* (A collection of essays by Teramura -Japanese Grammar-), (Kuroshio Shuppan, 1993). Vendler, Z., *Linguistics in Philosophy* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1967).
- Waibel, B., 'Corpus-based approaches to learner interlanguage: case studies based on the International Corpus of Learner English', *Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik*, 30(1-2), 2005, pp. 141-176.
- Xiao, R. and McEnery, T., *Aspect in Mandarin Chinese* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2004).
- Yip, V., *Interlanguage and Learnability; From Chinese to English* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1995).
- Yoshimoto, K., *Tense and Aspect in Japanese and English* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1998).

## **Notes on Contributors**

### **Joshua Archer**

Joshua Archer recently completed the Asian Studies Honours program at the University of Sydney. Having a keen interest in Asian history and in Japanese martial arts, Joshua has chosen to specialise in samurai history throughout his academic studies thus far. Joshua is enrolled to study graduate law at the University of Wollongong in 2009.

### **Yuan Cai**

Yuan Cai has a Masters degree in Oriental Studies from St Anthony's College, Oxford University. He is currently doing a PhD on the history of Pan-Asianist movement at the University of Adelaide. His research interests encompass the history of Pan-Asianism and the Japanese peace movement.

### **Kathleen Cusack**

Kathleen Cusack graduated from the University of Wollongong in 2008 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Japanese and was awarded First Class Honours. In 2007, Kathleen studied as an exchange student at Doshisha University in Kyoto.

### **Philip N. Eate**

Philip N. Eate graduated in 2007 with First Class Honours in Asian Studies at the University of Adelaide. He is currently a PhD candidate at Adelaide researching new forms of pilgrimage and spiritual quest in Japan.

### **Lucy Fraser**

Lucy Fraser graduated from the University of Queensland in 2007 with an Arts Degree in Literary and Japanese Studies. Lucy was awarded First Class Honours in Japanese Literature, as well as a University Medal. This year she will continue her research at Ochanomizu University. Lucy has also translated short fiction by Akutagawa Prize nominee Hoshino Tomoyuki.



### **Rose-Ellen Kesselly**

Rose-Ellen Kesselly graduated from the University of Queensland in 2006 after completing a Bachelor of Arts Honours degree in Japanese and Chinese, and a minor in linguistics.

### **Masafumi Monden**

Masafumi Monden attended the University of Western Sydney, where he received his Bachelor of Arts degree (Public Communication / History, Philosophy & Politics), and with distinction, his Master of Arts degree in Communication, Media & Culture in 2005. He is currently a second year PhD candidate at the University of Technology, Sydney where he is working on representations of youth in Japanese culture.

### **Lisa Narroway**

Lisa Narroway recently graduated from the University of Sydney with a Bachelor of Arts (Languages), majoring in Japanese and History. During her studies, she spent a semester in Japan as an exchange student at Kwansei Gakuin University. She was the 2007 recipient of a Department of Japanese Studies Honours Scholarship.

### **Kirsten Orreill**

Kirsten Orreill holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree with honours (double major Japanese/ Linguistics) from the University of Queensland. In 2006 she was on exchange at the University of Kitakyushu. Kirsten wishes to utilise these experiences of Japan and her knowledge of the Japanese culture, language, and history for future research.

### **Crystal Porter**

Crystal Porter graduated from Australian National University in 2007; she has a Bachelor of Asian Studies (Honours) and a Bachelor of Science. She wrote her Honours thesis after becoming interested in the Ainu and their semi-parallel situation with other indigenous groups around the world. She currently lives in Japan, teaching English.

**Erika K. Smith**

Erika K. Smith is a first year PhD (2008) student at the Centre for Cultural Research at the University of Western Sydney. Her PhD is focused on researching the Kokoda Track post World War II.

**Matthew Stavros**

Dr Matthew Stavros is a lecturer in Japanese Studies at the University of Sydney, specializing in the urban history and architecture of Kyoto during the medieval era. Dr Stavros was trained in architectural and urban history at Kyoto University and he studied Japanese history at Princeton University. He is, annually, a visiting researcher at the University of Tokyo's Historiographical Institute.

## **New Voices 3: Call for Papers**

*New Voices* is an academic journal published in print and online by The Japan Foundation, Sydney. The journal's primary aim is to support emerging Japanese Studies scholars by providing a platform for the promotion of outstanding research and writing by students and early career researchers.

The Japan Foundation, Sydney is now seeking submissions for New Voices Volume 3. We are currently soliciting original papers from recent Honours and Masters graduates who completed their Honours or Masters thesis at an Australian University between January 2006 and December 2008. The deadline for submissions is 30 June 2009. For further information, please download an information package from <http://www.jpf.org.au/newvoices>

Or contact The Japan Foundation, Sydney (Japanese Studies and Intellectual Exchange Department):

Ph: 02 8239 0055

Email: [newvoices@jpf.org.au](mailto:newvoices@jpf.org.au)