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**THE FIFTY-YEAR WAR: *RASHOMON*, *AFTER LIFE*,
AND JAPANESE FILM NARRATIVES OF REMEMBERING**

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The end of the twentieth-century coincided with a rush of academic and artistic works focusing upon, appropriately enough, the theme of memory and commemoration, in particular of the key events surrounding World War II, such as the Holocaust and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

This paper examines questions concerning war memory—both individual and collective—as they are presented in the 1950 Kurosawa Akira film classic, *Rashomon*,¹ and Kore-eda Hirokazu's 1998 *After Life*.² I first consider the Occupation-era films allegorically, as a sign of the ongoing problem concerning acknowledgement of Japanese responsibility for World War II, and then go on to analyze them philosophically; that is, as examples of an unresolved epistemological crisis in modernity. The recent film *After Life* suggests that, fifty years after *Rashomon*, the problem of memory remains a major concern as reflected in the inability of contemporary Japanese to grapple with the issue of wartime responsibility.

Although I believe that both films treat the theme of war and memory rather directly, I examine their narrative forms as a sign of their philosophic significance, in other words, the ways in which the films' structure—as film narrative—expresses remembering and reveals what may be called an epistemology of memory. In short, I maintain that the problem of memory posed in these films not only relates to the question of war guilt, but to larger questions regarding the unstable nature of modern knowledge and the relationship between images and history as modern acts of knowing. Stating this differently, philosophically speaking, modernity itself may have a “memory problem.” Both films problematize these issues by raising the question of whether it is possible for film narrative to convey and to visualize the content or substance of truth.

¹ *Rashomon*, Dir. Kurosawa Akira, Daiei Studios, 1950.

² *After Life*, Dir. Hirokazu Kore-eda, Engine Films, 1998.

But first of all, why discuss *Rashomon*, a film that premiered at the Venice Film Festival over fifty years ago? Following a provocative interpretation of the condition of postwar Germany by Eric Santner in his book, *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany*,³ I contend that Japan, since the war, has not yet faced and worked through its own sense of traumatic loss. Loss here is defined as the sudden rupture of national identity once mobilized for a total war effort under the emperor and imperial ideology (as in the case of Nazism and the Hitler cult) in the wake of a prospering postwar society. In the case of Japan, the prewar/postwar divide marks a transformation yet to be adequately understood, despite the massive efforts of social scientists and Occupation policy theorists. Conventional theories characterize the split in terms of the ideology of modernization theory as a story of transition from a pre-modern or feudal society to a modern society tied to the transformative agency of democratic capitalism under the sway of the United States.⁴

Within a reading of the famous Freudian text, “Memory and Melancholia,”⁵ Santner distinguishes two types of experience of loss that are labeled “mourning” and “melancholy” by citing Freud:

In mourning it is the world, which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself.⁶

Although mourning and melancholy are ultimately seen as extreme ends of the same pole and are *not* mutually exclusive, the key difference is that, in mourning there is an awareness of separation between the individual and the lost object, whereas in melancholy separation was never sufficiently established. Thus, the melancholic subject, in experiencing loss, is primarily feeling a lack of his or her own self-control, or what Freud characterizes as a kind of narcissism. In contrast, the subject in mourning, having come to terms with genuine loss and separation—for example, the

³ Eric Santner, *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).

⁴ See J. Victor Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

⁵ Sigmund Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-1974), vol. 14, pp. 244-245.

⁶ Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” p. 246.

reality of death—can potentially work through the traumatic loss to result constructively in a state of health. In a word, there are examples of “successful” mourning. The melancholic subject, on the other hand, continues to imagine a unity with the lost object. The object may be empirically gone, but it never really existed as a separate object or entity to begin with; thus the loss results in an unresolved melancholic state.⁷

While I cannot take the time to further elucidate Santner’s psychoanalytic reading, I would simply suggest that war events and war responsibility also remain problematic in the case of Japan, which arguably stands in a state of unresolved melancholy. Of course, the remembering of war-related events, such as the Japanese-American internment or atrocities committed by United States soldiers in Korea, are problems not limited to Japan and Germany.⁸

Allow me now to illustrate the Japanese condition with statements reported in the *New York Times*. The governor of Tokyo, Shintaro Ishikawa, made the first comment on April 10, 2000, in an address to the Ground Self-Defense Forces (SDF):

Atrocious crimes have been committed again and again by *sangokujin* and other foreigners. We can expect them to riot in the event of a disastrous earthquake.⁹

The term, *sangokujin*, literally “third country person,” was coined during the American Occupation to refer to those in Japan who were not Japanese or of the Allied Forces. It later became an insult used by xenophobic Japanese and, in this case, was used in reference to immigrants. The second

⁷ Lyotard links this unresolved melancholy, philosophically speaking, to the condition of postmodernism: “Anamnesis constitutes a painful process of working through, a work of mourning, for the attachments and conflicting emotions...We have only gotten as far as a vague, apparently inexplicable, end-of-the-century melancholy,” in “Ticket to a New Decor,” trans. Brian Massumi and W. G. J. Niesluchowski, in *Copyright 1/10* (1997): pp. 14-15. Originally cited in Eric Santner, *Stranded Objects*, p. 164 n.13.

⁸ Memory studies in the academy have flowed from Jewish studies of the Holocaust to Japanese analysis of war guilt and victimization to more recent Vietnam studies by American scholars.

⁹ Howard French, “Tokyo Politician’s Earthquake Drill is Militarist Moment,” *New York Times* (September 4, 2000).

quote was made on May 15 of the same year, when then Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori called Japan “a divine nation with the emperor at its center.”¹⁰

Both of these statements are shocking, although not entirely unusual because they demonstrate the ongoing tenacity of beliefs characteristic of prewar ultra-nationalism. The first example resurrects pernicious lies regarding Koreans in the aftermath of the Great Kanto Earthquake in September 1923, which leveled Tokyo.¹¹ Rumors that Koreans had poisoned well water and had set fires incited vigilante groups to lynch hundreds of innocent Koreans living in Japan. When Governor Ishikawa used the term, he infused a contemporary anxiety with a prewar fabrication, thereby continuing the legacy of the prewar imperial domination of East Asia, although this time determined from the position of postwar economic success coupled with a political alliance with the United States. Prime Minister Mori’s affirmation of the emperor system also underscores prewar ideology. Both statements raise concern about the persistent nature of certain prewar social structures that remain complicit with beliefs in the period bracketed as “postwar.”

The above statements by professional politicians call into question the notion that the past has been overcome. On the contrary, I contend that the very notion of the past as something to be overcome is an integral part of modernity, which establishes the past as the *mise-en-scène* or staging of its own legitimacy, ideologically speaking. What this fails to acknowledge is the degree to which modernity, along with theories of modernization, requires a certain temporization (religious, irrational, feudal, communal) and spatialization (non-Western, Eastern) of the past. This is projected in order for modernity to sustain its self-representation as an efficient, rational, secular, individuated, techno-scientific fulfillment in the present.¹² I

¹⁰ Sonni Efron, “Japan Premier’s Remarks of ‘Divine Nation’ Stir Uproar,” *Los Angeles Times* (May 21, 2000).

¹¹ The earthquake was the worst of the modern period, with 100,000 deaths and 550,000 buildings destroyed. See *Concise Dictionary of Modern Japan*, comp. Janet E. Hunter (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 86.

¹² This ultimately figures in characterizations of fascism as an insufficiently modernized remnant of a religious past, which was rekindled, rather than understood as a development of Enlightenment rationalism. Because modern discourses on Enlightenment and rationalized society marginalize

contend that during the modern period, the space and time of the “fulfilled present” has been most powerfully occupied by the nation-state.

In this context, I explore how memory projects, such as film and education, or sites of memory, such as memorials or museums, nearly always affirm national categories, while using *Rashomon* and *After Life* as examples of how national memory is disrupted by its own works of imagination. Indeed, even in modern democratic societies where the local voice, formerly unrepresented, is emphasized, more often than not this too is subsumed by the larger category of the nation; there is a sense of representation, perhaps, but these memories find their place only to the extent to which they affirm a common, national memory. Thus, specific tragedies and points of resistance in local voice are effectively suppressed, so that the formation of a national memory underscores the fact that every act of remembering is also an act of forgetting. In terms of the history of modern Japan, the battle over national memory is evidenced in the bitter contest about history textbooks in the national curriculum.¹³

Rashomon

The film is set somewhere in the time of great social calamity—the wars and famine that occurred at the very end of the Heian period in the twelfth century. The main scene is shot at the ruins of the Rashomon gate in south Kyoto, where a few individuals gather for shelter from the constant rain and refer elliptically to an event, a murder and robbery, with which they cannot come to terms and reconcile their interpretations:

I can’t believe such a thing could happen. I don’t understand how it could’ve happened.

and exclude religious discourses as irrational and therefore “pre-modern,” the continuity between these discourses remains hidden even though they are in reality interdependent. In this way, modern knowledge retains the framework of truth-value, whereas religion becomes subsumed in the general category of aesthetic knowledge. Because of the situation outlined above, it is impossible to fully account for statements such as Prime Minister Mori’s or any of the latest shockingly fascist utterances coming out of mainstream Japanese politicians or intellectuals. Again, they are not feudal aberrations of the modern in a return of the repressed; they are its legacy whose origins have been hidden.

¹³ For further information on this issue, see note 25.

With these words, the film proceeds to diverse accounts from the different individuals explaining the crime, with each version illustrated by a flashback sequence. Throughout the film it is left unclear as to who actually committed the crime, although there is a strong suspicion that it is the woodcutter.

The film has been compared to *Citizen Kane* in terms of influence on other filmmakers, and was acknowledged recently as an inspiration for Oliver Stone's *JFK*. For my purposes, I suggest that the central issue—Who did it?—while key, must also be seen in light of the greater social context of the times. The film represents the defeat of the Japanese imperial nation in its campaigns in Asia and its status as a territory occupied by the Western Allies, principally the United States.¹⁴ Perhaps the uncertainty or anxiety regarding remembering accurately the crime in question can be seen as an allegorical description of the condition of the Japanese nation in its inability to acknowledge its responsibility and agency in crimes committed against its Asian neighbors. Seen in this light, the problem of memory in the film is a direct reflection of a defeated nation coming to terms (or not) with the question of culpability.

Besides the socio-political symbolism of the film, I link the inability to remember that it conveys to an epistemological crisis or agnosticism toward incredulous narratives which have become real, in particular, the nuclear holocaust in Hiroshima, though this is not necessarily an incredulity in a Lyotardian sense. In a secular age, seeing is believing, but with science eclipsed not even physical, sensual experiences can be so readily grasped because they elude belief and the imagination's capacity to lay hold of them.

A somewhat controversial historian, Hayden White, in his article "The Modernist Event,"¹⁵ argues not that historical events are unknowable,

¹⁴ While drawing upon entirely different meanings, I acknowledge first encountering this allegorical reading of the film in James Davidson "Memory of Defeat in Japan: A Reappraisal of *Rashomon*," cited in *Focus on Rashomon*, ed. Donald Richie (Englewood Cliffs: Spectrum Books, 1972), pp. 119-128.

¹⁵ Hayden White, "The Modernist Event," *The Persistence of History; Cinema, Television, and the Modern Event*, ed. Vivian Sobchack (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 17-38.

but that the categories of modern knowledge that under girded the binary oppositions of fact/value or reality/fantasy may no longer hold; thus the objective narratives that they sustained have come into question. That is, the stability of what was considered a fact and its separation from “value” was only sustainable if the object of knowing was kept in its respective sphere; in short, contained within the Kantian category of cognitive reason, ethics or aesthetics.

Taking this point a bit further, perhaps the nature of catastrophic events in modern history—atomic bombs, total war, nuclear holocaust—“push the envelope,” thus destabilizing the categories by which we know “things.” If I understand White here, I think he means that our reticence about knowing with certainty may not be due to a lack of respect for “facts,” but because the notion of what is epistemologically permissible or knowable—what thoughts can be thought—has been exceeded. Thus, in order to write history in a way that is responsive to acts of memory regarding catastrophes, for example, it may be necessary not only to insist on adherence to particular facts but to “work through” what kind of imagination may be required to render events as stable, knowable, and believable objects of knowledge.

But since memory is selective, at issue here is the complicit relationship between remembering and history. In other words, in what ways does memory act as a guarantor of history? In analyzing the narrative structure of memory, I will now explore the ways in which a certain kind of memory construction in modern film and prose novel narratives supports the creation of a national memory and, by extension, a national identity. I believe that in the post-religious modern world, the nation-state functions as a guarantor of meaning, a repository in which separate and individual memories are rendered intelligible in national narratives, such as those presented in film and literature. Therefore, as in Santner’s argument about the “unhealthful” kind of mourning in which the subject over-identifies with the lost object—thereby suppressing the reality of death—filmic and novelistic narratives are used to create a sense of national unity which suppresses fragmentation, both of film itself and modern social formations; in providing powerful imagery, which is not only filmed, but “is” film.

To help illustrate this link between memory, narrative form and the suppression of loss or death, I quote Walter Benjamin:

The novel is significant not because it presents someone else’s fate to us but because the stranger’s fate by virtue of the flame, which consumes, it yields us the warmth, which we never draw from our

own fate. What draws the reader to the novel is the hope of warming his shivering life with a death he reads about.¹⁶

Here is a similar quote from J. M. Bernstein:

Because modern life has no natural telos, no unequivocal (transcendent) end or ends, then our finitude becomes the condition for all our ends and thus our proper end. By this latter I mean no more than that the recognition of the absoluteness of death is a necessary condition for comprehending projects and plots in a world from which God has departed...Only death, we might say, can raise life to the level of fate.¹⁷

Since death provides the closure from which, as in eulogies, links can be drawn to make sense of a person's existence, mainstream Hollywood film narratives, as in traditional novels, perform the work of memory and nostalgia.¹⁸ For example, the typical narrative will often begin with the film's present, and then start narrating a particular story that dissolves back in the time of the overall story. There may be periodic returns to the film's present, but increasingly as the film moves closer to the overall story's culmination, that moment of the narrated story encased within the film

¹⁶ Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller," *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 101.

¹⁷ J. M. Bernstein, *The Philosophy of the Novel; Lukacs, Marxism and the Dialectics of Form* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), pp. 136-137.

¹⁸ See Rey Chow's articulation of this in an analysis of Paoli Pasolini's, "Observations on the Sequence Shot," *Hermetical Empiricism*, ed. Louise K. Barnett, trans. Ben Lawton and Louise K. Barnett (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988). Chow quotes Pasolini: "It is necessary to die, because as long as we live, we have no meaning...Death effects an instantaneous montage of our lives; that is, it chooses the truly meaningful moments and puts them in a sequence, transforming an infinite, unstable, and uncertain present into a clear, stable, certain past. It is only thanks to death that our life serves us to express ourselves. Editing therefore performs on the material of the film...the operations that death performs on life." In Chow, *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 32.

narrative forms a unity and a perfect loop; the beginning is the end and the end is the beginning.¹⁹

In other words, this kind of narrative form is a nostalgic act of information retrieval based upon a mimetic projection or a portrayal of the remembered past which places a high regard for the aesthetics of realism, as in a flashback. Because existence itself does not yield the kind of satisfying closures needed in linear narratives, the circular loop performs a death—oftentimes based upon an actual death, or from the perspective of the old age of a character in the story—in the sense that the story narrated has already lapsed. It is being lived a second time through the narration. For the film viewer, this loop is doubled, as the narrated story is embedded within the larger framework of filmic time. In a sense, you may only live once, but you can die twice at the movies.

In returning to *Rashomon*, there is a unified temporal structure in the film in that the several flashbacks always return to the present context, and the overwhelming disturbance is moral, in other words, we all know that everyone but one person is lying. Nevertheless, following White, I would like to suggest that part of the moral ambiguity borders on the epistemological, as well, in that the uncertainties spill over into skepticism about what actually happened, precisely because the event itself is unmanageable and cannot be regulated by modern knowledge, leaving the viewer with a set of narrative fragments.

The Modern Epistemological Break: Philosophic Editing

As a result, the inability to render and stabilize catastrophic events by narrative structures may indicate that these events cannot be contained as objects of knowing by the modern subject of epistemology. This instability, in turn, leads to a split within the subject itself, as the impossibility of rendering the object is inextricably linked to a schism in the subject. Stated

¹⁹ This is, I believe, the philosophical content of modern nationalism, which informs key philosophic political texts, such as G. W. F. Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J. B. Baille (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1967), in its presentation of the State as the organic fulfillment of the World Spirit, resolving and harmonizing all fragmentation and particularism which Hegel ascribed to modern social life. Nationalism also informs narrative forms, and it is this narrative form that I link to the work of memory.

differently, it is hard to form memory in a narrative sense because it exceeds the faculty of the imagination, becoming the unthinkable thought. I will summarize and then link this discussion of the split Kantian subject and the bureaucratic nature of modern knowledge to film narrative.

According to J. M. Bernstein, the condition of a split epistemological subject and the divided categories of knowledge are the hallmark of modernity:

Modernity is the separation of spheres, the becoming autonomous of truth, beauty and goodness from one another, and their developing into self-sufficient forms of practice: modern science and technology, private morality and modern legal forms, and modern art. This categorical separation of domains represents the dissolution of the metaphysical totalities of the pre-modern age. To this day, for most philosophers this division of labor remains unimpeachable. Even writers on art who think that the proper way of comprehending art is as an institutional phenomenon hold that the language of art and art practices, are autonomous practices, wholly unlike ethical or cognitive practices. And this should tell us that the move to [replace] mental talk (aesthetic attitudes and the like) by practice (institution or language game) talk leaves the categorical separation of art and truth firmly in place.²⁰

In this way, there is a fundamental epistemological and social loss implicit in the foundational spheres of modern knowledge established as autonomous, disconnected activities. Important here is that since art has already been transformed in the modern period by being defrocked of its function as truth-value, any subsequent attempts to speak in the name of art (for example, in the case of Romantic movements of art and literature as an opposition to science) already contain the divided terms of the modern split within their projects. They are already marked by the disfigurement and rupture of the modern in their very natures.

²⁰ J. M. Bernstein, *The Fate of Art; Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1992), pp. 5-6. For an intriguing synthesis of both Freud and Hegel in regard to mourning and the notion of sublation in Hegelian dialectics, see Catherine Malabou's, "History and the Process of Mourning in Hegel and Freud," *Radical Philosophy* 106/2 (2001): 15-20.

By most accounts, the development of the modern subject is attributed to the work of Kant. The sheer rigor of Kant's system disallows the metaphysical realm (the non-sensual and non-material) from ever becoming objects of knowledge at all, driving a wedge between the world of material phenomena and the nominal realm of freedom. In this way, the self inhabits the world of phenomena (the world of things), but since that world remains beyond knowing, ultimately not only the world—but also the self as a part of that world—remains unknowable as a kind of epistemological “shut-in.” Thus, Kant's knowing self is fundamentally split, both within itself and between itself and the world, thereby constituting what I understand to be the basically anti-nominal structure of the Kantian critical system: the dualisms between freedom/necessity, mind/body, subject/object, and cognition/experience.

It is in this context that the aesthetic realm takes on an integral, mediating role in negotiating some kind of resolution. Art, including poetry, becomes the simultaneous sign of healing, while also the cause of schizophrenic illness or madness. Key here, at the epistemological foundation of the modern, is the duo-movement of rupture or break followed by reconciliation constituting virtually a secular form of redemption for the modern subject who is at best a split entity.

Modifying Bernstein's analysis, I identify Enlightenment epistemology specifically with the notion of critique in Kant in two basic senses: 1) a “subjectivization” of knowing in which objects in the world conform to the mind rather than the mind to the world; and 2) a separation of knowledge into discrete categories of cognitive reason, ethics and aesthetics, each with their own methodological protocols and objects of inquiry. In this way Kantian epistemology articulates a profound series of ruptures: between the knowing subject and the object of knowledge, between mind and body, between disciplinary spheres based upon instrumental reason, between cognition and experience, and between irreconcilable splits within the subject itself.²¹

²¹ In its autonomy and isolation, the condition of Kant's knowing subject bears a striking parallel to the general plight of privatized individuals in modern society, abstracted from the political dimension of their labor even while occupying the ideological center of liberal capitalism. That is, the knowing subject of the Kantian critiques turns out also to be the philosophic notation of the prototypical bourgeois.

More to the point, the transformation of art to aesthetics according to the modern division of philosophic labor divests art of its truth-value, or its content, relegating it instead to contemplative reflections on the experience of formal beauty. The modern nation thus represents a symbolization of the “logic” of the modern, mutually constituting both the subject and the object of beauty. Thus, as an apotheosis of the nation, its national-aestheticism exists not in spite of, but rather because of the epistemological breaks located within the subject itself.

The key point here is that while Enlightenment epistemology may signify rupture, the break is primarily internal. In other words, the differences between the pre-Enlightenment and Enlightenment structure of knowledge and the life-worlds they inform are very real—the differences in their philosophic systems is central to this thesis—but they are not essential. Indeed, part of what allows modern knowledge (the forms of science, scientific realism) to discredit and disenfranchise pre-existing forms of truth is its depiction of the pre-modern as a knowable entity (with a beginning and an end), while reorganizing its structure of knowledge into separate spheres of duty, and suppressing their mutual overlap. Thus again, the differences are apparent and will not go away by simply denying them, but that is not the same as saying they are a historical necessity.

Hegelian dialectics attempted to overcome the epistemological splits in modernity introduced by Kant between, among other things, reason/ethics and subject/object through a series of social mediations (national communitarianism, civic society), which are ultimately embodied in the State and symbolized through the modern subject. In Hegel’s society, the individual becomes a type of modern hero who, embodying the Absolute, overcomes the social constraints of sub-institutions like the family (which Hegel criticized), as well as the philosophic limits of Kant in a vision of social plenitude. Thus, the loss of transcendence in modernity not only entails a loss of confidence in matters of faith or theologically informed learning, but a complete transformation in terms of social and institutional practices in a secular life-world.

The components of the Hegelian system—the world movement of the Spirit through History, the return to origins, the substantiated subject, a redemptive eschatology—are not direct transfers from theology but narrative conventions that have been transformed.²² Therefore, despite

²² See Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*

Hegel's invocation of History and the great forward movement of the dialectic, the desire to overcome social and philosophical separations through an apocalyptic unity is not so much a direct recalling of theology, but a secular response to an internal problem, that is, the modern epistemological ruptures initiated by Kant.

In this way, two opposing and contradictory philosophical movements (which I characterize as Kantian and Hegelian) within the same basic epistemological development are what comprise the modern. I believe that our modern life-world remains defined within the tensions produced by the epistemological splits associated with Kant, the basic dilemma of which is outlined below by Bernstein:

In every act of knowing there is an object known and a knowing self; so even if the object known is the self, it cannot be the knowing/creative self since this self will in all cases be doing the knowing. Thus a chasm opens up between the self as knower/creator and the self as known, between the transcendental and empirical ego.²³

Bernstein's analysis of Lukacs' critique of Kant—Lukacs' Hegelian attempt to mediate Kantian antinomies—explores modern subjectivity through the form of the modern novel. As he summarizes above, the modern subject is premised on a series of profound gaps. Since the self participates in both materiality and immateriality, the same epistemological divide that makes it impossible for the self to know things-in-themselves equally applies to itself.

Thus, the transformation of art to aesthetics signifies the "subjectivization" of art as a entity of knowing, including the premise that the aesthetic realm is autonomous and divested of its former ability to

(London and New York: Routledge, 1990); and Naoki Sakai, "Modernity and Its Critique: The Problem of Universalism and Particularism," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 87/2 (1988): 475-504. See also Pheng Chang, "Universal Areas: Asian Studies in a World in Motion," in the inaugural issue, "Specters of the West and Politics of Translation," *Traces: A Multilingual Journal of Cultural Theory and Translation* 1 (2001): 37-70; and also in this issue, Naoki Sakai, "The Dislocation of the West," *Traces: A Multilingual Journal of Cultural Theory and Translation* 1 (2001): 71-94.

²³ J. M. Bernstein, *The Philosophy of the Novel; Lukacs, Marxism and the Dialectics of Form*, pp. 56-57.

generate knowledge in the sense of truth-value. Aesthetics is subjectivized in that art works are no longer understood as artifacts imitating or representing the spatial temporal world, but are seen as above all emblems of consciousness. So whatever the relations between theory and practice may be, their nature is understood largely on the model of mental entities rather than non-mental ones.

It is my belief that the realms of modern knowledge are divided, and the possibility of bridging or mediating those gaps are played out in the realm of aesthetics. To return to the beginning of this article, this is why theorization about art seems to get at the heart of what is divisive about modern knowledge formation, why attempts to unify theory and practice are always implicated in the aesthetic category, and why the role of art remains highly problematic in political projects, i.e., the attempt to realize social meaning through the imagination. I basically read mainstream Hollywood film narrative as acting in this way by smoothing over the cuts of editing and of philosophic breaks through an aesthetic category. In other words, “art” also reflects the general division of knowledge separating truth from aesthetic value in the major break between the realms of cognitive scientific reason and aesthetics, which evolves into a study of the subjective apprehension of beauty.

Furthermore, I believe that the aesthetic is the realm that reveals the impulse to achieve unity that is still present in modern knowledge formation, however divided. When outlining how a subjective consciousness of art comes to a judgment of beauty, there is a sense in which the problem of penetrating form with meaning and intention is foregrounded in aesthetic theory. As previously mentioned, one feature of Hegelianism lies in introducing the concept of history as a unifying principle, but I argue that the idea of the self-realization of Reason in the historical world is perhaps the grandest fiction or narrative modernity has produced. In this sense, in its Hegelian form, the aesthetic—as the other of cognitive reason—contains the drive to overcome the modern divides through social mediation, ultimately in an apotheosis of the Hegelian subject who comes to self-knowledge and identity through the structures of the modern State. This mediation is performed through art, and mainstream film in its narrative structuring of memory enacts that which, on a philosophic level, I link to the force of the Hegelian dialectic.²⁴

²⁴ Soviet director, Sergei Eisenstein, has been perhaps the strongest

After Life

While not a war film, Hirokazu Kore-eda's *After Life* produced in 1998, is a memory film which self-consciously poses the questions regarding the individual versus the collective memory of the nation in modern Japanese history. The film features a group of individuals who work in a dilapidated building somewhat resembling a high school. Their job is to interview a number of recent arrivals over a period of one week—in other words, people who have recently died and need to decide upon one memory to replay over and over again for eternity. As the film progresses, it turns out that the workers are among those unable to decide upon a memory and thus they remain in an in-between state as the ones conducting the interviews. After the workers help the newly dead pick one memory, they set out to recreate it as a filmed, staged event for posterity. There is a final screening to view the results. A range of individuals is being interviewed and the film explores the ease or difficulty people have in choosing—accurately, or even at all—a single moment from their past life. The entire film, except for one segment, takes place on the campus site.

The director, Kore-eda, also wrote the screenplay and chose to subvert the inclination for a collective memory along national categories by periodically displacing the individual stories with fragments—often violent ones—of the legacy of some fifty years of Japanese imperialism. This is a remembering of the past not performed in terms of mimetic depiction by making history seem real, as in *Saving Private Ryan*'s celebrated opening segment featuring the D-Day invasion, but in terms of interviews to recreate an impression of the past. Incidentally, some five hundred people throughout the Tokyo area who were not professional actors were interviewed in preparation for the making of the film, some of whom appear in the film as interviewees. From the beginning, Kore-eda's emphasis is on linguistic mediation and a self-conscious use of film within a film, in a way

explicator linking dialectics to the work of film montage: "We may yet have a synthesis of art and science. This would be the proper name for our new epoch in the field of art. This would be the final justification for Lenin's words, 'cinema is the most important of all the arts,'" in *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, ed. and trans. Jay Leyda (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Janovich, 1949), p. 63.

reminiscent of Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*²⁵ documentary and its refusal to depict realistically, but rather to narrate the ongoing effects of the Holocaust by interviewing survivors who were Polish villagers.

In *After Life*, the re-creation of memories emphasizes the staging technology at work in film, especially by belaboring the process through the use of primitive techniques of visual effects. Therefore, in contrast to Steven Spielberg's aesthetics of realism in *Saving Private Ryan* or TV's violence and voyeurism, Kore-eda does not show the viewer the past, as though it could be unproblematically retrieved as a visual experience. The film instead focuses on the uneventful quality of life, as well as its lack of closure by simply proceeding to the next group of the dead.

In these ways, I believe that the film challenges the viewer to work through the terms and conditions of memory, as well as to problematize the relationship between individual and collective narratives. At key points the film intersperses historical events in modern Japanese history—the Marco Polo Bridge Incident; the failed coup d'état on February 26, 1936; the mass lynching of Koreans in the hysteria following the 1923 Kanto earthquake; and the promise of democratic reforms in the early postwar period. Indeed the first person we encounter in the mix of individuals seen in the waiting area announces, as his voice rises above the crowd, that he died in the Marco Polo Bridge incident. In a sense, a background of imperial conquest and violence begins to emerge as several of the interviewees and workers are soldiers, and the question of repressed memory and the failure of Japan to work through its past comes to light.²⁶ To begin with, the building itself

²⁵ *Shoah*, Dir. Claude Lanzmann, French Ministry of Culture and Communication, 1985.

²⁶ One of the best examples of the failure is represented by the long-term lawsuit brought by historian Ienaga Saburō, who sued the government for censoring his entries on Japanese imperialism, in changing the term for “aggression” to *shinryaku* (“invasion”). Ienaga first sued the Ministry of Education in 1965 for censoring his entries describing the Nanjing Massacre and other acts of aggression in Japan's Pacific War against other Asian nations. See the English translation in Ienaga Saburō, *The Pacific War, 1931-1945; A Critical Perspective on Japan's Role in World War II* (NY: Pantheon Books, 1978). Another example involves the memorial at Peace Park in Hiroshima. The international anti-nuclear movement is naturally well-invested in that particular site, but as Lisa Yoneyama has

is an abandoned high school from the early 1950s. I believe this signifies the reality of postwar Japan represented as being both economically and successfully stuck in the past. Just as the workers turn out to be the dead who were unable to decide on a memory, thus staying on as interviewers, modern Japan remains in a static position without an adequate sense of history. For a brief moment, the film action, otherwise entirely based at the high school, moves to contemporary urban Japan. It is a surreal world of storefronts and mannequins, in other words, commodity culture's clear suppression of a sense of history; or what Benjamin calls "empty time."

After Life also raises the question of ethical choice, but rather than envelop ethical life with notions of responsible citizenship and family, Kore-eda focuses the issue on the choice to be made by a punk kid with orange hair who is particularly aggressive with the interviewers and who simply refuses to choose a memory. He dismisses the options available, wanting to choose the future instead, but when that is out of the question, he declines and becomes the next caseworker to remain behind.

One story, which is followed with particular care, is that of an older man who cannot think of what memory to choose and sits in a room with stacks of videotapes of each year he lived. Watching the videos, he evaluates his life. A period of his college years is screened in which he dates a woman who will later become his wife, and they discuss favorite films over an awkward dinner. Significantly, his favorite films are *chanbara* or the swashbuckling samurai flicks; a genre that continues to enjoy popularity on Japanese television through the continuing dramatization of well known folkloric stories about competing clans and warlords. (Incidentally, this genre finds new life in the international popularity of Japanese *anime* films and comic books, which capitalize on

argued the universal categories of the memorial and its appeal to all humankind tends to suppress: a) that according to theories of modernization which are based on modernity arising in the West, the Japanese were not part of enlightened humankind; and b) that the Japanese were also engaged in imperial aggression in East Asia. In other words, memorializing the dropping of the Atomic Bomb under a universal category effectively suppresses the historical relations between Japan and its neighbors from the late 19th century through the end of the war. See Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space, and the Dialectics of Memory* (Berkeley: University of California, 1999).

the mythologies surrounding warrior valor and fight-to-the-death codes). My point here is that this kind of film genre was particularly favored for the inculcation of loyalty and valor in the period of Japanese militarism and that this has survived in the postwar period. These “historical” dramas, as Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto has written, have created a kind of distance for contemporary Japanese who, in watching these films and TV shows, keep the possibility of ethical responsibility in the present at bay.

After Life is not a dismissal of the possibility of knowledge or an expression of the idea that all knowledge of the past is hopelessly relative and selective, but rather it presents memory as an integral part of the effort required in order to know and understand past events. Thus, it is not a matter of pitting memories over and against history in a typical binary opposition of personal narrative versus official accounts, but rather of seeing the two as informing each other. There is the striking case of Iseya, a young, smart-alecky, punky man in his early 20s, who refuses to choose on ethical grounds out of a sense of responsibility, because choosing one memory in a hypostatic fashion rules out the imagination, making choice and other possibilities irrelevant. For Iseya, real history is fluid but is only kept so if one is able to maintain memory so that its multiple possibilities stay alive, if only for an interpretive framework, since his life has already been lived.

In this way, Kore-eda undoes the opposition between memory as personal and thus unreliable and history as public and thus the objective truth. Indeed, history in the sense of facts does matter in the film as the historical events upset, and are used to correct misperceptions of the past. There is one woman who, in recalling that her childhood memory concerning the Kanto earthquake is false, revisits the recollection in her reenactment as a matter of correction. It is not clear when she learned the truth of what happened at that time, but presumably it was as an adult that her memory was adjusted. In other words, when the film portrays her as an adult swinging in the re-created swing of time, living out a remembered childhood experience, it is a recharging mediated by age, experience and knowledge gained, rather than a mere return to innocence, which in this case would signify a belief in murderous lies. Memory stands corrected, and the act of remembering is corrective.

The overall strategy of *After Life* resembles Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah*, in which a philosophic stance is taken so as to resist realism, as reflected also in Spielberg’s *Schindler’s List*. Taking an allegorical approach, Kore-eda uses interviews with non-actors and emphasizes the

staged aspect of the reenacted scenes. Authenticity is not seen as something to retrieve, but a possibility that requires artifice.²⁷

In conclusion, I believe that the nation-state provides the comprehensive sense of unity for modernity, thus serving as the secular telos mediating identity for modern individuals. As complex narratives of remembering, which fall outside of the traditional realist narratives associated with depicting the events of World War II, both *Rashomon* and *After Life* to varying degrees draw attention to the structuring of memory. As a result, in both films history may not be apprehended as if in an experiential museum.²⁸ It is rather as a narrative, which places the question of how history is remembered (via stories and images) at the foreground; thus making the lives and stories of individual persons intelligible, rather than resolving individual death by silencing it through a so-called redemptive process for the sake of a national memory.

²⁷ In this way, both *Shoah* and *After Life* recall Alain Resnais' *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (Dir. Alain Resnais, screenplay by Margurite Duras, dist. Home Vision Cinema, 1997), which also treats the event of Hiroshima in allegorical terms. Resnais, who originally attempted to make a documentary about Hiroshima, later decided to scrap the attempt and, instead, create a film featuring actors who deal with the problem of memory. Anti-nuclear protests are themselves staged in the film, serving to bracket the realist aesthetic of the fictive film and its limitations; thus the constant phrase from the Japanese architect to the French actress who claims to have "seen" Hiroshima through films, artifacts at the museum, Peace Park memorials: "You never saw anything there..."

²⁸ I use Alison Landsberg's definition in her careful analysis of The United States Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C., "America, the Holocaust, and the Mass Culture of Memory: Toward a Radical Politics of Empathy," *New German Critique: An Interdisciplinary Journal of German Studies* 71/1 (1997): 63-86.

**THE TANKA POETRY OF YOSANO AKIKO:
TRANSFORMATION OF TRADITION
THROUGH THE FEMALE VOICE**

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The poetry and life of Yosano Akiko are marked by intriguing ambiguity: an emblem of female daring and willful self-determination who inspired a younger generation of Japanese feminists, she was nonetheless the mother of eleven children, the apparently devoted wife of a difficult man who had once been her mentor and the main support for her family. One of the first Japanese poets of her era to speak openly of female sexuality, she is sometimes characterized as “unfeminine” by both Asian and Western critics. Direct and uncompromising in her expression of intense emotion in life and poetry, she inspired the Romantic movement in Japanese poetry; yet few Romantics have been so pragmatic, constant, and down-to-earth in realizing their visions of love and art. Regardless of the controversies about her character and artistic vision, critics are beginning to acknowledge Yosano Akiko’s pivotal importance in transforming Japan’s traditional 31-syllable tanka (or waka) poem from a sterile exercise in formulaic sentimentality to a bold, resilient medium equal to the complexity of the modern condition. Akiko’s initial notoriety came not so much from her poetry as from the extensive scandal that erupted in response to her liaison with her literary mentor Tekkan, who was married when their affair began. Leith Morton traces the critical reception of Akiko’s work in her article, “The Canonization of Yosano Akiko’s *Midaregami*,” and finds that much of the initial discussion of her poetry is capsized by moral indignation. An extreme but apparently not uncommon reaction comes from the critic Takizawa Shugyo, who describes Akiko as “the worst type of modern tart, a bitch whose work does not deserve serious

¹ The author acknowledges the following influences: Chiyoki Higuchi, *Her Place in the Sun*, trans. Sharon Rhoads (Tokyo: The East Publications, 1973); and Dorothy Robins-Mowry, *The Hidden Sun, Women of Modern Japan* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983).

consideration.”² Morton suggests that Akiko’s arresting poetry and her uncompromising approach to love and life are significantly intertwined. Unapologetic in their honesty, directness and passion, both aspects raised the hackles of traditionalists and captured the admiration of later generations of young women and men eager for a freer life and a more vital poetry to celebrate it. Akiko’s poetry endured several reversals of critical opinion and, not surprisingly, fell into total obscurity during the years of the Second World War. It was only in the postwar years that her impact on Japanese literature was fully recognized. Likewise, the new image of woman that Akiko created through her life, her poetry, and her essays—one that unnerved many of her contemporaries—stood as a beacon for postwar youth rejecting the confinement of tradition. As Morton points out, the scandal and denunciation that attended the initial publication of *Midaregami* had positive connotations for readers following the war.³ In summarizing the impact of *Midaregami*, Morton states that critics throughout the decades acknowledge the importance of the work in relation to “the two new great literary currents of the Meiji era: romanticism and naturalism.”⁴

It would not be the first time that a woman could claim credit for transforming the literature of Japan. Murasaki Shikibu, with whom Yosano felt great empathy, was also a definer of Japan’s aesthetic traditions. Women, if they were brazen enough to seize the writing brush, stood outside the universe of expectations that comprised the *kata* (or path) of literature and hence were free to innovate in a way that men were not. Even when Yosano Akiko attempted to follow the lead of her early male mentors, she spoke with a female voice that realized their visions in surprising ways. While the poetry of her husband Yosano Tekkan and his group is marked by unconvincing imitation of certain superficial elements of European late Romanticism, and therefore is interesting mainly for historical reasons, Akiko’s poetry riveted her contemporaries as well generations of readers to come with its iconoclastic energy.

To what extent is Akiko’s poetry a legitimate reflection of the female voice? Feminism was as complicated in Akiko’s time as it is in our

² Leith Morton, “The Canonization of Yosano Akiko’s *Midaregami*,” *Japanese Studies* 20/3 (2000): 237-254.

³ Morton, “Yosano Akiko’s *Midaregami*,” p. 251.

⁴ Morton, “Yosano Akiko’s *Midaregami*,” p. 243.

own. The debate over the nature of “the new woman” was defined by several radically different voices. Whereas Akiko maintained that women should receive equal education to men, have full legal rights, and also assume responsibility for their own lives, other proponents argued from a diametrically opposed perspective that called for full state support for women on the basis of their importance as mothers. Some feminists believed that women’s issues were necessarily bound with larger political issues and espoused socialist or anarchist revolutions, while others thought the improvement of women’s circumstances must come within the traditional framework of “good wives and wise mothers.”⁵ Akiko wrote voluminously for both literary and more popular publications about her views and experiences as a woman, speaking from the paradoxical intricacy of her own situation—the mother of a large family, the main breadwinner, the devoted lover of her less successful husband, and a professionally accomplished individual. Acting on her conviction that education was the key to freedom for women, she spent the last two decades of her productive life teaching young women at a school designed to provide quality, substantive education for girls.⁶ It seems that Akiko’s own quest for personal freedom began with a burst of passionate rebellion but found its fulfillment in steady productivity and commitment.

It is not surprising that the evolution of Akiko’s orientation as a woman with all its complexity is reflected in her writing. Janine Beichman in her thoughtful essays asserts that in the early works, of which *Tangled Hair*⁷ is the most well-known, Akiko had not yet found a truly female voice, but was in fact imitating men in order to write.⁸ The imitation of men, she believes, explains the defiant, sexually blatant quality of the

⁵ Laurel Rasplica Rodd, “Yosano Akiko and the Taisho Debate Over the ‘New Woman,’” *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945*, ed. Gail Lee Bernstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 176.

⁶ Rodd, “Yosano Akiko and the Bunkagakuin: ‘Educating Free Individuals,’” *Journal of the Association of Teachers of Japanese* 25/1 (1991): 75-89.

⁷ Akiko Yosano, *Tangled Hair, Selected Tanka from Midaregami*, ed. and trans. Sanford Goldstein and Seishi Shinoda (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1987).

⁸ Janine Beichman, “Yosano Akiko: Return to the Female,” *Japan Quarterly* 37/2 (1990): 204-228.

poetry and what she and other critics characterize as its “narcissism.” Beichman contends that critical attention to Akiko’s early work overlooks the strength of her later work, which deals with issues of childbirth and less glamorous aspects of femininity.⁹ She attributes the adulation of *Tangled Hair* and the relative obscurity of the later work to a male critical bias toward the sensual and sexual dimensions of femininity. Beichman’s arguments are convincing insofar as the later poetry is indeed powerful and worthy of greater critical attention than it has received; but she fails to appreciate the importance of Akiko’s affirmation of female sexuality, both as a crucial aspect of “claiming” and articulating the experience of being a woman and as a catalyst for the creation of a new kind of poetic voice.

The early poetry should not, I believe, be categorized merely as imitative of the masculine style and proclivity. In one sense, it is true that “Akiko’s poetic voice came in part from her own impersonation of the male.”¹⁰ In Japanese culture (and in others as well) an aspect of what Akiko describes as “being stuck inside a woman’s body” is swallowing defiance and carefully removing the sharp edges of one’s passion lest they cause an injury.¹¹ Cultivation of individuality, which Tekkan promoted as the basis for the new tanka poetry, was alien ground for women who had been culturally schooled to accommodate and harmonize. To speak with the poetic force and honesty advocated by Tekkan and his school, Akiko must necessarily imitate the freedom of the male condition. However, I would argue that while the act of speaking openly and directly is an imitation of the male condition, the voice that emerges in Akiko’s poetry is a uniquely female articulation that redefines what the tanka form can achieve.

The sexual content of Akiko’s *Midaregami* seems crucial as a transformative force that pushes both consciousness and poetry to a new honesty, directness, and passion characteristic of modernist expression. In attempting to match the West, Meiji Japan adopted an image of womanhood that reflected the values of Victorian Europe. Celebration of sexuality—certainly a woman’s

⁹ Beichman, “Return to the Female,” p. 204.

¹⁰ Beichman, “Return to the Female,” p. 207.

¹¹ Beichman, “Return to the Female,” p. 207. It is significant that Akiko edited *Midaregami* extensively in response to criticism. See Morton, “Yosano Akiko’s *Midaregami*,” p. 246.

celebration of her own sexuality—was shunned as part of the embarrassing past of “Floating World” libertinism. As in the West, the repression of female sexuality was seen as a crucial cornerstone of civilization. To affirm her own specifically female sexuality, Akiko had to adopt a new voice and poetic stance that rejected corrosive Western attitudes to both sexuality and poetry. She appealed to *Genji* in reinventing an image of female sexual passion, and she rejected “prosy” Western approaches to poetry, looking instead to traditional Japanese aesthetic standards that called for verse that is “polished and taut and unified.”¹² Akiko reaches back to traditional Japanese aesthetics in formal matters, but launches into startling new terrain with regard to subject matter, imagery, and tone to express defiantly the intensity of her passion. This explosive fusion of the old and the new mirrors the combination of romanticism and naturalism that some critics place at the heart of modernity in Japanese literature.¹³

In *Tangled Hair*, Akiko’s confrontational directness, her expression of female sexuality and passionate feeling, and her rejection of the sanctity of religion and war defy not only the constrictions of traditional female roles but also aesthetic values that had dominated Japanese poetry for centuries. The sound of the female voice speaking openly transforms an atrophied aesthetic tradition. It was not unusual for male Japanese artists to assume a feminine persona in their aesthetic undertakings—however, it was a feminine persona defined almost exclusively by male-dominated cultural traditions. The actual female voice is a radical departure from this fantasy: it challenges both the stereotype of woman and the primacy of an entrenched aesthetic tradition based on an image of femininity created and appropriated by a male tradition.

Donald Keene, in his analysis of Kenko’s *Essays in Idleness* as a cornerstone of Japanese art traditions, identifies “suggestion” as a critical aspect of Japanese aesthetic sensibility. Understatements, muted colors, subtle innuendoes, “beginnings and ends . . . move us more profoundly,”

¹² Rodd, *New Leaves: Studies and Translations of Japanese Literature in Honor of Edward Seidensticker*, ed. Aileen Gatten, Michigan monograph series in Japanese studies, no. 20 (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan), pp. 235-246.

¹³ Morton, “Yosano Akiko’s *Midaregami*,” p. 243.

says Kenko “than the full moon shining over a thousand leagues.”¹⁴ From the perspective of traditional Japanese aesthetics, the full-blown flower is crude compared to the bud or the fallen blossom. This value is also manifested in the emotional behavior prescribed for women: while passions may rage internally, the fully cultivated Japanese woman allows only the most restrained, oblique expressions of them, out of consideration for those who might be upset by strong feelings. She speaks in a language of intense subtlety that parallels the poetic language of suggestion described by Kenko, and the beauty of her emotions is measured precisely in proportion to the extent of their compression.

By the time of Akiko and Tekkan, the aesthetic ideal of “suggestion” had become little more than allusion to a set of stock sentiments and symbols. The critical tension between the depth of emotion and the sparsity of the means by which they might be expressed was lost, and waka had become dry and lifeless. Tekkan’s prescription for remedying this condition was revival of the individual voice and a new investment in the expression of emotion. When Tekkan attempts this, however, the result is sometimes bombastic:

I am a male child
A child of temper, a child of pride,
A child of the sword,
A child of poetry, a child of love,
And ah! A child of anguish.¹⁵

and sometimes bathetic:

too emotional
hence his brittle love
too talented
hence his eccentric verse
take pity on this poor man!¹⁶

¹⁴ Donald Keene, “Japanese Aesthetics,” *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture*, ed. Nancy Hume (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 30.

¹⁵ Noriko Takeda, “The Modern *Tanka* and Yosano Akiko,” *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature/Revue Canadienne de Litterature Comparée* 23/4 (1996): 1025-1037.

¹⁶ Makoto Ueda, ed. and trans., *Modern Japanese Tanka* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 4.

One understands immediately why understatement, emotional restraint, and subtlety had been so long valued in Japanese verse. True to Kenko's assessment, there is something off-putting in these unvarnished appeals, as if the "yang" of male emotion, untempered by the "yin" of a subdued aesthetic, goes over the top and falls flat.

When Akiko expresses emotion directly, however, the dynamic is entirely different. The force of the female voice, so long muted, is arresting, bold and incisive:

In love
And frail as the stem
Of this summer flower—
Yet will I bloom
Deep red under a dazzling sun!¹⁷

Whereas boldness of expression in Tekkan's poetry combines with temper, pride and swords, an excess of feeling and talent to produce bluster and pathos, in Akiko's poetry it announces courageous fragility and ephemeral beauty to produce a life-filled spectacle. The "yin" of Akiko's femininity expressed through a direct, "yang" determination to manifest, both in poetry and in life, produces vital, engaging emotion.

The image of the red flower, which appears frequently in Akiko's works, is a potent symbol of the fullness and directness of the poet's feeling and sexuality.¹⁸ Aside from suggesting passion and seductive beauty, the color red is also an indication of the power and persistence of feminine energy. In Five Phase theory, red is the color of the heart, the South, the ultimate yang energy. But Akiko co-opts it to express her own passion:

Let poems bear witness:
Who dares deny the flower of the field
Its color red?
How moving!
Girls with sins in spring.¹⁹

The idea of sin in the last line appears as an ironic nod to the mentality that judges the young women Akiko describes. So pale this assessment—it is

¹⁷ Yosano, *Tangled Hair*, p. 46.

¹⁸ Takeda includes an interesting discussion of the color red in *Midaregami*, "The Modern *Tanka* and Yosano Akiko," p. 1031ff.

¹⁹ Yosano, *Tangled Hair*, p. 9.

clear that the intolerant have a feeble argument against the undeniable beauty they condemn.

In nearly one-fifth of the tanka in *Mideragami*, Akiko addresses the intended audience directly and, more often than not, confrontationally. The target is sometimes a lover, but it may also be an accusing moralizer, a priest or even Buddha. The result, as Shinoda and Goldstein note, is a highly charged dramatic quality that brings terrific energy to Akiko's poems.²⁰ The message is typically a challenge asserting the legitimacy of women, their emotions and sexuality, over against the insensitivity of men and their heartless institutions, religion, morality and war.

Orders of Buddha,
Orders high and low,
Do you think
I chant these sutras
Without anguish?²¹

or,

Who calls me sinner
For pillowing his head
Against my arm?
The whiteness of this hand
Not less than God's!²²

She frequently baits priests, eager to demonstrate the folly of their celibacy:

You have yet to touch
This soft flesh,
This throbbing blood—
Are you not lonely,
Expounder of the way?²³

Priests seem to represent to Akiko a naïve, impossible or sometimes hypocritical, disregard for the beauty, sensuality, and feeling embodied in the female.

The consequences of ignoring the female side of existence are more serious than the mere adaptation of unrealistic programs of celibacy, however. Disregard for the bonding power of eros also leads men and

²⁰ Yosano, *Tangled Hair*, p. 20.

²¹ Yosano, *Tangled Hair*, p. 6.

²² Yosano, *Tangled Hair*, p. 64.

²³ Yosano, *Tangled Hair*, p. 7.

nations into pointless wars. At a time when most of Japan was swept up in patriotic war frenzy, Akiko wrote a poem that could have gotten her executed. Addressed to her brother, who had been drafted, the poem questions the legitimacy of the entire enterprise of war:

O my dear brother, I am in tears for you:

....

Did your parents teach you to wield the sword
to murder other people?

Did your parents raise you
for twenty-four years
to kill and die?

....

You should not be killed.

The Honorable Emperor would not personally
engage in the war.

Since the Emperor's heart is so merciful,
how could he possibly ask
others to shed blood
and die like beasts
and believe that dying is honor?²⁴

....

The poem produced a furor. Not only was patriotism required by the state, but other poets of the time believed that poetry should encourage the war effort and celebrate the glory of combat. Only backpeddling into a plea that these were merely the personal sentiments of a woman saved Akiko from prosecution.²⁵ Once again, the female voice can say things that the male

²⁴ Yosano Akiko, "River of Stars," *Selected Poems of Yosano Akiko*, trans. Sam Hamill and Keiko Matsui Gibson (Boston: Shambala, 1996), pp. 122-123.

²⁵ Beichman's contention in "Yosano Akiko: Return to the Female," (pp. 210-214) is that the poem was indeed merely a personal statement, and not an indictment of Japan's war effort; however, the execution of the feminist anarchist Kanno Suga several years later indicates that the dangers Akiko faced were serious. It seems more likely to me that her recanting in "Open Letter" was more a matter of self-preservation than of genuine support for the war against Russia. It is clear from this poem that Akiko thinks the war is hardly worth the human cost of it.

voice cannot say, and Akiko has confronted the misguided excesses of the masculine political and literary establishments with the force of the female perspective.

In order to speak so directly, openly, forthrightly, Akiko had to break inwardly with the ideal of Japanese womanhood. She had already done so externally by pursuing her own choice in marriage against her parents' wishes and precipitating the break-up of Tekkan's former marriage. Even the bohemian poets of Tekkan's circle were critical of his defection from his wife to marry Akiko. The cost of freedom for Akiko was ostracism from the ranks of respectable womanhood. She was not insensitive to her status as "sinner," but with characteristic determination she seemed to embrace the stigma placed upon her. If the cost for being a full human being was the label of sinner or loose woman, then so be it. Once beyond the pale of respectability, Akiko was free to explore her experience of being female with unvarnished honesty. Her poetry seems to suggest that at the heart of the "good wife, wise mother" (and Akiko seems to have been both) was a wild girl with tangled hair.

Throughout her poetry Akiko deals with the Victorian proposition that only "fallen" women experience sexuality vividly. She seems quite willing to embrace fallenness if in doing so she is able to celebrate her sexuality. In some of her poems she assumes the persona of a dancing girl or prostitute. The image of tangled hair, which pervades Akiko's collection of poems by that name, is appropriately ambiguous. In the introduction to their English translation of *Midaregami*, Shinoda and Goldstein note: "In the days before World War I, the image of a woman with even slightly disordered hair had a peculiar aesthetic and erotic association....it was considered a disgrace for a woman to let others see her disheveled hair," and "Women who had disheveled hair were considered immoral, loose creatures."²⁶ In Akiko's tanka, tangled hair suggests not only erotic potential, but also the complexity of feeling and distress that emerges when a woman acknowledges her sexuality and her creative power in defiance of tradition.

A thousand lines
Of black black hair

²⁶ Sanford Goldstein and Seishi Shinoda, "Introduction," *Tangled Hair, Selected Tanka from Midaregami* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1987), pp. 22-23.

All tangled, tangled—
 And tangled too
 My thoughts of love.²⁷

The visual character of the tanka poems, executed side by side, each poem a single line of characters, most likely written in the spontaneous grass script favored by poets, suggests wispy strands of hair.

The imagery in *Midaregami* is often characterized as “narcissistic,” Shinoda and Goldstein point out that this type of imagery is a certain break from tradition in a culture that shuns self-admiration.²⁸ Indeed, the word “breast” had apparently not appeared in poetry prior to Akiko’s tanka.²⁹ The human body was not a focus of aesthetic attention in Japanese art and literature, despite a lively tradition of erotic art. Though Akiko clearly asserts the seductive power of her body, these statements seem fraught with a kind of virginal wonder at her own beauty, which is finally the beauty of her womanliness:

In my bath—
 Submerged like some graceful lily
 At the bottom of a spring,
 How beautiful
 This body of twenty summers.³⁰

By becoming the object of her own gaze, Akiko neutralizes the claim on a woman’s body that tradition yields to men. This maneuver is essential in a culture that for centuries advised “respect the man, despise the woman.”³¹

Akiko does not have to look to the West for models of feminine assertion. Rather, she delves back into the classical Japanese tradition of Murasaki to identify with a vision of womanliness, albeit idealized, that is both passionate and artful, sensual and intelligent, capable of deep devotion

²⁷ Yosano, *Tangled Hair*, p. 104.

²⁸ Yosano, *Tangled Hair*, p. 21.

²⁹ Yosano, *Tangled Hair*, p. 21.

³⁰ Yosano, *Tangled Hair*, p. 16.

³¹ Sharon L. Sievers, *Flowers in Salt, The Beginnings of Feminist Consciousness in Modern Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), p. 6. This book offers an excellent analysis of the complexity of attitudes toward women in Tokugawa and Meiji Japan.

but deeply aware of creative freedom and its power.³² This vital image she brandishes in the faces of those who sought to soften the view of women in Japan through the imposition of Western values that only camouflaged the enduring oppression of women. The image seems to strike a chord for both Japanese and Western readers, who continue to relish the beauty of her work.

³² G.G. Rowley, "Textual Malfeasance in Yosano Akiko's *Shin'yaku Genji Monogatari*," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 58/1 (1998): 201-220. See Rowley for a discussion of the extent to which Akiko sought to identify with Murasaki.

**CIVIL SERVANT OR OBEDIENT SERVANT?
IDEAL(IZED) OFFICIALS IN 16th CENTURY JAPAN**

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It is generally acknowledged among constitutional historians that the development and growth of a civil service is one of the most significant hallmarks for the emergence of the (early) modern state. In the European context, the process of “state-building” in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries went hand in hand with the creation of a multitude of positions for *consiliari* and *ministri* at the various large and small courts of those who claimed the newly fashionable concept of “sovereign power” for themselves. These councilors and ministers were not only required to play an increasing role in the day-to-day management of human and material resources of an ever growing territory, they also faced a situation courtiers in previous times would most likely have found very hard to accept. Basic knowledge of economics, law and administrative practice were considered necessary qualifications, as impartiality and loyalty were the chief ethical requirements. Yet even the most qualified official was subject to transfer, promotion or demotion at any time. Gone were the days of strong personal ties between prince and courtier; Welcome to the Weberian rationalization of politics and to the bureaucratization of power! The contemporaries were very much conscious of these developments, as witnessed by the attention political writers such as Lipsius, Seckendorff and others devoted to the subject of the “ideal official.”¹

Meanwhile, half a world away, in Japan, a somewhat similar development took place. Here too, *daimyō*, regional rulers “just like our kings” in the words of one Western observer,² were accumulating unprecedented powers, styling themselves as legitimate bearers of public authority, and in the process developing impersonal state-like administrative

¹ For a brief synopsis of the continental European literature see Michael Stolleis, *Staat und Staatsräson in der frühen Neuzeit* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1990), pp. 197-207.

² Guido Gualtieri in 1586, as quoted in Peter Kapitza ed., *Japan in Europa* (München: Iudicium, 1990), p. 158.

structures. Eventually these autonomous domains would become part of a semi-centralized system that historians like to call an “early modern state,” the *bakuhan* system of Tokugawa Japan. Much ink has been spilled describing the process of turning a warrior aristocracy into a corps of administrators; most recently the focus was on what it took to “tame the samurai.”³ Terms derived from Western political theory are freely used in describing the set-up in Japan that we consider early modern and, it would seem, in most cases justifiably so. Just as in Europe, the efforts of qualified and diligent officials helped make the exercise of power over a given territory in Japan at once more complete and less personal. The degree of control that rulers of the best organized domains had over their territory made them contenders for the role of unifier, while their administrative mechanisms could (and did) serve as a blueprint for a nationwide structure. For all intents and purposes, it was this phenomenon that brought the age of Warring States to an end by 1600 and made a re-unification of Japan possible.

With the collapse of a traditional order the ethical restraints that had governed action of individuals (and provided the categorical framework for the legal system) before the advent of the *Sengoku* or “Warring States” period in mid-fifteenth century Japan tended to disappear. The political free-for-all that followed offered potential rewards that far outweighed any moralistic concerns on the part of the actors, most of whom were low-level provincial warriors. The breakup of the old political system vastly enhanced the opportunities of upward social mobility. The victors in such a power struggle had often acted with extreme disregard for traditional ethical norms in order to achieve their position. Yet, at the same time, they created a new set of norms and values that governed their actions. Self-reliance, trustworthiness, loyalty, but also shrewdness, cunning, and plain good fortune were highly regarded.

To the outsider, a society that rewards those who possess naked military power with authority to govern will look anarchical. Indeed, often the new rulers are also the gravediggers of the old order. However, for anyone inside such a system the quest for power made possible by the instability is also a quest for order, if only in order to solidify the position one has achieved. What looks like anarchy from a physical and

³ Eiko Ikegami, *The Taming of the Samurai* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

chronological distance might well appear to be a necessary process of re-ordering for those involved.

The new order that was being created in the domains of *Sengoku* Japan was by necessity based on the values and norms that had crystallized in the period of instability. These values and norms, then, formed the backbone of a new system, but it should be remembered that the new legal and administrative structure was also expressly designed to prevent any further “hostile takeover bids.” Consequently, it was probably necessary to negate some of the values that the creators of the new order had espoused in the process of building it. The new order, therefore, was both innovative and conservative at the same time. Depending on the amount of time that has passed since the collapse of the old order and the relative freshness of the historical memory of that previous system in the minds of the new rulers, such a situation often leads to the re-incorporation of many traditional norms, values, and concepts.

In the case of *Sengoku* Japan, that historical memory was not only relatively fresh, but the traditional (Confucian, for lack of a better term) value system was an integral part of a highly literate culture which any newcomer to the political arena was eager to mimic. Confucian doctrine combined ethical precepts with practical administration. Thus, in sketching the “ideal official” political theorists in Japan would conceivably have had a somewhat easier time than their European contemporaries. For the latter, the establishment of a new administrative structure meant a radically new departure. In other words, building a bureaucracy and supplying a system of ethics for civil servants was nothing new, even though the political order that this bureaucracy was designed to uphold was of a very recent vintage indeed.

Most *Sengoku daimyō* had a smattering of, admittedly sometimes ill-digested, Confucian wisdom that they were trying to apply to the realities of war-torn Japan. Furthermore, in a very theoretical sense the old order did still exist, since all legitimacy was ultimately derived from the emperor. But how does one reconcile that idea with the reality of having achieved one’s rightful position thanks to one’s own military might?

Indeed by implicitly interpreting the breakdown of the old order and the creation of a new one as just a process of re-ordering, any player on the political scene could openly utilize the expertise of representatives of the old order without compromising his image as a self-made “new man.” By the same token, stressing the fact that one had come to power thanks to

one's ability and initiative in unstable times did not seem to imply a lack of legitimacy.

The most important question any newly minted *daimyō* faced was how to eliminate any threat to his authority from inside his domain, most notably from amongst those closest to him. Having benefited from what contemporary observers called "*gekokujō*," or "the lower overthrowing the upper," any *daimyō* was trying very hard not to fall victim to the same dynamic.

This was true of every *daimyō*. However, the focus of this paper will be the house of Takeda, which ruled a considerable part of eastern Japan, from their home base in Kai province (present-day Yamanashi prefecture) for most of the sixteenth century. The exploits of Takeda Shingen (1521-73), his son and successor Katsuyori (1546-82), and their allies and vassals were immortalized in the "*Kōyō Gunkan*," or "Mirror of the Illustrious Warriors of Kai." This chronicle of the house of Takeda was written and published in the first half of the seventeenth century, some 50 years after the destruction of the Takeda forces at the hands of the founding father of the new order, Tokugawa Ieyasu.⁴ It is a valuable source of information not only about the Takeda and their administration, but also about what was considered an exemplary administrative system in the eyes of "early modern bureaucrats." Needless to say, the *Kōyō Gunkan* provides an often idealized and romanticized picture of war-torn Japan, and much of the information is anecdotal and thus neither exhaustive nor statistically representative. However, it should provide a valuable glimpse into ethical and administrative standards required of the sometimes none too civil but hopefully always obedient servants of *Sengoku* and, by extension, early Tokugawa Japan. What ethical norms governed their actions and what were these norms based on?

Michael Stolleis has outlined several political functions of an ethical system in an essay on the fundamentals of civil service ethics.⁵ Such

⁴ The text of the *Kōyō Gunkan* appears to have been completed by 1621, with the first known print appearing in 1656. For the history of the document see Reinhard Zöllner, "Die Takeda als Feudalherren in Kai no Kuni im Spiegel des *Kōyō Gunkan*," *Japan von Aids bis Zen*, eds. Eva Bachmayer, Wolfgang Herbert and Sepp Linhart, vol. 1 (Wien: Institut für Japanologie der Universität Wien 1991).

⁵ Stolleis, *Staat und Staatsräson in der frühen Neuzeit*, p. 199.

a system of ethics will be effective where other mechanisms of control fail, it enhances the stability of the political system, it justifies the demand for additional sacrifices in times of crises, and it prevents political adversaries from gaining power. Though Stolleis' thesis is based exclusively on continental European data, it would appear that traditional Confucian doctrine has similar characteristics. One key element in such a construct has to be the concept of loyalty, since no early modern ruler could hope to govern around or against a rebellious bureaucratic apparatus. Two considerations are therefore crucial in the recruiting process of officials, namely competence on the one hand and predictable behavior towards the holder of political power, i.e. loyalty, on the other.

With regard to loyalty, it should come as no surprise that old concepts of a vassal's fealty to the lord were apparently frequently utilized in *Sengoku* Japan, and the Takeda are no exception. The realities of civil war had changed the character of lord-vassal relationship over the course of the 15th and 16th centuries. Traditional political philosophy had always viewed it in strictly hierarchical terms, there was no implied equality between the lord and vassal, and unlike their European counterparts they were not considered partners in a contractual relationship. In fact, this had been a relationship linking individuals of different status. The bond it provided was strong and theoretically immutable, so that a vassal who failed to fulfill his obligations was likely to be stigmatized. The lofty ideals of selfless service and self-sacrifice for the lord remained firmly in place, if contemporary literature is any indication, but they ceased to be the accepted norm for action. Instead, we read of individuals who joined someone's service for purely pragmatic reasons, choosing a lord because of his perceived economic position and military reputation, regardless of formal status. A relationship thus based on expediency proved to be rather easily dissolvable, and the loyalty of the vassal had to be constantly secured by a steady stream of rewards, unless he should find another employer.

The Takeda, like most other warlords of *Sengoku* Japan frequently utilized the instrument of oath-taking to reinforce the concept of immutability of a vassal's bond to his lord. Important vassals as well as family members swore an oath of fealty on the two most important family treasures, a white flag with a red sun ball, and a suit of armor known as "The Shield-less," (*Tatenashi*) both reputedly belonging to Minamoto

Yoriyoshi, a direct ancestor of the Takeda.⁶ The formula, “As the Exalted Flag and the Shield-less be my witness,”⁷ leaves little doubt that the oath sworn in such a manner created a strong personal bond between lord and vassal. On the occasion of succession to the headship of the house, the *daimyō* himself swore on those family heirlooms. It appears, however, that swearing this rather old-fashioned oath was the prerogative of very few who entered the service of the Takeda, and that it was considered mostly a family affair.

Another more common form of oath-taking in medieval Japan involved invoking the wrath of a multitude of *kami*, Buddhas, and Bodhisattvas should the oath be broken. Taken usually at a Shinto shrine or Buddhist temple, such oaths could conceivably be tailored to the current political situation and thus could provide a vehicle of extracting promises of loyalty from people who would not enjoy a strong personal bond with the *daimyō*. Takeda Shingen was not one to take chances, he let even his nephew Nobutoyo swear in 1567:

Item: Not to break any of the promises made previously.

Item: Not to contemplate treason and rebellion while serving Lord Shingen.

Item: Not to reach an agreement with enemies, such as Nagao Terutora,⁸ no matter what the promised reward will be.

Item: To serve and protect Lord Shingen without fail, even if the warriors of Kai, Shinano, and western Kōzuke provinces should plan rebellion.

⁶ According to legend, he received the flag from emperor Go-Reizei (r. 1045-1068), and bequeathed it and the suit of armor to his third son Shinra Saburō, the founder of the Takeda line.

⁷ *Mihata tatenashi mo shōran are*. For example see *Kōyō Gunkan*, vol. 2, bk. 30, p. 103. The most complete published version of the text is Hattori Harunori and Isogai Masayoshi, eds. *Kōyō Gunkan*, 3 vols., *Sengoku Shiryō Sōsho*, vols. 3-5 (Tokyo: Jimbutsu Ōraisha, 1965). In the following, quotations from the text will be referenced as KYGK followed by the volume in the modern edition, the book in the original, and the page number.

⁸ Uesugi Kenshin of Echigo province, Shingen’s most important enemy at the time.

Item: Never to make common cause with those from inside the house who plan evil against the province of Kai or its ruler, or who speak in a cowardly fashion.⁹

After this follows a long list of deities whose wrath Nobutoyo would incur should he break the oath, and a sneak preview of what that wrath might bring. Invocation of the supernatural was commonplace in such oaths, and many warriors appear to have been deeply religious. But as arule religious beliefs rarely seem to provide the basis for any moralistic concerns and ethical guidelines were not expressed in religious terms. The reason for this is not the absence of a single religious doctrine capable of acting as a ubiquitous moral arbiter in medieval Japan. Rather, it appears that the inherent dangers and insecurity of the *Sengoku* period created a fatalistic attitude in people. In such a setting, religious beliefs now became a less practical affair; observances were not thought of as effective means to influence reality.

The general understanding that emerges from a close reading of the records was that if one did what had to be done with a pure heart the gods, Buddhas, and Bodhisattvas would be favorably inclined to one's person. However, this did not imply that a specific act of worship would necessarily bring a desired result. Consequently, religious beliefs and the day-to-day affairs a warrior had to attend to, be it military or administrative tasks, were interconnected only in a very general sense. Religion in this context could not very well provide moral guidelines to specific actions. The realities of the times were such that what needed to be done had to happen at any cost. Some of the most powerful and ruthless *daimyō* were devout Buddhists, most notably Uesugi Kenshin, Takeda Shingen, and Hōjō Soun, but their actions made very clear that they were anything but pacifists. In other words, religious convictions had very little to do with practical actions, and religious doctrine did as a rule not provide moral and ethical guidelines for the behavior of those in power and of those trying to take this power from them. This is not to say that warriors were not spiritual people, but their spirituality rarely seemed to inform their actions.

⁹ For the full text see *Kōfu Shi, Shi Shiryō hen*, vol. 1 (Kōfu: Kōfu shi yakusho, 1980), p. 660 (document 441). Curiously, the exact same text was used on several different occasions. See Reinhard Zöllner, *Die Ludowinger und die Takeda* (Bonn: Verlag Dieter Born, 1995), pp. 236-238.

The documents that come closest to providing a “workable” realistic ethical guideline for the upper echelons of warrior society in *Sengoku* Japan are the so-called “House Rules” (*kakun*). Guidebooks written by the head of a powerful household to his heir apparent, these documents constitute perhaps the best primary source material on the question of warrior ethics in medieval Japan. Contemporary chroniclers appear to have made little distinction between these “House Rules” and the so-called “House Laws” (*kahō*), often treating them as closely related documents. However, only the latter had legislative character, whereas the former were usually personal documents directed to an identifiable individual addressee. Therefore, they provide valuable information about the value system of warrior society and the ethical norms that guided the behavior of its political actors. The authors of *kakun* wasted very little ink on discussions of the “true warrior spirit,” deciding instead to concentrate on the nitty-gritty details of everyday administrative tasks, from disaster prevention to resource management. No amount of fatalism could blind the upper echelons of warrior society to the fact that to neglect rational calculation and planning for the future was to invite disaster.

The “House Rules” of the Takeda form the second volume of the *Kōyō Gunkan*. This *kakun* is actually a lengthy letter of instruction written by Shingen’s brother for the benefit of his son, the same Nobutoyo who was later to swear the oath we encountered previously. The 99 articles of this document seem to cover every imaginable topic that was of significance for a future member of the of the warrior elite of Kai. Furthermore, the advice to young Nobutoyo from his father is virtually littered with quotes from the *Lunyu* (Analects). Naturally, service to the lord is of utmost importance:

In the service of the lord, there shall never be any treachery.

The *Lunyu* says, “One has to be there when it is built, and one has to be there when it falls.”

It also says, “Devote your life to the service of the prince.”¹⁰

As for the lord, whichever assignment you might receive from him, don’t complain.

¹⁰ Art. 1, KYGK 1, 2, p. 57. The first quote is from *Lunyu* iv, 15. See James Legge, trans., *Chinese Classics*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893), p. 167, for the original text and a somewhat different translation. The quote appears to have been taken somewhat out of context. The second quote is from *Lunyu* i, 7, Legge, *Chinese Classics*, p. 140.

It is said: The king might be lacking as king, but the minister may never be lacking as minister.¹¹

While in service, never be the slightest bit late.

The *Lunyu* says, “Upon receiving the lord's command, don't wait for the palanquin.”¹²

Along with the ubiquitous admonitions to show bravery on the battlefield, to cherish the art of war and to treat one's vassals justly, some at first glance less pragmatic topics are given prominence as well:

Never be unfilial towards your father and mother.

The *Lunyu* says, “It is good to exert oneself for one's father and mother.”¹³

Never make light of your older and younger brothers.

In the *Houhanshu*¹⁴ we read: Older and younger brother are like right and left hand.¹⁵

Never be negligent in your studies.

The *Lunyu* says, “Studying without thinking is dishonest. Thinking without studying is dangerous.”¹⁶

The author of these lines, presumably Shingen's younger brother Takeda Nobushige (1525-1561), tries very hard to display great familiarity with the Chinese classics, quoting verbatim, if not always correctly, not only from the *Lunyu* but also from a number of other more obscure works.

It appears that traditional Confucian doctrine¹⁷ provided sufficient theoretical underpinnings for the concept of loyalty in mid-sixteenth century Japan and that no new and further reaching constructs were required, at least as far as the Takeda was concerned. The fact that the document remained in print (as part of the *Kōyō Gunkan*) throughout the early

¹¹ Art. 32, KYGK 1, 2, p. 66.

¹² Art. 69, KYGK 1, 2, p. 76. Quote from *Lunyu* x, 13; Legge, *Chinese Classics*, p. 235.

¹³ Art. 6, KYGK 1, 2, p. 58. Quote from *Lunyu* i, 7; Legge, *Chinese Classics*, p. 140.

¹⁴ *Chronicle of the Later Han Dynasty*, comp. Fan Ye (398-445) from the state of Song (Northern and Southern Dynasties Period).

¹⁵ Art. 7, KYGK 1, 2, p. 59.

¹⁶ Art. 11, KYGK 1, 2, p. 60. Quote from *Lunyu* II, 15; Legge, *Chinese Classics*, p. 150.

¹⁷ No reference to Neo-Confucian doctrine is made in the “House Rules.”

modern, Tokugawa period further underlines the usefulness of an old doctrine for a new order. The biggest problem in ensuring the loyalty of a retainer was apparently not to find a new theory of obedience, but to maintain the usefulness of vassals as fighting men while at the same time reducing their independence. For these purposes, rehashed Confucian doctrine seemed sufficient.

At any rate, the most pronounced ethical imperative to emerge from the pages of the Takeda House Rules is based on wisdom derived from a work very close to every warrior's heart:

Always avoid falsehood.¹⁸

The *Sunzi*¹⁹ says, "Even if integrity might not yield an immediate favor, in the end one's patience will be rewarded." But doesn't in military strategy everything depend on the right moment? Tell your descendants to cherish the truth and to weed out falsehood.

At times it appears as if the greatest concern of the author of these House Rules was the lack of any ethical standards, and as a result he tried to provide yardsticks for just about anything. Perhaps the age-old adage of "today's youth is much wanting in manners" was partly to blame for this, but the concerns were real. The recipient of this letter was expected to play a leading role in warrior society; he had to behave in an exemplary fashion, trying to conform to the medieval ideal of a warrior on one hand while coping with the tasks of day-to-day administration on the other. Nobutoyo was preparing to become a vassal of Shingen's and a leading member of the powerful military machine and the vast administrative apparatus of the Takeda domain. There he would be sure to face many pressures that came with being a relative, a vassal and an official of the lord.

The bureaucratic apparatus of a domain of the size of Takeda Shingen's was by necessity quite specialized and relatively sophisticated. Usually a distinction between relatives of the Takeda and other vassals was made, as is also exemplified in the practice of oath-taking described earlier. According to Book 27 of the *Kōyō Gunkan*, a senior vassal once explained the link between social stratification and the Takeda administration in the following words:

¹⁸ Art. 5, KYGK 1, 2, p. 58.

¹⁹ *Classic of the Art of War*, written by Sun Wu during the Warring States period (403-221 B.C.).

Man has a head up above, hands in the middle, and feet down below. Thus there exists a high, a middle, and a low. Now man is the greatest of all living things. Therefore he is an example [for how things are ordered]. Heaven grants to some abundance and to others scarcity, thus there exist those above, those below, and those in the middle. Because of that those below ask those above and those in the middle [for help], and receive grace in return to make a living. Among the [manifestations of] grace, grants of land are the highest. As a result, the greatest of those who are the greatest of all living things becomes the ruler who gives land to everybody, high middle, and low, without distinction. All those upper, middle and lower people band together and serve the ruler. However, few of those men belong to the upper and middle [classes], taken together they are called officials. The one who gathers those officials together, grants them sustenance and showers them with benevolence is called the prince, which is the ruler. From the prince the few receive land and become landowners. They have to serve [the ruler] lest they forfeit their land. This service can take eight different forms. First there are messengers, second—guardsmen, third—attendants, fourth—suppliers and caterers, fifth—engineers, sixth—officers, seventh—judges, and eighth—the military. Who serves well will receive additional land, who fails will not.²⁰

It is clear from this passage, which ostensibly was written in 1547, that the author was operating in a categorical framework informed by Confucian doctrine. He seems to be mostly concerned with the perceived reciprocity of service and land grant. This reciprocity, however, does by no means imply an equal standing of the parties entering such a relationship; the distinction between those above and those below is considered a preexisting condition. Of course the relationship between the giver and the recipient of “grace” is a personal one. Its continued validity will be evaluated on an individual basis, and it is conceived of as a relationship of vassalage, not as one of employment. Yet the passage lists obligations besides military service, indicating a growing differentiation in the responsibilities of vassals.

²⁰ KYGK 2, 27, pp. 40-41.

One would expect, therefore, a heavy emphasis in the records on the qualifications of officials and on their competence in fulfilling their assigned tasks. Indeed, article 38 of the “House Rules” states:

If a man is employed in service, he should be given a post that is in accordance with his abilities.

There is an old saying: A good carpenter does not throw away timber, a general does not abandon his soldiers.²¹

A good official in Shingen’s service should ideally have what European writers would have called *eruditio practica*, i.e. a wide-ranging knowledge of various matters, civil as well as military. There appears in the “House Rules” a passage that could be interpreted as expressing apprehension regarding a potential employee’s overly specific qualifications:

Although a man might appear knowledgeable, one must seriously think before employing him.

There is an old saying: As you covet another cup of sake, you lose a full boatload of fish.²²

It is competence, then, that sets the good official and the *daimyō* himself apart from those below him and from his deposed predecessors. Such a political philosophy fit the requirements of an emerging political elite of warriors in late medieval Japan very well, despite, or perhaps because of, the fact that it had lain in the heart of the old order as well. As is often the case with great upheavals and periods of change in history, those who engineered the change were wont to stress the elements of historical continuity.

What then, were the chief requirements for officials in the service of the Takeda and how were they justified? First and foremost it is worth noting that in virtually all cases where service in the Takeda domain is described in contemporary and near contemporary documents, such service is treated as a vassal’s duty. The personal aspect of the relationship between the ruler and the official in question is very frequently stressed. Competence is important, but anecdotal evidence suggests that an in-practice loyalty was the key factor for employment and retention.

Over the course of the late sixteenth century the Takeda and many other *daimyō* became territorial rulers presiding over a sophisticated administrative mechanism that was functionally a civil service bureaucracy.

²¹ KYGK 1, 2, p. 68.

²² Art. 90, KYGK 1, 2, p. 80.

Yet the individuals staffing it were first and foremost vassals of the lord. The growing administrative needs made it possible for them (and desirable for the ruler) to show their obedience by serving well wherever they were assigned. Was such an official an “early modern civil servant?” This author would be inclined to characterize him rather as an obedient servant fulfilling civil service functions.

By contrast, in Europe where the theory of medieval vassalage assumed two equal (i.e. free and arms-bearing) individuals, demands for absolute loyalty to the ruler could not be explained within the categorical framework of a lord-vassal relationship. The development of the early modern state required the members of its civil service to be absolutely loyal to their sovereign state, and to their sovereign as representative of that state. Here the civil servant had to be obedient in a way the medieval vassal had not been. In Japan, on the other hand, the pre-existing concept of a vassal’s absolute obedience to his lord had by necessity been broadened to include civil service tasks. Such a broadening did not initially require the formulation of new ethical concepts, although later Tokugawa period philosophers would touch upon the subject in the course of redefining the warrior as an administrator.

Are the two cases comparable at all? Perhaps only in so far as one keeps in mind the admonition of the sage:

The noble man observes without comparing, the common man compares without observing.²³

²³ *Lunyu* ii, 14; Legge, *Chinese Classics*, p. 150.

**THE FARCE OF THE “GREAT RUSSIAN SALVATION TOUR”:
THE LEGACY OF AUM SHINRIKYO IN MOTHER RUSSIA**

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The Japanese religious sect, Aum Shinrikyo, and its leader, Asahara Shoko, gained worldwide notoriety at the time of the famous Tokyo sarin gas incident on the Tokyo subways in March, 1995 when Aum terrorists killed twelve innocent commuters and injured thousands more. The Japanese media overwhelmed the public with its coverage of Aum’s activities in Japan, where the sect never had more than ten thousand members, but made little mention of Aum’s initially surprisingly successful bid to transport its movement to Russia, where it is said to have gained as many as thirty to forty thousand adherents.¹

Aum Shinrikyo’s experience in Russia is worthy of examination for two principal reasons. First is the fact that many thousands of Russians expressed genuine interest in a new Japanese religious movement and in the persona and supposed powers of a Japanese mystic in a country that had never heretofore expressed much interest in Japanese religion. The second factor involves the more sinister efforts by Aum leaders to acquire Russian weapons, military equipment and know-how to produce a crude nuclear weapon. Aum enjoyed immense support in Russia in 1992-93, but its sudden decline thereafter was as rapid as its ascent.

Aum Shinrikyo in Japan

Aum Shinrikyo has a short infamous history in Japan. When Asahara Shoko (birth name: Matsumoto Chizuo) founded Aum in the early 1980s, there was little to distinguish it from many of the so-called “new new religions” (*shinshin shukyo*) that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s.

¹ Oki Kasha, “Doko e iku shinja sanmannin?” [What will become of the thirty thousand believers], *AERA* (May 1995), p. 35. The source for this figure is the chief Russian security office, the former KGB. Another scholar, Yulia Mikhailova, puts the figure at 40,000. See also Ian Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), p. 275.

These religions appealed to a wide variety of younger Japanese, including young professionals, and middle-aged women who were disillusioned with or felt uncomfortable in Japan's highly materialistic society during an economic boom period. Aum became famous for its isolation and its killing of approximately 30 people.

The centerpiece of Aum has always been the personality and teachings of Asahara himself. Asahara taught that much of the misery that we experience in life is due to the corrupt nature of the human world. Living in society means that we absorb much of its negative karma and impulses that causes us great suffering not only in life, but in death as well. Asahara promised followers that he could intervene on their behalf by personally absorbing their bad karma and giving them in turn transcendent powers through a variety of very costly initiation ceremonies. Followers would live strong and joyful lives and would have many extraordinary powers including the ability to survive a nuclear war.

Aum attracted up to 10,000 members in Japan including about 1000-1200 *shukke-sha* (followers who renounced society and lived in Aum communes). Aum and Asahara developed an increasingly paranoid view of society. Aum isolated itself from society and began to arm itself for a possible confrontation with society in the early 1990s.

Aum in Russia

Aum Shinrikyo's spectacular yet exceptionally brief plunge into Russian society in the early 1990s mirrors its meteoric rise and fall in Japan. Asahara and Aum attracted considerable media attention, access to several key political figures, and a rapid rise in membership in 1992 and 1993, but, as in Japan, it ran into trouble when some of the families of Russian Aum members who had renounced the world to join the religion, formed a pressure group to oppose Aum as a distinct threat to Russian society. Strong pressure and successful court action led to the revocation of Aum's legal registration as a religious organization in 1994 and a police raid on one of Aum's Moscow centers on March 15, 1995, just days before Aum's fateful subway attack in Tokyo. Ian Reader aptly reflects that:

Aum's history in Russia was a troubled one in which the movement was beset by legal problems and in which, despite its initial smooth entry aided by bureaucrats and officials, it fell foul of the courts and official bodies. Again, the patterns of conflict paralleled those it had faced in Japan and centered on its

demanding system of world renunciation and severing ties with one's family.²

Russia was Aum's sole success in its efforts to gain an overseas base. Aum also set up offices in the United States and Germany and sought to build a center in Sri Lanka in 1991, but these efforts met with very little success.

Asahara made three trips to Russia in 1992-93 accompanied by as many as 270 faithful from Japan on chartered Aerflot jets.³ Aum ran a fully staffed main headquarters in Moscow and had eleven branches outside of Moscow and at least seven inside of Moscow.⁴ Asahara and other Aum leaders were initially well received by various Russian leaders as well as by many curious Russian citizens. Asahara bought extensive blocks of time on Russian television and radio and broadcast many of Asahara's speeches and workshops throughout Russia as well as regular broadcasts to Japan beamed via Vladivostok. It is also known that Aum clandestinely bought a Russian military helicopter and other equipment from the Russian black market, but failed in its attempt to acquire materials for nuclear weapons.

Aum media reports that Asahara first visited Russia in March of 1992 with a large band of supporters from Japan in response to a November 1991 invitation from the Russian Republic.⁵ Asahara gave lectures at Moscow University and six other universities,⁶ made several appearances on Russian television and radio, addressed a few groups of several thousand Russians at "initiation ceremonies," and met with a number of influential Russian politicians.

² Reader, *Religious Violence*, p. 177.

³ A main source for this section is the English-language Aum publication, *Monthly Truth* [hereafter abbreviated as MT] 11 (January 1994).

⁴ Some of the other Aum headquarters in Russia were located in St. Petersburg, Kazan, Perm, Vorkuta, Tyumen, Samara, Vladivostok, Elista, and Vladikavkaz. Source: "Global Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction: A Case Study on the Aum Shinrikyo," US Senate Government Affairs Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, 31 October 1995, Staff Statement, p. 1.

⁵ MT 11, p. 12.

⁶ Oki, "Doko e iku shinja sanmannin?," p. 35.

Why Did Aum Appeal To So Many Russians?

The fact that thirty thousand or more citizens of a country with a long and very strong Christian tradition would join a movement like Aum Shinrikyo has puzzled many writers in the West, but a closer look at economic and social conditions in Russia in the early-to-mid 1990s might provide some explanations.

Aum credits its radio and television broadcasts as well as the charisma of Asahara and the “greatness” of his teachings for its initial successes. Endorsements of Aum by Russian members indicate that an overwhelming number of them first heard of Aum through the media. Aum also credits its success to the disruption of life in Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union. An Aum publication in 1995 declared that so many Russians were “suffering mentally from the confusion of the collapse of Communism” that they could not resist the “promise of true happiness” that they found in the “practices and teachings of Aum Shinrikyo.”⁷

Anybody walking the streets of Moscow and St. Petersburg during this period could see isolated examples of new wealth—a fancy car or a new boutique—but the main sight was a sense of sadness in the eyes of most Russians. The fall of Communism had led to hyper-inflation where the value of the Russian ruble fell from a few rubles to the dollar to five thousand to the dollar by mid-1996. People on fixed salaries and pensions saw their livelihoods destroyed.⁸ A parallel breakdown in authority led to increased anxiety and considerable criminal activity. A dysfunctional political system, economic collapse, massive corruption, infectious diseases and a declining population had destroyed Russia’s power and spirit.

Dr. Vladimir Yeryomin, Executive Secretary of the Union of Japanologists of Russia, Institute of Oriental Studies in Moscow, presented a Russian perspective to John McFarlane, who participated in the official Australian investigation of Aum in Western Australia.⁹ Yeryomin portrays

⁷ MT 11, p. 15.

⁸ I talked to one retired government functionary who had worked and saved all her life and had retired with what had initially been a sufficient pension, but inflation ravaged her savings account and the stamp used to mail her monthly pension was greater than the payment inside.

⁹ John McFarlane, Record of Discussion with Vladimir Yeryomin, Executive Secretary of the Union of Japanologists of Russia, Institute of Oriental Studies, at the Australian Embassy, Moscow on 12/13 July 1995.

Russia as a nation and society in chaos, having suffered the acute trauma of a sudden shift from a state that was materialistic, autocratic and officially atheistic to one that was increasingly chaotic, anarchic and entrepreneurial in nature. Both the personal and national identity of the ordinary Russian was under severe challenge and the nation had become split by a series of secessionist elements and overpowered by criminal gangs. The average Russian had become frightened, confused, and without hope. One way to cope with this chaos and sense of hopelessness was a resurgence of a long-suppressed spiritualism, which at times exhibited it self in extreme forms.¹⁰

Russian churches I visited on Sundays in 1996 were packed with crowds of generally elderly Russians. Younger Russians grew up under a Soviet regime that strongly discouraged and restricted religious practices. Reports in the Russian media in 1996 indicated that younger Russians, like their counterparts in Japan, rarely took part in traditional Christian activities, but were seeking a new sense of spirituality.

Russians have often turned to mystics during periods of stressful transition. All students of Russian history are aware of the powerful presence of Rasputin¹¹ in the years prior to the Russian Revolution. Rasputin, the “mystic from the East,” convinced many members of the royal family of his faith-healing powers. In recent years other “gurus” have drawn even bigger audiences in Russia and eastern Europe. A few years ago a faith healer, Anatoly Kashpirovsky, drew tens of millions of viewers in Russia when he promised to perform a live operation on a woman using his healing powers to keep her out of pain. Shortly before his fall, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev welcomed Korean Unification Church leader

As of summer 2001, Mr. McFarlane was Executive Director of the Australian Member Committee of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (AUS-CSCAP) at the Strategic and Defense Studies Centre, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australia National University, Canberra, Australia. This writer wishes to thank Mr. McFarlane for providing a copy of the 1995 report. Mr. McFarlane stipulates that reference may be made to the report, but direct quotes are not allowed.

¹⁰ McFarlane, Record of Discussion, p. 7.

¹¹ It is probably not a coincidence that Asahara’s image as reproduced in Russian-language pamphlets was not that of a portly robed Asian mystic, but that of a stripped, beaten Christ wearing a crown of thorns and hanging from a cross while also bearing a striking resemblance to Rasputin.

Sun Myung Moon to the Kremlin and allowed “Moonies” to perform a ritual in a Kremlin Cathedral. Several fundamentalist churches from the United States have had success when sending missionaries to Russia. Indeed, one scholar described the tremendous surge of interest in religious movements in Russia after the collapse of the national ideology, communism, as a veritable “rush hour of the gods,” thus using a memorable phrase used in postwar Japan to describe the sudden upsurge of many new religious movements.¹² Asahara was only one in a parade of foreign religious leaders and “mystics” that met with some degree of success in Russia since the mid-1980s.

Aum’s philosophy includes the idea that a true believer can rise above his current state of misery and become a virtual super-human with the physical strength to overcome all limitations and the wisdom to achieve great success in life and to look into the future. Dr. Yeryomin stresses that Aum’s challenging, disciplined, entrepreneurial and esoteric philosophy was appealing to Russians searching for an answer to the complexities, contradictions and downturns of Russian life.¹³ Aum’s promises to uplift its followers from the misery of contemporary Russia had its appeal.

Aum’s connections with Japan also had some appeal. Japan in 2001 had endured a decade-long recession and was no longer the economic envy of much of the world, but in 1992 Japan was highly regarded as a wealthy and dynamic nation. The fact that Aum is a Japanese organization enhanced its appeal and it is possible that some Russians felt that if they somehow became associated with a wealthy Japanese movement, perhaps they could share in this prosperity. Dr. Yeryomin stresses that Aum deliberately employed its “Japaneseness” to attract members, implying that members could learn a lot about Japan through Aum and, by inference, how to become wealthy and powerful like so many Japanese.¹⁴ Ian Reader supports this notion, observing that Aum may well also have attracted some followers, amongst whom were a considerable number of people who had lost their jobs in the economic upheavals of the period or who were unemployed postgraduates, because it was Japanese and hence associated in people’s minds with the potential for economic advancement.¹⁵

¹² Reader, *Religious Violence*, p. 176.

¹³ McFarlane, Record of Discussion, p. 7.

¹⁴ McFarlane, Record of Discussion, p. 7.

¹⁵ Reader, *Religious Violence*, p. 176.

There were other times when Aum cleverly used a humanitarian cover to convey the idea that it is a philanthropic organization that would do much to help the poor and aged of Russia and that any desperate Russian could find companionship, food, and comfort inside an Aum commune. With so many citizens in such distress and with no governmental agency or other humanitarian group to help them during the collapse of the Soviet system that had provided a sense of security to many Russians, Aum may have appeared to be a lifeline to survival for some of its recruits.

It appears that although Asahara and Aum appealed to a variety of disaffected groups in Russia, one of the prime targets was students. One source, citing Russian press reports, insists that a majority of Russian Aum members were disaffected university students.¹⁶ Aum gained access to several elite Russian universities by providing generous amounts of computer hardware and technical training to schools that could not afford computers and whose personnel had fallen behind in their technical training.

Asahara's appeal to students or recent graduates possibly stems from his many speeches at leading Russian universities, where he was a welcome guest because of Aum's generous contributions of computers and even cash. His talks, using a blend of pseudo-science and his own religious beliefs, drew large audiences. One of his talks, "How do Mental Illusions Occur?", focused on the lack of brain wave activity in enlightened beings such as himself, the Buddha and Jesus. Asahara tried to convince his audience that the way to perfect enlightenment is a complete transformation of personality because the changed person's once normally high brain activity would become calm:

My EEG record shows that my brain waves have a frequency below 0.05 hertz. Doctors say that it is an inconceivable phenomenon that I am alive and talking to you today. They say that I should be dead. But this is the state in which the primary projection of the deepest level of consciousness manifests in this world most accurately. In other words, I have the cleanest mirror. This state is described in Buddhist texts as "the state of a Buddha who has attained mirror-like wisdom..." I am leading a regular

¹⁶ "Global Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction," Staff Statement, p. 2.

life but deeper than what is normally considered deep sleep. This sense of calm is only found in Buddhas.¹⁷

It is also clear that some professionals were attracted to Aum for reasons that were not at all religious, including a number of desperate musicians seeking a way to make a living. Statements by Russian converts in Aum publications indicate that a Russian orchestra organized by Aum, “Chyren” (Sanskrit for “divine offering”), drew a lot of favorable attention from Russians. According to the Japanese news weekly *AERA*, Aum offered to pay up to \$US 1000 a month to skilled Russian musicians to join its new orchestra. A thousand dollars a month was a very high salary for a Russian musician and many rushed to audition for Chyren.¹⁸ The new orchestra played Aum-derived “Astral music” as well as more traditional fare at Aum convocations and on television and radio, but it collapsed quickly when Aum itself lost its hold in Russia. At first Asahara paid the musicians quite well, but shortly thereafter the flow of money ceased, in effect terminating their employment with Aum.

Aum offered other inducements to attract younger Russians. One scheme was to advertise on computer bulletin boards for young people who would be trained as Japanese interpreters and who would be paid \$1,000 per month for their services.¹⁹

Aum’s Shallow Roots in Russia

One must question the actual strength of Aum Shinrikyo in Russia despite its claims of tens of thousands of members. True conversion to another religion requires more than just signing one’s name to a piece of paper and attending a couple of meetings. Aum as a religion renounces society and teaches that one can only transform oneself through renunciation and active practice. The over 1,100 Aum *shukke-sha* in Japan gave it a somewhat strong membership base, but conflicting reports put the number of “monks” in Russia at only 50 or 170, a tiny fraction of the claimed membership.

Such a small core membership indicates that although Aum made a successful entry on the Russian stage, it failed to develop a strong base in its three years there. Aum in Russia seems to have been little more than a

¹⁷ MT 12 (February 1994), p. 26.

¹⁸ Oki, “Doko e iku shinja sanmannin?”, pp. 35-36.

¹⁹ McFarlane, Record of Discussion, p. 11.

passing fad that quickly disappeared except for a small handful of members who seriously sought to devote themselves to Asahara's teachings. The experience of one of Aum's Russian renunciants (*shukke-sha*), Marina Romandina, is recounted in Kaplan and Marshall's *The Cult at the End of the World*.²⁰

Marina was an eighteen-year-old student taking time off from a Moscow area music college when she first encountered Aum in 1993. She found Asahara's teachings to be so fascinating and stimulating that she impulsively decided to become a *shukke-sha*. She shaved off her hair, devoured books by Asahara, and moved into an Aum commune in Moscow. She repeated the vow, "I am happy to join Aum. I will always follow the guru. I will become a renunciant" every day. There were two three-hour breaks for sleep and a ritual called "sacrificing food to the guru." "We had to eat until we felt sick. This was to make us understand that food caused pain. Anyone who threw up had to eat their own vomit."

Marina gradually suspected that there was more to Aum's daily regimen of two meals of macaroni and porridge. She remembers feeling strange after each meal. "After eating, I always felt sleepy and had vivid dreams." She suspected that she was being drugged. Then there were the pills. "Every month we were given a package of small yellow tablets called "sattva vitamins." We took one every day. Afterwards, I'd feel so lethargic. I couldn't think....I didn't want to think." She has reason to believe that the vitamins were a type of prescription tranquilizer called Fenozepan.

Life in the Moscow Aum community center deteriorated rapidly. Russian Aum members suffered from chronic health problems. "Just about everyone was suffering from some kind of neurosis. *Shukke-sha* beat each other up and women quarreled the whole time. There was a lot of talk of suicide." Life in a supposedly utopian commune had become pure hell. "It was hard for me to think rationally. Nobody was in control of themselves anymore. Many of us had high temperatures and allergies. My throat ached and my eyes watered." When Marina began smelling strange chemical odors and getting terrible headaches, she made a successful escape.

Marina survived her encounter with Aum, but others were not so lucky. A young male member hung himself from a tree branch in a

²⁰ David E. Kaplan and Andrew Marshall, *The Cult at the End of the World: The Incredible Story of Aum* (London: Arrow Books, 1996), pp. 195-198.

Moscow park without any explanation. A thirteen-year-old who had joined with his mother jumped to his death from a balcony of a Moscow apartment after endless taunts from other *shukke-sha* who criticized his “lack” of spiritual progress. A few other former Aum Russians simply disappeared.

When stories such as Marina’s became known, family members of many Aum members became very concerned. Some of these families, as early as late 1992, joined together and, under the leadership of a Russian orthodox priest, initiated a civil law suit against Aum.²¹ Some families enlisted the help of an organization known as the Committee for the Protection of Youth from Totalitarian Religions, which had campaigned against a variety of other new/non-orthodox religious movements in Russia. The suits bore fruit in the summer of 1994 when Russia’s Ministry of Justice annulled the registration of the Russian branch of Aum on technicalities having to do with the registration procedure itself. A few weeks later Aum was re-registered by the Moscow Department of Justice as “Moscow’s Aum Religious Association.”

Penal suits demanding damages began bearing fruit by 1995. On March 15, 1995 police arrived at one of Aum’s Moscow-area centers and confiscated property to be used to reimburse the families who had won a civil suit against Asahara’s band. After the Tokyo gas incident, President Yeltsin publicly ordered Russia’s Prosecutor General, the Federal Security Service, and the Commission for Religious Organizations to scrutinize Aum’s activities with great care. Soon thereafter the Russian court that had been hearing the lawsuit banned all of Aum’s activities in Russia. The court charged that Aum was inflicting great harm on young Russians and criticized domestic radio and television that had broadcast Aum propaganda. The court ordered Aum to pay the defendants 20 billion rubles (four million dollars), confiscated its registration and banned further television and radio broadcasting. Aum was doomed as an organization.

There are interesting parallels between Aum’s downfall in both Russia and Japan. Aum leaders in Russia did not launch gas attacks on the civilian population as they had done twice in Japan, but they did attract intense opposition and protest from the families of some members as well as from the media. Russian leaders and courts at first did not act against Aum and, in fact, in several cases actively courted Aum. But later, acting in

²¹ “Global Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction,” Staff Statement, p. 2.

response to public and media pressure, the government and courts acted quickly and forcefully to shut down the Japanese sect. As was the case in Japan, Asahara complained that Aum had been stalled in Russia because of an anti-Aum conspiracy led, among others, by the CIA and the Vatican.²²

Aum's Relationships with Russian Leaders and Talk of Arms Sales

Aum Shinrikyo's extraordinary access to powerful Russian leaders must be regarded within the broader context of Japanese-Russian relations at the time. When the Soviet Union declared war on Japan in the waning days of World War II, it seized several Japanese-held islands in the Kurile chain north of Hokkaido. Japan has demanded the return of these islands as the basis of any normal relationship with the Russians and the issue remains unresolved to this date.

Russian leaders in the early 1990s appeared very anxious to develop better relationships with Japan. They wanted access to greater trade with Tokyo and to encourage substantial Japanese investment in Russia, but always the islands issue got in the way. It is apparent that when Aum and Asahara, who was well aware of the difficulties in the relationship between the two countries, promised to help the Russians find ways to overcome these problems, they found ready listeners in Moscow.

Asahara and other Aum leaders seemed to have had unusually close access to Russian leaders, but Aum was not the only Japanese religious group to enjoy such privileges. As previously noted, the Rev. Moon, head of Korea's Unification Church, once visited Moscow on an invitation from President Gorbachev. Japan's Soka Gakkai has enjoyed a cordial relationship with Soviet/Russian leaders since the 1970s, long before the Gakkai had become a mainstream movement palatable to Japan's establishment. The Soka Gakkai has few if any members in Russia and has never launched any proselytization campaigns amongst the Russian people. Soka Gakkai leader Ikeda Daisaku and other Gakkai leaders have traveled to Moscow on many occasions to meet Kremlin leaders as well as other ranking Russian luminaries. Students at Soka Gakkai schools in Japan have had exchange visits with Russian students and Soka University in Tokyo has an active exchange program with Moscow University.

Since the Soka Gakkai has never actively sought many converts in Russia, one wonders what each side saw in the other. Officially, the Gakkai

²² Reader, *Religious Violence*, p. 177.

delegations are “Missions of Peace” to strengthen cultural ties between Russian and Japanese citizens. A cynic, however, might remark that a picture from Soviet days of Ikeda meeting Gorbachev at some important Russian landmark adds legitimacy and prestige to the Gakkai in the eyes of its members as well as the Japanese public. Russian leaders might utilize the Gakkai’s close ties with Japan’s political establishment for their own benefit. It is entirely possible that Russian universities and other institutions received donations from the Soka Gakkai, but this has not been documented.²³ The fact that the Soka Gakkai’s own political party, the Komeito, had many contacts in the Japanese government and had played a key role in the short-lived anti-LDP coalition governments of 1993-94. The Soka Gakkai and Komeito had also acted as a key liaison when the Japanese and Chinese governments were establishing relations in 1972.²⁴

Perhaps Russian leaders expected Asahara to be another Ikeda. Oleg Lobov, then Secretary of the Security Council in Russia and a close confidant of President Yeltsin considerably helped Aum’s entry into Russia. Lobov was one of the most influential politicians in Russia in the early 1990s and was even entrusted with control of the Russian government during the failed coup attempt of 1991. Yeltsin had instructed Lobov to establish a seat of government outside of Moscow if the coup leaders had imprisoned Yeltsin.²⁵

Lobov was to be a key player in the enhancement of relations between Russia and Japan with the linchpin a “Russian Japanese University” in Moscow, which among other things was designed to facilitate business contacts between the two countries and to encourage

²³ The Soka Gakkai’s close relationship with Gorbachev has continued long after the demise of both his presidency and the nation. When I attended the Soka Gakkai’s annual World Peace culture festival in Osaka in November 1997, I sat in the honored guest section a few rows behind Ikeda and Gorbachev and his wife. The Soka Gakkai has published a book-length dialogue between Gorbachev and Ikeda. Gorbachev has lost political standing at home and probably relishes any major source of outside income and public recognition he can receive.

²⁴ Daniel Metraux, *The History and Theology of the Soka Gakkai* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1988).

²⁵ McFarlane, Record of Discussion, p. 9.

Japanese investment in Russia.²⁶ The Russian government gave Lobov a large old Moscow building, but no staff, faculty, or equipment. When Lobov met Asahara in Japan, he probably felt that he had found a wealthy Japanese religious leader who might come to Russia with large wads of cash. Aum did provide Lobov with some funds, but he soon discovered that it was impossible to get funds from other Japanese sources because of his Aum ties. Sadly, when Lobov died in 1995, so did his university.

Lobov, however, did facilitate matters for Asahara and other Aum leaders when they arrived in 1992. Asahara sought to convince Russian leaders that a relationship with an influential and high profile group such as Aum could really help Russia's relationship with Japan. Dr. Yeryomin stresses that during this transitional period in Russian history, religious leaders, including those from overseas, were accorded great respect by Russian leaders and that it was a feature of Russian diplomacy to seek good relationships with them. Aum responded by sending generous funds to Russian hospitals and agrarian institutes as well as supplies of medicine and it is said that Aum bribed certain Russian officials to secure better contacts inside Russia.²⁷

These tactics worked quite well. Asahara even managed to get an appointment to visit President Yeltsin, but Yeltsin eventually cancelled the visit and Asahara had to settle for Vice-President Aleksandr Rutskoi, who soon thereafter lost his power base. There were ties also with a number of parliamentary leaders in the State Duma.

Aum also spent lavishly to get time on Russian radio and television. Aum bought a three-year contract on one of the largest radio stations in Russia, state-run Mayak Radio, at \$800,000 per year. Aum broadcast an hour-long program on a daily basis and had the program relayed via an Aum radio tower in Vladivostok to Japan every evening. It is said that Aum either leased or owned its own radio station in Vladivostok which was used to relay speeches by Asahara and other Aum programs back to Japan on a daily basis.

Aum's Search for Russian Arms

By the early 1990s Asahara and Aum experienced a series of public exposes, public humiliations and legal challenges that caused

²⁶ Reader, *Religious Violence*, p. 176.

²⁷ McFarlane, Record of Discussion, p. 10.

Asahara to look inward and to think that his group was under attack from outside forces that sought to destroy everything that he had worked so long to build. Asahara concluded that Aum needed an arsenal of weapons to defend itself against outside attack although it is not entirely clear what he intended to do with the weapons. It is also evident that he considered the possibility of Aum's scientists building their own crude nuclear bomb as the ultimate defense weapon.

Since guns are highly illegal in Japan and are very hard to come by, Asahara and other Aum leaders devised plans to procure weapons, military parts and technical know-how abroad. Aum's futile attempt to find uranium in Australia is well documented, as are its attempts to procure highly technical equipment in the United States, but Russia was Aum's chief target.

Aum's chances of procuring both materials and technical know-how in Russia were enhanced by the chaos that had become endemic after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Ian Reader notes:

The collapse of values and the extremes of a free and unregulated market meant that those with money could have access to whatever they wanted, including military equipment, chemicals and other such materials. It is clear that in Russia Aum found that it could acquire weapons and other materials, and its leaders, having already engaged in violent activities and displayed an interest in manufacturing biological weapons in 1990, certainly possessed the mindset necessary to follow up with interest any opportunities to acquire military technologies that presented themselves.²⁸

The Russian military was in a state of virtual collapse in the early 1990s. Inflation and government cutbacks meant that officers and soldiers received pitiful compensation and lived in apparent squalor. Discipline and standards had collapsed to such an extent that a high-level decision was made within the army to sell off surplus equipment and to offer other services to make money. Therefore, when Aum came knocking to request the right to purchase military equipment and to have military training for various Japanese members of Aum, the Russians complied.

It is reported that Kiyohide Hayakawa, the alleged mastermind of Aum's attempts to arm itself, made twenty-one trips to Russia from Japan

²⁸ Reader, *Religious Violence*, pp. 177-178.

between 1992-1995.²⁹ He and other Aum officials managed to smuggle a Russian AK-74 rifle into Japan, which was to have become the model that Aum would use to manufacture at its base at Kamikuishiki in Japan. There were also blueprints for rocket launchers and various other forms of military equipment. It is known that Aum also somehow managed to smuggle in a former Russian military helicopter (broken into separate parts) and perhaps much more, including perhaps blueprints for the manufacture of nerve gases such as sarin.³⁰ It was Masami Tsuchiya, Aum's top chemist, who, having learned a lot about sarin in Russia, succeeded in producing it in usable form in Japan as early as 1993.³¹

Why Did Aum Go to Russia?

Aum's expansion into Russia between 1992-95 involved tremendous effort, time and money, but its initial successes, however impressive, soon came to naught. It is clear that Asahara and Aum wanted both converts and weapons, but it is not at all clear which of these two objectives instigated Aum's move to Moscow. Did Aum come to Russia seeking advanced weaponry and only then discover that it had the opportunity to attract many new members? Or did it go to Russia seeking to expand its religious base only to find that it might have a chance to acquire weapons and nuclear technology?

Ian Reader, who has studied Aum intently for many years, speculates that Aum went to Russia as part of an effort to both expand and internationalize its movement,³² but other scholars feel that the membership drive was only a smoke screen and that the hidden agenda was the procurement of weapons.³³ There is no conclusive evidence to support either view, but what is clear is that both the search for weapons and new members was very intense and that every effort was made to succeed. My only guess is that both efforts were equally serious and sincere, whether or

²⁹ "Global Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction," Staff Statement, p. 3.

³⁰ Reader, *Religious Violence*, p. 178.

³¹ Robert Jay Lifton, *Destroying the World to Save It: Aum Shinrikyo, Apocalyptic Violence, and the New Global Terrorism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1999), p. 183.

³² Reader, *Religious Violence*, p. 178.

³³ Reader, *Religious Violence*, p. 178.

not one came before and paved the way for the other. Aum went to other countries such as Australia³⁴ and perhaps the United States in a search for

³⁴ John McFarlane, who in his capacity as Visiting Fellow, Australian Defence Studies Centre, Australian Defence Force Academy headed the official Australian government investigation on Aum activities in Australia, provided this writer with the following overview of Aum activities in his country: “We had very little knowledge of the Aum Sect when they visited Australia in 1993. They came to notice when Customs observed that they had imported a huge amount of air cargo (some \$AUS 30,000 worth) when they arrived in Australia. Included in this cargo were a number of items apparently to be used in assaying samples for uranium mining, including hydrochloric and perchloric acids, which was actually described in their Customs declaration as liquid soap. It was not until a Customs officer asked one of the party to pour some “liquid soap” into his hand, that he admitted that the substance was not soap, but actually acid, which was intended for chemical analysis purposes. As a result of this false Customs declaration and the fact that they had carried a dangerous and prohibited substance in the aircraft, two members of the party were each fined \$AUS 2,400. Even so, neither the Australian Federal Police nor Customs had any reason at that time to doubt their claims that they were importing these items for reasons of mineral exploration. At that time, we had heard very little (if anything) of the Aum Sect. It was not until after the incident in the Tokyo subway that the people who bought Banjawarn Station in Western Australia from the Aum Sect contacted us, and that the loose ends had been tied together. The new owners found a number of chemicals that had been left in a “laboratory” on their property, and, having heard the alarming account of what had happened in Tokyo, they contacted the AFP and, together with the Western Australian Police, we launched a major investigation into what had been going on at Banjawarn Station. As a result of this investigation the remains of a flock of sheep herded together in unusual circumstances were discovered, and two independent forensic tests of the carcasses and surrounding soil revealed a byproduct which appeared to be related to sarin gas that was discovered. Retrospective investigations revealed that members of the Aum Sect had purchased Banjawarn Station in September 1993, apparently for the purposes of exploring for uranium (which is found in the area), and apparently carrying out tests of sarin gas

technology or uranium without much if any effort to gain members, but it went to Russia for both the acquisition of new members and weapons technology.

Is Aum Still Alive in Russia?

Even though Aum was officially barred from proselytizing in Russia in 1995, the newspaper *Izvestiya* reported in February 2000 that Aum was secretly rebuilding there, gathering followers and training them at a village on the outskirts of Moscow in defiance of the ban. It was also reported that Aum's activities are being financed from Japan. It is said that after the proscription imposed in 1995, Russian AUM followers acquired a 9-hectare plot of land in a village, about 300 kilometers east of Moscow, keeping their membership in the sect secret. AUM is also said to have built a warehouse to store vegetables, a prayer facility, and two houses where cult members train.³⁵

There are no further reports concerning Aum activity in Russia, but it would not be surprising if there were a few odd members. Aum continues to survive in Japan in a very truncated form even though many of the top leaders are in prison. Japanese members often say that they had given up their former lives and could not return and that they have no other place to go. A small number of Japanese have joined the movement since 1995 for a variety of reasons, including feelings of isolation or attraction to the teachings of Aum. It would not be surprising if at least a handful of Russians either kept their membership or joined for very similar reasons, but there is no indication that Aum will grow to its former size in Russia. As is the case in Japan, there is good reason to believe that Aum will limp along in Russia in a rather clandestine manner.

against sheep. As far as I recall, there was no serious attempt by members of the Aum Sect to recruit members in Australia.”

³⁵ Kyodo News Service, February 24, 2000.

**ANIME AND HISTORICAL INVERSION IN
MIYAZAKI HAYAO'S *PRINCESS MONONOKE***

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Introduction

If box office receipts are any indication of cultural significance, then Miyazaki Hayao's *Princess Mononoke*¹ surely stands as one of the most important works of late-twentieth-century Japanese popular culture: currently it remains one of the highest-grossing (¥16.65 billion, approximately \$150 million) domestic films in Japanese history. Prior to the release of *The Titanic*, *Princess Mononoke* eclipsed *E.T.* and reigned as the biggest box-office hit ever, domestic or foreign, in Japan. While *The Titanic* and other recent mega-hits have since surpassed *Princess Mononoke* in overall ticket sales, over 13.53 million Japanese, or more than one-tenth of the population, have watched *Princess Mononoke* in theatres, and over five million copies of the video have been sold domestically.² *Princess Mononoke* also stands as one of the most expensive animated movies ever made in Japan, with a 3 billion yen (approximately \$30 million) production cost.³ Critics have lauded it in literally hundreds of media reviews, especially in Japanese film and popular culture publications such as *Kinema junpō*, *SAPIO*, *Nyūmedeia*, *AERA*, *Fuirumumeekaazu*, *Bessatsu Comicbox*, *Bessatsu Takarajima*, *Tech Win*, *Shunkan Kinyōbi*, *Video Doo!*, *Yurika*, *Cinema Talk*, and *SPA!*, as well as in the major newspapers, periodicals, and regional media. Additionally, *Princess Mononoke* has been awarded numerous prizes, most notably the 21st Japan

¹ *Mononokehime*, Dir. Miyazaki Hayao, Dentsu Inc., 1997 (Japan); Miramax Films, 1999 (USA, dubbed).

² Yumi Yoneda, "Bideoka ni atari *Mononoke* sempū futatabi: *Mononokehime* obake hitto no nazo o kangaeru," *Kinema junpō* 1258 (1998), pp. 204-205.

³ Takuhiko Wakita, et al., "*Mononokehime* Shitsurakuen shinema jyapanesuku," *Kinema junpō* 1244 (1998), pp. 168-169.

Academy Award for Best Film.⁴ Not surprisingly the film has been released internationally, with an English language version, featuring numerous familiar American voices, including those of Gillian Anderson and Billy Bob Thornton, thus making it exceptionally accessible in the United States for *anime* fans, and those interested in Japanese history and culture. Internationally the film has been more widely covered than any Japanese movie ever, with reviews in virtually every major newspaper and journal in the U.S. and Europe. One Japanese commentator has declared that *Princess Mononoke* has become an “historic phenomenon.”⁵

While easily characterizable as an allegory examining the ecological conflict between civilization and nature,⁶ or as a religious epic depicting the tragic fate of animal deities inhabiting what had been luxuriant virgin forests,⁷ *Princess Mononoke* is most obviously an *anime* of historical fiction, specifically an animated *jidaigeki*, or “pre-modern historical drama,” making many of its more poignant, often ecologically-oriented, ideological statements by couching them in rich allusions to history, myth and legend.⁸ That Miyazaki decided to direct a film in the *jidaigeki* genre is somewhat unusual, for his earlier *anime* have not typically appropriated that genre.⁹ Miyazaki is not alone in this regard:

⁴ Tsutomu Kuji, *Mononokehime no himitsu: haruka naru Jōmon bunka no fūkei* (Tokyo: Hihyōsha, 1998), pp. 3-4; Mark Schilling, trans., *Princess Mononoke: The Art and Making of Japan's Most Popular Film of All Time* (New York: Hyperion, 1999), p. 3.

⁵ Jurō Iwatani, “Kinyō bunka bideo: *Mononokehime*,” *Shūkan kinyōbi* 234 (1998), p. 43.

⁶ Seiji Kanō, “Prologue: *Mononokehime* Miyazaki Hayao no sekai,” *Bessatsu Takarajima: Anime no mikata ga kawaru hon* (1997), pp. 38-39; Yasuki Hamano, “Rūkasu to Supirubaagu ga aitte mo ‘Nihon no anime’ no hanashibakari shite iru,” *SAPIO: International Intelligence Magazine* 242 (2000), p. 35; Junko Saeki, “*Mononokehime* 21 seiki no joshin saibōgu goddessu,” *Miyazaki Hayao, Filmmakers*, vol. 6, ed. Yōrō Takeshi (Tokyo: Kinema junpōsha, 2000), p. 142.

⁷ Yoneda, “Bideoka ni atari *Mononoke*,” pp. 204-205.

⁸ Schilling, *Princess Mononoke: The Art and Making*, p. 4.

⁹ See Helen McCarthy, *Hayao Miyazaki: Master of Japanese Animation* (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 1999).

anime are not usually *jidaigeki*; instead they more characteristically utilize science-fiction or fantasy as genres,¹⁰ taking advantage of the animator's full ability to create and metamorphose total environments to fashion imaginary, often futuristic scenarios. Kurosawa Akira (1910-98), generally recognized as the greatest of the *jidaigeki* directors, defined that genre as it is commonly understood with classic films such as *Rashomon* (1950), *Seven Samurai* (1954), *Yojimbo* (1961), *Sanjurō* (1962), *Kagemusha* (1980), and *Ran* (1985), all featuring samurai heroics, swordplay, and an anonymous, often victimized peasantry.¹¹

With *Princess Mononoke*, Miyazaki has developed the *jidaigeki* genre in historically innovative ways, moving it away from the motifs Kurosawa deployed, and towards what has been considered the peripheries of Japanese history and culture.¹² In the process, Miyazaki catapulted women, young people, lepers, outcasts, "barbarian" groups, and other marginalized minorities of traditional narratives into prominent, often heroic roles, in some cases as defenders of the sacred natural environment against the onslaught of imperial Yamato civilization as led by ominously anonymous samurai. In turning the *jidaigeki* genre, as well as standard themes of long-established accounts of Japanese history, on their head, Miyazaki has drawn upon the pioneering work of the revisionist historian,

¹⁰ Susan J. Napier, *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p. 6.

¹¹ Stephen Prince, *The Warrior's Cinema: The Cinema of Akira Kurosawa* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); James Godwin, *Akira Kurosawa and Intertextual Cinema* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

¹² The juxtaposition of Miyazaki and Kurosawa is not gratuitous: Miyazaki was a great admirer of Kurosawa, especially his *Seven Samurai*. The two directors discussed postwar filmmaking in a special television broadcast, during which Kurosawa asked Miyazaki what he thought of using Shakespeare as a model for a *jidaigeki* film. In response, Miyazaki suggested the possibility of integrating that idea with the Muromachi period of Japanese history. According to Harada et al., the "idea" behind *Mononokehime* was born from that dialogue. Sayuri Harada, "Miyazaki Hayao waarudo kaisetsu," *Miyazaki Hayao, Filmmakers*, vol. 6, ed. Yōrō Takeshi (Tokyo: Kinema junpōsha, 2000), p. 171.

Amino Yoshihiko (1928-). Amino's voluminous writings on medieval Japan similarly de-emphasize samurai/peasant culture, feudal lords, the imperial line, and the centrality of the imperial capital, while highlighting the role of women, townspeople, artisans, outcastes, minority groups, and geopolitical spheres that have only infrequently figured in major ways in traditional histories.¹³

Fredric Jameson suggests that science fiction has often been used to envision the "present as [past] history." On the other hand, "the classical nostalgia film, while evading its present altogether, registered its historicist deficiency by losing itself in mesmerized fascination in lavish images of specific generational pasts."¹⁴ *Princess Mononoke*, as a *jidaigeki* style of *anime*, however, rejects "nostalgia" in favor of a perception of the present as a kind of "science fiction" in which some of the players, specifically those viewing the film, still have a chance to engage their present in light of a re-envisioned past. Though "lavish images of specific generational pasts" are indeed offered, *Princess Mononoke* does not encourage evasion of the present for the past so much as activism in the present for the future. Arthur Nolletti and David Desser have explained that "genre films" such as *jidaigeki*, "emerge as invaluable artifacts of their society, and even serve to redefine and mythologize the way that society sees itself."¹⁵ Though they do not discuss *anime*, their observation is undoubtedly relevant to *Princess Mononoke* and its significance vis-à-vis Japanese history, legends and ideology.

This essay examines salient historical allusions and fabrications made in *Princess Mononoke*, analyzing them intertextually in terms of various narratives of Japanese history—legendary, mythic and modern—to

¹³ Amino Yoshihiko, *Chūseiteki sekai to wa nan darō ka* (Tokyo: Asahi shibunsha, 1996); *Nihon no rekishi o yominaosu* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1991); *Nihon shakai saikō: kaimin to rettōbunka* (Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 1994); Amino Yoshihiko and Imatani Akira, *Tennōke wa naze tsuzuita ka* (Tokyo: Shinjinbutsu oraisha, 1991).

¹⁴ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), p. 298.

¹⁵ Arthur Nolletti and David Desser, "Introduction," *Reframing Japanese Cinema: Authorship, Genre, History*, eds. Nolletti and Desser (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. xiii.

assess Miyazaki's aggressive reinvention of history through *anime*. The essay argues that more than simple revisionism, *Princess Mononoke* transforms history by subverting received narratives, chronologies, and interpretive categories via extensive, salutary legendary fabrication regarding the nature of war and its heroes, gender roles, the "impact" of the West, religion, nature, and the spiritual environment. In *Princess Mononoke*, Miyazaki graphically re-imagines transformative moments in Japan's past by inverting some long-manipulated legendary constructs of traditional historical literature, while highlighting other often marginal aspects, thereby fashioning a new ideological basis for a more ecologically balanced vision of the future. At the same time, *Princess Mononoke* subverts legends, which, though well ensconced in traditional accounts of the past, offer little positive inspiration for contemporary Japanese seeking to come to terms with themselves, their spirituality, and their environment.

In engineering this innovative set of ecologically, socially and religiously positive historical visions, the film supersedes legends, myths and motifs which ideologists of the 1930s and early 1940s manipulated to advance their military and nationalistic ends via glorification of imperial heroes, especially those who fought to extend the territorial and cultural hegemony of the imperial state. In this regard Miyazaki's *anime* serves an ideologically positive role. Nevertheless, in its effort to provide a realistic vision of the future, one affirming the importance of nature and civilization, the film is reluctant to recognize the ultimate integrity of nature and the absoluteness of its claims, especially in relation to gratuitous human encroachments. While *Princess Mononoke* should be lauded, it leaves ample room for further re-conceptualizations of the past, which might better serve Japan's future ecological needs.

Such an interpretation might seem exaggerated, even fanciful, given that *anime* is the medium. However, the noted scholar of Japanese culture John Whittier Treat has observed that "it is commonplace now...to look upon popular culture as the site of struggle for hegemony, a 'contested terrain' between the admittedly dominant ideological intentions for how we are to live within culture and the emergent ideological ways in which we may succeed in re-articulating that culture in our own diverse interests."¹⁶

¹⁶ John Whittier Treat, "Yoshimoto Banana Writes Home: Shōjo Culture and the Nostalgic Subject," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 19/2 (1993): 353-

Similarly, David Desser situates the works of New Wave directors such as Imamura Shohei and Teshigahara Hiroshi, “within the wider discourses of historical, political, social, and cultural studies.” Desser claims that too many studies have sought to “de-historicize” New Wave cinema by emphasizing its continuity with “traditional Japanese culture.” He stresses the “political importance” and “cultural engagement with the historical moment” of New Wave, showing how it has “used cinema as a tool, a weapon in the cultural struggle.”¹⁷

Along related lines, *anime* scholar Susan J. Napier suggests that the postmodern “absence of any sort of past” evident in the “creative destruction” of an earlier animated blockbuster, *Akira* (1988), implies an indifference to, if not a “thoroughgoing denial or even erasure” of traditional Japanese history and culture. Napier contrasts *Akira*’s celebration of “history’s imminent demise” with *Godzilla* (*Gojira*, 1954), which allowed Japanese to “rewrite or at least re-imagine their tragic wartime experiences,” and *Nippon chinbotsu* (*Japan Sinks*, 1973), which sought to prompt a nostalgic, “melancholy pleasure of mourning for the passing of traditional Japanese society.”¹⁸ Viewed in this spectrum, *Princess Mononoke* returns to the didactic approach offered in *Godzilla*, providing Japanese a means of re-imagining their past for the sake of redirecting their present and future worlds. Napier’s recent study, *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke*, affirms this view, suggesting that *Princess Mononoke*, by re-envisioning “the conventions of Japanese history,” in effect assists Japanese in negotiating a major change in national identity.¹⁹

In interpreting *Princess Mononoke*, this paper endorses the doctrine established by the ‘New Critics’ (including John Crowe Ransom, Robert Penn Warren, Allen Tate, Cleanth Brooks, W. M. Wimsatt) and furthered by recent theorists such as Umberto Eco, that “the author’s pre-textual intention—the purposes that may have led to the attempt to write [or

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¹⁷ David Desser, *Eros Plus Massacre: An Introduction to the Japanese New Wave Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), pp. 2-3.

¹⁸ Susan J. Napier, “Panic Sites: The Japanese Imagination of Disaster from *Godzilla* to *Akira*,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 19/2 (1993): 327-351.

¹⁹ Napier, *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke*, pp. 175-177.

in this case, direct] a particular work—cannot furnish the touchstone of interpretation.”²⁰ While this hermeneutic approach is most typically applied to literary works, critic-theorists such as Noël Carroll have transferred it to film. Carroll supports an “anti-intentionalist bias,” noting “the value of a film resides in the individual film as it is seen.”²¹ Similarly, while this paper often speaks of Miyazaki as having re-imagined history, inverted legends, recreated myths, etc., it does not mean to imply that this was Miyazaki’s primary purpose or, necessarily, his conscious intention. Rather it simply suggests that this re-imagining, inversion, recreation, etc., can be read as salient byproducts of Miyazaki’s labors.

Synopsis

Despite the title and promotional posters suggesting a female protagonist, the most obvious hero of *Princess Mononoke* is a teenage warrior Ashitaka,²² the last prince of a hidden tribe of Emishi, supported faithfully by his youthful steed, Yakkuru, a robust red elk. It is noteworthy in this connection that the film’s original title was *Ashitaka sekki*, or *The Life of Ashitaka*.²³ Shortly after the film opens a monstrous creature appears, a *tatarigami*, a vengeful raging deity depicted as a huge mass of bloody leech-like entities squirming forth from a largely unseen physical core. Briefly, the *tatarigami* throws off the oozing parasites to reveal his body as that of a giant wild boar. For reasons that are not clear, he attacks Ashitaka’s village. The only wrong of the villagers is that they are humans, creatures the boar has come to hate unto death, without discrimination. With selfless bravery, Ashitaka defends his village, killing the *tatarigami* with an arrow piercing his right eye. In the fight a dark substance spewing

²⁰ Umberto Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 10.

²¹ Noël Carroll, *Philosophical Problems of Classical Film Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 174.

²² Takuya Mori, “Book Review Eiga no hon: *Mononokehime wa kooshite umareta*, risō no shōnen no shōnen no risō,” *Kinema junpō* 127 (1998), p. 193.

²³ Tsutomu Kuji, *Mononokehime no himitsu: haruka naru Jōmon bunka no fūkei* (Tokyo: Hihyōsha, 1998), pp. 39-42.

from the *tatarigami*'s form hits Ashitaka's right forearm, infecting him, as he later learns, with a deadly disease.²⁴

Rather than remain in his village and risk infecting others, Ashitaka accepts the divination of the local shamaness and embarks on a journey to the southwest in search of the source of the madness, which consumed the *tatarigami*. Along the way Ashitaka encounters a young female, San, riding bareback on a giant wolf deity, Moro. Though human, San has been raised by wolf deities and can communicate with the myriad spirits of nature; thus, she is the movie's eponym, *Princess Mononoke*, Princess of the Wrathful, Raging Spirits of Nature. Predictably, Ashitaka is attracted to her, and eventually persuades her to accept, in a limited way, her own humanity, along with his, in an effort to stem the greater violence

²⁴ Susan Napier notes that in the final apocalyptic portion of *Akira*, Tetsuo loses an arm, but then telekinetically replaces it. She compares this to Luke Skywalker's loss of an arm in fighting his father, Darth Vader, in the second film of the *Star Wars* trilogy. Napier proposes that the arm is "a displaced signifier for the phallus," and that the loss and telekinetic recovery can be viewed as part of Tetsuo's "struggle for maturity" and a sense of "his own identity *vis-à-vis* the world," in Napier, "Panic Sites," p. 343. Similarly, Ashitaka's diseased arm, which throbs with malignant hypertrophy whenever he feels hatred, symbolizes one aspect of the protagonist's critical, life-threatening passage from adolescence to existential authenticity. Insofar as Ashitaka can be viewed, as this paper suggests, as the antithesis of Yamato-takeru, and the latter as a prewar exemplar of the nation and its virtues, Ashitaka's struggle for maturity acquires monumental significance. Similarities between Ashitaka's infection and contraction of "A-bomb" disease via black rain—in both cases, contact with a black substance transfers potentially mortal, but not immediately deadly, sickness—suggest that Ashitaka's struggle to overcome the disease of hate can be read as an allegory for Japan's coming to terms with the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, by transcending the impulse toward retribution in favor of a commitment to building a more ecologically respectful and spiritually harmonious world. Themes traditional to Shinto such as pollution and purification are also obvious here and acquire more universality insofar as Ashitaka is an Emishi, not a Japanese.

that separated her realm, the forests defended by the wolf deities, from his, that of human society encroaching on the spiritual realm of nature in its relentless efforts to provide a better life for itself.

In the process, Ashitaka thwarts the efforts of an opportunistic Buddhist monk, Jikobō, and a cunning female, Lady Eboshi, to behead the Deer Spirit of the Mountain Forest, Shishigami, for the sake of personal gain: a mountain of gold offered by the Japanese emperor as reward for a means to immortality, in this case the head of Shishigami. By returning Shishigami's severed head to him and thus calming his apocalyptic rage, Ashitaka saves the day and the ecosystem, preserving the balance and harmony of nature and the spirits that Jikobō and Lady Eboshi were so hell-bent on destroying. As an unexpected reward for returning Shishigami's head, Ashitaka achieves purification, being cured of his mortal disease, and presumably lives happily ever after with San. Most likely it is because of his love for San that Ashitaka, in the end, forgets his Emishi homeland and the possibility of returning there. Curiously enough he decides instead to remain with Eboshi and the people of the iron factory village to help them reconstruct their lives in a more positive, harmonious manner. In many respects, *Princess Mononoke* is an old-fashioned epic love story which, no doubt, accounts for at least some of its popular appeal.²⁵

Before turning to the main points of the paper, it must be noted that the English translation of the Japanese title *Mononokehime* is not very informative, despite its useful brevity and exotic aura. *Hime* means princess, and is not problematic. *Mononoke*, however, is not a name, as the translation suggests. Rather, it refers to wrathful, vengeful spirits, either of

²⁵ Junko Saeki discusses the innovative romantic qualities of *Mononokehime*. Saeki, "Mononokehime 21," p. 144. Eri Izawa states that contrary to the typical Westerner's view of Japan as "a cold, calculating land of antlike workers, brutal efficiency, and overwhelming bureaucracy," *anime* offers "one of the best places to get a taste of Japanese *roman* ('romance')," Izawa, "The Romantic, Passionate Japanese in *Anime*: A Look at the Hidden Japanese Soul," *Japan Pop!: Inside the World of Japanese Popular Culture*, ed. Timothy J. Craig (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2000), p. 139. While not highly passionate and hardly sexually explicit, *Princess Mononoke*, true to Izawa's analysis of *anime*, is held together by the evident adolescent affection Ashitaka feels for San.

the living or the dead. While the Japanese promotional logo for *Mononokehime* presents *mononoke* in *hiragana*, the *kanji* for it are read *wu guai* in Chinese, and can be traced in ancient Chinese literature to Sima Qian's (ca. 145-ca. 90 B.C.E.) *Shiji* (Historical Records), a classic of historical literature from the Han dynasty, and Han Yü's (768-824) essay, "On the Origins of Ghosts" (*Yuan gui*), written in the mid-Tang. Han Yu explained "entities which can assume any shape or sound are *wu guai*, or 'supernatural things.'"

In Japan the term assumed distinctive nuances with Murasaki Shikibu's (ca. 973-ca. 1016) *Tale of Genji* wherein, according to Doris Barga's study, *A Woman's Weapon: Spirit Possession in the Tale of Genji*, *mononoke* refers to "spirit possession and possessing spirits...a psychic phenomenon so integral to the text that it seems almost to structure the entire narrative." Barga states that the *Genji* portrays Heian women, suppressed and subordinated within a male-dominated aesthetic culture, asserting themselves through *mononoke* spirit possession, while alive or after death, as a means of taking revenge on those who have wronged them, and of rebelling against the biased socio-aesthetic system.²⁶

Norma Field's *The Splendor of Longing in the Tale of Genji*, notes that "the record [for occurrences of *mononoke*] is reached in the *Genji*, which has no fewer than fifty-three examples, seconded by the *Tale of Flowering Fortunes*, an historical tale written some four decades later, with seventeen examples."²⁷ Classic instances in the *Genji* are in the ninth chapter, "Aoi," referring to Aoi's fatal *gomononoke*; and the fifty-first chapter, "Ukifune." Arthur Waley's translation of the *Genji* renders the "Aoi" usage as "possession," and the "Ukifune" as "illness"²⁸; Edward Seidensticker's more recent translation of the *Genji* glosses the first occurrence as "malign spirit," and the second as "evil spirit."²⁹

²⁶ Doris Barga, *A Woman's Weapon: Spirit Possession in the Tale of Genji* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), p. xv.

²⁷ Norma Field, *The Splendor of Longing in the Tale of Genji* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 52.

²⁸ Arthur Waley, trans., *The Tale of Genji* (New York: Random House, 1993), pp. 189, 1215.

²⁹ Edward Seidensticker, trans., *The Tale of Genji* (New York: Knopf, 1976), pp. 167, 1010.

In Miyazaki's film, the word *mononoke* can be understood as a reference to the raging, vengeful spirits of the forest, which both possess the bearer and can pollute, mortally, those with whom the *mononoke* makes physical contact. These vengeful spirits have been incited to rage, most generally, by the destructive incursions of humans, more specifically by the hypertrophic Yamato state, as it was re-crystallizing in the late-Muromachi period, and most specifically, by the bullets that sear their bodies, break their bones, and burn their innards. The film's title could thus be translated, far less poetically, as "Princess of the Wrathful, Raging Spirits of Nature."³⁰

Analytic Themes

Princess Mononoke makes myriad historical allusions to geography, art, architecture, religion, philosophy, society, politics, and the martial arts, just to mention the more salient categories. Nevertheless Miyazaki does not offer these allusions in any chronologically unified way so as to suggest, e.g., a relatively accurate representation of the Kamakura, Muromachi or Tokugawa period, though the film is most evidently set in the late Muromachi, an era during which Japan had descended into chronic civil war and ecological crisis. Yet, rather than any attempt at consistent historical fidelity Miyazaki offers a mismatched, chronologically incongruous set of allusions, often merged with flights of complete historical fancy, thus suggesting a radically different historical past that might have been, not one which, even remotely, actually was. For example, the epic struggle with the raging deities, often manifest in their transformation bodies as monstrous animal demons,³¹ recalls, more than

³⁰ In ancient China, the *Analects* (7.21) made the word *guai* suspect, at least from a Confucian perspective, by noting that "the Master (Confucius) did not talk about supernatural phenomena (*guai*), feats of power, anarchy, or spiritual phenomena." *Princess Mononoke*, in addressing all of these topics, when viewed in terms of East Asian intellectual traditions, is an un-Confucian film. Zhu Xi's (1130-1200) *Collected Commentaries on the Analects* explains Confucius' reticence by observing that supernatural phenomena, feats of bravery and power, and disorder and anarchy do not convey "the right aspects of ethical principles."

³¹ Figal suggests that discourses related to monsters (*bakemono*), "the supernatural," "ghosts," and the "fantastic" can generally be viewed as "a

Muromachi times, episodes from the age of the kami as described in the *Kojiki* (Records of Antiquity, 712) and *Nihon shoki* (Chronicles of Japan, 720).³²

Also Miyazaki modeled Ashitaka's name after the ancient chieftan, Nagasunehiko ("Prince Longshanks"), who opposed Emperor Jinmu's conquest of the Yamato plain. Ashitaka's name, in translation, similarly produces "Prince Longlegs" (*ashi*=leg, *taka*=tall).³³ Nagasunehiko's armies were defeated, and he was killed, after a golden kite appeared and led Jinmu's troops to victory. Nagasunehiko's encounter with Jinmu is described in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. While Nagasunehiko opposed the imperial ambitions of the then crystallizing Yamato line, much as Ashitaka did, unlike the latter, he was not an Emishi. If the connection with Prince Longshanks is pressed, Ashitaka can even be viewed as an avatar, in *anime*, of the "anti-Emperor Jinmu" archetype.

This recombination of the traditional narrative, merging motifs associated with the mythic age of the gods and those of the late-medieval Muromachi period, exemplifies the manner in which Miyazaki radically reimagines the Japanese past, not merely changing a few details, but instead fusing opposite ends of the historical continuum so as to create a sufficiently open-ended, even unfamiliar, historical space for articulating a

mode of social and political critique," one "affiliated with the instantiation of modernity in Japan." Applied to monstrous *kami* in *Princess Mononoke*, Figal's view implies that the raging boars, wolves, and apes affirm the revolt of nature and its powerful spirituality against the encroachment of the re-crystallizing Yamato state. Furthermore, Figal's analysis implies that rather than atavism, the revolt of the monster deities provides a means of coming to terms with modernity. Gerald Figal, *Civilization and Monsters: Spirits of Modernity in Meiji Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 156.

³² Takeshi Matsumae, "Early *Kami* Worship" *The Cambridge History of Japan, Volume 1: Ancient Japan*, ed. Delmer Brown (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 340-341; *Kojiki*, comp. Aoki Kazuo, et al., *Nihon shisō taikai* [Records of Antiquity] 1 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1982), p. 712; and *Nihon shoki*, ed. Inoue Mitsusada, *Nihon no meicho* [Chronicles of Japan] 1 (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1971), p. 720.

³³ Visit www.mv.com/users/ctwilkes/MH-text-j/MH-names.txt.

novel, ideologically satisfying narrative. In the following sections several of Miyazaki's other re-makings of the past are explored intertextually as both inversions and subversions of traditional historical accounts. In particular, four central themes and the protagonists epitomizing them are examined: (1) Ashitaka, warfare and the problem of the Emishi; (2) *Princess Mononoke* and gender stereotypes in Japanese history; (3) Lady Eboshi, arquebuses, and the problem of the West; and (4) Shishigami, quasi-Shinto pantheism, and problems related to religion in history and the environment.

Ashitaka, Warfare, and the Problem of the Emishi

Key to understanding Ashitaka's significance, as protagonist of *Princess Mononoke*, and the film's fabrication of ideologically innovative historical legends, is his identity as an Emishi, one of the so-called barbarian tribes supposedly "subdued" (i.e., marginalized if not eliminated) early on, during the age of the gods, by the emerging Yamato state. Though little is known about them, later they, or others like them, were generally referred to as the Ezo, and then after the Meiji Restoration, commonly called Ainu.³⁴ What is clear, however, is that in traditional historical narratives, the Emishi were rarely assigned laudatory roles. Rather they were cast as "eastern savages" who "dwell together in promiscuity...dress in furs and drink blood"³⁵ i.e., as a despicable people

³⁴ Mark Hudson suggests "Emishi" was "primarily a political category whose meaning changed over time." He explains that "biologically and probably linguistically" the Emishi were related to proto-Ainu groups derived from Jōmon peoples. Still, Hudson observes that "the presence of any ethnic 'reality' behind the Emishi is in a sense irrelevant, since the concept of Emishi was itself an artificial construct, imposed from outside." Hudson adds that once Emishi were incorporated into the Ritsuryō system, they were referred to simply as prisoners, implying that "differences between the Emishi and Japanese were not very great or else that such differences were not considered important in this context," in Hudson, *Ruins of Identity: Ethnogenesis in the Japanese Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), pp. 198-200.

³⁵ W. G. Aston, *Shinto: The Way of the Gods* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1905), p. 203; *Nihon shoki*, Inoue, pp. 174-184. The *Nihon*

who ought to be ostracized, enslaved or eliminated. One *locus classicus* is the *Nihon shoki* where an advisor to the emperor Keikō relates that the Emishi are of “fierce temper.” He suggests that the Emperor “attack them and take” their land which is “wide and fertile.”³⁶ Miyazaki’s lionization of Ashitaka as a heroic Emishi prince thus inverts traditional narratives of the Japanese past, which idolized those associated with the imperial throne and loyalists serving it.

The most significant intersection of the dominant, emperor-centered Yamato narrative and those systematically denigrating the Emishi occurs in the (legendary) accounts of Yamato-takeru no mikoto (supposedly 83-113), in many respects the archetypal divine warrior of imperial Japan. Arguably it is the tale of this well-known figure, first set forth in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, that *Princess Mononoke* turns on its head, casting Ashitaka, the Emishi prince, as the Anti-Yamato-takeru, and having him reverse the heroics (or pseudo-heroics) Yamato-takeru is credited with so that instead of slaying vilified barbarians and building an imperial state, he

shoki vilifies the Emishi far more than does the *Kojiki*, describing them as rebels and kidnapers who have not been “steeped in the kingly civilizing influences.” Furthermore, they are said to live amongst “malignant deities” who “beset the highways and bar the roads, causing men much annoyance.” See Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi for an analysis of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* treatment of Yamato-takeru in relation to Yamagata Daini’s (1725-67) promotion of him in eighteenth-century Tokugawa Japan, in Wakabayashi, trans., *Japanese Loyalty Reconstructed* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995), pp. 89-91.

³⁶ Aston, *Shinto: The Way of the Gods*, p. 200; Hudson, *Ruins of Identity*, p. 199. Regarding the military strength of the Emishi, Hudson explains that they were “more than a match for the Yamato armies,” citing studies by William Wayne Farris, *Heavenly Warriors: The Evolution of Japan’s Military Elite, 500-1300* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1992), pp. 82-119; Karl F. Friday, “The Taming of the Shrewd: The Conquest of the Emishi and Northern Japan,” *Japan Foundation Newsletter* 21/6 (1994): 17-22; and Bruno Lewin, “Die Japanischen Beziehungen zu den Emishi um das Jahr 800,” *Oriens* 18-19 (1967): 304-326.

defends the natural, spiritual and social orders necessary for the preservation of a balanced ecosystem.³⁷

A rehearsal of six major aspects of the Yamato-takeru legend, along with a commentary on how *Princess Mononoke* inverts and subverts them, should make clearer Miyazaki's reconstruction of historical legend through *anime*.³⁸ First, Yamato-takeru was a prince of the supposedly

³⁷ Barrett cites Yamato-takeru as a "Prodigal Son" archetype, second to Susano, in his account of Mizoguchi Kenji's "internationally famous" *Sansho the Bailiff* (*Sansho dayu*, 1954), in Gregory Barrett, *Archetypes in Japanese Films: The Sociopolitical and Religious Significance of the Principal Heroes and Heroines* (London: Associated University Presses, 1989), pp. 141-145. Relatively little has been done to relate, intertextually, *anime* characters to historical, mythic, or religio-cultural archetypes. Noteworthy exceptions are Toji Komata's comparison of the character Akira, in Otomo Katsuhiro's *manga* and *anime* from 1989 by the same name, and Wakanomiya, the *kami* of Kyoto's Kasuga Shrine; see Komata, "Nagare to chikara no hate ni," *Yurika* 20/10 (1988): 54-67. Susan Napier likens Miyazaki's Nausicaa, heroine and eponym of the *anime* film, to "a godlike figure from ages past who will come to save the world," in Napier, "Vampires, Psychic Girls, Flying Women and Sailor Scouts: Four Faces of the Young Female in Japanese Popular Culture," *The Worlds of Japanese Popular Culture: Gender, Shifting Boundaries and Global Cultures*, ed. D. P. Martinez (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 102. In an endnote, Napier suggests similarities between Nausicaa and the princess of "one of Japan's first fairy tales," *Taketori monogatari* (*The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter*), and notes that Miyazaki himself has "mentioned his indebtedness to another Japanese folktale, *The Lady Who Loves Insects*. It might be added that Ashitaka's inversions of Yamato-takeru are less explicit when considered in relation to Yamato-takeru prior to his expeditions against the Emishi. For example, there is no parallel, inverted or otherwise, linking Ashitaka to Yamato-takeru's decision to disguise himself as a female consort in order to gain proximity to, then assassinate, a Kumaso chieftan.

³⁸ According to an introductory account in Morris, "The *Nihon shoki* and *Kojiki* accounts differ significantly in details, though both describe Yamato-takeru at length." Ivan Morris, "Yamatao Takeru," *The Nobility of Failure:*

sacred Yamato line, which claimed imperial power over central portions of the Japanese archipelago but was, during the period corresponding to the legend, more engaged in aggressive acquisition of power via conquest of independent groups such as the Emishi. On the other hand, Ashitaka is a young Emishi prince (though there is no historical evidence the Emishi ever had an imperial line), dwelling in an apparently peaceful, marginalized community (five centuries after they were supposedly assimilated or wiped out), led by a shamaness “Wise Woman,” Hii-sama.³⁹ Although Ashitaka

Tragic Heroes in the History of Japan (Tokyo: Tuttle Press, 1974), pp. 1-13. Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi points out that in the *Kojiki*, Emperor Keikō dispatches Yamato-takeru due to fear of his murderous nature, hoping that he will be killed fighting barbarians. In the *Nihon shoki*, Yamato-takeru volunteers for the mission. Also, the *Nihon shoki* vilifies the Emishi more than the *Kojiki* does, and casts their conquest in a logic echoing that of ancient Chinese texts justifying military expeditions against so-called barbarians. See Wakabayashi, *Japanese Loyalty Reconstructed*, pp. 89-91. Also, Edwin Cranston notes that the *Kojiki* “concentrates on the guile, violence, loyalty, and hubris of the hero [Yamato-takeru]—he emerges strongly as a simple and tragic figure...in the *Nihon shoki*, however, the same character spouts reams of high Confucian sentiment.... The effect is noble but remote from the unpretentious lyricism of the Japanese,” in Cranston, “Asuka and Nara Culture: Literacy, Literature, and Music,” *The Cambridge History of Japan, Volume 1: Ancient Japan*, ed. Delmer Brown (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 469.

³⁹ Miyazaki’s depiction of the Emishi community, with its shamaness leader, Hii-sama, recalls the most ancient extant accounts of Japanese communities recorded in the Chinese work, the *Weizhi* (History of the Kingdom of Wei, 220-265). There the Japanese are denigrated as a “dwarf-people” (*Wa*) given to divination, and ruled by Queen Pimiko, a shamaness who “occupied herself with magic and sorcery, bewitching the people.” For a translation, see Wm. Theodore De Bary, et al., comp., *Sources of Japanese Tradition 1* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), pp. 4-7. Since nothing is known about Emishi political organization, it is difficult to claim that Miyazaki inverts Emishi realities by relating them in terms of categories used by Chinese historians to describe ancient Japan. Nevertheless it seems clear that instead of the vacuum of ignorance

possesses a nobility that sets him apart, he is on very human terms with young and old throughout his village. While similar to Yamato-takeru in his status as a prince, Ashitaka is otherwise his antithesis: rather than a divine warrior serving an ambitious, domineering imperial state, he is a culturally content human being, hardly seeking to subjugate other peoples or dominate their ways of life.

Second, Yamato-takeru achieved fame (or notoriety) due to his “rough, fearless nature,” early on manifested when he murdered his elder twin brother in the privy. Fearing his son’s ruthlessness, perhaps even patricide, Emperor Keikō (71-130) sent Yamato-takeru to Kyushu to subdue Kumaso tribes (97) and thus expand Yamato power. Later he was deployed to the northeast to subdue the Emishi (110).⁴⁰ Along the way Yamato-takeru hunted and killed various and sundry deities of nature as if it were sport. Ashitaka, however, is presented as an ethically responsible, spiritually and ecologically sensitive youth, given to gentle pursuits, though trained with a strength enabling him to overcome samurai en masse. Miyazaki allows Ashitaka to slay a deity (the *tatarigami*), and to maim and kill samurai with demonic horseback arrow shots that either dismember or decapitate them. But such displays of superhuman martial skill are few, and only permitted as last resorts for the sake of defending innocents. Even so, because he killed the *tatarigami*, Ashitaka contracts a mortal illness. Still, more than an aggressive warrior he is portrayed as a righteous defender of his village and a ready savior of those in distress. In this respect he more epitomizes, ideologically, postwar Japan’s military commitment to self-defense, than the prewar willingness to engage in

regarding Emishi, Miyazaki offers an idyllic depiction of female rule in the Emishi community, one which casts the latter as akin to the ancient Japanese, prior to their turn away from female rule. It is noteworthy that there are shamans, both male and female, in Ainu cultures that have often been socio-political leaders as well; see Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Illness and Healing Among the Sakhalin Ainu* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 162-175.

⁴⁰ This follows the *Kojiki* account more than the *Nihon shoki*. In the latter, Yamato-takeru volunteers for duty, while in the *Kojiki* he suspects that his father, Emperor Keikō, in dispatching him to fight distant battles, intends to do him in.

aggressive warfare for the expansion and glorification of imperial rule.

Thirdly, Yamato-takeru was sent on distant journeys to fight for the cause of Yamato glory in part because of his violent nature.⁴¹ Before allowing Yamato-takeru to depart for the east, Emperor Keikō focused his son's wrath by vilifying the Emishi as a people living among "evil spirits in the mountains and boisterous demons in the plains that bar the highways and obstruct the roads, causing much suffering to our people."⁴² Ashitaka, however, was sent on his pilgrimage to the southwest, towards the Yamato geopolitical heartland, in order to discover the root of hatred and evil in the world. Hii-sama, the Emishi shamaness, informs Ashitaka that if he can find the source of hate which consumed the *tatarigami*, then his mortal wound might be healed. Ashitaka learns that the rage of the deity resulted from human aggression into its forests, made possible by the deadly arquebus. Thus whereas Yamato-takeru was dispatched by Emperor Keikō to facilitate the spread of imperial civilization into the Emishi homelands, Ashitaka, seeking to end the crisis of hatred and rage, found its cause in the intrusion of civilization into the previously harmonious realms of spirit and nature. Ashitaka thus serves as an ideological critique of both the Japanese past and the aggression of humanity vis-à-vis nature in the contemporary world.

Fourthly, before his journey to subjugate the Emishi, Yamato-takeru visited his aunt, the High Priestess of the Great Shrine of Ise, who provided him with a sword, the *kusanagi no tsurugi*, or "grass-slaying sword," supposedly passed down from Susanoo no mikoto, brother of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu. It was this sword, which Yamato-takeru used to escape a fiery trap laid for him by a Sagami chieftan. In contrast, Ashitaka, before going into exile, is met by Kaya, a simple village girl who secretly violates an Emishi taboo forbidding encounter with a person en route to exile. Kaya violates the taboo in order to give Ashitaka a small crystal knife as a good luck charm. Again, Miyazaki depicts Ashitaka as the antithesis of Yamato-takeru, subverting a legend glorifying imperial expansion by means of a sacred sword, by remaking it into one which highlights the relatively peaceful pilgrimage of Ashitaka via the non-threatening, largely symbolic good luck charm he carries with him. This

⁴¹ *Kojiki*, comp. Aoki, et al., p. 177.

⁴² *Nihon shoki*, ed. Inoue, p. 177.

pilgrimage is supposedly forced on Ashitaka, not by the imperial ambitions of Emishi to lord it over all as divine sovereigns, but by the acute rise of hatred and rage based on evil forces emanating from the southwest. This is a result of the belligerent expansion of humans into the spiritual realm of nature, something Ashitaka must halt in order to survive. Though hardly Gandhian in his non-violence, Ashitaka is, compared to Yamato-takeru, a less heavily armed, relatively pacifistic hero, relying not on sacred weapons but instead his commitment to peace and spiritual harmony.

Fifth, after slaying the Suruga chieftain,⁴³ who tried to incinerate him on a moor where he had been sent to hunt deer, Yamato-takeru's party sailed across the bay between Sagami and Kazusa. En route, they encountered a violent storm sent by a deity whom Yamato-takeru had offended. To appease the kami and save her husband's life, Yamato-takeru's wife, Princess Ototachibana, threw herself into the ocean. Shortly after, the storm subsided. Princess Ototachibana's self-sacrifice, while arguably an act of courage and assertion of strength, also helped establish one of the most egregious patterns of behavior enjoined for women: readiness to martyrdom for the sake of their husbands. Yamato-takeru mourned his wife's demise, exclaiming "*Azuma wa yo!*" (Oh! My Wife), but within days had subdued another deity in Shinano, and then conjugally united with a new consort, Princess Miyazu, despite her menstrual period.⁴⁴

Princess Mononoke offers an inverted analogue: after Ashitaka sustains a mortal gunshot wound while trying to thwart San's attempt to assassinate Lady Eboshi, San, already filled with hatred toward all humans and livid that Ashitaka had foiled her attack, drew her dagger back to plunge it into his neck. Stunned when he responded, "Live! You are beautiful," San suddenly felt pity for Ashitaka and carried him to Shishigami's pond, leaving his lifeless body partially immersed in the water. Later Shishigami arrived and kissed Ashitaka's bleeding wound, healing it completely, but not the deadly disease infecting his arm. When San saw Ashitaka restored to life, she offered him dried meat for sustenance. While saving Ashitaka's life, San resorted to none of

⁴³ The *Nihon shoki* identifies the area of Suruga, while the *Kojiki* states Sagami.

⁴⁴ *Kojiki*, comp. Aoki, et al., pp. 242-244; W. G. Aston, trans., *Nihongi* (New York: Paragon Book Reprint, 1956), pp. 205-208.

Ototachibana's suicidal heroics. Indeed, her first impulse was brutal: to cut Ashitaka's throat. Rather than a distinctly subordinate species, women in *Princess Mononoke* are frighteningly powerful, and at points potentially deadly creatures.

Finally, Yamato-takeru died at the age of thirty after threatening to slay the kami of Mount Ibuki, which had, unknown to him, transformed into a huge boar. Due to this arrogant irreverence, the boar sent a mysterious hailstorm down, causing Yamato-takeru to contract a deranging, mortal illness that soon killed him.⁴⁵ In *Princess Mononoke*, Ashitaka cleanses himself of the rage disease by returning to Shishigami his severed head, which had been shot off by Lady Eboshi and Jikobō in their effort to gain a mountain of gold as a reward from the Japanese emperor for the potion of immortality. Rather than dying tragically as a fallen youth, Ashitaka lives, facilitating the realization of spiritual harmony among all he encounters. Whereas Yamato-takeru's final, regretful thoughts are directed

⁴⁵ Aston identifies the kami of Mount Ibuki as "a great serpent," in *Nihongi*, p. 208; Donald L. Philippi states it was "a wild boar," in Philippi, trans., *Kojiki: Translated with an Introduction and Notes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 246; Kevin Doak relates that Yasuda Yojūrō (1910-1981), the leader of the Romantic School, identified Yamato-takeru's offensive words to the Mount Ibuki *kami*, and the retributive hailstorm that followed, as "the transformative moment" marking "the beginning of the decline of the ancient logic of sequence," and the end of "a time when the Japanese people and their gods 'lived in the same palaces and slept in the same beds' (*dōden kyōshō*)," in Doak, *Dreams of Difference: The Japan Romantic School and the Crisis of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 11, 21. The opening of *Princess Mononoke* suggests that a similar "transformative moment" occurs in the film: the narrator relates, "In ancient times, a land lay covered in forests, where for ages long past dwelt the spirits of the gods. Back then, man and beast lived in harmony. But as time went by, most of the great forests were destroyed. Those that remained were guarded by gigantic beasts who owed their allegiance to the great forest spirit, for those were the days of gods and of demons." To apply Yasuda's analysis to *Princess Mononoke*, the twilight of the age of coexistence of humans and *kami* began with the use of firearms, and ended with the decapitation of Shishigami.

toward his emperor, Ashitaka's last remarks reveal his dedication to the project of building a better society, one in equilibrium with the natural and spiritual realms. In this respect Ashitaka's mission is consonant with the virtue of harmony (*wa*) supposedly extolled by Prince Shōtoku (572-621) in his "Seventeen Point Constitution."⁴⁶ Thus Miyazaki attributes one of the more positive ideals of Japanese political thought not to yet another ancient Yamato prince, Shōtoku, but to an Emishi prince, Ashitaka.⁴⁷

With Ashitaka, Miyazaki subverts the Yamato-takeru legend by inverting most of the major twists in it so as to glorify the model of selfless service to one's community, humanity, the spirits, and the environment via harmonious life with all. Rather than attempting to dominate or subjugate the Yamato forces or the deities of nature, Ashitaka, an Emishi, works with them assisting in the transformation needed for the eventual reconstruction of human society, including both Yamato and non-Yamato. When Ashitaka engages in warfare, it is always defensive, and most frequently for the sake of preserving the spiritual and natural realms. Never is there a hint of war for the sake of imperial glory. Thus, if *Princess Mononoke* endorses any warfare as just, it does so only for the sake of preserving the spiritual and ecological order of the environment against those forces that might destroy it. On the other hand, the Yamato-takeru legend assumes, without explicit question or critique, that war is just provided it serves the expansionist ends of the Yamato state and its "kingly civilization." Ashitaka's legend, then, as created by Miyazaki, both inverts and subverts that of Yamato-takeru at almost every turn.

Critics of literature and film refer to the "intentionalist fallacy" as the mistaken belief that "evidence about the author's pre-textual intentions" is most crucial to establishing "the 'meaning' of the aesthetic object."⁴⁸

⁴⁶ De Bary, *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, p. 48; Nakamura Hajime, "Jūshichijū kenpō," *Shōtoku taishi* (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1970), pp. 409-416.

⁴⁷ Somewhat similarly, Tsutomu Kuji describes Ashitaka as a "conciliator" (*chōteisha*), but does not mention Prince Shōtoku or *wa* in this context, in Kuji, *Mononokehime no himitsu*, pp. 51-55.

⁴⁸ Stephan Collini, "Introduction: Interpretation Terminable and Interminable," *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, ed. Stephan Collini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 6.

This paper assumes that it not necessarily crucial that Miyazaki meant, intentionally, to fashion Ashitaka as an inversion of the Yamato-takeru legend. More significant than Miyazaki's "intent" is that such a reading of the film is coherent and credible. At the same time, the tale of Yamato-takeru has long been one of the most widely known in Japan, and even today is one most children know, at least vaguely.⁴⁹ Undoubtedly, Miyazaki knew the legend, and at the very least worked away from it, perhaps unconsciously if not in purposeful subversion of it. And there were good ideological reasons for doing so. After all, Yamato-takeru is not just a character from ancient histories: early-twentieth century ideologists repeatedly appropriated his legend, readily finding in it traditional inspiration for the militaristic and ultra-nationalistic ambitions of imperial Japan.⁵⁰ For them, he embodied an exemplary willingness to do battle for

⁴⁹ Children's literature on Yamato-takeru includes the picture book by Yoda Junichi, *Yamato-takeru*, illust. Seiichi Tabata, *Ehon mukashibanashi* series, vol. 8 (Tokyo: Kokudoshya, 1968); Keiko Hamada, *Taiyō to tsurugi no uta*, illust. Tashiho Sanzen, *Sōsaku shōnen shōjō shosetsu* series (Tokyo: Jitsugyō no Nihonsha, 1968); and Haruko Akune, *Yamato-takeru*, illust. Watanabe Gaku (Tokyo: Fukuonkan shoten, 1969). Though postwar juvenile literature on Yamato-takeru emphasizes his mythic, tragic nature, prewar children's books were more oriented toward militaristic nationalism. For example, the postscript to Yamagishi explains that it was published to promote in "the nation's children" (*shōkokumin*) the excellent qualities of the "leading race" (*shido minzoku*) for the sake of the future establishment of Greater East Asia. Gaishi Yamagishi, ed., *Yamato-takeru no mikoto*, illust. Harada Naoyasu (Tokyo: Kaihatsu sha, 1943).

⁵⁰ For example, in a popular illustrated work which went through 110 printings in its first year, *Yamato sakura* (Tokyo: Kokushi meiga kankōkai, 1935), featuring the likes of Susanoo, Emperor Jinmu, Empress Jingu, Minamoto Yoritomo, the Soga brothers, Benkei, Yoshitsune, the Akō samurai, etc. Yamato-takeru is depicted twice (pp. 3-4), first disguised as a young woman about to stab the Kumaso chieftan, thus spreading the "majesty" of the imperial throne to barbarian peoples, and second, standing with his "grass slaying sword" in hand, observing his fiery victory over the Sagami chieftan who had tried to burn him to death. Both portray Yamato-takeru as an ever-victorious agent of the emperor, extending imperial

the imperial cause, especially in its conflicts with non-Japanese. Though Yamato-takeru did not die in battle, moments before his death he did regret that he would never again see his emperor, thus exhibiting utter loyalty to the throne and the success of its military ventures against non-Japanese. In the 1930s and 1940s, as Japan extended its hegemony into northeast Asia (rather than northeastern Honshu), as well as southern Pacific territories (rather than Kyushu), the legend was repeatedly invoked as one of the earliest and most sacred expressions of *bushidō*, or the so-called “way of the warrior.”

Princess Mononoke supplants the militaristic nuances still associated with the legend via the creation, through inversion, of Ashitaka, a good, gentle, and righteous warrior fighting for the causes of non-Japanese, the environment, and the integrity of the spiritual world. Perhaps recognizing the ideologically tainted nature of much of Japan’s legendary past, and the Yamato-takeru legend in particular, and realizing the potency

military prowess east and west. Another example of the appropriation of Yamato-takeru for militaristic ends is in Ariyoshi Saeki, *Bushidō hōten* (Tokyo: Nipponsha, 1939), pp. 17-19. Also, Seita Tōma notes how late-Meiji Monbusho sanctioned history textbooks for elementary schools provided glowing accounts of Yamato-takeru, and that the content and spirit of these early lessons was consistent through August 15, 1945, in Tōma, *Yamato-takeru* (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1958), pp. 8-9. Tōma adds that scholars such as Tsuda Sōkichi criticized the veracity of accounts of Yamato-takeru by noting significant differences between the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* versions, but admits that such scholarship was subjected to bitter critique by defenders of Yamato-takeru (pp. 11-12). Postwar studies of Yamato-takeru treat his story as “myth” (*shinwa*) or “legend” (*densetsu*), rather than history, and emphasize the tragic and poetic elements in it, often comparing Yamato-takeru to other tragic figures in ancient mythologies, such as Hercules. For example, see Sunairi Tsuneo, *Yamato-takeru densetsu no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Kindai bungei sha, 1983); and, Atsuhiko Yoshida, *Yamato-takeru to Ōkuninushi Hikaku shinwagaku no kokoromi*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Misuzu shobo, 1979). There are still nearly two thousand shrines in contemporary Japan where Yamato-takeru is fêted with annual matsuri. For a listing of them, see Mitsuru Sakurai, *Yamato-takeru no mikoto ron: Yaizu jinja shi* (Yaizu: Yaizu jinja, 1989), pp. 583-627.

of *anime* for creating new cultural icons, especially among the young, Miyazaki turned to historical fiction in an effort to pioneer, via *anime*, a new, more positive set of legends capable of facilitating Japan's peaceful, ecologically balanced advance into the new millennium.

Princess Mononoke and the Presentation of Women

Miyazaki presents women as being as strong, if not stronger than men.⁵¹ Most noteworthy is *Princess Mononoke*, or San as she is called in the movie itself. San first appears with blood smeared all over her mouth from where she has sucked the poison from a rifle wound in the shoulder of her mother, Moro the wolf demon.⁵² Spitting out the tainted blood, San

⁵¹ *Princess Mononoke's* positive presentation of women contrasts with that found in much of postwar cinema. For a recent study, see Sandra A. Wawrytko, "The Murky Mirror: Women and Sexual Ethics as Reflected in Japanese Cinema," *Japan in Traditional and Postmodern Perspectives*, eds. Charles Wei-hsun Fu and Steven Heine (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 121-168. Wawrytko examines the presentation of women in four films, Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950), Kinugasa Teinosuke's *The Gate of Hell* (*Jigoku kumon*, 1953), Mizoguchi's *The Life of Oharu* (*Saikaku ichidai onna*, 1952), and Shinoda Masahiro's *Double Suicide* (*Shinjū ten no Amijima*, 1969), and finds "each of the central women characters in the films examined here is in some way victimized by...cultural assumptions and accommodations" (p. 125). Wawrytko does not examine the presentation of women in *anime*. She does, however, conclude that Japanese women looking for role models other than those of "the lady or whore" should choose "an older mirror in which to peer, such as that provided by the primal Shinto role models of women and sexuality that preceded Confucian and Buddhist trepidations," especially those of *Amaterasu* and *Ame no Uzume* (pp. 161-162). *Princess Mononoke's* portrayal of San suggests the creation of a new, Shinto-like role model for women, one grown out of traditions revering nature, but not simply reiterating or paraphrasing them. Tsutomu Kuji suggests that San is cast as a "Jomon-style woman," i.e., one harking back to Japanese prehistory, circa 10,000-250 B.C.E., in Kuji, *Mononokehime no himitsu*, pp. 60-62.

⁵² Mark Schilling suggests that San "has her antecedents in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* and François Truffaut's *The Wild Child*. Schilling also notes

glares at Ashitaka, telling him with her eyes that she is far fiercer than he could ever imagine. Though Ashitaka clearly has feelings for her, the reverse is never as evident. In the end, the Princess vows that she must return to live with the wolves, a course more admirable and perhaps heroic than that chosen by Ashitaka, working with those at the rifle factory to build a better society rather than returning to his Emishi village. Most likely it was because of his affection for San that Ashitaka forgot his former community and found a new mission in one closer to her, even as she remained committed to the wolves. San is not alone in her superior strength of character: Lady Eboshi and the brazen women of the factory village are presented as being equally strong, independent and outspoken, if not entirely admirable. They readily upbraid their men, aggressively approach them, at least verbally, engage in physically demanding work with seemingly boundless energy, and even form a militia unit devoted to the defense of their village.

Historical reality for the late-Muromachi period, or for most any epoch in medieval Japan was hardly similar.⁵³ After all, there is no suggestion in *Princess Mononoke* that any of the major women, San, Lady Eboshi, or the women of Tataraba, are beholden to men for their stake in society, despite the fact that political and military developments tended to encourage concentration of a family's fortunes in the hands of one son, typically the eldest, which in turn accelerated the process by which women,

that Miyazaki's 1984 hit, *Kaze no tani no Nausicaa* (Nausicaa of the Valley of Wind) features a "young heroine," Nausicaa, who "battles to survive in a poisoned future world," in Schilling, *Princess Mononoke: The Art and Making*, p. 4. Susan Napier analyzes Nausicaa as "a far more positive role model," if not, by Western standards, "a totally liberated heroine," in Napier, "Vampires, Psychic Girls, Flying Women and Sailor Scouts," pp. 100-103. Other recent studies of female roles in *manga* and *anime* include: Maia Tsurumi, "Gender Roles and Girls' Comics in Japan: The Girls and Guys of Yūkan Club," *Japan Pop!: Inside the World of Japanese Popular Culture*, pp. 171-185; Anne Allison, "Sailor Moon: Japanese Superheroes for Global Girls," *Japan Pop!: Inside the World of Japanese Popular Culture*, pp. 259-278; and Napier, *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke*, pp. 182-184.

⁵³ Napier, *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke*, p. 182.

losing virtually all claims to significant property rights, came to be dependent on their male relations, either their fathers, brothers, husbands, or sons.⁵⁴

If anything, *Princess Mononoke* suggests that there were alternatives for medieval Japanese women, albeit not very appealing ones. San, though heroically brave, lives amongst the wolf demons of the forest, hardly an appealing role. Lady Eboshi manages a factory town producing firearms, mostly relying upon the labor of strong-willed women, once sold to brothels but bought out of that humiliation by Eboshi. Though Eboshi is shrewd, sharp and courageous, her angle on success suggests the extent to which women were marginalized in medieval times. In addition to her ex-prostitute work force, Eboshi also employed lepers in her rifle factory, giving them a productive and meaningful, though hardly desirable task. The collection of outcastes that Eboshi assembled around herself has prompted Kuji Tsutomu to suggest that Eboshi might have been a *burakumin*, or a part of the pariah group ostracized throughout medieval and early-modern Japanese history.⁵⁵

But it can also be argued that Miyazaki's presentation of women in *Princess Mononoke* accentuates somewhat exceptional if not marginal trends of medieval history in which women stood out, despite the forbidding threat of samurai violence. None of the major female roles in Miyazaki's film depict women as being in any way weak, defenseless, shy or relatively inarticulate creatures, in desperate need of male defense or assistance for their survival. If anything Miyazaki's presentation of women acknowledges their unfortunate circumstances, i.e., their marginalization within a sociopolitical system of military rule, but also casts them with a defiant strength meant to make the best of what could easily be construed as an insufferable set of circumstances virtually without options. In this respect, Princess Mononoke as a character might be typed in the same category as the "strong and even domineering women" portrayed in story collections (*setsuwa*), comic plays (*bungaku* and *kyōgen*), and more serious Nō drama. Given the spiritual potency assigned to her and the wolf demons who are her family, she resembles the kind of popular legendary, quasi-

⁵⁴ Susan J. Pharr, "History of Women in Japan," *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, vol. 8 (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1983), p. 258.

⁵⁵ Kuji, *Mononokehime no himitsu*, pp. 65-76.

spiritual persona sometimes described as “the powerful and mysterious ‘snow woman’ (*yuki onna*) and/or ‘mountain woman’ (*yamamba*),” i.e., as a mysterious, eccentric, spiritually potent female capable of superhuman feats and/or appearances, and most typically appearing in a manner that frightens if not terrifies those more ordinary sorts who encounter her.⁵⁶

It should be mentioned that one of the traditional categories of Nō plays, specifically the third “developmental level,” was that of “Wig Plays” (*katsura mono*) or “Female Plays.” Another category, that of “Madness Plays” (*monogurui*), often features deranged women (*kyōjo*). Kunio Komparu has suggested that the “derangement” evident in these plays represents a “release of the self from all normal bounds precipitated when an already abnormal state of mind, created by extreme human suffering or sadness, is suddenly ignited, either by some event or by an explosion of

⁵⁶ Pharr, “History of Women in Japan,” p. 259. Inokuchi Shōji describes the *yuki onna* as “an apparition of a woman dressed in white, believed to appear on snowy nights. Pale and cold like the snow, she is often blamed for mysterious happenings. She is associated with children and is sometimes thought to be a woman who died in childbirth, frequently appearing with a baby in her arms,” in Inokuchi, “*Yamamba*,” *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, vol. 8 (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1983), p. 357; Shōji Inokuchi, “*Yuki onna*,” *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, vol. 8 (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1983), p. 357. Regarding *yamamba*, sometimes called *yamauba*, Inokuchi explains that while “commonly described as a female demon that devours humans the *yamamba* sometimes appears in legends and folklore as a humorous, stupid old hag” (p. 297). A Nō play entitled *Yamauba*, originally written by Zeami (1363-1443) but revised by Komparu Zenchiku, portrays the “old woman of the mountains” as “the fairy of the mountains,” who has managed their seasonal vitality for infinite ages past. According to Arthur Waley’s description of her, the *yamauba* “decks them with snow in the winter, with blossoms in spring; her task carrying her eternally from hill to valley and valley to hill.” Though her “real” form is that of an old, thin-faced woman with wild white hair hanging down over her shoulders,” she can appear to stranded travelers as a “mountain girl,” in Waley, *The Nō Plays of Japan* (Rutland, Vt.: Tuttle Co., 1976), p. 247. Princess Mononoke seems closer to the *yamauba* than the *yuki onna*.

violent emotions like love, yearning, or jealousy.”⁵⁷ Komparu suggests that this derangement is “a highly spiritual state accompanied by separation from the self,” one which may take the “form of having another spirit existing within oneself in order to be able to receive signs from the outside or of intentionally replacing one’s own spirit with another.”⁵⁸ Relating this theme to the *Tale of Genji* and the notion of *mononoke*, Doris Barga suggests that Murasaki Shikibu utilized *mononoke*, or spirit possession, as a means of empowering women to challenge the oppressiveness of a male-dominated, aristocratic society wherein polygamy allowed men a number of wives and mistresses, resulting in emotional distress for those rejected.⁵⁹ The case of the Rokujō Lady, so enraged by Genji’s rejection of her that her spirit possessed unto death Genji’s new love, Aoi, is the most famous, and surely one relevant to understanding *Princess Mononoke*.

Again, however, Miyazaki inverts traditional accounts, here literary rather than historical, suggesting that *mononoke*, rather than a “woman’s weapon,” is one deployed by kami, the deities and demons of nature, directed at humanity, both male and female, in the wake of humanity’s rape of the environment and its inherent spiritual order. There is no hint that the spiritual rage and wrath issuing from either the *tatarigami* or Shishigami, for example, actually derived from that of San. Rather than its source, she is the sympathetic midwife of the rage, allying herself with the offended creatures, but fighting physically, selflessly, and heroically, mostly as a human being rather than through circuitous spiritual means. If ancient and medieval drama depicted *mononoke* as a means of empowering women in rebellion against a stifling, humiliating social order, Miyazaki inverts that depiction through *Princess Mononoke* by making it a weapon primarily of the deities and demons, with women such as the Princess depicted as atavistic human allies rather than the actual agents or recipients of spirit possession. Lady Eboshi represents another archetype: the medieval samurai woman who gains political power, or an opportunity to display exceptional bravery in desperate circumstances.

⁵⁷ Kunio Komparu, *The Noh Theatre: Principles and Perspectives* (New York: Weatherhill, 1983), pp. 34-41.

⁵⁸ Komparu, *The Noh Theatre*, p. 37.

⁵⁹ Barga, *A Woman’s Weapon*, pp. 245-250.

Most notably, Eboshi is somewhat reminiscent of Hōjō Masako (1157-1225), wife of Minamoto Yoritomo (1147-1199), and one of the key players in the founding of the Hōjō regency, which governed the Kamakura (1185-1223) *bakufu* in the wake of Yoritomo's demise, and that of his sons. Eboshi's cool courage, even in battle, is reminiscent of women such as Shizuka Gozen, Yoshitsune's (1159-1189) mistress who defiantly danced before her captors. While these medieval women do offer more than significant historical justification for the creation of a strong-willed female leader such as Eboshi, they differ from Eboshi insofar as each rose to power via their associations with their husband's campaigns or military projects. Without Yoritomo's rise to shogun it is difficult to imagine Masako's assumption of power as shogunal regent. Similarly, without the military campaigns of Minamoto Yoshinaka (1154-1184), it seems farfetched to imagine Tomoe Gozen riding into battle and beheading men. Eboshi, on the other hand, is presented as a woman who has risen by her own strength, making her rather unique as a female of medieval Japan.

The women, ex-prostitutes, working for Eboshi, are arguably the most historically credible group in *Princess Mononoke*. In her history of Japanese women, Susan Pharr relates that "altered family patterns, war, and other social changes such as the development of cities led to a growth of prostitution, and brothels were established at major transportation centers." Regarding samurai women, Pharr adds that they were "expected to strive, and even die, for family honor if necessary; to help defend their homes, they were trained in certain martial arts, especially the use of a blade-headed staff (*naganata*)." ⁶⁰ *Princess Mononoke* merges these strands, liberating women from the brothel, not by a man but instead through the work of Eboshi, and then presenting the ex-prostitutes as ready to fight with muskets rather than *naganata* in defending their factory village.

Pharr's study does not suggest that martial skills were cultivated among medieval women at large, but it does not seem beyond credibility that even the lower orders would have expected women to take part in self-defense if necessary. While female warriors were surely not the norm, in highlighting this aspect of the medieval past Miyazaki was arguably accentuating a positive periphery of Japanese history *vis-à-vis* women.

⁶⁰ Pharr, "History of Women in Japan," p. 258.

Given that the 1980s and 1990s have frequently been called the *onna no jidai*, or “the age of women,”⁶¹ there can be little question that Miyazaki’s presentation of a host of strong, valiant, spiritually potent women played well with those intent upon establishing a heightened consciousness of what has been, until recently, a muted historical theme, the diversity and continuity of significant female roles in Japan’s past.

Lady Eboshi, Firearms and Consciousness of the West

For Western viewers familiar with Japanese history, one disturbing aspect of *Princess Mononoke* is that Miyazaki chose to situate the Manichean struggle between the forces of humanity and divinity in what would seem to be the age of Japan’s first major encounter with the West, the mid-16th century, when Portuguese introduced firearms, in the form of the arquebus, and Christianity, as taught by Jesuits, Franciscans, and Dominicans. Miyazaki’s narrative does not explicitly acknowledge this as such, suggesting instead that the period in which the film was set was perhaps more than a century before the coming of the Portuguese. However the presence of firearms (*ishibiya*)⁶² and their prominence throughout the film, leaves little room for questioning whether the crisis of hatred, rage and imbalance, spiritually and ecologically, which plagued Japan generally and Ashitaka’s village in particular, resulted, even if only indirectly, from the impact of the West, and most conspicuously the introduction of firearms. After all, as the *tatarigami* lay dying, an iron clump erupted from his oozing, disintegrating viscera. Although at that point, the identity of the bullet was not clear, Ashitaka’s journey ultimately introduced him to a village of ironworkers led by Lady Eboshi.

⁶¹ Kumiko Fujimura-Fanselow, “Introduction,” *Japanese Women: New Feminist Perspectives on the Past, Present, and Future*, eds. Fujimura-Fanselow and Atsuko Kameda (New York: Feminist Press, 1995), p. xvii.

⁶² Takayanagi and Takeuchi refer to this as another name for the firearms introduced to Japan by “the ships of Southern barbarians.” Some sources, however, identify the *ishibiya* as a “hand cannon of Chinese origin.” Since Miyazaki does not address the origins of the *ishibiya* specifically, the matter is of course open to question. Mitsutoshi Takayanagi and Rizō Takeuchi, eds., “*Ishibiya*,” *Kadokawa Nihonshi jiten* (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1987), p. 57.

Under Eboshi's direction, the village had thrived as a manufacturing town producing rifles and intent on aggressively mining the great forest where San and her wolf-mother, Moro, lived. Arguably, much of the madness that infected the land could be traced to the poison that entered the body politic, the spiritual cosmos, and the realm of nature, with the introduction of western things, symbolically demonized by the arquebus bullet.⁶³ After all, Eboshi and her cadres regularly attacked Moro and the wolf gods, and other kami intent on preserving the spiritual balance of the forest, with their rifles, blasting away at them until finally the iron bullets broke the bones of their transformed bodies and crippled their spirits with a hatred that typically led to self-destruction. For the sake of progress, it seems, Eboshi and her settlement engaged in systematic deicide, or a slaughter of kami, a horrific crime made possible, the film implies, by the introduction of the arquebus.

Admittedly this is an overly simplistic reading of Miyazaki's film, for it does not specifically present Westerners at all: rather it portrays Japanese, in this case the villagers led by Eboshi, as conspicuous culprits. Also, Miyazaki makes no allusion, implicit or explicit, to Christianity, the religious force associated with the spread of firearms in Japan throughout the second half of the sixteenth-century. Instead, Eboshi is said to have obtained the rifles from Jikobō, the crafty, double-dealing Buddhist monk.

⁶³ Conrad Totman relates that the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were times of massive deforestation, resulting from the "feverish building and burning" that accompanied war and peace. Mining for precious metals such as gold and silver added to the depletion of natural resources. In this respect, Miyazaki's identification of the Muromachi period as one of ecological crisis is accurate, in Totman, *Early Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 226. Along other lines, Delmer Brown states that "the heroic military exploits of Yamato-takeru" reflected the aggressive Yamato expansion into the west and northeast made possible "by a far more extensive use of iron weapons." The age in which Yamato-takeru supposedly lived, then, was similarly one of ecological crisis, in part resulting from new developments in military technology, in Brown "The Yamato Kingdom," *Cambridge History of Japan, Volume 1: Ancient Japan*, ed. Delmer Brown (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 120.

Nevertheless the film does suggest through the historical symbolism of firearms, that an indirect legacy of Japan's first encounter with the West was an infectious hatred, capable of killing even the gods and demons of nature, transmitted by gunshot and aggressive abuse of the ecosystem, and made possible by weapons sold by Europeans. While Miyazaki reportedly does not see *Princess Mononoke* as a sweeping condemnation of the West, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that "things Western" are at the heart of the problem, and, furthermore, that had the West not intruded, somehow the human-divine harmony which Ashitaka sought to recover, and which Miyazaki suggests existed, might somehow still have prevailed.

While this anti-Western nuance appears difficult to avoid, there is one possible explanation for the presence of the firearms, which does not involve the West. Soranaka Isao relates "there is scattered evidence that the Japanese already had some basic knowledge of explosive weapons before the Portuguese arrived." Soranaka explains,

Mongol invaders in the late 13th century had surprised the samurai defenders by using weapons that are now believed to have been a type of explosive cannonball, known among contemporary Japanese as *tetsuhō* or *teppō*. Historical documents, including the *Hōjō godai ki*, also suggest that copper-barreled handguns, developed by the Chinese in the 13th century, were introduced at the port of Sakai in 1510 and actually used in combat by some warriors in the eastern provinces as early as 1548.

Soranaka acknowledges, however, "it was the introduction of European firearms that marked the beginning of the widespread use of such weapons."⁶⁴ Conceivably, Miyazaki might have had this relatively little known footnote to the history of firearms in mind when he cast them as crucial players in *Princess Mononoke*. If so, then he again would be evoking a form of historical inversion, denying that firearms and the evil that flowed from them was something that could be blamed on the West. Rather, his suggestion would be, on the one hand, that Japanese were intelligent and technologically sophisticated enough either to develop firearms themselves, without gaining them from the West, or to master the

⁶⁴ Isao Soranaka, "Introduction of Firearms," *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1983), p. 279.

technology they had previously been exposed to in combat with Mongol invaders. While these are real possibilities, it remains difficult to avoid the conclusion that for most viewers, the medieval presence of firearms, especially ones resembling arquebuses as those in *Princess Mononoke* do, will be associated with the West, and given the nuances developed in the film, the associations will be decidedly negative.

While this paper does not intend to offer even a passing defense of firearms, it must be noted that assigning the crisis of hate and religio-ecological disorder to firearms encourages a kind of *higaisha ishiki*, or “victim consciousness,” which leaves the Japanese seemingly blameless victims of abuse or inhumanity at the hands of evil foreigners who sowed the seeds of destruction within them. While there is undoubtedly some truth in this view, even Miyazaki’s claims that he has depicted Japanese as, in part, the evil-doers seems to be less memorable than the arquebus and the more or less automatic historical associations that it conjures.

Shishigami and Quasi-Shinto Pantheism

Princess Mononoke opens with a beautiful, bird’s eye vista of mist covered mountains. The narrator solemnly relates,

In ancient times a land lay covered in forests where for ages long past dwelt the spirits of the gods. Back then, man and beast lived in harmony. But as time went by, most of the great forests were destroyed. Those that remained were guarded by gigantic beasts who owed their allegiance to the great forest spirit, for those were the days of gods and of demons.

Shortly after the *tatarigami* was mortally wounded, the shamaness Hii-sama respectfully bowed before the boar, identified him as a “nameless god of rage and hate,” and pledged that a mound would be erected to honor him in the hopes that he would “pass on in peace and bear us [the villagers] no hatred.” The boar then cursed the humans, and promised that they would feel his hate and suffer as he had suffered. The shamaness later explained that Ashitaka had been infected by the rage that poisoned the boar after a metal shot shattered his bones and burned his flesh, turning him into a *tatarigami*, a demon of hate and rage.

Identification of Ashitaka as an Emishi prince suggests that Miyazaki has no intention of reviving Shinto for the sake of imperial glorification. At the same time, *Princess Mononoke* does endorse the

conception of Japan as a *shinkoku*, or divine land, one of the notions most emphasized by State Shinto, as well as historically in texts such as the *Jinnō shōtōki* by Kitabatake Chikafusa (1293-1354).⁶⁵ Still, insofar as a narrator, who laments its degeneration—presumably due to the Yamato conquests—broaches the *shinkoku* perspective and insofar as the *shinkoku* ethic is championed by a character explicitly identified as an Emishi prince it can hardly be identified simplistically with Shinto religiosity. After all, the *shinkoku* way of thinking, identifying nature with the spiritual world, is equally characteristic of many ethnic groups, as well as religiously inclined ecologists and environmentalists who view nature as the very body of the divine.⁶⁶

Arguably, Miyazaki's emphasis on the religious, as well as the struggle between natural forces and humanity was meant to provide a spiritual worldview, more or less consonant with that of Shinto, though with a decidedly more universal, multi-ethnic grounding, and at the same time to link that universalism with a new realm of religious activism, the environment. More traditional accounts of the Japanese past, legendary or

⁶⁵ Paul H. Varley, *A Chronicle of Gods and Sovereigns: Jinnō shōtōki of Kitabatake Chikafusa* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

⁶⁶ Katsuichi Honda relates that the notion of *kamui* in Ainu religiosity, e.g., “is broad, including the spirits of the dead as well as good and evil deities and demons.” Honda characterizes Ainu life as, “One with all the other lives of great nature, Ainu people lived with *kamui* (pantheistic spirits), leading a life of ‘ethnic self-determination’.... Contrary to the perspective of modern Western science, which came to approach even living phenomena as ‘things,’ the knowledge and skills of the Ainu were based on viewing even ‘things’ considered inanimate as having life,” in Honda, *Harukor: An Ainu Woman's Tale*, trans. Kyoko Selden (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 11, 55. Watanabe adds, “Every topographical feature such as hill, river, and sea, was seen as the field of activity of these *kamui* groups.” Hitoshi Watanabe, *The Ainu Ecosystem: Environment and Group Structure* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1972), p. 69. If Emishi can be identified with Ainu, then the pantheism (and respect for the environment which might issue from it) that *Princess Mononoke* promotes could be as easily equated with Emishi-Ainu beliefs as Shinto.

historical, would have featured persons identifiable as Shinto clergy, but in *Princess Mononoke* they are not to be found. One noteworthy allusion to Shinto is Miyazaki's endearing depictions of *kodama*, or tree spirits, as little white creatures living in the forest and serving as guides for those who peacefully pass through it. The Team Ghiblink website, however, notes that since the name is written in *katakana*, not *kanji*, "it could also mean 'small ball' or 'small spirit.'" It adds, "Although *kodama* (a tree spirit) appears in many Japanese folktales, *kodama* as a little white creature is Miyazaki's creation."⁶⁷

Another possibility is that Miyazaki is highlighting an aspect of Shinto, the *kodama*, to accentuate one of the most positive aspects of that form of religiosity, its sanctification of nature. Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801) referred to *kodama* in his *Kojiki den*, observing that, "the term *kami* is applied in the first place to the various deities of heaven and earth who are mentioned in the ancient records...Amongst *kami* who are not human beings I need hardly mention Thunder.... There are also the Dragon, the Echo [called in Japanese *kodama* or the Tree Spirit], and the Fox."⁶⁸ Thus it seems that a religious worldview similar to that of Shinto is expressed at every turn, though its sanctity is most recognized not by the Yamato but by Emishi. Miyazaki's association of Shinto with the Emishi rather than the Yamato groups inverts traditional historical assumptions casting Shinto as the form of religiosity associated with the Yamato imperial line and the Japanese people themselves.

If Miyazaki's goal was to substitute for Shinto a form of religiosity akin to it, but ultimately attributable to the Emishi, then his focus on Shishigami, or the Deer Spirit of the Mountain Forest, might be viewed as a reworking of Amaterasu the Sun Goddess in favor of a supreme nature deity, described by Ashitaka as "life itself," less removed from humanity and more mystically approachable than the Sun Goddess. Another possible line of interpretation views Miyazaki's development of the Deer Spirit of the Mountain Forest as another inversion of the Yamato-takeru legend. The *Nihon shoki* and *Kojiki* relate that after Yamato-takeru "subdued all of the unruly Emishi and pacified the unruly deities of the mountains and rivers," he traveled into the province of Shinano where he killed the deity of a

⁶⁷ See www.nausicaa.net/miyazaki/mh/faq.html#nascot.

⁶⁸ Aston, *Nihongi*, p. 8-9.

verdant mountain, which had taken the form of a white deer, striking it in the eye with a piece of garlic.⁶⁹ Soon after, Yamato-takeru proceeded to Mount Ibuki intending to slay the deity there. That deity then sent down a violent storm of hail and sleet, one that reduced Yamato-takeru to a mortally diseased, deranged stupor. Though Yamato-takeru, according to the *Nihon shoki*, “made an offering of the Emishi,” whom he had earlier captured, to yet another deity, his disease soon killed him, at which point he transformed into a large white bird and flew away into the heavens.⁷⁰

While Yamato-takeru became diseased unto death for killing one mountain deity, transformed into a white deer, and for having threatened to kill another, Ashitaka was healed because he returned to the Deer God of the Mountain Forest his decapitated head. By ultimately respecting the deities of nature, Ashitaka achieved purification and physical redemption, while Yamato-takeru, due to his gratuitous attacks, met tragic death. Arguably the lesson taught by Ashitaka is simply a more positive version of the one learned, the hardest way possible, by Yamato-takeru, that engaging the deities of nature in frivolous battle is senselessly suicidal. Though it might be argued, then, that the message Miyazaki advances is essentially Shinto in nature, by linking it to Ashitaka, it acquires an Emishi identity, one which privileges those marginalized, ultimately lost peoples, with a kind of familiar, but ethnically reformulated, religious integrity that was surely meant to be viewed by the audience as worthy of emulation.

Nevertheless, the subplot in *Princess Mononoke* relating the attempt by Jikobō, the rogue Buddhist, and Eboshi to decapitate Shishigami in order to win a reward offered by the Japanese emperor, casts the Yamato imperial line in the worst possible light,⁷¹ at the center of deicide and ecological degradation, even while arguably alluding to a famous episode in Shinto mythology in which Amaterasu, having been harassed by Susanoo, retreated into a cave and left the world in utter darkness, threatening its warmth and ultimate vitality. Somewhat analogously, the decapitation of Shishigami leads to hypertrophy of the deity’s terrifying night body, and the threat that its divine yet deadly cytoplasm might envelop and suffocate the

⁶⁹ Philippi, *Kojiki*, p. 242; Aston, *Nihongi*, pp. 207-208.

⁷⁰ Aston, *Nihongi*, pp. 209-210.

⁷¹ Iwatani, “Kinyō bunka bideo: *Mononokehime*,” p. 43.

earth as it searches for its severed head in a state of apocalyptic anger. Only after Ashitaka returns the head to Shishigami does the divine beast assume its beautiful form, and the balance of nature is again restored. Thus, rather than rehearse the old Shinto legends Miyazaki offers an ideologically clean mythology, one close to Shinto in important themes but decidedly different in detail and alleged origin. Miyazaki's historical fiction thus articulates a new history and a new religiosity facilitating greater respect for, even veneration of, the ecological order. In traditional legends Miyazaki found too little that could be unambiguously used, or that was not already tainted by earlier ideological manipulation.

Buddhism, as represented by Jikobō, offers little that is inspiring or positive. Rather, Jikobō is a duplicitous, self-serving cynic, always ready to justify via twisted logic whatever he wants. Along decidedly pessimistic lines, in one of his first conversations with Ashitaka, Jikobō relates that "War, poverty, sickness, starvation. The human world is crowded with the dead who died swallowing their resentment. If you are talking about a curse, then this whole world is a curse." While Jikobō does help Ashitaka buy a bag of rice, thus doing one good deed, he does so by conning the rice seller into thinking that the piece of gold given him by Ashitaka is worth far more than it actually was. Although Jikobō directs Ashitaka towards Shishigami, he does so for his own purposes, apparently thinking that Ashitaka, a demonic archer, might help him in securing Shishigami's head. It was also Jikobō who first supplied Eboshi with firearms, and then later persuaded her to help him in attempting to decapitate Shishigami. When Ashitaka foiled that effort, returned the severed head to the Shishigami, and restored balance to the forest, Jikobō's only conclusion was, "I give up! You can't win against fools."

While a source of comic relief, Jikobō can hardly be construed as representing any serious religious alternative offered by the film. If anything, the monk represents a religion too worldly and too cynical for its own good, one incapable of grasping the gravity of the crucial balance between humanity, nature and the divine necessary for satisfactory life in this world. Though Miyazaki's presentation of Buddhism through Jikobō might only be construed as a critique of Buddhism, and not of Japanese religiosity generally, nor Shinto in specific, one could easily argue that just as Buddhism constituted the dominant form of spiritual engagement in the Muromachi, Miyazaki's humorous yet unappealing casting of it was meant as an overall questioning

of the value of tradition in the face of a crisis for existence, ecologically and spiritually, in the contemporary world. As a result, Miyazaki inverted the religious order, privileging the supposed spiritual worldview of the long-hidden Emishi, while lampooning that of the dominant tradition. In the process, as with the inversions of Yamato-takeru, the role of women, and the legacy of the West, Miyazaki created a new historical perspective meant to inspire, more than received tradition might have, renewed awareness of the spiritual importance of harmony with the ecosystem and the realm of spirits.

Epilogue: The Problem with Miyazaki's Legend

While *Princess Mononoke* is, as historical legend, superior to most found in traditional literature as it relates to the struggle between Japan and the Emishi, and more generally Japanese civilization and the realms of nature and the numinous, insofar as the film concludes with an optimistic ambiguity, it can hardly be considered problem free. Viewers might find solace in the victory of Ashitaka over Eboshi and Jikobō, not to mention the defeat of the shadowy samurai forces presumably representing the expansionistic imperial regime of the Yamato state. Nonetheless, committed environmentalists will find the conclusion anticlimactic due to its endorsement of some kind of compromise between the forces of aggressive growth, the environment and the spiritual realm. Such compromise might usher in a mere truce that barely undermines the human putsch, even as it sounds the death knell of the ecosystem and the spiritual universe, as they had existed. After all, the film concludes with Shishigami, the supreme deity of the innermost natural sanctuary as yet unconquered by human advances, being decapitated by gunfire, an explosive dismemberment warning of its ultimate demise. San realistically declares, "even if it comes back, this is no longer Shishigami's forest. Shishigami is dead." In a way reminiscent of Krishna's advice to Arjuna, delivered in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, denying that death can ever really occur, Ashitaka consoles San by saying, "Shishigami cannot die. It is life itself. It has both life and death. It told me to live."

Ashitaka's words are comforting, upon first hearing, but they ring less true every subsequent time, especially given that for a deity such as Shishigami the disgrace and humiliation of decapitation would be tantamount to death itself. Shishigami might live, but with the threat of firearms (and, as we all know, much worse) challenging the integrity of its

existence, the latter becomes a relatively mute and substantially meaningless point. One can only wonder whether Shishigami might, for example, end up exemplifying “life itself” encaged in a zoo. While the return of its head affords it a degree of final dignity, Shishigami is equally disgraced by Miyazaki insofar as the director has Ashitaka deliver it. In his rage, Shishigami might have destroyed the entire universe, clumsily searching for unity within himself, and finding it only in apocalypse. That such a deity would be so inept in recovering his head makes him appear bumbling and surely lacking in anything near omniscience. While it might be unfair to fault it for the latter, undoubtedly Shishigami’s defeat at the hands of the humans signals if not an outright destruction of the gods, then their decided subordination to the realm of human power.

Equally ominous for any real affirmation of environmentalism is Ashitaka’s decision to remain within the Yamato body politic rather than return to his Emishi village. One might object that Ashitaka had earlier declared himself “dead” to his village, a death encoded ritually via his cutting off his hair. Mutually, the village had deemed him dead, recognizing his self-imposed exile. That notwithstanding, Ashitaka’s return to Emishi life and the close communion with nature it embodied, would have sent a more powerful message to viewers than does his decision to become a part of Lady Eboshi’s village and make it a better one. The very ambiguity of what Ashitaka and Eboshi envision as a “better village” will leave only naive viewers with a sense of reassurance that things are going to improve. One does not need to be thoroughly cynical to recall that Eboshi’s village, despite the harbor it offered to lepers and prostitutes, was engaged in the aggressive manufacture of firearms, producing new and more refined lines even within the course of the movie. A “better village,” then, for Eboshi, might mean little more than one fully capable of decapitating and destroying Shishigami. And, given the cool-headed cynicism that regularly issues from Jikobō as well as the smooth double-talk that make him so appealing, one can only wonder whether his final line, “I give up! You can’t win against fools,” refers to the supposed idealism of Ashitaka and the newfound faith of Eboshi and the others or serves as a disarming tactic, making viewers chuckle even as they, in swallowing such facile lines, cast themselves equally as fools.

BOOK REVIEWS

Elise K. Tipton and John Clark, eds., *Being Modern in Japan: Culture and Society from the 1910s to the 1930s*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000. 224 pages. ISBN: 0824823605.

Reviewed by Scott P. O'Bryan

A decade-long fascination with the culture and experience of modernity in early twentieth-century Japan shows little indication of abating among today's scholars of history, literature, and art—and rightly so. Intense focus on the emergence of modern cultural forms and practices during the interwar era is, in part, a response to what the time advertised about itself. Certainly readers of Elise K. Tipton's and John Clark's *Being Modern in Japan* will be left with little doubt either about the frequency with which contemporary commentators declared *modanizumu* and *bunka* the signs of the time or about the intensity of contention over the meaning of those terms. But interest today in what seems to be the rise of modern culture during the interwar years also remains strong because, even after scholars carefully dethroned our more simplistic notions about the flowering of Taisho democracy and the like, the era still seems in part a time of promise, politically perhaps, but also culturally. Our views of the period retain a lingering nostalgia for the changes in daily life and mass culture of the time that seemed to offer the possibility of new liberating forms of subjectivity and cultural expression.

Tipton, known best for her work on the *Tokkō* (Special Higher Police) of the 1930s and 1940s, and Clark, the author and editor of several important volumes on Asian art and modernity, are to be lauded for bringing together a diverse group of scholars in *Being Modern in Japan* to explore the variety of ways in which Japanese labored to understand cultural and social change in the years roughly bounded by the First World War and the beginning of Japan's second war in China. The editors have included the works of specialists in the history of art, design, literature, and society in an effort to define precisely "what being modern meant in Japan" (p. 8) during the period from the 1910s to the 1930s. The book is a collection of eleven essays drawn from a symposium held at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia in 1998. It is a worthy volume that

well illuminates the broad array of domains in which questions of modernity and its cultural modes mattered to Japanese of the time.

While a few of the chapters are somewhat uneven in style and message, many are extremely good. The very strongest do a careful job of revealing how the meanings of the economic, social and cultural transformations so trumpeted at the time—individualism, urbanization, mass consumption, and so on—were in part shaped by the ways changing modes of representation were employed to interpret those new developments. Gennifer Weisenfeld’s intelligent essay, for example, on the transformation of artisanal design into a professional artistic field traces the establishment of *shōgyō bijutsu* (commercial art) through the career of Hamada Masuji. As chief editor of the multi-volume *Gendai shōgyō bijutsu zenshū* (*Complete Collection of Commercial Art*), Hamada played a critical role in codifying the specialized knowledge of the modern designer and putting art to commercial use in the marketplace. Creating demand for commercial art among retailers and such giants of the emerging consumer packaged goods and pharmaceutical industries as Lion, Kao, Shiseido, and Hoshi, Hamada “paved the way,” as Weisenfeld felicitously writes, “for both a commercialization of aesthetics and an aestheticization of commerce” (p. 77).

Jordan Sand offers a similarly sensitive analysis in his chapter on competing attempts by architects and social reformers during the Taishō period to define *bunka jūtaku* (culture houses) as the appropriate forms of dwelling for the modern age. Taking the “Culture Village” model house show at Ueno Park of 1922 as his starting point, Sand skillfully demonstrates that architects and others responded to the emerging idea of mass markets by the “rendering visible” (p. 103) of dwellings in a variety of physical and discursive ways that contributed to their aestheticization and, in essence, one surmises, their commodification. His point that the “cultured life” was highly contested terrain is little surprising by itself, but Sand extends this idea significantly to suggest that the much touted rise of mass markets during the Taishō years might best be understood less in terms of markets for actual cultural goods and more in terms of newly competitive and fragmented markets for polemical contests about what the cultured life really meant and about appropriate social prescriptions for achieving it.

Sandra Wilson’s instructive essay, “The Past in the Present,” examines the function of wars in constructing what she calls a “pedigree” of Japanese modernity that by the 1920s and 1930s rested in large part on “a perceived

capacity to go to war and a willingness to use war as a political instrument” (p. 170). As Wilson demonstrates, the standard narratives of modernity by the 1930s drew on the entire range of Japanese conflicts from the time of the Meiji Restoration to provide evidence of modern Japan’s national power, territorial coherence, spiritual unity, and international equality with world powers. While focusing on the “dominant narrative” of Japan’s wars as modernity, Wilson is also careful to show the ambiguities and mutability of such modern orthodoxies. Her essay is particularly illuminating where she shows how private and less heroic memories were often the most compelling competitors to official versions of wars past.

Others essays in the volume also make valuable contributions, including John Clark’s chapter exploring the ways in which changing reprographic technologies and graphic styles gave rise to new kinds of modern visual spaces, Omuka Toshiharu’s examination of correspondence columns in art magazines as a lens on the formation of audiences for modern art, and Elise Tipton’s treatment of new urban cafés as a discursive site for anxious contention among social critics over perceived cultural decline. In another chapter, Kashiwagi Hiroshi writes about attempts to apply concepts of rationalization and efficiency to interior design. He seems in places, however, too easily to assert a direct translation of representations in the media to real experience or attitudes, a problem that Barbara Hamill Sato might have considered as well in her otherwise fascinating piece on mass magazines and middle-class women readers.

The writing in parts of the volume might have benefited from further sharpening. The prose in the introductory essay by Tipton and Clark, in particular, makes it a bit difficult to follow the train of the arguments and summaries there. Readers might also find themselves wishing that the introduction went further in defining the relationship, as the editors understand it, between ideas of Westernization, modernization, modernism and modernity that were often unreflexively conflated by commentators themselves at the time and frequently continue to be by scholars and journalists alike today.

Being Modern in Japan joins a growing body of important research, represented by works ranging from editor Sharon A. Minichiello’s *Japan’s Competing Modernities* to Stephen Vlastos’ edited volume, *The Mirror of Modernity*, and Harry D. Harootunian’s *History’s Disquiet*, on the relation in Japanese society between a variety of modernisms and the lived experiences of modernity. Taken together, the essays in *Being Modern in Japan* well document the complex relationships between the texts produced

by various literate arbiters of modern taste and experience; official state policies; changing modes and technologies of representation in print, image, and design; the images of alternative modern subjectivities embraced by reading and viewing publics; and daily life. Much of the putative rise of individualism and consumerism in the early twentieth century remained more image than reality for most Japanese until after the end of the Second World War. Yet *Being Modern in Japan* and like-minded studies help reveal the hopes and anxieties that modern change prompted among Japanese during the years in which these developments first suggested themselves. Ample illustrations throughout the volume provide important support to the essays. The strongest pieces would make suitable reading for upper level undergraduate courses as well as graduate courses concerned with issues of culture, modernity and the twentieth century.

NHK International *A Bilingual Guide to the Japanese Economy*. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2001, 368 pp. ISBN: 4770027826

Reviewed by Kiyoshi Kawahito

Despite a considerable interest in Japanese economy and business management, as well as a sizable increase in the number of non-Japanese experts in the field, publication of English-language works on the subject suitable as general textbooks has been very limited in the last ten years. A major reason seems to be that the country's economy and business practices have been undergoing rapid and significant changes in many areas since the collapse of the "bubble" at the beginning of the 1990s. Potential textbook authors have been unable to keep abreast of important developments in all relevant areas to come up with a wide range of topics that does not become obsolete quickly.

The paucity of the availability of such textbooks in turn has made it difficult for typical U.S. universities, where students are expected to buy only one or two required books, to offer an effective introductory course on the subject. The instructor cannot compel students to purchase several specialized books (on economic history, industrial structure, labor market, finance and banking, international trade and investment, government policies, business management, social and cultural framework, and the like), in lieu of one general book or two. On the other hand, compiling an up-to-date reading list and making the literature available in the library for the

students would be a cumbersome task. The latest book by the NHK International, *A Bilingual Guide to the Japanese Economy*, is a welcome addition from the above perspective. It has several good features, although it is far from an ideal textbook.

First, the book, which is divided into four parts (Part I “Japanese-style Management,” Part II “The Working World,” Part III “Postwar Government Economic Policy,” and Part IV “The Japanese Economy and International Society”), covers numerous economic, business, and social topics in 45 chapters. For example, Part I deals with elements of Japanese business culture, including executive salaries, quality control activities, research and development, high technology application, lifetime employment, seniority system, manpower development, labor unions, *keiretsu*, cross-share holding, market share consciousness, and corporate restructuring. Similarly, Part III deals with key topics in the economic development of Japan since 1945, such as the role of MITI, export promotion, technological buildup, financial industry crisis, service industry expansion, regulations and deregulations, industrial concentration, social capital, and consumer welfare.

Secondly, the book covers not only the traditional norms of Japanese economy and business but also notable changes that took place in the 1990s up to year 2000. The original version of the book published in 1995 was based on the texts of a serialized Radio Japan broadcast from April 1993 to March 1994. The broadcast was a major economic project of the NHK Overseas Broadcasting Department, which collaborated closely with the Economic Research Department of the Daiwa Institute of Research. The current edition was published in 2001, with some consulting assistance from the *Mainichi Newspaper*, adding new topics, updating and revising discussions in the earlier edition, and incorporating the latest data. The new topics include trade restriction and trade liberalization, appreciation of the yen, overseas production, international economic assistance, deregulation, aging population, government reforms, private sector restructuring, and the like.

Other attractive features include the book’s availability in paperback, use of a Q&A (question-and-answer) style presentation of the content, and incorporation of quizzes as discussion openers. These features make the book interesting and easy to read. In addition, for those who are eager to learn Japanese-English or English-Japanese translations of economic and business literature, this book should be a treasure; the same content is

presented in Japanese and in English side by side, although the translation work is poor at times.

On the negative side, it should be pointed out that this book alone is not adequate even for any introductory course on Japanese economy and business, in terms of thoroughness in topical coverage and updated information. For example, the book almost totally leaves out the discussion of the impact of the country's geography, history, religion, philosophy, education, language, politics, and the like on its economic structure and business practices. It contains little updating on such crucial topics as lifetime employment, seniority wage, and *keiretsu*, despite conspicuous changes that have taken place in recent years.

The deficiency should be dealt with by additional purchase of such annual publications as *Japan Economic Almanac* by the Nikkei Weekly of the Nihon Keizai Shimbun and *Japan: An International Comparison* by the Keizai Koho Center, particularly the former if the students can afford it. Some internet sources, including the home pages of JETRO and the Keidanren, can also be used as supplements.

Ian Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000. 310 pp. ISBN: 0-8248-2340-0.

Reviewed by Daniel A. Metraux

Monday, March 20, 1995 was a beautiful clear spring day when five members of the small religious sect Aum Shinrikyo conducted chemical warfare on the Tokyo subway system using sarin gas. It was the first postwar example of mass terrorism directed indiscriminately against a helpless public. Like the September 11, 2001 terrorists who attacked the World Trade Center and Pentagon, Aum's alleged goal had been to kill thousands of people, but fortunately the ineptitude of Aum's scientists reduced the toll to twelve dead and several thousand injured. After the attack Japanese scholars and the media engaged in considerable soul-searching to determine how and why such shocking violence could occur in Japan, a nation well known for its safety and orderly ways.

The leading scholars on Aum are Professors Shimazono Susumu of Tokyo University and Ian Reader of the Lancaster University (UK). It is necessary to examine all of their books and articles on the sect to get an in-

depth view of how Aum evolved into a murderous organization that vowed to destroy the world around it for its own good. Reader's *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan* is perhaps the best work by a Western scholar on the process that led to Aum's violent outburst. It presents a superb overview of Aum Shinrikyo's short infamous history in Japan.

When Asahara Shoko (birth name: Matsumoto Chizuo) founded Aum in the early 1980s, there was little to distinguish it from many of the so-called "new new religions" (*shinshin shukyo*) that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, but by the late 1980s and certainly by the early 1990s, it had veered off in a direction of its own. Reader offers the following observation:

When Asahara Shoko first set up his yoga group in 1984, the group he established had not set its aims on causing mayhem or mass murder, and its interests appear to have been primarily located in yoga, spiritual development, and the attainment of psychic powers. Even when, from around 1985, its leader began to have visions of a sacred mission, Aum's orientation remained optimistic and its incipient message of salvation affirmed spiritual transformation rather than the destruction and violence that became paramount in later Aum teachings and actions. Within that optimistic vision, however, there were latently violent images of a sacred war, which over the years became transformed into real conflict as Aum's view of the future turned dark and catastrophic. This change was conditioned by the gap between Aum's expectations and aspirations on the one hand and the realities of its experience on the other. Asahara visualized his movement and himself in grand, messianic terms; however, its growth did not match these cosmic expectations while the public response to his message was, at the very least, indifferent. The contrast between expectations and realities demanded explanations and influenced Aum's view of the world at large. As a result, Aum became more withdrawn and introverted, turning away from the optimism of world salvation, creating an internal religious hierarchy which progressively elevated the status and power of its guru and his followers, and embracing catastrophic visions of the future, at first internally with the beatings administered to disciples and later with murders carried out to silence opponents. This path of violence was not so much a planned development as it was a process in which Aum reacted to events in ways that sought to bolster Asahara's authority in the

face of setbacks. Such responses caused Aum to amend its doctrines in the light of these changing circumstances and to assume ever more confrontational postures (pp. 231-232).

Aum's inclination towards violence increased as it continued to separate itself from mainstream society.

Aum rapidly set itself apart, creating a spiritual hierarchy that claimed superiority over the world at large. Due to the continuing failures of its mission – or, rather, in Aum's terms, the refusal of the world to listen – its alienation from society increased, and as it did so, it constructed an alternative and self-directed view of morality. Its doctrines developed accordingly, sanctifying acts that were committed in order to protect the position and authority of its leader and to safeguard what it saw as its mission of truth. As it followed this path, Aum lost its grasp of external reality and turned inwards into a self-constructed world in which all who remained outside the movement were unworthy while those inside were transformed into sacred warriors who believed that they could kill with impunity and that in so doing, they could save those they killed. The tragedy of Aum Shinrikyo is not just that its symbolic fight against evil and for world salvation was transformed into a real and brutal fight which resulted in indiscriminate murder, but that in claiming to operate on exalted spiritual ground beyond the boundaries of normal morality, it severed all links with the spiritual base to which it aspired (pp. 248-249).

Reader's study is especially valuable because of his frequent comparisons with other extremist religious sects including Heaven's Gate, Solar Temple, Branch Davidians and the Rajneesh and Jim Jones movements. All of these groups started off as relatively moderate and optimistic alternative religious ventures that tried to gain a significant religious base of support. Their leaders became frustrated and angry and increasingly isolated from society when it appeared that the public was paying no heed to their ideas or pleas for support. They later became paranoiac and self-destructive when faced with major public criticism and possible desertions of many of their members. These groups finally destroyed themselves through a crescendo of violence that always achieved considerable public attention. This violence was generally directed inward against their own members who either committed mass suicide (Jonestown, Solar Temple, and Heaven's Gate) or who died when attacked by outside

authorities (the Branch Davidians). Aum differed in that its final act of violence was directed at the public rather than its own members.Re

The March 1995 subway massacre, according to Reader's speculation, occurred when Aum leaders realized that a major police raid that would shut down their group was imminent. Aum sought one final orgasm of violence that would win it considerable public attention and blaze its name into history. "Asahara had, as a result of the subway attack, achieved a level of power, attention and influence that he could never otherwise have gained and that no postwar Japanese government has ever had. He no longer spoke to a small dedicated band of followers, but could seize the attention of a nation and, indeed, the world at large, and could influence the movements of millions of people" (p. 220).

Reader theorizes that Aum's legacy tells us far more about tendencies more common to some isolated religious movements than problems existing in contemporary Japanese society. He concludes that Aum should be studied as an extreme example of a religious organization that because of its unconventional religious characteristics comes into friction with mainstream society and, because of the friction, turns to violence. Reader's case is strengthened by his comparisons with other 1990s sects around the world whose history and destiny closely parallel that of Aum.

Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan includes a brief section portraying Aum's initially very successful but ultimately failed attempt to build a strong base in Russia. Aum's venture into Russia in 1992-95 mirrors its meteoric rise and fall in Japan. Asahara and Aum attracted considerable media attention, access to several key political figures, and a rapid rise to as many as 30,000 members in 1992 and 1993. There were also attempts to acquire Russian military weapons and technology including atomic weaponry. Aum's entry onto the Russian scene in the early 1990s coincided almost exactly with the chaos facing the region due to the sudden collapse of the Soviet Union and Soviet communism, the dominant ideology that had framed that society for over seventy years. The result was a great upsurge in interests in religious movements. Aum was only one of many religious movements that took advantage of this growing religious market, and its teachings quickly attracted an audience in a most distressed society.

Ultimately, the Russian branch of Aum, like its parent group in Japan, ran into trouble when some of the families of Russian Aum members who had renounced the world to join the religion formed a pressure group to oppose Aum as a distinct threat to Russian society. Strong pressure and successful court action led to the revocation of Aum's legal registration as a

religious organization.

Reader's *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan* is a masterpiece of solid, comprehensive research and analysis that should be read by all persons interested in contemporary Japanese society and in modern religious movements. He consulted an amazing array of sources and conducted in-depth interviews with former and current Aum members who provide amazing insights into the movement. The most interesting chapter contains in-depth profiles of several members. Reader is also a brilliant writer whose lively and clear prose makes this book a genuine pleasure to read.

Masaharu Shibata and Hideharu Kaneda, *Toyota-shiki Saikyono Keiei: Naze Toyota wa Kawaritsuzukeru no ka* [The Toyota Style of Strongest Management: Why Toyota Keeps Changing.] Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha, 2001. ISBN: 4-532-14923-1

Reviewed by Kinko Ito

Toyota is a well-established Japanese multinational automobile manufacturer well known for its particularly effective and efficient management style and production systems. Many books and articles have been written about the company. Their organizational systems and various production techniques have been emulated not only by Japanese corporations but by many others in different parts of the world. Shibata and Kaneda's book, *Toyota-shiki Saikyono Keiei*, explains how and why Toyota keeps changing in accord with the competitive worldwide marketplace and turbulent economic environment where rapid globalization is taking place. The authors analyze Toyota's strengths, especially the company's ability to adapt to new situations and its distinctive and persistent corporate culture. The book also provides suggestions for the renovation of the Japanese style of management.

According to Shibata and Kaneda, the Toyota production system can be understood in three different ways: its particular production methods, improvement and renovation methods, and enterprise renovation methods. The aim of these methods is to maximize the chance to win in the severe competition of the marketplace. The key to the strongest management approaches that Toyota boasts is utilizing the strength of the Japanese group ethic to mobilize human resources, which contributes to the workers'

autonomous activities for renovation. At Toyota, work = operation + improvement, and the efficient management of Toyota can be summarized as “the innovation activities where everyone participates” (p. 151; my translation). According to Shibata and Kaneda, organization is people. The workers’ initiative to participate and their willingness to work hard are the definitive factors for the success of organizational renovation and progress. Toyota has a deep understanding of human nature, and its managerial practice is based not on imposing control but rather promoting the workers’ own sense of self-control and discipline.

The book being reviewed consists of an introduction and nine chapters that cover such topics as: the Toyota method of innovation; the Just-In-Time inventory system; certain Japanese managerial practices (e.g. small group improvement activities [SGIA], *kanban*, *kaizen*, QC circle, etc.); Toyota’s “seven habits,” including the managerial mind, remodeling, progressive organization and revolutionary human resources, leadership, etc.

As is well known, Japan has been going through an unprecedented recession since the early 1990s when a so-called “Bubble Economy” burst. Shibata and Kaneda think that Japan needs to utilize its own assets of management that are particular to Japan instead of importing the way of thinking and methods borrowed from Anglo-Saxon countries. Japan needs to utilize the strengths of Japanese management and then add and include those of other nations. Changing only the hard core, or the technical aspects of organization, does not help transform the organization for the better.

Human beings change organization. Shibata and Kaneda consider that one of the most positive aspects of the Japanese style of management is intimate and close human relationships formed within the work groups and in the company as a whole. However, they note that the tightly knit human relationships and socialization (company recreation day and trips, drinking after work, etc.) that once existed in Japanese corporations are disappearing now. The young Japanese seem to prefer spending time as they like instead of getting together with the same groups of people from work. This kind of informal organization used to play a very important role in the spread of information about what others are doing in different departments within the same company.

The socialization process is euphemistically called *nomination*. The Japanese word “*nomu*” means “to drink” or “to go out drinking with others.” The term *nomination* is a hybrid of the Japanese word “*nomu*” and English “communication.” A work group goes out drinking and the

members engage in informal, frank, and casual communication with one another. Nowadays, according to Shibata and Kaneda, not only *nomination*, but also dialogue seems to be lacking in Japanese organizations, even at meetings. The information seems to flow only one way, and everyone appears to want to avoid those topics with which she or he does not feel comfortable.

This book offers the readers numerous case studies, concrete examples, and anecdotes not only from Toyota, but also from other Japanese and American companies such as Ford and General Electric. There are also many diagrams to illustrate the managerial designs, processes, etc. that help the reader conceptualize what the authors are talking about.

Shibata and Kaneda describe and explain the managerial practices that are particular to Japan as well as those that are efficient and effective on a worldwide basis. The Japanese approach to innovation and improvements as well as efficiency and rationalization is that everyone participates and helps come up with new ideas rather than a single super-bright individual coming up with his or her own ideas. It is a group endeavor. Toyota advocates holism and realism; the whole is more than the sum of its parts. The company encourages an activity called *jishuken*, or autonomous study/research that promotes critical and independent thinking and leads to constructive problem solving. This will bear fruits for improvement and renovation.

Wisdom derives from direct experiences and does not function on the same level as knowledge. Wisdom also emerges through interaction with others as the phenomenon of truth-making takes place in front of the participants. It comes seems to come freely of its own accord, and should not be controlled or coerced. *Jishuken* encourages each individual worker to participate in the activity of renovation and improvement, so that in the process mutually beneficial human resources are fostered. Toyota keeps changing and adapting to new and difficult situations by *jishuken* activities, and this contributes to its strength of management.

This book is well written and is full of case studies and anecdotes that show the maturity of the authors' experience and knowledge about the company. It is recommended to those who are interested in Japanese management and organizations in general.

Richard M. Jaffe, *Neither Monk nor Layman: Clerical Marriage in Modern Japanese Buddhism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001. xxii +286 pp. ISBN: 0-691-07495-X.

Reviewed by Steven Heine

This is a thoroughly researched and impeccably written book on a fascinating but long overlooked aspect of modern Japanese Buddhism, that is, the fact that the male clergy is almost entirely married and meat-eating (*nikujiki saitai*). As Richard Jaffe, an authority of Meiji era religion and culture, shows in his study, “The presence of the temple wife is now so taken for granted that today, along with the usual Buddhist doctrinal texts, histories, and popular religious manuals found in Buddhist bookstores, one can also find pan-sectarian works like *Jite fujin hyakka* (Encyclopedia for temple wives)” (p. 2). Although marriage along with issues of gender and sexuality is foremost in the discussion, Jaffe actually focuses on two interrelated aspects of the modernization of clergy. The second issue is meat-eating, which was another practice similarly restricted and prohibited by basic Buddhist monastic regulations that is now taken for granted.

How and when did these practices arise and go on to become so widespread? What were the pre-modern precedents, as well as the various forces of modern secularization that brought the process to fruition? Why is the case of Japan so anomalous among Buddhist cultures? Who were the key players in different Buddhist movements in relation to social and political pressures, and how did they react pro or con to the new trends? The answers to all of these questions and much more are amply provided by Jaffe’s study, which carefully traces the history of pre-Meiji examples that demonstrate the prevalence of temple wives, as evidenced by the enforcement of anti-fornication ordinances, especially in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The “Introduction” shows how the case of Japan’s departure from a monastic and ascetic emphasis is unique among Buddhist cultures and to a large extent reflects the Meiji era “attacks on Buddhist temples, forced laicizations of the clergy, seizure of temple lands, and abolition of clerical perquisites” (p. 4). Chapter two discusses pre-Meiji antecedents going back to classical (Nara and Heian) and especially Tokugawa era violations of the precepts regarding sexual transgressions and non-violence or eating meat. The next chapter analyzes the origin of the term *nikujiki saitai* in light of the context of Tokugawa political, legal and social changes which in restricting

and restraining Buddhist clergy brought to light just how commonplace these seemingly anti-monastic practices already were. At that time, the center of the debate was the Shin clergy, which came under increasing attack for long permitting clerical marriage, whereas other sects seemed to sanction clandestine activities.

Chapter four analyzes the changes in policy regarding Buddhist clergy enacted in the early Meiji period, around the early 1870s, in light of the persecution of Buddhist institutions in *haibustu kishaku* (destruction of Buddhist iconography) and *shinbutsu bunri* (separation of kami and buddhas) campaigns, as well as sweeping reforms of many sectors of society that dissolved similar regulations governing other groups. These broad changes included laws allowing commoners to use surnames in public and samurai, who were banned from carrying swords by the mid-1870s, to cut off their top knots, while the outcaste communities (*hinin* and *eta*) were eliminated. On May 31, 1872, there was a straightforward edict that read, "From now on Buddhist clerics shall be free to eat meat, marry, grow their hair, and so on. Furthermore, they are permitted to wear ordinary clothing when not engaged in religious activities" (p. 72). One main result was the rapid diminution in the numbers of clergy and temples, thereby weakening the overall Buddhist monastic structure.

The remainder of the book traces a kind of zigzag progression in the evolution of *nikujiki saitai* laws and practices from surprising support by Buddhist clergy to adamant resistance in some quarters and eventually to the widespread acceptance and even encouragement of the practices. For example, by the mid-1940s, the Sōtō sect was holding seminars for temple wives and ordination ceremonies to induct them as nuns. Jaffe shows in chapter five that during the early Meiji period there was a trend emphasized by Ōtori Sessō, a Sōtō monk who worked for the Ministry of Doctrine, among others, to modernize Buddhism and eliminate the dissonance between traditional monasticism and secularized, industrialized society. Not only was there a decriminalization or *nikujiki saitai*, but Japanese subjects were being warned against "corrupt customs" like vegetarianism and celibacy.

Chapter six, however, discusses the way that Buddhist clerical protests quickly became a factor. Fukuda Gyōkai led the charge to say that the reform of Buddhism should go in the opposite direction of a stricter adherence to the precepts. The precept restoration movement held that Buddhist codes are immutable and inviolable for all who want to wear robes and shave their heads.

What changed matters, as examined in chapters seven through ten, was the gradual emphasis on laicization—that is, more involvement of the lay community and more acceptance of the idea that the lives of clergy were not so distanced from laymen—that was part and parcel of modernist and secularist social trends. This wore down factions of resistance and gave a tacit acceptance of *nikujiki saitai*. By the early part of the twentieth century, bans on clerical marriage were being removed and regulations concerning precept adherence were being compromised. Tanaka Chigaku, one of the founders of a Nichiren-based new religion, devised a Buddhist wedding ceremony, one of the earliest religious marriage rituals created in Japan, and other voices advocated sexuality as a healthy, natural drive rather than the source of delusion and defilement. At the same time, the exposing “of such phenomena as temple poverty, illegitimacy, and dispossession of widows as social problems” (p. 213) forced Buddhist institutions to become protectors of women and to embrace the role of temple wives. Presently, there remain factions, especially in Sōtō Zen, which reject clerical marriage and hold to a traditional stance that it results in corruption and antinomianism that cannot be reconciled with the precepts.

One minor criticism is that this book, which takes a pan-Buddhist approach covering the major sects and key new religious movements, tends to lose focus on what the particular groups believe or have come to accept. We get an overview but sometimes lose the trees for the forest, so to speak. Nevertheless, in conclusion, Jaffe’s work is clearly the definitive study of the social changes in the lives of clergy from Meiji period on, and it vividly depicts how various Buddhist schools have struggled with the gap between the traditional and the modern.

Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*. New York: Harper Collins, 2000. 832 pp. ISBN: 0060931302

Donald Keene, *Emperor of Japan: Meiji and His World, 1852-1912*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. 928 pp. ISBN: 023112340X

Reviewed by John A. Tucker

In the last two decades, postmodernists have pushed for an increasingly de-centered historiography, i.e., research and monographs

focused on largely neglected, seemingly peripheral or at least marginalized subject matter. Much valuable work has resulted, especially on topics such as women, rebels, outcasts, and geographically remote areas. Though not a postmodernist, the work of Mikiso Hane comes to mind on this count. Two of his monographs, *Peasants, Rebels and Outcasts: The Underside of Modern Japan* (Random House, 1982), and *Reflections on the Way to the Gallows: Rebel Women in Prewar Japan* (University of California Press, 1993), well illustrate this trend. Yet traditional topics of historiography have remained quite vital, and recently have even generated two new monumental works. Herbert Bix's biographical study of Hirohito, the Showa emperor, and Donald Keene's¹ work on Mutsuhito, the Meiji emperor, explore these two emperors and the evolving Japanese imperial institution in exceptional detail. While Bix's is hardly the first study of Hirohito,² Keene's encyclopedic study of the Meiji emperor is the first of its kind. Without a doubt it will stand, if for no other reason than enormity of

¹ Donald Keene, of course, is the leading Western authority on the history of Japanese literature. His works are too extensive to cite here (the Library of Congress online catalog gives 72 entries), but suffice it to note that among them are *Anthology of Japanese Literature from the Earliest Era to the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (New York: Grove Press, 1988); *World Within Walls: Japanese Literature of the Pre-Modern Era, 1600-1867* (New York: Henry Holt, 1976); *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era* (New York: Holt Rinehardt and Winston, 1984); *Seeds in the Heart: Japanese Literature from Earliest Times to the Late-Sixteenth Century* (New York: Henry Holt, 1993); *Modern Japanese Literature: An Anthology* (New York: Grove Press, 1956); *Noh and Bunraku: Two Forms of Japanese Theatre* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); *Four Major Plays by Chikamatsu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961); *Japanese Discovery of Europe, 1720-1830* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969).

² Other works include, Peter Wetzler, *Hirohito and War: Imperial Tradition and Military Decision Making in Prewar Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998); Carol Gluck and Stephen Graubard, eds., *Shōwa: The Japan of Hirohito* (New York: Norton Company, 1993); Edward Behr, *Hirohito: Behind the Myth* (New York: Villard Books, 1989); and David Bergamini, *Japan's Imperial Conspiracy* (New York: William Morrow, 1971).

detail, as *the* reference work in English on the Meiji emperor for decades to come.

Despite their very different subjects, the two books share many traits, good and bad. Both are as much studies of the history of the period during which the respective emperors reigned, as they are biographies of the men themselves. Thus, for example, when Keene examines the Meiji emperor's contacts with U. S. President Ulysses S. Grant or the Hawaiian monarch, David Kalakaua, far more time is devoted to accounts of Grant and Kalakaua, and their overall travels to Japan than to the relatively brief exchanges between the Hawaiian, the American and the Meiji emperor. Similarly, Bix's study of Hirohito is more consumed by accounts of the various and sundry important figures of the Showa period than by coverage of Hirohito's life.

Also, surprisingly enough, neither book is concerned with addressing, positively or negatively, the host of related historical studies that indeed exist in English. For example, Bix does not attempt to situate his findings in relation to the many reputable works in English dealing with the Shōwa period, such as the anthologies edited by Carol Gluck, *Shōwa: The Japan of Hirohito* and John W. Dower, *Japan in War and Peace*.³ Instead, Bix sets forth a narrative of his own, which while based on extensive reading of Japanese sources, does little to incorporate or critique explicitly existing Western scholarship. Similarly, Keene's study does not seek to address recent works pertaining to the Meiji period such as Takashi Fujitani's *Splendid Monarchy*,⁴ or before that, Gluck's *Japan's Modern Myths*. Instead, Keene takes as his task the exposition of a chronicle-like study of the Meiji emperor, based largely upon the thirteen-volume Japanese chronicle, *Meiji tennō ki* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1968-75).

³ John W. Dower, ed., *Japan in War and Peace: Selected Essays* (New York: New Press, 1993). Other works by Dower that are not addressed explicitly in the main text are *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: Norton, 1999); *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon, 1986); *Empire and Aftermath: Yoshida Shigeru and the Japanese Experience, 1878-1954* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, reprint 1979).

⁴ Takashi Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996).

Readers who go to these volumes expecting a discussion of the larger field of literature will be disappointed. Despite the fact that Bix and Keene have labored heroically in completing their enormous projects, they have opted not to take the opportunity to assess related literature in the field. Those familiar with this literature should have little difficulty in seeing how the new works compare, e.g., Keene obviously does not subscribe to the view that the imperial system was “invented” in the Meiji period as a largely novel, and nontraditional institution. Rather, he accepts the more traditional analysis that what happened in the Meiji was in many significant respects a continuation of practices, relationships, and tendencies that had characterized the immediate and more remote Japanese past. At the same time, it would have been very interesting to hear, in explicit terms, exactly what Keene makes of Fujitani’s view that the Meiji imperial institution was little based on anything “traditional,” and instead represented a largely novel invention.

Bix, as is well known, advances a more aggressively critical analysis of the Showa emperor, taking issue with the standard view of Hirohito as an aloof, even passive monarch who refrained from any kind of opposition to militarism due to (1) fear of a coup, and (2) constitutional limitations that obliged him to endorse the policies of the militarist prime ministers, primarily Tōjō. Instead, Bix argues that Hirohito was a “dynamic emperor” (p. 12) who “had been educated to play an active role in political and military decision making” (p. 294), but one who also “projected the defensive image of a passive monarch” (p. 12). Among other things, for example, Bix suggests that Japan’s similarities with the fascist powers, Italy and Germany, while mixed, are more compelling, in their similarities—including “the similar psychological roles played by their cult leaders”—than their “obvious differences” (p. 202).

Many may well find Bix’s interpretations compelling, but the careful reader will note that they are very often little more than conjecture and surmise. For example, Bix states, “There is the *strong possibility* (italics added) that Hirohito had received an informal briefing on the ballon-bomb weapon program...” (p. 477). This is one of many examples where Bix, in the absence of hard evidence, is willing to appeal to probability of involvement rather than refrain from judgment. Insights about Hirohito’s feelings, his intentions, desires, hopes, aspirations, and so on are often the subject of comment, though no clear documentation is given. Due to the very sensitive nature of the subject matter, such speculation at points seems to reduce the overall credibility of the study.

Bix's readiness to blame Hirohito largely for what occurred goes too far "the other way" in advancing revisionism. For example, Bix states, "Hirohito's reluctance to face the fait accompli of defeat, and then to act decisively to end hostilities...were what mainly kept the war going..." No doubt Hirohito was more responsible than most have allowed, and should be held accountable for his complicity, but to suggest that Hirohito alone was "what mainly kept the war going" seems excessive in its confidence that the ostensibly passive emperor could have, by raising his voice righteously, brought the momentum of militarism to an effective halt.

In numerous other cases, Bix is ready to conclude the worst about Hirohito even when there is little hard evidence to substantiate the same. For example, he declares that, after Nagasaki, what Hirohito cared most for was "not primarily...the Japanese people...but for his own imperial house and throne" (p. 524). And in the postwar period, that Hirohito "naturally...did not in any way hold himself or the court group responsible" for defeat (p. 535). Bix also blames Hirohito, without hesitation, for the failings of postwar Japan. Thus, for example, he states, "Hirohito's continuation on the throne after independence clearly inhibited popular exercise of the constitution's guarantee of freedom of thought and expression" (p. 649). No doubt this is true to an extent, but Bix seems all too willing to excuse the Japanese people, while blaming the emperor, as though things would have been all that different in terms of the exercise of constitutional liberties had Hirohito abdicated.

Perhaps a more serious weakness of the book is its overwhelming focus on Hirohito's life leading up to and including the war, as compared to the relatively short shrift given to the postwar years and the recreation of the monarchy and the man. Surely much of what Bix has argued needed to be said, and he puts it in a way that is academically respectable. Yet equally important to assessing Hirohito was the aftermath. Given that many developments could have been cast to suggest that Hirohito was still actively involved, in a way that bode well for the reconstruction of state and society, but that these developments were not so interpreted, leaves one with a sense that the treatment was so aggressive in its vision of Hirohito as an emperor, who was responsible for the tragedies of militarism, that it overlooks the possibility that in his final decades Hirohito's impact continued to be felt on real yet more positive than unrelentingly self-serving and counterproductive elements of democracy.