



Disorder and the Japanese Revolution, 1871–1877

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Disorder and the Japanese Revolution, 1871–1877

A dissertation presented

by

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to

the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines how intellectual disorder produced social and political disorder in 1870s Japan. The simultaneous collapse of the early modern Japanese diplomatic and social systems created unprecedented freedom to know globally, to be individually, and to depart from the past. This freedom, enabled by a revolution into globality, engendered a crisis of justice: it deranged the ideational relationships between the domestic and the foreign; among individual, state, and community; and between past and present. Intellectual contest over who determined these relationships and how people should understand them continually precipitated into armed violence as men fought to realize or combat particular configurations of enlightenment and counter-enlightenment thought. The ideational and militant contest over how to generate equilibrium between freedom and order in a global world was the Japanese revolution.

The dissertation takes as evidence the intellectual dimensions of major developments in the political, social, and diplomatic history of early Meiji Japan: the Iwakura Embassy of 1871 and the political instability of the caretaker government it left behind (chapter 1); the diplomatic crises of 1873 (chapter 2); the rise of the Movement for Freedom and Civil Rights (chapter 3); the Saga Rebellion of 1874 (chapter 4); the Shinpūren Rebellion of 1876 (chapter 5); and the civil war of 1877 (chapter 6).

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– ибо ничего и никогда не было для человека и для человеческого общества невыносимее свободы!

– for nothing has ever been more insufferable for man and for human society than freedom!¹

The Grand Inquisitor in *The Brothers Karamazov*

¹ Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1990), p. 252

Introduction

A COMPLETE REVOLUTION

Argument

We begin with this proposition: that justice produces equilibrium between freedom and order. Unbridled freedom splinters people, prevents social security, produces terror; a conception of justice allows people to curtail freedom in favor of greater ideals of stability and peace. Yet stifling systems of order too yield terror, engendering chaos by insisting on a delusion of unfreedom disjointed from the undetermined possibilities of lived experience. Insofar as justice, principles of fairness and equitability, fuels social unity and cohesion by balancing freedom and order, problems of justice yield disorder.

By dismantling systems of justice that had maintained order during the early modern era and by accelerating Japanese entry into a modern global world, the Japanese revolution unleashed disorder. It was primarily in this sense that the Revolution was a revolution: the overthrow of the Tokugawa state involved not only a change in government or in political process but an overhaul in conceptions of what was right or fair. It created a need to build fundamentally new intellectual and practical systems—social, political, economic, geographic—to establish order and manage freedom in a global age. And it was in this sense that the Revolution was a complete revolution: it yielded widespread and seemingly uniform recognition

that the past had irrevocably passed, that something new would have to emerge in a global present.² There was no going back.³

But if the revolution succeeded in wrecking the past at the level of thought, in dismantling faith in the adequacy of the justice of suddenly bygone times, then it did not succeed in building consensus around a new conception of justice. It created a crisis of justice. It engendered three general arenas of intellectual instability, of intellectual disorder, which together produced social and political disorder. This intellectual instability was never resolved—it was in this sense, as we will eventually conclude, that the revolution was an incomplete revolution.

The first realm of intellectual disorder in the crisis of justice was that of agency or of subjectivity: who determined justice? Did the individual determine for himself, or possibly even herself, through his own intellectual or rational faculties, what was right or wrong, what was fair or unfair? Or did he rely on, and yield precedence to, the community, which by the late Tokugawa era had ceased to be a community of interpersonal bonds but a national civil society of impersonal relations? Or did the institutions of the state, in their capacity as governors of the realm, claim dominating arbitration over problems of intellect? Where did the ultimate or primary locus of subjectivity, of agency, lie? None of these three categories—self, society, state—was given in the revolution. The revolution itself turned on producing and constituting them, on establishing the relationships among them, and on placing them in equilibrium.

The potential agents or subjects of justice, who themselves formed the first category of intellectual instability, operated in an intellectual sphere quadrisected by two planes of ideational

² See Carol Gluck, “The End of Elsewhere: Writing Modernity Now,” *American Historical Review* 116:3 (2011): 676–687.

³ It is in this sense that Banno Junji claims that the Revolution ended in 1871 with the dissolution of domains and the installation of prefectures. See, for instance, Banno Junji, *Saigō Takamori to Meiji Ishin* (Tokyo: Kōdansha gendai shinsho, 2013), pp. 149–50.

contest over *how* those agents determined justice, two planes that formed the second and third arenas of intellectual disorder.

The first plane was horizontal, spatial: was justice a particularist or a universalist concept, or where along the continuum did it lie? The scale of universalism lay on literal geographic space: did justice exist differentially in the household, in the physical community, or in the domain, or did it apply indiscriminately across domains and throughout the nation? And more pressing: was justice a global concept? Was that which was right in places beyond Japan necessarily applicable to Japan, or to domains within Japan? Was there a distinction between the Orient and the non-Orient? The scale of universalism also lay along imagined space. Did justice apply indiscriminately to status groups, or were people within an incipient civil society differentiated among themselves? Did it apply to men and women equally? Across age?

The second plane of the contest of justice was vertical, temporal: did justice come from the past, or did it have to be reinvented for the future? The relationships among the past, the present, and the future, and along with these, among what was thought to have occurred and what did occur and how anyone could know, pervaded questions of justice. Did the past, insofar as it had passed, endow the present with something of exceptional value in guiding the future? Or was the present so distinct from the past, had the past passed so far, that it had to be rejected? And whose past could inform whose present? Were different pasts interchangeable?

These are universal humanistic questions that inhere in every society, in every part of the world, at all times. Their irresolution produces disorder everywhere. But these problems of justice—the problem of agency, the problem of universalism, the problem of history—all came together and were endowed with revolutionary, exceptionally destabilizing force during the Japanese revolution because two processes of modernization were abetting unprecedented

degrees of freedom, freedoms that demanded the consideration of all of these problems together. These processes were the individuation of being and the globalization of knowing. They did not begin in the Japanese revolution. They had gradually gained in intensity during the Tokugawa era. The Revolution was a revolution insofar as it dramatically accelerated these processes so that none could avoid engaging with them. It was because the revolution was made possible by, and then itself made further possible, unprecedented means of conceiving of global universalism, and of thinking of the individual as a discrete, autonomous entity, that contestation emerged over whether these developments were indeed good or bad, whether they should be advanced or obstructed.

Two major systems in the Tokugawa era had produced order by curtailing freedom and holding justice as a differentiated, particularist, and historicist concept whose primary arbiter was the state and the social status group charged with governance by reason of history and heredity.

The first system, a domestic social order, held justice as a necessarily discriminatory concept. All social relations and economic activity were theoretically determined by hereditary, state-mandated social status (*mibun*) groups that held individuals within corporate bodies.⁴ Even though practical individual activity to support livelihood was often disjointed from theoretical corporate occupation, the premise that the individual belonged to an occupational group to which law and justice applied particularly, in distinction from other status groups, pervaded every dimension of Tokugawa life, determining the individual's relations with others. Central to this

⁴ This explanation of the Tokugawa status system emerges from David L. Howell, *Geographies of Identity in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). Howell leads a historiographical movement in English that identifies status as the central defining feature of Tokugawa politics and society. The origins of the movement might be traced perhaps to John W. Hall, "Rule by Status in Tokugawa Japan," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 1:1 (1974), pp. 39-49. Other notable works that accept status as the defining, all-pervading feature of Tokugawa life include, for instance, Daniel V. Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005) and Maren Ehlers, *Give and Take: Poverty and the Status Order in Early Modern Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2018).

premise of discrimination was the principle that governance was the occupation of the samurai; non-samurai were barred from any participation in, and theoretically any knowledge of, state political affairs. This status system held together a decentralized federalist system and marked the borders of the Japanese polity: where it ended, Japan ended. But domains remained varied among themselves even in this federal system. Just as individuals were subsumed within their household and their corporate status groups, those status groups were then affiliated with their domains; samurai in particular were held by theoretical bonds of vassalage to their domainal lords, which were held together in a patchwork system of intersecting modes of sovereignty, not to a central regime.⁵ Like status groups in the social order, domains in the political order were differentiated, unequal.

The second system of justice, a global diplomatic order, relied on isolationism. Although the Tokugawa state engaged in limited diplomatic exchange with some immediate neighbors in its earliest years and permitted specific domains to engage in trade with particular foreign states, by the nineteenth-century Japan undeniably maintained a policy of willful global isolation, both relative to expanding global empires of the time and in absolute terms.⁶ This isolationism included proscriptions on knowledge from most foreign places but those mandated by the state.

⁵ Conceptions of the Tokugawa geographic order are many. On federalism, see Mary Elizabeth Berry, *Hideyoshi* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982); on the ‘composite structure’ of contrasting modes of sovereignty, see Mark Ravina, *Land and Lordship in Early Modern Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); on a more extreme view of Japan as an ‘international’ system, see Luke Roberts, *Mercantilism in a Japanese Domain: The Merchant Origins of Economic Nationalism in 18th-Century Tosa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁶ The work done by Ronald Toby, *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Asia: Asia in the Development of the Tokugawa Bakufu* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1984) to expose the foreign connections of the Tokugawa bakufu in the early Tokugawa era often been overextended as evidence that the Tokugawa regime was simply not isolationist. Robert I. Hellyer, *Defining Engagement: Japan and Global Contexts, 1640-1868* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009), reveals how a turn did indeed occur toward what he calls “guarded engagement.” On the reasons for deliberate obstruction of globalization in the nineteenth century, see, for example, Fuyuko Matsukata, “King Willem II’s 1844 Letter to the Shogun: ‘Recommendation to Open the Country,’” trans. Adam Clulow, *Monumenta Nipponica* 66:1 (2011), pp. 99-122; and David L. Howell, “Foreign Encounters and Informal Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 40:2 (2014): pp. 295-327.

These restraints construed the state as the determinant of how men should know and privileged the Japanese and East Asian past as a superior guide to the Japanese present than the pasts of other lands. In this sense, the state appointed itself as a mediator between people and a world of knowledge. It was on these premises that order was at least theoretically maintained: even though social unrest flared frequently, it ordinarily did so within the parameters of these systems.

Economic change, the steady expanse of access to foreign knowledge, environmental crises, social rebellion, and a host of other forces gradually undermined these systems. Then the Japanese revolution demolished them altogether. The forced collapse of these systems accelerated the individuation of being and the globalization of knowing. “All matters,” the revolutionary regime pledged, “shall be decided by open discussion.” “All classes,” it decreed, “shall be united in vigorously carrying out the administration of affairs of the state.” The “evil customs of the past,” it claimed, “shall be broken off.” “Knowledge,” it insisted, “shall be sought throughout the world.” Everyone, it averred, “shall be allowed to pursue his own calling.” It was as if “ages, not moments, had passed” since the fall of the early modern order, as one influential historian has written.⁷ Everyone could partake in knowledge and governing. The individual could be as he pleased. Knowledge would come from everywhere. The past was dead. Justice was individual, universal, revolutionary.

It was one thing to say these things. It was another to put them into effect. By seeking to put the increasingly unfettered individual in a national civil society and thereby in an increasingly direct relationship with global knowledge, the revolution brought Japan into the world and the world into Japan at an unprecedented pace. Where once the state had insisted on its intermediary role between the two, now it became far less clear whose role it was to mediate

⁷ Carol Gluck, “The Invention of Edo,” in *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan*, ed. Stephen Vlastos (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 265.

between the self and the world, to determine justice on behalf of members of an incipient public. The difficulty, the seeming impossibility, of intellectually balancing freedom and order in a global world plunged Japan into disorder.

The Japanese revolution, then, was a revolution into what we might call *globality*, a condition of existing consciously in a global world, a condition akin to modernity, itself a state of consciously existing in a modern world.⁸ Like modernity, globality is a process, a mutable and volatile condition of knowing and being, not a stage whose attainment can be measured by checkbox criteria. Like modernity, it is ever contested and disputed by those who operated with in it. The disorder the Japan revolution engendered was a consequence of the unavoidable reality that globality had produced unprecedented freedom and of the irresolvable problem that to secure order, justice for the self, for society, and for the state now had to accommodate a global world.

Evidence

The scope and depth of disorder that rocked Japan throughout the 1870s testify to how the freedom unleashed by the Japanese revolution turned on problems of globality. Having consulted Guido Verbeck, a Christian missionary, on how to learn of Western civilization, the most senior members of the revolutionary Japanese regime accepted the universalist social-scientific premise of his civilizing project and left Japan in late 1871 on a tour of the world, intent on bringing home the best and newest ideas from abroad. This was the Iwakura Embassy,

⁸ The term “globality” does not appear, and would never appear, in her sterling literary prose, but Maya Jasanoff, *The Dawn Watch: Joseph Conrad in a Global World* (New York: Penguin Press, 2017), offers a model of how “globality,” much like “modernity,” can serve as both a condition that historical actors inhabited and a means of analysis for the historian.

as it is known. While they sojourned in Europe, the leaders received a panicked letter calling them to come home. In their absence, the nation was falling into chaos. The ministries of justice and of finance, already divided by domainal-factionalist bickering and corruption scandals, were tumbling into an imbroglio over allotment of the state budget—and over the proper relationship between a revolutionary enlightened state legislature and an incipient civil society. The dispute threatened to bring down the unity of the entire government. Angry government memoranda were leaked to a nascent national press, and an internal government crisis became public for the first time in Japanese history. Meanwhile, a threatening counter-enlightenment movement led by refractory Satsuma strongman Shimazu Hisamitsu made splashy displays of rejecting all forms of globalism. Intellectual opposition to the revolutionary globalizing project teetered on military uprising. Many feared that a counter-revolution was nigh. As Japan spun in a widening gyre of global ideas, the itinerant global regime came home to reimpose order. Such are the concerns of Chapter One of this dissertation.

The center could not hold, Chapter Two reveals. As upheavals rocked Japan internally, international crises brought down the unity of the brand new national government. A revolutionary epistemology based on the essential universality of humanity led to a brouhaha between Japanese traders and the Korean government. When Japanese capitalists clamored for freedom to trade freely against a traditionalist Korean regime that sought to obstruct that freedom, calls mounted, most notably from revolutionary hero Saigō Takamori, to invade Korea and resolve the epistemological clash by force. Then came calls for an invasion of Russia. New settlers on the Karafuto frontier, with no historical precedent to establish order in free interactions with their new Russian neighbors, agitated for a state military dispatch to settle petty neighborly disputes. They needed the central state to resolve their crisis of justice for them.

Unable to manage these problems of transnational justice, the revolutionary regime was beset by schism. In a political dispute known as the Chastise Korea arguments (*Seikanron*), plans to invade Korea were blocked by a seemingly feigned concern with attacking Russia. Some of the most distinguished members marched out of the government in October 1873, followed by scores of men from the military.

Almost immediately, renegades from the regime turned to arms to resolve the crises of freedom and order overcoming the nation, Chapter Three explains. The revolutionary regime had started out by seeking to instill a national religious myth in all its subjects, situating the state as the arbiter of internal belief. But it made an about-face and backtracked, promoting instead the freedom of individual belief, most conspicuously with the lifting in 1873 of a centuries-old ban on Christianity. Infuriated by the permissiveness of the state and by the threat of Christian knowledge, terrorists began torching Tokyo in January 1874 in a quixotic attempt to overthrow the government and defend invented Japanese indigeneity. Other terrorists, armed with the new knowledge they had gained when they were dispatched to Manchuria as spies, sought in the same month to assassinate Iwakura Tomomi, the government official they deemed responsible for the failure to invade Korea. That same month, the leading members of the renegade regime signed onto a petition to the government drafted by a young Japanese Christian who had studied at the University of Oxford. He believed that the Japanese future lay in Christianity and the liberty it endowed in the individual. He wrote a call for a parliamentary system that held individual freedom, apparently Christian freedom, as its core concept, and a movement to pressure the Meiji regime into ceding power to a public electorate, and into making of Japan what John Stuart Mill envisioned, began.

Competing visions of what the Japanese revolutionary Enlightenment should entail persisted. The erstwhile head of the Ministry of Justice returned to his native prefecture, mobilized a counter-enlightenment resistance force, and called for the invasion of Korea based on Enlightenment principles, Chapter Four reveals. He insisted that the construction of an autonomous civil sphere in Japan had to go hand in hand with aggressive foreign militarist interventionism. He and his unlikely counter-enlightenment allies rebelled in February 1874. The regime crushed his army and decapitated him.

While movements within the Enlightenment vied for influence, other movements questioned the very premise of globalist universalism and anti-historicist rationalism on which they turned. Disgusted by the tawdry intellectual and material pastiche of Westernism that they observed in a changing nation, others invented a national ancient past and pretended to surrender all individual subjectivity to the sacred, devising ways to realize a heteronomous divine justice, one that was particularist and historicist, supposedly undefiled by the new and the foreign. They too rebelled, most notably in the Rebellion of the League of the Divine Wind in 1876, and the state dispatched troops to crush them, Chapter Five reveals.

As the nation spun ever faster in this gyre of global ideas, it plunged into civil war in 1877, Chapter Six shows. Various factions of the enlightenment and imperial-democratic movements joined hands with elements of the Counter-Enlightenment, intent on using violence to bring their particular visions of a new Japan into reality. Many of their rebellions turned on readings of the French and American revolutions and of Western enlightenment theory to oppose the Meiji regime. Some questioned why what should have been a Japanese Revolution did not become what the French Revolution became, and they insisted that violent insurrection was only way to bring about freedom and civil rights in Japan. But their civil war resolved nothing, the

dissertation concludes. Japan could not extricate itself from the crisis of global justice. The same problems of enlightenment and counter-enlightenment, and of which enlightenment was the best Enlightenment, persisted, and so too did violent movements to resolve them.⁹

The empirical story of the 1870s is familiar. The schism of 1873; the calls to invade Japan's neighbors; the rise of the Movement for Freedom and Civil Rights; the series of "samurai rebellions"; the civil war of 1877—Japanese history is among the most rigorously, deeply, and brilliantly studied histories in the world, and within the history of Japan, these developments in the Japanese revolution have been an object of exceptional, perhaps singular, attention. No incident or crisis that appears in this dissertation, perhaps even no single document that appears in this dissertation, has escaped the scrutiny of a historian somewhere at some point. Some incidents and documents have been debated so deeply that historians seem to have given up on studying them altogether.

But questions linger, curiosities that are known to virtually all historians of Japan but that have not been adequately resolved.¹⁰ One question, for instance, is why the same people who were among the foremost advocates of democracy in Japan were its most aggressive and vocal advocates for imperialism. To some extent, the question can be answered with a basic observation: Japan was learning from the West, and Western countries were largely both democracies and empires; Japan learned both imperialism and democracy from abroad. But this solution has problems both theoretical and empirical. Ideas do not travel across the world as

⁹ In this connection, see the pioneering work on violence in Japanese politics, Eiko Maruko Siniawer, *Ruffians, Yakuza, Nationalists: The Violent Politics of Modern Japan, 1860–1960* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008).

¹⁰ See Anzai Kunio, *Jiyū minken undō shi e no shōtai* (Tokyo: Yoshida shoten, 2012), p. 167. He refers to Makihara Norio, "Naze Meiji no kokka wa tennō o hitsuyō to shita ka," in *Nihon no kingendaishi o dō miru ka*, ed. Iwanami shinsho henshū bu, vol. 10 of *Iwanami shinsho shin'akaban: 1051 shirizu Nihon kindaiishi* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2010), p. 30.

predetermined packages. Individuals have agency in choosing and recombining concepts. And indeed the empirical record of Japanese history corroborates this theoretical expectation. There was sweeping, vigorous disagreement over the wisdom of overseas expansionism and of popular government. Another question is why two simultaneous historical movements that seem to clash at the level of ideology—the Movement for Freedom and Civil Rights and anti-regime samurai rebellions—had such intimate connections. There were strategic alliances between people of seemingly contradictory ideological bents, hands joined between enlightenment and counter-enlightenment. That observation prompts the question of whether, and if so why, ideology was so flimsy as to allow these awkward alliances. Then there appears the question of why the 1870s were so violent, so rebellious, at all. Recent attempts to depict the Meiji transition as a smooth, largely bloodless affair, coupled with longstanding historiographical convention of simplifying the major incidences of violence in the first decade of the Meiji era as examples of mere “samurai rebellions,” obfuscate rather than clarify the reasons for the armed instability of the 1870s.¹¹

This dissertation insists that the answers to such questions, that explanations for the disorder of the 1870s, are not internal to Japanese history. It begins by considering questions that have long been asked, but it does so to expose their fallaciousness, or at least their inadequacy. We might ask, for instance, how did democracy arise in Japan? Or why did samurai rebel amid the dissolution of their status? Or how did Japanese imperialism originate? These are legitimate questions, but each privileges a particular problem in history above all others—to some extent, of

¹¹ On smoothness, see most notably Mitani Hiroshi, *Ishin-shi saikō* (Tokyo: NHK Books, 2018). For a critique, albeit one that is itself deeply flawed, of Mitani and the “simply story” of Meiji smoothness, see Carol Gluck in the “Meiji at 150 Podcast,” <https://meiji150.podbean.com/e/episode-81-dr-carol-gluck-columbia/>. The classic work on samurai rebellions (*shizoku hanran*) is Gotō Yasushi, *Shizoku hanran no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Aoki shoten, 1968). Gotō sees samurai rebellions as flowing from the schism of 1873 and turning on the preservation of samurai power and heritage; he frames the struggle as between old and new forces. See, for instance, p. 14.

course, an unavoidable dimension of imposing analytical clarity on muddled evidence, of turning the past into history. The problem here is not the projection of a concept, such as democracy or imperialism, anachronistically onto an era to which it does apply and a consequent teleological origin story, but rather the way in which the questions themselves tend toward the extrication of that concept from various alternative ideological configurations with which it existed simultaneously. This approach fails insofar as the democratic movement or samurai rebellions are not in themselves the problem: they together were merely symptoms of broader, sweeping ideational problems at which we must grasp through them.

To understand the rise of democracy, or the rebellion of samurai, or the links between liberalism and imperialism, we must recognize that those problems turned on the revolution into globality: each was an attempted resolution to the new freedoms in, and the problem of global justice in, the Meiji era. We must move to a deeper level of thought, examining the various epistemological and ontological premises and upheavals within these problems, foundational humanistic questions of how and whether people are the same and of how anyone could possibly know. We must seek, then, what David Armitage has characterized not as a history of ideas, which pursues concepts “across the ages, as if the ideas themselves were somehow alive and had an existence independent of those who deployed them,” but rather a history in ideas, one that treats ideas not as “disembodied entities” but rather as integral elements of lived experience, in contest with one another, “shaped and debated” in time by actors who deployed them for particular purposes.¹² And inasmuch as the overriding problem of the early Meiji era was an ideational one over a new state and civil society engaged in the problem of justice, and inasmuch

¹² David Armitage, *Civil Wars: A History in Ideas* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017), pp. 20-21.

as this problem of justice was engendered by the crisis of globality, the history of the early Meiji era cannot be other than a history in global ideas, that is, a global intellectual history.

Method

In what appears as the founding manifesto for the new approach of “global intellectual history,” which has emerged as a coherent medium of scholarship in the 2010s, Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori schematize three meanings of the term.¹³ First, the “global” in global intellectual history can be a category for the historian, in which the historian herself takes a global perspective on a topic; she here undertakes universal or comparative history, bringing together discrete, unconnected histories in a global comparative approach or analyzing a particular concept, such as “science” or “nation,” with explicitly or implicitly universal implications. Second, the “global” can be a scale of analysis, in which the processes the historian examines are in themselves global; the historian here is concerned with how and why an idea with global currency, such as “rights,” spreads around the world. Third, the “global” can be “a subjective category used by historical agents who are themselves the objects of the historian’s inquiry”; the historian seeks to understand how the actors in history themselves understood globality, we might say.¹⁴

Because the Japanese revolution was a revolution into globality, it poses the interpretively and methodologically vexing problem that it collapses these various modes of

¹³ For stimulating critiques of Moyn and Sartori, particularly with respect to the distinction between ‘global history’ and ‘history of the global,’ see Rosario López, “The Quest for the Global: Remapping Intellectual History,” *History of European Ideas* 42:1 (2016): 155–160 and J. G. A. Pocock, “On the Unglobality of Contexts: Cambridge Methods and the History of Political Thought,” *Global Intellectual History* [pre-publication edition] (2019).

¹⁴ Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, “Approaches to Global Intellectual History,” in *Global Intellectual History*, ed. Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), p. 5.

global intellectual history into each other and demands some amalgamation of them—as perhaps all global intellectual histories inevitably do, Moyn and Satori imply. These various modes of the “global” have methodological implications for how we think of nineteenth-century Japan.

Inasmuch as the Japanese revolution produced movements for “freedom,” “rights,” and “enlightenment,” a certain universalism, a tacit comparison, inheres in the invocation of those categories by the historian writing of them: if we speak of a Japanese Movement for Freedom and Civil Rights, or if we speak of a Japanese Enlightenment, or indeed of a Japanese revolution, we imply a necessary commensurability between the Japanese and European conceptions of those terms, a necessary universalism to what originated as a European concept. We engage thus in the first mode of the global approach. That acceptance of universalism is related to, but separate from, the consciousness of the actors themselves that they operated in a global world as they themselves invoked “civil rights” or “enlightenment” as global concepts they sought to apply to their world. Pervading seemingly every dimension of thought was the consciousness that actors operated not only within an incipient nation but in an incipient world of global ideas: as we speak of men speaking of rights, we witness, as in the third mode of global intellectual history, their painful consciousness of their existence in a global world.

And because actors in nineteenth-century history full well knew that they were not invoking indigenous categories when they spoke of “freedom” or “rights,” in their and our use of those terms we grapple with the second problem, how those ideas came to globalize, with Japan acting as a case in point. Here too we find two separate problems. One is the act of translation, both literal and figurative, by the actors themselves, how they ordered a new ideological plane by translating new concepts they had freedom to engage with more directly. Then there is the task in which the historian is engaged as he writes the history of people in a language in which they did

not write: it is conceivable for historians simply to write—as some historians of Japan nauseatingly do—*kaika* or *minken* or *Ishin* instead of *enlightenment* or *civil rights* or *revolution*. To insist on invoking the universal concept is to insist that the actors themselves were concerned with transmitting these concepts, through intellectual and literal translation, to their own worlds.

We thus grapple with the problem both of how people on the ground themselves thought they were aiding or thwarting the globalization of an idea and of whether we see adequate correlation in the global concept they invoked to affirm its scholarly deployment in the Japanese case. And in thus traversing the first and third modes of the global approach—in making the etic case for the global universalism of the categories in which Meiji men operated and in making the emic case that they themselves were contemplating the global universalism of the categories—we arrive at an argument about the second mode of the global approach: that the freedom men had to engage with global ideas rendered existing modes of order wanting and set men in a crisis of justice over whether these global ideas should, or even could, take root in Japan—that this was a violent, disorderly, destabilizing, and above all conscious process of entering globality.

In his own manifesto to supplement this “framework for debate” on modes of global intellectual history, Samuel Moyn sharply and brilliantly disputes what he characterizes as a dominant model in how historians account for the global transmission of idea, revealing how lack of introspection in global intellectual history on its own methodological premises has led to faulty historical conclusions. In a regnant model of “autoglobalization,” historians examine ideas in themselves to explain how they spread through the “passive intermediation” of humans: because the idea of rights is inherently universal, historians claim, by its own inner logic it

cascades across the world.¹⁵ This claim has been made in the context of Japan, too.¹⁶ Moyn writes that to make this case for “autoglobalization” is hopelessly naive: insofar as the globalization of one concept always involves for actors on the ground—and cannot be separated by historians from—the nonglobalization of another, we cannot look at the “immanent logic” or the content of an idea to explain how it spread.¹⁷ We must look instead, he argues, to the agency of people and the contingent circumstances in which they chose to adopt or not to adopt an idea. This agency is not, Moyn carefully notes, an “ineffable and unconstituted agency.” Rather, “complexity” must be the “starting point” of global intellectual history: it must recognize how “individual actors choose to use concepts in some specific, conjunctural, and culturally laden moment.” Moyn thus insists that any examination of the means of globalizing ideas must take into account “competing alternatives and situational appropriations” inasmuch as ideas are in constant competition.¹⁸

As we traverse the three modes of the “global” in the case of the Japanese revolution, we encounter the historical problem that what Moyn states historiographically or theoretically—that ideas are always in global competition with one another, that the globalization of one idea means the nonglobalization of another—is how the actors themselves understood the world in which they lived. They wanted to understand: should an idea globalize? If it should, they wanted to grasp, just as historians themselves do: how was it that global concepts such as rights and freedom, such as the enlightenment, should take root in Japan? If they should not, then how must they be obstructed? Should it take force? It was the agency that people exercised in

¹⁵ Samuel Moyn, “On the Nonglobalization of Ideas,” in *Global Intellectual History*, p. 197.

¹⁶ Mark Ravina, *To Stand with the Nations of the World: Japan’s Meiji Restoration in World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

¹⁷ Moyn, “On the Nonglobalization of Ideas,” p. 193.

¹⁸ Moyn, “On the Nonglobalization of Ideas,” p. 198.

appropriating, recombining, or obstructing global ideas that produced disorder in the Japanese revolution as people quite literally fought to make an idea globalize or non-globalize—to put it into effect or not into effect both in Japan and in Japan’s neighbors.

But if Moyn uses this notion of the competition of ideas in situated historical contexts to call for greater attention to contingency and agency, to the ability of the individual not quite to choose from an existing menu of ideas but to reform and recombine those global ideas according to his needs and to reject others in the process, we might use the argument in the Japanese case to make the exact contrary point: that in the very fact that people exercised agency in engaging with global ideas, they could not help but engage with them. The very possibility of the individual engaging in a global competition of ideas was itself the problem.

In thinking about a global intellectual history of the early Meiji era, then, we encounter sweeping evidence against, and here we make a stubborn and self-conscious case against, contingency and agency. Agency mattered only insofar as it determined how people responded to and tried to manage the crisis of globalism that overcame them. But they had no choice other than to respond. This irrevocability of globality was their determining and constituting condition, the “laden moment” in which they operated. The overarching fact that people had no choice but to respond to the crisis of globalized justice matters more, and explains more, in our attempts to understand the Japanese revolution than the particular ways in which people responded: it is the restive and variable agency people exercised to resolve the crisis of global justice that explains the disorder of the Japanese revolution. Contingency and agency mattered, then, only within the unalterably and newly determining structures of globalization. Just as there was a certain inevitability to Japan being drawn into the emerging global geopolitical order in the nineteenth-century, just as countenancing the possibility of sustained geopolitical isolationism in a world of

competing empires was historically and is in retrospective analysis untenable, entry into a global competition of ideas, not just a global competition of geopolitics, was unavoidable.¹⁹

If globality was irrevocable, it does not follow, we must hasten to add, that “Westernization” or “Enlightenment” were in any way inevitable. We are making here precisely the opposite point: men in the state and in civil society could exercise agency in choosing to reject these ideas, and in that conscious and destabilizing choice, they affirmed the fact that they had to engage with them.

Implications

Testimony to the inescapability and the inevitability of the problem of global justice lies not, then, in the rise of the Japanese Enlightenment or conceptions of rights and freedom. It lies in the deep contingency and fragility of those ideas and in the depth of the counter-enlightenment movement that agitated against them and persisted well past their origins. It is the reality that Enlightenment, Counter-Enlightenment, and elements within each gained revolutionary, destabilizing force as they violently vied for influence that demonstrates the common global problem from which none in the Meiji era could escape.²⁰

¹⁹ My thanks to Professor Gordon for articulating this clarifying comparison for me.

²⁰ Whether there even was a Counter-Enlightenment in Europe is the source of contentious debate. Writing that the term does little to contribute to scholarship, especially since it was not indigenous to the thinkers themselves, Jeremy L. Caradonna claims that it simply did not exist: Caradonna, “There Was no Counter-Enlightenment,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 49:1 (2015), pp. 51-69). He is rebutted by Graeme Garrard, “Tilting at Counter-Enlightenment Windmills,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 49:1 (2015), pp. 77-81, and Darrin M. McMahon, “What is Counter-Enlightenment?” *International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity* 5:1 (2017), pp. 33-46. The term is most prominently associated with Isaiah Berlin, “The Counter-Enlightenment,” in *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas* (London: Hogarth Press, 1979), pp. 1-25. Other notable works on the Counter-Enlightenment include Darrin M. McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Graeme Garrard, *Counter-Enlightenments: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2006); J. G. A. Pocock, “Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment, Revolution and Counter-Revolution: A Eurosceptical Enquiry,” *History of Political Thought* 20:1

To speak of an enlightenment and especially of a counter-enlightenment is to return to the first point in the global intellectual history manifesto of Moyn and Sartori, to imply that the historical reality of the Japanese revolution into globality historiographically renders concepts used to analyze European history applicable to Japanese history as well. For even if the Enlightenment consciously derived from European models, the counter-enlightenment did not. Its European connections are correlative, not causative. The implication here, then, is that Japanese thought, and therefore Japanese history, not only replicated European thought but mirrored it, that inasmuch as modernity was globality, similar patterns of reactions to the problems of modernity emerged independently in different parts of the world: it is because of both causation and correlation that both the first and third approaches to global history must apply in the Japanese case.

Like the European Enlightenment, what the Japanese Enlightenment itself was is perhaps the greatest problem in its study, a problem not only to people who examine it retrospectively but to people who operated within it.²¹ Much of this dissertation grapples with how men fought over what the Enlightenment should mean in Japan. Still, despite its internal heterogeneity, we can include diverse people and ideas under the category of the Japanese Enlightenment insofar as they turned on two general presumptions that unified their competition of ideas. One was the notion of universalism. Men in the enlightenment often wrote of how ideas from foreign lands

(1999), pp. 125-129; and Joseph Mali and Robert Wokler, eds., *Isaiah Berlin's Counter-Enlightenment* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2003).

²¹ Scholarship on the what the European Enlightenment was is course overwhelmingly vast. A handful of notable works includes: Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, 2 vols. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1966-1969); Anthony Pagden, *The Enlightenment: And Why It Still Matters* (New York: Random House, 2013); Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1670-1752* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights, 1750-1790* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). Many important works, including analyses by Foucault and by Adorno and Horkheimer, can be found in Ryan Patrick Hanley and Darrin McMahon, eds., *The Enlightenment: Critical Concepts in Historical Studies*, 5 vols. (New York: Routledge, 2009).

should govern people in Japan and people in Korea, Taiwan, China, Vietnam, and India. As they made a statement about what should be, they tacitly made a striking assertion of what could be, the idea that people were essentially the same across the world, that it was both possible and desirable to recreate Japan according to seemingly universal principles that did not derive from indigenous sources. As they endorsed universalism, they pushed, too, for individualism, for the idea that reasoned intellectual thought by the individual in civil society should take precedence over adherence to precedent. The premise here was that the individual should think for himself and that a society of thinking individuals who debated among themselves advanced the progress of the nation. Members of the Enlightenment might not have agreed on the ultimate purpose of this individualism; many saw it as the means to advance a higher nationalist project. But for whatever ultimate purpose, they sought to construct the individual as autonomous and discrete. Stated in other terms, then, the Enlightenment generally mobilized behind the globalization of knowing and the individuation of being. It sought to expedite the freedoms that these processes allowed, even if it was internally differentiated in ideas about the extent of this freedom, and it pursued a society of autonomous individuals that engaged directly with a world of ideas.

Against this Enlightenment agitated a Counter-Enlightenment, most notably represented by the agitation of Shimazu Hisamitsu in Chapter One and the League of Divine Wind in Chapter Five and indeed by the Korean government and its anti-revolutionary stance in Chapter Two. This Counter-Enlightenment sought to curtail the globalization of knowing and the individuation of being through a historicist-particularist epistemology and by discriminating among agents of justice—and in this very critique of the Enlightenment affirmed the ascendancy of its adversary's ideals and departed from its premises. Just as the Enlightenment was not monolithic, the Counter-Enlightenment was not an internally coherent or necessarily

interconnected movement; it was not even a movement per se. It was rather a particular pattern of responses to modernity-as-globality that critiqued individualist civil society and its exposure to a world of ideas, a critique that was visible only in light of the Enlightenment. The Counter-Enlightenment in Europe, as Darrin McMahon argues, often turned on a religious critique of Enlightenment rationalism; this religious rebuttal to the seemingly secular Enlightenment was “neither an atavism of the past nor a holdover from a world that was gone, but a *modern* reaction to conditions that were inscribed in the modernizing process itself.”²² In Japan this point is even more crucial, especially when “religion” itself, a source of Japanese counter-enlightenment agitation, was a category that was constructed in Enlightenment thought. Regardless of from where the critique of globality-as-modernity emerged, it affirmed a contest of knowing in a global age.

Neither men nor the ideas they carried existed exclusively on one side or the other of a binary between Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment. They existed along a spectrum of responses to agency amid globality, and as the empirical evidence of the 1870s shows, men did not abide unflinchingly in one category or the other, often enthusiastically rallying on the other side. The seeming readiness with which men joined hands with ostensible ideological adversaries is a consequence of the reality that their competing ideas sought to resolve common problems of the global revolution. But if the categories are thus so fraught and so difficult to separate from each other, then what purpose is there in invoking them?

One point that the invocation of the categories of enlightenment and counter-enlightenment implies is that of a lived causative relationship between ideas and history. When the Counter-Enlightenment in Europe critiqued the Enlightenment, Mark Lilla explains, it did so

²² McMahon, “What is Counter-Enlightenment?” p. 37; emphasis McMahon’s.

not primarily on philosophical but on historical grounds. Philosophically, it often collapsed the internal diversity of the Enlightenment and misconstrued its claims in order to advance its competing vision. And in order to make this critique, the Counter-Enlightenment needed to construe this flattened-out Enlightenment as, historically, a “smashing success”: it assumed, perhaps it had to assert, that the ideas of the Enlightenment had become historical reality, that “word ultimately became deed,” that the basis of the “modern ‘break’ or ‘crisis’ which it firmly believes to exist in contemporary society” lay in intellect.²³ To critique the Enlightenment was not only to express a presumption about the dominance of those ideas but also about the ways in which those ideas had so transformed social reality, Lilla suggests, that they needed to be combated. To deploy the analytical category of the Counter-Enlightenment in a Japanese context, then, is to a large extent to concede this point interpretively to the Counter-Enlightenment: the Enlightenment was a “smashing success” not in the laudatory sense of the term but in the sense that it had gained an undeniable and destructive ascendancy manifest in social and political reality. To speak of enlightenment and counter-enlightenment is to insist that the same intellectual forces that produced the Enlightenment as an intellectual category were responsible for its social manifestations and to the backlash against those social manifestations.

A second point that follows from the implication of social manifestations of intellectual change, as Lilla explains, is the premise of a categorical difference between modernity and what came before it. Inasmuch as critics of modernity were themselves modern, and inasmuch as they execrated the Enlightenment through the social and practical manifestations of its intellectual ascendancy, all actors during the Japanese Enlightenment appear as existing within a shared modern framework, unavoidably engaged in the globalized world as they militated for or against

²³ Mark Lilla, “What is Counter-Enlightenment?” in *Isaiah Berlin’s Counter-Enlightenment*, p. 6.

it. And at least in the case of Japan, this modernity was globality: in being modern, they were global.

This point is crucial in the third implication, which is perhaps the most controversial and the most important. To assert that enlightenment and counter-enlightenment, modernity-as-globality and its critique, were intertwined from their very origins in the Japanese revolution, and to assert that those engaged in the Japanese revolution were so completely overcome by globality that they could not possibly escape it, are to imply obliquely the genetic relations, the twinned nineteenth-century birth, of what appeared as democracy and fascism in the twentieth century. It is not to imply direct causality or a notion of ideas cascading through time. It is not to insist rashly on a direct genealogy or teleology from the counter-enlightenment to fascism, from enlightenment to democracy, as some historians have. Indeed, the democratic faction of the nineteenth-century Enlightenment in Japan militated against other elements of the Enlightenment, as the Rebellion of Etō Shinpei in Chapter Four in particular shows.²⁴ Rather, it is to indicate that a pattern of response to modernity-as-globality recurred continually from the start of the modern age. It is to imply that the same problems that spurred social instability in Japan during the 1870s did so later in Japanese history. As Lilla observes, modernity in Europe faced two major crises, two moments of intense critique: the first was the French Revolution, and the second was between the two World Wars. To invoke a counter-enlightenment as a modern phenomenon is to suggest intellectual resonance between these two moments of critique of modernity. In Japan, too, as in Europe, it was these two moments—during the course of the Japanese revolution and between the two World Wars—in which modernity-as-globality faced its most intense critique. And insofar as the Japanese revolution was a revolution into globality,

²⁴ Zeev Sternhell, *The Anti-Enlightenment Tradition*, trans. David Maisel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), commits these errors, according to a particularly withering critique from Darrin McMahon.

just as the well-studied critique of modernity in the interwar moment had global imperialist resonances, so too did it have that same valence in the revolutionary moment.

In making this claim, we return to, resurrect, and invert a long-extinct idea in Japanese historiography. Whereas once historians of Japan claimed that the origins of Japanese fascism and of the crisis of the 1930s and 1940s lay in an incomplete revolution, which failed to rid Japan of feudal elements and to constitute Japanese as autonomous subjects, by here conjuring both Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment as engaged in a fully self-conscious struggle over questions of agency in global justice as early as the 1870s, we make the exact opposite argument: that it was the completeness of the revolution, the inevitability of the entry into a global revolution of ideas; the destruction, not the vestiges, of the past; and the totalizing effect of the revolution as people exercised their fully developed subjectivity within the parameters of modernity-as-globality, that spurred an enduring struggle between modernity and its modern critique and among those who traversed the categories.²⁵ And it was incompleteness of the

²⁵ For an overview of this concept, see Germaine A. Hoston, “Conceptualizing Bourgeois Revolution: The Prewar Japanese Left and the Meiji Restoration,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 33:3 (1991): 539–581. In very broad strokes: As is well known, the idea of incomplete revolution is most prominently with the *kōza-ha* school of Japanese Marxist thought, which emerged in the 1930s, which viewed the Meiji Restoration as an incomplete bourgeois revolution that failed to establish a true civil society in Japan; the school attributed the eventual rise of fascism to this incompleteness. Its intellectual adversaries in the *rōnō-ha* argued that the bourgeois democratic revolution was in fact complete. A very brief but helpful summary of the *kōza* school is available in Anzai, *Jiyū minken undō shi e no shōtai*, pp. 107–109. Notable works in the school, Anzai and Hoston indicate, include Hattori Shisō, *Tennōsei zettaishugi no kakuritsu* (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1954); Hirano Yoshitarō, *Jiyū minken undō to sono hatten* (Tokyo: Shin Nihon shuppansha, 1977) and *Nihon shihonshugi shakai no kikō* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1967); Noro Eitarō, *Nihon shihonshugi hattatsu shi* (Tokyo: Nihon tētō shōsin, 1930); see also the scholarship of Yamada Moritarō. These arguments of an incomplete bourgeois revolution was countered by another argument about a different sort about incompleteness: Maruyama Masao, repudiating rigid Marxism, claimed that the Restoration failed to endow Japanese with an interior sphere or with adequate subjectivity: he claimed there “was in principle no basis in Japan for freedom of belief”; that Japanese law “failed to recognize” a Hegelian sense of the “sanctity of such an interior, subjective sphere” (pp. 5–7). See for instance Masao Maruyama, *Thought and Behavior in Modern Japanese Politics*, ed. Ivan Morris (London: Oxford University Press, 1969). In contrast, members of the “People’s History” school (*minshūsha*) argued that a spiritual undercurrent of autonomous action remained after the Restoration, though it was crushed by the Meiji elites. Representative of this movement was Irokawa Daikichi; see, for example, Irokawa Daikichi, *Meiji seishinshi* (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1973) and Irokawa Daikichi, *The Culture of the Meiji Period*, ed. Marius Jansen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), and for an overview of the school in English, see Carol Gluck, “The People in History: Recent Trends in Japanese Historiography,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 38:1 (1978): 25–50.

revolution, the irresolution to modernity-as-globality, the need to impose order on the free and irrepressible agency that people exercised in their attempts to resolve modernity-as-globality, that found continually destabilizing force throughout the modern Japanese experience, well into the twentieth century.

Here, too, we travel through the first and third modes of the global approach, the question of modernity-as-globality and its critique both as an empirical historical problem in the past and as a means of interpreting a universal past. Critiques of modernity have little room to “aspire to novelty,” Lilla writes, inasmuch as they were articulated and anticipated by Hegel, who set a precedent for Counter-Enlightenment thought even if he himself was not a Counter-Enlightenment thinker.²⁶ And Hegel critiqued modernity in part by turning to the French Revolution and the Enlightenment that engendered it: Hegel placed the blame for the Terror of the French Revolution—of modernity itself—on the Enlightenment and on the reason and individualism it advocated.

The Terror of the French Revolution, Hegel famously asserted, exposed absolute freedom as terror. “In this absolute freedom,” Hegel wrote, “all social ranks or classes, which are the component spiritual factors into which the whole is differentiated, are effaced and annulled; individual consciousness that belonged to any such group and exercised its will and found its fulfilment there, has removed the barriers confining it; its purpose is the universal purpose, its language universal law, its work universal achievement.” And “the sole and only work and deed accomplished by universal freedom is therefore *death* — a death that achieves nothing, embraces nothing within its grasp.” Because the only purpose of absolute freedom is freedom, “it is thus the most cold-blooded and meaningless death of all, with no more significance than cleaving a

²⁶ Lilla, “What is Counter-Enlightenment?” p. 4.

head of cabbage or swallowing a draught of water.” It is the deracination and emptying-out of life produced by the unbridled and particularly Rousseauian freedoms behind the French Revolution that yielded its ruinous violence.²⁷ The counterpoint here is Kant, who regarded the Terror as something incidental to the Enlightenment and exonerated the Enlightenment for its social manifestations in violent insurrection.

The point here is not to seek to apply Kant and Hegel in all their complexity to Japan. The precise dynamics of the relationship between individual and general will at the heart of absolute freedom; the critique of Rousseau that inheres in Hegel’s denunciation of that freedom; the particular contingencies of the Jacobin rise to power to which Hegel responds—these crucial elements of Hegelian theory of course do not apply readily to the Japanese case, and to seek to apply them recklessly is unproductive. This is not a dissertation about Hegel. The purpose is rather to derive meaning from the intellectual approach Hegel takes to the violence of the French Revolution inasmuch as we accept Lilla’s claim that Hegel anticipated counter-enlightenment thought: Hegel saw the physical disorder of the Terror as a manifestation of intellectual problems, particularly of the problem of the intellectual flattening of society into a universal, civil whole, and therefore used the Terror to critique modernity itself. He offered, in the phrasing of Richard Wolker, “a conceptual history of modernity in terms of the self-transfiguration of philosophy into violence.”²⁸ The value of comparison between revolutionary Japan and revolutionary France lies less, then, in testing empirical similarity than in the issue of the interpretive or theoretical means by which we can understand them historically. We can use a flattened, caricatured distinction between Kant and Hegel in their approaches to the French

²⁷ This point is clarified by Richard Wolker, “Contextualizing Hegel’s Phenomenology of the French Revolution and the Terror,” *Political Theory* 26:1 (1998), p. 35.

²⁸ Wolker, “Contextualizing Hegel’s Phenomenology,” p. 34.

Terror to think through two essential problems, one meta-historical, the other historical, one that uses our Flat Hegel as a philosopher, the other, as a historical actor himself.

So many once turned to the Japanese revolution to think through the most fundamental questions of their own and their nation's existence, whether they decried the Revolution for denuding Japan of an essential Tokugawa aesthetic and inveighed against its hollow, vain Westernism; or they bemoaned the incompleteness of the revolution into modernity, its failure to endow Japan with adequate subjectivity; or they lamented the way in which it truncated the bourgeois democratic revolution that, alas, could have been; or they found in it the “undercurrents” of a “spiritual history” of Japanese autonomous action that was stifled by an overbearing elite.²⁹ All of these theories failed. And with them seemingly grand theory itself failed.

But the Japanese revolution continues to provide us with fraught, opaque, vexingly urgent lessons for the present day, and when brought into the global history of thought, when placed where it belongs on equal footing with other global revolutions and terrors, it demands that we engage not only in a vigorous examination of the salubrious effects of Western civilization on the non-West, not only in reflection on the vexed fact that it arrived through the gunboats of American and later British, French, and Russian imperialism, but also in unsparing and thoroughgoing criticism of “Western ideas” and the way they took hold in Japan. These are not questions that can be resolved in any single dissertation—they are debates that must continue. And in it is this point that this dissertation stresses: insofar as these debates have largely died down in the present historiographical moment, especially in English, it is justifiable, perhaps

²⁹ On a lost aesthetic and its connections with fascism and imperialism, see, for instance, Kim Brandt, *Kingdom of Beauty: Mingei and the Politics of Folk Art in Imperial Japan* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), and Leslie Pincus, *Authenticating Culture in Imperial Japan: Kuki Shūzō and the Rise of National Aesthetics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). On the other views, see footnote 23.

even necessary at this historiographical juncture, to raise these sweeping theoretical questions even if they cannot be answered fully here, for so long as they remain unasked, they will remain unanswered. That task is all the more urgent when historians today treat the revolution as a closed process, making the profoundly alarming claim, with blasé confidence, that the revolution is happy evidence of how the supposedly inherent universal truth—a short step away from the inherent superiority—of their values, of “Western values,” triumphed seemingly inevitably across the world and retained their supposed purity despite the inconvenient fact of imperialism.³⁰ Meiji history is abused to assert there will be no clash of civilizations: the “West” has already won, and seemingly had already won by the end of the nineteenth century, because truth itself was something “Westerners” discovered and from which all could peacefully benefit, we are told.³¹ If the values of “Western enlightenment” are potentially salvageable from complicity in the horrors of imperialism, then certainly the critique of that Westernism and enlightenment must be potentially salvageable from their clear complicity in the horrors of

³⁰ Ravina, *To Stand with the Nations of the World*, pp. 212 – 213: “East Asia has grown rich and powerful within the European international order. Reflecting on the long sweep of Japanese history, this is unsurprising. There is no reason to assume that Western values should overlap with Western power or Western interests.” “Restoration leaders and activists embraced ‘Western’ ideas precisely because they could be disembodied from their Western origins and adopted as universal values.” See also p. 11, “Cosmopolitan chauvinism posited that certain great universal truths had been discovered outside Japan. Although discovered abroad, these ideas were universally applicable and would therefore enhance rather than degrade Japanese culture.” And p. 9: “Full of optimism and revolutionary ardor, Meiji reformers saw themselves as revitalizing their Japanese heritage and culture rather diluting it [*sic*] through Westernization. What could possibly be wrong with strengthening Japan by adapting ‘international’ and ‘universal’ best practices? How could the benefits of civilization possibly make Japan less Japanese? Because terms such as ‘civilization’ were culturally and temporally non-specific, late Tokugawa and Meiji-era reformers could combine their admiration for the ancient Japanese past with an eagerness for radical change and foreign models.” (Cf. for instance Gluck, “The End of Elsewhere,” p. 681: civilization in the early Meiji era was “understood both as a universal stage in world history and a description of contemporary ‘Euro-America’”—in other words, it was decidedly both culturally and temporally specific, to say nothing of the vast literature on the ways in which mappings of “civilization” and “barbarism” were a driving ideological justification for imperialism.) Fascism, communism, liberalism, imperialism, colonialism, biological racism, capitalism, White supremacism—all of course are “Western values” that arrived in Japan and some of the supposedly “universal best practices” that the Japanese “adapted.” Among the many intellectual problems with the statements above is, for instance, that the argument that is utterly ahistorical and defensible only based on a selective ideological commitment to a set of amorphous values: the primary causative role in the Meiji Restoration is attributed not to Japanese actors but instead to the inherent transcendental truth of “Western values” themselves.

³¹ Ravina, *To Stand with the Nations of the World*, p. 212.

Japanese fascism. But this dissertation insists that neither enlightenment nor counter-enlightenment can be so blithely extricated from the terrors that each, and both together, engendered.³²

In this sense, then, we can think about Hegel thinking about the French Revolution in order to think about the Japanese revolution. At the most generalized level of abstraction, of Japanese history perhaps it was our Flat Hegel, not our Flat Kant, who was right. Perhaps it was the Enlightenment itself—the empty freedom it advocated; the fatuous individualism it valorized—that was responsible for the terrors wrought by the revolution.

To make this claim, we must first recognize the empirical reality, demonstrated throughout this dissertation, that the Japanese revolution had a Terror in the Hegelian sense, that it was accompanied by intense violence that arose directly, not incidentally, from the principles of the revolution. It is true that terror does not occupy the same prominence in memory of the Japanese revolution that it does in the French. It was less obscenely gory in Japan, perhaps. There was no clear villain.³³ But that is only when we look at the domestic scene. Inasmuch as the Japanese Enlightenment advocated entry into globality, the terror in the Japanese Enlightenment was primarily projected abroad, at the “barbarians” of Taiwan starting with the Expedition of 1874, at the hidebound monarchy of Korea rather than the revolutionary monarchy of Japan, starting with the 1873 Chastise Korea debate; and eventually at the hidebound monarchy of China, target of popular ire and condescension as early as the 1880s—all of whom were constructed as enemies of the civilization and enlightenment the Japanese revolution

³² For a forceful articulation of this point, see D. V. Botsman, “The Meiji Restoration and the Politics of Post-War Commemoration: 1968/2018,” *Japanese Studies* 38:3 (2018), esp. pp. 293–294.

³³ Mitani Hiroshi, *Ishin-shi saikō*, insists that the Japanese Revolution came with impressively few casualties, especially when compared with other revolutions across the world. But Mitani has an extremely narrow view of what constituted violence after the Meiji Restoration. This critique was made by Inoue Shōichi in a book review conference in July 2018. And Inoue made the further astute criticism that simple numerical comparison is rather meaningless, not least since it excludes all those affected by the Restoration beyond Japanese borders.

claimed to bring about. As with all elements of the Japanese revolution apart from its globality itself, there was nothing inevitable about this terror—whether or not to wreak military havoc on the “unenlightened” or the recalcitrant, either within Japan or abroad, was itself a source of intense and violent debate, and it led to insurrection repeatedly. And when part of the Enlightenment regime sought to obstruct the terror from raining down on Korea, the terror came home. Eventually it was wrought abroad. This terror was not analytically or empirically separable from the revolution and the enlightenment that accompanied it: it was itself, as we will see, a product of the revolution into globality—and in many cases of the individualist reason and rationalism of a revolutionary epistemology. It resulted from the emptying-out of the Japanese past, the attempted flattening of Japanese community life into a civil society, the failure of the enlightenment to fill a hollow present with adequate meaning.

To write about a Japanese terror is to jump headlong into a historiographical quagmire. Indeed, as Patrice Higonnet has explained, the question of the relationships among the Enlightenment, the Revolution, and the Terror in France are among the most “enigmatic” and among the most deeply studied in all of history.³⁴ And as he explains, part of the trouble is that none of the glut of explanations for those relationships, among which Hegel’s is only one, in itself seems entirely wrong; it is simply that all seem inadequate. The Habermasian explanation, for instance, is that the French Terror was produced by the rise of a civil society and by the attempted “colonization” of the public sphere by public opinion, which produced “instability” as men tried to represent it.³⁵ We will grapple with this argument about the role of a public sphere in the Japanese revolution—and in its terror—throughout the dissertation.

³⁴ Patrice Higonnet, “Terror, Trauma, and the ‘Young Marx’ Explanation of Jacobin Politics,” *Past and Present* 191:1 (2006), p. 121.

³⁵ Higonnet, “Terror,” p. 124

Higonnet himself pursues a more “organic,” a more “integrated” view of the Terror. To do so, he turns to Marx’s explanation, in which Marx confronts a fundamental contradiction in the French Revolution. To Marx, the French Revolution emerged at once from the “decline of feudalism and the emancipation of the individual” and from a notion of equal and universal rights for all. The Jacobins somehow had to find reconciliation between “individual, particularist rights” and “universal values”; they somehow had to insist that all people could individually be bourgeois while sustaining the category of bourgeois against the non-bourgeois.³⁶ It is from here, in the structural contradiction between individual freedom and universalism, that Higonnet departs in examining the terror of the French Revolution. The inability to sustain both creates a moment of trauma, of the sudden collapse of the Jacobin worldview, and explains the turn to violence to resolve their crisis. This Marxist criticism, Higonnet explains, comes from none other than Hegel’s conception of absolute freedom and the futility of the violence it produces, from which many other conceptions of the Terror too, such as Hannah Arendt’s, emerge.

We thus arrive back at the point where we began, to the most fundamental lesson of the Japanese revolution. Like the French Revolution, the Japanese revolution turned on a conception of a universalism and of individualism within civil society—but this universalism was a global universalism. And insofar as the universalism imagined in the Japanese revolution existed not only across domestic status groups but across different peoples around a global world, people in Japan were left to fight over how to ensure at once the universal application of their mission and the possibility of the autonomous individual and nation, at once to sustain the category of the enlightened against the unenlightened while professing the universalism of enlightenment. And this structural contradiction was only one dimension of a broader struggle over who could even

³⁶ Higonnet, “Terror,” p. 143

decide whether a justice that appeared potentially global and revolutionary should be global and revolutionary, whether it should be imposed on others by force or through suasion. That contradiction within one strand of the Enlightenment produced terror, and what was even more terrible was the broader struggle over global justice of which it was but one element.

When Hegel or Marx looked upon the French Revolution, they did so not only as philosophers but as agents embedded in history, as foreigners looking at the pasts of others, wondering what those pasts meant for their own pasts. Hegel turned to the French Revolution to explain why Germany never had, and would never need, a Revolution of its own—it already had achieved a spiritual revolution that resolved the crises that violence tried to resolve in France. Rebecca Comay writes of Hegel and his views of the French Revolution in this connection, not simply to understand his reading of that historical phenomenon but to take him as the most representative figure of the German misery, *die deutsche Misère*—a misery that fittingly needs a French word to capture a German experience, she writes. That misery “stands here above all for a historical discordance,” a widespread sense in Germany from the nineteenth century of “historical nonsynchronicity,” of “incorrigible temporal slippage,” of a sense, in words from Marx that Comay quotes, that “we are the *philosophical* contemporaries of the modern age without being its *historical* contemporaries.” Just as Higonnet refers, through Marx, to the French Revolution as a form of trauma in France, Comay invokes the same concept, through Hegel, for its role in Germany. The French Revolution, she argues, produced a sense of “anachronism,” of “missed opportunity,” of “the future as already passed” in Germany.³⁷

But this is not merely a distinctly German problem, Comay insists. “The German encounter with the French Revolution is an extreme case of the structural anachronism that

³⁷ Rebecca Comay, *Mourning Sickness: Hegel and the French Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), p. 2, 3.

afflicts all historical experience,” she writes philosophically. “The clocks are never synchronized, the schedules never coordinated, every epoch is a discordant mix of divergent rhythms, unequal durations, and variable speeds.” Historical experience itself, she theorizes, “is nothing but this grinding nonsynchronicity, together with a fruitless effort to evade, efface, and rectify it.” Comay refers here to Ernest Bloch—the same historian to whom Harry Harootunian turns to make sense of the rise of fascism in Japan and of the “unevenness” of Japanese modernity.³⁸ It is indeed, as Lilla mentions, that there is a certain resonance between the crisis of revolution and of the interwar era, both in Japan and in Europe. It is this sense of being philosophical contemporaries of the world without being historical contemporaries that spurs the turn to the French past to critique modernity, to see Terror as a constituent element of the Enlightenment, in Comay’s interpretation—it is this consciousness of existing a world of supranational justice that appears to underlie Hegel’s use of France to decry absolute freedom as terror.

There was, we might say, a *japanische Misère* just as there was a *deutsche Misère*. The freedom men exercised to know the worlds of foreign others, freer than before from the intermediary role of tradition, of nation, and of state, spurred a sense of global nonsynchronicity experienced by state power-holders and individuals within Japanese civil society alike, who voiced their resolutions to the problem in a cacophonous public sphere. If the competition of ideas must be at the heart of any global intellectual history, and if the global consciousness of the actors themselves in the early Meiji era of their situatedness in the global world means that any intellectual history of the early Meiji era must be global, then we witness how the very freedom to think of oneself as a constituent member of the world produced a crisis of justice as men

³⁸ Comay, *Mourning Sickness*, p. 5.

fought—physically—over what many called “the very soul of Japan.” When men repeatedly rebelled against a regime they condemned as oppressive, they rebelled against the oppressiveness of not knowing how to know, of a world in which the sudden public multiplication of opinions had thrown justice itself, thrown the soul of the nation, into disarray.

In December 1871, just months after they formally abolished Japan’s feudal domains and established a centralized nation-state, the most senior members of the Japanese revolutionary regime embarked for America in search of their new soul, opening a cataclysm not only in Japanese but in all of world history.

Let us set sail with them.

Chapter One

THE WIDENING GYRE

The gyre of global ideas widened suddenly. And the revolutionary Japanese regime spinning in it fell to pieces. Just half a decade had passed since it first came to power.

A vacuum of power that was opened up when leading members of the Meiji state left Japan on a round-the-world tour and ceded power to a slipshod caretaker regime; a furious back-and-forth between the Ministry of the Treasury and the Ministry of Justice over budgetary matters; the threatening fury of a strongman from the southwest over the erosion of samurai power, or rather his power; diplomatic disputes with Korea and with Russia—all appear as independent, deeply contingent conundrums that incidentally combined to bring about what is known as the Political Crisis of 1873, when the Meiji government split into two. But when we look more closely at each factor individually, and then take them together, we encounter striking and rather startling resonance among seemingly disparate crises. No factor alone felled the Meiji regime. All were symptoms of a deeper problem. All turned on the destabilizing reality that Japanese life was suddenly global. At the exact moment when the revolutionary regime was left to define anew, and therefore left Japan to define anew, what it meant to be a government, what it meant for a Japanese society to exist under its helm, and what it meant for the Japanese individual to exist in that society, all three—government, society, the individual—bore the brunt of the shock of accelerated entry into a global world. The global competition of ideas over how to find balance among state, society, and self destabilized the Meiji regime.

On August 29, 1871, members of the Meiji regime dissolved the system of semi-autonomous domains that had organized Japanese political life for centuries and replaced the

domains with prefectures, removing domainal lords from power and establishing a centralized nation-state under a modern national bureaucracy based in Tokyo.³⁹ On September 13, they inaugurated a new system of state organization to divide legislative and executive functions, assigning each national executive department expansive powers to plan and carry out reforms in their particular field of action. And on December 23, 1871, the most senior members of the revolutionary regime left the brand new nation-state they had just founded.

On March 19, 1873, Iwakura Tomomi and his retinue of itinerant revolutionaries arrived in Berlin, having circled through America, Britain, France and Belgium over the previous fifteen months. There, they received a panicked letter dated January 19 summoning two of them, Kido Kōin and Ōkubo Toshimichi, back home. It would be “difficult,” the letter conceded, for the entire retinue to come back. For now, the two would suffice. The letter came from Sanjō Sanetomi, head of the Council of State and the most senior member of the caretaker government left behind in Japan.⁴⁰ He had been sending repeated messages over the past month, but now a crisis in Korea was coming to a head. He needed help.

On January 6, 1873, two weeks before summoning Kido and Ōkubo, Sanjō Sanetomi had written to Iwakura lamenting four specific crises besetting the government. It faced threatening opposition to its reforms from Shimazu Hisamitsu, a strongman from the powerful southern domain of Kagoshima. The Ministry of the Treasury was struggling to manage budgetary affairs arising from ministerial infighting. Aborigines on Taiwan had massacred boatmen from the

³⁹ Major studies on *haihan chiken* include Matsuo Masahito, *Haihan chiken no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 2001); Matsuo Masahito, *Haihan chiken: kindai tōitsu kokka e no kumon* (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1986); Fujita Seiji, *Haihan chiken: 'Meiji kokka' ga umareta hi* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2000); Satō Shigerō, *Kindai tennōsei keisei ki no kenkyū: hitotsu no haihan chiken ron* (Tokyo: San'ichi shobō, 1987); Nagano Susumu, *Seinan shohan to haihan chiken* (Fukuoka: Kyūshū daigaku shuppankai, 1997); and Miyaji Masato, “Haihan chiken no seiji katei: Ishin seifu no hōkai to hanbatsu kenryoku no seiritsu,” in Banno Junji and Miyaji Masato, eds., *Nihon kindai shi ni okeru tenkanki no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Yamakawa shuppansha, 1986).

⁴⁰ Nihon shiseki kyōkai, ed., *Iwakura Tomomi kankei monjo* (Tokyo: Tōkyō daigaku shuppankai, 1968-1969), v. 5, p. 231 (document 6). Mōri Toshihiko, *Meiji rokunen seihen* (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1979), pp. 76-79.

Ryūkyū islands, setting off a diplomatic row with the Qing Empire. And diplomatic tensions with Korea, which refused to recognize the revolutionary regime in Tokyo, were ratcheting up.⁴¹ Six days later, another government official, Ōhara Shigemi, wrote to Iwakura elaborating on these anxieties.⁴²

Ōkubo arrived back in Japan on May 26, 1873, to manage these crises. Then Kido came on July 23. The rest of the Iwakura Mission returned prematurely on September 13. By the time the retinue had returned, even greater problems were threatening to tear the revolutionary regime apart. On September 19, six days after Iwakura arrived back in Japan, he wrote to Sameshima Naonobu, Japanese envoy in France, lamenting the “hundred problems” still rocking the government. And now he added Russia into the growing diplomatic crises.⁴³ The caretaker government was slouching closer toward war.

The caretaker government had approved plans to ignite a war with Korea. The Iwakura returnees succeeded in obstructing the plan. War was prevented. Enraged, leaders of the caretaker regime defected from the government in October. They “descended into the field” of society (*geya*) and led radical and often violent movements to topple the revolutionary government. Historians refer to this schism of 1873 as the Chastise Korea Debate (*Seikanron*) or as the Political Upheaval of Meiji 6 (*Meiji rokunen seihen*), depending on what they think caused the crisis.

It was from of this collection of letters that, in the 1970s, historian Mōri Toshihiko launched a polemical revision of the history of the 1873 crisis. He stunned the academic

⁴¹ Mōri, *Meiji rokunen seihen*, pp. 76-79. Nihon shiseki kyōkai, ed., *Iwakura Tomomi kankei monjo* (Tokyo: Tōkyō daigaku shuppankai, 1968-1969), v. 5, p. 209-212 (document 1).

⁴² *Iwakura Tomomi kankei monjo*, v. 5, pp. 212-222 (document 2).

⁴³ Mōri Toshihiko, *Meiji rokunen seihen no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Yūhikaku, 1985), pp. 10-11; Mōri, *Meiji rokunen seihen*, pp. 148-151. *Iwakura Tomomi kankei monji*, v. 5, pp. 320-324 (document 37).

establishment. The Chastise Korea crisis of 1873 was not about chastising Korea at all, he claimed. It was about internal Japanese affairs. The Korea crisis was only one of a “hundred affairs” beleaguering the government. And it was not the main one.⁴⁴

Two general points of revisionism drove Mōri’s polemic. The first and perhaps the more important point concerned the person of Saigō Takamori, whom historians had depicted as a hotheaded militant member of the caretaker regime intent on leading a suicide mission to spark war in Korea. Mōri sought to recuperate the image of Saigō. Saigō in fact did not advocate an invasion of Korea at all, he insisted. Far from the hidebound, cantankerous caricature of a washed-up samurai that appeared in received histories, Saigō in fact actively sought both to erode samurai privilege in the domestic sphere and to prevent, not to foment, an invasion of Korea; Saigō sought to rebuff a call for military action from fellow leader Itagaki Taisuke. The second general claim was that the political upheaval turned not on diplomatic affairs but on domestic politics. It was not just that Saigō opposed invading Korea. It was that the Korea issue was incidental altogether. The real problem lay factionalist infighting between Chōshū and Satsuma government officials. The dispute was exacerbated by a series of corruption scandals that the Ministry of Justice of Etō Shinpei was eager to expose in his pursuit of a nation ruled by law and legislature. It was not deliberate Japanese aggression abroad that drove the problem; foreign policy was a sublimation of domestic politics.

Mōri framed his revisionism as a fight not only over history but over historical method. A radical, conceited positivism dominated his approach. He insisted that a systematically tendentious reading of sources, wherein interpretation ran before evidence, had warped the truth of 1873. By “discarding preconceptions” and relying on “the sources themselves,” reading them

⁴⁴ In a well-known clash of interpretations, Tamura Sadao, “‘Seikanron’ no shiryō hihan: Mōri Toshihiko setsu hihan,” *Rekishigaku kenkyū* 61 (1991), pp. 16–25, sharply disputed Mōri’s interpretations.

“in as objective a way as possible,” he had arrived, he boasted, at a true reading of the past.⁴⁵

Underlying his work was the assumption that reading texts as objectively as possible can reveal what he called the “true intentions” and “true story” of the past. His rewriting the history of 1873 was part and parcel of a quest to advance an empiricist historical fundamentalism wherein texts, internally coherent and self-sufficiently rational, inherently have more knowledge of themselves and of their time than the interpretive power of retrospection does.

About a half-century after Mōri originally tried and to some extent succeeded in overturning historical consensus, we can now return to the evidence Mōri took up and arrive at different conclusions. It is true enough that the 1873 schism was not really about Korea. But it was not really about Japan, either. The sources themselves tell us far less about the true intentions or true stories on which they professed to comment explicitly than about foundational problems of human life that they often inadvertently revealed.

Was it Saigō or Itagaki who wanted to invade Korea? Who was at fault: the Iwakura Embassy returnees or the Caretaker Government? Was the problem really Korea, or was it domainal infighting, or was it corruption feuds? These are all legitimate questions. But fixating on them makes us miss the broader context in which they arose—the common crisis of globality that had engulfed Japan, one that manifested itself in ostensibly independent crises. And the social and political disorder engendered by globality intensified with the official state idea of leaving Japan to learn of the West.

⁴⁵ Mōri, *Meiji rokunen seihen no kenkyū*, pp. i–iv; Mōri, *Meiji rokunen seihen*, pp. i–iv.

Journey to the West

“The government is going to send a very superior embassy to America and Europe,” Guido Verbeck wrote in a private letter dated November 21, 1871. He had just met with Iwakura Tomomi, whom he called the “Prime Minister and most influential man in the empire,” the man who would lead the mission to the West. (In fact, the official translation mandated for “Minister of the Right,” the official title of Iwakura in Japanese, was “Vice Prime Minister.”⁴⁶) The departure date for the embassy was set for December 22. “It is my hope and prayer,” Verbeck wrote, “that the sending of this mission may do very much to bring about, or at least bring nearer, the long longed-for toleration of Christianity.”⁴⁷

The official purpose of the Iwakura Mission did not include learning to tolerate Christianity. The mission outlined in an official government document, called the “State Letter,” was threefold: to offer official greetings to those nations with which Japan had signed treaties; to call for a postponement of treaty revision since Japan had not yet attained an adequate stage of enlightenment to make successful revisions; and to learn of the civilization of the West.⁴⁸

An idea so grand—and so fun—as making a round-the-world trip to rescue Japan from imperialism and learn about the West did not come about so easily.⁴⁹ The unofficial record of the reasons for the Iwakura Mission tells a more obscure, more convoluted, and far less admirable story than what official documents convey. Indeed, the Iwakura Mission was supposed to be the Ōkuma Mission, and along the way, Ōkuma Shigenobu’s political adversaries, resentful and

⁴⁶ Ōkubo Toshiaki, *Iwakura shisetsu no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Munetaka shobō, 1976), p. 175.

⁴⁷ William Elliot Griffis, *Verbeck of Japan; a citizen of no country; a life story of foundation work inaugurated by Guido Fridolin Verbeck* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1901), pp. 255-256. See also Albert Altman, “Guido Verbeck and the Iwakura Embassy,” *Japan Quarterly* 13:1 (1966), pp. 57–58.

⁴⁸ See Document 13, “Tokumei zenken taishi oyobi dō fukushi ni zenken i’ nin no kokusho,” in Ōkubo Toshiaki, ed., *Iwakura shisetsu no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Munekata shobō, 1976), p. 179.

⁴⁹ Indeed, Izumi Saburō describes the mission as an “adventure” in the “second wave” of globalization, one led by Europe and America. Izumi Saburō, *Iwakura shisetsudan to iu bōken* (Tokyo: Bungei shunjū, 2004), esp. pp. 7-10, 217-219.

suspicious of his mounting power, knocked him off the helm. A series of three major manifestos, all of which have been examined carefully by Ōkubo Toshiaki, tell us of the twisting, often twisted impetuses behind the decision to go abroad. Those manifestos are the Brief Sketch of Guido Verbeck; the “Statement of Purpose” of the Meiji government for the foreign embassy; and the “Contract” between the itinerants and the caretaker government. Through these documents, we can discern the intellectual impetus behind the foreign dispatch.

The Brief Sketch

At the heart of the Iwakura Embassy lay brazen assumptions and untested theories about being and knowing in the modern age, theories so radical that men eventually took up arms to resist them. Those ideas came largely from Guido Fridolin Verbeck (1830–1898), a Dutch-American but legally stateless Protestant missionary and teacher in Japan. The list of his students over the years reads as a who’s who of the revolutionaries and counterrevolutionaries who made the Meiji government and modern Japan itself: Ōkuma Shigenobu; Soejima Taneomi; Itō Hirobumi; Ōkubo Toshimichi; Katō Hiroyuki; Etō Shinpei; Ōi Kentarō.⁵⁰

Verbeck was himself the product of the displacements of the global age. He had immigrated to the United States in 1850s, where he Americanized his name to “Verbeck,” but was soon struck down by grave physical sickness and seeming depression.⁵¹ He chose to devote his life to Christianity. William Elliot Griffis, his contemporary American in Japan and his biographer, attributes his conversion from an aspiring civil engineer to a Christian missionary to the prayers of Japanese “for light and a teacher,” prayers that were “heard of God” and answered

⁵⁰ Umetani Noboru, *Oyatoi gaikokujin no kenkyū*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Seishi suppan kabushiki gaisha, 2010) pp. 238–261; Katano Susumu, *Oyatoi gaikokujin to sono deshitachi* (Tokyo: Shinjinbutsu ōraisha, 2011), pp. 32 – 42, esp. p. 41.

⁵¹ Griffis, *Verbeck of Japan*, pp. 51-55.

with the person of Verbeck. But at least sociologically, it appears that Verbeck's conversion mirrored that of many of his later students. At a time of radical change, afflicted by the torment of uncertainty in an unfamiliar world, he turned to personal faith in a transcendental community as a source of solace.⁵²

In the late 1850s, Samuel Wells Williams, later a Yale professor and an eminent translator active on the diplomatic scene in East Asia, sent a call to the Reformed Church of America to dispatch missionaries to Japan. The branch in New York City began soliciting missionaries to help in the effort to persuade Japan to lift the ban on Christianity.⁵³ Verbeck signed up. He left the United States in mid-1859; in November, the “youthful face and blonde hair of the tall, sedate, and thoughtful Guido F. Verbeck,” as one observer witnessing his departure from New York recalled, arrived with an “embassage of mercy [in] the far-famed Zipangu!”⁵⁴

From 1864, Verbeck began teaching at a national academy in Nagasaki. By 1866, he already had his first baptisms of Japanese men.⁵⁵ By 1869, according to his own letters, he had achieved such renown that he was summoned to Tokyo by the revolutionary regime—“by thirty-six of my former pupils [who] came after me to Yedo”—to advise the government formally there and eventually to teach at university.⁵⁶

It was precisely at this moment, in June 1869, that Verbeck wrote for Ōkuma Shigenobu what he called a “Brief Sketch,” an outline of guidance for a journey to the West whereby Japan would learn about the world and enter the comity of global nations. According to Verbeck's

⁵² Griffis, *Verbeck of Japan*, pp. 56-57.

⁵³ Griffis, *Verbeck of Japan*, pp. 60-61.

⁵⁴ Griffis, *Verbeck of Japan*, pp. 65-68.

⁵⁵ Griffis *Verbeck of Japan*, pp. 123-126.

⁵⁶ Griffis, *Verbeck of Japan*, p. 188.

telling, in October 1871, after Iwakura replaced Ōkuma as head of the voyage, Iwakura turned to him to ask about the document he had sent Ōkuma. Together, Iwakura and Verbeck went over it “clause by clause,” with Iwakura hailing the manifesto as the “*very* and the *only* thing for them to do” while abroad and promising to follow it “by the letter”.⁵⁷ In 1872, as the Iwakura Embassy was traversing the world, H. M. Ferris, on the board of missionaries in America that had launched Verbeck’s journey, requested that Verbeck share his manifesto with the public.⁵⁸ Verbeck declined, insisting that he had written it in confidence. But he revealed in private to Ferris. Even as he committed to the members of the embassy that he would “leave the outward honor of initiating the embassy to themselves,” he made it unsubtly clear that he saw himself as responsible for launching the embassy.⁵⁹ Iwakura repeatedly told him, Verbeck claimed, that the manifesto was central in “start[ing] off the embassy” and to getting “the government out of a great difficulty.”⁶⁰ And even though Verbeck refused himself to publicize it at the time, the document was discovered in the 1960s in archives in the United States by Israeli historian Albert Altman.⁶¹

It was a revolutionary document. Indeed, to leading historian of the mission Tanaka Akira, the Iwakura Embassy as a whole instantiated the “discontinuous continuity” (*hirenzoku no renzoku*) that “epitomized the historical characteristics of the ‘revolution’ that was the Meiji Restoration (*Meiji Ishin to iu ‘kakumei’*)”: although much of the staff of the Iwakura Mission was made of technocrats who had built up expertise in the late Tokugawa era, including those in

⁵⁷ Griffis, *Verbeck of Japan*, p. 260.

⁵⁸ This biographical detail on Ferris from James Mitchell Holmes, “Verbeck of Japan: Guido F. Verbeck as Pioneering Missionary, *Oyatoi Gaikokujin*, and ‘Foreign Hero,’” (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2014), p. 113.

⁵⁹ Griffis, *Verbeck of Japan*, p. 262.

⁶⁰ Griffis, *Verbeck of Japan*, p. 258.

⁶¹ A helpful overview of the origins of Iwakura Mission appears in Tanaka Akira, *Iwakura shisetsudan no rekishiteki kenkyū*, esp. pp. 19–25. Tanaka himself relies to some extent on Ōkubo Toshiaki, *Iwakura shisetsu no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Munetaka shobō, 1976). On the discovery of the document, see Ōkubo, *Iwakura shisetsu no kenkyū*, p. 39. Altman published his finding in Albert Altman, “Guido Verbeck and the Iwakura Embassy.”

the leadership, in its intellectual dimensions, and especially to Tanaka in the notion of “international law” that that leadership accepted, it represented marked discontinuity.⁶² Still, despite this radical break, Verbeck befuddlingly sought to convince Ōkuma and later Iwakura that a journey to the West was in fact the least risky, the least brazen option for a nation in the throes of upheaval. In its blasé indifference to its own intensely controvertible worldview, Verbeck’s “Brief Sketch” startles.⁶³

Two foundational ideas about human knowledge and existence formed the basis of Verbeck’s ideas, the first an explicit statement of epistemology, the second less pointedly remarked as a premise about human ontology, one perhaps so essential to the being of the interlocutors that it went without saying. The second is the more basic; let us begin there.

Verbeck offered no dearth of practical advice to the Meiji regime. How many officers must make up the commission to study armies and navies in the West? What should be the qualities of the man whom the Emperor selects as chief ambassador? By what route should the prospective mission embark? But these practical recommendations, the adoption of many of which Ōkubo Toshiaki cites to reveal the causal role of the Brief Sketch on the Iwakura Mission, were secondary to a more essential point that the Iwakura Mission shared with Verbeck.⁶⁴ Verbeck took for granted a radical notion of the essential sameness of all people regardless of history or nationality. “And in the important matters of legislation, finance, education, etc.,” he wrote,

⁶² Tanaka Akira, “Kurobune’ raikō kara Iwakura shisetsudan e,” in Tanaka Akira, ed., *Kaikoku*, vol. 1 of *Nihon kindai shisō taiki* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1991), p. 464; Tanaka Akira, *Iwakura shisetsudan no rekishiteki kenkyū*, p. 30.

⁶³ The text of the Brief Sketch can be found in Tanaka Akira, ed., *Kaikoku*, pp. 364-371; or in Altman, “Guido Verbeck and the Iwakura Embassy,” pp. 58-62.

⁶⁴ Ōkubo Toshiaki, *Iwakura shisetsu no kenkyū*, pp. 41-44.

it is not necessary to experiment, for there lies the whole of Europe open and ready to be studied *and copied by all who like* to do so. In Europe and America every imaginable form of government, all kinds of laws, every possible way of managing national finances, and every system of education, have been experimented on for several centuries, and the system of states as it exists in Europe and America today is the result of these experiments.

We might dwell on the tacit chauvinism of Verbeck's worldview, the assumption that it was only in the West that so wide a range of social and political experimentation had occurred, that no conceivable form of government existed outside.⁶⁵ And let us make no mistake: it is blind chauvinism, and it represents the profound hubris that characterized much of the Western experience in Japan in the Meiji era and indeed onward—hubris that itself engendered a furious backlash from those far less impressed by European and American government than Europeans and Americans themselves appeared to be. We might wonder how differently world history might have progressed had the Iwakura Embassy had the insight to search out in the “non-West” lessons they could never learn in the West. But to dwell excessively on this critique would be to distract from the revolutionary core of the argument: a blithe assumption that allowed Verbeck to argue, seemingly commonsensically, for the perfect fungibility of human systems across space. We witness here the social-scientific historicization of the human past, the notion that the being of societies arises not from any inert or inherent quality but from the trial-and-error accumulation of past experience, that the experiments of the past of one place are perfectly replicable in

⁶⁵ Tanaka Akira takes the Iwakura Mission as his central piece of evidence to argue that the Meiji Restoration itself was an act of “leaving Asia,” not only physically and literally but intellectually and figuratively. Tanaka Akira, *Datsu-A' no Meiji Ishin: Iwakura shisetsudan o ou tabi kara* (Tokyo: Nihon hōsō shuppan kyōkai, 1984).

present of others with seemingly no need to control for variables of human diversity. It was this unarticulated premise that launched the mission: that because humanity was essentially universal, because trappings such as laws or government or finance were incidental outgrowths of human chance that belied essential sameness rather than suggested innate difference. Who had tried to supplant Euroamerican institutions into Japan before? Verbeck needed no prior evidence for the plausibility of his project: “*There* may be seen, in the greatest variety, excellences to be studied and imitated, as well as defects to be known and avoided.”

This postulation of essential sameness ran up against the problem of global imperialism, which turned on placing greater emphasis on differences among peoples of the world, regardless of whether that difference was incidental or immanent. This tension between the universalism of the epistemology underlying the attempt to adopt Western missions and an awareness of profound difference that itself spurred the need to adopt lay at the heart of the multiple objectives of the Iwakura Mission and indeed undercut the universalism of the epistemology itself. Verbeck wrote out a script of a letter that the Japanese ambassador should present to foreign nations once he arrived there. The script acknowledged, indeed emphasized, “the peculiar status of Japan in relation to Western States, the latter not receiving Japan into political equality with themselves, so that Japan cannot as yet be said to be fully received and admitted to the society of nations as contemplated by International Law.” All people were the same, yet Japan was not equal. But as Verbeck ventriloquized behind the Japanese ambassador ventriloquizing behind the fictive specter of the Meiji Emperor, he took pains to stress that the “peculiar status” of Japan resulted not from any sort of inherent difference but from the inability of its past to furnish Japan with a legal system on par with the West. “H.M. is aware,” Verbeck wrote, no doubt perfectly unaware of that of which His Majesty was aware or unaware, “that from the different constitutions and

laws of different countries there is a reason assigned for the want of political equality in regard to his Empire as compared with the Western States.”⁶⁶

This “assigned reason” betrayed vexing ambivalence over the notion of human universalism: should law articulate and codify the preexisting equality and rights of people, or did it itself produce and engender that equality? Verbeck seemed to slip between the two notions: people are essentially the same, and yet their “want of political equality” supplies ample reason for their inequality. This conundrum did not simply vitiate the intellectual coherency of Verbeck’s proposal. It signaled a conundrum, a paradox, at the heart of Verbeck’s sketch and indeed at the heart of Japanese modernity: if Japan was, a priori, so essentially similar to Western states that it could readily lift “laws and constitutions” from foreign states, then why was that equality attained only after its adoption of those laws and constitutions? Was equality a condition inherent to the being of all people, or was it something attained only with the trappings of modern law and politics?

Verbeck came close to addressing this problem, to conceding that inequality might mean difference, to acknowledging the possibility that the obvious differences in the Japanese body might mean it would reject Western organs transplanted into it for reasons inherent to its organism—only to dismiss the possibility hastily. “Now, it is not difficult to guess at some of the answers that may be given” to his draft statement from the Emperor, Verbeck conceded. One such objection from his imagined Western interlocutors was “that the civilization of Japan (mainly depending on education) is too widely different in its nature from the civilization as developed in European countries and the U. States.” But the objection as Verbeck articulated it stopped short of an admission that the quixotic adventure he proposed might from the outset be

⁶⁶ On the relationships among law, civilization, global equality, see Daniel V. Botsman, *Power and Punishment in the Making of Modern Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

nullified by the essential difference. To Verbeck, even the “nature” of civilization was, as he noted parenthetically, constructed by education, subject to change, to progress. To resolve the problem of possibly incompatible natures, he proposed a special commission on the embassy that would look exclusively at the educational systems of Western civilization “anticipating” the objections. Nothing inherent separated the Japanese from their Western interlocutors.

But something did separate the West from the rest of the world. “Although all or most of the Treaty Powers might be visited by the Embassy,” he wrote, “yet the only countries whose institutions are to be thoroughly studied, as pointed out above, are France, England, Prussia, Holland, and the United States. If these are well understood, the others are not worth spending time on.” Evidently nothing needed to be seen and felt in order to be fully appreciated in Russia. That other Asian societies deserved no time went without saying. The tension here recalls the tension that Marx, drawing from Hegel, identified in the Terror of the French Revolution, the conundrum that all people could be bourgeois but that the notion of the bourgeois in itself rested on the assumption of that the non-bourgeois existed. This was a conundrum that tore down the universalism of enlightenment values and lay behind the unleashing of violence to impose the universalism on everyone. But here we see this problem on a global stage of enlightenment, with entire nations, not classes, acting as differentiated people within a universalist worldview. We see here, then, a logic structure in which the paradox of universal sameness and imperialist differentiation could be resolved with violence: to use force to impose universalism on other people at once asserted their inherent possibility of joining universal enlightenment and yet assumed the fact that they had not caught up yet.

Thus Verbeck unfolded a forceful argument not simply to persuade the nascent Japanese regime to journey west but to impress upon it the foundational beliefs about shared human nature

on which it should depart. Closely associated with these ontological premises was the second major assumption of Verbeck's proposition, an epistemological one. Verbeck believed, again seemingly so firmly that he had little reason to corroborate his assertions, that the sensory and visceral experience of the West would serve, more than any other means of knowing, to confirm not simply the superiority of the West or the desirability of adapting its institutions but the validity of the theories he set forth. Such first-hand corroboration was necessary especially because of his own difference, or of his own tendentiousness: they need not believe him, a foreigner, when they could go and see for themselves the brilliance of Western institutions. He betrayed no fear that the experience of a strange other, of the garish, knavish modernity of the West, might cause his Japanese interlocutors to recoil and arrive at precisely the opposite conclusion. That lived experience would align with the intellectual anticipation of perfect congruity went with little qualification: "There is something in the civilization of the West," Verbeck averred, "that must be seen and felt, in order to be fully appreciated; personal experience is necessary to understand the theory of civilization so thoroughly as to enable one, to introduce it into other parts, and besides, there is no evidence so convincing as that of the eyes."

This, too, appeared as an anodyne afterthought, needing no further corroboration: "besides, there is no evidence so convincing as that of the eyes," Verbeck shrugged. But it was a revolutionary epistemological claim. The notion that personal experience was necessary to understand a theory of civilization constituted a peremptory repudiation of the foundational ideas of early modern Japan. After all, the bakufu outlawed the entry of all foreigners into the realm and the exit of all Japanese from it during the 1630s, and it did not lift that ban until the mid-nineteenth century. Undergirding these interdiction lay an assumption that the stability of the realm depended on the self-containment of its people: to know the other through personal

experience would compromise, not buttress, the structure of the Tokugawa realm. It was the nature of early modernity that enabled this assumption. Limits in technology and economy permitted the state to proscribe first-hand sensory perception as a way of knowing that world, and to conceive of that proscription as a prescription for prosperity.

Into the environment of the late nineteenth century, where technological innovation and economic efflorescence had rendered experiential abstinence neither salutary nor even possible, stepped Verbeck, insisting that the prosperity of the realm relied on “personal experience” of others, not its avoidance. It was of course not only Verbeck who had this idea. The leaders of the Meiji coup d’état themselves had, in their five-point revolutionary manifesto known as the Charter Oath, trumpeted that “knowledge shall be sought throughout the world so as to strengthen the foundation of imperial rule.” But it was left to the instruction of Verbeck to explain what exactly consisted “seeking.” To him it involved a physical act of searching, and a searching that was primarily individual and rational, not bounded by custom or tradition. And to him, oddly enough, this revolutionary experience of a global world was the most conservative option available to the state. Inasmuch as civilization to him was “the result of the practice and experience of ages,” it was not “the result of abstract reason”: “I do not mean to say,” he equivocated,

that there is no way of succeeding by studies and theories, and then experimenting on the same, if necessary; but experiments are expensive, and sometimes dangerous.

Experiments in mechanics or chemistry may result, if unsuccessful, in the breaking of a wheel or a lever, or in the bursting of a bottle; but experiments in politics, if unsuccessful,

involve the happiness of men, it may be of a whole nation, and they result in confusion and the loss of precious lives.

The Tokugawa dictatorship feared what gaining experiential knowledge would bring. Verbeck sought to make the Meiji regime fear what not gaining it would bring. That was the difference between social science and natural science: the wages of social science were so much higher that its experiments had to be observed personally and confirmed. But the essential principles did not change.

The stakes of the epistemological claim lay in the underlying motivation Verbeck had in proposing the mission abroad: to push the Meiji regime to legalizing Christianity. To experience civilization first-hand meant to learn to tolerate Christianity. And this prospective legalization required him prod the Meiji regime toward the construction of a new Japanese nation wherein the masses would attain enlightenment, for the reconstruction of the Japanese self or of individual being across the nation. An assumption pervaded Verbeck's argument that state leaders bear seeming omnipotence in steering the course of national civilization until he arrives an awkward, seemingly tangential "Note about religious toleration," which he tacked on at the end of his letter. Verbeck suggested that the purpose of the state lay not in determining the lives of its national subjects but in enabling their subjective autonomy. "Some people seem to have a vague idea," he wrote to the Meiji regime, "that, to grant religious toleration involves the necessity on the part of the Government openly to approve of the religion of the West, and to recommend it to the people at large. No such thing is involved in the term. Governments generally, do no such thing," he lectured.

The purpose of the mission, then, was to allow Meiji leaders themselves to apprehend through personal experience whether Christianity had indeed engendered in Europe “such baneful effects as is supposed by some [Japanese]”—and thereby to affirm the theoretical significance of individual autonomy, which the regime had to afford Japanese subjects so that they could make their own free decision to adopt Christianity. Verbeck stressed that the individual must remain, first and foremost, an individual: “Religious tolerance simply means that a subject of any country is allowed to hold such religious opinions and use such modes of worship as his own conscience approves,” he wrote. And he insisted that in a nation of individual subjective autonomy, the individual remains first an individual before a representative of any broader social grouping to which he might belong. “If he [an individual] commits a crime, whether with or without religion, it makes no difference, he is simply a criminal, and is of course to be treated as such.”

Verbeck pressed his student revolutionaries to adopt a universalist ontology and an individualist, experiential epistemology to transform Japan into a realm in which each Japanese individual could, by his or her own will, choose from among global ideas flowing into their nation—and especially Christian ideas flowing into their nation. And even if they could not experience the West themselves, they could learn from their leaders of its enlightened benefits. This distinction separated, in the reading of Verbeck, the present embassy from those that the Tokugawa bakufu sent out in its dying years, whose “object,” he claimed, “was probably not so much to gain information as to make an impression in favor of the Shyogoon.”⁶⁷ He called on “all the Officers of the Embassy” to “write a detailed account of all they see and hear, and obtain in writing or print all possible information about their respective branches, so that on their return

⁶⁷ On those embassies, see Tanaka Akira, “‘Kurobune’ raikō kara Iwakura shisetsudan e,” in *Kaikoku*, pp. 458-461.

home the Government may, if it choose to do so, compile and publish all the results of the mission for the general benefit and enlightenment of the nation.” Tanaka Akira stresses the ways in which Kido Kōin, and seemingly by extension the rest of the Meiji regime, adopted this particular dimension of the message.⁶⁸ The ultimate purpose lay not only in the civilization and enlightenment of the regime but in its production of the individual self and of a society that could, through the agency of the state, become enlightened.

Even if Verbeck tried to instill these values in his students, the men at the helm of the revolutionary Japanese regime, it of course does not necessarily follow that they readily adopted them.

The Statement of Purpose

As Ōkubo Toshiaki, grandson of Ōkubo Toshimichi and himself a leading historian of the Iwakura Mission, explains, historical records on the actual initial decision to dispatch an embassy to the United States and Europe are thin. He uncovers three bodies of work that reveal the varying and competing intents behind the mission.⁶⁹ They reveal the struggles among the Meiji officials over how to lead the embassy abroad—but they show that official thinking remained largely in accordance with the underlying ideas of Verbeck.

In his personal recollections, Ōkuma Shigenobu, the initial recipient of the “Brief Sketch,” perhaps unsurprisingly takes credit for being the one to have made the seemingly final proposal for the embassy to other Meiji leaders, who accepted it. The Ōkuma proposal, which the grandson Ōkubo suspects was written in 1871, after the dissolution of domains, was not

⁶⁸ Tanaka, *Iwakura shisetsudan no rekishiteki kenkyū*, pp. 69-73.

⁶⁹ On absence of historical records, Ōkubo Toshiaki, *Iwakura shisetsu no kenkyū*, pp. 27–31.

optimistic about treaty revision:⁷⁰ “We must not expect total success,” Ōkuma flatly wrote. The purpose of the mission abroad was simply to enter the world, in Ōkuma’s phrasing, “for in the countries of Europe and America, the situation is such that people still do not even know that we, Japan, exist. Here and there are those who know, but they know us as a semi-enlightened (*hankai*) nation, and they still do not know our nation and our customs well.” The purpose was to “to make the people of those lands know Japan.” The point was not friendly and fun cultural exchange. Ōkuma feared that at this moment of change in Japan, when the “final leaves of the bakufu were falling” and the nation was mired in “struggle and discord,” foreign nations would “take advantage of the struggles and fractiousness” within the nation and the reality that the Meiji regime lacked the means to “give deep attention to other affairs” and heap “indignities and violence” on Japan.⁷¹ Familiarizing foreign nations with Japan would aid the process of establishing Japan as subjective force on a global scene. Ōkuma saw globality as a threat to a Japan already in the throes of disorder; going abroad, he thought, would resolve, not exacerbate, that disorder.

It was after Ōkuma’s proposal was submitted, the dispatch was approved, and Ōkuma was displaced by Iwakura Tomomi as head of the foreign dispatch that the documents most often regarded as the manifesto for the Iwakura Mission were written, the grandson Ōkubo explains.⁷² Known as “Statement of Purpose” (*jiyūsho*), the texts represent, Ōkubo suggests, a dramatic expansion in the purpose of the mission abroad from mere “introduction to Japan” to a

⁷⁰ Ōkubo Toshiaki, *Iwakura shisetsu no kenkyū*, p. 32.

⁷¹ Quoted in Ōkubo, *Iwakura shisetsu no kenkyū*, p. 28.

⁷² Ōkubo Toshiaki, *Iwakura shisetsu no kenkyū*, pp. 31–35.

thoroughgoing intent to learn from the West, an intent that suggests to him the influence of Verbeck.⁷³

The Treatises reflected, whether by causation or correlation, the same conundrum at the heart of the Verbeck proposal: the problem that Japan had to fight to gain entry into a global epistemology that was supposed to be universal and to afford equality. Right from the outset, the “Statement of Purpose” begins with the conundrum that the nations of the world have seemingly a priori “equal rights” (*taitō no kenri*), that it was for this reason that treaties were drawn up to obstruct war and to allow trade, and that “international law” (*rekkoku kōhō*) existed to “suppress the forces of the strong and the weak.” But “our nation has lost its equal rights,” it lamented, and now that “humiliation” had been wreaked upon Japan, it was necessary to “exert will and unleash effort to retrieve those rights, to cast off humiliation, and to gain back the path not to be invaded.”⁷⁴ These “rights were lost,” it claimed, because of the “isolationism (*sakoku*) of accumulated generations,” because the nation “rejected the opening of ports and adhered to custom.” Now the government had been changed, and yet the “evil customs of the past” had not yet been overcome: it was time for Japan to enter into a universal world. Why was it, the document asked, that Japan had not attained “balance” with foreign nations”? The state had now “studied” the reason and developed a “strategy” to become equal: to centralize the government, to “wash away the evil customs that have accumulated over generations,” to establish trade, and to “recover civil rights” (*minken o fukushi*).⁷⁵ The paradox of the particularist universalism of Western international law could be resolved by reason and by time: by rejecting the past, by

⁷³ Ōkubo Toshiaki, *Iwakura shisetsu no kenkyū*, pp. 41–44. See also Takii Kazuhiro, *The Meiji Constitution: the Japanese Experience of the West and the Shaping of the Modern State*, trans. David Noble (Tokyo: I-House Press, 2007), pp. 1–48, for an account of the Iwakura Embassy and indeed for this translation of the term *jiyūsho*.

⁷⁴ See Documents 1 and 2 in Ōkubo Toshiaki, *Iwakura shisetsu no kenkyū*, pp. 160–165.

⁷⁵ Ōkubo, *Iwakura shisetsu no kenkyū*, p. 164

adopting a rational strategy to overcome the “evils” of bygone time, Japan could lurch into the future of globalism. The Meiji regime blamed Japan for the imperialism of the West.

It might be, as Ōkubo Toshiaki stresses, that the invocation of international law was merely a ploy to enable treaty revision; the problem was the strategic geopolitical issue of gaining equality in a world of empires. But the fact that the concerns were geopolitical does not mean that they were not simultaneously intellectual. The problem of treaty revision spurred a radical reconceptualization of the concept of justice itself, the recognition of some sort of higher, supranational ideal of global equality that had to be enshrined in law, some sort of revolutionary lurch into the future.

This construal of the spatial conundrum of universalism as essentially a temporal conundrum of history that could be resolved with a leap into the future, and this identification of the past itself as responsible for the woes of the present, appears most starkly in the text that the grandson Ōkubo takes as most representative of the intent of the Iwakura Embassy: an opinion paper that Itō Hirobumi, the English-speaking deputy ambassador of the mission, wrote in Salt Lake City and that was approved by Iwakura and other senior members of the retinue.⁷⁶ The document is particularly valuable in that it appears to have been written as an internal memorandum, not a public declaration.

A parvenu from Chōshū who had visited the United States and Europe previously, the Anglophone Itō was a colorful force on the Embassy, as Takii Kazuhiro has vividly recounted. When a woman aboard the Iwakura ship to the United States protested to Ōkubo Toshimichi about unwanted advances from a leading official on board, Ōkubo referred the matter to Itō. Itō appointed himself judge, set up a mock court right on the ship, and put the matter on trial in

⁷⁶ Shunpo kō tsuishō kai, ed., *Itō Hirobumi den*, (Tokyo: Shunpo kō tsuishō kai, 1940), v. 1, p. 643.

order to “learn from Western forms by imitating them.”⁷⁷ His progressiveness and irreverence in general, and his willingness in this particular case to make a harassment complaint public, drew the ire of famed diarist on the voyage and Meiji official Sasaki Takayuki, who saw in Itō the embodiment of a tawdry new present: “I was also shocked by Itō,” Sasaki wrote, “whose talents apparently exempt him from having to comport himself in a fashion appropriate to a vice-ambassador. But this is the way of the world at present, where such manners are practiced, and [are] gaining the upper hand.”⁷⁸ Itō, whom Takii calls a “running riot,” is said even to have been shamelessly profligate on the Embassy and even “set a match to the dress of a nightclub dancer” while in the United States, “saying that he wanted to see whether the chiffon she was wearing would burn.”⁷⁹

Itō did more constructive things to pass time, too. He was bored in Salt Lake City. He wrote to Yamagata Aritomo and Inoue Kaoru saying that “because snow has piled up on the Pacific Railway, we have already had a long sojourn of over ten days in a city in the mountains called ‘the Salt Lake.’ Idle and doing nothing, we still have not been able to reach Washington.” The delay presented Itō an opportunity to speculate on what lay ahead for Japan: the *Alabama* crisis between Britain and America threatened to ignite war between the two, and if war did break out, then Russia would “without doubt” seize India and America would seize Canada and Ireland. The most urgent task at hand, he impressed upon his interlocutors in Japan, was to settle the dispute with Russia over Karafuto and to fix the border with Russia.⁸⁰ And he wrote that as far as he could tell, the United States had no plans to attack Korea: after all, he wrote, the

⁷⁷ Takii, *The Meiji Constitution*, p. 16.

⁷⁸ Takii, *The Meiji Constitution*, p. 17.

⁷⁹ Takii, *The Meiji Constitution*, p. 19.

⁸⁰ *Itō Hirobumi den*, v. 1, pp. 632-634. Ōkubo Toshiaki stresses that the Itō opinion paper must be read alongside this letter, but he emphasizes different parts of it, claiming centrality to the *Alabama* Claims issue.

countries still did not enjoy cordial relations—one only attacks those with whom one has good relations, apparently—and it had no benefit to the trade and commerce for the people. Even in 1872, his eyes were on brewing border crises at home in Japan.

Boredom provided Itō also with a chance to theorize on why he was in “the Salt Lake” in the first place—and to reveal the intellectual implications of the geopolitical problem of treaty revision.

The purpose of “the dispatched embassy extraordinary and plenipotentiary by His Majesty the Emperor is not,” Itō emphasized explicitly, to “abrogate present treaties” or “to sign new treaties with the countries of Europe and America.”⁸¹ The aim was something grander: “to discuss the benefits and harms of our experiences up to now with various governments”; “to plan for future increase of rights for the citizens of our country”; “to speak earnestly of the conditions in our nation and to request recommendations from various governments”; and, seemingly most important, to “allow our empire to join in the company of the civilized nations of the world,” “to make it enjoy free intercourse, equally and shoulder to shoulder, with those that uphold international law,” and “to make us receive, in its totality, the public right (*kōken*) to independence and autonomy.” To “put these goals into effect,” Itō wrote, the embassy had to ask how to reform government, how to write new laws, how to build policy and engage with foreign nations—how to overturn their world.

Itō listed eleven points that he wrote were the “expected and planned goals of His Majesty the Emperor.” The first could hardly have been starker: “His Majesty the Emperor does not regard the political customs of our Oriental lands (*waga Tōyō shoshū ni okonawaruru tokoro no seiji fūzoku*) as adequate to bringing about the good of our nation.” “By and large,” he wrote,

⁸¹ See Document 22 in Ōkubo Toshiaki, *Iwakura shisetsu no ken'yū*, pp. 187–191.

“the politics, institutions, customs, education, business, and industry of European and American states far exceed ours in the Orient,” and so the Emperor wills to “transfer the ways of enlightenment (*kaimei no fū*) to our nation” and “to make our people quickly progress into the realm of equal enlightenment.”

This task of enlightenment hinged, indeed, on two interwoven presumptions. One was the radical destruction of the past for the purpose of the equality of the people in the present. “The Emperor seeks to destroy feudalism in order to make the nation’s powers as one, and revering the rights of the people (*jinmin no kenri*), to shave away hereditary stipends of the samurai and to wipe out the evil customs of the past.” A litany of technological and social changes would have to proceed: the expansion of knowledge, the development of various fields of learning, the elimination of nepotism in favor of meritocracy and ability in selection of government ministers, the installation of telegraph lines and railroads, a conscript military for the protection of the people, and the opening of a parliament (*giin*) for public debate (*kōron*). “In all these matters we seek to copy the systems currently used and the precedent already established in the countries of Europe and America.”

To Europeanize or Americanize and to overcome the past, then, implied developing the power of the people. Itō had stressed this point in a stentorian speech in San Francisco announcing Japanese entry into the world. It was raucously hailed by his American audience at the time and that remains today among the most notable achievements of the Iwakura Mission. Itō boasted to his American audience about the sterling success of the dissolution of domains and the establishment of a central nation-state. Just a year after civil war had rocked the country, he said, “our daimios magnanimously surrendered their principalities” and “a feudal system established many centuries ago, has been completely abolished, without firing a gun or shedding

a drop of blood. [...] What country in the middle ages,” he asked, “broke down its feudal system without war?” The minor civil war that did unfold, he insisted, “was but a temporary result” of people coming “to understand their rightful privileges, which, for ages, have been denied them.” It was the fault of history: “held in absolute obedience by despotic sovereign through many thousand years, our people knew no freedom or liberty of thought,” Itō reflected. But now, “although our improvement has been rapid in material civilization,” Itō revealed, “the mental improvement of our people has been far greater.” And it was time to uplift women, too: “By educating our women,” Itō grandstanded, “we hope to ensure greater intelligence for future generations.” The Japanese people were ready for enlightenment, an enlightenment “taught her [Japan] by the history of those enlightened nations whose experience is her teacher.”⁸²

The dramatic change that Itō envisioned was a revolution into global universalism. Itō claimed that the Emperor insisted on “right to autonomy (*jishu no kenri*) of our people,” asseverating that regardless of whether people originated from “within or beyond,” all had to abide by the law of Japan—a swipe, it seems, against the extraterritoriality imposed by the West. Because of this universalism, and because the Emperor sought to “obey the precepts of international law” whether in times of war or of peace, he sought both to allow Japanese subjects to renounce their Japanese citizenship and to permit foreigners to naturalize as Japanese. And “based on the freedom of people (*ningen no jiyū ni motozuki*),” the Emperor ordained that people “from within and from beyond” should be allowed to marry freely.

The point was to abolish extraterritoriality, one of the major sticking points of the unequal treaties. And Itō was explicit: he demanded that foreigners be tried in Japanese courts. But he also conceded in return the abolition of foreign settlements and permission for “mixed

⁸² For the full text of the speech, see Tanaka Akira, ed., *Kaikoku*, pp. 401–402. The final line is stressed in Takii Kazuhiro, *The Meiji Constitution*, p. 18.

residence” and free travel throughout Japan for foreigners. Even if the ultimate objective was to win legal autonomy for the Japanese nation, to reach that objective required wholesale intellectual reform in the process—and the development of individual Japanese autonomy, legally as well as practically.

The Contract

But even as the Iwakura itinerants abroad were extolling radical change, radical change was precisely the problem at home.

Before they left, members of the Iwakura Mission, including Iwakura, Kido, and Ōkubo, had signed a “Contract” (*yakujō*) with members of the Caretaker Regime, including Sanjō, Saigō, Soejima, and Itagaki.⁸³ But what exactly the two sides agreed to, and why they agreed to it, is—and was, at the time—far less clear than the act of signing a contract might suggest.

Who exactly was responsible for developing the “Contract” is obscure. Historians once commonly argued, and continue generally to assume in English, that it was proposed by the Iwakura faction to put a halt on prospective radical reform in the regime, particularly by Saigō Takamori, while they were away. But as Kasahara Hidehiko explains, new evidence seems to indicate that it was in fact, perhaps counterintuitively, the men who stayed behind, not those who left, who proposed the contract. This view now holds greater influence. Ōkubo Toshiaki argues

⁸³ Ōkubo Toshiaki, *Iwakura shisetsu no kenkyū*, p. 80.

that it was Ōkuma Shigenobu who proposed the document; Sekiguchi Eiichi claims it was Inoue Kaoru. Neither man was on the Mission.⁸⁴

Nor is it clear what the “Contract” was even supposed to mean. The opening clauses generally express support for the exploratory dimension of the Iwakura Mission, and the latter part of the document does appear intent on thwarting radical reform in their absence. Clause Eight prohibited replacing heads of executive departments with new men while the original members traveled abroad and proscribed changes in the scope of administrative posts; Clause Nine disallowed an increase in the number of upper-level executive ministers appointed by the state, allowing changes only in “unavoidable circumstances” and only after a “decision” was made; Clause Ten blocked the hiring any new foreign advisors into the regime, offering the same caveat as Clause Nine; and Clause Eleven altogether suspended meetings of the Ministry of the Right, the council of all heads of executive departments. From these clauses, it appears that the contract intended to stymie the flexible functioning of government.

The problem lies in the middle of the document, when the text pivots from the Iwakura Mission to the Caretaker Regime. As Kasahara stresses, the middle clauses of the text are oddly self-contradictory.⁸⁵ The sixth clause stated, “Because it is the purpose of the embassy to implement reforms in internal affairs upon its return to the country, in the interim, to the extent possible, [the Caretaker Government] should not implement new reforms. If by some small chance implementing reform is unavoidable, it [the Caretaker Government] should refer the reforms to the dispatched embassy.” But then the very next clause made the exact opposite recommendation: “Because the measure of dissolving domains and installing prefectures has lain

⁸⁴ Kasahara Hidehiko, *Meiji rusu seifu* (Tokyo: Keiō gijuku daigaku shuppankai, 2010), pp. 9-13. He provides this general historiographical overview.

⁸⁵ Kasahara, *Meiji rusu seifu*, pp. 13–17.

the basis for the return to centralization of all internal national administration, [the Caretaker Government] should proceed with adjustments, methodically bring about their positive effects, and create a basis for reform.” Different historians, Kasahara indicates, have emphasized one clause or the other to make different arguments about whether the Caretaker Government, which did inaugurate radical reforms, violated or fulfilled the spirit of its agreement with the Iwakura Mission.

The reasonable conclusion Kasahara draws from the text is that the clauses suggest different “levels” of reform: whereas the clause halting reform refers to structural transformations of the government, the clause about adjustments refers to lower-level work in the executive ministries. This interpretation appears corroborated by the text itself: it encourages the development of a “basis” or literally a “footing” for reform, not reform itself. Kasahara further makes the insightful claim that the clashing clauses suggest clashing interests: different government officials, reading their own personal interests into the text, understood the clauses as tacitly slapping restrictions on particular individuals. It is perhaps for this reason that it was those who stayed behind who wanted to sign a Contract: anticipating new maneuvering by their rivals once the uppermost elites of the government left, they pushed through with the text because they understood it as fulfilling their own petty partisanship. There was political rather than ideological intent at work.⁸⁶

Rather than seek to impose clarity on a decidedly unclear document, perhaps the most important lesson we can glean from the confusion around the text is precisely that: confusion. It does not appear to be confusion in retrospect only. Despite Verbeck’s professions that somehow going abroad was the least risky thing to do, the Contract testifies that everyone understood fully

⁸⁶ Kasahara, *Meiji rusu seifu*, pp. 15-17

well that the quixotic journey abroad—and they were under no delusions about how quixotic it was—came with profound risk for the nation. And therein lay the problem: the Meiji regime well realized that it could not build up domestic structures of government without considering both the ideas from, and the judgmental gaze of, Western imperialist powers. Part of it was the question of treaty revision, of proving to the so-called “West” that they were civilized and enlightened enough to be one of the boys. But strategic treaty revision was not the ultimate problem: the problem was the genuine recognition that the “West” did indeed have important things to say about how people should organize into a society and how the state should manage—or not manage—them. Somehow folding those ideas into the national future when that very future was at stake—and while each Meiji official scrambled to indulge himself, one-up his personal adversaries, and cement his personal foothold in the regime—was a discombobulating experience. The new Meiji regime, part of it in Japan, part of it abroad, had at once to advance reform and not to advance reform too quickly all while maintaining its autonomy on a global stage and keeping the domestic scene secure. The confusion of the “Contract,” tossed between the two arms of the Meiji regime, reflects these contradictory demands.

The need for a contract in the first place lay in the reasons the Ōkuma Embassy had turned into the Iwakura Embassy, an outgrowth of deep fissures running through new political establishment—which was not adequately established yet.

Just weeks after the dissolution of domains on August 29, 1871, on September 11, the state made sweeping changes to the central administration, inaugurating the Three Ministries System of the Council of State. The system endowed each individual department of the executive state with substantial powers to determine policy within its field of jurisdiction, exacerbating departmental turf wars. The system also split legislative power and executive power, signaling a

repudiation of a longstanding desire of Ōkubo Toshimichi to amalgamate those powers by endowing legislative authority on the heads of executive departments.⁸⁷ Toward this division of legislation and execution, the Council of State, the central government apparatus, was reorganized into three ministries: the Central Ministry, which acted as the supreme and general coordinating organ; the Ministry of the Left, a legislative organ; and the Ministry of the Right, in which the head of each executive department assembled.

These structural changes set the stage for personal infighting. Ōkubo Toshimichi was serving as head (*kyō*) of the Ministry of the Treasury, with Inoue Kaoru serving as his senior aide (*daiyū*), when in 1871 Ōkuma Shigenobu resurrected an earlier plan to go abroad. The Ministry of People's Affairs, which until then had held taxes and family registration under its helm, was folded into the Ministry of the Treasury on September 11, turning the treasury into a leviathan of a government executive organ. The young upstart Ōkuma, a parvenu Saga man unlike the Chōshū heavyweights, was gaining power; he had been a leader of the People's Affairs Ministry and a longstanding proponent of its separation from the Treasury.⁸⁸ He particularly opposed the new reality that the Ministry of the Treasury now gained authority even over provincial and local politics.⁸⁹ Fearing the mounting influence of Ōkuma, Ōkubo managed to persuade Sanjō Sanetomi to knock Ōkuma off the helm of the voyage abroad and bring in Iwakura instead. Even with or perhaps precisely because of this success, they foreboded that political tension remained. Added to the mix of political interests were personal clashes among Inoue Kaoru, Itagaki Taisuke, and Saigō Takamori, all of whom stayed behind on the Caretaker Government. The

⁸⁷ Yuichiro Shimizu, *The Origins of the Modern Japanese Bureaucracy*, trans. Amin Ghadimi, ch. 3.

⁸⁸ Kasahara, *Meiji rusu seifu*, p. 5.

⁸⁹ Kasahara, *Meiji rusu seifu*, p. 138.

“Contract” signaled a recognition of not only the hazards of splitting the regime but of the fissures that ran through the government left behind.

The Iwakura Embassy left behind a fragile nascent government, one that had only just become the central administration of a unified nation, one that was perennially a step away from political chaos. The “Contract” its members signed with the Caretaker Regime, far from representing the place of strength from which the Iwakura Embassy departed, signaled their full recognition that deep fault lines that ran through their revolutionary government. The pleas for the Caretaker Government to do absolutely nothing drastic in the Iwakura absence, but to plough ahead and make the full fruits of the enlightenment project available for harvest, revealed foresight that the precarious government was threatening to collapse under the weight of a radical enlightenment agenda.

A crisis of justice

That is indeed what transpired. The problems with the Ministry of the Treasury that Ōkubo Toshimichi left behind exploded as a swirl of personal grudges and private intrigues played out as inter-ministerial infighting in a regime rocked by corruption. But the more important point is this: that political infighting in turn played out as a clash of epistemologies, a fight over global ideas. As in all modern political systems where power is not hereditary and where governing philosophy varies depends on who seizes power, philosophical and intellectual disagreements merged with petty personal and financially interested clashes to the extent that it became hard to tell which came first or where one ended and the other began. This new political state of affairs merged with new social developments, particularly the rise of a national public sphere, to engender an unprecedented moment in Japanese history. The first political crisis of

1873—our concern in this section, a political crisis that preceded and contributed to well-known schism of October—was, as historians have observed, the first modern political crisis in Japanese history. And it went public, it was public, for the first time in Japanese history.

It was of course not as if politics had never faced crisis before. But as the Meiji revolution reconfigured the relationships among self, society, state, and the world, political crisis took on a new character. As political selves clashed, the idea of the prosperity and wellbeing of the masses became a potent instrument for an upstart elite intent on gratifying itself. Factionalist foes and crony capitalists hurled homilies about popular rights, equality before the law, and individual freedom to propel their own private interests. Thus the individualist-liberalist ideology that undergirded democratic thought began to emerge in the state. The gyre of global ideas supplied beguiling chances for men to advance person profit, and the urgency of slaking personal avarice accelerated the spinning gyre of ideas about the proper relationship between an enlightened regime and the—potentially—enlightened masses over whom it now ruled. And with an entire public now available to mobilize in favor one political faction, or another and one global idea or another, the publicness of politics became exploitable.

The most proximate cause of the crisis was a budgetary feud within the regime. In 1872, just months after the Iwakura Mission sailed for the United States, the Ministry of Education under Saga man Ōki Takatō, tasked with inaugurating a new nationwide education system, found its proposed budget slashed by Inoue Kaoru, who was in control of the Ministry of the Treasury. Inoue had done the math and found that the state was in deficit, and he was intent on tightening the national budget. (It turns out that Inoue had done the math wrong: the state, it appears in retrospect, did have the money.)⁹⁰ The problem was then compounded the following year when

⁹⁰ Kasahara, *Meiji rusu seifu*, p. 89.

Etō Shinpei, a fellow Saga man advancing a vision of legislative independence that would cut into the local powers of the treasury, found the budget he proposed for the Ministry of Justice slashed by about half.⁹¹

On January 24, 1873, Etō, the justice minister and the most radical member of the regime, resigned in protest of what appeared as financial maneuvers by Chōshū elements against the Hizen, or Saga, faction. He left a sweeping resignation manifesto behind him. The Council of State rejected his resignation and coopted him, promoting him to a higher position of power, that of councilor (*sangi*), on April 19. Then, on May 2, in an attempt to resolve the budgetary crisis, the entire government system was revamped to diminish instability caused by inter-ministerial bickering. Power was wrested away from individual ministries and concentrated in the Central Ministry. Sanjō Sanetomi had called for the return of Iwakura itinerants the beginning of January; Ōkubo Toshimichi, ally of Inoue Kaoru, would arrive at the end of May. The political changes ran roughshod over the Contract and its call for no structural changes to be made to the government. Or were these the fruits of the enlightenment the Contract hailed?

Before Ōkubo returned, Inoue Kaoru quit the government. Facing an erosion of power, and likely livid over the greater status afforded his archenemy Etō Shinpei, Inoue and his associate Shibusawa Eiichi counter-resigned on May 3. They too wrote an ideological manifesto in protest. And it was leaked to the press. It appeared in the *Nisshin shijishi*, a newspaper published by Englishman John Black, published for anyone to read.

The leaking of the manifesto—it is unclear by whom—sparked a debate in the public sphere. Journalists openly debated questions of the national budget and of the trustworthiness of the government. With the Meiji regime now in damage control mode, Ōkuma Shigenobu wrote

⁹¹ Kasahara, *Meiji rusu seifu*, pp. 93-94.

his own manifesto bewailing the “thinning of trust from the people and of reliability” as a result of the crisis. He made the national budget a public document, disclosing the finances of the state for the first time in Japanese history on June 9, 1873.⁹² And in further response to the crisis, the Meiji regime, which until this point had actively promoted an independent press and the publication of newspapers as a means of spreading enlightenment, made an abrupt about-face and began to slap restrictions on public media.

Thus was launched a pattern of resignation and counter-resignation that would repeat itself again and again over the next decades of Japanese history. Officials understood that marching out of the regime could cripple the government and prevent its functioning. And they also understood that before the face of a politically engaged public, resignations could humiliate those left behind. Government became a farce, a form of entertaining theater intended for particular audiences—but one that had dramatic consequences for national, even global history.

Throughout the dispute between the ministries of justice and finance, what might have emerged from petty individual jaundice and domainal-factionalist sparring appeared as profound philosophical arguments over the heart of the Japanese Enlightenment. What did the enlightenment mean? And what did it mean to govern as an enlightened state in a global context? Etō, with his intellectual predilection for—and personal interests in—the legislature, advanced a fundamentally different vision of the relationship between state and society, and of the individual in that relationship, from what Inoue and Shibusawa presented.

Etō Shinpei

⁹² Meiji bunka kenkyūkai, ed., “Seishi-hen, vol. 1,” in *Meiji bunka zenshū*, vol. 9 (Tokyo: Nihon hyōron shinsha, 1956), p. 181.

Etō seized on his resignation to submit a sweeping manifesto on the singular importance of his ministry, and by implication his own self. To Etō, the task of the Ministry of Justice and the most fundamental purpose of the revolutionary Japanese regime was to construct the individual, autonomous Japanese self, who would, of his own accord, engage in economic enterprise and thereby bring about prosperity both through his own activity and his payment of taxes. And to Etō, it was the law itself that brought about this individuation of Japanese society, an individuation on which the very survival of the nation depended. It followed, he claimed, that the Ministry of Justice deserved the budget it demanded.

What was it, he asked, that allowed a nation to exist alongside others in a global world (*kakkoku to heiritsu*)?⁹³ Coexistence relied on “the wealth and strength (*fukyō*) of the nation (*kuni*).” But that in turn relied on a deeper level. “The foundation of the wealth and strength of the nation,” Etō argued, “is the peace and security of its citizens (*kokumin no ando*). And the foundation of peace and security is the rectification of the status (*ichi o tadasu*) of the citizens.” From here he considered the counterfactual: when the status of citizens is not made right, then they do not live in peace. And when they do not live in peace, they cannot undertake industry (*waza*). And they do not know the shame in such a situation. “And if they do not undertake industry, and if they do not know the shame in this, then in what way can [the nation] be strong and prosperous?” Notions of governance, of globalism, and of capitalism collided in Etō’s manifesto. Survival in a world of nations hinged on the economic prosperity of the realm, and it was the people who provide this economic prosperity by pursuing their own profit. No doubt it drew from longstanding Confucian notions of individual responsibility to a greater harmonious

⁹³ The manifesto can be found in *Etō Nanpaku* pp. 7-13, 176. Mōri covers some of this same material in *Etō Shinpei: kyūshinteki kaikakusha no higeki* (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1987), pp. 171–176. The image of Etō as a liberalist and individualist, an image first advanced by Mōri, is controversial, as discussed further in Chapter Four.

society. But Confucius did not write about global world, nor did he confront Western capitalism and liberalism. Etō, fond of France, did. Indeed, it is said that one of Etō's great regrets was he never had the chance to go to the Hexagon himself.⁹⁴

Civil law engendered the liberalism that in turn produced stability in the realm. “What does it mean to rectify the status of those called ‘citizens?’” Etō asked. He listed off a sweeping range of domains of life in which clear, vigorous civil law was needed: marriage, birth, and death; inheritance; movable and immovable property (*dōsan, fudōsan*); lending and borrowing, buying and selling; partnerships; private and joint ownership. He called for “justice” (*kōsei*) in legal suits, in national law, and in ordinances for governance and punishment. Law enabled people to “preserve their rights” (*kenri o hōzen shi*). Each man would be able to establish lifelong goals for himself, and the result would be that they would embark on entrepreneurial endeavors (*kōdai no jigyo o kuwadatsuru*). A widening cascade of positive ramifications would result. When laws were rectified, then people would at last be able to embark in industry. And as they prospered, and so too would tax revenue skyrocket. And flush with tax revenue, the army and navy would prosper, public works would prosper, and education improve.

So pervasive and radical was the social and economic liberalism of Etō that it swept the institution of the household into its fold. It puzzles, at first, to find that a man resigning from his post from a government ministry over a budgetary row would dwell at the length Etō did on the institution of the family. But it was the family, which Etō regarded as an impoverished, underdeveloped source of entrepreneurial spirit and economic productivity, that needed to be constituted anew by law in the revolutionary regime just as society and the self were. “Because marriage laws have yet to be established,” Etō lamented,

⁹⁴ This according to Mōri, *Etō Shinpei*.

in the morning people get married and in the evening they separate. As a result of these circumstances, even long-standing husbands and wives lack faith in one another, and they do not join together to cooperate and undertake industry, they do not seek to increase their private possessions (*shiyūbutsu*) in accordance with rationality (*ri*), and they lack the ideals to make their family way prosper. Today they are husband and wife; tomorrow they separate and become strangers.

Into this capitalist-liberalist model Etō even folded children, lamenting the adverse economic effects that divorce and the dissolution of family structures had on them. “When wives and husbands separate from one another, their children in the end lack someone who will nurture them, and those children fall ill and die. Or a husband dies, and his wife is left alone with a child; members of the family assemble and plunder their assets, and the child and mother fall into despair,” Etō observed. The most important consequence of this problem of family was financial: laziness and a failure to recognize the need to work hard and earn profits. “It is for this reason,” Etō insisted, “that in every country marriage laws and matters of divorce are truly difficult.” He expatiated on the lengthy legal processes by which one must enter into a contractual marriage or the difficult procedures it entailed to enter into divorce. It was “as a result” that “the generality of everyday people, once they become husbands or wives, cooperate to undertake industry, to make their households prosper, to gain wealth for expenditures on education, and thereby to make their children and descendants into human resources who will in turn make their households flourish further and further without any other thought than this,” he explained. And even if divorce were to happen, in “every country,” laws protected ownership and ensured the clarity on how property

would be handled. Because property rights (*zaisan kenri*) were lacking in Japan, Etō claimed, even the children of wealthy parents could fall into despair, and thus people were robbed of the environment in which to work hard and make profit. With proper laws, Etō insisted, people would find stability, they would deeply hold the ideal of hard work, and they would become autonomous, free to use their wealth as they deemed fit (*zaiyū yūzū no michi jizai to nari*).

We can trace a genealogy back to ancient Confucian thought to explain the notion in Etō's work of rectifying the individual as a means of producing wider valences of prosperity, and the idea of using the law to civilize people was reminiscent of Tokugawa strategies explained so evocatively by Daniel Botsman to discipline its subjects. But what Etō envisioned was something new, a civil society that did not discriminate among various status groups and in which it was economic productivity that determined the ultimate worth of the individual—even of children, even of the institution of marriage. And more important, as Etō tried to reconstitute Japanese selves and society through the power of legislature, he did so with his eyes directed not toward Japan but abroad. It was the specter of what “other countries” did that had to change Japan. And it was the direct influence of those “other countries” that went into recreating the Japanese self into a French Napoleonic self.

“It is as if the station of the people of our nation is different from that of people other nations,” Etō anguished. “Whereas the masses (*minsho* 民庶) in other nations have the power to become more and more prosperous with each passing year, the impoverished masses of our country grow in number day by day and the wealthy decrease in number day by day.” Etō referred to this situation as a “source of disease” (*byōgen*); it was the Ministry of Justice that had to take responsibility (*sekinin*) to cure the nation. And it was already engaged in this task by developing for Japan a “civil law” (*minpō*), he explained. Without civil law, “our country”

appeared as a “chaotic and lawless military,” whereas in foreign lands the law itself acted as a general bringing the people to order. Whatever personal reasons he had for trying to defect, or feigning defection, from the Caretaker Regime, Etō publicly construed the budgetary attacks on his person as assaults on the creation of civil law and the consequent creation of individual autonomy in Japan.

The Ministry of Justice was formulating Japanese civil law, Etō readily acknowledged in his manifesto, with the help of two “hired Frenchman”: Georges Hilaire Bousquet and Albert Charles du Bousquet. Georges Bousquet wrote a sweeping, 900-page historical and social study of Japan that he published in France in 1877 at once revealing the thought behind and tacitly but sharply condemning this work in the justice ministry. In his reflections on “public and private law,” we see the specter of Etō Shinpei, whom he names rarely—and indeed of Etō’s ultimate military insurrection against the state, which we will discuss further in Chapter Four.

Georges Bousquet

Like Etō, Bousquet saw himself as engaged in the fundamental task of building the Japanese individual self through law. He wrote that he been summoned to Japan in 1872 because Japanese regarded the Napoleonic code as “the law of civilized peoples par excellence.” But, he continued, “I did not delay in recognizing and indicating the inanity of the headlong work that they wanted to undertake.”⁹⁵

It is in the law, Bousquet wrote, waxing poetic, that we find the spirit of an individual; the law “is, for man, an element of his moral identity and becomes the prerogative of free men, of the independent and progressives races, which have taken each of their steps in history by

⁹⁵ Georges Bousquet, *Le japon de nos jours et les échelles de l'extrême Orient*, vol. 2 (Paris: Hachette, 1877), p. 57.

means of the perfections that the idea of rights (*droit*) has left in their breasts.” But Japan did not belong to these “independent and progressive races” in which law induced a “moral identity” in individuals. Rather than spurring the individual to act of his own accord, Japanese law had, since the rise Tokugawa Ieyasu, whom he called “an Oriental Machiavelli inspired by the wisdom of the Chinese,” prevented Japanese from developing a genuine sense of individualism.⁹⁶ He wrote:

That which Ceasar said of the Gauls, *the people are almost regarded as slaves*, sums up the political rights of the Japanese people. Nobles are born to govern, and the others to obey; there are government officials, and those who are administered; one can find neither citizens, nor individual liberty, nor civil equality. [...] Do not ask a man of his civil rights (*droits civils*), he has none [...].⁹⁷

And again:

Among the indolent and enslaved races of the Extreme Orient, the principle of free investigation (*libre examen*) is effaced in the face of blind submission to obscure tradition and to fixed forms, and whereas man in free countries gains a place by reasoning above and beyond facts or written laws (*se place pour raisonner au-dessus des faits ou des lois écrites*), a Chinese or a Japanese will accept, as dominant and directing necessities, these written laws or these existing facts. For him, the beautiful words of Bossuet do not exist; he responds, to the contrary, that there is no right (*droit*) outside authority. In this slumber

⁹⁶ Bousquet, *Le japon de nos jours*, v. 2, p. 14, 27.

⁹⁷ Bousquet, *Le japon de nos jours*, v. 2, p. 35. Ne l’interrogez pas sur ses droits civils, il n’en a pas, ou n’en a que pa une tolerance qui peut cesser sans qu’il s’en étonne.

of individual conscience, men, habituated to listening to the voice of the master before that of their own selves (*la nature même*), have no social ties other than obedience hardened by fear, by penal punishment, and by public opinion. From these [instigators of obedience] arises a series of conventional precepts that man observes as a matter of habit, conviction, or human respect, but which he does not examine and none of which takes root in the depths of his self.⁹⁸

That Bousquet was wrong about historical Japanese subjectivity or that he was “Orientalist” in his assessment are beside the point. Insofar as we can accept his public pronouncements as his own thought, these were the ideas that the man charged with aiding the Ministry of Justice and composing a Japanese civil code carried into the government with him at a moment of revolutionary change. In Bousquet’s criticism, the overbearing nature of authority in the Japanese past had not only obstructed the construction of the Japanese individual but prevented the development of organic bonds of community; it is individualism that engenders a true communal society. Bousquet’s condemnation of the supposedly stultifying effects of Tokugawa law elucidates the preoccupation Etō revealed with the construction of the individual autonomy through legislature. And his writing on the Japanese family, too, reveals why Etō is rather oddly concerned with problems of marriage and divorce. Both found in the family a reason of the supposed failure of Japan to achieve progress. But whereas Etō invested faith in the ability of law to reconstitute the Japanese household, Bousquet reviled the Japanese family as an excessively legalistic entity. Whereas in the Occident, it was the ties of affection that bound individuals within a family into a cohesive social unit, Bousquet claimed, in the Oriental and

⁹⁸ Bousquet, *Le japon de nos jours*, v. 2, p. 3

especially Japanese family, it was simply precepts and orders more than “natural instinct” that placed people within a familial system that was essentially “artificial.”⁹⁹ The fault in Japanese law was that just as it prevented individual autonomy, its supposed subjugation of the individual under the overriding power of authority, whether that in the household or in the state at large, prevented real forms of human associationism.

Even as Bousquet censured what he regarded as the Oriental paternalism of Tokugawa law, and even as he saw civilized law in “progressive races” as the cause of their greatness, he rebuked the Meiji government, tacitly Etō himself, for the speed and rashness with which they sought to apply a new law. As a result of the Japanese revolution, which he called precisely that, Japan, he claimed, “has lost its ancient customs (*moeurs*), and it must therefore wait for new customs to be established before making the basis of laws. It must, before the promulgation of a new law, create and propagate the absolute notion of rights (*droit*).”¹⁰⁰ Things were moving too quickly. At a moment when “the oligarchy is dead, and democracy is still nothing more than a word devoid of meaning,” it behooved Japan “to look much less abroad and much more within.” “Laws do not transplant from one soil to another,” he lamented; “they are not durable or effective except in a condition wherein they respond exactly to already existing needs, formed instincts, and shaped general mores.” So much for Verbeck and his belief in the all-sufficient example of the West.

And so Bousquet called on Japanese legislators in particular to “save from the shipwreck the debris of an erstwhile society to use it in the construction of its new designs rather than destroying what little is left.” Even if he diagnosed the specific woes of Japan as particularly Oriental, he did not regard its revolution as exceptional. “All flowering is chaos,” Bousquet

⁹⁹ Bousquet, *Le japon de nos jours*, v. 2, p. 48.

¹⁰⁰ Bousquet, *Le japon de nos jours*, v. 2, pp. 57-58.

wrote. “Is there a European people whose history does not offer a parallel period of laborious gestation?”¹⁰¹

To Bousquet as to Etō, then, the revolution into globality had thrown Japan into intellectual disorder as the individual, the family, the society, and the state legislature all had to be reconfigured in light of what to Bousquet appeared as a sudden entry into the world: “Like the mummies in Egyptian tombs that are conserved for centuries in a rarefied atmosphere but that fall to dust at the first breath of free air,” he wrote, “Japanese society, at the first wind from abroad, fell to ashes.”¹⁰² Bousquet and Etō only disagreed, with Bousquet having the benefit of hindsight, on what to do about it, whether Japan needed to plunge further into the global gyre of ideas or whether Japan needed to decelerate and extricate itself, whether the law could alone civilize Japan or whether something else was needed. The general tenor of Bousquet’s work, published in 1877, suggests that much of his pessimism over the ability of civil law itself to quickly recreate the Japanese individual and his fears over the haste of Japanese reform emerged from the violent convulsions he observed following Etō’s resignation—and that we will observe in the coming chapters.

Ultimately, much as it was to Verbeck, to Bousquet the most fundamental problem was that Japan was not Christian enough. “Without a doubt, there still lacks in this already-organized society that Christian element *par excellence*: spirituality (*spiritualisme*),” he wrote. “The society lacks an ideal that is intimate and that extends beyond the human, an aspiration toward *the beyond*, that secret impulse toward beauty and toward the absolute good, which the society cannot find in either its lamentable religion or in the effete stoicism of Confucius,” he wrote. His argument was subtle: the past, responsible for the “effete” nature of the Japanese present, had

¹⁰¹ Bousquet, *Le japon de nos jours*, v. 2, p. 62.

¹⁰² Bousquet, *Le japon de nos jours*, v. 2, p. 55.

caused the ills of Japanese society, but to destroy it too quickly had its own perils. He was pessimistic about any change that Christianity could make in Japan. Japanese “skepticism” meant that even if people would go through the “exterior motions of devotion,” they were incapable of developing “that religious fervor that causes moral metamorphosis.”¹⁰³ But even if it was not the metamorphosis Bousquet wanted, it was a dramatic metamorphosis nonetheless.

Inoue Kaoru

The most potentially debilitating critique of the impetuosity and seeming hollowness of Etō’s legislative revolution came not from truculent foreigners writing for a curious French public but from Japanese bureaucrats themselves writing for a deeply invested, harshly critical Japanese public.

Facing a loss of influence with the restoration of Etō to power, facing the erosion of the autonomy of their ministry amid what is known as the “re-decoration of the Council of State system” (*Dajōkansei junshoku*), and perhaps most devastatingly, facing a humiliating corruption crisis known as the Osarizawa Mine Incident that Etō and his ministry seemed all too pleased to expose, Inoue and Shibusawa of the Ministry of the Treasury resigned from the regime on May 3. Just a few days later, just as Etō did, they seized on the opportunity to trumpet a manifesto on the revolution at hand. They, too, were coopted back into the regime, but not without their manifesto appearing in John Black’s newspaper.¹⁰⁴

And as they left the regime, Inoue Kaoru and Shibusawa Eiichi articulated a critique of the revolution that would be rehearsed time and time again over the next decade. It was true, they

¹⁰³ Bousquet, *Le japon de nos jours*, v. 2, p. 61

¹⁰⁴ “Seishi-hen, vol. 1,” in *Meiji bunka zenshū*, vol. 9 (Tokyo: Nihon hyōron shinsha, 1956), p. 181. The incidents described in this paragraph are all discussed by Mōri, *Meiji rokunen seihen*.

acknowledged, that the surface of Japan had changed. And indeed it had changed dramatically. The real stakes of the revolution lay, though, not in outward material improvements but in the heart and soul of the nation, in the elusive world of abstract ideas. And that heart and soul of Japan had not changed, despite the outward pretenses of whoever the ideological adversary was. It was, in essence, about this same problem that Etō and Bousquet complained and for which Etō proposed legal reform. How did one change the heart and soul of a nation?

Inoue and Shibusawa opened with a whirlwind invocation of the shattering transformation that had overcome their nation not even ten years since the Restoration (*ishin*), as they put it. Within the state, they wrote, they had revived institutions of governance “had become enervated after hundreds of years,” a fiction, of course, to justify the radical revolution they had effected.¹⁰⁵ And beyond the state, they had blended together “the most prosperous legal and political systems from the five continents”; they had dissolved a decentralized feudal system of rule (*hōken*) and installed centralized rule (*gunken*); they had adopted international law (*bankoku no kōhō*) into their system of order (*ritsu*); they had carried out public debate (*yoron*) in every corner of the land; they had invited the “ignorant masses” (*muchi no tami*) to partake in education; they had installed a modern military system; they had begun minting their own currency. The hearts of men had been mobilized for the purpose of trade, and their powers been exerted for development (*kaitaku*). Even things as “minute” as dwellings and clothes “had been changed in a day, been revolutionized in a month.” Technological change had overturned notions of time and space: boats and vehicles powered by steam had allowed people “to attain distant places in a signal instant”; the telegraph had allowed urgent information to travel “myriad miles” in a hurry. In but a few years all the trappings of civilization (*bunmei no gubi*) had been put in

¹⁰⁵ The document is reproduced in “Seishi-hen, vol. 1,” in *Meiji bunka zenshū*, vol. 9 (Tokyo: Nihon hyōron shinsha, 1956), p. 176-181

place. Now they could “rival the nations of Europe and America without a shade of embarrassment.” But they sounded caution. “Rejoicing does not end in rejoicing. There is always something lamentable in it.”

Inoue and Shibusawa set up a sharp distinction between what they described as two distinct paths toward the common goal of enlightenment (*kaimei*). One could insist that building up “structures” (*katachi*) constituted the main vehicle toward enlightenment, but demanding changes in structures was easy. The other path, of attaining enlightenment through essence (*jitsu*) and not through structures, “through the power of the people (*minryoku*),” was harder. And even if now Japan could feel no shame in the face of the West, herein resided the fundamental difference between Japan and the world across the ocean. “All people” in the West, they wrote, dedicated themselves to practical learning, bore surpassing knowledge, and exerted their utmost effort in life. But in Japan, warriors relied on the stipends of their fathers and knew nothing of artistic and military pursuits (*bunbu*). Peasants relied on the precedent of their hometowns and knew nothing of the arts and technologies of cultivation. Artisans knew only their own value with respect to those who paid them, and they did nothing to pursue innovation in craftsmanship. Merchants fought with one another to gain profits, but they knew nothing of the enlightened laws of trade. None relied on his own powers. Inoue and Shibusawa bewailed how slowly men were freeing themselves from a lingering past. That the distinctions between “Westerners” and the hidebound Japanese constituted empty, reckless binaries hardly diminished their intellectual potency. They were ones on which both sides of the Justice-Treasury imbroglio turned.

Even while sharing with Etō the assumption that the essential problem of modernity was a problem of the deficiency in autonomous will relative to people of the West, Inoue and Shibusawa unleashed an invective against their fellow governmental leaders. It was they who

were responsible for foolishly seeking to build the structures of enlightenment without cultivating its essence, failing to building a “enlightenment based on the power of the people.” “The laws of the country became ever more beautiful, while the people become ever more enervated,” they lamented. There was no mention of Etō Shinpei specifically in the resignation letter, but the target of vituperation was clear. Because government officials believed that it was they and not the people who were responsible for bringing about the civilization and enlightenment of the realm, they claimed, the tasks of the government piled up. And as the tasks of the government piled up, the officials made endless requests for ever-increasing funds and ever-ballooning staffs. And as expenditures began to skyrocket beyond revenue, the state had to seek the difference from the masses (*jinmin*). Inoue and Shibusawa cut at the heart of the Etō thesis that the prosperity of the people would flush the state with cash: the very notion of taxing the people heavily was reprehensible, as was the fiscal irresponsibility that demanded it. “Rational finance should be the first principle of this day,” they insisted. The prosperity of the people and the stability of the land depended on it.

Their interlocutors, Inoue and Shibusawa continued, claimed that if one wishes to advance in knowledge and gain in wealth, one must work hard, and by working hard, then taxes are increased, and “quickly we will become like the nations of Europe and America.” “What utter error is such talk!” they wrote. In Europe and America, they claimed, people have autonomous will and principles of their own (*tokuritsu no shisō* 志操). It is their continuous participation in the discussions of the government (*seifu no gi ni sansuru*), a participation that itself constitutes the state (*kokutai*), that props up both the government and the people.

Today, our people are entirely different. They are accustomed to the remnants of authoritarianism (*senken no yoshū*), they have been inured by the myopic, fixed customs of the past, they remain unenlightened (*chishiki hirakezu*), and their will and principles are not firm (*shisō* 志操 *tashikarazu*). Whether they move forward or backward, whether they look up or down—in all this they only follow the orders of the government. What are called ‘rights’ and ‘duties’ (*kenri gimu*) and the like—they still have no knowledge whatsoever of these things.

Even in the intimate details of their life, the people adhere slavishly to the state, Inoue and Shibusawa complained. On this servility they blamed the balance of payments problem plaguing the nation; they claimed that people managed to export only twenty to thirty percent of that which they imported, leading to their impoverishment. And because people were not ready, they argued, to be “fettered” with laws and “blood taxes” extracted from them, to institute laws and penalties of all sorts, even extending to concubines and female entertainers—precisely the reform measures on which the justice ministry had embarked—would be futile. Each new law instituted would only confuse the people further. Not knowing which way to turn, they would shift from occupation to occupation trying to gain a foothold, only finding nowhere to turn. Thus would the distance between the governing and the governed widen, and the people would fall into the evil habits of “barbarism” (*yaban*).

The question of whether to afford the Ministry of Justice the funds it demanded thus erupted into a fight over the means by which to bring about what the bureaucrats continually called an “enlightened” (*kaimei, kaika*) government and people. As they bickered over the shared problem of inducing individual autonomy in the Japanese self and of how to extricate the people

from the evil customs of the past, Inoue and Shibusawa began to construct an intellectual world in which politicians best served their own interests by invoking the supposed interests of the people, their freedom, and their rights. Within the government, the question was how, in a global world, to make the Japanese people ready for enlightenment by making them think and be for themselves. As state ministers disagreed over how to induce liberal enlightenment, liberalism itself gained ascendancy as a tool of gratifying partisan political interests.

But not all existed in this shared enlightenment framework. Some believed that the problem was not a supposedly obedient public but rather the very people who reveled in recalcitrance, who agitated for a world constructed by lunkhead foreigners for the benefit of an indulgent self. And that was the very irony: as the state disparaged the Japanese people for their submissiveness, the greatest threat it faced was their obstreperousness.

What a loss of pretty things

It was January 1873, but Shimazu Hisamitsu did not want it to be January 1873.

On the ninth day of the eleventh month of Meiji 5, the Emperor decreed that “the old calendar”—evidently it was already an old calendar before the promulgation was even complete—had been abolished. A new solar calendar would be inaugurated. The third day of the twelfth month of Meiji 5 would become January 1, Meiji 6. A twenty-four-hour clock would be adopted. And a ceremony marking the calendrical upheaval would trumpet to the spirits of all bygone Emperors the arrival of a new system of time.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ “Seishi-hen, vol. 1,” in *Meiji bunka zenshū*, v. 9, pp. 167-168.

The Emperor—really a government official speaking through him—announced the temporal revolution by fustigating the calendrical system that had held his realm together for centuries. Common sense suddenly made no sense. Because the old system relied on the moon and not the sun, the Emperor explained, every two to three years it required the addition of an intercalary month. These intercalary months threw calculations of time into disarray, especially when they were added to the latter half of the calendar. It was a “baseless, unreasonable” system, he claimed, one “that had no small part in obstructing the development of human knowledge.”¹⁰⁷ The new solar calendar allowed for a system wherein but one intercalary day was needed every four years. And it was out of sync with the astronomical systems by only one day for every seven thousand years. Thus it was that the government had arrived, after careful consideration of advantages and disadvantages, at this decision.

Shimazu Hisamitsu chafed. The Western solar calendar was an absurd, artificial system of measuring time in meaningless dissonance with the orderly rhythm of nature. He lamented how the new calendar, which dictated that the New Year would appear at the nadir of winter, would wreck the logical sequence of spring, summer, fall, and winter; how it would throw agrarian methods of measuring time into disarray; how it would deprive fishermen of the lunar and tidal patterns on which they relied.¹⁰⁸ He composed a series of sardonic, bitterly trenchant classical Japanese poems on the first of January bemoaning the imposition of a new year on a natural world that yielded no signs of renewal.¹⁰⁹ “When the new year arises, the winter deepens—a reign that knows not time,” he wrote. Contempt sneered through poem after poem: “A new calendar opens, and yet no spring winds blow through the realm”; “A new year arrives,

¹⁰⁷ “Seishi-hen, vol. 1,” in *Meiji bunka zenshū*, v. 9, pp. 167-168.

¹⁰⁸ This according to Shimazu Tadatsugu, *Shimazu Hisamitsu kō* (Tokyo: Takashima Yanosuke, 1937), p. 316.

¹⁰⁹ For the poems, see Shimazu Tadatsugu, *Shimazu Hisamitsu kō*, pp. 317–318.

and we recall, more and more, the springs of the past”; “A new day, and yet the skies are not bright and serene; a new year, but only in the heart has the new spring begun.” Laconic, brusque, sententious, in their subtlety the poems scathingly gainsay a new temporal order. For centuries the natural world had told people how to know when a new year had arrived. The wind, the skies, the experience of a changing environment had long signaled renewal. Man had taken his epistemological cues from the reliable order of the natural world. But now the state had determined that the experiential harmony of man and nature mattered not at all. Japanese man and woman now had to know by an unknown West, a West never experienced, even as their immediate natural surroundings relentlessly, jarringly intimated to them that the West, a West that found inexplicable renewal in the frozen depths of winter, knew nothing.

The Emperor had met with Shimazu Hisamitsu in Kagoshima in the sixth month of Meiji 5, about half a year before the first Japanese January. The dissolution of domains and installation of prefectures the year earlier had left Shimazu livid. Kanbashi Norimasa, author of an authoritative account of Shimazu and his thought, recounts a familiar story of how Shimazu had ordered fireworks after hearing of the reorganization of the land, not to celebrate, but to let his fury go up in visible flames.¹¹⁰ Shimazu wrote that the dissolution of domains had made the nation “become ensnared in the devices of Westerners” and that the evils of republican governance were threatening the sanctity of the imperial throne.¹¹¹ He had more concrete grievances, too. The Meiji regime had split Satsuma and Ōsumi, two provinces that had long belonged to the same feudal domain, into two different prefectures. Shimazu cried foul, suspecting a Chōshū conspiracy against Satsuma. And he was further miffed that he had not been

¹¹⁰ Kanbashi Norimasa, *Shimazu Hisamitsu to Meiji Ishin: Hisamitsu wa naze tōbaku o ketsui shita no ka* (Tokyo: Shin jinbutsu ōraisha, 2002), p. 222.

¹¹¹ Kanbashi, *Shimazu Hisamitsu to Meiji Ishin*, p. 222.

appointed as governor (*kenrei*) when the Meiji regime revamped prefectural governance.¹¹² The regime tried to placate him by conferring fancy ranks and honors on him. And Saigō, Shimazu's foe from Satsuma, convinced the regime to have the Emperor meet with Shimazu directly to help mollify him further.¹¹³

When the Emperor arrived in Kagoshima, Shimazu seized on the opportunity to present to Tokudaiji Sanetsune, the head of the imperial household ministry, a list of fourteen demands intended for the Emperor. Shimazu claimed he had wanted to present them to the Emperor in 1869, when he ascended to Tokyo to meet with the Emperor, but he took this chance three years later. On the twenty-eighth day of the sixth month in 1872, he visited the Emperor and Tokudaiji in Kagoshima, his hair and clothes unchanged to Western style. He presented his counter-enlightenment manifesto.¹¹⁴ His assault on the revolutionary changes of the Meiji era gave voice to a broader rising counter-enlightenment movement that opposed the very premises of the revolutionary regime. Justice, Shimazu claimed, resided in the past and in Japan, not in the future, not abroad.

Shimazu was not simply a holdout from a bygone era. He developed his vision of a pure Japanese future derived from the undefiled heritage of the past only in light of the irrevocable changes of the present. And he knew he had clout. Shimazu was a member of the family that once ruled the heavyweight southwestern domain of Satsuma, and he had acted de facto as its daimyo in the late Tokugawa years. In a passage Kanbashi brilliantly cites, the Meiji Emperor lamented in his recollections that people in Kagoshima commonly treated the Emperor “as if

¹¹² Kanbashi, *Shimazu Hisamitsu to Meiji Ishin*, pp. 219-228

¹¹³ Kanbashi, *Shimazu Hisamitsu to Meiji Ishin*. p. 229

¹¹⁴ Kanbashi also presents this information about his hairstyle, but he does not provide a source for where he obtains this information. It seems that he is deriving his information from Shimazu Tadatsugu, *Shimazu Hisamitsu kō*, p. 314.

they have no idea who We are.” Kanbashi writes that it was the splashily Japanese Shimazu, not some strange callow emperor in uppity Western clothes, who captured the imagination and veneration of people in Kagoshima.¹¹⁵

Solving the Shimazu problem, especially since Shimazu was the most notable and prominent domestic opponent of the enlightenment project, was not only a matter of intellectual concern for the Meiji revolutionary leaders. It would ensure that smaller, disparate uprisings across the country did not combine into a genuine counter-revolution. As Kanbashi, who has led the turn to examine Shimazu not as an irrational hothead out of touch with the times but a legitimate, rational political player in his own right, has revealed, and as Kubo Masaaki has stressed, dozens of petitions to Shimazu calling on him to lead the way in opposing the reforms of the regime began to accumulate under Shimazu from 1868 and at a dramatically increased rate from 1873. Kanbashi explains Shimazu’s own petition reflected and gave amplified voice to this glut of smaller petitions, which called on Shimazu to air their grievances more loudly. The regime needed at once to accommodate and to thwart Shimazu in order to quell the growing restiveness of the population.¹¹⁶

Indeed, as one Anglophone historian observes, the pitch of anti-state fervor had heightened so precipitously in mid-1873 that Meiji Japan verged more closely than ever on “social revolution”—against the regime, not by the regime.¹¹⁷ In different parts of Fukuoka, rioters destroyed buildings, murdered a local government official, and set fire to telegraph poles. They demanded the revocation of the new calendar; the restoration of samurai stipends, which

¹¹⁵ Kanbashi, *Shimazu Hisamitsu to Meiji Ishin*, p. 231

¹¹⁶ Kubo Masaaki, “Meiji rokunen seihen go no Shimazu Hisamitsu ha,” *Nihonshi kenkyū* 611 (July 2013), p. 23. On the historiography, see pp. 18-19 and Kanbashi, *Shimazu Hisamitsu to Meiji Ishin*, pp. 254-264

¹¹⁷ Marlene J. Mayo, “The Korea Crisis of 1873 and Early Meiji Foreign Policy,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 31.4 (August 1972): 793–819.

were being shaved away; and the return of their old government officials, not the new men the regime had imposed on them after the dissolution of domains and installation of prefectures. It took until July to snuff out the rebellion in Fukuoka. Then peasants in Tottori and Shimane mimicked the rebellion, raising their own anti-regime riots in response.¹¹⁸ Not everyone was such a fan of the enlightenment. The radicalism of the regime's plunge into it was threatening to set off a counter-revolution.

Just before these rebellions, and soon after the Emperor and his retinue received Shimazu's anti-revolutionary manifesto and left Kagoshima, Katsu Kaishū was dispatched to Kagoshima to summon Shimazu to the capital. The Emperor wanted to hear Shimazu elaborate in person on the criticisms he was leveling against the regime.¹¹⁹ Shimazu acceded. He arrived in Tokyo in late April. It was part of an attempt to keep Shimazu at bay.

Both the diary of Shimazu himself and the accounts of him written in the late Meiji and Shōwa periods present the battle of ideas in which he engaged as a civil, subdued one. But Mōri Toshihiko, relatively unconcerned with the intellectual dimensions of the affair, offers a starkly different account. Shimazu ascended to Tokyo accompanied by 250 troops, presenting a threat so great, Mōri claims, that the Meiji regime feared it was facing a counter-coup just five years after it had seized power. Saigō had to put down the seeming rebellion through an ostentatious counter-display of military force.¹²⁰

External evidence bears Mōri out. On June 15, 1873, the *New York Times* ran what it claimed was a letter that had come in from Yokohama dated May 9. Foreigners in Tokyo were stunned that a counterrevolution had *not* occurred.

¹¹⁸ *Meiji bunka zenshū*, v. 9, p. 187

¹¹⁹ Kanbashi, *Shimazu Hisamitsu to Meiji Ishin*, p. 243

¹²⁰ Mōri, *Meiji rokunen seihen*, p. 96

“The dreaded Prince of Satsuma has arrived in Yeddo,” the letter began dramatically. “To show his antipathy to progress,” he, “the great representative man of the ‘Foreign-Hating Party,’” had demanded that all Western-style furniture be swept clean from the ship that sailed him up Japan’s coast. A horde of men, “all dressed in the old style,” “swarmed into the city.” “All sorts of rumors were at once rife.” There were whispers that the Emperor, made a prisoner by Shimazu’s bodyguards, had called for French and British troops to fight against what appeared as a Satsuma insurrection. “All this was of course a humbug,” the letter explained. But Tokyo was on edge. Even the foreigner could tell: “I noticed that these chaps were more than ordinarily saucy.”

Then the situation exploded, quite literally.

A few evenings afterward [that is, after initial observation of the saucy chaps], about 2 o’clock in the morning of the 5th of May, boom, boom, boom, the cannons roared out from the palace. All Yeddo jumped to its feet. The soldiery surged forth in one dense, dark mass, and such a scene of confusion you never saw, cavalry, artillery, infantry, in mixed masses with police and citizens, all pouring toward the castle, which was in flames. The Satsuma revolt has begun, was on every tongue. Foreigners clasped pistols, knives, and rifles, and the general idea was that if there should be a revolt the first thing would be to kill all the foreigners. The confusion continued until daylight, when it was discovered that the burning of the palace had been accident, nobody hurt, no revolt on hand, and perfect order existing.¹²¹

¹²¹ *The New York Times*, June 15, 1873

It turned out that there was no Satsuma rebellion in 1873. The Meiji regime survived. But the Emperor's palace and all its ornaments burned down. "Oh, what a loss of pretty things," the foreigner lamented. To Shimazu, the prettiest thing lost was a Japan that had kept people like the writer, and the obscene ideas they espoused, outside its borders.

While in Tokyo, Shimazu appears to have submitted an elaboration on the fourteen-point counter-enlightenment manifesto he submitted, adding to his bullet-point skeleton the reasons for his opposition. The follow-up manifesto is extant, but there is doubt over whether Shimazu really did submit the manifesto or whether he merely composed it and then demurred when it came to actually submitting it.¹²² In either case, the bullet points became an enduring symbol and guiding ideological document for the counter-enlightenment.

In its very repudiation of seemingly every dimension of Japanese modern globality, it was a striking, sweeping manifesto, and indeed a quintessentially modern manifesto, for a global age.¹²³ Shimazu called upon the state to be circumspect in its employment of human resources and to be scrupulous in taking account of its expenditures and its income and expenditures. He insisted that the state open paths for public expression, reduce rent and ease taxes, be just in its dealings with reward and punishment, steer clear of private desires, maintain decorum and always pay utmost regard to honesty and uprightness. He called for the state to regulate a world in which morality had seemed to go awry: to fix national attire and crack down hard on people's appearances; to draw an unmistakable division between the noble and the mean (*kisen no bun*); to proscribe licentiousness (*inran*) and to make clear the difference between man and woman

¹²² On this point see Kanbashi, *Shimazu Hisamitsu to Meiji Ishin*, pp. 244-245.

¹²³ See Shimazu Tadatsugu, *Shimazu Hisamitsu kō*, pp. 314–315, for the source. Alternatively, see Nihon shiseki kyōkai, ed., *Shimazu Hisamitsu kō jikki*, rev. ed. (Tokyo: Tōkyō daigaku shuppankai, 2000), v. 3, pp. 213-225.

(*danjo no betsu*); and to be austere in engaging with foreign lands, discriminating carefully between “us” and “them” (*tsumabiraka ni higa no bun o wakimau*).

These seemingly domestic concerns stemmed from outrage over the globality of the times. “I cannot bear simply to sit on the sidelines and watch a world as danger closes quickly in on it,” he wrote in classical Chinese in his afterword.¹²⁴ He did not close his eyes to the world and retreat. He looked, and he fought back. He lamented how what he called a supposedly ancient, unchanging system of imperial rule was now slipping into the snares of the evil customs of republican governance (*kyōwa seiji*), a process that could only result in Japan becoming “a vassal state of Western barbarians” (*yō’i no zokkoku*). To fight against a future of globality, he constructed a past of indigeneity.

And as Shimazu swept from education to gender to economy to politics to sartorial culture, the fourteen branches of his argument spiraled around a single concern of panic not only over the globality of the world but of the globality of a world in which individual being had been suddenly and radically underdetermined. It was an age in which men—and, horrifyingly to him, women—had become unshackled from the weight of the past. He wanted to believe that where once the very fact of being born within the Tokugawa dominion determined access to knowledge and education, the influx of Western knowledge had created epistemological anarchy, allowing men and women alike to know by means they chose. And where once the status system had supposedly organized men according to their occupation group, mediating all social affairs through a state-mandated system, the rise of a capitalist order had created social anarchy, a world in which men could find their own paths in life. Shimazu reviled the unprecedented freedoms of a new age. As he did so, he made precisely the opposite arguments of those in the justice-

¹²⁴ Shimazu Tadatsugu, *Shimazu Hisamitsu kō*, 315

treasury imbroglio: as they lamented the inability of the Japanese people to overcome the past, he decried how quickly the past had been overcome.

“Heaven (*ten*) is above, and earth (*chi*) is below, and this is the natural principle of things (*shizen no ri*); so it must be that human affairs abide by the model of heaven and earth (*tenchi*),” Shimazu sermonized, setting up an argument in which the revolutionary present appeared as a perversion of a naturally ordered world, just as the Western calendar was.¹²⁵ Society had to mirror nature: “The noble (*ki*) must look down on the mean (*sen*), the lower must make obeisance to the higher. The two must remain firmly fixed in this way, the princely and the popular (*kunmin*) must preserve one another, and thus will the nation (*kokka*) find peace and stability.” It was a vision of society where men achieved natural equilibrium when they abided by a place supposedly determined by a celestial model of being. The newfound freedoms of a new age had flattened human relations and led, in Shimazu’s view, to the erosion of stability. People no longer existed in order because they no longer looked to the right places to know how to be. “The Western institutions (*seiyō no seido*) we are now mimicking have no separation among warriors, farmers, artisans, and merchants (*shi nō kō shō*),” he wrote, referring to the Neo-Confucian division of society into an ideal occupational hierarchy. “When we look at means of transportation,” he went on, “we find no distinction being made between rich and poor, and when men look for clothes and accessories, they know not the difference between noble and mean.” He called on the regime to “fix the grades of things, to restore order to principle and rites, and to distinguish severely and clearly among the four estates (*shimin*).”

Things never were the way Shimazu said they were. An idealized ranking of four occupational categories did exist in the intellectual world, but as historians have well established,

¹²⁵ Shimazu Tadatsugu, *Shimazu Hisamitsu kō*, p. 324. All quotations in this paragraph appear on this page.

the on-the-ground social reality was far murkier. Indeed, it was not as if Shimazu naively sought to hearken back to a bygone age. The world he constructed was a willful illusion, an imagination of a past that never really was, a past visible only in light of the present. There was, and is, no greater evidence of the thoroughgoing modernity of the 1873 present, to the ubiquitous reality that revolution had fundamentally changed everything, than the visibility of what seemed to be vestiges of a bygone order. More than anything else, it was the squirming agitation of those for whom Shimazu spoke, their desperation to find stable ground as the foundations of society shifted beneath their feet, that testified to the irrevocability of the Japanese revolution into global individualism. Shimazu was left caught in a struggle to build a new ideational world by pretending it was the world that had always been.

And as it did for seemingly everyone else in the early Meiji era, the question of law stood at the center of this project of reconstruction. No laws were more plainly visible than those governing clothes. The Tokugawa shogunate had mandated the visible division between samurai and commoners by dictating what they could and could not wear. Clothes and hair further marked the fundamental difference between people within the Japanese polity and those beyond it. Shimazu insisted that apparel and outer appearances had to distinguish strictly between domestic and foreign, the wealthy and the poor. He fulminated that “today old traditions (*kyūten*) are being rent utterly asunder, and not only is no separation being made between noble and mean, domestic and foreign, but high and low have been joined together, and the attire of the West is being used without shame, throwing into chaos the ritual order [of the nation].” He was explicit in his demands: the complete proscription of Western attire, the rectification of the appearances of both the wealthy and the poor, all according to the laws of ancient times (*kyūhō*).

The rapid acceleration of globalization because of the Japanese Revolution endowed the invocation of a spiritual indigenous past with an explicit rejection of globalism.

This conjured-up yearning for a return to bygone, indigenous sartorial and tonsorial laws manifested a more abstract problem. Shimazu's harangue against modernity turned on a rather unctuous condemnation of the pursuit of private interest and private profit (*ri, riyoku, jin'yoku, rimon*), as if Shimazu himself were freed from the pursuit of his own interest. It was a problem rampant, he claimed, among government officials who used their state positions to indulge in private economic gain, who deceived people through their ostentation, and who "who worked for the sake of their own selves, not for the sake of the nation." From ancient times, he insisted, personal interest had been deemed anathema. But now its tide rose with the gravitational pull of Western values: "To adhere to personal interests and to depart from principle is the normal state of the petty man, the custom of the West." Shimazu mapped one binary onto another: Japan was the past and the West was the future. It was precisely the same set of binaries that his intellectual opponents rehearsed to make the exact opposite argument: that Japan was stuck in the past and needed to catch up to the West. And critically, as his intellectual opponents did, Shimazu identified the individual subjective self as the locus of this Manichean struggle. The foundational problem of modernity was whether it abetted or thwarted the freedom of the self to satiate his, and even her, own interested desires.

The problem of self-gratification emerged from the pollution of Japanese education, Shimazu believed. From the past, he insisted, schooling had been premised on Chinese studies, and therefore the great talents of the nation had been reared to place sincerity (*chūshin*) as their master, to put rites first, to be pure and virtuous, and to ensure that their deeds always matched their words. But now, he lamented, people in schools had become "inebriated on Western

theories” (*yōsetsu ni chinsui shi*) and had “even gone to the extreme point of licentiously immersing themselves in the fatuous drivel of Jesus” (*Yasu no mōsetsu ni shin'in sen to su*). He described the state of affairs as a “grievous calamity” that had needs be regarded as “an urgent affair.” He inveighed against the Ministry of Education (*Monbushō*) for failing to enforce the division between indigenous Japanese beliefs and Buddhism, and he insisted that “girls’ schools and such things in particular must be dissolved.”

To Shimazu, the wantonness of men was not simply intellectual. It represented itself in a world where men wallowed in alcohol and sex, becoming involved with prostitutes and entertainers “even to the extent that they forget their fathers and mothers and wives and children.” Such sexual liberty was of course a central feature in the entertainment, theater, and literature of the Tokugawa era, yet Shimazu blamed the supposed wantonness of a new era on that new era, doubling down on a pure phantasm—pure in multiple senses of the word. The Meiji state was actively abetting the sexual anarchy of the land, he wailed. “Not only have they permitted marriage across the four estates, but they have also proclaimed laws for children born from those other than one’s wife or concubines, thus truly laying the basis for licentiousness,” Shimazu wrote. And the state of affairs had become so despicable that people had even begun to marry people of foreign lands. Shimazu conceded the “unavoidability” of engaging in diplomatic relations with foreign states, but he insisted that it had to be conducted with the utmost prudence and with a continued delineation of the internal and the external. The present state of affairs, he exclaimed, was “intolerably deplorable”: the dignity of the Emperor was fading, the forces of the West were running rampant, foreigners and Japanese were living among one another (*zakkyo*) to the extent that even their rooms faced one another, “and even in extreme cases marriage has been permitted.”

Law acted as the means to stymie personal autonomy, to discriminate among people, to determine life for people, and thereby to enable the peaceful coexistence of status groups. “Although there are many causes for disorder (*ran*), none is greater than heavy duties and iniquitous taxes (*jūren ōzei*),” he explained. “By what means must the impoverished (*hinmin*) endure their lives [or commands]? When they can no longer bear to live [endure under their orders], they gather the masses (*shū*), form organizations (*tō*), and without regard for their own death go so far as to lead rebellions.” He demanded that the regime revoke its “nefarious” (*kakoku*) taxes and breathe new life back into the people. Along with reduced taxes, the masses needed “open avenues of speech” to make direct appeals to the government (*jōsho chokugen*): these avenues were “the necessary roads to kingly governances, the sources of peace and stability. He proceeded through a litany of Chinese monarchs who ruled while heeding the demands of the people: “The Duke of Wen,” for instance, “listened to the voices of the masses” (*yojin*) and used them to make his dominion over the realm prosper. “Although the institution of the parliament now exists (*gi'in no setsu ari*), the scourge of blocked avenues of speech has not expunged,” he claimed.

To many in the regime, the democracy of the West resolved these issues: Etō and Inoue turned to thinkers of Western liberalism to call for the renovation of Japanese sociopolitics. Here Shimazu pursued the same ends, but insisted that they came by a different means. It was in the venerable traditions of the East, not the newfangled ideas of the West, that something akin to popular participation in state affairs emerged. And popular participation rested not on a liberalist worldview of subjective autonomous beings but on a vision of a rigidly compartmentalized society in which each individual understood his place within a system of hierarchy: people below could suggest their ideas to those above, but essential divisions in society did not collapse as a

result. Paying taxes did not form justification for this political role but rather signaled a concrete transaction of the abstract system of duties, not of rights, that held men in equilibrium with each other and with those who governed them.

In this sense, then, Shimazu built on and departed from the same basic premises of modernization and globalization on which his intellectual adversaries stood, but he diagnosed different solutions to the problems they together encountered. Indeed, it is this drive to situate Shimazu as actively engaged with the modern world, not simply a holdout of “feudal” times, pervades the work in the twenty-first century on Shimazu Hisamitsu. Kanbashi, most notably, argues that Shimazu was driven by fear not simply of the physical but the “spiritual colonization” of Japan by Western powers.¹²⁶ And unmistakable sympathy for Shimazu, perhaps a strain of apologetics for him, underlies Kanbashi’s reading.

Even if we grant the validity of the dubious notion of “spiritual colonization,” and even if we allow a certain degree of latitude in sympathy or disdain for the historical actors one examines, the argument misconstrues the nature of Japan’s revolution into globality. The notion of “spiritual colonization” by the West assumes a static, already constituted Japanese nation and subject that the Western world, itself an active subject, invaded. But “West” itself was less a coherent historical actor than a figment of Shimazu’s desperate imagination, and it was in contradistinction to that West that Shimazu could construe the purity of the Japanese past. Did Shimazu really call for the dissolution of institutions for women’s education as part of a noble quest to save Japan from “spiritual colonization”? The question itself is a red herring, for the Japanese “spirit” itself was hammered out in the crucible of globality. To call for a return to an

¹²⁶ Kanbashi, *Shimazu Hisamitsu to Meiji Ishin*, p. 219. Kubo Masaaki, “Meiji rokunen seihen go no Shimazu Hisamitsu ha,” *Nihonshi kenkyū* 611 (July 2013), p. 18. Kubo cites two other works that promoted the reappraisal of Shimazu: Sasaki Suguru, *Bakumatsu seiji to Satsuma han* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 2004), and Machida Akihiro, *Shimazu Hisamitsu: Bakumatsu seiji no shōten* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2009).

indigenous past in itself signaled that the “spiritual colonization” not only by the West but by globality in and of itself was an accomplished fact: this was Shimazu’s way of dealing with it.

Shimazu’s call for a return to nature and the past because of the sudden changes of the present, even while it was unprecedented, appears to resonate with what Harry Harootunian rightly terms the “nativism” (*kokugaku*) of the late Tokugawa era. If we follow Harootunian’s interpretation of the rise of nativism, we see that it, too, appears to have emerged from a similar conundrum of modernity. Nativism in the late Tokugawa era appealed to “an authentic and ‘natural’ reality that needed to be separate from the constraints of culture and artificiality in order to return to a whole and integrated life in the supposed natural relationship between [among] deities, land, and people,” Harootunian writes.¹²⁷ In this invocation of nature as something to which society had to return, nativism at once held divisions and discrimination among people as a natural possibility and held them together in a transcendental family of natural kinship; in this system, each part, such as the household or the community, stood in for a grander unity of the divine. This invocation of nature and of a natural form of spirituality emerged precisely because the profound capitalist transformations destabilizing late Tokugawa life called for something transcendental to take the place of an increasingly out-of-touch official ideology.¹²⁸ It was precisely in order to find a way amid the jarring displacements and radical upheavals of everyday life that nativists, and indeed Shimazu, constructed an invented past of spiritual identity with nature. Shimazu responded to a degree of globality his forebears could never have fathomed. But much as Harootunian’s nativists did, in his artificial construction of a “native” Japanese essence,

¹²⁷ H. D. Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen: Discourse and Ideology in Tokugawa Nativism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 17.

¹²⁸ Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen*, esp. pp. 23–33.

Shimazu built a new world with the debris of the past and with the light of foreign imperialists; he did not defend a bygone world from spiritual colonization.

In this sense, even as Shimazu hearkened back to the spiritualism of Tokugawa nativist thought, he appeared more to foreshadow such prominent intellectuals as Shiga Shigetaka in the 1880s and Watsuji Tetsurō in the 1930s, who looked desperately for a way to maintain an illusion of Japanese distinctiveness when faced with undeniable evidence that Japan had been irrevocably integrated into a global world. The hankering for stability amid the violent collision of “precapitalist pasts,” “industrialization in an indeterminate present,” and “unenvisioned futures” amid a “spectacle of ceaseless change” in a “dominant historical culture no longer anchored in fixed values” spurred this sense of yearning for a purer Japanese past. People agitated for a way of “laying hold of an experience capable of resisting the erosions of change and supplying a stable identity—difference—in a world dominated by increasing homogeneity and sameness.”¹²⁹ Such were the terms with which Harry Harootunian described, in a later book, the conditions in which prewar ideology, especially fascism, were hammered out. They fit to describe the world of Shimazu no less than of the 1930s fascists.

The counter-enlightenment with which Shimazu declaimed the Japan enlightenment revealed, most fundamentally, a nation in which justice was in crisis. In the helter-skelter of revolution, as individuals and regions and nations jockeyed for secure position in an endlessly shifting world, what was right and what was wrong, what was fair and what was unfair, had been thrown into disarray. Is personal profit good, or must it be constantly subordinated for the general good? Should tradition be upheld because it is tradition, or must it be sacrificed at the altar of the new? Should people be free? Should they be equal? Who knew? The obsessive

¹²⁹ Harry D. Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. xviii-xix.

concern of Shimazu with resurrecting supposedly “old laws” reflected a squirming desire to reinstate intellectual equilibrium to a world of derangement. “When reward and punishment are not right, then by what means can the realm be in peace?” Shimazu lamented that his nation was mimicking Western law (*yōhō*) and abandoning the laws of its forefathers: “We must revert back to ancient law (*kyūhō ni fukuseraru beki nari*),” he repeated. Government wastefulness, the ballooning budget of the state, the slashing of funds for nobility and warriors—all were the result of “the veneration of Western law.” He was not altogether wrong, as we will see momentarily.

At precisely the same historical moment that Shimazu berated his state counterparts for adopting the appearance of the West, renouncing their Japaneseness, and thereby undermining the very law of the land, the Korean government made the exact same point.¹³⁰ Alone, Shimazu’s attack on the regime was not fatal. But when others from abroad made the exact same threats, the Japanese enlightenment came undone.

¹³⁰ Kang acknowledges the resonance between the Korean and Shimazu criticisms: see p. 144.

Chapter Two

THE CENTER CANNOT HOLD

The Meiji regime might have been able to manage its runaway political crises had its enlightenment and counter-enlightenment disputes been contained under its sovereign control. But as Etō Shinpei and Inoue Kaoru threatened to bring down the unity of the government with their competing visions of enlightenment, and as Shimazu Hisamitsu riposted with a repudiation of the entire enlightenment project, a more threatening, more intolerable counter-enlightenment attack assailed the regime from a source beyond its dominion. The regime could not manage fundamental intellectual challenges that traveled across its newly demarcated international boundaries. So fragile was the Japanese enlightenment that the Korean counter-enlightenment brought down the unity of the revolutionary regime.

In the most compelling theorization of Japan's nineteenth-century transformation to appear in English since the defeat of modernization theory, David L. Howell makes the ostensibly straightforward argument that the limits of the domestic early modern status order demarcated the boundaries of the Tokugawa polity: where the shogunate-mandated division of samurai from non-samurai dissolved, there too did Japanese dominion, the "Japanese" themselves, end.¹³¹ At a first glance, the cogency of the argument derives from its elegant simplicity. In modern nation-states, too, where the jurisdiction of domestic laws ends, there does the territorial sovereignty of a government terminate. The difference between early modernity and modernity itself lay in that the early modern Japanese diplomatic order did not rely on a

¹³¹ David L. Howell, *Geographies of Identity in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

transcendental system of law to determine territorial sovereignty: it was from a set of customs internal to the nation demarcating “civilized” from “barbaric,” not from a global system of universally recognized norms and laws under which the Japanese government abided, that the notion of dominion extended.

When Howell extends this argument temporally to examine how the concept of dominion transformed across the revolution into modernity, the complexity of his argument, and its vast theoretical implications, become clearer—and trickier. Inasmuch as Japan’s territorial expanse and internal cohesion vis-à-vis its neighbors, its very “geography of identity,” relied on the hegemony of domestic customs and sociopolitical systems, the dismantling of those domestic systems necessarily had diplomatic and geopolitical implications that transcended the incipient nation. To reconfigure society within was necessarily to establish a different set of rules by which Japan coexisted with, and differentiated itself from, its neighbors. Customary Tokugawa notions of separating civilized from barbaric were replaced ideationally with transcendental global cultural and intellectual conceptions of “civilization and enlightenment” just as Japan, as a geopolitical entity, now invoked international law to assert its autonomy in a global diplomatic system.

Herein lies a fundamental paradox of the Japanese revolution. To discriminate between domestic and foreign in an age of global modernity, then, was to invoke a distinction between civilized and uncivilized, between enlightened and unenlightened, at a transnational level. And yet those categories in themselves had to be conjured as universalistic, not particularistic: abidance by international law and norms of global enlightenment in themselves constituted the civilization against which Japan defined barbarism. But when its adversaries did not accept those definitional premises in the first place, they undermined the very means by which the Japanese

regime could assert its internal coherency in contradistinction from its barbaric enemies. The conundrum lay in the paradoxical need to accuse benighted neighbors of being benighted because they did not accept universalist global principles—an accusation that relied on the premise that those principles were universally accepted in the first place.

This paradox did not in itself have causative force. It was, instead, how men exercised agency within its conditioning parameters, the clash between the experience of difference and the intellectual assumption of sameness, that had destabilizing power. And it was settlers on the furthest frontiers of the empire, not intellectuals and politicians in the national capital, who were forced first and most pressingly to manage the crisis that this dilemma posed.

The Political Crisis of 1873 emerged from the fundamental problem that the collapse of domestic social system during the Meiji Revolution necessarily had diplomatic consequences that surpassed the sovereign control of the revolutionary regime. It arose from the diverging means by which men tried to address the problem that the concept of sovereignty itself, and the notions of universal civilization and enlightenment that undergirded it, necessarily implicated the political and economic dominion of the national regime.

Trojan horse from Tokyo

Long generating friction, diplomatic crises began exploding at the beginning of January 1873, precisely the same month in which Sanjō Sanetomi, overwhelmed by the demands of governing, recalled members of the Iwakura Embassy prematurely. When the members of the Embassy began finally arriving back on the shores of Japan, they walked into fires only dimly lit when the initial call for their return went out. These were crises catalyzed by and extending from the dissolution of domains and the installation of prefectures, which had established a single

centralized nation-state and undermined the system of semi-autonomous domains that had held Japan at peace with its neighbors for some three centuries. The largest crisis did not arise in Japan at all. It began in Korea.

Hirotsu Hironobu and Hanabusa Yoshimoto, senior members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, wrote to Moriyama Shigeru, representative of the ministry to Tsushima and Korea, on January 21. In three days, Arikishiya Zenzō 有岸屋善藏 would dispatch some men to Tsushima from Tokyo.¹³² Arikishiya, manager of the Mitsui Apparel Store (*Mitsui gofukuya*), had been loaning funds to the trade bureau in Tsushima (*Taishū bōekisho*) with an eye to acquiring leather from Korea. Until the dissolution of domains, all trade with Korea from Japan had to go through Tsushima. But the previous autumn, the Tsushima trade bureau had been shuttered: the dissolution of domains had absorbed Tsushima fully into the central Japanese nation-state apparatus, and Tsushima had lost the autonomy it had long held in mediating the flow of goods between Japan and Korea. The establishment of a centralized nation-state in 1871 had eliminated the premise behind a centuries-old economic and diplomatic system: from 1871, all Japanese were subjects a national Emperor, and since all prefectures were identical in a rational national bureaucracy, Tsushima lost, according to new Japanese national logic, its privileged trading prerogatives. Both Mitsui and the newly disadvantaged Tsushima traders themselves were left adjusting to a new reality.

Mitsui tried to find a way to make money amid the uncertainty of changing economic and diplomatic relations. Arikishiya asked merchants based on Tsushima to look into the possibility

¹³² Han'guk Ilbon Munje Yōn'guhoe p'yōn, ed., *Chosŏn oegyo samusō: Ilbon'guk Oemusōng wōnan* [Chōsen gaikō jimu sho: Nihonkoku gaimusho gen'an], vol. 6 (Seoul: Sōngjin Munhwasa, 1971), pp. 415–417. See also Kang Bōm-sōk [Pōm-sōk], *Seikanron seihen: Meiji rokunen no kenryoku tōsō* (Tokyo: Saimaru shuppankai, 1990), pp. 45–46, which covers this same material using the same sources, though from different archives; Mōri Toshihiko, *Taiwan shuppei: Dai Nihon teikoku no kaimaku geki* (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1996), p. 82.

of buying a range of goods on behalf of Mitsui. And as he awaited news from Tsushima, he requested permission to send his own men, who would use the name of the Tsushima traders and investigate the situation for themselves. In theory, according to the universalist principles of 1871, Tokyo men should have been allowed to trade as freely as Tsushima men. But the Korean monarchy had not accepted these principles. To the problem that the Korean regime continued to ban all people not of Tsushima origins from engaging in direct trade with Korea, Arikishiya and the foreign ministry proposed just to pretend that the Tokyo traders were from Tsushima. “Please give them a hand,” Hirotsu and Hanabusa asked of Moriyama, in Tsushima. It was crony capitalism at its finest.

It is not altogether clear why the foreign ministry and Mitsui could not just wait, why it was necessary for them to send these men in disguise. But there are strong clues that something besides private capitalist interests was impelling Mitsui. It appears highly improbable that Mitsui was simply acting of its own accord. In their letter, Hirotsu and Hanabusa mentioned in passing to the officer in Tsushima that the leather Arikishiya needed was for use in the military materiel division of the army bureau (*bukoshi goyō*).¹³³ Kang Bōm-sōk reads the letter as a sign that the Mitsui traders were acting under directives from the Japanese military. Indeed, Mitsui had intimate ties to Meiji officials. As Mōri stresses, throughout 1872 and 1873, the army ministry was mired in a series of embarrassing corruption scandals that forced the resignation of army minister Yamagata Aritomo—and that drew in both Mitsui and Inoue Kaoru of the finance ministry. Inoue was infamous for his connections to the Mitsui faction. In what Mōri calls a well-known moment, Saigō sardonically hailed Inoue as “Mitsui’s man on the government roster” (*Mitsui no tōban san*). When a succession of scandals involving army officials using public

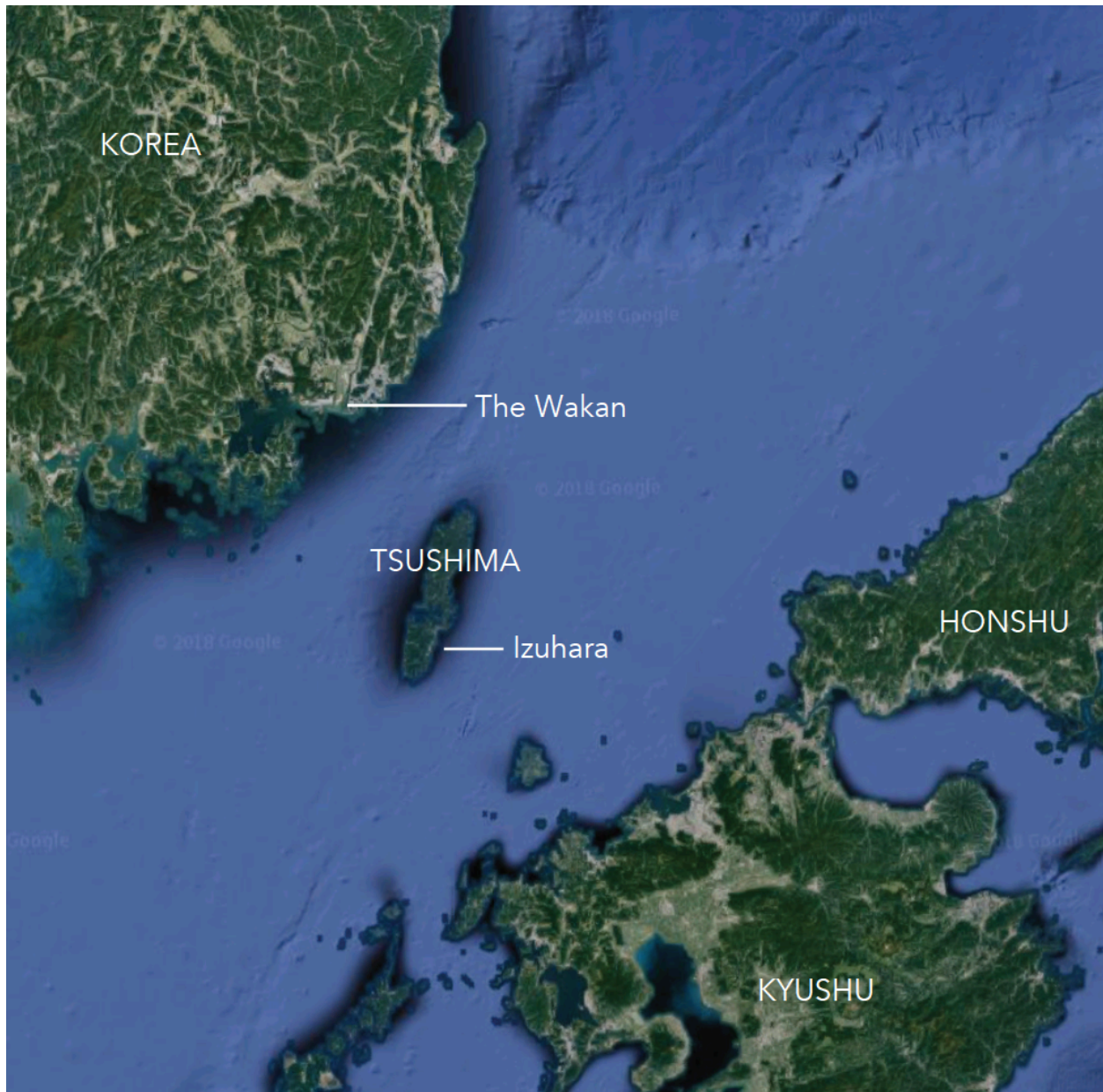
¹³³ See Kang, *Seikanron seihen*, pp. 45-46, for this point.

funds for their own benefit was readily exposed by Etō and the justice ministry, Inoue Kaoru liaised with major financial group Mitsui to help bail out, through land transfers, the embarrassed army ministers, who belonged to the same Chōshū faction he did. There is no smoking gun, but there is plenty of smoke at once obscuring and suggesting seedy connections between the army and Mitsui.¹³⁴

In any case, to send the Tokyo traders to Korea as Tsushima men in disguise was an utterly inane plan, and Hirotsu and Hanabusa knew full well that it was. They were perfectly aware of the refusal of the Korean side to accept trade from people of non-Tsushima origin: “Without [using] the name of the Izuhara merchants,” the merchants based in the major town on Tsushima, “crossing over to Korea is very difficult,” they acknowledged to Moriyama. And they pressed upon him their prescience that “evil customs (*heifū*)” would be stirred up if the traders in Korea saw through the duplicitous scheme. But they charged ahead anyway because, they insisted, it was a necessary course of action so long as Osaka and Tokyo traders were banned in Korea. Something needed to give. They implored Moriyama to make sure that everything on the ground would go without trouble. One imagines that he could hardly have been surprised when it did not.

¹³⁴ Mōri, *Meiji rokunen seihen*, pp. 94-95.

Figure 1: Tsushima and its surroundings



In the profusion of extant documents that scuttled back and forth between Tokyo and its Korean frontier in the early 1870s, this seemingly minor letter stands out in hindsight. Most official communications concerned a more vexing problem: the perennial irritation of Korean

boats getting blown off course and winding up in Japan. But the short document revealed how the most essential problems of Japan's leap into globality lurked in the seemingly minor Mitsui trading issue. The Meiji regime could unilaterally dissolve Japan's domestic status system and establish all people as affiliates not of their domanical lords but of a centralized national system. But what if foreign regimes did not accept this new system?

This question turned on an epistemological clash. The locus of identity, according to the Korean traders and their state officials, resided in region, in locality. That Tsushima traders lived on Tsushima determined their being. Permitted for centuries to trade with Korea, they were categorically different from Osaka and Tokyo traders, who had to be treated differently because of their origins. And until 1871, seemingly everyone knew and agreed upon this categorical difference because of history. Tradition had established that trade would only be conducted with Tsushima. The determinacy of officially mandated Korean ontology in diplomatic relations and the historicism of their epistemology ran up against the Japanese revolution. And it was not only Korea: at precisely this same moment, the Meiji regime was struggling to negotiate the status of Taiwan with the Qing Empire, sending foreign minister Soejima Taneomi in February 1873 to China for talks and leaving the foreign ministry without its head. Diplomacy across the region was in the throes of upheaval.¹³⁵

The urges of the Mitsui traders at once forced a feigned capitulation to Korean epistemology and reinforced the Japanese drive to overturn this epistemology. To conduct trade even after the 1871 political reconfiguration, the Japanese had to at least pretend to accept the ontological and epistemological premises of the Korean policy: the Tokyo traders were decidedly

¹³⁵ On the diplomatic history of the region more generally in the nineteenth century, see Pär Kristoffer Cassel, *Ground of Judgment: Extraterritoriality and Imperial Power in Nineteenth-Century China and Japan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

not from Tsushima, but the lure of freer trade compelled them to put on a show for Korea. Within Japan, it was in Mitsui's economic interests to be treated now as free economic actors unfettered by history or geography.¹³⁶ It was profitable to insist that the past no longer guided the present—but profitable to Mitsui, not the traders on Tsushima. As Kang Bŏm-sŏk stresses in his account, much of the problem lay in the threat to the financial interests of traders based on Tsushima that the entry of competition from Tokyo posed. The Tsushima men plotted to resist the insertion of Tokyo actors into their world.¹³⁷

On April 25, three months after the scheduled departure from Tokyo, Hirotsu Hironobu, now himself at the Korean frontier for the foreign ministry, reported to Tokyo that the three Mitsui men in question had arrived at the Japan Mission in Korea four nights earlier.¹³⁸ It was a rather opaque missive, but one that was telling its opacity. Hirotsu took pains to emphasize the foreignness of the visitors, their trouble finding places to eat and sleep, and the extraordinary care that was lavished on them as a result. He stressed that he had “admonished” the Tsushima traders not to make life difficult for the new Tokyo men and that the Japan House in Korea, the Japanese diplomatic and economic outpost there, was making it a point to treat traders “fairly and equally.” But he expressed his fears that difficulties arising with these traders, who were among the first coming to Korea, might lead to future problems with other traders who arrived

¹³⁶ Park argues that *Seikanron* was a direct result of the contradictions of capitalism: because, he claims, Japan was a resource-poor country, its leader sought to “enslave” resource-rich Korea and exploit it for its own economic ends. He also writes that the regime sought to project inner economic strife, in part engendered by the withdrawal of samurai stipends, out to Korea to maintain stability. There is of course an element of truth to both of these claims, and Park is right to point to the significance of the rise of capitalism. But his conclusion that capitalism simply led power-holders to try to “enslave” Korea is clearly too simplistic. See Paku Tokuchun, *Nihon teikoku shugi no Chōsen shinryakushi 1868-1905 : seikanron taitō kara Itsushi go jōyaku (hogo jōyaku) netsuzō made*, trans. Ryan Sanjin (Tokyo: Akashi shoten, 2004), pp. 19–22.

¹³⁷ Kang, *Seikanron seihen*, pp. 46–47.

¹³⁸ *Chosŏn oegyo samusŏ*, v. 6, p. 617.

without permission.¹³⁹ Hirotsu sounded an alarm. Just as Korea could not accept that all Japanese should be treated equally now that they all belonged to a single nation-state, so too could Tsushima traders themselves not accept the new state of affairs in their own nation, for it indeed undermined their privileged place in the economic order. Hirotsu recognized that men from Tsushima, subjects of the Japanese nation-state, had reason to side with Korea, not with the newly centralized administration in Tokyo.

Those reading the missive could well have understood that things—and worse, ideas—were unstable at the frontier. It was as if time had collapsed in on itself in the small Japanese outpost in Korea, as if the regime in Tokyo spoke from the future, telling of a world in which all Japanese were readily interchangeable regardless of local origin, while the travelers themselves, subjectively living in the present, suddenly found themselves foreign in a strange world that was nominally Japan, lagging behind Tokyo theory, stuck in a past world where ignorance and unfamiliarity prevented men from finding food, from seeing one another as fungible.

Just four days later, on April 29, Hirotsu wrote again to his superior in Tokyo, this time with more disconcerting news. The Koreans had found out that the newly arrived Tsushima traders were in fact not Tsushima traders.¹⁴⁰ Someone had tipped them off “well in advance” of the arrival. The Korean officials responsible for the Japan Mission on Tsushima cried foul, claiming to the Japanese side that the men who had just arrived were not from Tsushima but members of “the largest Japanese merchant [house], Mitsui.” They claimed that they had, until then, looked the other way as non-official trade had proceeded, but they threatened that “if men like these” continued to come to Korea, the Korean authorities would suspend trade permits.

¹³⁹ Kang, *Seikanron seihen*, p. 46, and Mōri, *Taiwan shuppei*, p. 82, make this general point as well, though not in connection to this specific document.

¹⁴⁰ *Chosŏn oegyo samusŏ*, v. 6, p. 681. See also Kang, *Seikanron seihen*, p. 46.

The traders on the ground supposedly denied both the allegations and the premise on which the allegations were hurled. “Our country has changed since the bygone times of the system of feudal domains (*hansei*),” Hirotsu claimed the traders explained to Korean authorities, “and now people from Tsushima transfer to Tokyo and Osaka while people from Kyoto and Settsu [the Kobe area] have the freedom (*jiyū*) to establish their residence on Tsushima.” Then they denied wrongdoing. The men from Tokyo were in fact dispatched by the Tsushima traders, they insisted: “it is a mistake to say that they have come from Tokyo-Mitsui” (*Tōkyō Mitsui yori korishi to mōsu wa machigai naru beshi*). “No need for you to worry,” they stressed; “they will not stay for long.” They struck a conciliatory tone.

There is palpable desperation in the letter as Hirotsu wrote of how the traders supposedly tried to quell the growing conflagration, a desperation that reveals the volatility of Japanese revolution itself playing out on the Korean frontier. As the allegiance of Tsushima traders tottered, and as they began to connive with Korean officials to thwart Tokyo’s meddling in trade, Hirotsu slandered them in his reports back to Tokyo. “Every little thing they hear on the road they turn around and spread further down the road,” he fulminated.¹⁴¹ “The frivolous tawdriness of the people of Tsushima is truly the height of ignominy,” he wrote, laying the blame for the growing crisis all but explicitly on how the people of Tsushima were “leaking” everything they heard. He credited the negotiations of other traders for resolving the crisis with their defense of the Japanese revolution. He concluded with a hopeful note about a positive meeting with the Korean liaison, who praised them for their quick handover of Korean drifters who had ended up in Japanese hands.

¹⁴¹ *Chosŏn oegyo samusŏ*, v. 6, pp. 683-4

It of course seems doubtful that the traders spontaneously gave such an eloquent, rousing defense of the revolutionary nationalization of Japan's autonomous domains in the face of threats against foundation of their being in Korea. And one wonders why Hirotsu took great pains in the report to emphasize in unequivocal terms that it was the traders themselves who rallied to the defense of the Japanese regime, that they helped put out the sparks of a threatening diplomatic crisis ignited first by the men on Tsushima. As information, goods, and people flowed from the capital to the far-away holdout in southern Korea and back, no doubt they did so shrouded in obfuscation, prevarication, perhaps outright lies.

But sometimes mendacity can tell more truth than the truth can. For what was unfolding before Hirotsu's eyes appeared to him as a battle of ideas, or at least that is what he wanted the authorities in Tokyo to see vicariously through him. The crux of the crisis he faced was that the experience of Mitsui traders arriving on the scene was in fact reinforcing the Korean anti-revolutionary message and refuting the message from Tokyo. Even as he tried to persuade the Koreans that the epistemological ground had irrevocably shifted beneath their feet, that one knew the identity of these men not through history but through dictate from Tokyo, he could not refute the lived reality that the Tokyo traders were foreigners through and through, with nary a clue of where to sleep and where to eat on a strange frontier. And now, as a foreign adversary dived into the hoopla of the Japanese revolution, the men on Tsushima, their economic interests under fire, had defected to the Korean epistemological camp.

'Changing the immutable laws of the past'

Hirotsu wrote again on May 21 with more alarming news.¹⁴² The Japanese were under siege.

Hirotsu claimed that there had been expectations that if the Mitsui traders were to head back to Japan, patrols of the Japanese delegation would be relaxed and the situation would be ameliorated. But things had only grown more tense. The Koreans had followed through on their threat to crack down on trade. On May 16, Korean patrol boats seized a ship with more than thirty sheets of cow hides “carefully hidden in the bottom of the boat.”¹⁴³ The goods and the traders themselves were seized by the Korean authorities, and the following day, the men were taken for interrogation before being investigated directly by the Tōraifu, the Japanese term for the Korean regional government in the Tongnae district, which was directly responsible for relations with Japan. “We did not know what their punishment was,” Hirotsu wrote. “And coincidentally, the evening of that same day, because of military training, we heard the reverberations of some fifty or sixty gunpowder explosions for some two hours.” Something ominous was in the air. “As a result [of these circumstances], the traders associated with the Mission have not traded a single good, a single item,” he wrote; “they seemed greatly distressed.”

In retaliation for illicit trade, the Korean regime blockaded the Japanese outpost, degrading the basic material conditions of the Japanese living in Korea, Hirotsu reported. The siege had succeeded in “totally” sealing off the import of “cotton cloth, sweets, fish, eggs, meat, and the like.”¹⁴⁴ Authorities had allowed only a supposedly paltry quantity of vegetables to pass through the border. Hirotsu did not write with the maudlin desperation of the Japanese state

¹⁴² Gaimushō, ed., *Nihon gaikō monjo: Meiji*, vol. 6 (Tokyo: Gannandō shoten, 1994), p. 276 (document 118).

¹⁴³ *Nihon gaikō monjo*, v. 6, p. 276

¹⁴⁴ *Nihon gaikō monjo*, v. 6, p. 277

official in Sakhalin, whom we will encounter shortly. He was relatively subdued, rather surprisingly matter-of-fact given the circumstances. But beneath the façade of stoicism, the image Hirotsu depicted was unmistakable: a pitiless Korean enemy starving a hopeless Japanese population. The only solution if the state of affairs were to continue, Hirotsu proposed, was for him to go to Tsushima himself to bring food for the hungry men stationed there.

As the crackdown on the movement of goods and people in and out of the Mission impoverished the Japanese settlers materially, it no less began to tear apart the intellectual and social fabric of their lives. Hirotsu depicted a state of confusion. He emphasized the “exasperation” (*konkyaku*) the traders felt in situation wherein “truth could hardly be separated from falsehood.” Amid the blockade, the Korean authorities had conducted a thorough inquiry inside the Japanese House and imposed harsh restrictions. But evidence of wrongdoing was scant: nothing could be proven definitively, or so Hirotsu claimed. The investigators had observed a stockpile of trading goods in the facility, from which they determined that illicit trafficking was occurring, and a member of the search party had the entire load of goods bought up by the Korean authorities. In such a state of affairs, Hirotsu fretted how the number of traders was plunging and how “unlike until last year, now the facility is lonely and desolate (*sekiseki ryōryō*) in the extreme.”¹⁴⁵ It might be that in his bathos, Hirotsu was merely indulging in the conventionally overwrought classical Chinese style of Japanese diplomatic correspondence.¹⁴⁶ But there was something clearly awry.

Hirotsu jeered at his Korean foes. The explosions from the navy drill he had overheard were not incidental, he explained. The Korean men in the regional government, he wrote somewhat opaquely, had long duped and exploited the people by trying to make a show of

¹⁴⁵ *Nihon gaikō monjo*, v. 6, p. 277

¹⁴⁶ My thanks to Professor Kaoru Iokibe for raising this possibility.

strength to them. The people, though without knowledge or learning, were not so easily deceived. But having heard the continued explosions for the first time themselves, everyday Koreans had now begun to come to the Japan mission flaunting their newfound strength. “It is extremely pitiful,” Hirotsu wrote. Men could quite literally hear an impending military confrontation in the distance.

Then there was the natural environment. Hirotsu wrote of an inhospitable setting, a realm where the hostile natural world seemed to embody feelings of frustration and despair. “The rain has been abundant in the bay this year, and the humidity has been especially harsh,” Hirotsu complained to the foreign ministry. “Every morning the fog is dense,” he grumbled, saying it was hard to see very far. “Water,” he wrote, “drips incessantly, and even those without illnesses feel bothered.” He himself was exceptionally bothered, and indeed, he was ill. “And what is more,” he wrote, “there are more snakes and scorpions than there would be in a regular year, and we are distressed by their comings and goings during the night.”¹⁴⁷

It might have been routine to write of the weather, and indeed others stationed in the Mission had complained about the rain in Korea and the apparent inadequacy of the physical infrastructure of the Japanese outpost.¹⁴⁸ But the crestfallen reports Hirotsu wrote on the hostility of the climate, a climate that was not dissimilar to what Japanese experienced right across the Tsushima Strait, had uncanny coherency. Independent variables of life seemed to collude with one another in creating an ecology of terror: the blockade, the resulting absence of food, the haughty officials and their duping of everyday Koreans, the military drill, the everyday Koreans lordling it over them, the rain, the fog, the critters on the nighttime floor—everything to Hirotsu seemed to be conspiring against the Japanese in Korea. The same pattern emerged in the

¹⁴⁷ *Nihon gaikō monjo*, v. 6, p. 278

¹⁴⁸ For example, *Chosŏn oegyō samusŏ*. v. 6, pp. 422-423.

rumblings for war emanating from Sakhalin at precisely the same time, as we will see. Left alone, free to fend for themselves on desolate frontiers where nothing seemed to go right, Japanese representatives most distant from Tokyo went scampering back to the central state, longing for determinacy in a future that was all too undetermined. It was on the furthestmost frontiers of a supposedly consolidated nation-state that men were freest to determine the courses of their own lives. A broad revolutionary clash unfolded, then, through the everyday feelings of “loneliness,” of the threat of snakes and scorpions, of the grinding difficulty of living on the frontiers of life, of the feelings of one man that the world was collapsing in on him.

Up to this point, Hirotsu wrote mainly of the injury the Koreans inflicted on the Japanese. Just ten days later, on May 31, they added insult.

In his new dispatch, Hirotsu again expatiated on a state of affairs wherein canards swirled, wherein lived reality lagged behind an elusive truth emanating from the national center. “Rumors that the Imperial Palace has gone up in flames have emerged in the Mission recently,” he wrote.¹⁴⁹ It was the exact same moment at which Shimazu Hisamitsu appeared, in the *New York Times*, to threaten revolution. But Hirotsu did not read the *New York Times* in Korea. Were the rumors true? “Fear and anxiety” ruled, he claimed, as people could not know “truth from falsehood.” He “implored” the Ministry for an urgent update of the situation. He was no doubt fawning to his superiors, feigning concern for the wellbeing of an Emperor who did not know what it felt like to be attacked by scorpions in Korea. But on the imperial frontier, the newly “restored” imperial institution held the empire together—and separated Japanese from Korean.

It had seemed that the two sides had begun to overcome the worst of the blockade of the Japan House, Hirotsu wrote. After considerable exertion, the traders based in the Mission had

¹⁴⁹ *Nihon gaikō monjo*, v. 6, pp. 279-283 (document 119). Quotation on p. 279.

formed an organization of their own and entered into negotiations with the Korean official on the ground. He had allowed them freer movement and had opened up trade routes.

But all they had done was to walk right into “a trap” that a conniving Korean official, feigning blasé innocence, had set for them. After allowing freer trade, he came in and seized the goods and profits of the traders.

The bombshell came at the end of the letter. Hirotsu appended what he claimed was the full text of a document that a Korean official had posted as a notice from the Tōraifu so that Koreans could see it as they entered the Japan Mission.¹⁵⁰

The immediate purpose of the Tōraifu manifesto was to rebuff the Japanese traders gathering at in Korea and to insist on the irrevocability of the economic and diplomatic status quo. Hirotsu drove home the point that the recent blockade and the vituperative document that backed it up were “undoubtedly” the result of the arrival of the Mitsui traders.

But money and trade were not, most essentially, what the document was about. It struck at deeper epistemological and ontological problems. By gainsaying the social, diplomatic, and economic order inherited from the past, and by taking institutions “without shame” from foreign lands, the wanton men gathering at their doorstep ceased even to be Japanese, the Tōraifu claimed. With the counter-enlightenment tract, the Korean state opened fire in a Japanese war of ideas over global justice.

The notice opened with a statement of knowing. In recent years, the Tōraifu explained, “whereas our side has long relied on the established promises and precedent of three hundred years, their side has changed the immutable laws of the past.” It decried the arbitrary whims of the Japanese, and it then lamented the insistence of the Japanese to extend their iconoclasm onto

¹⁵⁰ *Nihon gaikō monjo*, v. 6, pp. 282-283.

their neighbors: the Japanese are free to do whatever they want in their own country, the notice suggested, but how can they come and impose it on a neighbor? A clear division was established: on one side of the Tsushima Strait, people knew through the past, respecting and living in accordance with centuries of peaceful precedent. On the other side, men transgressed the ways handed down to them by their ancestors.

From knowing the notice proceeded to being. “They have no shame in adopting systems and institutions from others,” the notice asserted, referring to the Japanese. “They have changed their appearances and transformed their customs. In light of these things, we cannot call them people of Japan, and we cannot allow them to come and go across our borders.” The paradox of the ship of Theseus had docked in southwestern Korea: if a boat has all its parts swapped out for new ones, is it the same boat? The Korean notice insisted it was not. There was nothing essentially Japanese about the being of Japanese men. Their nationality, and indeed that which made them worthy of economic and diplomatic respect, resided in their adherence to past custom, to particular hairstyles, to certain types of clothes. Just as the Iwakura Mission sailed around the world on Verbeck’s promise of fungibility, the Korean regime flatly refused to accept that the Japanese were really Japanese if they wore different clothes. As if nodding to Plutarch, the notice added, “If they ride ships and vessels that are not [made] in the old Japanese ways, then we cannot allow them to enter our borders.” It was probably an allusion to a crisis that had erupted three years earlier, in the fifth month of Meiji 3, or 1870. Japanese emissaries had sailed into Pusan without permission on a German steamship. The Korean officials protested, warning that the Japanese use of Western technology would threaten the three hundred years of peaceful coexistence between them.¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ Ishida Tōru, *Kindai ikōki no Nitchō kankei : Kokkō sasshin o meguru Nitchō sōhō no ronri* (Hiroshima: Keisuisha, 2013), from p. 203.

It was from these grand problems of knowing and being that the Korean officials narrowed down to the problems at their door. “That [only] men from Tsushima engage in trade with us has been, from the very beginning, a fixed and immutable law,” they explained. “We absolutely do not allow men from other islands to engage in trade with us. Furtive trafficking is a crime that both of our countries have forbidden.” And here the Tōraifu arrived at a passage that has been quoted repeatedly since 1873: “We see the recent actions of men from the other country, and we must say that it has become a lawless land, and yet they feel no shame in this situation, whereas in our country the law continues to stand on its own.”¹⁵² If the men of the Japanese outpost in Korea seek to abide by the law of the past, then we will let them trade, the notice proclaimed, “but if they seek to engage in activities outside the law, we will forever bar them; if they seek to sell a good illicitly, the roads for trade will not be open to them.” It called on the traders to reflect hard and bear these injunctions in mind. And it closed with a threatening ultimatum: if the Japanese were willing to abide by Korean law, then all would be well, but if not, if they would face continued investigations and patrols and the application of the full force of the law—and even the suspension all trade.¹⁵³

The Tōraifu presented a stark choice. The Japanese could admit their folly, repudiate their revolution, and reenter the only valid form of law, that which was inherited from the past,

¹⁵² A slightly different rendering of this document appears in Peter Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1859–1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 37–38. A *yomikudashi* version is available in Kang, *Seikanron seihen*, pp. 48–49.

¹⁵³ On sourcing problems with this document, see Kang, *Seikanron seihen*, pp. 49–53; 249–257. The actual document that Hirotsu attached is not extant. Instead, two slightly different versions of the document remain, each with different dates. Kang proposes that the document now read as that which Hirotsu submitted was tampered with before it was submitted to the Emperor in late 1873. The modified version emphasizes the civilization and enlightenment of the Japanese side. Regardless of whether Kang is correct in his analysis, the essential argument here still stands. That the document might have been modified the only goes further to show their perception that they were waging a war of ideas over their own being in the world.

that which dictated that only men from Tsushima could trade with Korea, that which had held East Asia in diplomatic equilibrium for three centuries. Or they could lose trade with Korea.

It is not surprising that the Caretaker Regime in Japan sought a third option: to invade Korea.

It was not the first time since 1868 that Koreans and Japanese had tussled over the legacy of the past. On November 13, 1868, or the twenty-ninth day of the ninth month, a delegation from Tsushima notified the Korean government that the Meiji Emperor was the new sovereign of the Japanese realm. The Korean regime refused to accept Japanese communications referring to the Japanese sovereign as “Emperor” (皇). As Ishida Tōru has explained in an argument similar to Kang’s, the problem was not simply a clash between Japanese and Koreans over diplomatic protocol. In the middle, the go-between ambassadors from Tsushima agitated for the protection of their “private” trade interests with Korea even while communicating the “public” or official stance of the Japanese regime.¹⁵⁴ The regimes continued to push and pull for years thereafter over the question of international law (*bankoku kōhō*), the Korean refusal to accept it, and the status of Tsushima as an intermediary.

Neither empire nor nation, as historians now stress, is constructed by politicians and soldiers and bureaucrats alone. It is men and women on the ground who drive the expansion of a nation-state into a regional power. And the ideational problems that arose from one nation butting up against another were not ones that only intellectuals and statesmen had to resolve. They were the most urgent problems that everyday men had to resolve as they tried to get along on the frontiers. It is when they could not resolve them on their own that they escalated into state-level problems.

¹⁵⁴ Ishida, *Kindai ikōki no Nitchō kankei*, ch. 4, esp. p. 148.

Hirotsu appeared to anticipate that relaying the Tōraifu notice would ignite a firestorm. He tried to play it cool: “There are those among the young hands in the Mission who are livid after having seen the opprobrious words in the document,” Hirotsu acknowledged. “But when such public communications of disrespect are made to our Mission, they in fact provide us with an opening to engage in negotiations at a later day. We will therefore put up a triumphant appearance, showing that we are not taking this to heart, and we will act with collected serenity. Our only pleasure is to fulfil, single-mindedly and doggedly, the imperial will.” He called for “concerted patience.” And in making that call, certainly he knew that that is not what he would get.

Suicide mission to Korea

As historians have indicated, no record of the internal discussions of the Japanese cabinet remains extant to tell us exactly how this news from Korea took Japan to the brink of war. But historians have painstakingly pieced together their debates from the letters that statesmen wrote one another. And among those documents is one of the best-known letters in modern Japanese history: a quick note written by Saigō Takamori to Itagaki Taisuke on July 29 in which Saigō volunteered to go to Korea, be assassinated, and foment war.

It is a mystifying letter. Historians have spent over a century analyzing and interpreting it. “Has any decision been made on Korea, now that Soejima is back?” Saigō asked Itagaki.¹⁵⁵ Soejima Taneomi, the foreign minister, was still in the Qing Empire to figure out how to respond to a massacre by Taiwanese aborigines of boatmen from Ryūkyū who had washed up on Taiwan

¹⁵⁵ Hensan Saigō Takamori zenshū henshū iinkai, ed., *Saigō Takamori zenshū*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Daiwa shobō, 1976–1980), pp. 371 – 373 (document 102). Using translation that appears in *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, v. 2, part 2, p. 19.

in 1871. The letters from Hirotsu had repeatedly flowed into Tokyo without the foreign minister actually in Japan. Now that Soejima had returned, he faced the possibility of war, but on the Korean front, not the Taiwanese front.

Saigō was leaning toward war on a third front, that with Russia. He sought to dismiss the proposal for an immediate troop dispatch to Korea, which evidently had been promoted by Itagaki. If soldiers were sent to Korea, Saigō wrote, “the Koreans will unquestionably demand their withdrawal, and a refusal will lead to war. We shall then have fomented a war in a manner very different from the one you originally had in mind.” Japan, in other words, would be seen as an unlawful aggressor if the regime unilaterally sent troops to Korea. He saw in a burgeoning crisis in Sakhalin a graver problem—or perhaps a more justifiable form of war. “Russia has fortified Sakhalin and other islands,” Saigō observed, “and there have already been frequent incidents of violence. I am convinced that we should send troops to defend these places before we send them to Korea.”

Even while seeking to dissuade Itagaki from going to war with Korea, insisting on the priority of the Russian frontier, Saigō called for another way to spark war with Korea. “Wouldn’t it be better therefore to send an envoy [to Korea] first?” Saigō asked, proposing an ostensibly diplomatic solution. But then he made a prognostication puzzlingly framed as a statement of certainty about the future: “It is clear that if we did so, the Koreans would resort to violence and would certainly give us an excuse for attacking them.” He nominated himself as the envoy. “If it is decided to send an envoy officially, I feel sure that he will be murdered. I therefore beseech you to send me. I cannot claim to make as splendid an envoy as Soejima, but if it is a question of dying, that, I assure you, I am prepared to do.”

What was Saigō thinking? Why is Saigō so sure that he will be assassinated in Korea? Why is he so eager to go on the suicide mission himself? Historians have debated these questions to no end. Citing the same evidence, some have claimed that Saigō was a bellicose warmonger; others have praised the ingenuity with which he sought, in his pacifism, to dissuade Itagaki from dispatching troops by calling for a diplomatic solution with himself at the forefront. Perhaps he knew that his suggestion that he would be assassinated in Korea was nonsensical; perhaps he meant it only as a means of distracting a bellicose Itagaki, as Mōri suggests.

But the excessive attention on the person of Saigō distracts from the significance of his letter.¹⁵⁶ We can only speculate on what Saigō was really thinking, what he really wanted. But we can know what conditions he was forced to respond to with his strange plan. As men on the suddenly destabilized Korean frontier struggled with transnational modes of justice spilling beyond a new nation-state, simmering confusion was exacerbated by a state-led free-trade scheme that drew Korean officials more fully into the Japanese revolution.

And Saigō himself, as is well known, saw in waging war against the counter-enlightenment abroad a means of quelling the military threat of the counter-enlightenment at home. In August, Saigō continued to insist in his letters on the desirability of his plan and reiterated his conviction that he would be assassinated: “Grounds for starting a conflict might be found from an examination of international law, but they would be entirely a pretext, and the people of the nation would not accept them.” He continued, “If a diplomatic solution were sought, though, and a diplomat sent, I am sure that the contemptuous attitude of the Koreans will reveal itself. They [the Koreans] are absolutely certain, moreover, to kill the envoy. This will bring home to the entire nation the necessity of punishing their crimes.” And Saigō reflected on

¹⁵⁶ Ishida makes this point in *Kindai ikōki no Nitchō kankei*, pp. 6-10.

the positive domestic effects that war with Korea would have: it would “divert abroad the attention” of those agitating within Japan so that they would “refrain from creating any internal disturbance.” Those agitators, we have already seen, railed against the Japanese enlightenment in the same way that the Korean regime did. It would take military struggle to win the intellectual struggle.¹⁵⁷ As we saw in the previous chapter, Saigō was preoccupied at this moment with trying to pacify the restive Shimazu Hisamitsu, the strongman from his own home domain from Satsuma. Regardless of where Saigō stood ideologically in the domestic competition of ideas, smashing the Korean counter-enlightenment would deflect the militant energies of the Japanese counter-enlightenment from plunging Japan into unnecessary civil strife. None knew, at this point, that Saigō himself would himself precipitate a civil war not four years later.

Saigō was not interested only in rebuffing Korea and in thwarting domestic unrest. He needed to create a pretext for an invasion of Korea, but he believed there was already valid justification under international law for a war against Russia. Indeed, as Iguro Yatarō, citing recollections from Kuroda Kiyotaka, explains, Saigō had tried to convince his colleagues in the Meiji regime to establish a military garrison in Hokkaidō with himself, Kirino Toshiaki, and Shinohara Kunimoto at its helm—we will see in the final chapter that these were the very men who led the rebel army in the Civil War of 1877. Other members of the regime feared turning Hokkaido into “Saigō’s kingdom” and rejected the move.¹⁵⁸ But the military troubles on the northern frontier did not go away, nor did Saigō’s concern with the north. By the time the Iwakura Mission returned home, the Sakhalin problem had become inextricably tied up in the Korea problem. It appeared that two independent, contingent crises on two frontiers had

¹⁵⁷ De Bary et al., eds., *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, v. 2, part 2, p. 19.

¹⁵⁸ Iguro Yatarō, *Kuroda Kiyotaka* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1987), pp. 74-75.

collapsed into each other. The same dominating crisis of global justice played out in contingent everyday life in ways that rocked Japan on two separate frontiers.

Karafuto conflagrations

If men in the ministries of justice and the treasury, if grumpy erstwhile de facto daimyo in Kagoshima, and if traders on the Korean frontier quarreled over the extent to which they should or should not be free from a ponderous past, then the Japanese stationed in Karafuto fought over what at first appears as the exact opposite problem: they did not have enough of a past. The Mitsui traders and their foreign ministry associates struggled against hundreds of years of precedent in how to establish a system of justice with Korea; fishermen and government representatives on Sakhalin, meanwhile, struggled against a dearth of precedent in their fight to establish a shared framework of justice in their interactions with their new Russian neighbors.¹⁵⁹ They were free, too free, to carve out a new society of their own, their desolation leaving them largely beyond the reach of the central state and the reach of tradition. These contrary circumstances in Korea and on Karafuto were engendered by the same revolution into globality. Men had to think anew how they would interact with foreign others as new subjects of a Japanese nation-state freed from the safety of their erstwhile occupational groups. And it turned out that it was difficult for men to establish justice on their own without the intervention of a state, without some structure of order. Rejecting the freedom that transnational society produced, lower-level state officials scurried back to their higher-ups to come in and impose order by force.

Japanese lived with foreigners only in designated places on the main islands of the Japanese archipelago. Imperialist powers had demanded permission for “mixed residence,” for

¹⁵⁹ I use the terms “Karafuto” and “Sakhalin” interchangeably throughout.

foreigners and Japanese to live among one another in Japan, but the Meiji regime had managed to prevent it: foreigners remained confined to treaty ports. It was only in 1899, after long struggles, that the proscription on mixed residence was finally lifted.

Karafuto was different. In 1855, the Tokugawa bakufu had signed a treaty with Russia allowing for mixed residence on Sakhalin. As Japanese settlers intermingled with indigenous Ainu inhabitants and Russian troops and prisoner-exiles, they stood willy-nilly at both a literal and a figurative frontier of the burgeoning empire. In what Akizuki Toshiyuki, the leading historian in the field, describes as a failure in Japanese diplomacy, a late bakumatsu dispatch to St. Petersburg botched negotiations to demarcate a border in Sakhalin, and in 1867, the bakufu submitted to and signed a treaty composed by the Russian side allowing both Japanese and Russian freedom of movement across the island—and enabling Russian advances toward the southern end of the island. Within months, the Russian military had sailed to Tōfutsu, set up camp, and begun construction on a permanent settlement.¹⁶⁰ The Meiji regime installed, meanwhile, a Japanese administration on Karafuto and began settling the Sakhalin frontier, too. An experiment began as men tried to figure out for themselves, through fitful experience, what it meant to know and to be among people with histories and identities far different from their own. It did not go well.

¹⁶⁰ Akizuki Toshiyuki, *Nichiro kankei to Saharin tō: Bakumatsu Meiji shonen no ryōdo mondai* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1994), pp. 173–177; 206–207.

Figure 2: Map of the Japan-Russia frontier. Based on Akizuki, *Nichiro kankei to Saharin tō*, cover page.



In what Akizuki depicts as strategic moves to crowd the Japanese out of Sakhalin militarily, in 1869 Russian forces moved west and began constructing a base at Hakkotomari, an Ainu burial site immediately adjacent to the main Japanese settlement and economic hub of

Kushunkotan, today the city of Korsakov.¹⁶¹ The revolutionary Meiji regime took diplomatic measures to pressure the Russians into withdrawing. Their failure set the stage for conflict.

Karafuto was a land that time had almost literally forgotten. As Shimazu Hisamitsu waxed bitterly poetic in the wintry depths of January 1, 1873, it was still the twelfth month of Meiji 5 on Karafuto. It was cold on Sakhalin. Communications and transportation had been suspended as things froze over, and it had been about seven months since the last vessel had come in to send messages from Karafuto to Hokkaido.¹⁶² The Japanese men and women living in Karafuto found out only five months after 1873 began that now they were supposed to start counting years based on the birth of Jesus. May 1 had arrived on the fifth day of the fourth month of an old calendar that did not die soon enough.

And just as time took time arriving on Karafuto, messages took time going to Tokyo.¹⁶³ Horii Motoi, representative of the Hokkaido Development Commission stationed in Karafuto, had been panicking for weeks. He had had to wait until winter ended before he could inform the central state of the crises on Karafuto. He finally got word out to the Hokkaido Development Commission in early June. And then it took another three weeks, until June 25, for Nishimura Sadaaki of the Development Commission to forward his message to the foreign ministry in Tokyo and to Sanjō Sanetomi, head of the Council of State.

Hori was horrified. In the third month, the Russians had dispatched most of the contingent of troops based in Tōfutsu to Hakkotomari, leaving only some twenty or thirty men behind in their original encampment. Hakkotomari was now suddenly teeming with people. It was “a genuinely bewildering situation,” he wrote.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Akizuki, *Nichiro kankei to Saharin rō*, pp. 190-191.

¹⁶² Akizuki, *Nichiro kankei to Saharin tō*, pp. 210-211

¹⁶³ Akizuki, *Nichiro kankei to Saharin tō*, pp. 210-211.

¹⁶⁴ *Nihon gaikō monjo*, v. 6, p. 341 (document 153)

Then violence had broken out. Russian soldiers had set fire to a storage facility for fishing goods, and some 200 hundred trees' worth of firewood had suspiciously gone up in flames as well. It was a situation "truly beyond words," Hori lamented.¹⁶⁵ Japanese firefighters had rushed to quell the conflagration, but Russian troops obstructed them and heaved their firefighting implements into the fire. The Russian authority in the area, K. V. Tiazhelov, descended on the scene. He proceeded to ask Hori, according to Hori's account, about the possibility of using armed force to resolve the situation at hand. It was a proposition that Hori described as "so infuriatingly deplorable in the extreme that it cannot be tolerated."¹⁶⁶ A more detailed account of the incident dispatched to Tokyo later told a slightly different story: a Russian troop had approached Hori to ask him if he was carrying arms, to which Hori replied by asking why arms would be necessary, a response that the evidently struck the Russian side as puzzlingly naïve.¹⁶⁷ Fear gripped Hori. "The protection of the people of the land cannot be achieved," Hori wrote in his report, unless troops be dispatched to Karafuto.¹⁶⁸ He pleaded for military support.

The Hakkotomari Fire Incident, as Japanese officials called it in their official correspondence, had come at a tense moment in community relations around the southern Karafuto area, Hori explained in a postscript to his notice.¹⁶⁹ Just a day before the fire, some fifty to sixty Russian soldiers had stormed the store of a liquor salesman, seized alcohol, and run off, according to Japanese accounts. The number might be dubious, but it is telling of the level of

¹⁶⁵ *Nihon gaikō monjo*, v. 6, p. 341

¹⁶⁶ *Nihon gaikō monjo*, v. 6, p. 341.

¹⁶⁷ *Nihon gaikō monjo*, v. 6, pp. 349-50 (document 159)

¹⁶⁸ *Nihon gaikō monjo*, v. 6, p. 342

¹⁶⁹ *Nihon gaikō monjo*, v. 6, p. 343 These incidents are covered in Akizuki, *Nichiro kankei to Saharin tō*. Many of the details we have gleaned from the primary sources are the same, though apparently we have used different archives; there is significant overlap in the content, though not necessarily in the interpretative framework, of our work. The romanization of what appears as "Chiyajirofu" in the Japanese archives comes from his work.

alarm it triggered among the Japanese. When Japanese police pursued them, they were obstructed by other Russian troops. Around the same time, some seventy to eighty Russian troops—again, perhaps a dubious number—entered the official residence of Hori, wandered around, acted “disrespectfully” toward members of his family, and tore down a garden fence. They had not removed their shoes before storming the building, the report notes. Other mysterious conflagrations had been appearing and burning through the area. Fire had broken out at Kushunkotan one late night, past 12 o’clock. A similar incident then replayed itself in the middle of the month, but this time in a different part of town. A policeman had spotted a fire burning in a box where fishermen usually stored oil. He quelled the conflagration. It was late at night, though, so no one quite knew who had perpetrated the crime or how. But the report allowed Japanese national authorities to rest assured about the criminal: “It is clear that it was not someone from our country.”

Shoes had posed an ongoing problem, as later records revealed. The same day the shoed Russians stormed into Hori’s residence, the twenty-sixth day of the third month, a certain Omura Shinkichi had removed his shoes before entering his home, and a Russian soldier had come by and swiped them, “dishonoring Omura,” as the Japanese record explains.¹⁷⁰ Omura and some three or four of his neighbors ran after the Russian and caught him. But some thirty Russian troops then descended on the scene, and an altercation exploded. The Japanese, vastly outnumbered, could not put up a fight. They appealed to the Japanese police. The patrolmen entered into negotiations with a representative from the Russian troops, but he refused to investigate the issue or reprimand any soldiers. The Japanese were “left with no choice but” to refer the matter to Hori Motoi, who then appealed directly to Staff Captain Tiazhelov. Hori

¹⁷⁰ *Nihon gaikō monjo*, v. 6, p. 348

demanded to know what had caused the crisis. The Russian representative brushed him aside: “Everyone has fights. There is no point in looking into such entirely irrelevant, sundry talk and [trying to] decide the right and wrong of it.”¹⁷¹

Nothing in the panicked missives descending from Sakhalin to Tokyo at this moment went far beyond the sort of ordinary crime that would have arisen, or indeed did arise, in any Japanese town, or in any town in any place in the world. This was, after all, a fledgling nation that was being rocked at the exact same moment by far graver anti-government arson, vandalism, and murder across the south. Tiazhelov tried to impress upon his Japanese interlocutors the negligible nature of the violence. But Hori Motoi could not shake off the cumulative weight of the growing pile of grievances against the Russians. Tiny problems between neighbors mushroomed into national crises: A man swindles another man’s shoes. The perpetrator and the victim try to negotiate a solution. They fail. The police get involved. They fail. Government representatives get involved. They fail. Representatives report back to those whom they represent, calling for troops to be mobilized. And thus by the time the textual figment of the shoe thief rears his head in the foreign ministry and the Council of State in Tokyo, he is pushing two world empires to the brink of war. Such individual voices of disgruntlement came together in a cacophony, the sound of a community in crisis. An insulted family member, a trampled garden wall, a fire at the fishery—together, to Hori, they somehow added up to justification for troop mobilization.

Why? How do we account for the seeming mismatch between the urgent desperation of Hori in calling for troop mobilization and the nondescript pettiness of the crimes unfolding on Sakhalin?

¹⁷¹ *Nihon gaikō monjo*, v. 6, pp. 349-50

It is true, as Akizuki stresses, that the Hakkotomari Fire Incident sparked exceptional panic because the torched stockpile of wood had been a necessary resource for spring economic activity by Japanese settlers. And Japanese officials in Karafuto suspected that Tiazhelov himself had instigated the arson.¹⁷² In the context of the military build-up in Hakkotomari and Russian assertion of force, even shoe thieves appeared as men seeking to undermine Japanese sovereignty. As Takahiro Yamamoto explains in a pioneering study of violence in early Meiji Karafuto, the nationalizing projects of both Russia and Japan subsumed local incidents of disorder and sublimated them into security crises, transforming everyday disputes into geopolitical disputes over territorial sovereignty and indeed problems of state administration on a refractory frontier.¹⁷³

But in the actual text of the reports going from Karafuto to officials in Hokkaido and Tokyo, it is the problem of someone stealing Mr. Omura's shoes, not the geopolitical threat of the Russian imperial military gaining a foothold just off the coast of northern Hokkaido, that is emphasized as the primary problem besetting both Hori and the community in Karafuto. Much as Hirotsu could only understand the trade crisis on the Korean frontier as part of the problem of creepy critters crawling on him, so too did brash Russian aggression appear as personal, petty grievances. And in the absence of any established system for maintaining order on a quite literally lawless frontier, a military dispatch was needed to restore discipline, Hori insisted.

Japanese officials decided they needed to see for themselves what exactly was unfolding on the Karafuto frontier. And it appeared to them that things were not nearly so desperate as Hori Motoi thought they were. In July 1873, Kuroda Kiyotaka, later a Japanese prime minister but

¹⁷² Akizuki, *Nichiro kankei to Saharin tō*, p. 210.

¹⁷³ Takahiro Yamamoto, "Recording Violence as Crime in Karafuto, 1867–1875," *Japan Forum* 30:4 (2018), pp. 452–473.

then the Kagoshima man leading the Hokkaido Development Commission in Sapporo, dispatched Yasuda Sadanori to Karafuto to investigate the situation and to advise him specifically on the question of dispatching troops. Kuroda himself sent a brusque, rather miffed letter to Hori to impress upon him that his requests for troops would be rebuffed. “When I visited Karafuto in the fall [of 1870], I established a firm pledge [with you],” Kuroda wrote to Hori. “Because this is a land in which people from within and without live among one another (*zakkyo*), the first priority is to preserve respect and dignity, to put up an unwavering, indefatigable will (*kennin fubatsu no kokorozashi*), and to endure the unendurable even if indignities are heaped upon you from the other side.” Then he ripped into Hori. “In light of recent communications calling for a troop dispatch and expressing the opinion that it is no longer possible to endure these circumstances, I am concerned: have you not forgotten this pledge of recent years?”¹⁷⁴ Without orders from the government on how to deal with the strange Russians, Hori went scurrying back, calling for help. And Kuroda berated him, demanding that he abide by his own will and free himself from overreliance on his superiors.

Yasuda arrived on Sakhalin to check on Hori, and the two entered into negotiations with their Russian counterparts over the burgeoning crises. The Russian officials denied the allegations of arson at Hakkotomari, rebuffed Japanese attempts to convince them to extract a confession from their troops, and castigated the Japanese side for selling alcohol to Russian troops in defiance of a Russian prohibition. The Japanese side fired back, decrying the Russian shoe thief and insisting that it was these acts of petty pilfering that had sparked conflict in the first place. It was all rather ridiculous. Grown men, official representatives of two great

¹⁷⁴ *Nihon gaikō monjo*, v. 6, pp. 344-345 (document 156)

civilizations, in turn hurled and deflected accusations about who stole whose shoes. The transcript of the flippant conversation then traveled all the way through the representatives in Hokkaido and the Japanese foreign ministry in Tokyo and to the official Russian ambassador to Japan. Yasuda himself, lamenting the absence of any way to prove what had happened, described the diplomatic exchange as “profitless,” “naught but empty bickering.”¹⁷⁵

But as the two sides indulged further in such profitless talk, they sunk deeper into quagmire. The Russian side excoriated the Japanese for the “disrespect” and the “baseless” accusations they heaved their way. According to the records Yasuda submitted, the Russians broached the prospect of armed confrontation: “with the way you have been dealing with us,” they threatened, “[this situation] may even result in war.”¹⁷⁶

In the record of bellicose, empty bickering between the Russian and Japanese diplomats, there emerge details that do not appear in earlier communications between Hori and his Japanese supervisors, details that in their very triviality strike at the heart of the nature of the conflict on Karafuto. The Japanese complained to their interlocutors that Russian soldiers had forced a Japanese liquor salesman to sell them alcohol, even though the Russian government had banned alcohol among its soldiers. Russian soldiers, who were supposed to be indoors, were traversing the entire city intoxicated, causing problems, even entering the home of Hori and demanding food from members of his family—this, evidently, was the nature of the “disrespect” and “storming” that Hori had vaguely reported to the foreign ministry. And before burning down the fishing facility, the Russians had appealed several times to have it removed, having even made prior attempts to destroy it unilaterally before someone tried to burn it down. The ongoing

¹⁷⁵ *Nihon gaikō monjo*, v. 6, p. 352

¹⁷⁶ *Nihon gaikō monjo*, v. 6, p. 352

Russian frustration with the fishing settlement arose, Yasuda reported, not apparently from strategic considerations but from “its squalor and stench, which words could not describe.”

In the crimes being committed emerges evidence of men pushed past the brink of perseverance in the frigid destitution of Sakhalin. Through the records we might imagine the penury that the Russian soldiers and prisoners, far from home, endured. Impoverished, they resorted to crime against their Japanese neighbors to find some sort of material relief in a world of want. And we might imagine the terror of Hori Motoi, who hailed from the balmy climes of Satsuma, as his residence was overrun by the Russian soldiers. In an inhospitable climate, far from home, the fires and thefts and acts of violence by Russian soldiers rattled Hori so deeply that he could not live with himself unless he had Japanese soldiers by his side, protecting him and his family—and his nation. The strategic geopolitical considerations of lower-level bureaucrats stressed by Takahiro Yamamoto converged, it appears, with a sense of personal frustration.

The Japanese and Russian sides concluded their negotiations with a brief agreement. Both sides would strictly prohibit their men from entering into the homes of the people on the other side to demand food; in case conflict arose, especially over financial transactions, people should check with their superiors before resorting to wielding weapons; construction work would occur in the vicinity of existing structures only after careful negotiations by both sides; and because drunken actions that impeded on the liberty (*jiyū*) to engage in occupations (*shokugyō*) of both sides, they would be strictly controlled.

It was not as if more serious problems than shoe theft and small fires had not arisen. Two years earlier, a farmer had been murdered by a small gang of Russian soldiers and prisoners. The next year, Russians killed another three Japanese fishermen. Later in 1873, an Ainu woman was

raped and murdered by other men of other indigenous groups under Russian control.¹⁷⁷ No doubt far more rapes went unreported. And in early 1870, Russian settlers began to construct a jetty out into the bay off Hakkotomari as they developed their military encampment. Japanese government officials protested, claiming the jetty would obstruct the Japanese fishing industry there. During negotiations, Russian forces captured six Japanese foreign ministry officials and held them captive in a Russian bathhouse. They claimed that the Japanese forces had, in a drunken rage, drawn swords and sought to obstruct the jetty construction violently.¹⁷⁸

But inasmuch as a problem that dominated negotiations between Hori and his Russian counterpart that Yasuda witnessed was shoe theft and not transnational murder, the simple reality underlying the crisis in Sakhalin was that the Japanese and the Russians just could not get along. It was a problem that originated in politics and diplomacy in St. Petersburg and was then exacerbated by the military and the environment. But it was most fundamentally a question of building a means of living side by side when people of different nations suddenly had to get along on inhospitable terrain—both naturally and geopolitically. Did secondary differences of race, of nationality, of legal jurisdiction, and of language trump the shared fear, the shared hunger, the shared suffering of two peoples, flung together in a barren land against their will? Guido Verbeck and his students now leading the Japanese revolutionary nation believed firmly in the theoretical ontological interchangeability of Japanese and foreigners. But in Korea and Sakhalin, the few places in the Japanese nation where everyday Japanese interacted with everyday foreigners, the lived experience of difference impugned any such heady thoughts of sameness.

¹⁷⁷ Akizuki, *Nichiro kankei to Saharin tō*, pp. 216-218. Akizuki claims that the murder was a larger problem in discussions

¹⁷⁸ Akizuki, *Nichiro kankei to Saharin tō*, 209-210

On September 2, not long after Hori and Yasuda signed their non-cooperation pact with the Russians, and several months after the fire at Hakkotomari broke out, a call to arms ascended from Kuroda Kiyotaka to Sanjō Sanetomi.¹⁷⁹ After rebuffing Hori and telling him his call for military action would be rejected, now Kuroda was suddenly in favor of sending Japanese forces to Sakhalin.

The letter amounted to a fiery plea for war against Russia. Hori Motoi had long called for soldiers to protect his people, Kuroda explained, but he had been rejected on the basis that “the dispatch of troops would result in the outbreak of war and ultimately inflict great harm upon the country.” The people of Karafuto were forced, he said, “to endure the unendurable” (*shinobu bekarazaru o shinobu*). “We have dithered to the present on a matter of national security,” Kuroda continued. “But as circumstances now gain extreme urgency, we must not endure for a single more day.” At stake was the very purpose and meaning of government: “If we tarry and fail to make a decision, if are not fit for the task of opening the way for the protection of the people, then how is it that we fulfil our heavenly duties?” His verdict was clear: “The urgent task of our day is none other than to dispatch troops to suppress these violent actions [on Karafuto] and to win security for the people. My will is fixed on this.”

Kuroda anticipated that the conflict would not simply remain a localized struggle between embittered neighbors. He called for the imperial court to put its army and navy on alert and prepare them for future contingencies “because,” in his words, “[the dispatch of] forces will certainly break open a war.” He stressed the need for immediate reconnaissance missions to China, Korea, and Turkey; presumably here he refers to Inner Asia in general. He demanded the scoping out of a vast swath of land and sea from Kamchatka down to the Amur River. “No

¹⁷⁹ *Kuroda Kiyotaka kankei monjo*, microfilm (Tokyo: Hokusensha, 1993), R4-81-3. All subsequent quotations from the document come from this citation.

doubt,” he wrote, “the state of the world will presently be revolutionized (*hōkon udai no keisei kanarazu ippen suru tokoro ari*).” The nations of Europe, he explained, were suspicious of the strength of Russia and were seeking an opening to weaken it. And if anything were to happen in the West, Kuroda speculated, Russia would seek to turn the Japanese northern borderlands into a battlefield. Other nations would no doubt turn to Japan with expectations that the Japanese would help defeat Russian armies. For these exigencies, he said, Japan must be prepared. And on the day when war arrived, Kuroda pledged, he would be willing to take the helm of the army, for although he had scant military experience, but he had “an insurmountably extreme desire” to lay his life on the line in defense of his country.

Kuroda spent about half his letter trying to explain why he had suddenly changed his mind after long years of opposing not only war with Russia but the settlement of Sakhalin itself. Violence had broken out earlier in 1869, and representatives had taken the case to the central state, which had decided to send troops to Sakhalin. But Kuroda had blocked the plan then, insisting that because the foundation of the state lay in careful use of its finances and the trust it won from its people, to send troops was to violate this trust and undermine the government before its foundations were firm. Over the years, Kuroda continued to oppose repeated decisions from the central state to station troops in Sakhalin, insisting the state first needed to shore up its foundations. It could not afford to waste its valuable human and financial resources on a fleeting threat. In early 1871, Kuroda had even called for the abandonment of Karafuto altogether. The “best plan,” he insisted, was to “yield [Karafuto] to Russia and not to exert our energies on this worthless land.”¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ *Kuroda Kiyotaka kankei monjo*, microfilm, R4-81-1(5)

Earlier missives Kuroda had sent the central state indeed reveal at least a professed concern with state finances and the question of state responsibility, especially fiscal responsibility, to the general population, not geopolitical defense. “For what reason in the first place,” he sermonized in 1870, “did we bring about the return of imperial rule, did we establish the foundations of the Restoration, did soldiers suffer great adversities and brave the sword and exterminate the enemy? Was it not to rescue the people from the dregs of affliction and to establish the realm on the peaks of security?”¹⁸¹ It was not, but it was a convenient piece of historical misremembering. The revolution was incomplete, Kuroda insisted. For three years the state had temporized, with “no real results” coming of the change in government. “The people still have not escaped the afflictions of hunger and cold and homelessness. Nothing is different, even still, from the evil ways of the erstwhile bakufu. I do not know how it is that we can claim that this is a Restoration, how it is that we can claim that this is a Renovation.”

Kuroda laid the blame squarely on the shoulders of members of the state to which he himself belonged. “What I deplore,” he said, “is that given that the imperial court has lost the trust of the realm, the hearts of the people are distant and scattered, and so all that has been achieved is the toppling of the previous carriage,” he wrote, referring to the overthrow of the Tokugawa regime. No real government had come instead. He castigated a regime that had indulged in wasteful expenditure: he demanded the reduction of bureaucrat salaries and of taxes, lamenting that the calls for “renewal” (*kōkaku*) and “benevolence” descending from the central regime were but empty letters (*kyobun*).

Because fiscal irresponsibility had truncated the Meiji revolution, to abandon the Karafuto project would be both fiscally responsible and a necessary means of making Japan’s

¹⁸¹ *Kuroda Kiyotaka kankei monjo*, microfilm, R4-81-2

transformation complete. Kuroda called for the maintenance of mixed residence in Karafuto for only three years. Citing historical precedent, he opposed any prolongation thereafter. Western powers, he wrote to the central regime, had signed an agreement with Russia in 1856 for the sake of Turkey.¹⁸² But it was overturned not two decades later, in 1870 [*sic*; it was in fact in 1871] after France was defeated in the Franco-Prussian War. What benefit would there be, Kuroda asked, in a treaty establishing mixed residence, if it too could be overturned so soon? Japan should strive for cordiality and amity before resolving the Karafuto problem altogether by renouncing any claims to the land.

Now Kuroda mobilized the same line of reasoning to make the opposite point. Circumstances in the sixth month began to deteriorate to a state that Hori Motoi, as he explained in his missives, “could not endure.” “The situation has come so far that we can no longer use past precedent to judge it,” Kuroda insisted. “It is not right to sit by and watch the unlawful violence unfolding and the obstruction of work of the fishermen and hunters among our people.” He appealed to “the imperial court, they who are the fathers and mothers of the people” to do something, to “fulfil their heavenly duty” to defend their own children. In one important respect, Kuroda did not change his mind: he still believed that a troop dispatch would ignite a large-scale conflict. Now he was determined that it was worth it. In just a few short months, frustrations over the pilfering of a Japanese man’s shoes on a desolate, “worthless” frontier had escalated to talk of a cataclysmic war between two burgeoning empires.

It is of course hard to believe that Kuroda changed his mind because he really cared about state finances and their connection with the Sakhalin crisis. Kuroda biographer Iguro Yatarō, reflecting seemingly widespread historiographical consensus, argues that the change of heart

¹⁸² *Kuroda Kiyotaka kankei monjo*, microfilm, R4-81-3

over Karafuto was not a change of heart over Karafuto at all. It was an attempt by one Kagoshima man affiliated with the Ōkubo faction of the regime to divert his fellow Satsuma man Saigō's attention away from Korea by distracting him with the problems of Sakhalin. After Saigō's desires to lead the Hokkaido garrison had been shot down and Saigō turned his attention to waging war against Korea, Kuroda sought to deflect his focus, and his bellicosity, back north.¹⁸³

The response to Kuroda's demands for war against Russia came, indeed, from Saigō Takamori on September 2.¹⁸⁴ Saigō was effusive, so florid that scholars speculate that he had seen through the designs of Kuroda and was playing along in a game of deceit.¹⁸⁵ "To this point I have been the recipient of your kindness—how measureless it is!—and as I have been contemplating death, I will not only support you but also take the lead in fully discussing the matter. Rest assured." He gushed that the gravity of the Karafuto problem vastly outweighed that of the Korean problem, for here the enemy was Russia, not a mere Korea.

But then Saigō wrote again on September 11 dragging his feet.¹⁸⁶ "Yesterday, I passed your recommendation [for a troop dispatch to Sakhalin] around to Sanjō Sanetomi, but I did not gather what his opinion was." He claimed that he forwarded it to Gotō Shōjirō and Ōkuma Shigenobu, too, but they had only offered vague replies. He was forthright with Kuroda: it does not look as if we are at a point to send troops to Sakhalin, he said. And he explicitly wrote that he feared that his further pursuit of the Sakhalin question would distract from his impending dispatch to Korea, so he would wait.

¹⁸³ Ihuro, *Kuroda Kiyotaka* pp. 74-76

¹⁸⁴ *Saigō Takamori zenshū*, v. 3, p. 393 (document 111)

¹⁸⁵ The editors of *Saigō Takamori zenshū* make this note; see v. 3., pp. 394-395. See also Mōri, *Meiji rokunen seihen*, pp. 133-134.

¹⁸⁶ *Saigō Takamori zenshū*, v. 3, pp. 396-7 (document 113)

Other members of the regime, most notably Iwakura Tomomi, who had now returned from his mission abroad, continued to press on the Sakhalin problem to insist that Saigō should not go to Korea, that the real threat lay in Russia. Etō Shinpei countered Iwakura, arguing that the problems on Sakhalin, mere incidents of civil disorder, did not count as a real international dispute to which the state should pay attention: “Because the incidents on Karafuto are problems among civilians (*min to min no gi*), they should be handled through judgments based on negotiations; they are largely the same as the sort of incident involving a madman stabbing an Englishman at Shinbashi Station.” But the Korea affairs was different because Koreans were “barbarians” who would assassinate Saigō if dispatched there.¹⁸⁷ To civilize barbarians unable to accept a Japanese diplomatic mission would require military force.

On October 15, the Korea faction prevailed. The regime confirmed the decision made in August that Saigō would be dispatched to Korea as an emissary. But the decision did not hold.

Things fall apart

The story from here is at once well-known and obscure. Meiji officials did what they did best when things did not go their way: they quit. On October 17, Ōkubo Toshimichi resigned from the Meiji regime. Iwakura Tomomi followed. They then formed a “furtive scheme” (*hissaku*) to thwart Saigō: they won the support of the Meiji Emperor, who overruled the cabinet decision and decreed that the dispatch of Saigō to Korea be postponed.

Ōkubo famously delineated seven points against the Saigō expedition. He covered the same ground over which men had fought continually since the dissolution of domains. Indeed, his first point was that the future of the revolution was at stake: “the sovereignty [of the

¹⁸⁷ Mōri, *Meiji rokunen seihen*, pp. 177-179; quotation appears on p. 179. The full letter appears in *Iwakura Tomomi kankei monjo*, v. 5, pp. 341-344 (document 56).

Emperor] has been restored, and extraordinary achievements have been made to bring about today's prosperity," he celebrated, but he fretted that "foundations are not yet firmly laid. The sudden abolition of feudal fiefs and the establishment of prefectures are indeed a drastic change unusual in history."¹⁸⁸ The world was indeterminate, the nation-state not yet a real nation-state. "A look at the situation in the capital seems to indicate that the change has been accomplished. But in remote sections of the country there are not a few who have lost their homes and property and who are extremely bitter and restless because of this measure. ... Within the last two years, how many scenes of bloodshed have taken place unavoidably?" he asked, citing "riots" by "ignorant, uninformed people." With foundations of a new polity still wobbly, he argued, they could not start a war with Korea. It was the exact same problem Saigō acknowledged, and for which he arrived at the precise opposite conclusion. As men like Shimazu Hisamitsu and his underlings agitated against the central regime, would a war with Korea distract them and bring peace to Japan or would it make Japan tumble into further disorder?

Ōkubo then continued to rehearse the same problems over which Shimazu and Etō and Inoue and Shibusawa and Kuroda fought, merely offering different approaches. Government expenditures would balloon in the case of war, and the state could not afford to waste money. There were diplomatic problems: Russia was a great threat, as was England, and a war with Korea would leave Japan vulnerable to these threats. And of course, Ōkubo insisted that waging war "ignores the interest of our people" just as his enemies insisted that not waging war ignored the interests of the people.

Once the "furtive scheme" of Ōkubo succeeded in postponing the Korea emissary dispatch, Saigō retaliated by counter-resigning from the regime on October 22. Etō Shinpei,

¹⁸⁸ Using translation in *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, v. 2, part 2, pp. 20-24.

Itagaki Taisuke, Gotō Shōjirō, Soejima Taneomi, and over two hundred other government officials and soldiers followed him. But this time there was no going back. The government split, irrevocably.

Why then did the Meiji regime disintegrate in October 1873?

Debates over what happened and why erupted no sooner than the crisis ended. Writing a century later, in the 1970s, Mōri Toshihiko outlined what he saw as the major lines of disagreement in the historiographical field extending from the Meiji era. In one camp, proponents of what he called “Theory A” regarded Saigō and Ōkubo as representatives of contradictory political inclinations. Within Theory A, proponents of Theory A1a saw Saigō as feudal, conservative, militarist, and imperialist and Ōkubo as progressive, an advocate not of rule by arms but by culture, concerned more with domestic than foreign affairs. Proponents of Theory A1b saw the split over more popular concerns, with Saigō portrayed as anti-oligarchist proponent of civil rights and constitutionalism and Ōkubo as a proponent of oligarchist, anti-constitutionalist rule by bureaucrats. In Theory A2, Saigō appears as a feudal curmudgeon intent on sustaining rule by samurai militarism, whereas Ōkubo appears as a proponent of bureaucratic absolutism seeking to build a capitalist nation led by bureaucrats. Theory B rejected the notion of any real political or ideological divide between Saigō and Ōkubo, seeing their clash as a personal conflict and power struggle incited by the Korea crisis.¹⁸⁹ Mōri himself claimed, as we have seen, that the struggle was not over ideology or over Korea, but rather a factionalist fight over corruption incidents and attempts of various factions within the Meiji oligarchy to win power, with Korea merely acting as a realm on which to project domestic affairs.

¹⁸⁹ These views are outlined in Mōri, *Meiji rokunen seihen no kenkyū*, pp. 29-30 and described in detail on pp. 30-79.

The newest work in the field now takes the heresy of Mōri as orthodoxy, departing from the basic premise that 1873 had more to do with internal politics than foreign affairs or ideology, even if it does not accept Mōri's central argument about the pacificism of Saigō Takamori. In a signal new work published in 2016, for instance, Matsuzawa Yūsaku situates the crisis of 1873 more firmly within the broader sweep of the transition to modernity. The Tokugawa status system, he wrote, had mandated “bags” (*fukuro*) in which people associated and by which society was organized; he argues that the upheaval of Meiji 6 was a direct result of the “tearing” of these “bags.” But his explication of the causal mechanism here is surprisingly narrow. He claims that Saigō and Itagaki, both themselves heroes of the Boshin War, sought to mollify their subordinates by fomenting war with Korea and thereby redirecting popular violent energies toward a foreign target, not Japan itself. He claims, seemingly echoing Mōri, that samurai restiveness arose because those who had prevailed in the Boshin War and brought about the dissolution of domains in 1871 had won a Pyrrhic victory: triumph had removed their reason for being, and with their social “bag” rent asunder, and with the rebel army known as the Goshinpei absorbed into the state as the formal Konohehei, the army had no real reason for being and faced an existential crisis.¹⁹⁰ Waging war would resolve the existential crisis resulting from the civil war and its collapse of the status system.

Discussions on the upheaval of 1873 continue thus to turn on the deep contingencies of developments in Japanese history. It was the particular way in which the status system fell apart that created particular problems within the Japanese polity that sparked the crisis with Korea. That is true enough: it was, after all, the particularly decision-making of individual members of the Meiji regime that led either to invasion or not.

¹⁹⁰ Matsuzawa Yūsaku, *Jiyū minken undō*, pp. 30–32

But as David Howell has cogently shown, because the status system had been the means of maintaining the unity of and demarcating the boundaries of the Japanese polity, its dissolution was in and of itself a transnational problem: it was less the way in which the status system dissolved and a new centralized nation-system established than the very fact that it did that led to friction with Korea and to a diplomatic clash with Russia. The political, diplomatic, and social contingencies that rent the government apart followed the fundamental crisis of a conceptual transition into supranational justice.

We can try to resolve the puzzle of the schism of 1873, as historians have long tried to, by prying into the personalities of Saigō Takamori and Etō Shinpei, of Iwakura Tomomi and Ōkubo Toshimichi. We can try to understand why Saigō chose to walk out of the regime, whether he really want to invade Korea or not, whether he was a hidebound curmudgeon or a pioneering defender of the Revolution.

But men, even government statesmen, acted within parameters greater than their own selves. Within the nation, various factions of the Enlightenment and of the Counter-Enlightenment transformed their nation into a battleground of global ideas. As men fought over how to know and be in a new global age, men abroad became engulfed in the domestic competition over globality. Forced to confront the unprecedented crisis of knowing in a new global age, none agreed on what to do about it. The Meiji government could not rein in the transnational crisis of justice its revolution into globality engendered, and it fell apart.

Chapter Three

FREEDOM

The losing side of the Political Crisis of 1873 marched out of the government. And on January 17, 1874, its leaders signed and submitted the Proposal for the Establishment of a Popularly Elected Parliament (*Minsen giin setsuritsu kenpakusho*).¹⁹¹ The proposal appeared the following day in the *Nisshin shinjishi*, the same newspaper that published the resignation diatribe of Inoue Kaoru and Shibusawa Eiichi. A public-opinion controversy erupted. And thus was born what is conventionally known as the Movement for Freedom and Popular Rights (*Jiyū minken undō*), better translated as the Movement for Freedom and Civil Rights, at least a decade of anti-government agitation demanding a parliament and constitution in the state and freedom and rights for society and the individual.

The obsessiveness of the Civil Rights Movement with the idea of freedom was a result more than a cause of freedom in Japan: demands for liberty arose not from its dearth but from its glut. Men demanded to be free, to be freer, because suddenly they could be more freely than they could be before, could know more freely than they could know before. And that freedom arose from the revolution into globality.

The Civil Rights Movement had to agitate so splashily for freedom because it had formidable opponents, opponents whose strength came not only from their political or military power but from the cogency of their arguments. Not everyone wanted freedom. Not everyone thought the freedoms wrought by a global revolution were a positive historical development. Not everyone thought freedom was a good idea.

¹⁹¹ See the appendix of this dissertation for the full text of the proposal.

On February 11, 1889, the Meiji Emperor bestowed the Constitution of the Great Empire of Japan on his subjects in an “unprecedented ceremony” marking the 2549th birthday of the Empire of Japan. Proffered from the hands of Itō Hirobumi, mastermind of Japanese constitutional governance, the text of the constitution passed into the hands of the Meiji Emperor, who then vouchsafed it to Prime Minister Kuroda Kiyotaka, the man who in 1873 had first told Hori Motoi he was a wimp and then called for all-out war with Russia. Kuroda clutched the first national constitution in the history of the non-West, a symbol, according to one Western journalistic account, of how far these “Asiatic Yankees” had come in “adopting” a range of Western practices and institutions, not least “our freedom of education and thought.”¹⁹² The establishment of a national constitution and the inauguration of the parliament it ordained rendered moot the Movement for Freedom and Civil Rights.

We find here two milestones of Japanese democracy: the call for a parliament and popular elections in 1874 and the proclamation of the opening of the parliament in 1889. These two milestones lay beside two other milestones along the same road. It is easy, perhaps preferable, to ignore these alternative milestones, for they point to a path Japan seemingly did not end up taking—or did take, much later, with disastrous consequences. On the same road of global modernity lay indicators to a path not toward but precisely away from the liberalism envisioned in 1874.

Not all signatories of the 1889 constitution had made it to the unprecedented ceremony of February 11. Mori Arinori, the minister of education, had been stabbed that same morning. A certain Nishino Buntarō had arrived at the Mori residence the morning of February 11 and managed to persuade the guards to let him into the house. Mori descended the stairs of his house

¹⁹² Gluck, *Japan’s Modern Myths*, pp. 42 – 44

to board a vehicle that would whisk him away to the birth of constitutional Japan. Nishino lunged at Mori. By the morning of February 12, Mori was dead from his wounds.¹⁹³

The assassin, killed immediately by Mori's bodyguard, was carrying his motives with him. On his corpse was found a document that declared, "Education Minister Mori Arinori while visiting the shrine [of Ise in December 1887] mounted the steps of the sanctuary without removing his shoes, in defiance of the Imperial prohibition; lifted the sacred veil with his walking stick to peer inside; and retired without performing the customary obeisance."¹⁹⁴ If the constitution represented the unprecedented successes of "Asiatic Yankees" in adopting Western ideals of freedom of thought and education, then the assassination of Mori represented those who militated against the excesses of that turn away from the past, men who sought to create a sacred national essence that no politician or newfangled political system could profane. The constitution represented a break from history, a realignment with Western powers and their political systems, a constitution, in multiple senses, of a new Japanese individual; the assassination of Mori decried the excesses of that break, the hideousness of the West, the tawdriness of personal autonomy. In their contradiction, together they affirmed the reality of that break, that Japan had turned into a battleground of global ideas.

Just as the founding of the constitutional state hearkened back to a milestone in January 1874, so does the assassination of Mori Arinori inadvertently recall the agitation of that same month. To open 1874, angry samurai who had defected from the regime in late 1873 set fire to the Institute for Great Teachings (*Daikyōin*) at the Zōjōji, a major temple in Tokyo. They then proceeded in the following week to try to torch another major temple, the Sensōji, in Asakusa. The plan was to use arson to destabilize Tokyo and then lead a massacre of state officials. Their

¹⁹³ Ivan Parker Hall, *Mori Arinori* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 3–4.

¹⁹⁴ Hall, *Mori Arinori*, p. 5.

targets were sites that represented to them the Meiji regime's abandonment of the project of thwarting Christianity and of instilling a Japanese national myth in all its subjects—sites that represented the garish freedom and permissiveness of a new age.

If the parliamentary proposal initiated over a decade of fierce democratic agitation, an attempt to adopt Western institutions premised on liberalist notions of the freedom and self-determination of the individual, the torching of Tokyo opened a decade of fierce anti-enlightenment agitation that sought to curtail the excesses of the autonomy and individualism enabled by a new age. These were not unrelated or coincidental processes. Neither can be understood in isolation from the other. Just as democracy and fascism existed in intimate relationship with one another in the middle of the twentieth century, just as capitalist liberalist modernity could never extricate itself from the forces it engendered that militated against it, so too did enlightenment and counter-enlightenment exist in a symbiotic relationship. Each was a reaction to the other, but even more so, both reacted to the common upheavals of building justice in a global world.

Strategies to weather the forces of freedom differed: some turned to the public sphere, others to violence; some wanted to rely more on Western theory, others found Western theory utterly abhorrent. And none fit neatly within these binaries: everyone existed somewhere along a spectrum, and indeed sometimes the same individual changed his mind. In all cases, as the crises of January 1874 reveal, men grappled with the problem of whether the construction of autonomously knowing and thinking Japanese men was in fact a desirable aim and whether to rely so heavily on other people's ideas, especially Christian ideas, to build a new Japan.

Torching Tokyo

When 1874 began, exactly one year had elapsed since the dawn of Gregorian Japan, a year since Shimazu Hisamitsu wrote his mordant poems bemoaning a new year without newness. It had been a tumultuous year. Not three months had passed since the schism of the Meiji regime. And now buildings in Tokyo were going up in flames.

Fire had broken out at the Zōjōji. Today the structure stands as a quiet oasis of quaintly preserved tradition sitting incongruously in the shadow of the iconic Tokyo Tower. Then it was the headquarters of the Institute for the Great Teachings, founded by the Meiji regime in January 1873. The Institute was barely a year old.

The fire erupted in the main assembly hall and then spread quickly across the shrine, setting the bell tower, too, aflame. Within about two hours, the conflagration was suppressed, but not without those structures, as well as all the files and records of the shrine, burning completely to the ground.¹⁹⁵ At first suspicion fell on young trainees of the sacerdotal order lodging there. Perhaps they had set the fire purposely. But soon it was discovered that they in fact had made supposedly heroic efforts to rescue shrine treasures from the flames. It was not they who had started the fire. Within a month, they had been exonerated by the Ministry of Justice.¹⁹⁶

What, then, had happened? By August 1874, the police had found the culprits. Miyazaki Misaki and Sen'ya Takagō 孝郷 of Kōchi as well as Toda Kushirō 九思郎 of Niigata were rounded up on suspicion of arson.¹⁹⁷ The fire was no accident, nor was it a one-time conflagration of emotion. It was the start of a larger plan. The arsonists planned next to torch the

¹⁹⁵ Ogawara Masamichi, *Daikyōin no kenkyū: Meiji shoki shūkyō gyōsei no tenkai to zasetsu* (Tokyo: Keiō gijuku daigaku shuppankai, 2004), pp. 182–3. Ogawara quotes extensively, and with striking accuracy, from primary sources scattered across archives in the National Diet Library to lay out the narrative of how and why the fire erupted. A description of this incident based on similar sources also appears in Danny Orbach, *Curse on this Country: The Rebellious Army of Imperial Japan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017), ch. 4. Sen'ya Takagō appears as Sen'ya Kiyosato in Orbach's work; there is no clear correct reading of the name.

¹⁹⁶ Ogawara, *Daikyōin no kenkyū*, pp. 185–6.

¹⁹⁷ Ogawara, *Daikyōin no kenkyū*, p. 188.

Sensōji at Asakusa. As Tokyo burned, they predicted, the government would destabilize, and they would ride the growing flames to massacre government councilors and ministers of the state.¹⁹⁸ A week later, on January 8, Toda joined Miyazaki and Sen'ya and tried to set Asakusa alight, but somehow they failed. They had planned next to torch the Akasaka area, where the temporary imperial palace was located after the original palace had gone up in smoke and so many “pretty things” were lost the year before. That plan never materialized.

News of the fate of the three arsonists was published in *Yūbin hōchi shinbun* on September 16, 1874.¹⁹⁹ Recent studies in the history of the Movement for Freedom and Civil Rights, in English most notably that of Kyu Hyun Kim, have stressed the significance of new media, especially the newspaper, in establishing a political culture of popular participation and protest; it was the publicness of the Proposal for the Establishment of a Popularly Elected Assembly, Kim stresses, that marked the origins of a sphere through which popular political participation could occur. But if some men agitated for freedom through the public sphere, some could use it to revile that very freedom. The public sphere was not inherently linked to the idea of freedom or rights. By committing small, isolated, but sensational crimes, men could now count on the media to report on their acts, to disseminate fear and terror, and thereby to broadcast whatever ideology they sought to propagate across the nation. For Japan, it was the dawn of the age of modern terrorism.

The police report in *Yūchi hōchi shinbun* announced the facts of the arrest of Miyazaki, Sen'ya and Toda and their crimes. And in presenting their arrest to a public, the paper indeed

¹⁹⁸ This according to Fukushima Nariyuki, *Seikanron yobun akasaka kuichigai no jihen* (Tokyo: Maeda bajōta, 1927), p. 58; see also Ogawara, “Seikanron seihengo no seifu tenpuku keikaki,” *Musashino gakuin daigaku kenkyū kiyō* 3 (2006), p. 92.

¹⁹⁹ For a facsimile of the original, see Yūbin hōchi shinbun kankōkai, ed., *Yūbin hōchi shinbun* (Tokyo: Kashiwa shobō, 1989-1993), v. 4, p. 145. See also Ogawara Masamichi, “Seikanron seihengo no seifu tenpuku keikaku,” *Musashino gakuin daigaku kenkyū kiyō* 3 (2006), pp. 92 – 93, footnotes 22, 26.

broadcasted for them, to an audience far larger than they themselves could have conceived, the reasons they professed for their terrorism. “I have carefully observed the situation of our nation (*kokutai*),” Miyazaki said.

Christianity is the single greatest scourge in our nation. Even though the evil cult was banned nationally, recently it has begun spreading and flourishing. It was for the purpose of curtailing such evil cults that the Kaitō kyōin [the Institute] was established, but in fact [all that resulted was] the commingling of Shintō and Buddhism (*shinbutsu konkō*). The moral suasion (*kyōka*) [of the people] to respect the gods and love their country (*keishin aikoku*) did not occur.

Miyazaki lamented that the site the Meiji regime had selected for the Institute of the Great Teachings, the Zōjōji, was the temple at which the ancestors, or *Bodhi*, of the Tokugawa household were enshrined. The Meiji regime “had gainsaid the very purpose of venerating the gods and loving the nation and defiled the dignity of the gods” by placing a supposedly Shinto stronghold in a Buddhist site. Before long, he insisted, the institution would “be overcome by the evil teachings,” the epithet for Christianity. In such circumstances, he declared, “in fact, the best situation is for the aforementioned Daikyōin not to exist.”

The arsonists were not wrong about the rising tide of Christianity across the nation, which was but one example, perhaps the most glaring example, of the ever-broader freedoms allowed by the Meiji regime. And as they implied, the rise of Christianity represented the swift dismantling of the determination of individual thought that had formed the bedrock, at least theoretically, of the Japanese past. Horrified by the new freedoms enabled by the Meiji regime as

it retreated from a world in which the state decided on behalf of its people what they should or should not believe, the terrorists of January 1874 lashed out, seeking to recover the imagined stability of a national essence that never really was, desperate to find of community of pure national selves before the evil teachings of foreign others overtook the nation.

In February 1873, less than a year before the torching of Zōjōji and in the midst of the burgeoning crises in Korea and Karafuto, the caretaker regime legalized Christianity in Japan, revoking a ban that had stood since the early 1610s. It was a sharp change in policy. In the very first edict it issued, the Meiji regime had reaffirmed the Tokugawa ban on Christianity. It had set up five signposts (*takafuda*) proclaiming the interdiction on Christianity. Five years later it lifted those signposts.

Spurred by an imagined “crisis of conversion” to Christianity, as Trent Maxey has described it, the Meiji regime had meandered and hedged its way through a desultory process of assembling religious policy from 1868 to 1873. Maxey argues that the encouragement of freedom of belief by the Meiji regime starting from around 1872 resulted from the disastrous failure of earlier policies. The premise behind initial Meiji policy was to defeat Christianity by doing what Christianity itself did: to fold the masses into a common ideology that we now describe as “Shinto,” at whose helm was the Emperor himself.²⁰⁰ Here was the policy of *saisei itchi*, the unity of rites and rule. It was none other than Etō Shinpei, Maxey claims, who saw the problem with this policy and proposed its revision: if the state presented the Emperor and his quasi-religious myth as merely one among a multiplicity of possible belief systems, it faced the challenge of continually militating against other belief systems in order to sustain ascendancy over the realm. Etō foreboded a future in which “various doctrines will view each other with

²⁰⁰ Trent E. Maxey, *The “Greatest Problem”: Religion and State Formation in Meiji Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2014), ch. 1, esp. pp. 19 – 20.

enmity and seek to sway the hearts of the people, thus leading to upheaval.” And if people, swayed by Christianity, failed to buy into the myth of the Japanese gods, then the Emperor himself would lose legitimacy. Etō proposed, therefore, to place the Emperor above this realm of personal belief, producing a national myth that transcended what we understand today as “religion.” People could be free to be “swayed” by whatever idea they wanted in a way that would not undermine the Emperor’s unity of rites and rules: rites had to be separated, then, from the competition of doctrine. The freedom of individual belief, then, became part of the means of counteracting the destabilizing forces of a global competition of ideas playing out in Japan. Individuals could partake in the competition of knowing freely, as long as the power of the government was not undermined: that power was enshrined in an imperial system held above the realm of private conscience.

It was according to the policy of the unity of rites and rule that the Institute for Great Teachings, and the broader Great Promulgation Campaign of which it was a part, was inaugurated.²⁰¹ Emerging largely from the crisis of the Urakami Christians, in which the Meiji regime faced and tried to crush recalcitrant Christians in Kyushu who refused to recant their Christian faith, the Great Promulgation Campaign committed to waging ideological war against Christianity by inventing a Japanese national myth that would crowd Christianity out. As Ogawara Masamichi, author of the authoritative study of the Great Teachings Institute, explains, the Institute indeed emerged from the intent of the Meiji regime in late 1871 to counteract what it called the “incitement of the hearts of the masses of people by those who teach the theory of

²⁰¹ Maxey, *The “Greatest Problem,”* pp. 32–47. See also James Edward Ketelaar, *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan: Buddhism and its Persecution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990, ch. 3, esp. 122–130. For a brief overview of the Daikyōin in English, see also Helen Hardacre, *Shintō and the State, 1868–1988* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 42–48; Helen Hardacre, “Creating State Shinto: The Great Promulgation Campaign and the New Religions,” *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 12:1 (1986), pp. 29–63.

republican government, denigrate the national essence (*kokutai*), and proclaim the New Teachings.”²⁰² To stymie the influence of foreign ideas and practices, in 1872, the regime announced an official ideology known as the Three-Point Doctrine and called for Buddhist priests to join in the task of rebuffing foreign ideas. The doctrine sought to fold individuals into the ideology of the state, calling on them to incarnate the essential principle of venerating the gods and loving the nation; to make clear, in their lives, one presumes, the heavenly principles of morality; and to offer obeisance to the Emperor and strict conformity to the will of the imperial court.²⁰³ The Great Promulgation Campaign thus encouraged ecclesiasts associated with a variety of doctrinal bents to partake in building the national myth of the Emperor, which was supposed to transcend the divisions of doctrinal thought.

Even though the Institute for Great Teachings was thus conceived as a training ground for the joint promulgation of Buddhism and Shinto, it was inaugurated in January 1873 as an institution to train proselytizers for Shinto after the plan was overtaken by state leaders opposed to the association of Buddhism with Shinto. The institution was then moved to the site of the Zōjōji in February 1873 in what James Ketelaar describes as “a true ideological coup de grace,” an attempt to deface Buddhism, and its ideological undergirding of the Tokugawa regime, by situating a Shinto stronghold within an erstwhile Buddhist bastion.²⁰⁴ But that is not how the arsonists saw it: the testimony of Miyazaki suggests that they saw the Shinto institution in a Buddhist site as an attempt to amalgamate the two, a tarnishing of the sanctity of the national teachings as the Meiji regime turned away from its early commitment to enforcing a single religious doctrine on everyone. And this amalgamation of Shinto and Buddhism not only

²⁰² Ogawara Masamichi, *Daikyōin no kenkyū*, p. 3.

²⁰³ See also Ketelaar, *Of Heretics and Martyrs*, p. 106.

²⁰⁴ Ketelaar, *Of Heretics and Martyrs*, p. 122,

“defiled” the purity of Japanese indigeneity but also prevented a rigorous attack on Christianity. If the state was willing to accommodate such a variety of ideas, permitting the supposedly foreign ideas of Buddhism to commingle with supposedly indigenous ideas and even allowing the teachings of Jesus to spread, it was better that Tokyo go up in flames.

Others, too, decried the amalgamation of Shintō and Buddhism and inveighed against the Institute for its avowed small-c catholicity and the possible consequent large-c Catholicism—but for precisely the opposite reason, as Ogawara astutely discerns.²⁰⁵ The torching of the Institute came in the wake of different a separation movement led by famed Pure-Land Buddhist scholar Shimaji Mokurai. In a well-studied text in 1872 he wrote while in Paris, Shimaji decried the inauguration of the Three-Point Doctrine, calling for a separation of government and religious faith.²⁰⁶ He maligned Shinto as a barbaric, benighted quasi-religion that vitiated Buddhism. His approach, as Ketelaar has stressed, involved a rigorous comparison between Japanese belief systems and monotheistic faiths he viewed in the West, and he deemed Japanese folk belief unenlightened. But he did not therefore call for the rise of Christianity instead. He believed that withdrawing state sponsorship of Shinto, dissolving the national trans-denominational campaign to indoctrinate the masses, and relegating the question of religious faith to the realm of individual conscience would help to thwart Christianity, an agenda that led him to his rhetorical attacks on the Institute of Great Teachings itself. His methods and reasons were different, but his intent was the same as that of the New Year terrorists: to thwart Christianity by finding a better alternative.

It was the realization that it was too late, that things had already come too far, that spurred such desperation to go about torching Tokyo in search of an alternative to the Christian globalism overtaking Japan. Ogawara argues that the motivations of the arsonists stemmed not

²⁰⁵ Ogawara, “Seikanron seihengo no seifu tenpuku keikaku,” pp. 198 – 199

²⁰⁶ See Ketelaar, pp. 126-129; Ogawara, *Daikyōin no kenkyū*, pp. 153-155.

only from religious fervor but on political grievances with the Meiji regime. We can build further on his important insights. The fights unfolding in January 1874 emerged not just from religious or political grievances but from more fundamental crisis in establishing the extent to which the individual should be allowed to think, know, and be for himself, free from the control of external forces. It was against these freedoms that Miyazaki and his band agitated.

Christian freedom

Would freedom enable Christianity? To some, the question was the wrong way around. It was Christianity that enabled freedom.

“This is so true that ~~for myself~~ I myself am become more sincere worshiper of God than when I was there [*sic*],” Furusawa Urō wrote in 1874 to Hachisuka Mochiaki, erstwhile lord of Tokushima and future governor of Tokyo.²⁰⁷ He edited heavily, seemingly aware of the clumsiness of his English, unable to fix it fully. He did not sign the letter as Furusawa Urō.²⁰⁸ He was “Arthur Uuro Furusawa,” even to his Japanese counterpart. Furusawa described his spiritual evolution since his time at the University of Oxford from 1870 to November 1873, first as a

²⁰⁷ Modern Japanese Political History Materials Room of National Diet Library, *Furusawa Urō kankei monjo*, 36 D-4, 5. A transcription of the handwritten letters as well as commentary and analysis appear in Yamashita, “Furusawa Urō to shoki jiyū minken undō (ue),” pp. 90–92. There are inaccuracies in Yamashita’s transcription. See Yamashita Shigekazu, “Furusawa Urō to shoki jiyū minken undō (ue),” *Kokugakuin hōgaku* 13:3 (1975), pp. 83-106, and Yamashita Shigekazu, “Furusawa Urō to shoki jiyū minken undō (shita),” *Kokugakuin hōgaku* 13:4 (1976), pp. 121-157. These letters are also the object of analysis of Andrew Fraser, “Early Meiji Liberalism as Seen in Draft Letters of Furusawa Shigeru (1847-1911) to Hachisuka Mochiaki and Others, around August 1874,” *Papers on Far Eastern History* 9, pp. 15–34.

²⁰⁸ I was first tipped off to the significance of Furusawa Urō by footnote 5 of chapter 3 of Kyu Hyun Kim, *The Age of Visions and Arguments*, p. 104, which refers to the Fraser work. Kim succinctly and elegantly summarizes the parliamentary debates on pp. 101–119.

student dispatched by the Ministry of the Treasury and then, after his official funding ran out, as an independent student.²⁰⁹ Hachisuka was there himself now.

Furusawa wrote of the goings-on among the Meiji elites with whom he hobnobbed after they defected from the Meiji regime. “All our party friends are quite quite well (Mr. Soyeshima’s vice-wife died suddenly last month and Mr. Itagaki vice-wife [*sic*] is suffering from consumption only these excepted),” he explained, referring to the spouses of Soejima Taneomi, former foreign minister, and Itagaki Taisuke. As for Hachisuka’s own wife, who was now living with “Mrs. Komuro,” the wife of his friend Komuro Shinobu, Furusawa reported to Hachisuka: “they keep Sundays as strictly as they did in England, they work on week days but rest the whole day on Sundays + let their servants have their holidays.” That is all he had to say about Mrs. Hachisuka. Evidently that is all that mattered. The question of Sundays remained a controversial and persistent flashpoint in the first decade of the Meiji era, a symbol of the Christianization of Japan

The historical record on Furusawa Urō exists in fragments: the end of one letter, the beginning of another, the rest lost somewhere in time. And these morsels of evidence were discovered only relatively recently. Furusawa’s papers were donated to the National Diet Library in 1972, leading to a temporary uptick in interest in his writings.²¹⁰ But analysis of his writings has been dropped since then, and he remains shrouded in obscurity.

Even if sources on his person and his life remain limited, there is little doubt of the depth of the Christian devotion of Arthur Furusawa. Historians suspect he had been baptized in Britain.²¹¹

²⁰⁹ Yamashita, “Furusawa Urō to shoki jiyū minken undō (ue),” p. 89

²¹⁰ Yamashita, “Furusawa Urō to shoki jiyū minken undō (ue),” P. 84

²¹¹ Fraser, “Early Meiji Liberalism,” p. 22

And it was not only Christianity that Furusawa learned at Oxford. “P.S.,” he wrote to Hachisuka. “I ~~congratulate you~~ must not forget to say that I was very glad to upon your success in [*sic*] hear that you had removed to Oxford where no doubt you may be able to become acquainted with the members of higher society.” Evidently Oxford had inculcated in Furusawa a stereotypically posh snootiness, an attitude that manifested itself in his insistence on writing in English even to his Japanese brothers, in his adoption of the name “Arthur” even in those communications, and in his interest in schmoozing with “members of higher society” not only at home in Japan but in Britain, a land of “aristocratical haughtiness.” And there was something more dangerous at play than just off-putting snobbery. He continued to Hachisuka: “I hope you while ~~adopting~~ learning the liberal doctrines of England even to republicanism [*sic*], will not be altogether inattentive to learn what I ~~was fond~~ was in the habit of calling the aristocratical haughtiness.” It was one of the few ideas that seemingly no one in the helter-skelter of the early Meiji period endorsed, the one idea that seemingly everyone feared and condemned. But the freedom of thought Furusawa was afforded in Britain, away from the power of the imperial ideology, allowed him to entertain the wonders of “republicanism.” We might scoff at all those, from Shimazu Hisamitsu down, who wrote frequently and desperately about the prospect of Japan becoming “ensnared,” as they often said, in the “evils” of “republicanism.” But their fears, it appears, were legitimate. They lay in the person of Arthur Furusawa and the “liberal doctrines” he learned amid the “aristocratical haughtiness” of Oxford.

Furusawa was in his twenties, but he was not merely one among the countless youth adrift in the 1870s. He was the author, in English, of the Petition for the Establishment of a Popularly Elected Parliament, the original manifesto of the Movement for Freedom and Civil Rights. It was Furusawa who launched the movement that ended, in 1889, with what he

anticipated would be the “first instance in history of Asia” of men adopting a national constitution. The document was signed, with some editing, by Itagaki Taisuke, Gotō Shōjirō, Etō Shinpei, Soejima Taneomi, and other leaders of the movement.

In another undated letter, but one clearly from around 1874, after the publication of the petition, Furusawa wrote to someone, seemingly at Oxford, of his advocacy in Japan of what he described in English as liberalism. “I returned to Japan [in November 1873] ~~in the~~ hoping that we might do some good to the empire, but we found that all our friends who have any inclination towards liberalism [*sic*] had just resigned from their offices + all state affairs in confusion,” he wrote, referring to the schism of 1873 and to his friends “Soyeshima” and Itagaki.²¹²

We therefore necessarily put ourselves on the side of opposition to the present government. & so far as political controversies can possibly be carried out by the force of arguments, we have, we flatter ourselves, fought our enemy[? *handwriting unclear*] so convincingly[? *unclear*] that the word ‘parliament’ ~~in its full sense~~, which was never heard of in its full sense, has now all but [been] recognized by the public at large as the only means that can bind together, as it were, a nation from the highest to the lowest as one people, uniting their strengths in common.

Even if we take into account what Furusawa himself acknowledges as self-congratulation in taking credit for the parliamentary movement, the particular way in which he depicts the parliamentary struggle is telling. To him, the parliament was a means of “fighting” through a

²¹² *Furusawa Urō kankei monjo*, 36 D-4, D-5; a transcription of the handwritten letters as well as commentary and analysis appear on pages 90 – 92 of Yamashita, “Furusawa Urō to shoki jiyū minken undō (ue).” There are inaccuracies and errors in Yamashita’s transcription.

political controversy among patronizing elites. And that fight involved mobilizing a “public” in favor of one faction or another. The parliament, then, was a political tool to rally the public behind a political faction, and in this fight, the people would become united.

But if the fight was a petty political one, it was simultaneously a transcendently spiritual one. In the same letter to his Oxford tutor, Furusawa waxed hopeful about the inauguration of a constitutional system: “We now have a very fair ~~hope~~ prospect before us, that ~~we~~ it will not be before long when we shall have what is called the constitution of the 19th century copied from yours, putting the first instance in the history of Asia, of peoples’ ~~getting~~ emancipating themselves from the ~~bondage~~ degrading state of absolute subjection to [~~unclear~~] despotism so characteristic from Constantinople eastward to Behring Strait [*sic*].” It was by copying the British constitution and establishing a parliament that Japan, on behalf of all Orientals, could be released from their bondage, or “~~bondage~~.”

And it was by Christianizing. “Perhaps you will think it rather strange,” he wrote to his Oxford interlocutor, as he did to Hachisuka, “when I say that my ~~conviction of~~ belief in Christianity has ~~been becoming~~ become more strong since I came back than when I was ~~in~~ among Christians,” he wrote. The evidence of the truth and growing ascendancy of Christianity lay in the rise of the national parliament, in the birth of notions of liberty in Japan. The emancipation from bondage of the Japanese people revealed the liberating power that Christianity, by presumably some mystical and providential force, had unleashed in the Orient. “To say nothing of the future state, I think we can see the Christian salvation even at the present,” he wrote.

I remember Lord Halifax said something in this form that he would rather not think it worth while to live in a county where there is no liberty, but if wish to make our lives worth living, we can only do so by the means of Christianity for saying ‘Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty’ in as much as there is no other nation but Christians on the whole surface of the earth that enjoys in any measure the blessing of liberty; for it is Christianity ~~alone~~ both that any ideas like liberty can be ever put into people’s minds, and that when a nation then have their liberty, it can be maintained ~~by Christianity~~ effectually against any invasions from its oppressors. So Christianity sows the seeds of liberty; and ~~guards~~ [sic] protects it by knitting people together in a social bond.

To Furusawa, drawing from the influence of his British friends, life was only worthwhile if it was lived with liberty. Liberty made life. And it was Christianity that made liberty. No nation in the world could possibly enjoy liberty unless it be Christian. And people could not associate with one another bearing true social bonds without liberty, without Christianity.

It was Furusawa who wrote the proposal for a popularly elected parliament and thereby launched the Movement for Freedom and Civil Rights. He did so at precisely the same moment that his fellow Tosa men were torching Tokyo in the hopes of rescuing their nation from the evils of Christianity, which robbed Japan of its very soul.

Humans as steam engines

On January 17, eight men signed the Proposal for a Popularly Elected Parliament drafted by Furusawa Urō and submitted it to the Ministry of the Left. Besides Furusawa, the signatories were Soejima Taneomi, the former foreign minister; Gotō Shōjirō; Itagaki Taisuke; Etō Shinpei;

Yuri Kimimasa; Komura Nobuo; and Okamoto Kensaburō. The following day, the petition appeared in the *Nisshin shinjishi*. And vigorous debate erupted in the public sphere over the question of parliamentarianism.

The medium itself was significant. The early Meiji era was an “era of petitions,” in the phrasing of Makihara Norio, pioneer of the study of *kenpakusho*, as they are known in Japanese.²¹³ Heralding in the 1868 Proclamation for the Restoration of Imperial Rule the opening of “avenues of speech” as a means of “sluicing away the baleful customs of the past,” the nascent Meiji revolutionary regime, Makihara explains, managed to set up within three months of its inauguration a system of petitions wherein all people, regardless of their status affiliation, were encouraged to “set forth recommendations without reservation.” The petitions became both a symbol of and an instrument for the establishment of public debate (*kōgi*), which constituted, according to Makihara, a decisive blow against the Tokugawa status system, wherein only samurai were permitted to engage in political affairs. Now everyone could air his grievances to the government. Everyone could tell the government what it should or should not do.²¹⁴ It was, to Makihara, a “surprisingly early” measure to destroy the status system and open a sphere of public political participation. And it was premised on the belief that the individual could know better than the government what was best for the nation.

People wrote, and they wrote about everything. They panicked about eating meat and cutting their hair and wearing western clothes. They grumbled about the new calendar. They asked about marriage. They inveighed against Christianity. They worried about Saigō Takamori and the crisis in Korea.²¹⁵ And although the petition system had been inaugurated as early as

²¹³ Makihara Norio, *Meiji shichi-nen no dai ronsō: Kenpakusho kara mita kindai kokka to minshū* (Tokyo: Nihon keizai hyōronsha, 1990), p. 1.

²¹⁴ Makihara, *Meiji shichi-nen no dai ronsō*, pp. 1-2.

²¹⁵ Makihara, *Meiji shichi-nen no dai ronsō*, p. 4.

1868, 1874 marked, in Makihara's reading, "year one" in the mass public explosion of these debates, which would engulf the Meiji regime.²¹⁶ The petitions reveal, he contends, the convulsions of the Japanese transition from a decentralized feudal system to a modern nation-state.²¹⁷

Along these lines, Matsuzawa Yūsaku, author of the most recent and significant work on the Movement for Freedom and Civil Rights, rightly reads the parliamentary petition that Furusawa Urō wrote as an attempt to find order and structure in a "post-status society."²¹⁸ Matsuzawa distills the proposal and the debates around it to two main problems.²¹⁹ The first lay in the agents of parliamentarianism: the public sphere fought over whether Meiji leaders who had been a comfortable part of the authoritarian establishment just three months ago were qualified now to criticize the corruption and authoritarianism of that regime. The second problem lay in timing. Although all agreed that the Japanese masses remained benighted, the question was whether a parliament was needed to bring about the enlightenment of the masses or whether the masses had to be enlightened before a parliament could be inaugurated.

But these questions were merely the practical problems men debated. Through them they fought over a deeper problem. The construction of a new enlightened Japanese society after the collapse of the status system involved the construction of new individuals within that society who would participate in a parliamentary system. And inasmuch as the parliamentary system, and the ideas of the civilization and enlightenment of the individual that undergirded it, were global ideas, and indeed inasmuch as the construction of post-status Japanese society was itself a contest among various global and indigenous ideas, the fundamental problem in the

²¹⁶ Makihara, *Meiji shichi-nen no dai ronsō*, p. 6.

²¹⁷ Makihara, *Meiji shichi-nen no dai ronsō*, pp. 6-12.

²¹⁸ Matsuzawa Yūsaku, *Jiyū minken undō*, p. 47

²¹⁹ Matsuzawa Yūsaku, *Jiyū minken undō*, pp. 42-43.

parliamentary proposal was in fact not really about the parliament at all. It was about how to know how the Japanese individual, state, and society should be placed in proper relationship in a global world. The problem was not just who should establish a parliament and when. It was how anyone could possibly know in the first place. The argument over agency and timing was an argument, more fundamentally, over how to know Japan through global ideas.

No doubt, a parliament was what Furusawa and his petitioners concretely proposed. Warning that increasingly precarious circumstances in the realm threatened “the collapse of the nation-state,” they argued, “we have found that the only path to salvaging this situation lies in extending the public debate (*kōgi*) in the empire, and the only way to develop public debate in the empire is to set up a parliament elected by the people. The authority of officials would be curtailed, and high and low alike would gain peace and happiness.”²²⁰

But we begin with a curious problem. The opening lines of the parliamentary petition bemoaned precisely the same problems Shimazu Hisamitsu had lamented. Itagaki, Furusawa, and their band complained—just as Andrew Gordon’s imperial democrats would in the 1900s to 1920s—that governing power lay neither in the figure of the Emperor nor in the masses, as it should, but in state officials who mismanaged that power: “The manifold decrees of the government appear in the morning and change in the evening, politics and law become the realm of private interests, rewards and punishments depend on personal favor or disfavor, and with the avenues of speech blocked, people cannot voice their pain and hardship,” they lamented.²²¹ The reign of private interests and of personal favor or disfavor (*aizō*) in selecting government

²²⁰ A full reproduction of the petition can be found in *Meiji bunka zenshū*, v. 9, pp. 212-214. For an English translation, see Wm. Theodore de Bary, Carol Gluck, and Arthur E. Tiedemann, eds., *Volume Two: Sources of Japanese Tradition: 1600 to 2000, Part Two: 1868-2000* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 54; and W. W. McLaren, ed., *Japanese Government Documents, 1867–1889* (Tokyo: Asiatic Society of Japan, 1914), pp. 426–432.

²²¹ Based on but modified from *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, v. 2, pt. 2, p. 54

officials was, down to the exact choice of word, precisely the same accusation Shimazu had hurled at the regime. And indeed, he had bemoaned, using the exact same words, how “avenues of speech were blocked.” “Opening the avenues of speech is the necessary way of kingly governance, the source of stability and peace,” he had said. He had acknowledged the existence already of a “parliament” (*gi'in no setsu*), bemoaning how the “scourge” of blocked avenues of speech had not yet been cured. And the idea that laws changed so frequently that people could not find stable ground was precisely the allegation that Inoue and Shibusawa had leveled against Etō, the man in charge of laws. Now that Etō was out of the regime, it was this charge he joined the renegades in leveling against the regime.

Two ostensibly antipodal political views, one hearkening back to an imagined past, insisting on the immutability of established laws, the other plunging into the future, gushing that “that which we call progress is the most beautiful thing in the empire,” diagnosed the same problem in the state and seemingly diagnosed the same remedy.²²² How do we account for this situation? The revolutionary and indeed contestable elements of Furusawa’s petition lay not in the idea of the parliament itself but in two other problems: the extent to which Japanese society should be, or was, interchangeable with societies abroad, and the extent to which the Japanese individual should exist autonomously, independent of the determination of the state.

The crux of the parliamentary manifesto begins to emerge more in what Itagaki and his renegades refused to say than in what they said. “Those people who have the duty (*gimu*) to pay taxes to the government also have the right (*kenri*) to partake in, know of, approve, or repudiate the government,” the defectors claimed. “This is a commonly held theory (*tsūsetsu*) across the empire,” they asserted, “so we will not wait around blathering and speaking needlessly about

²²² *Meiji bunka zenshū*, v. 9, p. 214; McLaren, *Japanese Government Documents*, p. 431.

it.”²²³ What the petition declined to discuss, brushing away as a “commonly held theory,” constituted precisely the greatest problem at stake. Shimazu had proposed a parliament, he had called for the lowering of taxes, but he made no mention of popular elections. Indeed, he explicitly rejected the notion that tax-payers had any “right” to anything in governmental affairs. And the presumption that people outside the government had no right whatsoever to meddle in or even know about matters of governance had been a foundational premise of the Tokugawa military dictatorship. It was not even the individual but rather the household that paid taxes under the Tokugawa regime. Just six years after the collapse of the early modern order, Itagaki and his band rejected the basic foundational principle of almost three centuries of Tokugawa peace, seeing the tax-paying self as entitled to rights in his own governance. And they claimed that it was a principle that needed no corroboration.

Even as Furusawa privately trumpeted Christianity as the only means of allowing people to attain their true liberty, the petition he drafted called for the monetization and empiricization of human relations, a secularist repudiation of abstract principles of human interaction and an affirmation of an economic, social-scientific worldview. Whereas Shimazu had hailed a parliament as the legacy of the ancient Chinese sages, insisting that it fit into a natural order of things wherein heaven and the noble looked down upon and extend solicitude toward the earthly and the mean, the parliamentary proposal held not history or supposedly natural principle but the economic relations of man and state as determinate of their relations.

In this secularization of human relations, the petitioners invoked the exact same epistemological premises that Verbeck had imparted to Ōkuma and Iwakura. Ironically enough, they mobilized the ideas that launched the Iwakura Mission to thwart the members of the

²²³ *Meiji bunka zenshū*, v. 9, p. 213; *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, v. 2, part 2, p. 54. The text in *Sources of Japanese Tradition* comes from McLaren’s translation.

mission. “Another argument of the officials is this,” they wrote, to conclude their parliamentary manifesto: “the parliaments of the nations of Europe and America were not things established in one morning and one evening. They were achieved only by means of gradual progress (*shinpo*). We therefore cannot copy them today suddenly.” The problem here was not essentially question of timing but of universalism. The renegades wrote, refuting the argument they set up:

But is it only the parliaments that they [Europe and America] achieved by means of such gradual progress? All fields of learning, all technologies, all mechanical arts, are like [parliaments]. That they achieved these things only over hundreds of long years was because no models existed previously, and they had to experience and invent for themselves. If we choose from their existing model, why can we not apply them successfully? Would you have it that we should wait until we ourselves had discovered the principles of steam before we began using steam engines, or if we had to wait until we discovered the principles of electricity before we began setting up telegraph lines? Then the government, too, would never begin to function [until we invented parliamentary systems ourselves].²²⁴

To accept a parliament in Japan immediately, then, was to accept two interlocking epistemological premises. The first was that the governance of people and their society was a science indistinguishable from other sciences. Humans became like steam engines or electricity: entities that could be governed by universal laws irrespective of context. Japanese humanity was emptied of any particular transcendental or “spiritual” content. Within the context of the petition, this social-scientific premise implied a collapse of time onto a flat spatial universalism. It was

²²⁴ *Meiji bunka zenshū*, v. 9, p. 214; McLaren, *Japanese Government Documents*, p. 432

not only that the Japanese past had failed to prepare the nation for this moment of universalism, though it was certainly that. It was also that nothing about the Japanese past, and certainly nothing inherent to Japan, made Japan or the Japanese distinct from other people. If the pasts of Europe and America had endowed them with particular “models” of society, there was no reason these pasts could not be applied to the Japanese present. In this sense, the seemingly secular social-scientific universalism of the Furusawa petition did not contradict the Christian convictions he privately professed. The parliamentarianism that acted as evidence of “Christian salvation” in Japan involved the disembodiment of the Japanese past from any spatial or temporal particularism and its situation in the sweep of a history that was British.

But a contradiction, perhaps a paradox, lay behind this assertion of social-scientific universalism. If humans had to be inserted fully into a natural order alongside steam engines and electricity for the global universalism of parliamentarianism to be justified, then they also had to be extricated from the natural world. Just as electricity and steam signaled a particularly modern departure from the principles of nature through science, so too did humans need to become civilized and enlightened and depart from both the past and nature at once. This departure, this “enlightenment,” involved the production of human autonomy.

If the question of timing was essentially a question of the interchangeability of human societies and of society as a science, then it was also about the subjectivity and agency of the Japanese people—more precisely, the Japanese person. Furusawa and his band conjured up an argument their supposed adversaries made: “because our people are ignorant and benighted and have yet to step into the realm of enlightenment,” their opponents claimed, “it is too early to establish a parliament.” “They even go so far as to argue that to establish a parliament would be

no more than to assemble all the ignoramuses of the realm.”²²⁵ The renegades did not deny that Japanese were unenlightened, but they insisted that establishing a parliament would itself bring about the enlightenment of the people. “To wait for the people to overcome the ignorance and benightedness to which they have become inured and to step, of their own accord (*mizukara*), into the realm of enlightenment is as to wait for a muddied river to turn clear,” they wrote, invoking a classical Chinese turn of phrase. The petition transformed the question of timing, then, to a question of enlightenment, and it thus entered into a battle over the meaning not of parliamentarianism but of enlightenment, and of a revolutionary enlightenment: of how to accelerate the process of entry into the future, a future that *was* enlightenment, a future that came from the pasts of others. The critical question was, then, what it meant for the Japanese to be enlightened.

The petition turned on the question of how, paradoxically, to induce people to do things “of their own accord,” an autonomy that was the defining feature of enlightenment. Furusawa and his band argued that a parliament itself would cause people to take charge of their own edification, to seek out knowledge, and to understand government on their own—presuming, of course, that people should understand government in the first place. “What will allow our people today to gain knowledge and intelligence and to enter into the arena of enlightenment,” they wrote, “is first to induce them to protect [their] common rights (*tsūgi kenri*), to create in them a spirit [or mentality, *kishō*] wherein, respecting and valuing their own selves, they will share together in the sorrows and joys of the empire, and thus to have them partake in the affairs of the realm.” The launch of the Movement for Freedom and Civil Rights was a milestone not so much in democracy as in the invention of, an obsessive fixation on, the self in an age of modern

²²⁵ *Meiji bunka zenshū*, v. 9, p. 213; McLaren, *Japanese Government Documents*, p. 429.

globality. To constitute individual selves was the point of government and the point of the revolution: “In unenlightened times (*sōmai no yo*), when customs were barbarous (*yaban no zoku*) and when people were violent and recalcitrant, the occupation of the government was to make them know that they must obey. But our nation is now no longer unenlightened, and our people have been too submissive (*jūjun*).” The word used in English in the original draft, translated from the Japanese as “submissive,” might have been “obedient,” judging from later writings from Furusawa. In any case, now the regime had to break down the submissiveness of the people and “arouse in the people a spirit of persevering self-reliant enterprise (*yūō kan’i no ki*), to make them know the obligation to share in the burdens of the realm and to partake in its affairs.”²²⁶

This faith in the power of the individual self to know and to be autonomously, and for the entire nation to prosper as a result of the civilization and enlightenment of intelligent selves, provided the ammunition with which the renegades could assail those still in power. They returned to the original argument: that the revolutionaries in power abused power by obstructing both the will of the people and the will of the Emperor. The argument that a parliament would prove an “assembly of ignoramuses” represented “haughtiness” of the ruling officials. It was on them to cede power to people—to cede power altogether—by setting up a parliament and making the individual Japanese self supreme.

If it all felt rather jarringly *déjà-vu*, it was because it was. Essentially the same fight that Etō Shinpei had had with Inoue Kaoru within the regime over whose ministry mattered more was now rehearsed with one side having “descended into civil society.” And it was a debate that would be rehearsed over and over again over the next years of the Meiji era.

²²⁶ *Meiji bunka zenshū*, v. 9, p. 213; McLaren, *Japanese Government Documents*, p. 430

Of round lids on square pots and the ‘obedience’ of Orientals

The publication of the Petition for the Establishment of a Popularly Elected Parliament in John Black’s newspaper catalyzed public discussions of political affairs, marking a milestone in the history of Japan. Both in its content and its medium, the public debate over parliamentarianism revealed how the newfound freedoms that the revolution had opened up were responsible for the rise of parliamentarianism, even as the petitioners themselves claimed that it was parliamentarianism that had to engender that freedom. And as the debate intensified, within the Japanese Enlightenment the notion that seemingly everything had to be tested according the theories of other people in other lands deepened.

The most prominent rejoinder to Itagaki and his band came from famed intellectual Katō Hiroyuki. “I have read your petition published in No. 206 of the *Nisshin Shinjishi*,” Katō wrote to his interlocutors. This was no heady conversation between intellectuals. It was a fight intended for a reading audience. And Katō first hailed his adversaries: “My esteem and affection for you has been suddenly increased by observing your deep dissatisfaction with the present condition and the warmth of your patriotic feelings.” No doubt it was grandiloquence, a softening segue into the heart of their clash of wills. But it was not flourish. To be a public curmudgeon filled with “deep dissatisfaction” became a public virtue. In a revolutionary moment, to be angry, to be opposed to the regime, to be unhappy with the present state of affairs not a decade after the collapse of three centuries of peace, became a reason for a “sudden increase in esteem and affection.”²²⁷

²²⁷ Using here with minor modifications the translation in McLaren, *Japanese Government Documents*, pp. 433–439. For the Japanese, see *Meiji bunka zenshū*, v. 9, pp. 218–221.

Katō Hiroyuki went on to become one of the most distinguished intellectuals of revolutionary Japan. By 1874, he had already begun to cement his reputation. He had worked in a range of capacities as a lower-level state bureaucrat throughout the earlier Meiji years, and he was a prolific thinker and translator, with major early translations of works on constitutionalism by Karl Biedermann and Johann Bluntschli.²²⁸ In 1874, he wrote his first major original treatise, “New Theory of the State” (*Kokutai shinron*), which played a major role in introducing German constitutionalism and notions of rights to the Japanese intellectual world.²²⁹ At this stage, Katō was an advocate of natural-rights theory, but he soon turned to social Darwinism and began to attack natural rights theory in a well-known and sensational case of intellectual conversion.²³⁰ His biographer, Tabata Shinobu, depicts Katō as a consistent materialist philosopher despite this shift.²³¹ He is notable for his vigorous attacks on Christianity in the 1900s and indeed his denunciation of all forms of religion as unscientific and therefore “superstitious.”²³²

The rhetorical struggle Katō waged against the renegade petitioners recapitulated yet again the same intellectual war Inoue and Shibusawa had waged against Etō less than a year earlier in the pages of the same newspaper: did the structures of government in themselves induce the enlightenment of the people? And in asking that question, he tacitly grappled with the questions that inhered: what enlightenment even meant and from where it came. “The entire purpose of raising up a parliament is to establish the institutions and constitutional laws (*seido kenpō*) that form the foundation of the peace and security of the nation,” Katō wrote. “And in establishing institutions and constitutional laws, first we must carefully observe the present-day

²²⁸ Tabata Shinobu, *Katō Hiroyuki* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1986), pp. 26-27, 84-87. See also Yoshida Kōji, *Katō Hiroyuki no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Shinseisha, 1976).

²²⁹ Tabata, *Katō Hiroyuki*, pp. 79-80.

²³⁰ Tabata, *Katō Hiroyuki*, pp. 88-89. See also Julia Adeney Thomas, *Reconfiguring Modernity: Concepts of Nature in Japanese Political Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), ch. 4.

²³¹ Tabata, *Katō Hiroyuki*, pp. 148

²³² Tabata, *Katō Hiroyuki*, pp. 148-187

conditions and feelings of the nation and select those [laws] that are in accordance with those feelings. Otherwise, it would be like putting a round lid on a square pot, and the constitution and laws cannot be said to place peace and prosperity on a sure foundation.”²³³ The point was anodyne enough, a point with which the Koreans representatives at the Tōraifu and Shimazu Hisamitsu would have agreed. But who knew how round the lid was and how round it should be, how square the pot was and how square it should be? The only people who could institute laws suited to the needs of the people, Katō insisted, were “wise men” (*kenchisha*). To make the “incompletely enlightened” (*kaika mizen*) people of Japan engage in parliamentary debate and institute the law of the nation would be “alas no different from looking for fish in trees.” The problem that public opinion (*kōgi*) could be “unenlightened” (*meisetsu narazu*) was a problem even in the civilization and enlightenment of European countries (*Ōshū bunmei kaika*). Indeed, as Matsuzawa indicates, the question of who the primary subject of enlightenment was became a point of contest.

But if Katō quibbled over round lids and square pots, he did not disagree that the best lids and pots came from Europe. And by agreeing that revolutionary Japanese justice emerged from historical European sources, Katō transformed the question of Japanese social and political life into a battleground of European theory and history. It was because laws had to be compatible with the conditions of the people, Katō claimed, that “European scholars have said that what deliberative assemblies need is wide-ranging knowledge (*tsūshiki*), and what legislative assemblies need is justice and fairness (*kōchoku*).” And the ignorant people of Japan could not live up to the standard set in Europe of “wide-ranging knowledge” and therefore could not partake in parliamentary government. The point of contrast was Britain. No doubt their

²³³ McClaren, *Japanese Government Documents*, p. 434; *Meiji bunka zenshū*, v. 9, p. 219

profession that it was their constitution, out of all those of Europe, that was most suited to the people was “braggadocio,” but it was justified braggadocio. The British parliament teemed with “wise men.” The Japanese parliament would not.

And Katō agreed with his interlocutors that the wisdom of wise men arose from enlightenment and that that enlightenment was revolutionary and global. What made the Japanese so unenlightened? Russia had an answer. “Although the people of our nation are today gradually moving toward civilization (*bunka*), when [we] go so far as [to consider] peasants and merchants (*nō shō*), [we find that] that many of them remain the self-same peasants and merchants of the past, wallowing, satisfied, in ignorance and benightedness (*muchi fugaku*), even to the extent that one cannot seek to make them rise up themselves (*shinki suru*). Only samurai (*shizoku*) seem to find this state deplorable, but alas those who understand principles are few in number.” As a result, Katō said, eight or nine out of every ten samurai did not even know what sort of a thing a government is, what sort of thing subjects are, what right the regime has to extract taxes (*shūzei no kenri*) or what principles military conscription relies on.²³⁴ To Katō, then, the problem of enlightening was a problem of overcoming the status system of the Tokugawa era. The Japanese masses remained accustomed to a Tokugawa world of overdetermination wherein there was no need, at least Katō thought, even if it was not true, to rouse oneself to action. A parliament made of men complacent in their ignorance, without the individual will to pursue knowledge, would result, he wrote, in “the adoption of foolish ideas” (*guron*). Why was it, he asked, that Russia had yet to adopt a popularly elected parliament? It was because, he claimed, “the people lack the discernment (*shikiken*) to partake in governance.” How was it, he asked rhetorically, that we can seek to achieve in Japan what they have yet to realize in Russia?

²³⁴ *Meiji bunka zenshū*, v. 9, p. 219; McLaren, *Japanese Government Documents*, p. 436.

If the evidence of the inadequacy of the present state of Japanese people lay in Russia, evidence of their future lay in Prussia, where “the people today have a ferocious spirit of autonomy and enterprise (*jishushin kan no ki ōsei ni shite*)” and as a result have built up the strongest, most valiant nation in all of Europe. Such a spirit resulted from the efforts of Frederick II and the Prussian government to direct the hearts (*kokoro*) of the people solely toward the advancement of human talent.²³⁵ Katō hailed Frederick II as one who abjured monarchical absolutism (*kunshu senken*), advocated the expansion of popular rights (*minken o kakuchō suru no setsu*), and curtailed monarchical authority (*kunken*), decrying systems in which one man held total power (*hitori/ichinin senken*). That Frederick the Great continued, by Katō’s own admission, to monopolize power without building a popularly elected parliament was not because he sought to satisfy his own whims but because he saw that his people remained incompletely enlightened, lacking the knowledge to partake in state affairs. Germany revealed that schools, not a parliament, resolved the problem that the “enlightenment (*kaika*) remains shallow,” that the people “remain excessively submissive.”

It therefore followed that the government, in accordance with the principle that “the government is made for the people, not the people for the government,” had at once to sustain absolutism temporarily while “following implicitly the policy of Frederick in restricting the powers of the government, extending as far as possible the private rights of the people, encouraging freedom of speech, and promoting education.”²³⁶ The absolutism was necessary in spite of this because “in general, when people whose knowledge and consciousness are still not enlightened first gain expansive rights to freedom, they do not know the proper way for putting these rights into practice, and as a result, they tumble into self-oblivion and self-abandonment,

²³⁵ *Meiji bunka zenshū*, v. 9, p. 221; McLaren, *Japanese Government Documents*, p. 438

²³⁶ Following translation in McLaren, *Japanese Government Documents*, p. 439

threatening to inflict harm on the security of the country.” The ultimate stakes of a rash rush into the future lay in the disorder of the realm.

Katō published his reply on January 26, 1874. He addressed it to four men: Soejima, Gotō, Itagaki, and Etō. Their reply to him came on February 20, but one man was missing: Etō. He was in Saga waging a physical and not rhetorical war against the government, as we will see in following chapter.

The reply to Katō was not written by them. It was written by Arthur Furusawa. Unlike the original memorial, whose first English-language draft is not extant, two English-language drafts in the hand of Furusawa remain in archives today. And they reveal how as Furusawa and Katō pushed ahead with the debate over autonomous selves, the origins of Japanese democracy drifted further into a recondite world of European political theory and history. Should Japan be more German or more British?

Furusawa assailed Katō not by disputing the particular merits of monarchical despotism or of the present Meiji regime but mainly by questioning two points: whether Katō had understood the historical significance of Frederick the Great correctly, and whether Katō had appropriately positioned the present state of Japanese civilization with respect to Prussian precedent. “Citing the example of Frederick the Great, you prove the advantages of an absolute monarchy over the Representative system. But this citation is hardly applicable to the present states [*sic*] of our empire,” Furusawa retorted in English, in what appears to be the newer of the two drafts that remain in the archives.²³⁷ Furusawa appeared well aware that his repudiation of monarchical government teetered on the edge of lese majesty. But he swept potential protestations away by belittling the youth of the Meiji Emperor: “We are self-confident,” he

²³⁷ *Furusawa Urō kankei monjo*, 15-1, D-2-1, p. 2

hedged, “that the greatness of His Majesty [*sic*] will not, in future, let Frederick the Great etc remain engrossing the glorious glory all to themselves in Europe (as if it were their own only).” (By contrast, when historians translate the published Japanese version back into English, they produce much prettier prose: this sentence reads, for instance, “The wisdom and divine valour of His Majesty the Tennō will certainly some day deprive Frederick II and others of the exclusive enjoyment in Europe of brilliant fame [...]”²³⁸) Furusawa continued with his oblique attack on the Emperor in English: “But His Majesty is young still. Then the establishment of a parliament is the only means (left within our choice) to meet the present exigency so as to hold up our empire from decline, nay, to string it up.”²³⁹

Furusawa proceeded to lecture Katō on European history. Katō had asserted, in Furusawa’s words, that Frederick was the “only one, who laying bare the wrongness of arbitrary power, advocates the rights of people,” but this claim was “not without exaggeration.” Furusawa fired back: “Before Frederick the Great came to the throne he was a worshipper of Voltaire whose doctrine, when spread, brought about such an age, that there was scarcely a throne in Europe, which was not filled by a liberal + reforming king [...]” or similar ruler. “From this you can see,” he claimed, that it was not only Frederick who was responsible for bringing about rights in Europe. And therefore it followed that Japan did not need only to follow Prussian precedent. All of Europe was enlightened, and there were any number of models from which to pick.

It is possible to dismiss the entire debate as rather indulgent one-upmanship. And indeed that is exactly what it was. Knowledge and interpretation of the European past had become the splashiest way for one man to lord it over the next, to prove the heft of his intellect, the dazzle of

²³⁸ McLaren, *Japanese Government Documents*, p. 441

²³⁹ Furusawa *Urō kankei monjo*, 15-1, D-2-1 pp. 2-3.

his mind. It was as if Furusawa sought to make Katō's head spin as he invoked a whirlwind of names and figures in European history. An unpublished draft reveals that Furusawa did not stop merely with the assertion that there were other enlightened monarchs in Europe. He named them: the age of Enlightenment in Europe was, he explained, the age "of Catherine the 2nd, of Joseph the 2nd, of Peter Leopold, of Benedict XIV, of Ganganelli, of Pombal, of Arand, [but] we shall dwell no more on this fact and leave the details to the history itself."²⁴⁰

Even if it was indulgent, there was meaning in, and there were real consequences to, the desire to show off the newfangled ideas Arthur Furusawa had discovered at Oxford. Even if the Marquis of Pombal and Pope Clement the XIV did not make it into the published version of the parliamentary debate, John Stuart Mill did. And Mill acted as the primary instrument by which Furusawa tried to dismantle Katō's argument. It constituted a form of epistemological surrender. As if Mill was omniscient, as if no further defense was needed once the authority of Mill was ushered onto the scene, and as if John Stuart Mill had diagnosed the Japanese present better than the entirety of the Japanese past had, Furusawa deployed copious and scrupulously accurate quotations from *Considerations in Representative Government* to demolish Katō. The future of the entire empire, as Furusawa liked to call it in English, rested on a particular interpretation of Mill's particular interpretation of European history. And to refute Katō's use of Frederick the Great to justify absolutism in Japanese governance, Furusawa cited Mill discussing not Frederick the Great at all: "Such examples as those of Charlemagne + Peter the Great are,' says Mr. Mill, 'so unfrequent, that they can only be classed with the happy accidents.' It would be absurd to construct institutions for the purpose of taking advantage of such possibilities; especially as men of this calibre, in any distinguished position, do not acquire despotic power to enable them to

²⁴⁰ Furusawa *Urō kankei monjo*, 15-2, D-2-2, pp. 2-3.

exert great influence as is evidenced by the case of Themistocles or the first and third William of Orange.”²⁴¹ John Stuart Mill said that Charlemagne was an exception, not the rule, and therefore somehow it followed that Katō Hiroyuki was wrong and that Japan should not follow the Prussian model.

John Stuart Mill proved, moreover, that Katō had confused cause and effect about the most fundamental problem in the debate: individual freedom and autonomy. “Again you say,” Furusawa wrote to Katō, “our people is too obedient, because their civilization is low. In this case, we fear, you turned your words upside down. Why? For their civilization is low because they are themselves too obedient, and their being too obedient is the natural consequence effect of the badness of institutions, by which they have been hitherto governed.” John Stuart Mill said, Furusawa wrote, “‘If it [a nation] has never risen above the condition of an Oriental people, in that condition it continues to stagnate.’ Therefore if we wish,” he continued in his own words, “to make the condition of our own people, in general, improved, we must, first of all, endeavor to let them renounce ‘the being too obedient[’][...]”²⁴² John Stuart Mill said that people needed to rise above the condition of an Oriental people, and now Arthur Furusawa wanted a parliament to stop being so Oriental.

The “upside-down words” and “mistake in the art of logic” that Katō makes, then, is in the role of the state in effecting the autonomy of the individual. The despotism of the state itself was the reason for the absence of autonomy in Japan. “The Egyptian hierarchy”—Furusawa continued, quoting Mill, with the word “hierarchy” eventually rendered in Japanese as “hayarāki”—“the paternal despotism of China, were very fit instruments for carrying those nations to the point of civilization which they attained. But having reached that point, they were

²⁴¹ Furusawa *Urō kankei monjo*, 15-1, D-2-1, p. 2.

²⁴² Furusawa *Urō kankei monjo*, 15-1, D-2-1, p. 2.

brought to a permanent halt, for want of mental liberty and individuality; requisites of improvement which the institution, that had carried them thus far, entirely incapacitated them from acquiring.”²⁴³ Japan had to prevent itself from going the way of Egyptians and Chinese by building an institution that would not incapacitate the “mental liberty and individuality” of the people.

And how could anyone know that a parliament, and not schools, as Katō claimed, would induce this mental liberty that would save Japan from the paternal despotism of China? That, too, was thanks to John Stuart Mill. The adoption of a parliament before mass education hinged on a particular understanding of human nature itself that Furusawa readily accepted from Mill. “It is not sufficiently considered how little there is in most men’s ordinary life to give any largeness to their conceptions or to their sentiments,” Mill claimed in words that Furusawa again quoted. Nothing in the life of man guided the “mind to thoughts or feelings extending beyond individuals.” Men operated on “self-interest in the most elementary form, the satisfaction of daily wants.” “[I]f instructive books are within their reach, there is no stimulus to read them,” Mill believed. But when man is assigned public duty, then “it makes him an educated man.” The emancipation of man from his innate pettiness and the narrowness of his mind was to Mill in this particular passage, and therefore to Furusawa, the point of an elected parliament. Political participation resulted in the “education of the intelligence and of the sentiments.”²⁴⁴ Thus Mill conceived of the individual as petty and narrow; it was only by public political participation first that the individual could be properly constituted and then that the society he formed could find some sort of transcendental bond itself. And Furusawa accepted these assumptions about human life.

²⁴³ *Furusawa Urō kankei monjo*, 15-1, D-2-1, p. 3.

²⁴⁴ *Furusawa Urō kankei monjo*, 15-1, D-2-1, p. 9

Furusawa was not naïve about the prospective problems of applying the theories of Mill suddenly and immediately in a Japanese context. And so he conceded a point: it was hasty for universal participation in the parliament. “We do not purpose to make the people’s franchise universal,” he offered.²⁴⁵ But this was only a temporary state. “The samurais [*sic*] + certain class of farmers + merchants, who are possessed of so much properties as their qualification requires, will for the present, only be made to enjoy their franchise—the classes from which came forth the Ronins, that cried first for the Restoration, as well as its authors.” But this was only a tentative measure. And the revolutionary changes that had overturned Japan life since 1868 themselves evidence that the grander project of building a parliament was entirely realizable. “Can it be reasonably believed,” Furusawa asked, “that the people, who, seven years ago, were capable of constructing present government and of their own exertions, are yet incapable of bearing up this institution [a parliament] as if it were an exception?”²⁴⁶

But ultimately it was still Mill, not the Japanese past, who proved the possibility of parliamentary government. Mill had established three criteria to determine whether a people were suited for parliamentary: that people can accept it fully, that they can sustain it, and that they can do what is needed to make it fulfill its purpose. These “three conditions above layed down [*sic*], are not without existing in the people,” Furusawa wrote.²⁴⁷

The future of Japanese government, and of the individual and society who would together compose it, lay in a few checkboxes John Stuart Mill set out. Arthur Furusawa ticked them. And so began the Movement for Freedom and Civil Rights.

²⁴⁵ *Furusawa Urō kankei monjo*, 15-1, D-2-1, p. 7

²⁴⁶ *Furusawa Urō kankei monjo*, 15-1, D-2-1, p. 6

²⁴⁷ *Furusawa Urō kankei monjo*, 15-1, D-2-1, p. 7

‘Where governors and governed live amicably together’

Around the same time that Arthur Furusawa invoked John Stuart Mill to make a fuss about an excessively obedient and submissive Japanese populace and the need for a parliament to endow them with mental liberty, thousands of farmers and erstwhile samurai in Miyazaki prefecture led a mass rebellion to protest harsh taxes.²⁴⁸

The jarring irony notwithstanding, Furusawa Urō and Katō Hiroyuki managed to ignite a veritable public-opinion firestorm. Hundreds of others wrote petitions and editorials to debate the merits and drawbacks of parliamentary government. And that cacophony of public opinion revealed further that the questions of timing and agency in what only ostensibly appears as a parliamentary debate were secondary to deeper questions of universalism and individualism. The seemingly shared agreement on universalism and individualism on which the debate between Furusawa and Katō turned was only internal to that particular segment of that debate. Others wondered whether the whole project of civilization and enlightenment imported from Europe was dangerous, “evil,” in the first place. The Japanese soul could not be reduced to checkboxes from John Stuart Mill. To say that the Petition for the Establishment of a Popularly Elected Parliament launched the Movement for Freedom and Civil Rights, then, is true but tendentious. It launched, more crucially, an unending public fight over the extent to which freedom and civil rights were good ideas in the first place.

Historians have honed in on particular and certainly important segments of the debate that coalesce around the benefits of parliamentary governance. Mori Arinori accused Itagaki and his petitioners of being no different from the regime they criticized. The members of the parliament they envisioned would “be unable to be other than submissive to the regime,” and

²⁴⁸ *Meiji bunka zenshū*, v. 9, p. 217.

because the parliament would be submissive, “its discussion will hold up the actions of the regime, and in the end it will garner the disapproval of the world as the holders of the drums of the regime.”²⁴⁹ Furusawa and Katō had not allowed enough room for condemnation of the government. Ōi Kentarō, who in 1885 led a terrorist mission to overthrow the monarchy in Korea and install a democratic government there, wrote in 1874 a particularly well-known rejoinder castigating Katō for his gradualism. Hailing the “right of the people to autonomy (*jinmin jishu no kenri*),” he conjured the erstwhile Tokugawa status system as the source of the ills of the nation that a parliamentary system now needed to cure. Government by the heredity of samurai (*seshū no shizoku*) had led rulers to become estranged from the “agonies” of the people. Now high and low alike (*jōge*) had to be united in government. Ōi slammed Katō for “wallowing in theory” and being “imprisoned by the trajectory of the German past.” Frederick could establish a dictatorship (*dokusai no matsurigoto*) because, Ōi claimed, all governments at the time had been dictatorship; people could not look back in time and find precedent of parliamentary government. A universal history had endowed the Japanese present with a precedent of parliamentarianism to which men could refer. The advance of time would allow Japan to break free from a German trajectory.²⁵⁰

But there was condemnation of parliamentary government in the first place, people who reviled the European precedent itself on which it was premised. It is to this point that W. W. McLaren, in his sterling 1914 translation and compilation of early Meiji government documents, gives ample voice by giving equal place to a “reactionary” petition.

²⁴⁹ William Reynolds Braisted, trans. and ed., *Mei roku Zasshi: Journal of the Japanese Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 32-34

²⁵⁰ *Meiji bunka zenshū* v. 9, pp. 225–228

Katō Hiroyuki had championed schools as the means of enlightening the masses, but a group of petitioners, for instance, from Kōchi, the very birthplace of the democratic movement, condemned the very schools the Meiji regime was setting up in “every parish” for turning the “chief attention” of students to “European studies.” “Education should consist, first of all, in the study of our native writings by which we learn the superiority of our national constitutions over those of all foreign nations,” they wrote. Only then should students be “taught to read European books,” for if students studied Western learning first, then they would “fall into the snares of an evil religion”—“the religion of Jesus.” Jesus taught “men to make naught of their lords and parents,” they warned, and it had to be “strictly prohibited.”²⁵¹

There was justice in this “superior” national way of organizing society, in “distinction being made between high and low” in “the respective duties of low high and low,” and it was this system of justice premised on duty, not rights, that Jesus and Western learning at schools threatened.²⁵² In their repudiation of a duty-bound indigenous system, adherents of “Western learning” demonstrated “worst kind” of “bigotry” by “holding fast to one thing,” “the customs of foreign countries,” without any regard for “the reverence due to the gods” and the “doctrine of the sages.”²⁵³ The petitioners trashed France. “France is described to us as an enlightened, wealthy, civilized, and warlike country,” they wrote. But true civilization and enlightenment lay not in a self-serving enterprising spirit of autonomy of an indulgent Japanese self. It lay in a society of harmony and peace, one where “governors and governed live amicably together; where there are no starving paupers in the streets, or robbers on the moors.” And, perhaps most strikingly, a civilized country was one in which “people are slow to private quarrel, but zealous

²⁵¹ McLaren, *Japanese Government Documents*, p. 450-451

²⁵² McLaren, *Japanese Government Documents*, p. 451

²⁵³ McLaren, *Japanese Government Documents*, p. 452

to combat in the cause of their country.”²⁵⁴ Who needed autonomy and independence if there were “starving paupers on the street”? What honor was there in a realm overrun with men gaudily advertising their “dissatisfaction,” as Katō had called it? Harmony between rulers and the ruled had value, had an inherent worth, that no squabbling among intellectual equals in a parliament could replace.

The justice of discriminatory indigenous Japanese life stood in contrast to the phony universalism of the West. “Since 1853 foreigners have despised and mocked us for our servility and have not scrupled to use their military prestige to bring pressure upon us,” the petitioners wrote. “They have tricked us by their international law and deluded us by their false religion [...] Their international law and good faith and justice are certainly not to be relied on.”²⁵⁵

And insofar as it was after 1853, they claimed, that the West inflicted their hypocrisy and sanctimony on Japan, true civilization and enlightenment lay in the past: in the samurai, in the sages of the Chinese ancient times. They wrote that a samurai was one who “devotes his powers to the acquirement of learning and the art of war” and that the state’s attempt to “convert him all at once into his peasant,” to make him at “the same level as all classes of subjects,” represented an “impossibility.”²⁵⁶ They called for the samurai to be “restored” so that “morals may be rendered pure” lest “all our efforts after progress toward civilization and enlightenment” be in vain. And that civilization and enlightenment was domestic: because there was “no control” over people with the loss of status distinctions, people “rival each other in adopting new things” and “despise” what is Japanese, creating an “unnatural world.”²⁵⁷

²⁵⁴ McLaren, *Japanese Government Documents*, p. 449

²⁵⁵ McLaren, *Japanese Government Documents*, p. 454

²⁵⁶ McLaren, *Japanese Government Documents*, p. 452

²⁵⁷ McLaren, *Japanese Government Documents*, p. 453

These “reactionaries” were not mere holdouts from a bygone time. They were actively engaged in the present. They looked hard at Western civilization and enlightenment and inveighed against its hollowness, its vanity, its ugly and barefaced hypocrisy. They wondered whether the values of contention and debate at the heart of the democratic project merited the jarring title of “civilization” or “enlightenment.” And they chose to rally behind a conception of unity and social harmony based on indigeneity to negate the baleful influence of Western liberalism and freedom. What good was freedom when it left people begging on the streets?

For indeed, global civilization and enlightenment were plunging Japan into the stirrings of a civil war. Between the Petition for the Establishment of a Popularly Elected Parliament and the retort that its main signatories sent Katō Hiroyuki, Etō Shinpei had already gone and waged a war against the enlightened regime based on his own version of the enlightenment. When men decried the upheavals that the freedoms of the present had engendered and called for a return to a world of bygone harmony between rulers and the ruled, they might have been wrong about the stability of the past. But they were right about the present.

Chapter Four

IMPERIAL ENLIGHTENMENT

It is the historiographical gallbladder of the Meiji era. People know it is there. They are vaguely familiar with its functional role and general systemic positioning. But historians rest assured the Saga Rebellion of 1874 can be removed from the historical body of the Meiji period without compromising the integrity of the overall narrative structure. When the Saga Rebellion appears in history-writing in English, it often does so in passing among “samurai rebellions” in the early Meiji era—that is, quixotic, poorly planned, and seemingly inevitably unsuccessful insurrections by “disaffected samurai” unhappy with the reforms of the Meiji regime. Grouped together with the Shinpūren Rebellion in 1876 or the assassination of Ōkubo Toshimichi in 1878, it mattered slightly more than, but was categorically similar to, the smaller-scale Mimasaka Blood-Tax Rebellion in 1873 or the botched attempt to murder Iwakura Tomomi that year. It was overshadowed by the Civil War of 1877.

The Saga Rebellion epitomizes, then, what David Howell, writing of the Mimasaka upheaval, has identified as an oddity in the way Meiji history is told: historians all acknowledge that “murderous violence” occurred around the revolution, but they explain it away rather than explain it, regarding it as something incidental to the Meiji revolution rather than integral to the transition from domainal status-based early modernity to a modern national civil society.²⁵⁸ Thus Stephen Vlastos, for instance, writing in the *Cambridge History of Japan*, can make the generalization that the “original leadership group [of the Meiji government] stayed in charge and did not change its basic policies”—this despite, within eleven years of its founding, the defection

²⁵⁸ Howell, *Geographies of Identity*, pp. 89-90.

of a sizable fraction of its most elite members; the killing of Etō Shinpei, Saigō Takamori, and Ōkubo Toshimichi; two civil wars; and policies on seemingly every dimension of life that changed so quickly that no single work in English has yet managed to come fully to terms with them.²⁵⁹

In its grouping, the Saga Rebellion is further defined as analytically and historically distinct from the more “civil” resistance of the Movement for Freedom and Civil Rights, which operated in the public sphere through discourse and which violently radicalized, conventional narratives have it, much later, in the 1880s. Although Etō Shinpei left the regime at the same moment as Itagaki Taisuke and others of civil-rights bent, he betrayed the cause and died a pointless death, it is thought, whereas his civil-rights compatriots stayed true to the cause of civil discourse.

Is the categorization of the Saga Rebellion among “samurai rebellions” (*shizoku hanran*) or “disaffected samurai” (*fuhei shizoku*) fair? Does it share enough in common with the other rebellions with which it is grouped to merit its categorization? Or does it make more sense to regard it as an early instance of the violent radicalization (*gekka jiken*) of the Freedom and Civil Rights Movement?

The questions themselves are misguided, for they emerge from flawed assumptions about the domestic origins of social instability in the early Meiji era. The modes of resistance were not categorically different. What may appear in retrospect as ideological contradictions among them were all various intellectual configurations in a relentless revolution over how to situate Japanese society in a world of global ideas. The Saga Rebellion, in its ostensibly self-contradictory

²⁵⁹ Stephen Vlastos, “Opposition Movements in Early Meiji, 1868-1885,” in *Cambridge History of Japan*, ed. Marius Jansen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), v. 5, ch. 6, p. 367.

ideological mélange of nationalist anti-foreign samurai chauvinism and vigorous advocacy of civil rights along French lines, illustrates this point starkly.

Despite its intrigue, no extended analysis of the Saga Rebellion exists in English. The most recent and most complete account in English appears in Danny Orbach's work on military rebellions, although the Saga insurrection was not really a military rebellion.²⁶⁰ Orbach argues that the Saga case was one in which the "optimistic" rebels were acting as loyal subjects of the Emperor, seeing themselves not as rebels but as loyalists. Because he is concerned more with how the rebellion contributed to a broader culture of rebellion in the name of the Emperor, Orbach does not seek to explain why the two parties involved—the Yūkokutō, the "Patriot's Lament Party," which supposedly sought to reverse the revolutionary reforms of the Meiji regime, especially the revocation of samurai stipends, and the Seikantō, the "Invade Korea Party," which sought to push them further and force an invasion of Korea—appear to be united only by the military and strategic contingencies of the 1874 moment. Was ideology really so insignificant as to allow people at ideological odds simply to band together? Was it, as Orbach suggests, the "haziness" of the imperial center to which all pledged fealty that allowed any one of any ideological bent simply to tack on to him and thereby to join hands with other imperial servants?

The towering work on the Saga Rebellion is a two-volume 1914 biography of Etō Shinpei by Matono Hansuke. Matono compiles and transcribes scores of sources not only by Etō but by a range of other actors involved in the uprising, adding his own commentary around these sources.²⁶¹ Most of the primary sources on Etō that appear in this chapter emerge from the

²⁶⁰ Danny Orbach, *Curse on this Country: The Rebellious Army of Imperial Japan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017), ch. 3.

²⁶¹ Matono Hansuke, *Etō Nanpaku*, 2 vols. (Tokyo: Nanpaku kenshōkai, 1914).

Matono compilation, and most other works follow in his wake.²⁶² In his monumental series on the Meiji period, which includes a major analysis of the Saga rebellion, Tokutomi Sohō reproduces Matono’s sources in his history, sometimes reproducing Matono’s commentary and sometimes adding his own.²⁶³ And in his landmark biography of Etō, Mōri Toshihiko follows the same sequence of events and traces the same sources as Matono and Tokutomi, only adding new ideas and changing the perspective.²⁶⁴ Mōri seeks, hagiographically and controversially, to defend Etō as a visionary and radical democrat who was defeated by a vengeful and nefarious Ōkubo Toshimichi; Kyu Hyun Kim describes Mōri’s assessment of Etō as “discomfiting.”²⁶⁵ The most original scholarship on the Saga Rebellion is by Nagano Susumu, who turns attention away from Etō Shinpei and uses a fastidiously detailed account of the economic and social contingencies of samurai in Saga domain to account for why different groups banded together. Nagano identifies three reasons to account for the collaboration of the two seemingly unconnected rebellions—that of the supposedly conservative Yūkokutō, led by Shima Yoshitake, and the violent expansionist Seikantō, led by Etō—which coalesced into one. The first was a shared sense of national crisis that manifested itself in the consciousness of samurai, a sense of crisis that was exacerbated by the heavy-handed tactics the regime took early on to suppress the uprising. The second was a sense of domainal factionalism in which local samurai sought to elevate Hizen, or Saga, over its more powerful foes in Satsuma and Chōshū. The third was what

²⁶² Some other works on Etō include: Suzuki Tsuruko, *Etō Shinpei to Meiji Ishin* (Tokyo: Asahi shinbunsha, 1989) [Suzuki is the granddaughter of Etō’s younger brother]; and Sugitani Akira, *Etō Shinpei* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1962).

²⁶³ Tokutomi Ichirō, *Saga no ran hen*, vol. 89 of *Kinsei Nihon kokumin shi* (Tokyo: Kinsei Nihon kokumin shi kankō kai, 1961).

²⁶⁴ Mōri Toshihiko, *Etō Shinpei: Kyūshinteki kaikakusha no higeki* (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1987). See also Mōri Toshihiko, *Bakumatsu Ishin to Saga han: Nihon seiyōka no kenten* (Tokyo: Chūō kōron shinsha, 2008).

²⁶⁵ Kyu Hyun Kim, *The Age of Visions and Arguments*, p. 129

Nagano regards as the fundamental shared opposition to oligarchic government (*yūshi sensei*) across Saga.²⁶⁶

But the fixation on contingent reasons for the apparent ideological contradictions of the Saga Rebellion faces two problems. First is empirical: as we will see, resistance to the state turned into a violent insurrection because of the collaboration of the rebel leaders Etō Shinpei and Shima Yoshitake, neither of whom shared the Yūkokutō ideology. The fury of the rank-and-file Yūkokutō provided a human basis for the war, but the actual decision to wage war was made by Shima and Etō, who shared in a common imperial enlightenment ideology.

Second, and more important, received analyses of the Saga Rebellion look so deeply within the contingencies of Japanese history, within the motivations and personalities of individual actors and the precise configuration of status relations within Hizen, that they miss a prior, more fundamental impetus to the war. Insofar as all actors grappled with the Enlightenment ideology of the day, their opposition to the Meiji regime signaled a broader struggle.

The Saga Rebellion was a revolutionary war, a war waged by Etō through a concoction of epistemological premises of individual reason, of faith not in the exceptional legacy of the Japanese past but in the social-scientific examination of global societies, and of the salutary benefits of full-throated engagement with the foreign world. Because the Meiji government could find no consensus on how to manage the helter-skelter of global ideas that had overcome its incipient nation, revolutionary ideas about how to organize Japanese society in a global world produced a struggle to lead what Etō himself allegedly called a second Meiji Restoration. And in the context of the revolution, Etō's enlightenment rebellion joined hands with counter-

²⁶⁶ Nagano Susumu, "*Saga no eki*" to *chiiki shakai* (Fukuoka: Kyūshū daigaku shuppankai, 1987), pp. 219, 239-240

enlightenment militants. Strategic, practical contingencies brought them together as one arm of the enlightenment joined hands with the counter-enlightenment in order to topple another faction of the enlightenment. As they emerged from the same crisis of global revolutionary justice, they responded to the same problems of modern globality, differing in their proposed solutions but not in the questions they sought to answer.

We will see first how the main figures of the Saga crisis strove to invent a new legal and political concept of Japanese society after the collapse of the Tokugawa status system; how they sought to reconfigure Japan's relations with global imperial powers after centuries of conscientious diplomatic non-engagement; and how they regarded their domestic social and foreign diplomatic projects as inseparable dimensions of resistance to global imperialism. We will see, in other words, how the simultaneous collapse of the Tokugawa social and diplomatic system led to the inextricability of domestic and foreign systems that men developed to replace them. Then we will see how the global ideas those men espoused led to a sudden eruption of the violence in a volatile intellectual and social world. We will see how a philosophy of imperial enlightenment turned to violence.

The imperial enlightenment of Etō Shinpei

Etō Shinpei, historians have long argued, was the father of Japanese civil rights, the inventor of the legal and political idea that Japanese people must have a set of formally recognized rights that the state was responsible for safeguarding. He also called for the invasion of Korea in 1873—but that call was a shift in direction. Before 1873, he had been far more interested in invading China.

Once a central figure in the Meiji government, he had amassed a series of major achievements in the new regime, first as the man behind Iwakura Tomomi, then as the de facto head of the brand new Ministry of Education, and finally as the first ever minister of justice. He wrote Japan's first civil code. He founded Japan's courts. He set up Japan's modern prisons. He lifted the prohibition on women worshipping at shrines and temples. He banned prostitution, human trafficking, and honor killing. He called for the abolition of feudal domains, samurai stipends, the samurai itself, and the status system.

He dreamed of banding together with Russia, jointly invading China, and then, some historical records claim, relocating the Emperor himself to Beijing. There, Japan would establish its permanent imperial capital. And then, as Etō himself wrote, Japan would be ready to engage Russia, Germany, and America in a global struggle for domination.

To depict Etō as the progenitor of civil rights is to skip a step in explaining his historical role. Both by design and in effect, the series of reforms Etō advocated aimed for the construction of the notion of the *civil* in and of itself. Etō was concerned, first and foremost, with building a Japanese civil society akin to civil societies in Europe. This crucial fact explains both the democracy and the imperialism of Etō Shinpei.

The record of reforms implemented either by Etō or under his watch are bewildering, and among the most notable of them was the invention of the term “civil rights” (*minken*) itself as a legal and political category. Etō served at the beginning of his tenure in the Meiji regime as the central figure in the Bureau of Institutions (*seidokyoku*), which was formed in 1870 under the Dajōkan, the Council of State.²⁶⁷ He set about leading the formation of a civil code for the first

²⁶⁷ Matono, *Etō Nanpaku*, v. 2, p. 105

time in Japanese history through a committee he led.²⁶⁸ He set Mitsukuri Rinshō, a scholar of French law, to the task of translating European codes into Japanese.²⁶⁹ It is in the translations of the French Napoleonic code by Mitsukuri under directions from Etō and in collaboration with Georges Bousquet, the French legal advisor to the Ministry of Justice whom we encountered in Chapter One, that the term *minken* was first coined. Mitsukuri recollected:

In the third year of the Meiji era, at a place known as the Institutions Bureau of the Council of State, a man at the time known as Etō Shinpei was working as a *chūben* [an aide in the ministry]. Every time I translated two or three [pages] of civil law (*minpō*), he would tell me to submit it to the committee. Yes, it was very strange (*hen wa hen da ga*) [...] At that time, I translated the words *droits civils* (*dorō shibiru*) to *minken*, at which point there unfolded an argument: “what does it mean that the people have rights” (*min ni ken ga aru*)? I vigorously tried to defend myself, but the argument was intense.

Fortunately, the head of the committee, Mr. Etō, explained and finally we were able to settle the matter.²⁷⁰

Of course, it is entirely conceivable that the term had multiple origins, and it is possible that Mitsukuri overstates his own significance in the genealogy of the term. But even if the term had other intellectual branches, the legal origins of *minken* in the government were here—as a translation of the French notion of *droits civils*.

²⁶⁸ Mōri, *Etō Shinpei*, pp. 95-100; Robert Epp, “The Challenge from Tradition: Attempts to Compile a Civil Code in Japan, 1866-78,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 22:1/2 (1967), pp. 23–36

²⁶⁹ Matono, *Etō Nanpaku*, v. 2, p. 107

²⁷⁰ Matono, *Etō Nanpaku*, v. 2, p. 106

To understand the significance of this desire to adapt French civil law to Japan, and to see the ways in which this legal endeavor was inseparable from the social engineering of a civil sphere, we must begin by understanding how Etō understood not Japanese society itself but rather its place in the world.

That Etō was a Saga man, or a Hizen man, mattered not only in his disdain for Satsuma and Chōshū, the origin of the major forces in the regime. Under the helm of daimyo Nabeshima Naomasa, Hizen had vigorously undertaken modernization efforts well ahead of those of the central bakufu in the late Tokugawa era, and those efforts included a particularly strong advocacy for the settlement of Ezo.²⁷¹ After the bakufu fell, Nabeshima himself was appointed as the first head of the Development Ministry of Hokkaido, the organ of the Meiji government charged with bringing Japan's northern territories into the national fold and modernizing them. Shima Yoshitake, Etō's accomplice in the Saga Rebellion, was the leading figure under his helm.

Etō Shinpei and his diplomatic thought emerged from this context of an aggressive Hizen foreign policy. Matono cites two texts as crucial indicators of Etō's foreign-policy worldview, the first of which is "A Plan for Charting the Seas" 図海策, a text he wrote in 1862 while still a Saga vassal. The text elucidates the origins of Etō's understanding of the relationship between the civil sphere and national power.

Etō's essential point in his 1862 tract was, as he put it, "the stupidity (*oroka*) of the argument for isolationism (*sakokuron*)."²⁷² We can discern two general reasons he suggests for this "stupidity" as well as three solutions he explicitly outlines. Let us examine his reasons first.

²⁷¹ Mōri, *Etō Shinpei*, pp. 10-14

²⁷² This text appears in Etō Shinpei, *Nanpaku ikō: zen*, ed. Etō Kumatarō and Etō Shinsaku (Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1892), pp. 9-27. It is reproduced in Matono, *Etō Nanpaku*, v. 1, pp. 118 - 131.

The first reason that Japanese isolationism was “stupid” was that the policy was unintentionally suicidal.²⁷³ The proof, Etō wrote, was what he anachronistically called “Mexico.” In the *Huang Shigong*, an ancient Chinese text, it was written that “pure hardness and strength” (*jungō junkyō*) would lead to the destruction of a country and that “flexibility and weakness” ensured survival. The history of Mexico acted as empirical evidence of this classical Chinese adage, Etō explained. Mexico had once been the strongest country in the Americas, with vast lands and over two-hundred colonies or vassal states (*zokkoku*), in Etō’s phrasing. And because of its strength, it refused overtures from Spain (*Isupaniya*) in the sixteenth year of the Eishō era. Spain responded by crushing Mexico.

Japanese isolationism would similarly lead to war in Japan, Etō claimed, and Japan would fare even worse. “Their shogun,” he wrote, referring to the leader of the inhabitants of Mexico, was experienced in war. But Japanese authorities, having lived for centuries in peace, knew nothing of war and would face certain defeat for five reasons: the first and most colorful was that “the shogun is an idiot” (*tai shōgun gumin naru*). The result of this suicidal war would be that the spirits of the people, who would be filled with terror (*zenkoku no jinki wa kyōfu chinshoku*), would be eroded and “be extremely difficult to arouse again.”²⁷⁴ A war of isolationist “hardness” would crush Japan, just as it crushed Mexico—and would destroy the ability of the people to exercise their own will.

Let us note here, even if in passing, that in this respect Etō Shinpei’s analysis fundamentally agrees with that of Kumamoto mystic Hayashi Ōen, whom we will encounter in the following chapter. It appears that there was wide-ranging consensus in the late Tokugawa era that isolationism would inevitably would lead to war. Differences lay in whether people thought

²⁷³ Matono, *Etō Nanpaku*, v. 1, p. 119

²⁷⁴ Matono, *Etō Nanpaku*, v. 1, p. 120

war was a good idea. Hayashi believed that a fundamentalist total war against foreigners based on isolationist principles, which would result in the complete destruction of Japan, was in fact preferable to welcoming foreign ideas into the Japanese national community; Etō sought to avert that war by forming a civil society that could independently parse those ideas.

The reference to the “spirits of the people” in Etō’s treatise signaled the second indicator of the stupidity of isolationism: the people themselves. Times had fundamentally changed since the days when isolationism was justified, Etō argued. Those who were in favor of isolationism “studied the policies that Hōjō Tokimune implemented” to chase away the Mongols in the thirteenth century and invoked it foolishly for the nineteenth century, he claimed. “Japan has changed from ancient times, and the barbarians today, too, are not the same as those of ancient times.” The Mongols had attacked through Hirado, in Hizen, he wrote. Had they sought to come in through Tsuruga, in Echizen, they would have seized control of the land. The barbarians of the world of Etō were hardly so daft as the Mongols, and they had surveyed the entire globe; they would know how to attack Japan.²⁷⁵ Etō set up a stark epistemological contrast in which the passage of time had dramatically shrunk space: whereas people in defense of isolationism looked to indigenous history to guide the present, to Etō, it was through the histories of other people, through “Mexico,” and through a sober analysis of Japanese geography, that the Japanese present and future made more sense.

This shift in what evidence to employ in foreign policy and how to deploy it was necessary to Etō because of changes not only in the ways of “barbarians,” who had become more sophisticated over time, but also in the fundamental changes in Japan itself. In the days of the

²⁷⁵ Matono, *Etō Nanpaku*, v. 1, p. 120-121

Mongols, the samurai “lived on the land and were strong and robust. Today,” he wrote, “they have gathered under castles and are extreme in their sloth (*yūda*).” He continued, colorfully:

Three-hundred years have already passed since the raid on Osaka Castle (*enbu*) [this is an overstatement; the raid was in 1615, and Etō is writing in 1862], and from the shogun at the top all the way to the wandering ruffians (*mushoku no burai*) at the bottom, people have become desensitized by orchestral music playing from dawn till dusk; they specialize in the techniques of doing nothing (*yūda no waza*); they have yet to see the battlefield; and they have become accustomed to these forces of the present day.

The greatest threat of the day, he wrote, were Western barbarians who came to Japan’s shores and demanded supplies and money. They were threatening because of the enervation of the Japanese people themselves, who were unprepared for the arrival of a global world at their door. It was not an uncommon theory: many of those who were “anti-foreign” in the late Tokugawa era, Aizawa Seishisai most notable among them, made similar complaints.

What Etō suggests about his own time anticipates the essential point that David Howell has recently made about late Tokugawa politics.²⁷⁶ By reading high-end politics in close conjunction with on-the-ground, seemingly inconsequential quotidian interactions—that is, by recognizing the inseparability of the formal diplomacy as it was long studied by scholars of Japan a half-century ago and what he calls “informal diplomacy”—Howell suggests that the heavy-handed approach of the Tokugawa bakufu toward foreign interventionism arose not from a fear of those foreigners themselves but from a fear of their own people associating with those

²⁷⁶ David L. Howell, “Foreign Encounters and Informal Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan,” *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 40:2 (2014), pp. 295-327.

foreigners. By making this argument, Howell moves bakumatsu diplomatic history from the ideological realm to the social realm: the Tokugawa bakufu acted not through pure xenophobia or anachronism but through careful consideration of on-the-ground contingencies. The emergence of a social world in unmitigated and naked contact with foreigners—with all its crass connotations, Howell reveals—threatened the hegemony of the Tokugawa regime by opening up the possibility that foreign ideas would vitiate the ascendancy of the military regime.

What Howell identifies, then, as the driver of Tokugawa foreign policy in the early nineteenth century was the infiltration of the foreign intellectual world into the domestic social sphere. Although the idea of Tokugawa isolationism remains intact in Howell's work—the Tokugawa regime unquestionably feared, resented, and actively sought to obstruct what was foreign and what was global—what it feared was not the foreign in and of itself but rather the destabilizing influence that a national people exposed to it might bring about. The Tokugawa regime insisted, then, on retaining the role of the state in mediating the relationship between the social world and the foreign world. The people at large, the Tokugawa state asserted, were incapable of acting as autonomous arbiters of justice, without the intermediary role of the state in a world of global ideas.

These fears of global ideas in social life did not magically vanish as “expelling the barbarian” turned to “civilization and enlightenment.” Quite the contrary: it was precisely because of these fears that Etō's reform measures all revolved around constructing a vibrant civil sphere in which people could themselves withstand the onslaught of globality. Rather than simply insist on the power of the state to instruct the people and stand in for them as the arbiter of global justice, Etō saw a certain inevitability in the relationship that modernity would establish between the national social sphere and a world of ideas, and he saw the need to inculcate in the

people the power of their own to determine justice, to find a way for themselves to parse right from wrong, fair from unfair, to know where to surrender their own freedoms for the sake of order and where to insist up them. And so he sought to build a vibrant civil sphere where none had existed in law before.

The solutions Etō devised for the problems of a stupid foreign policy and of stupid people suggested the inseparability of the tasks of strengthening the nation on the global stage and developing a strong citizenry based on the talents of each of its individual members. He called for three measures: “recruiting talent (*jinsai*),” “trade,” and “developing the north,” a reference to Ezo.

The task of “recruiting talent” demanded, Etō explained, “reforming over a thousand years of established custom” of lineage and status and building up a nation in which individual striving stood at the center of society.²⁷⁷ Human talent was the “treasure of heaven and earth”—nations that mined that talent “prospered,” and those that did not “perished.” Japan was among the perishing: “Japan today,” he wrote, “employs people based on a system of family lineage (*kakaku*), and it distances itself from those of low status (*hisen* 卑賤) and is unconcerned with the sentiments and circumstances of the masses (*kajō* 下情).” “As a result,” he continued, when human talent appears in distinguished households, the country employs that talent and prospers, “but when it appears in the civil sphere (*minkan*) and not in distinguished households (*taike*), the nation is perennially weak.” He attributed this elitism to contingent historical circumstances, providing a detailed history of why Japan had developed this means of government—and suggesting that those circumstances no longer applied to his world. Now, Japan had to “recruit and assemble human talent of course from within Japan but also from across the world” to build

²⁷⁷ Matono, *Etō Nanpaku*, v. 1, pp. 123-124

machines, to strengthen the army, to improve medical sciences, to develop underdeveloped lands, to teach various fields of science, astronomy, and geography, to “teach the skills of rich country, strong army” (*fukoku kyōhei*)—and to overcome the past. Not only, then, did Japan have to build a society in which all people had equal opportunity, as individuals, to build the strength of the nation, but it had to regard that society as global: talent was talent, and it could be mobilized for the strength of Japan regardless of whence it came. It is a vision that conflated individualism with the future: a sociopolitical system based on status and heredity was the product of historical circumstances that had lapsed.

What Etō called “overseas trade” was integral to this strong society of individuals. The people themselves benefited from engaging in economic exchange because traders had to “brave tempestuous winds and harsh waves and pirates” and therefore “inculcated in the people a spirit of bravery and fearlessness toward death,” making them “fighters.”²⁷⁸ “Countries that do not engage in overseas trade gradually deteriorate,” Etō observed. “Their customs thin out, their spirit of trust and righteousness vanishes, and not only their martiality but their courage dissipates.” The argument was precisely the opposite of what many samurai of the day, most notably Shimazu Hisamitsu, whom we encountered in in the first chapter as he removed chairs from his boat because they were evil Western things, asserted: where many saw in the foreign and the global a threat to the supposedly unique martial tradition that constituted the very soul of Japan, Etō claimed that that martial tradition had been corrupted because of the prosperity of Japanese indigeneity and the only way to preserve the Japanese state was to gain active exposure to the foreign world. And here, too, Etō invested belief in the ability of a reasoned population to use foreign economic contact to their benefit. It was precisely the rejection of this principle that,

²⁷⁸ Matono, *Etō Nanpku*, v. 1, p. 125

according to Robert Hellyer, had driven the Tokugawa regime to economic “guarded engagement,” or economic protectionism: the Tokugawa regime believed that the Japanese people were dissipating national wealth on worthless foreign imports, leading the regime to sharply curtail foreign trade in the mid-eighteenth century.²⁷⁹

In this context of the need for global trade to develop the Japanese population, it was crucial to “develop the north,” in Etō’s phrasing. “Developing Ezo,” Etō asserted, “not only [leads to] a rich country and the expansion of industry but also acts as an expedient in plotting against Russia.”²⁸⁰ Ezo was rich in “silver, gold, bronze, and iron, and its water were rich in kombu and otters,” and since it is so close to Karafuto, Etorofu, and Kamchatka, it provided strategic significance. For economic benefit, Etō proposed a scorched-earth policy in which pioneers would “set fire to Ezo,” clear away deleterious creatures and critters, and build a “prosperous metropolis and thereby a capital for northern trade and commerce.” Criminals (*burai no to*) could be settled on Hokkaido, and each according to his status affiliation could play a role in building up the city. Japan would then prepare for war contingencies with Russia: Given the harsh terrain of eastern Siberia, Russia would be unable to dispatch troops quickly enough to traverse Yakutsk and its most easterly possession, and Japan would be able to seize control of Kamchatka and the Okhotsk. This obsession with Russia, as we will see, continued right through the opening of hostilities in the Saga Rebellion.

In 1862, Etō still envisioned transplanting the Tokugawa status system to Ezo after it had transformed into a northern military and commercial hub. As the Tokugawa bakufu fell and he himself entered the ranks of a new national regime, Etō’s vision of a strong Japanese population

²⁷⁹ Robert I. Hellyer, *Defining Engagement: Japan and Global Contexts, 1640-1868* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009).

²⁸⁰ Matono, *Etō Nanpaku*, v. 1, p. 129.

and a strong Japanese state evolved to one of a vigorous egalitarian civil society and an expansionist Japanese empire, all based on engagement with a world of global ideas.

And this desire to build a strong empire and a strong civil society emerged in his views on Korea. The stakes of the inextricability of the domestic society and aggressive foreign policy ratcheted up as the “stupid” policy of isolationism crumbled.

‘The sole possession of Asia’

Like many who wrote of Japanese aggression in Korea, Etō wrote, at an indeterminate date soon after the Restoration, of the legendary Empress Jingū, who “traversed the unexplored waters,” according to Japanese legend, to subdue the Three Kingdoms on the Korean peninsula and induce them to pay tribute. But times had changed since the days of the Empress. Whereas then braving the straits between Japan and Korea constituted a feat, “now,” Etō wrote, “there is no country that cannot traverse the four seas, no sea a sturdily manufactured ship cannot sail.”²⁸¹ In an age of new technology, he wrote, not to “carry down the will of the Empress” and to fail to subjugate Japan’s distant enemies “is like the thirsty seeing clear water and not drinking, the hungry gaining wholesome food and not eating.”

Those “distant enemies” were no longer Korea but rather China and Russia after the Meiji Restoration. Matono quotes an extraordinary passage that contains remarks Etō allegedly made to fellow Saga man and Meiji official Tokuhisa Tsunenori; Nagano accepts this quotation as fact.²⁸² Etō reportedly said:

²⁸¹ Matono, *Etō Nanpaku*, v. 2, pp. 287-288

²⁸² Matono, *Etō Nanpaku*, v. 2, pp. 288-289; Nagano, “*Saga no eki*,” pp. 238-239

The Boshin War was nothing more than a domestic struggle. The urgent task of today is to expand the territory of the Empire onto the continent, to arrange for the development of the [Japanese] race (*minzoku*), and thereby to raise the reality of a Second Restoration (*dai ni Ishin*). The indignity that Korea has inflicted on us offers as an opportunity we cannot miss to use force on the continent to enlarge our Empire. It is appropriate first to cooperate with Russia, to seize Korea for ourselves, and then to split China into north and south. We will give Russia the north and take hold of southern China ourselves. Some ten years later, once we extend railroads into the interior of China, we will use the management of those railroads to drive out the Russians, and as a result, we will be able to move our Heavenly Prince to Beijing and make it our imperial capital for eternity.

There appears to be no way to verify the authenticity of this quotation definitively, but in light of Etō's 1871 manifesto titled simply "Foreign Policy" (*Taigaisaku*), it is thoroughly believable.

Two things, Etō wrote, should "worry" the Imperial Kingdom in 1871: the first was feudalism (*hōkenron*), a term he used not to refer only to a system of lord-vassal relations but also, in the classical Chinese sense, to a system of semiautonomous domains wherein men were loyal to their fiefdoms rather than to a centralized government (*gunken*, Ch. *junxian*). The second was "the Evil Sect," or Christianity (*jashūmon*). He feared that Russia—he identified Russia in particular—would be able to take advantage of domainal divisions in a feudal system for Russian benefit, exploiting the narrow domainal loyalty of people to undermine the broader nation. The absence of an adequate sense of nation threatened the ability to resist foreign aggression. And Russia would be able to use Christianity, too, to introduce falsity into the country and destabilize the nation. Under these circumstances, Japan would be dragged into a war it would have no

chance of winning. The global competition of ideas threatened to bring about social instability and endanger the very survival of the Japanese nation; building a nation in which individuals in a civil society could be loyal to the Emperor and resist the ferocity of the contest of thought was needed to stymie the imperial threat.

Etō revealed an unstated but sly consciousness that the very problems Japan faced because of its fractured domestic not-yet-society could be turned in Japan's favor abroad. Even as Japan built a national sphere to resist the spread of evil Christian ideas in its society, it could employ the same strategies to seize China. Japan, too, could wield its power in the global battleground of thought to promote its own interests. Etō estimated that about two percent of China adhered to Christianity or Confucianism, with the remaining ninety-eight percent adhering to Buddhism. And that was ideal for Japan. "Because their religion (*shūmon*) is the same as that of our people," Etō wrote, "we should send priests to spread Buddhism or engage people in training so that, later on, we can subdue the hearts of the people, and we can dispatch spies (*kanja*) so that we can plant the seeds of military intervention (*gunryaku o hodokosu no tane to subeshi*)." Etō laid out elaborate plans for how to establish a Buddhist base in China "from among whose disciples or whose priests we can select individuals to act as spies to dispatch to China."²⁸³ These spies would conduct research on Chinese geography and other points of interests and report back with their findings within five years.

It might strike us today as a ridiculous plan, but in the context of the Great Promulgation Campaign and the national indoctrination schemes we encountered in Chapter Three, which revealed the confidence of the government in instilling ideology into the minds of its subjects, it seems hardly a stretch at all. Seemingly everyone in Japan was concerned about the rise of

²⁸³ Matono, *Etō Shinpei*, v. 2, p. 296

Christianity, whether he endorsed it or opposed it. The state, spurred by Etō Shinpei himself, turned to building a national imperial myth above the realm of individual conscience as a means of counteracting the potentially destabilizing forces of Christian thought. If China failed to do the same with its civil society, and if Japan could succeed in its civil society, why could Japan not take advantage of the weaknesses of China to exploit its civil society? And what is more, the Etō plan indeed appears as merely a way to combat in China what many Japanese leaders believed Western powers, Russia in Etō's view, were doing in Japan: using Christianity to win over the allegiance of some members of society and then destabilizing the entire nation.

The plan Etō hatched would progress to the complete conquest of China after initial endeavors in espionage. To Etō, China needed to be seized because of the threat of Russia, but to conjure up that threat required an elaborate analysis of global geopolitics. The fate of the entire world, Etō explained, lay subject to relations among five countries: Russia, Prussia, Britain, France, and America. As Prussia sought domination in Europe; Russia, in Asia; and the United States, in the Americas; the interests of the three powers remained geographically disparate, and they would succeed in coming together to dominate the world without thwarting each other. Britain would quickly lose power and would be unable to retain its colonies in Canada and India, he predicted, and France had already been crushed in the Franco-Prussian War. "Under such global conditions, by what means will the Imperial Kingdom (*kōkoku*, i.e. Japan) respond if from here it is confronted with a difficult problem by Russia?" Etō wondered. And that "problem" emerged particularly from China: if Russia attacked China, with the blessing Prussia and America, then "the Imperial Kingdom will be placed in imminent danger."

Japan first needed to send regular dispatches to America, Prussia, and Russia and develop human contacts so that when trouble arose with Russia, America and Prussia could be called

upon to help resolve the crisis. It had to maintain regular relations with Britain while training its soldiers and a navy in the event of war. Meanwhile, it should increase trade (*tsūshō*) with China and regularly send Japanese merchants. Incidents of “indignity” (*burei*) would be unavoidable as economic relations developed, and so the Japanese military needed to be prepared.

Then, with the help of Buddhist spies and their reconnaissance missions, everything would come together.²⁸⁴ Some sort of “indignity” would unfold, and Japan would be compelled to “straighten the crooked.” Japan would invade China. Because Japan had won the goodwill of America and Prussia beforehand, and because those nations’ interests were on other continents, they would not intervene. If Japan were able by its own military might to subdue all of China, then it should; otherwise, it could cooperate with Russia and split China. Victory was “without doubt” because although China had an army of 600,000 men, its people were “stupid,” its army “weak,” its military apparatus “inchoate,” and its military method “feckless.” Japan would gain regional security. “China is the battleground of Asia,” Etō wrote. “He who fails to win it is in danger. He who takes it has taken sole possession of the very making of Asia.”

China itself was not the ultimate point. Once China had been fully subdued, Japan would engage in a “fight for the world” with America, Russia, and Prussia. But for now, China needed to be conquered to avert the Russian threat, for the Russians would seize China if Japan did not.

As we read Etō’s thought in retrospect, we encounter an undeniable reality: in a relatively short manifesto from 1871, Etō successfully predicted the next 75 years of world history: he foresaw war with China, war with Russia over China, the German seizure of the rest of Europe, and an ultimate world war in a global struggle for power among Japan, Germany, Russia, and

²⁸⁴ Matono, *Etō Shinpei*, v. 2, pp. 296-297.

America. Matono noted in his biography even as early as the 1910s that Etō had successfully foreseen the course of Asian history.

But we also face a prognostication more proximate, more meaningful, and more striking, in the context of Etō Shinpei's own life. The plan that Etō traced for war with China in 1871 is exactly what unfolded in 1873—but with Korea, as we saw in Chapter Two. Japan began to extend its trade interests in Korea, precisely what Etō recommended in China. An incident of “indignity” erupted, just as Etō predicted. Then the Japanese regime—Etō himself—sought to use that “indignity” as a pretext to “straighten the crooked,” just as threats from Russia in the north were raining down, and Saigō Takamori sought to manufacture a further form of “indignity” to lay down a more solid pretext for war. Etō's adversaries in the regime thwarted the plan. There is no definitive link between the 1871 manifesto Etō wrote and the way things played out in 1873, but the resonances are too close to ignore. And they help to explain, at the very least, why Etō endorsed an invasion of Korea.

Matono does not acknowledge these similarities, and he claims that Etō did not have his sights on Korea yet in 1871. He sees another reason for Etō's interventionism in Korea. He quotes, again from an unknown source, a remark from Etō to Itagaki in which Etō bemoans the course of the Meiji revolution, lamenting that the Restoration in Japan had gotten things fundamentally wrong. Etō asked Itagaki to lead an invasion of Korea and then to allow Etō to try a new Restoration there. This time, in Korea, they would get things right. Etō would lead reform not through the executive branch of the government, as the Meiji reform did, but through the legislative branch. He would establish justice (*kōhei*) as the central concept in Korea and win over its people by its means.²⁸⁵

²⁸⁵ Matono, *Etō Shinpei*, v. 2, pp. 297-303.

Such were the ideas that Etō Shinpei had been developing before he left the Meiji regime in 1873 and signed onto the Petition for the Establishment of a Popularly Elected Parliament the following January. And they were the ideas that laid the groundwork for his violent uprising at the helm of the “Invade Korea” party in February 1874.

To rebel in Saga required more than simply the visions of Etō Shinpei. It required the help of Etō’s Saga buddy Shima Yoshitake. As Etō was dreaming of world domination, Shima was in Hokkaido building up the commercial hub and Russian bulwark Etō had imagined in 1862. It took a series of curious events to bring him down to Saga.

The imperial enlightenment of Shima Yoshitake

Like Etō, Shima Yoshitake was a man of imperial enlightenment. Born in Saga in 1822 and educated in the Kōbunkan, the domainal academy, he was dispatched at age 35 to Ezochi by domainal lord Nabeshima Naomasa to survey land there. He accompanied the Hakodate magistrate (*bugyō*) on reconnaissance missions throughout what are today Hokkaido and Sakhalin before returning to Kyushu, fighting in the Boshin War, and receiving government merit for his military performance. He was sent back to Ezo in the seventh month of Meiji 2, or 1869, as head official (*hankan*) of the Ezo Development Commission, under Nabeshima Naomasa, now a senior councilor (*gijō*) in the regime and a superintendent (*tokumu*) of Ezo affairs. Shima spent only a year in Hokkaido, leaving Sapporo in the second month of 1870. He was appointed governor of Akita at the end of 1871, leaving his post in the sixth month of Meiji 5, or 1872.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁶ Timeline of Shima’s life from Kōzen Noboru, *Shisetsu Kaitaku hankan Shima Yoshitake den*. Tokyo: Shima hankan kenshōkai, 1978), pp. 278–281.

Hokkaido was the last stronghold of Enomoto Takaaki, enemy of the revolutionary regime, until the fifth month of 1869, when the Meiji regime finally crushed him. Nabeshima was appointed head of the Development Commission two months later. Iwamura Michitoshi—the Tosa man who would take the governorship of Saga in mid-1873—also served as a Development Commission official in 1869 under Nabeshima. It was predominantly to Saga men and to men who later became associated with Saga that the Meiji regime entrusted the task of transforming Ezo from a recalcitrant frontier into a constituent part of the Japanese nation. Ties between Saga and an emerging Hokkaido ran deep.

Relocating from relatively balmy Saga to frigid Hokkaido was not easy. Throughout his sojourn in Hokkaido, Shima wrote plaintive poems bearing witness to his travails as a settler.²⁸⁷ The overriding concern is unsurprising: Hokkaido, Shima wailed, is very, very cold. But in his threnodies about the weather, we see something more significant occur in the intellectual world of Shima. We see moments of profound and trenchant reflection on what it meant to be a stranger in a cold world transforming that world into something warm, something familiar. Shima well believed—indeed, well understood—that he stood on both a literal and figurative frontier of Japanese history, charged not only with building up Japanese civilization but with thinking through what it meant to be a Japanese among others—and then of rendering obsolete the difference between Japanese and other. Shima Yoshitake stood among the very first men advancing Japanese “imperialism” in the dual senses of the term: of building up the Japanese empire in the name of the Japanese Emperor.

²⁸⁷ Shima’s poems are compiled in Shima Yoshitake, *Hokkaidō kikō: Shima Yoshitake kanshi shū*, ed. Ueda Sasao (Sapporo: Hokkaidō jingū hōsankai, 1974). Many poems are also reproduced in Ōta Takeshi, *Resshi Shima Yoshitake* (Fukuoka: Shima Yoshitake kenshōkai, 1999), pp. 81-127. Ueda appends the poems with footnotes and Japanese translations. I have relied on these footnotes and *yomikudashi* renderings.

Leading the settlement of Hokkaido stirred the depths of Shima's humanity. He lamented:

The boys back home are secure and at peace

Who among them knows how this old man anguishes in the cold?

Only because of the grace of the Imperial household

Do I not turn back from the agony of these rugged roads²⁸⁸

As geographic and mental distance exacerbated by personal suffering frayed the bonds that once bound Shima to his Saga countrymen, the Emperor now stood as an intermediary by which Shima could understand his world, even as he was ejected from their stability of home. What was the point of forsaking the boys back home for the hardship of a rugged land? As the burgeoning imperial realm untied the interpersonal bonds of community, the imperial figure swept in to build new bonds. And those bonds were mobilized for an enlightened empire.

As Shima shivered in the northern extremes, away from the warm embrace of community in Saga, the harshness of distance brought Hizen and Ezo, settlers and indigenous men, together.

Passing a road beneath Mount Raiden

The northerly wind blows snow to fill the sky

My skin wants to freeze as I wear a coat of brocade

But even more pitiable is my guide, the white-haired old man²⁸⁹

²⁸⁸ Shima Yoshitake, *Hokkaidō kikō*, p. 14, poem no. 10.

²⁸⁹ Shima Yoshitake, *Hokkaidō kikō*, pp. 17-18, poem no. 14

Shima wrote with pity of the indigenous men he accompanied who, in his eyes, lacked even the basic necessities with which his freezing self could try to stay warm. And as the shared endurance of the natural world brought men together, man and nature themselves blurred on the Hokkaido frontier.

On these brutal plains I do not mind sleeping with the dog

To combat the cold, it beats sitting by the furnace

In the middle of the night we suddenly rejoice at the arrival of the hunting man

We call for the meat to be cooked and we eat the fresh meat²⁹⁰

Ezo was the antithesis of civilization, a world where man and nature collapsed into one another, where he was captive to the dictates of a harsh, cold world, where even the primitive technology of the furnace could not furnish man with comfort, where he was left to cuddle up next to a dog as he slept to keep warm.

Shima believed that his efforts in this environment would bring Japanese civilization to Hokkaido. In a poem he wrote during the winter solstice, Shima looked forward not only to longer, brighter days in the nature of Hokkaido but longer and brighter days for Japan. Time in Hokkaido was different from that in the rest of Japan, he noted: it used a different calendar, snow was everywhere, and there were no plum trees to tell the changing of seasons. But “I do not resent the fewness of friends with whom I can interact,” he wrote, for he had a heaping bowl of bear meat to eat, and here, even at such a distance from home, he lived in the world of the sacred, basking continually in the glory of imperial benevolence. He was, he wrote, building a great

²⁹⁰ Shima Yoshitake, *Hokkaidō kikō*, pp. 27–28, poem no. 22

capital and establishing a divine temple (*jingū*) to protect the Northern Sea (*Hokkai*). All around him were fields rich in materials—soon, it was not nature that would dictate man but man that would dictate nature as he exploited the wealth of a newly settled world. Soon, men from across the realm would assemble in this capital, and the world that Shima built would protect the south by blocking the Russians from the north, he wrote. The lands were brutal and harsh, but the successes of “opening the country” (*kaikoku*), the task he was undertaking, would endure past his own life.²⁹¹ Of the Russian threat he wrote:

How can we wait and pause as we develop the Northern Sea?

If we hesitate for but a moment our country will fall in great danger

So tell all the men across this Road:

Let us block the Russian barbarians from coming over from Karayama [i.e. Sakhalin]

Shima’s sojourn in Hokkaido did not last long. As the Meiji regime implemented a standardized system of provincial government across the country after the 1871 dissolution of domains and installation of prefectures, it summoned Shima from the Hokkaido frontier to Akita, where he served as the first-ever governor of the prefecture. Akita had defected from the Mutsu-Dewa-Echigo Domainal Alliance, the enemies of the Meiji revolutionaries in the Boshin War, and fought in favor of the anti-Tokugawa resistance. It came under brutal attack from its erstwhile Tokugawa loyalist allies, which laid waste to the domain.²⁹² The domain then became mired in financial distress arising from both reconstruction costs and from disastrous military

²⁹¹ Shima Yoshitake, *Hokkaidō kikō*, pp. 42-43, poem no. 31

²⁹² Ōta, *Resshi Shima Yoshitake*, pp. 151–152

investments, which have been studied by Anne Walthall.²⁹³ And then it was rocked by a thwarted attempt at rebellion. Shima was called in as the first governor to clean up these problems.²⁹⁴

With the inauguration of a new Akita prefectural headquarters in the third month of 1872, an obscure but rigorous new study of Shima explains, Shima undertook physical reforms that symbolized his intellectual approach: he swept away the tatami mats and installed wooden flooring with chairs and tables to inaugurate a “Western-style administration” in Akita.²⁹⁵ In his manifesto for Akita governance, he called for the encouragement of industry and commerce, the opening of elementary schools not only “to make clear the way of loyalty, filiality, benevolence, and righteousness” but also to have children “pour their will into the forces of the present day,” to have them study not only Japanese and Chinese but also to “widely draw out the truth (*kanpa*) of translations of Western books,” “without prejudice from dogged adherence to academic factions.”²⁹⁶ He banned abortion and called for measures to increase the population. His biographers claim that this demand for wide-ranging learning reflected his tenure as a state bureaucrat charged with developing universities at a time when imperial and Chinese learning came under fire, a controversy during which he lost his job, but whatever its impetus, it brought the Enlightenment to Akita.²⁹⁷

Shima invested his energies in developing a shipping harbor in Akita’s Hachirōgata region and petitioned to the Council of State to have the debt of the prefecture relieved, in part to support this project.²⁹⁸ The petition acknowledged Akita’s “difficult-to-govern” reputation, bemoaning what he described as the slyness, imperiousness, and obduracy of the domain’s

²⁹³ Anne Walthall, “Shipwreck! Akita’s Local Initiative, Japan’s Foreign Debt, 1869–1872,” *The Journal of Japanese Studies* (2013) 39:2, pp. 271-296.

²⁹⁴ Ōta, *Resshi Shima Yoshitake*, pp. 152-155.

²⁹⁵ Ōta, *Resshi Shima Yoshitake*, p. 156

²⁹⁶ Manifesto reproduced and edited Ōta, *Resshi Shima Yoshitake*, pp. 156-158

²⁹⁷ Ōta, *Resshi Shima Yoshitake*, pp. 141-143, 158

²⁹⁸ Ōta, *Resshi Shima Yoshitake*, pp. 159-165

samurai, who would be “difficult to enlighten (*kyōka*) immediately” and would require a gradual process of suasion “in light of new laws.” He justified the desire for a new developed port in Akita by saying that with an opportunity for economic development, the “obdurate customs of the people will gradually fade away and the tendency toward enlightenment (*kaika*) would emerge.” He called, too, for funds to employ a foreigner who would help in developing the port. He expressed surprise that efforts to implement “Western learning” in Akita schools were succeeding despite the long-standing benightedness of his field of governorship, and he celebrated the achievements already made in the inauguration of a Western-style medicine at hospital, describing it, too, as a means toward enlightenment. He pressed for the hiring of foreign instructors and doctors to accelerate the process of enlightening domainal medicine.

Shima’s biographers explain that that the petition for funds was “ignored” and “not even once read” by Inoue Kaoru, then head of the Ministry of Finance. Shima went to Inoue Kaoru to fight to win funds for Akita domain in the fifth month of 1872. Rebuffed by Inoue Kaoru, he resigned from his post the following month and headed down to Tokyo.²⁹⁹

It was not just Etō Shinpei, then, who clashed with Inoue Kaoru and the Ministry of the Treasury over their role in enlightening the masses, as we saw in Chapter Two. Inoue Kaoru had made two enemies of imperial enlightenment from Saga, and for now in Tokyo, Shima Yoshitake stewed.

Justifying war

A year after Shima’s protest-resignation from the Akita governorship, the Chastise Korea debacle erupted. Etō Shinpei sparred with the Chōshū faction over the invasion of Korea,

²⁹⁹ Ōta, *Resshi Shima Yoshitake*, p. 167

defected from the Meiji regime, signed a petition to establish a national parliament, and then arrived in Saga some ten days later, on January 27, 1874. The arrival of Etō set Saga sliding toward civil war. The arrival of Shima on February 11 sealed fate.

An Invade Korea faction, the Seikantō, already existed in Saga by the time Etō arrived there. It had been formed by Etō's Saga associates who gone home after the 1873 schism, while Etō and his close accomplice Yamanaka Ichirō stayed in Tokyo.³⁰⁰ According to the testimony of one Saga native who was involved in forming the Seikantō, Murachi Masachi, on whom Tokutomi Sohō relies in his account of the Saga Rebellion, the Saga emissaries tried to convince Saigō Takamori and the Satsuma faction to join hands in the invasion of Korea but were turned down.³⁰¹ The Saga rebels pushed ahead on their own invasion force, and on December 23, 1873, they formed the Invade Korea Party. According to Murachi, the organization began with a few hundred people and had amassed 1000 members within twenty days.³⁰² After forming, the party dispatched four men to meet with Etō in Tokyo and convince him to join them in rebelling against the Meiji regime.

In its founding manifesto, which too was submitted as a petition to the Meiji state, the Invade Korea Party inveighed not against Korea so much as against a Meiji regime that exploited global affairs to deceive its own people.³⁰³ The schism of late 1873, it wrote, had arisen from the “derogation” of the Japanese emissary to Korea and the Korean regime's refusal to accept a Japanese state missive (*kokusho*). But the Meiji regime obfuscated the true origins of the crisis, the party claimed, and advanced a falsehood: “The trouble in attacking Korea is not in attacking

³⁰⁰ Tokutomi, *Saga no ran*, p. 8

³⁰¹ Tokutomi, *Saga no ran*, 10-11; Matono, *Etō Nanpaku* v. 2, pp. 394-6

³⁰² Tokutomi, *Saga no ran*, 12

³⁰³ Tokutomi *Saga no ran*, 14-16; Matono, *Etō Nanpaku*, v. 2, pp. 399-400. There are minor differences between the two versions.

Korea,” the government said, in the words of the Seikantō; “the fears of today lie in Russia. There have already been incidents of our people clashing with Russian colonists (*shokumin*) on Karafuto. If we attack Korea, then of a certainty it will lead to the opening of hostilities with Russia.” The Meiji regime lacked the resources and the military might to wage war against the Russians.

The regime was prevaricating, the Seikantō asserted. The conciliatory actions of the Russian regime had betrayed these theories as false and exposed them as just a scheme by which the Meiji regime could advance its own ends. The Russians had punished their own emissary and apologized to the Meiji regime for the crisis on Karafuto, the Invade Korea Party claimed. That a war with Korea would open hostilities with Russia was but an excuse, they insisted. We saw, in the previous chapter, the protest Etō made to Iwakura that the Sakhalin clashes were but petty domestic disputes that had been amplified and transformed into a manufactured crisis by the anti-invade faction. The Invade Korea Party made this same argument. It is unclear the extent to which Etō directly had a hand in the composition of these drafts, and it is unclear when exactly they were written, but the concerns resonate with those of Etō earlier in his career.

“We are indignant to no end,” the rebels wrote. “Within not even twenty days, we have more or less prepared our troops and finances. The number of men of our common will has already reached some several thousand.” They implored the Meiji regime to allow them to act as “arrowheads” for the invasion of Korea: there was “nothing to rival this in happiness” to them, they wrote. They had “recklessly amassed troops and weapons without regard of the law,” they readily admitted, “because of the unprecedented humiliation that has come upon our nation,” and they were now ready to go to war.

The Invade Korea Party wrote a mission statement (*shuisho*) in addition to its direct petition to the state. They recapitulated the arguments in their petition but added a curious preface to it.³⁰⁴ On the first day of 1874, they wrote, emissaries from foreign states had presented a direct protest (*jikiso*) to the Emperor calling for permission to travel without restrictions across Japan. “Even though people other than ad hoc plenipotentiary ambassadors have no right in the first place under international law” to make such direct appeals to the Emperor, the party claimed, the Meiji regime had tolerated such “impertinent” actions, adding to the indignities it accepted from the Korean regime—it was, they asserted, the fecklessness of the regime in addressing the Korea problem that emboldened and enabled these further indignities. And within Japan, the regime sought to “block public debate” (*kōgi o habami*) on the matter of invading Korea. Now the Invade Korea Party was ready to raise an army to thwart the “evil designs of the state ministers,” claiming it was not only their will but those of people across the country. They would rescue the Emperor from the indignities of the Koreans, of the foreigners, and of evil state ministers; they would thwart foreigners from entering into Japanese society; they would allow free public debate within the nation; and they would invade Korea.

On January 16, around the time but possibly before the writing of the petition, the Invade Korea Party set out their major objectives to advance their cause of invading Korea: to gain influence by placing their men in positions of authority in Saga prefecture, to establish an physical office for their purpose of attacking Korea, and to use the grounds of the domainal school for their agenda.³⁰⁵ A Seikantō band of thirteen men then had an angry confrontation with a Saga official as they tried to persuade him to let them use the domainal school as a party

³⁰⁴ Matono, *Etō Nanpaku*, v. 2, pp. 400-401; Tokutomi, *Saga no ran*, pp. 15-16; summary appears on Nagano, “*Saga no eki*,” pp. 204-205

³⁰⁵ On timing, see Nagano, “*Saga no eki*,” p. 203. See also Orbach, *Curse on this Country*, ch. 4.

headquarters. They occupied the building briefly but then retreat and apologized, apparently deciding that they would wait for Etō Shinpei to join them before taking any violent measures. The Saga government began to fear the violence of the Invade Korea Party.

Meanwhile, the Patriot's Lament Party (*Yūkokutō*), a group of samurai angry over the revocation of their long-held privileges, banded together and wrote a manifesto of their own. "We form this assembly of faces to rush forth at any time and preserve the imperial palanquin and the private residence at a time of treachery in the imperial vicinity," they wrote, rather opaquely. Tokutomi writes that the "private residence" invoked here likely refers to the residence of daimyo Nabeshima.³⁰⁶ The Party wrote of the need to "rouse their will" (*risshi*) for the sake not only of the Emperor and not only the "erstwhile domains" but even each district and village, each household, and their own selves. They referred to the attempted assassination of Iwakura Tomomi in January 1874 and other members of a government dominated by "people of a certain prefecture" as a sign of the volatility of the times and the need for their military action to impose calm. A call for the arrest of fifty men threatening disorder had been made, they claimed, but not a single one had yet been apprehended. The risk of lurking banditry and violence was "incalculable." "Is this not a clear sign of danger," they wrote? Adding to the danger of physical violence was the rhetorical violence descending on the nation. They decried a nation in which the "avenues of speech are convoluted" but in which "truth has not yet been separated from falsehood," and they wrote that although the regime had called for the dissolution of the samurai status, it was their duty as soldiers of the Patriot's Lament Party to ensure that the people of the nation rose themselves in fealty to the imperial state.

³⁰⁶ Tokutomi, *Saga no ran*, p. 21.

The manifesto is often taken as a form of “conservatism,” but to understand it as “conservative” is to obfuscate the nature of the problems it tried to resolve.³⁰⁷ At its heart, the Patriot’s Lament manifesto rallied behind a notion of duty and of honor and against a notion of radical equality. The samurai, they argued, bore a particular set of duties because of their heritage and because of their status in society to lead the nation as a whole. In a world where “avenues of speech were convoluted” and “truth not separated yet from falsehood,” in which violence lurked at the very core of society, it needed to fall on a particular band of people to resolve the crisis of justice. In this sense, the Patriot’s Lament drew from the past but to resolve a crisis wrought by revolution: who, in a nation now united as subjects of an Emperor, in which knowledge itself was in crisis, could take the helm of the nation? The government lacked the ability to do so, and so it needed to fall on them. It is here, in these contrasting manifestos, that we find the ideological contradictions historians emphasize in the Saga Rebellion—the union of a radical imperial-enlightenment faction with a band of men intent seemingly on preserving their singular role as samurai in a crisis of global knowing.

But the contradictions were not so stark. All inveighed against a regime of “oligarchic absolutism,” no doubt, but they all reflected the underlying fact that that regime could not handle the crisis of justice that had overcome it, that men had now taken justice into their own hands, especially insofar as the state could not manage the challenges to justice coming from abroad.

Historical contingencies rendered the ideology of the Patriot’s Lament largely subordinate to the plans of Etō Shinpei. Their discontent provided Etō with a valuable reservoir of restiveness into which he could tap to advance his own rather different agenda. How he did so

³⁰⁷ For an example of the characterization as “conservative,” see Tokutomi, *Saga no ran*, p. 22.

is obscure. We now encounter, in the run-up to war, a series of events whose cause and effect, and whose very veracity, remain intensely controversial.

A ‘strange telegram’

Etō returned to his home domain of Saga in early 1874 to lead an already formed Invade Korea Party to rebel against the regime from which he defected. Or did he?

Mōri Toshihiko tells a radically different story. Etō returned to Saga, he claims, not to lend his energies to the Invade Korea Party but rather to establish a democratic civil rights organization, just as Itagaki had in Kōchi at the exact same moment.³⁰⁸ Tokutomi Sohō, writing decades earlier, does not go this far, but he acknowledges that historical evidence is inadequate to conclude that Etō already had designs for rebellion when he set out for Saga—but he claims that we cannot say that Etō went to Saga to suppress disorder, either.³⁰⁹

Etō’s own claim in a document by his hand at the end of December 1873 was that he was returning because he was “regularly afflicted with many illnesses” and was “extremely exhausted,” needing to go home to “maintain his health.”³¹⁰ But a fellow Saga clansman claims that he visited Etō shortly before Etō returned to Saga and asked him why he sought to return, getting a rather different answer. “Oligarchism has now run rampant, and it is as if we are now seeing a second Tokugawa bakufu; today is the day when men of will must bestir themselves and bring about a Second Restoration (*daini no ishin*),” he claims Etō said.³¹¹ Would this Second Restoration come about by force or civil advocacy? Many in the regime, including Ōkuma

³⁰⁸ Mōri, *Bakumatsu Ishin to Saga-han*, Kindle version loc. 2519

³⁰⁹ Tokutomi, *Saga no ran*, p. 30

³¹⁰ Tokutomi, *Saga no ran*, p. 33

³¹¹ Tokutomi, *Saga no ran*, p. 40

Shigenobu and Itagaki Taisuke, had fears.³¹² Etō allegedly told Ōkuma that he was returning to Saga to help suppress restive forces there, to which Ōkuma allegedly replied, “There is a saying: he who goes to steal mummies himself becomes a mummy (*miira tori ga miira ni naru*).”³¹³

Regardless of what motivated Etō Shinpei to return to Saga at the end of January, the situation radically escalated at the beginning of February. Let us first survey the most rudimentary facts of what happened.

On February 3, a telegram arrived at the Home Ministry announcing a crisis in Saga. Mōri notes that the telegram is oddly dated February 4.³¹⁴ It read:

SAMURAI AFFILIATES SAGA PREFECTURE – ASSEMBLE AT TEMPLE –
LOUDLY PROCLAIM INVADE KOREA ARGUMENT – GAINING VIGOR DAILY
– LAST NIGHT CLOSE IN ON ONOGUMI – OFFICERS (*tedai*) ALL FLED NONE
REMAINING.³¹⁵

The Onogumi was a money dealer charged with managing prefectural financial affairs, and somebody had evidently raided their office and tried to steal their money.

In direct response to this telegram, Ōkubo Toshimichi sent his own telegram commanding the Kumamoto garrison, the central government’s main military force in Kyushu, to enter Saga and crush the rising Saga resistance. Sent on February 5, it reached Tani Tatewaki, head of the Kumamoto garrison, the following day.³¹⁶

³¹² Tokutomi, *Saga no ran*, p. 42

³¹³ Tokutomi, *Saga no ran*, p. 41

³¹⁴ Mōri, *Bakumatsu Ishin to Saga-han*, Kindle version loc. 2576

³¹⁵ Telegrams are reproduced in Ochiai Hiroki, “Saga no ran to jōhō,” in Sasaki Suguru ed., *Meiji Ishin ki no seiji bunka* (Kyoto: Shibunkaku shuppan, 2005), p. 180.

³¹⁶ Ochiai, “Saga no ran to jōhō,” pp. 182-183

Ōkubo Toshimichi dispatched Iwamura Takatoshi, the younger brother of Saga governor Iwamura Michitoshi, to replace his older brother as the governor of the prefecture and help quell unrest. And Sanjō Sanetomi called on Shima Yoshitake to go and help suppress the Patriot's Lament forces. It is possible that the Patriot's Lament Party had specifically requested that Shima come down and be their leader. Shima and the younger Iwamura boarded the same ship to Kyushu on February 7.

Shima, it is said across virtually all narratives of the Saga Rebellion, had no intention to start a rebellion when he embarked for Saga. But after encountering the supposed heavy-handedness and snootiness of the younger Iwamura aboard the ship, who was incidentally there with him, he decided to defect the other side.³¹⁷

Shima arrived in Nagasaki on February 11, where he met with Etō and decided to combine their forces to combat the government armies under the leadership of Iwamura, arriving from Tokyo, and Tani, arriving from Kumamoto. This decision was in direct contradiction to the purpose for which he had been dispatched to Saga. Shima and Etō returned to Saga on February 14. On February 15, the younger Iwamura led the Kumamoto garrison into Saga Castle. The following day, the battle began.

The narrative defies belief. There are three major curiosities. First, as Mōri Toshihiko emphasizes, is the telegram that went from Fukuoka to Tokyo on February 3 communicating the raid on the Onogumi. Second, and related, is the speed with which the entire situation descended into armed conflict. Third is the role of Shima in the battle. Each of these problems sheds light on the nature of imperial enlightenment.

³¹⁷ It appears that this idea originates in Matono, *Etō Nanpaku*, v. 2, pp. 431-432

Mōri Toshihiko reads in what he calls the ‘strange telegram’ of February 3 a conspiracy. He claims that nothing in the telegram was so alarming as to justify the exorbitant cost of sending the message by that new and costly medium. It reported no actual damages or injuries. And it is odd, he thinks, that the telegram was sent from the neighboring Fukuoka prefecture. Cause and effect are confusingly out of proportion, Mōri claims: the attack on the Onogumi did not justify an entire military dispatch from Kumamoto.

From these suspicions, Mōri proceeds to place the blame for the entire Saga crisis on Ōkubo Toshimichi. There was no real Saga rebellion to Mōri: rather, the rebellion was in fact a crisis deliberately precipitated by Ōkubo Toshimichi to wipe out his adversary Etō Shinpei. He uncovers the specific document from the Central Ministry dated February 4 commanding the deputy governor of Saga to suppress the Invade Korea faction by military force. The document, Mōri notes, did not mention the Onogumi, the ostensible cause for the military dispatch of the Kumamoto garrison; Ōkubo justified the military response through what Mōri calls the “flimsy” reason of crushing those who wanted to invade Korea.³¹⁸

Mōri thus flips the Saga Rebellion entirely around: the question to him is not why Etō Shinpei rebelled against the Meiji state but “why Ōkubo turned the power of the state into his personal plaything,” why he was so desperate to wipe out Etō “to the point of sacrificing the lives of so many young people” in a war.³¹⁹ “An answer is not easy to come by,” he writes, but he lets on, “I cannot help but think that it was because Ōkubo became captive to a ferocious sense of jealousy toward Etō.” He speculates that Ōkubo suffered from a “sense of inferiority” as he became aware of the “brilliant talent” of Etō.

³¹⁸ Mōri, *Bakumatsu Ishin to Saga-han*, Kindle version loc. 2608.

³¹⁹ Mōri, *Bakumatsu Ishin to Saga-han*, Kindle version loc. 2691

Mōri's account is sensationalist, polemical; blaming Ōkubo Toshimichi is part of his hagiographic attempt both to rescue the reputation of Etō Shinpei and to paint the defecting side of the Meiji schism as innocent. But we need not dismiss the essential point Mōri makes because of the tendentious way he makes it. Even if his conspiracy theory seems wildly beyond the pale, we should take seriously his intuition that something is rather odd about the way in which the entire Saga crisis escalated.

The oddity of what Mōri calls the “strange telegram” of February 3 lies not so much in the content as in the medium itself. As Tanaka Nobuyoshi explains, the telegraph was, along with railroads, maritime cargo, and the postal service, one of the four great new technologies introduced in the early Meiji period.³²⁰ But if historians have placed tremendous emphasis on the railroad as a symbol and carrier of Japanese modernity, they have not adequately acknowledged how the telegraph dramatically disrupted Japanese life. Telegraph lines were first established between Tokyo and Yokohama in the ninth month of 1869, and public use began in the last month of that year, a full three years before railroads and a year before the postal service. The telegraph line between Tokyo and Nagasaki was established in February 1873. A telegraph station was then opened in Nagasaki in April, followed by stations in Kokura, Fukuoka, and Saga in October. The telegraph was then extended to Kumamoto in March 1875—and, as we will see in the following chapter, it was deliberately targeted and destroyed in the Shinpūren Rebellion of 1876. In 1874, the command to the Kumamoto garrison to invade Saga could not go directly to Kumamoto yet.³²¹

³²⁰ All this information from Tanaka Nobuyoshi, *Denpō ni miru Saga no ran, Shinpūren no ran, Akizuki no ran* (Kumamoto: Kumamoto insatsu shikō, 1996), p. 1.

³²¹ This point from Ochiai, “Saga no ran to jōhō,” p. 201.

What is striking about the telegram of February 3, then, is not why it blew a small incident out of proportion but the very fact that it could: just six months earlier, before October 1873, the very means by which a panicked message could, within a few hours, arrive in Tokyo from Kyushu and spark war were unavailable. And following that first “strange telegram,” the entirety of the Saga Rebellion was telegraphed back and forth between Saga and Tokyo, a phenomenon that would have been impossible before the schism of 1873. In a remarkable coincidence—though perhaps not really a coincidence if we consider the underlying intellectual problems—the Meiji government split the exact month that telegraph technology became available in Kyushu.

Multiple competing ideologies had all coalesced in various factions in Saga after the schism of the Meiji regime in 1873. Each faction responded to the crisis of global ideas. Some, enraged by the flattening of status distinctions and the construction of a national civil society, demanded the reconstruction of a quasi-fictive past in which samurai stood duty-bound as guardians of the realm. Some, enraged by the fecklessness of the Meiji regime in thwarting “indignities” from abroad that emerged, somewhat contradictorily, from a Korean counter-enlightenment and from Western violations of Japanese sovereign law, called for an invasion of Korea and the defense of the sanctity of the Emperor. Together, they starkly represented the reality that the Meiji government, now split, could not manage the realm of intellectual and ideational life even if it could sustain geopolitical sovereignty over the realm. Then it was the swift introduction of a foreign technology that accelerated the pace at which these various ideas about the clashed with one another, precipitating the realm of intellectual conflict into the realm of war. Regardless of whether Ōkubo or Etō started the war, their clash became a war because

the temporal frame in which conflict occurred narrowed dramatically: information that once took days to move from Saga to Tokyo now took hours.

As ideas accelerated, becoming endowed with a certain velocity themselves, truth became elusive and obfuscated, and order became difficult to maintain without the use of force. Indeed, Ochiai Hiroki, who examines the Saga Rebellion by considering the information the central regime in Tokyo had about it, has argued that the Saga Rebellion was revolutionary in its particular use of new technologies, not only the telegraph but also steam ships (*kisen*), the means by which Shima quickly scurried down from Tokyo to Nagasaki before the panic over the Onogumi raid could die down. In this context, Ochiai makes a different claim about the “strange telegram” of 1873. He believes that the attack on the Onogumi was not committed by the Invade Korea faction at all but rather by the Patriot’s Lament Party. The telegram sent to Tokyo was factually wrong, he argues, possibly because the people at the Onogumi themselves mistook what was happening around them. Ochiai sees the Saga crisis as having nothing to do, then, with invading Korea. It was rather a crisis over samurai stipends. The stipends, once paid in rice, had been changed into cash payments the previous year, in 1873. Rapid inflation in the cost of rice impoverished samurai and spurred them to demand a return to payments in kind. The Patriot’s Lament Party, he writes, raided the financial institution as part of their dispute with the government over their stipends.³²² Amid confusion, the message telegraphed to the central regime became that people were causing disorder and calling for the invasion of Korea.

The telegrams that went back and forth between Kyushu and the imperial capital over the course of the Saga Rebellion testify to the struggle of managing the speed of the modern age and the unreliability of knowledge that that speed engendered. The last telegram sent directly from

³²² Ochiai, “Saga no ran to jōhō,” p. 181. He cites the scholarship of Tsutsumi Keijirō on this point.

Saga to Tokyo went out on the evening of February 15, just before the rebels seized Saga Castle and thwarted further government information-gathering. Its last words described a state of “great commotion” in the city.³²³ “WOMEN CHILDREN FLED,” it explained. But telegrams continued to ascend to Tokyo, now sent from Fukuoka. At 10 am on February 15, a counselor in the Fukuoka prefectural government announced to the Home Ministry the opening of hostilities in Saga. The telegraph arrived at the ministry four hours later. The following day another telegraph mentioned “WORD” whose “TRUTH STILL UNCLEAR” that “GOVERNOR IWAMURA KILLED IN BATTLE.” (The rumors were false.)³²⁴ The Saga Rebellion marked a fundamental and seemingly irrevocable change in the nature of warfare in Japanese history: now the central government could have almost real-time updates on what was unfolding at the battlefield. And it had to make quicker decisions based on information whose veracity it did not have time to check.

If we ask not what the motives of Ōkubo and Etō were but the conditions under which they formulated and operated on those motives, the Saga Rebellion becomes clearer. Whether Ōkubo was fomenting or thwarting war, the heavy-handedness of his response reveals a clear sense of the volatility of the Meiji regime. The military threat of the Saga Rebellion was relatively minor. The more important threat operated at the level of thought: the potency of the argument that the civil sphere must mobilize behind an overseas imperialist war, an argument that spurred the Saga Rebellion and that portended to explode into something more widespread. The defection of Etō Shinpei revealed the reality that the Meiji regime existed only as one element in a national battleground of ideas, one that could be challenged and resisted by the civil sphere. It might have been that Ōkubo was personally vindictive in his desire to destroy Etō, but

³²³ Ochiai, “Saga no ran to jōhō,” p. 188.

³²⁴ Ochiai, “Saga no ran to jōhō,” p. 189.

that intense jealousy signaled the more important problem that he needed to use military force to crush ideological difference and win over its ascendancy.

And in it is in the acceleration of the crisis of justice that we find the significance of Shima, who jumped on a ship from Tokyo and declared war on the regime that dispatched him in the first place.

It defies belief that Shima had fully agreed to suppress an uprising in Saga until he boarded a ship, got into a fight with the to-be governor, and decided to switch sides and fight against the very government that sent him. Shima himself made this dubious claim when on trial; Matono, and many historians after him, take his courtroom testimony as a credible indication that Shima and Etō had not planned a rebellion against the state. Shima, in this view, became a victim to the forces of Patriot's Lament Party.³²⁵ But surely the testimony that Shima gave just before his execution, and after he had already gone through with his rebellion, cannot necessarily be taken as a truthful account of his motives before the war. Indeed, Kume Kunitake has written that Ōkubo's decision to dispatch Iwamura Toshimichi alarmed Kido Kōin to the extent that Kido considered it "an error" that endangered the security of the nation-state itself³²⁶; to those at the time, the decision to dispatch Shima to Saga was an alarming one. Even if we accept that there was a change of heart on the boat ride from Tokyo to Kyushu—and that seems to be apocryphal—there had to have been long-standing reasons for Shima to band with Etō against the regime, reasons of which other members of the regime were aware. And those reasons lay certainly not only in his disdain for the ascendancy of Inoue Kaoru and his faction of Chōshū men but also in his imperial enlightenment.

³²⁵ Matono, *Etō Nanpaku*, v. 2, pp. 432-437.

³²⁶ Matono, *Etō Nanpaku*, v. 2, p. 442.

We find substantial common ground between Shima and Etō at the level of thought, then: not only in their shared dedication to the Emperor, as Danny Orbach has argued, but in their common consensus of the need for a Japanese expansionist state, their desire to thwart the aggression of foreign military powers, and most of all, their agreement that the Japanese state needed to accelerate the process of building a civil society by using the social models of the West. It might have been that the ideological clash was but a sublimation of this petty personal politics, but those personal grievances expressed themselves through a competition of global ideas on the domestic scene that rapidly descended into murderous violence.

The people's Meiji Restoration

With Shima now in Kyushu and allied with Etō Shinpei, on February 13, the Invade Korea faction formally declared war on the Meiji regime with a sweeping manifesto written by Etō. To Etō, the point of this war was a fight for civil rights.³²⁷

“If the rights of the nation (*kokken*) are ensured,” Etō wrote, “then will civil rights (*minken*) be achieved as a result.” It was according to this principle of the inextricability of national and civil rights, he claimed, that questions of war and peace had to be decided and that agreements on trade and maritime affairs had to be made. And in Korea lay a case in which the nation had to wage a war on the international scene to preserve its own rights and the rights of the civil sphere: “If for a day its rights (*kenri*) are lost, then a country ceases to be that country.”

He continued: “If men are spat on and they do not feel indignation, if they are flogged and they do not feel enraged, then though they may have wives and children thereafter, they [those wives and children] will certainly be disparaged (*keibu*).” This disparagement, he wrote,

³²⁷ Subsequent quotations from the war manifesto from Matono, *Etō Nanpaku*, v. 2, pp. 443-445

was what happened when “a person loses his rights” (*kenri wo ushinau*). Korea had figuratively spat on and flogged the Japanese state when it rebuffed the Japanese emissary and humiliated Japanese representatives. “The Emperor on high all the way to the masses below have been dealt a great humiliation without precedent.” By not fighting back against Korea, “two or three ministers” in the Meiji government, as if they “had been spat on and flogged without being enraged,” brought disgrace on the nation and made it lose its national rights (*kokken o ushinau*), inviting the derogation of “every country overseas,” and causing “not only years” of ongoing damage to international relations, to legal affairs, and commerce but also damage to the spirit of the nation itself. And now that war abroad had been obstructed, it was time for war at home.

The people were ready to lead a second Meiji Restoration. Therefore, he wrote, his “men of common spirit” had plotted, “for the Emperor on high, and for the masses below (*okuchō no tame*),” to extirpate the great humiliation that was brought upon them. This was “their duty as people among the masses” (*jinmin no gimu*) to each and all uphold the “great principle” of the nation. They would raise arms just as Chōshū did “the other year,” he wrote. They were determined to avenge the indignity (*burei*) that Korea had inflicted on their nation, and they were willing each and all to give their lives for this sake. Insofar as the nation existed for the people, and the people stood as one with the Emperor in common will against of the evils of government bureaucrat, they stood ready to wage a popular war of imperialism against a foreign power.

It is tempting to read Etō as hypocritical or to claim that he simply did not understand civil rights well enough when he wrote that asserting the rights of the nation was the means by which civil rights could be achieved. But Etō was no naïf. We have already seen how throughout his body of work, he demonstrated a consistent belief in the strength of the civil sphere as a

bulwark against foreign imperialism. In a world of competing empires, preserving civil rights required a strong nation that stood up to foreign aggression.

Etō's right-hand man Yamanaka Ichirō went on a reconnaissance mission around Saga Castle on February 15 to scope out prospects for war, and hostilities opened the early morning of the February 16.³²⁸ By the February 19 the joint forces of Etō and Shima had seized control of Saga Castle.

The rebels sent out a flurry of secret letters revealing their anticipation that their actions were just the start of a widespread national revolution and even a cataclysmic global war. Shima wrote a sweeping manifesto decrying the “tyranny” (*sen'ō*) of the Meiji regime, lambasting the government for driving Shimazu, Saigō, Itagaki, Gotō, and Etō out of the regime, for becoming “intoxicated on the customs of the barbarians,” and for establishing “an unprecedented government of evil and a law of violence.” He foreboded that the “airs of savagery that [the government] had obscenely aroused” would spread from Hizen to Higo, Satsuma, and then Tosa. Shima wrote that with Etō, his forces planned not just to seize Korea but then to make China and Russia their vassals (*jimboku*).³²⁹ Etō, for his part, wrote to Itagaki, Soejima, and Gotō on February 19 updating them on the latest military developments and of the rebel armies in seizing Saga Castle. Etō and Shima were not operating as lone renegades, sad rebels who failed to internalize the peaceful modes of protest of Itagaki and the other signatories of the parliamentary proposal.

But then came the regime counteroffensive. Etō and Shima were no match for the Meiji military. State forces crushed the slipshod Patriot's Lament and Invade Korea armies and entered

³²⁸ Matono, *Etō Nanpaku*, v. 2, p. 457

³²⁹ Matono, *Etō Nanpaku*, v. 2, pp. 464-465

Saga Castle by March 1. At nine in the evening, a telegram arrived in Tokyo for the Central Ministry: “APPEARS REBELS DEFEATED – WILL REPORT DETAILS TOMORROW.”³³⁰

The rebels had managed to put up no more than two weeks of military resistance. The imperial army expected to find Shima and Etō dead in the castle or at least waiting to be arrested.³³¹

But they were not there.

Etō had banded with Yamanaka Ichirō, Kagawa Keigorō, and others from the Invade Korea Party, hopped on a fishing boat the night of February 23, and fled south.³³² He ran away so that the revolution would run away with him.

At two in the afternoon on March 2, a telegram with the “details” promised to Tokyo went out from Hiroshima, citing information from home ministry officials now stationed in Fukuoka: “GREAT REBEL ETŌ SHINPEI HAS RUN AWAY.”

Etō made it from Kumamoto through present-day Miyazaki and Ehime before he was finally nabbed on his way from Kōchi to Tokushima. He was put on trial. And Ōkubo Toshimichi telegraphed the Central Ministry in Tokyo from Saga at 9 am on April 13, 1874. “JUST NOW LEAD REBELS ETŌ SHIMA DECAPITATED.”³³³

Etō Shinpei and Shima Yoshitake were dead. Saga was pacified. But the struggle over global ideas in Japan, to which their vision of building an enlightened Japanese civil society, of invading Korea, and of establishing Japan as the leader of all of Asia responded, was carried forward in the next Kyushu region to tumble into war: Kumamoto.

³³⁰ Tanaka, *Denpō*, p. 18

³³¹ Matono, *Etō Nanpaku*, v. 2, pp. 487-488

³³² Tokutomi, *Saga no ran*, pp. 151-152; Tokutomi 251

³³³ Ochiai, *Saga no ran to jōhō*, p. 199; Tanaka, *Denpō*, p. 21

Chapter Five

COUNTER-ENLIGHTENMENT

If the Japanese imperial enlightenment originated in a particular conception of globalization and individualization, in a belief in the positive effects of universal reasoned individualism and globalism, then it would seem reasonable to anticipate that other conceptions of the relationship among self, state, and world were not only intellectually viable but also historically attestable. Indeed they were. Furious movements in 1870s Kumamoto primarily but not limited to that of the Shinpūren, the “League of Divine Wind,” arose to stem the tide of individualism and globalism.

The Shinpūren, or Jinpūren, was a counter-enlightenment organization in Kumamoto that led a failed revolutionary movement in 1876. The band sought to restore a phantasmal past in which the individual lay subordinate to the community and in which notions of globalism and universalist individualism were rejected. Calling for transcendental autarkic nationalism and supposedly divine heteronomous justice, they led a rebellion that recognized that things, and ideas, had changed so completely since the start of the Meiji Revolution that to sustain the phantasm that nothing had changed from a world of bygone glory, everything would have to change.

It is only recently that historians of Europe have begun to pay full attention to the extent to which the European Enlightenment, and especially the French Enlightenment, produced a vigorous intellectual and indeed physical backlash. As Darrin McMahon has emphasized in a pioneering study, histories of the European Enlightenment have almost always told the intellectual past through those in favor of Enlightenment ideals. But there were many in history

who decried the ideas of Voltaire and Rousseau, to the extent that a vigorous Counter-Enlightenment developed inextricably alongside the Enlightenment in France.³³⁴

McMahon, seemingly following convention, identifies Isaiah Berlin as the original historian who explored counter-enlightenment (*Gegenaufklärung*) thought and indeed popularized the term, but he explains that Berlin saw the Counter-Enlightenment as a largely German affair in which men denounced the alleged “rationalist, universalist, and ahistorical mechanism” of the Enlightenment and opposed it with a “relativist, historicist, vitalist, organic, and irrational” strain of thought. This irrationalism, McMahon stresses, was not a vestige of a bygone past but in itself engendered by the revolutionary nature of the Enlightenment.³³⁵

While not rejecting the insights of Berlin, McMahon searches for a more capacious understanding of the Counter-Enlightenment. Methodologically, he begins not with abstract definitions of Enlightenment doctrine as Berlin does but by examining what the Counter-Enlightenment itself characterized as its adversaries in the Enlightenment. And empirically, by uncovering a counter-enlightenment in France, the birthplace of the Enlightenment, he makes clear that the opposition to the Enlightenment cannot be analytically separated from the Enlightenment itself: both emerged and responded to shared problems. McMahon warns that to turn “a deaf ear to the ‘cries of horror’” that these “anti-*philosophe* polemicists” had “uttered throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is to fail to understand the central context in which Enlightenment movements throughout Europe developed: that of militant struggle.”³³⁶

³³⁴ Darrin McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

³³⁵ Darrin McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*, pp. 8-9.

³³⁶ McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*, p. 12

What is true of the French Enlightenment is true no less of the Japanese: we cannot understand the Japanese Enlightenment without recognizing “cries of horror” from the Counter-Enlightenment that accompanied it—and the militant struggle it had to try to vanquish, notably in the 1876 Shinpūren Rebellion.

We might characterize the Shinpūren as making three important claims, claims that resembled the “relativist, historicist, vitalist, organic, and irrational” critique of the “rationalist, universalist, and ahistorical” Enlightenment developed in Europe. First, the Shinpūren rejected faith in the individual as an arbiter of right and wrong in the global competition of ideas. They argued that knowing must be surrendered to forces and beings transcending the individual. They situated the primary locus of being in the visceral bonds of community, not in the rational faculties of the individual. And through the community they pretended to surrender the self to the divine. In this sense, they conflated individualism with enlightenment rationalism, diminishing both. But ironically, as we will see, in this call for the precedence of both communitarianism and mysticism, they reaffirmed the primacy of the individual. Second, the Shinpūren opposed globalism along with individualism and rationalism, locating the community as an essentially national entity not bifurcated between civil society and state but rather as a divinely unified whole. Reading enlightenment as globalism, they argued that that which was foreign undermined the community and the mystical relationships it engendered and therefore had to be rejected. Third, following the first two claims, they produced and elevated the national past to a sacrosanct position. If their adversaries in the imperial enlightenment often regarded Japanese history as an inadequate guide to the present, the Shinpūren decried the treatment of history as a mere object of rational examination and located in the past an essential spirit of mysticism and communitarianism. These intellectual responses to the crisis of globalism and individualism, to

justice and universalism, led to a war of arms because the Shinpūren understood that they were being defeated in the war of ideas.

Let us trace the rise of Shinpūren counter-enlightenment from the irrationalism advocated by the spiritual leader Hayashi Ōen, to a vigorously anti-universalist critique of imperialism his followers developed in response to the invasion of Taiwan in 1874, through the banning of swords in 1876, and finally to holy war at the end of that year.

The purity of the divine wind

“Our nation had transformed,” explained one account of the Shinpūren written in 1911.³³⁷ “The trappings and customs of civilization had, with the force of a torrential river, rained down to the feet. Our Eight Islands of Akitsu,” an ancient name for Japan, “is the country of the gods,” the account averred, and yet proponents of civilization had “eliminated the *terakoya* schools of former times and built elementary schools and then normal schools and ad hoc middle schools. And the old castle became the site of the prefectural office (*kenchō*), and adjacent to it the Western Academy and the hospital were founded, and with an introduction from the Nagasaki missionary [Guido] Verbeck, the American [Leroy Lansing] Janes was hired as a teacher in the school and the Dutchman known as Mansu [Constant George van Mansveldt] as head of the hospital.” Kumamoto disgusted. “They set up telegraph lines up and down the entire area,” the account continued. “They set up Western-style barber shops; noisome, bloody meat dangles at the stores; people wear Western-style clothes and don hats; they even wear shoes that make eerie

³³⁷ Harada Tōshū, *Shinpūren* (Tokyo: Ryūbunkan, 1911), p. 22–23.

kyu kyu sounds; and they have become such that they mimic the ways of the hideous barbarians, the abominable foreigners.”

“Their anger is extraordinary,” the account continued, now referring to the Shinpūren rebels. “When they encounter such people [who mimic Western practice], they cover their noses with their sleeves, saying those people reek of foreigners. And when they pass under the telegraph lines, they spread their fans over their heads and exclaim ‘Sorcery! Sorcery!’”

Such stories of the Shinpūren rebels abound. Lore had it that Tominaga Saburō, one samurai rebel, went to the prefectural office of Shirakawa, a prefecture that was merged with other prefectures and finally renamed as Kumamoto in 1876, to collect the rewards his brother Morikuni had earned for accomplishments in the Meiji rebellion. Saburō received paper cash as a prize. But paper money was a form of currency modeled after that of the West. Saburō picked up the money with chopsticks. Direct physical contact with Western things would defile his being.³³⁸

Noguchi Tomo’o was a particularly devout rebel. When he went to Tokyo to fight on behalf of his feudal lord in the Boshin War, he did so carrying a gun. But guns were dirty Western things, so he paused on his way at the Yodogawa, the river running from Lake Biwa to Osaka, and purified his firearm as well as his *haori* top in its waters. About a decade later, as technological change overran Kumamoto and a telegraph station was installed, Noguchi refused to walk under telegraph lines. Telegraphs were a Western invention. When he went each day to offer devotions at the temple of Seijōkō, he took a road with no telegraph lines. But sometimes he could not avoid them. He used the nifty fan trick to prevent defilement.

³³⁸ Kobayakawa Hideo, *Kesshi Kumamoto Keishintō* (Tokyo: Ryūbunkan, 1910), pp. 22-23. These stories also appear in Mishima Yukio, *Runaway Horses*, trans. Michael Gallagher (New York: Knopf, 1973), pp. 70–71.

Noguchi was always sure to carry salt with him in his sleeve pockets. If he met a Buddhist priest, or someone in Western clothes, or some sort of thing related to death or impurity, he scattered salt to prevent the pollution of his person. He did not drink alcohol or eat meat and other cooked things. Ōtaguro Tomo'o, the leader of the Shinpūren, was the same: for a hundred days he would go without eating cooked things, and he would fast for three weeks on end.

We do not know how true these stories are, and indeed much of the struggle of studying the Shinpūren is that sources are scarce and seemingly mythologized. We will consider the reasons for this scarcity and the methodological strategies historians have used to address this problem throughout this chapter. The sources that do appear, which form the basis of this chapter, are of a few varieties. First, we have the written records of Hayashi Ōen, the intellectual and spiritual leader of the Shinpūren, and the testimony and recollections of his students. Accompanying those are commentary on Hayashi that his students wrote. Second, we have documents that were submitted by individuals in the Shinpūren to the Meiji state as petitions, which offer a window into their intellectual world. Finally, we have wills, poems, manifestos, and other ideological and literary texts the Shinpūren wrote for themselves and for their close associates and relatives.

Many of these sources appear in bound primary-source anthologies, some of which were put together during the Second World War and have not been republished since. Many are reproduced, too, in secondary sources written during the prewar era. One major anthology comes from Tokutomi Sohō, who produced a detailed secondary account and primary-source collection relying on the scholarship of Ishihara Shiko'o, the son of one of the Shinpūren rebels. Tokutomi himself belonged to the Enlightenment faction of Kumamoto youth at precisely the same

moment the Shinpūren were active. The only two major works of secondary scholarship in the postwar era appear from Kumamoto intellectuals Araki Seishi in 1971 and Watanabe Kyōji in 1972.³³⁹ Popular and often nationalist works of historical fiction abound. Both Araki's and Watanabe's are prodigious works of scholarship; Araki's is relatively empirical, whereas Watanabe's is a work of spectacularly imaginative historical thinking and scholarship. Both act as guides for this study, which converses extensively with their interpretations and follows their general outline of the sequence of events and ideas leading to the Shinpūren while weighting various factors differently. In its empirical dimensions, this study does not depart substantially from the work of Araki and Watanabe.

The depth of this limited extant scholarship notwithstanding, the Shinpūren remains shrouded in mystique and myth. Whether apocryphal or not, the tales of Shinpūren purify their gain potency from their ability to encapsulate in vivid allegory what is often taken as the historical significance of the rebellion of 1876. Samurai, historians generally say, were unhappy with the revocation of their long-held social privileges and deeply hostile to the Westernization of their realm. Among the rebellions, the Shinpūren seems to stand out as the “purest” case of men clinging to a bygone era and trying to resist the modernization and Westernization of their society. This interpretation bears some legitimacy. But the notion of “purity” only made sense in the context of the thoroughgoing modernity, and the thoroughgoing globality, of the age, only in light of the Japanese Enlightenment thought and the depth of a desire to overcome the globality

³³⁹ Araki Seishi, *Shinpūren jikki* (Tokyo: Shin jinbutsu ōraisha, 1971). Watanabe Kyōji, *Shinpūren to sono jidai* (Fukuoka: Ashi shobō, 1972) and (Tokyo: Yōsensha, 2006). The 2006 reprint excludes a critique of Araki Seishi that Watanabe had written in the 1972 version. Citations to both versions appear throughout this chapter; the year is therefore included in subsequent citations. In English, see a compelling study by John M. Rogers, “Divine Destruction: The Shinpūren Rebellion of 1876,” in *New Directions in the Study of Meiji Japan*, ed. Helen Hardacre and Adam L. Kern (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 408–439. Rogers places particular emphasis on contingent personal and social factors, such as career frustration and personal “disorientation and frustration,” to account for participation in the rebellion.

that had overcome them. The past that the Shinpūren invented to fight against the revolution into globality never really existed: it was itself the product of a modern global age. To explore this claim, let us begin with their intellectual origins.

Anti-intellectualism

The spiritual and intellectual progenitor of the Shinpūren was a man by the title of Hayashi Ōen. Born to a samurai family in Higo, or Kumamoto, in the tenth year of the Kansei era, 1798, Hayashi attended the Jishūkan, the domainal Confucian academy, but he dropped out.³⁴⁰ He was “a man of strange appearance,” in the words of Kimura Hōsen 邦舟, one his students and a chronicler of his life. “His lower lip drooped and covered his jaw,” and his “pupils shone like torches” in his “eagle eyes.” “His godly spirit overwhelmed people,” it was said. “With one look at him, a man knew that he was not an ordinary person.”³⁴¹

The image of Hayashi as a mystic, an inscrutable being who transcended rational thought, straddles the history of the Shinpūren, or the image his disciples had of him at the time, and the historiography of the incident, or how historians have interpreted him. Tokutomi Sohō contrasted his mysticism with the rationalism of Yokoi Shōnan, his contemporary in Kumamoto at the time and the progenitor of the rival Practical Learning faction (*jitsugakutō*). The two, he wrote, were like dark twins who emerged from the Confucian domainal academy.³⁴² “Yokoi had a fixed

³⁴⁰ The writings both of Hayashi and of Kimura are compiled in Hayashi Ōen, *Ōen sensei ikō*, ed. Kametarō Kodama (Kumamoto: Seichōsha, 1981). The 1981 version is apparently a reprint, though with different pagination, of Hayashi Ōen, *Ōen sensei ikō* (Kumamoto: Kawashima shoten, 1943). The citations here are to the 1981 version. For this passage, see Kimura, “Hayashi Ōen sensei den,” in *Ōen sensei ikō*, p. 293. See also Tokutomi Iichirō, *Shinpūren no jihen hen*, vol. 94 of *Kindai Nihon kokumin shi* (Tokyo: Kinsei Nihon kokumin kankō kai, 1962), p. 192; Araki Seishi, *Shinpūren jikki* (Tokyo: Shin jinbutsu ōrai sha, 1971), pp. 27-28.

³⁴¹ Kimura, “Hayashi Ōen sensei den,” p. 293. See also Tokutomi, *Shinpūren*, p. 191; Watanabe (2006), *Shinpūren to sono jidai*, p. 103; Araki *Shinpūren jikki*, p. 27

³⁴² Tokutomi, *Shinpūren no jihen*, p. 219

home address in this world,” Tokutomi theorized, “whereas Hayashi had one foot in this world and the other extended into the world of the spirits.” Unlike that of Yokoi, the inspiration Hayashi instilled in his students came not from erudition but rather from his reputation of self-abnegation and complete dedication to the gods. Yokoi knew of the gods; Hayashi knew through them. Yokoi sensed the spirits; Hayashi conversed through them.³⁴³ And Ōen differed not only from his rationalist counterparts but from other men of the Nativist school, men similarly preoccupied with the gods. Whereas such luminaries of Nativist scholarship as Motoori Norinaga had explicated the ancient way, Tokutomi wrote, Ōen put it into effect.³⁴⁴ And it was by implementing the ancient way, according to Tokutomi, that Ōen exerted influence “largely without comparison over the three hundred years of the Tokugawa era.”³⁴⁵

How must we interpret an intellectual force who seemingly disavowed this-worldly intellectualism? Watanabe Kyōji draws from Tokutomi to reflect on this historical challenge. As an intellectual (*shisōka*), Ōen “causes problems,” Watanabe writes.³⁴⁶ “That he was a great intellectual leader is incontrovertible, given even just the redoubtable influence he had on his students,” Watanabe concedes. “But there is not a single person who has been able to explain, with a sort of universal persuasiveness, why it was that Hayashi was so great.”³⁴⁷

One reason is that the trail of sources Ōen has left from his own hand contradict the effect he had on his students. In a disjunction of cause and effect, the writings of Ōen seem daft. “If we look through the writings of Ōen to try to draw out his place of distinction as the master of the *Shinpūren*,” Watanabe despairs, “we will be left with nothing but disappointment.”³⁴⁸

³⁴³ Tokutomi, *Shinpūren no jihen*, pp. 216 – 217

³⁴⁴ Tokutomi, *Shinpūren no jihen*, p. 218

³⁴⁵ Tokutomi *Shinpūren no jihen*, p. 219

³⁴⁶ Watanabe, *Shinpūren to sono jidai* (2006), p. 101

³⁴⁷ Watanabe, *Shinpūren to sono jidai* (2006), p. 101

³⁴⁸ Watanabe, *Shinpūren to sono jidai* (2006), p. 102

Watanabe speculates that Ōen disdained writing, and that this disdain was entirely the point of his person. The modern intellectual, Watanabe generalizes, cannot put his faith in a specific, concrete audience with whom he can establish a particular kind of relationship, and so he must address himself to a generic reader. “Ōen was one who occupied a position undoubtedly different from that of the modern intellectual, and only in association with his students, an association in which he could put his faith, did he expound his theories,” Watanabe writes.³⁴⁹ In a burgeoning nineteenth-century national public sphere, when ideas were bandied about first in print media and books and later in newspapers and in petitions for a general reading public, Ōen forsook modern media and the public sphere in favor of the bonds of interpersonal association.

Here Watanabe gestures at another major methodological problem. Most of Hayashi’s writings come from the early part of his career. We have no significant first-hand writings from him that directly addresses intellectual matters after the arrival of Perry in 1853, precisely when Ōen’s thought evidently veers dramatically toward a radical anti-foreignism. The sources on which historians rely and that are attributed to Ōen are from conversations with his students, conversations mainly reported by Kimura. Through this problem, we glimpse into a world of master-vassal relations rather than individual equals in the public sphere: Hayashi responds to his student’s questions rather than set forth a coherent treatise, almost as Confucius does in the *Analects*. Historians writing about Ōen, including Watanabe, have little choice but to work with these limited sources.

The brilliance in Watanabe’s analysis is to return to secondary sources from the Meiji 40s, or the start of the twentieth century, to make sense of this methodological challenge.³⁵⁰ Scholars in the late Meiji period found in the shallowness, paucity, and unreliability of sources

³⁴⁹ Watanabe, *Shinpūren to sono jidai* (2006), p. 102-103

³⁵⁰ He turns primarily to Kobayakawa, *Kesshi Kumamoto Keishintō*.

not an obstruction to knowing the history of Ōen but precisely the very manifestation of his historical significance. The appeal of Ōen, his “greatness,” lay precisely in his rejection of modern intellectualism and his reliance on the irrational, the inscrutable, and the visceral. He built an affective community of hearts, not an intellectual society of minds. It was not an accident. Hayashi was not a remnant of a bygone era but a deliberate repudiation of the public sphere and its impersonal, individualist associationism.

Despite, then, Watanabe’s insistence that we cannot find the appeal of Hayashi’s person through his writings, we can. Both through his writings and through his dearth of writings, Ōen developed a shrewd strategy to deal with the crises of global modernity by abjuring rational, intellectual thought altogether and investing in visceral ties of community, a strategy that undergirded the violent rebellion of the Shinpūren. Hayashi Ōen did not and does not appear as a modern intellectual. And in that way, through his deliberate repudiation of the trappings of modern intellectualism, he was as modern an intellectual as there was.

Atavism in the globalization of knowing

Though he himself did not articulate his claims in this way, we can read Hayashi Ōen as constructing an intellectual, social, and visceral world that tried to resolve three major conundrums of Japanese modernity: the problems of self, community, and state; the problem of justice; and the problem of knowledge. Through these points, Hayashi sought resolve the problem of human freedom, a freedom engendered by globality, by calling for its curtailment.

The most fundamental idea in Hayashi's thought appears most clearly in his *Explanation of the Secret of Rising to Heaven*, a text he wrote in 1815, when he was just 19 years old.³⁵¹ The world, Hayashi explained, was in fact made of two worlds: that of the gods, and that of men. The world of the gods was eternal, one in which death did not exist. But the world of men, though it was originally created by the gods Izanagi and Izanami, was a world of death. The aim of life in this temporal world was to remain pure and undefiled so that man may rise to heaven and attain immortality in the world of the gods. That immaculacy in turn arose when a man followed the way of the gods. Hayashi quoted extensively from the *Kojiki* and the *Nihonshoki* to build his argument through extensive, indeed frustrating reliance on direct references: the frustration of reading texts from a clearly bygone time appears to be the point in and of itself of the references, an indication of how far the temporal world had drifted from an ancient divine realm and a signal that the individual must transcend his own rational faculties and surrender to the inscrutable forces of the past. To Hayashi, then, the purpose of life was to live heteronomously, to surrender individual will and thought in favor of abiding by the dictates of external forces, which allowed man to overcome the death and destruction of the contingent, temporal world.

Two important questions emerge here. The first is why. What was so wrong with being autonomously, and why must humans surrender themselves to the heavenly way? Why was it, at this historical moment, that problems of purity and defilement, of the individual curtailing his own freedom in order to preserve the sanctity of the divine, appear especially significant to Hayashi? The second question is how. If humans must follow the way of the gods, how, exactly,

³⁵¹ "Shōten hisetsu," in Hayashi Ōen, *Ōen sensei ikō*, pp. 1 – 9. The text is summarized and interpreted in Kokuryūkai, ed., *Seinan ki den*, 6 vols. (Tokyo: Kokuryūkai, 1908-1911), v. ue 2, p. 526; I have relied on this analysis while consulting the original text. See also Watanabe, *Shinpūren to sono jidai* (1972), p. 28.

did one know the way of the gods? Even if a man accepted the premise that he should exist heteronomously, how did he know the way of the gods in order to follow it?

The problem of purity and defilement, of heteronomy and autonomy, emerged precisely because modernization during the late Tokugawa era had opened up unprecedented opportunities to depart from the past. In response, Hayashi dug through the past to find the origins of this freedom. And he offered the significant intellectual innovation of providing a concrete means by which to overcome the problem of freedom and recreate the stability of external determination.

In the past, Hayashi wrote in an 1831 treatise, no foreign teachings (*ihō no kyōhō*) existed in the imperial realm of Japan, which was governed according to the way of the gods (*Shintō*).³⁵² Evidence for this, he wrote, appeared in detail in the *Kojiki* and the *Nihonshoki*. The heavens and the earth abided by divine command (*mei*), and supplication of the will of the gods (*kami no mikokoro*) preceded all other things. All Emperors since the days of the original two gods and then the days of Emperor Jimmu had venerated and abided by the divine way, and as a result, the people prospered, there were no natural disasters, and military uprisings did not occur. Even these emperors themselves, Hayashi wrote, citing a range of ancient texts including the *Manyōshū*, were gods. The means by which these divine emperors abided by the divine way involved “pacifying the land, crushing the enemies, and defeating the foreign barbarians.” Hayashi cited the specific case of Empress Jingū, the legendary empress who invaded Korea, an act she carried out in accordance with “the majesty and virtue of this way.”³⁵³ But as the nation entered into its latter days, Hayashi lamented, and as the Hōjō and the Ashikaga rose to power, later emperors degraded the divine way and acted in ways countered to its will. Now, he argued, only if men could retrieve the way of the gods then was it possible to regain peace in the world.

³⁵² Hayashi, *Ōen sensei ikō*, pp. 13-14

³⁵³ Hayashi, *Ōen sensei ikō*, p. 16.

The world Hayashi conjured up of course never existed: the notion of a pure Japan free from foreign influence was his own phantasm. But it was a potent, willful phantasm, a means of producing the nation when the nation suddenly ceased to suffice. Hayashi cited the writings of Ise Sadatake to pretend that such a use of divine will as a means of governance was unique to Japan, not a universal process. Although the Chinese, too, had their practices of venerating the gods, Ise wrote, it was Japan that governed through the divine. It was for this reason that the Japanese applied the word *matsurigoto*, or acts of worship to the gods, to the Chinese character meaning “to govern.” It was by prayer (*kigan*), rites (*shingi, saishi*), and other such ritual acts that government, as a phenomenon, occurred. The state, in its divinity, held the individual and the community under its helm through the transcendentalism of its heteronomous justice, which had to be recovered.

Ōen conflated three things that did not necessarily need to go together: the heteronomy of knowing, the past, and indigeneity. That Hayashi associated the past, the limitations on human freedom, the sanctity of the nation, and the power of the state with one another revealed the intimate connections among the changes overtaking Japan. Beneath the fantastical assertions of the dual divine creators of the world and the halcyonic world of purity, Hayashi made a historical observation that was both simple and profound. The progression of time, he essentially argued, allowed ideas from more places to enter the country. This influx of knowledge from other places destabilized the realm. And this influx of knowledge coincided with an increasing separation between state and society, between government and governed. We do not have to accept the romanticized vision of stability Hayashi conjured up of the past to recognize the legitimacy of his argument that the influx of ideas from foreign places created possibilities to know by other means, and that these possibilities in turn made the realm harder to govern.

Hayashi reflected explicitly on this modern problem of the globality of knowing in an afterword he added to his 1831 treatise.³⁵⁴ “I am not one who despises Confucianism,” Hayashi wrote; “I am one who venerates it.” He tried to convince his reader that his rejection of Confucianism was not a bigoted case of prejudice. “In the universe there is an extreme variety of Ways, and the reason I say that we cannot be limited just to Confucianism is that the people of the world cannot know the Imperial Way by taking only the teachings of Confucianism as the Way.”³⁵⁵ The story of Yao and Shun narrated in the *Shang shu*, a story about legendary sage kings, did not depict true divine kings: it belonged to the things of the present world, not of the divine worlds, which were Japanese. And inasmuch the way of the gods (*shinji*) was the beginnings or the origins (*moto*) of everything, the things of the temporal world (*genji*), Confucianism included, were mere products of those divine impetuses, not divine things in themselves.³⁵⁶ Confucianism, then, was legitimate as something belonging to this world, but the Imperial Way of the Japanese gods was a way that transcended these temporal ways, and men had to make a distinction between the two. It was not a blanket condemnation of Confucianism: it was a search for something that could transcend it.

This need to elevate something above Confucianism arose from Hayashi’s acute awareness that there is “an extreme number of ways” in the world, that there was to him no rational reason to believe that Confucianism was superior to any other systems of thought in this world. “In Greece, Socrates followed Confucius by just 100 years, and his law exalted philanthropy and based itself on the heavens (*jōten*); in its rites and laws, it largely resembles Confucianism, it is said,” Hayashi reflected. And there was more. “In India [*injia*],” he wrote,

³⁵⁴ Hayashi, *Ōen sensei ikō*, pp. 39–42 Araki emphasizes the significance of this afterword: Araki, *Shinpūren jikki*, p. 32. Watanabe discusses it in *Shinpūren to sono jidai* (1972), p. 22.

³⁵⁵ Hayashi, *Ōen sensei ikō*, p. 41, p. 66

³⁵⁶ Watanabe quotes this specific line of the *ukei* document frequently.

“there is *Heidenen*, or in other words, Buddhism. In Judea [*shutea*] there is Jesus [*Yasu*]. In Medina [*me de na fui fui*], there is Muhammad [*Mohametto*]. [...] In the country of the Russians, it is said that Greek teachings are seen as the best way to govern the people.” Hayashi swept across the world. “The five continents are vast,” he wrote. “We must not stop with Confucianism alone.” India had its four Vedas and many branches of thought; in China, too, over a hundred schools of thought with nine main streams, including Daoists and Mohists and Legalists. He proceeded to elaborate on an intellectual history of Confucianism before arriving at the conclusion, “Because Confucianists only venerate the Western lands, they know not of the ancient ways of the Imperial Kingdom.” He accused them of claiming that Japan was a land “that originally had no Way.”

Faced with this overwhelming global competition of ideas, Hayashi wondered why Confucianists could claim intellectual hegemony. How could anyone know, in a global world of ideas and a world of global ideas, that Confucius offered the best system of thought? Faced with this crisis of intellect, he sought a way out by turning to the national past and transcending intellectualism altogether. The rejection of intellectualism, then, emerged from a genuine intellectual engagement with the crisis of global knowing—and a recognition of its futility, of a need for something other than intellect to resolve intellectual problems.³⁵⁷

In this context, purity, the notion of abnegating the self and associating entirely with the way of the gods, meant something precise: extricating oneself from the competition of ideas, rejecting the powers of the individual to be able to discern right from wrong amid the helter-skelter of ideas. Hayashi opened an afterword to a treatise he wrote in 1831 by arguing that prayer and the various rites on which he expatiated were the ways of the gods and the means by

³⁵⁷ Watanabe offers a scintillating piece of analysis in this vein: see *Shinpūren to sono jidai* (2006), pp. 256-257.

which man could expunge himself from the dross and defilement of the world. “To depart from all rites (*ji* or *koto* 事) and to invoke only principle [or reason, *ri* 理], is in fact inadequate for knowing principle [itself],” he wrote.³⁵⁸ With no stable way of knowing right from wrong, the individual was incapable of determining a correct way in a world of global knowing.

The question was how to find this right way by means of rites. How did one know the way of the gods, of whom Hayashi counted some approximately eight million in existence, all with their own purposes?³⁵⁹ Here was Hayashi’s most important innovation: a concrete way of knowing through the divine.

Hayashi proposed the concept of the *ukei*, a practice and custom that was among the central parts of his ideology and later of the Shinpūren uprising.³⁶⁰ In his 1831 treatise, Hayashi presented three possible ways of calling for divine intervention from the gods and thereby knowing the divine will. The first was the *saniwa* 審神者, a rite from the Nihongi.³⁶¹ The second was the *uragoto* 卜事, a practice from the Kojiki. The third was the *ukei* 宇氣比, from the Nihongi. “By means of these three things,” Hayashi wrote, “we seek out the will (*kokoro*) of the gods and implore their injunction, and it is because these are received and put into effect that the realm is pacified and the people prosper.”³⁶² And this was the means by which enemies could be defeated, Hayashi repeatedly emphasized.

The *ukei*, Hayashi wrote in his 1849 treatise *Thoughts on the Ukei*, was the most venerable of the three rites of the gods. It was a practice that originated with Amaterasu and

³⁵⁸ Hayashi, *Ōen sensei ikō*, p. 39.

³⁵⁹ For the figure, see Hayashi, *Ōen sensei ikō*, p. 25

³⁶⁰ Watanabe covers this material, too, in *Shinpūren to sono jidai* (1972), pp. 28 – 29. To Watanabe, this specific act of finding a way of know the will of the gods is a repudiation of the philosophy of Motoori Norinaga, who claimed that people could do nothing to change the will of the gods; rather, they could interact with and influence the gods and align themselves with their way through prayer. See p. 31.

³⁶¹ Hayashi, *Ōen sensei ikō*, pp. 20-23

³⁶² Hayashi, *Ōen sensei ikō*, p. 25

Susano-o and carried down to the present day. He quoted extensively from the *Kojiki* to explain its origins. One day, Susano-o, exiled from his land, visits Amaterasu to explain where he is going on his banishment. But Amaterasu is suspicious. She believes Susano-o has come to seize her land. Susano-o insists he has “no evil will,” to which Amaterasu replies, “how do I know that your will [*kokoro*, or intentions, or heart] is pure?”³⁶³

Susano-o proposes the *ukei* as a testimony to his good intent. Susano-o and Amaterasu, divided by a river, take the *ukei*: Amaterasu takes a sword from Susano-o, and Susano-o takes jewelry from the hair of Amaterasu. From this act, five male children and three female children are born of Amaterasu and Susano-o. The rite bears witness to the purity of Susano-o.³⁶⁴ It was by means of this ancient rite, Hayashi wrote, that one could know the will of the gods: the *Nihongi* claimed, he wrote, that if one conducted the *ukei* at night and then went to sleep, the will of the gods would appear in the form of a dream.

Hayashi proceeded to quote from other sources in classical Japanese literature to explain how the *ukei* allowed men to know the success or failure of things; how it makes things die or come to life; and how it has the power to end thunder and rain and to put down even the most ferocious of creatures.³⁶⁵ It was by consulting the texts of the past, Hayashi wrote, that one could be enlightened to the purpose of the *ukei*. It is a rather tautological argument: ancient texts provide the truth of the *ukei* because ancient texts were already themselves endowed with the will of the gods, uncorrupted by foreign influence. If one is pure in doing the *ukei*, Hayashi wrote, then good would arise; if one were duplicitous, then evil would arise. If one wrote one’s

³⁶³ Hayashi, *Ōen sensei ikō*, p. 48

³⁶⁴ For this story in English, see Ō no Yasumaro, *The Kojiki: An Account of Ancient Matters*, trans. Gustav Heldt (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), pp. 19-28

³⁶⁵ Hayashi, *Ōen sensei ikō*, pp. 50-52.

prayers and approached the gods, and the gods looked propitiously upon what was being requested of them, then they would vouchsafe their aid.³⁶⁶

But as Watanabe indicates, these were texts that Hayashi wrote before the arrival of Perry; he wrote no major works after 1853.³⁶⁷ His vision of a divinely governed, pure Japanese nation, in which the state knew through the gods and the individual through a community that surrendered to the state, turned to violent after foreigners appeared on the Japanese shore—and eventually after a new government, itself intent on learning the ways of the West, seized power.

Anti-imperialist total war

The remarks on which historians including Watanabe and Araki rely to tell the history of Hayashi Ōen after 1853 emerge from writings by his student Kimura.³⁶⁸ In some ways, the recordings of Kimura are perhaps even more valuable than those of Hayashi himself precisely because it is dubious if they reflect Hayashi's "actual" speech and ideas. The writings of his student represent him through the eyes of those who followed him, or purported to follow him, after his passing. They reflect the mythical, mystical figure Hayashi stood for among those who unleashed violence under his influence, whether real or imagined. It was that myth more than the actual man that left its legacy in the form of the Shinpūren Rebellion.

Hayashi himself went to the Edo region and met with leading figures in the Mito school of anti-Westernism in 1853. Kimura suggests that a dramatic shift occurred after Hayashi came

³⁶⁶ Hayashi, *Ōen sensei ikō*, p. 59

³⁶⁷ Watanabe, *Shinpūren to sono jidai* (1972), p. 28

³⁶⁸ Watanabe makes this connection explicit. See *Shinpūren to sono jidai* (1972), p. 28.

back from Mito, precisely the time when Perry arrived.³⁶⁹ “The Master returned,” he writes, “and as if severing his will from human affairs (*jinji*), he invested his complete and total devotion in divine rites (*jingi*).” He took to explaining to his students how to fight against the Americans and the foreigners.

According to Kimura, Hayashi elaborated on his original worldview by adding a second binary onto his division between the contingent world of men and the eternal world of the gods.³⁷⁰ The contingent world of humans (*ningen* or *jinkan genkai*) was entirely born by the direction of the invisible world of the gods (*shinmei yūkai*), he said, but that invisible other world was itself composed of two competing forces: gods of good and gods of evil. The interaction of these two forces determined the peace or the disorder of the nation.

That human affairs were entirely contingent on this struggle did not imply that humans had no influence over the worlds of the divine. Humans exercised agency. When an upright man exerted his energy and gained power, he allowed the good gods in the invisible realm to gain power and crush the evil gods. The rise of good forces allowed the realm below to gain stability and peace. And conversely, when evil men gained power, they enervated the forces of the good gods and allowed the evil gods to triumph, thus engendering chaos, instability, and violence in the contingent realm. The role of good warriors of will (*yūshi no shi*) was, to the greatest extent and with entire devotion, to pray for the support and solicitude of the good gods so that the evil gods may be crushed. But they also had to exert their own effort to in this world to gain power, to vanquish forces of evil themselves, and to lend their own energies to the aid of the good gods.

³⁶⁹ Kimura, “Hayashi Ōen sensei den,” pp. 297-298. This argument is taken up by Araki, *Shinpūren jikki*, pp. 39-40, and by Watanabe, *Shinpūren to sono jidai* (1972), pp. 44-45.

³⁷⁰ Kimura, “Hayashi Ōen sensei den,” pp. 298; Araki, *Shinpūren jikki*, pp. 40-41

This view of the interaction between good and evil and the role of human agency, Watanabe Kyōji explains, falls between the views of Motoori Norinaga and Hirata Atsutane, who respectively led the two dominant schools of nativism in Japan.³⁷¹ Motoori argued that all good and evil in the world resulted from the will of the gods and that humans had no control over their actions; Hirata dissented, arguing that humans themselves were responsible for evil in the contingent realm. Hayashi acceded that the gods controlled good and evil, but he rejected the Motoori view that humans had no control over their lives.

Hayashi revealed here his concern with precisely the same problem that preoccupied virtually every actor we have encountered in the previous pages: to what extent should humans exist as independent entities, and to what extent should they subordinate to the will of external forces? But Hayashi phrased the question not as one of *should* but one of *is*: it is a statement of the way the world simply exists, and humans must subordinate themselves to the existing status quo rather than seeking to change it. There is a certain order in the world, and humans achieve prosperity by accepting themselves to it. They must remain in incessant communication with the divine. Humans are free, then, insofar as they are capable of exercising agency in choosing to align themselves with the good gods or the evil gods. But this freedom is not desirable. Far from it: the prosperity of the contingent realm lies in man's choice to use this very freedom toward its deprivation, to subordinate his ability to choose beneath the determination of the gods.

The question remains: If Hayashi endorsed a pure and upright life in conformity with the will of the gods as a means to engender peace and to suppress the violence-mongering evil gods, then why did he then appear to endorse violence in the world of man?

³⁷¹ Watanabe, *Shinpūren to sono jidai* (1972), pp. 29–31

The image of Hayashi that appears in the work of Kimura is at first one of ambivalence. Kimura writes that men of the Revere the Emperor, Expel the Barbarian (*sonnō jōi*) faction frequented Hayashi's place to ask him about foreigners. Hayashi replied, "I only know of the things of the gods; I am not a man for the things of people," leaving his guests flabbergasted by his aloofness.³⁷² As the national situation in the Bunkū and Keiō eras deteriorated, Kimura writes, and the ideology of expelling barbarians merged with calls to topple the bakufu, Hayashi condemned anti-bakufu agitators not because of his support for the existing government but because of his ideas about the individual self: "Men who call themselves warriors of spirit (*yūshi*) are mostly thralls of personal ambition and fame, of wealth and nobility, and they put their reputation and the profit of the individual self (*onore*) ahead of the country; they are men who think of the country for the benefit of their own selves." The result of their agitation, he claimed, would be "the same as the toppling of one bakufu and the emergence of another bakufu"—precisely the same allegation that those who called for freedom and civil rights made. Men who truly felt pity for their country, Hayashi said in Kimura's portrayal, would quietly observe the trends of the world and find where they could apply their powers.

The place for warriors of spirit was to promote the extension of the power of the nation (*kokken*) abroad. The nation had little choice but to race ahead with domestic reforms, Hayashi predicted, but the purpose of those reforms always had to be to project power abroad; all reforms must always be ancillary to the rights of the nation. Some among people today, Hayashi allegedly said, seek to forgo the power of the nation abroad in favor of focusing on domestic reforms, but this view is misguided. We cannot help but wonder whether Kimura here projects

³⁷² Kimura, "Hayashi Ōen sensei den," p. 299.

the world of 1873, which Hayashi never lived to witness, back onto Hayashi.³⁷³ But this was how men recalled the person of Hayashi, how they construed his nativism in a world of imperialism.

The strategy Hayashi allegedly offered for how to carry out the expulsion of the barbarians was striking. The expulsion, Kimura wrote, must take precedence over the toppling of the bakufu. Japan must look to countries abroad and determine when there was an opening for attack. And when such an opening emerged, without fear of threats, Japan must arise and directly engage in war. The war must rouse the wrath of the entire nation. After long years of prosperity, the military might of the nation had atrophied, Hayashi observed, and it “was certain that war would result in our loss.” But if people high and low united their hearts and their powers and braved even a hundred losses, they would succeed, for the troops from abroad would be distant and unfamiliar with the lay of the land. And if the Japanese managed to secure even one victory, “The might of our nation will convulse Europe like thunder.”³⁷⁴ He insisted that “to open our country or close our country should be according to our wants,” and treaties should be signed according to the desires of the country. Thus it was that the Japanese people needed to arise for a total war against foreigners to preserve the sanctity of their own supposedly ancient way, even if that total war meant the physical destruction of their nation.

The nationalism and anti-universalism of Hayashi evidently struck some of his disciples as odd. One student allegedly asked Hayashi, “In the classics it is said, ‘all men of the four seas are brothers,’ and so foreigners, too, are humans like us, and to seek to expel them now without reason is to go against the way of humans.” Hayashi responded that the dictum applied only in times of normalcy, wherein the distinction between relatives and strangers was moot. But now,

³⁷³ Kimura, “Hayashi Ōen sensei den,” p. 300. These passages are also edited and reproduced in Araki, *Shinpūren jikki*, pp. 40–43

³⁷⁴ Kimura, “Hayashi Ōen sensei den,” p. 301

he wrote, was an exceptional time. At times of emergency, there was a need to make a distinction between family and strangers. Likewise, he said, the arrival of the foreigners had trampled on the nation's longstanding prohibitions and violated our country's isolation. To cling blindly to ethics was the same as what the effete Confucians did, Hayashi claimed, and it would be to do what officials did in the Qing dynasty. We must know the times, as Sima Hui enjoined us to, he said.³⁷⁵

To another student who responded that waging war with foreigners would result in the complete destruction of Edo, since two-hundred years of profligacy and indolence and extravagance had enervated the people, Hayashi responded that that was certainly the case, and that indeed a war with the foreign powers would destroy all the useless daimyo, dead weight on the country. It would result in the total destruction of all the extravagant objects of profligacy of the past. They could not afford to prepare for war. They had to fight now, even if the consequences were disastrous.³⁷⁶ The arrival of foreigners on Japanese soil had brought the opportunity to destroy everything and build an invented ancient way anew. We do not have to believe that these second-hand accounts of Hayashi's thought are "true" in order to extract meaning from them and to use to them see how the worldview he articulated progressed to a rabid form of anti-Westernism in the eyes of his students.

We have already seen how Hayashi elevated the nation to a sacrosanct position and projected it back into ancient times as a means of overcoming the competition of global ideas that began to overtake Japan in the mid nineteenth century. This elevation of the nation relied on a certain pessimism about the ability of the individual self to be just and judicious in his knowing of the world. The formation of a national community and the explication of that community as

³⁷⁵ Kimura, "Hayashi Ōen sensei den," p. 302

³⁷⁶ Kimura, "Hayashi Ōen sensei den," p. 303

something essential and timeless combatted the problem of globalized knowing. It appears that Hayashi elevated this reliance on the precedence of community even further amid the encroachment of Western powers, an encroachment that became physical and not just intellectual. Individuals selves had to strive to subordinate their will to the national community and the gods and engage in an all-out self-destructive war to preserve the sanctity of the national imagined community and to vindicate the imagined past. This reliance on community, this repudiation of the intellectual in favor of the visceral, manifested itself in the bonds of community he evidently constructed with his students, who stressed his transformation after the 1853.

To Watanabe Kyōji, who places particular emphasis in his work on this idea of total war, the core problem in the thought of Hayashi and his advocacy of total suicidal war emerged fundamentally from the problem of subjectivity (*shutaisei*): Hayashi, he claims, was not opposed to “opening the country” in itself but rather the imposition of the foreign will of powers abroad. He insisted that the nation had to exercise its own decision-making, to decide on its own whether to open or close. His endorsement of scorched-earth total war extended from this view of national subjectivity.

We might accuse Watanabe of being overly sympathetic to Kimura’s account, failing to read Kimura’s positive portrayal of Hayashi more critically. Sometimes bigots are just bigots. But his essential insight about subjectivity appears cogent, even if it was just an intellectual sublimation for visceral anti-foreignism. For Hayashi, the nation had to be subject: it was the national past that provided Japanese with the singular means of transcending the inability of the individual to parse truth in a world of global ideas. The arrival of the Americans threatened the very ability of the Japanese to know. So grave was the threat to Japanese knowing that Hayashi

knew it might take destroying everyone and everything to preserve—to invent, for supposedly it had already been sullied for centuries by Confucianism—the purity of the Japanese past.

Anti-universalism as anti-imperialism

The anti-imperialism of Hayashi Ōen did not end with anti-Americanism. It evolved in the 1870s into a condemnation of Japanese imperial endeavors in Asia.

Hayashi perished in 1870, just as reforms in Kumamoto accelerated the process of enlightenment and Westernization. Hayashi's followers took up the mantle of violent counter-enlightenment revolution.

The first incident of militant action appeared as small-scale terrorism by Kawakami Gensai, a Hayashi disciple.³⁷⁷ Kawakami is most notorious as the assassin of Sakuma Shōzan, whom he felled in 1864. Sakuma was the man famously associated with the dictum “Western science, Eastern ethics.” Kawakami himself had not always been a vigorous xenophobe: during his days at the domainal academy, he had applied to go overseas as a study-abroad student. But he was turned down. He turned to nationalism, and in 1872, he was executed for his alleged involvement in the assassinations of Western-learning scholar Meiji leader Ōmura Masujirō in 1869 and of Meiji official Hirosawa Saneomi in 1871.

The Shinpūren Rebellion of 1876 is sometimes understood as an explosion of anger over the execution of Kawakami, who was regarded both by Kimura, perhaps by extension the students of Hayashi, and by historians as one of the three great students of Hayashi Ōen.³⁷⁸ The

³⁷⁷ All this according to Araki, *Shinpūren jikki*, p. 44. See also Araki Seishi, *Teihon Kawakami Gensai* (Tokyo: Shin jinbutsu ōraisha, 1974).

³⁷⁸ Araki, *Shinpūren jikki*, p. 44; Watanabe, *Shinpūren to sono jidai* (2006), p. 185

other two leading students were Ōtaguro Tomo'o, who became the leader of the Shinpūren, and Kaya Harukata, who became his deputy in the failed revolution. Kimura wrote that Kawakami differed intellectually from the Ōtaguro and Kaya; Watanabe Kyōji supports this reading. Whereas Kawakami took the militarist dimensions of Hayashi's thought and put them into practice, Ōtaguro and Kaya were allegedly more concerned with its theosophical or religious dimensions.

But Ōtaguro and Kaya did not abjure militarism. Theosophy was but a step en route to it. Legend has it that Ōtaguro performed the *ukei* and consulted the will of the gods to determine the precise date for his violent insurrection against the Meiji state. The myth holds that Ōtaguro received negative results for the *ukei* twice before finally obtaining confirmation from the gods. Araki suspects that the first *ukei* was performed in 1874 because, as we saw in Chapter Four, it was at that moment that the Kumamoto garrison had evacuated its physical location and headed to Saga, opening up an opportunity to seize control over the prefecture. We do not have to believe that divine intervention thwarted a Shinpūren insurrection in 1874 to accept the possibility that indeed the Shinpūren began seriously considering an insurrection in that year.

The years between the deaths of Hayashi in 1870 and of Kawakami in 1872 and the insurrection of 1876—years that saw the invasion of Taiwan, the revocation of samurai stipend privileges, the reorganization of Japanese feudal domains into prefectures administered by a centralized administration, the installation of a conscript army, the development of telegraph lines, the dissolution of state-mandated worship and rites, and the proscription of sword-wearing—made the anti-imperialist communitarianism of Hayashi Ōen take on invidious new forms.

The disciples of Hayashi, taking on the ultranationalism of their master, decried the dissipation of national strength on ruinous imperialist endeavors. Indeed, if the imperial enlightenment threw its energies behind the invasion of foreign lands because of a belief that the rules that governed the West could govern Asia, who were essentially similar, then the elements among the Shinpūren rebels, in their rejection of the notion of global sameness, decried imperialism as a foreign tactic, something inherently at odds with Japanese beliefs of communitarianism and exceptionalism. And they went even a step further: they described the imperialist urges driving Japan to wage war against its neighbors as a ploy that Western countries had set up and into which Japan had fallen. By pitting Asians against Asians, the West was seeking an opening by which to advance its own imperialist agenda. The syllogism was convenient: Imperialism was Western, Westerners were evil, so imperialism was evil. At the core of the anti-imperialism of the Shinpūren, then, was a rejection of universalism itself as an idea.

In a petition to the Meiji regime led by Shinpūren militant Ishihara Unshirō 蓮四郎, one not signed by Ōtaguro or Kaya, we find the followers of Hayashi Ōen conflate a set of independent ideas, as their teacher did: first, the past as a reified form; second, the benefits of discrimination among people; and third, the nation as something sacred. “Our heavenly ancestors established our country and laid its foundations,” they wrote to open their petition, “and ever since they descended onto earth, through the heavenly objects (*jingi*), from generation to generation,” those heavenly ancestors passed this heritage down, letting imperial rule prosper, unbroken.³⁷⁹ By discriminating between the princes and their ministers, between high and low (*jōge no betsu*), men were able to honor one another with rites and principle, with rectitude and a sense of shame, and to venerate maritality itself as a category. These attributes set Japan apart

³⁷⁹ The petition is reproduced in Ishihara Shikoo, *Shinpūren ketsurui shi* (Tokyo: Dainichisha, 1935), pp. 197 – 199.

from the rest of the world. “Can we say, then, that our days are the same days as those of the myriad countries of the West (*seiyō*)?” Ishihara asked rhetorically, alluding to a metaphor from the *Shiji* to argue that Japanese “days”—Japanese history—were categorically different from those abroad. The divine past had endowed Japan with something exceptional.

The Westerners arrived in 1853, or the “Mizunotōshi year of the Kaei era,” in their phrasing, disrupting the sanctity of the unbroken heritage of the divine founders of the nation. The Tokugawa bakufu, they wrote, took “rash, short-sighted steps” to propitiate the “ink-colored barbarians,” allowing the “Western enemies (*jūryō*)” to “stream continually onto our mainland.” As a result, the hearts of the people of the realm became scattered and rebellious. The situation was temporarily rectified when military power (*heiba no ken*) was reverted to the imperial court, and “the realm returned again to the ancient way of kingly governance.” But then the regime dissolved the singular military system of the country and transformed it and other institutions into “Western things.” The will of the gods, “our distant heavenly ancestors,” and more proximately the will of the emperor in recent years went unfulfilled, leading to a “loss” that was “unprecedented from the ancient times to the present.”

We see again the seemingly unanimous sense in the 1870s that men were encountering “days” without any parallel in the past. Nothing had prepared them for their day. The question was why things were unprecedented: it was, in the reading of Ishihara and his band, because the fundamental relationships between government and governed, between domestic and foreign, and between the past and the present had in a single instant been thrown into disarray with the arrival of Westerners.

Like Etō Shinpei in Chapter Four, Ishihara and the Shinpūren petitioners recognized the arrival of Westerners as a problem of the Japanese community and its relationship with a global

world. But unlike Etō, they saw the solution not in doubling down on universalism or conditioning the Japanese public as an autonomous bulwark against foreign intrusion. They turned to forces that transcended time but that remained firmly situated in place. “The Western enemies,” the petitioners wrote, in general accord with what Etō independently wrote, “began by using the evil theories,” a reference to Christianity, “to allure our national people, to weaken and then infiltrate the arteries of our nation until, today, they have gone so far as to walk right into the body, deeper month by month, more gravely year by year.”³⁸⁰ The elements of Western intrusion to which Ishihara and his band most explicitly objected were similar to those Etō himself condemned—and which Itō Hirobumi endorsed, as we saw in Chapter One: rumors, first, that foreigners were seeking to marry into the imperial family; second, that they sought to establish mixed residency with the Japanese; third, that they sought to impose their own laws on Japan; fourth, that they sought to carry the teachings of Jesus widely across the realm. “If these things are true,” they wrote, they would make Japan a “vassal state” of the foreigners, bringing “great humiliation” to the imperial nation.

Unlike Etō and others of the imperial enlightenment, who sought to flatten out distinctions among people and create a civil society to resist foreign intrusion, Ishihara maintained discrimination as the central means to preserve Japanese autonomy. Two ideas that would seem to be in tension with one another lurked in the argument Ishihara laid out. The unity of the Japanese nation, he insisted, relied on the will of the Emperor and the distinction between the high and the low, that is, the distinction between two groups that must “join their hearts” to resist the foreign. This vertical separation managed to ensure the horizontal association of the land. The introduction of foreign ideas rent this careful indigenous geometry asunder.

³⁸⁰ Ishihara, *Shinpūren ketsurui shi*, p. 198

Just as they found fault in the intrusion of foreigners into Japan, Ishihara and the petitioners decried Japanese intrusion into other nations. They inveighed against the Japanese decision to punish the “sins” of “distant Taiwan” and “then to attack China” (*Shinakoku*) in the Taiwan Expedition of 1874. They called for an end to the Taiwan war and for no further troop dispatches once the men returned home. To dissipate the will of the imperial nation needlessly on foreign lands would result, they claimed, in exceeding troubles and worries for the people. This “adversity in the internal affairs of the nation,” they argued, was “what the foreign barbarians desired.” “This is something we should know if we reflect on the recent failures of India, of the Manchu Qing, and the like,” they wrote. The foreign barbarians were looking carefully for an opening by which they could undermine the nation, and they would do to Japan precisely what they sought to do to China. And from there, there would be no way to turn “the catastrophic tides” that would engulf the nation. “These are all the schemes of the foreign barbarians,” he wrote.

“And so we implore you,” they wrote, to take the energy of the Taiwan Expedition to “conciliate” with China. The situation in China was approaching a state of emergency, they observed, and contingencies were arising in which a willful war might break out between Japan and China. In such a case, they said, it behooved the regime “to consult the gods as to whether or not they should attack China.” Other priorities took precedence over war: to restore the military of the nation, to raise and stimulate the martial spirit of the warriors, to conform with the national essence, to obey the will of their imperial ancestors—and first to exterminate the Western barbarians overrunning the realm, to go to the distant source of the barbarians and “completely annihilate” their “breeding ground,” and thereby make the “awesome name of the imperial land scintillate among the myriad nations overseas.” Then Japan would establish an eternally

unyielding foundation for the state, to recover the Department of Divinity, the Jingikan, and in accordance with the great law of the maintenance of the oneness of rites and rule (*saisei i'itsu*), to make all decisions through the divine rites and in accordance with the will of the heavenly ancestors and gods, to fulfil the wish of the Emperor in recent years.

These were the measures, they said, by which to form a nation that revered the gods and loved the country. To loosen one's hair and to drop the sword—these were things that extinguished the light of the country; the national essence could not reside “in the hideous customs of the Western states”—of which imperialism itself was one.

The idea of heteronomous knowing that Hayashi had elaborated earlier in the nineteenth century, and indeed that animated the anti-state rebellion of January 1874, as we saw in Chapter Three, took on greater urgency as globalization intensified through the 1870s and as Japan was further drawn with it into imperialist competition. But even as they insisted on the utter exceptionalism of the Japanese past, Ishihara and his band could not shake the reality that foreign precedent might dictate the future of their nation: the threat that Japan would go the way of China and India impended. Even if Japan had exceptional “days,” the pasts of China and India told them of their own future. This very crisis, which spurred Etō and his coterie to want relocate the Meiji Emperor to Beijing, made the Shinpūren conceive of an incipient pan-Asian solidarity as a means of defeating the “barbarians” who threatened the purity of their nation—or rather who, in their threat, ironically spurred the constitution of a pure Japanese nation itself.

Overcoming globality

We do not know the exact date that Ishihara and his band submitted their anti-imperialist petition, but judging from the chronology of events to which Ishihara refers, Watanabe

speculates that it must have been after September 1874, when Ōkubo began negotiations with the Qing Empire in Beijing and when the withdrawal of troops had already been decided, and before the actual return of troops in December 1874.

Much as Ishihara encouraged the Meiji regime to consult the gods to determine whether to wage war against China, strongly implying that the gods would oppose war, indeed it appears that the Shinpūren themselves were consulting divine martial forces around this time. The strongest evidence that a supposedly divine violent insurrection was in preparation at this point is in the actions of the governor of Kumamoto, who began hiring members of the Shinpūren to positions of authority in state shrines as a means of coopting them and preempting their holy war.³⁸¹ The holy war was in itself meaningful, not merely a cover for other concerns. The interpretation Watanabe offers to think through the notion of the “war of *ukei*,” the phrase Ōtaguro used in his will to describe the uprising he led, is revelatory. He argues that Ōtaguro developed a theory to elaborate the relationship between armed rebellion and prayer. It was not as if Ōtaguro thought that earnest prayer necessarily ensured military victory, Watanabe explains. Rather, fighting on behalf of the gods with faith that they would ensure military victory was itself a form of prayer in which one entreated the divine for military aid through action.³⁸² In this way, Watanabe claims, Ōtaguro moved away from a fatalist notion of divinely mandated war in which the individual surrendered subjectivity and left the outcome of battle to divinely ordained forces and toward a theory that in fact affirmed the individual’s subjectivity, for it was the holy warrior who, in his active and autonomous embrace of the faith needed to fight a war, entreated divine confirmation for the success of his battle precisely by waging it. This wresting-away of subjectivity from the divine, Watanabe then infers, took Ōtaguro from mindless,

³⁸¹ Araki, *Shinpūren jikki*, discusses this point in detail.

³⁸² Watanabe, *Shinpūren to sono jidai* (2006), pp. 221–222.

benighted irrationalism to a self-conscious irrationalism actively nurtured by the believer—to, we might add, a self-conscious counter-enlightenment insurrection that ironically turned on the same fixation on individual autonomy on which enlightenment did. They themselves knew they were irrational, Watanabe suggests.

The march to insurrection proceeded quickly. The Shinpūren rebels banded together and made an oath to win all of Japan over to their cause. The oath, according to Watanabe, was also written by Ishihara and was formally made at the shrine at which Ōtaguro worked. It was dated the second month of Meiji 8, or 1875.³⁸³

In the oath, the men of the Shinpūren pledged to three main purposes.³⁸⁴ The first was “to venerate divine rites and to uphold the national essence (*kokutai*),” an obligation that entailed “strict adherence to the great cause of revering the Emperor and expelling barbarians.” Fulfilling this first pledge would ensure that the men achieved that which was their hearts’ desires, they said, that the imperial will (*shinkin*) would be preserved, and the general people would be rescued from their painful calamity (*totan*) in which they found themselves—they constructed thus a unity of Emperor, nation, and people that bypassed the state. The second objective was “to follow the fixed and unique divine way,” which implied that “by no means would they take on the hideous appearance of such things as a relaxed hairstyle or the dropped sword.” They anticipated that the day would come when their sword-carrying would be outlawed: “even if there are injunctions from the court,” they pledged, “with death we will admonish them, even to the point of fighting, and we must carry through with the determined beliefs of the vassals.” The third commitment was that “the comrades,” or more literally, those of “the same will” (*dōshi*),

³⁸³ Watanabe, *Shinpūren to sono jidai* (1972), pp. 94–95

³⁸⁴ “Seimon,” *Shinpūren resshi ibun shū*, ed. Araki Seishi (Tokyo: Dai’ichi shuppan kyōkai, 1944), pp. 182–183. Also reproduced (with minor differences) in Ishihara, *Shinpūren ketsurui shi*, pp. 204 – 205. See also Tokutomi, *Shinpūren no jihen*, pp. 272-275

“will make of their associations an intimacy (*shitashimi*) of flesh-and-blood brothers (*dōhō*). Without [fluctuations of] intimacy and estrangement, depth and shallowness, they must through course of their long years, not disrupt their humility before the rites above, not be slandered by calumny, to experience both suffering and joy together and to egress and regress as one entity.” The pledge concluded with a supplication that the gods vouchsafe their invisible aid so that the testators’ great will of long years be quickly achieved, that they may not repudiate the solemn oath they have taken, and that they may unhesitatingly fulfil their duties.

We might rightly say that the pledge sounds similar to pledges people make everywhere at any time: men promise to band together, to be as brothers, and to resist any temptation that may pull them apart, even if those temptations came from the government itself. But in the context of 1870s Japan, the pledge had exceptional meaning. With Meiji regime sweeping away structures state-mandated or historically mandated forms of community and brotherhood, men were left to recreate their own communities.

The question was what the stuff of community was. Ironically, in their formation of their own form of society, the Shinpūren railed against civil society itself. That men came together to form associations did not matter in and of itself: it was why men banded together, what made the ties that bound, that mattered to the Shinpūren. Those ties had to lay in the sacred Japanese past, in the venerable ties of the Emperor with his subjects, and in the sacrosanct identity of divine and personal will. In that way, the notion of civil society, of a distinction between a government and people, was inimical to the very purpose of the League of Divine Wind, which called for men and government to merge before the will of the divine. How was it that men communed, that individuals came together to form communities in an age in which the sword, as a sign of martial brotherhood, was being stripped of its ideational valences and reduced to a mere weapon of war?

Indeed, just months after the Shinpūren rebels anticipated an impending ban on bearing arms, the interdiction on carrying swords descended from the Meiji regime in what historians generally regard as the last straw for the Shinpūren.

Yamagata Aritomo, minister of the army, presented the Proposal to Abolish Swords to Sanjō Sanetomi on November 7, 1875. For what reason, Yamagata asked, had the “so-called warriors” of Japan continually worn two swords since the days of mid-antiquity?³⁸⁵ He claimed that the reason was “nothing more than” practical: swords and spears constituted a form of weaponry, and by their means warriors could fend off their enemies and protect their own selves. But “the world changes and time moves on,” Yamagata wrote. Warriors overcame their sense of martiality. They returned their domainal affiliations to the imperial court. And in 1873, “an unprecedented great law, that is, the Conscription Edict, was proclaimed.” The new military forces inaugurated by the conscription edict ensured the security of the realm, and matters pertaining to the safety and wellbeing of people in the villages and hamlets fell within the scope of the police force established in the prefectures, a force that extended across the entire nation. But samurai clung ignorantly to a bygone past, Yamagata lamented. Many still insisted on carrying their swords. “This band,” Yamagata explained, “is obdurate and benighted, and unenlightened to the transformations of the times and the reconstruction of the military system.” They believe that the responsibility to protect themselves and fend off their enemies is their own, and so they carry weapons. Not only did such men have no benefit whatsoever to the nation, Yamagata wrote, but they represented “the empty title that is the ‘warrior’ and the vestiges of the warrior’s sanguinary customs.” It behooved the regime to issue a ban on the sword expeditiously

³⁸⁵ “Haitō kengensho,” *Yamagata Aritomo ikensho*, ed. Ōyama Azusa (Tokyo: Hara shobō, 1966), p. 66; *Seinan kiden*, v. ue 2, pp. 536 – 537

“so that they may make all the people of the nation gradually progress in the realm of enlightenment.”

Kaya Harukata, who went on to become the deputy general of the Shinpūren in the rebellion, erupted in rage. He wrote a sprawling manifesto over 100 pages long reproducing passage after passage from classical Japanese texts and offering commentary on those passage to decry the ban on samurai swords. He tried to submit the text to Yasuoka Ryōsuke, the prefectural governor. Yasuoka refused to receive the document. Kaya walked out of his post as head of Katō Shrine, to which he had been assigned as a means of keeping the peace in Kumamoto.

Kaya sermonized on what the sword meant. “In our nation of godly martiality, the wearing of swords has been a fixed custom across the divine generations,”³⁸⁶ Kaya wrote. “Because of it and by its means, the foundations of the nation were raised, the might of the imperial throne shone, the divine rites were venerated, evil was expelled, and disorder was turned to stability [...] Therefore, in broad terms, it is by the wearing of swords that the nation has been pacified; in narrow terms, it has allowed the protection of one’s own self.” Kaya did not entirely reject, then, the materialist and instrumentalist reading of the object of the sword. He justified wearing it by invoking its practical benefits: it had historically allowed both the individual and the nation to remain at peace. But Kaya saw value in the abstract significance that this historical practical value endowed in it. That the sword was an established custom in and of itself, that it was by its means that the Japanese nation was unified, gave it exceptional value beyond any other object and beyond its immediate present-day utility. It was endowed with some sort of transcendental value inherited from bygone times.

³⁸⁶ Kobayakawa, *Kesshi Kumamoto Keishintō*, pp. 24–29; *Seinan kiden*, v. ue 2, pp. 537 – 541.

Here Kaya left himself susceptible to precisely the accusation that Yamagata leveled in inaugurating the edict: that men had simply failed to catch up with the times, that they remained convinced that the historical import of the sword, which Yamagata did not deny, retained some sort of present-day relevance that it did not have. Indeed, Kaya confirmed, if inadvertently, the very accusations that Yamagata made in inaugurating the sword edict. “O, that it behooves us not to swiftly abandon the national essence of venerating the gods and revering maritality—is this only with respect to swords?” Kaya asked. He wrote that those “whose responsibility was to embody the imperial will of venerating the gods and loving the nation and to make people strictly adhere” to this will could not wantonly give up their swords; the stakes lay not simply in the sword itself but in the spiritual identity of the nation and in the exceptional responsibility that samurai had to lead the subjugate the people to the divine way. Yamagata was well aware of this when he wrote that men in favor of the sword felt an exceptional responsibility to protect themselves and the nation, a responsibility that the professional military had obviated.³⁸⁷

Kaya and Yamagata thus fundamentally agreed on the stakes of the sword issue. Was tradition, was history, something so inherently valuable that it had to be safeguarded for its own sake, or did the exigencies of modernity permit men in the present to trample on the legacy of the past? It was a problem of knowing worth and value: what made things worthwhile, what endowed things with value? The modern Japanese enlightenment, as articulated by Yamagata, dictated that the bearing of arms no longer had any practical benefit, that it had lost its functional purposes. Kaya did not seem to dispute this point. Rather, he disputed the premise behind it: that what mattered was not functionality but spirit—a second problem.

³⁸⁷ Kobayakawa, *Kesshi Kumamoto Keishintō*, p. 25

The third problem inserted these questions into the realm of human relations. Did samurai, because of the past, bear an exceptional “responsibility” toward the nation and toward themselves? Did their history endow them with immutable difference, and therefore an immutable and unique right to bear arms, or were they really no different from anyone else?

Change in itself constituted a problem to Kaya. Kaya quoted a verse from the *Mencius* that in fact is a reference to the Book of Poetry: ‘Never, never transgress and never forget: always abide in the ancient rules.’ Has anyone ever erred by honoring the laws of ancient emperors?” And he drew from the Books of Rites, claiming, “A superior man, in his practice of ceremonies (in another state), should not seek to change his (old) customs. His ceremonies in sacrifice, his dress during the period of mourning, and his positions in the wailing and weeping, will all be according to the fashions of his former (state). He will carefully study its rules, and carry them exactly into practice.”³⁸⁸ Kaya wrote that the ancient Chinese theory of regime change (*ekisei kakumei*) had understood that frequent change of customs and apparel and the change of the calendar served as a profound warning, Even in the customs of the “flippant, evil Chinese,” Kaya wrote, there was a sense of shame in laying waste to the immortal customs of the heavenly realm, the national essence, and the divine teachings.³⁸⁹

“It seems,” Kaya write, “that at no time in the past has the degeneration of divine martiality and national dignity been as extreme as today.” He referred to the appeal of Shimazu Hisamitsu, who accused the government of demanding the national customs of tied hair and bearing swords be dissolved, as we saw in the Chapter One. He listed a range of grievances:

³⁸⁸ Verse 5.10 in James Legge, trans., *Confucianism: The Four Books and the Five Classics: Collected Works of Confucius* (London: Delphi Class, 2016).

³⁸⁹ Kobayakawa, *Kesshi Kumamoto Keishintō*, p. 27

meat-eating, leather-wearing, and a host of other ways in which the regime “cherishes the foul dregs of the barbarians.” He was ready to rebel.

With Kaya now willing to fight with the Shinpūren, the league marched to war. Kaya himself wrote their war manifesto.³⁹⁰ The purpose of the government, he explained, was to aid the heavenly court, to protect the masses, to exert to its utmost their responsibility to ward off humiliation and maintain peace. The Japanese state had fawned at the feet of the hideous barbarians, proscribed “our” native swords and spears, furtively abetted the spread of the “evil cult,” and ultimately prostituted the territory of the heavenly emperor to others and sought to allow mixed residence on the homeland. He referred to widespread rumors that the Emperor, in an “evil, nefarious scheme,” was to go abroad himself, an act that would defile the purity of his national sacredness. “We cannot wait any longer for word on this treasonous act of waywardness and *lèse-majesté*,” he wrote, “which has become a source of indignation to the gods and the people alike. Our feelings and obligations cannot endure any more waiting.”

To avert any unforeseen dangers to the jeweled body above and to remove the extreme suffering and calamity of the masses below, we receive the imperial injunction and we raise up righteous soldiers in an alliance across the various territories of the land, and by utterly uprooting and eradicating the enemy, we open up the basis for the restoration (*bankai*) of the power of the imperial throne. O, who among the warriors, the farmers, the artisans, and the merchants, does not bask in the all-encompassing munificence of the heavenly emperor? It behooves this band of willful men, samurai and commoner alike, to haste into the castle premises with heavenly alacrity and, for the sake of the imperial

³⁹⁰ “Gekibun,” *Shinpūren resshi ibun shū*, p. 184

nation, and with loyalty and sincerity, to seek to do good deeds in return for that munificence.

After a successful *ukei*, the date for revolution was set on October 24. Men were dispatched to other provinces to give word to other samurai to raise rebellions. Ishihara, the anti-imperialist petitioner, was dispatched to Akizuki; another man was sent to Hagi.³⁹¹ Unlike the Saga Rebellion, the Shinpūren Rebellion did run away: rebellions in Akizuki and Hagi followed that of the Shinpūren in quick succession.

The rebellion began the evening of the scheduled date. With Ōtaguro leading the army as general and Kaya as deputy, the army split into factions. Some were assigned to assail the military at the Kumamoto garrison. Others were tasked with pinpoint assassinations of government officials. One band of six assassins went after head of the Kumamoto garrison. They felled him. Another band of five went after Yasuoka, the governor. They were met with resistance. But they wounded him fatally. He died three days later. The assassination of Ōtaguro Korenobu 惟信—not to be confused with Ōtaguro Tomo'o—was botched. It is said that Korenobu, head of the Kumamoto prefectural assembly, had been responsible for the execution of Kawakami Gensai and was such an avid Westernizer that he had installed a bed in his home.³⁹² He was singled out for execution, but he scraped by.

Meanwhile, the Kumamoto garrison itself, home to some 2000 soldiers, came under attack. But the Shinpūren rebels were crushed. Kaya was killed on the battlefield. Ōtaguro committed seppuku, but not before encouraging Noguchi to go and destroy the telegraph station.

³⁹¹ Tokutomi, *Shinpūren no jihen*, pp. 283-284

³⁹² Watanabe, *Shinpūren to sono jidai*, p. 47

Young lives vanished in a suicidal holy war to resurrect a past of samurai valor and imperial honor that they themselves never experienced—and indeed that never really existed. Looking at the ages of those who fought for the Shinpūren suggests the radicalism rather than the conservatism of the movement. The ages ranged from 69 to 16. But of the 123 rebels who fought and died in the uprising, more than half—a total of 63 men—were in their twenties. Another twelve were in their teens. It is true that those who led the movement tended to skew older: Ōtaguro was 43; Kata was 41; Ishihara, who wrote the anti-imperialist manifesto, was 45.³⁹³ But the reality stands that more than half of the men fighting to win back a world of samurai unity with the gods could not have had a living memory of the time before the arrival of Matthew C. Perry. Ōtaguro and Kaya were in their early twenties as the post-Perry crisis of globalization began to beset Japan, and the Tokugawa bakufu was decidedly in decline for the entirety of their living memory. The boys of the Shinpūren were seeking to build up a phantasmal world they never knew, not to restore a world that was fleeing away.

The world of the Shinpūren was masculinist but not exclusively male. The great heroine of the Shinpūren legend is Abe Ikiko. The spouse of one of the Shinpūren rebels, Abe Ikiko facilitated the seppuku of two holy warriors and then slit her own throat, following them in martyrdom.³⁹⁴ She wrote a letter to her mother before she died. She had been fasting for three days now, and she could not even lift chopsticks, she said. It was time for her to follow her husband, “even though” she was a woman. She concluded with a poem:

How fleeting is the world

When we think of the ways of the warrior

³⁹³ Numbers from Tokutomi, *Shinpūren no jihen*, pp. 336-338

³⁹⁴ Tokutomi, *Shinpūren no jihen*, pp. 351-355

‘Like fire, it burns in Greece and Persia alike’

The conjuring of the nation as pure and of foreign influence as polluting; the rejection of a society of individual equals in favor of transcendental values of community; the phantasmal remembrance of a past that never was and the yearning to return to this fictive bygone glory; the endorsement of violence as not only a legitimate but a necessary means of revolutionizing into the future that this ancient past promised; the duplicitous rejection of imperialism and the hypocritical yet potent conceit of resisting violations of ethnic autonomy through violent insurrection—looking back through the twentieth century, we are struck by a glaring analytical problem: it looks like fascism.

But the Shinpūren were certainly not fascists, and as Mark Lilla writes in his study of Counter-Enlightenment intellectual Giobanni Battista Vico, whose legacy has been claimed by any number of people in his wake, “it is a rule of intellectual history that we not visit upon our forefathers the sins of their children.”³⁹⁵ But he continues, explaining that we are compelled to explain why it is that a particular philosophy takes on such relevance to particular ideologies in its wake.

And indeed, historians of the Shinpūren have acknowledged this problem. As we will see in the conclusion of this dissertation, Yukio Mishima himself read the Shinpūren as a text that circulated through time, beyond its immediate era. Watanabe Kyōji, too, in the closing paragraphs of his study, writes that the Shinpūren offer “omens” of February 1936—that is, of the 2-26 Incident, the infamous fascist coup attempt.³⁹⁶ The Shinpūren differed from the 2-26

³⁹⁵ Mark Lilla, *G. B. Vico: The Making of an Anti-Modern* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 3

³⁹⁶ Watanabe, *Shinpūren to sono jidai* (2006), pp. 264–267

terrorists in their theism, he claims: whereas the Shinpūren sought to create a divine realm on earth, the 2-26 fascists invested faith in a nation of imperial citizens. But the “essential similarity” in the two, he writes, “lies in that both were expressions of a sharp sense of the incongruity of the Western European style of civil society that was introduced into this country. The Western European model of civil society is a type of civilization entirely different from that of Asian collectivist society, which is composed of a fusion between regional small-scale communities and autocratic authority.”³⁹⁷

Watanabe is at once misleading and revelatory. His analysis of both fascism and the Shinpūren assumes an already formed Asian “collectivist” society that is displaced, with violent consequences, by another discrete “European” civil society. But that is not what Japanese fascism was, as historians have now ably demonstrated: fascism in Japan constructed the fiction of a collectivist Asian society precisely because it had been so thoroughly overcome by the rise of a capitalist civil society that it sought to overcome that overcoming: notions of collectivism and of indigeneity were constructed because of, not displaced by, the rise of civil society.³⁹⁸ This is where the similarity between the two incidents appears to lie: the Shinpūren, too, militated against the ubiquitous signs that globality had overcome Japan and that a civil society of individuals had displaced the status system of the past. In this way, then, Watanabe is insightful even in his analytical error: he is astute to find in the notion of both globalism and of civil society the intellectual links between the Shinpūren and the 2-26 Incident, even though he takes as structures what in fact were historical processes.

In this sense, the notion of counter-enlightenment captures the essence of the Shinpūren affair, which was a willful, conscious reaction against a new status quo of globalism and

³⁹⁷ Watanabe, *Shinpūren to sono jidai* (2006), p. 265

³⁹⁸ Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*.

individualism, not a form of conservatism but of revolutionary thought that descended into practice by seeking to displace something new with something even newer.

In the European Counter-Enlightenment described originally by Isaiah Berlin and studied more closely by Mark Lilla and Darrin McMahon, thinkers alleged that those in the Enlightenment were, in Lilla's phrasing, "radical rationalists who dogmatically held all truths about nature and man to be universal, objective, timeless, and transparent to reason."³⁹⁹ The Counter-Enlightenment developed a response that viewed culture as whole and complete, discrete unto itself. Its proponents claimed they needed to understand other peoples not by transcendental reason but rather by their own internal sets of criteria. The epistemology they developed was therefore often fundamentalist and nationalist, seeking to instill an "epistemological and cultural pluralism" that repudiated the "monism" of the Enlightenment, the assumption that "the natural light of reason shines equally in all human beings—that, like fire, it burns in Greece and Persia alike."⁴⁰⁰ Ironically, the counter-enlightenment, as an ideological strategy to address the crisis of globality, itself burned in Occident and Orient alike.

Lilla proceeds to identify major intellectual innovations from which Vico and in general the Counter-Enlightenment gained their cogency. First, their legacy was dramatically enhanced by the violence wrought by the French Revolution, both within and beyond the borders of France, as intellectuals turned against the Enlightenment itself and found in its monism the reasons for the atrocities revolution had wrought. Second, rather than lament modernity or modernization as a broad condition, they turned developed a system of thought that targeted Enlightenment itself and its "cosmopolitanism and individualism."⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁹ Lilla, *G. B. Vico*, p. 4

⁴⁰⁰ Lilla, *G. B. Vico*, p. 5

⁴⁰¹ Lilla, *G. B. Vico*, p. 5

The Shinpūren did not elaborate a philosophy or intellectual system so sophisticated as that of the earliest Counter-Enlightenment figures in Europe. Such a system developed later in Japan. Yet their fundamental impetus was the same: to identify in Enlightenment ideals the origins of terror and imperialism; to insist on a world in which the ancient past had endowed a particular people with an exceptional present that necessarily needed to exist in contradistinction to the presents of other people; to conflate emotion with autochthony and to emblazon an aggressive nationalism as an ontological state of individual being and an epistemological means; to place the blame for the ills of modernity, of globality, on the Enlightenment itself.

These critiques lived on and intensified, finding continual expression in violence over the next decades of Japanese history. But not before Japan tumbled back into civil war, less than a year after the Shinpūren erupted in suicidal violence—a civil war itself fanned in part by the Enlightened monism against which the Shinpūren militated.

Chapter Six

CIVIL WAR

The age of modern warfare had arrived. With the intoxicating power that an apparently national audience endowed in them, journalists and pundits and public intellectuals pounded a drumbeat for war, summoning readers to march in line and seize freedom from a tyrannical order.

Turning on problems of justice in the widening gyre of global ideas, localized but continual rebellions spinning out from the Meiji schism of 1873 deployed physical force to resolve abstract problems. They failed, catastrophically. The conundrum of global justice endured. And so did violent endeavors to solve them. Now elements of the public were ready to wage a wider-scale war against the state. Claiming the authority that came from fanciful foreign ideas and from the pasts of foreign lands, intellectuals moved to mobilize public opinion behind revolution, to make of Japan what men had made of America and France a century earlier.

They claimed to rebel against the tyranny of the Meiji regime. But through the regime they rebelled against a global competition of knowledge that had been decimating the unity of their nation for a decade. They sought stability, certainty, in a world that proffered none. Carrying a past that had not prepared them for the bewildering vastness of the present, they turned to violence to secure a future they read in the pasts of others.

This is what freedom and civil rights had wrought in Meiji Japan: a garish, gaudy public sphere that reveled in intrigue and sedition, that gave public purview to private indulgence. It was an indulgence in the autonomy and independence of a self constructed as intellectually supreme over a government that supposedly ruled him. There was something vulgar to the public

sphere. It intended perhaps to inform, to edify, but also to inflame, to produce a certain haze, a conception of self-gratification in the mind of its reader so he would think himself important and fulfil his own self through the worlds of unknown others—and to keep reading, to keep buying.

Recognizing the folly that freedom and rights had wrought, the Meiji state, goaded on by public intellectuals themselves alarmed by the horrors of modern freedom, scurried to restore order, to rescue a nation tumbling toward wider scopes of disorder. It tried to silence speech. It slapped harsh interdictions on print and expression. It rounded up scores of men whom it charged with undermining the security of the nation in their jeremiads against the regime.

But the Meiji regime faced the intractable problem of controlling within its borders an invisible crisis emanating from beyond its borders. It could not muffle the hortatory cries, broadcast from Europe through Japanese intellectual voices, for civil rights, for the freedom of the individual and the society he constituted in conscious contradistinction to the state, for his entitlement to know and to be as he pleased. The nation plunged into civil war.

The belligerents in the Civil War of 1877, known most commonly in Japanese as the War of the Southwest (*Seinan sensō*), were many. Foremost was Saigō Takamori, whose legend looms large, too large, over the war.⁴⁰² His mythologization in Japanese memory as a pure and noble being towers above that of perhaps any other figure in modern Japanese history. His characterization in English-language historiography, too, as “the last samurai,” as a vestige of a quaint and fleeting past, has produced an image of the Civil War that is misleading, indeed false.

⁴⁰² There are many, many scholarly books and articles on Saigō, and then many more by non-academic writers. For a helpful introduction and bibliography, see Iechika Yoshiki, *Saigō Takamori: Hito o aite ni sezu, ten o aite ni seyo* (Tokyo: Mineruva shobō, 2017).

“The defense of samurai tradition was at the core of Saigō’s rebellion,” we read. “Old Japan and new Japan had met in battle. Old Japan had lost.”⁴⁰³

There were not two sides in the battle. Nor was the battle a struggle between old and new. There was, as there is in all wars, a confusing array of intersecting and contradictory interests, of strategic alliances and coalitions of convenience. All competed for which new vision of Japan should win in a world of globality. By focusing in this chapter not on Saigō and the often-examined belligerents from Kagoshima but instead the participants from Kumamoto and Kōchi, we will examine the complexity and the thoroughgoing modernity of the fight for the future, for the “soul,” of Japan. We will observe how a global struggle of ideas played out in a civil war.

Saigō Takamori was, by seemingly all accounts, merely a figurehead of the civil war, a spiritual force that was needed to mobilize the masses. Saigō had spent several years in Kagoshima as a grumpy recluse playing with his dogs when he found out about a series of events pushing his prefecture to the brink of war. As we saw in Chapter Two, he had left the regime in 1873 and descended to Kagoshima along with Kirino Toshiaki and Shinohara Kunimoto, his close associates; together they founded the Private Academy (*Shigakkō*) to train young men of the prefecture in martial practice. Suspicious of the restive energies emanating from the Academy and of the enduring recalcitrance of Kagoshima as a whole, the Meiji regime dispatched police in late 1876 under chief Kawaji Toshiyoshi to investigate the activities of the Saigō band.⁴⁰⁴ Hotheads from the Academy captured the police and allegedly extracted a confession from government agent Nakahara Nao’o on February 3, 1877; the confession told of a state conspiracy to assassinate Saigō. To this day it remains unclear whether such a conspiracy

⁴⁰³ Mark Ravina, *The Last Samurai: The Life and Battles of Saigō Takamori* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2004), p. 3.

⁴⁰⁴ On Kawaji and the rise of the Meiji police force, see Ryan Glasnovich, “Return to the Sword: Martial Identity and the Modern Transformation of the Japanese Police” [provisional title] (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2019).

actually existed. But it was enough to stoke fury. Just days earlier, a steam ship from Mitsubishi Corporation had been dispatched to Kagoshima by Kido Kōin with instructions to confiscate, in secret, a stock of ammunition and materiel stored at a warehouse and construction facility there. The materiel was seen as a tinderbox in light of the string of rebellions that had rocked western Japan. A handful of samurai drunkenly decided to seize the materiel; then, over the next few days, around a thousand men from the Private Academy raided various military installations in Kagoshima, including a ship-building facility, and seized armaments. “Drats! well I guess it’s too late” (*shimatta!*), Saigō allegedly said after hearing of these developments—and then decided to take the intellectual and spiritual helm of a war against the Meiji regime. Satsuma forces began to mobilize for an attack on the military garrison in Kumamoto, the same one the Shinpūren had attacked not a half-year earlier, and the regime declared war on Kagoshima on February 19, by telegraph commanding the Kumamoto garrison to attack Satsuma forces. Hostilities opened on February 22.

This account, although factually true, does little to explain the civil war itself. Indeed, according to Ogawara Masamichi, author of several books on the Southwest War, a guide for parts of this chapter, and a succinct explicator of the story above, Saigō himself found it regrettable that he could not stifle a war that he had not yet adequately justified.⁴⁰⁵

As in all major conflicts, the empirical path to war in itself seems inadequate: the events alone do not explain why affairs escalated so quickly. But when catastrophic regional wars erupt for seemingly small reasons, we understand that those events merely catalyze broader intellectual, social, and diplomatic forces long gaining energy.

⁴⁰⁵ Ogawara Masamichi, *Seinan sensō: Saigō to Nihon saigo no naisen* (Tokyo: Chūō kōron shinsha, 2012), p. 53

Indeed, in Japan those forces lay in a government bearing the full force of globalization and in a restive public reading the violent stories of the Western past and the dramatic news of the global present. The Civil War of 1877 was a war waged by a public, some of whose members had been part of the state not half a decade earlier, against a regime that could not triumph intellectually over it in a global world, a war precipitated by the crisis of justice that the newfound freedoms of the Meiji era wrought. It might have been, as Ikai Takaaki has argued, that samurai believed that it was their duty to take up arms and wage a war of principle because the “masses” were unable or should not do so themselves, that some notion of the exceptional duty of samurai in Japanese society lingered from the past. But the samurai rebelled not because they wanted to “retrieve” their lost privileges or even to express their disgruntlement about the changes in Japanese society, Ikai writes.⁴⁰⁶ They were themselves the foremost proponents of change—and they went to war for it.

Which love to love

It was April 1876, just months before the Shinpūren Rebellion, and Ishida Tomohiko 石田知彦 ripped into those “massive jackasses” (*dai bakamono*) who avowed that swords, “these useless objects, nay these forms of weapons of murder,” somehow constituted the soul of Japan. “It is because such jackasses linger in and among our brothers that the Japanese Empire is unable to flaunt our national flag of the rising sun across the world and to overtake the countries of Europe and America,” Ishida wailed. “Brothers!” he cried. “Take these tools, which are depraved like farts, depraved like shit, and heave them into the sea—nay, not even into the sea, but into a swamp.”

⁴⁰⁶ Ikai Takaaki, *Seinan sensō: Sensō no taigi to dōin sareru minshū* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 2010), p. 197.

And “exchange them, exchange them,” he cried, “for that most august, that most venerable spirit and soul: civil rights and freedom.”⁴⁰⁷

Ishida wrote in *Hyōron shinbun*, or the *Review*, at once a thinktank behind, an ideological mouthpiece of, and an intellectual façade for what we might understand as the terror cell that helped orchestrate the outbreak of the War of the Southwest. The cell revolved around an axis connecting Ebihara Boku, or Ebihara Atsushi 海老原穆, in Tokyo to Kirino Toshiaki in Kagoshima. Ebihara collected information in the capital and acted as a communicative pipeline for the Private Academy faction, sending messages to Kirino by hiding them in the shoes of personal emissaries to Kagoshima.⁴⁰⁸ Ebihara himself gave a green light for Kirino and his associates to wage war when on January 9, 1877, as Kirino was growing frustrated with Saigō’s tepid attitude toward war before the “discovery” of the alleged assassination plot; Ebihara called on him to seize on the moment to raise an army and “save the people from their suffering.”⁴⁰⁹

Ebihara founded the *Review* in July 1875 after having formed its parent organization, the Society for the Assembly of Thought (*Shūshisha*).⁴¹⁰ A Satsuma man himself, he had joined the Goshinpei, the national army before the inauguration of conscription, with Kirino Toshiaki before marching out of the Meiji regime under Saigō in 1873. The *Review* was perhaps the most radical of a glut of similar extremist publications at the time, though historians have struggled to characterize what its radicalism was: one historian describes it as part of the “extreme right,” whereas another sees it as the most representative work of the radical left of the civil rights movement.⁴¹¹ The society and its *Review*, the latter historian writes, stood opposed to Ono Azusa

⁴⁰⁷ *Hyōron shinbun* v. 83

⁴⁰⁸ Sawa Taiyō, “Shūshisha no shō kenkyū,” *Tōkai daigaku seiji keizai gakubu kiyō* 20 (1988), pp. 53-54.

⁴⁰⁹ Ogawara, *Seinan sensō*, p. 42.

⁴¹⁰ Sawa Taiyō, “Shūshisha no shō kenkyū,” p. 45.

⁴¹¹ For the former view, see Uemura Kimio, *Miyazaki kyodai den: Nihon hen*, 2 vols. (Fukuoka: Ashi shobō, 1984), v. 1, p. 121.; for the latter view, see Sawa, “Shūshisha,” p. 44.

and his Co-Existence Society, which we will encounter momentarily. In any case, the *Review* was banned in July 1876, after its 109th edition—after which it reappeared as *Chūgai shinbun*, which too was banned, and then again as *Bunmei shinshi*.⁴¹² The publication spot of the journal was listed as Ebihara’s own home for the early editions of the paper. He financed the newspaper and, it is said, distributed funds he raised among the journalists under his helm, creating what one journalist in retrospect called “a sense of communal family” among the members of the paper.⁴¹³

Ebihara and his newspaper became a hub for young, impetuous rebels. Because of its centrality to the civil rights movement, the *Review* appears frequently in histories of the Meiji era and especially of the Southwest War, but it has not been studied well itself, nor do we know much about Ebihara. One detailed but obscure analysis comes from Sawa Taiyō, who argues that three distinct strands of the civil rights movement converged in the paper. The first was from Kagoshima. According to the recollections of Komatsubara Eitarō, a notable journalist for the paper and later a bureaucratic heavyweight in the government, the newspaper had men from the Private Academy coming and going among its staff, whose members had “placed their will on Saigō” to raise an army against the regime. Many of the journalists were evidently ruffians livid about the state of the nation, and many eventually took part in the Southwest War. The second strand among the *Review*’s journalists was from those sympathetic to the invasion of Korea. The third was made of largely anti-invasion civil-rights radicals from Okayama. Komatsubara said, in retrospect, that he had not joined the *Review* because he was a supporter of Saigō; he simply wanted to “call for freedom of speech and advocate enlightenment thought.” He claims that he wrote an editorial calling for the destruction of the Saigō Private Academy faction but that his

⁴¹² Sawa, “Shūshisha,” p. 45.

⁴¹³ Sawa, “Shūshisha,” pp. 53-53.

writing was blocked by other members of the newspaper.⁴¹⁴ Sawa concludes from these assessments that these various ideological configurations coexisted in the paper because anti-government officials and the radical civil-rights faction found common cause in their resistance to their state. He claims that the paper shows how the civil rights movement was not merely an upper-level push for samurai rights but included support from urban intellectuals and from wealthy farmers and commoners. We might go further with his argument: as various factions of the collective public sphere jostled, even within the same newspaper, to claim the “public” as their own, it was but a short step from intellectual to physical contest: it was in the shared desire to exploit the public sphere and conquer the realm of ideas, not just in the shared resistance to the state, that men at odds found common cause.

That there was an empirical relationship between the *Review* and the civil war of 1877 appears abundantly clear. As Ogawara Masamichi explains, the document often regarded as the ideological manifesto for the Kagoshima Private Academy appeared in the *Review* in May 1875.⁴¹⁵ Testimonials from the Private Academy suggest that its members avidly read the *Review*. And as the Academy ramped up for war in early February 1877, all reading materials among students were banned with the exception of the *Review*.⁴¹⁶

These facts are both befuddling and clarifying. If the Private Academy really was an institution about preserving samurai heritage, if the Southwest War was a war of the “last samurai,” then it is odd that the *Review*, in its relentless calls for civil rights and intellectual globalization, would be its ideological organ. Why would the only permissible reading material

⁴¹⁴ Sawa, “Shūshisha,” pp. 51-2

⁴¹⁵ Ogawara Masamichi, *Seinan sensō to jiyū minken* (Tokyo: Keiō gijuku daigaku shuppankai, 2017), p. 22.

⁴¹⁶ Ogawara, *Seisan sensō to jiyū minken*, pp. 22-24, 53.

for training samurai be one that published articles claiming that samurai swords were “depraved like shit” and should be “exchanged for civil rights”?

The puzzle becomes more readily intelligible when we read the actual content of the *Review*, which acts, rather than the empirical evidence of the logistics of plotting the war, as the foremost evidence for the revolutionary role of the *Review*. The lesson we glean from the *Review* is how men of the 1870s were inundated by the ferocity of an intellectual competition from abroad. The public sphere, which the *Review* instantiated, gave cacophonous voice to these opinions on global ideas, overcoming men with a crushing awareness of too much to know. And to resolve the crisis of a public knowing globally, it took violence.

Men raised a stench as they fought over the soul of their nation. Ishida Tomohiko continued in his diatribe against swords: “I turn my ass up in the direction of that posse of thieves,” those men who insisted on carrying swords, “and humbly proffer this contribution of words: things like swords are the fartiest farts of farts (*he no he*).” He elaborated: “For in our society (*shakai*) there is a soul (*konpaku*) called civil rights. There is a spirit (*seishin*) called freedom. And because this soul and this spirit are endowed by God (*tentei*), even the power of government cannot rob [us of] them.”

The crudity was not gratuitous. Civil rights were not inherently pure or pristine or civilized. Nor were they the ideas of urbane, sophisticated intellectuals. They were taken up and deployed for popular purposes with a distinct populist, and violent, message.

Ishida faced dissent in his dismissal of the government mandate to wear swords. Did men not have the right to defend themselves? So Tomo Moriyoshi asked, in arguments that might seem eerily familiar today. The Meiji state had not attained the means for securing society, and so without men bearing arms themselves, how “could it protect the tranquility of the people of

the realm”? How would people defend themselves if anyone violated the prohibition and attacked them? And swords were “private property” (*shiyūbutsu*), he argued. “No matter how much it might be the case in this day that they are useless weapons of murder,” he wrote, they were “at a point in the past purchased with some amount of money,” and it should not be acceptable for the state simply to sweep in and indiscriminately take personal possessions away. The government could not intervene in private property. The individual as an idea—his safety, his ownership—rendered the sword necessary.

And swords don’t kill, Tomo Moriyoshi insisted; people do. To claim that people would stop killing each other once their weapons of murder were taken from them was an “idiotic argument,” mere “prolix.” “If someone wants to kill and steal,” he suggested, “there are grass cutters and scythes and hatchets and battleaxes.” If the government wanted to eliminate all means of murder, then, it had “to exterminate basic human necessitates.” He accused the regime of trying “to instigate the public by this very strange means.” Swords were nothing but a “nuisance” on which the regime had fixated. He suggested that a proposal made in *Chōya shinbun* made the most sense: to have people swap swords for rabbits and exact a tax on them, and then to have them go and sell swords in countries without an anti-sword edict like Korea.⁴¹⁷ There already was an arms industry. Why not internationalize it and profit off it?

It was this public, furious, crass, populist, and decidedly modern struggle over the very soul of Japan, appearing over edition following edition of the *Review*, on which Hirakino Hirazaemon reflected in his 1875 letter to the editor titled “Of Love.” (Sawa lists Hirakino

⁴¹⁷ On the early Meiji obsession with rabbits, see Pieter S. de Ganan, “Down the Rabbit Hole: A Study in the Political Economy of Modern Japan,” *Past and Present* 216 (2011), pp. 237–266.

among pseudonyms that appeared in the paper.)⁴¹⁸ “I have heard this from Bacon,” Hirakino wrote: of all the things in the world, the most “extreme” was love.⁴¹⁹

Bacon had written of love, indeed “Of Love,” in the early 1600s. “[I]n life it doth much mischief; sometimes like a siren, sometimes like a fury,” he wrote, bewailing the many objects of love, its siren-like destructiveness: “Nuptial love maketh mankind; friendly love perfecteth it; but wanton love corrupteth, and embaseth it.” “It is impossible to love,” he famously quipped, “and to be wise.”

This multiplicity of loves was devastating the Japanese public, Hirakino suggested. There were lovers of everything: of the Emperor and of the Chinese classics (*aikunka*, *aikanka*), lovers of the gods (*aishinka*) and of Christianity (*ai-Yasu-ka*). There were lovers of concubines, of sex, of drink (*aishōka*, *aishokuka*, *aishuka*).

Hirakino played on words and with sounds, tongue in cheek, but these were not innocent, innocuous loves. There were lovers of the West (*aiyōka*), those “who open their mouth and speak of and spit out their tongue about and rave about France and Britain and America as the holy of holies.” There were lovers of feudalism (*aihōkenka*). There were lovers of the samurai (*aishizokuka*), “who believe that it is inappropriate to degrade the dignity of Japanese martiality and who see the samurai as the means for the preservation of the spirit and the sustained existence of the nation” at a time when the samurai were “losing their permanent occupations” and being “effaced.” There were “lovers of the sword” (*aitōka*), who believed that the abolition of the sword constitution the abolition of “the soul of Japan” (*Nippon no seishin*). There were “lovers of stipends” (*airokuka*), samurai who found that they could not make ends meet and who

⁴¹⁸ Sawa, “Shūshisha,” p. 51.

⁴¹⁹ *Hyōron shinbun*, vol. 87

“weep, without means to love their children or their wives.” Hirakino wrote sympathetically toward indigent samurai, perhaps well aware of his audience.

There were “lovers of jail” (*aigokuka*), or “newspaper journalists who recklessly spew theories of violence and immediately become imprisoned”—this was the Society for the Assembly of Thought, the writer added snarkily. And there were “lovers of chaos” and “lovers of coups d’etat” (*ai-tenpuku-ka*), the latter of whom admired Voltaire and Rousseau “and anticipated American independence and the French Revolution” in a Japanese context.

Then there were the “lovers of government” (*aiseifuka*), people who believed that every little thing in the world, whether cats or finger-compressor implements (*neko, sakko*), whether soybean paste or shit (*miso, kuso*), should be under government control. They believed that they were privileged to live in this “brilliant day” with a brilliant government. And there were “lovers of government ordinances” (*aijōreika*) who scoured every page of the newspaper so that not a single bit was left unexamined—and uncensored, presumably.

And the author stressed two loves: those who loved “national rights” (*aikokkenka*), and those who loved the civil rights (*aiminkenka*), who bewailed the absence of autonomy in the land and call for civil rights and freedom.

And there were lovers of revolution, too.

Beneath article after article in the *Review* there was some sort of revolutionary content, a jab at the regime, an invocation of revolutions in the past, a hint that reading about the American Revolution is really fun! When writers wrote of the presence of “lovers of coups d’etat” or of “lovers of jail,” they were not simply telling facts. There was a desire to incite, to instigate.

This array of choices for love, the sudden visibility of this overwhelming multiplicity of opinions in the public sphere, raised a question that Hirakino expressed: “Which of these must the people of the public (*yōjin*) take up?” How did a man know which love to love?

It was not a rhetorical question. The public, as represented in the paper, responded to Hirakino’s question with revolutionary fervor.

Komatsu Masatane responded with what he called a confession. He apologized repeatedly and profusely for letting personal matters spill into the public domain, as if that was not the whole point of the public domain and of his writing in it, but “from among these options, personally I am extremely fond of being im*****ed,” he wrote coyly. A circle stood in for what appears as asterisks here—the word is, of course, “imprisoned.” He loved writing things to infuriate the government and undermine its legitimacy.

Torii responded, amused by this “really fun joke” (*omoshiroki share*) that Hirakino had introduced in which one could pick and choose from among “over thirty-thousand forms of thought in the single word ‘love.’” “Even if it’s shameful, I’m not a step behind anyone in loving drink and loving sex,” he wrote. But there was something else, too, of which he was extremely fond: “reading the American Declaration of Independence and the history of 1789 France.” “Wouldn’t you agree, Hiraki?”

Tanaka Naoya, who later joined the government police force to crush the Private Academy in Kagoshima rather than to support it, wrote of his love for newspapers because “the journalist dudes (*kisha san tachi*) spew funny sounds” as if they “were on stage performing *kyōgen*,” a form of Japanese theatrical farce that literally translates to “mad words.” Surely there was no need to worry that those journalists on stage “might transform into perpetrators of

political crime” (*kokujihan*), he wrote, seemingly sarcastically. In one sitting of reading a newspaper, he wrote, you could experience over a month of continuous farce.

The article was cut off, with the words “further speech prohibited.”

The power of print to incite human action, and the harshness of regime circumvention of media as a result, as we will see shortly, produced an intellectual environment in which justice itself was thrown into disarray, wherein the reading public was made to believe that what was right was always somewhere else, always elusive, precisely because public opinion was so divergent—and because the state could not control the overwhelming publicness of what the public itself called the “public” (*yo*). Satire had long been among the most distinguished features of Japanese literature and print media. Deception and conceit had long histories as the means by which Tokugawa writers and readers circumvented official proscriptions on reporting of political affairs. But now the problem had reversed: where once writers had satirized the absence of adequate information, now satire sublimated the problem of the overabundance of information.

The “fun joke” of which love to love, which was not a joke at all, poses a methodological rejoinder to historians of the Meiji era. No tidy genealogy of ideas or intellectual backdrop to the disorder of the Japanese revolution exists: where men found themselves wading through a jumble of ideas, historians too cannot easily trace out separate ideological strands. People spoke of farts and civil rights in the same breath—if we forgive the crudity. In this world of a bewildering multiplicity of loves, where justice was muddled, journalists took to muddling justice further to justify their revolution, to giving full public view to the chaos of knowledge in their realm. And justice was best deranged by ideas from France or America.

Weapons of mass instruction

Some of the revolutionary content of the *Review* was explicit. In the second edition, one editorial was explicitly titled “Assassinate State Ministers.”⁴²⁰ Another editorial called for “the head of Councilor Itō [Hirobumi].”

But often the *Review* sought to incite revolution by saying the exact opposite of what it meant—and ensuring that it was clear to everyone that meaning was the reverse of denotation. In their “On the Need to Overthrow Oppressive Government,” contributors Shibayama Naigū 芝山内寓 and Itō Kōji 伊東孝二 reveled in the progress Japan had made from a history of tyranny.⁴²¹ “Today our Japanese government has gradually lifted the oppression of the past and given the people rights to autonomy and freedom (*jishu jiyū no ken*) and has sought to make the people greatly safe and happy,” the writers rejoiced. “How fortunate are the people of Japan (*Nippon jinmin*) in this era!” Could government censors ban an editorial that praised them? “But if by any chance in the future there appears an autocrat (*senseika*) who wantonly exploits tyranny and injures the freedom and happiness of the people,” the writers added quickly, “then we cannot but say: for those who are human (*ningen taru mono*) to subordinate themselves to that autocrat’s commands is for them to violate their very duty as people.” Their “purpose in drafting this text,” the contributors wrote, was “to make it clear” to people, “in advance” of any possible violation of their humanity, what their “essential duty as human beings” was.

That essential duty to resist autocracy extended from the universalism of human existence. “The purpose for people existing in this world is for them to realize their natural freedom (*tennen no jiyū*) and attain unto supreme happiness (*mujō no kōfuku*),” they wrote. This was an indiscriminate feature of being: “Heaven has created the myriad people in the masses the

⁴²⁰ Introductions to *Hyōron* generally refer to these sensationalist titles. These titles appear, for instance, in the encyclopedia *Nihon dai hyakka zensho*, s.v. “Hyōron shinbun,” 2018.

⁴²¹ *Hyōron shinbun*, no. 62

same and given them immovable rights and freedom (*kenri jiyū*)." Governments existed because the powerful still obstructed the weak from attaining their full freedom; the "most important duty" of government, then, was to "protect the people" from such invasions of their freedom and to allow them to fulfil their natural freedom and the happiness. Governments that "restrained the freedom of the people, even to the point of restraining their movement and speech" were not only violating their own purpose but would also be unacceptable in the face of God (*kōten jōtei*). Any people who lived under a tyrannical government were bound "to arouse the power of resistance of their entire beings to recover their natural freedom," and if their freedoms were not forthcoming, then "to overthrow the tyrannical government to build their own government of freedom."

It was for this reason, the contributors wrote, that in the Declaration of Independence in America it was said that the duty of people was to build free governments and to overthrow regimes that obstructed their freedom. And in "the manifesto of the French Revolution," too, it was said that people had to overthrow the government. Obedience to tyrannical regimes made men "sinners under the heavenly lord (*kōten no tsumibito*) and men who had forsaken their very duty as human beings."⁴²² It was a violation of their very essential duty (*honbun no gimu*) as human beings to subordinate themselves to the commands of autocrats (*senseika*).

"Learned men of the public," they concluded, inviting the public sphere to speak openly on the need for revolution, "do you take us as ignorant and stupid or not?"

Responses followed. They appeared initially as a split between British gradualist, pacifist modes of change and French and American violence. "The Englishman [Herbert] Spencer said that no means of political change rivals the tranquility of judicious public debate (*seigi tōron*),

⁴²² This text is also discussed in Ogasawara, *Seinan sensō*, pp. 22-23.

which transforms the hearts of the people of a generation and as a result transforms government and law,” Komatsubara Eitarō, later minister of education, wrote. He urged people to “endure the unendurable” and seek gradual change, just as did the British, who “were rich with a spirit of forbearance” and who became the foremost people in the world by “gradually increasing their freedom without using the smoke of cannon-fire.”

But what began as an argument against violent insurrection turned subtly to one in favor: in instances in which a regime oppresses its people, must the people be sacrificed for one or two officials in the government, or the other way around? Even “a child” would know the answer: people should seek divine retribution (*tenchū*)—that is, rebel. But the Japanese government today, Komatsubara hastened to add, is “pure and pristine,” a phrase he repeated so frequently that it becomes nauseating. It is a “good government” and “all its officials are brilliant and enlightened.” But because there was no way to guarantee that in “thousands or tens of thousands of years” that purity would not fade, men now had to prepare now for a day of tyranny millennia away. People who spoke of revolution were not causing revolution, he wrote, but “doing nothing more than riding on the history of the West to devise methods to prepare for change” sometime thousands of years from now. It did not take thousands of years for Komatsubara himself to be absorbed into the regime, or for civil war to break out.

Yamawaki Gi wrote with plangent agreement with the original speaker: “Those who are constrained by manmade cages and do not exert themselves to spread freedom are sinners in the face of God (*tentei no tsumibito*),” he wrote, and it was therefore man’s “duty toward God” to “hoist the flag of freedom, to ring the bell of freedom, and to topple an oppressive, restricting government.” “I cannot but praise the American people for fulfilling their duty to God” by “resisting the country of their mothers and fathers,” he wrote.

“True freedom sprouts from fresh blood and death, not from armchair debate (*zajō giron*),” he sermonized. “If the Americans had not taken up lances against the British government and had only used debate, then how would they have won the freedom of today?” “If one desires freedom,” he continued, “it cannot be obtained without hundreds of lives [sacrificed].” But he hastened to add: “I am not saying that the free government of Japan today should be overthrown. I implore: let there be no mistake.” He too was just warning that “if in a few hundred years” the Japanese government did what the British government did to the Americans, Japanese should not fear death in resisting that regime. What appears as debate in fact coalesces around the same relentless, gratingly repetitive call for revolution.

Yokose Fumihiko had the last word, following Yamawaki. He too sounded a warning for the “future”: if “rapacious ministers and crass officials” were to impose harsh law, wantonly exploit their authority, exert harsh taxes, and even restrict their freedom of speech, and if that government were not overthrown, then the very independence of the nation itself would be impossible to maintain. Those particular cluster of allegations—cruel laws, heavy taxes, restrictions on freedom of speech—were precisely the problems against which the civil rights movement was inveighing at that very time.

Rousseau began to star in the *Review* around the time or just before Kumamoto civil rights activist Miyazaki Hachirō arrived at the paper. There is no definitive way to know whether Miyazaki, known as the Rousseau of Kyushu, spurred this turn to Rousseau, or whether he simply reflected an ideological climate that the *Review* also independently reflected. In either case, the ninetieth edition of the *Review* paper led with a front-page article titled “Jean-Jacques Rousseau.” It consisted of a rather boring factual account of the trajectory of Rousseau’s life,

from his birth to his death and his influence after the French Revolution.⁴²³ But it followed with rapturous praise from contributor Torii, who reveled in the “greatness” of Rousseau, of the moving tale of Rousseau’s young vicissitudes, and of Torii’s own personal recollection of having read the *Social Contract* and finding in it a text that “swept away evil customs and raised up the truth of a generation.” And he wrote of his visceral reaction to the text: as he read, he progressively turned from clapping his hands and stomping his feet to “overturning the table” and “crushing” his writing implements, “unable to restrain” his excitement. The word for “overturning” a table is the same as that for “overthrowing” a government.

Komatsu followed with a more explicit statement. The written word generally involved “empty theories” with no “use,” but that was not the case with Rousseau. “When I just now read the story of Mr. Rousseau, I realize that it was not happenstance that his work stirred up the hearts of the French people and that even after his death [his influence] continued, ultimately stimulating a revolution (*kakumei no ran*).” Rousseau’s words had influence that reached through society (*shakai*), he noted.

The next edition reported on political affairs in its “recent news” section: “These days there are rumors that the honorable officials of the government especially detest the French *philosophe* Rousseau. Alas, however,” they wrote, the “alas” appearing sardonic, “as a result, translations of Rousseau’s works such as *The Social Contract* are being published everywhere, one after another.”⁴²⁴ The government opposition to Rousseau was in fact making Rousseau more popular, they reported, supposedly factually. They claimed to abhor this ironic popularization of Rousseau.

⁴²³ Hyōron shinbun, v. 90

⁴²⁴ Hyōron shinbun, v. 91

The paper followed with commentary from Torii that implied why government officials might hate Rousseau. “I have read and thought deeply about many books written by Rousseau, including *The Social Contract*,” Torii explained, “and the gist of those books is that tyranny must be repressed, that false words be destroyed, that rights be equally afforded among that entity which constitutes the people, and that their happiness not be divided tendentiously.” Nothing in these ideas, he wrote, would arouse insurrection or tarnish the hearts of the people, and indeed, if these theories of Rousseau were gradually to enter into their hearts, tyrannical state officials would be unable to turn the government into their own playthings, as he put it. That the spread of Rousseauian ideals would bring about greater happiness among the people “did not allow any doubt.” Why would the regime hate such wonderful ideas?

As the writings of Rousseau began to spread across the public in the French past, the French government “blindly suppressed” them, leading only to spreading interest of the people in what it was that the regime disdained so much, Torii explained. Rousseau’s influence spread even further, to the extent that it became the reason for the overthrow of the French government. “People of later generations used the term ‘Bible of the French Revolution’ (*Fukoku kakumei no Baiburu*) to appraise the *Social Contract*,” he wrote.

Strictly speaking, then, Torii argued, it was the French government that overthrew itself, not others who overthrew it, for if the government had not carried out tyranny and “injured the happiness of the people,” then “even if a thousand or a myriad Rousseau wrote hundreds and thousands of *Social Contracts*,” the social forces underlying the revolution would not have existed. The regime blamed Rousseau, but it had no one else to blame but itself.

And so Torii’s “breast was frozen over with a great sense of doubt that I do not know how to melt away” when he read the “strange news” that Japanese state officials hated Rousseau.

It didn't make sense! The state officials of Japan served "public affairs" for "no other reason than the happiness of the people, and they do not exploit the power of the state wantonly or manage it with private interests." They did not have reason disdain Rousseau. Simply putting in the negative allowed the writers at *Review* to hurl every imprecation at the state while claiming they were in fact defending the state.

Another contributor chimed in, writing that he "was of the same opinion" of Torii: the French government brought the revolution upon itself by turning away from the will of the people. "Those massive morons (*dai baka yarō*) like Louis the Fifteenth haughtily took everything to themselves and went behind the backs of Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rousseau" to "carry out affairs," inviting their own destruction. But, Komatsu quickly added, he was a man of "shallow knowledge," and "of course, without a doubt, Rousseau is the foremost work that must be banned."

It is in this context that we must understand the Meiji regime's crackdown on newspapers and speech. That the *Review* was banned in 1876 and its staff imprisoned is little wonder. The journalists whom we have encountered here were all thrown into jail between January and May 1876 for sentences ranging from a few months to a few years. In their prison at Kajibashi, in Tokyo, they joined journalists from the nation's other leading newspapers, including *Yūbin hōchi*, *Chōya*, and *Nichinichi*.⁴²⁵ Risshisha intellectual Ueki Emori was imprisoned in the same jail for an anti-state editorial he published in *Yūbin hōchi*; in jail, he wrote a prison diary in which he named the *Review* men with whom he was incarcerated. Ueki even tells us to which room of the prison each man was consigned.⁴²⁶ We will return to Ueki momentarily.

⁴²⁵ Inada Masahiro, *Jiyū minken no bunka shi: Atarashii seiji bunka no tanjō* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 2000), pp. 196–203.

⁴²⁶ Ueki Emori, *Ueki Emori shū*, ed. Ienaga Saburō, 10 vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1990), v. 3, p. 25.

The proscriptions on journalism followed what are sometimes called the dual “evil laws” of June 1875, the “Law on Libel and Slander” (*zanbōritsu*) and the “Ordinance on Newspapers” (*shinbunshi jōrei*). It was ironically these regulations that themselves generated much of the fury that we see in the *Review* against government “oppression”; the ordinances exacerbated the problem they tried to solve. The decrees are often taken as examples of the authoritarian, oppressive nature of the Meiji regime and as precursors to the brutality of Japanese censorship and state control in the twentieth century.⁴²⁷ Kyu Hyun Kim refers to the “conduct” of the Meiji regime that the ordinances enabled as “not far removed in nature from that of the ‘thought police’ in a fascist nation.”⁴²⁸ The question of legal genealogy or similarity aside, the seeming severity of the Meiji regime in articulating these laws—which were not technically laws, as Inada Masahiro explains, but rather ordinances—reveals less the alleged oppressiveness of the Meiji regime than the depth of its leniency up to that point and the profundity of anti-state agitation in the public sphere. Indeed, until 1873 and the Inoue-Etō crisis we encountered in Chapter One, the Meiji regime had actively encouraged the publishing of newspapers as a means to “break through obduracy and tendentiousness of the heart and guide people to the realm of civilization and enlightenment.” It even called on newspapers to use “extreme simplicity” in their language so that they could be readily understood by the widest range of people and not to dwell on pure profit.⁴²⁹ It was forced to make an about-face. There would have been no need to censor newspapers so harshly if there was not so deep a threat. The decrees in themselves revealed fear of power of the public sphere.

⁴²⁷ Inada, *Jiyū minken no bunka shi*, p. 177

⁴²⁸ Kim, *The Age of Visions and Arguments*, p. 265

⁴²⁹ Inada, *Jiyū minken to bunka shi*, pp. 94-95

The ordinances against excessive freedom of expression and print ironically proceeded from the same conception of individual autonomy and freedom as that to which their critics subscribed. Inada Masahiro explains that a direct impetus to the ordinances lay in a January 1875 petition from Ono Azusa and a band of six other intellectuals who formed the “Coexistence League”—coexistence, that is, between state and society (*chōya*).⁴³⁰ “Honor” (*meiyo*), Ono and his petitioners claimed, was what allowed people “to enjoy life and to maintain their bodies.” Inflicting damage on the honor of another person “was worse than death.” And it was for this reason that “all the countries in Europe and America value” laws regulating calumny (*bari no ritsu*) and put those laws on par with regulations on physical conflict. The petitioners said that in Britain, this sort of calumny was known as *raiberu*, or “libel”; they used the English term to gloss the Japanese characters for the word *zansho*. In Britain, people greatly valued “freedom of press and publication” (*insatsu kankō no jiyū*) and “everyone” published his opinions and wrote extensively on interests and politics in newspapers and magazines “without restraint,” a process by which people “progressed into enlightenment.” And yet the British punished those who slandered or defamed individuals or political parties and thereby violated their “honor.” The intellectuals sharply criticized the Meiji regime for “hoping to open up freedom of print while failing to implement laws to guard against its harms.” Libel laws were necessary for “the protection of the rights of the individual” (*jinmin koyū no kenri o hogo suru*). The impetus for this petition, Inada writes, was a particularly slanderous article that appeared in *Nisshin shinjishi*, the John Black paper in which the petition for parliamentary government appeared. Newspapers, in his clever phrasing, constituted both a revolution in hardware and the hardware of revolution.

⁴³⁰ Inada, *Jiyū minken no bunka shi*, p. 169.

In a world agitating over freedom, men sparred over how to bring freedom about: whether laws needed to promote or curtail freedom of speech in order to permit the autonomy and engender the rights of the individual. The Meiji government had actively encouraged a free public sphere. But now it scrambled to stifle a free public sphere, the problem it itself had caused. The Enlightenment was getting out of hand.

But it was too late. The Meiji regime could imprison journalists at the *Review*. But it could not imprison ideas. And it could not shut down the public sphere.

The French fit

“Truly the situation with foreign affairs will reach a point of paroxysm (*kairan*),” Miyazaki Hachirō wrote to his Kumamoto comrade Sakimura Tsuneo in early 1876, referring to mounting tensions with Korea. “When we read the history of the 1789 French Revolution, truly it fits; it fits. Is this something to fear? Perhaps it is something to celebrate.”⁴³¹

As he often did, he appended a poem in classical Chinese to his letter:

The crimson of the flowers, the green of the willows—they fight for the spring
How long will the downtrodden people wait?
Meditate on the hundred years of man’s life—
Freedom—these two syllables are divine truth⁴³²

Miyazaki became involved in the revolutionary work of the *Review* in early 1876. He wrote to his father, apparently in May 1876, regaling him with the wonders of being “involved with

⁴³¹ Araki Seishi, *Miyazaki Hachirō* (Kumamoto: Nihon dangisha, 1954), p. 90

⁴³² Araki, *Miyazaki Hachirō*, pp. 89-90

newspaper societies,” of being engaged in vigorous discussion with his “comrades” about “all sorts of unusual arguments and curious theories.”⁴³³ Just a year later, he used those theories to lead the Kumamoto belligerents against the regime in the civil war.

By 1876, it appears that Miyazaki had become a leader of the *Review* alongside Ebihara Boku. There is disagreement whether Miyazaki was imprisoned for his involvement with the *Review* as other journalists were. Historian Araki Seishi says he was, whereas Yamamoto Hiroaki rightly signals that there appears to be no empirical evidence to corroborate this speculation.⁴³⁴ But Miyazaki was indeed arrested in January 1876 for suspected involvement in an attempted assassination of Itō Hirobumi, only to be released a week later. When he was arrested, it appears that he was well aware that events were quickly coming to a head. He wrote to an acquaintance that many of those who participated in the alleged Itō assassination attempt belonged to the “Shimazu party” like other “people who tie their hair and wear swords.” He lamented the impending trials facing the *Review* itself and its journalists, and he lauded the men who “joyfully accepted imprisonment.” He spoke, too, of “rumors” of “truly intense criticism across Europe and America of our country’s oppressiveness.” He reflected on trepidation over political circumstances in Kumamoto, of the need to “wait for the movement of Saigō” to see what would happen next, of word that a Korean embassy was to arrive in Yokohama, of “fractious argument” over the Ryūkyū problem, of their effects on relations with China, on peasant uprisings in Wakayama and of impending tax reform to resolve the financial distress sweeping the country, and of the momentous shift from samurai stipends to bonds.⁴³⁵ Such were the signs, to him, that a French Revolution in Japan was nigh.

⁴³³ Araki, *Miyazaki Hachirō*, p. 91

⁴³⁴ Araki, *Miyazaki Hachirō*, p. 92; Yamamoto Hiroaki, *Kindai o kakenuketa otoko: Miyazaki Hachirō to sono jidai* (Fukuoka: Shoshikankanbō, 2014), p. 104.

⁴³⁵ Araki, *Miyazaki Hachirō*, pp. 87–93

He himself mobilized to make that revolution a reality. In 1877, he banded together with Arima Gennai, his buddy from when they together signed up to join the army invading Taiwan in 1874 and his associate in founding the Rousseau-oriented Ueki School in Kumamoto. They raised the Collaborationist Army (*kyōdōtai*), the Kumamoto force that joined that of Kirino Toshiaki in waging war against the Meiji regime. They would make the French Revolution happen in Kumamoto themselves.

In the short year between his release from prison and his raising of the Collaborationist Army, Miyazaki rejoined and helped to fan the flames of the increasingly militant democratic movement in Kumamoto. Let us draw from the archival findings of Araki Seishi and closely read an article Miyazaki published in *Kumamoto shinbun*; he entrusted the article to one of his Kumamoto friends, who himself delivered it in person for publication on May 24, 1876, Araki explains.⁴³⁶

The indulgent, self-promoting style with which Miyazaki wrote represented the changes sweeping his nation, of young men from the provinces rising in the world by their own volition. “I have been away from home for ten months now,” he wrote, speaking floridly about how, while in Tokyo, he rode down the Sumida River in the light of the moon and was intoxicated by the flowers of the region. And he conveyed tidings of the “good news” he had heard: “that the brilliant Kumamoto governor Yasuoka will, with peerless and supreme determination, establish a popularly elected prefectural assembly.” He could not suppress the joy that led his “hands to dance and his feet to stomp.”

He wrote bombastically not of democratic theory so much as of his own deep contemplation of democratic theory, much as others in the *Review* did: “I have roused thought

⁴³⁶ Araki, *Miyazaki Hachirō*, pp. 95-98

and regarded the greatest exigency of a developing country to be civil rights and freedom, and I have spoken at length about this without regard for my own inadequacy and lack of knowledge.” He wrote that the time had now come for “those beings who are the people (*jinmin taru mono*)” to open speech assemblies, to “study what rights and duties are,” each to establish his own spirit of independence, and, responding to imperial decree, to speak and write and submit their opinions to the government. He reflected on his own failures earlier to bring about parliamentary government in Kumamoto but saw now that things had changed because “the knowledge of the people” had advanced. “Even if I was too precipitate last year in advocating civil rights,” he wrote, now he could only praise the government and the people for advancing the ideal of popular elections.

The premise of the entire democratic affair is befuddling. Somehow the personal feelings of a young kid who had left home mattered so much that they deserved to be broadcast for anyone to read in a newspaper—or at least Miyazaki thought himself so important as to flaunt himself in his home-prefecture newspaper. He appeared to understand himself, or at least aspired to portray himself, as a democratic celebrity. The public sphere, and the ideas about civil rights and freedom expressed in it, became his arena for ostentatious displays of his life experiences. There appear signs of the structural links between democracy and the public sphere: insofar as popular democracy relies on the individual asserting himself and his views before the public and on a society of debating equals, the public sphere itself enabled that particular form of association, and disabled other forms of association. His gaudy individualism stands in jarring contrast to the equally gaudy absence of writing, to the absence of an assumption of a general reading public, to which the *Shinpūren* and their leader Hayashi Ōen were dedicated—at the exact same moment in the exact same prefecture, as we saw in the previous chapter.

This notion of the individual, the “I,” in Japanese intellectual history has been closely studied by scholars of literature, with whom scholars of history are in unfortunately thin conversation. In her landmark study of the “I-novel” and of narratives of self, Tomi Suzuki argues that the story (*shōsetsu*) and especially the genre of the I-novel, which generated conceptions of individual autonomy in Japanese intellectual life, originated in the Movement for Freedom and Civil Rights.⁴³⁷ “The notion of an independent, individual ‘self’ emerged first and foremost in the political arena,” she writes, and she identifies the civil rights movement, the rise of Christianity, and the state-led Enlightenment project as constituting this arena.⁴³⁸ The case of Miyazaki reveals how both in its content and in its medium the Civil Rights movement, and the state-led Enlightenment project that at first fueled and then tried to quench it, produced this individual and his democratic strivings, the notion that he knew, better than anyone, how the world was and should be.

Circumstances in Kumamoto degenerated quickly. Only months after Miyazaki wrote in the *Kumamoto shinbun*, the Shinpūren rebellion erupted; Yasuoka, the governor whom Miyazaki had hailed for his democratic reforms, was assassinated. As Yamamoto explains, within weeks of the appointment of replacement governor Tomioka Keimei, Kumamoto was rocked by an uprising from the local civil rights faction, vestiges of the Ueki School that Miyazaki and Arima had formed and then dissolved.⁴³⁹ In early 1877, Tomioka wrote with alarm to Ōkubo of “popular rioting” in Kumamoto (*jinmin sōran*) in which the members of the civil-rights faction were descending in person on government officials to demand that village heads (*kochō*), because they were representatives of the village people, be elected by popular vote. In his report

⁴³⁷ Tomi Suzuki, *Narrating the Self: Fictions of Japanese Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), chs. 1-2, esp. 26-32.

⁴³⁸ Suzuki, *Narrating the Self*, p. 33

⁴³⁹ Yamamoto, *Kindai o kakenuketa otoko*, pp. 117-123

to Ōkubo, Tomioka blamed the rioting in part on civil rights activist and former Ueki School affiliate Hirota Shō. Just weeks later, Hirota joined Miyazaki in a concerted effort to combine with Satsuma forces invading Kumamoto and tear down the Meiji regime. The Collaborationist Army began to coalesce.

The editors of the *Seinan ki den*, a major study of the Southwest War from the early twentieth century, write that the Collaborationist Army and the Kumamoto civil rights faction on which it was based “resembled la Montagne,” the radical liberalist party of Robespierre, “of the French Revolution era.”⁴⁴⁰ There was causation, not mere correlation. The editors claim that rebel leaders Miyazaki, Arima, and Hirakawa gathered together when they learned that the Private Academy in Satsuma was planning to raise troops and said the following: “When we carefully observe the forces of the nations of Europe and America, we see that within [their borders] they sought to put their government in order and to value rights, and beyond their borders they promoted overseas colonization (*kōkai shokumin*), expanded their territories, and bestirred themselves to seize on opportunities to make things new.” They railed against the Meiji regime for doing the precise opposite in each sphere. “We are inexpert, but we are still people (*ichimin*) of the imperial nation,” they wrote, “and so we move forward, along with men of will across the realm, to reconstruct the government and rescue the people (*jinmin*) from the realm of slavery (*dorei no iki*), expand civil rights within, extend national rights abroad, and thereby build the foundation for the independence of our nation, to let the imperial might glitter across the universe.”

It is unclear from where the editors of the volume obtain these exact words the Collaborationists allegedly spoke. There is no necessary reason to believe them. But they appear

⁴⁴⁰ Kokuryūkai, ed., *Seinan kiden*, v. shita 1, p. 45

consistent with the motivational forces that had long been driving Miyazaki and indeed with the revolutionary bent of the *Review*.

On February 19, a suspicious fire erupted at Kumamoto Castle. It appears that it was not part of a deliberate attack, but it was enough to arouse suspicion. Within two days, the Collaborationist Army, with Miyazaki Hachirō as chief of staff of the command center, had formed.⁴⁴¹ They began with some forty men, but they manage to increase the numbers tenfold.

In his manifesto for the army, Miyazaki wrote that the government had lost control of the nation after the crisis of 1873, leading to “a loss of rights (*kenri*) in relations with other countries” and “signs of a degenerate world approaching the end of times (*massei*)” had appeared. “The people,” he claimed, felt “intense pain and fury” over the failures of the government, one that had been overrun with thugs who even plotted to assassinate Saigō. “If not now, then when?” he asked, pledging to “cooperate with united hearts and resolutely overthrow the tyrannical government” so that in Japan they could establish a virtuous government and so that abroad they could extend Japanese power. “This is our essential will,” he wrote, “This is our duty.” It is said that this document was sent to Saigō, who read it with seeming approval. One survivor of the war allegedly reflected decades later that it was odd that Miyazaki did not write explicitly of freedom and rights in the manifesto.⁴⁴²

The Collaborationist Army joined forces with the Satsuma army under the helm of Kirino and waged war. Arima, Hirakawa, and the rest of the troops marched into Yamaga, in northern Kumamoto, drove out government forces, and then evidently jumped in the hot springs and got drunk. As if liberating oppressed land, they wasted no time in realizing their democratic dreams

⁴⁴¹ Kokuryūkai, ed., *Seinan kiden*, v. shita, pp. 50–51

⁴⁴² Araki, *Miyazaki Hachirō*, pp. 117-119; Kokuryūkai, ed., *Seinan kiden*, v. shita 1, pp. 51-52; Uemura, *Miyazaki kyōdai den*, pp. 208-209.

in their new territory. They established a “people’s government” there and, “according to the freedom and civil rights manifesto that they had been advancing, assembled the populace, explained to them the critical elements of self-government, and through popular-election procedures elected a general representative of the people,” who then established a government of self-rule that was “unprecedented in our nation.” Miyazaki Tōten, brother of Miyazaki Hachirō, told this story in his retrospective account and used it to argue for the “loyalty to principle” of the Kumamoto faction.⁴⁴³ Motives and nepotistic revisionism aside, as Uemura argues, it appears that Tōten is not making the story up: sources from the government side, too, tell of the popular government the civil-rights army established in land it seized from the government.⁴⁴⁴

Miyazaki’s younger brother further claimed that Nakae Chōmin, Rousseau of the Orient, visited Miyazaki Hachirō, Rousseau of Kyushu, during the civil war. Nakae sought to obstruct Miyazaki’s participation in armed struggle, discouraging him from fighting for Saigō because Saigō “was not a believer in freedom and civil rights.”⁴⁴⁵ Miyazaki did not take Chōmin’s advice.

It is not surprising that Miyazaki and Chōmin knew one another given the depth of their shared admiration of Rousseau’s thought, but it is perhaps surprising that Miyazaki and Chōmin had in fact plotted for military action against the Meiji state before 1877—and solicited the help of Shimazu Hisamitsu toward this end. Ogawara Masamichi writes that Chōmin went to Shimazu in 1875 and called on him to summon Saigō to the capital with troops from Kagoshima as a means of strong-arming the Meiji government into reform.⁴⁴⁶ Shimazu evidently did not

⁴⁴³ See Miyazaki Tōten, “‘Kyōdōtai ni tsuite dokusha shokun ni kinkoku,’” in *Miyazaki Tōten zenshū*, ed. Miyazaki Ryūsuke and Onogawa Hidemi, 5 vols. (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1971-1976), v. 4, pp. 104-136. Relevant passages are reproduced in Uemura Kimio, *Miyazaki kyōdai den: Nihon hen*, 2 vols. (Fukuoka: Ashi shobō, 1984), v. 1, p. 178. Yamamoto, *Kindai o kakenuketa otoko*, pp. 166-171;

⁴⁴⁴ Uemura, *Miyazaki kyōdai den: Nihon hen*, v. 1., pp. 184-191.

⁴⁴⁵ Araki, *Miyazaki Hachirō*, p. 125; Uemura, *Miyazaki kyōdai den: Nihon hen*, v. 1, p. 197.

⁴⁴⁶ Ogawara, *Seinan sensō*, pp. 94 – 95.

acquiesce. Uemura explains that another student of Nakae Chōmin, then a secretary in the government and later mayor of Yokohama and Kyoto, reported that Nakae and Miyazaki had indeed worked together on a plot to overthrow the government.⁴⁴⁷ Whether with Miyazaki or not, it appears that even Nakae Chōmin, perhaps the single most celebrated intellectual of the Civil Rights Movement, shared in the desire to use military force to topple the Japanese government.

Miyazaki Hachirō wrote to his parents in the depths of war—no surprise, Araki writes, given his “extreme filiality.” While encamped at the army headquarters of his troop, he wrote to his father on March 3 to say that he was “day in night in consultation with Kirino, Murata, and other luminaries” and that waging war was “a genuinely cheerful thing.” And because his “righteous army” was the product of “years of spirit” rather than composed of mere “day laborers” in the government conscript army, the distinction between the warring camps was clear: his, formed by men of spirit, was vastly superior. “The basis for better fortunes in the Imperial Nation has begun with the Kumamoto War,” he exulted. “I have been able to fulfill my longstanding will, and it is a greatly joyous thing in the extreme.”⁴⁴⁸ Indeed, in an editorial in *Kokai shinbun* speaking of “signs that the Empire of Japan is about to perish,” someone—historians generally agree that it must have been Miyazaki Hachirō—wrote just months before the war that he “would gladly accept that [his] entire body be cut into tiny shreds and his bones to smashed into powder” even if it would be a “small help” toward letting the “spirit of freedom to be exerted, and heaven-endowed rights to be extended” and people to “be guided until the pathway of enlightenment.”⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁷ Uemura, *Miyazaki kyōdai den: Nihon hen*, v. 1., p. 122. Ogawara echoes this claim in *Seinan sensō*, p. 94.

⁴⁴⁸ Letter reproduced in Araki, *Miyazaki Hachirō*, pp. 122-123 and in Uemura, *Miyazaki kyōdai den: Nihon hen*, vol. 1., p. 195.

⁴⁴⁹ Article quoted in Uemura, *Miyazaki kyōdai den: Nihon hen*, vol. 1, p. 162. Uemura provides detailed notes on speculation over the author of the editorial. See also Yamamoto, *Kindai o kakenuketa otoko*, pp. 103-104; Araki, *Miyazaki Hachirō*, pp. 91-92.

Was it, as Nakae Chōmin allegedly said, that Miyazaki Hachirō and the Collaborationist Army allied themselves with the supposedly anti-civil-rights Saigō and fought for civil rights in the civil war merely for strategic purposes? Ogawara Masamichi turns to an oft-quoted passage from an early associate of the Ueki School claiming that Miyazaki himself allegedly said that he had no intellectual affinity with Saigō: he merely sought to use Saigō as a vehicle by which to achieve his own eventual aim of establishing constitutional civil rights and an aggressive foreign policy in Japan. Ogawara argues that for civil rights activists (*minkenka*), the Southwest War was a hydra that presented both “lights” and “shadows.”⁴⁵⁰ The prospect of toppling a regime they deemed evil presented the glittering “lights” of the rebellion, and it was by these lights, he claims, that the Kumamoto civil rights band were guided when they fought in the uprising.⁴⁵¹ But many others feared the “shadows” that civil war would cast: since Saigō and the regime were not too far from one another in what Ogawara calls their “conservatism,” many feared that no constitutional state would be inaugurated if Saigō won the war.

This notion of joint rebellion against a common enemy despite ideological divisions has been used frequently by historians to explain various seemingly unlikely ideological alliances in the Meiji era. And indeed the writers of the *Review* themselves viewed these alliances with curiosity and a degree of alarm: the ideological splintering was evident to men at the time, not only to people writing in retrospect.⁴⁵² But to understand this widespread case of apparent alliances of convenience, to make sense of the relationship between strategic and intellectual considerations, we must return to the foundational point that the rebellion against the state was not essentially or fundamentally about the evils of the state itself: it was rather part of a broader

⁴⁵⁰ Ogawara, *Seinan sensō to jiyū minken*, p. 35

⁴⁵¹ Ogawara, *Seinan sensō to jiyū minken*, p. 8

⁴⁵² See, for instance, editors in *Hyōron shinbun*, v. 75

struggle over justice being waged in an incipient public. The freedoms opened up by the Meiji Revolution enabled these curious configurations as men saw that the contest for intellectual surety was so deep that violence was needed to resolve it, regardless of who was waging that war.

Miyazaki Hachirō died on the battlefield; as one might expect, his death is shrouded in rather silly legends.⁴⁵³ And the Collaborationist Party lost the civil war and its popular government in Yamaga. But just a year later, Ikematsu Toyoki, Miyazaki Hachirō's buddy from the *Review*, founded the Society of Mutual Love (*Sōaisha*) to carry on the work of the civil rights faction.⁴⁵⁴ Their activities took off once Hirota Shō and the other belligerents were released from prison in 1879 and joined the organization. And that same year, Ueki Emori, the intellectual mastermind of revolution in Kōchi, dropped by Kumamoto on his civil-rights speech tour through Kyushu.⁴⁵⁵ It was just a year after he, too, had entangled himself in the civil war.

'If not America, then India'

As the Kumamoto civil-rights faction waged war, the Kōchi faction, the most prominent force in the nationwide civil rights movement, contemplated its own rebellion. The Kōchi faction centered around the Risshisha, or the Society of Self-Exertion, the organization most notably associated with Itagaki Taisuke. Another member, Hayashi Yūzō, masterminded the proposed rebellion. His scheme, which he hatched along with Ōe Taku, was to attack prefectural headquarters in Kōchi, assassinate the governor, and then raise forces to assail the military

⁴⁵³ Uemura, *Miyazaki kyōdai den: Nihon hen*, vol. 1, pp. 226-238.

⁴⁵⁴ Uemura, *Miyazaki kyōdai den: Nihon hen*, vol. 1, pp. 261-262.

⁴⁵⁵ Uemura, *Miyazaki kyōdai den: Nihon hen*, vol. 1, pp. 264.

garrison in Osaka while Kirino and his forces attacked the garrison in Kumamoto. It was a dream he had harbored in 1874, when Etō Shinpei rebelled. It did not work out then. He thought it might now. When Miyazaki Hachirō died in 1877, Hayashi Yūzō was scurrying about Japan trying to secure funds to buy the weapons that would make battle possible.

It remains a controversial historiographical problem whether Hayashi was a rogue militant or whether the Risshisha as a whole, and particularly Itagaki Taisuke, supported military participation in the civil war. Itagaki Taisuke famously tried to exculpate himself in his own retrospective account. He claimed that the Risshisha was split into two factions: the first, in Kōchi, revolved around himself and sought to “arouse public opinion” behind the formation of a national parliament, using arguments as the means of bringing about a parliamentary state; the other, based in Tokyo and centering on Hayashi Yūzō, sought to use military force to overthrow the government.⁴⁵⁶ The editors of the *Seinan ki den* sharply disputed this exculpation, Ogawara Masamichi explains, writing that there was no way that Itagaki could not have known about the militarist plans of his organization. He must at least silently have condoned them. But beyond just the empirical problem of the extent of Itagaki’s involvement, if we read Itagaki carefully, his means of deflecting blame ironically draws attention to his possible culpability. By insisting that his activities were discursive and peaceful, and therefore opposed to Hayashi’s violence and militancy, Itagaki inadvertently raises the question of the extent to which words and weapons could be so cleanly separated.

Seeking to resolve this question of Kōchi civil-rights militancy in the civil war, Ogawara begins where many histories start: with a gathering Itagaki held at his home, according to a report by Meiji government spies, with Gotō Shōjirō, Ōe Taku, Hayashi Yūzō, and others of the

⁴⁵⁶ See Ogawara, *Seinan sensō to jiyū minken*, pp. 35–36.

Risshisha. It was only days after the Kagoshima Private Academy had seized military installations in Kagoshima.⁴⁵⁷ Itagaki expressed concern that the war unfolding was a “personal battle” between the Saigō-Kirino-Shinohara faction in what was once Satsuma and the rival Ōkubo-Kawaji Satsuma group, which now stood at the helm of the country. But Itagaki said that that did not matter: “In the histories of foreign lands,” he reflected, trying to make of Japan a foreign country, “men have occasionally seized on chances like these to advance the cause of civil rights. We must not let this chance slip away. Let Saigō Takamori strike at the government with an army of fury; let us strike at the government with civil rights.” There came a caveat: “But let us use military force afterward; first we must attack with petitions.”⁴⁵⁸

Writing self-consciously in the vein of the recent turn in the studies of the Movement for Freedom and Civil Rights toward the influence of various media in the formation of a national political culture, Ogawara doubts that Itagaki’s eventual endorsement of public discourse over military force meant he rejected military insurrection in principle.⁴⁵⁹ He claims that Itagaki simply never made the full climb out of the “first stage” of a revolutionary theory of words to the “second stage” of weapons, both of which he endorsed. Other historians generally coalesce around the argument that logistical limitations to raising an army combined with waning military prospects for a Saigō victory to obstruct a Risshisha revolution. But some argue that the mainstream of the Kōchi civil rights faction did make a fundamental shift from promoting a civil-rights revolution through weapons to one through words, a repudiation of violence that the famous “Risshisha petition” of June 1877, which called for a speedy formation of a national

⁴⁵⁷ Ogawara, *Seinan sensō to jiyū minken*, p. 38; see also Matsuoka Kiichi, “‘Hayashi Yūzō jirekidan’ o yomu: Tosa kyohei keikaku ni tsuite,” *Kōchi daigaku kyōiku gakubu kenkyū hōkoku* 63 (2003), p. 5. Ogawara writes that he derives this account from a secret report from government spies reproduced in the account of a notable Meiji official: see Sasaki Takayuki, *Hogohiroi: Sasaki Takayuki Nikki*, 12 vols. (Tokyo: Tōkyō daigaku shuppankai, 1970-1979), v. 7, pp. 348-349.

⁴⁵⁸ Quoted in Ogawara, *Seinan sensō to jiyū minken*, p. 38; quotation from Sasaki, *Hogohiroi*, v. 7, p. 349

⁴⁵⁹ Ogawara, *Seinan sensō to jiyū minken*, p. 37

parliament, supposedly exemplifies. Ogawara makes an important intervention in stressing that Itagaki never fully left the shared “intellectual space” violent of revolutionary theory he inhabited with Hayashi and Ōe.

Even if the notion of “stages” helps to exonerate Itagaki Taisuke practically but not intellectually, the record of the Kōchi faction in 1877 reveals a muddy reality in which no distinct gap between stages can easily be made. The whole point of the “words” of the mid-1870s was to incite a broader struggle of weapons, one that those who spoke those words could not control.

Indeed, in describing the “shared intellectual space” of revolution, Ogawara stresses the importance of Western theories of justified resistance against the government in reconfiguring the intellectual heritage of earlier *shishi* rebellions in which they partook.⁴⁶⁰ He places particular emphasis on two figures in this reconfiguration. One is Mitsukuri Rinshō, the very man who claims to have coined the term “civil rights” in his translations of French law under Etō Shinpei, as we saw in Chapter Four. Mitsukuri translated a key text on the right to justifiable revolution that historians identify as the locus classicus on revolutionary theory. The other is Ueki Emori, who is perhaps most famous for enshrining the right to revolt against an oppressive regime in his draft constitution for the Meiji regime.

Ueki Emori is significant not only in formulating the general theory that pervaded the civil rights movement. He was, as Ogawara notes and as his diary reveals, involved in the speech assemblies and media activities of the *Review*. And he was the man behind the petition that allegedly marked the Risshisha turn away from violence. Let us examine this petition to reveal the militant revolutionary bent of the Risshisha.

⁴⁶⁰ Ogawara, *Seinan sensō to jiyū minken*, p. 35

As Hayashi Yūzō charged ahead with planning military operations, Gotō Shōjirō plotted to negotiate with Kido Kōin and develop a Tosa-Chōshū coalition against Ōkubo and the Satsuma faction of the regime. At this point in the battle, Itagaki was calling for troops to prepare to attack the military garrison in Osaka while he and Ueki Emori returned to Kōchi to help rally the civil-rights factions there.⁴⁶¹ The plan, then, was for troops from Shikoku to attack state military installations in Osaka while those rebels from Kyushu waged war on that island.

In April, members of the Risshisha in Kōchi who had been advocating a military insurrection formally declared their resolve to raise an army. They submitted a notice to the government of Kōchi at the end of April stating that they intended to raise troops to “defend” Kōchi as “military chaos” engulfed Kyushu.⁴⁶² It appears that Ueki Emori wrote these papers. There were two documents. One was a manifesto justifying the raising of troops, in which the petitioners declared that it was “an obvious duty that requires no expiation for those who are human” to raise an army when their nation is at war “in order to preserve our own rights” (*onore no kenri*). The manifesto was a supplement to a request to the Kōchi government: that request, Matsuoka Kiichi stresses, was strictly speaking not calling for the raising of an army in and of itself but rather demanded a “public discussion among the people” for the necessity of raising an army. When the Risshisha came under widespread suspicion for using the notion of a “defensive army” to raise troops to overthrow the government, Ueki Emori took to *Ōsaka nippō* in June to deny the claims, Matusoka explains. The letter to the editor was coy: Ueki claimed that the army his organization was planning was in fact not an army but just “a means to share our common will with one another and pledge it to one another.” It was the role of the people to come together and decide whether to wage war against the state, evidently.

⁴⁶¹ Ogawara, *Seinan sensō to jiyū minken*, pp. 39–45

⁴⁶² Matsuoka, “‘Hayashi Yūzō jirekidan’ o yomu,” pp. 19-20

Around the time he drafted the proposal to form an army, as Kyushu was being rocked by military insurrection, Ueki also composed a petition to the Meiji regime for the establishment of a parliament. This was the so-called Risshisha petition.⁴⁶³ Intent on military action, Hayashi Yūzō vigorously protested, claiming, “this is not the time for petitions.” But the petition survived and was quite literally carried around Japan as various members of the Risshisha read it and edited it: after Ueki wrote it in late April and Kataoka Kenkichi and Ōe Taku revised it, it was approved by Itagaki and submitted by Kataoka to the government, then located in Kyoto as the Emperor was on tour, in June 1877.⁴⁶⁴

Did the petition represent a turn away from military inclinations and toward peaceful means, or was it merely offering an ideological platform for war? Ogawara uncovers a letter from Itō Hirobumi to Yamagata Aritomo in which Itō denounces the letter as “nothing but a bunch of idiotic arguments without anything in it even worth looking at.” But Itō did look, and he looked carefully: “Behind it there is an argument for assassination (*ansatsu no ron*).”

Itō was not needlessly panicking. Just as it was clear to Itō at the time that there was something odd “behind” the petition, or literally “in the shadows” (*kage*) of the text, it seems clear in further retrospect that Ueki was writing something more insidious than just a call for popular government.

The fundamental question Ueki raised in his petition was why disorder had overtaken Japan for the ten years since the Meiji Restoration.⁴⁶⁵ And the sweeping theory he proposed to explain seemingly everything over the past decade was that the Meiji regime had blocked public debate: people were not permitted to discuss political matters openly. In making this claim, Ueki

⁴⁶³ Matsuoka, “‘Hayashi Yūzō jirekidan’ o yomu,” p. 22

⁴⁶⁴ Matsuoka, “‘Hayashi Yūzō jirekidan o yomu,” pp. 19-23; Ogawara, *Seinan sensō to jiyū minken*, p. 66

⁴⁶⁵ For the text of the petition, see Ueki Emori, “Risshisha kenpakusho,” in *Ueki Emori shū*, 10 vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1990, v. 6, pp. 3–23.

ironically revealed that the logically prior point was true: the very possibility of a public debate in civil society through new media and through foreign ideas was the crisis that the Meiji government could not control. When Ueki said that stifling public debate created disorder, he exposed the reality that the possibility of debate, the freedom of the public to have open opinions and to try to influence the opinions of others, in itself had destabilized Japan.

And indeed, Ueki's diatribe against the blocked avenues of public debate was a thinly disguised argument for revolution, a manifesto of imperial democracy, one that repeatedly praised the glory and overriding majesty of the Emperor, regarded his will as one with that of the people, saw the right of the people to participation in government as essential, and denigrated state ministers as meddlers in the proper relationship between the people and the Emperor.⁴⁶⁶

Ueki opened by grappling with the two linked concerns that pervaded the thought of the time: the place of the Japanese present within the sweep of both the Japanese and the global past, and the violent, disorderly nature of that Japanese present. It had been "but a few years" since the Emperor unified the nation, Ueki wrote, and yet there had been a slew of developments "without parallel or comparison in the history of the world's nations": feudalism had been dissolved and a centralized government established; laws promulgated; a police force trained; an army and navy consolidated; school education founded; and a postal service, telegrams, and railways all developed. "The people have advanced into the arena of enlightenment, the nation has arrived at the realm of wealth and strength, and it is not difficult to compare the nation in its prosperity to the countries of Europe and America," he revealed.

And yet there was problem, Ueki wrote: these developments somehow did not have the "effects" that one would have expected. Within the nation, samurai and civilians alike rebelled;

⁴⁶⁶ It is not clear which parts of Ueki's original draft were revised and by whom; for the sake of convenience, we will refer to Ueki as the author of the draft while recognizing that others too had a hand in making changes.

beyond, the nation faced the depredations of foreign nations. He posed a curt, direct question: “Why?” Why was the Japanese revolution not working? All these crises arose simply because “the ministers who serve the Emperor revere despotism and do not allow public debate (*kōgi*).” As soon as the Tokugawa government had been abolished, he wrote, the ministers “venerated oppression, discarded public debate, leaving no place without tyranny,” leading “men of will, warriors of justice (*seigi*)” to raise their fury.

“We have heard,” he continued, “that the purpose of national government is to ensure the peace and tranquility of the nation, and the purpose of peace and tranquility is to advance civil rights (*min no kenri*) and to allow people to live in the realm of happiness and safety.” And he continued: “We have heard: the reason heaven has produced man and endowed him with hands and feet and supplied him with a head and eyes and a spirit to envelop them is to make them possess rights to autonomy and freedom (*jishu jiyū no kenri*).”⁴⁶⁷ The very essence of being had been violated in the ten years since the fall of the Tokugawa regime.

Ueki does not say from whom he “heard” the argument that the very purpose of human existence was freedom, but they strikingly resemble the words for which he was thrown in jail not a year earlier. Ueki was imprisoned for his 1876 *Yūbin hōchi shinbun* editorial “Monarch who Makes Monkeys out of Men,” in which he argued that the freedom to exercise thought and imagination constitutes the defining ontological feature of humanity, distinguishing men from monkeys. When governments violation of this freedom, it “made monkeys out of men.”⁴⁶⁸ In some fascinating intellectual sleuth work, Na Xifang homes in on the unusual word *shizō*, a portmanteau of “thought” (*shikō*) and “imagination” (*sōzō*) that Ueki uses to describe what

⁴⁶⁷ Ueki Emori, “Risshisha kenpakusho,” v. 6, p. 5.

⁴⁶⁸ Ueki Emori, “Hito o saru ni suru kunshu,” in *Ueki Emori shū*, v. 3, pp. 16–18. See also Julia Adeney Thomas, *Reconfiguring Modernity*, ch. 6; Amin Ghadimi, “The Federalist Papers of Ueki Emori: Liberalism and Empire in the Japanese Enlightenment,” *Global Intellectual History* 2:2 (2017), pp. 196–229.

should be free in humans, to trace the origins of Ueki's thought.⁴⁶⁹ Analyzing the texts Ueki records in his reading journal around the same time, Na discovers that the word, and by extension at least part of Ueki's notion of freedom-as-human-being, came from *Tendō sōgen*, a text by Nakamura Masanao that Ueki claims he read three times between 1874 and 1876. The Nakamura text, in turn, was a translation of a book American missionary William Alexander Parsons Martin wrote in Chinese to spread Christianity. Indeed, the references to the divine in Ueki's petition seem to substantiate the empirical evidence for the Christian derivation of his revolutionary thought; Ueki considered himself a strong Protestant at this early point in his intellectual career. Christian proselytism in 1850s China was fanning civil strife in Japan.

Japanese society was destabilized by the failure to produce a world in which all people could enjoy their divinely mandated freedom independent of status, a world that should have been manifest, Ueki thought, in what he called a system of equality between samurai and the generality of people (*shimin* [士民, not 四民] *heikin no sei*). When samurai lost their “permanent occupations,” rather than take on the duty of elevating the spirits of the “general people” to the position they once supposedly occupied, they sullied their own spirit, “took on the evil customs of depravity among the people,” and turned to despotism. And it was because samurai lost this spirit of responsibility that “whenever there has been disorder (*karan*) in the nation since the Restoration, it has invariably been samurai who have led it and invariably been samurai who have planned it.” It was this fact that explained the uprisings in Saga and the one unfolding in Kagoshima, he explained. The flattening of distinctions among people had led to the depravity of all, not the elevation of all.

⁴⁶⁹ Na Xifang, “Ueki Emori no Tōkyō yūgaku jidai ni okeru shisō keisei: ‘kaika’ ‘minken’ to ‘jiyū,’” *Nenpō: Chiiki bunka kenkyū* 18 (2014), p. 104.

These principles of public debate, universal freedom, and mass equality were meant to govern all people, not only those in a new Japanese civil society, but everyone in Asia—where they did not.⁴⁷⁰ The nations in Asia were old, large, and prosperous, Ueki wrote, but their governments were all despotic and oppressive, their people were depraved and “abandoned themselves to evil customs and did not know how to extend their rights to autonomy and freedom”; the government and the people were isolated from each another; the people “lacked equality in rights and their knowledge was not enlightened.” They could not, he wrote, “depart from the evil customs of barbarism.” Japan had to flee Asian despotism.

In this context, Ueki unleashed an invective, one that he and other intellectuals reiterated time and again through the rest of the early Meiji period, about the indignities that foreign governments had heaped on Japan, which constituted an attack on the people: it was the Japanese people who felt indignation and humiliation because of the foreign relations crisis. It was because “the people were unable to suppress their overflowing feelings of animosity that the Hizen crisis [i.e. the Saga Rebellion, the topic of Chapter Four] erupted,” he wrote. No sooner was the Saga crisis suppressed than the Taiwan crisis emerged. This, too, he lamented, the regime had gotten wrong: the Taiwanese were barbarians “who drank blood,” without a monarch, without a government, the opposite of Koreans, who had an established country and who had hundreds of years of relations with Japan. The Japanese invaded the wrong people. And then there was the problem of China and the Ryūkyū: the regime had not resolved the problem of the sovereignty of Taiwan; it requested that the Chinese government resolve the Taiwan problem; the Chinese government failed; the Japanese public knew this fact and so “a spirit of readiness to preserve the face of the nation in the event of hostilities opening with China

⁴⁷⁰ Ueki Emori, “Risshisha kenpakusho,” v. 6, p. 6

pervaded” it, and yet all the government managed to do was to extract a paltry indemnity without securing sovereignty over Ryūkyū. And then there was crisis on Kanghai Island, in which the Japanese government failed to preserve the honor of the nation, and then there was too the absurdity of the Karafuto situation: the “northern gates” of Japanese “were not closed” as they should have been, Ueki wrote, and even under the Tokugawa era, “the territory of Karafuto [Sakhalin] was ours, and the territory of Chishima [the Kuril Islands] was ours.” “No one among the people under the realm does not know” that these territories “belong to us,” he wrote. But the Russians came in and claimed the land, and the Japanese regime did something baffling: even though both of the territories were Japanese, because Russia claimed them, they carried out a quid pro quo trade with their possessions, surrendering one to Russia. All the money spent on developing the north had, with a single treaty on a single piece of paper, gone to naught. He wrote that soon China would do the same with the Ryūkyū as Russia did with Karafuto, and as the Japanese territory shrank, “people” would not be able to stop the cascade. “The people seek to preserve the face of the nation, and so they place the blame for this on the government.” This, and another seven points, all revealed the perils of “lauding despotism and disallowing public discussion,” which “led to the loss of order in the realm (*dajō jo o ushinai*) and to chaos.” If the public had been allowed to do what it wanted, then the Japanese would not have been eviscerated by imperial powers, the nation would not have fallen into disorder, and the empire would have grown strong.

Was there a way out? To Ueki and the Risshisha, “the establishment of a popularly elected parliament and the sure building of the foundations of a constitutional polity” together with “making the people participate in political power (*jinmin o shite seiken ni sanyo seshime*)”

so that they could “extend their heaven-endowed rights” would resolve the crises of the Japanese Revolution. It would allow the people themselves to “rise up” and defend the nation.

This seemingly civil call for imperialism and parliamentary government constituted what Ueki Emori explicitly wrote. What he implied was rather different. Victory in the raging civil war would not rescue the regime, Ueki wrote ominously, for even if the state managed to suppress the uprising, “there will be no benefit to the people of the realm.”⁴⁷¹ The state would resurrect the “pervasive evils of olden times,” suppress public debate day by day, the “men of public debate will be regarded as enemies, as idiots,” and the regime would place Japan “back on the dead-end road of the Tokugawa.” It was only through the “ultimate pouring of fresh blood” at the end of the Tokugawa era that Japan had escaped that impasse. The ministers of the Tokugawa state were marching to destruction, and the people saw their misdeeds and reflected on the “evils of despotic oppression”; they rescued the nation by violent resurrection. Now the people would have to do the same, again.

The comparison Ueki made between the civil war engulfing Japan in his 1877 moment and the series of events that led to the violent toppling of the Tokugawa government, resulting in the civil war of 1868, makes it difficult to read the petition as other than an endorsement of violent insurrection, even if that endorsement is stated as an intellectual fact rather than a subjective opinion. Just as the men of the late Tokugawa era needed to overthrow the government and rescue the state through “blood,” Ueki predicted—endorsed—the same future in his present moment.

⁴⁷¹ Ueki Emori, “Risshisha kenpakusho,” v. 6, p. 21

This not-particularly-veiled revolutionary intent appears even more starkly when we consider other works that Ueki was writing at the time: it appears unlikely that he simply became a pacifist for this one moment in 1877.

In September 1877, a few months after the petition was formally submitted and during what turned out to be the final month of the civil war, Ueki took to the pages of civil-rights newspaper *Kainan shinshi* to call for a “Second Meiji Restoration.” Arguing that change was the way of nature, he observed that politics, too, had to change along with everything else in the world. In general, governments progressed from “customary governments” (*inshū seiji*), which he glossed parenthetically as “monarchical despotism” (*kunshu dokusai*), to “mixed governments between custom and reason,” which he glossed as “joint rule between the monarch and the people.”⁴⁷² “In Europe, countries such as Britain and Netherlands” began with what he called “customary governments” (*inshū seiji*), but as “the enlightenment of the people progressed,” they liberalized their governments and made reform. But in France, it was the people who “raised rebellions and overthrew the government by force” in order to change the government.⁴⁷³ In Japan, he observed, there had already been one change in regime with the Boshin War. But that change had just been a change in government, away from what he called the “despotism” of the Tokugawa government. It had “nothing to do with the people” and “did not increase their rights or their freedom.” He called for a Second Meiji Restoration for these rights and freedom to emerge.⁴⁷⁴ It seemed that the British method did not work the first time around. Now, he seemed to imply, they needed the French method.

⁴⁷² Ueki Emori, “Meiji daini no kaikaku o kibō suru no ron,” in *Ueki Emori shū*, v. 3, p. 87

⁴⁷³ Ueki Emori, “Meiji daini no kaikaku o kibō suru no ron,” in *Ueki Emori shū*, v. 3, p. 88

⁴⁷⁴ Ueki Emori, “Meiji daini no kaikaku o kibō suru no ron,” in *Ueki Emori shū*, v. 3, p. 89

Two months later, Ueki wrote more precisely about how this change in government needed to occur, bemoaning that “there is no such thing as a good government in the world.”⁴⁷⁵ All governments oppressed people; it was only when people themselves became the government that government became good. “In the West, in Greece, in Rome, and in Britain, from the past the people did not have freedom”: the monarch simply oppressed them, Ueki observed. He continued:

Look at the people of America: Britain did not favor their independence. Look at the people of Britain: the Magna Carta was not something that King John himself hoped for and underwrote. And look at all nations: Is there one in which the government itself formed a republican state (*kyōwa seiji*)? Is there one in which the government itself brought about a parliament for people’s rights? Certainly there is not a single example.⁴⁷⁶

Ueki wrote that he continually kept “this one word: doubt” in his heart, for he “did not have faith in the government whatsoever.” He called on the Japanese people to dedicate themselves to “bringing about a good government.”⁴⁷⁷ The implications were clear enough even if they were not spelled out. And even if he was not explicitly calling for violent uprising, he was unsubtle in his endeavor to construct both a public sphere and an autonomous Japanese self that existed in perennial opposition to the state, that revolved around a political culture of antagonism.

Just a year before the civil war, the same month he was released from prison, Ueki wrote in *Kokai shinbun*, under a pseudonym, that “freedom must be won by fresh blood,” lauding

⁴⁷⁵ Ueki Emori, “Yo ni ryō seifu naru mono naki no setsu,” in *Ueki Emori shū*, v. 3, pp. 96-99.

⁴⁷⁶ Ueki Emori, “Yo ni ryō seifu naru mono naki no setsu,” in *Ueki Emori shū*, v. 3, p. 98

⁴⁷⁷ Ueki Emori, “Yo ni ryō seifu naru mono naki no setsu,” in *Ueki Emori shū*, v. 3, p. 99

freedom “as the most valuable thing a man has.”⁴⁷⁸ He turned to the same examples: he saluted the Magna Carta and especially American revolutionaries, those men who were “lauded as the people who have achieved the greatest freedom.” He hailed the Americans “for not thinking twice about spilling fresh blood” in their rebellion against the British. And he made a critical comparison: “Would there be an America today if the American people had put their hands in their pockets and shut their mouths and submitted to whatever the British king did?” His response was not “no” but rather: “It would just be India; it would just be Annam.”⁴⁷⁹ Ueki drew a direct line of causality from British colonialism in the Americas to Anglo-French colonialism in Asia to the oppression of the Japanese regime in the mid-1870s.

Lying before Ueki, the intellectual force behind the Risshisha in 1877, there lay two simple choices: to lead a revolution, win back freedom by force, and to become America; or to be docile, to wait, and to become India, become Annam.

The Kōchi revolution never took off as the Kumamoto revolution did. In late May or early June, Kirino Toshiaki wrote to the Kōchi faction to tell them only to fight if they were prepared for “two to three years of war” against the Meiji regime.⁴⁸⁰ Members of the Risshisha based in Kōchi gathered at the home of Itagaki Taisuke on June 3, where they apparently agreed again to raise arms and attack Osaka once all their war material was put in order. But as Matsuoka explains, the government swept in two days later and confiscated the arms that the Risshisha had managed to amass, with no resistance from the Risshisha. And the regime made arrests of Hayashi and others of the military wing, even those not located physically in Kōchi.⁴⁸¹ Ueki was not detained a second time, but forty men in the Kōchi civil rights military faction were

⁴⁷⁸ Ueki Emori, “Jiyū wa senketsu o motte kawazaru bekarazaru ron,” v. 3, pp. 39–43.

⁴⁷⁹ Ueki Emori, “Jiyū wa senketsu o motte kawazaru bekarazaru ron,” in *Ueki Emori shū*, v. 3, p. 40

⁴⁸⁰ Matsuoka, “‘Hayashi Yūzō jirekidan’ o yomu,” p. 23

⁴⁸¹ Matsuoka, “‘Hayashi Yūzō jirekidan’ o yomu,” pp. 26–28

arrested, including Hayashi Yūzō and Ōe Taku, who were handed ten-year sentences. The rebellion from Kōchi was snuffed out.

The facts in themselves, culled together by expert historians from fragmentary sources, seem unavoidably incomplete: they do not add up to explain fully how the members of the Risshisha swung back and forth, dithering seemingly endlessly on the line between war and peace. But the best sources we do have are those that tell of the intellectual inclinations rather than the military or social organization of the Kōchi civil rights faction. And those intellectual sources speak of widespread consensus that even if military insurrection was not logistically possible, it was not only justifiable but justified.

‘The first day of the revolution’

The Southwest War of 1877 resolved nothing. It did not overthrow the Meiji state. Nor did it foreclose the revolutionary impulses that underlay that objective.

It is not only, as Ogawara rightly claims, that the theory of violent rebellion fueling civil-rights participation in the Southwest War failed to be dismantled after the conflict, though that is true. The problem was more fundamental: the problem of the struggle of a society of autonomous individuals who interacted through the impersonal mechanisms of a public sphere and waged intellectual war against a regime that tried to position itself and its society in a world of global ideas. In this context, a frequently invoked historiographical assumption that the civil war ended the use of force in the civil rights movement and major violence more generally in early Meiji Japan appears false: what appears as the “radicalization” of the movement in 1880s merely extended the destabilizing forces of the 1870s. And just as those impulses spurred radical

violence at home, they were increasingly projected abroad in Japanese imperialist endeavors, often led by members of civil society themselves.

We will grapple with these problems in the conclusion, in which we will turn to Miyazaki Tōten, the younger brother of Miyazaki Hachirō and a man who once captured the imagination of intellectuals across Asia and Europe. Tōten wrote, as Watanabe Kyōji explains, that the Southwest War of 1877 was “the first day of the revolution” (*kakumei no shonichi*)—a revolution that he tried to support in China, in a quest to eject despotism from Asia, and in the Philippines, in a quest to eject American colonialists from Asia. Whereas Miyazaki Hachirō was once arrested in Tokyo for plotting a Japanese revolution, Miyazaki Tōten was arrested in Singapore for collaborating in an Asian revolution.⁴⁸²

What are we to make of the claim that the Civil War of 1877 was the “first day of the revolution,” of the frequent invocations throughout the public sphere of the French Revolution and the American Revolution?

Historians often say that 1877 marked the last civil war in Japanese history. And historians often say that 1877 marked the rebellion of Saigō Takamori against a government he once served.

What was it? A civil war or a rebellion? Or a revolution, as Miyazaki Tōten thought?

As David Armitage has illustrated in his intellectual history of civil war, the opposition between revolution, something essentially good, and civil war, something essentially bad, is deeply entrenched in Western-language thought, but deeply false. Revolutions in conventional thought are noble, based on great principles, “modern, novel, and forward-looking”; civil wars are destructive, fruitless, “archaic, traditional, and backward[-]facing.” “Civil wars, by the

⁴⁸² Watanabe Kyōji, *Hyōden Miyazaki Tōten* (Tokyo: Yamato shobō, 1976), pp. 21-22.

conventional understanding, betoken the blighting and collapse of the human spirit,” he writes, “while revolutions affirm and actualize it.”⁴⁸³

This binary opposition is not accidental. Because Christianity had been responsible for wide-ranging intrastate violence in European history, many secular thinkers in the European Enlightenment saw their whole project as a means of extirpating the basis for civil war, Armitage explains. The Enlightenment deployed the idea of revolution as something not only distinctly opposed to civil war but as a means of ending civil wars once and for all, rewriting the genealogy of civil war by writing the deleterious effects of civil war out of revolution.⁴⁸⁴ In this sense, the French Revolution “revolutionized revolution,” Armitage writes, because it shifted the notion of revolution as something natural and unavoidable to something willed and deliberate, something that people brought about on their own as a means of starting history anew.⁴⁸⁵

Not everyone was so enthusiastic about the French Revolution. Edmund Burke denigrated the French Revolution as a “civil war” precisely as a means of delegitimizing its conceit as revolution.⁴⁸⁶ Lincoln referred to the American Civil War as such, a “civil war,” but he called it a “rebellion” more often.⁴⁸⁷ From these reflections, Armitage arrives at the brilliantly simple conclusion that the “heart of most great modern revolutions was civil war” and that, at the same time, “civil war was the genus of which revolution was only a species.”⁴⁸⁸ A revolution, in other words, is a particular kind of civil war.

⁴⁸³ David Armitage, *Civil Wars: A History in Ideas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), pp. 122-123. See also David Priestland, “Civil Wars and Revolutions,” *Global Intellectual History* [pre-publication edition] (2019), on how “civil war” has displaced “revolution” as a category of analysis in post-1970s discourse.

⁴⁸⁴ Armitage, *Civil Wars*, pp. 123-124.

⁴⁸⁵ Armitage, *Civil Wars*, pp. 147-149

⁴⁸⁶ Armitage, *Civil Wars*, pp. 151-156

⁴⁸⁷ Armitage, *Civil Wars*, p. 167

⁴⁸⁸ Armitage, *Civil Wars*, p. 158

In this sense, describing the Southwest War as the “last civil war” is to make certain presumptions about the war and indeed about Meiji history. It is to argue that the ideological elements of the cause of rebellion were secondary or altogether illegitimate, that the war was a destructive and ultimately fruitless endeavor. And it is to cordon the war off as something final, distinct from prior violence and violence that flowed from it. Empirically, that is true: no civil war followed that of 1877. But as we have seen, the civil war was the physical precipitation of destabilizing revolutionary energies that both preceded it and proceeded from it. Recognizing the intimate links between civil war and revolution, between the physical act of violence and the intellectual justification for it, and between armed violence within Japan and beyond it, allows us to make sense of the violent means by which ideology was negotiated during the Japanese Revolution. By thinking of the civil war as part of a revolution, we extricate it from the determinism of historical teleology: it did not mark the conclusion of a bygone world of violence and permit the ushering in of a new Japan but rather instantiated, through intense violence, the visions of a new world order that many in civil society harbored. It was willful, spurred by apparently lofty ideals, and most of all self-conscious in its globality. It is this point that an intellectual history of the war reveals.

We here face another complicating factor. The civil war of 1877, an ostensibly domestic affair, was in fact a global ideational war fought on domestic turf, both, one, an ideological struggle over the legacy of the French and American Revolution and, two, an aftershock of the crisis in East Asian diplomatic order that the Japanese revolution wrought, a result of the socialization of foreign policy. Civil wars are generally understood as phenomena fought within the borders of a single polity, but even if that was true of the belligerent people involved in 1877,

the war of 1877 was fought at least in part with foreign ideas: it was not a strictly national affair in its intellectual dimensions.

Civil war is “civil” in European history, Armitage explains, because it is fought among members of the same *civitas*, or the same community of people. In the case of Japan, it is precisely this notion of a *civitas* that in and of itself spurred the civil war, the notion of a people who were endowed with not only responsibilities but rights in the national community to which they belonged. In this way, the Civil War of 1877 was quite literally a *civil* war: a war waged by a civil society, by a society of people who considered themselves autonomous and rational, who interacted by means of an impersonal public sphere, and who saw their society as distinct from, and indeed superior to, the state.

But the *civitas* of a civil war, even if it is national, cannot be self-contained: being a member of the same *civitas* does not necessarily preclude the idea of cosmopolitanism, Armitage has explained elsewhere. He writes that civil war and cosmopolitanism are—surprisingly, alarmingly—“conceptual companions.”⁴⁸⁹

When we use Japanese history to think deeply about Armitage’s at first puzzling claim, it becomes hardly surprising at all. Drawing from Kant, Armitage argues that the present-day notion of cosmopolitanism as a pacifist ideal of transcendental global justice is “not essential or natural but contingent and accidental,” that this pacifist cosmopolitanism had to emerge, compete with, and defeat another form of cosmopolitanism, what Armitage calls a “conflictual cosmopolitanism” in which “the goal of his [Kant’s] cosmopolitanism might be tranquility,

⁴⁸⁹ Armitage, “Cosmopolitanism and Civil War,” unpublished manuscript (https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/armitage/files/cosmopolitanism_and_civil_war.pdf)

among persons and between states, but the pathway to peace would still be strewn with corpses.”⁴⁹⁰

This insight elucidates the Japanese Civil War of 1877—and perhaps the general experience of the early Meiji period. The bewildering intellectual cosmopolitanism of the early Meiji era was conflictual. Men might have seen a path to a future of peace, eventually. But men would have to die to make that cosmopolitanism work, indeed in the name of that cosmopolitanism, as they fought over whether that cosmopolitanism itself was a good idea. And they believed that this dying, this violence, was the whole point of the cosmopolitanism they espoused.

This problem, this cosmopolitanism, was itself engendered by the stunning freedoms that the 1870s enabled, the chance for man to know things he never knew before, the squirming of a civil society that gave voice to innumerable loves and left no one with a sense of which love to love, yielding violent agitation to win over the public sphere, to settle the intellectual competition that had overtaken the realm. The civil-rights belligerents of 1877 might have claimed that their war was meant to create freedom and rights. But in that claim they revealed how free they had become, a freedom that threw Japan into disorder in the 1870s. And order was never fully restored.

⁴⁹⁰ Armitage, “Cosmopolitanism and Civil War,” pp. 2–3

Conclusion

AN INCOMPLETE REVOLUTION

We end with this observation: that problems of justice deranged the equilibrium between freedom and order in revolutionary Japan; that the difficulty, the seeming impossibility, of finding justice amid a revolution into globality plunged Japan into disorder; that inasmuch as the violence of the Japanese revolution failed to resolve the crisis of globality, that inasmuch as the agents of justice continued to wage war on a global intellectual plane divided by spectrums of universalism and historicism, the Japanese revolution remained incomplete.

“I believed that all the world was one family,” Miyazaki Tōten wrote in his 1902 autobiography, “and therefore I deplored the present competition between nations. The things I hated had to be destroyed; if not, it would all be an empty dream. I thought it would take direct action to achieve these aims, and therefore I committed myself to world revolution.”⁴⁹¹

He chose China. “I thought of it as an enormous country with a large population; it was a place ready for revolution.” He solicited the help of Inukai Tsuyoshi, who eventually became prime minister and whose assassination in 1932 marked a turning point toward Japanese fascism; he became a close comrade of Sun Yat-sen, who toppled the Qing monarchy and established a republic in China for the first time in its millennia-long history; he mustered logistical aid for revolution in the Philippines, seeking to provide Emilio Aguinaldo with arms to depose American colonists; he tried to transfer those arms to China when the Philippine Revolution

⁴⁹¹ Miyazaki Tōten, *My Thirty-Three Years' Dream: The Autobiography of Miyazaki Tōten*, trans. Etō Shinkichi and Marius B. Jansen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 285. The original Japanese text can be found here: Miyazaki Tōten, *Miyazaki Tōten: sanjūsan nen no yume* (Tokyo: Nihon tosho sentā, 1998). All subsequent citations are to the English-language edition. A full collection of Miyazaki's work is available in Miyazaki Ryūsuke and Onogawa Hidemi, eds., *Miyazaki Tōten zenshū*, 5 vols. (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1971–1976).

failed. The world was a globeful of jarring nonsynchronicity, of a miserable sense of philosophical but not historical contemporaneity. Tōten turned to violent revolution to make history catch up to philosophy.

“I didn’t know what freedom or people’s [civil] rights were, but I knew that they were good things, and I was sure that government armies, government officials, in fact anyone involved with government, was a criminal and a thief,” Tōten recalled of his youth. “A great general or a great hero, I thought, should lead a rebel army or an insurrection.” Tōten was the younger brother of Hachirō, rebel and leader of the Collaborationist Army in the Civil War of 1877. He recounted, “And my relatives, and the elderly men and women in the village, all added their voices to urge me to ‘be like your elder brother!’”⁴⁹²

Historians of a bygone generation once wrote that the Meiji Restoration was an incomplete revolution. They wrote that landlords and crony capitalists and power-hungry state leaders combined to truncate a genuine bourgeois democratic revolution, that the overbearing hegemony of a new elite in the aftermath of the Meiji Restoration quenched a fleeting moment of possibility.

They were right about the incompleteness. They were wrong about its reasons. The revolution was incomplete not because it closed too soon. It was incomplete because it never closed, because it could not close. The furies that globality had unleashed, the struggles it begot over knowing and being, over the relations among self, society and state, over justice in a global world, could not be resolved. The violence and disorder wrought by the irresolution of globality persisted unabated. And they intensified.

⁴⁹² Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years’ Dream*, pp. 8–9.

To live in a global world was an insurmountably painful, discombobulating, fractious condition. Some thought Japan had globalized too much, some thought not enough. Some thought the individual had been liberated too far, some thought not enough. Some thought the past lingered too long; some thought it was too long gone. Some saw the world as a family that had been artificially torn into fragments; some saw the world as family that had been artificially fused together. Some called for revolution to weld the world together; some called for revolution to splinter it apart.

As Japan veered from federalist dominion in the early modern era, to nation and empire in the early Meiji to early Shōwa eras, to semi-colony in the immediate postwar era, to nation-state in the post-colonial era; as it jolted from imperial oligarchy to imperial democracy to imperial fascism back to imperial democracy—as cataclysm followed cataclysm, Japan stumbled through ideological formulations that tried to overcome the crisis of justice with which globality had overcome the nation, much as enlightenment and counter-enlightenment had in the earliest moments of the revolutionary era. These attempts to overcome an overcoming failed.⁴⁹³ Japan led the world into war. And as the world continues to reckon violently with its own globality today, we but wonder, three quarters of a century after Japan was once destroyed, if the lessons of that destruction have not been learned.

Asia's Lafayette

⁴⁹³ The allusion, of course, is to Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*.

“When we first met in 1951,” scholars Etō Shinkichi and Marius Jansen wrote of each other around 1984, “Miyazaki Tōten’s *Thirty-Three Years’ Dream* provided the first item in the discovery of common interests.”⁴⁹⁴

Etō and Jansen attributed the appeal of Miyazaki to their common dedication to studying China in the Japanese mind, but they gestured at some greater, vaguer interest in the “thought world of young men in Meiji Japan.”⁴⁹⁵ *Thirty-Three Years’ Dream*, an English rendering of Tōten’s autobiography, was the result of their shared interest. “Kuwabara Takeo and E. H. Norman talked about doing it too,” they conceded. Something about Miyazaki Tōten and his “thought world” seemed to enrapture their generation.⁴⁹⁶

From young civil-rights hothead, to devout Christian, to Japanese settler colonist in Thailand, to failed fomenter of revolution in China, to friend of Kang Youwei and Sun Yat-sen, to failed collaborator in revolution in the Philippines, to arrested convict in Singapore, to failed fomenter again of revolution in China—Tōten’s was a life of turmoil, of upheaval, of struggling to understand his place in a new world. His was a life that stood for that of Japan itself, a life

⁴⁹⁴ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years’ Dream*, p. vii.

⁴⁹⁵ On China, see Marius Jansen, *The Japanese and Sun Yat-sen* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954) and Marius B. Jansen, *China in the Tokugawa World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988). Cf. for instance, Urs Matthias Zachmann, *China and Japan in the Late Meiji Period: China Policy and the Japanese Discourse on National Identity, 1895–1904* (London: Routledge, 2009); Zachmann does not give Miyazaki a notable place in his telling of late Meiji Sino-Japanese relations, writing that men like Miyazaki, “romantically inspired,” “certainly did not represent the political mainstream, nor did they strive to do so” (p. 75). Regardless of who was “mainstream” or not, “romanticism” does not seem to be an adequate description of Miyazaki’s thought, nor is his civil-rights-based violence so easily dismissible in light of the broader ideological forces from which it partook.

⁴⁹⁶ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years’ Dream*, p. vii. There is a great deal written about Miyazaki Tōten. The authoritative work is Uemura Kimio, *Miyazaki Kyōdai den, Ajia hen*, 3 vols. (Fukuoka: Ashi shobō, 1987–1999) and *Miyazaki kyōdai den, Nihon hen*, 2 vols. (Fukuoka: Ashi shobō, 1984). In Japanese, see, for instance, Satō Tsuneo, *Miyazaki Tōten* (Fukuoka: Ashi shobō, 1990) and Watanabe Kyōji, *Hyōden Miyazaki Tōten* (Tokyo: Daiwa shobō, 1976). In English, see for instance Faye Yuan Kleeman, *In Transit: The Formation of a Colonial East Asian Cultural Sphere* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2014), ch. 1; Joshua Fogel, *Between China and Japan: The Writings of Joshua Fogel* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), ch. 2; Christian Uhl, “Fukuzawa Yukichi and Miyazaki Tōten: A Double Portrait in Black and White of an Odd Couple in the Age of Globalizing Capitalism,” *Critical Historical Studies* 1:1 (2014): pp. 47–84. Kayloe Tjio considers the idea of “incomplete revolution” with respect to Sun Yat-sen: Kayloe Tjio, *The Unfinished Revolution: Sun Yat-sen and the Struggle for Modern China* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Editions, 2017).

whose struggles spilled over national borders, just as Japan's did.⁴⁹⁷ Most of the time, he would have us believe, he was completely intoxicated, both intellectually and neurologically.

He crossed paths with so many of the great luminaries and failed heroes of East Asian history. As he traversed Asia, he seemed to have a knack for coming across the terrorists of the so-called Osaka Incident, who were imprisoned and then pardoned for their attempt in 1885 to overthrow the Korean monarchy, establish democracy in Japan, and drag China into a devastating war with Japan.⁴⁹⁸ Like them, he dreamed of a world of universal freedom, a dream that needed force to become real. And as he lived his dream in an extraordinary life of exporting revolution, he revealed how ideas of freedom, how the global competition of ideas that had engulfed Japan, persisted in a regional Asian struggle, a violent struggle, over how to apply global ideas in local and national life.

The thought world of Miyazaki Tōten began with democracy. As a child, Tōten learned of liberalism, of democracy, and of the French Revolution from none other than Tokutomi Sohō. He enrolled at Sohō's Ōe Academy, a school he described as "a paradise for progressive liberalism and democracy." The schooling was so egalitarian that students were forbidden to call Tokutomi "sensei." They were to call him by his first name. The students sat around and read Herbert Spencer, and at the Speech Club organized on weekends, speakers "went on and on lauding Robespierre and Danton, quoting Washington and Cromwell, and arguing about Cobden and Bright." When Sohō regaled them with stories of the French Revolution, students "would

⁴⁹⁷ Although her concern is for the mid twentieth century, relevant, for instance, is Jessamyn Abel's argument that the notion of internationalism persisted throughout the Second World War, with an "international minimum" of requisite interactions with other powers continually rising as globalization proceeded through the century. Jessamyn R. Abel, *The International Minimum: Creativity and Contradiction in Japan's Global Engagement, 1933 – 1964* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015).

⁴⁹⁸ On the incident, see Marius B. Jansen, "Ōi Kentarō: Radicalism and Chauvinism," *Far Eastern Quarterly* 11:3 (1952): 305–316; Ōsaka jiken kenkyūkai, ed., *Ōsaka jiken no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Kashiwa shobō, 1982).

involuntarily break into wild approval, jump up and dance around, swing their swords and strike the pillars.”⁴⁹⁹

Tōten recounted his profound disquiet when he saw he could not match the intellect of his classmates, revealing the crisis that the globalization of knowing in the Meiji era had instilled in young men as they tried to understand a world of revolution.⁵⁰⁰ Tōten anguished, fleeing to Tokyo to find something to assuage his pain, failing. “Ah, wide as the world was, where was I to fit in?” he lamented. He transformed into a “world-weary misanthrope.” “How often, at night when everyone was quietly asleep, would I feel that I alone has been left out of things! I would quietly break into sobs.”⁵⁰¹

Tōten meandered. He converted to Christianity and was baptized.⁵⁰² But in a meeting with his brother Yazō, his faith was shaken. Yazō told him that he had “more important things” to worry about than faith. “The present situation of the world is a battlefield in which the strong devour the weak,” Yazō told Tōten. And he continued:

Surely those who prize human rights and revere freedom have to develop a plan to overturn this state of affairs. If we do not work out some defense, I believe that the yellow race will be oppressed by the white race for years to come. The upshot of this, the way this destiny plays itself out, will depend entirely upon the rise or fall of China.

⁴⁹⁹ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years' Dream*, pp. 12–13

⁵⁰⁰ On young men trying to find a new way in the wreckage of the past, see Kenneth B. Pyle, *The New Generation in Meiji Japan: Problems of Cultural Identity, 1885–1895* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969); on individual striving, see Earl H. Kinmonth, *The Self-Made Man in Meiji Japanese Thought: From Samurai to Salary Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

⁵⁰¹ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years' Dream*, p. 20.

⁵⁰² On the Christian conversions of young Kumamoto men in the Meiji era, see F. G. Notehelfer, *American Samurai: Captain L. L. Janes and Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); on Christian conversion more generally, see Irwin Scheiner, *Christian Converts and Social Protest in Meiji Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970).

Although China is now in decline, its territory is vast and its people are numerous. If its institutions are reformed and its unity restored, it will be in a position to restore the rights of yellow people and, what is more, to control the world and extend the way of morality to all countries. All that is needed is for a great man to rise and implement this program. Because of this, I have decided to go to China and look for this hero, and if I can find him and persuade him, I shall serve him in any way I can. If I cannot find such a person, I myself will be that hero.⁵⁰³

Tōten took on his brother's vision and determined to succeed him as liberator of China and defender of the "yellow race." In Tōten's telling, Yazō saw in China a counterweight to the exceptionally deleterious influence of Russia, and he believed that the rescuing of China was necessary for the defense of all non-Western people: "Let China once again revive and base itself upon its true morality, then India will rise, Siam and Annam too will revive, and the Philippines and Egypt can be saved." Tōten drifted from his faith, decrying Christian transcendentalism: "in moving through this world of change one should not rely on God or on Christ, but rather look to true friends within the human race."⁵⁰⁴

In 1891, Tōten headed to China to realize the vision of rescuing Asia, its freedom, and its rights, paradoxically by supposedly reviving a Chinese spirit from an ancient past that had long died. It was not an obscure plan: he even consulted Soejima Taneomi, erstwhile foreign minister and defector in the 1873 political crisis, for advice on how to destabilize China.⁵⁰⁵ He joined hands with Kim Ok-kyun, who himself had gained the support of Japanese democratic terrorists

⁵⁰³ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years' Dream*, pp. 29 – 30.

⁵⁰⁴ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years' Dream*, p. 47

⁵⁰⁵ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years' Dream*, p. 62

a half-decade earlier to topple the Korean monarchy and drag China into a war with Japan. That plot was led by Ōi Kentarō, who, as we saw in Chapter Three, inveighed against Katō Hiroyuki in the 1874 parliamentary debates for being too feckless in advocacy of representative government. Kim Ok-kyun, in the words of Tōten, saw China as “probably the place where the fate of the entire world will be settled.”⁵⁰⁶ But Kim was murdered in China; the Sino-Japanese War broke out, spurred by the Tonghak Rebellion in Korea, itself fomented in part by a Kyushu friend of Miyazaki.⁵⁰⁷

Tōten skirted conscription and decided to flee. He now had a new idea: to go to Thailand and mobilize the Chinese diasporic population there to help spur revolution. “When I dreamed about the outcome of my activities in Siam,” he wrote, “I imagined myself entering the Chinese continent in front of a host of Chinese, a general mounted on a white horse in white raiment.”⁵⁰⁸

In Thailand, Tōten met Prince Chaophraya Surasakmontri, whom he described as a fallen-from-grace former minister of war who “could not forget the humiliation his country had suffered at the hands of England and France” and who had “the purpose of importing Japanese settlers to Siam in the hope of reviving the country.” “How far will your country go in extending to other countries the spirit with which you defended Korea?” he asked Tōten, the latter claims.⁵⁰⁹ The plan was to bring Japanese settler colonists to Thailand as a means of defending all of Asia from Western imperialism. But Tōten expressed frustration that his desire to bring Japanese settlers to Thailand was obstructed because “all they [his associates in Japan] wanted to talk about was Korea.”⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁶ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years' Dream*, p. 57

⁵⁰⁷ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years' Dream*, p. 61

⁵⁰⁸ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years' Dream*, p. 73

⁵⁰⁹ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years' Dream*, pp. 76–77

⁵¹⁰ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years' Dream*, p. 83. On Korea as a settler colony, and on Japanese settler colonialism more generally, see, of course, Jun Uchida, *Brokers of Empire: Japanese Settler Colonialism in Korea, 1876–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011). On people-smuggling and border

After poverty, disease, and seemingly every manner of affliction devastated the community of settlers in Thailand, Tōten returned home to Japan, his brother Yazō inveigling him with stories of new chances for revolution in China. He met with Ōi Kentarō in Singapore on his tortuous journey from Thailand.⁵¹¹

Back in Japan, Tōten visited Inukai Tsuyoshi. Inukai asked him about his Thailand expedition, saying, “It might be different if you had a slave trade going, but it’s impossible for you or me to make money with settlers. It’s probably a good thing you gave it up.”⁵¹² The idea that slaves were integral to gaining freedom was not only discursive or metaphorical; to Inukai, at least in the words of Tōten, apparently it was literal, a practical necessity.⁵¹³ Inukai agreed to help Tōten find funds for a project in China rather than Thailand. Now working for the government, Tōten “received orders from the Foreign Ministry,” he claims, to carry out reconnaissance work in China.⁵¹⁴

Before Tōten set out for China, he met Sone Toshitora, an old friend of his brother Hachirō. The meeting was set up by Kobayashi Kusuo, an associate of Itagaki Taisuke and of Ōi Kentarō. In 1884, at the height of the Sino-French War, Kobayashi and Itagaki had gone to the French embassy in Tokyo to ask for funds to lead an insurrection in Korea; seeking to distract the Qing Empire in Korea as France fought for supremacy in Vietnam, the French allegedly signed up as enthusiastic supporters of Kobayashi’s terror plot. Now, about a decade later, Sone provided Tōten with letters Hachirō had written to Sone in 1873, when Sone was living in China.

transgressions, see David R. Ambaras, *Japan’s Imperial Underworlds: Intimate Encounters at the Borders of Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Mark Driscoll, *Absolute Erotic, Absolute Grotesque: The Living, Dead, and Undead in Japan’s Imperialism, 1895–1945* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

⁵¹¹ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years’ Dream*, p. 100

⁵¹² Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years’ Dream*, p. 117

⁵¹³ On the notion of slavery and Japanese conceptions of freedom, Daniel V. Botsman, “Freedom without Slavery? ‘Coolies,’ Prostitutes, and Outcasts in Meiji Japan’s ‘Emancipation Moment,’” *The American Historical Review* 116:5 (2011), pp. 1323–1347.

⁵¹⁴ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years’ Dream*, p. 121

Hui Muslims were waging a series of devastating wars against the Tongzhi emperor, and Hachirō was piqued. He had wanted to go to China to help resist the Qing Empire. Now it was his younger brother's turn.⁵¹⁵

Sone introduced Tōten to Chen Shaobai, a close revolutionary associate of Sun Yat-sen. Through Chen, Tōten met with various other Chinese revolutionaries in Hong Kong and Macao, who introduced Tōten to the thought of Sun Yat-sen and Kang Youwei. Together they set their minds on revolution.

Tōten headed back to Yokohama, where he met none other than Sun Yat-sen himself for the first time. "I know you are determined to carry out a revolution in China," Tōten said to Sun. "Would you explain to me what the content of your so-called revolution is, and you can you explain the steps by which you plan to implement it?"⁵¹⁶ Sun Yat-sen spoke of "the highest order of government" as "one in which the people government themselves" and of his advocacy of "republicanism." He said that his party had begun to try "to take advantage of the disorder in China to start an insurrection." He regaled Tōten with the virtues of republicanism, oddly claiming that it was somehow "a heritage bequeathed to us by our ancient sages"; he execrated the "barbarian Manchus"; he warned that the only way to thwart "foreign powers trying to take advantage" of China's miserable state was "a sudden, irresistible revolutionary surge."⁵¹⁷

Sun called on Tōten to join the Chinese revolution. "The way to help the four hundred million of China's masses, the way to wipe out the insults that have been heaped on the yellow peoples of Asia, the way to protect and restore the way of humanity throughout the universe—all this can be done only by helping our country's revolution." Tōten reported his conversation with

⁵¹⁵ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years' Dream*, p. 122

⁵¹⁶ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years' Dream*, p. 134

⁵¹⁷ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years' Dream*, p. 136

Sun Yat-sen to Inukai Tsuyoshi, and then he visited Komura Jutarō, deputy foreign minister, who asked him about the results of his reconnaissance. Komura was allegedly “startled” and said he would “pass up the opportunity” to collaborate with the Chinese revolutionaries.⁵¹⁸ But he was apprised of the plan, Tōten claims.

Tōten headed to Hong Kong, where was distracted by another new cause: that of the Philippines. “Did you know that when war between the United States and Spain broke out, the Americans promised us our independence if we would start an insurrection?” Filipino intellectual Mariano Ponce said to Tōten in Hong Kong. America betrayed the Philippines. “We who fought the Spanish for the sake of liberty now have to fight the Americans. Yes, there’s no alternative to war.”⁵¹⁹ He intended to call on the Japanese government to help the Filipino struggle against American oppression.

But then Beijing fell into disorder. Now associating more closely with the followers of Kang Youwei than with those of Sun Yat-sen, Tōten grew frustrated with the relative pacifism of Kang’s followers thought and “gave them a lecture on revolution,” seeking in vain to have them combine with Sun to topple Manchu despotism.⁵²⁰ Despite tensions, Tōten mediated with the Japanese consulate in southern China to have Kang Youwei dispatched to Japan, where he would be granted asylum. He played the role of “amateur diplomat,” in his own words. Kang himself looked, in Tōten’s telling, to Japan’s own revolutionary tradition, starting with the Meiji Restoration to the assassination of the Korean monarch Queen Min, as a model of how to dispose of Cixi, the Manchu dowager empress, the “root of all evil in East Asia.”⁵²¹ “There is a destiny that binds your country to Japan,” Tōten told Kang Youwei. “Our efforts to plan for your country

⁵¹⁸ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years’ Dream*, p. 137

⁵¹⁹ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years’ Dream*, pp. 141–142.

⁵²⁰ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years’ Dream*, p. 149

⁵²¹ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years’ Dream*, p. 154

are not going to change. All Japanese long for the reform of China.”⁵²² Inukai Tsuyoshi forwarded funds to Tōten, and with that support, Kang surreptitiously boarded a ship from Hong Kong to Kobe, where a representative from the Japanese foreign ministry greeted him and ushered him into Japanese sovereignty in the cover of night. He then boarded a train for the capital. Hirayama Shū, his associate, had arrived in Tokyo a week earlier with Liang Qichao.⁵²³ Tōten believed that Kang thought he could persuade Ōkuma Shigenobu, then foreign minister, to dispatch troops to Beijing and help Kang’s cause. But the cabinet fell and Yamagata Aritomo came to power, and Kang lost his connections in the Japanese regime.

The failure of the plot against China left Tōten floundering, but then he heard news in early 1899 that Emilio Aguinaldo had indeed begun his independence struggle against American colonists, part of the Philippine Revolution. Mariano Ponce, envoy to Japan of the anti-colonialist revolutionaries in the Philippines, called on Sun Yat-sen to aid the cause. Later, at the height of the Second World War, Aguinaldo would become an enthusiastic collaborator with Japan, hailing Japanese invasion as a means of protecting the people of Asia.⁵²⁴ Still decades before the Co-Prosperity Sphere, Sun Yat-sen approached Tōten and called on him to arrange material support. According to Tōten, Sun not only called for arms provision but also believed that “some of his followers should go to the Philippines in secrecy, join Aguinaldo’s army to speed its victory, and then turn to direct their new power to the Chinese interior, establishing a revolutionary army there.”⁵²⁵ In any case, Tōten turned again to Inukai Tsuyoshi, who directed him to Nakamura Haizan. Nakamura procured the materiel and enlisted the support of others.

⁵²² Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years’ Dream*, p. 157

⁵²³ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years’ Dream*, p. 162

⁵²⁴ On this, and on the fraught place of Aguinaldo and his collaborationism in Philippine history, see Satoshi Ara, “Emilio Aguinaldo under American and Japanese Rule: Submission for Independence?” *Philippine Studies: Historical & Ethnographic Viewpoints* 63:2 (2015): 161–192.

⁵²⁵ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years’ Dream*, p. 174

Tōten himself won over the aid of Kokuryūkai member Uchida Ryōhei. Hirayama Shū went to the Philippines and met with Aguinaldo as Tōten returned himself to Hong Kong, where Tōten set about mediating among the various revolutionary factions in China and trying to unify them.⁵²⁶

Aguinaldo himself was fully aware of the duplicity of a nation supposedly founded on freedom from imperial diktat now seeking to impose its imperial diktat on another nation.⁵²⁷ And he was unabashed in exploiting that duplicity for his own revolutionary ends. In a plaintive, frenetic appeal to the American people he wrote in 1899, he decried the atrocities the Americans were inflicting upon the Philippine people amid what he called “the Philippine revolution,” akin to that of the Americans a century earlier. The Americans were acting on a “whim of maintaining a war in contravention of their honourable traditions as enunciated by Washington and Jefferson.” He decried “the ruffianly abuses which the American soldiers committed on innocent and defenseless people in Manila shooting women and children simply because they were leaning out of windows.” In a gushing apostrophe to the Philippines, he lamented how the natural plenitude of the Philippines had “aroused the ambition of the Imperialists and Expansionists of North America,” who had “placed their sharp claws upon your entrails.” He warned of a day in which it would be Americans themselves who would fall into despair and need the sollicitude of the Philippine people; he warned of a time when colonialism would return to haunt the colonists themselves:

⁵²⁶ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years' Dream*, chs. 20 – 21.

⁵²⁷ On the United States as an empire, especially in the Philippines and in other modern-era colonies, see Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019).

Go back, therefore, North American people, to your old-time liberty. Put your hand on your heart and tell me: Would it be pleasant for you if, in the course of time, North America should find herself in the pitiful plight, of a weak and oppressed people and the Philippines, a free and powerful nation, then at war with your oppressors, asked for your aid promising to deliver you from such a weighty yoke, and after defeating her enemy with your aid she set about subjugating you, refusing the promised liberation?⁵²⁸

The Philippine Revolution sputtered, and Tōten remained fixated on China. He returned once again to Yokohama, where he met an old acquaintance from his settler days in Thailand, Suenaga Setsu. Suenaga asked him what he was up to: “Oh, we’re just going to try to implement J. S. Mill’s *On Liberty* in China,” he replied.⁵²⁹ Suenaga laughed at him, but he threw his support behind Tōten. Sun Yat-sen, meanwhile, had decided to divert the arms he was accumulating for the Philippine Revolution to China, claiming that the “Philippine revolutionary committee has agreed to let us use the guns instead. [...] If we succeed [in China,] it should also lead to independence for the Philippines.”⁵³⁰ Tōten seemed conflicted. “On the one hand there was my love, the geisha Tomeka, on the other the management of the Chinese revolution.”⁵³¹ He was, he acknowledged, already married with three children.⁵³²

Tōten joined Sun Yat-sen; Uchida Ryōhei, who had returned from Vladivostok; and three others to head out to Hong Kong, following Hirayama Shū, to begin the Chinese revolution. Sun Yat-sen feared Chinese security forces and decided to go to Saigon first; he directed Miyazaki

⁵²⁸ Don Emilio Aguinaldo y Famy, *True Version of the Philippine Revolution* (Project Gutenberg, 2006) <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/12996/12996-h/12996-h.htm>.

⁵²⁹ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years' Dream*, p. 195

⁵³⁰ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years' Dream*, p. 196

⁵³¹ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years' Dream*, p. 197

⁵³² Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years' Dream*, p. 200

and others to head from Hong Kong to Singapore to regroup. Kang Youwei was in Singapore, too, and Tōten wanted to make amends with him. In Hong Kong, the revolutionaries met Tamamizu Tsunekichi, yet another conspirator in the 1885 Osaka terror plot of Ōi Kentarō. Tamamizu was on his way to Thailand. “I’m rather good at making bombs,” he told the Tōten group, and so Tōten persuaded him to abandon his plans in Thailand and instead to join the insurrectionaries after they returned to Hong Kong from Singapore.⁵³³ When Tōten arrived in Singapore, it was 1900, and the Boxer Rebellion was in full force. Evidently Kang Youwei suspected Tōten was going to Singapore to assassinate him.⁵³⁴

The police arrived, and Tōten was arrested. They were concerned not with his revolutionary activities, of which they seemed unaware, but rather with his relationship with Kang. He was thrown in jail in Singapore for six days. When the police wanted to know why he was carrying swords, Tōten “immediately became an advocate of national character” and claimed the sword “is the very life of a Japanese”—he himself well knew that that explanation was pure humbug, but when he made the same appeal on trial, the British Orientalists interrogating him seemed thoroughly convinced.⁵³⁵ The interrogation seemed quickly to devolve into an interrogation of Japan’s role in the Orient as a whole. Why was it, they asked, that Miyazaki was “so intent on working with Chinese?” The officials asked about “the attitudes of the Japanese people toward China,” about the efflorescence of Pan-Asianist associations in Japan.⁵³⁶ Tōten was charged with plotting to assassinate a member of the conservative party of China and was deported for five years. He was shipped back to Japan—along with a crew of revolutionaries including Sun Yat-sen himself.

⁵³³ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years’ Dream*, p. 203

⁵³⁴ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years’ Dream*, p. 206

⁵³⁵ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years’ Dream*, p. 211, p. 220

⁵³⁶ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years’ Dream*, p. 223

All along the way, Tōten claims he was tracked and supported by Japanese consular officials. When he, Sun, and the others arrived in Hong Kong on the way back from Singapore, the Japanese consulate there told him that he was being tracked and exhorted him to return to Japan quickly.

Aboard the ship docked at Hong Kong, Sun Yat-sen was forced to change his revolutionary plans now that Singapore had been foreclosed as a revolutionary base. One member of the band called for an immediate attack on China: “I think we ought to go ashore tonight under cover of darkness at Kowloon, go inland with our comrades and attack Canton, with a sudden strike, an insurrection like that of the Shinpūren.” Sun Yat-sen objected, saying the plan would leave nowhere: “Even if this whole plan should come to nothing, I am not ready to take such a suicidal step.” Tōten ripped into Sun. “A revolution isn’t something you can work out on an abacus.” Sun countered that Tōten might as well “jump overboard and commit suicide.”⁵³⁷

The two reconciled, and the group decided instead to build up an army. Sun would go to Taiwan, with Tōten in tow, to plot insurrection from there; other members of the group would seize a city Tōten did not disclose in his close and then head to Xiamen. But their plans, including that to send the Philippine arms to support the 1900 rebellion in Huizhou, repeatedly failed, as infighting rocked the band of revolutionaries.

Tōten’s diary ends just a few years into the twentieth century. He wrote the preface to his autobiography in 1902.

But history went on. And not ten years later, Sun Yat-sen’s revolution succeeded. The “Manchu barbarians” were overthrown. And for the first time in its millennia-long history, China

⁵³⁷ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years’ Dream*, p. 236

was without a monarch. China tumbled into decades of civil war and colonization over how to organize a sprawling state surrounded by meddling foreign powers. “Our efforts to plan for your country are not going to change. All Japanese long for the reform of China,” Tōten had told Kang Youwei. He might have been wrong about what “all Japanese” thought about the totality of the Japanese empire at that moment. But he was prescient.

Sun Yat-sen himself wrote a foreword to Tōten’s autobiography to “show my respect for him.” It was a book, he said, for “the consideration of those who will feel concern for the rise or decline of Asia and the existence of the yellow race in the future.” He hailed Tōten as a man of “benevolence and righteousness” with a “heartfelt desire to bring about with us the great achievement of our age—the revival of Asia.”⁵³⁸

Tōten closed his diary with typical maudlin. “Ah, worldly affairs and human affairs seem a dream once one has gained enlightenment,” he wrote. Then he hedged: “But they are also a dream without enlightenment. When we pursue a dream in a world of dreams, we enter yet another dream.” And he sang a song of himself, a song of the soul of his nation:

So let me sing of fallen flowers.

Let me act out a play of fallen flowers.

Let me gather the flowers of Musashino.

How can they console me?

Ah, how can they console me?⁵³⁹

⁵³⁸ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years’ Dream*, p. 289

⁵³⁹ Miyazaki, *My Thirty-Three Years’ Dream*, p. 279

‘To know and not to act is not yet to know’

Miyazaki Tōten’s diary ends just before the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, just before what Andrew Gordon has called the era of imperial democracy. “Imperial democracy” began in 1905 as a grassroots movement demanding widespread civil liberties, a representative political system based on popular elections, veneration of the Emperor and preservation of his sovereignty, and an aggressive empire. Riots and street clashes driven by this imperial-democratic ideology convulsed Tokyo, and as political parties formed and then vied for power around these ideas, “imperial democracy” transformed from an anti-establishment movement to a structure of rule in and of itself in the 1910s and 1920s—before being toppled with the rise of “imperial fascism” in the 1930s.

To Gordon, the point of tracing these transformations was not only to reflect on how a system of thought became manifest first in social and then political life. It was also to search for a means of explaining a fundamental conundrum in the study of Japanese history: how was it that what appeared as a full-blown democracy in the 1920s veered to fascism in the 1930s? The crux of Gordon’s argument was that the same social forces responsible for imperial democracy were responsible for imperial fascism. The “era of popular violence,” commencing in 1905, responded to the consolidation of the nation-state, the emergence of a thoroughgoing capitalist socioeconomic order, and the maturation of an expansionist empire.⁵⁴⁰ Inasmuch as imperial democracy responded to these social circumstances, and imperial fascism developed as a reaction against the social unrest and class conflict that imperial democracy unleashed, both represented attempts to resolve the unprecedented challenges of the post-Russo-Japanese War

⁵⁴⁰ Andrew Gordon, *Labor and Imperial Democracy in Prewar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 14–15.

order. Imperial fascism, like imperial democracy, was a product of modernity, particularly of fractious labor relations in a modern capitalist society, not a vestige of Japanese feudalism or a counter-modern dark valley.

This interpretation of Japanese fascism rightly dominates history-writing today. It underlies Harry Harootunian's landmark study of the problem of overcoming modernity.⁵⁴¹ And it forms the fundamental premise on which Carol Gluck writes, concluding her study of Meiji ideology, "What sometimes appears as a succession of independent and seemingly unconnected phenomena—from Meiji conservatism to Taishō liberalism to Shōwa fascism—becomes instead a continuously evolving ideological landscape in which one or another of the dispersed versions [of ideological orthodoxy] gained increased authority."⁵⁴² What we find is not a sudden turn away from one system of thought to another that was diametrically opposed but rather the rise of a particular set of available ideas in response to the exigencies and contingencies of the historical moment. These ideas are all readily available to be mobilized in social life; it is historical contingency that explains which gains "authority" at a given time. Miyazaki Tōten might have been a fringe radical when he sat in Tokutomi Sohō's classes as a troubled youth or stumbled into a Singapore prison. But in complex, contingent, confusing ways, elements of the "dispersed ideas," global ideas, he put into action—combining with other Asian powers to oust Western imperialists; establishing an egalitarian, democratic society; using force to rescue Japan and Asia from impending demise—gained in authority as Japanese history progressed and globality deepened. Jansen had reason to find in Tōten's life not simply an intriguing story but a "thought world" that bore meaning for Japanese history, and seemingly for his own moment in postwar United States.

⁵⁴¹ Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*

⁵⁴² Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, p. 277

And yet, despite their shared framework for understanding the ideological and social transformations of the early twentieth century, it does not seem possible for Gordon and Gluck both to be correct simultaneously. Both Gluck and Gordon cover developments in the late Meiji period: Gluck moves across the quarter-century between 1890 and 1915, an era in which, she believes, ideology “settled,” in which lived reality and ideological formations found such congruence that they coalesced into national myths. To Gluck, then, the formation of ideology in the late Meiji period was a largely civil, uncoerced affair, spurred by the willing acquiescence and selective rhetorical resistance of society, a fleeting moment of ideological convergence with experience before Meiji myths outlived their era. But to Gordon, this same historical moment marked the era of popular violence, of widespread rioting that accompanied the rise of a movement for so-called “Taishō liberalism,” violence that spurred a vigorous police crackdown on the movement for imperial democracy. Citizens agitated for a new ideology to become manifest in a new political system, in direct opposition to those promoted by the state. Through Gluck, we see a late Meiji world of vigorous but civil debate in which the words people use peacefully coalesce into myths that envelop both state and society; through Gordon, we see a late Meiji world of a state crackdown on disorderly social upheaval and on the ideologies underlying it that threatened its hegemony, of the violent agitation of people to overcome elements of myths imposed upon them.

Our concern here is less the degree of empirical support for these two contrasting arguments than the theoretical implications, the stakes of this clash of historical interpretation; our concern is what we gain in the breakthrough that is Gordon’s implicit correction of Gluck. The competition of these various ideologies was not merely a case of civil debate but in fact the underlying reason for social instability: various ideological configurations rose and fell in a

violent competition of ideas. People torched police boxes. Policemen monitored the specific words men uttered in speech gatherings and shut the gatherings down when men said something intolerable. And although the world after the Russo-Japanese War was markedly different from that which preceded it, as Gordon observes, in its ideological configurations and violent struggles it had ample precedent in the nineteenth century.

Here, then, we extend and modify Gordon's argument: imperialism, democracy, and fascism were means of grappling with a society situated in a global world, much as enlightenment and counter-enlightenment were in the late nineteenth century. As it did in the era of imperial democracy, the inability to resolve the crisis of global justice engendered disorder in Japanese society, and beyond, from the very origins of the Japanese revolution.

In light of the observation that ideology progresses not through unconnected phenomena but through the rise and fall in prominence of, and through reconfigurations of, different available ideas, it appears as no coincidence that the historiography of the Shinpūren closely reflects the egressing and regressing ideological tides that Gordon has identified. As Watanabe Kyōji explains, the Shinpūren Rebellion spent some three decades in the recesses of historical consciousness—roughly the three decades in which Miyazaki Tōten rampaged through Asia trying to export a violent ideology of revolution—until it reemerged in the wake of the Russo-Japanese War. Intellectual extremism began to run rampant after triumph in war obviated the most immediate reason for the unity of state and society, Watanabe explains.⁵⁴³ “A certain weariness and purposelessness spread among the hearts of the nation's people,” he writes.⁵⁴⁴ Increasingly ascendant postwar nationalists argued that visceral notions of loyalty and faithfulness—the visceral itself, we might say—had been eviscerated by the development of the

⁵⁴³ Watanabe, *Shinpūren to sono jidai* (2006), p. 7

⁵⁴⁴ Watanabe, *Shinpūren to sono jidai* (2006), pp. 75-76

modern capitalist empire. In search of “a belt to tie the atomized elements of society together,” these intellectuals sought to overcome “the system of division of interests that is characteristic of modern civil society” by supposedly resurrecting the affective modes of a bygone era.⁵⁴⁵ That is when they rediscovered the Shinpūren Rebellion. At precisely the same moment when imperial democracy came to the fore as a reflection of the fundamental changes that overcame society, the Shinpūren was recalled and reinvented as a potential alternative to liberalist-rationalist society.

Just as those who recalled them in the 1910s did, the Shinpūren themselves in the 1870s, a time when they believed that purposelessness and weariness had eviscerated the visceral, turned to an earlier era when what they regarded as the evils of globalization had supposedly not shorn the Japanese community of its purpose. Historians in the Meiji 40s, roughly the 1910s, took up the Shinpūren to examine it as something odd, as a strange form of social mysticism that seemed obscure yet appealing in the increasing atomization of the twentieth-century social life.⁵⁴⁶ A sense of crisis, as if the soul of the nation had been lost, as if morality had fallen under attack amid Westernism and capitalism, spurred a resurrection of the Shinpūren. And the Shinpūren themselves took up a strange ancient past as a time of mystical unity with the gods at a moment when the Meiji Revolution was rending social bonds asunder. Men looked back at men looking back, each finding in a bygone era the purity they sought to invent anew. The ideology of finding something from the past, something transcendental, found resonance precisely at times of the most intense historical change. Enlightenment and counter-enlightenment, democracy and fascism, were hammered out in common crucibles.

In this connection, we encountered, in the fifth chapter of this dissertation, the idea that the Shinpūren offered “omens” of the attempted fascist coup of February 1936. In that chapter,

⁵⁴⁵ Watanabe, *Shinpūren to sono jidai* (2006), p. 76

⁵⁴⁶ Watanabe, *Shinpūren to sono jidai* (2006), pp. 238-239

the idea appeared as one presented by Watanabe Kyōji, who saw in both uprisings a backlash against capitalism and Western civil society. That idea was not most prominently presented by Watanabe. Its original and most influential advocate was Yukio Mishima, among the foremost writers of postwar Japan. In his 1969 novel *Runaway Horses*, part of a tetralogy of historical fiction covering the first half of the twentieth century, Mishima presented through the Shinpūren a complex, subtle theory of a reincarnating historical spirit across modern Japanese time.

Does it matter if Mishima was “right” about the relationship between the Meiji and Shōwa eras? Not for our purposes: the very fact that Mishima made these arguments through his supposed fiction reveals the incompleteness of the revolution, how men in time themselves thought that neither Meiji Enlightenment nor Counter-Enlightenment managed to resolve the problems of Japan’s accelerated entry into globality. Mishima revealed the reality that even the cataclysm of the Second World War did not resolve these problems, leaving Mishima himself to grapple with them. That he wrote this story itself is evidence of how people—and not any people, but the brightest minds of Japanese life—thought they were caught in a struggle that originated in Japan’s revolution into globality.

Indeed, the fictional plans that Mishima sketched out for Isao Iinuma, the leading terrorist in his novel—plans to attack major government officials and businesspeople, to spread pamphlets denouncing capitalism, to try to lead a coup—turned out not to be fictional at all, reflecting not only the revolutionary urges of real-life Shōwa fascist militants but also of Mishima himself, who led a crazed rebellion in 1970 that appeared to follow precisely the ideological script he laid out in *Runaway Horses*.⁵⁴⁷ Mishima looked back and found the origins

⁵⁴⁷ The secondary literature on Yukio Mishima is overwhelmingly vast. Inasmuch as the following review is meant not as an assessment of Mishima himself but rather a reflection on the themes of this dissertation through one work by Mishima, citations to that literature are absent. For a helpful and concise bibliography of received secondary

of his own Counter-Enlightenment in the Meiji era. He depicted a world of lazy dichotomies: of the West and of Japan, of reason and emotion, of insincerity and purity, of past and present. But subtly, shrewdly, he revealed how all those operating within those dichotomies recognized their falsity but nonetheless rendered them real, even if they were untrue. He disclosed the means by which men produced those dichotomies precisely as a means of overcoming a world of uncertainty. Through *Runaway Horses*, Mishima uncovered the widespread underlying humanistic crises of globality: even if no direct line connects the Meiji Counter-Enlightenment to fascism, the Meiji Enlightenment to democracy, the underlying condition of globality and its crisis of justice, which produced these various configurations, went nowhere, he suggests through his novel.

The story opens with Honda Shigekuni, a judge.⁵⁴⁸ He is in his house working alone at night, uninterested in and seemingly incapable of meaningful social relations. We learn of the building he inhabits. There are two rooms on the second floor and five on the first. The garden spreads over 700 square feet. The rent is 32 yen a month. We learn nothing of joy, of brotherhood, of intimacy. Honda has a “harmonious” relationship with his wife, but she was “not the sort of woman to whom he could pour out his fantasies and dreams.”⁵⁴⁹ They have no children. His mother lives all alone in a large house in Tokyo. That is all we know of their relationship. Shōwa modernity has shorn humanity of its very humanity. Men inhabit a world empty and hollow, a cavern of meaninglessness in which intimacy has evanesced, in which they unknowingly suffocate in the pervasive, hideous miasma of reason.

literature, consult Shimauchi Keiji, *Mishima Yukio: Hōjō no umi e sosogu* (Tokyo: Mineruva shobō, 2010), pp. 327–336.

⁵⁴⁸ According to Shimauchi, *Mishima Yukio*, pp. 128–129, Honda is based on the real-life legal scholar Dandō Shigemitsu, who taught Mishima at university and whom Mishima regarded as “the incarnation of modern rationalism.”

⁵⁴⁹ Mishima, *Runaway Horses*, p. 4, p. 61. All quotations are from and citations are to the translated English version.

Honda is his house: spiritless, stiff, a mere set of rational and intellectual figures with no humanity. “Whatever new turmoil rocked the world,” we read, “his function would remain the same, and he would bring to bear upon each disturbance the rational scrutiny of the law.”⁵⁵⁰ His “task was to thrust aside every element of mystery.”⁵⁵¹ Confronted by courthouse chatter about the assassination of Inukai Tsuyoshi, Honda pretends to be above the fray: “Dominated as he was by reason, Honda lacked anything like a blind devotion to justice.”⁵⁵² He is unfazed, he pretends, by whatever urges men had in their unreasonable violation of the law. Mishima describes Honda’s rationalism and intellectualism in a manner so clunky, feigned, and repetitive that it appears deliberately forced and artificial—the text itself is like Honda.

“Honda was of course sympathetic to the mystical,” Mishima writes. “It was something like affection for a mother. But from about the age of nineteen he had felt he could get along quite well without it, a feeling that by now had become second nature to him.”⁵⁵³ With bracing discernment, Mishima projects the notion of emergence from nonage that stood at the heart of enlightenment thought onto the very being of his character, and he suggests how that enlightenment had become a dominant ideology, “second nature.” For Honda, the notion of mysticism is akin to childhood; once he emerges from his nonage and becomes a rational, enlightened thinker, he is able to do away with anything that transcends rational thought. And this emergence from nonage is conflated with an entry into a world of masculinity: mysticism is feminine, and with an absent mother in an empty house somewhere in Tokyo, and with a wife with no real presence in the book or seemingly in Honda’s life, Honda, an adult, can get along perfectly well without it—without feminine, maternal love; without mystery, mystique. Implied

⁵⁵⁰ Mishima, *Runaway Horses*, p. 8

⁵⁵¹ Mishima, *Runaway Horses*, p. 20

⁵⁵² Mishima, *Runaway Horses*, p. 12

⁵⁵³ Mishima, *Runaway Horses*, p. 24

is that the emergence from irrational nonage in the individual person of Honda represents the transformation into enlightenment modernity of the Japanese nation. Honda is his house; he is the text; he is the rational law; he is Japan. And most of all, this emergence from nonage is a pretense, feigned; everywhere are nagging intimations, in Honda, in Japan, that everyone knows that that enlightenment is phantasmal, unsustainable, ready to crumble.

Honda encounters the young Isao Iinuma, and in the person of Isao he finds jarring and disturbing evidence that the teenager is the reincarnation of his boyhood friend Kiyooki. The prospect disturbs his world of rationalism. From Isao, he receives a copy of a history of the Shinpūren written by the fictional “Tsunanori Yamao.” The text, “reproduced” over about fifty pages of the novel, is in fact a history of the Shinpūren written by Mishima himself based on genuine facts and research but embellished with ideology. The richness of family life, the depth of human relations that appear in the history contrast starkly with the thinness of Honda’s own domestic life. When the survivors of the rebellion take their own lives in honor suicides, they die not alone on the battlefield but ensconced in the bonds of family. They share a spiritual intimacy with women in the lives, with their daughters, with their wives, that transcends life itself. Mishima suggests that the emergence of a rational world of impersonal relations, and the sweeping of women into that sphere, has not liberated women but in fact shorn them, too, of their humanity: the tacit contrast between the unidimensional Rie, Honda’s wife, and the vivacious Ikiko, wife of one of the Shinpūren rebels, reveals the devastating effect, in Mishima’s interpretation, of the enlightenment on women no less than men.⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵⁴ The situation of both women’s rights and women themselves in the emerging modern public sphere is the concern of Marnie Anderson, *A Place in Public: Women’s Rights in Meiji Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2010).

The reading of the Shinpūren Rebellion, by both Honda and the reader of *Runaway Horses*, transforms the problem of enlightened modernity, of individualism, and of rationalism into a problem of how to understand history itself. Honda writes to Isao: “Strangely enough, I, who now am thirty-eight, discovered myself capable of being stirred by this narration of an historical event shot through with irrationality,” as if emergence from nonage leaves one immune to stories of heroism.⁵⁵⁵ But he admonishes Isao to bring a balanced, rational view to history. “The immense esteem, then, that you have for this book on the League of the Divine Wind makes me fearful,” he divulges. “I think it would be well if you would try to think of history in terms of a vast stage of events, and of purity of resolve as something that transcends history.”⁵⁵⁶ He cautions Isao against conflating different periods of time, as if tacitly aware of the reincarnation of the spirit of the Shinpūren in the terrorist activity of the 1930s in which he himself is set: “one should by no means confuse,” he writes, his turn of phrase revealing that certainly there must be a means, “this tale of dreamlike beauty of another time with the circumstances of present-day reality.”⁵⁵⁷ He offers Isao a theory of history: “if one is to learn from history, one should not concentrate solely upon a single portion but rather make a thorough investigation of the many complex and mutually contradictory factors that made the era.”⁵⁵⁸ Different elements must be “evaluate[d].” “Thus,” Honda writes to Isao, “one must look at history from a perspective that offers a broad and balanced view.”

Isao scoffs. “This man understands nothing at all of the blood that flows in Japanese veins, of our moral heritage, of our will,” Isao argues. To Honda, history is “no more than a map, a scroll, a thing with no life.” “‘A perspective that offers a broad and balanced view,’ Isao

⁵⁵⁵ Mishima, *Runaway Horses*, p. 113

⁵⁵⁶ Mishima, *Runaway Horses*, p. 116

⁵⁵⁷ Mishima, *Runaway Horses*, p. 114

⁵⁵⁸ Mishima, *Runaway Horses*, pp. 115–116

thought, the phrase from the letter he had just read coming to his mind. He “smiled slightly.”

The blithe enlightenment of Honda bemuses Isao. Honda was a man who would “never touch hot fire tongs.”⁵⁵⁹ History is not a rational record of various elements of the past. It is not the role of the historian to bring a feigned sense of balance to reading what is bygone. What is bygone is not bygone: it lives in a spirit from the past that persists into the present, one that transcends thought.

Carrying forward this spirit, Isao seeks to form “a Shōwa League of the Divine Wind” and lead an insurrection to assassinate venal capitalists and corrupt government officials. “Subtle discourse, exegesis, the ‘on the one hand this, on the other hand that’ approach—all these were foreign to his way of thinking.” He is transcendental, mystical, divine. “His ideal was drawn upon pure white paper in fresh black ink. Its text was mysterious, and it excluded not only translation but also every critique and commentary.”⁵⁶⁰ It is a rejection of the most fundamental premises of the rational enlightenment—a Western enlightenment.

The men whom Isao pledges to kill are elderly, Westernized, and repulsive. Their dialogue, their association, is stilted, boring, rationalist. What sort of people are the Japanese? they wonder. The answer one suggests: “the citizens of Japan constitute a race blind to the dire perils of inflation.”⁵⁶¹ The Japanese are “naïve and ignorant, a passionate and emotional citizenry.” The capitalists and statesmen, by contrast enlightened, worship the West. “Furthermore, according to Victorian custom, the gentlemen did not rejoin the ladies until they had enjoyed their postprandial drinking to the full,” we learn. “This was a source of acute distress to Baroness Shinkawa, but, since it was an English custom, she accepted it as something that could in no way be amended.”⁵⁶²

⁵⁵⁹ Mishima, *Runaway Horses*, pp. 118–119

⁵⁶⁰ Mishima, *Runaway Horses*, p. 126

⁵⁶¹ Mishima, *Runaway Horses*, p. 168

⁵⁶² Mishima, *Runaway Horses*, p. 173

In this context of the turpitude of Shōwa capitalism and Westernism, Isao, himself the spirit of a Taishō era man now incarnate in a Shōwa body, circulates among characters in the book a text of the Meiji past, of Meiji men who strove for purity and brotherhood and irrational mysticism amid the Western secularization and rationalization of their country.

With this tale of reincarnation, with this trope of the circulation of texts across time and among characters, with the literal reappearance of the history of the Meiji and Taishō eras in the Shōwa era, Mishima acts in *Runaway Horses* as a historian who made essentially the same point that Gluck made a few decades later in *Japan's Modern Myths* and that Gordon made more forcefully in his work: that communitarian agitation against the atomized individualism and rationalism of Japanese society, an agitation that is a central facet of fascism, was an intellectual resolution to problems running continually through modern Japanese history that emerged at a particular juncture, that Japan's entry into globality spurred a proliferation of ideological responses that egressed or regressed by historical contingency. And to Mishima, this process was, above all, a violent process, a terrible process, in the most literal sense. It took assassinations and violence and terrorism to make an idea triumph over another.

Like that of his characters, Mishima's evidence is not empirical fact or rational analysis but story and personalities and visceral intuition. His history is an art, not a science. Yet he makes a deliberate, pointed statement about history that seeks to stand alongside, and compete with, more "rational," contingent interpretations. He tells of a competition of global ideas in the prewar era, and he himself partakes in that ongoing competition in the postwar era. Like Hegel, he is both philosopher and historical agent.

The text itself is of course fiction. Or is it? The genre of *Runaway Horses* itself is meant to muddle what history is. The events that occur in the book—the May Fifteenth incident,

rebellions in Thailand—are real. The books the characters read and the events they encounter, too, are real—revolutionary texts from Wang Yangming and Kita Ikki, recollections of the Rebellion of Ōshio Heihachirō in 1837 and the Incident at Sakai in 1868. And most important, the problems with which the characters grapple are real, the struggles of a nation in the throes of intellectual disorder, amid the runaway horses of the past, still running away.

The concept of reincarnation in the text, both of people and of history, implies, then, something more than mere historical memory or the deployment of the past in the present. It is rather a literary conceit to suggest something more fundamental: that the past continues to live, again and again, in the present, that the same problems of the past that drove the Shinpūren to their suicidal paroxysm are the problems that drive Isao in the 1930s to his suicidal Shōwa Restoration—and that drove Mishima himself his suicidal Restoration in 1970. Mishima tells of a world in which men agitated against a present swallowed whole by the Western enlightenment. And Mishima tells of a world in which life itself is destroyed as a result, a death that achieves nothing, with no more significance than cleaving a head of cabbage, in Hegel’s famous formulation.

Isao sees his fight against Japanese corruption as a fight against the West, against rationalism, against a capitalist society, but it is a conflicted fight. As he races toward revolution, Isao fears that there are “many rivers to be leaped over.” “And one clouded stream that never ran dry was that choked with the scum of humanism, the poison spewed out by the factory at its headwaters. There it was: its light burning brilliantly as it worked through the night—the factory of Western European ideals.” Those ideals “degraded the exalted fervor to kill.”⁵⁶³ He is threatened by those ideals. He fears their emasculating, dampening, mechanizing—their taming,

⁵⁶³ Mishima, *Runaway Horses*, p. 292

humanizing?—influence. Were those ideals meant to civilize humans, or did they lull them into peaceful complacency and degenerate self-indulgence so that Europeans could dominate them?

Members of the Shōwa League of the Divine Wind are caught and arrested before they can terrorize Tokyo. Honda reads the account of the arrest in a newspaper. He at first dismisses it as nothing important. In the impersonal isolationism of a callous public sphere, the dynamic, fiery spirit of Isao becomes flattened out as an anodyne story in a soulless nation. But that very night, Honda dreams of his old friend Kiyooki: “Kiyooki seemed to be asking for help, and also to be lamenting his premature death.”⁵⁶⁴ Honda is shaken. His colleagues belittle him for “contract[ing] the disease of romanticism.” They believe that Honda has become involved in a woman because “for the vast majority of men, romantic dreams are inevitably bound up with a woman.” The epistemological world of Honda has tottered. With knowledge of what Isao has schemed, what “he had constructed at a dizzying height in the structure of legalism” has been “threatened with the floodwaters of dreams, with the infiltration of poetry.” Honda awakens to a new form of law superior to what he had had before, a law “from a source more profound than the European worship of reason that undergirded natural law.”⁵⁶⁵ He resigns as a judge and vows to defend Isao in court.

In the Western-style court, justice and truth are muddled, not clarified. Honda admonishes Isao, instructing him how to win freedom in the contemporary world: “By speaking out without restraint,” he tells him, “you will at last learn that no one is willing to believe the truth.”⁵⁶⁶ He must prevaricate. Earlier, when he had given an account that was “totally unembellished,” the “judicial authorities ... bec[a]me wrapped in a falsehood that made him

⁵⁶⁴ Mishima, *Runaway Horses*, p. 306

⁵⁶⁵ Mishima, *Runaway Horses*, p. 307

⁵⁶⁶ Mishima, *Runaway Horses*, p. 360

shudder.” They cannot countenance truth. This aversion to truth means the court is at first oblivious to the reasons behind the Divine Wind insurrection. The whole point of the insurrection was to bring ideas to violence, to practice spirit; “Honda was concerned, however, about Judge Hisamitsu’s apparent lack of interest in the ideological aspects of the case.”⁵⁶⁷

In jail, it had been precisely this problem of the relationship between ideas and lived experience on which Isao had been left to ponder—to discombobulating effect. The police are sympathetic to his youthful ambition, to his vision of purity, of untrammelled brotherhood, of a pure and undefiled nation. The public, too, finds pity in the impetus behind his terrorism. “You shouldn’t have violated the law, of course,” the inspector in jail tells him, “but that shining sincerity of yours is something that even we can understand.”⁵⁶⁸ Still, Isao is troubled in jail as he hears the “cries and groans of the tortured”—of Communists, of “Reds.” He hears their squalls of “Long live the revolution!” as they are abused by the prison guards.⁵⁶⁹ Their ideology is so insidious that it must be beaten out by force. By contrast, Isao’s ideas are admired. “If real ideas have to be beaten like that, are mine supposed to be unreal?” he asks himself. “Isao was vexed with frustration: despite the enormity of what he had plotted, there had been no adequate reaction. If they realized the core of terrible purity within him, he thought, surely they would hate him.”⁵⁷⁰

But the terrible purity of Isao is vitiated in prison—or is it that prison exposes how impure, how unreal, his terrible purity was? Isao’s belief in pure brotherhood, in the ability of men to join together in true national fraternity to overcome the evils of foreign ideas, appears as a gossamer cloak over a core of insecurity. He doubts that the vision of blood brotherhood on

⁵⁶⁷ Mishima, *Runaway Horses*, p. 370

⁵⁶⁸ Mishima, *Runaway Horses*, p. 349

⁵⁶⁹ Mishima, *Runaway Horses*, p. 334

⁵⁷⁰ Mishima, *Runaway Horses*, p. 351

which his insurrection turned, on overcoming modernity through some transcendental, unifying ancient heritage, can ever be realized. “Perhaps there was some unwritten law of human nature that clearly proscribed covenants among men,” the narrator speculates, seemingly on Isao’s behalf, as Isao languishes in prison.⁵⁷¹ Isao struggles with what it means to exist in a world of diverse thought, in a world gripped in a competition of ideas: “The purest evil that human efforts could attain,” he fears, contradicting the very ideals that were at the heart of his insurrection, “was probably achieved by those men who made their wills the same and who made their eyes see the world in the same way, men who went against the pattern of life’s diversity, men whose spirit shattered the natural wall of the individual body.”⁵⁷² Was diversity, were strife and disagreement, was the atomization of individuals in a civil society—were these inherent to humanity, something embedded in the very nature of man, and therefore necessary? Isao tries to abnegate his own self, to build a world in which men merge their will into one in a community and with that of the Emperor, and yet in prison, he begins to doubt—and as soon as he starts to doubt, he backtracks, refusing to “pursue the idea that far.”⁵⁷³

Soon, in the courtroom, the judge finally turns to ideology. He demands that Isao explain the relationship between his ideas and his violence, between his belief in the purity of Japan and his desire to commit an insurrection. “Why isn’t belief enough?” the judge asks Isao in his interrogation. “Why must one go beyond that toward illegal acts, such as you had in mind?” Isao speaks of Japanese poverty in countryside, of the excesses of capitalism, of political turpitude, of Japan’s diplomatic humiliations in global treaties, of the assassination of Hamaguchi Osachi, one in an eruption of high-profile killings around 1930. He recalls the “Meiji Restoration youths” and

⁵⁷¹ Mishima, *Runaway Horses*, p. 336

⁵⁷² Mishima, *Runaway Horses*, p. 337

⁵⁷³ Mishima, *Runaway Horses*, p. 337

how they “struck down injustice.” He constructs an ancient past in which the Japanese people were one family beneath the Emperor. He dreams of a world in which the poor will not suffer in hunger. He speaks of Neo-Confucian intellectual Wang Yangming, whose literature he had read while detailed in jail: “To know and not to act is not yet to know.”⁵⁷⁴

The invocation of Wang Yangming thrusts the problem of the relationship between knowledge and action, among the most important debates in all of East Asian and therefore global intellectual history, into the heart not only of Isao’s insurrection but of the entirety of modern Japanese history. On trial is not only Isao; on trial is the problem of knowledge itself. The suggestion of the judge that it is possible for Isao to believe without acting appears to echo the stance of Neo-Confucian thinker Zhu Xi, who construed action as a consequence of knowledge. By invoking Wang Yangming, Isao counters that knowledge itself is not knowledge if it does not find expression in action. It is an even more profound, even more fundamental problem than the Hegelian question of whether enlightenment ideas found expression in revolutionary violence. Through Wang Yangming, Mishima wonders, did men know anything if they did not act? Were those ideas even ideas if they did not become manifest in violence? The very violence that rocked Japan from the earliest moments of the revolutionary era to the height of Shōwa-era terrorism signaled the knowledge of men of the inadequacy of their present, Mishima suggests. To seek to exonerate ideas when confronted with evidence of action was fatuous, for they were one and the same.

But then, as the trial proceeds, we are forced to grapple with a third, more troubling possibility, one that Isao first encounters in jail: maybe his ideas were never real at all, and maybe that is why they were tolerated and admired. Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming wondered if

⁵⁷⁴ Mishima, *Runaway Horses*, p. 390

knowledge comes prior to action. But what if action comes prior to knowledge? Does Isao act because he knows, or does he try to act to convince himself that he knows, when in fact, not emerged from nonage, he knows nothing at all? Knowledge does not come prior to action, Wang Yangming insists. But through the trial, the judge seems to imply that action came prior to knowledge. When men act, then, does their action instantiate their knowledge? Or do they act because they do not yet know and need to overcome this not-knowing, their violent action an expression of their nonage, their means of finding knowledge, finding certitude in a world in which knowledge itself is in disarray? These were not mere philosophical questions on which Mishima, as an intellectual, indulgently mused. They were pressing issues on which he, as a historical agent himself consciously embedded in intellectual history, acted in taking up his pen to write *Runaway Horses*—and his sword, not two years later.

On trial, in a courtroom of the ersatz West, in a whirling gyre of competing ideas of globality, the falsity of the entire world Isao has constructed becomes exposed. Encountering one form of turpitude dressed up as justice, another is laid bare. It is Makiko, for whom Isao had begun to fall and who acts as the sole complex female character in the book, who testifies to what lies beneath the bravado, the machismo, the passionate, oddly virile purity of the entire Shōwa League of the Divine Wind.⁵⁷⁵ Her supposedly private diary becomes public evidence. She writes that Isao, far from having committed to insurrection, had come to her before the planned rebellion to ask for advice on renouncing the insurrection. He leaves their meeting with his mind set not to go through with his plan. In the testimony of Makiko, Isao, and by extension his associates, appear as deeply insecure, fragile, blustering boys unable to suppress their personal selves in favor of common solidarity, boys whose only commitment to the divine cause

⁵⁷⁵ On the trope in Mishima's work of women seeing and exposing the truth in men, see, for instance, Shimauchi Keiji, *Mishima Yukio*, pp. 177–179.

they profess to share is their fear of being betrayed as cowards if they renege. Not lofty ideals, not blood brotherhood, not divine sentiments, but pettiness drives them. Makiko exposes a world in which purity and brotherhood are but the sublimation of men who cannot come to terms with their own brokenness and impurity in a complicated society, their own finitude in an infinite world. Isao had decided not to act at all: Isao, by Wang Yangming's philosophy, did not know anything.

The narrator tries to convince the reader that Makiko is lying to exonerate Isao: he never renounced the plan; her false testimony that he reneged will help him go free; Makiko must lie in a Western courtroom to exonerate sincerity. Freedom hinges on duplicity, impurity. Isao and the narrator, now collapsed into each other, inveigh against Makiko's perjury, her sacrifice of truth at the altar of freedom.

But the furious intensity of the narrator's vociferations against Makiko and against her supposed mendacity itself prompts the troubling question: perhaps Makiko's diary is indeed true. Even if she was lying, she has opened up a masculine world of supposed purity and exposed the profound defilement beneath it. The reality Makiko discerns through Isao is of young men who have seen through venality, mendacity, the hypocrisy of unbridled capitalism and of Japanese imperialist exploits in Manchuria, of untrammelled admiration of "Western" culture and the pettiness of "Western" law and government. And Makiko sees through them seeing through the West. Her testimony exposes men who have failed to find or develop something better, who are unable to overcome the modernity that has overcome them, who have to go rummaging through the past to resurrect inane fantastical stories of false heroism that they pretend to relive. She finds men who erupt in suicidal violence because they cannot be in a world in which they do not know

how to know, and they need to convince themselves and others that they know, when in fact they know nothing at all.

And thus the book itself, like all great courtroom literature, becomes a world unto itself in which we do not know whom we can believe, in which the characters and the narrator all become unreliable. And thereby Mishima depicts a historical stage in which truth has been deranged, in which justice itself has been obliterated, impossible to attain amid a muddle of competing narratives and divergent perspectives. And then the entire matter is thrown into further confusion when Isao unexpectedly, suddenly, testifies that the account Makiko has given is in fact true—that he had said those things but did not mean them, that to mollify Makiko, he had told her that he would not die.

Isao is not found not guilty, the narrator notes clunkily, but he is excused without punishment. He tries to learn who betrayed him to the police and had his band arrested. It appears it was his father, or maybe it was Makiko. We cannot be sure.

Isao flees and finds Kurahara, the target of his original terror plot, in his “Western-style” room as he sits in an armchair facing his “Western-style fireplace.”⁵⁷⁶ Isao has read a newspaper article reporting that Kurahara ate meat before worshipping at Ise Shrine and that he acted cavalierly in worship, “profaning the Grand Shrine of Ise.”⁵⁷⁷ It is tacitly but unmistakably reminiscent of the case of Mori Arinori and his assassination in the late 1880s.

Isao murders Kurahara. He flees the bloody crime scene. He kills himself. The book ends. His anguished spirit reincarnates in the next book, now in Thailand, now in the depths of world war.

⁵⁷⁶ Mishima, *Runaway Horses*, p. 416–417

⁵⁷⁷ Mishima, *Runaway Horses*, p. 417

APPENDIX

Petition for the Establishment of a Popularly Elected Parliament (*minsensetsuritsukenpakusho*)⁵⁷⁸

The opinion contained in the memorial hereto annexed which we have the honor to address to you having constantly been held by us, and some of us during our term of office having repeatedly memorialized you on the same subject, an understanding was come to that after the special embassy dispatched to the allied powers in Europe and America should have observed the practical working of such institutions, steps should be taken after due consideration of the circumstances. But although several months have elapsed since the return of the embassy to this country, we do not learn that any measures have been adopted. Of late the popular mind has been agitated, and mutual distrust has sprung up between the governors and the governed, and a state of things has arrived in which it cannot be denied that there are signs of destruction and ruin being ready to break forth at any moment. The cause of this we regret profoundly to say is the suppression of the general opinion of the empire as ascertained by public discussion (*tenkayoron kōgi*).

We trust that you will give these remarks due consideration.

Soejima Taneomi, samurai of Saga-ken

Gotō Shōjirō, samurai of Tōkyō-fu

Itagaki Taisuke, samurai of Kōchi-ken

⁵⁷⁸ The text is taken directly from the translation in McClaren, *Japanese Government Documents*, 426 – 432. Added in parentheses is the original Japanese for key terms; in certain places alternative translations are suggested. Spelling has been Americanized.

Etō Shinpei, samurai of Saga-ken

Yuri Kimimasa, samurai of Tsuruga-ken

Komuro Nobuo, samurai of Myōdō-ken

Okamoto Kensaburō, samurai of Kōchi-ken

Furusawa Urō, samurai of Kōchi-ken

Memorial

When we humbly reflect upon the quarter in which the governing power lies, we find that it lies not with the Crown (the Imperial House) on the one hand, nor with the people on the other, but with the officials alone. We do not deny that the officials respect the Crown, and yet the Crown is gradually losing its prestige, nor do we deny that they protect the people, and yet the manifold decrees of the government appear in the morning and are changed in the evening, the administration is conducted in an arbitrary manner, rewards and punishments are prompted by partiality, the channel by which the people should communicate with the government is blocked up and they cannot state their grievances. Is it to be hoped that the empire can be perfectly ruled in this manner? An infant knows that it cannot be done. We fear, therefore, that if a reform is not effected the state will be ruined. Unable to resist the promptings of our patriotic feelings, we have sought to devise a means of rescuing it from this danger, and we find it to consist in developing public discussion (or public debate; *kōgi*) in the empire. The means of developing public discussion is the establishment of a council-chamber chosen by the people (or a popularly elected parliament; *minsen giin*). Then a limit will be placed to the power of the officials, and both governors and governed will obtain peace and prosperity. We ask leave then to make some remarks on this subject.

The people whose duty is to pay taxes to the government possess the right of sharing in their government's affairs and approving or condemning. This being a principle universally acknowledged it is not necessary to waste words discussing it. We therefore humbly pray that the officials will not resist this great truth. Those who just now oppose the establishment of a council-chamber chosen by the people say: "Our people are wanting in culture and intelligence (*gaku, chi*), and have not yet advanced into the region of enlightenment (*kaimai*). It is too early yet to establish a council-chamber elected by the people." If it really be as they say, then the way to give to the people culture and intelligence and to cause them to advance swiftly into the region of enlightenment is to establish a council-chamber chosen by the people. For in order to give our people culture and intelligence and to cause them to advance into the region of enlightenment, they must in the first place be induced to protect their rights, to respect and value themselves, and be inspired by a spirit of sympathy with the griefs and joys of the empire, which can only be done by giving them a voice in its concerns. It has never happened that under such circumstances the people have been content to remain in a backward condition or have been satisfied with want of culture and intelligence. To expect that they shall acquire culture and intelligence by themselves is like "waiting a hundred years for the water clear." The worst argument they put forward is that to establish a council-chamber at once would be simply to assemble all the blockheads in the empire. What shocking self-conceit and arrogant contempt for the people this indicates! No doubt there are among the officials men who surpass others in intelligence and ingenuity, but how do they know that society does not contain men who surpass them in intelligence and knowledge? Whence it may be inferred that the people of the empire are not to be treated with such arrogant contempt. If again they deserve to be treated with such arrogant contempt, are the officials themselves not a part of the nation, in which case they also are

wanting in intelligence and culture? Between the arbitrary decisions of a few officials and the general opinion of the people, as ascertained by public discussion, where is the balance of wisdom and stupidity? We believe that the intelligence of the officials must have made progress as compared with what it was previous to the Restoration (*ishin*), for the intelligence and knowledge of human beings increase in proportion as they are exercised. Therefore to establish a council-chamber chosen by the people would promote the culture and intelligence of the people and cause them to advance rapidly into the region of enlightenment. The duty of a government and the object which it ought to promote in the fulfilment of that duty is to enable the people to make progress (*shinpo*). Consequently in uncivilized ages (*sōmai no yo*), when manners were barbarous (*yaban*) and people fierce, turbulent, and unaccustomed to obey, it was of course the duty of the government to teach them to obey (*shitagau*), but our country is now no longer uncivilized, and the tractableness (or obedience, *jūjun*) of our people is already excessive. The object which our government ought therefore to promote is by the establishment of a council-chamber chosen by the people to arouse in them a spirit of enterprise, and to enable them to comprehend the duty of participating in the burdens of the empire and sharing in the direction of its affairs, and then the people of the whole country will be of one mind.

How is the government to be made strong? It is by the people of the empire becoming of one mind. We will not prove this by quoting ancient historical facts. We will show it by the change in our government (*seifu no henkaku*) of October last. How great was the peril! What is the reason of our government standing isolated? How many of the people of the empire rejoiced at or grieved over the change in the government of October last? Not only was there neither grief nor joy on account of it, but eight or nine out of every ten in the empire were utterly ignorant that it had taken place, and they were only surprised at the disbanding of the troops. The

establishment of a council-chamber chosen by the people will create community of feeling between the government and the people, and they will mutually unite into one body. Then and only then will the country become strong.

We have now proved our position by universal principles (*tenka no dairi*), by the actual political state of our country, by the duty of a government and by the change which occurred in our government last October. Our belief in the justice of our views is strengthened, and we are firmly of the opinion that the only way to develop and maintain the destinies of the empire is to establish a council-chamber chosen by the people and to develop public discussion among them. We will not here enlarge upon the manner in which the idea is to be wrought out, as that would occupy too much space (lit., we could use tens of sheets of paper and we would still not exhaust the topic).

We are informed that the present officials, under the pretense of being conservative, are generally averse to progress (lit., strive to replicate precedent), and they nickname those who advocate reforms as “rash progressives” (*karugaru shinpo*), and oppose their opinions with the two words “too early.” We ask leave to make an explanation here.

In the first place we do not comprehend the phrase “rash progression.” If by rash progression is meant measures which are heedlessly initiated, then it is a council-chamber chosen by the people that will remedy this heedlessness. Do you mean by “rash progression” the want of harmony between the different branches of the administration, and the postponement of urgent matters to the less urgent in a period of reform, so the measures carried out are wanting in unity of plan? The cause of this is the want of a fixed law in the country, and the fact that the officials proceed according to the bent of their own inclinations. The existence of these two things proves the necessity for establishing a council-chamber chosen by the people. Progress is the most

beautiful thing in the world, and is the law of all things moral and physical. Men actuated by principle cannot condemn this word progress, but their condemnation must be intended for the word “rash,” but the word “rash” has no connection with a council-chamber chosen by the people.

We are not only unable to comprehend what the words “too early” have to do with a council-chamber elected by the people, but our opinion is directly opposite of what this phrase expresses. For if a council-chamber chosen by the people were established today, we may fairly suppose that it would not be expected to be in complete working order until many months or years had elapsed. We are only afraid therefore of a single day’s delay in establishing it, and therefore we say that we hold the exact opposite of this opinion.

Another argument of the officials is that the council-chambers now existing in European and American states were not formed in a day, but were only brought into their present state by gradual progress, and therefore we cannot today copy them suddenly. But gradual progress has not been the case with council-chambers only; all branches of knowledge and science and art are subject to the same conditions. The reason why foreigners have perfected this only after the lapse of centuries, is that no examples existed previously and these had to be discovered by actual experience. If we can select examples from them and adopt their contrivances, why should we not be successful in working them out? If we are to delay the using of steam machinery until we have discovered the principles of steam for ourselves, or wait till we have discovered the principles of electricity before we constructed an electric telegraph, our government will be unable to set to work.

Our object in seeking to prove that a council-chamber elected by the people ought today to be established in our country, and that the degree of progress amongst the people of this

country is sufficient for the establishment of such a council-chamber, is not to prevent the officials from making use of various pretexts for opposing it, but we are animated by the desire that by establishing such a council-chamber, public discussion in the empire may be established, the spirit of empire be roused to activity, the affection between governors and governed be made grater, sovereign and subject be brought to love each other, our imperial country be maintained and its destinies be developed, and prosperity and peace be assured to all. We shall esteem ourselves fortunate if you will adopt our suggestions.

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