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From the Land of Gods: Modern Japanese Imperial Ideology

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From the Land of Gods:
Modern Japanese Imperial Ideology

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

by
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I dedicate this senior project to my friends and family who are interested in East Asian Studies and would like to know a little bit more about Japanese history so that if they ever need to participate in an intellectual conversation regarding Japanese affairs, they can.

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Introduction: The Emperor System in Japanese History from 1868 to 1989

When the Meiji Restoration of 1868 returned sovereignty to the Japanese imperial monarchy, Japan would transition away from a feudal caste based system and make rapid internal changes that mimicked the structures of the Western world, and emerge as the first modern nation state in East Asia. While the Western world hoped Japan's modernizations would encourage the rest of East Asia to follow, they also perceived Japan's swift accomplishments as a huge success. The German Empire especially shared a close relationship with Japan as it supported Japan in developing into a modern nation state. The Prussian Constitution would serve as the prototype model to base the structure of the Meiji Constitution (1890-1947) that had been promulgated a month after the Imperial Rescript on Education (October 1890). Together these two documents politically legitimized Japan's claim to imperial modernity and inaugurated a state orthodoxy of emperor-centered nationalism called *tennōsei* ideology, in turn producing the civic edification of "national polity" called *kokutai*.¹ In this thesis I trace the discourses on modern Japanese imperial ideology by analyzing Japan's appropriation of Western culture and traditions, which produced an emperor centered nationalistic state, and then explore how the values of imperial orthodoxies unilaterally shaped the nation's internal and external values such as truth and justice. I will argue that the stability of emperor centered nationalism was dependent upon the preservation of the emperor's sacredness as a living god in the minds of the public.

In my first chapter, I trace the methodologies used to indoctrinate the state into believing the royal lineage were living descendants from the sun goddess, Amaterasu. In order to restore sovereignty to the emperor in the eyes of Japan, solidifying the emperor's image was crucial.

¹ *Tennōsei* is written as 天皇制 and literally translates to: (天 *ten*) heavenly, (皇 *ou*) emperor, (制, *sei*) system. *Kokutai* is written as 国体 and literally translates to: (国, *koku*) country, (体, *tai*) body.

The founding fathers of the Meiji period set out to fabricate and invent traditions that were appropriations of Western cultures, but promoted under the notion that the oligarchs were resurrecting a forgotten culture that had previously existed in ancient Japanese times. Ideologies surrounding the concept of *tennōsei* articulated a strict spiritual relationship between the emperor and his subjects. For example, deriving from Shinto religion came the most sacred notion that the emperor was a living descendent from the sun goddess Amaterasu, the creator of Japan. This conception was rationalized by the fact that the sun rose first everyday over Japan, while *kokutai* orthodoxies politically aligned the emperor and his subjects to ensure unwavering devotion and loyalty to the emperor system.²

As the Meiji oligarchs continued to indoctrinate Japan in the ideologies of the emperor system, the national ‘mission’ was conceived that saw an East Asia united under the emperor. The oligarchs then expanded their horizon to try and include their Asian neighbors. They believed that China and Korea should follow Japan’s example in becoming a modernized nation and that the emperor should be the one to lead Japan’s neighbors towards modernity. Naturally the Chinese and Koreans rebuffed this notion that would encourage Japan to scheme in order carry out its national ‘mission’. This would result in the first Sino-Japanese conflict lasting from 1894 to 1895 in which Japan would win rights to Korean territories. This military victory impressed the Western nations who all believed China would be victorious as they were bigger in size and resources. To Japan, the war symbolized the authenticity of the emperor system and the values of *kokutai*.³ Japan suddenly became the single most powerful East Asian nation, replacing China, and the United States and Britain eagerly welcomed Japan onto the world stage.

² Carol Gluck, *Japan’s Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), 4.

³ Gluck, *Japan’s Modern Myths*, 135.

In my second chapter, I will focus on how imperial orthodoxies were legitimized by the state and understood by the public. Driven by the belief that Korea's independence needed to be protected, Japan's second victory, against Russia, in the Russo-Japanese war (1904-1905) proved that Japan's first victory against China was not a fluke, restored Japanese rights to the Liaotung peninsula (won by Japan in their war with China) and signified that Japan had become an authentic global power. Japan was sent into a war frenzy that swept across the nation. The mass public became completely absorbed with their nation's affairs and eagerly awaited their newspapers' publications. The written press found huge success in editorials regarding Japan's progress abroad and turned Japan's expansionist desires a national affair. Newspapers selectively highlighted the patriotism of Japanese soldiers while omitting information pertaining to Japan's military losses and in this way promoted imperial culture as they held significant control over public knowledge. Imperialism was becoming a popular national crusade.

The annexation of Korea in 1910, followed by the Chinese Republican Revolution of 1911 and then outbreak of World War I (1914-1918), led Japan to conclude that it deserved, now more than ever, to 'enlighten' its Asian neighbors and instill a Japanese 'sphere' of influence. By the start of the Taishō Period in 1912, Japan had already expanded its territories to include the Korean peninsula and the southern hemisphere of Manchuria; World War I also provided opportunity for Japan to commandeer German colonized territories in China. In the wake of this success, Japan would experience an economic depression through the 1920s, which would halt expansion operations in Manchuria and cast Japan's imperial future into the waters of uncertainty. Politicians were more concerned with staying in office than addressing the anxiousness of the public and for the first time since its conception, the national values that embodied the *kokutai* were cast in doubt.

To replace faith in the emperor system, the Imperial Army became a crucial figure of authority in restoring the Japanese national polity through the economic stagnation until 1945 when Japan lost in the Pacific War. One plan to quickly rejuvenate *tennōsei* ideologies entailed right-wing conservatists focusing their attention on reinstating education on emperor worship in schools, to stress the emperor's divinity and to preserve the development of pure *kokutai* values in children; conversely Japan set out to silence liberalist thought. But it was the Imperial Army and its schemes in China that revitalized the public's enthusiasm for war and support for Japan's national destiny, to 'enlighten' East Asia under the emperor. Through the years 1930 to 1945, the Imperial Army would consider itself to be a great successful force, accumulating most of its power and influence during this decade and a half; the public would once again become absorbed into a war frenzy, when the Imperial Army invaded further into Manchuria in 1931, and reverene the emperor.

Both the Manchurian Incident in 1931 and the China Incident in 1937 indicated to the Western world that Japan's conquest to imperialize the East was escalating at an alarming rate. Due to the complexity of international politics, no nation could legally intervene in Japan's savagery in Asia, even though the Chinese had pleaded for assistance. By 1940, Japan had concocted a new plan called the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere that declared cooperation among the nations in East Asia. Ultimately this plan aimed to favor Japanese imperialism and instill emperor worship across the continent, but ended unsuccessfully when regions like French Indochina and the Dutch East Indies bluntly rebuffed Japan.

In the third chapter, I analyze how the emperor system influenced Japan's aggressive expansionist agenda towards the end of the Pacific War and then explore how emperor ideology negatively impacted the lives of the nation in a post war society. On August 15, 1945, Emperor

Hirohito formally announced over the radio, to his subjects, that Japan had accepted the terms of surrender issued at the Potsdam Conference on July 26; Japan had lost the war and the imperial mission of creating a 'Pan-Asia' was permanently abandoned. This surrender occurred only after the United States had dropped a nuclear bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, and Nagasaki on August 9. The severity to which the Imperial Army enforced national polity defied any sort of peaceful rationale so much so that when American forces landed in Okinawa, "Japanese army forces...made it clear to all that the defense of the homeland would be bloody...civilians were forced to commit mass suicide rather than surrender to the [Americans]."⁴ The Pacific War brought about the end of explicit imperial power in the Japanese Empire; the mythical elements of godliness, the essence of the emperor system and Japanese national pride, were stripped away; Japan was forced into a sudden new reality that their emperor was not a living god, they were not his extensions and that Japan no longer functioned as a single entity revolving around the emperor; Japan was no longer the land of the gods. But in the wake of this devastation arose a new Japan determined to understand and reciprocate Western modernity in order to rebuild itself and be a 'civilized' nation again.

⁴ Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, 135

Chapter One: Imperial Restoration

*You, whose ancestors in mighty days
Roared at the skies and swept across the earth
Stand now helpless to drive off the wrangling foreigners--
How empty your title, "Queller of the Barbarians"*

Yanagawa Seigan⁵

With the arrival of Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry at Uruga Bay on July 8, 1853, Japan was suddenly forced to open itself to the Western world after maintaining two and a half centuries of relative isolation. Within the next two years foreign forms of modernity belonging to the United States crept through Japan giving incentive for change within Japan's own political state of being. The founding fathers of Meiji Japan, the samurai who led the overthrow of the shogunate, envisioned a bright, successful future for their empire in which Japan would be the superior Civilization. "On 3 January, 1868, a handful of ambitious samurai from *han* (feudal domains) in southwest Japan carried out a bold *coup d'etat* by seizing control of the Imperial Palace in the ancient capital of Kyoto. With the backing of some sympathetic court nobles and samurai from a few other *han*, they ousted the *Bakufu* (the regime headed by a Shogun from the Tokugawa) and proclaimed the restoration of power to the imperial dynasty."⁶ The vision that the Meiji oligarchs held would serve to fuel Japan's unyielding successes that came to profoundly affect the course of global history, as well as Japanese history. The Meiji oligarchs were comprised of men from the different social classes established by the Tokugawa Bakufu and all

⁵ Peter Duus, *Modern Japan*, Second Edition ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 70-71.

⁶ Richard Sims, *Japanese Political History since the Meiji Renovation: 1868-2000* (London: Hurst, 2001), 1-2.

of whom desired political change for Japan, "...only two domains were capable of providing a direct political and military threat to [the] Tokugawa hegemony,"⁷ that were the *Satsuma* and *Chōshū* domains. At the very core of the oligarchs were Saigō Takamori and Ōkubo Toshimichi, two samurai who hailed from *Satsuma* and "dominated *Satsuma* policy and thought."⁸ From *Chōshū* were Kido Takayoshi, said to be the "soul of the Restoration"; Inoue Kaoru who took part in the drafting of the Meiji Constitution of 1889; Itō Hirobumi, the founding father of modern Japan; and Yamagata Aritomo, father of modern Japanese militarism.⁹ As the overthrowing of the *Bakufu* took place, more influential statesmen became a part of the new ruling class. The Meiji oligarchs did not simply want to alter Japan to mirror the West in certain aspects; they had extreme plans to completely reinvent Japan by absorbing Western cultural and political systems. It was Itō Hirobumi who came to the conclusion that Japan could be united through the institution of a national religion based on his analysis of Western nations and Yamagata Aritomo who led the reformation in the Japanese army because he "had returned from a tour of Europe convinced that the military systems in France and Prussia served to educate and mobilize the population behind the government."¹⁰ Through careful observations of Western culture and politics the Meiji oligarchs synthesized their objectives to create a modern Japanese nation state that utilized a political system that revolved around emperor centered nationalism. In this chapter, I will explore the discourses surrounding Japan's transition from the early modern Tokugawa (Edo) period into a modern nation state and a formidable empire that came to be regarded by the Western powers as a legitimate global power. I will argue in this chapter that the

⁷ Marius B. Jansen and Gilbert Rozman, *Japan in Transition, from Tokugawa to Meiji* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 190.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 190

⁹ George Akita, *Foundations of Constitutional Government in Modern Japan, 1868-1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967) 6-14.

¹⁰ Marius B. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*. Cambridge (MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000) 21. And, Duus, *Modern Japan*, 90-91

birth of Japanese nationalism could have only occurred as a by-product of Japan's thirst for knowledge of the Western world.

To understand the drastic political reformation that took place in the Meiji period (1868-1912) following the Imperial Restoration, I will first discuss the changes that concluded the Edo period and gave birth to Meiji. The Edo period lasted between the years 1603 and 1868 and is known for its long period of relative stability in the realms of society and economics; it was the last era to maintain a feudalistic military government system, which was centered on the Tokugawa shogunate; the monarchy was viewed as peripheral in comparison. That is to say, the Edo period lacked a strong sense of national identity among the Japanese subjects; "the emperor existed alongside the shogunate, but there was no association to the emperor as a central symbol for national identity."¹¹ During the Tokugawa period, the state was upheld by firm authoritative direction from the shogunate. When Commodore Perry and his fleet of black ships hovered unauthorized in Uruga bay in 1853 "demanding the right to put up and trade at Japanese ports [and] be taken to the emperor,"¹² the shogunate was at a loss as to how to handle his uninvited intrusion so much so that the shogunate consulted the monarchy for advice on a course of action.

To the Japanese subjects who placed their loyalty in the shogun's social system, this exchange with the emperor was viewed as a sign of the shogun's weakness. "The *bakufu* had adopted a policy...that probably saved Japan from a clash with foreign gunboats...at the tremendous cost to its authority and legitimacy."¹³ As a consequence a popular slogan emerged that acted as propaganda to rally the common people of Japan together. *Sonnō Jōi* that translates to "Revere the Emperor, Expel the Barbarians," became an influential social movement that

¹¹ Takashi Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 13.

¹² Ian Buruma, *Inventing Japan, 1853-1964* (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 12.

¹³ Duus, *Modern Japan*, 71.

aimed to redirect the people's loyalty back to the Imperial Court and away from the Shogun. The loudest voices of support for this political change came from former samurai who would later become the Meiji oligarchs and increasingly came to resent the caste-based system established by the shogunate.

The Tokugawa shogunate had established a caste-based social hierarchy that in turn created a strong sense of unity within each social class. There were four class systems that composed the Edo society: samurai (*shi*), farmers (*no*), artisans (*ko*), and merchants (*sho*). Dividing society into a caste-based system created an ethos of solidarity among the classes. Subjects of the same class understood and could sympathize with each other, but were unable to evoke a sense of common ground with another class. Tokugawa Society heavily relied on the notion that each class would fulfill their designated role dutifully. Thus, when the Americans inserted themselves without welcome into Japan and the slogan *Sonnō Jōi* began to spread; Japanese subjects from all classes were able to collectively agitate for change. "The actual overthrow of the Tokugawa Bakufu was not achieved by terrorist tactics but was carried out by those samurai, primarily in *Satsuma*, *Chōshū* and *Tosa* (another south-western han) who were able to mobilize the full force of their domains behind their campaign."¹⁴

The historian Sakamoto Takao claims that one should view the Meiji Restoration and the political changes it brought not as a revolution and discontinuity but as a competition and unification with the West.¹⁵ In retrospect, the Meiji period was robust because it concentrated social and political full attention onto the emperor as a symbol of Japan and in turn gave a unified identity to its citizens. The Tokugawa shogunate, on the other hand, failed to "create a

¹⁴ Sims, *Japanese Political History*, 9.

¹⁵ Kevin M. Doak, *A History of Nationalism in Modern Japan Placing the People* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 23.

single, demarcated, centralized political authority."¹⁶ Takashi Fujitani argues that during the Tokugawa period "the official discourse on ruling stressed that both society and polity were to be maintained by the accentuation of social, cultural, and political sameness,"¹⁷ but by contrast, the Meiji government aimed to undo the social order of two and a half centuries worth that the Tokugawa era had established. Kano Masanao remarks on how the "discovery of the West also produced the discovery of Japan."¹⁸ Sims describes this crucial turn to be "[with] major political and social changes came a policy of 'civilization and enlightenment' that encouraged the study of the West and involved the introduction of Western-style institutions and systems."¹⁹

Itō Yahiko describes the arrival of Commodore Perry as "a liquefying phenomenon that dissolved the pre-existing political world and provided an opening to the populist activist."²⁰ The Japan of the Tokugawa era lacked a concrete national ethos and there was no sense of a shared identity as a national whole; there existed no innate sense of being that identified as a community distinct from the rest of the world. Tanaka Akira observes the arrival of Commodore Perry as "encouraging Japanese people to begin to think of themselves as a united nation rather than as members of diverse regions."²¹ Prior to 1853, 'Japan' as a modern nation simply did not exist. After the United States came banging on the closed doors of Japan, the Meiji oligarchs worked to develop a sense of a cultural distinctiveness, and an awareness to being specifically "Japanese" was indoctrinated into the citizen subjects of the mid-19th century. The founding fathers of the Meiji Restoration believed it was their civil obligation and moral "responsibility to

¹⁶ Doak, *A History of Nationalism*, 36.

¹⁷ Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy*, 5.

¹⁸ Doak, *A History of Nationalism*, 40.

¹⁹ Sims, *Japanese Political History*, 2.

²⁰ Doak, *A History of Nationalism*, 33.

²¹ Akira Tanaka, *Bakumatsu ishinshi no kenkyu* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkanm 1996) 236-258.

lead Japan out of the wilderness of backwardness and weakness toward the green pastures of civilization and power."²²

With the transition into the Meiji period, the idea of "imperial restoration" acted as enthusiastic propaganda that encouraged commoners to embrace the new direction that the Meiji oligarchs wished to guide Japan. By inventing, manipulating and rewriting the foundation of the essence of "Japaneseness," the Meiji oligarchs created new feelings of national unity amongst the citizens. But the early years of change in the Meiji Restoration was met with resistance from the common people whose lives were supposed to benefit from this political change. The Meiji oligarchs understood this instability to be caused by a lack of a central national image. Fujitani remarks on an instance in 1876 in Mie Prefecture when local citizens attacked the central government because their lives had not changed since the Meiji Restoration. "The representatives of the state attacked [the citizens'] religion and way of life, by compulsory education that was costly in terms of tuition and children's labor lost, by military conscription, and by even heavier taxation than experienced in the past."²³ The idea behind the imperial restoration was to instill hope for change that would benefit the citizens. Thus it was crucial for the success of the Restoration to have a solid social structure to guide Japan towards a new modern civilization. The Meiji oligarchs invented a system based around emperor-centered nationalism that endeavored to re-educate the nation to believe that the Emperor was the central entity of Japan and that all of Japan was to be ruled at his behest. Japan was re-cast as "the land of the gods, inhabited by a people uniquely superior in the world, who lived together, the whole national as a single family, under the benevolent guidance of the divine emperor."²⁴

²² Akita, *Foundations of Constitutional Government*, 60.

²³ Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy*, 7.

²⁴ Carol Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), 4.

In the Meiji Constitution of 1890, it is written that the Emperor shall be the symbol of the State and of the unity of the people. Meiji oligarch and founding father of the Meiji Constitution Itō Hirōbumi warned, "If the constitution is known to the people as having been drafted by a given individual, it will lose the people's respect. It may [even] come to be said that it would be better not to have a constitution than to have a constitution disrespected by the people."²⁵ Before promulgating the Meiji Constitution to solidify the Emperor's symbolism and in turn the legitimacy Meiji oligarchy, the oligarchs sought to remold Japan so that encounters with new ideologies in everyday life resonated with sincere loyalty; citizens' hearts and minds should become one. The solidarity that quickly amalgamated Japan is one of many impressive accomplishments achieved by the Meiji oligarchs, who sought means of validating their political legitimacy.

In his introduction on the manufacture of tradition Fujitani briefly discusses how the Meiji oligarchs relied heavily on the "fabrication" of culture to legitimize the state. The oligarchs' first order of business in the early stages of modern Japan was to figure out ways for the common people to identify their Japanese 'cultural' roots that in turn pave the way to a strong national ethos. In short, the Meiji oligarchs wanted to utilize invented 'culture' to manipulate the commoners to believe in the new social construct identity of being a citizen. The oligarchs in their journeys abroad to Europe had interpreted religion to be prominent in Western styled ceremonies that was then understood as forging a strong unification between the people and the state. Japan did not have any primary sources that could serve as a core guidance for the oligarchs; there were no primary texts from which an ideology could be built from or proselytized to the nation. As such the Meiji oligarchs attempted to apply nationalistic values to previously ordinary entities in an effort to integrate the cultural essence of Japan into the daily

²⁵ Akita, *Foundations of Constitutional Government*, 61.

lives of Japanese citizens. "Since the Meiji Restoration, ritual making has been a central concern of the Japan's governing elites [who] invented, revived, manipulated, and encouraged national rituals [in order to] bring this [new] territory...under one ruler, one legitimating sacred order, and one dominant memory."²⁶ For example to reinforce the sacred origin narrative that the Emperor was a descendant of the sun-goddess Amaterasu; not only did it become a custom in school for children to bow to the east toward the Emperor before beginning work, but also the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution of February 11, 1889, was planned in conjunction with the same date as the ascension of the first Emperor of Japan, Jimmu, and became the first national holiday.²⁷ The Meiji oligarchs planned to accelerate Japan in the modern world that the Western nations had already broken through.

"By the time of the Restoration Japan possessed a core of "experts," their knowledge based in some cases no more than a single visit to Europe or America, but in others reflecting years of study."²⁸ The Meiji period represented a new dawn for Japan, with the name Meiji itself meaning a bright, or enlightened, reign, a slowly approaching enlightenment delivered by those who had worked together to overthrow the Tokugawa shogunate; "a loosely-held body of jealous and proud individuals, each with his specific ideas on how best to achieve the goal of a strong and independent Japan."²⁹ But Japan's growing obsession with the Western world flitted between attraction and repulsion as the Meiji leaders grappled with feelings of inferiority vis-a-vis dependence on the West for guidance; Japan interpreted the continuing progression of modernity in the Western nations to be a race in which Japan was being left behind. Hence it became essential for Japan to quickly close the contemporary political gap between herself and the

²⁶ Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy*, 11.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁸ W. G. Beasley, *The Meiji Restoration* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1972), 306.

²⁹ Akita, *Foundations of Constitutional*, 75-89.

Western nations, but to also rectify the unequal treaties forced upon the nation by the United States and Britain. "National unity, on which defense in the face of foreign threat depended, required political change; that this in some sense gave a new role to the Imperial Court; and that there must be a willingness to 'use barbarian to control barbarian' that is to adopt Western technique in the service of military and economic strength."³⁰

In preparation for and during the early stages of modernizing Japan, the newly established Meiji government sought guidance from their ally, the newly Prussian-orientated Germany. "Earlier the Japanese had looked to the United States, but very little of use had come from that country...restoration leaders were not favorably impressed [with] England and Ireland."³¹ A new trajectory was taken to build up a formidable military as a means to progress a step further towards a superior Civilization; with the reformation of Japan, the Meiji oligarchs maintained a vision to mold the empire into a specific type of Civilization that would not only be on par with the Western nations like America and Germany, but the oligarchs would not be satisfied until their vision surpassed the West entirely. Peter Duus elaborates further on this form of 'enlightenment' in which he acutely summarizes Japan's view on the world. "The dynamic countries of the West represented 'civilization,' the most advanced stage of human development, while China, India, and pre-Restoration Japan were 'semi-civilized' and the rest of the world was 'savage' or 'barbarian'."³²

The ambitious dream to become like Western nations with the intentions to surpass them would have been impossible to even fathom without the crucial assistance of Germany. "After the Satsuma Rebellion in 1877, when the inadequate training of the army became evident...Japan

³⁰ Beasley, *The Meiji Restoration*, 302.

³¹ Martin Bernd, and Peter Wetzler "The German Role in the Modernization of Japan — the Pitfall of Blind Acculturation" *Oriens Extremus* 33 (1). Harrassowitz Verlag (1990), 77.

³² Duus, *Modern Japan*, 99.

gradually turned toward Germany and away from Great Britain, the United States and France in its search for appropriate western prototype to emulate."³³ Emulation would be the key strategy to reinvent Japan for the Meiji oligarchs would appropriate Western military and legislation and transform it to be Japanese so to keep their national polity 'pure'; a crucial incorporation to the Japanese empire would be a Prussian influenced constitution in 1889, twenty one years after the inauguration of the Japanese nation state. "The Japanese regarded the young, aspiring Imperial German Reich as the model of an orderly nation state with a patriotic folk loyal to its monarch."³⁴ In this ideology, a constitution represented more than a set of rules, it was the living soul of the state.

The Meiji oligarchs rationalized the necessity of developing a constitution as not only a means to protect Japan from foreign invasion, but also to rectify blatant unequal treaties imposed on the empire by Western powers like the United States and Great Britain, in which rules were created in Western favor. "Based on the Prussian constitution, [the Japanese constitution] was meant to impress the Western world that Japan was now a modern nation-state, which should be free at last of unequal treaties that still afforded Americans and Europeans special privileges."³⁵ For example, the Japan-US Treaty of Peace and Amity in 1854 forced Japan to accept American ships at undesignated ports and on the mainland as well as receive any and all Americans graciously. In addition to restoring full international sovereignty to Japan, the constitution represents a form of centralization by bringing unity between the Japanese government and its citizens; it would come to legitimize Meiji ideologies by clearly outlining the duties of the Emperor, his subjects and the government. That is to say, the constitution exemplified a strong national ethos and inspired Japanese citizens to embrace a new modernity.

³³ Martin, and Wetzler, "The German Role in the Modernization of Japan," 78.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 78.

³⁵ Buruma, *Inventing Japan*, 37.

Doak writes on the Meiji Constitution that the primary function was twofold: to [politically] unite the [Japanese subjects] under sovereign monarchy and to take away dieresis and make the [nation] all the same³⁶; this was in essence the beginning of what would become a very powerful ideology known as the *tennōsei* ideology (Emperor System). Without the emperor, the entire Meiji Restoration would have been unsuccessful. "The Emperor [was] a symbol, not a ruler...and was important to the restoration leaders because he could give them legitimacy."³⁷ I will comment briefly below on the Meiji government's objective to build up the emperor's image amongst the Japanese subjects and the role of the emperor within the development of the Meiji constitution.

The emperor's image was a crucial competent to the Meiji restoration; the former samurai who took control of Japan and ended the shogunate rule envisioned a dominant future for Japan; and needed to sustain a permanent authoritative hold over Japan. The Meiji oligarchs had no intention of giving real power to the emperor, but publicized the illusion that the changes being made were done so by the emperor; it would be impossible to convince a nation to devote their loyalty to any other form of sovereignty but the emperor. Before the promulgation of the Meiji constitution on February 11, 1889, the oligarchs dedicated an abundance of time to promoting the emperor's image across all of Japan so that when the constitution was delivered to the public there would be less incentive to protest the new government system. Fujitani details how "the Meiji government sent out *senkyōshi* (state propaganda) and *kyōdoshōku* (national priests) to the farther corners of Japan to inspire people to embrace the new Emperor system. In schools, too,

³⁶ Doak, *A History of Nationalism*, 166.

³⁷ Beasley, *The Meiji Restoration*, 302

the emperor's portrait had become an object of worship."³⁸ But there was than merely using the emperor's image as propaganda to gain support for the new state regime.

Fukuzawa Yukichi, a journalist of the Meiji era, astutely sums up the role of the emperor in relation to the aim of modern Civilization as such, "School, industries, armies, and navies are all the mere external forms of civilization. They are not difficult to produce...yet there remains something immaterial, something that cannot be seen or heard, bought or sold, lent or borrowed that pervades the whole nation and whose influence is so strong that without it none of the...external forms [of civilization] would be the slightest use. This supremely important thing is...the spirit of civilization."³⁹ It was not the emperor himself who was the 'spirit of civilization', but his image manipulated and engineered by the Meiji oligarchs that inspired a nationwide social and cultural revolution. The oligarchs understood the necessity of embellishing the role of the emperor in their mission to create a constitution that would commandeer every life in Japan; the constitution would provide a strict conception of citizenship in Meiji so that it would no longer be satisfactory to just be born in Japan, people (citizens) must have a sound sense of nation.⁴⁰ The Meiji period reflected Japan's determination to join the Western nations in the world of modernity; the oligarchs drafted a new definition of 'Japanese' internally and externally within its first constitution.

The Meiji constitution was drafted with two very important objectives in mind: a model designed to be a powerful modern state based off of Europe's experiences and a constitution that shared some power and responsibility with other officials whom the Meiji oligarchs felt did not deserve.⁴¹ It was written by five men; Ito Hirobumi, Inoue Kowashi, Ito Miyoji, Kaneko Kentaro

³⁸ Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy*, 2.

³⁹ Duus cites Fukuzawa's *Conditions in the West* (Duus, 100).

⁴⁰ Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, 25.

⁴¹ Akita. *Foundations of Constitutional Government*, 60.

and Carl Friedrich Hermann Roesler, a "German expert on constitutional law...the only foreigner who was called upon personally to advise the government on constitutional matters."⁴² In fact if Roesler had been successful in his advising to Itō Hirobumi, the constitution would have taken a completely different direction and been more democratically oriented. The first draft of the constitution was rejected as a mere reflection of European nations constitutions that failed to embody Japan's national polity.⁴³ For Japan never intended to become Westernized, all culture and traditions appropriated were to still maintain a pure Japanese essence; "the Meiji Constitution between western legal provisions and traditional Japanese content was invested in it from the very beginning."⁴⁴

The Promulgation of the Meiji Constitution

The Emperor is sacred and inviolable.

The Constitution of the Empire of Japan (1889)

Chapter I Article III

To ensure the cleverly designed illusion that portrayed all of Japan to be descended from the gods could never be disturbed as well as strengthen their new emperor system, Itō Hirobumi made certain that during the drafting of the preamble and even first chapter the constitution explicitly referenced the sacredness of the imperial monarchy and by extension the rest of Japan. The constitution not only represented a primary source of legitimacy for the Meiji oligarchs and their constitutional government, but also firmly fixed the *tennōsei* ideology into place which would go on to sustain Japan's ambition of uniting all of East Asia and then the West under the

⁴² Martin and Wetzler, "The German Role in the Modernization of Japan," 79.

⁴³ Akita, *Foundations of Constitutional Government*, 60.

⁴⁴ Martin and Wetzler, "The German Role in the Modernization of Japan," 82.

sovereignty of the emperor (to be discussed in depth in Chapter 2). The promulgation of the constitution served as Japan's first modern national ceremony.

Monday, February 11, 1889, the sacred date of the promulgation of the Meiji constitution. "The ceremonies took place in sacred and national time, on *kigensetsu*, the holiday created in 1873 to commemorate the accession of the first emperor, Jimmu, and hence the founding of the nation."⁴⁵ All of the hard work the Meiji oligarchs had done to prepare Japan to embrace the new conception of national identity as being Japanese and to adapt to the changes Western modernity brought was put on full display in the imperial palace. Dressed in "ceremonial vestments of his ancestors" the emperor stood in the Palace Sanctuary, the innermost place and strictly forbidden to be entered by anyone but the rites performers.⁴⁶ There the emperor would announce to his imperial ancestors on the new changes wrought forth by the Meiji oligarchs and new modernity Japan would be striving towards. The new political system was described as "[a] progressive tendency of the course of human affairs and in parallel with the advance of civilization."⁴⁷ Following the emperor's oath, imperial messengers were sent out to relay the news to the divine gods at *Ise Shrine* and to the graves of the two previous emperors. By doing these two separate actions, the ideology of the emperor's sacredness was set in the people's minds for decades to come. "In the throne room the emperor handed down the Constitution, his gesture symbolizing the *kintei kenpō*, a Constitution bestowed upon the nation as a gracious imperial gift."⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy*, 107.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁴⁷ Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, 43.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 43.

The Makings of the Sino-Japanese War 1894-1895

The attack on China opens a new epoch in our history, it moves us from the national stage to the world stage. Our Great Japan now becomes tied to the world, militarily, commercially, and politically--In our national actions, in our personal actions, in the material sphere, and the spiritual sphere.

*Kokumin Shimbun, December 5, 1894;
Quoted in Nishida Taketoshi, *Meiji jidai no shimbun to zasshi*.⁴⁹*

Following the post-Restoration years, the Meiji oligarchs were presented with conflicting choices that could potentially prove disastrous for Japan. On one hand, the Meiji oligarchs wanted to restore full sovereignty to Japan by undoing the unequal treaties the shogunate had reluctantly signed with the United States and Britain; let it not be forgotten that the Meiji oligarchs were once samurai who held severe disdain for foreign presence on Japanese soil and was then perceived as a complete humiliation for Japan. On the other hand, the Meiji oligarchs were acutely aware that Japan was not yet capable of challenging Western military; even with Yamagata Aritomo's direction to completely rebuild the Japanese military structure to reflect a more German orientation. But there was an undoubted consensus within the Meiji government that "urged decisive action, even military action, to restore the 'national honor' forfeited by the *bakufu* in its concessions to the foreigners."⁵⁰

Restoring "national honor" to Japan was not as simple a task as the Meiji oligarchs presumed it would be. Adopting a Westernized legislation system and appropriating Western culture across the nation merely meant that Japan was to be the first East Asian nation to conquer the 'challenges' of modernity (in the eyes of the West). "The Iwakura mission [of] 1871 departed

⁴⁹ James L. Huffman, *Creating a Public: People and Press in Meiji Japan* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), 205.

⁵⁰ Duus, *Modern Japan*, 135.

for the West with hopes of opening negotiations for treaty revision.”⁵¹ Duus describes the Iwakura mission to be an ultimate failure as the Japanese were not only unable to renegotiate the terms of the treaty, but also it became clear to the Meiji oligarchs that the United States and other Western powers involved with Japan would not easily acquiesce any arrangements that could shift the balance in political power in Eastern favor. Along with the Western sphere, the Meiji oligarchs also wanted to assert Japan’s newfound superiority of being a modern nation and promote Western modernity to the Eastern sphere too; specifically to the Middle Kingdom and Korea. I will comment briefly below on the dynamics of East Asia up until 1894 in order to discuss the events that led up to the first war for the modernized Japan.

Before the United States had appeared at Japan’s front doors in 1853, the Western power had already established its presence in China some twenty years earlier. “Europeans and Americans have always been ready to believe that trade with China [held] potential for profit.”⁵² Great Britain and the United States had first enacted unequal treaties with China in order to gain access to ports to further opportunities for commercial trade. Beasley describes the circumstances in which the Western power was able to create such a treaty as requiring three conditions: the first, the Western power had to ensure to their merchants all potential access to trading in East Asia; the second, the Western power had to ensure some level of protection for foreign merchants; the third condition needing to be met was that the Western power had to be ready to use force in order to see through the first two conditions were being upheld by the East Asian nation in question.

That is to say, for instance, the imposed Treaty of Nanking (1842) which was the conclusion to the Opium War of 1840 (a war fought for foreign commercial privilege) between

⁵¹ Duus, *Modern Japan*, 135.

⁵² W. G. Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism, 1894-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 14.

Britain and China, forcibly opened five ports to British trade while also placing Hong Kong entirely under British control. Furthermore foreigners were afforded privileges such as lower custom duties and the freedom to live how they pleased without fear of Chinese discrimination while the Chinese were not granted the same rights for overseas. “To many in contemporary Britain, freedom of trade and freedom for traders were so axiomatic as to justify the use of force to secure a more liberal entry to the Chinese market.”⁵³ This new treaty port system would come to influence a new type of relationship of superiority that the Japanese would use in order to further their expansionist objectives across Asia.

The consensus in Japan on China was juxtaposed, divided into admiration and contempt. “On the one hand, most educated Japanese found it hard to think ill of a country that had provided the foundations of their own writing system, numerous administrative structures...many of their aesthetic norms...on the other hand, the Japanese had watched with increasing contempt as China struggled unsuccessfully to meet the challenges of modernity and Western imperialism.”⁵⁴ Tensions were strung high in Japan at the relationship between Korea and China; the Meiji government resented the fact that Korea remained loyal to China’s influences and continuously rebuffed Japan’s diplomatic era. From the Korean standpoint “many Korean scholars and officials regarded the Japanese as ‘Oriental renegades’ who had betrayed their heritage by shamelessly imitating Western countries.”⁵⁵ “A ‘war party’ emerged in Japan, insisting that the continuing rebuffs from the Korean court must be dealt with by a punitive expedition.”⁵⁶ Exactly like the United States had applied gunboat tactics to force Japan to open its ports, the Meiji government set out to open Korea under the system of a port treaty.

⁵³ Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism*, 15.

⁵⁴ Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 200.

⁵⁵ Duus, *Modern Japan*, 140.

⁵⁶ Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism*, 43.

Japan's resolve resulted in the treaty of Kanghwa enacted February 26, 1876. The contents of this treaty can be understood in hindsight to have set in motion the inevitable clash between Japan and China. "It opened three Korean ports to trade; gave permission for the continuation of coastal surveys; and described Korea as an independent state, enjoying 'the same sovereign rights as does Japan.'"⁵⁷ In reality though, Japan did not intend to actually allow Korea to be 'independent' as the Meiji government wanted to establish Japanese influence within Korea and "rid Korea of China's 'paternal influence' in order to strengthen Japan's own standing the broader imperialistic world."⁵⁸ The provisions of the Kanghwa treaty, in particular enjoying the 'same sovereign rights as Japan' provoked an ethnic rivalry between Japan and China to see which nation could be superior within Korea.

The treaty of Kanghwa represented the Meiji oligarchs first authentic step towards an affirmative action for foreign policy, at the behest of critics to the new government. In the past, during the Tokugawa reign, the shogunate had tried to establish a diplomatic relationship with Korea, but were unsuccessful. Liberals of Meiji Japan argued that "Japan's new national strength brought with it a responsibility to help its neighbors 'civilize' themselves."⁵⁹ While Fukuzawa also firmly believed that China and Korea needed to be protected from Western powers and that it was Japanese obligation to protect oriental culture while simultaneously promoting Western civilization. Activists in Japan feared that the West would dominate over Asia which in turn would directly hinder Japan's national strength and threaten their national security. The Meiji leaders were not far behind in coming to the same conclusion that Japan should be "concerned about the fate of [their] neighboring countries,"⁶⁰ as smaller Asian countries were succumbing to

⁵⁷ Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism*, 44.

⁵⁸ Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 199.

⁵⁹ Duus, *Modern Japan*, 137.

⁶⁰ Duus *Modern Japan*, 138-139.

Western domination. The growing consensus then became that in the interest of protecting Japan's national security from further Western imperialism, Japan felt morally obligated to dominate the rest of East Asia.

Yamagata Aritomo strongly believed in fortifying Japan's independence by making it a national interest to 'protect' adjacent territories in order to "maintain peace in the Orient."⁶¹ The Korean peninsula was perceived as ideal territory to help the Meiji oligarchs progress forward in their quest to make a superior Japan. With the treaty of Kanghwa serving as legitimate cause to 'encourage' a Japanese-Korean relationship, the Japanese expansionist party saw this as an opportunity to spread Japanese influence in Korea; more specifically Korea was seen as an ideal nation to begin Japanese strategy to guide the East into modernization. Japanese-Chinese rivalry flared as "promising young Korean [scholars] were sent to Japan to receive a modern education."⁶² Both the Chinese and opposed Koreans resented this blooming relation with Japan resulting in Korea splitting into pro-Japanese and pro-Chinese factions.

The Meiji oligarchs would become even more aggressive in their political crusade in Korea, especially as the Korean government continued to seek assistance from China which only further agitated Japanese indignation. In Japan, the various newspapers such as *Jiji Shinpō* and *Niroku Shinpō* rapidly brought attention to China's military actions within Korea and the lack of Japanese inclusion on Korean matters thus prompting public outcry at Korea's blatant offence to Japan; "When the reports of China's troop dispatch reached Tokyo in early June, the leading papers demanded an immediate, strong response."⁶³ Duus comments on the power balance of the 1880's of East Asia and how the Japanese watched as China's military was unable to adequately handle foreign intrusion of the French in Indochina. "A backward and weak Korea under the

⁶¹ Duus, *Modern Japan*, 138-139.

⁶² Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism*, 44.

⁶³ Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 201.

control of an equally backward and weak China seemed easy prey for one of the Western powers.”⁶⁴ This fear grew sharply when Russia proposed to build a trans-Siberian railroad; the Japanese leaders saw this industrial move to “put Korea at risk” and “threaten the independence of Korea.”⁶⁵

To protect Korean independence from Western encroachment was an entirely separate matter than revolved around successful military operations against the Qing Dynasty. Explicitly stated in the provisions of the Kanghwa treaty was that Korea be able to ‘enjoy the same sovereign rights as Japan’ and be ‘an independent state’ which was written with the intentions for solely Japan to ‘guide’ Korea towards modernization. Therefore the Meiji leaders decided that Japan needed to intervene in the Korea-China relationship. “For the Japanese army, [they] wished to free Korea from Chinese rule and [place] Korea firmly under Japanese political domination.”⁶⁶ The general agreement from both bodies of power was that in order for any reformation to occur in Korea, China must be driven out. “Only if the Chinese were ousted would it be possible for the Koreans to undertake the self-strengthening reforms needed to guarantee a Korean independence.”⁶⁷ July of 1894 “Japanese troops seized [Korea’s] royal palace, forcing the king to sign an agreement authorizing the Japanese to expel the Chinese [from Korea].”⁶⁸ For Japan wanted to dominate Korea to progress their political ambition to unite all of East Asia under Japanese sovereignty; this desire brought Japan into a quick war with China that is known as the first Japanese-Sino War.

August 1, 1894, Japan declared war on China and emerged victorious little under a year on April 1, 1895. Within the first two months of naval warfare against China, Japanese troops

⁶⁴ Duus, *Modern Japan*, 140-141.

⁶⁵ Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism*, 46.

⁶⁶ Duus, *Modern Japan*, 140-141.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 140-141.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 142-143

had seized almost all control of Korea; September 16, Japanese military captured Pyongyang, the capital of Korea; September 17, Japanese established complete dominance over the Yellow Sea; October 24, Port Arthur was safely secured under Japanese authority⁶⁹; Mid-February, Japanese fleet destroyed Chinese navy in Chinese waters.⁷⁰ The war itself was a quick affair with consistent Japanese success, but its significance in history was perceived on a monumental scale; for both Japan and the world. In Japan the written press awoke a fiery patriotism within the public. As newspapers increasingly reported Japanese victories against China, the public mood began to shift towards a new found admiration and away from criticism of the new government system.

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⁶⁹ Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism*, 48.

⁷⁰ Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 204.

⁷¹ Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism*, 48.

⁷² Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 204.

⁷³ Duus, *Modern Japan*, 142-143.

press awoke a fiery patriotism within the public. As newspapers increasingly reported Japanese victories against China, the public mood began to shift towards a new found admiration for Japan on a nationalist's level and away from criticism of the new political system. "Editors' [committed] to providing [Japanese citizens] with every imaginable detail about the war effort, both home and abroad."⁷⁴ Journalists paved the way towards a stronger relationship between the Meiji leaders and the Japanese citizens in which the public felt they could place unwavering loyalty into the new emperor-system. The year 1895 marked a new dawn in history as Japan debuted itself to be not only a legitimate global power, but also the most singular powerful nation state in East Asia.

⁷⁴ Huffman, *Creating A Public*, 209.

Chapter Two: Japan as a Global Power

Over the course of the next forty years, roughly from 1894 to 1945, Japan's continuous success on the world stage made the imperial nation a legitimate power in the eyes of other established empires. The Meiji oligarchs had prepared Japan thoroughly to adapt to the necessary changes that modernity brought, since the beginnings of the Meiji period. It would be a new generation of men, who were produced by a Japan now educated in and inspired by Western ideologies, who would go on to turn Japan into an imperialistic state, by the early twentieth century. In setting out to ensure political dominance over their East Asian neighbors, these new government leaders would see to it that Japan remained focused on its national 'destiny' to harmonize the East under the emperor. The following period of Taishō (1912-1926) saw attempts to spur a wave of democracy with the government splitting into separate political groups; one side favored the clique government rule of the oligarchs, while the other side was comprised of anti-bureaucratic men who wanted a more participatory government.⁷⁵ By the time of the Taisho emperor's death on December 25, 1926, politics in Japan were in the process of shifting towards the right-winged extremists; inspired by the Imperial Army who called for "national unity" and desired to instill across Asia a more pure *kokutai* (Japan, and in extension the rest of Asia, should be united under the emperor), on behalf of the emperor. The dedication of the Imperial Army reignited absolute devotion to nation and emperor worship. The circulation of perpetual victorious news evoked feelings of ultra-nationalism from the mass public. In this chapter I will argue the crucial roles of the written press and the Imperial army and how their influence brought the public to believe Japan's national mission of creating a Pan Asia was a righteous cause.

⁷⁵ Peter Duus, *Modern Japan*, Second edition ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 172.

The Rise of the Press and War Propaganda

When the vastly smaller Japanese Empire defeated the mighty Chinese dynasty (Sino-Japanese war 1894-1895) in their own domain, winning dominance over the Korean peninsula, the existing balance of power shifted and Japan emerged as the single most powerful nation in East Asia at the end of the nineteenth century. America and Great Britain welcomed Japan onto the world stage as a modernized nation, but other European powers like Russia, France and Germany hesitated to view this dramatic change with a favorable attitude due to their investments already established in China; Japan's newfound authority threatened to destabilize European economic, industrial and territorial acquired benefits. In May 1895, Russia, supported by France and Germany, pressured Japan into returning the Liaodong Peninsula (Port Arthur) to China in order to further their own industrial expansion of trans-railway systems which would provide easy travel between Russia and China.⁷⁶ On the home front in Japan, the public's primary source of information, about their nation's progress abroad, came from newspapers and magazines. The lack direct communication between the Meiji government and Japanese citizens gave rise to a new voice of the press, one that spoke on behalf of the new imperial Japan; the news media developed a strong sense of self-importance and took it upon themselves to nurture deep rooted nationalistic pride within the public.⁷⁷

Since the start of the first Sino-Japanese war in 1894, the rise of high circulation news media spread across Japan as war reports of Japan's success were delivered regularly to every

⁷⁶ Duus, *Modern Japan*, 143.

⁷⁷ James L. Huffman, *Creating a Public: People and Press in Meiji Japan* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), 273.

citizen. The Meiji oligarchs revealed very little of their affairs to the public once they had established their new regime; instead their focus in communication with the public was placed on creating model citizens through use of the emperor system.⁷⁸ Japan's first modern war, with China, opened a door for print media which evolved rapidly during the Meiji period from "a tool of the authorities into an independent medium of public discussion...out of the rumblings of internal strife...came the stirrings of civil society"⁷⁹ A war fever erupted and sparked a rivalry among newspapers to see who could deliver news to the public fastest. When war with Russia broke out in 1905 on the Korea-Manchuria border, frequent updates of reports from the battlefield built up extreme enthusiasm from the public and in turn all of Japan became immersed in the oligarch's imperial jingoism.

The Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905 solidified a newly modern sense of nationalism, uniting the public and influencing them to put wholehearted faith into the new ideologies of emperor worship that the Meiji oligarchs created. Prior victory in China demonstrated to the public that "the emperor was not only a constitutional monarch but the country's paramount military leader."⁸⁰ In this way, war became a national affair as the mass media broadcasted select information and news, usually articles that highlighted Japan's triumphs. In early 1905, the Japanese Army expressed great concern to its government over the amount of casualties that were sacrificed in order to secure victories against Russia; 56,000 casualties occurred to win back Port Arthur; by the end of the year long war, Japan had mobilized around 1.1 million men and lost a total of 118,000 men.⁸¹ Huffman comments on the one-sided nature the mass media had towards broadcasting information; newspapers actively chose to stay silent about Japan's

⁷⁸ Duus, *Modern Japan*, 147.

⁷⁹ Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 68-69.

⁸⁰ Duus, *Modern Japan*, 146-147.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 145-146.

losses and ignored the crimes committed in Korea by the Japanese army. Huffman also discusses the reality of Japanese casualties which the Meiji officials and the press ambiguously informed the public.⁸² “For those at home the [Russo-Japanese War] consisted solely of a string of costly...smashing and exhilarating victories, glorious confirmation that the more modest triumphs of the earlier war with China were not a fluke...Japan had become a power worthy of the name imperialist.”⁸³ This kind of expectancy of success would leave Japan unprepared to handle news of total devastating defeat nearly forty years later, something I will go into depth later in this chapter.

The mass media took on a newly active character with editorials increasingly oriented around an acute conception of Japan’s “righteous” mission entailed nation centered beliefs that “fostered unity.”⁸⁴ Expansionist journalists pushed for Japan to engage in aggressive foreign policies under the pretense of protecting the national interests of Japan. When Japan was on the verge of war with Russia, newspaper headlines without official authorization spoke to the public about Japan’s civic duty to go to war. By publishing “endless successions of emotional, patriotic stories” concerning their nation’s “right to insist on massive Russian concession,” mass media strongly influenced public opinion and in turn pressure was placed on Meiji officials to pursue hasty warfare; victories over China and Russia signified to the public that the invented emperor system was not only a legitimate political system, but also to support a culture of imperial lifestyle.⁸⁵

Newspapers therefore had complete control over public knowledge and as a result orchestrated the development of nationalist organizations such as the prominent and popular

⁸² Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 308-309.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 276-277.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 272.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 308-309.

Black Dragon Society (*kokuryûkai*) which declared its manifesto to be “The urgent duty of Japan was to fight Russia...and then to lay the foundation for a grand continental enterprise taking Manchuria, Mongolia and Siberia as one region.”⁸⁶ Duus observes the way both the Sino-Japanese war and Russo-Japanese war promoted imperial culture and added a new perception to being ‘Japanese’, “Being a child of the emperor involved more than paying taxes [and] obeying the law.”⁸⁷ Besides forming nationalist organizations, citizens found alternative ways to participate in the war from home, which added to the image of Japanese imperialism. “Communities subscribed to war bonds, villagers gathered food for troops...teachers taught their pupils that Japan’s cause was ‘righteous,’ and [then] students marched off to local shrines to pray.”⁸⁸

The ‘cause of Japan’ transcended the social hierarchy and infiltrated all aspects of domestic businesses. When word spread that Japan had defeated a modern power in Russia, not only were celebrations thrown in the emperor’s honor, but consumer products increasingly displayed Japan’s distinct national flag of the rising sun. Japanese citizens-having been conditioned by the mass media-were overwhelmed with patriotic love for their country’s victory.⁸⁹ For example, for Ubukata Toshirō, a student who followed the newspaper, reading about Japan’s triumph in one battle evoked feelings of “excitement”; “he felt warm and could no longer sit calmly at home”; Ubukata went to go find his friends who also shared the same passionate emotions after reading the newspaper.⁹⁰ Another example recorded by Huffman was of a man named Seizō who, on his deathbed in his village, would not let go of the newspaper and

⁸⁶ W. G. Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism, 1894-1945* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1972), 78-79.

⁸⁷ Duus, *Modern Japan*, 147-148.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 147-148.

⁸⁹ Duus, *Modern Japan*, 147.

⁹⁰ Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 278-279.

clutched it tightly to his chest.⁹¹ Duus states that by the time of the Russo-Japanese War, the once commoners of Japan now turned dutiful citizens had become more imperialistic than the Meiji oligarchs.⁹² This can be said due to how the mass media had successfully acquired loyal readership from almost all of Japan; their audience ranged from ordinary citizens in secluded villages to the elite leaders in the government. Lack of official communication from the Meiji oligarchs regarding their hardships during both wars left the public vulnerable to biased editorials from pro-expansionist journalists which naturally resulted in the public fully believing in a skewed reality of Japan.

Being strongly influenced by newspaper pro-war propaganda, it was no wonder that the public felt betrayed and outraged when the Meiji oligarchs were unable to consistently deliver results. One incident in particular that caused riots was the terms of the Portsmouth Treaty in which “Japan failed to secure greater concessions from the Russians.”⁹³ Sydney Giffard, a British diplomat, remarks that these violent attacks on authority figures in Tokyo represented the public’s “resentment that sacrifices, not only in the war but also in the construction of the modern state, [was] so inadequately rewarded.”⁹⁴ This ‘failure’ was interpreted as a sign of weakness that threatened to hinder Japan’s national “mission” which was to “protect the ‘backward’ nations of Asia and help them towards independence and self-government.”⁹⁵ But overall victory over both Russia and China undeniably meant to the citizens of Japan that their clearly superior nation should be allowed to assume the position as leader in Asia as it had also just won new colonial territories: Taiwan, southern Sakhalin, Korea, the Kwantung territories in

⁹¹ Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 147-148.

⁹² Duus, *Modern Japan*, 148-149.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 148-149.

⁹⁴ Sydney Giffard, *Japan Among The Powers, 1890-1990* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 33.

⁹⁵ Duus, *Modern Japan*, 148.

China; and the South Manchuria Railway zone.⁹⁶ To the rest of Asia, Japanese victory specifically against Russia signified that Western nations were no longer invincible entities.

The Fight for the Korean Peninsula

If Manchuria becomes property of Russia, Korea itself cannot remain independent.

Foreign Minister
Komura Jutarō (1901)⁹⁷

1905, the Portsmouth Treaty (mediated by U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt) granted Japan the formal right to ‘protect’ its interests in Korea; the peninsula was to become a product of “enlightened exploitation” in other words as a Japanese protectorate.⁹⁸ In other words, the rest of the world officially recognized Korea as ‘belonging’ to Japan and any desire to engage in foreign business would have to be authorized by imperial Japan. “According to international law, without Japan, Korea no longer existed in relation to the rest of the world.”⁹⁹ The newspapers framed this outcome as a necessary action because Korea was a place of “backwardness, corruption and [in] need for civilized leadership.”¹⁰⁰ By 1907, Japan had assumed total control over Korea’s judicial system with full intentions to use their sphere of influence to redesign the Korean legal code. “According to the logic of colonization, Japan’s Korea could be declared legal like Japan, a place the Powers could determine to be ‘civilized’.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Duus, *Modern Japan*., 200.

⁹⁷ Beasley *Japanese Imperialism*, 77.

⁹⁸ Alexis Dudden, *Japan’s Colonization of Korea: Discourse and Power* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005), 7.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁰⁰ Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 338.

¹⁰¹ Dudden, *Japan’s Colonization of Korea*, 110.

Liberating Korea from both China and Russia in order to ‘protect’ Korean independence was all but a faded political statement said only to further the Meiji oligarchs’ own agenda for Japan. The *Ōsaka Asahi* wrote: “The purpose for which a country has a colony is not for the interests of the inhabitants of the colony but for the interest of the mother country.”¹⁰² For Japan, Korea not only served as proof of legitimate political power on the world stage, but also supplemented the carefully constructed ideology of *tennōsei* (the emperor system). The Meiji oligarchs wished to establish an agricultural base, but their plan to send Japanese farmers to Korea ended unsuccessfully. Instead, the lower middle class of Japan found great economic prosperity and opportunities in migrating to the newly colonized territories. For example, in resettling to other parts of Asia “jobs were created for policemen, mailmen, technicians, clerks, as well as small commerce businesses.”¹⁰³ More importantly, the Japanese emigrants were introduced to living as a privileged class. “[The Japanese] enjoyed higher living standards, higher wages, and better access to schools, hospitals, and other social amenities than the indigenous population.”¹⁰⁴

It came as no surprise that when Korea attempted to resist Japanese encroachment violent repercussions ensued to ensure that imperial Japan remained in total control; there was to be absolutely no compromise or cooperation to be exchanged with the nation state that supposedly advocated for Korean independence. Sydney Giffard comments on how increasing Korean resistance only fueled determination of officials in Tokyo who “considered the complete subordination of Korea [as] an essential Japanese interest.”¹⁰⁵ The Meiji oligarchs intended to

¹⁰² Dudden, *Japan’s Colonization of Korea*, 338.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 201.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 202.

¹⁰⁵ Giffard, *Japan Among The Powers*, 34.

turn “Koreans into full-fledged ‘children of the emperor’ through a policy of ‘assimilation’.”¹⁰⁶ Koreans were then recast as people who had the “same origins and same ancestors” as the Japanese and that because both nations seemingly also shared the same culture it was only natural that Korea should become an extension of Japan’s *kokutai* (being ‘Japanese,’) ¹⁰⁷ By this ideology, the Meiji oligarchs were able to politically justify (to the rest of the world) the annexation of Korea in 1910.

Two events in particular can be said to have secured Japanese control over the Korean peninsula. First, the secret envoy to the Hague peace conference in the Netherlands (1907) carried out by Korean resistance who pleaded for “international declaration of Korean independence.” ¹⁰⁸ Not only was this mission unsuccessful, but the Katsura Cabinet viewed it to be embarrassing on Japan’s behalf. As a result, by June of that year, Itō Hirobumi now the Resident-General of Korea (an invented position that validated Japanese authority) forcefully insisted that the current Korean emperor, Gojong, to step down in favor of his son, Sunjong. “The Korean government was [forced] to accept...Japanese [officials] into [their] administration as chief secretary to the cabinet, chief of the Home Ministry police bureau, vice-ministers of departments, and judge.”¹⁰⁹ This unwelcome change in administration led to frequent attacks on Japanese civilians as a form of patriotic protest by Koreans. Foreign Minister Komura Jutarō condemned these attacks to be a result of a lack of firmly established Japanese power in Korea. His solution was to urge the cabinet to quickly annex Korea at Japan’s first suitable moment. ¹¹⁰

The second event that swiftly brought about the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty (August 22,

¹⁰⁶ Duus, *Modern Japan*, 203.

¹⁰⁷ Kevin Doak defines *kokutai* to be an ideology that highlights the Emperor as the rightful ruler and to recognize that the place where the sun rises is to be considered the divine land which in essence is Japan. (Doak, 55)

¹⁰⁸ Yong-ch’ul Ha Lee, and Sorensen W. Clark, *Colonial Rule and Social Change in Korea, 1910-1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013), 218. And Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism*, 88.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* 88.

¹¹⁰ Duus, *Modern Japan*, 140-142.

1910) was the assassination of Itō Hirobumi on October 26, 1909 by a Korean nationalist, An Jung-geun, in Harbin, China. Now, Imperial Japan had successfully expanded its modernized political regime to reign over a neighboring territory and proved again to the other world powers their legitimacy as a small global power.

The Fight for Expansion in East Asia

For the relatively new empire of Japan, the Russian occupation in Manchuria since 1900 had long been considered a problem; the majority of Japanese leaders interpreted Russian presence as a threat that could potentially destabilize Japanese national polity. Foreign Minister Komura argued that Japan “would never enjoy security in Korea,” and “Russia [would] create a sphere of influence which would exclude ‘all foreign enterprises and ventures other than [its] own.’”¹¹¹¹¹² The longer Russia retained its sphere of influence in Manchuria, the wearier Japan became of Russia’s intentions, especially with their Eurasian and Manchurian railways. Therefore it became essential to dilute as best as possible Russia’s hold on Manchuria; the annexation of Korea was one solution. The protégés of the oligarchs saw fit to approach the Manchurian problem with swift military action that would lead to eighteen months of violent bloodshed with Russia that granted victory at the cost of necessary human resources and financial means needed to fuel further Japanese imperialism. Japan settled in their secret treaty with Russia for a secured sphere of influence in the southern hemisphere of Manchuria (Russia maintained the northern hemisphere) while accommodating the already established “Open Door”

¹¹¹ Yoshihisa Tak. Matsusaka, *The Making of Japanese Manchuria, 1904-1932* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 32.

¹¹² Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism*, 79.

policy in China.¹¹³ The question now was not what Imperial Japan should do next, but how to continue the national cause of bringing the Japanese to the green pastures of civilization and power.

The Meiji oligarchs had set a Westernized political regime into motion with the development of Japan's first Constitution in 1889. The *kintei kenpō* (constitution granted by the emperor) "belonged, if to anyone, to the oligarchs who had controlled its drafting and hoped to control its operations."¹¹⁴ The oligarchs were elevated to the official status of *genrō*, elder statesmen, and while their opinions on political actions still held absolute authority, there was a growing restlessness with oligarch clique ruling; they were unwilling to share their power with "popularly elected representatives."¹¹⁵ The transition from the Meiji period (1868-1912) into the Taishō period (1912-1926) brought around a political turnover in Japan, centered around the symbolic representation of the Constitution, a clash between the "clique government" and "constitutional government."¹¹⁶ The clique government represented past political ideology invented by the oligarchs and their protégés while the constitutional government encompassed a more democratic system supported by an anti-bureaucratic public; the House of Representatives from the branch of legislation. The mass media, having established their role to be the voice of mainstream public opinions, weighed in heavily on the rising dispute of constitutionalism. Huffman states that the written press focused on "representing popular moods" and the more popular newspapers highlighted public opinion, a voice that could not be extinguished.¹¹⁷ One

¹¹³ The Open Door policy was a compromise drafted by the United States' Secretary of State John Hay in 1899 in order to protect the port treaty system in China. Powers promised not to use their spheres of influence in China to hinder each other's' business transactions. (Beasley, 71).

¹¹⁴ Carol Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), 229..

¹¹⁵ Duus, *Modern Japan*, 172.

¹¹⁶ Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, 228.

¹¹⁷ Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 356.

significant repercussion from the political standoff was the Japanese military manifested into an independent faction and would come to hold significant command over the government during the 1930's up until Japan's defeat in 1945.

In October 1911 revolution broke out in China that threatened the security of Japan's achievements in Manchuria. "The Qing dynasty, which guaranteed Japan's treaty rights and its foothold in Manchuria, had been easy to deal with [for Japan], but its fall from power introduced new uncertainties."¹¹⁸ Tanaka Giichi, a general in the Japanese Imperial Army, and Yamagata Aritomo viewed this outbreak to be beneficial to Japan as it was "a golden opportunity"¹¹⁹; while China fought with itself, the Japanese army hoped to take Manchuria completely, but also planned for further continental expansion. And while the Japanese politicians divided themselves to support either the Qing dynasty or the revolutionaries, the general consensus on China's revolution hoped that the end result would produce a "China friendly to Japan."¹²⁰ In other words, a China that would essentially permit Japan to do as it pleased.

When World War I erupted three years later in 1914, Japan would take control of German occupied territories; from the Japanese perspective this expansion was viewed as a strategic success, but from a historical hindsight was not a wise move for the Japanese Empire.

"Committed imperialists would have to develop new ways of justifying an expansionist course to their fellow Japanese, many of whom were losing their "appetite for empire."¹²¹ For example, the Ministry of Education, along with the army, attempted to counteract this waning civil morality by building up schools to serve as a primary source of various ideologies pertaining to the foundations of civil duty and the national mission, in essence different aspects of the emperor

¹¹⁸ Duus, *Modern Japan*, 204.

¹¹⁹ Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, 229.

¹²⁰ Duus, *Modern Japan*, 204.

¹²¹ Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, 228.

system. Schoolteachers were entrusted to become their local community's "pillar of ideological dissemination" and saw their profession of teaching as a mission.¹²² At the same time though, Japan took full advantage of the vacancy in European presence in East Asia to usurp more power and expand itself further. "While European powers wasted their resources and millions of young men on war, the Japanese built ships, exported textiles, made industrial machines, and railway rolling stock."¹²³ World War I was a very profitable period for Japan, but its overwhelming thirst for expansion overall caused the global power to damage relationships with Britain and the United States; too many Japanese lives were sacrificed in order to ensure a complete victory in various military strategies, a recurring theme that plagued their imperialistic schemes.

The Twenty-One Demands that were delivered by Japan to the Republic of China in 1915, were a political ploy that aimed to dominate Manchuria and the Chinese economy, are a prime example of nearsighted agenda that did not fully consider the possible consequences, such as a considerable Chinese backlash towards Japan or that Japan would lose favor with its ally, Great Britain. After the Japanese commandeered German spheres of influence in Qingdao and the Shandong province, they proceeded to try and turn China into a puppet state of Japan; by drafting unreasonable demands such as appointing Japanese advisors in key government agencies, they intended to only favor themselves and deny foreign powers from receiving aid if necessary.¹²⁴ Matsusaka Yoshihisa, professor of Japanese Imperialism, notes two important results, the first being that the Twenty-One Demands aroused suspicion from Britain and America and the two Western powers would keep a very watchful eye on Japan. The second,

¹²² Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, 152.

¹²³ Ian Buruma, *Inventing Japan, 1853-1964*, (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 65.

¹²⁴ Duus, *Modern Japan*, 205.

more important, result was what Japan actually gained from their aggressive strategy¹²⁵; the right to lease land in Manchuria for 99 years on a renewable basis. By doing so, Japanese emigrants would have full immunity from the Chinese judicial system. “These arrangements implied the establishment...of a dual system of law and administration in Manchuria, one for Japanese, the other for Chinese.”¹²⁶ In this way, the foundations for Manchukuo, a future Japanese region, were set in place.

1920-1940: Military Propaganda for Manchuria

One shortcoming of the imperial project in the Taishō Period was that its political leaders were unable to instill the same level of passion and love for the Taishō emperor as the oligarchs had engineered for the Meiji emperor. The ‘Japan’ that the Meiji oligarchs, former samurai discontent with their leaders of the Tokugawa Period, had envisioned and then manufactured was distorted in the democracy of the Taishō regime. Ian Buruma details, “The Taishō emperor, Yoshihito, a feeble-witted man, inspired none of the awe enjoyed by his father [Meiji emperor], even as a symbolic figure.”¹²⁷ Therefore his son, Hirohito, was forced to become his regent in 1926 which brought Japan into the Showa era, the period of a “bright” Japan that would last until his death in 1989. The pre-World War II period saw the rise of a politically totalitarian agenda in which *tennōsei* ideology, the ultra-nationalistic sense of being, was reaffirmed into the hearts of all Japanese citizens. The will of Emperor Hirohito became the will of the people and everything done was done for the sole sake of the emperor, a living god.

¹²⁵ The Twenty-One Demands ultimately was settled to become thirteen (Duus, 205)

¹²⁶ Yoshihisa Tak. Matsusaka, *The Making of Japanese Manchuria, 1904-1932*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 190.

¹²⁷ Buruma, *Inventing Japan*, 65.

When Emperor Hirohito ascended the throne on December 25, 1926, Japan was in the midst of an economic depression. World War I had accelerated Japan's industrial production, shifting gears from agricultural labor to white collar office work and blue collared factory labor. Japan concentrated its attention on industries such as mass shipbuilding to export to their Western allies to drive rapid growth of domestic economy. But this business investment was only profitable as long as there was war. "The government leadership failed to institute adequate measures to adjust the economy after World War I."¹²⁸ In fact, the entire duration of the 1920's faced terrible hardships with a significant decline in the agricultural workforce and blatant political corruption.¹²⁹ Masataka Kosaka describes the corruption as "unabashed pork barreling" with political parties only drafting temporary solutions that were made for immediate action and did not include any sort of long term plan.¹³⁰ The combination of economic stagnation and unscrupulous politics resulted in a gradual gap of prosperity between rural and urban areas of Japan as well as extreme indignation from the rural class who were forced to live in impoverished areas. This resentment did not go unnoticed by the military, who valued the rural areas because they consistently provided human and material resources.

The onset of the economic depression in the 1920s cast Japan's once clear future of global eminence into murky waters of uncertainty and anxiety. Rising national debt halted all official plans to expand across the continent and with corrupt politicians focused on remaining in power, the public was slowly losing their conviction in the imperial cultivated lifestyle.¹³¹ The Meiji oligarchs had oriented their political crusade to restore the imperial monarchy and bring about a completely modernized nation state that far exceeded the achievements of the Western

¹²⁸ Carol Gluck and Stephen Richards, Graubard, *Showa: The Japan of Hirohito*, (New York: Norton, 1992), 29.

¹²⁹ By 1929, agricultural contribution to the GDP was only 19.7 percent whereas ten years it was 26.8 percent. Gluck and Richards, 3.

¹³⁰ Gluck and Richards, *Showa*, 31.

¹³¹ Duus, *Modern Japan*, 180.

powers. Emperor Hirohito, to ensure continued national wealth, envisaged a Japan where the military and their achievements would “enhance the grandeur of the empire.”¹³² Under the emperor’s imperial rescripts, the military was granted a privileged status which enabled them to better cultivate power and eventually allow them to take control of the government. The military from the 1930’s until 1945 would aim to restore the so called slippery term *kokutai*, “Japanese spirit”¹³³, the core of *tennōsei*. By re-institutionalizing teachings on emperor worship and the essence of being ‘Japanese’ in school systems. Duus reports in his findings on right wing conservatives, “elementary instruction put new stress on the idea of the emperor as a ‘living god’ and the country as a ‘divine land’” while government officials began to crack down on “dangerous thought” like democracy and individualism.¹³⁴

The Washington Naval Treaty of 1921 declared a limitation on naval construction which was interpreted by the Imperial Army that there needed to be an increase in Japanese national defense. From the military perspective, the higher officials within the Imperial Army felt that the only means of protecting the homeland was to confront the United States via naval exchange in the Pacific.¹³⁵ This was only the beginning of imperial scheming under the pretext of necessity to increase national defense. The Washington Conference not only restricted naval expansion, but also caused concern among the Japanese at the lack of proper global acknowledgment of their stake in Manchuria. Military propaganda gripped the nation, after the Japanese Army expanded further into Manchuria, convincing the mass public to believe in and support the cause that Japan’s only means of survival (through its economic slump) was to expand across the continent;

¹³² Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2000), 172.

¹³³ Duus, *Modern Japan*, 215.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 215.

¹³⁵ Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, 205.

Manchuria was recast as an “economic ‘lifeline’ ...rich in land, resources and opportunity.”¹³⁶ For the national cause of self-preservation, an intense war fever broke out at the beginning of the 1930s just in time to support the new surge of imperial jingoism that led to a series of aggressive military attacks in China and eventually Japan’s defeat at the hands of the United States in 1945 . On September 18, 1931, an explosion occurred near the tracks of Japan’s South Manchurian Railway. This event came to be remembered as the “Manchurian Incident” in which the Imperial Army (Kwantung Army) falsely staged an attack on themselves in order to further invade China. The Osaka *Asahi* reported:

“...in an act of outrageous violence [*bōgyaku*], Chinese soldiers blew up a section of Mantetsu track located to the northwest of Beitaying [Military Base] and attacked our railway guards. Our guards immediately returned fire and mobilized artillery to shell Beitaying. Our forces now occupy a section of the base.”¹³⁷

Before the Imperial Monarchy could contain the plans of the Imperial Army, the Kwantung Army had already mobilized their units to advance past the territorial limitations arranged in the treaty of Portsmouth. It is worth mentioning that the emperor had not approved of this plan nor did he know it was going to happen until after the fact; the Imperial government considered the attack to be a form of insubordination. “[Hirohito] was not seriously opposed to seeing his army expand his empire. If that involved a brief usurpation of his authority, so be it- so long as the operation was successful.”¹³⁸ On the looming battlefield, the Kwantung Army had declared that “all Chinese soldiers were bandits, and all bandits Chinese soldiers”¹³⁹ and therefore was obligated to ‘secure’ Manchuria using as much force as deemed necessary. With only five

¹³⁶ Duus, Peter. "Militarism and War." In *Modern Japan*, 215. Second Edition ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998.

¹³⁷ Young, Louise, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 57-58.

¹³⁸ Bix, *Hirohito*, 240.

¹³⁹ Buruma, *Inventing Japan*, 89.

hundred Japanese troops, the Imperial Army managed to overwhelm a Chinese unit of seven thousand. Within five days, Japanese forces succeeded in occupying around five different cities of Northern China. The Imperial Japanese central government was taken aback by their Army's insubordination, but immediately sent back up infantry divisions to support Japan's victories. For the first time, Japan had struck fear into the Western powers as a very real potential future threat; where the Western world had once been impressed by Japan's swiftness to modernize itself, now looked at the empire with contempt and distrust as Japan continued, unchecked, on its bloody path into China.

A mere six months later in 1932, the Imperial Army established a puppet regime under the name Manchukuo that they would make their primary base of operation for future plans concerning China. Not only did the world powers refuse to acknowledge Japan's authority over Manchuria, but they also recommended, during a conference at the League of Nations, that Japan withdraw its troops and return the territory back to China. This passive-aggressive attempt to pacify East Asia caused Japan to withdraw from the League of Nations in 1933 and return to a state of isolation. The consensus of the world powers at the League of Nations was conveyed implicitly through the Lytton Report that confirmed in the minds of the Japanese that the Western powers did not want Japan to be its equal.¹⁴⁰

The Manchurian Incident accelerated the end to the Open Door policy that had been in effect since 1889 and served as a catalyst for change in domestic politics. During the time the League of Nations spent trying to handle the China situation, the Imperial Japanese Army had managed to chase out the Soviet Union from northern Manchuria; as a peace offering to avoid conflict, the Soviet Union handed over their rights to the Chinese Eastern Railroad. While the

¹⁴⁰ Saburō Ienaga, *The Pacific War, 1931-1945: A Critical Perspective on Japan's Role in World War II* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 66.

military organized themselves to combat Chinese resistance, the mass public began to organize themselves into radical right-wing fascist groups that fully supported the military's strict interpretation of *kokutai*. This is not to say that all of Japan turned into advocates for the right-wing national *kokutai* propaganda. Duus reports that between the years 1932 and 1936, membership to the "patriotic associations, national socialist political parties, and crank right-wing study groups" doubled in size from 300,000 to 600,000.¹⁴¹ The Special Higher Police, activated in 1911 to control political groups and 'dangerous' thinking, favored the efforts of the radical right-wing, which placed emphasis on the emperor's sacredness, by constantly badgering members of left-wing. "Japan's imperial madness was fueled by mass entertainment and the popular press...the Jazz age was replaced by marching songs [such as] 'The Imperial Army Marches Off,' or 'Military Spy Song,' or 'Ah, Our Manchuria.'"¹⁴² Such a romanticized sense of nationalism from the mass media exaggerated, to the public, the significance of Manchuria's role as a 'lifeline' for Japan; this continuous idealized theme of ultra-nationalistic styled media would come to negatively impact Japan when Emperor Hirohito would announce to the Japanese people, over the radio, Japan's unconditional surrender on August 15, 1945.

Until 1945, the Imperial Army continued to experience great success as a military force; their success represented the culmination of Japan's (and by extension the emperor's) ultra-nationalistic sense of self in East Asia. Under a Pan-Asia ideology, the military sought out to unite their acquired territories, which consisted of Manchuria, Korea and Taiwan, under the emperor as the other Asian states were considered to be already the emperor's subjects. Shinichi Kitaoka, a former ambassador to the United Nations and a historian, cites 1933 Japanese foreign

¹⁴¹ Duus, *Modern Japan*, 216.

¹⁴² Buruma, *Inventing Japan, 1853-1964*, 93.

policy (shown below) that encompassed an attempt at, but ultimately ended unsuccessfully in creating a Pan-Asian world.

“Under the leadership of the Japanese Empire, a relationship of alliance and cooperation should be formed among Japan, Manchukuo, and China, so as to secure permanent peace in the East and contribute to promotion of world peace.”¹⁴³

The height of the Imperial Army’s brutality would manifest itself as the beginning of the second Sino-Japanese War in 1937; known historically as the Marco Polo bridge Incident, but formally referred to as the China Incident by the Japanese. This day in history marked official exchange between Japan and China that would last until Japan’s surrender to the West. The China Incident, subsequently followed by the Nanking Massacre towards the end of the year, revealed to the world powers the extent to which Japan would go to in order to protect its foreign interests.

While Japan claimed to be acting for the cause of self-preservation against Western imperialism, it is quite clear that Japan had become greedy and whose imperial appetite knew no bounds; the thrill of conquering and victories had Japan lusting for more and more of China, which would be its downfall as Japan expended an excess amount of resources to secure each victory.

¹⁴³ Gluck, Carol, and Stephen Richards. Graubard. *Showa: The Japan of Hirohito*, 163. New York: Norton, 1992.

Chapter Three: A Democratized Postwar Japan

Japan, towards the end of the 1930s was at the height of its military power and would continue to pillage and defile China until 1945, justifying its brutality with the cause of a Pan-Asian sphere free from Western authority. As Japan invaded further into Manchuria, national policy was continuously modified in its wake because the invaded areas of Manchuria were politically considered to be Japanese; this prevented foreign nations from interfering.¹⁴⁴ The United States viewed Japan with contempt but was unable to act accordingly because its own foreign policy did not allow the western superpower to intervene with another nation's affairs. Only when the Imperial Army wrought the devastation of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 was the United States finally able to act and counter Japanese radicalism in East Asia. At the Potsdam Conference (August 2, 1945), prior to Japan's eventual surrender, President Harry Truman of the United States and Prime Minister Clement Atlee of Britain cautioned the Japanese government to "surrender unconditionally or face 'utter destruction'."¹⁴⁵ But Prime Minister Suzuki had believed that in accepting the terms of the proclamation, Japanese imperial sovereignty would be in jeopardy and therefore 'silently ignored' the Potsdam Declaration.¹⁴⁶ At the same time, even with no clear sign of absolute victory, the Imperial army refuted the notion of a peaceful compromise with the West; the Japanese troops had invested over a decade's worth of expansion efforts in Manchuria all for the sake of the emperor and Japanese national pride. Dropping a nuclear bomb on the Japanese cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 (August 6 and 9, respectively) destroyed hundreds of thousands of lives. Following Japan's unconditional surrender, the Japanese empire was immediately brought to an end as the Allied Occupation

¹⁴⁴ W. G. Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism, 1894-1945* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1972), 236.

¹⁴⁵ Peter Duus, *Modern Japan*, Second edition ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 245.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 245.

from 1945 to 1952 demanded Japan be demilitarized and democratized. Japan would not be welcomed back into the international community until they had proved themselves to be a civil, democratic, society. But even then, controversy would arise on whether or not the emperor should be held accountable for his role in the war. Quickly, Emperor Hirohito faded from the public's eye while his son, the Crown Prince Akihito, became the new face of a post-war modernized Japan. The mass public flourished in the economic booms of the 1960's, particularly the middle class, as they migrated away from emperor-centric ideology and learned to indulge in luxuries for themselves. It was not until the death of the emperor in 1889 that Japan became one again as war time memories resurfaced and the public remembered Emperor Hirohito's sovereignty as a sacred entity. In this chapter, I will explore the image of the emperor and the conflicting moralities of the emperor system in terms of internal and external values in postwar Japan, leading up to the war and then subsequently everything that followed and attempt to demonstrate the paradoxical reality of *tennōsei* ideology; in indoctrinating state orthodoxy that made internal values (i.e truth, justice) rely on national values, it was impossible for the mass public to perceive Japan's radical war actions to be anything but righteous.

The Road to Defeat

Before I begin to discuss the reality of postwar Japan that was a direct product of the emperor system, I will explore the years 1940 to 1945 and focus on how *tennōsei* ideology influenced Japan's totalitarian aggression across the continent as well as convince the nation the actions of the Imperial Army were justifiable:

“The countries of East Asia and the regions of the South Seas are geographically close, historically, racially, and economically very closely related to each other. They are destined to cooperate and minister to one another’s need for their common well-being and prosperity, and to promote peace and progress in their regions.”¹⁴⁷

This speech delivered by Foreign Minister Arita Hachirō in 1940 introduced Imperial Japan’s latest scheme to justify further expansion across the continent; expansion now included European occupied territories such as French Indochina and the Dutch East Indies. The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was intended to unite regions of South and East Asia and create a “self-sufficient economic bloc.”¹⁴⁸ This economic sphere would, of course, be led by the Japanese who planned to liberate the territories from “imperialistic, exploitative control”, in other words Western occupation.¹⁴⁹

What was conveniently omitted in this imperialistic propaganda was that the invaded nations were expected to understand their “proper role” in the Sphere while at the same time in order to facilitate ‘co-prosperity’, it was imperative the Imperial army and naval could establish bases of operation; which would entail nations to “recognize Japan’s real power.”¹⁵⁰ By January 1942, Prime Minister Hideki Tōjō had qualified the plan to the House of Peers, as such: “The object [is] to create ‘an order of coexistence and co-prosperity based on ethical principles with Japan serving as its nucleus,’ [With the exception] of areas which were ‘absolutely essential for the defence of Greater East Asia’ would be held under Japanese rule.”¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Duus, *Modern Japan*, 233

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism*, 233.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 234.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 235.

This new wave of Japanese foreign policy contradicted its ostensible goal of promoting a unified Asia in that the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere on one hand proposed an ideal community filled with mutual rewards, but on the other hand was clearly designed with Japan's self-interest in mind; it was impossible to achieve true co-prosperity. This plan ultimately aimed to build a new empire under Japanese rule, while also securing Japan's survival and place on the world stage as a legitimate global power.

Simultaneously, the Japanese government had also signed the Axis Pact, which politically aligned Japan with Germany and Italy for the remainder of World War II; this decision was meant to deter the United States from inserting itself into either the European war or Sino-Japanese affairs. The Axis treaty ensured Japan's fated clash with the United States which wrought the devastation of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 and subsequent American retaliation on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. The continuous escalation of military aggression in China only pushed the Western powers, the United States in particular, to further sympathize with the Chinese; the exact opposite of what Japan wanted.¹⁵²

The ways in which the Imperial Army enforced the teachings of *kokutai* (national polity) meant that if any government official was even to suggest the notion that Japan hold off its invasion of China in any capacity, it would be considered as dishonorable to the emperor. Duus cites the example of Takao Saitō, a member of the Constitutional Democratic party, who suggested to the Diet that Japan did not have the necessary means to defeat China at that time and was immediately expelled.¹⁵³ In other words, any attempt to defuse and or hold off on military operations, even if doing so would benefit the imperial mission later on, was met with national scorn. To withdraw troops from any occupied territory implied that the sacrifices made

¹⁵² Duus, *Modern Japan*, 233

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 231.

were done in vain; it was unacceptable; it just was not going to happen. In order to better understand the emphasis placed on upholding the teachings of *tennōsei ideorogii* (emperor ideology), I will explore briefly the ‘tunnel vision’ atmosphere which was a direct product of ultra-nationalistic mentality, in Mizuki Shigeru’s manga, *Onwards Towards Our Noble Deaths*. This manga gives us a rare example of insight into the ideologies of the Imperial Army from a Japanese point of view; in particular the manga illustrates the feelings of the conscripted Japanese troops who were deployed to the front of the battle zone. It demonstrates how emperor centered nationalism applies to the soldier’s self-consciousness in which he innately desires self-preservation.

The manga is set in 1943 and details the last few weeks of the author’s infantry service in Kokopo, New Britain in the South Pacific. In the manga, his unit is instructed by the General of the Imperial Army to die for their country instead of returning home alive; this meant soldiers only had two options: to die fighting the enemy or to take their own life if they survived the final attack in Rabaul. The Lieutenant-Colonel of the infantry, Tadokoro, is portrayed as a very serious man whose actions embody the ideals of *kokutai*; he upholds tradition, honor, and absolute fealty to the Empire. To contrast Tadokoro’s patriotic nature, the infantry is compiled of men who are less enthusiastic about being stationed on an island; they are often severely reprimanded for slacking off; and they sing along with the prostitutes, who are also stationed with them, the “Prostitute’s Lament” as they perform their military duties:

*I am a blossom that falls in the
red-light district.*

*Wilting in the day, blooming at
night.*

Can't hate nasty johns.

Forced smiles for smug pimps.

*Why am I stuck working this shitty
job.*

*No way out, all for my parents.*¹⁵⁴

The hierarchy and dissatisfaction of the infantry reveals the structure of the Imperial Army as a whole. The highest ranked officers fully understood Japan's imperial mission and believed it to be a righteous endeavor. Whereas the soldiers carried out their patriotic duties because national polity asserted that, for the sake of Emperor, going to war was a necessity. The "Prostitute's Lament" embodies the sorrows on the women who are trapped on the island and abused, but can also apply to the infantry's situation which is why the enlisted men sing along. The soldiers 'wilt in the day' because they must perform their military duties when all they want to do is eat good food and sleep, which takes place during night. The 'nasty johns' and 'smug pimps' could also refer to the infantry's commander and most likely the higher ranking men in the Imperial Army, neither of whom they were allowed to outwardly hate, but both of whom they were forced to very publicly respect. The soldier's burden is reflected in the final line, fighting "all for [their] parents" that embodies the ideology of *tennōsei* and translates as the soldier fighting solely for the sake of the emperor.

To raise morale among his men, Tadokoro repeatedly compares their roles to the supposedly inspirational story of five hundred men who died fighting alongside the 14th century samurai hero, Dai-Nanko, to defeat enemy rebels. In this way, the infantry is taught to respond positively to the notion of dying and self-sacrifice; it was an honor to die for the Empire. The infantry, especially the 'rookies', are also taught to appreciate receiving discipline. "New recruits are like tatami mats, the more you beat them, the better they are."¹⁵⁵ Therefore, by enduring

¹⁵⁴ Mizuki Shigeru and Jocelyne Allen, *Onward towards Our Noble Deaths* (Montréal, Quebec: Drawn & Quarterly, 2012), 24-26.

¹⁵⁵ Mizuki, *Onwards*, 68.

rough treatments, soldiers would ultimately improve their characters which then somehow would make Japan better as a whole.

The third segment of Mizuki's manga, "The Death of Sergeant Honda" opens with Tadokoro heading a strategic meeting at the Japanese headquarters in Rabaul. "The enemy went around and took the river from the rear, they have now surrounded us," Tadokoro says, "The only option left at this point is a noble death."¹⁵⁶ None of the other captains are able to dissuade Tadokoro from carrying out a mass suicide charge, regardless of the logical counterarguments. It is revealed in the next scene that the General of the Imperial Army has given orders to Tadokoro to hold the plateau; the Captain again repeats his idea of sending the troops to hide in the mountains to prolong the battle, but Tadokoro denounces the very notion of retreating as shameful.

Mizuki personifies Tadokoro's character to echo the values and traditions of the Imperial Army. It is clear from this dialog that the most important ethic to uphold is honor; every movement a soldier makes, he must do honorably because he is an extension of the emperor and under the impression the emperor is always watching his subjects. The ultra-nationalistic mentality validates suicide as a noble death. On one hand the General of the Imperial Army is saving his men from "dying a dog's death", should they choose to face the enemy another day. On the other hand, suicide is also justified as noble because the soldiers would sacrifice themselves for the emperor's sake, thus maintaining Japan's sacredness. Returning home alive was condemned with shame as it would dishonor the sacrifices of the dead.

Mizuki characterizes the underlying theme of his manga as a juxtaposition of morality of the group 'spirit' versus the individual 'spirit'; represented in the tension between the officer

¹⁵⁶ Mizuki, *Onward.*, 204.

class and the enlisted men. This tension addresses the issues of the unwavering social hierarchy within the Imperial Army. Tadokoro insists the only logical course of action is to take his men on a mass suicide mission, even though he is aware the outcome is not favorable for Japan. The soldiers are then forced to choose between their instinct for self-preservation and their understanding that a soldier's duty is to follow every order given.

In the final chapter, "Noble Death", Mizuki explores these conflicting moralities of internal values. Tadokoro has died as he planned, but the Captain, who is severely injured, has survived along with some of his men, who are carrying him back to Cape St. George. Despite being alive, the Captain is grim as he comes to accept his reality that his survival is an unacceptable disgrace, even though he had been adamant about not dying alongside Tadokoro. "We were ordered on a suicide charge. How could your Captain have the audacity to show his face alive?"¹⁵⁷ From this line of dialog, we can learn two things: first, the Captain is unable to listen to his own conscience; the second, once an order has been issued it not only transcends individual thought, but it takes on the urgency of national values. Maruyama Masao describes this phenomenon as such: "The entire national order is constructed like a chain, with the Emperor as the absolute value entity; and at each link in the chain the intensity of control varies in proportion to the distance from the Emperor."¹⁵⁸ The Imperial Army resided right under the Emperor's command and therefore was perceived to be the closest link to the sovereign that, according to Maruyama, rationalizes why orders from the Imperial Army transcended the will to live; it was almost like being ordered directly by the emperor.

The Captain leaves his subordinates with a paradoxical order to retreat; a soldier must follow his superior's command, but to retreat is dishonorable while continued survival is

¹⁵⁷ Mizuki, *Onwards*, 243.

¹⁵⁸ Masao Maruyama and Ivan I. Morris. *Thought and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 15.

perceived as taboo by the Imperial Army. The purpose of analyzing this manga was to demonstrate the degree of control of the Imperial Army, which they exerted over their forces to preserve Japan's national polity, and to explore conflicting modes of consciences brought about by the emperor system. This will become more relevant in the next section of the chapter, when I discuss Japan's defeat and the repercussions of the imperial regime.

The Imperial Army's brutality and continuous cruelty in China shocked the international community. To combat Japan's imperial expansion and to support the Chinese resistance, the United States, Britain and the Dutch East Indies restricted oil exports into Japan, thus crippling the Army's advancement within China. Imperial Japan faced an ultimatum: withdraw troops from China or engage in warfare with the United States. To withdraw from China went completely against Japan's own moral values of *tennōsei* ideology on emperor worship. Therefore Japan could only continue forward which would eventually bring them face to face, on the Pacific Ocean, with the United States. Attacking Pearl Harbor was classified by the Cabinet to be an act of self-preservation while simultaneously an act of nationalism, for the sake of Imperial Japan. The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, subsequently followed by Japan's unconditional surrender, abruptly marked the end of Japanese imperialism and left Japan to rebuild itself from the ashes of defeat into a newer modern nation state that Western powers would approve of.

The Road to Redemption: Post WWII Japan

It was almost noon on August 15, 1945, when overwhelming urgency spread throughout Japan. The emperor was to make a personal broadcast over the radio at exactly noon. Since

Emperor Hirohito's ascension to the throne in 1926, his subjects had only heard their god through his imperial rescripts (printed text) which were then read aloud by other people. It was a day that could never be forgotten. John Dower, a professor of Japanese history, recounts a letter detailing the emotions that followed after the Jewel Voice Broadcast. It was written in 1994 to the *Asahi Shinbun* by Aihara Yū, a farmer's wife living in Shizuoka prefecture. When a messenger appeared in her village informing everyone the emperor would be speaking shortly, Aihara prepared herself to be ready should the emperor ask her to join the war.¹⁵⁹ After all, the Imperial Rescript on Education (1890), which had been ingrained into every school child since its creation, stated that:

“Should [any] emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the State; and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth. So shall ye not only be Our good and faithful subjects, but render illustrious the best traditions of your forefathers.”¹⁶⁰

The radio crackled, distorting the emperor's voice and making it very hard to understand his soft spoken voice. Furthermore he spoke in very formal, sophisticated, Japanese which only increased confusion to everyone listening. The announcement was very short, only lasting four minutes, and did not openly state that Japan had been defeated, merely the war “did not turn in Japan's favor, and trends of the world were not advantageous to [Japan].”¹⁶¹ Coincidentally there happened to be a man from Tokyo, in Aihara's village, who understood the context of the emperor's speech and he quickly translated the message to everyone. Immediately everyone fell

¹⁵⁹ John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton &, 1999), 33-34.

¹⁶⁰ Carol Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), 121.

¹⁶¹ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 36.

to the ground, weeping.¹⁶² Japan had lost the war, but it was more than just losing that had submerged a nation into deep sorrow. Hirohito's broadcast had evoked severe feelings of guilt and shame from his subjects who felt that in losing the war they had personally failed the emperor. The American Occupation that would begin the following month on September 2nd, and would attempt to liberate the Japanese from "an ideology [that] contributed to their war guilt, defeat, suffering, privation, and present deplorable condition."¹⁶³ I will now review the emperor system, which was created to accelerate Japan onto the Western stage, in order to discuss Japan's reintegration into the post World War II modernity.

When the Meiji oligarchs began the imperial project to restore sole power to the emperor, it was for three reasons: the first, the Tokugawa shogunate failed to maintain their power when confronted by America which was then perceived to be a weakness in leadership and called for change; the second, after Japan had been exposed to Western culture, the Meiji oligarchs began to envision a Japan that would appropriate some Western traditions in order to be considered 'modern' and then Japan would surpass the Western nations; the third, in order to convince the mass public that modernizing Japan was in everyone's best interest, glorifying the image of the emperor was a necessary component.

The way in which the oligarchs envisaged promoting the emperor system (*tennōsei*) would require rewriting traditions and values to reaffirm the intricate relationship between the emperor and his subjects. In trying to create a modern state, Japan came to believe that they were the land of the gods and that the emperor was a living descendent from the sun goddess Amaterasu. Douglas MacArthur described the Japanese as being "abject slaves to mythological

¹⁶² Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 34.

¹⁶³ Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, 4.

fiction.”¹⁶⁴ Maruyama Masao states that these ideologies produced by the emperor system lacked a solid foundation and instead relied on slogans praising the emperor’s sovereignty to validate its authority.

In developing the Imperial Rescript on Education (October 1890) and the Meiji Constitution (November 1890), the oligarchs intended to provide a substantial agency for their imperial orthodoxies, which created a national sovereignty that legitimized itself through “spiritual authority and political power.”¹⁶⁵ Maruyama draws upon Carl Schmitt’s analysis on European nationalism (one of the prototype models the oligarchs envisioned) to rationalize the severe repercussions of Japanese ‘ultra’ nationalism after their defeat at the hands of the United States.

“...an outstanding characteristic of the modern European States lies in its being *ein neutraler Staat*...the State adopts a neutral position on internal values, such as the problem of what truth and justice are; it leaves the choice and judgement of all values of this sort to special social groups...or to the conscience of the individual. The real basis of national sovereignty is a purely ‘formal’ legal structure, divorced from all questions of internal value.”¹⁶⁶

This was not the case for Japanese nationalism. The oligarchs did not spend time in quantifying matters of the state (the external values) and matters of the people (internal values) and instead focused their orthodoxies to control the internal values. In this way, with the Emperor representing a culmination of all national values, virtues and truth, the mass public thereby became an extension of his own conscience. As I pointed out previously, in the manga *Onwards Towards Our Noble Deaths*, the conflicting morality of following a suicide order is an example of how the emperor system manipulated internal values to reflect state orthodoxy. The Captain

¹⁶⁴ Gluck, *Japan’s Modern Myths*, 4.

¹⁶⁵ Masao Maruyama, “Theory and Psychology of Ultra-Nationalism,” in *Thought and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 8.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

had been ordered by a higher-ranking officer, Tadokoro, to face the enemy with the intention of dying in the process which he failed to do. Ultimately he has to take his own life or defy the Imperial Army therefore defying the emperor.

The emperor system validated power and morality based on the social proximity to the emperor.¹⁶⁷ For example, the Imperial Army was under the direct control of the emperor which “led them to conclude they were superior to other members in the community, not only in their position within the hierarchy, but in all values.”¹⁶⁸ The closer to the emperor one group was, the stronger their morale. Vice versa, the further away one group was from the emperor the less power they had over others. Mizuki demonstrates this power dynamic in his portrayal of Tadokoro and the enlisted men; Tadokoro is enthusiastic about upholding honor and take his position very seriously while his enlisted men are not very motivated to fight, but only do so because it is their duty as soldiers to follow orders of their superiors which is to defend Japan from the enemy.

In a memoir about a Japanese soldier who self-surrendered to the Americans in 1944 and subsequently became a prisoner of war, Mr. Kojima recounts being selected to represent the Japanese POW’s as opposed to the highest ranking Japanese POW who was “an army major [who] talked proudly about the women he’d raped every time the Japanese army occupied a new area.” Mr. Kojima ends his experience as a POW with hope that the younger generations would realize how absurd the war was. “I want to make [Japan] a land where people think and live on their own. I was very briefly a captive, and while living as a prisoner of war I learned about democracy and freedom.”¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Maruyama, *Thought and Behaviour*, 14.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 14.

¹⁶⁹ Haruko Taya Cook and Theodore Failer Cook, “In the Enemy’s Hand,” in *Japan at War: An Oral History*, (New York: New Press, 1992), 373-380.

Japanese ultra-nationalism restricted public thought to pertain only to upholding the national values. In other words, free thinking was engineered to be unanimous and rely on the values of ‘national polity’; essentially personal values were to reflect the emperor’s values. Chapter II, Article 29, in the Meiji Constitution states that “Japanese subjects shall, within the limits of law, enjoy the liberty of speech, writing, publication, public meetings and associations”, but the ideologies of the emperor system countered this ‘liberty’. For the emperor’s subjects were conditioned to “never forget that even in [their] personal lives [they] are joined to the Emperor and must be moved by the desire to serve [Japan].”¹⁷⁰ Therefore when Japan lost the war and the emperor’s divinity was “formally denied in an Imperial Rescript” in 1946, the mass public was left to rebuild its beliefs, for the first time, free from any direction or restrictions.

The Arrival of the Americans: the Allied Occupation, 1945-1952

Kawachi Uichiro, a Yomiuri newspaperman, remembers very clearly the arrival of the first Americans in Tokyo, after Japan’s surrender. To his astonishment, the first Americans to drive straight into the capital were journalists. It was an unforgettable moment as the jeeps came to a stop and some reporters rushed to greet old friends, Japanese reporters they must have met at a previous time. Kawachi watched as everyone mingled together in a relaxed atmosphere; the American reporters were very friendly and acted like America and Japan had never fought. The most memorable, astounding moment for Kawachi was watching the Americans sit on the emperor’s throne, in the House of Peers, while simultaneously taking pictures of each other.

¹⁷⁰ Maruyama, “Theory and Psychology of Ultra-Nationalism,” 7. Maruyama cites an unknown author’s work titled *The Way of the Subject*.

Kawachi said, “When I saw that, the idea of defeat really sank in! Sitting in the Emperor’s seat, that’s something none of us could ever had imagined.”¹⁷¹

The Allied Occupation set out to accomplish two objectives: to demilitarize Japan and then democratize the sovereign ruled nation. With General Douglas MacArthur as supreme commander of the Occupation, the United States controlled all aspects of policy making and power in Japan. At the end of his command, MacArthur commented, “I had not only the normal executive authorities such as our own President as in this country, but I had legislative authority. I could by fiat issue directives.”¹⁷² It was imperative to the United States that their policies ensured a democratic future for the Japanese by “eradicating the very roots of militarism.”¹⁷³ Dower notes that this ambitious reform, even by the standards of being victorious in war, was not legally justified. The Americans sought to reeducate the mass public with the result that a society in which “the ‘will of the people’ prevailed” was created and the “will to war” was eliminated.¹⁷⁴ This meant attempting to completely rip the Japanese away from the ideologies of the emperor system which were already deeply cemented into their minds, an impossible task, “[Japanese ultra-nationalism succeeded in spreading a many-layered, though invisible, net over the Japanese people, and even today they had not really freed themselves from its hold.”¹⁷⁵

The ‘revolution from above’ and their radicalized agenda for a democratic Japan began with MacArthur’s orders to reinstate freedom of political expression on October 4, just a month after the Americans had arrived. By doing so, “the Special Higher Police, or ‘thought police’ of the Home Ministry were abolished. The heads of the Home Ministry and the national police

¹⁷¹ Haruko Taya Cook and Theodore Faylor Cook, “The Occupiers,” 477-478.

¹⁷² Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 79.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁷⁵ Maruyama, *Thought and Behaviour*, 1.

force were purged. Political prisoners were ordered released from jail.”¹⁷⁶ This meant that anyone could speak their minds without fear of retaliation by police. Most notably was how fast the mass media began to openly condemn “the wartime regime and its leadership, and debated why Japan had gone so wildly astray.”¹⁷⁷ Conversely though, when it came to implementing a more liberal education for schools, the United States placed great censorship in material related to, “imperial divinity, Japanese racial superiority, or patriotic myths and legends,” and suspended classes that related to “ethics, Japanese history, and geography,” until new textbooks, that had been given the American stamp of approval, could be distributed.¹⁷⁸ The idea behind censoring, what can be classified entirely as, Japanese history was that the reform hoped to instill values of democracy and the necessity of a democratic government while also teaching young students how to be an individual thinker. Higher education became more easily accessible to the general population while mandatory education extended until the ninth grade. Duus notes that with the installation of a liberal education came the retirement of many teachers, but this left their vacant positions open to freshly graduated university students eager to engage in post-war ideas of liberalism.¹⁷⁹

The greatest achievement during the American democracy reforms was the drafting of the new national charter that “codified the basic ideals of ‘democratization’ and weeded them to ‘demilitarization’ by explicitly prohibiting Japan from resorting to war as a means of resolving international disputes.”¹⁸⁰ The rewritten constitution completely denied the divinity of the emperor and the authority of an emperor centered state, instead the emperor was returned to a

¹⁷⁶ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 81.

¹⁷⁷ Duus, *Modern Japan*, 259.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 266.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 267.

¹⁸⁰ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 83.

mere “symbol of the state and the unity of the people,” who would only act in ceremonial rituals of the state. But the revised role of the emperor brought to question whether or not he should be tried as a war criminal. He was allowed to retain his position as the emperor which was an ambiguous decision and perceived cautiously by Japan’s neighbors. Henceforth, Hirohito was recast to be a “democratic civilian monarch,” traveling around Japan in Western clothing to greet his subjects, appearing to be just like the rest of society.¹⁸¹ From the Occupation until the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, Hirohito faded from the public’s eye and his son, Crown Prince Akihito, became the new poster child for a rehabilitated, civilized Japan.

Japan Re-Emerges onto the International Stage

Crown Prince Akihito symbolized the beginning of a new cultural revolution for Japan; he would come to embody the democracy America envisioned for a, civil, society. As a teenager during the Occupation, Akihito was taught by an American Quaker, Elizabeth Vining. Unlike Emperor Hirohito, Crown Prince Akihito continued his education in a relatively normal setting; he went to school with other boys his age instead of enduring an education in solitude because he was royalty. The appeal to Akihito’s image was his social assimilation into society, with his peers and others. In the eye of the public, and the world, Akihito was a model Japanese citizen, ordinary like his classmates and easy to relate to; whereas the mass public could never truly think of Hirohito as anything but their sacred emperor.¹⁸²

1953, just a year after the Occupation ended, Crown Prince Akihito embarked on a six month world tour. Before setting out to visit the Western Powers, the Imperial Household

¹⁸¹ Duus, *Modern Japan*, 261.

¹⁸² Kenneth J. Ruoff, *The People's Emperor: Democracy and the Japanese Monarchy, 1945-1995* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 211.

Agency made sure to thoroughly research all regional customs in order to prepare Akihito to make the best impression in his debut to the world. “*Sandē mainichi* described the crown prince’s trip as an opportunity for him to show pacifist Japan’s true form to the world.” Kenneth Ruoff remarks that this observation seemed to imply that Japan’s actions from 1931 to 1945 were nothing more than a phase that hid the “pacifistic nature of the Japanese.”¹⁸³ With the Japanese news media reporting almost every detail of Akihito’s trip, Japan was restored with hope for the prosperity of their nation. The United States, especially, received Akihito with enthusiasm and friendliness. “[Japan] felt relief and joy at the crown prince’s success in representing a New Japan to the world.”¹⁸⁴

Come the year 1958, the crown prince would shock Japan in his decision to marry a woman of commoner status, Shōda Michiko. No one of the imperial family had ever married anyone who was not of high status. The public enthusiastically cheered for the love between the crown prince and princess. The wedding between royalty and middle class symbolically united “the imperial house to the Postwar Constitution and [subsequent] the people to the postwar polity.”¹⁸⁵ Following the successful marriage, the royal family as a whole became the object of attention for the mass media; they were the public’s favorite role model. “Portrayed as the model of white-collar domesticity” the royal family set the living standards for the middle class which became better known as “my family-ism.” Like how during the Meiji Restoration, the Japanese began wearing western clothing as a show of being modern, the new modern lifestyle that was

¹⁸³ Ruoff, *The People’s Emperor*, 214.

¹⁸⁴ Ruoff, *The People’s Emperor*, 218.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 220.

exemplified by the royal family required things such as a love for sports and being knowledgeable on the current fashion trends.¹⁸⁶

In fact, Japan underwent a complete ‘lifestyle’ revolution starting in the mid 1950’s through the 1970’s, inspired by mass media coverage of the royal family, in particular the media portrayal of Crown Princess Michiko was very successful with women. In preparation for the imperial wedding between the crown prince and princess, Ruoff reports that within the estimated audience of fifteen million, majority chose to watch the ceremonial parade from their television (a symbol of middle class wealth); from within that group, many had purchased a television just for the royal occasion.¹⁸⁷ Japan experienced “a mass migration of people from the rural to the urban areas,” which led to a huge increase in mass demand and consumerism.¹⁸⁸¹⁸⁹ For example the accumulation of the television, the refrigerator and the electric washing machine became standard items within the middle class household and represented a thriving postwar economy as well as personal status. Migrating away from emperor centered nationalism, the economic boom encouraged self-indulgence and improving the quality of home lifestyles.

“Today Japanese do not wear clothes to protect themselves from the elements; they do so to make themselves look beautiful...Japanese no longer eat to live...The emphasis in Japan today is on how to enjoy food...sex is regarded as an important means of enabling people to enjoy life; it is no longer tied to marriage, reproduction, or love.”¹⁹⁰

The Tokyo Olympics of 1964 bolstered industrial productions like “the new high-speed bullet trains...jumbo jets...high-rise building complexes,” but also, more importantly, brought waves of hope for the post war Japan. It was a new beginning, but not without haunting memories of

¹⁸⁶ Daikichi Irokawa, *The Age of Hirohito: In Search of Modern Japan*, (New York: Free Press, 1995), 110.

¹⁸⁷ Ruoff, *The People’s Emperor*, 222.

¹⁸⁸ Irokawa, *The Age of Hirohito*, 40.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

destruction and despair of the Pacific War. On one hand hosting the Olympics meant welcoming Japan back into the international community, symbolizing a ‘rehabilitated’ peoples. “The emperor declared the opening of the games, and with well-orchestrated fanfare, reappeared on the world stage as the leader of a fully rehabilitated Japan.”¹⁹¹ Irokawa Daikichi describes this ‘rehabilitation’ to be the transition from a “charismatic wielder of authority to a member of civil society.”¹⁹² On the other hand, construction of the Olympic stadium, and even then the opening ceremony, linked an economically successful Japan to bittersweet memories of the mass mobilization of college students (October 21, 1943) to fight the Western enemies.¹⁹³

The End of Showa

In regards to the emperor system, Post war Japan found itself divided in opinions. For the generations who had been indoctrinated in the imperial orthodoxy, “some were unwilling to forgive the emperor and the emperor system,” and therefore demanded for the abolishment of the emperor system in Japan’s democratic society. But for the younger generations, impact of ruling under the emperor system was understood with indifference. Surveys conducted by Irokawa to his students regarding the emperor, just as he fell gravely ill, showed that they believed Japan needed the imperial family. In his students’ eyes, the imperial family represented the only Japanese who stayed true to tradition and whose ancestry was irrefutable. Irokawa concluded,

¹⁹¹ Irokawa, *The Age of Hirhoto*, 109.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 109/

¹⁹³ Yoshikuni Igarashi, *Bodies of Memory: Narratives of War in Postwar Japanese Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 144.

based of his surveys, that the younger generations “did not perceive the emperor system in a hierarchical sense,” and instead viewed the emperor to be on their level.¹⁹⁴¹⁹⁵

While the middle class enjoyed the luxuries that came with Japan’s economic booms and the government worked relentlessly to bring a democratized Japan back into the good graces of the Western world, the rest of Japan was left to figure how to assimilate into a post war, ‘modernized’ Japan. The emperor ideology that Japan was one with itself and everyone should work together for the sake of the emperor had dissolved during the Occupation. Now the public worked to benefit the individual rather than the group. “Japan was a harsh, inhospitable place for anyone who did not fall into a “proper” social category.”¹⁹⁶ This meant that the victims of the war, children without family, women without husbands, civilians severely affected by radiation and mercury poisoning and military veterans, were not recognized as being members of society; they were labeled as ‘improper strangers’ and therefore society had no reason to concern themselves with the affairs of outcasts.

With this notion of thinking, it was impossible for the victims of the war to ever become ‘proper’ members of society because it was their situation, that was a result of the war, that automatically made them improper. A report in 1948 placed the census for orphaned or homeless children to be at 123,510; girls often found themselves being forced to turn to prostitution while boys were forced to engage in delinquent behaviors in order to survive on the streets. Widowed women were looked down upon; there was no sympathy that she was without her husband. But the people who were treated with the utmost cruelty were the veterans who returned home.

¹⁹⁴ Irokawa, *The Age of Hirohito*, 114.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹⁹⁶ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 61.

“Veterans suffering from battle shock were commonly shunned. Disabled veterans were doubly stigmatized, having lost the war as well as their physical or mental wholeness.”¹⁹⁷

The public maintained the belief that the returned veterans failed to win the war for Japan and that the ex-veterans should have committed honorable suicide rather than come home. Irokawa explores the accounts of two Japanese who endured the public’s indifferent attitude in order to stress the severity of the emperor system. In their desperate moments, Sakanoue Yuki, a victim of mercury poisoning, and Yokoi Shōchi, a formal Corporal left overseas, began to envision the emperor to be their only savior from their pain; the emperor's status as a living god was exaggerated in their minds. For the disregarded members of society, they could only but continue to believe in the emperor system, to hope that the emperor alone could save them from their despair.¹⁹⁸

The death of the emperor on January 7, 1989, put Japan into national mourning. Prior to his death, when the emperor fell ill in 1988, the mass media went into a panic state and wrote about the nation being in a “sombre self-restraint.” With the fluctuation of the emperor’s health, Japan switch back and forth between feelings of relief and then concern; the media was to cover every detail and there was to be no comments criticizing the emperor.¹⁹⁹ Calling the inevitable death to come “X-day”, Japan more or less returned to its previous ways of condemning anyone who spoke out against the emperor; Hirohito was once again viewed as being a sacred entity. Irokawa speculates, “Perhaps [the media] was afraid of being labeled ‘Un-Japanese’” if they published articles pertaining to imperial slander.

¹⁹⁷ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 114.

¹⁹⁸ Irokawa, *The Age of Hirohito*, 116-118.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

Emperor Hirohito died believing firmly that throughout his reign as emperor he was a descendant from the sun goddess Amaterasu and that his subjects loved him until the end. The emperor's sense of being had been concretely shaped by the mythological ideologies the Meiji oligarchs had created so long ago that evoked passionate feelings of love and loyalty from the public. Japan essentially halted in its tracks as memories of Showa prosperity, pre 1945, came to the public mind. Nothing but right-wing praise for the emperor emerged in the newspapers. Under the emperor's sovereignty, Japan had become the single, most powerful East Asian nation.²⁰⁰

The United States envisioned a postwar Japan that would eagerly embrace the attributes of a democratized society such as freedom of speech and individualized thinking; the reformation of the post war society aimed to discredit and erase the emperor system in favor of a liberal atmosphere. The result of the Occupation produced a new social caste-system in which society was divided between "proper" citizens and "improper" outcasts. The middle class flourished from the reformation and the youths were indifferent towards indoctrination of liberalistic ideologies, but the victims of the war suffered tremendously from the intense transformation of postwar Japan; the reeducated society forsook their once "heroes" of war and stigmatized the rest of society who could not adjust to modernity of postwar Japan. The death of the emperor brought back overwhelming feelings and memories of Japan's century worth of endeavors to become a first rate nation.

²⁰⁰ Irokawa, *The Age of Hirohito*, 126-134.

Conclusion: Thoughts on Imperial Japan

My original senior project intended to analyze the status of contemporary Japan in relation to its East Asian neighbors and the United States. In order to even begin a commentary on contemporary Japan, it was necessary that I trace the conception of modernity in Japan.

When Commodore Perry arrived with his black ships in Uraga Bay in 1853, the Tokugawa shogunate were incapable to deny the demand for open trade exclusively with the United States. This failure was perceived to be a weakness in leadership that gave rise to a rebellion for change. Led by ambitious samurai hailing from *Satsuma*, *Chōshū* and *Tosa* clans, the Tokugawa shogunate were overthrown therefore resulting in the end of the Tokugawa period and the beginning of the Meiji era. The intentions of these samurai, who would become the Meiji oligarchs and create ideology that would enslave the nation for nearly a century (1868-1945), was to ultimately create a Japan that would surpass the achievements of Western empires. My first chapter traces the foundations of the emperor system and analyzed how Japan was recast as a “superior” nation descended from gods.

The emperor system relied heavily on re educating the nation to understand their relationship to the emperor. The notion that the emperor was sacred took precedence in the restoration of imperial leadership. The Meiji oligarchs set out to legitimize the emperor system by fabricating traditions and by drafting political documents that essentially reiterated the emperor’s divinity by the nation’s duty as subjects to the emperor and legitimized the state. By doing so, the emperor became a volatile image and the emperor system then depended on continued indoctrination of the state. I found that it was not the emperor himself who the people were manipulated into believing, but his image as a sovereign ruler that the Meiji oligarchs based

the emperor system around. Emperor centered nationalism revered the emperor's symbolic identity.

As Imperial Japan transitioned into the 1900s as the leading East Asian nation, the success of the imperial army began to spread and the Japanese citizens became more enthusiastic about the imperial project. Success was directly linked to the emperor's sovereignty which then deepened the nation's bond to the emperor's image and motivated people to embrace their role as a citizen. The United States and Britain were very impressed by Japan's achievements in modernity as they had previously viewed it to be a "backwards" nation. The following war with Russia and then subsequent annexation of Korea arguably placed Japan on the world stage.

My thesis for this project explored the construct of the emperor system and how it enabled and justified Japan to expand across the continent. I was interested in answering the question of how the state was able to convince itself a Pan Asia ruled by the emperor was a righteous endeavor. By reading Peter Duus' historiography on modern Japan, I came to the conclusion that the emperor system corrupted and controlled moral values of truth and justice in order to continue expanding across the continent. By making truth and justice a matter of the state, it was impossible for an individual to form their own thoughts on Japan's aggressive warfare. Emperor ideology maintained that the national values were also the people's values and in this way became paradoxical.

Regarding Manchuria, Japan won rights to the southern hemisphere after its victory against Russia. From expanding into foreign territories of Korea and Manchuria, Japan began to develop a taste for power and began to view the other Western occupied territories as threats against Japanese security. After enjoying continuous prosperity, the 1920 economic depression caused the nation to panic. The people doubted the legitimacy of emperor centered nationalism

and wondered if all of Japan's progress would dissolve. Therefore Japan's stake in Manchuria was advertised as an economic lifeline in which Japan had to firmly secure from the occupied northern hemisphere of Russian influence.

From 1920 to 1945, the Imperial Army radicalized itself and in the process the nation. China was portrayed as being unequal to Japan as well as being oppressed by the West. Japan sought to liberate China from Western influence and when the government was rebuffed, Japan violently retaliated. The Imperial Army employed aggressive totalitarian warfare in order to expand Japanese control into China; even going as far as to stage an attack on itself. What surprised me in my research were the memoirs of Japanese soldiers during this violent period. They talked about how they thought the war was redundant but participated in it because the ideology of the emperor system mandated it so. I used Mizuki's manga to show how the Imperial Army functioned; the higher ranked officers really advocated for the nation's mission while the enlisted men couldn't openly disagree to anything or they would be labeled a traitor. Ultimately Japanese soldiers were trapped and had to follow orders. The continuous radical warfare of the Imperial Army eventually became too extreme even for the Western powers to watch and subsequently the Japanese Empire suffered humiliating defeat at the hand of the United States in 1945.

During the postwar years of Japan, Emperor Hirohito shocked the world in his statements about the war as he apologized for trying to "liberate" Asia. He was not tried as a war criminal, but faded from the public's eye as a prominent figure until the opening of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. Meanwhile Japan underwent democracy reforms as the Allied Occupation set out to erase emperor ideology and replace it with liberal education. In my reading of John Dower's "Embracing Defeat" he talks about how the reforms of the Occupation were on the same level of

extreme as the indoctrinations of imperial culture. I was surprised to learn that the Occupation included banning Japanese history textbooks while supplementing Japanese schools with Western written textbooks on Japanese history; I do not agree with this methodology of reform as it conflicts with the very nature of the liberal education the Occupation intended for Japan. But on the other hand, there was the question of how to rid the nation of imperial orthodoxy without radical action.

My final thoughts on the emperor system are that it exploited a nation into believing they were superior for the wrong reason. The Meiji oligarchs insisted on the idea that Japan was the land of the gods and from this mythological origin, the nation was brought to believe they were entitled to “rescuing” East Asia. And because they were descendants from gods, it was impossible for the nation to be in the wrong which impaired their ability to graciously accept defeat. Instead, postwar Japan has become a divided nation, separated into different social categories. Especially the veterans of the Pacific War who were once hailed as heroes were condemned by society as being failures because Japan lost the war. Emperor ideology dictated that the victims of war were at fault and that society should not concern themselves. Emperor Hirohito, when speaking about the Pacific War, framed Japan’s actions as attempting to liberate East Asia and was unapologetic.

Imperial Japan emerged as the first modernized East Asian nation and impressed the Western world as a sophisticated empire. Their belief that the rest of East Asia should be united under the emperor ultimately brought their imperial reign to an end when the United States bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. The democratized Japan, like the Meiji oligarchs, appropriated Western culture to reinvent itself as a newly “rehabilitated” nation and once more returned to the world stage.

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