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## The Transformation of Japan from 1868 to 1970s: Detective Fiction as the Carrier of Social Anxieties

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The Transformation of Japan from 1868 to 1970s:  
Detective Fiction as the Carrier of Social Anxieties

Senior Project Submitted to  
The Division of Social Studies and Languages and Literatures  
of Bard College

by  
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

May 2022



*To My Beloved Ones,*

*My Family, My Friends, and My Kareshi,*

*And Everyone Who Is Always There To Support me.*



## **Conventions**

Japanese writers, critics, characters in the fictions, and so on were mentioned with their family name first and given name second. Unless otherwise noted, all translations (the English titles of the detective fiction excluded) are mine.



## **Acknowledgements**

I have been a fan of Japanese detective fiction since my junior high school days, and this senior project has enabled me to explore something that I really like. It has also brought my four years at Bard College to a happy ending.

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## Introduction

The period from 1868 to 1970 was crucial for Japan; in just one decade, the country has experienced dramatic cultural and economic transformations. They went through the Tokugawa government which blocked the country from foreign trading, to the Meiji government which embraced foreign cultures, through several recessions and recoveries from World War I and World War II, and finally achieved rapid economic recovery and development from 1950 to 1970. Their economic model was later copied by other countries and regions in East Asia, and is considered by lots of economists as the "East Asian Miracle".

In his book, Gordon described this period as “*the unprecedented metamorphosis in the modern century*” and argued that the collision of foreign events, ideas, and resources with Japan during this period cannot be ignored.<sup>1</sup>

The development of literature has likewise become a part of this metamorphosis. In his translation work, Apostolou mentioned that “*The Japanese, arguably the most voracious readers in the world, consume vast quantities of popular fiction*”. At the same time, he noted what he considered to be the most popular genre of literature among the Japanese - “*Although romance and science fiction novels are popular, much of what is read in Japan falls in the crime or mystery genre.*”<sup>2</sup> The detective fiction, without a doubt, is precisely the genre that combines crime and mystery perfectly, like what Apotolous suggested.

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, Fourth edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> John L. Apostolou and Martin Harry Greenberg, eds., *Murder in Japan: Japanese Stories of Crime and Detection* (New York: Dembner Books : Distributed by Norton, 1987).

The detective fiction (mystery novel) is a genre of literature that has a wide readership all over the world. In Japanese, it was originally called 「探偵小説」(detective fiction), but was later changed to 「推理小説」(mystery novel) because of the reform of Japanese writing after 1946, when a list of "common Kanji characters" was published and eliminated the kanji 「偵」detect; and at the suggestion of Japanese writer Takashi Hayashi, detective fiction were renamed as mystery novels. For convenience and to avoid confusion, I will keep referring to the original Japanese name - detective fiction.

In 1841, Edgar Allan Poe's detective fiction *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* was published in the United States. This work established detective fiction as a subcategory of the fiction genre, and also had a very profound impact on literature of other countries at that time. After that, Wilkie Collins published *The Moonstone*, which is the first full-length detective fiction in Western literature. Led by these representative works, thus, detective fiction began to develop in English-speaking countries in the 19th century, while finally flowing into Japan in the early 20th Century.

However, the earlier development of detective fiction in the West does not mean that western detective fictions have always been dominant in the worldwide field. In Melville's foreword to a translation work of Japanese detective fiction, he argued that Japanese local detective fiction deserved attention.

*“Even quite well-informed lovers of crime fiction tend to think of the genre as something of an Anglo-American preserve. Pressed to cast the net wider, most would after brief reflection name Georges Simenon as a giant in the field, but as John Apostolou points out, hardly anyone in the West is familiar with even a fraction of the colossal output of*

*Japanese mystery writers over the past half-century and more. All the subgenres familiar to us have their practitioners in Japan. Classic whodunits are called Pazuraa, from the English “puzzler,” while tough, action-packed stories are, reasonably enough, haada-boirudo (hard boiled). There are police procedurals, private eye stories, and accounts of the exploits of amateur sleuths. For the Japanese love what they, too, colloquially call misteru fiction. The domestic demand is insatiable and the Japanese-language market sustains hundreds of professional authors, many of them in circumstances that must be the envy of all but a handful of their most successful Western counterparts.” (Melville, 1987)<sup>3</sup>*

Japanese detective fiction is, as Apostolous stated, a collection of dark crimes, which was supported by lots of scholars. In Saito's book which researched on detective fiction, he also argued that *"Detective fiction operates under the larger dynamic of secret and exposure that characterizes many modern fictions."*<sup>4</sup> and in Kawana's article, she suggested that *"Japanese detective fiction challenged its own generic norms by blurring the boundary between fiction and reality, between legitimate academic endeavor and vulgar thrill."* and she believed that *"detective fictional works were among the first in Japan to disseminate at the popular level the view of science and progress as illusions created and perpetuated by the ideologues of no only Meiji but also European enlightenment"*.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> John L. Apostolou and Martin Harry Greenberg, eds., *Murder in Japan: Japanese Stories of Crime and Detection* (New York: Dembner Books : Distributed by Norton, 1987).

<sup>4</sup> Satoru Saito, *Detective Fiction and the Rise of the Japanese Novel, 1880-1930*, Harvard East Asian Monographs 346 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Harvard University Asia Center : Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Sari Kawana. "Mad Scientists and Their Prey: Bioethics, Murder, and Fiction in Interwar Japan." *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 31, no. 1 (2005): 89–120. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25064536>.

Literature is a reflection of what happened in the society, and after several recessions, stagnations, economic recoveries, and involvement in the world wars, the detective fictions reflected not only the dark crimes themselves, but also an important problem that hid deeply in Japanese society - anxiety. This concept of anxiety has been proclaimed by several scholars, such as Silver, who argued that westernization has led to rapid cultural change in Japan and brought serious cultural anxiety<sup>6</sup>; Godron, who believed that the repetition of significant economic fluctuations has brought about social class anxiety<sup>7</sup>; and Hayashi, who suggested that the failure of Japan in World War II has created cognitive anxiety among Japanese citizens about the image of their country.<sup>8</sup>

The root of the different anxieties may seem to vary, but the reason behinds are the same - too “*rapid*”. As Silver mentioned, the Meiji government supported Western culture and enable it to spread in Japan too quickly<sup>9</sup>; the economic recessions, stagnations and recoveries were also too fast, with various anxiety-provoking social events, such as the Great Kanto Earthquake and the atomic bombing. At the same time, Japan was quickly ruled by the U.S. after World War II, and this rule also ended very quickly - all too “*rapid*”. Hence even though Japan's economy in the 1970s has become a world-recognized miracle, the opposite social anxieties behind functioned like a dark side that still existed and cannot be ignored.

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<sup>6</sup> Mark Silver, *Purloined Letters: Cultural Borrowing and Japanese Crime Literature, 1868-1937* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, Fourth edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> Michio Hayashi. “The Imagined Map of the Nation: Postwar Japan from 1945 to 1970.” *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*, vol. 26, 2014, pp. 285–303, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43945803>. Accessed Apr. 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Mark Silver, *Purloined Letters: Cultural Borrowing and Japanese Crime Literature, 1868-1937* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008).

This project analyzes the two previously mentioned social anxieties: cultural anxiety and social class anxiety through the reflection of Japanese detective fiction. Since national cognitive anxiety emerged after World War II, a lot later than the other two anxieties, this project will be referring to national cognitive anxiety as an affiliation of the other two anxieties. Meanwhile, in terms of the research on the Japanese economy, this project mainly refers to Gordon and Lockwood's work on Japanese history and connects it to the concept of anxiety proposed by Silver, Gordon and Hayashi.

The first chapter analyzes Japan's performance in the period from 1868 to the 1930s and discusses how detective fiction entered Japan, gained popularity, and reflected the economic conditions of the time. The first chapter focuses on Edogawa Ranpo's works "*Two-Sen Coppers* (Japanese: 二銭銅貨)", "*Human Chair* (Japanese: 人間椅子)", and "*Death of a Sleepwalker* (Japanese: 夢遊病者の死)" for analysis, suggesting how Japan's economic prosperity before World War I and its economic decline after World War I were reflected in the detective fiction and how the concept of "cultural anxiety" was created. Even though there was already some crime related work in the 17th century, Edogawa Ranpo's work is commonly recognized as the first detective fiction written in Japanese, which had a profound influence on the crime literature and detective fiction that followed. As a result, the content and style presented by many subsequent detective fictions can be seen in his works. Ranpo made his debut and is known for his short stories, and the three works chosen for this chapter are his debut work - *Two-Sen Coppers*, the one considered to be his best known work - *Human Chair*, and one received less attention as compared to others - *Death of a Sleepwalker*.



*Two-Sen Coppers*, set in the post-World War I period, tells a story of two unemployed young men, "I" and the friend, who spend their days doing nothing, staying in a small rented room and couldn't find a job under the economic recession. The newspaper reported a strange theft case, a thief dressed like a gentleman and fraudulently stole a huge amount of money from a factory, even though he was eventually arrested, the police could not find where he hid the money. One day the friend found a code hiding inside a two-cent coin - the change that "I" received after buying cigarettes. The friend tried to decode it, and thought it was the hint of where the thief reported in the newspaper earlier hid the money. Two young people who needed money urgently and wanted to prove that they're the one smarter than the other, then started a game of who was able to address this code...<sup>10</sup>

*Human Chair* is a story in the form of a letter about a magazine editor who received a letter addressed to her, and what's in the letter was very shocking - a chair craftsman has actually developed the idea of becoming a chair, and he gradually began to live in the chair he had made, existing as a "chair" during the day, and walking around at night. At the end of the letter, the craftsman expressed his love to the editor and said that the editor's newly purchased chair was his very last dwelling place, in which he has been hiding. He would be honored if the editor would meet with him. The editor was horrified, but realized that she had missed a page, which was a final note from a writer, saying that the letter was just his work submitted to the magazine. But how did the writer happen to know that the editor had bought a new chair and knew exactly what it looked like? Is this really just fiction?<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ranpo Edogawa, 二銭銅貨 [Two-Sen Copper Coin]. (「新青年」博文館, 1923).

<sup>11</sup> Ranpo Edogawa, 人間椅子 [Human Chair]. (「苦楽」プラトン社, 1925).

*Death of a Sleepwalker* also tells a story in the economic recession. The main characters are a father and son, and a strange thing has happened to the son that he would do things while sleeping that he was not aware of, and he was quit from the store he used to work at because of this. He became increasingly anxious and had more and more arguments with his father until one day he woke up to find his father dead in front of him. The son was frightened out of his mind and thought he had killed his father while sleeping, so he tried to escape his home, yet he scared himself to death on the way out. The truth of the matter, however, was that the real killer of his father was someone else.<sup>12</sup>

The second chapter analyzes Japan's performance in the period from the 1930s to the 1970s and discusses why the style of detective fiction changed under the impact under the war and how it further presented the social class anxiety mentioned at the end of the first chapter. The second chapter focuses on the work of *Inspector Imanishi* (Japanese: 砂の器/*Suna no Utsuwa*) and *The Demon* (Japanese: 鬼畜/*Kichiku*) by Matsumoto Seicho. Seidensticker made this comment in his article, “*to social consciousness in the case of Matsumoto Seicho, that tireless raker into the fetid muck of the American occupation, opens up a bold new in-between prospect.*”

<sup>13</sup> Matsumoto Seicho's detective fiction is considered to be more socially relevant than Edogawa Ranpo's. In fact, in addition to detective fiction, Matsumoto Seicho has also written a lot of documentary literature that exposed the dark side of society, so that his works were regarded as possible to present social anxiety more than others in the same period. At the same time, Matsumoto Seicho was famous for his long fictions, so Chapter 2 analyzes one of his

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<sup>12</sup> Ranpo Edogawa, 夢遊病者の死 [Death of a Sleepwalker]. (「苦楽」プラトン社, 1925).

<sup>13</sup> Edward Seidensticker, “The ‘Pure’ and The ‘in-Between’ in Modern Japanese Theories of the Novel,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 26 (1966): 174, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2718464>.

representative long fictions - *Inspector Imanishi*, and a short story with less recognition - *The Demon*.

*Inspector Imanishi* is a long fiction that tells the story behind a murder case from the perspective of police Imanishi. The police found a body at a railway station and determined that the victim had been strangled after drinking alcohol mixed with a hypnotic, and his face couldn't be identified due to being struck in the face. During Imanishi's investigation, important witnesses died one after another, and eventually the killer was found to be a famous pianist. He was a beggar when he was a child, and suffered a lot under others' discrimination. This past experience was the last thing he wanted to remember, and the victim was his adoptive father whom he reunited with after many years. The pianist was afraid that his adoptive father would reveal his past and break his figure of a celebrity, so he brutally killed him.<sup>14</sup>

*The Demon* tells a story of a family: a married couple gradually became rich through their own efforts, and the husband used his spare money to find a mistress, who gave birth to his three children. Unfortunately, the good times did not last long, the couple's business had problems, and the husband's financial situation soon could not support his mistress and his three children, and the mistress left him without bringing three children. The wife was mad at her husband's cheating and demanded him to kill the children to make them less financially stressful, and the husband had no choice but to obey it.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Seicho Matsumoto, *Suna no utsuwa. Jōkan*, Kaihan, Shinchō bunko (Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, 1990).

<sup>15</sup> Seicho Matsumoto, 詐者の舟板 [The Scammer's Boat Board], 鬼畜 [The Demon]. (Tokyo: 筑摩書房, 1957).

## Chapter 1

### From 1868 to 1930s: World War I and Edogawa Ranpo

Detective fictions were popular in Europe and the United States in the 19th century, but were introduced to Japan in the late 19th century with the Meiji Restoration and became a craze within a short time. The reason why the trend of detective fictions did not flow into Japan in the first place had to do with the economic policy of the time - during the reign of the Tokugawa Shogunate (Edo Shogunate, 1603-1868), in terms of foreign trade and economic relations, the Tokugawa Shogunate implemented several economic policies called The Seclusion Orders(Japanese: 鎖国令) to monopolize foreign trade.

In order to prevent the infiltration of Western powers from causing ideological alienation in Japan, the Tokugawa Shogunate believed that the spread of the Catholic faith in God in Japanese society would threaten the Shogunate's rule (at the beginning of the Tokugawa period, there were 700,000 Catholic believers mainly in Kyushu)<sup>16</sup> and therefore had to be eradicated. At the same time, the "Gaijin Daimyo"(Japanese:外様大名) in the southwestern part of the country, which were the feudal lords formerly subordinate to Toyotomi Hideyoshi, were gaining huge profits from free trade and posed a threat to the Shogunate. As a result, from 1633 to 1639, the Tokugawa Shogunate issued 5 "The Seclusion Orders", which not only prevented the introduction of Western ideas, but also monopolized foreign trade and prevented the benefits of trade from being divided among local Daimyo.

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<sup>16</sup> Dongliang Yang, "The Socio-Economic Development of Japan on the Eve of the Meiji Restoration," *Economic and Social History Review*, no. 03 (2017): 54-66+127.

Under the Tokugawa Shogunate's decision, the speed of obtaining new international information in Japan was greatly slowed. Although Japan's windows of foreign commerce were not completely cut off (e.g., with China, Korea, and the Netherlands, which promised not to be missionary), and Japan was still able to learn about changes in the world to some extent, there is no doubt that the spread of detective fiction as a new culture to Japan was delayed and that the concept of detective fiction did not exist as a subgenre in Japan's local fiction for some time. Fortunately, although The Seclusion Orders lasted for over 200 years under the Tokugawa Shogunate, it was broken up in the late nineteenth century by the Black Ship Turmoil (Japanese: 黒船来航), which also introduced detective fiction to Japan.

The Black Ship Turmoil happened In July 1853, when the American side asked the Shogunate to open the port for diplomatic relations. After that, other countries followed the U.S. and asked Japan for commerce as well. As a result, In 1858, Japan signed the Kanagawa Treaty (Japanese: 神奈川条約) with the United States, and then the same treaties were subsequently signed with the Netherlands, Russia, Britain and France.<sup>17</sup> After that, Japan then opened five ports. Before that, Tokugawa society was closed to Western literature and thought; after the Black Ship Turmoil, with the opening of ports and commerce, the importation of culture was no longer hindered and the Japanese people had a possible channel to understand the outside world and learn about Western culture.

In 1868, the Meiji government replaced the Tokugawa Shogunate and carried out a series of reforms known as the Meiji Restoration. Emperor Meiji issued the Five Oaths (Japanese: 五箇条の御誓文), one of which was to "seek knowledge from the world and revitalize the imperial

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<sup>17</sup> Yoshio Ando, 近代日本経済史要覧 [Modern Japanese Economic History]. (Tokyo University Press, 1975).

foundation,"<sup>18</sup> demonstrating the receptiveness of Japanese society to world culture. It was also under this policy that Japanese society underwent a transformation, and a large number of Western books were translated into Japanese, including, naturally, the acceptance of European and American detective fiction - the first opportunity for detective fiction to be introduced into Japan. Among them, the translators represented by Kuroiwa Ruiko translated and published foreign detective fiction works such as "The Beauty of the Court"(Japanese: 法庭の美人) by Fergus, Frederick John in the early Meiji period, which was the first time that detective fiction entered the Japanese publishing industry.<sup>19</sup> According to Japanese publication records, from 1889 to 1911, Kuroiwa Ruiko has published 55 novels, both translating and original writing, most of which were detective fiction, making an indelible contribution to the development of detective fiction during the Meiji period<sup>20</sup>, and this period is known as the golden years of Japanese detective fiction. The magazine The nation's friend (Japanese: 国民の友) commented on the contribution of Kuroiwa Ruiko in May 1893, "*The age of the detective novel has arrived...Detective novels, as spiritual sustenance of our society, do not even serve as a humble meal.*"<sup>21</sup>

The Meiji Restoration not only brought Japan a cultural introduction, but also inspired the Japanese government with some new ideas - that is, to establish its own financial system like other Western countries. After sending officials to Western countries to study (mainly about the

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<sup>18</sup> “日本の民主主義の基本と、普遍的な理念 [Basic and universal principles of Japanese democracy].” 明治神宮, accessed October, 2021, <https://www.meijijingu.or.jp/about/3-3.php>.

<sup>19</sup> “法庭の美人 [The Beauty of the Court].” 国立国会図書館, accessed October, 2021, <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/876426>.

<sup>20</sup> “明治以降単行本 [The Books Published during Meiji Period].” 浮世絵文献資料館, accessed October, 2021, <https://www.ne.jp/asahi/kato/yoshio/hanponnenpyo/kutie-meiji-tankoubon.html>.

<sup>21</sup> “文学社会の現状 [The Current Situation of the Literary Society]”, 国民の友, Translated by Satoru Saito, in *Detective Fiction and the Rise of the Japanese Novel, 1880-1930*, Harvard East Asian Monographs 346 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Harvard University Asia Center : Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2012).

financial system of the United States), the Japanese government has improved and completed a series of their financial systems and policies, including the tax system, monetary system, and banking system, as well as making huge financial investments, and the Japanese economy experienced a significant development, which is known as the “Industrial Revolution”. These actions were undoubtedly very effective for the Japanese society at that time, which has brought rapid population growth and economic growth to Japan, as well as the flourish of all industries - from 1886 to the outbreak of World War I in 1914, Japan's annual GDP grew from 800 million yen to 4,738 million yen, and the total population also grew from 38.5 million people to 52.04 million people.<sup>22</sup>

The Meiji Restoration also reopened the door to trade for Japan - which had been closed for over 200 years in the Edo period. Japan's economy was already growing rapidly at the time, and this economic measure brought this development to another peak. World War I was the point at which the importance of this policy in Japan's economic development could be demonstrated.

At the beginning of World War I in Europe, Japan had not yet entered the war. The Allies ordered a large amount of munitions as well as other manufactures from Japan, and neutral countries also turned to purchase goods they needed from Japan in order to maintain their neutral status, because the countries they had previously traded with were involved in the war. At the same time, those countries that had originally exported a lot were greatly reduced in their exports because they were caught up in the war, as it was clear that the activities of trade would be

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<sup>22</sup> Yoshio Ando, 近代日本経済史要覧 [Modern Japanese Economic History]. (Tokyo University Press, 1975).

greatly hampered by the war.<sup>23</sup> All this created unique conditions for Japan, and as a direct result Japan gained a huge export surplus, something it had never experienced before.

The reason why it was possible to make huge profits in trade, apart from the fact that other suppliers of goods were involved in the war and unable to trade, was also inseparable from the Meiji government's policy of encouraging industrialization. After the Meiji Restoration and before World War I, Japan's industrial performance had obvious improvement, such as the textile industry(silk), which had an excellent production rise after learning from Western technology, and gradually had quite a clear advantage over other countries that lacked industrialization (such as China). From the 1890s to 1913, Japan's silk export has improved roughly 4 times.<sup>24</sup>

On August 9, 1914, the Japanese Genro group (the unofficial elder statesman who communicated with the Japanese government) decided to participate in World War I. In a letter to the Prime Minister, Japanese patriarch Inoue Kaoru wrote: *"What happened in Europe is God's blessing for the development of Japan's national fortunes, so we should make the most of this opportunity."*<sup>25</sup> In the same year, Japan waged a war against the German side in Qingdao, a city in Shandong Province of China that was a German colony, and Japan was the victorious side. The strong military power of Japan and its huge governmental investment in the military before the war were inseparable, and it can be said that the economic development of Japan before the war greatly helped Japan to achieve victory in the German campaign.

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<sup>23</sup> William W. Lockwood, *The Economic Development of Japan: Growth and Structural Change, 1868-1938*, Michigan Classics in Japanese Studies, no. 10 (Ann Arbor, Mich: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1954).

<sup>24</sup> Debin Ma, "Why Japan, Not China, Was the First to Develop in East Asia: Lessons from Sericulture, 1850-1937," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 52, no. 2 (January 2004): 369-94, <https://doi.org/10.1086/380947>.

<sup>25</sup> Seizaburo Shinobu, 大正政治史 [Taisho Political History]. (Tokyo: 勁草書房, 1968).



In the post-war Paris Peace Conference in 1919, Japan officially took over the German colonies in the Far East (such as some Chinese cities, North Korea, etc.) as a result of the victory in the war against Germany.

However, even though Japan gained tremendous benefits from World War I, such economic prosperity did not last long. During World War I, various factors led to serious economic problems that directly caused a major economic depression in Japan in 1920.

The root of this hidden problem came first from the Japanese government's increasing expenditure on temporary military and reserve funds during the war, with diminishing surplus funds and the central government's increasing investment in assets (e.g., armaments, ships), etc.<sup>26</sup> Increased spending on the military led to less spending in other areas, bringing many companies to the brink of bankruptcy.

Moreover, the demand for Japanese goods from the rest of the countries during the war period was also an important cause of the economic depression. Due to the growth in exports, factory openings rose, but the lack of labor supply led to a sharp rise in salaries. Also, the prices of Japanese products were too high in the global market, and once World War I ended and other suppliers of goods reentered the market, it was difficult to create a comparative advantage in terms of prices. At the same time, the large demand for exports during the war led to the issuance of a large amount of Japanese paper money; and the Japanese government did not react quickly for this serious sign, which directly led to the inflation, a kind of "false prosperity". This is evident from the value of Japanese imports and exports, which tripled from 1913 to 1919, but only increased by a quarter in actual volume, which was the symbol of the rapid depreciation of

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<sup>26</sup> Chotaro Sakairi, 昭和前期財政史—帝国主義下における財政の政治過程 [Fiscal History of the Early Showa Period: The Political Process of Public Finance under Imperialism]. (Sakai Shoten, 1988).

the currency. At the same time, the rapid rise in prices caused disorder of exchange and banking, and the difference in foreign balances made it impossible for the amount of exports and imports to match, thus creating a problem with the exchange rate of the Japanese currency and further aggravating the effect of inflation in Japan. As a result, Japan fell into a serious post-war economic crisis.<sup>27</sup>

The Japanese critic Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke once wrote the following: *There is no doubt that certain social conditions must exist in order for detective fiction to develop. Until a certain social environment develops, detective fiction will not be born.*<sup>28</sup> In fact, this severe economic crisis became the cradle for the further development of Japanese detective novels.

According to the current Japanese Constitution, in order to encourage the Japanese people to go out and occupy the colonies, it was stipulated that the eldest son inherited the family business, and the younger sons had to stay at home and work for their elder brothers if they chose to stay in Japan.

In 1920 where the serious crisis took place, a magazine called "New Youth" (Japanese: 新青年) was founded; originally it was a general magazine that included comics, sports, and clothing - and in line with the national policy of encouraging young people to go to overseas colonies, it began to publish European and American detective fiction, which was flourishing at the time. New Youth was later considered as the first Japanese Detective magazine even though at first detective fictions only took up only about 20% of the space because in 1923, a young man

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<sup>27</sup> William W. Lockwood, *The Economic Development of Japan: Growth and Structural Change, 1868-1938*, Michigan Classics in Japanese Studies, no. 10 (Ann Arbor, Mich: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1954).

<sup>28</sup> Hirabayashi, *Tantei shosetsu dan no Shokeiko*. Translated by Satoru Saito, in *Detective Fiction and the Rise of the Japanese Novel, 1880-1930*, Harvard East Asian Monographs 346 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Harvard University Asia Center : Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2012).

whose pen name was Edogawa Ranpo submitted his first short fictional detective story, "The Two-Sen Copper Coin"(Japanese:二銭銅貨) to the magazine, and once it was published, it received an unexpected popularity. He later became one of the most representative writers of Japanese detective fiction, and the release of his novel is also considered to have caused the second booming of Japanese detective fiction after the first one led by Kuroiwa Ruiko's contribution.

*"Japanese writers have a tendency to lean too far toward the unhealthy interests..."*<sup>29</sup>

also said by Hirabayashi, who once called Edogawa Ranpo "the only true detective author in Japan", yet regarded Edogawa Ranpo as "a representative writer who has unhealthy interests" as well.<sup>30</sup> It is true that Edogawa Ranpo's works are filled with a variety of characters who perform dazzling transformations, and he was regarded as one of the forerunners of Eroguero-nonsense, an unique style of Japanese literature. Edogawa Ranpo tends to love special and niche writing themes and styles, such as fetishism, abnormal psychology.....which are the "unhealthy interests".

By the end of January 1920, loans already accounted for 99% of deposits in Tokyo and Osaka, and by the end of December, loans exceeded deposits, and this economic problem became more severe between 1920 and 1930<sup>31</sup>. In fact, in his first novel, "The Two-Sen Copper Coin," Edogawa Ranpo illustrated the social environment of the time through the situation of the main character.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> The Wanderer in the Attic; August 1925. Translated by Satoru Saito, *Detective Fiction and the Rise of the Japanese Novel, 1880-1930*, Harvard East Asian Monographs 346 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Harvard University Asia Center : Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2012).

<sup>31</sup> Yoshio Ando, 近代日本経済史要覧 [Modern Japanese Economic History]. (Tokyo University Press, 1975).

*“The two of us, who had done nothing in our lives, were already driven to a desperate situation by reality, and when we saw a sensational theft case, we could not help but admire the ingenious way the thief had committed the crime. .... Matsumura Takeshi and I were staying in a small six-tatami room on the second floor of a shoe store in a remote area, both desperate and unsuccessful, struggling to make ends meet at the edge of the poverty line. However, in the midst of this most unpleasant situation, it was fortunate that it was spring. This is something that only the poor can understand - the way to make a living! From the late winter to early summer, the poor can actually make a lot of money. Actually, it just felt like making a profit, because the coats, fall clothes, and pants that people only needed for cold weather, even including bedding, fire pits and so on, can be sent to the pawnshop when it gets warm. Thanks to the weather during this time, there is no need to worry about the future, like what to do tomorrow, where to get the money to pay the rent at the end of the month, at least we could therefore take a breath. I could go to the bathhouse, which I hadn't dared to visit for a while, and I could get a haircut; and when I went to a restaurant, I didn't have to eat miso soup and kimchi to go with my meal as usual. I could finally splurge and order sashimi to satisfy my craving.” (Edogawa Ranpo, 1923)<sup>32</sup>*

In *Two-Sen Copper Coin*, Edogawa Ranpo clearly demonstrated the projection of the social condition of the time. After learning of a horrific grand theft, the protagonist and his friend felt envious of the thief who stole a huge sum of money, because the protagonist and his friend were living at the bottom of society, without any job or income, struggling to make ends meet,

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<sup>32</sup> Ranpo Edogawa, 二銭銅貨 [Two-Sen Copper Coin]. (「新青年」博文館, 1923).

and could only get some money by selling their winter clothes when spring comes - this was the way of life of the poor at that time under the Great Depression. The novel was published and gained a wide audience and reader support, which is inseparable from Edogawa's tendency of including realistic descriptions for the setting of the novel; at the same time, Edogawa's "unhealthy tendency" is also reflected here. In the story, a thief stole a large sum of money; although the thief has been arrested, the money has not been found by the police, and the main character and his friend have been trying to conspire to steal and find the whereabouts of the money and keep it for themselves - while behind the scenes, the main character was setting up all sorts of blindfolds to tease his friend, all of which are the first manifestations of his "unhealthy tendencies" in his debut work started with this morally incorrect mentality of the protagonist. This unique style was continued in his works between 1920 and 1930, which was also further confirmed by the publication of the short novel *The Human Chair* two years later (1925). In the story, Yoshiko, a female writer, receives a long letter, and the letter recounts an absurdity: it is the confession of an ugly-looking but skilled chair craftsman. The craftsman's chairs are well-made and sold to various high-end places, and he was increasingly interested in a life outside of his class because of the mismatch between his work and himself. He hid himself in the chairs he made, blending in with all kinds of places and feeling all kinds of people sitting on him. The reason he wrote to the writer was that the new chair she had purchased not long ago was by his hand. He sat in the woman writer's chair every day, separated by a thin layer of leather, skin to skin with her, madly in love with this writer, and dared to ask her to meet face to face.

Edogawa Ranpo described the inferior and absurdly insane psychology of chair craftsmen from an embedded perspective, which is full of his usual bold and unusual fantasy elements, and

here comes to the concept of hybridity mentioned in Mark Silver's book *Purloined Letters: Cultural Borrowing and Japanese Crime Literature, 1868-1937*, Edogawa's treatment of his characters, their actions, and psychology often suggests that, behind his stories, there has been a hidden anxiety about the westernization of Japan and the cultural hybridity it brings<sup>33</sup>; and this is especially reflected in *The Human Chair*, where the psychology of the chair craftsman is actually a process of searching for personal identity, which forms as a mapping of the current situation in Japan at that time. When the chair craftsman got into the chair for the first time, he was transported to a hotel - the author specifically mentioned that it was a hotel owned by a foreigner, and Edogawa Ranpo describes the bizarre scene and psychology when someone sits for the first time on the chair where the craftsman hid:

*“After a while, a heavy footstep vaguely came from the corridor to four or five meters away from the front of the chair. Then the sound of footsteps disappeared, leaving only a low scraping sound, probably because of the carpet in the room! Soon, a ragged male breathing came close, and while I was surprised, a seemingly Western man's huge body landed on my lap, and also gently bounced two or three times. Through a thin layer of leather, my thighs and the man's strong, sturdy buttocks almost attached together. His broad shoulders rested right against my chest, and his thick palms overlapped my hands through the leather armrests. Then he began to smoke, and a rich smell of male body wafted into the leather gap.” (Edogawa, 1925)<sup>34</sup>*

At the very beginning of the story, the craftsman just wanted to hide among the chairs so as to steal in the hotel. At this stage, his psychology is comparatively normal, but when a

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<sup>33</sup> Mark Silver, *Purloined Letters: Cultural Borrowing and Japanese Crime Literature, 1868-1937* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008).

<sup>34</sup> Ranpo Edogawa, 人間椅子 [Human Chair]. (「苦楽」プラトン社, 1925).

Western man sat on his body, this weird physical contact made him have strange feelings, and could not help but start to enjoy, thus changing his mind - he decided to become a human chair. I believe that this process of psychological change in Edogawa's writing is an invisible projection of the process of change in Japanese literature under Western influence at that time. When the craftsman was sat by a foreigner, he used several words to describe the strength of the other man in particular. Broad shoulders, heavy arms.....And it was all very fast and unpredictable, until then, the craftsman himself did not know that he would fall in love with this strange feeling of being a human chair.

Considering the fact that Japan had been closing its door to foreign countries for over 200 years before the Meiji restoration, it lagged far behind the West in many aspects of development, and after the Meiji restoration, the introduction of Western culture and technology caused great change to Japan at that time; meanwhile, the shock and change of Japan under this circumstance coincided with the transformative nature happening in this scene, as the chair craftsman hid in the chair and experienced firsthand the “strength and muscle” of the Western guest - which formed as a symbol of the “strong western countries”. The arrival of the Western guest brought about a decisive change in the craftsman’s will for his own personal identity, which was full of contradictions.

This happy yet painful mental expression can be more easily understood by reviewing Mark Silver's arguments about cultural hybridity anxiety in Japan; in fact, this culture intertwining is evident in the origin of Edogawa Ranpo's own pen name, which was the romanization of American detective writer Edgar Allan Poe. Western culture has had an indelible and profound impact on Japanese culture, but as what have been noted in a reactionary manifesto

“Kokutai no hongi”, it is worth consider whether this change was too shocking and impactful to Japan:

*“...since the days of Meiji so many aspects of European and American culture, system, and learning, have been imported, and that, too rapidly.”<sup>35</sup>*

Edogawa himself obviously agreed with this, and in addition to the origin of his pen name, he also referred to Western things (including but not limited to detective literature) in his works in various ways, and in an ambiguous yet somehow negative-tended attitude.

For example, in *Two-Sen Coppers*, there were several references to western detective fictions:

*“For the code, I used to have a little bit of research on that. Although not Sherlock Holmes, but I at least know about one hundred and sixty kinds of code writing ..... When it comes to the method of deciphering, if it is English, French or German, I can just find out the E like what's written in Edgar Allan Poe's The Gold-Bug, but what confused me is that the code is obviously in Japanese.”(Edogawa, 1923)<sup>36</sup>*

In his debut work, Edogawa has several references to the British detective novel writer Conan Doyle and the American detective novel writer Edgar Allan Poe, not only quoting the lines of Conan Doyle's character Sherlock Holmes, but also directly quoting the mysteries created by Edgar Allan Poe. And in *the Human chair*, he also referred to western countries through the perspective of the main character.

*“Once, the great body of the ambassador of a powerful European country (I learned this from a waiter's chat) sat on my lap. More than a politician, he was also a poet of*

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<sup>35</sup> *Kokutai No Hongi*. Translated by Mark Silver, in *Purloined Letters: Cultural Borrowing and Japanese Crime Literature, 1868-1937* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008).

<sup>36</sup> Ranpo Edogawa, 二銭銅貨 [Two-Sen Copper Coin]. (「新青年」博文館, 1923).



*international renown, and it made me proud to touch the skin of this great man. He talked to a few of his compatriots over me for about ten minutes, and then left. Of course, I had no idea what they were talking about, but every time he made a gesture, the muscles, which were much warmer than normal, contracted and bulged, and the tickling sensation brought me an indescribable thrill.” (Edogawa, 1925)<sup>37</sup>*

I think what Edogawa was trying to show in his work is, in a way, a potential reaction to the localization of Western culture. Even though the rapid influx of this culture caused some anxiety for the native culture, after a few decades of settling down (1868-1925), this anxiety was somewhat alleviated and a mix of cultures was formed to some extent.

The famous Japanese translator and writer Kuroiwa Ruiko once said that, “*The Japanese people are by nature a people who are easily swayed by emotions, and that compared to Western detective novels, which are highly logical and detached from real life scenes in Japan, Japanese mystery novels, which combine realistic backgrounds with reasoning, are more easily accepted by the Japanese people.*”<sup>38</sup> Edogawa's style of writing is undoubtedly in line with this comment - the background revealed in his novels is in line with the social context of the time, which greatly aroused the sympathy of readers, and is also one of the important reasons for the extreme popularity of his works.

The series of economics and social fluctuations of the 1920s in Japan, which can be traced in Edogawa's works, were undoubtedly very dramatic and turbulent. In his book *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, Professor Andrew Gordon comments that in the 1920s, the history of Japanese society was characterized as diverse and full

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<sup>37</sup> Ranpo Edogawa, 人間椅子 [Human Chair]. (「苦楽」プラトン社, 1925).

<sup>38</sup> Hideo Ito, 黒岩涙香研究 [The Research of Kuroiwa Ruiko]. (幻影城, 1978).

of contradictions. The source of his assessment is naturally Japan's role as a supplier in World War I, enjoying a huge economic boom during the war (unprecedented after the Tokugawa government's closure for more than 200 years), but experienced a long economic recession afterwards. At the same time, Gordon mentions why he thinks this recession is diversified, and the fundamental reason was the vastly different fluctuations of the different industries.<sup>39</sup>

For example, the publishing industry was developing as a new industry, with magazines, books, and newspapers in circulation, and much of the popular content, whether fiction or articles, was related to the middle class of society at the time. Gordon suggested that, noting that Japan was going through an economic transition at the time, and that lots of publications related middle-class life were related to social anxiety - that people were anxious about the rapid changes in society and thought they were afraid they would be lagged behind the development of the society.<sup>40</sup>

I believe that this view of "social anxiety" coincides with the "culture anxiety" that Silver sees reflected in Edogawa's work, and it is certain that this concept of anxiety was indeed a common situation in Japanese society at the time, which explains why Gordon defined Japanese society as "diverse and full of contradictions" during this period - People were afraid of change, but they had to speed up and make changes to keep up with the pace of the track of society; in this case, the whole society was extremely contradictory, which can also be found in Edogawa's detective fictions. For example, in the previously mentioned works "The Two-Sen Copper Coin" and "The Human Chair", his protagonists are poor, were far away from middle class, and are not respected by others in society; but in their personal psychological depiction, the desire and

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<sup>39</sup> Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, Fourth edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*

longing for a better life never ceases, and all the things they do in the fictions are based on this reason.

And this anxiety was undoubtedly further exacerbated by other things that happened in the 1920s. As mentioned earlier, Japan did not participate in the war at the beginning of World War I, but exported goods for the countries in the war, thus gaining huge profits, and this vast export led to Japan's currency crisis of inflation after the war. In the early 1920s when the inflation crisis had just broken out, the monetary policies of the Japanese government at that time were contractionary, such as reducing government spending and shrinking the economy, in order to improve the competitiveness of the Japanese economy and to regain the economic benefits from manufacturing exports. However, such an approach was also “full of contradictions”, as the Meiji government did not stick to their policy. Despite the nominal claim to try to reduce spending, government spending was increased because of various economic activities, for example the spending in the military industry - in 1922, Japan successfully developed the first aircraft carrier.

On September 1, 1923, the Great Kanto Earthquake came, violently affecting Japan's capital city of Tokyo and its surrounding areas, burning down many commercial and industrial buildings, with about 200,000 casualties according to the data in Seidensticker's article.<sup>41</sup> This natural disaster has dealt a deeper blow to Japan's manufacturing industry, which was in desperate need of recovery. Before the earthquake, Japan's post-war relief financing for economically depressed companies had increased the size of the national debt, and the earthquake took the national debt to an even higher level, and its issuance has greatly exceeded

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<sup>41</sup> Edward Seidensticker, *Low City, High City: Tokyo from Edo to the Earthquake*, 1st Harvard University Press pbk. ed (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1991).

the capacity of the financial markets. At the same time, the post-earthquake reconstruction added a large amount of government spending, and all these factors led the Japanese economy into a long period of chronic economic depression.

In Edogawa Ranpo's short detective fiction "Death of a Sleepwalker (Japanese: 夢遊病者の死)" as always, he reacted to the economic depression after the earthquake. The novel was published in 1925, exactly two years after the Great Kanto Earthquake and at a time of growing financial crisis.

*"It has already been three months since Hikotaro returned to his father's place after he was fired by the cotton wholesale store where he worked. It was not a pleasant experience for him to rely on his father, who was over fifty years old and worked as an emissary of Count M's residence. He had been trying to find a job for himself, but the economy was depressed, and no one was willing to hire a man like him with no educational degree and no particular skills." (Edogawa, 1925)<sup>42</sup>*

Hikotaro, the protagonist of the story, is a newly unemployed man, and the "economic depression" mentioned in the text just referred to the long period of economic depression after the Great Kanto Earthquake. Edogawa used the protagonist's point of view to describe the actual consequences of the economic crisis in Japan at that time - the protagonist lost his previous job and had difficulty finding another one, a serious problem brought about by the downsizing of companies that many people in Japanese society were facing at that time; and in his inner monologue, his desire and anxiety for money was evident -

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<sup>42</sup> Ranpo Edogawa, 夢遊病者の死 [Death of a Sleepwalker]. (「苦楽」プラトン社, 1925).

*“Ah, if I had 100,000 yen that would be great, so I do not have to work, because the interest is enough for me to live. I can also ask a famous doctor to treat my disease, as long as I have money, it is very likely to be cured. And dad too, he is already so old; if I have money, he doesn't need to work for others anymore. All of this requires money, money. As long as there is 100,000 yen, and the annual interest rate is 6%, this brings me 6,000 yen a year, 500 yen a month, great.....” (Edogawa, 1925)<sup>43</sup>*

I think that although the character's inner monologue is all about money, the essential issue is not about money but about social class - a return to the concept of "anxiety" that Silver and Gordon had proposed earlier. Gordon suggests that even though the socio-economic environment in early 20th century Japan was unstable, cultural life was flourishing. One of the reasons for this was the boom in the publishing industry which added more channels for people to acquire information, and the other was the rapid influx of new products and new consumer ideas that came into Japan after it was brought into line with the world. Inflation in Japan made the price index go up, and people at that time were extremely obsessed with entertainment in pastimes such as visiting art exhibitions and buying imported products (clothes, cosmetics, furniture, etc.) at department stores<sup>44</sup>. The department stores encouraged people to spend money and to express their "social class" in this way; people relied more on them to show their social status than on the real need for these expensive purchases.

Another factor worth mentioning in Gordon's book is the marginalized groups in Japan, such as immigrants, Burakumin (modern-day descendants of Japan's feudal outcast group), and

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<sup>43</sup> Ranpo Edogawa, 夢遊病者の死 [Death of a Sleepwalker]. (「苦楽」プラトン社, 1925).

<sup>44</sup> Louise Young, "Marketing the Modern: Department Stores, Consumer Culture, and the New Middle Class in Interwar Japan," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 55 (April 1999): 52–70, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S014754799900318X>.

Okinawan immigrants (where the native language and culture is very different from the main island of Japan). Even though Gordon did not directly link their presence to the issue of "social class," I think this was also an important reason that contributed to it. At that time, most immigrants were poorly educated, had low-paying jobs, and were discriminated against by the mainstream, even as many companies emphasized that they didn't hire immigrants. Thus, the marginalized group in Japan was cut off from the mainstream community, and given what Gordon noted about the dominant thinking in Japan at the time - "immigrants are lazy and stupid" - I think the mainstream group needed this sense of cut-off to maintain their sense of social class confidence.

Another short story from Edogawa Ranpo that I want to mention is called *Death of a Sleepwalker*, in which the protagonist's father dies, and the protagonist thinks he killed his father while sleepwalking. Then he died of shock under the staring from the police - but the police later found out the truth that his father's death has nothing to do with the protagonist. I think this plot arrangement is also a reflection of "anxiety".

*“While fighting with his father, Hikotaro always started to cry as if he couldn't stand it any longer. He wondered what to be sad about? And actually, everything was so sad to think about. His 50-year-old father, who worked while dressing a suit with stand-up collar; himself, who has no salary and relies on his father, the three-and-a-half-tatami-mat house that's just like a beggar's hut, everything is sad..... and then what's next?” (Edogawa, 1925)<sup>45</sup>*

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<sup>45</sup> Ranpo Edogawa, 夢遊病者の死 [Death of a Sleepwalker]. (「苦楽」プラトン社, 1925).

In this part of the story, the protagonist has an argument with his father. In this monologue, Edogawa specifically has the protagonist mention the environment of the house they live in, and the particular way his father dresses when he works (which is an indication that his father works as a server for someone else). The protagonist was not only saddened by their difficult financial situation, but also by the fact that their family is unable to maintain a high social status, or, unable to appear to have a good life. And in Edogawa's narrative, the protagonist's sadness for the latter is undoubtedly more intense.

*“His heart was beating madly in the chest. His throat was parched and hissing like an asthmatic. He had already forgotten his original purpose for running. He was only driven to run by the vision of the horrific death of his father that floated before his eyes.”*  
(Edogawa, 1925)<sup>46</sup>

In the last part, the protagonist found his father's death, thinking that he did it while sleepwalking. His reaction was to run away, completely unaware of where he was going, running for dozens of kilometers, and eventually running out of strength and exhausting himself alive. For the protagonist, his father's death is like the last straw that breaks a camel's back, and the final depiction of him running to escape also reflects the anxiety and tension in the main character's mind - running endlessly seems to be a way which he used to release them.

In summary, all aspects of Japan, whether literary, cultural or socially minded, reflect varying degrees of anxiety, and this can be well concluded by the arguments in Gordon's book.

Gordon mentioned that under the imperial democracy that lasted from the 1890s to the 1920s, the overall situation in Japan tended to be very mixed. The imperial system and political

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<sup>46</sup> Ranpo Edogawa, 夢遊病者の死 [Death of a Sleepwalker]. (「苦楽」プラトン社, 1925).

system moved toward modernity, while the various classes developed differently and conflicted with each other. And a series of events that happened in the 1920s to early 1930s (such as economic recession, military expansion, assassination of the prime minister and important political figures, etc.) created a deeper economic panic on top of the cultural anxiety of the rapid influx of Western culture.<sup>47</sup> This depression and this affiliated panic seriously threatened the factories, stores, retailers, etc. in the cities. The purchasing power of customers weakened, while many businessmen went bankrupt and fled away. In 1932, the unemployment rate in Japan reached 15% nationwide, while the unemployment rate in the cities exceeded 20%.<sup>48</sup>

These social events and the accompanying anxieties were well reflected in the detective fiction produced by writers such as Edogawa Ranpo. One question then follows - why detective fiction and not other fiction? I think there are two main reasons.

One, after the influx of Western culture, it has become one of the most popular types of fiction in Japanese society; the number of readers and authors was rising. As a result, the author community of detective fiction is very large, and even if not every detective fiction is as reflective as Edogawa's work, the number of works reflecting this social anxiety was larger because the overall sample size was large.

Second, the style of detective fiction suppressing is usually suppressing among all genres of literature, as most of its stories would involve elements such as death, criminal cases, death, and police and prisoners. Most of such stories were not relaxing, and this was the perfect composition to reflect the social environment at that time.

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<sup>47</sup> Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, Fourth edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

<sup>48</sup> Ryoichi Miwa, “隅谷三喜男編, 『昭和恐慌：その歴史的意義と全体像』, 有斐閣選書、昭和四九年七月刊、三五六頁、一一〇〇円” [The Showa Depression : Its Historical Significance and Overall Figure] (社会経済史学会, 1975), [https://doi.org/10.20624/sehs.41.1\\_87](https://doi.org/10.20624/sehs.41.1_87).



## Chapter 2

### From 1930s to 1970s: World War II and Matsumoto Seicho

The late 1930s seemed to be a transition point where Japan's economy rebounded, and industrial output and foreign exports began to pick up. Gordon attributed this boom to 1) the yen's exchange rate plummeting in the 1930s, so that many other countries would love to import Japanese products, and 2) their implementation of Keynesian economic theory, and began to accordingly change the economic policies.

This was a period of great internal changes in Japan, and whether it was dealing with internal issues or external territorial disputes, the Japanese government was tough and the political environment became extremely harsh.

Even though the economy was gradually warming up, this was not the case with literary production. This tough attitude of the Japanese government was reflected in the distribution of literature - bureaucratic control over literature became extremely strict, and the government arrested and suppressed many left-wing writers, some of whom were killed and died in prison.

Between 1940 and 1945, the Japanese government even banned detective fiction altogether (to avoid left-wing works and satire of the government), and during this period, there was almost no newly-written detective fiction, and many detective writers switched to writing adventure novels, or simply stopped writing for a while.

In his book, Lockwood described Japan's war behavior during this period as "reckless gamble" and argued that the Japanese government was "military extremists".<sup>49</sup> The war in the

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<sup>49</sup> William W. Lockwood, *The Economic Development of Japan: Growth and Structural Change, 1868-1938*, Michigan Classics in Japanese Studies, no. 10 (Ann Arbor, Mich: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1954).

Pacific in the 1940s began with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and continued with the war against China until then, meaning that Japan was under the shadow of war throughout the 1930s and 1940s.

In World War II, however, Japan did not maintain the same level of victory as in World War I. The United States and the Soviet Union declared war on Japan, and Gordon argued that the war was devastating for Japan as the Japanese colonies in East Asia collapsed due to the oppressive policies of their occupation, which led to the collapse of colonialism in Asia. About 100,000 Japanese soldiers were killed in the late 1930s and early 1940s, and countless others suffered the effects of the atomic bombings and nuclear radiation.<sup>50</sup>

August 1945 became another important turning point for Japan, as it was the day Japan surrendered to the Allies. Gordon believed that the new rulers(America) wanted to change Japan's systems and cultural values. In his book, he described the American occupation strategy as demilitarization and democratization. In 1946, the second year of the American occupation, the Japanese government abolished the Kanji "detective"(偵) and published a list of standardized Kanji, so that detective fiction had its new name - speculative fiction. (But for convenience, I'll continue to refer to it as detective fiction). This was a cultural result of the external intervention.

As a result, the economic recovery of the 1930s was interrupted after World War II, and Japan's economy went back into recession and the problems that had occurred before reappeared. Within four years after the war, Japan experienced another huge inflation, with prices rising 150 times. This situation was mainly due to the fact that businessmen used government subsidies to

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<sup>50</sup> Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, Fourth edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

buy low and sell high for profit, instead of spending the money on production, so that the government's aim to revive the industry was not achieved.<sup>51</sup>

The U.S. occupation of Japan ended in 1952, and the reason for this end was that the U.S. was under pressure from the Korean War and needed to devote a lot of resources, so it was not able to tilt its resources toward Japan anymore. Around 1949, however, the four years of economic stagnation welcomed its beginning to recover. Joseph Dodge, an American economist at the time, worked with the Japanese minister to formulate new policies - the introduction of a fixed and single exchange rate for Japan, the suspension of government loans to industry, and the elimination of all state subsidies. However, different economists held different views on these policies, for example, Johnson mentioned in his book that such policies might have killed the Japanese economy as government cutbacks had cost hundreds of thousands of people their jobs<sup>52</sup>; however, Patrick and Rosovsky argued that these policies directly led to the recovery of the Japanese economy, prevented further inflation, and were very helpful to Japan's export trade.<sup>53</sup>

Regardless of the impact of these policies, it is a fact that Japan's economy recovered. A significant part of this came from the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, and as was the case in the First World War, the war in other countries led to a demand for goods, creating excellent export trade opportunities for Japan. From the 1950s to the 1970s, Japan's economy grew so fast that it was considered an "economic miracle" by the world, and the World Bank issued a report analyzing the factors that led to Japan's high economic growth. However, this report has received

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<sup>51</sup> Theodore Cohen and Herbert Passin, *Remaking Japan: The American Occupation as New Deal*, Studies of the East Asian Institute (New York: Free Press, 1987).

<sup>52</sup> Chalmers A. Johnson, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy, 1925 - 1975*, Reprinted (Stanford, Calif: Stanford Univ. Press, 2007).

<sup>53</sup> Hugh T. Patrick and Henry Rosovsky, eds., *Asia's New Giant: How the Japanese Economy Works* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1976).

a lot of criticism and economists of different schools of thought have different opinions, and there is no unified conclusion so far.

In his book, Johnson mentioned that Japan has a rather special national characteristic, which was defined as "culturally derived capacity to cooperate", and that this capacity was reflected by Japan's economic performance, that is, a virtual agreement within the society, no difference for the government, the ruling party, or the people.<sup>54</sup>

I believe that Japan's performance in the two recoveries has considerable similarities, for example, they have always been promoting exports and have been learning from the Western systems. As to why the second recovery was more successful than the first, I argue that it was because Japan learned from past events: the 1920s depression brought the collapse of the banking system and inflation, as the government lacked economic awareness at the time - considering they've just opened their national door in 1868. However, in subsequent developments, Japan retained their strengths (sticking to the export trade that had benefited them in World War I) and made up for their earlier mistakes, as exemplified by their later modification on economic theories. Combined with the cultural characteristics suggested by Johnson, Japan's national cooperation contributed a lot that this miracle was born in the 1960s, thanks to the efforts of the entire country - of course, the Japanese detective fiction, in which I'll refer to later.

Even as Japan continued to rise from one recession to the next, this spirit of recovery was not reflected in their culture. In his book, Gordon used the word “虚脱”(lethargy; despondency; mental numbness) to describe Japanese people after the war, as many people were drinking and taking drugs, and there were more robberies and thefts than had occurred in the 1930s. Gordon

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<sup>54</sup> Chalmers A. Johnson, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy, 1925 - 1975*, Reprinted (Stanford, Calif: Stanford Univ. Press, 2007).

also mentioned that the social problems in Japan were actually not that serious at the time, and were still manageable. While it was still under control, the government and the media at the time were in an unprecedented state of anxiety, believing that the level of social disorder had been enormous. I think Gordon's reference to the exaggerated concerns of the government and the media is a continuation of the cultural anxiety I mentioned in Chapter 1, that is, the anxiety has not gone away because of the economic recovery, but has even gotten worse. Gordon also mentioned a culture of “粕取り”, a term that originally meant a kind of cheap Japanese of poor quality, but at the time referred to a mentality that had no expectations for the future and only cared about the present day.<sup>55</sup>

Before referring further to the content of the literature, I would also like to add to this great cultural and economic contrast. In her work, scholar Kawana Sari mentioned the strange phenomenon that book sales were very high whether the Japanese economy was stagnant or recovering. It is not surprising that people bought a lot of books after the economy took off, but during the economic downturn, with stagnant wages and low disposable income, people still invested a lot of money in literary reading. Kawana mentioned the library and bookstore system in Japan at the time functioned as one of the reasons, but more importantly, literature was packaged as a must-have material. In the minds of the Japanese at the time, knowledge and culture were things that had to be acquired, and literature was the way to get them.<sup>56</sup> In his book,

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<sup>55</sup> Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, Fourth edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

<sup>56</sup> Sari Kawana, *The Uses of Literature in Modern Japan: Histories and Cultures of the Book*, SOAS Studies in Modern and Contemporary Japan (London ; New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2018).

Gordon also mentioned that the Japanese are the most eager readers in the world, based on data from the 1960s and earlier.<sup>57</sup>

And regarding what is the reason for the formation of this concept, I found the answer in Hayashi Michio's article. The author mentioned an important concept - visualization of a country, which is an extension of the idea of internalizing national identity in Benedict Anderson's book. Hayashi argued that these rapidly disseminated media, including detective fictions, have shaped the image of a country from the perception of the Japanese people, especially in the important period after World War II - since the image of Japan's territorially expanding empire and national status was denied after the war, it was the disseminated media that led to the redrawing of the country's and contributed to the formation of an imagined community.<sup>58</sup>

I believe that Hayashi's argument extends and explains Silver's cultural anxiety and Kawana's point about book sales. What can be seen is that after the opening of the national door in 1868, Japan has been undergoing great changes, and continued to experience economic recessions and recoveries. As mentioned before, cultural anxiety was formed because the changes were so great and so rapid that people's search for mental comfort never disappeared and did not improve due to economic fluctuations. At such times, literature existed as a media that all people were able to access.

But what did people get from literature? To this question, I believe that literature actually somehow exacerbates people's anxiety and creates a vicious circle - people relied on literature for anxiety relief, but what literature spreads is still anxiety. The literature of the time can be

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<sup>57</sup> Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, Fourth edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

<sup>58</sup> Michio, Hayashi. "The Imagined Map of the Nation: Postwar Japan from 1945 to 1970." *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*, vol. 26, 2014, pp. 285–303, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43945803>. Accessed Apr. 2022.

presented as an example: Japanese writers during the war loved to depict depravity of humanity in peacetime, arguing that the war forced the people to enforce loyalty, yet it was an anti-humanization. For detective fiction, in contrast to the creation of the early 20th century, detective fiction of this period moved more in the direction of reaction to social darkness.

In 1950, Matsumoto Seicho published his first piece of detective fiction, and he later became a famous Japanese socialist detective writer. Unlike Edogawa Ranpo who debuted in his 20s mentioned in Chapter 1, Seicho did not publish his first work until he was 41 years old.

Kawana described Seicho as “demonstrated an overt awareness of contemporary social issues”.<sup>59</sup> Before becoming a writer, Seicho has worked as a clerk in a printing press, joined the draft, and was involved in newspaper work, all of which occurred during a period of economic depression. Therefore, Seicho's past experiences were largely reflected in his works, as well as in the economic and social conditions and the real thoughts of the Japanese people during that period.

Hiyashi believed that fictional works of detectives somehow stimulated the economy of the time, for example, Seicho's works inadvertently boosted tourism. In Seicho's detective works, the stories always take place in small cities and villages that the detectives would have to travel there. And when the stories were published, many storytelling tourists tended to visit the towns mentioned in the stories. Hiyashi mentioned that this kind of story setting was fatally attractive to middle-class tourists because after World War II, many people experienced moving from small

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<sup>59</sup> Sari Kawana, *The Uses of Literature in Modern Japan: Histories and Cultures of the Book*, SOAS Studies in Modern and Contemporary Japan (London ; New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2018).

towns to big cities.<sup>60</sup> Their interest was stimulated by a kind of criminality with the story, and also by an interest in the cultural impetus of the region. For example, in Seicho's 砂の器 (commonly translated as Inspector Imanishi in English, and Suna no Utsuwa in Japanese Romanization), the story unfolds with the word Kameda. At first the protagonist does not know what the word stands for, but as he pursues it a little, he realizes that it actually refers to a place name.

*“This is a folded color map of National Sightseeing Spots and Hot Springs Guide and Imanishi holds it, looking at it with interest. Before long, his attention was subconsciously focused on the Tohoku region. Kameda was always on his mind, no matter what. The railway lines on the map were densely populated with the names of small stations. Imanishi had never been to the Tohoku region, but when he looked at the unknown names of places, the scenery seemed to come to him in a blur. When his eyes moved to the name of the station “Kameda”, he was frozen - Udo Kameda?! In a flash, his eyes dazzled. This Kameda is not a person's family name, but a place name, and there must be a village or town called Kameda nearby.” (Matsumoto, 1960)<sup>61</sup>*

In designing the plot as well as the setting of the stories, Seicho has deliberately added the drama happening in the small towns and highlighted the special features of these areas through the design of the related deductive puzzles and the importance of the locations in the overall story. It is worth noting that some of Seicho's Short stories were even published in

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<sup>60</sup> Michio, Hayashi. “The Imagined Map of the Nation: Postwar Japan from 1945 to 1970.” *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*, vol. 26, 2014, pp. 285–303, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43945803>. Accessed Apr. 2022.

<sup>61</sup> Seicho Matsumoto, *Suna no utsuwa. Jōkan*, Kaihan, Shinchō bunko (Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, 1990).



monthly travel magazines, making it easier for readers to access other travel promotional content in the magazines.

Hiyashi pointed out that in addition to the great success of Seicho's stories themselves in driving tourism, they also hinted at a problem - the labor shortage in Tokyo after World War II. At that time, a large number of young people from rural areas (even high school and junior high school students) were recruited and left their hometowns to board trains to Tokyo. The anxiety caused by this "migration" phenomenon was presented in various ways, such as in Enka, a popular music genre at the time, which focused on the theme of homesickness. Hiyashi believed that Seicho's stories, somehow, have caused these urban "immigrants" to generate a sense of shame by depicting rural areas as places where crimes have happened, and this "reality" of their hometowns was contradicting to their middle-class life in the city.<sup>62</sup> In other words - people born in the middle class have developed a desire for the countryside, while people who came from the countryside and moved to the big city have developed a sense of shame about their personal identities. The class issue raised by Gordon that was mentioned in the first chapter arose in another economic fluctuation, and even though the people Hiyashi referred to were not a "minority" - they come from Japan's mainland - there was still a strong fear that they would be cut off from the mainstream.

The reason why literature has been effective in promoting social class anxiety continued to lie in Japan's successful economic recovery and the rapid growth of publishing, advertising and other communication media-type industries in just a few decades, which by the 1970s had become an indispensable part of most Japanese people's lives - the Engel Index of Japanese

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<sup>62</sup> Michio, Hayashi. "The Imagined Map of the Nation: Postwar Japan from 1945 to 1970." *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*, vol. 26, 2014, pp. 285–303, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43945803>. Accessed Apr. 2022.

households can be used to support this point: In the 1950s, Japanese household had an average Engel coefficient of about 0.5, which dropped to less than 0.25 by the 1970s.<sup>63</sup> Gordon believed that by this time the Japanese people were no longer satisfied with the basic necessities of life, but were turning to durable consumer goods such as washing machines and refrigerators (which over 90% of Japanese households owned by the mid-1960s).<sup>64</sup> According to social surveys from the 1950s onwards, the percentage of people who considered themselves to be part of the middle class gradually increased: in 1955, about 42.5% of the population considered themselves to belong to the middle class, in 1965 it was 56.3%, and in 1975 it was 77%. In contrast, the percentage of the population who consider themselves to be in the lower class has dropped from 57.4% to 21.8%.<sup>65</sup>

According to this survey, it is clear that the middle-class awareness of the Japanese people has been increasing during this period. However, it is worth noting that the results of this survey are "self-identified as middle class", which was not objective but subjective. Gordon also mentioned that many critics and writers at the time believed that the current status (referring to the salaried class) could not be maintained, but were worried about the future because Japanese society was progressing too quickly.

In *Inspector Imanishi*, through a conversation between the two detectives, Seicho also mentioned an organization - the Atarashiki-Mura. This is an organization of political commentators/critics who “are strongly aware that they are responsible for the future of Japan”.

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<sup>63</sup> Andrew Gordon, ed., *Postwar Japan as History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>64</sup> Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, Fourth edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

<sup>65</sup> Shigeru Aoki, “Debunking the 90%-Middle-Class Myth,” *Japan Echo* 6, no. 2 (1979): 29–33.

“‘They're not people who have nothing to do, are they?’ ‘How is that possible! They are all intelligent people who have been strongly aware that they are carrying the future of Japan on their backs ..... However, in recent years, their personalities have become more distinctive. The different strong personalities in each of them are converging into the characteristics of this organization; they are also constantly speaking out about politics.’”(Matsumoto, 1960)<sup>66</sup>

In Seicho's subsequent descriptions of this organization, we can find that they prided themselves on daring to challenge authority. They are outspoken commentators who were unafraid of the bigwigs and the regime. In fact, I believe that the members of this organization were the embodiment of Seicho himself, for in his work *Black Fog over Japan* which has made pointed comments on dark social events in Japan at the time.

In *Inspector Imanishi*, however, even though this organization (Atarashiki-Mura) has many followers, the members consider themselves to be "unable to be well-understood"-and those followers are, for the most part, "people who use them to promote or preserve themselves." I think this is still a projection of Seicho himself, as well as a projection of people who have the desire for change but also the fear of change in the society at the time.

However, the reason why I considered Seicho's work "spreading anxiety" goes beyond social classes. It is noteworthy that many of his works were published in the aftermath of World War II. Even years after the horror of the atomic bombings, the fear of war still existed in Japanese society. In Kawana's book, she mentioned that "*The experience of war changed soldiers both psychologically and physically, and these effects figured prominently in Postwar detective*

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<sup>66</sup> Seicho Matsumoto, *Suna no utsuwa. Jōkan*, Kaihan, Shinchō bunko (Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, 1990).

*fiction.*" Postwar Japanese writers believed that flesh was the only real thing left after the war, and therefore focused on describing the physical injuries of the victims when designing mysteries of detective fiction.<sup>67</sup>

*“‘Oh my god, I found a Maguro!’ ‘Maguro? The driver froze for a moment at first, and then laughed shortly afterwards and said, ‘Hey, the subway hasn’t even started yet, how can there be a Maguro? Are you still sleepy? Calm down!’..... The police dragged the body out from the bottom of the subway. The dead man’s face was bloody and appeared to have been struck hard with a blunt thing. The eyes bulged out, the nose collapsed and concave, the lips were split, and the white hair was covered in blood.” (Matsumoto, 1960)<sup>68</sup>*

Maguro literally means a type of fish commonly eaten by Japanese people, and was later used as a metaphor for people who were lying unconsciously due to alcohol and other reasons. The post-war period was also a period of high suicide rate in Japan, and many people chose to commit suicide by lying on the tracks, therefore Maguro gradually derived other meanings. In *Inspector Imanishi*, Maguro refers to a body crushed by the subway - motionless, just like a dead fish.

I think this word not only hinted at how frequent death cases were in Japan at the time, but also reveals how common it was for society to have such things happening - death seemed to be a common answer to lots of things.

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<sup>67</sup> Sari Kawana, *Murder Most Modern: Detective Fiction and Japanese Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

<sup>68</sup> Seicho Matsumoto, *Suna no utsuwa. Jōkan*, Kaihan, Shinchō bunko (Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, 1990).

Outside of fiction, in real Japan, the writer and critic Mishima Yukio committed suicide in 1970. The reason for his suicide was his desire to return to traditional social values<sup>69</sup> - he broke into the Tokyo Self-Defense Force, addressed them, but failed to receive appreciation, and eventually died by hara-kiri - a Japanese traditional way of suiciding. In their article, Marias and Costa commented, *“The death of Yukio Mishima was so spectacular that it has almost succeeded in obliterating the many other stupid things he did in his life, as if his previous non-stop exhibitionism had been merely a way of getting people’s attention for the culminating moment, doubtless the only one that really interested him.”*<sup>70</sup>

They called what Mishima did as "stupid" because Mishima's ideas were anti-political and did not receive much supports, and therefore did not have many followers as he expected, but his death still caused quite a stir at the time, as Marias and Costa described - a spectacular death.

What happened to Mishima was a product of the anxiety that Japan was experiencing at the time. Disturbed by the rapid changes, he strongly urged the rest of society to abandon the widely accepted Westernized values and ideas of the time and to return to the traditional society. However, Mishima's persuasion failed, and this directly led to his suicide in despair. Yet from lots of people believed that Mishima's death was a challenge to the society of the time, for example, in Yamanouchi's article, he commented that, *“In every detail Mishima's suicide was an act calculated well in advance. In its political implications it was a challenge to the kind of stability and prosperity of present- day Japan of which the Prime Minister himself is the*

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<sup>69</sup> Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, Fourth edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

<sup>70</sup> Marias, Javier, and Margaret Jull Costa. “Yukio Mishima in Death.” *The Threepenny Review*, no. 104 (2006): 9–10. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4385482>.

*representative...For despite their different views on such matters as the Imperial authority both Mishima and those students aimed their criticism at the order and prosperity of present-day Japan.”*<sup>71</sup>

In fact, the day before Mishima's suicide, Japan's prime minister gave a speech stating that Japan was on the threshold of a new age. This coincidence of timing was certainly ironic, and Yamanouchi further mentioned that Mishima and the prime minister in fact represented two completely different positions - one side was confident in the rapid recovery of Japan after World War II, while the other side was deeply skeptical about Japan's transition and future.

Yamanouchi argued that the rapid changes have raised doubts about the validity of the existing order in Japan, and that this attitude was shared by both the right and the left - considering that these are two groups that hold completely different political opinions, this shared idea is certainly worth thinking about.

At the same time, Yamanouchi's article also mentioned a very important point through the perceptions of Japanese university students at the time about educational institutions - students regarded the corruption and the defects of universities as “*the reflection of the society at large, which apparently enjoyed economic prosperity but was not healthy at bottom*”.<sup>72</sup>

Although the objects are not the same, it is surprisingly consistent with what the critic Hirabayashi, mentioned in the first chapter, said about Japanese writers in the early 1920s - "unhealthy tendencies". This tendency appeared in Japanese literature in the early 20th century because of the negative and depressing impact on the society of the economic stagnation at that

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<sup>71</sup> Hisaaki Yamanouchi. "Mishima Yukio and His Suicide." *Modern Asian Studies* 6, no. 1 (1972): 1–16. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/311983>.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*

time, yet it did not disappear nor be addressed with the recovery of the economy, but became more and more serious.

Going back to Seicho's fiction *Suna no Utsuwa*, Mishima and the organization depicted in the story actually acted in the same way - they were both worried about the future of Japanese society and dared to challenge the social order of the time. The members in the organization did not commit suicide as Mishima did, but they were doing the same thing as him - expressing their views and calling attention to the future of Japan through various social activities.

It is certain that both the detective fiction (of course, in addition to detective fictions, there were also many literature works that played the same role, such as Mishima's own creations) and the "unhealthy" view of society at the time were proof that Japanese society was still drowning in deep anxiety. This anxiety cannot be concealed or compensated for by a rapid economic recovery, which is why, in my opinion, the style of Japanese literature - especially detective fiction - remained dark and depressing during this period, even though the Japanese economy created the induplicable "East Asian Miracle".

A projection of this anxiety can also be found in Seicho's another short detective fiction, *The Demon* (Japanese: 鬼畜). The genre of this story is actually very vague; it involved the part of a police investigation into a case, but very subtle, ending only with the sentence "*The police started an investigation based on this clue.*" Yet the progress of the police investigation was not clarified, and it was an open ending.

The story is about a couple whose printing business has survived the economic recession. The wife continued to work hard every day, but the husband found a mistress and had 3

illegitimate children. However, a modern, large printing company with advanced equipment and technology emerged in their area, and the couple's business has lost its competitiveness.

*“The second disaster was the establishment of large, modern printing companies in the city, all with advanced technology and equipment. It was nothing but natural that the printing techniques of the old-fashioned craftsmen would lose out to the competition, and the Takenaka family's business soon fell into decline and struggled. Takenaka Muneyoshi started to take second-hand orders and process them for others, however, he had not contacted his former printing house customers for a long time and no one was willing to help him. He became frightened and restless because he could no longer provide for his mistress as he had done in the past.” (Matsumoto, 1958)<sup>73</sup>*

Although fictional, the scenario Seicho portrayed was in fact what the real Japan faced. In the 20th century, Japan industrialized faster than imaginable, and as Ma's analysis of Japanese silk exports mentioned earlier shows, it was technology that dramatically increased its competitiveness and stood out in the international market.<sup>74</sup> But industrialization inevitably came with the elimination of old technology or even craftsmen, which is precisely why the protagonist Takenaka's business has faced difficulty.

*“In fact, he felt that raising his little two-year-old son was so troublesome that it was better that he died. Frankly, he felt that his son's death had helped him, and this thought was growing stronger in his mind ..... After leaving his daughter at the zoo in Tokyo, Takenaka got on the train and kept sitting facing the window as the same view flew*

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<sup>73</sup> Seicho Matsumoto, 詐者の舟板 [The Scammer's Boat Board], 鬼畜 [The Demon]. (Tokyo: 筑摩書房, 1957).

<sup>74</sup> Debin Ma, “Why Japan, Not China, Was the First to Develop in East Asia: Lessons from Sericulture, 1850–1937,” *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 52, no. 2 (January 2004): 369–94, <https://doi.org/10.1086/380947>.



*backwards as he had come. He kept saying to himself in his mind, 'She is not my child, she is not my child.' ..... Yes, it did get easier; there was a sense of freedom from the resentment of the wife and the responsibility to the children.'”(Matsumoto, 1958)<sup>75</sup>*

Takenaka, the main character in the story, was surely drowning in anxiety. This anxiety stemmed from the financial pressure on him - when he is well-off, he has more than enough money to raise three children, but when his business is about to break, the children become a burden. In the dynamic of Takenaka's figure, a negative image of “transformation” is revealed.

The first transformation was his personal life. He was married, but he made a shift in his family relationships - getting a mistress. He actively made this transformation and thought he could handle the consequences that followed. The second transformation, on the other hand, was a transformation in the economic situation of his printing business when it faced difficulties, a transformation that passively received yet was closely related to the first. He wavered, felt difficult to choose, and gradually embarked on an "unhealthy" path - killing his children.

Throughout, Takenaka never thought about other possible options like changing his business to another industry, but was stubbornly hoping that their printing business could get better. He and his wife were in the lower class of society when they were young, and it was only later that they entered middle class as their business grew, yet their business almost broke and made them lose the identity of middle class people. It is clear that Takenaka and his wife were unwilling to accept this class change, which just corresponds to the social class anxiety mentioned in Gordon's book.

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<sup>75</sup> Seicho Matsumoto, 詐者の舟板 [The Scammer's Boat Board], 鬼畜 [The Demon]. (Tokyo: 筑摩書房, 1957).

By comparing Seicho and Ranpo's detective fiction, it is clear that both their stories reflect cultural anxiety (for example, about the rapid westernization of Japan), which becomes an interesting point because Ranpo and Seicho are considered to be writers with different styles, and as mentioned in Kawana's book, Ranpo himself thought it would be a good idea to distinguish fiction that focuses on detection and logic from those that are more related to social issues. Seicho's work, on the other hand, undoubtedly leans more toward the latter, yet their detective fictions appeared to share the same thoughts. Kawana explained about this in her book - this distinction made by Ranpo is actually not very valid, just as the postmodern has never replaced modernity, the two different styles of detective fiction, no matter which one they lean more toward, overlap each other.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Sari Kawana, *Murder Most Modern: Detective Fiction and Japanese Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

## Conclusion

*“Detective fiction always offers a glimpse of hope for maintaining control over one’s existence and hints for ways in which modern subjects can pursue their individual goals in life. As the agents serve as guides to the shady side of the modernity, they also elucidate for themselves and readers the parameters of their freedom within which to stylize their existence... Detective fiction decodes the general anxiety of such modern perils and repackages them in digestible, consumable form; this would seem to explain why the genre always enjoyed a certain surge in popularity after each disastrous historical event.” (Kawana, 2008)<sup>77</sup>*

As Kawana argued, anxieties embedded in detective fiction cannot be ignored, and as she suggested, both post-war periods became opportunities for the further development of the detective fiction style. However, a question is raised here - why did the post-war recession become a changing point of these anxieties, but not the economic recoveries that followed?

I think something posed in Ma’s article of how Japan was able to achieve significant economical improvements from its silk exports in the 20th Century gave an approach to this question. In the article, Ma analyzed the performance of Japan and China in silk exports in the early 20th century, specifically analyzing the reasons why Japan was able to outperform China - in conclusion, Japan was willing and able to learn from Western technology and quickly industrialized, which gave them an advantage in both silk productivity and quality.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Debin Ma, “Why Japan, Not China, Was the First to Develop in East Asia: Lessons from Sericulture, 1850–1937,” *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 52, no. 2 (January 2004): 369–94, <https://doi.org/10.1086/380947>.

At the same time, however, many other Asian countries have been in economic stagnation for over 100 years (e.g. China, India) and have not been able to recover from recession as quickly as Japan, which just corresponded to Ma's question in the end of the article - *Why Japan's ideological or cognitive switch had been earlier and more decisive than other countries?*<sup>79</sup>

Although I agree with Ma's point - *that the answer to this question is difficult to specify* - I would like to find some approach from the perspective of historical facts.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, before the 1850s, the door to Japan's foreign trade was completely closed under the Tokugawa government. It was not until The Black Ship Turmoil (Japanese: 黒船来航) that Japan was demanded by many other countries to start foreign trade and to sign the Kanagawa Treaty - a choice that was made passively. Although the subsequent Meiji government chose the same strategy (encouraging trade and embracing Western culture), it didn't change the fact that this change came too suddenly, considering that Japan had little exposure to foreign cultures during over 200 years under the governing of the Tokugawa Shogunate. As the one who overthrew the Tokugawa rule, the Meiji emperor made the "transformation" of the entire country too rapid, both for the sake of erasing their previous governing traces and for the sake of national development.

And this actually coincides with what happened in Seicho's *The Demon* - the transformation that happened to the main character Takenaka corresponds to the transformation of Japan itself. The first transformation seemed to have little impact at first, but has brought

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<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*

unprecedented economic pressure when the second one occurred. So how many transformations exactly did Japan go through?

The first was when The Black Ship Turmoil (Japanese: 黒船来航) occurred and changed the model of the whole country - Japan had to take the opportunity to open up to foreign trade; the second was when the Tokugawa government fell and Meiji government took control - a political change and instability; and the third was when Japan decided to participate in World War I, briefly gaining benefits but with an immature economic and financial system that led to inflation; the fourth was the post-war period, when Great Kanto Earthquake plunged the capital Tokyo's economic circle into recession again; the fifth was Japan's change of economic approach and adoption of Keynesian theory and obtained a brief economic recovery before World War II; the sixth was the defeat in the World War II as well as several atomic bomb attacks that eventually brought U.S dominance into Japan; the seventh was the end of the U.S. occupation and the beginning of Japan's fast economic recovery ..... and all of this happened in less than 100 years.

The economic and political instability of these 100 years was clear, and in Gordon's book he mentioned that during this period, some of Japan's traditions (or, cultures) were seen as obstacles to progress, and it was these various and continuous conflicts and transformations that evoked the national consciousness, which ultimately made Japan to what it is now.<sup>80</sup>

Another thing that could possibly be the approach of the answer to Ma's question is an economic comparison of other countries.

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<sup>80</sup> Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, Fourth edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

Going back to Johnson's point mentioned in Chapter 2 about a characteristic of Japan - "*culturally derived capacity to cooperate*", and building on this, Johnson extended it further to Japan's situational motivations - the problems of the Japanese economy such as lagging development and trade demand actually drove them forward.<sup>81</sup>

Japan's performance in its recoveries has considerable similarities, for example, they have always been promoting exports and have been learning from the Western fiscal system and economic theory. As to why the second recovery was more successful than the first, I argue that it was because Japan learned from past events: the 1920s depression brought the collapse of the banking system and inflation, as the government lacked economic awareness at the time - considering they've just opened their national door in 1868. However, in subsequent developments, Japan retained their strengths (sticking to the export trade that had benefited them in World War I) and made up for their earlier mistakes, as exemplified by their later modification on economic theories. Combined with the cultural characteristics, Japan's national cooperation contributed a lot that this miracle was born in the 1960s, thanks to the efforts of the entire country. This unique culture and an irreplicable historical background gave Japan the opportunity to learn from the past - and I think their uniqueness comes from the fact that their very first depression started with an economic boom. Japan went from boom to depression twice and eventually sustained the boom, and the experience of the boom enabled Japan to realize what would benefit them - export promotion.

More importantly, the initial 1920s depression was not a long-term internal problem that plagued Japan, but a short-term problem that emerged from the immaturity of various systems

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<sup>81</sup> Chalmers A. Johnson, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy, 1925 - 1975*, Reprinted (Stanford, Calif: Stanford Univ. Press, 2007).

after Japan opened to foreign trade in 1868. The economic stagnation in China and India can be presented as the opposite case, as their economic stagnation originated from a long-term internal crisis that hindered themselves, and that trying to fix the long-term problem is undoubtedly more arduous than the short-term: According to Elvin's theory of the "high level equilibrium trap", China continued to use agricultural development to sustain population growth, and that the growing population consumes the benefits of agricultural innovation, and this is a long turn internal problem that trapped China<sup>82</sup>; for India, the various problems left during the colonial period have become a hindrance. Japan did not experience such long-term internal problems, which is an important reason why it has survived multiple recessions and not fallen into long-term stagnation like China and India.

From the 1970s to the present, Japan's economy has continued to grow rapidly, and the previous crisis did not reappear. This also applies to Japanese detective fiction, whose prosperity has been maintained - after Edogawa Ranpo and Matsumoto Seicho, another representative detective fiction writer made his debut - Higashino Keigo. His style is similar to Seicho's in that both have strong ties to social issues and are considered as literature that exposes the dark side of society. In fact, I believe anxieties have not disappeared in Keigo's work, and in future I would like to read his work and further explore in what way and to what extent the anxieties inherited from the Meiji period have been retained in modern Japanese literature, and how it reflects the economic situation of the modern times.

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<sup>82</sup> Mark Elvin, *The Pattern of the Chinese Past: A Social and Economic Interpretation*, Repr. (Stanford, Calif: Stanford Univ. Press, 1990).

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