SOME EFFECTS OF THE WAR UPON JAPANESE SOCIETY

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UNTIL 1945, the Japanese nation had never suffered a really major defeat. Humiliations, actual as well as imaginary, had been imposed, but never outright and final loss of a war, never invasion and occupation since the descent of the Yamato people themselves from the high plain of heaven. Her remoteness in fact, and in the calculation of her leaders, her unique polity under the rule of a dynasty established for ages eternal in the minds of her people had saved Japan on each previous threatening occasion. But this time there was no escape. Japan lost the war, and all Japanese know that she lost. Just as, at an earlier date, the country provided a unique laboratory for the student of social stability and of cultural integration—a much neglected laboratory, unfortunately—so, now Japan offers the opportunity for a study of society under the most extreme forms of stress. What have been the effects of war, of catastrophically losing war, upon Japanese society?

PREWAR JAPANESE SOCIETY

Before trying to give an answer, it is necessary to state briefly the principles of the prewar social structure, of the culturally determined behavior patterns which upheld and expressed that structure, in a word, of Japan's so-called unique polity.¹

¹ The author was a member of the Civilian Morale Division of the United States Strategic Bombing Survey from October 1945 through June 1946. The months October to January were spent in Japan collecting information on civilian morale and attitudes during and after the war; the following months were spent in analysis of the data and preparation of a report thereon. Information was collected by means of polling a random sample of some 3,000 Japanese, by special interviews with selected prominent persons, and by the study of such documentary evidence as was available. Since the author had spent a number of years, both in Japan and the United States, as a student of Japanese anthropology, he took particular interest in noting ethnographic items and in recording aspects of behavior which might bear upon the subject of cultural or social change. The conclusions presented in this paper are the author’s, and the United States Strategic Bombing Survey is not to be held responsible for any of them.

² It must be recognized that authorities differ, to some extent in viewpoint but even more in terminology, in their discussions of Japanese social structure and culture. The account given in the next few pages summarizes the author’s ideas, deriving both from personal observation and from reading. In all essentials they are the same as already recorded in his paper, “A sketch of Japanese society,” Journal of the American Oriental society, 66 (1946), 219–29.
The social hierarchy is of primary importance. Devotion to one’s superior is the universal obligation; a sincere person feels no other so deeply, for ties of affection are dangerous. Even benevolence to inferiors may be suspected. This devotion, of course, is directed to individuals rather than to groups, castes, or classes.

Each person belongs to a definite social class, which has a recognized status. Such a status implies certain functions but always includes the privilege of directing inferiors and the duty of obeying superiors. All members of a given class are supposed to adhere to sharply defined behavior patterns in accordance with these functions. Class-determined behavior has dominated the actions not only of such groups as rulers, merchants, farmers, but also of groupings based upon principals of age, sex, and wealth. Each group is thus cut into several smaller strata of greater or less prestige. In their social relationships, how people act is determined by their exact place in society.8

Throughout the Pacific world at least, there is a strongly held belief in the presence in certain men as well as certain objects of an automatic power known as mana. In a way, it may be thought of as a transferable fluid similar to electricity: it evokes awe, but it can be managed; it carries no connotation of moral good or evil. The concept of mana, according to Haring,4 pervades social structure as well as other aspects of Japanese culture. One may by deeds demonstrate the possession of this power, and a hero will attract great numbers of devotees. But more commonly mana and the status which accompanies it are ascribed rather than achieved. In either case, the possession of this power is likely to be represented by some outward and visible sign. Thus, in old Japan, samurai carried swords which were felt to be repositories of the power; and persons with any considerable amount of mana were commonly referred to as kami, a word which has been commonly—but understandably—mistranslated as “God.”5

In a society where all social relationships are with superiors or inferiors rather than with equals, encounters with strangers lead to much uncer-

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5 Many scholars reject the idea that the concept of mana is useful in an analysis of Japanese culture. It is true that they have no term in their own language to express this concept: the word kami refers to a person or object possessing a certain dread power, not to the power itself. But the existence and multiplicity of kami imply the existence of the power. For the sacred power of the sword, see G. B. Sansom, Japan, a short cultural history (New York, 1943), 262–63.
tainty, because their hierarchical position and obligations are unknown. Those who do not owe loyalty to the same superior cannot be depended upon. Those who owe loyalty to the same superior feel mutual responsibility to him rather than to one another. In small localities, where everyone knows everyone else, the varied obligations of different families are mutually known. Co-operation for specific purposes, such as road repair, house building, or shrine maintenance are possible because no uncertainty exists, hence accommodations can be made. Because of the loyalty pattern, although family unity is strong, any rebel against the ancestral kami or the living overlord will tend to be rejected rather than supported.

Strict conformity to quite precise rules of behavior, found so helpful in reminding everyone constantly of their exact social status, has not interfered with the integration of many foreign techniques into Japanese life. Both magical and scientific practice require close adherence to exact formulae, whether in reciting a charm or mixing two chemicals, if the desired result is to be attained. Chinese etiquette and Occidental business practice have been assimilated with attention to detail, and it is thoroughly correct to conform to Occidental behavior patterns when in a situation felt to be Occidental.

The all-pervasiveness of conventional behavior and—if one be sincere—attitudes is both enjoyed and felt as a frustration. It is certainly enjoyed as an art form, a type of acting which will be most appreciated if conducted in a really polished fashion; it is very probably enjoyed as a form of self-aggression. Spectacular martyrdom, the kamikaze spirit, may be put down as acting, but the constant emphasis upon austerity, the neglect of comfort, the hypochondria which are also noticeable seem perhaps more like masochism. However, because of the almost complete lack of privacy in Japanese life, even these may attract the admiring attention of an audience. At the same time this lack of privacy gives the actor no opportunity to relax from his role. It is a strain upon the nervous system to attempt complete self-control at all times. Since benevolence to inferiors is not expected, one can discharge some of one's aggression upon them. But even this will not overcome the loneliness imposed upon a person all of whose contacts are with inferiors and superiors. Affection may be sought, covertly, timidly, but one dare not give it, for fear of arousing his superior's wrath. That same superior, also human despite his kami-

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6 See J. F. Embree, Suye Mura, a Japanese village (Chicago, 1939), chap. 4.
7 See G. Gorer, Japanese character structure (New Haven, 1942).
8 Ibid.
hood, is himself lonely, knows the weaknesses of his devotees, and consequently views their apparent devotion with some cynicism.

In such a society the form is usually more important than the reality. Sincerity, the anticipation of and conformity to the leaders' interests, is valued over truthfulness. Even the superior should be lied to, if the lie puts him at ease. During the war, for instance, false reports of local victories were often made, as in the case of battles as late as those of the Philippine sea in 1944. As might be expected, they proved costly to Japanese strategy. Cynically minded superiors might discount them, and doubtless did so, but at the same time they must have found it difficult to estimate just how much to discount. The results of such polite lies, however, are not always disastrous. At Christmas time 1945, after the surrender of Japan, members of the occupation forces received a ration of locally made whiskey, the product of a very reputable firm. Each bottle bore the label: "Especially distilled for the Allied Forces of Occupation. Aged in the wood 5 years."

Despite the overthrow of landed feudalism by the Meiji restoration, the basic principles and weltanschauung which upheld the social structure already existing remained. People's loyalties were channeled in the same direction as before, but, being more conscious now of foreign countries, they were also conscious of their own "unique polity"; and all loyalties were joined, eventually, beneath the throne. The introduction of occidental scientific techniques only reinforced the mechanistic, manipulative view of the nature of the world and of man. Contradictory concepts, such as the Christian ideology of sin, prayer, and foregiveness, were simply rejected as rather silly. Now that the stakes were higher, skill and determination became even more valuable; there does seem to have been a heightening of nervous tension during the past two generations.

In the cities new social classes began to form, and the task of assimilating them into the existing hierarchy was not always easy. There was little trouble about putting women to work in factories. Women had always worked, and regulations insuring that their wages should go to their male superiors were not difficult to devise or even to enforce. But the extension of the money-wage system itself was a most unsettling factor. Money gives the individual too much freedom of choice and permits one to obtain advantages not socially recognized as his own by status. Landlords were always careful to collect rent from tenant farmers in kind

*E. H. Norman, Japan's emergence as a modern state (New York, 1940), especially chap. 2.
but to sell for cash.\textsuperscript{10} Conforming to occidental rules of business procedure was obviously correct, yet often it led to unseemly results; financiers, traditionally despised, became so powerful as to force their way, as a class, to the very top of the social ladder. And, as the cities grew rapidly in size, vast numbers of people came to live apart from the watchful eyes of their relatives and fellow-villagers. Habits learned from their parents in rural areas usually kept them in line, but even their potential freedom caused distress to those above.

The old feudal leaders and the new financial leaders, jealous though they might be of one another, had to unite against this tendency. A shift in position on the ladder is not nearly so upsetting as the collapse of the ladder, after all. Both official indoctrination and police repression were therefore intensified during the present century, and even before. Conscriptio (the right to bear arms had previously been restricted to samurai) accompanied compulsory education, or, rather, compulsory instruction, in the 1870's.\textsuperscript{11} Insofar as possible it was intended that all Japanese should learn to behave like samurai. The thought control law accompanied universal adult male suffrage fifty years later. The cynicism of Japan's leaders assured them that all Japanese do not act as samurai. As traditional social controls broke down new ones were imposed. The only liberty lies in the inefficiency of the execution of the new controls. This inefficiency has been, in fact, considerable, as might be expected in a society wherein it is so often correct to lie to one's superior.

\textbf{WARTIME ADJUSTMENT PROBLEMS}

It is quite unnecessary to describe in this paper how Japan went to war, although the events leading up to the plunge, as well as the method of the plunge itself, were in part determined by the existing social structure of the country. It should be pointed out, however, that going into war against the United States caused a feeling of shame or guilt to very few. The attack upon Pearl Harbor was regarded as a skillful maneuver, and one which took determination, even daring. Some Japanese, knowing the United States far better than did the dominating forces of the nation, were appalled; they realized that only catastrophe could result, but they were very few according to the testimony received by the U. S. Strategic Bombing Survey. Interestingly enough, a good number of such individuals, including some whom I met in Tokyo after the war, were kept out

\textsuperscript{10} F. Utley, \textit{Japan's feet of clay} (New York, 1937), chap. 4.
\textsuperscript{11} E. O. Reischauer, \textit{Japan, past and present} (New York, 1946), chap. 9, especially pp. 120 and 127.
of harm's way, away from the clutch of the kempei, all through the war by their superiors. It was deemed prudent to have persons who could be called pro-American kept in reserve, as a form of insurance, just in case. This recalls to mind the practice of great feudal families during Japan's medieval civil wars, many of which divided their forces, one branch fighting on each side; thus the family name and property might survive no matter which side won the war.

On becoming a soldier, a man assumes the duties and the power of the samurai, but not before. As the war went on, this dichotomy became more and more pronounced. The government realized the danger of such an attitude, and both laws and propaganda were used to combat it. Emotional ties with those in the army were strong, and wages offered in war plants were, by existing Japanese standards, high—high enough to depopulate houses of prostitution in some cases. Loyalty to the throne was complete. So, as long as the army and navy advanced, there was little trouble. People worked in war plants and accepted smaller rations. The conflict of interests and duties between soldier and civilian appeared (save for the inevitable complaint of businessmen that the military interfered with customary methods of production) only in the preparation of air-raid defenses. The military, though insisting upon control, would not provide materials and gave only the most generalized instructions. Their business was to win battles, not to defend civilians. The civilians, under the circumstances, refused to take the matter seriously. In their most agreeable manner, they said "Yess, yess" and then went about their own business.

The civilians had plenty of troubles of their own, to be sure. Even during the years of war with China alone, more and more restrictions had been put upon civilian consumption. With a much greater war to be waged, many restrictions became prohibitions. Electric light bulbs vanished from the market, and lumber for house repairs could not be found. Rice was rationed, and then the ration was cut, and then beans, potatoes, and other inferior articles were included in the rice ration. Then the ration was cut again. Medical drugs became very scarce—a source of much distress to people who depended upon this type of therapy so much. As

12 Kempei is sometimes translated as gendarmerie, sometimes as military police. A branch of the armed forces, their function was to maintain security, especially military security. The concept of military security, of course, enlarges during any time of strife, and the activity of the kempei grew apace from 1931 on. Considerable jealousy existed between them and the regular police as a result.

13 Factual data for the war period is derived both from verbal and documentary information received by the author while in Japan, and from news reports from that country.
year followed year, there was always less of everything: less clothing, less shelter, less food, and the average civilian had never had too much of any of these.

The natural result was a booming black market. Long before the war was over, the rationing system had collapsed, not in form but in fact. People had to spend more and more of their time and money in the search for food. Farmers hoarded; city people hungered. The trains became overburdened with people visiting their country cousins. The police were supposed to search their baggage for food, but arrangements could be made to avoid this. In at least one city the leader of the local chapter of the Fujinkai (Lady's Aid-to-the-War-Effort Society) told me that she had fixed things up with the local police authorities so that each woman could carry in, once daily, a back-load of garden produce. Only a second trip would be regarded as really black market. When directions from Tokyo which stress the importance of keeping women shoppers within their ration are so interpreted, one can see that hunger was great. One can also see that the duty of devotion to the overlord does not include starving one's family. In theory, of course, it is absolute devotion, and in fact it has resulted in killing one's family and self—as at Saipan. Apparently the limit is reached when the death is not spectacular.

Repression by the authorities also increased during the war. No real confidence has ever been placed in the masses by their rulers; in fact, the suspicion of the masses seems to be far greater than necessary. Among some it reaches the stage of real delusion; numerous well-to-do persons with whom I spoke voiced the fear of a communist uprising, in the next breath reminding me—and perchance themselves—that all the Japanese were utterly devoted to the Emperor and the system which he represents. The fears of the cynic encourage gullibility, in contrast to the doubts of the skeptic. With such fears, it was natural that the kempei and thought police became ever more arbitrary and ruthless. Christians and those who knew English were constantly persecuted as a matter of course; and in at least one instance, at the city of Taira, in order "to make the punishment fit the crime" members of a local Shinto sect who had been known to state, during peace time, that peace is better than war, and that all men are brothers, were sentenced as an object lesson to their brotherhood to labor in coal mines beside American prisoners-of-war. But this way

may well represent merely a wry sense of humor on the part of the local police chief.

Still, the restrictions did increase enough to be very obvious to the average man. And they were arbitrary enough to interfere with the normal functioning of the economy, which may be of more practical importance. As rapidly as new factory hands were trained, they were drafted into the army. Plant managers in Yamagata, Sendai, and Yokosuka all mentioned this to me as one of their major troubles during the war. Farmers were taken to cut trees or dig pine roots during planting or harvest time—and this when agricultural prices were high. Landlords were intensely annoyed, when, to facilitate the government collection of crops, they were directed to accept rent in cash rather than rice. The Chief of the Patriotic Agricultural Association at Mizusawa spoke of this as a "most inconvenient method."\(^{16}\)

In short, the pressure was really put on the entire population. Then the bombers came.

**EFFECTS OF THE BOMBINGS**

To pressure and worry, the bombing, especially during the last few months of the war, added actual physical calamities. Conflicts in interest which had been latent came into the open. Even the ordinary forms of politeness, upon which the Japanese set so much store, began to break down. Confidence in victory, which all but a very few had felt during the first three years of war, took a nose dive. Analysis of the testimony received by the Civilian Morale Division of the U. S. Strategic Bombing Survey, shows that whereas only one-tenth of the Japanese people anticipated defeat in December 1944, nearly half expected it by June 1945; and at least two-thirds felt that their country could not win by the time of the surrender. This realization of the truth took place not only as a direct, immediate result of the bombing. Each bomb that burned a civilian's house set in motion a chain-reaction of social explosions. The fear of bombs to come spurred millions into action which tended to upset the precarious balance of the social structure.

For instance, one-quarter of the urban population left the cities to take refuge with their country cousins, or, at any rate, to flee the horror which Japanese cities became. Stories of the horror lost nothing in the telling, and there were continuous complaints by local officials that

\(^{15}\) Ibid.

\(^{16}\) The new method, adopted for the purpose of making the rationing system easier, has had, in fact, a truly revolutionary effect economically. For landlords, it certainly is inconvenient.
evacuees brought low morale to the countryside. This complaint certainly was justified. In general the evacuees were women, the better-educated and the young. Under happier circumstances such people tended to accept the rosy promises of their leaders, but they were most sensitive to the results of bombing. Just as Japanese indoctrination and propaganda had persuaded them before, so American bombs persuaded them now. The experience of the evacuees was, however, only that of their fellow countrymen to a heightened degree; consequently, the tales they had to tell were quite credible. Their departure caused other great dislocations. Many of them were war-workers whose labor could ill be spared. Many of them were wives of key employees, and there was a constant tendency for such men to pay long and frequent visits to their evacuated families. Absenteeism among those with family members in the country was much higher than among other workers.

Bomb damage and fear of bombing also caused a tremendous amount of absenteeism. The Japanese are fortunate in lacking the compulsive attitude toward work which some cultures stress.\(^\text{17}\) Reporting for work after a bombing, whether or not the factory was hit, appears to have been rare. At Sendai, for instance, where absenteeism at the largest industrial plant had already, during the war, risen from an average of 10 per cent daily to 20 per cent, over 70 per cent ceased work entirely after the one and only air raid on the city. Yet the plant itself was quite undamaged. As the manager told me: "No, the plant was not hit. We had just evacuated eleven autogyros to a near-by field, the day before the raid. They were hit!"

Prices were high, food was hard to get. There was little profit to one's family in remaining at work when the best way to get food was to seek it in the near-by countryside. The police visited and admonished absentees, but with little success. Sometimes, I was told at Taira, they even spoke of cutting the rations of absentee. But any efforts to keep a man at work served to remind him all too forcefully of the difference between his interests and those of his employer, a difference which his past indoctrination in the peculiar beauties of Japan's unique polity and social hierarchy had attempted to obscure.

The results of bombing and consequent evacuation would undoubtedly have been far worse if it had not been for one aspect of that polity—the strength of the family system. Just as in the search for food, one could

go to one's country cousins, so, if evacuated, they were the obvious people with whom to take refuge. The wholesale invasion of the countryside by over 8,000,000 victims was highly resented by very many rural people. Many of their objections were well founded. As one rural schoolmaster said: "There were fallings-out between our people and the evacuees. There simply wasn't enough food for everyone, and the people felt that additional months complicated the situation, while the evacuees felt that they had as much right as anyone to eat."

Only the fact that over 80 per cent of evacuees found relatives with whom to live saved the situation from catastrophe. It was obvious, as a result of the questioning done by members of the U. S. Strategic Bombing Survey, that neither guests nor hosts were too happy about the situation, but the mutual obligation of cousins to the same ancestors kept friction beneath the surface, save for a tendency on the part of the country cousins to lord it over their now-dependent guests. In the past, people in the cities had tended to feel that those in the villages were rather uncouth. Villagers, too, had suffered much from a lower standard of living. The average farm family had been sinking deeper and deeper into debt, and many had become dependent upon the earnings of their children in the cities to save them. Now farm prices were high, even the legal ones; and much more could be had from the black market. The rents could be paid in cash. So country folk felt, for the first time, a sense of superiority over the urban people who had come to them for help. It would have been foolish of them not to take advantage of their opportunity. After all, they too suffered; in fact, the proportion, among rural people, who thought that farmers suffered most in the war was greater than the proportion, among urban people, who thought that city folk did.

People all over Japan became more and more conscious of their own troubles and of the better fortune of other classes than ever before. A majority of those interviewed after the war was over said that they had been critical of their home-front leaders, which is exactly what those leaders feared. Almost half noticed that there was less social cohesion: people quarreling publicly, acting with undue selfishness. More than a third recognized that suffering was not equal among all the people. Evacuees, who were, as pointed out above, a particularly sensitive group, provided the most interesting evidence on this score. Among them the poor were sensitized to inequality of suffering, the rich to social cohesion. Few of the rich could bring themselves to admit that their class had suffered

18 R. Benedict, *The chrysanthemum and the sword* (Boston, 1946), 137.
less than the poor; and this was true whether they themselves had evacu-
ated or had remained at home. But many of the richer class lost faith in the
attitude of the people towards one another when they evacuated. Poor
people, on the other hand, appear to have retained their belief, no matter
whether they evacuated or not, in social cohesion; but many poor evacuees
came to believe that the rich suffered less than they. Social cohesion, for
the rich, implies recognition by others of their own superior status—
deferential treatment by poor country cousins, for instance—and ap-
parently they no longer received such deference, after being forced to
evacuate. The country cousins were now at the top. No one had ever
defferred to the poor, and whether in the city or in the country, they did
not anticipate such treatment. What they observed was that rich evacuees
could buy things which they themselves couldn't afford, so that their
jealousy of the rich increased. These contrasting reactions are symptoms
of the weakening of the social structure under the impact of evacuation.

Under the watchful eye of the kempei there were few ways in which
class conflict could be shown overtly in Japan. If awe of the kami cannot
control those of lower status, the power in the swords of the samurai is
always available. Nevertheless, a few people did begin to speak out in
public in a most unseemly fashion as incendiary bombing became more
intense, and as the measures taken for protection against it revealed their
utter futility. The local police tended to turn a deaf ear to subversive
statements by those who had just seen their families burnt to death, but
if they could not recover their composure within a day or two, it became
necessary to "rectify their ideas by coercive measures," as they so nicely
put it. Arrests for lèse majesté rose to alarming numbers. But not very
much could be done about people who were too sick to work, or who had
fled to the country, or who became absent-minded in their business. And
these tendencies began to grow on the people generally.

By the summer of 1945 the extent of popular apathy was frightening.
Everyone expressed the most loyal sentiments, not only to the police,
but to one another. Yet nothing worth while could any longer be ac-
complished. The most essential repairs could no longer be made. Even
trains ran behind schedule—something previously unthinkable. According
to numerous psychiatrists who were interviewed by the U. S. Strategic
Bombing Survey, the increase in psychoses during the war was negligible,
but vast numbers showed neurotic symptoms. Women ceased to menstru-
ate in many cases; others ran dry of milk and could no longer feed their
babies. Tidiness declined; homes were neglected as women spent more
and more time searching for food. Food became an obsession. Government broadcasters indulged in obvious fantasies: projects to rebuild Tokyo underground, to resettle all the evacuees in Hokkaido in a month, to arm everyone with bamboo spears in order to resist invasion. This last item may have been planted by the surrender party among the bureaucrats, which had finally gained office under Suzuki; for many of our informants said that, when they heard of this government proposal, they knew surrender to be close at hand and began to prepare for it. It would, indeed, be a typically Japanese indirect method of showing that the jig was up, being obviously impractical but very noble. Yet many—particularly among the young women—appear to have been ready to so defend themselves.

In retrospect, it appears that the social structure of Japan, although it had received very severe shocks, was not yet cracking. Anyone who could calculate ahead, however, anyone who had high status which he wished to preserve at all costs, must have realized that there was only one last desperate expedient—surrender before invasion. The Emperor realized this, and so did the men around him. For weeks they worked, at first very secretly, to prepare the stage; and, at the correct time, in council, the Emperor himself spoke, commanding acceptance of the Potsdam terms. The War Minister committed suicide, some of his subordinates tried unsuccessfully to rescue Hirohito from himself, and in the famous broadcast, the voice of the Emperor himself told all the people that the war was over, and that Japan had lost.

POST-SURRENDER ADJUSTMENTS

The dilemma had been solved by another act of determination and skill—Japan’s unique polity had been saved. The swords of the samurai had been drained of their dread power, but that power had all flowed back to the kami who is himself the source of power. The soldiers had failed in their duty to win battles, but the Emperor had saved the Japanese nonetheless—he had given them back the lives which they owed him. And the people, only human after all, resigned to death but only too glad to live, revered him perhaps as never before. Their obligation to him, theoretically immeasurable before, was now immeasurable in fact.

As a result, when the occupation by American forces began, the reception was entirely different from what many had expected. The people really were tired of war and had been told they might use their own military as scapegoats. They were in terror of mass attack by the conquering

Americans, but since this did not occur, their relief often blossomed forth into extravagant adulation. Those same Americans had also been prepared for the worst, and so they too were relieved by their astonishing reception. Of course, there were innumerable problems of accommodation to be solved—what status did the occupation forces have in the new social hierarchy, for instance? I may say that most of them have been more readily assimilated to their correct position in this structure than were many urban Japanese in the old days—they are tourists and are treated as such. Some, whose behavior does not conform to this status, have been placed elsewhere; but as a general rule, the Japanese have succeeded best when treating American soldiers like tourists.

Meanwhile the internal rearrangement of the society continues. No striking alterations in behavior were apparent during the time when the United States Strategic Bombing Survey was making its investigations. The greater part of Tokyo had vanished, of course, but that has happened before, as after the great earthquake and fire of 1923. Most of the mess which results from bombing had already been removed by October 1945; people had become tidy and neat again, their self-control appeared to be restored, their apathy to be vanishing. As it became possible to examine matters more closely, it was obvious that much of this was, in a sense, somnambulism. Most individuals were still in a daze, their correct behavior was largely the result of ingrained habits being reasserted now that the awful tension of the summer had passed. Much activity was random or misdirected. In clearing away debris, tidy piles in one place were moved to another place near by, just as tidy but just as much in the way. The tendency to regard orders as automatically self-executing had increased, but in reality bureaucratic efficiency had all but collapsed with the burning of records, the loss of a unifying purpose for collective activity, and the scattering of minor officials throughout the provinces. The restoration of courtesy had not been accompanied by a renewal of consideration—both families and individuals had become more self-centered than ever.

Of course this social atomization was to be expected. Organizations had been disintegrated physically as well as psychically by bombing. Mutual dependence was simply not safe. If you did not go to the country for food, you starved: trains were incredibly packed by food-seekers. If you did not collect debris wherever you could to build yourself a shack, you slept in the open: police (who in the past had kept careful records of the location and activities of everyone) had lost all track of people's addresses. If you did not lay hands on and sell or barter what you could, you had no
livelihood: most large-scale industry had gone up in smoke. But the interesting thing is that almost everyone still had the vitality to carry on: beggars remained amazingly scarce. There was no abjectness towards the conquerors: Japan had never lost a war, but all Japanese are used to being given orders, and they accept them agreeably. Perhaps, as I found it phrased in a Japanese novel, "They took confidence in the fact that they could not help themselves."

The power and prestige of the samurai had clearly passed to America and particularly became concentrated in the person of Makasa Gensui, General MacArthur. In a sense he is a new Shogun; certainly many people render him the deference and the gifts which are due a very mighty feudal lord. One of our most revealing encounters in this connection came at New Year's 1946. A farmer's wife whose name had been picked by lot as an informant for the U. S. Strategic Bombing Survey appeared for her interview with her husband, who carried a huge box full of the most valued of the family's possessions, as her gift to the general for New Year's. Nor were we alone in receiving such presents—the Supreme Commander received thousands of them.

But in another way his position is quite different. The Shogun of feudal days stood between the Emperor and the people and did his utmost to prevent access by anyone else to the throne. The Supreme Commander stands outside the social hierarchy and does not attempt such intervention. The Shogun, and later the government under the constitution, acted in the name of the sovereign; MacArthur makes it very plain in all his directives that he is giving orders to the imperial government, which they must execute. And his representatives are in a position to interfere with administration all the way down the line. At first the direction was largely, in fact, confined to the topmost levels of the bureaucracy, but, as time goes on, this would appear to be less true. Such directness is really unprecedented in Japan; and it has, also, the quality of providing an alternative line of appeal for a dissatisfied individual. Should this advantage be exploited by those who have cause to dissent, it can shake the foundations out from under the social hierarchy.

During the first few months of the American occupation this advantage was not, to my knowledge, or to the knowledge of those whom I questioned, often exploited. The social fabric retained, or had perhaps regained,
much of its stability. The technique by which surrender was accomplished was a first step in this direction, for those who have profited most from Japan’s unique polity are quite sophisticated in manipulating it. The extensive and rather successful entertainment of American officers was a second step. The following-up of the U. S. Strategic Bombing Survey’s morale polls by other polls, undertaken by the Japanese, which questioned the same people, was a minor precaution which came to our attention. And of course the anticipated growth of Russian-American tension has been exploited from the beginning by many Japanese. In Tokyo, Sendai, Yokosuka, and Mizusawa property-owning individuals spoke to me of the wickedness of the Russians. In Tokyo and Sendai they added that Japan would gladly be our ally against them. But quite possibly none of these maneuvers were really necessary. People of lower status in Japan are so unused to the concept of appeal from their superiors, and so convinced—quite justly—of the necessity of being agreeable to them (although not always obedient), and so reluctant—again with reason—to stand out against them, and to support any leadership which might spring from within their own class, that only a few, and they as individuals, realized that they had an opportunity. Heroes may attract devotees, but they are rare.

As time went on, some organized groups, such as the communists, do seem to have attempted to take greater advantage of the dual line of authority in the country. They were not, however—at least in most cases—groups which were attempting to promote ideas, or to represent interests, in which the occupation forces placed much confidence. As a rule, local government officials were the first persons to come in contact with any Americans who arrived in a city, town, or village. And, quite naturally, they did their best to be friendly, to see to it that no contacts existed between the visitors and any dissatisfied individuals, and to explain the local situation to their own advantage. Certainly this was true in most places visited by teams of the U. S. Strategic Bombing Survey.

Entertainments were given in most cities and towns, by officials, to the visitors. We were told who the correct people to interview were. Guides, at times, simply couldn’t find individuals whom we ourselves had selected. This was not the result of an elaborate plot—it was just the operation of the prudence which bureaucracy practices for its own protection. It was assisted, furthermore, by the complete absence of our concept of public opinion on the part of the Japanese. The village mayor of Anetai, when asked about what people thought of government actions as they applied locally, said at first: “I was told by my supervisors what to tell them to
think.” Only after being pressed did he add, quite simply, “Why, they thought what I was instructed to tell them to think.” Lest this seem simply an official point of view, it should be pointed out that quite a few of our informants—picked by lot from among the general population—simply could not believe that anyone would care for their personal opinions. Some obediently submitted to interview but gave answers to nothing at all. Several women sent their husbands or brothers in their stead. One passed on her invitation to a richer cousin. The substitutes were as astonished as the selectees at our insistence upon talking with those on our own list. If the group thinks a given thought, the highest ranking member should express it, after all.

This was quite apparent from the results of the first postwar elections in the spring of 1946. The electoral law was, and for some time had been, so devised that, from each constituency, more members were returned than any single voter may vote for. Thus, in a five-member constituency, one voted for only three names. If political parties are organized on a strong nationwide basis, this results in a type of proportional representation. What actually happened, in many instances, was that individuals of high status, or groups representing a local interest, selected dependable bureaucrats or persons of well-known family connections, who might or might not affiliate with a “party.” In any case, since several were to be elected, an unseemly man-against-man contest was avoided. As a result, those connected with the most outspoken local groups win; their names are before the public, voters are reminded of their obligations and impressed by the reputation of the candidate or his overlord. The big names get the votes. This was the case before the war, and it was the case in 1946, perhaps more than ever with woman suffrage in effect. By 1947, the Social Democratic party had become rather well organized—as Japanese parties go—and the two conservative groups, the Progressives and the Democrats, combined to “reform” the election law, in order to reduce its proportional representation features. Man-against-man contests are unseemly as between gentlemen but apparently are quite correct when waged against upstarts. Affairs of state are too important, too dangerous, for ordinary folk to deal with. So, despite defeat and occupation, the ruling groups of old still run the show, from the top down.

The internal conflicts which began to show during the war, however, have not been stilled. The way of appeal is still open, and a skillful and determined man might exploit the situation to revise the structure of Japanese society quite drastically. Farmers, for instance, are still in an
unusually advantageous position. With inflation growing daily worse, they have food for sale, and more and more they have been hoarding it. Tenants still pay rent in cash, despite the wails of their landlords. They have always been agreeable rather than obedient—government schools have not succeeded in indoctrinating country people so well as city people, since the techniques used were adapted for the cities. And farmers have always known their status—a definite one, though lowly. As a consequence, they were, by many, thought to need indoctrination less, being less exposed to temptation. As an example of this lack of indoctrination I cite the fact that over twice as big a proportion of rural people than urban told the U. S. Strategic Bombing Survey interviewers that the Emperor should be deposed.\(^{21}\) Furthermore, there aren’t so many policemen in the country, and a man who has known his neighbors since childhood can more safely predict their reactions and so feels more at ease with them. And there is a tendency, very likely unconscious but clearly to be seen by an outsider, for each locality to give its own interpretation of national rules, nor is this tendency new.\(^{22}\)

It may quite validly be objected that, in politics at least, the rural areas remain strongholds of conservatism in Japan. The most recent elections bear this out. Their conservatism is, however, that of an era even older than that of the attempts at indoctrination by the makers of prewar Japan. The greater number of farmers retain, very strongly, their established, feudal loyalties, their acceptance of the political leadership of men of higher status, even when there are economic issues, such as the method of paying rents, which may separate them. Thus they may be only too pleased to take advantage of every government measure which obviously makes life easier but continue to vote for local candidates who are opposed to such measures. This phenomenon is by no means purely Japanese.

Farmers are not the only self-reliant group. Craftsman, with the development of modern machinery, might be expected to disappear, and this has been to some extent true. But, due to the decentralized nature of many industrial processes in Japan,\(^{23}\) there are many more people of some mechanical skill or, more often, ingenuity and persistence, than one might expect. The destruction wrought by bombing has forced self-reliance upon many, and their activity extends not only to commerce and trade but also

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\(^{21}\) In both cases, of course, the proportion was very small indeed.


to production. Many streets in Tokyo, during the winter of 1945–46, became lined with petty tradesmen selling minor consumer goods which they or their families had fashioned out of war surplus materials. In smaller towns, we found such activities as the repair of electric light bulbs. It was noticed that informants drawn from this class of craftsmen, whether the craft were old or new, expressed a considerably more independent viewpoint concerning the government and were more willing to criticize leaders, than other individuals.24 Both at Yamagata and Sendai, I was told by informants that “artisans felt it unreasonable that they should go to work in factories.” No more than to farmers did it occur to them that they should take political action, but they thought that those whose place it was to engage in politics ought to conduct affairs in a more successful manner, and they expressed less reverence for those of higher status.

Both of these groups are apparently secure in their minds because they are able to produce goods, and because they know their place. The vast numbers of footloose people—women, refugees, and young unskilled workers, the returned soldiers—are at the other extreme. Most cling to the verbal symbols associated with Japan’s unique polity, expressing unanimous devotion to the Emperor, incredulity at defeat, belief of Japan’s spiritual strength,25 little criticism of anything, and utter bewilderment about the future. Some have become bitter, never at the Emperor, of course, but at his advisors, particularly the military, and most specifically Tojo. He is the scapegoat. Democracy, they declaim, must replace militarism, but just what this implies it proved very difficult to make out. One mayor, entertaining me at lunch, spoke of his hatred of the military, his admiration for Lincoln, and his devotion to the democratic ideals of America. Meanwhile the chief of the city rationing bureau served us as butler, bowing and sucking in his breath politely as the mayor snapped out peremptory orders. Perhaps democracy means following the instructions of General MacArthur. The outgiving, boisterous efficiency, and ease of American soldiers have aroused the admiration of the young, and of numerous more sophisticated adults, but I have no evidence that the Japanese consider these qualities to be either the cause or the effect of democratic practices.

There was still, during the first few months after the surrender, con-

25 About one-tenth of the women, but no man, spoke of the Kamikaze corps as Japan’s greatest strength during the war.
siderable dread of the police. Although in all the places which we visited
the police claimed to be the protectors of the people, especially from the
kempei, it was quite obvious that the average Japanese was just plain
scared of them, and wanted to have nothing to do with them. In reaching
those who had been, by lot, selected for interview, we found that using
guides from the rationing office, or from the local community clubs (tonari
gumi), brought much better results than when the police were depended
upon. Contact with the police rendered individuals incoherent in many
cases, and, at best, evasive. Assurance that their answers would remain
confidential were clearly unconvincing to anyone who saw us depending
upon the police. The more neighborly approach of community or ration-
ing officials did not intimidate even the old ladies or young girls. Such
informants as these, although amazed at our interest in their opinions,
were at any rate not terrorized. The more recent introduction of new
members into the police and the reformation of their haughty attitude
are reputed to have altered this popular feeling, so that many people
now take advantage of police leniency. If this be true, it is only a natural
result of a reversal of positions in the hierarchy, of the same nature as that
which took place during the war when city people had to flee for refuge
to their country cousins.

Since women, in wartime Japan, were forced into much more active
participation in the economic and even the political life of the country
than had previously been the case, one may wonder whether they also may
take advantage of the altered situation. Very little evidence that this would
happen came to my attention. The pre-existing pattern of relationships
in Japan placed individual women beneath individual men, rather than
one sex on a higher plane than the other—this is quite in accord with the
general principles of social hierarchy as expressed in the opening para-
graphs of this article. And nothing which has happened during or since
the war is of such a nature as to alter this personal loyalty of wife to hus-
band or daughter to father. Women, in the absence of men, have fre-
quently deputized for them—during the war at least 10 per cent of tonari
gumi heads in Sendai were women. Just as in Texas Mrs. Ferguson re-
placed her husband as governor after his impeachment, so, in Japan
since the surrender, wives of politicians banned from office have been
elected in their stead. Some leaders of the Fujinkai, as at Mizusawa for
instance, were individuals who, because of personality as well as because of
social position, were real leaders. In every place which we visited we saw
women of higher status directing, with authority, the activities of men of
lower position. This is nothing new. Nor are women in industry an innovation, as pointed out above. Deferential treatment by American soldiers, however, may have an effect. Being deferred to by a person who has power is a new experience and one which in some cases terrified the recipients, simply because it was such unheard of behavior. Both at Taira and Yokosuka maids at the inns where we stayed spoke of their worry for the future. We were spoiling them, it seemed—how could they train themselves to be good wives under such circumstances?

Of one thing we may be sure: just as the Japanese have assimilated both Chinese and Occidental techniques into their culture without disintegrating the sense of values which they had before, and without disrupting their social structure, so now they are making a supreme and by no means wholly unconscious effort to fit into the same pattern the new ideas which defeat and occupation have brought. Even among the dispossessed there seems to be little hysteria or revivalism. No ghost dance religion, such as excited the Plains Indians to a frenzy against the white man during the 1890’s, is required to restore the Japanese’ faith in themselves. On the contrary, ritualism, acceptance, adaptability still rule. One high official, a practicing Episcopalian of long standing, told me that to him as a Japanese the Holy Trinity meant: God the Father = the line of Emperors unbroken for ages eternal; God the Son = the reigning Emperor; God the Holy Ghost = the spirit of unity between Emperors and people.

This interpretation expresses both the craving of the Japanese to fit Western ideas into their own pattern of culture and the sort of pattern into which their own culture had been fitted. It is a culture which has absorbed the forms of other religions, while retaining its own weltanschauung: why not Christianity, too?28 Talks with various Buddhist ecclesiastics and government officials in Japan left me with the feeling that the former had been broken to the will of the latter just as much as had any other individuals, even in their thinking about the place and function of religion in society. There seems to have been remarkably little dependence upon religious consolations for one’s worries, and few congregations increased, or even reported, greater temple attendance, during the war. A Nichiren priest at Yokosuka expressed astonishment and even worry at the idea that Buddhism might comfort the anxious. “No, we never interfered in politics in any way,” he stated. His functions were to conduct the correct funeral and commemorative services for the dead.

28 It is perhaps not out of place to mention that the Premier of Japan, at the time of writing, is a Christian.
On the other hand, a school principal, two local Fujinkai leaders, and a Zen priest agreed that indoctrination in the sincere observance of the correct forms had been inadequate in prewar and wartime Japan. That was the country’s weakness. So we see, still, the value placed upon the proper way of doing things. Some lessons are learned easily, but most of them require not only skill but patience. To be weak is human, but the good Japanese will bear his sufferings—not always stoically, not always silently, but with willingness to learn from them. They have been through a fiery, indeed a disastrous, course of instruction. They do not yet know what the lesson which they have been studying is supposed to teach. Before the war Japan’s leaders were convinced that they had absorbed all that the West had to offer. This was a mistake—a very costly one. So now again they are our pupils, and we are their teachers. They did not learn their lesson, and they are ashamed. But, if they are sincere, they hope we will teach them; and with skill and determination, they can learn and they will.

The question is, “What lesson?”