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Citation
Kersten, R. (2002). *Defeat and the Intellectual Culture of Postwar Japan*. Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/1887/5321

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Defeat and the Intellectual Culture of Postwar Japan

Rede uitgesproken door

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bij de aanvaarding van het ambt van hoogleraar
op het vakgebied van het moderne Japan
aan de Universiteit Leiden op 11 oktober 2002.

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Postwar Japan**

Mijnheer de rector magnificus, zeer gewaardeerde toehoorders,

'What do you tell the dead when you lose?' This rather chilling question, used by John Dower in his recent book entitled *Embracing Defeat*[1], encapsulates beautifully the dilemma that faces the transwar generation of intellectuals in the aftermath of war. For the victors, this question can be answered in the creation of heroes, in the rituals of memory and public ceremony that mark the anniversary of victory. Victory in war is its own answer to the question: it logically implies a just cause, a worthy sacrifice on the part of the dead, and a validation of loss for those who remain. War can be incorporated into an historical narrative that affirms and underpins the postwar era; historical continuity is ennobled by the happy ending. But for the defeated, the monologue with the dead merely elicits more questions.

Defeat inhibits memory and constrains commemoration. Those who died for a lost war died in vain; moreover, mourning the dead in a lost war is an illicit activity, an unwelcome reminder to a postwar nation of a discredited past. The overwhelming momentum in the historical sensibility of a newly defeated nation is to demonstrate discontinuity from the negative past. Defeat severs past and present through an inversion of values, and postwar is consciously constructed as the value opposite of the war era. Defeat thus facilitates a denial of historical identity in the present as much as it denies the immediate past, and it is this element above all others that invites the artificial division of past and present to eventually break down. When identity becomes hostage to bifurcated history, there is enormous pressure to reconcile past and present.

Retrieving historical coherence for collective identity has been the driving force behind postwar Japan's intellectual culture. In particular, the intellectuals of the transwar era were the first to confront the supremely difficult task of critically appraising and rationalising their own life experience, including their own role in the national catastrophe. The search for war guilt on the part of transwar intellectuals is one of the most fascinating developments in modern Japanese political history. In asking why Japanese society went to war; why there was no significant resistance to the authoritarian state; and how responsibility for the war should be articulated, the transwar intellectuals of Japan were hoping to make war responsibility the ethical foundation for postwar Japan. For the transwar intellectuals, it was not the dead, but the living and the yet-to-be-born, to whom their answers about war and responsibility were addressed. The way they did so in the first 15 years of postwar set in place the conceptual markers and patterns of discourse that have become the foundation for postwar democracy itself.

In present-day Japan, it is historical revisionists who now hold centre-stage in discussions about the war. Conveyed through the denial of certain historical events (such as the Nanjing Massacre of 1937), and through passionate advocacy of patriotic education, revisionists are attempting to recover historical coherence in their own way, by rewriting the negative interpretation of the wartime past. In order to revalidate national pride, the war is being recast as a noble effort in a righteous cause, and history is developing as an accomplice in the triumph of national values over universal ones. The postwar intellectuals who rebut the revisionists do so by supporting the cause of the many non-Japanese victims of Japan's war who are engaged in legal battles in Japan's own courts for recognition, apology, and compensation from the Japanese government.

Today we shall examine two ways in which the transwar generation of Japanese thinkers initially tackled the thorny question of war responsibility in their own society. We will first consider the assumption put forward in the immediate postwar era that war was an act of state. Secondly, we will examine intellectuals' belated and painful appraisal of their own responsibility for the past. The 1950s debates over intellectuals' war guilt, and over *tenkō* – wartime political apostasy - led to the disintegration of intellectual consensus on the relevance of war responsibility to the postwar era. Finally, we shall assess the legacy of these war responsibility debates, and how this is revealed in the tussle between revisionists and leftists in Japan today.

Defeat and War Responsibility: The Official Versions

For Japan, the ending of the war on 15 August 1945 (8.15) was a moment of pervasive confusion for the living. When the people of Japan were told to gather together at midday on 8.15 to listen to an important broadcast, many assumed that they would be ordered to prepare to fight the enemy to the death on Japan's home soil. In his *Defeat Diary*, the intellectual Takami Jun recorded his wife's response: ' "If the Emperor asks everyone to die with him, they will, won't they".[2] Instead, the radio broadcast conveying the voice of the living deity, Emperor Hirohito, delivered news of peace, not death. In a high-pitched, shakey voice, and in a language that was incomprehensible to ordinary folk, the Emperor announced his decision to 'follow the general trends of the world' and accept the declaration of the Allied powers. The war ended, but there was no mention of defeat.

The confusion was exacerbated by the official packaging of defeat as something which would ensure continuity, rather than the opposite. The Emperor declared that his decision to end the war would enable the nation to 'continue as one family'. Furthermore, the war aims were reaffirmed even as Japan had been brought to its knees: the war, Hirohito explained, had been fought for 'self-preservation' and 'for the

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stability of East Asia'. The end of the conflict was not due to the spiritual inferiority of those aims, but rather to the scientific superiority of the enemy (ie 'the new and most cruel bomb'). In subsequent days, the aim of shielding the Emperor from responsibility for both war and defeat was made more explicit through the infamous *ichioku sōzange* speech of his cousin, the Prime Minister, who stated that defeat was due not only to the flawed policies of the government, but 'to a decline in the moral behaviour of the people'. Accordingly, the Prime Minister invited 'the repentance of the one hundred million' towards the Emperor, in whose name they had fought the lost war. [3]

Incredibly, the official Japanese version of defeat was consolidated by the mainly U.S. Occupation administration. As part of their concerted policy of democratisation, the Allies conducted war crimes trials between May 1946 and November 1948 that effectively quarantined Japan's war guilt to the military leadership. The Emperor's exemption from indictment as a war criminal merely served to enhance the ethical confusion surrounding the association of war, democracy and accountability. Both the official Japanese and American versions of Japan's defeat bequeathed a legacy of obfuscation and compromise, where responsibility was selective and guilt the preserve of those in positions of formal power. Few Japanese were encouraged by postwar authorities to perceive a connection between national and personal pasts. To the contrary, the underlying message to the citizens of postwar Japan was one of ethical disconnection, of political disassociation, and of utter relief that it was all over.

War as an Act of State: Maruyama Masao's Theory of War Responsibility

In retrospect we might conclude that this deeply flawed representation of both defeat and democracy helped propagate a culture of irresponsibility in postwar Japan, especially where the war was concerned. However, alongside these politicised official narratives arose others, from within Japanese society, which had quite different perspectives on war and defeat. Certainly, the transwar intellectuals did not necessarily take their cue from official versions of defeat. As Karl Jaspers outlined in his landmark book *The Question of German Guilt,* amongst different types of guilt (criminal, political, moral, and metaphysical) the first two types can be assigned from outside, but the last two can only emanate from within.[4] What matters most is not received guilt, but that which arises from within the defeated nation, and its people: 'even more important to us is how we analyse, judge and cleanse ourselves'.[5]

One of the first and most shocking examples of war responsibility literature in postwar Japan was written before the Tokyo War Crimes Trials began. Maruyama Masao's 1946 essay *The Logic and Psychology of Ultranationalism*[6] not only addressed subjects that no-one else dared contemplate so soon after defeat, but it also embodied the

conceptual assumptions that were to drive debate over war responsibility for the next decade. Indeed, the intellectual legacy of this essay, along with others penned by Maruyama in the late 1940s, remains tangible in Japanese political culture today.

Maruyama's experience of war was mitigated by his status as a member of the intellectual elite. He was able to remain in his study at Tokyo Imperial University until 1944, when at the age of 30 he was conscripted as the war entered its last desperate phase. Handing part of a manuscript out of the window to his wife as the train taking him to boot camp pulled out of the station, Maruyama feared that his life work might never be completed. Eventually, he was despatched to Hiroshima, where he was to survive the atomic bomb, and witness its aftermath. Spared from body retrieval duties, he was instead asked to photograph the horror.[7] It was twenty years before Maruyama publicly discussed this experience; only doing so then on the 20th anniversary of the bombings. Maruyama never felt comfortable attaching the label of *hibakusha* – atomic irradiated person – to himself. Even in his postwar writings on peace and in his pacifist activism, he wanted his ideas to persuade and inspire, not his personal story. His ideas as he came back from Hiroshima to the world of academe were electric.

Maruyama's question to his fellow-citizens was this: 'what was the main ideological factor that kept the Japanese people in slavery for so long and drove them to embark on a war against the rest of the world?'[8] In crafting his answer to this question, Maruyama kept returning to the core idea that war had been sustained not so much by ideology, but by a certain spiritual structure, that had permeated the institutions and psychology of his nation. In his development of this idea, Maruyama articulated several important concepts.

First: he declared that Japanese society had been absorbed into the state through the 'interfusion of ethics and power'. Instead of a preserve of individual conscience, values were determined by the state. The result was that 'the locus of Japanese morality was not in the conscience of the individual, but in the affairs of the nation'.[9] This meant that it was difficult to conceive of criticising state policy, let alone expressing this criticism; furthermore, it made the idea that the nation's policies could be fallible, simply unthinkable. Victory in war became synonymous with ethical transcendance. A powerful Japan was always in the right.

Second: Maruyama argued that those in formal positions of authority had no corresponding awareness of personal accountability. This 'system of irresponsibility' was the product of the pathology of power that he called 'unconscious despotism'. This enabled individual decision-makers to see themselves as mere appendages to history, hostages to 'established reality'. Maruyama subsequently wrote that Japan's military elite had not decided to go to war, but had instead 'slithered into war', without ever being aware of their responsible role in the war's conduct.[10]

A third core idea expressed by Maruyama in his 1946 essay was that of 'proximity to the ultimate value'. By this, he meant the relative distance of each individual from the Emperor. Morality emanated from above, and was transferred through hierarchical mechanisms down to the lowest entity in Japanese society. Convinced that violence was accentuated the further one was from the ultimate value, Maruyama's theory of 'the maintenance of equilibrium by the transference of oppression'[11] was one way to begin to explain Japan's wartime atrocities. Those distant from the apex of morality, he argued, were driven to compensate for this distance through a show of force, something that could demonstrate a connection to that distant moral core.

Taken together, Maruyama's early postwar work seems to be marking out the intellectual ground for explaining irresponsibility, rather than identifying the locus of responsibility, in wartime Japan. It appears that responsibility neither resided in the state, nor in society. And yet, the logic of Maruyama's diagnostic of wartime society becomes clearer when we see it as a prescription for postwar Japan, rather than as an analysis of the past.

Maruyama's message even at this early stage was that defensive distance between state and society was absolutely essential, if the situation that led to war was to be avoided in the future. This had to occur not only on an institutional level, but on the less tangible plane of psychology and ethics. War had been an act of a distorted, ultranationalist state that had incorporated expansion into its own *raison d'etre*. In postwar, democracy would enable an inversion of power from state to society, and identify the representative state as the locus of accountability. But all of this would only be possible if subjectivity could be restored to the world-view of ordinary Japanese.

The real danger of the wartime state in Maruyama's view was not its use of force, but its ability to infiltrate people's thought structures. The conflation of personal, national and divine identities under the rubric of the 'Emperor System' ultimately meant that love of country could be used to obliterate subjective identity. The people of Japan had perhaps been complicit in their own negation, because they had invited the state to mediate their own identities. Call it 'ultranationalism' or 'psychological coercion', it was clear to Maruyama in 1946 that self-definition and value-creation were the postwar responsibility of the Japanese people, and that the state had been responsible in wartime for depriving the people of the means to define their own political selves. All of this rested on the assumption that war was inherently an act of state, not of society.

Postwar values, and indeed the postwar intellectual agenda, were accordingly mapped out almost as a reflex action. If war was an act of state, then peace was an act of society. Postwar Japanese society would thus ensure its independence from the state through a whole-hearted dedication to pacifism. Article 9 may have been an American imposition, but it became a Japanese identity in the postwar world.

Distance between state and society would be guaranteed by making resistance the dominant mode of interaction between state and society; power and ethics would be divorced by rejecting state-led nationalism. It would be the postwar task of intellectuals to enlighten, to educate, and to explain the notion of modern subjectivity in a democratic nation.

There were, however, two gaping holes in this logic of war and peace. Through focussing on irresponsibility in war, and removing the people from an association with active complicity in war, Maruyama was undermining the very thing he regarded as indispensable in postwar society. The responsible subjects, the creators of value and the makers of postwar pacifism, could not be conjured up from a wartime past where these subjects were implicitly considered to be victims. This was also true of the transwar generation of intellectuals, including Maruyama, whose initial preoccupation with the mechanisms of state deception when searching for war responsibility eventually attracted critical attention to turn towards the intellectuals themselves.

Intellectuals' War Responsibility

It took ten years before intellectuals in postwar Japan became substantively critical of their own complicity, and their own failure, in wartime Japan. In some senses, the delay is understandable. Many leading postwar thinkers reported severe depression in the aftermath of defeat.[12] Society seemed to veer wildly from one extreme ideological attachment to another after 1945: Marxism, liberal democracy, social democracy, militant trade unionism, were all embraced feverishly by a transwar generation that was keen to shake off the disgrace and impotence of the immediate past. Indeed, the dramatic overnight shift from authoritarianism to democracy was frequently referred to as a kind of 'national mass conversion (*tenkō*)'. Maruyama Masao had come hurtling through the gates of defeat feeling liberated and inspired, claiming that the war had not had any impact on him at all (he later admitted that this was perhaps a precipitous claim).[13] But his peers, including Shimizu Ikutarō, Yoshimoto Takaaki and Tsurumi Shunsuke, were not quite so perky.

Shimizu had spent the war as a journalist; he ended it by lining up with the military staff at a naval research institute in Tokyo, crying openly as Hirohito's voice trembled over the airwaves. Every day he would go out looking for food, and after writing editorials for the Yomiuri Shimbun, he would walk through the door of his house at night and collapse in floods of tears.[14]

Yoshimoto was a young man working at a factory at the time of the 8.15 broadcast. His extreme emotional response tells a similar story. After the broadcast, he ran back to his dormitory and crawled into his futon, howling like a baby. For weeks after-

wards he did his tasks like a machine, 'while living, feeling dead'. He would later claim that defeat 'was the greatest lesson for me in terms of what it means to face reality'.[15]

Tsurumi had been dragged from his studies at Harvard University by the FBI, and forcibly repatriated to Japan on a ship filled with other undesirable aliens in the aftermath of the bombing of Pearl Harbour in December 1941. His bitterness was undiluted at war's end: indeed, he had spent the war talking English at home with his family, and had parleyed his American experience into a job at a research institute for the rest of the war. Defeat, he declared, had left him completely cold.[16]

Together these disparate individuals would comprise the backbone of the vibrant intellectual debate culture of the first 15 years of postwar Japan. Moreover, Maruyama, Shimizu and Tsurumi were to be the leading intellectual advocates of pacifism and democracy, not only in their writing but also as active participants in demonstrations and resistance movements. Shimizu's name remains synonymous with the anti-US bases movement; Maruyama's name is automatically associated with liberal democracy. Yoshimoto's role was that of critic and agitator, poking holes in the enlightenment activities of his senior colleagues, particularly Maruyama. Tsurumi, on the other hand, was to make his mark through forming one of the most influential intellectual groups in the postwar era, the Shisō no Kagaku Kenkyūkai.

By the mid-1950s, many things had changed in the atmosphere in which these thinkers worked. The Korean War of 1950 had provided a tangible focus for pacifist protest, and the parameters of postwar political culture took shape as the protest agenda was defined. Japan had acquired independence in 1952, though in such a way that the culture of protest and resistance was reaffirmed. Peace was 'partial', in that not all belligerents signed the peace treaty with Japan; moreover, peace was conditional on the signing of a security treaty with the United States. The pacifist agenda was crystal clear. And yet, it was at this time of intellectual clarity that the wheels began to fall off the intellectual community's unity of purpose. It began with Tsurumi Shunsuke's call for self-criticism by intellectuals for their own war responsibility.

Fearful that the popular mood in the mid-1950s was rushing headlong into forgetting both the war and the postwar, Tsurumi threw down the gauntlet to his fellow intellectuals. It was time, Tsurumi wrote, for intellectuals

> … to confess that in the past they did not personally resist, consider the state of affairs that intellectuals have been heroically lording over the people while continuing to paint over their own cowardice with superficial arguments, and from now one, instead of menacing the people with words, intellectuals should actually try to acquire true courage where it is needed, when the people participate in the peace movement[17]

Tsurumi's intervention seemed to have filled the subjectivity gap in postwar intellectuals' treatment of the war. It also acted as a catalyst for renewed debate over the question of war responsibility, and the participants kept a keen eye on its implications for postwar democracy.

Maruyama countered Tsurumi's call by turning the spotlight onto other entities instead. Intellectuals were not the only ones who were absent from war responsibility. The people had been by-passed as well: 'a sense of active opposition to the evil authorities of tomorrow cannot be expected from a people who were exempted from responsibility for greeting the evil authorities of yesterday'.[18] With this, it seemed that the door was finally open to considering the people of Japan as active subjects in their own recent past. And yet, the belated attribution of subjectivity to the people of wartime Japan was partnered by a niggling doubt concerning the inherent capacity of the people to determine their own futures.

Maruyama was frequently criticised for his elitist demeanour and his obvious self-regard as an 'enlightener'.[19] The focus of his postwar work continued to point to the spectre of the state, even as he spoke of popular responsibility for the war. But he was not alone in his low expectations of the masses. Shimizu Ikutarō emerged from his postwar depression to find an unseemly rush by many intellectuals to embrace communism or liberal democracy without any real forethought. Perturbed, he called for greater consideration to be given to the actual values and lives of the people, which he called 'anonymous thought'. Shimizu argued that intellectuals had failed to understand this everyday mentality; this was the substance of their war responsibility.

But part of the problem also lay with the people themselves. In a rather unfortunate turn of phrase, Shimizu referred to this amorphous void as a 'behavioural drainage ditch'.[20] Not only was it difficult for rational thought to penetrate this layer of popular feeling, said Shimizu, but this anonymous thought provided a kind of comfort zone for the people in times of upheaval or duress. As such, it 'freed the self from troublesome reflection and responsibility'.[21] In the past, the militarists had appealed most successfully to this deep layer within the people. In the late 1940s, Shimizu had seen no evidence of democracy getting anywhere near this mysterious sphere. Shimizu warned darkly that 'if we cling to a naïve faith in humanity, we will only be avoiding the completion of social change'.[22]

Shimizu's solution in postwar was to advocate 'science' (meaning social science, particularly American pragmatism) over 'value' in intellectual matters. Here we see the beginning of a great rift in the postwar community. Maruyama was convinced that subjectivity was the key to postwar democracy; this subjectivity would only emerge from active value creation on the part of individuals in society. Shimizu came away from defeat with a formula that amounted to banishing value as something altogether

too similar to that 'drainage ditch' that had been so useful to the state in wartime. Even Yoshimoto, who in the 1960s would become the self-proclaimed champion of the masses and the bane of 'elitist' thinkers like Maruyama, had misgivings about what he called 'the dark zone' lurking in popular consciousness.

It is curious that the consideration of intellectuals' war guilt by intellectuals was accompanied by something that implicitly mitigated that responsibility. As a result, the ideal of postwar democracy was beginning to look shakey. At the heart of the new postwar world, there existed active subjects who were still prone to forces beyond the reach of rationality and universal ideals. The transwar intellectuals' postwar task was clarified, even as it was undermined. Intellectuals had a postwar responsibility to develop coherence between their ideas, and the values and experiences of the masses. The culture of alienation of wartime was disowned and discarded. Tsurumi Shunsuke's decision in the late 1950s to revisit the subject of intellectual failure in wartime would play a vital role in consolidating these patterns of argumentation in postwar Japan.

War as Intellectual Failure: Postwar Debates over Wartime *Tenkō*

The end-game of postwar unity on the part of transwar intellectuals began with a renewal of critical attention towards those intellectuals who had failed to resist the wartime state, particularly the communists. Japan's communists had emerged from defeat resplendent as the only identifiable group that had attempted to defy the authoritarian wartime state. Though small in number and ineffectual in fact, those who lived long enough to be released from prison by General MacArthur in September 1945 were hailed as heroes. For a brief moment, it seemed that Japan's postwar rehabilitation would occur under the banner of the communist party.

The red honeymoon did not last long, however, suffering under the onslaught of the Cold War; by 1950, MacArthur was putting them back in prison and purging com-munists from official positions in society. The criticism of Stalin in the mid-1950s did not help their cause, either. Neither did their disarray in the midst of the movement against partial peace and conditional independence. But it was not the 'reverse course' of the Cold War that affected the positive image of the communists in the eyes of transwar intellectuals. Rather, it was the behaviour of the communists themselves.

The majority of communist party members had not taken the path of noble defiance in wartime. Instead, they had undergone the traumatic experience of *tenkō* (aposta-sy). In 1933, two senior leaders of the communist movement, Sanō Manabu and Nabeyama Sadachika, had written a public document renouncing their communist beliefs, and embracing the ideology of the Emperor System. Drafted in prison under

duress, this act of renunciation of one belief in order to embrace its apparent opposite, became the model for the mass renunciation of communism by party members in 1930s and 1940s Japan. We might call this act of moving from one intellectual extreme to another 'political apostasy'.

The thought police of 1930s Japan developed a laboriously nuanced list of types of *tenkō*, which supposedly detected the degrees of authenticity in these renunciations: it was possible to range from whole-hearted *tenkō*, to partial *tenkō*, all the way to fake *tenkō*. Full and partial *tenkō* were a ticket to freedom, as long as the partial convert agreed to refrain from political activities against the Emperor. Full *tenkō* frequently saw the apostee engaging in the government's program of 'spiritual mobilisation' of the Japanese people behind the war effort. Fake *tenkō* was more problematic: in many cases, this was a label claimed by postwar communists, rather than one acknowledged by wartime authorities. Not surprisingly, postwar Japan saw a virtual avalanche of self-proclaimed *gisō-tenkōsha* (fake political apostates). This was the crux of the criticism against communists that grew in intensity as the first decade of postwar Japan unfolded.

Those communists who had supposedly merely 'pretended' to collaborate with the war, were now declaring their right to lead revolution in postwar Japan. The hypocrisy buried in this attitude increasingly incensed their peers. Foremost amongst them was the young firebrand, Yoshimoto Takaaki. He observed the orgy of recrimination and name-calling that had erupted amongst different factions of communists immediately after defeat. But when these same individuals turned towards society as self-declared postwar leaders, Yoshimoto erupted.

> I was appalled when the generation that had supposedly opposed the war emerged. If such a generation exists, you'd think I'd have met them before[23]

It was not the hypocrisy that bothered Yoshimoto, so much as the failure of the communists to utilise the lessons of war and defeat. The complete lack of self-criticism and self-transformation seemed to him to be irresponsible. The wartime *tenkō-sha* communists 'have existed to this day without ever having assimilated the kind of substantial experience involving the structure of thought in wartime', wrote Yoshimoto.[24] This 'was tantamount to rendering the meaning of having lived through the day of defeat completely pointless'.[25] As unreconstructed failed intellectuals, the communists were poised to repeat exactly the same error that had led them to their sorry predicament in wartime.

And what was this error? In Yoshimoto's opinion, this was the single most important intellectual failure of the war. His conclusion was revealed in his explanation of why wartime Marxist intellectuals had committed *tenkō*: 'I do not think that official force or pressure was the greatest factor. Rather… isolation from the masses was the great-

est factor'[26]. Yoshimoto's reading of wartime *tenkō* was that the intellectuals had been hopelessly alienated from the real concerns and experiences of the people. This prevented communist thinkers from acknowledging that many ordinary Japanese believed that they had had good reason to support the war.

When the self-appointed vanguard looked to see who was following them, they were dismayed to realise that they were on their own. Their ideas were so disconnected from those of the people, that total abandonment of their principles was their only resort. Their *tenkō* was thus a rearguard action to reconnect with the masses. In this sense, those communists who did not *tenkō* but chose instead to rot in jail, were in Yoshimoto's estimation even worse than their apostate peers.[27] The jailbirds had failed even to recognise their utter alienation from the people of Japan. So much for the heroes of September 1945.[28]

It was in this charged atmosphere of the late -1950s that Tsurumi summoned the intellectual firepower of transwar Japan under the auspices of the Shisō no Kagaku Kenkyūkai (Science of Thought Research Group) to conduct a comprehensive examination of the phenomenon of intellectual collapse or cowardice - *tenkō* - in modern Japanese history. The resulting 3 volume work[29], published between 1959 and 1962, presented a detailed analysis of the different periods of *tenkō*, naming specific individuals and creating their own classification system for each type. Authored by the leading thinkers of the postwar, this seminal text presents a snapshot of the problem consciousness and mindset of the transwar generation of intellectuals as they stood on the brink of disarray. In 1960, Japan's greatest postwar political crisis – the renewal of the security treaty between Japan and the US – would smash the optimism and unity of the transwar intellectual community.

Tsurumi's contribution to the first volume of this work had a rather familiar ring to it. He defined *tenkō* as something that involved 'a combination of pressure and spontaneous compliance' (*kyōsei to jihatsusei no karami-ai*)[30], meaning that both authority and the individual were involved in the process. And yet, over the course of this project, it becomes clear that the overwhelming majority of contributors regarded force applied by the state as the most significant feature of wartime *tenkō*. The working definition of *tenkō* for the life of the project was simply 'a change of thought which occurs because of pressure.'[31]

The reappearance of the state at the centre of discussion about responsibility had some serious ramifications. In this formulation of intellectual compliance, war as an act of state makes a conspicuous return to the fulcrum of discourse. Moreover, it does so in such a way that the act of compliance on the part of intellectuals is explained, if not excused, by the presence of the threatening state. Rather than examining the nature of intellectuals' disconnection or alienation from society, or their absorption

into the logic of ultranationalist ideology, their actions were rationalised as something 'unavoidable', or out of their hands. There were no lessons here for postwar intellectuals apart from that of keeping a hostile watch on the state. In 1946 Maruyama had also framed war responsibility as an act of state, however, he did so in terms of the 'spiritual structure of society' rather than as a result of historical inevitability for a very particular reason. He wanted to emphasise individuals as the subjective makers of their own history, instead of following the communist logic of historical materialism. The crux of postwar idealism – subjectivity – was fatally undermined by Tsurumi's *tenkō* study.

By the end of 1960, as the revised security treaty passed through parliament despite loud popular and intellectual protest, it seemed to many that the spectre of the all-powerful state had returned to the forefront of postwar life. With a former A-class war criminal in the Prime Minister's chair in 1960, it was only natural for intellectuals to associate the decline of democracy with the failure of war responsibility discourse.

Conclusion: The Legacy of the War Responsibility Debates in Contemporary Japan

In the 21ˢᵗ century, devising a continuous historical identity for the present remains the objective of Japanese intellectual discourse on the past. While war was a source of shame, it interfered with the development of a positive self-image for the people of postwar Japan. The pressure to find a legitimate historical foundation for the present ultimately led to the appearance in the 1990s of a new wave of neo-nationalist thinkers who tried to rehabilitate the past by presenting the war as a positive, noble event in Japanese history. Their primary aim was to make patriotism respectable for the young people of contemporary Japan.

War is now discussed by a postwar generation that wants to be proud of Japan's past, instead of a transwar generation that had to confront their role in that past. The denial of negative events – atrocities; forcing women to act as prostitutes (comfort women) – is part of their agenda. Their target audience is the youth of Japan, not historians or foreign public opinion. Accordingly, today historians in Japan can be cartoonists (like Kobayashi Yoshinori), and history can be conveyed through the mouths of black and white heroes on the pages of *manga*.

History is not only taught in the classroom, it is also the subject of legal action. As foreign victims of Japan's war continue to seek redress, and legal disputes over the content of history textbooks continue, lawyers and judges decide on what amounts to an orthodox version of the wartime past. Where can we discern the legacy of those first fifteen postwar years of war responsibility discourse?

A heavy presence in these contemporary debates about the war in Japan is the depiction of war as an act of state. It is fascinating that even amongst those intellectuals today who want to rebuild patriotism through denying a negative past, there is a dominant inclination to reject the state as part of their world-view. What makes neo-nationalists in contemporary Japan 'new' is their rejection of state-centred nationalism.

Those who oppose these nationalists, continue to research and publicise the atrocities and war crimes committed by Japanese in war. Their main aim today is to encourage young people to understand that victim consciousness should include non-Japanese; in other words, they are appealing to universal values in their battle for war to remain a lesson for postwar generations. The phrasing of debate as 'national history' versus 'universal values' also attests to the endurance of Maruyama's cherished ideal of value-driven discourse. Likewise, the development of neo-nationalism as something centred on the nation (ie on the people) instead of on the state, is a tangible consequence of war responsibility discourse of the 1940s and 1950s.

And yet, we can also identify a legacy that is disturbing. The preoccupation with creating a culture of disconnection that was so tangible in those early postwar debates has become a fixture in postwar Japan's political culture. Disconnection between state and society, between past and present, and between politics and ethics, dominates intellectual life in Japan.[32] It is not surprising that the postwar generation, having grown up in a postwar world where Japan was respected and emulated as an economic miracle nation, feels impatient and somewhat mystified at the suggestion that patriotism is somehow tainted, or dangerous.

The fate of the transwar cohort that first articulated ideas about war responsibility tells us much about how their ideas have affected the democratic idea in postwar Japan. In effect, they all committed what amounts to *tenkō* in postwar Japan, except this time they were not under pressure from the state to change their political allegiance; neither were they moving away from a commitment to the communist party and towards an authoritarian state led by the Emperor. Instead, many of them were moving away from the idealistic version of democracy that they themselves had developed in the early postwar years.

Yoshimoto ended up flipping across the ideological spectrum of postwar with gay abandon, moving from identification with the radical left, to the conservative right. Shimizu, having already moved from communism to theorising about the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in the 1930s, threw his heart into the 1960 movement against the security treaty. His devastation at the outcome affected him deeply – this leader of pacifism in the 1950s ended up advocating nuclear armament for Japan in the 1970s. Tsurumi has remained quite constant, but he continues to regard *tenkō* as a 'living tradition' in Japanese society.

And what of Maruyama, the person most closely associated with democratic idealism following the war? In the notebooks published after his death in 1996, he reveals the depth of his concern underneath those early debates about responsibility:

> How strange it is that I am in a position of staking myself on postwar ideals, when all along I have felt out of step with the reality of postwar Japan! Is this tragedy or comedy, I don't know. What I want to know is: am I really giving expression to an era, or am I in opposition to it? My conviction that principles only exist when the dominant flow of events is contradicted, remains immovable.[33]

Japan's 'defeat democracy' (*haisen minshushugi*) has retained its ambivalent association with resistance. In Japan today, neo-nationalists and leftists continue to battle for the hearts and minds of postwar generations over how war should be integrated with modern Japanese history. As long as war responsibility and democratic legitimacy remain inter-dependent phenomena in contemporary Japan, we should welcome the continuation of this vital debate.

Rikki Kersten

Defeat and the Intellectual Culture of Postwar Japan

Notes

1   John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), p485.

2   Takami Jun in Katō Shūichi, Bonjinkai, *"Sensō to chishikijin" o yomu* (Reading 'War and the Intellectuals') Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1999, p24.

3   Prince Higashikuni, reproduced in Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (New York: Harper Collins, 2000), pp 557 –8. At that stage, a considerable number of the 'one hundred million' were still stranded around the globe, and many would never return. In addition to 3 million dead, there were 6.5 million Japanese still overseas at the time of the 8.15 broadcast; 1.6 million would remain in the Soviet Union until 1949 as forced labourers, and not all would return to Japan. See Dower, *op.cit.*, pp 37 – 49.

4   Karl Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1967) (1946), pp 31 – 33.

5   Jaspers, *op cit.*, p49.

6   It appears in translation as 'Theory and Psychology of Ultranationalism' in *Thought and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp 1-24.

7   Maruyama Masao, *Senchū bibōroku* (Wartime Memorandum) (Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Sentaa, 1997). Ishida Takeshi ed.

8   Maruyama, *Thought and Behaviour*, pp 1-2.

9   *Ibid*, p10.

10   See Maruyama, 'Thought and Behaviour Patterns of Japan's Wartime Leaders', in *Thought and Behaviour, op.cit.,* pp 84 – 134.

11   Maruyama, 'Theory and Psychology of Ultranationalism', pp 16 – 19.

12   For instance: Yoshimoto Takaaki, Shimizu Ikutarō, Takami Jun

13   Maruyama Masao, 'Kindaiteki shii' (Modern Thinking), *Maruyama Masao Shū* Vol. 3 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1995), p.5.

14   See especially Shimizu Ikutarō, 'Haisen no hi' (Day of defeat), in *Waga Jinsei no Danpen* Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1975), pp 113 – 115.

15   Quoted in Washida Koyata, *Yoshimoto Takaaki Ron* (On Yoshimoto Takaaki) (Tokyo: Sanichi Shobō, 1992), p14.

16   For some background on Tsurumi see Shimizu Ikutarō, 'Haisen no hi' (Day of Defeat), in *Waga Jinsei no Danpen* (Fragments of our Lives) Vol 1 (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1975), pp 123 – 125.

17 Tsurumi Shunsuke, 'Chishikijin no sensō sekinin' (The War Responsibility of Intellectuals), *Chūō Kōron* Vol. 71 No. 1 January 1956, p60.

18 Maruyama Masao, 'Sensō sekinin no mōten' (The Blindspots of War Responsibility), in *Senchū to sengo no aida* (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobō, 1976), p 598.

19 His most outspoken critic was Yoshimoto Takaaki. See 'Maruyama Masao Ron' (On Maruyama Masao), in *Yoshimoto Takaaki Zenchosakushū* Vol. 12 (Tokyo: Fusō Shobō, 1969), pp 5 – 96.

20 For an analysis of Shimizu's thought see R. Kersten, *Diverging Discourses: Shimizu Ikutarō, Maruyama Masao and Postwar Tenkō* (Oxford: Nissan Occasional Paper Series, No. 20, 1994).

21 Shimizu Ikutarō, 'Tokumei no shisō' (Anonymous Thought), *Sekai* September 1948, p24.

22 Shimizu quoted in Tsuzuki, *Sengo Nihon no chishikijin* (Postwar Japan's Intellectuals) (Tokyo: Seori Shobō, 1995), p97.

23 Yoshimoto in Tsuzuki, *op cit.*, p256

24 Yoshimoto Takaaki, 'Sengo sedai no seiji shisō' (The political thought of the postwar generation), *Chūō Kōron*, January 1960, pp 32-33.

25 Yoshimoto Takaaki, 'Takamura Kōtarō', p 163.

26 Yoshimoto Takaaki, 'Tenkō ron' (On Tenkō), in *Yoshimoto Takaaki Zenchosakushū* Vol. 13 Seiji Shisō Hyōronshū (Tokyo: Keiso Shobō,1969), p15.

27 Yoshimoto in Odagiri Hideo, Kuno Osamu, Hirano Ken, Honda Shūgo, Matsumoto Sannosuke, and Yoshimoto Takaaki, 'Nihon shisō shi to tenkō' (Kyōdō Tōgi) (Japanese intellectual history and tenkō (joint discussion)), *Kyōdō Kenkyū Tenkō* Vol. 3 p 386.

28 Yoshimoto was not alone in unmasking the inadequacy of the communists as leaders of postwar Japanese thought. In *The Blindspots of War Responsibility*, Maruyama also pricked the balloon of the communist heroes, asking: 'the question is, did they win the fight, or lose it?'. See 'Sensō sekinin no mōten' (The Blindspots of War Responsibility) in *Maruyama Masao Shū* Vol. 6 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1995), pp 159 – 165.

29 Shisō no Kagaku Kenkyūkai eds., *Kyōdō Kenkyū Tenkō* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1959 – 1962).

30 Tsurumi Shunsuke in *Kyōdō Kenkyū Tenkō*, Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1959), p2.

31 Tsurumi, *ibid.*, p5.

32 See for instance R. Kersten, 'The war in postwar politics', in *Japanese Studies Bulletin*, Vol. 15 No. 3 1995, pp 1 – 9.

33 Maruyama Masao, *Jikonai Taiwa* (Internal Conversations) (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobō, 1998), p246.