JAPANESE ATTITUDES TOWARD PRISONERS OF WAR: FEUDAL RESURGENCE IN KOKUTAI NO HONGI

THESIS

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During World War II, the Japanese earned the reputation for cruelty toward their prisoners which surpassed the treatment accorded to POWs held by Germany and Italy. The conduct exhibited by the Japanese soldier was the result of a combination of ancient social and religious traditions made manifest by twentieth century documents. Through constant inculcation of ancient myths nurtured by a national religion, the Japanese believed that their holy mission was world domination. Believing themselves to be of divine origin, they treated all other races as inferior; therefore, the POWs suffered cruelties as sub-humans. The Japanese inflicted punishment and torture in the name of their emperor, believing that they did so through divine instruction. This study reveals how they arrived at this conviction.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Considerable literature is available detailing the brutal treatment meted out by the Japanese armed forces to prisoners of war (POWs) during World War II. This information generally exists as reminiscences of survivors of Japanese captivity or from clinical and statistical data collected en masse from various military agencies. The data usually concentrate in graphic detail on the kinds of mistreatment and degree and frequency with which the Japanese meted it out to the prisoners. The world remembers the horrors of the Bataan Death March and the inhumane suffering at Changi Prison in Singapore. Certainly, the incalculable pain and death suffered by POW laborers during the construction of the Burma-Thailand Railway will never be forgotten. Worst of all were the atrocities deliberately inflicted by the Japanese. These included beating prisoners until unconscious or dead, beheading, using prisoners for bacteriological experimentation, and the cannibalism of POW corpses for ceremonial purposes.

The purpose of this research is to explain <u>why</u> the Japanese treated their captives so cruelly. (To do so will require an understanding of a myriad of historical

influences as well as their cultural and social impacts on Japanese lifestyle.) Rather than list suppositions drawn from "Old Far East Hands," who have allegedy penetrated the unfathomable and inscrutable "Japanese mask," this study will shed insight on the uniqueness of the Japanese national experience. Such an assumption will help in examining the Japanese mind-set when compared with Western thought and will demonstrate the development of an imperial national culture culminating not only in an individual attitude toward life but a national attitude of obligation to one's country that was unparalleled in any other nation during World War II.

To develop the thesis further, this study will describe how ancient traditions and religious myths in Japan survived and evolved to continue intact into the twentieth century. It will be necessary, therefore, to show how the samurai-politicians perpetuated their codes through national legislation to mold the entire Japanese nation into a people who conducted themselves in the samurai ways of duty to master and country. Additionally, the combination of Shinto religion and militaristic inculcation of total devotion to duty will reveal, through official documents, how religious myths of the earliest times became national directives and goals in World War II.

In this study references to the other Axis powers will be minimal. The Germans and Italians, moreover, subscribe

to the Judeo-Christian ethic, which is characteristic of Western thought. Japanese culture developed an ideology that exhibited some parallels to Nazi philosophy, but that is where the comparison stops. The impetus of societal custom and religious obedience exerted far greater impact in preparing Japan for war than exhortations by an individual like Hitler. The Japanese never produced a charismatic dictator who was catalytic in inciting the people, as the Italians and Germans did. Emperor Hirohito was worshipped at a distance and with the reverence and solemnity due a god, but he was not actively involved in politics. The Japanese people, for instance, never heard his voice until the end of the war, and even then his surrender speech was a recording.

Since no particular Japanese leader was responsible for plunging the nation into an unwinnable war against numerically and technologically superior opponents, how could the Japanese people allow themselves to be embroiled in that conflict? Other underlying circumstances made the Japanese people gladly sacrifice their lives while in the service to the emperor. These motives are found in the Japanese national culture. On the dark side of this national culture one discovers, moreover, the reasons why the Japanese inflicted unparalleled brutality and cruelty upon their captives with virtually no sense of remorse. Memoirs, official documents, and eyewitness accounts record

atrocities of barbarous magnitude administered with enthusiasm and zeal by the the Japanese soldier. The Japanese nation cannot be judged as a strain of animal, human or otherwise, which is meaner than other national communities. On the contrary, the world clearly acknowledges the brilliance and quiet sensitivity in the Japanese arts, music, and literature as a part of a courteous and respectful lifestyle the Japanese have observed for centuries. An element, however, of violence did exist in the Japanese "id" from the beginning of that nation's recorded history. This characteristic obsessed and molded the entire national fabric of the Japanese people for centuries.

Several elements within the Japanese national character, including Shintoism, bushido (Warriors code), and political instruments such as the Kokutai No Hongi (National polity), explain this behavioral characteristic. The application of Shinto, in its mutated form, ultimately were responsible for the death for many POWs during World War II. Intrinsically, Shintoism is an innocuous religion containing polydeism. Shinto and its modifications through the years affected the Japanese before and during World War II. To understand Shinto is to understand the raison d'etre for the aggressive national spirit to complete the "divine mission." When exposed to and mixed with the ancient bushido for centuries, Shinto began to take on a more pernicious

character. Later in the nineteenth century, a third element combined with Shinto, the political application of the Kokutai No Hongi. It permeated all levels of Japanese life. Daily indoctrinal recitations of the Kokutai No Hongi in schools, the military, and in cities and villages inculcated the Japanese people with the belief that they were a divine race assigned to complete a holy mission of destiny from Heaven. Finally, the politics of the times just before World War II must be examined.

An effort will be made to explain the elements of social, religious, and psychological changes that brought about the ingredients necessary to transform Japan into an aggressive nation. A close inspection of a few political instruments will demonstrate how Shinto, promulgated by the Kokutai No Hongi, became the national religion of death and manifested itself in a Shinto constitution, which embarked on the road to religious conquest of the world. The Kokutai No Hongi was the primary instrument that joined the destiny of Japan's past to the destiny of its future; and the Kokutai No Hongi was the weapon, which, when wielded by overzealous politicians and militarists, changed Shinto, education, military training, and the nation itself into the feared enemy of the Allies and became the harbinger of death to the captives of the Japanese.

By finding answers to the aforementioned phenomena, one can determine why the Japanese treated their prisoners so

brutally and why they ignored with criminal indifference POWs' basic needs for survival. The study of the customs, traditions, historical, political thought, and the psyche of Shinto will explain the formation of a unique amalgam which defined the Japanese national character during those times. Once defined, the national character will reveal the answers for Japanese indifference and cruelty during the Pacific War.

This study is unique in that it attempts to pull together the various arguments offered to explain Japanese behavior toward POWs. Most writers seem to concentrate on a specific aspect of national behavior to explain Japanese atrocities. For example, social historian Inazo Nitobe explains to the West in Bushido, the Soul of Japan some of the codes and obligations followed by the Japanese people. He does not indicate why the Japanese adopted the samurai way of life or what government documents or national military organizations "taught" the people how to live by samurai obligations to duty. In War Without Mercy, historian John Dower reveals how Japanese racism, national military policies, heroic folklore, and social policies contributed toward Japan's decision to initiate a war of aggression. He also discloses how political bureaucrats formulated political documents in the light of their religious perspectives. All fail, however, to connect the religious myths to twentieth century politics. It is the

metamorphosis of Shinto myths by promulgation of a constitution that propelled Japan toward a collision course with the West. No one characteristic is sufficient to explain the wartime conduct of the Japanese military. Rather, one must examine a combination of characteristics, including Shinto, bushido, the Kokutai No Hongi, and twentieth century politics.

CHAPTER II

JAPANESE ATROCITIES AND WAR CRIMES ON RECORD

The Japanese charged by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE) in Tokyo for war crimes were relatively few, when compared to the number of Germans tried at the Nuremberg Trials. Many of the accusations levied by the IMTFE were identical in nature to those addressed to German leaders. Some of the charges included conspiracy to wage war, waging war, violation of international laws, commission of crimes against humanity, and failure to prevent violations of international conventions concerning the respect and welfare of prisoners of war and civilian internees.

During the Second World War, both the Japanese and Germans committed atrocities. Although it is apparent that the Germans and Italians treated their military captives far better than did the Japanese, there were nonetheless instances of mistreatment, torture, and murder of Allied prisoners by Germans and Italians who were overzealous or sadistic in the execution of their orders. What is incredulous, however, are the statistics of the hideous kinds of treatment inflicted upon prisoners of war by the Japanese. So many people, combatants and noncombatants,

perished on such a scale that it could be presumed that Emperor Hirohito's forces pursued a deliberate policy of genocide. Four percent of the Allied prisoners' in German and Italian custody died, while the percentage of those who died in Japanese custody stands at 27 percent, or almost one in three.[1]

The Allies charged the Japanese Government with failure to comply with the articles of the Geneva Convention concerning the treatment of prisoners of war. Additionally, the Hague Conventions' Declarations of 1899 and 1907 set forth rules which specifically prohibited certain violations against captives. They also gave rights and privileges to POWs and admonished warring nations about their obligations for the care and welfare of any POWs who fell into their hands. The Japanese violated the following articles of the Hague Convention, which were later periphrased by the Geneva Convention: Article Six, which specifically prohibited manual labor by captured officers; Article Eight, which forbade the punishment of recaptured prisoners who had attempted to escape; and Article Twenty-three, which prohibited the killing of an enemy who surrendered. The Japanese also violated other laws of the Geneva Convention, by refusing to allow the International Red Cross to inspect their prisoner of war camps, robbing prisoners, denying food as a means to instill discipline, and withholding medicines.[2]

The Japanese never denied violating the Geneva Convention of 1929. They argued, moreover, that they were not obligated to follow it. At the International Convention on the treatment of prisoners of war in July 1929, the Japanese felt an international effrontery when the delegates soundly defeated a proposal calling for the equality of Asiatic races in the world community. The proposal would have abolished racial discrimination in any future international dealings. This was especially embarrassing in that Japan had participated as a full Allied partner in World War I. The Japanese did, however, sign the Convention with the exception of Article Forty-four, which stipulated that prisoners of war be treated humanely. They refused to accept this particular article because, they claimed, such condescending treatment meant that prisoners of war could not be punished as severely as Japanese soldiers. Such a course, the Japanese argued, would create an inequity of preferential treatment in the imperial forces because their soldiers would be disciplined more harshly than prisoners of war. This was the last alleged indignity that the Japanese were to suffer at the hands of the West. The Japanese delegation then issued a foreboding warning as it left the Geneva Convention: "Only peace between equals can last."[3]

One of the first forms of mistreatment of any POW is denial or calculated or careless neglect of his basic needs. This means that basic necessities of food, water, and

shelter must be provided to prisoners. At the outset of the Pacific War, one of the first mistreatments to come home to the American press was the infamous Bataan Death March. It alone represented an affront to common decency due to its lack of basic humane treatment for captured Americans and Filipinos. Volumes of official statistics have been compiled on the subject. After the fall of Bataan, the Japanese marched 76,000 American and Filipino prisoners 120 kilometers in a seven-day period to a temporary internment center, Camp O'Donnell, on the island of Luzon in the Philippines. During that relatively short time, over 10,000 died, including more than 1,500 Americans. Most succumbed from heat exhaustion and lack of food and water.

A Congressional House Report cites a peculiar incident during that march. When a Japanese officer asked an American colonel about the condition of his and his mens' health, the American responded that his men were dying for lack of water and food. Curiously, the Japanese officer advised that the colonel and his men should exercise more because there was no problem concerning food or water. The colonel did not receive food or water, although the Japanese had plenty of both for the duration of the march.[4] Lack of food and water was sometimes a natural byproduct of wartime shortages. These were unavoidable problems. [The Japanese, however, sometimes explained to the POWs the reasons for the lack of nutritional necessities from which they also

suffered.] A speech made by Lieutenant Colonel Yoshitida Nagatomo* in Thanbyuzayat, Burma, to the Allied POWs who were working and dying on the Burma-Thailand "Railway of Death" explained that the nutritional priorities of Japanese soldiers came first. Further, he admonished the POWs that because of food shortages, he would uphold the popular "no work, no eat" maxim. It would not matter if a prisoner was too weak or ill to work. During the construction of the railway in 1942 and 1943, 27 percent of the POWs, or over 50,000 Allied soldiers, and more than 50 percent of the conscripted Asian slave labor, which was estimated at more than 250,000, died.[5] The Japanese distributed medicines in much the same way as food, that is, when it was available and after the needs of the Japanese soldiers had been met. Thus, from the Japanese point of view, negligence, even criminal disregard, for basic necessities as food, water, and medicine could be justified because the Japanese were subjected to the same deprivations.

Some of the atrocities endured by the POWs came during their confinement aboard the "hell ships" which took them to Japan, Manchuria, Formosa, where they were employed as slave labor. Decent accommodations aboard these ships were non-existent, and many POWs did not finish the voyages alive.

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*In this paper all Japanese names appear in Western sequence, that is with the surname first.

The conditions described by survivors made many POW camps look appealing by contrast. An account from a survivor of the fateful 1944 voyage of the Oryoku Maru describes the conditions that speak for most of the other "hell ships." On 13 December 1944 from a pier in Manila, the Oryoku Maru boarded 1,650 POWs bound for Japan. The Japanese literally had to beat and stuff POWs into the holds. As there was standing room only, and no latrine facilities available, POWs could only squat in place to defecate. Because the hatches to the holds were shut, temperatures reached close to 120 degrees. Suffocation began almost immediately. The Japanese issued one canteen of water a day per man, which did little to prevent the critical dehydration of the POWs. The lack of water drove some POWs insane. Some began to drink their own urine, because they were dying of thirst. Others went to an even greater extreme and cut their wrists and drank their own blood. To add to the POWs' misfortune, because the Oryoku Maru did not carry the markings of a POW ship on the outside of her hull, American planes attacked her with devastating results. As the Oryoku Maru began to sink, the Japanese ordered the POWs out of the holds and into the water. Once in the water they were ordered to swim to shore, a not impossible task for a well person, because the ship was just a few hundred yards from land near Subic Bay, Philippine Islands. Those POWs who did not respond quickly enough were shot. Even though the foundering ship

was close to shore, many POWs did not make the short distance because the Japanese guards, for no apparent reason, began machine-gunning the prisoners in the water. In the two days that the Oryoku Maru was at sea, 300 of the 1,650 POWs died.[6]

Another ship, the Nitta Maru transported POW survivors of Wake Island to Shanghai on 12 January 1942. The cruelty endured by the defenders of Wake exceeded those reported on the Oryoku Maru. The accommodations were no better in comparison. The Japanese guards and ship's company clubbed, beat and robbed the POWs, as soon as the ship set sail. The Japanese launched on a spree of wanton murder in front of witnessing POWs, and the Japanese officer in charge commanded that several prisoners be beheaded on the ship's quarterdeck. One by one, the POWs knelt before several Japanese executioners. They were decapitated for no apparent reason other than the ship commander's capricious whim.[7]

POWs suffered other flagrant mental and physical abuses. Slapping was the most common physical abuse encountered. The cause for this "punishment" was due to a combination of influences. Lack of prisoner cooperation, defiance of Japanese rules, and laziness, (real or imagined) usually resulted in a POW being struck in the face or about the head with an open hand, fists, a stick, or a rifle butt. Certainly, the differences in Japanese and English language

exacerbated the harshness and frequency of slapping episodes. The Japanese slapped prisoners for the smallest of infractions. No matter how asinine the rule, it still was a rule broken. Sometimes POWs were slapped for no apparent reason at all. Yet the Japanese always had a logical reason for administering this humiliating punishment. One explanation was to "imbue the prisoner with humility and dispel his arrogance." Slapping POWs in the presence of other Asians achieved a two-fold purpose in Japanese eyes. First, it demonstrated to the prisoner that even the lowliest Japanese soldier was superior to the highest ranking Allied officer, and second, it demeaned the national stature of the Allied prisoners in the minds of other witnessing Asians. Upon instruction from their senior officers, Japanese enlisted men even slapped and beat General Johnathan Wainwright on many occasions, to demonstrate his "correct place" in the strata of the Japanese-Allied POW pecking order. They told General Wainwright that the beatings were not for brutality's sake but for his education so that he would understand Japanese racial superiority.[8]

Almost without exception, the punishment for attempted escape was death. This violated the Geneva Convention's rules on escape, which recognize that it was a prisoner's duty to try to escape. Many Japanese POW camp commanders announced to their prisoners the folly of escape and the

penalty they would suffer if recaptured. The Japanese employed a system of POW accountability called "groups of ten." A group of ten POWs was responsible for the whereabouts of each member of the group other at all times, during musters, work details, while eating, and even when in their sleeping quarters. The Japanese camp commanders announced that if one man was missing from their group at any time, the remaining nine would suffer severe punishment. Usually this meant death. Even if an escaped POW returned on his own, the Japanese would normally execute the entire group. The Geneva convention also prohibited the practice of collective punishment for individual misconduct.[9]

After the war, the Allies discovered in Japanese military archives secret orders pertaining to the "disposal" of POWs. One such document, Army Secret Order Number 2257, dated 17 March 1945, stated, "Due to the critical war situation, not to make any blunders in the treatment of POWs." It recommended that in the event of an imminent invasion of Japan that the POWs be set free, which, in light of previous treatment of prisoners, could only mean set the POWs free from earthly concerns. This directive gave an open invitation for the indiscriminate murder of POWs to prevent them from falling into enemy hands. Another Army Secret Order issued by the Vice Minister of War, General Heitaro Kimura, on 28 July 1942 instructed his field commanders concerning the disposition of captured Allied

fliers. It stated that those airmen were to be treated as "war criminals." Field commanders, no doubt, interpreted this in the most brutal sense. The United States protested these unwarranted murders, but what was particularly odious and abhorrent to the American press was the method used in the execution of the captured fliers. The usual Japanese method of execution for enemy airmen was ceremonial beheading. The United States Department of State contacted the Japanese government through neutral embassies concerning the murders of the airmen and the cruel methods by which they were executed. The Department of State promised the Japanese that retribution would be sought at the conclusion of the war for those responsible for the airmens' deaths.[10]

In addition to the individual murders, the Japanese also inflictedd individual torture and even mass murder. Some examples go beyond the excesses carried out by the German SS in its treatment of the Jews. At one Philippine POW camp, an American officer witnessed the Japanese beat a Filipino, who was suffering from dysentery. The Japanese guards then forced the prisoner to eat everything he excreted. Five of the Filipinos were subsequently thrown into a community pit latrine and buried alive.[11] A little known massacre documented by the IMTFE listed a death count of almost double that of the Malmedy massacre in Belgium during the Battle of the Bulge. On 14 December 1944 at Palawan, Philippines, the Japanese feigned an air raid drill

in the POW camp located there. When the prisoners ran into the makeshift air raid huts. Their captors poured gasoline throughout the shelters and set them ablaze. Prisoners who did not die from fumes or heat in the conflagration ran out of the shelters on fire. They begged the Japanese to shoot them in the head so they might be relieved from their misery. The Japanese guards instead shot or bayonetted them in the stomach.[12]

Another form of brutality that took place was medical experimentation. The Japanese operated a bacteriological development unit, called the TAMA Group or Unit 731. It operated out of Harbin, Manchuria, under the direction of Lieutenant General Shiro Ishii. Allied prisoners and Asian civilians suffered from inhuman experiments. Prisoners, injected with anthrax, cholera, typhoid, gas gangrene, small pox, and syphilis, suffered and died, just to satisfy medical curiosity. Other prisoners were lashed to stakes, while Japanese guards, wearing protective clothing, opened canisters containing bubonic plague and then timed the death. Also at the Kyushu Imperial University between 17 May until 3 June 1945, eight captured American B-29 crew members were used for vivisection experiments. Professor Fukujiro Ishiyama conducted the dismemberment of the captives, removing lungs, stomachs, and even drilled holes in their skulls. This was all done without anesthesia! Not until 1982 did the Japanese government acknowledge that it

had used more than 3,000 Allied POWs and Chinese for medical and bacteriological experiments.[13]

On the grand scale of brutality the Rape of Nanking speaks for itself. When Japanese troops entered the city of Nanking on 12 December 1937, they slaughtered Chinese soldiers and civilians on an unparalleled basis. Within the following six weeks, finally ending on 6 February 1938, the Japanese killed over 200,000 Chinese and raped at least 20,000 women. Japanese excesses during that time, and the incalculable destruction of people and property in the short span, made it a singular distinction for cruelty and brutality in modern history.[14]

More heinous than murder was the crime of ceremonial cannibalism that was practiced occasionally by Japanese armed forces. Irrefutable proof that field commanders and their troops indulged in this crime exists because a captured field order announced, <u>it was permissible to eat the flesh of the enemy only</u>. In 1946 an Allied military tribunal convened in Guam to bring one Japanese Major, Suso Matoba, to trial on the charge of cannibalism. The charge alleged that Matoba issued a written order directing the ceremonial consumption of flesh of an executed American flyer. Not only did his men comply with the directive by eating a soup cooked with strips of skin cut from the American's corpse, but Matoba had the dead aviator's liver removed and taken to his superior, Admiral Mori, where he

and Major Matoba ate it.[15]

This list of Japanese war crimes is by no means all encompassing. They are enough, nonetheless, to show the scope of atrocities committed by the military. Only through an examination of the Japanese psyche and mind-set, however, can one understand how men of normal compassion and sensitivity could commit these atrocities. By such means, one will find explanations of how a nation engaged in such conduct.

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CHAPTER III

JAPANESE PSYCHIC RACISM: THEIR ROLE IN THE TREATMENT OF POWs

The intent of recounting the racism and the mental psyche of the Japanese is to dispel myths that this nation is genetically different from other people or other Orientals. Rather, observations show that the societal and religious combinations throughout Japan's history made a race unlike any other. There is no magic or sly way to penetrate the inscrutable "Japanese mask." The frustrations of the West to arrive at an expedient solution of "why are Japanese Japanese?" stem from a lack of historical understanding and logical observations of sociological behavior, which together create the alleged "enigmatic Japanese race."

A brief look at the origins of the Japanese race helps determimne how Japan's geographical and social isolation from the world caused it to develop into a people with peculiar racial attitudes. This investigation is fundamental to understanding their culture. Concerning psychological references, all races are mixtures, and the Japanese are no different. Nonetheless, the Japanese have a distinction of isolation that over a period of time contributed toward the

development of a racial homogeneity.

In prehistoric times several successive waves of races populated Japan. Ostensibly, the land bridge which existed around 20,000 B.C., connecting the Korean peninsula and the Japanese islands, provided an access for south-central Asian and Caucasoid migration. The strange and hairy Ainu, occupy the northern island of Hokkaido, are said to be part of this first migration. In turn, Mongoloid, south Chinese, Maylay-Polynesian, and Borneo races made their way to the Japanese islands. These groups with possibly a few other tribes comprise the Japanese race. Because of the land bridge between Japan and mainland Asia disappeared, Japan and its inhabitants remained isolated for thousands of years. This situation did not preclude an occasional contact with migratory tribes caused by the pressure of Chinese expansion to the east, but the Japanese islands did not experience migrations on the mass scale that it had previously. The flow of people into Japan gradually tapered off, leaving the inhabitants in the islands to develop a unique culture over several thousand years.[1] Psychological and sociological isolation followed. The result was a society unique to Japan. The Japanese mind-set began to take form.

During World War II, the Office of War Information promulgated a subdivision to study the Japanese mind-set for purposes of psychological warfare. This agency, the Foreign

Morale Analysis Division for the Far East (FMAD), almost never came into being, however, because the Japanese soldier appeared fanatic, spirited, tough, and impervious to external fears, and seemed prepared to die for the emperor. Some officials believed, therefore, that there was little necessity to expend efforts on the Japanese in psychological warfare.[2] Regardless, a panel of renowned anthropologists and psychologists convened in an attempt to decipher Japanese behavior in society and in battle. Some of the well-known names included Margaret Mead, Alexander Leighton, John Embree, Clyde Kluckhohn, Morris Opler, and Ruth Benedict. The insights gained from their exhaustive investigations and observations of Japanese lifestyles revealed several psychological idiosyncrasies unique to the Japanese.

These experts presented anthropological and psychological postulates for FMAD that point out Japanese behavioral patterns of interest to the Allied military strategists. The FMAD released its compendium of collected information to the military as studies in "national character." The studies drew favorable comments as well as condemnation from official military sources. The data gathered identified psychological traits that were unique to the Japanese race. In its research, FMAD accurately assessed how the Japanese people viewed the world and would probably respond to defeat by the West. Some patterns did

show that the Japanese suffered heavily from psychological burdens that were rife in anxieties at the societal and individual levels. As a result, the Japanese possessed a repressed anxiety that was not allowed expression in "polite" society at home, but that could be given open vent in aggression and brutality in war abroad.[3] Another characteristic was a governmental inferiority complex. The political embarrassment caused by the failure of Japan's inability to drive out Commodore Matthew C. Perry's warships in 1853 no doubt made the Japanese government feel inferior. The Japanese soon discovered that the West had technological and military superiority over them. These feelings of inferiority, however, also came from their societal upbringing. This intensified their perceptions of inferiority to the West.

A preoccupation with Japanese child rearing traits caused many of the FMAD anthropologists and psychologists to accept the theories of English social anthropologist Geoffry Gorer. He claimed that the sadistic and aggressive traits exhibited by Japanese soldiers, as well as Japanese males in general, stemmed from overindulgent and doting mothers at the early stages of a boy's life and then the lad having to face the traumatic experience of an abrupt withdrawal of the mother's attention. This rejection, argued Gorer, caused the young male to resent the female, his mother, and consequently infuriated him when he could not have his way.

Only through vociferous temper tantrums was he able to acquire the attention he craved, as well as the belief that through dominance of the situation he had regained control. Thus the young Japanese male was mentally conditioned to dominate the female. Throughout the rest of his life, male dominance over females in any circumstance became an obsession. Japanese males conditioned themselves to a transference of the "female" role to the object or person with whom he was situationally confronted. This transference could even be directed toward and entire nation. To take control or conquer the problem or the country was vested in the "male dominance over the female" role play.[4]

Associated with this belief, according to Gorer, was the severe toilet training practiced by the Japanese. Cleanliness and proper toilet etiquette was inculcated to a point of absurdity. Casebooks of contemporary psychology indicated that preoccupation with ritualistic cleanliness engendered a compulsive and obsessive behavior. Compulsive and obsessive character then created situational morality, that is, to conduct oneself in the "right" manner regardless of what was "morally correct." According to Gorer, the Japanese value system was based on situational correctness. As such, there was no "sin," or right or wrong, but instead emphasis was placed on "doing the right thing at the right time."[5]

Gorer then argued that the obsession with cleanliness coupled with situational correctness made for a dangerous combination of psychological and emotional melding. The compulsiveness of male dominance over a female-designated target and fastidious adherence to the ritual of cleanliness as learned from prepubescent toilet training made an interesting role for the Japanese national character. Thus Japan had to control its role in the international world; it did not like the rejection or discrimination foisted upon it. Only through control would it feel dominant and safe, like the safe complacence of the child who is again paid attention by his mother when he raises a tantrum.[6]

Gorer proposed that Japan placed the Allied Powers in the "female" role during World War II. He believed that perceived feminine characteristics of Western softness, indecisiveness, and vacillation of policy clearly encouraged an inviting target to control. Ultimately, Gorer proposed that Japan perceived itself as a true male entity in international affairs. As such, it was superior to the "female" nations of America, Great Britain, China, and the other Allied nations. The Japanese, Gorer claimed, did not feel safe or satisfied until they controlled the earth.[7] The support given to Gorer by his peers from FMAD indicated that the Japanese possessed a compulsive obsessive behavioral characteristic on a national scale. This trait demonstrated, said the FMAD, that Japan looked at the rest

of the world situationally and acted according to its own value system of "correctness" without moral recriminations.[8]

Thus the FMAD asserted that Japan dealt with the West and other Asian nations seemingly in the manner of a spoiled child's temper tantrums and resented being admonished for its imperial aggression in Asia. It demonstrated an "international immaturity" that influenced the West in its assessment of future dealings with the Japanese modus operandi. Still, relatively newborn from its feudalistic era, Japan did not know how to deal with effective diplomatic adroitness in the international community. Rather, it "got its way" by political swagger and bluff. This was an image that the anthropologists and psychologists supported until the end of World War II. Much of this bluster, they argued, was a reaction to cover a problem of cultural inferiority.[9]

Another explanation for Japanese behavior stemmed from the belief in the superiority of the Yamato race. Thus racism also played an important role in the fury and brutality with which the Japanese waged the Pacific War, a brutality that was not experienced in the European theater. Japan had what it considered a more tenable position of claims as a homogeneous "race" because of its long isolation from the world and relatively few occurrences of immigration. Western racial hatred and suspicions of the "inferior yellow man" also generated reciprocal feelings and

amplified those prejudices. Before addressing the Japanese perspective of Western racism, however, one needs to review some historic generalities of prejudices practiced by the white man in his relationships with "inferior" peoples of the world.

Since the age of exploration and discovery, the Spanish, Portuguese, French, and British generally had regarded the people of their colonial acquisitions as "savage" and "childlike." Without belaboring the point, the conquest of India, Africa, the New World, and the Far East always yielded a product of white bigotry. Such bigotry emerged as a consequence of the "obviously superior Occidental fighting techniques," and subsequently Western powers believed they had received the heavenly mandate to conquer. During the subjugation of these empires, an Aristotelian attitude of that some people were natural slaves bolstered the idea of white supremacy. It naturally became indelibly marked on the Western mind as a natural order of things. Western science supported itself with a postulate of racial inequality in regard to non-whites. Therefore, traits of immaturity, as well as moral and emotional deficiency fostered an assessment of general backwardness mentally, culturally, and technologically for the "colored races." Such people, in the natural order of things, deserved to be controlled and given direction by superior people. These ideas combined produced the advent

of scientific racism. The West found its views on racial superiority comfortable and defensible.[10]

The Japanese observed Western aggression fastidiously, and they later emulated imperialistic philosophy of the Prussians, the British, and the Americans. They noted with interest how the British subjugated India and parts of Africa. The "inferior" natives of those countries quite "naturally" yielded to the "superior" white men. Victor's justice was not always benign to the vanquished. Closer to home the Japanese watched the British imperialistic adventures in China during colonial expansion and acquisition in the 1800s. Of particular interest was the way the British ran roughshod over the Chinese during the Opium War (1839-1842). The Japanese thus had the benefit of a close-up view of Western "benevolence" in the pursuit of empire building. The lessons of brutality learned from the British were not wasted on Japanese observers. In the future, they dealt the same type of "just treatment" to the defeated as they deserved. Such conduct was acceptable on the part of any superior race. Racial hatred could be logically connected to losers or the "defeated." It was permissible to hate losers because, quite naturally, they were racially inferior.

The transformation of an inferior race to a subhuman or nonhuman entity is simple anthropomorphic reduction expressed through racial bigotry. This reduction is often

reflected in mental or physical inferiorities which among racists can even be espoused as genetically linked. When one looks different it is easy to attach labels of inferiority because he or she does not fit the accepted mold. Cultural and physiological differences account for the abundance of mockery and derision of the Japanese by the West.

Physiological differences also weighed heavily against the Japanese, who already felt at a physical disadvantage next to the Westerners. The Japanese undoubtedly swallowed their pride many times when confronted by a Westerner, who generally was superior by stature and strength. The universally recognized "Napoleon Complex" or "little man's syndrome" evidently influenced Japanese behavior. The diminutive height of the Japanese, in contrast to an Occidental, was so readily identifiable that there is every reason to assume that this condition further exacerbated any lack of confidence or paranoia that a Japanese might have had.

The racial prejudice of the Occidental justifying imperial ambitions proved two things to the Japanese. First, the white man attained his goals through military strength and execution. Second, the survival of any non-white country was critically dependent on imperialistic diplomacy carried out through military intervention in order to stand as an equal with the white nations. The Japanese

learned that racial equality depended on "might makes right." In mimicry of the West, the Japanese made use of their longstanding xenophobia toward Occidentals to incite hatred against white nations. This position served the purpose of justifying the treatment and overthrow of arrogant whites nations which interfered with Japanese imperial interests.

The Japanese have a long history of suspicion and revulsion for other races of the world. Normally, they do not accept the incursions or intermingling of races outside of their own. Over several hundred years, the repudiation of foreigners grew. To add to racial prejudice, as in the West, cultural and physiological differences created a unique bigotry for whites not unlike the way in which the white man regarded the "colored man." Reverse discrimination of Japanese for whites needs explanation, as well as Japanese racial prejudices against other Asians. Since 1542, when the Portuguese made landfall on the island of Tanegashima, the Japanese regarded the Occidental explorers as "barbarians." Moreover, the usual image conjured up by the Japanese for Westerners was one of a dog. Although descriptions of white men exist in demonic form, the general caricature that befitted the "barbarian" was the canine. Atsutane Hirata (1776-1843), Shinto scholar and scientist, published a description of a typical Dutchman, or anyone from the West for that matter. In his detailed

assessment he said: "Their eyes are really just like those of a dog....When they urinate they lift one leg, the way dogs do." He continued in his description by indicating that the heeled shoes worn by Westerners only made their legs and feet look more like canines. The dog image not only survived through the years but found a new usage in the Japanese newspapers. Racial derision of the enemy was commonplace, and like the Western media the Japanese recalled memories from those early days of first contact with the West. Also, like their early historians such as Atsutane, the dog image played an important part in describing Japan's enemies. The media created a play-on-words for the word "American." They labeled the United States soldiers as Mer-ri-ken ('merican), which are written in three ideographs that literally mean "misguided dog."[11]

Even the ancient historical chronicles, the Kojiki (Record of Ancient Matters), compiled in 712, and the Nihon Shoki (Chronicles of Japan), compiled in 720, reviled the "red hairs." In those records, the major deity, Amaterasu Omikami or Sun Goddess, held a convocation of "800 myriad deities to drive out the savage , earthly, red-haired barbarians." Several hundred years later, among the first names that the foreigners acquired was komojin (red hairs). Because of extended sea voyages, beard growth on Nordic Dutchmen tended to be red in color at times. The facial hair, which is not usually present on Japanese males and the

body odor caused by infrequent bathing habits of the sailors, also added the impression of an "animal." Not surprising was the applicability of the old myth again to exhort the Japanese people through the press to do like their fictional forbears. Mitsuru Toyama, head of the militant prewar Black Dragon Society, announced to the Domei, the official governmental news censoring agency, on 13 April 1941 that "the red-haired barbarians must be expelled from Asia."[12]

In regard to the demonic stigma attached to the white races, the Japanese went a step further in human degradation with reference to Anglo-Americans. In the course of employing historical fantasy to stir up anti-Western sentiment, the "white demons" assumed physiological characteristics similar to the demons of Japanese folklore. Those facets often included claws, horns of various sizes, fangs, and sometimes a tail. The West, in short, took on stereotypical attributes of a devil image. The Japanese press called them demons (oni), devils (kichiku), evil spirits (akki and akuma), and monsters (kaibutsu). President Franklin D.Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill appeared frequently in Japanese newspaper cartoons with horns, tails, and other Mephistophelean attributes. Leaders of the Japanese hierarchy, such as Foreign Minster Yosuke Matsuoka, reiterated the propagandistic rhetoric of the media by declaring that "the mission of the Yamato

[Japanese] race was to prevent the human race from becoming devilish, to rescue it from destruction and lead the world to light."[13]

The Japanese, however, held a different racial regard for their Oriental brothers, much of which was linked to religious and traditional beliefs. Racial bigotry directed against Koreans, Chinese, Vietnamese, Filipinos, and Thais was the result of propaganda which taught Japanese to regard these groups as inferiors. The distinguished American journalist, Edgar Snow, agreed with anthropologists Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson in their assessment of Japanese resentment of "lesser Asian races." All three postulated that Japan experienced a long, unhappy history of cultural contacts. Mead and Bateson asserted, "The Japanese, lacking respect for their own culture, perceive their inevitable inferiority and feel insulted when they meet this self-respect in others." Snow added, "The Japanese is aware of his intellectual and physical inferiority to individual Koreans and Chinese, the two peoples subject to his god-emperor. He is forever seeking ways of compensation--and finding such compensation in the humiliation, brutalization, and wanton slaughter of others."[14] Racism was commonplace in finding a scapegoat in situational crises. As an example, the Japanese frequently targeted the Koreans as a racial scapegoat in troubled times. In the aftermath of the earthquake that destroyed most of Tokyo in 1923, the

Japanese government spread rumors that Koreans had plotted revolts and conspired to loot in the city's ruins, and sham courts convicted and beheaded thousands of innocent Koreans in the name of racial inequality. Later, during increasing food shortages as the Pacific War drew to a close, Koreans suffered indiscriminate blame and punishment at the hands of the Japanese for those circumstances.[15]

The Japanese treated other countries that they conquered with varying degrees racial discrimination. Their belief of racial superiority led them to exploit other Asians as inferiors, and, as such, non-Japanese countries and their people could and would be expended for the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. The single characteristic of the Japanese that manifested itself in occupied countries was the brutality inflicted on those people and indifference toward respect for other nationalities, cultures, and traditions.

The Japanese attitudes toward Koreans and Chinese were extremely cruel, and they expended much effort to dismantle the Korean and Chinese governments through force and humiliating implementation of Japanese rules and regulations intended to destroy national identities. The Japanese, for instance, ensured that Korean work wages were much lower than the Japanese laborer's wages. Conscription laws forced Korean men into labor camps and to serve in the Imperial Japanese Army; women were sent to the battlefront as

prostitutes. Korean language was banned from Korean schools, and Shinto religious observances were required of the people.[16]

The Japanese treatment of the Chinese does not need further explanation. The wanton destruction of China and its people by the Japanese clearly shows that the Japanese regarded the Chinese as racially inferior. The Japanese seemed determined to carry out a policy of genocide against the Chinese wherever and whenever they came in contact with them. The brutality accorded to the Chinese in Manchukuo, the Japanese puppet-state of Manchuria, as well as Taiwan and Malaya, was universally without comparison.[17]

Burma and Indonesia initially welcomed the Japanese invasion forces as liberators, which lends some credence to the brotherhood of Asian nations described in the Co-prosperity Sphere. The Japanese, however, were quick to dispel any notion that these occupied countries had any level of equality with their divine country. Consequently, Japanese ministers for those countries imposed oppressive measures which soon let the Burmese and Indonesians know that they were second-class citizens. Japanese soldiers slapped and beat the citizens and subjected them to the tortuous interrogations by the kempeitai (secret thought police) in those occupied countries and, in the case of Indonesia, forced the native population to sing the Kimi ga yo, the Japanese national anthem. In all cases, the raw

materials and resources beneficial to Japan's war machine were subject to immediate confiscation.[18]

The countries that allied themselves with the Japanese in efforts to gain independence from foreign rule felt no equality or treatment of brotherhood by the Japanese. Leaders of Asian countries who attempted to throw off the yoke of British, French, and Dutch colonial oppression found that they traded one oppressor for a worse one. The Japanese treated Premier Ba Maw of Burma, Subhas Chandra Bose of India, and Emperor Henry Pu-yi of Manchukuo as hirelings and racial inferiors even though these men allied their revolutionary governments with Tokyo. All these leaders hoped that by siding with the Japanese, they might gain independent nationhood for their respective countries. Each received unctuous diplomatic courtesies and feigned equal peerage with the Japanese race when they appeared with the emperor in Tokyo. The Japanese occupiers, however, made it clear that the support that each revolutionary leader might enjoy from the Japanese armed forces came as a sublime gift of support from the emperor in Tokyo, and their political existence was at his pleasure alone.[19]

Premier Hideki Tojo, on opening the first war Diet on 21 January 1942, explained Japan's role as the superior Asian race. He stated Japan's goal as being "... to enable all states and peoples in Greater Asia to have their proper place...which all can live in mutual prosperity with Japan

as leader."[20]

The most detailed policy of how the Japanese regarded other Asians and non-Asians racially was in a secret multi-volumed document discovered in a used-book store in Tokyo in 1981. In War Without Mercy, John Dower describes the last six volumes of the document Yamato Minzoku o Chukaku to suru Sekai Seisaku no Kento (An Investigation of Global Policy with the Yamato Race as Nucleus). The document is emphatically racist, and it places the people of different nations on several levels of hierarchy with Japan at the highest level; and it declares that "to view those who are in essence unequal as equals is itself inequitable. To treat those who are unequal unequally is to realize equality." Therefore, however the Japanese treated the people of an occupied territory was proper at that time because of Japanese superiority and the other nation's inferiority. As the leading race in Asia, other countries assumed their "proper place" subordinate to the dictates of Japan.[21] This document was not used to explain economic imperial expansion, but rather the formulation of a policy for making the myth of the divine race manifest. It was in concert with racial beliefs expressed by the aforementioned eighteenth-century Shinto scholar, Atsutane Hirata, who declared, "No matter how small a superior country may be, it remains superior, and no matter how big an inferior country may be, it remains inferior."[22] As a superior race in Asia

and certainly superior to Western "devils," Japan's impetus to spread its divine hegemony was racially motivated.

These differences clearly directed and filtered perspectives, which acted as conduits through which the Japanese conducted personal actions and collectively their national behavior. They also formed the basis from which the Japanese developed their religious beliefs and traditions, which will be the topics of the following chapter.

ENDNOTES

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2. Alexander H. Leighton, Human Relations in a Changing World, Observations on the Use of Social Sciences (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1949), 46-48.

3. Dower, War Without Mercy, 121-22.

4. Geoffrey Gorer, "Why are Japs, Japs?" Time 7 August 1944, 66.

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6. Ibid., 128.

7. Ibid., 124-28, 138; Geoffrey Gorer, "Why are Japs, Japs?" Time 7 August 1944, 66; Clyde Kluckhohn, Mirror for Man (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1949), 200.

8. Dower, War Without Mercy, 127-29.

9. Ibid., 133.

10. Ibid., 149, 153.

11. Ibid., 241; Hall, Japan, From Prehistory to Modern Times, 136; Donald Keene, The Japanese Discovery of Europe, 1720-1830 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), 170.

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13. Dower, War Without Mercy, 244-45; Office of War Information, Foreign Morale Analysis Division, Weekly Report No. 30, Japanese Personality And Reactions As Seen in Soldiers'Diaries (Washington: Military Archives and Records Administration, 1945), 24 (hereinafter cited as FMAD, Report No. 30); Otto D. Tolischus, Through Japanese Eyes (New York: Cornwall Press, 1945), 66.

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15. Embree, The Japanese Nation, 123; Leighton, Human Relations in a Changing World, 67; Mosley, Hirohito, 81-84.

16. Ienaga, Pacific War, 157-58.

17. Ibid., 159-166, 172-73.

18. Ba Maw, Breakthrough in Burma: Memoirs in Revolution, 1936-1946 (New Haven: Yale University Press, y1968), 310-15; Ienaga, Pacific War, 174-78.

19. Louis Allen, Singapore, 1941-1942 (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1977), 259-265; Ba Maw, Breakthrough in Burma, 310-315; Ienaga, Pacific War, 173-76.

20. Tolischus, Through Japanese Eyes, 46.

21. Dower, War Without Mercy, 262-64, 266, 357.

22. Keene, Japanese Discovery of Europe, 163.

CHAPTER IV

RELIGION AND TRADITION: THEIR ROLE IN JAPANESE TREATMENT OF POWS

It is crucial that the student of Japanese history understand the fundamental building blocks of Japanese religion, for the Shinto religion demonstrated its influence on Japanese conduct and attitudes toward prisoners of war during World War Two. One must also address other religions which influenced Japanese military behavior. The discussion will center mainly on Shinto, but the role of peripheral religions will also be explored. Nevertheless, emphasis will be on Shinto because it is exclusively of Japanese origin.

Following the discussion on religion, Japanese cultural traditions will then be addressed inasmuch as Shinto affects tradition and vice versa. It is the fusion of these two phenomena that made the Japanese people extremely malleable and controllable by the militarists before and during Japan's war of Pacific expansion.

The Kojiki (Record of Ancient Matters), and the Nihon Shoki (Chronicles of Japan), are historical creeds for the Japanese. Even today, regardless of incongruities with mythological and actual historical dates, the Japanese

solemnly revere the two documents with respectful devotion. Both were compilations of the spoken origins of the Japanese people passed from mouth to mouth in the days before written languages existed in Japan. They complimented each other in the support of mythological evidence of divine origination of the Japanese people. The Shinto religion has its litany recorded in these books, and they lend historical strength to the gods and goddesses described by them.

In animistic fashion, as legend recalls, the world existed in a dark void before recorded time. In the ethereal heavens two deities, Izanagi (male) and Izanami (female), formed the Japanese islands by lowering a spear into the waters, and in those places where the drips fell from the raised spear piled up, islands appeared. From this point the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki go through such intricate explanations of the panoply of gods and goddesses, but for the sake of brevity only the most important ones will be identified. The female, Izanami, gave birth to Amaterasu Omikami, the Sun Goddess, and to her brother, Susa No O No Mikoto or God of Storms and Violence.[1] The Japanese accepted the personalities of both as role models. Susa No would burst into childhood temper tantrums, exhibit rage and insatiable sexual desires, and generally lust after those attributes which would be expected in a classic hedonist. His indiscretions in sexual affairs with other goddesses and his political intrigues to conquer and control the lands and

possessions of others reveal his covetous nature. He constantly tried to control his sister Amatarasu and ended up mating with her to produce even more deities. The Japanese do not find Susa No's capricious and unrestrained conduct unbecoming. Because he is one of the founding gods, many Japanese males emulate his manner. Like Susa No, the other gods of Shinto did not abstain from indulging in sin. The gods of Shinto were unashamedly promiscuous and mischievous; they were sinful as well as upright. Thus morality is not a goal of Shinto as it is in Christianity.[2]

Amaterasu, on the other hand, represented stability and focus in achieving her goals. She is probably one of the greatest deities in Japanese historical myth. Through her descendents almost two million years later, the first "human" emperor was born, the fabled Jimmu Tenno of the Yamato clan. He was successful in quelling and subduing all of the feuding tribes and bringing them together under his hegemony on the mythical date of the founding of the Japanese Yamato national state in 660 B.C.[3] The conquest of the warring factions in that period took some time. In the Nihon Shoki the emperor Jimmu Tenno described his desire to bring peace and control over his empire with the term hakko ichiu or "eight corners of the world under one roof."[4] At that time, the world that Jimmu Tenno was referring to was the Japanese mainland. In the next chapter a redefined and expanded definition of the hakko ichiu by political zealots

will show how the Shinto myths were inextricably linked to the political forces pushing for world expansion.

As implausible as they appear, these myths were incorporated into official Japanese history. The Japanese believed in the validity of such tales concerning the origin of their race, and the lineage of emperors was unbroken in Japanese eyes. Logically, since all Japanese were descended from Jimmu Tenno, then all are linked to divine lineage as well. This belief meant that all Japanese were themselves gods, albeit in a smaller connotation but gods nonetheless. This bond between emperor and his people, promulgated by myth, was eventually exploited to engender uncompromising loyalty and senseless sacrifice of life during World War II. Consequently, whatever the emperor desired, the people would desire as well, so any holy mission of the emperor's was a task of his people. Frequent ritualistic inculcation and immersion of the Japanese people in Shinto brought about a total commitment and blind obedience from most of its disciples.[5]

It is also necessary to examine the peripheral aspects of Zen Buddhism in order to understand the final product when it is grafted onto Shinto to make the state religion, Neo-Shinto. Zen is an adaptation of Buddhism which was tailored and shaped by the Japanese. Zen existed in Japan since the seventh century but did not really flourish until the twelfth century. Buddhism is concerned with reaching

Nirvana, or ultimate peace and oblivion. It is achieved by following steps of faith and action and seeking help by prayerful adulation of Buddha and his lesser gods. Zen developed, however, as a meditative religious sect of Buddhism. Its focus was the realization of an "inner eye," which through introspection one could win his way to Nirvana. It further taught that if one were at peace with himself, then all actions and efforts were flawless. Zen Buddhism was popular with the samurai (one who serves) warriors because through rigid physical and spiritual discipline, austerity, and self-sacrifice, one could react with calm indifference to the tragedies of life. Zen disregarded the scholastic and intellectual processes but believed that answers to life's insoluble problems arrived intuitively, in other words, "to know all by knowing nothing." It also added the dimension of karma, which is the merit of life. One thus received what one deserved.

The combination of Zen and Shinto was a cult religion that devoted itself in the sacrifice of self for the master, the family, and the gods. It taught that hardship was the way to purity and to overcome the dualism of the world, and that life was death. Since life and death existed simultaneously, life was therefore an illusion. Subsequently, there was no fear of death. Zen developed such popularity that Zen priests became indispensable advisors to the early shoguns' (military dictators) courts.[6]

This was the Zen Buddhist school of thought that merged with Shinto. The proliferation of Shinto became so widespread that by 1867 it was officially adopted as Kokka Shinto or the state religion.[7]

One more major feature joined the Neo-Shinto religion: a Confucian code of ethics or obligations. The Japanese adopted these codes as an all-encompassing responsibility of master to servant. These codes of responsibility were the equivalent of noblesse oblige, of the superior person to the servant and the servant's unflinching and selfless devotion to his master. The Japanese called this Oyabun-Kobun. Primarily it existed in several sets of obligations based on the Analects of Confucius, and adopted by the Japanese. They were: father to son, older brother to younger brother, brother to sister, and husband to wife. Loyalty went both ways. Additional expansions to these are, but not limited to: emperor to subjects, village elders to villagers, factory supervisors to employees, military officers to enlisted men, and so on. The list was essentially inexhaustible, and the Japanese established codes of obligation for almost any situation.[8] These codes dispelled the need to think individually about any fluid situation of "Where do I fit?" or "To whom do I owe loyalty?" All one had to do was situationally to place oneself in the proper relation of higher obligator or lower obligee, and then one's place in the world was clear. Situational ethics and

role positioning were important in Japanese life. They played a sad but true part when carried out to the absurd in the military. But how were these responsibilities carried out, and in what measure of repayment?

The Japanese have been labeled as possessing compulsive personalities, for they tend to conform to rules, expect planned outcomes, and like things that fit. They live by a preferred life of codified forms in which payment and repayment are addressed. These forms cover situations and most contingencies which arise in the course of day-to-day living. Most of these codes are as much a part of the Japanese psyche today as they were in feudal times.

The first form is one of on, an ascribed obligation that is a debt. This debt may exist for any present, kindness, honor bestowed, or debt of honor, and is separated from other obligations in that it has to be repaid within a time limit. A second form is gimu, the unquestioning duty to the emperor. A third is ko, which is duty to one's ancestors. Others include nimmu, a duty to work, and giri, which is the most important of all.

Giri is all-encompassing and controls the behavior for all walks of life. Giri may be understood as a bonding of all of the aforementioned forms. It is the balancing of obligation just as in a mathematical equation. It must be balanced; it repays or "sets things even." It is punishment for misconduct. The misconduct may not have actually

happened, but if a person felt that he has been wronged, then his giri must be fulfilled by correcting an injustice and return to the status quo before the real or imagined injustice. He must repay be word or deed, whatever the cost, until both terms of the moral equation have been satisfied. Simply, there is a lack of justice if something is left undone. Further, the duty to repay or to owe to one's family name demands even the ultimate sacrifice. This obviously means necessary vengeance suicide. To protect or prevent one from endangering giri, one must live up to his station or duty. If he fails in this endeavor, he has no right to respect himself. Giri is for all classes of the nation, but the more elevated one is on the social or political level, the heavier the burden to guard and, if necessary, to repay giri.[9]

The codified form, which superseded giri in the feudal period, was gimmu-chu, a higher law than giri. Gimmu-chu was fulfillment to the emperor, while giri was fulfillment to one's self. In the proper order, fulfilling gimmu-chu always came before giri. For instance ,imperial authority mandated that when a dilemma arose between repaying the debt to gimmu-chu or giri, gimmu-chu always came first. It is noteworthy for a portent of things to come that gimmu-chu contained a deadly element where, in execution of the imperial authority, one would remain virtuous no matter what actions were taken to fulfill the gimmu-chu.[10]

The last militant application to obligated forms was the meirei. The meirei was an authoritative order to be carried out at all costs. Any circumstances which might excuse failure did not exist. The meirei was purely the issuance of an order or task. It did not stipulate the method of execution. An order issued without specific details for its execution left the moral responsibility and initiative of how it was to be carried out to the recipient. Therefore, the choice of action taken was in the hands of anyone who received the order, be it an individual or an army.[11] This gave carte blanche permission to many Japanese field commanders to operate to excess in World War II.[12]

The tradition of the samurai warrior also needs explanation in order to show how an ancient and exclusive class of people, along with their codes of conduct, gradually imbued the rest of the Japanese with a national warrior spirit through years of indoctrination. The outcome will demonstrate how a nation developed mental toughness as well as moral insensitivity, disregard, and contempt for an enemy.

The samurai was the reflection of one totally devoted . He pursued an ascetic and spartan lifestyle, and he lived for duty and loyalty, which for him were one and the same. The swords that he carried were his badges and the soul of his existence. They were revered as servants of ultimate loyalty, of service unto death. The Japanese people

regarded the samurai as knights or paladins of the realm and rendered homage to them as was their due.

In time the Japanese people emulated the "way of the warrior" or bushido. For instance, they adopted the samurai style of austere living. Certainly, the population found that the harshness and sometimes cruel codes of conduct fit well within the precepts of Zen Buddhism. As feudal generations passed, many Japanese commoners and merchants desired to partake of the prestige of being a part of the warrior class nobility. This was a privilege denied to most classes of lower birth but obtained by some wealthy merchants who bought into a financially defunct samurai family through marriage. This mesalliance was symbiotic. The samurai family could continue its good name by being monetarily solvent again, and the merchant class family, previously looked down upon, could enhance its reputation by assuming a noble samurai family's name.[13]

Bushido is in its ethereal image noblesse oblige. This code extolled veracity and protection of the weak, and it also led to devotion to the arts of warfare and the development of a spartan-like indifference to suffering and death. The bushido arts and practices evolved into such a refined following that the Hagakure (Hidden Among Leaves), a comprehensive manual of traditional bushido, was compiled around 1717. It put forth traditional virtues for the samurai warrior, which, although not intended for the

Japanese as a whole, were absorbed by them as well. A written definition of bushido included the attainment of frugality, loyalty, and courage. Above all, bushido glorified dying. Therefore, a glorious or meaningful death had a higher value than a meaningless life. This maxim permeated the entire social spectrum of Japan and remained intact throughout the revolutionary social and political changes which were to come.[14]

Another peculiar facet of bushido was the regard for moral shame. Shame helped to ensure discipline. In other words, proper conduct socially or martially was not to incur shame through deed or word. The absence of shame also involved a clear conscience. That meant to "save face." According to Japanese author Inazo Nitobe, "Shame is the soil from which grows all good manners--to live up to family obligations and expectations, the community, and the gods."[15]

Yet another tenet of bushido, and one of a sinister nature, was the regard and treatment of prisoners. It had a direct relationship to manners. These were not manners which dealt with courtesy and social obligation, but manners of devotion to duty. The Japanese interpretation of manners in this sense meant the devotion and zeal or enthusiasm by which obligations were carried out. The cruel treatment of prisoners or unwarranted execution of captives demonstrated "good manners" if it was done without reservation or

reluctance on the part of the person ordered to carry it out. In support of this credo was the age old tradition of "help" or "beneficence" during ritual suicide of a samurai by his friend. During seppuku, the kneeling samurai plunged his sword into his stomach. Upon a predetermined time or when he might exhibit un-warrior like facial grimacing due to the pain, his friend the kaishaku-nin, would quickly cut the dying samurai's head off in one stroke to relieve the actor's pain and un-samurai embarrassment. This could be further construed to be benign, or "life-giving," in the hands of a samurai who deeply considered bushi-no-nasake, or "the warrior's sense of mercy and benevolence."[16] The Japanese did not ponder the West's idea of benevolent treatment toward Allied POWs in World War II worthy of humane consideration. The Japanese would inflict this kind of treatment on their captives regardless of the opinion of the outside world.

In a distorted way, it is understandable how a Japanese warrior of the twentieth century could, with clear conscience, "help" a prisoner of war to alleviate "his shame" of capture by separating the POW's head in the same "live-giving" stroke. If one finds that the "life-giving" stroke theory too incredible to believe, then there was the right of every samurai, and later with the commoners conscripted into the armed forces who mimicked the practice, the act of kirisute-gomen. According to this credo, it is a

sole justifiable right, in fact a duty, to kill a disrespectful commoner, or a POW, on the spot! This could be for the simple annoyance of failure to bow to one of a superior station or to utter words when none were solicited. Such a senseless execution for a simple act or infraction or faux pas seems more plausible in Western eyes than from some warriors's code of benevolence heretofore offered.[17]

Eventually, the Japanese people accepted the precepts of bushido unconditionally. The national doctrine that evolved from egocentricity was one in which self-control could easily have gone too far, "forcing pliant natures into distortions and monstrosities." It had the potential to beget bigotry and breed hypocrisy.[18]

A unique relationship also developed between the shoguns and the emperors from medieval times. It occurred so repeatedly that it became a tradition in Japan that carried through to the end of World War II. The tradition was partially responsible for what the West might call the manipulation of the emperor by his generals or the imperial inability to control the political destiny of his nation.

In the dawn of the Japanese imperial court at the ancient capital of Kyoto, courtiers were sent to far reaches of the young empire to administer as directors and governors. Most of these administrators were related to the court nobility and sometimes to the throne itself. Over a period of time, the far-flung administrators acclimated

themselves to political isolation and established feudal political pockets of power. To make their power legitimate required armed support for enforcement of their taxes and directives for their autonomous regions. These retainers became samurai. Eventually these provincial barons became strong enough to intimidate the court at Kyoto or choose to be a military guardian arm of the throne.[19]

In 935 A.D. Taira Masakado grew strong enough to defy the Kyoto court and even claimed himself to be the "new (legitimate) emperor." After several years of rebellion, the insurrection was quelled. In this struggle, the court at Kyoto depended on the fighting abilities and expertise of warriors from other provinces to protect the capital. Of course, there was a price for services rendered, and in this case the Minamoto clan emerged as the official defender of the court. The Fujiwara family manipulated the clan. The emperor and the court could scarcely refuse to bestow title and honor to the family and clan, which for a long period of time defended its safety for so many years. Therefore, it was natural to confer titles of kampaku, or regent, by the throne to the representatives of those powerful armies as sole military proprietor for the emperor, thus establishing a monopoly of access to the throne.[20]

Restricted access to the emperor or his immediate advisors meant essentially control of the throne. In essence what transpired was an inversion of political power

in Japan. Court officials grew to fear the samurai appointed to protect them. As samurai elevated their class in the court through marriages with the imperial nobility and appointment of military aristocracy to court positions. Eventually, the infusion of samurai into the imperial court matters thrust the samurai class up to supreme political power in the twelfth century. The samurai class was barely conscious that it usurped the authority of the imperial court.[21]

To counter a monopoly of military power and compete safely with the ruling clan's representatives at court, the Office of Retired Emperor was established in 1086 A.D. From this position an emperor could appoint his heir to the throne and influence administrative affairs with less fear of losing political control or possibly his life to the ruling clan.[22]

Over the following hundreds of years, the military dominance of the imperial throne vacillated back and forth from family or clan, with stronger, emerging armies overcoming others on the battlefield, each trying to wrest control of the throne from the current clan. Each time a new military dictator ascended to his august position of shogun or dictator, a power shift in the imperial court administration occurred. Many emperors abdicated in order to study the ethereal and aesthetic observances of religion, and they were content to manipulate their progeny from a

remote political position. In such a manner they became "cloistered emperors." They ruled through their sons, yet the ruling families of the ruling clans (like the Fujiwara) influenced them.

Thus manipulation of the throne through several political echelons by the military became a tradition in itself. The practice of bureaucratic advisors influencing the emperor when they were influenced by the military themselves became commonplace. It was quite difficult to ascertain from what source an imperial decision was made when so many people had an input. A good example would be the sequential falling of dominos, when one after another falls and in turn knocks another over until the end of the row. In retrospect, successive emperors were sequestered from political activity for the most part until the middle 1850's, and the military clans fought each other for control of the position of shogun, which really controlled the country. The military handled the problems of state, which the emperor "really need not be bothered with."

It is paramount to give a brief background of events showing the end of the old feudal system with relationship of the samurai and its influence over the throne through the transition into a new feudal period. In understanding how Japan emerged into the modern Western World and still retained the rudiments of feudal control, one will observe how a continuum of samurai beliefs and actions never really

expired but were stored away until future times when they emerged in terrifying measure and circumstance when inflicted on Allied POWs in World War II.

Japan was one of the few countries to have been at war with itself almost since recorded history there. With the few brief periods of peace after 800 A.D., civil wars were constant among the warring factions of feudal lords. The period of 1571-1868 represented the last unbroken reign of shoguns, primarily from the Tokugawa clan. The emperors were rarely challenged during all of the times that the military might was in the hands of these shoguns. The emperors were regarded as the spiritual link to the gods and as such were not involved with the banalities of conquest and domination as were the shoguns.[23]

The shogun had many feudal lords, the daimyo, who supported him in his conquests. They received fiefs of land from the spoils of war as payment for their services to the shogun. Subservient to the daimyo were the loyal retainer warriors, the samurai. They trained and responded to any contingency and with reckless devotion sacrificed themselves for their master.[24]

The years of peace during the Tokugawa rule brought about its own demise. The daimyo, who held allegiance to the shogun, were hard pressed to pay their samurai. Without war there were no spoils to pay them, so the samurai began to lose their economic prestige. Many farmers left their

farms to become artisans and merchants because the rice tax exacted by many daimyo to pay their samurai left the farmers with little or nothing.

Trading centers at Osaka and Nagasaki encouraged a growing merchant class, much to the anger of the financially strapped samurai class. The samurai, who previously looked down on the merchants with disdain, subsequently regarded them as economic allies. As pointed out previously, the samurai yielded to economic necessity and allowed intermarriages into the wealthy merchant class. This bond ostensibly gave financial relief to the indigent samurai, reinstating them to a respectable financial level, and at same time allowed the non-nobility class the opportunity to enter into a prestigious level of upper class. The mesalliance of these two social levels set a precedent which would inundate future Japanese big business with militant nobility as executives.[25]

As the government of the effete bakufu (rule by military dictator) approached the mid-nineteenth century, an event occurred that hastened, if not by itself helped topple, the demise of the shogun and the entire feudal system. For centuries Japan remained in political seclusion from the rest of the world, and there were times when lost or shipwrecked foreigners were turned away and not allowed to land for help or repairs. Those that did land usually suffered the loss of their heads. By the 1850s,

however, ships from Russia, Holland, and the United States were whaling in Japanese waters. The presence of these foreigners, represented a threat, whether real or imagined, to the military rule in Japan. The disappearing samurai blamed many of their social and political ills on the intrusion of the West. The shogun subsequently remained intransigent, and he adamantly refused to open the doors of Japan to the "barbarian" foreigners no matter how much they entreated him by invitation and inducement.

In 1853, Commodore Matthew C. Perry sailed into Tokyo Bay, after receiving orders from President Millard Fillmore to promulgate negotiations with Keiki, the last Tokugawa shogun, to open Japan to trade with America. He made proposals with the threat of the guns of his "black ships," as the Japanese called them. The Japanese would remember how their first official contact with the United States was one in which the Americans chose to use force to achieve diplomatic objectives. This lesson was not wasted on the Japanese military bureaucracy in the years to come. The shogun was consternated, as he could not repel the impudent, audacious, and well-armed foreigners.

The emperor, who began to emerge from political seclusion at the insistency of the tozama or "outside lords," (daimyo who were belligerent to the Tokugawa clan), sent a message to the shogun demanding to know how and when he, the shogun, would expel the barbarians from Japan.

Furthermore, it was within the spirit of the dictator's title, Sei-i-dai-Shogun, (Barbarian-expelling Generalissimo) to execute his office of responsibility. He had to expel the Western invaders by force.[26] The tozama, in opposition to the shogun, took delight in embarrassing him by demonstrating how useless his administration was in evicting the Westerners and simultaneously encouraged the emperor to resume his rightful position as head of state, with them as his devoted followers.[27]

Throughout Japan, a general discontentment with the current shogun gained strength, and a rally cry of "Sonno-joi" ("Revere the Emperor, Expel the Barbarian") resounded throughout the empire. The shogun received a fait accompli. Because he could not muster the support of enough daimyo to back him in driving out the intruders in an military confrontation, he was asked to step down. In the face of superior American weaponry, and extreme embarrassment concerning his inability to live up to his duty in the execution of his emperor's directive, Keiki relinquished his title of shogun. Feudal Japan, at least politically, vanished overnight.[28]

Officially, by 3 January 1868, the Meiji Restoration reinstated the emperor in political control of the government with the backing of many forward-looking and progressive samurai. The dual system of government which previously existed--the emperor as the sovereign of state

and the shogun as the governor of the state--was destroyed. The feeling toward the West changed little, and the advisors to the emperor were wary, if not incensed, with the manner that the West forced itself into Japanese affairs.

The chaos created by the abdication of the shogun left the Japanese warrior class without any political or social polarization. To whom would the former shogun's samurai pledge their loyalty? As there was a governmental movement afoot to disband the old samurai clans, how were they to live and function in the Japan which was taking its first step in becoming a new member in the family of Western nations?

The answers came from many sources, but one of the most poignant came from the teachings of the ancient Tokugawa warrior-scholar, Yamaga Soko (1622-85), who encouraged the samurai to devote their energies to refining their intellect. He further advocated the development of interests in the political sector and not just on the battlefield.[29] He argued that political combat could be fought as well as physical combat. Yoshida of Mencius, Soko's student, carried the studies of his master further by emphasizing the role of the emperor as the spiritual and governmental will and head of Japan. He militantly decreed that the emperor was descended from the gods and that as such he was in the world to complete a divine mission. Yoshida proclaimed that the divine mission of the emperor

was to repudiate the West and to create an world empire![30]

With public acceptance of the ideas of Soko and Yoshido and others, the worship of the throne became a polarizing element for the Japanese nation. For the first time in centuries, devotion to the emperor alone secured the peoples' obedience to a central figure. With this objective accomplished, the feudal devotion to many different daiymo lords was neatly substituted for devotion to the emperor alone. The idea that the god-emperor was the font of secular direction and literal blood link to the people fit the Japanese mind with its ideals of obedience to duty and family. In later years the Japanese regarded the nation as the family with the emperor as the head of its household.

The two salient points which emerged from the early days of the Restoration were the overwhelming urgency to deal with the foreign crisis from abroad and the development of a new leadership evolving from the samurai classes themselves. The new slogan, "fukoku-kyohei" ("to prosper the state and strengthen the armed forces"), was a reaction to the Western incursion.[31] The ruling clans, demoted to an advisory capacity at the court, were concerned with a reconsolidation of the samurai class. With all of their land holdings confiscated during the centralization and restructuring of former Tokugawa fiefs, the landless gentry could only find fulfillment of samurai-like duties and service in the various ministerial functions of the emperors

new government. As before during feudal days, the idea that they would shoulder the burden of operating the governmental machinery prevailed. This shift would free the emperor from troubling himself with mortal banalities so that he might better dwell on important religious observances as high priest of the state, when in fact the tradition of the military controlling the emperor continued under a new cloak of subtlety. The former samurai worked toward the "reconsolidation of the samurai class in an effort to retain control of the country," which was a "counter-revolutionary drive toward political absolutism."[32]

These are the important points of religion and traditions; when put together they were the controlling influences on Japanese historical development. What is surprising to the West is that, regardless of the societal change that Japan went through in the 1860s and 1870s, the samurai doctrines and the divine mission supported by historical myths expanded more than ever before. In the next chapter the political tools of manipulation will be discussed, for it is through them, that Japan's religious, social, and warrior traditions were distorted as to twist and contort normal perspectives and sensitivities of a nation as a whole, allowing it to conduct itself in such an brutal manner in the Pacific War.

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Chapter V

POST-1868 GOVERNMENTAL TRANSITIONS AND MANIPULATIONS: THEIR ROLE IN ATTITUDES TOWARD POWs

The transition from a feudal state to a modern one was a whirlwind nature for Japan. The adoption, consolidation, and absorption of Western social refinements, scientific advances, and political structures in a span of less than fifty years since the "opening" of Japan was remarkable. Nonetheless, the entire development of the nation rested with the sole responsibility of samurai of all classes. Regardless of the modern face-lift that Japan went through, with Western encouragement, the country used most of the old fragments of political structure to build a new political system. The formulators of political change, since the time of the Mejii Restoration, had merely shifted around and modified traditional principle. Thus, the political fiber of the feudal institution ran unbroken from the end of the bakufu into the Meiji Restoration, and the trends of Japanese political workings progressed little beyond the feudal system.

It is not fair to pass judgement on governmental bureaucrats and argue that they conspired to make a samurai nation of Japan. The oligarchy, it will be remembered, were

for the most part disfranchised samurai who were formerly in the service of a master or daimyo to whom they offered fealty and service. They sought service in the ranks of a new type of master: the government. When placed in decision-making roles, they merely reflected their own upbringing. Not surprisingly, therefore, in their efforts to restructure a new government, they chose to enact laws that would cause the common people to adopt samurai-like obedience to a master; but in this case they substituted the emperor. They expected the Japanese people to behave in similar manner if given the proper education, and they believed the average citizen should adhere without public protest to the dictates of those newly promulgated ordinances. The population was to follow policy, not make it. Yet provisions in the new government did allow the people to have a small voice in the formulation of policy.

The mechanisms used to build and develop the new government were several-fold. First, the government embarked on a policy of international learning in order to catch up and keep pace with the West. Japan realized its backward and inferior national image and military prestige after the Western incursions and quite logically needed to improve its military and scientific knowledge to become a respected equal in the world. Second, a legal system of public education to inculcate and control the people needed adoption. Last, the oligarchs had to place the emperor in a

respected position of state and still be able to manipulate the affairs of government without his interference. The governmental formulators' indirect approach to control the nation was to isolate the emperor and control the people through their definition of the interpretive will of the emperor.

Not unreasonably, the founding fathers of the new Japan relied on from their feudal past to find inspiration upon which to build policies for the modern government. They believed that the strengthening of the nation was to be found by inculcating the masses with the precepts of Shinto. This was not a novel idea. The studies of Shinto in conjunction with its philosophical connections of modern government were several centuries old. It was called Kokugaku (national learning). Kokugaku became a nationally recognized endeavor in 1728 when the national philosopher and scholar Kada Azumamaro (1668-1736) applauded the bakufu for the establishment of a "school of national learning." It gradually developed into a national awareness movement which became ultimately nationalistic and anti-foreign. The violently anti-foreign warrior-scholar Hirata Atsutane (1776-1843) preached of a Kokutai or a unique Japanese nation that emerged into the world by the will of the gods, ruled by an imperial line of divine emperors, and unbroken forever. He postulated that Japan as a whole had to accept these precepts of faith as outlined in the Kokutai[1] Thus

national exposure to the litanies of Shinto became national education. Regardless of the sciences and advanced technology adopted from the West, real Japanese education was the dissemination, adoption, and constant inculcation of Shinto to the masses. To be well educated in the Japanese sense, therefore, was to be a fervent follower and practioner of state Shinto religion and swear unswerving loyalty and service to its practices and goals. This made the Shinto myth of the Japanese race, stemming from heavenly origins and the gods and the peoples' obligation and duty to help the god-emperor fulfill his goals or sacred missions, actual fact.

The oligarchs reacted to the national crisis of foreign intervention with various solutions. Ii Naosuke, advisor to the throne, offered the most logical one. At the time of the overthrow of the last shogun, Naosuke acknowledged that during the "forced opening" of Japan, the country could not realistically expel the foreigners, but he believed that in time Japan could strengthen itself by adopting Western methods and eventually could overcome and force the foreigners from the country. He favored dealing with the West and biding time, and he counselled other advisors to the throne in this matter. Naosuke's argument met with fierce opposition, however, despite his entreaties to powerful anti-foreign samurai clans who favored immediate and violent expulsion of the Westerners in Japan.[2] Opinion

within the oligarchy at this juncture favored Naosuke's ideas in regards of how to deal with the West, so the Japanese government decided to send envoys throughout the world to learn new ideas and take notes of technological advancements and study the blueprints of governmental organization and military power. With these fact-finding excursions, the oligarchs expected to build Japan into a modern, respected, international equal within a minimum amount of time.

The most auspicious of the fact-finding journeys was the Iwakura Mission, so named for its leader who had a consanguinary relation to the emperor. His mission included members of the powerful samurai clans of Satsuma, Chosu, Tosa, and Hizan, and it departed in 1872 for the United States and Europe to learn from the West. Completing its task in 1873, the mission brought back a plethora of new governmental ideas and scientific documents to refurbish Japanese lifestyles. Additionally, scientists, doctors, architects, teachers, political bureaucrats, philosophers, and military advisors from all over the world were invited to come to Japan to help build and prepare her for entry into modern nationhood. For a brief twenty-year period, Japan absorbed the knowledge of the West and allowed its citizens a unstultified philosophical freedom heretofore not permitted.[3]

From approximately the mid-1870s to the late 1880s,

however, there was a trend toward the assumption of greater control over the masses' education. The restrictions placed on knowledge and education became more and more important to the oligarchy in efforts to retain and protect its positions of control and power. Too many liberal Western ideas, particularly that of government operated by representatives from the masses, caused great consternation among former samurai in the government. To keep their absolutist form of "representative" government, the oligarchs subsequently appointed former samuari from their administration, Ito Hirobumi primarily, to draft a constitution. The document appeared on the surface to have fair representation by the people, but its tenets in reality called for control of the population through military regimentation.

The constitution, according to Iwakura, was a gift from the emperor to his subjects. It consisted of a bicameral Diet, with an upper house of Peers and a House of Representatives or lower house. The throne appointed members of the House of Peers, who were former court nobility, samurai, and people of influence and power next to the emperor. Elected commoners comprised the lower house, which in essence had no real initiative authority but could at least vote on the national budget. Ostensibly, to the Western world, Japan made a quantum leap into the democratic process. This was not to be the case, however, since the

seemingly innocuous design and structure of the constitution was not democratic in the Western sense. The oligarchs designed and drafted the constitution to retain political control and maintain the status quo. The primary author and former Choshu clan samurai, Hirobumi, drew from his impressions of the imperialistic Prussian style of government. As he drafted the constitution, he insured that the military leaders of the country remained ensconced permanently as the controlling factions within the constitutional process. For example, the constitution placed the ministers of the Army and Navy directly under the control of the emperor and accountable to him alone. If the Diet did not vote according to their wishes, one or both would resign, causing the House of Representatives to dissolve and new elections to follow. With a more pliant assemblage of newly elected representatives, the military was in a position to continue dictating its wants and needs or, as a last resort when it ran into Lower House resistance, have its ministers of the Army and Navy resign to start all over again.[4]

The pernicious elements of the constitution were in the articles which stem from Shinto and the warrior's code of bushido. Article I declared: "The Empire of Japan shall be reigned over and governed by a line of Emperor unbroken for ages eternal." Article III stated: "The Emperor is sacred and inviolable." Article XI denoted: "The Emperor has the

supreme command of the Army and Navy." Article XIII proclaimed: " The Emperor declares war, makes peace, and concludes treaties."[5] Other provisions in the constitution mandated that the Japanese people serve as conscripts in the new armed forces. It also demanded that all Japanese subjects uphold and adhere to the laws of the constitution and that the document itself was inviolable and unchangeable.[6] Logically, because the emperor was divine and therefore infallible, his gift of the constitution made the document infallible itself.

In reality, the constitution failed to hold any branch of government accountable for its actions. The ministers and functionaries of state merely attended to the upkeep of the political processes when in fact it was the hidden bureaucrats who controlled the government and isolated the emperor from behind the doors of a nebulous bureaucracy. The emperor was not accountable, for he merely bestowed the document upon his people. The military leaders who controlled through their interpretation of the emperor's will in actuality continued what their samurai forbears practiced in the days of the shogun. Once again, the modern samurai collected political power in the hands of a few and simultaneously isolated the emperor from dabbling in the affairs of state, since he trusted his ministers to govern in his name with sage direction. The oligarchs successfully managed to keep, and in fact enhance, their positions of

power and yet appear to the Japanese people and the West as a modicum of democracy.

To embark on this quest for absolute control, a legal instrument was needed which would be so powerful and broad in scope as to encompass state religious ideals, inculcate samurai-like sacrifice for the emperor and nation, and endorse the legitimacy of all laws and actions enacted by the government in the emperor's name. This document needed to be a daily national recitation and reflection that would reaffirm the devotion of the Japanese people to fulfill their duty to their imperial destiny. The authors of this political instrument drew on and distorted the teachings of the renowned seventeenth-century warrior-scholar, Yamaga Soko. He was a prophet for nationalistic identity and awareness of Japanese racial superiority, proclaiming that "the land of Japan stands high above the other nations of the world, and her people excel the peoples of the world."[7] Modern Japanese political philosophers developed the divine mission of Japan's mythological first human emperor in his efforts to subdue the rebellious tribes in ancient Japan. Jimmu Tenno, as remembered in the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki, meant to use his slogan of hakko ichiu (eight corners of the world under one roof) to the extent of the quelling the untamed warring tribes in Japan. Subsequently, latter day Japanese scholars carried the "eight corners" out of proportion to mean the whole earth under Japanese hegemony.[8]

The document that made the mythological Shinto mission of the emperor manifest and placed Japan on a collision course with the West was called the Kokutai No Hongi or "Cardinal Principles of the National Polity." It prophesied that through self-sacrifice and obedience, the Japanese nation could individually and collectively assist the emperor in the completion of his divine mission. The Kokutai would be effective only if public education was completely controlled by the government. As the Kokutai was designed to capture the mind of the nation, the government molded a national educational conduit through which to impact the people. To accomplish this goal, the ministry of education decided to introduce this document as mandatory for reading and study at all levels of compulsory school, as well as a thorough indoctrination for the armed forces in the tenets of the Kokutai.[9]

General Sadao Araki, inspector-general of military education, issued a foreboding warning to the West in his interpretation of the Kokutai. He claimed that all resistance to the Japanese mission would feel justifiable blows, and as the imperial morality spread, obstacles would be removed at whatever the cost. Peace could not come, Araki declared, until the world was under one ruler. To subdue all those who refused to conform to the emperor's virtues was the mission of the imperial forces. General Araki was to have an even greater influence on Japanese

children, beyond his impressions of tutoring the emperors's army and navy.[10]

Almost simultaneous with the passage of compulsory education in 1872 was the selection of the minister of education. The educational code was designed to bring Japan up to the levels of the rest of the world in the shortest amount of time. Since there was no format on which to build and educational superintendency, the government placed the educational ministry in the hands of the military. For this position the government chose the very same General Sadao Araki, inspector-general for military education. He immediately began a militaristic intensification of teaching the Kokutai in all levels of school. Under his direction the schools placed great emphasis on moral training, that is, emperor worship rather than learning. The emergence of militant bushido and self-sacrifice for the emperor filtered down to the grade schools. By 1925 the ministry of education assigned active duty military officers to schools, and they monitored classrooms to oversee the Kokutai and ensure that the correct moral training was instructed properly and that compulsory military training courses were taught to the children with equal thoroughness.[11] The Kokutai supplanted all other forms of education and religion so that gradually the teaching of the doctrine dominated both independent learning and most other religions.

The fanatic implementation of the Kokutai reached

absurd proportions. As an example, many of the stained glass windows of former Christian missionary schools were removed because the image of Christ on the window stood higher in the building and looked down on the sacred lectern containing a copy of the Kokutai. The extreme outcome of these teachings filtered even to the levels of the lower school children, who, after listening to the daily reading of the Kokutai, would scream in unison, "Tenno heika banzai!" ("To die for the emperor!")[12] Reflections from a Japanese schoolgirl twenty years later, Nakane Mihoko, relate that school children memorized everything. She said that such an approach to rote learning had the effect of losing sensitivity to human feelings. In the process she and other children became so "well trained" that they had no doubts about the righteousness of [World War II or] anything taught to them. They were what is called in popular parlance "brainwashed." As the author Saburo Ienaga succinctly stated, "The mass of population...had been conditioned by public education to accept military discipline. Any doubts about militarism had been killed by the chilling frost of state indoctrination."[13]

As mentioned before, the relaxed attitudes of the government in the 1860s and 1870s gradually changed. By 1890 the passage of an Imperial Education Rescript curtailed much of the free expression and teachings in schools. The Kokutai, in reflection of feudal times, combined state

Shinto doctrines with Confucian ethics and molded the young Japanese minds at institutions of learning. Through strict adherence to the Kokutai, Japanese were taught to disregard individual thought and worth and think of themselves as living cells in the support of a greater state organism. The use of the Kokutai possibly taught people what to think rather than how to think, to instill obedience and uniformity through a closely controlled education system.

As the education system became more strictly regimented, to ensure absolute control, the government salvaged another feudal institution from the Tokugawa Shogunate, the metsuke or secret police.[14] Since the restoration of the emperor, the secret police were called the "thought police," and they had the authority to arrest anyone on suspicion of anti-governmental activity. Mere public denunciation or accusation alone made one liable for immediate incarceration, while even diary entries, which might reflect private thoughts in discordance with governmental policy, were enough to warrant arrest. Listening to foreign or Western music incurred police harassment or, worse, arrest and torture by the dreaded kempeitai (military secret police). Other items and events scrutinized by the police were plays, public speeches, moving pictures, newspapers, and writings. The most incredulous pseudo-science practiced by the police was "face-reading." If a policeman could determine "suspicion"

by looks alone, a person could be arrested for that itself.[15]

The ministry of justice controlled the "thought police," while the prosecutors or "procurators" at all levels of the courts had jurisdiction of the ministry of justice. After an individual's arrest, upon direction of the procurator and not by the recommendation of the figurehead judges, a suspect could be detained indefinitely without official charges being brought against him. There was no habeas corpus in Japan.[16]

Hiranuma Kiichiro, the constitutional consultant to the throne in 1921, held almost limitless power over the courts. Previous to his appointment to the advisory council to the throne, he was chief procurator of Japan (1912-1921). In that capacity he set the tenor of treatment and punishment for dissidents and those considered a danger to the teachings of the Kokutai. As the son of a samurai, he believed that duty and loyalty to the throne were his foremost obligations. In his estimation all teachings of the West corrupted the morality of the Japanese nation. By 1915 Kiichiro exerted considerable influence over all areas of national politics.[17]

The Peace Preservation Law of 1925 and its update in 1928 expanded police powers to a ominous level. It declared that all teachers and students would be watched closely for any radical thoughts, corrupt Western practices, or

communist ideologies. Any person who "might wish" to change or challenge the Kokutai or any of its corollary interpretations was subject to arrest and interrogation.[18] With the capricious "powers to discover suspicion" of the "thought police" and the absence of habeas corpus, persons foolhardy enough to voice disgruntlement with the government publicly promptly disappeared from public life for an indeterminate time. Other dissenters, in fear of incurring the same fate, kept their opinions silent.

Political parties finally disintegrated with the passage of stricter laws and increased police intimidation. To increase further central control by government and to reverse the "corruptness" of the short-lived liberal movements of the 1920s, one law dissolved all other political parties, and a single party, the Imperial Rule Assistance Association (IRAA), took their place in 1940. The facade placed in front of a totalitarian government was that the one party would be more attuned to direct the nation toward the imperial objectives and the divine mission. Japan by this time had been fighting in China since 1931, and the war fever carried propaganda from the media, which was also carefully censored to keep the newspapers' national spirit within the bounds of governmental policy.[19]

One of the goals of the IRAA was "spiritual mobilization" of the people, and it saturated the media with

jingoistic goals of the "holy mission" of hakko ichiu (eight corners of the world under one roof). Without pretense or political masking, political scholars, scientists, and military leaders told the public that the Japanese mission was to conquer the world. This was only logical because once the Shinto precepts were accepted and once an outside world was acknowledged, it followed automatically that the "divinely born" Japanese, as a superior race, were entitled to rule the whole earth, not just the home islands. Armed with this rationale, the imperialists in the government contorted the religion and duped the people into a holy crusade. An individual among some notable men who perpetuated this religious farce was General Sadao Araki, former war minister, who, in a published pamphlet in 1933 said: "to conquer the world and embrace the universe as our state ...our imperial morality ...must be preached and spread over the whole world. All obstacles standing in the path of this must be removed, even if it is necessary to apply real force." Foreign Minister Yosuke Matsuoka, in a book published in 1941, reflected: "Japan should take over the management of the continent on a large scale, and propagate hakko ichiu and kodo [the imperial way] in Asia, and then extend it to the world."[20] Likewise, according to the intellectual political scholar, Dr. Shumei Okawa, Japan was to bring "peace" to the whole world [through total control].[21]

Through the modern interpretations of the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki, which embraced hakko ichiu, a logical development of Japan's new concept of the Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere emerged. Simply, the Japanese created an operative plan for the conquest of Asia in steps to achieve the "emperor's mission." The creation of a Japanese Monroe Doctrine for Asia was ordained from the Shinto past.

According to author John Dower in War Without Mercy, the recent discovery in 1982 of a Japanese report of eight volumes corroborates the this theory. The document was called An Investigation of Global Policy with the Yamato Race as Nucleus.[22] The promulgation of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was not attempted out of logistical desperation to support wartime exigencies, which were an obvious side benefit. Rather, the document was a policy intended, foremost, to follow the heaven-mandated plan for permanent and righteous domination over the other races of Asia, with the Japanese as the rightful executor because of their racial and cultural supremacy.

In the pursuit of this Co-prosperity Sphere, the imperialistic West was to be expunged from Asia so that the Asian community could develop without the white man's oppression. The document then called for Japan to assume its role as leader of the Asian community and guide it in its service to accomplish further the "holy mission." One of Japan's greater geopolitical leaders, Professor

Tsunekichi Komaki of Kyoto Imperial University, inspired a revision of the political and geographical objectives of the Co-prosperity Sphere. In its assessment of the stages of Japanese conquest of the world, the document identified the first stage as taking possession of Manchuria, Mongolia, most of China proper and its islands. The second stage encompassed the remainder of China south through the Asian mainland, Southwest Pacific islands, and Australia and New Zealand. Stages three and four included Soviet territory east of Lake Baikal, the Philippines, India, Turkey, Afghanistan, West and Southwest Asia. Further to amplify the fulfillment of the "holy mission," the Japanese seriously intended to transplant their Yamato Minzoku (Japanese race) into the "soil" of these colonies to rule and supervise them. This would firmly establish the Japanese in their divine role as creators of a new world order.[23]

In helping the masses understand their part in creating the new order, the IRAA, through the authorship of Professor Chikao Fujisawa, published The Great Shinto Purification Ritual and the Divine Mission of Japan in which he described the "holy mission" of creating the new order through the realization of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere as a global ritual of Shinto water purification. As practitioners of state Shinto, the Japanese always cleansed themselves of moral impurities with the act of misogi or washing one's hands symbolically with purifying water before

prayer. In the same way, the Japanese people would be cleansing Asia of impurities by political misogi as "heavenly" forces washed Western imperialists out of the intended Co-Prosperity Sphere. Closely akin to this ritual, Shinto required that to achieve purity of soul and mind, one had to endure deprivation, hardship, and sacrifice. In turn, if one were to achieve true purification, then logically only the extreme sacrifice of one's life could obtain it. The Great Shinto Purification Ritual document distorted even the act of purification to achieve a most repugnant result. As Dower described Fujiwara's treatise:

> "Once war and dying well became established as honorable practices, death assumed connotations of purity and transcendence, and the ablution that purified could be a bath of blood itself. Thus, the Japanese leadership inculcated the masses that graphically presenting themselves in mass deaths in combat was an act of collective purification!"[24]

New words describing national sacrifice appeared in the litany of war media. Borrowing from two sixth-century Chinese ideograms, the Japanese government applied the term gyokusai or "smashed jewel" to those who sacrificed themselves in combat to attain purification. For the Japanese, it was a brilliant star nova in the heavens which burned brightly for a brief moment and then extinguished itself. Likewise, the media was rife with the term, which

received a kind of anthropomorphic attachment. The Japanese military regarded itself as brilliant shards of a smashed jewel when its troops wasted themselves in senseless banzai charges against enemy ground forces or tokkotai (Special Attack Forces) air attacks called kamikaze or "Divine Wind" by Westerners. This thinking explains why pilots plunged their aircraft into enemy ships during World War II in an effort to destroy them. Later, an explosive-laden suicide boat called the kaiten, employed to accomplish the same purpose, was added to the suicidal arsenal. The tokkotai Forces were instituted at the end of 1944 as a desperate Japanese home-defense maneuver planned by Vice Admiral Takijiro Onishi. The commanders of these organizations did not expect their subordinates to live through the ordeal once they had left their bases bound for designated targets.[25]

Late in World War II, the Japanese government encouraged the media use of a modified form of gyokusai. The term gyokusai tokko or the "hundred million as Special Attack Force" was coined. The Army and Navy introduced the term to the Diet. On 30 January 1945 the cabinet approved the usage of the slogan for an informational policy promotion for the Japanese people. Realizing the futility of their situation later, the media revised the former slogan further, which reflected a hopeless outcome from the war except to die in "brilliance." Ichioku gyokusai or "the

smashing of the hundred million like a beautiful jewel" called for nothing less than for the entire Yamato race to embrace total extermination. This would be in the final act of national purification, taking their own lives by suicide whether they won or lost in the hopeless defense of Japan.[26]

The effectiveness of this "do and die" propaganda cannot be underestimated. Just before the end of the war, representatives from the Foreign Morale Analysis Division, Bureau of Overseas Intelligence, collected large amounts of psychological and social data from Japanese citizens concerning their attitudes about the war. When the Japanese were asked what did they think would happen to them if Japan lost, almost three-fourths of the responses replied that death was preferable to capture.[27] Nevertheless, media propaganda and police intimidation probably could not ensure that the distant rural population would be as easily malleable as their urban counterparts.

Plans were afoot, however, to bring even the remotest village into compliance with the government's designs. In their efforts to convert Japan into a state of total mobilization, several army generals agreed on the necessity of gaining the support of the rural communities. They then designed martial organizations to include hamlet and village participation in activities to ensure military popularity, spread nationalistic ideology, and build the army a solid base of support.

The creator of Japan's modern army and navy was General Aritomo Yamagata (1838-1922). He came from the powerful Choshu clan, which helped restore the emperor to power in the Meiji Restoration. Additionally, he was a member of the famous Iwakura Mission sent to the West to gather ideas and innovations and bring them back to Japan. His observations of Western military technology and strength made a deep impression on General Yamagata, for he was keenly aware of Japan's military weaknesses and outmoded tactics and weaponry. As such he wished to unify Japan's military using the fragmented armies of the disbanded daimyos and strengthen it so that Japan could defend itself from the perceived Western threat. Basing his model on the French armed forces, he pushed for adoption of new techniques of warfare and a conscription clause in the new constitution when it was drafted. Through his efforts and other former samurai, a conscription law was promulgated in 1873. General Yamagata created a drastic departure when, as a former samurai himself, he broke with warrior tradition and helped enact a conscription law. His main efforts to bring Japan up to Western standards were in improving the army and navy, the police, education, and involving all levels of citizenry from the cities to the hamlets in strengthening Japan. He believed that through conscription all of these goals could be accomplished directly or indirectly.[28]

By breaking the tradition of filling the ranks of the

army and navy with commoners, he hoped to broaden the military's social base. As such, except by virtue of rank, conscripts of all social strata now served in a system where before only the upper caste of samurai nobility participated. There was thus an immediate attraction for the commoners to rise above their station in life when they joined the armed forces, for Yamagata's plan was to imbue the conscript commoners with the same Shinto spirit and code of bushido of the former samurai. This step ultimately strengthened the nation through an army and navy with a common samurai spirit of duty and devotion.[29] The validity of a commoner army was tested only four years after the enactment of the conscription law.

A former Satsuma samurai clansman, Takamori Saigo (1827-1877), who aided in the Meiji Restoration, found himself at odds with the new Tokyo government in 1873. Saigo and several constituents desired to persuade the government to launch a war of colonial aggression against Korea, but he and his followers lost their case in the parliament, whereupon in disgust he and others resigned. Saigo then returned to the Satsuma clan region in southern Kyushu and raised a samurai army to overthrow the Tokyo government. In 1877 his professional samurai army of 30,000 warriors fought the unprofessional conscripts. It took the Tokyo government six months and 40,000 troops to defeat Saigo and his forces in what the Japanese called the Seinan

engagement. "Military socialism" had come of age. The victory over the professional samurai raised national prestige of the lowly classes and uplifted them in the social scale. A social revolution had occurred as the feudal caste system was discarded forever.[30]

General Giichi Tanaka, one of General Yamagata's most loyal devotees, promoted his mentor's thoughts on the citizen-soldiers. Since in his opinion the best citizens were educated in the army, he believed that all citizens had a legal obligation to serve in the army and absorb the its ideals and values. Thus, conscription, Tanaka claimed, would build national cohesion. This was a social basis for militarism.[31]

Tanaka was instrumental in organizing reserve organizations to gain rural support for the army. Through his efforts the organization which was to have the greatest effect in controlling, directing, and forging the rural communities into a unified political front was the Zaigo Gunjin Kai or the Imperial Reserve Association, which was established in 1910. Tanaka's reasons for the creation of the Reserve Association and subsequent organizations reiterated General Yamagata's opinions. First, Tanaka was obsessed that Western influence might threaten or spoil the peasant communities with liberal ideologies that had sparked rural revolutions or reforms like those in America and Europe. Second, he argued that the Japanese rural

communities could provide many civilian soldiers for total mobilization like many Western countries did when committed to total war.[32]

Military officers introduced patriotic curricula for the agrarian Reserve Association. The ceremonies usually opened with a reading of the Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors, and then a speech followed on a military or ideological subject eliciting patriotic applause at its completion. The objective was to inculcate the people with an amalgam of village, family, warrior, and national values, all centering on the emperor. The process brought the practice of bushido to the family unit and in another sense made village and hamlet service, through patriotic military duties, synonymous with nationalistic values. This created controllable "national villages."[33]

The hamlets were organized in a military-type structure with a chain of command modeled to create a more harmonious cooperation from its members. Dissidents, malcontents, or nonconformists received punishment through gossip, economic disbarment, and general ostracism by the hamlet people. Thus, the system caused the village to join the Reserve Association membership in toto.[34]

The Reserve Association was directly connected to conscription. A conscript's service was extremely important to the village, for he would serve for two years in the Imperial Reserve Army and return to his home as a man to be

honored. Those returning with a rank of anything less than first class private, however, were considered failures, while those returning as superior privates were heralded. Those who performed with distinction in the army reserve were selected as leaders of the villages and their respective Reserve Associations. This was the incentive and reward to excel while in the army reserve and to follow any military or governmental doctrine implicitly. Support from the agrarian cells appeared to be so effective that the politician and theorist Tokutomi Sohro declared: "The villages are the army's electoral constituency."[35]

The preceding topics indicate how the government controlled the education and conduits through which the Japanese were trained for service for their emperor. An examination of army life is also essential because it will show how all of the previously mentioned religious, educational, and governmental influences molded the Japanese soldier and explain how he could be as brutal and insensitive as the historical record indicates.

From the very moment of draft notification, the conscript came face to face with the harshness and brutality of army life. Even the method of his induction into the Imperial Army was a double entendre in a derogatory manner which labeled him as virtually worthless. From the army draft boards conscripts received postcards that cost less than a penny for postage. The amount of the postage was

called issen gorin or one sen and five rin. The army in its cruel humor named all of the inductees issen gorin, indicating that the draftee's worth was less than that of a penny. Thus, the new soldier was virtually considered a non-person or non-entity, and it logically followed that because the army could "afford" an inexhaustible supply of issen gorin, his rights and opinions as a person were equally worthless when compared to weapons or supplies which cost "real" money.[36]

The Japanese Army operated on a system of transfer brutality, permitting hostility and stress to be meted out upon each descending rank stratum, with a downhill snowball effect, gathering momentum until unleashed physical brutality vented itself on the new recruits. They had no object upon which they could vent their frustrations or stress; they could punish no one or anything.[37] The usual method of punishment was open-handed slapping, and the Japanese were particularly fond of this "corrective measure." The corrective measure was unique to the army since it was immediately meted out to the errant soldier and not a matter of official record that would have to be sent to headquarters. Loss of face, shame, and vituperous reprimand for laxness of control was to be expected if reports of infractions made their way to headquarters. If, however, no report was made for an infraction, then it was not "official" and no one was embarrassed. Therefore, if it

was not reported, it did not happen; and since it never occurred, there was no stigma for having erred or been punished at all.[38]

Nonetheless, commissions of rule violations were interpretive of senior soldiers. If a soldier who had been in the army only one day longer than another thought that a situation or "junior" soldier needed correcting, he had the right to slap, hit, or beat that person spontaneously, without asking questions. The junior soldiers could only stand and receive the punishment without resisting.[39]

Military training was subsequently a daily exercise in humiliation, unwarranted physical violence toward subordinates, and hard work to the point of exhaustion, oftentimes around-the-clock. To endure these hardships day after day helped the recruit to understand "spiritual training," which consisted of self-discipline, overcoming of odds, vocal recitation of loyalty to the emperor unto death, and fanatical execution of orders to the last ounce of strength. The excesses and abuse of recruits often did lend credence in preparing men for the hardships and deprivations of combat.[40]

The noncommissioned officers (NCOs) were demi-gods in the army. For whatever reason they joined the army, they found many desirable benefits in it. Many came from the rural areas in Japan or were from the lower castes of society. For instance, a second or third born son, who

never hoped to receive any land or birthright, often left his farm or village and became an NCO in the army. Life as an NCO was often easier than survival prospects on the farm. NCOs often enjoyed absolute despotism over their troops as they were the buffer between and the conduit through which the officers commanded the soldiers. The NCO was absolute in his control of the soldiers' daily lives, and he handed out rewards and punishments to his men since all aspects of military life came through him. Because the NCOs were so powerful, the troops had no right to appeal any grievance. The NCO made sure that no mistakes were made by his recruits because in the Japanese Army such an admission most likely resulted in a loss of face. Mistakes made by recruits could only reveal to the officers that the NCO in charge was incompetent or remiss in training those soldiers.

Since regulations, slogans, and official maxims were the spirit of army life, the NCO made sure that his charges were more than imbued with the proper spirit. In this oppressive atmosphere, recruits vied for the privilege to attend or serve the NCO. This was particularly true in the recruit barracks, where recent conscripts fought for the honor of removing the NCO's footwear at the end of the day or exhibited obsequious behavior in the hopes to wash the sergeant's back in the bath. Most ironic was that many of the men who fawned over the NCOs to do menial work for him came from higher social classes before their entry into the

military. It seemed that a social inversion occurred in that these same recruits who fought for the privilege to assist an NCO in his bath would not deign to have given him the time of day had he met the NCO in former civilian life.[41]

This totalitarian atmosphere explained why the Japanese forces, and the individual soldiers as well, often behaved as they did in their treatment of POWs. The Imperial Rescript for the armed forces spelled out exactly what was expected of them. It defined their chu, their duty to the emperor to whom they gave absolute loyalty. Soldiers were expected to achieve "genuine heart" through fealty, etiquette, chivalry, fidelity, and frugality. When "true heart" was attained, it was free from taint, regardless of deed or action. Sincerity was equated with good manners, as in the feudal days. Thus, enthusiasm to carry out the mission of the Kokutai No Hongi had nothing to do with benign sincerity in the sense of Western morality.[42]

A Japanese soldier entered a mystical coalition when he joined the armed forces. Because of the Shinto "blood link" to the emperor, the acts of the soldier were allegedly "perfect and above reproach" because the emperor was in every man. The fulfillment of gimu and chu for the emperor led them to believe that they contributed in the attainment of the emperor' holy mission. Further, the belief that any enemy of the emperor could not be right, so the more

brutally the soldiers treated the enemy the more loyal they were to the emperor in the completion of a soldier's imperial service. The Teikoku Shimpo, a daily newspaper, declared on 18 September 1938 that "all sins are forgiven if one commits them in the service of the emperor's holy war."[43] If, in the act of self-abnegation in selfless sacrifice for their emperor, they met death, soldiers became minor gods next to their emperor and were to be worshipped at the soldier's shrine at Yasukuni.[44]

On the subject of capture, there was not one guideline. The imperial forces were reputed to be inured to hardships, and compassion was scorned. General Hideki Tojo, the Minister of War, concluded in his Military Field Code of 8 January 1941 that on the subject of surrender and reputation: "Never die in disgrace; endeavor to satisfy the wishes of the family group; do not live to bear the shame of imprisonment by the enemy." Surrender was, therefore, unworthy of the spirit of the Japanese forces. Furthermore, he admonished that "it was a criminal offense to be captured alive [wounded or unconscious] while there is a means to resist." In the Japanese Army, the offense was punishable by death.[45]

The Allied forces, on the other hand, were psychologically bolstered for the event of capture. They were told that if they had done their best, there was no cause for disgrace. The Japanese could not conceive of

capture even under these circumstances. To be captured was a failure to fulfill gimu-chu, an unbearable shame of failing in their duty to the emperor. As an example, in cases where a Japanese hospital was about to be captured, Japanese doctors were seen running through the wards shooting wounded Japanese soldiers. Wounded soldiers were damaged goods, and there was no "sense" in allowing them to be captured alive and bear the failure of gimu-chu. The ratio of captured Allied personnel losses in the later Burma Campaign were four captured to one dead. On the other hand, the Japanese average was one captured to 120 dead![46]

With all that has been said, the Japanese soldier was fortified with many symbolic sanctions, all given to him by his emperor, the ministers of his country, his army, and his immediate superiors. They bolstered his outlets for destruction. A conviction of correctness of those institutions gave him security that he was fulfilling his duty. His war office licensed any act of destruction.[47] There is no explanation in light of Judeo-Christian ethic and compassion that excused the treatment of prisoners of war at the hands of the Japanese, although from the Japanese perspective, their conduct was logical and appropriate.

ENDNOTES

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5. Ibid., 298-300; Embree, Japanese Nation, 265-72.

6. Embree, Japanese Nation, 266.

7. Dower, War Without Mercy, 222; Hall, Kokutai No Hongi, 108; Hall, Japan, From Prehistory to Modern Times, 344.

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13. Ienaga, Pacific War, 30, 108.

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CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS FOR CONDUCT

On New Year's Day, 1941, a Japanese intelligence unit stationed in Formosa, under the direction of Colonel Masanobu Tsuji, submitted a document to the General Staff Headquarters in Tokyo for review. Upon acceptance of that document, the staff authorized it for release to the Japanese Army for the dissemination and education of its soldiers. It was a soldier's primer explaining why they were fighting for Japan and Asia and how to conduct themselves in combat as well as treat the enemy. The document was titled Kore dake Yomeba Ware wa Kateru or "Read This and the War Is Won."[1] This pamphlet was a compendium of ideologies written in rudimentary and understandable terms. It directed each soldier, as his duty, to offer himself in selfless abnegation for the emperor's holy mission to annihilate Western oppressors in order to reconstruct a greater Asian community. According to the document, war was to be the instrument for divine Asian purification.[2]

Therefore, armed with many years of fanatical religious adherence to the emperor's holy mission, military regimentation based on the samurai warrior's code, and

constant exposure to state propaganda of Japan's invincibility, the Japanese soldier marched off to war. For him it was not "victory or death," but "victory and death," if he was to complete his mission for the emperor.

The appalling combat losses suffered by the Japanese, at least from the Allies' perspective, meant little or nothing to the Japanese. They expected adversity, deprivation, and death. Consequently, the Japanese had utter contempt for defensive battle plans, withdrawals, or retirements. Their fighting psychology simply refused to acknowledge that such situations could arise.[3] The few captured survivors of the famous but mostly futile banzai charges believed that the Allies would not take POWs (since they themselves were forbidden to surrender) and that their choice was to die fighting rather than die as POWs.[4] The forgone attitude toward surrender coupled with the personalities of those who supervised the prisoner of war camps detracted from the chances of a POW's survival.

It must be understood that the commanding officers and soldiers who were ordered to operate POW camps were probably not necessarily the best the Japanese Army had to offer. Further, many of the camps had a staff comprised of a mix of Japanese and Korean guards. The Korean conscripts in the Japanese Army were often more brutal than the Japanese soldiers, who treated them as "second-class" citizens in their army. Consequently, the ingredients for an extremely

inhumane POW camp situation existed because of soldiers who were convinced of their divine superiority above all others and who instead of being sent on to greater glory to fight for the emperor were assigned to guard "sub-humans" in the backwaters. They had been denied their birthright and all their years of psychological, spiritual, and emotional training to die honorably in the emperor's holy mission as a warrior. These men possessed pent up great inner frustrations and inadequacies and needed to vent them, unfortunately in the worst ways. Their treatment of Allied POWs is testimony of these needs.

The initial Japanese reaction to prisoners of war for the most part was one of disgust. The Japanese were understandably confused about why their prisoners allowed themselves to be captured, for they expected other military forces to conform to the Japanese code of behavior and fight to the death rather than surrender. Once the enemy had surrendered, therefore, he had forfeited his rights to any consideration. The captive had no honor to know shame and to feel at least remorse for his capture. Therefore, the POW had no right to respect himself, so why should his captors have respect for him? The Japanese soldier would have lost face in the same situation. To the Japanese, the prisoners were already dead, so little or no consideration was to be given to those who had brought disgrace to themselves.[5] Moreover, because the Japanese had no idea why

there were so many Allied prisoners, they had not planned adequate logistical provisions for them.[6]

The Japanese had unique solutions in their explanations for lack of food or medicines in the POW camps. These "logical" explanations emerged from a peculiar Japanese mind-set of not to lose face or embarrass a superior or a unit. Their answers to some of the problems which confronted them were convoluted or distorted by Western standards in their interpretation of right and wrong, correctness of action versus correctness of morality, and fulfillment of promise with mere gesture without substance. The Japanese operated on situational ethics.

The Japanese soldier spoke in contradictory terms with all honesty. If he actually convinced himself that an event had occurred or a situation needed correction, then he acted on belief of proper action or conduct alone. Whether a violation, real or imagined, needed to be punished or not, if the Japanese soldier acted on the faith that he was balancing the scales of right by taking action, then he acted correctly. If he were asked to look into a problem by the POWs, then even the mere gesture of "yes, I will look into it," was sufficient, even if he took no further action.

These reactions reflect the repayment of obligation to a request or duty. The amount or substance of fulfillment to the repayment was not important, only that something was done. The years of being told what to think rather than how

to think made his life of maxims logically sound, for they explained life's exigencies which made up for the lack of psychological resources. Organizational interests (the army) replaced personal interests, so it was important to keep up the appearances of that organization and to guard its integrity by saving face.[7]

As discussed, the obligation to "gesture" was important. If a solution to a problem was required or asked of a soldier, he was obligated to try and find an answer. If no answer could be found, then he saved face by averting his failure to find a solution by giving a nonsensical or illogical answer which was supposed to placate the questioner. Any further questions on the unsolvable problem had no relevance once an initial answer was given. If a solution could be provided, then even the minimum amount of effort to solve the problem was as acceptable as solving the problem completely.

For example, the Japanese had a unique outlook on ration shortages; they simply told their own soldiers to "exercise more," and they did. The remedy did not alleviate the hunger, but the commanders avoided embarrassment because they did not have to tell their men that there was no food. As explained before, the answer to this problem was diverted to a solution which would supply "an answer" to the problem. To prevent losing face the commanders chose to believe that there was no shortage. It simply did not exist. In like

manner during times of food shortages, the Japanese told the POWs to exercise more because that is what the Japanese Army did.

The Japanese often used denial of food as a punishment that then exposed POWs to the diseases of malnutrition and the jungle contagions. Since the Japanese Army in many instances lived off the land, food was often hard to procure and, such being the situation, the care and welfare of the already "dead" prisoners logically came as a last priority. The Japanese at home dealt with food and fuel shortages early as 1942, when it was decreed illegal to order toast in a restaurant because of the electricity shortage.[8]

Another problem that did not exist in the Japanese Army was sickness. In regards to sickness in the military, the Japanese did not have exaggerated medical care. Sickness was an inevitable bother, and treatment was restricted to cases of absolute necessity. At the outbreak of diseases such as beriberi, pellagra, malaria, and dysentery, POWs therefore received very little care since the Japanese provided minimal attention or medicines for their own soldiers; and the Japanese saw no reason to make such provisions to the POWs in preference to its own soldiers. Another sickness that did not exist in the Japanese mindset was venereal disease. Japanese soldiers constantly hid the complaint of VD from their commanding officers and medical officers. Venereal disease was not <u>officially recognized</u> in

the Imperial Army, and therefore did not exist! With equal incredulity, Japanese medical doctors denied the existence of diphtheria, dysentery, and other diseases "alleged" by the POWs despite physical evidence and increased daily death rates.[9]

As a preamble to some of the physical abuses meted out by the Japanese to their prisoners, it is necessary to recall the situation of the meirei order used in feudal times. It was the carte blanche directive which, when issued, defined an objective or goal to achieve and left the moral responsibility of its execution up to the recipient. In much the same way, War Minister Hideki Tojo issued a meirei directive in which he emphasized that the POW camp commandants employ whatever means necessary to discipline their charges.[10] It is understandable how officers who had been relegated to loathsome POW camp duties in the far-flung outposts of the Pacific could easily lapse into severe melancholia. To compound their problems, supplies to their camps were often scarce. The obligation to care for their men was doubly embarrassing considering that at times they could not provide for their own soldiers much less fulfill the endless requests from the POWs for food and medicines. Clearly, abusive attitudes and treatment to POWs flourished in such an atmosphere. With a meirei directive from Tokyo, to operate the prison camp in the matter which suited the commander, anything from criminal neglect of failure to

supply minimum food and medicine requirements to wanton murder of POWs took place.

Slapping was the most common abuse suffered by the POWs. It was a commonplace occurrence in the Japanese Army, as a method to right a wrong or to instill discipline. Therefore, it was logical that the POWs received their share of slapping. Many times, indirectly, the POWs felt the wrath of the camp commanders. In descending order of rank hierarchy, a prison officer might hit a junior officer, who in turn hit a sergeant who then unleashed his fury upon the privates beneath him. Unlike the private's experience when he was conscripted, he now had a target upon which he could vent his frustrations, the POWs. Sometimes the Japanese NCOs relieved boredom by having their own soldiers slap each other and then have the POWs stand opposite each other and do the same. Beatings and slappings took place for the smallest of rule infractions, real or imagined. The Japanese slapped or beat their own subordinates for rule violations, sometimes in front of the POWs, so the POWs soon expected the same treatment. The frequency of slapping the POWs was probably exacerbated by language difficulties, lack of prisoner cooperation, defiance of Japanese rules, laziness, or any combination of these. Nonetheless, a rule broken was a rule broken. During his trial after the war, General Tojo, speaking in mitigation of slapping episodes inflicted on Allied POWs by Japanese guards, revealed that

slapping was a cultural and traditional teaching method in Japanese society, especially in the armed forces. Japanese soldiers even slapped and beat Allied officers for refusing to work, in complete contravention of Article Twenty-seven of the Genenva Convention, which prohibited manual labor by captured officers.[11]

From previous study, the giri, the repayment for an imbalance of a situation with corrective action for an infraction, was executed swiftly by corrective punishment, in this case by slapping. The natural order of things was restored immediately. An example of this was explained in the postwar trial of Sergeant Major Tanno Shozo in 1946 when he was charged with slapping a Sikh Indian prisoner. The repayment of giri was evident when Shozo beat the Indian, who "apparently erred" in his duties to the sergeant major. Shozo had investigated an incident of frequent occurrence, the theft of stolen sugar from the Japanese food supply hut, but because he was making very little progress with the investigation, he had a debt to giri. He was losing face and a wrong had been committed against the Japanese supply system. When the Indian was questioned about the stolen sugar, he denied all knowledge of the theft. Shozo then beat the Indian, after which at his trial he explained that "he trusted the Indian," and because the Indian knew nothing about the sugar incident, the beating was justified "because the Sikh should have been more watchful."[12] Giri was

repaid. The sugar was never found, nor the thief caught. Yet, repayment was made, the uneven balance was again level. Punishment was meted out, and Shozo did not have to lose face.

Punishment for the gross infraction of attempting escape was almost always death. Escape represented a most serious loss of face, and the Japanese warned their prisoners of the severity of an attempt.[13] The Japanese employed a system of "familial responsibility" by creating the groups of ten. POWs were divided into ten prisoners per group. At musters, at labor, everywhere, all ten men were responsible for each other's presence at any given time. If one attempted escape, the remaining nine could expect to be executed, and many were subjected to this system.[14] It was an effective deterrent to escape and relieved the Japanese guards from much of the stress of being accountable for each man. They were accountable for each other.

The treatment accorded to downed and captured Allied aviators reflected a steadfast adherence to the bushido codes of the samurai. At the direction of Tokyo, a policy promulgated by the Vice-Minister of War, General Heitaro Kimura, was released on 28 July 1942 as Army Secret Order Number 2190. It specifically prescribed a "different treatment" that would be used against enemy airmen. In explicit terms it determined that captured enemy aviators would be dealt with as "war criminals."[15] That meant

summary execution. Generally by order, the method of handling or disposal of captured air crewmen was by ceremonial decapitation. Despite the admonitions from the United States through the embassies of neutral countries to the Tokyo government, concerning the "brutal" and non-Western murder of prisoners by beheading, the Japanese responded in characteristic fashion with their rationale for doing so. The Japanese made it known that since they never ratified the terms and articles of the Genevea Convention, they were not bound by it whatsoever. Further, according the feudal code of bushido, which was universally ingrained as policy in the Japanese armed forces, execution by beheading was an accepted and natural method to achieve an honorable death.[16]

Again, the Japanese rationalized the right and duty to fulfill giri and balance an unlevel moral and emotional situation for the enemy. Additionally, the Japanese soldier fulfilled his gimu-chu, when he treated the prisoner as a sub-human because the foreigner did not die for his country and allowed himself to be captured. A diary entry of a Japanese soldier, underscored the necessary "help" to repay giri. Since the prisoner had unbalanced his giri through the shame of his capture, the entry read: "I feel nothing [after seeing the aviator's head cut off] but the true compassion of bushido." Another bystander remarked, "He will enter Nirvana now."[17] An entry for 29 March 1943 from

the diary from a Japanese soldier killed at Salamaua, New Guinea, also reflected upon the execution of a captured Australian Air Force captain. It recalled that the Japanese commander decided to accord the downed aviator a samurai's death by beheading. Upon observing the head being severed from the prisoner, who knelt in front of his executioner, the soldier recorded: "I realize that the emotions I felt just now was not personal pity but manifestation of magnanimity that becomes a chivalrous Samurai."[18] Thus giri was satisfied and the prisoner's shame caused by his capture or surrender was removed with the "benevolent help" from the sons of Yamato; the airmen died honorably without bringing shame to themselves or their families. To help someone die honorably and avoid disgrace was commonplace in the Japanese armed forces, and they could not comprehend why the West was unable to understand and accept their modus operendi. Cultures clashed further when the American public discovered that the bodies of their dead soldiers and airmen were cremated, a procedure Japan still employs as a method for corporal disposal.[19]

The most odious and repugnant incidents committed by the Japanese was cannibalism. It occurred rarely, but with enough frequency that the Japanese High Command issued particular orders to the army on when and under what conditions it would be conducted. Directives admonished all commands that only the eating of the flesh of the enemy was

permitted! The order probably came as no great shock to the Japanese soldiers as they reflected on their national polity of the Kokutai No Hongi, which had reduced the other peoples of the world to the level of kichibu or "beasts." Therefore, since they viewed the enemy as beasts of burden or consumption, it was not hard to regard POWs literally as cattle.[20]

The incident involving cannibalism by Major Suso Matoba and his men in eating an executed Allied pilot was not odious to them. His troops were not starving when they ate the cooked strips of flesh from the aviator's corpse. It was an auspicious occasion. In fact, when Major Matoba ordered the liver of the recently executed American pilot, Lieutenant (j.g.) Hall, removed and brought to him to be consumed by Admiral Mori and himself, it held religious and ceremonial significance as well. According to the Japanese, the liver is the organ of the body of man or beast where the courage and power of that being dwells. To consume the liver was to inherit the power and courage of that being. After the war, when questioned at his trial in Guam for this conduct, Major Matoba responded that he did it "to gain the strength of a tiger."[21]

As the war drew to an end, new policies shaped Japanese attitudes and the subsequent treatment of POWs. Vice-Minister of War Shitayama issued Army Secret Order Number 2257 on 17 March 1945, and it reflected once again on the

warrior's code of the samurai. The order directed commanding officers of POWs to take certain contingency actions with their prisoners before being overrun by the enemy. In order not "to blunder" with the correct handling of the POWs, the directive recommended that their prisoners "be set free." To "be set free" meant in the feudal sense of what was the Zen state of mind, munen, or "free from earthly cares." In its encrypted double-talk, it meant that before any of the POW camps could be taken by the enemy, the commanding officers were to kill the prisoners in their custody.[22] Interestingly, although the Japanese probably did not feel any remorse for their treatment of prisoners, they did try to conceal their actions, rationalizing that the Allies would never have understood their conduct in the treatment accorded to the POWs.

In overview, the climate or tenor of the commanding officers of these POW facilities set the trend and ultimately the type of treatment accorded to the Allied prisoners. As capricious as the malevolent or benevolent temperament of the of the commandants ran in their attitudes regarding the treatment toward the POWs in their charge, correspondingly so was the flux in the incidence of survival of those POWs. As with most any military unit, subordinates emulate their superiors in attitudes and will perform or conduct themselves with as much discipline or laxness that is levied upon them. Unfortunately, unrestricted or carte

blanche leadership tends toward unit entropy indicated by sloppy discipline and wanton brutality if unchecked. In large scale wartime operations, with communications at a minimum and subordinate unit commanders operating independently, catastrophic results occur. General Tomoyuki Yamashita, the "Tiger of Malaya," was tried, convicted, and executed for what the International Tribunal called guilt by acts of omission, that is, as overall commanding general he failed to make himself aware of the atrocities committed under his command. Yamashita's troops, while fighting a retreating action in Manila, killed, raped, and plundered thousands of civilians. The excuse from his junior officers in that action was that if the civilians were anti-Japanese, then they were guerrillas. That excuse alone, they claimed, justified the slaughter of innocent bystanders in Manila. In that bloody spree, all was forgiven in the name of the emperor in his mission for world domination. The incident clearly showed the criminal culpability of the commanding officers. The military tribunal that convicted Yamashita said that he was equally responsible for every crime committed in his command.

General Tojo provided further evidence for the indictment of the Tokyo government in criminal complicity when he stated at his trial that, although the individual field commanders were responsible for the conduct of their soldiers, he was ultimately responsible for the commanders'

conduct since he was in overall charge of military administration. In his defense he proffered the excuse that "the Japanese idea is different from that in Europe and America," and that to be taken prisoner was to be "honored because he had discharged his duties, but in Japan, it was very different."[23]

The IMTFE judged the morality of the Tokyo government with its topheavy military representation. Of the twenty-five capital war criminals who stood trial at Ichigaya after the war. Of that number, only seven were executed, and of the remaining who received life imprisonment, all but three were paroled by 1955.

In retrospect, there are some indisputable social and religious traditions which manipulated the conduct of the Japanese toward Allied prisoners of war in their custody. Foremost was the tradition of bushido, which survived from Japan's feudal past. The intrusion of the West hastened the transition from feudal control by the shogun to restore the emperor as head of state. Japan never had an opportunity to grow out of its samurai mold and develop a democratic form of government because the incursion by the West created a crisis of ideology that to resist in strength would have brought about the end of Japanese autonomy, a fate suffered by China and India. The thought that the sacred and living islands of the mythological Izanagi and Izanami would be cut up piecemeal, like so many other Asian countries, only

fueled the desire to hold onto religious beliefs and keep the only defense organization that could be depended upon, the samurai tradition, latently intact. By ostensibly surrendering to the West's desires and pressures for international development, the Japanese hoped to build equivalent technology and armed forces later to complete the Sonno Joi slogan of "revere the emperor, expel the barbarian," which would be brought to fruition at a later date. Thus, the coerced entry into Japan by the West rallied many factions of samurai clans.

Additionally, the restoration of the emperor brought with it the myths of Shinto, which substantiated the throne's divine origin and raison d'etre. Initially, the attendant fables of hakko ichiu, "eight corners of the world under one roof," were innocuous enough. These were benign until overzealous ex-samurai in unrequited frustration to serve a "master" involved themselves in politics as a new field of battle. Beset with the caste disfranchisement of their former warrior-nobility class, but still immersed in filial and fervent ideology of a servant's duty to his master, they added a political invention that would change Shinto into a ultranationalistic tool, that is, a panacea for the "foreign crisis" through the political recognition of legitimacy of the myths of Shinto as factual history for the entire Japanese population. The resultant state religion then upheld those goals contained therein.

The creation of a unique constitution to keep the power brokers ensconced in their positions of national control also lent credence and validity to the laws that they promulgated. Expanding the goals of feudal hakko ichiu, literally to place the real world under the hegemony of the Yamato race, accomplished several things simultaneously. Through a regimented educational system, overseen by the military, the people assumed a state of national crisis as a way to learn quickly from the outside world and thus later improve Japanese status in the international scene and provide a defense from future foreign intrusion. The people were then further molded to fit within a national military-citizen infrastructure in which they would be "sacrificial cells" supporting a greater "divine organism."

Thus, the oligarchs continued to imbue and educate the masses with the ideals formerly reserved for samurai alone. With the whole nation inculcated, therefore, with the imperial throne's goals as expressed in state Shinto, it was not difficult through daily recitation to brainwash people at all strata of society. In samurai-like fashion, self-abnegation in the attainment of the emperor's holy mission was not only glorious but expected. The ready assimilation of samurai virtues of enthusiastically pursuing what was "expected of one" by the entire population nurtured a fanaticism that became the thrust of ultranationalism. Therefore, the implementation of the Kokutai No Hongi was

the instrument used to forge a national morality came before and above all other laws of right or wrong. It was the catalyst and cement that brought about the metamorphic change of feudal Shinto into the new state Shinto and bonded with the bushido codes for assimilation by the entire population. Japan became a nation of samurai dedicated to the emperor's mission: the conquest of the world by a divine race.

Reinforcement of religion and the Kokutai through the educational system by suppression of the right to dissent guaranteed that an autocratic rule would flourish in Japan. The secret police arrested citizens on capricious supposition, and the convoluted legal machinations of the Japanese criminal court system removed all who were found guilty of "thinking" against the precepts of the Kokutai. Citizens brought up in a governmental system that supported a police state could only go along with its programs. If one spoke out against governmental or religious policies in a country where civil and universal rights were suspended, indefinite incarceration was the alternative.

It is understood, therefore, that if a population wholeheartedly accepts the government's propaganda program, then they would expect the rest of the world to understand that the policies of a people of divine origination were as infallible as their emperor. That being the case, the Japanese expected the West to respect them as a superior

nation and consider their political and military conduct as always correct and not be criticized by inferior Western standards.

The blind acceptance of the combination of the myths of political fulfillment of a religious destiny led the obedient Japanese people to disaster. It can be understood why the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and civilians attempted to do their duty to the last man, woman, and child and go to a senseless death with the words quoted from the 1875 Imperial Rescript on their lips: "...bear in mind that duty is weightier than a mountain, while death is lighter than a feather."[24] It seems obvious that most of the nation, even the "pacifists," would do their duty and die in accordance with the widely touted slogan of ichioku gyokusai and would die for their emperor as the "hundred million [people] smashed as a beautiful jewel." They accepted their fate as a duty and puzzled as to why the enemy could not accept their fate and die gladly for their cause as well. Instead, the Allies confronted the Japanese with a passive resistance in their surrender and captivity. This presented the Japanese with "how" to treat prisoners whom they did not expect to have as a burden. Additionally, the Japanese wondered why the Allies surrendered without feeling overwhelming disgrace. Caught between cultural obligations to their religion and their god-emperor, Japanese soldiers in many cases, encouraged or ignored by the commanding

officers, let their contempt and vexation for the passive POWs grow into uncontrollable anger and frustration. The venting and release for that emotional turmoil is recorded from the Rape of Nanking, the capture of the Philippines, and the building of the Burma-Thailand railway.

Since the Allies were "dead" in the Japanese solders' eyes, it made little difference how prisoners were treated. Therefore, any punishments meted out to them were correct. After all, some of the punishments inflicted on the POWs, such as slapping for minuscule infractions, were daily practice for discipline in the Japanese Army.[25]

Tokyo issued orders for carte blanche methods to manage the POWs and because in some cases it was a meirei order, the camp commandants had total freedom in carrying out this directive. The brutal treatment received by the POWs was the result of punitive discipline descending from the commanding officer to the NCOs to the guards and finally on the prisoners. As explained, by the time the punishment reached the POWs, the frustration and anger gathered strength and fury.

In reflecting on this conduct, it cannot be disputed that the criminal negligence or lack of fulfilling the minimum needs for subsistence and hygiene was in no way of a moral concern to the Japanese soldier. If soldiers struck or slapped POWs, it only seemed right. They deserved to be punished because their shame of voluntary capture demanded

punishment, even death. The Japanese expected such treatment if they had allowed themselves to be captured.

Sadistic torture, such as beheading, bayonetting, forcing prisoners to eat their own excrement, or overtly refusing to feed those too weak to work until malnutrition and disease killed the prisoners was equally correct conduct from the Japanese perspective. Working "dead" men to death was of no consequence. It fit into the bushido ideology of a sense of duty.[26] It "freed them from earthly cares" one way or another.

It was also the duty of the samurai to help the POWs to Nirvana or, if the occasion warranted, to execute immediately those "rude" prisoners through kirisute gomen as in the feudal days. A captured field order issued by the commanding general of the Sixteenth Division on the subject of prisoner disposal left no question as to the POWs fate: "Malicious surrenderers will be taken into custody ... and will be (k i l l) ed secretly when the [local] inhabitants have forgotten about them. POWs will be interrogated on the battlefield and shall be immediately (k i l l) ed." Emergency measures shall be taken without delay against those of antagonistic attitudes..."[27] Whatever the situation, the bushido codes permeated the armed forces and the nation. It was the "benevolence" of bushido that was the conduit for the brutality felt by the Allied POWs.

The obligation or noblesse oblige expressed as giri was

a gesture at most. In the "hell ships" any gesture for food or water was enough. Whether the amount of water, food or medicine was ample to sustain life was of no importance, the giri or the imbalance of the obligation to the prisoners was satisfied.

The indiscriminate carnage at Nanking and Manila clearly pointed out the ruthlessness and enthusiasm in which the Sons of Nippon carried out their orders in the holy mission of their emperor. No matter how horribly they treated their captives and POWs, all was without sin if committed in the spirit of service to their emperor."[28]

The unanesthetized vivisections of downed Allied aviators and exposure to bacterial and nerve agents all fit into the preachings of the Kokutai No Hongi, which sublimated all other races of the world to the divine race of Japan. Regarding the other people of the world as kichibu or "animals," the Japanese expected to exploit them as beasts of burden or even slaughter and consume them, as Major Matoba and his soldiers did.

It cannot be refuted that regardless of the personal feelings and wants of the individual Japanese soldier, statistics reflect that they willingly sacrificed themselves for their religion and therefore their emperor. The ready assimilation of the samurai virtues of enthusiastically pursuing what was expected of one by the entire population nurtured a fanaticism that was the thrust point of

ultranationalism. The invention of the Kokutai no Hongi was the instrument used to forge a national morality which came before and above all other laws of right or wrong.

Having grown and blossomed in the light of Shinto and directed by the Kokutai no Hongi, the brutal treatment to prisoners was to be expected. The fact that a sub-human was mistreated was of no concern to the Japanese. The prisoners were not of a divine race. They did not adhere to the honorable conduct of self-sacrifice for their cause, and they were contemptible enough to seek aid after a dishonorable capture. Nothing was too bad for them. The Japanese had heavenly permission to treat POWs as they wished. After all, was it not in the commission of duty for the emperor in his holy war?

The Japanese traditions were taken from noble feudal origins and distorted by clever means of propaganda. Had the Kokutai no Hongi not been devised to contort the ostensibly harmless myths of Shinto, World War II might not have occurred. Nevertheless, because of the metamophasis of Shinto, its myths became politically manifest, and as such the national and divine oracle for the fulfillment of global conquest became a reality. Had this not occurred, the brutal indifference and disregard for basic compassion for prisoners of war probably would not have been as severe.

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