INDOCHINA IN THE 1940s AND 1950s

TRANSLATION OF
CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE
SCHOLARSHIP
ON
SOUTHEAST ASIA

INDOCHINA
IN THE
1940s AND 1950s

EDITED BY TAKASHI SHIRAISHI AND MOTOO FURUTA

VOLUME II

SEAP

CONTENTS

This page intentionally left blank

INTRODUCTION

Born as "Southern Studies" (*Nampo Kenkyu*) in the interwar years, Southeast Asian studies in Japan is now passing from the second to the third generation, while the fourth generation of scholars in their twenties and early thirties is now emerging on the horizon. The preceding generations have produced excellent works, only some of which are available in English. Tatsuro Yamamoto's classic, *Recherches sur l'histoire de l'Annam*, and the "Overseas Chinese" studies by scholars affiliated with the East Asia Economic Research Bureau of the Manchurian Railway are among the best works of the first generation, while the writings of such scholars of the second generation as Akira Nagazumi, Yoneo Ishii, and Toru Yano represent Japanese scholarship on Southeast Asia at its best.[1] These and other studies, cross-bred with non-Japanese language works on Southeast Asia, have formed a beautifully mestizo scholarly tradition of Japanese research on Southeast Asia, now rebaptized as *Tonan Ajia Kenkyu* (Southeast Asian Studies), in which the succeeding generation of Japanese Southeast Asianists, among whom I belong, have worked over the last twenty years.

Yet each·generation of Japanese scholars working on Southeast Asia carries its own historical birth marks. Many members of the first generation entered "Southern Studies" in the 1930 when Japan was starting its fatal southward expansion. No wonder, then, that one of the major contributions of these scholars lay in their work on the "Overseas Chinese" and on the anti-Japanese Chinese national salvation movement in Southeast Asia.[2] Members of the second generation started to study Southeast Asia in the 1950s and early 1960s when Japan was notable by its absence from the region and when American scholarship was fast replacing the old colonial studies of Southeast Asia. Akira Nagazumi, the first Japanese to obtain a PhD in Southeast Asian history at an American university, thus clearly marked the coming-of-age of the second generation.

---

[1]Tatsuro Yamamoto, *Recherches sur l'histoire de l'Annam* (Tokyo: Yamakawa, 1950); Mantetsu Toa Keizai Chosakyoku, *Tai-koku ni okeru Kakyo* [Chinese in Thailand] (Tokyo, 1939); *Firipin ni okeru Kakyo* [Chinese in the Philippines] (Tokyo, 1939); *Ranryo Indo ni okeru Kakyo* [Chinese in the Dutch Indies] (Tokyo, 1940); *Eiryo Marai, Biruma oyobi Goshu ni okeru Kakyo* [Chinese in British Malaya, Burma and Australia] (Tokyo, 1941); *Futsuryo Indo-shina ni okeru Kakyo* [Chinese in French Indochina] (Tokyo, 1943); Akira Nagazumi, *The Dawn of Indonesian Nationalism: The Early Years of the Budi Utomo, 1908-1918* (Tokyo: Institute of Developing Economies, 1972); Yoneo Ishii *Jozaha Bukyo no Seiji-Sakai-gaku: Kokkyo no Kozo* (Tokyo: Sobunsha, 1975) Translated by Peter Hawkes, under the title *Sanha, State, and Society: Thai Buddhism in History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, c. 1986); Toru Yano, *Tai Biruma Gendai Seijishi Kenkyu* [A Study of Thai and Burmese Political History] (Tokyo: Sobunsha, 1968) and *"Nashin" no Keifu* [The Lineage of "Southward Expansion"] (Tokyo: Chuo Koronsha, 1975).

[2]Aside from the works on "Overseas Chinese" cited in n. 1, see also Toa Kenkyujo, Dai 3 Chosa Iinkai, *Nan'yo Kakyo Konichi Kyukoku Undo no Kenkyu* [A Study on the Nanyang Chinese Anti-Japanese National Salvation Movement] (Tokyo: Toakenyujo, 1944).

The third generation of Japanese Southeast Asianists, some of whose works appear in this and future volumes of this series, also display special characteristics. In terms of age they are now in their forties, and they entered Southeast Asian studies in the mid-1960s to early 1970s, when Japan was fast returning to Southeast Asia, and there were expanding opportunities for conducting research in the region and/or graduate studies abroad. Many of this generation spent one or more of their formative years outside Japan—in Southeast Asia, in the US, in Australia, and in Europe. They viewed a knowledge of all the languages needed for their studies as a self-evident requirement, "translation works [those based on non-Japanese works]" were no longer acceptable, and many were well aware of most recent research by non-Japanese Southeast Asianist. Yet when they first entered Southeast Asian studies Southeast Asia was still remote and it remained so for some time. Scholars of this generation felt themselves fortunate to visit the region once in five years; library collections on Southeast Asia were poor, a book or a journal article had to be pursued from one library to another. Besides, there were few places where one could learn Southeast Asian languages. At the same time, events were moving swiftly in Southeast Asia: the killings and the establishment of the New Order in Indonesia in 1965-1966, the American war in Vietnam, the 1969 riot in Malaysia, the anti-Japanese movement and the revolution in Thailand in the early 1970s, the anti-Japanese riot in Jakarta in 1974. Since then things have changed very much. But scholars of the third generation have not forgotten this past and the contrast it presents with the way things now are. And this memory still leaves its marks on many of their studies—in the questions they ask, on the approaches they take, and on the sources they use.

The essays included in the four volumes of the present series, *Contemporary Japanese Scholarship on Southeast Asia*, are chosen to illuminate the scholarship of this third generation, especially in fields where few Japanese works are available in English. The studies included in the first volume, *Reading Southeast Asia*, were attempts to read Southeast Asian "texts" in the broader sense. The essays in the present volume explore Japanese and Vietnamese language sources on Vietnam in the 1940s and 1950s and represent a collective effort by the Japanese authors to make their own contribution to our understanding of Vietnamese history: the four works on the 1940s by Motoo Furuta, Masaya Shiraishi, Yukichika Tabuchi, and Minami Yoshizawa are based on Japanese sources, while the two essays by Furuta and Hirohide Kurihara are based on their archival research in Hanoi.
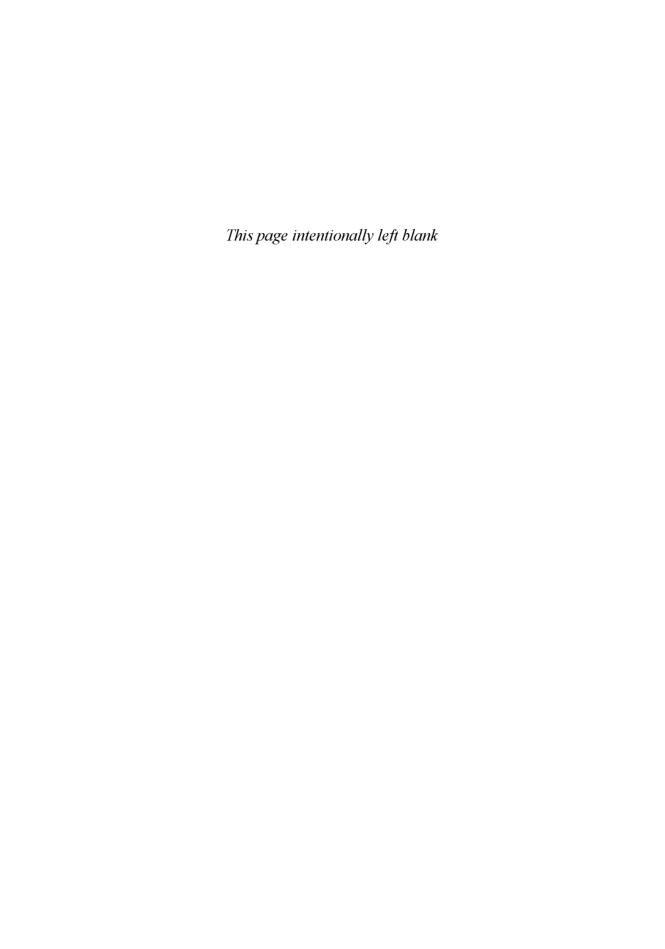
Most of the works to be included in the third volume were originally written by the research group led by Hajime Shimizu at the Institute of Developing Economies. Building on Toru Yano's pioneering work on Japan's southward expansion they investigate the origins of the Japanese presence in Southeast Asia. And, finally, the fourth volume will include works on Suharto's New Order in Indonesia, the country where since the late 1960s the Japanese presence in the form of aid, investment, and trade has been the most pronounced in Southeast Asia.

This project to make Japanese works on Southeast Asia available to English readers has been carried out by a team at Cornell, headed by Professor George McT. Kahin and funded by the Toyota Foundation. All the draft translations were done by the EDS (Editorial and Design Services) in Tokyo. For all this, I would like to thank Ms. Kazue Iwamoto of the Toyota Foundation who first brought up the idea; Ms. Yoshiko Wakayama who patiently saw the project through to completion; Ms. Suzanne Trumbull and her colleagues at the EDS who put so much work into the translation effort; Dr. Audrey Kahin, without whose effort this project would have

gone nowhere; Dr. Sadako Taylor who checked the draft translations with great care; and Roberta Ludgate, Donna Amoroso, and Dolina Millar who contributed to the project in many and valuable ways.

Finally, many Japanese scholars of the third generation owe an enormous intellectual debt to the late Prof. Akira Nagazumi in whose seminar some of us, including myself, were initiated into Southeast Asian studies and whose works set a standard to which all of us have had to live up. His untimely death in 1988 was an enormous loss for us all. But his works are still with us, and his soft voice, his gentle and quiet manner, and his rigorous scholarship are still in our memory. To his memory we would like to dedicate this book.

Takashi Shiraishi
Ithaca
March 1992

This page intentionally left blank

THE NISHIHARA MISSION IN HANOI, JULY 1940

Minami Yoshizawa

I. PERSPECTIVES OF ANALYSIS

INTERNAL DISSENSION AND THE EXPANSION OF THE WAR

In late September 1940, when the Japanese army began its occupation of northern Indochina in a two-pronged approach, overland from Lang Son and by sea from Do Son, Major General Issaku Nishihara, stationed in Hanoi as the leader of a mission directly assigned by Imperial Headquarters, telegraphed the following message to the vice-minister of war and the assistant chief of the Imperial Army General Staff in Tokyo: "Because it will be absolutely necessary to provide the chief commanding officer occupying French Indochina with a new organization to conduct diplomatic negotiations after action is taken around Lang Son, [two illegible characters] I request that selection of personnel and so on be initiated today. For the past three months, we have tried to conduct friendly negotiations. Granting the [illegible character] above not only will undermine trust in Imperial diplomacy but also is something that I personally, and as a member of the Imperial Army, cannot condone. Please take this into consideration."[1]

This text is most interesting. The troops that took action around Lang Son were the Kwantung [Guangdong] Army and the Nanning Army, stationed in Guangdong and Guangxi, respectively—army units on the southern edge of the expanded China front. Nishihara and his men in the Nishihara Mission in Hanoi, charged with undertaking diplomatic negotiations with the government of French Indochina, had "for the past three months . . . tried to conduct friendly negotiations," but now that China-based troops had taken action, that is, had occupied French Indochina, Nishihara was requesting that army headquarters relieve him and his group of their negotiating duties and transfer authority to "the chief commanding officer" of the occupying forces. Nishihara and his men did not consent to the execution of military action by the garrison army. Nishihara's comment that he "personally, and as a member of the Imperial Army," could not condone the military occupation was unusual for a telegram because it conveyed emotion. Nishihara, the leader of the group that had, in fact, laid the groundwork for the Japanese army's occupation—peaceful or otherwise—of Indochina, was asking that headquarters relieve him of his duties when the occupation actually occurred.

---

[1] Document 46.

A close study of the documents dealing with the occupation of northern French Indochina reveals not only Nishihara's frustration (the reasons for which are also important) but also the deep rifts within the group planning and prosecuting the war and thus involved in expanding the war. Why was expansion of the war possible under such conditions, and what was the nature of the disunity within the war-leadership group? These were my first questions.

In his postwar memoirs Major General Raishirō Sumita, Nishihara's successor in Hanoi, describes Major General Kyōji Tominaga, head of the First Department of the Army General Staff, and his associates as "the little gang of hawks in charge of army operations" and the actual ringleaders of military occupation, and praises Nishihara and himself, who opposed the hawks and engaged in negotiations, as the "moderate and impartial" doves who "adhered throughout to principles."[2] Although this evaluation reflects the self-serving character typical of memoirs, nevertheless it forces one to consider whether the military occupation of northern French Indochina and the disunity within the group that executed it can be explained adequately in terms of hawks versus doves and the identification of the hawks as the ringleaders (and, conversely, the identification of the doves as those opposing the ringleaders), and whether this schema of two opposed factions was indeed the crux of the problem.

Analysis of the Vietnam War is another focus of my historical research. Here, too, the pattern of hawks versus doves within the leading councils of the United States, the instigator of that war, must be considered. The nature and role of the doves can be viewed in a variety of ways, but at least some of the doves, while remaining within the group planning and prosecuting the war, also identified themselves with forces outside that group in thought if not in deed (this led ultimately to doves divorcing themselves from the war-leadership group by resigning in protest), and in extreme cases even established links of some sort with the antiwar movement, whose goals and activities were totally incompatible with those of the war leaders. Therefore the dovish faction, if indirectly, generated a force that was able to act to block expansion and continuation of the war. Naturally, elucidation of the way in which the conflict between the hawkish and dovish factions within the US war-leadership group developed, the way in which relations between the two groups evolved, and the impact that these factors had on the conduct of the war necessitates consideration of the relationships that pertained among the government, the military, big business, Congress, and mass movements within the context of the US political system.

It should be self-evident that, although we may apply the terms "hawks" and "doves" to the Japanese context, the situation in Japan at the time of the occupation of French Indochina differed considerably from that in the United States at the time of the Vietnam War. Specifically, consideration of the circumstances surrounding the Japanese army's occupation of northern French Indochina in 1940 and of southern French Indochina in 1941 makes it clear that the conflict between the faction advocating the use of force, which took the initiative in the occupation, and the faction advocating negotiations, or "peaceful occupation," and also the conflict between the faction advocating southern expansion and that advocating war against the Soviet Union, or northern expansion, was a tussle, both covert and overt, among birds of a

[2] Raishirō Sumita, "Futsuin shinchū to Sumita kikan no katsudō" [The occupation of French Indochina and the activities of the Sumita Mission], in Masaki Miyake, ed., *Shōwashi no gumbu to seiji* [The military and politics in the history of the Shōwa era], vol. 3 (Tokyo: Daiichi Hōki Shuppan, 1983), p. 238.

feather; this being the case, none of the parties to the conflict could possibly have acted to block expansion or continuation of the war.

THE SYNERGISTIC EFFECT OF SECTIONALISM

The sectionalism within the group planning and prosecuting the war, and the conflicts generated thereby, is well known. So far, historical research has concentrated on the nature of this dissension and its effect on the expansion and continuation of the war. One of the major perspectives of such analysis has been the so-called leadership theory: the attempt to determine what individual, or which of the conflicting factions, within the group planning and prosecuting the war played the leading role in the expansion and continuation of the war. This perspective naturally leads to identifying the "leader" (either an individual or a faction) as having had prime responsibility for expanding and continuing the war and the individuals or factions opposing this "leader" as having worked to block expansion of the war.

Typical of this approach are the work of Ikuhiko Hata[3] and the hundred-plus volumes of the *Senshi sōsho* [War history library] compiled by the Defense Agency's War History Office. Let us consider part of the latter, *Daihon'ei rikugunbu Dai Tōa sensō kaisen keii* [The Imperial Headquarters Army Department and the circumstances leading to the Greater East Asia War],[4] which devotes many pages to the occupation of French Indochina and is cited frequently in this paper. In its own fashion, this work directly addresses the issue of conflict within the group planning and prosecuting the war and taking the initiative in conducting the war. One may be tempted to think that a work emanating from the War History Office of the Defense Agency would not pursue the question of responsibility for the prosecution of the war, but this is not the case. The initiative taken by Tominaga in the Army General Staff's First Department, through his arbitrary actions, and by Colonel Kenryō Satō and other staff officers of the Kwantung Army in pushing for the military occupation of northern French Indochina is examined, and an attempt is made to pinpoint responsibility.

In my opinion, however, the leadership theory is seriously flawed for two reaons. First, it has a strong tendency to oversimplify the conflict between those advocating the exercise of force and those advocating negotiations into a conflict between two fixed policies, expansion and nonexpansion of the war. The truth is that, while there was always sectionalist conflict within the group planning and prosecuting the war, the points of policy at issue were not as clear-cut as, for example, expansion versus nonexpansion of the war, and for this reason the various sections' policies, despite the battles of rival proponents, were not always consistent. For example, the navy's advocacy of peaceful rather than military occupation actually reflected a policy not of nonexpansion of the war but of a different kind of expansion. The statements of Yōsuke Matsuoka, minister for foreign affairs at the time of the occupation of southern French Indochina, provide a classic illustration of this sort of inconsistency.

---

[3] Ikuhiko Hata, "Futsuin shinchū to gun no nanshin seisaku (1940–1941)" [The occupation of French Indochina and the army's policy of southern expansion (1940–1941)], in Nippon Kokusai Seiji Gakkai [Japan Association of International Relations], Taiheiyō Sensō Gen'in Kenkyūbu [Study Group on the Causes of the Pacific War], ed., *Taiheiyō sensō e no michi* [The road to the Pacific War], vol. 6 (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbunsha, 1963).

[4] Defense Agency, War History Office, *Daihon'ei rikugunbu Dai Tōa sensō kaisen keii* [The Imperial Headquarters Army Department and the circumstances leading to the Greater East Asia War], 4 vols. (Tokyo: Asagumo Shimbunsha, 1973, 1974).

Although he consistently opposed the mainstream within the group planning and prosecuting the war, he shifted his stance with dizzying rapidity, advocating first southern expansion, then southern expansion while reducing the scope of the China front, then postponement of southern expansion, and finally cessation of southern expansion and promotion of northern expansion. In short, that opposition to expansion of the war did not necessarily mean advocacy of nonexpansion and that the focal points of opposition over policy were neither clear nor consistent were hallmarks of the sectionalism within the war-leadership group, but these points are overlooked by exponents of the leadership theory.

The second major flaw in this theory is that, while it acknowledges conflict within the war-leadership group, too often it fails to recognize this as a dynamic process. Let us take the conflict between the faction advocating the exercise of force and the faction advocating negotiations. The usual interpretation of exponents of the leadership theory is that Tominaga and the army units on the scene strongly advocated the exercise of force and took the initiative in executing the occupation, either ignoring or dragging in their wake the advocates of negotiations—Nishihara and the navy units on the scene. According to this simplistic interpretation, expansion of the war was instigated by the hard-line proponents of military force, while those who opposed this policy, including the advocates of negotiations, either acted as a deterrent or passively acquiesced.

When we analyze the actual dynamics of this opposition, however, we find that it was not simply a matter of one faction—the hard-liners, for example—taking the lead in expanding the war; in fact, the various factions vied for leadership of the expansion effort, and the friction thus generated strengthened the impulse toward expansion. In other words, the existence of hard-liners within the war-leadership group was not the decisive factor in expansion of the war; the decisive factor was, rather, the synergistic interaction of internal conflicts.

Viewing these conflicts as expressing not a static relationship of opposing positions but a dynamic process of competitive relationships among factions culminating in expansion of the war allows us to explain the occupation of French Indochina in a more realistic fashion. If we adopt this perspective, we see the negotiation faction not as a deterrent to the war expansion instigated by the military-force faction but as an active, competitive participant in that process. This is why I take a jaundiced view of the frequent protestations of people formerly affiliated with the Imperial Navy that the navy's role in the conflict between army and navy was one of opposing the "tyranny of the army" through constant efforts to "avert war."[5]

As I have already said, the leadership theory seeks to identify those who played the most active role in expanding the war, the ringleaders. In this sense, it also endeavors to fix responsibility. By focusing solely on the responsibility of the ringleaders, however, it disregards the complicity of those who opposed the ringleaders. For example, in proposing Tominaga as the ringleader *Daihon'ei rikugunbu*, compiled by former officers of the Imperial Army, weakens its analysis of the role of the army leadership as a whole. Similarly, the War History Office's *Daihon'ei kaigunbu Dai Tōa sensō kaisen keii* [The Imperial Headquarters Navy Section and the circumstances

---

[5] See, for example, Takeo Shimmyō, ed., *Kaigun sensō kentō kaigi kiroku* [Records of navy conferences to consider war] (Tokyo: Mainichi Shimbunsha, 1976).

leading to the Greater East Asia War],[6] prepared by former officers of the Imperial Navy, while mentioning Tominaga, identifies the army as a whole as the ringleader; thus, despite the many navy documents cited, this work fails to provide an incisive analysis of the navy's role.[7]

But the greatest flaw in the leadership theory is that despite its search for culprits it lets the archcriminal slip through its fingers. It pays no attention whatsoever to the structural factors that generated discord in the group planning and prosecuting the war or to the way in which these factors functioned. Any such analysis, I believe, must lead ultimately to examination of the emperor system.

THE ROLE OF THE EMPEROR SYSTEM AND MAINTAINING ORDER BY PARALLEL ARGUMENT

In a 1981 paper, Keiichi Eguchi, discussing past studies of the Manchurian Incident which marked the beginning of the Fifteen-Year War, notes that according to the theory of "emperor-system fascism" Japan's leadership was basically united. Although there were conflicts among the military, elder statesmen (*genrō*), political parties, big business, and so on, these were temporary, localized, relative, and tactical; ultimately, the ruling stratum united in promoting fascism and an external war of aggression. His objection to this theory is that it "explains that the birds of a feather all came from one nest, but not why they pecked one another so viciously, inflicting such bloody wounds."[8]

Amplifying this criticism in a 1982 paper, Eguchi notes again that "one of the greatest problems" in study of the Manchurian Incident lies in the way in which one perceives "the conflicts and rifts in Japan's external policies" occasioned by army field units' embarking on the exercise of force by means of a stratagem while the government professed a policy of nonexpansion.

> It is a fact that in the end the conflicting and divided parties were united in the policy of aggression and that a consensus of state organs and the ruling stratum was established, but emphasizing the fact of unity and consensus alone leads to overlooking the questions of why the conflict preceding unification and the rifts preceding consensus arose and persisted.

He applies a scalpel of sharp analysis to the conflicts and rifts in the group planning and prosecuting the war, concluding that they were "rooted in the highly contradictory dual character of Japanese imperialism, self-reliance as a military power on the one hand and economic dependence on the United States and Britain on the other,

---

[6] Defense Agency, War History Office, *Daihon'ei kaigunbu Dai Tōa sensō kaisen keii* [The Imperial Headquarters Navy Section and the circumstances leading to the Greater East Asia War], 2 vols. (Tokyo: Asagumo Shimbunsha, 1979).

[7] One reason for this lopsidedness is probably that army histories are written or compiled by people formerly affiliated with the Imperial Army and navy histories are written or compiled by people formerly affiliated with the Imperial Navy. Such histories thus reflect even today the conflict and rivalry generated by army and navy sectionalism. A comparative study of such works as the War History Office's *Daihon'ei rikugunbu* and *Daihon'ei kaigunbu* or of Makoto Ikuta, *Nippon rikugunshi* [A history of the Japanese army] (Tokyo: Kyōikusha, 1980) and Saburō Toyama, *Nippon kaigunshi* [A history of the Japanese navy] (Tokyo: Kyōikusha, 1980) reveals that to a greater or lesser extent the authors are writing as apologists for the services with which they were once affiliated.

[8] Keiichi Eguchi, "Manshū jihen ki kenkyū no saikentō" [Reexamining studies of the time of the Manchurian Incident], *Rekishi hyōron* [Historical review], no. 377 (September 1981), p. 4.

and are to be seen as the expression of the conflict between the two external policies based on this dual character"[9] (cooperation with the United States and Britain to accommodate the system established by the Washington Conference on the one hand and an Asian Monroe Doctrine necessitating conflict with the United States and Britain on the other).

Eguchi's "dual imperialism" theory appears to have received favorable notice from some scholars of Japanese history.[10] I, for one, searching for a way to explain the dissension within the war-leadership group at the time of the occupation of French Indochina, found his thesis suggestive, since it supports thinking of the occupation, which was an expansion of the war, in terms of the conflicts dividing the group planning and prosecuting the war. I should, however, note one way in which the focus of Eguchi's interest differs from mine. He is concerned with *why* such dissension occurred, whereas at this time my interest is focused on *how* it evolved. Nevertheless, I do not believe that these are mutually exclusive concerns.

When the development of dissension within the war-leadership group is viewed from this perspective, two points demand attention. The first is the group's composite organization *(yoriai-jotai)*. Imperial Headquarters, part of the war-leadership group, was itself a composite of the Army General Staff and Naval General Staff. And the membership of the Nishihara Mission, which was directly attached to Imperial Headquarters, was drawn from the Army General Staff, Naval General Staff, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These organizations were set up to coordinate different sections' views and unify policy and action, but cursed as they were by their composite nature, they functioned instead to amplify disunity—temporarily concealed at best—as members with disparate views vied with one another.

The second point has to do with the war-leadership group's decision-making process, which was dominated by the parallel presentation of pros and cons *(ryōron heiritsu)*; the policies finally adopted also gave opposing views equal weight and set them forth in parallel fashion *(ryōron heiki)*. Whatever the controversy—forcible occupation versus peaceful occupation, southern expansion versus northern expansion, war against Britain and the United States versus negotiations with Britain and the United States—there was no logical debate by means of which a consensus could be achieved (no mechanism for such debate was provided), and no firm leadership decision to endorse one or the other viewpoint. This was true from the tactical level all the way up to the strategic and state-policy level. In the circumstances, the expedient of "respecting" opposing views was the dominant mode of "resolving" disagreement. A classic example of this approach is seen in the joint instructions issued by the assistant chiefs of the army and navy general staffs: these documents did not stipulate a single course of action agreed upon by the army and navy but merely set forth the two sets of views.

A decision-making process that shrank from dealing with opposing views either by adopting one or the other on the grounds of greater efficacy or by achieving agreement through logical debate to settle points of contention, and that relied in-

---

[9] Keiichi Eguchi, "Jūgo nen sensōshi kenkyū no kadai" [Problems in the study of the history of the Fifteen-Year War], *Rekishigaku kenkyū* [Journal of historical studies], no. 511 (December 1982), p. 9.

[10] See, for example, Nobuyoshi Tazaki, "Shōwa senzen ki kenkyū o meguru jakkan no mondai" [Some problems in regard to the study of the prewar period in the Shōwa era], in Junnosuke Sasaki and Susumu Ishii, eds., *Shimpen: Nihonshi kenkyū nyūmon* [An introduction to the study of Japanese history: New edition] (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1982).

stead on "consensus" policies that were nothing but a patchwork of contradictory views, necessarily produced policies that remained merely theoretical and abstract. Moreover, because policies arrived at in this manner set forth two viewpoints, giving equal weight to both, any given policy could obviously generate two courses of action. Because no choice between opposing views had been made, it was possible to initiate and justify conflicting courses of action on the basis of the same policy.
In this way, the conflict among different sections of the group planning and prosecuting the war resulted in an increasingly violent oscillation between confrontation and "consensus" or compromise that exacerbated friction and strengthened the impulse toward war. Indeed, because of its amplificatory effect this motion should be likened to that of a screw spiraling forward rather than that of a pendulum swinging back and forth.

What underlay the war-leadership group's composite makeup and its penchant for a method of decision making that gave equal weight to opposing views, characteristics that determined its pattern of internal dissension? I will address this question by examining the way in which the emperor system functioned and the role of the emperor. Because of the magnitude of this theme, I will limit my discussion to the context of the issues raised so far. Specifically, I will address two issues: the functioning of the emperor system in relation to sectionalism and the role of the emperor in relation to let-both-arguments-stand decision making.

My thinking in regard to the first issue, the functioning of the emperor system in relation to sectionalism, owes a great deal to Masao Maruyama's well-known views, expressed in the following three passages:

> What determined the everyday morality of Japan's rulers was neither an abstract consciousness of legality nor an internal sense of right and wrong, nor again any concept of serving the public; it was a feeling of being close to the concrete entity known as the Emperor, an entity that could be directly perceived by the senses. It was therefore only natural that these people should come to identify their own interests with those of the Emperor, and that they should automatically regard their enemies as violators of the Emperor's powers.[11]

> Sectionalism . . . derived from a system according to which every element in society was judged according to its respective connexion, in a direct vertical line, with the ultimate entity. This involved a constant impulse to unite oneself with that entity, and the resultant sectionalism was of a far more active and 'aggressive' type than that associated with feudalism.[12]

> Each unit finds refuge in the limits of its authority; since every such attempt involves an effort by the respective unit to link itself vertically with the prestige of the Emperor, the various units (with their limited authority) are trans-

---

[11] Masao Maruyama, *Zōhoban: Gendai seiji no shisō to kōdō* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1964), p. 21. The translation of this passage is by Ivan Morris in the English version of Maruyama's book, *Thought and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics: Expanded Edition,* ed. Ivan Morris (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 13.

[12] Ibid., p. 23. The translation of this passage is by Ivan Morris in *Thought and Behaviour,* p. 15.

formed into something absolute and their relations with each other become infinitely complex.[13]

The reason that each section was able confidently to act independently, thus exhibiting the pluralized nature of the political system, was its belief that it was linked directly to the emperor, the sole ultimate authority. In this paper, incidentally, I use the term "sectionalism" narrowly, to refer to the pluralized political forces that defined themselves in terms of their direct links with the emperor and to their mutually exclusive nature.

The uniqueness of the emperor's ultimate authority and the pluralism of the political forces emanating therefrom constituted a contradiction peculiar to the emperor system. Two methods had to be employed to "resolve" this contradiction: one was to emphasize the uniqueness of the emperor's ultimate authority; the other was to recognize and "respect" the pluralism of the political forces.

Let us first examine the second method, which sought to integrate pluralized political forces under the single ultimate authority of the emperor while "respecting" their pluralism. This necessitated a composite organizational makeup, a policy-making process that gave equal weight to opposing arguments, and therefore the formulation of policies that set forth both sides of disputed issues. Because building a "consensus" of pluralized political forces while giving equal weight to opposing arguments upheld the contradictory relation between the uniqueness of the emperor and the pluralism of political forces, the result was an entire order *(chitsujo)* premised upon the equal-weight method. For the group planning and prosecuting the war, upholding this order was an imperative. It is not surprising that "consensus" building premised on "respect" for pluralized political forces was unable to unify these forces.

What about the other method, which emphasized the uniqueness of the emperor's ultimate authority? As the sole holder of power, the emperor was "theoretically . . in a position to bring about the ultimate integration of the pluralized political power."[14] Let us consider this in connection with the central governing apparatus. It is well known that the Constitution of the Empire of Japan (the so-called Meiji Constitution) invested the emperor with powerful and sweeping prerogatives.[15] It also stipulated that the exercise of these prerogatives required the advice of ministers of state. This placed constitutional limits upon the scope of the emperor's authority, but at the same time, because ministers of state were required to take total responsibility for the execution of the imperial prerogatives, the emperor was placed outside the sphere of legal and political responsibility, thus enabling him to remain "sacred and inviolable" (Article 3).

One imperial prerogative, however, was unconditional: the prerogative of supreme command did not necessitate the advice of ministers of state. Instead, the General Staff (eventually divided into the Army General Staff and Naval General Staff) was invested with the right to report directly to the throne concerning matters

---

[13] Ibid., p. 124. The translation of this passage is by Ivan Morris in *Thought and Behaviour*, p. 123.

[14] Ibid., p. 125. The translation of this passage is by Ivan Morris in *Thought and Behaviour*, p. 124.

[15] See Saburō Ienaga, *Rekishi no naka no kempō* [The constitution in a historical context], vol. 1 (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1977), pp. 62–74.

of supreme command. This direct vertical link with the emperor enabled the General Staff to execute all matters having to do with supreme command. "Independence of the prerogative of supreme command" *(tōsuiken no dokuritsu)* is the phrase used to describe the fact that this prerogative did not depend on the advice of ministers of state. In regard to this prerogative, at least, "it is fair to regard the emperor as an absolute monarch with dictatorial powers who had no leeway to behave as a constitutional monarch."[16]

The independence of the prerogative of supreme command, together with the expansion of its scope over time, led to a division between state affairs and supreme command, that is, between the government and the military, and further between the War Ministry, which was in charge of administering military affairs, and the General Staff (the Imperial Headquarters Army Department), which was in charge of exercising supreme command (this division between administrative and general-staff functions applied to both the army and the navy). Although the emperor's prerogative of supreme command applied, of course, to the army and the navy alike, in 1903 the Naval General Staff split off from the General Staff. From then on, the army and navy general staffs were on an equal footing, each linked directly to the emperor, which made the two services independent of each other. In this way the government, the army, and the navy, by virtue of their separate direct links with the emperor, came to possess independent spheres of competence and became separate entities competing with and checking one another.

Given this structure, when dissension among the three arose (disagreements because of sectionalism were frequent), only the emperor could mediate or arbitrate. When expansion of the war became inevitable, dissension among the government, the army, and the navy grew still more pronounced and became chronic. The need to unify political power required the emperor to assume an expanded role as absolute monarch. Without unified state policies the war could not be prosecuted, much less won. However, it is important to note that "even in regard to the exercise of the prerogative of supreme command, which is construed as having been intended to enable the emperor legally to act as an absolute monarch, the emperor did not in fact impose his individual will in order to wield his potential as an absolute monarch."[17]

The establishment of a mechanism whereby the government, the army, and the navy could achieve "consensus" is a good example. The institution of Imperial Headquarters–government liaison conferences in 1937, the substitution of Imperial Headquarters–government liaison discussions in 1940 to promote unity, and the reversion to liaison conferences the following year testify to the difficulty of achieving consensus. But as a rule the emperor neither attended such meetings nor issued direct imperial decisions. Instead, the emperor's judgments and will were made known and implemented through a process that, though tortuous, was invested with the coercive power of absolute authority: conferences of the war-leadership group to coordinate opinions, followed by communication between members of that group and the emperor in the form of private reports to the throne *(naisō)*, formal reports to the throne *(jōsō)*, imperial questions *(gokamon)*, and imperial conferences *(gozenkaigi)*. Simple consultations among some ministers and representatives of the army and navy general staffs took precedence over cabinet meetings and became the actual mechanism for determining important state policies even in regard to matters that

---

[16] Ibid., p. 70.

[17] Ibid., pp. 71–72.

did not involve the prerogative of supreme command because for the emperor, in time of war, that was the most expedient and efficient way of gaining "consensus" among the government and the two military services.

The role of the emperor in the governing apparatus can also be explained in terms of his divine authority. To preserve his "sacred and inviolable" status, it was necessary that he not become caught up in the rivalries and conflicts of the pluralized political power but remain above the fray, a transcendental entity. Because, as I have noted, unification of political forces required the emperor to expand his role as an absolute monarch, remaining in a transcendental position was contradictory. Resolution of this contradiction was attempted by using the emperor's very transcendence of the political sphere as a kind of disguise behind which he could exercise effective and real authority for unification, in other words, by deifying him still more. As the impulse toward war expansion grew, it became essential "to bring about the ultimate integration of the pluralized political power." In accordance with this necessity, the emperor had to express his intentions and act explicitly as an absolute monarch. Ceremonial and formalistic embellishments became more important than ever to maintain the fiction that the emperor was aloof from the pluralized political power. I may add that in discussing the emperor's responsibility for the war, obviously what should be examined is not the fiction of his transcendence but the reality of his power.

The emperor could not openly display the attributes of an absolute monarch but had to rely on a number of embellishments and disguises. This testified to an inherent contradiction in efforts to resolve the dilemma between the pluralization of different policy groups maintaining their own lines of authorization to the emperor and an emperor whose authority was emphasized as ultimate, unique, and absolute.

Viewed thus, dissension within the group planning and prosecuting the war can be seen as inevitable and insoluble. But there were of course "safety valves" to vent some of the pressure of this insoluble conflict. One was the thorough repression of the antiwar and antiestablishment movements within Japan, the only true opposition; the other was the prosecution of a war of aggression overseas.

II. THE SURVEILLANCE ACTIVITIES OF THE NISHIHARA MISSION

Contemporary documents refer to the Nishihara Mission variously as a "surveillance group," a "study group," or a "group dispatched to French Indochina." Nishihara himself, after taking up his duties in Hanoi, referred to the group in telegrams to army headquarters in Tokyo mainly as the Nishihara Mission. The mission was called a surveillance group because the main official reason for dispatching this band of military specialists was to observe the blockade of supplies to Chiang Kai-shek by conducting surveillance in Vietnam, on the Chinese border, and in other key locations.

On June 22, 1940, a message titled "Proposal to France Concerning the Dispatch of a *Surveillance Group*" (emphasis added) was handed by Masayuki Tani, the vice-minister for foreign affairs, to Charles Arsène Henry, the French ambassador in Tokyo. The first paragraph read: "The Imperial Government [wishes to] send . . . thirty military specialists and ten diplomatic personnel *to observe* the blockade of supplies moving through French Indochina to China"[18] (emphasis added). The

---

[18] Document 5.

function of the military specialists that Japan wished to send to French Indochina was to be limited to surveillance.

To cite another example, on June 24 Captain Kuranosuke Yanagisawa, an Imperial Headquarters naval staff officer, was named head of the group's navy contingent by the Imperial Headquarters Navy Section. His orders, issued by the chief of the Naval General Staff, stated: "As head of the Imperial Headquarters Navy Section contingent, you are ordered to carry out *surveillance* of the French Indochina blockade of supplies to Chiang Kai-shek"[19] (emphasis added).

Since the ostensible reason for sending military specialists to Hanoi was "to carry out surveillance of the blockade of supplies to Chiang Kai-shek," the group was called a "surveillance group" or "study group." Let us now consider the surveillance activities of this group of military specialists.

Japan first disclosed the composition of the surveillance group it was sending to Hanoi—thirty military specialists and ten diplomatic personnel—in the "Proposal to France Concerning the Dispatch of a Surveillance Group"[20] of June 22. The army contingent, headed by a major general, included eleven field and company officers and eleven warrant officers and noncommissioned officers, a total of twenty-three personnel.[21] The navy contingent was headed by a captain and included two commanders or lieutenant commanders, one special-duty officer, and three petty officers, a total of seven personnel.[22] Nishihara, the leader of the army contingent, also commanded the entire group. Thus Yanagisawa, the leader of the navy contingent, was under Nishihara's command. The Nishihara Mission "received orders from the chiefs of the Army General Staff and Naval General Staff to act as an organization dispatched by Imperial Headquarters."[23] However, because it included both army and navy personnel, it perpetuated the army-navy conflict that existed at central headquarters.

Three of the ten diplomatic personnel in the group were from the Japanese consulate general in Hanoi.[24] The remaining seven were sent directly from the Foreign Ministry in Tokyo. The course of later negotiations between Japan and French Indochina indicates that the Japanese consul general in Hanoi at that time, Rokurō Suzuki, acted as the representative of the ten diplomatic personnel, which means that the Hanoi consulate general also came under the command of Imperial Headquarters once the Nishihara Mission arrived. Thus, because of the structure of the Nishihara Mission, the discord that characterized the relationship between the military and the Foreign Ministry at central headquarters was replicated in Hanoi. However, this discord cannot be viewed as a conflict between equals. Throughout the Japanese army's occupation of Indochina, the consulate general in Hanoi disliked and distrusted the local Japanese military authorities and put up weak, sporadic resistance. But it was never able to act autonomously or implement its own proposals, because it was merely an appendage of the military organization. The inclusion of consulate general

---

[19] Document 7.

[20] Document 5.

[21] Document 9.

[22] Document 8.

[23] Suketaka Tanemura, *Daihon'ei kimitsu nisshi* [Imperial Headquarters secret war diaries] (Tokyo: Daiyamondosha, 1952), p. 16.

[24] Document 5.