

**Cleansing History, Cleansing Japan:
Kobayashi Yoshinori's *Analects of War* and Japan's
Revisionist Revival**

REBECCA CLIFFORD

**NISSAN OCCASIONAL
PAPER SERIES
NO. 35**

2004

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REBECCA CLIFFORD

Rebecca Clifford is currently a doctoral student in Modern History at Oxford University, working on memories of World War Two in France and Italy. She graduated with first class honours from Queen's University (Kingston, Canada) in 1997 and then spent three years on the JET programme in Fukui City, Japan. On her return to Canada in 2000, she secured a first-class Master of Arts degree at the University of Toronto, specializing in modern Japanese history. This paper, based on her Master's thesis, was given at the workshop on 'The Media and Contested Memories of the Asian-Pacific War,' held 11-13 March 2004 and co-sponsored by the Nissan Institute of Japanese Studies and the Asian Studies Centre, St Antony's College.

Mark Rebick
Editor

Cleansing History, Cleansing Japan: Kobayashi Yoshinori's *Analects of War* and Japan's Revisionist Revival

Japan's publishing industry produced a surprising bestseller in 1998: an ultra-nationalist retelling of the nation's participation in World War Two, in comic book form. Cartoonist Kobayashi Yoshinori's 400-page *Analects of War* (*Sensō ron*) received a remarkable level of consumer attention in the wake of its publication, and prompted a public debate that raised questions concerning how Japan's wartime record is represented in the media. Kobayashi's hypothesis – that modern Japan's inability to take pride in the history of the war has led to a crisis of national consciousness – echoes the arguments of the Liberal Historiography Study Group (*Jiyūshugi shikan kenkyūkai*), a right-wing organization that seeks to recast Japan's wartime history in a positive and deeply nationalistic light. The organization's members publicly negate or deny atrocities committed by the Japanese military during World War Two, and propose instead a narrative cleansed of all morally problematic elements. Focusing on the themes of purity, guilt, and Japanese national identity, Kobayashi takes this reactionary narrative and offers it up in an easily digestible form, one that is well suited to tales of nationalist heroics. This approach has garnered him a large following, attesting to the appeal of both the medium and the message.

The medium of the comic book, or *manga*, is well developed in Japan, and is a highly effective means of communication for an author who wishes to target the young as his principal readership. Kobayashi has found a receptive audience particularly among young adults in their twenties, who are unlikely to have studied the war in any detail in school, and who thus have no background against which to

evaluate Kobayashi's claims. It was primarily this young readership that made Analects of War one of the best-selling so-called 'serious' comic books in Japanese publishing history: it sold 420,000 copies in its first three months of publication, went through twenty-nine printings in its first year, and has sold roughly a million copies in total. Part of its appeal lies in its pseudo-academic style: Kobayashi uses complex and archaic Chinese characters in his text, and does not include the phonetic readings usually found in Japanese comic books, giving the text an air of scholarly credibility that reinforces his authority as narrator. Indeed, the book was such an immediate success among university students that some universities responded by offering seminars on wartime history to address the book's misrepresentations.¹

Analects of War is both a defense of Japan's participation in World War Two, and a commentary on contemporary Japanese society. Kobayashi argues that Japan waged war for justifiable reasons, even though wartime administrators may have made mistakes in practice. The Japanese went to war, he claims, to protect their national security, to liberate Asia from Western imperialism, and to alter a world order that they perceived to be racist. Japanese citizens of the war era genuinely believed in these lofty goals, he argues, and were sincerely devoted to them – so devoted that they were happy to die both on the battlefield and on the home front in the hopes of achieving them. He suggests, however, that modern Japanese citizens have lost this sense of duty to the nation, and he traces the origins of a host of perceived societal ills to this loss. He concludes that the Japanese can rebuild their society only if they learn once again to devote themselves to the national entity, and to “respect our grandfathers and what they wanted to protect in the war.”² He thus seeks not only a

¹ The New York Times, Sunday, March 25, 2001, pg. 3.

² Kobayashi Yoshinori, Sensō ron (Tokyo: Gentosha, 1998), pg. 284.

positive and positivistic re-evaluation of Japan's reasons for waging war, but aims to use this interpretation of Japan's wartime history as a prism through which he can expose the defects in contemporary society.

Kobayashi traces the decline of Japanese patriotism to the policies and initiatives of the Allied Occupation government during the post-war period (1945-1952), and to the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal in particular. He argues that the tribunal allowed the Allies to unilaterally impose punishment on Japan by denying the validity of Japanese participation in the war, thereby legitimizing their own war crimes (such as the dropping of the atomic bomb). The Occupation government, he continues, launched a concerted program of censorship to convince the Japanese that they had been slaves to militarism, and that the adoption of American ideals such as democracy and individualism was necessary to counteract this militaristic drive. He claims that the Japanese people were effectively brainwashed by this censorship, and remain so to this day. He concludes that modern Japanese citizens must shake themselves free of American-imposed mind control, and come to see the war as a justifiable and heroic endeavor, even if it was a failed one.

Kobayashi's theories borrow heavily from those of the Liberal Historiography Study Group, an organization that has been instrumental in popularizing similar revisionist concepts.³ The organization was founded in 1995 by Tokyo University education professor Fujioka Nobukatsu, and counts among its members a diverse collection of literary, media and academic personalities (including Kobayashi himself). It is primarily Fujioka and Kobayashi, however, who have striven to create a broad public base for the group's ideas. The success of

³ Although the term 'revisionism' can have many connotations, I here refer to the reactionary, apologist strain favoured by members of this group.

Kobayashi's Analects of War followed directly on the heels of Fujioka's own publishing triumph, the 1997 bestseller History Not Taught in Textbooks (*Kyōkasho ga oshienai rekishi*). This book set the tone for later publications by group members, and Kobayashi borrows many of its main arguments wholesale in Analects of War. While the book's title implies an unorthodox historiography, it is in fact a collection of upbeat stories about so-called "great" men and women in modern Japanese history. As Fujioka explains in his introduction, his aim is to offer Japanese readers a historical narrative in which they can take pride. Standard, official interpretations of modern history, he argues, encourage the Japanese (and Japanese students in particular) to view their history as a succession of aggressive and immoral acts. The result, he argues, has been a loss of national pride and patriotic spirit. The function of history education, according to Fujioka, is to strengthen the state by encouraging the Japanese to be proud of their nation again.⁴ Analects of War's central premise – that the history of World War Two must be recast in a positive light if Japan is to regain a sense of national pride – is borrowed directly from Fujioka's work⁵.

The popular support enjoyed by this organization is likely part of a larger reaction to changes taking place both within Japanese society and internationally during the 1990s. In 1993, Prime Minister Hosokawa Morihiro, who headed the first non-Liberal Democratic government in four decades, publicly admitted that the war had been "aggressive" on Japan's part – the first such admission by a prime minister

⁴ Fujioka Nobukatsu, *Kyōkasho ga oshienai rekishi* (Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten, 1997), introduction.

⁵ In pursuit of the goal of educational reform, the members of the Liberal Historiography Study Group formed a second organization, the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform (*Atarashii rekishi kyōkasho o tsukuru kai* in Japanese; the group's English name differs somewhat from its Japanese one), which aims mainly to remove references to Japanese war crimes from junior high school and high school history textbooks. This second organization has vehemently attacked the Ministry of Education's 1996 decision to allow references to 'comfort women' to be included in textbooks. The group has written its own textbook, New History of Japan, which was approved by the Ministry of Education in 2001 and became available for use in schools in April 2002. It underwent 137 mandatory revisions, however, and has not been adopted for use by more than a handful of local school boards.

since the Occupation era.⁶ Hosokawa's successor, socialist Murayama Tomiichi, offered a public apology to the peoples of Asia for suffering inflicted on them by the Japanese military during the war. The end of the LDP's long-standing hegemony in the Diet opened up new opportunities to address the question of how the war is officially and publicly represented in Japan. As Gavan McCormack has noted, this period saw the formation of a "national consensus in favour of apology, admission of the aggressive and colonial character of the war, and compensation to the victims...."⁷ Against the backdrop of these events, the Liberal Historiography Study Group emerged as an oppositional force, repudiating apology and insisting on the primacy of the national cause.

Alongside domestic political realignments, changes in the international sphere during the 1990s contributed to a growing public sense of insecurity that the revisionists would turn to their advantage. The collapse of Cold War strategic divides opened up possibilities for new geopolitical configurations at the regional level, but also allowed decades-old wartime tensions and unresolved grievances to re-emerge. In Japan, leaders found themselves beset by new calls for apology and compensation for crimes committed during the war, particularly from South Korea and the People's Republic of China. Members of the Liberal Historiography Study Group have taken vocal issue with these calls for apology from foreign sources, arguing that nations must necessarily differ in their perceptions of history, and that non-Japanese readings of Japanese actions during the war are inherently confrontational. The irony, of course, is that the widespread publication of the organization's views has led to increased foreign demands for a role in the articulation of Japan's national history.

⁶ Norma Field, "War and Apology: Japan, Asia, the Fiftieth, and After," Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique, vol. 5, no. 1 (1997), pg. 4.

⁷ Gavan McCormack, "The Japanese Movement to 'Correct' History," Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars, vol. 30, no. 2 (1998), pg. 16.

While the impetus for the creation of this group may be based in events unique to the 1990s, nationalist and revisionist historiographies are not new to Japan. Apologist histories of the war have been published, sometimes widely, since the early 1960s. Novelist Hayashi Fusao's "Affirmation Thesis on the Greater East Asian War" (*Dai toa sensō koteiron*), which was serialized in the journal *Chūō Kōron* in 1962, was the first such history of the war to gain widespread public support. Hayashi argued that the war had not been an aggressive one, and in fact had served to liberate Asia from white colonialism – a view which is still voiced frequently by those representing the traditional right in Japan, and which has served as the predominant model for ultra-nationalist historians throughout the post-war period. Yet while the mandate of the Liberal Historiography Study Group appears to owe much to Hayashi's argument, its members have in fact tried to distance themselves from this orthodox view. Fujioka has gone so far as to publicly renounce any association with Hayashi's work, claiming that the views of the Liberal Historiography Study Group represent a new intellectual development that belongs to neither the political right nor left. The group's decision to refer to themselves as "liberal" further indicates their wish to separate themselves from traditional revisionist thinking, at least on the surface. It suggests a recognition that the conventional right-wing perspective, long in existence on the fringe of Japanese society, has been largely discredited and holds little appeal for a modern mass audience. The association with liberalism, however, marks a change not so much of content as one of orientation: by professing to adhere to a 'liberal' perspective, the members of the Liberal Historiography Study Group encourage the participation of those who might otherwise not associate themselves with the nationalist right. The wide measure of popular success enjoyed by the group, from book sales to the Ministry of Education's tacit nod of support in the textbook

issue, attests to the wisdom of this change in orientation.

For the members of the Liberal Historiography Study Group, history and history education function as a moral instrument which guides and shapes national identity and pride. The group's declared goal is to reinstate a "distinctive Japanese historical consciousness" (*Nihon jishin no rekishi ishiki*) in the Japanese people, a condition that, its members argue, is necessary for the development of a strong sense of patriotism. The Japanese once had this historical consciousness, they claim, but it has eroded in the post-war period due to the prevalence of what they call a "masochistic" (*jigyakuteki*) historiographical approach that has over-emphasized pre-war and wartime militarism.⁸ Central to this argument, although often suggested more than stated, is the idea that what is distasteful or negative in history has a polluting effect on the collective psyche of the Japanese, and must be excised to protect the purity of the national consciousness. This fixation on notions of purity and pollution is one of the central themes of Analects of War.

Consciously or unconsciously, Kobayashi has replicated a key element of wartime propaganda in his focus on Japan's moral purity. As John Dower has argued in his book War Without Mercy, conceptions of purity and contamination were focal themes in patriotic wartime writings. The Cardinal Principles of the National Polity (*Kokutai no hongei*), a 1937 government publication that provided the framework for the creation of propaganda, described how Japan's divine, unbroken imperial line ensured the absolute moral purity of the Japanese people.⁹ Sacrifice was the key purifying agent in this equation, and the greater the sacrifice, the greater the cleansing effect. Soldiers were encouraged to commit suicide before allowing themselves to

⁸ See Nishio Kanji *et al.*, The Restoration of a National History (Tokyo: Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform, 1998).

⁹ See Robert K. Hall, Kokutai no hongei: Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), introduction.

become prisoners of war: employing the language of disease, government propaganda suggested that the shame of defeat could corrupt the body of the nation through the surrendered soldier, but also that the willing sacrifice of life would expunge this contamination. By the war's end, this logic had been extended to include not only soldiers but the nation as a whole. On the eve of defeat, the government's propaganda department issued a final, desperate slogan to the public: *ichioku gyokusai* ("the hundred million die like shattered jewels"), a request to the entire populace to embrace the beauty of death before giving up to the indignity of surrender. As Dower has noted of this memorable catchphrase, "the supreme sacrifice and ultimate state of purification, by this terrible logic, had finally come to mean readiness to embrace extermination."¹⁰

Drawing on this assumed link between purity and sacrifice, Kobayashi argues that the lack of a desire to die willingly for Japan is indicative of an impure and morally corrupt society. In the first chapter of Analects of War, he relates a conversation he has with a taxi driver on the topic of the war and national defense. He is initially impressed when the young man speaks of his desire to join Japan's Self-Defense Forces as a pilot, but is shocked when the man reveals his reason for wanting to join: should Japan ever be the target of a nuclear attack, only a pilot will be able to escape. This encounter leads Kobayashi to conclude that the taxi driver's self-interest demonstrates a broader lack of commitment to the national cause: "There's no one in today's Japan who would die for this country."¹¹

The case of the taxi driver is one of many examples that Kobayashi constructs to suggest a moral blight in contemporary Japan. In a series of collages, he

¹⁰ John W. Dower, War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), pg. 233. See also Dower, Embracing Defeat (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1999).

¹¹ Kobayashi, *ibid.*, pg. 18.

pinpoints several social conditions that display, to him, this moral bankruptcy, often juxtaposing universally recognizable social ills (such as murder) with those that appear comparatively trivial and innocent. In one of the more interesting of these collages, he portrays five different situations: a divorcing couple, a young woman walking with an older man under the heading “housewife prostitution”, a case of *enjo kosai* (compensated dating) between a teenaged girl and a middle-aged man, a junior high school student stabbing another student, and, most prominently, a man shaving his eyebrows.¹² Those familiar with Japanese popular culture will recognize in this last image one aspect of a broader trend towards androgyny among young men. Popularized at the time of Analects of War’s publication by such superstars as Katori Shingo of the music group S.M.A.P. (who often appeared on television in a dress and a wig), the androgynous look has been much criticized by older male voices in the media, who see in it a purposeful abandonment of masculinity and a conscious shunning of the tradition of *bushidō* by morally corrupt youth. As Yumiko Iida has noted, the current trend towards “feminization” among young men is particularly threatening because it is more than skin deep: many of the male idols who embody this stylistic change have also “added to their selling points sensitivity, gentleness, and good looks, attributes that in the past were largely associated with the ideal woman.”¹³ Iida suggests that these changes are so contrary to conventional notions of Japanese masculinity that they appear to threaten the patriarchal narrative itself. By juxtaposing the image of the young man styling his eyebrows with those of murder and prostitution, Kobayashi encourages his readers to draw a link between the contemporary reinterpretation of traditional modes of masculinity, and more

¹² *Ibid.*, pg. 8.

¹³ Yumiko Iida, “Between the Technique of Living an Endless Routine and the Madness of Absolute Degree Zero: Japanese Identity and the Crisis of Modernity in the 1990s,” Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique, vol. 8, no. 2 (2000), pg. 432.

obviously problematic social ills.

Kobayashi likewise perceives changes to conventional notions of women's sexual identity as a threat. He relies heavily upon images of the sexualized commodification of women's bodies to suggest the moral degeneration of Japanese society, implying both that the female body provides a sort of litmus test of societal contamination, and at the same time acts as a site through which corruption disseminates into society. Most of Kobayashi's collages center on the female body, and he repeatedly makes use of images such as women in bed being offered money by faceless men, high school students hanging on the arms of businessmen, and young women being chased by stalkers. One such collage bears the heading "From adults to children, the sense of being 'public citizens' has been completely lost!", a statement that, taken together with the images in the collage, implies a direct link between the commodification of women's bodies and the loss of national identity.¹⁴ The reader is left to conclude that the link between these two seemingly disparate themes is morality, a morality that is defined by what the female body does, and what is done to it. Where Kobayashi depicts women, it is almost without exception in one of two roles: either as the '*baka na gaki*' (stupid brats) whose eroticized bodies are symbolic of corruption, or as the young mother, holding an infant, who represents the purity of desexualized womanhood, of the family, and of the nation as a whole. He thus also draws a parallel between the strength of the family unit and of the nation. In Japan, where citizens have long been urged to regard the state as an extension of the traditional family system, perhaps it is not surprising that an attack on the family should be construed as an attack on the nation itself.¹⁵ If women's role as "public

¹⁴ Kobayashi, *ibid.*, pg. 101.

¹⁵ For a discussion of the family and the state in Japan, see Sandra Buckley, "Altered States: the Body Politics of 'Being Woman'," in Andrew Gordon, ed., Postwar Japan as History, (Berkeley: University

citizens” is defined by their ability to produce children, then those women who use sex for other ends necessarily threaten this assumed role.

Yet while Kobayashi sees changing gender identities as a root cause of moral degeneration, he does not seek to blame the women and men he describes, either individually or collectively. Japan’s fall from purity cannot be blamed on the Japanese at all, claims Kobayashi; rather, the real blame lies in what he refers to as the “atmosphere of peace,” which he believes was introduced by the Allied Occupation government, and which he claims has suffused and stupefied the nation in the post-war period. This atmosphere is marked by one social trend above all: the widespread adoption of a “Japanese-style” individualism (*kojinshugi*) that is built on a disregard for the family, the larger community, and the nation. This individualism, he argues, is a bastardized form of the true concept, forced on the Japanese by the primarily American Supreme Command for the Allied Powers as part of a program of mind control intended to pacify Japanese society. The root cause of moral corruption and loss of purity in modern Japan, according to Kobayashi, can thus be traced to a distorted foreign concept that the Japanese were tricked into adopting in the aftermath of war and defeat.

It should be noted here that Kobayashi has borrowed this idea largely from Fujioka, who has argued for years that the “problems” in Japanese society – from the loss of a national historical narrative to women’s demands for equal rights – are the Americans’ fault.¹⁶ This type of accusation serves two useful functions for Fujioka and other members of the Liberal Historiography Study Group: it reinforces their claim that the Japanese are essentially pure (as modern impurities originated from

of California Press, 1993), pp. 347-372.

¹⁶ Fujioka’s book *Jubaku no kingen daishi* (Modern History and Mind Control), [Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten, 1999]) concentrates entirely on this topic.

foreign sources), and it negates the opinions of those who oppose them (as any differing views can be chalked up to American brainwashing). Other members of the group have been as eager as Kobayashi to blame Japan's current social problems on a non-Japanese source, particularly where issues of sexuality and gender are concerned. The group's directives often suggest a link between issues of nationalism, sexuality, and gender: apart from pursuing questions related to public memory of the war, the group is most actively involved in voicing their opposition to sex education in schools, to women's demands for equality in the workplace, and to other issues that similarly raise questions concerning the future of Japan's traditional patriarchy. As Aaron Gerow has observed, their supporters clearly see a link between these two issues as well: many local legislatures which opposed the inclusion of references to comfort women in the new textbooks in 1997 also opposed proposed changes to Japan's family law, which would have allowed women to keep their maiden names after marriage.¹⁷ A challenge to the patriarchy is equivalent, for the group and its followers, to a challenge to the nation itself, and thus those individuals and groups who seek to alter the patriarchal order are viewed not only as impure, but as fundamentally anti-Japanese. Ultimately, however, Kobayashi and others like him prefer to regard those who challenge traditional Japanese society as being motivated by forces beyond their control.

Proceeding on a similar tack, Kobayashi locates the origins of postwar guilt in Occupation-era Allied policies. The Japanese themselves have no reason to feel guilty for their actions during the war, he claims; they persist in feeling guilty only because the Occupation government tricked them into doubting their innocence. In

¹⁷ Aaron Gerow, "Consuming Asia, Consuming Japan: The New Neonationalist Revisionism in Japan," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, vol. 30, no. 2, 1998, pg. 32.

particular, Kobayashi traces the roots of Japan's post-war fixation with guilt to the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal. Japanese and non-Japanese scholars alike have argued that the Tokyo Trials were primarily a display of victors' justice, and this view is by no means the preserve of the political right.¹⁸ Even at the time of the trials, which began in May 1946 and ran for thirty-one months thereafter, many of those involved – both Japanese and Western – were quick to point out that the trials were often hypocritical, arguably self-serving, and at times fundamentally unlawful. Even those responsible for overseeing the trials had doubts as to their propriety; three trial judges submitted dissenting opinions, and General Charles Willoughby (who was the head of the Civil Intelligence Section at the time) decried the trials as “the worst hypocrisy in recorded history”.¹⁹

Kobayashi extends this argument to ascribe genuinely sinister intentions to those responsible for the Tokyo Trials, and to the Americans in particular, claiming that they consciously distorted facts in an attempt to deflect guilt from themselves. As evidence, he points specifically to the treatment of the Nanjing Massacre in the Trials. He goes so far as to argue that the Nanjing Massacre was an American and Chinese invention:

One of the crimes invented by the judges at the Tokyo Trials was the Nanking Massacre. Since the Americans killed 300,000 people with the atomic bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, they wanted to pin an equally heinous crime on the Japanese. ... 300,000 people were massacred (in Japan); there weren't even 200,000 people living in Nanking at the time. ... There were 200 Nationalist Army guerillas hiding in the safety zone at Nanking, and they were the ones who committed rape and murder in Nanking. They then pretended that these crimes had been the doing of the Japanese army.²⁰

Kobayashi aims to shift the weight of culpability away from the Japanese and onto the

¹⁸ See John Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, chapter 12, for an excellent discussion of the legal and social repercussions of the trials.

¹⁹ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, pg. 451.

²⁰ Kobayashi, *ibid.*, pg. 45.

Americans, who are doubly guilty in his eyes: they have caused high numbers of civilian deaths in Japan, and have also deflected blame from themselves onto the Japanese. However, he does not feel it is enough simply to redirect the burden of guilt; he seeks to absolve the Japanese of any guilt whatsoever by denying that they were in any way responsible for what happened in Nanjing. For Kobayashi, the purity of the Japanese must be absolute, and thus he recasts the victims of the Nanjing Massacre, the Chinese, as their own aggressors. He goes on to claim that such large numbers of Chinese citizens (women and children in particular) were guerillas that Japanese soldiers in China could trust no one, and were justified in opening fire on civilians – a convenient validation of Japanese actions in China. By suggesting that it was impossible for the Japanese to tell the “good” Chinese from the “bad”, Kobayashi also implies that deceitfulness was widespread in Chinese society, and integrally bound up in Chinese culture. In contrast, he depicts the Japanese as the moral opposites of the Chinese: guileless, trusting, and deeply hurt by the deceit of the Chinese, who they were only trying to help. Ignoring the obvious example of Pearl Harbor, Kobayashi leads his readers to believe that the Japanese could not even conceive of using guerilla tactics or sneak attacks, because the very nature of their organic national character prevented such thinking.

Kobayashi’s view of the Japanese national character as intrinsically pure is central to his overall argument, and he goes to some lengths to find supporting evidence. In his chapter on the Tokyo Trials, he discusses the trials themselves only briefly; the majority of the chapter concerns a letter that he received from an elderly fan. The letter, written by seventy-year-old Ito Kazuko, describes her experience as a young woman working for a company in Wakayama Prefecture immediately after the war. One evening, she was invited to have dinner at the house of her employer, along

with another employee, a young man named Ogawa. After dinner, she sat with the quiet Ogawa on the veranda overlooking the garden of her employer's home. Although they did not speak, she wrote that she felt an unusual sense of peace sitting beside Ogawa, who seemed to be a thoughtful and contemplative young man. The shy Ogawa began to tell her stories of his experience in the war, and the stories were so innocent that Ms. Ito was surprised to learn from her employer afterwards that Ogawa had actually commanded troops at Nanjing. The real shock for Ms. Ito was to come the following year, when the proceedings of the Tokyo Trials began to be published, and she first heard about the atrocities committed by Japanese forces in Nanjing. Ms. Ito simply could not believe that such a nice man as Ogawa could have taken part in any atrocity, and so firm was her conviction of his innocence that she could only assume that the information reported on the Tokyo Trials had been a lie. "In recent public opinion," she writes, "the verdicts of the Tokyo Trials are being re-examined as a case of the victors punishing the losers, and a movement to correct history is beginning."²¹ Thus in the story of Ms. Ito, Kobayashi has presented a classic comic book scenario: the innocent victim who has been wrongly accused, the enemies plotting to keep the truth a secret, and the struggle to overcome injustice. The role of the hero is open to the reader, should he or she choose to join in the battle to set the historical record straight.

If the Japanese were truly innocent, why then did so many of them come to acknowledge their collective guilt in the post-war era? Kobayashi argues that the Occupation government was again directly responsible for encouraging the Japanese to see themselves as the aggressors. In particular, he points his finger at something he calls the War Guilt Information Program:

²¹ Kobayashi, *ibid.*, pg. 48.

Along with the Tokyo Trials, the American GHQ introduced the War Guilt Information Program, which was a brainwashing program intended to convince the Japanese that they were responsible for war crimes. The mass media was involved in its entirety in convincing the Japanese that they had perpetrated such cruelties during the war, that the army was evil, that [the Americans] had had no choice but to drop the bomb, and that the Japanese had been tricked by their own army...this type of information thoroughly saturated movies, radio, newspapers, and books. The Japanese populace was easily brainwashed.²²

This is a seductive hypothesis for those who champion Japanese innocence, as it separates the Japanese entirely from both accountability for crimes committed during the war, and responsibility from any post-war displays of regret for these crimes. The Occupation government never created this type of propaganda initiative under the heading of ‘War Guilt Information Program’ – or under any other heading, for that matter. It is true that the Occupation forces did censor the media during the Occupation, and were particularly hawk-eyed when it came to views that cast the occupiers in a bad light, such as criticism of the Americans for dropping the atomic bombs. Many historians have observed that it was hypocritical of the Occupying forces to promote a broad-ranging platform of democracy for the defeated country, while at the same time using censorship as a tool to shape the public psyche for the reception of democratic principles.²³ However, Occupation-era censorship policies aimed to remove material deemed unsuitable from the popular media, rather than force the media to record information that had been deemed suitable. The official press code, released by the Office of the Supreme Command for the Allied Powers on September 19, 1945, provided the guidelines for censorship, but outlined only those topics which members of the press should avoid, not those which they should use.²⁴

²² Kobayashi, *ibid.*, pg. 49.

²³ See in particular Monica Braw, The Atomic Bomb Suppressed: American Censorship in Occupied Japan. (Armonk, New York: East Gate Books, 1991).

²⁴ In terms of censorship, the most important article of the press code was article four, which stated that “there shall be no destructive criticism of the Allied Forces of Occupation and nothing which might invite mistrust or resentment of those troops.” Division of Special Records, Foreign Office, Japanese

The code for motion pictures, released on November 16, 1945, went further than the press code in clarifying which topics would be censored out of movies (in particular “nationalist, militaristic and feudalistic concepts”), but again made no attempt to suggest what should be censored *into* them.²⁵

Kobayashi is correct, however, in his observation that the mass media underwent a remarkable about-face after Japan’s defeat, when patriotic zeal was replaced seemingly overnight with open criticism of the wartime government and of the war itself. That this change was in part attributable to the occupiers’ censorship policies is a valid point, but not for the reasons that Kobayashi would have his readers believe. The Occupation forces made no secret of the fact that demilitarization was one of their primary objectives, and while their censors never forced members of the media to condemn the wartime government or the war, many did so voluntarily, anticipating that Occupation authorities would favorably receive such views. Other motivating factors may have been equally or more significant, however. What Kobayashi does not mention, but what is undoubtedly true, is that some members of the media were glad to be free of the yoke of wartime censorship, which had been far stricter than that of the Occupation.²⁶ However, even if a censored media was promoting GHQ’s reforms, this does not explain how an entire populace could be completely brainwashed in a matter of months by former enemies. By ignoring other factors which influenced Japan-occupier relations – psychological and physical exhaustion, a serious lack of food, housing, clean water, hospitals, and schools, and a general sense of relief that a hopeless war had finally ended – Kobayashi paints a highly over-simplified picture of the Japanese during the Occupation. Moreover, in

Government, *Documents Concerning the Allied Occupation and Control of Japan*, volume II, pg. 180.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 186.

²⁶ See Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, pp. 185-187.

order to support his claim that the Japanese were brainwashed, he must recast the Japanese themselves as mentally pliable and incapable of independent thought. He depicts the brainwashed Japanese as hysterical, with limbs flailing, eyes glazed, mouths wide open, and faces tear-stained, clearly beyond any rational emotional control. These frenzied Japanese prostrate themselves before smug-looking Americans and offer their thanks:

“We were brainwashed by the military, but the Americans and the GHQ saved us! Thank you for giving us democracy! Please execute those responsible for war crimes quickly! I’m sick of war! War is evil! We don’t need an army! Peace is more important than anything! Give me chocolate! Give me the Japanese Constitution!”²⁷

The Americans, in contrast, are calmly smiling ominous-looking smiles: clearly, their agenda of mind control has been successful. A sinister MacArthur presides over the whole, wearing dark glasses, holding a pipe, and hovering larger-than-life above the assembled Japanese masses. In the final frame of the chapter, Kobayashi replaces the looming MacArthur with an image of himself, his face and spatial presence an almost exact duplicate of MacArthur’s from the preceding panel. Where the brainwashed Japanese looked to MacArthur as a false savior, Kobayashi offers himself as the real thing, the one who has seen the truth and can pull Japan out of the stupor of prolonged mind control.

In conclusion, it may be apt to remind ourselves of the roles of Kobayashi’s comic book players, and examine how these relate both to the narrative and to the medium. For in the final analysis, Analects of War is a comic book, and although it may treat an unusual subject, it does not stray far from the standard parameters of the genre. Like any *manga*, its characters fall into the well-worn categories of heroes,

²⁷ Kobayashi, *ibid.*, pg. 50.

victims, and villains. The Allied villains are classic comic book bad guys: treacherous, deceitful, manipulative and one-dimensional, they aim to ensure that the victims remain victims and the heroes remain silent. They may physically no longer be present, but they have left a stupefying ideology that has continued to do their dirty work in their absence. The victims-in-distress, however, are a somewhat more complex case. After all, if one of Kobayashi's main goals is to provide his readers with a historical narrative in which they can take pride, it seems to run counter to this goal to portray the Japanese as mentally weak and easily brainwashed. However, this representation is in keeping with one of Kobayashi's key purposes, for it is meant to provoke in the reader a complex and contradictory mixture of pity, respect and shame, as well as a desire to avenge this shame. Kobayashi would have us believe that the Japanese of the war era were easily duped, but this was due to their innocent and trusting nature. This innocence is so deeply ingrained, so wholly organic, that it trumps all accusations of guilt, and serves as the defining factor of their identity as Japanese. Kobayashi leads his readers to believe, however, that this innocence has been lost, and while he never states it directly, it is clear that it was lost at the moment of defeat. Thus there is a caesura which separates the victims along generational lines: those of the pre-defeat era command respect as the last truly Japanese generation, while those post-war generations bear the burden not of guilt, but of shame: shame for having kept the gullibility, but lost the innocence. The work of the heroes thus becomes clear: it is their duty to wrestle back this lost purity while ensuring that the Japanese will never be tricked out of it again. It falls to them to wake the Japanese from their post-defeat stupor, to rid Japanese society of foreign defilement by returning to a pre-defeat state of mental, spiritual and sexual purity, and to avenge the shame of defeat by resurrecting national pride. Kobayashi clearly sees

himself as the bearer of the truth, but any reader can fill the role of hero by subscribing to his version of events. Herein lies much of the emotional appeal of Analects of War: it encourages its readers to become actively involved in the narrative, to see the Japanese people as victims while seeing themselves as avengers, and to take up the role of the hero by promoting the book's central arguments.

When Analects of War was first published more than five years ago, its critics primarily feared that young readers, ignorant of the history of the war, would be only too eager to adopt this role. Whether these fears have proven true or not remains debatable. The fact that the textbook written and promoted by Kobayashi's fellow revisionists has met with such a lukewarm reception among educators suggests that the revisionists' influence is more limited than many previously believed. However, those who oppose the notions of Kobayashi and the Liberal Historiography Study Group have been slow in offering a response that is equally accessible to Japanese youth. The works of the Liberal Historiography Study Group have prompted public debate, but not of the incendiary and ultimately transformative nature that followed similar revisionist offerings in France and Germany, for example.²⁸

²⁸ In both Germany and France, the question of national responsibility for atrocities committed during the war (particularly pertaining to the Holocaust) was hotly debated throughout the 1980s and 1990s; although the question is still being grappled with in each country, these earlier debates prompted governmental and institutional leaders to move towards a public acknowledgement of state and social responsibility. Revisionist histories offered by both the political left and right have been touchstones in this continuing debate. In the French case, the writings of Robert Faurisson, who denied the existence of gas chambers at Auschwitz, sparked a public outcry in 1978/1979 when his letters were published in *Le Monde*; the 'affaire Faurisson' continued to garner media attention throughout the 1980s and 1990s, as the trials of Paul Touvier, René Bousquet and Maurice Papon kept the public eye trained on the question of France's role in the Holocaust. In Germany, the debates surrounding national responsibility that accompanied the 1986/1987 *Historikerstreit* – in which leading German historians publicly disputed the unique nature of the Holocaust – re-emerged with the 1996 publication of Daniel J. Goldhagen's Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust. Goldhagen's book, a revisionism of a different sort which emphasized the role of average Germans in the implementation of the Final Solution, met with broad public support, although it was widely criticized by professional historians. See in particular the following: Geoff Eley, "Nazism, Politics and the Image of the Past: Thoughts on the West German Historikerstreit 1986-1987," Past and Present, no. 121 (November, 1988), pp. 171-208, and The Goldhagen Effect: History, Memory, Nazism (Ann Arbor, 2000); Charles Maier, The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust and German National Identity (Cambridge, Mass., 1988); Richard J. Evans, In Hitler's Shadow: West German Historians and the Attempt to Escape from the Nazi Past (New York, 1989); Robert R. Shandley, ed., Unwilling Germans? The Goldhagen Debate (Minneapolis, 1998); Pierre Vidal-Naquet, Les assassins de la mémoire: <<Un Eichmann de papier>>

Some educators have taken up the issue of Japan's wartime actions in their classrooms, and some scholars have attempted to address the questionable claims of the revisionists in their academic debates, but in the vitally important sphere of popular culture, Kobayashi and his supporters still have the upper hand.

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