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GUEST EDITOR'S INTRODUCTORY NOTE: MODERN JAPAN: FROM THE MEIJI RESTORATION TO THE TAKARAZUKA REVUE

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The study of modern Japan, in all its aspects, is in constant evolution. From the "re-discovery" of Japan by the United States and the Western European powers during the time known as the Bakumatsu period in the middle of the 19th century to the present day, the field of Japanese studies amassed over 150 years of research on the language, culture, history, and society of the archipelago. A body of scholarship far from limited to what we now define as "modern Japan" has come to be embraced and enriched not only by scholars from the "West", but also by Japanese researchers, alongside others from all over the world.

Certainly, defining "Japan" and "modern" poses challenges. For this special issue I opted for a wide view of the "Japan" concept as we came to define it in postwar scholarship: the geopolitical space of the country named Japan today in its borders as set after its defeat in World War II (including some, but not all of the territories and colonies occupied by the Empire of Japan after 1868, the point in time that we identify as its launching into modernity), and populated by ethnic Japanese together with Ainu populations, as well as with Korean, Chinese, and other non-Japanese ethnic groups.

"Modern" and "modernity" in turn have also be generously defined here as the period started in the Bakumatsu period (1853-1867, the end of the

Tokugawa shogunate), when United States Navy Commodore Matthew Perry (1794-1858) reached the shores of Japan and forced the moribund shogunal government to open the country for trade with foreign powers after over two centuries of relative isolation from the rest of the world. And while the beginning of "modernity" per se could be argued to stretch back in time to the 17th century, or even earlier, the end of Japan's "modern" period is perhaps a more vexing issue to address. Historians of Japan tend to close Japan's modern period with the defeat in World War II. Chronologically that may make things easy, as it aligns the historical interpretation with other parts of the world. If we consider, however, that 1945 found Japan barely two decades into what turned out to be the longest reign of its modern monarchy (that of the Shōwa Emperor—better known outside Japan as Emperor Hirohito—which covered almost 65 years, spanning from 1926 until 1989), then shouldn't Japan's "modern" period also end in 1989? Or should it continue into the Heisei Period (1989-2019), and the "lost decades" that dominated it, as a natural consequence of the "bursting" of the "bubble economy" of the 1980s?

Or should the modern period end with the start of World War II? But, Japan's World War II does not cover the same period as it does for Europe, 1939-1945, nor does it align with that of the United States' and the Pacific War, 1941-1945. In fact, Japanese historiography talks about the "15-Year War" (1931-1945). Should then, Japan's modernity end in 1931, with the Mukden Incident of that September? As is the case with "Japan", for the purpose of this special issue of the *Annals of the West University of Timisoara (Humanities Series)*, I generously considered "modern" Japan to extend all the way into our immediate contemporaneity, with the end of the Heisei Period and the beginning of the Reiwa Period (2019-).

The research papers in this issue cover that entire span. In his contribution, "A *Restoration* that Never Became a *Revolution*: The Meiji Restoration as a Rebuilder of Japanese Conservative Nationalism", Kyu-hyun Jo reopens the debate around the nature of the 1868 Meiji Restoration to power of the imperial house of Japan, one that had been more or less dormant and lacked real authority over state matters for centuries (depending on how far back one goes, it could either be since the 12th century and the establishment of the first shogunate, the Kamakura, or even further back, as even during the Heian Period the court was mostly dominated by all-powerful clans such as the Fujiwara or the Tachibana). Jo challenges the accepted view of the Meiji

Restoration and demonstrates in his study that the restoration had nothing to do with the throne itself, as it was a compromise between liberal and conservative forces aimed at supporting Japanese nationalism and creating the mythology around the modern emperor, who was to become once more no more than a figurehead in this new iteration of monarchy. Moreover, rather than being born out of idealistic endeavors, the restoration was, in Jo's view, a pragmatical way to mimic change without truly implementing any and to replace a group of elites with another.

The next study in the volume, "A Political Consideration on the Japan-Italy Treaty Revision Relations During the Inoue Kaoru Foreign Affairs Era (1879-1887): Centering on Japanese and Italian Primary Sources" is written by Carlo Edoardo Pozzi. Based on careful research from Japanese and Italian archives, Pozzi sheds light on a lesser-known side of Japan's early modern diplomatic history, namely that of the relations with Italy. Focused on the infamous "unequal treaties", Japan's first international treaties in more than two centuries, signed during the last years of the Tokugawa shogunate, the research discusses the way the Kingdom of Italy, a relatively new modern nation itself, and Japan re-negotiated the Bakumatsu Period treaties and found ways to offer satisfactory solutions to both parties. While Italy was not at the time necessarily the main Western power with vested interests in Japan's opening for trade, the two countries used diplomacy to their own advantage and pursued their interests through foreign policy strategies that shed additional light on the convoluted history of the period.

The following research paper skips historically to the last years of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s. "Political Conversion Opposites: Two Writers and Their 1920s Soviet Union Experience", which I authored, reposits Japan's prewar salient issue of *tenkō* from a different perspective. *Tenkō*, the coerced political conversion of the Japanese leftist intelligentsia and membership of the Japan Communist Party, has an early iteration in the person of female writer Miyamoto Yuriko who will turn from political neutrality to convinced and militant communism. The study focuses on Miyamoto's experiences in the Soviet Union at the end of the 1920s and compares them to those of French Romanian writer Panait Istrati and of French writer André Gide, who turn from leftists into critics of the young Soviet regime following their own trips.

Two other papers bring the research focus in our closest contemporaneity, thus skipping Japan's long postwar period, and projecting us straight into the “lost decades” (1990-2020). In her study, “Contemporary Urban Hideaways: Shops in Two Japanese Novels”, Beatrice-Maria Alexandrescu offers a close reading of two novels by female writers Kawakami Hiromi and Murata Sayaka. Alexandrescu’s analysis reveals multiple layers of meaning interlaced within the narrative structure of the novels, *The Nakano Thrift Shop* and *Convenience Store Woman*, both works that achieved international recognition since their original publication in Japan.

The last paper in the volume is centered on the wildly popular Japanese revue theatre company Takarazuka and the gradual transformation of its take on war since 2014. In her study, “Between a Rock and a Hard Place: The Representation of War in Takarazuka Revue’s Performance Strategy,” researcher Maria Grajdian offers an overview of the theme of war in four separate performances by the famed Osaka theater company. In a reflection of our times, the company has been opting to gradually incorporate war into their plays as a contemporary reality and carry that message to their mostly female fans in Japan.

This is the first special issue of the *Annals of the West University of Timisoara (Humanities Series)* dedicated to Asian studies, and I am excited not only that it is focused on Japan, but honored that I was asked to curate it. It’s been a longer than anticipated journey to see this work to completion, but I am proud of the result. The contributions gathered here reflect the importance and worldwide spread of current scholarship on modern Japan. Italian, Korean, American Romanian, and Romanian researchers who teach and do research at universities in Japan, Romania, South Korea and the United States bring an unique and complex universe of themes and methodologies to their contribution to the field.

A *RESTORATION* THAT NEVER BECAME A *REVOLUTION*: THE MEIJI RESTORATION AS A REBUILDER OF JAPANESE CONSERVATIVE NATIONALISM

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Abstract: The Meiji Restoration has traditionally been described as an event that ushered in great economic and technological progress, accompanied by rapid governmental bureaucratization and industrialization. Contrary to this view, the fact that progressive development served as a means to restore Japanese nationalism critically explains why the Restoration cannot be called a revolution. In this study, I will argue that the Restoration was no more than a restoration because beneath the veneer of pursuing rapid industrialization to keep up with the West, it had the deeper aim to restore Japanese conservative nationalism. More specifically, the restoration of the authority of the imperial throne as the core of nationalism or *kokutai* was aimed at the restoration of national pride after Commodore Matthew Perry's gunboat diplomacy, an

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ideal cherished by politicians and citizens alike. Economic and technological advancements and the recuperation of imperial authority were means through which the rebuilding of a conservative spiritual nationalism was to be accomplished as the ultimate goal. In other words, the Meiji Restoration was a societal reconstruction program initiated from above and supported by the Japanese public to re-establish Japanese conservative nationalism through rapid material advancement *and* the return of the monarch as a symbolic figurehead.

Keywords: *Meiji Restoration; conservativism; nationalism; Japan; reconstruction*.

The Meiji Restoration (1868) has traditionally been described as an event that ushered in great economic and technological progress, accompanied by rapid governmental bureaucratization and industrialization of the Japanese society. However, contrary to this view, such development served only as a means to restore Japanese nationalism. As such, the Meiji Restoration cannot possibly be called a revolution. The Restoration was no more than a restoration because beneath the veneer of pursuing rapid industrialization to align with the West, there was a subtler meaning in the Restoration as a rebuilder of Japanese Conservative nationalism. More specifically, restoring national pride through a restoration of the authority of the imperial throne as the essence of nationalism or *kokutai* after Commodore Matthew Perry’s gunboat diplomacy was an ideal cherished by politicians and citizens alike. Economic and technological advancements and the recuperation of imperial authority were means through which the rebuilding of a Conservative spiritual nationalism was accomplished as the ultimate end.

The Meiji Restoration was a societal reconstruction program initiated from above and supported by the Japanese public to re-establish Japanese conservative nationalism through rapid material advancement *and* the return of the monarch as a symbolic figurehead. Of course, “conservative” is a contentious label; research is still needed on the liberalism of pursuing material progress to better understand how it philosophically reconciled with the conservative outcome of restoring the imperial throne.

Traditional scholarly consensus focused primarily on the Restoration’s rapid achievement of material and institutional advancements. Yasuzo Horie (1937, 79-81) posited that the Restoration was a revolution that gave birth to a strong market economy, a Western-based parliamentary culture, and most importantly, the overthrow of the Tokugawa Shogunate by lower-class samurai. Such positive results "eliminated a feudal form of government" and helped "unify the country based on centralization of power and transformed Japanese politics into a democracy."2 This perception, proposed by Nobutaka Ike (1948, 7-8), remained very popular up to the late 1940s. Ike similarly concluded that European parliamentary models and alarming international events such as the Opium Wars inspired samurai leaders like Saigō Takamori (1828-1877) to propose a national assembly which could accommodate various interests across the nation without destroying the provincial clans. Thus, the Restoration was a capitalist, anti-feudal, democratic, and thoroughly progressive revolution.

While the consensus can be credited for jump-starting a fresh debate on the significance of the Restoration, an important question forces this traditional logic to stand on its head: Must the end results of economic and technological progress necessarily reflect a thoroughly liberal ideological consensus? The answer is no: reforms do not arise from a *tabula rasa*, but, as an event created by people, are deeply influenced by their objectives and interests. Although a decision may reflect a majority's opinion, no majority is ever destined to be a majority without the existence of a minority whose thoughts may influence the majority to constantly revise its original position. The traditional consensus ignored this simple but crucial fact and left no room for any consideration of how Tokugawa sympathizers influenced the thinking of the new Meiji elite. It also ignored that the Restoration was a negotiated outcome between the new elite of reformers who desired rapid Westernization and conservative samurai who remained loyal monarchists. Hence, what resulted was a bland configuration of the Restoration into a one-dimensional historical event without any meticulous analysis of the *people*, or more specifically, their individual motives and roles. Only the Restoration's material results were emphasized at the expense of practical cooperation between the reformers and the loyalists for national strengthening—the essential complexity of the Restoration.

"Practical" is the right adjective, for reformers cooperated with loyalists out of necessity and convenience. The reformers found allying with the loyalists convenient and desirable because they shared conservatism ideas, such as the preservation of monarchical authority, which stabilized the Japanese government and helped mobilize soldiers for national defense—goals of *realpolitik* (Emery 1915, 468). The Restoration was a "fundamental

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[2] Horie also argues boldly that the Restoration was "bound to come, accelerated by the invasion of foreign capitalism," without justifying his claim through analysis on p.70.

step taken towards absolutism" in reaction to the gunboat diplomacy of the Perry Expedition (Shigeki 1951). This led reformers to prioritize national security, relegating all technological and economic developments as means to ensure the stability and restoration of nationalism and monarchical grandeur. The Restoration was "fundamental" for igniting a comprehensive causal chain; political power depended on military power, which in turn, depended on strong finances.3 Thus, without the currying of favors with the Tokugawa elite, the reformers would have faced immense difficulty in initiating their reforms since they needed the military and financial support.

However, what made the Restoration truly "fundamental" is that it was also one of the first events in the history of Japanese modernization in which the general public had significant historical agency. The Reformers harbored a sophisticated variety of pragmatism that strongly influenced both the process and result of their quest to clearly identify what they had to exactly restore while pursuing what they truly wanted. More precisely, the Restoration had to realistically *be* conservative. The Meiji Reformers pragmatically concentrated on recovering Japanese national sovereignty by cooperating with Tokugawa loyalists to restore the imperial throne because they wanted to establish solid political legitimacy by acting according to popular will. What this means is that reformers inevitably had to comply with a highly enthusiastic popular support for this unified and coalitional effort to hasten modernization.3 Hence, the Perry expedition, a militarily and financially useful alliance between Reformers and Conservatives, and public support for collaboration between the two sides to prioritize restoring imperial authority explain why the liberal drive for technological progress was pragmatically tempered by the conservative desire for the preservation of the monarchy. Unfortunately, like Horie, Toyama was not able to see past the conservative perception of the Restoration as an event drive exclusively by the political elites, for ordinary citizens only briefly make their appearance as occasional sources of grassroots support for those elites. Thus, while Toyama offers a more nuanced assessment of historical causality than Ike or Horie, he fails to liberate himself from the shackles of the same limitations inherent in their opinions. Toyama's inability to liberate himself is however telling, for it suggests that if the Meiji Restoration was indeed a restoration and nothing more, the fundamental question remains, what were the motives behind its conservative bend?

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[3] See also Marius Jansen's review of Toyama's book in *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No.1 (November, 1952), 90-93. Toyama would agree with my usage of "fundamental" here, as he was one of the first historians to account for enthusiastic public support for the restoration of monarchy.

The complexity of human motivations and their change through time ought to be at the center of historical study since history is also the study of human behavior. Since history is a collective human enterprise produced through interactions between people regardless of class, understanding elite and popular conservative influences on the reformers' agenda is a crucial endeavor. Instead of engaging in generalizations and characterize the Meiji Restoration as "modern," "progressive," or "led by lower-class samurais," a more comprehensive assessment of political motivations—including those of the imperial household—is necessary to understand it as a holistic human experience (which is the essence of history itself). An exclusive focus on elite actions and policies, as Toyama pursued, can be misleading. To understand the Meiji Restoration as a societal phenomenon, it is essential to account for emotional change—the ultimate golden mean between narrative history and general history. In other words, general history, where Toyama's work belongs, becomes especially problematic with its focus on generalization and heavy reliance on specific causes to explain a complex web of simultaneous events (Sakata and Hall 1956, 31-36). On the other hand, it is not clear *how* historians can maintain objectivity by focusing on emotional fluctuations, because emotions are liable to constant change and are far too limited in scope to represent a holistic human experience. Most importantly, there remains the lingering question of *how* psychological history can integrate well with the more traditional political and elite histories, open so much to speculation as it is. Even Sakata and Hall fail to provide a clear answer here.

Yet, the fact that they are not part of the analysis does not mean that emotions are absent from politics. Firm loyalty to imperial sovereignty, for example. might provide an answer to dealing with human emotions and their relationship with political history. A path is not smooth the moment it is made. Underneath the seemingly smooth layers of dirt or cement lie pebbles and gravel which make out the road's foundation. Likewise, the Meiji reformers could not easily dismiss the conservative combination of nationalism and imperial loyalty because the imperial household represented the symbolic essence of the Japanese people. What Tokugawa supporters had importantly reminded the reformers was that no matter how Westernized Japan might become, the Japanese people would never want to become Westerners themselves. Instead, Westernization could only be a sufficient condition for Japan's material progress. To justly qualify this truth, I would revise the traditional consensus about the Restoration by invoking "the loyalty and honor for the imperial throne" as a major connection between reformers and conservatives.

For example, the Chōshū loyalist clans provided significant support to the newly risen Westernized elites, so much so that, contrary to Toyama's assertion, the public had little to contribute to the success of the Restoration. As Albert Craig (1961) argued, the reformers easily incorporated the Chōshū clan members because they shared the conservative aspiration for a very nationalist Japan due to their long attachment to imperial loyalty and samurai values since the rise of a feudal order. Furthermore, the Chōshū domain had amassed immense wealth—an obvious boon for the cash-hungry reformers who wanted to speed up the modernization processes. Finally, the clan was militarily beneficial, as it had taken advantage of the Meiji elites' intolerance for Western superiority, and had enthusiastically embraced Western military technology to modernize its soldiers and strengthen itself. In essence, the Chōshū domain had ideas and means to exercise genuine *realpolitik*, preserving traditional samurai values while pragmatically supporting the reformers with their strong military power—the cornerstone for the modernization of the Japanese military.

Craig's theoretical contribution closely follows the political role of Chōshū clans during the Restoration, softening the traditional analysis by showing how Japan's modernization was built on highly pragmatic conservatism, while also toning down Toyama's argument by rejecting his treatment of the public masses as a significant historical actor. What is left, in Craig's conclusion, is a half-baked revolution which quickened the speed of Japan's technological advancement and bureaucratization based on European models because the reformers already had a firm base of wealth which the Chōshū domain had amassed long before the Restoration. The only thing left to figure out was how to invest the finances to acquire much-needed Western technology. The intense focus of the Meiji leadership on this issue prevented Japan from pursuing a thorough abandonment of the monarchy in favor of a liberal democracy. However, Craig's conclusion is rather grandiose because his only major body of primary sources supporting his analysis came from the *Bocho kaiten shi*, which in Craig's own words, is just a "pastiche of loosely organized letters and memorials" concerning the daily affairs of the Chōshū clan in the imperial court. Without hearing much from the reformers' perspectives, objectivity remains limited. (Craig 1961, 369-374)

Furthermore, because it was primarily the Meiji reformers' wise use of the Chōshū domain's finances which led to the landmark economic progress of the Restoration, just how much agency ought to be ascribed to the Chōshū clans as a group is debatable, for they were only one conservative force at the court. How influential was their philosophy? For it's one thing to claim that a certain group was influential because they actually made the plans that resulted in the rapid progress during the Restoration. To state, however, that they were "influential" due to their material contributions, especially when the value of the ideal for which those contributions were used exceeds that of the means, is rather dubious. Aside from finances, the Chōshū domain was most probably a valuable supplier of labor force, even if reformers never isolated or completely rejected them. Many samurai were successfully integrated into Japan's mainstream economy and encouraged to participate in agricultural production while being allowed to engage in financial investments which the central government used to expand the Japanese banking system.

Thus, the reformers efficiently killed two birds with one stone, erasing the possibility of rebellion and securing additional labor force for the emerging industrial economy. Under such circumstances, it is difficult to assess how much influence the Chōshū clans' strong values had compared to their actual financial contribution. The mixture of doggedness, diplomacy, and duplicity of the Perry Expedition aimed at achieving a forced "opening" of Japan had already served as a wake-up call for the reformers—Japan needed a stable centralized government and technological know-how akin to that of the West in order to begin developing the ability to match the wealth and military power of leading nations such as England and Germany. Hence, many of the reformers probably knew well that ascribing historicity to Japanese nationalism through the preservation of the imperial throne and the rekindling of nationalism through economic growth for strengthening national defense and industry were not contradictory (Harootunian 1960, 433-444).4 So, an important question that arises from the conservative Chōshū clans' "pro-liberal" role in the Restoration is, what does the inclusion of a powerful conservative clan into the liberal program imply about the event's political identity?

A simple answer is that "identity is in the eye of the beholder." Rather than settling for a "black-or-white" assessment of the Restoration as only progressive or only conservative, one could perhaps understand the

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[4] Members of the Chōshū clans, largely middle-class, were also probably incorporated into the agrarian economy. See also Albert Craig, "The Restoration Movement in Chōshū," *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (February 1959), 187-197. On Perry's Expedition, see Arthur Walworth, *Black Ships off Japan: The Story of Commodore Perry's Expedition* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946).

Restoration as an ambiguous event with two fluidly interactive layers—a political revolution and a social counter-revolution. Neither had more importance over each other but were two equal halves. While the Restoration can be a politically progressive revolution which introduced a unified currency through the issuing of banknotes, universal male conscription for military service, and most importantly, bureaucratic centralization, the Restoration was also a minor social counter-revolution. Although there were small peasant revolts during the *bakufu* period when the grain market posted exorbitant prices during famines, those unrests were primarily "revolts of disappointment" demanding a return to better economic conditions. They were not major public movements aimed at achieving socio-economic equality or demanding universal suffrage. Hence, the Restoration is what I would call a "Goldilocks' movement," neither socially too hot nor politically too cold. Despite the mixed assessment, Akamatsu was the first to demonstrate Sakata and Hall's point by objectively accounting for the complex variations in human interactions emotions. Yet, he also nullified his original ambiguity by concluding that the Restoration began as a political revolution but would *eventually* become a socio-economic one, arguing the obvious point that the Restoration already had a definite outcome. (Akamatsu 1972, 287-305)

If one resorts without proper examination of primary sources from before 1868 to historical determinism and assumes that the Restoration was a naturally progressive revolution, that is an easy mistake to make. However, there is no such thing as a promised historical outcome, and the results of political change are never evident upon immediate initiation. It involves slow and careful planning, calculation of the possible moves of the opposition, and a solution to block or reduce the influence of that opposition so that it never overwhelms the initiative. Historical events are products of this process which often results in unlikely political alliances, as the Tokugawa supporters and the reformers had formed. If one forgets this aspect, it is easy to mix up the murkiness of human emotions with the clarity of a political outcome. And no historian can ever read the human mind with accuracy, so there is no guarantee of the results of such analyses. Hence, rather than relying solely on human passion to describe the ambiguity of the Restoration process, we must consider the reality of a liberal-conservative alliance.

A plausible, albeit elitist, assessment of the Restoration that does justice to both factors and ties them together is that the Meiji Restoration was foremost conservative *and* nationalistic. The qualifier "nationalist" is important because the reformers were realists who aptly incorporated rural landowners and entrepreneurs who had studied overseas and sought new economic and political careers. As W. Beasley showed through the analysis of governmental records, these qualities of the rural elites influenced their seemingly contradictory ambitions, and eased the Meiji elites' push for the Restoration. On one hand, the rural elites had a "love-hate" relationship with the samurai class, emulating the samurai way of life and promoting a samurai code to the Meiji elite even though they wanted to obliterate their class altogether.

On the other hand, while rural elites utilized peasant rebellions to express their discontent with the existing Tokugawa *bakufu*, they were not radical enough to be completely sympathetic to the peasant class. Instead, the rural elites were attracted by the alure of a modern life as governmental bureaucrats and by the Meiji promise of recruiting talented men and, ultimately, seeking control over the farmer class that they once supported. Put differently, these two seemingly contradictory motives coexisted because the reformers were pragmatists and realists who believed that incorporating rural elites was a necessary condition for national unity and an effective national defense system which could support the newly emerging market economy, the very source of the wealth of the new elites. (Beasley 1972, 417-421 and 423-424) By discussing the interplay between economic interests, class, and political intrigue, this assessment not only provides a correction to Akamatsu by assigning conservatism a more complex and nuanced objective and face, but also debunks Horie's assumption that a progressive outcome must emerge from a progressive intent.

Ends do not reflect the nature of the means. If so, then I would argue that the complex motives of the rural elites also indicate that the reformers' flexibility was possible not because they were genuine egalitarians who pursued democracy, but because they were highly interested in pursuing the Meiji Restoration slogan of *fukoku kyōhei*, or "rich nation with a strong military." This goal prompted the new elites to focus on acquiring technological expertise and industrial expansion led by strong government intervention. The only change was that the Tokugawa centralized bureaucracy gave way to the emergence of "centralized capitalism" without any promise for democratic reforms. The Restoration never became a revolution because it had no radical social program to encourage and support an egalitarian democracy. Instead, the movement's chief objective was rapid realization of national strength, a feat achieved precisely through a combination of modernized "feudal" elites and thin presence of "capitalism" under a highly centralized authority. So, what would be that ideal authority?

Tokugawa supporters who became members in the Diet had a clear answer to that question: the imperial throne. They had *earned* the right to be in the Diet because they knew that proving that an answer is right is always more difficult than only suggesting one. Fortunately, their appeal to the throne's historicity and national stability proved very effective, winning various strands of enthusiastic support. Western envoys and monarchists desired a restoration of imperial authority to ensure personal security and recovery of national sovereignty. *Bakufu* and imperial loyalists, promising economic and military growth, yearned to preserve the influence they enjoyed during the Tokugawa Shogunate. Thus, they encouraged ordinary citizens to unite in supporting and celebrating a new collective national identity as "Japanese" citizens. Citizens, in turn, responded with both hope and anxiety, while also eagerly anticipating a stable government that could revive patriotism and nationalism. This matrix of societal responses to the Restoration aimed for what George Wilson calls a "double transformation"—a shared desire among civilians and the Meiji elites to achieve political reorganization internally and gain international respect by recovering national sovereignty externally. (Wilson 1992, 43-73 and 95-100) A "public" encompassing all strata of society had enough historical agency to establish the salience of a popular and genuinely societal view of the Restoration.

Yet, this argument has a significant limitation: primary sources on the actions of ordinary citizens are not available. Overall, motives cannot be considered historically constant determinants as that would lead to historical reductionism. Generalizations about motives are risky as they are mere ends to which the question of design or intent is the latent means and variable. Therefore, uncertainty cannot be ignored or concealed by modeling and statically compartmentalizing motives, as it does not do justice to the complex and fluid mixing of emotions and nature of historical change. Nevertheless, motives can still serve to indicate that writing history requires the inclusion of both elite and civilian voices to account for fluctuations in human psychology and the resulting emotional complexities over the flow of time. Wilson's "societal synthesis" thereby gives a nice theoretical façade to Beasley's primarily phenomenological analysis of the mixed interplay of motives, showing why considering societal origins of Japanese nationalism is *conceptually* important to understand that interplay's complexity.

However, even without accounting for emotional complexities, it is evident that a political distinction between the new Meiji elites and Tokugawa-supporting samurai is rather difficult. Japan's "opening" in 1853 and reconstruction after the late 1860s civil wars convinced the former to replace the latter only to refashion conservatism with a modern and pragmatic twist. This, as Marius Jansen argued, meant preserving the imperial court as a "quintessential center of national identity and keeping the Tokugawa lands under Meiji control without redistribution"—a policy publicly enforced through centralization, education, and mobilization.5 (Jansen 1989, 364-366) The reformers modernized Tokugawa monarchism by pragmatically using the emperor as a nationalistic figurehead and the imperial court as the chief banker for the conservatives' wealth. Thus, the revolutionary fervor for technological progress which strongly captured the imagination of earlier historians was no more than a liberal peel to conceal the conservative fruit of Japanese nationalism rebuilt around the restoration of the imperial throne. For reform champions such as Saig**ō** Takamori, the Meiji Restoration represented a prime opportunity for modernization through a sweeping professionalization of bureaucratic administration under the control of a strong centralized state.

"Modernization" in the Meiji lexicon was more than a word; it was a carefully and systemically conceived blueprint for progress from that early architect of the Restoration, Sakamoto Ry**ō**ma (1836-1867). Ry**ō**ma was the father of the very philosophy Beasley indicated as the reformers' ultimate ideal throughout the Restoration. As Jansen showed with the use of Japanese, French, and Dutch sources, Ry**ō**ma envisioned reforms that balanced technological progress with democratic political culture and recommended talented men for offices in court while encouraging open political discussions that had to go hand-in-hand with military modernization, and most importantly, with the promotion of collecting knowledge to strengthen imperial authority. (Jansen 1961, 294-311) What Jansen cannot really capture in Ryōma's biography is the larger picture—the complex mindset of the members of the new elites as they had to confront modernization—since a biography naturally puts a single individual at the center of the analysis. The larger political and social milieus heavily influence an individual's worldview more than the other way around, and Jansen must

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[5] Jansen might have been inspired by G. Wilson's "Plots and Motives of Japan's Meiji Restoration," *Comparative Studies in History and Society*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (July 1983), 407-427, which served as the groundwork for *Patriots and Redeemers*. The book is an extension of the arguments in that article, using the same actors and scheme of a matrix.

have been aware that a biography is not the best format to portray Meiji Restoration as a collective human experience as Sakata and Hall had urged before. Therefore, it is natural that Jansen decided to deliver a moderate view of things after Wilson gave a definitive cue. Unlike the traditional consensus which singularly concentrated on linking elite activities with a progressive spirit, Jansen presented a more nuanced argument in both of his works, suggesting that "conservatism" did more than oppose "liberalism." It was deeply committed to institutionalizing a conservative nationalism through the restoration of the imperial throne, reconciling with a progressive form of patriotism by supporting rapid industrialization and technological advancements—a genuine and pure *realpolitik* aimed at simultaneously pursuing political stability and economic growth.

Of course, this decision was not fully a reflection of the public will, for most citizens lacked direct experience with policymaking to understand the sophisticated art of *realpolitik*. Nevertheless, citizens can also become major historical actors if they can compensate for that deficit by their sociability, influencing politicians to exercise policies to specific ends. Matsuo Taseko, a social female activist who fervently supported the conservative cause, is a prime example proving this point. Although Matsuo could have simply led an ordinary life as a "dutiful mother and wife" (according to the precepts for Japanese female subjects of the time), her deep support for the loyalist cause made her go against that temptation. Her passion was such that she actively pursued an influential career as unofficial political adviser to the Tokugawa loyalists. For people like Matsuo, the Restoration *was* a revolution, because by expressing herself through debates with her guests, she was spiritually liberating herself from a world in which very few choices were available for women besides largely confining their lives indoors, lacking the opportunity to socialize and to discover what it meant to live as a human being. As Anne Walthall suggested, Matsuo demonstrated her dedication to the loyalist cause by advising Tokugawa supporters to stand their ground in defending the throne at all costs. She sought to realize her advice by encouraging her son to join the loyalist military ranks and actively lobbying the newly established Meiji government through letters to guarantee secure political posts for those whom she had protected.6 (Walthall 1998, 225-284)

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[6] Walthall convincingly illustrates her facts through Matsuo's very few letters, poems, and memorials. Walthall continued to explore the Restoration through civilians' eyes in *The Human Tradition in Modern Japan* (Delaware: SR Books, 2002). Matsuo's significance is as a reminder of the importance of public agency, a point which I elaborate later.

Thus, Matsuo's autonomous decision to transform her home into a vibrant center for political debate suggests that we need to distance ourselves from the "progressive revolution" thesis. Matsuo's example appends Craig and Akamatsu's dismissal of public agency by demonstrating that the conservatives acted as leverage to ensure that the new elites implemented their intended programs of rapid militarization and industrialization. An ordinary woman and citizen Matsuo did, albeit rarely, play an influential role in an event whose historical focus has primarily been on male political leadership.

Indeed, conservatism may have had some, albeit limited, potential for civilian activism. Matsuo's true contribution was in realizing that the Diet was not the sole center of politics, illuminating the private home's political potential as an active space of public discourse in an age when women were socially confined indoors. This was possible because the frequent "public debates" Matsuo had with her male counterparts who provided her with a constant supply of information about national politics blurred the distinction between political and social spaces. Matsuo's engagement with the loyalists is significant because it suggests that women too could think radically and programmatically launch what was effectively one of the first public lobbying campaigns for legislative action. Matsuo critically shows that any political event can be discussed by the public, for without a civilian catalyst no reform could ever arise spontaneously among the political elites alone. The will of the public necessarily impacts that of the elite and pushes it toward various forms of change that civilians want as much as the elites. As such, the Meiji Restoration can be interpreted as a comprehensive *collective* public-elite project to restore Rightist nationalism in Japan. And a sophisticated and original woman who transcended her gender and managed male politicians to deliver her conservative ideals played a major role in that interpretation.

Finally, unlike Beasley, Walthall showed how nationalism was not exclusively an elitist concern, but also one that belonged to the citizens. Conservative public culture during the Meiji Restoration was explored in 1988 by examining the public protests against the reforms. The reformers succeeded in destroying traditional collective action because its rise was sequential rather than simultaneous and because some traditional samurai clans provided financial and military power to the reformers, and, finally, because some opposition groups such as the *shizoku* (nobility) simply lacked resources for effective mobilization. In other words, destroying tradition was a sunk cost for state centralization and modernization. Unfortunately, that research study sacrificed depth for breadth, ignoring motives and actions at the individual level. Thus, "opposition" was merely a patchwork of groups discontent over failing to protect their own interests. (Vlastos 1989, 426-431) However, not all opposition necessarily arose from self-interest; some was borne out of a national interest. The passion for the latter was such that women, for instance, courageously opposed radical reforms not based on self-interest, but out of a genuine public concern that too much modernity would erode the imperial throne's sanctity as the historical symbol of Japanese nationalism. Nationalism motivated even socio-politically marginalized individuals to autonomously orchestrate and counsel politics and politicians at home, exercising political influence without actually physically exerting themselves as politicians.

Collectively, the current scholarship has only presented mosaic pieces that *suggest* a need to move away from the traditional emphasis on the Restoration's progressive results of economic and technological progress. However, how were diverse motives, the alliance between reformers and Tokugawa loyalists, and finally, popular support, able to converge together toward a conservative modern Japanese nationalism? I would argue that the Restoration was Janus-like, simultaneously utilitarian and idealistic. It stemmed from a pragmatic collaboration between a flexible "bureaucratism" that yearned for modernization and a devoted "loyalism" that yearned for the continuation of imperial authority, resulting in a Westernized and modern bureaucracy that would remain under control of and thereby preserve imperial authority. In other words, the reformers crafted the Meiji Restoration as a synergistic movement that drew in conservative samurai groups like the Chōshū clans because, as T. Najita put it, "restorationism" flexibly embedded idealism in utilitarianism, allowing the "stone" of solid imperial authority to kill the "two birds" of modernizing Japan and retaining its symbolism as protector of nationalism.7 (Najita 1974, 43-68)

The Meiji Restoration was *destined* to only be a restoration. It aspired to Westernize Japan's technological, economic, and political environments without attempting to radically Westernize the Japanese national spirit and historical consciousness. It achieved its objective by reviving a conservative Japanese nationalism centered on the restoration of the imperial throne. If there was anything revolutionary about it, it was the realization that

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[7] The synthesis would also revise Akamatsu's assertion that the Restoration was neither conservative nor progressive.

restoring the monarch while pursuing rapid economic and technological development could become the means to give nationalism a symbolic and physical essence. Yet, the Restoration was a consciously societal conservative movement, bound tightly by fervent nationalism. Almost the entire Japanese society—liberal reformers, Tokugawa loyalists, and the general public—was focused in unison on balancing a historical imperial nationalism with a rapid surge of economic and technological progress, "half-baking" Japan's modernization.

Nevertheless, "conservative" remains a contentious label for the Meiji Restoration. More research on the liberal agenda for progress is required to fathom its reconciliation with the eventual conservative restoration of imperial authority. Only with a societal picture of Meiji liberalism can we understand why the Restoration remained a restoration that never bloomed into a complete political or social revolution.

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A POLITICAL CONSIDERATION ON THE JAPAN-ITALY TREATY REVISION RELATIONS DURING THE INOUE KAORU FOREIGN AFFAIRS ERA (1879-1887): CENTERING ON JAPANESE AND ITALIAN PRIMARY SOURCES

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Abstract: In the early Meiji Era, the revision of the so-called "Unequal Treaties" was an issue of vital importance to the Japanese government. In particular, since the early 1880s Foreign Minister Inoue Kaoru (1836-1915), unlike his predecessor Terashima Munenori (1832-1893), who had given priority to the acquisition of tariff autonomy, sought to include in the negotiations with foreign powers also the abolition of extraterritoriality. In this context, the Kingdom of Italy found itself playing a significant role in Inoue's foreign policy in the 1870s after the Italian diplomats in Tokyo had shown a strong interest in treaty revision aiming to obtain the right for the Italian traders to circulate freely in Japan's inland areas in exchange for the renunciation of their extraterritorial rights. Since the Japan-Italy Treaty Revision Relations during the management of the Japanese Foreign Ministry by Inoue (1879-1887) have not received sufficient consideration by either Italian or Japanese historiographies, this

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research aims to examine it in detail, focusing the analysis on the strategic importance that the Kingdom of Italy had for the Japan government in the 1880s. Some still unclarified issues will be illuminated mainly by making use of Japanese primary sources and integrating them with the Italian ones.

Keywords: *Treaty Revision, Japan, Italy, Inoue Kaoru, Japanese foreign policy*.

Introduction

It is well known that, in the early Meiji Period, one of the Japanese foreign policy's main objectives was to revise the treaties that the Tokugawa Shogunate had concluded with some of the Western countries between 1858 and 1867. These agreements, commonly known as the "Unequal Treaties", in addition to opening for trade and residence to foreigners two cities and five ports (collectively known as the Treaty Ports)[2], included a whole series of clauses that put Japan in a position of inferiority to foreign powers. The most onerous and humiliating of these consisted of fixing customs duties on imported goods at an artificial 5% *ad valorem* and granting to all citizens of the treaty nations extraterritorial rights, especially consular jurisdiction, that rendered them immune from Japanese justice. Therefore, after the Meiji Restoration of 1868, the new liberal government taken over from the shogunate struggled to revise the "Unequal Treaties", aiming, first and foremost, at the abolition of extraterritoriality (i.e., the restoration of legal rights) and the acquisition of tariff autonomy (i.e., the recovery of tax rights).

Meanwhile, since Article 3 of said treaties restricted the movement of foreigners within limited settlements located inside the treaty ports, the Kingdom of Italy showed a strong interest in the treaty revision. Its main purpose was to obtain the right for Italian citizens to move throughout Japan's inland area. This was due to the fact that, when in the 1870s the two countries were closely connected by prosperous large-scale silk trade mainly concerning the export of silkworm eggs from Japan to Italy, the Italian traders needed to bypass the Yokohama silk market (and its brokers) to purchase the best quality products possible directly from local producers in the sericultural districts (Bertelli 2007, 57). In 1873, this particular need led the second Italian Minister Plenipotentiary in Japan, Alessandro

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[2] I.e., the port of Kanagawa (Yokohama), Nagasaki, Hakodate, Niigata and Hyōgo (Kōbe), and the cities of Ōsaka and Edo (present-day Tōkyō).

Fe d'Ostiani (1825–1905), to ask the Japanese Foreign Minister Soejima Taneomi (1828-1905) to give Italian traders the possibility to circulate freely in Japan's inland areas in exchange for their renunciation of consular jurisdiction outside of foreign settlements (63-64). Later, in 1879, the third Italian Minister Plenipotentiary, Raffaele Ulisse Barbolani (1818-1900), made an even more advanced proposal to Foreign Minister Terashima Munenori (1832-1893): the Kingdom of Italy would consent to Japan's restoration of tariff autonomy and management rights for coastal trade in exchange for the abolishment of all export tariffs on Japanese products to Italy; moreover, Italian citizens who would have enjoyed the right to transit, reside, trade, hold property, and carry out industrial activities in Japan's inland areas (*naichi zakkyo*) should have submitted completely to the Japanese civil and criminal jurisdiction, while those residing within the foreign settlements would have continued to enjoy the right to be tried within a consular court while obeying Japanese Administrative Rules (Pozzi 2017, 136-37). However, due to Great Britain's strong opposition, both Fè d'Ostiani (Ishii 1977, 97-188) and Barbolani (342-45, 347-48) were forced by the Italian Foreign Ministry to interrupt their negotiations with the Japanese side and align with the positions of other foreign diplomats in Tokyo.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that in the 1870s the Kingdom of Italy had considerable strategic importance for Japanese foreign policy since, in the event of implementation, its diplomats' plans would certainly have allowed the Meiji government to make significant progress in revising the "Unequal Treaties". Moreover, Italy continued to be relevant to Japan even during the management of the Japanese Foreign Ministry by Inoue Kaoru (1836-1915), who succeeded Terashima in 1879 and remained in office until 1877. To demonstrate this, the current research aims to analyze in detail, and for the first time, the Japan-Italy Treaty Revision Relations advanced when Inoue Kaoru was Foreign Minister, highlighting his revision policy toward Italy, the Italian Foreign Ministry's attitude toward the signing of a new treaty, and the degree of influence that the fourth Italian Minister Plenipotentiary in Japan, Renato de Martino (1843-1893), in charge since 1883, had during the revision negotiations between the Western Powers and the Japanese side. The research will make use mainly of Japanese primary sources, such as official letters and transcriptions of conversations, preserved at the Diplomatic Record Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (*Nippon Gaimusho Gaikō Shiryokan*) and the National Archives of Japan

(*Nippon Kokuritsu Kōbunshokan*)[3], integrating them with Italian diplomatic documents preserved at the Historical-Diplomatic Archives of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Archivio Storico Diplomatico del Ministero Degli Affari Esteri*).

Inoue's revision policy and the role of Japanese diplomats in Italy

First, it should be remembered that Foreign Minister Inoue Kaoru's foreign policy toward treaty revision consisted mainly of obtaining an increase in tax rates and a gradual restoration of legal rights by gathering the representatives of all the Treaty Powers and personally conducting revision negotiations with them in Tokyo (Ishii 1977, 356). At the request of the British government, Inoue decided in 1881 to carry out a series of multilateral meetings in which the delegates of all the treaty nations would discuss in concert the problem of revision with him (Perez 1999, 74). As a result of that choice, the Preliminary Conference for Treaty Revision (*Jōyaku Kaisei Yobikaigi*) and the more formal Conference for Treaty Revision (*Jōyaku Kaisei Kaigi*) were held in the Capital in 1882 and between 1886 and 1887, respectively. Meanwhile, the main task of Japanese diplomats abroad was to persuade the foreign governments to accept in principle Inoue's requests concerning treaty revision to ensure the beginning and success of the negotiations between the Japanese Foreign Minister and their delegates (Iokibe 2010, 92). Moreover, Inoue's policy included the continuation and development of a work of legal and judicial reform started in 1868, the Westernization of different aspects of Japanese society, and, not less importantly, a strategy aimed at providing Japan with the credibility necessary for the signing of new treaties through the creation of personal bonds with the ruling class of other countries and the promotion of social and informal events, such as dance parties and gala dinners (Inuzuka 2009, 164). This latter strategy is known as "Rokumeikan diplomacy" (*Rokumeikan gaikō*) and takes its name from the homonymous large two-story building in Tokyo built between 1881 and 1883 as a social gathering place for state guests and foreign diplomats with the express purpose of facilitating negotiations at the Conference for Treaty Revision (Kumada 2017, 54).

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[3] All these materials have been published (partly also with a translation to English) in the second volume of *Nihon gaikōmonjo: Jōyaku kaisei kankei* (Nihon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai 1941-53, vol. 2).

In the above context, the appointment of the former daimyō of Saga Domain, Nabeshima Naohiro (1846–1921), as Minister Plenipotentiary of Japan in Italy in March 1880 should be considered one of the most evident expressions of Inoue's foreign policy, and in particular of the "Rokumeikan diplomacy". After a long stay in England between 1871 and 1878, in the next two years, Nabeshima was the person in charge of the reception in Tokyo and Yokohama of Prince Thomas of Savoy (1854-1931), 2nd Duke of Genoa and brother-in-law of the Italian King Umberto I (1844-1900), during his second visit to Japan (Pozzi 2018, 33). This circumstance, specifically created by Inoue himself, allowed him to build a strong friendship not only with Prince Thomas (Pozzi 2020, 101-02) but, once he arrived in Italy in August 1880, also with other prominent members of the Italian Royal family, especially with King Umberto and his wife Margherita (1851-1926) (103-05). Moreover, Nabeshima actively participated in the social life of Italian high society and personally organized dance parties and gala dinners at the Japanese Legation in Rome, often being praised by Roman and national newspapers. It was probably thanks to these events, as well as to his deep knowledge of European etiquette and culture, that the Japanese Minister enjoyed a high reputation among the members of the Italian ruling class and the Italian public opinion, becoming known to all as *Principe Nabeshima* (106-08).

Regarding treaty revision, Nabeshima's main duty was to ensure that the Italian Foreign Minister appointed as soon as possible a representative with full authority to discuss in Tokyo with Inoue a draft treaty concerning an increase in customs tariffs and a partial recovery of legal and judicial rights within the foreign settlements (Nihon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai 1941-53, 2:71-72; Tsuda 1987, 13)[4]. Struggling with the Italian government's prudent attitude towards the problem of treaty revision and its substantial alignment with British decisions in the matter[5], Nabeshima strived actively to ensure that Inoue's requests were quickly accepted by the Italian side. In this regard, it should be noted that he proved to be skilled at gathering information and pursuing negotiations not only through official meetings with the heads of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but also through informal events (including dinners and dance parties that he organized at the Japanese Legation) and confidential talks with influential figures within the Italian ruling class, such as Fè d'Ostiani[6] and Barbolani[7] themselves (Pozzi 2020, 112-13).

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[4] It should also be added that on October 2, 1880, Nabeshima proposed to adopt the draft Treaty advanced by Barbolani in 1879 as an alternative revision plan, but on the condition that extraterritoriality was completely abolished in the foreign settlements as well. However, his proposal was immediately rejected by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Nihon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai 1941-53, 2:1204).

[5] See the next chapter.

However, Nabeshima's constant efforts did not have the desired effect: after having waited for the outcome of the negotiations between Japan and Great Britain, in November 1881, the Italian government eventually instructed the Italian chargé d'affaires in Japan Martin Lanciarez (1834-?) to discuss the problem of treaty revision with the Japanese government on a new basis and in concert with the representatives of the other western nations at a plenary conference (i.e., the above mentioned Preliminary Conference for Treaty Revision), scheduled in mid-January 1882 (Nihon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai 1941-53, 2:1212-13). Nevertheless, upon his return to Japan in July 1882, Nabeshima continued to be actively involved in Inoue's foreign policy, by organizing dance parties and official dinners for foreign diplomats at the Rokumeikan as Secretary General since 1884 (Tomita 1984, 164).

To preserve and consolidate the personal relations that Nabeshima had been able to create with the Italian ruling class (and, in particular, with the Royal Family), Inoue decided then to appoint as his successor another prominent member of the Japanese aristocracy: Asano Nagakoto (1842-1937), former daimyō of Hiroshima Domain and member of the Chamber of Elders (*Genrōin*) since 1880. When he arrived in Italy in August 1882, the Tokyo Preliminary Conference had just ended the month before. At the Conference, on April 5, Inoue had proposed to the Treaty Powers a plan to abolish extraterritoriality in exchange for the possibility for foreigners to reside, trade, and hold property in Japan's inland areas after a five-year transition period (from the date of the ratification), during which foreign judges would be hired in Japanese courts for cases involving foreigners (Kayaoğlu 2010, 85). However, due to strong opposition from France and Great Britain[8], he eventually decided to postpone the matter and conclude first a commercial treaty providing only for an increase in customs tariffs (Kajima 1970, 67). Probably to scuttle the negotiations and avoid that sooner or later an agreement on the abolition of extraterritoriality was reached, in May 1883 the British Government sent out to the other Treaty Powers a Circular Letter asking them to sign with Japan the treaty concerning an increase in tariffs only on the condition that it should be "unlimited in duration […], with no stipulation of revision, but with an indication of some kind that it cannot be modified without the consent of both parties" (Nihon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai 1941-53, 2:301).

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[6] Nabeshima and Fè d'Ostiani probably met for the first time in May 1873. At the time, Fè d'Ostiani accompanied the Iwakura Mission, to which Nabeshima belonged as a foreign student, to the 1873 Vienna World's Fair and the main Italian cities. As appears in a letter he wrote to Inoue on November 13, 1880, Nabeshima held high regard for Fè d'Ostiani and considered him "a person who understands the feelings of our country well and has a strong influence on our own government" (Nihon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai 1941-53, 2:1205).

[7] While still in Japan in 1879, Nabeshima had often been in contact with Barbolani to organize with him the welcome ceremonies and other official events for Prince Thomas of Savoy. He had therefore been able to forge a close personal bond with the Italian diplomat (and this was probably one of the reasons that led Inoue to send him to Italy as Minister Plenipotentiary). After Barbolani's return to Italy in April 1881, Nabeshima had the opportunity to meet him again and discuss privately with him the adoption of mixed courts with foreign judges (Nihon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai 1941-53, 2:1211)

Given this delicate situation, Minister Plenipotentiary Asano was tasked with convincing the Italian government to reject the British request and recognize Japan's right to terminate the treaty after the expiration of a time agreed upon (2:1215). Meanwhile, in August 1883, the Japanese Minister Plenipotentiary in Germany, Aoki Shūzō (1846–1911), was invited by Inoue to help Asano achieve that goal and, thus, decided to send him the secretary of the Japanese Legation in Berlin, Alexander von Siebold (1846-1911)[9], as an interpreter and assistant (2:1137, 2:1141). Being able to count on both Siebold's assistance as well as Fè d'Ostiani's mediation, on September 27, Asano officially met then-Italian Foreign Minister Pasquale Mancini (1817-1888) and obtained from him the commitment of the Italian government to support Japanese demands against Great Britain's obstructionism attempt (2:1141-42). Thanks also to this result, on October 8, 1883, the Japanese

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[8] These two countries were concerned that under the existing Japanese judicial system, "fair and just trials could not be expected" after the abolition of extraterritoriality (Kamikawa 1958, 142); moreover, at the time, Great Britain feared that this concession would induce its colonies in East Asia and China itself to claim the restoration of their legal rights (Nihon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai 1941-53, 2:1229).

[9] Eldest son of japanologist Philipp Franz Balthasar von Siebold (1796-1866), Alexander George Gustav von Siebold was a German translator, interpreter, and advisor who served the Meiji government for many years starting in 1870. He was one of the people most involved in the process of treaty revision. He served Minister Inoue as a secretary during the 1882 Preliminary Conference and later often collaborated with the diplomat Aoki Shūzō, assisting him in the successful conclusion of the 1894 Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation (which took place in London on July 16, 1894). About Siebold and his role during the revision of the treaties, see Katada Tomoko's work (Katada 2016).

Minister Plenipotentiary in London, Mori Arinori (1847-1889), was able to start new negotiations with the British government (Kajima 1970, 68).

Italian Foreign Minister Mancini and his policy toward treaty revision

As it was briefly mentioned in the previous section, between the end of the 1870s and the early 1880s, the Italian government adopted an extremely prudent attitude towards treaty revision by aligning itself with the positions taken by Great Britain on the matter. This occurred mainly because a large part of the Italian ruling class believed that the Kingdom of Italy should move with great caution on the international scene, trying to interfere as little as possible with the interests of other powers, in order to guarantee the state of "peace" necessary to protect and consolidate the national unity recently conquered in 1861 (Chabod 1951, 533-34). Accordingly, the Italian government gave priority to the resolution of internal problems (and especially the financial ones), aligning itself with the positions of other European nations concerning all the issues not considered of vital importance for Italy (531-32). Furthermore, between 1879 and 1881, then-Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Benedetto Cairoli (1825-1889) needed Great Britain's support to protect national interests in Tunisia, as he feared that France would take over a region so strategically and economically relevant for his Country (Ministero Degli Affari Esteri 1960-2000, 13:602-04). It is no surprise then that he strived in every way to go along with London's will on the issue of treaty revision, both by stopping the revision negotiations between Barbolani and Terashima in 1879 and by evading Nabeshima's requests on the same issue between 1880 and 1881.

In May 1881, after France invaded and occupied Tunis and Tunisia without meeting Great Britain's opposition (which was hostile to the entire control of the Strait of Sicily by Italy), Cairoli was forced to resign, and Pasquale Mancini succeeded him as Foreign Minister. To bring the Country out of its diplomatic isolation resulting from the *Schiaffo di Tunisi* (lit. the "Slap of Tunis") and guarantee national security, Mancini adopted a foreign policy aimed at preventing any conflict in Europe at any cost and, at the same time, at allowing Italy to obtain authority and influence in the Concert of Europe (Mancini 1893-97, 6:550); he, then, decided to establish ever closer relations with the Central Empires of Austria and Germany, signing with them a military alliance (the so-called Triple Alliance) on May 20, 1882, "since their need and firm willingness to maintain peace were evident, and because they also had a greater commonality of interests with Italy, both in large and secondary issues of general policy”[10] (6:610).

As a result of these events, under Mancini’s management, the policy adopted by the Italian government towards treaty revision became more active and less subordinate to Great Britain’s will: for example, after having listened to the requests presented by Asano on September 27, 1883, the new Foreign Minister “took the initiative by writing to the German Government in a sense favourable to the Japanese Government” (Nihon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai 1941-53, 2:1247); furthermore, in October, together with the Berlin and Vienna governments, he supported Japan’s right to conclude new treaties after a fixed period, despite the contrary opinion expressed by Great Britain on that issue (Tsuda 1987, 25).

Meanwhile, Mancini, who was strongly inclined to sign a new treaty with Japan, followed with great interest the running of the 1882 Tokyo Preliminary Conference. Moreover, because he had been a lawyer, jurist, and Minister of Justice, he also paid close attention to the work of legal and judicial reform, which the Japanese government was conducting in parallel with treaty revision negotiations: in particular, he checked out and appreciated the new Japanese codes of criminal Law (completed in 1880 and entered into force in January 1882), which he admitted had been “prepared on the model of the latest codes of Europe, namely those of Italy, which I, when I was Minister of Justice, had the good fortune to pass through parliament”; not surprisingly, at the Preliminary Conference, Foreign Minister Inoue himself mentioned him “as one of the highest authorities who had examined them” (Nihon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai 1941-53, 2:1250).

The main goal Mancini hoped to accomplish by signing a new treaty with Japan was to obtain a speedy opening of the whole of Japan to Italian trade (ASDMAE, January 7, 1887). In this regard, it should be noted that, in parallel with the constant drop in demand for Japanese silkworm eggs and the consequent decline of the Italian-Japanese silk market since the late 1870s, the interest of the Italian side had progressively turned to intensification and diversification of commercial exchanges between the two countries, especially as regards the import of Italian products into the Archipelago (Pozzi 2017, 135-36). The opening of Japan, therefore, continued to be fundamental for Italy and to obtain it Mancini was willing to abandon the consular jurisdiction reserved for Italian citizens on the sole condition that the codification of the new Japanese laws and the reform of its judicial system on the model of the European ones were completed. He then showed a favorable attitude towards the proposals and requests made by the Japanese side in a matter of jurisdiction. For example, in 1882 he expressed his appreciation for the above-mentioned Inoue's proposal concerning the opening of the country in exchange for the gradual abolition of extraterritoriality (ASDMAE, June first, 1882). About two years later, when, in August 1884, Inoue presented a new proposal with fewer claims regarding the recovery of legal rights (Nihon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai 1941-53, 2:345-51), Mancini accepted to adopt it as a basis for negotiations during a new plenary conference for treaty revision, showing also his desire to make still more concessions than the Japanese government had requested in the matter of jurisdiction (2:1247-48). Furthermore, in October 1884, he even proposed his personal idea "to open the Country at once and place foreigners simply under the existing Japanese laws and courts in the interior until the new codes and new judicial organization with foreign judges are completed" (2:1248).

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[10] “Essendo evidente il loro bisogno ed il loro fermo volere del mantenimento della pace, ed avendo esse altresì maggiore conformità d’intenti coll’Italia, tanto nelle grandi, come nelle secondarie questioni di politica generale”. Translation by the author.

At the same time, although in August 1884 Inoue had decided with the general consent of the Treaty Powers to increase customs tariffs based on a draft tariff prepared by Germany and Great Britain and submitted as a joint proposal by all the foreign delegates at the Preliminary Conference in May 1882 (2:345, 2:1249), Mancini struggled to obtain from the Japanese side a reduction of the duty on some articles contained in it. During a discussion with Siebold on October 30, 1884, he first claimed a duty reduction on coral, justifying his request as follows:

> You (i.e., Siebold) know that Italy has but a small trade in Japan and corals are in fact our principal article. The people who produce it have of late been severely suffering by misfortunes (alluding to the cholera in Naples). They say that the increase in the duty will ruin their trade with Japan and I hope, therefore, the Japanese Government will, in consideration of this, consent to a decrease of the duty. (2:1247)

In December, the secretary of the Foreign Ministry, Augusto Peiroleri (1831–1922), claimed duty reductions on other articles, such as quinine, specifying that high taxation, in addition to damaging Italian merchants, would have enticed some dishonest English and French merchants to smuggle Italian products into Japan (2:1254). Furthermore, as stated by Mancini, without the reductions required by the Foreign Ministry, the

Italian Parliament would certainly have opposed the whole revision project proposed by Inoue in 1884 (2:1256). For all these reasons, on April 25, 1885, the Italian Minister Plenipotentiary Renato de Martino privately asked Inoue to modify the above-mentioned draft tariff by reducing coral duty from 12.5% to 10%, quinine duty from 8% to 5%, and olive oil duty from 10% to 5% (2:381-82). Inoue strongly opposed the Italian demand for duty reduction; he wanted to avoid at any cost other countries making similar requests, thus jeopardizing the success of the negotiations on the question of tariff (2:1251). Therefore, the Japanese Minister Plenipotentiary in Italy, Tanaka Fujimaro (1845–1909), strived to convince the Italian government to retire its demands for reduction (2:1252-53). However, due to the constant insistence of Mancini and his successor at the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Carlo Felice Nicolis Conte di Robilant (1826-1888), in May 1886, Inoue eventually accepted to reduce the duties on coral, quinine, and olive oil once the Conference for Treaty Revision was over, but on condition that in the meantime this arrangement should have stayed secret between the two governments (2:1264).

The Plenary Conference and Italian delegate de Martino's role

While Japan and Italy were reaching an agreement on the tariff issue, the Plenary Conference for Treaty Revision met in Tokyo on May first, 1886. This conference was attended by Inoue, the Vice Foreign Minister Aoki Shūzō (1844-1914), and delegates from 12 countries with full powers to draw up and sign a new treaty with the Meiji government. Initially, they discussed a new revision project involving an increase in customs tariffs (from 5% to 11%) in exchange for an extension of legal rights (Sganzerla 2012, 75-76); but, since neither the Japanese nor the British sides seemed satisfied, it was later shelved, and, in its place, it was decided to adopt as the basis of discussion a counterproposal submitted on June 15 by the British plenipotentiary Sir Francis Richard Plunkett (1835-1907) and his German colleague Theodor von Holleben (1838-1913) (Minohara and Naraoka 2016, 23). In summary, this draft convention, known as the *Anglo-German Project*, provided for the abolition of consular jurisdiction after 3 years from the entry into operation of a seventeen-year treaty (articles 9) in exchange for the opening of Japan's interior to foreign travel, trade, and residence (article 1); however, within two years after the ratification of the treaty, the Japanese government should have put into operation new law codes and new law courts prepared on the model of Western legal principles, once they have been approved by all Treaty Powers' governments (articles 2 and 3); furthermore, Japan was required to establish and maintain for 15 years after the opening of the interior a legal system of mixed courts, composed mostly of foreign judges and with jurisdiction in cases involving foreigners (Articles 5, 6, and 8) (Nihon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai 1941-53, 2:477-81).

Now, even if the Italian Minister Plenipotentiary and delegate to the Conference, Renato de Martino, is often mentioned in numerous Japanese contributions on treaty revision, especially as regards the discussions during the Conference, his name is never directly associated with the *Anglo-German Project*. If we read the letters that de Martino sent to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs between June 1886 and January 1887, it emerges instead that he not only actively endorsed this project (Fujiwara 2004, 150) but even contributed significantly to its realization.

Before arriving in Japan at the beginning of 1885, de Martino had been instructed by Minister Mancini to attempt to obtain the opening of Japan's interior, bearing in mind that "as a condition of abandoning consular jurisdiction, (the King's Government) required only that the codification and the judicial system were completed"[11]. Nonetheless, although this principle had been eventually shared by the Concert of Europe, de Martino and the other foreign delegates didn't settle for the completion of the codification of new laws but found it necessary to have for a certain period European judges applying Western laws and teaching Japanese magistrates how to do it (ASDMAE, January 7, 1887). Concretely, de Martino's idea, which he called *Concetto Italiano* (lit. "Italian Concept"), consisted of safeguarding foreign citizens in Japan simply by obtaining that they could be tried in Courts of Cassation and Courts of Appeals composed mostly of Western judges (ASDMAE, August 16, 1887). Concerning this idea, in a confidential letter dated January 7, 1887, de Martino wrote to Foreign Minister Robilant as follows:

> The happy success (of the negotiations) is due to this concept, all mine and which I revealed to my government a few months after I arrived in this Country. Experience has demonstrated that it was the only possible solution. The facts have shown how the interests of Germany and England induced them to be united in that concept, instead of opposing and paralyzing

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[11] "Per abbandonare la giurisdizione consolare, (il Governo del Re) chiedeva soltanto che la codificazione e l'ordinamento giudiziario fossero completati". Translation by the author.

> each other. And considering it, in the end, a satisfactory compromise by which, once the truly harmful consular jurisdictions were abandoned, the much-desired opening of the Empire could be obtained, both of them (i.e., Great Britain and Germany) accepted the bases that I proposed and constantly supported. This is how I was able to write to Your Excellency that the political concept of the King's government could triumph. [...] And the proposal of judges of foreign nationality was accepted (by the Japanese government), after many of our efforts, and mainly mine, only because it was limited to only 15 years. […][12] (ASDMAE, January 7, 1887)

In the absence of further sources that prove it, it seems hard to say for sure that de Martino's contribution has been decisive for the creation of the *Anglo-German Project* and its acceptance by the Japanese government as a basis for further discussions, but there is no doubt that at the Conference the Italian diplomat played a significant role as mediator and arbiter of disputes both within the Western side (especially between the British and the German delegates) and between it and the Japanese representatives. For example, after the submission of the *Anglo-German Project*, he contributed to the elaboration of various amendments and additions discussed during the sitting and later became part of a more articulated plan known as the *Draft Jurisdictional Convention* (Nihon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai 1941-53, 2:481-92). Speaking of this latter draft treaty, it is worth mentioning de Martino's merit of having compiled paragraphs 1 and 2 of Article 6, which were concerned respectively with the partition of jurisdictional competencies between the Japanese courts and the consular ones and the enforcement of Japanese courts' judgments by the consular courts during the first three years transition period from the entry into force of the new treaty; their composition was certainly a complex work considering that de Martino had to gather and arrange propositions and additions previously made by the other delegates (including Vice Foreign Minister Aoki) and by himself so as to make all the colleagues agree on such thorny issues (Fujiwara 2004, 252-57).

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[12] "A questo concetto, tutto mio e da me palesato al mio governo pochi mesi dopo del mio arrivo in questo paese, è dovuta la felice riuscita (delle trattative). La esperienza ha dimostrato come fosse la sola possibile soluzione. I fatti hanno constatato come gl'interessi della Germania e dell'Inghilterra consigliassero che si unissero in quel concetto, invece d'avversarsi e paralizzarsi a vicenda. E considerandolo, alla perfine, un compromesso soddisfacente mercè del quale, abbandonate le invero dannose giurisdizioni consolari, si potesse ottenere la tanto agognata apertura dell'impero, hanno consentite ambedue alle basi da me proposte e costantemente sostenute. È così che ho potuto scrivere all'Eccellenza Vostra che il concetto politico del governo del Re poté trionfare. […] E se la proposta di giudici di nazionalità straniere venne accettata (dal governo giapponese), dopo molte fatiche nostre, e principalmente mie, fu perché limitata a soli 15 anni. […]". Translation by the author.

In any case, even though an agreement was eventually reached by the parties with the completion of the Draft Jurisdictional Convention on April 22, 1887, the Plenary Conference ended without results since Minister Inoue had to suspend it *sine die* on August 9 and resign from his post on September 17 after strong criticism of his negotiations with the Foreign Powers had spread both among the Japanese public opinion and inside the Meiji Government itself (Perez 1999, 76–78). As he wrote in a letter sent to Minister Robilant on August 16, de Martino could observe "the Public Opinion rising against the conditions agreed upon by us and that the Government of this absolute Monarchy being forced to bow before the National Will even at the risk of antagonizing or alienating the whole of Europe"[13]; moreover, he argued that such protests had been fomented by a part of the Nation "called the "Liberal", which most represents democratic doctrines and which would like to be [...], in my opinion, too violently reforming"[14] (ASDMAE, August 16, 1887); in the same letter, he did not even fail to acknowledge the responsibility of the Western side both in having made excessive demands without worrying about the discontent that they would create among the population and in having proposed too many amendments, thus altering and weakening the above-mentioned "Italian Concept":

> And are we blameless? Did the Bureaucracies of Europe not, by dictating the details of the Convention, obscure that policy (i.e., the "Italian Concept")? Forced to lay hands on extraterritoriality and Consular Powers, did they not think of anything other than subrogating them with provisions that did not consider the most delicate and jealous feelings of this nation? Among the Plenipotentiaries at the Conference, was it not lacking, in someone, the right appreciation of the environment, and, in such others, the academic skills necessary for this work? Have not been imposed by both parties, despite all opposition, clauses as offensive and burdensome as they would have been difficult to implement? Did someone not persist in declaring that

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[13] "L'Opinione Pubblica sollevarsi contro le condizioni da noi pattuite, ed il Governo di questa Monarchia assoluta essere costretto a inchinarsi dinnanzi alla Volontà Nazionale anche al rischio d'inimicarsi o d'alienarsi l'Europa intera". Translation by the author.

[14] "Chiamata la "Liberale", che rappresenta maggiormente le dottrine democratiche e che vorrebbe essere […] troppo, a parer mio, violentemente riformatrice". Translation by the author.

> it was not enough that the laws complied with the “Western Principles” but that, to be valid, they needed the approval and the sanction of the foreign governments, as well as any modification? And is that not a usurpation of legislative powers and sovereignty? […] Lastly - and so that my criticism does not continue - was the clear and sacred Italian Concept not submerged in the additions and modifications generated by the rivalry between the Plenipotentiaries of England and Germany? That concept put in place a guarantee of security for our fellow citizens simply by allowing them to be tried on appeal and in cassation by a majority of magistrates belonging to Western nationalities. And the Plenipotentiary of Germany instituted a division of the Supreme Court into two chambers, one for the review of the sentences given by a Court of Appeal and the other for appeal in Cassation, but he was finally forced, it is true, to abandon this, I don’t know if German, “appeal of the appeal”. And the Plenipotentiary of England desired, without it being possible to prevent it, that foreign judges should exist in the Courts of First Instance too, and he was barely prevented from imposing foreign praetors as well. […][15] (ASDMAE, August 16, 1887)

But even so, de Martino had no doubts that the Draft Jurisdictional Convention, despite its flaws, would ultimately allow Japan to obtain the abolition of the Consular Jurisdiction, while at the same time allowing the

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[15] “E siamo noi senza colpa? Le Burocrazie d’Europa, dettando i particolari della convenzione non oscurarono quella politica? Costrette a por le mani sulla Estraterritorialità e i Poteri Consolari, pensarono ad altro se non a surrogarli con disposizioni che non tennero conto dei sentimenti più delicati e più gelosi di questa Nazione? Fra i Plenipotenziari alla Conferenza non mancava forse, in taluni, il retto apprezzamento dell’ambiente, e, in tali altri, la disciplina degli studi occorrenti all’opera? Non furono imposte, dagli uni e dagli altri, nonostante ogni opposizione, clausole tanto offensive ed onerose quanto sarebbero state d’ardua attuazione? Non si ostinarono gli uni a dichiarare che le leggi di quest’Impero non bastava fossero conformi ai “Principi Occidentali” ma che, per essere valide, necessitavano l’approvazione e la sanzione dei governi stranieri, e così pure ogni modifica? E non è quella una usurpazione dei Poteri legislativi e della Sovranità? […] Infine – e perché la mia critica non si dilunghi – il chiaro e sacro Concetto Italiano non fu sommerso nelle addizioni e modifiche generate dal rivaleggiare dei Plenipotenziari d’Inghilterra e di Germania? Quel concetto poneva la guarentigia pei nostri concittadini semplicemente nello essere giudicati in appello e in cassazione da una maggioranza di magistrati appartenenti a nazionalità Occidentali. E il Plenipotenziario di Germania instituiva una divisione della Corte Suprema in due Camere, l’una per la revisione delle sentenze date in appello e l’altra per i ricorsi in Cassazione, ma dovette poi, egli è vero, abbandonare questo, non so se tedesco, “appello di appello”. E il Plenipotenziario d’Inghilterra volle, senza che si potesse impedire, che i giudici stranieri esistessero pure nei tribunali di prima Istanza, e a mala pena fu evitato che imponesse anche Pretori forestieri. […]”. Translation by the author.

Treaty Powers to trade freely throughout the Country. Even after the failure of the negotiations, the Italian diplomat did not resign himself to "abandoning the opening of this empire, which is for the benefit of all, but perhaps of ours more than of any other country"[16]; moreover, he remained convinced that the problem of treaty revision could be solved only through a "pure and simple return to the Primitive Italian Concept without excrescences, confusion, or complications"[17], firmly believing that "among all Powers, we are the only ones who could untie the knot"[18] (ASDMAE, August 16, 1887).

Conclusion

The present research aimed at bringing to light some unclarified issues concerning the Japan-Italy Treaty Revision Relations advanced during the Foreign Minister Inoue Kaoru Era, mainly by making use of historical sources found in Japan and integrating them with some Italian diplomatic documents. Its analysis resulted in the conclusion that, as in the 1870s, the Kingdom of Italy had considerable strategic importance in Japanese foreign policy even during the years of Minister Inoue's management. It can be stated based on the following considerations.

First, this importance is evident considering Inoue's great attention to selecting the diplomats to send to Italy. In particular, in the first years of his mandate, putting into practice the so-called "Rokumeikan diplomacy", Inoue appointed as Japanese Ministers Plenipotentiary in Rome two members of the Japanese aristocracy he believed were able to convince the Italian government to comply with the Japanese government's requests by forging (or strengthening) solid bonds of friendship with influential exponents of the Italian ruling class. Second, since 1882, Foreign Minister Mancini has adopted a more independent and active attitude than in the past toward treaty revision: aiming to obtain a rapid opening of the whole of Japan to Italian trade, he chose to move together with those powers, such as Germany and Austria, which could have shared Italy's same goals and interests; moreover, he was often ready to accept Inoue's proposals concerning jurisdiction, not failing to show the willingness to abandon Italy's extraterritoriality rights on the sole condition that the Japanese government completed its work of legal and judicial reform. Third, Italian Minister Plenipotentiary de Martino played a leading mediation role at the Conference for Treaty Revision in 1886-87, thus greatly contributing to reaching an agreement by the parties. It should not be forgotten that de Martino's efforts were held in high regard by the Japanese government itself: when he received the Grand Cross of the Rising Sun from Emperor Meiji (1853-1912) in October 1887, it appeared in *The Japan Daily Mail* that "the Italian Representative's uniformly friendly and helpful action, especially throughout the Treaty Revision negotiations, is doubtless the proximate cause of this distinction" (Japan Mail Office 1870-1915, 8:395).

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[16] "Abbandonare l'apertura di quest'Impero ch'è a beneficio di tutti, ma forse del nostro più che di ogni altro paese.". Translation by the author.

[17] "Ritorno puro e semplice al primitivo Concetto Italiano senza escrescenze, confusioni e complicazioni". Translation by the author.

[18] "Fra tutte le potenze, noi siamo la sola che potrebbe sciogliere il nodo". Translation by the author.

In conclusion, the role that the Kingdom of Italy played in Japanese foreign policy must have been even more significant if we consider that about seven years after the resignation of Foreign Minister Inoue, on December first, 1894, it became the third country, after Great Britain (July 16) and the United States (November 22), to sign a new treaty of Friendship, Commerce, and Navigation with the Meiji government and start dealing with Japan on an equal basis (Zavarese 2004, 152). However, to understand to what extent the action of the Kingdom of Italy influenced the general progress of negotiations between 1887 and 1894, it is necessary to consider in detail what policy and attitude its government and diplomats adopted toward treaty revision during those years. Therefore, since Japan-Italy Treaty revision relations between the late 1880s and the early years of the following decade are still almost completely neglected by both Italian and Japanese historiography, in my next research I intend to deal with this subject by using the primary sources stored in the diplomatic archives of both countries.

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POLITICAL CONVERSION OPPOSITES: TWO WRITERS AND THEIR 1920S SOVIET UNION EXPERIENCE

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Abstract: This study reopens the question of the nature of political commitment and its causes during a time that drastically altered the history of the 20th century, the 1920s and 1930s. Focused largely on a body of texts produced by Japanese female writer Miyamoto Yuriko (1899-1951) who returned from a three-year long trip to the Soviet Union in late 1920s as a convinced communist, the study offers a comparison with communism renunciation writings produced by leftist Romanian French writer Panait Istrati (1894-1935), as well as other communist and fellow travelers who experienced the same Soviet realities

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as Miyamoto but with opposite outcomes, such as French writer André Gide (1869-1951). What made those members of the intelligentsia so passionately embrace or renounce certain political ideologies that ultimately changed the face of modern history?

Keywords: *Ideology; Communism; Propaganda; Japan; Soviet Union; Miyamoto Yuriko; Panait Istrati; André Gide; Japan Communist Party.*

Introduction: Two Destinies

The two main writers[2] whose experience is explored here never met nor knew of each other's work, although their literary and personal destinies are intricately intertwined by their visits to the Soviet Union during the late 1920s. One, Miyamoto Yuriko (1899-1951),[3] was a Japanese female writer best known for her realistic depictions of the plight of poor farmers in her early work and *shishōsetsu* (semi-autobiographical) writings[4] later, all written prior to her Soviet Union trip (1927-1930). The other, Panait Istrati (1894-1935), was a Romanian-French realist working-class writer, discovered and encouraged to publish by Romain Rolland (1866-1944), who launched his career by labeling him the "Gorky of the Balkans" in his "Preface" to Istrati's first novel published in France in 1923.[5]

Born in 1899 in Tokyo, Miyamoto Yuriko was the daughter of Seiichirō (1868-1936) and Yoshie (1876-1934) Chūjō (or Nakajō), the family name by which she would be known throughout most of her artistic and political career.[6] Following on his illustrious father's footsteps—Chūjō Masatsune

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[2] A slightly different version of this research was previously published in the since discontinued journal *Human and Social Studies* 7(3)/2018, 113-154.

[3] Japanese names follow the traditional order Last name First name.

[4] Unique and heavily contested category of Japan's literary modernism, *shishōsetsu* (literally, "I fiction," often rendered in English as I-novel) comprises narratives based on the pre-established convention between an author and the readers that characters and events described in fictional format are, in fact, based on real events that occurred in the author's life.

[5] On the relationship between Istrati and Rolland, see, for instance, Fisher, D. J. (1988) *Romain Rolland and the Politics of Intellectual Engagement*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press. pp. 214-217.

[6] Biographical information here is indebted to several sources, including Nakamura, T. (1973) *Miyamoto Yuriko*. Tokyo: Chikuma shobō.; Miyamoto, K. (1955) *Miyamoto Yuriko*. Tokyo: Chikuma shobō.; Takiji Yuriko kenkyūkai, T. Y. (ed.) (1976) *Miyamoto Yuriko: sakuhin to shōgai,* Tokyo: Shin Nihon shuppansha.; Phillips, S. P. (1979)

(1841-1900), one of the best known civil engineers of the first half of the Meiji period (1868-1912),—Seiichirō became a famous modern Japanese architect. Miyamoto's mother, Yoshie, highly educated by the standards of the time, was the eldest daughter of Japanese thinker and educator Nishimura Shigeki (1828-1902).

Miyamoto spent the first three years of her life on Japan's northern island of Hokkaidō, where the Ministry of Education had dispatched young Seiichirō as a part-time instructor in the Civil Engineering Department of the Sapporo Agricultural School. During Miyamoto's early childhood, Seiichirō also spent three and a half years at Cambridge University in England conducting research and taking classes. The family income was modest for a while, but as soon as Seiichirō returned to Japan, on the eve of Japan's involvement in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), well-trained architects were in high demand, which led to a sudden increase in wealth and social status for the family.

Miyamoto showed interest in literature and writing very early. In the Chūjō household, she had easy access to works of classical Japanese literature, as well as writings on European art and architecture brought back from England by her father.[7] In high school, she started missing classes to go to the Ueno library and read. This is when she first came in contact with Western and Russian literature. She read works by Lev Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Ivan Turgenev, Anton Chekhov, Maksim Gorky, Edgar Allan Poe, Oscar Wilde, William Shakespeare, Romain Rolland and Friedrich Nietzsche, along with popular modern Japanese writers. Strongly encouraged to read and write by her family, Miyamoto's literary path started to take shape around 1915.

In April 1916, she entered the English Literature Department at Japan Women's University only to withdraw after the first term, as her literary career took off after the publication of her debut story "Mazushiki hitobito no mure" (A Flock of Poor People)[8] in the popular magazine *Chūō kōron*. Inspired by the plight of poor farmers working on her paternal grandfather's

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Miyamoto Yuriko: Imagery and Thematic Development from Mazushiki hitobito no mure to Banshū heiya. MA, University of British Columbia.; Soeshima, Y. (2006) *The Politics of Gender, Class and Sexuality in Miyamoto Yuriko's Fiction.* PhD, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

[7] Sawabe, H. (1990) *Yuriko, dasuvidaniya : Yuasa Yoshiko no seishun*. Tokyo: Bungei shunju. 21.

[8] In Miyamoto, Y. (1979) *Miyamoto Yuriko zenshū*. Tokyo: Shin Nihon shuppansha. 1:5-98. Hereafter *MYZ*.

farm, “A Flock of Poor People” is the result of the deep impression Russian literature had made on her. Michiko Niikuni Wilson commented that in the story “Yuriko already displayed the seed of feminist-socialist spirit, ready to sprout at any time given the right environment,”[9] although “socialist” may be too early a description for “A Flock of Poor People. The Russian word *narodnik*,[10] one often used to describe Gorky’s work, may be more adequate.

After this first success, the young writer became well known within the literary circles (*bundan*) of the time. It was around the same time that she met fellow writer Nogami Yaeko (1885-1985), an active member of the Seitōsha (Blue Stocking Association), a female writers’ group, part of the larger Shirakaba (White Birch) literary group. The humanistic and egalitarian attitude that animated the members of the Shirakaba seems to have been a major influence in Miyamoto’s early literary activity.

In the fall of 1918, she followed her father to New York, and chose to stay there after he returned to Japan. She attended courses at Barnard College and met Araki Shigeru (1884-1932), a Japanese man fifteen years her senior, and a graduate student of ancient Persian languages at Columbia. Defying her parents’ plans for an arranged marriage, she married Araki in October 1919.

Soon after however, her mother’s health condition worsened and Miyamoto needed to return to Japan, followed a few months later by her husband, who had abandoned his studies. Once back in Japan, Araki defaulted to the conventions of a traditional marriage, but Miyamoto’s independence could not to be bridled by social expectations. Michiko Niikuni Wilson wrote about this period in Miyamoto’s life:

> […] Yuriko, a naïve but intellectually sophisticated woman with a firm commitment to writing, from an upper-middle-class urban family, was hardly suited to Araki Shigeru, a passive, insecure, unreflective man from the countryside. Back in Japan, despite well-meaning efforts, mostly on the part of Yuriko, the marriage ended…[11]

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[9] Niikuni Wilson, M. (1997) “Misreading and Un-Reading the Male Text, Finding the Female Text: Miyamoto Yuriko’s Autobiographical Fiction.” *US-Japan Women’s Journal,* 13**,** 26-55. 27.

[10] *Narodnik* (from *narod* – people, in Russian) were called writers who expressed feelings of sympathy for the poor and outcasts of society.

11 Niikuni Wilson, M. (1997) “Misreading and Un-Reading the Male Text, Finding the Female Text: Miyamoto Yuriko’s Autobiographical Fiction.” *US-Japan Women’s*

Her diary from the period records a desperate quest for ideals both in love and in social life. Her literary output declined throughout 1924, when she separated from Araki and whom she divorced the following year.

Nogami Yaeko introduced Miyamoto to Yuasa Yoshiko (1896-1990), a Russian literature specialist, translator, and well-known feminist activist. The moment, particularly salient tor the writer’s future career path, is captured in Miyamoto’s 1926 semi-autobiographical novel *Nobuko*:

> - Allow me to make the introductions. This is Ms. Nobuko Sasa, and here is Ms. Tomoko Yoshimi, who depends on her father’s good social status to make a living.
> - That was a rather strange introduction, Tomoko replied and laughed. At least for food I manage to make it on my own. I am the editor of Magazine X.[12]

The two felt an instantaneous attraction for one other. Miyamoto was impressed by Yuasa’s independence, although the latter’s first thought—as recalled years later—was: “Met Chūjō. Plump housewife impression. She seems older than me. […] Not a bad feeling, though. Interest for strange things.”[13] The two women moved in together as soon as Miyamoto’s separation from Araki was final, and Miyamoto’s need for passion and intimacy took literary form in several letters to Yuasa in which she declared her love.[14]

After the creatively unproductive period of her marriage, Miyamoto started writing again. In 1926, the semi-autobiographical novel *Nobuko*, still her most popular work today, was published. One of the most representative works of the Japanese *shishōsetsu* literary category, *Nobuko* remains virtually unknown outside Japan. In *Nobuko*, Miyamoto describes her relationship with Araki, their married life, and the challenges they faced upon their return to Japan. After completing *Nobuko*, Miyamoto would not return to the *shishōsetsu* category convention until after the end of World

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Journal, 13**,** 26-55. 27.

[12] *MYZ*, 3:58. All translations from Japanese are mine, unless indicated otherwise. In good *shishōsetsu* tradition, the names of the characters are changed in the novel, although the two would have been easily identifiable by the readers of the time as Yuasa and Miyamoto. The magazine referred to here was *Aikoku fujin* (Patriotic Women). See Sawabe, H. (1990) *Yuriko, dasuvidaniya: Yuasa Yoshiko no seishun*. Tokyo: Bungei shunju. 17.

[13] In *Yoshiko nikki*, cited in ibid. 17.

[14] Miyamoto, Y. & Yuasa, Y. (eds.). (1978) *Yuriko no tegami,* Tokyo: Chikuma shobō.

War II. Her life with Yuasa is covered in the 1948 novel *Futatsu no niwa* (The Two Gardens), while the trip they took together to the Soviet Union will be detailed in the voluminous *Michishirube* (Road Posts, 1949).

The trip Miyamoto and Yuasa took to the Soviet Union between 1927 and 1930 changed the former's life and made her a firm believer in the need for political engagement as the only means through which an artist can bring positive contributions to social advancement. Literary critic Iwabuchi Hiroko, on the other hand, believes the trip to the Soviet Union marks the beginning of a "weakening of her literature."[15] All texts written by Miyamoto during the time spent in the Soviet Union—mostly newspaper and magazine articles—were later gathered by the editors of her Complete Works in the volume "“Soveto kikō”" (Soviet Travelogue), and constitute the main object of the current analysis.

Inspired by the realities of post-revolutionary Soviet Union, Miyamoto secretly joined in 1931 the rather shaky Japanese Communist Party (JCP) and the Japanese Proletarian Writers Association (NAPF) and committed to supporting the feminist arm of the movement by serving as editor of the magazine *Hataraku fujin* (Workingwomen).

The next year, she met her future husband, Miyamoto Kenji (1908-2007), one of the leaders of the underground Communist Party, and longtime (1958-1977) postwar leader of the JCP. In February that year, she had left her increasingly dissatisfying relationship with Yuasa. Brett de Barry remarked on Yuriko's union to Kenji that "The marriage of a daughter from the prestigious Chūjō family with a communist eight years her junior once again aroused the curiosity of the press, who labeled Yuriko's romance with Kenji 'red love' (*akai koi*)."[16]

With the Japanese government taking a sharp conservative turn at the beginning of the war in China, and the end of the last civilian government in 1932, most JCP leaders were either arrested or forced to continue their activity underground. In 1933, Miyamoto Kenji was arrested and remained in prison until the end of the war, one of the very few Japanese communists to do so. Throughout the twelve years of his imprisonment, Miyamoto

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[15] Iwabuchi, H. (1996) *Miyamoto Yuriko : kazoku, seiji, soshite feminizumu*. Tokyo: Kanrin shobō. 158.

[16] de Barry, B. (1984-1985) "Wind and leaves: Miyamoto Yuriko's The Weathervane Plant." *Journal of the Association of Teachers of Japanese,* 19(1**)**, 7-28. 9. The term "red love," often used in a derogatory manner by the Japanese media of the time, is a reference to the 1927 novel bearing that title and written by Soviet female writer and revolutionary Alexandra Kollontai (1872-1952).

Yuriko was also detained several times—the incarceration would eventually compromise her health—although she was never forced to renounce her political allegiance to communism (*tenkō*[17]), like so many leftists of the time. In 1937, as a present for his birthday, the writer decided to adopt her husband's family name, and became known as Miyamoto. The twelve-year correspondence between the two, gathered in a volume and published after the war, was an immediate sensation in Japan. The volume, entitled *Jūninen no tegami* (Letters of Twelve Years, 1950), became a testimony of relentless resistance against state oppression.

Miyamoto's postwar political and literary activity on behalf of the reborn JCP and feminist and leftist organizations is overwhelming. She wrote prolifically, as if she were trying to make up for time lost during the war years—during part of which she was forbidden to publish—and got involved in numerous democratic initiatives and organizations. Her health had been, however, severely compromised during imprisonment, and her time was limited. During her final years of life, she published two massive novels, *Banshū heiya* (Banshū Plain, 1946), and *Fūchisō* (The Weathervane Plant, 1947). The former engages the reality of Japan in defeat and has been deemed "one of the most soberly detailed literary evocations of Japan in August and September 1945."[18] The latter, more closely inspired by the writer's own experience, narrates a couple's reunion after long years of separation and the painful process of readapting to living together, much like the Miyamotos went through after Kenji's return from prison. The tension between the main character's sexual experiences with women in the absence of her spouse, on one hand, and her admiration and love for her husband's resilience, on the other, make that adjustment all the more difficult.

Yuriko died in January 1951, at the height of her creativity and activism. Her staunch commitment to Stalinism, to which she had adhered after living in the Soviet Union, remains both an inspiration and an enigma. Criticized by some for not having been a true communist because she had shown no interest for it prior to 1927 and admired by others for her determination to defend its principles to whatever end under the radical revolutionary dictum "the end justifies the means", Miyamoto Yuriko, her life, political views and literary and journalistic work have been studied extensively in Japan. Beyond Japan, however, there is still much to understand about her life and work, as well as her sudden adherence to communism after her return to Japan from the Soviet Union.[19]

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[17] *Tenkō* (often rendered in English as "conversion"), is a term describing the coerced political conversion of Japanese leftist and democracy activists who were imprisoned and made to publicly denounce and renounce their political beliefs. With very few exceptions, the majority of the arrested leftist activists recanted *en masse*, making *tenkō* a heavily charged social, political, and ideological phenomenon of prewar Japan. For more on *tenkō*, see, among others,

[18] de Barry, B. (1984) "After the War: Translations from Miyamoto Yuriko." *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars,* 16(2)**,** 40-47. 40.

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Unlike Miyamoto Yuriko, Romanian French writer Panait Istrati went to the Soviet Union a convinced communist and returned to France, and later to his native Romania, not only disappointed by the realities of the revolutionary society in which he had placed all his artistic and political hopes, but also a vehement, and sometimes unfair, critic of all things Soviet.

Born just outside the city of Brăila, at the time a major harbor on the Danube River, Panait Istrati was often described as a global vagabond. Of humble origins, his father was a Greek smuggler he never met and his mother a Romanian laundress.[20] An avid reader, poverty pushed him to quit school after completing elementary school to begin working as an apprentice for various businesses and stores in his native Brăila.

Primed to understand and depict firsthand the inherent cruelty of the capitalist system from the perspective of a low-skill laborer, Istrati started writing for socialist magazines in Romania around the time he turned 23 and became heavily involved in local union work. He traveled abroad extensively to Turkey, Egypt, Syria, Italy, and finally France and Switzerland, making a point of not using a passport and paying nothing along the way. Most of his travels are captured in semi-autobiographical novels, having Adrian Zografi—an alter ego of sorts—as the protagonist.

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[19] Recently, Jill Dobson has produced a doctoral dissertation on Miyamoto's Soviet experience: Dobson, J. (2015) *Self and the City: A Modern Woman's Journey. Miyamoto Yuriko in the Soviet Union and Europe, 1927-1930*, PhD, University of Sheffield, and an article based on that research, Dobson, J. (2017) "A 'Fully Bloomed' Existence for Women: Miyamoto [Chūjō] Yuriko in the Soviet Union, 1927-1930". *Women's History Review,* 26(6), 799-821.

[20] The biographical details here are indebted to several sources, primarily to Bălan, Z. & Feodosiev, S. (eds.). (1996) *Panait Istrati, Omul care nu aderă la nimic: Documente din Rusia Sovietică,* Brăila: Editura Istros a Muzeului Brăilei.; Cogălniceanu, M. (2005) *Panait Istrati: Tentația și ghimpii libertății*. Brăila: Ex libris.; Koëlla, C. E. (1947) «Panait Istrati, le Vagabond Humanitaire.» *The French Review,* 20(4), 292-301.; and Bacot, J.-F. (1988) «Panait Istrati: ou la conscience écorchée d'un vaincu.» *Moebius,* 35, 95-114.

Struggling with tuberculosis since childhood, Istrati hoped, unsuccessfully, for a cure while in Switzerland. After a brief return to Romania where he worked as a house painter and tried to become a pig farmer, he decided to go back to France and become a writer. Full of admiration for Romain Rolland and his 1915 Nobel Prize for literature, Istrati reached out to him, but his letter was never delivered to the French writer because it had been sent to an address where the author had resided only briefly. Sick and depressed, in 1921 Istrati attempted suicide by cutting his throat, but failed. A second undelivered letter addressed to Rolland and found on his body on that occasion was delivered to the French writer by a good Samaritan from the hospital where the suicidal Romanian was being treated. This is what Rolland wrote about the episode in his "Preface" to Istrati's first novel, *Kyra Kyralina*, published in 1924 in France:

> During the first days of January 1921, I received a letter from the hospital in Nice. It had been retrieved from the body of a person, who, at the height of despair, had cut his throat… I read it, and I was shaken by the tumultuous spirit of a genius. A flaming wind rushing across the plains. I was holding in my hands the confession of a new Gorky of the Balkans. They managed to save his life. I wanted to meet him. We began to write to each other. We became pals. His name: Istrati.[21]

For most of the rest of his life, Istrati lived in France, and stayed active within the Socialist writers' circles, animated mostly by the humanist and egalitarian side of the revolution. The years following the first encounter with Rolland were his most prolific, and some of his best-known writings were published over the next ten years. Chief among them, in addition to his debut with *Kyra Kyralina*, he wrote and published in French, *Oncle Anghel* (Uncle Anghel, 1924); *Codine* (1926); *Mikhail* (1927); *La Famille Perlmutter* (The Perlmutters, 1927); *Les Chardons du Baragan* (The Thistles of Baragan, 1928); *Tsatsa Minnka* (Auntie Minnka, 1931); *La Maison Thuringer* (The Thuringer House, 1933). Some of these he would translate into his native Romanian and publish almost simultaneously in his home country, while others remained available only in French during his lifetime.

A staunch supporter of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and vice-president of the "Les Amis de l'URSS" Society in Paris, Istrati was one of the beneficiaries of a special invitation to the festivities occasioned by the

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[21] Cited in Koëlla, C. E. (1947) "Panait Istrati, le Vagabond Humanitaire." *The French Review,* 20(4)**,** 292-301. 292.

Tenth Anniversary of the October Revolution in 1927. He traveled across the Soviet Union, with short breaks in Greece, for about sixteen months between 1927 and 1929, accompanied either by Soviet and Comintern officials, such as Christian Rakovsky (1873-1941), Victor Serge (1890-1947) and Boris Souvarine (1895-1984), or by new friends such as Greek writer Nikos Kazantzakis (1883-1957), and his wife, Eleni Samiou (1903-2004).[22] His stay in the Soviet Union overlapped almost perfectly with Miyamoto Yuriko and Yuasa Yoshiko's, and, as guests of the Soviet government, many of the sights they visited were the same. As such, the Japanese and the Romanian writers' experiences in the country of the Soviets, while so radically different in outcome, can be argued to have had a dramatic impact on the political awakening—at opposite ideological poles—of the two artists.

Compared to Miyamoto, a self-declared novice in political matters, Istrati was a fervent admirer and supporter of the Soviet regime prior to his trip to Russia. Having gone to the Soviet Union with high expectations for a political and social regime emphasizing equality and elimination of class privilege, Istrati could not help but notice that the lives of most regular Russians had not radically changed under the new order, remaining as miserable as before the 1917 Revolution. Disenchanted with the Soviet authorities and their inability to address poverty, homelessness, and prevent the creation of a new privileged class of Communist Party elites, Istrati took it upon himself to unmask the budding dictatorship of Soviet Russia under Stalin. Animated by deep concern for his fellow humans, Istrati decided to bring down the myth of the communist paradise being built in post-revolutionary Russia and became a vehement critic of the young political order.

In 1929, a non-fiction trilogy of reportage-style volumes was published in France under his name. Entitled *Vers l'autre flame* (Toward a Different Flame, 1929),[23] it comprises three statements about Soviet Russia: *Après seize mois en URSS: Confession pour vaincus* (After Sixteen Months in the USSR: Confession for the Defeated), *Soviets 1929* and *La Russie Nue* (Russia Unveiled[24]). Although published under Istrati's name, the latter two volumes were written by Victor Serge and Boris Souvarine, committed Marxists but staunch critics of Stalin's regime. Soon after Istrati's visit to the USSR, the two revolutionaries would be labeled Trotskyites and eliminated from party leadership in some of the early instances of what will later come to be called Stalin's "Great Purge" or "Great Terror" (1936-1938).

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[22] See Samios Kazantzakis, E. (2013) *Adevărata tragedie a lui Panait Istrati*. Brăila: Editura Istros a Muzeului Brăilei.

[23] Istrati, P. (1929) *Vers l'autre flamme: Après seize mois dans l'URSS*. Paris: Les Éditions Rieder.

[24] Istrati, P. (1975) *Russia unveiled*. Westport, CT: Hyperion Press. Originally published in 1931, the English translation has been published under Istrati's name, so it is cited here as such, although it is now known that the book was in fact written by Boris Souvarine.

From a historical perspective, it can be argued that Istrati was one of the first leftists to see what other Western intellectuals and artists would only many years later begin to understand about the oppressive nature of the Soviet regime under Stalin. The testimonial published under his name came at a time when Soviet authorities were still enjoying strong support from European and American intelligentsia. As such, with the publication of the *Flame…* Istrati turned almost instantly into a *persona non grata* not only within French and Western European Marxist and communist circles, but also within those of intellectuals who could not conceive of themselves as anything other than supporters of the sole social system in the world that had declared itself the defender of the poor and the oppressed. Chief among them—and crucial to Istrati due to the support he had given to the Romanian on so many occasions before—, Romain Rolland also decided to distance himself from his former protégé and chose instead not to meet with him in the midst of a vitriolic media campaign directed against him by the French socialist media and led by Henri Barbusse (1873-1935), a former friend and political ally.

From 1930 to 1933, Istrati travelled back and forth to Romania, while public attacks against him continued in France. He would eventually leave France for good in 1933, as his tuberculosis advanced and his social relationships crumbled around him. Two years later he died in Bucharest, alone and embittered. His legacy as a humanist writer who, above all, chose to remain faithful to his fellow humans and to never blindly adhere to any ideology, is still being revisited and properly understood.

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Japanese scholars agree that Miyamoto Yuriko's adoption of communism occurred while she was traveling through the Soviet Union and Western Europe (December 1927- October 1930). The 42 texts gathered by her "Complete Works" editors under the title "Soveto kikō" represent the written testimony of the transformation of a writer, who knew nothing of Marxism and was disinterested in politics, into a militant communist. The following pages take a closer look at the timeline of her trip to the Soviet

Union, as related in diaries and texts she wrote while there, and which mark her evolution into a believer in the political and social order proposed by Marx and turned into reality by the Bolshevik Revolution.

Miyamoto and her partner and travel companion, Russian literature translator and Chekhov specialist, Yuasa Yoshiko, made the decision to travel to the Soviet Union sometime in 1926, soon after they had started living together. As a specialist in Russian literature, Yuasa would have naturally benefited most from the trip. Miyamoto, on the other hand, was excited at the idea of eventually having the opportunity to directly experience the land that had fascinated her since childhood and whose writers had inspired her own literary debut in such a major manner.

Dozens of Japanese writers - and hundreds of others coming from fourteen countries - were invited to attend the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the October revolution, and then the First International Conference of Proletarian and Revolutionary Writers that took place in November of the same year. Despite being a well-known writer in her home country, Miyamoto was not the politically engaged writer that Soviet authorities typically would have invited to the events organized for the occasion. Discussing her ignorance of the proletarian movement and its literature in Japan prior to her visit to the Soviet Union and adoption of communism, Miyamoto wrote, in the "Afterword" of a later edition of her 1926 novel *Nobuko*:

> I wrote *Nobuko* from 1924 to 1926. Those were the times when the proletarian movement and the proletarian literature movement began. However, my way of life did not really allow me any significant opportunities to come in contact with those movements.[25]

Referring to the same period, Miyamoto Kenji also noted in a postwar book dedicated to her legacy that "Yuriko knew amazingly few things about the proletarian movement."[26]

Miyamoto's first impressions of Moscow are captured in an early text, "Mosukuwa no inshōki" (Impressions from Moscow), recorded in the May 7, 1928 entry of her diary, under the title "Jibun, inshō no Tsuzuki" (Continuation of my Impressions). Slightly edited, the text (with a different title, "Mosukuwa no inshō: sono ichi", Impressions from Moscow, Part 1) was published by the magazine *Kaizō*, in its August issue of 1928.[27]

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[25] *MYZ*, 18:60-61.

[26] Miyamoto, K. (1963) *Miyamoto Yuriko no sekai*. Tokyo: Shin Nihon shuppansha. 117.

[27] *MYZ*, 9:593-594.

The "Impressions…" are full of joy at being in Moscow, as she is trying to experience the city on a personal level and engage with its sensations and people. Commenting on the text, Iwabuchi wrote: "The first section of the 'Impressions…', written during her first six months in Russia, marks, in fact, the first step of Yuriko's reception – somewhat by senses, somewhat by intuition – of the Soviets."[28] The writer's excitement at being in Russia is noticed by Akita Ujaku as well, in his diary,[29] while Yonekawa recollects her knowledge and passion when talking about Tolstoy's country.[30]

Their first contact with Russia's new political regime did not take long. Soviet authorities got involved as Miyamoto wished to visit Moscow in an organized manner, so she needed an official tour guide, a service provided exclusively through a governmental organization supervising and in effect controlling all interactions between foreign visitors regardless of the purpose of their trip and Russian society and its people. As such, Miyamoto came in contact for the first time with the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (Vsesoiuznoe Obshchestvo Kul'turnoi Sviazi s Zagranitsei, best known by the acronym VOKS), the *de facto* tour-organizing agency of the Soviet government, although not formally defined as such, as Michael David-Fox has shown.[31] While critic and literary historian Nakamura Tomoko made the assertion that the *Impressions…* were the result of Miyamoto's naïve and uninfluenced by politics contact with Russia of her childhood readings,[32] the reality may have been slightly different. The "Impressions…" seem more of a mix between that initial excitement at the experience of a place she had been dreaming to know for a long time, combined with those guided tours that purport to show her the "real" face of new Russia. Guided by the VOKS, the tours offered to foreigners visiting the country were a selection of carefully prearranged sites, meant to showcase the extraordinary advances achieved by the Soviet state since the Revolution. The list of sites offered to her by VOKS and carefully recorded by Miyamoto herself in "Impressions…" is telltale of the

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[28] Iwabuchi, H. (1996) *Miyamoto Yuriko : kazoku, seiji, soshite feminizumu*. Tokyo: Kanrin shobō. 160.

[29] See Akita, U. (1975) *Akita Ujaku nikki*. Tokyo: Miraisha..

[30] Yonekawa, M. (1979) "Mosukuwa no Yuriko san." *Miyamoto Yuriko zenshū.* Tokyo: Shin Nihon shuppansha.

[31] David-Fox, M. (2002) "From Illusory 'Society' to Intellectual 'Public': VOKS, International Travel and Party: Intelligentsia Relations in the Interwar Period." *Contemporary European History,* 11(1)**,** 7-32. 11.

[32] Nakamura, T. (1973) *Miyamoto Yuriko*. Tokyo: Chikuma shobō. 178.

"techniques of hospitality" employed at the time by VOKS. "A Soviet tour: factories, the Revolution Museum, elementary schools, peasants' homes, and in the evening, shows at the Bolshoi Theater."[33] Other foreign tourists in the Soviet Union of the time describe similar set-menu tours offered to them by the same organization.[34]

The factory she visited was a must-see objective for all foreign tourists of the time. It was the pride of Soviet Moscow, the candy-making factory "Red October." Miyamoto was shown the nursery, the library, the workers' clubs, and the guide explained to her the meaning of the slogans hanging on the walls. The inability to fully connect linguistically made Miyamoto uncomfortable, and solidified her determination to learn Russian, a feat that she could not ultimately achieve completely. Either frustrated by this linguistic handicap, or sensing that what she was being shown was not a full picture of regular people's lives—which fascinated her since adolescence and literary debut—she wrote in "Impressions…":

> I cannot be happy with this kind of superficial tour that only shows me the surface of real life in the USSR. My interest and love for Russia, which I have been carrying in my heart ever since I read *The Cossacks*[35] and *Twenty-Six Men and A Girl*,[36] became a life purpose on that December night when, after getting off the train, I watched sleighs and horse silhouettes on the streets of Moscow through the car window. I must get rid of my English as soon as possible.[37]

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The three full years (1927-1930) Miyamoto spent in Russia and Europe are usually presented as three distinctive periods. The first covers the period from December 1927 to April 1929, when her VOKS tours across Russia took place and which resulted in "Impressions from Moscow" and "Roshia no tabi yori" (From a Trip to Russia, published in *Yomiuri shinbun*, October 12, 1928)[38], a short travelogue about the trip she and Yuasa took on the river Volga. During that time she was also hospitalized in Moscow for gallbladder inflammation from January to April 1929. The second period, from April to November 1929, corresponds to a trip Miyamoto took alone to Western Europe to meet with her parents in Paris and then to travel to other places. Finally, the third period, her last year in Russia, spans November 1929 to December 1930, and marked her complete political conversion and commitment to the cause of communism and is punctuated by several other tours organized by VOKS.

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[33] *MYZ*, 9:22.

[34] See, for instance, Burton Holmes, *The Traveler's Russia* (New York: G.P. Putman's sons, 1934).

[35] Lev Tolstoy's 1863 novel.

[36] Maxim Gorky's 1899 short story.

[37] *MYZ*, 9:23.

[38] *MYZ*, 9:45-46.

The three periods are important markers for the stages of Miyamoto's political awakening. The first was a time of accumulation of new information about Russia. The imagined land of her youthful literary adventures gradually and steadily became "the country of the Soviets," a space of political and social experimentation, very much new and unique to the politically unaware female writer from Japan, who, worldly and educated as she was, must have felt that, at the age of 28, she was still aimless and unfocused on a greater goal for her life and art. At this stage, Miyamoto's texts are almost devoid of pro-Soviet propaganda, as information was coming at her in waves, and the process of accumulation was carefully directed by VOKS guides, well-trained in "techniques of hospitality," ultimately a refined form of propaganda and indoctrination.[39] During this period, in addition to the two articles discussed earlier, Miyamoto also wrote the short story *Akai kasha* (The Red Freight Car, *Kaizō*, August 1928[40]), her first attempt at a socio-revolutionary plot. The young female protagonist of the story arrives in Moscow from the countryside to find a job, and the story focuses on her experiences in the city. Other writings dealing with the writer's memories and impressions of this first period are later texts, so although their subject matter belongs timewise to the first period, their tone and political commitment place them outside it. They are, "Donbasu tankō ku no 'rōdōgun'" (The Workers' Club of Donbas Coalmine Town, published in *Taishū no tomo*, November 1931) and "Sekiyū no miyako Bakū e" (To the Oil Capital, Baku, 1933, first published in the 1952 edition of the author's "Complete Works" at publisher Kawade shobō).

According to the texts written during this period (or about it), as well as the postwar novel *Road Posts*, the first trip the two Japanese female writers took across Russia was "[…] not exactly what we call today a standard tourist tour, but an excursion full of experiences."[41] They went to Nijni Novgorod, visited Gorky's native place and the town bazaar and then took the boat on the Volga and reached Stalingrad in five days. From Stalingrad they continued to the Northern Caucasus region, and, after a ten-hour drive through picturesque landscape, arrived at Tiflis, the Georgian capital. From there they traveled to Baku, where they visited oil workers' living facilities, and then to Yalta, where they visited Chekhov's memorial house. Eventually they reached Donbas and visited the coalmine workers' recreation facilities. Back in Moscow, Miyamoto got sick and spent four months at the University of Moscow Hospital.

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[39] For extensive research on "techniques of hospitality," see, among others, Hollander, P. (1988) *The Survival of the Adversary Culture: Social Criticism and Political Escapism in American Society*. New Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers. 170 et passim, and Hollander, P. (1998) *Political Pilgrims: Western Intellectuals in Search of the Good Society* (3rd ed.). New Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers.

[40] *MYZ*, 4:67-126.

Miyamoto's trip to Western Europe is said to have also played a major role in her decision to dedicate herself to the cause of communism. In contrast to what was presented to her by the Soviet government as Soviet workers' daily life, the crushing poverty, unemployment, and overall misery of the working masses in the wake of the great economic depression in Western Europe must have been a shocking reality, reminiscent of the conditions in her own country. "London, 1929" is a somber-toned, dark text in comparison with the luminous, bright descriptions of Soviet society. There is nothing but a striking and revolting discrepancy between the lives of the poor and those of the rich in England, human degradation, and collapse, all brought about by the capitalist system and its intrinsic socio-economic inequality. As if engaging in a dialogue with that reality, as soon as she returned to Moscow, Miyamoto wrote "Kodomo, kodomo, kodomo no Mosukuwa" (Children's, Children's, Children's Moscow, published in *Kaizō*, October 1930), a text about the dignified and fair protection guaranteed by Soviet law to pregnant women and children.

As of 1929, Miyamoto seems to have been deeply engaged in the realities of a perpetually changing Soviet society. These were historic times for Stalin's leadership of the Union, and, under his direction, the Lenin-inherited New Economic Policy (NEP) was replaced in 1928 with a strictly centralized state economy organized on five-year plans. The first five-year plan in Soviet history (1928-1933) was already on its way in 1929, and slogans and solemn promises to fulfill its commitments as quickly as possible were part and parcel of daily life in Moscow.[42] Revolutionary propaganda filling the air must have been intoxicating, and the sentiment that something more than one's usual daily life was at stake, that the responsibility for the entire nation was resting on the shoulders of each and all must have been exhilarating. Shaken emotionally by her brother's suicide in 1928 and by the experience of the Western European trip, Miyamoto started to apply herself to the study of Marxism, to better understand and connect with the lives of the people around her. Visits to factories and cooperative farms were no longer simple curiosity. She wanted to grasp the essence of Soviet society. Her knowledge of Russian improving, she began to read journals and to comment in her diary, as well as in conversations with Yuasa, on various aspects of Soviet society. The articles she writes now are in-depth analyses of women's issues, workers' problems, and provide insight into cultural debates on the nature of proletarian art and literature. Increasingly convinced that she had found an ideal to which to dedicate herself and her art, Miyamoto was adjusting her whole persona from her ideas to writing style. Talking about "Children's…" Tomoko Nakamura noticed that this was the first article in which Miyamoto directly compared the socialist and capitalist systems and qualified them as "good" and "bad," respectively. As for her writing, "compared to "Impressions from Moscow" of two years before, "Children's…" is stylistically completely different."[43]

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[41] Nakamura, T. (1973) *Miyamoto Yuriko*. Tokyo: Chikuma shobō. 115.

[42] See, for example, Fitzpatrick, S. (1999) *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* Oxford University Press.

During this gradual transformation, as she is embracing communism and is making it her fight, what remains unchanged is the way she travels around Russia. Although she could now find her way in Russian and could have potentially arranged visits on her own, she continued to ask VOKS for assistance. Her decision may have been driven either by a conscious desire to stay within the state-prescribed boundaries allowed to foreigners and respectfully follow the rules of her host country, or by a very conscious decision not to see what Soviet authorities would not have wanted her to see. If the latter, then it must be assumed that what she wanted to see was no longer a process of discovery, but one meant to confirm that her decision to commit to communism in its Stalinist format was right. Through the last days she spent in the Soviet Union, Miyamoto never expressed the slightest suspicion that she may have been the victim of VOKS's "techniques of hospitality." "I would like to see the March 8 celebration at the Tekstilinyi Factory. I went to VOKS", she wrote, for instance, in her diary (March 6, 1930).[44]

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[43] Nakamura, T. (1973) *Miyamoto Yuriko*. Tokyo: Chikuma shobō. 135.

[44] *MYZ*, 24:494.

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The reasons behind Miyamoto's commitment to communism have been debated by scholars over the years in an attempt to understand the nature of political commitment in general, and to communism, in particular. If in the case of Panait Istrati, his public renunciation of communism was clearly explained in his 1929 trilogy as disenchantment with the Soviet regime, disgust with the privileges accorded the party elites, and deep sadness at the plight of the social categories remaining on the fringes of society, Miyamoto's commitment to communism confused her contemporaries and made them regard it with significant suspicion. What could have driven a successful young writer coming from privilege and money to commit herself to a political movement that had been under scrutiny by the Japanese police and the Special Higher Police (Tokubetsu kōtō keisatsu, or Tokkō) ever since the formation of the first Japan Communist Party (JCP) in 1922? The mass arrests of the communists and leftists that shook Japan's public opinion in 1928 (The March 15 Incident, *San ichi go jiken*), and then again in 1929 (The April 16 Incident, *Yon ichi roku jiken*) must have been well-known to Miyamoto and should have deterred her from even considering joining a weakened political organization constantly under police surveillance. Despite the hostile political environment that she found at home upon her return from the Soviet Union, Miyamoto remained faithful to her commitment, and dedicated herself to working from within numerous leftist organizations.

According to Miyamoto's own statements, later captured and developed in her husband's writings about her and turned into official JCP lore, three main reasons led to her political transformation while in the Soviet Union: the treatment of Soviet women as equal partners to men in building the socialist society; her younger brother's suicide in 1928, and the letter he left behind about his uncertainty about the future; and her trip to Western Europe, which further convinced her that socialism was superior to capitalism in terms of protecting the proletariat masses from misery and poverty.[45] Never directly stated was her love for Russia fostered by childhood readings.[46] To all these, Miyamoto's emotional readiness to dedicate herself to an ideal that she had been lacking and that would henceforth drive her life and art must have played an equally important role in her decision-making process. The dissatisfaction with the life she had been leading, as a Japanese citizen and writer, may have equally constituted an impetus in this crucial decision. The various reasons offered for Miyamoto's adoption of communism never completely convinced all the analysts and fellow travelers. Only two weeks after her death in 1951, communist female writer Hirabayashi Taiko (1905-1972) called Miyamoto's path to communism "easy," and wrote: "She did not become a socialist inspired by Japanese society, but by the Soviet society."[47]

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[45] Iwabuchi, H. (1996) *Miyamoto Yuriko : kazoku, seiji, soshite feminizumu*. Tokyo: Kanrin shobō. 161.

[46] Ibid. 159.

Miyamoto's search for a social and political ideal can be arguably traced back to her ardent involvement in social and humanitarian activities, such as the relief work she did to counter the effects of the Russian famine of 1921, or for the victims of the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923. Moreover, inspired early in her life by humanitarian and egalitarian-utopian literature, a pining for an ideal society where all humans are equal and treated equally well by the state, had underlined Miyamoto's own literary work in her youth. Educated within a Western paradigm, Miyamoto would not have been radically different than her European and American counterparts who were at the time actively engaged in finding and living in those social systems and societies they perceived as incarnations of the "good society." In his 1998 work *Political Pilgrims: Western Intellectuals in Search of the Good Society*,[48] Paul Hollander took a closer look at the reasons that led many artists and members of the 1920s and 1930s intelligentsia to become firm believers in societies they considered embodiments of utopian ideas only to end up having to make peace with the fact that they could never live up to those expectations.

Hollander invoked two reasons that led Western intellectuals to support totalitarian regimes, such as the Soviet Union was becoming in the 1930s. One is the intellectuals' alienation from their own societies and their quest for utopias where they may feel empowered to build a new, "perfect" society, in accordance with their ideas about what that may mean.

> Not surprisingly, my inquiry found that alienation from one's own society and susceptibility to the attractions, real or imagined, of others are very

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[47] In *Miyamoto san no oshimu*, "Yomiuri shinbun", 1951, January 22, quoted in ibid. 161.

[48] Hollander, P. (1998) *Political Pilgrims: Western Intellectuals in Search of the Good Society* (3rd ed.). New Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers.

> closely linked. The late 1920s and early 1930s provide an excellent example. […] The Soviet case offered the most helpful alternative to the economic and social chaos of the […] period.[49]

Artists and intellectuals found in the Soviet and in later oppressive regimes "a sense of purpose" and seemingly "meaningful lives for their citizens."[50] As such, "a favorable predisposition toward these societies was based in part on the belief that they stood for the values the intellectuals cherished."[51]

The second reason—already invoked here—is what Hollander coined "techniques of hospitality". VOKS was the Soviet materialization of Hollander's concept and it must have been one of the essential factors contributing to Miyamoto's adoption of communism.

Two of the reasons considered crucial for Miyamoto's political transformation, her brother's suicide and the trip to Western Europe merit additional attention here. Miyamoto was the eldest of four siblings, but neither Kunio, Chūjōs' next born, nor Hisaeko, the junior, were as close to her as Hideo. He is reportedly the model for Yasushi, an often-present character in her *shishōsetsu* writings, a serious, sensitive, loving young man. Funny and energetic, Yasushi's hobby is to cultivate flowers in a greenhouse. Miyamoto's grief at his death is depicted in several short stories such *Omokage* (Visage, 1940[52]), as well as in the long novel *Road Posts* (part 1, chapter 3).[53]

The fact that her diary entries stopped abruptly for weeks in 1928 after she received the telegram informing her of her brother's death[54] is often indicated as a sign of the emotional effect Hideo's passing must have had on Miyamoto. "Her pain was so profound that even after she resumed writing her diary, she could not utter a word about her brother's death."[55] On October 13, she received a letter from her father with details about Hideo's suicide and it was only in that day's entry that, for the first time, she mentioned her brother's death.56 On October 19, in "words that seem to hit the paper,"57 she wrote:

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[49] Ibid. 7.

[50] Ibid. 8.

[51] Ibid. 8.

[52] *MYZ*, 5:325-337.

[53] *MYZ*, 7:269-342.

[54] *MYZ*, 24:298.

[55] Nakamura, T. (1973) *Miyamoto Yuriko*. Tokyo: Chikuma shobō. 113.

[56] *MYZ*, 24:307.

[57] Nakamura, T. (1973) *Miyamoto Yuriko*. Tokyo: Chikuma shobō. 113.

> His silhouette in the summer *kimono*, with the black muslin *obi*, or in his high school uniform… I plunge myself deep into these visions, dear visions. But it is so painful. (Oh, God!) Somehow, all my life's prospects for the future collapsed. […] He did not want to live a lie.[58]

Iwabuchi Hiroko does not, however, take this first expression of pain as relevant for the connection between Hideo's death and her adoption of communism. "Yuriko herself stressed Hideo's death [as a reason for her political transformation], in later years."[59] In other words, the significance accorded to her brother's suicide originated from an older Miyamoto looking back on her youth. Nakamura Tomoko also wrote: "In her later written "Nenpu"[60], Yuriko attached a great meaning to her brother's suicide." The passage of "Nenpu" (Timeline, 1948) that Nakamura is referring to is:

> 1928: this summer, on August 1, my brother Hideo (21) committed suicide. In his last letter to me, which was never sent, there are words of hate. Awake day and night, both his unexpected death (=downfall) and the ardent progress of this new [Soviet] society opened my eyes. I finally understand the aim, the shape, and the meaning of the fight I fought alone. I have an entirely different perspective of what political action is now. As an artist, I will not give up the uncompromising way of this social system. I will not give up my hate."[61]

In fact, both Nakamura and Iwabuchi followed the same reasoning as Honda Shugo, when he wrote in 1957: "I don't quite understand why she [Miyamoto] felt there to be such a direct connection between her true acceptance of communism and her brother's death."[62]

It is not unlikely that postwar Miyamoto would have looked back on the events of 1928 and attribute more significance to her brother's suicide than it might have had at the time. That, however, does not diminish the fact that she considered that personal event of her life relevant enough to have had a devastating impact on her worldview. Coming only a year after the suicide of Japanese writer Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892-1927), whose death was a shock not only to Miyamoto, but to all Japanese society, and whose famous final letter addressed to his friend, writer Kume Masao (1891-1952), talked about "a vague anxiety" about the future, Hideo's letter is eerily similar. Moreover, Akutagawa's gesture was interpreted in 1929 as the end of an era of politically unengaged literature by no other than Miyamoto Kenji, Miyamoto's future husband, in the seminal essay "Haiboku no bungaku" (The Literature of Defeat).[63] By the time she was re-evaluating the significance of Hideo's death in her own political awakening, Miyamoto Yuriko must have seen all these connections and purposely chose to augment the impact her brother's death had on her adoption of communism.

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[58] *MYZ*, 24:311.

[59] Iwabuchi, H. (1996) *Miyamoto Yuriko: kazoku, seiji, soshite feminizumu*. Tokyo: Kanrin shobō. 161.

[60] *MYZ*, 18:657-685.

[61] *MYZ*, 18:662.

[62] In *Miyamoto Yuriko: Sono shōgai to sakuhin*, in Honda Shugo (ed.), *Miyamoto Yuriko kenkyū* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1957), 4, quoted in Iwabuchi, H. (1996) *Miyamoto Yuriko: kazoku, seiji, soshite feminizumu*. Tokyo: Kanrin shobō. 161.

The other cause typically invoked for Miyamoto's adoption of communism, the trip to Western Europe and the ensuing comparison with the Soviet Union, represented more the occasion than the actual reason for her political awakening. Yuasa Yoshiko, her travel companion and life partner at the time, does put a lot of weight on Miyamoto's reaction to the misery of the working class in Western Europe:

> It is generally believed that she [Miyamoto] 'got red' while in the Soviet Union, and it is very true that the two years of life there changed the second half of her life, but I don't believe the importance of her experiences in the month she spent in London was without significance in her decision-making process.[64]

Similar to Hideo's death, Miyamoto declared in postwar writings that the economic collapse in Europe had been a determining factor in her political choice.[65] Had it not been for the Soviet Union propaganda and "techniques of hospitality", however, she might not have been primed the same way to notice the difference. By the time she left Soviet Russia, she might have already been convinced of its superiority. Miyamoto had lived in England and the United States during her childhood and adolescence, so the tares of that kind of capitalist society should have been familiar. Moreover, Europe's deep economic crisis at the end of the 1920s was not unknown to Miyamoto. While impactful, the experience of being there physically should not have been more than a confirmation of what she already knew from the media of the time.

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[63] For more on Miyamoto Kenji's reading of Akutagawa's final letter "Aru kyūyū e okuru shuki" (Letter to a Certain Friend), see Lippit, S. M. (2002) *Topographies of Japanese Modernism*. New York: Columbia University Press. pp. 39 et passim.

[64] Yuasa Yoshiko in the "Afterword" of *Seishun no kōkan: Wakaki hi no Miyamoto Yuriko no tegami*, in "Fūjin kōron", republished in *MYZ*, bekkan:9.

[65] See, for instance, *MYZ*, 18:78-79.

In conclusion, Miyamoto's adoption of communism was not necessarily the result of one direct factor, but an intricate net of reasons, spanning her entire life. From childhood readings to anxieties about a politically unengaged future to the sense of emotional and spiritual aimlessness to the experience of a capitalist system on the brink of collapse, and in light of the success of the "techniques of hospitality" employed by VOKS, Miyamoto's turn to communism became not only a conscientious choice, but also a well calculated one.

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A closer look at some of the texts produced by Miyamoto Yuriko during her time in the Soviet Union show a deliberate choice to introduce to Japanese readers selected aspects of life in Soviet Russia. Initially enticed through the VOKS "techniques of hospitality," there came a moment when, although she had more access to access the society around her, Miyamoto must have decided that the negative aspects she encountered were inevitable and small obstacles on the way to achieving the goals of the Bolshevik Revolution. It was, however, those negative aspects that shocked, disappointed, and led to loss of faith in the cause of the revolution for Soviet supporters, sympathizers, and fellow travelers. Istrati's denunciatory trilogy will be famously followed, a few years later, in 1936, by French writer André Gide (1869-1951).

Miyamoto's "Soveto kikō" texts can be categorized in different ways. The chronological order gives the reader the ability to better understand the author's evolution into a communist believer, and it has been touched upon earlier. Identifying overall themes offers, in turn, a different, and more meaningful way to analyze them individually, and as pieces of the whole group. Miyamoto Kenji grouped the texts by themes he identified.[66]

As such, the portrayal of the lives of regular people in a socialist country is one of the major themes. Miyamoto paid close attention to factories and workers, women and children, cultural aspects of daily life, all described objectively, with no ideological *parti pris*, at least in Miyamoto Kenji's view.

The theme comprises texts written mostly in 1928 and 1930, with the latter being better informed and showing more in-depth understanding of Soviet realities. "Life and culture are now portrayed using historical analyses of economic and political realities."[67] From 1928 until 1930, Miyamoto's position on Soviet issues turned partisan, supportive of revolutionary goals, and she adopted a stance diametrically opposed to that of the former Soviet supporters who renounced their allegiance to the cause after experiencing the Soviet Union in person. Miyamoto made a deliberate choice here, one in the name of the cause, and that would later defend when responding sharply to André Gide's criticism of Soviet Russia in her 1937 article, "Jiido to sono Soveto ryokōki" (Gide and His Soviet Travelogue).[68]

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[66] Miyamoto, K. (1963) *Miyamoto Yuriko no sekai*. Tokyo: Shin Nihon shuppansha. 122-127.

A different theme, in Miyamoto Kenji's assessment, is the interest of a *literata* for the literature, art, and culture of the Soviets. Most texts categorized here tend to be long discussions about writers, their political engagements, or comments on heated debates on the nature of literature, as well as reportage-like narratives about interactions between workers and proletarian writers, or about writers from the working class. Some, such as "Soveto bundan no genjō" (Current Conditions of the Soviet Literary Circles, 1931), go into detail about various Soviet writers of the time, and their works, discuss literary icons of the time, such as modernist poet Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893-1930),[69] and express the author's opinion on policies concerning the arts in the Soviet Union.

In these texts, Miyamoto often shows a keen interest in understanding how ordinary people's lives are impacted by pressures experienced at societal level:

> How does society change? And to what extent does that change impact people's feelings and makes them change? The Soviet people don't want to simply change their lives, they strive for internal change. The new, socialist literature shows them that they need to change their destinies on their own. Tolstoy was a great man, and Dostoyevsky's world is as violently colorful as a tempest in May, but they did not understand the revolution. They did not comprehend the turmoil and the changing nature of historical moments. Their personalities did not possess a trigger for class issues.[70]

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[67] Ibid.

[68] *MYZ*, 11, 20-31; See later a commentary on Miyamoto's position on Gide's *Travelogue*. Very similar to Istrati's, Gide's public denunciation of the Soviet regime came later, in 1936.

[69] Vladimir Mayakovsky, a futurist poet who transitioned after the October Revolution into a proletarian playwright, clashed with the official doctrine of socialist realism in arts, and came under heavy criticism from governmental art watchdog organizations. His suicide in 1930 is treated rather callously by Miyamoto as a necessity for the advancement of revolutionary ideals and somehow does not elicit feelings similar to Akutagawa's suicide from only three years before, although ironically, they are very similar.

[70] *MYZ*, 18:79.

Another theme in the Soviet texts is the writer's concern for changing her own writing style. That desire is increasingly more visible from "Impressions..." to texts such as "Atarashiki Shiberia o yokogiru" (Crossing the New Siberia, published in January-February 1931 in the magazine *Shojin geijutsu*). In the latter's "Chōsha no kotoba" (Author's Words), the preoccupation with her writing style is clearly stated: "I still write using my old techniques," and "I am thinking of putting an end to this manner of writing literature." Finally, Miyamoto wrote: "I am making a promise to myself, and to my readers: my next book will describe life in the Soviet Union in an organized manner. And in simpler words."[71] Simple words and an organized writing manner were demands originating from workers and addressed to Soviet proletarian writers to make literature more accessible to the working masses, as Miyamoto herself indicated in "Current Conditions of the Soviet Literary Circles."

A final theme mentioned by Miyamoto Kenji is the comparison between the realities of Soviet society and those of capitalist Japan, Western Europe or imperialist Russia. The comparison, Miyamoto Kenji claims, is "the expression of the author's belief that the Japanese masses will begin to desire their own liberation by realizing the shortcomings of the capitalist system and the benefit of the socialist model."[72]

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In addition to the themes proposed by Miyamoto Kenji and detailed above, the texts in "Soveto kikō" can also be classified along the lines of other overarching topics: Soviet women, children, workers, and culture. Close readings along these themes allow for comparisons with texts dealing with the same in Panait Istrati's denunciation of the Soviet regime, as well as André Gide's, in his 1936 volume *Retour de l'URSS* (Return from the USSR), and the 1937 sequel *Retouches à mon Retour de l'URSS* (Revisions of my Return from the USSR).

The texts dealing with the social status and conditions of Soviet women are the most numerous in Miyamoto's "Soveto kikō". Published in both leftist and general interest magazines, they convey Miyamoto's admiration for the progress achieved in the status of women in the Soviet Union. To summarize, Miyamoto records Soviet working women who enjoy guaranteed political and social rights, benefit from equality with their male counterparts, and are encouraged to return to school and continue their education. Additionally, they enjoy state protection as mothers. All, of course, undoubtedly great strides for women's rights. And they were even more shocking when compared to the status and rights of Japanese women at the same time. Miyamoto's excitement was, as such, not at all unwarranted.

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[71] *MYZ*, 18:18.

[72] Miyamoto, K. (1963) *Miyamoto Yuriko no sekai*. Tokyo: Shin Nihon shuppansha. 127.

She was impressed and fascinated by the celebration of March 8 as Women's Day. "In the USSR, every year on March 8, women leave the workplace one hour earlier to celebrate."[73] In an effort to be as authentic as possible, rather than commenting herself on Soviet women's rights, as they are presented to her, Miyamoto opts for quoting full speeches delivered by party leaders about the importance of women in Soviet society to show that it was indeed the official position of the Soviet authorities. Surprisingly, she seems to ignore the Japanese official propaganda about motherhood and the importance of women as Japan was sliding into fascism, to perhaps identify similarities and distinguish between reality and mere official posturing.

When comparing Soviet and Japanese women, Miyamoto emphasized the elevated status of the former, as portrayed in official state propaganda:

> Ever since the victory of the Revolution, Soviet women bring their contribution to proletarian production as well as to the building of socialism. In other words, they have their human rights recognized. […] when they possess similar skills, men and women alike receive *exactly the same wages*."[74]

The reality, however, did not match such an ideal as presented by the Soviet regime.

Russia Unveiled, the third volume of the trilogy published under Panait Istrati's name (albeit written by former Soviet leading journalist Boris Souvarine, who had broken away from the Party in 1924 following his criticism of Stalin's leadership), is filled with examples of abuse, misery and poverty experienced by Soviet citizens. All the examples in *Russia Unveiled* are excerpts from Soviet newspapers, selected by a former insider of the regime who was intimately acquainted with the realities of post-Lenin Soviet Union and the growing privilege of Party leadership under Stalin.

> "Pravda" of March 20, 1925 described the plight of female workers at Tula: "Investigations reveal a gloomy picture. The low level of education and almost complete ignorance, the absence of any qualifications for work

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[73] *MYZ*, 9:127.

[74] *MYZ*, 9:349. (emphasis added)

> and the consequently low wages, the expenses of feeding their families—all weigh heavily upon them and hamper their social and cultural development." Nearly all [women] had three, four, some five and six mouths to feed, and wages corresponding to the third category and were worth, at that time, about 10 rubles a month.[75]

Cited by Souvarine, Leon Trotsky too indicated the same issue in his article "Review of Economic Situation of Adolescents in 1924-25 and 1925-26":

> In many branches of industry, the wages earned by women workers in March 1926 were 51, 61 and 83 percent of the men's. The necessary measures have not been taken to protect female labor in such branches of industry as the working of turf-pits, lading and unlading, etc.[76]

Souvarine also acknowledged that "There certainly are some model maternity hospitals and crèches which visitors, tourists, and 'sham friends of the USSR' are taken to see. But surely these are totally insufficient for a country embracing 'one-sixth of the globe!'"[77]

Throughout her stay in the Soviet Union, Miyamoto must have encountered extraordinary female characters whom she projected into archetypal models for the Soviet woman. Captured in some of her texts, one of them is Ana Simova (a character in the postwar novel *Road Posts*), whom she met in Leningrad, as the president of the Leningrad Women's Council. An energetic party member, factory worker by day and student at night, she fascinated Miyamoto. Another was Natasha, the nurse who took care of her during her hospitalization in 1929. Natasha (Tania in "Children's, Children's, Children's Moscow"[78]) was also a party member, married to a factory worker who was going to school to become a baritone. Natasha was a nurse by day and taking School of Medicine courses in the evenings. Moreover, she shared her wish to become a mother one day, an idea that exhilarated Miyamoto, as Natasha did not seem concerned that having a baby would lead to her losing her hard-earned job.[79] These women existed in Soviet society, and they were certainly part of Miyamoto's experience there, but they were not the rule as much as the exception.

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[75] Istrati, P. (1975) *Russia unveiled*. Westport, CT: Hyperion Press. 93-94.

[76] Trotsky, *Review of Economic Situation of Adolescents in 1924-25 and 1925-26*, cited in ibid. 93.

[77] Ibid. 97.

[78] See Iwabuchi, H. (1996) *Miyamoto Yuriko: kazoku, seiji, soshite feminizumu*. Tokyo: Kanrin shobō. 163.

[79] *MYZ*, 9:101.

And she was bound to encounter the exceptions by virtue of the fact that she was a foreigner in a society that had a vested interest in projecting a certain image for outsiders. Moreover, most of the people she interacted with were carefully selected by VOKS and the authorities. The somber of Soviet women was better captured in this quote from a *Pravda* article from 1925, cited in *Russia Unveiled*:

> Out of 42 who were questioned, five women could not send their children to school for want of material needs of various kinds; 11 had no boots or underclothing either for themselves or for their children; 14 could not always provide one hot dish a day; 12 were illiterate. […] In the Astrakhan fisheries, women workers had for a long time been forced into immoral intercourse and "above all, received no payment for their services." So weak were they from want of food that they could not refuse the advances made on them by the foremen. Even the most courageous of them lost their means of livelihood. "Morals have hardly been altered at all by the Revolution. Just as in the old days, the directors of the concern run after the women on the rafts and into the rushes and catch them, and not only the responsible chiefs but even the humblest of the employees make this a practice." Newspaper labor correspondents called attention to numerous cases of this sort, but the Unions only dismissed those who were caught in the act. "That was no remedy at all," for their seducers…[80]

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The situation is similar in the case of Miyamoto's articles about children. As is the case with the women described in her reportages, the children she encountered and introduced to her readers in Japan are real, and other visitors to the USSR saw them as well in their VOKS-organized tours. The same visitors, however, also saw the poverty most children in Soviet Russia experienced from the second half of the 1920s throughout the outbreak of War World II. Few travelers of the time fail to mention in their travelogues the omnipresent *bezprizorni*, homeless children, who lived on the street and in sewers after running away from their parents' homes due to physical abuse, lack of food, and exploitation. A major social issue, sometimes openly and directly debated in the Soviet media, *bezprizorni* are strikingly absent from Miyamoto's writings.

Most of her articles dealing with children are also articles about women and motherhood, although two are dedicated exclusively to children and the care the Soviet state accords them. They are "Tanoshii Soveto no kodomo"

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[80] Istrati, P. (1975) *Russia unveiled*. Westport, CT: Hyperion Press. 94.

(The Enjoyable Children of the Soviets, published in *Fujin geijutsu*, March 1931) and "Soveto no pioniēru wa nani shite asobu ka" (How Do Soviet Union's Young Pioneers Play? in *Shōnen senki*, May 1931).

In Miyamoto's Soviet Union, children are happy, well-fed and go to daycare centers in factories where their parents work. Misha is one of the young Russian children in Miyamoto's articles. He is barely a toddler and goes to daycare every morning. There he learns how to take care of his body, how to wash his hands and brush his teeth. His mother takes him to daycare by streetcar. "The streetcar is always full, but Misha and his mother don't need to worry about it. In the Soviet Union, children and their parents can always get on public transportation using the driver's door."[81] At daycare, Misha plays with other children, and makes fun of one of his playmates, Varosha. When his family moves to a new apartment building, he no longer needs to go to the factory daycare, because their new building has a kindergarten on the first floor.

> Children are very important in Soviet Russia. For them to grow up to be healthy, strong, good workers, the state allocates whenever possible money for their development. So, Misha can easily change his daycare for a kindergarten because there are many such institutions in the cities. And the plan is to keep increasing their numbers […] The number of beds in daycare facilities in 1928 was 34,000. By 1933, it is expected to reach 65,000. The number of children going to nurseries and daycare centers was of 225,300, but it is expected to reach 1,040,000 by 1933.[82]

Miyamoto borrowed all the data from official Soviet five-year plan documents.

Missing from the official picture—and, as such, absent from her writings—is the dark side of children exploitation, still prevalent in Soviet Russia.

> At the Fourth Congress of the Communist Youth a delegate said in his report: "Painful though it be, the fact is that no one troubles with the amount of work done by children. At first sight it seems impossible to believe that the conditions revealed in their letters really do exist in the USSR. Members of the children's organizations ('pioneers') are unanimous in saying that children are obliged to work 14 to 16 hours a day for a monthly salary of between five and 10 rubles."[83]

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[81] *MYZ*, 9:237.

[82] *MYZ*, 9:239.

[83] Istrati, P. (1975) *Russia unveiled*. Westport, CT: Hyperion Press. 99. Cited from "Youth

Dozens of similar examples of child abuse are included in the trilogy signed by Panait Istrati. Here is just another one about the plight of girls, the very same who were to become empowered Soviet women, as Miyamoto's articles indicate. "Little girls in the tens of thousands worked as nurses and general maids and worked like slaves. Absence of education, harsh treatment, and deplorable sanitary conditions were frequently reported."[84]

Miyamoto equally praised young pioneer camps, and many deserved the praise as other visitors of the time include in their own testimonials. French writer André Gide wrote a few years after Miyamoto: "the camp was marvelous. […] Everything one might imagine for the children's well-being, their hygiene, sports training, amusement, and pleasure was present. The children breathed health and happiness."[85] Gide was, however, distraught by the level of political indoctrination that seemed to suffocate and obliterate general education. The children he encountered knew virtually nothing of the world outside Russia and declared proudly that there was no need for them to ever study foreign languages. Their education seemed to him rather basic and steeped in propaganda slogans and phraseology they recited mechanically to all foreign visitors.

Gide was equally saddened by his encounters with *bezprizorni*. When he visited the Soviet Union, they were still a major problem, as troublesome as in 1929, when Istrati and Miyamoto were there. Gide saw them on the streets of Sevastopol and he was told that there were many more in Odessa. In summertime their presence was striking, because having no place to live, they were forced to wear all the clothes they owned. So, while everyone else wore light pants and shirts, the *bezprizorni* children looked unusually warmly dressed.[86] Gide noted:

> We talked with some of them; we won their confidence. They ended up showing us the place where they slept when the weather wasn't good enough to sleep outside: it was near the place where a statue of Lenin, placed under a beautiful portal, dominated the embarking platform.[87]

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Numerous articles in Miyamoto's "Soveto kikō" focus primarily on Soviet workers and their life in a budding communist society, and as active participants in its building.

Pravda" of July 25, 1929.

[84] Ibid. 99. In the same "Youth Pravda" issue of July 25, 1929.

[85] Gide, A. (1936) *Retour de l'URSS*. Paris: Gallimard. 58.

[86] Ibid. 123.

[87] Ibid. 124.

To summarize Miyamoto's articles on Soviet workers, she defines the class itself as everyone in the Union, from picturesque Moscow sleigh drivers to the artists she encounters on her trips throughout the country. A full description of the Soviet worker as experienced and understood by the Japanese writer is virtually impossible, scattered as it is throughout all the texts of the time, but there are several points that return consistently throughout the collection. In essence, Soviet workers are the leading social class of one of the largest countries in the world and the "vanguard of the proletariat's fight for freedom."[88] Main work force of the Soviet Union and sole beneficiary of its production, they work seven hours per day, six days per week. Miyamoto makes, however, a point of mentioning that not all Soviet workers are party members, and the Soviet government does discriminate based on party membership.[89]

Workers benefit from various services, such as daycare centers, professional schools, libraries,[90] all provided at the workplace. Most of the benefits she listed are owed to a text about the Rostov Tobacco Factory (The Giant), a model factory, famous throughout the Soviet Union and preferred destination for VOKS-guided tours. According to Miyamoto, housing shortages affected only foreign residents who were no longer allowed by the Soviet state to rent houses and had to settle for hotel rooms. Workers, although not permitted to own a home, had priority to rent, and the state, the only legal landlord in the country, found ways to accommodate their needs. "If they are in Moscow, individuals or associations must go to the Moscow City Administrative Bureau of Residential Locations in order to rent a house."[91] It is worth noting here that one of the major points of contention for Panait Istrati in his separation from the Soviet regime was the way in which state authorities forcefully removed one of the old communist revolutionaries from his own home to make room for a new party leader in what came to be known as the "Russakov Affair."[92]

In Miyamoto's view, all evils perpetrated against the Russian working class were things of the past. Very much a supporter of all Stalin-initiated policies and legislation, Miyamoto adopted a critical attitude toward most everything done before 1928, the starting point of Stalin's first five-year plan. In line with official party directives of the time, Miyamoto expressed outrage in her texts at the privileges of the *kulaks* (rich farmers), one of the economic engines under Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP) of a mostly agrarian-based economy, peppered her texts with slogans printed in special font or set out in boxes to ensure that they stand out to the reader, and gets emotional when describing sessions of self-criticism.

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[88] *MYZ*, 9:332.

[89] *MYZ*, 9:564.

[90] *MYZ*, 9:563.

[91] *MYZ*, 9:413.

[92] For more on the "Russakov Affair" see *Soviets 1929*, Victor Serge's volume in Istrati's trilogy. Serge was Russakov's son-in-law, and, as such, deeply impacted by the injustice committed against his family.

The "dekulakization" movement, officially launched by Stalin in December 1929 took grotesque forms and led to a veritable genocide of an entire social group of wealthy and relatively educated farmers.[93] Their elimination was replaced by the government propaganda with an avid public promotion of the *udarnik* (overproductive workers), who were presented as heroes of the socialist production system. Miyamoto wrote numerous pages in her articles about Soviet workers praising *udarnik* work.

A few short years after Miyamoto's writings, André Gide agreed that social classes seemed to have been indeed eliminated in the Soviet Union. That, however, did not mean that Soviet workers were economically stable and protected by the state, as they should have been: "There are, of course, no more classes in the USSR. But, there are poor. Too many of them; way too many. I was hoping not to see them, or to be more exact: I came to the USSR not to see them anymore."[94]

And while Miyamoto does not go into detail about the actual role played by the *udarnik* system in the creation of the new, reinvented revolutionary worker of a country where farming and not industrial production was the norm, Gide wrote, rather cynically and callously:

> They invented the *udarnik* work to counterbalance the nonchalance (in the old days they would have used the whip). *Udarnik* work would be meaningless in a country where workers work. But, here (in the Soviet Union), as soon as they are left to their devices, most people relax.[95]

One text in particular deserves special attention in any discussion about Miyamoto Yuriko's political commitment to communism, her 1931 "Naze Soveto dōmei ni shitsugyō ga nai ka" (Why is there no unemployment in the

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[93] For more on *kulaks* and their plight after the victory of the Bolshevik Revolution, see Conquest, R. (1986) *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[94] Gide, A. (1936) *Retour de l'URSS*. Paris: Gallimard. 65.

[95] Ibid. 43.

Soviet Union).[96] Written two months after her return to Japan, Miyamoto claimed that the Soviet Union was the only country in the world that had completely eliminated unemployment: "[…] somehow, only the Soviet Union has no more unemployment."[97] Miyamoto continued by invoking the case of the United States where the Great Depression had turned "the dream of perpetual good times" into 6,000,000 unemployed workers. "In all collapsing capitalist powers, the proletariat is crushed between production rationalization and labor intensification. […] Regardless of how low their class consciousness may be, workers worldwide have these words imprinted in their minds: There is no unemployment in the Soviet Union."[98] Miyamoto explained this amazing feat as the result of the implementation of Stalin's first five-year plan. In 1928 when the plan had started, there were 11,303,000 unemployed workers in the Soviet Union. The five-year plan, however, had created tremendous need for labor force, and, as such, all those unemployed in 1928 had been absorbed into the workforce.

Published in 1929, Istrati's trilogy does not provide data for the early 1930s, but Gide's 1936 work addresses the issues of unemployment and low productivity.

Commenting on his late spouse's misrepresentation in this 1931 article, Miyamoto Kenji would later admit that she must have been aware that her claim was false. After all, Stalin himself addressed the issue in his speech at the 16th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in June 1930, when Miyamoto was still in the Soviet Union. And Miyamoto knew the speech, as she invoked it later in her work.[99] Stalin declared in that speech: "Furthermore, in spite of our unusual growth rate, one might still speak today of negatives, as there are still 1,000,000 unemployed people, according to our information."[100] Stalin also commented in his speech at the Congress on the overall slow industrial growth rate and added that "compared to capitalist economies, our growth is still *slow*."[101]

Her own misrepresentation did not prevent Miyamoto from vehemently criticizing Gide on his 1936 and 1937 Soviet travelogues. Published in 1937 the article "Gide and his Soviet Travelogue" accused the French writer of allowing personal feelings to influence his judgement of Soviet society. Miyamoto was referring there to the death in a Sevastopol hospital of Eugène Dabit (1898-1936), gifted socialist writer and one of Gide's companions on the literary tour of the Soviet Union. Dabit's death was due to a case of misdiagnosed typhoid fever, and Gide held the Ukrainian doctors' incompetence responsible for his friend's death. Deeply affected by the loss, Gide dedicated his *Travelogue* to the memory of his friend and fellow artist. Ironically, despite her accusation of Gide, a few years later, in her autobiographical "Timeline," Miyamoto also invoked her brother's suicide as a reason for her own adoption of communism. In the end, Miyamoto dismissed Gide and his criticism of the Soviet society as coming from someone who was not a "true Marxist," and who "lacked class consciousness" and "political culture."[102]

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[96] *MYZ*, 9:234-237.

[97] *MYZ*, 9:235.

[98] Ibid.

[99] *MYZ,* 24:523.

[100] Cited in Miyamoto, K. (1963) *Miyamoto Yuriko no sekai*. Tokyo: Shin Nihon shuppansha. 124.

[101] Cited in ibid.

Miyamoto Kenji tried to defend his life partner and the misleading information she provided in her articles. An optimist by nature, he wrote, although she did know of the problems the Soviet society was facing and she was aware of unemployment and slow industrial growth, she took them to be unavoidable hurdles that would be eventually resolved.[103]

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Several articles in Miyamoto's collection from the Soviet Union deal with arts and culture, and two main subthemes are evident. One is the preoccupation with "improving workers' cultural level," and the other is the role of art and artists in socialist society. Completely left out by Istrati in his writings, the workers' clubs are one aspect of Soviet society that Miyamoto and Gide were equally thrilled to experience. The reading, painting, literary criticism and debate clubs in factories, the Culture Parks in all major cities, where people came together to read, watch movies or theater plays, or listen to choir music were all benefits Soviet workers enjoyed.

On the role of the artists and their art in socialist society, however, Miyamoto adopted an ideological hardline. Great early Soviet writers such as Boris Pilnyak (1894-1937)[104] and Vladimir Mayakovsky became in

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[102] *MYZ*, 11:12.

[103] Miyamoto, K. (1963) *Miyamoto Yuriko no sekai*. Tokyo: Shin Nihon shuppansha. 124.

[104] Boris Pilnyak, pseudonym of Boris Andreyevich Vogau (1894-1937), Soviet writer of Symbolist novels and stories, prominent in the 1920s. He traveled to Asia (Turkey, China, Japan) in 1926. Banned by Stalin, Pilnyak was arrested in 1937 for not complying with the norms of Socialist realism and died the same year in prison. Posthumously rehabilitated, a volume offering a very limited selection of his works was published in

Miyamoto's texts grotesque representatives of bourgeois artistic practices and sensibility, and their ultimate defeat, either by ostracization or suicide, a justified act of the class struggle that needs to subjugate art to its own goals. Great theories and debates of the time over the nature of proletarian literature and art were summarily dismissed when they did not comply with the precepts of Marxist materialist dialectics, or fall outside the norms of the newly-defined "socialist realism."

Discussions and debates in other fields, such as film or theater reveal a similar Socialist realism hardline. For instance, artists coming from intellectual families—which happened to be Miyamoto's own case—were deemed valuable only if they adopted and embraced class-consciousness in their wors, while art was not to express individualist attitudes or sentiment in any shape or form, as its value was exclusively given by compliance with the taste and the class needs of the working masses. The list of reductionist statements and value judgements goes on.

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In conclusion, the comparative reading of works from writers who came into political consciousness while visiting the budding authoritarian regime of Stalin's Soviet Union in late 1920s revealed that, ultimately, the same experience can lead to completely opposite outcomes. For politically unengaged Japanese female writer Miyamoto Yuriko, the careful selection of sights she was allowed to visit led to the desired outcome of the Soviet authorities and not only convinced her of the superiority of the socialist society that was being built but led to her wholeheartedly adopting communism and making it her life goal. So dedicated was she to the cause of communism that she never gave up her creed despite several arrests and significant time spent in prison that ultimately led to her untimely death. At the opposite pole, fervent communist supporter Romanian French writer Panait Istrati, a genius vagabond and working-class writer, was so disappointed with Soviet realities that he became a vehement opponent of the regime and of communism altogether.

1976. Miyamoto discussed him in a couple of articles, especially due to his connection with Japan. Pilnyak wrote *Korni yaponskogo solntsa* (The Roots of the Japanese Sun), following a trip to Japan in 1926, where he tried to set up the Japanese branch of the Russo-Japanese Literary Society, and *Kamni i korni* (Rocks and roots), in 1934, after a second visit to Japan. For more on him and other early Soviet writers see Struve, G. (1971) *Russian Literature under Lenin and Stalin, 1917-1953*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Almost contemporaries, the two writers come from diametrically opposed social backgrounds, Miyamoto from wealth, high social status, and advanced education, and Istrati from poverty and *lumpenproletariat*. Similar in their early love for literature, however, both Miyamoto and Istrati were inspired to write by almost the same sources, most prominently modern Russian writers, and ended up with debut works stylistically resembling the Russian modern masters, but most of all, Maxim Gorky's. Constantly dissatisfied and rebellious, both ardently searched for ways to bring a positive contribution to the lives of their fellow humans. And while Miyamoto decided on a political course that ended up placing her on the side of a brutal dictatorial regime, Istrati's flirtations with the Romanian Nazi organization of the Iron Guard in his last year of life may have ultimately led him in that ideological direction, should he had lived longer. Both Miyamoto and Istrati exemplified the tragic destiny of the artists of the first decades of the last century who struggled to make sense of the world around them, of their social, political, and intellectual leadership role in it, of their art and its meaning to their fellow humans, and of the competing ideologies that ultimately broke the world into two opposing camps for half a century. In the end, they both tried to control and organize that troubled and confusing global environment through their art and activism.

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CONTEMPORARY URBAN HIDEAWAYS: SHOPS IN TWO JAPANESE NOVELS

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Abstract: The aim of the present study is to identify how different types of shops—a thrift shop and a convenience store—are represented in two Japanese novels that illustrate various facets of contemporary society: Kawakami Hiromi's (b. 1958) *Furudōgu Nakano shōten* (The Nakano Thrift Shop, 2005) and Murata Sayaka's (b. 1979) *Konbini ningen* (Convenience Store Woman, 2016). What are the narratives that define such spaces of monetary transit? How do these writers weave a specific image of the shop in their prose? And what role does the shop play in these novels that present aspects of contemporaneity – for example, on the one hand, social phobia in the case of Kawakami's male character Takeo, and on the other hand, alienation and the pressure to conform to society's norms in the case of Murata's female protagonist Keiko? In this article I analyze how these commercial spaces are depicted as urban hideaways in Kawakami Hiromi's *The Nakano Thrift Shop* and Murata Sayaka's *Convenience Store Woman*. These places are characterized not only by the

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financial dimension, but by an emotional one as well, namely the possibility of building new relationships with other people (for instance, the staff members, their relatives, and the customers) and a special bond with one's workplace.[2]

Keywords: *Japanese literature, Kawakami Hiromi, Murata Sayaka, shop, hideaway.*

Introduction

In his seminal contribution to the understading of individual perception of place, *The Betweenness of Place*: *Towards a Geography of Modernity*, Nicholas Entrikin wrote:

> To understand place requires that we have access to both an objective and a subjective reality. From the decentered vantage point of the theoretical scientist, place becomes either location or a set of generic relations and thereby loses much of its significance for human action. From the centered viewpoint of the subject, place has meaning only in relation to an individual's or a group's goals and concerns. Place is best viewed from points in between. (Entrikin 1991, 5)

Place has not only a spatial meaning, but an emotional one: by indicating the name of a specific place, one does not only delimit it from some different places, but one may also attach a psychological dimension to it – some typical examples for this case are one's room, one's home, and one's homeland. In other words, one deals in such situations with what I would like to call *psychological geography*, in which the spatial coordinates intertwine with one's interiority, which also lends meaning to that particular place. In the modern world, as we know, the inability to find a purpose in life, alienation, mental illness, the pressure to conform to society's norms, and other psychological issues are prevalent. As data indicated by World Health Organization (WHO) show, "1 in every 8 people in the world live with a mental disorder" (World Health Organization 2022). Moreover, as regards Japan, it

> …has one of the highest suicide rates among Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. Since the economic

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> slump in the 1990s, multiple mental health-related social issues have emerged and highlighted the distinctive psychological features of Japanese society. *Karoshi* - deaths and suicides from overwork, *hikikomori* – people who lock themselves in at home to shut out social contacts, and long-term absentees at schools are the most frequently cited mental and social problems in recent years. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has further increased the focus on active mental health maintenance and mental wellness initiatives. (Statista Research Department 2022)

As can be observed, there are even specific forms of mental and social issues that characterize Japanese society, some of them being related to the over-demanding working conditions or with the need to isolate oneself. What is more, the economic or the pandemic context influenced the emergence of new mental and social disorders or the way they are approached by institutions. Therefore, it seems that places endowed with an atmosphere that may contribute to their guests' or inhabitants' well-being can generate a sense of belonging or constitute an "enclave that offers the characters respite from the rough and tumble of late capitalism", as Larson claimed in his review titled "The Anxiety of Intimacy in Hiromi Kawakami's 'The Nakano Thrift Shop.'" (Larson 2017). Such is the case of the two fictional shops, in Kawakami Hiromi and Murata Sayaka's novels, *Furudōgu Nakano shōten* (The Nakano Thrift Shop, 2005) and *Konbini ningen* (Convenience Store Woman, 2016).

The aim of this study is to illustrate how the space of the shop interacts with the identities of the protagonists of the two works, Suganuma Hitomi and Furukura Keiko. After referring to the category of *shishōsetsu/watakushi shōsetsu* "the I-novel" (a literary category which includes works "narrated in the first or third person in such a way as to represent with utter conviction the author's personal experience" (Fowler 1988, xvi)) in the literature of these two Japanese authors, I will present the relationship between various emotional and social issues and the female protagonists. Then I will explain how the Japanese writers depicted the shop as a contemporary hideaway in both novels.

Emotional and Social Issues in the Case of Suganuma Hitomi and Furukura Keiko

Shishōsetsu "the I-novel", a category that, as Hijiya-Kirschnereit (1996, 3) explained, has origins in "*shizenshugi*, a literary current that took its orientation from European naturalism and declared its dedication to truth and ‘straightforward description’” (Hijiya-Kirschnereit 1996, 3), emerges at the beginning of twentieth century (Hijiya-Kirschnereit 1996, 3). During the Taishō era (1912-1926), it was marked by an extraordinary development (Ng 2009, 311) and “continues to form the metanarrative of Japanese literature and criticism up until today” (Ng 2009, 311). What is more, as Karatani noted, during the Taishō period, the *shishōsetsu* entered the literary world “as a reaction against the structure of the modern novel. The ‘I’ of the *shishōsetsu* was no longer a subject-on the contrary, for that ‘I,’ subjectivity was a fabrication. The *shishōsetsu* was fundamentally antithetical to structure, to logic, and to intellectuality” (Karatani 1998, 171-72). Actually, what characterizes this literary genre is “the conflation ... of the ‘I’ who confesses and the subject of confession” (Karatani 1998, 76). In addition to this, *shishōsetsu* is a combination of “transparency, sincerity, subjectivity, and autobiographical character” (Coenradie 2017, 304); moreover, its foundation lies in “the assumption that realism in the novel can only be founded on authenticated personal experience. Fiction and autobiography thus overlap when the author concentrates on narrating his or her own life and feelings.” (Coenradie 2017, 304)

In analyzing Kawakami’s fictional characters, the researcher Yuko Ogawa commented, her “protagonists’ age depends on the author’s age at the time. Additionally, the background of her protagonist is also similar to the author’s” (Ogawa 2019, 112). As regards Kawakami, she uses the literary conventions of the *shishōsetsu*, an aspect which is demonstrated, for instance, by the striking resemblance between the given name of the main character in the novel *The Nakano Thrift Shop* - Hitomi - and Kawakami’s given name - Hiromi. What is more, when taking into consideration their literary value, one can state that Kawakami’s works belong to “*junbungaku* – high artistic literature, carrying important content” (Kubiak Ho-Chi 2018, 84). *Junbungaku* “pure literature” can be seen as being “In contrast, if not really in competition, to the commercialized genres” (Morris 1997, 270), the opposition between *junbungaku* “pure literature” and *taishū bungaku* “popular literature” or “literature for the masses” being a famous one in the Japanese literary world. Actually, *junbungaku* is regarded as being in opposition to many literary forms: “the way it is used in Japan would seem to indicate that it is an antonym for popular literature or, more specifically, literature of action, tales of adventure, sex stories, and so forth” (Anderson, Richie 1982, 122). As Morris pointed out, to the category of *junbungaku* belong “most of the writers known outside Japan” (Morris 1997, 270), and

"The major publishers ... continue to publish *junbungaku* authors largely as a matter of prestige (Morris 1997, 270). Besides, for Strecher, "pure literature" is related to Japaneseness, through such literary works being illustrated aspects of what it means to be Japanese (Strecher 2017, 73):

> 'Pure literature,' despite its grounding in Western models imported during the Meiji period, was always intended as a wholly *Japanese* mode of writing, intended for *Japanese* readers, meant to construct Japanese models of subjectivity, to express, indeed, something essential about *being Japanese*. (Strecher 2017, 73, emphasis in original)

Regarding the literary subjects Kawakami chooses for her novels, Gebhardt noted that the Japanese writer "offers escape routes from the Heisei reality" (Gebhardt 2011, 469). In the novel *The Nakano Thrift Shop*, the young Suganuma Hitomi, the narrator, works as a shop assistant at Mr. Nakano Haruo's store, where various second-hand products are sold. She falls in love with her coworker, Kiryū Takeo, and, although their relationship is not yet romantic, in the end, we are told that they meet again in the hallway of the IT company for which Hitomi works after she became a certified accountant.

The semi-autobiographical dimension is present also in Murata Sayaka's novel *Convenience Store Woman*, in which the life of Furukura Keiko – an unmarried 36-year-old woman – is depicted. As Murata explains,

> The convenience store depicted in the novel is an ideal store. I have worked in 5 or 6 different stores and incidentally all of them had gone bankrupt. So, I merged these stores together and created an ideal, ultimate store as if I was its manager: with its morning salutation, with motivated employees. (Murata Sayaka in Buritica Alzate 2020, 149)

The protagonist has been working at the convenience store Hiiromachi Station Smile Mart for 18 years. Being unmarried and having no plan for building a family in order to become a person accepted by society, her personal choice to continue working in the convenience store is not understood by her relatives and coworkers, who still hope that they will witness Furukura Keiko's integration in society. Although not interested in dating, she will live in the same apartment with Shiraha, a former coworker; thus they will build the image of a couple in the eyes of those that consider that having a partner is a very important aspect. Furthermore, after quitting her job at Smile Mart, she understands that she had lost her purpose in life, so when she “meets” another *konbini*, she is convinced that she belongs to the space of a convenience store.

What is more, Kawakami’s novel *The Nakano Thrift Shop* “offers narrational flatness to a global readership that is indulging in the pleasures of the moratorium culture of contemporary Japan” (Gebhardt 2009, 699); it comprises the figure of the *moratorium man* – the man who puts off phases such as building a family and having a serious career (Okonogi 1981). As defined by Erik H. Erikson,

> A moratorium is a period of delay granted to somebody who is not ready to meet an obligation or forced on somebody who should give himself time. By psychosocial moratorium, then, we mean a delay of adult commitments, and yet it is not only a delay. It is a period that is characterized by a selective permissiveness on the part of society and of provocative playfulness on the part of youth, and yet it also often leads to deep, if often transitory, commitment on the part of youth, and ends in a more or less ceremonial confirmation of commitment on the part of society. (Erikson 1968, 157)

This period is distinguished by a different approach to the behaviour considered by society as being specific for adulthood. As “a prolongation of the interval between youth and adulthood, which we will call a ‘psychosocial moratorium’” (Erikson 1968, 143), the *moratorium* denotes an interval during which people postpone the social roles they should fulfill as adults in accordance with the social norms. In addition to this,

> Present-day society embraces an increasing number of people who have no sense of belonging to any party or organization but instead are oriented toward non-affiliation, escape from controlled society, and youth culture. I have called them the ‘moratorium people.’ (Okonogi 1978, 17 quoted in Kinsella 1998, 291-92)

Suganuma Hitomi and Kiryū Takeo are such figures; they work at Mr. Nakano’s thrift shop, but after the owner closes it, they will work in a different place – an IT company. Hitomi is constantly seen as a child by Mr. Nakano; for example, she sits in the truck between him and his beloved Sakiko, or Mr. Nakano asks her “‘Hitomi, don’t you think you’re perfectly capable of taking care?’” (Kawakami 2021, 185) after Sakiko told them that they would play *chinchirorin*, a gambling game which implies the use of three dice. Additionally, in this previously mentioned scene, Hitomi and Mr. Nakano play the role of children, while Sakiko plays the role of the parent, which again signalizes that Hitomi is rather portrayed as a girl and not as a woman during the first part of the novel. At the same time, Takeo, her coworker who goes on pickups, the boy whom she secretly loves and with whom she occasionally goes out without having a well-defined relationship, rarely talks and gives short answers to every question the curious Hitomi asks. He dropped out of high school after being a victim of *ijime* (bullying) (a classmate slammed one of Takeo's fingers in the door) and is afraid of people. Although at the end of the novel Hitomi tells us that she works for an IT company, when meeting again Mr. Nakano, his sister Masayo and Takeo, the protagonist exclaims that she misses the thrift shop and that the presence of the three reminds her of the past, when all of them shared moments in the shop. In addition to this, as Mr. Nakano underlines, "But the Nakano shop lives on forever" (Kawakami 2021, 259), thus suggesting that the store represents a memorable place, where everyone witnessed moments that somehow contributed to embellishing one's life. Moreover, although it is a public space, where one sells second-hand objects, Mr. Nakano's store became a space of intimacy: there are a lot of scenes in which discussions between Hitomi and Masayo or Hitomi and Mr. Nakano on intimate subjects such as love are presented. As Larson explained with regard to Kawakami's literary work,

> Even as the novel grapples with the nature of social anxiety in the current culture, it also represents something of an asylum from contemporary, urban Japanese life — for the reader as much as it does for the characters. The thrift shop occupies a storefront in a fading *shotengai* — the shopping districts built during Japan's postwar boom that can be found all over the country — and over the course of the narrative it serves as an enclave that offers the characters respite from the rough and tumble of late capitalism. (Larson 2017)

The thrift shop is a space that can be seen as being in contrast to the rest of the world to which the characters in this novel belong: it can be perceived as a place where one finds a form of tranquility (apart from the urban tumult), which ensures his/her emotional safety. Contrary to the outside world, which is characterized by ceaseless agitation and puts a lot of pressure on people, this store functions as an oasis, where quietude permeates almost everything. Thus, it fulfills a bivalent role: that of opening itself to the public (to the potential customers) by offering a variety of products and that of providing an ambiance of trust and emotional safety, where the unconfident individuals can recount their stories to people that wish to listen to them. What is more, the thrift shop almost functions as a home, while the characters' homes are rarely mentioned and described, a fact which accentuates the characters' emotional dependence on the store and its total integration into their everyday life.

On the other hand, as the protagonist of Murata's novel tells us in the first part of the novel, her childhood was also made of odd situations which demonstrated her offbeat personality. For instance, after seeing a dead bird in a park, little Keiko thinks she could bring it home and transform it into a meal and, while trying to stop a fight scene between two boys in her school, she hits one of them, thus shocking her teachers. As McNeill describes Murata's main character, she "lives in a sort of Kafkaesque nightmare of standing out or causing offense, and mimics others to blend in, echoing Murata's own detached childhood" (McNeill 2020, 5). Indeed, Keiko's unusual behaviour delimits her from what is considered a normal, socially accepted human being and, as a consequence, she decides to try to get hold of herself, to imitate the others, and to follow the instructions the other people give her. Although she goes to a psychologist, there is no change in her way of acting: her passivity and isolation from the society which imposes norms will accompany her for the rest of her life.

The *konbini* comes into Keiko's life as a presence that contributes to reconstructing her identity and giving her a purpose in life, thus integrating her into the normal cycle of human existence. While rebuilding her in order to fit into society, the shop preserves her peculiarities and even amplifies them, because Keiko only apparently fits society. The convenience store transforms the protagonist into a dependent being—Keiko is dependent on the life of the store—, thus accentuating the main character's singularity. On the first day of work at the convenience store, she feels that she gains a new status, becoming an active part of the mechanism of society: "At that moment, for the first time ever, I felt I'd become a part in the machine of society. *I've been reborn*, I thought. That day, I actually became a normal cog in society." (Murata 2019, 19-20)

She thus participates in the economic and social life, being apparently no more isolated from the rest of the world. After resigning from this part-time job (under the influence of another social outcast that worked in Smile Mart and that lived in Keiko's apartment – the coworker called Shiraha) and entering a convenience store, she writes that "I caught sight of myself reflected in the window of the convenience store I'd just come out of. ... For the first time, I could think of the me in the window as a being with meaning." (Murata 2019, 163)

This excerpt illustrates the fact that the *convenience store*—be it the one where she worked or another one—constitutes a genuine *window*, which shows her true self and her role in the mechanism of society. What is more, the *konbini* represents not only the center of Keiko's existence, but her existence. By working there, she concentrates no more on the demands of her family and friends - that of getting married and being no more a part-time worker -, but finds refuge in a place that hides her from the people that could judge her unconventional way of being.

The Shop as a Contemporary Hideaway

The convenience store, Hiiromachi Station Smile Mart, in Murata's novel is a place where one follows a strict set of rules that are specific for their job and finds purpose in life. By comparison, the thrift shop in Kawakami's work is an urban hideaway clearly demarcated from the rest of the city, where one meets peace and various forms of being together and spending time with her coworker, the owner of the shop and his sister. The fictional characters thus discover "corners" of calmness. Additionally, as I will demonstrate, they contribute to the literary characters' better understanding of their personality and constitute spaces where one can isolate their frail self from the rest of the society that obliges them to abide by rigid norms.

Furthermore, in his analysis of Charles Dickens' literary work *The Old Curiosity Shop*, Hollington stated that „elsewhere ... objects are represented as faithful companions who share and sympathise with the lives of their owners" (Hollington 2009, 4). Products sold in Mr. Nakano's thrift shop,

> From Japanese-style dining tables to old electric fans, from air conditioners to tableware, the shop was crammed with the kind of items found in a typical household from the 1960s and later. In the mornings, ... he'd arrange the goods intended to tempt customers outside the front of the store. Bowls and plates that had any kind of fancy pattern, arty task lamps, onyx-like paperweights shaped like turtles or rabbits, old-school typewriters and the like—these were all attractively displayed on a wooden bench set outside. (Kawakami 2021, 3)

accompany the characters as well: the second-hand objects offer Hitomi and Takeo a new life through the fact that they take part in a continuous monetary exchange; the two characters are thus included in the economic dynamics of society. Nevertheless, the shop in Kawakami's novel is characterized not only by this commercial dimension, but also by its psychological importance for Hitomi:

> ... we all filed into the tatami room in the back. There had been a *kotatsu* heater there but it had been sold only a little while ago and now, in place of the table with its inbuilt heater, just the *kotatsu* cover was laid flat on the tatami. Mr. Nakano brought in a largish Japanese-style dining table from the shop and set it on top of the cover. (Kawakami 2021, 17-18)

As can be observed, the transitory objects in the store (for instance, the *kotatsu* and the table) construct a second home for Hitomi. Although their presence is not permanent, they become a part of Hitomi's experience during her *moratorium* phase. Moreover, the *tatami* room is a place where the characters gather to eat, an aspect that emphasizes the emotional significance Hitomi attaches to Mr. Nakano's shop. Moreover, the products sold in the store also have a sensorial dimension: "When he came back, he was soaking wet. Mr. Nakano tossed him a towel. It had a frog pattern on it. They had got it from the last pickup" (Kawakami 2021, 27). They cover and protect them from anything outside the shop that could harm them. At the same time, the relationship between Takeo and the objects (and implicitly the shop) gains a sensorial dimension: he comes closer to them, he touches them, he feels them on his skin.

Alternatively, Murata's main character establishes an unusual relationship with the *konbini*, a relationship which incorporates also an intense sensorial experience:

> I never knew customers could be so loud! Their footsteps echoed and voices rang out as they walked around the store, confectionery packs rustling as they tossed them into their baskets, the refrigerator door clunking open and shut as they took out cold drinks. Overwhelmed by the sheer volume, I kept yelling out 'Irasshaimasé!" over and over again. (Murata 2019, 17)

The main character is absorbed in this world of sounds, which constitutes her reality. The acoustic presence of the *konbini* confers onto her peace and a sense of safety as well as a sense of belonging. Keiko belongs to this world of "echoes", "rustling" and "clunking". The sensorial interaction characterizes Keiko's relationship with the *konbini*, which manifests itself almost as a human being by having needs and a voice: "I couldn't stop hearing the store telling me the way it wanted to be, what it needed. It was all flowing into me. It wasn't me speaking. It was the store. I was just channeling its revelations from on high." (Murata 2019, 160)

Keiko becomes a piece of the *konbini*, participating in its life, while the shop gives her a normal life. By noting that "When I think that my body is entirely made up of food from this store, I feel like I'm as much a part of the store as the magazine racks or the coffee machine" (Murata 2019, 22), she recognizes that she became a piece of the shop, for instance, one of its vital organs. This excerpt resembles another fact the protagonist in Kawakami's novel *The Nakano Thrift Shop* mentions:

> Though I had to admit that I had procured plenty of daily necessities and furniture from the Nakano shop. Things like that yellow stool and this dress, sure, but what I bought most often were baskets. Large ones, small ones, open-weave ones, and tightly woven ones —I bought all sorts and tossed all kinds of things into them. Thanks to these baskets, my apartment was much less messy than it used to be. (Kawakami 2021, 198)

Both Keiko and Hitomi are profoundly connected with the convenience store, respectively the thrift shop: they bring their lives into equilibrium, they regularize them, they lend order to them. The relationship between these main characters and the shops is not only emotional, as already stated, but also economic: they buy products that are sold in them and these objects become essential parts of the two protagonists' private life. They fill or cover their bodies or permeate their home. To put it another way, the image of the store is prolonged in their apartments.

Additionally, Murata's protagonist communicates with the shop as it was pointed out by critic Serrano-Muñoz:

> Furukura's eventual realisation that her place is the convenience store requires from her a renunciation of her humanity. ... In Japanese, Murata uses the word *ningen*, a term referring to humans that is free from gender associations. Her body became one with the *konbini* and we are left to judge whether that is subversive freedom or claudication to economic life. (Serrano-Muñoz 2021, 171-72)

No longer a human being, the protagonist experiences the life of a *konbini*. Consequently, Keiko is free, devoid of social norms, but with the freedom to live as a store, and thus protected against social pressures. Furthermore, the *konbini* constitutes a real urban hideaway: although Keiko follows the entire set of instructions during work hours in order to comply with the standards of society, this is only apparent. The shop provides shelter for her peculiar figure and the acoustic dimension—the various *sounds* produced in the shop—enriches her bond with the store. Keiko's total immersion into the *konbini* demonstrates that she lost contact with the world outside the shop, which now also regulates the rhythm of her life. The shop does not only lend order to her atypical lifestyle, but it also protects her from being judged and prevents her from being evaluated for having chosen to become a "convenience store woman". She has "faith in the world inside the light-filled box." (Murata 2019, 30), where there is an atmosphere of calmness. After resigning her part-time job, she no longer hears the song of the *konbini* and loses her balance.

What is more, Keiko depicts not only an acoustic connection with the *konbini*, but a biological one as well:

> I suddenly recalled hearing once that the water in a person's body was replaced every two weeks. It occurred to me that the water I used to buy every morning in the convenience store had already run through my body. The moisture in my skin, in the membrane over my eyeballs was probably no longer formed by the water from the convenience store. (Murata 2019, 149)

Therein yet another facet of Keiko's relationship with the shop is revealed: the store is her energy source, it feeds her. The essence of the *konbini* runs through her veins, thus constantly refreshing and nourishing her transformed organism. Moreover, this example shows how intimate the relationship between Keiko and the shop has become: through this liquid, it inhabits her body. The absence of water illustrates Keiko's biological dependency on the store. Interestingly, a similar situation is described by Kawakami's main character as well:

> I doubted this was the real Takeo.
> As more time passed, I became increasingly convinced of this. I heard somewhere that human cells renew themselves every three years. (Kawakami 2021, 251)

The absence of the convenience store and the thrift shop can be observed at an anatomical level: once they leave their jobs in the stores, Keiko and Takeo's organisms are different. Their structural change exemplifies how thoroughly the shop has merged with their bodies. The convenience store and the thrift shop merge with their identities that are subject to remodeling after they depart the world of those two spaces.

Additionally, the convenience store in Murata's novel functions as a place where one can get wholly immersed, where differences are abolished and where one is not judged based on expectations related to gender or age:

> I wished I was back in the convenience store where I was valued as a working member of staff and things weren't as complicated as this. Once

> we donned our uniforms, we were all equals regardless of gender, age, or nationality—all simply store workers.
> I looked at the clock—3:00 p.m.—so they'd have finished settling the cash register account and changing money at the bank and would be starting to put the latest truckload of bread and lunch boxes out on display.
> Even when I'm far away, the convenience store and I are connected. In my mind's eye I picture the brightly lit and bustling store, and I silently stroke my right hand, its nails neatly trimmed in order to better work the buttons on the cash register." (Murata 2019, 38-9)

The life offered by the convenience store is what the protagonist needs: the shop protects her from the external tensions that could harm her. The *konbini* does not demand her to lead a life governed by social expectations but accepts her as she is and helps her fully integrate into the space enclosed by its walls. This is why she feels a deep connection with the shop, even though she finds herself in a completely different place. Such a bond is also reflected in the need to find oneself in the presence of the *konbini*, which offers her a profound sensorial experience:

> Somehow I felt the need to hear the sound of the convenience store, so on my way home from Miho's that evening I dropped into work. (Murata 2019, 81)
> I would never again be touching the tools of the trade I knew so well—the bar code scanner, the machine for placing orders, the mop for polishing the floor, the alcohol for disinfecting hands, the duster I'd always carried stuck through my belt. (Murata 2019, 143)

The acoustic and tactile dimensions illustrate in these cases Keiko's need to perpetually live in the convenience store, which has become *her place*. No other sounds and no other objects offer her the same sensorial experience. Additionally, it seems that there's no other place like the *konbini* that creates a similar atmosphere of acceptance:

> It was still light out, but the convenience store was lit up more brightly than the sky. It looked like a shining white aquarium...
> Normally I would be concerned about work the next day and would be sure to care for my physical needs with food and sleep. My body had belonged to the convenience store even when I wasn't at work. Having been liberated from this, I didn't know what to do with myself. (Murata 2019, 144)

In Keiko's case, working for the store means continuously working and living for it. Although she is at home, she does not feel that this place hides her from the outside world; instead, it is the *konbini* that offers her emotional security and guards her against the demands of society. In addition to this, there's no other place she would rather be in, since anywhere outside the shop she has to fulfill a social role specific to her gender and age, namely that of a mother. Alternatively, the convenience store lets her be a (simple) member of the staff, without additional constraints. Besides, after quitting her job at Smile Mart, she understands that home does not represent for her what it may represent for other people -- a place for resting oneself and for hiding away from the outside world. Rather the *konbini* fulfills this role in comparison with her apartment, which seems to have nothing in common with Keiko's inner world:

> There were numerous sounds in the apartment, from Shiraha's voice to the hum of the refrigerator, but my ears heard only silence. The sounds of the convenience store that had previously filled me to overflowing had now left my body. I was cut off from the world. (Murata 2019, 145-46)

Further, the unchanging life of the store, with its set of principles that Keiko continually carries out, contributes to creating a calm atmosphere, where one knows exactly what has to do:

> But here I was repeating the same scene of that first day. Since then we had greeted the same morning 6,607 times.
> I gently placed the eggs in a plastic bag. The same eggs I sold yesterday, only different. The customer put the same chopsticks into the same plastic bag as yesterday, took the same change, and gave the same morning smile. (Murata 2019, 73-4)

By not being subject to change, the *konbini* seems to serve as an area that exists beyond time and the incessant variations that characterize a society. Thus also Keiko escapes from the rhythm of the outside world, being concealed by the atemporality of the store. Such an atemporality or rather another form of temporality, one marked by a total opposition to the urban turmoil, seems to be present in Kawakami's thrift shop as well: "Ever since the Indian summer arrived, customers had been staying away. The street in front of the shop was deserted – there wasn't a single car" (Kawakami 2021, 110). The shop conceals the workers from the urban agitation, constituting a place where one can experience tranquility. Moreover, not only a special form of temporality distinguishes Mr. Nakano's thrift shop from other places, but also its spatial coordinates: "For the past twenty-five years or so, Mr Nakano had been running his thrift shop in a western suburb of Tokyo that was full of students" (Kawakami 2021, 2). The thrift shop is not located downtown, but in a suburb. What is more, time flows differently inside it:

> One day, no customers came in at all. But the Nakano shop was not some high-class antique shop – no matter how slow a day it might be, there were almost always at least three or four people who would wander in to browse. (Kawakami 2021, 111)

Not always crowded, Mr. Nakano's thrift shop offers an atmosphere of calmness, where one finds refuge from the constantly hectic city. Also, the actions and movements of the potential customers, who look at the different objects displayed in the shop, differentiate it from other stores, which are rather marked by agitation.

Conclusion

The shops in the two novels seem to be depicted as urban hideaways; in fact, it seems like the space of the store is a microcosm of Japanese society. All pressure and social customs, all capitalist tensions are reflected in the stores themselves. What is more, the biological dimension and the sensorial experience that are described in the two novels highlight the strong relationship between the shop and Hitomi, respectively, Keiko. In addition to this, by buying objects that are sold in the stores and either bringing them into their homes or introducing them into their bodies, the two female protagonists establish a particular relationship with the shops. Both places become an essential part of their existence, having not only an economic meaning, but permeating their private lives as well. They transcend the monetary world and become integrated into the characters' everyday lives.

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BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE: THE REPRESENTATION OF WAR IN TAKARAZUKA REVUE'S PERFORMANCE STRATEGY

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Abstract: In this paper, I delve into Takarazuka Revue's performative representation of war, death and suffering with particular focus on the past ten years (since 2014). Based on extensive fieldwork and in-depth literature research, the four pivotal performances chosen as case-studies serve to highlighting the gradual shift from a worldview which rejects war as barbaric towards a vision of/for the future in which war is not only accepted but integrated into the quotidian realities as an inseparable phenomenon. Instead of fighting against war, it seems that the alternative solution proposed by Takarazuka Revue's recent on-stage developments is to acknowledge war as a means to an end, to achieve and maintain peace as foundation for political stability and economic prosperity.

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Keywords: *Japan, masculinity, stage arts, performative representation, late modernity*

Introduction: The Reality and Theatricality of War

War has become once again the current palpable reality. This paper tackles the problematic of war as displayed by the all-female popular musical theater Takarazuka Revue in Japan. Since its inception in 1914, Takarazuka Revue has accompanied Japanese society throughout the tumultuous 20th century and into the 21st century: approximately one third of the live performances staged at Takarazuka Grand Theater in the city of Takarazuka and at Tokyo Takarazuka Theater in Japan's capital follow the performance policy of displaying Japanese and Asian contents, with the remaining two thirds of the performances bringing in front of the (predominantly) Japanese (preponderantly) female audiences, as Takarazuka Revue's fan community is composed mostly of women from their mid-30s to their early 60s, stories with Western topics, oftentimes wrapped up in incredulous plot developments and characters' construction. The vast majority of performances, regardless of contents, adhere rather to Japanese traditions of dramatic architecture than to Western worldviews of late-modern perception and processing. In the forthcoming analysis, Takarazuka Revue's increasing display of warfare, death and suffering on-stage during the past ten years (since 2014) is critically observed and theoretically contextualized in an attempt to elucidate its mechanisms of theatrical representation and performative contextualization in affluent, post-industrialized, service-based societies.

To this aim, I proceed in three steps: first, I briefly introduce Takarazuka Revue as a socio-cultural phenomenon and its general approach to war, both narratively and meta-narratively; second, I refer to the concept of war as a juxtaposition of power and seduction in the interplay of theatricality and mass-media conveyed reality based on Robert Greene's elaborations on power (1998), seduction (2001) and war (2007); and third, I discuss four plays as case-studies, each displaying its own idiosyncratic approach to war. In the Conclusion, I approach the necessity to address war as a reality rather than the politically motivated, demagogic insistence on avoiding it while looking into two crucial insights revealed by Takarazuka Revue's role in representing war, proactively propagating war and eventually leading to war's general acceptance.

Methodologically, I draw on 20 years of empiric-phenomenological fieldwork on Takarazuka Revue as well as in the complex domain of

Japanese mass-media. I observe the multiple layers of the Takarazuka Revue's administration and self-orchestration such as performance politics, the economic supervision of brand-related consumption, the socio-cultural management of actresses and fandom (fans and fan communities) as well as the performances themselves and their meta-narrative concatenations. The sources consist of extensive performance attendance, archive research of Japanese documents and interviews with Japanese producers – Takarazuka Revue actresses, staff (directors, composers, assistants, teachers, etc.) – as well as with Japanese and non-Japanese fans and other consumers of products of popular culture, domestic and international. This complex procedure has been allowing me unexpected insights into the mechanisms of production, consumption, perception and dissemination of quotidian events in Japan. Taking into account the fact that the Japanese media industry is extremely vivacious and almost painful in its superficiality, Takarazuka Revue's longevity with more than 100 years of uninterrupted activity is a powerful reminder that determination, hard-work and persistence are worthy assets in the hierarchy of human values – although not always forthrightly advertised as such. As to be seen from forthcoming elucidations, Takarazuka Revue relies on a long tradition of self-fashioning and self-advertisement while appealing to audiences' sense of purpose within mutually intertwining marketing strategies.

Takarazuka Revue and Its Theatricalization of War

Within Japan's highly corporative and unpredictably volatile entertainment industry, Takarazuka Revue has established itself throughout the decades as an important reference system, with equally stable ideological and aesthetical standards and serving, simultaneously, as a dynamic example of the power of hard-work, insight and persistence – compounded by kindness and a sense of responsibility barely ever taken into account when it comes to cultural products as a means to implement and transmit a specific set of values across generations. Founded in 1912 by Kobayashi Ichizō[2] (1873-1957), one of the most influential and progressive entrepreneurs in prewar

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[2] Kobayashi Ichizō, Japanese industrialist and politician, is best known as the founder of the Hankyū Railways Company in 1907 with its main terminal at Umeda station in Osaka and for his successful development of the railway infrastructure in an adverse region in the northern part of Kansai (Western Japan) through the implementation of residential areas along the railway line, an amusement park, a department store at the railway terminal as well as, in time, the main attraction: the Takarazuka Grand Theater in Takarazuka (Iwahori 1972, 47; Watanabe 1999, 39).

Japan, Takarazuka Revue had started as a small theatrical arrangement set-up to attract more customers in the relatively isolated city of Takarazuka with its hot-springs (*onsen*) and its fresh air, provided by the surrounding forests on the majestic mountains. Since 1919, the exclusive, very competitive two-year Takarazuka Music School (*Takarazuka Ongaku Gakkō*) has been graduating 40 (female) actresses yearly who join the team of approximately 350 others performing on the stage of the Takarazuka Revue.

Similarly to the Takarazuka Revue (Company), the Takarazuka Music School changed its official designation several times since its inception. The current name dates back to 1946. At the center of the sociocultural phenomenon embodied by Takarazuka Revue resides the *otokoyaku* ("female impersonator of male roles"), a highly ambivalent construction combining Western physical appearance with Japanese inner qualities and exemplifying once again the powerfully (in)famous hybrid identity epitomized in the slogan *wakon yōsai* ("Japanese roots/spirit, Western technology/knowledge") – the basis and crux of Japanese modernity (initiated in 1868 with the Meiji Restoration; see Jaundrill 2016, McClain 2002). In tandem with *otokoyaku*'s representation of masculinity on Takarazuka Revue's stage and its public advertisement, *musumeyaku* (literally: "daughter-role" with the subliminal image of "maiden") refers to female impersonators of female roles in Takarazuka Revue. Both *otokoyaku* and *musumeyaku* are subsumed to the category of "actress", while their denomination within the Takarazuka Revue Company and its related contexts is *seito* (pupil) or *takarasienne*, introduced by director Shirai Tetsuzō (1900-1983), who compared the cute Takarazuka Revue actresses with the beautiful Parisiennes at Moulin Rouge (Robertson 1998, 104, Stickland 2008, 57). Two massive theaters with over 3.000 seats in major metropolitan areas of Eastern and Western Japan – Takarazuka/Osaka respectively Tokyo – built in 1924 and 1934, belong to Takarazuka Revue Company. They host ten performances weekly throughout the year staged by the five ensembles, encompassing a huge variety of topics and ways of tackling those topics. Thus, Takarazuka Revue Company has come to be recognized both as a mirror of Japan's tumultuous 20th century and an important source of inspiration, as it reputedly facilitates – or essentially mediates – the import of non-Japanese, mostly Western, cultural assets to Japan and to its Japanese audiences.

Within the extremely strict hierarchy of Takarazuka Revue's educational and performance system, the concept "golden combination" refers to the *otokoyaku-musumeyaku* pair (in Takarazuka Revue jargon: "topstar[s]") at the top of every of the five actively performing ensembles. It is important to mention that, while the acting staff is exclusively female, the administrative staff is to a great extent male, and was exclusively male from Takarazuka Revue's inception until 1999 (Kawasaki 1999, Tsuganesawa 1991, Watanabe 2002). This clear-cut separation of functions has been playing a fundamental role in Takarazuka Revue's evolution and its preoccupation with staging evolving patterns of sociocultural delineation and belonging as well as its dialectically pragmatic adaptation to the expectations of audiences while subtly influencing their tastes, preferences, and life choices. The unusually entangled dynamic between Takarazuka Revue administrators and its mostly fan-based audiences has led, in recent times, to more profound analytical approaches of a business-model relying on "deep-fandom" (see Jenkins 1992, Fuller/Goffey 2012). "Deep fandom" refers to those faithful fans who support a specific phenomenon throughout the years, instead of spending their money, time and emotions on a variety of entertainment tools, which might be labeled as "surface-fandom". There are clear disadvantages to Takarazuka Revue Company's business orientation, but its most obvious advantage is the profile clarity of the cultural institution engaging in the promotion of "deep-fandom" which emerges as a strong identification model and existential paradigm while challenging prevalent standards of "fan-service" in Japan.

Takarazuka Revue's general performance policy related to war has changed repeatedly throughout its more than centennial history since 1914. Nonetheless, it has been consistently playing a fundamental role in orchestrating the Japanese society on-stage in a representation strategy which encapsulates the tension between the reflection of the shifting layers of power throughout Japan's modernity and the proactive input towards socio-cultural transformation challenging superficial economic-political premises of change more recently. While during the first half of its history, Takarazuka Revue intently and intensively supported Japan's nationalist, expansionist project of the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" (*Dai Tōa Kyōeiken*) under Japanese domination, Takarazuka Revue's postwar history strictly follows a performance policy which promotes peace as the highest ideal of humankind and does not allow for the representation of Japan or Asia in modern and contemporary times in those Japan- or Asia-focused plays and instead focuses on plotlines located in atemporal Asian or Japanese societies as well as mythological or science-fiction narrative environments (Hashimoto 1999, Etō & al. 2007, Kawasaki 2005, Uchino 2009).

Since 2017, however, there has been an astonishing increase in war-related performances, with the year 2017 marking a significant step forward in that progression: six out of nine performances that year dealt with war, militarization, or revolution. By comparison, in 2016 there were three out of nine performances tackling wars that occurred exclusively in premodern Japan, and in 2015, six out of nine performances focused on wars, riots, and revolutions in various geographical and historical areas. Furthermore, 2018 and 2019 brought to the foreground of the performance strategy the gradual return to the pre-war performative vision of Takarazuka Revue's founder Kobayashi Ichizō of "mass-theater" representing of Japan and the Japanese people in their advancement towards becoming world leaders. The global pandemic of 2020 and 2021 still ramifying into 2022 accelerated in Takarazuka Revue's case the performative strategy of "globalization from within" as a means to attain internationalization through the display of human diversity, with the simultaneous, continuous deconstruction of the Japanese premodern heritage, the increasing spotlight on individual achievements, responsibility and freedom, as well as on the accumulating awareness of the practicality of the Latin dictum "if you want peace, prepare for war" ("Si vis pacem, para bellum"): it is in strength and preparedness for conflict – even war – as well as in the radical acceptance of others as one's equals despite their "otherness" that authentic global cooperation can become attainable. This appears, one might argue, in blatant contrast to Japan's political experiment of a *saisakoku* or the "renewed closure of the country" in 2020-2022 emulating Tokugawa period's historic-geographical isolation (1603-1868) and its policies of what Naoki Sakai called "hikikomori nationalism" (Sakai 2022) – that is, the retreat into its (in)famous attitude of detachment and non-involvement in foreign affairs unless directly interested.

As such, there seems to be an increasing display of warfare, death and suffering on Takarazuka Revue's stage during the decade starting in 2014. The procedure of elucidating the mechanisms of instrumentalizing violence and pain reveals its versatility in de-sensitizing audiences towards the evils of war on the backdrop of emotional-mental complacency and indifference in affluent, post-industrialized, service-based societies (Yamanashi 2012, Weber 2004). Moreover, as is to be seen in the four plays analyzed further below – *Napoléon, the Man Who Never Sleeps: Beyond Love and Glory* (2014), *A Song for Kingdoms* (2003/2015), *Rurouni Kenshin* (2016), *The Legend of King Arthur* (2016) – the problematic relationship between the *bushidō* ideology in Japan and current realities moves into the foreground.

Questioning, rather than glorifying, the "way of the warrior" as encompassed in the *bushidō* and its supposed premodern fame (see Yoshino 1992), draws back on the promotion of a more peaceful, cooperative approach towards life, which Takarazuka Revue proactively, compassionately juxtaposes over the gradual return to an ideology of "Japan First" in present-day Japanese politics – and painstakingly displayed by means of performative representation in Japanese mass-media.

As will be explained in the forthcoming lines, my conceptualization of Takarazuka Revue in the spirit of the Platonian theatrocracy with Benjaminian nuances has deep socioeconomic, and political-cultural implications.

Theatrocracy, Power and Seduction: The Meta-narratives of War

The relationship between theater and war has a long and complicated history as war is intrinsically connected to political strategies. Of all the arts, theater most directly resembles war in that it has traditionally been understood to involve the assemblage of people on two sides in a shared place and there is mutual involvement in displays of power, seduction and victory. The two sides of the theatrical act, though – performers and audiences –, differ from the members of wartime disputes and challenges in so far that their existence is limited in time and has a very predictable duration. Theater acknowledges artificiality, artifice, specific strategies within the competitive display of power and seduction, whereas war-established communities are often constructed in terms of great natural uncertainty and forceful participation. Theatrocracy is to be understood in the Platonian meaning as delivering the control to audiences rather than to performers and playwrights, directors, producers, and other participating parties (see Weber 2004, 68). Theater, albeit popular theater, appears as an agent of change and innovation, in contrast to Walter Benjamin's critique of mass-media and the consumers' famously conservative tastes, expectations, ideals (Benjamin 1980 [1935], 442; see Hori 2018). Then again, precisely because it targets audiences seen as monolithic and immutable, the seductive power of theatrical performances resides not in them staying the same, but in their potential for change and innovation, which is disturbing as it challenges and eventually transforms the prevalent order, the traditional authority, the existing hierarchies. Takarazuka Revue's form of theatrocracy extracts its essence, vitality and longevity from two elements, which become particularly visible in its display of war: power and seduction.

The first half of the equation in the representation of war is power: in Robert Greene's conceptualization of power, "power requires the ability to play with appearances" (Greene 1998, 52) just like in theater. To this end, one must learn to wear many masks and keep an arsenal full of deceptive tricks; deception and masquerade are neither ugly nor immoral, as all human interaction requires deception on many levels. Deception is a developed art of civilization and the most potent weapon in the game of power – just like in theater where deliberately directing the audience's focus is one major strategy so that resistance to manipulation is bypassed and the flow of action seems to unfold organically. Moreover, one cannot succeed at deception unless a somewhat distanced approach to oneself is being employed: like an actor, one must be able to be or, better said, to become many different people, wearing the masks required at various moments with a flexible approach. In doing so, the actors' faces turn into malleable constructions, concealing the performers' true selves from spectators, while luring audiences into mental, emotional, sensorial traps. Playing with appearances and mastering the art of deception are among the aesthetic pleasures of life – or at least, this is how they are sold by actors who are key-components in the acquisition of power.

Furthermore, if dramaturgic deception is the most potent weapon in the theatrical arsenal, then patience is the crucial shield: like mastering emotions, patience is a skill which does not come naturally. Patience is a supreme virtue of gods who have nothing but time – and in emulating the gods on-stage as they recreate the world in real-time, actors mediate the illusion of slowing down time with the subliminal message that good things will happen, eventually, if one trusts the future. Impatience, on the other hand, only showcases one's weakness and appears as a principal impediment to power and control. Eventually, power is essentially amoral transcending rules and values; one of the most important skills to acquire in the game of power is the ability to see neutral circumstances rather than positive or negative situations, emotions, gestures. If power is a game precisely like theater which sells itself in the realm of playfulness and escapism, then the relationship between the parts involved – performers and spectators – is to be judged by the effect of their actions: in other words, there can only be those who influence by means of their performative power and those who are influenced in their quest for catharsis and limitless permission to "suspend [their] disbelief for the moment", in their longing for freedom without the attached responsibilities.

The second half of the equation in the representation of war is seduction. Theater as a space for seduction embraces warfare as the space where everything is fair: actors mastering the art of seduction are never self-absorbed. Their gaze is directed outward: as professional seducers, actors' first move when they encounter someone or create a character is to get inside that person's self and see the world through his/her eyes so that they can then represent it as such. This ability to transcend their innately human insecurities by projecting a persona of confidence, gives actors a buoyant spirit, so that spectators want to be around them, to feed off their positive energy, to glimpse into their limitless freedom. Moreover, getting access to someone else's self in creating the characters and delivering them on stage, imagining what it is like to be them, helps the actor-turned-seducer to gather valuable information, to learn what makes spectators tick, what will make them lose their functionality and the capability to think straight so that they fall, ultimately, into the trap of their own delusions. Armed with such valuable information, actors can supply focused and individualized attention – a rare commodity in a world in which most people see us only from behind the screen of their own prejudices. Getting into the target's subconscious by bypassing their protective mechanisms is the first important tactical move in the war of seduction as meta-narrative indoctrination and/or propaganda.

Actors as masters of seduction see themselves as providers of pleasure: the actor as seducer knows that people are waiting for pleasure – they never get enough of it from friends and lovers, and they cannot get it by themselves. A person who enters their lives offering adventure, romance, freedom cannot be resisted: pleasure is a feeling of being taken past our limits, of being overwhelmed – by another person, by an experience, by life itself. People are dying to be overwhelmed, to let go of their own usual stubbornness. More often than not, their resistance to us is a way of saying "Please, seduce me!". Actors-seducers know that the potential of pleasure will make a person follow them and the experience of it will make someone open up, weak to the touch, vulnerable to influence. They also train themselves to be sensitive to pleasure knowing that feeling pleasure themselves will make it that much easier for them to infect the people around them by means of emotional contagion within the empathic space created in the realm of the theatrical representation. A master of seduction, the actor sees all life as theater, and everyone in it as an actor. Conversely, actor-seducers see all life as a seduction game in which there are those who influence and those who are being influenced. While most people feel they have constricted roles in life, which makes them unhappy, actors as seducers on the other hand can be anyone and assume many roles and take the freedom to do that naturally. In their amorality, they are fluid and agile. In doing so, actors address spectators as targets, carefully avoiding the construction of relationships of compassionate interdependence which builds up the solid skeleton for functional communities and/or societies.

In displaying war on-stage, Takarazuka Revue conceptualizes theatrocracy as power through seduction; war is a sensorial experience, not some imaginary realm divorced from the quotidian reality. War is an eminently human arena, full of the best and the worst of our nature. Additionally, war reflects trends in society: the evolution towards more unconventional dirtier strategies like guerrilla warfare or terrorism mirrors a similar evolution in society where increasingly "almost anything goes". The strategies that succeed in war, whether conventional or unconventional, are based on timeless psychology, and great military failures have much to teach us about human stupidity and the limits of brute force in any arena. The strategic ideal in war—being supremely rational and emotionally balanced, striving to win with minimum bloodshed and loss of resources—has infinite application and relevance to our daily battles. Inculcated with the values of our times, many might argue that organized war is inherently barbaric, a relic of man's violent past and something to be overcome for good. To promote the arts of warfare in a social setting, it might seem, is to stand in the way of progress and to encourage conflict and dissension. The question "Isn't there enough of that in the world?" might, again, seem reasonable and while this argument is very attractive, it is not at all reasonable. There will always be those in society and in the world at large who are more aggressive than we are, who find ways to get what they want. We must be vigilant and must know how to defend ourselves against such types. Civilized values are not furthered if we are forced to surrender to those who are crafty and strong. In fact, being pacifists in the face of such wolves is a source of endless tragedy. Instead of resisting the pull of war and the virtues of rational warfare or imagining that it is beneath oneself, it is far better to confront its necessity. Mastering the art of war will only make life more peaceful and productive in the long run, for it ensures the knowledge and ability to play the game and to win without violence. Ignoring it will lead to a life of endless confusion and defeat. Learning to look at things as they are, not as emotions color them, to judge people by their actions, not by their words, to depend on your own mind and soul instead of on externalized assets, to be wise, rational and pragmatic, not aggressive, violent, brutal, to think strategically, not tactically – that is, to have long-term vision not short-term coping reactions –, to look inward for potential of progress, growth and improvement, are timeless ideals in the arena of life as theatrocratic representation.

These powerful lessons are outlined in the iconic case-studies further below: the performative orchestration of war as an interplay of power and seduction has been delivering impactful results in the shifting paradigm from the precept of "peace at all costs" towards the realization that "in order to achieve and maintain peace, there might come times when war becomes necessary."

Theater as geostrategic medium: the narratives of war

In Takarazuka Revue's case, the best way to analyze the shifting paradigms of war representation is through the lens of *otokoyaku*'s embodiment of the archetypal warrior. Four case-studies offer themselves, two of them brought to life by star troupe (*hoshi-gumi*) – founded in 1933 and associated with the delivery of strong, charismatic *otokoyaku* actresses – and two staged by snow troupe (*yuki-gumi*) – founded in 1924 and known for its Japanese traditional plays and the intensive Japanisation of Western plots – respectively by moon troupe (*tsuki-gumi*) – founded in 1921 and popular throughout decades due to its overwhelming ensembles scenes of grandeur and splendour in alignment with Japan's future position as an international leader.

The first case-study is dedicated to the performance *Napoléon, the Man Who Never Sleeps: Beyond Love and Glory* (*Nemuranai otoko Naporeon: Ai to eikō no hata ni*), which was staged by star troupe in 2014, at Takarazuka Grand Theater from 1. January until 3. February and at Tokyo Takarazuka Theater from 14. February until 29. March. The role of Napoléon Bonaparte was taken over by leading *otokoyaku* Yuzuki Reon and the role of Joséphine de Beauharnais, Napoléon's wife, was attributed to leading *musumeyaku* Yumesaki Nene. The director of the performance was Koike Shūichirō, the composer was Gérard Presgurvic (French composer of Serbian ancestry). Within a powerfully romanticized framework, Napoléon Bonaparte (1769-1821) appears on-stage as a highly split person, with inner insolvable conflicts, revealing in front of the (preponderantly) female, (predominantly) Japanese audiences the struggles of men, contemporary or not, their need to be understood, appreciated and admired – and above all, their need to be loved and accepted for who they *truly* are. Napoléon's actress Yuzuki Reon could be described as one of the cult-*otokoyaku*s of the last decade, with domineering stage presence and long-lasting impact on the creation and re-creation of masculinity on-stage – and ultimately off-stage. Correspondingly, her impersonation of the great warrior exudes firmness, decisiveness, to a certain degree ruthlessness, magnetically irresistible in his relentless pursuit of warfare-dominated expansion. His legendary hard-work and persistence as well as mental toughness turn war into an existential necessity, for which humans better prepare themselves than delude themselves into lofty slogans of peace, harmony and mutually beneficial cooperation. On the other hand, in this performative reconstruction of Napoléon as a man and as a historical figure, he turns from the Nietzschean ***Übermensch*** into a deeply flawed human being – with longings and failures, with misunderstandings and defeats, but also with brief moments of joy and excitement. In doing so, the Takarazuka Revue administrators deconstruct the historical "I" into a broader conceptualization of human essence as a juxtaposition of positive and negative elements, both individually and collectively.

The second case-study reflects even more efficiently this stress ratio between war as an inevitable necessity and war as a calamity to be kept at bay in the character of Radames, the young officer in the Egyptian army, from the performance *A Song for Kingdoms* (*Ōke ni sasagu uta*), staged in 2003 by star troupe and restaged in 2015 by cosmos troupe. The director of the performance Kimura Shinji based the plot-line on opera *Aida* from 1871, composed by Giuseppe Verdi on a libretto by Antonio Ghislanzoni. Star troupe's Radames' *otokoyaku*-actress Kozuki Wataru, like Yuzuki Reon, one of the cult-*otokoyaku* in recent decades, delivers a warrior figure keen on peace, fully aware than wars bring only misery and loss of human lives. The obtrusive appeal to keep peace at any cost and to avoid the war was at the time politically motivated, the year 2003 having been a difficult turning-point year for Japan as political tensions had arisen due to the US pressure to send segments of the "self-defense [military] forces" (*jieitai*) overseas in support of the UN military missions in Iraq, increasingly dividing a population famously regarded by outsiders and perceived by itself as a reputed monolith (Benesch 2014, Sugimoto 2015).

The public debate, energically fueled by mass-media on all levels, ended with the victory of those few vigorously promoting the deployment of Japanese troops to Iraq – which were officially promised on 9. December by then-prime minister Koizumi Jun'ichirō "for reconstruction efforts" – and despite the overwhelming opposition of a vast majority of the population throughout the nationally negotiated process of reinterpreting the postwar constitution to employ the *jieitai* exclusively for “self-defense”, as the denomination itself asserts. An usually message-impactful performance, staged in 2003 from 11. July until 18. August at Takarazuka Grand Theater in Takarazuka and from 19. September until 3. November at Takarazuka Theater in Tokyo, this version focused intensely on the romantic trio between Radames, Amneris, the daughter of the king of Egypt enacted by topstar-*musumeyaku* Dan Rei and Aida, the Ethiopian slave girl who is disclosed to be, in fact, the princess of Ethiopia, embodied by secondary-topstar *otokoyaku* Aran Kei: therefore, the human drama is highlighted rather than the phenomenon of war itself which slides into the background. Nevertheless, when *A Song for Kingdoms* was re-staged in 2015 (from 5. June until 13. July at Takarazuka Grand Theater in Takarazuka and from 31. July until 30. August at Takarazuka Theater in Tokyo) by cosmos troupe (*sora-gumi*) – grounded in 1998 and associated with progressive plots, often conveying pilot-projects in attempts to test audiences’ limits –, the message of the performance changed radically, from the imperative commandment to keep and protect peace in the name of the human right to a life in freedom to the open acknowledgment that war might be at times necessary for restoring peace. Radames was enacted by topstar-*otokoyaku* Asaka Manato who generally portrayed warm-hearted masculine characters, so that her version of Radames emanated a sense of compassion and vulnerability, and in combination with topstar-*musumeyaku* Misaki Rion’s Aida the focus shifted towards the impossible choices leaders have to make and the heavy responsibilities which come with their privileged position. While war cannot be avoided, good leaders can make it short and less destructive.

The third case-study refers to *Rurouni Kenshin* (*Rurouni Kenshin*) from 2016, staged from 5. February until 14. March at Takarazuka Grand Theater in Takarazuka and from 1. April until 8. May at Takarazuka Theater in Tokyo, by the snow troupe, with topstar-*otokoyaku* Sagiri Seina as Himura Kenshin and topstar-*musumeyaku* Sakihi Miyu as Kamiya Kaoru. *Rurouni Kenshin* is a typical cross-medial phenomenon, which had emerged in the first half of the 1990s as *shōnen* manga publication (comics aimed at male teenagers) and moved through animation television series and independent productions (OVA) until live-action movies ever since. When director Koike Shūichirō adapted it for Takarazuka Revue, he had to overcome two major challenges – the (predominantly) female audience and the limitations of the theatrical genre as a live event – while keeping up with the aesthetic-technical details of its performance standards and complying with the prevalent ideologies of the *wakon wasai* ("Japanese spirit, Japanese technology") policies openly promoted by the Abe administration, thus aligning to similar ardent efforts within the Japanese entertainment industry and media landscape at the time (see Iwabuchi 2015, 422-424, Robertson 1998, 175, Valaskivi 2013, 489; see Nye 2004).

The plots follows Himura Kenshin (also known as "Hitokiri Battosai", Himura the Manslayer), the former kill-for-hire assassin with incredible fighting skills who had helped the establishing of the Meiji Restoration by siding with the pro-imperialist *ishin-shishi* (nationalist patriots) against the shogunate's forces, including the elite *shinsengumi* (newly selected corps) swordsmen, and who has become a wandering samurai who protects the people of Japan with a vow to never kill again in order to repent for his previous crimes. The dramatic transformation of the main character from a bloody kill-for-hire into a benevolent promoter of peace and compassion, turns through the topstar-*otokoyaku*'s embodiment into a symbol of faith and empowerment, in strong contradiction with Japan's realities of the so-called "lost three decades". *Rurouni Kenshin*'s life story spans violence, death and suffering as well as the pragmatics of attaining and keeping peace as the crucial pathway towards political stability and economic prosperity. The sense of futility and emotional frugality conveyed by the performance *Rurouni Kenshin*, which was one of the most successful performance of Takarazuka Revue's recent history, running with closed ticket houses since the first day of the ticket-presale, is magnified by the austere stage design, in striking contrast with other typical Takarazuka Revue performances.

The fourth case-study is *The Legend of King Arthur* (*Āsā-ō densetsu*) by moon troupe starring Tamaki Ryō as Arthur, King of Camelot, and Manaki Reika as Guinevere, Arthur's wife, the Queen) from late 2016 (at Bunkyo Civic Hall in Tokyo from 14. October until 19. October and at Umeda Arts Theater Dramacity in Osaka from 28. October until 9. November), which was the Japanese-language translation of Dove Attia's and François Chouquet's French-language musical comedy *La Légende du roi Arthur*, world-premiered on 17. September 2015 at Palais des Congrès de Paris in France's capital, with Florent Mothe as King Arthur, Camille Lou as Guinevere, Charlie Boisseau as Lancelot du Lac, David Alexis as Merlin, Zoho as Morgan le Fay and Fabien Incardona as Maleagant. In importing *The Legend of King Arthur* from France and adapting it to the realities of Japan's mid-2010s, Takarazuka Revue's administrators revived particularly the moderation aspect of King Arthur's character: to a remarkable degree, and from its very inception by mid-6th century, the narrative of King Arthur subverts the traditional model of warrior masculinity celebrated in the West. Arthur does not serve ends of glory or conquest, but is tied to the exercise of self-defense, preserving his group against the extremity of foreign invasion.

This stands in contrast to Achilles or Alexander the Great or Odysseus, heroes more commonly evoked for their image of grandeur and excess than for their quest and display of *modestia* (humility or moderation; Wheeler, 1992, 6-11). An intrinsically *vir modestus*, namely first of all a moderate man or a man of moderation, humility and compassion, Arthur as a warrior delivers an alternative understanding of power which actively rejects violent aggression and its identification with heroic masculinity, and instead is majorly preoccupied with achieving and maintaining peace as the foundation for political stability and economic prosperity. To this original projection of the Arthurian ideal, Takarazuka Revue juxtaposes negatively the model of the premodern samurai – and makes it very clear, once again, that it is crucial to keep in mind that the exalted narrative of the samurai as a functional *modus operandi* in Japan had been inaugurated by Nitobe Inazō's *Bushido: The Soul of Japan* from 1904 which had reconstructed the "way of the warrior" or *bushidō* for Western readerships and, in a curious development of strategic cultural (re-)imports, made it strikingly popular among Japanese intellectuals and subsequently among Japanese regular citizens throughout the decades (Turnbull 2004).

This dialectical tension becomes visible from the beginning of the performance in the title-song composed especially for the Japanese version, which speaks of leadership as a compositum of kindness, sense of responsibility, moderate vision of/for the future, so that the subjects love the leader and follow him out of trust and awe, and not out of fear and lack of alternatives. By placing the domineering stardom embodied by the lead-*otokoyaku* in the position of the master-turned-disciple who learns valuable life skills and eventually finds in the very act of treason a fresh life purpose, Takarazuka Revue's version of *The Legend of King Arthur* turns the scenic act into a huge parable on humility and respect. Highly idealist, Takarazuka Revue's version of the *vir modestus* – "the moderate man" or "the humble man" – described by Gildas the Wise in Britain's 6th century performatively displays the ideal of "empowered masculinity": a high-caliber man so stable in his masculinity that he can afford to be gentle and forgiving, in his aspiration for peace and harmony in his kingdom and in the world despite historical challenges. As a means to an end, war is to be employed parsimoniously while accepting it as an inevitable part of life.

Conclusion: Violence as Catharsis, Peace as Subversion

The mesmerizing, breathtaking war scenes which underscore both high-quality group coordination reminding the entire company's focus on collective excellence emerging from individual excellence, are the result of long hours of focused training, hard-work and perseverance, often culminating in touching, soft, inconspicuous confirmation of intense work ethics and professional discipline. More subtly or more overtly, leaders are gradually portrayed as seeking the love, appreciation, respect of those who entrust them with that function – and which they have to earn again and again. Beneath this stylistic cacophony, ideological inconsistency and aesthetic contradictions, a rigorous, disciplined lifestyle as the pathway to individual fulfillment, individual excellence and individual agency emerges. War is transcended in exceptional individuals who disclose their "humanity of vulnerability": Napol*é*on and Radames, Himura Kenshin and King Arthur alike, the idealization of the warrior was a process initiated immediately after it had become obsolete, with their appeal and fascination residing in their historically inaccurate perfection, compounded by the ambiguous roles the warriors, soldiers, war-lords had played in premodern and early modern times both as defenders of the old order with its crystalized structures and as forth-bringers of the new order with its scary, but necessary changes. This leads to two crucial insights in conceptualizing war as a performative representation.

The first insight is that theatrocracy has the meta-narrative function to make-or-break historical systems by means of power and seduction in the service of live performances. It might seem as a paradox, but in a performance on war and warriors as well as their inscrutable death ethics, the fleeting moments of togetherness and acceptance are celebrated alongside traumatic memories of wiped-out communities and their mercilessly slaughtered inhabitants. On the more specific background of the actresses' strict educational system within the Takarazuka Music Academy, in which "friendship, hard-work and (individual) excellence" serve the more comprehensive model of a dynamic community based of compassion, respect and trust among its members – after all, the supreme goals of any enlightened society in late-modern era (Miegel 2007, Eisenstadt 1996, Žižek 1998) –, the characters and the ideals they represent, believe in and fight for evolve towards metamorphosing into tangible goals for average participants in the audiences, compounded by specific elements included in Takarazuka Revue as a geopolitical and historical appearance.

Catharsis is, therefore, replaced by contradictory emotions, by the self-aware immersion into the frugality of life without expectations of moral teachings or profound messages. Precisely because it openly displays the horrors of war, Takarazuka Revue manages to equally depict humanity as a tender, soft endeavor. It envisions a more compassionate cooperation between humans both within the same society and among different nations, which could eventually, successfully, replace the Western project of modernity engineered by efficiency and competitiveness.

The second insight is that the shifting dynamics of war representation and its performative impact on the narrative dimension naturally associates men with war. In the process of reconfiguring Japanese masculinity in accordance with renewed historical and geostrategic requirements by means of live performances which focus on the ambivalently charismatic symbol embodied by *otokoyaku*, Takarazuka Revue's administrators are keenly observing sociopolitical tendencies and both reflecting and subtly influencing them in a continuous dialectical movement. In doing so, they are fully aware of the danger of cultural essentialization lurking in the basements of cultural constructs of identity models and of masculinity paradigms in highly romanticized, highly fictionalized mass-media set-ups (see Eagleton 2003, Watanabe 2002; see Drucker 1981) – and they cautiously avoid it.

Takarazuka Revue's reconfiguration of the symbol embodied by the warrior had to happen under the sign of a rediscovered curiosity for life, so that the disintegration of the "old world" as materialized by death ethics appeared as a necessary condition for the emergence of the "new world", organically integrated in the flux of history. Therefore, it is individual excellence rather than blind obedience and courage rather than unconditional loyalty augmented by the vulnerability encompassed in a deep-rooted love for life and for all beings which define the "new approach to war" of early 21st century. This allows combatant sides to empathize with their opponents, to understand them and to learn to accept them in their fundamental alterity or "radical otherness", as Emmanuel Levinas (1995) famously put it, and to view them as humans despite – or precisely due to – their differences, flaws and inconsistencies. In the all-too fluid identity representations of the warrior characters throughout Takarazuka Revue's past decade, a sense of acknowledging the existence of a greater whole than the national limited geographies becomes palpable, with perfectionism questioned in light of the necessity of the many "others" who share historical avenues with Japan on planet Earth.

The comprehension of the supreme value of life clashes against the codex of honor, loyalty and self-sacrifice which dominated premodern and early modern narratives of war: not incidentally, Takarazuka Revue's *otokoyaku*'s warrior as orchestrated by its administrators relies on demystifying it as a deeply, strongly reinvented ideal in the shadow of its historical dissolution, while at the same time presenting it as a valid ideological structure to be remembered and acknowledged as such. Respect replaces loyalty and vulnerability replaces stoicism; in the process, new layers of compassion and self-awareness emerge which allow for universalism (see Fukasawa 2009, Kristeva 1974, Hidaka 2010).

Japan's exceptionalism seems to have lost its charm and *raison d'être*. What has started like a modest cultural import decades ago, even more intense since late 2000s, turns gradually from a means to define and re-define supremacy, Japanese and otherwise, into a paradigm of coping and cooperating with the "others" in the universal vortex. In doing so, Takarazuka Revue – its actresses, its administrators and last, but not least, its faithful audiences – compose(s) an impactful discourse on the redemptive power of love, of peace, of acceptance, while (re-)negotiating its position within the world community.

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