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Verbal Subversion and Satire in Japan, 1937-1945, as Documented by the Special High Police

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We find much research on political opposition by individuals and by groups in Japan during the 1930s and early 1940s, but criticism expressed by the Japanese people in general at that times has been little examined. In large part that is because it was indirect and veiled. This essay focuses on satiric comments about Japan's rulers and the political situation. Such commentary could be heard in all parts of the country. Most of the material presented here is extracted from monthly reports of the Special High Police (*Tokkō Keisatsu*) between 1937 and 1944. Although many of the comments that ridiculed and criticized the authorities were ephemeral and did not find their way into mainstream discourse, satirical songs and parodic argot circulated in the same way political jokes did in the Western world. Wartime humor often was aimed at the emperor and his family. Cynicism arising out of the misery caused by war was widespread. Through political parody and satire, ordinary Japanese people could at least temporarily escape their burdens and misery, and recover some of the individual dignity the government had taken from them.

Keywords: MILITARISM, SPECIAL HIGH POLICE (*TOKKŌ KEISATSU*), POLITICS, SATIRE, PARODY SONG

Abnormal—that is what I would call the days of intimidation and coercion by violence and by legal authority. From the last half of the 1930s until Japan's defeat, particularly, was a time of intimidation and coercion by violence and by legal authority. It may have been a time of elation for those who were in control, but for the common people it was a time of humiliation and of bad conscience about inhuman actions they had themselves committed.

—Shiromaru Fumio¹

INTRODUCTION

What people laugh at differs according to place and time. If the rulers of a country restrict expression, people often respond by making jokes that disclose and criticize the

government's weaknesses. The resulting humor strikes the authorities not as funny, but as subversive. Such was the case in Japan during the wartime period of 1931-1945.

Police records from 1937 to 1945 reveal abundant examples of this type of subversive humor in wartime Japan. The Special High Police (Tokkō Keisatsu 特高警察) diligently investigated so-called verbal offenses throughout the country, everything from late-night talks in sake bars to graffiti on toilet walls. Drawing on police documents, this paper will introduce and analyze a number of these anti-government, satirical statements.

In the West in the years just before and during World War II, people circulated political jokes that played variations on traditional forms of humor. One such form made use of ethnic stereotypes, and a typical version brought prominent representatives from different nations (a common grouping was Churchill, Hitler, the Pope, et al.) together in fictitious meetings. Another form was the so-called hymn parodies in which sacred music was reinterpreted with a secular (occasionally sacrilegious) bent, and names of religious figures were replaced by those of politicians.

In Japan at that time song parodies could also be heard, probably in greater number and more than in Western countries, and these became objects of official censure. However, we find less use of stereotypes in wartime Japanese jokes than in contemporary European jesting. More frequently employed in Japan were riddles and poetic forms. The seventeen-syllable *senryū* 川柳 poem was a vehicle for political humor, while other verse forms were used in more serious pro- and anti-war texts. Moreover there was often the impromptu creation of satirical wordplay possessing a very sharp bite.

Fanciful satirical inventions and crude associations were used to reduce the distance that the militaristic government tried to put between the people of Japan and her deified emperor. In general the gap between official propaganda and reality was viewed cynically, and it was much ridiculed. Rhetorical joke-like idioms and song parodies flourished, especially in the last years of the war as things deteriorated at home and abroad, creating a sort of anti-government consensus in larger towns and in the cities.

A common feature of many jokes or satirical remarks is that they seek the quickest route, or optimal shortcut, to scathing criticism of an opponent. The shortcut might be a single striking word or a slight parodic modification of some familiar phrase or notion. When the shortcut succeeds, the hearer or listener is provoked to laughter. Sigmund Freud wrote in detail on an important element of the joke, the punch line (German *Pointe*, Japanese *ochi* 落ち).²

In this article, I will consider a number of taboo-breaking statements or subversive rumors that stood in stark contrast to the official or orthodox versions that were virtually obligatory in the Japan of that time. Somehow those evoked a comic effect and a feeling of release. This sort of political humor aims at spontaneous laughter of release or satisfaction and—as also pointed out by Hans-Jochen Gamm in his study of political jokes in Germany during the Nazi period³—normally does not have the goal of stirring up political protest in the way that agitation leaflets, for example, do.

In the late thirties and early forties, Japanese performers of *naniwabushi* 浪花節, the

popular shamisen-accompanied narrative entertainment, employed a technique well known also in other countries, namely, noticeable omission. They simply did not voice censured passages in their lyrics or dialogues, leaving it to the audience's imagination to fill in the gaps.

The last kind of humor that we will look at here is satirical effects that were not intended as such by their speakers or writers, but ending up having that effect anyway. Freud called such an unintentional joke a *harmloser Witz*.

Until now, research on opposition to the government in wartime Japan has generally focused on certain individuals, organizations, or academic groups. It has paid less attention to the broader, unorganized forms of verbal protest exercised by people throughout the country and throughout the war. Exceptions appear in works by Inagaki Masami, who in 1976 published a good survey of soldiers' and children's song parodies,⁴ and John Dower, who in 1993 published an excellent essay entitled "Sensational Rumors, Seditious Graffiti, and the Nightmares of the Thought Policy."⁵ Dower analyzes the Tokkō records with special regard to the Communist movement and to those with a pro-Communist background, and he covers a good number of seditious graffiti that were scrawled by officially converted ex-Communists as one kind of underground activity.

On the whole, the anonymous Everyman's humor that persistently rejected the government's wartime policies and Tennoism⁶ seems today, sixty years later, to have been forgotten.

Abroad, the Japanese government of those militaristic years also pursued a policy intended to create and to cultivate the image of an ideological homogenous nation. But the fact that jokes and satire against the war and Tennoism existed in those days of strict censorship is evidence that protests by the Japanese people did not differ from those of other nations under comparable strict rulership.

Two Political Jokes of the Nineteenth Century

Before I characterize the source of the material used in this paper, the periodical *Tokkō geppō*, and before we get engaged with that material, let me briefly discuss two examples of wordplay with political subjects from the late nineteenth century. Although explanation risks turning pithy Japanese witticisms into lengthy English shaggy-dog stories, I do so in order to indicate the existence of a longer tradition of this genre, that is, a history of subversive humor in Japan.

The first of these jokes is a commentary on the weak position of the Tokugawa shogunate. At one point during the 1850s, a stick (or pole, *bō* 棒) to be used for carrying a *nagamochi* (長持ち, an oblong chest for storing clothing) was left (*oku* 置く) by the palace of the shogun, which was also called the *okubō* (お公方). When the people of Edo (current day Tokyo) saw this, they were able by deft wordplay to read this ordinary occurrence as a kind of omen regarding the future of the shogunate: "*okubō nagamochi nashi*." This phrase can either mean "a stick left without a *nagamochi*" (置く棒長持ち

無し) or “the shogun will not reign for long”(お公方ながもち無し) This joke is mentioned in the diary of the wife of the director of the domain academy (*hankō*) of Wakayama. She reported that the joke circulated in Edo for a couple of days, and commented that although it was well done, it was quite inappropriate.⁷

The other joke aimed its barb at numerous newly created taxes ordered in the name of the Meiji Emperor. It was told by the storyteller Itō Enkyokudō in a performance in downtown Tokyo in 1887.

His Majesty was in his previous life a fortuneteller in Yanagihara [the old book shop quarter]. Once he put three funeral plates [an allusion to Itō Hirobumi and Saigō Takamori] in front of himself and laid out bamboo sticks [an allusion to excess taxes]. In doing this, he followed the Holy Divine Book *Yijing*... [As a result] in the Sumiyoshi dances nowadays, they sing “*sasayatokezei yoiyazei ariyaranzei kononandemozei*” ササヤアトコゼイ、ヨイヤゼイ、アリヤランゼイ、コノナンデモゼイ and so on.

Given this context, the song becomes a play on the morpheme *zei*, which can be understood as an emphatic particle or as the word “tax.” Thus the song goes something like this: “oh yeh yeh legi tax, oh marry maxi taxy, oh ever never mix and tax, oh this whatever taxer.”⁸

It is worth noting that these clearly political jokes stand in contrast to the large number of jokes that were collected in a German book on Japanese humor around 1900.⁹ In fact, that collection represents a European colonialist image of the picaresque, jolly oriental, and does not give the impression that Japanese humor often had a sharp satirical edge, nor that it was ever directed at its rulers.

THE TOKKŌ GEPPŌ

The main source of examples of wartime humor in this paper is the internal periodical of the Special High Police *Tokkō geppō*.¹⁰ From 1930 to 1944, that publication informed its readers about opposition or anti-government movements in the country and their organizations, and analyzed these movements in detail. As a result, the periodical offers much splendid material for historians of subversive activity at that time. From July 1937 to the end of 1944, records of subversive statements obtained by the police in the course of their monitoring the populace were published under a special subheading¹¹ at the end of the first section of each issue called “The Situation of the Communist Movement.” Increasing criticism of the government after the “China affair” seems to have prompted such strict surveillance.¹²

The *Tokkō geppō* report on offenses recorded the same kinds of data about all offenses. This pattern can be seen already in 1936, when offenses committed by religious groups were presented as follows¹³:

- the region (prefecture) where the offense occurred

- the person under suspicion of having committed the offense and/or
- the circumstances of the offense
- the offense itself
- the punishment (in many cases mentioned in a later issue).

Offenses were classified as:

- *lése majesté*
- anti-war
- anti-military
- disturbing the public peace.

The Special High Police obtained information from individual citizens directly, and also by listening in on daily conversations on trains, in drinking places, village theater halls, public baths (*sentō*), barbershops, and even prisons. They found words of protest written on banknotes, in private letters, letters to politicians and in leaflets. Public toilets became common sites of exchange of subversive information, as we can observe from the number of graffiti found in public and factory lavatories that referred to their readers as "Toilet comrades," or as is illustrated by a graffiti in a factory loo in 1939 that read:

This toilet is our propaganda board [for preparation for a strike]. Use it effectively!¹⁴

As a medium of protest, toilet graffiti were followed in popularity by song parodies and anonymous letters to high politicians and institutions. Performing artists borrowed the techniques commonly used in political cabaret.

The *Tōkkō geppō* contained about thirty items each month that were selected from the material collected throughout Japan. The Security Section (*hoan ka*) listed the number of incidents in the whole country and their classifications for the years 1942, 1943, and 1944 as follows¹⁵:

- 1942, 308 cases:
 - lése majesté*, 84; anti-war/anti-military, 51; disturbing the peace etc., 137.
- 1943, 406 cases:
 - lése majesté*, 113; anti-war/anti-military, 56; disturbing the peace etc., 237.
- 1944, 607 cases:
 - lése majesté*, 93; anti-war/anti-military, 224; disturbing the peace etc., 290.

These figures follow a central selection of the monthly prefectural reports on cases of offense, and it is clearly stated at the beginning of each issue that there may be omissions of parts of the reports received from the prefectures. (Therefore a comparison of the numbers in prefectural documents of one month with the figures in *Tōkkō Geppō* for the same month can sometimes show that there were a greater number of oppositional voices in total than disclosed in the periodical.) Moreover, in addition to these police figures from the prefectures, there were also oppositional voices heard within the military, as can be ascertained from statistics on verbal protest in the army.¹⁶ Finally, there were many protesting voices that were not officially recorded and reported. The *Tōkkō* Police repeatedly mentions regional circulation of forbidden song parodies and even common use of

oppositional slang idioms. Especially from spring 1943 until the end of the war, the police observed that song parodies swept from the youth of the working class to young people in general, and from them to school children—in short, from the factory to the school. The author Senoo Kappa¹⁷ describes in his novel *Shōnen H* the atmosphere during those years in a downtown district of Kobe, mentioning that such forbidden songs were widely known and that children sang them in small voices to themselves.

It appears that at least some of the cases of offense were in the form of jokes, parodies, satires, and scornful and/or cynical commentaries about the political situation. The fact that this kind of material appeared regularly in *Tokkō geppō* makes it clear that this kind of humor and satire consistently served as an informal medium for venting frustration or expressing political protest.

SONG PARODIES

Let me begin my consideration of song parodies with an early example from the mid-1930s. An old soldiers' song dating from the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905 goes as follows:

Here, away from the homeland
 Hundreds of miles away in Manchuria
 Lies my comrade, buried under a stone
 Illuminated by the sun.¹⁸

In the following fourteen verses, the surviving soldier sings the praises of his friendship with the dead soldier. The mid-1930s parody, by contrast, sings of the affair surrounding law scholar Takigawa Yukitoki's (1891-1962) criticism of an ever-increasing centralized government. It was an affair that, through an organized protest of his sympathetic department at Kyoto University, turned into a nationwide movement of sympathy.¹⁹ The parody went like this:

Here, away from Tokyo
 Hundreds of miles away in Kyoto
 Lies regional autonomy and freedom
 Buried under a stone
 Illuminated by Fascism.

This was clear criticism of the government through parody. In the following fourteen verses, the loss of freedom is mourned, a loss emphasized by the melancholy tune of the song.

While this parody was at a relatively high intellectual level, there were many other song parodies that were much less sophisticated, particularly those that appeared among children and new military recruits. A variety of new, more inspirational military songs began appearing in 1937, most of them bearing stock phrases praising the emperor and Japan. Parodies of these martial songs were a kind of frantic reaction expressing frustra-

tion with garrison life. The following is one such song that was sung by a bakery apprentice in a loud voice on a street in 1938,²⁰ and two years later, with slight variation, by three young men in a hot spring spa.²¹ The three singers got a strict warning, and in cooperation with the military police, the civilian police undertook an investigation to find out who had composed the song's lyrics so that the circulation of this "anti-army" song could be brought under control.²²

For the great nation [*okuni no tame ni*], as it is called
 Poor boy that I am, I go to the army.
 The people hate the army, but
 I say goodbye to you, my sweetheart.

The middle part of this song had different versions in different places. For example, the third line was changed to "The older soldiers kick me" or "By moonlight I have to clean the boots of the older recruits" or, in still another version, to "Only fools volunteer to go to the army."²³ These lines of parody are normally followed by a refrain describing a tearful farewell to a sweetheart named Suchan. These song texts sound quite harmless, but because they parodied official songs promoting loyalty, they had the effect of turning that loyalty into something ridiculous.

Besides these songs on garrison frustration, another group of songs that was already being sung by the late 1930s reflects pure fear of the front line and of death. While in one of them²⁴ the recruit is still joking (as he waits at the harbor for embarkation to the front in China, he wants to be bitten in the testicles by a mouse so that he will be exempted from military service), in another the young recruit simply expresses what he is feeling:

I hate the soldiers.
 If now I could become a little boy
 I would lie in the arms of my mother and drink from her breast,
 I would get one sen from her and could buy me a sweet.

The dreadful awareness of death is also reflected in a cynical—or at least bitter—verse that refers to the practice of using metal bowls and metal chopsticks in offering food to the dead:

How hard! How hard!
 The troops have metal bowls and metal chopsticks.
 But we are not dead!
 How cruel—this rice for the dead.
 Oh yeah, that's true, real truth!²⁵

In unpublished police records from August 1945, we also find a war-end version of the already mentioned "Sweetheart" song, which circulated in Ishikawa Prefecture:

The spring flower blossom has quickly passed.
 When I informed her about my merit bonus and the number of my stars,
 My sweetheart was [already] the wife of another.²⁶

In addition to the song parodies by soldiers, children also picked up the wartime

idioms of adults and created their own world of parody, as in this example:

The young pig yesterday born
 Was stung by a wasp
 And died with honor in the war
 When will its bones return?
 On April 8 in the morning they will return.

The young wasp yesterday born
 Was stomped on by the (mother) pig stomping
 And died with honor in the war.
 When will its bones return?
 On April 8 in the morning they will return.²⁷

Another variation of this song went:

The octopus went to the army for the holy nation
 It died with honor in the war
 When will its bones return?
 It has no bones and will not return.
 The poor parents!

Children imitated the world of adults and innocently chanted songs while playing. It was all the more fun for them if their songs violated adult taboos. Not surprisingly, the police constantly tried to suppress the steadily increasing number of children's parodies.²⁸

One such children's song that was reported was a parody on the requiem-like quasi-national anthem, *Umi yukaba* ("If I Went to the Sea"). In this parody, the dead body of a loyal subject becomes a hippopotamus swimming in the sea (*kaba* 河馬 for *yukaba* 行かば). A worm also appears in the song (*mimizu* 蚯蚓 for *mi-zuku* 身漬く), and the word for "corpse" is changed to the word for "foolishness" or "nonsense" (*baka, ne* 馬鹿、ね for *kabane* 屍). Even the revered texts of the Imperial Rescript on Education and the Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors were not immune to satire. Puns on words in these texts changed them from dignified imperial declarations into farcical or stale jokes.

Three final examples of children's parody can be adduced here. One plays on the ever-higher inflation in the last years of the war, the other two on the end of the war. In 1940, a hymn written to celebrate the 2600th anniversary of the imperial line contained the words "golden kite," "wing" and "ray," which were also names of cigarette brands sold during the war. With slight adjustments to the lyrics, it became a song that bemoaned the ever-rising price of cigarettes to fifteen sen, then twenty sen, and so on. It is a well-done play on words that both satirized a sacred imperial text and commented on the economic misery of the Japanese populace.²⁹

While the former song employs remarkably sophisticated wordplay, the following one, documented by the police in 1944, makes use of only one powerful pun: *kyūjō*, meaning "nine castles," is a homonym for "the imperial palace," thus allowing for the possibility of the lyric

One castle burnt down
 Two castles burnt down
 Three. . . .
 Nine castles (or the imperial palace) burnt down.³⁰

Yet another song³¹ cites a Tokyo place-name, Hitotsubashi (Onebridge), and then offers variations on the theme of “bridge” (*hashi-tsukushi*):

One bridge fell
 Two bridges fell
 The double bridge under the imperial palace fell
 The imperial palace fell.

Both songs use a simple poetic technique similar to that in a children’s song that had won an important prize about a decade earlier. The words and logic of the prizewinning song had gone in the opposite direction: the grandparents built the town Tokyo as the capital of Japan, the parents made Tokyo into a metropolis of East Asia, and we the present generation will turn it into a metropolis of the world.³² The gradual rise from one generation to the next came quickly tumbling down.

SATIRICAL TREATMENT OF POLITICIANS AND THE IMPERIAL FAMILY

The Special High Police were not amused by how the images of political leaders and the imperial family appeared in the mirror of popular cynicism.

Politicians

Prime Minister Tōjō Hideki (1884–1948) was a particularly common target of jokes and satire. People sneered at his bearing and at certain of his actions, regarding his adoption of a militaristic attitude as an attempt to ape General Nogi Maresuke, and his looking into the faces of children and patting their heads or visiting maternity wards with gifts as an imitation of Adolf Hitler. He was seen as grasping for popularity, as transparently eager to hear a “Thank you, Mr. Tōjō!”³³

A piece of graffiti written on a telegraph pole by a fifteen-year-old boy, though somewhat enigmatic, provides an example of the way in which Tōjō was ridiculed:³⁴

Announcement from the Imperial Headquarters [Daihon’ei]: Mr. Tōjō has only one right leg.

It seems likely that the boy had heard adults’ remarks about the absurdity of the announcements of the Daihon’ei,³⁵ and that his graffiti alluded to the one-sided support of the premier by the right wing.

The Imperial Family

In general the most common graffiti on public toilet walls were appeals to “kill” the “crazy emperor” or to “overthrow the emperor,” but the deified emperor of Japan was also brought down to earth by being made the butt of numerous satirical jokes. Among these japes, mostly found on telegraph poles and in anonymous letters, we find a minor but nevertheless forbidden bit of conversation overheard near Yokosuka in April 1941. A man on a train asked his colleague if he had already seen his son and wife using for the colleague’s family members the honorific expressions ordinarily reserved for reference to the imperial family: “His Highness the Prince” and “Her Majesty”.³⁶ In a more elaborate joke, a company president remarked in a 1940 speech that if the emperor was worshipped because of his 2600-year-long ancestral line, then if he, the speaker, could claim a family history of 3000 years, he should be the one being worshipped.³⁷ Another clever commentary by a comic storyteller (*manzaishi*) who was entertaining “industrial soldiers” in a town in Hokkaido dared to voice the view that there was—at least in the Buddhist cosmos—equality between the emperor and the people:³⁸

It is said that His Majesty Kanmu became blind in both eyes while living in the capital of Nara, but after praying to the Bodhisattva Kannon, his eyes became clear again. It might be impolite to say so, but to Kannon there is no difference between His Majesty the Emperor and worms like we are.

Although this was not a joke per se, there might have been, in the days of Tennoistic propaganda, some surprising comic effect in concluding an imperial legend with a short prosaic sentence that such a miracle could happen to anyone. The police were probably especially prone to find offense in such remarks at the time of, and shortly after, the enormous celebrations that honored of the 2600th anniversary of the founding of the imperial line, which occurred in late 1940.

While some remarks simply stated that the emperor was crazy or that he was nothing more than a wall decoration—the latter referred to the emperor’s picture being required by law to appear in public institutions³⁹—other remarks offered suggestions about what to do with the emperor after the war (see below). However there were also satirizations of the human side of the emperor’s deified existence, focusing in particular detail on the sex life of the imperial couple, who at the time had seven children.⁴⁰ Occasionally these prohibited comments employed vulgar language. Especially with a group of jibes that portray the emperor engaged in various sex acts, we can feel the accumulated fury of the exploited and suffering people. Such jokes also seem to be a scornful commentary on the privileged situation of the imperial family at a time when, according to a graffiti from the last years of the war, the impoverished people did not even have the energy to produce the number of children the government expected of them.⁴¹

A rumor of a romantic affair between the emperor and a princess was an exception.⁴² Other romantic rumors circulated, especially in regards to Prince Chichibu, the emperor’s brother, who was next in line to the throne, though these stories seem to have been

told with more sympathy (see below). But in reference to the emperor, it was sometimes said that he should think about the people of his country instead of just having sex. A letter addressed to a high politician expressed this, then boldly asserted the writer's belief in a forbidden philosophy:

Tell that crazy emperor not only to fuck but also to think about the people! I am a communist!⁴³

Some of the graffiti in this group mention the remarkable length of the emperor's genitalia (*isshaku, goshun*, or ca. 45cm).⁴⁴ Another graffiti writer, in his rage against the government, did not hesitate to denigrate its imperial representative as a "fucking animal."⁴⁵

In another example from 1941, which made use of the *naniwabushi* or *rōkyoku* tradition, a song and declamation accompanied by shamisen, an artist performed a song on sex and the erect penis. In it various people, from scholar to pharmacist, are described in a state of nakedness. Towards the end the empress and her daughter also appear stark naked, but the song ends with them harmlessly entering a bath.⁴⁶ This image on its own is not particularly offensive, but in the context of a ribald song, it is clearly intended as political cabaret aimed at a taboo subject. In spring 1943, a subtle jab at the sex life of the emperor was included in a speech given at an evening program at a village school on Shikoku. The speaker, the director of a branch office of the central Hiroshima Broadcasting Corporation, added the following remark on "the situation in the Royal House" to his report on the war situation:

The outermost part of the palace is called the Front Hall, the adjoining room is called the Middle Hall, and the room behind that is called the Back Hall or the Emperor's Room. In the Front Hall the senior employees do their work. Boys of seven or eight and twelve or thirteen years of age serve in the Middle Hall. In the Back Hall His Majesty is served by the court ladies and chambermaids. This is because the men who work in the Front Hall receive the messages for His Majesty and pass them to the emperor via the boys who are in the Middle Hall. One reason why they send the messages via the boys of twelve or thirteen years of age is to avoid the leaking of secrets in important documents. The other reason is that if His Majesty touches [i.e., has sex with] a chambermaid, the boys, who do not yet have sexual feelings, will not notice as adult employees would.

The speaker used a very polite style in this fairy-tale-like depiction of the peaceful life in the imperial palace, which contrasted vividly with the war situation and the misery throughout the country. There was no direct reference to the reigning emperor, but the reference to touching a chambermaid was obviously alluding to the image of the imperial house as oversexed.⁴⁷

Another group of remarks overheard in pubs or written in toilet stalls commented on the intelligence or physical features of the imperial family. In one relatively harmless example, a reporter in Matsue remarked that one of the princesses, the wife of Takamatsu no miya, was said to be "well-suited to being a waitress in a coffee shop because of her rich make-up and permanent sexy grin."⁴⁸ The young reporter was arrest-

ed one week later and prosecuted on a charge of *lése majesté* just four days after that. A similar remark concerning the sexy face of princess Teru was made by a young office employee of a company in Hokkaido; he was also prosecuted.⁴⁹

Another satirical device used to ridicule the imperial family members was to have a narrator in a *rōkyōku* performance describe a fictitious comical situation in which a member of the royal family appeared. In one example, the hero of the story comes across Prince Takeda Tsunehisa, who is learning to ride a bicycle. Mistaking the prince for a servant of the prince, the hero asks him, “Is His Highness clever or crazy?” His Highness answers, “It depends on what you mean by crazy. Might be a bit soft in the head.”⁵⁰

During the last years of the war, a complete rejection of the imperial family characterizes a number of remarks that found their way into the police records. The words of a female Ikebana teacher in Yamagata prefecture exemplify this. During one of her lessons, she found fault with the appearance of the Taishō Emperor’s mother, saying she looked like a “second-rank court lady”; she went on to make reference to how short the neck of the wife of Prince Mikasa was, and to her unsuitable Western dress.⁵¹ Pictures of the royal family in newspapers were sometimes clipped out and mailed to prominent officials with indignant comments scrawled on them. In other instances, these clippings were tacked up on telegraph poles. Captions like “Well-fed faces” or “These people should earn a living” were found on such pictures. “The emperor should use his legs instead of a horse-drawn carriage” was written on one picture, while “If he does not even do so much as walk alone and open his umbrella, he should not eat”⁵² was written on another.

A number of the remarks that got the attention of the police reflected the fantasies of people who wished retribution for all the suffering they had to endure for the sake of the emperor. In one such fantasy—a comparatively harmless one—a young metal worker had some fun at the expense of a member of the royal family. Talking with friends, he concocted a scheme that called for them to catch the crown prince and throw him into a cupboard. The prince’s disappearance would cause a great commotion, whereupon he, the young metal worker, would pull the prince out of the cupboard and release him.⁵³ More forceful than this boyish prank, and probably not intended as funny, was the fantasy of a twenty-year-old farmer who, when looking at a picture of the emperor in the shrine of the village school, remembered:

When I was in the army, I had the idea of throwing the emperor into the double sewer pipe of a drainage ditch.⁵⁴

Yet another graffito bitterly reflected on wartime malnutrition, and suggested the emperor be cooked and eaten with soy sauce.⁵⁵ A graffito found in 1940 in Shimonoseki reduced such a desire to the laconic line: “Here died His Majesty in war—Banzai!”⁵⁶

In another example of fantasy or dark humor, a boy was observed as he went through the streets carrying a picture of the emperor that he had clipped out of a newspaper, holding it in front of himself. His gesture seemed to copy the custom of funerals, and it is possible that the child’s action reflected the talk of adults. Obviously, remarked the

police, the boy did not know what his action meant. He was brought to his mother, and she was admonished that he should not do such things again. These examples reflect the furious response the people had to authorities who were believed to use the image of the emperor to rubber-stamp their policies.

Still another type of exaggerated fantasy described the emperor in post-war times. The emperor was imagined having to explain Japan's actions and having to apologize on a visit to Washington. In one farmer's version of this, the emperor had to kneel down on the entrance bridge of the imperial palace and apologize before the Japanese people.⁵⁷ In a conversation between the director of a heavy metal industry company and a member of the company's supervisory board, overheard in August 1944, the suggestion was made that after the war, the emperor might be dispatched to the South Seas or to the backward island of Awajishima.⁵⁸ In an anonymous letter, the writer suggested to the emperor that he should just go to the tiny spot of Yaeshima and die there.⁵⁹ In a conversation overheard earlier in the war, in 1939, a young watchmaker saw the imperial family becoming captain of a whaling ship.⁶⁰ In the same year, a user of a dockyard toilet declared that the imperial family should be cleaning toilets, and, playing on words, he changed the phrase of "imperial family" to "imperial robbers."⁶¹ In these examples Japanese people manipulated the figure of the emperor and those of the family members like marionettes in a fantasy puppet play, as they proposed dream-like solutions to the problems of those who could not escape their real burden.

A final example is a strange and rather convoluted narrative that referred, on the one hand, to the Toranomon affair in 1923 (an assassination attempt on the Crown Prince by Naniwa Daisuke), and, on the other hand, to the childhood muteness of one of the Crown Prince's daughters. The narrator of the story, who is in detention, asks a neighboring inmate if he knows the story behind the phrase "*yō iwan wa*." This phrase, Osaka slang newly coined in the 1930s, is used to reject emphatically an exaggerated statement. It connotes also "no words," and the comical effect of its use in this story might result from the shading between both. When his listener says he does not know the story, the narrator tells him the tale of Daisuke, whose fiancée was forced to spend the night with the Crown Prince. Daisuke's attempt to avenge this offense failed, and he was sentenced to death.⁶² However, on the same day that Daisuke was executed, a daughter was born to the Crown Prince. According to the story, the vengeful ghost of Daisuke attacked the girl and struck her mute. The servant soon noticed this and when asked by another servant about the rumor he answered, "*Yō iwan wa*." It seems that this story offers an explanation for the muteness that afflicted the Crown Prince's daughter, while tacitly endorsing an attack on the imperial family with sympathy for the attacker.⁶³

Prince Chichibu

Many rumors circulated about Prince Chichibu, or Chichibu no Miya Yasuhito

(1902-1953). They tended to portray him as an opposite pole to his reigning brother. His absence or dispensation from his duties as a representative of the royal family, and the rarity of mention of him in the press offered plenty of room for speculation. This speculation did not take the form of jokes per se, but one cannot but smile seeing that people created an image that stood in striking contrast to the official press accounts, a figure that, though close to the emperor, stood in opposition to official imperial policy. "You may say what you want, Prince Chichibu is obviously the most clever person in the royal family," a couple who owned a hostel in Tochigi remarked in 1944. Another bit of gossip reported in a superficially bland tone:⁶⁴

It is said that when he is alone, Prince Chichibu likes to leave the palace incognito, travel all over Japan like a common person and visit the houses of common people. In the same year an insurance employee and an artisan commented in a less reserved manner on a news item about the illness of Prince Chichibu:

When Prince Chichibu went to England for the coronation ceremonies, it is said he contracted "downwards diseases," and now these diseases have gone to his head and become cerebral syphilis.⁶⁵

Some years earlier, in 1941, an institute director in Tokyo attributed the absence of Prince Chichibu at official events of the imperial family to a mixture of love and politics: Because the Prince allegedly was having a love affair with the daughter of the British ambassador, he was opposed to Japan joining the axis powers (Germany and Italy) and was therefore under house arrest in Aoyama.⁶⁶ In the same year other rumors spread word that Prince Chichibu was pro-Anglo-American or that he had been shot by someone. These rumors led to alarmed demands that the people should be more fully informed about Prince Chichibu.⁶⁷

To explain the differences in thinking between Prince Chichibu and the emperor, it was sometimes said that the brothers had different mothers.⁶⁸ Yet another politically loaded opinion about the absence of the prince's name from reports on the court was offered by a wineshop owner in Miyagi prefecture:

I heard it when I was in Tokyo. . . . According to this story, Prince Chichibu was involved in the 2-26 affair. The Prince was staying in Hirosaki at that time but came to Tokyo before the affair in order to take over leadership.⁶⁹

Going through the frequent *lése majesté* verbal offenses that refer to Prince Chichibu, one gets the impression that some people took the figure of the prince and created of it an opponent close to the throne, a sort of *enfant terrible*, in order to escape, at least in their minds, the pressure of the imperial government. We find similar complementary patterns in other countries. In Germany before World War I, for instance, Prince Heinrich was opposed to Kaiser Wilhelm, at least in the imaginations of some people.

THE MISERY OF WAR AS PORTRAYED IN JOKES

Finally, I want to consider some of the idioms and satirical commentary spawned by the misery caused by the war. First, I will focus on those about high taxes and the black market, later on death in war.

Commenting in 1943 on the high inflation and ever increasing taxes, someone hand-wrote on a fifty sen banknote:

What are fifty sen? It's nothing but a bit of paper.⁷⁰

A fifty-nine-year-old female hairdresser is said to have made a joke, a sort of onomatopoeic riddle containing a veiled complaint about the ever-increasing tax burden, in a public bath:

What is the emperor like? He is like a groaning old man suffering from *zei zei*.

“*Zei zei*” denotes the groaning of an old man (the emperor), but it is also a homophone for “tax, tax,” and thus implies more and more taxes.⁷¹ The joke appears to be a Shōwa-period version of Itō Enkyokudō’s joke on the high taxes of the Meiji period, mentioned earlier.

As legally purchasable food grew scarcer, especially in the last years of the war, a black market sprang up and flourished. Newly created idioms emerged in the dealings of this market, and some old phrases were manipulated and given new meanings. These found their way into people’s vocabularies throughout the country. This jargon, or argot, reflects a sort of community of illegality. The police’s internal periodical *Shisō junpō* offered a glossary of these words in 1944. The people’s linguistic imagination was in full swing.⁷²

- *yamikago/yamibukuro* (literally, black basket/bag) shopping bag for the black market—in general use
- *yami-hara* (black [market] stomach) if you had enough to eat—used among workers
- *haikyū-hara* (distribution stomach) if you did not have enough to eat because you were limited to food supplies that were officially approved for distribution or sale—used among workers
- *tsuki no yo* (moon night) a price close to that of the black market—in general use among businesspeople
- *gyorai* (torpedo) national bond, no longer re-exchangeable for money—in general use (meant to suggest that the money the people had paid for national bonds [for weapons production and other wartime purposes] would not return, like a torpedo once launched)
- *chōchin de ike!* (go with a lantern!) the article is only available at the black market price—used among housewives
- *oborozuki no yo* (a night with a misty moon) black market—in general use, among businessmen
- *kome hitsugi* (rice coffin) a trunk or suitcase filled with rice; luggage used to disguise the rice and smuggle it home from the black market—in general use

- *shōmōhin* (expendable article) soldier—used among soldiers
- *jinsei nijūgo-nen* (a life of twenty-five years) recruit; young airforce soldier—used among soldiers
- *usumawari* (pounding the mortar) at public distributions only the upper class obtain the article—in general use
- *sutsu, jinken* (synthetic silk, recommended by the government) article of bad quality, declining quality of a person
- *gunkan kaoyami* (black [market] face of a military officer) a military officer has priority in purchasing goods—in general use
- *yoru* (night) black market—in general use among businessmen
- *kosakuryō chōshū* (imposition of the tenant farmer's rice rent) waiting in a queue to buy distribution rice—in general use
- *toka kansei* (light limitation regulation) black market—in general use
- *maruya* (a circle, maru, around the syllable *ya*, the first part of the word *yami no ichi*, black market; a symbol drawn in the manner of a traditional trade mark) black market—in general use.
- *kokumin kōtei* (national regulation) black market—in general use
- *gekichin daiha* (warship sent to bottom[the language of this phrase is in newspaper headline style] —full damage; direct hit) a superb sake—used among sake shop owners
- *oto nashi* (“without noise”, also “proper”) black market—used among businessmen
- *sukotan* (twist of the word *tansoku* [short leg {pig}]) secret slaughtering of a pig
- *nigiri komi* (knead into [rice ball etc.]) if a person responsible for distribution of articles acquires another person's portion—in general use.

The police periodical characterized these terms as “satirical comments on the present situation,” and warned that they spread tremendously fast and were more or less in common use. The black market jargon was compared with “public-peace breaking” songs, of which I have given some examples, and with wild rumors. To the authorities, “They impl[ie]d an increasingly anti-government attitude and a critical attitude of distance towards the army and government policy.” The reasons for this tendency throughout the country were seen in the extension of the war and in the increasing lack of food.⁷³

Before addressing the cynical and sarcastic group of verbal thrusts—the Special High Police regarded them as delicts—reflecting popular sentiment about death at the front, let me mention two poems in the laconic *senryū* genre by anti-war poet Tsuru Akira. (The poems were first published in a posthumous edition.) Already in 1938 Akira recognized that the general population was stuck in an impossible situation, caught between inadequate income and food supply, on the one hand, and the militaristic policy of a high birth rate, on the other.⁷⁴ One poem is written from the point of view of a mother:

If I have children until I am tax exempt, hunger and death await.

In another *senryū* from 1937 or 1938, he pointed out the incompatibility of the

emperor's glorification and the cruelty or absurdity of the war on the Chinese continent. The poem reads:

The arms I once lifted for the *banzai*
I left behind on the continent.⁷⁵

This poem can be associated with severely wounded soldiers who had returned home or those who had become speechless after their war experiences on the continent. In the latter sense this *senryū* is a grim version of a graffito found on the wall of the women's toilet in Atami railway station in 1941:

Nowadays no one who comes back from the front says "For our [great] nation."⁷⁶

The extreme conditions of the war and its high death rate were repeatedly reflected in this "banzai-exclamation," as in these lines from a village theater performance in Shizuoka prefecture⁷⁷:

Your body is obviously on the recruits list. . . . I don't understand the guys that send you off with a "Banzai." No one comes back alive. Instead of shouting "Banzai," they would be better off saying "Namu Amida Butsu."

In Toyama prefecture, the police journal recorded how a young monk reflected on the high death rate from his point of view as a priest and questioned his task of praying for the salvation of dead soldiers.⁷⁸ In a sake bar a customer and a female entertainer were talking about news of the war. Overhearing them, the monk commented:

These *senninbari* amulets⁷⁹ and the care parcels to the front⁸⁰ don't make any sense. No soldier comes back alive. I just read the sutra text. That's it.

In the middle of Kyoto, an anonymous citizen wrote "The [newly created obligatory] national dress could soon be called national mourning dress" on a newspaper clipping of a picture of a high politician, and pinned it on a telegraph pole.⁸¹ In a school in Osaka in 1940, a note on a notice board carried a sarcastic message:

Our country has too many people! The government plans their end and will reduce the nuisance [of these burdensome] people. Die fast if you have reached that fate!⁸²

Government-supported war death insurance provided a lump sum of 5,000 yen and a payment of ten yen per year for the bereaved. That inspired a cynical writer to send a caustic observation to a newspaper publishing house in Matsumoto:

It is written in newspapers that if you visit a bereaved family, they are all content and in a good mood. [In fact,] this is because of the 5,000 yen.⁸³

Commenting on the return of remains of the war dead by the military to their families, an antique-shop owner drunkenly said to a waitress in a drinking place—hinting that he, by profession, knew what was fake and what was not:

Only idiots go to receive the mortal relics [of a family member killed in the war]. They could very well be nothing but cow bones, horse bones or pig bones.⁸⁴

The misery experienced by the Japanese populace at home was sometimes linked with the misery of the soldiers fighting at the front. A claim made by a fifty-two-year-old farmer in Wakayama in 1938 is an example. He maintained that the crop failure that had occurred the year before was a result of the discontented souls of dead soldiers that

had returned to fly over the country and haunt it.⁸⁵ Therefore, one should not do silly things like wage war. This comment reflects a belief in the notion of *tatari*, that is, that the souls of people who die with grievances against the living are the cause of natural disasters such as plagues, famines and earthquakes. The farmer's theory that the souls of the dead Japanese soldiers had returned to haunt the country reflected a very harsh judgment on the government; by implication, it discredited the official ceremony of enshrining the souls of dead soldiers at Yasukuni Shrine. This man's statement was surely not a joke, unless it represented a very subtle form of gallows humor. Contrary to all the government propaganda and State Shinto ceremonies, these one-liners and short satirical comments captured and connected the distress and suffering at the frontline and on the home front.

I have tried to give a brief summary of the kinds of subversive material, humor, satire, and parody that can be found in the *Tokkō geppō*. Children incorporated anti-war songs and humor into their games, and army and navy recruits deplored their lot by parodying military songs. Jokes expressing scorn and hostility toward government officials and the imperial family revealed a suffering populace. Whoever laughed at a graffito felt some solidarity with its author. But in the end, the emperor was not cooked and eaten with soy sauce, and he did not have to apologize before the nation. Wartime jokes were, as Freud said of other witticisms, a form of wish fulfillment: attacks on figures on the political stage that occurred in the dreams and fantasies of the Japanese people. With this kind of political humor and satire, the suffering people of Japan could for a moment escape their burdens and recover a shred of the pride, dignity, and individuality that the governments of those years had taken from them. In the end, they were just jokes, but they conveyed the pain and frustration that many Japanese people felt during the war.

I have presented only a few of the many instances of subversive humor and satire that occurred between 1937 and 1945 in Japan. Nevertheless, I do not mean to imply that there was universal or even extremely widespread (if latent) opposition to the government's ideology and to the war. There were, however, independent voices of protest heard throughout the country and throughout the war that were never silenced by the war propaganda and the imperial system.

The mass media of those years give the impression that the Japanese people were kept at a distance from the emperor. Reading between the lines, we might argue that the people were held hostage, kept in check by the fascination that a distant ruler possesses. I might go further to argue that this image of that time is, to a certain extent, still current. But the material I have presented here, especially that which directly satirized the emperor (and the imperial family), suggests that the distance between the emperor and his people—in part a product of the reverence they felt for him—was not nearly as great as the official version of the time would have had it. Likewise, popular support for Japan's wartime authorities was clearly not as strong as the government claimed. In future study, I hope scholars will take a closer look at these gaps, and at why their existence is still

being denied by some today.

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NOTES

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¹ Shiromaru 1998, p. 32.

² Freud 1958.

³ Gamm 1964, Introduction.

⁴ Inagaki 1976; also—together with an instructive article of Inagaki on the political atmosphere in a boarding school during the wartime—in *Nihon heiwaron taikai*, vol. 15, Tokyo 1994.

⁵ Dower 1993, pp. 101-154. The essay includes early American analyses from the Japan occupation period and offers statistical material from wartime.

⁶ The centering of the state around an absolute a priori authority of the emperor, since the promulgation of the Meiji constitution (1889); increasingly emphasized in everyday life in the years 1940-1945.

⁷ Shiga and Murata 1976, p. 108.

⁸ Omata 1998, p. 48. The performer had to pay twenty yen for his joke.

⁹ Netto and Wagener, 1901.

¹⁰ Naimushō Keihokyoku Hoanka, ed., *Tokkō geppō*, hereafter cited as TG. Published from March 1930 to November 1944 (except for the May and September issues of 1944); between November 1935 and July 1938 the periodical's title was *Tokkō gajji geppō*. A general index (*Tokkō geppō Sōmokuji*, 1973) and the periodical set exist as originals or as reprints in libraries in Japan. A copy of a handwritten text planned for a 1945 issue is in Ogino 1994, vol. 30. A word about this organization: The Special High Police, Tokubetsu Kōtō Keisatsu or Tokkō Keisatsu, was first installed as its own section, Tokubetsu Kōtō Keisatsu Ka, in 1911 at the Metropolitan Police Presidium (Keishichō in Tokyo), splitting off from the High Police, Kōtō Keisatsu. The Tokkō Keisatsu gradually grew as a police section and later became a department within the Home Ministry and regionally within the Prefectural Police Presidium. Its officers were distributed among regional police institutions, numbering some 5,000 in mid October 1945 when the institution was dissolved. For a good survey of the now available material created by the Tokkō Keisatsu over thirty-five years, see Ogino 1991 (introduction). His thirty-volume compilation is often used as a supplement to reprinted police documents, and it includes some issues of the periodical *Shisō junpō*, which appeared every ten days, that offer, for the last year of war, most interesting analysis of the mental and emotional situation of the people. For documents of the Tokkō Keisatsu still remaining in regional archives see also Schauwecker 1998 (2001).

¹¹ See TG July 1937, p. 1.

¹² The army had already begun to plan this sort of general monitoring—“during eating, breaks, in the bath, control of dairies, notebooks and controlling graffiti,” letters—one year earlier, after the military coup d'état known as the “2-26 affair.” See Awaya and Otabe 1984, p. 345.

¹³ See *Tokkō gajji geppō*, June 1936, p. 163ff.

- ¹⁴ TG August 1939, p.29.
- ¹⁵ Years here are fiscal years, April through March. See Selected archives of the Japanese Army and Navy archives, 1868-1945 (microfilm), reel 201; the text is partly also included In *Nihon heiwaron taikēi*, vol. 15, Nihon Tosho Sentā 1994, p. 315ff.
- ¹⁶ Documents of the Kenpeitai on criminality in the army (violence against senior officers, desertion, etc.) give the impression that there was a high rate of verbal protest. They offer an inside look into the (bad) psychological situation of the Japanese troops. See also Awaya and Otabe 1984.
- ¹⁷ Senoo 1997, p. 315.
- ¹⁸ By Mashita Hisen (text) and Miyoshi Kazuoki (comp.); for the parody, see also Kindaichi and Anzai 1982, 164ff.
- ¹⁹ The so-called Takigawa affair or Kyōdai affair.
- ²⁰ TG April 1938, p. 22.
- ²¹ TG October 1940, p. 37.
- ²² Another variation of this song, “Sweetheart” and “Suchan Farewell,” also appears in January 1942, p. 13.
- ²³ TG November 1937, p. 18. For further song parodies see also TG April 1938, p. 22f; TG April 1939, p. 62; TG May 1943, p. 23; TG August 1944, p. 33, TG November 1944, p. 25f.
- ²⁴ See TG August 1944, p. 33; also Kindaichi and Ansei 1982, p.122.
- ²⁵ See hen ao, 3A, 15, 7-9-7; *Shisō junpō* 3 (30 April 1944).
- ²⁶ See Ogino 1994, p. 349, page number of the handwritten page: p. 24. (The Tokkō Keisatsu was dissolved on 13 October 1945.)
- ²⁷ TG March 1944, p. 17; see Inagaki 1976; other versions of the “pig song” also in *Shisō junpō* 3 (1944).
- ²⁸ See the report on verbal protest for March 1944: hen ao 3A, 15, 7-9-4.0020; see also Schauwecker 1998, 313ff.
- ²⁹ TG April 1943, p. 32f; also TG March 1944, p. 17.
- ³⁰ In hen ao, 3A 15, 7-9-4, 0023.
- ³¹ In hen ao, 3A, 15, 35-4, p. 11.
- ³² The song, music by Yamada Kosaku, got a Tokyo price in 1932; see Schauwecker 1998, p.314.
- ³³ TG May 1943, p. 24; see also TG January 1943, p. 28.
- ³⁴ TG September 1943, p. 25.
- ³⁵ The police remarked in 1944: “The Daihon’ei announcements are too simple and cause the circulating of bad sayings.” See hen ao, 3A, 15, 7-9-7, *Shisō junpō* 2.
- ³⁶ TG April 1941, p. 23f: There existed a special vocabulary in use only for reports or descriptions of the imperial family; for the use of a limited number of terms, the permission of the palace administration had to be requested. A violation or a misprint was punishable by confiscation of the published product if the text resulted in an unpleasant image of the emperor or his family. But this sometimes happened, as we can read in the “censorship regulations” in the documents of the Tokkō Keisatsu of the Hokkaido Administration: Instead of “the departure home of His Majesty” the gremlin had misprinted “the death of the emperor,” instead of “the imperial train,” “the imperial mortuary van” (hearse).

- ³⁷ TG February 1941, p. 23: prosecuted.
- ³⁸ TG November 1941, p. 14: The artist received a severe admonition for this *lèse majesté* (*fukei*) and had to change or omit this passage.
- ³⁹ TG May 1939, p. 28; or TG February 1941, p. 19; see also TG July 1943, p. 30 (a man repeated in a public bath in simple words three times that the Tennō was crazy).
- ⁴⁰ TG April 1943, p. 29; or TG November 1941, p. 19.
- ⁴¹ TG November 1941, p. 18. “They always say: ‘Give birth to children!’ But how can we continue to have the energy (*seiryoku* 精力) to do that if we don’t have anything to eat?”
- ⁴² TG October 1944, p. 14: a reference to the emperor jumping over the palace wall in his youth in order to visit a princess, who became pregnant.
- ⁴³ TG February 1941, p. 19.
- ⁴⁴ TG March 1941, p. 12.
- ⁴⁵ TG August 1941, p. 24.
- ⁴⁶ TG May 1941, p. 31f.
- ⁴⁷ TG April 1943, p. 31f: the speaker was tried one month later for verbal *lèse majesté*.
- ⁴⁸ TG November 1941, p. 17.
- ⁴⁹ TG November 1943, p. 34.
- ⁵⁰ TG December 1940, p. 20.
- ⁵¹ TG December 1943, p. 40.
- ⁵² TG December 1942, p. 9.
- ⁵³ TG November 1944, p. 24.
- ⁵⁴ TG August 1943, p. 8.
- ⁵⁵ TG February 1940, p. 20.
- ⁵⁶ TG February 1940, p. 20.
- ⁵⁷ TG July 1944, p. 16.
- ⁵⁸ TG October 1944, p. 14f.
- ⁵⁹ TG January 1943, p. 28.
- ⁶⁰ TG September 1939, p. 27.
- ⁶¹ TG September 1939, p. 27.
- ⁶² This was the version that generally circulated at the time, while Daisuke actually had a political motive; see Morikawa 1994, p. 65ff.
- ⁶³ TG March 1941, p. 13: for a variation on the story see TG December 1940, p. 22. – I might add here an episode from 1936, one year before the period examined in this article. A Christian group, the Anglican Church of Japan, had followed the government Tennoistic directives and added the emperor to their prayers; they prayed, “Lord, have mercy upon the Tennō.” This displeased the authorities, however, and so it had to be changed to “Lord, protect the Tennō,” using the Chinese character for the word “protect,” with its added nuance of protecting a country. See Documents of the Special High Police, hen ao, 3A 15, 56-17, p. 2. I wonder if the Anglicans’ first version was not employing a splendid “Schweik-technique,” offering resistance under the guise of submission. (The paradigmatic example of this is in Jaroslav Hašek’s famous novel *The Good Soldier Schweik* [1921-1924; first English version 1930].)

- ⁶⁴ TG October 1944, p. 15: prosecuted for this and comparable verbal offenses.
- ⁶⁵ TG October 1944, p. 14: prosecuted. In fact the Prince had been suffering from tuberculosis since 1940. In 1937, he had represented the Japanese imperial family at the celebration of the coronation of George VI.
- ⁶⁶ TG November 1941, p. 15.
- ⁶⁷ TG December 1943, p. 40.
- ⁶⁸ TG November 1938, p. 34f.
- ⁶⁹ TG April 1943, p. 30: strong warning with the order to stop this rumor. The reference is to the attempted *coup d'état* by military rightists on February 26, 1936. Rumor that Prince Chichibu had led a failed coup attempt appeared also in March 1938 and in February 1944. The prince was a high-ranking army officer and a popular figure among young rightist officers of the royalist *kōdōha*.
- ⁷⁰ TG August 1943, p. 28.
- ⁷¹ TG June 1944, p. 25.
- ⁷² Explanations in brackets added by the author of this article.
- ⁷³ In hen ao, 3A, 15, 7-9-7; *Shisō junpō* 2 and 3 (April 1944).
- ⁷⁴ *Ikkōjin* 1978, p. 169.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 183.
- ⁷⁶ TG September 1941, p. 20.
- ⁷⁷ TG September 1937, p. 16.
- ⁷⁸ TG March 1938, p. 21.
- ⁷⁹ “1,000 persons’ needlework” amulets (woolen cloth) made by 1,000 women with altogether 1,000 stitches, at public places etc.
- ⁸⁰ Also part of a program to encourage soldiers at the war front.
- ⁸¹ TG December 1940, p. 2.
- ⁸² TG April 1940, p. 18.
- ⁸³ TG January 1938, p. 28.
- ⁸⁴ TG September 1938, p. 36.
- ⁸⁵ TG May 1938, p. 27: the farmer had to pay a fine of ten yen.

要旨

言語による国家転覆と風刺（1937-1945）

- 特別高等警察の資料から -

デトロフ・シャウヴェッカー

1930年代から1940年代前半に反政府運動を行った個人やグループに関する研究は、随分行われているが当時の一般の人々による批判はあまり検証されていないようである。拙稿は当時、国内の広い範囲

で聞かれたような指導者層や政治状況を批判するサチリク（諷刺的）なコメントに焦点を絞るが、その資料の殆どを特別高等警察（特高）が編集した「月報」から抜き出した。滑稽な諷刺やグロテスク（怪奇）な誇張などはその場限りの発言で終わり、広まらなかったが、替え歌やアルゴ（俗っぽい隠語など）はむしろ西洋の政治的なジョークのように流布される傾向があった。中でも天皇やその家族を対象とする笑いと戦争による貧窮に対するシニカルな（冷笑的な）言葉が目立つ。サチリクな発言を通して、苦難の中にあっても暫くその重荷を忘れて政府に奪われていた個人の威厳を取り戻そうとする日本人が数多くいた。