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Expo Fascism? Ideology, Representation, Economy

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If one wanted to look for fascism in 1930s Japan, exhibitions would be a good place to start. Mass spectacle, it is clear, was a political priority in Fascist Italy.¹ The repeated commemorations of the March on Rome, the monumental staging of the 1932 Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution, the mass kinaesthetics of 18 BL in the same year (an experimental theatrical performance celebrating and starring the first truck mass-produced by Fiat), and the plans for the Esposizione Universale di Roma (EUR) in 1942 were all state projects. They were designed to ensure that their audience would identify with the nation, in the person of Mussolini, and so produce a new fascist subject, which the revolution had promised and on which the regime would be based. In each case, an architectural sanctum enabled a processional sacrament. By rehearsing in material form the ideological tropes and revolutionary narrative of the movement through which the regime had come to power, they promised to transform the spectator into willing participant, both actor within the spectacle itself and acted upon by their viewing of the event. The epiphanic abolition of the usual distance between viewer and viewed would produce an ecstatic union with leader and so

regime. Nor was Nazi Germany slow to recognize the potential of such events. Nuremburg rallies and Berlin Olympics, not least in Leni Riefenstahl's filmic representations, have long been recognized as one key to understanding that regime.

Fascists were not alone in their enthusiasm for spectacle, however, nor were Italy and Germany the only countries to exhibit signs of fascism. Great exhibitions had long been used by states to mediate the shock of the new, whose iteration and amplitude following the First World War were fast becoming insufferable. As Harry Harootunian has noted, the interwar crisis of capitalism was a global one, fracturing everyday convention and traditional certainties throughout the world. Fascism therefore took its place among a number of proposed solutions that promised "capitalism without capitalism," that is, the liberating modernity that capitalism enabled without the corrosive externalities that it had also produced. Envisioning this alternative was the work of culture, which could conjure a foundation upon which to reestablish the sense of identity and community that had been set adrift. Fascist culture shared many of its own panaceas with other visionaries. Given the anxieties of the time, it is not surprising to find a recurring and general preference for community over individual, nature over history, and form over content, nor to discover Japanese thinkers among those who sought indigenous solutions to the global crisis.²

In conjuring up mythic pasts or possible futures for popular consumption, however, cultural producers everywhere had to confront the present absence of the desired alternative. The imagined community could not be assumed, but had to be represented; spectacle promised to do so in style. The French and Americans were quick to turn again to exhibitions after the First World War, while Los Angeles in 1932 provided the blueprint for a modern Olympics, which Hitler sought to build

four years later in Berlin.³ The fascist regimes in Germany and Italy were innovators, overcoming the inherently diffuse nature of mass spectacle by disciplining the narrative, regimenting the audience, and animating the display, as noted above. But the benefits of such total environments were obvious and quickly sought elsewhere. The 1939-40 New York World's Fair sought to produce a world of tomorrow, nowhere more than in General Motors' Futurama, which rapt its audience with a panorama of the automobilized future. Fifteen years later, fair and pavilion inspired the creation of Disneyland, wherein imagined worlds were enclosed for good. No less than fascist mass spectacle, the capitalist version sought to incorporate spectators in a world from which uncertainty had been banished; abolishing the distance between viewer and viewed not only removed the consumer from the anxieties of the present, but encouraged him or her to buy the trademarked future on display.⁴

Generalized anxiety, common solutions, and the use of spectacle were not by themselves enough to make the icons of American corporate culture fascist. Emphasizing commonalities and genealogies in this way suggests only the extent to which the fascist regimes in Germany and Italy shared their context, preoccupations, and some procedures with others at the time. Put differently, fascism did not arise beyond the modern pale; the potential for fascism was not limited to the countries that would later become an Axis, or to the 1930s. Only in Italy and Germany, however, did fascism progress, from potential to proclivity, ideology, movement, and finally regime. Analyzing fascism requires both that we acknowledge the potential, but also mark the differences that characterized the progression. Here too spectacle is useful. On the one hand, fascist culture inflected familiar themes in distinctive ways, emphasizing particular solutions to the

common problems of the present. Nature, community, and nation were to be restored by a rupture with the immediate, degenerate past; the recovery of a founding national endowment; the identification of the nation with its heroic leader; and an ongoing militarization through which a new national subject might be forged.⁵ On the other, fascist regimes, as noted above, were distinguished by the extent to which the production of culture became the work of the state, rehearsing these tropes in an attempt to yoke subject to regime.⁶ Spectacle is therefore one point at which to connect fascist culture to fascist politics.

It is hard to find such a spectacle in Japan, however. In what follows, I want to use the small story of an exhibition that did not take place, in order to mark the difference between Italian and German solutions to the interwar crisis and what was happening in Japan in the 1930s. The Japan World Exhibition to commemorate the 2600th year of the Imperial Era (*Kigen 2600 nen Kinen Nihon Bankoku Hakurankai*, hereafter Banpaku) was planned for 1940, to take place on a couple of reclaimed islands in Tokyo Bay. Together with the Olympics, it was to be the centerpiece of a range of events commemorating the anniversary of the putative ascension of Jimmu, the first emperor, to the chrysanthemum throne in 660 BCE (hereafter Kigen 2600). Banpaku and Olympics were both cancelled in the summer of 1938 in the wake of the invasion of China, but until then, the exhibition fit easily enough with the rhetoric and initiatives that affirmed Japan's increasingly strident self-identity and place in the world.⁷ In retrospect, too, it has proved easy enough to fold it into a familiar narrative about the dark valley of early Showa Japan. Banpaku, like most of the decade, can be seen to have lead to war, Axis, and inevitable defeat. The teleology is tempting, collapsing the exhibition and the decade as a whole into the tale of an

omnipotent state, exploiting the fascist potential in a society under economic siege in order to build an authoritarian, if never quite fascist, regime.⁸ But it is wrong.

A close analysis reveals that this exhibition attracted interest and investment not because it promised to forge a fascist subject, but because it could seem, albeit with some effort, to be all things to all people. That is, the exhibition was one of many ways in which Imperial Japan, almost until its end, could provide a sufficiently inclusive imaginary space, inscribed on an appropriately expansive physical area, to accommodate radically diverse, even ideologically opposed, interests. As such, it may also suggest some broader conclusions for our understanding of Japan in the 1930s, and of the place of fascism within it. Japan certainly shared in the general anxieties of the time, but for solutions it was able for the most part to draw on older configurations of ideology, institutions, and initiative. It may be that these were enough, in the end, to achieve similar results to those achieved by fascist regimes: the mobilization that was possible under conditions of total war and the uses that were eventually made of the anniversary both suggest affinities between Japan and its Axis allies.⁹ The differences in the process by which they arrived at these solutions, however, as well as similarities between Axis and Allied representation and practice suggest that we need to widen the frame, and place at least this exhibition, but also Japan, and even perhaps fascism itself within a more general, if no less troubling, history of modern political economy, as well as mass spectacle.

Origins Narratives and Imperial Destiny

The theme of the exhibition was a predictable one. As

summarized in the official prospectus, the exhibition promised to "humbly commemorate the 2600th year of the imperial era by gathering and displaying the flower of industry from home and abroad, and so contribute to the fusion of cultures east and west, the development of global industry, and the advance of international peace."¹⁰ This was elaborated elsewhere in the promotional literature to reaffirm a set of relationships between ancient national history, recent modern accomplishments, the contemporary international situation, and future global prospects. The ritual invocation of four-character slogans served to underwrite an evolutionary account of national destiny, but one which sought to banish the possibility of change over time, and so confirm the self-identity of the Japanese nation and its historical mission.¹¹

The starting point was Jimmu's accession to the "imperial" throne. The mythical first monarch had thus planted the "seed" not only of the Japanese people (*ikkun banmin*) and their "unsurpassed" national spirit, but also of Japan's successful recent modernization.¹² The present was thus the "autumn," industrial development and international standing the fall crop of Jimmu's initial planting, the inevitable fruit of the original spiritual endowment, guaranteed by the unbroken imperial line (*bansei ikkei*).¹³ Finally, the organic unfolding of the national genetic code would itself bring about international harmony (*bankoku kyōwa*)—sometimes glossed as the infamous "eight corners of the world under one roof" (*hakkō ichiu*)—which was both the spiritual core of the founding (*chōkoku no seishin*) and therefore the national faith (*kokumin no shinnen*).¹⁴ All that was required, and the goal of the exhibition, was to reaffirm the basic principles of their national destiny to the Japanese people, and to reveal the true meaning and pacific nature of that destiny to the world at large.¹⁵

The theme was susceptible to any number of variations. One of the most elaborate was the lyrics of the official exhibition march, published in March 1938.

At the dawn of a young Asia,
A new Japan with bright life.
Look! Piercing the ages
The essence of Japanese spirit
 Gorgeously unfolds today.
 The Japan International Exhibition.

Three more stanzas elaborated the lesson, invoking familiar symbols ("pure Yamato cherry," "graceful Fuji") to anchor the "pure history" and "great mission" of a nonetheless "young Japan."¹⁶ Again, an unfolding but unchanging essence, buttressed by nature and seasonal metaphors, served to anchor Japan's place at the center of Asia and modernity.

Much of the rhetorical content here was shared with the slightly later promotion of the Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Rather than rehearse the iterations of Japan's imperial destiny, however, and damn the exhibition by rhetorical association, it seems more useful to unpick the thoroughly generic form—the very model of a modern national narrative—that structures the particular Japanese content. Briefly, such a narrative begins by assuming a point of (divine) origin freed from the contingencies of the historical environment. This assumption of autopoiesis allows subsequent historical experience to be rewritten as the inevitable self-realization of a genetically programmed destiny: one studies the past to anticipate the future.¹⁷ Temporal and spatial distinctions are collapsed: the articulation of organism and its environment and the resulting change over time are characterized as the extension across time and space of the

unchanging, self-same code and so the heroic yet effortless creation of a world by the organism. Thus the Exhibition's President, Ushitsuka Kotarô, could note that the absorption of western science and civilization since the beginning of Japan's rapid modernization in the Meiji period (1868-1912) was in fact the realization of the essence of Japan's own spirit and culture.¹⁸ The origins narrative, sustained often by a metaphor of seasonal transformation, subsumes difference, both within and without, under Japan, naturalized as the world. Modern Japanese development is not understood as the outcome of an intricate pattern of interaction with the contemporary world; rather, a world of international harmony will result from the natural development of the Japanese empire.

Such an origins narrative was hardly unique to Japan. It differed little from the autobiographies of almost all imperial powers, in which the imagined distinction of the modern nation authorized manifest destiny and civilizing mission. Nationalism imagined a unitary identity (a spiritual essence, great culture, pure history) not only as a means of defense in a competitive international system, but also in order to transcend the differentiated interest of a pluralist, capitalist society. International competition and capitalist interest, however, both ensured that identity and system were expansive. The universal pretensions of a civilizing mission prescribed what was profitable for some as good, if not yet to be implemented, for all. Here was one difference with the distinctive posture of fascist rhetoric. Where the latter began with rupture (from both past and world), demanded personification, expelled difference, and generalized violence, imperial nationalism asserted continuity, abstracted personality, incorporated difference, and tended, at least in rhetoric, to peace.¹⁹ This is not to argue that either set of attributes should be read as the truth of their respective

regimes. But it is to claim that the ideological means toward their acquisitive ends were distinctive.

It also suggests that both rhetoric and exhibition need to be understood within a longer history. Nowhere were the projections and evasions of modern nationalism on more obvious display than the international exhibitions of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Delusional patriotism and imperial destiny were their stock-in-trade. The Philadelphia Centennial exhibition of 1876, the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1889, and the Chicago World's Fair of 1893 all sought to tie universal aspirations to national commemoration. Nor had Japan been slow to explore the possibilities of their newly invented imperial tradition. Unrealized plans for an international exhibition in 1890 had also exploited the putative ascension of the first emperor, although in that case the anniversary had been the 2550th. Late Victorian bombast and national origins were less obvious by the interwar period, but both the United States and France continued to insist on their imperial birthright and civilizing influence, even as the focus shifted to tomorrow's worlds and modern art.²⁰ In other words, the constructed and contradictory nature of such narratives may have been more apparent in Japan in the 1930s, but the latter still relied on the conventions of the form.

Material Form and Commemorative Space

In the linear prose of public relations and official statements, exhibition organizers and supporters could have recourse to time-honored tropes and a familiar rhetorical structure. Origins narratives provided a simple solution for bridging particular and universal, by collapsing distinctions, absorbing contradiction, and so freeing the thereby imagined community from any temporal or spatial specificity. It is not surprising that problems came when the rhetoric was obliged to

take specific material form, as two-dimensional graphics or three-dimensional architecture. The rhetorical sleight of hand afforded by narrative, reading modern science as ancient destiny, for example, could not be sustained in more stable media, wherein signifiers were valuable precisely for the specificity of their historical and cultural reference. The contradictions inherent in reconciling Japan and the world, the effort required to do so, and the ambivalence of the final result, were apparent at every stage of the process.

The basic outlines of the problem were apparent in the jury responsible for choosing the official exhibition posters. Its discussion of the submissions was bedeviled by an uncertainty as to whether the design chosen should express the "spirit of the age," emphasizing the exhibition's international dimensions, or the "spirit of the founding," highlighting its commemorative nature. A degree of interaction with the outside world, coded as "westernization," seemed unavoidable: many of the posters copied foreign examples, and the Chinese characters used on all the posters were unambiguously modern. In the end, the jury was saved by being able to reward and recommend the dissemination of several posters. The winners were united in suggesting that they had sought to produce something uniquely Japanese ("*Nihon-teki toiu koto*," "*Nihon dokuji no kanji o dashitai*"), although their designs ran the gamut, from a decidedly futurist dove carrying a globe belted with 2600 in a sling of national flags to a white Mt. Fuji, floating on a red ground, with a bird flying across its face. The first prize must have seemed a safe bet, finally going to a portrayal of an ancient Japanese warrior standing facing out over an expansive plain. Even here, however, one of the jurors suggested that there was no way of knowing whether or not he was standing in Japan, or perhaps the whole universe.²¹

The poster competition revealed a simple version of the problem that was by now wracking design in general, architecture above all, and that caught the exhibition authorities in a multiple bind. On the one hand, the ascent of international modernism had rejected cultural specificity in favor of universal form. On the other, rising nationalism, not least among the bureaucrats responsible for overseeing architectural competitions, demanded a more identifiably Japanese architecture, especially on those occasions where Japan itself was on display. Fascist architects in Germany and Italy resolved a similar dilemma by framing the functional imperatives of modernism within the dictates of neo-classical style. Japanese architecture in the 1930s also saw an updating of tradition, known as *Nihon shumi* (Japanese taste), which involved the use of traditional Japanese elements to ornament modern building construction. But where fascists could pass off their atavism as the heir of earlier developments, and therefore an embodiment of genuine modernity, the Japanese reversion to type marked itself as a throwback to tradition defined against the modern, an embrace of the particular against the universal.²² The problem was particularly acute given this particular context. The anniversary demanded a visual rubric that was clearly Japanese, but an international exhibition had to incorporate the world.

The solution came in two parts, combining architectural style and site planning. First, the authorities determined that a Memorial Hall should anchor the site as a whole. The regulations for the prize competition stipulated that the hall was the "main sign" of the exhibition and therefore its style should be "sublime and majestic, symbolizing the Japanese spirit."²³ After ruminations as tortured as those of the poster committee, the judges finally picked a design by Takanashi Katsushige, who explained his entry as "pure Japanese

architecture," an attempt to modernize the Sumiyoshi style, the oldest of the "globally incomparable" traditions of shrine architecture. Sano Toshikata, the chairman of the judges, noted that the architects' task had been a difficult one, the traces of the struggle visible in the variety of submissions, which had mimicked castles and temples, as well as shrines. The simplicity of the latter model had carried the day, however. The great staircase, pillars, and roof combined elegance and dignity.²⁴ Inside the hall, frescoes would recreate the scene at the accession of Jimmu, and the subsequent development of the Japanese people from ancient times to the present.²⁵

Where the Memorial Hall could solve the puzzle by divorcing steel-frame structure and throwback style, the site plan had to resort to disaggregation. The site as a whole was subject to strict considerations of symmetry and style. Early plans had the exhibition occupying four reclaimed islands at the mouth of the Sumida river, but the final site comprised only two (present-day Toyosu and Harumi), together with a small subsidiary site devoted to marine-related exhibits in Yokohama.²⁶ An artist's impression with accompanying commentary, spread over four pages of the official magazine, suggested the architectural panorama that would unfurl before the visitor. He or she would approach the main gate as if visiting a shrine. Beyond it sat the Memorial Hall, a modern rendition of the most ancient of Japanese architectures. To its right were halls relating to "spirit and culture" (including Society, Health and Hygiene, Education, and the Arts), to its left exhibits of industry and natural resources (including Mining, Engineering, and Communication and Transportation). The island would be unified throughout by a "sublime" Japanese architecture, before yielding to a miscellany of exhibits and facilities on the second, executed in a "free, modern"

architectural style, and including Agriculture, Chemical and Manufacturing Industries, the Foreign Pavilion, various entertainments, and parking. The exhibition's unique synthesis of East and West would further underwrite Japan's claims to possibly global and certainly Asian leadership.²⁷

The plans as a whole neatly recapitulated the characteristic tropes of generic exhibition design. International exhibitions had early outgrown the original single-building model of the Crystal Palace in 1851. By the late 19th century, the movement had developed a standard repertoire: central axes, spatial symmetry, and officially-endorsed, historically-pedigreed architecture for the most important buildings, as the standard against which foreign styles were set off. By the 1930s, architectural style had moved on, but the other principles remained. They were ideally suited to accommodate the evolutionary and imperial principles that still informed such exhibitions, the spatial embodiment of the narrative structure outlined above. Narrative and exhibition might begin with a statement of national origins, but quickly moved on to provide a panorama of the world beyond the nation. This was far removed from the national sacrament for which fascist architecture was designed. There, the original covenant was reaffirmed by creating a sanctum, excluding the world, and choreographing space and time as a processional, which would culminate in the ecstatic union of subject with leader and so the state.²⁸ In Tokyo, on the other hand, site plan and architecture had to incorporate rather than exclude, making space for multiple ways of representing the world and, perhaps most importantly, experiencing the exhibition.

International exhibitions, in other words, were as much about pragmatics as ideology. Nowhere is this clearer than in the discussions of the Site Planning Committee, which began

meeting in January 1937.²⁹ Later meetings of the committee touched on questions of representation and style, but much of this labor could be delegated, or sub-contracted, to juried competitions. The committee began with the study of blueprints from Paris and Chicago, and spent much of its time shuttling backwards and forwards between visitor numbers and site plans, tinkering with plans to maximize numbers, and extrapolating from numbers to address the question of how people were going to get to and move around the exhibition.³⁰ The most basic imperative in site planning was traffic flow and crowd control, important enough to spawn a separate transportation committee and to produce the only permanent legacy from the exhibition, the Kachidoki bridge linking Tsukiji on the mainland, southeast of the Imperial Palace, to the reclaimed islands on which the exhibition would be staged.³¹ This constraint also meant that the artist's impression would remain just that. There were multiple possible entrances to the exhibition, including one that led straight into the amusement zone on the second island. After this, and the novelties of the foreign exhibits, the unique architectural synthesis of the first island may perhaps have seemed merely antiquarian, its orchestrating symmetry didactic and dry.

At the most general level, in other words, planning for the exhibition betrayed the awareness that an exhibition had to work to attract people, that attractions at an exhibition therefore had to be adequately differentiated, and that its audience had to be accounted for. There could not be only one route around the exhibition, and there would certainly not be only one kind of visitor. As ideology and representation confronted the lessons of experience, in other words, the exhibition entered the world of trade-offs, accounting, and interest.

Interest Aggregation and Numbers Games

What is most striking about this and other exhibitions in Japan during the 1930s, as well as the initial plans for the imperial anniversary, is that they were not state projects. In the 1870s, the early Meiji state had embraced exhibitions as a central initiative in its efforts to promote industry, but its initiatives at home had been quickly supplemented and soon replaced. By the turn of the century municipal governments had turned to exhibitions for urban development and renewal, while the emerging consumer industry seized on them following the First World War as a powerful medium for commercial expansion.³² This combination, of local government, business interest, and an emerging exhibition industry, was the context for the original plans for 1940. In 1926 a consortium of local politicians, industrialists, and exhibition promoters came together to form an Exhibition Club. Three years later it was this group that first proposed an international exhibition, to be held in 1935, as a way of attracting exhibitors, visitors, and above all capital to a local economy still reeling from the aftershocks of the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923. The initial discussions ran aground in 1931, but the initiative reemerged the following year as the locally-organized centerpiece of a government-supervised celebration of the imperial anniversary. The lead advocate was Sakatani Yoshiô, a former Minister of Finance and Mayor of Tokyo, and with his energetic promotion and extensive connections, the proposal took off.³³

The imperial anniversary provided an ideal opportunity for such an event. As suggested above, national commemoration had long proved a profitable rationale for international exhibitions, precisely because of its ability to satisfy diverse imperatives: national prestige and international respectability; local development and business opportunity;

foreign tourism and popular entertainment. On the one hand, given this particular occasion, it is no surprise that the exhibition employed much of the rhetoric through which the population was mobilized for empire and, eventually, war. On the other, the capacious structure of that vocabulary, suggested above, could bear multiple investments, by private entrepreneurs as well as state ideologues.³⁴ The concerns of capital were indifferent to the putative content of the brands through which it sought a return on investment, and the opportunity of an imperial anniversary promised a higher than usual rate of return.³⁵ To understand how it did so, however, requires turning from words to numbers. In pitching the 1940 event, it was the latter that were paramount, but the same figures could be cut differently for different audiences. At the national level, organizers explained how the exhibition would benefit the national balance of payments, generating at least half as much foreign currency as textiles, Japan's leading export, but at twice the profit rate.³⁶ To regional audiences, however, they emphasized the influx of capital to the Kantô economy, relying on the example of Paris in 1889 to suggest that the exhibition would generate 27 times its own budget for local businesses.³⁷

At the same time, the fact that the brand was an imperial one, and the possibility of monopolizing its value, guaranteed that the battle for marketing rights was a keen one. Sakatani and the Federation were not alone in producing visions of Kigen 2600. As early as October 1933, there were reports of plans by the Home, Education, Army, and Navy Ministries for a "great national festival" commemorating the anniversary as a way of "overcoming the emergency."³⁸ The Home Ministry, in particular, was a persistent critic of any aspect of the exhibition that might detract from the solemnity it believed appropriate to the commemoration of the nation's founding. The

advance guard of these concerns was the Japan Culture Association (*Nihon Bunka Renmei*), which had been formed in 1933 by Matsumoto Manabu, a Home Ministry bureaucrat, and which soon sought to promote an alternative vision of the anniversary. In January 1936, the Association proposed a survey of Japanese culture together with four other projects, and a year later published a comprehensive "Outline of Publicity Policy for Kigen 2600."³⁹ However, despite the organization's efforts, only the survey, of the five projects, was taken up by the government, its authorized budget of 1 million yen only a third of that initially proposed, and dwarfed by the expected 50 million yen cost of the exhibition. Although the Ministry of Education did subsidize the Japan Culture Association, the latter remained on the periphery of the official plans for Kigen 2600, for which the exposition and the Olympics remained the centerpiece.

The Home Ministry and its allies were able to gain more leverage, though never the upper hand, by translating their concerns into the budgetary language of the exhibition's promoters. Financing an exhibition was never easy. Other decisions could be made in-house, but an international exhibition always required government funding, implying trade-offs with other bureaucratic interests, and so providing an opening for possible compromise. In his 1932 proposal, Sakatani had emphasized that the success of earlier international exhibitions, notably at Paris in 1900, had rested in large part on advance ticket sales, which could finance the substantial expenses that fell due before the exhibition opened. In order to get potential visitors to buy tickets in advance, however, there had to be some incentive. A lottery seemed ideal.⁴⁰ Over time, however, this proposal ran into problems, with the Home Ministry leading the charge against the damage that speculation would do to the national

spirit.⁴¹ The Association counterattacked, using the pages of the official magazine to claim that the exhibition itself was Jimmu's dying wish. The rhetoric was eye-catching, but the Home Ministry was fighting a rearguard action. In the cabinet and government committees the lottery had been accepted as a *fait accompli*, with the point at issue being how far in advance the tickets should be sold and the financial value of the prizes. The debate rumbled on for another year, but all parties finally and predictably agreed to meet somewhere in the middle, the Diet passing the necessary law in August 1937. In March 1938, the first one million advance tickets were sold, many seemingly swept up in the dreaded speculative "fever," and in May the prize winners were announced. Among the ten first prize winners, each of whom received 2,000 yen, was Sakatani, who immediately assured reporters that he would donate his prize to the Celebration Committee.⁴²

The lottery was not the only issue on which entertainment and industry had to compromise with commemoration. In February 1938, the President of the Exhibition spoke to the Tokyo City Council. He began by noting that while previous exhibitions had always had an aristocrat or bureaucrat as their President, the government had realized that this exhibition required the experience of the private sector. He then turned to numbers, citing the economic impact of the Chicago fair in 1933. His audience could expect the same of Banpaku. Given the war in China, they predicted only half the normal number of foreign visitors, but nonetheless the exhibition could be expected to generate 355 million yen in demand for the region. The number might be even higher, if the exhibition could do what it wanted: special theme days and a slew of entertainments would certainly attract the crowds. But given the solemn significance of Kigen 2600, it would be difficult to make the exhibition as lively as one might want. Entertainment had to

be kept within limits, and so, perhaps, the exhibition's attraction would be limited. Still, he promised, it would be a success.⁴³

Conclusion

In the end, of course, national concerns trumped global outreach. On July 15, 1938, the cabinet announced that the exhibition, together with the Tokyo Olympics, were to be postponed indefinitely. At this point, Japanese essence proved incompatible with international affairs: material and meaning were restricted, devoted to the prosecution of the war. But while it was eventually swept away by the Japanese invasion of China, it is important not to subsume the exhibition within a narrative governed by that aggression. Until then, Kigen 2600 imposed limits, but it was not yet enough to overwhelm or even transform the exhibition itself. The latter, I have argued, needs to be understood not primarily in terms of a state mobilizing a nation for war, but in terms of a local economy seeking investment and recovery through the proven medium of international exhibition. From the late 19th century, exhibitions had been adept at reconciling private, local, and state interests, putting national history and imperial destiny alongside modern industry and popular attraction. Like the origins narratives and capitalist economies of the empires in which they took shape, exhibitions could accommodate any number of players, providing some basic rules but requiring only a sufficiently expansive area within which to resolve the inevitable contradictions. The exhibition planned for Tokyo in 1940 was no different.⁴⁴

In this light, the planning for the exhibition also suggests some broader conclusions for our understanding of Japan in the 1930s. Fascism may help us identify certain features of cultural production during that time, the clarity

of whose constellation in Italy and Germany reveal both their utility in covering the fractured nature of contemporary experience and the eagerness with which they were also adopted elsewhere. Fascist culture, however, differs in key particulars from the emphases evident in the rhetoric surrounding at least the initial plans for the imperial anniversary. Moreover, analyses of fascist culture alone cannot explain how and why aesthetics and ideology could become regime. Spectacle suggests one way in which fascist culture was linked to politics, but again marks the difference between contemporary developments in Japan and the countries that would later become its allies. Rather than using fascism to mark Japan as exceptional, therefore, and so confine it to an Axis that was yet to appear, it may be more useful to emphasize the extent to which developments in Japanese political economy, society, and culture during the 1930s were similar to those elsewhere in the world.

Two patterns seem significant here. The first dates to the late nineteenth-century world of industry and empire, of which international exhibitions were one self-congratulatory expression. Here, origins narratives justified hierarchy as the consequence of progress, rather than conflict and conquest, scripting development as the outcome of unique endowments and singular histories. As imperial commemoration, then, Banpaku echoed familiar themes, providing grandiose justification for municipal initiative and business interest. Japan in the 1930s, by this account, was a particular blend of a familiar brew, of capitalist economy, differentiated society, and imperial polity, with its distinctive notes of nationalist bombast and exceptionalism. At the same time, however, a second pattern was emerging, born in large part of the consequences of the first. Globally, colonial nationalism was beginning to throw the rules of the imperial club into question, while socialism

refused to accept the distributions of capital. Domestically, economic dislocation and social unrest provided the incentive and 1929 the opportunity for massive, unprecedented state intervention in the economy, ranging from Stalinist planning through Rooseveltian New Deal to fascist corporatism. This second pattern is also faintly visible in the planning of the exhibition, as local response to the dilemmas of uneven development.

Here, however, Banpaku points for the most part past 1945. Given the economy's relative resilience in the early 30s and subsequent subordination to the unproductive demands of total war, the full-blown emergence of the developmentalist state had to wait until after the war, unlike its welfare counterparts in Europe and the US.⁴⁵ When it did arrive, however, exhibitions were again part of the arsenal of development, milled by the bureaucrats of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry. The early postwar reiterated the prewar pattern, the state concentrating its efforts overseas, through the newly minted Japan External Trade Organization, and municipalities and newspapers seizing on exhibitions as a catalyst for recovery. By the 1960s, however, in the wake of liberalization, the government had to supplement export promotion with domestic demand. Big events became the means of choice not only to prime the economic pump, but to provide the social capital with which to plan development, and so even out the concentrations and distortions of unprecedented economic growth.⁴⁶

In this sense, Tokyo's plans for 1940 came to fruition in the 1964 Olympics and the 1970 Osaka Expo.⁴⁷ Given the innovations in mass spectacle during the 1930s and 40s, it was no surprise that the former took precedence. But while the Olympics transformed the capital, it was the Expo that got people on to the new bullet trains, leading to a national

campaign to Discover Japan and a boom in domestic and international tourism.⁴⁸ The 64,218,770 visitors to the Senri Hills in the summer of 1970, 15 billion yen in profit, and the estimated 1.244 billion yen that Expo generated in demand suggests the Exhibition Club may well have been on the right track in the 1930s.⁴⁹ Prewar nationalism and imperial bombast may have been absent, but broader continuities remained. An evolutionary theme, "Progress and Harmony for Mankind," together with an expansive site, still proved able to accommodate not only the diverse interests of national and corporate exhibitors, but even the Cold War rivalry of the U.S. and USSR. Expo 70 may not have been an exact replica of its predecessor, but anyone who still had their tickets from the Tokyo event was welcome to use them in Osaka, thirty years after the fact. Given the similarities between the two events, it was perhaps only appropriate that the backers of development should see some return on their investment.

¹ The following draws on: Jeffrey T. Schnapp "Epic Demonstrations: Fascist Modernity and the 1932 Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution," in Richard J. Golsan, *Fascism, Aesthetics, and Culture* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1992) and *18 BL and the Theater of Masses for Masses* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); Mabel Berezin, *Making the Fascist Self: The Political Culture of Interwar Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); and Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

² Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) and *History's Disquiet: Modernity, Cultural Practice, and the Question of Everyday Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

³ For exhibitions, see Robert Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993) and Sylviane Leprun, *Le Théâtre des Colonies: Scénographie, Acteurs et Discours de l'Imaginaire dans les Expositions, 1855-1937* (Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 1986). For the Olympics, Allen Guttman, *The Olympics: A History of the Modern Games* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992).

⁴ For Futurama, and a picture of visitors "assessing the future," see Rydell, *World of Fairs*, pp. 133-5. For Disney, see Steven Watts, *The Magic Kingdom: Walt Disney and the American Way of Life* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001), and Stephen M. Fjellman, *Vinyl Leaves: Walt Disney World and America* (Boulder: Westview, 1992).

⁵ This is only a partial list, which references an extensive literature devoted to identifying the differentia specifica of fascism. Two excellent recent surveys are: Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995); and Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993).

⁶ For Italy, see note 1, above. For Germany, see Stephanie Barron, ed., "Degenerate Art" (New York: Harry N Abrams, 1991), and Jonathan Petropoulos, *Art as Politics in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

⁷ See Shōkōshō, "Kigen 2600 nen Kinen Nihon Bankoku Hakurankai nit suite," *Shūhō*, 82 (1938.5.11), pp. 13-19.

⁸ For example, Imai Seiichi, "'Hakkō Ichiū' no kage de," in Asahi Jaanaru Henshūbu, ed., *Shōwashi no Shunma* (Asahi Shinbunsha, 1966), vol. 1.

⁹ For recent arguments along these lines, see E. Bruce Reynolds, ed., *Japan in the Fascist Era* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

¹⁰ Nihon Bankoku Hakurankai Jimukyoku, *Kigen 2600 nen Kinen Nihon Bankoku Hakurankai Gaiyō* (Kigen 2600 nen Kinen Nihon Bankoku Hakurankai Jimukyoku, 1938) (hereafter *Gaiyō*), p. 1.

¹¹ Four-character phrases, or *cheng yu* (lit. formulated expressions) were and are widely used in Chinese, and were

also eagerly adopted into Japanese. From the beginning of Japanese modernization, in the Meiji period (1868-1912), they provided a convenient medium through which government and ideologues could trumpet broad national goals. In the late 19th century the chief of these was *fukoku kyōhei* ("rich country, strong army").

¹² *Banpaku*, no. 1 (1936.5), p. 5. *Banpaku* was the official monthly magazine of the exhibition association, combining statements of support by prominent public figures and essays on the significance of the exhibition, with updates on the work of the various committees.

¹³ The autumnal metaphor appeared early and lasted long. See *Nihon Bankoku Hakurankai Kyōkai, Kigen 2600 nen Kinen Nihon Bankoku Hakurankai* (n.d., but perhaps 1935?), p. 6, and *Banpaku*, no. 21 (1938.2), p. 5. For attributions of recent developments to Jimmu's founding of the nation and its attendant spiritual bequest, see *Banpaku*, no. 1, p. 2; no. 2 (1936.6), pp. 7 and 28.

¹⁴ *Gaiyō*, p. 4; *Banpaku*, no. 1, p. 4.

¹⁵ *Banpaku*, no. 1, p. 5 and no. 2, p. 28.

¹⁶ *Banpaku*, no. 22 (1938.3), p. 2.

¹⁷ *Banpaku*, no. 3 (1936.7), p. 22.

¹⁸ *Kigen 2600 nen Kinen Nihon Bankoku Hakurankai*, p. 20.

¹⁹ For the former, see Payne, *A History of Fascism*, and Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*.

²⁰ Rydell, *World of Fairs*, especially chapter three, "Coloniale Moderne," and Leprun, *Le Théâtre des Colonies*. James Herbert, *Paris 1937: Worlds on Exhibition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998) emphasizes that empire was hardly absent even when the nominal focus was art.

²¹ *Banpaku*, no. 15 (1937.7), pp. 10 ff.

²² See: Inoue Shōichi, "Pari Hakurankai Nihonkan, 1937: Japonizumu, Modanizumu, Post-Modanizumu," in Yoshida Mitsukuni, ed., *Bankoku Hakurankai no Kenkyū* (Kyoto: Shibunkaku, 1996), pp. 133-56; Jacqueline Eve Kestenbaum, *Modernism and Tradition in Japanese Architectural Ideology, 1931-1955* (Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1996); and Jonathan M. Reynolds, *Maekawa*

Kunio and the Emergence of Japanese Modernist Architecture
(Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

²³ Nihon Bankoku Hakurankai, ed., *Kigen 2600 nen Kinen Nihon Bankoku Hakurankai Chōkoku Kinen Kan Kenshō Kyōgi Sekkei Zushū* (Kōyōsha, 1938), n.p. The desired permanence of the hall—and of what it signified—required modifications in the traditional signifier. The building was to be steel framed, and to include a suite of rooms for the emperor and his attendants, facilities for the VIPs, a large hall including a stage for 2,000, committee rooms, dining rooms, a movie theatre, and a viewing platform.

²⁴ *Banpaku*, no. 19 (1937.12), pp. 4-5. The judges chose another submission by Takanashi as their runner-up. They claimed to have been surprised to discover the common authorship, although a brief glance at both reveals an obvious family resemblance. Sano commented that the innovative insertion of windows into the roof was a striking feature, but detracted from the building's elegance and splendor. As Takanashi noted, his second design was not as faithful to the ancient model as his first.

²⁵ *Banpaku*, no. 27 (1938.7), p. 20.

²⁶ The earlier plan included much of the reclaimed land to the west of present-day Daiba and north of Tokyo Big Site. The first island after the main gate (present-day Toyosu 4 and 5 chome) was devoted to exhibit halls; the next (Shinonome 1) had a memorial hall to the founding of the nation, two large, hanger-like exhibit halls, and an amphitheater for musical performances; the third (Shinonome 2) circular exhibit halls, two outdoor theatres, and a pleasure garden; and the fourth (Ariake 1 and 2) foreign pavilions, concessions, stalls, a theatre, and an airstrip. *Kigen 2600 nen Kinen Nihon Bankoku Hakurankai*.

²⁷ *Banpaku*, no. 27 (1938.7), pp. 15-18. See also *Gaiyō*, pp. 18-19.

²⁸ See, for example, Schnapp, "Epic Demonstrations."

²⁹ Reports of the meetings can be found in *Banpaku*, but the agenda and somewhat telegraphic minutes are available as *Kigen*

2600 nen Kinen Nihon Bankoku Hakurankai Kaijō Keikaku Iinkai in the Tokyo Metropolitan Archives. These files seem to have belonged to Uchida Yoshikazu, who was also a member of the committee.

³⁰ It is this that seems to have led to the decision to abandon the first, four-island plan for the final, two-island solution. Earlier exhibitions were on the table at the first meeting (1937/1/18), the four-island blueprint, dated 1936/3/20, at the second (1937/2/1), and visitor predictions were at the third (1937/2/12). The file includes a version of the two-island blueprint dated 1937/7/15 and labeled *mi-kettei* (undecided), but I assume this was adopted, and preliminary rules for the Memorial Hall competition drawn up, at the fourth meeting, whose records are missing. The rules were amended at the fifth (1937/8/11) and the committee began to discuss general questions of style at the sixth (1937/10/27).

³¹ The transportation committee's records can also be found in the Tokyo Metropolitan Archives. *Kigen 2600 nen Kinen Nihon Bankoku Hakurankai Kōtsū Iinkai*.

³² See Yoshida Mitsukuni, *Bankoku Hakurankai: Gijutsu Bunmeishi-teki ni* (NHK Bukkusu, 1985); and Yoshimi Shunya, *Hakurankai no Seijigaku: Manazashi no Kindai* (Chūō Kōronsha, 1992).

³³ The narrative has been well-chronicled by Furukawa Takahisa. See *Kōki, Banpaku, Orinpikku: Kōshitsu Burando to Keizai Hatten* (Chūō Kōronsha, 1998), pp. 62-84, much of which can also be found in "Kigen 2600 nen Hōshuku Kinen Jigyō o meguru Seiji Katei," *Shigaku Zasshi*, 103.9 (1994.9), pp. 1573-1584.

³⁴ Exhibitions and empire had long proved attractive to entertainment entrepreneurs. See, for example: Breandan Gregory, "Staging British India," in J. S. Bratton et al., *Acts of Supremacy: The British Empire and the Stage, 1790-1930* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), pp. 150-78.

³⁵ In using the idea of brand, here, I am following Furukawa, *Kōki, Banpaku, Orinpikku*, pp. 19, 58, 217-8, 230-4. In other words, the anniversary and the slogans that surrounded it can be seen as valuable pieces of conceptual real estate, which

could be turned to a variety of ends. Furukawa suggests that the predominance of private initiative requires that we classify the anniversary itself within an unproblematic history of economic development. This overstates the case, and also underestimates the usefulness of the idea of a brand, as something that can encourage both loyalty (in this case, national service) and investment (the expectation of economic return).

³⁶ *Banpaku*, no. 21, pp. 13-15.

³⁷ *Banpaku*, no. 13 (1937.5), pp. 6-7. This level of aggregate demand also promised individual windfalls. Land speculation had long been part and parcel of exhibition history, and Sakatani spent some time in his original proposal advocating a site in Kawasaki belonging to the Tokyo Bay Reclamation Company, of which he was one of the directors. Furukawa, *Kōki, Banpaku, Orinpikku*, pp. 78-82. See pp. 33-8 for the land speculation surrounding an earlier exhibition, planned for 1912.

³⁸ Furukawa, *Kōki, Banpaku, Orinpikku*, p. 93, citing *Denki Nippō*, 1933/11/30.

³⁹ The latter suggested that the government should take the opportunity to "strengthen our national self-awareness of the true Japan, and display a correct Japan at home and abroad. Thus by contributing to the maturation of our national strength and proclaiming our national authority throughout the world, we can expect the achievement of our national destiny." *Ibid.*, pp. 110-16.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁴¹ The objections were elaborated by Matsumoto in a pamphlet published privately in April 1936. The imperial anniversary, he argued, was essentially a religious ceremony in honor of the country's ancestors, and as such should be supported by the family purse, however straitened its finances. Borrowing, or gambling, would compromise the integrity of the ritual. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

⁴² Furukawa, *Kōki, Banpaku, Orinpikku*, pp. 117-18, 122 ff., 138 ff. See also *Banpaku*, no. 21, pp. 4 ff.

⁴³ *Banpaku*, no. 22, pp. 11-14.

⁴⁴ The pages of its official magazine provide striking witness to this chameleon-like ability of the event to be all things for all people. The occasional advocate for Esperanto could thus appear among the admittedly more frequent calls for renewing the national spirit. For Esperanto, see *Banpaku*, no. 13 (1937.5), p. 8.

⁴⁵ See Chalmers Johnson, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982).

⁴⁶ For the place of big events within the discourse of development, see Tada Osamu, *Okinawa Imeeji no Tanjō: Okinawa Kaiyōhaku to Kankō Rizooto-ka no Purosesu* (Ph.D. thesis, Waseda University, 2002), pp. 14-24.

⁴⁷ I would like to thank Tak Fujitani, who emphasized the importance of this point at the conference in Berkeley.

⁴⁸ See Tada, *Okinawa Imeeji no Tanjō*, pp. 24-9.

⁴⁹ *Official Report of the Japan World Exposition, Osaka, 1970* (Commemorative Association for the Japan World Exposition, 1972), vol. 2, pp. 362-73, vol. 3, p. 124, and vol. 1, pp. 16-19.