The Meiji Education System: Developing the Emperor's Ideal Subject

Augustus Flottman
University of Colorado Boulder

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The Meiji Education System: Developing the Emperor’s Ideal Subject

Augustus B. Flottman

November 1st, 2012

Advisor:
Professor Marcia Yonemoto, History Department

Committee:
Professor Tyler Lansford, Classics Department

Professor John Willis, History Department
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Abstract

Japan transitioned from what was essentially a decentralized state with an agrarian based socio-economic infrastructure (1868) to an industrialized nation in roughly thirty years (1904). By 1930 Japan had the military capacity to maintain one of the largest maritime empires in world history, controlling nearly three million square miles of the Pacific. The astounding rapidity at which Japan established its prodigious empire produces my chief research question: what institutional mechanism was employed to produce not only the manpower necessary to maintain a colossal empire, but a society that would readily serve an aggressive imperial cause?

To ascertain the answer my thesis begins with an examination of the formative years of Japan’s modernization (1870-1890), with a focus on the government’s development of a compulsory education system, the governing philosophy of Japan’s leaders, and the national goals education was intended to help produce. The thesis then turns to the actualization of state ideology into the curriculum of the education system (1890-1930). Finally, the thesis assesses the success the education system had in inculcating the government’s ideals by analyzing soldiers’ diaries during the Pacific War (1941-1945) in order to understand what beliefs motivated men to offer their lives to the state. The findings show the compulsory education system served as the institutional mechanism that forcefully conditioned young Japanese to serve the state unconditionally.
A Note on Sources

Research was conducted without an ability to speak the Japanese language. As such all of the primary sources referenced are in translation. Further, the translations of these primary sources were often within secondary sources. As such, the autobiography and footnotes will mainly only cite secondary sources. Nevertheless, substantial primary sources were used during research and are identified explicitly and contextually. The introduction of an influential figure’s name will be followed with their birth and death date; however not all of the figures birth and death dates could be ascertained.
Introduction

In 1853 Commodore Matthew Perry arrived at the mouth of Uraga Bay outside modern-day Tokyo. The Tokugawa shogunate’s envoy that received the American fleet was awestruck by the power and might of the American steam ships. The massive black vessels were alien to the agrarian nation. The intimidating ships became symbolic of Japan's archaic infrastructure relative to the modernity of the Western imperial powers. Over the next decades Japan was forced to sign unequal trade agreements with the powerful Western empires, and became a victim in the age of "New Imperialism" (1870-1914).

Japan's agrarian socio-economic system, failing government infrastructure, and primitive military technology left the nation’s leaders helpless to prevent Japan’s economic exploitation. Desperately in need of reform, it came through the Meiji restoration (1868) when Emperor Meiji was restored to power, and a process of centralizing the government began. The new Meiji government recognized that further exploitation, and possibly colonization, was inevitable if Japan failed to rapidly modernize its government, socio-economic infrastructure, and military.

While undertaking many domestic reforms, notably expeditious westernization, one of Japan’s most important endeavors with regard to learning about the West was the Iwakura Mission. While the Tokugawa shogunate sent a handful of embassies to the west in the 1860’s they were diplomatic in purpose. The Iwakura Mission’s central purpose was to study the economic, social, government, and military infrastructures of the powerful European nations, and the United States. The leading minds and politicians of the Meiji government left Japan for almost two years to undertake a comprehensive study of Western powers. The Japanese learned several extremely valuable lessons from Western nations, but the Japanese ambassadors agreed that the most
important institution for facilitating modernization was a national, compulsory education system.

Of the many states visited, Prussia emerged as the most influential in Japan’s modernization. Prussia’s authoritarian and militaristic infrastructure was homologous with Japan’s militaristic legacy and authoritarian political tradition. When the Iwakura ambassadors returned to Japan the Meiji government began the process of constructing a compulsory education system. The objective of this research project is to show how the Meiji leaders’ goals for a modernized Japan produced a nationalist ideology that heavily influenced the educational curriculum, which in turn shaped the views and attitudes of Japanese well into the twentieth century.

Research will demonstrate the Meiji leaders’ intent to use compulsory education to contrive their ideal subject. The Meiji government’s ideal subject was a subservient, loyal, militaristic, and nationalistic individual who would serve the interests of the state over self-interest and self-preservation. The existing historiography sufficiently establishes the Meiji leaders’ ideology, goals for Japan, and the militaristic nature of the curriculum. Further, the current historiography adequately accounts for the importance of the Iwakura Mission to Japan’s modernization process highlighting the Prussian influence. Substantial research of Japanese soldiers’ diaries has also been completed. Nonetheless, current historiography falls short of a comprehensive study that connects the goals of the Meiji government’s education system with ideologies and principles fostered by the system’s beneficiaries: its students. In other words, the goals of the curriculum have been well established; however the results are inadequately measured. The purpose of this thesis is to provide a comprehensive overview of the education system and show the curriculum’s profound impact on the proclivity of Japanese citizens and soldiers.
Chapter One

Westernization and creation of the Education System

The Iwakura Mission embarked upon in 1871 by high-ranking Meiji government officials, including Iwakura Tomomi (1825-1883), Ito Hirobumi (1841-1909) and Kido Takayoshi (1833-1877), was the most explicit example of Japan’s intent to modernize. While the mission had diplomatic goals, as it sought to renegotiate unequal trade agreements with the Western powers, the mission was also characterized by Kido Takayoshi’s and Tanaka Fujimaro’s (1845-1909) study of Western socio-political infrastructures. The observations and knowledge gathered by Tanaka and Kido would become instrumental in the Meiji government’s reformation of its political infrastructure. In particular, the evaluation of Western compulsory education systems would greatly impact the ideological goals of Japanese education and consequently the budding system of Japanese compulsory education itself.

While the Iwakura Mission sought to survey the sources of modernity and power in Western civilization through examination of militaries, government systems, constitutions, heavy industry, and culture the most important factor in Western success identified by Japanese observers were viable systems of public education. The connections the ambassadors perceived between economic and military strength and compulsory education systems were unequivocal. From 1873 to 1890 Japan’s education system was reformed through a process of trial and error in which the Meiji government experimented with different types of Western education systems.
The most notable models of education implemented were the French, American, and Prussian systems.

During this period of educational reform the remarkable amount of influence the West had on Japan was evident. Western, liberal ideas would greatly influence the first attempts at educational reform. However, social and political conservative backlash would lead to an abandonment of the more liberal Western systems, resulting in a fusion of a statist Prussian ideology and traditional, conservative Japanese morals and ethics. Japanese scholar Michio Nagai termed this movement ‘Japanization’. Examination of the Meiji government’s educational reforms illuminates the Meiji ruling elites’ understanding of the connection between education and national prosperity. Furthermore, research reveals the extent to which the goals of the new education system and the long-term national goals of the Meiji government were intimately related. One result of this ideological and education process was the Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890, analyzed in detail below, that set forth a goal of shaping the Japanese people into the dutiful subjects necessary for Japan to become the preeminent imperial power of the Far East.

Kido Takayoshi focused much of his attention on the West’s political and economic infrastructure, particularly the structure of constitutions and the modern industrial economic foundations. Kido’s understudy, Tanaka Fujimaro, was charged with evaluating Western educational infrastructure. The report written by Tanaka Fujimaro and Kido Takayoshi, Riji kotei, would become the intellectual basis for Japan’s new compulsory education system. The new compulsory system was officially mandated through the Education Ordinance of 1872 that called for, “the establishment of eight universities, 256 middle schools, and 53, 760 elementary
schools; compulsory education was set at four years.”¹ The system of education initially implemented after the Iwakura Mission was modeled administratively along a French system centralized under the new Ministry of Education while the curriculum was based on American standards: “the curriculum …codified in the Elementary School Regulations of September 1872 was based on […] documents obtained from several American cities”.² The Western influence in Japan’s budding compulsory education system was clearly significant. The preamble to The Fundamental Code of Education (1872) provides evidence of the Western, liberal influence on the education system’s formative years:

Heretofore, however, the evil tradition which looked upon learning as the privilege of the samurai and his superiors and as being for the state caused many to depend upon the government for the expenses of education, even to such items as food and clothing; and, failing to receive such support, many wasted their lives by not going to school (Passin, 211)

Expressed above was the Meiji government’s initial intention to establish schools for the well-being of the individual so that, consequently, the individual relied less on the state and was more self-sufficient. Moreover, the preamble indicates that education should be provided to all people, not just the elite. Such beliefs are representations of the West’s liberal ideologies--specifically American and French--permeating Japan’s education system.


The curriculum emphasized the well being of the individual: focused on liberty, fraternity, and equality by teaching classic Western philosophers like John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). Western influence even permeated moral instruction as Francis Wayland’s *The Elements of Moral Science* was used in Fukuzawa Yukichi’s Keio Academy (Passin, 71). The influence of Western education systems was overwhelmingly evident in Meiji Japan’s early education. In 1870, over 5000 foreign teachers and advisers were working in Japan. In 1871, a engineering school created by the Ministry of Public Works was staffed solely by British instructors. Moreover, Tanaka Fujimaro, the Vice Minister of Education, hired Rutgers professor David Murray (1830-1905), who served in an official advisory capacity until 1878. Even the vocational schools were touched by Western, particularly American, influence. For example, the agricultural vocational school in Sapporo, now Hokkaido University, was modeled after American land-grant colleges (Passin, 71).

Such comprehensive Westernization was not limited to Japan’s education system. Socially, Japan experienced widespread adoption of Western culture after the arrival of Commodore Matthew Perry in 1853. This type of expeditious Westernization was sure to be met with opposition by conservative forces. Dissatisfaction with Westernization quickly reached its boiling point in the mid 1870’s as fulfillment of the education system’s budgetary requirements was largely placed on Japanese localities. Additional concern erupted over compulsory military conscription (known by opponents as the “blood tax”), the replacing of Confucian moralistic education with Western philosophy, and the forced removal of children from the agrarian workforce for elementary school. Installation of compulsory education was a strenuous process. Japan was already financially strained and the goals set forth in the Education Ordinance of 1872
were overly ambitious. In addition to the difficulty funding the construction of new schools and providing class materials, experienced and trained teachers were in short supply.

The Meiji government was already financially strained by the unequal trade agreements, such as the Kanagawa treaty, and in order to implement a viable compulsory education system the Meiji government needed to raise tax revenue. The result was a school system in which the Japanese subjects paid for 89.80% to 90.50% of the budget. Taxes amounted to roughly ten percent of an average farmer’s annual income.\(^3\) Figures from the early 1880’s demonstrate the extent to which municipalities bore the brunt of the system’s expenses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>National Share</th>
<th>Local Share</th>
<th>Prefectural</th>
<th>Municipal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>10.20%</td>
<td>14.30%</td>
<td>75.50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>9.50%</td>
<td>11.20%</td>
<td>79.30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Passin, 70)

As the table demonstrates roughly ninety percent of the education budget was derived from the citizenry. Seventy five to seventy nine percent fell on localities. This fiscal structure created an oppressive financial burden. In addition to heavy taxation the actual costs of schooling

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were equally burdensome on the average Japanese family. Provincial reports groused, “that
tuition costs were too high…books and materials were too expensive.” (Passin, 79) Clearly,
westernization and modernization in education would not come easily or cheaply in Japan.
Moreover, often the Western texts were too difficult for the new teachers to understand
themselves, much less teach, evidently it was, “a common complaint was that they (teachers)
could not answer the pupils’ questions, or that they answered queries about natural phenomena
with old wives’ tales.” (Passin, 78) Inept educators increased frustration. Indubitably, the over
burdened Japanese wondered why they paid such a steep price for a dysfunctional product.

The Japanese also began to object to what was called the “blood tax”, compulsory
military conscription. Compulsory conscription was common to many of the countries visited by
the Iwakura Mission and was seen as a way to modernize the Japanese military by the Meiji
government. For now, the significance that protests erupted against military conscription is this
particular point of contention fits in with the overall resistance to the legislative reforms
influenced by westernization. However, the presence of anti-conscription protests in 1873 will
ultimately provide significant evidence for the over-arching argument of research.

Farmers mainly resented compulsory education because, “school schedules did not take
into account the farmer’s need for the labor of their children.” (Passin, 58-59) Regardless of
ideological positions, the new education system and modernization as a whole greatly impacted
the lives of a still largely agrarian people. For some, the absence of Confucian moralistic
education in favor of Western philosophy was unacceptable. Many followers of True Pure Land
Buddhism, a popular form of Buddhism in Japan, rejected the Western curriculum, and
advocated the for Buddhist philosophy in the curriculum.
Beginning in 1873, school attendance rates began to dwindle and shortly thereafter the Japanese responded to westernization with violence (Passin, 58-59). The protests were anti conscription, anti public education, and against the adoption of the solar calendar (Passin, 80). Because the three points of protest were all Western adoptions the protests were in essence anti-westernization. Riots broke out in Okayama Prefecture with reportedly 3,000 Japanese from nine villages equipped with spears and rifles destroying 46 elementary schools while shouting: “down with conscription, down with the public schools, down with the solar calendar” (Passin, 25-26). The resistance to not only education, but the comprehensive westernization of Japanese society and political infrastructure was clear. With change came turbulence. Riots continued throughout the 1870’s sporadically. In 1876, 29 schools in the Mie prefecture were burned in a conflagration started by local farmers\(^4\). The severity of the rioting was evident in the response by the Meiji government: “Unable to control the situation…the ordinary prefectural police gave way to a special levy of samurai swordsmen backed by troops with firearms.” (Passin, 80) Interestingly, the increasingly obsolete role of the samurai--who were in fact becoming elementary teachers in droves--was temporarily revived\(^5\)

Despite the samurai performing police duties for the Meiji government they too were adversely affected by westernization. The vociferous resistance reached its apogee in 1877 with the Satsuma Rebellion led by samurai Saigo Takamori. Saigo Takamori served in the Meiji government, but became unhappy with the direction the new government was taking. Saigo


returned to Satsuma Prefecture where he established a large school system for disaffected samurai. Eventually Satsuma seceded from the Meiji government in 1876 leading to the rebellion. The domestic instability resulting from westernization and the education system would result in the Meiji leaders’ reevaluation of their reforms.

_Ideological Debate and the Abandonment of Liberal Curriculum_

Following the rebellion Tanaka Fujimaro and David Murray attempted to move away from the centralized French system of education to a more decentralized, individualistic, and liberal American model. The system shortened compulsory education to 16 months, simplified the curriculum, and gave the teachers more autonomy to adjust conditions in congruence with local conditions and needs. In 1878, following Emperor Meiji’s personal observations of schools, the debate over the ideological direction of compulsory education intensified. Emperor Meiji’s Confucian Lecturer Motoda Eifu issued the _Kyogaku taishi, The Great Principles of Education, in an Imperial Rescript in 1879_). Tanaka Fujimaro was forced to resign, and David Murray returned to America.

The period between 1880 and 1890 is marked by an ideological debate that recognized the influence the education system would have on the nature Japan’s future. Consequently, discourse centered not just on the goals of public education, but also the goals of the nation. Upon returning from the Iwakura Embassy General Yamada Kengi Kempaku-Sho made a statement that illustrated the Meiji government’s understanding of the importance of education:

…the foundation for a strong army is not simply a matter of giving arms to soldiers but rather to provide an education for the people as a whole, without
distinction between town and country, and to give the people throughout the whole nation knowledge and learning without discrimination of class or rank. Yamada

Despite the need for a viable education system being widely accepted by the Meiji reformers, contentious debate on the actual curriculum and goals of education slowed the process. In another example of the Iwakura Mission’s importance Tanaka Fujimaro’s and Kido Takayoshi’s observations were given serious consideration. Kume Kunitake recorded the diary of the Iwakura Mission and his reiteration of Fujimaro’s and Takayoshi’s impression of the Prussian education system illuminated why the Meiji leaders began to consider a Prussian system:

The standard of education in Prussia is among the highest in Europe, and it is an area of particular concern for the government. The construction of elementary schools is always paid for with taxes collected from the residents in each town and district. School maintenance is a mandatory responsibility of local officials, and sending their children to school is compulsory for parents...it is rare to come across anyone who cannot write. Their systematic approach and industriousness enables them to cultivate the study of letters, and their tireless research opens up a wealth of knowledge; consequently, Prussia leads Europe in producing great scholars of literature. The discipline and diligence of the Prussians have fostered their martial skills and they make well-trained soldiers, resilient in adversity, valiant in battle and steadfast in victory or defeat, with the result that their power has expanded until their military fame now resounds across the continent.

The noted relationship between education and military prowess must have struck a cord with the Meiji leaders who presided over a nation economically exploited by the more militarily powerful West. With the connection between education, economic success, and militaristic prowess firmly established by the Iwakura Mission’s research the debate on a means to an end was underway.

6 E. H. Norman, Solider and Peasant in Japan New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1943, p. 47
The Imperial Rescript of 1879, which issued the *Kyogaku taishi*, promulgated Emperor Meiji’s will to prioritize Confucian moralistic curriculum in the budding education system. However, before public education would stabilize in 1890, contentious debate emerged surrounding the goals of education, and the curricular means to those goals. The dispute over the goals of education boiled down to differing views on the relationship between the state and individual. Should education facilitate independent thinking and liberal ideology among the Japanese or foster unyielding dedication to a nationalist cause? Consequently contention over whether Western science and philosophical values, or traditional Japanese customs and belief should be the means to modernization emerged. While some argued the former was necessary to preserve Japanese custom and values advocates for the latter found Confucian moralistic curriculum archaic and impractical. The most vocal figures of this debate were soon to be Minister of Education Mori Arinori (1847-1889), Prime Minister Ito Hirobumi, Emperor Meiji’s Confucian lecturer Motoda Eifu, and influential scholar Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901).

Motoda Eifu was the personal Confucian lecturer to Emperor Meiji and was held in high regard. After Emperor Meiji took a personal tour of the schools across Japan in 1878 the Emperor charged Motoda Eifu with issuing an Imperial Rescript to entrench the Emperor’s view on the principles of education, the *Kyogaku taishi*. The decree, began: “The essence of education, our traditional national aim, and a watchword for all men, is to make clear the ways of benevolence, justice, loyalty, and filial piety, and to master knowledge and skill.” The first lines of the *Kyogaku taishi* emphasized, “our traditional national aim” firmly establishing that the

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Emperor sided with the traditionalists in matters of education. Motoda Eifu continued on to clarify the basic tenets of Confucian morals as the “traditional” curricular aim which Japan should perpetuate. Motoda Eifu then attacked the permeation of Western curriculum into the Japanese education system:

They take unto themselves a foreign civilization whose only values are fact-gathering and technique, thus violating the rules of good manners and bringing harm to our customary ways...The danger of indiscriminate emulation of Western ways is that in the end our people will forget the great principles governing the relations between ruler and subject, and father and son...For morality, the study of Confucius is the best guide (Gluck, 96).

Motoda Eifu, on behalf of the Emperor, was clearly advocating an abandonment of Western curriculum in favor of traditional Confucian moralistic education that instilled the values of filial piety, loyalty in subjects, and benevolence. Motoda Eifu’s promotion of traditional Confucian education demonstrated the statist tendency of the Meiji government’s traditionalists, who sought a system of education that facilitated subservience among the masses to the idea of a Confucian family state. It was clear that Emperor Meiji and Motoda Eifu saw the cultivation of Confucian values as way to instill the, “principles governing ruler and subject.” (Gluck, 96) The language used by Motoda Eifu in this excerpt of the Kyogaku taishi is important to note. He used ‘ruler’ and ‘subject’ as opposed to ‘government’ and ‘citizen’. Such language further demonstrates the emperor’s will that education condition the Japanese in a manner conducive to an authoritarian political infrastructure.

The statist ideology of Motoda Eifu, Emperor Meiji and the traditionalists is further evident in a section of the Kyogaku taishi in which Motoda Eifu offered forth his opinion on elementary education:
All men are by nature benevolent, just, loyal, and filial. But unless these virtues are cultivated early, other matters will take precedence, making later attempts to teach them futile. Since the practice has developed recently of displaying pictures in classrooms, we must see to it that portraits of loyal subjects, righteous warriors, filial children, and virtuous women are utilized, so that when the pupils enter the school, they will immediately feel in their hearts the significance of loyalty and filial piety (Gluck, 97).

Motoda Eifu expressed above his view that in order to entrench the idea of a Confucian family state, in which the emperor is the father and the subjects are the children who practice the same filial piety towards the emperor as they would their father, conditioning must begin at an early age. Certainly, such conditioning would serve the statist and authoritarian aims of the Meiji traditionalists.

Fukuzawa Yukichi held a Western, liberal view in regards to the state and the individual, and was a strong opponent of Confucian moralistic education. While Fukuzawa did not serve in the Meiji government, his importance in the debates was founded on the circulation of his opinions in periodicals for the Ministry of Education, in his newspapers, the and in Keio University, which he founded. Fukuzawa was perhaps the most highly regarded educator in Meiji Japan. Fukuzawa advocated that: “there must be the power of the government within and the power of the people outside, the powers working on each other and keeping their balance.” (86) Such a statement illustrates Fukuzawa’s liberal tendencies, likely fostered by his time spent in the West. Fukuzawa felt strongly that the Japanese citizenry relied too heavily on the government:

The whole society is leaning more and more toward the government, longing for it, depending on it, fearing it, and flattering it—there is not the least to show of the spirit of independence among the people.9

For Fukuzawa Yukichi, education was means to remove the dependent state of the Japanese and facilitate a population independent of the state, able to uphold its individual freedoms:

I believe that for the promotion of civilization, one must not look to the power of the government alone...What we need for this purpose is a person to stand before others as an example toward which all other may endeavor to strive...The only area one may hopefully find someone will be among the scholars of Western learning (Yukichi, 89)

Fukuzawa’s view on what the curriculum of compulsory education should be surfaces in this excerpt. Widely regarded as anti-Confucian, Fukuzawa believed that Japan needs a leader who embodied the liberal principles of Western democracies. Fukuzawa’s opposition to Confucian moralistic education, the likes of which are advocated by the emperor, was its lack of practical application:

With Confucianism based on the moral principles of self-discipline and family management, and the political principles of national government and world pacification, is there not something missing for practical purposes? (Yukichi, 200)

Fukuzawa maintained, in spite of the conservative backlash characteristic of the 1880’s, that re-entrenching Confucian moralistic education in the curriculum would not benefit the Japanese students. Instead, Fukuzawa argued that the perpetuation of Western liberal philosophy in the curriculum in conjunction with political liberalization was in the nation’s best interest. Fukuzawa, unlike Emperor Meiji and Motoda Eifu, advocated a system of education that would enable the Japanese to realize a democratic political culture and government as opposed to the idea of a system that encouraged subservience to an authoritarian Confucian family-state.
Prime Minister Ito Hirobumi didn’t miss an opportunity to weigh in on the debate. The Prime Minister held a similar opinion on Confucian morals as Fukuzawa and Mori Arinori, but also employed the same rationale on Confucianism as he did Western philosophy. In his Opinion on Education of 1879 Prime Minster Ito Hirobumi states:

Moreover, our students usually come from the Confucian schools, and whenever they open their mouths it is to babble political theory and argue about the world situation. Thus, when they read Western books, they are unable to set about their tasks with calm and cultivated minds. Rather, the plunge themselves into the radical schools of European thought, delighting themselves with empty theory…we should spread the study of industrial arts.  

Without weighing heavily on the relationship between state and individual, Hirobumi simply advocated an education system that promoted modern industrial progress.

*Mori Arinori and Authoritarianism: The Prussian Model*

While Fukuzawa Yukichi was a strong advocate of individualism and a balance of power between the rights of the citizenry and the power of the state, Mori Arinori maintained the position of a nationalist; however the two had similar positions regarding the Confucian curriculum. Mori Arinori became the Minister of Education in 1885, and his views on the relationship between state and individual would heavily influence the Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890. Prior to taking office Mori criticized previous education ordinances for inadequately addressing the relationship between state and individual:

The guidelines laid down at the time that the Ordinance was drafted were extremely vague leaving unclear such issues as how education should relate to home life, the distinction between general education and scholarship, along with the proper amount and type of education or scholarship appropriate to each individual’s personal benefit (Swale, 127)

Mori’s essays and drafts of education ordinances revealed his perspective of the relationship between state and individual and their relationship with compulsory education. Mori asserted that:

The first is the need to implement a form of education that develops compliance in the student. In other words we must develop through education the custom of recognizing the duty to follow directives (Swale, 148)

Conditioning compliance certainly seems aimed to turn the citizenry into obedient subjects, as opposed to freethinking citizens. In an essay on the direction of the education system Mori states: “The education system is to be based on the principle of national education and should also be framed according to the requirements of the national economy.” (Swale, 133) The latter half of the excerpt regarding the national economy indicates that the system of education should place the national interests of the state above those of an individual. While educating a population in the hopes of achieving national economic prosperity cannot be termed absolutist, nonetheless the aim of education is national prosperity, not individual prosperity.

Mori Arinori’s views of Confucian moralistic education were similar to Fukuzawa Yukichi’s, but the two differed on the relationship between the state and individual. In 1881, following the promulgation of the Kyogaku taishi, which expressed Emperor Meiji’s wish to reintroduce Confucian curriculum, the Elementary School Regulations Ordinance of 1881 stipulated:
in order to guide people, make them good, give them wide knowledge, and to do this wisely, teachers must particularly stress moral education to their pupils, Loyalty to the Imperial House, love of country, filial piety towards parents, respect for superiors, faith in friends…The teacher must himself be a model of these virtues (Passin, 85)

The above-mentioned principles were derived from Confucian morals and ethics, and Mori in a number of instances, argued that such values should be instilled because of their congruency with the entrenchment of authoritarianism. However, shortly after his appointment in 1885, Mori Arinori explicitly prohibited many of the curricular subjects mandated in the Kyogaku taishi. It remains unclear how Mori Arinori managed ignore the will of Emperor Meiji without consequence. It is clear, however, that Mori aligned his views on Confucian morals with Fukuzawa Yukichi, in that he found their impracticality unacceptable, and ultimately Mori: “rejected Confucian teachings as too old-fashioned, too unscientific to use as a basis for building a really strong authoritarian state.” (Shively, 88)

Despite being an influential scholar, educator, and journalist Fukuzawa Yukichi’s liberal perspective on the relationship between state and individual and his subsequent vision for compulsory education did not prevail. Between 1885 and 1889 Mori Arinori accomplished what Michio Nagai refers to as the “Japanization” of the education system. Such Japanization represents where Mori Arinori and Fukuzawa Yukichi differed. While both found Confucian moralistic curriculum impractical, Mori Arinori still advocated a system that harmonized with authoritarianism. The result was a blend of Prussian infrastructure and a curriculum that perpetuated the Confucian values congruent with statist ideology without sacrificing the practicality of education.
Favorability towards the Prussian system of education came in part because: “its iron-like political control and cold efficiency were employed to reinforce the Confucian idea of the family state” (Nagai, 76). Reinforcement of the Confucian family state was achieved, legislatively, shortly after the promulgation of the Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890 through the “Fundamental Principles and Rule for Elementary School Teaching”, which was intended to make, “the Rescript the basis of moral instruction” (Gluck, 149). This way the idea of a Confucian family state, loyalty to the imperial family, and filial piety were perpetuated in spite overbearing representation of Confucian morals and ethics in the curriculum.

Structure of the Education System

The rationale employed in choosing and implementing the Prussian system illuminated the long-term national vision of the Meiji government. The system accomplished two things. First the Prussian system “aimed at strengthening the power and prosperity of the state and in training men who would serve this cause” (Nagai, 74). Recall the observations of General Yamada Kengi on the relationship between military strength and the viability of education. Second the system provided for a two-tier infrastructure in which: “a compulsory sector heavily indoctrinated in the spirit of morality and nationalism” and also provided for a, “university sector for the elite in an atmosphere of the greatest possible academic freedom and critical rationalism.” (Passin, 88) The gap between elementary school and university was filled by ‘normal school.’ The latter demonstrated the heavily militaristic aspects of the Prussian system. Normal school students “were placed in dormitories under strict military-style discipline.” (Passin, 89) The head of the normal schools were also active duty officers, like Colonel Yamakawa at the Tokyo
Higher Normal School, and six hours a week were devoted to conducting military drill (Passin, 88).

The structure of the new education system made clear the Meiji leaders’ view of the relationship between state and individual, their goals for the education system, and their national vision for Japan. Throughout the latter half of the 1880’s Mori Arinori entrenched the new compulsory system through a series of ordinances on elementary, school, middle school, universities, and the training of teachers.

While the ordinances themselves simply legislated the framework of the system, often the accompanying speeches by Mori Arinori clarified the goals of each part of the system. Regarding elementary education, Mori stated,

The fundamental principle of elementary common school education is that every son or daughter…ought to be so educated as to enable them to fulfill their responsibilities and exercise their rights as units of the nation (Duke, 337)

While Mori mentioned the “units” ability to exercise their rights, the conditioning of “units” to fulfill their “responsibilities” nonetheless alludes to the statist focus of the education system and Meiji government. The initial elementary texts, approved by the Ministry of Education in 1887, underlined the term “iwae wagakuni” meaning celebrate our country; moreover the text taught students about the unbroken reign of 122 emperors. (Duke, 337-338) Clearly promulgating the myth of an unbroken line of emperors and emphasizing a love of country aimed elementary school curriculum at instilling patriotism and nationalism from an early age.

The middle school ordinance created the two-tier system by establishing five higher middle schools. These schools were reserved for the highest-performing elementary students and used as recruiting for the Imperial University. Such a system reflected Mori’s philosophy and
illustrates the Prussian influence in the system: “Elementary education and the Lower Middle Schools were designed to provide…a practical education that prepared the masses.” (Duke, 326) Higher education wasn’t considered education in Mori’s view, but instead he viewed it as learning, “Learning…involved advanced specialized knowledge and skills provided at the higher middle and university levels, preparing future leaders of the country.” (Duke, 326) Such a system provided the Meiji government, and future rulers, with an avenue to condition the masses into a loyal workforce while also providing a meritocratic avenue to the elite tiers of society for the willing and capable. Consequently, the learned elite could lead the country to international prominence through utilizing a loyal yet adequately educated mass.

Established in 1886 the Tokyo Higher Teacher Training College was designed by Mori Arinori to produce the best possible instructors for the compulsory education system. Like the normal schools and elementary schools, the education of teachers had a militaristic component. First Major General Yamakawa Hiroshi was the head of the new college and as such in charge of carrying out Mori Arinori’s vision of “a balance between the intellectual and physical training of future teachers” (Duke, 330). Military training was seen by Mori Arinori as a means to ensure that the ideal values Mori had for teachers: fraternity, dignity, and obedience, were instilled during teacher training. Mori understood the teachers as the most important piece of the educational mechanism in developing the country. As such, Mori wished to have the militaristic discipline of soldiers imparted upon Japan’s teachers.

The elementary tier of Mori Arinori’s education system cultivated patriotism, nationalism, and obedience among Japan’s youth. Military officers then ran normal schools and lower middle schools and every day life was conducted in a militaristic fashion. Moreover, the
instructors of all schools were trained and disciplined, as soldiers would be. In addition to this obedience and loyalty to the Confucian family-state were facilitated. Such a system of education illustrates the Meiji government wanted education to create a nation in which the interests of the state were placed over the individual, in which nationalism and militarism were prioritized over Western liberal philosophy (save for a select few, and a system of education that would enable the creation of a strong Imperial power under an authoritarian government.

The Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890 was the apogee of the twenty-two years of trial and error employed by the Meiji government in their search for a viable compulsory education system. Mori Arinori legislated the system throughout the latter half of the 1880’s through a series of ordinances and the Imperial Rescript on Education essentially documents the goals of education. While the patriotic and nationalistic curriculum of elementary education, the militaristic characteristics of middle education, and further the militarism instilled in Japanese teachers all foreshadow to the imperial and authoritarian goals of the Meiji government, the Rescript firmly established these goals. The Rescript stated: “Our subjects ever united in loyalty and filial piety”. This phrase demonstrates that the Meiji government saw its people as “subjects” and reinforces the idea of the Confucian family-state as it asserts that the Japanese subjects are united by their loyalty to the imperial household. The Rescript went on to declare: “thereby develop intellectual faculties and perfect moral powers; furthermore, advance public good and promote common interests” This line clarifies that the intellectual development of Japanese subjects was for the betterment of the state, not singularly the individual.

The period between 1868 and 1890 was characterized by the ideological, social, and political struggles that accompanied education reform. While Western liberal ideology initially
permeated the school system and Western customs were fostered socially, a socially traditional backlash launched the Meiji government into an ideological debate for much of the 1880s. The heated contention characteristic of these debates further demonstrates the Meiji government’s understanding of the connection between the type of education a population receives and the type of state a nation becomes. The overt shift from Western liberal curriculum to an education system characterized by strongly statist goals illuminates the imperial and authoritarian goals of the Meiji government further revealing to historians how Japan cultivated its government and people into an imperial state in the early twentieth century.
Chapter Two

In the years following the promulgation of the Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890 the ideology Meiji leaders intended to impart to students through education began to materialize in the curriculum. Evidence from the late Meiji period and early Showa period illustrate the entrenchment of the Confucian family-state ideology propagated by the Imperial Rescript on Education. Moreover, from about 1890 to 1930 historians are able to see the role education played in the development of nationalism and militarism.

For Japan, the last years of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century were defined by the emergence of ultra-nationalism and militarism. While nationalist ideology was articulated in the Imperial Rescript on Education and in the school curriculum the initial emergence of militarism in Japanese education had socio-economic roots. This chapter will present and analyze evidence that Japan’s compulsory education system, in conjunction with domestic initiatives inculcating nationalism and militarism, progressed towards the actualization the Meiji leaders’ Prussian-inspired goals to transform the Japanese into nationalistic, militaristic, imperial subjects. Evidence from the school texts and teachers’ manuals will show lessons were intended to promote nationalism and subservience to the emperor through the forceful promotion of the emperor as divine. Further, evidence shows a focused effort by the government and educators to glorify death in service to the emperor and cultivate the
prioritization of service to the state above self-preservation. Evidence of the curriculum is chiefly drawn from the Shushin and Kokugo textbooks of the period. The Shushin text is the morals and ethics textbook, and the Kokugo textbook is the Japanese language text. The text’s lessons often contain a concoction of ideologies and facilitate among students the subscription to the Confucian family-state ethos, militarism, and nationalism.

Analysis of the Meiji and Showa leaders’ domestic policies reveals a multilateral initiative to actualize the government’s Prussian inspired goals. The government targeted multiple layers of society with different methods to entrench the carefully chosen civil ideals of family state ideology, divine rule, militarism and nationalism. First, the empire addressed the young Japanese student demographic with a meticulously chosen curriculum and compulsory education system. Second, the leaders targeted the educators of young Japanese, formulating a militaristic teacher-training program. The training program undoubtedly aimed to ensure the inculcation of militaristic values and the creation of a highly strict and disciplined learning environment. Third, Yamagata Aritomo’s civilian socialization system aimed at those not subject to compulsory education, targeting Japan’s many agrarian villages and their local elites.

*Teachers and Educational Training*

One of the most important components of an education system is the teacher. Examination of the supply of educators to the Meiji government’s new education system reveals two important precursors to the militarization of the Japanese education system. First, research shows that former samurai in the absence of viable employment opportunities became educators. Second, in 1886 Mori Arinori created a new, highly militaristic form of teacher education. The
samurai values held by educators and the militaristic training of the teachers are both indicative of the degree to which militarism began to permeate the education system.

The samurai’s hardship reached its apex 1876 when the samurai no longer received privileges due to their status. Historian Andrew Gordon points out that the samurai’s “time-honored military skills, focused on swords and archery, were useless. Thus the samurai’s stipends were basically welfare for the well-born.” The stipends were rice allowances paid out to samurai, which for many were their only source of income. In 1876 the samurai stipends were converted to government bonds and the samurai’s yearly income dropped by up to 75 percent and consequently so did their prestige (Gordon, 65). The samurai’s obsolete martial skills were useless; however the samurais’ relatively high level of education enabled them to fulfill the compulsory education system’s demand for educators. Prior to Meiji rule samurai benefited from a, “Tokugawa education centered on the literary arts, including the study of Chinese classics.” (Duke, 119) Thus, as the samurai were among the chief beneficiaries of education prior to the creation of a national education system, they would be apt educators. The idle samurai enrolled in teacher training schools in droves. In 1875, eight of ten graduates of the Tokyo Teacher Training School were from samurai families (Duke, 148). In the same year at the Hiroshima Teacher Training School nineteen of twenty two graduates were from the samurai class, and at the Niigata Teacher Training School eight out of nine graduates were from samurai families all the while the samurai only made up, “about 5 percent of the general population.” (Duke, 148) The significance of the samurai’s predominance as educators was the militaristic and disciplined

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culture they brought to the classroom. Evidenced below in the section over-viewing the curriculum, the textbooks used were filled with militaristic stories extolling Japanese who honorably sacrificed their life for the emperor. Unyielding loyalty and the willingness to die for the emperor were key tenets of the samurai ethos. It is more than likely the samurai instructors emphasized such anecdotes highlighting the glory and honor in loyal sacrifice. The samurai undoubtedly reinforced these militaristic ideals in their pupil’s impressionable minds.

In addition to the martial background of the educators, in 1886 Mori Arinori codified the curriculum at the several teacher training schools located across Japan. On March 6th, 1886 Mori appointed Colonel Yamakawa Hiroshi (1845-1898) as the head of the Tokyo Higher Teacher Training College, and this marked the introduction of, “military training into the regimen of teacher education.” (Duke, 329) The militarization of teacher education was carried out to the fullest degree. Dress codes were enforced twenty four hours a day with unannounced inspections during the night during which, “students were required to fall out in front of the dormitory fully dressed with rifle and bayonet attached.” (Duke, 333) The dormitories were also remodeled after the army’s barracks and active duty army officers, who were known for their brutality, were placed in charge (Duke, 332). The military style dress code was so similar to actual uniforms that regular soldiers would sometimes become confused and, “the future elementary school teacher was saluted by the regular soldier on occasion.” (Duke, 332) Mori Arinori also called for a physical education regimen that, “consumed 14 percent of the entire curriculum and was the most important subject.” This included, “drills, marches, inspections, rifle training, and so on.” (Duke, 334) The Tokyo Higher Teacher Training College was not the only school to adopt these methods as, “Before the end of 1886…twenty nine of the forty six local training schools had
adopted the military style program.” (Duke, 335) A foreign teacher, Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904), who taught at Shimane Normal School in Matsue observed that, “The discipline is military and severe…he (the student) leaves the college a trained soldier.” (Duke, 336) One cannot ignore the implications military training for teachers, many of whom were already from samurai families, had on the education of young Japanese students. It is evident that Mori Arinori and the Meiji leaders intended the Japanese classroom to be a highly disciplined and structured environment. Hence, the goal of this type of education was to produce future Japanese subjects that were highly disciplined, loyal to the throne, and willing and able to serve the State during conflict.

The Textbooks

From the 1903 to 1945 there were five editions of national textbooks12. The pre-war editions of national texts laid down a nationalistic foundation with an emphasis on the divinity of the emperor. The nature of the curriculum makes explicit the government’s intention to train ideal citizens. The texts promulgate Shinto mythology as fact in an effort to inculcate nationalism and loyalty, employ stories of selfless acts in battle to foster militarism, and lay down guidelines on how to be an ideal citizen during times of peace and war.

The phrase “bansei ikkei no tenno” is repeated often in elementary school texts which translates too, “A line of emperor’s unbroken for ages eternal.” (Sun Song, 59) The phrase refers

to the Japanese belief that the emperor is a direct descendant of the Sun-Goddess Amaterasu and demonstrates the relationship between ultra nationalism and Shinto belief. The widespread curricular promotion of the emperor as divine reinforces the Japanese family state ideology and is the ideological pillar supporting the development of Japanese ultra-nationalism. The texts articulate this belief clearly: “The emperor, whom we worship as god, is a descendant of the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu, and He rules the country in accordance with the will and desires of the great Goddess Amaterasu.” (Sun Song, 80) The concentrated effort on behalf of the Meiji government to embed such a belief in the youth is of particular importance to this research. Instilling such a belief in an entire generation would promote a political culture of obedience and subservience to a single ruler. Moreover, in the minds of a young Japanese student, service was not viewed as to the state, but to god.

The positioning of the emperor as a deity served not only to promote a culture of nationalism, but also to cement the Confucian family state-ideology, specifically filial piety. The textbooks described the emperor as a father figure in accordance with the Confucian ideology: “The manner in which our emperor graciously and lovingly leads our people is like the parent’s love for their children and like the sunshine that shines equally over all living things and his benevolence toward his people is deep and boundless” (Sun Song, 82). This excerpt is an example of how the hotly debated ideological goals of the education system, discussed in Chapter One, translated into the curriculum.

Textbooks provide several anecdotes to convey the proper attitude towards loyalty and service to the emperor. Chapter Four of the Shushin textbook contains a short anecdote
describing how Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598) displays the ideal, bona fide attitude towards the emperor:

At the Jurakudai Hideyoshi served the emperor with all his heart. Although the emperor was first scheduled to stay for only three days, he lengthened it to a five-day stay at the request of Hideyoshi. Meanwhile Hideyoshi made the daimyo pledge their respect to the Imperial Household in the presence of the emperor. (Sun Song, 16)

The anecdote took place during the Sengoku era, or ‘Warring States Period’ when many daimyo (feudal lords) competed for power and control of Japan while the emperor did not have sovereign power. Within this historical context the anecdote holds significant meaning as Hideyoshi requested to entertain the emperor for two extra days demonstrating his wish to please the emperor; furthermore Hideyoshi made a show of loyalty in the presence of the emperor during a tumultuous period in Japanese history. The two above excerpts illustrate the actualization of the Meiji leaders’ contentiously debated curricular goals overviewed in Chapter One. The passage is an example of how the curriculum taught the importance of loyalty to the emperor.

An additional excerpt illustrates the curricular blend of militarism and loyalty common to the lessons found in Shushin and Kokugo textbooks. A story describes the valiant acts of an Imperial family member, Prince Yoshihisa (1847-1895), on the battlefield:

On one occasion when they faced the rebels on the opposite side of a riverbank, the Prince found himself in a dangerous predicament as an enemy shell came flying over his head and landed nearby, soiling His uniform with the flying dirt. When asked about his health the Prince, ‘I am on an important mission. I cannot remain idle for even a single day. As long as I can breathe I will continue’ (Sun Song, 88)
In his doctoral thesis, *A Sociological Analysis of the Value System of Pre-war Japan*, Un Sun Song aptly points out, “The implication here is, of course, that if a member of the imperial family could be so dedicated to his duty and so loyal to his country, then a subject should certainly be willing to give up his life in selfless devotion.” (Sun Song, 88) Here historians can see an example of a lesson that incorporates two of the major goals of the Meiji education leaders. First, it demonstrated the loyalty requested of subjects to the emperor reflecting Confucian family-state ideology. Second, it developed the militaristic value of selfless devotion to the emperor and the state.

Elementary texts promoted nationalism and militarism through several types of lessons. Previously mentioned were the lessons employing Shinto beliefs to foster nationalism and anecdotes nurturing militarism and loyalty. In addition the texts provided lessons in which nationalism and militarism were intimately intertwined highlighting the increasingly inseparable association of national pride with militaristic prowess. For example, the Kokugo textbook discusses the importance of the samurai’s sword to the Japanese:

> The Sword is the spirit of the samurai. The ancient samurai never put it away for even an instant. Even modern soldiers use this for a saber…The beauty of the Japanese sword is beyond the power of words to describe. Is there any nation in the world which has such a beautiful sword…Moreover, the Japanese sword is not only beautiful but there is a grace which no one can violate. When one draws his sword and watches it intently he begins to feel the spirit of the sword springing out from some unknown place. When one swings this sword, all unpure feelings disappear in a second and the mind is automatically clean and purified (Sun Song, 83)

The above passage presents the samurai’s sword as a symbol of national pride further cementing the association of militarism with national pride. Moreover, the use of sword is described as having a metaphysical purifying quality. The excerpt celebrates a deadly instrument, and
associates its use, killing, with purification and cleansing reflecting the militaristic values of the Japanese government; moreover the lesson adds to the ample amount of evidence typifying the government’s intent to inculcate militaristic ideals.

The role of Shinto shrines in the promotion of militarism, loyalty, and nationalism is also reflected in the textbooks. Particularly, the Yasukuni Jinja, the Nation Protecting Shrine, which honors the war dead, illustrate the shrine’s role. Each year, until US occupation, a celebration was held on April 30th and October 23rd when the emperor and Empress visited the shrine. School texts stated that, “It is the desire of the emperor that those loyal heroes who died for the country and Him should be enshrined and be worshipped civilly.” (Sun Song, 64) The practice highlights the faith associated with military sacrifice illustrating the belief that dying for the emperor wasn’t simply a sacrifice for the state. National religion called upon the Japanese to worship ‘civilly’ those who sacrifice themselves for the emperor. Thus, we have evidence of how outside the classroom religious culture promoted the glorification of service and sacrifice to the emperor.

The textbooks provide insight into life under a government strongly promoting nationalism. The Shushin text describes the importance of four national holidays: Shihohai, New Year’s Day; Kigensetsu, Japan’s Founding Day; Tenchosetsu, the reigning emperor’s birthday; and Meijisetsu, Emperor Meiji’s birthday:

We, the subjects, must be fully aware of the importance of these national holidays and great festival days and must recall to ourselves the glory of our nation and bestir ourselves to even greater loyalty and patriotism. On these days we should fly our national flag and demonstrate our true love (Sun Song, 89)
The emphasis placed on the celebration of these national holidays provides more evidence of the promotion of national pride and provides insight into the role of nationalism in annual Japanese celebrations of national ‘glory’.

Texts from the elementary level, the middle school and the upper high school levels often contained stories with implied meanings echoing the bushido ethos, for “the standard for textbooks chosen by the Ministry of Education included texts that directly expressed the ideology, ‘to die for the emperor/country’.” The Eighth volume of the elementary level national language text, published in 1905, contains a story of a man being accepted into the army. The man, “vows to his parents to fight without clinging to his life”, while his parents are envied by other families for their son’s heroism. The story ends with the line, “Japanese soldiers do not spare their lives and their loyalty is as firm as a rock.” (Ohnuki-Tierney, 127) It is easy to discern that the message of the story is to willingly give up one’s life for the emperor. Moreover, in keeping with the association of military service with prestige, the parents of the soldier are envied in their community while their son, “becomes the hero of the village”. The existence of this propagandistic curriculum in elementary, middle, and normal schools demonstrated the overt intentions of the Meiji government to mold a militaristic population.

However, it was not simply the texts themselves that were militaristic in nature. Teacher manuals instructed the teachers what each lesson aimed to inculcate. In a lesson from the Shushin text about performance during times of war the teachers’ manual states the goal of the lesson was to, “to let the pupils know that people should serve their country and the public by

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performing their duty, and should make every effort to do their duty.”¹⁴ The correlating lesson found in the Shushin text clearly stated the subject’s duties on the home front:

Consequently the people back home have as important a job to do as the soldiers who fight at the front. The duty of sending military supplies to the battlefronts must be performed under any hardship. And the people must bear all hardship, the military expenses, and guard against deterioration in production no matter how long the war may last…In such an event everyone including women and children, should calmly perform his duty and defend the country with his own body (King-Hall, 78)

The strong statement from an elementary textbook shows the importance placed not just on conditioning young boys to be loyal subjects, but also girls who would serve in vital domestic capacities during times of war. Nonetheless, the texts also state how young Japanese males should lead their lives with a priority placed on preparedness for military service; (a male student) “Should make it his duty to cultivate his body and mind from childhood so that he will be able to pass the conscription examinations and join the army and navy to perform the honorable duty of defending his country.” (Sun Song, 103) The degree of preparation expected of young Japanese men and women elucidates the Meiji government’s belief that a militaristic state, similar to Prussia, is best positioned to rise to international power.

The excerpts from Shushin and Kokugo texts provided above demonstrate several points about the Meiji leaders’ compulsory education system. First, the curriculum illustrates how the results of the ideological debates, overviewed in chapter one, were actualized in the texts and lessons. Second, the textbooks illuminate the overwhelming emphasis placed on fostering

militaristic values, nationalistic ideology, and Confucian family-state ideology. The emphasis is seen in the several lessons describing selfless sacrifice made for the emperor during battle, and the promulgation of mythology, as fact, to entrench the deification of the emperor. The latter point aimed at cultivating state-oriented filial piety, and nationalism. Third, recalling the fondness with which Meiji leaders’ viewed the Prussian education system for its, “iron-like political control and cold efficiency…employed to reinforce the Confucian idea of the family state”, the extent of Prussian influence on the curriculum is brought to light. The numerous excerpts focused on loyalty to the emperor, his god like status, and filial piety served to model Japan’s education system after Prussia’s. Further, recall the observations concerning military strength made of Prussia’s education system by Kume Kunitake:

The discipline and diligence of the Prussians (in reference to their education system) have fostered their martial skills and they make well-trained soldiers, resilient in adversity, valiant in battle and steadfast in victory or defeat, with the result that their power has expanded until their military fame now resounds across the continent (Kume, 289)

The explicit militarism present in the Shushin textbooks was undoubtedly chosen to mimic the Prussian system by educating generations of Japanese in a method that will make them ideal soldiers. Like the Prussian education system, the Meiji system “aimed at strengthening the power and prosperity of the state and in training men who would serve this cause.” (Nagai, 74) Finally, the curriculum reflected the goal of the Meiji and Showa administrations: build Japan into an international power. The education system thus plays a crucial role in the realization of this aim, as it served to condition Japanese subjects into loyal, patriotic, and militaristic people. Such values in subjects were viewed by the Meiji leaders as integral components to the rise of the Japanese Empire.
Yamagata Aritomo and the Civilian Socialization System: Militarizing The Societal Structure

In addition to the compulsory education system, the military adopted a Prussian method for gradually building support for the military in Japan’s numerous rural villages. Yamagata Aritomo views exemplified the Prussian influence in Japan’s government.

Yamagata Aritomo’s role in the rise of militarism cannot be overlooked. Yamagata Aritomo served as Home Minister at the time of the Imperial Rescript on Education was drafted and promulgated. Like the ambassadors of the Iwakura Embassy, Yamagata traveled to Europe and was similarly impressed by Prussian militarism. While Yamagata is notable for his role in the overseas expansion of the Japanese empire his time as home minister illustrates his militaristic domestic agenda. Yamagata Aritomo himself appointed Yoshikawa Kensei as the new Education Minister to draft the Imperial Rescript on Education. Under the instruction of emperor Meiji, “Yoshikawa received his instructions ‘to establish a basis for national enlightenment in consultation with Premier Yamagata.’”\textsuperscript{15} Through the drafting of the Imperial Rescript on Education and his domestic initiatives in the years following, Yamagata Aritomo’s militaristic ideals and their influence on the emergence of Japanese militarism are evident. When visiting Prussia in 1869, Yamagata “noted, how, through universal military service, all males were given military training, instilled with the habits of soldiers and made active defenders

of their countries” (Hackett, 52). This observation would ultimately lead to compulsory military conscription. However, Yamagata Aritomo believed that in addition to instilling the Confucian family state values through education, maintaining loyalty to the emperor and national prosperity required the indoctrination of militaristic values into society.

During the drafting process of the Imperial Rescript on Education, in 1890, Yamagata worked with Yoshikawa Kensei. In this capacity Yamagata sought to impart his militaristic values into the Rescript. Given the Imperial Rescript on Education would serve as a basis of Japan’s state religion or moral code, implementing militaristic ideals into the document is a significant development in the emergence of Japanese militarism. On September 30th, 1890 Yamagata wrote a letter that urged Inoue Kowashi (1843-1895) to include, “the thought that ‘the maintenance of the nation’s independence is dependent upon military preparedness.” (Hackett, 133) Yamagata’s wish would result in the inclusion of the clause stating, “should emergency rise, offer yourselves courageously to the State”, into the Imperial Rescript on Education (Hackett, 133). The above phrase reflects Yamagata Aritomo’s belief in, “the ideal that all citizens are soldiers”, a principle that mirrors Prussian doctrine 16. Yamagata Aritomo would continue to work towards establishing militarism as a key tenet of Japan’s cultural and social ideology.

The most important domestic initiative for the development of militarism launched by Yamagata Aritomo came in the form of the Imperial Army’s civilian socialization system and compulsory conscription. Yamagata Aritomo, Tanaka Terauchi (1852-1919), and Major general

Nagaoka Gaishi formulated a civilian socialization system in the early days of the first Sino-Japanese War. As previously mentioned one of Yamagata Aritomo’s fundamental precepts was the importance of militarism to national unity and prosperity. Roger F. Hackett, Yamagata Aritomo’s biographer, asserts Yamagata sought to create national unity on the foundation of, “the ancient ideal of a warlike spirit focused on loyalty to the emperor, and on patriotism” (Hackett, 102). The conscription system enacted in conjunction with the civilian socialization system represents Yamagata Aritomo’s attempts at implementing militaristic values into Japan. While not part of the education system, compulsory conscription, the civilian socialization system and the resulting reservist association were viewed, “as a way of building unity and commitment to national goals through the education of civilians in military values, through the soldier’s ethos.” (Smethurst, 5) Essentially, compulsory conscription and the reservist association were educational extensions of the compulsory school system: both were domestic initiatives aimed to inculcate militarism in civilians.

The military’s civilian socialization system’s formative years occurred during the first Sino-Japanese war, around 1894 and 1895. During this period Yamagata Aritomo planned to, “give intensive military, spiritual, physical and patriotic education to as broad a cross section of twenty year olds as possible, and then to send them back to civilian society to serve as community examples of diligence and good behavior.” (Smethurst, 5) The militaristic education in the last decade of the nineteenth century would have then been provided through the conscription system. Through compulsory conscription Yamagata Aritomo aimed to instill military values into a large portion of young Japanese who would then promote such values among the general population. Essentially the aim was that these militaristically socialized
twenty-year olds would become “village mainstays for local Japan.” (Smethurst, 6) Ideally the conscription system would have initially positioned the military and its values as prestigious. However, “Before 1889, the conscription law included so many draft exemptions that almost all men with education or wealth stayed out of the army.” (Smethurst, 7) The exempted demographic was, “for the most part from the village ruling class”, and thus the class of individuals who should have been promoting the military and its values instead, “learned to disdain the army and in turn influenced their ‘natural’ followers.” (Smethurst, 7) Again, Prussia’s significant influence on Japan’s modernization is evident. Prussian military advisor Major Jakob Meckel advised the elimination of the draft loopholes and the introduction of:

- a one year volunteer officer candidate system for graduates of middle or higher schools. By this innovation, the educated landlords’ sons served only one year on active duty, and then returned home as second lieutenants. Their families’ tenants concurrently served three years at the barracks and returned home as enlisted men. By these innovations Katsura aimed to identify the military’s elite, the officer corps, with the villages, the landlord class, and this increase army prestige and at the same time reinforce both military and village order (Smethurst, 7)

Such a reformation achieved the initial goal of associating prestige with service in the military and subscription to the bushido values propagated by the military.

The success of the reformed civilian socialization program is best illustrated by the reservist association which was begun by the officers produced through the one-year volunteer officer candidate system. When the volunteers for the officer candidate program returned to their villages after a year of training, the landlord ruling classes’ sons, now second lieutenants began, “building community military organizations in which they served as leaders and their enlisted men-tenants as followers.” (Smethurst, 7-8) As initially intended the village ruling class began
to serve as examples of the militaristic, disciplined ideal citizens Yamagata Aritomo sought to contrive. Further, by establishing community military organizations the young leaders had begun the process of fostering militarism on a societal level. The associations, “performed patriotic, relief, military, and community service duties in conjunction with nonmember village men of authority and prestige.” (Smethurst, 7-8) By performing community service the military societies undoubtedly cultivated a favorable public opinion of the military. By carrying out community service with non-military village elites the organizations further nurtured the association of prestige with the military.

By 1906 the army had officially endorsed the creation of such community military organizations labeling them ‘reservist associations’: “By 1906, because of army encouragement, there were over 4,000 and by 1910, over 11,000 such local groups which made community and civilian socialization in military and patriotic values one of their major duties.” (Smethurst, 9) Yamagata Aritomo’s vision of young soldiers serving as ‘village mainstays’ and the socialization of militarism and values had begun to actualize in the early decades of the twentieth century:

The central headquarters supervised more than 13,000 branches and 2,300,00 men by 1918, and more than 14,000 branches and 2,900,000 men by 1936. When one considers that the army dominated the organization, that at least one branch existed in every community in the country, that from 50 to 60 percent of the eligible men belonged, that half the members had never served in the military…it is apparent why the reserve association quickly made itself a potent force for educating civilians (Smethurst, 21)

The prominence of the reserve associations and its height during the 1930’s evidences the entrenchment of militarism on a societal level. With “50-60 percent” of members having no military background yet participating in an organization sponsored by the military it’s clear Yamagata Aritomo’s initiatives had substantial success entrenching militaristic and patriotic
values. The stated goals of reservist associations were, “to reform public morals, to enhance the prestige of the military, and to become models for the general public.” (Smethurst, 8) In the context of education these associations demonstrate how the Meiji government employed a two-pronged approach for conditioning its people. On one hand the government instilled the Confucian family-state values of filial piety, patriotism, and subservience in the youth through compulsory education. While on the other hand Yamagata Aritomo’s domestic initiatives built on the foundation laid by compulsory education through the cultivation of similar, however more martial, values on a societal wide level. The emergence and popularity of community military societies, catalyzed by the Prussian Major Jakob Meckel’s idea for a one-year volunteer officers candidates program, illuminates two important points. First, it highlights the Prussia influence on the Meiji government and by consequence Japan’s modernization. In the last chapter evidence highlighted the importance of Kido Takayoshi’s and Tanaka Fujimaro’s observations of Prussia on the Iwakura mission. The Prussia’s disciplined and statist education system impressed the Meiji diplomats to great degree, and ultimately Japan’s education system was modeled after the Prussia’s. After the ideological debates Mori Arinori and the Meiji oligarchy decided to teach the Confucian family state ideology that imparted values congruent with budding authoritarian government. Recall the observation Kido Takayoshi made of the relationship between militarism and education, “The standard of education in Prussia is among the highest in Europe…the discipline and diligence of the Prussians have fostered their martial skills and they make well-trained soldiers, resilient in adversity, valiant in battle…with the result that their power has expanded.” (Kunitake, 289) Thus the entrenchment of martial ideals into society will then reinforce the family-state ideology instilled through education. Keeping in mind the unequal trade agreements of the nineteenth century, Japan’s goals were international economic and
military preeminence. Thus the system of education in conjunction with the propagation of martial ideals and patriotism, modeled after the Prussian’s, was the societal aspect of the Meiji government’s reformations; reformations aimed at propelling Japan to its goal of international predominance.

Second, the substantial Prussian influence enables historians to view the military’s civilian socialization system as an extension of compulsory education of which worked in conjunction with compulsory education to shape the Japanese people. Ultimately, these domestic programs aimed to contrive a society of nationally and militaristically educated people, as observed in Prussia, in order to propel Japan to international prominence. On November 3rd, 1910 Yamagata Aritomo made a speech that evidences this goal. He states that the Japanese must, “fulfill the ideal that all citizens are soldiers. Not only must we repay our obligation to the emperor, but we must also make the nation prosper.” (Smethurst, 2) This excerpt shows how Yamagata Aritomo and the Meiji government perceived a positive correlation between national prosperity and military strength; further it demonstrates the bushido ideal of loyalty, and, militarism and loyalties relationship to national prosperity. Hence, within this context the military’s civilian socialization system and the reservist association are parts of a national, multi-institutional educational apparatus established to create a highly disciplined, obedient and militaristic population. This institutional educational apparatus illuminates the process by which Japan reformed its people from those who once rioted when conscripted to people who celebrated the opportunity to die for the emperor.

The evolution of school curriculum in the early years of the twentieth century provides evidence of the Meiji government’s coordinated effort to inculcate militarism and nationalism
into Japanese society. The militaristic training of teachers, their bushido roots, Yamagata Aritomo’s civilian socialization system, and the school curriculum worked concurrently to achieve the Meiji government’s statist goal. The civilian socialization system expanded the culture of militarism beyond the classroom all the while young students were indoctrinated with Confucian family-state ideology.

Former samurai, who had been educated to teach in a rigorous and highly militaristic fashion, taught young Japanese school children lessons that indoctrinated bushido and Confucian family state ideology. The majority of teachers had already been partial to martial values, given the prominence of their samurai past, and were further militarized through institutions like the Tokyo Higher Teacher Training School. The classroom environment for young students would then have been highly disciplined and already partial to martial ideology. The compulsory education system was further permeated by militarism via the Ministry of Education’s selected texts that taught children an ideal Japanese citizen willingly gave his life for the emperor. Further the curriculum inculcated the Confucian family-state ideology that taught children to be uncritical of their government and emperor. In addition to the prevalence of militarism and nationalism in the school system children were being brought up in a martial society that promoted military service as prestigious. These conditions would create a generation of Japanese who would help build and support one of the most dangerous empires of the twentieth century.
Chapter Three

The previous chapters focused on the creation, implementation, and content of the Meiji compulsory education system. Evidence presented has examined the Prussian influence behind the education system; the result of the dispute over the ideological direction of the curriculum; the actualization of this ideology into the curriculum; and the predominance of militarist and nationalist lessons in the curriculum. The challenge of this project, however, is to measure the education system’s impact on the students. Examining the reverberations of the militaristic and nationalistic lessons on a macro-level is beyond the scope of this research. Nonetheless, analysis of a select few diaries written by Japanese soldiers who hail from a variety of backgrounds, served different roles in the military, and received different levels of education, provides valuable insight into the effect of the educational curriculum on the ideological sentiments and decisions of Japanese soldiers.

In Section Two, evidence illuminated three core intentions of the curriculum: establishing the duty of the Japanese to serve the emperor, and state loyally, and in effect willingly sacrifice their own lives for the state as a cultural norm; entrenching the notion of the emperor’s divinity and divine ancestry; and inculcating and intertwining nationalism and militarism. The selection of soldiers’ diaries analyzed are written by mostly highly educated university students, many of whom were kamikaze pilots, and one individual who wasn’t educated at a university level.
Additionally, the diary of a university educated student who served as an infantry soldier is examined.

The level of education of the diaries’ authors is important because it is generally thought that education has a liberalizing effect. In contrast to this assumption, the selections reveal, respectively, an anti-war stance, an anti-military and anti-government stance, and a pro-totalitarian stance among the university-educated soldiers. All but one of the university-educated soldiers, however, expresses a militaristic sense of duty and commitment to Japan with a general willingness to give up their lives in service to the state. Indeed, two of the kamikaze pilots nurture liberal anti-war sentiments while simultaneously stating their willingness to serve and die for Japan. Yet, one kamikaze pilot’s diary conveys he is completely unwilling to be a kamikaze pilot and opposed to the war, but nonetheless ultimately becomes a kamikaze pilot. The most notable trend among soldiers seems to be the meshing of two seemingly incompatible ideologies. On one hand the soldiers are politically against the war while on the other hand the soldiers seem to foster a nationalistic-militaristic ethos as, at some level, they are honored to serve and feel bound by duty to die for the state.

In sum, the soldiers diaries examined can be divided into three categories. First, are the soldiers that are willing to sacrifice themselves, don’t express anti-war sentiments or are pro-war. Second, are the soldiers who paradoxically express anti-war sentiments yet feel bound by duty to make the ultimate sacrifice for the state. Finally there is the soldier who explicitly describes his unwillingness to be a kamikaze pilot and his disapproval of the war, but nonetheless makes the sacrifice. The latter two categories are most important. The soldiers with incongruous ideologies elucidate the effect of a curriculum that incessantly inculcates the Japanese subject’s sacrificial
duty to the state. In spite of their disapproval of the war these soldiers are able to set aside their political qualms and serve. This fact is one illustration of the astounding success the Meiji curriculum had cultivating a militaristic sense of duty in students. The final type of soldiers affords credence to this argument. This soldier is unmistakably opposed to the war and unwilling to die for the emperor, but does so anyway. Furthermore the opportunity to elude this service, while not inconsequential, is both known of and ever present. Why is this the case? The answer is found in the fact that serving, and if necessary, dying for the emperor was a duty deeply entrenched in young Japanese by 1945. Moreover because of Japan’s culture of corporate and familial responsibility and Confucian family state ideology, dodging one’s duty would bring about great dishonor, shame, and ostracism upon the individual and his family.

Nakao Takenori was born in the metropolitan Fukuoka Prefecture where he went to the Fukuoka Higher School until departing for Tokyo to go to the Imperial University. He earned a degree in law at the university. He entered the Sasebo Second Naval Training Corps on December 10th, 1943 and was killed in action on May 4th 1945 at age 22. Upon learning of his inevitable physical examination for conscription Nakao begins to reflect on the idea of death, and in doing so puts on display his impressive education discussing the work of Michel de Montaigne, “What is death? Montaigne (Michel Eyquem de Montaigne, 1533-92) said that death itself is nothing important. He added that it is the fear of death itself that makes death seem important.” Montaigne, the humanist known as the father of modern skepticism hardly embodies militarist and fascist ideology. Knowledge of notable sixteenth century French thinkers

is certainly impressive and illustrates the high level of education many student soldiers were receiving. Despite his liberal university curriculum Nakao still demonstrates a sense of duty to the state when reflecting on the philosophy of René Descartes:

I feel a great deal of difference between the times when Descartes lived and the present. He used the proof of *Ergo sum in Cogito*. But, for those who live today, rather than starting at an abstract level like his, we must start with our identity as a member of a collectivity- a nation or people-that is centered on blood and love. Shouldn’t we live with the feeling of dedication for our collectivity? (Ohnuki-Tierney, 195)

Likewise Nakao, “believed the government propaganda that Japan had to defend itself against the threat of Western colonialism and the other Asian countries would benefit from its program” (Ohnuki-Tierney, 186). The above excerpts evidence Nakao’s pro-war political stance and his sense of duty to the state. Nakao’s sense of responsibility to the collective didn’t emerge spontaneously; it’s the product of an education system and militaristic society. Later in his diary Nakao writes, “I am not physically on the battlefield yet, I am already in it. In pursuit of the infinite and in love with the absolute, I too, must sacrifice myself for the nation.” (Ohnuki-Tierney, 201) Nakao clearly falls into the first category of university students. He is pro war and willing to die for the state. The importance of his disposition is that despite his exposure to liberal Western philosophy such an education didn’t have the liberalizing effect the curriculum is known for. At some point in his upbringing Nakao imbibed a sense of duty to the state. Considering the curriculum he was taught the relationship between his sense of duty and elementary education appears less correlative and more causal.

Hirai Kiyoshi is from the Miyagi Prefecture, where he went to the Second Higher School and subsequently attended Tokyo Imperial University. Hirari’s diary was chosen for analysis because he was a university student who possessed the militaristic aspiration to die for Japan.
More importantly, he fostered this disposition as an infantry soldier not as a kamikaze pilot. This detail is significant because it evidences that volunteer kamikaze pilots weren’t the only university-educated members of the service knowingly and willingly headed to their death. In other words, the sense of duty to die for the state wasn’t confined to kamikaze volunteers as the research sample may suggest. Hirai’s wrote in his diary how his mother strongly encouraged him to avoid conscription, “She urges that I change my field of study to natural science so that I shall be able…to avoid conscription.” Students who majored in natural science, engineering, medical, or educational disciplines were able to avoid conscription. Later in the war, students of these disciplines were only able to avoid deployment to the front lines (Wadatsumi no Koe, 113).

Yet, Hirai wished to die for his country, “moreover, to die so young, even as a flower’s petal falls, is what I truly want.” (Wadatsumi no Koe, 112) In spite of a means to avoid conscription and danger Kiyoshi preferred to continue his study of literature and die for the state. In a sobering letter to his mother Hirai wrote:

> Mother I really do understand how you feel, dear mother, but the times we live in and the education I have received do not allow me to go along with your wishes. Please, please forgive me for the great impiety of dying before your own time has come (Wadatsumi no Koe, 113)

This somber diary entry illustrates three points. First, Hirai wrote that his education prevents him from avoiding conscription. Hirai was referencing the values of duty, loyalty, honor, and sacrifice he was taught to actualize throughout his life. Values, as research evidences, which were strongly entrenched through the curriculum of Japan’s primary and secondary schools. Second, Hirai’s reference to the state of the times also connects to his education. Recall

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18 Wadatsumi No Koe, Kike, and Joseph L. Quinn. Listen to the Voices from the Sea: Writings of the Fallen Japanese Students. Scranton, PA: University of Scranton, 2000. Print. 113
evidence Section Two that specifically outlines the male subjects’ duties during times of war. Hirai’s responsibilities to Japan in times of war were made abundantly clear through his education. To avoid conscription would not only mean contradicting the values Hirai was raised to live by, but also it would mean shamefully dodging his duty as a male subject of the Japanese empire. Clearly, Hirai took his duty to the state seriously. This fact substantiates an emerging theme from most of the diaries analyzed: a strong sense of duty and responsibility. Third, Hirai’s perceived impiety evidences the success of the Meiji curriculum at inculcating Confucian family-state ideology. The prevalence of Confucian family-state ideology in the soldiers’ rationale is further examined in the two following diaries.

Sasaki Hachiro’s diary epitomizes the sense of duty and loyalty to Japan Meiji leaders desired from their subjects. Sasaki Hachiro graduated from the prestigious Tokyo Imperial University and lived in the Tokyo metropolis, he met his end as a kamikaze pilot. Sasaki belongs in the second category of soldiers with incongruous beliefs. His writings explicitly express his political ideology: “Individualism is the ethos of capitalism: the new ethos needs to be some form of totalitarianism, appropriate either to a nation or the world itself.” (Wadatsumi no Koe, 120) This excerpt demonstrates Sasaki Hachiro’s fascist leaning political ideology; however Sasaki is an example of an ideological paradox as he is simultaneously anti-war, “I resolutely declare my anti-war stance.” (Ohnuki-Tierney, 55) Anti-war sentiments and totalitarianism aren’t typically compatible, but perhaps Sasaki’s stance against individualism explains how an individual fervently anti-war feels bound to die for his state’s imperial cause. Sasaki writes, “Being able to live well in this emperor’s state under his benevolence, I would not refuse to be drafted if it his order.” (Ohnuki-Tierney, 55) Sasaki, like Nakao Takenori, feels bound by duty to
serve. The important characteristic of each soldiers’ sentiment is their notion of belonging to a collective and a rejection of individualism. Instead the soldiers place the needs of the state over self-preservation. Sasaki views sacrifice for the state as a way of life, “I would say our duty would be to learn how…to live lives of sacrifice, anything else would be living a lie.” (Wadatsumi no Koe, 121) Sasaki’s comments illustrate the power of his sense of duty as it trumps his anti-war sentiment.

Sasaki Hachiro continues on in his diary seemingly epitomizing the Meiji leaders’ ideal subject:

In my opinion, however, my going to fight in a war can also be considered an honorable duty…In addition to pursuing my studies, I was fortunate enough to be blessed with superior physical strength…this means that I also have the honorable obligation to dedicate myself to the nation. I look upon both these duties as sublime in nature. I am not certain as to whether the whole tone of our war effort is reactionary or otherwise. I can only say that such and such duties and responsibilities are assigned to us and that our only goal is to live up to them. Whether or not the cause is reactionary, my wish is to do my very best. I wish to die most beautifully as a person in the midst of a supreme effort…as an unknown member of society, my only option is to love and die while remaining faithful to my duties and responsibilities (Wadatsumi no Koe, 122)

Sasaki Hachiro encapsulates Confucian family-state ideology. Above he expresses nothing other than a willingness to perform his duty and responsibility to the state, like the loyal subject the curriculum was designed to contrive. Further he dismisses the political debate surrounding the war focusing solely on his obligation to serve the state. Sasaki Hachiro’s ideology and decision to be a kamikaze can be directly connected to his experience in the compulsory education, as Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney points out in her analysis of Sasaki’s diary in the collection Kamikaze Diaries:
Sasaki’s experience at the First Higher School was crucial to his later decision to become a tokkotai (kamikaze) pilot, for during this period he realized that the students at the school were the future leaders of Japan. The school cultivated his pride and sense of responsibility to society (Ohnuki-Tierney, 43).

We see this causal relationship evidenced in Sasaki’s diary, prior to his conscription, when he describes his first day at the First Higher School: “When all of use, including the President, sang “Gyokuhai” {the school song}, I shed tears unexpectedly. The members of the entire school put our efforts together in order to build our country. This is how the graduates of the First Higher School carry out the role of leading the nation.” (Ohnuki-Tierney, 44) The First Higher School nurtured Hachiro’s sense of duty to Japan, the very sense of duty that produced the view expressed in his diary and mentioned earlier, “I would say our duty would be to learn how…to live lives of sacrifice, anything else would be living a lie.” (Wadatumi no Koe, 120) Sasaki’s diary highlights the impressive persuasion a sense of duty had on the two men as it trumped their anti-war sentiments. Additionally, Sasaki’s diary highlights the importance influence secondary education had on his ideology.

Nakamura Tokuro was born in the Yamanashi Prefecture, graduated from the First Higher School and entered Tokyo Imperial University in October of 1942. He was conscripted on October 1st immediately after entering the university, and was killed in action on October 21st, 1944 in the Philippines, at twenty-five years of age. Nakamura provides another example of a Japanese student soldier who despite holding anti-war sentiments and a keen interest in intellectualism volunteers to be a kamikaze pilot. In his diary Nakamura professed his urge to pursue his education writing, “The gakumon, the pursuit of knowledge, should set the condition
of life. That is my cherished contention. Yet it seems that at the present time the exact opposite is
the case.” Nakamura continued on to hint at his disapproval of the war: “what in the world is
going on? It makes me fearful for the fate of my country.” (Ohnuki-Tierney, 143) Despite his
love for the pursuit of knowledge and his anti-war sentiment, expressed in phrases such as, “I
firmly believe that the completion of my study would bring truly great honor and glory to
Japan’s position in the world, far more than would winning the war or the occupation of islands
or cities.” (Ohnuki-Tierney, 156), Nakamura also respected “the fine qualities of the Japanese
military-such as their transcendent conquest of the fear of death itself, their courageous charges.”
(Ohnuki-Tierney, 149) Later in his diary, when facing imminent deployment to hotly contested
areas in the Philippines, Nakamura is seemingly fond of the bushido practice of taking one’s own
life in the face of defeat: “Should you hear that I have ‘died’ please do not believe that
death…came against my will…when it is time, I have accepted the idea of taking my own life,
and indeed intend to do so.” (Ohnuki-Tierney, 156) Nakamura fosters disparate ideologies
simultaneously as his sense of duty collides with his liberal tendencies.

The fact that highly intelligent, and seemingly rationale individuals like Nakamura
Tokuro and Sasaki Hachiro could not only hold paradoxical ideologies, but also give his life for
a cause he opposes is certainly puzzling. The explanation lies in the two soldiers’ youth. As
overviewed in Section Two, the primary and secondary school curriculum incessantly inculcated
Confucian-family state ideology and was riddled with stories glorifying individuals’ brave
sacrifice for the emperor. Moreover, the teachers were trained in a highly militaristic method,
and nationalism was propagated through celebration of national holidays and the promulgation of
Japan’s divine origins. Mori Arinori (Meiji Education Minister) specifically designed the
education system to entrench Confucian family-state ideology. A key tenet of this ideology was the view of the emperor and state as a father figure with whom you practiced strict piety towards. Furthermore, Japan was already a culture that highly valued filial piety as a norm. While Tokuro Nakamura and Sasaki Hachiro may have been anti-war they were still raised to serve their parents loyally: furthermore they were conditioned by the compulsory education system to willfully and loyally serve his state. Recall from Section Two the excerpt from a teachers’ manual that instructed educators, “to let the pupils know that people should serve their country and the public by performing their duty, and should make every effort to do their duty.” (Hall, 77) This curricular goal was coupled with lessons that instructed the student to, “make it his duty to cultivate his body and mind from childhood so that he will be able to pass the conscription examinations and join the army and navy to perform the honorable duty of defending his country” (Sun Song, 103). The excerpts above demonstrate the immense and concentrated effort to entrench a militaristic sense of duty in students. Moreover, the fundamental goal of the Meiji leaders education system, as described by Mori Arinori in an essay was the, “need to implement a form of education that develops compliance in the student. In other words we must develop through education the custom of recognizing the duty to follow directives” (Swale, 148). Thus, from the onset of his primary education the curricular goal of Japan was to instill compliance and a militaristic sense of duty in individuals like Tokuro Nakamura and Sasaki hachiro. This conditioning explains how the two university-educated students could both oppose the war and sacrifice their life for its cause. Additionally, this rational unearths the roots of Sasaki Hachiro’s and Nakao Takenori’s sense of duty and rejection of individualism.
Itabashi Yasuo was not educated at a university. Instead, after completing the Fukushima
Higher School he joined the navy to train as a pilot. Itabashi undoubtedly falls into the first
category of soldiers. His diary clearly establishes his militaristic, gung ho, pro-war stance. He
served in the 503rd air division until he was shot down on June 8th near New Guinea. After being
stranded for four months in Manokwari, New Guinea, Itabashi returned to Japan to train bomber
pilots until, after months of applying, he was granted a position in Navy’s Special Attack
Squadron as a kamikaze pilot. By and large embodies an ideal soldier. He longs for combat, and
the opportunity to sacrifice himself for the state. Stationed on Biak Island, near Papua New
Guinea, Itabashi expressed his frustration when there wasn’t combat to participate in, writing
“I’m dying to use my skill as a pilot and am not happy about this situation.”19 Itabashi also
describes how the unit’s morale fluctuates with the sighting of enemy ships and aircraft,
describing how when, “Second Lieutenant Amori received orders to attack a transport convoy
east of Biak Island…Our spirits improved a hundredfold.” (Yamashita, 57) Such an insight
demonstrates the aggressive militaristic attitude of, at the very least, some in Itabashi’s unit.
Further, counter to what one would expect, Itabashi wasn’t concerned about dying and rarely
mentioned a fear of death, instead describing his confidence: “I went to bed looking forward to
certain victory in battle tomorrow.” (Yamashita, 57)

In late June 1944 following a costly offensive campaign around Biak Island Itabashi and
many of members of his unit’s aircraft were grounded for repair. Itabashi described how his unit,
experiencing heavy enemy bombing campaigns, felt at being unable to participate: “Every night

the base is subject to attacks…it was horrible for those of us without aircrafts, and we cried.” (Yamashita, 58) This diary entry provides a powerful insight into the disposition of Itabashi and his unit. It elucidates that Itabashi and his unit did not perceive their inability to participate in combat as a blessing to be relatively free of danger, but instead wished to fight and contribute. Such a perception highlights the loyal militaristic attitude of the soldiers. Itabashi’s later diary entries continue to reinforce this point, “At breakfast we heard that our forces on Saipan committed gyokusai…It was as though the chests of those of us without aircraft were about to explode.” (Yamashita, 59). Gyokusai, is the Japanese term for what is essentially a suicidal offensive charge and typifies the form of militarism characteristic of numerous soldiers’ diaries. The previous excerpt clearly evidences the urge of soldiers to fight, in spite of their safe position.

Itabashi Yasuo’s diary describes his transition from a combat pilot to a kamikaze pilot providing valuable insight into the progression from his want to achieve victories in battle to his want to carry out a single sacrificial mission for the Emperor. The demarcation between the two needs clarification. Obviously Itabashi’s disposition prior to stating his intent to volunteer for the Special Attack Unit was such that he tacitly accepted the fact he may die in service to the Emperor; however the important distinction lies in the above excerpts describing in detail his urge to aid his terrestrial comrades and the war effort while grounded. This disposition wasn’t so irrational that Itabashi sought to sacrifice himself immediately upon entering the fray, but instead achieve several victories. This assertion is evidenced above multiple times where Itabashi expresses his wish to employ his piloting skills, and achieve victory.

Itabashi’s transition to volunteer for a single sacrificial mission occurs after news he receives on November 15th 1944 that his former unit, the 503rd air group, “has been decimated”
Further in November of 1944 the War in the Pacific had reached a point in which allied forces had taken the Japanese home island of Okinawa and began to bomb the main islands. Itabashi writes on November 25th, 1944 that, “There was a report that seventy B-29’s bombed the Imperial capital, and I was furious.” (Yamashita, 65) Bombing of the imperial city was a stinging insult to an individual as nationalistic and militaristic as Itabashi Yasuo. Shortly thereafter, in January, he writes, “Isn’t it time for us all to join special-attack units and crash our planes into the enemy…to help us prevail, I’d happily see my little five foot body smashed to pieces.” (Yamashita, 67) It wouldn’t be until April of 1945 that Itabashi Yasuo would commit gyokusai as a kamikaze pilot. The last words he wrote in his diary, on April 8th 1945, were “I’ll smear the decks of enemy warships with this teenager’s blood. It’ll be wonderful!” (Yamashita, 79) Itabashi explicitly describes his wish to be a kamikaze pilot illustrating an ultra-militaristic and ultra-nationalistic attitude undoubtedly nurtured from a very young age in school, and expressed directly in his diaries. Itabashi’s journal demonstrates an example of a soldier who was willing to die for the state, but didn’t hold anti-war feelings. While he’s only one example, it provides insight into the ideology of a soldier who didn’t receive a university education, showing an absence of liberal anti-war sentiments.

The final university-educated student-soldiers’ diary examined presents an interesting exception to the other kamikaze diaries analyzed. Hayashi Ichizo was from Fukuoka on the island Kyushu. He graduated from the Imperial University in Kyoto and was a devout Christian. Of all the diaries translated in Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney’s Kamikaze Diaries Hayashi’s is the only that explicitly details both an anti-war mentality and an unmistakable unwillingness to be a
kamikaze pilot. Moreover, he is the only Christian. Hayashi’s Christian belief and upbringing undoubtedly shaped his anti-imperial views as Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney points out:

He had become a devout Christian under the influence of Uchimura Kanzo, perhaps the most important Meiji Christian, who defied the imperial system and refused to bow toward the emperor’s signature on the Imperial Rescript on education when, on January 9, 1891, the First Higher School celebrated its issuance (Ohnuki-Tierney, 164).

Not only was it in his nature to disdain Japan’s imperial governance, he actively worked against it as a child, “When he was young, Hayashi…went to a nearby air base to dissuade young boys from volunteering to be pilots.” (Ohnuki-Tierney, 167) Thus we have an example of an individual who volunteered to sacrifice his life for the institution he previously worked against. Hayashi even states that, “To be honest, I cannot say that the wish to die for the emperor is genuine, coming from my heart. However, it is decided for me that I die for the emperor.” (Ohnuki-Tierney, 170). Here Hayashi suggests that he is being forced to be a kamikaze pilot with the phrase, “it is decided for me”. However the mind of Hayashi Ichizo becomes increasingly difficult to understand when later in his diary before the final mission, he states, “This is an honorable death, fighting for the glory of the imperial nation.” (Ohnuki-Tierney, 175) Hayashi also states, “If my death is a glorious battlefield death, then, I will welcome my fighting…our ancestors wish was to die beside the emperor. Loyal individuals wished to do so.” (Ohnuki-Tierney, 172) It would appear Hayashi belongs in our second category of soldiers examined. However the key difference between Hayashi and Tokuro Nakamura and Sasaki Hachiro is that Hayashi explicitly states that he lacks a sense of duty or responsibility to sacrifice his life.

Was Hayashi forced to be a kamikaze pilot or did he genuinely volunteer to do so? This is the central question to understanding the rationale underlying Hayashi’s antithetical
statements. Unfortunately, Hayashi’s diary does not provide us with enough information to extract the progression of his thought. The information available informs us Hayashi is conscripted, and according to his statement on February 23rd, 1945 (the day after he receives the assignment to the kamikaze unit) he does not genuinely want to die for the emperor and the assignment was ‘decided’ for him. While Hayashi suggested he was forced into the cockpit Japanese military commanders at the time made clear it was volunteer-only detachment. The recruitment process for kamikaze pilots typically entailed gathering conscripted soldiers or students in a large hall, a speech about sacrifice and patriotism, and a method for either volunteering or not. In some cases, individuals would be blind folded to prevent peer pressure; however the noise clothes made when those volunteering raised their hand undermined this method. In any case, peer pressure was an important variable in the decision to volunteer. Despite peer pressure and the consequences of refusing to volunteer (shame, ostracism, and deployment to the front line) the opportunity to refuse was ostensibly present (Ohnuki-Tierney, 7).

Is it possible that Hayashi ideological shift was the result of military conditioning? Hayashi was drafted in November 10th 1943, and assigned to the special attack unit on February 22nd, 1945. As such, Hayashi would have already undergone Japan’s extensive and draconian boot camp. Therefore, it seems improbable Hayashi’s drastic shift would have occurred only after spending over two years in the Navy. Furthermore, Hayashi’s change of tone occurred sometime between February 23rd and March 19th (Ohnuki-Tierney, 170-175). This fact makes it appear even more farfetched that the Christian, anti-war individual (who used to dissuade
potential pilots from volunteering outside airbases) would suddenly become willing to die for the empire he once vociferously denounced.

The antithetical statements Hayashi makes in March only suggested that he had to come to believe his sacrifice was honorable and that it was a cultural tradition to make the sacrifice. He explicitly mentions he doesn’t want to die for the emperor in earlier statements, but the conflicting statements he later makes don’t necessarily or sufficiently establish his willingness to die. The most tenable explanation is that given the consequence of not volunteering (deployment to the front) Hayashi essentially had to decide between dying as a pilot, and most likely dying on the battlefield.

The explanation for the shift from not genuinely wanting to sacrifice him life to viewing it as an honor is found in Hayashi’s diary entry on March 19th, 1945: “I have a wish to make a difference in the world. I cannot deny that one element that is my wish that people recognize my existence.” (Ohnuki-Tierney, 171) Hayashi, as previously cited, continues on to state that if his death is glorious he will welcome it. The implication of this elucidation is that on some level Hayashi departed from his Christian, liberal ideology and embraced its antithesis, Japan’s culture of militarism.

In order to rationalize his sacrifice Hayashi decided that whether he volunteered or not his death was inevitable. Wishing for meaning to his life and a legacy Hayashi surrendered his anti-militaristic ideals to the romantic adulation of military sacrifice. Two separate excerpts from Hayashi’s diary evidence this explication for the rationale underlying Hayashi’s ideological acquiescence. First Hayashi’s statement, “If my death is a glorious battlefield death, then, I will welcome my fighting…our ancestors wish was to die beside the emperor. Loyal individuals
wished to do so”, illustrates how Hayashi’s ideological stance changed. This statement shows Hayashi wish for glory, but more importantly it establishes Hayashi’s identification with, and subscription to, Japan’s cultural glorification of honorable military sacrifice. To fulfill his wish of being remembered Hayashi needed not only to make the sacrifice, but also buy into Japan’s militaristic ethos that exalted individuals who manifested their honor and loyalty through the sacrifice of their life.

Second, shortly before his irrevocable mission Hayashi finally arrived at the conclusion, “This is an honorable death, fighting for the glory of the imperial nation.” (Ohnuki-Tierney, 175) Hayashi’s conclusion speaks volumes to the success of the Meiji leader’s curriculum. The curriculum, as evidenced throughout this thesis, entrenched the idea in young Japanese that sacrificing yourself for the emperor was not only a duty, but something to be glorified, deified, and worshipped. Hayashi could not have arrived at the conclusion he did without the compulsory education systems entrenchment of such values into Japanese culture. Section Two discusses an exemplary example of the curriculum that entrenched these ideals:

The 8th volume of the elementary level national language text, published in 1905, contains a story of a man being accepted into the army. The man, “vows to his parents to fight without clinging to his life”(Ohnuki-Tierney, 127), while his parents are envied by other families for their son’s heroism. The story ends with the line, “Japanese soldiers do not spare their lives and their loyalty is as firm as a rock.

The above excerpt shows how the curriculum aimed to both teach militaristic ideals to the pupils and reinforce the place of militarism in Japanese culture: the man’s parents are envied by other parents and their son’s heroism celebrated in the community. In conclusion, the answer to the question of whether or not Hayashi volunteered is technically, yes. Yet, Hayashi volunteered on the basis that not doing would still mean his inevitable death. No loophole existed for
Hayashi. He couldn’t change his major, since he already graduated, and avoid conscription. He had two choices: die as a glorified kamikaze pilot, or be a little known part of the army’s massive casualties.

The diaries of kamikaze pilots were chosen for analysis for a number of reasons. To answer the central question of the thesis it was necessary to measure the extent to which education effected the rationale of soldiers. Though entering a dangerous war the conscripted rank-and-file soldiers were not inevitably going to their death. Moreover, the masses of rank-and-file combatants were not volunteering for a suicide mission. Although some of these soldiers would commit gyokusai or suicide in loom of certain defeat this was done as a strategic last resort. Certainly, kamikaze missions were a last resort, however, the kamikaze were not given an opportunity to win battles in order to prevent resorting to the suicide missions. The suicidal acts committed by the rank-and-file do provide support for the argument that the inculcation of sacrificial militarist values was successful; however these soldiers’ diaries are few and far between in translation.

The exceptional aspect of the kamikaze diaries is that two important ideological factors were deleterious to the pilots’ sense of duty to die for the state. First, some of the pilots were anti-war and anti-imperial. Second, the pilots had benefitted from a very liberal university education in which ample opportunity existed for the pilots to realize Japan’s fascist, propagandistic, and manipulative domestic agenda. Rather, the study of the liberal philosophical curriculum could have certainly led to the realization that the Japanese people were victims of a draconian, despotic government. Indeed, many of the pilots expressed a liberal anti-war ideology; however none criticized the government’s despotic nature. Thus in spite of these
factors the pilots, even the Christian, expressed a sense of duty and responsibility to die for the emperor/state. We know that the kamikaze unit was a strictly volunteer based assignment, but social pressure weighed heavily on the decision. Yet, the assignment could be avoided by not volunteering or, prior to 1945, delayed through studying the natural sciences, education, engineering, or medicine. Further, the consequence of refusing the assignment would mean deployment to the front, but did not equate to certain death as being a kamikaze pilot did. The kamikaze aircraft was not designed to land, or return to base. This did happen in rare cases, but was uncommon. On the other hand, deployment on the front permitted the soldier to employ physical, mental, and martial talents to win battles and preserve the self.
Conclusion

The Iwakura Mission returned to Japan after almost two years abroad with valuable information about the infrastructures of Western states. The Meiji leaders were cognizant of European expansionism, the colonization and exploitation of inferior nations throughout the nineteenth century. Forced into signing unequal trade agreements by the West, the Meiji leaders knew without modernizing Japan’s military and economy exploitation would continue and colonization was possible. The Iwakura ambassadors shared their wealth of new knowledge, including repeated praise of Prussia. Shortly thereafter, Emperor Meiji launched a series of reforms.

The implementation of a compulsory education system was identified as one of the key components in the formula for modernization. The 1870’s and 1880’s were characterized by a series of liberal Western curriculums accompanied by the broader westernization of Japanese society, culture and infrastructure. Initially, the education was centered on liberal French and American curriculums. However, in 1873 protests erupted throughout Japan because the Western style reforms. The Japanese were upset at the cost and content of school as well as compulsory military conscription referred to as the ‘blood tax’. The Japanese were also angered by the
curriculum’s use of Western philosophy in place of traditional Japanese Shinto, Buddhist, and Confucian philosophy.

The central question of this research called for the identification of the mechanism that contrived a militaristic society and people. Within this context the most important part of Japanese history in 1873 was the outcry over compulsory military conscription. To understand such outrage we turn to Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598). Toward the end of the Sengoku period (1450-1600), characterized by two centuries of perpetual domestic warfare, powerful daimyo Toyotomi Hideyoshi controlled Japan. Hideyoshi issued a decree that prohibited all peasants (excluding the samurai) from owning weapons, and conducted a sword hunt to disarm the population (1588). After Hideyoshi’s death for the next 250 years the Tokugawa shogunate would rule over a peaceful Japan, until the Meiji Restoration (1868). Hence, the majority of the Japanese population lived tranquil lives free from the relentless warfare characteristic of the Sengoku period. Accordingly, in 1873 the outcry over compulsory conscription is understandable. Most importantly, this demonstrates that in the 1870’s the Japanese people were not militaristic, nationalistic or felt responsible to die for the state. Moreover, the protests against the ‘blood tax’ evidence the absence of a militarist culture.

Such is the context of the central research question: how did the Meiji government transform its peaceful people into the militaristic society that carried out suicide missions?

Following the traditional backlash to westernization the Meiji leaders commenced a contentious ideological debate on the goals for Japan and how the education system would help

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achieve these goals. The result of the discourse was the goal of entrenching an authoritarian government that could make Japan a powerful modern state. As noted in Chapter One, the Meiji leaders’ idealized the Prussian state, and sought to create a powerful military state along the Prussian model. Hence, the Meiji leaders’ wanted a curriculum that would strengthen Japan’s imperial cause. Under the leadership of Education Minister Mori Arinori the education system was modeled after the Prussian system and aimed to teach Japanese children to be subservient, loyal, nationalistic, and willing to serve the state.

Chapter One firmly establishes the Meiji leaders’ authoritarian agenda and their request of a curriculum conducive with the military aims of the authoritarian state. In Chapter Two, substantial evidence highlights the ultra-militaristic curriculum and the forceful effort if the school system to instill in the Japanese students a sense of duty and responsibility to the state. Notably, the curriculum explicitly teaches students they should willingly die for the emperor, doing so is honorable, and their sacrifice will be glorified and worshipped. Additionally, Chapter Two discusses the civilian socialization system that reinforced the militarist values inculcated by the curriculum. The civilian socialization system underpinned the curriculums’ militarism by ensuring nationalist and militarist values were widely endorsed outside the classroom.

Chapter Three presents ample evidence that despite the presence of antithetical influences the kamikaze pilots fostered an extremely persuasive sense of duty to the state. The soldiers, as cited, were in their early twenties when they perished. As such, we can confidently deduce the pilots went to primary and secondary school during the 1930s. Therefore it is certain the soldiers were exposed to the nationalistic and militaristic curriculum examined in Chapter Two. In the case of Sasaki Hachiro we know that his educational experience directly influenced
his decision to die for the state. Nakao Takenori epitomizes the product of the education system. Like Nakao Takenori, Hirai Kiyoshi typifies the Mori Arinori and Yamagata Aritomo’s ideal subject: Kiyoshi both knew how to and could have avoided the assignment, but didn’t. The examples of Sasaki Haciro and Nakamura Tokuro demonstrate that in spite of a liberal education and their liberal anti war sentiment both soldiers set aside these ideologies for their duty to the state. Itabashi Yasuo also serves an important role in the research sample. Itabashi did not receive a university education and displays an ultra-militaristic and ultra-nationalistic persona. It cannot be definitely asserted that in the absence of a university education all soldiers held similar sentiments to Itabashi; nonetheless Itabashi demonstrates a fanatical type of militarism reminiscent of the samurai. Finally, the perplexing example of Hayashi Ichizo illustrates the raw power of Japan’s militarist society. Hayashi was a political dove, a Christian, and a university-educated pilot. Nevertheless, facing imminent death, Hayashi conceded his values to militarism. The Christian pilot could have died clinging to his peaceful values, but instead embraced the Japanese celebration and glorification of military sacrifice.

The kamikaze pilots’ diaries show the success of the education system. Certainly, the education system failed to convince the kamikaze pilots the emperor was a god. Moreover, many of the pilots were anti-war illustrating the curriculums shortcoming at stymieing the liberalizing effect of university educations. Nonetheless, analysis of nearly every soldier’s diary evidences the soldiers felt a strong sense of duty for the state. Without the ultra-nationalistic and ultra-militaristic compulsory education system this sense of duty would have been difficult to facilitate. The compulsory education system served its purpose to transform a society that once protested against conscription into a society that glorified service. The curriculum would be used
from 1890 until 1945. The effect of roughly fifty years of a militaristic and patriotic is
discernable from the kamikaze pilots’ decision to die for Japan.

Works Cited


