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Mark Driscoll

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MARK DRISCOLL

Kobayashi Yoshinori Is Dead: Imperial War / Sick Liberal Peace / Neoliberal Class War

BULLET #1: THE FALL OF ABE SHINZŌ

A young "freeter" named Akamatsu Tomohiro shocked liberal pundits in Japan with his short piece published in the *Asahi Shinbun*'s journal of ideas *Ronza* in January 2007. Called "*Kibō wa sensō*" (My only hope is war), Akamatsu's challenge to informed readers warned that if Japanese youth continue to be robbed of an economic future, they just might turn to the military out of desperation. He darkly suggested that the disappearance of anything resembling equality in neoliberalized Japanese society could very easily be replaced by the leveling effect of a militarized and mobilized Japan. Akamatsu's challenge was that war stands a better chance of making Japanese society more equitable than any other social force and, for that reason, is more attractive for Japanese young men than out-of-date promises pitched by an increasingly irrelevant trade-unionism.

After ten years of startling commercial success that he has leveraged into a central place among political commentators in the Japanese media (and the starring role among contemporary ultranationalists), the manga artist Kobayashi Yoshinori doubtless read Akamatsu's article with glee. "My only hope

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is war" crystallized the central ideologemes of Kobayashi's work since his *Sensōron* (A theory of war) was published in 1998 by Gentōsha: an appeal to return to the collectivism of a militarist 1930s Japan, a refusal of what Kobayashi denigrated as the consumerist individualism imposed on Japan by the United States during the Occupation of Japan, and a recommendation to uprooted youth that they transcend that U.S.-style alienation by participating in a remasculinized Japanese nationalism. Akamatsu provides the counter to the well-known scene at the beginning of *Sensōron,* when the author gets into a conversation with a young taxi driver who tells Kobayashi that he wants to join Japan's Self-Defense Forces to fulfill a dream of becoming a pilot. Kobayashi is immediately drawn to this seemingly nationalist sentiment until the driver stuns Kobayashi by confessing that his ability to fly a plane will allow him to jet out of Japan and save himself the next time the Japanese nation goes to war.

The overturning of the cab driver's 1998 sentiment in Akamatsu's 2007 piece had its political correlative in the victory of the ultranationalist wing of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) when Abe Shinzō became Japan's prime minister in August 2006. When Koizumi Jun'ichiro stepped down after a rare five-year-long stint as prime minister, his designated successors hailed from the most assertively conservative wing of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, the Nihon Kaigi (Japan Conference). Abe was the head of this group for several years in the 1990s; the former rightist foreign minister Asō Tarō and the powerful Tokyo governor Ishihara Shintaro are also major players in the Conference. Although not a member, Kobayashi has been very close to several of group's members for several years.

The sudden hegemony of the Japan Conference should be configured as the victory of a group of politicians, academics, and, yes, cartoonists, who since the mid-1990s have been calling for a rollback against what they call the dominant "masochistic view of history" perpetrated by liberals in Japan. These liberal masochists are said to derive pleasure in obsessively punishing Japan and themselves as Japanese by reiterating specious, foreign-born narratives about the purported carnage inflicted on Asians during the period spanning Japan's victory over China in 1895 until the collapse of Japan's Empire in 1945. In concert with other elements of the far right, the Japan Conference is committed to whitewashing the already whited-out historical record of this period of Japanese Empire by substituting the masochistic and "politically correct" account with what we might think of as a wholesome and "patriotically correct" one. Therefore "rape" as a designation for something that Japanese inflicted on Chinese in Nanjing in December 1937 or for the coerced sex that happened ten or twenty times a day to individual "comfort

women" at the hands of Japanese soldiers in World War II is scrupulously denied. This denial is salient in all of Kobayashi's works but is especially prominent in *Sensōron* and the 2001 *Taiwanron* (On Taiwan).

But much more than functioning as a negative critique, his main texts work primarily as affirmative mnemological utopias. While abjecting the fashion-victimed and self-absorbed Japanese youth, Kobayashi counterposes them to the projected valor and self-sacrifice of male Japanese soldiers of the 1930s and '40s. The opening scene of *Sensōron* lambasts Japan's liberal capitalist "sick peace"[1] because Kobayashi holds it accountable for producing both masses of superficial youth and the correlative loss of Japanese national pride. While radically severed from Japan's history and its organic *kyōdōtai,* consumerist individualist Japanese "have been living hassle-free in a wealthy society."[2] This lament is generated through the projected memory of all wartime Japanese living with full confidence and unthinking faith in the virtue of their national community. Repeating one of his interventions into contemporary intellectual debate, Kobayashi opines that it was impossible to be a relativist or cynical nihilist in 1930s Japan. Wartime Japanese normatively experienced a full suturing with their birthplace, family, and national community. The desire to return to this seamless suturing of Japanese fascism is what links the disparate positions of contemporary ultranationalism, a symptom particularly salient in the Japan Conference. Informed North American readers have doubtless heard of the U.S. think tank called the Project for a New American Century, whose members scripted the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq in the 1990s. As the Japan Conference might be rendered as the "Project for a New Imperial Japanese Half-Century," I want to discuss some of the internal workings of this group, as it will flesh out some of Kobayashi's political positions.

The Japan Conference formed officially in 1997 as an amalgam of the Conference to Defend Japan (whose members include veterans of Japan's Imperial Army and Navy) and the Society to Defend Japan, a group made up of Shintō and new religious sects.[3] Its internal think-tank is the Japan Policy Institute. However, there are several important financial and political supporters who complicate this predictable profile of ultranationalist groups. One of these groups is more familiar to Anglophone readers as the Unification Church led by Reverend Moon Sun-myung. Known by their Japanese name of Tōitsu Kyōkai, they can be seen in the streets of Tokyo preaching their "chastity preservation movement" and hawking Moon's Japanese-language newspaper *Sekai Nippō.*[4]

Before his disgraceful resignation in August 2007, Abe's platform called for swift revision of the Japanese constitution in particular and a trashing

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of the post–World War II order in general—what he called in Japanese *sengo rejiimu kara no dakkyaku,* or "breaking away from the old regime." He promised to overturn not only the famous Article 9, pledging Japan to pacifism, but also parts of Article 24 (which guarantees equal rights between married men and women) and Article 25, committing the state to provide welfare to all its citizens. Abe and his cabinet have been criticized for reactionary statements on gender and sexuality (his friend and education minister Ibuki declared in February 2007 that women are fundamentally "baby-making machines"), but these views are ideological common sense inside the Japan Conference. Abe also draws on the patriarchal thought of his grandfather, the suspected war criminal Kishi Nobusuke who was the number two man in Japan's fascist colony of Manchukuo in the 1930s before going on to become vice-minister of commerce in his close friend Tōjō Hideki's war cabinet before being resurrected as two-term prime minister of Japan after World War II.

ABE'S FALL FROM 82 PERCENT APPROVAL AT THE BEGINNING OF HIS TERM TO UNDER 30 PERCENT AT THE END ALLEGORIZES A FALL OF SORTS FOR THE ULTRANATIONALIST POSITIONS ESPOUSED BY ABE, KOBAYASHI, AND THE JAPAN CONFERENCE.

According to the leftist journalist Tahara Maki, beginning around 1998 Japan Conference followers were advised by the Policy Institute and the Unification Church to be on the lookout for Japan-based survivors of the "1968 World Revolution." As posted at that time on their Web site, the Policy Institute identified the most dangerous elements of the 1968 Revolution as feminists and queers calling for changes in the ways in which sex education is taught in Japan's schools. The Japan Conference has largely agreed with Moon's insistence that Japan in general, and Tokyo in particular, is where the free love and gender radicalism of the countercultural "'68 Revolution" has penetrated the furthest. Japan is now seen, in the words of an executive director of the Japan Conference, as the main battleground where feminists and free-lovers are trying to "disintegrate Japanese society," through inciting "violent revolution" by other means.[5] This combination of cultish rhetoric, Japanese fascist ideology, and more recognizable ultranationalism preached by the likes of Jean-Marie le Pen in France and Pat Buchanan in the United States represents the political habitus of Abe and Kobayashi.

It is crucial that while analyzing the shifting hegemony in contemporary Japan we recognize the importance of Prime Minister Abe's resignation in September 2007, after only one year in power. As the assumption of Abe the year before provided Kobayashi with unprecedented access to the top echelons

of political power in Japan, Abe's defeat should be recognized as a lesser defeat for Kobayashi. Although not directly linked to Kobayashi's writings, Abe's fall from 82 percent approval at the beginning of his term to under 30 percent at the end allegorizes a fall of sorts for the ultranationalist positions espoused by Abe, Kobayashi, and the Japan Conference. This was the first check to the decade-long meteoric rise of Kobayashi, what I'm calling "bullet #1."

BULLET #2: OKINAWA

Kobayashi's four-hundred-page, 2005 *Okinawaron* (On Okinawa) claims on its front cover to form a kind of triptych with his 1998 *Sensōron* and the 2001 *Taiwanron*. The most salient aspect of Kobayashi's reading of Okinawan history is what I have called his unbridled "reverse postcolonial" take, first evidenced in his *Taiwanron*.[6] What I mean by this is that, rather than honestly interrogating the colonial past of an imperial power—whether it be British, French, Japanese, or U.S.—reverse postcolonialism eliminates almost all aspects of historical investigation in the name of affirming the heroism and honor of colonial-imperial endeavors. Similar to the reactionary revisions of the Scottish historian of British imperialism Niall Ferguson, Kobayashi manages to whitewash almost all of the central aspects of Japanese colonialism, leaving him only to congratulate Japan on the stunning modernizing successes achieved by valorous Japanese colonizers in Asia. In paradigmatic reverse postcolonial fashion, Kobayashi writes as if nothing about the ravages of colonial war and imperial excess are known, throwing himself into a schizoid temporality anachronistically shared by Japanese imperial elites circa 1935.

This plays itself out in *Okinawaron* as a ventriloquizing of the positions taken by Yanagita Kunio and other imperial *minzokugakusha* (nativist scholars) in the 1920s and '30s: Okinawa embodies the Japanese past and visiting it has the potential to remind Japanese and rewind them to a time before their country became blindly obsessed with Euroamerican modernization. Kobayashi claims that "Okinawa is Japan purified," the correlative of which is "the modernized homeland (*kindaikasareta hondo*) is the polluted (*fujun*) Japan."[7] Despite this critique of Japan's adoption of the central forms of Euroamerican modernization, Kobayashi nevertheless salutes the successful "modernization" project carried out by Japanese in underdeveloped Okinawa. This is the most extreme of Kobayashi's antinomies, with others occurring every ten pages or so.

The second appears in his insistence that Okinawa and Japan enjoyed a "latent unity" throughout the pre- and early modern periods, something that

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naturally led to a complete "assimilation" after the Meiji restoration. This underlying unity of Okinawa and Japan contradicts almost all the scholarship on Okinawan cultural practice and language, which locates a wealth of indigenous practices that were gradually overlayed by Chinese, then Japanese, imperial interests. Furthermore, Japanese economic historians like Hamashita Takeshi have been arguing for two decades now that Okinawa enjoyed an independent and privileged place in the China-dominated early modern world economy.[8] As a maritime trading power from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century, Japanese military interests based in Kyūshū gradually overwhelmed the peaceful trading kingdom, forcibly turning it into a part of Japan in the 1870s. This history of the violent deterritorializing of Okinawa by Japanese warrior-military concerns beginning in the mid-1600s is completely elided in Kobayashi's account. In its place is the ahistorical projection of an ethno-racial condensing of Okinawa into Japan.

Kobayashi's racialization of specific ethnicities contravenes the standard ethnological and geopolitical scholarship on Okinawa. But it is absolutely essential for him to advance his two central points in this text. The first is that the invasion of Okinawa by Kyūshū militarists was undertaken primarily to prevent the European powers doing to Okinawa what they did to China in the first Opium War of 1839–1842. This first defense of Okinawa necessitated a second, and here *Okinawaron* features the standard revisionist argument of Kobayashi's in particular and Japanese ultranationalists in general: in its self-sacrificing desire to rid Asia of Euroamerican colonizers, it was compelled to fight to the last man in defending Okinawa against the U.S. Army's "typhoon of steel." The defense of Okinawa featured Okinawans and Japanese soldiers fighting side-by-side with a shared vision. Here, Okinawa was permanently consolidated as the homeland's "*seimeisen*" (lifeline), the true southern border of Japan.

In the hands of Kobayashi, this heroic endeavor to protect Japan's southern border against the North American onslaught featured the willing participation of Okinawans—what amounted to a suicide mission in the face of the high-tech military machine of the United States. Kobayashi does not stop to interrogate the ultranationalist assumption that Okinawans were sincere in their willingness to die for imperial Japan; as he argued four years earlier in the case of Taiwan, he assumes that this is the natural response from an Okinawan people barely distinguishable from mainland Japanese who were saved from savage Europeans in the 1840s by Southern Japanese militarists from Kyūshū and who were thankful for the selfless modernizing efforts on the part of homeland Japanese beginning in the mid-1870s.

Kobayashi knows he cannot completely ignore the well-documented atrocities inflicted on Okinawan civilians by the Japanese military before and during the Battle for Okinawa. Prefacing his explanation with the reminder that the United States was the "only cause of tragedy on the Japanese mainland," he writes, "it was most unfortunate that there were isolated cases of Japanese soldiers victimizing (*kagaisha*) Okinawans."[9] While leaving out any details related to actual incidents, Kobayashi then proceeds to rationalize these unspecified Japanese atrocities. First, they need to be seen as only having occurred under the most extreme conditions (*kyokugen jōtai*) of the U.S.-inflicted "typhoon of steel." Second, he claims that atrocities were committed only *after* military discipline had broken down and soldiers were forced to flee alone or with one or two others. Kobayashi provides us with a drawing of just such a situation: three Japanese soldiers are pointing guns at five or six Okinawan civilians hiding in a cave. Approximately fifty meters from the entrance to the cave is a huge U.S. gunner tank patrolling ominously. The strongest worded critique of these actions states: "this was a serious act of betrayal against Japanese national citizens."[10]

Every year, women activists are discovering more "comfort stations" constructed by the Japanese military in Okinawa, where local women were kidnapped and forced to work as sex slaves for Japanese soldiers.[11] Naturally, Kobayashi says nothing about this and other atrocities. Even in this brief mention of isolated acts committed against Okinawan civilians by stray Japanese soldiers acting under extreme duress, the drawn image seems to justify the soldiers' actions. Crying and screaming women or children would jeopardize the location of the group in the cave, leading to a certain slaughter of everyone by the U.S. tank lurking just outside. Although the text explicitly condemns isolated actions against Okinawan civilians, it also firmly rationalizes the atrocities. But this pales in comparison to the one image we are provided with of an apparent war crime committed by a Japanese soldier: the potential act (I say potential because we are never shown a Japanese soldier actually committing a war crime; the most we get is a drawing of a solider thrusting a gun in the face of an Okinawan woman reasonably threatening to shoot her if she cannot keep silent) is justified in that it will keep the larger group alive and hidden from the U.S. tank.

These minor and ultimately excusable actions on the part of individual Japanese soldiers are contrasted against the group behavior of American soldiers. In two places in the text, after the closure of what he calls the "indiscriminate murder unleashed by the typhoon of steel,"[12] he claims that white and black U.S. soldiers went on nightly rape hunts, committing commonplace

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acts of sexual violence against Japanese women immediately following the end of the war. After Japan's surrender and during the early period of occupation, Kobayashi further claims that there were *daily* reports of sexual violence against Okinawan women committed by U.S. soldiers.[13]

There is no doubt that rape was a widespread phenomenon at the end of the war and continuing right up to the present, when approximately 22,000 U.S. troops remain stationed in Okinawa. However, the function of this in Kobayashi's text is to confirm the propaganda disseminated by the Japanese military during the last years of World War II to civilian women: it is far better to suicide than to face certain rape by U.S. barbarians. Although Kobayashi says nothing about the controversy raging about the Japanese military ordering civilians to suicide through *gyokusai*—either by forcing them off cliffs or ordering civilians to blow themselves up with grenades issued by soldiers—his clear message here is that it was better to have committed suicide honorably than to face nonstop rape by the black soldiers depicted raciologically as baboon-like by Kobayashi.[14] Although Kobayashi is nowhere explicit about this, the text clearly allows readers to blame both animalistic U.S. soldiers and Okinawan women, who should have taken the opportunity to kill themselves heroically—as they were ordered to do by the Japanese Army in Okinawa—rather than expose themselves to the rape hunts conducted by the savage United States.

For Kobayashi, this cowardly refusal on the part of many Okinawans to commit ritual suicide is one element in the assemblage established just after World War II that coded them as childish and immature. Immediately after the occupation of Okinawa, the United States set up huge military camps to house refugees. Many Okinawans came to rely exclusively on handouts from the U.S. Army, which led to Okinawans becoming known as the "give me" tribe. Kobayashi sees this legacy continuing in Okinawa today, where the once proud Japanized Okinawans have regressed into childlike cowards. While continuing to rely on the U.S. bases for economic support, they are seen as hypocritically obsessed with peaceful existence, summed up in what Kobayashi calls the juvenile Okinawan slogan *nuchidōtama*—"the preciousness of life."[15] Koyabashi's consistent critique of the peace and antibase movements characteristic of post–World War II Okinawan civil society is that these are naïvely dangerous as long as Okinawa continues to rely on the U.S. military for its security and economic sustainability. This immature dependence on the Unite States has, for Kobayashi, corroded Okinawan society from the top of Okinawan financial elites and rich landlords (the ones profiting from renting the land the bases lie on) all the way down to the infantile and ridiculous peace and antibase activists.[16]

The solution to this hollow Okinawan adolescence is provided in typical Kobayashi fashion through the negative example of the leftist, antiwar Japanese schoolteacher. Kobayashi eavesdrops on a Hokkaido high school teacher leading his students around Okinawa. According to Kobayashi, the teacher is indoctrinating the students with the false leftist rhetoric that passes for common sense about Okinawa among educated mainland Japanese: Okinawans love peace and tranquil "life"; Okinawa was an independent kingdom before its gradual military takeover by Japanese from Kyūshū; and the Japanese Army treated the Okinawans much worse in 1944 and 1945 than the U.S. military has since the beginning of the Okinawan campaign. The last point is what draws the wrath of Kobayashi. Anxious to erase the history of forced suicides of Okinawans by Japanese soldiers and repress the documented evidence of a vast network of comfort stations, Kobayashi's encyclopedic effort to identify the crimes committed against Okinawan women by U.S. soldiers attempts to demonstrate the absurdity of the Hokkaido leftist. Rather than mainland Japanese contributing to the extended childhood of Okinawans, they should be emphasizing the shared ethno-racial identity and homogeneous culture. The crucial first step in this Japanese nationalist endeavor is for Okinawans and mainland Japanese to delink from the U.S.-Japan security structure. Rather than emphasizing an empty "life" under continuing U.S. military occupation in Okinawa, and a life sustained by superficial consumerism in the Japanese cities, "Japanese" citizens should realize that "life is a means, not an end."[17]Kobayashi is clear that the end is always a nonnegotiable national identity, the only thing worth sacrificing one's life for.

OKINAWA RESPONDS TO JAPANESE ULTRANATIONALISTS

The publication of Kobayashi's *Okinawaron* was not as controversial as his previous celebration of Japan's colonial project in Taiwan. However, it did elicit extensive criticism in Okinawa. It is hard to tell what kind of impact Kobayashi's text had in the largest single demonstration against mainland Japanese nationalism on Okinawa in late September 2007. However, there is no doubting the fact that Kobayashi's bestselling *Okinawaron* is the most influential whitewashing of Japanese military atrocities committed against Okinawan citizens in World War II. As I pointed out above, in the huge four-hundred-page manga there is less than one page dedicated to the question of Japanese war crimes.

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THERE IS NO DOUBTING THE FACT THAT KOBAYASHI'S BESTSELLING *OKINAWARON* IS THE MOST INFLUENTIAL WHITEWASHING OF JAPANESE MILITARY ATROCITIES COMMITTED AGAINST OKINAWAN CITIZENS IN WORLD WAR II.

Emboldened by Abe Shinzō's rise to power, in March 2007 Abe's Education Ministry instructed publishers of high school history textbooks to take out the words "*Nihongun*" (Japanese military) in any context connected to the *gyokusai* Okinawan suicides, "out of concern that it might lead to misunderstandings about conditions during the Battle of Okinawa."[18] What Abe's Education Ministry wanted to do was to eliminate any suggestion that the mass suicides were ordered and carried out by Japanese soldiers. With this censoring of military involvement, young Japanese readers would be left with the idea that the Okinawans had willingly committed suicide rather than offer themselves to the slimy paws of African Americans and other sex machines in the U.S. Armed Forces. It is easy to imagine Kobayashi's sense of satisfaction when Education Ministry textbook reviewers ordered history textbook publishers to censor all references to atrocities committed by Japanese soldiers in Okinawa. As one of the Education Ministry's stated justifications for censoring is respecting "public opinion," *Okinawaron* arguably did more to contribute to the construction of public opinion about Okinawa than any one text published after World War II.

To give readers some idea of what Abe's Ministry was asking for, the first paragraph in the chapter on the war in Okinawa in Sanseidō's current textbook reads: "The greatest tragedy of the Battle of Okinawa was that so many people were forced by the Japanese military to commit group suicide."[19] When the Sanseidō editors were instructed by the Education Ministry to excise "Japanese military" from this accurate description, the effect was to imply that Okinawan civilians committed suicide willfully—without the grenades, threats, and orders from the Japanese military, which we know was actually the case.

Immediately after the Education Ministry ordered the censoring, a resolution was passed in all forty-one of Okinawa's city, town, and village councils condemning Tokyo. When it became clear that Abe's Ministry was not going to give any ground on the Okinawan denunciations—going so far as to call all the eyewitness testimony of Japanese soldiers' forcing Okinawans to suicide "fabrications," impossible to document—a huge demonstration was planned, which took place at the Ginowan Seashore Park. Attended by 110,000 people, the "Okinawa Citizens' Protest Demanding Cancellation of Textbook Revisions" adopted a resolution unanimously approved by the protesters:

> Textbooks play a vital role in conveying truth to the children responsible for our future. Therefore, the indisputable fact that so-called group suicides during the Battle of Okinawa would not have occurred without the involvement of the Japanese military must be communicated to them. It is our solemn duty to teach the lessons learned from the truth about the battle, to hope for peace, and to seek ways of avoiding another tragic war.

This collective "No!" addressed to Japanese ultranationalist hegemony by the Okinawan people should be seen as the second major attack on Kobayashi, what I am calling bullet #2.

BULLET #3: MARXIST-LOLITA FASHION

This last bullet will be the fatal one for Kobayashi Yoshinori. The rise of Kobayashi-inspired ultranationalism has taken place under the sign of widespread neoliberal restructuring, which intensified when Koizumi Jun'ichiro became Prime Minister in 2001. One of the most dramatic effects of this has been the hollowing out of the labor market for young Japanese and the exacerbation of social disparity. Gini coefficients that measure material disparity widened significantly from 1990 to 2005. For example, as of 2004 the top 20 percent of Japanese society appropriates 51 percent of national income, while the bottom 20 percent gets 0.3 percent and only 6 percent going to the second lowest 20 percent.[20] United Nations poverty indexes are revealing as well when we apply them to Japan. Poverty, defined by the UN as household earning half or less of the national average, has expanded from 13 percent in 1994 to 17 percent in 2004, the second highest among developed countries after the United States.[21]

Often referred to as the *freeter phenomenon,* since Koizumi the number of full-time permanent workers is dropping precipitously as the number of part-time or full-time temporary workers expands dramatically. What is worse is the pay disparity between these reserve armies of contingent workers and the shrinking pool of permanent full-time workers. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) figures for the ratio between permanent and nonpermanent wages is 100 to 48 in Japan, 100 to 92 in Sweden, 88 in Germany, and 63 in the United States. Koizumi pushed through a bill expanding the use of dispatch, nonpermanent (*haken*) workers in manufacturing in 2004 against huge opposition. Other changes in the labor market have occurred with less fanfare and debate.[22]

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It is important that we pause here to reflect on the two fundamental axioms in nationalistic, neoliberal discourse in Japan. The first is that social class *not* be factored into any analytic of social subjectivity. For Kobayashi and his allies like Nishio Kanji, identity is a priori nationality. Although Kobayashi reluctantly talks about gender, his thoughts on ethnicity and race are limited to the racialization of the different ethnicities in the archipelago (Yamato, Ainu, Okinawan, etc.) as unproblematically Japanese. This remainders nation as the sole determinant of socio-political identity.

The second axiom is that the rampant consumerism and superficiality that absorbs the thought and affect of young urban Japanese make them by definition incapable of critical thought. There is much more that could be said about this, but in Kobayashi's three major works he never assumes that anyone under thirty-five or so is worth arguing with. For the most part, his attacks are directed at the Japanese political center and left. However, unnoticed by Kobayashi and the ultranationalists, several leftist *and* fashion-conscious youth voices have emerged as the main critics of neoliberal nationalism since Koizumi's rise to power in 2001.

The most visible in terms of book sales and appearances in the mass media is the singer, writer and Gothic-Lolita Amamiya Karin. In several well-selling books and in appearances on television (to say nothing of her ubiquitous presence at labor and left demonstrations), more than any other presence on the left in contemporary Japan, Amamiya has thoroughly repudiated Kobayashi's absurd conflation of pop culture sensibility with intellectual bankruptcy. After (barely) graduating from high school, Amamiya drifted into far-right circles and nationalistic punk scenes. She gained instant fame in subculture circles when her rightist band The Revolutionary Truth was the subject of an acclaimed 1999 documentary film done by Tsuchiya Yutaka called *Atarashii kamisama* (The new gods).

Never one to shy away from the media spotlight, Amamiya was a fan of Kobayashi until the beginning of her political awakening around 2003, a rapid reverse *tenkō* from right to left that raised the eyebrows of suspicious pundits. Whether her shift was driven by sheer careerism or motivated by a sincere change in political consciousness, she now enthusiastically sponsors events at clubs and citizens halls dealing with issues of youth poverty and neoliberalism. Moreover, in 2006 she started her own advocacy group against poverty known as the Anti-Poverty Network. With the far-right following Kobayashi, Ishihara Shintarō, and the Japan Conference in continuing to push for the glorification of imperial war, Amamiya and the freeter left have started talking about another kind of war—class war. Beginning with her latest book,

IN SEVERAL WELL-SELLING BOOKS AND IN APPEARANCES ON TELEVISION, MORE THAN ANY OTHER PRESENCE ON THE LEFT IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN, AMAMIYA HAS THOROUGHLY REPUDIATED KOBAYASHI'S ABSURD CONFLATION OF POP CULTURE SENSIBILITY WITH INTELLECTUAL BANKRUPTCY.

the April 2007 *Ikisasero! Nanminkasuru wakamonotachi* (Live on! Refugeed youth), which had sold sixty thousand copies as of New Year 2008, Amamiya has turned recently to the thematization and advocacy of class war.

At the annual leftist gathering held in Tokyo around December 1, Amamiya led a panel on the theme of death. With two activists from freeter unions, she twice wondered what would happen to Japanese political hegemony if young leftists were able to shift the Japanese obsession with death from that of dying in imperial war to a responsibility to incite class war.[23] Only with this shift from nationalistic war to class war, Amamiya sloganed, could neoliberalism be overthrown. A mere seven months prior to this November 30, 2007, event, she was the main attraction at the first "precariat" May Day rally in Tokyo, which drew five hundred people. The English-language poster for the event called "Mondo Mayday for the Precariat 007" stated that the rally would call for

- Value everyone's right to life!
- End wage slavery! We demand decent wages for decent lives!
- We won't let society shut us out!
- War is murder. End all wars NOW![24]

Absolutely opposed to Kobayashi Yoshinori's insistence that "life is just a means, not an end," here Amamiya and the hip Tokyo leftists were reversing Kobayashi's ultranationalist implication that life is just a means to be offered up in deathly sacrifice to the nation. By December 2007, Amamiya not only wanted to prevent further imperial wars conducted for the pleasure and profit of the Japanese bourgeoisie, but she was affirmatively advocating *class* war as the means toward the end of a life with dignity. The final and fatal bullet is fired fittingly by Amamiya, the former Kobayashi fan.

Notes

1. Kobayashi Yoshinori, *Sensōron* (A theory of war) (Tokyo: Gentōsha, 1998), 9.
2. Ibid., 355.
3. This information was from the Nihon Kaigi's Web site, www.nihonkaigi.org.jp.

(accessed March 11 2007). See also Muto Ichiyo's August 2006 essay called "Restore the Constitution, Glory to Empire" at www.ppjaponesia.org/modules/tinycontent/index (accessed February 9, 2008).

4. I want to thank an anonymous reader of this essay for pointing out that Kobayashi has been publicly critical of the Unification Church. However, this seems to me to be like Freud's narcissism of minor differences; Kobayashi and the Unification Church are indistinguishable in their shared opposition to the empty consumer lifestyles of contemporary Japanese; their shared disgust with the waning of paternal authority; and the way they mirror each other in denouncing Japanese women as self-centered, narcissistic, and unwilling to stay in the patriarchal home raising children.

5. Tahara Maki, "Japanese Neo-Cons Infest Gender Discourse," *Japonesia,* no. 2 (December 2006): 61.

6. See my conclusion to *Kannani and Document of Flames: Two Japanese Colonial Novels* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005).

7. Kobayashi Yoshinori, *Okinawaron* (On Okinawa) (Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 2005).

8. Hamashita Takeshi, *Okinawa nyūmon: Ajia o tsunagu kaiiki kōsō* (Introduction to Okinawa: A Framework of the maritime connections with Asia) (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2000).

9. Kobayashi, *Okinawaron,* 361.

10. Ibid.

11. According to the most authoritative source on the numbers of stations, the Women's Active Museum on War and Peace at the Waseda Hōshien of Waseda University in Tokyo documents close to one hundred stations in Okinawa alone on their huge wall map of the East Asia region pinpointing exactly where comfort stations operated. See www.wam-peace.org.

12. Kobayashi, *Okinawaron,* 243.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., 245.

15. Ibid., 107.

16. Ibid., 232.

17. Ibid., 234.

18. I'm quoting from Steve Rabson's translation of Kamata Satoshi's "Shattering Jewels: 110,000 Okinawans Protest Japanese State Censorship of Compulsory Group Suicides" posted on *Japan Focus*'s Web site on January 8, 2008, at www. japanfocus.org/articles.

19. Ibid.

20. See Takenobu Mieko, "Japan's Deteriorating Labor Market—Workers Are Degraded as Dispensables," *Japonesia,* no. 2 (September 2005).

21. See Randall S. Jones, "Income Inequality, Poverty, and Social Spending in Japan" OECD Working Paper number 556, www.olis.oecd.org. (accessed February 8, 2008).

22. On the ways in which political hegemony has attempted to manage these contradictions, see my "Debt and Denunciation in Post-Bubble Japan," in *Cultural Critique* 65 (Winter 2007): 164–87.

23. I was present at this event, which took place in Harajuku, Tokyo.

24. This is from the Tokyo Indymedia Web site, http://japan.indymedia.org/newswire (accessed February 10, 2008).