

Contents

Acknowledgments	vii
1. Introduction	1
The Dark Valley	3
Research on Wartime Japanese Cinema	6
Culture and Society.....	19
The Culture of Nationalism	26
Aims and Approaches.....	32
Notes on Style.....	35
2. Cinema, State, and Audiences, 1900–1937	37
The Emergence of Film Business	37
Urban Popular Entertainment	50
Economic Competition	68
3. Film Policy for the Nation, 1931–1939	77
Redefining Film as a National Issue	77
Novel Policies and Administrative Measure	85
The Film Law	89
Impacts on Motion Picture Business	105
4. Towards a New Structure, 1940–1942	122
Cinema and the Protraction of War	122
Control Measures.....	142
New Structure Thought	146
Reorganization of Film Business.....	154
5. Cinema and the Decisive War, 1942–1945	167
Commemorating Early Victories	167
Preparing for Decisive War	177
Raising Spirits at the Home Front	187

6. Governmental Film Promotion, 1939–1945	190
The Ministry of Education and Film Recommendation	191
The Cabinet Information Bureau and Films for the Nation	200
7. Awarded Feature Films and the Culture of Nationalism	212
State Awarded Projects	213
Promoted Cultural Resources	230
The Family State	231
Sincerity and Sacrifice	243
National Traditions	248
War and Enemy	251
8. The Dark Valley Revisited: Conclusions	261
State Awarded Feature Films	270
Films, Sources, and Literature	384
Notes on Sources	384
Films	390
Unpublished Sources	392
Published Sources	394
Literature	416
Sources of Figures	440
Index	443

Acknowledgments

The support of many individuals has made this book possible. First, I would like to thank Klaus Kracht and Katsumi Tateno-Kracht, who laid the foundation for the study of Japanese film in Berlin, and who provided helpful discussions since the beginning of this project, more than a decade ago.

For encouragement, advice on methodological issues, support in locating precious sources, generous sharing of knowledge on wartime Japanese history and cinema, and for critical reading of all or parts of the manuscript, I express my gratitude to Kayo Adachi-Rabe, Klaus Antoni, Astrid Brochlos, Sheldon Garon, Andrea Greiner-Petter, Irmela Hijiya-Kirschner, Iwamoto Kenji, Irie Yoshirō, Michael Kinski, Nicola Liscutin, Makino Mamoru, Moriwaki Kiyotaka, Okumura Masaru, Markus Rüttermann, Togawa Naoki, and Beate Wonde. I am thankful for the warm hospitality of Larry and Sachie Christensen, during my stays in Japan. For numerous close readings and countless suggestions of immeasurable value, I thank Mary Louise Grossman. I would also like to thank students of the Centre for Japanese Language and Culture of Berlin Humboldt University for tolerating the numerous occasions when class discussions turned to movies from the Shōwa period.

Moreover, I gratefully acknowledge the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the German Institute for Japanese Studies, for support during various stages of research in Japan. With the assistance of the JaDe Foundation, the publication of this book was made possible. At Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden, I would like to thank Andrea Stolz and Reinhard Friedrich for their support.

Most importantly, I am thankful for the patience, support, and cheerfulness of my family. This book is dedicated to my wife and our children.

October 2010

Harald Salomon

1. Introduction

In January 1938, the release of the war film “Five Scouts” 五人の斥候兵 (*Gonin no sekkōhei*) created a sensation in Japan. Contemporary audiences, journalists, and authorities alike reacted enthusiastically to director Tasaka Tomotaka’s 田坂具隆 attempt to represent the human experience of warfare. Home Ministry censor Tatebayashi Mikio 館林三喜男, usually a critic of domestic motion picture production, stated that all earlier Japanese contributions to the genre had left the impression of “children playing tag”, when compared to the authentic impact of this work.¹ Later in the year, *Five Scouts* was entered in the Venice International Film Festival competition. When the jury’s decision became known in the imperial capital, the press celebrated a major success. The *Yomiuri Newspaper*, for example, proudly reported that the Nikkatsu production had come in second among more than 220 motion pictures from 52 nations to win the Award of the Italian Minister of Popular Culture.²

For foreign critics and audiences *Five Scouts* provided an opportunity to experience the artistic and technical quality of Japanese cinema. At the same time, it allowed insights into the cultural milieu in which the Japanese population was mobilized for the war against China since 1937. After the conflict developed into the Asia-Pacific War, American directors and anthropologists were the first to examine this issue on a systematic basis. Analyzing Tasaka’s work and other productions, they produced fascinating findings with respect to the patterns of thought and behavior featured in Japanese films of the period. Among the frequently quoted observations they elaborated upon, were the representation of war as natural disaster, the relative absence of an image of the enemy, and the pervasive rhetoric of personal sacrifice.

More than two generations later, the study of wartime cinema continues to offer compelling views of Japanese society during a period in history that is known as “dark valley”. Drawing inspiration from the research of Ruth Ben-

1 “Sensō eiga zadankai” 戦争映画座談会, *Nippon eiga*, December 1938: 125.

2 “Gonin no sekkōhei nyūshō” 五人の斥候兵入賞, *Yomiuri shinbun*, 2 September 1938 (second evening edition). The *Coppa del Ministero della Cultura Popolare* was considered as “second place”. In Japan, the work was officially distinguished as an “excellent film” by former general and acting Minister of Education Araki Sadao 荒木貞夫 during a ceremony later in the year. “Yūryō eiga hyōshō shiki” 優良映画表彰式, *Yomiuri shinbun*, 8 December 1938 (second evening edition).

edict and other anthropologists, this book started as an attempt to analyze the cultural codes that informed Japanese film propaganda during World War II. However, when examining audiovisual works and searching for historical materials in which to contextualize them, doubts arose whether the terms “culture” and “propaganda” were adequate and productive. Thus, the common understanding of propaganda as a “deliberate attempt by the few to influence the attitudes and behavior of the many by the manipulation of symbolic communication”³ was too narrow to accommodate the complex interactions between film business, bureaucracy, and audiences that emerged. In the same way, general references to “Japanese culture” appeared increasingly problematic, when realizing that government institutions had embarked on the mission to create a new notion of culture, namely, the frequently evoked “national culture” 国民文化 (*kokumin bunka*).

Therefore, the question of how the development of wartime Japanese cinema interacted with government efforts to create a particular culture of nationalism became the focus of this study. In the resulting book, this question is approached from two angles. After establishing the historical background, the first part traces how bureaucrats in the Ministry of Education, the Home Ministry, and other institutions came to perceive cinema as crucial in their efforts to integrate a population divided by socioeconomic and ideological processes. It explores ensuing policies formulated to make active use of cinema, and traces how the relationship between state and motion picture business changed during the course of the war. The second part turns to the promotion frameworks that evolved as a consequence of these policies. It follows governmental promotion practices and documents those fictional feature films that received the highest distinctions for their cultural contribution. This documentation allows independent strolls through the awarded fictional worlds of wartime Japanese cinema. It also serves as a basis from which to analyze the repertoire of mental attitudes and symbolical resources provided by awarded works to engage in defining and fostering a culture of nationalism. Lastly, it is used as a vantage point to shed light on the reception of these motion pictures by contemporary audiences.

The following parts of the introduction discuss aspects of the state of research on wartime Japan and the cinema of the period. Moreover, they explain

3 Terence H. QUALTER. *Opinion Control in the Democracies*, London et al.: Macmillan et al. 1985: 122. For an account of the meaning of the term propaganda from its appearance in the seventeenth-century campaign to promote Catholic faith to the present, see Wolfgang SCHIEDER and Christof DIPPER. “Propaganda”, in: Otto BRUNNER, Werner CONZE and Reinhart KOSELLECK (eds.). *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, vol. 5, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta 1984: 69–112.

the methodological considerations underpinning this study and detail the aims and approaches of the individual chapters.

The Dark Valley

Wartime Japan has been described as a “dark valley” 暗い谷間 (*kurai tanima*) or an “age of darkness” 暗黒時代 (*ankoku jidai*). Diaries, autobiographical writing, literary works, and academic studies use these metaphors to illustrate how the population experienced this period in Japanese history.⁴ In representing the early Shōwa years, these narratives are informed by a particular understanding of state–society relations. Thus, the increasing pressure exerted by both a powerful bureaucracy and military to suppress the rights and freedom of a reluctant population is emphasized. Frequently, the deception of public opinion by means of censorship and propaganda receives particular attention. Moreover, the governmental control of economic and creative activities, but also the restraint of private consumption is elaborated upon.⁵ Exemplifying many of these tendencies, Ienaga Saburō argued that the oppression exerted on the Japanese populace was even greater than in National Socialist Germany. The “manipulation of information and values to produce mass conformity and unquestioning obedience”, he held, was so efficient that resistance to or even a critical perception of military expansion abroad and domestic repression was barely possible.⁶

4 The words “dark valley” were chosen by Takeda Shigetarō 武田繁太郎 as the title of a work published in 1951 in *Waseda bungaku*. This text has been referred to as “the history of youth during the war”. *Nihon kindai bungaku dai jiten* 日本近代文学大辞典, vol. 2, Kōdan Sha 1977: 318. The expression “age of darkness” can be traced back to the wartime diary of the liberal journalist Kiyosawa Kiyoshi 清沢洌. See his *Ankoku nikki* 暗黒日記, Tōkyō Keizai Shinpō Sha 1954; *A Diary of Darkness: The Wartime Diary of Kiyosawa Kiyoshi*. Transl. by Eugene Soviak, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press 1999. The expression “dark valley” has also been used to denote the decade of global history following the Great Depression. According to Piers Brendon, the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the Soviet Union traversed “a dark valley inhabited by the giants of unemployment, hardship, strife, and fear” during the ten years after 1929. See *The Dark Valley: A Panorama of the 1930s*, London: Jonathan Cape 2000.

5 This concept is identified in the title of various publications. See, for instance, ASAHI SHINBUN SHA 朝日新聞社 (ed.). *Kurai tanima no kyōkō to shinryaku* 暗い谷間の恐慌と侵略, 3 vols., Asahi Shinbun Sha 1974 (Asahi shinbun ni miru Nihon no ayumi); Thomas R. H. HAVENS. *Valley of Darkness: The Japanese People and World War II*, New York: Norton 1978; TOGAWA Naoki 登川直樹. “Ankoku jidai no Nihon eiga kai” 暗黒時代の日本映画界, in: *Kinema junpō Nihon eiga shinario koten zenshū* キネマ旬報日本映画シナリオ古典全集, Kinema Junpō Sha 1966, vol. 5: 9–11.

6 *The Pacific War, 1931–1945: A Critical Perspective on Japan’s Role in World War II*, New

This particular perspective on wartime society can be retraced to the attempts of contemporary observers to explain events and processes in Japan. An influential example is the “emperor system” 天皇制 (*tennō sei*) construct introduced by the Communist International as early as 1932. While explicitly avoiding the term fascism, it pointed to the structural impediments inhibiting a democratization of the Japanese political system, among them the Imperial Constitution promulgated in 1889 and the supporting ideology of emperor worship institutionalized with the Imperial Rescript on Education in 1890.⁷

During the American occupation, the view that wartime developments were brought about by a conspiracy of a relatively small group of militarists was formulated in the vicinity of the International Military Tribunal of the Far East (1946–48). Writing in the same period, liberal intellectual Maruyama Masao 丸山真男 singled out the upper strata of the military and the bureaucracy as “driving forces” in the implementation of “fascism from above”. At the same time, he emphasized that segments of the middle class actively supported this process. According to Maruyama, these included, among others, small landowners, school teachers, and low-grade officials. He distinguished them as “pseudo- or sub-intellectuals” from the actual intellectual circles. However, their advanced education notwithstanding, intellectuals were also unable to see through governmental propaganda concerning the war in Asia.⁸

Many aspects of the ‘dark valley approach’ will necessarily remain important elements of every account of wartime Japan. Nevertheless, more recent works have qualified our image of coeval social dynamics and interactions. In *The Search for a New Order*, W. Miles Fletcher argues that intellectuals willingly participated in governmental campaigns for a new domestic order and the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere as a way to further their extensive reform agenda.⁹ In *Grass-Roots Fascism: The War Experience of the Japanese People*, Yoshimi Yoshiaki examines the ‘view from below’ and

York: Pantheon 1978: 110–11, 114. See also Iritani Toshio who presents a manipulated and acquiescent population in his *Group Psychology of the Japanese in Wartime* (London and New York: Kegan Paul International 1991).

7 This interpretation of the era has remained influential in the postwar period. A classic rendering is offered by IROKAWA Daikichi 色川大吉. *Meiji no bunka* 明治の文化, Iwanami Shoten 1970. For an English translation, see *The Culture of the Meiji Period*. Translation edited by Marius B. Jansen, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press 1985.

8 MARUYAMA Masao: “The Ideology and Dynamics of Japanese Fascism”, in: *Thought and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics*. Ed. by Ivan MORRIS, London et al.: Oxford University Press 1963: 57–65.

9 W. Miles FLETCHER: *The Search for a New Order: Intellectuals and Fascism in Prewar Japan*, Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press 1982.

demonstrates that many segments of the population were not only passive victims. According to the historian, people from all walks of life took an interest in the political situation and actively joined in national mobilization efforts.¹⁰ Sheldon Garon criticizes the dominance of the emperor system construct in explaining the rise of ultranationalism and militarism in Japan. In contrast, he examines interactions between bureaucracy and population that cannot be described according to notions of control. Thus, he reveals the vital role of non-governmental actors in identifying public issues and formulating related policies. As these activists frequently belonged to the middle classes, they shared a common background with administrative and military elites, and their relationship was not necessarily antagonistic.¹¹ Therefore, the question as to which social formation experienced a dark valley in wartime Japan has justifiably received new attention.¹²

Other historical studies of the early Shōwa period have shed light on the dynamic developments and long-lasting societal effects that evolved in relation to mobilization for total war during the 1930s and early 1940s.¹³ With respect to studies in the field of media and culture, in general, the publication of *Culture and Fascism* in 1993 acted as a catalyst.¹⁴ Also influential was a volume on so-called media events in wartime Japan. Interestingly, these contributions showed that technical innovation, entrepreneurial initiative, and consumer behavior exerted a decisive influence in shaping these develop-

10 YOSHIMI Yoshiaki 吉見義明. *Kusa no ne no fashizumu: Nihon minshū no sensō taiken* 草の根のファシズム 日本民衆の戦争体験, Tokyo Daigaku Shuppan Kai 1987. An English translation by Ethan Mark is forthcoming.

11 Garon's approach to state-society relations is developed in *Molding Japanese Minds: The State in Everyday Life*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press 1997. See also his "Rethinking Modernization and Modernity in Japanese History: A Focus on State-Society Relations", *Journal of Asian Studies* 53.2 (1994): 346-66; "Toward a History of Twentieth-Century Japan", *Monumenta Nipponica* 45.3 (1990): 339-52; "Luxury is the Enemy: Mobilizing Savings and Popularizing Thrift in Wartime Japan", *Journal of Japanese Studies* 26.1 (2000): 41-78.

12 Earl H. KINMONTH. "The Mouse that Roared: Saitō Takao, Conservative Critic of Japan's 'Holy War' in China", *Journal of Japanese Studies* 25.2 (1999): 331-60.

13 See, for example, YAMANOUCHI Yasushi 山之内靖, NARITA Ryūichi 成田龍一, and Victor KOSCHMANN J. ヴィクター コシュマン (eds.): *Sōryoku sen to kindaika* 総力戦と現代化, Kashiwa Shobō 1995. An English version of this volume with contributions by Japanese, American, and German authors was published three years later: YAMANOUCHI Yasushi et al. (eds.). *Total War and Modernization*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press 1998.

14 AKAZAWA Shirō 赤沢史郎(ed.). *Bunka to fashizumu: Senji ki Nihon ni okeru bunka no kōbō* 文化とファシズム 戦時期日本における文化の光芒, Nihon Keizai Hyōron Sha 1993.

ments.¹⁵ Consequently, the narratives of increasing state control have been questioned, and the manifold segments of the population, once exclusively described as manipulated victims of propaganda, have evolved as conscious consumers of media products who discriminated between governmental messages and, at times, supported their communication.¹⁶

This study draws on these developments and seeks to contribute to discussion by providing views on the dark valley afforded by an examination of wartime cinema.

Research on Wartime Japanese Cinema

American and British anthropologists were first to conduct systematic research on Japanese film outside of the country. Their activities were sponsored by the U.S. Office of Strategic Services and the Office of War Information in an effort to shed light on the psyche of “the most alien enemy the United States had ever fought in an all-out struggle”.¹⁷ As a matter of fact, a large number of social scientists worked in Washington during the early 1940s, and examined a variety of subjects, ranging from Hitler’s personality structure to folk songs in Thailand. In relation to Japan, a number of protagonists evolved, among them Gregory Bateson, Geoffrey Gorer, and Ruth Benedict. The latter’s experience in evaluating the importance of culture for personal behavior made her well qualified for the required intelligence work.

Benedict joined the Office of War Information in 1943 as Head of Basic Analysis Section in the Bureau of Overseas Intelligence. Until 1945, she employed cultural analysis to investigate problems of behavior and attitude in enemy and occupied countries, including Burma and Romania as requested by divisions of the Bureau of Overseas Intelligence. She also became a Social Science Analyst for the Foreign Morale Division, which assigned her to the

15 It was accompanied by two publications on media–society relations in Meiji and Postwar Japan. TSUGANESAWA Toshihiro 津金沢聡広. *Kindai Nihon no media ibento* 近代日本のメディア・イベント, Dōbun Kan Shuppan 1996; TSUGANESAWA Toshihiro and ARIYAMA Teruo 有山輝雄(eds.). *Senji ki Nihon no media ibento* 戦時期日本のメディア・イベント, Sekai Shisō Sha 1998; TSUGANESAWA Toshihiro (ed.). *Sengo Nihon no media ibento* 戦後日本のメディア・イベント, Sekai Shisō Sha 2002.

16 See, for example, Louise YOUNG. *Japan’s Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism*, Berkeley, Calif. et al.: University of California Press 1998; Barak KUSHNER. *The Thought War: Japanese Imperial Propaganda*, Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press 2006.

17 Ruth F. BENEDICT. *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin 1946: 1.