

INTRODUCTION

The Meiji period (1868-1912) was an exciting and cataclysmic era of Japanese history. In 1854 after two hundred and fifty years of self-imposed isolation, Japan was opened to diplomatic contact with the outside world and by 1868 the old political and social order had been overthrown. A new government was created with the promise that in the words of the Charter Oath, knowledge would be sought throughout the world and the evil customs of the past would be broken off. Once the restraints of the preceding Tokugawa state were removed, a new environment receptive to rapid change and innovation was ushered in. New ideas from the West inundated Japan, and institutions modeled on those of the West replaced the structure that had existed for centuries.

Optimism and liberalism characterized the early decades of the Meiji era, but so too did confusion and tension. The new ideas and techniques often clashed with concepts and attitudes deeply ingrained in Japanese tradition. Educated Japanese struggled to resolve the conflicts that arose from the disparity between their early training and the new values they embraced. They devoted considerable energy to the search for their own identity and that of their nation. They drew up plans for the future of Japan and for its place in a changing world order. The result was a proliferation of writings that reflect the aspirations, fears and conflicting views of those who lived in the Meiji period.

Sansuijin keirin mondō (A Discourse on Government by Three Drunken Men), published in 1887, is an excellent example of the kind of literate and concerned work that Japanese in the Meiji era were writing and reading. It is a valuable source for the history

of ideas and for Japanese political history as well. The essay is the best known political work of Nakae Chōmin (1847-1901).¹ The author was a leading cultural mediator between Japan and Western Europe and an ideologist for the movement for parliamentary government (Jiyū minken undō). His essay is a lucid, sympathetic and at times witty account of current intellectual trends and conflicts. It represents the author's attempt to resolve the polarities of thought of his day both for his own sake and for those involved in the political movement of which he was a part.

Like many of the outstanding people of his generation, Nakae Chōmin was urbane, intelligent, idealistic, dedicated to principles and also to their implementation. He was also stubborn and tenacious. Because of his flair for outrageous behavior he is remembered as one of Japan's foremost eccentrics. Nakae's early education like that of many of his contemporaries in the early Meiji period was in the traditional curriculum of the domain schools. The son of a low-ranking samurai from Tosa, Nakae as a young boy excelled in the study of the Chinese classics and in Japanese literature and history. When at the end of the Tokugawa period diplomatic and commercial contact with Western nations created a demand for Japanese skilled in Western languages, Nakae and others of his rank saw an opportunity for advancement in Western studies. He began the study of English and Dutch in Tosa and then went on to study French in Nagasaki and finally in Edo. Nakae was one of fifty students sent to Western countries by the new Meiji government in 1871 to study Western institutions and techniques. He traveled to America and to Europe with the Iwakura mission, and then left the mission to study in France for three years on a scholarship from the Japanese Ministry of Justice. While in France he began the translation of the Contrat social by Jean Jacques Rousseau which earned him the nickname of "The Rousseau of the East."

Nakae's translation of Rousseau's Contrat social particularly

impressed Itagaki Taisuke and other leaders of the movement for parliamentary government.² The movement had begun in 1874 after the dispute over policy towards Korea split the Meiji leadership. Itagaki Taisuke and Gotō Shōjirō, both from Nakae's home region of Tosa, resigned from the government and soon after, submitted a petition demanding the establishment of a popularly elected national assembly. Itagaki and his followers from 1874 on, with only brief interruptions, headed the most vocal political opposition to the government. They offered a peaceful alternative to the more traditional violent means of attacking government leaders such as assassination and military insurrection. Their aim instead was to gain political power in a nationally elected assembly. As the movement gradually expanded its regional base and attracted support throughout Japan its leaders sought a distinctive ideology, and read with interest translations and newspaper articles by Nakae and other scholars of Western political thought.

The ideology of the movement for representative government at the time of the movement's inception in 1874 included a vague and somewhat superficial commitment to some form of parliamentary government and to natural rights. The preface of the party pledge of Itagaki's Aikokukōtō (Public Party of Patriots) of 1874 outlined the political philosophy of the movement. It began, "When men were created by heaven, there were attached to them certain fixed and inalienable rights, and these rights, having been bestowed upon men equally by heaven, cannot be usurped by human power." The preface went on to declare the party's determination to protect those heaven bestowed gifts for the sake of the emperor and the country.³ Beyond the declaration that all men were equal and the government must not be allowed to monopolize power the ideology of the movement did not define what it meant by natural rights or attempt to explain its implications for Japan.

The content of the movement's ideology in the 1870s was not

unlike the ideas espoused by political thinkers not directly connected with Itagaki or his followers. In the early 1870s both Fukuzawa Yukichi and Katō Hiroyuki, proponents of liberal reform along Western lines, outlined the natural rights theory in their writings in terms not unlike those used by Itagaki and his followers. Even government leaders, Kido Takayoshi for one, were not entirely opposed to the idea. The similarity in the political theories of the 1870s may be due at least in part to the fact that all of the proponents of natural rights had been strongly influenced by the ideas of John Locke and the British liberal tradition.

It was not until after 1877 that Itagaki Taisuke and his followers began to express ideas that set them apart. Their ideology continued to include the concept of natural rights at a time when Fukuzawa and Katō were abandoning that idea, but even more important to the emergence of a distinctive political philosophy it incorporated new ideas from the French revolutionary tradition and specifically from Rousseau's Contrat social. On October 17, 1881 Itagaki founded a new political party called the Jiyūtō which included members of the old Aikokukōtō and other short lived political groups Itagaki had organized since 1874. The official doctrine of the Jiyūtō bore a strong imprint from the French political thought that Nakae espoused. The Jiyūtōshi, an official history of Itagaki's Jiyūtō states, "Up to that time popular rights theory was based on British thought. It had moved from Bentham and Mill to Spencer as its authority, but now the French faction spread its banner."⁴ Nakae Chōmin was a prominent member of that faction and his translation of the Contrat social and his explanation of Rousseau's ideas became the basis of the ideology of the Jiyūtō and of all of the disparate groups that joined that party.

Nakae's translation of the Contrat social had been circulating in manuscript form among Japanese intellectuals since 1877. It was published with extensive annotations in 1882 in the Seiri sōdan, a

journal that Nakae himself founded in the hope of enlightening all educated Japanese in Western thought. In the annotations to the translation Nakae explained Rousseau's contention that political control belonged to the people exclusively. That concept was central to Rousseau's ideal of a republic and to Nakae's ideas on political reform. Nakae and his fellow intellectuals in the Jiyūtō rejected the concept of power sharing between the ruler and the people and they also opposed the creation of a constitutional monarchy in which ultimate authority rested with the emperor and his appointed officials.

It was the adoption of the ideal of republican government and popular control that distinguished Nakae and his party from other groups in the early Meiji period and specifically from Ōkuma Shigenobu and his advisors, Yano Fumio and Ono Azusa. After the political crisis of 1881, Ōkuma was forced out of the government and so became a leader for those opponents of the government who for various reasons did not join Itagaki's camp. Ōkuma founded the Kaishintō (Reform party) in 1881 and called for the immediate establishment of a parliament. Unlike Nakae and his party, Ōkuma did not challenge the government's assumption that ultimate control belonged to the emperor and to his government.⁵ Although Ōkuma's party rejected Nakae's republican ideal in favor of a British style constitutional monarchy in which the people would share power with the emperor, the Kaishintō leaders undoubtedly defined and sharpened their own arguments in response to the ideology of Nakae and of the Jiyūtō.

In 1882 Nakae was optimistic that the Jiyūtō he helped to guide intellectually would provide political and intellectual leadership for the Japanese people. But just as the party was gaining a national following and seemed likely to win a share of political power in the coming Diet, it began to disintegrate. Factionalism and internecine battles within the Jiyūtō and bribery and police interference

from without undermined the party organization and discredited its political leaders. Finally in 1884 the Jiyūtō was disbanded. Its rival in the movement for parliamentary government, the Kaishintō, suffered from similar problems and it too was dissolved in the same year. Political parties in Japan seemed destined for a political graveyard.

Nakae did not give up hope for the movement or for the Jiyūtō. He set out to find a way to get the party back together. He continued to associate with former party members, and in 1884 he joined a group of party men headed by Sugita Tei'ichi on a mission intended to bring liberalism and Jiyūtō ideology to China.⁶ Members of the group were motivated by the idea that once they gained converts for their ideology among the Chinese their liberal doctrine would increase in prestige at home. Their ambition was not realized and the group returned to Japan in the following year. Their ideas won little support from the Chinese. The mission did, however, demonstrate the interest of those involved in the movement in Sino-Japanese cooperation and in the liberal political reform of Asia. For the development of Nakae's own political thought the China visit was significant. It represented for him a commitment to Asian unity which he was to state explicitly in 1887 in Sansuijin keirin mondō.

The movement for parliamentary government was still splintered by factionalism in 1887 when Nakae wrote Sansuijin. In 1886 and 1887 Nakae and his friends made a concerted effort to bring together former members of the Jiyūtō and the Kaishintō. In 1886 they organized a meeting in Tokyo for all those who had been connected with the two parties, and in the following year Nakae helped Gotō Shōjirō to organize the Daidō League. The league achieved the first real successful reunification attempt. It took as its cause célèbre opposition to the government concessions to Western demands in negotiations for treaty revision and emphasized unity and an end to ideological differences.

It was while he was involved in these activities that Nakae wrote Sansuijin keirin mondō. The essay is an ideological counterpart to Nakae's organizational efforts to cement together the disparate strains within the movement for parliamentary government. Nakae's purpose in writing Sansuijin, as may be judged from the content of the essay, was first of all to work out some basis for ideological unity within the movement for parliamentary government and particularly within the former Jiyūtō. In his editorials and commentaries on translations of Rousseau's writings in the early 1880s Nakae had discussed the principles of the French revolutionary tradition. In Sansuijin he continued to uphold the validity of his earlier ideology. Yet as important as his political ideals were to him, in 1887 he was no longer primarily concerned with explaining them. His objective was to achieve political unity.

In Nakae's view there were two extreme positions within the movement. He identified one extreme as the idealistic and uncritical proponents of Western thought and the other as the militant and reactionary advocates of expansionism and military confrontation with Japan's enemies. In Sansuijin Nakae outlined the ideas he perceived in each extreme and identified the issues on which the two disagreed. Finally he concluded with a set of moderate proposals that he may have hoped would be acceptable to both sides. It is Nakae's thesis in Sansuijin that neither extreme had looked objectively at actual conditions in Japan and in the world. He suggested that all of those in the movement realistically consider the direction in which Japan was moving and revise their positions accordingly; perhaps then, he believed, there would be a basis for unity within the movement and greater effectiveness in enlisting support for the parties among the Japanese people.⁷

Sansuijin keirin mondō is an evaluation of the ideas and conflicts of those involved in the movement for parliamentary government as seen by a leading ideologist of the Jiyūtō. The essay is significant because it summarizes the thought of an important political

movement. But it has an even greater significance for the student of Japanese history. The movement for parliamentary government evolved within the political and intellectual climate of the early Meiji period and its participants expressed the aspirations and fears of the age. Party leaders and their followers agreed with government leaders on the need for power sharing and for a constitutional government modeled on Western example. They also shared a commitment to national wealth and power and a strong concern for Japan's place in world affairs. In writing a critique of his own movement Nakae illuminated the attitudes, ideas and conflicting opinions that ran throughout Japanese society in 1887.

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New currents of thought were gaining importance in the 1880s and these are reflected in Sansuijin keirin mondō. For many advanced thinkers in Japan at the time Herbert Spencer's Social Darwinism offered a convincing explanation both of the rising specter of Western imperialism in Asia and of the weakness of the democratic cause within Japan. Nakae, like many of his contemporaries, discovered an evolutionary scheme according to which society inevitably passed from an aristocratic and authoritarian organization characteristic of military societies to an economically productive and democratic way of life that stressed liberty, equality and fraternity, the very principles Nakae and his fellow liberals were hoping to introduce into Japan. Spencer, however, maintained that at the present time the transition to democratic society was nowhere complete and the world was still dominated by a brutal struggle for the survival of the fittest. Only at some time in the future would this struggle be replaced by peaceful economic competition and democracy.

On the basis of Spencer's theories Japanese intellectuals developed diverse and often conflicting ideas. For Fukuzawa Yukichi

and Katō Hiroyuki, Spencer's Social Darwinism led to a greater consciousness of Japan's immediate national needs. Both men were strongly impressed by Spencer's discussion of the brutal and amoral world of the present. They rejected their earlier ideas of a natural moral order and stressed state power as a political expedient. Both became convinced that foreign aggression must be confronted with force.⁸ Tokutomi Sohō, a young liberal who supported the movement for parliamentary government in the 1880s, drew a different interpretation from Spencer than did Fukuzawa and Katō. Tokutomi saw in Spencer's evolutionary scheme a formula that allowed him to view militarism as a passing phenomenon soon to be replaced by a democratic society. He argued in Shōrai no Nihon (The Future Japan) that Japan must stress productivity and democracy and not armament. While Fukuzawa and Katō read in Spencer's writings a refutation of earlier principles, Tokutomi discovered a reason for optimism and a reaffirmation of the democratic principles he had long espoused.⁹

Nakae Chōmin was closer to Tokutomi than to Fukuzawa in his understanding of Spencer's Social Darwinism. It is apparent from a reading of Sansuijin that Nakae, too, found in Spencer an explanation for the slow pace of Japan's emergence from an authoritarian system toward democracy, and like Tokutomi he was encouraged by the promise of the eventual realization of his democratic ideals. In Sansuijin Nakae was specifically concerned with criticizing the way in which Spencer's theories had been incorporated into the thinking of the men at the two extremes within the movement for parliamentary government. His observations are revealing of the divisive impact of Spencer's theories on Japanese intellectuals.

Nakae attempted to demonstrate that militant extremists tended to use a brutal world view to justify their scheme for national expansion and militarism whereas the idealists lived only in the promise of a democratic future. In line with his thesis that those in the movement must reexamine their thinking in the light of reality,

Nakae argued in Sansuijin that in looking to the future, present realities should not be overlooked, and in dealing with current problems democratic principles should not be pushed aside because of an exaggerated fear of Western aggression.¹⁰ In short, Nakae did not take issue with Spencer himself, but rather concentrated his criticisms upon what he saw as the one-sided conclusions his contemporaries were drawing from Spencer's theories.

The format of Sansuijin keirin mondō is a discussion among three men each representing one intellectual position. Highbrow (Shinshikun) is an enthusiastic proponent of new Western ideas. Swashbuckler (Gōketsukun) is both a reactionary and a proponent of militarism and expansion. Nankai Sengyo or sensei is a moderate. Japanese scholars have offered a variety of theories linking Highbrow and Swashbuckler with specific intellectuals. Swashbuckler is often identified with Sugita Tei'ichi or Ōi Kentarō, two ultra-nationalist leaders of the left wing of the Jiyūtō. Highbrow is said to be Tokutomi Sohō, Baba Tatsui, Ueki Emori or the young Nakae Chōmin himself, all proponents of Western liberal thought. Although Highbrow and Swashbuckler in Sansuijin express ideas which can also be found in the thinking of specific individuals in the movement for parliamentary government, neither exactly expresses the views of any one person. They are probably intended to represent two currents of thought each exaggerated for the sake of argument.

Reflecting a new trend in Japanese literature in the 1880s toward the development of characterization in novels Nakae in his political essay endowed Highbrow and Swashbuckler with the characteristics he associated with the point of view the speaker expressed. Here again each character represents a type rather than any actual personality. For example, in physical appearance, dress and speech Highbrow is a prototype of the Western scholar of the Meiji era. Highbrow wore Western-style clothes,

He was slender and had refined features and an elevated bearing. His speech was educated. Obviously he was active in intellectual pursuits. Philosophy seemed to be in the very air he breathed, and his thinking rambled along the meandering road of empiricism.¹¹

To support his picture Nakae purposely had Highbrow present his ideas in a vague, disorganized and meandering manner. Highbrow frequently interrupts his own train of thought or contradicts himself. Swashbuckler, by contrast, is a scion of the warrior tradition of Japan's past. In physical appearance he resembled Saigō Takamori. Nakae described him as follows. Swashbuckler

was big and brawny, with deep set eyes and a swarthy complexion. He wore a patterned Japanese coat and Japanese trousers. Anyone could see that he was the sort of swaggering fellow who loves anything grandiose and revels in danger, using life as bait to fish for the pleasures of fame.¹²

Swashbuckler's speech, unlike Highbrow's, is forthright and aggressive. He is frequently impatient with Highbrow's idealism and interrupts him freely to express his frank disapproval.

Nankai sensei, the political moderate, is consistently a vehicle for Nakae Chōmin's own viewpoint in 1887 and may be considered to be a spokesman for the author. It is through Nankai that Nakae criticized the other two speakers and offered a moderate view of his own. The characterization of Nankai, too, resembled Nakae. According to Kōtoku Shūsui, Nakae Chōmin's most famous student and his biographer, the first paragraph of Sansuijin was Nakae's own self-portrait.¹³ Like Nakae, Nankai sensei took great pleasure in drinking and in discussing political theory and public policy.

Although loosely organized in the form of a discussion among three main characters, Sansuijin is primarily concerned with two highly controversial topics of the day. The first topic is the kind of government best suited to Japan. Highbrow presented his views on this topic, and then through Nankai sensei Nakae discussed Highbrow's

recommendations and offered some of his own which recalled and, in some instances, modified his earlier ideas on the way in which liberal principles should be put into practice in Japan. The second topic is foreign policy. Nakae had all three characters deal at length with the problem of Japan's relations with European powers and with Asia. Finally through Nankai he elaborated on themes he himself had considered in the editorials and articles he had published in journals from 1881 through 1887.

Nakae intended Highbrow to be representative of the young Japanese of the 1870s and early 1880s whose uncritical and idealized view of Western liberalism led them to call for the immediate and wholesale adoption of Western practices in Japan. In discussing the kind of government best suited to Japan Highbrow called for the immediate institution of democracy. He urged that all class distinctions be abolished and with them the privileges of both old and new nobility as they had been in France during the revolution. He argued that distinctions of rank were passed down from generation to generation in Japan regardless of merit, and even if the original title had been awarded in recognition of outstanding service or of great learning, there was no guarantee that the descendants of the original title holder would be worthy of the honor. Under a system of full equality no one man or group should monopolize political power, and all of the people should exercise control of the government. Highbrow went no further in calling for political reform in Japan than to discuss in reverent terms the principles of liberty and equality on which democratic government should be founded. Like many of the proponents of Western liberal theories in Japan, Nakae's Highbrow was not concerned with the problem of whether Japan was ready for such a system, nor did he discuss the specific institutions that would make possible the democratic system he envisioned for Japan.

In support of his recommendations for the reform of government

Highbrow outlined a universal and irreversible process of historical development. He applied the principle of evolution to history in order to argue that Japan, like the countries of the West, was inevitably progressing toward a democratic and productive society entirely divorced from its past. His argument is reminiscent of the theories of Herbert Spencer in its emphasis on a universal deterministic historical process. It reflects the thinking of Tokutomi Sohō and of the journalist Taguchi Ukichi who contended that Japanese historical development was only a part of the universal pattern of human evolution.

The early stages of the historical process described by Highbrow in Sansuijin owed less to Spencer than to Nakae Chōmin's own understanding of the thought of Rousseau and Rousseau's discussion of man's emergence from the state of nature. Man's original state according to Highbrow, was one of anarchy. Neither laws nor moral principles existed to protect the weak from oppression by the strong. As a result, like Rousseau, Highbrow contended that in these circumstances man willingly surrendered his rights to a ruler who could establish peace and order. The resulting socio-political organization was aristocratic and authoritarian and conducive to militarism.

Herbert Spencer had attributed what he believed to be the inevitable transition from the authoritarian to a democratic stage to the fact that a military society needs wealth; it therefore emphasizes productivity which in turn produces a democratic society. The military society in its quest for financial resources is transformed into a democracy, according to Spencer. Nakae's Highbrow may have understood Spencer's explanation of this transition, but neither he nor the Japanese intellectuals who adopted Spencer's scheme were concerned with the problem of why such a transition should come about. Instead, Highbrow, like Meiji intellectuals generally, was content to assert that such a transition was inevitable without offering any explanation. Nakae had Highbrow add a stage between authoritarianism

and democracy. According to Highbrow, the political structure is first transformed into a constitutional monarchy before it evolves into a democracy. This constitutional stage is imperfect, because it retains a king and nobility and so has only partially realized liberty and equality. Pure democracy erases all remnants of authoritarianism, and men regain their natural rights of liberty and equality.

The evolutionary process is personified and deified in Sansuijin as the "god of Evolution." In the West, according to Highbrow, the evolutionary process had already impelled society toward democracy, at least within national borders. In Asia and Africa, the "god of Evolution" had been much slower. As a result the peoples of Africa had not yet emerged from anarchy and those of Asia still had a despotism of ruler and ministers. Until he began to discuss the unfolding of the evolutionary process in Asia, Highbrow was faithful to a deterministic view of history. With respect to Asia he contended that democracy was inevitable. However, like many of the Western-oriented liberals in Japan, and also like the Chinese thinker Yen Fu, Nakae had Highbrow depart from strict adherence to a deterministic view and assert that man had an element of choice. He could take the initiative in instituting democratic reforms immediately and thus actively work for change rather than passively waiting for it to come about. Highbrow in Sansuijin argued that the Japanese should skip a constitutional monarchy entirely and move directly into a democracy. Highbrow concluded his recommendations for political reform by warning that the "god of Evolution" would inflict disaster and misery on anyone who attempted to impede the evolutionary process and that the wrath of that god when aroused was truly terrible.

Nakae Chōmin was not critical of Highbrow's ideals; they were in fact the ideals he and his fellow liberals of the movement held up for the Japan of the future. Nakae's major objection to the

idealistic and Western-oriented proponents of parliamentary government was their failure to relate theory to considerations of time and place or to weigh the problems of putting theory into practice. In Sansuijin keirin mondō Nakae's spokesman Nankai sensei called Highbrow's ideas "an airy cloud of resplendent ideals" and "the hope of the future."¹⁴ In concentrating on the democratic society of the coming age, the Highbrows of the movement for parliamentary government did not realize that Japan was not ready for full democracy. The reason for their error, according to Nankai, was a misunderstanding of the very historical process they invoked in support of recommendations for democratic reform. Nankai called attention to the contradiction in Highbrow's explanation of evolution; if evolution is an inevitable process, Nankai contended, then men do not have the choice of either obstructing that process or of accelerating it by eliminating any one stage. Instead, the role men play in history is all part of a deterministic evolutionary process. Hence through Nankai, Nakae pointed out to his contemporary liberals the fallacy in a deterministic scheme of history which also urges men toward the active promotion of reform. Nankai argued that those who tried to obstruct progress toward democracy were simply the products of the authoritarian stage of history, a stage as much a part of the overall historical process as was democracy. In Nankai's opinion, the greatest harm men could do would be to press for political changes that were inappropriate to the present time or place. The "god of Evolution" condemns any attempt to carry out the wrong thing in the wrong place at the wrong time. The inevitable result of such folly is calamity. Nankai supported his argument by citing the example of nineteenth-century reforms in Turkey and Persia, where premature democratic reforms resulted in rioting and bloodshed.

Nakae contended in Sansuijin that the ideas in the minds of the people shaped all institutions and hence determined the stage of evolution. The intellectual level of the people shaped the political

structure characteristic of each evolutionary stage. In this light, Nakae defined the purpose of government as follows:

That purpose is to follow the inclinations of the people, to be appropriate to their intellectual level, and in this way to maintain peace and happiness and bring about prosperity. If a government suddenly ceases to follow the people's inclinations and adopts a system which is not suited to their intellectual level, how can the people enjoy peaceful pleasures and the benefits of prosperity?¹⁵

Thus Japan could not simply leap into full democracy because the minds of the majority of the Japanese people, in Nakae's opinion, were filled with the ideas of the past. Until those ideas are replaced by democratic principles, Japan could not become a democratic society.

The importance Nakae attached to the role of ideas in history is an expansion of his belief in his own role as an intellectual. Since 1881 he had urged the politicians of the movement for parliamentary government to study the political principles of Western thought and particularly of Rousseau. In Sansuijin he gave additional force to his argument by asserting that ideas and principles were the very foundation of history. Kōtoku Shūsui noted that in about 1885, Nakae had some doubts about the effectiveness of ideas as the foundation for reform.¹⁶ By 1887, however, Nakae had evidently regained confidence in the power of ideas and principles.

On the basis of the importance he attached to ideas, Nakae offered a solution to the problem of what kind of action was possible within a deterministic scheme of historical evolution. What could an intellectual such as himself or his character Highbrow do while waiting for the emergence of democracy in Japan? Nakae urged intellectuals to work within the historical process by spreading ideals and so preparing men's minds for the eventual emergence of democracy.

In Sansuijin Nakae's spokesman declared to Highbrow that the presentation of ideas must be geared to a realistic assessment of the intellectual level of the people and carried out with the realization that evolution would progress only when the whole population was prepared for change. Although this recommendation might be considered contradictory to the deterministic view of history he held, Nakae himself was convinced that he had found a way to reconcile the promotion of his principles with the idea of evolution and to assign to ideologists like himself a crucial role in shaping society.

Nankai sensei interrupted his instructions to Highbrow with two paragraphs on the restoration of rights to the people. The problem of how the people should obtain the rights that were theirs by birth had troubled all Japanese intellectuals who in the early Meiji period had adopted the concept of the natural rights of man. Ueki Emori and Ōi Kentarō, radical members of the left wing of the Jiyūtō, had gone so far as to advocate that the Japanese people rise up and seize their rights by force. Nakae Chōmin himself in 1881 asserted the right of the Japanese people to rebel against oppressive government.¹⁷ By 1887, however, with the promulgation of a constitution and the convention of a nationally elected Diet only two or three years away, Nakae clearly believed that rebellion would not be necessary. At least some of the people's rights would soon be restored to them. Although he still maintained that the people had the right to rebel, violent measures would not be necessary in Japan so long as the government was willing to return the people's rights to them. In Sansuijin Nakae had Nankai sensei argue that if the rulers returned the people's rights voluntarily, the people might even be satisfied with fewer rights in order to regain them peacefully. After all, sensei insisted, rights that are bestowed on the people no matter how few are essentially the same as those seized by force.¹⁸

Nakae's message in Sansuijin, when compared with the diatribes of Jiyūtō editorials just five years before, was calm and moderate.

Perhaps Nakae realized that, as the journalist Kuga Katsunan pointed out in 1890, the threat of revolution, intended by the Jiyūtō members to frighten the government into extending political power to the parties, only had the effect of convincing government leaders that the movement was dangerous and should be held in check. The threat of revolution frightened many of the Japanese people and caused them to see the movement for parliamentary government as subversive and dangerous.¹⁹ By 1887 Nakae evidently realized, as did Ōi Kentarō and Ueki Emori, that if the movement were to be reunited and gain broad popular support, earlier radicalism would have to be greatly modified. This may well explain the more moderate position Nakae assumed in Sansuijin keirin mondō.

Nankai sensei concluded his discussion of the kind of government best suited to Japan at the time with a very general and moderate proposal. He based his proposal on the assumption that Japan in 1887 was emerging from a despotism of rulers and ministers and moving toward a constitutional system of government. He wrote,

I think that Japan should frame a constitution . . . strengthen the honor and glory of the emperor and increase the well-being and security of the people. We should set up a Diet with an upper and lower house. Membership in the upper house is to be hereditary in the noble families, and membership in the lower house should be determined by election. For detailed regulations we should take what we can from the present constitutions of Europe and America. Restrictions on discussions and publication ought to be made more lenient, and education, commerce and industry must be encouraged.²⁰

Nankai sensei's proposal here may have been intended by Nakae as a platform acceptable to as many people as possible. Former Jiyūtō demands for a unicameral legislature and republican government had given way to an acceptance of constitutional monarchy and of the bicameral legislature that government leaders had made clear would

be a part of the new structure. In keeping with the philosophy of the Daidō league, Nakae's spokesman Nankai sensei here was seeking a common ground for unity and widespread support. So moderate was Nankai's proposal that no one including those within the Japanese government could find fault with it in principle and, in fact, Nakae's essay did not incur censorship by the government.²¹

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By 1887 when Nakae Chōmin wrote Sansuijin keirin mondō the rise of European imperialism in Asia was constantly in the minds of all Japanese who were concerned with national problems. Japanese politicians and intellectuals inside and outside of government were fearful of Western activity in Asia and of the danger they believed it represented for Japan. They were especially concerned with defining Japan's policy toward the Chinese government and toward those Western countries that were active in China.

The Japanese involved in the movement for parliamentary government voiced the fears and quandaries of all Japanese who were concerned with Japan's position in world affairs. Fear that a weak and defenseless Japan might fall prey to Western aggression pervades the journal articles of party newspapers in the 1880s.²² Yet as in the case of domestic issues, political and intellectual leaders of the movement were divided on matters of foreign policy. They did agree on the need for a strong and independent Japanese nation and on the paramount importance of getting rid of the humiliating restrictions of the unequal treaties. They were also united in their condemnation of what they charged was the failure of government leaders to take a resolute position in treaty negotiations with Western powers. Beyond that, however, the movement was divided into two extremes. Sugita Tei'ichi represented one position. He and many of those who joined him on his China venture in 1883 and 1884

called for military buildup in Japan, the formation of a military alliance with the Chinese and the deployment of Japanese troops in China to guard against further Western encroachment.²³ In contrast to Sugita, Ueki Emori and Itagaki Taisuke believed that national military armament would not guarantee the security of Japan. The territorial integrity of Japan could only be assured by the creation of a world government that would put an end to war by mediating in international disputes and thus maintain a peaceful world order. This international government was also to promote liberty, equality and democratic government throughout the world.²⁴

In seeking to reconcile differences among the former members, Nakae was obliged to deal with the problems of Japan's foreign policy. As he had with domestic policy in Sansuijin, Nakae presented the extreme positions and then offered his own criticism of them based on what he believed to be a realistic appraisal of the current situation. In the second half of Sansuijin all three of the characters are plunged into a lively debate of Japan's role in Asia and in the world. Discussion of the kind of government best suited to Japan had involved only the idealist Highbrow and Nakae's spokesman, Nankai sensei. When the debate turned to the topic of foreign policy, however, Swashbuckler, the ultranationalist and proponent of militarism, took an active part.

Highbrow introduced the topic of foreign policy and outlined a position that resembled in general outline that of Ueki Emori and Itagaki. Highbrow called for an international government and world peace. In support of his recommendations Highbrow outlined a pacifist tradition that had grown out of the French revolutionary principle of fraternity in Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. That tradition had evolved in Europe from the Abbé de Saint-Pierre to Rousseau and Kant and finally to Émile Aollas, a teacher at the Sorbonne in the 1870s whom Nakae had known in Paris. According to the pacifist tradition, world peace

could only result from popular control of all government throughout the world. The people and not the rulers always bear the burden of war. A prince loses nothing by declaring war; he can continue to enjoy the pleasures of court life while his subjects pay the costs, fight and suffer. Consequently international peace will be possible only when the princes who declare war all too easily are replaced in power by the people. The people would choose peace rather than war merely as a matter of self-interest. Hence world peace will result from the establishment of democracy in all nations.

Highbrow used this pacifist tradition to buttress his demands for the immediate institution of democracy in Japan. By adopting democratic government and with it a pacific foreign policy, he argued, Japan would move into the most advanced stage of political evolution and at the same time contribute to world peace. He realized that despite the overthrow of monarchies in Europe, European nations persisted in waging war. Yet he insisted, despite this weak point in his argument, that Japan must adopt pacifism as the basis of its foreign policy. Japan would then become a model of reason and justice in the world. Western countries would respect Japan's independence because they would be impressed that Japan had succeeded where they had failed to make the complete transition to democracy and world peace.

For Highbrow, pacifism meant total abstention from offensive or defensive warfare. Any war was, in Highbrow's opinion, immoral. In response to Swashbuckler's suggestion that one aggressive country just might attack Japan in its defenseless state, Highbrow replied that in that unlikely event Japan should offer no more than moral resistance. If that failed, the Japanese should prepare to die bravely without resisting further. Again Japan is to be the moral model for the world. He stated,

If in defending itself a country counterattacks,
it becomes just as wicked as the aggressor.

Swashbuckler, if the enemy comes, I want our country to set a moral example for posterity. We must perish at the hands of the enemy without lifting a finger in our own defense.²⁵

Highbrow's emphasis on Japan's role in bringing about a world of peace and justice was in opposition to the prevailing current of power politics in the Meiji period. Although there was considerable interest in Western pacifism among Japanese liberals and particularly among converts to Christianity, only a few Japanese went as far as Highbrow in advocating pacifism and love as principles of foreign policy.

Proponents of expansionism and military strength made up a far greater proportion of educated Japanese including those involved in the movement for parliamentary government than did the pacifists. Nakae's Swashbuckler expresses a prevalent fear of Western aggression and particularly of Russian designs on Asia. In Sansuijin Swashbuckler tells us that Russia is determined to swallow up Turkey and Korea. Dread of losing Japan's northern territories to Russia underlies Swashbuckler's assessment of the world situation as it did for many Japanese. In direct contrast to Highbrow and proponents of pacifism, Swashbuckler called for a strong military and preparation for war as the only defense for Japan.

Unlike Highbrow, Swashbuckler was convinced that war and aggression were an inevitable part of the human condition. Highbrow had taken from Spencer the idea that evolution toward democracy and peace was inevitable, but he ignored Spencer's explanation of the current struggle for survival among nations. Swashbuckler, by contrast, was influenced only by Spencer's description of the contemporary world of the nineteenth century as an amoral and brutal battleground on which strength alone determined survival. On this assessment of the world situation Swashbuckler formulated his recommendation for Japan's foreign policy. Since only powerful nations would survive a struggle for supremacy, Japan must become as powerful

as any of its European adversaries. It must build up its military and land resources as fast as possible, no small task for so small a country. Swashbuckler suggested that this be accomplished at the expense of China.

Concern with the position of China in Japan's foreign policy increased throughout the Meiji period and was an extension of the prior concern with Western power. From the late Tokugawa period there were Japanese who called for a defensive alliance with China against the West. By the Meiji era liberals in particular advocated an alliance between an enlightened and liberal Japan and the backward and humiliated China. In such an alliance Japan would clearly be the leader. Such a sentiment had motivated Sugita Tei'ichi and his fellow party members in 1884. It anticipated a pan-Asianism that grew out of the paternalistic liberalism of the early Meiji and by the twentieth century developed into a cloak for imperialism, a justification of Japanese domination over China.

With respect to China, Nakae's Swashbuckler was an expansionist par excellence. His ideas as stated in Sansuijin were perhaps intended by Nakae to point out the logical result of current expansionist thinking. Swashbuckler went further than anyone in the 1880s when he urged that Japan take over China for the sake of its resources and move the emperor to China leaving the four main islands of Japan to the advocates of parliamentary government. Hideyoshi had advanced grandiose schemes for the conquest of China in the sixteenth century, but in the Meiji period no one had suggested that the emperor move to China and set up a new empire. In Swashbuckler, Nakae exaggerated for the sake of argument the growing concern for national interests and the tendency toward militarism and expansionism he detected in the thinking of those involved in the movement for parliamentary government.

After outlining his foreign policy ideas, Swashbuckler delivered a discourse on the conflicts that rapid change engenders

in societies. According to Swashbuckler, conflict arises between those who are attached to the values of the past and those who are attracted to innovation; it is observable in all levels of society and especially within the movement for parliamentary government. Nankai sensei assigned Highbrow to the innovators and Swashbuckler to those attached to the past. Like many of his contemporaries Nakae Chōmin had been concerned with this division within the movement from early in his career. Swashbuckler's discussion of the problem in Sansuijin is Nakae's own intrusion into the dialogue in order to develop a favorite theme of his as it related to the conflicts among the proponents of popular rights.

According to Nakae's analysis, Swashbuckler's recommendations for expansion, like those of Sugita Tei'ichi, were derived as much from an attachment to the warrior tradition of Japan's past as to the idea of a brutal and amoral universe based on Spencer. In his intrusion into Swashbuckler's speech, Nakae described this attachment to past values:

Twenty or thirty years ago, men like Swashbuckler waved swords and spears and glorified death in battle as the highest of all honors. They inherited their warlike traits from their ancestors and cherished the long swords that were the pride of their forefathers and the symbol of their ideals. When sword bearing was abolished, every one of them cried bitterly and put his sword away in a box. In their hearts, some still long to take out the swords and use them again.²⁶

His passage in Sansuijin is reminiscent of an earlier editorial by Nakae in which he warned the government that many of those in the movement were not far removed from the warrior tradition and could be easily incited to violence.

It was not difficult to understand why men like Highbrow would become advocates of popular rights, but the motives of the Swashbucklers of the movement for parliamentary government were more

complex. Nakae clearly agreed with government leaders who contended that men like Swashbuckler were attracted to the cause and to the principles of the French Revolution because they saw in them an excuse to attack the government. In the French revolutionary tradition they found a justification for violence, and in parliamentary government a vehicle for attaining power.

Nakae knew that if the Japanese were to have a successful parliamentary government, the conflict between progressives like High-brown and reactionaries like Swashbuckler must somehow be resolved. Otherwise the existence of two such disparate groups would lead to peril both for the parties and for the entire parliamentary experiment. Such a conflict would be an impediment to democracy. Nakae had Swashbuckler propose a solution. According to Swashbuckler, the group of militant extremists he himself represented clearly must abandon its reactionary tendencies or be eliminated from the Japanese political scene. Reactionaries were a cancer in the flesh of progress and must be cut out. The best way to eliminate the reactionary elements, Swashbuckler contended, would be to let them organize as private adventurers and go off to China to set up a private state of their own. Upon leaving Nankai sensei's house at the close of the discussion in Sansuijin, Swashbuckler followed his own advice and went to Shanghai.

Nakae evidently considered private adventurism to be a possible solution to the conflict between reactionaries and progressives in Japan. Though presented almost flippantly through the mouth of Swashbuckler, Nakae's suggestion that the reactionaries be allowed to leave Japan and divert their energies to other parts of Asia was intended seriously. Nakae had fully supported Sugita's China venture and in a conversation with Sugita had even suggested that Sugita might be a king in China.²⁷ In 1885 he had not opposed plans by Ōi Kentarō to assist Korean reformers even militarily although he strongly and consistently condemned the use of extremist

tactics at home.²⁸ Nakae persisted in his favorable view of private adventurism in 1891 when he wrote an article stating that Japan would have been better off had Saigō Takamori, a heroic figure of great energy and courage, been allowed to lead his band of discontented former samurai to Korea instead of being forced to remain in Japan where, according to Nakae, his followers were no more than worms.²⁹ In the context of the nineteenth century, Nakae's idea was not preposterous. He knew of the quasi-private adventures of men like Charles Gordon in North Africa and was well aware that when private ventures ran into difficulties, the home government could always repudiate them or at least fail to support them.³⁰ There were clearly precedents in the European experience for drawing a distinction between private adventurism and national policy, and Nakae proposed this as a possible solution for conflicts within Japan over foreign policy.

In the realm of Japanese national policy, however, Nakae was wholly opposed to expansionism and militarization. He gave priority to economic advancement and political reform at home. In the same 1891 editorial in which he discussed Saigō, Nakae praised the government leader Ōkubo Toshimichi for his stand in the Korean debate of 1871. Although Ōkubo was far less exciting a personality than Saigō, Nakae saw that Ōkubo had realized that Japan trailed behind Europe in enlightenment and political reform, and had set out with steadfast determination to import whatever was needed from abroad to bring the level of Japanese civilization closer to that of Europe. Ōkubo had also put down Saigō's rebellion of 1877 without endangering the state.³¹

In Sansuijin keirin mondō Nakae's spokesman opposed a national policy of expansion abroad and urged Japan to concentrate on commerce and industry at home as the best means for achieving democracy. Like Herbert Spencer and like Rousseau, Nakae believed that eventually the transition to democracy would result in world peace.

In the meantime Japan should promote friendly relations with all countries and pursue a good-neighbor policy toward the rest of Asia. Nakae disagreed with Swashbuckler that China was rotten beyond hope of reform and that only revolution initiated by Japan would create a China strong enough to resist the West. China was not, Nakae insisted, in a period of decline and moving toward internal revolution. Instead, the Manchus under the influence of Western civilization were instituting reforms and strengthening their defenses. In Sansuijin Nakae stressed the common cultural bonds between China and Japan and urged Japan to ally with China on the basis of this shared cultural heritage. Nakae's spokesman further argued that by stressing friendship rather than military expansion Japan would spare its people the financial burden of supporting a war.

Should the European powers attack Japan, Nankai sensei expected the Japanese to defend themselves. The following proposals anticipated Nakae's more detailed plan of 1888 for the creation of a national civilian militia to defend the country in case of attack. Nakae was not in principle opposed either to defensive or offensive action. He even sanctioned aggression in the case of private initiative. But he was opposed to a national policy of militarism and expansion for the expedient reason that internal development was more important for Japan.

Nakae's main criticism of the positions of both Highbrow and Swashbuckler on foreign policy was of what he considered to be their exaggerated concern with the threat of Western imperialism in Asia. Nakae's spokesman here identified a strain of fear with respect to the West which he considered obsessive and which in time, as Nakae feared, did develop into a kind of national paranoia in Japan. Nankai sensei did not worry about a military threat from the West. Nakae's spokesman counted on the balance of power to hold the nations of Europe at bay. The very fact that France and Prussia were arming on a large scale he found encouraging because,

he argued, each country was so absorbed in militarization that neither would actually wage war. Eventually their military stockpiles would become so cumbersome that war would be out of the question. At the present time, Nakae believed, force and not morality was the determining factor in international relations, but while each big country worried about the others, small countries like Japan were relatively safe. The greatest threat to world peace, according to Nankai sensei, was fear and mutual suspicion. Once a nation becomes obsessed with fear of attack, it loses the ability to assess the intentions of its neighbors realistically. When fear develops into national paranoia, a country will attack another in defense against what it sees as a threat of aggression. Nakae was undoubtedly issuing a warning to those of his fellow countrymen who like Highbrow and Swashbuckler were allowing their fears to inhibit their ability to assess the world situation realistically. With the advantage of hindsight many modern readers have seen unusual perceptivity in Nakae's warning here.

* * *

Of all Nakae Chōmin's works Kōtoku Shūsui considered Sansuijin keirin mondō to be the most revealing of Nakae's personality and thought.³² In the character of Nankai, the reader has a glimpse of Nakae himself as a sensei, a man deeply concerned with political affairs and conscious of the ideological divisions among his contemporaries. By 1887 Nakae Chōmin, like Nankai sensei, had earned a reputation for heavy drinking and eccentric behavior and, as Nankai sensei explained to his two guests at the end of their discussion, he was often purposely outrageous in random conversations simply for his own amusement. In discussing the major problems of his time, however, Nankai sensei, like Nakae Chōmin himself, was entirely serious. In the conclusion to Sansuijin Nankai sensei demanded, "How could I court novelty for my own amusement!"³³

Sansuijin was also Nakae's most ambitious project. Nakae set

out to assess the level of political development in Japan and to work out recommendations for Japanese domestic and foreign policy in the light of existing political realities. In making his assessment of the current situation, Nakae owed much to Spencer's Social Darwinism. Like Spencer, Nakae was aware that nowhere in the world had any country achieved a perfect democracy. However, some time in the future all countries including Japan would be democratic, and peaceful relations would replace military confrontations on the international scene. Meanwhile, it remained for ideologists like Nakae to propagate democratic principles in order to prepare the people for the future. Only when all of the people were intellectually ready for democracy would Japan attain the final stage of political and social evolution.

In Sansuijin Nakae addressed himself to the ideological sources of disunity. He did not attempt to deal with the problems of personality differences, personal ambition or regional loyalties that were also a cause of factionalism within the party movement. Perhaps he believed that once some kind of ideological unity was achieved, other sources of factionalism would become less important. It is not possible to assess the importance of Sansuijin in bringing the party together. The essay does, however, clearly represent a spirit of accord that motivated intellectuals and politicians to reorganize their party in time for the first national election in 1890. In January of 1890 three factions of the former Jiyūtō joined one faction of the former Kaishintō to form the Rikken Jiyūtō. Nakae Chōmin became the editor of the new party newspaper, the Rikken jiyū shimbun. In the national election he himself won the right to represent the people of an Osaka district in the first Diet.

The problem of sorting out and understanding the three strains of thought in Sansuijin was a difficult one even for Nakae Chōmin's contemporaries. Tokutomi Sohō told Nakae that because of its complexity, Sansuijin would never be a very popular book. Yet despite its complexity, Sansuijin was widely read by educated Japanese of Nakae's

day, and it continues to arouse considerable interest among Japanese readers today. Sansuijin is valuable to the historian as an assessment of intellectual currents in the Meiji era by a prominent Meiji intellectual. As such it is an insightful account of prevalent modes of thought. The question of Japan's position in Asia and in the world and of the direction of Japan's domestic policy should take care of continuing concern in Japan. Sansuijin keirin mondō arouses enthusiasm and admiration among Japanese today as it did in the nineteenth century because it discusses questions that have absorbed sensitive thinkers in Japan throughout the modern period.

Sansuijin keirin mondō was first published by Nakae himself in May of 1887 as a single volume of 138 pages. Prior to its publication the opening paragraphs appeared in Kokumin no tomo (April, 1887), a journal edited by Nakae's friend Tokutomi Sohō. It has since been reprinted in Chōmin bunshū, Meiji bunka zenshū, and an edition edited and annotated by Kuwabara Takeo and Shimada Kenji was published by Iwanami Shoten in 1965.³⁴ The work is also reprinted in Nakae Chōmin-shū, Hayashi Shigeru, ed. For this translation I have relied on the Iwanami edition and the first edition.