Universities and Students in Wartime Japan
Author(s): Ben-Ami Shillony
Reviewed work(s):
Published by: Association for Asian Studies
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/2056086
Accessed: 25/11/2012 06:33

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.
Universities and Students in Wartime Japan

BEN-AMI SHILLONY

In Japan the years from 1937 to 1945 are generally regarded as a dark and barren time. However, the closer one looks at Japan between the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War and its surrender at the end of World War II, the more one realizes that the prewar process of modernization, in fact, did not cease during the war years. To attribute positive developments to a period of suffering and destruction may seem strange, but, World War II—much like World War I was in Europe—was Japan's first total war. It required a high degree of common effort, mobilization, and the willingness to make sacrifices and it set into motion processes of rationalization, modernization, and even democratization that went beyond the expectations and intentions of the authorities. These wartime changes, no less than the reforms of the Occupation, paved the way for postwar developments in Japan. And the Japanese University was one aspect of life that did not stand still at this time.

The Prewar University

Modern higher education began in Japan with the establishment of Tokyo University in 1877. By the eve of the Second Sino-Japanese War sixty years later, Japan possessed a sophisticated network of higher education comprised of 45 universities (daigaku), 178 professional colleges (semon gakkō), 32 higher schools (kōtō gakkō), and 4 higher normal schools (kōtō shihan gakkō)—259 institutions of higher education, as against nearly 1,000 in 1986 (Nihon kindai kyoiku 1974:V).

Like higher education in Western Europe before World War II, higher education in Japan was elitist in that it accepted only that small portion of the young population which was destined to assume leadership positions in the state or in the professions. Nevertheless, this sector was a larger share of the population in Japan than it was in

Ben-Ami Shillony is Professor of Japanese History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel.

The author thanks the Hebrew University, its Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace, and the Center for Japanese Studies of the University of California, Berkeley, for their support in the preparation of this article.

A short version of this article was read at the Conference of the European Association for Japanese Studies in The Hague, and it was subsequently published in the proceedings of the conference in Gordon Daniels, ed., Europe Interprets Japan, Kent: Paul Nosbury Publications, 1984, pp. 108–116. Various versions of the essay were read at colloquia in Berkeley, Stanford, and Princeton. The author thanks all those who participated in the colloquia and contributed their comments. Above all, the author wishes to thank Chalmers Johnson, Irwin Scheiner, Thomas C. Smith, and Mary E. Berry of the University of California, Berkeley; Professor Marius B. Jansen of Princeton University; and Professor Kitamura Kazuyuki of Hiroshima University for their help and encouragement. The author also thanks Phyllis Killen of the University of California Press for her careful reading of the manuscript.
Western Europe. In the mid-1930s, 0.30 percent of the Japanese population attended schools of higher education, as against 0.15 percent in Britain and 0.18 percent in France. The proportion of students who attended schools of higher education in Japan was twice as high as it was in Great Britain (Ministry of Education 1963:214–16).

The best Japanese universities were national, and admission was conditional upon passing rigorous entrance examinations. Because tuition fees—¥120 (about $40) a year in state universities and ¥130 to ¥160 in private universities in 1937—were not very high, a cross-section of society was represented in Japanese higher education (Japan Year Book 1942–1943:598; Roden 1980:246).

Like in many Western countries before World War II, the Japanese system of education was not uniform; it provided several different levels of higher education. At the top were six imperial universities (teikoku daigaku), ranked according to the dates of their establishment in Tokyo, Kyoto, Tohoku, Kyushu, Hokkaido, and Osaka. There were also two overseas imperial universities, in Seoul and Taipei, for the sons of Japanese residents in those countries as well as for promising Koreans and Taiwanese. In addition there were twenty-five private universities, the two most prestigious of which, Keio and Waseda, were located in Tokyo.

The elite course of prewar education proceeded from the compulsory six-year elementary school (shōgakkō) to the five-year middle school (chūgakkō), and then to the three-year higher school and the three-year imperial university. Private universities maintained preparatory schools that were equivalent to state higher schools, and, thus, the best kind of higher education consisted of six years.

One could, however, pursue a less prestigious course by passing from middle school straight into a four-year professional college or higher normal school. Most of the one-hundred or so professional colleges were liberal-arts institutions, but some state and public colleges trained students for medicine, pharmacy, agriculture, commerce, and foreign languages (Amano 1978).

Technically, only the 72,000 students who attended daigaku were called students (gakusei); all the others were referred to as pupils (seito). The term for both categories combined was the compound gakuto. For convenience, I shall use the word student to refer to all those who were engaged in higher education.

The social status of women in prewar Japan was lower than that of men, and higher education for women was less developed than higher education for men. The imperial universities were virtually closed to women because the higher schools that prepared students for the university were boarding schools for men only. However, three imperial universities—Tohoku, Kyushu, and Hokkaido—admitted some women. These three universities together admitted 270 women students in 1937.

Women students were admitted to private universities and to the state universities of arts and sciences in Tokyo and Hiroshima. Women students could also avail themselves of about fifty private women’s colleges, some of which—like Tokyo Women’s Medical School—offered professional careers. However, most private women’s colleges aimed at producing educated wives and mothers (kenbō ryūōai). In addition, two government higher normal schools for women, in Tokyo and Nara, trained women high-school teachers. In 1937 women accounted for 9.9 percent of all students in Japanese institutions of higher education (Karasawa 1979:197–200).

The imperial universities and the best private universities, with their graduate schools and research institutes, were important centers of teaching and research. For instance, theoretical research in nuclear physics was vigorously pursued at the imperial universities of Tokyo, Kyoto, Tohoku, and Osaka, as well as at the state-run Institute
Table 1. Number of Students Arrested for Violating the Peace Preservation Law, 1937–1942

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>1937</th>
<th>1938</th>
<th>1939</th>
<th>1940</th>
<th>1941</th>
<th>1942</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tokyo Imperial</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keio</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waseda</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tokyo University of Agriculture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nihon</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosei</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tokyo Foreign</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meiji</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chūō</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyoto Imperial</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dōshisha</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tohoku Imperial</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hokkaido Imperial</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyushu Imperial</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Universities and Colleges</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>925</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Repression on Campus

The sordid aspect of prewar and wartime university life was the growing political repression by the militarist state, and most accounts of the universities during those years dwell on this aspect. Repugnant as this was, it was much less severe than the repression that existed in totalitarian countries such as Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union at the same time (Shillony 1981:7–16, 120–126).

From the promulgation of the Peace Preservation Law (Chian iijihō) in 1925 until the end of World War II, more than 3,000 students were arrested on charges of left-wing activities. The arrests reached their peak in the year 1932, when 1,170 students were arrested. From 1937 until the end of the war about 1,000 more students were arrested for violating this law (see table 1).

Most of the students arrested were, however, released after promising to refrain from engaging in left-wing activities. Only a small number were prosecuted and sentenced to prison. No one was executed, and there were no concentration camps. In fact, most hard-core Communists survived the war in jail.

After the Manchurian Incident of 1931, professors known for leftist views were dismissed, and their books were banned. In 1933 Takikawa Yukitoki, a professor of law at Kyoto Imperial University, was dismissed for having written that crime resulted
from social injustice. His dismissal triggered wide protests, and a group of his colleagues resigned in sympathy (Doo 1952:177ff.).

Other faculty members were prosecuted for expressing their views in writing. In 1939 two professors in the Faculty of Economics of Tokyo Imperial University, Ōuchi Hyōe and Kawai Eijirō, were indicted, the former for Communist sympathies and the latter for criticizing the military. The following year Professor Tsuda Sōkichi, an historian at Waseda University, was put on trial for having disputed the divine origin of the imperial lineage. Although all of these individuals were dismissed, the sentences they received were not severe: Tsuda was sentenced to three months in prison in 1940; Kawai was fined ¥300 in 1943; and Ōuchi was acquitted in 1944 (Marshall 1977, 1978). In March 1945, philosopher Miki Kiyoshi of Hōsei University was arrested for having sheltered Communist writer Takakura Teru after his escape from prison. Miki died in jail one month after the end of World War II, and Takakura was released immediately afterward.

In the early 1930s, it was still possible to criticize the government and the military. For example, the seizure of Manchuria in 1931 was condemned in articles and speeches by Professors Yoshino Sakuzō, Yokota Kisaburō, and Yanaihara Tadao of Tokyo Imperial University (Mitani 1973). Government controls became stricter in the late 1930s, and it was much more difficult to criticize the war in China; nevertheless, two professors, Yanaihara Tadao of Tokyo Imperial University and Amano Teiyū of Kyoto Imperial University, condemned army actions in China (Marshall 1977:400–1; Doo 1952:96–97). Yanaihara was dismissed in 1937, but he continued to express his views in a small, private magazine, and although some of Amano’s books were banned, he retained his university post until 1944 (Shillony 1981:131).

The imperial universities were zealous in safeguarding the autonomy that had become their prerogative over the decades. Although the government had the legal power to terminate or disregard this autonomy, and although the teachers in these universities were state employees, the government was reluctant to alienate institutions that enjoyed high public esteem. It was an established custom for the professors of these universities to decide on appointments and promotions and to elect their own presidents and deans; the Minister of Education approved these decisions and advised the emperor to issue the formal nominations.

General Araki Sadao, who was education minister from June 1937 to August 1939, attempted to put an end to this autonomy. He claimed that it infringed upon the sovereignty of the emperor and the powers of the cabinet, but the uproar that his intervention created at the imperial universities was so great that Araki was obliged to back down (Nihon kindai kyōiku 1974, vol. 5:1286–87; Kyōto daigaku 1967:113ff.).

Tokyo Imperial University was held in especially high esteem by senior officials, most of whom were graduates of that university. In 1940 the emperor attended the ceremony celebrating Japan’s 2,600th anniversary, which was held at Tokyo Imperial University, and in November 1942, Prime Minister Tōjō Hideki addressed the graduation ceremony at Tokyo Imperial University. The esteem of the university vis-à-vis the government was illustrated by the fact that Tōjō, when he arrived at the university accompanied by Minister of Education Hashida Kunihiko—himself a former professor of physiology at that university—was welcomed at the gate by only one person, the university’s chief manager. President Hiraga Yuzuru of Tokyo Imperial University, a professor of naval engineering who had designed many of Japan’s wartime battleships, waited in an office near the ceremony hall for the prime minister (Tōkyō daigaku 1977:96, 102; Ishii 1978:166–70).
One reason for the relatively small amount of direct oppression in Japan, in comparison with other dictatorships, was that many people including professors supported the war as a campaign for liberating Asia from white colonialism, and consequently there was less need for oppression. Among those who openly supported the war were philosopher Nishida Kitarō and his disciples at Kyoto Imperial University Kōyama Iwao, Nishitani Keiji, Kōsaka Masaaki, and Suzuki Shigetaka (Shillony 1981:110–20; Kōsaka et al. 1942:150–92).

The presidents of the leading private universities were outspoken in their nationalistic rhetoric. Upon the first death of a kamikaze pilot—a university student who had been mobilized—jurist Nakano Tomio, the president of Waseda University, called on other students to follow in the footsteps of the heroic pilot (Fifty Years 1975:149). The president of Keiō University, Koizumi Shinzō, a well-known economist who had lost his son in the war, reacted to Germany's surrender in 1945 by urging the Japanese people to keep faith in Japan's victory by continuing to fight the Americans with all their might (Nippon Times, May 10, 1945). Koizumi was severely burned two weeks later when his house was bombed in an air raid.

The Wartime Transformation

Prior to the outbreak of World War II, Japan had obtained scientific information from the West, especially the United States and Britain, and its research institutions depended on cooperation with the Western scientific community. As late as 1940 physicist Iimori Takeo toured nuclear laboratories in the United States, where he was warmly received. Professor Ernest O. Lawrence of the University of California, Berkeley, showed Iimori his laboratory and even mentioned that nuclear energy might some day be used for military purposes (Teikoku daigaku shimbun, December 8, 1941). Little did they guess that within five years Lawrence would be a member of the government advisory panel of scientists that would recommend dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

When Japan went to war against the United States and Great Britain, it looked to Germany to replace its contacts with the Anglo-Saxon countries. Germany was unable to fulfill that task because of wartime difficulties in shipping materials and Germany's basic mistrust of Japan. High-technology instruments that Japan managed to import from Germany, such as radar, ultrasonics, and infrared apparatus, were not the latest models (Kelly 1949:45). Consequently, for the first time in its modern history, Japan had to rely on its own science and technology. This forced a vast expansion of existing research institutions.

Between 1939 and 1945 Japan set up twenty-eight research institutes, most of which were attached to state universities. They included: a resources research institute at the Tokyo University of Technology, a tuberculosis research institute at Kyoto Imperial University, an institute of Southeast Asian economies at Tokyo Imperial University, an institute of electrical engineering at Kyushu Imperial University, an institute of aeronautical medicine at Nagoya Imperial University, and an institute of electronic communications at Tohoku Imperial University (Nihon kindai kyōiku 1974, vol. 5:1281–82; Hirotsige 1965:320ff.).

Before the outbreak of the war with China, about one-third of the students in institutions of higher education majored in fields such as medicine, science, agriculture, or engineering; the remainder majored in law, economics, literature, or education. But the war with China, and to a larger extent World War II, put heavy
new demands on the Japanese system of higher education: more doctors were needed for the front lines and the civilian population; more engineers were needed for war-related industries; more scientists were required for the new research institutes; and more agronomists were needed to increase food production.

The government and private sector both stood behind the shift toward science and engineering. The Ministry of Education, the Cabinet Planning Board, and the military all channeled funds into war-related research. The government granted fellowships and prizes, and it exerted other pressures to achieve this shift. In the private universities new facilities were funded by business.

In 1939, a science department was set up within the Cabinet Planning Board. A science section, established in the Ministry of Education in 1940, was elevated to a science bureau in 1942. A board of technology under the direct control of the prime minister was established by the government in May 1941 to coordinate and allocate funds for scientific research (Nakayama 1965:356; Hiroisige 1965:332–34).

In 1940 future Nobel prizewinner Yukawa Hideki was appointed head of the Institute of Basic Physics at Kyoto Imperial University. He was awarded several government prizes during the war. Another future Nobel prizewinner, physicist Tomonaga Shin'ichirō, taught at the Tokyo University of Arts and Sciences during World War II. According to a U.S. survey made after the war, Japanese theoretical research in nuclear physics during the war years was almost abreast of research done in the West at that time (Kelly 1949:45).

In 1939, a seventh imperial university was established in Nagoya; it consisted of departments of medicine, science, and engineering. In the same year Fujihara Kinjirō, a leading figure in Mitsui, donated 8 million yen to Keio University to establish the Fujihara University of Engineering in Hiyoshi near Yokohama. This university became the Keio University Faculty of Engineering in 1944 (Keiō gijuku 1964, vol. 2, pt. 2:685–793). In 1941 Tokyo Imperial University established a second Faculty of Engineering. Thus three new Japanese schools of engineering were established at the university level between 1939 and 1941.

The 132 million yen expended on higher education in Japan in 1940 represented 20.1 percent of the total public expenditure on education that year, a higher percent than any prewar or postwar annual figure (for example, 17.1 percent in 1937 and 13.1 percent in 1960); private institutions' share of the cost of higher education climbed from 32.1 percent in 1937 to 40.6 percent in 1940 (Ministry of Education 1964:301, 307).

The greatest growth in the area of higher education occurred in professional colleges, whose number increased from 177 to 309 in the decade between 1936 and 1945. Of 132 new colleges, 34 were technological colleges and 18 were medical colleges. Of the 34 new technological colleges, 22 were private institutions and 12 were government institutions. Thirteen of the new medical colleges were given provisional status by the government, and they were attached to the state universities (Amano 1978:183–90).

Fifty-six of the new colleges were created by reform of the normal schools. Until 1943, the five-year normal schools (shihan gakkō), which trained teachers for elementary schools and were entered after eight years of elementary and higher-elementary school, were considered institutions of secondary education and did not qualify as colleges. Only kōtō shihan gakkō, which provided four years of training and were entered after five years of middle school, were considered institutions of higher education. In 1943 the Japanese government upgraded the normal schools by expanding them from five- to six-year institutions divided into lower (preparatory) and upper
There were 14,387 students in the upper division in 1940, of whom 2,968 were women (1940:254-56). The number of students increased dramatically in 1943, to 4,533 in 1945. In sum, between 1935 and 1945 the number of institutions of higher education rose from 258 to 397 and the number of students enrolled in them rose from 169,030 to 406,132 (see table 2). This was an increase of 140 percent (Ministry of Education 1964:254-71).

A breakdown of students by field of study reveals a dramatic increase of enrollments in science and engineering. Whereas 9,000 students majored in science in 1935, the number rose to 30,000 in 1945, an increase of 209 percent. And although 14,837 students majored in engineering in 1935, the number jumped to 85,680 in 1945, an increase of 477 percent in one decade.

An interesting change in the enrollment of women occurred during the same period. In 1935, 15,565 women students were enrolled in all the institutions of higher education in Japan; most were enrolled in private liberal-arts colleges. The wartime pressure on women to take part in the national defense effort, together with the upgrading of the normal schools, brought many women into higher education. There were 58,536, or almost four times as many women enrolled in institutions of
higher education in 1945 than there had been a decade earlier. The number of women studying science, 44 in 1935, jumped to 1,470 in 1945. No women studied engineering in 1935, but there were 62 in 1945. The number of women studying medicine doubled during that decade; it reached 10,040 in 1945. Four women’s medical colleges were established during the war, in Nagoya, Gifu, Fukushima, and Hokkaido, and a third higher normal school for women was opened in Hiroshima four months before the atom bomb was dropped. Women students in institutions of higher education rose from 9.9 percent of the student body in 1937 to 13.7 percent in 1945 (Ministry of Education 1963:159, 169) (see table 3).

On September 9, 1942, the Japan Times and Advertiser observed: “Today women are entering all spheres of public life. They practice as doctors, some have entered the legal profession, they drive motor buses, teach in schools, work as stenographers, and in fact are free to enter almost any calling they may wish.” On November 23, 1943, journalist Kiyosawa Kiyoshi recorded in his wartime diary: “Women workers are replacing men. It is indeed a revolution for Japanese women. They will no longer be slaves as they have been until now. Their knowledge is expanding and their status is rising” (Kiyosawa 1970, vol. 1:185).

In 1942 two female graduates of Waseda University—Watanabe Mitsuko (age twenty-eight) in law and Yokoyama Yuriko (age twenty-five) in literature—were the first women included among those top graduates who received silver watches. That same year Ofu-kai, the alumni association of Japan Women’s University, announced that a poll it had taken showed that 90 percent of its graduates were married, refuting the notion that a college education hindered a woman’s chances of marrying (Japan Times and Advertiser, September 25, 1942; June 12, 1942).

Although the number of women teachers in institutions of higher education remained small, it grew from one in 1940 (Shöji Masako, a lecturer in education at the Hiroshima University of Arts and Sciences) to nine in 1945. The number of women teaching in colleges and normal schools was considerably higher; it rose from 1,058 in 1940 to 1,354 in 1945 (U.S. Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers 1952, vol. 2:375).

In 1944 female scientist Sudo Emiko of Tohoku Imperial University’s Institute of Metal Research discovered a new method for quantitatively analyzing the element molybdenum; Sudo announced her discovery in an address to the all-male annual convention of the Japan Metal Society in Tokyo in March that year (Nippon Times, March 21, 1944).

The laboratories of the imperial universities of Tokyo, Kyoto, Kyushu, and Hokkaido survived the war intact, and those of the imperial universities of Osaka and Tohoku, as well as of Waseda and Keio universities, were only slightly damaged (Kelly 1949:46). Know-how and expertise accumulated in fields varying from theoretical physics to electronics, to optics, and to shipbuilding proved an invaluable asset in the postwar years.

Thus, during the destruction and suffering brought about by World War II, higher education was forced in new directions that were to continue in the postwar era. Wartime circumstances boosted the increase in the number of research institutes, institutions of higher education, and students—including a large increase in the enrollment of women—along with a huge shift toward science and technology, which characterized the postwar period and spurred Japan’s postwar economic miracle.

The Draft

Students in wartime Japan were torn between two conflicting pressures: they were exhorted to devote all their time and energy to studying in order to enhance the
Table 3. Number of Students in Institutions of Higher Education, by Gender and Major Field of Study, 1935–1940

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Field of Study</th>
<th>1935</th>
<th>1940</th>
<th>1945</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>males</td>
<td>females</td>
<td>total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law, Literature, &amp; Economics</td>
<td>93,623</td>
<td>4,699</td>
<td>98,322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>6,644</td>
<td>1,099</td>
<td>7,743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>9,351</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>9,395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>14,837</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>14,837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>7,891</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>7,959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine and Dentistry</td>
<td>21,119</td>
<td>4,966</td>
<td>26,085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Ec.</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4,689</td>
<td>4,689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>153,465</strong></td>
<td><strong>15,565</strong></td>
<td><strong>169,030</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: The great increase in the number of students majoring in law, literature, and economics in 1945 was due to the student mobilization of 1943, which had prevented many of them from graduating in 1944 and 1945, although they were still listed as students. The increase in the number of students majoring in education in 1945 occurred because the normal schools were elevated to professional colleges in 1943.
scientific and spiritual strength of their country, and, at the same time, the state wanted them to finish school as quickly as possible in order to assume positions in the military.

According to the Military Service Law of 1927, which replaced the Conscription Ordinance of 1873, every male citizen had to pass a medical examination for military service at age twenty. Until the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, however, relatively few twenty-year-old men were actually drafted. Of the 742,000 young men who took the medical examination in 1937, only 187,000 or one-quarter, were drafted (Oe 1981:144–45). This was due to a multitude of exemptions: students, for example, enjoyed a special status that deferred their draft age to twenty-five if they attended college, and to twenty-seven if they attended university (Keiō 1964, vol.2:987–88).¹

However, there was military training in school. Compulsory military training courses (gunji kyōren) were introduced in middle and higher schools in 1924, at which time university and college students were also encouraged to enroll in courses that would lead to their becoming reserve officers in the army (kanbu kōbsei) or the navy (yobi gakusei). Compulsory military training was introduced into colleges and universities in 1939.

In April 1939, with the intensification of the Sino-Japanese War, the deferment age was lowered to twenty-three for preparatory and higher-school students, to twenty-four for college students, and to twenty-six for university students. In October 1941, as Japan was preparing for World War II, the deferment age was lowered again, to twenty-two for preparatory and higher-school students, to twenty-three for college students, and to twenty-four for university students (except for those studying medicine, who were still deferred until they reached age twenty-six). Students usually entered three-year preparatory schools or four-year colleges at age seventeen or eighteen, and they usually entered three-year universities at twenty or twenty-one; so these regulations still permitted most students to complete their studies before they were called up.

Prior to the outbreak of the war with China, few students were drafted—even after graduation. But when the Sino-Japanese War broke out in 1937, and even more so after the start of the war in the Pacific in 1941, the military needed every young man, especially since the number of junior officers produced by the military academy (shikan gakkō) and naval academy (heigakkō) was less than sufficient. Both services were interested in tapping the reservoir of college and university graduates as quickly as possible.

Japanese universities had begun the academic year in April and ended it in March since 1921. However, as World War II approached, the military needed more and more university graduates. Thus, in October 1941, the government announced that the final academic year in institutions of higher education would be shortened by three months, and would end in early December instead of early March. Students in the class of 1942 were taking their military medical examinations on the day of Pearl Harbor, which in Japan was December 8, 1941.

Once established, the precedent was repeated and expanded. In the following year the government again shortened the academic year for seniors, this time by six months; those who originally were to have graduated in March 1943 graduated instead

¹ In Japan a person was regarded as one year old at birth and two years of age at the beginning of the next calendar year. The draft laws, however, referred to “full years,” i.e., to years according to Western reckoning.
in September 1942. The same thing happened to the class of 1944, which graduated in September 1943 (Yasuda 1975:13ff.; Oe 1981:132ff.).

Next, in August 1942, the government decided that the lower division of higher education would be shortened by a whole year so that preparatory and higher schools would consist of two instead of three years of classroom study. Since the same amount of education had to be taught in the shorter period, this reform required reorganization of the curriculum. The new curriculum was applied only to those who entered school in April 1942 or later.

Graduate students did not enjoy deferment privileges, but in April 1943 the government notified all universities that they could designate a number of outstanding graduate students as “special research fellows” who would be granted indefinite deferments. Thus, Keio University designated fourteen such fellows, ten in medicine, two in economics, one in law, and one in the humanities (Ishii 1978:170–75; Keio 1964, vol. 2:847).

By the fall of 1943, when the military situation became grim, Japan could no longer afford to have many student deferments. In September 1943, Prime Minister Tojo announced on the radio that educational deferments were henceforth to be limited to students in the sciences, engineering, medicine, and some branches of agriculture. Other students were all to be drafted, together with the rest of the population, at the age of twenty, although their student status was to be retained. This announcement led to the “student mobilization” (gakuto shutsujin) of 1943. The records of the student mobilization were burned, and precise figures on how many students were drafted are not extant. However, according to calculations made by Japanese historians, the 1943 draft involved about 130,000 men, including those who graduated that year (Yasuda 1975:17).

On October 21 a huge farewell rally for mobilized students from the capital and its vicinity was held in the Meiji Garden Stadium in Tokyo. Despite the rainy weather, 70,000 students, teachers, and parents gathered to send off 25,000 mobilized students from seventy-seven schools in Tokyo and the vicinity. Clad in black school uniforms, and carrying wooden rifles, the inductees marched into the arena to the accompaniment of an army band. Rally speakers included Prime Minister Tojo and Education Minister Okabe Nagakage. A student of Keio University Medical School wished the draftees farewell, and a student of the humanities from Tokyo Imperial University replied in the name of the departing students. The rally ended with three shouts of “banzai” led by the prime minister (Kadoya 1973:200–1).

Two months later, in December 1943, the government lowered the draft age from twenty to nineteen years. This meant that third-year students in preparatory schools, higher schools, and colleges would be drafted. For the first time in modern Japanese history nineteen year olds were drafted. The draft age was never lowered to eighteen, despite the fact that eighteen was the usual age of conscription in Western countries, probably because eighteen year olds were considered children in Japan. In justifying the new regulation, General Suzuki Takao, president of the Great Japan Youth Corps, explained: “Some may harbor doubts as to the physical efficiency of the boys below the age of twenty. But I can assure you with confidence that boys at nineteen years old are physically fully grown” (Nippon Times, December 25, 1943).

Young men above the age of nineteen, however, could volunteer for auxiliary military service as “young soldiers” (shōnenhei), and some of those who did were sent to the Nakano Military Police School to become junior military policemen (Ichikokunin 1976:144). In October 1944 all boys aged seventeen and eighteen were ordered to
register to serve as a militia if Japan was invaded (Nibon kindai kyōiku 1974, vol. 5:1293).

Those not drafted included several thousand foreign students, most of them from East and Southeast Asia, who were studying in Japan. In addition, there were also students from Germany, France, and Italy, a few White Russians and two Jewish students from Manchukuo. The latter studied economics and architecture at Waseda.²

Those students who remained in school did not receive much schooling in the final year of the war for they were frequently called upon to help out in factories, hospitals, and farms. When the massive air raids intensified in the spring of 1945, the physical premises of many universities were destroyed and learning became virtually impossible.

The periodic mobilization of students for work (gakuto dōin) had begun in 1939, when the government decided that college and university students should spend one week a year helping farmers. In February 1941 this period of service was expanded to one month, and in November 1939 the regulation was extended to include work in factories and mines. In May 1943 the Patriotic Association of Students for Serving the State (Gakuto kinrō hōkokukai) was set up, and students of both sexes from schools of middle and higher education were required to perform such work. The students were organized into squads along with their teachers, and they were sent to work on farms, factories, and hospitals for extended periods. Some schools themselves were turned into factories, warehouses, or barracks. In June 1943, the limitation on the employment of women and children was suspended. Thousands of students, girls as well as boys, died during the last year of World War II when the factories in which they were working were bombed. In Okinawa 190 volunteer girl students, the Himeyuri Butai (Red Star Lily Unit), from the local normal school, who served as nurses at the army field hospital, died when the Americans attacked the island (Nakamura 1976:241).

Women were never drafted in Japan. Answering a question from the Diet on the subject in 1943, Prime Minister Tojō said: “There is no need for our nation to draft women for work just because America and Britain are doing so. . . . We must remember that we are able to perform our duties here in the Diet only because we have wives and mothers at home” (Nippon Times, October 28, 1943). Tojō was, of course, wrong. Women were drafted for work in Britain but not in the United States.

The students who went to work spent much of their spare time reading. In the fall of 1944 Professor Ueda Seiji of the Second Higher School in Sendai surveyed 162 student workers in the Tokyo and Tohoku districts. He found out that, unlike the other factory workers, the students were reading, and the books they were reading had nothing to do with the war effort. According to Ueda’s findings, most working students were reading novels by French and Russian authors, the most popular ones being Maupassant and Tolstoy (Nippon Times, March 24, 1945).

As the bombings increased and the enemy approached Japan, it became futile to keep up the educational facade. In February 1945 the cabinet suspended all schooling except for instruction in the lower grades of elementary school and the research institutes so that students could be mobilized for the “decisive battle for the home islands” (hondo kessen). Most of the schools that were closed did not reopen until the war had ended. In February 1945 science and technology students were also drafted. According to the official history of the Ministry of Education, “In June 1945, as

² Personal communication from one of the students.
Japan was bracing itself for the battle for the homeland, students constituted the core of Japan’s production and defence” (Ministry of Education 1950:449).

By the war’s end all students were involved in the war effort, either as soldiers or as workers. For the first time in Japanese history students were made to feel responsible for the fate of their nation. This sense of involvement was to survive in later years, although in different forms.

**Idealism Betrayed**

The spiritual involvement of Japanese students in World War II was achieved in two ways: by suppressing all expressions of independent political activity or dissent and by appealing to the innate idealism of the students.

In the 1930s critics often complained that the students were not serious. In January 1938 the magazine *Chūō kōron* carried an article by Shimmyō Masamichi (under the headline “Should the Students Cut Their Hair?”) in which students were urged to show more concern about national affairs (Shimmyō 1938:175–84). In April of that year female novelist Satō Toshiko, writing in the same magazine, took students to task for their easygoing manners and lack of commitment (Satō 1938:363–68).

This negative image of students was reflected in a contemporary maxim that said students were respected in the Meiji era, feared in the Taishō era, but they were despised in the Shōwa era (Shiba 1950:180).

Students during the interwar years were not hawkish; pacifism was still strong among them. In December 1939 the magazine *Bungei shunjū* conducted a nationwide poll on whether Japan should adopt a tougher policy toward the United States. About two-thirds of the respondents answered “yes,” as against one-third that answered “no.” The number of negative answers was greater than the number of positive ones only among students (“Kokumin wa” 1940:157).

The government made various efforts to develop student patriotism. In the spring of 1941 all voluntary student associations were disbanded and replaced by patriotic organizations (*hōkoku dan*) headed by college and university presidents. Cultural and sports activities were trimmed to a minimum in order not to distract the students from their duties, and novels such as Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, which contained explicit love scenes, were withdrawn from the libraries (Karasawa 1955:373–74; *Nibon kindai kyōiku* 1974, vol. 5:1258–59). All this was of little avail, however.

During the first year of World War II students were skeptical about official exhortations in the same way that students in previous years had been mistrustful of other government propaganda. A few months after the outbreak of war, John Morris, a Briton who taught English at Tokyo Imperial University and who remained free until his repatriation in 1942, observed: “There is among the present generation of university students fairly widespread dislike of the army, and I have little doubt that even today if it were left to individual choice, only a comparatively small number of them would enlist. Many of the students in my own classes seize every opportunity to absent themselves from military training” (Morris 1943:202).

A similar observation can be found in the diary of Yabe Sadaji, a professor of political science at Tokyo Imperial University. His diary entry of January 21, 1942, reveals that his lecture of that date on the New Order in East Asia amused the students to the point of laughter. Yabe’s angry conclusion was that the pernicious liberal
influences of prewar times still lingered on campus, and that the universities were "far behind the times" (Yabe 1974, vol. 1:493).

Although left-wing writings were banned, both professors and students found ways to evade the ban. Students of Professor Okochi Kazuo's seminar in political science at Tokyo Imperial University during the war managed to read and discuss books by Marx and Lenin, referring to them in class as "Mr. M." and "Mr. L." (Okochi 1979:45–46).

When he was in school in 1943 Sasaki Hachirō, an economics student at Tokyo Imperial University who later died as a suicide pilot in Okinawa, wrote in his diary that he was reading Das Kapital and a book about the Soviet Union. Sasaki noted that he wished that Japan had leaders as capable as Lenin and Stalin (Nihon Sembotsu 1952:133–14).

Some students tried to evade the draft by entering medical school, where they would be deferred until the age of twenty-six (Oe 1981:142–43). Students who were drafted tried to become paymasters, a position in which they could attain the rank of first lieutenant without much effort after six months (Kansai Gakuin 1975:178).

However, as the war situation worsened and the very existence of Japan was in jeopardy, the mood of the students changed. The country was in danger, and its young men must save it. On June 15, 1943, the Nippon Times reported that, following the "gallant death" of Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku in April of that year, more than 5,000 students had applied for service with the naval air force reserve. Of these volunteers about 1,000 were from Waseda, 800 from Meiji University, 700 from Tokyo Imperial University, and 500 from Hōsei University (Nippon Times, June 15, 1943).

When the student mobilization order was issued on September 22, 1943, a sense of excitement swept the campuses of colleges and universities. Irokawa Daikichi, then a literature student at Tokyo Imperial University, later described his feelings as he stood in the Meiji Garden Stadium with thousands of other students and sang the martial song "Umi yukaba": "An aesthetic excitement, almost an intoxication, swept all of us standing there at that great moment." Elsewhere he wrote: "We felt that at last we were going to sacrifice our small, limited selves for the great and noble cause of Japan" (Irokawa 1974:137ff.; Tōdai Jūhachi-shi Kai 1968:66).

"Umi yukaba" was a popular song with the draft students. The words, by Ōtomo no Yakamochi, are from the eighth-century anthology, Manyōbū; the music, by Nobukoto Kiyoshi, was composed in October 1937, at the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War:

\[
\begin{align*}
Umi\,\,yukaba & \quad \text{If I go out to the sea} \\
Mizuku\,\,kabane & \quad \text{My corpse will be covered by water} \\
Yama\,\,yukaba & \quad \text{If I climb the mountains} \\
Koke\,\,musu\,\,kabane & \quad \text{My corpse will be covered by moss.} \\
Ōgimi\,\,no & \quad \text{It is for the emperor} \\
Heni\,\,koso\,\,shiname & \quad \text{That I am going to die} \\
Karerimi\,\,wa\,\,seji & \quad \text{And never return.}
\end{align*}
\]

Most enlisted students joined the navy, and this upset army draft officers (Ki-

yosawa, vol. 1: 194). However, the army had been associated with the futile war in

China and with political oppression at home, and the navy represented the war against

the white man’s colonialism in Southeast Asia. The navy was also associated with

technological advance, and its officers wore neat white uniforms. Students were re-

ported to be attracted by the "three S's" of the navy: sainensu (science), sumaato (smart
appearance), and sairensu (silence) (Yamada 1966:150). These differed from the “three S’s” that had characterized students in the Taishō period: sports, sex, and screen.

Yet the “three S’s” of the earlier era were not dead. There are no statistics on sex, but the movie industry flourished during World War II in Japan. Although Western sports had been officially banned and the government disbanded the baseball league of the Tokyo universities in April 1943, when the student mobilization was announced in the fall of that year, the universities could think of no better farewell gift to their departing students than to allow them to have one final baseball match between the Waseda and Keio teams (Tōkyō jūni channeru 1969, vol. 4:141).

Many students who had been drafted volunteered to become pilots. When the special attack force (tokkōtai, commonly known as kamikaze) was organized in 1944, most of the volunteers came from the ranks of drafted students. In fact, 638 of the 769 officers who died as kamikaze pilots (or 83 percent) were students (Tamaki 1961:209). It appears that by volunteering for this dangerous task Japanese students hoped to prove that they were not the egghead cowards that they were often accused of being. Unlike the mass assaults in which infantrymen took part, the kamikaze pilot was an individual fighter flying a single plane. This required self-confidence as well as scientific sophistication, two traits that were found more among drafted students than among other categories of soldiers.

The kamikaze pilot, portrayed in the West as a fanatic warrior, in fact was quite often a well-educated, idealistic youth with little personal hatred for the American enemy. In most cases he volunteered for the gruesome mission out of a sense of duty and a wish to prove himself in the social milieu of his peers.

Idealistcally oriented students opposed the establishment before the war, tending to favor left-wing ideologies. But, during the final year of World War II, their idealism veered sharply so that, for the first time since the early Meiji period, the idealism of young people coincided with the goal of the state: to save Japan from foreign invasion. The vision that stirred them to sacrifice their lives derived less from archaic belief, or the tradition of the self-immolating samurai, than from the secular, Western idea of dying for a homeland in danger.

In diaries and letters that were left behind, kamikaze pilots often appear as sensitive, even pacifist youths who hate war, like classical music and Western literature, but at the same time are ready to sacrifice their lives to save their country (Nihon Sembotsu 1952). Although the students express their willingness to die for the sake of Japan, in these diaries and letters they hardly ever mention the emperor.

Uehara Ryōshi, an economics student at Keio University who died as a kamikaze pilot in 1945, wrote this last note: “I was fascinated by liberalism. I thought that liberalism was indispensable to the survival of Japan. This may sound foolish now that Japan has adopted totalitarianism. But I still think that if we open our eyes and reflect upon human nature we will realize that liberalism is the most logical philosophy. . . . Tomorrow I am leaving on my last mission. . . . Tomorrow one more liberal will depart from this world. His vanishing figure may look sad, but his heart is full of joy” (Nihon Sembotsu 1952:1–2, 228).

Another suicide pilot, Hayashi Ichizō, an economics student at Kyoto Imperial University and a Christian, wrote to his mother saying that he read the Bible every evening and that he intended to carry it with him on his suicide mission (Nihon Sembotsu 1952:215–17).

Sasaki Hachirō, the Tokyo Imperial University student who read Marx and admired Lenin and Stalin, wrote before he was drafted: “I do not know whether this is a reactionary war or not, but I know that I shall fulfill my duty and responsibility.
I shall muster all my strength to do my best. I want to die in performing the most noble duty. I do not desire citations. I do not expect future historians to praise me. My only wish is to live and die as a human being who fulfilled his duty by carrying out his responsibilities" (Nihon Sembotsu 1952:115).

There was much innocence and naïveté in the cheerful manner in which these drafted students went to sacrifice themselves for their country. Unagami Haruo, a student of economics at Tokyo Imperial University, wrote before departing for the Philippines, where he met his death: "I am leaving cheerfully to fulfill my duty. Haruo is still in every sense a student" (Nihon Sembotsu 1952:283).

This youthful outburst of patriotic idealism came to an abrupt halt with Japan’s surrender in 1945. Defeat and the postwar transformation made such wartime heroism appear to be lunatic actions of which one should be deeply ashamed. The misplaced idealism of the students had been betrayed; their self-sacrifice proved to have been in vain.

The feelings of betrayal and disillusion probably nurtured the extreme pacifism as well as the extreme militancy of the Japanese student movement in the years following World War II. Postwar student radicals kept alive their wartime sense of involvement in national affairs and the conviction that they were responsible for the fate of Japan. Like the wartime students, the postwar students believed that they could pull their country back from the brink of disaster only through a violent and heroic act. They even took over some of the anti-American phraseology of the wartime years.

Yet, unlike the wartime students, the main enemy of postwar students was the political establishment of their own country, the direct heir of the wartime establishment that had exhorted them to sacrifice their lives for a cause that proved to be wrong. Nevertheless, the postwar students had to face the problem of how to relate to their fallen comrades. Were these dead warriors mere victims to be pitied? Or were they evil monsters to be condemned? In 1949 the students of Tokyo University published a collection of excerpts from the diaries and letters of seventy-six fallen students, one-third of whom were from their university. The collection, called Kike wadatsumi no koe [Listen to the Voices of the Ocean], became a best-seller and bred the genre of “Wadatsumi literature,” which consists of the diaries and letters of fallen students.

The Japanese sculptor Hongô Shin built a “Wadatsumi statue” in 1950, which he offered to erect on the campus of Tokyo Imperial University. The students favored this, but university authorities hesitated, probably because they were not clear about the connotations that such a statue might have. When this became known to Suekawa Hiroshi, the liberal jurist who was then president of Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto, he invited Hongô to erect the statue on that campus. Suekawa was one of the professors who had resigned from Kyoto Imperial University in 1933, in protest over the dismissal of Professor Takikawa. Now, twenty years later, he wanted to honor the memory of the fallen students who had also been victims of Japan’s authoritarian regime.

The statue, set up on the Ritsumeikan campus in 1953, was awarded the Japan Cultural Peace Prize. At first the students respected the statue as a memorial to the idealistic youths who had died in a senseless war. However, sixteen years later, when the student turmoil of 1969 engulfed Japan, the radicals came to regard the statue as an expression of evil nationalism. They attacked and destroyed it in May 1969 (Kadoya 1973:207–8). The statue was recast the following year, and it stands today on the campus grounds, a symbol of the ideals and follies of World War II and its profound impact on Japan.
List of References


Ishii Tsutomu. 1978. *Tōdai to tomoni gojūnen* [Fifty years with the University of Tokyo]. Tokyo: Bunshōdō.


“Kokumin wa kō omou, yoron chōsa” [This is how the people think, a public opinion poll]. 1940. *Bungei shunju* January:150–61.


———. 1964. Wagakuni no kōtō kyōiku [Higher education of our country]. Tokyo.


Shimmyma Masamichi. 1938. "Gakusei wa kami o kirubeki-ka?" [Should the students cut their hair?]. Chūō kōron January:175–84.


Teikoku daigaku shimbun [Imperial university newspaper]. 1941–1942.


Universities and Students in Wartime Japan


