Everyday Fascism in Contemporary Japan

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This dissertation uses the concept of fascism in order to examine the socio-culture of contemporary Japan. Defined in terms of its commodity structure, fascism turns out to be a relevant concept to Japan not only prior to and during the Asia-Pacific War (1931-1945) but also from the postwar days to date. Against various forms of culturalism that claim that the country is essentially totalitarian and its culture is innately violent, I will argue that the country has shared fascist conditions with those other countries and regions that operate in the mode of mechanical reproduction. While the overall mode of mass-reproduction has been further articulated by different moments, such as late capitalism or post-modernism, the cultural and political condition of reducing singular lives and events into standardized forms has continued in these countries and regions roughly since the 1920s. My view will expand the horizon of studies of fascism, which has hitherto been limited to Europe between the two World Wars. At the same time, the view of fascism's generality should not be blind to local inflections and historical specificities. In this dissertation, I will examine such trans-war Japanese institutions as the ideologies of emperorship, formation of the petty bourgeois class, and corporatist organizations of gender and locality. My dissertation will ethnographically investigate the way in which these institutions have interacted with the country's modern capitalist everyday to result in fascist violence. The specific sites in which my ethnographies take place are the contemporary Tokyo and Yokohama suburbs (Chapters 1 and 3) and the Yasukuni Shinto Shrine in Tokyo (Chapters 2 and 4), among others. These ethnographies will elucidate how the categories of class, gender, and generation crisscross everyday pleasures and anxieties of commodification. Lastly and not least importantly, another historically specific element of postwar Japanese fascism is memories and traces of its prewar violence exercised on other Asians and Pacific Islanders. The problem of ill mourning seems to critically ground the postwar Japanese formation of fascist potentialities. The last chapter will discuss contemporary Japanese efforts for mourning and the accompanying issue of ethics.

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Japanese-style fascism. At the same time he attributes the problem to the intellectual autonomy of Japan's history of political ideas. In this argument the aborted development of Japanese modernity explains the failure of politics to control the military and the fascistic elements which then took over Japanese society itself. The influence of Maruyama's work remains immense in Japan. Not content with the kind of democracy imposed by the occupying forces, he questioned the role of modernity in contemporary Japan, making a strong distinction between modernity on one hand and Westernization on th In his article “Contemporary Japanese-style Painting and its National Characteristics,” published in Kokuga in 1942, Okazaki called Yasuda’s Camp at Kisegawa an exemplary artwork that is particularly “Japanese.” His discussion hinges mostly on the painters’ use of line (sen), two-dimensionality (heimen), and the resulting mood or aesthetics. ^ William Miles Fletcher III, The Search for a New Order: Intellectuals and Fascism in Prewar Japan (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982). Another notable work from around this period is Gordon, Labor and Imperial Democracy in Prewar Japan.