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Conflicting views of Japan’s mission in the world and national moral education: Yamaji Aizan and his opponent Inoue Tetsujirō

YUSHI ITO

Abstract: In this paper, I discuss the conflicting views of Japan’s mission in the world and national moral education held by Yamaji Aizan and Inoue Tetsujirō, two eminent intellectuals of the Meiji and Taisho periods. In doing so, I suggest that one can not understand the dilemma that Japanese intellectuals faced when they realized the limits of Meiji modernization if one simply labels them as ‘nationalists’. Inoue Tetsujirō made a sharp distinction between Japanese culture and other cultures and regarded foreign countries as a threat to Japan. Inoue attempted to establish the Japanese spirit embodied in bushido as the basis of ‘state-centred education’ (kokkashugi kyōiku), while believing that Japan’s mission was to spread this unique spirit to the world. In opposition to such arguments, Yamaji Aizan criticised Inoue’s idea of Japanese cultural uniqueness, which he thought could hinder cross-cultural understanding. Yamaji was also opposed to Inoue’s method of investigating Japanese spirit in history and utilising it as the basis of national moral education. Instead Yamaji asserted that there was a common humanity behind the different manners, customs and ways of thinking in each nation. Although often considered an imperialist, Yamaji believed that Japan’s mission was to promote better cross-cultural understanding by removing prejudice and discrimination.

Keywords: Yamaji Aizan, Inoue Tetsujirō, nationalism, bushido, education, cross-cultural understanding

Introduction

The first in-depth study in English of popular Japanese historian Yamaji Aizan was published under the title of Yamaji Aizan and His Time: Nationalism and Debating Japanese History (Ito 2007), which defines Yamaji fundamentally as a liberal rather than a typical nationalist of the period. However, it does not focus on the
conflicting views of Japan’s mission in the world and national moral education held by two Japanese nationalists, Yamaji Aizan and his opponent Inoue Tetsujirō during the Meiji and Taishō periods. Both of them were members of a new generation (the young men of Meiji), who were concerned that despite the remarkable changes that had taken place since the Meiji Restoration in 1868 the future of Japan was by no means certain (Duus 1974: 416; Pyle 1969: 190–4; Squires 2001: 148). This paper will discuss their conflicting views of Japan’s mission in the world and of national moral education and will throw light on the complicated dilemma that Japanese intellectuals faced when they realized the limits of the Meiji modernization under Western pressure.

After the Meiji Restoration, Japan developed the military and economic capacity to join the Western powers then colonizing Asia. Japan opened Korea by force in 1875–6, as it remained available for Japanese territorial expansion. The annexation of Taiwan in 1895 and Korea in 1910 provided a means for dealing with domestic overpopulation and a breakwater against the territorial expansion of Western powers (Fogel 1984: 58). It was under these circumstances that Japanese nationalists discussed Japan’s mission and prosperity in Asia. In reference to Japan in modern times, Benedict Anderson has asserted that Japanese nationalism ‘took on an aggressive imperialist character, even outside ruling circles’ (Anderson 1983: 97). Joshua Fogel argues that: ‘Nationalism in its various outward manifestations brought Japanese of opposing views together and turned in the direction of expansionism in the early 1890s’ (Fogel 1984: 59). In reference to Japanese nationalists, Carol Gluck regards the independent historian Yamaji Aizan as one of the min'kan (popular) nationalists, who included members of the Seikyōsha group such as Shiga Shigetaka, Miyake Setsurei and Kuga Katsunan (Gluck 1985: 112). Gluck suggests that ‘these min'kan nationalists often advocated the same native values as the moralists’ like Motoda Eifu, a Confucian scholar who took part in the drafting of Kyōiku Chokugo (the Imperial Rescript on Education), promulgated in 1890, and helped to establish an educational ideology for the Meiji government, but she does not explain, for example, why Yamaji Aizan strongly opposed Inoue Tetsujirō’s view of national moral education. Anderson, Fogel and Gluck have noticed the diversity of Japanese nationalism, but they are not so interested in its diversity and have focused their attention on the results caused by nationalism. As Bruce Stronach argues, however, ‘unless it is clear what type of nationalism is being discussed in each context, the word becomes meaningless’ (Stronach 1995: xiv–xv).

The diversity of Japanese nationalism was extensively discussed by Kenneth Pyle in his The New Generation in Meiji Japan. In this book, Pyle suggested that there were three types of nationalists in the late Meiji period, when Japan had to reconcile ‘the conflicting needs of cultural borrowing and national pride’. One group, called the Min'yūsha, believed that social progress was ‘unilinear’. They argued that: ‘The course of Western civilization represented the universal path of progress for all nations, and that Japanese therefore need feel no compunction
about Westernization’. This view accorded with the expectations of young Japanese in the early Meiji period. Encountering difficulties in reforming traditional thought and behaviour, however, many young Japanese intellectuals became uncomfortable with the unilinear view of social progress that implied indifference to Japan’s own history and traditions (Pyle 1969: 191).

Pyle has argued that the second group, the Seikyōsha, represented a different way of dealing with the problem of cultural borrowing and opposed the unilinear concept of social progress. They advanced the concept of ‘an evolving world civilization’, in which progress was achieved through competition and diversity among nations, each learning from the special strengths of others and in turn developing and improving its own special talents. The Seikyōsha group set out to find elements of their cultural heritage that could be considered special strengths and that would bring pride to modern Japan. In doing so, they attempted to preserve Japan’s ‘national essence’ (*kokusui*), but their ideas were completely different from those of more conservative nationalists (Gavin 2000; Iwai 1960: 42; Pyle 1969: 191–2). The third group of nationalists, including Inoue Tetsujirō and Takayama Chogyū, a student of Inoue Tetsujirō at the Imperial University, preached ‘a far more conservative brand of nationalism’ and became prominent during the 1890s. Like the Seikyōsha group, they aimed to preserve the Japanese national character, but offered sweeping solutions to problems of cultural identity. They tried to put an end to cultural subservience to the West by asserting the distinctiveness and superiority of the Japanese way of life (Pyle 1969: 192–4).

Yamaaji Aizan did not belong to any of the three types of nationalists that Pyle has classified. Although a member of the Min’yūsha in his early career, unlike Tokutomi Sohō, the leader of the Min’yūsha who regarded Japan’s past as a period of darkness and barbarism (Tabata 1969: 65), Yamaaji showed strong interest in Japanese history and traditions (Ito 2007). In this paper, I will argue that, while nationalists like Inoue Tetsujirō attempted to search for an ideal, unique Japanese national spirit in the past in order to strengthen Japanese national morals, Yamaaji Aizan did not emphasize the idea of the national character unique to the Japanese but attempted to find a universal ‘truth’ in history and establish new morals for the future. In previous studies, Yamaaji Aizan has been often regarded as an ‘imperialist’ or ‘expansionist’ and his achievements have been often studied in the context of the development of Japanese nationalism (Fujii 1968: 80; Oguma 1995, 2002). Characterizing him in this way, however, makes it impossible to understand the complicated dilemma that Japanese intellectuals faced around the turn of the century (Ito and Graham 1994: 1–18). It also discounts the inherent diversity of nationalism (Anderson 1983; Doak 1994).

**Inoue Tetsujirō’s idea of Nihonshugi**

Inoue Tetsujirō (1855–1944), professor of philosophy at the Imperial University, was the author of *Chokugo engi* (A Commentary on the Imperial Rescript, 1891)
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and influential in the pre-war period in propagating the spirit of loyalty and patriotism expressed in the Imperial Rescript on Education (Yamazumi 1980: 106–7). John Tucker has suggested that Inoue’s writings became increasingly nationalistic in the final decade of the Meiji period and continued to be so during the ‘liberal’ 1920s (Tucker 2002: 39). He also notes that ‘[p]re-1945 scholarly and popular writings which reflected Inoue’s views are too numerous to list’ (Tucker 2002: 49). Inoue was not tolerant of foreign ideas such as Christianity, even though it had been accepted in Japan from 1873, and he criticized Christians on the grounds that their ‘uchūshugi’ (universalism) contradicted kokkashugi (state-centred nationalism), which he thought was the basis of Japan’s kokutai (national polity) (Inoue [1893] 1974: 125–34, 147).

Being aware of a distinction between Japan and foreign countries, Inoue Tetsujirō was concerned about the difference of ‘peoples’ (jinshu) from the very beginning of his academic career.¹ In his book Naichi zakkyo ron (On Mixed Residence, 1889), Inoue hoped that the ‘inferior’ Japanese would avoid close contact with ‘superior’ Westerners until they became able to compete on equal terms. For him, the outside world was a threat to Japan’s safety, and he emphasized the importance of racial distinction to the survival of the ‘inferior’ Japanese (Minamoto 1958).² In May 1897, after the Sino-Japanese War (1894–5), intellectuals including Inoue Tetsujirō and his student Takayama Chogyū published the first issue of the magazine Nihonshugi (Japanism). In his essay published in the Nihonshugi in 1897, Takayama Chogyū expressed an exclusive view of peoples, asserting that there were no universal ‘friendly feelings’ (jinruiteki jōgi) in the world and that each nation had its own national morals (Miyazawa 1977: 31; Takayama 1905: 265). Takayama also argued that the people would become fully aware of their nationality only after they knew about their own national character, emphasizing that the ‘national character’ could be grasped thorough historical and comparative investigation (Takayama 1905: 257).³ Thus, both Inoue Tetsujirō and Takayama Chogyū argued that there was a clear distinction between Japan and other countries without showing any interest in promoting cross-cultural understanding.⁴

In the mid-Meiji period when state-centred nationalism became prevalent, Japanese intellectuals re-evaluated Japanese history and tradition in order to find Japan’s future destination (Pyle 1969: 190–1). In June 1897, Inoue Tetsujirō gave a speech for a meeting held at the lecture theatre of the Society of Imperial Education, which was published in March 1898 (Inoue 1898: 1). In this speech, Inoue explained what was meant by the ‘Nihonshugi’ he advocated. Around the time of the Meiji Restoration, he argued, Japanese considered Western civilization to be advanced and introduced it, which made it possible for them to create the present-day Japanese civilization. With the progress of the civilization, however, it was necessary for Japanese to consider whether or not they should continue to introduce Western civilization (Inoue 1898: 2–3). Inoue believed that Japan had to create a new civilization adopting only good points of Western culture while maintaining state-centred nationalism and national unity. If foreign ideas
were introduced without any rule to go by, Japan might be in danger of being spiritually disunited. Therefore, Inoue argued, Japanese people should embrace the principle of *Nihonshugi*, by which he meant a ‘groupism’ (*dantai no shugi*) that valued the Japanese spirit (Inoue 1898, 5–8).

While advocating the principle of *Nihonshugi*, Inoue insisted that ‘universalism’ (*sekaishugi*), which transcended the boundary of a state, was not practiced anywhere in the world. In his view, the principle of universalism was ‘vague’ and ‘intangible’ (Inoue [1893] 1974: 8–9). The state would become weak if the people were too faithful to the principle of universalism. On the surface, the great powers in Europe followed the principle of universalism, but they never looked down on their own country. Each country pretended not to violate other countries’ rights, but ‘actually invades each other’. In fact, Japanese immigrants were being rejected in Hawaii, and ‘the anti-Japanese campaign’ had started in various countries. Therefore, by being too faithful to the principle of universalism, Inoue thought, Japan would be disadvantaged (Inoue 1898: 10–11). Thus, Inoue asserted that Japanese people should not adopt the principle of universalism but should adopt the principle of *Nihonshugi* so that they could be unified as a nation. As will be shown in the following section, Yamaji Aizan criticized the vagueness of the concept of *Nihonshugi* used by intellectuals like Inoue and Takayama (Yamaji [1898] 1983b: 420).

**Yamaji Aizan’s criticism of *Nihonshugi***

Yamaji Aizan (1865–1917) was a journalist and popular historian of the Meiji and Taisho periods. His view of Japanese tradition and moral education was fundamentally different from that of nationalists such as Inoue Tetsujirō and Takayama Chogyū, who advocated the principle of *Nihonshugi* and asserted that the Japanese spirit should be restored since morals had been corrupted after the rapid introduction of Western civilisation to Japan. Yamaji’s view of Japan in the world was based on his belief that people in all ages and countries shared a common humanity. In the early part of his professional career, Yamaji wrote a short essay ‘The Present is like the Past, and that One is like this One’ for the *Kokumin shimbun* published in 1892. As the title of this essay indicates, Yamaji expressed his idea that ‘human nature is the same in all ages and countries’ (Yamaji [1892] 1983a: 59).

In 1898, one year after the publication of the first issue of *Nihonshugi*, edited by Inoue Tetsujirō and Takayama Chogyū, Yamaji Aizan published an essay addressed to Saionji Kinmochi (1849–1940), the then Minister for Education, and criticized educators for their adherence to the principle of *Nihonshugi*. In this essay, Yamaji argued that state-centred education failed to produce people with genuine patriotism and went on to say:
Educational circles are too arrogant to listen to criticisms levelled at them. They adhere to a biased view to the extent that they cannot consider a problem from the standpoint of a third party. A group of leaders in educational circles became like the Pope. They firmly believe that their own ‘dogma’ is the golden rule.

(Yamaji [1898] 1983b: 418)

Yamaji wanted Saionji Kinmochi to reform the state-centred education as the Minister for Education and asserted as follows:

They [educators] still do not understand the history of Japanese civilization, although they often talk about Japan’s national polity. They cannot define a model Japanese, although they often talk about Nihonshugi. Their so-called kokusuishugi (principle of preserving the national essence) and Nihonshugi are only airy-fairy.

(Yamaji [1898] 1983b: 420)

Thus, Yamaji strongly opposed educators like Inoue Tetsujirō on the grounds that they ‘misunderstood’ the history of Japanese civilization and asserted that the ‘unique’ Japanese character was the spirit of loyalty and patriotism.

In Yamaji’s view, those who held the principle of Nihonshugi did not tolerate foreign cultures including Western culture. As has been discussed, Inoue Tetsujirō argued that Japan should preserve the Japanese spirit while adopting only the ‘good points of Western culture’. In opposition to such an idea, Yamaji Aizan asserted that Japan should positively introduce Western culture in order to enrich Japanese civilization. He went on as follows:

I do not intend to fight against the old Japan. I respect and love all good, beautiful and genuine things that have developed in the last 2,500 years of Japanese history . . . Western civilization would not destroy the old Japan, but would awaken the old Japan that is on the verge of disappearing. . . . In this sense, I want to introduce Western civilization into Japan.

(Yamaji [1898] 1983b: 421)

Yamaji believed that one should not ignore Japan’s past because it showed the way in which Japan could reform itself for the future. Some people were afraid that Western civilization would destroy the good old Japanese tradition, but Yamaji did not think in that way. He believed that Western civilization would help the Japanese in rediscovering their own good old tradition that they had forgotten (Yamaji [1898] 1983b: 421). Thus, Yamaji criticized the principle of Nihonshugi, which was advocated by Inoue Tetsujirō and Takayama Chogyū, who made a sharp distinction between Japan and other countries and were intolerant of foreign ideas, including Christianity.6

In spite of arguments against the idea of Japanese uniqueness, the study of the Japanese national character continued until the end of the Second World War in an attempt to find out the essence of the Japanese national spirit. In his
Nihon ideorogii ron (On Japanese Ideology, 1935), the Marxist Tosaka Jun pointed out that, according to Nihonshugi, the characteristic of Japan was its exceptional spirituality, compared to the national characters of other countries. In opposition to such a view, Tosaka argued that the meaning of Nihonshugi was ‘vague’ and ‘could be interpreted in anyone’s favour’ (Tosaka 1977: 146–7). Kozai Yoshishige wrote that the activity of Tosaka Jun was ‘a shining moment in the dark age of the Second World War’ (Kozai 1977: 425), but already in 1898 Yamaji Aizan had criticized the idea of Nihonshugi advocated by Inoue Tetsujirō and Takayama Chogyū as ‘only airy-fairy’.

Yamaji Aizan’s criticism of Nihonjinron

Unlike nationalists such as Inoue Tetsujirō and Takayama Chogyū, Yamaji Aizan showed interest in the commonality of mankind and published an article ‘Nihonjin kakai ron’ (The Japanese are understandable) written by Takagi Mizutarō in his Kokumin zasshi in October 1912 (Takagi 1912: 60–2). This article is a summary of an essay on the Japanese national character written by George Kennan (1845–1924), an American journalist (Kennan 1912a: 815–22). According to Kennan, most Westerners believed that it was impossible for them to understand the mind of the Japanese. For instance, Lafcadio Hearn (1850–1904), a British author and educator, was naturalized as a Japanese citizen and introduced Japan to the world in his writings. Even after having lived in Japan for fourteen years, Hearn said that Japanese thought and feelings were different from those of Westerners. It is true, Kennan argues, that all nations and peoples have some aspects that are difficult to understand, but they also have something in common with each other. Behind different manners, customs and social organizations, there is a common humanity among people all over the world. If one looked at different people with sympathy, one would find that they had common human feelings despite external differences (Takagi 1912: 60–1). In Kennan’s opinion, one could easily explain the many cases of alleged Japanese inscrutability presented by foreign observers ‘without assuming that there was a racial difference between the Japanese mind and the American mind’. The author introducing Kennan’s essay in the Kokumin zasshi expressed his pleasure in seeing that mutual understanding was developing between the East and the West. Yamaji’s interest in George Kennan’s arguments on the Japanese national character is also reflected in the fact that Yamaji published translations of two other essays on the Japanese national character written by Kennan in his Kokumin zasshi (Kennan 1912b: 24–33; 1912c: 16–22).

In the late Meiji period, the issue of the Japanese national character became a major topic of discussion in intellectual circles (Shively 1971: 77–80). While some foreigners thought that Japanese people were incomprehensible, some Japanese intellectuals believed that the Japanese national character was so unique that foreigners would not be able to understand them. The anonymous author of a column in Dokuritsu hyōron, published in March 1908, wrote that ‘Wherever you
went, people attempted to define the Japanese national character in order to make the people aware of their nationality’ (Anon. 1908: 22). The author wondered if ‘there are any other nationals who think and talk about themselves as much as we do’. In this author’s view, those who talked about the national character resembled ‘oversensitive people who take their own pulses’ (Anon. 1908: 22–3). In the same column, Yamaji Aizan wrote that there should be no rash discussion of the Japanese national character, because the claim that the Japanese were unique was like ‘a fool’s dream’ (Yamaji 1908a: 28).

A widely read book on Japanese national character at that time was *Kokuminsei juron* (Ten Arguments on National Character, 1907) written by Haga Yaichi (1867–1927), a scholar of Japanese literature. Haga identified ten national characteristics he found in Japanese literature that ran through different periods and continued down to later ages. In his essay ‘Higa no tokusei’ (The Characteristics of our Nationals and other Nationals, 1908), Hayama Manjirō said that he was ‘one of the most earnest readers’ of Haga’s book and asserting that foreigners would never understand the Japanese because of their unique character. In his opinion, the Japanese national character had been unique since ancient times and no other civilizations were comparable to Japanese civilization (Hayama 1908: 43–6). Hayama’s essay was critically reviewed in the *Dokuritsu hyoron* (Independent Review) in 1908, the reviewer asserting that each civilization had its own unique character and that this was not limited to Japanese civilization (Anon. 1908: 41).

In an essay published in 1911, Yamaji Aizan criticized the *Nihonjinron* advocated by Haga Yaichi and Tomonaga Sanjūrō (1871–1951), a philosophy professor at Kyoto Imperial University. In *Kokuminsei juron*, Haga had explored the Japanese national character through literary analysis and argued that the Japanese people were ‘gentle, modest and graceful’, but Yamaji considered such an argument to be ‘superficial’. In Yamaji’s view, if one considered historical figures such as Emperor Ten’chi (626–71), Fujiwara no Kamatari (614–69), Minamoto no Yoritomo (1147–99), Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–616), Iwakura Tomomi (1825–83) and Ōkubo Toshimichi (1830–78), one would realize that Japanese people were ‘ambitious and active’ and pursued ‘great political and economic national policies’. Yamaji asserted that Haga’s argument neglected the biographies of these ‘active’ Japanese heroes (Yamaji 1911: 206–7). On the other hand, Tomonaga Sanjūrō argued that the Japanese people did not have a deep attachment to anything and were easily moved, but Yamaji thought this opinion to be ‘thoughtless’. The will of Japanese people, in fact, was determined to the extent that they sacrificed their lives for the country. Such a determined will was shown in the spirit of bushido. Japanese samurai showed a strong will when the Mongols attacked the Japanese islands. The Ikkō uprisings such as the Nagashima uprising (1570–4) and the Ishiyama Honganji uprising (1570–80) reflected the Japanese spirit of self-sacrifice. In Yamaji’s view, Tomonaga’s argument was wrong because these historical events showed that Japanese people had the spirit of tenacity (Yamaji
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Thus, Yamaji asserted that the *Nihonjinron* presented by Haga and Tomonaga was not acceptable if one seriously took Japanese history into consideration. It was wrong for Tomonaga to discuss the Japanese national character on the basis of medieval court literature. On the other hand, Haga discovered feelings of nobility in court literature, but these feelings did not represent the ‘strong and sturdy’ character of Japanese people (Yamaji 1911: 208).

To throw doubt on the uniqueness of the Japanese national character was to pay attention to variation among the Japanese. In his essay on *Nihonjinron* published in the *Dokuritsu hyöron* in 1913, Yamaji argued that one needed to understand variation among the Japanese if one wanted to understand the Japanese national character. He suggested that it was not sufficient for those who wanted to know the true character of the Japanese to observe only the citizens of large cities like Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto. It was necessary to carefully observe people in the countryside. For instance, the great optimism displayed by old people in the countryside was not something that old people who lived in a city could understand (Yamaji [1913] 1917b: 1224). In his view, because there were different characteristics among the Japanese people, *Nihonjinron*, which ignored variation, should be re-examined.8

**Inoue Tetsujirō’s view of bushido and national moral education**

Intellectuals who supported the idea of *Nihonshugi* and *Nihonjinron* emphasized the unique national character of the Japanese people. Such nationalistic ideas can be also seen in arguments about bushido. After the Restoration, the new Meiji government abolished the samurai class and the spirit of bushido was crushed out. In the mid Meiji period, however, bushido came to be evaluated as a traditional characteristic unique to the Japanese people. It has been suggested that various books on the spirit of bushido including those written by Nitobe Inazō (1899) and Inoue Tetsujirō (1901) were published in large part in response to the stimulus of the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War (Ōta 1995: 243).

Like scholars of the National Learning School (*kokugaku*), Inoue Tetsujirō emphasized that the Japanese national spirit should be maintained and he searched for something unique to Japan in history.9 In his paper on Japanese culture published in 1895, Inoue suggested that Japanese people had developed their own unique thought in spite of the fact that foreign thought had been introduced into Japan since the age of the *Kojiki* (*Records of Ancient Matters*, 712) (Inoue 1895: 9–10). After having presented his paper on Japanese philosophical thought at the International Conference of Oriental Studies held in Paris in 1897, Inoue wrote, he came to realize the necessity of the historical study of Japanese thought in order to throw light on the origin of national morals (Inoue 1900c: 4). In another paper on Japanese national thought published in 1899, he discussed the development of Japanese thought from the past to the present in the hope of maintaining the essence of Japanese thought in order to promote the national spirit (Inoue
In his book on the philosophy of the Wang Yang-ming School in Japan published in 1900, Inoue Tetsujirō expressed his concern with national morality because he thought morality had been corrupted in Japan. The aim of his study of the development of Japanese morality was to eliminate contemporary social evils. In Inoue’s view, some scholars advocated utilitarianism or egoism after the Meiji Restoration and, as a result, Japanese morality was corrupted. Utilitarianism might be effective for the national economy, but it should not be adopted as the moral principle of the individual because it was unable to mould national morality. On the other hand, ‘Egoism is nothing but a sophism which does more harm than good’ (Inoue 1900c: 4). Inoue was afraid that ‘Heretical ideas such as utilitarianism and egoism have been publicly expressed and have corrupted national morality’ (Inoue 1900c: 6).

Inoue Tetsujirō published his book Bushido in July 1901, in which he asserted that the spirit of bushido was unique to Japan. In his view, the spirit of bushido originated in Japan and could not be found in Europe (Inoue 1901: 7). In 1902, furthermore, Inoue published a book Nihon kogakuha no tetsugaku (The Philosophy of Japanese Classical Learning School, 1902) in order to clarify the unique Japanese national spirit. Yamaga Sokō had criticized the Neo-Confucian School for over-indulging in Chinese culture and attempted to base Japanese morals on the spirit of bushido (Inoue 1902: 80, 88). In Inoue’s view, the spirit of bushido was a reflection of the Japanese national character, which he thought was ‘active’ and was not ‘passive’ (Inoue 1902: 293).

In 1903, in opposition to Inoue Tetsujirō’s view of bushido, Yamaji Aizan wrote a book review of Inoue Tetsujirō’s Nihon kogakuha no tetsugaku (Yamaji 1903: 72–84). While Inoue insisted that the spirit of bushido was unique to the Japanese, Yamaji argued that it had been developed not only in Japan but also in other parts of the world (Yamaji 1903: 78). Inoue asserted that the genuine spirit of bushido was reflected in the revenge taken by the forty-seven royal retainers of Akō (Akō rōshi), but Yamaji argued that the spirit of bushido had changed with the times. In Yamaji’s view, the relationship between lord and retainer was not as close before the early Edo period. In the late Muromachi and Azuchi-Momoyama periods, retainers had easily switched their allegiance if they did not like their lord. It was said that the subject always respected his master even if the latter treated the former badly, but Yamaji thought that such a loyal subject could be found only among the people of the Edo period and that retainers of the late Muromachi and Azuchi-Momoyama periods had not been loyal as those of the Edo period (Yamaji 1903: 79). Thus, Yamaji Aizan was opposed to Inoue’s excessive emphasis on Japanese national characteristics like the spirit of bushido on the grounds that Inoue’s view contradicted the evidence that was found in history. For Yamaji, the spirit of bushido did not mean that the subject followed the lord blindly (Yamaji 1908b: 5).
In spite of Yamaji’s criticism of a moral education based on the spirit of the bushido, Inoue Tetsujirō continued to defend this idea. In his essay ‘Kokkateki dōtoku to sekaiteki dōtoku’ (National Morals and Universal Morals) published in 1905, Inoue asserted that national morality should be harmonized with universal morality. In his view, national morality was necessary to make the state strong enough to resist the threat to the individual’s life and property from foreign invasions. Inoue realized that universal morality should not be neglected because the state could gain respect from other countries through its own respect for universal moral principles such as ‘philanthropy, humanity, justice, fidelity and honesty’. In Inoue’s view, however, it was a mistake to value universal morality at the expense of national morality. Although asserting that it was ideal to harmonize national morality with universal morality, Inoue believed that Japan’s national spirit manifest in bushido and the like should not be injured, as it was the basis of national morality (Inoue 1905).

As Winston Davis has suggested, Inoue Tetsujirō tried to go beyond the traditionalists who regarded loyalty as an absolute obligation to the lord: his ‘nationalism could no longer be defended by simple traditionalism’ (Davis 1976: 9). In reference to the forty-seven rōnin in Akō, John Tucker has also asserted that Inoue ‘surely hoped to redirect the kind of ultimate loyalism manifested by the rōnin away from feudal lords and toward the imperial throne’ (Tucker 2002: 45). In Tucker’s view, Inoue valued the spirit of loyalty displayed by the rōnin and ‘was not bothered by the fact that the rōnin were criminals in their own days’ (Tucker 2002: 36). It should be noted, however, Inoue regarded the control of private sphere activities as essential to the maintenance of moral order in Japan and never liberated the ‘private’ sphere from that of the ‘public’. In an article published in 1900, Inoue asserted that moral conduct should be ‘objectively’ correct and that it was not sufficient to be ‘subjectively’ correct (Inoue 1900a: 60).

Yamaji Aizan’s view of bushido and ‘world civilization education’

Against the popularity of the spirit of bushido, the Enlightenment scholar Fukuzawa Yukichi attempted to establish a new morality that was different from that expressed in bushido. In February 1900, Fukuzawa published a book Shūshin yōryō (A Concise Outline of Morals) with the help of his students, in which he emphasized the importance of the spirit of independence and self-respect in moral education. In an essay published in the Shinano mainichi shimbun (Shinano Daily Newspaper) in March 1900, Yamaji Aizan discussed Fukuzawa Yukichi’s view of morality as expressed in the Katei sōdan (Family Stories) published in 1876 and 1877. Yamaji noted that Fukuzawa had felt the need of a new morality, because the old morality had become out of date in the early Meiji period. In the past, the samurai nourished the spirit of the country and preserved the vitality of the country. In the Meiji period, however, the authority of the descendants of the samurai was weakened and Confucianism came to be regarded as old-fashioned.
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It was reasonable, therefore, that Fukuzawa wanted to establish a morality for Japan’s new citizens, instead of a morality for the samurai (Yamaji [1900] 1917a: 412–20). In Fukuzawa’s opinion, morals such as patience, diligence and honesty were important for people to organize themselves and attain social success in the Meiji period (Yamaji [1900] 1917a: 415). In this way, Yamaji noted Fukuzawa’s criticism of Confucian morality as maintained by the samurai class in the Edo period.

Fukuzawa Yukichi’s attempt to establish a new morality encountered criticism from Inoue Tetsujirō, who wanted to preserve the Japanese national spirit. In June 1900, soon after the publication of Fukuzawa’s Shūshin yōryō (A Concise Outline of Morals), Inoue Tetsujirō published his essay on moral education in Tetsugaku zasshi (The Philosophical Journal), in which he asserted that the spirit of loyalty and filial piety should be the core of national education (Inoue 1900b: 480). In his view, the spirit of obedience was a virtue because it helped maintain peace and order in society. Without any obedience, a society could not continue to exist. If people actually acted on the principle of independence and self-respect, they could ruin themselves or disturb the order of the society (Inoue 1900b: 482). Therefore, the principle of independence and self-respect without the spirit of obedience would inevitably lead to subversive activities, as exemplified by the French Revolution (1789–99) (Inoue 1900b: 486). People had to be taught that the interest of the individual should be subordinated to the benefit of the society as a whole. Inoue also claimed that Fukuzawa’s view of moral education was inconsistent with the Imperial Rescript on Education, because he only emphasized the spirit of independence and self-respect while ignoring that of loyalty and filial piety (Inoue 1900a: 500).

In July 1900, one month after the publication of Inoue Tetsujirō’s criticism of Fukuzawa’s view of moral education, Yamaji Aizan criticized Inoue for using the Imperial Rescript on Education, which expressed only general moral principles, in a controversy between academic schools (Yamaji 1900a). In Yamaji’s view, the concept of ‘individualism’ did not mean that each individual looked after one’s own interests without regard to other people’s interests. At the same time, the concept of ‘kokkashugi’ (state-centred nationalism) did not mean that the interests of the individual should not be considered even if priority had to be given to the survival of the state. The duty of the state was to protect the life and property of the individual. On the other hand, it was natural that the individual should sacrifice his or her own life when the state faced a serious crisis (Yamaji 1900b). Whether one should give priority to the prosperity of the state or to the freedom of the individual depended on the international situation. Japan was a rising country among the powers of the world, and the region was encountering one difficulty after another. Therefore, Yamaji thought, the first priority should be given to the promotion of patriotism in order to maintain the prosperity of the state. In opposition to Inoue’s criticism of Fukuzawa’s view of moral education, however, Yamaji argued that one should use one’s ‘discretion’ because the situation was
not critical enough to justify denying the rights and freedom of the individual in order to save Japan (Yamaji 1900c).

Like Fukuzawa, Yamaji believed that it was necessary to establish a new morality in place of Confucian morality and was critical of the spirit of bushido based on Confucianism. In his essay ‘Kokumin kyōikuron’ (On National Education), published in 1901, Yamaji criticized the view of education that emphasized the uniqueness of the Japanese national spirit, including the spirit of bushido, and advocated ‘world civilization education’ (sekai bunmei no kyōiku), which was supposed to dispel prejudice and promote cross-cultural understanding.12

In this essay, Yamaji Aizan asserted that national education could not be perfect without good teachers, but the view of education held by some educators was based on the idea that Japan’s kokutai (national polity) should be retained (Yamaji 1901a). In Yamaji’s view, education had to be suited to the changing times. In the past, the retainers of the feudal lord were taught that they should die in battle on horseback in front of their lord. After the Meiji Restoration, people were expected to protect their own rights and obey the constitution and the laws. Yamaji respected the spirit of loyalty displayed by Kusunoki Masashige (?–1336) and Takayama Hikokurō (1747–93). Kusunoki Masashige was a warrior chieftain from the province of Kawachi who died supporting the Kenmu Restoration (1333–6) of Emperor Go-Daigo.13 Takayama Hikokurō was an emperor worshipper who advocated the legitimacy of the emperor’s authority under pressure from the Tokugawa shogunate. Instead of teaching old morals like the spirit of loyalty displayed by these historical figures, however, Yamaji argued that educators should teach a new morality that was in touch with the times (Yamaji 1901b). In Yamaji’s view, the aim of national education was to produce people who knew how to get on in the world of the present day.

Yamaji enumerated three important points in the promotion of ‘world civilization education’ as follows. First, the people should be aware of the responsibilities of their profession even though the spirit of bushido had been emphasized in education in the past. Old textbooks on morality were sufficient for the production of dutiful and obedient children, but were not good enough for the production of citizens who respected the spirit of independence and self-help and who were diligent in their professions. As Confucianism and the code of the samurai still exerted a ‘harmful’ influence on education in Japan, the people tended to be proud, while making light of the professions and despising the spirit of diligence. People should be taught to regard the professions as sacred and value the time that could be spent in their profession (Yamaji 1901d). Secondly, Japan should not be self-centred, although it was the people’s duty to their ancestors to maintain the ‘fine’ customs and public morals of Japan. It was acceptable to be old-fashioned if Japan was isolated from other countries. However, Japan had become one of the civilized nations and formed international friendships with foreign countries after the Meiji Restoration. Therefore, the people needed to know the ‘common feelings, manners, and morals’ that had developed among other civilized countries
in the world. Some scholars criticized this type of education, calling it ‘universalism’ (sekaishugi) or ‘anti-state-centred nationalism’ (hi-kokkashugi), but they could be criticized because they were ‘narrow-minded’ and ‘cowardly’ (Yamaji 1901c). Thirdly, the study of foreign languages should be promoted in order to deepen cross-cultural understanding. Studying foreign languages was the best way to understand foreign civilizations. Particularly, English was widely used in international business, so it should be taught at higher primary schools. It was not a problem if people could not read classical poems, but it would be disadvantageous if they could not read foreign newspapers. In this way, Yamaji urged Japanese people to learn foreign languages and abandon their ‘ignorant hostility’ to foreign countries (Yamaji 1901c).

Yamaji believed that the aim of ‘world civilization education’ was not to preach old morals such as the spirit of bushido but to educate Japanese people so that they could become familiar with a new morality and acquire knowledge of the world. In his article ‘Bushido ron’ (On Bushido) published in 1908, Yamaji asserted that Japanese people had been ‘patriotic’ and ‘brave’ since ancient times, but noted that the samurai had not been always obedient and had never followed their master blindly (Yamaji 1908c: 156–61). For Yamaji, the spirit of bushido was not to be obedient to the master. Thus, Yamaji wanted educators not to produce obedient people but to produce independent people who could understand and tolerate foreign cultures.14

Yamaji Aizan’s view of Japan’s mission in the world

In 1910 Japan annexed Korea after its victory over Russia in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5). In 1906, just after the Russo-Japanese War, Yamaji had advocated Japan’s annexation with Korea and regarded it as an ‘alliance’ (Yamaji [1906] 1985b: 183–4). He did not think that Japan had invaded Korea and did not show any keen sympathy with Korean nationalists who wanted to make Korea independent from Japan (Yamaji 1906: 11–12).15 Nevertheless, Yamaji noted that Japan had to cooperate with Korea and China in order to cope with the difficult international situation during a time of Western colonization of Asia.16 For this reason, Yamaji emphasized the importance of removing prejudice against foreigners and giving up the self-centred view of Japan for the promotion of better cross-cultural understanding and the improvement of Japan’s relations with neighbouring countries (Itô and Squires 1995: 147–60).17

In opposition to an exclusionary attitude toward foreigners, Yamaji Aizan argued that one should dispel prejudices against foreign cultures including Chinese culture in order to promote better cross-cultural understanding. In his essay ‘Daidō ron’ (On Similarities, 1905), Yamaji asserted that differences in national character between nations should not be emphasized. In his view, human beings looked different in appearance from each other, but if one closely observed them, one would find that there was no fundamental difference in human nature
Yamaji asserted that one should cast away all prejudices, and should remember that ‘there are fixed rules inherent in human society, which apply in all ages and countries’. For instance, as long as Japanese people regarded Chinese people as ‘strange foreigners’, they could not understand the nature of the Chinese (Yamaji 1905a: 36). Unless they realized that the laws that regulate Chinese history are the same as the ones that regulate Japanese history, Japanese people could not become good friends of the Chinese (Yamaji 1905a: 37). There are ‘quite a few fools who persist in discriminating against foreigners’, because they cannot appreciate ‘the common nature of human minds’ and ‘the common historical laws which regulate human minds’ (Yamaji 1905a: 38). The reason why Yamaji discussed cross-cultural understanding in this essay was that he wanted Japanese teachers to go to China to work for the establishment of friendly relations between China and Japan. In his view, Chinese and Japanese shared many common traits of thought and feelings.

If one considered a different culture to be behind the times, one might not be tolerant of that culture. The distinguished Sinologist Naitō Konan was shocked by some Chinese and Manchu manners and customs in Taiwan under the control of Japan, and repeatedly called on the Japanese authorities to outlaw foot-binding, queues and opium (Fogel 1984: 78). As regards different manners and customs, Yamaji thought that it was necessary to understand and tolerate foreign cultures and wrote as follows:

It seems strange to Chinese if they see Japanese sitting on the floor while reading a book. It seems strange that Japanese have a meal on a tray, instead of a table. It seems strange that Japanese do not use a bed when they sleep. It seems strange that the lower part of the body of Japanese is easily exposed when the wind is blowing, as they wear a kimono. It seems strange that Japanese schoolgirls remain unconcerned when they are mixed in among schoolboys. These are exactly the same as the case when Japanese laugh at Chinese men wearing their hair hanging down in a pigtail and Chinese women’s small bound feet.

(Yamaji 1905a: 38)

Yamaji argued that both Chinese and Japanese would not find each other’s behaviour strange if they investigated history and realized that manners and customs did not easily undergo change. The Japanese should study China until they could understand the nature of Chinese and could realize that there were common rules that regulated in China and Japan. It was also important, Yamaji claimed, for Japanese to let people all over the world know the ‘truth’ (dōri) in Ralph Waldo Emerson’s saying that ‘There are things common in human minds, and there are things common in histories’. In Yamaji’s opinion, we should eliminate our prejudiced views of other cultures and religions and should learn more about the fundamental commonality of human beings (Yamaji 1905a: 38–9).18

Besides the Japanese attitude toward foreigners, Yamaji was concerned with the Westerners’ view of the Japanese. In his essay ‘Nihonjinron’ published in
December 1905, Yamaji insisted that it was a misunderstanding for Westerners to regard the Japanese national character as exceptionally ‘superior’ because of their victory in the Russo-Japanese War. Some Westerners asserted that the rise of modern Japan challenged the moral supremacy of Christian countries and admired the Japanese people saying that ‘What is amazing’ was not only their force of arms but also their national character. In Yamaji’s view, the reason why Westerners were surprised at the rise of Japan lay in the fact that they believed in their own way and ‘despised other peoples and their beliefs’. Yamaji asserted that the human mind was universal and it was wrong to assume that ‘only one people and belief are good’ (Yamaji 1905a: 36–7).

In an essay published in 1913, Yamaji discussed the American policy of racial discrimination against the Japanese, criticizing the discriminatory view that only certain people were superior (Ukita 1908: 177). In his view, ‘the power of the white people’ had reached the Far East and, as a result, the Pacific region became a place where great powers struggled for supremacy. After the Russo-Japanese War, white people were afraid of the rise of the Japanese empire and ‘unreasonably oppressed’ the Japanese because they thought that the Japanese would rule over ‘the world that was dominated by the white people’. In the colonies occupied by white people, Japanese people felt inferior to them and were on the point of being expelled. As the population of Japanese immigrants increased in California in the USA, white people ‘felt disgusted’ at the manners and customs maintained by local Japanese. Some people said that it was inevitable for white people to refuse Japanese entry into the USA because Japanese found it hard to assimilate themselves to new surroundings. In opposition to this, Yamaji asserted that such an opinion was an ‘absurd argument’ and went on to say as follows:

If this argument were right, the white people who live in China could not be good citizens because they do not wear Chinese clothes and do not live in Chinese houses. Likewise, the white people who live in Japan could not be good citizen because they do not wear *hakama* and *haori*. Can you allow people to express such an absurd opinion?

(Yamaji 1913c: 5)

Yamaji thought that people could be ‘good citizens in the world’ even if they followed their favourite manners and customs. However, if the practice of these manners and customs offended the public and disturbed ‘the peace of community life’, the state had to prohibit them. If it was not necessary to prohibit them, it was no problem for Japanese to follow their manners and customs in the USA and for Americans to follow American manners and customs in Japan. The reason why some critics spoke ill of Japanese people was that they took a servile attitude and regarded the manners and customs of the white people as superior and those of the Japanese as inferior. Yamaji criticized the discriminatory view that certain people were superior because neither were white people particularly superior nor were Japanese people ‘incomparably good’ (Yamaji 1913c: 5–6). As has
been discussed, for Yamaji, Japan’s mission in the world was to let people in the world know about the fundamental commonality of human beings (Yamaji 1905a: 38–9).

**Yamaji Aizan’s view of Japan in the world**

Besides critically discussing intolerance and discrimination against different cultures and peoples, Yamaji urged Japanese people to give up the Japan-centred view of the world and to create a new Japan for the future. Regarding the anti-Japanese feeling in the USA, Kamata Eikichi, the then president of Keio Gijuku, insisted in 1908 that in order to solve this problem, Japanese people should not always follow the Japanese way of life in foreign countries (Kamata 1908: 199–200; Minami 1994: 59). Like Kamata, Yamaji critically discussed the self-centred view of the world that emphasized the uniqueness and superiority of specific people. While criticizing foreigners who sympathized with anti-Japanese feeling, as will be discussed, Yamaji asserted that the Japanese feeling of self-righteousness, which Kamata was concerned about, should be rectified through the fundamental reform of education.

In an essay published in 1913, Yamaji insisted that it was wrong to attempt to cultivate ‘a certain philosophy, set of feelings and beliefs acceptable only to the Japanese’ because Japan was ‘a part of the world’ as far as the realm of thought was concerned and such an attempt ‘is more ridiculous than trying to make a division between cloud and sky’ (Yamaji 1913a). For Yamaji, the self-centred idea of Japanese uniqueness, which was cherished by Inoue Tetsujirō and Takayama Chogyū, should be excluded from both national and international education because such an idea would produce a self-righteous view of the world and would hinder cross-cultural understanding.

Unlike Inoue, Yamaji did not search for a Japanese spirit like bushido in history, but attempted to find a creative spirit that could build a new Japan for the future. In his view, Japanese could be proud of their flexibility and open-mindedness. If they developed such old and good traditions that would be an honor to them (Yamaji [1898] 1983b: 420). In an essay published in 1899, Yamaji emphasized the importance of ‘the spirit of freedom and tolerance’ to the development of a state, and defined the meaning of kokutai (national polity) as follows:

> The spirit of freedom and tolerance would make it possible for us to absorb all things and change them into the customs of our country. This is our national polity. This is our imperialism. This is our national anthem.

(Yamaji [1899] 1985a: 282)

In Yamaji’s view, if unorthodox ways of thinking were destroyed, the state would be fossilized and would not prosper. Japanese history showed that Japanese people had accepted different ways of thinking from foreign civilizations. Therefore, ‘the spirit of freedom and tolerance’ should be Japan’s national polity (Yamaji [1899]
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For him, therefore, Japan's national polity was not 'something unique to Japan', but was 'a spirit of freedom and tolerance', which could be universally understood.

Yamaji not only argued that Japanese people should not blindly cling to the old tradition, but also urged them 'to create a new Japan in cooperation with other countries in the world' for the future. Criticizing those who attempted to retain old traditions such as bushido, in his posthumously published book *Sekai no kako genzai mirai* (The Past, Present and Future of the World, 1917), Yamaji wrote: 'If you think that Japan has been established, you are old. That is an old person's idea. The state is always in the course of construction. The state is always being constructed like a living tree' (Yamaji 1917c: 465–6). The idea that the state was always in the process of being created was also held by Sawayanagi Masatarō, an eminent leader of the movement for liberal education at the time. In his essay 'Sawayanagi Masatarō ron' (On Sawayanagi Masatarō, 1913), Yamaji listed Nitobe Inazo and Sawayanagi Masatarō as two of the most popular educators among students and called Sawayanagi 'a capable educator' (Yamaji 1913b: 22). Sawayanagi wrote in his essay 'Nihon no bunkateki shimei' (Japanese Cultural Mission, 1920) as follows: 'We should not be satisfied with or should not be proud of our past, even if that is great. We must create things that we could be proud of in future' (Sawayanagi [1920] 1976: 489).

It is clear that, like Sawayanagi, Yamaji wanted to promote international and national education for the future and urged people not to be carried away by the idea of Japanese uniqueness. In his book *Seiyō o jī o jō to shisō* (Western Conditions and Thought, 1933), Nitobe Inazo argued that the Japanese should be aware that 'they are members of the human race' (Nitobe 1984: 207). Like Nitobe Inazo, who attempted to make his students be aware of the position of 'Japan in the world' (Hirakawa 1984: 216), Yamaji insisted that Japan should create a new Japanese civilization 'in cooperation with other countries in the world' (Yamaji 1917c: 465–6).

About thirty years after the publication of *Nihon kogakuha no tetsugaku* (The Philosophy of Japanese Classical Learning School 1902), Inoue still adhered to the concept of a national spirit unique to Japan. In March 1933, after the outbreak of the Manchurian Incident of September 1931, Japan left the League of Nations because of the Manchurian problem. Thus, Japan became isolated from other countries, but Inoue Tetsujirō was optimistic and was not worried about the situation. In his paper entitled 'Koritsu Nihon no shōrai' (The Future of Isolated Japan) published in April 1933, Inoue asserted that it was rather fortunate for the Japanese that the country was isolated. In his view, Japan was able to adopt the principle of *Nihonshugi* in education and display the spirit of independence. Japan had three cultural products; the national polity, Shinto and bushido. The Japanese should clarify the meaning of 'the way of gods' (*kan’nagara no michi*) and encourage other peoples to follow this way. Inoue thought that Japan’s isolation gave the Japanese a good chance to perform their mission in the world (Inoue...
1933). It seems that the issue of cross-cultural understanding was not Inoue’s concern at the time.

**Conclusion**

It has been argued that Japan’s cultural mission from the Meiji Restoration into the pre-war period was to make Westerners know that Japanese culture stood on an equal footing with Western culture and to emphasize its superiority over Eastern culture (Shibazaki 1999: 56). As has been discussed, Inoue Tetsujirō, who advocated state-centred education, made a sharp distinction between Japanese culture and foreign cultures, regarding foreign countries as a threat to Japan. Inoue denied ‘universalism’ (sekaishugi) and advocated the principle of Nihonshugi and state-centred nationalism because he feared that the unity of the state might be destroyed by an influx of foreign ideas. Inoue discovered the unique spirit of Japan such as bushido in the past and believed that Japan’s mission was to spread this spirit to the world. Inoue’s idea of Japan’s cultural mission was fundamentally consistent with the nature of Japan’s cultural mission in the pre-war period, as has been discussed by Shibazaki Atsushi (Shibazaki 1999).

Yamaji Aizan’s arguments against Inoue’s ideas reveal that there were conflicting views of Japan’s mission in the world at that time. In 1992, Maruyama Masao pointed out that Yamaji emphasized ‘a certain aspect of the national tradition that opposed the dominant imperial view of history (kōkoku shikan)’ and throughout his whole life held the view that the spirit of independence and resistance was Japan’s ethos (Maruyama 1992: 97–9). In contrast, Fujii Shōichi argued that Yamaji was an ‘imperialist’ and ‘expansionist’ and that his view of imperialism was typical of his time (Fujii 1968: 80). Fujii’s interpretation of the thought of Yamaji originated in an attempt to trace the development of Japanese imperialism in the Meiji and Taisho periods. But simply labelling an intellectual in this way does not enable one to understand the intellectual predicament brought about by Japan’s modernization in the Meiji and Taisho periods.

While Inoue adhered to the idea of the Japanese spirit, Yamaji refused any idea of Nihonshugi that emphasized the uniqueness of Japanese culture, which he thought could hinder cross-cultural understanding. Yamaji criticized Inoue’s method of investigating the Japanese spirit in history and regarding it as the basis of national morality. He also thought that there was a common humanity behind the different manners, customs and ways of thinking of each country and that one could understand different cultures better if this universal ‘truth’ (dōri) was clarified. Japan’s mission was to teach such a universal ‘truth’ to people in the world and promote better cross-cultural understanding.

Taking these conflicting views as expressed by Yamaji Aizan and Inoue Tetsujirō into consideration enables one to gain a better understanding of the complicated dilemma which Japanese intellectuals faced when they realized the limits of Meiji modernization under Western pressure. Inoue’s view of Japan’s cultural
mission promoted narrow-minded nationalism, which eventually led to Japan’s overwhelming defeat of the Pacific War. It is not certain whether or not Yamaji’s views are original, but his argument against Inoue’s nationalistic idea of Japanese cultural uniqueness may reflect a continuous current of liberal thought in pre-war Japan (Takeda 2001: 351).

Notes

1. Both Inoue Tetsujirō and Yamaji Aizan often used the word ‘jinshu’ in their writings, but seemingly in the sense not of ‘race’ but of ‘people’. They believed that the Japanese were originally of mixed blood (cf. Itō 2007: 90–108).
2. Like Inoue Tetsujirō, Tokutomi Sohō also held a firm belief in the sharp distinction between peoples, and advocated Japan’s territorial expansionism in the early twentieth century (Vinh 1986).
3. In reference to Takayama Chogyū’s *Biteki seikatsu o ronzu* (1902), Harootunian has argued that Takayama’s criticism of Japan’s mediocrity, impoverished creativity, and cultural imitation was a forerunner of wide-scale rejection of Meiji civilization in the 1930s (Harootunian 2000: x).
4. Inoue ‘Tetsujirō maintained the view that ‘the descendents of the gods’ (*tenson minzoku*) had not come to the Japanese islands from the Asian continent, but did not deny that the Japanese people and their culture manifest elements that originated in the north such as China and Korea, as well as in the south (Inoue 1910: 11). Oguma Eiji has asserted that Inoue later rejected the view that the core Japanese had come from the south and adopted the view that they had come from the north and that he rejected the view that the Japanese were homogeneous and instead adopted the view that they were heterogeneous (Oguma 1995: 44, 113), but it does not seem that he really was converted (Itō 2007: 95).
5. Inoue believed that Christianity contradicted national moral education on the grounds that it was based on universal truth (Inoue [1893] 1974: 131–4).
6. Hamish Ion has argued that Yamaji was able to demonstrate that ‘Christianity was important to the transformation of Japan from a traditional to a modern society’ (Ion 1999: 42), but in 1916, a year before his death, he himself confessed that he was not a Christian (Itō 2007: 15).
7. As regards the Japanese national character, Harry Harootunian has argued that for Origuchi Shinobu ‘this desire for condensing characteristics for all times to come expresses only a modern Japanese taste for such things’ (Harootunian 2000: 337) and that ‘Contrary to expectations, such characteristics are not even manifest in antiquity’ (Harootunian 2000: 338).
9. Inoue Tetsujirō highly evaluated the National scholar Hirata Atsutane’s attempt to revive old Shinto (Inoue 1912: 108–31), but he also considered that Confucian moral teachings should be regarded as the basis of the Imperial Rescript on Education (Inoue 1905: 701–3, 740–1, 799). In Harootunian’s view, Hirata Atsutane ‘abandoned all history after the establishment of the Nara state’ and denounced foreign philosophies including Confucianism and Buddhism while the Mito scholar Aizawa Seishisai’s restorationism ‘remained true to Neo-Confucian philosophy’ (Harootunian 1970: 104–5).
10. Christopher Goto-Jones has suggested that there were at least two competing versions of bushido during the early Showa period. For Inoue Tetsujirō, bushido was ideal in the sense that the people should be inspired by the example of the *bushi* for the sake of the emperor. For Watsuji Tetsurō, it was ideal in the sense that all people should aspire to its ideal for the sake of their own salvation (Goto-Jones 2008: 51).
11. Harry Harootunian has argued that such sentiments as *mono no aware* (a sense of sadness for things because they will pass) and *mono gokoro*, namely the feelings of the people toward the
emperor as suggested by the poems of the Manyō, were employed by the nativist Motoori Norinaga to insure greater submissiveness to the authority of the emperor among the ruled (Harootunian 1970: 29). In Harootunian’s view, ‘the implications of this rule were fully worked out in the Meiji Imperial Rescript on Education’ (Harootunian, 1970: 30). In contrast, Inoue Tetsujirō did not rely on these ‘private’ sentiments toward the emperor in his argument for the Imperial Rescript on Education.

12. Peter Duus has asserted that Min'yūsha historians including Yamaji Aizan denied that there were differences in the Japanese past that set Japan off from the rest of the world (Duus 1974: 432).

13. Kusunoki Masashige was depicted in school textbooks before and during the Second World War as a perfect model of imperial loyalty.

14. Yamaji’s liberalism contrasts with his positive attitude toward Japan’s annexation of Taiwan and Korea (Itō 2007: 139–62). Susan Townsend asserts that recent scholarship has questioned the extent of Japan’s liberalism and democracy during the 1920s and 1930s, although some historians considered that ‘the Taisho period had witnessed the flowering of democracy or at least a certain democratic promise that went hand in hand with a general popularization of some “liberal” principles which had been imported from the West during the early Meiji period’ (Townsend 2000: 267).

15. I have discussed Yamaji Aizan’s view of imperialism and colonization in another work (Itō 2007: 121–62).

16. Yamaji Aizan supported Japan’s annexation of Taiwan and Korea although he criticized its administration of Korea, which benefited the Korean Imperial House rather than Korean people (Itō 2003: 213–30; 2007: 141–2).


18. In his essay on Christian missionaries’ prejudice against Muslims, Yamaji Aizan expressed a similar view of the commonality of human beings. In this essay, he insisted that one should study religions in the world ‘without prejudice’ (Yamaji 1916: 196–232).

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—— (1913c) ‘Shōbu ron’, *Dokuritsu hyōron*, December.
—— (1917c) *Sekai no kako genzai mirai*, Ōe shobō.


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