Preaching Modern Japan: National Imaginaries and Protestant Sermons in Meiji and Taishō Tokyo

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Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, Japan embarked on a feverish quest to reach the promised land of modernity. To more fully understand this objective and the means of achieving it, the country’s most socio-politically active men and women looked to the advanced nations of Europe and the United States. Through encounters with Westerners and Western sources, they sought and found formulas and models for dramatically improving the condition of the Japanese people and their systems of governance. Taken together, several of the most frequently repeated elements of this blueprint emphasized that the teleological destiny, and pinnacle, of mankind was the sovereign nation-state. The ideal modern nation would be led by civilized individuals, strengthened by heavy industry and expansion, and peopled by loyal citizens.¹

While the new national government continuously strove to make the populace aware of their membership in the Japanese nation and to instruct them of their duties to that entity, questions about the nature of the nation persisted and even multiplied for the citizenry. The modernizing people of Meiji Japan were increasingly literate, versant in the recently standardized national language, formally educated, linked by a growing national mass media, and connected by the expanding national network of railway lines.²

So armed, they often dealt with this challenge by adding their own interpretations to government rhetoric. Struggling to make sense of their national community and their respective places within it, many Japanese reacted by creating and tuning in to a multiplicity of discourses on the nation.

More than ever before, being Japanese became a challenge for all classes, and an array of ideologues quickly appeared in the late nineteenth century offering explanations and guidance. Through the strong language of decrees and pronouncements and the softer language of advertising campaigns and imperial visits, the Meiji government aimed to foster and instill in the public an appropriate Japanese national identity and pride.³

Government-affiliated ideologues and publicists were not alone, however, and complementing their efforts were popular (minkan) ideologues who made themselves increasingly available to the Japanese public. They surfaced “all around, plying different interpretive trades in different social places.”⁴ Making use of a variety of old and new gathering spaces, from urban temple precincts to the floor of the new Imperial Diet to lecture halls at the Imperial University, nation-minded activists and orators enhanced,

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¹ On the nation-state as the predominant social form produced by the conditions of modernity, see Anthony Giddens, Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 15.
² On the nation as an imagined political community whose members’ connections are created and reinforced through the modern phenomenon of mass media see Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (London: Verso, 1991), 6-7.
⁴ Gluck, 10. Gluck has employed the term minkan (popular) to distinguish these individuals from ideologues directly affiliated (officially and unofficially) with the national government.
reinterpreted, reduced, and refuted the views promulgated by the state. The new religious gathering space of the Japanese Protestant church figured among these forums, providing thousands of attendees with new meeting spaces and discursive tools for imagining and coming to terms with the new nation.

Urban Protestant churches were particularly attractive to the cosmopolitan new middle class as its members worked to define and embody Japanese-ness. Converging in large numbers on the new national capital in the 1880s and 1890s, they often discovered within Tokyo’s largest Protestant churches words and interactions that addressed their dilemmas. The nation’s intellectual elite possessed superior education, broad travel experiences, proficiency in one or more Western language, and ambitions to shape Japan’s future. Yet these very characteristics made the task and process of constructing a workable nation-view all the more complex for these individuals. The country’s new intelligentsia could not but be troubled by the difficulty of navigating between the moral hierarchies of loyalty and status of the Tokugawa period, the new national morality espoused by the imperial government, love and respect for Japan in general, and Western forms of knowledge and culture. The shūkaidō (meeting hall) or reihaidō (worship hall) of Tokyo’s most influential Protestant churches played host to ideologues and rhetoric that spoke directly to the concerns of those searching for a solid sense of national belonging and individual purpose within the nation.

Protestant church meeting halls in the capital offered well-read, well-traveled, multi-lingual Japanese a highly qualified popular ideologue in the person of the Protestant pastor. Themselves well educated, often familiar with English or German, experienced in studying and living abroad, mentored by Western experts, and preoccupied with the essence and fate of the nation, Tokyo’s Protestant pastorate was particularly well-positioned to respond to the questions and anxieties of nationally aware and concerned attendees. In addition to their weekly and monthly articles in Christian and secular periodicals, pastors’ Sunday sermons could appeal to men and women caught between universal ideals, Western learning, and Japanese national identity. This was especially valid in the social, economic, and political center of the nation, where the need for and visibility of such cultural interpreters remained high until the 1930s. For those grappling with the increasingly complex set of topics surrounding the definition of Japan and national citizenship, spoken pastoral discourse presented a supplemental and highly relevant set of national imaginaries. For those concerned with the relationship between the nation and religion, pastoral discourse situated Protestant religio-moral guidance in a distinctly Japanese cultural context.

This chapter sheds new light on the types of nation that Tokyo’s most popular Protestant pastors helped their listeners to imagine from the pulpit. The following paragraphs will examine sermons by the well-known pastors of Tokyo’s two largest Protestant churches, Congregationalist Ebina Danjō (1856-1937) of Hongō Church and Presbyterian pastor Uemura Masahisa (1857-1925) of Fujimichō Church, and by the seldom-mentioned pastor of another of Tokyo’s most famous churches, Congregationalist

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6 On the background of some of Tokyo’s most famous Protestant pastors in the Meiji and Taishō periods, see Irwin Scheiner, *Christian Converts and Social Protest in Meiji Japan*. Berkeley: University of California, 1970).
Tsunajima Kakichi (1860-1936) of Banchō Church. These three very different pastors are representative of a socio-politically conscious Tokyo pastorate sensitive and responsive to those walking between the world of Western ideas and traditions and a Japan rapidly becoming aware and proud of itself. Their special “nationalisms” diverged significantly in direction and depth from the forms of nationalism most prevalent in Meiji and Taishō Japan, and their sermons went to the heart of the pressing nation-related questions of the day.8

From the nature of national identity to the individual’s responsibility to and love for the nation to the proper composition and boundaries of the national body (kokutai) to the glorious national past and future, these pastors consciously blurred the line between religious and secular discourse each week. Prominent pastors such as Ebina, Tsunajima, and Uemura selected elements from within their personal reflections on Japan to project a specific image of the nation to their middle class audiences. This chapter analyzes the national community that each pastor verbally constructed and describes the context and ideological ramifications of these creations. In doing so, the essay also aims to add new color to a monochromatic depiction of Meiji- and Taishō-era Japanese Protestant Christian nationalism that often ignores the existence and diversity of coexisting nation-views among Christian leaders.

Since the 1890s, the nationalistic tendencies of certain turn-of-the-twentieth-century Japanese Protestant pastors have drawn considerable attention and even criticism from foreign missionaries, fellow Japanese Christians, and subsequent religious scholars. The fervent patriotism of Ebina Danjō in particular has come to represent the most extreme form of Japanese Protestant nationalism, leaving the impression that more moderate Christian leaders were not nationalists. In reality, war-supporting Protestants and jingoistic Christians held no monopoly on nationalist sentiment, and there was more than one kind of Christian nationalism at work in pre-war Japan. Prasenjit Duara has demonstrated that although the modern nation unites the affections, worries, and ambitions of its citizens, the shapes and shades of “nationalism” among the members of any modern nation can be varied and multiplicitous. While the object of nationalism, the nation, is constant and shared, “nationalism” is in fact the “site where different representations of the nation contest and negotiate with each other.”9

This definition makes it possible to see that Protestant churches in Tokyo, including but not limited to those led by nation-focused pastors such as Ebina, acted as loci for the formation and transformation of Japanese nationalisms. This chapter will show that the moderate Tsunajima and even the allegedly apolitical Uemura were also busy building and propagating specific nationalisms. For all three, the Japanese nation comprehended a set of meanings and responsibilities that went above and beyond official nationalisms and government dicta. They each firmly believed that their audience could only truly make sense of the problems and potential of the Japanese nation through the prism of Protestant belief and action. Each Sunday, these pastors and others like them negated the claims of Christianity’s many detractors that the religion was un-nationalist

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7 For an argument for the existence of multiple nationalisms, see Prasenjit Duara, Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 8. See Ibid., 10 for an introduction to Duara’s neologism “nation-view.”
8 Aasulv Lande, Meiji Protestantism in History and Historiography: A Comparative Study of Japanese and Western Interpretation of Early Protestantism in Japan (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), 92.
9 Duara, 8.
by offering the Japanese educated elite unprecedented, pertinent, empowering ways of seeing their nation and actively contributing to its present and future.

The Nation, Obvious and Elusive:

The nation and its destiny were at the heart of many Tokyo pastors’ sermons. Listeners at each of Tokyo’s largest Protestant churches were exposed, on a weekly basis, to variants on this theme. As one might expect, the nation played a decisive role in the vast majority of sermons that Ebina gave at Hongō. He made frequent and clear reference to the Japanese nation in the titles of his sermons, often using the suggestive diction of “our nation” (wagakuni, wagakokumin, or wagakokutai). Ebina’s tendency to focus on the nation continues to interest many different types of religious scholars, and sermon titles such as “The New Way of the Warrior” (Shin bushidō), “Gentry Religion” (Shi no shūkyō), and “The Meaning of a Virtuous Country” (Kunshikoku no igi) offer evidence as to why he has been singled out so prominently by scholars such as Shuma Iwai and Dohi Akio. From making criticisms and suggestions about Japan as a whole to outlining strategies for Japanese Christians to act as catalysts for national change to locating the Japanese national past in Western rubrics of race, sovereignty, progress, and expansion, Ebina consistently and directly engaged the nation in ways that many of his colleagues did not.

In contrast to Ebina’s overt references and emphases, the nation is often only present at a more subtle level in the sermons of the much less sensational Tsunajima Kakichi and the outspoken, popular, and more theologically focused pastor Uemura Masashisha. Only two of Uemura’s several hundred extant sermons, “The Christian Family and the State” (Kirisutokyō no ie to kuni) from March 1898 and “Christianity and the Way of the Warrior” (Kirisutokyō to bushidō) from July 1897, testify to his interest in nation-related themes and topics. In the case of Tsunajima, it would appear from a distance that that none of his twenty surviving sermons appears to deal with the “nation” directly. An analysis of the content of these pastors’ sermons reveals, however, that both aimed to affect the shape of the Japanese nation imagined by their listeners through their mention and use of nation-related rhetoric. They drew upon images, symbols, figures, events, and ideologies linked to the national past of Japan and other countries in order to put the messages of Protestant Christianity in terms more familiar to the Japanese audience. At a deeper level, Uemura and Tsunajima utilized these discursive tools to lift out certain elements within the Japanese national imaginary that they considered most compatible with Christianity and to suppress others; valorizing certain ideals that they...
judged as crucial for the creation of a new and better Japan and avoiding or discarding others.

Despite their substantial dissimilarities, Tokyo’s Protestant pastors clearly shared a strong interest in the fate of the Japanese nation-state and its people. Tsunajima, Uemura, and Ebina were all, regardless of their differences in theological or political orientation, self-aware members of and advocates for the Japanese national community. As such, they, like their listeners, were increasingly surrounded on all sides by the national narratives and moral injunctions prescribed by the national government. Ultimately, these religious leaders and their audience members would each have to flesh out government rhetoric with his or her socio-political and religio-moral preferences and knowledge. With their sermons, these pastors crafted and propagated specific nationalisms that they considered beneficial to Japan. In these constructions, these men also proposed elements with which listeners could construct their individual nation-views and work to actualize them. Each of the three subsequent sections of this essay will explore the nation in general and the Japanese nation in particular that popular Protestant pastors in Tokyo conjured from their pulpits. The first section will examine nation-view of Tsunajima Kakichi, one of Meiji and Taishō-era Japan’s most prominent pastors whose name and reputation have escaped the attention of historians and other scholars. The second and third sections will describe and analyze the nation-views of his much more historically recognized colleagues, Ebina Danjō and Uemura Masahisa.

The Nation of Tsunajima Kakichi:

In his role as pastor of one of Tokyo’s four largest Protestant churches, Tsunajima Kakichi spoke to a congregation of more than three hundred each Sunday morning, and he often clothed his rhetoric in the motif of the nation. Speaking directly in his sermons to the citizens of a nation characterized by domestic and international wars during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Tsunajima’s often borrowed metaphors and paragons from the Japanese military past and present. He singled out the patriotic soldier as a model for Christian behavior. The pastor paid specific attention to military men in Japan and elsewhere who had fought for their national community and demonstrated qualities such as sacrifice, leadership, and self-mastery. Tsunajima considered these ideals translatable to the Christian and his or her task for Japan.

Tsunajima argued that the Christian, like the soldier, was motivated by and responsible for the triumph of the nation. At the root of the soldier’s courage lay his conviction that he is fighting “on God’s side” for “sincere loyalty and patriotism, truth, a righteous death...[and] his fellow countrymen.” In particular, Tsunajima pinpointed some Western military leaders who exemplified this combination of patriotism and Christian righteousness, designating them as “the ideal for people who believe in God.” He spoke of English general Oliver Cromwell who chanted “psalms in a loud voice,” and “Union Army generals [who] advanced while singing psalms” during the U.S. Civil War. In a sermon entitled “The Lord Is My Castle,” (kami wa waga shiro nari) and

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11 Tsunajima Kakichi, Gyakkyō no fukuin (Tokyo: Keiseisha, 1924), 7-8.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
several other sermons, Tsunajima idealized both literal and figurative Christian soldiers who had exerted themselves for the good of their respective countries. In order to impress upon listeners the type of dedication that would allow the Japanese Christian soldier to fight successfully “for the moralization of his fellow countrymen,” he described the efforts of the British to save their homeland during World War I.

Men in the prime of their lives were sent to the battlefield to serve the nation…. They have sacrificed everything for the survival of Great Britain; they offered up their whole heart, whole soul, and whole life without looking back. Our spiritual battle is also like this...  

Tsunajima asked his listeners to develop a similar “resoluteness,” as they carried out their roles as “Christian soldiers.”

For Tsunajima, the Japanese Protestant was not akin to just any soldier, but instead constituted a member of a small elite specifically charged with a mission for the nation. In a sermon on “Gideon’s Elite Troops” (Gideon no seihē), Tsunajima likened his listeners to two groups whose members disregarded their own lives in order to fight for their respective nations: Biblical judge Gideon’s select, three-hundred man elite troop (seihē) and the Japanese suicide corps (kesshitai). The well-known term “suicide corps” had existed for centuries. In the aftermath of a famous and successful kesshitai operation in 1905 during he Siege of Port Arthur by a kesshitai, however, the term gained new significance and visibility. Tsunajima told his listeners that “we Christians are God’s chosen suicide corps” in Japan’s spiritual battle, and then told the story of one such unit formed bravely and spontaneously to eliminate the threat to the new Japan at any cost. On a train ride from Osaka to Kobe in 1883, a stranger with a “commanding face and powerful physique” told Tsunajima that he had “personally taken the initiative of forming a suicide corps [of] sixteen volunteers” during the Satsuma Rebellion of 1877. The self-selected band of healthy, strong, young soldiers, “vigorous” and “full of life,” swooped down upon the “rebels” like an “irresistible force” and “of the seventeen, not even a single one was killed or injured.” Tsunajima was confident that his listeners were capable of such victory for God in Japan.

Like the members of Gideon’s elite troop or the Japanese suicide corps, the Japanese Christian was a member of a select, proactive, and well-equipped few who were responsible for positively impacting the nation’s destiny. Just as many Japanese students hoped to become influential, wealthy, or famous, many men and women sought to guide Japan’s spiritual development. In the spiritual, as in the secular realm, however, only a select group would “take the lead”.

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14 Ibid., 121. Given the details provided in this quote, it is reasonable to infer that this sermon dates from 1916 or 1917.
15 Ibid., 122.
16 See Judg. 7 RSV.
18 Tsunajima, 106.
19 Ibid., 105.
Of the countless students who harbor high ambitions...how many really attain the success they expect? Every year, among the hundreds and thousands of graduates, how many take the lead in the business world, the political world, the intellectual world? There are truly not many.  

This small group was composed of individuals who were selected, at least in part, because they each possessed the necessary qualities for leadership. These ranged from the “dignity [required] of a high-level executive” to the respective appropriate qualities of a “school principal...company president...prefectural governor...[or] cabinet minister.” In a similar fashion, he encouraged church attendees, many of whom were part of the same socio-economic group that Tsunajima’s sermon no doubt purposefully targeted, to assume their roles of spiritual leadership in the nation just as they had in socio-cultural, educational, political, and economic affairs. These members of the new middle class were endowed with the traits and skills to remold Japan.

As with all of those positions, the responsibility of the Japanese Christian community to the nation required the development and possession of a special set of characteristics. The Japanese Christians’ “duty as the chosen” was to “save our fellow countrymen,” and for the completion of this task Tsunajima recommended a distinct combination of practical virtues. He looked not only to Western Christian models, but also to some particularly empowering elements in Japanese Neo-Confucian moral teachings. As the “face of the church,” the Japanese Christian needed to learn “self-respect, self-appointment, self-confidence” and the quality from which all of these qualities derived, the all-encompassing Neo-Confucian virtue of “self-cultivation.” For the sake of the nation, then, Tsunajima’s recommendation focused not on those authority-related Neo-Confucian virtues that the Meiji government was advocating most strongly, namely loyalty and filial piety, but on the personal, reflective, virtue of self-cultivation and its capacity to inspire individuals to affect, substantial change. In his view as expressed here, Japan needed cultivated leaders more than obedient subjects.

In this small sample of Tsunajima’s spoken pastoral discourse, he clearly argues that Japanese Christians were designated to play an important role in the continued existence and amelioration of Japan. While nation-related themes do not arise with notable frequency in Tsunajima’s other seventeen extant sermons, this is most likely due to the preferences and biases of their collector and re-publisher Fukunaga Bunnosuke. Tsunajima’s interest in the nation manifested itself in other sermons and speeches that have not survived up to the present. They include, for instance, a lecture to the Banchō youth Sunday school class titled “War Talk” (Sensō no hanashi) in 1906. Furthermore, he addressed issues surrounding Japanese-ness and race and entered the realm of the

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20 Ibid., 107
21 Ibid., 109.
22 Ibid., 111.
23 Ibid., 110.
25 *Kirisutokyō sekai* no. 1193 (July 12, 1906).
public intellectual entirely with a critical essay on Anti-Japanese sentiment and legislation in the United States.\textsuperscript{26} Tsunajima Kakichi formulated and expressed a form of nationalism, and these three sermons utilized Japanese morality, national consciousness, military metaphors, and patriotic Christian models to galvanize his listeners to think about and contribute to the nation.

\textit{The Nation of Uemura Masahisa:}

In his sermons each Sunday at Fujimichō Church, Uemura Masahisa did not feign to be either a critic or proponent of the prosperity of the Japanese nation. He sought to encourage individual Christians to develop moral strength and apply it in the secular world, whether or not it benefited Japan. On certain occasions, however, fundamental disagreements with particular formulations of the Japanese national polity clearly motivated Uemura to enter the realm of political discourse. By examining two such instances, it becomes clear that Uemura’s more doctrine-based religious morality in fact could have direct socio-political application. In 1890 in the first issue of his new relgio-political journal \textit{Nippon Hyōron}, Uemura wrote that he thought of his ministry “in terms of Japan.” He explained that, like other Japanese, “I have critical opinions about politics, literature, social issues, economics and education.”\textsuperscript{27} While scholars have shown that Uemura demonstrated a certain interest in and passion for Japan in his action and written words, none have remarked that he also spoke on the Japanese nation aloud in his sermons at Fujimichō Church.

In 1897, Uemura challenged one of the theoretical foundations for the Japanese national polity that was beginning to gain popularity during the 1890s with its unprecedented linkages between the religious belief and nationalism. Several political ideologues in the nineteenth century told Japanese citizens that under the guidance and protection of the Japanese emperor, they were a body of brothers and sisters. Japanese Protestant Christians, who were aiming to construct a new society based on the principle of brotherhood for all under Christ, agreed with many elements of this discourse. By the end of the decade, however, some of them had become wary of the type of brotherhood that conservative nationalist Hozumi Yatsuka wrote of in his 1897 work \textit{Kokumin kyōiku: aikokushin} (National Education: Patriotism). While many voices praised the ethnicity-based concept of the Japanese family-state that Hozumi developed, advocated, and placed at the center of a nascent State Shinto ideological constellation, some writers and speakers in Japan, including the least politically active Protestant pastors, encouraged their audiences to reevaluate Hozumi’s claims about the true Japan.\textsuperscript{28}

Uemura claimed that Hozumi’s ideology contained a blurred vision of the nation and its foundational elements. First, the Tokyo Imperial University legal scholar had misunderstood the origins of patriotism. He viewed patriotism as both analogous to and a

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natural outgrowth of ancestor worship, Uemura explained. According to Hozumi’s version of Shintō cosmology, all Japanese were blood relatives of the same race (minzoku) practicing simultaneously “reverence for one’s mother and father…reverence for the family’s ancestors…[and] reverence for the common ancestors of the Japanese race.”

By loving one’s country, as a collective body of blood relatives (living and deceased), one was showing the ultimate level of “love and respect” for all these individuals. This was how Uemura summarized Hozumi’s argument before presenting several reasons for his listeners to refute it.

Uemura argued that the relationship between patriotism, familial love, and supernatural religion constructed by Hozumi was backwards. To begin with, the idea that “if he does not worship and trust in an invisible supreme being, man is unable to govern himself or raise a country” was completely false. Religion and the nation-state did not and should not depend on one another, a sermon contention that echoes the division between church and state found by Takenaka Masao and, more recently J. Nelson Jennings in Uemura’s writings. Second, Uemura contended that it was instead by loving one’s family members that one could be most patriotic, and not vice versa. To make this point, Uemura found the poem “Hermann and Dorothea” by Johann Wolfgang van Goethe (1749-1832) to be poignant and pertinent. In this story set when Napoleon had extended his control over all of Europe in the early 1800s:

German customs and manners were being destroyed, [and] a young married man and woman, Hermann and Dorothea, built a family and from it patriotism sprung forth…. Love for the family needs to become…love [for] the country.

Furthermore, while Hozumi equated the family with the country, Uemura imagined an entirely different set of familial relationships.

Uemura also took issue with the delimitation of Hozumi’s family-state and the consequences that such definitions would have inside and outside Japan. While the all-inclusive family-state developed by Hozumi and other of later Meiji ideologues enveloped all Japanese, Uemura expressed concern about the fate of Taiwan’s inhabitants as residents of Japan’s first colony since 1895. The Taiwanese could have no place in blood-line based nationalism, leaving the Japanese only two choices of treatment. Given the impossibility of assimilating such people into Hozumi’s Japanese race-based family-state, the invading Japanese would have to “completely slaughter this people or if not make them all into slaves.” Although Uemura shows no awareness of the inferior treatment afforded the Taiwanese (Chinese) and even more inferior treatment of the

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30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., 170.
34 Uemura, 170.
territories’ aborigines (*seiban*), his dire vision proved prophetic. The hard labor, severe punishment and repression, low and infrequent wages of the aborigines, and other conditions were in many ways similar to slavery. The Musha Incident of 1930, during which one hundred and thirty-four Japanese were slain by Taiwanese aborigines testified to the contradictions between Japanese imperialism and the Japanese ethnicity based family-state. In punitive revenge, the Japanese killed some five hundred Taiwanese. As Uemura drew this sermon to a close, he spoke of “confusion” and “pity” as he expressed strong reservations about “Japan’s expansion” across the North Sea into the Shandong Peninsula as well.

Within the international and philanthropic constellation of Uemura’s nationalism, there remained room, nonetheless, for a strong emphasis on ameliorating the situation of the Japanese people at home. He idealized the “burning patriotic passion” of the “Old Testament prophets” who were deeply saddened by the “immorality and sin of [their] country”. “In Japan too,” he said, “this [type of] patriotism is desirable.” In particular, Uemura lamented the situation among the young men and women coming of age in Japan’s urban centers. In the Japan of Uemura’s time, love suicides, depression, and other problems among the capital’s maladjusted young adults served as daily reminders of the identity issues that this age group faced. Uemura’s love for Japan led him to work towards replacing the insufficient ideologies and worldviews popular among this age group with the promises and ideals of Protestant Christian morality.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, as Meiji youth sought to identify and understand their lack of cultural certainty and navigate Japan’s complex new loyalty structure, *bushidō* or “the way of the warrior” experienced a discernible resurgence. While Confucian scholar, professor, and state-sponsored philosopher Inoue Tetsujirō held up Yamaga Sokō (1622-1685) as the original theorist of this ideology and disseminated his own interpretations of *bushidō* in various forms, Meiji youth were drawn to this ideology by their own needs and priorities. By Uemura’s estimation, this was because that ideology drew images that resonated with those youth’s emotional state and offered directives that simplified moral dilemmas. In some ways, Uemura sympathized with “the many in today’s society [who feel] aloof from the world, like a root-less floating plant, transiently passing through life.” He understood how they could read Tokugawa-era samurai Daidōji Yūzan’s (1639-1730) *Budō shoshinshū (Initiation into the Warrior Way)*

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37 Uemura, 174.
38 Ibid., 172.
and identify with phrases such as “in general man’s life is transient, like the evening dew [and] the morning frost.” After repeating these lines aloud in his sermon “Christianity and Bushidō” (Kirisutokyō to bushidō) in 1898, Uemura explained the attraction that the allegedly uncomplicated value system of the samurai, whose “highest aim is to…fully accomplish loyalty and filial piety,” could appeal to young wonderers at the turn of the century. Despite this ideology’s attractiveness, Uemura urged caution.

Japan’s youth could not solve the modern problems that they and their nation faced by simply following Bushidō’s prescriptions because the ideology over-emphasized obedience and disparaged liberty, love, and the individual. According to Uemura, the Bushidō that pursued the very filial piety and loyalty that the Meiji state preached so diligently viewed all of these elements as greatly inferior to the obligations that all Japanese citizens shared towards their nation and its leaders. On the other hand, religion, while it admittedly “implies obedience to someone with control over oneself,” in fact “also implies developing and maintaining oneself.” Religion improves upon behavioral codes like bushidō by addressing the individual and placing “obedience and love and liberty…parallel to one another,” Uemura declared. For him, Christianity in particular was the “religion that harmonizes, arranges, and most beautifully fulfills this [set].”

Uemura was characterizing Protestant Christianity as a religion that established balance between the Western ideals of love and liberty, the modern category of the individual, and the Meiji era’s most touted Neo-Confucian virtues of obedience and duty towards authority. Without Christianity, Bushidō and the nationalistic ideologies linked to that belief system, would inevitably lead Tokyo churchgoers and other Japanese down a dangerous path.

On the opposing side of Uemura’s argument were the many Japanese whom, through the language of bushidō, were inflating the national pride of Japan beyond its healthy limits, he complained. Worried that bushidō, “our nation’s bright flower…is now gradually losing its loveliness…and no longer wields the power it did in the past,” these pastors “work hard…to maintain [bushidō], to promote it.” Those days, he remarked, “the Japanese are a people whose heart’s blood jumps when they hear the words prestige, popularity, acclaim, glory, etc.” As evidence, Uemura called listeners’ attention to the fact that children sang the stanzas of “At the Foot of Mount Fuji” at the middle school nearby Fujimichi Church where he was pastor, promoting the “sense of honor” (renchi) valorized by Bushidō rhetoric.

Gathered at the foot of the mountain,  
The towering peak of Mount Fuji,  
Looking up in the morning and at night,  
Let us lift honor up high.

43 Uemura, 189.  
44 Ibid., 189.  
46 Ibid., 192.  
47 Ibid., 191. “Fujimichi,” the name of the neighborhood in which the school and Fujimichi Church were located, can be translated literally to mean “the neighborhood that looks at Mount Fuji,” making this particular song a logical choice.
The situation had become so acute that the preservation and enhanced glory of “the country’s national honor” had become the top priority in Japan’s foreign diplomacy, he explained. During the late 1890s, as Japan sought diligently to step out from under the heavy financial and emotional burden of its various unequal treaties with Western nations, calls for national dignity reached an unprecedented high. The recent re-popularization of bushidō was at once a product of and a contributing factor to this trend that sought to rediscover and praise Japan’s indigenous past. Even Christians, such as Quaker Nitobe Inazō (1862-1933), represented the Japanese past and present through the lens of bushidō. All of this attention, however, had ignored the fundamental question of the origins and distinctiveness of bushidō for the Japanese people.

In response to the rise of national pride surrounding this ideology, Uemura set out to analyze and demystify the long-lived cultural link between bushidō and Japan. He outright criticized the glorification of bushidō as a specifically Japanese moral system. To demonstrate the errors in such a claim, Uemura highlighted the various sightings of the bushidō-type ethos in un-Japanese settings. He derided the millions of Japanese who chant Yamato damashii [the Japanese Spirit]...and have a habit of being proud that bushidō is something that [they] exclusively possess. This is nothing other than favoritism. It cannot be said that bushidō is entirely our nation’s tradition [alone]. It exists in Turkey; It exists in Tartary; If we think back to the foundation of the Ottoman Empire, that ethos is very similar to that of our nation’s Bushidō spirit... And even perusing Greek [and] Roman history, there are many of their manners and customs that, when considered in comparison with our nation’s warriors, would be viewed admirably.

This insight was meant less to insult Japanese tradition than to free Japanese minds from what he considered baseless chauvinism. Rather than focusing on the in fact limited Japanese nature and origins of bushidō or seeking to accumulate honor and glory by practicing the old warrior way, Uemura encouraged Japanese to think more carefully about bushidō as a moral code.

Despite some apparent hostility towards elements within bushidō, Uemura was in fact more of a reformer than an enemy of the ideology. As an advocate of “Baptised Bushidō,” the fulfillment of Neo-Confucian morality with Christian elements, it should come as no surprise that Uemura found a great deal of value in many portions of bushidō thought. He looked positively on the self-sacrifice, literally and figuratively, adherence to a moral code, respect for truth and honesty, an appreciation for teachings and reason over emotion, and the development of self-control advocated by bushidō. These were the elements worth upholding in bushidō. He hoped listeners would see that the best things

48 Ibid., 192.
50 See Nitobe Inazō, Bushido: The Soul of Japan (Philadelphia: Leeds and Biddle Co., 1900). Also see Hurst, 511-514.
51 Uemura, 185.
52 Jennings, 121.
within bushidō could be developed and achieved by “pouring into our nation” the tenets of Christianity. Christianity is, above all, a religion that values “doctrine”, “self-sacrifice,” and the search for “truth over profit.” To make these characteristics clearer, Uemura drew upon an example of bushidō-inspired bravery from the recent Japanese past.

In 1877, several men in Kōchi Prefecture, a seaward coastal area on the island of Shikoku, were plotting with Saigō Takamori to “betray the Meiji government,” as part of the same rebellion mentioned by Tsunajima above. A young national tax official named Watanabe Kunitake (1846-1919) received and accepted a government commission to come from Tokyo to deal with this situation. Politician Ozaki Yukio recalled that in 1877, this man was “sent to Tosa [Kōchi Prefecture] as governor, though he must still have been only in his twenties…. Watanabe arrived alone to take office in an uncertain land without even a bodyguard.” He resolutely declared, as the old story goes, that the Meiji government could not permit the prefectural army to join Saigō’s forces, and in obedience the leadership in Kōchi did not fight alongside the so-called rebels in the famous war.

While some claimed that by nature, Watanabe was just a brave man, Uemura insisted that only through training had he developed into man capable of such a task. Uemura, like Osaki Yukio, demonstrated a certain admiration for Watanabe’s thorough training in Zen Buddhism and strict regimen based on bushidō. In order to achieve this level of self-mastery, Uemura emphasized that Watanabe had employed the same portions of bushidō that resonated with the virtues of Christ and his most successful followers. By “cultivating morality, studying knowledge, and exercising discipline,” both Watanabe and numerous courageous Christians had developed the will necessary to overcome the challenges that stood before them. For in bushidō, as in Christianity, “genuine bravery can only be reached through the cultivation of character.” The other overemphasized elements of bushidō paled in comparison, and by replacing the objectives of fame and pride with the empowering imperative to “act with love,” Christians could in fact elevate bushidō into a world-changing moral code.

Rather than an effort to sell his vision of Japan to listeners, it would seem that he sought to encourage them to reflect carefully about their own nation-views before taking action outside the church. As historian Dohi Akio has explained, Uemura aimed to empower free-thinking, responsible Christians to take action for the improvement of the nation. By this understanding, it would ultimately be up to these active, thoughtful Japanese Christians, to determine the nature and function of the nation as well as its future. Therefore, by concentrating on the definitions of the Japanese national polity and the value systems that would guide and motivate its citizens, Uemura was in fact playing an active role in their socio-political preparation. There were of course other pastors in Tokyo that addressed the nation and its destiny much more directly and more often than either Uemura or Tsunajima.

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53 Uemura, 194.
54 Ibid.
56 Uemura, 195.
57 Ibid., 197.
The Nation of Ebina Danjō

Among the Protestant pastors in Tokyo during the Meiji and Taishō periods, none have been treated as “nationalist” or “patriotic” as frequently as Hongō Church pastor Ebina Danjō. Although other pastors such as Uemura and Tsunajima evinced concern and excitement for the present and future condition of their nation, Ebina’s sermons addressed more often, and made bolder statements about, the nature and primacy of the Japanese nation and Japanese national identity. From making positive reflections on national heroes to isolating the core qualities of the nation and its citizens, he created a Protestant Christianity that could claim to be both Japanese and patriotic. And yet somehow, Ebina’s sermons appealed to a mixed audience that included not only right-wing politicians and conservative thinkers but also left-wing students and activists. An investigation of the nation that he constructed in his sermons reveals a complex mixture of Christian humanism and nationalism that in fact held attractive elements for various types of listeners and defies simplistic categorizations.

Ebina imagined certain elements of Japanese national identity in terms reminiscent of some of Meiji Japan’s most conservative nationalist thinkers. In his 1901 sermon on “Our Moral Cultivation,” he explained that each Japanese individual’s identity was inevitably derived from that person’s lineage and ancestors. Contradicting the old Japanese proverb that “breeding more than birth makes a man,” Ebina argued that “birth more than breeding makes a man.” To determine our nature, “we must know our lineage; knowing our lineage is, namely, knowing what type of thing we are. What kind of parents do I come from? What sort of character do my parents have…” For Ebina, this road of genealogical inquiry inevitably led back for all Japanese to the “founding ancestors of the [Japanese] nation.” Just as Imperial University constitutional law professor Hozumi Yatsuoka who conceptualized the Japanese state as an ethnic group of “blood relatives of the same womb,” Ebina linked all Japanese to the country’s legendary founding emperor Jimmu and his descendents. While Hozumi employed this logic to place all Japanese under the hereditary rule of the Japanese emperor, Ebina had a different legacy in mind.

For Ebina, the most important element transmitted to his listeners through their ancestors was the “national historical spirit” (kokumin rekishiteki seishin) that touched each and every Japanese and made them members of the Japanese nation. To be Japanese was to be “linked to the flow of the pulsing of that great spirit.” At home or abroad, “[n]o matter where we go, we are Japanese; the Japanese nation’s spirit is our spirit; our spirit is Japan’s spirit,” he proclaimed. Japanese men and women would

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60 Ebina Danjō, “Gojin no shūyō [Our Cultivation],” Shinjin 1, no. 7 (February 1901).
61 Ibid.
62 Skya, 56. Here he has translated this phrase from Hozumi Yatsuoka, Kokumin Kyōiku: Aikokushin (Tokyo: Yuhikaku, 1897), 16.
63 Ebina, “Gojin no shūyō.”
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
always be possessed of the “national historical spirit” that made them typically Japanese, just as historical figures from other countries remained part of and shaped by their respective original national cultures.

Great men transcend their times, but certainly they cannot escape being the product of their nation’s character. Plato, Socrates, Aristotle were born in Greece…and they remained children of Greece’s [national] character. Cicero [and] Caesar built Rome, but nonetheless they still came to be creatures of Rome’s [national] character. 66

Just as Rome and Greece had national characters that produced great men, Ebina was quick to show that Japan did as well. The national historical character of Japan had laid the foundation for the “great Japanese character” (daijinkaku) of the admirable men of Japan’s recent and distant past. 67 Although Ebina offers no definition for this term, daijinkaku appears to have been a somewhat popular term in pre-war Japan. 68 In usage, daijinkaku carried a similar connotation to that of “the Japanese spirit” (Yamato damashii), the inner force bequeathed to the Japanese people by their long line of powerful ancestors and particularly referenced in times of war. 69 In a sermon on “The Beauty of War” made while Japan was in the midst of the Russo-Japanese War in August of 1904, Ebina recalled certain paragons of military bravery who embodied daijinkaku. He called to mind ultra-loyalist Satsuma samurai “Saigō Takamori’s bronze statue in Ueno Park.” 70 He spoke of the monument to the founder of Japan’s modern military, “the bronze statue of Ōmura Masajirō [standing] before Yasukuni Shrine” with reverence. 71 Looking back to the Gempei War (1180-1185), Ebina praised the bravery and acumen of Minamoto loyalist samurai Nasu no Yoichi (1169-1232) who so famously “shot down the fan target with just one shot”. 72 These men represented the embodiment of the daijinkaku that was available to all Japanese since the original founders’ first manifestations of this trait. While anyone could claim to personify daijinkaku, Ebina proceeded to explain why these men and the many like them in Japan’s history had truly come to possess this characteristic.

In an age of increasingly large and damaging wars, Ebina used the examples of these military figures to demonstrate that war, a real crucible of “purification,” provided

66 Ibid.
68 For examples of this term’s use, see Maekawa Shinjirō, Zetsudai naru jinkaku (Tokyo: Seikokai shuppan sha, 1929); and Saiga Hiroyoshi, Saigō nanshōō: daijinkan no ikan (Tokyo: Shizendō shoten, 1919).
69 On Yamato damashii and its wartime popularity, see See Gluck, 136.
70 On Saigō see Charles S. Yates, “Saigō Takamori in the Emergence of Meiji Japan,” Modern Asian Studies 28, no. 3 (July 1994): 449-474. It is worth noting that Saiga Hiroyoshi, author of one of the few works with “daijinkaku” in its title, used this term to praise Saigō Takamori just as Ebina did.
72 Ebina, “Sensō no bi.” Here Ebina refers to the incident written of in the Heike Monogatari in which Nasu no Yoichi shot down a red fan, thought to be a trap, hoisted up on a Taira vessel by a lady of the court. See the story in Helen Craig McCollough, The Tale of the Heike (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 367-9.
Japanese with an “opportunity to develop the great national character.” For both soldiers and civilians, Ebina argued that it was in war and such moments of national crisis that “Japanese patriotism...was so strikingly manifested” in those Japanese who exerted themselves for the nation. After all, “war is not just a soldiers’ war; the whole nation is fighting... After victory, soldiers cannot be proud of themselves alone.” Looking around him, he remarked that in this particular instance, he saw the Russo-Japanese War “beginning to produce the great national character” in the Japanese. Nearing the end of his sermon, Ebina proclaimed that “[s]eeing the splendid [national] character now being born within our nation, I truly cannot suppress my happiness.” It would take a lot more than patriotic displays of daijinkaku, however, for Japan to become one of the world’s great powers. Ebina called his listeners’ attention to other pertinent inherited elements within the Japanese national historical spirit that would serve Japan as it continued marching forwards onto the international stage.

Ebina explained that within that same “national historical character,” his audience’s ancestors had also passed down a certain expeditionary spirit into which all Japanese were now able and strongly encouraged to tap. In response to the countless Westerners who insisted that “the Japanese are an island race; their spirit does not escape the island country mentality,” Ebina’s 1901 sermon on “Our Moral Cultivation” offered a very different interpretation of Japan’s history and national essence. Japan, though indeed an island nation, had reasserted its connection with the “people of the continent” under the leadership of “Toyotomi Hideyoshi” and general “Date Masamune” (1567-1636) when they invaded Korea at the end of the 16th century. For Ebina, adventurer and explorer “Yamada Nagamasa” (1590-1630) was another good example of Japan’s non-insularity, and his “departure from the island country [to Thailand] displayed our nation’s character.” The task of uncovering and utilizing that expeditionary spirit was especially incumbent on the Japanese people of Ebina’s day, and in a 1902 sermon on “The New Way of the Warrior,” the pastor outlined motivations and strategies for utilizing this spirit.

For Ebina, it was very important for Japanese to develop the related quality of “bu” (martial spirit) in order to facilitate the realization of their inherited expeditionary spirit. It was by exercising this character trait, he said, that Japanese could work for the betterment of Japan beyond its immediate frontiers. For all classes, Ebina recommended that “[w]e thank God who gave this warrior spirit to the Japanese race” and declared that “with this [spirit], wherever the Japanese race goes, they advance, and [we] must not stop advancing.” He went further, specifying the applications of a bu-inspired expeditionary ethos for different occupational classes in Japan. “The Japanese scholar,” for instance, was for Ebina “a warrior, fighting against the cosmos and the universe, conquering them

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73 Ebina, “Sensō no bi.”
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
78 Ebina, “Gojin no shūyō.” Here, Ebina is referring to Hideyoshi’s ultimately unsuccessful attempts to invade China through Korea in 1592 and 1598. See Mary Elizabeth Berry, Hideyoshi (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982).
79 Ebina, “Gojin no shūyō.”
80 Ebina Danjō, “Shin bushidō [The New Way of the Warrior].” Shinjin 3, no. 10 (October 1902); reprinted in Ebina Danjō no sekkyōshū (Tokyo: Shinkyō shuppansha, 1973), 86.
and enlarging mankind’s territory.”

Just as so many other voices in the Meiji media were inundating farmers with pro-expansion discourse, Ebina spent a significant portion of his sermon on “The New Way of the Warrior” promoting the expeditionary warrior spirit among Japanese farmers as well. He wholly endorsed Japan’s growth beyond its borders and believed strongly in the Japanese people’s mandate to spread prosperity and order to its neighbors. The Meiji Japanese state colonized Hokkaidō and Okinawa in the 1870s, and Taiwan and Korea in 1895 and 1910, respectively, in an effort to make economic gains and secure their still-sovereign islands against Western colonization. As the result of a “deliberate colonization policy of the Japanese government”, Japanese settlers, of whom the majority were farmers, were arriving in Korea and other colonies by the late Meiji period. Politician Nagai Ryūtarō (1881-1944) and historian and statesman Takekoshi Yosaburō (1865-1950) and other ideologues depicted glowing images of paradisiacal lands in Japan’s overseas territories that Japanese farmers could come and cultivate without limit. In agreement, Ebina preached that it was the task of Japan’s agriculturalists, to subdue the “savage wastelands” of “Hokkaido, Taiwan, Manchuria, and Korea…taking up their hoe, with their shovel on their shoulder, conquering nature with our hand…” If they did not go to these places and “cultivate that warrior spirit and plan expeditions, [then] our national agricultural policy…is just useless talk,” he explained.

As one might expect, Ebina also had a great deal to say about the recently re-popularized ideological constellation of “loyalty” and “filial piety” (chūkō) that had become intimately linked with the Meiji revival of bushidō. One would also expect that, given his reputation for patriotic Christianity, his pronouncements on these two ideals would coincide with the nationalist discourse of pro-government Meiji ideologues. Indeed, he clearly grasped and supported the conservative ideological understanding of the concept in which “[t]he Japanese people’s spirit manifests loyalty to [their] sovereign…Loyalty to the monarch is direct loyalty to the state and love for country.” Here, and elsewhere, he repeatedly emphasized moral values that the Meiji government had enshrined and propagated in both the 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education and the commentaries and glosses of the text that appeared during the last decades of the Meiji period. In his 1902 sermon on new bushidō, Ebina admitted to thinking immediately of loyalty and patriotism when he thought of bushidō. In the words that followed these statements, however, the Hongō pastor demonstrated that he had a lot more to say about true patriotism and loyalty than the vague language of the Meiji government’s moral directives, and that his nation-view was in fact very different from that propagated by the state.

Mixed in with all of his praise and admiration for the Japan of yesterday, today, and tomorrow in this sermon, Ebina built a working definition of loyalty that clearly

81 Ibid.
84 Myers and Peattie, 89.
85 Ebina, “Shin bushidō”; reprinted in Ebina, Ebina Danjō no sekkyōshū, 86.
86 For the translated text of the Imperial Rescript, see Gluck, 121.
incorporated elements of his influential Christian humanism and casts his nationalism in a new light. The Hongō pastor signaled an upcoming deviation from the mainstream nationalism of his previous sentences when he told listeners that “we must remember not to narrowly limit loyalty to the monarch and filial piety to parents.” Using his expanded understanding of loyalty, Ebina then went on to criticize certain soldiers because:


As Ebina would explain three years later in an October 1905 sermon on Christianity in wartime, loyalty to the monarch meant more than obedience and respect for the imperial family, and patriotism was more than simply proclaiming love for one’s country. If “the people are treated as inconsequential, where is the patriotism?” he pondered. The people of Japan together formed “one body…[and] without the individual, there is no national polity.” Going beyond reformulations of loyalty and patriotism, Ebina also addressed the goals and application of the warrior’s moral code itself.


The spirit of the warrior way does not mean simply boasting of strength, but helping the weak… He [the warrior] not only sacrifices himself for noble, strong, and great people, but also lends his life for the sake of the weak, small, and humble.

It is perhaps for this reason that Ebina placed such a marked emphasis improving the nation for the sake of his “forty million countrymen,” in 1901, 1902, and 1903, “fifty million fellow countrymen” in 1905, and “sixty million fellow countrymen” in 1920. Contrary to Inoue Tetsujiō’s assertion that for Japan’s national success, “we can only rely on our 40 million fellow countrymen,” Ebina instead believed that it was the responsibility of each Christian to serve those fellow countrymen. In the end, the nationalist rhetoric that Ebina propagated from his pulpit left plenty of space for listeners to interpret, adjust, and select relevant elements into a workable and powerful mandate for Christian social activism in the name of both the Japanese nation and mankind.

\textit{Conclusion:}

If even the nationalism of Ebina Danjō is impossible to confine to a single hue, it stands to reason that Japanese Protestant nationalism in Meiji and Taishō Japan was not a single entity but many. The interplay of these three pastors’ understandings of and hopes for the

\begin{itemize}
\item[87] Ebina, “Shin bushidō”; reprinted in Ebina, \textit{Ebina Danjō no sekkyōshū}, 86.
\item[88] Ibid., 87.
\item[89] Ebina Danjō, “Ima wa kitō toki nari [Now It’s Time to Pray],” \textit{Shinjin} 6, no. 10 (October 1905).
\item[90] Ibid.
\item[91] Ebina Danjō, “Kirisutokyō to demokurashii [Christianity and Democracy],” \textit{Shinjin} 21, no. 6 (June 1920).
\item[92] Gluck, 130.
\end{itemize}
nation provides compelling evidence that nationalism is a body of competing conceptualizations of the meaning of the nation rather than one ideology, a debate more than a speech, a journey more than a place. The undeniably present and powerful Japanese national community was a constant within all of these shifting definitions, and official and popular ideologues alike strove to influence how the Japanese would perceive and interpret it. Although the national government aimed to create a modern nation-state and a unified and dutiful body of imperial subjects, the questions and concerns of Japan’s educated elite became a sea of competing and complementary nationalisms by the 1890s. As these individuals searched for ways to think about and interact with the nation and turned to various types of popular ideologues, Protestant pastors became one important source of inspiration and new paradigms.

Tokyo’s Protestant pastors formulated their nationalisms as both religious and secular responses to the socio-moral dilemmas inherent in the rise of the modern nation. In doing so, they filled important roles as cultural interpreters and popular ideologues for the most educated, ambitious, worldly members of Japan’s new middle class. Ebina espoused an intense nationalism filtered through Christian humanism, brotherhood, and individualism. Uemura selectively criticism and promoted a bushidō ideology supported by but beyond the control of the Meiji government. Tsunajima call his listeners to bravery, sacrifice, and self-discipline in the service of God and nation. Tokyo’s Protestant pastors, considered together, offered nation-minded Japanese with a set of perspectives and impetuses that they could not find elsewhere. Equipped with these original, timely and applicable fragments of these pastors’ alternative nation-views, Christians and other churchgoers set about transforming Protestant national imaginaries into reality.

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93 On the explicit links between national education and bushidō, as manifested in documents such as the 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education and the Bōshin Rescript of 1908, see Yushi Ito, Yamaji Aizan and His Time: Nationalism and Debating Japanese History (Kent, U.K.: Global Oriental, 2007), 426.