

## Introduction

‘Show me a hero and I’ll write you a tragedy.’

F. Scott Fitzgerald

On 29 November 1910, a small ship of only two hundred tons (181 tonnes) set out from Tokyo Bay carrying twenty-seven men headed for Antarctica; they were the first of their nation ever to have done so. The Japanese were a seafaring people, and by 1910 had more than six hundred years of maritime experience, so it was not a lack of knowledge or skill that had prevented their sailing south. And yet, even in the early years of the twentieth century, the idea of a Japanese expedition to Antarctica was generally dismissed, even by many Japanese. This was, in fact, the era of intense, international, Antarctic exploration – the Heroic Era, as it has come to be known – with world-famous British explorers such as Captain Robert Falcon Scott and Lieutenant Ernest Shackleton, and eventually, the equally famous Norwegian Roald Amundsen, planning expeditions to that continent. Any general history of Antarctic exploration will reveal that numerous expeditions from many of the European countries sailed to the southernmost continent in those years, and although they may have achieved little more than the Japanese mission, or indeed in some cases, far less, the names of their ships and the names of their leaders live on in the minds of Antarctic scholars. The little Japanese ship and its crew, and the man who led them, however, have faded from most accounts of those years.

Chapter 1 firstly examines the Heroic Era of Antarctic exploration, and this is followed by a brief overview of some of the more famous expeditions and explorers of that era, in order to provide a background and context for Shirase's expedition. This is followed by a summary of the events of the expedition itself. This is necessary because the expedition narrative has not been told in English in any substantive way for over eighty years, and the details of the expedition are now relatively inaccessible outside the Japanese literature. Shirase's post-expedition life is then examined with regard to the heroic status he initially enjoyed, and how swiftly that vanished. Through reference to contemporary newspaper articles and other sources, it is shown that he became a forgotten hero. The chapter ends with an overview of extant research on Shirase's life and the *Kainan Maru* expedition, both in English and in Japanese, illustrating the paucity of this material, and the unwarranted neglect this subject has suffered in the academic literature.

Chapter 2 discusses the Heroic Era as a product of late-Victorian and Edwardian England in particular, investigating the factors that generated a peak in Antarctic exploration at that time, as well as looking at a number of causal factors in, and features of, the form of hero-worship that arose at that time, in order to provide a basis for the comparisons of the following chapter.

Chapter 3 investigates the late-Meiji and Taishō eras in Japan, with reference to the factors in Japanese society that led to an upsurge in hero-worship at that time, and focuses on youth culture in particular.

Chapter 4 looks at the role Count Ōkuma Shigenobu played in securing Shirase's heroic status, to what extent he may have used the expedition to distract public attention from other events occurring at that time, and what part his subsequent disregard may have played in Shirase's rapid fall from fame.

Finally, Chapter 5 investigates the importance of an explorer's writing in securing heroic status, by looking at the way in which literary ability and skilful or fortuitous timing can be crucial to enduring fame, while at the same time, a lack of skill or unfortunate timing of publication can have severely detrimental effects on heroic status. The discussion then turns to an analysis of Shirase's situation, the style of writing seen in the magazine articles and books he published, and a broader overview of the literary genres that were gaining popularity in the Taishō years. A brief investigation of film culture in the West and in Japan at this time follows. Conclusions are then drawn regarding the expedition film footage, and the influence changing public tastes in film may have had on Shirase's heroic status in Japan.

The conclusions reached in each of the preceding chapters are then drawn together to illustrate the factors identified as instrumental in the rise and fall of an explorer hero of the Heroic Era of Antarctic exploration. The importance of this one case in the wider field of investigation into the historical figures of the era – what might be termed “hero studies” – and exploration history, is then discussed.

## The Heroic Era and the Voyage of the *Kainan Maru*

### 1.1 Defining the Heroic Era

It is difficult to define what exactly is meant by the term commonly used to identify the period in Antarctic history when men from many nations were making the first exploratory trips on the continent, for in what sense those men were any more heroic than their predecessors is unclear. At the most prosaic level, the boundaries of the Heroic Era could be delineated in essentially financial terms: in the “pre-Heroic Era” of the nineteenth century, expeditions were largely funded by whaling and sealing companies sending their ships south to harvest the seemingly limitless resources of oil and skins and whale bone, whereas in the “post-Heroic Era” after World War I and up to the present, expeditions have been funded by large corporations and government research programmes. In contrast, during the Heroic Era, ‘...funding of [expeditions] relied, awkwardly and inefficiently, on institutions and individuals who were too poor, grudging or indifferent to respond. Polar travel drew its funds from a few wealthy men, from slender government grants, from news agencies and publishers...’ (Thomson, 2002, p. 132). The source of funding was thus significantly different over these three periods.

On a similar level, the period could be defined in terms of technology. Prior to 1872, all expeditions in Antarctic waters were aboard sailing ships. The difficulties associated with sailing through pack ice, avoiding icebergs, and manoeuvring in the unknown and

unpredictable winds and weather of the Antarctic Circle were immense. The adoption of steam power meant an enormous expansion in what were considered “safe” waters. A ship could now reverse out of dangers, and had greatly increased power to force its way through ice. Thus, venturing close to the continent itself was now feasible. This contradicted Commander James Cook’s opinion expressed on meeting with Antarctic pack ice and bergs in the days of sailing ships that, ‘The risqué [*sic*] one runs in exploring a coast in these unknown and icy seas is so very great that I can be bold enough to say that no man will ever venture farther than I have done: and that the lands which may be to the South will never be explored’ (Quoted in Bayliss & Cumpston, 1939, p. 7). The first of the steamships to cross the Antarctic Circle was the *Challenger* in 1872, and all major expeditions from that time until the years shortly after World War I were steam-powered.

Although both Shackleton with his motorcar in 1907, and Scott with his motorised sledges in 1910, had tried to introduce mechanical power into the Antarctic, the internal combustion engine was still in its early stages of development, and was far from reliable at that time (Finkel, 1976). Nevertheless, these were the first hints of a new technological era for the Antarctic. Douglas Mawson’s attempt to take an aircraft on his 1911-1914 expedition similarly foreshadowed a revolution in transportation for future expeditions.

Success in the use of the internal combustion engine was achieved by Hubert Wilkins and Carl Eilson in 1928, when, with a flight of over two thousand kilometres in Antarctic skies, they proved that south polar regions could be explored from the air (Burke, 2006, p. 114). This was the beginning of what has been termed the ‘Mechanical Era’ (Bayliss & Cumpston, 1939, p. 8), but which is also known simply as the Modern Era of

Antarctic exploration. Thus, the period between the turn of the century and World War I coincided with a radical change in technology, from wind power, through steam power, to the power of the internal combustion engine. This development was to prove the fulfilment of the prophecies of Dr. Edward Wilson, Scott's companion on his final journey, who said that when the day came that polar exploration could be achieved by motor transport or flying machines, it would lose its attraction for men like himself and his contemporaries – in other words, for men of the Heroic Era (Preston, 1999, p. 60).

There has been some consensus for beginning the Heroic Era with the inauguration of the First International Polar Year in 1882. In 1879, at an International Meteorological Conference in Rome, members discussed the need for synchronous magnetic and meteorological observations in polar regions. This led to an International Polar Conference later that year, and the call for an International Polar Year, during which member nations established scientific stations in both high northern and southern latitudes.<sup>1</sup> As this was the first time that the Antarctic had been included in polar studies, it served to draw the attention of the scientific community away from the Arctic, and fostered an atmosphere conducive to exploration of the Antarctic.

Nevertheless, defining the announcement of the First International Polar Year as the start of the Heroic Era is not without problems. It has been suggested that the scientific involvement in Antarctica merely served to sustain interest, but was not itself the trigger of the Heroic Era. Instead, it has been argued that it was the discovery that Antarctica was in fact another continent, and not just islands surrounded by frozen ocean, that spurred the

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<sup>1</sup> The high latitudes are defined geographically as those designated by the higher figures, and are consequently those nearest the poles.

numerous expeditions of the following decades. The *Challenger* expedition under George Nares, sponsored by the Royal Society in London, investigated sea-floor geology in Antarctic waters between 1872 and 1876. It was the discovery by the natural historian on the expedition, John Murray, that rocks on the ocean floor, dropped from melting icebergs as they floated north, were of continental origin, which led to the conclusion that Antarctica was more than just an archipelago (Martin, 1996, pp. 97-100). It could thus be argued that it was the knowledge that Antarctica was a continent – a new and vast continent that had yet to be explored – that led to the “boom” in expeditions from the end of the nineteenth century into the first decade of the twentieth century, and not the proclamation of a Polar Year by a group of scientists. According to Martin (1996, p. 104), ‘... the efforts and perceptions of scientists preserved some interest in Antarctica, but these were to be subsumed once more as the political and emotional appeal of exploratory endeavour again took hold from the 1890s onwards.’

It is Martin’s use of the expression ‘emotional appeal of exploratory endeavour’ that is significant. For this is the defining characteristic of the Heroic Era: the romantic adventure of a quest ‘to reach a spot on the surface of the globe which hitherto has been untrodden by human foot, unseen by human eyes, ... associated for so long a time with the imaginative ambitions of the civilized world,’ as Lord Curzon phrased it (*Geographical Journal*, 1913), and not the achievement of scientific goals or commercial gains, or even geographical discoveries as such. It is for this precise reason that the period is so hard to define, for it was the product of the growth of widespread public sentiment and not of any objectively identifiable event that began the era, and which carried it through to its conclusion. To attempt to tie it to a technological step forward, or a change in sources of

finance, or to a scientific conference or a particular expedition is to miss the true nature of the entire historical period; it was not the product of the actions of any one man or group of men, but of a much larger and wider social phenomenon that valued and encouraged the romance of adventure. The Heroic Era was such, not because men necessarily showed any more courage than in previous or later periods, but because those who explored the Antarctic regions at this time were particularly rewarded with public adulation for their deeds, and that, conversely, the public were prepared to offer heroic status as an unspoken incentive to men who would take up the challenge of exploring the last unknown continent. In either case, it was the particular public response that peaked at this time, and then diminished during and after World War I, that is key to unlocking what the Heroic Era meant.

The Heroic Era of Antarctic exploration faded with the advent of World War I. When news of Shackleton's survival reached England on 31 May 1916, the response from the public was markedly subdued. The *Daily Chronicle* had exclusive rights to the expedition story, and therefore devoted more page space to it than the other papers. 'Even so,' according to Barczewski, '[Shackleton] was on the paper's front page for only two days before being swept aside by the news of Jutland and [Lord] Kitchener's death.' In most of the newspapers, the story was front-page news for only a single day, 2 June; 'by the 3<sup>rd</sup>, he had entirely disappeared due to the prominence of the Battle of Jutland.' When Shackleton finally returned to England in May 1917, his arrival was barely noticed by the



public (Barczewski, 2007, pp. 132-134). This was in stark contrast to the copious newspaper reportage expeditions and explorers had received over the previous decade.<sup>2</sup>

In the post-War era, the enormous national debts borne by so many nations, the vast loss of men, and wide-spread social disruption precluded the kinds of expeditions seen in the pre-War decades, discussed below. After the battles and bloodshed of the previous four years, there was little enthusiasm for the kind of polar heroics that had epitomised the Heroic Era. At the same time, the War had stimulated a gigantic leap forward in technology, and a new respect for science. Tracked-vehicle technology had benefitted from experience with tanks, communications had reached a level of sophistication previously unimagined, and breakthroughs in aircraft design and aerial photography were to have profound impact on Antarctic exploration from that point on. According to Martin, once the geographical prizes of the South Pole and South Magnetic Pole had been won, the focus of Antarctic activity turned to the more prosaic goals of scientific reconnaissance (Martin, 1996, pp. 156-162). Explorers surrendered the continent to the scientists, and the Heroic Era of Antarctic exploration was over.

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<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the press coverage had been so profuse over Robert Falcon Scott's 1901 expedition, William Bruce's 1902 expedition, and Ernest Shackleton's 1907 expedition, the package tour company Thomas Cook & Sons were prompted to advertise a tour to the Antarctic in 1910. Thomas Cook operated on their proven business model that 'leveraged favourable publicity to promote tours to recently discovered regions of the world'. For reasons unknown, the tour did not occur, and prospects for such tourism were blighted by the tragic events of the Scott expedition in 1912 (Snyder & Stonehouse, 2007, p. 27).

## 1.2 The Heroic Events of a Heroic Era

Following a period of extensive exploration in the first four decades of the nineteenth century, a gap of approximately half a century ensued during which no major expeditions entered Antarctic waters. This period was known as the era of ‘averted interest’ (Mill, 1905 Chapter XVI), or of ‘inverted interest’ (Mawson, 1930, p. xxvi), so named because the attention of the world was drawn away from the southern ice. Mill credited this lull in Antarctic exploration to the loss of the Franklin expedition in the Arctic, and the lengthy period spent in searching for them in those years (Mill, 1905 p.331).<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, by the close of the 1800s, interest in the Antarctic was again awakening, in both scientific circles and among the general public. On 24 January 1895, the first recorded landing on the continent was made at Cape Adare, at the western extremity of the Ross Sea, from the ship *Antarctic* (Martin, 1996, pp. 104-106). The mission was under the management of Henryk Bull, a Norwegian businessman who had migrated to Australia in 1885. Controversy erupted when the expedition returned over who had actually been the first man to set foot on the continent, with Carsten E. Borchgrevink (taken on the expedition as a ‘generally useful hand’), Captain L. Kristensen, and the New Zealander second mate A. H. F. von Tunzelman, all claiming priority (McGonigal & Woodworth, 2002, pp. 164-165). The *Antarctic* expedition was important not only because it aroused an interest in Antarctic geology among scientists such as Tannatt Edgeworth David, who was to play a significant role in later expeditions, but also in that it demonstrated, in Bull’s words, ‘that landing on Antarctica proper is not so difficult as it was hitherto considered, and that a wintering-party have every chance of spending a safe and pleasant twelvemonth at Cape Adair [*sic*], with a

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<sup>3</sup> The Franklin expedition is discussed in depth in Chapter 2.

fair chance of penetrating to, or nearly to, the magnetic pole' (Quoted in Martin, 1996 p.106). This suggestion was soon put into practice by Borchgrevink, who in 1899 headed his own expedition on board the *Southern Cross*. Borchgrevink, like Bull, was a Norwegian who had migrated to Australia in 1888, working in the outback for four years before securing a teaching position in New South Wales (Baughman, 1994, pp. 36-38). After accompanying Bull on the *Antarctic* expedition, Borchgrevink was able to raise funds in England for his 1899 expedition, during which he and his men became the first to spend a winter on the Antarctic continent.<sup>4</sup>

These nineteenth-century expeditions, however, in many ways signified little more than a “warming up” for the events of the next century, when the Heroic Era reached its zenith. The first of these iconic expeditions was the attempt on the South Pole made by the men of the *Discovery* expedition of 1901-1904 – Robert Falcon Scott’s first Antarctic expedition. The *Discovery* arrived at Ross Island at the western end of the Ross Ice Shelf<sup>5</sup> in February 1902, and the men set up base there. They spent the winter in preparation for the following summer when the weather would make exploration feasible. The first attempt to reach the Pole was begun in November that year, by three men: Scott, Edward Wilson, and Ernest Shackleton. They were not necessarily expecting to reach the Pole; as Wilson wrote, ‘Our object is to get as far south in a straight line on the Barrier ice as we can, reach the Pole if possible, or find some new land...’(Quoted in Preston, 1999, p. 61). Nevertheless, their ambition was clear, and they headed as directly south as conditions would permit. Scott wrote at this time, ‘We cannot stop, we cannot go back, we must go

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<sup>4</sup> Borchgrevink’s account of this expedition, published in 1901 under the title *First on the Antarctic Continent*, is discussed further in Chapter 5.

<sup>5</sup> An ice shelf is a thick layer of ice floating on the ocean, formed where a glacier flows out onto the ocean surface. The Ross Ice Shelf, or the Ice Barrier as it was originally known, is the largest ice shelf in Antarctica.

on' (Scott, 1905, p. 436). In fact, they were forced to go back before they left the ice shelf; their supplies were insufficient for the physical effort of the trek, and all three were suffering from scurvy – Shackleton the most severely. The dogs had nearly all died from starvation and over-work, and the men were hauling the sledges themselves. They set a new furthest south of 82 degrees 16 minutes, and returned to their base in February 1903, having been away for three months. The *Discovery* was held fast in the ice that had formed around her, and as a result Scott spent another winter in the Antarctic before returning to England in September 1904.

Scott announced that he was finished with polar exploration, and, tired of being a public figure, expected that he would return to his career in the Royal Navy. Nevertheless, by January 1907 he was again planning an expedition to the Antarctic. He was, however, forestalled by Ernest Shackleton, who announced in February that he intended making another attempt on the Pole, this time heading his own expedition. Shackleton based his expedition at Ross Island in February 1908. The following month, a party of Shackleton's men under the leadership of Tannatt Edgeworth David, geologist at Sydney University, became the first to ascend Mount Erebus.<sup>6</sup> Together with David were Douglas Mawson, geologist at Adelaide University who had studied under David, and Alistair Mackay, a naval surgeon. These three men were later to travel north from their base to locate the South Magnetic Pole, reaching it in January 1909.<sup>7</sup> At the start of this expedition, a motor-car was used to establish two depots, sixteen and twenty-four kilometres from their base. The possibility of using a car in Antarctica was first suggested in 1901 by Louis Bernacchi,

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<sup>6</sup> Erebus is the southernmost active volcano in the world. It is approximately 3794 metres in height.

<sup>7</sup> The Earth's Magnetic Poles are not fixed geographic points, but are constantly moving. In 1908, the Magnetic South Pole was in Victoria Land, to the north-west of Ross Island. In 2006, it was in the Southern Ocean, approximately 200 kilometres off the coast of Terre Adélie.

physicist on Borchgrevink's expedition, but the first trial of this mode of transport proved its unsuitability on soft surfaces (Bernacchi, 1901, p. 274).

Shackleton's attempt on the Pole began on 29 October 1908. He took three men with him – Frank Wild, Jameson Boyd Adams, and Eric Marshall – and four ponies. They sledged south on the Ross Ice Shelf until they reached mountains, and discovered an enormous glacier flowing down between them. They named it the Beardmore Glacier. They ascended the glacier, eventually reaching 3660 metres above sea level, and thereby discovered the highest plateau in the world. They continued across the plateau until 9 January 1909, when, at 88 degrees 23 minutes south, 156 kilometres from the Pole, they planted their flag and headed north once more; Shackleton had decided the risk of continuing was not worth taking because of their state of near starvation and the altitude sickness they were all suffering. They narrowly survived the return journey, but were back on board the *Nimrod* by 1 March, having walked 2,740 kilometres in 128 days (McGonigal & Woodworth, 2002, p. 175). Had the last pony not been lost down a crevasse, they may well have made it to the Pole as it is likely they then would have had sufficient food (Finkel, 1976, p. 79). This near-victory was to be the inspiration, and the undoing, of the later Scott expedition.

In the end, it was the Norwegian expedition led by Roald Amundsen that was to be first to the Pole. Amundsen was an experienced Arctic explorer, having been the first to sail the entire length of the North-West Passage. Indeed, he was planning an attempt on the North Pole in 1909 when newspaper reports told in September of both Robert Peary and Frederick Cook claiming to have been the first to that pole. Amundsen now turned his

attention to the other geographic pole. That same month, Amundsen learned of Scott's plans for a second expedition to the South Pole; thus began the famous "race for the Pole" which was to see Amundsen the victor, and result in tragedy for Scott. Amundsen did not reveal his changed plans until a year later, when he was already on his way south, and, as he anticipated, this drew some criticism from those who saw his entry into competition with the English as underhanded. He claimed that he was not concerned about this:

Nor did I feel any great scruples with regard to the other Antarctic expeditions that were being planned at the time. I knew I should be able to inform Captain Scott of ... my plans before he left civilization, and therefore a few months sooner or later could be of no great importance. Scott's plan and equipment were so widely different from my own that I regarded the telegram that I sent him later, with the information that we were bound for the Antarctic regions, rather as a mark of courtesy than as a communication which might cause him to alter his programme in the slightest degree ... As regards Lieutenant Shirase in the *Kainan Maru*, I understood it to be his plan to devote his whole attention to King Edward VII Land. ... If ... I had made my intention public, it would only have given occasion for a lot of newspaper discussion, and possibly have ended in the project being stifled at its birth.  
(Amundsen, 1913, pp. 44-45)

This has been criticised as disingenuous by more than one researcher, as the evidence overwhelmingly suggests that Amundsen was clearly intent on a race, and on not revealing his hand to Scott until the last possible moment (See, for example, Thomson, 2002).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> An important point which has not been commented upon in the literature is Amundsen's claim that he did not feel it necessary to reveal his plans to Shirase on the grounds that the latter was not intent upon the Pole in any case. This is not correct; as discussed in the following section, Shirase did not announce his decision to abandon his goal of priority to the Pole until 1911, when the Supporters' Group issued instructions to the expedition that they were now to undertake scientific and geographical explorations in Edward VII Land. Thus, it would appear that Amundsen, in attempting to justify his earlier actions, was using knowledge acquired at a later date, perhaps from Shirase's men when they met in the Bay of Whales, or when Amundsen reached Australia on his return journey.

Amundsen set out for Antarctica from Kristiania<sup>9</sup> in June 1910; his ship, the *Fram*, arrived in the Bay of Whales on 14 January 1911. Unlike Shackleton, who feared that the ice shelf might calve at any time and send a base built on it drifting out to sea, Amundsen was convinced that the Bay of Whales – an indent in the near-vertical face of the Ross Ice Shelf – had been created by underlying land in that area, the ice of the shelf buckling and curving around the land to form the bay. He therefore believed that this was a safe place to build his base. As the site for a base camp for an assault on the Pole, it had the great advantage over the Ross Island site of being ninety-seven kilometres further south.<sup>10</sup> A team of five men, using four sledges pulled by thirteen dogs each, departed for the Pole on 19 October 1911. Dogs were slaughtered to provide food for both men and the other dogs, and sledges were consequently abandoned as they progressed. On 8 December, they passed Shackleton's furthest south established in 1909, and in what Amundsen portrayed in his account as a largely uneventful and smoothly accomplished journey, arrived at the Pole on 14 December 1911.

Scott's second expedition, meanwhile, despite having departed London three months before Amundsen left Kristiania, likewise arrived at Ross Island in January 1911. The *Terra Nova*, Scott's ship, was slow, and there were many delays along the way in order to raise further funds, gather supplies, and refuel the ship. Scott's plans for transporting men and supplies from base to Pole were complex and intricate, involving the use of sixteen men, ten ponies, thirty-three dogs, and fifteen sledges, two of which were

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<sup>9</sup> Kristiania is an old name for the city of Oslo, used between 1877 and 1925.

<sup>10</sup> Later events have shown the risks of calving of the ice shelf in this area, with all three 'Little America' United States Antarctic bases near the Bay of Whales being carried out to sea when the extremely large iceberg B-9 broke away in 1987 (Keys, Jacobs, & Barnett, 1990). Amundsen's base no longer exists, having been carried out to sea as icebergs calved off the Ross Ice Shelf, as has the site of Shirase's base camp.

motorised.<sup>11</sup> The ponies suffered in the extreme cold and struggled to walk in deep snow; all had been shot by the time the expedition reached the bottom of the Beardmore Glacier. Scott was indeed following in Shackleton's footsteps, ascending the Beardmore to reach the polar plateau. Although Scott was not to know this, Amundsen actually reached the Pole as Scott was climbing the glacier on his now futile mission.

On 11 December, Scott sent two men and all the dogs back to base, leaving the remaining twelve men to haul three heavily-laden sledges. Four more men were sent back with a sledge on 21 December; the remaining eight continued to haul their two sledges until 4 January 1912. At this point, Scott selected the four men who were to make the final assault on the Pole with him, sending the others back to base. The men he chose were all to die with him on the return trek. They were Dr. Edward Wilson, who had also accompanied Scott on his *Discovery* polar attempt, Captain Lawrence Oates, Lieutenant Henry Bowers, and Petty Officer Edgar Evans. They passed Shackleton's furthest south on 9 January, and arrived at the Pole on 17 January, only to discover Amundsen's flag already marking the spot.

They began the return journey of 1290 kilometres on 19 January. Food and fuel shortages quickly became life-threatening. Their final camp was within a mere eighteen kilometres of a major food and supplies cache made in February of the previous year. The extreme weather conditions, with temperatures in the minus forty degrees Celsius range, and their growing weakness from lack of food, however, meant that the men were unable to

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<sup>11</sup> Scott had read Shackleton's account of his nearly successful polar attempt using ponies; rather than interpreting Shackleton's use of ponies as the cause of failure, Scott believed that the problem was Shackleton's having taken insufficient ponies, and decided that increasing the number of ponies could be the solution (Barczewski, 2007, p. 64).



make that last vital trek, and the three surviving men died on or about 29 March 1912. Their bodies were found in their tent eight months later, together with their diaries and final letters.

Just as Amundsen and Scott were on their way to the Pole, yet another expedition was departing for the Antarctic. This was Douglas Mawson's expedition to chart the coast of that part of the continent directly to the south of Australia, and to undertake a variety of scientific investigations. Mawson stated clearly that his expedition was not another attempt on the Pole. There were to be two landing parties: a main party of eighteen men under Mawson himself and based in Adélie Land, and a smaller party of eight, under Frank Wild, based further to the west in Queen Mary Land. The *Aurora* departed Hobart in December 1911, and arrived in Antarctica on 8 January 1912.

Six sledging expeditions set out from the Commonwealth Bay base between 8 and 10 November. Mawson's party consisted of Swiss ski expert and mountaineer Xavier Mertz, and ex-Royal Fusilier Belgrave Ninnis. Their mission was to map areas to the east of the base. They took three sledges and sixteen dogs, and enjoyed generally rapid progress, until 14 December, when Ninnis, with his sledge and team of dogs, fell through the snow covering a crevasse and was lost. Ninnis' sledge was carrying most of the food and spare clothing as well as the main tent, and had been pulled by the best of the dogs. Thus, Mawson and Mertz now faced a struggle for survival in their over five hundred kilometre race back to base. They killed and ate the remaining six dogs to supplement the few rations

that had not been lost, but Mertz sickened, and, on 7 January 1913, died.<sup>12</sup> Mawson continued the struggle alone, nearly losing his life several times as he fell into hidden crevasses. Each time, he managed to climb out, and despite incredible hardships and starvation, reached the base camp on 8 February. Mawson and the six men who had waited for him had to spend another winter in the Antarctic before they could be rescued. They arrived back in Australia on 26 February 1914 (Rosove, 2000).

The last expedition of the Heroic Era was Shackleton's third journey to Antarctica: his Imperial Transantarctic Expedition of 1914 to 1917. Once the Pole had been reached, there seemed to be little remaining that would require the heroic gestures of Antarctic explorers; Mawson was already pointing the way to the new era of mechanised, scientific exploration, with his predominantly geographic, geological, and atmospheric investigations. Shackleton, however, was determined to make one more "heroic journey", and quickly arrived at the idea of an expedition to trek across the Antarctic, travelling via the Pole. He planned to lead a six man party almost three thousand kilometres from the Weddell Sea to the Ross Sea, across the polar plateau.

The *Endurance* departed England on 8 August 1914, and had reached the pack ice of the Weddell Sea by the end of December. The crew struggled to force the ship towards Vahsel Bay where Shackleton planned to start his overland journey, but by the end of February, the ship was beset, and thus began a long slow drift north with the pack ice.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> It is likely that Mertz died of hypervitaminosis, a toxic excess of Vitamin A from eating the livers of the dogs. Mertz himself suspected that it was the diet of dog that was making him ill (Rosove, 2000, p. 258).

<sup>13</sup> The frozen waters of the Weddell Sea are not stationary, but are carried by ocean currents in a clockwise direction around the Sea, before the ice is crushed and piled against the western coast. What little ice escapes is carried north, out into the Southern Ocean.

Shackleton soon realised that he was not going to be able to achieve his cross-continental expedition.

The winter was passed quietly, but with the coming of the ice melt in August 1915, enormous pressure built up as ice floes were forced against the coast. The *Endurance* was slowly crushed, until, on 26 October, the men abandoned ship. It sank several weeks later. They were now stranded on the floating ice, slowly heading north. They lived on the ice for five months, before it melted sufficiently for them to take to the three lifeboats they had salvaged from the *Endurance*. They finally reached Elephant Island, a small, desolate rock in the Southern Ocean, north of the Antarctic Peninsula. Shackleton then took five of the fittest men and set sail in the *James Caird*, one of the lifeboats, and headed for the island of South Georgia, where they knew there was a Norwegian whaling station. It was a journey of 1,300 kilometres, through some of the stormiest seas on Earth, but they reached land seventeen days after leaving Elephant Island, trekked across the mountains in the centre of the island, and walked into the whaling station. It took another five months before the men left on Elephant Island could be rescued, owing to poor weather conditions and the unavailability of a suitable ship. This was finally accomplished on 30 August 1916.<sup>14</sup>

Shackleton undertook one final voyage in 1921, although by then, expeditions of this 'heroic' nature had become an anachronism. His vague and unrealistic proposal was to study subantarctic islands, comb the South Atlantic for islands and reefs of questionable existence, and to chart the coast of the Antarctic mainland in the Enderby Land region. The

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<sup>14</sup> Shackleton's Ross Sea Party, who laid a series of food depots for Shackleton to use as he approached the end of his journey, was largely forgotten until recent research revealed the heroic nature of that expedition too (Tyler-Lewis, 2006). The party, which had been divided and stranded, was rescued in January 1917.

*Quest* departed England on 17 September 1921. Shackleton's health had been a concern from the start, and was steadily deteriorating as they approached South Georgia, where they arrived on 4 January 1922. The next morning, Shackleton died of a heart attack. The expedition continued under Frank Wild, and some scientific data was acquired, before the *Quest* returned to England in September 1922.

### 1.3 The *Kainan Maru* Expedition of 1910 – 1912 and Shirase's Post-Expedition Life<sup>15</sup>

At the same time as Amundsen's and Scott's expeditions were headed for Antarctica, another expedition was also in progress. On 28 November, 1910, Lieutenant Shirase Nobu's ship the *Kainan Maru* [Opener of the South] set sail from Japan, captained by Nomura Naokichi, and headed south. An estimated fifty-thousand well-wishers were present in Shibaura near Tokyo Bay to farewell the explorers (C. Sato, 2004, p. 29; K. Shirase, 1986, p. 212), and numerous small boats accompanied the *Kainan Maru* as it sailed out to sea amidst a flurry of "banzais" and fireworks.

The ship carried twenty-seven men: a crew of eighteen, from the captain down to the stokers and sailors, and the expedition team consisting of nine men. These were listed as 'Expedition Leader' (Shirase Nobu), 'Head of Science' (Takeda Terutarō), 'Head of

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<sup>15</sup> Except where indicated, this account of the *Kainan Maru* expedition is based on Shirase's two publications in book form: *Nankyoku tanken* [Antarctic expedition] (N. Shirase, 1913), and *Watashi no Nankyoku tanken-ki* [A record of my Antarctic expedition] (N. Shirase, 1942). Although it is argued in Chapter 5 that these works were intended as juvenile adventure literature, there has never been any question raised, either by Shirase's contemporaries or since, as to the factuality of the details of the expedition itself as narrated in these works. As Rosove (2001, p. 400) in his extensive bibliography of Antarctic publications has noted, 'the principal narrative has not to date been translated into English,' and therefore is largely unavailable except in the Japanese language, in the two works cited.

Hygiene’ (Miisho Seizō), ‘Secretary’ (Tada Keiichi), ‘Head of Provisions’ (Nishikawa Genzō), ‘Head of Clothing’ (Yoshino Yoshitada), ‘Cook’ (Miura Kōtarō), and two men in charge of the dogs (Yamanobe Yasunosuke and Hanamori Shinkichi).<sup>16</sup>

Shirase was born on 13 June 1861, and at fifty years of age, was the oldest on board. He was the eldest son of a Buddhist priest, Shirase Chidō, and his wife, Makie, and was raised in the village of Konoura, Akita Prefecture. In 1879, he began training in the Japanese Army, in the Imperial Mounted Guard, and graduated in 1881. He served in the army, and was promoted to lieutenant after the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). He served for several years in the northern parts of Japan, gaining invaluable experience in survival in extreme cold. Despite his successful military career, Shirase claimed that his sole intent from early childhood was to be a polar explorer, and that he had joined the army specifically for the opportunities it would provide to gain useful skills in exploration. His Antarctic expedition was thus the fruition of many years of sustained effort and determined training.

The *Kainan Maru* was a small ship, only one-hundred feet in length (30 metres). It was a three-masted schooner, constructed of wood, with an eighteen-horsepower engine. It weighed a mere 204 tons (185 tonnes).<sup>17</sup> Although there had been some discussion of the expedition being provided with an Iwaki-class warship then in port, the bureaucratic difficulties involved in freeing the ship from naval control for the duration of the expedition

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<sup>16</sup> These dog handlers were both Ainu. The names given were their Japanese names as used by Shirase and the men on the *Kainan Maru*. Their Ainu names were Yayomanekuh and Sisratoka, respectively (C. Sato, 2004, pp. 7, 29).

<sup>17</sup> By comparison, Scott’s ship the *Terra Nova* was 187 feet in length (57 metres), and weighed 744 tons (675 tonnes).

were prohibitive. Operating on an extremely limited budget, Shirase was forced to accept the diminutive and under-powered *Kainan Maru*.

Shirase was intent on reaching the South Pole. He was well aware of Ernest Shackleton's furthest south of 88 degrees 23 minutes, reached on 9 January, 1909, and that Scott had already set out on the *Terra Nova* on his second Antarctic expedition. He believed, however, that if he could hurry his preparations and depart by the middle of August, 1910, he still had a chance of being first to the Pole. Roald Amundsen too had foreseen the necessity of starting out at this time if he were to beat Scott, and indeed, Amundsen departed Kristiania on 9 August.

In fact, the *Kainan Maru* did not depart Japan until November, because of difficulties Shirase encountered in raising sufficient funds to finance the expedition, and in then finding a suitable ship for the limited funds he had. Nevertheless, had the *Kainan Maru* made its departure in August as Shirase had wished, and encountered the more favourable weather conditions likely at that season, it is probable that, considering the shorter distances from Japan to the Ross Ice Shelf area where all three expeditions were headed, Shirase would have beaten Amundsen to the Bay of Whales, and most certainly have been well-established in his camp long before Scott moved into his base at McMurdo Sound, at the eastern end of the ice shelf. Even as it was, as Shirase was leaving Japan, Scott was only just departing New Zealand, and Amundsen was still *en route* in the Southern Ocean. Thus, there was still no great gap between the three expeditions. Indeed, Scott and Amundsen were to occupy their bases within days of each other, in mid-January 1911, and had Shirase not encountered adverse seas and winds between Japan and New

Zealand, his expedition could well have arrived on the ice around the same time. In the end, he did not arrive in Wellington Harbour, New Zealand, until 8 February, 1911, after seventy days at sea – a far longer journey than anticipated owing to severe weather conditions they met at the start, and from having been delayed in the Doldrums at the Equator.

A warm reception awaited them in New Zealand, although there was some degree of confusion due to the language barrier. On 11 February, after restocking the expedition's food supplies, the ship headed south again, and they recorded seeing their first penguin on 17 February, and their first iceberg on 26 February.

The Antarctic summer is short, and the period during which the Ross Sea is accessible is limited to approximately ten weeks, from the last week of December until the first week of March. Consequently, it had become an accepted part of planning an attempt on the Pole that an expedition team needed to establish itself in a base camp on the coast in the summer, and lay food depots as far along the route to the Pole as possible before winter closed in. Then, in the following summer, the polar party could set out with fewer supplies, carrying only what was necessary for the distance from the last depot to the Pole, and back to that depot. Shirase anticipated following this plan, having carried on the *Kainan Maru* a prefabricated hut for shelter during the Antarctic winter, just as Scott and Amundsen had done.

Shirase's first sight of the Antarctic continent occurred on 6 March, 1911, when the Admiralty Mountains came into view. As noted above, this represents the very end of the

season during which the Antarctic was accessible to ships of the time, and particularly one of such limited horsepower as the *Kainan Maru*. On 8 March, they passed the Possession Islands. The next day, they encountered pancake ice,<sup>18</sup> as the ocean surface began to freeze over. The ice steadily thickened, until, at noon on the 12 March, at 74 degrees 16 minutes south, 172 degrees 7 minutes east, the *Kainan Maru* was brought to a halt in the pack ice.<sup>19</sup> A blizzard and raging seas then arose, threatening to crush the ship in the ice. On the night of 14 March, Shirase gathered his crew in the stern cabin, and announced that the following day they would be heading for Sydney, to await the spring thaw, when they would once again sail south and attempt to land on Antarctica.

On 1 May, 1911, the *Kainan Maru* sailed into Sydney Harbour, and, after passing quarantine inspection, anchored in Double Bay. Here the men heard for the first time of Amundsen's expedition, and, more disastrously for their own plans, of both Amundsen's and Scott's arrival in the Antarctic. The *Kainan Maru* was allowed to moor in Parsley Bay, near to the Sydney suburb of Vaucluse. Although requested by the Australian government to stay at the Hotel Australia, the expedition budget was unable to support that expense, and eventually the men erected the demountable wooden hut intended for their Antarctic base in the bushland at the head of Parsley Bay. The camp was quite close to the few houses existing at that time in Vaucluse, which was still an outer suburb of Sydney in 1911. Residents of the area, particularly children, became regular visitors to the Japanese campsite.

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<sup>18</sup> Pancake ice is predominantly circular pieces of ice floating on the ocean. They range from thirty centimetres to three metres in diameter, and have raised rims due to the pieces striking against each other.

<sup>19</sup> Pack ice forms when large pieces of sea ice or pancake ice are driven together and form a large single mass. Pack ice was responsible for the crushing and sinking of Ernest Shackleton's 1914-1917 expedition ship the *Endurance*.



On 1 May, Captain Nomura and Chief Secretary Tada returned to Japan on one of the regular steamships carrying passengers between the two countries, in order to provide their expedition Supporters' Group with a progress report, receive new instructions, and assist in the raising of funds for the expedition. Nomura returned to Australia in October, and Tada in November, bringing with him the agronomist Ikeda Masayoshi, who became Takeda's "second" as Head of Science, and the cinematographer Taizumi Yasunao, as well as thirty new sledge dogs to replace those that had died since the expedition left Japan.

Most importantly for the expedition, the Supporters' Group had given instructions that the aims of the expedition were to change. With the knowledge that both Scott and Amundsen were already in Antarctica, and that competition with them for the Pole would now be futile, the *Kainan Maru* expedition was to become a scientific rather than a geographical expedition. On 19 November 1911, they departed Sydney Harbour for Antarctica amid considerable fanfare; a small flotilla of yachts and motorboats accompanied them, and a crowd of local Sydney residents waved farewell from the shore.<sup>20</sup>

On 11 December, they saw their first iceberg of the season, and were soon within the loose pack ice.<sup>21</sup> It was not until 3 January, however, that they were to see the Antarctic continent, beginning with Mt. Sabine in Victoria Land. They then sailed East along the Ross Ice Shelf, and into the Bay of Whales. Shirase and his men were stunned to find another ship already there – a ship they soon discovered to be Amundsen's *Fram*. The

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<sup>20</sup> In an interview conducted by local historian Jane Britten in 1993, Mr. Robert Hilliar, who was a small boy living in Vaucluse in 1911, recalled that when the expedition was leaving, 'nearly all the people from around Parsley Bay went out onto the cliff just behind Reid's shop to farewell them' (Britten & Yeh, 2000, p. 15).

<sup>21</sup> On 14 December, 1911, Amundsen, Bjaaland, Wisting, Hassel and Hanssen became the first men to reach the South Pole. They returned to their base on 25 January, and departed the Bay of Whales on 30 January, arriving in Hobart on 7 March, 1912.

crews later visited each other. After securing the ship to the fast ice near the foot of the Ross Ice Shelf, Shirase and his men donned their trekking costume in preparation for their first venture onto the continent. They put on several layers of shirts, over which they wore dog-fur suits, together with sealskin snow boots of Ainu design and make. In addition, they wore snow goggles, earmuffs and gloves, and each man carried a hiking staff. A perilous ascent of the ice shelf then began. When all the men finally made it to the top they repeatedly shouted “banzai” in joy and relief. They spent some time investigating towards the south, but soon returned to the ship to begin offloading supplies and equipment for their camp.

On 17 January, the men unloaded forty pieces of luggage onto the ice, and the two sledge drivers – Yamanobe and Hanamori – transported it to the foot of the ice shelf. Both used Ainu-design sledges, each of slightly over three metres in length, approximately thirty-six centimetres in width, and thirty centimetres high. Only five dogs were used to pull each sledge, although the driver was expected to push from behind. Ropes were used to pull the luggage to the top of the ice shelf.

Shirase determined that it was now time for the parties to be divided, and to allocate the duties of the respective parties. He divided the group into three: the Dash Party, the Base Party, and the Coastal Party. The Dash Party members were to go south-west as far as longitude 145 degrees west, undertaking scientific investigations and naming geographical features as they went. The Base Party members were to remain on the ice shelf at the Bay of Whales. The Coastal Party would undertake investigations into the weather and tides along the edge of the ice shelf, travelling eastwards aboard the *Kainan Maru*, go ashore in

the vicinity of Edward VII Land and explore that region. The Coastal Party was then to return in the *Kainan Maru* to collect the Dash Party and the Base Party. The Dash Party was to consist of Shirase, Takeda, Miisho, Yamanobe, and Hanamori. The Base Party was made up of two men: Muramatsu and Yoshino. The Coastal Party consisted of Ikeda, Tada, Nishikawa, Taizumi, and Watanabe.

On 18 January, the Dash Party under Shirase's command was taken by boat from the *Kainan Maru* to the base of the ice shelf, to a point determined likely to afford relatively easy access to the south. They climbed the shelf, and walked approximately three kilometres inland to a position 78 degrees 33 minutes south 164 degrees 22 minutes west, where they set up their base camp. The following day, many of the group were suffering from snow-blindness, and so the day was spent in camp.

The next day, 20 January, Shirase's expedition south began. The weather was fine, but the men had yet to fully recover from their snow-blindness. Nevertheless, Shirase felt it imperative that they begin, which they did by noon. They took the two sledges, driven by Hanamori and Yamanobe, while the other three men walked. They did not have the advantage of using skis, for although these were first seen in Japan in 1910, they were not generally known until 1911, and thus were not available at the time of the *Kainan Maru's* departure (Lunn, 1927, pp. 35-36).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Looking back in later years, Shirase expressed his regret that he did not have skis on his expedition, realising the significant advantages of their use. The success of Amundsen's expedition was largely attributable to Norwegian skiing expertise, skis having been in use there for many years. Scott and his men were not good on skis, these having been introduced to England only a short time before the expedition departed. Scott therefore took on his expedition the Norwegian ski expert Tryggve Gran to instruct the rest of the party. The men, however, never became more than moderately skilled, much to Scott's regret, as he too realised the advantage lost to Amundsen in this field.

By 4:50 p.m., Shirase realized that both men and dogs were suffering from fatigue, this being their first day sledging, and so stopped the group and made camp. Their tent was 1.5 metres high, held on five poles, and made of blue linen. In common with the European tents, the entrance was formed of a “tunnel” of material, designed to keep the snow out. There was no floor built into the tent, the men instead spreading two layers of canvas and their fur coats on the floor to sit on. They used a kerosene stove in the centre of the tent for heat and to cook their meals. Shirase, Takeda and Miisho slept in this tent, while the two Ainu sledge-drivers erected a make-shift shelter for themselves. They had travelled slightly under fourteen kilometres, reaching 78 degrees 33 minutes south 164 degrees 22 minutes west.

When they awoke on 21 January, Takeda went out to take his regular sightings for position, while Miisho took photographs.<sup>23</sup> Hanamori and Yamanobe prepared breakfast. They did not get away from camp until 11:00 a.m. The snow on the ground was thick, and they found the going difficult. They rested for lunch at 3:50 p.m., but as they rested, the weather rapidly worsened, soon developing into a severe blizzard. They found it impossible to go on, and so set up camp. Shirase realised at this time that they were still on the ice shelf; he believed that they would not be on land until they had reached somewhere around 78 degrees 40 minutes south. Again having travelled just under fourteen kilometres that day, they were at 78 degrees 38 minutes south 163 degrees 55 minutes west.

The next day was more promising, with the weather improving from late morning. They were able to leave their camp site by 1:00 p.m., but they found it difficult to make

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<sup>23</sup> The expedition’s official photographer, Taizumi, was a member of the Coastal Party; on the Dash Party, Miisho assumed this role.

progress through the deep snow deposited overnight. It now required two men to push each of the sledges, and having progressed only eight kilometres, they had to rest. After prolonged discussions, they decided to make a cache of as many items as they could spare. Shirase dumped his fur clothing. The other men cached two of their sleeping bags, agreeing to share the remaining bags. They left an array of other surplus items, and nine day's supply of food. In total, they managed to lighten their sledges by one hundred and fifty kilograms. They set off again at around 5:00 p.m., and by the end of this, the third day, had travelled nearly twenty-five kilometres, reaching 78 degrees 42 minutes south 163 degrees 2 minutes west.

On the morning of 23 January they left camp at 11:00 a.m., and noticed immediately that the ground rose steadily from this point towards the Pole. Shirase noted that the sledges were travelling well, and thought that the dogs were becoming used to the work. They stopped for lunch at 4:00 p.m., setting off again at 6:00 p.m. as a light snow began to fall. This soon worsened into blizzard conditions, and they were forced to make camp at 8:45 p.m.<sup>24</sup> They had travelled thirty-five kilometres, and were at 78 degrees 52 minutes south 162 degrees 38 minutes west.

The following day the blizzard stopped, but the sky remained overcast. They broke camp at 11:30 a.m., and soon ran into the first sastrugi<sup>25</sup> they had encountered. The sledges were overturned numerous times, and at some point the compass was broken. Takeda set to

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<sup>24</sup> In the middle of the Antarctic summer, the sun does not set, but merely approaches closer to the horizon at midnight. Thus, Shirase and his men were able to progress regardless of the time.

<sup>25</sup> Sastrugi are sharp ridges of snow formed by the wind. They may be small, similar to ripples in sand, or up to several metres in height. The difficulties of crossing fields of sastrugi have frequently been complained of by Antarctic explorers (Trewby, 2002, p. 157).

work to repair it, but as the temperature had dropped to minus 18 degrees Celsius, and as it was now 3:30 p.m., Shirase decided to stop for lunch. They started again at 5:00p.m., but once more ran into sastrugi at around 7:30 p.m.. There was another mishap with the repaired compass, and this time the magnetic needle itself was damaged. The temperature had now fallen to minus 22 degrees Celsius, and Takeda began to suffer from frostbite. As the weather was steadily worsening, they set up camp at 9:50 p.m., having come thirty-seven kilometres, and having reached 79 degrees 2 minutes south 161 degrees 20 minutes west.

The weather on the morning of 25 January looked threatening, but Shirase wished to press on, so after the regular observations, they broke camp at midday. The dogs were not pulling well, and Shirase, Takeda and Miisho had to take turns leading them. The sastrugi were again bad. They stopped for a break at 2:30 p.m., but started again by 3:00 p.m. Snow began to fall, and this suddenly developed into a howling blizzard, with the result that the two sledge parties were separated. Takeda in the front sledge with Shirase realised that although they had the compass, the food and tent were in the rear sledge; he observed that should the parties not be reunited, all would probably die. The temperature had fallen to minus 25 degrees Celsius. Shirase erected a shelter from bamboo stakes and canvas, and they huddled inside, trying to avoid hypothermia. They attempted to use their emergency whistles, but they had frozen and would not work, and immediately adhered to the men's lips. They shouted for the rear sledge group for an extended period of time, but received no answer. Shirase too had begun to doubt their chances of survival, when suddenly they heard a voice, and by calling to each other, the parties were finally reunited. Miisho in the rear sledge explained that when he discovered the parties had become separated, he searched the

ground for any indication of which direction the front sledge had taken. He was fortunate to find traces of blood from a cut in the paw of one of the front sledge dogs, and by following that, was able to come close enough to Shirase's group to hear their shouts. The reunited team progressed a little further, but soon decided that the weather was too bad to go on that day, and set up camp. They had progressed thirty-three kilometres, and were at 79 degrees 12 minutes south 160 degrees 50 minutes west.

The weather on day seven of the expedition was no better than on the previous evening, so the men remained in their tents until they were finally able to break camp at 9:30 p.m. Again they met with sastrugi, and progress was delayed. They continued walking through the night, with a rest and meal at 2:30 a.m. They saw what they took to be four mountain peaks in the distance, but after heading in that direction for several hours, realised that they were chasing a mirage, a common phenomenon in Antarctica. They camped and slept at 8:30 a.m., having travelled seventy kilometres since the previous evening.

They arose that afternoon, and broke camp at 6:30 p.m. The sastrugi continued to slow their progress, but they had progressed forty-three kilometres by midnight. They were now at 79 degrees 48 minutes south 157 degrees 40 minutes west, and approximately five hundred metres above sea level.

They continued walking until 12:30 a.m., but only achieved another four kilometres before camping. They arose at 11:00 a.m., and waited for Takeda to take his regular noon reading of their position. They found that they had reached 80 degrees 5 minutes south 156

degrees 37 minutes west. This, they decided, was to be their furthest south. It was 28 January, the ninth day of the trek.

Shirase gave three reasons for the decision to go no further. Firstly, their goals had changed while they were waiting for the coming of summer in Sydney; this second journey was ultimately intended as a scientific expedition, not one of geographical conquest. Having reached this far south, the scientific observations being taken by Takeda were largely completed,<sup>26</sup> and any further excursion southwards would be superfluous to their mission. Secondly, Shirase foresaw that to extend the expedition by even half a day would mean that their food supplies would be severely limited on the return journey, to the point where the team's survival would be jeopardised. Finally, they had arranged to be picked up by the *Kainan Maru* on her return from Edward VII Land, and if the Dash Party had not returned to the base camp before that time, both the Base Party and the men on board the ship would be alarmed and put into some difficulty as to how they should proceed.

At this point, Shirase dug a hole approximately one metre deep and buried a copper box, thirty centimetres square and six centimetres deep, engraved with the words *Nankyoku Tanken Dōjōsha Hōmeibo* [Antarctic Expedition Supporters' Honour Roll], with the list sealed inside. Heading the 'Honour Roll' was the name of the leader of the Supporters' Group, Ōkuma Shigenobu, and thereafter followed the names of over ten thousand supporters from around Japan. After burying the box, the men planted a bamboo pole

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<sup>26</sup> These observations, which included extensive meteorological data, were published together with those taken by the other parties, as scientific appendices to the official report of the expedition, *Nankyoku-ki* [Antarctic Record].



approximately two metres high to which they attached the Japanese flag. Shirase then lined his men up in front of the flag, and made the following speech:

Having spent fully two years, we at last on this month, this day, have arrived at this point, 154 degrees west, 80 degrees 5 minutes south, and, unable to go one step further, and deeply grateful for the benevolence of His Majesty's favour, proclaim our expedition's achievement.<sup>27 28</sup>

(N. Shirase, 1913, p. 286)

They followed this with three 'banzai's for the Emperor, and Shirase named the land in sight *Yamato Yuki-hara* [Yamato Snow Fields].<sup>29</sup> Miisho then photographed the scene.

Shirase and his men departed this, their furthest south, at 2:30 p.m., and began their trek back to the base camp. At 5:30 p.m. they passed their camp-site of the previous evening. Shirase noted that the sledges were running extremely well, and they continued a further three kilometres before stopping for the night.

On 29 January, they broke camp at 11:30 a.m., and passed the final camp of the journey south before 1:00 p.m. At 6:10 p.m. they took a short rest, but then began sledging again. They noticed, however, that the dogs had become severely tired, and some were

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<sup>27</sup> *Fushōra man ni nen no nisshi o tsuiyashi tsui ni hongetsu honjitsu seikei hyaku go jū yon do nan'i hachi jū do go fun no chiten ni tōchaku seshi mo mohaya ippo mo zenshin suru atawazu koko ni kōon no kōtoku o kansha shi tatematsuri haruka ni wagatai no kōdō o hōkoku shi tatematsuru.*

<sup>28</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Japanese in this thesis are the researcher's own; the English translation appears in the body of the thesis text, and a Romanisation of the original Japanese is shown in the footnotes.

<sup>29</sup> 'Yamato' is an ancient name for Japan, roughly meaning '[Land of] Great Peace'. The characters for 'yuki-hara' can also be read as 'setsugen' with no change in meaning, and Shirase himself later used this reading on occasion. As a result, there is some confusion in the literature regarding the name Shirase gave this land.

sickening, so at 11:30 p.m. they rested again, having travelled nearly ninety-five kilometres that day.

They started again at 12:30 a.m. the following morning, and did not camp until 4:30 a.m. They slept until 4:00 p.m., thus giving themselves and the dogs an extended rest. They then walked on from 5:00 p.m. until around 10:00 p.m., when they discovered in front of them the sea edge of the Ice Shelf. They now realised with delight that they were nearing the base camp. Nevertheless, in order to take scientific readings, they set up their camp. After resting, they went to the edge of the Shelf, and observed a bay below them. They followed along the edge of the Shelf, expecting that the fog would clear, but instead it thickened, and they were eventually forced to camp once more at 2:10 a.m. on 31 January, having come only one-and-a-half kilometres. When the fog cleared around two hours later, they found that they had in fact camped directly above the Bay of Whales, and that to the west could be seen their base camp. They immediately set off, and at 5:50 a.m. arrived back at base to the pronounced delight of Muramatsu and Yoshino, who ran out to welcome the Dash Party. The men ate well, and fell into a deep sleep. They had been away for eleven days.

The next morning, as the men in the tent were eating breakfast, Hanamori burst in with the news that the *Kainan Maru* had come into view. After signalling their location to the ship, they began to pack up the Base Camp. The ship sailed along the Ice Shelf, and then entered the Bay of Whales. A boat was launched at 8:00 p.m., and the four men it carried assisted the shore party in the transport of the base equipment back to the ship. This had been completed by 7:00 a.m. of the following day.

While the Dash Party under Shirase's leadership had been travelling to the south-west, the Coastal Party had sailed along the Ice Shelf towards Edward VII Land, the mountain peaks of the Alexandra Ranges coming into view on 23 January. This part of the Antarctic had not been explored in any detail at this time, the only expeditions to have ventured into the region being James Clark Ross in the *Erebus* and *Terror* in 1841, who claimed to have seen land beyond the Ice Shelf, and Scott in the *Discovery* in 1902, who caught a glimpse of mountains in the distance in what later came to be named King Edward VII Land. No land explorations had taken place to this date. The *Kainan Maru* entered Biscoe Bay, and at 4:00 p.m. was at 76 degrees 56 minutes south 155 degrees 55 minutes west. Two parties were landed on the fast ice;<sup>30</sup> they intended to make an attempt on the westernmost of the mountains in the range, which was also the closest to the ship. A four-man team under Tsuchiya, the ship's mate, headed south, but upon reaching the Ice Shelf, found it to be a nearly vertical cliff of ice over sixty metres high. They were forced to return to the ship. The second team, consisting of Nishikawa, Watanabe, and the cinematographer Taizumi, travelled to the south-west, where they also encountered the cliff-like face of the Ice Shelf. There was, however, one point where a slope of approximately thirty degrees had been created in the Shelf by a glacier-like formation, and they proceeded to climb this. When they reached the top, they discovered that the Ice Shelf at this point was riven by numerous crevasses, and they were forced to descend once more. Taizumi returned to the ship, but Nishikawa and Watanabe continued further to the east where they found an incline leading to the top of the Shelf, which was at this point over forty-five metres high. It took them two hours to ascend this, and they then began walking towards the mountains. At 11:00 p.m. a blizzard arose. The two men heated some canned

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<sup>30</sup> Fast ice is sea ice that is immobile due to its attachment to the land or sea floor.

milk they had brought, and drank this to keep them warm. They were fortunate that the blizzard soon ended, and they continued walking. The mountains were much further inland than had appeared at the start, but after the men trekked across the Ice Shelf for approximately sixteen kilometres they arrived at their goal at approximately 6:00 a.m. on 24 January. As they rested, an avalanche occurred, and the men narrowly missed being swept away. They were prevented from approaching any closer to the mountains by an enormous crevasse, four metres wide. Unable to go further, the men erected a post commemorating their expedition, and took several photographs.<sup>31</sup>

Nishikawa walked a little further to the west, in order to better observe the mountains, and on his return, fell into a crevasse that was hidden under the snow. Fortunately, his coat caught on a projection, and Watanabe was able to rescue him. As they had not returned to the ship by 2:00 p.m., several search parties were sent to look for them; they were finally found and brought back to the ship at 10:30 p.m. on 24 January.

At noon the following day the *Kainan Maru* sailed out of Biscoe Bay, and continued east along the Ice Shelf until stopped by icebergs and ice floes. They had reached 151 degrees 20 minutes west 76 degrees 6 minutes south, thirty-seven kilometres further east than Scott had been in the *Discovery* ten years earlier. They then returned to the Bay of Whales, discovering and naming Ōkuma Bay on the way. By the time they reached the entrance to the Bay of Whales, the weather had deteriorated, and strong winds and high seas precluded their entering. These conditions, combined with heavy snow, meant that

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<sup>31</sup> On the front of the post was written in Japanese, 'Japanese Antarctic Expedition, Coastal Party Landing Memorial'. On the right side were recorded the names of the Coastal Party members, and on the left those of the ship's captain and crew. On the rear of the memorial was written the date: '24 January, Meiji 45 [1912]'.

they were not able to enter the bay until the following night. The weather calmed, but as they could not identify the location of the base camp, five of the men were sent ashore in a boat to search for it. They attempted to climb the Ice Shelf, but two of them fell from the shelf into the water when the ice crumbled. They were pulled from the sea, and the men all returned to the ship. At this time, one of the crew sighted men at the top of the Shelf, and the expedition members were soon reunited.

The ship departed Antarctica on 4 February 1912, headed once more for New Zealand. As they passed Coulman Island, they debated whether to make a landing, but decided that their rapidly diminishing supplies of coal and water would not allow any delay in their return to civilisation. They again encountered heavy rain and high seas, and did not reach Wellington Harbour until 23 February.

On 30 February, Shirase, Takeda, Ikeda, Taizumi and Yasuda boarded the Nippon Yūsen Kaisha [Japan Mail Shipping Line] passenger steamer *Nikko Maru*, bound for Yokohama via Sydney. Shirase wrote that he returned this way so that he could expedite payment of salaries and allowances to the crew and expedition members upon their return to Japan. In Sydney, the news of their successful landing on Antarctica had gone before them; Amundsen had reported seeing the *Kainan Maru* in the Bay of Whales. Shirase received the congratulations of his supporters, and was interviewed by the press. The *Nikko Maru* then sailed for Japan.

The *Kainan Maru* left Wellington on 1 April, and, after surviving a severe typhoon in the South Pacific, arrived back in Yokohama Bay on 19 June 1912. The ship was

accompanied into port by a crowd of smaller craft, and as it anchored just thirty metres off shore the cheers of several tens of thousands of well-wishers greeted Shirase, who had boarded the ship for this return to port, and his men. Thanks to the enormous press coverage the expedition had received, and to the excitement the expedition had generated particularly among youth, enormous crowds of students from Waseda and other universities had gathered on the docks. Shirase and his men were met by the chairman of the Supporters' Group, Count Ōkuma, and led along a "guard of honour" formed by over ten thousand university students. Escorted to the stage, the men were confronted by a sea of flags as the crowd sang the expedition song.<sup>32</sup> Ōkuma made a rousing speech, and was followed by several other speakers from the Supporters' Group. Shirase and Captain Nomura then spoke, after which Ōkuma called for three 'banzai's for the Emperor. That evening, a paper lantern parade in honour of the expedition was held in Hibiya Park in the centre of Tokyo; 5,500 lanterns were lit by a crowd of over ten thousand people. On 21 June, the men attended a dinner at the home of Count Ōkuma, famous for his lavish entertainment and opulent residence. This event, however, was surpassed on 25 June, when they were invited to the Aoyama Palace and met with the Crown Prince and Princess, the Dowager Empress, and other members of the Royal Family. This outstanding honour was indicative of the status the men had attained through their expedition.

Shirase and his men had not achieved their initial goal of reaching the South Pole, but they had discovered new land, had travelled further to the east on the Ross Ice Shelf than anyone previously, and, above all, had become the first Japanese – and some of the first men of any nation – to set foot on the as yet largely uncharted Antarctic continent.

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<sup>32</sup> This song – the *Tanken Biwa Uta*, or 'Expedition *Biwa* Song' – is discussed in Chapter 5.

That they had not reached the Pole was forgotten in the excitement of welcoming home the heroes of the south.

#### 1.4 Shirase's Post-Expedition Fame and Subsequent Obscurity

Despite the joyous celebration Shirase enjoyed on his return, his fame soon waned. Shirase had returned to find that monies he had anticipated being available to him in the Supporters' Group fund were missing, and that the several tens of thousands of yen he owed in payment of stipends to his team and crew would have to be raised once more. No satisfactory explanation has emerged as to what happened to the missing funds. According to Shirase's daughter Takeko, the money was spent by the members of the Supporters' Group on food and drink (Watanabe, 1991, p. 166). Shirase himself offered no public explanation.

Although no definitive evidence exists as to what amount was required, Watanabe calculated that, based on the Supporters' Group still-extant partial records of income and expenditure, and lists of salaries of team and crew, the total was somewhere between twenty and forty thousand yen (Watanabe, 1991, pp. 166-168).<sup>33</sup> In 1991, this figure was estimated to be the equivalent in current values of between 140 million and 200 million yen (Shirase Nankyoku Tanken-tai Kinen-kan, 1991).<sup>34</sup> Despite the enormity of this debt,

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<sup>33</sup> Shirase Kyōko put the figure at between forty and fifty thousand yen, but provided no evidence for this claim (K. Shirase, 1986, p. 311). The Shirase Antarctic Expedition Memorial Museum in Akita Prefecture, Japan, has estimated the amount at approximately forty thousand yen (Shirase Nankyoku Tanken-tai Kinen-kan, 1991). Sato (2004, p. 50) gave similar figures.

<sup>34</sup> Between A\$1.4 million and A\$1.9 million at 1991 exchange rates.

Shirase was quoted in a 1934 interview with the journal *Chūgai Shinpō* as saying that he had managed to repay half the money owing.<sup>35</sup> This had been achieved at considerable personal cost, including the liquidation of virtually all his assets including the family home,<sup>36</sup> and even his army uniform and sword had been sold. He had also taken his daughter Takeko out of school and taken her with him on a lecture circuit starting in 1913 which included not only most of Japan, but extended as far as Northeast China, Korea and Taiwan (Watanabe, 1991, p. 184). During his presentations to public audiences, Shirase showed the film taken in Antarctica by the expedition cinematographer Taizumi, who was an employee of the Japanese M. Pathé Film Company (K. Shirase, 1986, p. 311). Ownership of the film passed out of the Supporters' Group hands and into those of a third party at an early stage, although actual dates are not clear. It is possible that this third party was in fact the M. Pathé corporation, or its owner Umeya Shōkichi, a renowned impresario and entrepreneur. In any case, Shirase, who wanted to take the film with him as he toured the country raising money, was forced to borrow the film from the new owner at a cost of ¥1,500 for a term of five months (K. Shirase, 1986, p. 312). Shirase had in fact initially intended to show the film to the public *gratis*, as a way of expressing his thanks for their support. Perhaps he was willing to pay the exorbitant sum to rent the film, and charge a

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<sup>35</sup> Again there appears to be some confusion in the literature over this point; Shirase is quoted as saying in 1934 that he had at that time repaid half the money owing (K. Shirase, 1986, p. 311), but he is also reported to have said in 1935 that he had repaid the full amount (Watanabe, 1991, p. 172). Neither Watanabe, Shirase Kyōko, nor the writer and researcher Tsunabuchi Kenjō (1983) who also cited these dates and figures, made any comment on this unlikely occurrence. Although Shirase reportedly received money from Ōkuma and also from Masuda Giichi, President of Jitsugyō no Nihon-sha (K. Shirase, 1986, p. 312), Ōkuma had died in 1922; whether Masuda (1869-1949), or someone else, may have helped erase Shirase's debt in 1935 cannot be ascertained.

<sup>36</sup> The house was sold for ¥6,000 (Watanabe, 1991, p. 184).



minimal fee for viewing, because he still wished to carry out something like his original plan.<sup>37</sup>

Many of Shirase's audiences were composed of school children; according to 1915 records discovered by Watanabe (1991, pp. 170-171), Shirase was visiting an average of two schools every 1.5 days. The most he received for a presentation to a school in the period recorded was ten yen, while the majority paid between three and five yen. As Watanabe noted, it is difficult to see how Shirase's efforts in this regard could have made any significant impact on the repayment of his debts, particularly once he had subtracted the costs of transport and accommodation. At this time, Shirase was in his mid-fifties, and with limited work experience or skills outside his army service, he had little choice but to give lectures about his expedition as a means of earning a living.<sup>38</sup> Forced for financial reasons to move frequently, his postal address changed at least thirteen times after his return from Antarctica (Watanabe, 1991, pp. 169-170).<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> That it may have been Umeya who forced Shirase into this extortionate deal is supported by what is known of his character; Dym described him as a 'rogue' who stole the Pathé name from the French owners (2003, p. 79). High (1984, pp. 39-40) expressed similar sentiments, noting that Umeya established his businesses only after '[d]igging deep into the pockets of friends and financiers.'

<sup>38</sup> It was of course quite normal in the West for explorers to travel around the country giving lectures in order to raise funds. As Riffenburgh (1993, p. 43) noted, 'In time, fund-raising became what was frequently the most gruelling aspect of a hazardous occupation, about which [the Arctic explorer] Hall stated, "lecturing is the curse of my soul."' Amundsen, Scott and Shackleton all expressed similar opinions.

<sup>39</sup> An interesting parallel can be drawn between Shirase's quiet assumption of responsibility to repay these debts accrued by others and Scott's overwhelming sense of financial responsibility for his family. Scott supported his mother and sisters after his father's death, and delayed his marriage because of his uncertainty as to whether he could support both his family and a wife. Indeed, one of Scott's primary motivations for Antarctic exploration was to improve his financial situation that he might better support those who depended on him (Fiennes, 2003, pp. 24, 136). In any case, Scott's *cri de coeur* voiced in the last line of his Message to Public said, '... surely, surely a great rich country like ours will see that those who are dependent on us are properly provided for.' (Scott, 1913) Even on the brink of death he was still thinking of his financial responsibility to his family. Shirase's sense of responsibility was to his creditors, rather than to his family, but all the same he dedicated the rest of his working life in order to repay the debts incurred in his name. The question must remain unanswered as to whether the same would have happened to Scott had he lived and returned to England having been *second* to the Pole.

In any case, it appears that demand for Shirase's lectures rapidly faded; indeed, despite the initial rush of requests from around the country, within two to three years interest had diminished significantly (K. Shirase, 1986, p. 315; Shirase Nankyoku Tankentai Kinenkan [Shirase Antarctic Expedition Memorial Museum]," 2007). For what period Shirase continued on the lecture circuit is unclear, but with the money thus earned, together with income from temporary jobs such as caretaker of a holiday villa, he continued to repay his debts. In the meantime, his wife Yasu supported the family from money she earned teaching the *shamisen* and Japanese dance (K. Shirase, 1986, p. 133).<sup>40</sup>

According to Watanabe (Watanabe, 1991, p. 172), by 1926 – the start of the Shōwa era – the demand for Shirase's lectures had completely evaporated, and he no longer featured in the public conscious. Indeed, even Shirase's place of residence had become unclear to outsiders. When Amundsen visited Japan the following year, Shirase appeared at the offices of the *Hōchi Shimbun* newspaper, hoping to meet with him. The newspaper editors, evidently considerably surprised at Shirase's sudden reappearance in public, published the following article on 22 June:

Today, a certain elderly gentleman visited these offices, seeking to meet Mr. Amundsen, the 'Conquering King of the Pole'. Sixteen years ago, Mr. Shirase Nobu, Lieutenant in charge of an expedition team, was engaged in the grand undertaking of exploring the South Pole. Since that time, he has faced much adversity and sought recluse, such that his very whereabouts had become far from clear ...<sup>41</sup>

("Amunzen-shi to Shirase-rou-chuui no akushu," 1927)

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<sup>40</sup> Shirase and his wife Yasu had four sons and three daughters, although two of the sons and one of the daughters died relatively young.

<sup>41</sup> *Honsha wo otozurete, seikyoku-ō Amunzen-shi ni kaiken wo motomeru ichi rou shinshi ga atta. Ima wo saru jū-roku nen mae, nankyoku tanken no sōto ni nobori, sono go, fugū no mi wo seken kara tōzakari, shozai wo sae akiraka ni shinakatta tanken chūi, Shirase Nobu-shi de aru ...*

Later in the same 1927 article, it was stated that,

The *Kainan Maru* expedition which so excited the public has already been erased from the memories of that same public, and Lieutenant Shirase's name is now almost completely forgotten.<sup>42</sup>

Shirase himself said to Amundsen at this time,

[I]f I have been forgotten by the public, that can't be helped. That thanks to the *Kainan Maru* expedition I have remained in your memory will be my only consolation.<sup>43</sup>  
("Amunzen-shi to Shirase-rou-chuui no akushu," 1927)

When Amundsen inquired as to where Shirase lived, he was unable to reply, and tears reportedly welled in his eyes (K. Shirase, 1986, pp. 318-319). In fact, Shirase had recently moved from Setagaya in Tokyo where he had been doing part-time farming work, to Yokohama, where he was acting as a caretaker of the holiday villa of the family of Count Inoue Kaoru (Watanabe, 1994, p. 81). Shirase, dressed in a summer *yukata* and *haori* he had only managed to acquire that morning especially to meet Amundsen (C. Sato, 2004, p. 50), undoubtedly was affected by the cruelty of his fate, particularly in contrast with that of Amundsen, whose name had reached new heights of fame at that time. Just prior to visiting Japan, Amundsen had become one of the first men to cross the Arctic in an airship, and in so doing was able to confirm that there was no land at the Arctic pole ("Roald Amundsen Collection, Archives of Scott Polar Research Institute," 2008; K. Shirase, 1986, p. 318). It was perhaps even more bitterly ironic to Shirase that in 1920 – just seven years earlier – he

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<sup>42</sup> *Honkokumin no chi wo odorashita Kainan Maru wa, sude ni kokumin no kioku kara sari, Shirase chūi no na wa hotondo wasurerareyou to shite iru ...*

<sup>43</sup> *... kokumin kara wasureraretemo shikatanai. Watashi wa Kainan Maru no na ni yotte kyōjin no inshou ni nokotte ita koto ga semetemo no nagusame de aru.*

had submitted a proposal to the forty-third session of the Japanese Diet, detailing his plans for a flight over the North Pole, and requesting financial assistance.<sup>44</sup> The proposal had been rejected (K. Shirase, 1986, p. 316; Watanabe, 1991, p. 174). This matter is perhaps also revealing of one of the causes of Shirase's financial difficulties arising out of the *Kainan Maru* expedition, for when he proposed his flight to the Pole, his son, Tomo, a naval pilot, had laughingly stated,

My father has no scientific knowledge. Even if he decides on a goal, as to how to achieve it, he doesn't give it careful thought. My father says that twenty-thousand Yen should be enough, but it would take one hundred million Yen. If you have that kind of money, you could fly from Tokyo to London!<sup>45</sup>

(Quoted in Watanabe, 1991, p. 175)

Tomo at least evidently thought little of his father's grasp of financial matters.

In the end, Shirase was able to clear the debts incurred during the *Kainan Maru* expedition, although it was not until twenty-three years after his return to Japan that he was able to say, 'At long last I have emerged from that hell of debt. Now I can die in peace'<sup>46</sup> (Quoted in Watanabe, 1991, p. 172) Shirase was seventy-four years of age at the time.

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<sup>44</sup> The proposal is reproduced in full in Kimura & Taniguchi (1942, pp. 365-366).

<sup>45</sup> *Chichi wa kagaku-teki chishiki ga zero. Mokuteki wa tatetemo, keiro ni tsuite wa, kōryō wo motanu. Chichi wa nijū man en de yoi to iu keredo, ichi oku en wa kakaru. Sore dake no okane ga aru nara, Tōkyō – Rondon kan wo tobu.* For Tomo's statements along these lines, as well as other matters, he was eventually disinherited by his father (Watanabe, 1991, p. 175). According to Shirase Takeko, Shirase's second son Oshie was likewise disinherited, for reasons unknown, and Shirase broke off relations with his youngest son Isamu after he failed to return a letter to Shirase from Douglas MacArthur which Shirase valued highly (Sodei, 2001, p. 115).

<sup>46</sup> *'Kore de yatto shakkin jigoku kara ukabi agatta yo. Mō itsu shindemo ii.'*

Forced on many occasions to rely on the charity of neighbours and family, and eventually supported in old age by his daughter Takeko, Shirase's post-expedition life was one of relentless poverty and constant movement. In the words of Watanabe Seiichirō,

... Lieutenant Shirase's life had only one 'highlight' – when he planted the Japanese flag on the Yamato Yuki-hara; the rest of his life was a fabric woven of endurance, false starts, misfortune, mistaken intentions, frustrations and poverty, and in the end, it was almost as if he were killed by the War (post-War destitution).<sup>47</sup>

(Watanabe, 1994, p. 30)

Shirase's grand-niece stated bitterly that it almost seemed the only reason he was allowed to go on living well after his rivals Scott and Amundsen had died was so that he could repay his debts (K. Shirase, 1986, p. 319).

Shirase died in 1946 at the age of eighty-five, in rented rooms over a *sushi* restaurant. His death is generally attributed to an intestinal obstruction (See for example Shirase Nankyoku Tanken-tai Kinen-kan, 1991, p. 27; Tsunabuchi, 1983, p. 660). As is implied by Watanabe above, however, it is more likely that Shirase died of chronic malnutrition – the result of unremitting poverty – exacerbated by wartime and post-war food shortages (Watanabe, 1994, pp. 29-30). In a 1949 letter to General Douglas MacArthur, Shirase's daughter Takeko also stated her belief that her father was suffering from malnutrition in May 1946, four months before his death: 'My father seemed to have developed dropsy from malnutrition, and he had difficulty walking' (Quoted in Sodei, 2001, pp. 112-116). Miyajima (2007) concurred with this conclusion.

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<sup>47</sup> ... *Shirase-chūi no shōgai wa, Nankyoku no 'Yamato Yuki-hara' ni Hi no Maru wo tateta toki dake ga yuiitsu no hairaito de, igo no jinsei wa nintai, fuhatsu, fushubi, fuhon'i, zasetsu, hinkon nado ni orinasare, saiki wa sensō (seno no kyūbō) ni yotte korosareta yō na mono datta.*

Thus, despite the heroic status Shirase enjoyed after his expedition returned to Japan, his was a short-lived celebrity, and his name soon sank into oblivion as he toiled to repay the debts he owed. The only path open to him to earn money was through his fame, and this did not last; within a few short years he found himself impoverished and unrecognised. To quote Shirase Kyōko,

[A]s time passed, the fame of the “Antarctic Hero” also swiftly slipped away. The focus of the new Taishō era was on the growth of things like the so-called Taishō Democracy and Liberalism. The things that symbolised the mood and spirit of the Meiji era like the Antarctic expedition faded all at once in the light of the new era, and were doomed to be forgotten. Nobu was unable to understand this, he could not comprehend it.<sup>48</sup>

(K. Shirase, 1986, p. 315)

Kyōko claimed that within two to three years of Shirase’s return from the Antarctic, only his uniqueness – indeed, his *curiosity* value – could attract any public attention; his heroic “aura” had faded.<sup>49</sup> The reasons behind this are discussed in depth in later chapters, but would appear to involve a range of political, social and historic factors far beyond Shirase’s control. His incomprehension can well be imagined.

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<sup>48</sup> ... kono “Nankyoku no eiyū” mo tsukihi ga nagareru ni tsurete kyūsoku ni wasure sarete iku. Taishō to iu atarashii jidai no ibuki wa, iwayuru Taishō demokurashi– ya riberarizumu to iwareru me o nobashite iku. Meiji rashii kibun to kikotsu wo shōchō suru yō na Nankyoku Tanken nado wa, sonna atarashii jidai no kūki no naka de tachimachi iroasete okizari ni sareru unmei ni atta. Shikashi, Nobu ni wa sore ga wakaranai, rikai dekinai no de aru.

<sup>49</sup> An indication of the degree to which Shirase’s expedition has been forgotten in the West is provided by Huntford’s book *The Last Place on Earth*, in which it is stated that after Amundsen left the Bay of Whales, Admiral Richard Byrd’s 1928 American expedition was ‘the first human visit since *Fram* had sailed away’ (Huntford, 1985, p. 543). This is despite the fact that the *Kainan Maru* was still in the Bay until 4 February 1912, although Amundsen had departed on 30 January.

## 1.5 Extant Research on Shirase and the *Kainan Maru* Expedition

The literature on the Shirase expedition is extremely meagre. A small number of primary accounts were followed by a limited range of translations into English of summarised versions of the expedition. As for secondary analyses, these have been more in the line of “general interest” works, rather than academic investigations, and are only available in Japanese. Again, they are very few in number. There has been no original secondary work in English about the expedition to date.

Tada Keiichi, official record keeper of the expedition, published the very first accounts of the expedition in 1912. According to Tsunabuchi (1983, p. 644), these works – *Nankyoku Tanken Shiroku* [My Record of an Antarctic Expedition], and *Nankyoku Tanken Nikki* [A Diary of an Antarctic Expedition] – were published with amazing speed, in July and August 1912 respectively, it taking Tada only approximately forty days to edit his notes into publishable form. Although neither book is currently in print, Tsunabuchi stated that a comparison of Tada’s works with Shirase’s later publications revealed a close proximity of facts and details, suggesting that Shirase relied substantially on Tada’s records in the composition of his own account (1983, p. 646).

Shirase’s *Nankyoku Tanken* [Antarctic Expedition] was published by Hakubunkan in January, 1913, six months after Tada’s books were released. The work tells of Shirase’s years in training for a Polar expedition, about the expedition itself, and about the reception the team received on its return to Japan. It is this work which is the primary reference work of this thesis. *Nankyoku Tanken* is currently out of print, the most recent reprinting

occurring in 1994. The original work is classified as ‘rare’ in Rosove’s bibliography of Antarctic literature (2001, p. 399).<sup>50</sup>

The official record of the expedition, *Nankyoku-ki* [Antarctic Record], was compiled by the expedition’s Supporters’ Group in December, 1913, and published by Seikō Zasshi-sha. This work is also extremely rare. Appendices to the work were translated into English, however, and published in successive editions of *Antarctic Record* in 1957 and 1958 as *Appendix to Nankyoku-ki, the report of the Japanese Antarctic expedition, 1911-12*. Although the appendices largely consist of lists of scientific data collected by the men of Shirase’s expedition, there is also extensive information regarding the construction of the *Kainan Maru*, and a ‘General Report on the Voyage in the Antarctic Region’ written by Captain Nomura Naokichi.

*Nankyoku Tanken to Kotai Jingu no Hōsai* [Antarctic Expedition and Invoking the Spirits of the Ise Shrine] is another first-hand account of the expedition, as recorded by Shima Yoshitake, although not published until 1930. Shima was the purser on the expedition. His detailed record includes all important events as they were recounted to him if he was not present, and of other events he observed from day to day. It provides a most interesting account of the expedition against which Shirase’s record can be compared, although the delay in publication of nearly twenty years since many of the events took place suggests a certain caution is required before accepting at face-value all the material

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<sup>50</sup> It should be noted that there is some confusion in Rosove’s otherwise authoritative work in the publications listed under Shirase’s name. Most importantly, Rosove made no distinction between Shirase’s own work, *Nankyoku Tanken*, and that of the Supporters’ Group, *Nankyoku-ki*. The book he described at Item 309 A1, however, having been published by Hakubunkan, is clearly *Nankyoku Tanken*. This is the work he classified as ‘rare’. *Nankyoku-ki* then, unfortunately, received no entry.



recorded. In 1930 when his book was published, Shima was a Shintō priest at the Narita Shrine, and this accounts for the reference to the Ise Shrine in the title – there was no connection between the expedition and the Shrine. This work too has been out of print since 1994.

Shirase published his second account of the expedition in 1942, under the title *Watakushi no Nankyoku tanken-ki* [A record of my Antarctic expedition]. This *Kokoku Seinen Kyōiku Kyōkai* publication was republished in 1998 by *Nihon Tosho Sentā*. The book closely follows his 1913 account, although for the 1998 publication the already modernised written language style of 1942 was again simplified for a post-World War II audience. Despite the ordering of events in the 1942 book following a more logical sequence than in the 1913 work, the account of the expedition is essentially as it was in the earlier publication.

Also in 1942, possibly the first secondary work on the expedition was published, again based on Shirase's 1913 *Nankyoku Tanken*, but including material concerning Shirase's later life. This was *Shirase-chūi Tanken-ki* [An Account of Lieutenant Shirase's Expedition] by Kimura and Taniguchi. Through interviews with Shirase, and from other sources, Kimura and Taniguchi were able to bring to light important data regarding Shirase's activities in the Taishō and early Shōwa periods.

The most important work on this topic to have been written since the original expedition accounts is undoubtedly Shirase Kyōko's *Yukihara e Yuku: Watashi no Shirase Nobu* [To the Snow Fields: My Shirase Nobu], published in 1986. Shirase Kyōko was

Shirase's grand-niece. Through her memories of Nobu and of discussions with Nobu's wife Yasu and other family members, together with extensive research of surviving privately held documents, Kyōko has published a book which throws more light on the topic than any work since. Her personal knowledge of the Shirase family has resulted in a wealth of new data on not only the expedition itself, but on Shirase's personality, his life after the expedition, and particularly on how he was viewed by his contemporaries.

Watanabe's 1991 book *Yukihara ni Idomu: Shirase chūi* [Challenging the Snow Fields: Lieutenant Shirase] is yet another re-telling of the Shirase story, although with the addition of some data concerning the lives of Shirase and his men following their return to Japan. Unfortunately, Watanabe has relied heavily on Shirase Kyōko's book, and consequently repeats much information already in print. Nevertheless, in the final third of the book Watanabe reveals the results of his investigations into the true identity of Nomura Naokichi, the captain of the *Kainan Maru*. Although not directly relevant to this thesis, the information uncovered by Watanabe provides pertinent background to the expedition. Watanabe does provide a very useful timeline for Shirase's life, as well as lists of the expedition members and ship's crew, their places of origin, ages in 1912, as well as an informative family tree for the Shirase family. Watanabe released a second book on the subject in 1994, entitled *Bannen no Shirase Chūi Fusai* [The Later Years of Lieutenant Shirase and His Wife]. Although a very short book, it nevertheless contains much useful information regarding the impoverished lifestyle Shirase and his wife endured after his initial fame had faded. Interviews Watanabe conducted with people such as the Shirases' neighbours and friends in later life provide an original insight previously unavailable in the

literature. A more complete timeline of Shirase's life, and a detailed family tree are included in the book.

A small book of more recent publication which again recounts the events of the expedition is Sato's 2004 publication *Nankyoku ni Tatta Karafuto Ainu* [The Karafuto Ainu who Stood on the Antarctic]. Although this book is mainly concerned with the two Ainu men who accompanied the expedition as dog handlers, other information contained in it regarding the expedition and Shirase himself is invaluable, if brief.

A final work in Japanese which is of immense interest is Tsunabuchi's 1983 publication *Kyoku: Shirase Chūi Nankyoku Tanken-ki* [The Pole: Lieutenant Shirase's Antarctic Expedition Record]. This is a historical novel, rather than the non-fictional account of Shirase's expedition the title might suggest. Nonetheless, Tsunabuchi has written a work very firmly based on the historical facts, only embellishing the historical record with invented conversations between the actual persons involved in the expedition. He also includes a number of considered conjectures concerning events not fully or clearly recorded by those who were present. Although there have been several fictionalised accounts of the Scott expedition, for example, this is the only fictionalised version of the Shirase story that has been published. The factual basis of Tsunabuchi's work is extremely well researched, and the fictionalised portions of the book lead to interesting and provocative speculations.

As for the English language literature on the expedition, as Rosove noted, 'The principal narrative has not to date been translated into English' (Rosove, 2001, p. 400). The

earliest English language account is Ivar Hamre's article, 'The Japanese South Polar Expedition of 1911-1912: a little-known episode in Antarctic exploration', published in the *Geographic Journal* in 1933. This article was Hamre's translation into English of an abbreviated account of the expedition contained in one volume of *Sekai Tanken Zenshū* [World Exploration Complete Collection], which was itself based on the 1913 *Nankyoku-ki* [Antarctic Record]. As Hamre comments, 'Strange though it may seem, this account of the Shirase Expedition is likely to be the first narrative thereof written in a European language, filling to a certain extent a blank in the history of Antarctica' (Hamre, 1933, p. 423). The work contains some factual errors, but nonetheless remains the best record of the expedition in English that has been published to date. It would seem that virtually all present-day publications and online materials in English concerning the Shirase expedition have Hamre's article as their main source of information, either directly or indirectly. It has thus served a pivotal role in providing non-Japanese speakers with information otherwise inaccessible.

The timing of Hamre's article and the release of Shima's book just three years before are possibly tied to a world-wide resurgence of interest in polar exploration that occurred at the end of the 1920s.<sup>51</sup> Two expeditions in 1928 - the Wilkins-Hearst Expedition, under the Australian pilot Sir Hubert Wilkins, and sponsored by Hearst newspapers, and the *New York Times*-sponsored expedition under Rear Admiral Richard Byrd - were commonly viewed as being in an aerial race for the Pole, and excited intense media coverage (Martin, 1996, pp. 174-176). Amundsen's 1927 crossing of the Arctic similarly had stimulated renewed public interest in polar exploration.

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<sup>51</sup> Mawson's book *Home of the Blizzard* was also re-released in 1930, possibly for the same reason, and enjoyed immense popularity around the world in that decade.

It had taken twenty years for the first account of the Shirase expedition to appear in English; it took a further twenty-two years for the second to be published. This was a short article that appeared in 1955 in the Australian Geographical Society magazine *Walkabout*, entitled ‘Forgotten Antarctic Venture: the first Japanese South Polar expedition 1911-1912’, by R.A. Swan. Swan provided no references in his article, but from his incorrect reading of Shirase’s given name as “Choku”<sup>52</sup> – a mistake Hamre had also made – it seems possible that Swan used the Hamre article as a basis for his work. Swan made considerable use of the English language newspaper reports of the day. At the end of the article are two letters, both dated 18 November 1911: the first is that sent by Shirase to Captain Scott to inform him of the Japanese expedition and its intentions in the Antarctic; the second is the letter of thanks from Shirase to Professor Tannatt Edgeworth David at the University of Sydney, expressing his appreciation for David’s help during the group’s time in Sydney.<sup>53</sup> This would appear to be the first time the letters appeared in print.

Since the appearance of Swan’s article over half a century ago, it would seem that no work of any depth has been published in English. Several abbreviated accounts have appeared in such works as the Reader’s Digest *Antarctica: great stories from the frozen continent* (Capricorn Press, 1985), and on a number of websites about Antarctic history, although these accounts would seem to be entirely based on earlier works such as Hamre’s and Swan’s, and not to represent original scholarship.

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<sup>52</sup> Shirase’s given name of Nobu is written with a single character no longer in use in Japanese. It is composed of one smaller character repeated three times. This smaller character is in common use, and is read as *choku*, meaning ‘straight’ or ‘direct’.

<sup>53</sup> From the style of the English expressions used in this letter to Edgeworth David, it is unlikely it was written by a non-native speaker. It has been suggested that it is a free translation by Edward Foxall of the Japanese Consulate of a letter written by Shirase in Japanese (Branagan, 2005, p. 231). Foxall had published a pro-Japanese anti-White Australia tract in 1903, entitled ‘Colorphobia: an exposure of the “White Australia” fallacy’ under the pseudonym ‘Gizen no Teki’, or ‘Enemy of Hypocrisy’ (Foxall, 1903). Foxall’s son, Henry George Foxall, later became an assistant to Edgeworth David (Atchison, 1996, p. 211).

This thesis relies primarily on Shirase's 1913 *Nankyoku Tanken*, drawing only on the 1942 account for comparative purposes. The reason for this is that it is only the 1913 work that can help reveal why Shirase's heroic status failed. The 1942 book, on the other hand, was published long after Shirase's initial fame had faded, and was in any case little more than a re-writing of the earlier account, designed for a different generation of readers. The other primary sources likewise do not play an important role in this thesis because, as argued in Chapter 5, it is an explorer's own account of his expedition that is a key factor in his enduring heroic status. As for the secondary sources listed above, although these have been relied upon heavily for factual data, none of them has taken an analytical approach to the facts in order to advance any theoretical framework or deeper scrutiny of the Shirase expedition. Instead, at most they engage in bringing to light more and more facts, without attempting to use these facts to elucidate the layers of meaning behind the expedition. The extraordinary dearth of analytical research on the Shirase expedition, both in Japanese and in English, has meant that this thesis does not articulate with any established theoretical discourse on the Shirase expedition, as exists, for example, in the literature regarding the Scott expedition. That such an *oeuvre* does not exist is surprising, considering the enormous number of books, journal articles, and media productions concerning other Antarctic explorers that have been produced since the end of the Heroic Era. This thesis therefore represents one of the few steps taken in this particular field of research in almost a century.

## The New Century and the Demand for Heroes

### 2.1 Introduction

Robert Falcon Scott's plans for a second expedition to Antarctica appeared in the London *Times* on Monday, 13 September 1909, together with a statement of the expedition's objectives of reaching the South Pole and furthering British claims to pre-eminence in Antarctic exploration. The same edition of the paper was full of news about the American Robert Peary's having reached the North Pole, and having claimed it for the United States. The condescending tone of his reported comments regarding the defeated British no doubt helped to build a renewed public enthusiasm for polar exploration in that country ("The South Pole: Captain Scott's expedition," 1909, p. 8).<sup>54</sup> Rumours of an American expedition to the south had been circulating immediately prior to this, and just two days later, on 15 September, a Reuters message from Newfoundland reported "absolutely authentic" news that Peary was now planning an expedition to the South Pole as well (Yelverton, 2000, p. 348). In 1908, the German Lieutenant Wilhelm Filchner announced his plans for a trans-Antarctic trek from the Weddell to the Ross Sea, although in the end this was unsuccessful. The Austrians who bought Filchner's ship on his return invited him to take part in an expedition they were planning (Capricorn Press, 1985, p. 205). Australians too were

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<sup>54</sup> When asked by the *Times* why he had given command of his support party to an Englishman, Peary replied, 'It seemed to me appropriate, in view of the magnificent British record of Arctic work covering three centuries, that it should be a British subject who could boast that, next to an American, he had been nearest the Pole.' The *Times* went on to comment that, '... if the British share of Arctic exploration has been limited to that of being pioneers to a point short of the Pole, there is no reason why the same should be the final verdict in their work at the other end of the globe' ("The South Pole: Captain Scott's expedition," 1909, p. 8).

showing an interest in exploration; Mawson approached Scott in 1910 to request an expansion of Scott's plans to include exploration to the west of Cape Adare. Scott was unwilling to commit himself to work so far from his base, and so Mawson approached Shackleton. Shackleton initially agreed to lead an expedition, but was later forced by personal circumstances to withdraw. Mawson therefore decided to launch his own expedition (Mawson, 1930, p. xviii). Meanwhile, Amundsen in Norway, having read the newspaper reports of both Peary's and Cook's controversial claims that each had been first to the North Pole,<sup>55</sup> decided to alter his already announced plans for an Arctic expedition to those for an Antarctic one instead. Similarly, Shirase in Japan had learned of the claims on the North Pole, and he too decided to aim for the Antarctic.

This was truly the peak of international "polar fever", and the climax of the Heroic Era of Antarctic exploration, with American, German, Austrian, Norwegian, British, and Japanese expeditions all interested in the southern pole. Scott's first expedition in the *Discovery* had, of course, made an attempt to reach the Pole, as had Shackleton's *Nimrod* party in 1908. In the following years, the Germans (Erich von Drygalski in the *Gauss*), the Swedes (Otto Nordenskjold in the *Antarctic*), the Scots (William Bruce in the *Scotia*), and the French (Jean-Baptiste Charcot in the *Français*), all sent expeditions south that made significant contributions to Antarctic exploration and scientific knowledge. Following the *Nimrod* voyage, but prior to Scott's *Terra Nova* expedition, the French (Charcot again, in the *Pourquoi Pas?*) made a second trip to Antarctic waters. Nevertheless, it was the British who were leading the upsurge in exploration, and the names Robert Falcon Scott and Ernest Shackleton were dominating news stories about the Antarctic around the world.

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<sup>55</sup> For details of this controversy, see, for example, Maxtone-Graham (1989, pp. 260-293). The London *Times* of September, 1909, contained several articles on the dispute.



It is beyond the scope of this investigation to attempt to examine all the factors that precipitated such an interest in exploration – eleven expeditions from eight countries all occurring in the same decade. Among the factors which must be considered, however, are the interest in polar exploration created by attempts to navigate the North-West Passage, technological advances in the print media, and, at least with regard to the English who were leading the near-obsession with the South Pole, a growing and widespread social unrest that was fuelling the need for explorer heroes.

## 2.2 The North-West Passage

With regard to the interest in polar exploration created by attempts to navigate the North-West Passage, the expeditions having the most profound effect on public ideas about the polar regions were undoubtedly those headed by Sir John Franklin. The North-West Passage – a sea route connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans across the north of Canada – had been sought since the fifteenth century as a possible trade route between Europe and Asia. In the first half of the nineteenth century, a number of English expeditions set out to find a passage, including a land-based expedition under John Franklin. Franklin's expedition sailed from England to Canada in 1819; the men walked west from Hudson Bay, north to the coast, and then east along the coastline. By late 1821 the party were near death from starvation, and were forced to turn back (Franklin, 1908). Hints of cannibalism, murder, and a tale of extreme conditions barely survived guaranteed enormous public demand for Franklin's book, *Narrative of a journey to the shores of the polar sea* (Delgado, 2000, p. 19; Sale, 2002, p. 42).

Nevertheless, the North-West Passage remained elusive, although both eastern and western ends of the Passage had been investigated. By 1845 pressure was mounting on the British Admiralty to complete the task. Franklin's age and physical condition clearly dictated against his being chosen for such a mission, but thanks to the relentless efforts of his wife Lady Jane Franklin, he was again selected to head an expedition to find a navigable route from east to west. The two ships, and the 129 men aboard them, were last seen on 26 July 1845 in Baffin Bay to the west of Greenland. Although no contact was expected from the expedition for several years, by 1848 fears were expressed for Franklin's safety, and during the following decade nearly forty rescue parties were sent out, many funded at least in part by Lady Franklin, who became famous as the epitome of the long-suffering but ever-faithful wife (Sale, 2002, pp. 48-59). The deaths of Franklin and his men were eventually reported back to England by the explorer John Rae. The suggestions of cannibalism that he also reported, and Lady Franklin's refusal to countenance such ideas, led to a protracted and public battle which ensured that from the middle of the Victorian era the romance of Arctic exploration was firmly implanted in the minds of people around the world.

Franklin's expedition was to have ramifications throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century, and into the twentieth. Sir Clements Markham, Robert Falcon Scott's mentor, and promoter and fund-raiser for both Scott's expeditions to the Antarctic, served in his youth on the *Resolute*, the British naval vessel sent in 1850 to search for Franklin (Markham, 1853). In later life, Markham became president of the Royal Geographical Society (1893 to 1905), and published extensively in support of Antarctic exploration,

under titles such as *The need for an Antarctic expedition* (1895), and *Antarctic exploration: A plea for a national expedition* (1898).

The Norwegian Roald Amundsen too was deeply influenced by the Franklin expedition, stating, ‘What appealed to me most was the sufferings that Sir John [Franklin] and his men had to endure. A strange ambition burned within me, to endure the same privations ... I decided to be an explorer’ (Fleming, 1998, p. 424). Thus, the Franklin expedition was to inspire in Amundsen an ambition that determined the course of his life, leading him to become a professional explorer, and eventually to become the discoverer of the South Pole.

Franklin’s expedition similarly inspired the eight-year-old schoolboy Shirase Nobu. In 1869, Shirase became a pupil of Sasaki Sessai. Shirase claimed that one day Sasaki spoke at length on Arctic explorers, in particular with regard to Franklin. Shirase decided that he too would become an Arctic explorer, and persistently inquired of his teacher as to how he could achieve that aim. Sasaki eventually gave the boy a list of rules to live by if he were to prepare himself for such a life, including total abstinence from tobacco, alcohol, and all hot drinks, which Shirase claimed to have abided by all his life (Kimura & Taniguchi, 1942, pp. 35-38).<sup>56</sup> Shirase’s life as an explorer was moulded from this early age by the story of Franklin, and would result in Shirase’s becoming the first Japanese Antarctica explorer.

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<sup>56</sup> When Kimura and Taniguchi visited Shirase in 1935 while researching their book, they reported being amazed to find the seventy-five-year-old Shirase refusing tea and drinking only water. They did not learn until later of the “five rules” Sasaki had given Shirase, and by which he was still living (Murayama, 1997, p. 2).

In a more general sense, too, the Franklin expedition served to transform interest in the Poles from the interest of a limited group of scientific thinkers concerned with advancing their particular field of research, into a public interest in the Poles as something of a hobby; as Spufford (1997, p. 54) pointed out, ‘It was now possible to be an enthusiast of polar exploration as an activity, rather than as a source for information about meteorology, or zoology, or the earth’s magnetic field.’ The Poles, once the property of scientists and explorers, had now been annexed by the general public.

### 2.3 Developments in the Print Media

The end of the Victorian era in England saw an enormous rise in the production and readership of newspapers. Revolutionary advances in type-setting and printing presses meant that an increase in page numbers and the rate of production were accompanied by a drop in production costs, and a drop in the cost to the consumer (Read, 1972b, p. 57). By 1900, the number of newspapers published in the British Isles showed a more than four-fold increase over that of half a century earlier (Smith, 1970, p. 64). The contents of the newspapers also showed significant changes during the Edwardian era. Early twentieth century publishers were intent on giving newspapers a popular appeal that had been absent from earlier publications. Two of the most famous publishers of the era, Sir George Newnes and Alfred Harmsworth, later Lord Northcliffe, both emphasised the dramatic side of news stories as a means of attracting readers. Harmsworth also introduced comic papers for young readers, which served to greatly increase the readership; together with adventure magazines, they formed ‘the prized literature of the Middle Class boys’ (Macqueen-Pope,

1948, p. 87). Most significant for the development of the Heroic Era was Harmsworth's deliberate encouragement of what he referred to as 'talking points', as opposed to 'actualities'. 'Talking points' were the development of topics being discussed by the general public, or indeed a topic created by a newspaper itself, such as an air race organised by the publisher. 'Actualities', on the other hand, were reports of events such as crimes, strikes, deaths, and sporting competitions. Harmsworth's goal to 'make the paper a happy one, fresh and free from dullness' through the championing of 'talking points' led to his becoming patron of Frederick Jackson's 1894 attempt on the North Pole, and of Scott's *Discovery* expedition of 1902 (Fiennes, 2004, p. 32; Read, 1972b, p. 59). Sir George Newnes had similarly exploited exploration to create news for his own publications when he sponsored Borchgrevink's 1899 *Southern Cross* expedition (Sale, 2002, p. 165). Newnes, Harmsworth and others had created a new reading public, and spending on British newspapers grew from less than £8 million in 1901 to well over £13 million in 1913. But not only had a new reading public been created; a new kind of news had been created as well – events sponsored by the press in order to make “news” that could be reported in that same press. The effects of this could be deeply disruptive:

Some mornings, a reader bought the paper to read about the paper: anything to keep up the excitement – stunt races and competitions, chances of large prizes, and, what was far more dangerous, impassioned challenges, revelations, campaigns for sudden irrational 'causes'.... Alfred Harmsworth had made a great contribution to popular journalism, but as Lord Northcliffe he began to make an even greater contribution to the confusion and bewilderment of the times.

(Priestley, 1972, p. 178)

Newspapers had become popular to a degree never seen before, and had enormous sway over public opinion and public interest. As Kirwan noted,

The creation of the Heroic Age and of the concept of the polar hero owed much to the new journalism, to those newspapers and magazines with mass circulations which were greatly aided early in the twentieth century in the distribution of news by the telegram and the wireless message. Through these new means of national and international publicity, denied to the explorers of an earlier age, the polar leader could now become almost overnight a public hero, his name a household word. For many indeed, absorbed by the story of his romantic adventures, he became a dream figure with whom they could happily identify themselves in brief moments of escape from the new imprisonment of urban life.

(Kirwan, 1959, pp. 253-254)

Thus, newspapers had emerged as a truly mass media, and were capable of creating enormous public interest in topics that previously had passed unnoticed. Now, polar exploration was a pleasure in which the reading public could vicariously indulge, through the men they celebrated as heroes.

#### 2.4 Social Unrest in Edwardian Britain

It is commonly thought that it was not until World War I that what had essentially been a protracted Victorian era that had lasted unchanged from the early nineteenth century finally came to an end. As noted by Petrie, the reign of Victoria's successor Edward VII straddled the last of Great Britain's years of prosperity, and there was a natural tendency after the Great War to romanticise the era (Petrie, 1965, p. 2). Macqueen-Pope's recollections of the pre-Great War era are typical: 'Those Victorian and Edwardian days were the Golden Age ... Such times had never been before, such times will never come again' (1948, p. 13).

As late as 1979, Huntford was still writing of the pre-War era as a ‘glorious spree’ (1979, p. 146).

To the author J.B. Priestley, however, who grew up in the Edwardian period, this “lost golden age” was little more than a myth:

[The pre-War years] are transformed into ... ‘the now fabulous Edwardian age’ by the autobiographers who look back not only at their own youth but also at a scene all the more radiant because it is on the other side of the huge black pit of war. ... The Edwardian was never a golden age, but seen across the dark years afterwards it could easily be mistaken for one.

(Priestley, 1972, pp. 56-57)

In fact, the years between the start of the twentieth century and World War I, commonly if inaccurately referred to as the Edwardian era,<sup>57</sup> were viewed by those living in Britain at the time as far from being a golden age. Ample evidence can be found of contemporary opinion clearly enunciating this, as for example in an article in the *Times* of 1909, which stated that, far from the Edwardian era being a golden one, ‘[People of today] place the golden age behind them, and assume that no generation ever had to deal with evils so great and perplexing as those of the present day’ (Quoted in Read, 1972a, p. 3). Hynes characterised the period eloquently as ‘a brief stretch of history, but a troubled and dramatic one – like the English Channel, a narrow place made turbulent by the thrust and tumble of two powerful opposing tides’ (1968, p. vii). After the long-established equilibrium of the earlier period, Britons felt themselves to be in turmoil as change rushed in from every side.

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<sup>57</sup> Edward VII assumed the throne in 1901 upon the death of Queen Victoria, but died in 1910. He was succeeded by his son, George V, who ruled from 1910 until his death in 1936. Thus, strictly speaking, the pre-War years were both Edwardian and Georgian.

R. C. K. Ensor, a leading historian of the period who drew extensively on his personal experience of Edwardian England, recalled ‘the seething and teeming of the pre-war period, its immense ferment and its restless fertility’ (1936, p. 557). Gretton, Ensor’s contemporary, saw this ferment and fertility being expressed in an urge to tempt fate:

Indeed, the strongest feeling just now of the average man was that the disastrous element in the outlook lay ... in the growth of a strange tendency to play with fire. Politicians tempted further and further by their own extravagances of language, suffragists going always a little deeper into destructiveness, Labor and Ulster moulding forces more and more into the machinery of conflict, and all the while a most dangerous number of the more comfortable classes making up their minds that something was bound to happen ...

(Gretton, 1930, p. 899)

After a detailed discussion of conditions in Britain in the pre-War years, Harris similarly concluded that this was not an era of stability and equilibrium:

All these points lend weight to the view, intuitively held by many contemporaries, that the late Victorian and Edwardian era was one of great contingency and contradiction. Fast-moving change was occurring on many fronts, but in a highly unpredictable, open-ended and often indecipherable way.

(Harris, 1993, p. 255)

It is Gretton, however, who spoke perhaps the most eloquently of the problems of Edwardian society compounding and accelerating:

And all the while so many problems of government and administration were being hustled along in a despairingly empirical fashion that public affairs became rather like a herd of nervous animals jostling one another down a lane of which the walls were remorselessly closing in. People began to think fatalistically that only an open smash somewhere could clear the road.

(Gretton, 1930, pp. 859-860)



In Gretton's view, it was the turmoil of the age that made the appearance of the explorer heroes a necessity; amidst all the confusion and lack of direction, the British public were searching for a beacon to lead them out of the darkness. Following a discussion of the Scott expedition tragedy, he concluded that:

The story was not, and it never can be, a story of failure; it remains one of the perfectly flawless flamings of the human spirit.

That had need to burn bright and high somewhere. In most directions it showed but a smoky and turbid flame. No mere description of events can give a true account of English history during [this period]. The events were serious enough, the problems they presented were inextricably baffling. But far more serious was the country's state of mind. In one way after another all the old loyalties, the old values, even such standards of behaviour as still survived, gave way. The more difficulties there were to meet the more it appeared that habits of conduct to which appeal could once have been made were no longer there to appeal to.

(Gretton, 1930, p. 859)

Among the many changes surging around the Edwardians was a dwindling faith in the science that had been so idolised in the late Victorian era. Science had been seen as the answer to mankind's problems, and seemed to offer nothing less than total power, as stated in Winwood Reade's popular work *The Martyrdom of Man* (1872). The idolisation of science, however, was waning as the Edwardian era progressed, with the general public beginning to feel that science was 'imposing an increasingly materialistic and impersonal pattern of life' upon them (Kirwan, 1959, p. 253). This feeling grew to the point that by 1914, science was being blamed not only for the state of England, but for World War I; as

one contemporary commentator claimed:

Science, and science alone, with its servant, engineering, has brought us to such an awful pass of over-civilisation, over-development, and fearfully organized and elaborated war-system ... Science stands for materialism, and the modern Germans are the most utterly materialistic people in the world, as they are the greatest in the laboratories ... As [Germany] has abandoned itself to the plague of science, its inner culture, its soul refinement, has been weakened...and now, in a mad fury, it has leapt to an attempted murder of the world.

(Quoted in M. Jones, 2003, p. 180)

The focus of public attention moved away from the achievements of the scientific world in the Edwardian era, and science alone was no longer sufficient to capture the public imagination, a fact well understood by those involved in expedition fundraising in those years. Indeed, it was commonly accepted by the explorers of the Heroic Era that lecturing on the importance of the Antarctic in the advancement of science would no longer be a fruitful means of garnering financial support from the public. Scott, for example, recognised that the romance of adventure was far more likely to loosen purse strings than any scientific argument:

[Scott] divined correctly that whatever he might say in elegant addresses to the Royal Geographical Society, it was the idea of planting the Union Jack on the Pole which would grip the public's imagination and attract the funds, and so the published objective of the expedition was to reach the South Pole.

(Preston, 1999, p. 117)

It was not science alone that was losing its gilt, however; even the imperialism so emblematic of Victorian England was beginning to pall:

In England the annexationist imperialism of the nineties died down in the following decade, not merely owing to the disillusionment of the South African war, but also because people suddenly realized that little was left to annex, and that the problem for Great Britain, with her vast and much-envied possessions, was not to get but to hold.

(Ensor, 1936, p. 553)

This was a new concern for the new century, almost unimaginable to the Victorians, arising out of a sense of power too thinly spread over too great an empire. Edwardians began to doubt their ability to reign over the empire they had, let alone expand it. One way in which this change in attitude was expressed was in the waning popularity of writers such as Rudyard Kipling. Kipling had been a particular favourite of late nineteenth-century readers, and a staunch supporter of Victorian ideals. Indeed, one of his most famous poems, the 1897 composition ‘Recessional’ first published in the London *Times* in commemoration of Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee, was commonly seen as a hymn to a divinely-sanctioned imperial expansion:<sup>58</sup>

God of our fathers, known of old,  
Lord of our far-flung battle-line,  
Beneath whose awful hand we hold  
Dominion over palm and pine –  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget – lest we forget!

(Kipling, 1897)

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<sup>58</sup> As Gilmour noted, that ‘Recessional’ was in fact warning of the perils of imperial hubris was, and remains, largely overlooked (Gilmour, 2002, pp. 119-124).

On publication of this poem, Kipling was immediately hailed as ‘Laureate of the Empire’, and elevated to a national symbol (Gilmour, 2002, pp. 123-124). From the start of the Edwardian era, however, Kipling’s ideas were seen as increasingly discordant with the mood of the times, and he became a gradually more isolated figure as he grew older:

The most popular literary figure of the eighteen nineties had been Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936). In the new century, however, though still widely read, he was no longer in touch with the trend of opinion. Kipling’s imperialism had begun to seem dated.

(Read, 1972b, pp. 62-63)

In the words of Hynes, ‘No more vivid and regrettable example of Edwardian change exists than this history of a potentially great artist’s disintegration. But the point is that Kipling’s decline was parallel to the decline of the cause and the values that he believed in ...’ (Hynes, 1968, p. 19). Indeed, by 1911 Kipling was widely ostracised; as H.G.Wells wrote in *The New Machiavelli*, first published in that year, despite his generation being in many ways indebted to Kipling, ‘[he] has since been ... mercilessly and exhaustively mocked, criticized and torn to shreds – never was a man so violently exalted and then ... so relentlessly called down’ (Wells, 1911, pp. 128-129).

Closely tied to this failure of confidence in their ability to maintain the standards of their Victorian predecessors was perhaps the single most widespread and influential of the doubts harboured by people in Edwardian Britain. This was the fear of racial degeneration. In the earliest days of the Edwardian era, the debacle of the Boer War had made clear what was viewed by many as a critical state of national decay; the manhood of Britain had been allowed to degenerate to the point where it could no longer be relied upon even to protect

the existing empire, let alone engage in imperialist expansionism. This seemed only too evident in the statistical data collected by Rowntree in northern England between 1897 and 1901 which showed that nearly one-half of would-be army recruits in that area had to be rejected on medical grounds (Rowntree, 1910, pp. 217-220). In a prominent article by Major General Sir Frederick Maurice KCB, it was estimated that, subtracting both initial rejections and subsequent losses through failure of health, only two out of every five volunteers remained as effective soldiers<sup>59</sup> (Cited in Samuel, 1989, p. 206). “Physical degeneration” now became the issue of the day, stimulating much debate, and leading eventually in 1903 to the setting up of an Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. The Committee was to determine the causes of physical deterioration among the British public, and arrive at a means of remedying the situation. Its recommendations included a number of references to urban overcrowding, air pollution, working conditions, and the care and nourishment of children (Read, 1972b, p. 156).<sup>60</sup> The final report of the Committee was intended to deny the idea that ‘progressive deterioration is to be found among the people generally’, although as Hynes (1968, pp. 23-24) has shown, the very fact that a Government Committee had been set up on ‘physical deterioration’, and a

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<sup>59</sup> Although Maurice’s argument has been called into question as having been based on false premises, his claims were undoubtedly responsible for creating much of the public impression at the time that the “race” was degenerating (Rosenthal, 1986, p. 136).

<sup>60</sup> It is interesting to note that comparisons were made at the time with Japan, particularly with regard to children’s health. Samuel for example referred to the members of the British Sanitary Institute being told in 1904 that in Japan every schoolchild was under medical supervision, and that first aid and hygiene were taught in school (1989, p. 208). Baden-Powell wrote at length on the good example the Japanese provided to the British in this regard:

The Japs are particularly strong and healthy, as was shown in the late war with Russia. There was very little sickness among them and those who were wounded generally very quickly recovered because their skin was clean and their blood was in a healthy, sound condition. They are the best example that we can copy. ... They eat very plain food, chiefly rice and fruit, and not much of it. They drink plenty of water, but no spirits. They take lots of exercise. ... They live in fresh air as much as possible day and night.

(Baden-Powell, 1908, p. 213).

Government report on the topic tabled, was sufficient to widely reinforce the idea that deterioration had occurred. Whether justified or not, anxiety that both the Empire was on the wane, and that the British people had lost the strength and vigour that had enabled them to build and hold that Empire, was ubiquitous. In such a climate, it was not surprising that analogies should have been made with the fall of earlier empires. One of the earliest writers to make a connection between physical degeneracy and collapse of empire was Arnold White, with his 1901 claim that

[t]he production of sound minds in healthy, athletic, and beautiful bodies is a form of patriotism which must be revived if modern England is not to follow ancient Babylon and Tyre. Unless our town dwellers take heed and recognise that we have begun to rot, our position as a World Power is doomed ...

(A. White, 1901, p. 121)

A similar comparison was drawn in Elliot Mills' 1905 satirical booklet *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire*, described on the title-page as 'A brief account of those causes which resulted in the destruction of our late Ally, together with a comparison between the British and Roman Empires, Appointed for use in the National Schools of Japan. Tokio, 2005' (Mills, 1905). The book poses as a work written in the year 2005 pretending to instruct the subjects of the then dominant Japanese Empire of the dangers of not studying the reasons for the fall of the British Empire at the start of the twentieth century. It was enormously popular with Edwardian readers. Among its devotees was Robert Baden-Powell, at that time still Inspector-General of Cavalry in the British Army, but already

formulating his ideas for the Boy Scout movement he was to found. In a 1906 speech, Baden-Powell told his audience that:

If you care to show your patriotism to the extent of expending sixpence, I hope each one of you will go tomorrow morning and buy a copy of the pamphlet called 'The Decline and Fall of the British Empire.' If you will carefully study it personally, each one of you, no matter what his line of life may be, will see what should be his share in saving his country from the possibility of disaster.

(Quoted in Hynes, 1968, p. 26)<sup>61</sup>

Baden-Powell was captivated by the parallels between the fall of the Roman Empire and the deterioration of the British people, and referred to it repeatedly in his first edition of *Scouting for Boys*:

Our great Empire is to-day to the rest of the world very much what the Roman Empire was two thousand years ago. But the Roman Empire, great as it was, fell. The same causes which brought about the fall of the great Roman Empire are working to-day in Great Britain.

(Baden-Powell, 1908, pp. 335-336)

And again, this time with direct reference to the feared physical deterioration,

Recent reports on the deterioration of our race ought to act as a warning to be taken in time before it goes too far.

One cause which contributed to the downfall of the Roman Empire was the fact that the soldiers fell away from the standard of their forefathers in bodily strength. ... much preventable deterioration is being allowed to creep in among the rising generation.

(Baden-Powell, 1908, pp. 208-209)

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<sup>61</sup> Baden-Powell's suggestion would seem to have been heeded; Hynes noted that twelve thousand copies of the pamphlet sold in six months.

Although Baden-Powell's actual motivation in founding the Boy Scouts has been a point of contention, it would appear conclusive from recent research that his initial aim was not the creation of a generation of self-sacrificing soldiers, but rather to the shaping of "good citizens" – men '... who could be trusted on their honour to do a thing; who are guided by a sense of what is their duty ... and who by their personal self-respect and avoidance of bad habits give themselves a manliness and dignity which no humbug can attain to' (Quoted in Jeal, 1990, pp. 365-366).<sup>62</sup> The constant foregrounding of manliness, physical strength, and masculinity became an obsession of the Edwardians, and was to profoundly influence the forms which hero-worship took by the end of that era.

It must also be noted that this "cult of manliness" was explicitly encouraged in the education system – particularly in the English public schools – where intellectualism came to be equated with a questionable masculinity. "Bookworms" came to be despised, and an admiration for active muscle over learning became the norm in a great number of schools as anti-intellectualism proliferated not only in the student body, but even among teaching staff and headmasters (Mangan, 1981, pp. 99-121). Baden-Powell was openly anti-intellectual in his writing for the Scouts (See for example Baden-Powell, 1934, pp. 10-13) as well as for the Rover Scouts – the parallel organisation for young men over the age of eighteen – who were warned in *Rovering to Success* against becoming 'intellectual highbrows' (Cited in Warren, 1987, p. 203). Muscularity and moral standing came to be viewed as inextricably joined in 'a simple linear relationship between physical courage and

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<sup>62</sup> Hynes, on the other hand, argued that, 'When Baden-Powell organized his scouting movement he did so with one clear motive – to prepare the next generation of British soldiers' (1968, p. 27). Baden-Powell himself stated however that, 'The whole intention of the Boy Scouts' training is for peaceful citizenship,' and fervently denied any desire to promote militarism (Baden-Powell, 1908, p. 341). For more on this debate, see for example Jeal (1990, p. 365).



moral worth – a relationship that represented essential masculinity ...’ (Mangan, 1981, p. 188).

In contrast to the kind of men admired by the Victorian public – the great Christian soldiers following the ethos of “Muscular Christianity”, marching to their deaths in a glow of righteousness – the heroes of the Edwardian era were far more likely to be paragons of courage and physicality. Indeed, it was the explorer heroes who now particularly inspired the adoration of the public, putting a masculine, outdoor, healthy, unfettered “man against the elements”-type hero ahead of the Christian soldiers of the previous generation.<sup>63</sup> Feeding this new paradigm – and, at the same time, being fed by it – were the Boy Scouts and similar movements. Tying this cult of manliness to the idea of hero-worship, Baden-Powell specifically promoted explorers as role models for boys:

The heroes of the wild, the frontiersmen and explorers, the rovers of the seas, the airmen of the clouds, are Pied Pipers to the boys. Where they lead the boys will follow, and these will dance to their tune when it sings of manliness and pluck, of adventure and high endeavour, of efficiency and skill, of cheerful sacrifice of self for others.

(Quoted in Turley, 1935, Frontispiece)

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<sup>63</sup> Muscular Christianity was a British religious movement typified by characters in the stories of Thomas Hughes and Charles Kingsley, who combine supremacy in athletic and sporting ability with Christian morality. Indeed, ‘[t]he basic premise of Victorian Muscular Christianity was that participation in sport could contribute to the development of Christian morality ...’ (Watson, Weir, & Friend, 2005). Muscular Christianity promoted the idea that to maintain a vigorous and active body was a part of one’s religious duty. Kingsley’s novel *Westward ho!* was a powerful agent in the recruiting of soldiers for the Crimean War (1853-1856), and he was claimed to be responsible for the “Christian soldier” hero; ‘Kingsley introduced into literature the huge British hero who always fought victoriously and who spread the doctrines of the English Church. ... In *Brave Words for Brave Soldiers* he wrote, “The Lord Jesus Christ is not only the Prince of Peace; He is the Prince of War too”’ (Winn, 1960, pp. 66-67).

The heroes of the Edwardians were not staging military coups, or being besieged by enemy troops and dying with a prayer on their lips.<sup>64</sup> Nor were they attempting to bring religion to the “heathens” and “savages”. Instead, they were pitting their bodies and minds against the forces of nature, using sheer muscle power and a vast range of survival skills to achieve feats of physical endurance. As a Boy Scout, the Edwardian boy could learn camp-craft, and begin to develop the skills and techniques needed to survive “in the wild”, and thus emulate his explorer heroes. Few boys would have been interested by Edwardian times in spending their leisure hours reading their Bibles or attending prayer meetings – Baden-Powell specifically warned Scout instructors against preaching religion to the boys – but they could happily spend their hours learning how to hunt animals, or build a camp-fire, or put up a tent. For Edwardian youth growing up in an era that valued improving the national physique and feared racial degeneration, to focus their dreams on heroes such as Scott and Shackleton was to be encouraged. Baden-Powell read *Scott’s last expedition* and repeatedly lauded Scott thereafter as a national hero in his columns in *The Scout*, the movement’s official newspaper first published in 1908.<sup>65</sup> Baden-Powell stated that, ‘[Scott] died proving himself one of the most energetic scouts of our nation’ (M. Jones, 2003, p. 204). Indeed, he went so far as to state in his 1908 *Scouting for boys* that, ‘The History of the Empire has been made by British adventurers and explorers, the scouts of the nation, for hundreds of years past up to the present time’ (p. 13). Among the many ‘peace scout’ heroes he listed were the Arctic explorer Sir John Franklin, and the Antarctic explorer Sir James Clark Ross, discoverer of the Great Ice Barrier, later named the Ross Ice Shelf. In fact, the first of the

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<sup>64</sup> Dying in the arms of his son, the Victorian hero Sir Henry Havelock was widely reported as saying, ‘Harry, see how a Christian can die’ (Lunt, 2004, p. 853). David Livingstone, the renowned African explorer, was famed for having died kneeling in prayer beside his bed (Ransford, 1978, p. 305).

<sup>65</sup> Similarly, shortly after Amundsen’s successful return from the Pole, the *Boys’ Own Paper* had recommended that the account of his expedition ‘should be read by every British boy’ (M. Jones, 2005, p. xxix).

‘Scouting Games for Winter in the Country’ that are included in *Scouting for boys* is a game called ‘Arctic Expedition’, in which boys are encouraged to make a dog sledge and use it to carry ‘rations and cooking-pots, etc’ as they follow a trail through the snow. They were then told to build ‘snow huts’ (Baden-Powell, 1908, p. 52). The connection between youth and polar explorer heroes could not be made clearer.

Baden-Powell’s preoccupation with Arctic and Antarctic expeditions during this period was far from exceptional among those writing for youth, as books such as his *Scouting for boys* fitted neatly into the juvenile literature genre that was so popular in the pre-War years. Jones discussed the enormous increase in the volume of print directed at young people at this time, with ‘tales of polar exploration a staple ingredient of this expanding juvenile literature’. Indeed, between 1909 and 1916, the *Boy’s Own Paper*, one of the leading illustrated weeklies for boys, published seventeen feature articles on polar exploration, as well as a variety of cartoons and photographs on the topic (M. Jones, 2003, p. 201).

Poetry too served the cause of bolstering the ideals of athleticism among youth, contrasting the positive connotations of a muscular, outdoor sport like cricket with the “feminine”, indoor recreations of the Victorians.<sup>66</sup> Norman Gale, a prolific writer for nearly fifty years, composed numerous works in this genre; one particularly blunt example was his

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<sup>66</sup> Mangan (1981, p. appendix vi) provides several examples of ‘poets of athleticism’ and their works.

poem 'The Female Boy', published in 1905:

### The Female Boy

If cursed by a son who declined to play cricket,  
(Supposing him sound and sufficient in thews,)  
I'd larrup him well with the third of a wicket,  
Selecting safe parts of his body to bruise.  
In his mind such an urchin King Solomon had  
When he said, Spare the stump, and you bungle the lad!

For what in the world is the use of a creature  
All flabbily bent on avoiding the Pitch?  
Who wanders about, with a sob in each feature,  
Devising a headache, inventing a stitch?  
There surely would be a quick end to my joy  
If possessed of that monster – the feminine boy! –

The feminine boy who declines upon croquet,  
Or halma, or spillikins (horrible sport!),<sup>67</sup>  
Or any amusement that's female and pokey,  
And flatly objects to behave as he ought!  
I know him of old. He is lazy and fat,  
And sadly in need of the thick of a bat!

Instead of this Thing, fit for punishment drastic,  
Give, Fortune, a son who is nimble and keen;  
A bright-hearted sample of human elastic,  
As fast as an antelope, supple and clean;  
Far other than he in whose dimples there lodge  
Significant signs of inordinate stodge.

Ay, give me the lad who is eager and chubby,  
A Stoddart in little, a hero in bud;  
Who'd think it a positive crime to grow tubby,  
And dreams half the night he's a Steel or a Studd!<sup>68</sup>  
There's the youth for my fancy, all youngsters above –  
The boy for my handshake, the lad for my love!

(Gale, 1905, pp. 15-16)

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<sup>67</sup> Halma was a Victorian board game, otherwise known as Chinese checkers, and similar to draughts. Spillikins is a much more ancient game, more commonly known as 'Pick Up Sticks'.

<sup>68</sup> Stoddart, Steel and Studd were all cricketers famous in late Victorian times.

Gale frequently and intentionally linked the ideas of muscular, masculine prowess with concepts of heroes, from sporting champions to figures in ancient Greek mythology.

There thus existed an environment that blatantly promoted sporting and physical prowess as moral goals in themselves, fostered by an education system that actively encouraged the worship of athletic heroes. At the same time, organisations such as the Boy Scouts were instilling the values of the rugged outdoor life as deeply entwined with being a good citizen, coupled to a form of juvenile literature that was patently endorsing the adulation of masculine virility and polar explorers. It is not surprising then, that explorer heroes were to dominate Edwardian thinking, particularly among youth.

At the same time, it is clear that the preoccupation of youth with “physicality” in itself encouraged the emergence of the Heroic Era of exploration, for one of the striking features of Antarctic expeditions of the pre-War years was the youthfulness of the expedition members. Apsley Cherry-Garrard for example, author of *The Worst Journey in the World* (1922), widely acclaimed as one of the best accounts of polar exploration ever published, and who served under Scott on his final expedition, was only twenty-four years of age when the *Terra Nova* departed England in 1910. His cabin-mate, the expedition physicist Charles ‘Silas’ Wright, was a mere twenty-three. Thus, the two men would only have been senior-school students at the start of the Edwardian era. Even Lieutenant Edward Evans, second-in-command of Scott’s expedition, was only twenty-eight at the time of sailing, and hence was a teenager in the opening years of the era. Henry ‘Birdie’ Bowers, one of the two men who died with Scott in his tent, was only seventeen when Edward VII acceded to the throne. Nor should the fact that these men were in their twenties at the time

of the expedition be seen as putting them beyond the age at which organisations such as the Boy Scouts, for example, would have had appeal; the initial announcement by the publishers of Baden-Powell's 'weekly penny paper for young men', *The Scout*, stated that, 'It will, primarily, be a paper for young men between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five' (Baden-Powell, 1908, unnumbered page after p. 334). In the words of a twenty-four year old member of Mawson's 1911 Antarctic expedition, the scientific assistant Charles Laseron, 'To a young fellow ... the sudden prospect of embarking on a great expedition, ... the prospect of travelling into new lands and encountering who knows what wonderful adventures, was almost overwhelming' (Laseron, 1947, pp. 8-9). Mawson himself was only twenty-five when he joined Shackleton's *Nimrod* expedition in 1907. Brigid Hains noted that these youthful polar explorers had grown up on a diet of juvenile adventure literature:

The expeditioners' attempts to make sense of the Antarctic landscape ... was aided by their education in adventure, exploration and romance. ... [T]hey were fresh from boyhoods at the turn of the century. Their imaginative world was one of big game hunting with Teddy Roosevelt; Arctic and Antarctic exploration; and the mysteries of lost tribes, dark civilisations, menacing nature, and hidden treasure in the books of Henry Rider Haggard and Robert Louis Stevenson.

(Hains, 2002, p. 10)

Green argued that the adventure tales that English youth read for almost two hundred years, from the 1719 book *Robinson Crusoe* through to the end of the Edwardian period, deeply informed British ambitions in terms of exploration and conquest: 'They were, collectively, the story England told itself as it went to sleep at night; and in the form of dreams, they charged England's will with the energy to go out into the world and explore, conquer, and rule' (Green, 1980, p. 3). It was the juvenile literature of the Edwardian era, however, that most closely linked the social values and mores of the day to a cult of explorer hero-

worship. The young Britishers brought up on this literature, and who went on to join Antarctic expeditions, were the energetic youth of an era that saw itself as one in crisis, haunted by the spectre of physical decline. In this environment, the explorer hero acted as both a focus of aspiration, and a panacea – a muscular, dominant figure who put paid to fears of racial weakness, and at the same time, reinforced the notion that it was athletic men, not highly intellectual or bookish, nor overly concerned with religion, who could achieve great things on an international level.<sup>69</sup> As the British *Daily Telegraph* of 15 June, 1909, reporting Shackleton's return to England from the *Nimrod* expedition, proclaimed,

In our age, filled with vain babbling about the decadence of the race, he has upheld the old fame of our breed; he has renewed its reputation for physical and mental and moral energy ... and at a critical time in the fortunes of all the Britains he has helped to breathe new inspiration and resolve into the British stock throughout the world.

(Quoted in Riffenburgh, 2004, p. 287)

The explorer hero had a very real role to play in providing a remedy to a mounting fever of self-doubt.

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<sup>69</sup> It should be noted that preoccupations with racial degeneration, and a failing of masculinity were not unique to Great Britain; similar concerns were being voiced in late-Victorian America, as an aftermath of the Civil War, and in Australia. As Crotty noted,

If in 1870 the [Colonial] boy was judged by the standard of his ascetic religious morality and his worthiness for the kingdom of God, by 1920 he was judged by his physical strength, patriotism, military usefulness, and ultimately, his worthiness as a member of the nation and empire.

(Crotty, 2001, p. 11)

## 2.5 Conclusion

The new century witnessed enormous change in Britain which resulted in a world-view distinctly different from that held by the Victorians. As a product of often unrelated developments and events, Edwardian thinking in one area at least – conceptualisations of what it meant to be a hero, and the value placed on such notions – had arrived at a point unimagined by Britons of the nineteenth century. Developments in the print media had created a world in which polar, and in particular, Antarctic, exploration was able to attract far more public attention and support than ever before. The tragic disappearance of the Franklin expedition, and perhaps more importantly, the efforts of Lady Franklin, had led to a public “ownership” of exploration. At the same time, Franklin had proved an inspiration to a new generation of explorers whose dreams would come to maturity in the Edwardian years. The loss of faith in science, a failing of the “empire spirit” so well-known to the Victorians, as well as a host of social and political problems, from trade union militancy to radical feminism, and widespread civil disobedience to a constitutional crisis engendered by the Irish Home Rule issue, argue against any view of Edwardian Britain as an extension of the Victorian era, let alone a “golden age”. Indeed, it is clear that to the Edwardian mind society was in turmoil. Amidst all the confusion and doubt, the explorer hero emerged as an expression of the profound desire for an idea to cling to, an ideal to emulate, and a figure to worship – and was an overtly *masculine* figure. In addition, the explorer’s story offered an escape from the challenges and confrontations of Edwardian society. He thus became simultaneously the *product* of the Edwardian imagination, and the *object* of its highest aspirations.



## Meiji – Taishō Japan and Heroic Status

### 3.1 Introduction

Just as the Edwardian era in England has tended to be seen as a “golden age”, so too has the Meiji era (1868-1912) come to be represented as a time when the Japanese people were freed from the drudgery and rigidity of “mediaeval” times, and came to live peacefully and prosperously under a benevolent emperor:

At a bound Japan leapt out of the darkness of the Middle Ages into the fiercest light of the nineteenth century ... The style adopted for the new reign was Meiji – ‘brilliant government’ – an auspicious combination of words which the future promptly justified. ... the era Meiji, in foreign as well as in domestic affairs, witnessed the inauguration of a new order of things ... [and] aroused the admiration of the whole world.

(A.B. Mitford, quoted in Cortazzi, 1985, pp. 11-12)

Perhaps the document most responsible for creating the popular impression of a dark “Middle Ages” being superseded by an era of light and truth was the Charter Oath of 1868 [*Gokajō no Goseimon*; literally, Oath in Five Articles], announced by the Emperor as a statement of the new Meiji government’s intentions in a post-Tokugawa Shogunate era.<sup>70</sup> Although largely disregarded at the time of its promulgation – one of its writers, Kido Takayoshi, had forgotten its existence a mere four years later (Jansen, 2000, p. 339) – the

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<sup>70</sup> Gluck discusses the way in which terms such as ‘feudal system’ [*hōken seido*] were used by ‘participants in the Meiji national project’ to dissociate themselves and their times from the ‘dark’ past, and in so doing, invented an imaginary ‘Edo-as- tradition ... forever trapped in the mirror of the modern’ (1998, p. 284).

Oath was to assume greater significance as time progressed, eventually being reiterated as the first article of the constitution. At least in its initial form, it proved more useful as an instrument of inspiration than governance. The Oath consisted of five articles, summarising the intentions of the new government:

1. Deliberative assemblies shall be widely established and all matters decided by public discussion.
2. All classes, high and low, shall unite in vigorously carrying out the administration of affairs of state.
3. The common people, no less than the civil and military officials, shall each be allowed to pursue his own calling so that there may be no discontent.
4. Evil customs of the past shall be broken off and everything based upon the just laws of Nature.
5. Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world so as to strengthen the foundations of imperial rule.

(Tsunoda, de Bary, & Keene, 1958, pp. 136-137)

It seems that the hortatory nature of the articles came to be misconstrued as a statement of fact in later times, and the reference to the abandonment of the ‘evil customs of the past’ taken at face value. As Jansen has pointed out, the five articles were more likely to have been interpreted at the time as ‘a promise of gradualism and equity’, rather than a radical step towards a ‘new Japan’ (Jansen, 2000, pp. 338-339). Nevertheless, whatever the causes may have been for the later glorification of the Meiji era, it is evident from the historical record that the late-Meiji years in particular were far from a “Golden Age”.

That Japanese intellectuals were aware of the dangers ahead was clear from comments commonly made at the end of the nineteenth century that Japan should learn from the errors of the earlier-industrialising nations to avoid making the same mistakes. In this respect, the advantages of being a “backward” country [*kōshinkoku*] as opposed to an

“advanced” country [*senshinkoku*] were frequently and unashamedly commented upon; Kaneko Kentaro, later a negotiator of the 1905 Portsmouth Peace Treaty, remarked in 1896 that, ‘It is the advantage of the backward country that it can reflect on the history of the advanced countries and avoid their mistakes’ (Quoted in Dore, 1969, p. 439). Katayama Sen, the writer and journalist soon to be responsible for a prodigious output of articles and books for youth, wrote optimistically in 1900 of the possibilities of avoiding the mistakes of others:

... since we Japanese can readily see the social problems plaguing Western countries we will undertake reforms while Japan is not yet troubled by these problems. We can profit from their experiences, and history; their failures and successes will show us the best course.  
(Quoted in Pyle, 1973, p. 54)

Despite the optimism, the head of the Treasury, Soeda Juichi, stated in 1896 that with regard to the social problems concomitant with industrialisation, ‘these problems are *beginning to appear* in Japan’ (Quoted in Dore, 1969, p. 439). In fact, the looming problems were not resolved, but instead grew into fully-fledged social turmoil in the new century.

### 3.2 From Bureaucracy to Democracy

Gordon proposed in 1991 that post-Tokugawa Japanese history be viewed not in terms of imperial reigns – the Meiji-Taishō-Shōwa divisions so commonly relied upon – but instead as two periods: the era of Imperial Bureaucracy, from 1868 to 1905, and the era of Imperial Democracy, from 1918 to 1932, with a transitional stage lasting from 1905 to 1918

(Gordon, 1991, pp. 5-10). He had earlier referred to this transitional stage as the ‘era of popular violence’, owing to the frequency of destructive public protests that occurred in those years (Gordon, 1988, p. 141). Despite this, he noted that there was a general consensus among Japanese historians that what they term the Taishō Democracy [*Taishō demokurashī*] began in fact in 1905, seven years before the Emperor Meiji died, and the same year Gordon chose as the start of transition from bureaucracy to democracy. Although he rejected the Japanese nomenclature on the grounds of chronological inaccuracy and the risk of analytical confusion invited by the application of the term ‘democracy’ to such an early stage in Japan’s political evolution, consensus over the importance of events that occurred in and around 1905 invites further investigation.<sup>71</sup>

In essence, what distinguished Gordon’s two periods was, in Silberman’s terms, ‘the means [adopted] for the authoritative allocation of values and resources’. In short, in the earlier era authority rested on the principle of administrative rules – ‘bureaucratic absolutism’ – whereas in the latter period, authority rested on the principle of organisational consensus – a general agreement among various bodies in a form of limited pluralism (Silberman, 1982, p. 231). Silberman (1982) argued that bureaucratic absolutism emerged in the early years of the Meiji as the only course open to the leaders of the new Japan following the Restoration. Political leadership had of course been taken over by those who had been instrumental in the Restoration movement; apart from this ‘qualification via participation’, there was little in the way of objective criteria for determining appointments within the government. More importantly, succession to roles in government could not be controlled in this situation – as Silberman put it, ‘The informal structures for determining

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<sup>71</sup> The debate concerning the definition of the beginning and end of the Taishō era has been discussed more fully than is possible here in Garon, 1998.

leadership could not be perpetuated because the original basis for bureaucratic appointment and informal membership could not be replicated' (Silberman, 1982, p. 235). In other words, the first generation of leaders were the offspring of the Meiji Revolution; in the absence of further revolutions, a process for selecting successive leaders did not exist. With the abolition of the *bakufu* class system, samurai connections could also no longer serve as any overt form of qualification for leadership. Two alternatives presented themselves to the Meiji oligarchy: leadership selection through some form of election based on the votes of an enfranchised body, or an "objective" *system* that would choose suitable persons on the basis of the needs and desires of society as a whole. As Silberman noted, for the Meiji leaders, 'the first notion was clearly anathema', since introducing any form of democratic election to choose their successors would simultaneously undermine their own legitimacy as leaders, as they themselves had merely seized power, rather than having been given it by any public body of voters. At the same time, the basis of their power – the imperial will they so frequently invoked – would crumble if the foundation of laws and governance were to be handed to "mere voters".

As a result, the first generation of Meiji leaders saw no alternative but to establish a system that would produce successive leaders, under which ostensibly there would be a complete objectification of the selection process. The system would have to do more than just select, however; it would also have to constitute a structure that would retain and legitimise those it had selected. Thus, the social organisation they created would need to include a selection process to identify suitable candidates, a means of recruitment, tenure within the system, advancement opportunities, and retirement. In sum, it would be a civil bureaucracy. By the turn of the century, such a system was well established, with, for

example, the majority of upper civil servants graduating in law and jurisprudence, following a routinised career structure with assured tenure, and retiring at a predetermined age (Silberman, 1973). Feeding into this bureaucracy was an education system designed,

... not so much to educate as to weed out. Each step upward required a competitive entrance to a narrower and narrower number of schools that the state accepted as capable of producing expertise. The top was so narrow – Tokyo Imperial University – that the state had little trouble adjusting its own structure to absorb the product almost totally. ... The state in effect established its authority on its monopoly over expertise through careful control over the reproduction of that quality.

(Silberman, 1982, pp. 237-238)

Under this system, the ideal policy maker was the neutral, impartial expert, trained to know the best way to allocate rights, duties and resources for the maximum benefit of society – rational administration was substituted for politics as the means of realising public satisfaction (Silberman, 1982, p. 251). By creating and then controlling the schooling system, weeding out unsuitable candidates, and then absorbing almost the entire cohort of “experts” remaining, the government could justify its legitimacy to hold the reins of state on the grounds of being composed of the only available persons sufficiently qualified to rule. At the same time, the bureaucracy ensured its legal claim to rule through the promulgation of the 1889 *Dai-Nippon Teikoku Kenpō* [Constitution of the Empire of Japan, more commonly known as the Meiji Constitution], in which the legal entitlement of the bureaucracy to govern, and its responsibility to the Emperor as head of state to do so, was made manifest (Akamatsu, 1972).

The challenge to Imperial Bureaucracy that was to result in its eventually being superseded by Imperial Democracy arose from many sources, both internal and external to the government. But as Silberman and Gordon both point out, the bureaucratic system contained within itself the seeds of its undoing:

... bureaucratically dominated political systems are characterised by several structural and processual patterns that are contradictory. ... Differentiation seems to be a direct product of the resort by bureaucracies to rules and administrative laws to reduce uncertainty. These very rules serve to create not only the conditions of hierarchy but of autonomy as well. Rules not only specify the boundaries beyond which the subordinated may not go, but also beyond which the subordinator may not go. The setting of such boundaries by the state bureaucracy creates the potentiality and actuality of new uncertainties. ... Economically and socially functional interests, such as political parties, youth organisations, labour unions, and business groups, as well as bureaucratic departments, emerge in response ... there is the emergence of ever greater numbers of formally differentiated organizations which, through the rationality of rules, achieve limited autonomy and legitimacy.

(Silberman, 1982, pp. 255-256)

Gordon spoke more specifically of the Constitution, which Imperial Bureaucracy had been forced to promulgate to legitimise itself, as the cause of self-destruction:

The promulgation of a constitution ... meant that Japan was a nation of subjects with both obligations to the state and political rights. ... The fact that these rights were limited to men of substantial property is well recognized and, of course, important. Clearly the constitution was expected by its authors to contain the opposition. Nonetheless, to stress only the limitations placed on popular rights by the Meiji constitution is to miss its historical significance as a cause of future change: the mere existence of a constitutionally mandated, elected national assembly with more than advisory powers implied the existence of a politically active and potentially expandable body of subjects or citizens.

(Gordon, 1991, p. 15)

The limits the Constitution placed on the bureaucracy, and the fact that the Constitution legitimised rule by a group of men chosen by their peers, together served to erode Imperial Bureaucracy, and led to the social turmoil that was to result in Imperial Democracy.

In fact, the initial crumbling of bureaucratic rule was soon evident, as hundreds of political rallies were convened in Tokyo alone throughout the 1880s and 1890s, involving people from the lowest classes up to men of means and education, including the rising urban professional classes made up of lawyers, journalists and the like (Gordon, 1991, p. 16). Indeed, it was the Meiji oligarchy's promotion of universal education that was a primary factor in the demand for change. Although the education system specifically promoted an emperor-centred ideology, this did not necessarily result in a population of compliant individuals willing to submit to any authority; as Gordon stated,

Meiji education surely promoted nationalism and support for the emperor, but the record of urbanites and workers in opposing their putative superiors shows that the success of the schools in also creating docile workers or subservient subjects was limited. Universal education provided the tool of literacy, and this could produce citizens who supported both the emperor *and* democratic reforms.

(1991, p. 18)

Bureaucratic Imperialism had set the stage for its own demise, and its eventual replacement by Imperial Democracy after an interval of more than a decade of instability and disorder.



### 3.3 The Rise of Literacy

Compulsory education was introduced in Japan in 1872, and by 1892 just over half the nation's children were in fact attending school. A dramatic increase in attendance rates over the next few years saw over ninety-five per cent of children going to school by 1905 (Ministry of Education, online). One consequence of the resulting explosion in literacy was a surge in magazine and newspaper readership, and this in turn was to have ramifications for political reform. Newspapers such as the *Yorozu chōhō* – the first full-scale commercial newspaper in Japan, founded in 1892 and targeting the newly emerging urban working classes – pushed the call for greater popular involvement in politics (Arai, 1983, pp. 369-370). Commercial newspapers [*Koshimbun*] such as the *Yorozu chōhō* and the *Jiji shimpō* were subscribed to by readers from the urban poor through to the lower middle classes (Gordon, 1991, p. 19). As a result, political awareness and political action were by no means limited to the intelligentsia. Indeed, Motoyama Hikoichi, President of the *Osaka Mainichi* newspaper, wrote to Gotō Shimpei, statesman and close confidant of Prime Minister Katsura, of the great interest in politics that had been aroused in the common people by the end of the Meiji period (Motoyama, 1912, online).

Similarly, popular fiction in the last decades of the century illustrates how widespread ideas of democratic reform and general political awareness had become by that time. Many of the young authors took as their models English political novelists such as Edward Bulwer-Lytton and Benjamin Disraeli, and their books generally shared a theme of ‘noble and ambitious youths determined to make their way in the world of politics by courageous espousal of liberalism’ (Jansen, 2000, p. 469). One political novel which was immensely

popular was Shiba Shirō's *Kajin no kigū* [Strange Encounters with Elegant Females], written in 1885 under the pen-name Tōkai Sanshi. Although written in highly symbolic prose, it is in essence a tract on democratic movements and resistance to oppression. *Kajin no kigū* enjoyed such popularity it was blamed for having 'raised the price of paper in the metropolis'; indeed, it was claimed that 'there was not a remote mountain village in Japan in which some young man had not a copy in his pocket, and the Chinese verses that so freely studded its pages were recited everywhere with great relish' (Sansom, 1950, p. 414).

Another political novel written in the same year as *Kajin no kigū* was Suyehiro Tetchō's *Setchūbai* [Plum Blossoms in the Snow]. Another work of little literary value, described by Suyehiro himself as 'nothing but a political tract sprinkled with novel-powder', it nevertheless belongs to the literary movement described as the 'Voice of Young Japan', a reference to Disraeli's novels which were labelled the 'Voice of Young England' in Victorian times. Set in the distant future (2040 A.D.), *Setchūbai* begins with two gentlemen discussing the great benefits Japan has reaped as a result of becoming a parliamentary democracy back in 1890 – five years into the future at the time the novel was written. One of Suyehiro's gentlemen then makes explicit the theme of the book for those readers who may not yet have ascertained it:

Until a hundred years ago our country was said to be the weakest and poorest in Asia and we were despised by Europe and America. The great increase in our national strength that has taken place in so short a time is due to the virtue of our wise sovereign, who at an early date decreed a constitutional form of government and opened our Parliament this day one hundred and fifty years ago.

(Quoted in Sansom, 1950, pp. 416-417)

That such works as the novels of Shiba Shirō and Suyehiro Tetchō, as well as the popular magazines and newspapers, were increasing exponentially in sales was not only tied to the rise in literacy, particularly among the youth of Japan, but was also intimately linked to the growing concentration of population in urban areas towards the end of the century. This growing urban population found easier access to the print media, and the larger body of potential readers at the same time spurred on the development of publishing companies.

### 3.4 Industrialisation

The appearance of a geographically concentrated lower and lower-middle class at the end of the nineteenth century in Japan was largely the product of rapid industrialisation. The sudden expansion of heavy industry had received considerable impetus from Japan's participation and ultimate victory in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). A boom developed in the production of supplies and materials during the War itself, and the government channelled much of the £38.1 million indemnity exacted from China into industry after the War (Lockwood, 1968, pp. 18-20).<sup>72</sup> Although production of materials such as coal was very low prior to the War, after 1894 it rose quickly, and in less than a decade there were approximately one hundred mining companies in existence with over one hundred and seventy thousand employees. Similarly, domestic production of oil grew from thirty-three thousand barrels in 1887 to over one and a quarter million barrels by 1903. Through a system of government subsidies, and the Shipbuilding Encouragement Act of

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<sup>72</sup> This was the equivalent of ¥360 million, or 4.5 times the 1893 national budget (Gordon, 1991, p. 70).

1896, that industry also was raised from insignificant proportions to the point where, by the start of World War I, Japanese shipyards were able to undertake the building of warships. Other industries such as electricity generation and the production of rolling stock also emerged in this era (Allen, 1946, pp. 73-89). Overall, Japan's total production and real income are estimated to have risen by between eighty and one hundred per cent in the years 1889 to 1914. By 1913, mining and manufacturing alone employed over two million workers. In fact, industrialisation resulted in an enormous shift in the composition of cities like Tokyo when compared with the pre-Meiji era. In 1908, approximately forty per cent of the capital's working population was employed in factories, shops, the construction industry, or cottage industries. Another forty per cent was engaged in commerce. In Tokugawa-era Japan, nearly fifty per cent of the population of the capital was made up of samurai military and the élite of the bureaucracy (Gordon, 1991, p. 21). Increasing numbers of rural families were being drawn into the metropolises and abandoning their traditional rural lifestyle. The industrial work-force nationwide doubled between 1900 and 1914, but in that same period, the Tokyo work-force tripled. This increasingly urbanised, increasingly literate, and increasingly wage-labourer-class populace began to resent the boundaries imposed by Imperial Bureaucracy, and post-Russo-Japanese War conditions were to prove the trigger that sparked outspoken public opposition.

### 3.5 Growing Social Unrest and the Treaty of Portsmouth

Although the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5 ended in victory for Japan as had the Sino-Japanese War ten years earlier, the social impact experienced in the years following the wars was markedly different. It is true that in both cases that the Japanese public felt humiliated post-war by the Western powers. In the earlier case, the Treaty of Shimonoseki saw the Triple Alliance forcing Japan to relinquish its claims on territories in China. The Japanese public reacted to this with astonishment and anger, which was only quelled by the direct intervention of the Emperor. The enormous indemnity received from China, however, more than adequately covered the cost of the War (Warner & Warner, 1974, p. 55). The aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War was, however, quite different; as Gordon stated, 'it was the Russo-Japanese War that brought the cost of war and empire home to thousands of Japanese' (Gordon, 1991, p. 23). At 1.7 billion yen, the expenditure on the War was almost eight times that of the Sino-Japanese conflict. Despite no less than fifty-three per cent of the budget being devoted to war expenses, the national debt rose sharply, from six hundred million to two thousand four hundred million yen. The annual interest on this debt alone amounted to over one hundred and ten million yen, and every day the war was said to be costing Japan a million U.S. dollars (Warner & Warner, 1974, p. 532; J. A. White, 1964, p. 289). A great part of this financial burden was borne by the general public through dramatically raised taxes, such that the share of state revenue raised in this manner nearly doubled between the start of the War and 1907. Even as early as 1904, the wartime budget had imposed taxes that were onerous; the German doctor Erwin Baelz, a resident in Tokyo,

complained in a diary entry in December of that year of the burden these taxes were imposing:

... the taxes are extremely heavy. The tax on building land doubled, the tax on agricultural land increased by 50%. Salt monopoly, increased import duties, business tax, increased taxation on beer and spirits, income tax, death duties, and actually a tax on the means of communication, which in the case of the electric trams is to amount to not less than 35 % of the gross receipts!

(Baelz, 1932, p. 330)

That the taxes were levied on basic consumables such as sugar, cooking oil, salt, tobacco, soy and *sake* meant that even the poorest classes shared the burden of funding the war effort (Gordon, 1991, p. 23). In addition, an oppressive household tax [*kosūwari*] was imposed on all families by local governments, and became their most important source of revenue (Pyle, 1973, p. 57). As Lockwood commented, government revenues were to a considerable degree extracted from consumption, and from ‘slender margins of income which would otherwise have been saved by small farmers and petty businessmen’ (Lockwood, 1968, p. 523). Of course, the financial hardships borne by the working classes were only exacerbated by the losses of fathers and brothers and sons, casualties of the fighting and of diseases such as dysentery and beriberi; nearly one hundred thousand men died in the siege of Port Arthur alone, and almost half the deaths were from disease (Warner & Warner, 1974, pp. 447-448).

Public expectations of recompense for their sufferings, in the form of an indemnity from Russia once victory had been achieved, came to be grossly inflated and based on anything but a true understanding of the military situation. That Japan’s forces were on the

brink of collapse by the middle of 1905, and that it was the Japanese Government that was seeking an end to the conflict, were not items of information to which the public was granted access. Instead, it had been fed nothing but a steady diet of accounts of Japan's continued victories (J. A. White, 1964, p. 317).<sup>73</sup> Popular entertainment only encouraged a presumption of military superiority. Cinema, a new medium at the time of the war, was enjoying enormous popularity in Japan as elsewhere, and a steady supply of footage from the front was attracting crowds eager to see what was happening in distant lands where family and friends had been sent. Theatres were decorated with Japanese flags, and street vendors sold buttons proclaiming 'Victory is sure.' At showings of war footage, *benshi* – the narrators who explained the silent footage to the patrons – would urge the crowds into a patriotic frenzy; High cited a description of a show at the Daikokuza Theatre in late 1904 published in the *Kōbe Shimbun* illustrating this:

After [the *benshi*] blows his whistle, the lights are doused, plunging the hall into almost total darkness and the band hidden behind the screen strikes up a martial tune. 'The films you are about to see,' he announces, 'are not filled with the eight hundred lies of charlatans and fortune hunters. Every foot was shot at the actual places sanctified by the blood of our countrymen. Therefore, when you see our soldiers marching into battle, I want you to shout *banzai* to cheer them on!'

(Quoted in High, 2003, pp. 4-5)

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<sup>73</sup> On 28 August 1905 the Emperor had been officially informed by the government and his advisors that militarily and financially, Japan had no choice but to conclude a peace (Okamoto, 1970, p. 154). With regard to public awareness of the situation, Tokutomi Sohō stated that

Only the officials in the government knew of the serious internal weakness and overall vulnerability of the nation. They kept their knowledge strictly secret lest it have an adverse effect upon the morale of the people. One may criticize the government's attitude for its lack of sincerity towards the people, but the actual situation was that nobody could tell what might happen if the whole truth were revealed. The government therefore chose to keep whatever it could strictly confidential, even if later, when the truth came to be known, it had to contend with the people's indignation.

(Quoted in Pyle, 1973, p. 56)

Ignorance of Japan's actual status in the War encouraged by such forms of entertainment extended not only to the working classes who revelled in the cinema spectacle, but to the intellectuals as well; one group that opposed a peaceful settlement in 1905 were the so-called 'Seven Professors', a group of academics at Tokyo University. The 'Seven Professors' publicly proclaimed what they considered as the minimum acceptable terms of any treaty, including an indemnity of three billion yen, and territorial concessions encompassing Sakhalin, Kamchatka, and the entire Russian railway network in Manchuria. One of the seven had gone even further arguing for the seizure of land as far as Lake Baikal (J. A. White, 1964, p. 320).

The Seven Professors were closely tied to the Kōwa Mondai Dōshi Rengōkai [Joint Council of Fellow Activists on the Peace Question]. This organisation was composed largely of lawyers and journalists, many of whom were in fact serving in the government, although not in positions of influence. Ten days before the representatives of Japan and Russia met in Portsmouth to begin negotiations, the Rengōkai announced its position regarding the signing of a treaty:

As our plenipotentiaries left the seat of His Majesty, the Commander-in-chief, His Majesty gave them a special edict. It stated: "You should devote yourselves with all your power to the discharge of your mission and make every effort to secure the reestablishment of peace on a durable basis." ...

Throughout history, Russia has been untrustworthy. ... Although it secretly covets peace, ... it will skilfully cover up its own calamities and exhaustion in the war and its inner turmoil. ... We feel strongly that peace negotiations are premature. A truce will benefit Russia, but not us. ... If we desire eternal peace, we must remove the teeth and claws of the enemy ... Are our plenipotentiaries capable of fulfilling this great task? We are indeed concerned ... about this matter. If we cannot attain the objectives of the war, all the people are prepared to keep on fighting, regardless of how much longer it takes.

(Quoted in Okamoto, 1970, pp. 200-201)



It is clear that even persons of some standing in society, such as the lawyers, judges and politicians among the membership of the Rengōkai, were utterly unaware of the perilous nature of Japan's military situation.<sup>74</sup>

When news reached Japan that a peace agreement had been concluded under which Japan received no financial indemnity whatsoever, and had gained only the southern half of Sakhalin, the members of the Rengōkai were outraged and headed a national movement to censure the government and reject the treaty terms. A letter was distributed publicly, and purportedly had significant impact on opinion across the nation:

... A peace agreement has been reached. What have we gained? Only eternal humiliation. Only the contempt of the powers. The loyal sacrifices of a hundred thousand soldiers are now in vain. A burden of 200 million yen is now placed upon the living. For what have we Japanese people endured the unendurable for ten long years? For what have we sacrificed our lives and property and achieved great military victories that have shaken the world? ... His Majesty some time ago gave our plenipotentiary the mission to restore eternal peace. The agreed terms, however, not only fail to guarantee eternal peace but also open the way to national ruin. ... Anybody who understands His Majesty's will should determinedly refuse it. ... whether or not we succeed in rejecting the peace is solely dependent upon the determination of the nation's people. Rise! Patriots, don't miss this opportunity!

(Quoted in Okamoto, 1970, p. 204)

Significantly, the members of the Rengōkai were hinting that they were the true interpreters of Imperial will, and were expressing doubts at the government's ability to carry out the

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<sup>74</sup> It would seem that at least some foreign residents of Japan suspected the true state of affairs; Erwin Baelz at first expressed surprise in his diaries in August 1905 that Japan had given up all demands for indemnity or other compensation, but then continued:

There must be cogent reasons for so wide a departure from the original terms. No doubt her statesmen understand very well why they are exhibiting this wise moderation. Though hotheads have been clamouring for a fight to the finish, the internal resources of the country are already strained to the uttermost, and to persist would bring its own punishment.

(Baelz, 1932, p. 384)

Emperor's wishes. This reveals the precariousness of the bureaucracy's claims of legitimacy to rule; a lack of a monopoly over interpretation of Imperial will was a systemic weakness the bureaucracy had tried to eliminate with the promulgation of a constitution.

In any case, the people of Japan felt they had been betrayed by their government, not by their emperor. They had suffered during the War in the belief that there would be recompense when the victory was won. Instead, they now discovered that not only would they not be recompensed, but that they would have to continue to bear the burden.<sup>75</sup> The initial exhilaration gave way to what the novelist Tokutomi Roka called 'the misery of victory' (Quoted in Nolte, 1984, p. 668). Okamoto (1970, pp. 173-176) cited numerous examples of public indignation over the issue expressed in letters to the press; leaders in the business world and financial markets also expressed their dismay at the outcome. The *Osaka Asahi Shimbun* of 3 September 1905 reported the feelings of the people in inflammatory terms:

The voice of dissatisfaction and indignation is growing louder day by day. ... 'There is no use in mere lamenting. There is no way now to crush with one blow this unfair peace agreement. Turn from despair to action in rejecting the peace!' This is what the people are now shouting. ... As evidence, the letters to the editor we received between yesterday and noon today number 569. Their wording differs but their intent is the same. 'Reject the peace agreed upon.' ... We even observe in the atmosphere of the streets that because of their great disappointment people are ready to act. How are they going to act? Needless to say, they are going to march on until the peace is rejected.

(Quoted in Okamoto, 1970, p. 181)

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<sup>75</sup> Amazement at this outcome was not confined to the Japanese public; the astonishment of overseas observers when the defeated Russians were able to control the peace talks was evident in a *New York Times* report of the results of the negotiations:

The judgement of all observers here, whether pro-Japanese or pro-Russian, is that the victory is as astonishing a thing as ever was seen in diplomatic history. A nation hopelessly beaten in every battle of the war, one army captured and the other overwhelmingly routed, with her navy swept from the seas, has dictated her own terms to the victors.

("Peace arranged: Japan gives in: No indemnity: Russia gets half Sakhalin," 1905)

The first large-scale anti-peace rally occurred in Osaka on that same day. Five thousand people assembled to listen to rousing speeches, and to pass resolutions calling for those responsible for the peace agreement to apologise to the nation and to the Emperor, and to annul the treaty and continue the War. Threats of assassinations were made, and a stirring ‘elegy’ sung in the streets by the demonstrators:

The flowers in full bloom, so like  
The battle victories of the land and sea forces  
Vanish like fleeting dreams  
Now what can be done in this situation?  
The Autumn winds that pierce one’s body so  
Like the easily-rent Portsmouth Conference  
The torn *shōji* that cannot be repaired,  
Just as no one can repair this situation.

The white bones bleaching  
On the howling plains of Manchuria,  
For whose sake did they die in vain?  
A mournful state of affairs, to think of it.  
The waves curling back on the rough sea  
Where those brave men met a loyal death –  
They too are now just foam on the water.  
A mournful state of affairs, these circumstances.

The cry for revenge reaches the heavens  
Fifty million people all together  
Pouring out their indignation and lamentations  
Must the futile tears simply be swallowed?  
The bones of the sons of Japan call out for action  
The gnashing of teeth in vexation, the flash  
Leaking between the clouds – is it lightning?

(Nakayama, 1936, p. 482)<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> *Hana no sakari to, mimakaheshi*  
*Kairikugun no, senshō wa*  
*Hakanaki yume to, kieusete*  
*Ima ikanisen, kono genjō*  
*Mi ni shimiwataru, shūfū wa*  
*Pōtsumausu no, danpanjō*  
*Moroku yabureshi, yabure shōji*  
*Dare tsukurowan, kono shimatsu.*  
(Continued over page.)

In Tokyo, the *Kowa Mondai Dōshi Rengōkai* called for a meeting in Hibiya Park on 5 September. The meeting soon developed into a riot, with over thirty thousand rioters battling police and Imperial Guardsmen. Seventy per cent of Tokyo's police boxes, fifty-three residences and other buildings, thirteen Christian churches, and fifteen streetcars were burnt (Warner & Warner, 1974, p. 536). When the proclamation of martial law ended the three days of rioting, five hundred men on the government side had been wounded, and somewhere between one and two thousand rioter casualties were reported, including seventeen deaths (Okamoto, 1970, pp. 207-214).

The Hibiya riots of 1905 were the first in a series of public demonstrations that continued up to the rice riots of 1918.<sup>77</sup> Together with the six major and three minor riots of these years, there were also numerous 'near riots', and hundreds of peaceful protests over this period, revealing extensive public dissatisfaction (Gordon, 1991, p. 27). The Russo-

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*Kikokushūshū, Manshū no  
 Kōya ni saraseru,  
 Shiroyi hone wa  
 Dare ga tame shisheshi, inujini ga  
 Omoeba kanashii, kono genjō  
 Sakamaku nami no, arai umi ni  
 Inochi wo sutete shi, masurao ga  
 Chūshi mo ima wa, mizu no awa  
 Omoeba kanashii, kono shimatsu.*

*Sakki wa ten ni, minagirite  
 Gosenman nin, issei ni  
 Hifun kōgai, hotobashiru  
 Namida wo munashiku nomu bekika?  
 Nihon danji no hone wa naru  
 Sesshi-yakuwan, hiramekuwa  
 Kumoma o moruru inazuma ka?*

Okamoto (1970, p. 183) provided a more forcefully worded translation of this elegy, in which the Treaty was condemned as a 'blunder', and implying that the elegy contained a call to arms to seek retribution. There would seem to be insufficient evidence, however, for such an interpretation of the original text.

<sup>77</sup> The rice riots of 1918 were the outcome of rapidly rising inflation that led to widespread demonstrations around the country. Government troops were mobilised, and many protesters arrested. Estimates put the number of protesters at approximately seven hundred thousand (Hane, 1982, p. 160). Although the immediate cause of the protests was economic hardship, many Japanese scholars saw the riots as being rooted in the denial of political power to the propertyless classes and the poor (Duus, 1982, pp. 424-425).

Japanese War and its settlement had resulted in tremendous political and social upheaval, cutting across social strata, and creating a wide-spread disillusionment with the political and social *status quo*.

### 3.6 The Shifting Values of Meiji – Taishō Youth Culture

In common with many countries in the West, Japan witnessed a rising cult of muscular masculinity in the closing years of the nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth century. Whereas in Britain this preoccupation had emerged largely from the Boer War and the fears of racial degeneration it had excited, in Japan the fixation on muscular masculinity arose partly as a result of Western influences, but also from other, domestic, factors. Nevertheless, the fascination with sport that was the product of Western influence merged seamlessly with an anti-government *bankara* cult that resulted from domestic issues, to foster an almost obsessive masculinisation of youth culture in turn-of-the-century Japan.

The word *bankara* appeared as an oppositional term to the already existing *haikara*, coined in 1898. *Haikara*, the Japanese pronunciation of “high collar”, was a reference to the high, stand-up collars fashionable in Western men’s clothing at the time, and widely adopted by Japanese followers of Western tastes. *Haikara* became a sobriquet for ridiculing the foppish tastes of the upper classes, particularly of government officials (Karlin, 2002, p. 61).<sup>78</sup> The 1880s in Japan are often referred to as the ‘Rokumeikan era’; the Rokumeikan was a building constructed by the government in 1883 for the conduct of balls and banquets

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<sup>78</sup> The word later transformed into one of approbation, implying high quality or in good taste, and eventually came to mean simply ‘good’.

in fashionable Western style, in a deliberate attempt to promote Western tastes and manners among the upper classes. The peak of *haikara* decadence, as it was viewed by its opponents, was the costume ball given by Prime Minister Ito Hirobumi in 1887, the extravagance of which led to public outrage and Ito's consequent resignation (Jansen, 2000, pp. 427-428; Sansom, 1950, pp. 370-371). The *haikara* "antics" of the political élite were widely lampooned in newspapers and magazines such as the enormously popular *Tokyo Puck*, first published in 1905, wherein the *haikara* politician was portrayed as vain, affected, and effeminate, and ridiculed for toiling more over his makeup than women did (Karlin, 2002, p. 63).<sup>79</sup>

The perceived gender ambiguity, as well as the pretentiously Western mien of the *haikara* government officials, prompted a masculinist and nationalist reaction in some quarters of Japanese society, expressed through the emergence of *bankara* values. The term *bankara*, written with a character meaning barbarous or savage, was applied to those who embraced a stoic, rugged conservatism in defiance of the *haikara* enchantment with Westernisation and consumerism; 'Where high-collar suggested civilisation, *bankara* expressed a return to barbarism and a celebration of male primitivism' (Karlin, 2002, p. 68). *Bankara* men regarded themselves as counteracting the feminisation of the Japanese male,

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<sup>79</sup> Rudyard Kipling, on a voyage to Japan in 1889, wrote jestingly of the *haikara* men he saw on a train:

The passengers themselves were altogether delightful. A large number of them were modified Europeans, and resembled nothing more than Tenniel's picture of the White Rabbit on the first pages of *Alice in Wonderland*. They were arrayed in neat little tweed suits with fawn-coloured overcoats, and they carried ladies' reticules of black leather and nickel platings. They rejoiced in paper and celluloid stuck-up collars which must have been quite thirteen inches round the neck, and their boots were number fours. On their hands – their wee-wee hands – they wore white cotton gloves, and they smoked cigarettes from fairy little cigarette cases.

(Quoted in Cortazzi & Webb, 1988, p. 68)

and opposed those politicians and members of the upper classes who were betraying the “true” Japanese identity with their profligate Western ways:

... the novelty, artifice, and ephemerality of Western material civilization came to represent the destruction of authentic, spiritual values. ... Representations of a “feminized” masculinity were linked to the degenerate and imitative aspects of Western material culture, while representations of a “masculinised” masculinity emphasized the spiritual domain of an essential national culture.

(Karlin, 2002, p. 77)

Thus, the form of muscular masculinity seen in Japan at the start of the twentieth century was in part a reaction against a perceived feminisation of society, but was at the same time linked to notions of a challenged national identity.

The other factor that played a critical role in the masculinisation of Japan at the end of the Meiji era was the active encouragement of competitive sports that occurred at this time. Although there had been proposals in the late nineteenth century from Western educators in Japan for students to adopt more outdoor pursuits, these were largely resisted; students were simply more interested in academic goals. One foreign educator in Japan, W. Gray Dixon, complained of his inability to lure his students from their desks:

The frequency of sickness among the students, and their generally delicate *physique*, demanded greater attention to outdoor exercise. For this end a football club was started. Different members of staff took part in the games, in which for the time being the students showed great interest, indeed getting so excited as to play at random in utter disregard of the rules of the game; but after the novelty was over, their devotion to study led most of them back to their old sedentary habits.

(Dixon, 1882, pp. 364-365)

Dixon similarly complained that ‘a passion for intellectual development seemed to blind [the students] to the necessity of an accompanying development of the body’ (Dixon, 1882, p. 365).

In the new century, however, the persistent efforts of the Western educators were rewarded, as interest in sports among Japanese students flourished, and in no sport more so than baseball. As Roden noted, ‘Of the outdoor games that attracted Japanese youth at the turn of the century, none rivalled baseball in igniting enthusiasm among players, spectators, and readers of an expanding popular press’ (Roden, 1980a, p. 513). Possessed of the notions of muscular masculinity prevalent in Britain and America at the time, the foreign educators introduced baseball and other sports as a means of promoting intercultural exchange. At the same time, foreign teachers and missionaries were seeking to ‘counter Japan’s narrow nationalism through hybridization of “traditional” *Bushido* with muscular Christian ideology’ (Abe, 2006, p. 714). *Bushido*<sup>80</sup> had come to be well known in the West at the time largely thanks to the efforts of Nitobe Inazō, whose widely influential book *Bushido: The Soul of Japan* was first published in the United States in 1899 (Holmes & Ion, 1980, p. 312). The traditional virtues fostered under bushido, of loyalty, honour and courage, were viewed as being in accord with the Christian principles the teachers wished to instil in their pupils, and encouraging sport was seen as one way of encouraging the development of such virtues.

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<sup>80</sup> *Bushido* literally translated is ‘the way of the warrior’. It refers to the samurai code of chivalry.



Nevertheless, it was the 1896 contest between the baseball team of the First Higher School and that of the expatriate Yokohama Athletic Club that ensured the surge in popularity of that game over all others in the new century; an unforeseen side-effect was a surge in the nationalistic sentiment the foreign teachers had been trying to counteract. News of the First Higher School team's victory over the Americans was received throughout Japan with unbounded delight, and the student president proclaimed, 'This great victory is more than a victory for our school; it is a victory for the Japanese people!' (Roden, 1980a, p. 524). The First Higher School, although instrumental in inculcating a love of baseball in Japan, was soon overtaken by teams fielded by Keiō and Waseda universities which dominated late Meiji era competitions.<sup>81</sup> The Christian socialist Abe Isō, who joined the faculty of Waseda in 1902, devoted himself to the development of baseball, and came to be known as 'the father of Japanese baseball' (Piovesana, 1964, p. 111; Roden, 1980a, p. 520). In line with his socialist beliefs, Abe saw baseball as a 'small group association' which allowed the individual to join voluntarily 'with his friends in a cooperative effort' (DeVere Brown, 1970, p. 230). Abe led the Waseda baseball tour to the United States in 1904, and became chief editor of the Waseda sporting journal *Undō Sekai* [Sporting World] through which he promoted his version of muscular masculinity, sport, and bushido (Abe, 2006, pp. 728-731). Apart from baseball, Waseda also became famous at this time for its competitive rowing prowess; the Waseda-Keiō Regatta held regularly on the Sumida River in Tokyo attracted much public attention. The race was frequently filmed for newsreels and scenes in film dramas, and thus reached a wide audience. The first of the regattas was held in 1905, just two years after the first Waseda-Keiō baseball match (Iwamoto, online). Through the

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<sup>81</sup> According to Roden, 'The early history of Japanese baseball can be clearly divided between the "Ichikō [Tokyo First Higher School] era" of the 1890s ... and the "Keiō-Waseda era" that followed' (Roden, 1980a, p. 520).

cultivation of sporting achievement, Waseda University became a focal point for notions of masculinisation among Japanese youth across the nation in the first years of the twentieth century, just as the First Higher School had been at the end of the previous one. The belief in the importance of masculinisation paralleled that known in the West:

By the turn of the century, student athletes in Japan were expounding the Victorian ideology of manliness and duty with the same determination as their counterparts in the West. ... they paid homage to the “fighting life” (*sentōteki seikatsu*) or the “strenuous life” (*funtō seikatsu*) as a necessary penance to be borne by a young elite in its mission to inspire the nation and to defend against the softening influences of “materialistic civilization” (*busshitsuteki bunmei*).

(Roden, 1980a, p. 531)

Although in Great Britain the cult of masculinity was to flourish through the Edwardian era up until World War I, in Japan it received a set-back following the Russo-Japanese War. Indeed, the fanaticism with which masculinity came to be regarded in the élite Japanese higher schools after this point was no doubt in part a reaction against the increasing diversification of youth culture that was seen following the war. The higher schools developed an extremely insular subculture at this time, which was blatantly and increasingly hostile to “the outside”:

... the higher school stalwarts believed that an internal battle was raging for control of their spirit, a battle between the manly values of the school (vigor, willpower, self-restraint) and the effeminate values of the outside society (enervation, weakness, self-indulgence). ... sport was the embodiment of the former and the prophylactic against the latter.

(Roden, 1980b, p. 116)

Thus, there developed an atmosphere tinged with paranoia, wherein the devotees of muscular masculinity believed themselves to be under threat from a world which must be

repelled; in Roden's words, 'The thrust of the kendo sword was a thrust at the seductive world that surrounded and threatened [the school's] bastion of masculinity' (1980b, p. 116).<sup>82</sup>

### 3.7 The Growth of Individualism

The diversification of youth culture that provoked the growing angst among sports youth was primarily the outcome of a new cult of individualism [*kojinshugi*] in the years surrounding the Russo-Japanese War. Indeed, the conflict between the oppressive power of the bureaucracy and the concurrent expansion of individualism has been considered by some historians to be a major cause of the social confusion of the era (see for example Nolte, 1984). *Kojinshugi* was, according to some turn-of-the-century observers, a worrying symptom of what was termed *bunmeibyō* – “civilisation sickness” – which they saw appearing throughout the populace at the time. *Bunmeibyō* was regarded as ‘a malady which afflicted people in the advanced countries and led to decadence, materialism, and the rise of radical ideologies’, particularly among youth (Pyle, 1973, p. 62). The rallying cries of the early years of the Meiji era, such as the oft-quoted *Bunmei Kaika* [Civilisation and Enlightenment] and *Fukoku Kyōhei* [Rich Country and Strong Army], had started to lose relevance to a new generation, who, as they became increasingly cosmopolitan, were thought to be forgetting the traditional virtues of group cohesiveness, hard work, frugality, filial piety and national spirit. With the victories of the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars, Japan had joined the ranks of the great imperial powers; the years of government

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<sup>82</sup> The martial art of *kendō*, meaning “way of the sword” is a form of Japanese sword fighting based on traditional swordsmanship used by the *samurai*.

appeals for *gashin shōtan* [perseverance and determination] had paid off. Post-War disillusion, however, led to a simultaneous loss of direction for the people as a whole – the sense of national purpose was dissipated. That the government saw this loss of direction as reaching alarming proportions was evident from the issuance of the *Boshin* Imperial Rescript [*Boshin shōsho*] in 1908, exhorting all Japanese to ensure the continued march of their country in the ranks of the Powers through continued hard work, thrift, and co-operation with the government. The Rescript aimed to re-establish the Meiji structure of officially sanctioned behaviour [*ōyakegoto*] and fortify ideals of the family state. Both of these were expected to counteract the extremes of ‘private activity’ and ‘private behaviour’ seen as the primary cause of the social unrest of this period (Harootunian, 1974, p. 11). The government was shutting its eyes to the economic hardships the people were enduring, and ignoring the betrayal felt over the Portsmouth debacle, both of which had made a loss of faith in bureaucracy and a withdrawal into the private realm a natural response. The *Boshin shōsho* purportedly expressed the emperor’s opinion that Japanese society had reached a critical point, and he urged his subjects to adhere to the principles contained therein (Sumiya, 1960, p. 15). In Harootunian’s words, the Rescript was, however, ‘a phantom from the past; it sought to reify values which had served a different kind of social order in a different time in history.’ The Rescript revealed ‘that Japanese society was undergoing profound structural changes and beginning to experience a genuine crisis of culture’ (Harootunian, 1974 pp.11-12), but the very name of the Rescript, intentionally reminiscent of the Boshin War that had seen the restoration of the emperor to a position of power in 1868, made manifest the anachronistic nature of the attempt.

Further evidence that the government recognised that significant and dangerous developments had taken place around the time of the Russo-Japanese War can be found in the alterations made in the ethics textbooks [*shūshin kyōkasho*] used in schools at this time. Government-produced ethics textbooks were first published in 1903, with revised editions published up until 1941. The original textbook contained what has been described as ‘the ethics of a modern citizens’ society’ (Quoted in Fridell, 1970, p. 825), and included instruction in not only the traditional Confucian doctrines, but also in topics such as the dangers of excessive alcohol intake, how to behave on crowded trains, and the importance of taking up a profession that would lead to both personal happiness and public good. For the second edition of the text released in 1910, however, there was considerable redrafting, and the final product was much influenced by the government’s perceptions as to the causes of the social unrest seen after the Russo-Japanese War. This edition consequently took a far more conservative and doctrinaire approach:

In the 1910 revision the modern ethics of the 1903 texts were eliminated, and in their place a feudal family ethic was stressed. All lessons such as ‘Others’ Freedoms,’ ‘Social Progress,’ and ‘Rivalry’ were removed, and new lessons like ‘Ise Shrine,’ ‘The Founding of the Nation,’ ‘The National Essence (*kokutai*),’ ‘Guard the Prosperity of the Imperial Throne,’ ... and ‘The Dying Instructions of our Imperial Ancestors’ were added in their place.

(Quoted in Fridell, 1970, p. 827)

Fridell investigated the way in which textbooks changed after the War, and discovered a significant drop in ‘personal ethics’ and ‘social ethics’, and a distinct rise in ‘national ethics’ and ‘family ethics’ (Fridell, 1970, pp. 827-829).

The attempt to counteract individualism through revisions of the texts used in Japanese schools is consistent with official encouragement given to youth organisations such as the Boy Scouts in the late-Meiji period. In 1908, just one year after the establishment of the Scouting movement in England by Robert Baden-Powell, the Japanese Minister of Culture Makino Nobuaki instructed the educator Hōjō Tokiyuki to investigate the British Scouting organisation while he was attending an international conference on morality in London (Nihon Boy Scouts, online). The first Japanese translation of *Scouting for Boys* was published two years later (Wilson, 1959, p. 29), and in 1911, the Russo-Japanese War hero General Nogi Maresuke met with Baden-Powell. Nogi viewed a parade of British Boy Scouts which much impressed him ("Boy Scouts greet Gen. Baden-Powell," 1912). *Scouting for Boys* contained numerous directives for youth, including many related to forgetting the self in the interest of others and the nation:

A nation to be powerful and prosperous must be well disciplined, and you only get discipline in the mass by discipline in the individual. By discipline I mean patient obedience to authority and to other dictates of duty. This cannot be got by oppressive measures, but by educating the boy first in self-discipline and in sacrificing of self and selfish pleasures for the benefit of others.

(Baden-Powell, 1908, p. 357)

As noted in Chapter 2, Baden-Powell directed such ideas at ‘young men between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five’. This was the age group enrolled at the higher schools and universities of Japan, which were seen as hotbeds of individualism by government authorities.<sup>83</sup> The virtues instilled in Scouts of loyalty to the throne, respect for authority,

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<sup>83</sup> At entry, students of the higher schools were required to be seventeen years of age; in that they in many instances stayed for four to five years, by the end of their school life students were more likely to be in their early twenties than teenagers (Roden, 1980b, p. 51). University students would therefore have been in their mid-twenties in most cases.

selflessness in the cause of the nation, and group-mentality all accorded well with government goals for youth, and this accounts for the official encouragement the Scouting movement received in Japan. At the same time as the Scouting movement was receiving official endorsement, Hara Takashi and his successors in the role of Home Minister were also encouraging the development of the *seinendan* – youth groups based on earlier, traditional associations of rural youth such as the *wakamonogumi*.<sup>84</sup> The *seinendan* held their first national meeting in Nagoya in 1910. Their purpose was ‘to serve as an essential part of a state-organized pattern for integrating young men into their role as national citizens’ (Pyle, 1973, p. 62), and members up to twenty years of age were welcomed (Hastings, 1995, p. 105). In fact, the aims of the Boy Scouts agreed so closely with those of organisations such as the *seinendan* that it came to be widely believed in Japan that Baden-Powell had based the Scouting movement on the Japanese programmes.<sup>85</sup> Despite the popularity such groups at first enjoyed, enthusiasm appears to have waned over time. According to Ambaras, ‘membership in such associations was frequently limited to graduates of specific elementary schools or to sons of local notables’; working-class youth were essentially unrepresented (Ambaras, 2006, p. 141).

Despite these official attempts to discourage the growth of individualism, a number of intellectuals at the time were urging the development of progressive education that fostered individual self-consciousness and self-assertion. The Waseda University faculty member and philosopher Tanaka Ōdō, for example, ‘berated the Ministry of Education for

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<sup>84</sup> The *wakamonogumi* existed from the Edo period in rural areas and were responsible for a range of duties within the hamlet, such as thatching roofs, fire-watch patrols, preparation for festivals, and even assistance in finding suitable marriage partners (Hastings, 1995, p. 104; Varner, 1977, pp. 473-482).

<sup>85</sup> That the *seinendan* were the model for the Boy Scouts is now denied by the Boy Scouts of Japan (Uehira, Tanaka, & Nakajima, 1996, pp. 80-84).

pontificating about moral ideals such as loyalty and filial piety, [and] urged the inculcation of individualism’ (Nolte, 1984, pp. 677-678). This, however, was entirely antithetical to the goals of the 1910 ethics texts, and of the Boy Scouts and *seinendan*, and other intellectuals whose thinking was more in line with government policies, such as the journalist and historian Tokutomi Sohō, were vocal in their condemnation of youth for their indulgence in individuality. Tokutomi proclaimed that ‘the greatest single illness of our times is the loss of state ideals and national purpose,’ and called on youth to subordinate their individual desires to working in common for the national good. He censured youth for their lack of interest in the State, and for a general ‘unrelatedness to the times, which is common to all these days.’ More specifically, Tokutomi indicted youth for the fact that ‘they are all divided between model students but without ambition, success-oriented youth caught up in a fever of rising in the world, anguished youth worrying about life’s problems, colourless youth uninterested in everything, et cetera ...’<sup>86</sup> (Quoted in Sumiya, 1960, p. 14). Indeed, one of the defining characteristics, if it can be termed such, of late-Meiji and Taishō youth was their diversity; a considerable number of “types” emerged in this period, each quite distinct from the other. As discussed above, the muscular masculinity of the sportsmen and their devotees tended to dominate youth culture from the late nineteenth century until the Russo-Japanese War. Thereafter, however, youth engaged in intellectual pursuits began to demand attention; such activities as debating clubs that had been bitterly opposed by the advocates of ‘athletic school spirit’ [*undō kōfū*] came to be tolerated, as were even music and poetry clubs (Roden, 1980b, pp. 115, 129). For adherents to the ideals of muscular masculinity an even more threatening development was the appearance of what were termed *keihakushi* – dandies. The demands for self-abnegation and stoicism during the

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<sup>86</sup> ... *haki no nai mohan seinen, risshin shusse yonetsu ni ukasareta seikō seinen, jinsei mondai ni kuyokuyo suru hanmon seinen, oyobi nanigoto ni mo mukanshin na mushoku seinen nado ni wak[arete iru].*



Russo-Japanese War – an ethos with which both the athletic youth and the *seikō seinen* were well attuned<sup>87</sup> – did not end with peace; instead, as noted above, there were renewed government calls for restraint. For some youth, this provoked an unfettered dandyism, with a mania for fashionable dress and extravagant entertainment. After years of dutiful wartime moderation, a life of ‘individualistic dissipation’, ‘preoccupation with carnal desire’, and a general indulgence in luxury complained of by writers such as Ishikawa Takuboku and Tokutomi Sohō beckoned for those youth who could afford it (Harootunian, 1974, p. 20). The appearance of these dandies in the higher schools was strenuously resisted, not only by the student *undō kōfū* adherents, but by the staff; in the words of Nitobe Inazo, First Higher School of Tokyo headmaster from 1906 to 1913, ‘To be a *shosei* (student), is to be plain in habit and taste. ... Dandyism is a heinous offense in the society of learning’ (Nitobe, 1912, p. 192).

As for the *bankara* style of youth, they too were losing ground to the dandies and rakes [*nanpa*]. Ambaras stated that from the 1920s, police and press reporters were commenting, ‘often in tones of regret tinged with cultural and gender anxiety’, on the decline in the numbers of ‘street ruffians’ and similar ‘toughs’, and their replacement by rakish delinquents. Indeed, so far did the machismo image of the street gangs fall that by 1930 one former member of such a group observed that ‘[male] delinquents can’t earn a living any more. ... Their skills have decayed, and the latest trend is for gangs to take on a beautiful girl as their leader’ (Quoted in Ambaras, 2006, p. 147).

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<sup>87</sup> Maeda wrote of ‘the will to self-denial common to a generation of Meiji youth who were expected to make *risshin shusse* [rising in the world] the sole purpose of their life’ (A. Maeda, 2004, p. 303).

It is clear from works such as Mori Ogai's *Vita Sexualis* that effeminate male youth and dandies existed in Meiji Japan well before the Russo-Japanese War (Mori, 1909).<sup>88</sup> Harootunian, however, argued that post-War dandyism denoted a new phenomenon distinct from pre-War, or indeed, pre-Meiji, ideas such as the Edo period *tsū*, in that it

... represented a repudiation of the social conformism which government in the late Meiji period was trying to re-establish. ... [For these youth] the time for working together in a collective effort to achieve some larger national purpose was over; the meaning of self-sacrifice and group effort was transmuted into the promise of the self seeking its own goals ...

(Harootunian, 1974, pp. 20-21)

Thus, post-Russo-Japanese War dandyism was not an expression of supposed superiority or exclusivity as it had been in pre-War times. It was similarly quite distinct from the dandyish reactions of post-Restoration Japanese to the 'pre-Restoration tradition of puritanical self-restraint' enforced during the Edo era (Roden, 1980b, p. 28). The new dandyism was instead a form of protest against authoritarian restrictions, and at the same time, a demonstration of individuality.

### 3.8 The Dominance of the *Hanmon Seinen*

The effeminate 'dandies', the ambitious achievers, the sports fans and athletes, the literary and intellectual youth – all these co-existed in the years after the Russo-Japanese War, leading to the development of what Nolte referred to as 'the yeasty pluralism of Taishō

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<sup>88</sup> Mori's bio-fictional work was written in 1909, but the story of his sexual awakening takes place in the early Meiji era. Mori's 'mashers' were 'dandies who affected elegance of dress and manner' (1909, p. 62).

culture’ (Nolte, 1984, p. 677).<sup>89</sup> The one group, however, that perhaps is most closely associated by historians with the final years of the Meiji period was Tokutomi’s ‘anguished youth worrying about life’s problems.’ Ubukata Toshirō, who wrote of his life as a student in the early twentieth century, described the suddenness with which the anguished youth emerged:

When I first came to Tokyo in 1899, ... the main hobby of students was eating until you were full, but three or four years later by the time of the Russo-Japanese War, ... the spirit of students had become romantic and sentimental. ... To be anguished became extremely popular among young students. Everyone was always anguished.<sup>90</sup>

(Ubukata, 1978, pp. 100-101)

According to Roden, the source of the angst endured by the anguished youth – or *hanmon seinen* as they were known – was to be found in their disenchantment with the old, externally-framed, standards, and in their own internal search for meaning in life:

The spiritual turmoil of the young elite ... was generated by an evolving realization that both the “athletic school spirit” and the family state offered the sensitive youth very little in his psychological and philosophic struggle for meaning in life. Like the adolescent heroes in the neo-romantic literature of Hermann Hesse, Thomas Mann, and Robert Musil, the anguished students of the late Meiji higher school posed as misunderstood geniuses in search of subjective authenticity against the combined obstacles of a domineering peer group and a meaningless ideology of state.

(Roden, 1980b, p. 157)

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<sup>89</sup> It might be added that Nolte identified at least three varieties of individualism co-existing in the Taishō period – statist, privatist, and liberal (or reformist) individualism – thus revealing even further levels of complexity in youth culture of the time (Nolte, 1984, pp. 670-671). A more in-depth discussion of this matter is, however, beyond the scope of this thesis.

<sup>90</sup> *Watashi ga Tokyo e dete kita Meiji 32 nen goro no gakusei no ... shumi wa hara ippai taberu koto ni atta ga, sorekara 3, 4 nen go no Nichi-Ro Sensō mae made ni wa, kono tōri gakusei no kifū wa rōmanchikku ni nari, senchimentaru ni natte ita. ... Hanmon to iu koto ga seinen gakusei no aida ni hijō ni ryūkō shita. Mina ga yoku hanmon shite ita.*

The ‘conspicuous displays of inactivity and melancholia’ Roden referred to as being distinctive of the *hanmon seinen*, as well as his use of the word ‘pose’ in the above quote would seem to imply that these youth were less than sincere in their anguish. Although this may have been so for some, for others, such as the sixteen-year-old First Higher School of Tokyo student Fujimura Misao, the psychological torment was sufficiently real to lead to self-destruction. Fujimura’s plunge from the brink of the Kegon Waterfall at Nikko had ramifications throughout late-Meiji youth culture, not the least of which was the inducement it proved to as many as two hundred “copycat” suicides (Roden, 1980b, p. 167). At the time, many observers ascribed the *hanmon seinen* suicides to self-inflicted social isolation. Natsume Sōseki wrote in his 1914 novel *Kokoro* that ‘loneliness is the price we have to pay for being born in this modern age, so full of freedom, independence and our own egotistical selves’ (Soseki, 1914, p. 30); the only resolution he could dispense to his protagonist in the novel was death. Sōseki repeated his belief in an inevitable link between individualism and loneliness in his lecture on individualism delivered at Gakushūin<sup>91</sup> in November 1914 (Rubin, 1979, p. 42). Death as the answer to this existential problem is a common topic in many of his books, including *Sanshirō* (1908), *Sorekara* (1909), *Mon* (1910), and *Kōjin* (1912). Although not opposed to individualism, Sōseki’s view of the topic was essentially pessimistic, if sympathetic:

Today’s young men, whether they are writing, or speaking, or moving, all have as the foundation of their faith “the assertion of self”: so intense and oppressive has our society become, so much has our society abused them ... On the surface, this “assertion of self” has many hateful things in it. But we must remember that ... behind it there is terrible suffering.  
(Quoted in McClellan, 1959, p. 369)<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> *Gakushūin*, or the Peers School, was established in Tokyo in 1877 for the education of the children of the aristocracy. After World War II it became Gakushūin University.

<sup>92</sup> McClellan, the translator of Sōseki’s *Kokoro*, claimed that although Sōseki wished to be read as a novelist and not as a social historian, nevertheless ‘his novels may be read profitably as social documents of late Meiji and early Taishō’ (McClellan, 1959, p. 368).

On the other hand, Fouraker, writing on suicide in Japanese history and culture, denied any inevitable link between individualism and loneliness, and blamed Fujimura's self-annihilation on his having reached a philosophical dead-end: 'Fujimura's disenchantment with the power of ideas to explain existence had led him to a personal dilemma.' Fouraker asserted that many young people at the time were deeply moved by Fujimura's death, 'which they saw not as the result of loneliness or isolation but as proof of his commitment to the search for answers to the questions they were all asking: "Where did I come from? Where am I going?"'(Fouraker, 2003, p. 5). Individualism had led the *hanmon seinen* to a deep engagement with existential problems, and in Fujimura's case, to the conclusion that death would provide an escape from the riddle with which he had struggled, as he stated in his suicide note:

What authority can be given to  
The philosophy of Horatio<sup>93</sup>  
The universal truth is exhausted in just one word,  
Namely, 'enigma'.  
Tortured by this,  
I am anguished,<sup>94</sup>  
And in the end, resolve to die...<sup>95</sup>

("Fujimura Misao no 'Gantou no kan'," online)

The suicide led to a period of intense debate among students throughout the higher schools across the nation, nowhere more so than at Fujimura's own school, the First Higher School, where it developed into a confrontation between the traditionalists (in particular,

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<sup>93</sup> This is a reference to the dialogue between Hamlet and his friend Horatio. Horatio's pragmatic response to life is questioned by Hamlet, who argues, 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy'(Shakespeare, I,5,168-169). Fujimura was thus identifying himself with a Hamlet tortured by existential questions which no "earthly" philosophy could satisfy.

<sup>94</sup> Fujimura specifically used the word *hanmon* [anguished], as in *hanmon seinen*, to describe his mental state.

<sup>95</sup> *Horēshiyo no tetsugaku tsui ni nanra no ōsorichī o atai suru mono zo. Banyū no shinsō wa tada ichi gon ni shite tsukusu, iwaku, 'fukakai'. Ware kono urami o idaite hanmon, tsui ni shi o kessuru ni itaru. ...*

the proponents of muscular masculinity) and the individualists. To a certain extent, it was the individualists who won this battle, in that as the Meiji period ended, the traditionalists were drawn into debating the issue of the individual's right of self-expression, and thus were engaging with the individualists on their territory – 'debate, which was formerly prohibited, gained a new respectability as the noblest of extracurricular activities' (Roden, 1980b, pp. 182-189).<sup>96</sup>

Outside the élite higher schools too, news of Fujimura's death became a sensation, and had significant impact on a large segment of youth across the nation, not least those youth who were 'the principal consumers of the postcards, picture books, and other marketable souvenirs that were spawned by the suicide' (Roden, 1980b, p. 167). The suicide generated poetry, a novel, and a song. Eventually, *Gantō no kan* became so popular among youth that it was prohibited by the police. All such measures intended to suppress the growing numbers of anguished youth were, not surprisingly, unsuccessful, and the issue of the *hanmon seinen* continued to worry the government and the press right through World War I; according to Kinmonth, '[a]s late as 1916 [Taishō 5], Tokutomi Iichirō<sup>97</sup> was describing the anguished youth as a significant portion of contemporary youth' (Kinmonth, 1981, pp. 209-210).

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<sup>96</sup> Roden suggested that the heights to which student debate on individualism rose was a uniquely Japanese phenomenon:

One wonders if the turn-of-the-century students at Eton or Andover (or at Oxford or Yale, for that matter) ever confronted the issue of individualism versus "house rituals" with either the fervor or the consciousness that informed so many of the "debates on the school spirit" in the Meiji higher schools. The surge of essays on self-discovery and the "new school spirit" that filled the pages of every higher school magazine was more than a frivolous outpouring of adolescent intellectualization. Students were reading and thinking and critically analyzing that culture they had inherited, within the broadest philosophic context. And this in itself may be unique in the annals of student history.  
(Roden, 1980b, pp. 188-189)

<sup>97</sup> Iichirō was the given name of the journalist and historian mentioned earlier, more commonly known by his pen-name Sohō.

Quite aside from the existential, psychological, or “spiritual” questions tormenting the *hanmon seinen*, Kinmonth suggested a more prosaic cause for their distress – the steadily worsening employment prospects for youth in the late Meiji period (Kinmonth, 1981, pp. 220-228). For students in less elite institutions than the higher schools, and indeed for the many who would not get beyond the elementary schools, the advance of industrialisation and the rise in literacy among other factors had resulted in a palpable limiting of future prospects. Earlier in the Meiji period, higher education had almost guaranteed a prosperous career. By the late-Meiji, however, competition had risen dramatically, and the chances of success were becoming ever slimmer. According to Roden, ‘Even among university graduates, the prospects for self-fulfilment in one’s occupation were dimming, and the road ahead must have looked even bleaker to those with a normal-school or middle-school degree, who knew they could never become more than petty functionaries’ (Roden, 1980b, pp. 167-168). Shirase too was aware of this trend, and recounted a speech by a member of the public at a 1910 meeting to garner support for his expedition, in which the speaker complained of the situation prevailing among youth at that time, and claimed that school graduates were already old enough to shave but still could not find employment (N. Shirase, 1942, p. 76). Kinmonth argued that the fading prospect for success in life was the pivotal factor in the rising angst among youth:

Examination of themes appearing in youth magazines, autobiographical writings, and critiques from the years just before the Fujimura incident does much to confirm this apparent relationship between the market for youth with secondary and higher education and their anguished mental state.

(Kinmonth, 1981, pp. 227-228)

Evidence that competition among youth was intensifying as the first decade of the twentieth century progressed is to be found in the admission rates for youth moving from middle to higher school. Despite a rise in admission rates in the pre-Sino-Japanese War years (1894-5), there was a significant drop as the Meiji era drew to a close. In 1895, sixty-seven per cent of middle school students were admitted to higher school, but this fell to only thirty-four per cent in 1901, and as low as twenty per cent by 1908. Admission rates for the First Higher School for the same years were fifty-two, twenty-three, and fourteen per cent respectively. This was largely the product of a dramatic increase in the number of students enrolling in the middle schools, from an average of eleven thousand in the 1880s to 1890s, to a startling one hundred thousand a decade later (Kinmonth, 1981, pp. 180, 187). A far smaller percentage of those enrolled were seeing their ambitions realised as the Meiji era came to a close, and the situation only worsened as the Taishō era began. Nitobe Inazo, principal of the First Higher School in 1912, wrote that seven of every eight applicants to his school failed to gain a place. Thus, of the two thousand four hundred applicants, only three hundred, or 12.5 per cent, were admitted. Nitobe was well aware of the effects mounting competition was having on youth:

I believe there is nothing that chills the genial current of the youthful soul more than the inadequate number of collegiate institutions in our country. Thousands of young men in the most ardent and aspiring period of life, feel the very door of hope slammed in their face!

(Nitobe, 1912, p. 190)



The desperation of the applicants was seen in students re-sitting the entrance examination year after year, in a frantic attempt to gain a place:

A great many do try three or four times, and in exceptional cases seven or eight times, one instance of perseverance being on record, where success crowned the fourteenth attempt!

(Nitobe, 1912, pp. 189-190)

At the same time, although the expansion of educational facilities was not keeping pace with demand, it was nevertheless outstripping the demand of the workplace. It was stated in 1911 that,

... whereas in the early Meiji period a student could get through a university at a cost of 15 to 20 yen a month and walk into a 100-yen-a-month job when he graduated, the modern student expected to spend 40 to 50 yen a month and could hardly hope to earn more than 20 yen at the end of it; indeed, if he were at one of the lesser private universities, he would be lucky not to find himself unemployed.

(Quoted in Dore, 1967, p. 132)

For Tokutomi Sohō's 'success-oriented youth caught up in a fever of rising in the world,' known at the time as *seikō seinen* [success youth],<sup>98</sup> whose dreams were steadily moving out of reach, Fujimura's suicide and the sentiments of his *Gantō no kan* must have seemed more than a little understandable. This is attested to by the words of Iwanami Shigeo, founder in 1913 of the still extant Iwanami Shoten publishing company. Iwanami, born in 1881, was himself a member of the *hanmon seinen*, and recalled the mindset of the era as

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<sup>98</sup> The *seikō seinen* are discussed further in Chapter 5 with reference to the literature they favoured.

being one in which psychological distress was leading many youth to thoughts of death:

What is the meaning of life, where did we come from, where are we going – these were the problems of an introspective and anguished period. ‘Raise yourself up and succeed’, ‘Gain wealth and rank through great achievements’,<sup>99</sup> these were the kinds of expressions we as men were ashamed to utter; to understand eternal life, to penetrate the fundamental meaning of life we were not afraid of death – that was the sort of era it was.<sup>100</sup>

(Quoted in Tsurumi, 1961, p. 204)

The societal pressures of modernisation and industrialisation were perceived as resulting in a *bunmeibyō*, manifesting itself as a rapidly expanding culture of individualism, and an exponential increase in the public eye of the *hanmon seinen* phenomenon.

### 3.9 Japan and World War I

The 1930s in Japan is frequently regarded as a period of militarism, beginning with the Manchurian Incident of 1931. Militarism, however, did not emerge suddenly and without precedent in that year; from the time of Ōkuma Shigenobu’s capitulation to the oligarchs in return for the premiership in April 1914, the military clique was given much greater freedom to achieve its goals of expansion.<sup>101</sup> The outbreak of World War I provided the opportunity the Army had awaited to flex its muscles. Although Japan entered the war on

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<sup>99</sup> These were the defining slogans of the middle years of the Meiji period, and were the catch-cries of the *seikō seinen*.

<sup>100</sup> *Jinsei to wa nanzoya, ware wa izuko yori kitarite izuko e yuku, to iu yō na koto o mondai to suru naikanteki hanmon jidai de mo atta. Risshin shusse, kōmyō fūki ga gotoki kotoba wa danshi to shite kuchi ni suru o haji, eien no seimei o tsukami jinsei no konpon shugi ni tessuru tame ni shi mo itowazu to iu jidai de atta.*

<sup>101</sup> In particular, the push for an enlarged army bore fruit in 1915 when Ōkuma dissolved the Diet for refusing to approve military expansion, and called for an election. This election gave Ōkuma the majority he needed to ensure the approval of the Army’s plans, and resulted in Japan’s first step towards a militarism that would rapidly expand later in the century (Borton, 1955, p. 252).

the side of the Allied Powers, the terms of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance did not require participation in arenas outside the signatories' areas of direct interest. Nevertheless, Japan sent a number of destroyer-escorts to the Mediterranean Sea and Indian Ocean. Japan's focus of attention throughout the War remained, however, on the East, as it viewed the War as an invaluable opportunity to increase Japanese influence and power in Asia (Kawamura, 2000, pp. 11-34). Thus, its initial moves included the seizure of German holdings in China and the South Pacific, and the expulsion of German raiders from eastern waters. Naval patrols sent to search for German ships and submarines largely went unchallenged, the German forces on the Shantung Peninsula were quickly surrounded, and the German-controlled Marianas, Caroline, and Marshall Islands surrendered almost without resistance (Borton, 1955, pp. 253-254; Jansen, 2000, p. 515). Japan's true motive, however, was not tied to antagonism towards Germany, as Japan had little to fear from that country. Instead, Japan, under the guidance of Ōkuma's Foreign Minister Katō Takaaki, saw the War as its chance to force China in 1915 to accept the "Twenty-one Demands", assuring Japanese hegemony over China and all of East Asia. Indeed, anti-German activity served more to free Japan of attempts by the Allied Powers to curtail Japan's zone of operations than to actually increase Japanese dominance; the seizure of German holdings in Shantung merely gave Japan its first step into China, serving as a precursor to Japanese expansionism under the "Demands" (Borton, 1955, pp. 253, 258).

Hence, Japan's hopes for the outcome of the War were far different from those of the other nations of the Allied Powers, and its involvement came at a far lower price than had either the Russo-Japanese War or the Sino-Japanese War. To begin with, both its naval and military commitments were far smaller than they had been during the earlier conflicts.

To Japanese in all walks of life, World War I seemed almost unreal, so little was the impact on their daily lives (Borton, 1955, p. 254). The typical attitude in Japan towards the War can be judged from the words of Natsume Sōseki, who in 1916 wrote in his diary of his expectations for the post-War period:

Of course, we cannot tell what influences the war will exercise on us until we have actually seen them, but at any rate we can scarcely expect any surprising changes from it.... As a matter of fact, I do not think that this war will bring about any results which can revolutionize the faith of mankind. Nor can I expect that it will entail any large changes in conventional ethics. Much less do I fear that it will disturb the existing aesthetic standards. In no respect does it seem likely that the war will lead to a sudden change in our spiritual life or to an acute turn of the main stream of civilization.

(Quoted in Nakamura, 1968, pp. 43-44)

That such an attitude could exist in the face of developments in Europe can to some extent be understood on the grounds outlined by Borton:

[Japan] had no military problems comparable in any sense to those created by the entrenchment of the German Army on the Aisne after the Battle of the Marne, by the struggle to win the channel ports, or by the attack being launched on the Eastern Front which was to defeat the Russians on May, 1915. On the contrary, Japan could settle back to profit economically from the manufacture of munitions and other war goods and from the logistic support its merchant marine gave to the Allies.

(Borton, 1955, p. 254)

Although Japan had recruited over eight hundred thousand men into its armed forces, very few of them saw action in World War I, and only one thousand three hundred and forty-four Japanese fatalities were recorded (Clodfelter, 2002, p. 483)<sup>102</sup> – far fewer than the over

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<sup>102</sup> Although the official toll was put at 300 killed in action, and just over 900 wounded, these figures are not considered to be accurate, as a higher toll than this was recorded for the Shantung offensives alone, where 415 (Continued over page.)

eighty thousand Japanese deaths that resulted from the Russo-Japanese War (Okamoto, 1970, p. 268).

While the Allied Powers hardly objected to Japan's provision of munitions or logistic support, it is true that Japan profited immensely from the War – it was indeed 'Japan's most profitable war' to that point (Jansen, 2000, p. 531). In terms of shipping, through the heavy losses suffered by Britain, Germany and the United States, and through an intensive programme of construction in Japanese shipyards, Japan had become one of the world's great carriers, and merchant marine income had increased ten-fold (Morton, 1994, p. 183). An economic boom resulted from the increased access to international trade, not only in China, but also in the British Commonwealth and colonial territories that had lost their import sources in Europe. Hence, Australia, the Netherlands East Indies, India and South Africa all emerged at this time as markets for Japanese exports (Nish, 1968, p. 134). The export of cotton goods to Asia, and of raw silk to America, showed exceptionally high rates of increase (Allen, 1934, pp. 542-543). Expansion in textile manufacture, chemical and pharmaceutical production, and iron and steel outputs all had significant effects on the Japanese economy, so that by the end of the War, what had been a debtor nation, burdened with the loans contracted during the Russo-Japanese War, was now a substantial creditor, with a national product that had grown more than forty per cent (Jansen, 2000, p. 531; Mason & Caiger, 1972, pp. 275-276). Truly could it be said that World War I had 'rescued Japan from a morass of fiscal and balance-of-payment problems', as foreign earnings

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Japanese died. As only 199 Germans died in this conflict, despite there being 60,000 Japanese pitched against a mere 4,000 German soldiers (Tsuzuki, 2000, p. 189), it is possible that the Japanese casualty statistics were deliberately reduced for propaganda reasons.

climbed from 41 million yen in 1914 to over 450 million in 1919 (Tsuzuki, 2000, pp. 194-195); as Hanes phrased it, ‘the Great War ... sent Europe to its knees and brought Japan to its feet’ (Hanes, 1998, p. 270).

The economic boom, however, did not last. Much of the increase in industrial capacity was the result of short-term speculative investments by the *nouveaux riches*. With spiralling inflation soon pushing Japanese export goods out of overseas markets, and escalating demands for higher wages to cope with rising food prices, the wartime economic bubble burst as speculative enterprises collapsed. Economic crisis and social hardship soon followed (Jansen, 2000, pp. 532-534; Najita & Koschmann, 1982, pp. 345-347; Nish, 1968, p. 135). As the price of rice rose to levels beyond the reach of not only the working classes, but even the white-collar workers of the middle classes, rioting ensued – including the famous ‘rice riots’ of 1918. Apart from a very real anger, a certain level of cynicism towards big business, the newly rich [*narikin*], and the political system came to the fore, expressed perhaps nowhere better than in a popular song of the summer of 1918 entitled ‘Carefree’ [*Nonki bushi*]:

Showing magic lantern slides of plundering *narikin*,  
A teacher at a school for the poor teaches his pupils  
With honest work all of you can achieve  
Success just like this!  
Ah, aren’t we carefree!

It’s because we are poor, we Japanese are great!  
On top of that, we are first when it comes to patience  
Even if prices rise and know no ceiling  
Sipping boiled water and rice gruel,  
We go on living.  
Ah, aren’t we carefree!

No matter we wear Western clothes, or put on shoes,  
Or have an education,  
We still go on living in houses like pigsties  
And although we don't have voting rights,  
We boast of being citizens of Japan!  
Ah, aren't we carefree!

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Swell, swell, our nation's might swells  
The tyranny of the capitalists swells  
My wife's belly swells  
More and more the ranks of the poor will swell.  
Ah, aren't we carefree!<sup>103</sup>

(Soeda, 1963, pp. 178-180)

The bitterly satirical tone of this song, common to a number of songs of the period,<sup>104</sup> points to a palpable distancing of the “man in the street” from an imposed economic system

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<sup>103</sup> *Narikin to iu kajidoro no gentō nado misete*  
*Hinmin gakkō no sensei ga*  
*Shōjiki ni hatarakya mina kono tōri*  
*Seikō surun da to oshieru.*  
*A, nonki da ne!*

*Binbō de koso are Nihonjin wa erai*  
*Sore ni dai-ichi shinbōzuyoi*  
*Tenjō shirazu ni bukka wa agattemo*  
*Yu nari kayu nari susutte ikite iru.*  
*A, nonki da ne!*

*Yōfuku kiyō ga kutsu o hakō ga gakumon ga arō ga*  
*Butagoya mitai na ie ni sumi*  
*Senkyoken sae motanai kuse ni*  
*Nihon no kokumin da to ibatteru.*  
*A, nonki da ne!*

*Bōchō suru bōchō suru kokuryoku ga bōchō suru*  
*Shihonka no ōbō ga bōchō suru*  
*Ore no kakā no onaka ga bōchō suru*  
*Iyoiyo binbō ga bōchō suru.*  
*A, nonki da ne!*

<sup>104</sup> Many songs of the Taishō period, such as *Bura-bura bushi*, *Sāsa goto da yo*, and *Gendai bushi* among others, contain lyrics sarcastically dismissing the problems of the day – unemployment, poverty, unequal distribution of wealth, et cetera – through the jocular assumption of a tone of unconcern. Yano has noted the way in which songs of this era expressed ‘the disillusionment of economic hopes [as] a prominent feature of the popular imagination,’ and the consequent widespread use of mockery in popular song at this time (Yano, 1998, p. 255).

and a government in which participation was forbidden. As Lewis stated,

In 1918 individuals ... no longer asked “What can we do for the greater glory of the Japanese empire?” The question shifted to what the state could – and should – do to improve the material and, by implication, the political quality of people’s lives.

In a nation offering little future for their children, and dire poverty a very real prospect, the Japanese people were asserting that the primary role of the state was popular welfare, and that public opinion was the only true basis for government policy (Lewis, 1990, pp. 133-134). The state had failed the populace; now they would free themselves of its control and make it their servant.

### 3.10 Post-World War I Youth Culture

Following the riots discussed above – and not unrelated of course to the disdain with which the Japanese state was being regarded in many quarters – a renewed fascination with Western lifestyle began to emerge in popular culture. With a feeling of sloughing off the bureaucratic control over individual aspirations as the first signs of a new Imperial Democracy emerged, the Japanese once more embraced Western culture.<sup>105</sup> The writers, designers, architects and entrepreneurs who promoted the new “liberated” lifestyle of the 1920s were purveyors of Western tastes in fashion, housing, and other aspects of what was termed “cultured life” [*bunka seikatsu*], sold to the public through the pages of mass-market

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<sup>105</sup> It is clear from the plethora of chairs and beds – items of Western furniture not traditionally found in Japanese homes – with Japanese touches, ‘culture houses’ built in obvious imitation of European houses, cafés with Western names, the influx of English language borrowings, et cetera, that this was indeed a case of “homage to Western culture” rather than the creation of something uniquely Japanese. For more on this, see Tipton, 2000.



books [*taishū bungaku*] and women’s magazines (Sand, 2000, p. 101). For youth at this time, cosmopolitan modernity was expressed through the “modern girl” [*modan gāru* or *moga*] and “modern boy” [*modan bōi* or *mobo*] persona – chic young people who dressed in the latest Western fashions, strolled the fashionable streets of the Ginza area of Tokyo, were seen in the ubiquitous cafes of the metropolises, and who generally conveyed that they were *au fait* with all aspects of *modan seikatsu* [modern life] (Tipton, 2000, p. 123).<sup>106</sup> The *mobo* and *moga* came to be the most obvious and controversial evidence of Taishō modernity with their worldly-wise manner, and shocked their Meiji-generation elders with their cigarette smoking, drinking, colourful “flapper”-style dresses and short hairstyles for girls, political radicalism, and casual relations between men and women.<sup>107</sup> A popular song at the time illustrates the attitudes and lifestyle of the typical *mobo*:

*Share Otoko* [The Fashionable Boy]

In the village I am the one they call  
 The number one *mobo*  
 Vain, conceited, smug,  
 I came to Ginza in Tokyo.  
 To begin with, my style consists of  
 A blue shirt with crimson necktie,  
 A derby hat and horn-rimmed glasses,  
 And baggy sailor pants.  
 The woman that I have fallen in love with  
 Has jet black eyes and bobbed hair.  
 She’s short and curvaceous,  
 And she is brazen down to her toes.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> It is interesting to note that just as individualism was regarded as a symptom of *bunmeibyō* – “civilisation sickness” – the *mobo* and *moga* were seen as having been infected with the ‘modern disease’ (Duus, 1998, p. 199).

<sup>107</sup> By the end of the 1920s, these *mobo* and *moga* were so upsetting the government with their casual sexual relations and unruly ways that the Home Ministry began a series of raids on cafés and dance halls; over three hundred waitresses and dancers were arrested in early 1929, and forty to fifty ‘delinquent modern boys and girls’ were rounded up every night in a series of raids in August of that year (Garon, 1997, p. 107).

<sup>108</sup> These were patent symbols of a girl’s identifying with the *moga* ethos, as they were for “flappers” in the West, on whom the *moga* initially modelled themselves.

I first got to know her at the café,  
Where I work ...

... the woman's husband comes rushing at me.  
Without saying a word, I am engulfed by a flurry of fists.  
Beaten to a pulp, I faint.  
My wallet, my watch have been taken!  
My precious woman is gone!  
What a fearsome place Tokyo's Ginza is!  
I am a *mobo* who cannot cry, even if I feel like it.

(Quoted in Menton, Lush, Tamura, & Gusukuma, 2003, pp. 108-109)

The *mobo* and *moga* had long left behind the mid-Meiji fascination with success and achievement, just as they were moving beyond late-Meiji concerns regarding declining masculinity with *haikara* sensibilities conflicting with *bankara* ideals, and *hanmon seinen* preoccupations with the meaning of existence or the fading chances of “getting ahead”. By the 1920s and early 1930s, a new modernity tied to mass consumerism was winning the hearts of Japanese youth. Although the *mobo* and *moga* may have represented an extreme in terms of youth culture as a whole, their influence was undeniably far-reaching in that they formed an ideal to which many young people aspired, and one to which they were frequently exposed through the media. At the same time, it should be noted that the terms were used to cover a far wider social group than the archetypal *mobo* and *moga* found in the cafés of Ginza; as Ambaras (2006, p. 150) and Sato (2003, p. 7) have noted for example, most women labelled as *moga* were in fact simply unmarried young women employed in the service-sector jobs that had arisen since World War I. Silverberg too has pointed out that much of the public imagining of *mobo* and *moga* was in fact based on lexicon, such that young people using newly-coined expressions such as *rasshuawā* [rush hour] and *puchiburu* [*petit-bourgeois*] were regarded as *mobo* or *moga* (Silverberg, 1998, p. 210). Thus, many of those labelled as *mobo* or *moga* would not necessarily have thought of

themselves as being so.<sup>109</sup> Regardless of the label applied, the youth of this era were a far cry in terms of attitudes, interests and lifestyles from the youth of a decade earlier, and although the *mobo* and *moga* may not have been completely typical of Japanese youth in the Taishō era, their “extremism” illuminated developments that were occurring in the wider youth culture.<sup>110</sup>

### 3.11 Conclusion – The Implications for Shirase’s Heroic Status

Just as Edwardian England saw the surfacing of a new type of adventure hero – the masculinised explorer hero – so too did late-Meiji Japan witness the appearance of an explorer hero in the same vein – Shirase Nobu. Men the likes of Scott in England clearly fitted with notions of muscular masculinity as they had coalesced in the new century following the ignominies of the Boer War and the resulting fear of racial decline. In Japan, on the other hand, it was largely through anti-government sentiment that overt masculinity came to the fore, as politicians and bureaucrats with their profligate ways enraged sectors of the public who distanced themselves from effeminate *haikara* manners through the adoption of the *bankara* persona – muscular, rough-and-ready traditionalists who shunned the temptations of Western civilisation. Shirase identified closely with the *bankara*

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<sup>109</sup> Sato has suggested that the press, for purposes of their own, turned the *modan* as represented by the *mobo* and *moga* into a “pseudo-event” [*giji ibento*] for popular consumption (T. Sato, 1982, p. 29). Novels about modern youth, such as Tanizaki Jun’ichirō’s *Chijin no Ai* [Naomi], also served to create the impression of the modern boys and girls being far greater in number than was in fact the case; not every waitress was a *moga*, although novels such as this encouraged the tendency to think in that way.

<sup>110</sup> Hanes has argued that many historians have falsely characterised the *mobo* and *moga* as ‘the pioneers and role models of a *homogeneous* mass culture in the making,’ and that Taishō culture was in fact far more complex and diverse than this (Hanes, 1998, p. 270). Although this is unarguably true for Taishō culture as a whole, it does not necessarily follow that the *mobo* and *moga* were not in many ways ‘pioneers and role models’ for other youth, whose lifestyles – and more fundamental attitudes and behaviours – were influenced by the modish élites.

movement, perhaps not with its political attitudes so much as with its robust, sturdy, not-overly-civilised behaviour. In describing his own personality, its development, and the reasons for his Antarctic expedition in his 1913 book *Nankyoku tanken*, Shirase very clearly asserted his *bankara* character:

Growing up in a place like this,<sup>111</sup> I was somewhat melancholy by nature. I was coolheaded. I was not easily excited. On the other hand, [once excited] I did not quickly cool off either. I was deeply infused with a temperament that was not easily moved. My will naturally grew stronger. I was given the character to overcome difficulties. If you were to think of the Pacific coast of Japan as red, then the Japan Sea side would be sepia-toned. One is cheerful. The other is gloomy. One is bright, but the other is dull. One accommodates itself to others, but the other is more intolerant and stubborn. If you used the image of colours that won't mix to apply to humans, that would also explain how we are not corrupted [by outside influences].<sup>112</sup> I was born *bankara* and inherently adventurous, and on top of that, to make matters worse, through my experiences I was influenced by the imperturbability of nature, until eventually my barbarous<sup>113</sup> side came to the fore. The older I got, the more I went to extremes, until time after time I found myself wandering on the borders of death. Finally, I became dissatisfied living in Japan, and ended up going as far as Antarctica.<sup>114</sup>

(N. Shirase, 1913, pp. 341-342)

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<sup>111</sup> Shirase is referring to his hometown of Konoura in Akita Prefecture, on the north-west coast of Japan. He describes it as extremely remote, a place of cold winds and dark woods, where foxes and wolves would come out of the forests and into the villages at night.

<sup>112</sup> This juxtaposition of the two sides of Japan, referred to as *omote Nihon* and *ura Nihon* (literally, “front Japan” and “back Japan” respectively), is a common trope in Japanese thought and literature. *Ura Nihon*, on the western side of the island of Honshu, faces the Sea of Japan. It is on the opposite side of the Japan Alps to the major metropolises and endures heavy snowfalls. Consequently, it was isolated from the rest of the country for much of the year until recent times. Thus, it has been viewed as a rugged and independent region, but insular and somewhat parochial in outlook.

<sup>113</sup> The word used for ‘barbarous’ is *banteki*, which uses the same first character – *ban* [barbarian] – as that used in *bankara*. In this case, the close proximity of the two words in the text reinforces Shirase’s description of his character as *bankara*.

<sup>114</sup> *Kono naka ni seiiku shita jibun wa nantonaku chin'uchi de atta. Reisei de atta. Nesshiyasukunakatta. Sono kawari sameyasuku mo nakatta. Mono ni dōsenu kishō o mo gaii kara chūnyū sareta. Ishi wa shizen to tsuyoki o kuwaeta. Konnan ni uchikatsu seishin o mo sazukerareta. Omote Nihon o aka to suru to ura Nihon wa sepia de aru. Hitotsu wa yōki de aru. Kore wa chin'uchi de aru. Hitotsu wa hanayaka da ga kore wa jimi da. Hitotsu wa ta to yoku chōwa suru ga kore wa mushiro henkyō de ganko da. Ta no iro to chushiki [chōshoku] shinai no wa ningen de tatoeru to yūaku sarenu to dōri da. Jibun wa sententeki ni bankara de bōkenteki de atta tokoro ni katete kuwaete kōtenteki ni shizen no reisei na kanka o ukete sara ni iyoiyo banteki no tokusei o hakki shi chōzuru ni oyobi masumasu hageshiku ikudo ka shichi no sakai o hōkō shite tsui ni Nihon ni wa akitarazu Nankyoku ni made dekaketa no de aru.*

Shirase continued the references to his *bankara* ways in a discussion of his troubles while staying in Australia. As discussed in Chapter 1, Shirase was unexpectedly forced to wait out the Antarctic winter of 1911 in Sydney; although the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs demanded that the expedition team stay in a hotel so as not to embarrass the Japanese nation, Shirase objected that he had insufficient funds for such extravagance. Instead, he set up his prefabricated hut intended for use in the Antarctic, together with a number of tents, on the shores of Sydney Harbour, and there he and his men camped for six months. Although the Japanese Consulate in Sydney requested the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to cover the cost of hotel accommodation, they declined to do so. In a somewhat confused and aggravated passage describing these events, Shirase referred sarcastically if indirectly to the *haikara* manners of the Japanese government officials trying to order his movements, and his *bankara* solution to the problem:

In the end, the money didn't arrive and we continued to live where we were. ... Perhaps people might laugh, but our eyes were set on the Southern Continent. We were not here for our own idle enjoyment. You can't explore in a frock-coat. You can't eat a Western-style dinner when you're on top of an ice barrier. [So I decided to] just do everything the *bankara* way – to act and strive and take the road that would serve us best.<sup>115</sup>

(N. Shirase, 1913, pp. 185-186)

Shirase explicitly rejects the foppish Westernised manners of officialdom insisting on luxurious hotels, instead identifying with *bankara* ideals of determination, seriousness of mien, independence, unconcern for what others might think, and succeeding through one's own efforts. The pleasure he finds in living unfettered by the constraints of an overly-

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<sup>115</sup> *Kekkyoku yōryō o enai, sono mama sunde shimatta no de aru. ... Hito wa nan to waraō ga warera no mokuteki wa Nantairiku no tōha ni aru. Ima an'itsu o musaboru toki ni arazu. Furokku kōto de wa tanken wa dekinu. Hyōheki e nobotte yōshoku ga kueru ka. Nandemo kandemo bankara de yaritōse to, akumade jibun wa ikkō o shite funrei, jichō seshimuru michi o totta.*

mannered Japanese lifestyle is patent in many passages in this section of his book, such as the following, wherein he compares Japanese formality with Western informality when entertaining:

You have no worries as you do in Japan, fussing over setting out the *zabuton* correctly,<sup>116</sup> or having to bow your head in greeting like a wind-up doll,<sup>117</sup> or reverently holding your teacup in both hands and drinking politely. You just stretch your legs out however you like (because you are sitting in a chair), smoke your tobacco while admiring a painting on the wall, have a pleasant chat – truly, these are the indicators of a civilised nation.<sup>118</sup>

(N. Shirase, 1913, p. 192)

Shirase contrasts a rough and “manly” style of social interaction with traditional Japanese etiquette, which he portrays as being fussy and constrictive. Although his comparison may reveal a lack of knowledge of 1913 Western formal etiquette, it nevertheless demonstrates his championing of masculine rough-and-ready ways. His rejection of “high collar” fashion is similarly made clear following a discussion of Australian men’s clothing and grooming, with their slicked hair and necktie chosen for its appropriateness to the season, use of

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<sup>116</sup> A *zabuton* is a traditional Japanese cushion on which to sit on the floor. When a guest arrives, a *zabuton* must be set out for them in a position of honour, such as in front of the hanging scroll. The guest is expected to decline the honour and attempt to sit in a “lowly” position such as near the entrance, while the host is expected to insist on the guest taking the position of honour. There is thus a formalised and somewhat complex cultural routine that must be gone through, and it is this to which Shirase is objecting.

<sup>117</sup> The *tōningyō* or *karakuri ningyō* were mechanised dolls originating in the seventeenth century which performed a number of “tricks” to entertain guests. The most commonly known such doll is a tea-carrying doll: ‘Fourteen inches high, when wound up and aimed properly it will “walk” toward a person while bearing a cup of tea and nodding its head. When the recipient lifts the cup from its hands to drink, the doll will stop and wait until the cup is replaced. Then it will about-face and carry the cup back to its starting point’ (Schodt, 1988, p. 55). Hence, Shirase’s mocking reference to the Japanese custom of bowing copiously to a guest, in the manner of a wind-up doll.

<sup>118</sup> *Nihon no yō ni ichi-ichi zabuton o suete atama o tōningyō no yō ni sagete aisatsu suru sewa mo nakereba, uyayuyashiku ryōte de chawan o nigitte ogyōgi yoku nomanakereba naranu to iu shinpai mo nai. Ashi o nagedashite (isu dakara) tabako o nonde hekiga o nagamenagara, danshō suru, jitsu ni bunmeikoku no tokuchō wa koko ni aru.*

cologne, and shoes polished to shine: ‘If a Japanese man does this sort of thing, he is laughed at as disgustingly foppish...’<sup>119</sup> (N. Shirase, 1913, p. 211).

Unfortunately for Shirase, as observed above, the *bankara* / *haikara* dichotomy that was so much a part of the pre-Russo-Japanese War era was in the post-War era being supplanted by the *hanmon seinen*, and then in the Taishō years by the emerging cult of the *modan* – the era of the *mobo* and *moga*. For both the anguished and the “modern” youth, notions of rugged masculinity versus foppish dandyism had lost the *cause célèbre* status they had once enjoyed. Thus, Shirase’s appeal to the ideals of the *bankara* spirit were cries to a cause already fast fading by the time of his return from the Antarctic in 1912.

As for the masculinisation of youth encouraged through participation in team sports in the late Meiji era, as noted above, Waseda University was a leader in the field, both through the prowess of Waseda’s sporting teams, and through the commitment of faculty members such as Abe Isō to supporting this ethos. Throughout *Nankyoku tanken*, Shirase frequently commented on the support he received in his venture from Waseda students, not to mention the important role the founder of Waseda, Ōkuma Shigenobu, played in heading the expedition Supporters’ Group. More generally, however, Shirase clearly felt deeply

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<sup>119</sup> *Nihon de wa otoko ga konna koto o suru to iyarashii toka niyakete itoru ka iute warau ...*

indebted to the students from whom he had received encouragement:

When I look back at those times, it is the students I remember – all you students whose cheering and encouragement made our team’s blood rise with excitement. More than the encouragement of a government minister, it was the encouragement of you students for which we must express our gratitude and pleasure ... More than having a hundred of the aristocracy to see us off, nothing could have pleased us more than the cheers of a hundred students ...<sup>120</sup>

(N. Shirase, 1913, p. 83)

The students who appeared on the docks in their multitudes to excitedly see the expedition off, waving the expedition flag and singing the expedition song<sup>121</sup> were unlikely to have been drawn from the ranks of the dandies or the intellectuals, and especially not from the *hanmon seinen* individualists. It is far more probable that they were the students who cheered and supported the baseball teams and the rowing teams, who harboured romantic notions of men throwing themselves into an extreme physical challenge of muscle and sheer will-power against elemental forces. But this group’s previous dominance of youth culture was under severe challenge by the start of the Taishō era. The rising individualism that the government was trying to suppress with its revised textbooks and encouragement of the Scouting movement and *seinendan*, for example, was resulting in a plethora of youth types who were not interested in heroic masculine adventure embodied in an Antarctic expedition. The *hanmon seinen* in particular was now the most prominent of the youth types, and the heroes of this group were not adventure heroes. Instead, the *hanmon seinen* was far more likely to be collecting souvenirs of the suicidal Fujimura Misao, and singing

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<sup>120</sup> *Tōji o tsuisō suru goto ni hotondo gakusei no kan ari, saru ni temo mantenka gakusei shokun no seien kobu wa ikani ikkō no chishio o wakitatashimeshi ka. Warera wa daijin ichinin no seien yori mushiro mantenka no gakusei shoshi no kansō ni mukatte kansha to manzoku to o harau ... Shinshi hyakunin no miokurinin yori gakusei hyakunin no kanko o yorokobu mono ani yuenashi to sen ya ...*

<sup>121</sup> The expedition team had devised their own flag, consisting of a gold cross and four stars representing the Southern Cross, on a blue background. The expedition song is discussed in Chapter 5.



*Gantō no kan*. Indeed, the extent to which the *hanmon seinen* had departed from the ruggedly masculine ideal is suggested in the statements of a foreign observer around 1911:

They [Japanese students] are in decline ... Most are enervated, obsessive, and frequently one finds those for whom it is quite usual to be sunk in anguish over things, like a woman. Also, when faced with danger they often have no courage, and in the same way, with regard to some enterprise (and despite their keen enthusiasm), they are deficient in the strength to carry it through, and furthermore an understanding of the importance of carefully going into things before acting is lacking in them. Students are apt to miss their lessons, and as soon as they get a headache they immediately run to the doctor. As well as this, when a dog barks at them, they are extremely fearful. Moreover, even when they have an army survey map clearly showing a path through the mountains, they are afraid that without a guide they will lose their way, and have not the courage to attempt to walk it alone.<sup>122</sup>

(Quoted in Tsurumi, 1961, pp. 209-210)

Students such as these were not likely to identify with an Antarctic explorer hero, nor to find vicarious pleasure in tales of exploration; youth who were afraid to take a mountain path lest they go astray were unlikely to fantasise about trekking to the South Pole, any more than those struck with fear at a dog's barking would want to imagine themselves facing the perils of the Antarctic seas.

Japan's involvement in World War I similarly did little to promote Shirase's heroic status. Few Japanese soldiers actively engaged in the war in Europe, and instead of the tragedy that was the war for the British, Japan experienced an economic boom. The financial hardship that soon followed, the rice riots and other turbulent events led among other outcomes to the appearance of the *modan gāru* and *modan bōi*, who flaunted a

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<sup>122</sup> *Karera wa ibi shite iru ... ōku wa nyūjaku de, shinkei kabin ni, shiba-shiba fujoshi no gotoku ōnō ni shizumu wa, sono tsūrei de aru. Shite mata kiken ni saishite wa, ōō ikkojin no yūki naru mono ga naku, sore to onajiku (kiwamete neshin naru mo) jigyō ni taishite no chikara mo toboshiku, katsu mata shūmitsu ni satchi shite sore ni jūji suru to iu yō na koto o kaite iru. Gakusei wa yaya mo sureba chōkō ni seiseki shi mata zutsū ga suru to iu te wa sugu isha no moto e yuku. Sore kara inu ni hoerareru no o hijō ni kowagaru. Mata rikugun no sokuryō chizu de akiraka ni wakatte iru sankan no keiro mo, annaisha nashi ni wa hōgaku o ushinau koto o osorete, hitoriaruki de tōha o kokoromiru yūki wa nai.*

detachment and *savoir faire* that indicated their dedication to all things *modan*. The preoccupations of the youth who identified with the *mobo* and *moga* were yet again antithetical to the worship of a hero figure in the mould of Shirase. The *moga* had discovered a previously unknown freedom – sexual, political and economic – that placed her firmly in the spotlight of public attention. The *mobo*, on the other hand, was developing a notoriety for political radicalism which for some led into a Marxist-Leninist ethos, typified by the politics of the Tokyo University students' *Shinjinkai* [New Man Society], the most influential student political group of the era (Gordon, 2003, p. 157). These youth were distinctly of the middle classes – often the children of the newly emerged *sararīman* employee of the government or a private company – and were far from representative of, for example, the children of tenant farmers who were trapped in a vicious cycle of economic decline through the 1920s (Duus, 1998, p. 195). They were, nevertheless, typical in many ways of the social stratum that had formed the basis of Shirase's popular support – generally well-educated, and urban, middle class youth. Although this same stratum had enthusiastically applauded an adventure hero in the muscular masculine *bankara* mould in the early 1900s, the post-Russo-Japanese War *hanmon seinen* and the post- World War I *mobo* and *moga* had other preoccupations.

Thus it is clear that the social forces that created and fostered the form of hero worship that aided the rise and endurance in the public mind of a hero of the likes of Scott in Britain did not exist in Japan, despite some superficial similarities. Shirase's heroic status, therefore, could only fade as the interests and concerns of youth swiftly changed and diversified in the Taishō period. The support he had received from the sports aficionados and other like-minded youth was dissipated as other cultural and historical events

intervened, and as youth found themselves confronting new challenges or plunging into new anxieties. Post-Russo-Japanese War Japan was in many ways a far more complex society than that of the early Meiji era in which Shirase had grown up. The implications for ideas of heroism were profound and fast-moving, and the homogeneity once typical of middle class Japanese youth was shattered as their world became a much more diversified one:

Taishō culture was a complex superstructure of political parties, mass communication, consumer marketing, and special-interest groups. Labor unions rallied beneath towering billboards plastered with advertisements for Lion Toothpaste and Kirin Beer; Model T Fords shared city streets with honey-wagons; suffragettes campaigned in kimono. The variegated culture offered the sons and daughters of the wealthy (and moderately wealthy) an unprecedented range of choices. There were movie theatres, cafes, dance halls for the Charleston, miniature golf courses, beauty parlors, department stores, and much more to suit the fleeting tastes and fancies of the “modern girls” (*moga*) and “modern boys” (*mobo*) of Taishō Japan. And there were bookstores stocked with a baffling array of “pure literature” (*junbungaku*), proletarian literature, comic books, sports magazines, and popular weeklies. The difficulty of arriving at decisions on what to read and how much to spend for a V-neck sweater added to the uncertainty of growing up in urban Japan.

(Roden, 1980b, pp. 194-195)

Shirase was too “old-fashioned” a hero for youth in the modern world of Taishō Japan.

## The Mediation of Fame: Count Ōkuma and the Japan-British Exhibition

### 4.1 Introduction

At the end of the Meiji era, a series of scandals occurred in Japan that had significant implications for the governments of those years. Among these was an emergent scandal which was successfully suppressed at the time, and which has rarely been referred to since in histories of the period. This involved the incipient public outrage over the perceived mishandling of the Japan-British Exhibition of 1910. In this chapter, how a potentially ruinous scandal may have been linked to Count Ōkuma Shigenobu's mediation of Shirase's heroic status is examined.

More generally, Ōkuma's role in the building of Shirase's heroic status is investigated in this chapter. It is posited that a connection existed between Ōkuma's vociferous promotion of the *Kainan Maru* expedition and his tendency to take political advantage of opportunities that arose regardless of moral considerations, and that Shirase's fame was in many ways a "by-product" of Ōkuma's involvement. At the same time, Ōkuma's championing of Shirase's heroic status for reasons of political expediency may have played a major part in his rise to fame, but also in his swift fall into obscurity.

## 4.2 The Mediation of Heroic Status

MacKenzie (1992, pp. 111-112) has suggested that the creation of heroic myths was a particularly prevalent phenomenon in the West in the nineteenth century. The heroes MacKenzie discussed were largely military ones, although as Riffenburgh (1993, pp. 6-7) noted, the arguments MacKenzie presented as to how such myths were developed are equally applicable to explorer heroes. Basing his work on Campbell's earlier investigation of the topic (Campbell, 1968), MacKenzie identified a number of key factors as essential to the creation of the heroic myth, including archetypes such as an exotic setting for the hero and a series of trials he must endure, preferably ending in his martyrdom. According to Riffenburgh, the heroic myths thus generated were used 'to influence the formation of policy; to justify decisions that had already been taken; and to intensify or eliminate the distinctions between groups, political parties, church and state, and industry and military'. One of the most important keys to the creation of a hero was the intervention of a 'mediator' who 'constructed, developed and interpreted the myth' (MacKenzie, 1992, p. 115), manipulating the story to serve the variety of purposes identified by Riffenburgh. Part of the mediator's role was the promotion of major publishing endeavours concerning the heroic myth:

Diaries, journals and letters, usually carefully edited ... were published in swift succession. ... Popular journalism and cheap publications, invariably directed at juveniles, made [the hero] available to all.

(MacKenzie, 1992, p. 115)

Riffenburgh applied MacKenzie's theories of heroic myth creation to the story of Robert Falcon Scott, whom Riffenburgh claimed achieved greater heroic status than even the most illustrious figures of the nineteenth century:

That few heroes of exploration actually fully reached MacKenzie's final stage of mythic – almost messianic – status, as Scott did, is unimportant. Virtual deities, men such as Charles Gordon or David Livingstone, who become instrumental in determining, for example, political policy, are hard to create.

(Riffenburgh, 1993, p. 7)

Hard to create as heroes may be, the role of the mediator has proved to be of crucial importance in the process in a great number of cases. Indeed, the mediator has frequently been at least as important as the actions of the hero in securing heroic status. In an investigation into the life of Livingstone, Helly (1987) demonstrated the importance of the editor of Livingstone's journals, Horace Waller, in 'the creation of a legend out of a public hero'. In the case of Livingstone, the legend Waller mediated was one he deemed necessary to serve a humanitarian cause:

Inventing a legend out of human clay was necessary to meet the need for enduring propaganda for the cause of antislavery. The editor of Livingstone's *Last Journals* brought himself, his ideas, the needs of the moment, and his hopes for the future to that creative process.

(Helly, 1987, pp. 353-354)

As Riffenburgh (1993, p. 7) noted, a similar pattern to this can be seen in the heroic status accorded Scott on his return from the 1901–1904 *Discovery* expedition. In that case, the

mediator was Sir Clements Markham.<sup>123</sup> Markham had in fact been the prime motivator of the expedition; in Huxley's words, it owed him 'not only its conception but its whole existence'. Markham was elected President of the Royal Geographical Society in 1893, and on assuming office, 'resolved that the equipment and despatch of an Antarctic expedition should be the chief feature of [his] term of office' (Huxley, 1977, pp. 1-4). Markham was unrelenting in his efforts to see the expedition become a reality:

... he threw himself into the business of organizing the expedition as the crowning work not only of his presidency of the Royal Geographical Society but of his life. With accelerated zest, he drafted circular appeals, gave lectures, sought interviews, wrote innumerable letters by hand. Dauntless, indefatigable, proud, he achieved the resounding total of £93,000. It was the largest amount ever raised for such a purpose.

(Pound, 1966, p. 22)

Markham selected Scott to lead the expedition, and championed him through the numerous committees whose endorsement was required for the formal appointment. In the end, Markham came to be widely regarded as the 'Father of the Expedition'.<sup>124</sup>

Unfortunately, Markham had also offended numerous people in his single-minded pursuit of his dream of despatching an Antarctic expedition under his protégé's command. He alienated both the Royal Society as co-sponsors of the expedition, and the Admiralty. He also insulted Prime Minister Balfour when Markham felt the government was not cooperating in his drive to fund a rescue party. This rescue party was the product of

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<sup>123</sup> The important role Scott's widow also played in securing her husband's fame has been investigated by Pinsdorf, who stated, '[b]efore public relations had form, a name or formal practitioners, ... widows created heroic images of their dead husbands' (Pinsdorf, 2002, p. 283). Pinsdorf analysed Kathleen Scott's role in ensuring the 'heroic veneration, honors, monuments, and tendentious history' that surrounded her husband's name.

<sup>124</sup> Scott in fact dedicated his book *The Voyage of the 'Discovery'* to Markham as 'The Father of the Expedition and its Most Constant Friend'.

Markham's fear that the *Discovery* was insufficiently stocked with foodstuffs for a second year in the ice. In the end, he badgered the government into sponsoring a relief expedition, but at the cost of all goodwill from that quarter. Criticism of the expedition's financial affairs appeared in the press, which complained that 'funds have to be begged for in an emergency when there should have been ample for all purposes' (Quoted in Thomson, 1977, p. 80).

When Scott and his men saw not one but two ships arriving to "rescue" them, they were aghast: 'It was not a little trying,' Scott wrote with characteristic understatement, 'to be offered relief to an extent which seemed to suggest that we have been reduced to the direst need. No healthy man likes to be thought an invalid' (Quoted in Huxley, 1977, p. 126). In his report to the Admiralty, Scott again dryly expressed an evident resentment about what had occurred, mentioning that 'some embarrassments' had been caused by the rescue mission, 'as our small company were so thoroughly able to take care of themselves' (Quoted in Pound, 1966, p. 115).

With two ships being sent to rescue the *Discovery*, a sense that the expedition was in trouble was created. Although this was in fact not the case, the public reaction to the return of Scott and his men initially was subdued. At the same time, it is possible that the failure of the men to even approach the South Pole, however far that was in reality from being a goal, nevertheless may have tarnished the achievements of the expedition in the minds of the public (Barczewski, 2007, p. 43). When the ship arrived back in London, there was no official reception, and the only dignitary present was the Mayor of Gravesend. The 'luncheon in a shed' held by the Royal and Geographical Societies the following day was



condemned by the *Daily Express* for its general shabbiness, and for the unimpressive guest list. One of those present at the luncheon wrote to the *Daily Mail*, commenting on the lack of pomp and ceremony to welcome Scott and his men (Huxley, 1977, p. 139; Preston, 1999, pp. 80-81). Markham, clearly aware of the lack of enthusiasm that had resulted in part from his scare-mongering, stated, ‘People do not understand the greatness of the achievement, nor the greatness of the results ... Our people have done a great work, and it will be shameful if it is not officially, as well as generally recognised ...’ (Quoted in Crane, 2005, p. 303). Markham embarked on a programme of zealous promotion of the triumph he claimed for the expedition: ‘Never has any polar expedition returned with so great a harvest of scientific results,’ he asserted, although the accuracy of this claim has been questioned.<sup>125</sup> To quote Crane,

[Markham wanted] an escort up the Thames and a show of flags before a final grand celebration in November. He wanted Lord Selborne there to greet Scott at Spithead, he wanted Fisher, May and Kerr, he wanted the whole of the RGS Council, the Royal Society officers, the Lords of the Admiralty, the Lord Mayor, he wanted more flags, and red cloth, and sledging pennants, and songs – ‘I want “all the thousand masts of the Thames to send back an echoing cheer”.’

(Crane, 2005, p. 303),

Despite the press having not long before complained that ‘as far as knowledge of what has been done is concerned, the public has really had nothing whatever for its money’ (Quoted in Thomson, 1977, p. 80), they soon took note of the growing fanfare around the expedition, and the lionisation of Scott began (Preston, 1999, p. 82). The *Times* for example announced, ‘The expedition commanded by Commander Scott has been one of the most successful that

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<sup>125</sup> Jones (2003, p. 70) for example, has pointed out that the expeditions of the Scotsman Bruce (1902-1904), the Frenchman Charcot (1903-1905), the Swede Nordenskjöld (1901-1903), and the German Drygalski (1901-1903) had all produced a wealth of scientific data about the Antarctic.

ever ventured into polar regions, north or south' (Quoted in Barczewski, 2007, p. 43). As Scott's star began to rise, the Admiralty too decided that discretion would be the wiser course – according to Markham, 'They would not dare spite him ... He stands too high now' – and a message from the First Lord of the Admiralty said, 'Will you tell Captain Scott and his officers and men the satisfaction of the Board of Admiralty at the manner in which they have so thoroughly upheld the traditions of the Navy, and with what pleasure they greet them on their return to England.' Markham as President of the Royal Geographical Society commissioned a gold medal to be awarded, and this was swiftly followed by a flood of medals from similar organisations around the world (Crane, 2005, pp. 300-309).

Thus, Markham's efforts were rewarded, and Scott was set on a course for heroic status. In Riffenburgh's terms, Markham's mediation had been successful. Although Scott was aware of how much he owed Markham, at the same time he realised that Markham's sponsorship could also be a liability. Markham was on Scott's side in every argument, but Scott soon recognised that this full-blooded support could equally well be a handicap: 'Scott was aware that Sir Clements was regarded as tiresomely opinionated and thoroughly partisan' (Preston, 1999, p. 82). Markham's proclivity for in-fighting and ready hostility to anyone he saw as interfering with "his" expedition created many enemies for Scott, and resistance where none need have existed. Prime Minister Balfour, insulted by Markham over the relief ship incident, took his revenge on Scott by denying the expedition any government recognition (M. Jones, 2003, p. 72). Dismay over official indifference towards the *Discovery* expedition continued to be felt at least as late as 1940, when Sir Richard Gregory, editor of *Nature* and President of the British Association for the Advancement of

Science, wrote of the failure of the government to award Scott any national acknowledgement of his accomplishments:

I have no doubt it was the attitude of the Royal Society and Balfour that was the cause. The injustice was an insult to science and to human achievement, and an example of an indifference unworthy of an enlightened people.

(Quoted in Pound, 1966, p. 122)

Thus, although the mediator's role could be pivotal in securing enduring fame for their protégé, in certain cases the mediator could equally prove to be a handicap.

#### 4.3 Count Ōkuma as Mediator

Perhaps the most important person involved in Shirase's status as an explorer hero was the populist statesman Ōkuma Shigenobu. Ōkuma served as prime minister of Japan on two occasions, firstly in 1898, and then again from 1914 to 1916. Boastful, extroverted, and eager for power, Ōkuma nonetheless served a valuable role in the politics of the Meiji era, constantly promoting the cause of representational government, and pleading untiringly for party cabinets as the basis for parliamentary governance. His championing of freedom of speech, and his unprecedented deference to the opinions of the public, led to his being hailed by the Japanese people as a 'champion of democracy'. Ōkuma was likewise very aware of the potential of the mass media, and fostered close relations with the press throughout his career. His introduction of the cabinet press conference in Japan ensured his

popularity with journalists, as did his efforts towards securing freedom of the press (Lebra, 1973, p. 306; Oka, 1986).

It is likely that Ōkuma first heard of Shirase and his plans in January 1910, when Shirase submitted a request for expedition funding to the 26<sup>th</sup> Session of the Diet. Despite the request being initially approved by the House of Representatives, the government eventually brushed the request aside with the comment that payment could not be made until the following year (Watanabe, 1991, p. 60).<sup>126</sup> Shirase's name was again brought to Ōkuma's attention by Chikami Kiyoomi, President of the Tokyo *Nichi-Nichi Shimbun* newspaper company, at the urging of Murakami Dakurō, owner of the magazine publishing firm *Seikō Zasshi-sha*. This occurred on 6 April, 1910, at a meeting of the Tokyo Asiatic Society which Ōkuma and Chikami were attending. When Ōkuma actually met with Shirase is unknown, but it seems to have been before the end of May, as an interview with Ōkuma published in *Tanken Sekai* that month indicated that Ōkuma was well acquainted with Shirase and his plans (K. Shirase, 1986, pp. 170-173). In August of 1910, Count Ōkuma agreed to speak at a fund-raising meeting which Shirase held in Kanda, Tokyo; Ōkuma consented to becoming the head of the Antarctic Expedition Supporters' Group [*Nankyoku Tanken Kōen-kai*] shortly thereafter (N. Shirase, 1942, pp. 78-79). Ōkuma continued to offer his support to the expedition, and was the first to welcome Shirase back to Japan at the official reception held in Shibaura, Tokyo, in 1912. Ōkuma gave a speech of congratulations before an enthusiastic crowd, and the event was well-attended by the press. Waseda University students were particularly prominent among the crowd of well-wishers, as they had been at Shirase's send-off. Ōkuma's ability to mobilise both the press and

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<sup>126</sup> In fact, in the end Shirase never received any financial support from the government.

university students was yet again in evidence. Ōkuma was known as a man who delighted in being the centre of attention and who craved fame; as he was out of office at this time, the *Kainan Maru* expedition offered a tempting vehicle for regaining the attention of the public.

According to the social historian Ishii Kendo (1944, p. 1335), Ōkuma was a personal acquaintance of Murakami Dakurō, publisher of *Seikō* [Success] magazine. Murakami was acquainted with Shirase initially through the latter's having been a subscriber and then regular contributor to one of Murakami's magazines, *Tanken Sekai* [The World of Exploration], although the relationship had developed into a friendship of long standing (K. Shirase, 1986, p. 169). Ishii stated that it was through Murakami's influence that Ōkuma became the head of Shirase's Antarctic expedition Supporters' Group. Shirase's expedition benefited immensely from the connection with a person as famous and as popular with the general public as Ōkuma. His ability to draw enormous crowds was well-known, and much of the financial support the *Kainan Maru* expedition received from the public was as a direct consequence of Ōkuma's patronage. Moreover, Ōkuma himself reportedly was responsible for a significant portion of the financial support the expedition received, donating the funds from his personal savings (Quoted in Kusunoki, 1977, pp. 97-99). At the same time, Ōkuma had contacts with many wealthy individuals and families of the élite; among the donations to the Supporters' Group was a significant sum from the Iwasakis of the Mitsubishi business empire, received thanks to Ōkuma's personal connections with that family (K. Shirase, 1986, p. 183).

Even without Ōkuma's patronage, Shirase was likely to have attracted considerable public support. Evidence in support of this exists in contemporary press reports of the enormous crowds attracted to the first public meeting Shirase called to garner support in July 1910, from which several hundreds of would-be attendees were turned away because of lack of space in the Kanda Kinkikikan Hall. Inside, 'the audience that filled the hall was largely composed of boys, delighted with a project for adventure'<sup>127</sup> and excited youth who would not quiet ("Shirase Chuuira, Kanda Nishiki-cho Kinkikikan de Nankyoku tanken keikaku wo happyou [Lieutenant Shirase and his men announce plans for Antarctic expedition at Nishikiki Hall, Nishiki-cho, Kanda]," 1910). In all, several thousand people crammed into the hall, some even entering via the windows, according to Shirase (N. Shirase, 1942, p. 75). Ōkuma's patronage, however, was invaluable in many ways, not least being his ability to generate enormous enthusiasm with his public addresses. Judging from the response he received at a meeting held in Kanda in 1910, during which he spoke the five simple words '*Kokkateki, danseiteki kaijigyō o ukeyo*' [Let us embrace this national, this manly, this gratifying undertaking], which somewhat surprisingly threw the hall into feverish excitement (C. Sato, 2004, p. 22), Ōkuma's appeal to audiences evidently was to be found more in his personality and charisma than in the words he spoke.

Although Ōkuma's name alone was sufficient to draw crowds, it was his connections with the press that were of inestimable value to Shirase. Shirase had attempted to interest the press in his expedition plans, but had been unsuccessful (N. Shirase, 1942, p. 74). With Ōkuma's connections and name, however, management-level personnel from *Kokumin Shimbun*, *Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shimbun*, *Yamato Shimbun*, *Chūō Shimpō*, and the

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<sup>127</sup> ... *ba ni manzuru no chōshū wa izuremo danji no bōken jigyo wo yorokobi ...*

*Jiji Shimbun* could all be summoned, and both the Osaka and Tokyo *Asahi* newspapers could be induced to assist in fund-raising for the expedition. Ōkuma's influence over the press included both city newspapers such as the *Mainichi*, and the *Yomiuri*, as well as the prefectural newspapers, and even some of the overseas press, such as the Manchurian *Ryōtō Nippō*, and Japanese newspapers in America. Together with Murakami Dakurō, Ōkuma was able to enlist the support of magazines such as *Bōken Sekai*, *Nihon oyobi Nihonjin*, *Jitsugyō no Nihon*, *Jitsugyō no Sekai*, *Tanken Sekai*, and many others (K. Shirase, 1986, pp. 180-183; N. Shirase, 1942, p. 80).

Ōkuma would also have found the departure and the return of the Antarctic explorers an invaluable opportunity to place himself once more in front of the public. As Oka noted, Ōkuma seized every opportunity to appear before the public even when he was not directly employed in the political sphere, entertaining lavishly at his residence on the Waseda University campus and giving pompous speeches to his guests, lecturing the public at each stop on his travels around the country, and becoming generally 'a very familiar and popular celebrity' (Oka, 1986, pp. 73-74). As early as 1889, Ōkuma had shown his skill in appealing to both the media and the public when he launched a nation-wide campaign tour seeking support for those candidates he favoured in an up-coming election. Ōkuma travelled through several prefectures, speaking at each stop along the way. To quote Lebra, 'Such activity helped enhance Ōkuma's image as a popular statesman in contrast with [conservative] oligarchs, who could not at this time envision such grass-roots electioneering. It was an augur of Ōkuma's full-blown appeal to the mass media of the Taishō period' (Lebra, 1973, p. 91). Oka stated, 'Keeping up a barrage of appeals to the nation through speeches, newspapers, and magazines, [Ōkuma] loved the limelight and kept himself talked

about. He cast himself in the role of the people's champion, and they responded with warm feelings for him' (Oka, 1986, p. 84).

In 1915, Yokoyama Kendō published a book about contemporary politics in which he discoursed upon Ōkuma's strategic creation of opportunities to put himself before the public:

A political leader must keep in the spotlight at all times. A surpassing skill in self-display is vital ... He must not allow the people to put him out of their minds for even a day; he must always remain a celebrity, the center of talk ... Politicians in power have frequent opportunities to meet many people. ... But when out of office they must strive hard to create such opportunities. After stepping down as prime minister, Ōkuma astutely understood this and has worked strenuously at it.

(Yokoyama, quoted in Oka, 1986, p. 74)

Ōkuma was indeed out of office in 1910 when Shirase was attempting to garner support for his expedition, Ōkuma having retired in 1907 (Lebra, 1973, p. 111). In fact, Ōkuma was to return as prime minister in 1914, but in 1912 when Shirase returned to Japan, Ōkuma was still in retirement. The expedition thus served as an ideal opportunity for Ōkuma to appear on stage before vast audiences during his time out of office, and deliver suitably animated speeches, the likes of which he was known to delight in making (Oka, 1986, pp. 62-64). Oka discussed Ōkuma's craving for public attention, and in particular his need to satisfy



this craving after being forced into retirement in 1907:

Appealing to the people and holding them in thrall satisfied Ōkuma's thirst for dominance, and he came to relish that role. After being driven from the Kenseihontō presidency in 1907, and withdrawing from active politics, he was left with no reasonable hope of regaining high office. ... appeals to the nation became the only way for Ōkuma to gratify his fierce cravings for power, and he continued to stage grand public appearances to the day of his death. Nothing gave him more satisfaction than the vigorous roar of welcome and the thunderous applause of a large crowd at his speeches, or the delight and admiration beamed upon him by throngs of guests crowding the reception room of his Waseda residence.

(Oka, 1986, p. 61)

The departure and return of the *Kainan Maru* provided exactly the occasions for a 'grand public appearance' of the type Ōkuma desired in this period – to hear the roar of welcome and the thunderous applause.

Apart from his political career, Ōkuma was also the founder in 1882 of Tokyo Senmon Gakkō, which later became Waseda University, and served as its chancellor after his retirement from politics. Again, among other things, this may be indicative of his desire to be constantly before the public's eye. In any case, the connection between Ōkuma and the university was undoubtedly an important factor in the enormous support the Antarctic expedition received from university students. In regard to this, Shirase quoted a *Jiji* press article of 29 November 1910 that reported on the festivities that accompanied the departure of the *Kainan Maru* from Tokyo, in which it was stated that, among the multitude of university and school students present, it was the three thousand Waseda students who formed the core (Quoted in N. Shirase, 1942, p. 93). Furthermore, it was the Waseda boating club that comprised a major part of the flotilla of yachts and motorboats that met the *Kainan Maru* on its return to Tokyo Bay ("Shirase Nankyoku tankentai no Kainan Maru,

seidai na kangei no naka Shibaura e kairu [Shirase Antarctic expedition ship Kainan Maru returns to Shibaura to magnificent welcome]," 1912). That Ōkuma was readily able to mobilise Waseda graduates as well as students was evident from the enormous numbers around the nation who were rallied to support his election campaign of 1915 (Najita, 1967, p. 200).

In this sense, then, the relationship between Ōkuma and Shirase would have benefited both parties: Ōkuma was able to use the excitement of an Antarctic voyage to put himself once more before the public, while Shirase gained from having a recognised and well-connected celebrity associated with the expedition. To what extent the fame that Shirase enjoyed, particularly on his return from what must be described in many ways as a failed mission, was likely to have been deliberately “mediated” by Ōkuma is difficult to determine. No immediate evidence exists that Ōkuma intentionally worked to inflate Shirase’s heroic status, or that the fame Shirase enjoyed thanks to Ōkuma was more than an incidental by-product of the alliance between the men, although circumstantial evidence suggests that this may have been the case. To investigate this further, however, requires analysis of Ōkuma’s character and mores, as well as an examination of motives Ōkuma may have had for such intervention.

#### 4.4 The Character of Count Ōkuma

Count Ōkuma was without doubt an extremely astute politician in the modern conception of that term; his ability to intuit popular opinion – ‘a kind of genius for following the spirit of the times’ (Lebra, 1973, p. 116) – and his cultivation of the press, ensured an enduring popularity regardless of his actual political record. Lebra claimed that Ōkuma ‘... perceived the implications of the mass media before any other politician in Japan, in a signal example of his sense of the shape of the future’ (Lebra, 1973, p. 149). Indeed, his deliberate encouragement of a favourable press went beyond merely speaking with them at great length and charming them with his affable manner, to ensuring that journalists were always well-represented in his spacious drawing-room where famous visitors both Japanese and international were frequently seen, and in his dining room, where sumptuous dinners were the norm (Oka, 1986, pp. 64, 79).<sup>128</sup> His popularity with the press was to reach a climax in 1914, when the Siemens scandal resulted in the toppling of the government; collusion between the German industrial conglomerate Siemens AG and members of the Imperial Japanese Navy outraged the Japanese people, and led to the public castigation of the Yamamoto Cabinet.<sup>129</sup> Thanks to Ōkuma’s cultivation of the press, the All Japan Journalists’ Alliance demanded his appointment as prime minister to replace Yamamoto, and an enormous ‘Ōkuma boom’ ensued (Oka, 1986, p. 79).

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<sup>128</sup> It has been estimated that around 1902, over 800 guests were served dinners at the Ōkuma residence every month (Oka, 1986, p. 67). The Shirase expedition members were also treated to a dinner by Ōkuma, the details of which were reported at length in the *Jiji Shinbun* of 23 June 1912 (N. Shirase, 1913, pp. 290-292).

<sup>129</sup> Coincidentally, Shirase’s oldest son Shirase Tomo, who rose to the rank of captain in the Imperial Navy, was implicated in the Siemens scandal and removed from the naval lists as a result (Watanabe, 1991, p. 187).

That Ōkuma became prime minister at this time was in fact as much due to the influence of the *genrō* – the retired elder statesmen who wielded enormous extraconstitutional power as informal advisors to the emperor – as it was to his public popularity or the power of the press (Najita, 1967, p. 193). This was despite the fact that Ōkuma continued to position himself in the public eye as being opposed to the power of the *genrō*, and a champion of democracy (Lebra, 1973, p. 117). Evidently, he had no scruples about taking advantage of *genrō* support while simultaneously denouncing them publicly. In any case, he continued to appeal to the press for their support in his new role, and delivered the following speech to a large gathering of journalists at his Waseda residence on the eve of his appointment:

Gentlemen, trust me! My cabinet will satisfy your expectations. ... My mission is to rid the bureaucracy and the parties of abuses. Gentlemen, trust me! And do not begrudge me your words of friendly advice. I will gladly listen. Just let me prove myself. Could I possibly do anything that would betray your expectations? I am not one to change my standpoint, and I am always ready to leave office if I disappoint you. ...

(Quoted in Oka, 1986, p. 80)

Ōkuma was, however, to disappoint not only the journalists, but the Japanese public as well. Although he called repeatedly for a fair election throughout his 1915 campaign, insisting that one of his Cabinet's basic policies was 'a revision of the election law to abolish election abuses such as vote-buying' (Lebra, 1973, p. 118), the resulting election was what Najita described as 'one of the most corrupt ever held in Japan' (1967, p. 200), and which Oka called 'the most notorious rigged election in Japan's constitutional history' (1986, p. 81). Ōkuma's Home Minister Ōura Kanetake flagrantly bought votes for pro-government parties and put considerable pressure on prefectural governors to ensure victory for

government candidates in those areas ("*Senkyo kansho* [Government election intervention]," 1983). It has been estimated that during just the two days prior to the election, 1.6 million yen was used in bribery. Ōura had bribed opposition party men into defection on the eve of the election, and himself accepted bribes from 'timid candidates currying his favour' (Najita, 1967, pp. 200-201). Ōkuma's party won the election, but he was forced to submit his resignation over the scandal that followed; although personally not directly implicated, he admitted his moral responsibility when acknowledging 'imperfect supervision' of the election as his fault (Lebra, 1973, p. 125). The Emperor, however, refused the resignation. Both journalists and the public were deeply disillusioned that Ōkuma had overlooked such wrongdoing in his own cabinet when he had canvassed so long for moral responsibility in government, and had preached the inviolability of the election process and the benefits of party government. He had, after all, published articles under such titles as 'Discussion of the abolition of party abuses' in *Shin Nippon* in that same year (Lebra, 1973, pp. 124-125, 127). Ōkuma was bitterly attacked by the opposition parties for his failure to resign, but in an extraordinary *volte-face* for one who proclaimed himself the champion of constitutional government, he stated, 'To be ordered by the emperor to stay in office, and yet disobey and resign on one's own volition – could anyone do such a thing? Your demand for a "responsibility" resignation violates imperial sovereignty!' (Quoted in Oka, 1986, p. 82). This stance betrayed his partiality to power and position, as it was in clear contradiction of his earlier repeated insistence that the cabinet was responsible to the Diet alone, and not to the Emperor. In the face of mounting public and political pressure, however, Ōkuma was forced from power in 1916.

Ōkuma had been caught betraying his principles on previous occasions; Hara Takashi (Kei) amusingly reported how Ōkuma had addressed audiences at a prohibition society and a *sake* manufacturer on the same day, on both occasions affirming the value of their work (Cited in R. Maeda, 1943, p. 266).<sup>130</sup> Ozaki recorded how Ōkuma was known ‘not infrequently to support the two incompatible sides of an issue at the same time’:

To cite just one example, Ōkuma had provided a similar letter of recommendation to two opposing candidates standing for election in the city of Fukui. When the train in which he was travelling stopped there, supporters of both candidates turned up to welcome him. Most people would have been at a loss for words, but the marquis<sup>131</sup> thrust his head from the window and delivered an impromptu speech exhorting both sides to win. He was nothing if not flexible.

(Ozaki, 2001, p. 295)

Hara stated that Ōkuma was apt to forget his responsibilities in the pursuit of popularity (R. Maeda, 1943, p. 266).<sup>132</sup> As Lebra put it, ‘his desire for popular support ... led him to forget principle; demagoguery became more apparent as he aged’ (1973, p. 126). In the words of the statesman and diplomat Count Mutsu Munemitsu, Ōkuma was ‘a man of talk rather than action’, and was ‘always hoping for quick fame’ (Quoted in Oka, 1986, p. 57). On a more weighty issue, Borton pointed out that Ōkuma was more the “politician” than the liberal he wished to be seen as. To begin with, he did not actively organise any form of political party until he himself was out of government and therefore stood to benefit. His willingness early in his political career to re-enter government under Kuroda Kiyotaka’s premiership after having exposed the latter’s unethical behaviour with regard to the sale of

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<sup>130</sup> ‘... *gozen ni wa kinshukai ni nozonde seppō shi, gogo ni wa shuzōgyō kumiai no tame ni, sake wa hyakuyaku no chō de arun de aru nanka to, naga kōzetsu wo furu ...*’

<sup>131</sup> The title of Count was conferred upon Ōkuma in 1887; the title of Marquis was not conferred until 1916, shortly before his retirement from politics. As the period during which he was involved in Shirase’s expedition was earlier than 1916, he is referred to in this thesis as Count Ōkuma.

<sup>132</sup> ‘... *hisashiku sekinin no chi wo hanarete, minkanjin wo yorokobasu koto bakari wo shabette ita ...*’

government property indicated what Borton termed ‘vacillation and opportunism’ in Ōkuma’s character. Borton also noted that in 1915 Ōkuma was willing to compromise his liberal stance with an aggressive policy towards China, not allowing his liberalism to interfere with what he saw as Japan’s destiny in Asia (Borton, 1955, pp. 133, 252). Furthermore, Ōkuma’s willingness to say one thing but do another was more than obvious on the international scene, when he informed the Government of the United States of America that, ‘Japan’s object [in occupying German territories in China and thus entering World War I] is to eliminate from the Continent of China the root of the German influence,’ and that Japan ‘harbours no design for territorial aggrandizement [nor] entertains [any] desire to promote any other selfish end.’ Despite this assurance, according to Kawamura’s careful investigation of the facts surrounding this matter, ‘[a]vailable Japanese government documents indicate that the Okuma cabinet, in fact, hoped to retain all the German territories Japan had occupied even after the conclusion of the war.’ This was in spite of the stipulations of the Root-Takahira Agreement, that with regard to their activities in China, Japan and America would consult openly (Kawamura, 2000, pp. 17-20).

Finally, and critically for Shirase’s relationship with Ōkuma, were the effects of what Oka considered to be Ōkuma’s ‘boundless self-confidence’, which prevented him from truly listening to others. Ōkuma seemingly believed that his opinion alone was sufficient in any circumstance, and thus he was not receptive to the ideas or thoughts of other people. Concomitant with this was his readiness to discard persons when he judged them to be of no further use: ‘When he employed people, he did so out of necessity, with no commitment to their futures when he no longer needed their services’ (Oka, 1986, p. 60). As a result of his investigations into Ōkuma’s personality, Oka concluded that Ōkuma was

a man of dubious integrity, with no deep principles or firm convictions. Even Ōkuma's close friend since childhood, the historian and academic Kume Kunitake described Ōkuma as an 'extemporiser, with no permanent or consistent views' (Quoted in Oka, 1986, p. 58). This, then, was the character of the man with whom Shirase's expedition, and indeed, his life, was so intimately entwined. Ōkuma was clearly a person who, while perhaps not intentionally seeking to exploit others, nevertheless was more than likely to do so in his constant improvisations, accommodations, and blusterings. As Kume said, Ōkuma's most characteristic trait was extemporisation – using the material at hand to serve the immediate demand. Shirase's Antarctic expedition certainly was a most convenient 'material at hand' when Ōkuma was out of office and was undoubtedly craving the opportunity to appear before the public. Perhaps the burgeoning Japan-British Exhibition scandal of 1910 was yet another occasion for Ōkuma to extemporise with the Shirase expedition.

#### 4.5 The Japan-British Exhibition of 1910

By the late nineteenth century, and into the early twentieth century, it had become almost *de rigueur* for “the powers” to stage international exhibitions, both to display their imperial achievements, and to have them acknowledged by their peers. Numerous expositions were held around the world, although perhaps the most famous was the first – the Great Exhibition of 1851, held in the Crystal Palace in London. The Great Exhibition, or more fully, the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations, was the model upon which all subsequent exhibitions that formed such a feature of the years up until World War I were based, while the enormous success it enjoyed encouraged other nations to hold



similar events. It was thus natural that in 1908 a proposal should be put forward for an exhibition to be held in London to display Japan's culture and achievements, and to simultaneously celebrate the newly-signed Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Put bluntly, as Yōnosuke Ian Mutsu, son of the Commissioner of the Imperial Japanese Government to the Exhibition stated, 'The aim of the Japan-British Exhibition in 1910 was to spread information about the new Japanese Empire and thereby win friends. It was "PR"' (Mutsu, 2001, p. i). The Japanese particularly wanted to prove to the British that theirs was a country with a long and splendid history, with a wealth of tradition and cultural achievements, but at the same time, as modern and as advanced as any other Power. As a result, the items displayed ranged from kimono to warships, suits of armour to the products of the mining industry, and demonstrations of *ikebana* to performances of Western music by a brass band (Salwey, 1910).

Included among the entertainments which the British organisers were eager to obtain for the Exhibition were an Ainu "village", and a sumo ring. With regard to the former, the London *Daily News* of 25 March 1910, reported that

One of the attractions at the Anglo-Japanese Exhibition<sup>133</sup> this summer is to be a party of Ainu from Japan. ... These strange visitors, who will arrive at the Exhibition early in April, are members of old tribes, and some of them are very well-to-do. ... Native huts are to be erected at the White City for the use of the Ainu. There they will be seen carving wood, embroidering, or otherwise engaged. ... These people, who cannot fail to be interesting, will perform weird native dances and ceremonies.

(Quoted in Mutsu, 2001, p. 42)

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<sup>133</sup> Although the exhibition was officially named the Japan-British Exhibition, it was frequently referred to as the Anglo-Japanese Exhibition in the press.

Forty sumo wrestlers arrived from Japan for the Exhibition, and matches were held daily in a traditional *dohyō* ring (*Times*, June 21, 1910, quoted in Mutsu, 2001, p. 93). Apart from the main attractions, there were ‘water jugglers, acrobats, drummers, sword dancers, child dancers, folk musicians, magicians,’ and others, as well as craft demonstrators who included ‘lantern makers, calligraphers, enamel makers, cloisonné makers, ivory carvers [and] rice-cracker makers’ (Hotta-Lister, 1999, p. 225).

By the end of the Exhibition, 8.35 million visitors had passed through the gates in the six months it was open – over two million more than had attended the 1851 Great Exhibition. As Mutsu (2001, p. vi) noted, this figure is even more extraordinary when it is remembered that the Great Exhibition was a global event and not simply a bilateral one, as was the Japan-British Exhibition.

#### 4.5.1 The Exhibition becomes a Scandal

Although it would be expected that an event attracting so much interest should have been hailed a success, this was not the case. Most of the Japanese who attended were reportedly dissatisfied with what they had witnessed; they were embarrassed by the Ainu village, the sumo bouts, and the entertainers and craft-workers, and felt they showed Japan as a quaint and primitive land. Far from demonstrating Japan’s equality with the Western Powers as a modern, civilised nation, they believed the Exhibition was having the opposite effect. At best, Japan would come to be regarded by the British as ‘a backward country of antiquities, beautiful scenery, and minor crafts’ (Hotta-Lister, 1999, p. 146; Itoh, 2008, p. 194).

Perhaps an early hint of the reason the Exhibition came to be seen as an embarrassment for the Japanese Government can be discerned in the words of Count Mutsu Hirokichi, son of former Foreign Minister Mutsu Munemitsu and Commissioner in England for the Exhibition, in a paper he delivered in London in January 1910. Mutsu spoke at length of the displays and events planned for later that year, and at the very end of his speech, almost as an afterthought, mentioned the side-show attractions:

With regard to the so-called “Side shows,” naturally they do not come under the direct control of either the British Committee or of the Japanese authorities. At the same time we fully recognise the fact that the public are strongly appealed to by these species of attractions and therefore hope to arrange so that the Exhibition will not be lacking also in this department of recreation. Steps are already being taken with a view to bringing over some of the typical attractions from Japan, but it is as yet premature to state definitely their exact nature.

(Mutsu, 2001, p. 210)

Even at this stage, Mutsu was making it quite clear that the Japanese authorities would not be held responsible for the side-shows, and was deliberately distancing himself and the Committee from them. His reference to the side-shows as a ‘species of attraction’, and the somewhat condescending tone concerning their popularity with the public – although, by implication, not with the members of Mutsu’s audience who were members of the Royal Society of Arts of London – spoke of the class distinctions of the era. Mutsu’s lack of detail regarding the attractions themselves also perhaps indicated his desire to show a lack of personal interest, since he devoted over six thousand words of his speech to copious description of all the other items to be displayed, such as the Japanese gardens, the artworks, and the manufactured goods. Clearly, side-show attractions were not something in which a Count showed interest, and by inference, were not something the upper classes would wish

to see. Of course, nearly all the Japanese in London at this time were of the élite – members of the aristocracy, diplomats, politicians, bankers, and the wealthy who were able to travel so far for pleasure at a time of economic gloom in Japan. For such a group, the Japanese street-life put on display in London could only be seen as low and vulgar, and as sullyng the nation’s reputation as a worthy ally of Britain (Hotta-Lister, 1999, p. 140; Itoh, 2008, p. 194).

On the other hand, the Exhibition organiser in Britain, Imre Kiralfy, had pressed most explicitly for the inclusion of such exhibits. Kiralfy, the most prominent exhibition organiser in Britain at the time,<sup>134</sup> had extensive experience in staging international exhibitions, and was of the opinion that side-show attractions were of prime importance to the success of an exhibition. Katō Takaaki, Ambassador to Britain, was distressed by the obvious discrepancy between Japan’s goals for the Exhibition and those of Kiralfy, reporting nervously that the latter had proclaimed that,

Although our exhibition is to show fine arts and commercial goods, at the same time, it is to be an elaborate entertainment or fairground ... Attractions at the site will be the most popular exhibits ... To sum up, persuading people to come to an exhibition by offering them interesting attractions first, and then, leaving them to do whatever they like is the best way to run an exhibition.

(Letter from Kato to Komura, quoted in Hotta-Lister, 1999, pp. 63-64)

By ‘attractions’, Katō was clearly referring to side-shows. Kiralfy was later criticised by the Japanese press for what they regarded as excessive side-shows and similar entertainments

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<sup>134</sup> Kiralfy, a Hungarian Jewish *émigré*, was responsible for the creation of the White City exhibition grounds where the Japan-British Exhibition was held, and designed the buildings to cater to the Edwardian taste for “Oriental spectacle”. He was Commissioner-General of all six White City exhibitions held between 1908 and 1914 (Hotta-Lister, 1999).

(Hotta-Lister, 1999, p. 131). Nevertheless, Kiralfy was proved correct to some extent: the British were certainly delighted by the exotic entertainments. But they were equally if not more impressed by the fine art exhibits, and such things as the extensive Japanese gardens constructed on the site. Evidence for this can be found in the words of Charlotte Salwey, author of a number of books about Japan, who visited the Exhibition three times, and who clearly found nothing improper or embarrassing to her ‘beloved Japan’:

Fair Japan,<sup>135</sup> with her busy population, who still are content to work with their hands, assisted in so many cases with the help of their families, make a delightfully impressive picture. ... They are not hurt by the rough and ready remarks of a staring crowd of pleasure-seekers, who sometimes overstep the bounds of courtesy. ... Several displays of the art of wrestling can be witnessed on payment of an inexpensive toll. The wrestlers are somewhat severely trained; they physically exceed both in height and girth the ordinary well-grown Japanese. Wrestling is a very ancient institution ... Japanese theatres and Halls of Magic have their attractions. They are supported by clever troops of performers who are untiring in their efforts to entertain sightseers. ... Some of the scenic and conjuring displays are of the ordinary type, others savour of the craft and cunning of Eastern life ...

(Salwey, 1910, pp. 376-379)

Although Salwey may have been indulging in the exoticism common to the era, her enjoyment of not only the arts and cultural exhibits, but of the side-shows as well, is evident. In fact, British impressions of the Exhibition were extremely favourable, and newspapers and journals praised the exhibits, the enormous value of the Exhibition in educating the British about Japan, the progress being made there in terms of modernisation, and the efficiency of the Japanese in running their section of the Exhibition (Hotta-Lister, 1999, pp. 128-131).

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<sup>135</sup> “Fair Japan in Essence” was the name of one section of the Exhibition, where the daily lives and work of Japanese craftsmen and women could be seen, and side-shows enjoyed.

Nevertheless, as soon as the Exhibition opened, complaints were being voiced within the Japanese community in England. Uchigasaki Sakusaburo, a graduate of Tokyo University studying at Oxford at the time of the Exhibition, visited it in the opening month of May 1910, and commented that he felt pity for those Japanese who did not appreciate the value of the Exhibition. As Hotta-Lister noted, this revealed that even this soon after the opening, negative comments were being made:

[Uchigasaki's] comment suggests that he was already familiar, even at that early stage, of such views which discredited the efforts of those who were involved with the Exhibition.

(Hotta-Lister, 1999, p. 143)

It is interesting to note that although Ambassador Katō reported back to Japan that there was little interest in the Exhibition being expressed in London in the months prior to the opening, a disinterested observer like Uchigasaki could assert that there had been a pre-Exhibition “fever” which had inspired considerable writing and debate (Hotta-Lister, 1999, pp. 53, 143). This could imply that Katō was hoping to conceal the criticism that was already emerging, as it is unlikely that as Ambassador, and with his involvement in the preparations, he would have been unaware of such debate. Further evidence of early dissatisfaction with the Exhibition can be found in a letter from Mutsu Hirokichi to Hara Kei in June 1910, informing him that there had been some complaints about the Exhibition from certain Japanese visitors in England, but that Hara should not worry as this was only the result of a misunderstanding (Cited in Hotta-Lister, 1999, p. 137).

In Japan, however, forewarning of the growing reaction against the Exhibition appeared in a letter to the *Japan Chronicle* of 24 July 1910, in which a Japanese visitor to London condemned what he had seen and predicted severe political ramifications:

... that the Anglo-Japanese Exhibition is a great blunder on the part of the Japanese government is the public opinion among the Japanese in England, and it is not impossible that in the coming session of the Diet the government will be impeached for its responsibility in connection with this fiasco.

(Hotta-Lister, 1999, p. 134)

The Ainu and Taiwanese exhibits too began to attract negative comment in Japan, on the grounds that the way those cultures were portrayed was at best, controversial, and at worst, demeaning (Itoh, 2008, p. 197). Typical of the press articles that began to fill the newspapers in Japan are those printed by *Yorozu Chōhō* entitled ‘Lessons to be Learned from the Japan-British Exhibition’ [*Nichi-Ei Haku no kyōkun*], which criticised the Japan Village as an embarrassment, and a later article entitled ‘The Great Failure of the Japan-British Exhibition’ [*Nichi-Ei Haku no dai-shippai*], which reported that a government official visiting England had informed the Ministry of Education in Japan that contrary to expectations the Exhibition was an utter failure (Cited in Itoh, 2008, p. 193).

By September, Ōura felt it necessary to attempt to forestall a political backlash by holding a press conference to explain the government’s position, and argue against the wave of negative opinion. In a rather surprising counter-move, Ōura claimed that the negative views of the side-shows and other entertainments were being expressed by Japanese who were resident in the West; perhaps they had forgotten that what had been displayed at the Exhibition was the sad but true state of affairs in Japan. To have attempted

to deceive the British public by presenting a more favourable picture of Japan, he asserted, would only have led to worse embarrassment later (Hotta-Lister, 1999 p.136).

Despite the efforts of Ōura and others, as predicted, the public outcry over the Exhibition led to the denunciation in the Diet session of 24 January 1911 of the ministers involved with the Exhibition. Foreign Minister Komura was accused of deception in persuading the government to contribute funds for the Exhibition on the grounds that it would be a joint undertaking of the Japanese and British governments.<sup>136</sup> The government was also blamed for having been associated with Kiralfy – a man of considerable notoriety – and details of court cases against him following the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition were tabled. The government was then accused of misleading the Diet by giving the impression that the aim of the Exhibition was to bolster the vital importance of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Visitors to White City, however, had seen no evidence of any connection being made between the Exhibition and the Alliance; on the contrary, the event had widely come to be known in England as ‘the Japanese Exhibition’, rather than as even the ‘Japan-British Exhibition’. Something of a “blame-game” emerged among politicians in the wake of the scandal. On receiving reports of trouble regarding the Exhibition from Mutsu Hirokichi, Hara Kei immediately launched into a vitriolic attack on Ambassador Komura, accusing him of having deceived the Japanese public (Cited in Itoh, 2008, p. 195). Komura and Ōura were forced to desperately justify themselves against the fierce indictments made against them, insisting that, ‘the righteous and honourable actions they had taken to further a good relationship between the two countries had accomplished the worthy aims of the government’ (Hotta-Lister, 1999, p. 136). Ōura also defended the government’s position

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<sup>136</sup> In fact, the British government had never provided financial or any other support beyond moral to exhibitions held in the country, including the Great Exhibition of 1851 (Priestley, 1974, pp. 63-80).



with regard to Kiralfy, and attempted to dismiss personal criticism of the entrepreneur as beneath the government's consideration.

#### 4.5.2 Political Obfuscation

The Exhibition came to be regarded as a public-relations disaster, despite being viewed as a success in Britain. The enormous sums of money spent by the Japanese government – over two million yen at a time of severe financial constraints following the Russo-Japanese War – which made it the biggest event of its kind Japan ever held up until the 1970s, were viewed as largely wasted:

There were two contrasted views of the Exhibition among the Japanese, though the negative opinion, 'the Exhibition was a failure', dominated in Japanese newspapers and elsewhere. Hence this Exhibition seems to have been widely accepted as a failure: as a result, it is not known widely nor generally referred to ... It is difficult to tell how this came about. It was as though it had become a deliberate policy of the government and media, or as though there existed a tacit agreement among those who had, directly or indirectly, been involved in, or who had seen, the Exhibition not to raise the subject again after the humiliating accusation raised in the Diet in January 1911, because perhaps they felt ashamed to talk about it. Considering the great initial enthusiasm, good intentions, and expectations which had been shown by all sectors on the Japanese side during the preparatory period and the beginning of the Exhibition, very negative views about the Exhibition ... were expressed by the Japanese articulate élite class ... Consequently, in the Japanese historical context, the 1910 Japan-British Exhibition had to take second place to such minor events as Captain Shirase's North Pole [*sic*] expedition or other events of similar magnitude ...

(Hotta-Lister, 1999, pp. 54-55, 182-183)

Hotta-Lister came across no explicit or documentary evidence of a 'deliberate policy of the government and media', nor of a 'tacit agreement' not to mention the Exhibition after the embarrassing Diet accusations. Likewise, she found no explicit indications of Shirase's

expedition being deliberately foregrounded to force the scandal from prominence (Hotta-Lister 2008, pers. comm., 1 February). It is far from likely, however, that evidence of such policies or actions would have been preserved in the historical record.

Nevertheless, there is cause to suspect that there could well have been political collusion to obfuscate the Exhibition scandal issue, through the promotion of the Shirase expedition. A precedent for such machinations can be found in the government's forcing of Ōkuma's resignation in 1881 over his opposition to the under-priced sale of government assets in Hokkaido. The government was well aware of Ōkuma's popularity with the public, and so on the same day that Ōkuma's resignation was made known, it announced an Imperial Edict proclaiming 1890 as the date for convening the long-anticipated Diet; 'Thus the government attempted to assuage public indignation,' Lebra stated, 'and to draw attention away from the purge of Ōkuma' (Lebra, 1973, p. 52).<sup>137</sup> Hence, it is clear that such techniques of obfuscation in the political arena were not unknown, and that Ōkuma himself in the past had been victim of this kind of ploy played on the public. Considering Ōkuma's proclivity for moral compromise in the cause of political convenience, that for political or personal gain he may have been ready to employ the same subterfuge that had been used against him would not be surprising.

To further investigate the possible relationship between Ōkuma's championing of the Shirase expedition, and the Japan-British Exhibition scandal, it is necessary to consider Count Ōkuma's connections to the Exhibition, particularly through his relationships with Baron Ōura Kanetake, Ambassador Katō Takaaki, and the Iwasaki Family.

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<sup>137</sup> Further information on Ōkuma's forced resignation can be found in Fraser (1967).

### Ōkuma's connections to Ōura Kanetake

Baron Ōura Kanetake, Minister of Agriculture and Commerce in 1910, served as President of the Japanese section of the Japan-British Exhibition. Ōura was Chief Inspector of Police in the Yamagata Cabinet of 1898 to 1900, and was Minister for Home Affairs twice between 1912 and 1915. In 1915, he was serving in this role under Prime Minister Ōkuma when Ōura was implicated in the election scandal discussed above; Ōura's payment of bribes led to the return of Ōkuma to the premiership, although ultimately to the collapse of his government. On that occasion, Ōura was allowed by Justice Minister Ozaki to resign in order to avoid arrest (Lebra, 1973, p. 125). In fact, Ozaki had been suspicious of Ōura from the beginning, and accurately foresaw what would happen:

From the early days of the Diet he [Ōura] employed his exceptional powers of persuasion, augmented by money, to corrupt members of the Diet. ... I was on my guard from the beginning when we both served in the Ōkuma government against the possibility of [Ōura's] interfering in elections and buying members to influence voting.

(Ozaki, 2001, pp. 297-298)

When Ōura was later recommended for the position of Home Minister in Ōkuma's second cabinet, Ozaki objected strenuously, and Ōura was forced to accept the role of Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce. Ōkuma nevertheless allowed him to act as *de facto* Home Minister, despite Ozaki's protestations (Lebra, 1973, p. 117).

As for his connection to the Japan-British Exhibition, Ōura was appointed President of the Japanese section of the Exhibition by then Prime Minister Katsura Tarō. Instrumental in obtaining many of the art works sourced in Japan, Ōura headed the Japan-British

Exhibition Arts Promotion Association. He was supported in this role by a number of prominent people, including both Ōkuma and Iwasaki Hisaya. The Association was formed in 1909 with the aim of encouraging the loan of arts and crafts from both private collections and government and religious organisations. In addition, it collected donations to be used in assisting artists to produce suitable works especially for the Exhibition. Ōura reportedly visited the heads of old *daimyō* families in person to persuade them to make their art treasures available for the Exhibition (Hotta-Lister, 1999 pp.51, 62). Ōura was thus fundamentally important to the successful running of the Exhibition. At the same time, his name was at stake should the Exhibition fail. It should not be forgotten that through his role as President of the Exhibition and as head of the Arts Promotion Association, Ōura had ties to a great number of important people, including Prince Arthur of Connaught,<sup>138</sup> Honorary President of the Exhibition, and Prince Tokugawa Iesato<sup>139</sup> (Mutsu, 2001, p. 106).

#### Ōkuma's connections to Katō Takaaki

Ōkuma's relationship to Katō Takaaki, Japanese Ambassador to Great Britain at the time of the Japan-British Exhibition, began much earlier than that event. In 1887, Katō, who was employed in the private sector in England, decided to return to Japan and enter government service. Thanks to his overseas experience, he became private secretary to Ōkuma, who was at that time Foreign Minister under Prime Minister Itō Hirobumi. Ōkuma and Katō

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<sup>138</sup> Prince Arthur of Connaught was a grandson of Queen Victoria and husband of Edward VII's daughter. After the death of King Edward in 1910 just prior to the opening of the Japan-British Exhibition, and the accession of George V, Prince Arthur frequently undertook royal duties on behalf of the new king.

<sup>139</sup> Prince Tokugawa Iesato was the first head of the Tokugawa clan following the Meiji Restitution. He became head of the clan after the resignation of the last *shōgun*, Tokugawa Yoshinobu, Iesato's adoptive father.

worked together on such important issues as the revision of the Unequal Treaties, and the formation of an Anglo-Japanese Alliance (Minichiello, 1983). He was appointed Foreign Minister in the 1906 Saionji Cabinet, but soon resigned as he was opposed to the Cabinet's move to nationalise railways, a step potentially damaging to Mitsubishi with which he had close ties ("Kato Takaaki," 2002, p. 763). Katō twice served as Ambassador to Britain, from 1894 to 1899, and again from 1908 to 1913. He participated in the formation of Ōkuma's second cabinet in 1914, and served as his Foreign Minister. In this role, he was responsible for the Ōkuma government's submission to China of the Twenty-One Demands, an attempt to secure Japanese hegemony over China. Katō resigned from the cabinet ostensibly in protest over the Ōura bribery scandal, although it is more likely that Katō was trying to leave the way clear for his appointment as Ōkuma's successor. This strategy proved unsuccessful, but Ōkuma continued to push for Katō's appointment as Premier throughout 1915 and into 1916 (Borton, 1955, p. 296; Lebra, 1973, p. 126).

Katō, as Ambassador to London at the time of the Japan-British Exhibition, was naturally deeply involved in the entire event; Hotta-Lister described him as 'one of the strongest promoters of the Exhibition'. Indeed, it was Katō who on behalf of the Japanese government signed the official contract with Kiralfy and Kiralfy's company, London Exhibition Ltd. (Hotta-Lister, 1999 p.48, 53). Katō was a close associate of Mutsu Munemitsu from the former's first stay in England when Mutsu took the newly-arrived Katō under his wing. When Katō subsequently became Ambassador, he employed Mutsu's son Hirokichi as First Secretary at the embassy. Mutsu Hirokichi later became Commissioner in England of the 1910 Exhibition (Ozaki, 2001, p. 287).

Hence, as with Ōura, Katō's name was intimately linked with the outcome of the Exhibition. At the same time, Katō's connection to Ōkuma was as close as that of his other *protégé*, Ōura. All three men shared close ties to the powerful Iwasaki family, which was also involved in sponsoring the 1910 Exhibition.

### Ōkuma's Connections to the Iwasaki Family

Closely linked with the above-mentioned figures were the Iwasaki family, founders of the Mitsubishi corporation. As noted above, Katō Takaaki began his working career in the private sector; he was in fact an employee of Mitsubishi, and enjoyed the patronage of Iwasaki Yatarō, the company's founder. Yatarō's daughter Haruji married Katō in 1886, and as a result, Katō enjoyed the support of the Mitsubishi conglomerate throughout his career ("Kato Takaaki," 2002, p. 763).<sup>140</sup> In 1924, Katō became Prime Minister, when his connections to the Iwasakis were so strong that his government was mocked as the 'Mitsubishi Government' (Allen, 1934, p. 547).

Katō was undoubtedly encouraged to pursue a position as Ōkuma's secretary by Iwasaki Yatarō, whose connections with Ōkuma far predated this. With the opening of Japan's ports at the time of the Meiji Restitution, there had been an enormous upsurge in

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<sup>140</sup> Ozaki Yukio summed up Katō's life succinctly, if sarcastically:

After graduating, [Katō] married into the main branch of the Iwasaki family. I do not know whether it was Iwasaki himself who discovered his admirable qualities or whether he was introduced by some other person, but the fact remains it was his enduring good fortune that Katō was always in demand and never had to face the adversities of life. This marriage may well have been the root of his failure. He had advantages enough without being married to an Iwasaki girl.

(Ozaki, 2001, p. 287)

foreign shipping which largely monopolised the coastal trade. The government attempted to reassert its control over maritime transport through the 1870s, when Home Minister Ōkubo Toshimichi decided to foster the development of the Mitsubishi Company, through his Finance Minister, Ōkuma (Yoda, 1996, p. 122). Mitsubishi had been founded by Iwasaki Yatarō in 1873 as Mitsubishi *Shokai* [Trading Firm], with its major focus on shipping, but the firm found itself struggling to survive following drastic discounting wars with its foreign competitors. After Ōkuma presented Iwasaki *gratis* thirteen ships bought earlier by the government, provided the company with extremely favourable loans to purchase more vessels, and granted them an annual subsidy of 250,000 yen, Mitsubishi was, however, well on its way to becoming a leading *zaibatsu*<sup>141</sup> (Norman, 1940, pp. 129-130). Iwasaki had also worked hard in developing the relationship with Ōkuma, reportedly engaging in ‘a great deal of campaigning behind the scenes – mostly at famous inns and *geisha* houses,’ to persuade Ōkuma into the above arrangements (Yamamura, 1967, p. 149).

The relationship between Iwasaki and Ōkuma changed the status of Japanese shipping beyond recognition in a few short years. As Yamamura noted,

Ostensibly [the government’s fostering of Mitsubishi] was to promote the Japanese shipping industry, but in examining the terms of “protection of infant industry” it would be extremely difficult to deny that Iwasaki’s “wine-and-dine” policy, and his financial contributions to the Ōkubo-Ōkuma alliance were not important reasons for such a policy as “protecting a Japanese company”.

(Yamamura, 1967, p. 150)

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<sup>141</sup> The *zaibatsu* were financial combines, namely groups of companies that engaged in business in several industries, such as real-estate, manufacturing, and electronics. A *zaibatsu* company group typically was a family-controlled monopoly, with a holding company at the top, and a bank from the same group providing finance to the other companies. They dominated large parts of the Japanese economy from the Meiji era until the end of World War II. The largest of the *zaibatsu* were Mitsubishi, Mitsui, Sumitomo, and Yasuda ("The Zaibatsu & Keiretsu," online).

That Iwasaki would “buy” the friendships of those who could later be of use to him was well-known, and the relationship between him and Ōkuma was an open secret (Yamamura, 1967, pp. 152-153). Indeed, resentment over Ōkuma’s favouritism towards Iwasaki, and the latter’s accumulation of wealth thanks to Ōkuma, resulted in the celebrated *Umibōzu* [Sea Monster] Affair of the 1880s. Ōkuma was accused of acting as the political agent of Mitsubishi, and of pouring public money into the company’s coffers, evoking the public cry of ‘*Umibōzu taiji*’ – ‘Subdue the sea-monster’ – a reference to Mitsubishi and its monopolisation of shipping (Norman, 1940, pp. 179-180; Yamamura, 1967, pp. 152-153).

Details of Ōkuma’s personal financial reliance on the Iwasaki family are unclear, although that Ōkuma was financially dependent on the Mitsubishi company was widely recognised at the time (Lebra, 1973, p. 73). The historian Kume Kunitake, writing at the time of Ōkuma’s death, was of the opinion that the Ōkuma mansion in the grounds of Waseda University was a gift from the Iwasaki family (Cited in Oka, 1986, p. 70). Ōkuma was deeply indebted to Mitsubishi for the latter’s support at the time of the Hokkaido *Kaitakushi* scandal of 1881, during which the company furnished both financial and other support for Ōkuma’s campaign to quash the ruling government clique. Mitsubishi also reportedly paid Tokyo newspapers to rally behind Ōkuma as champion of the people’s fight against the government over the scandal issue (Harrison, 1953, pp. 133-136).

That little changed over the coming years is evident from the fact that Ōkuma’s first, short-lived government, in power only from June to November 1898, was toppled by the outcry over a speech made by his Minister for Education, Ozaki Yukio, in which he said, ‘... let us imagine that I dreamt of a republican government. Most likely, Mitsui and



Mitsubishi would become presidential candidates'(Ozaki, 2001, p. 180). The government was forced to resign for Ozaki's having even hypothetically suggested Japan might become a republic, although, as Norman stated, '... the real interest in his remark lies not in his unfortunate slip, but in his testimony regarding the growing power of wealth in Japanese politics' (Norman, 1940, pp. 192-193).

Iwasaki Yatarō died in 1885, towards the end of the *Umibōzu* scandal, and well before Ōkuma's government was toppled. Mitsubishi's connections with the government continued after Yatarō's death, through his younger brother, Yanosuke. Yanosuke as Governor of the Bank of Japan campaigned hard to ensure that a new coalition cabinet was centred on Itō Hirobumi, Ōkuma and Matsukata Masayoshi; the Iwasaki influence within government at the time was more than clear from letters written to Itō informing him of Yanosuke's efforts in this regard (Banno, 1992, pp. 128-129).

Apart from their connection with the Japan-British Exhibition through Katō and Ōkuma, the Iwasaki family were also involved in other ways with this event. One of the most significant parts of the Exhibition, and one which excited considerable interest in Britain, was the extensive collection of fine arts that was sent from Japan. The value and importance of the collection is evident from an article by Lawrence Binyon, Keeper of Oriental Prints and Drawings at the British Museum and author of numerous books on

Japanese art, that appeared in the *Saturday Review* in 1910:

I wonder if the English public appreciates the extraordinary compliment which Japan has paid it? How many English collectors are there who would be willing to send their very choicest Reynoldses and Gainsboroughs and Turners to Japan? Yet Japanese collectors have sent us treasures quite beyond price, the finest examples of their greatest masters of all periods, from the eighth to the nineteenth century ...

(Quoted in Mutsu, 2001, p. ix)

The sentiment was repeated by Charlotte Salwey in her article in the *Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review* of 1910:

A very great privilege has been accorded to our nation – far greater than the general public have any conception. We are viewing among the collections objects of art, of historic value and industrial work that many a native Japanese would count a high honour to be allowed to view. ... Some of these are almost sacred belongings ...<sup>142</sup>

(Salwey, 1910, p. 355)

Among those who loaned many of the art treasures to Ōura Kanetake's Arts Promotion Association were the Iwasaki family, and as mentioned above, Iwasaki Hisaya was one of the supporters of the Association. Thus, any scandal associated with the Japan-British Exhibition would have cast far-reaching shadows over the names of Ōura, Katō, and the Iwasaki family, to name just three among the host of important and powerful people who shared ties to Ōkuma Shigenobu.

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<sup>142</sup> Some indication of the importance of the exhibits may be judged from the proviso placed upon loans from the leading temples in Kyoto that the government pledge that the treasures should never again leave Japan (Hotta-Lister, 1999).

### Obfuscation in Meiji politics

Of course, the above discussion of the ties between politicians and big business is merely indicative of the socio-political world of the late-Meiji and Taishō years, when personal connections between the leaders of the business world and those in the political sphere grew to represent a significant force previously unknown in Japan. The *zaibatsu* rose to be both the implements by which national policy was enacted, and the makers of that policy, sharing in the power wielded by bureaucrats and politicians:

So close indeed was the affiliation of the State and big business that it was sometimes difficult to tell where one left off and the other began. Increasingly the top figures in the big combines moved in and out of the government banks and the ministries handling economic affairs. They came to exercise great influence in the Diet through the political parties on which they lavished funds. They worked closely with the Army and Navy in the procurement of arms and equipment, and in financial imperialism overseas. They intermarried with the families of the peerage, ranking bureaucrats, politicians, admirals, and diplomats.

(Lockwood, 1968, p. 563)

Each Army and Navy clique, each bureaucratic faction, and each political party had its own connections, both personal and financial, among the *zaibatsu*; ‘the early affiliations of Mitsui with Count Kaoru Inouye [*sic*] and of Mitsubishi with Marquis Shigenobu Okuma are cases in point’ (Lockwood, 1968, p. 226). In such an environment, the necessity to actively protect the persons with whom one was bound by marital, business and professional ties was paramount. Hence, in a situation such as the aftermath of the 1910 Exhibition, where the reputations of persons intimately linked with Ōkuma were coming into question, and where mere association with the Exhibition was becoming an embarrassment, the likelihood of Ōkuma’s leaping at the opportunity to protect his circle of

friends and colleagues by distracting the attention of the public with an event such as an Antarctic expedition is extremely high.

Evidence of politicians other than Ōkuma acting in an ethically questionable manner with regard to the Exhibition can be found in the behaviour of Hara Kei, who served as Home Minister from 1906 to 1908, and again from August 1911, although he was out of office in 1910. Hara was normally an unbridled critic of the ruling government, and as noted earlier, had savagely attacked Komura for deceiving the Diet regarding the Exhibition. He was nevertheless uncharacteristically quiet at least publicly on the Exhibition itself. According to Hotta-Lister, Hara's reluctance to disparage the Exhibition was because of his close relationship with Commissioner Mutsu Hirokichi (Hotta-Lister, 1999, p. 137). Thanks to the patronage of Mutsu Munemitsu, Hirokichi's father, Hara had risen through the bureaucracy to the rank of vice-Foreign Minister. Hara's friendship with Munemitsu verged on adoration (Najita, 1967, pp. 14-15), and it was thus unlikely that Hara would publicly criticise an exhibition for which Hirokichi was in part responsible.

Hara was in many ways a similar figure to Ōkuma; an outsider to the ruling "cliques" in government, he fought against them for most of his life. At the same time, he was clearly an opportunist, ready to trade moral values for political advantage. In the words of Olson,

[Hara's] interest was power, his methods manipulation, compromise, and the pork barrel, his social ideas conservative. He never questioned the sovereignty of the Japanese emperor, and he had little or no desire to appeal to the people, although he was ready to profit when, as in 1913, they stood with their grievances in the streets.

(Olson, 1969, p. 321)

That Hara, Ōkuma's colleague in government and motivated by many of the same forces as Ōkuma, failed to speak out against the Exhibition because of his personal ties to Mutsu is significant, for it is symptomatic of a pragmatic code of behaviour that appears to have been endemic among politicians and public figures at the time.

Indeed, Hotta-Lister speculated that the Exhibition may have been used by politicians to achieve strategic, political, ends on a previous occasion. This was in regard to the deliberate choice of a propitious diplomatic atmosphere to announce the annexation of Korea in August 1910:

It seems ... likely that [Foreign Minister] Komura, knowing in July 1909 that the Exhibition in London would be taking place in 1910 and that the annexation would be carried out in the not so distant future, if not during the Exhibition, decided to take advantage of the Exhibition in London as a platform to justify Japan's rightful imperial role, just as Britain and other powers had been doing for decades in international exhibitions. ... It does not seem unreasonable to speculate that, in Komura's mind, the Exhibition could be a useful vehicle for justifying the annexation.

(Hotta-Lister, 1999, p. 83)

Hotta-Lister pointed out that Korea was represented quite favourably at the Japan-British Exhibition, prior to the annexation, as was Japan's officially recognised colony of Taiwan. Exhibits from Korea were intended to show the great advantages the Korean people were reaping from Japanese tutelage:

What was exhibited in the Palace of the Orient (which was an important feature of the Exhibition) was intended to demonstrate the great progress of, and improvement to, [Korea and Taiwan] since coming under the rule or influence of Japan in contrast to their former primitive state.

(Hotta-Lister, 1999, p. 84)

Mutsu Hirokichi in his speech to the Royal Society of Arts referred to earlier had similarly spoken of the advances being made in Korea under Japan's auspices:

In the history of Korea there have been many dark pages, and the turmoils and atmosphere of intrigue which have pervaded this nation have formed a great stumbling block to the steady advance to her progress [*sic*]. However, the country has at last awakened from her long slumber and is realizing the good effects of the administration of the new regime which is being appreciated especially by the more advanced section of the people.

(Mutsu, 2001, p. 202)

Hotta-Lister concluded that the Japanese government was attempting to give the British an impression that Japan had a 'rightful imperial mission' in annexing Korea, and at the same time, was hoping to ease anti-Japanese sentiment when the annexation was finally announced (Hotta-Lister, 1999, p. 86). Thus, the Exhibition was being used by politicians for a purpose far removed from the initial, overt purposes for which it was designed. Ōkuma had long been involved with the *Seikanron* [Conquer Korea debate]. He opposed the intentional provocation of Korea as an excuse for invasion in the 1870s, although Lebra suggested that this too was merely indicative of Ōkuma's opportunism; he had delayed making any commitment on the issue until it became clear where majority opinion lay (Lebra, 1973, pp. 23-24). Writing in 1895, Ōkuma noted that the leaders of the *seikan* movement had sought to use the debate for their own political, social, or private purposes (Calman, 1992, p. 320). In 1905, he stated that he believed the Korean people capable of greatness if properly governed – that Japan was the appropriate governor was implicit (Jensen, Davidann, & Sugita, 2003, pp. 109-110). Thus, he was in favour of annexation, although, publicly at least, not by overt aggression. In light of Ōkuma's position and connections, that he should have been unaware of the intentions of the government to use

the 1910 Exhibition as a means of justifying annexation of Korea, and assuaging foreign anti-Japanese sentiments after the fact, is extremely unlikely. Despite this, Ōkuma was able to maintain that the purpose of the Exhibition was the far more internationally acceptable goal of presenting Japan and Japanese culture in a favourable light in Britain. Ōkuma's readiness to acquiesce with the political obfuscation endemic to this era, and to using the Exhibition for other purposes is relevant to his later actions with regard to Shirase's *Kainan Maru* expedition, when he may have found the expedition could be used to obfuscate the Exhibition scandal issue.

#### 4.6 The Disadvantages of Ōkuma's Mediation of the *Kainan Maru* Expedition

It is clear from telegrams exchanged between the Japanese government and their Consulate in Sydney in May 1911 while the *Kainan Maru* was moored in Parsley Bay, that there was little official support for the expedition. Indeed, the official position was that the expedition should be terminated and Shirase and his men return to Japan. It is also clear from the telegrams that the government knew that this position would be opposed by Ōkuma. It is evident that on the government side there was fear of further international embarrassment on the heels of the Exhibition scandal, whereas Ōkuma, buoyed up by his vast self-confidence, possibly saw the expedition as a solution to the Exhibition problem. The telegrams reveal not only the official position regarding the expedition, but also expose the attitudes of officialdom towards Ōkuma. One telegram from the Consulate began with an

explanation of Shirase's intentions at the time:

Will remain in Sydney until the middle of August before returning south. With regard to stay, have sent request to Australian government. Captain Nomura returning to Japan to raise further funds.<sup>143</sup>

(Quoted in K. Shirase, 1986, p. 258)

After this, however, the text was in code, and was labelled by the Foreign Ministry 'Not to be sent to Count Ōkuma'. The gist of this part of the telegram included the following:

It is considered appropriate that they return to Japan as soon as possible to reconsider their expedition. Lieutenant Shirase, however, will not want to return thus to Japan after a futile attempt, and there is no possibility of gaining his consent. With regard to Shirase's course of action, the telegraphed instructions of the government are awaited. Advice is also sought concerning the sending of a recommendation to the Supporters' Group that Shirase be instructed to return to Japan.<sup>144</sup>

(Quoted in K. Shirase, 1986, p. 258)

According to Shirase Kyōko, Ōkuma was under some pressure from the government to instruct Shirase to return to Japan, and abandon what they regarded as his inevitably futile attempt on the Pole before further embarrassment was caused to the government. Ōkuma, however, resisted (K. Shirase, 1986, p. 258). It may be that Ōkuma placed more weight on the value of the expedition to himself and to his friends, than on the possibility that even more trouble might ensue for the government were the expedition to fail. It is noteworthy,

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<sup>143</sup> *Hachi-gatsu chūjun made taizai, sainanshin suru. Taizai no ken ni kanshite wa Gōshū seifu ni seikyū irai shita. Nomura senchō wa shikin chōtatsu no tame ichi ji kikoku suru.*

<sup>144</sup> [*Ōkuma Haku ni okuruna.*] ... *kakyūteki sumiyaka ni hongoku e hikikaeshi, saiki o hakaru no ga datō to kangaeru. Shikashi Shirase-chūi wa, kono mama munashiku kikoku suru koto atawazu to kikoku o gaen zezu. Kono Shirasera noshintai ni kanshite, hongoku seifu no kunden o aogitai. Mata kōenkai ni taishite mo Shirasera ni kikoku kankoku o dasu yō shidō aritai.*



however, that when Shirase realised that his chances of being first to the Pole were slipping away in the face of competition from Scott, Ōkuma sharply warned Shirase against any incautious action. Shirase had telegraphed Ōkuma of his fears, and insisted on setting out from Sydney in August 1911 in order to remain in the “race for the Pole”; Ōkuma clearly saw that to set out before sufficient funds could be collected in Japan by the Supporters’ Group would be to court disaster – the last thing he needed with the Exhibition scandal already ablaze. He therefore curtly informed Shirase that if he were to even consider departing before the end of October, the Supporters’ Group, of which he, Ōkuma, was the head, would flatly refuse any further support.<sup>145</sup> Ōkuma was an opportunist; if priority at the Pole was no longer a possibility, he was ready to change plans to achieve his ends, rather than make a romantic but inevitably ill-destined gesture. Shirase, who understandably wanted to make just that gesture in order to at least attempt to fulfil his life-long dream, had to be kept under control if Ōkuma’s intentions for the expedition were to be satisfied. Shirase Kyōko speculated on the deep regret that Shirase must have felt at this time (K. Shirase, 1986, p. 284).<sup>146</sup>

Of course, for all concerned in the Exhibition furore, news of Shirase’s being first to the Pole would have been gratefully received, and throughout 1911 Ōkuma made repeated requests of the government for financial assistance for the expedition. Contrary to expectations, he was refused on each occasion. Shirase Kyōko attributed this to the fact that Ōkuma had political opponents in the *genrō*, and that requests to the government for

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<sup>145</sup> In a telegram to Shirase in Sydney, Ōkuma stated, ‘*Hachi-gatsu shuppatsu ha mubō kiwamaru jū-gatsu matsu made shuppatsu naraba danzen kouen sezu.*’ [An August departure would be extremely foolhardy. Support for any departure prior to the end of October is flatly refused.] (Quoted in K. Shirase, 1986, p. 284).

<sup>146</sup> Kyōko (1986, p. 284) wrote, ‘*Shuppatsu magiwa ni natte kyōsō dannen no nen o osareta katachi to nari, Nobu no shinchū wa yahari munen de ippai de attarō.*’ [Having the idea thrust upon him of abandoning the race on the verge of departure, Shirase’s heart must have been filled with regret.]

support were consequently being ignored. Prime Minister Katsura Tarō who was then in power was particularly sensitive to the leanings of the *genrō* Yamagata Aritomo. Both Ōkuma and his associate Katō were renowned for their opposition to the *genrō*, so it is likely that any occurrence that would embarrass them would be welcomed by Yamagata and the other elder statesmen in the intensely anti-Ōkuma Yamagata faction (Tsuzuki, 2000, p. 184). In particular, Yamagata was of the Satsuma clan, which, together with the Chōshū clan, had wielded political power in Japan from the time of the Meiji Restoration for which they were largely responsible.<sup>147</sup> Ōkuma's fight against Satsuma-Chōshū dominance of power and insistence on democratic reform ensured his exclusion from this oligarchy (Lebra, 1973). At the same time, the Satsuma clan was historically supported by Mitsui, whereas Ōkuma's links with their business rival Mitsubishi were well-known (Tsuzuki, 2000, p. 145). Hence, Yamagata, and his Chōshū-born Prime Minister Katsura, would have opposed any requests from Ōkuma for assistance for his *protégé* Shirase (K. Shirase, 1986, p. 265). The importance of connections with the Satsuma-Chōshū power-base was emphasised by a speaker at a party held to farewell Shirase at the start of his expedition; the speaker lamented Shirase's lack of connections with members of the oligarchy, saying, 'If the Lieutenant had been born in Chōshū, he would have been sailing in a grand ship, and if he had been born in Satsuma, his preparations would have been more than adequately made ...'<sup>148</sup> (Quoted in Watanabe, 1991, p. 85).

That the Ōkuma-Shirase connection was not always of benefit to Shirase because of Ōkuma's antagonistic position with regard to the ruling élite has been largely ignored in the

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<sup>147</sup> For more information on this, see for example Borton (1955).

<sup>148</sup> 'Moshi Chūi wo Chōshū (Yamaguchi-ken) ni umareseshimeba ōbune ni noshi, moshi Chūi wo shite Sasshū (Kagoshima) ni umareseshime ni, jūbun no junbi shite ...'

literature. Shirase himself castigated the government bureaucracy for refusing him assistance, but blamed this on their short-sightedness and wish to avoid responsibility for the expedition, rather than on his patron's political affiliations (N. Shirase, 1942, p. 73). The obstinate refusal of the government as the reason for the lack of financial or other assistance – and in response Ōkuma's role as saviour of the expedition – has been repeated by numerous researchers. Perhaps the earliest account of the expedition in English, written by Ivar Hamre and based on the expedition Supporters' Group account *Nankyoku-ki*, gave credit for the success of the mission to Ōkuma, but failed to apportion any blame for lack of official support to that quarter: '[T]he difficulties ... seemed insuperable until [Shirase] succeeded in interesting Count Okuma in his plan.' Hamre criticised the government for its indifference towards geographical exploration and failure to support Shirase's expedition (Hamre, 1933, p. 411). Swan's early account also credited Ōkuma with "rescuing" the expedition, and condemned the government for its stolidity:

[T]he expedition was organized and led by ... Shirase, in the teeth of indifference and ridicule, both Governmental and public, in Japan. ... little financial support was forthcoming until Count Okuma, a Japanese nobleman and former Premier of Japan, formed the Association of Supporters of South Polar Exploration to back the plan.

(Swan, 1955, p. 31)

More recently, Wouters (2002, p. 21) claimed that, 'Shirase fought both government and public ridicule and was only successful [in obtaining contributions to support the expedition] when ... Count Okuma gave him support.' This version of events also dominates the Japanese accounts, including those by Tsunabuchi (1983, p. 327) and Watanabe (1991, p. 58). General histories of Antarctic exploration tend to follow this pattern, making claims such as that, '... Lieutenant Nobu Shirase ... met with indifference

and downright ridicule when he had asked the government for funds, and it was not until he received the support of Count Okuma ... that the public grudgingly gave enough money to meet his modest needs' (Capricorn Press, 1985, p. 206). Shirase Kyōko would thus appear to be the first researcher to make the connection between the lack of government support and Shirase's association with Ōkuma. This, however, was clearly a vital factor not only in terms of fund-raising, but in terms of the final outcome of Shirase's mission.<sup>149</sup>

The parallels between the Markham-Scott relationship and that of Ōkuma and Shirase are obvious: while mediators as prominent and outspoken as Markham and Ōkuma could certainly be an advantage to explorers, both in the short and long term, the friction such persons perhaps inevitably created with powerful and potentially useful groups could also prove a significant handicap.

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<sup>149</sup> Shirase himself, and most researchers since, have made much of the fact that the *Kainan Maru* expedition received no financial support from the government, and the implication has been that the Norwegian and British explorers were therefore "advantaged" over the Japanese. It should be remembered, however, that for example, Sir Clements Markham petitioned the British government for nearly seven years to obtain the funding for Scott's first Antarctic expedition, that Amundsen had had to borrow a ship for his expedition, and that Shackleton was only able to buy a run-down sealing vessel – the best he could obtain for the limited money he had. All of these men were forced, just as Shirase was, to go on the lecture circuit on their return in order to repay their debts, and to publish books. As Shackleton said, 'The difficulty that confronts most men who wish to undertake exploration work is that of finance, and in this respect I was rather more than ordinarily handicapped. ... for over a year I tried vainly to raise sufficient money to enable me to make a start ... but the money was not forthcoming, and it almost seemed as though I should have to abandon the venture altogether. ... As a matter of fact some of the promises of support made me could not be fulfilled, and I was faced by financial difficulties right up to the time when the expedition sailed from England. ... I found that some promises of support had failed me and had learned that the Royal Geographical Society, though sympathetic in its attitude, could not see its way to assist financially ...' On the basis of a number of personal guarantees, Shackleton was finally able to secure bank loans for £20,000, 'which could be redeemed only by the proceeds of lectures and the sale of [my] book after the expedition had concluded its work' (Shackleton, 1999, pp. 2-5).

#### 4.7 Ōkuma's Rejection of Shirase's Failure

Of course, Shirase's expedition was not a success in that it clearly failed in its initial and most important goal of being first to the South Pole. Prior to the expedition's departure, General Nogi had announced in the Akita Prefecture newspaper *Kaishinpō*, 'If they are not successful, they will bring disgrace on Japan'<sup>150</sup> (Quoted in Watanabe, 1991, p. 67). It was quite clear that being 'successful' meant being first to the Pole. This is again evident from the words of the expedition song, composed especially for the occasion of the departure of the *Kainan Maru*, and sung with enthusiasm by the crowds that gathered to see the men off:

Carrying the hopes of the Japanese people, ...  
On, to the very ends of the Earth, never resting until you reach the Pole! ...  
At the very point of the Earth's axis, ...  
At the raising of the *Hinomaru*  
Your cheers will rend the skies ...  
Truly, a courageous and heroic venture!<sup>151</sup>

(N. Shirase, 1913, p. 428)

This heroic triumph would take place, according to the song, after the men had dragged their sledges 'through ways uncharted'; success clearly entailed not only reaching the Pole, but being there first – before others had the chance to "chart the way".

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<sup>150</sup> *Seikō seneba, Nihon no haji.*

<sup>151</sup> This song is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

That the expedition had ended in failure was plainly acknowledged by the expedition purser Shima Takeshi in his account initially published in 1930, in which he stated,

We were not able to fulfil our initial expectations, including our attempt to compete with the world powers to reach the Pole, for which we hold a deep grudge against Norway and England for their having captured it first. Nevertheless, I believe that within the limits of the finances and facilities our team was able to prepare, it might almost be said that it was wrong to hope for anything more. It is just that we were not able to fulfil the heavy expectations of the Japanese people; the “souvenirs” we brought back were truly meagre, and the situation was undeniably humiliating ...<sup>152</sup>

(Shima, 1930, p. 587)

Nevertheless, when Shirase returned to Japan and attempted to apologise to Ōkuma for his failure, Ōkuma refused to listen, instead claiming that the expedition had been an outstanding success.<sup>153</sup> As Shirase Kyōko stated, however, it is far from likely that Shirase himself felt he had achieved an ‘outstanding success’ (K. Shirase, 1986, p. 306). Indeed, Shirase was reported as saying to Amundsen in 1927,

I fought a bitter struggle [on my expedition]. But my efforts were not successful. I have therefore brought on myself a burden of duty and responsibility to the Japanese people. Through your visit I feel a little compensated.<sup>154</sup>

("Amunzen-shi to Shirase-rou-chuui no akushu," 1927)

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<sup>152</sup> *Saishō no kibō wo tassuru koto no dekizu, rekkyō to kyōsō wo kokoromita kyokuchi no kyūkyoku mo, daku-ei ni senryō serareta urami wa fukai ga, waga tai ga junbi shita keihi to setsubi no han'inai de wa mushiro kore ijō wo nozomu no wa futō de aru to omou. Tada kokumin no tada no kitai ni mukuizu, seishi kitta [sic] miyage mo jitsu ni hinjaku, hazukashii shidai de wa aru ...*

<sup>153</sup> ... *jōjō no seikō da.*

<sup>154</sup> *‘Watashi wa kutō shita. Soshite mukuirarenakatta. Kokumin ni taisuru gimu to futan wo oute iru. Kyojin no shitsugen ni yotte ikibun demo tsukunawareta kimoichi de aru.’*

Thus, fifteen years after his return Shirase still felt a strong sense of responsibility for the *failure* of his expedition (K. Shirase, 1986, p. 319). Shirase again voiced his sense of having failed in his mission in his 1942 book, *Watashi no Nankyoku tanken-ki* [A record of my Antarctic expedition], which concluded with a lengthy apology:

#### Apology to the Nation

That, contrary to my expectations, I had to return home without having left my footprint on the Pole is a source of great bitterness to me, and the reason I felt I must apologise to the nation. That I planted the Japanese flag at [only] eighty degrees five minutes south and then returned to my homeland was completely unavoidable. Had we gone on, the team would only have collapsed on the ice field. There would be no cause for regret in collapsing, but then there would have been no way of completing our mission. ... Orders are light, duty is heavy, death is the end of effort but not the end of duty. If word came back that the Japanese Antarctic expedition members were dead somewhere on the Antarctic continent without having reached the Pole, how would the world have seen us? Undoubtedly, it would have become a national disgrace. Thus, at that point we had no choice but to choke back our tears, and return home. But whatever the reasons may be, having returned without reaching the Pole is, for me, something for which I must apologise to the whole nation.<sup>155</sup>

(N. Shirase, 1942, p. 295)

This would not appear to be an apology made simply to comply with Japanese cultural norms; instead, it would seem that Shirase is apologising from a genuine sense of personal responsibility for failure. Evidence for this can be found in the wording of the apology, which generally avoids standardised Japanese expressions of regret. In place of such expressions is a detailed explanation of the reasons for the failure, which could even be

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<sup>155</sup> *Watashi wa, jibun no yosō ni somuki, kyokushin e ashiato o in sezu shite, futatabi kokoku no tsuchi o funda koto wa, kaesugaesu mo tsūkon no itari de ari, tenka ni shasuru no wa kono ichiji de atta. Watashi ga nanei hachi-jū do go fun no chiten ni Nisshōki o tatete kikan shita no wa, mataku yamu o enai koto de atta. Soko kara sara ni susumeba, ikkō wa hyōgenjō ni taoreru nomi de atta. Taoreru no wa kui nai ga, sore de wa jibun no katta shimei o ikanisen. ... Mei wa karui shi, sekinin wa omoi shi, shi wa doryoku no shūkyoku de aru ga, sekinin no shūkyoku de wa nai. Nihon Nankyoku Tanken taiin ga, kyokushin ni itarazu shite Nankyoku tairiku no dokoka de shinda to tsutaerareta naraba, sekai wa, ikani wareware o miru koto de arō. Osoraku kokkateki chijoku to naru ni sōi nai. Koko ni oite ketsurui o nonde kikan shita no de atta. Shikashi, riyū wa tomo are, nankyoku no kyokushin ni tōtatsu sezu shite kikan shita no wa, watashi toshite akumade tenka ni shasanakereba naranu tokoro de aru.*

construed as excuses.<sup>156</sup> This suggests that Shirase is expressing a deeply-felt personal remorse, rather than simply conforming to culturally mandated modes of public behaviour. As a result, it can be concluded that he genuinely believed that his expedition was indeed a failure.

Immediately following the ‘Apology to the Nation’ is an addendum to the book, containing a jingoistic diatribe on the value of the expedition as a fore-runner of the imperialist expansion then going on under the title of the Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere (N. Shirase, 1942, p. 297). Whether Shirase truly subscribed to such notions, or whether this addition to the 1913 book was simply an attempt to “ease” the book through the censorship in force during World War II cannot be determined. But whichever the case may have been, it is even more likely that he would have portrayed the expedition as a great success for the Japanese Empire, had he not sincerely regarded it as a failure. In any case, he candidly wrote in 1942, ‘What I was aiming for was ... to reach the Pole’ (p. 296).<sup>157</sup> This was written two decades after the expedition had returned, and had he wished to claim that the goals of the expedition were anything other than priority at the Pole, he could easily have done so.

Thus, although Shirase clearly felt that his expedition had not ended in triumph, Ōkuma refused to admit defeat, still claiming it had been ‘an outstanding success’; anything less than victory would have been of little use to him in drawing attention away from the

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<sup>156</sup> Numerous studies have investigated the differences between the form and content of Western and Japanese apologies, emphasising the importance in Japanese apologies of reliance on formulaic expressions and avoidance of giving excuses (See for example Barnlund & Yoshioka, 1990; Sugimoto, 1998).

<sup>157</sup> *Watashi no mokuteki to suru tokoro wa, ... kyokushin ni tōtatsu suru koto de atta ...*



Exhibition scandal, or even in simply attracting attention to himself. It would instead have been just a weapon for his political opponents to use against him.

#### 4.8 Conclusion

As early as May 1910, negative opinions of the Japan-British Exhibition were being voiced by Japanese in England; by July the Exhibition was beginning to attract negative comment in the Japanese press. Shirase submitted his request for funding of an Antarctic expedition to the 26<sup>th</sup> Diet session in January of that year, and evidence suggests he was introduced to Ōkuma some time before May. Thus, Shirase's plans and the first indications of trouble brewing over the Exhibition would have come to Ōkuma's attention only a few months apart. The coincidence of a nascent heroic cause and the emerging scandal is likely to have presented an irresistible temptation to the ever-pragmatic Count Ōkuma, to champion one in order to contain the other. By acting as the mediator of Shirase's heroic status, Ōkuma was able to create a "smoke screen" that diverted attention from the Japan-British Exhibition to a new focus of public enthusiasm – a Japanese explorer hero to compete in the race for the South Pole. Earlier, the Japan-British Exhibition had been seen by the government as a means of achieving a goal quite distinct from that for which it was initially intended. In other words, it seems to have been regarded by the government as a useful tool for the spreading of propaganda regarding the Japan-Korea relationship, before Japan annexed Korea. Clearly, politicians were willing to use the Exhibition for other purposes should circumstances so dictate. By using Shirase's expedition to smother the Exhibition

scandal, Ōkuma would only have been acting in accord with the norms of the late Meiji political *milieu*.

Even had the Exhibition scandal not arisen, the considerable volume of data concerning Ōkuma's character suggests that would have been more than ready to use the Shirase expedition as a means of garnering public attention for his own sake. By "mediating" Shirase into a public hero, Ōkuma created a forum wherein he himself could bask in the public adulation he craved.

On the other hand, as Shirase Kyōko stated with regard to the reasons the government refused financial support to the *Kainan Maru* expedition, Ōkuma had many powerful enemies in government circles, and his outsider status with many of the political factions of the day was a considerable handicap, both to himself and to those he sponsored. Late Meiji Japan was still an era of intense clannishness; decisions were constantly made on the basis of factional alignments, and political persuasions of many in the political sphere were determined by regional origins. Shirase benefited enormously from Ōkuma's patronage in the public arena, and indeed it is more than possible that the expedition would not have gone ahead were it not for Ōkuma's skill in courting both press and public. Nevertheless, this same association with Ōkuma may have had significant negative consequences for Shirase and his expedition.

Finally, given Ōkuma's known proclivity for discarding people once they were no longer of service, it is perhaps not surprising that his sponsorship of Shirase ended once the Exhibition scandal had been stifled, and Ōkuma had regained the premiership in April 1914

in the midst of an “Ōkuma boom”. Shirase, set adrift from his greatest source of publicity – and his most important mediator – soon found that he was no longer the centre of public attention, and his heroic status swiftly faded.

## **Literary and Cinematographic Factors: The Implications for Enduring Heroic Status**

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates the effects of an explorer's written and cinematographic expedition record on heroic status, to determine what influence these factors may have had in Shirase's rapid fall from fame. Hence, this chapter firstly looks at the importance of an explorer's written account of his expedition in securing heroic status, and in ensuring that that status will endure. It is shown that although on some occasions an explorer's writing has resulted in lasting public acclaim, for other explorers, their published works have proved counter-productive in terms of creating and maintaining heroic status. The importance of expedition film footage in this regard is then investigated. Again, it is shown that film has had significant impact on the enduring heroic status of a number of explorers. The implications of the conclusions drawn for Shirase's demonstrated post-expedition obscurity are examined, and it is shown that neither his writing nor his film footage assisted in securing lasting fame. It is concluded that this was the result of widespread changes in both literary and cinematographic tastes in Japan in the early decades of the twentieth century that saw Shirase's works rapidly out-moded.

Juvenile literature in Japan only emerged as an independent genre in the 1890s, but within a decade had grown to an enormous extent, both in terms of the quantity of

publications, and in variety. At the start of the twentieth century, *seinen zasshi* [youth magazines] in particular had proved to be of great commercial value to publishers such as Hakubunkan, Jitsugyō no Nihon, and Kōdansha, who produced works ranging over fields as diverse as history, education, science, politics, sports, romance, and war (O. Griffiths, 2007 pp.3-4, 16). This period also saw the beginnings of cinema as mass entertainment, with documentaries in particular enjoying enormous popularity. The Russo-Japanese War was a particularly prevalent theme, and audience demand for documentaries, or pseudo-documentaries, on the War stimulated a rash of cinema construction across Japan. Although both developments should have helped build and prolong Shirase's reputation as an explorer hero, what were for Shirase and his contemporaries probably unforeseeable changes in the tastes of Japanese youth, in both literature and film, were already emerging as the Meiji era drew to a close.

## 5.2 Securing Enduring Fame through Writing

The importance of skilful writing in securing heroic status has been widely discussed in the literature of Arctic and Antarctic exploration, particularly with reference to the early twentieth century expeditions, but also to some extent for earlier periods. Correspondingly, it has been argued that a lack of such skill can have severe ramifications for the longevity of heroic status (See for example T. Griffiths, 1998; Le Guin, 1989, pp. 171-175). On several occasions, explorers have been able to ensure their place in the historic record largely through their ability to write an account of their expedition of sufficient merit to endure as a work of literature. Even when the explorer's feats were in reality less than

heroic, if he possessed a skill for writing, he could rescue his name from oblivion by penning a good account. Conversely, even explorers whose names should still be widely recognised and whose deeds are deserving of lasting renown have often been forgotten because they lacked the aptitude for constructing a written account that would endure.

One early example of an explorer who was able to secure lasting fame through his writing is to be found in the story of Elisha Kent Kane. On two occasions Kane was involved in search-parties looking for the lost British Royal Navy expedition of Sir John Franklin. On the first occasion, in 1850, Kane travelled as ship's surgeon, but the second expedition in 1853 was under Kane's command. Both missions were unsuccessful, and the second nearly ended in disaster when the men faced starvation after their ship became icebound. They survived only thanks to the kindness of the local Inuit who gave them food (Sale, 2002, p. 109). Forced to abandon their icebound ship and trek overland, the men were finally rescued by a Danish whaling ship (Sawin, 1997, p. 23). As for its initial goal of finding Franklin, no trace of that expedition was found; in short, Kane's mission was a failure.

Kane was, however, an adept self-promoter, and his books were best-sellers, winning praise in America and England; an article published in 1856 in the *Saturday Review* gushed,

We cannot but feel proud that the English language should be the mother tongue of the hero of such a tale. Looked at merely from a literary point of view, the book is a very remarkable one.

(Quoted in Riffenburgh, 1993, p. 43)

Kane's two books on the Franklin searches sold over 60,000 copies in the first year of publication, and were favourably reviewed over one thousand times. By the end of the 1850s, his accounts had sold over 130,000 copies (Sawin, 1997, Introduction), and it was claimed that only the Bible was to be seen in more American homes (Sale, 2002, p. 108). As Riffenburgh stated, 'Kane's efforts were a remarkable example of the power of the pen,' in that he was able to portray himself as 'truly heroic, a bold explorer and brilliant leader able not only to overcome nature but to master men.' Hidden behind his masterful writing, however, were Kane's 'weak leadership, erratic temperament, [and] his overwhelming ego.' Riffenburgh concluded that 'Kane was a far better writer than he was an explorer, and that ability ... made his reputation' (Riffenburgh, 1993, p. 43). According to Sawin (1997, Introduction), 'Kane seems to have understood what the American public wanted and used this knowledge to build both the accounts of his adventures, and the foundation of his much desired fame.' Thus, Kane created a heroic status for himself through his exceptional ability to write popular literature.

On the other hand, the case of Kane's contemporary, the Arctic explorer John Rae, illustrates the implications of poor writing ability for heroic status. Rae was a Scot who extensively charted the Arctic reaches of the North American continent. His accomplishments were undoubtedly worthy of international recognition, and included the mapping of the final navigable link in the North-West Passage. In particular, his discovery in 1854 of the fate of the Franklin expedition should have made his name known around the world, far more so than that of Kane who had failed in the same mission (McGoogan, 2002). Nevertheless, Rae was, according to Spufford, 'crucially bad with words, the medium in

which exploration was created for the public as much as in real, polar actions' (1997, p. 196). Rae was well aware of the handicap this represented, particularly when he found himself engaged in a battle in the press with Charles Dickens over the fate of the Franklin expedition. Rae produced evidence of the failure of the Franklin expedition to discover the North-West Passage, and worse yet, of the horrific deaths of all its members. Dickens dismissed Rae's evidence, discredited the reliability of his sources, and ridiculed him for his gullibility. Rae attempted to defend his position, frankly admitting his inadequacy for the task:

I am aware of the difficulties I have to encounter in replying to the article [by Dickens]. That the author of that article is a writer of very great ability and practice, and that he makes the best use of both to prove his opinions, is very evident. ... To oppose this I have nothing but a small amount of practical knowledge of the question at issue, with a few facts to support my views and opinions, but I can only throw them together in a very imperfect and un-connected form as I have little experience in writing and, like many men, who have led a wandering and stirring life have a great dislike to it.

("Dr. Rae's report," 1854, p. 458)

At this time, Dickens was already a famous author and founder of the widely popular magazine *Household Words*. Unfortunately for Rae, Dickens was also a close friend of the indomitable Lady Franklin who refused to accept her husband's fate. In the contest that ensued between the writer Dickens and the explorer Rae, the latter's ineptly phrased retorts offended the British public and alienated those who would otherwise have supported him (McGoogan, 2002, p. 230): 'Putting forward his views, as he did, with point and insistence his remarks were as a rule somewhat unwelcome' (Proceedings of the Royal Society, 60, 1896-97, quoted in Richards, 1985, p. 179). Spufford's analysis of Rae's 1854 'report'



quoted above, led him to the conclusion that Rae was aware of the importance of “public image”, but that his ultimate choice of ‘persona’ was his unmaking:

[S]ome amateur guile is at work in [Rae’s] statement, an accurate if clumsy notion on Rae’s part as to the strengths he ought to be playing from rhetorically. Look at me, the passage tries to say, I have *knowledge*, I have *facts* (what does Mr Dickens have?) and my *life* has been stirring even if my prose falters. Rae did sense that the persona he adopted would be important for the reception of his report. It ... required ... a frontman, a mediator<sup>158</sup> to smooth its passage ... Unfortunately the pitch he chose was one that has rarely prospered when more exciting rhetoric is available, an image of the explorer that has been regularly outbid by more seductive versions.

(Spufford, 1997, pp. 196-197)

As Spufford aptly put it, ‘There was no great appetite among readers for Rae’s incommunicative efficiency.’ In the end, thanks largely to Dickens’ literary ability, Franklin was acclaimed as the heroic discoverer of the North-West Passage, another explorer, Leopold McClintock, credited with ascertaining Franklin’s fate,<sup>159</sup> and Rae, a victim of his own lack of writing skills, forgotten:

Unlike almost every other major contemporary British explorer of the Arctic – Parry, both Rosses, Franklin, Back, Richardson, McClure, and McClintock – Rae was neither knighted nor accepted into the circle of national heroes.

(Riffenburgh, 1993, p. 30)

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<sup>158</sup> Spufford’s implication that had Rae had a mediator, his ultimate fate in terms of heroic status would have been different is relevant to the discussion of the importance of a mediator, investigated in Chapter 4. From the above quote, Spufford continues: ‘Ranked on Dickens’ side in the argument there were arrayed all the eloquent emotions aroused by the figure of Franklin ... Consider for a moment Rae’s implicit challenge to Franklin’s competence, and his situation can be seen as an anticipation of Amundsen’s, after Scott’s brilliant final testaments reached the press’ (Spufford, 1997, p. 197). Clearly, both the role of the mediator – in Franklin’s case, Dickens – and the explorer’s writing, are often intimately entwined. In this thesis, however, as there is no evidence directly connecting Count Ōkuma to Shirase’s publications, the importance of an explorer’s mediator, and of the explorer’s writing, have been treated separately.

<sup>159</sup> McClintock too was a skilful writer, and his account of his claims to solving the Franklin mystery became a best-seller. The inventory of Mudie’s Subscription Library, possibly the best indicator of the tastes of the English middle-class reading public at the time, included 3,000 copies of McClintock’s *The voyage of the ‘Fox’ in the Arctic seas*, more than any other book of that year, including Darwin’s *Origin of species*, Dicken’s *A tale of two cities*, and Hughes’ *Tom Brown at Oxford* (Griest, 1970, p. 21; Riffenburgh, 1993, p. 43).

Edward Wilson, who famously died with Scott in 1912, visited Rae's grave on the eve of departure of the Scott expedition in 1911. In a comment in his diary, Wilson implied that Rae was not the discoverer of Franklin's fate, and that a guide book he owned stating so was in error. The editor of Wilson's diaries only confirmed his mistake in 1972, stating in a footnote that it was in fact Sir Leopold McClintock who deserved credit, and not Rae (King, 1972, p. 263 footnote 3). Indeed, it is only in recent times that Rae's reputation has begun to be reinstated, in works such as Richards' 1985 and McGoogan's 2002 biographies. Nevertheless, as Richards stated, 'Rae has remained a largely neglected explorer' (1985, p. xi). McGoogan asserted that North Americans of the latter half of the twentieth century would not have allowed Rae's name to be ignored, had they only known of his achievements:

Nor do I believe that Americans of the new millennium will let such a figure remain any longer in the shadows of history ... this forgotten explorer deserves to be celebrated ...  
(McGoogan, 2002, p. viii)

In any case, it is evident that more recent researchers have noted that Rae deserved enduring heroic status for his deeds, but that he has instead been forgotten. While the reasons for this are many, one of the most important was clearly Rae's inability to effectively compete in the literary sphere with a writer of the stature of Charles Dickens.

An interesting parallel to Rae's story may be found in that of the Antarctic explorer Carsten Egeberg Borchgrevink. Described by Jones (1992) as 'A Forgotten Explorer', Borchgrevink has similarly failed to receive the credit due to him for his achievements. As Baughman (1994, p. 77) noted, 'Even though his adventure was a forerunner of [Scott's]

great national Antarctic undertaking of 1901, the efforts of Borchgrevink and his companions have been largely ignored by historians.’ Borchgrevink’s anonymity even in Australia, his adopted homeland,<sup>160</sup> is remarkable, considering that he may have been the first person to set foot on the Antarctic mainland, and was leader of the first expedition to spend a winter on that continent (Baughman, 1994, p. 109; Borchgrevink, 1901b Introduction). Borchgrevink was, however, described in terms redolent of Rae’s words about himself quoted earlier, as possessing a manner of ‘simplicity and directness that one expects from a man more used to deeds than words’ (24 April 1895 *Sydney Morning Herald*, quoted in A. G. E. Jones, 1992, p. 99). Indeed, Borchgrevink was a notoriously poor writer. When the men of Scott’s *Discovery* expedition found a letter left by Borchgrevink at his base on Cape Adare, its typically purple prose caused considerable hilarity: ‘Scott read it out to his companions who fell about with mirth, deriding it for its poor spelling, pomposity and general uselessness’ (Preston, 1999, p. 43). Scott also ridiculed Borchgrevink in *The South Polar Times*, the “in-house” magazine produced in Antarctica by the *Discovery* men. Relating a humorous fantasised childhood meeting with Borchgrevink, Scott wrote,

Once a great expedition man B-----K visited [my] parents and with a kindly pat on the head said [to me], ‘if you are good you may one day be nearly as great a man as I am’. I now had something to live for.

(Quoted in A. G. E. Jones, 1992, p. 100)

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<sup>160</sup> Borchgrevink emigrated from Norway to Australia in 1888. He worked on government survey teams in Queensland, and as a teacher in New South Wales. In later life, he returned to Oslo, where he died in obscurity in 1934 (Borchgrevink, 1901b, Introduction). Borchgrevink referred to himself as a British colonial, by virtue of his mother having been English, and his living in Australia (Baughman, 1994, p. 82).

Scott was mocking the grandiloquent style affected by Borchgrevink in his writing. When Borchgrevink asked Dr. Hugh Robert Mill, Librarian of the Royal Geographical Society, to edit his narrative, Mill declined: ‘I could not ... assent to Borchgrevink’s proposal that I should revise the manuscript of his book, the whole tenor of which jarred on me ...’ (Mill, 1951, p. 144). Ultimately, Borchgrevink’s account of the *Southern Cross* expedition was widely criticised, both for its inaccuracies and for its ‘journalistic’ style (Baughman, 1994, p. 109). Almost any short excerpt reveals the faults in Borchgrevink’s style, but perhaps nowhere more so than the very first page of his book, *First on the Antarctic Continent*:

While man’s knowledge of this Globe has continued to increase by the sacrifice of energy terminating many lives, the difficulties of obtaining further knowledge of the unknown territories have increased with the decrease of the unknown space.

But centuries have rolled onwards.

Strengthened by difficulties, man’s philosophy has forced the Arctic and Antarctic ice, and reached the glittering gates of the Poles where eternity rules in stern silence, awaiting the hour when time is ripe through the sacrifice of mortals, for man to be allowed to follow his philosophy and to enter the Polar crystal palaces, and to satisfy his thirst for certainty.

(Borchgrevink, 1901b, p. 1)

No doubt, few readers would have felt enticed to struggle through such a work, and it is no surprise that the book was ‘coolly received’ when first released in 1901 (T. Gjelsvik, in Introduction, Borchgrevink, 1901b, p. iv). Borchgrevink later published editions of his book in Dano-Norwegian and German, which likewise ‘held flights of fancy which made him vulnerable to further criticism’ in those countries (Crawford, 1998, p. 205). Evidently,

even in his mother tongue, Borchgrevink's writing was stylistically poor.<sup>161</sup> As it was, a review in the journal *Nature of First on the Antarctic Continent* was highly critical. After a relatively positive but brief introduction, the tone became less sympathetic:

This is the bright side of the medal; the reverse is not so pleasing. Mr. Borchgrevink would have done better if he had had another chronicler, for his literary style does him less than justice ... Is this an elaborate joke played by the author on the public, or is it a joke played on the author by some person unknown and not detected by him? ... The publication of this book will, we fear, tend to detract from the reputation which Mr. Borchgrevink has unquestionably merited by his organising power, his invincible perseverance and his successful completion of a considerable task. Had he been content to leave the discussion of matters he did not understand to the skilled members of his staff ... his expedition would have redounded to his credit in scientific circles, as well as amongst lovers of adventure.

("Mr. Borchgrevink's Antarctic expedition," 1901, pp. 468-470)<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Borchgrevink's Dano-Norwegian *Nærmest Sydpolen aaret 1900* [Nearest the South Pole in the Year 1900] contains passages which are as awkward and unwieldy as those found in his *First on the Antarctic Continent*. Two short examples illustrate this:

*Med Globusen for mig paa mit lille Studerekammer betragtede jeg de ubekendte Dele af Jordkloden. Og jeg forstod, hvorledes Menneskenes Kundskab om Jorden gradevis har udviklet sig ved Opoffrelse af Energi og Liv, og hvorledes Vanskelighederne ved at udforske de ukendte Dele er tiltagne, eftersom disse er aftagne i Omfang.*

(Borchgrevink, 1905, p. 1)

Sitting in my tiny study, with the globe in front of me, I contemplated the unknown parts of the Earth. And I understood how human knowledge about the world gradually had developed through the sacrifice of energy and lives, and how the difficulties of exploring the unknown parts of the world are increasing as they are decreasing in magnitude.

And:

*Men jeg stod ene, fremmed I et fremmed Land, og naar jeg nu ser tilbage over hin Tid med dens tidt saa haabløst udseende Arbejde og Kampe, saa er det, so mom den tilhørte Fantasiens uvirkelige Rige, som om den ingen Forbindelse havde med det Øjeblik, da jeg som Fører en stor og veludrustet Ekspedition stævnede mod Sydpolen med 30 kække Mand for at gore nye Egne af Jorden den menneskelige Kundskab underdanig.*

(Borchgrevink, 1905, pp. 6-7)

But I was alone, a foreigner in a foreign land, and when I look back on that time now, with its often so hopeless-looking efforts and battles, it feels like it belonged to some kingdom of unreal fantasy, as if it had no connection with that moment when I as a leader of a large and well-equipped expedition set sail for the South Pole with 30 brave men in order to subject new parts of the Earth to human knowledge.

(Translations courtesy of Carsten Levisen, Department of Linguistics, University of New England)

<sup>162</sup> After the appearance of this review, Borchgrevink launched into a series of rebuttals, including the following, which appeared in July 1901: 'Some rather venomous criticism of my book, *First on the Antarctic Continent*, has appeared in one or two periodicals. Had my book been intended to be what it is not – a scientific report upon our work in the south – the venom would to some extent be justified....' (Borchgrevink, 1901a). Unfortunately, these rebuttals only made Borchgrevink the subject of further derision: the father of Louis Bernacchi who served as geomagnetician on Borchgrevink's expedition wrote to his son, 'Your late (Continued over page.)

It is evident that, among the several reasons Borchgrevink has been forgotten in modern times, his literary ineptitude played a significant part. For his writing, packed as it is with overblown metaphors and self-aggrandisement, both distracts the reader from the events recounted, and at the same time forms an effective barrier to empathy with the narrator. As *Nature* noted, Borchgrevink's writing style was a hindrance to his expedition's being acclaimed not only in scientific circles, but also by 'lovers of adventure'. The final outcome of his literary incompetence was inevitable:

He who had so wanted to create an image of himself which would make the public accept and acclaim him as a hero, had succeeded in so alienating those he wished to impress that he was soon, to most people if they happened to think of him at all, just a slightly uncomfortable memory.

(Crawford, 1998, pp. 214-215)

Borchgrevink had become the 'forgotten explorer' Jones described.

At the peak of the Heroic Era of Antarctic exploration, the "Rae versus Kane" situation seen in the previous century was repeated in the writings of Roald Amundsen and Robert Falcon Scott, with Amundsen criticised for a paucity of literary ability, and Scott hailed for his abundant skill in this area. Amundsen's *The South Pole*, his account of his expedition

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chief has been lately entertaining the British public with some amusing correspondence through the columns of the *Times* ... Mr Borchgrevink got the worst of it at the end' (Quoted in Crawford, 1998, p. 211). A letter to the editor of *Nature* which was printed in the same edition as Borchgrevink's defence of his book, quoted above, again attacked his writing:

[The scientific results] which are to be found in the pages of Mr. Borchgrevink's account of the *Southern Cross* expedition afford food for reflection, but whether they could be more satisfactorily dealt with by a professional man of science or a professional humorist may be open to question.

(Plumstead, 1901, p. 278)

first written in Norwegian and then immediately translated into English (Rosove, 2001, p. 13), appears prosaic and overly subdued to the modern reader.<sup>163</sup> Even the success of priority at the Pole cannot stir Amundsen to any grandeur in his writing, but leads rather to a seemingly deliberate reticence, a refusal to leap into the realm of the poetic or sublime. After summarily dismissing his actually having arrived at the Pole as something which could not be ascertained with accuracy, he immediately launches into a description of far more mundane matters:

We reckoned now that we were at the Pole. Of course, every one of us knew that we were not standing on the absolute spot; it would be an impossibility with the time and the instruments at our disposal to ascertain that exact spot. But we were so near it that the few paces which possibly separated us from it could not be of the slightest importance. ... One gets out of the way of protracted ceremonies in those regions – the shorter they are the better. Everyday life began again at once. When we had got the tent up, Hanssen set about slaughtering Helge ... Helge had been an uncommonly useful and good-natured dog ... within a couple of hours there was nothing left of him but his teeth and the tuft at the end of his tail.

(Amundsen, 1913, pp. 121-123)

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<sup>163</sup> With regard to the quality of the translation, Hugh Robert Mill, Librarian of the Royal Geographical Society, stated,

The translator and publisher are to be congratulated on the admirable manner in which the work is done. Mr. Chater's rendering of the Norwegian narrative is so natural, easy, and free that it is often difficult to believe that we are reading a translation.

(Mill, 1913, p. 148)

Arthur G. Chater was a prodigious translator of works written in Norwegian, Danish and Swedish in the early years of the twentieth century. His translations include Fridtjof Nansen's *Through Siberia: The land of the future*, and the books of two Nobel Prize winners: Johannes V. Jensen's *Christopher Columbus* and Sigrid Undset's *Men, Women, and Places*. It is therefore unlikely that the translator was responsible for the perceived faults of Amundsen's *The South Pole*.

Amundsen even mocks the prose of past explorers who had, with more or less success, attempted to portray the wonder they felt on gazing upon the Ross Ice Shelf, known as the Great Ice Barrier in Amundsen's time:

The mystic Barrier! All accounts without exception, from the days of Ross to the present time, had spoken of this remarkable natural formation with apprehensive awe. It was as though one could always read between the lines the same sentence: 'Hush, be quiet! the mystic Barrier!' One, two, three, and a little jump, and the Barrier was surmounted! We looked at each other and smiled ...

(Amundsen, 1913, pp. 171-172)

William Heinemann, the future London publisher of Amundsen's *The South Pole*, despaired of his writing, commenting after an article by Amundsen appeared in *The Daily Chronicle*,

I am disappointed with the want of imagination he displays ... in even so thrilling a thing as his achievement. ... I cannot help feeling that however great Amundsen's feat is, he is not likely to write a good book.

(Quoted in Huntford, 1985, p. 517)

Even that staunch defender of Amundsen's reputation Roland Huntford conceded that, because of Amundsen's lack of writing skill, he could not compete with his rival Scott for enduring heroic status:

... quite simply, [Scott] was a better writer than Amundsen. Amundsen lacked the power of advocacy. He was too much the man of action; like so many of his kind, he squandered his talent on his deeds. ... 'The last of the Vikings' expected his deeds to speak for themselves ...

(Huntford, 1985, p. 526)



Riffenburg theorised that the primary reason Amundsen's works were not successful in the English-speaking world was his failure to realise the importance of telling an exciting tale, over recounting mere "achievements". That Amundsen did not become an enduring hero in the English-speaking world was a direct outcome of this:

Ultimately, ... Amundsen never gave the British and American public what they wanted. Not only did he not create exciting images in his books, ... he was possibly the one polar explorer who actually toned down what he had recorded in his journals. ... [Amundsen had not] learned that it was not achievements that were the key to journalistic hero-creation, but struggle and excitement.

(Riffenburgh, 1993, p. 164)

It may be, however, that Amundsen's literary failing was not his lack of skill *per se*, but in not giving the *English-speaking world* what it wanted. There are two reasons which can be advanced to explain this. Firstly, the way Amundsen as a Norwegian saw Antarctica was likely to have been radically different from the way an Englishman or American saw it. As Thomson noted, 'To read and follow Scott is to become overawed by Antarctica and its obstacles. But beneath Amundsen's skis it seems a tractable, sunny prairie where men are always vigorous and assured' (Thomson, 1977, p. 254). That Norwegians may indeed have viewed Antarctica as in many ways a 'tractable, sunny prairie' is supported by the comments of Tryggve Gran, the Norwegian ski expert on Scott's expedition. With the same matter-of-factness evident in Amundsen's writing, but absent from the accounts of the English, Gran noted on more than one occasion the familiarity of the scenery he encountered in Antarctica, writing, 'the landscape here is just like Norway' (Gran, 1984, p. 144). Ernest Shackleton, who, before Amundsen's triumph, had been the closest to the

Pole,<sup>164</sup> was aware of the difference between how an Englishman and a Norwegian would view the Antarctic landscape, informing Gran prior to the *Terra Nova* expedition that, ‘... as a Norwegian you will certainly feel at home when you get ashore’ (Gran, 1984, p. 10). Thus, the environment Amundsen encountered in Antarctica was not the alien and threatening environment encountered by non-Nordic expeditions. To men with the enormous collective experience of Arctic and sub-Arctic regions shared by Amundsen’s Norwegian team, Antarctica seemed far more like “home”. The famous Norwegian explorer, and Amundsen’s mentor, Fridtjof Nansen similarly acknowledged the familiarity of the Antarctic environment to his countrymen, citing several reasons for this:

[t]he Norwegians’ daily winter life in snow and frost, our peasants’ constant use of ski and ski-sledge in forest and mountain, our sailors’ yearly whaling and sealing life in the Polar Sea, [and] our explorers’ journeys in the Arctic regions ...

(Foreword to Amundsen, 1913, p. xxx)

At the same time, Englishmen such as Gran’s fellow expeditioner Herbert Ponting viewing the same Antarctic scenery wrote with awe of ‘a panorama of such austere and desolate grandeur as I had never hitherto seen’ (Ponting, 1921, p. 59). On first viewing the land of Edward VII Land in 1902, Scott similarly wrote of the extraordinary and unfamiliar in the landscape (Scott, 1905, p. 133).

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<sup>164</sup> In 1909, as leader of the *Nimrod* expedition, Shackleton had trekked to just 190 kilometres short of the Pole.

Wylie criticised the expectation that expedition accounts must necessarily portray Antarctic regions as bizarre or strange:

It seems that the prosaic and the everyday strike a jarring note in such a story for both casual and academic critics, running against an assumption that the distant ice-fields will be exotically different.

(Wylie, 2002, p. 179)

Obviously, when a Norwegian can say ‘the landscape here is just like Norway’, it is difficult to then ‘create exciting images’ as Riffenburgh phrased it, of the terrain encountered – to summon up the sense of the sublime that was so important to English language polar accounts (Spufford, 1997). Riffenburgh has claimed that this was a common “failing” of the early Scandinavian Arctic explorers:

... none of them dealt with the Anglo-American public and press in a way specifically designed to make them popular. They presented the Arctic as they saw it, not as the readership in England and the United States had come to perceive it, and certainly not as the press wanted to continue interpreting it. Thus, many Scandinavian explorers were unable to equal the reputations of their British or American contemporaries ...

(Riffenburgh, 1993, p. 158)

The second reason for Amundsen’s failure to give the English-speaking world what it demanded may have been that the readers of Norwegian and English literature differed quite markedly in their world-views. Wylie (2002, p. 179) noted that Amundsen seemed deliberately subdued in his writing, but argued that this was an intentional strategy designed to make his journey understandable to a contemporary Norwegian readership. Late-nineteenth and early twentieth century Norway was ‘a bastion of rationalist values’, where people held ‘a native utilitarian and realist perception of the natural world,’ he

argued. Thus, perhaps the only possible way of seeing, and then describing, an Antarctic expedition was one which, when compared with the romanticised landscapes drawn by English-speaking explorers, was necessarily prosaic:

Both the socio-economic elite (to which Amundsen belonged) and the broader peasant society of farmers and fisher-people ... encountered and appropriated nature with a degree of rational pragmatism. ... [A] distinctly classical, almost mechanistic understanding of nature's workings informed the beliefs and conduct of nineteenth-century Norwegians.

This is an especial feature of Amundsen's Antarctic diary, wherein the landscape's hazards are presented as cogs and springs within a methodical natural order, and where the necessary, indeed imperative response is prosaic, even subdued. ... In this sense ... Amundsen *nationalized* Antarctica and so brought it within the compass of his fellow Norwegians' understanding. ... If the Polar journey was to be made intelligible, *visible*, to this audience, it could be analogized to a ski-tour in the Norwegian mountains ... It might even be argued that such a characterization of Antarctica was the only one open to Amundsen, the only plausible vision he could distil from the rhythmic, habitual, inward-looking routine of Norwegian Polar being.

(Wylie, 2002, p. 179).

Thus, it is unsurprising that Hugh Robert Mill stated in his 1913 review of Amundsen's book that,

...the narrative of this voyage ... gives the impression of a rollicking time, and the predominant feeling, after reading the whole book, is that we have been following the exploits of a set of healthy, well-fed holiday-makers in the keen enjoyment of winter sports and rough yachting.

(Mill, 1913, p. 150)

The nuance of 'a ski-tour in the Norwegian mountains' was clearly emerging even in the English translation Mill was reading. Although Mill is evidently surprised by this – 'There is not a word of privation or suffering at all; the snow-blindness, frost-bite, and other slings and arrows of the Polar regions were simply laughed at' – according to Wylie, this is

exactly the style of writing that would have appealed to a contemporary Norwegian readership.

Murray (2006) has pointed out that at least with regard to Scott and Amundsen, there has been a bias in the literature towards reading their works as “pure” accounts of events. That their writings were not “pure” accounts can be seen through closer readings of the texts in question. That Amundsen may in fact have been writing exactly what a contemporary Norwegian readership demanded has to date not been investigated in any depth, at least in the English language literature, although it must be added that there is a paucity of credible research on almost every aspect of Amundsen’s life and expeditions. Nevertheless, there are a number of sources that would seem to indicate that his writing style may have enjoyed some popularity in Norway. To begin with, in a discussion of the differences between Amundsen’s writing and that of Scott, the Kristiania newspaper *Morgenbladet* observed in 1912 that Scott’s account gave

... the impression that terrain and weather were much worse [than] Amundsen’s. This can hardly be the case. From Amundsen’s account, one can see, for example, that he was forced to lie still for four days in a snow storm. But he considers it as something which belongs to such a journey – it’s ‘all in the day’s work,’ and he doesn’t make a fuss about it.

(Quoted in Huntford, 1979, pp. 531-532)

*Morgenbladet* clearly approved the “no-nonsense” attitude in Amundsen’s account, and evidently did not consider the failure to ‘create exciting images’ or emphasise the ‘struggle and excitement’ a negative aspect of his writing. Nansen, describing the tenor of

Amundsen's announcement that he had reached the Pole first, was similarly complimentary:

How like him and the whole expedition is his telegram home – as simple and straightforward as if it concerned a holiday tour in the mountains. It speaks of what is achieved, not of their hardships. Every word is a manly one. That is the mark of the right man, quiet and strong.

(Foreword to Amundsen, 1913, p. xxxi)

The idea of a holiday in the mountains appears yet again, suggesting the importance of this notion to Norwegian sensibilities. In any case, the lack of 'fuss' in Amundsen's *The South Pole* was a sore handicap when what Riffenburgh referred to as 'the biggest fuss in the history of exploration' – news of the Scott tragedy – became public soon after publication of Amundsen's work. Amundsen's accomplishment was completely overshadowed by the Scott tragedy. In terms of sales, Amundsen's book consequently was not the success he had hoped. According to Rosove, who has researched publication details of all Antarctic expeditions since the eighteenth century,

Among English-language readers, [Amundsen's] account, compared to the principal narratives of Scott's last expedition, went largely ignored for many years: demand was so light that about half a century passed after the one-volume Lee Keedick edition [1925] before the C. Hurst edition [1976] was published.

(Rosove, 2001, p. 16)

Yet again, the failure to secure enduring heroic status was intimately tied to the explorer's writing, and the man referred to by Riffenburgh (1993, caption to Plate 13) as 'the most accomplished of modern explorers', who had been the first to sail the North-West Passage, the first to reach the South Pole, the first to fly across the Arctic Basin, and the first to reach

both poles of the earth (Huntford, 1979, pp. 103, 556), was effectively snubbed by the public in the English-speaking world. Whether Amundsen failed to secure a place as an enduring hero simply because of a lack of writing skill as Huntford and others have suggested, or whether he was guilty of writing in a “Norwegian” style that did not appeal to English readers, or indeed whether he could not write of scenes exotic and sublime because he did not see them that way, the outcome was the same; Amundsen’s *writing* was the significant factor in his taking a distant second place in terms of lasting fame to his rival, Scott.<sup>165</sup>

In contrast to the criticism Amundsen’s books have received, Scott has been consistently praised over the near-century since his death for the expressiveness and lyrical ingenuity of his writing. Citing the account of the *Terra Nova* expedition, published as *Scott’s Last Expedition*, even Huntford, the most vitriolic of Scott’s critics, conceded Scott’s extraordinary literary ability; as he put it, ‘Scott had known how to speak to his countrymen’ (Huntford, 1985, pp. 520-521).<sup>166</sup> King (1972, p. xvi) referred to ‘Scott’s powerful literary genius’, while Jones discussed Scott’s ‘[l]yrical prose [which] conveys the

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<sup>165</sup> An interesting example of how fully Scott’s name has eclipsed that of Amundsen was provided by Pinsdorf, who cited an episode of the popular American television quiz show ‘Jeopardy’ where the three alternative answers given as to the discoverer of the South Pole were ‘Scott’, ‘Shackleton’, and ‘Byrd’ (Pinsdorf, 2002, p. 294).

<sup>166</sup> Huntford, the most famous “de-bunker” of the Scott legend, accused Scott of using his literary ability to “cover up” both his failure to reach the Pole first, and his responsibility for the deaths of his companions. Scott’s supporters have bitterly resented this implication. Griffiths has taken a middle path, suggesting merely that ‘in the white noise of the enshrouding blizzard, the written word assumed extraordinary power,’ and claiming that ‘Scott’s life and end was [*sic*] shaped by the power of narrative’ (T. Griffiths, 1998, p. 25). Huntford, in debunking the Scott legend, is nevertheless credited with having ‘rescue[d] Amundsen ... from relative historical obscurity’ (Beck, 1987, p. 33).

awesome beauty of Antarctica' (M. Jones, 2005, p. xvii). Crane, in a recent biography of Scott, praised the clarity of his writing:

[The text has] an organisation so limpid and undemonstrative that it almost goes unnoticed. ... [O]ne only has to read other sledging accounts – or paraphrases, summaries and plagiarisms of Scott himself – to become aware of the unusual powers of comprehension and planning that he brought to the business of both exploration and writing. No one can marshal detail on the page like Scott. Nobody can make the logistical complexities of a journey read so straightforwardly. Nobody can make so lucid and explicable an experience of being lost. Nobody fix a physical feature and make it so palpably real.

(Crane, 2005, p. 320)

In comparison with the writings of Amundsen, or even those of Scott's 'prop and advisor',<sup>167</sup> the artist and scientist Edward Wilson, it is Scott's writing that shines, both for the imagination it reveals, and for its simple technical excellence.<sup>168 169</sup> In Burnham's energetic terms, 'It was in his skill as a writer that Scott in particular scored over his rivals' (Burnham, 2000, p. 20).

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<sup>167</sup> Wilson was so referred to by Charles Wright, glaciologist on the *Terra Nova* expedition (King, 1972, p. xiii).

<sup>168</sup> Le Guin has written in relation to this as follows: '[Scott's] companion Edward Wilson, whose paintings are perhaps the finest visual record of Antarctica, kept a diary of the polar journey too. Wilson was a far sweeter, more generous man than Scott, and his diary is very moving, but it has not the power of Scott's – it is not a work of art ...' (Le Guin, 1989, p. 175).

<sup>169</sup> For a vastly more in-depth analysis and discussion of Scott's writing than is possible here, see Murray (2006).



But literary dominance was to have far greater implications than simple one-upmanship, for it was Scott's writing ability that ensured his lasting fame:

We do not remember Captain Scott because he was a great explorer but because he composed the most haunting journal in the history of exploration. Many pioneering travellers, John Hanning Speke, say, and even James Clark Ross, are largely forgotten. But Scott carved his name on the nation's psyche by penning a last testament of duty and sacrifice, which would resonate through the Great War and beyond. The story of Scott of the Antarctic is part of popular memory in Britain today ... [T]he last journals retain the power to captivate. ... And it is the insistent beat of anxiety, undermining the platitudes of patriotic duty and religious faith, which draws in the modern reader ...

(M. Jones, 2005, p. xvii)

Diamond (1989, p. 73) similarly asserted that, 'The image of Scott evoked by [his] writings established his place among the heroes of twentieth-century scientific exploration.' Rosove concurred with this, stating, 'The eloquence of Scott's diary, last letters, and "Message to the Public" assured him legendary status and immortality' (Rosove, 2002, p. 5).

Finally, it should be noted that Scott himself was not unaware of his ability, and appears to have worked at developing his innate talent. Hence, the lists of impressions he jotted down in his diary, trying out, as it were, a range of descriptive images for possible future use:

The seductive folds of the sleeping-bag.

The hiss of the primus and the fragrant steam of the cooker issuing from the tent ventilator.

The small green tent and the great white road.

...

The drift snow like finest flour penetrating every hole and corner – flickering up beneath one's head covering, pricking sharply as a sand blast.

...

The vast silence broken only by the mellow sounds of the marching column.

(Scott, 1913, pp. 153-154)

Scott had, of course, already penned a successful work prior to the *Terra Nova* expedition – his *The Voyage of the Discovery*, published shortly after his return from the 1901–1904 British National Antarctic Expedition. This earlier work had received positive critical reviews, and sold well. In fact, the first printing sold out within a few months (Pound, 1966, p. 121). The British magazine the *Spectator* proclaimed the book ‘the ablest and most interesting record of travel to which the present century has yet given birth’ (Quoted in M. Jones, 2003, p. 69), while the *Nation* classed it ‘among the foremost books of travel and discovery which a half-century has brought out’ (Quoted in Rosove, 2001, p. 342). Scott himself commented, ‘I worked very hard on my book, and I don’t deny that I am pleased that it has proved popular with the public’ (Quoted in Crane, 2005, pp. 321-322). Nevertheless, he did not take his talent for writing too seriously:

It is a good lesson – though it may be a hard one – for a man who has dreamed of a special (literary) fame and of making for himself a rank among the world’s dignitaries by such means, to slip aside out of the narrow circle in which his claims are recognised, and to find how utterly devoid of significance beyond that circle is all he achieves and all he aims at.

(Scott, 1913, pp. 419-420)

While in this moment of reflection upon his life Scott was able to put into perspective the relative unimportance of one individual’s literary fame in the wider world, the passage nonetheless reveals as nowhere else how important literary success was for Scott – how he had dreamed of it. These dreams were encouraged by the close friendships he had developed with the then-famous writers J.M. Barrie, author of *Peter Pan, or the Boy Who Wouldn’t Grow Up*, and A.E.W. Mason, author of *The Four Feathers* and other popular adventure novels (Pound, 1966, p. 118). The quote above suggests that Scott saw his ultimate goal of making a place for himself among society’s élite, as Barrie and Mason had

done, as being achievable not through expeditions to the Antarctic *per se*, but via his books. Thus, Scott saw his voyages of discovery not so much as the direct means by which he could raise his social status and income, as has been suggested (See, for example, Huntford, 1985, pp. 132-133), but rather as the necessary ingredient for his penning of books which would lead to this goal. Scott the explorer realised the overwhelming importance of literary success to long-term fame.

Griffiths (1998, p. 25) compared the writing of Amundsen and Scott, and argued that in their Polar accounts, '[s]piritual and moral barriers needed to be breached as much as geographic ones. Scott travelled on both planes, Amundsen on only one.' Scott had 'carved a moral universe out of the amoral, inorganic ice,' whereas Amundsen in Griffith's opinion had merely given an account of reaching the Pole first. Le Guin was one of the few commentators to approve of Amundsen's account, although she clearly favoured Scott's writing:

Amundsen's relation of his polar run is interesting, informative, in some respects admirable. Scott's journal is all that and very much more than that. I would rank it with Woolf's or Pepys's diaries, as a personal record of inestimable value, written by an artist. ... it was as that unheroic creature, a writer, that he gathered, garnered, saved what could be saved from defeat, suffering, and death. Because he was an artist, his testimony turns mere waste and misery into that useful thing, tragedy.

(Le Guin, 1989, p. 175)

It has been claimed that, 'Of all the great explorers of the Heroic Age Scott was the only one ... who had the literary talent to make imaginative sense of his life ...' (Crane, 2005, p. 38). This may, however, be overstating the case. It might be more accurate to say that Scott was one of the few Antarctic explorers with the talent to make imaginative sense of his life

in a way that still inspires an empathetic response nearly one hundred years after his death. As Thomson has said, Scott ‘left as his finest memorial a travel journal that is still eloquent. At the end of his tether, Scott found the words to give a lasting imaginative life to his ordeal ...’ (Thomson, 2002, p. 14).

It is clear even from this brief survey of Antarctic explorers and their writing that writing ability is, indeed, a factor of fundamental importance in both the creation and endurance of heroic status. The constantly repeated theme in the research cited is that the notion of “knowing what the public wants, and providing it” is indispensable to making a hero of an explorer. Conversely, it can be said that in the absence of this skill, explorers, no matter how great their deeds, may be destined to fade into obscurity. For enduring fame, even a writer of skill must produce work of interest not only to his contemporaries, but to later generations of readers. The flippant, gently humorous, but above all matter-of-fact tone of Amundsen, the ponderous, verbose style of Borchgrevink, or the ‘incommunicative efficiency’ of Rae failed to inspire enthusiasm in readers of later eras. Scott, on the other hand, deliberately worked at his writing, striving for improvement, and he admired and was influenced by authors of enduring classics – writers such as Henrik Ibsen, Thomas Hardy, Robert Browning and John Galsworthy (Cherry-Garrard, 1922, p. 204; M. Jones, 2005, p. xxxvi). In Rosove’s words, ‘One does not have to wonder why *Scott’s Last Expedition* has gone through so many editions and printings: few stories touch the soul so deeply,’ and indeed, the editions and reprintings listed by Rosove occupy six quarto-sized pages and cover a period of eighty years, amply demonstrating the enduring appeal of Scott’s writing

style (Rosove, 2001, p. 357). In speaking of the Scott-Amundsen rivalry, Evans stated,

In the end, [Amundsen] was undone by words, not deeds. For while Amundsen got the triumph, it was Scott, with his talented pen, who grabbed the glory, a salutary reminder that contrary to what the hoary old maxim might proclaim, history isn't always written by the winners.

(Evans, 2001, p. 127)

The stories of the “famous” Kane versus the “forgotten” Rae, the literary ineptitude of the mocked and disregarded Borchgrevink, and the overshadowed Amundsen, all point to the truth of Evans’ assertion; it might almost be said that, in the case of polar explorers at least, history was often written by the writers.

### 5.3 Securing Enduring Fame through Film

Just as enduring heroic status could be ensured through an explorer’s ability to write of his experiences in a manner that proved popular with the public, so too could film footage of an expedition be invaluable in encouraging the public to remember and honour an explorer. Cinematography was only just emerging as a means of recording events for public consumption at the time of the Heroic Era of Antarctic exploration, and as a result, there were few films made of expeditions in this period. The first professional photographer to be employed on an Antarctic expedition, Herbert Ponting, was a member of Scott’s *Terra Nova* team. Ponting was already a well-known photographer in 1907 when he read Scott’s

two-volume *Voyage of the Discovery*, which he purchased in Tokyo.<sup>170</sup> He was so impressed with that work that when he was invited by Scott to join his second expedition to record the journey in photographs and moving film, Ponting immediately agreed ("Herbert Ponting (1870-1935)," online). After Scott's death, Ponting toured the world, showing his film and photographs, of which he reportedly had copious quantities; the *New York Times* reported that Ponting returned from Antarctica with 'hundreds of photographs and 25,000 feet – nearly five miles – of cinematograph films illustrating the expedition' ("Sea tragedy on films: Captain Scott's companion gets a combat of whales and seal in moving pictures," 1912). Through an agreement with the Gaumont Film Company, owners of the film, Ponting edited the footage in 1913 into a documentary entitled *The undying story of Captain Scott* (Erickson, online). Details of Ponting's film were given at length in the press on the occasion of the first public showing, at the Lyric Theatre in London, when it was described as 'remarkable and inspiring'. Techniques for recording sound on film had yet to be developed, and as a result, 'each film was explained as it was flashed upon the screen by ... one of the Gaumont lecturers' ("Capt. Scott seen as he went to Pole: Moving pictures show how intrepid explorer began his task smiling," 1913). Such articles in the popular press did much to promote Scott's heroic status, encouraging and building upon an already

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<sup>170</sup> Ponting was a renowned "Japanophile", having already published a book of his photographs taken in Japan at the turn of the century, after three years of travel in that country. His book, *In lotus-land Japan*, was released in 1910. Ponting covered the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, attached to the First Japanese Army as war correspondent for *Harper's Weekly* ("Herbert Ponting (1870-1935)," online; Ponting, 1921, p. 1). His lecture and slide show on Japan, delivered to the men of Scott's expedition, was greatly admired, Scott recording in his journal,

To-night Ponting gave us a charming lecture on Japan with wonderful illustrations of his own. He is happiest in his descriptions of the artistic side of the people, with which he is in fullest sympathy. So he took us to see the flower pageants. The joyful festivals of the cherry blossom, the wisteria, the iris and chrysanthemum, the sombre colours of the beech blossom and the paths about the lotus gardens, where mankind meditated in solemn mood. We had pictures, too, of Nikko and its beauties, of Temples and great Buddhas. Then in more touristy strain of volcanoes and their craters, waterfalls and river gorges, tiny tree-clad islets, that feature of Japan – baths and their bathers, Ainos, and so on. His descriptions were well given and we all of us thoroughly enjoyed our evening.

(M. Jones, 2005, p. 207)

existing tendency to hero-worship the dead explorer. Profits from screenings of Ponting's film were donated to the public appeal established to raise funds to repay the expedition debts, and to support the bereaved families of the explorers; Ponting wrote that 'Some thousands of pounds were added to [the appeal's funds] from the proceeds of the exhibition of the kinematograph films' (Ponting, 1921, p. 296), which indicates their popularity with the public.

By 1914, Ponting's photographs of the Antarctic expedition had also become extremely popular, to the point where the *New York Times* told its readers of a new craze sweeping London:

A new society craze is to see H.C. Ponting's photographs of the Scott Antarctic expedition, which are now being exhibited in the West End. The exhibition has become as popular as any play, and many are turned away every afternoon. From the scene outside the hall yesterday one might have thought that a famous virtuoso was vouchsafing a single performance to the elect. The hall was barricaded with motor cars, and members of the fashionable world were crowding the entrance.

("Antarctic photos draw in London," 1914)

Lieutenant Edward Evans, Scott's second-in-command, took Ponting's film on his lecture tour of the United States, where he showed it at Carnegie Hall ("Evans to lecture here: Commander to tell of Scott expedition on March 17," 1914). Kathleen Scott praised Ponting's film, exclaiming, 'Over and over , and yet over again have I seen his cinematograph pictures of the Expedition, and I am still looking for further occasions of seeing them, for the beauty and wonder of them never varies' (Ponting, 1921, p. xvi).

With the outbreak of World War I, Ponting's film footage was shown extensively to the British troops in France. The film was praised for the encouragement it gave the soldiers, and nearly one hundred thousand men were said to have seen it (M. Jones, 2003, p. 258). Thus, even those who would not have been exposed to the flood of printed works on Scott while they were serving in Europe were still inspired by the heroic myth of that expedition through Ponting's film.<sup>171</sup> Excerpts from *The Undying Story of Captain Scott* continued to appear in compilation feature films long after Ponting's death in 1935 (Erickson, online).

After the War, Ponting continued to devote his time to keeping the tragic story of Scott's last expedition alive in the public's mind, investing £10,000 of his own money in the re-making of his footage into a sound version of the film. Entitled *90 degrees south*, the film was released in 1933 to great acclaim. He also published *The great white south* in 1921, a narrative illustrated with his photographs taken in Antarctica, which was almost continually in print up until the outbreak of World War II, and which had gone through at least thirteen editions by 2001 (Boddington, 1979, p. 22; Ponting, 1921, p. xi; Royal Geographic Society & Scott Polar Research Institute, 2004, p. 210). The film and photographs continue to be highly valued artefacts of the Scott expedition, and since their purchase in 2004 by the Scott Polar Research Institute for £533,000, have been displayed at length around the world. They now form an important core for the Institute's on-line photographic database launched in March 2009 (Russell, 1996; Scott Polar Research Institute, online; 2009, online).

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<sup>171</sup> Ponting mentioned that '... it was my ambition to produce a kinematograph record of our adventure ... which might enlighten those who do not read expensive volumes on exploration ...' (Ponting, 1921, p. 13).



In contrast, Amundsen never had a professional photographer on any of his expeditions. Instead, he and his men took photographs themselves, as they felt the need. Unlike the highly artistic and carefully posed photographs of Ponting,<sup>172</sup> Amundsen's snapshots were generally spontaneous, and amateurishly structured. On his return from the Antarctic, Amundsen did not print for public display the photographs he had taken, as Ponting had done. Hence, there could be no 'society craze' over Amundsen's photographs, even had they rivalled Ponting's artistic productions. Instead, Amundsen had the negatives converted into the special photographic plates required for projection as lantern slides, and used these to illustrate his public lectures. Kathleen Scott, Robert Falcon Scott's widow, saw the slides at Amundsen's first public presentation in London in November 1912. The pictures, she decided, 'were very poor, & many of them faked – painted etc' (Huntford, 1987, p. 8). Colour photography was still in its infancy at this time, and lantern slides were therefore either black-and-white, or hand-coloured. The tints on Amundsen's hand-coloured slides can still be seen, and indeed, although many are realistic, others are as Kathleen Scott described them.<sup>173</sup> In fact, no photographs of Amundsen at the Pole would have existed but for Olav Bjaaland's fortuitously including a folding pocket-Kodak in his luggage on that trek. As Huntford has pointed out, 'Thus it was that the photographic record of the last great journey of terrestrial discovery depended on snapshots, taken in the spirit of a holidaymaker who wanted to bring home a few mementoes' (Huntford, 1987, p. 44).

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<sup>172</sup> To pose for Ponting's photographs came to be referred to jokingly among the men of the *Terra Nova* expedition as 'to pont', defined by them as 'to pose, until nearly frozen, in all sorts of uncomfortable positions' (Royal Geographic Society & Scott Polar Research Institute, 2004, p. 39).

<sup>173</sup> Amundsen's photographs were thought to have been lost at the time of his death in 1928, bar a few damaged and faded specimens. Then, in 1986, more than 200 of his slides were discovered in the attic of the home of the widow of Amundsen's nephew and heir. Many of these were published for the first time in 1987 as *The Amundsen Photographs* (Huntford, 1987), and more fully in 2009 by the Fram Museum in a book produced to accompany an exhibition of Amundsen's photographs (Klover, 2009).

Despite the good fortune of a visual record having survived at all, the scenes Amundsen displayed at his lantern shows were nonetheless amateurish, with little of the grandeur or aesthetic appeal of Ponting's photographs. Huntford has attempted to put this in a positive perspective, claiming that although 'they were amateurs, and their work was undoubtedly that of the snapshot,' nevertheless, the outcome was 'a poignant blend of immediacy, artlessness and authenticity.' He admitted, however, that at the time, the lack of photographic professionalism resulted in significant and damaging 'drawbacks in presentation' (Huntford, 1987, p. 8).

Amundsen had also taken a movie camera – a 'cinematograph apparatus' as he called it – with him on the *Fram* expedition, and took the resulting film with him on his lecture circuit.<sup>174</sup> Unfortunately, once again the amateurish way in which filming took place resulted in footage that could not bear comparison with Ponting's efforts.<sup>175</sup> In any case, Amundsen's footage existed only as a silent film, unlike Ponting's re-made sound film. By the late 1920s, sound films were proving enormously successful with cinema audiences (Schoenherr, 2005, online), and thus, although Ponting's production was well-timed to take

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<sup>174</sup> Evidence of his having used the film during his lectures is found in correspondence sent from Gerald Christy of 'The Lecture Agency, Ltd.' to Amundsen's brother Leon, dated October 18, 1912, discussing whether the Antarctic footage Amundsen would be bringing to London was on 'ordinary' or 'non-flam' film. Some lecture venues prohibited flammable film for safety reasons; Amundsen in fact had both types of film. Reproductions of the original correspondence can be found in Klover (2009, p. 224).

<sup>175</sup> Amundsen described, in his typical jocular tone, Prestrud filming the departure of the Polar team:

Down on the sea-ice stood Prestrud with the cinematograph, turning the crank as fast as he could go as we went past. When we came up on to the Barrier on the other side, he was there again, turning incessantly. The last thing I saw, as we went over the top of the ridge and everything familiar disappeared, was a cinematograph; it was coming inland at full speed. I had been engaged in looking out ahead, and turned around suddenly to throw a last glance in the direction of the spot that to us stood for all that was beautiful on earth, when I caught sight of – what do you think? A cinematograph. "He can't be taking anything but air now, can he?" – "Hardly that." The cinematograph vanished below the horizon.

(Amundsen, 1913, p. ii 2)

advantage of growing popular demand, Amundsen's film was of a genre facing extinction.<sup>176</sup>

The significant role Ponting's film and photographs played in creating and maintaining Scott's heroic status is clear. On the other hand, that Amundsen had failed to take a professional cinematographer, or even photographer, with him to the Antarctic, and therefore had failed to return with visual images that would serve to form and bolster a heroic image, proved to be an important factor in his ultimate inability to secure enduring fame. Yet again, to paraphrase Riffenburgh, Amundsen had failed to give the public what it wanted.

#### 5.4 The Place of *Nankyoku tanken* in the Literature of late-Meiji – Taishō Japan

The importance of an explorer's writing to the securing of enduring fame has been illustrated above. Shirase too produced a number of literary works, including his book *Nankyoku tanken*, published in 1913. How this book fitted into the literature being read by youth in the late-Meiji and Taishō periods is examined in this section. Although a complete overview of Meiji era literature is beyond the scope of the present study, three developments in literature of particular relevance to the emergence and endurance of an explorer's heroic status in Japan were the successive appearance of the "success magazine"

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<sup>176</sup> In 1926, the world's first successful commercial sound film, *Don Juan*, was screened in New York. The popularity of the sound film *The Jazz Singer* in the following year 'completed the conquest of the "silents"'. In 1929, the sound film *The Broadway Melody* cost U.S.\$280,000 to produce, but grossed \$4,000,000, thereby sealing the fate of the silent film (Schoenherr, 2005, online).

and adventure magazines at the start of the twentieth century, Naturalism and the “I-novel” after the Russo-Japanese War, and the “modern” novels of the post-First World War years.

#### 5.4.1 The Importance of Success

In the latter half of the Meiji era, juvenile self-development literature became an important and socially significant field of publication, producing a vast and ever-changing selection of both books and magazines. Self-advancement magazines for youth were a particularly flourishing market in the Meiji era. These works were directed largely at male youth [*seinen*], loosely defined in terms of a readership group as those young men ‘from the period when they first thought of secondary education through their first years of employment (or unemployment, as was frequently the case)’ (Kinmonth, 1981, p. 5). The forerunners of the self-advancement magazine are to be found in works dating back to the Tokugawa period, but as a more modern and vibrant form they emerged following the translation into Japanese of works such as Samuel Smiles’ *Self-help*, and *Pushing to the front* by Orison Swett Marden, soon after the Meiji Revolution. *Self-help*, translated<sup>177</sup> by Nakamura Keiu as *Saikoku risshi hen* in 1871, was enormously popular throughout the Meiji era (Kinmonth, 1981, p. 10). Ukita Kazutami, writing in Ōkuma Shigenobu’s 1909 classic *Fifty Years of New Japan*, claimed that ‘[Nakamura’s] translations of Smiles’s “Self-help” and “Character” had a greater influence over young men in the early ’seventies than any other book of the day’ (Ukita, 1909, p. 156).

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<sup>177</sup> The “translation” was somewhat loose, to the point where Kinmonth stated that ‘[b]y modern standards it was no such thing. It was a paraphrase and an incomplete one at that.’ Nevertheless, he argued, *Saikoku risshi hen* retained the essential points of *Self-help* thanks to the considerable repetition of themes and topics in that book. For further on this, see Kinmonth (1981, pp. 24-32).

*Self-help* was a distinctly Victorian work published in 1859 which emphasised the importance of the individual developing their own personal virtues – commitment to hard work, diligence, frugality, perseverance, and so on – in order to effect an advance in civilisation. In Smiles’ philosophy, accomplishment was the measure of success. Indeed, accomplishment in the face of seemingly insurmountable difficulties, through hard work, was the *ne plus ultra* of success, as readers were constantly reminded throughout the book by the endless lists of “achievers” – scientists, industrialists, engineers, and manufacturers – who, despite all obstacles, accomplished their aims:

Men such as these are fairly entitled to take rank among the heroes of England. Their patient self-reliance amidst trials and difficulties, their courage and perseverance in the pursuit of worthy aims and purposes, are no less heroic of their kind than the bravery and devotion of the soldier and the sailor, whose duty and whose pride it is heroically to defend what these valiant leaders of industry have as heroically achieved.

(Smiles, 1859, p. 49)

The idea of the virtuous individual who lives the Self-help ethic as being heroic is constantly repeated throughout the book.

Similarly popular in Japan was Orison Swett Marden’s 1894 *Pushing to the front*, of which the publishers claimed, ‘It is doubtful whether any other book, outside of the bible, has been the turning point in more lives’ (Marden, 1894, p. iii). It contained parallel themes to Smiles’ work, including the importance of seizing opportunities for advancement, the value of obtaining an education, the rewards of persistence and attention to detail, the necessity of preserving a good character, and the merits of will-power, decisiveness, and

dedication. Most important, according to Marden, who was a disciple of Smiles, was a commitment to Self-help – achieving success through one’s own efforts (1894, p. 398).

In Japan, these ideas were subsumed under the slogan *risshin shusse* [rising in the world], a term that had been commonly used since the Meiji Restoration. Initially used to mean an urge to enhance the reputation or social standing of one’s family or name,<sup>178</sup> it was a parallel of Smiles’ self-improvement paying off in a broad context of social advancement, as opposed to individual financial gain (Kinmonth, 1981, pp. 153-205).

Oka (1982) suggested however, that following the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) the meaning of *risshin shusse* changed. It now came to refer to a distinctly monetary success, and to pertain to the individual’s success, independent of social recognition of achievement or reputation. Indeed, the expression now became more commonly *risshin shusse seikō*, or just *risshin seikō*, reflecting a change in emphasis from *shusse* – succeeding in life, or “self-advancement” – to *seikō* – success, interpreted as the accumulation of material wealth (Oka, p. 198). Oka quoted Ishikawa Tengai, writing in

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<sup>178</sup> *Risshin shusse* as an expression appears to have come from the saying of Confucius ‘*Mi o tatte, michi o okonai, na o kōsei ni agu*’ (*Kanwa jiten [Dictionary of Japanese characters]*, 1992), roughly translatable as ‘Raise yourself up, do as must be done, leave your name to be remembered by future generations’. This became part of the lives of many Meiji youth through the schooling system, and the sentiment was reportedly ‘sung at every graduation ceremony: “*Mi o tate na o age yayo hagemeyo*” (Rise and make your name in the world and strive forever hereafter)’ (Hirai, 1987, p. 96).

1909, in support of this interpretation:

Since time immemorial, the teachings of saints and sages and the doctrines of religious leaders have been directed to one goal: the furtherance of success in life. Here I do not use the term success to refer only to the accumulation of wealth. The term can be used to describe any case in which one attains a predetermined objective, whether in scholarship, spiritual cultivation, or any other enterprise. When the youth of today bestir themselves, it is because they are anxious to find out how they can succeed. What are the secrets of success? ... unfortunately the brand of success sought by the young and expounded by their mentors is in fact a minor aspect of success in the true sense. That is, they use the term success to mean only the attainment of wealth. We have here a good illustration of the extent to which people today are infatuated with riches.

(Quoted in Oka, p. 198)

Kinmonth (1981, p. 163) argued that Oka had misunderstood *risshin seikō*, and that what it referred to was not “achieving success”, but in fact “succeeding in achieving”. Kinmonth claimed that the change in late-Meiji society was not a move from a Smilesian ethic to a materialistic one, but rather from one less obsessed with competition to one very much obsessed with winning and losing – being a success or a failure.

In fact, both publications that emphasised character-building in the Smilesian sense, and those which ‘blatantly subordinated all moral considerations to the standards of social and financial advancement’ (Oka, 1982, p. 206), were being widely read by youth at this time. In Oka’s defence, it should be noted that he stated that, ‘one gets the impression that a number of different prescriptions for life were competing for the attentions of youth.’ Thus, he was not claiming, as Kinmonth implied, that youth suddenly changed from one preoccupation to another, but that several different streams of thought flourished among youth at this time.

Evidence of this diversity can be found in articles published in *Seikō* [Success] a magazine for youth first published in 1902. Among the plethora of magazines for youth emerging at that time, *Seikō* catered to a largely middle-of-the-road readership in terms of aspirational level. *Seikō* readers were neither Smilesean purists, nor were they focussed entirely on material gains. Contributors and supporters likewise were drawn from a diverse range of academics, journalists, and public figures.<sup>179</sup> *Seikō* was well-known in Meiji Japan, and was even referred to in Natsume Sōseki's 1910 novel *Mon* (p. 58). According to Kinmonth (1981, p. 166), *Seikō* provides a more reliable guide to late Meiji thought with regard to self-advancement than other similar magazines of the era. Modelled on an American magazine entitled *Success* which was founded in 1897 by *Pushing to the front's* author Orison Swett Marden, *Seikō* often reprinted translated articles from that magazine. It also contained large-format advertisements for a translation of Marden's book produced by the *Seikō* staff (Dore, 1967, p. 133). Smiles' *Self-help* was similarly inspirational to the magazine; the publisher and editor of *Seikō*, Murakami Dakurō, wrote in his initial statement of principles that the purpose of the magazine was to continue the Smilesean tradition, and to encourage the 'man of character who helps himself and respects himself, lives by his own enterprise and his own toil, and creates his own fate by the exercise of his own abilities' (Dore, 1967, p. 134). Murakami exhorted youth in 1902 to 'Just help yourself and raise yourself up. Manage yourself. Work hard by yourself. And, by the power of your own arms, create your own fate. That is the kind of person that is needed' (Kinmonth, 1981, p. 171). As Dore noted, 'the keynote of the magazine's moral message was perseverance,

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<sup>179</sup> A list of some of these is to be found in Kinmonth (1981, pp. 174-175).



determination, and self-denial’:

Even the great inventors, we are told in the first issue ... were not just the happy recipients of a sudden flash of inspiration. Many men are called to have ideas, but only the few choose to show the determination which enables them to persevere and develop these ideas into something of value. Likewise, the man who seeks wealth without work by speculation is condemned out of hand ...

(Dore, 1967, p. 134)

Perhaps what best symbolised success for the editors of *Seikō* at the time of the magazine’s inception was the “log cabin myth”, defined by Kinmonth as the idea based on a mythologised version of Abraham Lincoln’s life that being born under humble circumstances was not necessarily an impediment to future success. That the cover of the first issue of *Seikō* bore a silhouette of Lincoln, and the log cabin where he was born was pictured inside, suggest the importance the founder Murakami placed on the concept that, just like Lincoln, even the youth of the least means could, through self-education and Self-help, achieve success (Kinmonth, 1981, pp. 164-165).

Nevertheless, as the Meiji era drew to a close, a growing angst emerged among the *seikō seinen* [success youth], as the adherents to this philosophy had come to be known. In the face of mounting competition for places in schools and universities and in getting a job, as discussed in Chapter 3, a certain unease became evident in the pages of *Seikō*. Readers had begun to experience the struggle to survive in the education system, and foresaw what this meant for obtaining the respectable and lucrative employment they had been led to expect. The confident Self-helper was becoming less and less common, and the “anxious climber” was making up a far greater share of *Seikō*’s readership, who now wrote letters to

the magazine asking for advice on how to get ahead – what Dore described as ‘the careful requests for practical information from humble aspirants to middle-income security – which schools are cheapest, will this or that career offer better chances of promotion, what of pension prospects, and the chances of exemption from conscription’ (Dore, 1967, p. 136). Kinmonth stated that before the Russo-Japanese War, questions from readers were of ‘cosmic scope’, such as inquiries about the personal characteristics necessary in inventors, or whether genius was essential to eminence. Soon after the War, however, ‘the questions became increasingly technical and concerned with what might be called petty *risshin*: What level of education is required for the electrical technician certification exam? How much is an electrical technician paid? Is there a veterinary school that will take a twenty-six year old? ... Does a court reporter get a pension and what is his starting pay?’. Kinmonth noted that the replies the magazine gave to such inquiries were frequently ‘snappish’, and readers told that ‘someone with a true will to succeed should not be asking such questions’ (Kinmonth, 1981, pp. 197-198). Dore similarly observed that,

The brusqueness with which the answers are given and the high-handed tone of the instructions to readers ... suggest a certain irritation, as if this were a grudging concession to the weakness of the flesh, an unwilling perversion of the editors’ original intention to keep the whole affair on a plane of moral uplift.

(Dore, 1967, p. 136)

At the same time, the editors of *Seikō* and *Jitsugyō no Nihon* began to receive letters from *hanmon seinen* [anguished youth], who were fearful and perplexed by a changing world:

I have a spirit of wanting to advance. ... But somehow I feel a loneliness in my heart, and a fear and anguish about my destiny I can hardly bear. I have not attained scholastic achievement, I ask for your instruction on how to reach some peace of mind. I like to read the bible but have not acquired religious belief. On the other hand, I have come to deeply trust the novels and writings of Tokutomi Roka,<sup>180</sup> and find myself crying, crying, crying, crying without end. Please tell me what I should do.<sup>181</sup>

(Mita, 1971, pp. 211-212)

Another student wrote to *Seikō* in 1906 that, after pondering his future ‘in the quietness of the night,’ he had ‘come to feel apprehensive about this world and wonder what the pleasures of the next might be like’ (Quoted in Kinmonth, 1981, p. 213). As Dore stated, these appeals were frequently treated with astounding brusqueness, the anguished youth who was exhausting himself in ‘crying, crying, crying, crying’ being told for example that,

Your spirit to advance is extremely feeble, and so you are being forced to suffer through your own weakness ... You should be carefully reading and studying the biographies of heroes and great men, and for you, novels should be strictly prohibited and you should not even consider casting your eyes over them.<sup>182</sup>

(Mita, 1971, p. 212)

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<sup>180</sup> Tokutomi Roka, brother of the journalist and historian Tokutomi Sohō, was a novelist who achieved fame with his best-selling work *Hototogisu* [The Cuckoo], which first appeared in book form in 1900. *Hototogisu* is the story of a marriage coming to grief, and the victimisation of a young bride by her mother-in-law (Ito, 2000). When the book was adapted for the stage, it reportedly ‘left [the] audience awash in tears’ (McDonald, 1999, p. 8).

<sup>181</sup> *Kōjō no seishin o jishi ... Naze ka kyōchū isshu no ‘sabumi’ o kanji jiko no unmei o ayabumi hotondo tayuru atawazu hanmon jiko no gakugyō mo te ni tsukazu ikaga shite ritsume no chi ni tasshierareru beki ka go-shikyō o kou. Baiburu nado wa aidoku itashi sōraedōmo shinkō no chi ni aitassezu kaerite Tokutomi Roka kun no shōsetsu nado ni fukaku shinrai shi hotondo naite naite naite nakitsukusan bakari ni sōrō. Nanitōzo go-shinsetsu naru go-shikyō o negaitaku sōrō.*

<sup>182</sup> *Kōjō no seishin o funki itasuru koto hanahada hakujaku naru ni yori tada jibun no jakuten no tame ni kurushimeraruru mono ni sōrō. ... Eiyū gōketsu no denki nado o ōi ni jukudoku kenkyū serareru beshi kimi ni arite wa shōsetsu wa naosara kinmotsu nari sarasara me o muketamau bekarazu.*

As time went by, much of the writing in *Seikō* and similar magazines came to focus less on advancement and more and more on the treatment of anguish:

*Seikō* offered a column entitled “Success Philosophy” (*Seikō tetsugaku*), which stressed perseverance and endurance but which drew its quotations and examples from literary figures such as Zola and Carlyle, apparently seeking to appeal to what were perceived as the reading habits of anguished youth.

(Kinmonth, 1981, p. 245)

Nevertheless, this attempt to adapt to readers’ needs was evidently done most grudgingly. Kinmonth explained the mounting friction between the editor’s Smilesean philosophy and the more pressing needs of the readers of *Seikō*, either for career guidance or personal advice, as being at least in part a result of Murakami Dakurō’s outdated outlook; although *Seikō* was being published in the late-Meiji years, ‘the magazine intellectually belonged to the 1880s portion of the era when all were supposed to be striving to the utmost for their country’ (Kinmonth, 1981, p. 199). In the face of this growing rift, Murakami precipitously changed the entire orientation of the magazine in 1915, to one of imperial expansionism and outspoken nationalism – that only the strong would survive in the international arena – but this evidently met with little response from the readership. As Kinmonth stated, ‘Perhaps the most eloquent commentary on reader enthusiasm for the shift in *Seikō* editorial policy is that the magazine went out of business shortly after proclaiming its “strong-man-ism” ’ (Kinmonth, 1981, p. 202).

## 5.4.2 Shirase and Youth Literature

Apart from *Seikō*, another of Murakami Dakurō's *Seikō Zasshi-sha* publications was *Tanken Sekai* [The World of Exploration]. First published in 1906, this was the first magazine in Japan to specialise in adventure stories:

*Tanken Sekai* ... capitalized upon the wave of patriotic sentiment accompanying the Russo-Japanese War to present tales of Japanese adventure and exploration abroad. ... In addition to fiction, it carried tales of exploration, record-breaking achievements, scientific developments, and “unusual” customs from around the world.

(Angles, 2003, p. 137)

The prologue to the first edition contained a rambling statement of the magazine's purpose, but one which nevertheless illustrated its intention to put exploration before all else – it might be said, to *use* tales of adventure to “drown out” other thoughts:

[H]aving crushed the ferocity of Russia and thus found ourselves on the brink of leaping in a single bound into the fold of the first-rank nations, to then find ourselves unable to maintain that position, our spirits as a nation were depressed.<sup>183</sup> When for our great nation not to expand belongs almost to the realm of the impossible, we ask ourselves what we must do. But let us put an end to this discussion, overcome our tendency to insularity, and just fill our minds with thoughts of exploration!<sup>184</sup>

(Kaizu, 1994, Introduction)

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<sup>183</sup> The editor was clearly referring to the unsatisfying outcome for Japan of the Treaty of Portsmouth, discussed in Chapter 3.

<sup>184</sup> *Saki ni, Ro no kyōmō o kujikite ichiyaku jika ni sekai ittōkoku no retsu ni hairi shi wagakuni mo, chūcho shunjun genzai no gotoku iki shōchin genzai no gotoku nite wa, tōtei sono jisshitsu ni oite sekai ittōkoku no menmoku o hoji suru o ezu, daikokumin to shite sekai no omote ni hatten sen koto wa hotondo fukanō no koto ni zokusu, kono toki ni atarite nanimono ka mottomo waga kokumin ni hitsuyō naru, iron zuru o tomeyo, kokumin no shimaguniteki konjō o daha shite, sono nōchū ni tankenteki shisō o tsumekomu koto kore nomi.*

Shirase was a regular contributor to *Tanken Sekai* prior to his expedition (K. Shirase, 1986, p. 169), his stories appearing at least as late as 1910, the year of his departure for the Antarctic. The titles of his articles included *Raidentōge kesshi ryokō* [A do-or-die trip over the Raiden Pass] (1909), *Shumushu-tō kekkyo seikatsu tōji no kaiko* [Recollections of my Shumushu Island cave life] (1910c), *Chishima Guntō kaiba-kari jikkendan* [A true tale of a walrus hunt on the Kuril Archipelago] (1910a), and *Hokuyō mujintō moguma taiji jikkendan* [A true tale of the extermination of a ferocious bear on a desert island in the northern seas] (1910b).

Murakami Dakurō was a well-known figure in the late-Meiji era, as is evident for example from the way in which the press reported his involvement in the ceremonies welcoming the expedition's return to Japan in 1912 ("Shirase Nankyoku tankentai no Kainan Maru, seidai na kangei no naka Shibaura e kairu [Shirase Antarctic expedition ship Kainan Maru returns to Shibaura to magnificent welcome]," 1912). In his 1942 book *Watashi no Nankyoku tanken-ki*, Shirase found it necessary to explain to the reader who Murakami Dakurō was, but in 1913, Shirase's *Nankyoku tanken* mentioned Murakami without introduction, suggesting this was superfluous at that time. Murakami became the head of Shirase's expedition Supporters' Group, and, according to Ishii Kendo, went so far as to plough all of his profits from the magazine *Seikō* into the expedition. Ishii stated that Murakami's money in fact bought the *Kainan Maru* and stocked it with two years' worth of provisions (Ishii, 1944, p. 1335).<sup>185</sup> Apart from the obvious financial advantages, having Murakami's name linked to the expedition would have been enormously beneficial in terms

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<sup>185</sup> If this is correct, then according to the expedition balance sheets found in Murakami's house by Shirase Kyōko in 1986 (Watanabe, 1991, pp. 166-167), this represented over ¥60,000, or close to A\$3 million in current values.

of gaining the support of the avid readers of the *Seikō* and *Tanken Sekai* magazines. Both magazines appealed to youth interested in striving for success and heroic undertakings, and the *Kainan Maru* expedition must have appeared as an adventure story unfolding at their very door. For unlike the usual stories of success and adventure the magazines reported, such as Shirase's tales of walrus hunts in the Kurils or killing bears on desert islands, here was an expedition that was about to depart from Tokyo Bay; the readers of *Seikō* and *Tanken Sekai* could be present as the ship sailed away, to wave the expedition flag and cheer the explorers on – almost be a part of the adventure itself. For youth who wanted to believe that through their own efforts, success was possible, and for youth who just wanted to forget the trials of the post-Russo-Japanese War and fill their minds with thoughts of exploration, here was an unequalled opportunity to indulge in vicarious fulfilment.

After Shirase's return from the Antarctic in 1912, however, youth culture was going through an unprecedented change. That Murakami's *Seikō* magazine which had been so popular at the start of the century was forced out of production by 1915 is just one indicator of this. As discussed above, dreams of achieving success, in whatever sense that had been understood by late Meiji youth, were being overtaken by the emerging concerns of individual survival. The essentially outwardly-focussed view of the Meiji youth anticipating success through Self-help was being replaced by a more broodingly intellectual and introverted perspective as youth confronted a dismayingly competitive world. As discussed below, however, evidence suggests that Shirase continued to court the old *Seikō Zasshi-sha* readership in his writing, with inevitable and unfortunate results. Although actual sales figures of Shirase's 1913 book *Nankyoku tanken* are unavailable, evidence suggests the income from this source may have been negligible. Balance sheets kept by

Murakami Dakurō (Reproduced in Watanabe, 1991, p. 167), covering the period 6 July 1910 to 20 October 1914 – *Nankyoku tanken* was published on 22 January, 1913 – show all major income and expenditure for the expedition (K. Shirase, 1986, p. 310). There is, however, no figure for income from book publication. This is despite even relatively small sums such as expenditure for coal (¥480) being listed. The apparent precision with which the record was kept (129,896 yen and 29 sen<sup>186</sup> being recorded as received in public donations, for example) also suggests that income from book sales would not have been overlooked had it been at all substantial. It would seem that the public was simply no longer buying the kind of book Shirase had written.

Further striking evidence of changes that were occurring in the literary tastes of youth at the end of the Meiji era is to be found in the fact that Murakami's Seikō-sha publication *Tanken Sekai*, in which Shirase's writing had appeared up until his departure for the Antarctic, went out of publication in around 1912, the year of his return. Part of its market share had been taken away by Seikō Zasshi-sha competitor Hakubunkan's *Bōken Sekai* [The World of Adventure]. Unlike *Tanken Sekai*, *Bōken Sekai* appears to have catered more to that segment of the youth magazine readership interested in tales of military prowess. Editor-in-Chief of *Bōken Sekai*, as well as regular contributor to that magazine, Oshikawa Shunrō, achieved fame in Japan with his militaristic six-novel series for children, *Kaitai gunkan* [The battleship at the bottom of the sea]. The type of stories Oshikawa wrote for *Bōken Sekai* were clearly forerunners of the stories that would become so popular among youth in the inter-war years, such as *Shōnen Kurabu's Nichibeī miraisen*. In 1908, Oshikawa, a graduate of Waseda University, employed another graduate of the

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<sup>186</sup> The now obsolete sen was worth one-hundredth of a yen.



same institution, Kawaoka Chōfu, as his assistant editor on *Bōken Sekai*.<sup>187</sup> When Oshikawa left Hakubunkan to establish his own publishing company, Bukyō Sekai-sha, Kawaoka assumed full editorship of *Bōken Sekai*. Although Shirase is not known to have published in *Bōken Sekai* during Kawaoka's lifetime,<sup>188</sup> he evidently received considerable support from Kawaoka, who travelled Japan extensively in 1911 to raise funds for the Antarctic expedition, as Kawaoka noted in his autobiographical *Go go no haru* [The spring of five five]<sup>189</sup> (1912, pp. 103-129).

In 1908, there appeared an article in *Bōken Sekai* which clearly and forcefully impressed upon its readers the values of heroism. The magazine was unambiguously stating the necessity for an individual of heroic mien to come forward if Japan was to emerge victorious from the unspecified but imminent struggle for survival it was facing. At the same time, the writer was inculcating an ethos of hero-worship among readers. The article, entitled 'A warning to Japan', stated,

In our recent war with Russia, were we not crowned with victory through the super-human efforts of such heroes as Admiral Togo and Gen. Nogi? Youthful readers! Know that those who curse our glorious heroes or fail to reverence them curse the very Nation itself. At this time our country has more need for a single man of resolve than for a thousand mediocrities. Only the single man of heroism can establish Japan's place among the first-class nations.

(High, 2003, p. 9)

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<sup>187</sup> According to Moriyama (1999, online), Kawaoka was very popular with the founder of Waseda, Ōkuma Shigenobu, to the point where Kawaoka was allowed to come and go at will in Ōkuma's house.

<sup>188</sup> The only article by Shirase found in *Bōken Sekai* in the course of this research was that published on 1 April, 1919, entitled *Nankyoku no kyōi* [Antarctic wonders] (N. Shirase, 1919). The article gave some brief details of the 1910-12 expedition, as well as information concerning the Ross Ice Shelf, penguins, seals, et cetera.

<sup>189</sup> The title is a reference to the fact that Kawaoka wrote the book in commemoration of his twenty-*fifth* birthday in May of 1912 – the *fifth* month of the year Meiji Forty-*five*. He died in July of that year of spinal tuberculosis (Moriyama, 1999, online).

The thread was continued in 1910 in a non-fiction essay in *Bōken Sekai*, in which Oshikawa proclaimed his vision of a Japan that must either expand or die in the intensely competitive world of the future. He asserted that Japan could thank not great military tactics for its glorious victories in the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars, but ‘the ability of regular soldiers to “exert themselves to the utmost” and their willingness to “face inevitable death” ’(O. Griffiths, 2007, p. 14). In this same article, Oshikawa then rued the decline in *bushidō damashii* [samurai spirit] since the end of the Russo-Japanese War, and listed ‘excessive pride, conceit, socialism and naturalism as the principle [*sic*] domestic evils’ responsible for this. Most specifically, Oshikawa singled out naturalistic literature as corrupting the youth of Japan with its licentiousness (O. Griffiths, 2007, p. 14).

Since Shirase’s short stories were regularly accepted by *Tanken Sekai* up until 1910, it is clear that his style of writing was still in some demand at that time. That the magazine went out of publication in 1912, however, suggests that ‘tales of exploration’, ‘record-breaking achievements’, and ‘scientific developments’ were no longer as popular as the kind of militaristic fiction carried by its successor *Bōken Sekai*, and the later *Shōnen Kurabu*. At the same time, Oshikawa’s emotional attacks on naturalistic literature hint at the rising popularity of that genre too, a topic discussed further below. In any case, heroes of Self-help and heroes of adventure were swiftly losing ground to military heroes, or, indeed, no heroes at all, as youth turned their attention to the struggle to survive in a far less kindly world than that of just a few years earlier.

*Nankyoku tanken* as hero story of the *Tanken Sekai* genre

*Nankyoku tanken* [Antarctic expedition] is Shirase's personal account of his 1910–1912 journey. It was first published on 22 January, 1913, and was undoubtedly intended by Shirase to help in the repayment of his copious debts. This was a common pattern among polar explorers, Amundsen, Scott and Shackleton for example all having published accounts of their expeditions for that very reason. The official report of the *Kainan Maru* expedition, *Nankyoku-ki* [Antarctic record], was published by Murakami Dakuro's Seikō Zasshi-sha in December 1913. *Nankyoku-ki* was a factual record of the expedition, and included detailed reports of the scientific work undertaken. It was not designed as a work for a general readership, but for an audience of scientists and scholars. Indeed, the fact that the two books were released in the same year strongly implies that they were intended for very different purposes; Shirase would hardly have wanted to produce a book that would be in direct competition with that published by his Supporters' Group, if only for the fact that he was in severe financial difficulties and needed as much income as could possibly be generated from all sources. If *Nankyoku tanken* and *Nankyoku-ki* were published in competition, the total income generated would have been considerably less than had the books targeted different readerships.

In fact, *Nankyoku tanken* is far from being a work for scientists or scholars. The essential mood of the work is perhaps best illustrated by the expedition song, written by Kamiya Fusen, and according to Shirase, sung with vigour by the crowds who came to see off the *Kainan Maru* and to welcome the explorers home nineteen months later. The first

verse of the song appears on the final page of *Nankyoku tanken*, implying that Shirase saw the song as a summation of his expedition:

Expedition Biwa Song<sup>190</sup>

With no time for resting on the tiller, they part the waves that reach the sky,  
Through the scorching heat that brings the *Kuroshio*<sup>191</sup> to a boil,  
They sail beyond the equator  
Relentlessly onwards, on to the south,  
Through the frozen seas,  
Beneath Mount Erebus, rising 4000 *shaku*<sup>192</sup> into the sky.

How we anticipate the high spirits of the men as they go ashore,  
Carrying the hopes of the Japanese people  
To that place yonder where the silent, endless  
World of Silver<sup>193</sup> lies.

Men! Crest those waves on your way to the Southern Hemisphere!  
On, to the very ends of the Earth, never resting until you reach the Pole!  
Where you will raise our flag, your sincerity burning for a thousand years!

Not knowing the way, you drag your sledges across the immense ice-fields through ways  
uncharted,  
Valiantly determined even at risk of life  
To overcome the countless hardships and scale the soaring peaks of ice.  
At the very point of the Earth's axis,  
To the brilliant glow of our Sovereign's majesty,  
At the raising of the *Hinomaru*<sup>194</sup>  
Your cheers will rend the skies,  
And your shouts of triumph never die.  
Truly, a courageous and heroic venture!

(N. Shirase, 1913, p. 400)<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> The *biwa* is a traditional Japanese musical instrument, a plucked lute with large frets. While no explanation for the choice of *biwa* to accompany a song of this nature is given, the song was written just a few years after the heyday of modern *biwa* music, a time when large numbers of male students at major universities formed *biwa* circles, mostly under the tuition of performers from the Kinshin school of *Satsumabiwa*.

<sup>191</sup> The *Kuroshio* is an oceanic current off the east coast of Japan, analogous to the Gulf Stream in the Atlantic Ocean.

<sup>192</sup> The *shaku* is an archaic Japanese unit of measurement, approximately thirty centimetres in length. The elevation for Mt. Erebus cited is therefore approximately 1,200 metres, well short of the actual height of 3,795 metres. Whether this was simply an error on Kamiya's part, or whether the correct height was not known in Japan at that time, or if in fact the change was made because '4,000' scanned better than the actual 12,650 *shaku*, cannot be determined.

<sup>193</sup> The 'World of Silver' – *ginsekai* – is a commonly used Japanese poetic reference to snow-scenes.

<sup>194</sup> The *Hinomaru* (literally, "Sun Circle") is a common metonym for the Japanese flag, just as, for example, the American flag is referred to as the 'Stars and Stripes'.

The tone of heroic splendour of a very physical nature is explicit. Even those emotions that are mentioned are of a stereotypical character for an adventure story – high spirits, sincerity in their quest, valiant determination, and the sense of triumph – and never stray from notions of the archetypal adventure-hero as the victor over physical, external hardships. This mood is maintained throughout the book; the following passage relating Shirase’s first

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*Tanken Biwa Uta*

*Kaji o makura no itoma naku,  
Sora utsu nami o oshiwakete,  
Kuroshio wakitatsu ennetsu no,  
Sekidō chokuka o yokozama ni,  
Tada hitaburu ni Minami o,  
Sashite susumi ni susumeba,  
Hyōkai chikaku kōri ni sobiyuru Erebusu no,  
Kazan wa kaibatsu yon sen jaku,  
Nihon danshi no fukiaguru,  
Kien to miru mo omoshiro ya,  
Sa mo araba are kunitami no,  
Omoki nozomi no ikarizuna,  
Naguru kanata wa tada ichimen no ginsekai,  
Ten bōbōtari chi bakubakutari,*

*Danshi nami wo yaburite nankyū ni iru  
Kontan kiwamezunba shisutomo yasumazu  
Takaku kyokki wo sasage amatsutokoro wo sasu  
Tanshin hi no gotoku senshū terasu*

*Zetsudai no hyōgen no,  
Yukue mo shirenu michi naki michi ni sori o hiki,  
Kesshi no kakugo ōshikumo,  
Senshinbanku shinogitsutsu,  
Yojiru koori no mine takaku,  
Sekai chijiku no chūshin ni,  
Waga Ōkimi no miitsu no hikari kagayakite,  
Hinomaru no hata oshitatsureba,  
Banzai no koe tenkō o yaburi,  
Gaika no hibiki tayuru toki nashi,  
Ge ni isamashi no sōkyo ka na sōkyo ka na.*

scaling of the Ross Ice Shelf is typical of the style:

The Barrier was constantly swathed in cloud. To look up at its ninety metre sheer cliffs that were overhanging us was something horrible. That it might continue on at that height for five hundred miles would not surprise one. If one were to add the extent of the Barrier that is under the sea, the total height would exceed six hundred metres. It is near impossible for words to express the volume of it. The sea in this remote place is amazingly even bluer than the sky. The depth of the sea is reportedly more than three thousand six hundred metres. Oh, the vastness of the world! Oh, the size of the universe!

Anyway, wearing only the lightest of clothing – I was shirtless – we began to climb the Great Barrier. ... Step by step, we began to climb the steep slopes, almost like cliffs. Each of the expeditioners arranged their clothing around them, and wearing their snow goggles (although I didn't wear them), took a step, a gasp for breath, a shout of encouragement, and so we mounted the Barrier. Although at first we were cold, we found ourselves soon sweating. With each step we would look up. An iceberg towered up like a sword. It must have soared up like that for a thousand years, on the edge of Man's world. It was almost like the mysterious battle-axe of some god of the natural world!

Looking down, we could see the pack ice rising and falling on the waves. The waves began to pile the ice up. We were now in a place where no help could reach us. We ploughed our way up in our native sealskin boots, crushing the ice underfoot, until finally we met the scene that appeared as we reached the edge of the ice field.

Our hurrahs were carried by the cold winds right across the Southern Ocean. Ah – you can imagine our thoughts! Day and night, whether sleeping or awake, the one thing that never left our thoughts was leaving our footprints on that southern land. Mocked for our curiosity and for in any case being on a well-nigh hopeless mission, what could be our only revenge? Argument could not do it. Nothing would do but achieving our goals. Facts are a silent witness, and now we had made our first step. It was only natural that our courage would suddenly be multiplied a hundred times.

Looking at that distant point where clouds and ice meet, a fleeting cloud like a woman's waistband reared up like a dragon in the skies of our homeland. Oh yes! How we miss our homeland! And standing at the summit of the ice field we point at clouds maybe four thousand kilometres away. What might our friends and family be doing right now? How could they know the happiness we felt, standing here at the summit of the ice field, having achieved our goal?

(N. Shirase, 1913, pp. 264-266) <sup>196</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> (See over page.)

Seemingly irrelevant details, such as Shirase's shirtless state and that he alone did not wear snow-goggles, in fact have the specific purpose of reinforcing the adventure-hero image he is intentionally building. The indifference to physical discomfort, the terrifying environment, the struggle to the top, the "never-say-die" attitude, and the isolation from the rest of humanity, all serve the same purpose of creating an adventure hero in the minds of juvenile readers. Indeed, throughout *Nankyoku tanken*, the style is that of the juvenile hero narrative as discussed by Hourihan (1997). Very similar stylistic techniques have been identified by Riffenburg in the record of the events of Scott's last expedition:

... the young naval officer plucked from obscurity by Sir Clements Markham (the call to adventure); the farthest south of the *Discovery* expedition (the threshold); the years of planning a new expedition, the trek to the South Pole, and the discovery of Amundsen's priority (the trials); his relationship with Edward Wilson (the close-knit brotherhood); the desperate march to One Ton Depot (the magic journey); the death of the entire polar party (martyrdom); the return of his letters and notebooks to Britain and its public (the return, conveying the boon of national inspiration ...).

(Riffenburgh, 1993, p. 7)

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(Footnote 196 continued.)

*Kono hyōtei jitsu ni kumo tsuku bakari. Takasa sanbyaku shaku zeppeki kengai aogu mo osoroshi shi. Moshi sore haba ni itarite wa go hyaku mairu ni tassu to iu odoroku bekarazu ya. Kore ni kaichū ni maibatsu seru bubun o awasureba yū ni takasa nisenjaku ni itaran. Kono taiseki ni itatte wa hotondo monji o motte utsusu atawazu. Kono hen umi wa sora yori mo aoku ito monosugoshi. Tsutae iu fukasa nisen hiro nari to. Aa sekai no hirosa yo. Uchū no ōkisa yo.*

*Sate jibun wa uwagi mo kizu ni kiwamete keisō ni natte mazu kono daihyōtei o tōhan sen to shita... Zeppeki no gotoki kyūhan o warera wa jojo to tōhan suru. Ono-ono tanken'i o matōte yukimegane o shite iru (tadashi jibun wa shinai) ippo issen ikkō wa kakegoe shite hyōtei o noboru. Hajime no uchi wa samukatta ga, tsui ni ase ga deru yō ni natta. Ippo itte aogu. To ken no yō na hyōzan ga shōritsu shite iru. Iku sennenzen kara kō shite hito naki sakai ni kitsuritsu shite iru no de arō. Omoeba shizen no kami no fuetsu no myō!*

*Miorosuru to zahyō wa nami ni araware yuriugoite iru. Nami ga don-don to oshiyoseru. Jibunra wa tayori nai tokoro o yoji nobotte iru yō na. Azarashigawa no dojingutsu de saku-saku to kōri o funde tsui ni hyōgen no ikkaku ni tomatta toki no kōkei.*

*Banzai no koe wa kanpū to tomo ni Nanpyōyō ni hirogetta. Aa, waga tankentai no ichū o sasse yo. Akekure netemo sametemo nōri o saranakatta no wa kono Nantairiku ni ashiato o in suru koto de atta. Kōkishin to saraware obotsukanai to yubi o sasareta no ni taishite yuiitsu no fukushū wa nan de arō. Genron demo nai. Jijitsu ni kekka o shimesu yori hoka nai no de aru. Jijitsu wa mugon no shōnin nari warera wa mazu mokuteki no dai-ippo o togenū. Yūki tomi ni hyaku bai seru mo yue naki ni arazu.*

*Haruka ni ikkaku ni tatte kumo to kōri to ai sessuru itten o chōbō su to onna no shigoki no gotoki hiun naname ni kokoku no sora ni hiryū no gotoku kakaru. Are yo! Natsukashiki kokoku! To hyōgen no zetchō ni tatte sen ri no un'ei o yubisasu. Dōhō wa hatashite nani shite aran. Yo mo ya warera ga, ima koko ni mokuteki o tasshite hyōgen tojō kanki seri to wa shiru yoshi mo naken.*

The publication of expedition accounts as stories of adventure was not without precedent; an example of this can be found in the Arctic explorer Peary's first accounts of his expedition, which appeared in the British publication *Nash's Magazine* in 1910. *Nash's Magazine* largely published works in the science fiction, horror, and supernatural genres, although evidently it was also willing to include tales of high adventure. Peary's accounts catered to 'an exclusively popular audience and were written in a highly coloured prose with many a manifest exaggeration – fantastic heights of pressure ridges, for example – designed to add to their dramatic appeal' (Kirwan, 1959, p. 265). That Peary intentionally chose this style of writing is implicit in his description of his account as 'the last of the great adventure stories' (Peary, 1910, p. 268).

Although Hourihan's analysis of the juvenile hero story was based on children's literature in the West, Shirase's account of his Antarctic expedition would appear to include certain features of both Riffenburg's 'iconography of the explorer-hero' and the classic adventure-hero tale Hourihan described. The points Hourihan raised are examined below with reference to *Nankyoku tanken*, to support the argument that Shirase's book was designed to cater to Japanese readers of heroic journey tales as found in the juvenile adventure literature popular in the late-Meiji era.



## The adventure hero's dedication to his quest

Hourihan stated that the quest story is implicit in the nature of the hero in literature. A corollary of this is the hero's determination to succeed in his quest, regardless of opposition or difficulties he may face:

[I]n the hero story proper the journey which shapes the plot signifies the protagonist's progress through adolescence, and the qualities of the hero are the qualities of the adolescent male invested with a self-preserving gloss. The refusal to be diverted from his quest is a glamorized image of adolescent egocentricity. His courage and prowess are projections of adolescent fantasies of invincibility ... The dedication to his cause is an image of youthful idealism, always admirable but involving a simplistic view of the world. ... He is ... full of energy and certainty and too egocentric to consider the effect of his actions on other people ... And the hero does not grow up because, for him, only the journey and the struggle are real.

(Hourihan, 1997, p. 74)

Shirase repeatedly emphasised his refusal to be diverted from his quest, frequently narrating the problems he encountered, and his own resolute efforts to continue with his plans:

From all directions, criticism of our expedition team began to dribble in. Although it started with a certain scholar, soon it came from all corners of society. 'It's nothing more than child's play.' 'It's like something a student would do.' 'As if one could go to the South Pole in a two hundred ton ship.' 'Curiosity is all right up to a point...' <sup>197</sup>

But no matter what they said, I didn't care. <sup>198</sup>

(N. Shirase, 1913, pp. 60-61)

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<sup>197</sup> It is possible that Shirase deliberately included the criticism that the expedition was like something a student would do because of the connection it made between the expedition, or Shirase himself, and students; for the student reader of *Nankyoku tanken*, perhaps the gibe, from presumably an adult authority figure, would serve to encourage identification with the expedition and its leader.

<sup>198</sup> ... *kaku hōmen kara wagatai ni mukatte hinan no koe ga potsu-potsu wakidashita. Bōgakusha wa sono zuiichi naru mono yagate shakai ippan ni made oyonda. 'Jigi ni hitoshii.' 'Shoseiteki da.'* 'Ni hyaku ton de nankyoku e yukeru mono ka.' 'Kōkishin ni mo teido ga aru.' *Nan to demo hinan saretemo ii to wa omotta ...*

In one particularly revealing episode, Shirase recounted the vocal opposition he faced from both the public and the academic world, citing first a ‘certain person’, who reportedly said, ‘Their courage is praiseworthy, but it is not an undertaking that is particularly deserving of admiration,’<sup>199</sup> and then quoting a ‘certain scholar’:

Spurred on by their curiosity, what they are attempting is more laughable than anything. From an academic perspective, the value [of the expedition] is zero. Their failure is guaranteed. With the nation as busy as it is, if there is money available to be allocated to such a thing, it would be better for the nation if it were used for something more profitable.<sup>200</sup>

(N. Shirase, 1913, pp. 61-62)

Shirase’s only reply to this disparagement was a simple statement of indignation: ‘It was outrageous how the criticism and ridicule hailed down upon us from these people who like to inflate others’ weak points’ (N. Shirase, 1913, pp. 61-62).<sup>201</sup> Not only did Shirase fail to deny the validity of the criticism, he evidently saw no reason to abandon or even modify his goals, despite what were claimed to be fundamental flaws in the expedition plans. His determination to continue with his quest in the face of criticism is clear, and the glamorised adolescent egocentricity Hourihan mentioned, only too evident.

Shirase’s portrayal of his doggedness in the face of opposition includes a lengthy account of his fruitless attempt to obtain financial assistance for his expedition from the

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<sup>199</sup> *Yūki to shite wa yomi subeki da ga betsu ni kanshin suru jigyō janai.*

<sup>200</sup> *Kōkishin ni kararete anna koto o suru no wa mushiro warau beshi da, gakumonjō kara mite kachi wa zero de aru fuseikō wa ukeai da. Kokka tatan na baai sonna koto ni ateru kane ga atta nara sore o motto hoka no yūeki no hōmen ni shiyō shita hō ga kokka no tame da.*

<sup>201</sup> *Iwaku nani, iwaku nani to, akippoku, hito no ketten o bōchō shite iitagaru tokuchō o motte iru hitobito kara arare no gotoki hinan to chōshō o uketa.*

government. Despite his petition for funds being approved, Shirase found it was impossible to claim the monies promised:

As for the money, not one *mon* appeared.<sup>202</sup> When I went to the Ministry of Finance, I was told that exploration was considered scientific research, and that I would therefore have to negotiate with the Ministry of Education. When I went to negotiate with the Ministry of Education, they said that money matters were entirely up to the Ministry of Finance, each trying to smear the other with the responsibility.<sup>203</sup>

(N. Shirase, 1913, p. 51)

Shirase does not discuss government funding again, evidently having given up, considering it impossible to obtain the money. He laments the fact that his government refused to see the important opportunity it had missed, and that it did not have the foresight of the British Empire in its support for Shackleton's *Nimrod* expedition of 1907-1909. Shirase, however, cleverly turned the argument against the government, by enlisting the support of the people:

However, looking at it another way, very well, the Government is uninterested in becoming involved. But the general public are sure to have been watching us. We might just be surprised how much they sympathise with us. Let's show the public our passion for our Antarctic expedition, and ask their opinion.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> The *mon* was an old currency denomination used in Japan until 1870. It was worth one-thousandth of a yen. Expressions such as 'without a/ not a *mon*' [*Mon nashi...*] are still used in Japanese, much as 'not a penny/ penniless' are common in Australian English, despite the advent of decimal currency.

<sup>203</sup> ... *kane wa ichi mon mo kafu sarenu. Ōkurashō e yuku to tanken wa gakujutsu chōsa to iu hōmen dakara Monbushō ni kōshō seyo to iu, Monbushō e kakeau to kane no koto wa issai Ōkurashō da to itte sekinin o tasho e nuritsukeru.*

<sup>204</sup> *Tokoro ga, hirugaette omō no ni, naruhodo seifu de wa wariai ni kamatte kurenu. Keredo ippan kokumin wa hatashite nan to shite ware o mite iru de arō. Angai ware ni dōjō shite iru kamoshirenu. Hitotsu, waga Nankyoku tanken no netsujō o toro shite kōko ni tōte miyō.*

Shirase went on to describe the favourable outcome of the first public meeting to garner the support of the Japanese people:

I'll never forget that day – it was early summer – the Fifth of July, 1910! The rally was an unprecedented success, the crowd was almost crazy with excitement, and confirmed our eagerness. Of course we received cheers and shouts of encouragement from students, but also from men of distinction from around the nation. I was so happy! At that moment, I thought that we were sure of success.<sup>205</sup>

(N. Shirase, 1913, p. 54)

Thus, according to Shirase, through the support of the public – in particular, of students – he was able in effect to rise above the Ministries that had opposed him.

It is significant that just three pages later, Shirase first mentions Murakami Dakurō, noted above as possibly Shirase's biggest financial sponsor. Shirase, however, makes no comment on Murakami's financial support, merely crediting him with having held the first rally to announce the Antarctic expedition's plans. Murakami's name is marked with “emphasis points”<sup>206</sup> in Shirase's text, it obviously being a name with which Shirase wished to impress his readers. That Shirase does not reveal his expedition's financial dependence on Murakami may have been the result of the former's unwillingness to betray the adventure-hero role he was building for himself. That he had in fact gone “begging” to the government for support was an incident introduced into the story as it provided an opportunity to present the idea of the hero struggling against almost overwhelming

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<sup>205</sup> *Itsu de aru ka to iu to wasure mo shinai Meiji 43 nen, shoka no 7 gatsu 5 ka! Tokoro ga kono enzetsukai wa kūzen no daiseikyō de, hotondo nekkyōteki ni waga netsubō o sansei shite kureta. Gakusei wa mochiron, chōya no meishi kara mo omoigakenu seienkobu o eta, sono toki no ureshisa. Shunkan, motte ware koto jōju su to made omotta.*

<sup>206</sup> *Kyōchōten* in Japanese, these ‘dots’ beside words written in vertical text are used as emphasis, much as italics are used in written English.

opposition, and yet in the end being able to brush this opposition aside as being of no import. For the hero to then reveal that his entire mission depended on the charity of another, however, would undermine this carefully constructed image. Thus, Murakami is introduced for his “name value”, while his crucial contribution to the expedition is concealed.

A further example of the typical juvenile fiction hero’s ‘refusal to be diverted from his quest’, in Hourihan’s words, can be found in the events that Shirase reported as occurring during his stay in Sydney. In May 1911, the *Kainan Maru* dropped anchor in Sydney Harbour after the expedition was forced to abandon the first attempt to land in Antarctica because of the freezing of the ocean in the Ross Sea region. Shirase and his men camped on the shores of the Harbour in Parsley Bay until November, when they made their second attempt on Antarctica. During that six-month stay in Sydney, Shirase claimed that although they met much kindness at the hands of many Australians, they also faced some adversity, particularly from the press. Notably, Shirase asserted that an article slandering the expedition appeared in the Sydney *Sun* newspaper; he paraphrased the article as follows:

[The article] said that the so-called expedition team that has just come from Japan are fakes. It is nothing more than a whaling ship on a poaching mission. Discussion of the matter is superfluous when the proof is evident – would anyone think to go to the Antarctic in such a small ship? Furthermore, the so-called team members are fakes too. They are gorillas. The proof of that is that their bodies are undersized and coal-black, and their movements are the very image of a monkey’s.<sup>207</sup>

(N. Shirase, 1913, p. 186)

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<sup>207</sup> *Iwaku kondo kita Nihon no tankentai toka iu mono wa nise mono da. Are wa hitotsu no kujiratoribune ni suginu. Mitsuryōsen da. Ron yori shōko anna chippoke na fune de Nankyoku made yukeru mono ka. Sorekara taiin toka iu no mo nise mono da. Are wa gorira da. Sono shōko ni washintai ga waishō de makuro de dōsa ga saru sono mama da.*

Shirase stated that this article appeared quite ‘ostentatiously’ [*reirei to*] in the *Sun*; he repeated the claim in his 1942 *Watashi no Nankyoku tanken-ki* (N. Shirase, 1942, p. 155). Extensive searches of this newspaper for the entire period the *Kainan Maru* was moored in Sydney, however, have failed to reveal any such article. On the contrary, the *Sun* took a considerably more respectful view of the expedition on most occasions, in spite of its pro-“White Australia” stance.<sup>208</sup> On May 15, 1911, a lengthy article on the Japanese camp appeared in the *Sun*, under the heading ‘The mysterious Japs’. Although obviously attempting to create a news story out of less-than-newsworthy material, the writer nevertheless did not resort to anything like the racial vilification imputed by Shirase:

The mystery that has surrounded the alleged Antarctic expedition organised by Lieutenant Shirase and a party of Japanese thickens with time as time progresses. ... People began to doubt the bona fides of the expedition, and the man in the street promptly arrived at the conclusion that the Japanese secret service department had more to do with its despatch than ambitions in the way of Polar sprinting. The arrival of the expedition in Sydney, and the events of the last few days have strengthened this belief on the part of the man in the street.

A moment’s reflection, however, should convince anybody that the Shirase expedition, whatever may be its objects, is not intended for purposes of spying. No nation – and certainly not a shrewd, intelligent nation like the Japanese – go [*sic*] about the world spying with a brass band. A spying expedition would certainly not focus the eyes of the whole world on its movements by pretending to be a band of Polar explorers. ...

("The mysterious Japs," 1911)

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<sup>208</sup> The “White Australia” policy, more correctly known as the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, was introduced ‘to exclude alien Asiatics as well as the people of Japan, against whom the measure is primarily aimed’ (*Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Deakin, 12 September, 1901, p. 4816).

An additional article in the same edition of the newspaper concluded with the following:

People who live in the vicinity of the camp have no fault to find with the party, but this is nothing unusual. They say that the Japs are quiet, and apparently inoffensive, while one lady remarked that she did not know they were there until she saw the newspapers. One man regarded them as pleasant fellows. He said that some of them talked broken English, but that they indulged in common-place conversation only, and gave no information about themselves. He said they were always laughing and joking, and one of them had solemnly presented him with a novel printed in the Japanese language.

A later article, on 23 May, under the heading 'Local residents reconciled', stated

The Japanese camp at Parsley Bay, South head, is still being visited by numbers of people, and yesterday one of the visitors was Mr. N.J. Courtney. Mr. Courtney has just been appointed sanitary inspector of Vacluse municipality, and on his first day of duty he invaded the Japanese, presenting the following report to the council last evening:

"Today I inspected the Japanese camp at Parsley Bay, and found the camp site in every way suitable. The camp is properly fitted, and the sanitary arrangements are most complete. ..."

... He had met the authorities of the Jap camp that day, and he had been favourably impressed. He was satisfied of their bona fides, and he was now of opinion that they were exactly what they represented themselves to be, and that they were here for the purpose which they had stated. They were making an expedition of discovery, and were also on a tour of the southern seas to obtain for themselves or their country any information possible which would be useful to them now or in years to come.

This last statement alone should have been ample fuel for an anti-Japanese diatribe. That none followed further contradicts the blatantly racist image Shirase was attempting to build for the *Sun*. A further article in the same newspaper on 24 June reported an entertainment

given by the expedition members for the Australian public:

The comparative few who risked Thursday's cold weather conditions and journeyed to Watson's Bay were wholly compensated by the wrestling and ju-jitsu display given by the members of the Japanese South Polar exploration party at their camp at Parsley Bay. ... Lieutenant Shirase, in the uniform of his rank, and wearing the medals he won after going through the Russo-Jap. War, presided, and handed the prizes over to the winners of the sports contests. ... The singing was weird, and at times would stop suddenly to enable the vocalist to give a fierce war-cry. ... The slightly humorous part of the singing to the uninitiated European, was the perfectly serious way in which the singer would stop his weird wailing and gyrations, walk over to a bucket with an enamelled mug attached, drink a long draught of Parsley bay water, and then get back to his song. ...

After the display, which lasted well over two hours, Alderman Dr. George Read thanked the Japanese for the interesting and clever exhibition of their national sports and pastimes, and called for three cheers for the Mikado. These were loudly given. Lieutenant Shirase (through Dr. Read) asked for three cheers for the King of England.

The entertainment, which was altogether unadvertised, was a unique and pleasant one, and was much appreciated by the 250 or 300 people present.

It is quite clear that the stance of the *Sun* towards the *Kainan Maru* expedition, while not always positive or even free from bias, was far from holding the bitterly racist position Shirase claimed for it. The Japanese were referred to as 'the Japs', a term not necessarily as censorious as it was to become in later years, and at times were discussed in a most patronising tone, but there is no evidence of the malicious name-calling Shirase claimed. Even the Sydney publication *The Bulletin*, known for its rampantly pro-"White Australia" policies – its masthead slogan was 'Australia for the White Man' – did not use language of the type Shirase described. On 18 May 1911, a caricature of the expedition on the front page of the magazine implied that the Japanese were intent on spying on Australian defence



fortifications. A short item on page 24 stated,

Thirty Japanese from the exploring ship *Kainan Maru* have landed at Vacluse, and intend to camp there for three months. The pole that Nip is apparently keeping his eye on is the one that grows above the fortifications at Sydney's sea entrance.

("Political points," 1911)

Thus, even the xenophobic *Bulletin* did not describe the Japanese as 'gorillas' or 'monkeys', even when hinting that the Japanese were engaged in nefarious activities with regard to Australia's defences.

It would seem that the purpose of Shirase's introducing this tale of embattled Japanese pitted against the forces of "White Australia" was to enhance the image he was at pains to build of his refusal to be diverted from his quest, his invincibility, and his dedication to his cause, all described by Hourihan as features of the archetypal fictional adventure-hero. That a "White Australia" policy was in force was well known in Japan; Shirase was attempting to play upon anti-Australian sentiments engendered by this policy in order to encourage reader identification with the heroic character he was constructing for himself.

The theme of "winning through" despite the many obstacles to success thrown in his path is maintained throughout Shirase's book. The following excerpt narrating the

expeditioners' first steps on Antarctica is typical:

Ah, the outcome of almost three years of piteous efforts had not come to nothing, and luckily I was to have the pleasure of leaving my footstep on the great southern land. In particular, for me this was the land I had visited in my dreams for more than ten years. Thinking back, even as we set sail from Shibaura, although my heart was galloping across the Antarctic skies, there was some slight worry as to when our tiny ship of only two hundred tons would get there. But this very day we would rush into the wonderful Antarctic and were about to make our landing. My extreme happiness knew no bounds.<sup>209</sup>

(N. Shirase, 1913, p. 263)

In this paragraph Shirase was making two important points. The first was the reference to leaving his footprint. It is difficult to assess whether Shirase was making deliberate reference to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, the classic adventure story published in 1719 in which the castaway Crusoe's discovery of a footprint in the sand of his desert island forms a significant turning point. Hanlon (2001a, p. 611) described the footprint discovery episode as 'one of the most suspenseful, unforgettable moments in the history of fiction,' and noted that Defoe's book was 'one of the most popular adventure stories in world literature.' She added that '[t]he worldwide popularity and mythic proportions of this exotic island adventure led to a vast body of related literature called "Robinsonnades".' A Robinsonnade was defined as '[a] story of struggle for survival in an isolated, unfamiliar environment' (Hanlon, 2001b, p. 612). That Shirase made numerous references to the idea of leaving his footprint on Antarctica suggests that the inference was intentional, and that he may have been deliberately positioning his work as a Robinsonnade. A new translation into Japanese by Inoue Tsutomu of *Robinson Crusoe* had been published in 1883, under the

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<sup>209</sup> *Ā, zengo san nen no kushin santan sono kōka munashikarazu shubi yoku Nantairiku ni ashiato o inseshi yukai. Koto ni jibun ni totte wa jūsūnen mubi no aida ni kayōte ita chi de aru. Omoeba Shibaura shuppan no toki, kokoro wa Nankyoku no sora ni hasetaredo byōtaru ni hyaku ton no shōsen o motte aa itsu no koto ni ka to tashō no fuan mo naki ni arazarishi. Shikamo kyō koko ni migoto Nankyokuken ni tosshin shite masa ni jōriku sen to su. Kan kiwamatte iu tokoro o shirazaru mo kotowari nari.*

title *Robinson Kurūsō no shōgai to kushikumo odorokubeki bōken* [The life and strange, surprising adventures of Robinson Crusoe], and was regarded in Japan at that time as both an adventure story, and a tract on how young men could overcome adversity and achieve success – clearly a partner at least in Japanese minds to Smiles' *Self-help* (Jansen, 1989, p. 481; Sansom, 1950, pp. 398-399). It is quite possible that the twenty-two year old Shirase read this story of adventure and discovery, and was impressed by the notion of leaving his footprint on uncharted lands. At the same time, by including the idea in his own book, he was then encouraging his readers to associate his heroic expedition with Crusoe's 'strange, surprising adventure'.

The second idea that emerges strongly from the paragraph cited is Shirase's sense of dedication to his quest. His reference to his three years of 'piteous efforts' in getting the mission underway, and to his ten years of planning, are designed to show his unwavering perseverance in the face of enormous obstacles to success.

### The adventure-hero's relationships

Hourihan also suggests that the hero in fiction is not simply young, but has an essentially juvenile world view, and that this is reflected in the hero's relationships with others:

The hero's relationships are ... typically adolescent. ...[A]s he journeys relentlessly onward he meets people, spends a little time with them, then leaves them behind, especially the women he encounters. ... The meaning implicit in this structure is that serial relationships of this kind are not only normal, but superior to the alternative of an established commitment because they allow the hero to remain dedicated to his goal.

(Hourihan, 1997, p. 76)

The hero's relationships being of a serial nature precisely describes Shirase's narration of his interactions with all those he meets during his expedition. In fact, he never presents a rounded picture of any character in *Nankyoku tanken*, as no relationship is given time to develop, or for other people to "emerge" in any meaningful way. One example of this is Shirase's depiction of his relationship with the geologist and explorer Professor Tannatt Edgeworth David, whom Shirase met in Sydney. David was internationally famous for having led the first team to reach the South Magnetic Pole during Shackleton's 1907-1909 *Nimrod* expedition. Shirase wrote that his delivery from the "gorilla incident" discussed above came at the hands of David, whom Shirase claimed wrote a letter to the press,

refuting the statements that had appeared in the *Sun*. The letter allegedly stated,

... The Japanese explorers are not gorillas, nor are they monkeys. They are a group of explorers whose courage cannot be matched anywhere in the world. They have smashed their way through rough seas to come four thousand kilometres from the Orient, and extraordinarily, have already reached latitude 74 degrees on 10 March. They were, unfortunately, forced by the ice to turn back, and now await the ice melt when they plan a second attempt. These courageous Japanese deserve our praise. That is our duty to the expeditioners.<sup>210</sup>

(N. Shirase, 1913, p. 190)

Shirase did not claim that this was a precise translation of David's letter, but rather that it was 'along those lines'.<sup>211</sup> It is perhaps even more revealing of Shirase's intentions when this précis of the letter is compared with the précis Shirase provided in his 1942 *Watashi no Nankyoku tanken-ki*, which attributed to David the additional sentences, 'The expedition has been undertaken in a tiny ship of a mere 200 tons. This is the greatest expedition ship in the world' (N. Shirase, 1942, p. 158).<sup>212</sup> The distance the ship had travelled was also increased substantially, from one thousand *ri*, to 'many thousand' *ri*.<sup>213</sup> Thus, thirty years later, Shirase was ascribing to David an even stronger affirmation of the heroic status of the expedition.

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<sup>210</sup> ... *Nihon tankentai wa gorira ni arazu saru ni mo arazu. Sekai ni rui naki isamashii tankentai de aru. Toyō kara sen ri no hatō o tōha shite kita sae isū to suru ni sude ni sangatsu tōka ni wa nan'I nanajūyon-do no chiten made susunda. Ima ya fukō ni shite keppyō no tame ni hikikaeseri to kore kaihyō no ki ni jōjite saikyo o hakaran to seri. Isamashiki Nihon no tankensha o ōi ni negirae. Tankentai ni tai suru warera no gimu de aru.*

<sup>211</sup> '...to iu yō na imi no bun' are the words Shirase used (N. Shirase, 1913, p. 191).

<sup>212</sup> ... *Wazuka ni ni hyaku ton bakari no kobune de tanken ga dekita no da. Kore wa sekai dai-ichi no tankenbune de aru.*

<sup>213</sup> One *ri* was 3.9 kilometres. The significance of the above measurements is difficult to convey in English, as the earlier usage was literal, while the later was metaphorical. Thus, the earlier '*sen ri*' means literally 'one thousand *ri*' [3900 kilometres], while the later '*banri*', although written as 'ten-thousand *ri*' [literally 39,000 kilometres] is more correctly translated as 'thousands of kilometres'. Rendering the first as '3900 kilometres', however, and the second as 'thousands of kilometres', fails to convey the difference in magnitude implicit in the original Japanese.

According to *Nankyoku tanken*, the result of the publication of David's letter was an immediate cessation of the racial vilification the Japanese were suffering in the press, and a complete change in attitude among the many Australians who came to visit the Japanese camp. Shirase claimed that the *Sun* lost all credibility with its readers and was severely criticised for its actions (N. Shirase, 1913, p. 191).<sup>214</sup> According to David's biographer David Branagan,

... David, touched by the aims and plight of the Japanese expedition, and realising its inadequate equipment, sought to gain it practical support from both the government and the Australian public. This was done with little publicity, but by the time the Japanese expedition was finally ready to leave Sydney for the ice again, it was much better equipped and victualled than on its arrival.

(Branagan, 2005, p. 233)

Hence, according to Branagan, David did not engage in an open contest with the *Sun* which resulted in its being publicly shamed. On the contrary, he worked discreetly and without publicity to assist the Japanese expeditioners. Branagan's version of events clearly contradicts that narrated in *Nankyoku tanken*.

Shirase evidently felt such deep gratitude to David for his help that at the time of departure of the *Kainan Maru* on its second attempt to reach Antarctica, Shirase presented him with an extremely valuable antique sword.<sup>215</sup> Shirase wrote a letter of thanks to David on 18 November, 1911, the day before their departure (Branagan, 2005, p. 235).

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<sup>214</sup> As with the original article purportedly labelling the expedition members as gorillas, no evidence of this letter to the press, or of any criticism of the *Sun* over this matter, could be located in the course of this study.

<sup>215</sup> This sword is now in the possession of the Australian Museum, Sydney (For more information on the sword, see "Nobu Shirase: Mutsu no Kami Kaneyasu," 1999).

Despite Shirase's avowed indebtedness to David, however, no further mention of him appears in *Nankyoku tanken*, nor on the expedition's return to Sydney did Shirase report that he contacted David or visited him. Unfortunately, none of the materials preserved in the 'David Papers' now held by the National Library of Australia relates to the Shirase expedition, so it is not possible to determine whether David did indeed receive further communications from Shirase. In any case, in the story as told by Shirase, David appeared merely as a passing figure whose significance was to help emphasise the trials Shirase had to overcome in the form of racial discrimination, and in affirming the heroic nature of the mission in which Shirase was engaged; having fulfilled that role, David was no longer relevant to Shirase's quest as narrated in *Nankyoku tanken*.

Shirase's descriptions of his relationships with women are similarly two-dimensional; as Hourihan stated,

[The hero's] dealings with women and girls can hardly be described as relationships since the women exist merely as motifs in his story. His mother is more important to the hero than the women he encounters on his quest, but she is left behind when he goes off into the wilderness. The story ... asserts that the wilderness, the wide world, is a place for men. Women do not belong there: the domestic sphere of home is their place. Those who do turn up in the wilderness, being out of their place, are likely to be dangerous, aiming ... to lure him from his quest.

(Hourihan, 1997, p. 76)

With reference to his mother, in an appendix to *Nankyoku tanken*, Shirase recounted various incidents from his childhood intended to illustrate his waywardness and love of physical adventure and risk. He begins his tales with what seems to be a deliberate

distancing from his mother: ‘From birth, I did not depend on my mother’s breast. In other words, I never once drank my mother’s milk’<sup>216</sup> (N. Shirase, 1913, p. 342). As this is immediately followed by an unrelated story of his survival from smallpox, there would seem no explanation for the reference to his mother other than that he wished to convey to the reader his independence from his mother from birth. That she figures as little more than a ‘motif’ in his childhood stories, and is soon ‘left behind’ is consistent with the typical pattern of the adventure-hero’s relationship with his mother as discussed by Hourihan.

The only other females who appear as anything other than a vague image of idealised beauty are the girls who came to visit the camp site in Parsley Bay. These girls, described by Shirase as students [*jogakusei*], reportedly frequented the camp in order to socialise with the Japanese, and to bring them gifts of cakes, biscuits and fruit. The men were invited to a number of small parties and similar entertainments. Surprisingly, Shirase then claimed to have received a barrage of marriage proposals:

That in the end I was proposed to by foreign ladies can only be described as something unprecedented. At least as far as I was concerned, it was an even bigger thing than an Antarctic expedition. *I sincerely ask for the hand in marriage of Mr. Shirase, Japanese Expedition Leader!* From hither and yonder the requests started to come in ... Well, I adroitly turned aside all the offers of marriage from those ladies who were like so many flowers ...<sup>217</sup>

(N. Shirase, 1913, p. 193)

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<sup>216</sup> *Umareochitemo katsute ofukuro no chibusa ni sugaranu. Kangen sureba jibun wa ichi do mo chichi to iu o nomanakatta no de aru.*

<sup>217</sup> *Tsui ni jibun wa kano chi no redē kara kekkon o mōshikomareta ni itatte wa, koto hatenkō to iwaneba naranu. Sukunakutomo jibun ni totte wa Nankyoku tanken ijō no dekgoto de atta. Nihon no yūshi Shirase taichō to zehi kon’yaku o musubitai. To kanata kara mo konata kara mo ... Sate hana no yō na reijō to kekkon o mōshikomareta jibun wa migoto ni hanetsuketa ...*



Shirase suggests he had successfully “escaped” these women who were attempting to ‘lure him from his quest’. In the very next sentence, Shirase complained of the ennui of camp life, and spoke of the elderly couples and children who visited the nearby park; no further reference was made to the women who had wished to marry him. As noted by Hourihan, the women in heroic adventure tales exist merely as motifs in the story, and Shirase therefore could summarily dismiss them from his narrative and not deviate from the accepted norms of the genre in which he was writing.

In reality, Shirase could do little else. For most extraordinary of all in this regard is the fact that Shirase was a married man with an extensive family at this time. Yet, in a book which on the surface appears autobiographical, he not once refers to his wife or children. Shirase had married his wife Yasu in 1887, and by the time of publication of *Nankyoku tanken*, had fathered seven children, the youngest of whom, Isamu, was still only five years old, while the oldest, Tomo, was twenty-five (Watanabe, 1994, pp. 71-76). Shirase neither mentioned his own age – he was fifty years old – nor that he had a wife and children, as might have been expected at least when he was narrating the account of the marriage proposals he was allegedly receiving in such abundance from the female students of Sydney. That this information was not divulged, on the other hand, suggests that Shirase felt it would not serve the purposes for which he was writing. After all, the hero of an adventure tale is not normally middle-aged. More importantly, he is usually single; that he might in fact be neglecting his children and have essentially abandoned his wife in order to go on his quest fits poorly with the adventure story model. Indeed, Shirase’s wife Yasu was left without an income while Shirase was on his Antarctic expedition. Little documentary evidence remains to explain how the family survived in his absence. Watanabe (1991, p.

185), however, has suggested that the answer probably lies in something Shirase wrote in an unpublished manuscript regarding his 1893 excursion to the Kuril Islands, when he was in the Japanese Army. Shirase noted that as he would be unable to provide his family with an income, they would be on the brink of starvation [*gashi ni hin suru hazu nashi*] in his absence. Yasu had been forced to give up her pre-marital dreams of playing the *shamisen*<sup>218</sup> on stage in ballad dramas [*gidayū*] by the financial rigours of their married life. Faced with the starvation of their children while Shirase was in the Kurils, however, Shirase wrote that Yasu began to teach the *shamisen*, as well as taking in tailoring piecework. Watanabe postulated that this was again how the family survived while Shirase was in the Antarctic. In the same manuscript, Shirase credited Yasu with the education of their children, and expressed his deep admiration for, and gratitude to, his wife (Watanabe, 1991, pp. 185-186).<sup>219</sup> Despite leaving Yasu in such circumstances again in 1910, and Shirase's expression of his indebtedness to his wife on the former occasion, his failure to mention even her existence or that of his children in *Nankyoku tanken* clearly indicates that this book was not intended as an historically complete, autobiographical account of his expedition years.

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<sup>218</sup> The *shamisen* is a three-stringed musical instrument reminiscent of the banjo.

<sup>219</sup> That Yasu was not necessarily satisfied with the life she had been forced into is illustrated by an episode related to Shirase Kyōko by Shirase's eldest daughter Fumiko. Fumiko recalled her father taking the whole family to an expensive restaurant on his return from the Kurils, and treating the children to anything they liked. Yasu was greatly displeased by this frivolous waste of money, and refused to order anything but simple, cheap dishes such as noodles for herself, all the while with a 'sullen look on her face' [*shibui kao o shite*]. (K. Shirase, 1986, p. 65). Having been forced to struggle for many years to feed, house and educate her children, Yasu evidently was not happy with her husband's sudden largesse.

That Shirase rejected the advances of the young women in Sydney, and that he had effectively disavowed his marital status, also tie well with his identification with the *bankara* ethos, as discussed in Chapter 3. Crotty examined the close connection between

the adventure-hero in juvenile literature and fears of a flagging masculinity:

Fiction is a field on which anxieties can be mapped, the narrative providing the possibilities for fears and dangers to be met and overcome. ... When fears were held for the over-civilisation and feminisation of society, adventure stories allowed the masculine to run untrammelled, to escape civilisation and the feminine home.

(Crotty, 2001, p. 139)

Although Crotty's discussion was focussed on adventure-narratives in the early Australian context, his conclusions are nevertheless applicable to Shirase's story; his assertion that '[w]hat the Australian adventure hero overcomes reflects what white society feared it would be defeated by' equally applies to a Japanese adventure-hero overcoming what certain elements of Japanese society at the turn of the century feared would defeat them – 'the over-civilisation and feminisation of society'. The *bankara* youth for whom Shirase was writing saw themselves as fighting in defence of a "true Japanese spirit" against the feminisation of society represented by the *haikara* fop. By rejecting the civilising, emasculating influence of the women of Sydney who tried to lure him from his expedition into a 'feminine home', Shirase was positioning his narrative within the norms of the adventure-hero genre, as well as within the norms of Japanese *bankara* youth culture.

Further to the adventure hero's relationships, Shirase Kyōko expressed her surprise at the almost complete absence of detail in *Tanken Sekai* concerning Shirase's relationships

with the men in his expedition team:

... that I could not find even one mention of the personalities of the expedition team or criticisms of their actions or any statement of blame, I found somewhat perplexing. This voyage was not some one week or ten day sightseeing excursion, but a great voyage of over a year in which lives were often in peril, and which threw together twenty-seven men whose place of birth and upbringing were completely different, and whose only commonality was that they applied to join the expedition. As a result, until six months before they departed, they had never even seen each other's faces. Furthermore, as they were men who had enlisted in an Antarctic expedition – an adventure of a type unimaginable at that time – they were mighty tough guys. ... Accordingly, they had strong personalities, and it could be said they were a group of men with more than one odd habit. With such a group, confined in a small ship, and on a monotonous and boring voyage, for there to be no incident is quite contrary to expectations.<sup>220</sup>

Kyōko's next sentence is most revealing:

In fact, in the notes and memoirs of men other than Nobu on the expedition, the 'human situations' stirred up by the personalities or proclivities of the team members, are vividly depicted.<sup>221</sup>

(K. Shirase, 1986, pp. 225-226)

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<sup>220</sup> ... *taiin no jinbutsu ya kōdō ni tsuite no hihan, arui wa hinangamashii bunshō ga ichi gyō tari tomo miataranai no ni, chotto fushigi na ki ga shita. Kono kōkai wa issūkan ya tōka kurai no kenbutsu yusan to chigatte, ichi nen ijō mo tsuzuku inochigake no daikōkai de ari, umare mo sodachi mo chigau nijūnana mei no hitotachi ga, Nankyoku tanken to iu hitokoto ni nomi kyōmei shite ōbo shite kita mono de aru. Hantoshi mae made wa otagai ni kao mo mita koto no nai hitotachi de atta. Shikamo Nankyoku tanken nado to iu, tōji to shite wa sōzō o zessuru daibōken ni sankā shiyō to iu hitotachi de aru kara, ikki-tōsen no tsuwamono bakari de atta. ... Sore ga, chiisana fune no naka, shikamo tanchō de taikutsu na kōkaichū, nanigoto mo nakatta to iu no wa kaete fushizen de aru.*

<sup>221</sup> *Jitsu wa, Nobu igai no taiin ga kaita shuki ya kaisōroku no naka ni wa, taiintachi no kosei ya seiheki ga maki-okosu namanamashii "ningenmoyō" ga egakarete iru.*

Kyōko then narrated three instances of interpersonal conflict among the men of which she was aware either from the writings of the men on the expedition, or from other sources. Two of these events were rather trivial, but the third was of extreme importance for Shirase. This was the possible attempted assassination of Shirase during the expedition. Shirase is reported to have said to both his daughter Takeko, and to others, that at some point in the voyage an attempt was made by one of his men to poison him. In a letter to the magazine *Shūkan Asahi* (2 September 1951, cited in Tsunabuchi, 1983, pp. 495-496), Takeko stated that on one occasion, her father's food had been poisoned, but that the Ainu dog-handlers Yamanobe and Hanamori had warned him of this and thus saved his life. Tsunabuchi (1983, p. 496) also claimed that Shirase's grand-daughter, Shirase Yoshiko, said that she had heard of the attempted murder from her grandmother Yasu – Shirase's wife. Shirase Kyōko told of Shirase's having to wear a dagger in order to protect himself against possible mutineers in his crew, and that she had heard of the plot against Shirase from her great-aunt Yasu (K. Shirase, 1986, pp. 251-253). There is therefore significant evidence that Shirase believed that he was in danger of assassination, and also that an attempt on his life may have been made. As Kyōko noted, not one word of such an important event appeared in Shirase's writing. Although this would be a significant and damaging oversight in an autobiographical account of the expedition, in a work intended as a heroic adventure tale this kind of information would on the contrary compromise the work's place in the genre. As Hourihan (1997, p. 77) stated, in the adventure story, the hero typically travels with 'a band of brothers'; there is no leeway for attempted fratricide in such a story. Indeed, even trouble or friction between the men would hint at problems with the hero's leadership skills. Thus, it is not surprising that Shirase does not on any occasion mention interpersonal

conflicts that occurred, let alone a mutiny. In the archetypal heroic adventure story, not only are ‘the bonds between the members of the group ... stronger than any friendships with outsiders,’ but the men ‘make a voluntary submission to the hero’. In this manner, the tale acts as a romantic representation of the ‘boys’ gang’, and it is this which fuels the appeal to the reader of juvenile literature of classics such as the legend of Robin Hood (Hourihan, 1997, pp. 83-88). Shirase’s *Nankyoku tanken* likewise presents a band of men united in a common cause – the mutual endurance of hardships in the conquest of the Antarctic. It is therefore to be expected that Shirase would eliminate from his story all traces of conflict or dissent that may have occurred in real life. In his *The South Pole*, Amundsen similarly avoided any reference to the mutinous outburst of one of his men, Hjalmar Johansen, who accused Amundsen of cowardice and of abandoning his men in order to save his own life (Fiennes, 2003, p. 263). This profoundly unheroic episode – ‘the most inglorious and uncharacteristic episode of his whole exploring life’, as Crane put it – was ‘seamlessly glossed over in his account of the polar race’ (Crane, 2005, p. 509). Johansen was banished from the polar team in punishment for his revolt against Amundsen’s leadership, but Amundsen wrote of this without any reference to the rift that had split the ‘band of brothers’: ‘Circumstances had arisen which made me consider it necessary to divide the party in two’ was his only comment (Amundsen, 1913, p. 389).

Even in Shirase Kyōko’s detailed analysis of *Nankyoku tanken*, she, in common with all other researchers to date, failed to realise that Shirase had deliberately omitted all evidence of interpersonal conflict on his expedition.<sup>222</sup> This was not because he was

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<sup>222</sup> Shirase Kyōko weakly, and somewhat illogically, argued that Shirase had failed to mention any conflicts on the expedition because he had managed to contain them before they reached serious proportions (K. Shirase, 1986, p. 227). In so far as Shirase was not actually assassinated, Kyōko is correct in asserting that he

avoiding cultural taboos against criticism of his companions; Kyōko herself stated that many instances of ‘human situations’ appeared in the writings of the other men on the expedition. One prominent example of this is to be found in the contribution to *Nankyokuki*, the published official record of the expedition, from the Captain of the *Kainan Maru*,

Nomura Naokichi, who wrote of his annoyance at perceived interference in his work by unnamed expedition members:

At that time, certain members of the party made certain suggestions as to the course of the ship, on the basis of what they have heard from Prof. David at Sydney. In my opinion, however, it would be of serious consequences [*sic*], should the navigator of a Japanese ship have to obey at any cost the opinion of a foreigner. ... I answered them, as the captain, that although I naturally would take their opinion into consideration, I rejected any suggestion demanding blind adherence.

Later in his report, Nomura complained again of the continued demands made by the Research Division, clearly implicating the Head of Science Takeda Terutarō who had had lengthy discussions with Edgeworth David in Sydney. This time, Nomura concluded with a more ominous statement, suggesting the dangers of continuing to oppose the Captain:

In spite of my above answer, the members of the Research Division still bothered me with repeated requests on the matter. I answered them that ... the captain of the ship must act with great care, and that his commands should be obeyed.

("Appendix to *Nankyokuki*, the report of the Japanese Antarctic Expedition, 1910-12," 1958, p. 61)

The reason such friction did not surface in Shirase’s book was because it was not intended as an objective, factual account of an Antarctic expedition, nor even as his memoirs, as

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had contained the conflict. This, however, does not adequately explain his failure to mention the incident, particularly when she herself believed that he was forced to carry a dagger in self-defence.

Shirase Kyōko seemed to assume. Rather, *Nankyoku tanken* is a heroic adventure story based on real events, and as a result, certain details had necessarily to be omitted for it to fit seamlessly into this genre of juvenile literature.

### The adventure-hero as a ‘man of action’

Shirase’s writing bears many similarities to Amundsen’s in *The South Pole* (1913), published in the same year. There is an extraordinary “denial by omission” of any conflict or dissension between the men, as discussed above, and while Amundsen provides much more information about his men than Shirase does, the descriptions are generally shallow, and give no indication of the personalities of the men with whom he lived for many months. Amundsen too portrayed himself as a ‘man of action’, dedicated to his mission, and with little time for other matters. Thus, both Amundsen and Shirase fit well with Hourihan’s description of the ‘action hero’:

The hero is a man of action and it is in action that he expresses his nature – skill, courage, dominance and determination. He is neither contemplative nor creative. He marches onward, and when he encounters ... a difficulty he deals with it. In some versions of the story it is action itself, as much as the final goal, which is the point of the quest. Action involving an extreme level of skill or great danger is depicted as providing extraordinary fulfilment ...

(Hourihan, 1997, p. 96)



Hourihan's comment that in some versions of the quest narrative the action itself assumes an equal or greater role in the story than the goal is extremely apt when applied to both Amundsen's and Shirase's writing. In Amundsen's case, his narration of reaching the Pole

can only be described as anticlimactic:

At three in the afternoon a simultaneous "Halt!" rang out from the drivers. ... The goal was reached, the journey ended. I cannot say – though I know it would sound much more effective – that the object of my life was attained. ... I had better be honest and admit straight out that I have never known any man to be placed in such a diametrically opposite position to the goal of his desires as I was at that moment. The regions around the North Pole – well, yes, the North Pole itself – had attracted me from childhood, and here I was at the South Pole. Can anything more topsy-turvy be imagined?

(Amundsen, 1913, p. 121)

Amundsen's flippant tone, although perhaps attractive in its modesty and simplicity, seems to verge on the ludicrous when compared with the far more contemplative and emotional words of Scott when he reached the Pole, only to find he had been defeated for priority:

The Norwegians have forestalled us and are first at the Pole. It is a terrible disappointment, and I am very sorry for my loyal companions. Many thoughts come and much discussion we have had. ... All the day dreams must go; it will be a wearisome return.

(Scott, 1913, pp. 376-377)

What the Amundsen quote does reveal, however, is the relative unimportance of the *goal* in *The South Pole*, whatever its value may have been in real life. Amundsen spent nearly four

hundred pages discussing the journey to Antarctica and the preparations for the trek to the Pole before beginning the actual account of that journey, and it is clear that logistical aspects of the expedition were of far greater import in his book than being first at the Pole. To repeat Hourihan's words, 'it is action itself, as much as the final goal, which is the point of the quest'.

In *Nankyoku tanken*, as in *The South Pole*, the action assumes greater importance than the attainment of the goal. Perhaps the best illustration of this is in the account of Shirase reaching his furthest south. Although Shirase was considerably more vociferous about his achievement than Amundsen was about reaching the Pole, this does not mean that the former placed more weight on the 'goal' than on the 'action'. On the contrary, it is Shirase's complete disregard for the fact that he *has not achieved* his initial and most fundamental goal that is significant. For a story that began as a quest for priority at the South Pole to end in the hero's turning back more than a thousand kilometres short of that point<sup>223</sup> would be to entirely betray the reader's trust. Consequently, Shirase was forced to present his furthest south as a reasonable substitute. A certain level of "clamour" was necessary to establish in the minds of his readers that eighty degrees five minutes south was a goal achieved. Nevertheless, this remained a relatively minor feature of the story as a whole – it is the 'action' that was the point of the quest:

Since setting foot on the continent on the 19<sup>th</sup> January, over the following eight or so days we had traversed 282 kilometres from our starting point to where we now were. This was a

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<sup>223</sup> The distance Amundsen trekked from the Bay of Whales to the Pole was approximately 870 miles [1400 kilometres] (Amundsen, 1913, p. xlviii). Shirase travelled 282 kilometres from the coastline with his 'Dash Party'.

daily average of thirty-nine kilometres.<sup>224</sup> More precisely, we had reached 80°5' South 154° West and could go no more. To go on could mean only death. Nay, death was a certainty. But heavier on our shoulders than death was our mission. For if we were to die, our mission could not be completed. We swallowed our tears and, for the sake of our mission, put an end to our progress.<sup>225</sup>

(N. Shirase, 1913, p. 285)

The emphasis has clearly been placed on the death-defying nature of the trek, and the distances traversed, rather than on real accomplishments. It is the risk of death that takes centre stage, closely followed by the details of how far they had come, rather than the actual point reached. Once again Hourihan's description of the action hero story is confirmed, where action takes priority over the final goal as the point of the quest. Indeed, action itself can become the "final goal"; to draw the reader into the action and entertain or inspire them with the hero's exploits assumes a more fundamental role in the work than providing a satisfying and rounded dénouement. Thus, in the above account of reaching his furthest south, Shirase disingenuously conceals the failure to achieve the initial and most basic goal of the expedition – being first to the Pole – by persuading the reader that death had been narrowly avoided and that something physically extraordinary had been accomplished. Indeed, he now claims that his 'mission' involved simply going as far as possible, and then returning safely: 'For if we were to die, our mission could not be completed' – a far different prospect from being first to reach the Pole. The original purpose of the expedition, so explicit in the words of the Expedition Biwa Song, has been

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<sup>224</sup> Shirase was using the now antiquated Japanese units of distance known as *ri* and *chō*. One *ri* is approximately 3.9 kilometres; one *chō*, 109.1 metres. His daily average was given as 10 *ri*.

<sup>225</sup> *Ichi gatsu jūku nichī tairiku ni jōriku shite yori zengo yōkakan, hyōgen hyōya o basshō shite tsui ni shuppatsuchi yori nana-jū ri hatchō no chiten ni tasshinu. Ichi nichī heikin jū ri kyō o basshō seru nari. Shikaru ni Nan'i hachi-jū do go bu Sei-kei hyaku-go-jū-yon do ni itaru ya ippō o susumu atawazu. Susumanka, shi sen nomi, ina, shi wa kanete kiseru tokoro, aete osorezare domo shimei wa shi yori mo omoshi. Shi shite wa mei o hatasu o ezu, ware wa naite shimei no tame ni kono ue no kōshin o chūshi shi nu.*

undermined by the unabashed trading of action for achievement. Shirase masterfully draws the reader's attention to the action of the narrative, and denies priority at the Pole the importance it would necessarily assume in a straight-forward account of a polar expedition.

### The adventure-story appendix

Perhaps more persuasive than all the above textual evidence that Shirase's book was designed to cater to Japanese readers of the heroic adventure tales popular in the late-Meiji era can be found in the form in which *Nankyoku tanken* was published. Shirase attached several pieces of bio-fictional writing as an appendix to the book, including some that he had previously published in *Tanken Sekai*, the juvenile magazine produced by Seikō Zasshi-sha. Shirase introduced this appendix with a statement of his reasons for so doing:

On this occasion of publishing my expedition record, I have attached some tens of pages of accounts of my personal history of mischievousness from when I was a youth up until I reached the prime of manhood. At first glance, these accounts would appear utterly unrelated to the title of this work, but in fact they could be said to represent the underlying cause of my expedition, and so I have resigned myself to being criticised for including them, and attached some of the best accounts below. If they help to cheer you youth in the idle hours of a long night, I will be greatly satisfied. If they serve to bring you to an understanding that my expedition was not just the result of chance, I will be even more satisfied.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> *Konkai tankenki o shuppan suru ni sai shi jibun shōnen jidai kara sōnen no koro ni itaru wanpaku rekishi no sū jū pēji o furoku to shite tsukekuwaeta no de aru. Ikken, hanahada daii ni sowanu yō de aru ga, kore mo Nankyoku tanken no en'in to mo iu beki mono de aru kara daii ni kanawanu to no hinan o ba kanju suru tsumori de ika nakanzuku shūitsu naru mono o sukoshi tsuika shita no de aru. Shōnen shoshi ga nagayo no*

Shirase directly addressed the appendix to ‘you youth’ [*shōnen shoshi*], thereby implicitly indicating the readership he anticipated for the book itself. If the fifty-six pages of the appendix were intended to help youth in passing their idle hours, or at best, to come to some understanding of Shirase’s expedition, it is reasonable to conclude that *Nankyoku tanken* as a whole was intended for the same audience, and to serve the same purposes.

The ‘accounts’ of Shirase’s ‘personal history of mischievousness’ are a series of nine short stories which range from the rather non-eventful chronicles of certain events during his years of army service, to somewhat ludicrous anecdotes of his childhood. The more implausible or farcical of the stories include narratives of accidentally pulling the tail off a fox, falling from the top of a ten metre temple roof and receiving only superficial injuries, and falling asleep in the barrel of a canon. One of the tales was an account which Shirase insisted was entirely factual, entitled *Shinrinchū no shibijin* [The dead beauty in the depths of the woods],<sup>227</sup> Shirase had published this same story in *Tanken Sekai* in 1909, under the title *Raiden Tōge kesshi ryokō* [A do-or-die trip over the Raiden Pass], and subtitled *Byakue bijin* [The beauty in the white robe]. Shirase introduced the story as follows:

This is something that happened to me when I was a junior official in the service of the Hokkaido Government Educational Affairs Section; you could call it mysterious, or you

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*tozen o isuru no ryō to mo ai naraba honkai to omou. Kore o yomarete, jibun no tanken ga gūzen de nai to iu koto o satorare tamau naraba sara ni sara ni honkai no itari de aru.*

<sup>227</sup> The characters used for *shinrin* were those for ‘deep’ [*fukai*] and ‘woods’ [*hayashi*], not those more commonly used for ‘forest’. The translation is therefore given as ‘depths of the woods’.

could call it dreadful, but either way, since it was like an adventure novel come to life, I have added it as an appendix.<sup>228</sup>

(N. Shirase, 1913, p. 388)

Shirase's statement that he had added the tale to *Nankyoku tanken* specifically because 'it was like an adventure novel' is an unmistakable indicator of how he himself viewed the book as a whole. At a later point describing the appended story as 'like a novel from the world of military chivalry' [*Bukyō sekai no shōsetsu no yō da*],<sup>229</sup> Shirase narrated an extraordinary tale of his volunteering to deliver some examination papers to the next town – a journey which takes him on foot across a forest-covered mountain range. In the forest, he meets with a bear, and manages a lucky escape when the bear falls over a cliff.<sup>230</sup> A little further on, he rather surprisingly comes across a tea-house in the middle of the woods. The owner of the tea-house warns him against going any further as there are bandits who prey on travellers, but Shirase boldly replies that he has no money to be stolen, and insists he must continue his journey. A few kilometres after this, he sees a bluish-white flame through the trees, a flame he describes as 'like the flame of a ghost'. Indeed, from this point the story takes on the form of a traditional Japanese ghost tale.<sup>231</sup> Approaching the flame, Shirase discovers the corpse of a beautiful woman, the 'dead beauty' of the title, lying in a coffin, with a resentful [*urameshisō*] look upon her face, another clear reference to

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<sup>228</sup> *Kore wa jibun ga Hokkaidōchō no zokkan to shite gakumuka ni hōshoku shite otta toki no dekgoto, ki o ieba amari ki, sei to ieba amari sei, marude ikita bōken shōsetsu no yō na no de furoku to shite fuka shita.*

<sup>229</sup> The somewhat awkward and unusual wording of this phrase may have been an intentional reference on Shirase's part to the magazine for youth entitled *Bukyō Sekai*, published by Oshikawa Shunrō who had previously worked as editor of *Bōken Sekai*.

<sup>230</sup> Shirase wrote a very similar tale to this, concerning his fortuitous escape from a bear, which was published in *Tanken Sekai* in April 1910 under the title *Hokuyō mujintō moguma taiji jikkentan* [A true tale of the extermination of a ferocious bear on a desert island in the northern seas] (N. Shirase, 1910b).

<sup>231</sup> A brief but entertaining discussion of the *kaidan*, or traditional Japanese ghost tale, and how it differs from western ghost stories, can be found in Screech's article on this topic (Screech, online).

traditional ghost tales in Japan.<sup>232</sup> To one side of her is a fire, and on the other, a man asleep. The man is described as ‘an enormous man, bright red, and with an unkempt beard’.<sup>233</sup> Uncertain as to whether he is facing a supernatural terror, or perhaps one of the bandits about whom he was warned, Shirase draws his pistol and shouts at the man to awaken him. As the woman’s body begins to burn, the man awakes to explain that he is a simple wood-cutter who fell asleep after the funeral of the woman. Accepting this explanation, Shirase continues his trek, and eventually reaches the town where he is to deliver the examination papers. He then tells of his satisfaction in having fulfilled his duty, despite the trials he faced along the way. In conclusion, however, he once again states, ‘All the same, I will never forget the ghostly face of that bluish-white beautiful dead woman in the glimmering bluish-white flames! Or the silhouette of the deeply-sleeping enormous man lying in front of her!’<sup>234</sup> (N. Shirase, 1913, pp. 397-398) This, then, becomes the last sentence of narrative text in Shirase’s *Nankyoku tanken*; it is followed only by the lyrics of the ‘Expedition Biwa Song’ discussed above.

According to Shirase Kyōko, prior to his expedition, Shirase was writing embellished versions of possibly true events of his own youth for *Tanken Sekai*. These were events that occurred between his twentieth and thirty-first birthdays (1881 to 1892),

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<sup>232</sup> In traditional ghost stories in Japan, ‘Urameshiya!’ (roughly equivalent to ‘I bear a grudge!’) is the lament of those who have died and failed to find peace because of some resentment they bear towards the living. The ghost bearing a grudge, and intent on revenge on the living, is a standard figure in Japanese ghost stories. In this case, no explanation is given as to why the corpse should bear a resentful expression on her face, and it is not mentioned again, suggesting that Shirase introduced this detail simply to conjure up an atmosphere of ghostliness in the Japanese reader’s mind.

<sup>233</sup> Again, this would appear to be an allusion to a kind of goblin of the mountains and forests in Japanese mythology, known as the *yamabushi tengu*. The *tengu* is commonly depicted as being of enormous size and strength, with a red face, hirsute, and having supernatural powers, and offering considerable danger to people who meet with one (Blacker, 1983, p. 5; de Visser, 1908). This would once more appear to be an attempt by Shirase to create an atmosphere of ghostliness or the uncanny.

<sup>234</sup> *Sore ni shite mo ima da ni wasurenu no wa aojiroi hi no pokari-pokari moeru uchi ni, aojiroi shibijin no yūrei no yō na kao! Sono mae ni igitanaku nete ita ōtoko no yokogao!*

deliberately inflated for the enjoyment of that magazine's readership. Kyōko cited in particular a story Shirase published concerning a giant bat, of 2.6 metres in wingspan, which he claimed to have caught in a castle near Sendai. This again was a semi-ghostly tale. Kyōko cast doubt on the veracity of the story, which she described as a tale [*kōdan*] which 'possibly spoke much of Nobu's characteristic childlike state of mind that would not allow him to escape from his "mischievous boyhood", no matter how old he got' (K. Shirase, 1986, pp. 63-64).<sup>235</sup> In any case, these tales were clearly in the style required by a juvenile adventure magazine readership, even though *The dead beauty in the depths of the woods* was being reprinted at the end of an account of an Antarctic expedition.

#### Shirase's motivation in publishing *Watashi no Nankyoku tanken-ki*

One final piece of evidence that *Nankyoku tanken* was intended as a book for youth is to be found in Shirase's words of appreciation at the beginning of his 1942 publication *Watashi no Nankyoku tanken-ki* [A record of my Antarctic expedition]. This book is in essence a re-drafted version of Shirase's 1913 *Nankyoku tanken*, and changes in style and content are relatively minor. For example, the accounts of his childhood adventures originally contained in the appendix to *Nankyoku tanken* now appear at the front of the book, ahead of the expedition narrative. Nevertheless, the adventures are identical. Details of the Antarctic expedition remain unchanged, although the adventure story appendices have been deleted.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> *Nobu ga ikutsu ni nattemo "wanpaku shōnen" kara nukekirenai chiki ōitsu no seikaku o monogatari mono demo arō*. The largest bat in the Sendai region, then or now, is the Japanese Large Noctule (*Nyctalus aviator*), which has a wingspan of approximately forty centimetres (Kōmori no Kai [Bat Study and Conservation Group of Japan] 2009, pers. comm., 31 July).

<sup>236</sup> Indicative of the times during which *Watashi no Nankyoku tanken-ki* was published, Shirase included in the 1942 book an extraordinary claim regarding Japan's "missed opportunity" with regard to Australia:



Shirase begins *Watashi no Nankyoku tanken-ki* with a statement of his reasons for writing the book:

A few years ago, an article concerning my Antarctic expedition was published in a juvenile magazine under the title ‘*Onward, Hinomaru*’. At that time, several hundred letters from youth all around the country who had read the article arrived in my hands. ... As a result, ... I once again have the pleasure of taking up my pen.<sup>237 238</sup>

(N. Shirase, 1942, pp. 10-12)

It is evident that Shirase did not intend that *Watashi no Nankyoku tanken-ki* be regarded as an official account of the expedition, but rather as a work suitable for the age-group of

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And there was one more thing I felt – I felt this at the time – and that was that if only Japan had advanced south earlier than England – I won’t say half a century – even thirty years earlier – then Australia would without doubt now be under the control of Japan, and that it is not so is truly most regrettable ... that’s what I thought. [*Sorekara, mō hitotsu kanjita koto wa, – kore wa sono tōji kanjita koto de aru – Nihon ga, Eikoku yori mo mō hanseiki to wa iwanai, san jū nen mo hayaku nanpō ni shinshutsu shite ita nara, Gōshū wa, kanarazu Nihon no keiei suru tokoro to natte ita no ni, jitsu ni zannen shigoku da ..... to omotta koto de aru.*] (N. Shirase, 1942, p. 178)

Further on, Shirase claimed that his Antarctic expedition was a forerunner in the Japanese southward expansion to create the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere (N. Shirase, 1942, p. 297). His speech at his ‘furthest south’ also changed in the 1942 account, from the simple statement of his achievement cited in Chapter 1 to a tone more in keeping with ideas of imperial expansionism: ‘At this latitude, 80 degrees 5 minutes south, we stand here under the flag of Japan, and claim this land as occupied Japanese territory’ [*Kono nan’i hachi jū do go fun to iu tokoro wa, wareware ga nisshōki no moto, nihon no ryōdo to shite senryō suru mono de aru.*] (N. Shirase, 1942, p. 262). What advantage he was suggesting might accrue from the inclusion of Antarctica in the Japanese Empire remains unclear. Jarring as these statements are for the modern-day reader, the censorship laws in Japan of the 1940s left writers little choice but to compose works that demonstrated their patriotism in this way. By 1942, books could only be published subject to an approval system and issuance of a licence number. Approval hinged on the vague criterion of whether works would ‘invigorate, strengthen, and clarify the temperament of the people’ (Mitchell, 1983, pp. 287-324). Evidently, asserting that in 1911 he had been working towards the realisation of 1940s Japanese expansionist ideals was Shirase’s strategy for gaining official approval of publication. Nevertheless, that the tone and sentiments of these parts of the 1942 book were not present in the 1913 publication should not be forgotten; to claim the *Kainan Maru* expedition as evidence of imperialist expansionism in the late Meiji era cannot be justified on these grounds.

<sup>237</sup> *Sū nen mae, watashi no nankyoku tanken ni kan suru kiji ga, ‘Susume Hinomaru’ to iu dai de, aru jidō zasshi ni noserareta koto ga atta. Sono tōji, kore wo yonda zenkoku no shokokumin dokusha kara watashi e no temoto e, sū hyaku tsū ni oyobu tegami ga maikonde kita. ... Soshite, watashi wa, ... ima koko ni kangeki o arata ni fude o susume eru koto o yorokobu mono de aru.*

<sup>238</sup> Unfortunately, this magazine article, which appears to have been published around 1939, could not be located in the course of this research.

those who had sent him letters. As it so closely mirrors the earlier publication in both style and content, it is reasonable to conclude that Shirase must also have intended *Nankyoku tanken* for a juvenile readership.

The reason Shirase continued to write in the style of the juvenile heroic adventure story after 1913 – because he thought that this genre would still be popular, or because he was fundamentally unable to write in any other style as Shirase Kyōko implied – is not relevant to this discussion. What is important for the present argument is the fact that Shirase *was* writing in this style – the style of late-Meiji juvenile adventure literature. That Shirase’s pseudo-ghost tale of the dead beauty in the woods was intended for a juvenile readership is evident not only from the plot and style of narration, but also from the fact that it had been published in the juvenile magazine *Tanken Sekai* four years earlier. That Shirase considered it a suitable item for inclusion in *Nankyoku tanken* indicates that the latter work too was written for the juvenile reader of tales of adventure and exploration. His re-publishing of a stylistically unaltered version of the book in response to the ‘several hundred letters from youth all around the country’ again strongly indicates the intended readership of the original work. Unfortunately for Shirase, by 1913 this readership was rapidly diminishing, and being replaced by the fundamentally different Taishō youth who sought entertainment in literature of a vastly different nature, as discussed below.

#### 5.4.3 The Rise of *Shizenshugi*, and the Emergence of the *Shishōsetsu*

Enormous and unforeseen changes were occurring in the literary world in the Japan of the late Meiji era, and these accelerated as the Taishō era began. To what extent the changes affected the kinds of books and magazines read by the “man in the street” is debatable, but as for the younger, generally well-educated demographic group, the changes in reading tastes seen at this time were unprecedented. In 1908, a contributor to the Japanese English-language magazine *Sun Trade Journal* spoke of the breadth and speed of changes that were occurring in the literary world in an article entitled ‘Literature and zeit-geist’:

A change, almost to be called a revolution, is taking place in the current thoughts and ideas, in fact the entire intellectual life of the Japanese. ... The war with Russia has resulted in a great change in the political status of Japan. ... But as for the internal life of Japan, a change, even more important and more interesting than the political, has been taking place hitherto unnoticed by the West. The most conspicuous feature of the spiritual transformation of Japan is the rise of the literary school styled *shizenshugi*.

(Quoted in Rubin, 1984, pp. 66-67)

*Shizenshugi*, or *shizenha* writing, generally translated as ‘naturalism’ or ‘naturalistic’ writing,<sup>239</sup> set as its goal the portrayal of “nature”, or more correctly, “reality”, as objectively as possible. This was closely aligned with the rising popularity of neo-Kantian philosophy in Japan at that time, and literature of the genre sought to depict events without judgement, and to ‘move the reader not by the unusual but by what is normal and average’ (Fowler, 1988, p. 22). As early as 1901, the first stirrings of *shizenshugi* could be detected in the widely cited preface to Tayama Katai’s *No no hana* [The flowers of the

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<sup>239</sup> It should be noted that although the interchangeable Japanese terms are commonly translated as ‘naturalism’ or ‘naturalistic’ writing, this represents a distinct literary genre from the nineteenth century European novels of naturalism, such as those of Émile Zola. For a discussion of the differences between Japanese and European naturalism, see Katō (1979, pp. 163-164). In fact, the distinction between the *naturalisme* of French philosophy and the *réalisme* of the fine arts is perhaps an illuminating way to consider the differences between the French and Japanese writing styles (Sibley, 1968, p. 158).

field], in which he stressed the importance of staying true to nature, and painting nature as objectively as possible:

Maupassant's *Bel ami* and Flaubert's *Education sentimentale* are both works that contain any number of weaknesses as far as naturalism is concerned, and they are rather unhealthy; but, because they are not clouded by the author's irrelevant subjective impressions, nature's magnificent face can still be seen, and life's destiny is clearly shown. ... I wish that [Meiji era writers] would give a faithful and unhesitating account of life's secrets and the devil's insinuations. Then the face of nature would be reflected, albeit indistinctly, in the literature of the Meiji period.

(Quoted in Fowler, 1988, p. 23)

It is, however, the novel *Hakai* [The Broken Commandment] by Shimazaki Tōson that is widely regarded as marking the beginning of Japanese naturalism proper. *Hakai* tells the story of a young schoolteacher who has promised his father never to reveal his "Eta" class background.<sup>240</sup> Eventually, in support of others of his caste, the teacher discloses his origins, and flees the country (Shimazaki, 1906). *Hakai* thus reveals that despite *shizenha* literature's goals of objectivity and non-judgmentalism, it served to highlight socio-cultural problems, almost accidentally combining the socio-critical with the confessional or bio-fictional style of writing.

The rapidity with which change was happening, both in the national literature and in the world-view of many Japanese, was well-recognised at the time, with one critic writing in January 1908 that the changes in literature seen over the previous year were more amazing than all the changes of the previous twenty years. He attributed this new development to a rising individualism:

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<sup>240</sup> The Eta were an "untouchable" caste of the feudal era. The term is now considered derogatory, and their descendants are referred to instead as the *hisabetsu-burakumin* (literally, the 'discriminated hamlet people'). They comprise one of the main minority groups in Japan.

Following the Russo-Japanese War, the people came to see the value of self-awareness, which resulted in a recognition of the authority of the individual. Almost before we knew what was happening, we found ourselves looking at the old morality and the old customs with defiance and disgust.

(Quoted in Rubin, 1984, pp. 62-63)

He added that especially since the middle of 1907, the commotion over naturalism – both for and against it – had been enormous, and that it had been an epoch-making year in which a new intensity of debate was achieved. It was the success in 1907 of Katai's *Futon* which particularly sparked debate, by both challenging the old morality, and through its fostering the growth of individualism. *Futon* is the story of a middle-aged author who lusts after a young student of writing who boards in his house. He eventually manipulates events such that the girl's father takes her home to the country. Seeing a dismal and empty life before him, the hero falls onto the girl's bedding [*futon*], and weeps. In fact, Katai had a young student, Okada Michiyo, boarding with him at the time; she had come from the country to

learn how to write. As soon as the story was published, Katai noted that many readers took the work to be non-fictional. Consequently, *Futon* was both praised for its autobiographical accuracy, and condemned for straying from the "facts" of Katai's life. As Fowler (1988, p. 28) stated, it was in fact this readership preoccupation with historical accuracy that distinguished the newly emerged *shishōsetsu*, or "I novel",<sup>241</sup> of which Katai's *Futon* was

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<sup>241</sup> Perhaps the best illustration of the nature of *shishōsetsu*, commonly if not entirely correctly translated as the "I novel", occurs *inside* the *shishōsetsu* 'Amaki yo no hanashi', written by Uno Kōji and first published in 1920. The story tells of a man's affair with a geisha, but the narrator-hero interrupts the story to directly address the reader:

I have mentioned that I am a writer. When *Hitogokoro*, which I had completed during my previous stay in Shimosuwa ... was published last January, it created something of a sensation there, small town that it is, because I modelled the character "Yumiko" after Yumeko. Surely any intelligent

one of the first, from earlier Japanese literature in the *shizenha* style. In Fowler's words, 'the principle of absolute objectivity postulated for *shizenshugi* was replaced by the demand for absolute sincerity [in *shishōsetsu*].'<sup>242</sup> *Shishōsetsu* were commonly judged by readers and critics not on the basis of literary merit, but on how closely they were seen to mirror the author's lived experience. As one review of *Futon* stated, 'This work is the courageous confession of an exposed man of flesh and blood,' while another critic asserted that, 'In my opinion we should disregard the question of the artistic accomplishment for once and instead pay tribute to [the author's] courage ...' (Quoted in Fowler, 1988, p. 58). This was quite a new development, for Tōson's novel *Hakai*, published just one year earlier, which had similarly created a "stir" among critics, had been evaluated on the basis of traditional

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reader has noticed a peculiar development in much recent Japanese fiction, namely the appearance of a nebulous figure known only as "I." One reads nothing about his looks, much less about his behaviour or his profession. What *does* one read, you ask? Merely a string of impressionistic musings. Soon you realize that the "I" is none other than the author himself; indeed, this is almost always the case. The "I," therefore, is a writer, and the reader never seems to question this curious convention whereby the author uses first-person narrative to point to himself. Now, even though there is nothing wrong with having the narrator double as the hero and the hero pose as a writer, it is regrettable that readers have come to equate him automatically with the author and think of all the story's incidents as actually having taken place. At any rate, because *Hitogokoro* is written in the first person, people believed everything in it to be true and assumed that I had based my character "Yumiko" on Yumeko – which was all right by me, but I'm afraid it caused Yumeko no little consternation. ... I hurriedly sent her a letter of apology.

(Quoted in Fowler, 1988, p. 7)

As Fowler noted, the passage itself effectively illustrated a central concern of the *shishōsetsu*, namely the 'osmotic relationship that exists between author and narrator-hero – the one seemingly flowing into the other through a very permeable text' (1988, p. 8). In discussing the 'I' novel, Uno's hero is indeed just that 'I' he describes as a 'nebulous figure' in Japanese fiction popular at the time. As the hero points out, in these novels the 'I' usually turns out to be the author himself, who is a writer. And yet it is Uno himself who is in this case both the hero discussing the prevalence of writers-as-heroes, *and* the hero who introduces the passage with the remark that he is a writer. Furthermore, Uno's hero mentions his earlier publication of *Hitogokoro*, which was in fact Uno's publication in real life and which appeared in the same magazine as *Amaki yo no hanashi*. This deliberate collapsing of real world and fictional world was a distinctive feature of the *shishōsetsu*, and created a situation in which it was easy to read the text as autobiographical. That the text was frequently *not* autobiographical, and was often at best bio-fiction, came to be an overwhelming point of importance in criticism of this genre.

<sup>242</sup> Nakamura Mitsuo, a critic dismissive of *shishōsetsu* as being little more than thinly-disguised autobiographies, viewed the transformation in literary genres at this time as a conflict between the two seminal works: 'A battle was fought between *Hakai* and "Futon" and this ended, at least [if one measures it] by the influence on the literature of the time, with complete victory for "Futon".' When *Hakai*'s author Tōson later produced a work in the *shishōsetsu* style, Nakamura referred to this as the 'capitulation of Tōson in the face of Katai' (Cited in Hijiyama-Kirschner, 1996, p. 67).

literary criteria (Fowler, 1988, p. 59). *Futon*, however, was a new variety of writing, and although owing much to *Hakai*, attracted a new form of criticism. The public appetite for works such as *Futon*, however, hinged on the demand for both vicarious individual experience and the opportunity to investigate another person's – or fictional character's – individuality, as the leading naturalist critic and playwright Shimamura Hōgetsu observed in 1909:

In political parties and among the elder statesmen, in finance, foreign relations, and all matters, the public is most interested in persons. The center of interest is the yet undiscovered individual character. It is a kind of hero worship. This is the demand to become fulfilled and living beings.

(Quoted in Nolte, 1984, pp. 672-673)

The publication of *Futon* led to a flood of *shishōsetsu* works in the literary market, and, according to the novelist and literary critic Masamune Hakuchō, numerous “*Futons*” written by a wide variety of authors continued to appear over the following years.<sup>243</sup> The influential literary critic Nakamura Mitsuo stated that, ‘Most of the Taishō period’s best works ... were written in a style imitative of *Futon*’ (Hijiya-Kirschner, 1996, pp. 60, 64). The “*Futons*” that appeared included satirical works, such as Futabatei Shimei’s 1907 *Heibon* [Mediocrity], in which his writer-narrator-hero sardonically stated,

Recently ... it seems it has become popular for authors to write down all kinds of empty things they have experienced, just as they are and without the slightest hint of technique, all drawn out like strings of cow’s drool. Good things become popular. I’ll give it a go too!<sup>244</sup>

(Futabatei, 1907, p. 201)

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<sup>243</sup> As the *shishōsetsu* continued to grow in popularity throughout the Taishō era, it came to be the dominant form of literature, such that the phrase “Taishō literature” [*Taishō bungaku*] has come to connote the heyday of the *shishōsetsu* in Japan (Fowler, 1988, pp. 127-128).

<sup>244</sup> *Chikagoro wa ... nandemo sakka no keiken shita gu ni mo tsukanu koto o, isasaka mo gikō o koezu, ari no mama ni, daradara to ushi no yodare no yō ni kaku no ga hayaru sō da. Ii koto ga hayaru. Watashi mo yappari sore de iku.*

Nevertheless, as Hijiya-Kirschnerreit pointed out, *Heibon* ‘is tinged with the same sentimental, confessional tone as *Futon*’, and as a consequence, despite the writer’s intention to parody *Futon*, the work presents more as an imitation of Katai’s novel than anything else (1996, pp. 65-66). In any case, Futabatei clearly acknowledged that the style of writing typified by *Futon* was becoming increasingly prevalent. The writer Yoshida Seiichi claimed that the wave of “*Futons*” created a distinct shift in authorial perspective:

It is incontestable that [after the publication of *Futon*] the writer sees a profound sense in the placement of the ego as something absolute, and the expression of truth (*jujitsu*), which is most painful for the ego without falsification and adornment.

(Quoted in Hijiya-Kirschnerreit, 1996, p. 68)

This new-found centrality of the ego, and of truth as it appears to the ego, forms the basis of not only *shizenha* literature, including its offspring the *shishōsetsu*, but also of notions of individualism as they were surfacing in Japan at that time. Fowler argued that Japanese individualism at the start of the twentieth century did not denote a dynamic relationship between self and other, as it did in the West, but rather a distancing of the self from society in the ‘traditional equation of spiritual autonomy with aloofness from society’:

[Individualism was] a withdrawal into the world of nature and private experience. This notion of individualism as a form of isolated self-contemplation may have been the only avenue to spiritual independence in a society that placed severe constraints on interpersonal relations. ... The *shishōsetsu* was eminently suited to this view of individualism. Its protagonist becomes an “individual,” as it were, by virtue of his monopolized point of view and, not infrequently, by his occupation of an otherwise empty stage.

(Fowler, 1988, p. 15)



Although objections were raised on the grounds that much of the writing that appeared particularly as *shishōsetsu* was overtly sexual, the real danger from a conservative point of view was, as Rubin stated, that the writers of the new literature were ‘subversive agents threatening communal solidarity not with obscenity but with something far more insidious: privacy’ (1984, p. 94). Fowler’s ‘withdrawal into the world of ... private experience’ was a form of escape representing a rejection of the late Meiji socio-political *milieu* – a fact not overlooked by the government of the day. The critic Maeda Akira stated in 1908,

At last, the interaction between literature and society has grown close in Japan! No longer is literature a plaything, an amusement for men of leisure. It is one of the great and serious undertakings in life ...

(Quoted in Rubin, 1984, p. 95)

Until the previous year, Maeda claimed, any conflict between the traditional forms of literature and the newly-arisen forms was between the writers and critics only. Now, however, the government and the public at large had become involved. This is evident from the words of the Vice-Minister of Education who, speaking at the 1908 ceremony to announce the promulgation of the *Boshin shōsho* – the latest Imperial Rescript – said that the document was designed to ‘stem the evil tide of extravagance and frivolity’, and to counteract a decline in national unity resulting from ‘many undesirable phenomena ... such as naturalism and extreme individualism’ (Rubin, 1984, p. 109). The extent to which censorship and police intervention in the lives of writers ensued has been extensively researched by Rubin (1984) and others, and requires no further discussion here. It is

sufficient to note that from this time on, literature was a major concern for not only the government, but for the Japanese people generally.

To more closely identify the impact on Shirase's heroic status of the revolutionary change in literary tastes represented by the emergence of *shizenshugi* and the *shishōsetsu* – and indeed by the changes in world-view represented by the rise of individualism – it is necessary to investigate how the new styles and modes were adopted and consumed by the youth Shirase was courting with his earlier *Tanken Sekai* stories, and his 1913 *Nankyoku tanken*.

#### The literary magazines and schools within the *shishōsetsu* genre

The importance to writers of the magazine, as opposed to books, in the late-Meiji/Taishō era cannot be overstated. According to Fowler, although as a rule writers in the West established their reputation through book-length fiction, the serious writer's career in Taishō Japan depended almost completely on publication of short fiction in major magazines. The novelist Masamune Hakuchō, for example, stated bluntly that had the magazine format not been available he could not have written fiction at all (Cited in Fowler, 1988, p. 141). An eager readership for the literary works that appeared in magazines arose among what were known as the *bungaku seinen* [literary youth]. In a reference to the

*bungaku seinen* who eagerly devoured the often sordid and sexually charged details found in what they presumed to be the autobiographical *shishōsetsu* that appeared in the magazines, Hijiya-Kirschnerreit claimed that many of them ‘could imagine nothing more interesting than reading gossip about the every-day lives of their idols’ (1996, p. 63). Kirschnerreit’s comment, however, would suggest that the *shishōsetsu* did not change in any way after its birth with Katai’s “revelations” of middle-aged lust in *Futon*. In fact, this is far from the truth, as numerous sub-genres appeared over the ensuing years. Perhaps one of the most important subdivisions was that instigated by those writers who shared the style of writing that came to be known as the Shirakaba school, which first published its literary magazine, *Shirakaba*, in 1910. Including among its members what are today such well-known writers as Shiga Naoya and Mushanokōji Saneatsu, the Shirakaba school steered the *shishōsetsu* away from the somewhat deterministic and fatalistic tone it possessed under

writers such as Katai, giving it a more humanistic and idealistic flavour. Thus, according to Nakamura,

What they wrote were moral-culture novels or exhibitions of their own efforts for self-improvement. ... No one had ever expressed the idea of the ‘I’ novel, the ideal novel of the Taishō era, in words of such a beautiful and positive belief before.

(Nakamura, 1968, pp. 32-33)

As Mushanokōji himself stated, ‘Compared with bygone art, the new art [i.e. the ‘I’ novel] is extremely serious, tense and deep’ (Quoted in Nakamura, 1968, p. 33). At first the works of the Shirakaba school were popular only among youth, particularly those youth who, like

the majority of members of the Shirakaba school, were graduates of the Peers' School, later to become Tokyo University. From around the years 1914 to 1915 however, the adherents of the school began to publish in the major literary magazines, so gaining a far wider readership, and by the end of Taishō they had become so influential that this era has been referred to as the 'Shirakaba period' (Nakamura, 1968, pp. 32-35).

Nevertheless, other young writers – primarily graduates of Waseda University – tried to persist with the ideals of *shizenha*, maintaining the stance of the earlier *shishōsetsu* with their close adherence to portraying every-day events and objective depiction of even the darker side of life, including aberrant psychological states, as the title of Hirotsu Kazuo's 1917 *Shinkeibyō jidai* [The age of neurosis] suggests. Although intended to avoid the idealism of the Shirakaba school, their work nevertheless was influenced by humanism (Nakamura, 1968, p. 46).<sup>245</sup> This group also published a literary magazine, *Kiseki*, as well as writing for the prestigious *Waseda Bungaku* literary journal which became one of the *shizenha*'s key outlets for expression (Fowler, 1988, p. 93). Possibly the most famous writer of the group was Kasai Zenzō, whose *Ko o tsurete* [With children in tow], published in *Waseda Bungaku* in 1918, brought him widespread recognition. Referred to by Nakamura as the ““ancestor god” of the ‘I’ novel’ (1968, pp. 46-47), Kasai's works have been said to mark the high point in the development of the *shishōsetsu* (Hijiya-Kirschnerreit,

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<sup>245</sup> The idea of these two schools existing in some form of oppositionality should not be overemphasised; to some extent, the difference between them was one of 'pedigree rather than literary predilection' (Fowler, 1988, p. 109). Indeed, Satomi Ton, a writer of the Shirakaba school, stated that the difference was largely one of social status:

If one mentions the word “Shirakaba” people soon start on about its “confrontation” with naturalism, and one can't say that there wasn't one, but our differences with the naturalists arose mostly from questions of upbringing. We were aristocrats, whereas “naturalism” meant to us that crowd cooped up in lodgings around Waseda University; and being young, there didn't seem much chance of our getting along with them. But as far as literature was concerned I don't actually recall any real criticism as such being made.

(Quoted in Fowler, 1988, p. 109)

1996, p. 220). The writer Kōno Toshiro considered the Waseda University *Kiseki* group to be the true bearers of Taishō culture – ‘the ones who experienced before anyone else the languid, weary, melancholy world of the Russian modernist writers ... They are the so-called youth of pure literature’ (Quoted in Gerbert, 1997, p. 31).

It should be added to this discussion that the *hanmon seinen* – the anguished youth discussed in Chapter 3 – developed into an important theme in the literature of the era, with writers like Mori Ōgai contributing works such as the earlier mentioned *Vita Sexualis*, published in 1909, and *Gan* [Wild Geese], published in 1911 (Marcus, 1995, p. 265).<sup>246</sup> Other famous writers such as Kunikida Doppo and Takayama Chogyū produced works that were eagerly devoured by the *hanmon seinen*; Takayama’s most famous essay, *Biteki seikatsu o ronzu* [On the aesthetic life] became ‘almost a manifesto for the anguished youth’ (Kinmonth, 1981, pp. 230-233). A certain amount of “feedback” is evident in this period, with the emergent *hanmon seinen* literature fostering a growing population of anguished youth, who then demanded more literature of this type. *Shizenha* literature in general, and particularly the *shishōsetsu* of the *Kiseki* school, had enormous appeal to youth anguishing over their lives and the meaning of individual existence; writers such as Kunikida were putting into words the confusion and dismay the *hanmon seinen* were confronting, and giving voice to the existential dilemma with which these youth were struggling.

#### 5.4.4 Implications of the New Literature for Shirase

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<sup>246</sup> Marcus described the ‘literature of pained youth’ as ‘a mainstay of the late-Meiji *bundan* [literary world]’.

In a consideration of the impact the rise of *shizenha* literature and the *shishōsetsu* may have had on Shirase's fame and heroic status in Japan, it is essential that a number of facets of this development be taken into account. Firstly, the time at which the change in literary tastes took place, relative both to the timing of Shirase's expedition and to the publication of his first book, is of great importance. Secondly, the actual structure and content of the new literature, compared to the structure and content of Shirase's 1913 book *Nankyoku tanken*, is relevant to how the latter work was likely to have been viewed by youthful readers in the Taishō era.

From the reader's point of view, of course, the appeal of *shishōsetsu* came in part through an identification with the hero, and the sense of escape and liberation from the ties of society that can be found in such works. Oka suggested that, 'This literature was loved by a broad cross-section of postwar youth, most likely because of its affinities to other tendencies displayed by the young. Naturalist literature also reacted upon those tendencies to augment and strengthen them' (Oka, 1982, p. 200). There was thus an interactive process by which youth were attracted to this literature because of the similarities they observed between the thoughts and beliefs of the characters therein and their own thoughts and beliefs. At the same time, reading the ideas expressed in *shizenha* literature in general, and more specifically, in the *shishōsetsu*, tended to reinforce and enhance that mode of thought in the young. Consumers of this literature could feel that the writer was in some ways "clearing the way" for the reader to shed some of the fetters of society. At the same time, although the reader may never have imagined themselves in the hero's situation, the actions of the protagonist nonetheless served as an affirmation of the reader's right to thoughts and

beliefs distinct from the socially accepted norms; the protagonist's individuality validated the reader's individuality. Although such philosophical musings may seem unlikely to have troubled the average youth, the Taishō period was in fact an era in which many young people found great attraction in such ponderings. To quote the Japanese historian Albert M. Craig,

It was just at this time [i.e. in the second decade of the twentieth century] that Neo-Kantian philosophers in Japan were propounding *jinkaku shugi*, a philosophy of inner moral values. It was this type of idealistic philosophy which, by some accounts anyway, filled the heads of higher-school students.

(Craig, 1982, p. 540)

Despite Craig's hesitancy, it seems that indeed a great number of Taishō youth were deeply intrigued by the philosophy of morals, as is evident from the popularity of books such as Abe Jirō's *Santarō no nikki* [Santaro's diary], a collection of philosophical reflections written in diary form and published in 1914. This work, which described a 'semi-religious asceticism and moralism', was a best-seller among youth (Piovesana, 1997, p. 70). The delight young people experienced even on reading Abe's more overtly philosophical writings is evident in Hijikata Teiichi's reminiscences in 'On the *Aesthetics* of Abe Jirō', published in 1917:

I remember distinctly how moved I was by [Abe's *Aesthetics* and Nishida Kitarō's *Geijutsu to Dōtoku* (Art and Morality)] ... This was the first time that I, not yet in my twentieth year, had encountered this kind of writing. I still recall the mixture of pure joy, doubt, and puzzlement ... When I think of the joy I felt when I first explored a field that until then had remained alien to me, I cannot free myself of my personal recollection of Abe's *Aesthetics*. ... [It] inspired in me a sense of dignity and self-awareness as a human being.

(Hijikata, 2001, p. 198)

Piovesana wrote that ‘Abe Jirō’s wide reputation was due to his simpler ethical works in which his passionate and persuasive style delighted his young readers’ (1997, p. 73). Piovesana ascribed the rise in popularity of philosophy – in particular, neo-Kantian thought<sup>247</sup> – in the Taishō era to broader changes in Japanese society. Whereas in the Meiji years, people were pressed by socio-political problems such as those concerned with governmental policies or human rights, “pure” philosophy [*junsui tetsugaku*] and metaphysical problems went unaddressed. The Taishō period, however, saw the beginning of academic philosophical studies in Japan in general, as well as witnessing a surge in popularity of philosophical debate and rumination among educated Japanese youth (Piovesana, 1997, pp. 77-78). Writing in magazines described by Piovesana as designed for the general reader, Taishō philosophers and academics such as Abe Jirō investigated the wider issues of culture and life – problems being discussed both in and out of academic circles at that time. Indeed, the point was reached where one bookseller asserted, ‘If the title doesn’t have the words philosophy [*tetsugaku*] or humanity [*ningen*] in it, a book won’t sell’ (Quoted in Kinmonth, 1981, p. 210). Thus, it was not merely a change in literary tastes that was occurring in Japan at this time, but a much deeper change in attitudes towards life – youthful preoccupations with success were being replaced by far weightier concerns of a more philosophical bent.

Donald Keene graphically illustrated these changes in a comparison he made of the two famous poets Masaoka Shiki and Ishikawa Takuboku, who died within a decade of each other in 1902 and 1912 respectively. Shiki’s tastes were in many ways typical of the

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<sup>247</sup> Piovesana has demonstrated the preponderance of neo-Kantianism in the Taishō period, listing the overwhelming number of texts of this nature published in those years, as opposed to works of other philosophical schools (Piovesana, 1997, p. 77).



Meiji era; his *haiku* and *tanka* frequently incorporated images of modernity and Western imports, such as tooth powder, oil-lamps and trains. Likewise, his tastes in reading matter were what would be expected of a Meiji era Japanese, as Keene noted:

Of all Western writers [Shiki] found Benjamin Franklin most congenial, and although he repeatedly insisted on the inadequacy of his English, he derived pleasure from reading Franklin's *Autobiography* in his sickbed. Shiki must have identified himself with the poor boy who, by virtue of hard work, established himself as a great man. This was typical of the Meiji period, when an American educator achieved immortality by urging Japanese boys to be ambitious,<sup>248</sup> and when *Self-help* by Samuel Smiles was a major source of inspiration.

(Keene, 1971, pp. 161-162)

Takuboku, on the other hand, wrote intensely personal poems, with a sharp focus on himself or people he knew, paralleling the *shizenha* and *shishōsetsu* developments in prose literature. His reading tastes also reflected the far different tastes and values of Taishō Japanese:

Takuboku lived in a world of incomparably greater sophistication, and the European books he read were not the *Autobiography* of Benjamin Franklin or Samuel Smiles but Ibsen and Gorki.

(Keene, 1971, p. 164)

As Keene added, 'In literary tastes a century, not ten years, separates the two men.' The movement away from Victorian/Meiji notions of success as the goal of life, towards a far more self-reflective, introspective – indeed, egotistical – contemplation of morals and values is evident, particularly when Keene's analysis is considered alongside developments

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<sup>248</sup> Keene was referring to the words of William S. Clark, founding vice-president of the Sapporo Agricultural College, now Hokkaido University, who in his farewell speech in 1877 reportedly said, 'Boys, be ambitious. Be ambitious not for money or for self-aggrandizement, not for that evanescent thing which men call fame. Be ambitious for that attainment of all that a man ought to be.' The first three words of this speech are now famous throughout Japan (Maki, 2002, p. 196).

in youth magazines as discussed above. Keene's discussion, however, also serves to emphasise the rapidity with which this change occurred; a span of as little as ten years between 1902 and 1912 could see enormous differences in reading tastes.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the post-World War I years in Japan saw yet another “leap forward” in terms of youth culture, with the appearance of the “modern youth” – the *moga* and *mobo* and their liberated lifestyle. Not surprisingly, the *mobo* and *moga*, and the many youth fascinated by the “modern youth” phenomenon if not willing to become recognisably *mobo* and *moga* themselves, displayed significantly different tastes in literature to their early Taishō and Meiji predecessors. Having lost any inclination for inspirational heroics or philosophical manderings, many youth turned instead to fictional accounts of *mobo* and *moga*, such as the best-selling novels *Hōrōki* [Diary of a vagabond] by Hayashi Fumiko, or *Chijin no ai* [A fool's love, also known as Naomi] by Tanizaki Junichiro. While the years from the end of the Russo-Japanese War to the end of the Meiji period have been described as ‘the naturalist era’ (Oka, 1982, p. 200), post-World War I era youth discovered a new literature to call their own. For although *Hōrōki*, for example, undeniably incorporated aspects of the *shishōsetsu*, it constantly moved through a range of styles and genres of writing: ‘Hayashi’s writing courses between prose journal entries and poetry, as well as regularly interspersed “reality fragments,” such as songs heard or recalled, conversations overheard, or shopping lists drawn up by the protagonist’ (Gardner, 2003, pp. 72-73). It was, however, essentially the story of a café waitress – and not of a writer, as was typical of the *shishōsetsu* – and of her *moga* life, and it was this that possibly accounted for the commercial success of the novel. The literary critic Furuya Tsunatake recalled that as a twenty-two year old café patron at the time of the novel’s release, he bought the book for

the insight it gave into the “hidden life” of café waitresses (Cited in Gardner, 2003, p. 92). *Chijin no ai* was similarly the story of a “modern girl” named Naomi, again a waitress in a café, and told of her sexual dominance over her lover. Naomi was seen as the archetypal *moga*, to the point where the *moga* phenomenon came to be referred to as “Naomi-ism” (Chambers, in Introduction to Tanizaki, 1924, p. viii).

Thus, yet again, the tastes of youth in terms of literature had moved forward, into a genre unimaginable to writers of a mere decade earlier, such as Shirase. The *shizenha* literature which was the expression of, and stimulant to, individualism, had developed even further into tales of “Naomi-ism” – a transformation that took the literature of and for youth into realms far removed from the adventure story Shirase wrote in 1913.

#### 5.5 The Place of *Nippon nankyoku tanken* in Film in late-Meiji – Taishō Japan

Apart from his book *Nankyoku tanken*, the other product of Shirase’s expedition was the film footage discussed in Chapter 1, entitled *Nippon nankyoku tanken*, and released on 28 June, 1912. Japan experienced a “cinema craze” towards the end of the Meiji period, with over fifty cinemas opening in Tokyo alone between 1909 and 1912 (Gordon, 1991, p. 31). M. Pathé, the film production company responsible for the *Kainan Maru* expedition footage, owned three cinemas in Tokyo by the end of 1908, and continued to grow nationwide, such that over the next few years it could boast several theatres in each of the major cities, and at least one in most of the lesser urban centres (High, p. 123, online). Although according to High the Shirase footage represented the most remarkable documentary film of the Meiji era, the film itself was, as High admitted, in a badly damaged state by the time the expedition returned to Japan. When developed, it was found

that the film had been severely affected by the heat as the *Kainan Maru* passed through the tropics; many scenes had been lost, and those that could be saved were considerably blemished (High, p. 126, online). Presumably at least in part because of the damage it sustained, the film that remains contains a largely disjointed record of the expedition ("Nippon nankyoku tanken," 1912). Of the approximately forty minutes of footage, one quarter is of scenes filmed prior to departure from Japan, including lengthy shots of Ōkuma Shigenobu, and of the crowds at the public farewell in Shibaura, Tokyo. The middle section of approximately twenty minutes shows a variety of scenes taken from the deck of the *Kainan Maru* as it sailed along the Great Ice Barrier. Unfortunately, most of these scenes are over-exposed because of the intense light conditions from sunlight reflected from the sea and ice, thus rendering much of the detail invisible, and men unidentifiable. A further approximately ten minutes of footage showing what High (p. 126, online) described as 'expedition members cavorting with a herd of solemn yet fearless penguins'<sup>249</sup> is often

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<sup>249</sup> Far from playfully 'cavorting' with the penguins, the men are repeatedly cuffing, kicking and generally mistreating the penguins, trying to make them "toboggan" as it is known – slide on their stomachs, using their flippers and feet for propulsion. Although this interpretation may appear to be imposing twenty-first century standards of animal cruelty on early twentieth century behaviour, that this is not the case is evident from statements made by Amundsen's First Lieutenant Thorvald Nilsen regarding scenes he witnessed during his visit to the *Kainan Maru*:

At 7 p.m. on the 16<sup>th</sup> we were somewhat surprised to see a vessel bearing down. ... She came very slowly, but at last what should we see but the Japanese flag! ... Immediately afterwards ten men armed with picks and shovels went up the Barrier, while the rest rushed wildly about after penguins, and their shots were heard all night. ... [Lieutenant] Prestrud and I went on board [the *Kainan Maru*] later in the day ... They had put penguins into little boxes to take them alive to Japan! Round about the deck lay dead and half-dead skua gulls in heaps. On the ice close to the vessel was a seal ripped open, with part of its entrails on the ice; but the seal was still alive. Neither Prestrud nor I had any sort of weapon that we could kill the seal with, so we asked the Japanese to do it, but they only grinned and laughed.

(Nilsen, appended to Amundsen, 1913, pp. 347-348)

Nilsen recounts several other tales of this nature. He also says that he had heard that Shirase expressed concern regarding the deaths of Shackleton's ponies, but adds, 'From this one would think they were great lovers of animals, but I must confess that was not the impression I received' (Nilsen, appended to Amundsen,

badly framed; for example, the penguins go out of the picture when they “toboggan” in a horizontal position.<sup>250</sup> Although this footage may still have been of interest to a 1912 Japanese cinema audience, there is little narrative continuity to the film. It is, rather, a

series of vignettes of men and wildlife in Antarctica, on film that is heat damaged, over-exposed, and poorly framed.<sup>251</sup>

### The role of the *benshi*

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1913, p. 348) Thus, even Shirase’s contemporaries considered the treatment of the birds and animals inhumane.

<sup>250</sup> Richie (1990, p. 7) has pointed out that in early Japanese cinema the picture on the screen is, to a Western eye, unbalanced, with ‘too much space’ at the top of the screen. Richie claims that this arrangement of the screen conforms to Japanese aesthetic tastes, citing the convention whereby, for example, the upper part of a painted scroll is often left blank. Whether Taizumi was aiming for such an effect is unknown; the point is that the penguins go out of sight when they do what the men are clearly trying to make them do for the camera – toboggan. Thus, this can only be considered poor framing, possibly the fault of the equipment Taizumi was using, and not an aesthetic choice.

<sup>251</sup> Poor though the quality of the footage may be, as Bernardi has pointed out, somewhat less than four percent of the output of the Japanese film industry before 1945 has survived (Bernardi, 2001, p. 17), and therefore the value of the Shirase expedition footage as an historical document cannot be overestimated, whatever its entertainment value may be. It should also be noted that this was a very early period in the history of photography, and particularly, cinematography. Senouque, the photographer on the 1908-1910 *Pourquoi-Pas?* expedition, experienced similar difficulties to Taizumi; Senouque’s photographs showed extreme contrast and lack of tonal range, were poorly composed, and ‘demanded much of the retoucher’s art when they were published in book form.’ He reported his attempts at moving pictures as equally unsuccessful: ‘I did not make any suitable movie films. The camera was very cumbersome. It never worked well because the films were always jamming’ (Quoted in Arnold, 1969, pp. 48-49).

In an analysis of Japanese silent films, the tradition of the *benshi* must be taken into consideration; as Anderson and Richie stated, ‘The *benshi* was so important to the early films and has played such a major role in the history of the films in Japan, his influence continuing even to this day, that an understanding of what he did and why is basic to any understanding of Japanese movies’ (Anderson & Richie, 1982, p. 23). *Benshi* were essentially silent film “narrators” who stood at the front of the cinema and provided a spoken commentary or explication of the film. The role of the *benshi* arose out of the necessity to explain to Japanese audiences the foreign exotica shown in the first imported films (Dym, 2003, pp. 8-9). Records suggest that there were at least several thousand *benshi* in Japan at the height of the silent film era. Their popularity grew throughout the 1920s, such that films came to be publicised more for the *benshi* who was narrating than for the actors who starred, although during the 1910s *benshi* were still regarded as a ‘side attraction’ to the film itself (Dym, 2003, p. 2; Friends of Silent Films Association, 2001, p. 10). Although there is no record of a *benshi* narrating *Nippon nankyoku tanken*, it is extremely likely that at least when the film was screened in the larger cinemas in the cities, a professional *benshi* would have been provided by the theatre, for throughout the 1910s even short one-reel films were usually presented by a *benshi* (Bernardi, 2001, p. 33). In addition, Umeya Shōkichi, owner of M. Pathé, was a strong supporter of the use of *benshi*, and had even established a *benshi* school in 1907 (Dym, 2003, pp. 79-80). On the other hand, when Shirase was travelling through the countryside, showing the film in schools and similar venues, he himself would have provided some explanation of his expedition. Hence, it must be considered that although the footage shows little narrative continuity, it is possible that with a vocal explanation the problem could to some extent have been

redressed. According to Dym, however, prior to 1918 explanations were to a large extent given by the *benshi* before screening began [*maesetsu*], as opposed to narration given while the film was screening [*nakasetsu*]. Critics spoke against the use of *nakasetsu* in short or scenic films, and in general ‘audiences came to hear *maesetsu*, being less interested in *nakasetsu*’ (Dym, 2003, pp. 41-42, 63-64), much as audiences today are pleased to listen to explanatory comments made prior to a concert but are less tolerant of interruptions once the concert has begun. Although a connected narrative can be explained with advantage prior to the showing of a film, *Nippon nankyoku tanken* presents only a series of “episodes” surrounding the Antarctic expedition. It is therefore doubtful that even the services of a

*benshi* with his *maesetsu* could have significantly improved the audience’s enjoyment or understanding of the work.<sup>252</sup>

### The growing demand for continuity of narrative

Compounding the physical and presentational challenges of Shirase’s footage were growing audience expectations for continuity in the narrative of film. Film producers in America in

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<sup>252</sup> It should be added that the footage as it now exists does contain intertitles which would have been read by the *benshi* as part of a *nakasetsu*. Intertitles are shots of printed narration or dialogue flashed on the screen between the scenes of a silent film. According to the Japanese Friends of Silent Films Association, however, it was not until almost 1920 that intertitles first appeared in Japanese films (Friends of Silent Films Association, 2001, p. 8), suggesting that these were added to *Nippon nankyoku tanken* at a later date, and only after *nakasetsu* came to be accepted by the Japanese public.

the early years of the twentieth century were trying to wrest control of their productions from the hands of the lecturers – in effect, *benshi* – who were employed by cinemas in that country to explain silent films. This saw the introduction by film-makers of a wide variety of editing, framing and *mise en scène* techniques that would allow audiences to understand a film visually, without having to rely on a lecturer. With mastery of these techniques came the freedom to produce feature-length films, as audiences were now able to follow a protracted storyline unassisted. Indeed, according to Dym, ‘By 1914, filmmakers [in the West] were fully engaged in making full-length features that utilized all of the basic filmic methods needed for visual narrativity’ (2003, pp. 62-63). This trend was delayed in the Japanese film world, perhaps largely due to resistance from the *benshi*, although the

beginnings of change could be seen even during the years of the First World War.<sup>253</sup> In any case, Japanese audiences were exposed to the new type of narrative film being produced overseas, especially as the war in Europe resulted in a flood of American films entering Japan. Several of these films were extremely popular in Japan, such as the much acclaimed 1916 film *Intolerance* starring Lillian Gish, which attracted such large crowds that cinemas were able to levy admission charges higher than the best live drama could command at that time (Anderson & Richie, 1982, pp. 35-46). Indeed, the fast editing seen in *Intolerance* proved a significant challenge to *benshi*, who were used to the slower pace of earlier

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<sup>253</sup> Because of the popularity of the *benshi*, as well as their resistance to change, the transition from silent to sound film in Japan was significantly slower than in the West (Freiberg, 2000). Thus, the Japanese film industry could ‘continue to produce, distribute and exhibit the silent product in great numbers, without losing money’ well into the 1930s. Even as late as 1942, fourteen per cent of films exhibited in Japan were silent (Freiberg, 1987, p. 76). Hence, the fact that Shirase’s film was silent would not have represented the same handicap in Japan that it was for Amundsen’s film in the West.



foreign films, or Japanese silent films, which left sufficient time for the *benshi*'s narration (Standish, 2006, pp. 65, 68-69). Thus, although Japanese filmmakers were yet to follow the trend being set in the United States, Japanese audiences were no doubt coming to expect narrative integration of the type to which they were exposed in foreign-made films. Certainly, among serious filmmakers and "educated" audiences who were increasingly exposed to imported films, there was a demand for an exploration of the 'expressive possibilities of cinema' (Standish, 2006, p. 66). With narrative integration so lacking in *Nippon nankyoku tanken*, not to mention the other problems with the film, it is difficult to see how it could have competed successfully in a marketplace where not only films themselves but also audience expectations were evolving so swiftly.

#### From documentaries to magical samurai

Cinema in Japan is generally claimed to have begun in 1897, with the first paid exhibition of *jidō shashin* [moving pictures] in Osaka in February of that year. The instigator of this exhibition was Inabata Katsutarō, who in that year had purchased the necessary equipment in France from Auguste Lumière, one of the earliest filmmakers. Inabata stated that, 'I believed that this would be the most appropriate device for introducing contemporary Western culture to our country...' (Toki & Mizuguchi, 1996, online). Ultimately, many of the films shown in the late Meiji era were domestic productions. They did, however, remain overwhelmingly documentary in nature as befitted Inabata's intended role for cinema as a medium of education; of the approximately twenty Japanese films produced in 1899, fifteen were documentaries. This pattern continued through the 1904-1905 Russo-Japanese War

years, when nearly all the forty-two and forty-seven films known to have been made in those two years respectively were documentaries, many about the War. Towards the end of the decade, however, audience tastes were changing, and of the over 139 Japanese films known to have been created in 1909 for example, only two were documentaries. In 1912, when Shirase's film was released, only six of the 397 films of that year were documentaries – less than two per cent (Goble, 2008, online). Thus, the overwhelming dominance of documentary films that Shirase had witnessed in the years prior to his expedition was a thing of the past by the time of his return to Japan in 1912.

One of the major factors in this dramatic evolution of audience tastes was the appearance of the works of the film-maker Makino Shōzō. Makino began directing in 1907, and was particularly productive in the years around 1913 to 1914, with seventy films to his name in the former of those years, and eighty-three in the latter. Makino “discovered” the actor Onoe Matsunosuke, who made his debut in the 1909 film *Goban Tadanobu, Genji-no-Ishizue* (Toki & Mizuguchi, 1996, online). Makino exploited the material he found in the *kōdanbon*, the books of romanticised historically-based tales which were at that time enjoying great favour among children (High, 1984, p. 45); as a result, children became a major segment of movie audiences in Japan (Dym, 2003, p. 123). Described by High as ‘the great entertainment bargains of the era’, *kōdanbon* were inexpensive, and the pages printed to the very edges with stories designed to appeal:

From this *Kodanbon* treasure trove came stories to fill the screen – great Loyalist wanderers like Mito Komon, morally pure *yakuza* gangsters, the Robin Hood-like Kunisada Chuji and a host of magical *ninja* spies.

These latter were to become the most popular of all... The *ninja* and 'magical samurai' films rose to such popularity that by 1914 they dominated the Japanese screen.

(High, 1984, pp. 45-46)

Onoe Matsunosuke, who appeared almost exclusively in the latter roles, featured in all except six of Makino's numerous 1913 and 1914 productions and became the first Japanese movie star (Goble, 2008, online; Toki & Mizuguchi, 1996, online).

*Nippon nankyoku tanken*, which Shirase no doubt expected to follow the fashion for documentaries so evident before his departure, suddenly found itself competing in a marketplace thoroughly dominated by a form of cinema that had been only in its infancy when the expedition left Tokyo. The documentary, of which Shirase's film may have represented the most dramatic footage of the entire era, as High (p. 125, online) claimed, had been thoroughly routed by the *kōdanbon* action film; blotchy footage of icebergs and out-of-frame penguins could hardly compete with *ninja* and magical samurai, especially when played by a film star like Onoe Matsunosuke.

It is pertinent to this discussion to compare the development of film in Japan and Great Britain in the early years of the twentieth century, particularly with regard to the influence of World War I. As in Japan, British film was dominated in the pre-War years by factual subjects, and the role of cinema in general was seen as being to improve society. According to MacKenzie (1984, pp. 73-74), however, film did not continue along these lines, as the potential of cinema for story-telling and comic subjects became more obvious. Thus, by the immediately pre-War years, factual subjects were declining rapidly as the demand for escapist films was blossoming, just as in Japan. In fact, Hollywood quickly

came to dominate films shown in British cinemas, and by 1913, only some fifteen per cent of the films screened were British productions (Read, 1972b, pp. 66-67). The outbreak of World War I, however, led to a sudden return to army films in Britain, particularly as the utility of cinema as a medium for propaganda was seized upon by the government. Biographies of past war heroes and films about the rise of the British Empire and its role in “contributing to progress” flourished, as did stories on topics such as the Boy Scouts, extolling the participation of youth in war, and adventure films based on the works of writers like Rider Haggard and A.E.W. Mason. Naturally, in such an environment, films of the Scott expedition were extremely popular, and were as widely publicised as explicitly propagandist films such as the 1913 *British Army Film* (MacKenzie, 1984, pp. 71-76).

Gretton recalled the impact film footage of the Scott party had on the contemporary observer:

The cinematograph added a poignancy of its own; no written words could have had upon the mind the effect of the actual picture of the polar party as they left the rest for the final dash – the dogged trudging figures with their sledges moving so confidently away across the blank interminable snows into the dimness which slowly blotted them from view. To see them live again with their fate upon them was almost more than could be borne.

(Gretton, 1930, p. 859)

Hence, while Japanese cinema was growing away from the documentary and adventure/expedition genres and into escapist entertainment at the end of the first decade and into the second decade of the century, British film began on the same path but returned to subjects such as heroic adventure propaganda as World War I loomed. The changes in cinema and society in Japan that saw a waning of interest in Shirase’s expedition footage

contrast clearly with the developments of British film in the pre- and intra-war years which virtually guaranteed the growth and continuation of Scott's fame.

## 5.6 Conclusion

That writing is vital to both the securing of heroic status, and to its endurance, is evident from an examination of the lives of many explorers. Likewise, the important role film has played with regard to heroic status from the early years of the twentieth century is amply demonstrated in the cases of Scott and Amundsen in particular. With regard to Shirase, both his 1913 book *Nankyoku tanken* and his earlier short stories were firmly rooted in the heroic adventure genre of juvenile literature that appealed to the *seikō seinen*, the *bankara* youth, and the consumers of magazines like *Tanken sekai*, who typified youth of turn-of-the-century Japan. Analysis of *Nankyoku tanken* reveals that Shirase carefully structured his narrative to comply with the norms of this style of writing, and omitted or appended elements to the story to enhance its appeal to its youthful readers.

This genre of literature, however, was rapidly going out of fashion in the second decade of the century, as is evident from both the magazines *Seikō* and *Tanken Sekai* ceasing publication by 1915. In its place, novels in the style of the newly emerged *shizenshugi*, including its “offspring”, the *shishōsetsu*, as well as other works of a distinctly philosophical bent, were dominating the literature that youth were reading. In the post-World War I years, and through the next decade, literature for youth took yet another turn, towards novels of and for young Japanese of the *modan* era.

Although the nature of the literature published from the late 1900s through to the 1920s and beyond – from the *Seikō*-style adventure story to the open sexuality of the *modan* novel – would seem to suggest that writers and publishing companies were focussing on a steadily older age bracket as time went on, this was not the case; letters to *Seikō* cited above, for example, reveal that “youth” at least as old as twenty-six were reading and contributing to that magazine, while other references cited demonstrate that twenty-two-year-old students were buying the *moga* novels of Tanizaki Jun’ichirō. Thus, the same age group to which Shirase had been catering with his 1910 short stories had moved on in terms of tastes in reading materials, such that even by 1913 when *Nankyoku tanken* was published – and certainly through the next decade – there was little market for heroic adventure books.

With regard to the film footage of the *Kainan Maru* expedition, not only was it amateurish in terms of production techniques, the film had been severely damaged in transport. Compounding these problems, it neither suited the physical structure of a film designed for narration by a *benshi*, nor did it have the visual continuity of narrative that would have made the *benshi* superfluous. By the time of release of *Nippon nankyoku tanken*, documentaries had succumbed to audience demand for *ninja* and magical samurai films, with both narrative continuity and sound. Shirase’s film, therefore, just like his book, had become the anachronistic shadow of an era fast disappearing.



## Conclusion

### Conclusions of this study

The Shirase expedition of 1910 to 1912 aroused enormous public interest and excitement, in both Japan and the West. Coming at a time when the Heroic Era of Antarctic exploration was at its zenith, the expedition represented the first intrusion of an Eastern power into what had until then been the preserve of Western nations. Meetings held in Tokyo to organise the voyage were attended by enthusiastic crowds, and fifty-thousand people came to see the men off, singing the expedition song and excitedly waving the expedition flag as the *Kainan Maru* departed Tokyo in November 1910. The movements of the expedition team were constantly reported not only in Japan, but in the Western press. On their return in June 1912, again they were met by jubilant crowds, and fêted at the home of the statesman Ōkuma Shigenobu. Shirase was presented to Crown Prince Yoshihito, soon to become the Taishō emperor, and other members of the Royal Family – an extraordinary honour for a lieutenant in the Japanese Army, but evidently considered not out of place for the explorer hero Shirase had become.

Nevertheless, within a few short years, interest in this hero had waned significantly, and public demand for lectures and film screenings diminished to the point where Shirase was soon forced into poverty. A mere decade later, he had been entirely forgotten, and when he died, it was probably the result of chronic malnutrition. The hero who had been presented to the Crown Prince, whose activities had been reported around the world, and



who had been cheered by tens of thousands of supporters, had faded into obscurity with astonishing speed and completeness.

In this study, three factors have been identified as instrumental in the sudden collapse of Shirase's heroic status. Firstly, Shirase's fame was in many ways the product of a particular phase in Japanese history when a masculinisation of youth was taking place. This trend paralleled a similar development in Western social history which had fostered the growth of the Heroic Era of Antarctic exploration, and had seen the appearance of explorers such as Robert Falcon Scott and Roald Amundsen. The masculinisation of Japanese youth was in part a reaction against the perceived feminisation of upper class society, such that the "cult" of the *bankara* emerged because of *haikara* excess. At the same time, it was also partly the outcome of deliberate efforts by educators and others, eager to inculcate the ideals of masculinity associated with sport and outdoor activities.

The end of the *haikara* vogue in the early years of the twentieth century, however, meant that muscular masculinity as a cause to be championed also lost relevance. As economic and social competition escalated in Japanese society, youth were forced to focus their efforts on survival, rather than ideals of masculinity, or the dreams of fame and success indulged in by the *seikō seinen*. The resulting profusion of *hanmon seinen*, writing tearful letters of desperation to the magazines they had relied upon for their *seikō* dreams, and in some cases indulging in a fascination for suicide, meant the end of youthful worship of rugged adventure-heroes bent on exploring distant lands. The post-World War I youth, with their dreams of living the *modan* life, and their carefully cultivated nonchalance, were no more likely to be interested in an explorer hero than were the *hanmon seinen*.

A second factor in Shirase's swift fall from heroic status concerns his relationship with the political figure Ōkuma Shigenobu. The importance of Ōkuma's adoption of the *Kainan Maru* expedition as a cause of his own cannot be overstated. Without his having lent his name to the efforts to set the expedition in motion, and using his influence with the press, the mission would not have received the widespread reportage, and subsequent public support, that it did. Likewise, his financial contribution to the project should not be forgotten. Ōkuma's mediation of Shirase's fame, however, had both positive and negative outcomes. Operating in a way that to some extent typified the Meiji political world with its power games and pragmatism, Ōkuma appears to have used the Antarctic expedition to divert public attention from the emerging scandal of the Japan-British Exposition. Thus, Shirase's expedition and Shirase's fame were convenient tools in Ōkuma's ploy to distract the public from matters he wished to sweep aside. At the same time, Ōkuma's advocacy of Shirase's cause equally meant that Ōkuma's enemies became Shirase's enemies; the antagonism Ōkuma had provoked in the oligarchy meant that critical government support of Shirase's expedition was withheld. Consequently, the expedition was financially crippled, and departure delayed, the outcome of which was the ultimate failure of Shirase's planned assault on the South Pole.

With respect to the endurance of Shirase's heroic status, when Ōkuma withdrew his support after the expedition's return, and no longer acted as Shirase's mediator, Shirase lost access to the public which had made him a hero. For the pragmatic Ōkuma, there was no advantage in continuing to champion a protégé who no longer served any immediate need. The consequence of this for Shirase was that he almost immediately vanished from public view. Once Shirase had been abandoned by the mediator whose connections with the press

and public had been paramount in the fostering of heroic status, it was inevitable that fame would swiftly fade.

The third factor identified as central to the failure of Shirase's heroic status was the profound change in literature and film that occurred in the first decades of the twentieth century. Before his expedition, Shirase wrote for a magazine published by a man who was well-known to the *seikō seinen* – Murakami Dakurō, owner, editor and publisher of *Seikō* magazine. Shirase penned stories that were distinctly of the heroic adventure genre of juvenile fiction. They involved overcoming a series of obstacles, including slaying walruses and giant bats, subduing ferocious bears, crossing mountain ranges and surviving on desert islands, and even edging past possibly-supernatural dangers, to finally achieve a successful outcome for the hero – Shirase himself, in every case. The stories were published in edition after edition of Murakami's magazine *Tanken Sekai*, and it is clear that this kind of story was attractive to a large body of youth in the years before Shirase departed for the Antarctic.

Unfortunately for Shirase, however, during his absence and in the years after his return, a wave of individualism resulted in a youth culture far different from that of a decade earlier. For the literary world, this meant the financial collapse of previously successful magazines such as *Seikō* and *Tanken Sekai*, and a sudden plethora of publications in the *shizenshugi* vein, including the *shishōsetsu*, or “I-novel”, as well as works of moral philosophy. Compared with the adventure stories so popular at the start of the century, writing of this nature was far more attractive to the *hanmon seinen* who became so prevalent at this time; in Ubukata's words, ‘everyone was always anguished.’ Although to label all youth who were reading philosophy texts and *shishōsetsu* as *hanmon*

*seinen* would be unwarranted, the fact remains that by the second decade of the twentieth century, a great number of young people were pondering ideas far deeper than could be found in any tale of adventure. By 1913, Shirase was far from a youth himself, and had been away from Japan since November 1910. That he should have been out of touch with the new trends in youth literature or thought is not surprising. Possessing, according to his descendant Shirase Kyōko, a ‘childlike state of mind that would not allow him to escape from his “mischievous boyhood”, no matter how old he got,’ Shirase in 1913 almost inevitably wrote a book still in the *Tanken Sekai* style. *Nankyoku tanken* was demonstrably written to comply with the norms of the adventure story, and the narrative was carefully amended and structured to follow the standards of that genre of juvenile literature. Unaware of changes that had occurred in literary tastes, or simply unable to write in any other style, Shirase’s *Nankyoku tanken* was a book destined for failure with the youthful readers at whom it was aimed. After World War I, the same age group that had bought Murakami’s *Seikō* and *Tanken Sekai* were now avidly reading novels of the *moga*’s café dalliances with the opposite sex, and were unlikely to have wanted to be discovered reading *Nankyoku tanken* – literature so obviously unsuited to their *modan* lifestyle.

The importance of writing in the endurance of heroic status has been commonly discussed in the literature regarding the Heroic Era. The role of film has not enjoyed the same depth of academic interest, largely because moving pictures were in no more than a nascent phase at that time. Nevertheless, the important role Ponting’s film played in the endurance of the Scott legend is evident. The film footage of the *Kainan Maru* expedition unfortunately did not serve Shirase’s heroic status so well. The film was damaged during the expedition. It was poorly structured for the purposes of the *benshi* narrator. Growing

audience expectations for narrative continuity could not be satisfied by a series of loosely connected “episodes in Antarctica”. Further, the dominance in Japan of the documentary film in the first decade of the twentieth century had been usurped in the following decade by the *kōdanbon* action film. “Magical samurai” and *ninja* spy films lured far greater audiences in the Taishō era than even the most remarkable documentary films of the Meiji years could do. *Nippon nankyoku tanken* was physically and structurally problematic; temporally, it was a relic of the past.

To paraphrase the words of Shirase Kyōko, those things that symbolised the mood and spirit of the Meiji era, such as Shirase Nobu’s Antarctic expedition, faded swiftly in the light of the new era, and were doomed to be forgotten. Youth culture had changed. Juvenile literature had changed. The world of the cinema had changed. And, symptomatic of the political *milieu* of the times, Shirase’s mediator had used him and abandoned him. That Shirase Nobu was to become a forgotten hero so quickly seems, in hindsight, almost inevitable.

### Contribution to academic research

This thesis represents an important contribution to the exponentially growing field of Antarctic studies in that it is the first extensive academic study to date of the Shirase expedition. Since the publication of Ivar Hamre's translation in 1933, there has been no substantial work published in English regarding Shirase's expedition. This thesis makes available for the first time details of the expedition, and of Shirase's life, which were previously accessible only to Japanese speakers. In the Japanese language too, only a handful of publications have appeared since the expedition took place, and these are more general-interest works than detailed investigations or analyses. Unfortunately, the most recent media productions have tended to the hagiographic. It is hoped, therefore, that this thesis may prompt a renewed interest among Antarctic scholars, both Japanese and non-Japanese, to undertake research into an undeservedly neglected event in exploration history.

Research on the Heroic Era, and on the many individual expeditions that took place during that period, is flourishing, with more and more articles and books being published every year. Without reference to the Japanese expedition that took place at the very peak of the Heroic Era, however – an expedition that was on the ice at the same time and in the same place as the two most famous expeditions of Antarctic exploration – a substantial gap in the research must necessarily remain. Until the end of the Heroic Era, nearly all major expeditions to Antarctic regions were from European nations, and research on Antarctic exploration history has exclusively focussed on the West. Conclusions drawn from these studies, regarding Western societies and cultures, have consequently remained unproven in the absence of a test case. The expedition of the *Kainan Maru* was the first from an Eastern

nation to undertake Antarctic exploration, and as such presents a unique opportunity for researchers to make comparisons between Western expeditions and one of distinctly different cultural and historic origins.

Shirase's expedition also provides an important window into late Meiji and Taishō Japan, in that it was perhaps the first national, yet non-government, enterprise to receive widespread public support. It thus sheds light on popular sentiments and ideas unrelated to the well-documented political or social movements of the era. The *Kainan Maru* expedition excited extensive press coverage, and together with the expedition film, Shirase's books, and those of the Supporters' Group and the other men on the expedition, constitutes an invaluable source of information giving new insight into the attitudes and thoughts of ordinary Japanese citizens of the early twentieth century.

Turning to the significance of the expedition in Australian history, Shirase's six-month stay in Sydney in 1911 created much public interest at the time, expressed in the daily press across the country. Editorials and letters to the editors of newspapers provide an important insight into the attitudes of Australians towards Japan in the years shortly after the introduction of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, a subject which has received extensive attention from historians. It is hoped that the interaction between the expedition team and the residents of Sydney revealed in this thesis will provide interesting and profitable input to discussions of the impact of the 1901 Act.

“Hero studies” is another area which has received considerable scholarly attention in recent times, although these investigations too have largely focussed on figures in

Western history. It is not the intention of this thesis to “rehabilitate” Shirase, as some works have attempted to do in the case of Scott, Rae, or other explorers whose reputations have been wronged or neglected. On the other hand, Shirase was undeniably considered a hero in Japan at one time, and as such, his exclusion from studies of heroism particularly of the Heroic Era, cannot be justified. As he represents one of the few Japanese heroes of the early twentieth century whose field of action was international, and who was in fact initially in competition with contemporary Western explorer heroes, Shirase’s story provides an important opportunity to formulate and investigate theories of heroism in a multi-cultural context. Forgotten hero though he may be, Lieutenant Shirase Nobu and his Antarctic expedition of 1910 to 1912 can still be a source of invaluable data for investigating both the nature of heroism, and the factors that can influence the sustainability of heroic status.



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