Chapter 5:

Residents’ activism, Sasebo 1968

There was a strong sense of both trepidation and anticipation in Japan as the small town of Sasebo set itself to receive the USS Enterprise, a nuclear powered aircraft carrier, in January 1968. Thousands of protesters, peace organizations and political parties had come from all over the country for the occasion. The media were in a frenzy over the impending visit and newspapers were bustling with political debate and commentary concerning the aircraft carrier, and warnings about the probability of student violence. As student groups congregated at the major train stations around Japan and prepared themselves for the journey to Fukuoka and then on to Sasebo, the debates flared up over the implications and the acceptability of the visit, and speculation about the events that were set to unfold. In the meantime the government was busily trying to hose down the significance of the port call and pre-empt the trouble that was expected from the gathering protestors.

On entering the port of Sasebo, a small town 50km north of Nagasaki in Kyūshū, the massive aircraft carrier was piercing the heart of a small community and challenging the values that underpinned that community. The port call represented what political scientist Maruyama Masao may have called an ‘axis-of-definition’ – an incident in which the time and space of the nation became transformed in one week and one small town. It was an ‘axis-of-definition’ in which one village became representative of all villages in the archipelago, and one week during which the ‘national imaginary,’ the postwar identity of Japan, was being (re)narrated. While the protest was intimately tied to the plight of a small regional town it emerged as a local struggle of national significance. The protests against the Enterprise were the ultimate test case of the postwar national ideals.

Events of the past and anticipation of the future fueled the fervor on all sides. In the background were the so-called Haneda incidents. Staged on October 8 and November 12 1967, the Haneda incidents were massive student demonstrations
against Prime Minister Satō’s visit to Japan’s Asian neighbors and to the United States. On both of these occasions violence was said to have wracked the district of Kamata near Haneda International Airport and hundreds of students were arrested after clashing with police. The press roundly condemned the violence that was associated with the protests, but the fervor surrounding the incidents was still smouldering when the Enterprise was heading towards Japan in January the following year. In the foreground was the anticipation of a massive struggle that drove all protest during this period, namely the impending renewal of the *Ampo* Security Treaty in 1970.

In this chapter I will explore the politics of the port call and the national ideals that were brought into focus by the visit. Acceptance of the visit and the terms under which it took place highlighted the inequality between the US and Japan and, with the Vietnam War in full swing, the conservative forces in government were seen to be colluding with their US counterparts. The government’s acceptance of the port call and the conditions under which it was allowed saw critics once again declaring a disparity between the ‘will of the people’ and the policies of the state. The possibility that the aircraft carrier was equipped with nuclear weapons amplified this concern, and touched off a nerve that was branded the ‘nuclear allergy.’ The issues surrounding the visit drew attention to the Pacific War and the distance that Japan had traveled since 1945, and it quickly became a test case for the postwar ideals of peace and democracy.

The nature of protest in the late 1960s - the shifting terrain of political activism that came into view at Sasebo - reveals the new, and enduring conceptions of protest and democracy that emerged in 1968. Through the opposition of the local residents at Sasebo, new forms of resistance emerged that differed considerably to those of the 1960 *Ampo* demonstrations, and to a lesser extent, differed from the agenda of citizens’ rights groups discussed in the previous chapter. *Jūmin undō* (residents’ movements) became the focus of attention as a new feature of the political landscape. In the process, the nature of Japan’s democracy and the sense of possibility (*kanōsei*) that underpinned that democracy was both tested and radically altered.
The politics of the port call

According to Foreign Minister Miki, the visit of the nuclear powered aircraft carrier Enterprise, which Prime Minister Satō was informed about on New Year’s Eve 1968,¹ was supposed to be void of any political significance. It was simply the fulfillment of Japan’s obligations to the United States under the terms of the US-Japan Security Treaty. Miki was at pains to point out that port calls were accepted under Article 5 of the Status of Forces Agreement, and that the visit was not linked to Japan’s attitude to the war in Vietnam and would not hinder their efforts to broker a peaceful settlement.² Despite these assurances, as the massive ship lumbered towards the small port town of Sasebo the politics of the visit, and the implications of its presence in Japan, came under intense scrutiny. Even for those who supported the Enterprise visit Miki’s cautious remarks disguised the immense importance of the carrier’s presence in Japan. With the visit of the Enterprise Sasebo was engulfed in a struggle over national politics, progress and growth, history and war memories, universal ideals, national values and identity.

Despite the LDP’s reticence, non-government supporters of the port call drew attention to the historical and political significance of the visit as an awe-inspiring symbol of the future. Military affairs critic Kuzumi Tadao indicated that, like the visits of the black ships 130 years earlier, the technological superiority of the US as represented by the Enterprise would benefit Japan in the longer term. ‘The Enterprise constitutes the kernel of new navies in the twenty-first century, and it is necessary to keep in mind that the Enterprise is, so to speak, a pioneer of civilization.’³ Others writing in the same Yomiuri Shimbun forum as Kuzumi, believed that the visit was crucial to Japan’s defence in a volatile region. It was deemed a pragmatic response to strategic affairs – in the national interest - and

¹ Japan was informed about a visit in September 1967 but it was not until December 31 that the actual date for the port call was set. The Enterprise entered the port January 18 and departed on January 23. See, Thomas Havens, Fire Across the Sea: The Vietnam War and Japan, 1965-1975, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1985, pp. 145-151.
² Yomiuri Shimbun, January 18.
³ Yomiuri Shimbun, January 17.
‘the people’ would respond appropriately. ‘Opposition to the port call is impertinent,’ wrote Saeki Kiichi, ‘and I think that the majority of people will accept the port call calmly.’ Intimately tied to these notions of progress, development and sacrifice for the sake of the nation was an apparent desire to ‘overcome the nuclear allergy.’ Thus, while the government denied that a political strategy underpinned their acceptance of the visit, many who questioned the strategic importance of the port call in Sasebo, saw it as a means by which to challenge the popular perceptions of nuclear power and the people’s aversion to nuclear weapons. The government’s intention was to ‘liquidate the nuclear allergy symptoms’, wrote Kamiya Fuji.

Prior to its arrival the Enterprise was dubbed the ‘third black ship’ to enter Japanese territory, a reference to the two fleets of Commodore Perry that had ‘opened Japan to the west’ during the Tokugawa period. As I have already indicated, for some this was a reference that highlighted the great opportunity that the visit represented and its significance for Japan’s future but it also drew attention to the inequality of the defence relationship and the sense of uncertainty about what the visit signified. The official reason given by the US authorities was that the visit was for the purposes of the crew’s rest and recreation. On the Japanese side, Secretary General Fukuda corroborated this position stating: ‘In view of Japan’s international position, it is Japan’s natural duty to approve the port call of the Enterprise for the purposes of supply and recreation for crewmen. We earnestly seek the people’s understanding.’ But most were unable to accept that the US and Japanese governments did not have a surreptitious motive. The media and opposition parties pointed out that it could easily have traversed the world without even making a port call and yet it was calling at Sasebo after less

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4 Yomiuri Shimbun, January 17.
5 Yomiuri Shimbun, January 17.
6 Yomiuri Shimbun, January 17.
than two weeks at sea. Many speculated about whether it was a show of American military prowess or, more significantly, an endeavor to ascertain the type of welcome that a nuclear powered vessel would receive in Japan – a test of public sentiment towards nuclear weapons. Like the visit of the first black ships into Japan during the Tokugawa Period the underlying significance of the visit remained unclear.

In terms of diplomacy the visit of the Enterprise was met with antagonism in the Japanese media, reflecting simmering resentment towards Japan’s treatment at the hands of the United States’ government. The US was unwilling to share strategic information with their Japanese allies and the port call was surrounded by secrecy as they stood steadfast behind their Cold War military protocol. As the Mainichi Shimbun reported ‘important points such as whether she is actually carrying nuclear weapons and the construction around the nuclear reactors are covered by a thick veil of military secrecy.’ Indeed the US assured the Japanese government that it would abide by the terms of the treaty but refused to say whether the ship was equipped with nuclear weapons and also refused to allow inspection by Japanese officials. Many commentators and officials raised concerns over safety and the threat to local residents of having a nuclear powered vessel in the port. Reports submitted by the Japan Science Council prior to the port call, regarding the nuclear submarine visits to ports at Yokosuka and Sasebo simply confirmed the misgivings. They suggested that ‘a port call by a nuclear powered submarine should be regarded as the temporary installation of a nuclear reactor …(and) it is hoped that its safety can be studied and confirmed officially.’ In the case of the Enterprise visit the government completely ignored the recommendation for ‘official studies.’ Japan was being asked to ‘trust’ the US with regard to treaty obligations and the issues of nuclear power, contamination and emergency

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8 The Enterprise had just departed from Honolulu. Yomiuri Shimbun, evening edition, January 18.
9 Yomiuri Shimbun, January 15.
10 Mainichi Shimbun, January 16.
11 Mainichi Shimbun, January 16.
procedures and, in the eyes of many, Japan was being kept in complete ignorance with regards to the visit. Japan was certainly not privy to US military intelligence.\textsuperscript{12}

It was in the context of these concerns that a ferocious debate erupted over the visit and a massive opposition movement was established. In parliamentary political circles it was not just the JSP and JCP which enunciated concerns. Despite qualified support for the US-Japan Security Treaty the Democratic Socialist Party \textit{(Minshu Shakaitō, DSP)} and The Clean Government Party \textit{(Kōmeitō)} also expressed their opposition to the arrangement. The DSP made representations to the government calling upon them to reject the port call on the basis that there was no proof that it would not be carrying nuclear weapons. Kōmeitō expressed similar concerns and also voiced opposition to the fact that there would be no safety investigation and that the ship was an ‘attack vessel’ carrying out operations in Vietnam. Statements made by Kōmeitō betray a complete distrust of the LDP and the US: ‘Our Party will in the future too, oppose the rightist inclination of the government, which is planning to make Japan into a nuclear base.’\textsuperscript{13} The vehement opposition of these parties came as a surprise to the LDP and undermined their contention that the visit was an acceptable part of the security treaty. The opposition of the DSP and Kōmeitō gave further credence to the statements made by the JCP and JSP who were playing a crucial role in defining the nature and scope of the debate. ‘The forthcoming port call of the US nuclear powered warship,’ [read the JSP statement]

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\textit{is aimed solely at pushing forward the Satō cabinet’s established policy line, including conversion of Japan into a nuclear base, elimination of the people’s nuclear allergy and the bringing of nuclear weapons into Japan.}
\end{quote}

Opposition parties also indicated that the visit was intimately tied to the reversion of Okinawa with nuclear bases intact. They believed that it was accepted in order

\textsuperscript{12} Under Cold War protocol the US was unwilling to divulge information about nuclear arsenal on its ships. See Thomas Havens, \textit{Fire Across the Sea}, 146.

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Asahi Shimbun}, evening edition, January 18.
to test the waters in mainland Japan and determine the popular sentiment with
regard the military, defence and nuclear capabilities. ‘The government is blindly
following the US Far Eastern Strategy,’ concluded the JSP.\textsuperscript{14}

\textbf{In the eye of a cyclone}

Reports from various student groups just prior to the port call indicated that Japan
was still in the midst of a succession of revolutionary struggles, sitting
precariously in the eye of a cyclone. During a rally of students at Hōsei University,
\textit{Marugakudō} (Marxist Student League) Chairman Akiyama Katsuyuki highlighted
the sense of fervor:

Through the two Haneda incidents we have dealt blows to political
authorities and thereby achieved success in advancing our movements on
a large scale. Our action in blocking the Enterprise’s port call is, so to
speak, a ‘third Haneda Struggle.’ We must try to lead our local struggles
through to mobilization of people on the largest scale, thereby attaining
definite prospects for the security treaty struggles slated for 1970.\textsuperscript{15}

Similar sentiments emanated from the leaders of \textit{Shagakudō} (Socialist Student
League) who assumed mass support for the student agenda and saw the port call
as an opportunity. ‘Let us stand up again and block the US nuclear–powered
aircraft carrier’s proposed port call through the use of force,’ declared Shagakudō
Chair Narishima Tadao.\textsuperscript{16} Other student groups such as the JCP-affiliated \textit{Minsei}
students were critical of the violent agenda being proposed but they were firmly
opposed to the visit. For these groups the Enterprise was a symbol of the
government’s close relationship with the United States, it implicated Japan in
‘America’s war of aggression against Vietnam,’ and it paved the way for the
establishment of nuclear bases on Japanese soil.\textsuperscript{17} Thus it was with a sense of

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Asahi Shimbun}, evening edition, January 18.
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Tokyo Shimbun}, evening edition, January 15.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Tokyo Shimbun}, evening edition, January 15.
\textsuperscript{17} Ishida Ikuo, ‘Sasebo to Zengakuren,’ \textit{Tembō}, March 1968, pp. 58-68; \textit{Tokyo Shimbun}, evening
edition, January 15.
both anger and optimism that, on January 15, thousands of students boarded trains, paraded their banners and flags on the windows and doors, and headed down to Sasebo.

Sensing the political importance of the protests, right wing groups such as the Greater Japan Patriotic Party (Dai Nihon Aikoku Tō) and the Kyūshū based Patriotic Council (Kyuai Kai) were also planning to descend on Sasebo and confront the left wing groups. These groups not only supported the visit of the Enterprise and the security arrangements with the United States, they also vehemently opposed the left wing forces and thus headed to Sasebo with sound trucks to disrupt the protests. In addition, an ‘anti-student group’ emerged called the Sasebo Citizens’ Council to Protect the Security Treaty (Sasebo Ampo o Mamoru Kai) which claimed to represent the interests of local residents and supported the visit of the Enterprise. This group hinted at the sense of trepidation that residents felt with their small community splashed across the national newspapers each day as the site of an impending struggle.

It is almost certain that the Enterprise’s port call will be a turning point. Rightwing and Leftwing forces and the riot police will wage a tripartite struggle at Sasebo as a prelude to the expected struggles at the time of renewal of the security treaty in 1970.

Sasebo was emerging as a site for a massive political showdown and the national newspapers printed articles calling for calm: ‘Not another Haneda incident at Sasebo,’ was the plea from many of the nation’s newspapers. The January 12 edition of Sankei Shimbun noted that 5000 riot police would be on hand as a precautionary measure and called upon the JSP and JCP to exercise some control

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20 Ishida Ikuo, ‘Sasebo to Zengakuren,’ 58.
over their affiliated groups.\textsuperscript{22} The \textit{Yomiuru Shimbun} urged students to throw away the staves and helmets and reported that large numbers of Zengakuren students had been arrested for assembling with dangerous weapons even before departing Tokyo.\textsuperscript{23} According to the report there was very little opposition to the pre-emptive arrests in Tokyo and the paper cited antipathy towards student violence as the primary reason for the disinterest. University President Ōkochi concurred with this view stating: ‘staves and helmets used at the first and second Haneda incidents have destroyed trust in the student movement.’ \textsuperscript{24} This antipathy escalated further as students clashed with police at Hakata Station in Fukuoka in an episode that saw only one arrest but signalled the force the police were prepared to exercise and the tension that surrounded the impending demonstrations. The January 16 edition of \textit{Sankei Shimbun} called for a return to reason and urged students not to embark on a violent course of action at Sasebo.\textsuperscript{25}

There was a sense in the media that student activism and violence were signs of youthful exuberance and excess rather than strong political commitment, and freedom of expression. Many expressed a belief that students needed to be kept in check not only by the riot police but also by political parties, university authorities and the wider community.

\begin{quote}
It is hoped that all people will stir up public opinion to the effect that use of violence will not be permitted and warn them against their reckless action … it could be said that real peace will not be brought about on the soil tainted with the blood of fellow Japanese.\textsuperscript{26}
\end{quote}

This statement goes some of the way to highlighting the sense of anticipation, danger and trepidation in the weeks prior to the port call of the Enterprise. The fact that students were entering the domain of a small community made these

\begin{footnotes}
\item[22] \textit{Sankei Shimbun}, January 12, 1968.
\item[26] \textit{Sankei Shimbun}, January 16, 1968.
\end{footnotes}
calls ever more prescient. The Haneda Incidents took place near the international airport on the streets of Tokyo, the Sister City to New York, the satellite for Japan’s interaction with the international community. Tokyo was not a hometown; it was just a big town.

By contrast, in the case of the protests against the Enterprise national politics was entering the domain of small town Japan, the domain of a seaside community where it would almost certainly impinge upon the lives of ‘the people.’ ‘The infestation of these outsiders may cause problems for local residents,’ chimed one paper.\textsuperscript{27} The threat to local lifestyles, combined with the fact that a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier was entering the port community, attributed Sasebo with a significance that went far beyond the Haneda incident. The newspapers therefore urged for a ‘return to reason’ as the students set out from Tokyo and Osaka. ‘All of us experienced enough 20 years ago,’ reported the \textit{Sankei Shimbun}, ‘to know how much fanatical violence, and its employment without self-reflection, has misled the nation and left families and individuals in misery.’\textsuperscript{28} Somehow it was the political fervour of students, rather than the aircraft carrier, that was reminiscent of Japan’s wartime experience.

Another commentator compared the students to the young officers involved in the February 26 incident of 1936\textsuperscript{29} indicating that they too were acting without reason and were not being accountable to the dictates of the law or the people.\textsuperscript{30} This denotes a recurring theme in postwar political thought, the notion that society had been ‘misled’ by crazed and fanatical leaders, and ‘the people’ had been somehow coerced into war in the 1930s. But was this association of student violence of the

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Tokyo Shimbun}, evening edition, January 15, 1968.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Sankei Shimbun}, January 16, 1968.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{29} The February 26 incident saw young officers attempt to assassinate the Prime Minister in order to ‘restore the Emperor to power.’ The comparison between Sasebo and a movement that ultimately failed is significant. Perhaps if the February 26 incident succeeded the term ‘young’ would have been omitted from historical accounts. The reference to youth denoted a lack of maturity and a sense of idealism that fails to heed rational argument. Once again we find that the rendering of activism as an indication of youthful exuberance is employed to undermine the significance of the protest.}
1960s and wartime Japan really warranted? The very suggestion is edifying. The plea for reason and the condemnation of fanaticism reveals the gravity of the situation in January 1968. It alludes to the possibility that vested interests could derail village Japan (again), that political activism could be justified and carried out without being accountable to the people (again). Students had a responsibility to ensure that village Japan was not dragged into a bloody struggle (again).

**In the wake of the Enterprise**

Before describing the protests and the character of activism that manifest itself with the visit of the Enterprise it is important to point out some of the concerns that activists were confronted with in 1968 – the issues at stake. Many of these issues - the issues of peace, anti-nuclear sentiments and a tacit distrust of the government – were only addressed by the newspapers and journals ‘in the wake of the Enterprise’ rather than in the midst of the protests. As I will indicate the protests themselves brought prescience to these issues and encouraged the analysis within the media. Nevertheless, they were concerns that simmered beneath the surface through the duration of the visit.

The significance of the visit and antipathy towards the government certainly did not recede when the soldiers boarded the carrier and headed out to sea. Nagasu Kazuji wrote that ‘with the visit here of the “black ship” early in the new year the march toward 1970 has started with sounding footsteps. National history seems to have predetermined times of choice and changeover. We are living, it seems, in such a time.’

In a similar vein the *Asahi Shimbun* ran a feature titled ‘The Deep Wake of the Enterprise,’ focusing on the debris that was left behind after the Enterprise had departed. ‘It is at least fortunate under the circumstances,’ writes the *Asahi*, ‘that no radioactivity remained in the port. But there are almost too many things that the Enterprise did leave behind after its four day port call.’

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32 *Asahi Shimbun*, January 24, 1968.
The sight of the Enterprise coming into port must have made many onlookers catch their breath or retreat into silent thought, overwhelmed by the enormity of what confronted them. It was not simply that the Enterprise was so massive, but also that the image flooding their line of vision was an image of war. When the carrier came into port it did so as a relic of the past; the great bulk of the aircraft carrier traveled like a colossal remnant from another time providing a stark reminder of the Pacific War and ushering in a heated debate over the legacy of war for postwar Japanese society. It was re-opening the scars of battle and forcing Japan to revisit its memory and legacy. With the Enterprise in port, time suddenly dissolved and peering at the aircraft carrier was akin to peering into a looking glass onto wartime Japan.

But was this really the past or simply the unrecognized present objectified in a technological odyssey – an ugly symbol of national strength powered by universal righteousness - and thrust before them? The war that the Enterprise was participating in was a current concern. So too was the complicity of Japan in that war; the accountability of the government to the people; Japanese sovereignty; Japan’s relationship with the United States; the ‘nuclear allergy’; the ideals of peace; and the health of Japan’s democracy. It was like looking into a deep well in which one’s reflection in the water below was, though true to type, actually an image from a past era – for a moment the past and present were suddenly indistinguishable from each other. In the events of January 1968 Japan was confronted by their nation some 25 years before and, in turn, the postwar nation that was unfolding before them. Peering at the aircraft carrier, that was traversing the seas of both time and space, onlookers were confronted by Japan’s past and present held together in an intimate, yet hostile, embrace.

The flashback to war and its legacy, and the concurrent self-reflection on postwar society and its apparent mimesis of the past, sparked debates that were galvanized around two primary themes. First, the so-called nuclear allergy and the national memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Second, a recurring theme in postwar Japan that I discussed in earlier chapters, the relationship between the people and the state and corresponding ideas about citizenship and war responsibility. Both
themes highlighted the tension that developed surrounding the visit and the significance of the opposition for Japan’s postwar ideals.

**i. The Nuclear Allergy**

In January 1968 the massive nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Enterprise was seen as a colossal reminder of war, and ushered in debates over the nuclear legacy as politicians, intellectuals and journalists, grappled to determine the symbolism that it conveyed. For some, it was understood as the source of a nuclear allergy that needed to be overcome in order to enhance defence consciousness. Conversely, the war was remembered as the epitome of evil and the Enterprise was read as yet another symbol of tyranny and destruction.

For those stressing the former reading the significance of the nuclear powered aircraft carrier, and the nuclear weapons that it may or may not have been carrying, was the same as that attached to the nuclear bombs of 1945. Both were a symbol of technological capability and military strength that Japan should emulate rather than simply condemn. The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were the ultimate symbols of American technological prowess while also highlighting the ineptitude of Japan’s wartime state. In the aftermath of defeat science and technology were singled out as the obvious explanation for defeat and the basis upon which the country could be rebuilt. The hope that was placed on technological development led people such as Kazumi Tadao to welcome the Enterprise into port and marvel at its technological prowess.33

In the face of overwhelming opposition other commentators who supported the visit cast doubt on the legitimacy of the anti-nuclear stance. Takeyama Michio, for example, ridiculed the notion that Japanese people had an inherent aversion to war and nuclear weapons. Alluding to the ‘imagined identity’ of postwar Japan, Takeyama argued that ‘the nuclear allergy has been artificially constructed rather

33 Kazumi Tadao, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, January 17.
being a self-realized identity. Therefore it is unnatural.\textsuperscript{34} Takeyama cited the publication of graphic images of the devastation in Hiroshima and Nagasaki by \textit{Asahi Gurafu} in 1952 as the ‘seeds of the peace offensive propaganda’ and the basis of a constructed/artificial national identity.\textsuperscript{35} Of course, this not only assumes an identity that exists untouched or untainted by the historical and cultural developments of postwar Japan but, as Iida Momo points out, overlooks the ‘artificiality’ of censoring the bombing and its devastation – the tyranny of silence.\textsuperscript{36}

The government could hardly have found a more inauspicious site to test the nuclear sentiment of the people than Sasebo. It is a town located in the prefecture of Nagasaki and less than 50 kilometers to the north of the city itself. In the aftermath of defeat in 1945 the atomic bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima became the central symbols of the Japanese peace movement and underpinned a sense of ‘victim consciousness’ (\textit{higaisha ishiki}) with regard to the Pacific War. The trauma of nuclear devastation and unconditional surrender reinforced an abiding sense of Japan’s peculiar vulnerability and victimization at the hands of the United States. John Dower goes so far as to say that ‘the nuclear victimization spawned new forms of nationalism in postwar Japan – a neo-nationalism that co-exists in complex ways with antimilitarism and even the ‘one-country pacifism.’\textsuperscript{37}

By the 1960s this unproblematic ‘pacifist nationalism’ was being substantially rethought in relationship to Asia and Japan’s own war responsibility, but the antinuclear sentiment remained a pillar of postwar political ideals. Philosopher Tanikawa Tetsuzo wrote:

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\textsuperscript{34} Takeyama Michio, ‘Goddo ga shinu ni, kaku ga umareta,’ \textit{Jiyû}, March 1968.
\end{flushright}
I feel sick when I hear people triumphantly warning against the over-sensitivity of the Japanese people towards nuclear weapons, using the expression, ‘nuclear allergy.’ Since, as I understand it, an allergy is not harmful to a normal constitution the use of such an expression in relation to a harmful nuclear weapon is problematic.38

The proximity of Sasebo to ‘ground zero’ brought the issue of nuclear capabilities into sharp relief. Thus, by far the most prevalent argument surrounding the visit was that the spirit of postwar Japan was once again facing defeat at the hands of US technology and a conspiratorial state. Writing in 1984, Iida Momo argues that the visit of the Enterprise ushered in ‘post-civilized society’ which was driven by progress, failed to heed the lessons of the past and operated according to its own destructive logic. Drawing on the work of Oda Makoto, Iida Momo wrote that the great bulk of the ‘Enterprise was not a mere thing (mono),’ but a symbol of human tyranny.

This ‘thing’ was a mobile nuclear base that represented the very limits of human estrangement. The way I see it is that, by way of the Tonkin incident, when this thing insensitively invaded a corner of non-nuclear Japanese territory we gained a first hand insight into a grotesque historical development. When you put this reading in the context of our 20-year postwar history, which began with Hiroshima and Nagasaki, I think that the significance of the Enterprise port call becomes ever more prescient.39

Writing over fifteen years after the Sasebo episode, Iida depicts the visit as an epoch in Japanese history and a symbol of the post-1968 future. With hindsight he is able to represent the Enterprise as a ‘grotesque’ symbol of evil that sails across the seas with stories of humanity’s past sins and with the potential to inflict future destruction/annihilation.

In this regard the Enterprise was not unlike the sites of nuclear destruction in the Pacific War. Hiroshima, and to a lesser extent Nagasaki, are fixed in time as symbols of death and destruction, symbols of humanity’s inhumanity. Hiroshima emerged as a sacred site, a memorial to the mass liquidation of human life and a site that transcended politics. Iida refers to it as ‘Saint Hiroshima’ denoting its unique place as a martyr to the cause of world peace. ‘Hiroshima was not just a Japanese national experience,’ writes Iida, ‘through the creative imaginary (sōzō teki sōzō ryoku) it became a figure of universal vision. It became “Saint Hiroshima”’. Evident here is the fact that the universality of peace underpins the postwar identity of Japan, and conversely, Japan has a unique perspective on the ideal of peace. As I indicated in the previous chapter, Oda Makoto also pays heed to the ‘universal’ that underpins the ideals of postwar Japan. Writing about the strengthening of universal activism, individual responsibility and democracy, Oda cites the experience of war and the atomic bombing as a basis from which Japan can ‘make a unique contribution’ to humanist debates.

Considered from this perspective the Enterprise was violating a sacred site. A symbol of destruction was entering a nation that defined itself according to the ideals of peace at the very site at which it was purported to be symbolized. The LDP had paid lip-service to this reverence and continued to do so despite acquiescing to the port call of nuclear submarines and the Enterprise. Just one year earlier Prime Minister Satō had introduced the ‘three non-nuclear principles’ in an effort to solidify Japan’s anti-nuclear stance and appease the peace movement. Many lamented that the Japanese state had come to embody the ‘victim consciousness’ of the people, incorporating ‘shop worn’ words such as

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41 Iida Momo, ‘1968nen 1gatsu Sasebo,’ 102.
43 The ‘three non-nuclear principles’ were that Japan would not manufacture nuclear weapons; nor possess them; nor permit them to be brought into Japan by others.
peace and democracy into their political agenda, while maintaining support for the American war effort in Vietnam.  

The visit of the Enterprise brought this anomaly into sharp relief, not just in terms of Japan’s relations with Vietnam but also in relation to China. Writing for a special edition of *Shisō* printed in January 1968 and devoted to Japan’s relationship with China, Fukuda Kan’ichi indicated that the relationship between the two countries had been ‘based on a succession of misunderstandings since the Meiji era.’ ‘China, though close geographically and culturally,’ wrote Fukuda, ‘is a distant country politically and is now becoming a remote country to the Japanese psychologically.’ While Fukuda did not cite the importance of reflecting on Japan’s role of aggression in China, his analysis highlights the significant place of China within contemporary discourse on the nation and Japan’s international relations. Many indicated that the so-called ‘misunderstandings’ between the two countries could only have been exacerbated by the aggressive foreign policy stance that the Enterprise visit represented.

The reflections on Japan’s relations with Asia in 1968 saw a metamorphosis in the way that the nuclear bombings were considered. When the ideal of peace was thrust onto the national agenda and Hiroshima and Nagasaki where brought back into the limelight, they could no longer symbolize Japan as simply victim. While the Enterprise did re-emphasize the technological prowess of the United States and its military strength, on this occasion Japan was also implicated. Oda Makoto noted that the stress on ‘victim consciousness’ had disguised the role of Japan in

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45 Fukuda Kanichi, ‘Nihon ni totte Chōgoku to wa nani ka,’ *Shisō*, January 1968, 98.

war and as victimizer in Asia. With the visit to Sasebo many realized what Oda and Beheiren had been saying since 1965: that Japan was complicit in the war effort in Vietnam. In his 1968 article ‘The Ethics and Logic of Peace,’ Oda draws attention to the hypocrisy that had been exposed by the visit of the Enterprise, writing:

A realisation that we ourselves may have been in the past, could become in the future, or actually are at present, victimisers as well as victims is a prerequisite to effective denunciation of Allied hypocrisy … a victim may simultaneously be a victimiser.

ii. The people and the state

The second theme that was brought to the surface by the port call was the institution of the state and its relationship to ‘the people.’ As I pointed out in Chapter One, a central tenet of postwar thought was the distinction between a people who had been led into war and the deceptive, unaccountable state. The discussion above indicates that groups such as Shisō no Kagaku were encouraging ‘the people’ to take responsibility for the past rather than dwell on their ‘victim consciousness,’ but the episode at Sasebo gave further rise to the sense that a gulf existed between the state and the ideals of the nation.

Some referred to the episode at Sasebo as the politics of deception and political manipulation, during which deals were done behind closed doors rather than through open debates and persuasion. The government’s vagueness with regard to safety, its apparent ignorance as to whether the aircraft carrier was equipped with nuclear weapons, and its willingness to ‘trust’ the United States and accept ‘no comment’ on the problems raised, underpinned the accusations of underhand politics. It raised the issue not just of political deception but also of Japan’s loss of

47 Ōe Kenzaburō also discussed the changing way in which he had come to think about Hiroshima in relation to Japan’s wartime aggression in Asia in a series of articles for Sekai from 1963. These articles are re-printed in Hiroshima Notes, David Swain and Toshi Yonezawa (trans.), Marion Boyars, UK, 1988.

48 Oda Makoto, ‘Heiwa no rinri to ronri,’ 47.
sovereignty to the United States. Reports in the *Asahi* indicated that the deal with the US was ‘suspicious’ and suggested that the US could not be trusted to leave its nuclear weapons behind when visiting Japan.\(^49\) The government appeared to be orchestrating a relationship of colonial dependence with the US and thus sabotaging the aspirations of the people. The *Asahi Shimbun* concluded by warning: ‘If the government continues in this way, without being able to truly convince the people, while also deepening the color of a “partnership accompanied by responsibility” (a policy of President Johnson), it may eventually backfire in an undesirable way on the future of Japan-US relations.’\(^50\)

While these were prescient concerns the issues involved went deeper than simply highlighting government corruption and the unequal nature of the US-Japan relationship. The politics surrounding the visit appeared as a legacy of war; a reminder that the institution of the state had survived both defeat in 1945 and postwar reconstruction. Nagasu Kazuji lamented the implications of Sasebo, writing:

> What Sasebo drove home to me was the deep gap between the ‘official’ (the government or the state) and the ‘public’ (the people or civil society). At the very least it saw the breakdown of communication between the government and the people. Demonstrations were the people’s efforts to express their intention and fill this gap. But the gap was so deep that some resorted to violence.\(^51\)

The use of riot police against the protest movements in Sasebo further exacerbated the sense that the government had deceived the people. A ‘50-year old housewife’ quoted in the *Tokyo Shimbun* stated: ‘The government’s method of holding down the opposition movements by strong police force without conducting sufficient discussions reminds me of the dark authoritarian politics of

\(^{49}\) *Asahi Shimbun*, January 24.

\(^{50}\) *Asahi Shimbun*, January 24, 1968.

the pre-war days.’\textsuperscript{52} Even some that supported the port call and the security treaty with the United States, highlighted the gulf between government policy and ‘the people.’ One commentator wrote: ‘Politicians of government and opposition parties should sensitively read the feelings of distrust in politics that lurks in the minds of the average people, and they should reflect on their conduct.’\textsuperscript{53} The government was depicted as being out of step with the ideals of the nation and its people, out of synch with the spirit of postwar Japanese society. The visit of the Enterprise drove home the fact that the Japanese government was complicit in the unpopular war in Vietnam and prepared to prostitute Japan to the American military. In this regard the very notion of ‘rest and recreation,’ and the sight of women crowding the shoreline to welcome the American soldiers, was an embarrassing reminder of the government’s betrayal of the nation – the prostitution of Japan to the United States.

**The reaction of local residents**

Despite the government’s attempts to divest the visit of political significance in the days before the port call debates centred on how ‘the people’ would react to the impending visit. The way in which average citizens would respond to the national political issues came to the fore as the government, commentators, journalists and letters to the editor analyzed the significance of the massive aircraft carrier.\textsuperscript{54} Sasebo 1968 was a case in which the fabric of the postwar nation seemed to be held on the brink. It was a temporal and spatial location at which time and place - the past and present, and the villages of the nation - coalesced in an axis-of-definition, a ‘predestined time of choice and change.’

\textsuperscript{52} *Tokyo Shimbun*, January 29, 1968.

\textsuperscript{53} *Tokyo Shimbun*, January 24, 1968.

\textsuperscript{54} Ishida Takeshi reported that in January 1968, the month of the visit, 8,163 letters were sent to the *Asahi Shimbun*. This was four times the monthly average. 2,516 were concerned directly with the issue of the Enterprise. See Ishida Takeshi, ‘Emerging or Eclipsing Citizenship? – A Study of Changes in Political Attitudes in Postwar Japan,’ *The Developing Economies, Journal of the Institute of Asian Economic Affairs*, Vol. VI, No. 4, December 1968, pp. 410-424.
The articulation of a national imaginary, the writing of a nation’s identity, is widely understood as a retrospective endeavor – it is contingent upon recourse to a selective history and to selective amnesia; it commemorates events, people and ideas that are only later deemed significant. But at Sasebo participants were keenly aware that the national identity was being performed, and the actors in the drama were suddenly confronted by the immense significance of issues unfolding and the way in which they were being read.

Despite the apparent political consensus against the visit of the Enterprise opposition groups remained split throughout the five days of protest, unable to overcome their differences and establish even a degree of solidarity. Each of the opposition political parties laid claim to separate constituencies at demonstrations. At the height of the activities the DSP-Dōmei affiliated rally saw crowds of 10,000, Kōmeitō saw 20,000 while on January 18 the JCP-JSP demonstrations saw 50,000 people congregate on the shores of Sasebo.55 All of these groups claimed a small victory but it was the presence of the local residents and their apparent support for the students that elicited the greatest response from political leaders and the press.

As I noted earlier, much of the activity at Sasebo was initiated by student groups that had traveled from Tokyo and Osaka and established their headquarters in the dormitories of Kyūshū University in Fukuoka. On January 17, two days before the arrival of the black ship, or the Emperor as the students came to call it, students clad in ‘gewalt gear’ and armed with helmets and staves battled with riot police on Hirase Bridge, at the entrance to the Naval Base. The riot police had erected large barricades using barbed wire and confronted the students with high-pressure streams of water from nozzles mounted on the roofs of their armored vehicles. This was complemented by the canisters of tear gas which police launched at the students as they battled to dismantle the barricades and infiltrate the line of over

1000 riot police. The heavy-handed tactics of the police were apparently justified by the violence that beset the Haneda incidents of the previous year but with local citizens and national television audiences watching on, it was an approach that worked against them at Sasebo.\(^{56}\)

Usami Shō notes that a radical ‘change of attitude’ towards Zengakuren students emerged during the Hirase Bridge struggle. At 11.45am, with the police surrounding the students on all sides, the mood of the onlookers, and ultimately the press, apparently shifted. ‘The students were trapped like mice in a bag,’ writes Usami, ‘… the police kept raining blows on the students who, taken by surprise, were running around defenseless, but they kept beating the students until they fell unconscious and lay motionless on the ground.’\(^{57}\) Tussles also broke out in front of the hospital when police used gas grenades to fend off the attacks of students and, according to the press, lost control of the situation. The initial plan of the riot police to ‘establish control at a distance in order to avoid injury’ had been aborted in the Hirase Bridge struggle. On January 18 the National Public Safety Commission Chairman Akazawa was forced to hold a press conference to defend the actions of the police while also urging them to exercise more restraint in the confrontations at Sasebo.\(^{58}\) But the damage had been done. After the squabbles between the police and students, local residents were said to have emerged in support of the defeated students and gave generous donations to the protesting groups.\(^{59}\) And under these circumstances, with ‘the people’ and the students aligned, the use of police force was deemed almost un-Japanese.

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\(^{57}\) Usami Shō, ‘Zengakuren,’ *Japan Quarterly*, 235-236.

\(^{58}\) *Yomiuri Shimbun*, evening edition, January 18.

The clashes between the forces opposing the port call and the police guard presented an occasion to reconsider relations between politics and the will of the people. The wake left behind by the nuclear powered aircraft carrier is indeed deep.\textsuperscript{60}

The local residents and their reaction to the struggle between police and students became the filter though which the media reported on the incidents. Reports on January 23 betrayed the significance of their presence:

On the streets of Sasebo, head on clashes between students and police were repeated everyday, but an unprecedented affair occurred in the midst of such disturbances. It was average citizens’ participation. About 5000 citizens gathered near the bridge, the actual spot of collision between students and police.\textsuperscript{61}

As the sentiment of the village community became increasingly apparent over the course of the week, rifts began to appear amongst those that had supported the port call. Sasebo Mayor, Tsuji Ichizō, who had shown strong support and led a welcome party out to the aircraft carrier on January 17, changed his tune on the port call, and expressed his reluctance to accept further visits to the port. The newspapers soon began to prey upon the differences of opinion emerging within the LDP and the surfacing of the ‘Dove and Hawk Factions.’ Chief Cabinet Minister Kimura was unwilling to retract his acceptance of the visit but paid heed to the ‘sentiments of Sasebo citizens.’ ‘It is one of the obligations under the terms of the security treaty to approve the Enterprises port call,’ stated Kimura on January 22, ‘but viewed from the sentiment of the people the port call is not desirable.’\textsuperscript{62} Other members of the so-called ‘Dove faction’ indicated that dialogue between the government and the people had broken down and that they should in future educate the people rather than use ‘shock tactics’ like the Enterprise.

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Asahi Shimbun}, January 24, 1968.
\textsuperscript{61} \textit{Sankei Shimbun}, January 23.
\textsuperscript{62} \textit{Yomiuri Shimbun}, evening edition, January 23.
The reaction of the local residents, the people, clearly came as a shock to the government. It provided evidence of protest outside the existing opposition parties and organizations and while many remained hopeful that the people were still malleable to the conservative agenda the reaction indicated that they had clearly not been bought off by the decade of high speed economic growth and industrialization. How could the government have read the sentiment of the people so wrongly?

The A-powered aircraft carrier Enterprise is going to leave Sasebo on the morning of January 23, leaving in its wake strong ripples and a whirlwind. Not only Sasebo but the whole of Japan has been rocked over the last five days, and ugly scars have been left in the hearts of the Japanese people.\textsuperscript{63}

The reference to ‘the people’ and the fervor of the debates that took place in the nation’s newspapers reveals that village Japan was coming back onto the map of the nation. The sociology and politics of a small community was once again figuring in national debates. The role that it was set to play - its identity and ideals - was being hotly contested in the politics of protest. As the days rolled by the nature of the fracas and the government’s control over the agenda shifted significantly. The protests of students and the opposition parties were anticipated but all eyes were on the local residents to see how they would respond to the presence of the massive carrier in their port and the violence of student groups. In the wake of the visit Sasebo was not being linked to the Haneda incidents as the students might have wished, instead it was a protest representing the emerging frame of Japan’s community-based activism, and the identity of ‘the people.’

**The village of postwar Japan**

In January 1968 when the Black Ship came into port - when the ‘Emperor’ was taxied into the harbor of the small town - the enduring symbolic power of the village within wartime state discourses was being brought into contact with the

\textsuperscript{63} *Tokyo Shimbun*, January 23.
everyday of a living postwar village; an apparently stable History (an essentialised village identity) was being brought into contact with an unstable, evolving present.\textsuperscript{64} Through the episode at Sasebo and the politics surrounding its visit, the village, as the objectification of ‘the people,’ returned to the national agenda as the discursive space for a struggle over postwar ideals. The sight of the Enterprise encouraged reflection upon the tropes of the village past and, conversely, on its contemporary discursive space within the modern nation. In this sense the response of the village to the episode of January 1968 was a test case for postwar Japan; Sasebo 1968 was a site at which the kyōdōtai (village community or organic community) located itself in relation to postwar democratic ideals.

‘The people,’ as represented by the village community, or kyōdōtai, had an ambiguous history that had to be confronted in 1968. As Irokawa Daikichi points out, prewar and wartime villages of Japan sought to ‘stave off final destruction’ by embracing nōson kōsei undō (the village rebirth movement) and supporting emperor-centered fascism during the Pacific War.\textsuperscript{65} The village past was a community firmly ensconced in the Emperor System ideology and the agenda of war and imperialism. During the Pacific War it was deemed the embodiment of timeless traditions, an ‘object’ based upon the pre-given or constituted historical origin in the past; the ideal village underpinned a notion of identity that existed within an essential realm divorced from the ruptures of time. The idea that the kyōdōtai was refracted in the structure of the state – that the village was a consensual community representing the fabric of the nation and inherently malleable to the agenda of the wartime leaders - haunted village Japan throughout the postwar period.


Nevertheless, as noted by Dipesh Chakrabarty, within the ‘carnivalesque aspects of democracy’ - in political activism, rebellions or even sporting events - the nation is also ‘performed,’ and the people become the ‘subjects’ in a process of the nation’s articulation. At Sasebo, the people - the village - were in fact performing a national identity that displaced these prior conceptions of its nationalist imaginary. Elucidating the underlying ambivalence between the performance of nation and its essentialised identity Homi Bhabha writes:

[The people are] a complex rhetorical strategy of social reference; their claim to be representative provokes a crisis within the process of signification and discursive address … In the production of the nation as narration there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative.

While pedagogical nationalism is not completely displaced by the performative, its recourse to the people as the ‘objects’ of definition leaves it open to challenges from those same constituents operating as ‘subjects.’ Sasebo in 1968 provided a site at which to elucidate the ambiguity evinced here in the sense that the wartime representation of the kyōdōtai as the embodiment of an essentialised nation-state (primordial nationalism) was being partially displaced within a performative expression of identity. This is why the outpouring of sentiment concerning the nation’s ethics and identity, the ‘nuclear allergy’ and the aversion to the state, took on such prescience. The issues that coalesced around the visit of the Enterprise/Emperor/Black Ship elicited the power of ‘the people’ in both a rhetorical and performative sense. Shinohara Hajime draws attention to the liminal position of the village in 1968 by juxtaposing the authoritarianism of the government against the activism of the village. He writes:

The promotion of nation-state consciousness; enhancing defense consciousness; eradicating the nuclear allergy; the denial of an open constitution; toying with possession of nuclear weapons; and the use of riot police to enforce public peace and order. These are the authoritarian policies that the LDP continue to emphasize. Conversely we are passing through a phase where citizens are becoming lively. At Sasebo the crowds became citizens. At Natori the farmers have become citizens. At Nagasaki the workers have become citizens.68

The state was said to be operating in the same way that it had during the Pacific War; the visit of the Enterprise and the politics that surrounded it were indicative of the business as usual attitude. But, the village had been a pawn of the state during the war rather than an active player in opposition. Shinohara indicates that a new dimension had surfaced in the people/state relationship – the activism of the local community. After Sasebo the village offered the antidote to a deceptive state, the new direction for a rudderless nation. It was not a village steeped in ancient reified traditions or even a village that was being inscribed with meaning from outside activists, it was a village that had found its own voice within resistance. ‘Don’t link Sasebo with Vietnam,’ came the cry as local residents sought to extract the representation of their village from the politics of their nation’s political leaders.

**Defining the postwar village**

*i. Beheiren and citizens’ activism (shimin undō)*

The notion of citizens’ activism provided one of the important conceptual categories through which to understand the protests of Sasebo residents and a frame in which to characterise the postwar village. The political activism of Beheiren and other citizens’ rights groups was an important catalyst for protest in Japan. They garnered widespread support during the port visit and were elemental in determining the agenda of protest and ascribing significance to the events.

Beheiren founders encouraged ‘unaffiliated citizens’ to join them in their march and tried valiantly to nurture local activism. Beheiren and its championing of *shimin undō*, was a central player in the democratic activism at Sasebo, and their movement provided an important frame of reference through which to understand the activism of the local residents.

Soon after the protests at Sasebo a group of women from NHK, the national broadcaster, deterred by the violence and sexism of *Seineniinkai* started the Nagasaki chapter of Beheiren. Nagasaki resident and activist Yamashita Hirobumi noted that these groups broadened the base of Beheiren to include average citizens rather than simply writers and intellectuals. Likewise the *Nagasaki Shim bun* indicated that Nagasaki Beheiren was able to draw students into the realm of citizens’ activism. The local communities provided Beheiren with a catalyst for renewal and an important basis for political legitimacy.

The number of local Beheiren chapters trebled in the wake of the Enterprise visit linking autonomous communities, with distinct politics and agendas, behind the anti-war effort. A map of the Beheiren groups around the country published in *Beheiren Nyūsu* graphically illustrated the integration of village communities into a national protest movement – each dot on the map represented an independent Beheiren group integrated into an imagined community of resistance. Local citizens’ activism became the focal point at which a national community could be

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69 Yoshikawa notes that this approach was in direct contrast with Minsei who actually warned students to look out for unfamiliar faces infiltrating their group while in Sasebo. Yoshikawa Yūichi, *Shimin Undō no Mondai*, Shisō no Kagakusha, Tokyo, 1991, 107.


71 Asahi Jānaru, “‘Hansen shimin’, 27.


73 Discussing the individual names of American Soldiers inscribed on memorials in Washington DC Benedict Anderson describes how the inscription of each individual name emphasizes the place of the nation more than it does a specific individual. The massive wall of names allows for a sense of individuality but on stepping back from the wall the viewer is faced with a conglomerate of unidentifiable individuals – a national community. The map of disparate protest groups across the Japan works in a similar way. Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the World*, Verso, New York, 1998.
identified – united within the cultures of protest in which they sought to find a
voice and (re) establish their identity.

Oda Makoto and Yoshikawa Yūichi travelled down to Sasebo on January 21 and
staged a demonstration urging ‘unaffiliated citizens’ to join them in their march -
‘people who have nowhere else, let’s walk together and protest the Enterprise.’
It was a protest strategy that they used throughout the country, focusing on
encouraging locals to support the protesters’ agenda and challenge the policies of
the government. Beheiren sought to redefine the boundaries of activism, and
encourage the local community to participate in the politics of contemporary
Japan. Interviews carried out by Patricia Steinhoff revealed that the Sasebo
Beheiren, which was inaugurated during the Enterprise visit, was conceived by
police for lack of a better category for local activists. This pigeon-holing of the
activists is indicative of the serialization of unique, autonomous, local movements
within an existing frame of reference. It illustrates how local particularity was
codified within the framework of a standardized national category. Nevertheless it
also confirms the dynamism and diversity of Beheiren and its central place within
the cultures of protest that were emerging. In fact, Beheiren was uniquely placed
to both define and draw strength from the developments at Sasebo.

A second protest strategy employed by Beheiren was to target the American
soldiers on the aircraft carrier itself and appeal to their democratic ideals. As I
indicated in the previous chapter, Oda and Yoshikawa Yūichi went out on a small
boat and held up large banners urging the soldiers on board the Enterprise to
‘obey their constitution and follow the Intrepid Four.’ In his article ‘Objects and
Humans – Sasebo, January 1968,’ Oda points out that the Enterprise, despite its
awe inspiring size and technological capabilities, was not a mere ‘object’ running
on auto-pilot around the world. The Enterprise was a product of ‘humanity’ – it
depended on hundreds of individuals and their unqualified service for the state.

74 Yoshikawa Yūichi, Shimin Undō no Mondai, 107.
75 Oda Makoto, “Mono” to “ningen” – Sasebo 1968 nen Igatsu,’ (Sekai, March, 1968) Nanshi no
While the humanity that he was referring to in this case were US soldiers the message for the Japanese audience was clear – take responsibility, become agents of change and embrace democracy as part of your everyday existence as human beings. Thus the plea to American soldiers was directed as much at the Japanese protesters sitting on the shoreline.

In a political climate where the Pacific War and its remembrance had manifested itself so blatantly on the national agenda Oda’s challenge was ever more pertinent. While the key issues of other protest groups were nuclear weapons, Japan and war, and the issue of Japanese sovereignty, Beheiren’s activities stressed the importance of political agency and accepting responsibility for the past, present and future. The emphasis on the humanity implicit within the state-industrial complex (the Enterprise) highlighted the importance of finding a voice within contemporary politics. Beheiren was able to facilitate that voice.

Perhaps in part because Beheiren had wielded influence within journalism and academia in 1968, the local struggles that flared up all over Japan were depicted as evidence of shimin undō (citizen’s activism). In December 1968 Beheiren activist and critic Matsuda Michio defines the development of shimin undō in Japan around the broad axis of leisure time, spontaneity and individual strength. Matsuda depicted it as a new form of ‘communication’ that evinced a subjectivity based on the community rather than the proletariat. The same reading appears in Sekai’s discussion of opposition to the American Base in Fukuoka where, once again, the postwar kyodōtai was being considered within the guise of citizens’ activism.

Opposition movements have escalated into an extensive citywide and community wide struggle with the attitude of condemning the Security Treaty setup itself. Movements that transcend debates on how to reduce

the individual evils of the Bases have begun to take root in the citizens’ consciousness and actions.\textsuperscript{77}

Always conscious of past representations of the village, Shinohara highlighted the possibility that local self-governing associations (\textit{jichitai}) might simply re-emerge unchanged from their wartime manifestations, but he remained confident of a more fundamental shift in citizens’ consciousness.\textsuperscript{78} The Editor of \textit{Asahi Jānaru} aptly drew on the metaphor of a mother giving birth to a child in relating the significance and meaning of local activism:

\begin{quote}
It is said to be the “citizens’ season”, the “blooming of citizens’ activism” … Sasebo in January this year told of a new development – citizens’ activism. In the radiant shades of illumination we can decipher a new history tentatively coming forth, emerging into the light as in the final stages of labor.\textsuperscript{79}
\end{quote}

The local residents had stepped onto the stage of history as citizens, the agents of Japan’s modernity rather than simply the passive victims of the state. Writing in March 1968 Shinohara Hajime noted that citizens activism was ‘not yet in full bloom’ but it represented a new form of communication that distinguished Japanese movements from non-government activists in Europe.\textsuperscript{80} In this reading ‘citizens activism’ was not only unique to Japan but represented a shift away from the old alliances and subjectivities. It was the new face of Japanese democracy. This notion of a uniquely Japanese development and the related rhetorical strategy of ‘giving birth’ to a new consciousness provided a provocative basis from which to narrate Sasebo.

\textsuperscript{77} Sekai, ‘Sono ato no kichi hantai undō,’ \textit{Sekai}, September 1968, pp. 124-128

\textsuperscript{78} Shinohara Hajime, ‘Shimin undō no ronri to kōzō,’ 36.

\textsuperscript{79} Asahi Jānaru, ‘Shimin undō no takamari,’ (tokushū) \textit{Asahi Jānaru}, 17 March, 1968, 14.

\textsuperscript{80} Shinohara supports this argument by suggesting that, unlike in Japan, European non-government activism was contained within the student movement. Shinohara Hajime, ‘Shimin undō no ronri to kōzō,’
ii. Sasebo and residents’ activism (jūmin undō)

The protests at Sasebo saw a sense of optimism sweep the nation that ushered in new hope in Japan’s democratic promise. In addition to articles on the student movement at Sasebo and the ‘silent demonstrations’ of Sasebo residents, the March 17 edition of Asahi Jānaru launched a special issue on the ‘rise of citizens’ activism’ and ran stories on the local communities in Fuji City, Sendai, Setagaya and Nagasaki. The following week stories about the farmers of Sanrizuka and the city residents of Ōji were also featured. In the aftermath of Sasebo ’68 the focus turned to the local community, and the associated notion of ‘residents activism’ (jūmin undō) as a catalyst for protest and the site at which to express postwar democratic ideals.81

Local community-based protest had occurred in Japan earlier in the postwar period. The Uchinada protests (beginning 1953) over US artillery testing, and the Sunakawa disputes (1955) against the expansion of a US Base both represented cases of village-based activism. As in Sasebo, issues of local sovereignty and the people’s attachment to the locality and its history were seen to be under threat. One of the slogans emanating from Uchinada was: ‘Let us not lose the land where the graves of our ancestors are located.’82 It was only with Sasebo however that the local dimension of protest came into focus as the site for more enthusiastic conceptions of Japanese democracy and resistance.

In the wake of ‘Sasebo’ each month seemed to bring another local community onto the front pages of the national newspapers. Weekly and monthly publications devoted special issues to the phenomenon of local citizens protesting. The voice of the village suddenly hit the headlines and brought a new dimension, and a new efficacy, to the cultures of protest. In particular, protests that erupted at Sanrizuka

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with the planned building of the new international airport, and the protests surrounding the military hospital opened in Ōji, Tokyo, flared up in the first half of 1968 and became intimately tied to the protest against the Enterprise and the radicalism of the village community.

The Ōji struggle was sparked by the opening of a 400-bed hospital for American troops in a district of northern Tokyo. The opening of the facility highlighted the complicity of the Japanese government in the US war effort in Vietnam, brought into question the government’s jurisdiction over the US Bases in Japan, and riled the local community. From early March 1968 the anti-hospital protests of residents, citizens’ rights groups and student organizations engulfed the area around the base in an effort to stop the plans from proceeding. Residents expressed concerns about communicable diseases, and the noise of military vehicles and helicopters, in addition to the wider concerns about the Vietnam War and Japan’s role. Nevertheless, the specificity of the struggle at Ōji was superseded by its place within the wider dynamics of the village and protest.

Reporting on the upheaval on March 24 in Ōji the Asahi Jīnaru began an article titled ‘The Vietnam War has entered the heart of the city,’ by drawing the link between the developments at Ōji and the protests at Sasebo.\(^83\) By this stage it was not necessary to write ‘in Sasebo,’ ‘at Sasebo’, or ‘the protest of Sasebo’; explanation was unnecessary. It was simply ‘Sasebo ’68.’ Like in Sasebo the Vietnam War had infiltrated the community of Ōji and touched off the nerves of the local citizens.

An American military field hospital in the heart of Tokyo – with the escalation of the Vietnam War this is the plan that has been put forward. Students clash with police, blood is shed – “take your politics home,” cried out the citizens. Ōji on the evening of March 8 saw the reappearance of Sasebo Bridge, January 21.\(^84\)

\(^84\) Asahi Jīnaru, ‘Toshin ni haiitekita betonamu sensō,’ 20.
Over the course of 1968 local residents of Ōji participated in countless demonstrations calling out slogans such as ‘go home,’ ‘don’t cooperate in the Vietnam War,’ ‘if you abide by war go to Vietnam.’ Photographs of local residents holding placards and walking the streets appeared in countless newspapers and magazines and the protesters turned to their status as ‘locals,’ their attachment to place, as the ultimate source of political strength and legitimacy. The emergence of the Opposition Faction Housewives Committee (Hantai-ha Shufu no Shūkai) in Ōji is testament to the importance of village identity and the corresponding idea that the war in Vietnam was infiltrating the local and undermining the values of the local community. Photographs of an ‘apron demo’ on March 31, 1968 featuring 2 men among a group of apron clad women marching down the street with placards reading ‘American military don’t cheat the locals’ is testament to the local as a source of power. The placards were written in Japanese rather than English thereby posing a challenge to the policies of the national government rather than simply an expression of anti-American sentiment. In this regard the women’s role and their decision to wear an apron was instructive of the new political agenda within protest.

Wearing the uniform that was usually reserved for the private sphere symbolized two important new developments in the representation of political activism and village identity. First, it highlighted the threat to the domestic sphere, the inner sanctum of home, family and community that the military hospital represented. The Japanese government’s acquiescence to US demands threatened the smooth running of the home, and forced mothers and wives out of the kitchen. ‘Don’t link Sasebo with Vietnam.’ The slogan denoted the role that the Enterprise played in threatening the kyōdōtai (village community) of postwar Japan. It directly threatened the traditional domain of the wife and mother. Women were able to both define the nature and scope of village based activism while also drawing strength from the local community for subsequent feminist politics.

Second, the apron symbolized the politicization of women and the politicization of the local within national politics. The ‘apron demonstration’ and the inauguration of the Housewives Committee saw women incorporating notions of
sexual difference within their conceptions of citizenship and activism, making
claims upon a political identity bound within the subjectivity of motherhood and
domestic labour. On one level the sight of women in aprons restricts the
representation of women to the existing subjectivities of mother and servant, but it
also opened the way for women’s participation within the politics of protest.85
The women claimed localized political activism as a sphere in which they could
participate within the cultures of protest and national politics. In recourse to the
‘traditional representation’ of the apron, these women were able to situate
themselves as the ultimate representatives of the local protest movement; they
exercised their public responsibility as the self-defined representatives of the
private sphere which, in this case extended to the local community. It was not
simply a case of the government and military violating the sacrosanct family and
village, but a case of the village responding positively to the challenge and
articulating the identity of the village as an autonomous and active community.
The apron demonstration represented the politicization of the local community.

The power of the local is further exemplified by the activism of some feminist
groups in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Vera Mackie shows how women’s
groups at this time looked towards Asia as a way of defining their struggle and
how notions of gendered difference interacted with representations of ethnic and
cultural difference.86 The speaking position that these activists assumed within
international forums – the way in which these Japanese women located
themselves in their interaction with Asia is instructive. Feminist Kitazawa Yōko
writes:

I think there were many similarities between the styles of fighting of
women in Sanrizuka and liberation struggles in Asia and the Third World.
The Japanese Women’s Liberation Movement was stimulated by people

85 Marilyn Lake discusses the ambiguous relationship between citizenship and feminism. See,
Marilyn Lake, ‘Personality, individuality, nationality: feminist conceptions of citizenship 1902-

86 Vera Mackie, ‘Dialogue, distance and difference: feminism in contemporary Japan,’ Women’s
in the US, but it was not a simple import. From a woman’s point of view, there were many similarities between Japan and the third world.  

Here Kitazawa draws attention to activism at Sanrizuka where women were playing an active role in protesting the building the new Narita international airport that had been slated for the area in late 1965. In this case women from the student movement and those from the local community joined forces in 1968 and fought together to stop the government plans for the facility. The key point here is that feminists such as Kitazawa Yōko were able to use the local struggle – residents’ activism - as a basis from which to forge alliances with women’s groups throughout Asia. Thus, through the re-conceptualization of the local community women found a strong position from which to speak, not just as women, but as citizens in a national community and an international movement. Local protest groups were able to circumvent the institution of the nation-state, as well as the male-dominated student and citizens’ rights movements, and negotiate directly with their Asian neighbours. The feminist groups discussed by Mackie had established a symbiotic relationship to the local community – drawing strength from and at the same time characterizing the local community within the ideals of activism.

Was this about the emergence of a ‘democratic citizenry’ in the sense laid down in Western historicism? Was Japan taking another step along the path towards modernity inscribed within a Western universal? The sight of local people (the premodern, essentialised village) on the streets saw the notion of ‘modern’ defined as a product of Western universalism temporarily displaced. The synonymous relationship between Modernity and the West elicited notions of


88 The struggle at Sanrizuka has continued to play out the politics of village based politics ever since. Apta and Sawa write: ‘the movement accumulated such a variety of principles that it appeared to be a fault line for all forms of citizen protest; indeed something volcanic; it was a place where all other cleavages joined to form a concrete disjunctive force in the community.’ See
uneven development, democratization and modernity as a universal historical
development. As noted earlier, the presence of local residents on the streets for
some commentators heralded the emergence of a democratic citizenry and the
coming of age for democracy in Japan. This was a reading that posited Japan
behind Europe on the road to realizing modernity – a reading bound within
western historicism. It could also be read however as the encroaching of tradition
into the domain of the modern, or more accurately the displacement of the binary
oppositions, Japan/tradition and West/modern. What seemed traditional in this
show of modernity (the resistance of the local people, the village) was traditional
only in so far as it was deemed to have been indigenous, but it was by no means
archaic in the sense of being outmoded.

Within the performance of nation, in the carnival of democracy, a space was
emerging in which representations of the nation within the pedagogic frame of
reference (the village) – in a frame of reference that had been deemed a pre-
modern, undemocratic, peasant based community – was being replaced by one
that could be deemed modern. The pedagogy of Japanese nationalism (tradition)
was being recast as its binary opposite, a democratic and autonomous local
community, thus the village came back onto the map of the nation as a basis for
political activism and vague notions of a Japanese democracy.

The articulation of this re-located modernity (non-Western modernity) was no
more apparent than in the changing terminology over the course of the 1970s as
the notion of shimin shakai became increasingly dependent upon the politically
charged category of jūmin, or local. As I have already noted it was the
representation of the local community that provided efficacy and strength to the
movements. The term jūmin provided for a stronger distinction between the local
residents and their plight, and the agenda of political organizations. During the
Sanrizuka struggle in particular the alliance between the local farmers and outside
protestors became so strained as to make the distinction crucial. Local farmers
wanted to distinguish themselves from the violence of student groups and carefully locate their struggle in the local rice paddies of their homeland – ‘jūmin’ was more evocative of their political agenda. But more importantly it hints towards the shift away from a conceptualisation of modern Japan that took Western notions of citizenship as its point of reference.

The emergence of local movements in contemporary politics paved the way for the historical mission of the minshūshi (people’s history) scholars. Minshūshi appeared in the late 1960s as a school of history in which the people become the subjects rather than the objects of political authority.89 Scholars such as Irokawa Daikichi and Kano Masanao searched the past for models of political behavior that could provide a guide to the present, for ‘a potential source of energy to revitalize a debilitated modern Japanese culture.’90 In an important sense it was a development that eschewed the civil society ideals that were espoused within the modernist democratic ideals of Maruyama Masao and some Beheiren members. Citizens’ rights activists came under attack within the search for indigenous expressions of democratic activism.91 Minshūshi scholars looked instead towards purely indigenous conceptions of political activism. Like the women’s movements discussed earlier, minshūshi scholars stressed the local community as an agent of political change and protest rather than a passive victim of the state’s political discourses. Irokawa and others liken movements of the 1960s to the ‘leveling festival’, or world renewal festival (yonaoshi matsuri), of the 1860s in which villages would rectify inequality by rising up against inept leaders or

81 For example Irokawa Daikichi writes that Maruyama ‘failed to grasp the genuine historical dynamism that is so much a part of the community.’ See Irokawa Daikichi, ‘The Survival Struggle of the Japanese Community’, 254-55.
wealthy landowners.\(^92\) This kind of historiography was intimately tied to the political struggle at Sasebo and the emergence of the local community on the map of the nation.

In 1971 Shinohara Hajime drew attention to the great hope that was placed in local politics and residents’ movements during the late 1960s. ‘When I find headlines such as “Birth of a reformist community head,” [in the newspapers] I cannot but feel as if I have found a faint breath of air in a suffocating age.’ Shinohara points to the increasing prominence of local elections, the increase in voter turn out and the success of reformist mayors at the local level, as signs of a new vibrancy in Japanese politics and an effective challenge to the government. ‘Is it not possible,’ asks Shinohara, ‘to think about [local self-governing bodies] in the context of changes in the people’s way of thinking, feeling and appraisal - in the context of a cultural metamorphosis?’\(^93\) By 1970 local politics offered a sphere in which to engage in politics that was not tainted by the pragmatism of the nation-state; it was a sphere in which local residents – the people – came to express their ideals outside the parliamentary apparatus. Citing a publication on local political activism Shinohara writes:

“‘A self governing body (Jichitai) must be strengthened as ‘local government’ (chihō seiju) in order to make decentralization effective and increase the people’s control over national politics.” It may sound exaggerated but we can safely say that conditions for restructuring politics ‘from below’ are beginning to appear as late as 100 years after Meiji.’\(^94\)

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\(^{93}\) Shinohara Hajime, ‘Bunka henyō to chihō seiji no kadai,’ 39.

\(^{94}\) Shinohara Hajime, ‘Bunka henyō to chihō seiji no kadai,’ 42. Quote in Editor, ‘Atarashii Jūmin jichi no sōzō e,’ November 1970.
The re-emphasis on the local implicit within the term *jūmin undō* (residents’ movements) clarifies the centrality of community to political activism after Sasebo. Sasebo was not the first community-based protest of the postwar period but it was certainly the most politically charged and brought the village into the realm of national politics. Many other more enduring local struggles proliferated and gathered strength on the back of the activism and political ideals evinced in Sasebo. Through these protests the image of the village was manipulated as an agent through which to change, define and protect the ideals of postwar Japan. Don’t link Sasebo with Vietnam; don’t link Ōji with Vietnam; don’t link Sanrizuka with Vietnam; don’t link village Japan with the tyranny of war (again). What emerges through this struggle is a nation founded upon activism and protest; an imagined community of villages that, despite the specificity of the struggles and differences in issues and tactics, are intimately connected to one another. The dynamics of protest and resistance, and the people’s challenge to a government that had failed to eschew war despite the lessons of history, denoted the rescue of village Japan and brought it back into the fracas of politics as an autonomous community. The performance of a village identity disrupted the pedagogy of its essentialised identity.

**Conclusion**

Students heading down to Sasebo for the demonstrations against the visit of the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Enterprise were, in an important sense, heading back in time. Their journey along the Tōkaidō Line of Japan Rail (JR) saw them travel not only across the countryside of the nation but back to a Japan that had been hurriedly disguised by the scaffolding of rapid economic growth and industrialization. The village represented an institution of the past; an enduring symbol of a different era. Drawing on this village (past)/city (present) dichotomy, the early 1970s Japan Rail campaign characterized travel out of Tokyo as a nostalgic return to a vanishing past. Their advertisements appealed to the nostalgic desires of people working in the big cities of Japan and offered them
respite from the pressures of modernity; travelling out of Tokyo on Japan Rail was akin to visiting ancient Japan.\textsuperscript{95} The newspapers in January 1968 seemed to support this reading of the students’ journey, labouring the fact that the lives of the local residents in a conservative Japanese community would be disrupted by the youth of modern Japan. The protesters were travelling back to a village community that in many ways replicated the villages of their childhoods, or at least that of their parents. It was in this sense that the protesters were travelling back in time, departing the metropolis and re-entering a Japan of the past.

Despite the apparent congruence in the temporal and spatial journeys there remains an underlying disparity between the students’ journey to Sasebo and the Japan Rail campaigns. They both offer vastly different, even contradictory readings, of the village (past) in postwar Japan. As David Lowenthal points out, the past is intimately attached to the politics of the present, it is a sphere of contested values and meanings. ‘The past is a foreign country,’ he writes, ‘whose features are shaped by today’s predilections, its strangeness domesticated by our own preservation of its vestiges.’ \textsuperscript{96} The preservation of the past/past places/ancient cultures in the JR campaign was, on this reading, a nostalgic appeal to a pre-modern past in the face of a modernizing present. By contrast the students’ journey to Sasebo represented far more than simply the return to a reified past. Returning to the village of their childhood denoted returning to a village that was mired in the wartime ideology of a fascist state. Thus, with the Enterprise moored at Sasebo the Pacific War became a strong point of reference in debates and so too did the sociology, the pedagogy, of the village community.

In this sense the journey to the west could not have been simply a ‘nostalgic’ journey into an unchanging cultural landscape; it was a journey to contest and

\textsuperscript{95} As Marilyn Ivy points out the Discover Japan campaign ‘was the first highly visible mass campaign urging Japanese to discover what remained of the pre-modern past in the midst of its loss.’ Marilyn Ivy, \textit{Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan}, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1995, 34.

\textsuperscript{96} David Lowenthal, \textit{The Past is a Foreign Country}, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1985, xvii.
Determine the symbols of an ancient village within the politics of the present. The journey back to Sasebo was certainly not a return to a vestige of antiquity, to a preserved and de-politicized ancient village. Protestors were in fact mining the past (Sasebo) for new political values and ideals, bringing that past to life within the present. The demonstrators sought to retrieve the past(s) that the village represented and define it according to the politics of modern Japan. But, with the presence of the aircraft carrier in port, there was a further sense of uncertainty and urgency confronting the protesters as they journeyed back to the village – not only was the kyōdōtai mired in the emperor system ideology of wartime Japan, but the postwar village also seemed to have succumbed to state-centred authoritarianism. In fact, home to the military port and the United States’ Base, Sasebo had already been scarred by the rupture of war and its legacy.

Demonstrators seemed keenly aware of rescuing the village when they embarked on their journey to Sasebo. Past, present and future became intimately entangled as the protestors contested the meaning and significance of the village in the context of postwar Japan. The presence of the aircraft carrier and the American Base at Sasebo made this task all the more crucial – it was not simply about defining village Japan but actually retrieving it from a Japanese state that was colluding with the United States military. The village (the past) was still very much alive in 1968 and ripe for new imaginings of meaning, and yearning to shed the shackles of past identities.

Through the protests at Sasebo the identity of village Japan came back onto the map of the nation, not as a relic of ancient Japan, but as a living history to be inscribed with the values of Japan in the postwar world. Notions of a ‘nuclear allergy,’ political manipulation, and the apparent complicity of Japan in war, graphically illustrated what was at stake during the Sasebo demonstrations. With the local residents emerging onto the streets the nation – modern Japan – as an entity that was intimately connected to protest, autonomy and democracy was reshaped and reconfigured as a truly postwar nation; at Sasebo in January 1968 local movements became synonymous with both democracy and the nation.