‘Ancient Japan’ in a right-wing publication: The utilization of the Jōmon period for nationalistic purposes

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Abstract

One look at ancient history sections in bookstores shows that there is quite a lot of mass publications deal-ing with ancient history and the founding of the Japanese nation. One popular era is the Jōmon period (ca. 13.000 BCE－300 BCE), and interest in this prehistoric time has been booming for years now, with visi-tors flocking to archaeological museums and Jōmon artefacts being commercialized into goods such as stickers, stationery, and more. This “boom” also coincides with the late Abe Shinzo’s nationalist-conservative political agenda and populism since 2012. It is, therefore, of great interest to see how a pre-historic time period is currently utilized in popular discourse. Using qualitative content analysis, this paper examines one publication targeting the conservative public, *Jinmu-tennō izen* by Miyazaki Masahiro (2019), that utilizes Jōmon (and the eponymous Jinmu). I argue that the author uses the image of “ancient Japan” as a rhetoric tool to strengthen a Japanese identity which aligns with an ultra-nationalist Japanese perspective.

Keyword

Historical revisionism, Jōmon period, ancient Japan, nationalist discourse, conservative populism

「古代日本」右派系出版物における言説

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要旨

書店の古代史コーナーに目を向けると，日本の古代史や建国に関する大衆向け出版物が数多く存在することが確認できる。特に人気のある時代の一つに縄文時代（紀元前約13,000年～紀元前300年）があり，近年ではこの先史時代への関心が高まりを見せている。考古学博物館への訪問者数が増加し，縄文時代の遺物がステッカーや文房具などの商品として商業化されている現状が，その証左である。これらの「ブーム」は，2012年以降の安倍晋三元首相による国家主義的・保守的な政治路線やポピュリズムと時を同じくしている。このような背景を踏まえ，先史時代が現代の一般的な言説においてどのように利用されているかを検証することは，重要な意義を持つ。本稿では，保守層を対象とした宮崎正弘の著作『神武天皇以前』（2019年）を取り上げ，縄文時代がどのように言説化されているかについて，質的内容分析を用いて考察する。筆者は，これらのテーマが，日本の極端な国家主義的視点に基づく日本人アイデンティティを強化するための修辞

的手段および象徴として機能していることを論じる。

キーワード
日本歴史修正主義，縄文時代，古代日本，右派ディスクール

Introduction

“The Japanese essence originated in the Jōmon era.”

This statement is printed prominently on the dustjacket of Miyazaki Masahiro’s “Before Jinmu-tennō” (*Jinmu-tennō ‘izen’*, 2019). The publication promises to deal with two popular topics: Japan’s alleged first emperor Jinmu, and the Jōmon era. And while the title promises Jinmu-tennō, a look at the cover and the table of contents makes it clear that the focus of this book is on the prehistoric Jōmon period – which is, according to Miyazaki, the time “before” Jinmu.

Jinmu, the mythological founder and first emperor of Japan, and the prehistoric Jōmon period – why are they combined in this publication and what is the Jōmon period in particular used for? Miyazaki claims that the "prototype of the Tennō system emerged in the middle of the Jōmon period," i.e. “before” Jinmu. To support this thesis, the author points out the many advantages and positive traits he attributes to the prehistoric Jōmon period and muses what this means for today’s Japanese society. His message is clear: The origins of “Japan” and the “Japanese people” lie much farther in the past than most academics currently acknowledge. But who is Miyazaki Masahiro? And why does he use the Jōmon period for this argument?

The book’s dust jacket text and his homepage tell us more about the author. Born in 1946, he is described as a “critic” (*hyōronka*) and Waseda University dropout. He has worked as the editor-in-chief of the (right-wing) *Japanese Students’ Newspaper* (Nippon Gakusei Shimbun), the head of the planning department of a short-lived magazine called *Rōman*, and as the manager of his self-founded trading company. Miyazaki’s first publication in 1982 dealt with American and Soviet policies and their (possible) impact on the Japanese economy. Ever since, he has been writing on various topics such as international economics and politics, China, and Japan’s history, authoring and co-authoring sometimes up to ten books per year.

Judging from the titles and blurbs alone – “China and Korea are hated by the world. Japan is appreciated” (2014), “The origins of conservatism: ‘Conservatism’ will save Japan” (2015), or “The decline of the United States and the expansion of China: Japan's long absence” (2018) – his publications lie squarely in the right-wing political point of view. Additionally, he publishes in conservative journals such as *WiLL* or *Seiron*. Miyazaki himself also names well-known right-wing activists such as the late Kase Hideaki (Nippon Kaigi), Seki Hei (Society for the Dissemination of Historical Fact), the authors Nishibe Susumu and Nishio Kanji, and the late Ishihara Shintaro (ultra-nationalist and former Tokyo governor) as friends and acquaintances and has appeared in programs such as Sakurai Yoshiko’s Sakura Channel. It is, therefore, safe to say that this author’s publications will most likely show a distinct

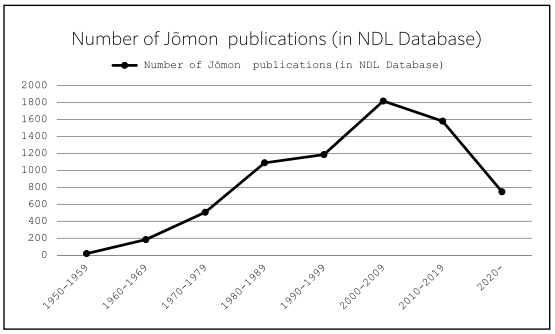
right-wing positioning. I do not in any way share Miyazaki's views. Instead, in this paper I analyze his publication from a critical standpoint and aim to point out flaws in his argumentation.

Both the titular Jinmu and the Jōmon period have become more and more popular topics in the past decades: mythology and ancient history are booming in Japan.

The use of Jinmu-tennō for right-wing purposes is nothing new. Japan's alleged first emperor was the figurehead of imperial Japan's ideology up until 1945. Utilizing the nation-founding myth as an allegory, Japan's militaristic regime justified their expansionism. And while this background might not be known to the average Japanese person nowadays, Jinmu is still prevalent in (very) conservative discourse. Thus, Jinmu–and the imperial house in general –is directly connected to very conservative positioning since the 19th century.

Just like Jinmu, the prehistoric Jōmon time (ca. 11,000 BCE to 300 BCE) is a popular topic. Interest in archaeology has risen steeply since 1945, and due to new excavations in the 1990s, especially the Jōmon period is a favorite in academic as well as popular discourse.

This rise in popularity is also visible in the number of publications dealing with the Jomon period (Graph 1). An NDL database search, using "Jōmon period" (縄文時代, *jōmon-jidai*) as a keyword, shows that while Jōmon-focused publications were very low in the 1950s, their numbers started to rise rapidly from the 1960s and peaked in the early 2000s. Publication numbers have fallen since then, but are still very noticeable, considering that there have been more than 700 publications in the past five years (from 2000 to 2024) alone.



Graph 1 Number of Jōmon publications (in NDL Database)

Hence, Jinmu and Jōmon are both old hats in (nationalistic) discourse and identity construction. It is, however, interesting to see how these two themes are being used nowadays. For the sake of clarity, this paper focuses on the more prominent of these two topics in Miyazaki's publication: The Jōmon period. In the following, I examine *Jinmu-tennō 'izen'* and aim to answer the question of how Miyazaki as an exemplary right-wing writer uses the Jōmon period for his agenda, and what kind of identity he creates with this utilization. His work serves as a case study of ab right-wing publication and prominent example of the late 2010s in this popular semi-academic discourse. I argue that the Jōmon period is a tool for shaping a distinct Japanese "essence" and identity that aligns with nationalist goals, especially the formation of a distinct self-assertion strategy.

I understand self-assertion as the "assertion or recovery of one's own identity" (Amelung et al. 2003a). Such strategies aim to (re), gain stronger influence for values and views assigned to the collective in question. One direction such self-assertion can aim at is the shaping of a national identity. A prominent example of Japanese self-assertion discourse is *nihonjinron* ("theories about Japanese"), which attempt to define a distinctive Japanese identity by emphasizing alleged Japanese particularities. In the aforementioned quote of Miyazaki, too, an

emphasis on identity construction is obvious; after all, his assertion about a Japanese essence and its origins seem to define Japanese identity.

Highlighting (alleged) Japanese particularities constitutes one of the main components of self-assertion discourses in Japan. This particularity is approached and illuminated from different angles depending on the discourse participants. Frequently used in the discourse are, for example, the Japanese language, aspects of Japanese history, or the Japanese character (Befu 2001). This emphasis of alleged particularities goes hand in hand with a differentiation from other countries, the so-called *Othering*: Japanese particularity needs the contrast to the Other to actually be a particularity. Only in drawing a clear differentiation from others, a (national) identity can be constructed (Yoshino 2000).

The Jōmon period is used as a prime example of a Japanese particularity frequently, which clearly links it to national identity and self-assertion. With this paper, I analyze how Miyazaki instrumentalizes the Jomon period and what kind of collective image of "Japan" and the "Japanese" is shaped with them. In the following, I first outline my theoretical framework and introduce concepts relevant to my study. Consequently, I move on to my analysis of Miyazaki's work before discussing my results in a conclusion.

Nationalism and self-assertion strategies

Nationalism, and the usage of ancient times for nationalist purposes, is by no means a singularly Japanese phenomenon, but can be observed worldwide.

The concept of "nationalism" is far too broad to be fully addressed in this paper. Of particular relevance to my research are studies that focus on Japanese nationalism. Brian McVeigh (2004) highlights that nationalism in and related to Japan operates on multiple levels, permeating everyday, seemingly mundane aspects of life, a phenomenon called *banal nationalism* by Michel Billig (1995/2010). Kevin Doak (2007) offers a thorough analysis of the historical development of nationalism in modern Japan. In the realm of cultural nationalism, foundational contributions from Harumi Befu (1993, 2001), Yoshino Kōsaku (2000), and Ōguma Eiji (2002) explore the core principles, key arguments, and evolution of *nihonjinron* as a form of self-assertion. From a political perspective, Nakano Kōichi (2016) examines the rise of nationalist sentiment in Japanese politics, identifying a shift to the right, while Sven Saaler (2016) concentrates on issues of historical revisionism. The study of Japanese nationalism remains a dynamic field of inquiry. Recent research, such as the ongoing series *The Online Ecosystem of the Japanese Far Right*, edited by Fabian Schäfer (2024) and published by *Japan Focus*, exemplifies this continued scholarly interest. Japanese-language scholarship also provides valuable insights, including Tsujita Masanori's (2023) analysis of patriotism and mythology in modern Japan, as well as the work of Shinto scholar Hirafuji Kikuko (2023), who investigates the role of Shinto and mythology in contemporary Japanese society.

The connection of archaeology and identity construction has been discussed by (mainly) archaeologists, in the case of Japan especially prominently in the 1990s and 2000s. Gina Barnes (1990) discusses how the concept of 'prehistory' has been used differently in Japan in prewar and postwar times, while Ricnard Pearson (1992) points out that archaeology in Japan is "high-tech, high-profile, big business and big budget"

(115) and that this relates to archaeology's utilization for identity construction. Walter Edwards (1991) shows more specifically how the Yayoi-period archaeological site of Toro impacted postwar identity construction in Japan. Another good example is Philipp Kohl/Clare Fawcett's *Nationalism, Politics, and the Practice of Archaeology* (2000), especially Fawcett's chapter on Nationalism and postwar Japanese archaeology. The anthropologist Fumiko Ikawa-Smith (1999) contrasts archaeology in Japan, China, Vietnam, and Korea, and demonstrates that in the East Asian context, one of archaeology's most prominent uses is identity construction. Junko Habu and Clare Fawcett (1999) explicate how findings from the Jōmon period have influenced Japanese identity construction.

All in all, the state of research on nationalism and self-assertion discourses is good. Similarly, there is ample scholarship on Japanese archaeology and, more specifically, the utilization of archaeology for identity construction in the Japanese context. However, just as the number of publications focusing on the Jōmon period waned after the early 2000s, the academic discourse on this topic is mainly from the 1990s and therefore quite old. Additionally, there is little to no research focusing on the usage of the Jōmon period in contemporary nationalist discourse. With this article, I therefore aim to partially close this lacuna by pointing out how Miyazaki uses the Jōmon period to construct a distinctly Japanese identity. For this, it is necessary for me to first explain how a prehistoric time period became a means for identity construction in Japan.

The relationship between the Jōmon period and national identity construction

The Jōmon period received its name in the late 19th century from Edward Morse, a zoologist at Tokyo University who excavated shell mounds in Tokyo and named the time after the cord-marked (*jōmon*) pottery found in the mounds. However, prewar archaeology mainly focused on assigning findings to ethnic groups who might have produced them; in this mindset, Jōmon period findings, perceived as too primitive to be "Japanese", were largely assigned to the Ainu (Brownlee 1997). With the strengthening of imperial ideology, archaeological research was mostly limited to excavating and typological classification until the end of the Asia-Pacific War to avoid clashing with the official view on history, i.e., the Japanese heavenly origins (Fawcett 1995). This imperialist ideology was discredited after Japan's defeat, which impacted the Japanese self-perception and self-definition greatly: New answers were needed for the Japanese origin narrative, and archaeological findings offered some. In the early postwar time, it was first the Yayoi period, when the excavation of Toro in Shizuoka between 1947 and 1950 piqued a media (and consequently popular) interest and contributed to a new national identity of a "cultural Japan" (Edwards 1991; Fawcett 1995). The depiction of Yayoi people as "Japanese" enabled the "agrarian myth" pictured the Japanese as (peaceful) rice-farmers since earliest times, which also played into the "myth of homogeneity" (Oguma 2002). The revival and growth of Japanese industry and infrastructure led to many accidental site discoveries by construction crews in the late 1950s and 1960s. This, paired with the emergence of *nihonjinron* as well as a strong

public interest in archaeology in the 1970s lead to archaeological findings becoming a pillar of identity construction in Japan.

The Jōmon period, on the other hand, was still considered uncivilized and irrelevant for a "Japanese" essence until archaeological breakthroughs in the 1990s showed that Jōmon settlements and people were far more complex than previously thought (Habu/Fawcett 1999). Excavations at the Sannai-Maruyama site in Aomori prefecture unearthed an until then unknown complexity of the Jōmon culture, which was widely discussed in science and the media. The Jōmon people's image changed from primitive to possible Japanese ancestors, and Aomori claimed the site for their regional identity and as a tourist attraction (Habu/Fawcett 1999; Mizoguchi 2006). Sannai-Maruyama was the first of several Jōmon sites provoking the public interest, which led to a "Jōmon boom" in the 1990s and early 2000s (as evidenced by Graph 1). Ever since, publications arguing that Jōmon people were the ancestors of today's Japanese have been on the rise, debating whether Jōmon people were displaced by Yayoi people or merged peacefully (Kreiner 2010). From the beginning of its rising popularity in the 1990s, the Jōmon period was also a welcome topic in right-wing discourse. Nishio Kanji's highly conservative *Kokumin no rekishi* (1999), for instance, claims this time to be the world's oldest civilization and proof of Japan's "unique culture" (*dokuji no bunka*) – pointing straight to the Jōmon period being a crucial part of Japanese identity.

But what is identity, exactly? For the purposes of this paper, I adopt the social science definition of identity as a "subjective self-definition associated with membership in a social group" (Straußß, 2019). Central to this concept is the formation of a collective identity, which is achieved by highlighting shared characteristics as a unifying foundation. Origin narratives serve as a powerful means of establishing this common ground, thereby facilitating the construction and reinforcement of collective identity.

As a commonality, such a narrative can ensure the alleged homogeneity of a people and thus contribute to national identity. This has happened in Japan's nationalist discourse since the postwar period, as Ōguma (2002) has pointed out. Japan with its founding myth and its utilization of ancient history for identity construction does not stand alone in the world. In East Asia alone, (South) Korea similarly employs a founding narrative that emphasizes ethnic homogeneity as well; their mythological date of nation-founding through Tangun allegedly even predates the founding of Japan through Jinmu (Pai 1994). Similarly, both Koreas have employed archaeology to construct their respective nation and to provide a sense of community and nationalist pride to their respective people (Kim 2008). And in the decidedly multi-ethnic People's Republic of China, myths of origin and descent based on the mythical, but highly historicized "Yellow Emperor" are used to propagate an alleged Chinese claim of "ethnic homogeneity" through common ancestry. At the same time, prehistoric findings are used to argue for China's culture being older than generally estimated and for a genesis of the Chinese race separate from the commonly viewed genesis of humanity in Africa (Sautman 1997).

The shaping of a shared understanding of history therefore represents a possible cornerstone of collective identity formation. Particularly nationalist groups tend to use historical narratives to strengthen their self-

image and to assert themselves against the outside world (Smith 2009). Discourses around the origin of a nation can be and are used to reinforce the legitimacy of a nation and its claims to be (Saaler 2016). In Japan's origin discourse, the Jōmon period with its some of the oldest pottery in the world can be used to emphasize a unique role of Japan in early times (Befu 2001). Such representation of a prehistoric period as culturally particularly outstanding and highly developed clearly shows the nationalistic narrative of "striving for the oldest" (Saaler 2005), which is similarly emphasized by China and the Koreas via the Yellow Emperor- and the Tangun-discourses, respectively. Emphasizing the Jōmon period also allows for the por-trayal of an alleged original Japan without foreign influences in the sense of a *nostalgic nationalism* (McVeigh 2004). Finally, by anchoring the Japanese origin in the distant past, the "myth of ethnic homogeneity" can be discursively emphasized (Oguma 2002). The discourse regarding Japan's origin thus offers the possibility of emphasizing a Japanese particularity – in this case, based on the past.

Emphasizing particularities is a favored rhetoric in nationalistic discourses, a part of it being Historical Revisionist discourse, which deals with a reassessment of history. While such a "revision" of history happens worldwide, e.g., due to newly emerging evidence or the reinterpretation of historical artifacts, Japanese Historical Revisionism differs from the usual in that it is a "highly politicized version of historiography that subordinates scientific method – however defined – to the achievement of political aims" (Saaler 2005: 23).

Historical Revisionists aim to reevaluate and rewrite commonly accepted historical facts regarding the Asia-Pacific War (and its treatment in history books). Contemporary Japanese Historical Revisionism flared up in response to the "comfort women" debate and ensuing textbook affair in the 1990s. Its proponents criticize the "masochistic view of history" allegedly prevalent in Japan because of the Tokyo Trials and call for an approach to history through which Japanese can once again develop pride in their country, i.e., a stronger national identity through "healthy nationalism" (Saaler 2005; Richter 2011). To achieve this, they aim to revise Japanese actions in the Asia-Pacific War and attempt to cast the war in a more positive light. Such aspirations are based, among other things, on a sense of unfair treatment or overly strong criticism of Japan and show a "[…] narcissistic, less than rational, [desire for self-affirmation]" (Iida 2002). Japanese Historical Revisionism has increased strongly in recent decades. It is far from marginal in politics and the media, as evidenced not least by the fact that former Prime Minister Abe Shinzō and many other politicians are also actively involved in Historical Revisionist movements (Saaler 2016; Yang 2008). The (re-) development of national pride is what connects nationalistic discourse back to the Jōmon period: Emphasizing alleged particularities and employing rhetoric means such as "striving for the oldest" narratives plays right into the Historical Revisionist aims to shape the public's understanding of Japan's history.

In the following, I demonstrate how Miyazaki Masahiro as a right-wing writer employs the Jōmon period for his own agenda and discuss his arguments.

Analysis

Miyazaki's publication abounds with

statements that relate to a construction of a Japanese iden-tity. Consequently, I analyze how these statements relate to nationalist discourse.

(1) Emphasizing Jōmon origins

Miyazaki already writes in his introduction, "The Japanese essence has its roots in the spirit of the Jōmon people" (11). He also claims that this era is remarkable in Japanese history, and that according to recent ceramic finds Jōmon artistry was by far superior to the cave paintings in France and Spain of the same time. This "unique culture," as Miyazaki repeatedly calls it (*dokuji no bunka*), not only produced remarkable artworks with a distinctly Japanese aesthetic but is even older than previously assumed, thus leading him to argue that the Japanese culture developed separately from China and Korea. He underlines this with the statement that, since Korean pottery finds are much younger than Japanese ones, Jōmon-period pottery must have developed without outside influence. This matches his claim that the Jōmon civilization was unique due to its isolated location at the eastern end of Eurasia.

With this, Miyazaki clearly distinguishes the Jōmon culture (and thus Japanese culture as a whole) from foreign countries: The distinctiveness and age of Japanese ceramics serves here to emphasize a primordial Japanese essence, while providing a chance to solidly contrast Japan and foreign countries, especially Korea, at the same time. This is reminiscent of scholars in imperial Japan who tried to deny the possible cultural supremacy of Korea in history by a similar presentation (Tanaka 1995). The distinctly "Japanese" aesthetic he claims to see in Jōmon pottery is a highly subjective interpretation, just as his claim that Jōmon artistry supersedes other prehistoric art.

Another focus of Miyazaki lies on the supposedly harmonious and ideal living conditions of the Jōmon period and the people themselves:

> Jōmon-period bone finds show no injuries from weapons, indicating that even physically impaired individuals reached adulthood. Society was an ideal collective in which the weak were cared for through welfare and nursing. The Jōmon period, according to modern understanding, is dated from 10,000 BCE to the 1st century CE. This means that there were over ten thousand years of peace. (30)

This "time of peace" is mentioned again later, emphasizing the extraordinariness of it. Miyazaki also elaborates on the Jōmon people's general positive characteristics and way of life by using a dichotomous narrative, contrasting the Jōmon period with the subsequent Yayoi period. To this end, he first recounts his visit to the Yoshinogari excavation site in Kyūshū:

> Although [Yoshinogari] represents a Yayoi settlement, to be honest, I did not feel emotionally moved. Why? Because there was little felt of the archaic energy that was otherwise so strong and vivid, and somehow it felt 'modern.' (26)

Judging from the replica of a military fortress and bone finds, Miyazaki surmises that there must have been wars in the Yayoi era, which he attributes to the start of overseas influence. On the other hand, Miyazaki presents the development of rice cultivation, which is commonly assigned to the Yayoi period, as a development of the late Jōmon period: Since the oldest rice cultivation remains are about 3,200 years old, he claims that rice cultivation was probably not exported from Korea to Japan, but vice versa from Japan to Korea. In a similar

vein, he argues that Jōmon people already used advanced shipbuilding and navigation techniques and led a comparatively prosperous life due to the plant diversity of the time.

What is interesting here is his contrasting: Miyazaki is clearly not only comparing two ancient periods but also primordial Japan, the origin of the "Japanese essence," with the present, globalized Japan. He gives Japan a civilizational primacy over Korea and attributes negative developments such as war to influences from outside of Japan. By placing important developments in Jōmon times and claiming it to be an era without contact to other cultures, Miyazaki weakens the cultural influence of China and Korea on Japan and its early cultural development. Thus, Miyazaki creates a strongly idealized image of the Jōmon period by employing a *nostalgic nationalism* (McVeigh 2004), creating a pure, idealized past Japan. His rhetoric relies heavily on highly subjective valuation of prehistoric art and excavation sites, and therefore lacks objective or quantifiable arguments.

(2) Placing Japanese origins in Jōmon times

Miyazaki explains that the Jōmon period and the Yayoi period overlapped, which is why a clear differentiation is impossible. Since excavations show no signs of fighting between different peoples, the Jōmon people must have peacefully evolved into Yayoi people (79). Thus, Miyazaki opposes the theory that Yayoi people displaced Jōmon people and shapes an origin narrative reaching back to Jōmon times, which enables him to admit to as little foreign influence as possible: According to his interpretation, trade with other cultures only really picked up in the Yayoi period, which is why a Japanese origin narrative anchored in Jōmon times ensures an essence untainted by foreign influences.This argument emphasizes the particularity of Japan and the pure origin of the Japanese people. At the same time, Miyazaki is able to underline the homogeneity of the Japanese people discursively with this origin narrative. The nationalist discourse of the postwar period often portrays such emphasis on homogeneity (Oguma 2002). In addition, however, Miyazaki also states that the early Japanese settled in northern Japan before the Ainu did (56). He thus distinguishes the "real" Japanese from a discriminated minority within Japan, and opposes theories that the Ainu were the original inhabitants of Japan, effectively eliminating any claims of Japan having mistreated the Ainu minority in the past.

Moreover, one of Miyazaki's main theses is that the "prototype of the Tennō system, the center of traditional Japanese culture, already emerged in the middle of the Jōmon period" (9). Jōmon finds allegedly show that settlement leaders gradually evolved to the supra-regional ruler figure of Tennō. Miyazaki emphasizes that the tennō system is an organically grown system of rulership, which–just like the Jōmon language–is based on pure Jōmon (and thus Japanese) es-sence. Since the Tennō was a "priest-king" (*purīsuto kingu*), the Tennō system is not based on violence and authority, but on spiritual leadership, and therefore completely differs from other monarchies. Miyazaki assumes the existence of Jinmu and considers the founding myth of the empire to be historical fact but cites right-wing writer Nagahama Hiroaki (Nagahama/Shinpo 2018b), who claims that Jinmu's accession took place in 70 BCE. Thus, the enthronization of Japan's first tennō would have taken place in the Yayoi period–which was already sullied by foreign influence. With

his claim of a prototype system emerging in Jōmon times, Miyazaki can place the emergence of the Tennō system in the idealized, "pure" Jōmon period (Befu 2001, McVeigh 2004). This ensures that the imperial system is purely Japanese. The theory of a "priest-king" enables him to put the Tennō system on a pedestal and thus distinguish it from other monarchies –another point for Japan's particularity. The veneration of the emperor system itself also carries a distinct and highly conservative or nationalistic connotation, since the importance of the Tennō was only reinstated through the emperor's role for State Shinto as it emerged in modern Japan (Skya 2009).

(3) Emphasizing purely "Japanese" traits

Miyazaki emphasizes quite a few allegedly "purely Japanese" traits, the first being the Japanese language. According to him, even foreigners fluent in Japanese have difficulties reading *waka*. Therefore, he believes that the Japanese aesthetic sense cannot be learned. In a different passage, Miyazaki explains that the Japanese *wa* does not match the English concept of "harmony" any more than *dōtoku* and "morality" or *shizen* and "nature." He further comments on the concept of nature, "Westerners regard nature as an enemy [...]. A harmonious [...] concept of coexistence with nature as in Japan did not exist in Christian society" (97). In addition, Miyazaki distinguishes between "purely Japanese" and "foreign influence." He states that poems that use the Japanese *yamato-kotoba* seem far more natural than poems using Sino-Japanese words; he therefore concludes that *yamato-kotoba* originated from the language of the Jōmon people and thus "from the feelings and enthusiasm of the Jōmon period" (106). This way, he connects the Japanese language with a Japanese essence and directly relates this to the Jōmon period.

Locating a Japanese particularity in the Japanese language is based on the idea that language shows the worldview of the speakers (Befu 2001). Discourse participants invoke Japanese words and concepts (such as *amae*, *wabi*, and *sabi*) to illustrate that such difficult or impossible to translate terms reveal the mindset of its speakers (or even the "Japanese essence"). They then cite the untranslatability of these concepts as a reason only Japanese can speak the language properly and understand the underlying thought patterns (Yoshino 2000). Because of the alleged "perfect isomorphism between speakers of the Japanese language and bearers of Japanese culture," a peculiarity of the language simultaneously implies a peculiarity of the Japanese people (Befu 1993). At the same time, Miyazaki's argument also reveals a *proprietary nationalism*, according to which certain attributes such as language are perceived as belonging to the Japanese and therefore unlearnable by outsiders (McVeigh 2004). The emphasis of certain (alleged) peculiarities and contrasting them with those of other countries makes readers aware of such characteristics. This *Othering* shows a stark dichotomization between Japan and other countries, between tradition and modernity, or the West and a "Japanese essence" (*nihon no kokoro*) (Hijiya-Kirschnereit 2003). This is especially plain to see in his differentiation of *yamato-kotoba* and words of Sino-Japanese origin, another one of his arguments which is solely based on his subjective impression and not on rational argumentation.

(4) Japan's international relations

Miyazaki mainly criticizes the Chinese and

Korean understanding of history. For instance, he claims that the Chinese understanding of history is politically influenced and manipulated to match their preferred narrative, and criticizes the Korean understanding of history, since allegedly, the Koreans still teach a founding myth without historical evidence in their schools. In addition, Miyazaki states that the Koreans believe in their important cultural influence on ancient Japan, while he argues that cultural goods did not only come from Korea, but also arrived in Kyūshū through fishermen from southern China. Miyazaki thus clearly weakens the cultural influence of Korea on Japan in ancient times. His rhetoric, using a rejection of a single route over Korea, was similarly used by historians in imperial Japan to ensure that Japan could not have been inferior to Korea at any time (Tanaka 1995). Miyazaki also discursively insinuates that these countries' narratives are historically inaccurate, even though criticizing Korea's use of a founding myth is quite ironic, since there is no evidence whatsoever supporting the Japanese founding myth either.

Discussing Korea and China, Miyazaki creates the image of an arrogant China and Korea with distinct negative characteristics: "They use [the] nickname *wado*, which means 'little slaves,' as a metaphor for Japanese people. It would certainly be the equivalent of the Japanese *chankoro*" (101). In the same section, he states that only Japan is no longer allowed to refer to China as *shina* (instead of *chūgoku*) and considers this unfair treatment of Japan by foreign countries. Thus, the narrative of Japan being treated contemptuously in the international arena and unfairly by neighboring countries emerges. However, Miyazaki fails to mention that the very term *shina* has extremely negative connotations today due to its use in imperial Japan: At that time, *shina* discursively promoted the image of China as a weak country trapped in the past. This distinguished China from modern, progressive Japan through *Othering* (Tanaka 1995).

Miyazaki evokes the impression that Japanese should feel superior to precisely these neighboring countries with all their negative characteristics –and thus turns the (discursive) tables. For example, he emphasizes that the Japanese are the "better" people by distinguishing the Analects of Confucius from Confucianism, the latter allegedly lacking a moral or religious set of rules. Contrary to China and Korea, only the *Analects* but not Confucianism spread in Japan. Miyazaki quotes the right-wing writer Seki Hei, according to whom Confucianism in China developed into brutal teachings and a political ideology; Japan, on the other hand, adopted Confucian teachings and implemented them in the spirit of Confucius. Miyazaki connects the Confucian teachings with the Japanese origin in Jōmon times, claiming that the Japanese were naturally good, which is why Confucian morals and teachings were incorporated so naturally and positively into the Japanese spirit. In this way, Miyazaki puts Japan in a consistently positive light while portraying China and Korea as corrupt and immoral to the core. The differentiation between Confucianism and the *Analects* allows the author to reconcile foreign influence with Japanese essence while simultaneously giving Japan a preeminent position. Again, this line of argument is by no means new, but was already part of a discursive strategy in the first half of the 20th century to distinguish Japan from China (Doak 2001; Tanaka 1995).

Miyazaki gives explicit statements that aim

to weaken or even deny foreign influence on Japan. He also provides a strongly negative portrayal of different cultures and shows a devaluation of foreign countries. This occurs, among other things, through specific terms with negative connotations. This is in line with nationalist discourse, in which confrontation with foreign countries is used to emphasize Japan's particularity (Yoshino 2000). Such *Othering* is thus an essential component of identity construction, whereby undesirable characteristics are applied to the *Other* to highlight one's own positive features (Chow et al. 2001).

(5) Opinions on Japan's Perspective on History

Miyazaki already clearly states his opinion on the influence of the occupying powers in the introduction:

> Japanese history books are still based on the GHQ's masochistic view of history, and the Japan Teacher's Union is doing their stooge work and bending the truth. [...] If one is brainwashed by this leftist history, then it is easy to tend toward a mindset that portrays Jinmu-Tennō as a fabrication and the *Kojiki* and *Nihon-shoki* as fakes. [...] We must rediscover the true form of history as soon as possible. (10)

According to Miyazaki, Japan suffers from a "leftist" and "masochistic" image of history due to the influence of the GHQ. These are often used terms in nationalistic and especially Historical Revisionist discourse. Miyazaki refers even more frequently to "leftist historians" or the "brainwashing" by the GHQ. Strikingly, he accuses China and Korea to use Western accusations against Japan in their favor:

> By imposing an absurd view of history and bringing up a Nanking massacre that never happened and forced labor, China and Korea demand apologies and reparations. They adopt American war strategies against Japan in a vile way. Demanding morality from [Chinese and Koreans] is like handing a smartphone to a Stone Age man and expecting him to operate it without any problems. (203)

Here, Miyazaki clearly denies Japanese war guilt and shows clear contempt with this derogatory comparison. Additionally, he refers to the Asia-Pacific War as the "Great East Asian War" (*daitōa sensō*), thus using the war designation of imperial Japan. This in itself already demonstrates that he sympathizes with Imperial Japan's worldview and ideology.

Miyazaki argues that due the post-war influence of the GHQ the Japanese suffer from a masochistic view of history. He describes the current state of Japan as follows:

> Seventy-four years after the end of the war, the Japanese are almost completely brainwashed. Japan officially regained its sovereignty through the Treaty of San Francisco, but this has only happened on paper. [...] Japan truly follows the 'world order' like a sheep. (215f.)

Miyazaki's treatment of Japan's modern history shows a clear Historical Revisionist worldview complete with denial and redistribution of war guilt and a reinterpretation of Japanese war actions. As is often the case in Japanese nationalist discourse, he displays a dismissive attitude toward the U.S. (Raddatz 2017) and distinct "racist overtones and xenophobic attitudes toward the outside world, particularly toward China and Korea" (Akaha 2008). Particularly prominent here is the appeal for a more self-confident or aggressive appearance toward foreign countries.

(6) Criticizing Japanese Contemporary Society

Miyazaki criticizes not only other nations but also contemporary Japan quite a lot. He claims that schools still propagate a masochistic view of history and provide too little or no information about the Jōmon period or Japanese mythology; American history books, on the other hand, would make one like the country, while Japanese history books do the opposite. According to him, the fault lies in Japanese historians and their left-wing influence on the curriculum. But Miyazaki also sharply criticizes the alleged lack of morality in contemporary Japan:

> [Since] neither schools nor families teach morality anymore, today's Japanese have no [Japanese] *dōtoku* and not even [Western] *moraru*. [...] I do not believe that the Japanese today possess even the lowest level of morality. (203)

With his choice of words, incidentally, the author also makes clear that the pure Japanese *dōtoku* is superior to Western morale. As an example of moral neglect, Miyazaki cites that young Japanese would only give up priority seats on trains, no longer standard seats for clearly disadvantaged people and goes on to emphasize that this is a development for the worse:

> [...] Today's Japanese consider themselves too important [...] and have become unthinking idiots. When one looks at the friendly facial expressions of the Jōmon clay figures and thinks of the generosity of the original Japanese, one cannot avoid an automatic comparison with today's people. (204)

But all is not yet lost. Miyazaki sees a glimmer of hope in the establishment of new Jōmon museums and the general interest in this period. He assesses this as a desire to rediscover traditions that constitute the Japanese essence. Moreover, while criticizing the less than venerable media excitement regarding the release of the new era name, he notes that the great interest in the new era, and thus in the imperial house, is positive. Finally, he interprets the non-Chinese origin of the current era name (Reiwa) to signify a cultural detachment from China, therefore setting a precedent. Significantly, he does not use the neutral term *chūgoku* for China at this point, but rather the derogative *shina*.

(7) Jōmon Revival in Contemporary Japan

Lastly, Miyazaki also offers suggestions for the future in his conclusion:

> Why do [young people] not want to have children anymore? [...] I think the sense of loss of community results in a lack of dreams for the future and a lack or absence of emotion. In the past, there was a spiritually close-knit collective in Japan in which everyone participated. [...] In the founding period of Japan, the Jōmon period, problems like today's did not exist. (207 f.)

This extremely idealized depiction of a prehistoric time follows Miyazaki with his opinion on how to solve Japan's labor shortage which is a result of the declining birth rate: In accordance with his repeated claim that foreign influence has at no time been beneficial to Japan, his solution to is certainly not "the patchwork policy of blindly letting foreign workers into the country, as has been done for the last hundred years" (210). Instead, he states that the problem of an aging society could be solved by reducing medical assistance for seniors. Regarding the declining birthrate, he proposes:

> The idea is to think of men behaving like men and women behaving like women,

> women wanting to have children by strong men, and food procurement for survival being the top priority. We can achieve this by returning to a system where everyone cares for children, shares the thoughts and lifestyles of the Jōmon period, and lives life as it was then. (211)

Here, once again, the author's extremely conservative attitude becomes apparent. His argumentation in general and especially in this part of his publication provides an excellent example of a "triadic structure of nationalist rhetoric" (Levinger/Lytle 2001) in that he contrasts the glorious past with the degenerate present and finally outlines his vision of a better future – which, in his case, actually consists of a return to values he simply ascribes to Japan's alleged glorious past. In doing so, he discursively elaborates on the impression of negative foreign influence and the necessity of Japan's detachment from foreign countries. This also explains why Miyazaki wants to combat the labor shortage by increasing the birth rate.

Miyazaki's text contains most explicit statements about contemporary Japan and even suggestions for the future. What is made clear is a criticism of Western or American influence through the occupation period and an alleged loss of morals. It is, therefore, not surprising that the author propagates a shift away from the allegedly imposed image of history and urges a return to Jōmon-era social structures.

Discussion and Conclusion

As my analysis shows, nationalistic motifs are abundant in Miyazaki's publication. He emphasizes an origin narrative that is strongly based on the glorification of ancient times, which makes for a very good example to illustrate how the Jōmon period is utilized for right-wing writing. In Miyazaki's case, an emphasis on Japan's particularity and a differentiation from foreign countries through strong *Othering* are especially prominent.

Miyazaki relies on the Jōmon period to construct an idealized image of Japan's unique origins. In doing so, he employs the by no means new "striving for the oldest" rhetoric (Saaler 2005). The linchpin of his work is, of course, the Jōmon period, in which he sees the origin of the Japanese people and Japanese culture. It is, therefore, no wonder that, according to him, Japan's "unique culture" (*dokuji no bunka*) originates from this period. Since he claims that the Japanese descended from the Jōmon people, Miyazaki also achieves the alleged ethnic homogeneity of the Japanese nation and incidentally marginalizes minorities such as the Ainu. Furthermore, he argues that the unique Tennō system symbolizing Japan stems from Jōmon times and is an organically grown, culturally rooted system of rule based on spirituality. Therefore, Miyazaki claims several particularities as crucial for national self-assertion: the Japanese essence, the Tennō, and the Japanese culture, all of which are discursively linked to ancient Japanese times.

Additionally, the recourse to the Jōmon period enables Miyazaki to construct a dichotomous narrative. He contrasts the original Japan, corresponding to the idea of a 'pure' past (McVeigh 2004), with Yayoi-period Japan, which "degenerated" due to foreign influence. According to Miyazaki, this deterioration continues today: He describes the Yayoi period as "modern" and thus discursively connects this period to the present time. Miyazaki also differentiates "purely Japanese" characteristics from foreign countries by emphasizing an

alleged linguistic particularity. This is a clear case of an isomorphism of the Japanese people with the Japanese language (Befu 2001). Furthermore, he explains the anchoring of the Tennō system in the Jōmon period by this distinction from foreign countries. This way, Miyazaki can ensure that this revered ruling system did not begin with Jinmu in the Yayoi period.

Although Miyazaki's work, according to its title, is concerned with the origins of Japan and the imperial family, it is replete with references to the author's position regarding modern Japan. If Miyazaki is to be believed, foreign influence has been pushed to its peak by the GHQ: He essentially claims that that the foreigners with their censorship and masochistic worldview took away the Japanese people's sense of themselves and their essence. According to the author, Japan has not regained its own identity because of a continuing subordination to an allegedly leftist view of history.

That Miyazaki does not share the prevailing view of history is made clear by his continued use of the wartime term *daitōa sensō* alone. He puts Japan in a victim role, interpreting modern his-tory according to the usual revisionist view. Especially his comments on China and Korea show strong negative *Othering* with clear "racist overtones and xenophobic attitudes" (Akaha 2008). Statements about China's and Korea's alleged arrogance and their moral depravity due to Confucianism give the impression that foreign countries mistreat Japan. By using the negatively connoted term *shina* and referring to the misapplication of Confucianism, Miyazaki again uses 80-year-old rhetorics to portray Japan as morally on higher ground. What is interesting here is Miyazaki's critique of Korea's founding myth – after all, much of his book consists of wishful thinking and inferences about the distant Jōmon period. Perhaps it speaks to a certain right-wing "narcissism" (Iida 2002) on the part of the author that he notes the unprovability of another founding myth and, at the same time, makes all sorts of highly idealized claims about Japanese origins himself.

Miyazaki's description of a glorious past and following deterioration, plus his mention of a possible improvement in the future is a prime example of a "triadic structure of nationalist rhetoric" (Levinger/Lytle 2001). Interestingly, his solution to Japan's current dire situation is the return to Jōmon values and structures. Especially the latter contain highly conservative views on gender roles, among other things, which should solve the declining birth rate problem and sidestep letting more foreigners into the country. Here, Miyazaki shows his xenophobia as well as fear of the dissolution of gender roles as a "perceived threat to Japanese national and masculine identity" shared with other Historical Revisionist authors (Iida 2002).

The above already clearly demonstrates how Miyazaki as an exemplary right-wing writer uses the Jōmon period for his agenda. This leads me to my second question: What kind of image or identity is created with this utilization?

Miyazaki's rhetorics – such as emphasizing Japan's particularities, and strong *Othering* – show the desire for a stronger Japan and a more assertive Japanese identity. He works out a distinct view on Japanese history to insinuate that the Japanese should feel superior to foreign nations, and to look down on others – especially China and Korea – with a fair amount of disdain. This way, Miyazaki wants the Japanese to develop pride in their country and to show it to the outside world. That this requires a correction of the historical image seems logical

here as well and is done according to the usual Historical Revisionist rules of weakening and denial as well as the shifting of war guilt. Thus, Miyazaki creates a position from which Japan would be better able to defy foreign countries –or rather, globalism?–while exercising more self-assertion by appealing to the Japanese essence.

Overall, a highly nationalistic view is evident in Miyazaki's publication. He is extreme in his positions: Miyazaki joins the Jōmon fanatics and believes that he can solve the Japanese social and identity problem by returning to the Jōmon period. The Jōmon period is a tool for the author to advance his mission, and the added topic of Jinmu-tennō ensures that the author reaches his intended target group: Here, the "true" Japanese, who can refer to their purely Japanese origin from Jinmu and, even further back, the Jōmon people and identify with a collective group through this, are addressed. Miyazaki claims a scientific approach when he recalculates Jinmu's reign and the very human development of the Tennō system. Nonetheless, he assigns Jinmu a special significance for Japanese particularity as part of core Japanese culture. On the other hand, the Jōmon period serves a nationalist purpose because of its age and the presumed relative isolation of the Japanese islands: Since Miyazaki has to admit that Jinmu's origins are not as old as presumed in prewar times, he needs this era to assure Japan's supreme position in the world as the oldest civilization with the many positive attributes he assigns to the Jōmon period and people–without much scientific backing, but instead an abundance of highly emotional rhetorics. Ultimately, the Jōmon period and Jinmu are two narratives that can emphasize the particularity of Japan extremely well. Their combination ensures the attention of a wide group of readers, considering both the popularity of the Jōmon period and mythology at the time of this book's publication. In conclusion, Miyazaki's publication can be seen as a prime example of the spectrum of nationalist discourse.

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