The period bounded by the massive Hibiya riot of 1905 and the nationwide rice riots of 1918 is aptly dubbed Japan's "era of popular violence."\(^1\) Tens of thousands of Tokyoites participated in nine instances of riot during these years (table 2.1). These outbursts were serious affairs; in the six major Tokyo riots, hundreds were injured and arrested, and at least twenty died. On four occasions cabinet changes took place largely or in part because of the riots.\(^2\)

The 1905 Hibiya riot, in particular, had insurrectionary qualities. The peace settlement to the Russo-Japanese War had brought Japan neither reparations nor the expected territorial gains on the Asian mainland, and it stirred tremendous popular antagonism. The riot broke out when police tried to ban a rally at Hibiya Park on September 5, called to oppose the signing of the treaty in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Rioting continued for three days, during which Tokyo was reported to be without an effective government. Surviving photographs of September 6 and 7 show dozens of people fishing lazily along the banks of the imperial palace moat, normally strictly forbidden terrain. Crowds destroyed over 70 percent of the police boxes in the city, and police records

counted 528 rioters injured and 17 killed, in addition to over 500 injured policemen (figs. 2-5). The news of the riot stimulated similar, although smaller, risings in Kobe and Yokohama, and it was preceded or followed by nonviolent rallies or speech meetings in hundreds of villages, towns, or cities in all but two of the nation's forty-four prefectures.

This was the first of six major and three minor riots in the "era of popular violence." While table 2.1 reveals that the immediate causes of riot varied greatly, this surface diversity is misleading. Underlying patterns of ideas and action link these events, making them part of a distinct historical formation. They stood at the apex of a huge pyramid of collective action comprising in addition several near riots and hundreds of commonplace peaceful instances of assembly and action (see Appendix A).

The assemblies and riots of this "era of popular violence," then, were central elements in the movement for imperial democracy. While the ideology and actions of the crowd were derivative to the extent that they were fashioned out of a context of meeting places, dates, a representative assembly, and a constitution bequeathed by the oligarchs, the participants in the riots unequivocally articulated a vision of the political order at odds with that of the elite. In the nineteenth-century oligarchic conception of "imperial bureaucracy," the people were to obediently support the policies of the emperor's ministers. In the popular vision of "imperial democracy," the ministers were to carry out policies reflecting the unified, expressed will of the emperor and the people. This vision affirmed both emperor and people as touchstones of legitimate rule, and it placed the glory of the empire among its foremost goals. It also left ambiguous the heart of the matter. What procedural means would ensure that policies did, in fact, honor both emperor and popular wills?

3. The Tokyo police were (and are) stationed in hundreds of tiny one- or two-room "boxes" scattered throughout the city. This ensured that the police were close to the people. It also made them vulnerable.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Main Issues</th>
<th>Secondary Issues</th>
<th>Site of Origin</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 5–7, 1905</td>
<td>Against peace ending the Russo-Japanese War</td>
<td>Against clique government For “constitutional govern-ment”</td>
<td>Hibiya Park</td>
<td>17 killed; 70 percent of police boxes, 15 trams destroyed; progovernment newspapers attacked; 311 arrested; violence in Kobe, Yokohama; rallies nationwide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 15–18, 1906</td>
<td>Against streetcar-fare increase</td>
<td>Against “unconstitutional” behavior of bureaucracy, Seiyūkai</td>
<td>Hibiya Park</td>
<td>Several dozen streetcars smashed; attacks on streetcar company offices; many arrested; increase revoked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 5–8, 1906</td>
<td>Against streetcar-fare increase</td>
<td>Against “unconstitutional” actions</td>
<td>Hibiya Park</td>
<td>113 arrested; scores injured; scores of streetcars damaged; police boxes destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 11, 1908</td>
<td>Against tax increase</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hibiya Park</td>
<td>21 arrested; 11 streetcars stoned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 10, 1913</td>
<td>For constitutional government</td>
<td>Against clique government</td>
<td>Outside Diet</td>
<td>38 police boxes smashed; government newspapers attacked; several killed; 168 injured (110 police); 253 arrested; violence in Kobe, Osaka, Hiroshima, Kyoto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Issue(s)</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Events</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 7, 1913</td>
<td>For strong China policy</td>
<td>Hibiya Park</td>
<td>Police stoned; Foreign Ministry stormed; representatives enter Foreign Ministry to negotiate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 10–12, 1914</td>
<td>Against naval corruption</td>
<td>Outside Diet</td>
<td>Dietmen attacked; Diet, newspapers stormed; streetcars, police boxes smashed; 435 arrested; violence in Osaka</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For constitutional government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Against business tax</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For strong China policy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 11, 1918</td>
<td>For universal suffrage</td>
<td>Ueno Park</td>
<td>Police clash with demonstrators; 19 arrested</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 13–16, 1918</td>
<td>Against high rice prices</td>
<td>Hibiya Park</td>
<td>Rice seized; numerous stores smashed; 578 arrested; incidents nationwide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Against Terauchi Cabinet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE CONTEXT OF RIOT

The people of Tokyo in the early twentieth century inhabited a world in transition; their assemblies and occasional riots reflected and furthered the trajectories from subject to citizen, wealth to capital, and isolation to empire. The constitution integrated the ancient imperial institution with the structure of a nation-state; it sanctioned political participation for some city-dwellers and stimulated demands for greater participation by those left out. Capitalism drew increased numbers of the working poor and wage laborers into the city, and it heightened the uncertain, dependent quality of their existence. The rickshawmen, who proliferated soon after the invention of that conveyance in 1869, and the streetcar, which attacked their livelihood when service began in 1903, were the most visible symbols of this transformation of the city. Not coincidentally, the former accounted for numerous rioters and the latter became one of the most common targets of angry crowds. Imperialism both elicited jingoistic calls for a strong foreign policy and exacted major sacrifices, in money and lives, from the populace.

Any social world, of course, is transitional, but the claim that the political crowd of 1905 to 1918 was transitional is more than a truism. One finds continuities between the thought and behavior of the crowd of this era and protesters of earlier and later eras, yet in key particulars the demarcation is sharp and clear between previous crowd actions, those of this era, and those that would follow. Continuities are visible in the ways crowd behavior and ideology echoed traditions of collective action of an earlier era. The “fair price” distribution of rice in 1918 closely followed the scripts of riots of late Edo times. Direct attacks on the homes or offices of wrongdoers such as the rice merchants in 1918 and the streetcar company in 1906 harked back to Edo-era attacks on the wealthy. The theatrical quality of the events, the parody and inversion of symbols, and the echoes of festival celebration seen in the use of traditional drums to build atmosphere at a rally and the coincidence of riot and holiday would have been familiar to a Tokugawa peasant or town-dweller. Finally, “outside the realm of formal politics, the people

6. Edo was the pre-1868 name for Tokyo. It also refers to the Tokugawa era, 1600–1868, during which Edo was the capital of the Tokugawa shogun’s government.

of Tokyo had lived in a “spectating world” for over two centuries. They had long been accustomed to gather in crowds, and authorities since the 1600s had associated even apolitical assembly with turbulence and immorality. Traditional popular entertainments included puppet and Kabuki theaters, the more plebeian Yose variety halls, and sumo wrestling. As the high technology of the early 1900s created modern settings for mass entertainment, opportunities for, and interest in, leisure-time gathering and spectating increased. No fewer than fifty-one moving picture theaters opened their doors in Tokyo between 1909 and 1912.

Despite continuities with the Edo era, the demarcation between the riots of the early 1900s and nineteenth-century crowd actions is unmistakable. The rice rioters in Tokyo revealed a new national political awareness in their calls for the resignation of the prime minister. The widespread attacks on police boxes and government offices, such as on the Home Ministry in 1905, betray a similarly changed political sensitivity; rioters of the Edo era typically attacked merchant wealth, not samurai office. In terms of organization, the critical role of organized interest groups of politicians, lawyers, journalists, and small businessmen had no pre-Meiji precedent.

In addition, a temporal gap is clear. Before the 1905 riot, one must go back to the 1860s to find Tokoyoites (Edoites at that time) engaged in citywide collective violence. In 1887 Popular Rights activists produced a flurry of rallying and demonstrating in Tokyo with the “Three Great Issues Petition Movement” for freedom of speech, lower taxes, and reform of the unequal treaties. These precisely anticipated the concerns of the post-1905 crowd and identify the incident as an early stage in the transformation of popular collective action and poli-


11. In formulating this distinction between Edo-era and twentieth-century collective actions, with the 1905–18 crowd in between, I was greatly aided by Tilly’s formulation for France, where the mid nineteenth century was a transitional era between repertoires, with marked similarities to the Japanese sets. See Tilly, Contentious French, pp. 390–98.
tical ideas. But no major violence accompanied the agitation; the urban lower class, which joined in later riots, was neither sufficiently politicized nor yet of a size or concentration to produce major upheaval.¹²

The divide at the end of this era is also precise. After the rice riots of 1918, no more citywide riots took place. In the 1920s, assemblies were more numerous than ever, and clashes between police and demonstrators or striking workers were commonplace, but several aspects of the violence were different. First, the mobilization process was new; it involved workers acting through their own organizations. Second, the open conflict between bourgeoisie and proletariat was new. Third, the limited scope of the actions was different. Confrontations of workers with police and owners generally came only at the assembly site or picket line itself. Even at the peak of labor protest during the depression of 1927–32, no citywide scattering of attacks on merchants, streetcars, or the authorities took place.

Between 1905 and 1918 the crowd had a uniquely heterogeneous social base and voiced a distinctive ideology of populist nationalism. These social and ideological configurations behind the movement for imperial democracy were peculiar to this “era of popular violence.” The willingness of respectable leaders to appeal to the crowd contrasts to Tokugawa protests and to the Popular Rights movement on the one hand and to the politics of the 1920s on the other. In the early 1880s the urban intellectuals, former samurai, and rural men of substance active in the Jiyutō or Kaishintō parties lost no time in condemning and distancing themselves from the poor commoners active in several violent uprisings. In the 1920s their successors fearfully sought to control, repress, or incorporate new working-class organizations. But between 1905 and 1914 the successors to the Meiji Popular Rights leaders, and in some cases the same people, took enthusiastically to the podium at huge rallies, and even applauded the violence of the crowd as a positive expression of the “healthy spirit of the people” (kokumin no genki). When such speakers were put on trial and asked, “Didn’t you know that similar speeches have always led to riots in the past?” they would earnestly deny any intent to provoke a riot and defend the right to demonstrate in an orderly fashion.¹³

A changing political and economic context thus produced crowds

¹² Inoue Kiyoshi, Kaisei jōyaku (Tokyo: Iwanami bunkō, 1955), pp. 129–70, for more on this intriguing movement, which merits further study.
whose members developed their own ideas about their changing world and demonstrated "awareness" in various ways: in patterns of mobilization, composition, internal organization, in the choice of targets, of sites and dates of assembly, and in the recurrent expression of key ideas that moved diverse individuals to act in concert. While the high degree of control maintained by a narrow elite that promoted capitalism and created a modern nation has seemed distinctive to many historians of modern Japan, the history of the crowd reveals a more complex, ironic distinctiveness: elite control was limited, and the revolution from above in fact fueled the popular response.

PATTERNS OF RIOT

The 1905 Hibiya riot inaugurated the "era of popular violence" with a vengeance; it was the most intense uprising of the period. It also set a pattern of mobilization, of crowd composition, and crowd structure that was repeated and further elaborated in the ensuing events. Yoshino Sakuzō was one contemporary who saw the riot as the first of several related events. Before it, he wrote, "a few workers had on occasion gathered in Ueno Park or Shiba Park, but that would be the beginning and end of it. They left no lasting impact. The events of September 1905 were indeed the first time that the crowd acted as a political force."14

Eight of the nine riots listed in table 2.1 followed a similar three-stage pattern of mobilization. In the first stage, organized political groups would mobilize when an issue engaged their attention. Men in diverse formal bodies of lawyers, journalists, businessmen, and local and national politicians sought out like-minded groups, formed joint committees or federations, called meetings, adopted resolutions, and drew up petitions and presented them to authorities. They used a sympathetic press to publicize their cause.15

The locus of this activity varied with the issue. Diet politicians played a major role in 1905. In 1906, when the issue was a proposal submitted to the Tokyo City Council and Home Ministry to raise streetcar fares from three to five sen per ride, opposition came from the ward councils or ad hoc groups of councilmen in all fifteen of Tokyo's wards.16

Groups of lawyers (Horitsu Club), journalists (Zenkoku kisha dōshi-kai), students, and politicians in the majority Seiyūkai Party coordi-

15. For detailed analysis of these groups, see Miyachi, Nichiro sengo.
nated the “Movement for Constitutional Government” of 1913. They opposed Prime Minister Katsura’s stubborn support for two new army divisions. In 1914 the scandal of corrupt arms dealing in the navy precipitated joint actions on the part of three overlapping clusters of organizations: the “Constitutional Government” groups of the previous year, supporters of a tougher China policy in the China Comrades Association, and opponents of the business tax, led by the National Federation of Business Associations.

In the second stage, organizers in each case reached out to the general public. They would call a series of speech-meetings (enzetsu kai) in any of several well-known halls, attracting from 100 to 15,000 listeners for a two- or three-hour series of speeches by heroes of the various popular causes. As the agitation of 1913 gained in intensity, for example, eighteen organizations joined to sponsor a January 12 rally in Tokyo, one of a month-long succession of almost daily indoor assemblies throughout the city. The culmination of this second, still peaceful, stage, would be an outdoor assembly, labeled either a “people’s” or a “citizens’” rally (kokumin or shimin taikai).

In the third stage, crowds turned violent. Riots began in the aftermath of rallies in Hibiya Park in 1905, 1906, 1908, and September 1913. In 1905 and twice in 1906 violence spread throughout Tokyo and lasted several days. In the evenings, crowds of 50 to 500 would coalesce at scattered locations downtown or in the “Low City,” smash streetcars or police boxes, and dissolve. Rallies outside the Diet also turned violent and spread citywide (and to other cities) in February 1913 and February 1914.

Many other such gatherings, of course, did not end in violence, and the authorities often determined the outcome. The police ban on rallies at Hibiya Park and the Shintomiza Theater in 1905 infuriated those who came to protest the treaty, precipitating the riot. When the home minister rejected the unpopular streetcar fare increase proposed in March 1906, on the other hand, he quickly ended the rioting of that month, and his preemptive decision to deny a fare increase in 1909 avoided a repetition of the 1906 violence.

As this pattern repeated itself, the inhabitants of Tokyo came to recognize these three stages as a distinct process not previously part of the

The Urban Crowd and Politics

life of the city. First came political organizing, followed by collective assembly, and, finally, violent action. By 1914 the process was so familiar that Yoshino Sakuzō described it as “a sort of fad.”

Each of the riots involved a similarly diverse array of participants. Impressionistic descriptions in the press and trial records drew on a stock of social clichés in portraying the crowd as a motley of lower-class city-dwellers, sprinkled with students and an occasional well-dressed gentleman. On the day of the September 5 riot in 1906, the Tōkyō asahi shinbun noted that the police had been alerted to keep an eye on “factory workers in each ward, as well as others such as rickshawmen and so forth.” The rickshaw puller, in particular, stood in the eyes of official and middle-class observers as an emblem of volatile poor urbanites.

Japanese historians have compiled extensive lists of those arrested or brought to trial, which in fact reveal the journalistic clichés to be close to the mark. Table 2.2 summarizes the data available for those arrested or tried for rioting in five of the incidents and offers a rough idea of how the composition of the accused group compared to the population of the city as a whole.

The heterogeneity of those arrested is striking. The only major group missing was the professional class of bureaucrats, doctors, lawyers, journalists, and managers, the very people who had organized the gatherings that ended in riot. Wage labor, broadly defined, was probably the major element in the political crowd, with artisans a leading component in the early incidents, and factory labor more prominent by 1918, but the crowd drew from a broad range of lower- and some middle-class urbanites: masters, artisans, and apprentices, shopkeepers and their employees, factory wage workers, outdoor laborers, transport workers, and students. With the exception of the students, Tokyo crowds appear to have been not unlike the London or Parisian crowds

20. There is no occupational census ideal for our purposes. The 1908 survey used here is the best available. Its main defect is the lack of any distinction in level within an occupation. A textile worker and textile factory owner would both be classed in the “textile occupation.” A rich merchant and his delivery boys would all be classified as tradesmen, in the subcategory of “rice trade.” But if we make the reasonable assumption that wealthy owners of large establishments were a minority compared to both small owners and employees in any one category, these figures can offer a rough indication of the composition of the Tokyo working population. The figure of .8 percent unemployed (5,534 of 712,215) is surely too low, reflecting official undercounting of this category.
The Movement for Imperial Democracy

of the eighteenth century: "the workshop masters, craftsmen, wage-earners, shopkeepers, and petty traders of the capital." 21

The women of Tokyo were also conspicuous for their near total absence from the crowd. 22 Had women been prominent or even present during rallies and riots, they would have been noticed, for their actions would have been illegal. First the 1889 Law on Assembly and Political Societies and then Article 5 of the 1900 Public Order Police Law barred women from all forms of political participation, not only voting, but joining political parties, speaking at rallies, and even attending rallies. 23 On those occasions prior to these laws when women orators did take the podium, during Popular Rights rallies of the 1880s, the press took notice.

Despite the low profile of women in the riots, the forces producing imperial democracy did touch women and begin to reshape their social role and self-conception in these years. Consider this rare vignette, from the rally to demand a strong China policy of September 7, 1913. The main rally platform was set up at the balcony of the Matsumoto Restaurant in the center of Hibiya park, but a part of the overflow crowd converged on the bandstand located at the edge of the park, creating an unplanned second rally site:

Suddenly Ōno Umeyo, a believer in the Tenri religion [one of several popular new religions founded in the Meiji era] and the 19-year-old eldest daughter of Ōno Shūsuke of the village of Tsukitate, Kurihara County, Miyage Prefecture, ascended the bandstand. She wore a tight-sleeved summer kimono with a purple-blue skirt and had a hisashigami hair style [a popular hair style of the period]. The crowd cheered and hooted: "Fantastic! Hurrah! A new woman!" and so forth. She raised her voice: "Truly it is the duty of the Taishō woman to save our comrades in China." With her eloquent words she cut a brilliant figure. 24

22. No women were arrested in any of the riots. On the other hand, a special issue of a popular pictorial magazine of the time includes women in several drawings of the 1905 riots. In one, a kimono-clad woman is among two dozen rioters fleeing the police. In another, five Tokyoites sit reading an "inflammatory leaflet concerning the National People's Rally," a woman among them. And a young woman in school uniform is one of five people shown marching on the cover of the magazine. The matter of women's involvement in early twentieth-century political life needs further investigation. See Tōkyō sōjō gahō, no. 66, September 18, 1905 (subtitled in English The Japanese Graphic).
24. TAS, September 8, 1913, p. 5.
The reporter’s introduction of the young woman as Uno’s daughter and his attention to her clothes invoked familiar female social roles of obedient daughter and decorative object. But the positive crowd response and her own words show her to have been a participant in the making of the popular idiom of imperial democracy.

In contrast to these plebeian rioters, the leaders who founded political associations, drew up resolutions, joined in federations, spoke at indoor speech-meetings, and finally sponsored open-air rallies were educated men of substance: lawyers, journalists, Diet representatives,
local politicians, or small businessmen. The relationship between such leaders and the rioters is controversial. It perplexed contemporary authorities, very likely aware of the latest European theories of “mob psychology,” who could not decide whether the rioters were puppets of these gentlemen leaders or an uncontrollable mob. Thus, Koizumi Kōsaburō, a judicial official who prosecuted the rioters, invariably sought “to find the conspirators or agitators . . . among the sponsors of the rally, but we always failed. There was never a case where the rally sponsors planned on a riot or violence. . . . As soon as the rally ended, the crowd was overtaken by a mob psychology, and transformed into a living thing.” Despite the difficulty in identifying a group of leaders who manipulated the gullible masses, he rejected the possibility that the rioters themselves had conscious motives: “If we questioned those arrested in the act of violence, they could not explain it.”

The surviving trial records reflect such biases in conveying two contradictory impressions of the relationship of rioters to leaders: an image of the manipulated rioter and a picture of the inebriated, uncontrollable rioter. Both types are seen to be devoid of political consciousness. Prosecutors directed most of their energy to interrogation of a handful of leaders charged with conspiracy, asking few questions of the hundreds arrested for common crimes of arson or property destruction. We must credit most of the defendants with a good deal more political motivation than they admitted, for their most sensible defense was to play upon official prejudice, seeking lenience by disavowing political awareness and claiming simply to have been swept up in the excitement. Historians have echoed the prosecution view in stressing the role of “professional rooters” (sōshi or ingaidan) acting at the behest of party leaders to manipulate crowds, especially in 1913 and 1914.

These dismissive and inconsistent conceptions are inadequate. From evidence culled primarily from the trial records of 1914, a more finely

25. Gustave Le Bon’s Psychologie des foules (1895) was the classic European analysis of the time. The Japanese translation, Gunshū shinri, appeared in 1910.
28. Thus, six of the eight volumes of preliminary interrogation for the 1914 trial (Hanai, “Taishō 3 nen sōjō”) focus on five conspirators. The remaining two have brief interrogations of ninety-three individuals. The four volumes of “Kyōto jiken,” from 1905, focus even less attention on the common rioters.
grained picture of the structure of crowd action develops. On one hand, the national leaders were seldom found rubbing shoulders with the crowd; nor were they in tight control of what happened after rallies. But neither were leaders and crowd wholly unconnected, with the latter moved by a mob psychology unrelated to the issues of the day. A middle stratum of unofficial or semiofficial streetcorner leaders existed. Some of these figures had links to organized groups, but the ties could be tenuous. The crowd could sometimes on the spur of the moment press one of its number into action as a leader or a link between the Diet politicians and the populace. These subordinate leaders and activist followers possessed considerable political awareness. They bridged the gap between, and overlapped with, both professional political leaders and the stone-throwing rioters. Acting in significant measure on their own initiative, they invoked causes that apparently resonated with the sentiments of those in the crowd.

Diverse individuals mediated between gentlemen politicians and the rest of the crowd. One Kumatani Naoyoshi, a 31-year-old recent migrant to Tokyo, was one such subleader with relatively close ties to the leaders. An acquaintance of a leading member of the China Comrades Association, Kumatani helped out at six rallies in the seven days prior to the riot in February 1914, carrying flags and banners. Accused of urging on the crowd in front of the Diet, he admitted the basic facts of the accusation, but attributed his actions to intoxication with both sake and the spirit of the crowd.

The rice merchant Kawamura, a 39-year-old resident of Kanda ward, is an intermediate figure who had leadership thrust upon him. A close friend of several members of the Kanda ward assembly, and himself a member of a committee in the ward opposed to the business tax, he claimed to have gone to the Diet on February 10, 1914, at the urging of fellow committee members "to file an [anti-tax] petition as an individual." He bought several newspapers along the way, extra editions with reports on the Diet situation, and as he neared the Diet, a crowd gathered around him and urged him to "read them to us," which he did. Later that afternoon, he again read aloud upon request a report of events inside the Diet to a group of those on the outside.\(^\text{30}\)

Kawamura's actions reveal the theatrical dimension to crowd actions

\(^{30}\) Hanai, "Taishō 3 nen sōjō" 7, sec. 2:112–14. These episodes reflect a shortage of the latest newspaper copies, and the interest among those gathered in up-to-date information, rather than widespread illiteracy.
throughout the center of the city during each riot. The chief of the Kōjimachi police station had described "people everywhere making speeches in the streets," during the 1905 riots; Kawamura’s public readings were part of this phenomenon of streetcorner speechifying.\(^{31}\) In addition, he nicely illustrates the overlap between issues and constituencies within the crowd: a merchant concerned with the tax issue mingled with a group ostensibly convened in anger at naval corruption and a weak foreign policy.

Kawamura belonged to a political organization, but other impromptu leaders held no formal affiliation; informed of the issues, they held strong opinions and sought to act on them. One defendant in 1914 was Takei Genzō, aged thirty-two, a tradesman who sold machinery of some sort. After "one glass of whiskey" (wisukii) during the afternoon of February 10, he made his way to the Nihonbashi area and delivered an impassioned impromptu speech to a crowd gathered there:

Prime Minister Yamamoto took a commission. The Maiyū supports the government, so it takes a commission, too. I’m a former soldier, and we should all rise in anger now for the sake of the nation. The police are running dogs of the bureaucrats. We have to smash the police line and attack the Maiyū newspaper.\(^{32}\)

Colorful leaders of the moment surfaced during other riots as well, such as Matsumoto Dōbetsu, a maverick activist who achieved brief prominence in 1906. He was head of a small group he called "imperial socialists" and had attracted some attention for carrying a black-edged "mourning flag" during the 1905 Hibiya protest. In 1906, despite personal and financial ties with other political leaders, his group acted separately from the larger federation of city and ward councillors, lawyers, and journalists who sponsored the citizens’ rally (shimin taikai) at a rented hall on September 5, the anniversary of the 1905 riot, to protest the streetcar fare increase. Matsumoto sponsored a separate rally that same day in Hibiya Park, attended by several thousand.\(^{33}\)

According to the Asahi, as well as the prosecution at his trial, Matsumoto asked the audience whether they wished to allow the Home Ministry more time to change its mind: "Should we wait quietly until

\(^{31}\) "Kyōto jiken" 4:352.

\(^{32}\) Hanai, "Taishō 3 nen sōjō" 8, sec. 3:39–40.

\(^{33}\) Estimates range from 2,000 to over 10,000. See the account of Matsumoto’s background and activities in Katsuragawa, “1906 nen Tōkyō,” pp. 89, 92–97.
the 11th [the day before the increase was set to take effect], or should we do some smashing [yakeuchi]?” Some shouted back, “Let’s do it tonight!” but the majority seemed inclined to wait, so Matsumoto led a group on what he later claimed was intended to be a peaceful march to the Home Ministry. It turned out differently. Some in the crowd began to stone streetcars. Every night until September 12, when heavy rains dampened popular enthusiasm, crowds of tens or hundreds, and in a few cases thousands, stoned streetcars and police boxes or substations at locations throughout the central and “Low City” wards of the city.34

Just as the involvement of those in this intermediate stratum varied significantly, so did that of the masses of people in the “audience.” Many of the defendants in 1914 participated out of simple curiosity. A 19-year-old tailor, Kawazumi, made his way to the Shimbashi police station on the evening of the 10th and, he admitted, threw stones at it. Why? “Everyone was shouting ‘Go to it! Go to it! [yare, yare],’ so I did it with no special reason.” Yet we dismiss such youths as mindless or apolitical at some peril. Kawazumi had been to a speech-meeting prior to the riot, belying this perhaps calculated self-portrait as a casual participant. Others like him in fact followed the progress of the event in the press. One Ōmoto, a 21-year-old employee at a fish market, attended the rally at Hibiya upon reading of it in the newspaper; he admitted to shouting epithets at the police and throwing his wooden clogs at them. Newspaper reports on the planned rally also drew Nakagawa Seiichi, an unemployed youth, to Hibiya. An 18-year-old lumberyard worker, Tanaka, was one for whom curiosity and excitement were the apparent main attractions. He had attended several speech-meetings because he found them “entertaining” (omoshiroi), and he went to Nihonbashi and joined in the stone throwing with a friend, who said it promised to be entertaining, as well. This aspect of the rioting highlights the theatrical dimension, but does not deny the political significance. As the broad meaning of the word _omoshiroi_ suggests, the rallies were probably both “entertaining” and “interesting.”35

For inhabitants of a spectating world, the political speech-meeting, the rally, and even the riot were inexpensive forms of popular entertainment (except for those arrested: one of the thirty defendants fined for

rioting in Osaka in 1913 was overheard to remark, with a laugh, “Twenty yen for picking up one rock! That’s an expensive stone.”)\textsuperscript{36}

Unlike Kabuki, variety theater, sumo wrestling, or moving picture shows, rallies offered the prospect of audience participation. This form of theater had its stars, the “gods of constitutional government,” who addressed huge throngs; its supporting actors and bit players, such as Matsumoto Dōbetsu, Kawamura, and Takei Genzō; and its audience, whose members sometimes leapt onstage.

One further index of this quite natural range in degree of engagement is supplied by the judge in the 1914 trial, who asked forty-four of the ninety-three common defendants if they had ever attended speech-meetings prior to the rally. Despite tempting advantages to denying such political involvement, thirteen claimed they had, while thirty-one said they had not. The political crowd thus covered a broad spectrum in two senses: varied occupations and differing degrees of engagement with the issues. Its members were drawn from the full range of lower-to-middle-class urbanites. The official leadership consisted primarily of professional politicians, lawyers, and journalists. The intermediate strata and the mass of the crowd included youths seeking patronage and aspiring to a political career, concerned residents of local prominence, and many people simply curious or interested in joining what promised to be a good time.

**POLITICAL THEATER**

A coherent set of political symbols can be found in the theater of the Tokyo crowd. Tokyoites used a constellation of dates, assembly sites, and targets to articulate a political vision embedded in the urban popular culture of the early twentieth century. Theirs was a vision of an imperial democracy at odds with the ruling ideas of the bureaucratic elite, though to an extent derived from them.

The timing of crowd performances reflected both awareness of the broader context of nation-building and dissent from ruling definitions of the commoners’ role in the political order. Seven of the nine Tokyo incidents listed in table 2.1 took place on or about one of two dates, September 5 and February 11.

The former gained significance as the anniversary of the Hibiya anti-
treaty riot of 1905. The organizers of the streetcar fare rally of September 5, 1906, included leaders of the 1905 anti-treaty coalition, and they deliberately and successfully used this anniversary to draw attention to their cause.37 The rally and assault on the Foreign Ministry of September 7, 1913, also took place on the Sunday nearest to the 1905 anniversary date. The Asahi the next day reflected the awareness of precedent in describing how the police, "considering the several past experiences," kept a low profile and did not excite a major riot.38 Participants no doubt made the anniversary connection on their own when a dandy in a Western suit with striped pants, a glass of sake in one hand, a walking stick in another, identified in the Asahi simply as "an old political rooter [sōshi]," shouted from the speaker's platform, "Don't you know me? The patron saint of the riot!"39

The case of February 11 is more complex and interesting. The Meiji government in 1874 chose February 11 as the date on which to celebrate the accession of the (mythical) first emperor, Jimmu, in 660 B.C. and with it the founding of the nation and the imperial line. In 1889 the state chose this date to promulgate the Meiji constitution,40 and in the contest between the state and various opposition groups with their own interpretations of the true nature of "constitutional government" in the years after 1905 both sides sought to wrap themselves in the flag and the aura of imperial sanction by making this date their own.

The participants in the crowd joined the battle by attending the rallies and occasionally rioting. Certainly the simple fact that February 11 was a holiday made it easier for people to gather, and February was a time when the Diet was almost always in session. But it seems no coincidence that the rallies and riots of 1908, 1913, and 1914 all took place on either February 10 or 11. The bureaucratic elite, for its part, entered the contest, and stimulated awareness of the date's importance, by sponsoring huge, tightly policed, and consciously nonpartisan celebrations of the twentieth anniversary of the constitution in Hibiya Park in 1908 and 1909 and by issuing an Imperial Rescript on Poor Relief on

38. TAS, September 8, 1913, p. 5.
39. He called himself "Yakeuchi jiken no taishō kitenjin." I think the term sōshi in this context suggests an association with the Popular Rights movement. See drawing in TAS, September 8, 1913, p. 5.
this date in 1911. \(^{41}\) In both 1913 and 1914, however, with a wide array of antigovernment forces all planning their own rallies, there was no official celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary, suggesting that the oligarchs had at least temporarily lost control of this symbolic date. \(^{42}\) Leaders of the movement for universal manhood suffrage were subsequently among the most self-conscious in contesting for the ideological high ground. Beginning with the rally on February 11, 1918, which ended in minor violence, pro-suffrage rallies took place on this date yearly until 1923, and by 1920 suffragists had dubbed February 11 "Universal Suffrage Day."

The settings for the drama were predictable as well. Crowds returned consistently to a few favorite meeting places and persistently chose the same targets. Hibiya Park, of course, was the most important assembly site. By the occasion of the 1913 siege of the Foreign Ministry, the Asahi simply noted: "Hibiya Park is by now synonymous with the people's rally." \(^{43}\)

It emerged as such out of the same critical dialectic of nation-building policy and popular response that built the importance of February 11 and sanctioned the general practice of popular assembly and political participation. In Edo, while temples or shrines had served as holiday gathering places, there were no explicitly public spaces that the townspeople could call their own. Designed around the turn of the century on a Western model, built by the government, and opened only two years before the 1905 riot, Hibiya Park was first used extensively during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5 for privately sponsored rallies to celebrate Japanese military success. \(^{44}\) These gatherings helped

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**41.** See ibid., p. 146, on the 1908 celebration, and pp. 49–60, passim, on the bureaucratic conception of the constitutional order as above politics. See *Jiji shinpo,* February 12, 1909, on the twentieth anniversary celebration of 1909, which featured Noh plays and music, but no speeches praising the constitutional political order. The repeat of the celebration in two years was because of the concurrent use of Japanese and Western counting customs. Nakamura Masanori, Emura Eiichi, and Miyachi Masato, "Nihon teikokushugi to jinmin: 9/5 minshū bōdo o megutte," *Rekishigaku kenkyū,* August 1967, p. 16, describe the 1911 rescript, in which the emperor donated 1.5 million yen to found a poor relief organization and called for further private donations.

**42.** The death of the Meiji emperor in June 1912 may also explain the absence of a 1913 celebration, but not the 1914 case.

**43.** "Kokumin taikai ni Hibiya kōen wa mō tsukimono de aru" (*TAS,* September 8, 1913, p. 5).

**44.** See Appendix A. See also Sakurai Ryōju, "Nichiro senji" on wartime victory celebrations in the park, and Seidensticker, *Low City, High City,* pp. 116–23, on the designing and building of the park.
Map 1. Central Tokyo in 1905
make the park a place of explicitly political significance that Tokyoites of all sorts felt entitled to claim as theirs, in opposition to the state. The riot of 1905 began when the police forbad an anti-treaty rally and barricaded the park. A crowd of 30,000, some shouting, “It’s illegal [fuhō] to close the park!” overwhelmed the police, destroyed the barricades, and met anyway. The disturbances of 1906, 1908, and 1918 also began with rallies in Hibiya.

This struggle over the use and definition of urban space is full of irony. The popular frenzy of support for both the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars, and the resulting desire to gather to celebrate victories, was a product in part of the oligarchic policies of patriot-making. Yet even during the war with Russia the police had worried about the frequent, implicitly political gatherings for victory celebrations, but had failed to ban them effectively.

The struggle for Hibiya Park also neatly illustrates both the links and the tension between the concept of the legitimate polity promoted by Japan’s rulers and the different vision of the urban populace. The government built the park as a symbol of the modernity and greatness of the new imperial capital and promoted it as a space for people to gather quietly in support of empire, emperor, and the ministerial servants of the emperor. People in the crowd, while concurring in support of both empire and emperor, disagreed both on the proper relation between the emperor, themselves, and the bureaucracy, and on the appropriate use of the park. They made Hibiya a symbol of their freedom to gather and express their political will.

A connection of more or less intimacy to this bureaucracy was unsurprisingly the thread that tied together all but one of the favorite targets of the crowd once it left Hibiya on a smashing spree. The Tokyo police, under the jurisdiction of the Home Ministry, was the institution least popular and most besieged. The hundreds of small, hard-to-protect two- or three-man “police boxes” scattered throughout the city were easy prey, and crowds stoned or burned them in five of the riots (1905, 1906, 1913, 1914, 1918). The Home Ministry itself was a second frequent target. During the violence of September 1905, the crowd directed its fiercest attack on the residence of the home minister, across the street from Hibiya Park (see map 1 and fig. 3). Ten thousand people surrounded the compound and set fire to parts of it.

The police and the Home Ministry, both created by the oligarchs in the first decade of nation-building, stood as symbols of the larger political order and as the particular institutions most responsible for restricting the activities of ordinary people. Yoshikawa Morikuni, one of Japan's first generation of socialists in the early twentieth century, witnessed an aged "jinrickshaw-type" ask one of the rioters to "by all means burn the Ochanomizu police box for me, because it's giving me trouble all the time about my household register."

Other targets provoked enmity insofar as they were implicated in support of the bureaucratic system. These included progovernment newspapers, politicians, and political parties (usually Hara Kei and the Seiyukai), the homes of the oligarchs, and, in September 1913, the Foreign Ministry.

The streetcar, which began service in 1903, the same year Hibiya Park opened, was a frequent target both for economic and political reasons (see fig. 5). It represented a direct threat to the livelihood of the capital's thousands of rickshaw pullers. Further, the fare increases proposed in 1906 and 1909 threatened to take substantial bites from the incomes of lower-class streetcar riders. In addition, however, political issues fueled anger at the streetcar companies. Numerous resolutions of ward assemblies and other groups in 1906 criticized the high-handed, "unconstitutional" behavior of the Home Ministry and city council, and the intimate ties between Seiyukai politicians on the council and the streetcar company. They blasted the selfish politicians and capitalists who "neglected the public good" and ignored the "will of the citizens" (shimin no ikō) in approving the increase.

The inversion or parody of procedures of the authorities and the appropriation of forms of parliamentary behavior recurred in the theater of the crowd. Inversion was seen in the 1905 demonstration, when the flags and banners were modeled on those used to send off troops just months earlier. Many anti-treaty banners were designed as flags of

46. The Home Ministry was founded in 1873. The Tokyo police force was founded in 1874.
47. Takahashi Yūsai, Meiji keisatsu shi kenkyū (Tokyo: Reibunsha, 1961), 2:103. Takahashi, in the history sympathetic to the police and hostile to the socialists, concludes that Yoshikawa's testimony is reliable.
48. Even an increase of one sen per ride would have claimed an additional 2.5 percent of the average factory worker's monthly income of twenty yen, assuming two rides daily twenty-five days a month.
national mourning, mounted on large poles, the slogans framed with black ribbons. A portion of the crowd at Hibiya set off with these on a march toward the imperial palace, in effect offering “condolences” to the emperor on the failed policies of his ministers. This extraordinary symbolic act, implicating the emperor in politics, was too much for the police, who broke up the march.\textsuperscript{50}

Appropriation is seen in the institution of the “people’s rally” (kokumin taikai) itself, which typically followed a set pattern. First came a succession of speeches, presided over by a chairman (gichō), followed by passage (kaketsu) of a several-point resolution (ketsugi) drawn up by an organizing committee. In 1913 the sponsors distributed 50,000 copies of the resolutions adopted at the people’s rally of September 7.\textsuperscript{51} This was a popular reenactment of the form and vocabulary of the parliamentary procedure of the Diet, which may be read as a challenging assertion that the people had a place as participants in the process of government.\textsuperscript{52}

A spirit of parody is found in the graffiti and the letters to the press at the time of the rice riot written in the mode of a Tokugawa peasant’s defiant accusation of unjust officials.\textsuperscript{53} It surfaced in the 114 comic haiku (kyōku) published as part of a contest sponsored by the nation’s major journal for lawyers after the September 1906 riots.\textsuperscript{54} But perhaps most creative was the flyer circulated anonymously on the eve of the anti-tax rally of February 11, 1908. An anti-tax movement of hundreds of business federations had begun the previous summer when the government, far from ending the unpopular new war taxes of 1904–5, proposed an increase in sales taxes on food oil, sake, and sugar. A national convention of the Federation of Business Associations (Jitsugyō kumiai rengō kai) called for a February 5 rally as the climax of this lobbying campaign, but the Diet approved the increase the day before the meeting with Seiyūkai support, and the five hundred conven-

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{50} Okamoto, “Hibiya Riot,” p. 261.
\bibitem{51} TAS, September 8, 1913, p. 5.
\bibitem{52} For one of many examples of this appropriation of parliamentary language and form, see the description of an anti-tax “People’s Rally” in Osaka in 1914 in \textit{Tokyo keizai zasshi}, February 14, 1914, p. 38.
\bibitem{54} The 114 entries are listed in \textit{Hōritsu shinbun}, September 10, 1906, p. 27; September 15, pp. 22–23; September 20, p. 25; September 25, pp. 26–27; September 30, p. 27; October 5, p. 25, October 10, p. 26.
\end{thebibliography}
tion delegates could only vow to oppose pro-tax M.P.’s in the next election. 55

The Tōkyō mainichi newspaper then reprinted on February 10 what it called an “inflammatory leaflet” of unknown origin that had been circulated throughout the city, calling for a rally in Hibiya Park on February 11. Police promptly arrested all known socialists in Tokyo. Several thousand people gathered at the Hibiya bandstand on the 11th, but no organizers were to be found. The Asahi reported that Matsumoto Dōbetsu attended, standing by quietly, slightly drunk. After several impromptu speeches denouncing the tax increase and demanding suffrage expansion, some in the crowd left the park and began to stone streetcars. 56 The flyer which drew this crowd to the park read:

**ANTI-TAX INCREASE**
**PEOPLE’S RALLY [Kokumin taikai]**
Hibiya Park, February 11, 1 P.M.

Admonitions to Attendees:
1. Do not bring any dangerous weapons.
2. Do not prepare oil, matches, or clubs.
3. Do not fight with the police.
4. Do not smash any police boxes.
5. Do not smash any streetcars.
6. Do not throw stones at the Diet building.
7. Do not attack pro-tax or Seiyūkai M.P.’s.

The style is that of the ubiquitous Edo-era injunctions to townspeople or villagers, typically mounted on a pole and planted in the ground for all to see and respect. The flyer teased the authorities and exhorted potential rioters precisely because its injunctions were an inverted list of the very actions most common in crowd incidents. 57 In the political culture of Tokyo in 1908, this document invoked for its readers an instantly recognizable pattern of crowd action. Their shared understanding of the symbols of political theater reflected the deep antagon-

55. The Seiyūkai did in fact lose three of its five seats in Tokyo in the next Diet election. Matsuo, Taishō demokurashii, pp. 53–62.
56. Leaflet in Tōkyō mainichi shinbun, February 10, 1908, p. 2. Also, TAS, February 13, 1908, p. 2. Yorozu chōhō, February 12, 1908, p. 3. TAS reported 10,000 attendees, thirty arrests; the Yorozu claimed 30,000 attendees, forty arrests.
57. Also of interest is the fact that the newspaper was willing to further the cause by reproducing the flyer rather than simply reporting its contents.
ism toward the bureaucratic elite on the part of Tokyoiites excited by
the political vision of imperial democracy.

THE IDEOLOGY
OF IMPERIAL DEMOCRACY

The constituent elements of the crowd had specific grievances. Workers
and artisans were likely to care more about streetcar fares and rice
prices than business taxes; the reverse no doubt held for shopkeepers
and merchants. Yet, while the businessmen, lawyers, party politicians,
and journalists each had separate formal organizations, they acted
together in the mobilizing pattern that led to riot, and lower-class city-
dwellers who were not part of any of these groups attended rallies that
they organized.58 Thus, despite the clear diversity of participants, lead-
ers, and causes, the moments of common action and the repetition of
key concepts and slogans reveal that a related cluster of issues and ideas
created a new political space. In this space, disparate elements, which
would later organize separately for differing causes, reacted together.

The participants in the political crowd responded to a set of surface
issues that cohered both logically and in the identity of the activists.
Scholars such as Miyachi Masato have carefully
~democ­
overlap in the membership and leadership of those formal groups of
lawyers, journalists, intellectuals, and politicians concerned with several
related issues.59 These imperials democrats supported empire abroad
and economic justice and political reform at home. They were pro-
emperor, pro-empire, and committed to elusive notions of constitutional
government and popular involvement in politics. Individual voices
differed; some accented the democracy, others the imperialism, but the
goals themselves were logically related.

At the center was a simple notion. A strong modern nation required
the active participation of a prosperous populace. This belief was the

58. Miyachi, Nichiro senso, pp. 209–14, on organizations of small businessmen.
ists, hoping to build on the political energies nurtured during the anti-treaty movement, proclaimed that constitutionalism and imperialism were the two great international trends of the day. Nations that followed them would prosper; others would decline. The twin goals “originate in popular awakening, stand on popular confidence, and are fulfilled through popular activity.”

The attitudes of members of the crowd are more elusive, but in newspaper accounts and those few trial records that allowed the plebeian participants to speak for themselves, both a set of three surface issues (economic welfare and justice, an aggressive foreign policy, and domestic political access) and a common, underlying political vision can be discerned.

Taxes and prices were the two recurrent economic issues. One or the other was prominent in the foreground or background of the riots of 1905 (new taxes to finance the war), 1906 (streetcar fares), 1908 (tax increases), 1914 (business tax), and 1918 (rice prices). Certainly the anti-tax movement, focusing mainly on the business tax and various retail sales taxes had greatest relevance for businessmen and merchants, who stood to lose most if taxes discouraged sales, but these sales taxes, as well as the unpopular travel tax, an imposition of one sen per ride on all streetcar, ferry, and trail travel, directly affected the populace as a whole.

Prices, on the other hand, were primarily the concern of the poor and working-class population. In urban and rural protest of the early to mid nineteenth century, the price and supply of rice had been at the heart of the popular moral economy. Exchanges such as the following in 1914, between the judge and one Onishi Harukichi, a 55-year-old maker of wooden boxes, show the staying power of this concern of poor city-dwellers:

JUDGE: Which do you prefer, the bureaucracy or the Seiyūkai [Party]?
ONISHI: I don’t know which I prefer, but with Mr. Katsura’s cabinet, rice has just gotten more expensive, and with a Seiyūkai cabinet rice will be cheaper. That is the only reason the Seiyūkai is better.

60. Ibid., pp. 253–54. The term *kokumin* is here translated as “popular.” It was used four times in the sentence quoted.
Prices also upset people at the Shintomiza Theater at the start of the 1905 riot. Anger at the police, who banned the meeting, led to violence outside the theater, but the audience inside were also furious that organizers collected a “box lunch charge” at the entrance. Similarly, scuffling broke out at a speech-meeting of February 5, 1914, when some of those in a crowd of 2,500 protested collection of a ten-sen entry fee when big-name speakers failed to appear. While this evidence is more suggestive than conclusive, Onishi’s concern with prices was probably common.

But the numerous poor participants were not simply motivated by hunger and poverty, their anger manipulated by a politically attuned leadership. Foreign policy and domestic political issues, as well as prices, were important even to the poorer members of the crowd. Support for imperialism was a second tenet of the imperial democratic creed, one upon which all participants agreed. To honor the nation and the emperor, the crowd wanted Japanese hegemony in Asia and equality with the West. These goals were prominent in 1905, in September 1913, and in 1914. Few, however, were anxious to foot the bill for Japan’s expanding empire. Spokesmen for the anti-tax forces skirted the issue by asserting that only lower taxes would produce the vibrant economy that would make Japan great. To point out the contradiction between calls for lower taxes at home and costly empire abroad is simple enough (although the contradiction remained unresolved in late-twentieth-century America), but the logic of this populist nationalism had a certain elegant simplicity as well: only those neither politically nor economically oppressed could produce a strong nation.

Political reform was the third concern of those who joined the political crowds. Both actors and audience opposed the monopoly on political power held by bureaucrats from Satsuma and Chōshū. They sought a greater popular role in political affairs. Bureaucratic scorn for popular desires and the “unconstitutional” behavior of the political elite were major issues in 1905, 1906, 1913, and 1914. For the more pragmatic party politicians, constitutional government meant rule by cabinets drawn from the majority political party in the Diet. For many in the crowd, it had a rather different meaning, discussed below.

The overlap among these three concerns is most evident in the events of the Siemens Incident of 1914. As in a symphony with three entwined

motifs, the lobbying of numerous groups gradually built to the resounding climax of February 10. Organizers of the previous year's Movement for Constitutional Government had planned anti-tax rallies for January 6 and 14, before the catalytic news broke that high officers in the imperial navy had pocketed kickbacks from the German arms supplier. The China Comrades Association had also for months planned a series of rallies for an aggressive posture on the continent to coincide with the Diet session that winter. Similarly, the Tokyo Ward Council Federation and the National Federation of Business Associations, together with other groups, had planned a National Anti-Tax Rally in Tokyo for February 9, and the Business Tax Abolition League, composed of anti-tax members of the Tokyo City Council, was planning a rally on the 17th.65

In this context, the speeches at any one rally naturally referred to the entire set of current issues. Four days before the riot, at noon on February 6, over ten thousand Tokyoyotes attended an indoor "Rally of Federated National Comrades of Each Faction."66 The title was cumbersome, but apt. Speakers, including imperial democratic luminaries Shimada Saburō and Ōzaki Yukio, attacked the government for endangering and sullying the honor of the nation, overtaxing the people, and handling finances poorly. Another huge indoor rally on the 9th sounded the same refrain. The streetcar companies reportedly feared vandalism after the meeting, while the police worried that the following day's rally at Hibiya Park might get out of hand. For both the attendees and popular leaders of these events, excessive taxes, a weak foreign policy, and corruption in high places were symptoms of a single illness, the lack of true "constitutional government."67

Voices from the crowd, recorded in the press and in trial records, spoke as well to a consistent set of underlying concerns, expressed in the diverse contexts of economic welfare, foreign policy, and domestic politics. Time and again people called for (1) fairness and respect for the public good, (2) freedom of action, assembly, and expression, (3) respect for the "will of the people," and, embracing all these, (4) "constitutional" political behavior.

66. "Kaku ha renō zenkoku yūshi taikai."
67. TAS, February 1 through 10, 1914, reported on these and numerous related events. See Anamiya, "Kensei yōgo," in Seiji saiban, p. 21, for a contemporary observation that a similar mix of issues moved activists in 1913.
The failure to heed the public good and the favoring of selfish private interests were especially prominent concerns in 1906. Leaders of the movement against the fare increase commonly condemned the home minister for catering to private interests (shiri) at the expense of the public good (kōeki). When a crowd left one afternoon rally in March, it echoed this refrain, marching to the Ginza crossing, standing for ten minutes blocking two streetcars and shouting “Unfair increase! Ignores the public good!”

The belief that the streets and public places belonged to the people was widely held. Members of crowds frequently coupled calls for freedom to assemble or demonstrate with a fierce antagonism toward the police. One policeman, stoned and beaten in 1905 for trying to prevent a crowd from carrying black-trimmed flags toward the imperial palace, claimed that people shouted at him, “This is not something the police should restrict.” Fukuda Torakichi, the chief of the Kōjinmachi police station, described in an affidavit the scene on September 5, 1905, in front of Hibiya Park, when a reporter for the Yorozu chōhō climbed atop an empty box near the south gate of the park and spoke:

The government has taken unconstitutional actions and caused the police to close off this park, which is a place for us to enjoy freely. By what means can we guarantee our freedom? In order to make our demands prevail we must carry out a great movement. A treaty that could do honor to the lives of a hundred thousand people and the expense of two billion yen has been lost because of the present government.

These words, Fukuda claimed, greatly stirred the crowd. When police tried to halt the speech, people stoned them and attacked them with sticks and metal bars.

Participants in later incidents frequently echoed the calls for freedom to assemble, speak, or act. A youth in 1911, angry at police interference during a rally to protest the terms of the municipal takeover of the streetcar service, shouted, “We have the freedom to criticize this failed

68. The Japanese version (“Neage futō, kōeki mushi”) has a more rhythmic, chantable cadence. TAS, March 12, 1906, p. 6. The crowd here may be invoking Confucian notions of an official obligation to eschew private (shi) gain and serve the public (kō) good of the realm, but I would not exaggerate the particularity of the Asian ideological universe in this respect. In Western traditions crowds have also claimed to be acting for a higher public interest against selfish authorities concerned with private wealth. See Dirk Hoerder, “People and Mobs: Crowd Action in Massachusetts during the American Revolution, 1765–1780” (Ph.D. diss., Free University of Berlin, 1971), pp. 133–35.

69. For similar examples, see “Kyōto jiken” 2:210–11; 4:269, 284.

70. “Kyōto jiken” 4:353.
policy. The police action makes our blood boil.” Patrolman Watanabe Yokichi reported that a crowd of about five thousand marched in his direction during the Siemens riot in 1914. Urged by a gentleman in a rickshaw to move on the Chūō newspaper, the crowd seemed intimidated by the police blocking its way. Some threw pebbles in the direction of the police or the newspaper buildings, others yelled epithets at the police, and Watanabe reported that someone shouted, “Why are you blocking us? We have the freedom to pass through the streets. Why do you protect the newspaper company and not the people’s rights?”

The term kokumin and several words including the character i (will, intent), in particular ikō (intention) and ishi (will), were at the heart of the political ideology expressed in crowd actions. The very concept of kokumin, like Hibiya Park and the Founding Day of February 11, was another child of state-making policy that turned on the bureaucratic state. The campaign to create a new body politic had succeeded so well that in all the riots people in the crowd made claims that a legitimate political order must respect the will of the people, the kokumin.

The official leadership used these terms as early as 1905. Ogawa Heikichi, an activist in the anti-treaty movement, explained to a judge that he joined in forming a political group called the Anti-Russia Comrades Society out of the need to express the “will of the people.” The numerous streetcorner leaders rising to speak on the spur of the moment also used this language. In 1905 one unidentified speaker climbed to the balcony of a small teahouse near the Shintomiza Theater, shouted that he was going to “express the will of the people,” and delivered a speech (see fig. 2). Another unnamed figure spoke in the vicinity of the imperial palace, according to police testimony, saying: “We cannot accept this treaty. We must make the will of the people prevail.”

Those in the crowds of the Siemens riot of 1914 spoke or heard similar language. At Hibiya Park, one Oshimoto, an unemployed 24-year-old, with some connections to the China Association leaders, allegedly shouted that under an “unconstitutional cabinet that does not follow the will of the people, the police are repressing us.” Seto Moto-nori was a Jiyūtō Party activist as a youth in 1884, but he later became a

71. TAS, July 10, 1911, p. 5.
75. Hanai, “Taishō 3 nen sōjō” 7, sec. 2:66–67. Oshimoto denied the remark, but even if he did not say it, the fact that the police would invent such comments indicates their ubiquity.
The tailor, living in Tokyo with no formal political affiliation. On the afternoon of the riot, he scaled a large rock near Moto-toranomon and addressed a group assembled there:

Overthrow the Yamamoto cabinet! Yamamoto [Gonnohyoe] is a great thief who gained millions in riches through his “commission.” Overthrow Yamamoto! We must sever Gonnohyoe’s head from his body. That is my opinion. . . . We must either throw Yamamoto in jail or else I’ll go take care of him and go to jail myself.

Why, asked the judge, did you say this? Seto replied: “Because it was the will of the people. I had no choice.”

The final key adjective for the crowd in the movement for imperial democracy was “constitutional” (rikkenteki). Both elusive and broad in meaning, the word holds a key to understanding the critical difference between politicians leading the Movement for Constitutional Government and the masses of people attending rallies or stoning streetcars. For practical leaders of the political parties, constitutional government by 1913 meant a system where the majority party in the Diet formed the cabinet and carried out policy with the blessing of the emperor and the support of the voters. For those in the crowd, and for some of those popular leaders characterized by Tetsuo Najita as the “hards,” the phrase “constitutional government” did not seem tied to a particular institutional arrangement.

To the opponents of a fare increase in 1906, the behavior of Home Minister Hara Kei and his Seiyukai party allies in the city council was “unconstitutional” because it opposed the popular will and injured the public good of two million Tokyoites for the sake of the private gain of the company. An unidentified speaker addressing a crowd outside the gate to Hibiya Park in 1905 made a similar point when he said: “Today the police actions at Hibiya Park were extraordinarily unconstitutional. They closed off the park, which should be free to all of us, and prevented us from voicing our demands.” Higuchi Eiichi, a 29-year-old member of the Constitutional Youth Party, also used the word in defense of freedom to assemble and express opinion. Prevented by

police from speaking to a crowd in front of the Diet, he claimed to have shouted, "Why are you doing this? Don’t you know the constitution?"80 And to the machine salesman Takei Genzō in 1914, constitutional behavior was simply the orderly, nonviolent expression of the popular will. Accused of urging the crowd to stone the police, he told the judge that, no, he had first told people they should take constitutional action and should not throw stones. After the police had drawn their swords, he still was a voice of reason, telling people to throw snowballs, for stones were dangerous.81

That a diffuse set of meanings attached to the term is not surprising. Vernacular reference to “constitutional” behavior has been wide-ranging in other contexts as well.82 Its varied usage reveals that “constitutional government” encompassed that cluster of related values at the center of the imperial democratic ideology expressed by members of the Tokyo crowd: respect for the public good, freedom to assemble, and respect for the expressed will of the people.

Party government, therefore, was only constitutional to those in the crowd when they perceived it to support these values. Hara Kei and the Seiyūkai were the darlings of the crowd just once, in 1913, and this was a union of mutual suspicion and convenience. Seiyūkai domination of the Tokyo City Council was anathema to popular activists throughout this era; as home minister in 1906 Hara and his party were twice targeted as part of the unresponsive elite that ignored the will of the people, and in 1908 the tongue-in-cheek leaflet quoted earlier enjoined attendees at the rally in Hibiya Park on February 11 not to attack Seiyūkai Dietmen. For the young Oshimoto in 1914, the cabinet, which had been formed with the support of the Seiyūkai Party, was “unconstitutional” because it did not “follow the will of the people.”

This is the heart of the matter. At the popular level, constitutional government was simply a political order in which the wielders of power favored the public good and respected the will of the people. It was also a polity where the wills of the emperor and the people were in harmony, with no selfish private or authoritarian bureaucratic interests standing between them, and where those in power furthered the greatness of the

81. Hanai, “Taishō 3 nen sōjō,” 8, sec. 3:39. For further vernacular uses of the term constitutional, see Gluck, Japan’s Modern Myths, p. 243. Whether Takei or Higuchi were lying is not a critical matter, for there is no question that they said rikkenteki (“constitutional”) in explaining themselves to the judge.
82. See Hoerder, “People and Mobs,” pp. 115–17, on the issue of constitutionality in a student protest over rotten butter at Harvard in 1766.
nation and the welfare of the people. This view echoed pre-Meiji political concepts of the reciprocal obligations of ruler and ruled, but did not simply replicate such notions. In its vociferous defense of the right to assemble, and its ongoing calls for government serving the popular will on issues of national and international policy, the Tokyo crowd transcended the more localized, passive popular conception of Tokugawa times, where common people took action only when rulers failed to maintain a moral economy through benevolent intervention.83

This conception of constitutional government clearly offered an uncertain commitment to a parliament as the structural means to ensure representation of the popular will and unity of emperor and people. Yet despite this important qualification, its spirit was democratic in important respects. The crowd wanted a government that worked “for” the people in both foreign and domestic policies. Both speech-meetings and outdoor rallies symbolically affirmed government “by” the people, recreating parliamentary procedures and adopting resolutions directed at the relevant authorities.

An episode from September 1913 offers further dramatic evidence of the popular will to participate. In response to the murder of a Japanese national in Nanking, a rally at Hibiya Park called on the government to demand reparations of China and send troops to enforce this. Some of the thirty thousand reported in attendance marched on the Foreign Ministry and tried to force open its steel gate. Some stoned the few policemen on the scene; others shouted: “Why is the gate closed? It’s the people’s Foreign Ministry!”84 The crowd then chose ten representatives “in dignified fashion,” in the words of one impromptu leader. They were able to meet an assistant to the foreign minister and present their demands.85

The bold claim to possess “the people’s Foreign Ministry,” literally unutterable before the creation of the word kokumin itself, finally affirmed a species of popular sovereignty. The sovereignty issue is treacherous. In popular conceptions, constitutional government was not unambiguously “of” the people. Despite the fact that the crowd

83. See Vlastos, Peasant Protest, ch. 2, on the “political economy of benevolence,” and chs. 7 and 8 on the local orientation of late Tokugawa rebellions.

84. “Kokumin no gaimushō da zo!” (Jiji shinpō, September 8, 1913, p. 8). Likewise, a speaker at the September 5, 1906, streetcar fare rally had stressed that the home minister was “the people’s home minister, the citizen’s home minister, not the home minister of a private corporation!” Katsuragawa, “1906-nen Tokyo,” p. 96, cites press accounts.

85. TAS, September 8, 1913, p. 5; September 9, 1913, p. 5. Jiji shinpō, September 8, 1913, p. 8.
claimed the Foreign Ministry as its own, no one in it questioned the sovereignty of the emperor. The question itself verged on treason, and the Tokyo rioters were vociferously loyal. They insisted both that a proper political order honor the emperor, and that it operate for and by the people; their behavior and expressions implied a shared locus of sovereignty in a system of imperial democracy where “the trust [goshin-nin] of the emperor is conferred directly on the decision of the majority. Therefore, constitutional politics is the politics of the unity of the ruler and the people. Now [1913] a wall stands between the emperor and the subjects, and the emperor’s trust is not conferred directly on the decision of the majority.”86 The crowd collectively articulated this vision by customarily closing outdoor rallies with two cheers of “Banzai!” one for the emperor and one for the citizens.87

FROM CROWD ACTION TO WORKING-CLASS ACTION

The 1914 riot was the last in which all elements in the chemistry of the crowd—the bourgeois leaders, the free professionals, the shopkeepers, their apprentices, artisans, and outdoor and factory laborers—reacted together. The next two Tokyo disturbances came in 1918. They were turning points in two related processes: first, the separation of the elements of the crowd; second, the transformation of imperial democracy from movement for change to structure of rule.

The relatively narrow scope of the violence after the suffrage rally of February 11, 1918, is one sign that actors and audience in the theater of the crowd were moving apart. Police clashed with rock-throwing demonstrators after an indoor rally to call for suffrage and commemorate the 30th anniversary of the constitution. Upward of a thousand people attended the rally, sponsored by leading politicians in the Kenseikai, and upon its conclusion the assembly began a march toward the imperial palace, ostensibly to bow to and cheer the emperor. Police dispersed the group, which was armed with small flags and at least one big drum, before it reached the palace. A spree of rock-throwing began, and seventeen demonstrators were arrested.88

Anticipating clashes typical of the 1920s, the violence in this case was

87. That is, “Tennō banzai! Tōkyō shimin banzai!” Two examples are found in Hōritsu shinbun, September 10, 1906, p. 27, and September 15, 1906, p. 21.
88. Tōkyō nichihonichi shinpō, February 12, 1918, p. 5.
limited to the site of the rally and the route of the march. It primarily involved the police and the pro-suffrage demonstrators themselves. The suffrage movement of the following years certainly drew on patterns of action elaborated by the earlier crowd: the rally, the speech-meeting, the demonstration, the choice of a symbolic date, and rock-throwing clashes with police. And the common justification of suffrage as the only way to build a strong, unified Japan capable of taking the lead in Asia was in the best tradition of imperial democratic ideas. But in the years after World War I, the working-class elements seceded from this movement for suffrage expansion, creating their own organizations with a different agenda.

The rice riots of the summer of 1918 provide further evidence of the separation of social and political groupings involved in earlier crowd mobilizations. They show that the urban poor could act without significant prompting from the educated leaders of the imperial democratic movement; in contrast to earlier incidents, rioters went into action with almost no preliminary buildup and very little direct or indirect encouragement from any formal “leadership” organizations.

The only relevant public act in Tokyo prior to the day of the riot was an ad placed in the Asahi on August 10, calling for an August 12 rally to discuss and protest the high price of rice. Police refused to grant a permit for the rally, although by evening a crowd of about 200 had gathered in Hibiya Park in any case. One metal worker stood on a bench, confessed that he was ill-educated and unable to give a proper speech, and called on someone else to speak, but nobody came forward. The crowd dispersed without incident when the park lights went out at 9:00 P.M.

At 6:30 the next evening, however, most of the 700 people attending a speech rally at Kanda Youth Hall, sponsored by thirteen assorted groups in favor of the dispatch of troops to Siberia, headed for Hibiya after the meeting. By 7:00 P.M. a crowd of 700 to 800 had gathered in the park, and several individuals, including at least one factory worker, rose to give short speeches attacking the cabinet, the minister of agriculture, and the nouveaux riches (narikin). By 8:00 P.M. the crowd had swelled to perhaps 2,000, and when police tried to break it up, the riot began. Several groups ranging in size from 500 to 2,000 set off on a

89. Miyachi, Nichiro sengo, p. 341.
90. The Terauchi cabinet had made its formal commitment to join the anti-Soviet expeditionary force to Siberia on August 2.
series of destructive tours of the city, smashing storefronts of all types and attacking police boxes. Crowds also confronted rice merchants and enforced immediate “fair price” sales. Crowds throughout the city carried out the same range of actions on the following three nights (August 14–16), with at least nine instances of forced rice sales in Asakusa ward alone on the 14th. On August 16 a large shipment of rice reached the city, and the violence subsided over the next two days.91 Prime Minister Terauchi and his cabinet resigned on September 29 and were replaced by Hara Kei at the head of Japan’s first political party cabinet.

The formation of the Hara cabinet was a milestone in the transformation of imperial democracy into a structure of rule. Hara himself had always feared the people, even when he profited from their anti-oligarchic energies in the riots of 1913.92 The independent actions of poor urbanites and farmers in 1918 decisively furthered the movement of Hara and his party from outsiders demanding power to insiders exercising it. As workers and the poor created their own organizations, the bourgeois leaders’ awareness of the popular threat heightened. The more conservative of the imperial democrats, such as Hara, opposed further suffrage expansion and concessions to labor, while an emerging liberal grouping of imperial democrats primarily in the Kenseikai, with allies in the bureaucracy, came to justify suffrage expansion as a way for bourgeois political leaders to regain control of the people. Thus, in 1919 the Kokumin-tō Party supported universal suffrage as a “progressive solution to the problem of social order,” and Takahashi Korekiyo, minister of agriculture in the Kenseikai cabinet that finally pushed the suffrage bill through the Diet in 1925, justified the measure as a political solution to head off “social problems.”93

Not all of the leaders in the imperial democratic movement reacted in the essentially defensive fashion of these politicians or bureaucrats in later years. A lawyer named Fuse Tatsuji, to give just one example, had called for a hard line toward the Chinese in the rally of September 1913, but by the early 1920s he had become one of Japan’s most prominent defenders of unionists, organized tenant farmers, and Koreans both in Japan and the Korean colony. His career typified an alternative re-

response of numerous lawyers, journalists, and intellectuals who resolved the tension inherent in the movement for imperial democracy by tempering or abandoning the imperialist rhetoric and broadening a liberal democratic, or even socialist, commitment.\(^9^4\)

Study of the riots clearly reveals that since at least the time of the Russo-Japanese War, politically engaged Tokyoites included factory workers, artisans, rickshaw drivers, shopkeepers, and clerks concerned with national issues. It also makes clear that few of these individuals possessed separate organizations or articulated a sense of themselves as a separate constituency. Only toward the end of this era, in a process described in the following two chapters, would Tokyo’s workers begin to organize effectively on their own and tentatively begin to articulate their separate interests. In so doing, they initially built upon the vision of imperial democracy put forward in crowd actions.

Thus, as imperial democracy became a structure of rule, numerous new working-class organizations both drew on and transformed the traditions developed by the political crowd between 1905 and 1918. They often worked in tandem with activists such as Fuse Tatsuji, and opposed the newly entrenched bourgeois parties. To build a workers’ movement, they used speech-meetings, rallies, and demonstrations, all actions familiar to the workers in Tokyo even before Suzuki Bunji founded the Yuaikai in 1912. Labor simultaneously transformed the older movement by articulating an ideology that broke out of the imperial democratic framework. Symbolic of this, it now chose a new date, May Day (first celebrated in 1920), to replace February 11 as the time for its annual public demonstration.