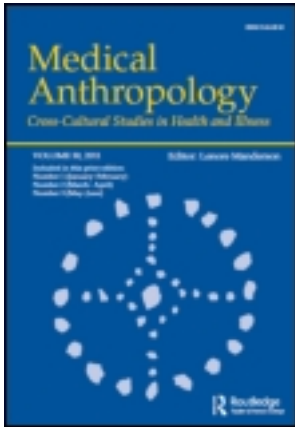


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Hemato-nationalism: The Past, Present, and Future of “Japanese Blood”

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In Japan, citizenship is based on the principle of *jus sanguinis*. Naturalized citizenship is a possibility, but there is a tacit understanding at large that really real, or “pure,” Japaneseness is qualified (and circumscribed) by “blood” (*chi, ketsu*). Blood, in this sense, is understood as an active agent responsible for catalyzing an ethos, or a national-cultural identity. For many Japanese today, blood is understood in terms of blood type, which, despite its controversial serological history, prevails as a popular mode of horoscopy, match-making, and personality analysis. I interrogate the compelling fiction of something called “Japanese blood”—a multi-authored “hemato-narrative” that has been nurtured and sustained for more than a century. To this end, I assemble a comprehensive account of the constructive and deconstructive aspects of blood and blood type that considers the cuteness industry, eugenics, blood donation, and national identity.

Keywords *blood donation, blood type, eugenics, Japan, nationalism*

In Japan, but not only in Japan, citizenship is based on the principle of *jus sanguinis*. Naturalized citizenship is, of course, a possibility, but there is a tacit understanding at large that really real, or “pure,” Japaneseness is qualified (and circumscribed) by “blood” (*chi, ketsu*). Blood, in this sense, is understood as an active agent responsible for catalyzing an ethos, or a national-cultural identity. For many Japanese today, blood is understood in terms of blood type, which, despite its controversial serological history, prevails as a popular mode of horoscopy, match-making, and personality analysis. My aim here is to historically situate the compelling fiction of something called “Japanese blood”—a multi-authored “hemato-narrative” that has been nurtured and sustained for more than a century.

Beginning with the most recent incarnation of blood as a family of cute cartoon characters, I retrace the provenance of the politics of blood and blood type and their invocations and applications. The contentious biopolitics of blood, or hemato-politics, has been exercised in many

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places, and there is a vast (mostly Euro-American) scholarly literature of rhetorics of blood and blood type. My focus on Japan helps to balance the Eurocentrism of that literature.

BLOOD: CUTE, CURSED, AND CONGRUOUS

Cute

In Japan today, cuteness is a major industry. Hello Kitty may be the best known ambassador of cuteness outside Japan, but within Japan she has dozens of rivals for that title, including Kenketsu-*chan*, the blood donation (*kenketsu*) mascots. The lead mascot, Chitchi (Lil' Blood, Figure 1), has her own homepage on the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare's website, which includes the following biographical profile: her genus is Love-Spirit (*ai no yōsei*); her native place is Help (or Rescue) Love Island (*tasuke airando*); she is perseverant and helping others is her number one priority; her hobby is gazing at Heart Fountain (*hāto no izumi*) on the island; her dream is to become friends with everyone in Japan; her hearing is acute on account of her big ears; her favorite phrase is, "I'm going to check it out" (*chotto chekku to shimasu yo*); and her favorite food is soft ice cream (<http://www.mhlw.go.jp/new-info/kobetu/iyaku/kenketsugo/5a/about.html>).

Chitchi herself has no blood type; instead, the A, O, B, and AB blood groups are represented by her four spirit friends on the island: Eitchi (A), Ōtan (O), Bibi (B), and Ebirin (AB). They are distinguished by pendants bearing the letter of their blood type and by different emoticon-like expressions (Figure 2). Curiously, and disturbingly (for reasons I elaborate next), these four government-sanctioned characters have been given personalities that reinforce the wholly unscientific, and even discriminatory, but hugely popular practice of blood-type horoscopy in Japan. Eitchi, the spirit of type A, is in charge of publicity, is very responsible, and organizes everyone. The spirit of type O, Ōtan, summons and attracts people, and is always an energetic



FIGURE 1 Chitchi, the main Kenketsu-*chan*, or blood-donation mascot, thanking donors in advance. From www.mhlw.go.jp/new-info/kobetu/iyaku/kenketsugo/5a/about.html (color figure available online).



FIGURE 2 The Kenketsu-chan characters. Chitchi's blood-typed companions. From www.mhlw.go.jp/seisaku/12.html (color figure available online).

mood maker. Bibi, the honest spirit of type B, is resolutely tenacious, while Ebirin, the spirit of type AB, is in charge of nursing, being of a kind and caring disposition.

The five blood-donation mascots share their island utopia with several other equally cute (*kawaii*) comrades who play important roles in the blood donation process. Their nicknames are based on substance and function: cottonballs (Wata-chan) and band-aids (Bansoku-chan), both identified as spirits, and oxygen (O₂ Bōya [Boy]), platelets (Ban-chan), hemoglobin (Setchan) and white blood cells (Hatchan). Back on earth in a story-book Japan, all of them are assisted by four human friends with metaphoric names: Kensuke (Health Helper), a big brother figure whose goal in life is to help others; Aiwa (Beautiful Harmony/Japan), a college co-ed committed to recruiting blood donors from among her peers; and two reliable child assistants, Tsuyoshi (Strength) and Aichan (Lil' Love) (<http://www.mhlw.go.jp/new-info/kobetu/iyaku/kenketsugo/5a/friend.html>). These human characters are nearly identical to the nuclear family featured in an animated advertisement for blood donation that is hyperlinked to Kenketsu-chan's homepage. The Ministry's website also includes the lyrics and recordings of the "Blood Donation Calisthenics Song" (*Kenketsu taisō no uta*; Figure 3) and the "How to Draw Kenketsu-chan Song" (*Kenketsu-chan egaki uta*), downloadable Kenketsu-chan computer wallpaper, information on how to donate blood, a calendar of events, and an FAQ folder.

Kenketsu-chan's homepage and the various cartoon protagonists involved with blood donation collectively illustrate several key features that have characterized the biopolitics of blood in Japan since the late nineteenth century. These are the quasi-magical properties of "Japanese blood" and its personification through blood-type characterology and what I have coined the hemato-archipelagic construction of Japanese citizenship, which is based on the principle of *jus sanguinis*.

The "cutesification" of blood and blood type as personified by the five mascots apparently dates to 2003 when a law to secure a stable supply of blood products was implemented, stipulating that the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, along with prefectural governments, must formulate blood promotion plans every fiscal year, working in tandem with the Red Cross, which has been the entity responsible for blood collection since 1952. Thirteen years earlier,

“Blood Donation Calisthenics Song” (*kenketsu taisō no uta*)

A “hello” always said with gusto
 Yes! Chitchi!
(Blood donation calisthenics will now begin. Give greetings, make a tight fist)
 Today’s joy of good health shared with everyone, the
 Giving Chitchi
(Extend both hands, curl and open your palms)
 One way to help someone in the world
 Blood donation with love
(A small amount, a large amount)
 It doesn’t hurt at all so it’s okay, smile happily
 Yes! Chitchi!
(Twist your body, rotate your arms)

Take two big deep breaths
 And in a flash, Yes! All done.
(Take a deep breath, take a deep breath)

Says Wata-chan (cottonball) offside, “Let’s do it again, okay?”

FIGURE 3 The calisthenics song was composed as a traditional festive song and is performed in a manner reminiscent of Okinawan folk music (with a three-stringed *sanshin* and trademark refrain). My translation. Lyrics and the accompanying exercise and donation instructions (in parentheses) along with a recording can be accessed at www.mhlw.go.jp/new-info/kobetu/iyaku/kenketsugo/5a/song.html.

in 1990, the Ministry established the Blood Products Research Organization to coordinate the achievement of self-sufficiency in all blood products and to expedite the end of Japan’s dependence on imported blood products (Blood Products Research Organization 2010). Following the precedent of commercial consumer advertisers, the Ministry has exploited the affective cogency of cuteness in order to promote among the general public not sales but important information and a spirit of volunteerism.

Cursed

The positive valence of blood and the familiar conviviality associated with blood donation are historically recent attributions. For most of Japan’s 15 centuries-long cultural history, blood was a cursed and dangerous substance. Prior to the seventeenth century, blood was associated with death and symbolic pollution. In the form of menstruation, and mixed with fluids accompanying childbirth, blood was classified in Shinto and Buddhism as a “ritually dirty” (*kegare*) substance that was especially harmful to males (Nishida 1995:18–19). In addition to banishing females from certain “sacred” sites and spaces—a practice that continues today—males could avoid “blood poisoning” by undertaking Shinto purification rituals. According to cultural historian

Nishida Tomomi, between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries blood gradually acquired a positive meaning of life force and lineage. With the promulgation of the first constitution in 1890 during the Meiji period (1868–1912), blood and specifically “paternal blood” became the main criterion of and for nationality and citizenship, which continue to be based on the principle of *jus sanguinis* (in terms of parentage and not descent). Only in 1985 was “maternal blood” legally recognized as an equal agent of nationality and citizenship.

Nishida (1995) surmised that the terms *ketsuen* (blood relationship), *kettō* (blood line), and *ketsuzoku* (blood relatives), indicative of an affirmative connotation of blood, were coined around the mid-nineteenth century when they began to appear in a wide range of literary sources. Before blood acquired its new, constructive meaning, heredity was denoted by the term *kotsu-niku*, or bone-flesh, where bone (*kotsu*) referred to paternity, and flesh (*niku*) referred to maternity (32–35). Another term in use since at least the tenth century to identify paternity specifically was *tane* (seed). From the late-nineteenth century onward, the Japanese-style term *hitodane* (person seed) was used to denote heredity. Thus, the phrase *tane ga kawaru* (seed changes) refers to children with the same mother and a different father (35). Nishida also noted that in Japan, unlike in China, blood relations (qua heredity) per se were not especially privileged over other types of social intimacy, such as adoption, which has a long history in Japan as a pragmatic strategy of insuring household stability and continuity (18,65,76; Bryant 1990). Since the Meiji period, however, blood as a cipher of and for Japaneseness has been privileged.

Congruous

Let us now turn to the matter of blood type. Physician Hara Kimata’s (1882–1922) 1916 article in *Igaku Shinpō* (Medical News) allegedly was the first in Japan to discuss the relationship between national-cultural temperament and blood type. Kimata had studied in Germany with the internist Emil von Dungern (1867–1961), who, in 1910 discovered, with the assistance of Polish serologist Ludwik Hirszfild (1884–1954), the heritability of the A, B, O, and AB blood groups.¹ Their research tracked the statistical distribution of blood-type groups along “racial” lines, and was informed in part by the nascent eugenics movement discussed next. Serologists like von Dungern and Hirszfild believed in the alleged superiority of North and West Europeans, the majority of who were type A. Type B appeared to be more prevalent in South and East Asians (Boaz 2009:37, 45, 49, 56, 61ff, 218 fn.69).

In the early 1920s, the Vienna-born American anthropologist Reuben Ottenberg (1882–1959) proposed that the “races” of the world could be classified into six categories on the basis of the pattern of distribution of the A, B, and O blood types. Ottenberg’s categories were European, Intermediate, Hunan, Indian-Manchurian, African-South Asian, and Pacific-American. He grouped the Japanese in the Hunan category along with the Southern Chinese, Hungarians, and Romanian Jews (Ottenberg 1925:1393–1395). Ottenberg’s groupings were challenged by the German-trained Japanese geneticist and physician Furuhashi Tanemoto (1891–1975). Furuhashi proposed that the Hunan category be relabeled Japanese-type (*Nippongata*). He insisted that the Japanese and central Europeans—minus the Jews—should form one group (Furuhashi 1929:125–126; Hayashida 1976:146–147; Suzuki 1983:180). Furuhashi’s proposal garnered a lot of publicity in Japan but from all accounts was ignored by Ottenberg.²

Furuhata was an internationally respected serologist; in a 1929 article in the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, he challenged the von Dungern-Hirszfeld hypothesis of the Mendelian laws informing blood-group inheritance (Schneider 1996:297–299). At the same time, however, and particularly during the period of Japan’s intensified imperialist aggression in Asia (1930–1945), Furuhata regularly authored or was cited in newspaper articles on topics ranging from practical information on blood donation to blood-type character analysis (Furuhata 1944:4; *Hanzai kagaku no jikken* 1937:11). A regional director of the Japanese Race Hygiene Society and a popular public speaker, Furuhata also lectured at the public exhibition on genes held from November 14–22, 1939, at Science Museum in Tokyo’s Ueno Park. The exhibition included displays on the genetics of blood type and eugenic sterilization (*danshu yūseigaku*) (Satō 2002:35; *Ueno de iden tenrankai* 1939:11).

Whereas the nationalization of Japanese blood was marked by the *jus sanguinis* criterion for citizenship in the Meiji Constitution (1890), the origins of the popular culturization of blood type are found in Furuhata’s public relations efforts and especially in the sensationalistic publications and radio broadcasts of his contemporary, social psychologist Furukawa Takeji (1891–1940). Beginning in 1927, Furukawa zealously promoted the unscientific but now taken-for-granted notion of a connection between blood type and personality. Basically, he simplified prevailing scientific theories about the racial distribution of blood types and melded them with an eclectic mix of psychological concepts, a combination which proved seductive to the general public (Furukawa 1932a, 1932b). Practical, albeit discriminatory, applications of Furukawa’s thesis followed. In 1930, for example, a new blank for recording one’s blood type was added to job application forms in the belief that such information would help to evaluate a candidate’s employment potential. Even cities were characterized by the blood type of the majority of their residents. Thus high concentrations of O- and B-type blood made Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya “active” cities whereas Kyoto, with high concentrations of A- and AB-type blood, was a “passive” city (Furukawa 1930; <http://chiri-zemi.web.infoseek.co.jp/framepagekansai.html>; Maeda 1930:5; Okuda 2005; Saitō and Watanabe 1995). Furukawa also analyzed Taiwanese and Ainu as distinct groups on the basis of their blood type (Furukawa 1932a).

Today, the notion that blood type determines temperament is even more popular than it was more than 70 years ago due to the efforts of the late journalist, Nomi Masahiko (1925–1981), who during the 1970s published 65 bestselling books that basically recycled Furukawa’s thesis. After Nomi’s death in 1981, his son Toshitaka (1948–2006) continued the family’s lucrative “blood business”; until his own death, Toshitaka directed the Institute of Blood-type Humanics (Ketsuekigata Ningengaku Kenkyūjo) reorganized in 2004 as a nonprofit global organization, the Human-Science ABO Center. The Center actively solicits ABO Club members through its websites in Japanese, English, and Indonesian, and has established branches in several countries (<http://www.human-abo.org/top.html>).

SANGUINIS EUGENICS

We have shown that there seems to be a correlation between blood-type and temperament. It should, therefore, be possible to determine temperament scientifically without the subjective judgments of different observers. This should prove of value in various fields: 1) In education, especially in matters of discipline and vocational guidance; 2) In applied psychology, to the choice of vocations; 3) In folk-psychology, to the study of the character of peoples; 4) In medical science, to the problem of the

relation between mind and body; 5) To eugenics, and to other mental and social phenomena. (Furukawa 1930:505)

By the 1930s, when Furukawa noted the relevance of blood type to the field of eugenics, the “wellborn science” was already deeply rooted in Japan. Coined by Francis Galton (1822–1911) in 1883, the term eugenics quickly entered the Japanese vocabulary as the romanized *yuzenikkusu* and as the neologisms *yūseigaku* (science of superior birth) and *jinshu kaizengaku* (science of race betterment). These terms were used synonymously with two terms coined a little earlier: race betterment (*minzoku/jinshu kairyō*) and race hygiene (*minzoku/jinshu eisei*).³ *Minzoku* and *jinshu*, the two Japanese words for “race” in both the social and phenotypical senses, for the most part were used interchangeably, although *jinshu* remains the more clinical, social-scientific term (cf. *Rasse*) and *minzoku* remains the more popular—and populist—term (cf. *Volk*). When prefixed with names, such as Nippon and Yamato, *minzoku* signifies the conflation of phenotype, geography, culture, spirit, history, and nationhood. These semantic and semiotic inventions were part of the ideological agenda of the Meiji state and were incorporated into the postwar constitution of 1947, which retained the definition of nationality and citizenship as a right of blood.

The interarticulation of the discourses of eugenics and blood was realized from the late-nineteenth century onward. Women’s magazines were among the first popular venues for factual information about both subjects. For example, a lecture on blood by the physician Miyake Hidekimi was published in *Fujin Eiseikai Zasshi* (*Journal of the Women’s Hygiene Association*) in 1892. Miyake invoked European biological research on the character (*seishitsu*) of blood to dismantle traditional Chinese ideas about blood: “through the power of biology we can understand the true functions of blood which were difficult to assess under the [traditional] Chinese system” (Miyake 1892:2).⁴ Between 1910 and 1911, the same journal published a series of scientific articles on blood by the distinguished physician Niki Kenzō (1873–1966) who summarized the “ancient history of blood” and provided a litany of amazing statistics involving blood, such as how much blood is pumped by the heart over what distance in how much time, and so forth (Niki 1910:1–3). Folklore about blood, blood types, and the history and present-day methods of blood transfusion were the subjects of an article published in *Aikoku Fujin* (*Patriotic Women*) in 1929. The author equated blood with life itself, noting in this context that the blood of a young person is popularly (and erroneously) referred to as *shinsen na chi* (fresh, pure blood) and that of an elderly person as *kitanaichi* (dirty or soiled blood) (Ōsako 1929:19–20).⁵

In Japan, the discourse of eugenics clustered around two essentially incommensurable positions concerning blood: “pure-blood” (*junketsu*) and “mixed-blood” (*konketsu*). Pundits favoring the pure-blood position were keen on preserving the eugenic integrity of what was, in their view, the pristine “Japanese race.” Those promoting the mixed-blood position enumerated the eugenic benefits of hybrid vigor through the mixing of Japanese and non-Japanese blood (see Robertson 2001, 2002). The concept of hybrid vigor was introduced in 1884 by Takahashi Yoshio (1861–1937) in his essay *Nippon jinshu kairyōron* (Proposal to improve the Japanese race). A journalist for the *Jiji Shinpō* (*Current Events*), a leading newspaper at the time founded by Fukuzawa Yūkichi (1835–1901) two years earlier in Osaka, Takahashi introduced the idea of arranging marriages between Japanese males and white females, which he called the “mixed-marriage of yellows and whites” (*kōhaku zakkon*).⁶ Following in the footsteps of Fukuzawa, a distinguished political theorist, Takahashi also traveled to the United States where

he gained the impression that (white) American females were taller and stronger than their Japanese counterparts and, consequently, made superior birth mothers. The idea behind his proposal was to create as quickly as possible a new generation of taller, heavier Japanese. Takahashi never addressed the complicated logistics of plan: who these women were, and how they might be persuaded to procreate with Japanese men.

The “mixed-marriage” proposal never moved ahead. Advocates of the pure-blood position acted quickly to criticize the proposal to marry yellows and whites, pointing out that such hybrid individuals would be not pure Japanese but an entirely new category of human being (Katō 1886). Although the pure-blood position emerged fairly quickly as the dominant one, the pros and cons of both platforms were hotly debated in the eugenics literature through 1945. In fact, these debates were so antagonistic that in 1892, (Baron) Kaneko Kentarō (1853–1942), the trusted aide of Prime Minister (Count) Itō Hirobumi (1841–1909) (who had also served as Japan’s first prime minister 1885–1888), wrote to Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) requesting advice about how to settle the rancorous debates in Japan over the pros and cons of mixed blood marriages. Spencer, a Social-Darwinist whose political theories influenced the formulation of the Meiji Constitution and Japan’s gradual democratization after centuries of martial rule, responded with resounding support for the pure-blood position. Citing the “abundant proof” in the deleterious consequences of mixed marriages, Spencer strongly urged Kaneko to “peremptorily interdict marriages of Japanese with foreigner” (Spencer 1926:168–169).

Concerns about mixed-blood marriages, first aired in the late nineteenth-century in the context of nascent Japanese imperialism, continue today in other guises, such as in debates about citizenship and “international marriages.” These ideologies of blood—both pure and mixed—were anchored in competing conceptions of the body and its phenotypic or outward characteristics. The virtues of hybridity were again advanced during the heyday of Japanese colonialism in Manchuria by soldier, writer, and political theorist Ijichi Susumu (1904–1966). In an article published in 1939 in *Kaizō* (*Reconstruction*), a popular, generally liberal, literary periodical, Ijichi advocated for the intermarriage of Japanese males and “carefully selected” Manchurian females. He referred to his proposal as a “racial blood transfusion” (*minzoku yūketsu*), arguing that “mixing superior Japanese blood with inferior Manchurian blood would stimulate the development and civilization of inferior peoples by producing hybrid offspring who would mature as natural political leaders” (Ijichi 1939:85, 86, 88). Ijichi’s views recapitulated the rationale behind the proposal a generation earlier to marry “yellows and whites,” although by 1939, white was represented by Japanese males and yellow by select Manchurian females. His views also paralleled the dominant position of the state’s assimilation policy toward the aboriginal Ainu of Hokkaido, who were categorized as “proto-Japanese.” Assimilation through miscegenation, or “blood sharing,” would accelerate their evolution as a “civilized” people (Takakura 1942).

Ijichi’s idea of “racial blood transfusion” was rebuffed by Tōgō Minoru (1881–1959), a bureaucrat, politician, and theorist of colonialism who had been an exchange student in Berlin. Tōgō’s proposal for preserving the purity of Japanese blood formed the eugenic core of state policy on assimilation. He was especially concerned by the high percentage of mixed-blooded children in the Philippines, especially in the Davao region, where he claimed that more than 40% of the students in Japanese state-run schools (*kokumingakkō*) were mixed-blooded (*konketsu*). In Manila, more than 30% of students were of mixed parentage. Reiterating earlier arguments about the detrimental effects of diluting the pure blood (*junketsu*) of the Japanese through miscegenation, Tōgō cited various Euro-American scholars who called attention to the allegedly

degenerative consequences of racial hybridization. Because, Tōgō argued, mixed-blooded offspring represented a “new race” (*shinminzoku*), miscegenation by definition could only fail to produce the objective of assimilation, namely “Japanization” (*Nipponka*). Furthermore, he asserted, mixed marriages between Japanese and non-Japanese Asians would effectively “dissolve the spirit or soul (*tamashii*) of the original Japanese race and national body” (Tōgō 1925;1936:141–144; 1945:33). In other words, for Tōgō, miscegenation was a sure means of squandering a finite and valuable cultural resource: Japanese blood. His views both reflected and reinforced the dominant imperialist ideology of antimiscegenation coupled with pure-bloodedness.

Blood Talks

Inspired by the German Wandervogel and Czech Sokol physical fitness organizations, and with the support of leading politicians, scholars, physicians, and military officials, Ikeda Shigenori (1892–1966), founded Yūsei Undō (Eugenic Exercise/Movement Association) in 1926. Along with a eugenics journal of the same name, Ikeda aimed to foster among the general public an interest in incorporating hygienic and eugenic practices into everyday life practices. The journal ceased publication in January 1930, the year when the physician Nagai Hisomu (1876–1957) inaugurated the Japanese Race Hygiene Association (Nippon Minzoku Eisei Kyōkai), in which Ikeda thereupon served as a regional director.⁷ Ikeda was profoundly committed to both maintaining and improving the quality and caliber of Japanese blood, and was committed to the welfare of girls and women—he earned degrees in women’s studies and eugenics at Jena University in Germany (1919–1924) as a reporter for the *Hōchi Shinbun*, then one of the top dailies (Robertson 2002:193–194). Ikeda also founded the co-ed Ashi no Kai (Legs and Feet Society) in 1927, under the auspices of his movement, which sponsored nature hikes and outdoor games for young women and men.

Also in 1927, Ikeda crafted a “eugenics manifesto” that was published in the January issue of his journal, *Yūsei Undō*. As evident in the following excerpt, he alluded to blood as the agent that determines outward appearances (e.g., phenotype) and performances (e.g., kinship relations), and that materializes that which is unacknowledged (e.g., membership in an indissoluble hemato-national community).

Blood talks (*chi wa mono o iu*). Japanese are, in the end, Japanese. Blood binds with blood. Japanese are, in the end, Japanese. There is nothing that talks more substantively than blood. There is nothing that binds together human beings more intrinsically than blood. (Ikeda 1927:2)

Furthermore, Ikeda claimed,

Because we do not share borders with another country our contacts with foreign peoples have been superficial and thus our blood has been divinely protected [from mixing] . . . our blood ties as a grand family-state, are unique in the world. (1927:3)

Blood, according to Ikeda, is a substance that possesses irreversible and indissoluble binding properties and is a valuable resource that enables the vigorous continuity of Japanese society and culture. A contemporary and colleague of Furuhashi and Furukawa, Ikeda’s discursive construction of blood drew from the new science of blood types as well as from the metaphoric uses of

blood by nationalists as a cipher for specifically modern ideas of disciplinary biopower. Not to be underestimated in this context was the admiration he cultivated while in Germany for the cult of “blood and soil” (*Blut und Boden*) taken to extremes by the Nazis, and his essays and books on the Wandervogel and Hitler were advertised in his journal. In his manifesto and in dozens of lectures and publications, Ikeda repeated the slogan of his movement: “superior seeds, superior fields, superior cultivation” (*yoi tane, yoi hatake, yoi teire*), which, he explained, was a metaphor for “superior genes, superior society, superior education” (*yoi iden, yoi shakai, yoi kyōiku*) (1927:2–3).

Ikeda’s invocation of the narrative agency of blood further helped to ensure its widespread use as a popular metaphor for shared heredity or shared ancestry, and even for the essential material imagined to constitute the “Japanese race.” Today, as I noted, blood talks and even sings in the cutesified guise of the Kenketsu-chan mascots! Ikeda took the initiative to declare (unofficially) December 21, 1928 as “blood depuration day” (*jōketsu dei*), on which his Eugenic Exercise Association sponsored free blood tests at the Tokyo Hygiene Laboratory. According to Ikeda’s report, by early afternoon 2000 persons, mostly women, had their blood typed and scanned for pathogens. A second day of free tests was offered five days later to accommodate the crowds, whose presence was construed by Ikeda as evidence of the popular acceptance of eugenic precepts (*Shimin no jōketsu dei* 1928). Public blood-testing, blood-typing, and blood-donation clinics were organized on a frequent basis under the aegis of the Ministry of Welfare after it was established in 1938 and were widely publicized in the daily newspapers. Official guidelines for screening blood were not implemented until 1948. Ikeda did not limit his conception of the purity of blood to the absence of pathogens, for, as I discuss next, pure blood, irrespective of blood type—was also used by him as both a marker of and a condition for Japaneseness and racial purity.

BLOOD AND PERFORMATIVITY

As Ikeda discerned, blood talks, and in the course of talking, reflects and conveys the manner in which the Japanese have shaped their physical and metaphysical worlds, and have conceptualized fundamental and perduring assumptions about Japaneseness and otherness. He was among many eugenicists internationally to realize that to exercise control over blood was to shape, quite literally, both a people and their cultural genealogy, and to determine the manner in which they interacted among themselves and with the rest of the world. In this sense, the expression “blood talks” can be productively understood as both a performance and a performative utterance.

“Performance at its most general and most basic level is a carrying out, a putting into action or into shape,” either through an individual production or through a collection of practices (Maclean 1988:xi; Kershaw 1992:3). Performance is something a subject or agent does, such as donate blood. Performativity, however—as Judith Butler (1993) and Don Kulick (2003) have elaborated in the context of gendering practices—is the process through which subjectivity or agency emerges or is realized. In a way, performance already incorporates a concept of performativity in that it involves turning something—blood—into something else, such as citizenship, a national body (*kokutai*), or a family state (*kokka*), perceived as unique or eugenically superior (e.g., Crane 2001:173). I discovered a particularly cogent illustration of this concept in the course of reading wartime newspaper notices of blood-donation campaigns urging young

women and men to perform *kenketsu kennō*. *Kennō* is a reverential, even religious, ritual of offering or dedicating something of value to the gods, the state, or to very important persons. Like its synonym *hōnō* (see Robertson 2008), *kennō* constitutes an illocutionary act or a communicative activity that attempts to provoke or invite in someone or something, a response or reaction of some sort. As stated in one wartime newspaper article, the response or reaction in question was the “medical treatment and therapy of battlefield soldiers” (*Asahi Shinbun* 1944).

Significantly, Ikeda, in both his journal and movement, incorporated the word exercise (*undō*), which means more than just a physical activity undertaken in order to improve one’s health. As Crane (2001) observed, the language of exercise “provides a way to account for the effects of performance as a material process rather than as (or in addition to) representation” (177). Exercise alludes to the development of bodily skills as well as to the kinesthetic experience of a performance. Unlike “discipline,” which connotes a teleology of control, “exercise” is more open-ended, naming the movement or action through which the body becomes something else and actively participates in making meaning (Crane 2001:177). The postwar Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare’s “Blood Donation Calisthenics Song” (Figure 3) can also be understood in this context.

The naturalization of something called Japanese blood as part of Japan’s nationalistic modernization beginning the late nineteenth century helps to explain how blood donation came to constitute a “performative performance” of Japaneseness. Prior to the mid-1960s, virtually all blood donations were purchased from, largely, impoverished donors. When, in 1964, the US ambassador to Japan, Edwin Reischauer (1910–1990) contracted hepatitis from a blood transfusion during emergency surgery after he was stabbed by a mentally ill Japanese youth, the Japanese government quickly adopted a resolution to promote the voluntary donation of blood from screened donors. Since the scandal in the mid-1980s involving the use of unheated imported blood products infected with HIV, the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, together with the Japanese Red Cross and blood donation Internet “clubs,” such as www.kenketsu.com, have made domestic self-sufficiency in the supply of blood an urgent goal. Implicit—and sometimes explicit, depending on the source—in the rhetoric of self-sufficiency is the assumption that Japanese blood is a unique and vital cultural resource that will ensure the future health of the otherwise resource-poor island nation.⁸

The performative aspect of blood donation today is generated by two practices. One is the concept of affective bonding through voluntary blood donations, evident in such slogans as “Express your love by donating blood” (Tokyo Lions Club). In this case, voluntary blood donation is characterized as the key to the “development of a peaceful and delightful society” (Mitsuboshi 2000). The other practice involves the meticulous screening of donors, who must complete a detailed, nationally standardized questionnaire available only in Japanese. In addition to the explicit requirement that potential blood donors must be able to read Japanese—or have someone translate the document—information gathered about family history (which alludes to sexuality) may be used to sort candidates into “desirable donor” and “disqualified donor,” and Japanese and non-Japanese categories. In short, the ideal of self-sufficiency in voluntarily donated blood seems both to implicitly re-enforce the century-old perception of blood donation as a right (and rite) of citizenship, and blood itself as an agent of Japaneseness.

Thus far, I have referred to blood as a cultural resource in a self-evident way. Cultural resource is most often used as a synonym for historic property, such as physically present historic properties (buildings, battlefields) and other tangible historic materials, such as artifacts and

documents. The term has also been used to identify properties in the sense of qualities and characteristics whose materiality is less obvious and subject to transformation, such as folk life, traditions and customs, theater groups, orchestras, and other community-type amenities (Kramer 1996). George Kramer, a historic preservation consultant, observes that cultural resources “reflect and convey the manner in which people have shaped their world, both physically and perceptually (Kramer 1996). Japanese blood, blood-typology, and blood-donation practices, as previously discussed, fit within Kramer’s definition of cultural resources.⁹ The underlying rationale of self-sufficiency in blood products today is strikingly similar to eugenicist Ikeda Shigenori’s convictions about the performative agency of Japanese blood, which, as he claimed in his 1927 manifesto, both enables and derives from the uniquely integral network of social and historical relationships that constitute Japan. Today, the endearing Chitchi and her cute entourage promote voluntary blood donation as a process that will ensure the integrity of the Japanese social network.

Blood Donation Guidelines

The blood donation mascots have been kept very busy these past several years. Especially targeted in the kenketsu campaigns are 16 year olds (who can legally donate only 200 ml of blood until they turn 18, when they can donate double that amount) and metropolitan residents (Mitsuboshi 2000). Every New Year, the Japanese Red Cross Society initiates a campaign that coincides with “coming of age day” on January 10 to encourage 20 year olds to donate blood. And beginning in 2007, posters and fliers featuring Kenketsu-chan were widely posted and circulated in public places, including subway cars. Other popular icons, like Hello Kitty, are also mobilized to encourage voluntary blood donations.

Hello Kitty dolls were perched here and there in the modest waiting room of the Akiba (short for Akihabara) Blood Donation Room, established in 2005, which I visited in February 2007. The shelves were stocked with *manga* (comic books), trendy magazines, and DVDs. In October 2009, an expansive state-of-the-art clinic designed to look like the Starship Enterprise opened nearby to great media fanfare. The free Wi-Fi, display cases filled with cute figurines and holograms of the same, and dozens of video games and movies were designed to attract even more of the mostly young men who had made the old Akiba Blood Donation Room one of the most successful in Japan (<http://www.tokyo.bc.jrc.or.jp/rooms/roomhpr/room15.html>). Akihabara, Tokyo’s headquarters for electronic equipment, has blossomed over the past decade as a center for the sale of *manga* and anime, and their *otaku* (“geek”) fans. The district is also flush with maid cafes, where young women in French maid costumes mother their mostly male clientele.

In 2006, the Japan Red Cross Society began offering various perks in an attempt to reverse the decline in blood donation in Tokyo, and thus on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays at the Akiba Blood Donation Room, women dressed as French maids massage the hands of blood donors following their procedure. There was no maid on the occasion of my visit on a Friday afternoon, but I was struck by how only two of the 25 mostly young adults present were female. As they sipped their cream of corn soup and nibbled on chocolates following their donation, they chatted enthusiastically about the palm-reading services offered every fourth Friday at the clinic. The staff returned their blood donation registration booklets along with “point cards” to use toward gifts, such as the colorful glass sake cups on display. Excepting the loyal donors in

Akihabara, the declining number of blood donors overall deeply worries the Japanese Red Cross. In 1993, 7.2 million people gave blood in Japan, compared to 5 million in 2006 (Blood Products Research Organization 2010:8). As a strategy to increase the number of repeats the Red Cross has begun to offer various services to those who register for membership on the “repeater” homepage, such as free health consultations from doctors, and health and diet counselors at each blood center.

While such perks and services are free, they compromise the principle of volunteerism and conjure up disturbing analogies to the system of paid blood donations prior to 1964. Then too, as Douglas Starr has noted, blood donation generated spin-off businesses: “Vendors gathered up and down the lines, to sell fortifying dishes of *zenzai*, a soup of beans and sugar, and *niku udon*, noodles with beef and eggs” (Starr 1999:162). The hand massages, palm readings, and manicures today may be complimentary services to reward (unpaid) blood donors, but the sponsoring organizations are also benefiting from the free advertising.

During my afternoon at the Akiba Blood Donation Room, I took some time to review the very detailed information on a Red Cross poster spelling out the relationship between one’s fitness as a blood donor and one’s travel and/or residence abroad. The poster was in Japanese; nowhere in the clinic was there any information on blood donation available in any other language. In contrast, the website of the Japanese Red Cross includes some information in English albeit only a fraction of that in Japanese and no information at all on how and where to donate blood (<http://www.jrc.or.jp/donation/index.html>). Although the nationality of prospective donors is not singled out, the criteria effectively preclude a broad swath of foreigners and Japanese who had traveled or lived abroad. For example, in 2005, the Ministry of Health ruled that anyone who has spent more than one night in the United Kingdom and much of western Europe between 1980 and 1996 could not donate blood on account of possible contamination from Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (related to Bovine Spongiform Encephalitis). Even the Japanese Red Cross Society raised concerns at the time that this ruling could exacerbate the blood-supply shortage by too strictly limiting the pool of available Japanese donors (Mitchell 2005; Wade 2005), and this criterion was subsequently changed to one month for the period of residence in the United Kingdom from 1997–2004. However, anyone who has returned from abroad cannot donate blood until four weeks have elapsed (to prevent the spread of West Nile virus through blood products).

The blood donation instructions in Japanese are very specific. The Japanese Red Cross specifies that a female donor must weigh at least 40 kilograms (80 pounds) and male donors at least 45 kilograms (99 pounds)—the minimum weight in the United States is 110 pounds for both sexes. As in the United States, persons with various acute and chronic illnesses, and males who have had sexual relations with other males, are ineligible, as are persons who have had their bodies tattooed or pierced within six months of donating blood. Also ineligible are those who have lived for between six months to five years since 1980 in countries spanning the European continent and parts of the Middle East.

These restrictive measures are considered necessary to protect the safety of the national blood supply, and are really no different from the blood-donation eligibility guidelines in the United States, Australia, or many other postindustrial countries. Moreover, Japanese blood donation policies and facilities are far superior to those in China, where blood is still purchased and safety measures are arbitrary (Yu 2008). And in South Korea, a fear of infection from the needles used in collecting blood—as opposed to a fear of contaminated blood products—has kept individuals

from donating blood, resulting in a chronic shortage of domestic blood products and a critical dependency on imported blood products (Kim 2006).

What does distinguish the Japanese blood-donation guidelines from those followed today in the United States or Australia, however, is the tacit belief in the value and desirability of blood from “pure” Japanese. This tacitness, as opposed to concrete directives per se, has provoked frustration among some foreigners in Japan eager to donate—especially in the wake of the trifold disasters of March 11, 2011 (earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown).¹⁰ Apart from charges of discrimination against gay men in particular, a number of foreigners have blogged that their charitable intentions were thwarted by the arbitrary way in which fluency in Japanese was imposed as a precondition for donation (e.g., <http://www.debito.org/?p=8636>).

So, what exactly is a pure Japanese anyway? As I discussed earlier, the adjective “pure” (*jun*) was used unabashedly during the period of Japanese imperialism and by early eugenicists who promoted the pure-blood position. But in popular parlance today—with the exception of xenophobic groups, such as the ultra-nationalist Junnihonjinkai (Association of Pure Japanese)¹¹—pure is most often defined by apophasis, that is, by enumerating what is not Japanese-like, from certain phenotypic features to an ignorance of Japanese or foreign-accented but fluent Japanese, all factors separate from the possession of a Japanese passport.

Alternatives to Blood Donation

In part as a solution to the diminishing supply of Japanese blood, scientists, led by the late Professor Tsuchida Eishun (1931–2010) of Waseda University, are developing a totally artificial or synthetic blood, which is being tested in laboratory animals and select human patients. Once certified—and an effective mass-production technique perfected—synthetic blood may occasion an end to blood donation, prescreening for diseases, blood group differentiation in stocks, and shortages of blood in the wake of big accidents and natural disasters (<http://www.waseda.jp/prj-artifblood/purpose%20Eng.htm>). It is not clear from the current literature, whether Japanese-ness is considered an integral part, or ideological metonym, of artificial blood. Tsuchida and his colleagues affiliated with the Society of Blood Substitutes founded in 1993, do however underscore the special needs in Japan for artificial blood, from the frequency of earthquakes to problems associated with imported blood. Artificial blood is regarded as *mukokuseki* (nationality-less), thereby opening the possibility of universal donorship, although the primary motive for its invention is to secure a safe blood supply for the Japanese people and a potentially lucrative global market for Japanese companies.

Another new initiative is what might be called a hematological pan-Asianism. AsiaCORD was founded in 2000 to facilitate the collection and coordination of umbilical cord blood among Japan, Korea, China, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam. Dr. Asano Shigetaka, president of both AsiaCORD and the Asian Hematology Association, views AsiaCORD as a means to promote “Asian harmonization.” The rationale for AsiaCORD was premised on the ostensibly higher frequency of human leukocyte antigen (HLA) matching within Asian populations (<http://asiacord.org/>). However, a review of HLA-related articles in *Tissue Antigens* suggests that Asian is neither a definitive nor an exclusive category (e.g., Yang et al. 2006). Japan is also a member of NetCord, a nonprofit international organization founded in 1998 to promote the use of placental and umbilical cord blood; AsiaCORD, in contrast, is a for-profit conglomerate. In

addition, the Japanese Cord Blood Bank Network was established in 1999 and comprises 11 blood banks nationwide. Following the birth of her son in September 2006, Princess Kiko, in a widely publicized act, agreed to donate umbilical cord blood to the Network for the benefit of others. Like the Japanese Red Cross Society, the Network has its own cute mascot, Kizuna-chan (Lil' [Family] Ties), a pink angel with a large blood-drop shaped head, smiling face and little white wings (<http://stemcellnews.com/articles/princess-kiko-donates-cord-blood.htm>; <http://www.j-cord.gr.jp/index.jsp>).

EPILOGUE: NOT SO SANGUINE CONUNDRUMS ABOUT BLOOD

Blood is a raw material of limited availability and an increasingly scarce cultural resource, especially in its “pure” form—pure in the sense of free from pathogens, in the earlier eugenics-based sense as unmixed, and today, in the tacitly ethnocentric sense. Cultural resources are substances that convey how people shape their world and worldview, and thus the ongoing preoccupation with blood, in all of its registers and typologies, underscores the problems and challenges of defining just what constitutes Japaneseness.

A recent event raises the question of whether pragmatic realism will effectively devitalize Japanese blood as a cultural—and enculturating—resource. In January 2007, Aomori (Prefectural) Blood Bank officials held a blood drive on Misawa Air Base for Americans to donate blood at a mobile van brought on base for that purpose. The presiding officer noted that this marked the first time Americans were able to donate blood using the Japanese registration system, which involved translating the questionnaire into English (http://www.af.mil/news/story_print.asp?storyID=123038417). While the officer acknowledged the various travel restrictions (noted previously), I surmise that in part because the United States is not on the list of suspect countries, the donors' foreignness was less markedly problematic. In a reversal of the usual procedure, the Aomori Blood Bank technicians came to where the donors were. Moreover, they only took the donors' blood pressure prior to drawing blood, as opposed to providing the more extensive physical exam and blood tests to which Japanese and other donors off base are subjected. While these atypical procedures likely made the process of blood donation more convenient for the Americans, who were perhaps already screened ahead of time by a base doctor, it also ensured that the blood donated on base was categorized as a “marked” supply. The question remains whether the American blood will be incorporated into the Japanese blood supply or kept separate, perhaps for use in foreign patients exclusively. As a footnote, the recent trifold disasters of March 11, 2011 did not prompt the Japanese Red Cross Society or the Japanese government to request blood products from the United States or elsewhere (<http://www.redcrossstl.org/Japanearthquake.aspx#blood>).

In conclusion, a return to beginnings: With the promulgation of the first constitution in 1890 (and again in the postwar constitution of 1947), blood became the principal criterion of and for nationality and citizenship. Japan was an old state, but in the late nineteenth century it became a newly invented nation. For the first time, ordinary people were forced to transcend their local place affinities and to imagine themselves as members of a larger communal entity: the Japanese nation. Blood, and to a more limited extent blood type, was less a criterion of membership in a natal family and much more a measure of indissoluble nationality. It was, after all, the national family or family state (*kazoku kokka*) and not the nuclear family (*ka, ke, ie*) that has been sustained

by “blood talks” since the Meiji period. *Enfin*, a compelling fiction of something called Japanese blood has been nurtured and sustained over a century by a multi-authored hemato-narrative.

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NOTES

1. The A, B, and O blood types were first discovered in 1901 by Austrian pathologist Karl Landsteiner (1868–1943), and the AB type in 1902 by his Viennese colleagues, Alfred von Descastello-Rechtweh (1872–1960) and Adriano Sturli (1873–1964).

2. It is important to note that although blood metaphors were an instrument of political control in Japan, knowledge about specific blood-types—as opposed to notions of pure-bloodedness—was not deployed as a eugenic tool in the early twentieth-century discourse of race improvement. Nor were specific blood groups (or races) singled out for elimination in a diabolical scheme to purify the national body (*kokutai*), as was the case in Nazi Germany.

3. The blurred semantics of eugenics and race hygiene also typified debates about applied biology in Germany before and during the Third Reich; see Proctor (1988).

4. Miyake here is referring to the linkage of *ch'i* (bioluminescent body) and blood in traditional Chinese medicine. For an excellent history of Chinese medicine, see Unschuld (2010).

5. The idea that the blood of young people is “fresh and pure” apparently governed the numerous blood transfusions received by the ailing Shōwa Emperor (Hirohito), who died in early 1989. According to an account filed by Jason Cone (on December 28, 2005), “Japanese doctors gave him blood from police officers, who were all young and strong men. Towards the end, he was receiving transfusions on a daily basis. I was living in Japan at the time, and I remember people talking about it; even very well educated people believed that giving him the blood of strong young men to be a great idea” (http://www.jimmyakin.org/2005/12/when_vampire_no_1.html). Cone’s account conflicts with Margaret Lock’s report (based on verbal information from a gynecologist who treats members of the royal family) that the emperor’s “family members” alone donated the blood used in the many transfusions (Lock 1996:234).

6. The multitalented Fukuzawa, who founded Keio University, is recognized as one of the foremost modern reformers of Meiji Japan. He supported Takahashi’s idea of international marriages to improve the physiology of the Japanese people.

7. Nagai studied for three years at Goettingen University in Germany from 1903 to 1906 (<http://wp1.fuchu.jp/~sei-dou/jinmeiroku/nagai-hisomu/nagai-hisomu.htm>). An advocate of eugenic sterilization and abortion, Nagai was instrumental in drafting the National Eugenics Law (*Kokumin yūseiō*), which was passed in May 1940 and activated

in July 1941. This law was modeled after the first German racial hygiene law of 1933, which in turn had been informed by earlier American sterilization laws. The overarching purpose of this law was to insure the betterment of the Japanese ethnic nation (*minzoku*) by preventing (through sterilization) the reproduction of “unfit” people with an allegedly hereditary disease, and by promoting the reproduction of genetically healthy people (Frühstück 2003; Norgren 2001).

8. Much has been made of the fact that the HIV-tainted blood scandal in the early 1980s “was not caused by blood donated in Japan” (Mitsuboshi 2000). Along with Green Cross (formerly the Japan Blood Bank) officials, Health Ministry officials were also charged with willfully covering up the dangers of tainted blood for two years. In 1985, when the Ministry finally approved the heat treatment of blood products, it also claimed that a certain gay male was Japan’s first “official” HIV/AIDS patient, although officials were aware of doctors’ reports that two hemophiliacs had earlier contracted and died of AIDS. Altogether more than 1800 hemophiliacs have been infected, and approximately 500 patients have since died. It appears that the Ministry officials wanted HIV/AIDS to be perceived as a strictly “gay disease,” one brought into Japan by foreigners. It occurred to me that conflated in this rather diabolical conspiracy was both the fiction of the immunity of Japanese blood to diseases, specifically HIV/AIDS, and the fiction of the protective safety of heterosexual sex. Although the state no longer subscribes to these fictions, it seems that they have been taken for granted by Japanese youth, a majority of whom are shockingly ignorant about sexually transmitted diseases much less “safe sex” practices. The lack of media attention exacerbates the problem, making Japan the only postindustrial country where the HIV/AIDS rate continues to climb rapidly (Ichikawa 2011; Kakuchi 2007).

9. As if to further underscore the utility of blood as a cultural resource, the 2010 brochure of the Blood Products Research Organization features a photograph of Yakushi-ji, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The temple in Nara venerates Yakushi Nyōrai, the “medicine Buddha.”

10. In this connection, on May 26, 2011, a man from Fukushima prefecture was turned away from a Japanese Red Cross Society (JRCS) blood donation center in Tokyo with the explanation from the attending physician that his “genes might be damaged from radiation.” Earlier, in April, the JRCS instructed its centers not to accept blood donations for six months from workers based at the nuclear reactors who were exposed to cumulative radiation of 100 millisieverts or more. The man noted earlier was not such a worker, and a JRCS spokesperson suggested that the man likely misunderstood the physician’s explanation (*Japan Times* 2011).

11. The group’s shockingly intolerant and fanatical rhetoric and conspiracy theories about how foreigners control the Japanese government can be perused on their website, <http://www.junnihon.com/>.

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