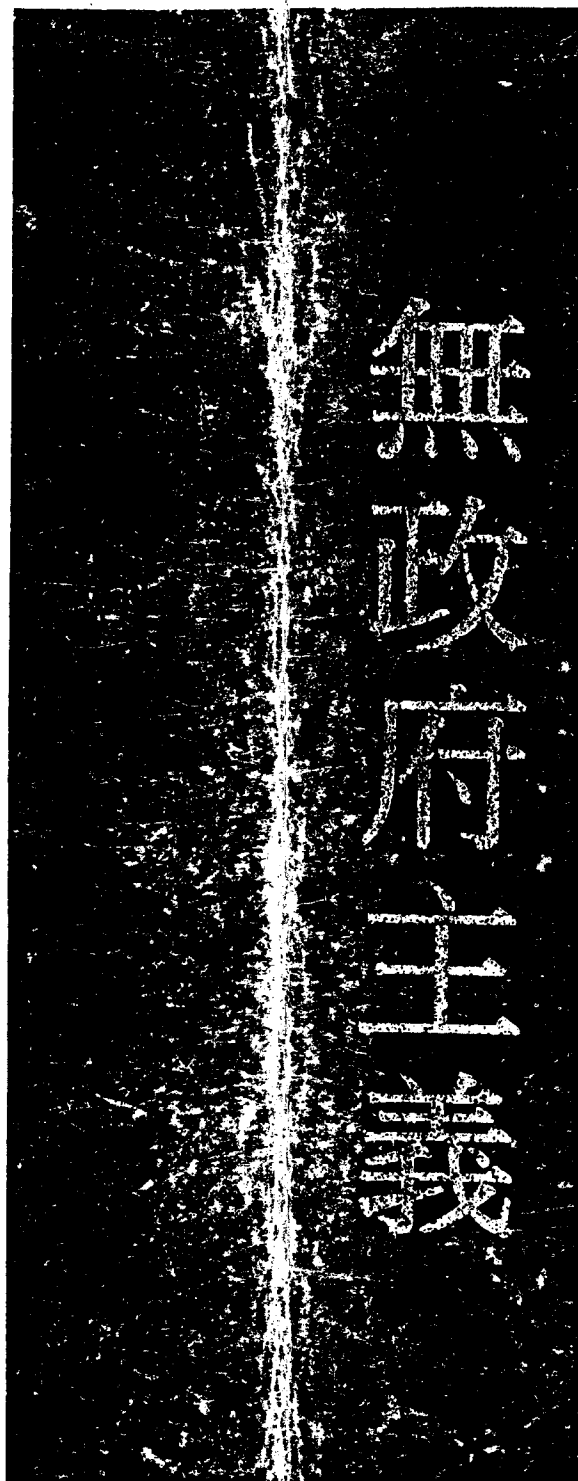


\$1.00

Although the popular image of Japan is of a nation where, due to cultural homogeneity and a natural propensity for social harmony, capitalism and conservative politics have developed largely unopposed, earlier this century there was considerable unrest among labour unions and other leftists. Many of these groups were influenced by *museifushugi*, or anarchism, which at the time was one of the dominant strains of thought among the revolutionary left. This is a brief account of the introduction and development of anarchism in Japan prior to World War Two, and of some of the individuals involved.

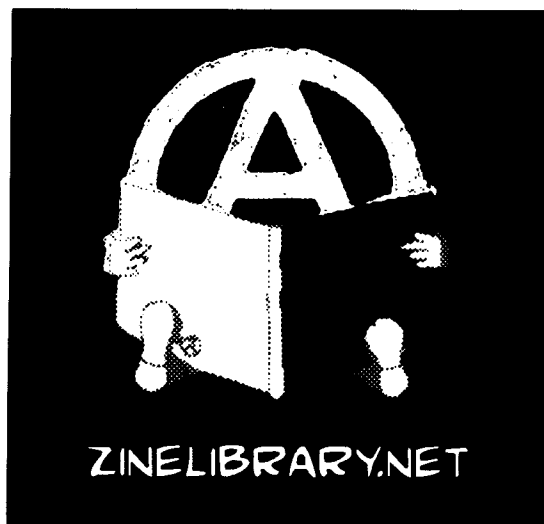
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# Museifushugi

A Brief History  
Of Anarchism  
In  
Pre War Japan





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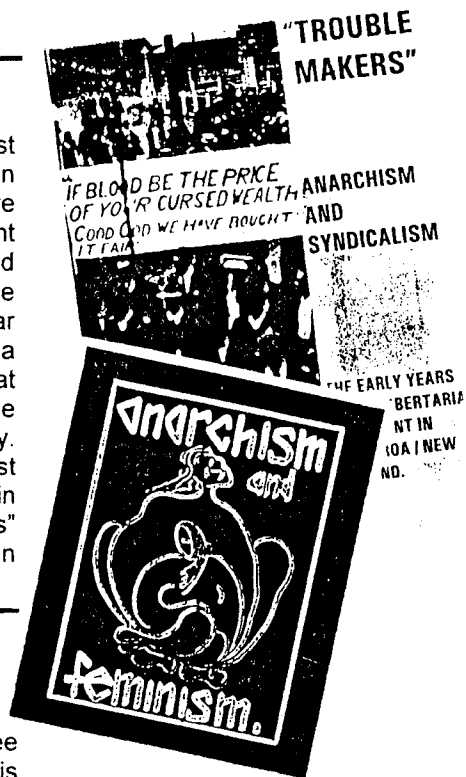
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Is a partial account of the anarchist and syndicalist movement in Aotearoa/New Zealand before 1914. It is the story of a movement that has remained buried and largely forgotten. However the years before the First World War witnessed the emergence of a world-wide workers movement that threatened to destroy the foundations of capitalist society. The anarchist and syndicalist tradition played a prominent role in that movement. "Troublemakers" is the story of that movement in Aotearoa.



**ANARCHISM AND FEMINISM**

*12 pages / 2 dollars*

This pamphlet consists of three separate contributions. The first is based on an introductory leaflet prepared by the Direct Action Group in 1991. The second was written by Margeret Flaws and circulated at the Women's Liberation Conference held at Piha, west of Auckland in 1978. The last was contributed to the same gathering by three women involved with the Auckland Anarchists. The cover is based on a design from a pamphlet produced by anarchists in Auckland in 1978.

**NEW TITLE  
ANARCHY  
AN INTRODUCTION TO  
ANARCHIST IDEAS AND ACTION**

*12 pages / 2 dollars*

A pamphlet originally published in the 1970's by the Christchurch Anarchy Group. This pamphlet is an excellent introduction to anarchism. The Anarchy Group produced several excellent pamphlets and a regular newsletter. Hopefully in the near future we will be able to reprint some of these pamphlets.

**無政府主義**

**Museifushugi**

**A Brief History  
Of Anarchism  
In  
Pre-War Japan**

*By Matthew Turner*

*Libertarian Press*

"Museifushugi"

## Introduction

The meteoric rise of Japan from feudal backwater to major industrial power in the short space of some one hundred years has understandably attracted the attention of historians and economists alike. In their search for the secrets behind this economic "miracle", many commentators have looked to Japan's management techniques and industrial relations, which are often presented as more harmonious and less alienating than those of the West. Even some observers on the left, encouraged by glowing accounts of "willing" workers finding fulfilment in "organic" corporate structures, have been enchanted by the promise of a friendly, humane form of capitalism, and have closed their eyes to the gross inequality and exploitation of the Japanese employment system. Captivated by the theories of American management specialists and Japanese corporate propaganda, some leftists have even claimed that Japanese companies have harnessed libertarian attitudes existing in Japanese and Buddhist cultures as a means of gaining genuine commitment from the workforce.

Japan does have a libertarian tradition, but it is not to be found in the boardrooms or offices of modern Japanese corporations, let alone the half-baked theories of American management gurus. It is to be found in the struggles of the peasants and workers who dreamed of a different future for their country, and who fought to stem the rising tide of imperialism and capitalist exploitation in early modern Japan. It is also found in the efforts of those pioneers who earlier this century rejected the injustice of discrimination against women and ethnic minorities - discrimination which is still at the very heart of corporate Japan - and who strove to create a society based on true equality and respect for the individual.

Unfortunately the stories of many of these pioneering groups and individuals have yet to be told. There is a dearth of information particularly in English - on the anarchist movement in Japan, and despite the efforts of a small number of dedicated researchers, there is little in the way of a general survey of the history of this movement to inspire and encourage budding enthusiasts who lack Japanese language skills. My aim in writing this brief work, then, has been to gather together the material I have on the Japanese anarchist movement up to World War Two and present it in an easily accessible format, so that those who are interested in this topic at least have a general picture of the groups and individuals who were involved. With this in mind, it should be noted that I have generally relied on secondary sources, and I admit that I struggled (particularly when dealing with the labour union movement) to make sense of conflicting accounts and unreliable figures. Accordingly, I hope the result will be regarded not as an authoritative source, but as a useful introduction, and I would be delighted to think that by sharing my admittedly limited knowledge of the Japanese anarchist movement I have in some way encouraged others to delve deeper into a fascinating and rewarding field of study.

Note that all Japanese names are written in the Japanese style, with family names first.

"Museifushugi"

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Thomas A Stanley's *Osugi Sakae: Anarchist in Taisho Japan* (see below for details) contains an extensive bibliography of publications in English and Japanese relating to anarchism in Japan. Most of the information included in this pamphlet came from the following:

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forced to adopt a more moderate position, eventually turning into a right wing organisation which supported Japan's colonial expansion in the 1930s.

The Suiheisha was officially disbanded in 1942, and although a small number of anarchists are still involved in Burakumin liberation groups today, the post-war movement has been dominated by organisations aligned to the major opposition parties. But one legacy of the anarchists' involvement in the Burakumin liberation movement remains in its use of direct action tactics in the form of *Kyudan* protests. According to this strategy, groups or individuals who insult or discriminate against Burakumin are confronted directly and ordered to apologise. Those who refuse became the target of increasingly militant protest action, which in the 1920s often involved hundreds of Suiheisha members in violent confrontations. In one incident near Nara in March 1922, two Burakumin took offence at a gesture directed at them by a bystander, and his refusal to apologise led eventually to a skirmish in which 1220 Suiheisha supporters fought over 1200 members of a right wing group. Today's *Kyudan* are usually less dramatic, although they can still be harrowing experiences for their targets.

"THE END".

#### FRONT COVER

*The cover photo shows Hori Yasuko (right) at the time of the Red Flag Incident, in which Osugi Sakae and several other socialists were arrested while parading in the streets of Tokyo waving red flags with provocative slogans. The flags pictured bear the words "museifu kyosan", or "anarcho-communism" (1908)*

## *Historical Background*

In the two hundred and fifty years from the time of its unification in the late-sixteenth century until the Meiji Revolution in the mid-nineteenth century, Japan was virtually cut off from the rest of the world, the majority of its people oblivious to the new strains of social thought then sweeping through Europe. The authoritarian feudal regime of the Tokugawa shogunate clung to power throughout this period, imposing strict internal security and severe austerity laws as well as implementing a rigid hierarchical class structure backed by a neo-confucianist ideology, all aimed at dividing its opponents and weakening any threats to its power. But from the start of the nineteenth century, internal pressure from the peasants and the rising merchant class - to whom the samurai were heavily indebted - and external threats from the United States and other countries combined to weaken the Tokugawa regime, and in 1867 a group of young samurai from outlying provinces joined forces to seize control of the country and established a new regime under the name of the Emperor Meiji.

Partly in response to demands from the Western powers that Japan prove itself to be a modern nation able to handle its own affairs, the new Meiji rulers of Japan launched a program of rapid modernisation, borrowing western technology and the institutional trappings of European powers and at the same time building up considerable military strength. In the short space of some thirty years the samurai were stripped of their arms and replaced by a modern army of conscripts, compulsory primary education was introduced, and a constitution was promulgated establishing a parliament. Real power, however, still remained in the hands of an oligarchy consisting of a handful of ex-samurai and nobles, and the education system was designed to instil a sense of loyalty and obedience in the people along with more practical skills in the arts and sciences.

But the state was unable to control all avenues of learning. With Japan now open to the outside world, educated Japanese among the lower samurai class in particular gained access to Japanese translations of a wide range of Western classics, including Thomas More's *Utopia* and Samuel Smiles' *Self-help*. The ideas of Locke, Mills and Rousseau were reflected in the calls by the Jiyuto (Liberal Party) and Jiyu Minken Undo (Freedom and People's Rights Movement) - both formed in the 1880s by traditional rivals of the members of the new oligarchy - for more representative institutions and the establishment of basic human rights for all citizens. To the country's leaders, however, all political dissent was seditious because it weakened the state, and the onslaught of democratic ideas had to be resisted at all costs. The government's response, therefore, was to attempt to increase its control by introducing laws requiring the registration of political parties and newspapers and giving it the right to censor or ban any publications.

This desire to stifle opposition continued to be a feature of Japanese politics up

### "Museifushugi"

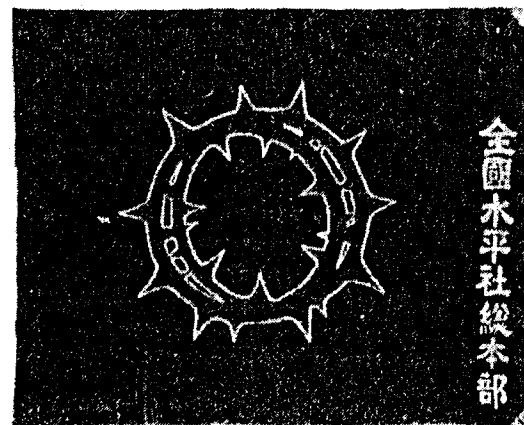
to the 1930s, when the increasingly militaristic and totalitarian nature of Japanese society made political dissent all but impossible. And although the labour movement enjoyed a brief period of prosperity in the 1920s at the height of the so-called "Taisho democracy", those who attempted to speak out against injustice invariably came up against considerable hostility. It is encouraging to know that so many chose to speak out in spite of this.

## Early Developments

It is customary when discussing Japanese society in the period up to World War Two to do so in terms of two traditions: the authoritarian, hierarchical, paternalistic tradition of the samurai; and the more egalitarian, democratic tradition of the rural villages. A comprehensive history of the libertarian tradition in Japan, therefore, would have to include an account of life in these rural villages, but as we are concerned not with the libertarian tradition but with the anarchist movement, such a survey has been omitted. For the same reason we have dispensed with an account of Zen Buddhism, which, as a number of observers have pointed out, is inherently iconoclastic and libertarian in its rejection of hierarchy and domination. Although a small number of Buddhist priests were involved in the Japanese anarchist movement, they did so against the wishes of their institutional leaders and were on the whole rejected by them.

No single event or figure can be said to herald the start of the anarchist movement in Japan. Indeed, it is unclear exactly when anarchist ideas first filtered into Japan, although the theories of Bakunin in particular are thought to have influenced the Toyo Shakaito (Oriental Socialist Party), which was formed in Nagasaki in May 1882. The Toyo Shakaito was actually a radical association of peasants led by Tarui Tokichi (1850-1922), who later joined the Freedom and People's Rights Movement and was elected to parliament in 1892. The Party had seventy or eighty members, but claimed the support of some 3000 followers and called for political morality, economic equality and the greatest welfare for the greatest number, as well as advocating the collective ownership of property and communal rearing of children. It was short-lived, however, disbanding in June 1882, although Tarui continued to champion its goals until his arrest in 1883.

### "Museifushugi"



Flag of the Suiheisha, with crown of thorns symbol.

before joining the Suiheisha, predicting in one that the Burakumin would rise up in revolution against their ruling class oppressors. Hirano was active in the national organisation until December 1924, when he was expelled after being accused of spying for the police. He continued working with Burakumin liberation groups in Tokyo, but there is evidence to suggest he

later became involved in a number of right wing organisations. Some commentators suggest that Hirano was never in fact an anarchist, although this is still the subject of considerable debate.

Another prominent anarchist within the Suiheisha was Kitahara Daisuke (1906-1981). A pacifist, Kitahara was conscripted in 1927 and was involved in a number of protests against discrimination in the army. In the most famous of these, Kitahara broke ranks during a military parade and marched up to the Emperor, presenting him with a written appeal on behalf of a group of Burakumin soldiers arrested in a previous incident. Although Kitahara was sentenced to a year's imprisonment, his actions were widely publicised and led to improvements in the treatment of Burakumin conscripts. The second conference of the Suiheisha was held in March 1923. The delegates rejected motions calling for the recognition of Soviet Russia and universal suffrage, which, along with the stress on direct action, has led some observers to conclude that the syndicalist faction was dominant at this stage. In subsequent conferences, however, the Bolsheviks grew in strength, although neither side ever had the support of the majority of the organisation's members. Later, despite strong opposition from the anarchists, the fourth conference introduced a hierarchical structure with an all-powerful central committee. The anarchists held a series of meetings in 1925 and 1926 to co-ordinate their opposition to both the moderates and Bolsheviks in the movement, and although outnumbered, they continued to strongly oppose future efforts by the Bolsheviks to hijack the Suiheisha. In November 1926 they organised themselves into the Zenkoku Suiheisha Kaiho Domei (National Suiheisha Liberation League), and later they formed the Kaiho Renmei (Liberation League), an umbrella group comprising more than 1000 anarchists from twenty-seven groups, which boycotted the 1928 conference. By this time, however, the authorities were stepping up their campaigns against the left, and the Suiheisha was

## Anarchism and the Suiheisha



Hirano Shoken

The increasing popularity of socialist and liberal ideas in Japan after 1918 encouraged groups outside the labour movement to organise and push for social change. One such group was the Burakumin, who in 1922 established the Suiheisha (The Levellers) as a national organisation to co-ordinate protests and other activities. As was the case with the trade union federations, however, the Suiheisha soon became the battleground for anarchists and communists as they fought for control of the nation's social movements.

The Burakumin are generally thought to be descendants of leather workers and other people whose work brought them into contact with dead animals, which was considered a taboo according to Shinto and Buddhist doctrines. In the Edo period members of

such communities became outcasts and were ranked at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Although ethnically indistinguishable from other Japanese, Burakumin continue to be subjected to discrimination, particularly with regard to marriage and employment. Burakumin were formally emancipated in 1871, being officially recognised as equal to other "common people". However, discrimination in the general community and in official circles continued, prompting local Burakumin groups to push for further reforms and engage in protest action. The government responded by trying to set up its own network of "self-improvement" groups as part of an effort to encourage national unity in the threat of the growing social movement, but the failure of these and the rise of the radical left led to calls for an independent Burakumin liberation movement, and eventually to the formation of the Suiheisha.

Between 1000 and 3000 people attended the Suiheisha's inaugural conference in March 1922, and although it is difficult to gauge the level of support the anarchists had, at least one self-proclaimed anarchist was elected to the six-member executive committee. Hirano Shoken (1891-1940) was a printer and an active member of the anarcho-syndicalist Shinyukai. He had written several articles for left wing journals in Tokyo

## Kotoku Shusui and the Heiminsha



Kotoku Shusui

In 1887 the government introduced new Peace Preservation Regulations, giving the police widespread powers to expel from the vicinity of the capital anyone they considered injurious to public order. A number of Jiyuto members were expelled from Tokyo under these regulations, among them Kotoku Denjiro (1871-1911), a young liberal who was later drawn to socialism and eventually rose to prominence as Japan's most well-known anarchist propagandist.

Following his expulsion from Tokyo, Kotoku (better known by his penname, Kotoku Shusui) joined the ranks of the Freedom and People's Rights Movement, boarding with one of its spokesmen, Nakae Chomin, in Osaka, where he devoted himself to studies of Chinese learning and foreign languages. Around this time he was also introduced to the works of Marx and Kropotkin, who both had a considerable

influence on his later political development. At the age of twenty-three, Kotoku began work translating foreign news for the *Jiyu shimbun* newspaper, later moving to Tokyo in 1895 to work for the *Chuo shimbun*. But after disagreement over that paper's editorial policy, Kotoku left to work for the *Yorozu choho*, where he wrote extensively on domestic and foreign politics and educational and social issues. His interest in the social problems of the day led him to join the Shakaishugi Kenkyukai (Society for the Study of Socialism) in 1898 and establish, along with Kinoshita Naoe, Katayama Sen and Abe Iso, the Shakai Minshuto (Social Democratic Party) two years later. The latter, which supported "socialism, democracy and peace", was promptly outlawed, a reflection of the hard-line attitude adopted by the government towards any group with links to socialism in any form.

In 1903, after leaving the *Yorozu choho* in protest at its support of the war against Russia, Kotoku joined a group of Christians and socialists in setting up the Heiminsha, a highly influential group which published the *Heimin shimbun* (Commoners' Newspaper) and acted as a focal point for young socialists throughout the next decade. Kotoku had already established himself as a leading socialist intellectual, having published two popular books: *Nijusseiki no kaibutsu, teikokushugi* (Imperialism: The

*"Museifushugi"*



Founders of the Heimin shinbun.  
Clockwise from left: Kotoku Shusui,  
Sakai Toshihiko, Nishikawa Kojiro,  
Ishikawa Sanshiro.

Monster of the Twentieth Century) in 1901, and *Shakaishugi shinzui* (The Essence of Socialism) in 1903. He continued his socialist critiques in the pages of the *Heimin shinbun*, which in 1904 published the *Communist Manifesto*. This led to the confiscation of all copies of the newspaper and the arrest of Kotoku, and such intimidatory tactics eventually led to the closure of the *Heimin shinbun* in January 1905, although it appeared again a number of times in following years.

Kotoku was imprisoned for offences against the press laws, and spent from February to June 1905 in Sugamo Prison. During this time he corresponded with Albert Johnson, a member of the Industrial Workers of the World in America. He read widely, including the works of Kropotkin, which Johnson had recommended to him, and in a letter to Johnson in August he indicated that he had rejected Marxism in favour of anarchism. On his release from

prison Kotoku travelled to America, meeting syndicalists from the IWW as well as exiled members of the Russian Socialist Revolutionary Party in San Francisco. He also helped organise Japanese workers in California. His experiences in the United States (he was particularly impressed with the way in which ordinary people co-operated in the aftermath of the San Francisco earthquake) finally led him to reject parliamentarianism in favour of direct action, a conversion which he announced at a meeting of the Shakaito (Socialist Party) on his return to Japan in 1906. This led directly to a split in the socialist movement and the eventual dissolution of the Shakaito.

Kotoku had been corresponding with Kropotkin in London since his return to Japan, and in 1908 he began work on a translation of Kropotkin's *The Conquest of Bread*. It was published by the Heiminsha the following year, and although officially banned, most copies of the book were distributed. In May 1909 he started publishing the journal *Jiyu shiso* (Free Thought), but this too drew the attention of the government censors, and its first two issues were banned. Working with him on this journal was Kanno Suga, one of the key figures in the High Treason Incident, which would lead to the downfall of Kotoku.

*"Museifushugi"*

Kumiai Domeikai (Trade Union League). An attempt had been made in 1920 to bring all of Japan's socialist groups and unions together in a single organisation called the Nihon Shakaishugi Domei (Japan Socialist League). This group was dominated by anarcho-syndicalists, but was disbanded in 1921 under government pressure. In 1922 another effort was made to form a united front in the establishment of the Zenkoku Rodo Kumiai Sorengokai, but its inaugural conference in Osaka ended in uproar (with the help of several police raids and the arrest of Osugi Sakae), and this failure marked the final split between the anarcho-syndicalists and the Bolsheviks.

The death of Osugi in 1923 was a further blow to the anarcho-syndicalists, who had steadily been losing ground to the Marxists as the "success" of the Russian Revolution convinced an increasing number of Japanese socialists of the superiority of the Bolshevik cause. But the anarchists remained a force to be reckoned with in the labour movement, especially in the Tokyo region, and in 1926 a new federation of anarchist unions called the Zenkoku Jiyu Rengo Rodo Kumiai (National Free Federation of Labour Unions) was formed, bringing together 25 unions with a total membership of 8000. The previous year the Nomin Jichikai (Peasants' Self-governing League) had been established as a syndicalist tenant union (claiming 6300 members in 1926), while in early 1926 the Black Youth League was formed as an umbrella group for anarchist groups and unions in the Tokyo region. The League brought together a number of intriguing groups, such as the Egoist Society, the Bohemian Society and the Literary Critics Society, and gained considerable notoriety due to an incident after its inaugural meeting in January 1926 in which members swarmed into the Ginza district of Tokyo, waving black flags and smashing shop windows as they went.

In 1927 splits began to appear in the Zenkoku Jiyu Rengo Rodo Kumiai over ideology, and the syndicalists within the Federation left in 1929 to form the rival Nihon Rodo Kumiai Jiyu Rengo Kyogikai (Japan Free Conference of Labour Unions). The Zenkoku Jiyu Rengo Rodo Kumiai, which subsequently followed a pure anarchist-communist line, grew to achieve a membership of over 16,000 in 1931, while the breakaway Nihon Rodo Kumiai Jiyu Rengo Kyogikai claimed to have 3000 members. Although the Zenkoku Jiyu Rengo Rodo Kumiai remained active until 1935, the Black Youth League collapsed in 1928 when the government launched the first of a number of raids on leftists, arresting 1200 communists and anarchists. The following year a further 700 were apprehended, while in 1935 a final mass roundup of anarchists took place and their organisations were banned entirely, as Japan slipped further down the slippery slope towards totalitarianism and all-out war.



*"Museifushugi"*

of the most radical unions in Japan, striking in 1919 in support of demands for an eight-hour working day. Its members were Western language typesetters, and as such were mostly well-educated and familiar with trends in labour movements overseas. The Shinyukai claimed to have 650 members in 1917, rising to 1500 in 1917, making it one of the larger unions then in existence.

The other union heavily influenced by Osugi Sakae's anarchist ideas at this time was the Seishinkai, a union of newspaper employees formed in December 1919. Its predecessor, the Kakushinkai, was dissolved after a bitter strike against Tokyo newspapers ended in failure. The Seishinkai joined the Shinyukai in 1920 for Japan's first May Day celebrations, in which several thousand workers paraded in Tokyo's Ueno Park waving red and black flags.

Both the Seishinkai and the Shinyukai were initially affiliated to the Yuaikai, which became more radical as the years went by. In 1920 it changed its name to the Nihon Rodo Sodomei (Japan Federation of Labour), and at its 1922 annual conference dropped its demand for universal suffrage and replaced it with a call for unrelenting struggle against the capitalists and the creation of a new society through trade union action. By this stage, however, the anarchists had left after disagreement over organisational principles (the Sodomei favoured central authority, while the anarchists demanded a decentralised free federation), and formed a rival organisation, the Rodo



Meeting of the Kakushinkai (1919)

*"Museifushugi"*



Heimin shimbun (1903)



Kotoku Shusui with Albert Johnson in San Francisco (1906)

“Museifushugi”



Kanno Suga and Kotoku Shusui

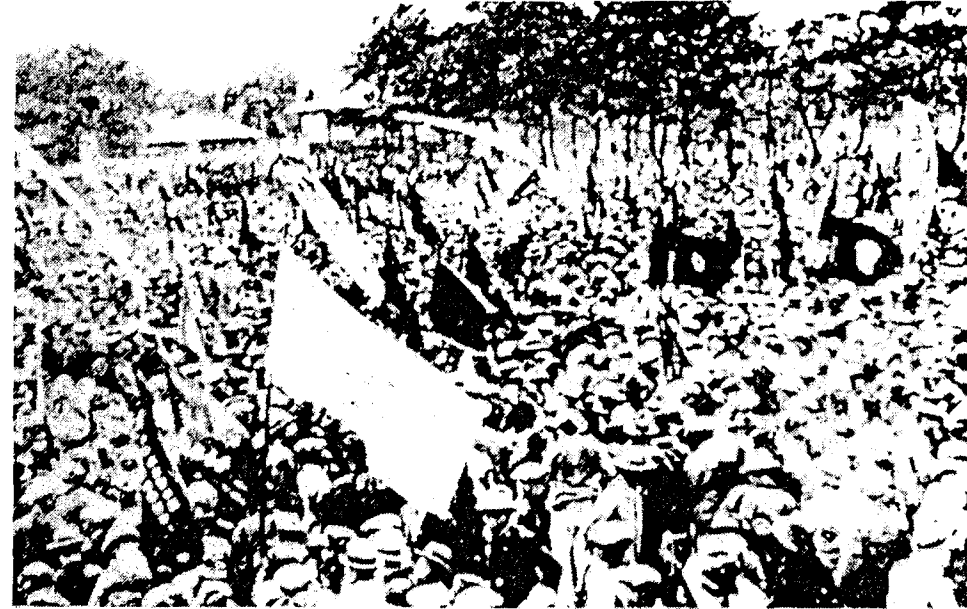
## Kanno Suga

Kanno Suga (1881-1911), the daughter of a mine operator, had an unhappy and difficult childhood. She had been raped as a young girl and was burdened with guilt until reading an essay by Sakai Toshihiko in which he counselled rape victims not to be overcome by feelings of shame or guilt. This sparked her interest in socialism, and she began reading widely the works of Sakai and other socialists. Kanno dreamed of becoming a writer, and in 1902, after three years in an unhappy arranged marriage, she began working as a journalist. Shortly after, she became involved in efforts by Japanese Christians to reform the prostitution laws, and this brought her in contact with the *Heiminsha*, which she joined in 1904.

While working for a newspaper in Wakayama, Kanno met the socialist Arahata Kanson (1887-1981), moving to Tokyo with him when he began working for the *Heimin shimbun* in 1907. Then, in June 1908, Kanno attended a rally of socialists and anarchists at which she, Arahata and fourteen others were arrested (the so-called Red Flag Incident). Although not held responsible for the incident, she spent two months in jail awaiting trial, while Arahata and several others received stiff prison sentences. Her treatment by the authorities led her to doubt the effectiveness of peaceful protest, and she became convinced of the necessity of more revolutionary action, including assassination.

On her release from prison, Kanno began a relationship with Kotoku, who divorced his second wife to live with Kanno in 1909. The affair was the source of considerable outrage on the part of their comrades, since her previous lover, Arahata, was still in prison at the time. Kanno and Kotoku worked together on *Jiyu shiso*, for which Kanno was arrested and imprisoned. She had also been involved in a plot to assassinate the emperor, and although she had by this stage left Kotoku on the grounds that he was too moderate, Kotoku was arrested and tried, along with twenty-five others, in the famous High Treason Incident.

“Museifushugi”



Japan's first May Day celebrations (1920)

As mentioned earlier, the Meiji leaders stressed the need for unity in their pursuit of modernisation, and the measures they had introduced in the late-nineteenth century to combat political opposition were soon extended to cover opposition on the labour front. In particular, the Public Peace Police Act of 1900 effectively outlawed labour unions. Although purported to be aimed at controlling the excesses of both capital and labour following rumblings about poor working conditions among groups of railway engineers and other skilled, male workers, the Public Peace Police Laws were used almost exclusively against workers. The government remained antagonistic towards unions until the end of World War One, when an economic slump and riots over shortages of rice forced them to adopt a more liberal attitude. The number of factory workers had also risen, more than doubling to reach 1,800,000 in the five years between 1914 and 1919.

The first major attempt at forming a labour federation was in 1912, when the Yuaikai was established under the leadership of Suzuki Bunji (1885-1946). Suzuki was a Christian, and the Yuaikai was initially a labour-capital conciliatory group which steered clear of any revolutionary ideology. However, the Yuaikai also included a number of radical unions.

The oldest of the revolutionary trade unions was probably the Oyukai, a printers' union formed in 1907. In 1916 it was reorganised as the Shinyukai, and under the influence of Osugi Sakae and his study group the Hokufukai, it rapidly became one

## Hatta Shuzo

Hatta Shuzo (1886-1934) began, like Ishikawa, a Christian, but converted to anarchism following the death of Osugi in 1923. Along with Ishikawa he was a prominent member of the Zenkoku Jiyu Rengo Rodo Kumiai and became a leading proponent of "pure anarchism". Unlike the anarcho-syndicalists, the pure anarchists regarded modern industry as inherently authoritarian and hierarchical, and therefore objected to the syndicalists' promotion of trade union activity as the principal means of revolutionary struggle. Instead, Hatta and his comrades looked to Kropotkin's anarchist communism for their model of a future society, and to the farming villages of rural Japan as the physical basis on which this new society would be built.

Although heavily influenced by Kropotkin, Hatta criticised his reliance on science, which Hatta saw as nothing more than a system of knowledge specific to a particular historical period and set of class interests. He rejected mathematical science in favour of local traditional wisdom, or "the knowledge which relates to the land on which we live in each district". Events in Japan had convinced Hatta that the cities were exploiting the rural areas, and to reverse this trend he sought to alter the scale and purpose of production. He outlined his strategy in *An Appeal to the Peasants* (1931), in which he urged villages to cease producing agricultural products for sale to the cities and concentrate on supplying their own needs, and at the same time end their reliance on urban Japan by developing skills in handicrafts and establishing workshops to replace manufactured goods from the cities. Hatta also advocated the use of natural substitutes for commercial fertilisers out of a fear that the latter would lead to a reliance on the cash economy. This has led to comparisons with the modern social ecology movement, and while the changes Hatta sought to bring about would undoubtedly have resulted in a more ecologically sound society, the main driving force behind his ideas was a concern for social justice rather than any fear of environmental catastrophe.

## Anarchism and the Labour Movement

The growth of the labour movement in Japan during the period in question was hindered by two factors: the small number of industrial workers, and government opposition. Although the Meiji government had embarked on a modernisation drive, there was comparatively little heavy industry in Japan until World War One, and by far the large majority of the population were still peasants. Furthermore, workers in the textile industry, which was the dominant industry up to World War One, were mainly poorly educated young women from the countryside who worked under appalling conditions. Factories were small in scale, most employing only a few dozen workers, and this also hindered the organisation of labour unions.

## The High Treason Incident

The plan to assassinate the Meiji Emperor which was at the heart of the High Treason Incident was the brainchild of a factory worker called Miyashita Takichi (1875-1911), and involved Kanno, Niimura Tadao (1887-1911) and Furukawa Rikisaku (1884-1911). Miyashita made and tested a bomb in late 1909, but was betrayed by a friend who informed the police. For the authorities, who had been directed by Prime Minister Katsura Taro to crack down on the leftists, this was a golden opportunity, and they set about rounding up everyone connected with those directly involved, including Kotoku, who was arrested in June 1910. Hundreds were taken into custody and interrogated, twenty-six eventually being charged with High Treason.

On January 18 of the following year, after a trial closed to the public and at which none of the defence arguments was allowed to be published, all of the defendants were found guilty, twenty-four of them receiving death sentences. Twelve of these were later commuted to terms of life imprisonment, but within a week the other twelve, including Kotoku, Kanno, Niimura and Furukawa, had been hanged. Many of the others later died in prison.

It is difficult to overstate the effect the trial and its outcome had on the socialist movement at the time. Not only had the anarchist movement lost a number of its most prominent and active members, but many of those who had been sympathetic to the cause decided to cut their links altogether, either in protest at the alleged actions of those involved or in fear of further reprisals from the authorities. Socialism in Japan entered into what is commonly referred as its "winter period", during which time all but the most dedicated activists refrained from any direct action or propagandist activity. One such dedicated activist was Osugi Sakae, who was destined to take over Kotoku's role as the most prominent Japanese anarchist.

## Osugi Sakae

Osugi Sakae (1885-1923) was born in Marugame, Kagawa prefecture, the son of an army lieutenant. Hoping to follow his father in becoming an army officer, in 1899 Osugi entered the Military Preparatory School in Nagoya. Although expelled after clashing with his classmates, Osugi remained hopeful of pursuing a military career, and he moved to Tokyo to continue his education, enrolling in 1903 in the French Department at the Tokyo Foreign Language School (Japan's army had been modelled on that of France, and knowledge of French was therefore a prerequisite for becoming an army officer). Through his language studies Osugi became familiar with the anarchist movement in France and Italy, but it was his interest in the social problems of Japan which led him to eventually establish contact with the Heiminsha. He attended his first meeting there late

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Osugi Sakae (1922)

in 1903, and over the next two years attended regular meetings and helped distribute the *Heimin shimbun* while continuing his studies at the Tokyo Foreign Language School. Then, in March 1906, Osugi was arrested during a protest against an increase in trolley fares and served a brief prison sentence. This put an end to any hopes he still retained of becoming an army officer, and it was then that he decided to devote himself to the socialist cause.

Osugi aligned himself with Kotoku and the other direct-action supporters within the Heiminsha, joining them in a number of protests over the following years. He was arrested on numerous occasions and spent a total of three years in prison between his first arrest and his final release in November 1910. It was in prison that he read closely for the first time the

works of famous anarchists such as Bakunin, Kropotkin, Malatesta and Reclus, and he also read widely on other topics, such as biology and sociology. He continued his language studies there, vowing to master a different language during each incarceration, and his reading list grew to include the classics of English, French, German, Italian and Russian literature. Osugi was also a keen student of Esperanto, and set up Japan's first Esperanto school in September 1906. It was partly due to this prodigious effort that Osugi was able to assume the mantle of the country's leading anarchist theoretician after the death of Kotoku, for Osugi's lengthy imprisonment over the Red Flag Incident in 1908 meant that he escaped arrest in the High Treason Incident and was spared the fate of so many of his comrades.

Osugi emerged from prison in 1910 to find the socialist movement decimated, and together with a small group of sympathisers set about rekindling the flames of anarchism. In December 1910 he joined the Baibunsha, a publishing company set up by Sakai Toshihiko (1870-1933) with the express purpose of providing work for socialists during the "winter period". Sakai, one of the founders of the Heiminsha, later became a Marxist and Osugi's greatest rival within the Japanese socialist movement.

In October 1912 Osugi began publishing the journal *Kindai shiso* (Modern Thought) with Arahata Kanson. *Kindai shiso*, of which up to 5000 copies were published monthly until September 1913, was billed as a science and literary magazine, largely in order to escape the wrath of the censors, but in it Osugi published a number of important essays outlining

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## Ishikawa Sanshiro

Ishikawa Sanshiro (1876-1956) was a colleague of Kotoku Shusui and Sakai Toshihiko on the staff of the *Yorozu choho*, and in 1903 he joined them in setting up the Heiminsha after leaving that newspaper in protest at its support of the war with Russia. Unlike Kotoku and Sakai, however, Ishikawa was a Christian, and this led him to split with the materialists and establish the journal *Shinkigen* (New Age) along with two other Christian socialists, Kinoshita Naoe and Abe Iso, when the *Heimin shimbun* ceased publication in 1905. In *Shinkigen*, Ishikawa developed his ideas on socialism, urging workers to embrace the ideal of socialism through mutual love of a common humanity rather than by class hatred. Ishikawa distrusted all political parties and refused to join the Nippon Shakaito or any other early socialist organisations, concentrating instead on writing and spreading propaganda.

Ironically, Ishikawa's Christian beliefs eventually led him to embrace anarchism around the same time as Kotoku. While he was in prison for a year from April 1907 serving a sentence for offences against the press laws, Ishikawa not only studied the Bible but also read the works of Kropotkin, and like so many other prominent Japanese anarchists, he emerged from prison with his anarchist beliefs firmly entrenched. The "winter period" of political repression following the High Treason trial was not far away, however, and Ishikawa's response was to leave Japan. He headed for Europe in March 1913, spending eight years in exile in Britain, Belgium and France, where he lived with Paul Reclus. His experiences with the Reclus family and with Edward Carpenter in England were to have considerable influence on the development of his ideas following his return to Japan in 1920.

Ishikawa was a founding member of the syndicalist Zenkoku Jiyu Rengo Rodo Kumiai (National Free Federation of Labour Unions), which developed along pure anarchist-communist lines following the breakaway of the syndicalists in 1929. Along with Hatta Shuzo, Ishikawa became a leading proponent of agricultural anarchism, claiming that agriculture was primary to industry. He advocated the establishment of a federation of independent and autonomous producer communes, and in 1927 put his theories to the test by moving to a farming community on the outskirts of Tokyo. While working on the land, Ishikawa continued his propaganda activities in the pages of his new monthly journal, *Dynamic*. After the war he wrote *Japan Fifty Years Later*, in which he elaborated on his plans to reorganise Japanese society into a federation of co-operatives. Although Ishikawa has been criticised for his Christian sentimentality, and for his attitude towards the imperial family (he advocated retaining the Emperor as a "symbol of communal affection"), he was a perceptive thinker who remained a dedicated activist throughout his life.

## *Anarchism and the Literary World*

As one of the dominant strains of social thought in early-twentieth century Japan, anarchism had a considerable influence on the intelligensia, including a number of prominent writers. Many were shocked by the executions of Kotoku and the others in the High Treason Incident, and although efforts were made to suppress reports of the trial and executions, in 1911 the poet Ishikawa Takuboku (1885-1912) copied Kotoku's prison writings and published them together with his own comments, as well as quotes from Kropotkin's *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, under the title *A Letter from Prison*. Mori Ogai's 1910 short story *Kinmoku no to* (The Tower of Silence) was also based on the High Treason Incident.

Several members of the famous Shirakaba (White Birch) school of writers were admirers of Kropotkin and Leo Tolstoy, whose Christian anarchism they found particularly appealing. In September 1918, one of these writers, Mushanokoji Saneatsu (1885-1976), set off to Miyazaki prefecture to create a commune called Atarashikimura. He was joined by several young writers and poets, and the group lived together communally, sharing ideas as they tended to the village farm.

Another member of the Shirakaba school influenced by anarchism was Arishima Takeo (1878-1923). The son of a high-ranking government official, Arishima was well-educated and left Japan in 1903 to study in America for three years. There he read Walt Whitman and Kropotkin, and on his way back to Japan he stopped in London where he met the exiled Russian anarchist, who gave Arishima a letter to pass on to Kotoku Shusui. Arishima was also a friend of Osugi Sakae, and is reported to have funded Osugi's trip to Europe in 1922.

In the same year Arishima inherited a 450-hectare farm in the northern island of Hokkaido. Adamant that the means of production should not be in private hands, and that all land should be publicly or mutually owned, Arishima decided to hand the land over to be owned commonly by the tenant farmers who worked on it. He organised and equipped the farm with advice from the agricultural economics department at Hokkaido University, but the authorities objected to this experiment in communism and broke up the community.

Arishima's most famous work is the novel *Aru onna* (A Certain Woman, 1919). In this semi-autobiographical work modelled on the realistic novels of late-nineteenth century Europe, a beautiful middle-class woman struggles unsuccessfully to overcome the prejudice and hypocrisy of society in order to live a life true to herself. Arishima's own struggle for self-realisation mirrored this work of fiction, and he committed suicide together with his lover on June 9, 1923.

his philosophy. He drew heavily on ideas he picked up as a result of his prison studies, blending the communism of Kropotkin and the scientific approach of Darwin with the individualism of Stirner and Nietzsche and the anti-rationalism of the French philosophers Bergson and Sorel. The result was an emotional appeal for the full development of the individual through creativity, which became a central theme of Osugi's writing. Although he supported the labour movement and described himself as a syndicalist, Osugi always stressed the role of the individual and the importance of workers educating themselves to ensure the success of any revolution. At the same time he was always mindful of the dangers of the individual becoming isolated from society, and was critical of the extreme individualism of Stirner, which he equated with selfishness. He dismissed intellectuals and was highly critical of art and literature which failed to address the problems of the working class.

Osugi's individualism, unlike Stirner's, was more than simply a theory; he strove to implement it in every facet of his daily life. This led to a high degree of notoriety, especially following a disastrous attempt to test his theory of free love. While still married to his first wife Hori Yasuko, Osugi began affairs with Kamichika Ichiko in 1915 and Ito Noe the following year. Both women were members of the feminist group Seito (Blue Stocking), and while Ito stayed with Osugi until his death in 1923, bearing five children by him, the other two took exception to the arrangement, Kamichika stabbing Osugi in November 1916 and Hori renouncing all ties with him the following year. Members of the socialist movement were equally outraged at Osugi's behaviour, some writing scathing attacks on him, others shunning him completely. And although Osugi was unrepentant, the affair had a lasting effect on the remainder of his career.

Following his recovery from his stab wounds, Osugi devoted himself to his activities with the labour movement. He published a number of journals directed at the working class, including *Rodo shimbun* (Labour News) and *Rodo undo* (Labour Movement), and in December 1917 began living with a group of workers in an industrial suburb of Tokyo to experience their plight at first hand. He joined Wada Kyutarō, Watanabe Masatarō, Kondo Eizo and others in forming a number of study groups and labour unions, including the Shinyukai and the Seishinkai, both radical printers' unions, and exerted considerable influence on their organisation and strategy. Members of these unions were behind the first May Day celebrations in Japan in 1920. At this stage in Japan, anarchists were still working alongside Bolsheviks and other radical socialists, and in December 1920 these groups co-operated in forming the Nihon Shakaishugi Domei (Japan Socialist League), which boasted a membership of 3000. But Osugi became disenchanted with the Bolsheviks in 1921 after reading Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman's accounts of the aftermath of the Russian Revolution, and this led to a split in the Japanese labour movement. A number of Osugi's closest allies, including Wada, had already been won over by the Bolsheviks after meeting Lenin in Siberia, and it was from this point that the anarchist movement in Japan began to lose ground to the communists.

Disenchanted, Osugi launched a number of scathing attacks on Russia and its treatment

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of anarchists, at the same time criticising Sakai and others for their desertion to the communist cause. Then, after hearing news of Nestor Makhno's activities in Russia, he decided to attend an anarchist conference in Berlin in the hope of meeting him. He arrived in Europe in February 1923 but unfortunately got no further than France, where he was arrested while giving a speech during May Day celebrations in Paris. He was deported and arrived back in Japan in July 1923, where he continued writing about Makhno (his admiration for the Ukrainian revolutionary is reflected in the fact that he named his only son Nestor) and the evils of the Russian regime.

On September 1, 1923, a huge earthquake hit the Kanto region around Tokyo, which was subsequently devastated by fire. Martial law was declared and thousands of troops entered the area. As part of the effort to "maintain order" in the aftermath of the earthquake, the authorities detained scores of socialists and union activists, many of whom were killed. On September 16, military police detained Osugi along with Ito and her nephew, aged six, and all three were later strangled to death. The officer in charge, Amakasu Masahiko, was tried and sentenced to ten years imprisonment, and although no concrete evidence exists to suggest Osugi's murder was ordered by higher authorities, Amakasu was released in 1926 and was later involved in propaganda work for the Japanese government in Manchuria.

## Ito Noe and Seito



Cover of *Seito* (1911)

Ito Noe (1895-1923) was an independent-minded, individualistic woman even before she met Osugi Sakae, although it was with him that she developed her anarchist-feminist ideology. Ito was born into a poor family in Fukuoka prefecture, and began working for the Post Office at the age of fourteen after an elementary education. The following year, however, she moved to Tokyo and enrolled at Ueno Girls' School. There she fell in love with her English teacher, Tsuji Jun, bearing two children by him and eventually marrying him in 1915. Tsuji was an admirer of the individualist anarchist Max Stirner, and later rose to fame as a Dadaist flute player.

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Ito Noe and daughter Mako with Osugi Sakae after his return from Europe.

While living with Tsuji, Ito began reading *Seito*, a feminist journal produced by the Seitosha (Blue Stocking Society). Under the editorship of its founder Hiratsuka Raicho, *Seito* had steered clear of revolutionary ideology, but Ito was keen to become involved in the feminist movement, and began helping out with the journal's administration in November 1912. She wrote her first article for the magazine at the age of seventeen, and her

enthusiasm was such that two years later she was appointed editor and publisher in charge of all administrative affairs. Ito's anarchist ideas came to be reflected in the organisation and content of *Seito*, which she claimed had no particular rules or regulations, no set policy and no doctrine.

In 1913 Ito published a translation of Emma Goldman's "The Tragedy of Woman's Emancipation" in *Seito*, and this caught the attention of Osugi Sakae, who was also interested in the Russo-American anarchist. Osugi and Ito first met in September 1914, and in 1916 began an affair. Ito had lost faith in Tsuji, who had initially supported and encouraged her in her intellectual pursuits but was critical of her involvement with *Seito*. The two parted, and Ito took their two children and moved in with Osugi in April 1916. By this stage *Seito* had ceased publication, largely due to Ito's involvement in the stabbing incident following Osugi's free-love experiment. Ito's reputation had been severely damaged and she withdrew from the Seitosha, and because *Seito* had come to be so closely associated with its editor, no one was willing to take over the running of the magazine in her absence. Under Ito's direction the magazine had tackled a number of controversial issues, sparking debate, for example, on the problems of abortion and contraception. Through its pages Ito often criticised those who did not share her radical views, as well as attacking Sakai Toshihiko and other traditional socialists for their paternalistic attitudes. In 1917 Ito moved to the working-class Tokyo suburb of Kameido with Osugi, working with him in establishing a number of journals over the following years. In all she produced over eighty original articles and translations, including a study of Kropotkin co-written with Osugi, as well as two short autobiographical novels, while at the same time bringing up seven children (although Osugi was by all accounts a devoted and helpful father - by Japanese standards!). Her writings are included in the collected works of Osugi Sakae, comprising one volume of the fourteen volume set. She was killed along with Osugi in September 1923, aged twenty-eight.