

## Yasuoka masahiro's 'new discourse on bushid philosophy': Cultivating samurai spirit and men of character for imperial Japan

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### Abstrak

This essay considers the bushid (Way of the Warrior) discourse of the nationalist ideologue and theorist of Ty shis (Oriental thought) Yasuoka Masahiro (1898–1983). As part of his Confucian nationalist perspective on jinkakushugi ('personalism'), Yasuoka propagated self-cultivation that would enable Japanese to resist the supposedly debilitating effects of materialist ideologies and effete urban living upon their personalities. Relying on Tokugawa-era reflections on the bushi (warriors), late Meiji musings on bushid and bud ('martial arts') and modern idealist responses to materialism, he exhorted Japanese men to embrace a self-sacrificial 'samurai spirit' and to act as exemplary 'men of character' (jinkakusha) loyal to the emperor-centered state. Articulated during the advent of universal male suffrage, Yasuoka's bushid discourse not only revealed the obvious expectations of wartime service to the empire but also expressed elite anxiety over the prospect of mass political participation in an age of radical ideologies. Concern for political stability was also prominent in his insistence that these enfranchised public men be supported by disenfranchised housebound women living a feminine analog to bushid. Examining what Yasuoka called his 'new discourse on bushid philosophy' (bushid tetsugaku shinron) thus sheds considerable light on the modern reproduction and political implications of bushid as national ideology, as masculine ideal, and as part of the pervasive prewar discussion of self-cultivation.