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JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN JAPAN

PRE-WAR, WAR AND POST-WAR YEARS

Walter A. Lunden

The author has been engaged in the study of delinquency since 1930. He was Assistant Professor of Sociology in the University of Pittsburgh from 1931 to 1942. During World War II he was a prison officer in the United States Army serving in England, France and Germany from 1943 to 1946. He was with the British 21st Army, the United States 7th Army and 3rd Army and at the end of the war became Chief of the Prison Branch of the Office of Military Government for Bavaria. In 1946 he was instrumental in establishing an American type juvenile reformatory (Youth Institution or *Jugendanstalt*) for delinquent boys at Laufenberg in the Eastern Military District near Salzburg. Since 1947 he is Professor of Sociology in the Iowa State College.—EDITOR.

Current information reveals that juvenile delinquency in Japan has reached high proportions since the end of World War II. Prior to 1940 the highest number of juveniles arrested for major offenses in Japan was 54,023 in 1934. In the five-year prewar period of 1936 to 1940 the annual average number of juveniles arrested for violations of the penal code (serious offenses) was 48,588. During the five years (1941-1945) of World War II the annual average increased to 62,153 or an advance of 28 percent. During the war the highest number (75,314) occurred in 1944. In the postwar years (1946-50) arrests increased rapidly with the highest amount of 158,424 in 1950. The five-year average for the postwar years was 126,360 or 160 percent above the prewar five-year average.¹

Statistics for "lesser offenses" of juveniles "received" in the Juvenile Protection Office in Japan in the war years (1941-45: 107,924, annual average: 21,585) more than doubled the number in the prewar years (1935-40: 41,932 with annual average of 8,386). In the postwar years of 1946 to 1950 the number of cases advanced more than six times to 268,525 with an annual average of 53,705 cases. In 1950 the number of lesser juvenile cases in Family Courts reached the all time high figure of 78,406.²

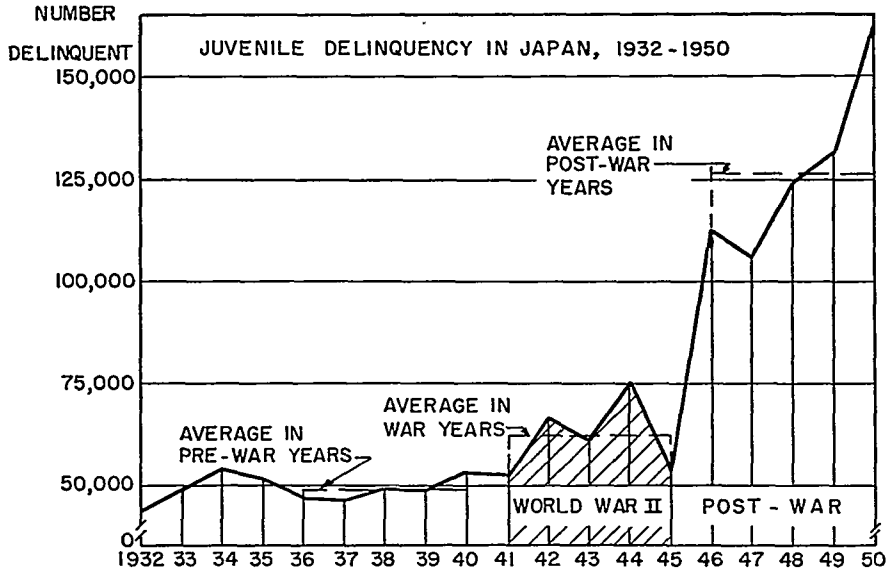
CHANGES BY AGE GROUPS

When the data for juvenile arrests for major offenses are separated by age groups the greatest increase appeared in the age group of 18

1. The author is indebted to Masami Takahashi of the Criminal Affairs Bureau, Supreme Court of Japan, Tokyo for the unpublished data used in the present analysis.

2. Under the old Japanese Code (1923-48) delinquents under 18 years of age were tried in the Juvenile Protection Office at the discretion of the public prosecutor. According to the New Code adopted in 1949 juveniles are heard in the Family Courts which have jurisdiction over juvenile and domestic cases. This new court has been created as a result of influence of Anglo-American law following the end of the war and the United States Occupation of Japan. The older legal code was patterned very largely after the Continental law which had been introduced into Japan in 1923.

to 20 years. The annual average for juveniles under 14 arrested for major offenses for 1941 to 1945 was 9,958 whereas the same for the postwar years (1946-50) was 16,550 or an increase of 66 percent. In the age group of 14 to 18 the annual average during the war was 28,606 whereas in the postwar years the same increased to 55,850 or 95 percent. In the 18 to 20 year age group the five-year annual average



changed from 23,587 (1941-45) to 53,760 in the postwar years or 127 percent.

Table I

Juveniles Arrested for Major Offenses in Japan by Age Groups and 5 Year Periods, 1941-1950 (a)

Year	Age			Total
	Under 14	14 to 18	18 to 20	
1941	10,108	22,731	19,870	52,709
1942	10,683	30,256	25,649	66,588
1943	9,823	28,116	23,427	61,366
1944	11,914	36,722	26,678	75,314
1945	7,265	25,208	22,314	54,787
Total	49,793	143,033	117,938	310,764
Average	9,958	28,606	23,587	62,153
1946	12,401	47,479	51,910	111,790
1947	12,278	45,831	46,720	104,829
1948	11,073	52,453	61,310	124,836
1949	18,385	60,405	53,126	131,916
1950	29,617	73,075	55,734	158,426
Total	83,754	279,243	268,800	631,797
Average	16,550	55,850	53,760	126,360

(a) An extract from "Crime Statistics," 1950 published by the National Rural Police Headquarters, Tokyo, Japan in 1952.

CHANGES IN SPECIFIC OFFENSES

Of all the 10 major offenses for which juveniles were arrested in the 15 year period from 1936 to 1950, robberies increased the most. Arson decreased by less than one percent and embezzlement declined by 35 percent. The decrease in arson has been due, in the main, to the destruction of dwellings as a result of war damage. The decline in embezzlement may be due to the changes in the monetary system during and after the war (see data on bank issues). For the five-year prewar period (1936-1940) total juvenile arrests for robbery increased from 1,708 to 15,395 in the five postwar years or about 800 percent. For the same years rape increased 275 percent, theft 194 percent, obscenity 169 percent, gambling 123 percent, homicide 108 percent and fraud 47 percent. As may be expected juvenile arrests for property offenses increased more than for those against persons.

Table II

Delinquency in Japan by 5 Year Periods. Reasons for Apprehension

Offense	Prewar 1936-1940	War 1941-1945	Postwar 1946-1950	Percent Change Postwar (1946-50) to Prewar (1936-40)
Homicide	738	653	1,532	+ 108
Robbery	1,708	2,096	15,395	+ 800
Rape	1,027	1,430	3,854	+ 275
Arson	1,371	980	1,263	— less than one
Theft	156,444	227,004	461,145	+ 194
Injury	12,756	13,815	7,837	(a)
Obscenity	518	1,705	1,447	+ 169
Gambling	7,798	15,652	17,418	+ 123
Fraud	14,424	8,575	21,203	+ 47
Embezzlement	15,253	9,248	9,984	— 35
Others	30,907	29,586	90,717	+ 193
TOTAL	242,944	310,764	631,795	
Annual Average	48,588	62,152	126,359	+ 160

(a) Not comparable as 7,837 covers only from January 1946 to June 1948.

INTERPRETATION

The sharp increase in juvenile delinquency observed in Japan is a natural consequence which a nation must suffer after a war—especially a defeated nation. The social and economic results of war are serious in victorious nations but far more devastating in a vanquished country. Japan is an example of what happens to juveniles in a defeated nation. Both the victor and the vanquished have certain postwar problems with which to contend but the psycho-social factors in a defeated nation are far different and more serious than in a victor nation. Defeat not only

means the loss of the war for the defeated peoples but far reaching changes in the total political and social structure of the nation.³

In the postwar years Japan underwent very serious food shortages and many items were beyond reach because of price. The conditions are evident from the changes in the bank note issues and the price index, wholesale and retail, for the various years. In the prewar years the highest bank note issue was in 1940 with 5,544 million of Yen. In 1950 the issues amounted to 425,446 million of Yen. The highest wholesale price index (Tokyo, 1934-36, equals 100) was 164 in 1940. By 1950 the wholesale price index had risen to the extreme figure of 24,552. The retail price index (July 1914, equals 100) prewar was 260 in 1940. In 1949 the same index had shot up to 37,283 (36,609 in 1950).⁴

In addition to these monetary conditions the physical necessities of shelter, of fuel and many other items were at the barest minimum. As a single illustration of conditions seat covers in trains and street cars were torn off and clothes on family clothes lines had to be guarded. In many places telegraph wires, door handles, post-boxes and other public property disappeared in many cities.

The rapid increase in offenses for the older age group of 18 to 20 years above that of the under 14 and 14 to 18 years group may be due to what Exner and Liepman designated as *Kriminalität determinierende* or the *milieu stimuli* in *Krieg und Kriminalität*. The age group which is more active in the struggle for existence in a crisis (postwar) is in the main the age group which engages in acts of violence and crime. The tendency for crime in a crisis is, therefore, in direct proportion to the square of the value of the crime rate for each age group.

Furthermore, there has been a change in the moral fiber of the people. There has been "a decline in the moral concept of the people in the apathy and broken-heartedness caused by defeat which removed all ethical controls and power of self-reflection from the minds of the people."⁵ Another factor which has contributed to the high rate of

3. In modern warfare the social consequences in a defeated nation are less serious than in earlier wars. At present the victor nations have instituted large scale rehabilitation programs relieving much of the disorders which have come to defeated nations. Prior to the present century defeated nations have been confronted with serious economic problems to say nothing of the many revolutions which have come in the years following defeat. Had the Allied Nations not maintained an army of occupation in Japan after the war it is impossible to estimate what the results would have been.

4. The wholesale price index was based on the yearly average of 248 items and the retail index on 100 commodities. All data are from the *Statistical Year Book of Japan, 1951*, published by the Bureau of Statistics, Tokyo, Japan.

5. Recent Developments in the Field of Criminal Justice in Japan, Criminal Affairs Bureau, General Secretariat, Supreme Court of Japan, Tokyo, August 1950, p. 26.

crimes is the presence of many Koreans in Japan. Some of these have taken the position that they have certain extra-territorial rights under Japanese rules. In not a few instances they have joined with the underworld outlaws and criminals. This same condition was not uncommon in some of the liberated European countries at the end of the war.

The serious increase of juvenile delinquency in Japan after the war has been due to a combination of social and economic conditions and a general breakdown in the previous "ethical controls" of the people. Extreme privation, food shortages and lack of basic necessities caused people to commit many offenses otherwise not stimulated in normal times. If or when socio-economic conditions can be stabilized and the ethico-religious elements within the nation revitalized juvenile delinquency may be expected to decline to the prewar level.