

The Twenty-Year Occupation:
Cultural Reimagination and the American Occupation of Japan

By Phillip Jones

Thesis Director: Dr. David Snead
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Introduction: Reimagining Occupation

Japan's 18th Prime Minister, Tsuyoshi Inukai was assassinated by Japanese naval officers on May 15, 1932 because his moderate policies were seen as an obstacle to national expansion and Japan's eventual rise to prominence on the world stage through military might.¹ In order to reduce the threat of continued internal violence, Emperor Hirohito assumed responsibility for approving subsequent prime ministers, making Tsuyoshi the final democratically elected prime minister in Imperial Japan's history. Japan would not be wholly governed by democratically elected officials for two decades, marked by the signing of the San Francisco Treaty of 1952, which signaled the withdrawal of American occupying forces from an immeasurably transformed Japan. This twenty-year military occupation of Japan ultimately shaped the fate of Japan as a world power, its relationship to the United States, and its conception of itself as a nation.

Japan would come to remember the tumultuous two decades that followed their invasion of Manchuria and the assassination of Prime Minister Tsuyoshi as the "fifteen-year war." This period was dominated by domestic reform efforts paired with visceral, violent engagements with foreign nations. Domestically, strict censorship, State schools, and propaganda were effectively employed to produce an often fanatically compliant populous. By purging political opposition in the two decades preceding World War II, the Japanese populous was left with few dissenting voices within a nation that religiously celebrated common purpose. This produced a self-sustaining system of psychological coercion, in which state-issued propaganda was the only mechanism by which new ideas could be introduced and broadly disseminated.² The two most

¹ Richard B. Frank, *Tower of Skulls* (New York: Norton & Company, 2020), 12.

² Maruyama Masao. *Thought and Behavior in Modern Japanese Politics*, Translated by Ivan Morris, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 2.

prominent concepts presented in state messaging were the supremacy of the Japanese people and the value of dying for the emperor.

The efficacy of state messaging is clearly demonstrated by the seemingly fanatical violence carried out by Japanese forces in China and later against the United States. Inspired by men such as Lt. Col. Kanji Ishiwara, a political and religious zealot who believed Japan and the United States were destined to fight in an apocalyptic race war, Japanese forces carried out a holy war against the West.³ Japan portrayed itself as the savior of Asia, wishing to free it of the harmful influences of Western colonizers.⁴ Japan's imperial intentions betrayed their altruistic posturing and eventually led them into direct conflict with the United States. From December 7, 1941 until August 15, 1945, Japan and the United States fought a bloody war characterized by incredible bloodshed, war crimes, and racial animosity.

John Dower's *War Without Mercy* represents the most significant work addressing the racialized violence that dominated the conflict between Japan and the United States. Dower presents Japanese conceptions of race as being inwardly-focused, electing to emphasize the pure-self and the superiority of the "Yamato race," rather than by demeaning their adversaries.⁵ Jason Ānanda Josephson argues that this served to reinforce the centralized conception of the nation as stemming directly from the Emperor; a foundational position that was used to legitimize the imperial state following the Meiji Restoration.⁶ While the historical roots of Shinto in the organization of the Japanese state are disputed, the enormous impact of this belief-set on the people of Japan during World War II is not.

³ Frank, *Tower of Skulls*, 10.

⁴ Columbia University, "Selections from the Kokutai no Hongi (Fundamentals of our National Polity)," *Asia for Educators* April 25, 2021, 5.

⁵ John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 10.

⁶ Jason Ānanda Josephson, *The Invention of Religion in Japan* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 96.

The United States represented the “demonic other” resisted by the Japanese people. Unlike Japan, the United States employed a traditionally-Western, ethnicity-oriented conception of race relations during World War II.⁷ By comparing the seemingly barbaric Japanese soldiers to African and Native Americans, journalists were able to utilize strikingly familiar language to de-humanize their opponents.⁸ Malini Schueller argues in *Campaigns of Knowledge* that, while there were certainly consistent elements of primitive, racialized depictions of the Japanese, the United States viewed Japan as a civilized nation that needed to be reeducated, rather than one that needed to be brought into modernity.⁹ This position is contentious and is potentially undermined by American efforts to produce a modern Japanese culture after the war by destroying feudal influences.

Steven Casey argues in *The War Beat, Pacific* that the brutality of combat motivated the United States to military malice more prominently than racism, though he acknowledges that race often contributed.¹⁰ Due to the inherent difficulty of interacting with active Japanese soldiers, American reporters necessarily focused on the American soldiers they travelled with, limiting their analysis of the ultimate motivations of the Japanese people.¹¹ Independent of whether racialized depictions of the enemy were the cause or the product of brutality in the Pacific, it is clear that it played a significant role by the war’s conclusion. Indeed, the enduring themes of the Pacific Theater in historical memory are the intensity of combat, the brutality of its execution, and the use of two atomic bombs to bring the conflict to a close.

⁷ Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 34.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 149-152.

⁹ Malini Schueller, *Campaigns of Knowledge* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2019), 157.

¹⁰ Steven Casey, *The War Beat, Pacific* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2021), 11.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

The decision to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945 represents one of the most significant moments in modern history. Not only did atomic weapons bring the bloodiest conflict in human history to a close, they have come to define the balance of international power to the present day. Their immediate significance was unignorable demonstrated by the utter destruction of Hiroshima and the creation of over 200,000 casualties between the two impacted cities. When placed within the context of the United States' broader firebombing campaign, the death total exceeds 400,000, with the vast majority being civilians. How then, in the wake of the shock of the attack on Pearl Harbor, the brutality of the Pacific War, and the ruthless destruction of the Japanese nation, have the United States and Japan come to model cultural and economic cooperation today?

Despite the destruction of the war, Japan has undergone an economic revolution, currently operating as the third largest economy in the world by GDP.¹² Japan exports more of its resources to the United States than any other nation, while the U.S. imports to Japan are exceeded only by China.¹³ Beyond shared economic interests, it is likely that cultural exports represent the most significant connection between the two nations. Finally, the U.S. military presence in East Asia continues to represent a significant factor in the lives of the Japanese people today. In order to understand these remarkable developments, it is necessary to analyze the events and impact of the American Occupation of Japan from 1945 until 1952.

The study of the American Occupation of Japan benefits from an incredibly rich historiography, comprised of personal memoirs, legal analyses, and cultural reflections. The seven decades that have passed since the U.S. withdrawal from Japan in 1952 have produced

¹² The Observatory of Economic Complexity, "Japan," August 2021, <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/jpn>.

¹³ Global Edge, "Japan: Trade Statistics," 2019, <https://globaledge.msu.edu/countries/japan/tradestats>.

several waves of historical research, disagreement, discussion, and resolution. In order to effectively deconstruct the rich historiography offered by the Occupation, it is necessary to divide its study into three component parts.

The first subdivision of Occupation scholarship worthy of analysis is the deep selection of personal memoirs, off of which subsequent policy analyses have been constructed. The controversial impact of the State Department and the complex realm of political diplomacy draw most heavily on this initial substratum of the historiography. Second, histories regarding the cultural impact of the occupation offer perhaps the largest variance in subject matter and have proven to be the most vivacious branch of the broader historiography of the Occupation over the last two decades. Finally, the analysis of war guilt, particularly as it is channeled through the treatment of Emperor Hirohito and the broader Tokyo War Crimes Trials, is essential to understand the varying ways that historians have reflected on the Occupation from a legal perspective in the intervening years. The development of these three areas presents the compelling selection of historical works available, as well as key shifts in historical perspective over time.

The earliest materials submitted into the field of Occupation scholarship were reports and memoirs provided by members of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP) government detailing their personal involvements. Mark Gayn's 1948 work, *Japan Diary*, provides a shockingly contemporary glimpse into the initial stages of the American occupation. Gayn offers a sympathetic perspective on domestic efforts at liberal reform within Japan, and provides, if only by suggestion, very early critiques of SCAP efforts to repress democratic impulses within Japan.¹⁴ These arguments would be co-opted by later writers such as John

¹⁴ Mark Gayn, *Japan Diary* (New York: Sloan Associates, 1948).

Dower and Michael Schaller to portray Douglas MacArthur, the head of the SCAP government, as inflexible and unwilling to work with grassroots reform movements within Japan during the Occupation.

Perhaps the most significant autobiographical work authored regarding the Occupation is Douglas MacArthur's *Reminiscences* (1964).¹⁵ MacArthur's memoir offers invaluable insight into his perspective regarding the goals of the Occupation, as well as the steps taken by the SCAP government to achieve them. Significantly, *Reminiscences* places the Occupation in a larger historical context and provides insight into the impact of contemporary world events such as the Korean War and the fall of China to communism. The positions established by MacArthur in *Reminiscences* represent the foundation on which subsequent scholarship would come to disagree in subsequent decades.

The declassification of many Occupation-relevant sources in the 1970s ushered in a second wave of impactful memoirs. Alfred Christian Oppler's 1976 work, *Legal Reform in Occupied Japan* offers valuable insight into the realities of occupational legal reform. Oppler attributes the perceived success of legal reforms to their formulation during the initial years of the Occupation, suggesting that a change in posture by the SCAP government may have hampered later efforts to facilitate necessary change.¹⁶ This marks a significant development in the historiography of the field, as it invokes what historians have come to refer to as the SCAP "reverse course," which implies that a fear of communism impeded efforts at genuine democratization during the second half of the Occupation. The American "reverse course" is explored at length in Michael Schaller's *The American Occupation of Japan* (1985), in which he argues that the growing pressures of the Cold War had an enormous impact on SCAP decision

¹⁵ Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1964).

¹⁶ Alfred Oppler, *Legal Reform in Occupied Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 318.

making as the Occupation progressed, leading to a deemphasis of cultural democratization and the artificial acceleration of Japan's economic recovery. Schaller's book has been accused of potentially placing too much emphasis on the external influence of the Cold War on the Occupation but is considered a foundational work in the field nonetheless.¹⁷

American policy regarding the democratization of Japan is an additional field that saw significant development in the 1980s. Toshio Nishi's 1982 work, *Unconditional Democracy*, attributes the decision to impose democratic values on Japan to Gen. MacArthur, whom Nishi presents as filling the authoritarian role desired by the Japanese populous at the time.¹⁸ Theodore Cohen, who served as an economic advisor and special assistant to Gen. Marquat, the head of the economic and scientific sectors during the Occupation, argues that MacArthur should not receive credit for his decision to impose democracy upon the Japanese populous, arguing instead that he was simply carrying out the ideas presented by a New Deal-inspired State Department.¹⁹ Cohen's account has proven the more impactful of the two works, providing a foundation for a SCAP-critical revisionist school of scholars.

John Dower represents the most prominent member of this revisionist school, and indeed the most significant cultural historian of the Occupation broadly. Dower's *Embracing Defeat* (1999) is considered perhaps the most significant entry in the field, earning glowing endorsement from fellow Occupation scholar Sheldon Garon, who called his work "the most comprehensive treatment in English of the American-dominated Occupation of Japan."²⁰ Garon's praise extends

¹⁷ Peter G. Boyle, "Review: [Untitled]," Review of *The American Occupation of Japan* by Michael Schaller, *Journal of American Studies* 21 (April 1987), 152.

¹⁸ Toshio Nishi, *Unconditional Democracy* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1982), 566.

¹⁹ Theodore Cohen, *Remaking Japan: The American Occupation as New Deal* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 12.

²⁰ Sheldon Garon, "Review: [Untitled]." Review of *Embracing Defeat* by John Dower, *Diplomatic History* 25 (Spring 2001), 341.

to Dower's presentation, describing his writing as "masterful, even lyric throughout. . ." ²¹ Ishida Tikeshi expands on Garon's assessment, calling *Embracing Defeat* "one of the best [books] ever written on that period, either in English or Japanese." ²² Perhaps the most widely-praised component of *Embracing Defeat* is Dower's hybrid approach to explaining the development of the Occupation, recognizing the shared impact of both the SCAP government, and the people of Japan. ²³

Embracing Defeat's critics point to an over-emphasis on the ubiquity of grass-roots liberal reform within Japan during the Occupation but concede that it does not fundamentally undermine the good work done by the book. ²⁴ Masami Kimura argues that Dower's criticisms of traditional Japan experts are reductionistic, as they falsely imply that ethnocentrism was an influence felt primarily by Japan experts, to the exclusion of New Deal liberals. ²⁵ These critiques outline a general conservative response to Dower's revisionist works, placing him alongside other key Occupation writers such as Herbert Bix and Michael Schaller. ²⁶ Despite these criticisms, Dower's work, and by extension, the revisionist school of the American Occupation remain the strongest influence on contemporary works produced about the Occupation.

Perhaps the most pronounced development in the historiography of the Occupation over the last twenty years is the increase in monographs and journal articles addressing specific components of the cultural impact of the Occupation. Naoko Shibusawa's *America's Geisha Ally* (2006) explores the steps taken by the United States to shift public opinion behind the Japanese

²¹ Ibid., 341.

²² Ishida Tikeshi, "Review: [Untitled]", Review of *Embracing Defeat* by John Dower, *Social Science Japan Journal* 5 (April 2002), 119.

²³ Ibid., 121.

²⁴ Garon, "Review: [Untitled]", 343.

²⁵ Masami Kimura, "America Asia Experts, Liberal Internationalism, and the Occupation of Japan," *The Journal of America-East Asian Relations* 21 (2014), 251.

²⁶ Herbert Bix, "Emperor Hirohito's War," *History Today* 41 (December 1991), 12-19.

people following the animosity of the war years.²⁷ This work directly contributes to the Schaller-supported claim of a reverse course in order to address growing fears regarding communism. Robert Kramm's "Haunted by Defeat" expands on Dower's exploration of the role of prostitution as an avenue for cultural diffusion.²⁸ Each of these works contain pressing implications regarding the continually developing conception of the relationship between Japan and the United States to this day.

Finally, Malini Schueller's *Campaigns of Knowledge* (2019) utilizes a comparative approach to the analysis of American educational efforts during its occupation of both the Philippines at the beginning of the 20th century, as well as the American Occupation of Japan. Schueller argues that the educational directives of the American Occupation were fundamentally undermined by a lack of willingness on the part of the SCAP government to allow the equalizing ideals of liberty and democracy to be actualized among the Japanese people.²⁹ The implication of this assertion is that Japanese democratization was only viewed as desirable inasmuch as it benefited the United States' broader geopolitical goals in an increasingly tense Cold War. These works build upon a revisionist foundation in order to offer an increasingly comprehensive analysis of the myriad complexities of the American Occupation of Japan.

The final component of the Occupation's historiography that necessitates analysis is the issue of war guilt as represented by the Tokyo War Crimes Trial and the decision to not convict Emperor Hirohito. Herbert Bix addresses Emperor Hirohito's guilt in his pointedly-titled article "Emperor Hirohito's War", (1991) in which he utilizes newly-released diaries that directly tie Hirohito to the ultimate decision to go to war.³⁰ Bix develops these concepts in his Pulitzer Prize

²⁷ Naoko Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

²⁸ Robert Kramm, "Haunted by Defeat," *Journal of World History* 28 (December 2017), 587.

²⁹ Schueller, *Campaigns of Knowledge*, 12.

³⁰ Bix, "Emperor Hirohito's War," 13.

winning *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (2016), in which he demonstrates the generational impact of the decision not to indict the emperor.³¹ Tessa Morris-Suzuki also addresses Hirohito's role in national decision-making, during and after World War II, suggesting that it is impossible to fully separate Emperor Hirohito from the decisions that were made during his rule.³²

The historiography of the Tokyo War Crimes Trials represents perhaps the area of greatest dissension in its scholarship. Richard H. Minear's *Victor's Justice: Tokyo War Crimes Trials* (1971) represents the most significant early critique of the trials, echoing Hideki Tojo's claim that the trial had in fact been "victor's justice."³³ Lawrence S. Wittner praised Minear's analyses of legal failings in the execution of the trial, calling it "the best scholarly study thus far of the legal aspects of the Tokyo trial," but adds that Minear's historical and theoretical arguments are "less convincing."³⁴ Theodore McNeilly provides a scathing review of Minear's work, accusing him of providing thinly veiled attacks on contemporary historians and "saying nothing new" through his moralistic argumentation.³⁵

Yuma Totani's *The Tokyo War Crimes Trials: The Pursuit of Justice in the Wake of World War II* (2009) rejects Minear's position, emphasizing instead the important work done by prosecution in collecting invaluable evidence of Japanese war crimes and establishing complicity for those charged.³⁶ *The Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal* (2018), co-authored by David Cohen and

³¹ Herbert Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2000).

³² Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Showa: An Inside History of Hirohito's War*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1984).

³³ Richard H. Minear, *Victor's Justice: Tokyo War Crimes Trials* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).

³⁴ Lawrence S. Wittner, "Review: [Untitled]", Review of *Victor's Justice: Tokyo War Crimes Trials* by Richard H. Minear, *Pacific Historical Review* 41 (May 1972), 262.

³⁵ Theodore McNeilly, "Review: [Untitled]", Review of *Victor's Justice: Tokyo War Crimes Trials* by Richard H. Minear, *The American Political Science Review* 62 (June 1972), 720-721.

³⁶ Yuma Totani, *The Tokyo War Crimes Trials: The Pursuit of Justice in the Wake of World War II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009).

Yuma Totani, expands on Totani's initial position, emphasizing the role of jurisprudence in international law generally.³⁷ Finally, Nariaki Nakazato's *Neonationalist Mythology in Postwar Japan* (2016) explores the dissenting opinion of Radhabinod Pal, and its subsequent empowering influence on neonationalist myth-making regarding the victimhood of Japan.³⁸

The historiography of the American Occupation of Japan, despite its incredible depth and richness, would benefit from a dedicated analysis of the complex processes of cultural reimagination which underpinned both Japanese and American experiences of occupation. While elements of this subject are addressed in part in several other works, I believe that dedicating a greater focus to this incredibly important subject will appropriately reflect the transformative role shifting concepts of self, former enemies, and respective nations had throughout the Occupation. Indeed, if the current relationship between the United States and Japan is to be understood, the foundational elements of the Occupation must first be analyzed. In pursuit of this goal, this essay draws most heavily on the excellent works of John Dower, Carol Gluck, and Naoko Shibusawa, and combines the novel insights of contemporary cultural historians with the updated analyses of legal historians.

These complex and often contradictory processes of cultural reimagination can only be properly understood within the overarching historical context in which they occurred. Toward this end, the first chapter addresses the pragmatic policy-making that defined the American Occupation of Japan. The most pressing material reality faced by Occupation personnel in the wake of World War II was the utter destruction of Japan. Preventing mass-starvation, social unrest, and demobilizing militarist elements within Japanese society represented the first

³⁷ David Cohen and Yuma Totani, *The Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

³⁸ Nariaki Nakazato, *Neonationalist Mythology in Postwar Japan* (London: Lexington Books, 2016).

challenges faced by SCAP officials.³⁹ SCAP provided a desperately needed sense of stability in the chaos of postwar Japan, allowing many Japanese to actively engage with reform policies. Despite the seemingly ever-present influence of both SCAP personnel, as well as SCAP's reformist policies, most Japanese experienced a sense of detachment from the occupying force, receiving news, policy directives, and life-saving food from Japanese third parties.

Indirect engagement defined much of the occupation experience. SCAP's segregated housing and carefully curated interactions with locals ensured that the majority of men and women serving in the Occupation received only partial insight into the lives of common Japanese persons. By design, personal stewards, cooks, chauffeurs, and assistants insulated Occupation personnel and the broader Japanese populous from one another.⁴⁰ This separation was institutionalized through the SCAP practice of implementing policy through preexisting governmental structures within Japan. This was done in order to grant a sense of legitimacy to SCAP policies, as well as to ensure a smooth transition of power following the eventual withdrawal of American forces.⁴¹

The general directives provided to SCAP called for "democratization from above."⁴² Inspired by New Deal liberalism, SCAP reform policies impacted nearly every facet of Japanese life, reaching as far down as to alter student-teacher relationships. Cultural reform often proved jarring for the Japanese populous, though the SCAP government was met with a surprising domestic impulse toward change in the wake of wartime destruction. Democratization extended to economic policy as well, leading to the dissolution of *zaibatsu*, which served as monopolies within the Japanese economy, fixing prices and regulating output. Despite initial efforts to

³⁹ John Dower, *Embracing Defeat* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 90.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 208.

⁴¹ Deborah J. Milly, *Poverty, Equality, and Growth* (Boston: Brill, 2002), 95.

⁴² Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 69.

decentralize the Japanese economy, the rising threat of communism undermined initial SCAP directives, leading to a distinctly industrial, export-driven economy by 1948.⁴³ This move would come to characterize the change of course that emphasized the need to stabilize the Japanese economy, rather than producing genuinely radical liberal reform economically. Despite these changes, the adoption of Japan's constitution codified economic and cultural reforms that have endured to the present day.

The development of these key policies facilitated and reflected remarkable shifts in political, economic, and cultural thought for both Japanese and Americans. Addressing the impact of these policies on American personnel, the second chapter explores the varied ways in which American understandings and perspectives of the Japanese people, the U.S. responsibility to guide thought, and the developing threat of international communism impacted policymaking throughout the Occupation. Naoko Shibusawa's analysis of an organically developing feminine and childlike depiction of Japanese provides a useful model with which to understand shifting conceptions of Japanese in the minds of Occupation personnel.⁴⁴ Consistent exposure to the hardships faced by Japanese on a daily basis reduced war bitterness and facilitated an increasingly human understanding of the Japanese people

SCAP would come to reflect broader American trends within international geopolitics, utilizing their authority to guide Japanese thought through the promotion of suitably liberal ideals, as well as through the censorship of materials deemed dangerous to the public welfare. MacArthur played a significant role in the development of SCAP's paternalistic posture, serving as a detached ruler through whom all policy was justified. Whether through cultural insight, or simply through fortunate happenstance, MacArthur's dignified, detached rule as Supreme

⁴³ Michael Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 145.

⁴⁴ Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*, 4.

Commander was not without precedent in Japanese history and was received with remarkable openness by Japanese civilians. MacArthur effectively utilized this social cache to gain public support for SCAP policy until his removal from power in 1951.

Despite SCAP's liberal reform remaining largely unchallenged between 1945-1947, the growing threat of communism produced a meaningful shift in Occupation policy. Beginning in 1948, SCAP purges primarily targeted individuals associated with communism, rather than the militarism of the immediate postwar. The United States reimagined Japan as a potentially invaluable Cold War ally, reinvesting in Japan's heavy industry and repressing public demonstrations of discontent.⁴⁵ Despite this reverse course, the economic and cultural reforms codified in Japan's 1947 constitution ensured that many of the Occupation's liberal reforms survived inconsistency in policymaking. Toward this end, many within SCAP directly cooperated with like-minded Japanese reformers and maintained the early-Occupation spirit of New Deal liberalism up through the formal withdrawal of the United States from Japan in 1952.

While the United States reflected shifts in political and cultural thought externally through variation in policymaking, Japanese were left to internally contend with the war's crushing defeat, the contradictions of the Occupation, and the restructuring of Japanese society. The third chapter addresses the varied processes through which Japanese came to reimagine their national history, traditional value systems, and relationship to the state. John Dower's "cultures of defeat" offers the most compelling model with which to analyze the incredibly diverse array of Japanese responses to both defeat and Occupation.⁴⁶ While many struggled to overcome the despair of the postwar period, countless Japanese transcended the difficulty surrounding them and actively engaged with reform efforts.

⁴⁵ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 272.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 121.

For many Japanese, the Occupation was dominated by a spirit of newness. The desire to build a “new Japan” reflected Emperor Hirohito’s challenge to the Japanese people, as presented in his Imperial Rescript Ending the War, and proved appealing to a populous weary of the sacrifice and suffering of the war years.⁴⁷ SCAP’s promises of democratization offered an avenue by which Japanese could simultaneously move beyond the suffering of the recent past and engage with reform policy in pursuit of a brighter future. Toward this end, SCAP emphasized the continuity of Japan’s modernization process, depicting Japan’s fascist interlude as an exception to an otherwise contiguous process of liberal reform. This act of historical revision produced the unintended consequence of discouraging appropriate reflection regarding public support of the war effort.

This reflects the broader tension between the intended impact of SCAP policymaking and the functional impact experienced by Japanese throughout the Occupation. While the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE) was intended to communicate the war guilt of key Japanese leaders, it served the unintended dual purpose of allowing many Japanese to symbolically detach from the broader issue of war guilt altogether. Through this process, many began to view themselves as victims of both the profound violence of the war, as well as of domestic deceptions by former militarist leaders. Indeed, the shortcomings of the IMTFE, as presented by Indian Justice Radhabinod Pal, would later be used to undermine legitimate discourse surrounding war crimes carried out throughout the broader Asia-Pacific War.

Ultimately, liberal reform efforts transcended issues of historical revision and impacted nearly every aspect of Japanese life. Japanese vibrantly engaged with political processes, assuming an active and engaged role in the running of the nation. Additionally, men such as

⁴⁷ The Imperial Rescript Ending the War, August 15, 1945, National Archives of Japan, <https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/gallery/en/0000000002>.

Sakaguchi Ango and Maruyama Masao fervently sought to reconsider the role of the individual relative to the state and pursued the development of subjective autonomy. The enfranchisement of Japanese women offers perhaps the clearest demonstration of the radical liberalization of Japanese culture, as many fundamentally reconsidered a woman's "proper" role in society. Ultimately, the transformative impact of the Occupation dominated postwar narratives of Japan and remains influential to the present day.

It is only through the analysis of these key concepts that the complex and often contradictory processes of reimagination can be understood. The Occupation, as well as the seeming contradictions that it produced, existed within tension between the legacy and devastation of the Second World War and the developing geopolitical concerns of the Cold War. Many Americans were able to look past the violence and bitterness of the war through simple, human interactions, paired with the increasing political convenience of adopting Japan as a Cold War ally. Japanese engaged with this tension by reimagining their recent past, their relationship to the state, and through the radical liberalization of their culture. Despite the inequitable distribution of power, the Occupation represents a distinctly cooperative narrative, in which neither American nor Japanese experiences can be understood in isolation. The strange tensions and cooperation of the American Occupation of Japan gave birth to varied and remarkable processes of cultural reimagination, which have come to define Japanese-American relations to the present day.

Chapter One: Pragmatic Policymaking

The American Occupation of Japan is characterized by cooperation, conflict, and contradictions. The Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP), Japanese politicians, and the Japanese people each sought to advance their own interests, adapt to their changing realities, and ultimately direct the course of the nation of Japan. While SCAP possessed a near monopoly on functional power, their directives were often administered by or dictated through the existing Japanese government. In this sense, the Occupation can be best understood as something that was directed by American officials, transmitted through the Japanese Government, and experienced by the people of Japan. It exists as a unique experience in the lives of those that lived through it, as well as in the broader scope of modern history. To better understand this complex intersection of competing interests and national reimagination, it is necessary to first understand the pragmatic policymaking that has come to define contemporary analyses of the American Occupation.

The Allied Occupation can be best understood as a result of concerns regarding the surrender, demilitarization, and ideological rehabilitation of Japan on the part of Allied leaders during and after World War II. The governments of China, Great Britain, and the United States explicitly referenced these subjects as being of primary concern in the Potsdam Declaration on July 26, 1945. Following Japan's formal surrender on September 2, 1945, American policy makers in the State Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) published directives which reflected years of internal consideration regarding how best to address the difficult task of carrying out a military occupation of their defeated foe.¹ Harry Truman's unexpected rise to the

¹ U.S. Initial Post-Surrender Policy for Japan, 1945, SWNCC 150/4/A, RG 331 U.S. National Archives, College Park Maryland.; and JCS to MacArthur, "Basic Directive for Post-Surrender Military Government in Japan Proper," November 3, 1945, found in *Report of the Governmental Section of SCAP* (Washington, 1948), Record Group 5, Box 89, The MacArthur Memorial Foundation, Norfolk, VA. Hereafter cited as DMMA

presidency following Franklin Roosevelt's death on April 12, 1945 provided the State Department, the JCS, and the War Department unprecedented influence over foreign policy and provided the opportunity for a relatively small group of Asia experts within Washington to dictate the direction of post-war activities in the region.² While the Occupation was ostensibly a joint-effort carried out by the Allied nations, it was quickly apparent that the United States would operate unilaterally, often providing only symbolic concessions to the wishes of its war-time allies. Washington's foundational goals for the Occupation were expressed in these directives as the prevention of future Japanese militarist aggression through the demilitarization of the nation and appropriate public reforms which would "permit her eventual admission as a responsible and peaceful member of the family of nations."³

Japan was to be rendered a peaceful, democratic, law-abiding nation through the dissolution of the military and the rejection of militarist ideologies. This necessarily vague directive facilitated an incredibly diverse and ambitious process of democratization, paradoxically, handed down by decree, often through the conservative Japanese officials that supported the war effort only months earlier. Despite this top-down approach to reform, it was understood within the United States that any enduring change would have to come from grass-roots support from likeminded Japanese citizens.⁴ Carol Gluck describes the tension between handing down authoritarian decrees and the need for independent public support, stating that SCAP's goals "rested on a belief in the power of the people, which translated into the task of shaping Japanese public opinion so that it could think for itself. But until it could do so, SCAP

² Dayna L. Barnes, *Architects of Occupation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), 36.

³ JCS to MacArthur, "Basic Directive for Post-Surrender Military Government in Japan Proper."

⁴ T.A. Bisson, "Japan as a Political Organism," *Pacific Affairs*, (December 1944): 417-420.

would have to think for the Japanese in a relation of power that was absolute and unambiguous.”⁵

The individual responsible for directing this absolute control of the development of postwar Japan was General Douglas MacArthur. MacArthur carried out his role as the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers and governor of the Occupation with messianic zeal, attempting to shape the nation of Japan to his image of a modern, Christian ally in an increasingly polarized world.⁶ Despite this ambitious vision, MacArthur preferred to lead through delegation, rarely leaving the Daichi Building in which SCAP General Headquarters (GHQ) was housed, and even more rarely inviting the counsel of the Japanese people. John Dower describes MacArthur’s approach to leadership, stating that he had “no serious first-hand experience with Japan, apart from war. There is no evidence that he widely read about the country, apart from intelligence reports. . . His only guides, he often intimated, were Washington, Lincoln, and Jesus Christ. . . He seemed to operate on the assumption that the four of them together could – with help from the emperor – “democratize” Japan.”⁷ Whether through ironic happenstance or inspired forethought, MacArthur’s detached, strong-willed leadership proved an effective and familiar conduit by which the principles of democracy could be “handed down” to the people of Japan.

These combined efforts at national reformation produced three enduring policy legacies: the broad process of democratization, which fundamentally transformed Japanese societal and governmental structures, the formation and subsequent adoption of a radically liberal

⁵ Carol Cluck, “The Power of Culture,” in *The Occupation of Japan: Arts and Culture*, ed. Thomas W. Burkman (Norfolk, VA: General Douglas MacArthur Foundation, 1988), 249-250.

⁶ Memorandum of conversation between Kennan and MacArthur, March 1, 1948, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 6, The George C. Marshall Foundation, Lexington, VA, 366-367, <https://www.marshallfoundation.org/library/digital-archive/6-187-george-f-kennan-memorandum-of-a-conversation-february-19-1948/>.

⁷ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 223.

constitution, and the accomplishment of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE). The process of democratization was perhaps the most impactful policy implemented during the Occupation, though the ultimate analysis of this subject is complicated by the ideological about-face performed under the guidance of the State Department in 1947 called the “Reverse Course.” Despite these inconsistencies in American policy, the broader political impact of democratization was codified by the passing of a new, radically liberal Japanese Constitution the same year. Finally, the Tokyo War Crimes Trial provides an incredibly instructive example of American efforts to symbolically reform the Japanese people without meaningfully addressing the core, conservative concepts that motivated much of Japan’s military aggression during World War II. Ultimately, these policies gave rise to the complex and varied processes of cultural reimagination and must be understood in order to appreciate their impact on the histories of both Japan and the United States.

The first step in SCAP’s reformation of Japan was the dissolution of the military. This process had already been underway for several weeks by the time the Occupation formally began, with much of Japan’s extended military infrastructure disappearing from military bases and reappearing on the black market for resale.⁸ SCAP initiated wide sweeping purges which targeted persons associated with the military or the promotion of militarism broadly, impacting over 200,000 individuals.⁹ The vast majority of these individuals were directly removed from military positions, with a notably smaller proportion of politicians facing expulsion for their association with the war effort. While the careers of many pro-war politicians survived the Occupation, this was often the result of ideological flexibility which allowed them to pivot

⁸ Ibid., 114.

⁹ Hans Baerwald, *The Purge of Japanese Leaders under the Occupation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959).

effectively from nationalist state messaging to espousing the virtues of a democratic society under an American occupation. As a result, American efforts to remove the influence of militarist agents within Japanese society were primarily dependent on SCAP's ability to win the war of ideas that came to dominate international geopolitics following the conclusion of World War II.

The Second World War represented a period of intense international ideological conflict. The defeat of the authoritarian states of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan represented a triumph for Western liberalism. It was necessary, then, to achieve a similar victory in the realm of ideas in order to solidify the victories won on the battlefield.¹⁰ In this sense, influences and concepts within Japanese society that were interpreted as feudal or militaristic presented an existential threat to SCAP's efforts to achieve ultimate victory. MacArthur and the State Department agreed that wealth disparity, political oppression, and repressive educational structures produced an affinity for extremism and would need to be remedied in order for Japan to prosper as a modern, democratic nation.¹¹ The mechanism of change advocated for in pre-occupation directives, and publicly endorsed by MacArthur was the implementation of radical, altruistic reform efforts to transform the nation of Japan.¹²

In order to effect this change, Washington preferred SCAP operate through existing governmental structures within Japan, rather than establishing a domineering military government.¹³ This approach resulted in SCAP providing forceful suggestions regarding changes or adjustments they wanted to see the Japanese government initiate, making it immediately apparent where power resided during the Occupation. This dynamic was generally understood

¹⁰ Gluck, "The Power of Culture," 246.

¹¹ Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, 30.

¹² U.S. Initial Post-Surrender Policy for Japan, 1945.

¹³ JCS to MacArthur, "Basic Directive for Post-Surrender Military Government in Japan Proper."

among the Japanese populous, though SCAP censors prevented open discussion of the finer details of this issue. Additionally, this relationship extended all the way to Emperor Hirohito, who was presented as retaining his title and position at MacArthur's will, unambiguously demonstrating the absolute authority of Japan's most recent military conqueror.¹⁴ This arrangement had the practical benefit of easing the implementation of SCAP policies as they could simply operate through existing governmental structures, simplifying the arduous processes of translation and regional implementation. While this decision granted a degree of legitimacy to directives handed down by SCAP, it also ensured the survival of the pre-war bureaucracy and fundamentally hindered efforts to engage with the general issue of war responsibility as it applied to many within the government, as well as in the general populous.

Perhaps the most successful policy implemented by the Japanese Diet under SCAP supervision was a sweeping series of land reforms, which ultimately impacted one-third of Japan's arable land, and nearly one-third of Japan's entire population.¹⁵ In an attempt to equitably reallocate portions of Japan's arable land, the Japanese government purchased large tracts of land from wealthy landlords and resold them to small farmers in credit sales. Michael Schaller describes the incredibly beneficial impact of this policy, stating, "Not only did the program accomplish many of its economic goals, but it also created a class of small landowners loyal to conservative parties who first opposed the reform."¹⁶ This policy encouraged the growth of the middle class and undermined the power of land-holding elites that had dominated pre-war politics within Japan. Practical land reform efforts such as these, paired with anti-trust measures carried out against Japanese *zaibatsu*, Japanese trusts that greatly exceeded their American

¹⁴ Ashida Hitoshi, *Ashida Hitoshi Nikki* [Diary of Ashida Hitoshi] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1986), I:77 (February 19, 1946).

¹⁵ Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan* 43.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

counterparts in size and influence, represented the backbone of SCAP's "anti-feudal" efforts at public democratization.

Despite the successes of land reforms, the issue of how to address *zaibatsu* ultimately dominated SCAP's economic policy during the Occupation. Washington policy makers initially presented the reduction of heavy industry and the dissolution of *zaibatsu* as necessary steps in the demilitarization of Japan.¹⁷ This stemmed from a general belief that *zaibatsu* had played a pivotal role in both the decision to go to war, as they benefited most directly from the production of war materials, as well as efforts to sustain the war against Allied nations. This conclusion was reached despite the best efforts of Japanese Prime Minister, Yoshida Shigeru, who attempted to obfuscate the role of *zaibatsu* in encouraging and empowering the war effort by claiming that militarists had actually rejected the *zaibatsu* and wanted instead to work through newly developed trusts in which they had special interests.¹⁸ The Japanese government presented a bit-part "solution" to the *zaibatsu* issue called the "Yasuda Plan," which provided for superficial restrictions of trusts, but allowed for shareholders to retain their influence over newly formed subsidiaries, functionally effecting no dissolution of power. Unimpressed by the Japanese Diet's efforts, SCAP took control of economic reform.

American plans to impose harsh reparations and near-absolute reductions of heavy industry did not survive the first two years of the Occupation. By 1947, the United States abandoned plans to exact debilitating reparations, preferring a modest transfer of machinery from Japan to victimized nations.¹⁹ Despite these eased financial burdens, the Japanese economy continued to struggle, failing to reach pre-occupation recovery projections. SCAP's efforts to

¹⁷ JCS to MacArthur, "Basic Directive for Post-Surrender Military Government in Japan Proper," 428-429.

¹⁸ Thomas A. Bisson, *Zaibatsu Dissolution in Japan* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1954), 70.

¹⁹ F. C. Everson (British Embassy Staff) to D. F. MacDermot (Foreign Office), February 24, 1947, FO 371/63643, PRO, Public Record Office, London, 1947.

restructure Japan's economy through the dissolution of *zaibatsu* and heavy industry provoked domestic concern within the United States, as the redistribution of *zaibatsu* capital was presented in distinctly socialistic terms.²⁰ MacArthur hit back as his critics in a letter written in response to questions posed by Senators William Knowland, Brien McMahon, and Bourke Hickenlooper, stating SCAP was combatting the feudalistic "traditional economic pyramid" that gave a "few Japanese families direct or indirect control over all commerce and industry, all raw materials..." MacArthur went on to argue that SCAP's failure to dissolve these inequalities would ensure that "its cleansing will occur through a bloodbath of revolutionary violence."²¹ These debates were underpinned by growing concerns regarding the threat of international communism, which presented an increasingly present threat to the stability of Japan. Ultimately, the State Department viewed the anemic growth of Japan's economy as an opportunity for the development of communist sympathies within Japan and intervened.

The beginning of the American Reverse Course can be most closely tied to the State Department submitting SWNCC 381 in July 1947, which advocated for a \$500 million-dollar program to reinvigorate the Japanese economy and strengthen the formerly weakened heavy industries.²² The stated purpose of this directive was to reduce Japanese dependence on American support. It served the secondary purpose of bolstering Japan's potential to act as a Cold War ally, and potentially served the third purpose of rendering MacArthur less significant as the governor of an increasingly self-sufficient defeated nation. Additionally, the State Department revised its presentation of Japanese economic history, stating that it would

²⁰ *Congressional Record*, December 19, 1947, Vol. 11, 686-688; and "U.S. Opinion on Japan and Korea," December 1947 – January 1948, in Records of the Office of Public Opinion Studies, DOS, RG 59, Congressional Records, Washington D.C.

²¹ Quoted in Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, 121.

²² SWNCC 381, July 22, 1947, National Archives of the United States, SWNCC Records, RG 353.

unilaterally benefit eastern Asia through its economic development, downplaying the exploitation of surrounding nations in the development of its robust imperial economy.²³ Following this intervention by the State Department, MacArthur would play a distinctly secondary role in economic decision making for the remaining four and a half years of the Occupation.

The Reverse Course is best understood within the context of the broader limitations of American efforts at democratization. SCAP GHQ was far from unilaterally supportive of grass roots efforts to democratize, particularly as it related to unionization. GHQ undermined protest efforts made by Japanese workers who seized control of businesses that failed to offer employees agreeable working conditions. GHQ denounced such operations as harmful to the economy, though they never produced meaningful harm, or represented more than 1% of available man hours at any given point, which represented a miniscule amount compared to the burden posed by GHQ and its many superfluous arms.²⁴ In this sense, the Occupation was defined, in part, by fundamental suspicions of domestic efforts to reform. George Kennan, the key architect of the American Reverse Course, went further, claiming that United States should forget about “human rights” or “living standards” and that they should deal exclusively in dispassionate power politics.²⁵ This was necessary in Kennan’s estimation as he fundamentally doubted the capability of Asian persons to resist the corrupting influence of communism and needed to be forcibly directed towards the United States. Despite the cynicism of many key American decision

²³ Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, 110.

²⁴ Miriam Farley, *Aspects of Japan’s Labor Problems* (New York: John Day, 1950), 82-85, 97.

²⁵ Quoted in Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, 25.

makers, genuinely altruistic efforts at reform were sustained by members of SCAP in cooperation with like-minded Japanese citizens throughout the entirety of the Occupation.²⁶

Perhaps the most ideologically consistent reform efforts initiated by SCAP were varied processes of educational reform. These efforts, which were overseen by the Education Division of SCAP under the leadership of Lt. Col. Donald Nugent, were based in a distinctly liberal conception of education which rejected scientific racism.²⁷ George D. Stoddard, the Chairman of the Education Mission to Japan, described the Japanese people as being “earnest in their striving” to embrace their emerging freedoms in pursuit of democratization.²⁸ This New Deal idealism, which came to embody American efforts at educational reform in Japan, denied narratives that Japan needed to be brought into modernity, choosing instead to emphasize the need for an appropriately liberal education which would empower the Japanese populous to grasp the universally-appealing principles of Western democracy. Malini Schueller contends that this position was often justified using the language of “oriental conformity,” which emphasized the thoughtless compliance of Asian persons.²⁹ While these ideas prominently affected general descriptions of the process of democratization by non-education members of SCAP, educational reform was invariably presented as a cooperative process which systematically necessitated and acknowledged the varied contributions of Japanese educators.

Many Japanese educators independently initiated reform efforts, responding to both the end of war-time repression and the impending arrival of liberal American reform. While general openness to SCAP’s liberal reform varied widely, Japanese civilians understood and accepted the

²⁶ For examples of SCAP engagement with domestic reform efforts before and following the Reverse Course, see *The Occupation of Japan: The Grass Roots*, ed. William F. Nimmo (Norfolk, VA: General Douglas MacArthur Foundation, 1991).

²⁷ Report of the United States Education Mission to Japan, May 30, 1946, RG 31, Box 7 Folder 6, DMMA.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁹ Schueller, *Campaigns of Knowledge*, 157.

need for self-reflection and the elimination of militarist institutions within education.³⁰ Indeed, Japanese openness to change stunned many Americans who interpreted their ideological flexibility as symptomatic of war-time racial stereotypes of “Oriental compliancy.” John Dower contends that this phenomenon is more appropriately understood as a symptom of national exhaustion regarding the recently defeated authoritarian state, stating that Japan’s defeat demonstrated “how quickly all the years of ultra-nationalistic indoctrination could be sloughed off. . . . People everywhere demonstrated relief at the collapse of the authoritarian state. . . .”³¹ Ultimately, the beleaguered Japanese educational system demonstrated incredible flexibility and perseverance in the face of changes that represented foundational departures from the fundamental principles of Japanese education during the war years.

This broad process of reform was closely guided and overseen by SCAP’s Civil Information and Education Section. The Education Section helped guide education through the production and use of textbooks such as *Primer for Democracy*, which advocated for democratic ideals and for a fundamental reframing of Japanese history.³² The *Primer for Democracy* traces democratic thought in Japan to the arrival of Admiral Perry in 1853, inherently tracing democracy’s ideological roots to Japan’s complex and often troubled relationship with the United States.³³ In this sense, the *Primer for Democracy* carried on a tradition of Japanese modernization, which saw the depiction of Western concepts as being congruous with Japanese historical tradition. Mark Ravina calls this familiar mechanism of state messaging “cosmopolitan chauvinism,” which he describes as “integrating Japanese cultural distinctiveness with cross-

³⁰ Joseph Trainor, *Educational Reform in Occupied Japan* (Tokyo: Meisei University Press, 1983), 29.

³¹ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 122.

³² *Primer for Democracy*, Vol. 2, August 26, 1949, RG 31, Box 7 Folder 4, DMMA.

³³ *Ibid.*, 1.

cultural norms.”³⁴ In this sense, American involvement in the development of education represented the natural conclusion to the process of modernization described by Japanese diplomat Itō Hirobuma as beginning with the arrival of Admiral Perry in 1953.³⁵

The ultimate legacy of American educational directives during the Occupation is one of cooperation. SCAP systematically encouraged Japanese initiative in educational reform by acting in a primarily advisory role. When asked to expound upon the general guiding principles offered by SCAP regarding how Japanese educators ought to go about teaching, Lt. Col. Nugent, the Chief of the Civil Information and Education Section (CI&E), stated, “In order that the reconstruction of Japanese education may succeed and last long, it is essential that most of the work be done by the Japanese,” and that any effort to explicitly lay out the course of Japanese education would be “an insult for the intelligence of Japanese educators.”³⁶ Members of the Japanese committee for educational reform established by SCAP “consulted its American counterparts as equals” and ultimately initiated over 60% of all reform throughout the Occupation.³⁷ Joseph Trainor, who served in the Education Division, fondly recalled the spirit of cooperation that defined his work during the Occupation, stating, “The story of the Education Division is not so much the story of developments and events in Japanese education as it is one of the development of kinds of working relationships between individuals and groups of disparate cultures whose common ground was an interest in problems which transcended both cultures.”³⁸

³⁴ Mark Ravina, *To Stand with the Nations of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 10.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

³⁶ Answers Given to Japanese Educators, RG 100, Box 1, Folder 2, DMMA, 1-2.

³⁷ Harold Noble, “We’re Teaching the Children to Lead Japan,” *Saturday Evening Post*, 27 July 1946, 9.

³⁸ Trainor, *Educational Reform in Occupied Japan*, vii.

The final element of democratization implemented during the Occupation was the radical liberalization of Japanese culture. SCAP's efforts to deconstruct feudal influences in Japanese culture saw the reorientation of gender relations, the normalization of taboos, and proliferation of literature and external media which had been withheld from Japan during the war. While Japanese filmmakers could have been censored during the war for failing to present pro-war sentiment, Japanese filmmakers were often censored for failing to depict females in an appropriately progressive light during the Occupation.³⁹ SCAP's continuation and appropriation of war-era censorship mechanisms extended well beyond simply ensuring the affirmation of democratic principles. Japanese publishers could be censored and ostensibly risk losing their freedom to publish if they addressed the authoritarian nature of SCAP's rule, reported on violence carried out by American GIs, criticized SCAP policies, or if they alluded to MacArthur in almost any capacity.⁴⁰ SCAP's remarkably inconsistent valuation of what represented inappropriate material for publishing undermined Japanese efforts to freely engage with their newfound liberties and represents an additional irony of SCAP's post-colonial authoritarian democracy.

Japanese citizens who vigorously engaged with the principles and promises of SCAP's democratization often found the very tangible limits of their occupier's goodwill. Matsushima Shōtarō experienced these limitations as he was arrested for carrying a sign that coarsely questioned why Emperor Hirohito was allowing his citizens to starve and die.⁴¹ Matsushima was arrested for violating the dignity of the sovereign and allowed to face trial by GHQ. While SCAP pressure eventually facilitated Matsushima's release, it sent a clear message that Japanese

³⁹ Keiko McDonald, "Whatever Happened to Passive Suffering? Women on the Screen," (53-71), in *The Confusion Era* ed. by Mark Sandler (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institute, 1997), 53.

⁴⁰ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 411.

⁴¹ Kōdansha, ed., *Shōwa: Niman Nichi no Zenkiroku* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1989), Vol. 7, 260.

conservatives still held power and that the emperor's sovereignty was still a legally protected concept. GHQ made it abundantly clear that democratization would only occur at their pace and on their terms, with MacArthur going as far as cancelling peaceful demonstrations and fundamentally undermining the ability of Japanese citizens to protest food shortages and other similarly universal concerns.⁴²

Despite the contradictions and inconstancies of SCAP's tolerance for politically inconvenient positions, the Occupation provided Japanese citizens with genuinely unprecedented access to books, films, and the revolutionary concepts contained therein. The first four years of the Occupation saw a six-fold increase in publishing companies, over 16,500 distinct newspapers, and the translation and introduction of over 1,367 foreign language books, of which less than eight percent were American.⁴³ The breadth and depth of the content expressed and introduced into Japanese society during this period cannot be quantified and has irreversibly altered the way that Japan viewed the United States, itself, and the world.

These efforts demonstrate a genuine altruism on the part of SCAP officials, who certainly risked the destabilization of the relatively compliant Japanese populous through the introduction of materials which often directly contradicted the values of democratization which were so fervently protected during the Occupation. This reflects a general transition to the post-colonial world of the Cold War, in which American policy makers gambled on the universal appeal of democratic values in the face of competing worldviews such as communism. The protective and contradictory policies implemented in pursuit of the protection of these ideas model the complex

⁴² Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 269.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 181-183.

tension of democratic ideals and government supervision which would come to define the next four decades of international geopolitics.⁴⁴

Every act of liberal reform handed down by SCAP was presented through conservative elements of the Japanese government. This served the dual purpose of blurring the line between Japanese and American influence in legislation and granting legitimacy to directives presented to the Japanese people.⁴⁵ Japanese politicians sought to undermine this process by deliberately passing ineffectual laws through the subtle manipulation of language or through the delay of policies that represented significant departures from existing Japanese law. Michael Schaller describes this process, stating, “In anticipation of a SCAP command to, say, deconcentrate industry or revise the constitution... The government would appoint a committee to recommend some specific, often cosmetic alterations in response to SCAP’s orders. By offering minimal reform proposals, the Japanese hoped to deter more radical alternatives... until the Americans either had a change of heart or lost interest in rigorous enforcement.”⁴⁶ The obstructive work of conservative politicians would ultimately lead to the involuntary reconstruction of Japan’s foundational legal document.

Japanese and American policies toward legitimate reform came to a head on the issue of the remodeling or complete replacement of the Japanese constitution. The Potsdam Declaration cited foundational government reform as a necessary step to reduce militaristic influence within Japanese society.⁴⁷ SCAP officials used this condition of surrender to justify taking direct action to fundamentally reshape Japan’s foundational legal documents to better align with the

⁴⁴ Ibid., 23.

⁴⁵ Deborah J. Milly, *Poverty, Equality, and Growth: The Politics of Economic Need in Postwar Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 95.

⁴⁶ Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, 41.

⁴⁷ Potsdam Declaration, July 26, 1945, found in *Documents on the Tokyo International Military Tribunal* ed. Neil Boister and Robert Cryer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1. Hereafter cited as DTIMT.

democratic ideals that were perceived as being congruous with the general will of the Japanese people. The State Department directed GHQ to inform the Japanese government that it should independently pursue this course of constitutional revision in order to emphasize the legitimacy of any produced modifications.⁴⁸ The Japanese government appointed a “Constitutional Problem Investigation Committee,” led by Matsumoto Jōji, who, after significant prodding, ultimately advocated for minor reforms of the existing Meiji Constitution which represented no significant departure from the legal basis on which the government currently stood.⁴⁹ With Matsumoto’s failure to understand the desires of the American occupiers and, indeed, the developing will of the Japanese people, MacArthur intervened.⁵⁰

Dissatisfied with the Japanese government’s tepid reform efforts, MacArthur instructed SCAP’s Government Section, under the charge of Br. Gen. Courtney Whitney, to construct a model constitution which demonstrated the nature of reform desired by the United States and the Potsdam Declaration. MacArthur provided Govt. Section one week to draft a model constitution and inserted three stipulations, indicating that the emperor be retained as a dynastic, representative head of state, that Japan forfeit the right of war as a mechanism of the state, and that feudal structures of nobility would not extend beyond the current bearers of noble titles.⁵¹ MacArthur’s provisions ensured that any draft produced by Govt. Section would be genuinely revolutionary in the broader scope of world history and stretched his authority as supreme commander.

⁴⁸ U.S. Initial Post-Surrender Policy for Japan, 1945.

⁴⁹ Drafting Process of Japanese Constitution, (1947), RG 33, Box 1, Folder 1 DMMA.

⁵⁰ Beate Gordon, Interview by Marlene Mayo, New York, September 8, 1978, Box 3, Marlene Mayo Oral Histories, 0015-GWP, Special Collections and University Archives, College Park, MD.

⁵¹ Political Reorientation of Japan, September 1945 – September 1948, RG 5, Box 89, Folder 4, DMMA, 102.

Govt. Section attempted to give legal form to the principles presented in the founding State Department and JCS directives with appropriate consideration for MacArthur's stipulations.⁵² This remarkable circumstance afforded individual members of Govt. Section, such as Beate Sirota, a twenty-two-year-old Jewish woman who grew up in Japan and pursued education in the United States, an incredible opportunity to affect lasting change on Japanese legal structures. Pulling upon her experiences growing up in Japan, Sirota was uniquely equipped to address repressive elements of existing Japanese law and fervently fought for the inclusion of greater legal protections for women than were offered in any other contemporary constitution.⁵³ The ultimate product was an unprecedentedly liberal document, which combined the perceived strengths of Western legal tradition.

The presentation of Govt. Section's constitution shocked conservative Japanese diplomats, who found it entirely incompatible with their current government as well as their legal traditions. Conservative elements within Japanese society found the civil liberties afforded to women in Govt. Section's constitution particularly troubling, with one Japanese man remarking that the economic independence of Japanese women was worse than the use of the atomic bomb.⁵⁴ Addressing Japanese concerns regarding the progressive civil liberties afforded to women in the initial draft, Col. Kades, the head of Govt. Section's Constitution Steering Committee, stated that "Miss Sirota has her heart set on women's rights," and encouraged the Japanese delegates to accept the terms and move on.⁵⁵ Ultimately, members of Japan's ill-fated "Constitutional Problem Investigation Committee," were encouraged by Gen. Whitney to pass

⁵² Charles Kades, "Kades Memoir on Occupation of Japan," (1986), RG 33, Box 1, Folder 4, DMMA, 278.

⁵³ Gordon Interview.

⁵⁴ Lucy Herndon Crockett, *Popcorn on the Ginza: An Informal Portrait of Postwar Japan* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1949), 169.

⁵⁵ Gordon, Interview.

the constitution on to the national diet through a callous allusion to atomic weapons and the implication that the retention of the emperor's status could only be ensured if the constitution passed.⁵⁶ These threatening insinuations, paired with the very real possibility that Japanese officials could be democratically replaced by liberally minded politicians in an upcoming election should they fail to support the constitution, ultimately facilitated the constitution's submission to the Japanese Diet.

Emperor Hirohito's public support for constitutional reform greatly eased pressure on members of the Japanese Diet who harbored concerns about unsurreptitiously amending the Meiji Constitution. Following the approval of the constitution in principle, SCAP allowed the Japanese Diet several months to explore the legal implications of the document and suggest potential adjustments. GHQ openly encouraged Japanese involvement in the process of constitutional revision to better reflect the language of the Potsdam Declaration, which advocated for a government that reflected the will of the Japanese people.⁵⁷ Ultimately, the Far East Commission (FEC) advocated for the most substantial revisions made to the constitution, though the Japanese Diet engaged in the process of revision as well. GHQ ultimately proved good to their word and approved the vast majority of non-transformative adjustments suggested by their Japanese counterparts.⁵⁸

The most consistent quality of the provisions proposed by the Japanese Diet was the subtle alteration of terminology in translation to make the liberal demands of the new legal document less explicit.⁵⁹ Perhaps the clearest example of Japanese efforts to soften the material impact of the new constitution was the translation of the term "the people," which was rendered

⁵⁶ Ashida, *Ashida Hitoshi Nikki*, I:77.

⁵⁷ Kades, "Kades Memoir on Occupation of Japan.," and Potsdam Declaration.

⁵⁸ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 389.

⁵⁹ Drafting Process of Japanese Constitution.

as *kokumin*, which intonates a conservative, nationalistic sense of a harmonious people of Japan, rather than a collection of individuals that consent to the constitution and are theoretically capable of doing otherwise.⁶⁰ Dower describes these efforts, stating that “through such ambiguities, the conservatives desired to blunt and obfuscate the radical thrust inherent in the American notion of ‘popular sovereignty.’ They were aghast at the thought of postulating a sovereignty equal to or higher than the emperor’s.”⁶¹ While Japanese conservatives were ultimately unable to meaningfully alter the revolutionary nature of the new constitution, they were able to introduce appropriately vague language which allowed for subsequent debate over the true intent of the document.

Japan’s new constitution took legal effect on May 7, 1947, over a year after its original conception by Govt. Section. Despite the best efforts of conservative elements within the Japanese Diet, it represented a fundamental shift in the way the Japanese populous related to and interacted with the concept of the state. The opening lines of the constitution unambiguously recall the document’s Western origins and its inherently revolutionary nature within the broader scope of Japanese legal tradition, stating:

We, the Japanese people, acting through our duly elected representatives in the National Diet...do proclaim that sovereign power resides with the people and do firmly establish this Constitution. Government is a sacred trust of the people, the authority for which is derived from the people, the powers of which are exercised by the representatives of the people, and the benefits of which are enjoyed by the people. This is a universal principle of mankind upon which this Constitution is founded.⁶²

The first article of the Japanese Constitution states that the emperor shall serve exclusively as a “symbol of the state and of the unity of the people,” which simultaneously placed the emperor under the will of the people while validating the concept that he personified the collective unity

⁶⁰ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 381.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 382.

⁶² The Final Draft of Japanese Constitution, (1947), RG 33, Box 1, Folder 1, DMMA.

of the Japanese people.⁶³ Additionally, key decisions of the diet, such as appointing prime ministers or chief justices, would be affirmed, if only symbolically, by the emperor. In this sense, the emperor simultaneously existed above and below the will and consciousness of the Japanese people. Hirohito's exact position embodied the undiscernible otherness that had come to define the extended history of Japanese emperors. Through the passing of Japan's new constitution, GHQ ensured that the emperor would retain a position of vague significance which, ironically, echoed more closely the traditions of feudal Japan than the emperor-centric traditions of Japan's recent imperial past.⁶⁴

Despite the Japanese Constitution's ambiguous treatment of the emperor, it represented a radically liberal document when considered in its entirety. Article 15 stipulated that Japanese citizens have an "inalienable rights to choose their public officials and to dismiss them," and ensures universal adult suffrage.⁶⁵ The constitution guaranteed Japanese citizens the right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" inasmuch as it does not directly interfere with the public welfare.⁶⁶ Ultimately, MacArthur's stipulation that Japan renounce war as a sovereign right of the state would prove the most significant facet of the new constitution. Article Nine stated that "the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes."⁶⁷ This radical, pacifistic policy existed in shocking contrast to the lived experiences of both Japan and the United States

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ The Emperors of Japan have served in a largely symbolic, religious role for over 1,000 years. While all Japanese governments have operated under this symbolic authority, true power has rested in the Imperial Court and subsequently with various military governments since the 12th century. See Conrad Totman, *Japan Before Perry: A Short History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 73-75, 81.

⁶⁵ The Final Draft of Japanese Constitution, (1947).

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

over the previous decade and would come to dominate the nature of the relations between nation for the remainder of the century.

MacArthur's policy of peace represented the most dramatic actualization of the Potsdam Declaration's directive which called for the prevention of future acts of Japanese aggression. MacArthur defended Article Nine, calling it the "most moral of ideas," stating that he succeeded in carrying out the general wishes the Allied leaders at the close of the war.⁶⁸ MacArthur supported Japanese pacifism so adamantly that he advocated for a long-term solution to regional defense where the United States did not have military bases on mainland Japan, allowing Japan to remain ostensibly neutral in a potential conflict with the USSR.⁶⁹ Ultimately, the outbreak of the Korean War dashed any hopes of such a policy being tested and even produced American requests for Japanese rearmament in secret.⁷⁰ While the concept of a nation of peace failed to endure in the hearts of American policy makers, it would be warmly embraced by many within Japan who sought to reimagine their nation as one of a unique cultural character.⁷¹

The final policy legacy of the American Occupation of Japan was the establishment and the operation of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE). The surrender terms provided to Japan through the Potsdam Declaration specified that "stern justice" would be handed out to Japanese war criminals, with specific notice being given to war crimes inflicted upon Allied prisoners.⁷² On January 19, 1946, MacArthur formally established the IMTFE toward this end.⁷³ The creation of the IMTFE was predated by regional hearings throughout east Asia, including the active extradition and prosecution of war criminals in Yokohama, overseen

⁶⁸ MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 304.

⁶⁹ Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, 66.

⁷⁰ John Dower, *Empire and Aftermath: Yoshida Shigeru and the Japanese Experience, 1878-1954* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1979), 373.

⁷¹ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 548.

⁷² Potsdam Declaration.

⁷³ Establishment of an International Military Tribunal for the Far East, January 19, 1946, in DTIMT, 5.

by SCAP's Legal Affairs Section. In this context, the IMTFE was founded, in part, to address the remaining high-profile members of the Japanese military and government who were judged to have played a significant role in the execution of Japan's aggressive war. MacArthur seized this opportunity to address symbolically the issue Japanese war guilt through a showcase trial of many of Japan's most famous war-time leaders, including Hideki Tōjō.

The most significant legal impact of the IMTFE was the controversial "crimes against peace" designation, which was proposed and expounded upon in the Charter of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East.⁷⁴ While the IMTFE was instructed to address conventional war crimes and crimes against humanity (Class B and Class C offenses respectively), Class A offenses, or crimes against peace, were given preeminent focus during the trial, punishing the Japanese defendants for the "planning, preparation, initiation or waging of a declared or undeclared war of aggression."⁷⁵ This controversial designation would come to define the IMTFE, occupying the primary focus of the prosecution's efforts, as well as of dissenting justices at the trial's conclusion. Ultimately, the International Prosecution Section (IPS), led by Joseph Keenan, elected to emphasize Class A crimes at the expense of a wholistic prosecution effort, and determined to not press charges for any Class B or Class C offenses during the trial.⁷⁶

The prosecution argued that a collection of international treaties, including the ill-fated Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928, cumulatively provided precedent for this decision, though they made no effort to conceal the ground-breaking nature of this classification as an enforced policy in the broader history of international law. Mei Ju-ao, the justice representing China, found these

⁷⁴ Charter of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, April 26, 1946, in DTIMT 7.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁷⁶ Fujita Hisakazu, "The Tokyo Trial: Humanity's Justice v Victors' Justice," in *Beyond Victor's Justice? The Tokyo War Crimes Trial Revisited* ed. by Yuki Tanaka, Tim McCormack, and Gerry Simpson (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2011), 16.

arguments to be compelling, listing the Treaty of Versailles as an additional precedent through which he was comfortable passing judgement with regard to the crimes against peace designation.⁷⁷ Perhaps the most significant precedent afforded the Tokyo Trial was the recently concluded Nuremburg Trials, which directly addressed the issues of the aggressive wars and the punishment of individuals for the acts of the broader state.⁷⁸ The Nuremburg Trials appear to affirm the IMTFE's crimes against peace designation, stating "To initiate a war of aggression, therefore, it is not only an international crime; it is the supreme international crimes differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole."⁷⁹ While these arguments eventually earned a majority decision, they have remained at the heart of the controversy surrounding the trial for over seventy years.

Critics of the trial accuse the United States of carrying out "victor's justice," punishing Japanese leaders through criminal designations without legitimate legal precedent.⁸⁰ By emphasizing the lack of a clearly established and agreed upon legal precedent in international law, critics such as Richard Minear and Bengali Justice Rabhabinod Pal affirmed a view of legal positivism, which emphasizes the "positive" or explicitly confirmed elements of law.⁸¹ This view was rejected by the President of the IMTFE, Australian Justice William Webb, who addressed the issue of legal positivism in his closing remarks, stating, "International Law may be supplemented [by] rules of justice and general principles of law: rigid positivism is no longer in accordance with international law. The natural law of nations is equal in importance to the

⁷⁷ Mei Ju-ao, *The Tokyo Trial and War Crimes in Asia* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 23.

⁷⁸ United States et al v Hermann Wilhelm Göring et al in *Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal, Nuremberg, 14 November 1945 – 1 October 1946* (1947) Vol. I, Judgement, 223.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 186.

⁸⁰ Minear, *Victor's Justice: Tokyo War Crimes Trials*.

⁸¹ Judgement of the Honorable Mr. Justice Pal, September 9, 1947, in DTIMT 809.

positive or voluntary.”⁸² Justice Mei, affirms this position, stating that the “application of law shall not adhere blindly to the language employed,” and that must also consider “the spirit of the legislation and the environment at the time.”⁸³ The majority of the eleven justices serving on the IMTFE ultimately accepted this position through their rulings.

Criticisms of the IMTFE extended beyond simply the controversial Crimes against Peace designation, involving the methodology employed in the selection of both justices and defendants, the criteria for the submission of admissible evidence, and the work of Chief Prosecutor Joseph Keenan broadly. As stipulated in the IMTFE’s founding charter, the tribunal was not “bound by the technical rules of evidence,” and was encouraged to “apply the greatest possible extent expeditious and non-technical procedure.”⁸⁴ The decision to carry out an expedited military tribunal can best be understood as a “civilized” alternative to the simple execution of suspected war criminals, as was considered possible at the conclusion of the war.⁸⁵ Ultimately, the regrettably robust body of evidence of Classes B and C war crimes which could be unavoidably attached to the majority of the twenty-eight defendants rendered this policy immaterial.

The only criticism of the IMTFE which existed primarily among Western persons, as opposed to the supposedly victimized Japanese defendants, was the decision not to prosecute Emperor Hirohito. This decision was made within the broader context of MacArthur fervently working to protect the emperor from critical analysis as it related to his culpability for the war, as well as to insulate Hirohito from domestic questions of abdication in order to preserve the

⁸² *United States et al v Araki Sarao et al in The Tokyo War Crimes Trial: The Records of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East*, (2002) Vol. 21, Separate Opinion of President Webb, found in *Beyond Victor’s Justics?* ed. by Yuki Tanaka, Tim McCormack, and Gerry Simpson, (2011), 20.

⁸³ Ju-ao, *The Tokyo Trial and War Crimes in Asia*, 25.

⁸⁴ Charter of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, 10.

⁸⁵ Henry Stimson quoted in Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 445.

dignity of the throne.⁸⁶ MacArthur drew most closely upon the advice of Gen. Bonner Fellers, who insisted that Emperor Hirohito paradoxically lacked the power to stop Japan from waging a war of aggression, but bravely exercised his near absolute power to bring the war to a conclusion in August 1945.⁸⁷ Fellers would go as far as to instruct a Japanese officer which charges could be brought against Hirohito in order to allow them to more directly undermine prosecution efforts.⁸⁸ Whether genuinely moved by this position or simply acting out of a pragmatic desire to retain leverage with which to manipulate Japanese conservatives, MacArthur informed Dwight Eisenhower that any effort to remove Emperor Hirohito would produce violent revolts, the destabilization of the Japanese state, and its likely subsequent fall to communism.⁸⁹

Ultimately, intelligence reports produced by both Japanese and American intelligence officers cast doubts on the likelihood of this reactionary national turmoil. SCAP intelligence reports produced in the opening months of the Occupation stated that the Allies were “unduly apprehensive of the effect on the Japanese if the Emperor was removed,” stating that “people are more concerned with food and housing problems than with the fate of the Emperor.”⁹⁰ John Dower echoes this sentiment, affirming that “Had the occupation authorities chosen to encourage Hirohito’s abdication, it seems clear that there would have been no insurmountable obstacles to such an act...However sadly, the public would surely have accepted an imperial announcement of abdication as easily as they had accepted defeat itself.”⁹¹ Despite these reports, MacArthur

⁸⁶ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 321.

⁸⁷ October 1 Briefing to MacArthur, October 1, 1945, RG 44a, Box 1, Folder 1, DMMA.

⁸⁸ Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, 343-344.

⁸⁹ The Chief of Staff (Eisenhower) to General of the Army General Douglas MacArthur, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS 1946*, vol. 8, 395-97, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1946v08/d115>.

⁹⁰ Civil Intelligence Section, SCAP, *Occupational Trends: Japan and Korea*, January 9, 1946, 4-5.

⁹¹ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 322.

was disturbed growing communist sentiment within Japan and accordingly demonstrated no interest in reflecting the advice of his intelligence officers.⁹²

Ultimately, the decision to not prosecute the emperor was heavily influenced by promises made prior to the conclusion of World War II. Japanese diplomats intoned as early as April 1945, that Japan might be willing to consider terms of surrender but presented constitutional reform and the removal of the emperor as unacceptable.⁹³ This proposal was accompanied by a promise that, despite understanding the hopelessness of the war, Japanese citizens would render any potential occupation “impossible,” should formal surrender not be declared.⁹⁴ While these conditions were never formally provided for in the terms of surrender signed by Japan, Gen. Fellers argued that it would be a “breach of trust,” to convict the emperor following his instrumental role in affecting a peaceful transition of power.⁹⁵ This position simultaneously portrays the emperor as exercising his near absolute power to produce peace, while denying that he had the agency to prevent Japan’s war of aggression to begin with. While it unclear whether MacArthur understood Emperor Hirohito’s role in these paradoxical terms, it is apparent that he appreciated the emperor’s capacity for ensuring the peaceful execution of the Allied Occupation generally. MacArthur made it clear that Hirohito was off-limits for the prosecution. Joseph Keenan dutifully devoted his efforts to ensuring that MacArthur’s would be respected throughout the IMTFE.

⁹² Formal membership of the Japanese Communist Party peaked in 1950 with 79,263 members. This membership represented approximately 28 percent of the combined membership possessed by Japan’s four primary political parties. See *The History of Nonmilitary Activities of the Occupation of Japan: Freedom of the Press*, (Washington, 1951), D802.J3 A34 1951, Reel 3, USAHEC, 188.

⁹³ *The Minister in Sweden (Johnson) to the Secretary of State*, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS 1945*, vol. 5, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945v06/d343>.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Quoted in Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 299.

GHQ's efforts to obfuscate Hirohito's role in the war would produce bizarre collaborators. The International Prosecution Section indirectly worked with Japanese defendants to ensure that their testimonies absolved Hirohito of all blame. When Hideki Tōjō mistakenly confessed that the emperor represented the highest authority in the land, he was coached under the guidance of the prosecution to recant his testimony at the soonest available opportunity.⁹⁶ For many Japanese defendants, protecting the emperor and dying in his place represented a final, significant act of self-sacrifice in obeisance to their leader. Keenan concentrated his efforts on demonstrating a grand conspiracy to conduct global conquest by Japanese militarists, independent of the wishes of the sovereign. Keenan's ubiquitous influence extended to the selection of defendants, the drafting of indictments, and the manipulation of "investigations, evidence provisions, examinations, and arguments."⁹⁷ Through the manipulation of the IPS, Keenan manufactured an international conspiracy with no-lead actor.

Keenan's brash, partisan, and American-focused prosecution drew harsh criticism from the Australian President of the Tribunal and demonstrated that the IPS was more interested in symbolically addressing U.S. grievances, such as Pearl Harbor, than they were in comprehensively prosecuting Japan for its crimes during the war. Justice Mei, distinctly aware of the harm inflicted upon the Chinese citizenry over the previous nine years, expressed great frustration, stating that Keenan "pretended to respect the opinions of the Allied Powers and tried to build relations with other prosecutors with regard to dealing with the trial of the war criminals, but he still provided a shield for the criminals and tried to restore Japan's militarism..." and that he "dictated everything and chose America over other countries. He laid bare his domineering and arrogant attitude not only within the IPS, but also before the Tribunal." Ultimately, the

⁹⁶ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 325.

⁹⁷ Ju-ao, *The Tokyo Trial and War Crimes in Asia*, 87.

decision to insulate the emperor from prosecution undermined the legitimacy of the prosecution's efforts and proved incompatible with justice in the eyes of many justices.⁹⁸

The decision to pursue a largely symbolic punishment of Japan's war-time leaders fundamentally impaired Japanese efforts to engage with the issue of war guilt. For many Japanese citizens, the decision to not prosecute Hirohito clearly communicated that they did not have to engage with the issue of war guilt, as the war was ultimately fought in his name. This was demonstrated perhaps most clearly by Watanabe Kiyoshi, an ex-serviceman who grew to despise the imperial institution and the lack of accountability in post-war Japan. Watanabe explicitly blamed Emperor Hirohito for the state of the nation, stating in his journal, "Even the emperor gets away without taking responsibility, so there is no need for us to take responsibility, no matter what we did."⁹⁹ Despite this conscious, considered rejection of war guilt, the most common Japanese reaction to the rulings of the IMTFE was total apathy. For many, the IMTFE represented a natural consequence of the lost war. Accordingly, the rulings produced by the IMTFE represented moral rejections of the war effort, which proved largely unremarkable to the average Japanese civilian by the time of their release in 1948.

The American Occupation of Japan must be understood within the broader historical context of the conclusion of the Second World War and developing Cold War. The incredible violence and animosity produced by this conflict could have represented a defining influence throughout the Occupation, but was ultimately overcome through cultural exhaustion, strained cooperation, and the genuine goodwill of countless individuals on both sides. The policies produced during the early years of the Occupation represent these cumulative tensions and are appropriately high-minded, complex, and contradictory. The Occupation represents the United

⁹⁸ Dissenting Opinion of Justice Henri Bernard, September 9, 1947, in DTIMT, 677.

⁹⁹ Quoted in Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 344.

States' first steps as a post-colonial superpower and, appropriately, demonstrates many of the successes and failures that would come to define the broader American experience during the Cold War.

The functional impact of these contradictory, ambitious policies reflected the impact of the Second World War on both the occupier and the occupied. Japanese citizens enthusiastically embraced defeat as an opportunity to move past their collective suffering during the war and viewed democratization as an opportunity to redefine themselves. Despite the best efforts of Conservative Japanese politicians, the radical liberalization intended by SCAP's democratization efforts were codified by the creation of a new Japanese constitution. This action affirmed American conceptions that they were paternalistically presenting democracy to a beleaguered people and presented an opportunity for Japanese citizens to reimagine themselves as a nation of peace. Finally, the IMTFE demonstrates the competing and often incompatible goals of the Occupation, attempting to symbolically address feudal influences within Japanese society without meaningfully engaging with the broader scope of Japanese war crimes throughout the broader Asia-Pacific region over the previous decade. Ultimately, these policies gave rise to the complex and varied processes of cultural reimagination and must be understood in order to appreciate their impact on the histories of both Japan and the United States.

Chapter Two: Reclaiming the Feudal Foe

The first half of the twentieth century saw the United States transition from being a largely isolationist nation to an international superpower. The events surrounding the Second World War ultimately proved most impactful in bringing this change about, signaling both the decline of traditional colonial superpowers and the ascendancy of the United States and the Soviet Union in their place. This transition also marked a shift in international geopolitics, with the ideological tensions of the Cold War replacing traditional methods of imperial expansion. While the functional impact of this transition often appeared subtle, if not imperceptible for locations of conflict during the Cold War, the justifications and mechanisms utilized by these new superpowers drew more heavily than ever before on state messaging and ideological warfare.¹ The tensions and contradictions of this transitional process are demonstrated most clearly during the American Occupation of Japan.

The concept of carrying out a benevolent military occupation of Japan was largely antithetical to much of the divisive language used to describe Japanese by the United States during World War II. John Dower's *War Without Mercy* compellingly argues that American depictions of Japanese persons as inhuman or as superhuman effectively isolated the public image of Japanese as "the other."² These conceptions were reinforced in the minds of many American servicemen who experienced the horrific violence of the Pacific Theater. Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor played a particularly pivotal role in turning American opinion against Japanese, leading to cases such as Master Sergeant Hugh O'Reilly, who chose to re-enlisting in the Marines rather than in the Army specifically for the opportunity to kill Japanese.³

¹ Melvin P. Leffler, *The Specter of Communism: The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1917-1953* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), 49-51, 58-59.

² Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 9.

³ Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*, 30.

These sentiments progressed throughout the war and by 1943, over half of all GIs believed that peace would only come following the death of the last Japanese person.⁴ Dower describes the chilling impact of Japan's increasingly desperate defense as the war progressed, stating that in the minds of many Americans, "the willingness of the Japanese to accept incredible casualties had persuaded many observers in the Allied camp that this was an enemy that not only deserved to be exterminated, but had to be."⁵ Following the war's formal conclusion on September 2, 1945, these servicemen became responsible for carrying out an occupation of their defeated enemy.

Reports of Japanese brutality and fanaticism also dominated reporting of the Pacific Theater in the final years of the War.⁶ These reports affirmed negative conceptions of Imperial Japan produced by the Pearl Harbor attack and solidified negative public sentiment against Japanese persons domestically and abroad. A survey conducted by the State Department in 1943 demonstrates this impact, stating that the Americans understood Japanese persons to be fundamentally different to themselves, possessing an inherent will to war.⁷ Orville Prescott, an editor for the *New York Times*, stated that "Americans find it easy to hate the Japanese" and that "hating Japs comes natural – as natural as fighting Indians once was."⁸ These views were supported by a 1944 Gallup Poll in which 13 percent of all respondents answered stating that they supported the extermination of all Japanese.⁹ Improbably, the American Occupation of Japan reflected little of this negative sentiment and ultimately played a key role in helping the United States reimagine its relationship with Japan and its own role in the world.

⁴ Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 53.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁶ Casey, *The War Beat, Pacific*, 7.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸ Orville Prescott quoted in Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*, 14.

⁹ Michael Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, 3; and FO 371/41793, Public Record Office, London, (1944).

The uncertainty of the postwar period provided an incredible opportunity for the United States to reshape its conceptions of its defeated foe, itself, and the developing threat of communism internationally. Marcello Flores situates this experience within the broader context of international change, stating, “We should never forget that after every historical watershed, identity tends to recreate itself, and in so doing it retains obvious elements of continuity, but at the same time tries to break with the recent past in the name of emerging and shared values, new symbols, and new forms of coexistence.”¹⁰ The emerging ideals of New Deal liberalism, which Roosevelt defined as the pursuit of improved education, employment opportunities, and a functional “second Bill of Rights,” underpinned the radically ambitious strategy for the reconstruction of Japan as a nation and as an idea in the minds of the American public.¹¹ The rejection of scientific racism and an underlying faith in the universal appeal of democratic ideals places the Occupation in stark contrast to traditional colonialism. Despite this, the Occupation reflects, if only in part, the continuity of hierarchical ideals and the presupposition of American dominance.

Naoko Shibusawa offers perhaps the most compelling analytical structure with which to interpret Japanese-American relations during the Occupation, arguing that “the postwar public discourse assumed two ‘natural’ or universally recognized hierarchical relationships – man over woman and adult over child – and compared them to the relationship between the United States, a ‘white’ nation, and Japan, a ‘nonwhite’ nation.”¹² These universal hierarchies helped public conceptions transition away from racialized depictions of the enemy and towards universal

¹⁰ Marcello Flores, “Occupier, Occupied: The Double Reality of Japanese Identity after World War II,” in *Legacies of the U.S. Occupation of Japan: Appraisals after Sixty Years*, ed. by Duccio Basosi and Rosa Caroli, (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publisher, 2004), 86.

¹¹ Quoted in John W. Jeffries, “The ‘New’ New Deal: FDR and American Liberalism, 1937-1945,” *Political Science Quarterly* 105 (Spring 1990), 398.

¹² Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally*, 4.

concepts such as paternalism and national maturation. Using this model, the United States emphasized the child-like and feminine qualities of the Japanese and reimagined itself in a paternalistic light, benevolently “handing” democracy down to the Japanese people. MacArthur described his responsibility to the Japanese under his authority, stating, “I had a deep responsibility as guardian of these people so dramatically brought under my charge. I felt they needed spiritual leadership as well as material administration.”¹³ In this context, and under the growing threat of international communism, the United States directed public concern away from its defeated Japanese foe and reimagined global communism as the primary existential threat to the Western world. These paradigm shifts ultimately dominated American experiences of the Occupation and gave rise to a complex process of cultural reimagination.

The first public relations challenge faced by SCAP was the need to reorient American thinking about the recently defeated Japanese foe. Toward this end, the Army aired short films for American servicemen such as *Our Job in Japan*, which utilized the same structure as war-era anti-Japanese films but focused instead on Japan’s cultural uniqueness and the need to help a defeated people that had been misguided by rogue militarists.¹⁴ GIs were given a small handbook titled *Pocket Guide to Japan*, which gave general information about Japan, tips for simple communication, and chastened American soldiers to behave responsibly during the Occupation.¹⁵ The *Pocket Guide to Japan* continued, stating that the United States did not need heroes and that their goal was to “Teach [an] authority-ridden people the meaning of democracy,” and that it “would not help if the occupation simply means a change in bullies.”¹⁶ Ultimately, the

¹³ MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 283.

¹⁴ *Our Job in Japan*, U.S. Department of the Army, 1945.

¹⁵ U.S. Department of the Army, *Pocket Guide to Japan* (U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle, PA), hereafter cited as USAHEC.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 58-59.

surprisingly accommodating posture presented by most Japanese eased transitions from conqueror to police force for many Americans.

American servicemen, having prepared for fanatical resistance from Japanese civilians, were surprised by the gracious reception of the occupied nation. Many Japanese within occupied cities viewed serving the occupation force as an opportunity to escape the poverty that dominated postwar Japan. Jacob Van Staaveren, an American economist who served as part of SCAP's Government Section, described the myriad services provided to members of the occupation force, stating, "hotels were staffed with a surfeit of Japanese maids to make the beds, houseboys to sweep the rooms, waiters and waitresses to serve meals or drinks...hotel clerks, record keepers, elevator operators, door attendants, drivers of jeeps, cars, and trucks, and mechanics at motor pools to keep the vehicles running."¹⁷ Ultimately, many Americans who arrived in Japan with a distinctly negative conception of the Japanese people were won over by the relentless politeness of their Japanese hosts. Lucy Herndon admitted that "such ingenuously friendly overtures serve[d] to disarm the most coldly skeptical newcomer, as cordial hospitality [was] extended the conqueror on all sides."¹⁸

American personnel enjoyed relative luxury throughout the Occupation at the expense of the Japanese government, which was required to cover all expenses associated with hosting the occupation force. Servicemen received affordable access to nightly dances, tours of the Japanese countryside, and cheap concert performances.¹⁹ Army officials sought to occupy GIs by encouraging them to enjoy scenic Japan, its people, commodities, and culture. This was seen as a

¹⁷ Jacob Van Staaveren, *An American in Japan, 1945-1948: A Civilian View of the Occupation* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1994), 20.

¹⁸ Lucy Herndon Crockett, *Popcorn on the Ginza: An Informal Portrait of Postwar Japan* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1949), 29.

¹⁹ Van Staaveren, *An American in Japan, 1945-1948*, 22.

wholesome distraction that would help facilitate the softening of Japan's barbaric wartime image.²⁰ The greatest luxuries were reserved for the high-ranking members of SCAP who stayed at the Imperial Hotel, and could expect to be waited upon by twice as many staff members relative to guests when compared to other luxury hotels such as the Ritz in Paris.²¹ Despite the myriad opportunities presented to see Japan and to better understand its people, most occupation members preferred to stay in the tightly controlled regions surrounding SCAP GHQ, which conveniently bore little witness to the nearly universal destruction of the war. Beate Sirota Gordon recognized this reality and lamented the fact that no one she saw in the military made a genuine effort to get to know Japan while they were there.²²

SCAP placed the burden of funding the Occupation and its various expenses on the already-struggling Japanese government, in lieu of traditional reparations. This burden ultimately proved so great that it totaled approximately one-third of the Japanese government's entire operating budget in the immediate postwar years.²³ These expenses necessarily limited the Japanese government's ability to address the developing issues of starvation, crime, and a failing economy, indirectly necessitating increased American interference. The practical impact of these policies was the establishment of a clear hierarchy in which the needs and desires of Occupation personnel, superficial or not, took precedent over the often-dire realities of the Japanese populous. Even the *junpū bizoku*, or "good morals and manners" which facilitated SCAP's assumption of authority in Japan, reflected the feudal, hierarchical concepts which were ostensibly antithetical to the stated purposes of the Occupation. These inherent contradictions undermined

²⁰ Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*, 20.

²¹ Van Staaveren, *An American in Japan, 1945-1948*, 15.

²² Gordon Interview.

²³ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 115.

democratization efforts and indirectly reaffirmed conservative concepts of hierarchy throughout the Occupation.

Independent of the inherent contradictions of SCAP policy, the Occupation was fundamentally experienced on a personal level by the men and women that carried it out. The first and most consistently affirmed Occupation experience was shock at the incredible destruction inflicted upon Japan's major cities. Upon arriving in Japan for the first time, Jacob Van Staaveren described "acres and acres of rubble everywhere interspersed with many small huts and hovels patched together with whatever useful debris Japanese families could find... Everyone on my bus appeared transfixed by the enormity of the destruction on both sides of the highway as far as the eye could see."²⁴ Upon attempting to find her childhood home in a heavily bombed region of Tokyo, Beate Sirota Gordon could not recognize her former neighborhood, as the hill on which her home had previously resided had been unrecognizably deformed by American bombing.²⁵ Naval intelligence officer, Richard B. Finn recalls the immediate transformation of his view of Japanese upon arriving on mainland Japan, stating that "being an enemy was never a factor in Japan," describing Japanese as hard working individuals struggling through "very poor" living conditions.²⁶ For most occupation members, wartime concepts of Japanese supermen or monkey-men lost resonance upon seeing the distinctly human suffering of the Japanese people.

American sympathy towards the Japanese often focused on the seemingly dispassionate killing of Japanese civilians through fire bombing. William P. Woodward, who served as the head of SCAP's Religious Research Unit, lamented the ubiquitous and impartial destruction

²⁴ Van Staaveren, *An American in Japan, 1945-1948*, 8.

²⁵ Gordon Interview.

²⁶ Richard B. Finn, Interview by Marlene Mayo, Glenn Echo, November 4, 1978, Box 3, Marlene Mayo Oral Histories, 0015-GWP, Special Collections and University Archives, College Park, MD.

caused by American fire bombing, noting the desperate living conditions of surviving Japanese civilians, stating, “In the midst of the desolation hundreds of thousands of people were living in hovels, hastily constructed from pieces of sheet-iron, metal, or any noncombustible material that had escaped the holocaust or had been brought in from other areas to provide a semblance of shelter.”²⁷ An anonymous GI described Japan in a letter home as being “completely flat with destruction,” and stated that American bombing “seemed to have destroyed everything but the obvious military targets.”²⁸

Perhaps the most striking examples of public sympathy were produced in response to the use of the atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Journalist John Hersey’s *Hiroshima*, which reported on the material impact of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima through the lens of six survivors, shocked American readers upon its release on August 31, 1946.²⁹ Hersey’s candid descriptions of Protestant clergymen and war widows struggling to survive in the wreckage of Hiroshima, humanized Japanese in the eyes of many Americans. While the majority of Americans approved the use of atomic weapons to bring the war to a close, many came to view the residents of Hiroshima and Nagasaki sympathetically in the aftermath of the war.³⁰ Michihiko Hachiya, a Japanese doctor who survived the bombing of Hiroshima, recalled a conversation with an American officer who expressed disbelief at the absolute destruction caused by the first atom bomb, stating that he would sue the United States if he were in Hachiya’s position.³¹

²⁷ William P. Woodward, *The Allied Occupation of Japan, 1945-1952 and Japanese Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 7.

²⁸ Otis Cary, ed., *War Wasted Asia: Letters, 1945-1946* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1975), 48.

²⁹ John Hersey, *Hiroshima* (New York: BN Publishing, 2012).

³⁰ *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion – 1935-1971*, Survey #353-K Question #8C (New York: Random House, 1972), 521.

³¹ Michihiko Hachiya, *Hiroshima Diary* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 229.

In the wake of this incredible destruction, no portion of the Japanese populous elicited more sympathy than Japanese children. Takemae Eiji describes the concern with which Japanese and Americans interacted during the opening weeks of the Occupation, stating, “Japanese repaid American misgivings in kind, regarding the ‘demonic and beastly’ enemy with dread and loathing.”³² Ultimately, the curiosity of Japanese children facilitated regular interactions with American servicemen and eased general tensions. Despite being instructed to avoid fraternization with Japanese, few servicemen could resist handing out candy and various other treats to the children they encountered.³³ Directly interacting with Japanese children, often in difficult personal circumstances, helped disarm wary American servicemen and softened their internal conceptions of Japanese broadly. These early acts of genuine kindness served as the mechanism by which American servicemen won the measured trust of many Japanese.³⁴

Perhaps the most exceptional example of benevolent paternalism demonstrated by an American during the Occupation was carried out by Master Sergeant Hugh O’Reilly. Despite O’Reilly’s initial intent to avenge the harm caused at Pearl Harbor, he was greatly moved by his experiences in Japan. O’Reilly was shocked by the conditions at a local orphanage and began gathering financial and material aid from the members of his regiment. O’Reilly’s consistent efforts ultimately secured between \$3,000 and \$4,000 each payday and funded the construction of a new orphanage building.³⁵ These efforts continued after his regiment’s deployment to Korea in 1950 and inspired international attention through his work as a writer for *Stars and Stripes*.³⁶ O’Reilly’s touching philanthropy and his eventual marriage to a young Japanese woman named

³² Takemae Eiji, *The Allied Occupation of Japan* (New York: Continuum Intl. Pub. Group, 2003), 72.

³³ Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally*, 15.

³⁴ Crockett, *Popcorn on the Ginza*, 172.

³⁵ Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally*, 31.

³⁶ Gertrude Samuels, “O’Reilly’s Mission,” *NYT Magazine*, 3 June 1951, 187.

Saitō Yuko inspired the 1955 film, *Three Stripes in the Sun*.³⁷ Ultimately, popular depiction of Hugh O'Reilly's interracial marriage to Saitō Yuko reflected a general shift in conceptions of race relations as well as the foundational role that interactions between Japanese women and American men played in both the experience and historical memory of the Occupation.

The potential problems posed by American men interacting with Japanese women was a pressing concern for the Japanese government in the weeks following Japan's surrender. Prince Konoe Fumimaro feared that American soldiers would carry out mass rapes as had become unfortunately common during his tenure as prime minister in the initial stages of Japan's invasion of China.³⁸ Konoe advocated for an expansion of existing government-sponsored brothels and the recruitment of women of appropriately low social standing to insulate the "purity" of respectable Japanese women.³⁹ Despite objections from Lt. Gen. Kawanabe, who praised the moral behavior of Allied forces and insisted that they would never consent to such a system, the plan was approved. The Japanese Home Ministry sponsored the creation of the Recreation and Amusement Association (RAA) and cooperated with local police in order to establish "comfort houses" for occupying Americans.⁴⁰

Police Superintendent Ikeda Hirohiko justified his involvement in the recruitment process, stating, "although it was a sort of overstepping the bounds of the Police Act...I made up my mind to deal with the matter by myself...I was prepared to stand between the occupation forces and the Japanese people for general good in maintaining peace and order, and, if necessary, to bear any reprimand."⁴¹ The RAA's aggressive recruitment process extended

³⁷ *Three Stripes in the Sun*, Richard Murphy (Columbia Pictures, 1955).

³⁸ Yuki Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 133.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Michael S. Molasky, *The American Occupation of Japan* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 105.

⁴¹ Quoted in Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, 138.

beyond local police and utilized the assistance of *yakuza*, Japanese crime syndicates, in order to meet demands. This led to instances such as the functional kidnapping of high school girls that had been recently orphaned by the dropping of the atomic bomb to serve as involuntary comfort women.⁴²

Even ultra-nationalists such as Sasagawa Ryōchi, the leader of one of Japan's leading wartime fascist organizations *Kokusui Dōmei* (National Virtues Federation), jumped at the opportunity to financially benefit from the establishment of a comfort house marketed to American GIs called the "American Club."⁴³ Yuki Tanaka places this targeted exploitation of Japanese women within a broader historical context, stating, "Such was the reality in the aftermath of the war that even the most ardent nationalists like Sasagawa...quickly became flattering sycophants of the US occupation forces as soon as the war ended. We find Japanese politicians who had procured tens of thousands of non-Japanese comfort women during the war quickly turning to the procurement of their own women."⁴⁴ Ultimately, Prince Konoe's concerns proved misplaced. While the initial weeks of the Occupation saw several instances of rape as well as various other forms of targeted violence, reported cases diminished significantly by mid-September 1945.⁴⁵

Despite MacArthur's public objections to the concept of state-sponsored prostitution, SCAP knowingly coexisted with the RAA for the opening months of the Occupation. SCAP intelligence officers estimated that interactions between SCAP personnel and *panpan*, a nickname given to Japanese prostitutes during the Occupation, exceeded 10,000 per week for the

⁴² Ibid., 138.

⁴³ Ibid., 140.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 117

1st Cavalry Division alone.⁴⁶ Indeed, it was estimated that nearly half of the \$185 million spent by GIs during the Occupation was directed toward the purpose of acquiring or maintaining some nature of accompaniment.⁴⁷ MacArthur maintained his objections to state-sponsored prostitution and passed directives in early 1946 which forbade state-licensing and the retention of non-consenting *panpan*, many of whom were retained through the manufacturing of unpayable debts.⁴⁸ While these directives served to undercut many of the most exploitative practices of state-run prostitution, they did little to limit the incredible volume of American interactions with *panpan* generally.

The realities of such accompaniment provided the subject for Naval Petty Officer Bill Hume's famous Occupation cartoon, *Babysan*. Hume's comic run explored cultural miscommunications between the title character, a caricature of a Japanese pinup girl, and a rotating cast of American GIs.⁴⁹ Hume's comics often made jokes at the expense of naïve American servicemen and even acknowledge the financial difficulties that are implied to have played a role in facilitating Babysan's initial interactions with Americans.⁵⁰ Despite this, Hume failed to dignify the legitimacy of Babysan's relationships, ultimately concluding his run by implying that both Babysan and her Occupation boyfriend will quickly forget about each other following his departure.⁵¹ Hume's comics reflect the inherent and often superficially considered imbalance of power between GIs and Japanese women throughout the Occupation.

⁴⁶ "Memorandum for the Record by James H. Gordon, Subject: Conference with Major Philip Weisbach" September 30, 1945, in USNA Collection, RG 331, Box 9370, Document 3.

⁴⁷ Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*, 38.

⁴⁸ Molasky, *The American Occupation of Japan*, 108.

⁴⁹ Bill Hume, *Babysan: A Private Look at the Japanese Occupation* (Rutland: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1953).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 11, 33.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 126.

Despite the short-lived nature of the majority of American interactions with Japanese women, a number of American men such as Hugh O'Reilly formed and sustained long-term relationships based on mutual respect, complicating analysis of these cross-cultural interactions. Shibusawa describes the often-transformative effect these relationships had on American conceptions of Japanese, stating that they "allowed Americans to downplay the supposed barbarism of the Japanese soldier and to display a form of liberal paternalism toward the Japanese."⁵² John LaCerde, an American journalist who reported on Japan during the Occupation, attempted to explain these relationships, stating that American servicemen appreciated the hearts of service seemingly presented by Japanese women, going as far as to state that American women could learn from their example.⁵³ LaCerde continued, stating that Japanese women who pursued relationships for reasons other than material gain, often did so out of an appreciation for the chivalry presented by Western men.⁵⁴

These interactions represented a significant shift in race relations and provided a model for the altruistic paternalism advocated for in New Deal liberalism. They played a pivotal role in allowing Americans to reimagine their defeated foe as humans worthy of sympathy, rather than as violent automatons. Ultimately, these interactions transcended the Occupation itself and paved the way for decades of cooperation between Japan and the United States. Importantly, these relationships also affirmed a distinctly hierarchical relationship in which the masculine United States assumed a position of influence over the child-like or feminine Japan. The sword-wielding Japanese soldier was replaced by the culturally obscure geisha in public thinking, facilitating the easing of wartime animosity. This transformation ultimately occurred naturally and diversely.

⁵² Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*, 19.

⁵³ John LaCerde, *The Conqueror Comes to Tea* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1946), 52.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 54.

While it benefited SCAP's ideological goals, the general transformation of American conceptions of Japanese developed organically as a result of New Deal liberalism, the regression of overtly racialized policy, and the ascendancy of the United States to a position of international leadership.⁵⁵ These realities allowed the United States to begin reimagining Japan as a potential Cold War ally, and itself as a paternalistic world leader, guiding Japan into a democratic future.

The ease with which the Japanese seemingly accepted the Occupation and its reform policies reinforced American conceptions of "oriental compliance," and affirmed the need for the United States to take an active role in guiding Japanese thought away from its militaristic past.⁵⁶ Occupation personnel viewed individuals such as Kondo Hidezo, a Japanese cartoonist who seamlessly transitioned from anti-American to pro-occupation work following Japan's surrender, as indicative of broader cultural weakness.⁵⁷ This ideological flexibility proved similarly alarming to portions of the Japanese populous as well. Kobayashi Masaki, a former Japanese soldier who served as a forced laborer in Okinawa for a year before returning to the Japan, stated, "the conformism seemed just the same as before the war, only then everyone had jumped on the militarist band wagon."⁵⁸ Reflecting on his time spent serving as the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers, MacArthur ultimately characterized Japan's seeming ideological immaturity by likening Japan to a "boy of twelve," which needed time to mature in order to engage with Western ideals.⁵⁹ Through this analysis, MacArthur clearly interpreted SCAP's role as one of tutelage and situated himself as a father figure to the nation of Japan.

⁵⁵ Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*, 12.

⁵⁶ Schueller, *Campaigns of Knowledge*, 164.

⁵⁷ Sodei Rinjiro, "Satire under the Occupation: The Case of Political Cartoons," in *The Occupation of Japan: Arts and Culture*, ed. Thomas W. Burkman (Norfolk, VA: General Douglas MacArthur Foundation, 1988), 95.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 225.

⁵⁹ U.S. Senate Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Foreign Relations, *Military Situation in the Far East*, May 1951, part 1, 312.

The necessary first step in “handing down” democracy was the provision of fundamental civil liberties such as freedom of speech and the separation of church and state. SCAP broadly interpreted these directives as allowing for the “removal of militarists and ultranationalists from positions of influence,” and the “abrogation or modification of laws and regulations which conflicted with occupation objectives.”⁶⁰ The functional impact of this policy was SCAP advocating for freedom of speech while simultaneously censoring content that failed to support democratization. The inherent incongruity between these two practices created tension within SCAP, as American personnel struggled between promoting liberal expression, while being expected to censor ill-defined “indecent expression.” David Jortner describes this contradiction in goals, stating that SCAP “wanted to use the theatre to promote freedom and democracy while at the same time enforcing a moral code,” and that they “wanted to promote freedom but control content.”⁶¹ Ultimately, Japan’s burgeoning liberal culture made it clear that, while SCAP’s goal of Japanese liberalization had been wildly successful, its attempts to encourage moral consideration along distinctly Western lines had not been.

SCAP viewed assurances of a separation of church and state as a similarly effective weapon with which to target militarist influence. Toward this end, SCAP ordered the deconstruction of State Shinto and the cessation of mandatory payments to neighborhood associations, which operated as communal extensions of religious organizations.⁶² These decisions were based on the foundational premise that State Shinto played a pivotal role in motivating Japanese aggression during the war and the belief that a democratic society could

⁶⁰ The History of Nonmilitary Activities of the Occupation of Japan: Theater and Motion Picture, Washington, 1951, D802.J3 A34 1951, Reel 4, USAHEC.

⁶¹ David Jortner, “Imposing the Standards of Boston on Japan’: Kasutori Performance, Censorship, and the Occupation,” *Theatre History Studies* 33 (2014), 131.

⁶² Van Staaveren, *An American in Japan, 1945-1948*, 237.

never truly function with a state sponsored religion.⁶³ SCAP monitored additional components of Japanese religious life, such as *Gokoku Jinjas*, public shrines which commemorated Japan's war dead, but ultimately decided not to intervene as it was believed that they did not play a significant role in promoting a resurgence in nationalist fervor.⁶⁴ While SCAP publicly endorsed religious neutrality in their policymaking, it is clear that many of its personnel viewed the Occupation as an opportunity to advance their own Christian faith.

Gen. Bonner Fellers correlated SCAP's democratization efforts with his Christian faith, claiming that "never in the history of Japan has there been such a great opportunity for Christian evangelism as there is today...now the people have swung from right to left, so to speak, trying to find a happy solution in Christian democracy rather than in communism."⁶⁵ William Webb found similar Christian purpose in serving as the Chief Justice for the IMTFE, claiming that international law can be best understood as an extension of Christian civilization.⁶⁶ These positions reflected the traditional colonial association of civilization and the Christian faith, and accordingly, alarmed persons of Shinto or Buddhist faith who feared that SCAP's promises of religious freedom were merely a mechanism by which to promote Christianity.⁶⁷ These concerns stemmed primarily from the consistent and directed religious language employed by MacArthur throughout the Occupation.

MacArthur's personal faith featured prominently in public addresses throughout the opening two years of the Occupation. MacArthur claims that he felt a personal, spiritual responsibility for the Japanese people, and saw the Occupation as an unprecedented opportunity

⁶³ Woodward, *The Allied Occupation of Japan*, 9.

⁶⁴ Van Staaveren, *An American in Japan, 1945-1948*, 241.

⁶⁵ Bonner Fellers, Comments and Reports on the Growing Rise of Christianity in Japan, 1946, RG 44, Box 7, Folder 10, DMMA.

⁶⁶ Separate Opinion of Justice William Webb, September 9, 1947, found in *Documents on the Tokyo International Military Tribunal* ed. Neil Boister and Robert Cryer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 607.

⁶⁷ Woodward, *The Allied Occupation of Japan*, 247.

to effect lasting change.⁶⁸ In a letter addressed to Louis D. Newton, President of the Southern Baptist Convention, MacArthur described his view of the revolutionary potential of his faith, stating “Christianity now has an opportunity without counterpart in the Far East. If this opportunity is fully availed by the leaders of our Christian faith, a revolution of spirit may be expected to ensue which will more favorably alter the course of civilization than has any economic or political revolution accomplished in the history of the world.”⁶⁹ In this sense, MacArthur viewed the Occupation as not just an effort to democratize Japan, but also an effort to save the soul of the nation of Japan.⁷⁰

These concepts extended to many of MacArthur’s professional interactions, in which he often connected the concepts of democratization and Christianity. In a conversation with George Kennan, MacArthur described his duty as “bringing to the Japanese people two great appreciations which they had never before perceived and which were destined to revolutionize their thinking, namely, democracy and Christianity.”⁷¹ This association necessarily positioned the rising threat of communism as a threat to not only democracy, but also global Christianity as well. MacArthur employed this argument in an address to Protestant leaders in 1945, stating “Japan is a spiritual vacuum. If you do not fill it with Christianity, it will be filled with communism. Send me 1,000 missionaries.”⁷² This arrangement served the dual purpose of reaffirming the guiding, paternalistic role of SCAP and situated religious thought within the broader realm and Cold War geopolitics.⁷³

⁶⁸ MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 283.

⁶⁹ Quoted in Woodward, *The Allied Occupation of Japan*, 355.

⁷⁰ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 23.

⁷¹ Memorandum of conversation between Kennan and MacArthur, 366-367.

⁷² Quoted in Woodward, *The Allied Occupation of Japan*, 243.

⁷³ Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally*, 187.

MacArthur's public advocacy for Christian virtues was done against the will of SCAP's Religions Division, many there believed that it undermined SCAP support for the separation of church and state.⁷⁴ This reflected MacArthur's general disinterest in reading reports or suggestions produced by the Religions Division, despite it being tasked with the role of conducting research and offering suggestions to GHQ. MacArthur's enormously exaggerated claim that over two million Japanese persons had converted to Christianity had no basis in research conducted by William Woodward's Religious Research Unit and offers perhaps the clearest example of MacArthur's insular collection of advisors during the Occupation.⁷⁵ Ultimately, MacArthur's public advocacy for Christian virtues ended in 1947, likely in response to consistent pushback from both members of SCAP and pre-existing religious elements within Japan. For the remainder of the Occupation, MacArthur dutifully endorsed the separation of church and state and recognized the universal desire for religious freedom.⁷⁶ By 1949, MacArthur conceded that his Christian mission to Japan had failed to revolutionize the nation as he had initially hoped, lamenting that, "Japan would not be Christianized in any conceivable period of time."⁷⁷

Despite MacArthur's ultimately ineffectual evangelical efforts, he retained a near-mythical reputation throughout the Occupation. MacArthur's distant behavior and refusal to travel anywhere other than his personal residence and SCAP headquarters made him entirely inaccessible to even important members of SCAP. Beate Sirota Gordon was incredibly intimidated by MacArthur, going as far as to physically hide behind a pillar upon his arrival at

⁷⁴ Woodward, *The Allied Occupation of Japan*, 242.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 243.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 247.

⁷⁷ Quoted in Woodward, *The Allied Occupation of Japan*, 249.

SCAP GHQ in order to avoid disrupting his procession in some way.⁷⁸ This impression was enhanced among the Japanese populous who viewed MacArthur as the source of ultimate authority in the confusion and chaos of the postwar period. This authority extended even to Emperor Hirohito, who was believed to have retained his position at the Supreme Commanders will. Despite the conceptual irony of having a distant authoritarian figure leading SCAP's democratization efforts, many Japanese such as Tane Matsumura found a familiar comfort in MacArthur's "dignified" and "unreachable" persona.⁷⁹

The Japanese actively engaged with MacArthur's paternalistic, regal persona, presenting him as a symbol of the Occupation's authority and ideals. Sodei Rinjirō describes the bizarre and remarkable reception MacArthur received as Supreme Commander as "adulatory and frequently [bordering] on the ecstatic."⁸⁰ MacArthur came to embody desperately needed stability in an uncertain postwar world, as well as hope for a peaceful, democratic future. Countless Japanese chose to express their gratitude by sending gifts and letters to SCAP GHQ, personally thanking MacArthur. Perhaps the simplest, if not most earnest of these offerings was an invitation for MacArthur to join a local Japanese fisherman so that they could catch and enjoy seasonal fish together at the Supreme Commander's "soonest convenience."⁸¹ These gifts often took on elaborate symbolic meaning, such as the presentation of a kimono and sash composed of over 70 million stitches, bearing clear homage to support and well-wishes of 70 million living Japanese.⁸² Sodei Rinjirō contends that for many Japanese under the Occupation, MacArthur came to represent a father figure.⁸³

⁷⁸ Gordon Interview.

⁷⁹ Tane Matsumura, Interview by D. Clayton James, Tokyo, August 18, 1977, RG 49 Box 5, DMMA.

⁸⁰ Sodei Rinjirō, *Dear General MacArthur: Letters from the Japanese during the American Occupation* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), xi.

⁸¹ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 229.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 230.

⁸³ Rinjirō, *Dear General MacArthur*, 103.

Harry Truman's decision to remove MacArthur from his position of leadership on April 11, 1951 shocked the Japanese public. Both Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru and Emperor Hirohito personally visited MacArthur to express remorse at his departure.⁸⁴ Many Japanese sought to formally commemorate MacArthur's brief tenure as the nation's face of authority, suggesting that he should be provided honorary Japanese citizenship or receive a monument. The *Asahi Shimbun* marked MacArthur's departure with a gracious editorial, writing, "...it was General MacArthur who taught us the merits of democracy and pacifism and guided us with kindness along this bright path. As if pleased with his own children growing up, he took pleasure in the Japanese people, yesterday's enemy, walking step by step toward democracy..."⁸⁵ While MacArthur's unflattering depiction of Japan as a "boy of twelve" before congress dampened Japanese affection for the former Supreme Commander, his six years of service were predominantly characterized by gratitude, admiration, and paternal respect.

MacArthur's complex and often contradictory relationship with his authority and paternalistic responsibilities appropriately models the broader ethical challenges posed by the American Occupation. Naoko Shibusawa describes the impact depicting Japan as a feudalistic nation in need of guidance had, stating that it "reaffirmed a belief in the linear progression of 'civilizations,' showed the United States to be the most sophisticated, and thus rationalized the U.S. role to lead Japan as only proper and fitting."⁸⁶ Occupation leaders, such as MacArthur, further encouraged a traditionally colonial interpretation of American actions by associating reformist policy with an often condescending framing of American actions as "handing down" democracy to the child-like Japanese. Ultimately, the radically liberal and often genuinely

⁸⁴ Ibid., 549.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 549.

⁸⁶ Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*, 59.

altruistic impact of SCAP's reform policies challenges these conceptions and complicates historical analysis. In stark contrast to the broader developments of Western colonialism, the American Occupation was based on the genuine belief that a nonwhite nation could "mature" and eventually stand as equals on the world stage.⁸⁷

The looming threat of global communism posed the largest threat to the idyllic hopes of New Deal liberals. Japan's surrender on September 2, 1945 brought the Second World War to a close, but immediately created a power vacuum that would come to define the broader struggle for power in Southeast Asia throughout the Cold War. During the Occupation, China and Korea represented the frontier of this struggle, with the Soviet Union acting as a counterpart to the United States, providing aid to communist elements within each nation. Melvin P. Leffler contends that the United States assumed responsibility for Japan's ill-fated Co-Prosperity Sphere as a direct response to Soviet pressure without ample consideration of the long-term responsibilities associated with taking this action.⁸⁸ The necessary consequence of the U.S. commitment to opposing communism throughout Southeast Asia was that the fall of a single nation risked shattering public confidence in the U.S. ability to protect strategically invaluable positions such as Japan from experiencing a similar fate. Increasingly bleak appraisals of Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist government alarmed policy makers in Washington and produced a fundamental reappraisal of occupation policy along conservative lines.

The primary emphasis of early-Occupation policymaking was the removal of militarist influences and the proliferation of liberal ideologies. Within the context of the chaos surrounding the immediate postwar period, SCAP's democratization policies seemed to have secured the

⁸⁷ JCS to MacArthur, "Basic Directive for Post-Surrender Military Government in Japan Proper."

⁸⁸ Melvin P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 246.

tolerance, if not outright support of a meaningful portion of the Japanese populous. Despite these encouraging signs, SCAP's distinctly liberal application of State Department directives fell under increasing scrutiny from Washington, as it was believed that Japanese citizens were pursuing ideologies that were more liberal than was acceptable.⁸⁹ Domestic concerns formed regarding MacArthur's leadership, suggesting that policies such as the deconcentration of *zaibatsu* could serve as "lethal weapons of socialism," encouraging existing communist elements within Japan.⁹⁰ Hollywood depictions of Japan began depicting a gentler, kinder Japan that could serve as a bulwark against communism.⁹¹ Over the course of two years, and under the growing pressure of global communism, the United States organically reimaged their former Japanese enemy as a potential Cold War ally.

This shift in thinking which accompanied and motivated SCAP's reverse course necessitated that communist influences within Japan be repressed. Despite SCAP's insistence that Japanese should engage with democratic ideals, it depicted protests regarding national starvation, unfair working conditions, and the failings of Japanese leadership which took place throughout the first three years of the Occupation, as existential communist threats that needed to be prevented.⁹² SCAP policy makers internally acknowledged that these protests were almost exclusively peaceful, but elected to willfully misrepresent them as public threats in order to reassert conservative control of the nation and national discourse.⁹³ MacArthur removed the right for public employees to strike by the summer of 1948 and encouraged the dissemination of anti-leftist propaganda within organized labor.⁹⁴ The functional impact of this change was the

⁸⁹ Sandler, *The Confusion Era*, 66.

⁹⁰ Harry Kern quoted in Woodward, *The Allied Occupation of Japan*, 115.

⁹¹ Life: "Bulwark in the Far East," 28 August 1950, 84-90.

⁹² Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 271.

⁹³ *Summation: Non-Military Activities in Japan* 8, May 1946, 29-30, 37.

<https://collections.nlm.nih.gov/bookviewer?PID=nlm:nlmuid-23460370RX3-leaf>.

⁹⁴ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 272.

reaffirmation that conservative elements within the Japanese government, independent of their wartime associations with militarism and ultra-nationalism, were given preference over potentially risky liberal ideologies.

Despite the broad scope of SCAP's initial militarist purges which impacted over 200,000 individuals, conservative elements the Japanese government remained largely untouched. While many Japanese politicians were removed from the political process for unsavory wartime associations, this often resulted in only symbolic change. Purged politicians Naka Funada and Kurio Morshita were immediately replaced by younger brothers.⁹⁵ Tsuneo Kanemitsu and Tadao Kozaka were immediately succeeded by their sons.⁹⁶ Superficial replacements were afforded to war criminals such as Shinsuki Kishi of the Socialist Party and permitted the appointment of private secretaries, nephews, personal attorneys, and election managers.⁹⁷ By fall 1948, SCAP officials shifted the focus of ideological purges away from militarist collaborators and toward suspected communists, slowly permitting the resurgence of war-era politicians.⁹⁸ The lasting impact of SCAP's militarist purges was undermined by their reprioritization of the suppression of communist thought, resulting in only 8,710 of the original 210,827 purged individuals, failing to receive a release or annulment of some variety by April 28, 1952.⁹⁹

Perhaps the clearest, if not most ideologically hypocritical demonstration of SCAP's willingness to undermine the liberal policies of the early Occupation were efforts to convince Japan to secretly form a standing army. In response to the outbreak of the Korean War, American policy makers made the "reckless, almost insane" demand that Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru

⁹⁵ John D. Montgomery, *The Purge in Occupied Japan: A Study in the Use of Civilian Agencies Under Military Government* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1953), 231.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 232.

⁹⁸ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 433.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

covertly assemble a standing army of over 300,000 men, ostensibly to aid in ever-expanding Cold War conflict.¹⁰⁰ Yoshida understandably rejected the proposition of Japan being used as reserve garrison for U.S. international geopolitical struggles and cited their recently-ratified constitution which explicitly prohibited them from forming a standing army. SCAP's efforts to motivate Japanese military action against communist threats in Southeast Asia extended to the classroom, where the recently concluded Asia-Pacific War was retroactively justified, if only in part, as a response to the threat of communism in China.¹⁰¹ Despite the best efforts of American policy makers, Japan refused to reclaim the right of war as a mechanism of state for the remainder of the Cold War. American efforts at rearmament and the developments of militarists purges clearly demonstrate an eagerness on the part of SCAP to reimagine Japan's conservative and often militarist elements as useful tools in the Cold War.

How then, in light of the SCAP's seeming abandonment of New Deal liberalism in favor of a potential conservative Cold War ally, can American policymaking be understood? It is necessary to understand that, while these policy changes occurred at an institutional level, they did not necessarily dominate the experiences and perspectives of the men and women that served on the ground-level. While SCAP undermined some democratization efforts through the utilization of state censorship and the repression of public demonstrations, SCAP personnel actively worked and formed relationships with like-minded Japanese individuals serving at the grass-roots level. Thomas W. Burkman suggests that this divide be described as the "two occupations," which simultaneously existed in tension with one another.¹⁰² While Washington policy makers such as George Kennan advocated for dispassionate power politics at the expense

¹⁰⁰ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 548.

¹⁰¹ Eugenia Bogdanova-Kummer, *Bokujinkai: Japanese Calligraphy and the Postwar Avant-garde* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 22.

¹⁰² Burkman, *The Occupation of Japan: The Grass Roots*, 185-187.

of Japanese citizens, SCAP personnel such as Beate Sirota Gordon passionately fought to secure women's rights and felt genuine compassion for the beleaguered nation.¹⁰³ Ultimately, this disconnect in both perspective and intention complicates and enriches historical analysis of the Occupation.

The legacy of American policymaking during the Occupation is, then, defined by ever-present contradictions. SCAP promoted radically liberal reform policies which simultaneously rejected scientific racism while affirming the preeminent position of the United States both geopolitically and culturally. The Occupation developed under the core assumption that the child-like and feminine Japan would follow the example, if not the explicit direction handed down by the budding world superpower, the United States. This took the form of cultural, political, and religious direction passed down by Douglas MacArthur, who came to embody SCAP's near-limitless authority. Finally, SCAP's reverse course demonstrates that Occupation personnel operated with as much ideological flexibility as the supposed "orientally compliant" occupied nation by abandoning the radically liberal reform efforts of the early Occupation and reimagining their recently defeated foe as a Cold War ally. Despite these institutional inconsistencies, the Occupation was experienced at a human level. While many Occupation personnel demonstrated little interest in interacting with the occupied nation, countless Americans formed meaningful relationships with Japanese counterparts which radically altered the course of Japanese-American relations for the remainder of the 20th century. Ultimately, these striking paradigm shifts dominated American experiences of the Occupation and gave rise to a complex process of cultural reimagination.

¹⁰³ Gordon Interview.

Chapter Three: Yamato to Yasukuni

As a child growing up in the 1960s, Akiko Hashimoto witnessed the lingering impact of World War II everywhere she went.¹ Injured veterans openly displayed scars received in a conflict that was ostensibly antithetical to the values of their nation two decades later. While the nature of this conflict was often reserved for the world of abstract allusion, Akiko clearly recalls sensing that “something dreadful had happened.”² Indeed, for many that lived through the war and its subsequent occupation, historical memory is primarily concerned with the crushing, confusing, and often conflicting feelings surrounding defeat, rather than Japan’s remarkable and strange American interlude. Emiko Yamanashi describes her experience growing up in what she calls “the confusion era,” stating that while “the Occupation itself is a historical fact,” her generation’s responses to this period are “related rather to feelings associated with ‘the end of war’ or ‘the loss of war.’”³ Such is the disassociation of the postwar experience from American involvement, that in a poll taken near the end of the Occupation, only 20 percent of Japanese respondents believed that SCAP’s policies played an instrumental role in the democratization of Japan.⁴ The postwar period, or this “confusion era,” presents occupied Japan with no occupier, a Co-Prosperity Sphere with no conqueror, and a recent history with little stable footing for genuine reflection. While the postwar era can be neatly be drawn to a conclusion with the restoration of Japanese political autonomy in 1952, or perhaps later with the death of Emperor

¹ Akiko Hashimoto, *The Long Defeat* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1.

² Ibid.

³ Emiko Yamanashi, “Painting in the time of ‘Heavy Hands,’” in *The Confusion Era* ed. by Mark Sandler, 23.

⁴ Montgomery, *The Purge in Occupied Japan*, 77.

Hirohito in 1989, the ever-present impact of Japan's long postwar is very much alive to the present day.⁵

In this sense, Japan's postwar can be best understood as a journey to embrace the crushing, universal defeat of World War II. The war's sudden conclusion stunned Japanese citizens, who were actively preparing to carry out a protracted and bloody defense of their nation. Ichiro Hashimoto recalls the factory he worked in being moved into the cave systems of a mountain in order to avoid American bombing as late as February 1945.⁶ Japanese citizens prepared to carry out a protracted defense of their homeland and children were taught the most effective way to stab invaders with bamboo spears.⁷ Edgar Porter describes the "new normal," experienced by the people of Japan as World War II drew to a close, stating "teachers left their positions to join the army, students scraped bark off trees to make uniforms, and bombing attacks killed families, but rice was still planted and classes were sometimes held."⁸

Despite increasing exhaustion toward the war effort, Japan demonstrated little willingness to consider the terms of surrender presented in the Potsdam Declaration. Many remained defiant even after the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.⁹ A Hiroshima resident named Yamashita wrote in his diary following the destruction of the city and the loss of his son, "Every scientific weapon that has been produced by the brains of man has appeared on the stage. Fear is not known in this war. I believe not one Japanese will remain. May all the rivers and mountains be burnt and destroyed – that is the penalty of war. I am yet alive

⁵ Carol Gluck, "The Long Postwar," in *Legacies and Ambiguities: Postwar Fiction and Culture in West Germany and Japan*, ed. by Ernestine Schlant and J. Thomas Rimer (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1991), 74.

⁶ Edgar A. Porter and Ran Ying Porter, *Japanese Reflections on World War II and the American Occupation* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 131.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 131-132.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁹ Richard Frank, *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire* (New York: Random House Publishing, 1999), 188-189.

and I have offered a son, but I will not cry.”¹⁰ Ultimately, the twenty days that passed between the issuance of the Potsdam Declaration on July 26 and Japan’s eventual surrender on August 15 saw the devastation of nearly every major Japanese metropolitan area, the dropping of two atomic bombs, and the deaths of an estimated 380,000 Japanese.¹¹

While listening to Emperor Hirohito’s Imperial Rescript Ending the War on August 15, 1945, Michihiko Hachiya expected to hear exhortations for the people of Japan to renew their commitment to dying in defense of the homeland.¹² Emperor Hirohito’s spoken message, transmitted by radio, represented the first time the emperor had directly addressed Japanese citizens in the nation’s history. Despite this shocking development, Hirohito’s announcement that he was ending the war, which had not developed “to Japan’s advantage,” proved most remarkable.¹³ Hirohito specifically cited the use of atomic bombs as being significant in his decision, stating that “the enemy [had] begun to deploy a new and most cruel bomb, the power of which to do damage is incalculable, taking the toll of many innocent lives.”¹⁴ Hirohito directly depicted his decision to end the war as graciously sparing the world from “the total extinction of human civilization.”¹⁵ Hirohito concluded by challenging the people of Japan to “pave the way for grand peace for all generations to come by enduring the unendurable and suffering the unsufferable.”¹⁶ In a single, masterful display of statesmanship, Hirohito “descended” to directly address his subjects, ended Japan’s nearly fifteen-year war of expansion, and reimagined his nation as a model of peace for the nations of the world.

¹⁰ Quoted in Hachiya, *Hiroshima Diary*, 222-223.

¹¹ Porter, *Japanese Reflections*, 168.

¹² Hachiya, *Hiroshima Diary*, 80.

¹³ The Imperial Rescript Ending the War.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Hirohito's message received a broad range of responses from the people of Japan. Mamoru Hirano, a noncombat army technician expressed relief at the war's conclusion, "despite the good work done by the kamikazes," but stated that he could not publicly express this view at the time.¹⁷ Japanese serving overseas, such as Sergeant Naomasa Kodama, felt a lack of resolution regarding the conflict, stating, "In my mind, we did not lose. Japan never surrendered – it was just that the war was now finished."¹⁸ Perhaps the most common response to the war's conclusion was a search for answers. Captain Shukichi Maki lamented the failed, exhaustive effort of seven years carried out by his men and wished to understand how they could have lost.¹⁹ Following the surrender, Shukichi and his men were forced to live off the land for over ten months, only returning to Japan in June 1946.²⁰

It is estimated that approximately 6.5 million Japanese lived or served overseas at war's end.²¹ Roughly 3.5 million Japanese servicemen were spread throughout China, Korea, Formosa, and countless islands throughout the Pacific. It is estimated that over 245,000 Japanese died in Japan's former colony of Manchuria alone during the winter that followed surrender.²² Many Japanese soldiers were taken and utilized as forced laborers by Allied nations, with tens of thousands being conscripted to fight in China's renewed civil war for both sides.²³ Perhaps most strikingly, an estimated 1.7 million Japanese were taken by the Soviet Union and utilized in Siberian labor camps, of which over 300,000 simply disappeared from Soviet records.²⁴ This

¹⁷ Quoted in Porter, *Reflections on World War II and the American Occupation*, 174.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 175.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 174.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 48. Dower's excellent treatment of this subject addresses the myriad challenges that obstructed repatriation. Sherzod Muminov's *Eleven Winters of Discontent* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2022) addresses the broader system of Soviet forced labor in greater detail.

²² *Ibid.*, 50.

²³ *Ibid.*, 51.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 52.

seemingly endless postwar haunted displaced Japanese such as artist and soldier Kazuki Yasuo, who required over a decade of reflection before he was able to communicate his experiences serving as a forced laborer in Siberia.²⁵ For countless Japanese, the long postwar was defined by waiting for the return of loved ones who would never arrive.

Domestically, Japanese prepared for the arrival of their “demonic” enemies, whom they believed would rape and pillage in accordance with state-depictions of American soldiers throughout the war.²⁶ Those who could afford to do so, sent wives and daughters into the countryside, and hoped that newly established comfort houses would insulate “respectable” members of Japanese society.²⁷ Those who could not leave major cities prepared for the worst. One such example was Nobuko Eto, a hospital employee who was given poison by a pharmacist so that she would be able to kill herself if the need arose.²⁸ This overwhelming sense of uncertainty extended to the emperor’s Imperial Guard, who actively prepared plans to restart the war effort following Japan’s formal surrender.²⁹ Isematsu Matsumoto, who served as an Imperial Guard at the war’s conclusion, was told by his commanding officer that he may be contacted at any point within five years with instructions to overthrow the provisional government toward this end.³⁰ As the years passed, and the bizarre realities of the Occupation became increasingly commonplace, Matsumoto expressed relief at having never heard from his commanding officer again.³¹

Despite Japanese concerns, the arrival of American troops unfolded with relative ease. There would be no mass killings and Japan’s demonic foe proved to be generally amicable, if not

²⁵ Yamanashi, “Painting in the time of ‘Heavy Hands,’” 35.

²⁶ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 124.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Porter, *Japanese Reflections*, 170.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 173.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

strangely lighthearted amidst the ruin and desolation of Japan.³² The beginning of the Occupation marked the start of a period of incredible transformation within Japan, politically, culturally, and socially. The newly formed SCAP government provided the desperately needed stability required for Japanese to come to grips with the events of the war and to reimagine their place within the wider world. John Dower's "cultures of defeat" offers perhaps the most compelling model with which to analyze the impossibly diverse array of Japanese responses to defeat and occupation and provides the foundation for much of the analysis presented in this chapter.³³ While there is no uniform Japanese response to defeat and occupation, the themes of renewal, victimization, and liberalization dominate postwar narratives.

While each of these themes developed and reflected gradual shifts in Japanese society throughout the long postwar period, their roots can be distinctly traced back to the Occupation. Despite the inherently insular nature of Japanese reflections on this period, SCAP's policymaking and the general presence of American personnel played an undeniable role in the complex processes of cultural reimagination that dominated Japanese postwar experience. SCAP's promises of a new, democratic society, coupled with the ideological exhaustion and trauma of the war facilitated the pursuit of a new, peace-loving Japan, bearing little reference to the past. For many Japanese, the Occupation provided an opportunity to reimagine their role in World War II, adopting the position of victim relative to Allied violence and domestic militaristic deceptions, rather than as willing and violent collaborators in an imperialistic war of aggression. Finally, reimagining Japan as a modern, liberal nation represented the most universal experience of the Occupation. Knowingly or not, the experience of Occupation and the crushing

³² Hachiya, *Hiroshima Diary*, 225.

³³ See Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 121-167.

realities of defeat generated revolutionary societal change within Japan and gave birth to remarkable processes of cultural reimagination.

While the formal conclusion of World War II ended the threat of continued American bombing, it did little to address the crippling poverty and starvation that dominated the lives of Japanese. The majority of the 100-billion-yen worth of materials owned by the Japanese military quickly disappeared and resurfaced in black markets throughout Japan, providing little meaningful relief for the defeated nation.³⁴ The arrival of American forces did little to resolve these issues, as it was determined that Japan's suffering was a necessary consequence of pursuing a war of aggression. When loans of American grain were eventually introduced in the opening months of the Occupation, they were largely funneled to black market retailers who resold the American food at increased prices. Price gouging was exacerbated by crippling inflation which ensured that paying for food required approximately seventy percent of a family's budget in 1946.³⁵ John Dower describes the scope of hunger in postwar Japan, stating "hunger was not simply a product of defeat. Rather, it derived from the desperate prolongation of the emperor's lost war, besides being compounded by a disastrous harvest exacerbated by the confusion, corruption, and ineptitude of the post surrender elites."³⁶ For many Japanese, securing the food required to sustain life presented a more consistent reality of the early Occupation than idealistic concepts of reform.

Struggling Japanese civilians viewed hunger as reflecting broader societal issues of governmental corruption and the collapse of the Imperial Japanese state. Perhaps the most

³⁴ Ibid., 114.

³⁵ Steven J. Fuchs, "Feeding the Japanese: Food Policy, Land Reform, and Japan's Economic Recovery," in *Democracy in Occupied Japan: The U.S. Occupation and Japanese Politics and Society*, ed. Mark E. Caprio and Yoneyuki Sugiata (New York: Routledge, 2007), 27.

³⁶ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 90.

shocking display of this reality was the death of Yamaguchi Yoshitada, a thirty-six-year-old judge who allowed himself to starve to death, as he refused to eat food secured illegally through the black market while being asked to prosecute struggling Japanese families for using the black market to feed themselves.³⁷ While Japanese politicians made small fortunes redirecting emergency aid and food rations to criminals, Japanese citizens desperately struggled to make ends meet and risked imprisonment to feed their families. Ultimately, the devastation the war and the subsequent challenges of the Occupation destroyed countless Japanese families. Remarkably, half of all serious crime reported in April 1949 was carried out by individuals between the ages of eight and twenty-five, with many operating as members of children-run crime syndicates.³⁸ A generation of war orphans and widows struggled to grapple with the ever-present challenges of poverty, starvation, and homelessness throughout the Occupation. In this context, many Japanese struggled to find continued purpose in dutifully “enduring the unendurable,” and simply despaired.

Despite the brief reprieve in tension offered by the war’s conclusion, the crushing realities of both defeat and the ever-present destruction of Japan produced a state of psychological defeat among much of the Japanese populace titled the “*kyodatsu* condition.” *Kyodatsu* was used to describe the exhaustion and despair that gripped many within Japan following over a decade of sustained conflict, suffering, and self-sacrifice. While this condition limited Japanese resistance to American policies, it simultaneously undermined hopes for grass-roots engagement with the foundational concepts of democratization.³⁹ It, then, became a categorical imperative of both American and Japanese reformers to present the concept of a new

³⁷ Ibid., 100.

³⁸ Ibid., 110.

³⁹ Ibid., 89.

Japan; a Japan in which the horrors of the recent past need-not dictate the lives of the Japanese people.

The Occupation presented a perfect opportunity for Japan to reimagine its recent past in pursuit of an idealized, democratic future. Carol Gluck describes the active role the United States played in molding historical memory within Japan, stating, “defeated, liberated, and occupied all at once, in the autumn of 1945 the Japanese were suddenly both free and unfree to confront their past. After the defeat, many were ready to speak of the enormities of recent years; with liberation, they were free to do so; under foreign occupation, they were required to begin right away.”⁴⁰ For many Japanese, the opportunity to construct a new nation along democratic lines offered an elusive hope for a brighter future: a future in which Japan was neither defined by its past nor its current struggles.

The simple belief that the nation could be improved, and that its current struggles could be overcome proved instrumental in helping many overcome the *kyodatsu* condition and engage with societal reform once again. Poet Horiguchi Daigaku channeled this optimism in a 1946 poem, stating:

The country has become small
 And powerless,
 Food scarce,
 Shame plentiful,
 Life Fragile.
 Stop Grieving!
 Raise your eyes
 To the treetops,
 To the sky.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Carol Gluck, “The Past as Present,” in *Postwar Japan as History* ed. by Andrew Gordon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 66.

⁴¹ Quoted in Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 119.

Dower describes the spirit of renewal that possessed Japan as the Occupation progressed, stating “but, each in his or her own way, millions of individuals did stop grieving and fixed their gaze on clear targets. Defeat stimulated skepticism and outright anger at established authority...Blatant corruption often prompted healthy criticism...For every personalized story of emotional exhaustion and shattered lives, it usually was possible to find an uplifting counterexample of resilience, hope, and accomplishment.”⁴² Japan was imbued with a sense that traditional structures could be reconsidered, cultural values reevaluated, and historical narratives reimagined. Countless Japanese channeled this spirit of possibility into the conceiving of a “New Japan,” the pursuit of individualistic moral codes, and the creation of a nation of peace.⁴³

The intellectual and cultural explosion that occurred among Japanese during the Occupation defied the ever-present realities of starvation, paper-shortages, and SCAP censorship.⁴⁴ Despite these restrictions, 435 magazines entered publication in the eight months that followed surrender, with many directly referencing the concept of new beginnings.⁴⁵ The *New Age* and *New Life* magazines joined an incredibly expansive collection of novel Occupation creations which celebrated and channeled the universal sense of newness and potential that accompanied the rebuilding of Japan. Even preexisting publications seized the opportunity to rebrand themselves in accord with this spirit of newness, with *Heiki Gijutsu* (Weapons Technology) rebranding to *Peace Industry* and *Keikoku* (National Administration) becoming *New Era*.⁴⁶ Perhaps the most successful of Japan’s “new” magazines during the Occupation was

⁴² Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 119.

⁴³ Creating a nation of peace served the dual purposes of satisfying both the radical goals of SCAP’s pacifistic constitution, as well as Emperor Hirohito’s challenge to model peace to the nations of the world in his Imperial Rescript Ending the War. This spirit was channeled into the common saying *Heiwa Kokka Kensetsu* (construct a nation of peace).

⁴⁴ Gluck, “The Long Postwar,” 65.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 180.

Shinsei, which sold over 360,000 issues in the first three days following the release of its initial issue.⁴⁷ *Shinsei* clearly captured the spirit of the times, stating that in “these historic days that divide the century,” all Japanese must “put our sorrows behind us. Our course is clearly set. We must not err again... The Old Japan is completely defeated. Completely—. With these thoughts etched deep within us, let us strike out on the path toward a reborn Japan (*Shinsei Nihon*).”⁴⁸

General support for the pursuit of a new Japan transcended literature and reached every corner of Japanese society. Seemingly every facet of Japanese society was reconsidered, if not repackaged, bombarding Japanese with a confusing mixture of the old and new. Japanese were presented with “new culture, new democracy, new education, new geography,” including even “new haiku, new marriage,” and “new family.”⁴⁹ Even businesses engaged with this process, routinely producing advertisements which included language offering support for the creation of a new Japan, a peaceful Japan, and democratization broadly. Imatake Shinchiro produced an advertisement for the services of Sumitomo Bank which read, “Let’s all make a bright future for Japan: Sumitomo Bank.”⁵⁰ Whether out a genuine desire to engage with democratization or simply out of a wish to endear one’s business to reform-minded members of Japanese society, the apparent optimism of national discourse defied the distinctly sobering realities of the immediate postwar period.

Despite the genuine novelty of SCAP’s liberal reform within the context of Japanese history, cultural inclinations toward the “new” represented a distinct continuation of Japan’s recent imperial past. Indeed, despite Western depictions of Japan as a backward, feudal state, the

⁴⁷ Gluck, “The Long Postwar,” 65.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 178.

⁵⁰ Imatake Shichiro, “Let’s All Make a Bright Future for Japan: Sumitomo Bank,” Fall 1945. Offset Print, 67 x 48 cm.

Imperial Japanese state emphasized the need to produce a “new culture tied to a radiant past,” in pursuit of a “New East Asia.”⁵¹ In this sense, SCAP represented a subsequent military government advocating for widespread societal reform and personal sacrifice in the name of progress. Both the Imperial Japanese and American occupational governments utilized censorship to guide public thinking, and actively sponsored content that supported their ideological goals. This is demonstrated perhaps most clearly by the United States physically occupying and utilizing the exact same radio facilities to transmit state messaging as their Japanese counterparts before the war’s conclusion.⁵² While SCAP’s censorship apparatus proved lenient by comparison and actively encouraged public discourse on many challenging issues, many Japanese were left distinctly confused regarding how far freedom of speech truly extended. Even films which ostensibly mirrored SCAP’s public messaging, such as Kemei Fumio’s 1946 film, *Nihon no Higeki* (The Tragedy of Japan), could be removed from publication months after release, even following pre-release approval by SCAP censors.⁵³ For many Japanese, inconsistency in censorship paired with the blurred lines of continuity between Imperial and Occupation governments undermined faith in political structures and led them to pursue internal moral systems.

Sakaguchi Ango, a literary critic of the postwar period, viewed the ideological continuity of ostensibly antithetical political organizations within Japan as absurd.⁵⁴ Repulsed by the contradictory realities of kamikaze pilots selling food to starving families on the black market and war widows taking American boyfriends, Ango lost faith in Japan’s political systems. He

⁵¹ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 178.

⁵² Marlene J. Mayo, “The War of Words Continues: American Radio Guidance in Occupied Japan”, in *The Occupation of Japan: Arts and Culture*, ed. Thomas W. Burkman, 46.

⁵³ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 427-428.

⁵⁴ Sakaguchi Ango, “Discourse on Decadence,” translated by Seiji M. Lippit, *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 1, (October 1986), 5.

describes these systems as “contrivances,” and fundamentally suspected the value systems they espoused, stating “It is no less our inevitable destiny that when we destroy the contrivance we call the emperor system and create a new system in its place, this new system should turn out to be but one more step in the evolutionary progress of contrivances!”⁵⁵ Ango argues in his 1946 manifesto, “Discourse on Decadence,” that Japan had only experienced superficial change and that its underlying societal problems remained intact.⁵⁶

Ango offered the hedonistic pursuit of “decadence” as the only honest way to interact with the absurdity of the world and its superficial value systems. Ango emphasized the physical body as the only mechanism by which value could be determined, pointedly rejecting the language of self-sacrifice advocated for under Imperial Japan. Rather than finding value in the *kokutai*, or the collective “body” of Japanese people and its values, Ango found absolute value in the individual’s physical personhood.⁵⁷ In this sense, “Discourse on Decadence” can be best understood within the broader context of the Japanese literary tradition *nikutai bungaku* (carnal literature). Carnal literature similarly advocates for the rejection of traditional morality and offers a distinctly dehumanizing view of others. These fundamental reconsiderations of traditional value systems appealed to many within Japan as they sought to make sense of the new and often seemingly absurd world around them.

Despite acknowledging the contradictions of the Occupation, many Japanese such as social critic Maruyama Masao were disturbed by the implications of carnal literature. Masao rejected Ango’s call for decadence, stating, “If we don’t control carnal literature and carnal

⁵⁵ Alan Wolfe, “From Pearls to Swine: Sakaguchi Ango and the Humanity of Decadence,” in *War, Occupation, and Creativity*, ed. by Marlene J. Mayo and J. Thomas Rimer (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2011), 360.

⁵⁶ Ango, “Discourse on Decadence,” 5.

⁵⁷ Wolfe, “From Pearls to Swine,” 366.

politics in one way or another, then it's senseless to talk about Japan as a democratic or a cultured nation."⁵⁸ Masao advocates instead for self-reflection, hope for the future, and genuine remorse for the failings of the past, producing a "community of remorse."⁵⁹ This community of remorse simultaneously rejected the insular gratification of Ango's decadence, while conceding the existential need for Japanese citizens to develop value systems that transcended the official positions presented by those in power.

Many within Japan sought to develop the individual and produce a new, democratized Japan through art, rather than through legislation. Sano Mitsuo, an artist who lost his family during the war as a child, echoed the need for Japanese to admit their fault in supporting Imperial Japan's aggressive war effort, stating:

There are those who, although they may say nothing, hate war more than those who scream against it. They scream, but they are being used by politics, and their voices do not sound from the bottom of their hearts... That war was not begun by anyone other than the Japanese people themselves, and all of my family members, including myself as a child, felt positive about that war.⁶⁰

The *Kindai Bungaku* (Modern Literature) group similarly argued that "the absence of the modern subject" was responsible for the failure of Japanese citizens to oppose the war effort, and that the only way to resist totalitarian influences going forward would be to "develop a strong sense of subjective autonomy in the Japanese people."⁶¹ Ryūzaburo Umehara, a leading oil painter of the mid 20th century, believed that Japan should not have gone to war, but argued that the Occupation presented a unique opportunity for the Japanese people to become "rugged individualists."⁶² Ultimately, Japanese artists wished to address the issue of war guilt

⁵⁸ Maruyama Masao, "From Carnal Literature to Carnal Politics," in *Thought and Behavior in Modern Japanese Politics*, ed. Ivan Morris (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 266.

⁵⁹ Maruyama Masao, *Kōei no Ichi Kara – "Gendai Seiji no Shisō to Kōdō Tsuiho"* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1982), 120-121.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Sandler ed. *The Confusion Era*, 36.

⁶¹ Asato Ikeda, *Art and War in Japan and its Empire: 1931-1960* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 342.

⁶² Umehara Ryūzaburō, "Shigoto shugi: Waga Seikatsu Shinjō," *Chūōkōron* 65, (December 1951), 193.

independently, proactively asking artists that contributed to the war effort to step away and reflect on their personal responsibility.⁶³ These artists argued that in order to construct a new Japan, Japanese citizens needed to first look within themselves and meaningfully reflect on their complicity in the war effort.

Despite the hopes of many Japanese artists, most Japanese struggled to engage with the idea of war guilt in the wake of their own personal suffering. In this sense, historical apathy was the most common Japanese response to the Occupation. While no universal Japanese experience can be identified, for many, the physical destruction of war was so great, the moral defeat of their nation so absolute, that many preferred to disengage from processes of historical revisionism altogether. For such individuals, the Occupation represented a second chance to create a new Japan, a Japan of culture, a Japan that was neither defined by, nor beholden to their actions in China, the Philippines, or the Pacific Theater broadly.⁶⁴

Honda Shūgo, a literary chronicler during the Occupation, described the feeling of stark discontinuity following the war's conclusion, stating, "on that day of total emptiness, the edifice of our entire past collapsed. It was the first day of creation, when all existence waited to be called into being."⁶⁵ Hara Meiko, a survivor of the dropping of the first atomic bomb, echoed this sense of violent division in her personal life, stating "The Meiko of today is completely different from the Meiko of the past."⁶⁶ Ultimately, abandoning the past proved the only mechanism by which

⁶³ Miyata Shigeo authored "Artists' Morality Debate" less than two months after the war's conclusion, challenging Japanese artists to reflect on their personal war guilt and to seek to atone for their wrongdoing during the Occupation. Similarly, the Japan Art Society asked thirteen artists to step away from painting and to reflect on their role in allowing militarists to "overrun the art world." See Miyata Shigeo, "'Artists' Morality Debate," *Asahi Shinbun*, October 14, 1945. and Maki Kaneko, *Mirroring the Japanese Empire: The Male Figure in Yōga Painting, 1930-1950* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 128.

⁶⁴ Gluck, "The Power of Culture," 250.

⁶⁵ Quoted in Wolfe, "From Pearls to Swine," 366.

⁶⁶ Quoted in John Dower, *Ways of Forgetting, Ways of Remembering: Japan in the Modern World* (New York: The New Press, 2014), 138.

many Japanese were able to find hope for the future. Independent of the ethical implications of this approach, Carol Gluck acknowledges the appeal of this model when faced with the crushing realities of postwar Japan, stating “And what an illusion. It was scarcely likely that one day in August would inaugurate an utterly new Japan any more than it was possible for history to end, then start again.”⁶⁷

Within the context of the incredible suffering endured by the nation of Japan during World War II, it is understandable, then, that the second primary process of reimagination which has come to define postwar narratives is that of victimization. Of the five primary Japanese responses to war guilt cited by John Dower, “Denial, evocations of moral (or immoral) equivalence, victim consciousness, binational (U.S. – Japan) sanitizing of Japanese war crimes, and popular discourse acknowledging guilt and war responsibility,” four are primarily concerned with the denial and/or repression of productive dialogue regarding war guilt.⁶⁸ Indeed, just as the Occupation is a narrative defined by tension and cooperation between Japan and the United States, so too has the cultivation of a sense of national victimhood been aided in uneven measure by both sides.

While the United States consistently stood in public opposition to Japan’s war of aggression and the myriad crimes committed therein, it incidentally contributed to the repression of appropriately thorough examination of Japan’s actions during the Second Sino-Japanese War and subsequent Second World War. This occurred primarily through the shifting of historical narratives away from Japanese colonial aggression, emphasizing the broader scope of Japan’s modern development rather than the pressing realities of its recent imperial past. SCAP sought to legitimize the process of democratization by placing it within the larger context of Japanese

⁶⁷ Gluck, “The Long Postwar,” 66.

⁶⁸ Dower, *Ways of Forgetting, Ways of Remembering*, 112.

modernization beginning with the arrival of Admiral Commodore Perry in 1853.⁶⁹ In this framework, the regrettable actions of the Imperial Japanese government, and, by extension, the peoples of Japan were deemed a historical anomaly within the context of Japan's modernization process, rather than the natural conclusion of the founding principles of the Japanese state.⁷⁰

Perhaps the most common process of self-victimization carried out in postwar Japan was the assertion that the people of Japan had been maliciously deceived by militarists. This position presupposed that the Japanese people had neither the knowledge nor the agency to resist their militarist leaders, and accordingly bore no guilt for actions taken during the war.⁷¹ Indeed, many Japanese counted Emperor Hirohito foremost among the victims of this deception, as his image and position had been exploited to misguide his subjects. Following the formal announcement of Japan's surrender, Michihiko Hachiya directed his animosity toward his own militarist government, rather than the nation which had devastated his home only nine days earlier, stating:

To myself, I began denouncing the army: 'What do you fellows think about the emperor? You started the war at your pleasure. When the outlook was good, you behaved with importance; but when you began to lose, you tried to conceal your losses, and when you could move no more, you turned to the emperor! Can you people call yourself soldiers? You have no choice but to commit *harakiri* and die!⁷²

By reimagining themselves as passive onlookers and victims of militarist deceptions, many Japanese were able to simultaneously clear themselves of culpability, while punishing their leaders for leading a failing war effort.⁷³

SCAP inadvertently contributed to the construction of this narrative through their incredibly narrow selection of defendants at the IMTFE, bringing only twenty-six defendants to

⁶⁹ *Primer for Democracy, Vol. 2*, August 26, 1949, RG 31, Box 7 Folder 4, DMMA.

⁷⁰ Wolfe, "From Pearls to Swine," 369.

⁷¹ Dower, *Ways of Forgetting, Ways of Remembering*, 130.

⁷² Hachiya, *Hiroshima Diary*, 83.

⁷³ Nakazato, *Neonationalist Mythology in Postwar Japan*, 148.

trial. Conspicuous by his absence, Emperor Hirohito was not only excluded from criminal proceedings, but was directly shielded by the Chief Prosecutor of the IPS, Joseph Keenan.⁷⁴ By cordoning prosecution efforts in such a narrow fashion, SCAP unintentionally affirmed that neither the common Japanese person, nor the emperor and the broader principles under which he unified the nation bore meaningful responsibility. Carol Gluck describes the appealing nature of this approach, stating, “the stark narrative of the war produced by the trial was accepted by most Japanese at the time. Identifiable villains, a culpable because conspiratorial history, and a strong story line with a clear ending – this view of the war suited a country that so much wanted to break with its past.”⁷⁵

The broader scope of American prosecution oversight proves telling as well. The Japanese system of “comfort women,” in which over 100,000 East Asian women were kidnapped and forcefully placed in military brothels, escaped prosecution altogether. Additionally, even the members of Unit 731, a Japanese research unit which infamously carried out cruel experimentation on Chinese civilians during World War II, escaped prosecution in exchange for the data produced by their research. While the high-minded ideals of SCAP’s reform policies extended equivalent human decency to Japanese, there is little indication that the inherent value of the Chinese and Korean civilians was of particular concern to the IPS. These obstructions of justice clearly communicated that there would be no criminal too guilty, nor crime too vile to overlook for geopolitical convenience under the growing pressures of the Cold War.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 325.; See Chapter One.

⁷⁵ Gluck, “The Past as Present,” 69.

⁷⁶ Dower, *Ways of Forgetting, Ways of Remembering*, 124.

The perceived double standard with which crimes against Asian persons were assessed inadvertently served the dual purpose of repressing awareness of Japanese war crimes, while retroactively justifying pre-war Japanese anti-colonial justifications. Channeling this frustration, Indian Justice for the IMTFE, Radhabinod Pal offered a scathing dissenting opinion which fundamentally questioned the legal basis of the trial and the perceived moral posturing of the West.⁷⁷ Pal's dissenting opinion, which extends beyond 700 pages in length, critiqued the fundamental premise of the trial and exonerated all twenty-six defendants.⁷⁸ Nariaki Nakazoto contends that Pal's "conservative nationalist leanings," as well as his relationship with Pan-Asianism "bear great importance for a proper assessment of the political views he expressed during the Tokyo Trial."⁷⁹ Likely stemming from generational frustrations with colonial rule and the growth of Pan-Asian thought within India rather than the successful efforts of Japanese propaganda, Pal's dissenting opinion reflected common anti-colonial sentiments which transcended both Japan and India throughout the mid 20th century.⁸⁰

While Pal offers a distinctly Indian conception of Pan-Asianism, his dissenting opinion has come to represent the "bible for Japanese critics" of the IMTFE.⁸¹ Despite the relatively insignificant cultural impact of the release of Pal's dissenting opinion in 1948, it has come to define revisionist narratives of the trial, offering neo-nationalist elements within Japan a foreign voice of authority with which to retroactively validate their critiques of the trial.⁸² Perhaps the most striking and impactful component of Pal's dissenting opinion on the broader scope of

⁷⁷ Judgement of the Honorable Mr. Justice Pal, in DTIMT.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Nakazoto, *Neonationalist Mythology in Postwar Japan*, 120.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 125.

⁸¹ Dower, *Ways of Forgetting, Ways of Remembering*, 115.

⁸² Pal was invited back to Japan six months following the formal conclusion of the Occupation in 1952. During his celebrated visit, Pal lamented Japan's "subservient posture" toward the United States and encouraged convicted Class B/C war criminals at Sugamo Prison that the "release movement [would] be continued." See *Asahi Shimbun*, 12 November 1952.

Japanese discourse regarding the IMTFE is his utilization of false equivalencies. In his dissenting opinion, Pal directly compares the dropping of the atomic bombs to the Holocaust, placing the United States foremost among the criminals of the Second World War.⁸³

This comparison models one of the most enduring methods of ethical obfuscation and self-victimization carried out during the postwar period, directly undermining Japanese efforts to engage with questions of war guilt. In this sense, every crime carried out by Japanese forces during the war could be “justified,” if not excused relative to the suffering inflicted upon the Japanese people. For many Japanese, the wholesale execution of Allied prisoners of war proved unremarkable when compared to the mass-kidnapping and mistreatment of Japanese soldiers at the hands of Chinese and Soviet forces after the war.⁸⁴ Similarly, the devastation of Japanese cities at the hands of American firebombing campaigns, coupled with the use of the atomic bombs was used to justify nearly any action taken by the Imperial Japanese Army and undermined the perceived moral high ground with which the IMTFE operated. Indeed, the process of self-victimization extended into the Occupation as well, with individuals such as Maruyama Sakuji directly connecting the ideas of starvation and the atom bomb, asking GHQ if they are “planning another mass killing of the people with a passive atomic bomb?”⁸⁵

Nariaki Nakazato describes the difficulty faced by many Japanese while engaging with the broader issue of war guilt within this context, stating, “...Because of ingrained ‘imperial consciousness,’ few Japanese were able to see the plain fact that it was not the Japanese populace but the peoples of Asia who had been victimized, and that is was that same populace that was the

⁸³ Dower, *Ways of Forgetting, Ways of Remembering*, 117.; and Judgement of the Honorable Mr. Justice Pal, in DTIMT.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Rinjirō, *Dear General MacArthur*, 56.

perpetrator vis-à-vis Asia.”⁸⁶ In the wake of Japan’s destruction, many struggled to simply disregard the past in service of a new Japan, choosing instead to reimagine it, as well as their roles within it, as victims of both foreign brutality, as well as domestic deceptions. John Dower describes the impact of this analytical framework, stating “There could be no heroes for the losing side. It became commonplace to speak of the war dead themselves – and, indeed, of virtually all ordinary Japanese – as being ‘victims’ and ‘sacrifices.’”⁸⁷

While many Japanese chose to reimagine the past as well as their relationship to it as a nation, perhaps the most common response to the Occupation was the reimagination of Japanese society itself along radically liberal lines. SCAP encouraged Japanese cultural reform as a rejection of traditional, “feudal” elements of Japanese society, emphasizing the need to develop appropriately modern characteristics. The distinction between “modern” and “Western” often proved difficult to determine, producing a distinctly American brand of democratization. Concurrently, many Japanese independently pursued policies of radical reform, whether political, social, or ethical.⁸⁸ The product of these combined, often competing, and frequently contradictory reform efforts was an entirely changed Japan, in which political processes, gender roles, and family structures were reimaged completely.

For many, whether for political convenience or out of a genuine change of heart, the process of liberalization occurred, “literally overnight.”⁸⁹ Despite advocating for the steadfast continuation of the war effort only weeks earlier, the *Oita Godo Press*, a newspaper based out of the Kyushu city of Oita, quickly adapted to the war’s conclusion, challenging its readers to listen

⁸⁶ Nakazato, *Neonationalist Mythology in Postwar Japan*, 147.

⁸⁷ Dower, *Ways of Forgetting, Ways of Remembering*, 119.

⁸⁸ Gluck, “The Power of Culture,” 250.

⁸⁹ Porter, *Japanese Reflections*, 180.

to the emperor and to rebuild Japan with “full and collective efforts.”⁹⁰ It continued, affirming the justness of both the war effort as well as Emperor Hirohito’s decision to end it, stating, “although Japan had intended to establish a peaceful world through this war, the situation for Japan deteriorated day by day, culminating with the great number of innocent people sacrificed by the atomic bomb. If we continue the war, our nation and civilization will become extinct.”⁹¹ Even amidst the ashes of defeat, the emperor’s awesome charisma, as directed through carefully curated state messaging, impacted even ostensibly dissenting organizations within Japan.

SCAP policy makers sought to walk the tightrope of reform without destabilization. As directed by the Potsdam Declaration and its subsequent State and War Department directives, SCAP was responsible for the removal of elements which were deemed to have contributed to Japan’s war of aggression.⁹² These necessarily broad directives facilitated constitutional and economic reform, the censorship of Japanese media, and the dissemination of public education programs. Through the combined efforts of American and Japanese educators, the Japanese educational system was transformed during the seven years of the Occupation, replete with open classrooms, open discussion, and appropriately democratic textbooks.⁹³ Such was the ambition of SCAP reformers, that expansive adult education programs were introduced with the purpose of producing an increasingly stable, educated body of Japanese in the wake of the war’s destruction.

The *Report of the United States Education Mission to Japan* emphasized the importance of adult education programs, stating that a “broad program of adult education is essential to any society that looks toward the highest development of its human resources. Stunned and scared by a disastrous war caused by military domination of the masses, the Japanese are now turning

⁹⁰ *Oita Godo Press*, August 16, 1945, 1.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Potsdam Declaration in DTIMT, 1.

⁹³ *Primer for Democracy*.

toward a new battle, with peace and world cooperation as its objectives.”⁹⁴ In response to the report, SCAP expanded access to education for adults, provided technical and vocational training, and encouraged interest in both the government and the democratic processes that underpinned its operation.⁹⁵ Ultimately, most Japanese proved incredibly receptive to these programs, embracing the concept of democracy and genuinely wishing to engage with its often vague, political and cultural implications.

Perhaps the most remarkable manifestation of Japan’s newfound faith in democratization was the incredible volume of letters written by Japanese civilians, directly addressing MacArthur and GHQ. Of the estimated 500,000 letter addressed to SCAP and MacArthur, the vast majority expressed support, gratitude, and an earnest belief that their writing would impact public policy.⁹⁶ These letters expressed desires to retain the emperor, depose the emperor, offered advice on how the nation ought to be run, and criticized the running of the Occupation.⁹⁷ The latter of these purposes proved most telling, as it demonstrated a general faith that Japanese could publicly disagree with SCAP without risking their personal wellbeing. While SCAP employed censorship to repress certain lines of public discourse, individuals such as Maruyama Sakuji, who mockingly challenged GHQ, asking, “where is justice when only American soldiers have full stomachs and the Japanese people are on the verge of starvation? Have you forgotten your American spirit?” without fear of state backlash.⁹⁸

This robust political engagement reflected a general willingness among most Japanese to fundamentally reconsider their relationship to the state. Communism represented perhaps the

⁹⁴ Report of the United States Education Mission to Japan, 47.

⁹⁵ Van Staaveren, *An American in Japan, 1945-1948*, 116.

⁹⁶ Rinjirō, *Dear General MacArthur*, 2.

⁹⁷ See *Ibid.*, 63, 86, 175, and 47.

⁹⁸ Quoted in Rinjirō, *Dear General MacArthur*, 56.

most genuinely contiguous liberal reform within Japan, having suffered repression at the hands of the Imperial Japanese government over the previous two decades. Dower described communism's appeal in the immediate postwar, stating, "defeat helped establish Marxism and the Communist Party itself as sources of clear, secular, universal principles that transcended the disastrous, particularistic values of the imperial state."⁹⁹ Indeed, such was the faith in the genuine openness of the new, liberal Japan promised by the United States, that Kumaō Tokuhei openly identified himself as a member of the Japan Communist Party (JCP) and stated that he looked "to the headquarters of the Allied powers for [their] support and determination" in a letter addressed to GHQ on December 2, 1945.¹⁰⁰ Despite the relative autonomy with which the JCP operated during the opening months of the Occupation, Tokuhei's confidence would ultimately prove misplaced.

Despite fears from both Japanese and American conservatives, the JCP never presented an existential threat to Japanese stability. In the April 1946 elections held for the House of Representatives, communists received a meager five seats, offering functionally no representative presence when compared to the 143 boasted by the Social Democrats.¹⁰¹ The underwhelming performance of the JCP during a period in which Japanese communists faced less pressure than at any other point during the Occupation led analysts such as Jacob Van Staaveren to conclude that the JCP failed to truly capture the hearts of the voting Japanese populous, "despite their large expenditure of funds and their zeal in campaigning."¹⁰²

Ultimately, the JCP's failure to pursue foundational civil liberties, choosing instead to emphasize inflammatory issues such as continued food shortages undermined their appeal to

⁹⁹ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 236.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in Rinjirō *Dear General MacArthur*, 201.

¹⁰¹ Van Staaveren, *An American in Japan, 1945-1948*, 148.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

Japanese moderates.¹⁰³ This would only be exacerbated by the JCP's public celebration of an attack on four Americans on May 30, 1950. Despite this representing the first meaningfully violent confrontation between Japanese and Americans during the Occupation, the JCP's callous treatment of the attack tarnished their image as being champions of the people.¹⁰⁴ Finally, consistent anti-communist efforts affected by SCAP, paired with the increasing stability offered by Japan's resurgent economy following the escalation of Cold War tensions with the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, gave Japanese little reason to pursue the communist revolution so feared throughout the Occupation. In this sense, the JCP was not killed by SCAP, but rather aided in its recession on the political stage, due in large part to its own systematic failings.

Despite the poor electoral performance of the JCP, Japan's representative bodies underwent immense change during the Occupation, marking a distinct shift away from both the politicians and politics of Imperial Japan. The April 1946 elections saw the election of 375 new representatives, with ninety-one regaining their positions following previous service.¹⁰⁵ Additionally, the elections of 1947 produced the youngest body of representatives since 1903, reflecting a new generation of politicians stepping in to fill the void left by excised militarists.¹⁰⁶ While many of the new politicians represented insignificant departures from their predecessors ideologically, popular support for SCAP's reform agendas clearly communicated that a tide change in Japanese politics had occurred. While Prime Minister Shidehara Kijūrō openly wept upon presenting Japan's new liberal constitution to his cabinet, he would later proudly claim that the constitution's controversial "no-war" clause had been his idea from the beginning.¹⁰⁷ Despite

¹⁰³ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 271.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 272.

¹⁰⁵ Montgomery, *The Purge in Occupied Japan*, 213.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 214.

¹⁰⁷ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 404.

the best efforts of Japanese conservatives, such was the public embrace of the liberal promises offered by SCAP and codified in its constitution, that the Occupation represented a foundational shift in Japanese politics which have stood largely unchallenged to the present day.

Liberal reform transcended the political in postwar Japan, wholistically transforming Japanese culture. Foundational elements of Japanese society came under unprecedented scrutiny, with many opting to abandon conservative values altogether in the name of democratization. Ronald Dore comments on the fluidity with which traditional value systems were reevaluated, stating, “the confusion which followed [Japan’s] defeat was catastrophic to the old morality. In some cases it was catastrophic to moral restraint of any kind.”¹⁰⁸ Language, family structure, and gender roles underwent incredible change, as Japanese seized the opportunity to actively engage with the elusive promises of democratization.

Perhaps no group pursued the promises of reform more fervently than Japanese women, who came to embody both the controversies and successes of postwar Japan’s cultural liberalization. The foundational concept which communicated cultural expectations for Japanese women prior to the Occupation was *ryōsai kenbo* (good wife, wise mother), which emphasized the need for Japanese women to be homemakers, raising children sensibly and with respect to the societal values being promoted by the imperial state.¹⁰⁹ Embodying this principle, former Education Minister Makino Nobuaki defined his perspective on the role of women in society, stating, “recently some girls have received specialized education to engage in vocations, but they are exceptional. In the end, a girl’s duty is to become someone’s wife and someone’s mother; to

¹⁰⁸ Quoted in Mark McLelland, *Love, Sex, and Democracy in Japan during the American Occupation* by (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 71.

¹⁰⁹ Kathleen S. Uno, “The Death of ‘Good Wife, Wise Mother?’” in *Postwar Japan as History* ed. by Andrew Gordon, 297.

manage the household; and to educate children.”¹¹⁰ In reality, these “idealized” conceptions of women’s roles became increasingly untenable throughout World War II, as manpower shortages necessitated women enter the workforce. By the war’s conclusion in 1945, many Japanese women had to struggle by any means necessary to provide for both themselves and their families.

The inescapable pragmatism of the changing role of Japanese women failed to convince conservative elements within Japanese society. Despite public scorn, many women elected to pursue work as *panpan*, placing the increasingly pressing realities of poverty and starvation above societal pressures.¹¹¹ Often adopting Western clothing and marketing themselves to Occupation personnel, *panpan* near Fujiwara Hospital in Tokyo brought home over ten times as much money on a monthly basis when compared to men working office jobs in October 1946.¹¹² Despite the often exploitative nature of their work, *panpan* subverted feudalistic Japanese constraints on romantic association and seized autonomy of their personal financial well-being in the chaos and uncertainty of the postwar period. While the broad appeal of concepts such as *ryōsai kenbo* survived beyond the Occupation, and was at times reinforced by traditional, Western conceptions of gender relations presented by Occupation personnel, Japanese women demonstrated that they were capable of filling more roles than simply that of a good wife or a wise mother.¹¹³

The cultural liberalization of Japanese women was mirrored and at times exceeded by the legal protections provided for and codified in Japan’s new constitution. Japanese women were

¹¹⁰ Quoted in Uno, “The Death of ‘Good Wife, Wise Mother’?”, 298.

¹¹¹ Female Japanese sex workers were given the nickname *panpan*. This title came to encapsulate a broader collection of Japanese women who rejected traditional Japanese conservatism and embraced Western fashion and/or pursued relationships with Western men. See chapter 2 for additional information regarding the establishment of Japan’s system of state prostitution.

¹¹² Mark McLelland, *Love, Sex, and Democracy in Japan during the American Occupation*, 72.

¹¹³ American personnel often encouraged Japanese women to pursue careers as housewives, reflecting firmly engrained domestic conceptions of gender roles during the Occupation. See Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally*, 47.

granted suffrage, given property rights within the context of a marriage, guaranteed equality in employment and education, and granted greatly improved marital rights.¹¹⁴ While these policies did not transform societal conceptions of Japanese women universally, they provided legal protection which facilitated the gradual acceptance of Japanese women as autonomous members of Japanese society. Kathleen Uno describes the grudging acceptance with which women's rights were met, stating "even conservatives modified their vision of womanhood in the postwar era... They did not block the employment of married women outside the home... even staunch supporters of female domesticity condone, rather grudgingly, women's activities outside the home. The alternative would have been unfilled jobs and impoverished community life..."¹¹⁵ In this sense, many Japanese women seized the promises of democratization and reimagined their role within Japanese society along liberal lines.

Carol Gluck defines the relationship between national identity as constructed through a curated past, stating, "Since national history is also ideology – a past imagined in the context of national identity – public memory is hegemonic, even if it is not singular. There is a weight to it. And as postwar Japanese constantly reconstituted the past in the light of the present, the weight of public memory changed."¹¹⁶ The postwar period, and indeed the Occupation in particular, were defined by active engagement with historical memory. Neither Japanese conceptions of self, nor the Occupation can be properly understood without engaging with vibrant and varying processes of cultural and historical reimagination.

For nearly all Japanese, the absolute defeat of World War II provided a distinct turning point in the broader narrative of their nation's history, as well as in their own lives. Writing for

¹¹⁴ Uno, "The Death of 'Good Wife, Wise Mother'?", 303.; And The Final Draft of Japanese Constitution.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 315-316.

¹¹⁶ Gluck, "The Past as Present," 65.

the commemorative 1958 “Hiroshima Panels,” Oda Taturō challenged viewers to “question the meaning of defeat in order to subjectively accept the opportunity, brought on by the external force known as defeat in war, to transform our values. Without recognizing that the survival of our ways of life depends on whether we can live through the meaning of defeat as the turning point of our spiritual history, we cannot think about the post-defeat [period]...”¹¹⁷ In the uncertainty of this historical moment, many found purpose in rebuilding Japan as a nation of peace, as described by Emperor Hirohito at the war’s conclusion. Such perspectives were aided by the strange sense of continuity that existed at times between the Imperial Japanese and American occupation governments. For Sakaguchi Ango, defeat gained purpose through the trivialization of these political systems and the single-minded embrace of the individual amidst the absurdity of the world.¹¹⁸ Ango modelled the pursuit of the subjective individual, ironically, in unison with critics such as Maruyama Masao, stating “a political transformation can be implemented in a single day, but not so human changes,” and that “the very notion of salvation through politics is superficial nonsense.”¹¹⁹

For others, the past was reimagined in the shadow of, and defined by the violence experienced by Japanese throughout the war. In this context, they understood themselves to be victims of both Allied brutality and domestic deceptions. Such individuals cite dissenting figures such as Radhabinod Pal and present Japanese war crimes as being insignificant when compared to the broader scope of Allied violence during World War II. Transcending every framework of historical analysis, Japan underwent incredible social, economic, and political reform while engaging with the promises of democratization. These changes saw widespread democratic

¹¹⁷ Oda Taturō, “The Hiroshima Panels’ and their Surroundings,” 1958 Epigraph. Oda Taturō, “The Hiroshima Panels’ and their Surroundings” *Bijutsu Techō*, no. 145 (August 1958): 140.

¹¹⁸ Wolfe, “From Pearls to Swine,” 370.

¹¹⁹ Quoted in Wolfe, “From Pearls to Swine,” 369.

engagement, legal reforms, and the fundamental reappraisal of the role of women within Japanese society. These complex processes of reform and reimagination each find their roots in the strange tension and cooperation between Japanese and Americans during the Occupation. It is only by engaging with these themes that one can truly understand the Japanese experiences of defeat, occupation, and the long postwar.

Conclusion: In Pursuit of Peace

Michihiko Hachiya welcomed two American officers to Hiroshima Communications Hospital on September 29, 1945, less than two months after the dropping of the first atomic bomb.¹ For as many of the preceding seven weeks as possible, Hachiya worked with surviving members of the hospital's staff to treat and save survivors, including Hachiya himself who physically struggled to give the two American officers a tour of the hospital's facilities. Without a translator, the American officers primarily observed those still suffering the crippling effects of radiation poisoning, and more still attempting to recover from the bomb's incredible thermal and kinetic impact. Hachiya recalls the conclusion of the tour, stating:

After we had finished looking around and returned to the entrance of the hospital, they shook hands with me and, by way of a parting, said in Japanese '*konnichi wa*' instead of '*sayōnara*.' Those who were standing around burst out laughing because '*konnichi wa*' is a Japanese greeting similar to 'good afternoon' in English. I laughed too, and the young officers laughed with me. They got in their truck with big smiles on their faces and waved until they were out of sight. 'Everything will be all right,' someone said, and there was hearty agreement. Everyone was much relieved.²

Later that night, a young woman named Hiyami gave birth to the first baby to survive to term in Hiroshima Communications Hospital since August 6.

The American Occupation of Japan was defined by such tragic, hopeful encounters. American personnel, often woefully ill-equipped to comprise an occupational government, met countless Japanese in the wake of the worst period of their lives. The remarkable devastation of the war, the ideological defeat of the Imperial government, and the painful, protracted suffering of the postwar period made the idea of hope absurd. In the face of this devastation, however, most Americans struggled to retain the bitterness of the war years, often wishing to help rebuild

¹ Hachiya, *Hiroshima Diary*, 224-226.

² *Ibid.*, 225.

the nation they had fervently worked to destroy. American personnel were greeted by astonishingly receptive hosts, eager to reimagine their futures, their nation, and their lives.

The processes of rebirth and reimagination which have come to dominate narratives of the Occupation produced myriad strange collaborators. Foremost among the Occupation's collection of odd bedfellows is that of General Douglas MacArthur and Emperor Hirohito. This, "silent partnership" imbued MacArthur with a sense of indomitable authority and helped facilitate the relatively smooth execution of the Occupation and its directives.³ While MacArthur and Emperor Hirohito's relationship began with tense uncertainty in 1945, by the time of MacArthur's withdrawal from Japan in 1951, it could only be described as ending with mutual respect and admiration. Under the stability provided by SCAP and MacArthur's watchful oversight, many Japanese grew to appreciate MacArthur as the nation's functional leader, coming to view him as a father in a nation in tragic need of leadership.

Indeed, MacArthur's image proved invaluable in the presentation of SCAP's radically liberal reform agendas. In a sense, as MacArthur subsumed the will of the emperor into his person, so too SCAP presented directives and decrees to both the Japanese government and populous with a near authoritarian certainty of application. Remarkably, up until the initial phases of SCAP's reverse course in July 1947, SCAP utilized its authority to support a Japanese process of democratization. This process would see the dissolution of major trusts, the removal of significant militarist influences within Japanese society, and the wholesale reconsideration of Japanese political structures. Civil liberties such as the freedoms of religion and speech fundamentally transformed the mechanisms by which Japanese persons could engage with both religious and state bodies.

³ Woodward, *The Allied Occupation of Japan*, 240.

These rights would be codified in a SCAP-authored constitution, which afforded legal protections so liberal that it prompted domestic concern within the United States. Most remarkably, SCAP's constitution dictated that Japan renounce its right to war as a mechanism of the state. Japanese politicians, despite ostensibly standing in opposition to the nature and content of the constitution, came to proudly associate themselves with the document upon its overwhelmingly positive public reception. Indeed, this profound political engagement is mirrored by Japanese efforts to directly communicate their hopes, critiques, and wishes for the Occupation to GHQ through the authoring of 500,000 letters. The spirit of possibility which imbued the Occupation produced a genuine, almost naïve belief that the thoughts and feelings of constituents ought to play a meaningful role in directing public policy.

SCAP's short-lived, single-minded admiration for New Deal liberalism represented one of the first victims of the blossoming Cold War, producing contradictory, often antithetical policymaking throughout the Occupation. While SCAP assured Japanese that they should engage with political discourse, MacArthur removed the right for public employees to protest in the summer of 1948. While Japanese were encouraged to make use of their newly acquired freedom of speech, SCAP censored materials deemed "dangerous to the public welfare." Such dangers often simply represented positions or statements that proved politically inconvenient for the Occupation government. Inconsistent enforcement of censorship policies often left Japanese confused as to the true limitations of their liberty. Such contradictions mirrored the paradoxical realities of "democratization from above."

The disconcerting sense of continuity present at points during the Occupation was exacerbated by SCAP's direct cooperation with conservative elements within the Japanese government. While many within Japanese society faced purges for militaristic associations,

particularly during the first three years of the Occupation, core elements of Japanese conservatism were retained, if not directly promoted by SCAP policies. Former Prime Minister Konoe represented the cornerstone of early constitutional reform efforts until his eventual arrest and suicide following the presentation of war crime charges.⁴ Perhaps more striking still were cases in which suspected war criminals, such as the members of Unit 731, avoided prosecution altogether in exchange for information which might aid Cold War efforts. Undeniably, the most significant instance of conservative association was that of Emperor Hirohito. While Hirohito helped ensure a stable transition of power between Imperial and American governments, the decision to insulate him from prosecution efforts clearly communicated that, despite constitutional reform and a renunciation of divinity, he still stood outside, if not entirely above, the law. It was ultimately through these associations that the United States reimagined their former foe as a potentially invaluable Cold War ally.

Japanese citizens did not passively experience these shifts in policy, but rather actively sought to make sense of the confusing and often contradictory realities of postwar Japan. Amidst the destruction of the war and the uncertainty of the Occupation, many Japanese engaged with the promise of a new Japan, which represented the “founding myth” of the postwar period.⁵ Toward this end, historical memory was reimagined to better facilitate engagement with reform policies. Japan’s modern history became primarily characterized by the process of modernization, having been briefly interrupted by an anomalous militarist interlude. In this framework, the United States served as a guiding, paternalistic force of modernization, rather than as a conquering nation, imposing its political and cultural ideologies on a defeated foe. Similarly, Japan would be defined by neither its fascist, expansionist state, nor the profound

⁴ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 349.

⁵ Gluck, “The Long Postwar,” 66.

violence it inflicted upon the peoples of Asia and the broader Pacific. In a remarkable display of “contrary prestidigitation,” the gruesome realities of Japan’s Co-Prosperity Sphere evaporated from public memory.⁶

How then, in light of the ideological failings and contradictions of the Occupation, can this period be understood? The repression of grassroots democratic engagement, the ethical compromises of the IMTFE, and the insulation of conservative elements within Japanese society all represent meaningful components of Occupation narratives. In a sense, these realities each reflect the broader tension under which the Occupation occurred between the devastation of World War II and the growing geopolitical demands of the Cold War. The United States externally engaged with this tension, modifying policies within Japan, and indeed their foundational understanding of the Japanese people in response to the growing threat of communism. Japan engaged with this tension internally, seeking to come to grips with the physical, psychological, and ideological devastation of World War II. In the wake of the war’s destruction, the promise of democratization offered an avenue through which many found the hope with which to rebuild their lives and nation.

These coexisting and often competing visions for the Occupation were often mediated through purposeful collaboration between passionate, reform minded individuals on each side. Beneath the authoritarian decrees and proclamations of General MacArthur, and the internationally minded directives of the State Department, a second occupation occurred in which Occupation personnel actively and passionately strived in cooperation with like-minded Japanese to rebuild the defeated nation. Through these interactions, countless Americans came to reimagine their defeated foes, not as Cold War allies, but rather, radically, as human beings of

⁶ Gluck, “The Past in the Present,” 68.

equivalent value. In the wake of the brutality of the war's conclusion, such a transformation in thought is nothing short of remarkable.

That Japan was prepared to accept this American embrace proves more remarkable still. Japanese engagement with Occupation reform expands immeasurably beyond that which can be attributed to historical convenience, suggesting rather a genuinely revolutionary shift in Japanese political, ethical, and cultural thought altogether. Foundational ideas regarding one's relationship to the state, conservative value systems, and the role of women in Japanese society produced an unrecognizably changed Japan by 1952. Indeed, the profound political, economic, and cultural changes that each came to dominate the second half of Japan's twentieth century bear witness to the transformational impact of the Occupation period. While the seven-year American interlude represents only a single facet in Japan's long postwar, the complex processes of reimagination which found root during this period reflect the foundational impact of the Occupation on all Japanese postwar histories.⁷

Ultimately, the American Occupation of Japan is best understood as a period in which Japan and the United States came to reconsider historical narratives, one another, and their broader roles within international geopolitics through varied processes of reimagination. The policy legacies of democratization, the creation of a radically liberal constitution, and the failings of the IMTFE are reflected universally throughout Occupation narratives and provide cornerstones of analysis for these processes. The United States reflected these experiences through organic, feminine and childlike conceptions of Japanese, paternalistic guidance of Japanese thought, presented most prominently through the person of Douglas MacArthur, and

⁷ Gluck, "The Long Postwar," 66.

through the reimagination of Japan as a potential ally amidst the growing pressures of the Cold War.

The Japanese people experienced seventy-seven million occupations, with each individual learning to embrace defeat and occupation in his/her own way. Whether through the single-minded pursuit of a new Japan, the ethical comfort of self-victimization, or through radical liberalization, Japanese recontextualized historical narratives, adopted new value systems, and fundamentally reconsidered their relationship to the state. Transcending these processes entirely were simple, human interactions that ultimately defined Occupation experience for so many. In the wake of the bloodiest conflict in human history, countless Japanese and Americans rediscovered their mutual humanity and learned to put aside the bitter pain of the war in pursuit of peace. Reflecting on the months spent mutually striving to help the beleaguered survivors of the first atom bomb alongside American doctors, Michihiko Hachiya wrote in his diary only days before the conclusion of the Occupation in April 1952, confessing:

There is no boundary where sympathy and understanding are present... The harsh winter that followed the autumn was less harsh for their having come. When I think of the kindness of these people, I think one can overlook thoughts of revenge; and even in this moment, I feel something warm in my heart when I recall those days and those friends.⁸

⁸ Hachiya, *Hiroshima Diary*, 232-233.

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