

UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS:  
US SERVICEMEN ENGAGE JAPAN IN WAR AND OCCUPATION, 1941-1946

A paper submitted to the faculty of the History Department in partial fulfillment  
of the Requirements for a degree in Honors

By MIDN 1/C BENJAMIN L. OLIVAS

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND

17 DECEMBER 2010

On 7 December 1941 the Imperial Japanese Navy launched a surprise attack on the US Naval Base at Pearl Harbor, thus marking the start of the Pacific War of 1941-1945. During the war American servicemen engaged Japan's armed forces in brutal battles of attrition that created intense hatred of the Japanese people. When the conflict ended, American servicemen were tasked with occupying and rebuilding Japan from the ground up, which required Americans to engage their former enemy in new ways. During the course of the first year of the postwar Allied occupation of Japan (1945-1952), many of those same bitter US servicemen of the war years experienced new sorts of close encounters that helped them to reconsider the character of the Japanese people. Such encounters illustrate that military personnel can change their intense views about their former enemies and suggest a model of behavior for a contemporary world once again wracked by violent war. In order to illustrate how those changes came about, this paper examines a wide variety of sources that reveal a pattern of changing perceptions of the Japanese people by American servicemen, such as memoirs and print periodicals. Additional materials include secondary sources that provide insight into the occupation's institutional approach to dealing with a defeated Japan.

Before one can learn about American servicemen's changing perception of the Japanese people, one must first have an understanding of the animosity felt by US troops during the Pacific War. Thus, this paper also discusses wartime attitudes that American servicemen held about the Japanese people. In civilian and military periodicals, memoirs, journals, and other first-hand accounts of combat, US troops showed that they held little regard for their Japanese foe and considered them to be less than human. Atrocities committed by Japanese soldiers on the battlefield only reinforced negative connotations about the Japanese people in general and consequently encouraged many

American soldiers to fight the enemy just as brutally, effectively plunging both sides into an abyss of lawlessness and disregard for enemy's life. Following the introduction of the Soviet Union and the atomic bomb into the war, Japan eventually surrendered and the Allied powers occupied the country so as to democratize and demilitarize it.

Before delving into the experience of the American servicemen in Japan, one must understand how the Allied occupation operated in theory. Understanding how the Allied Powers initially proposed achieving political and economic recovery by applying modernization theory is critical to comprehending why the occupation required that Allied troops be as sympathetic and as open-minded as possible. Being compassionate and sympathetic towards the Japanese people accelerated the speed of Japan's reconstruction. American soldiers wrote to their brothers-in-arms via military periodicals like *The Marine Corps Gazette* and advised them that most of the Japanese people were good in nature. This view was echoed in US War Department training films for US troops that concerned the American mission in Japan and how the Japanese people possessed the potential to mature into a peaceful society. In addition to films, the War Department also commissioned research such as anthropologist Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* that sought to explain Japan's way of life and how to engage with the Japanese people.

The core of this paper analyzes American soldiers on the ground in Japan and how they interacted with the Japanese people. Close observations shows that there was much uncertainty concerning the Allied occupation. While American servicemen were less than anxious about rebuilding the Japanese homeland, most Japanese people feared that occupying forces would ravage their country in the name of vengeance for the actions committed by Japan's armed forces during the war. In actuality, the situation on

the ground in Japan during the first year of the occupation was much different than either side expected. American troops showed goodwill towards the Japanese public that would have been considered unthinkable during wartime. American servicemen earned the trust and respect of the Japanese public through their actions and conduct, and came to regard them as human beings as opposed to animals. Examples of this are evident in historical accounts written by and about American servicemen stationed in Japan during the initial months of the occupation.

This paper examines the years from 1941-1946 for two critical reasons. The first reason is to provide an understanding of the historical context with which American soldiers began to express their intense hatred of the Japanese people and to examine how that animosity grew and changed as the war between the United States and Japan escalated. The second reason is to shed light on how quickly the perceptions of American servicemen regarding the Japanese people changed during the first year of the Allied occupation. The years 1941 through 1946 provide a wealth of historical primary and secondary sources that identify the rapid shift in the perceptions of American servicemen.

It is clear after examining primary and secondary historical sources regarding American servicemen before, during, and after the Allied occupation that a noticeable change in perception occurred in the minds of US troops with respect to Japan. As they transitioned from combat to occupation, American soldiers engaged the Japanese people on a daily basis and engaged them in ways inconceivable during wartime. Learning from such an experience is critical to a world still besieged by war, animosity, and ignorant hatred of one's enemies; the contemporary world can learn from the experiences of American troops in occupied Japan.

*Historical Scholarship*

The scholarly assertion that a race war took place in the Pacific emerged in the 1980s in historian John W. Dower's *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (1986), which set a new standard for analyzing an important facet of the social history of World War II. Dower's work examined the devastating acts of total war committed by the United States and Japan and posited that conflict between races played an integral part in making many tragic events come to pass.<sup>1</sup> Dower explored why Americans hated their Japanese counterparts and vice versa in part by examining the views of American and Japanese servicemen, and in the process he provided personal testimonies about atrocities committed at the war front.

Dower's view of the war is being scrutinized in new scholarship that complicates his analysis. Douglas Ford, a historian of contemporary international affairs, challenges Dower's assertion that the nature of the Pacific War hinged upon racial conflict. Ford claims that American servicemen judged the Japanese based on their experience in combat. Harsh and unforgiving tactics used by the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) inevitably created hatred among American soldiers, but Ford argues that such enmity did not teach US servicemen to underestimate the Japanese soldier. The US Army's vast intelligence system allowed Americans to analyze the Japanese military objectively, thus identifying Japanese strengths and weaknesses. Ford asserts that US soldiers characterized their Japanese foe as a respectable adversary rather than irrational subhumans.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> John W. Dower. *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1986.

<sup>2</sup> Douglas Ford, "US Perceptions of Military Culture and the Japanese Army's Performance During the Pacific War," *War & Society* 29, No.1 (2010): 86.

English-language research on occupied Japan has evolved from analyzing the political successes of the occupation to examining its social history. Contemporary scholars focus on the everyday experiences of the occupation years more than the occupation's position within the Cold War or its consequences on American foreign policy. During the 1950s and 1960s historical scholarship tended to summarize the key events of the occupation and discuss political and economic issues that arose as part of the postwar reconstruction of Japan; an overview of noteworthy studies illustrates this trend. In 1953 E.J. Lewe Van Aduard wrote *Japan, From Surrender to Peace* (1953), which summarized the Allied occupation year-by-year and attempted to project Japan's future course.<sup>3</sup> The next year Henry Emerson Wildes wrote *Typhoon in Tokyo: The Occupation and Its Aftermath* (1954), an account of the origins, personnel, philosophy, methods, and aftermath of the Allied occupation that centers on governmental, political, and social matters. Wildes emphasized on the big picture of the occupation rather than concentrating on a specific area of study.<sup>4</sup> During the next decade Kazuo Kawai wrote *Japan's American Interlude* (1960), which investigated the most controversial topics of the Allied occupation, including political reorganization, economics reforms, the new education system, and social change. Kawai argued that the American-led occupation constituted the most significant foreign influence ever exerted upon Japan.<sup>5</sup>

Research of the 1970s and 1980s dwelt on broad views of the occupation, ranging from how it fit within the context of the Cold War to the political history of the US

---

<sup>3</sup> E.J. Lewe Van Aduard. *Japan: From Surrender To Peace*. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1953), xiv.

<sup>4</sup> Harry Emerson Wildes. *Typhoon In Tokyo: The Occupation and Its Aftermath*. (New York: Macmillan Company, 1954), 1.

<sup>5</sup> Kazuo Kawai. *Japan's American Interlude*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), v.

military government in Japan (known as both SCAP and GHQ).<sup>6</sup> In 1977 a scholarly collection of essays from a Japanese historical symposium “Basic Studies on the International Environment” became available to the public as *The Origins Of The Cold War In Asia* (1977). The symposium, which was held in Kyoto during 27-30 November 1975, marked the first time when Japanese historians came together to discuss and analyze Asia in the context of the Cold War. The book offered scholarly writings on different perceptions of the Cold War’s origins in Asia, particularly in Southeast Asia, China, Japan, and Korea. US Cold War strategy required a stable, friendly ally in the Japanese people, and the historians involved in the symposium attempted to view the Cold War from a point of view that differed from the American perspective.<sup>7</sup>

Building off of research conducted during 1970s, John Curtis Perry published *Beneath the Eagle’s Wings* (1980), which details American forces arriving in Japan, portrays General Douglas MacArthur, commander of the Allied occupation during 1945-1950, as the hero of the occupation, and investigates how the Japanese adopted democracy from the Americans.<sup>8</sup> In the vein of historians of previous decades, in 1984 Robert Wolfe published *Americans as Proconsuls: United States Military Government in Germany and Japan, 1944-1952* (1984). Wolfe’s work focused on the history of American military government in Japan and reopened the dialogue on how well American military forces operated as occupiers in a foreign land. The following year Michael Schaller, a historian of United States foreign policy in the Far East, published *The American Occupation of Japan: The Origins of the Cold War in Asia* (1985).

---

<sup>6</sup> SCAP stands for Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers, a term that referred to both General Douglas MacArthur in particular and Allied Occupational Headquarters in general; GHQ stands for General Headquarters, the administrative branch of the occupation.

<sup>7</sup> Yonosuke Nagai and Akira Iriye, eds., *The Origins Of The Cold War In Asia*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), vii.

<sup>8</sup> John Curtis Perry. *Beneath The Eagle’s Wings: Americans in Occupied Japan*. (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1980).

Schaller's work situates the occupation global Cold War and positions the occupation as a critical element in the bigger dynamic of superpower strategy.<sup>9</sup> Howard B.

Schonberger's *Aftermath of War: Americans and the Remaking of Japan, 1945-1952* (1989) argues that Americans tried to make Japan into a peaceful society but Schonberger did not examine Japanese history to determine what contributed to the prewar failure of democracy in Japan. In Schonberger's divergent, inglorious view, the occupation only superficially made Japan into a peaceful democracy.<sup>10</sup>

Beginning in the 1990s scholars began to examine the social history of the Allied occupation years. In 1991 the General Douglas MacArthur Foundation convened the last of a series of academic symposia on the occupation, the first of which took place in 1975. Unlike previous symposia, which focused on such topics as "Impact of Legal Reform" (1977), "The International Context" (1982), and "The Impact of the Korean War" (1986), the symposium held during 7-8 November 1991 bore the theme "The Grass Roots." The purpose of the symposium was to further the knowledge of the occupation's operations at the local level and to record the observations of individuals involved in the occupation's day-to-day processes.<sup>11</sup> In 1997 Christopher Aldous wrote *The Police In Occupied Japan* (1997), a historical study of change in the Japanese police force over time. Aldous explored how American occupation forces ultimately failed to reform the Japanese police force and how black market operations maintained that allowed corruption to linger in Japan. Aldous, like Schonberger during the previous decade, showed the not-so-glorious

---

<sup>9</sup> Michael Schaller. *The American Occupation of Japan: The Origins of the Cold War in Asia*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

<sup>10</sup> Howard B. Schonberger. *Aftermath of War: Americans and the Remaking of Japan, 1945-1952*. (Kent: Kent University Press: 1989), pg 279.

<sup>11</sup> Robert C Christopher. "When The Twain Met." *The Occupation Of Japan: The Grass Roots: The Proceedings of a Symposium*. (General Douglas MacArthur Foundation: Norfolk, 1992), v.

side of the occupation and how corruption ultimately evaded GHQ's grasp.<sup>12</sup> In 1999 John W. Dower released a history of the Allied occupation titled *Embracing Defeat: Japan In The Wake of World War II* (1999), which provided a social history from the Japanese point of view. Dower's Pulitzer Prize-winning study explained the defeat and occupation from the perspectives gleaned from repatriated soldiers, urban and rural Japanese communities, the popular Japanese press, social entertainment, and the experience of living amongst a foreign army while Japan was rebuilt.<sup>13</sup>

In the 2000s English-language scholarship turned to studying the occupation primarily along social lines. Japanese historian Takemae Eiji's study *Inside GHQ: The Allied Occupation of Japan and its Legacy* (2003), which first appeared in Japanese in various forms during the early 1980s, presents a massive study that deals with every aspect of the occupation. From MacArthur's first day in Japan to the last American soldier's departure in 1952, Takemae provides a thorough analysis of the occupation's accomplishments as well as its failures. *Inside GHQ* discusses such topics as the redistribution of land, the drafting of the new, progressive constitution, the acknowledgement of human rights, and the personal experiences of both American and Japanese personnel. Takemae does not shy away from discussing the negative aspects of the occupation. He reserves his sharpest criticism for those occupation authorities who initially nurtured a liberal movement within Japan, then fell back to rigid conservatism during the years of the Red Scare that took place as the occupation ended. Takemae maintains a chronological narrative throughout his study and shows Japan's change from

---

<sup>12</sup> Christopher Aldous. *The Police in Occupation Japan: Control, Corruption and Resistance to Reform*. (Routledge: 1997).

<sup>13</sup> John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*. (New York: Norton Paperback, 1999).

being an aggressive prewar power into a peaceful, postwar economic engine in the Far East.<sup>14</sup>

Recent scholarship tied to postwar Japan has shifted away from the political and economic history and now focuses on cultural and social concerns. For example, emerging scholarship by historian Sarah Kovner examines Japanese female sex workers commonly known as *panpan* and how they played an integral role in infusing American cash into Japan's local-level economy during the occupation years. Kovner has written about how *panpan* were looked down upon by ordinary Japanese people even though sex workers reconfigured traditional views of women in Japan, made women more independent than before, and helped to revitalize the beleaguered national economy.<sup>15</sup> Because of this developing trend in social history, now is the perfect opportunity to analyze the grassroots perceptions and deeds of US troops in Japan during postwar occupation years, a topic that has received scant attention in historical scholarship to date. In 2006 historian Naoko Shibusawa wrote *America's Geisha Ally: Reimagining The Japanese Enemy* (2006), which focuses on how Americans at home came to reconsider the Japanese people and the country of Japan during the early postwar period. Shibusawa's objective is to show how Americans at home changed their opinions of the Japanese following the end of the war in the Pacific, but what about American servicemen in Japan?

Historical analysis of American thoughts and actions in occupied Japan will connect Shibusawa's study of the changing domestic American attitudes about the Japanese to Kovner's analysis of grassroots social history in Japan during the occupation

---

<sup>14</sup> Takemae Eiji. *Inside GHQ: The Allied Occupation of Japan and its Legacy*. (London: Continuum, 2003).

<sup>15</sup> Sarah Kovner, "Base Cultures: Sex Workers and Servicemen in Occupied Japan," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 68 (2009).

years. The history of American servicemen in early occupied Japan presents a crucial building block for furthering our understanding of the US-Japan relationship. By investigating this moment in history, scholars may understand the vital role that US troops played in early postwar Japan. In addition, such an examination sets the state for the future study of the history of US forces interacting with the Japanese population not only during but also since the occupation and how those engagements affect the US-Japan bilateral relationship.<sup>16</sup>

*In the Field: US Servicemen Get Acquainted with Japan*

On the morning of 8 December 1941 the front page of *The New York Times* reported that “war broke with lightning suddenness in the Pacific” on the previous day.<sup>17</sup> For months the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) had planned and prepared for a sudden, surprise attack on the Hawaiian Islands conducted as part of an aggressive military offensive in southern Asia as well as the Pacific.<sup>18</sup> Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku, the Japanese flag officer who spearheaded the attack, expressed hope that the raid on the US Naval Base at Pearl Harbor would constitute a shattering blow against the US Pacific Fleet and leave the American people so dispirited that they would not recover to wage war.<sup>19</sup> The US Pacific Fleet and Army garrison at Pearl Harbor took severe casualties as a result of the raid. The final American body count amounted to 2,500 dead, and the

---

<sup>16</sup> Potential areas of future scholarly research include the additional examination of interactions between US troops and Japanese people in the countryside during the occupation and how those relationships differed from their urban counterparts. Were relationships easier to make because of the war’s absence in the country or were rural Japanese just as timid of Americans as those in the cities? Additional topics include a study of the US Army’s arduous intermarriage process in occupied Japan and what American GIs went through to marry their Japanese girlfriends in order to bring them back to the United States. Why was the process made so difficult? Did most of those relationships survive the grueling process? What were the consequences of the army’s high barriers to intermarriage? Did those barriers have the desired effect?

<sup>17</sup> “Tokyo Bombers Strike Hard At Our Bases On Oahu.” *The New York Times*, December 8, 1941, Pg 1.

<sup>18</sup> Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 21.

<sup>19</sup> Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 36.

Navy's material losses amounted to four battleships, two destroyers, and a light cruiser with many more ships incapacitated by the damages sustained by the attack.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the devastating blow to its Pacific Fleet, the United States did not fold as Yamamoto had hoped. During the months prior to the raid, American and Japanese diplomats attempted to negotiate a final "settlement" over tensions resulting from American protests and embargoes that were a response to aggressive Japanese military expansions in China, Indochina, and the South Pacific Ocean.<sup>21</sup> The attacks made it appear that the Japanese government used the negotiations to mobilize the IJN and carry out the Pearl Harbor attack. U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull, who had lead the negotiations undertaken with Japanese consul Kichisaburō Nomura, spoke on behalf of angry Americans when he described Pearl Harbor as a "treacherous and unprovoked attack" and accused the Japanese people of being "infamously false and fraudulent by preparing for the attack while conducting diplomatic negotiations with the professed desire of maintaining peace."<sup>22</sup>

Jingoistic attacks against Japan and its people worsened and intensified in the United States as the war in the Pacific escalated. Japan became associated with terms like *barbarism*, *treachery*, *world domination*, *irrationalism*, and *totalitarianism*. The American press often equated Japanese society with a culture of slavery and oppression. For example, soon after the raid on Pearl Harbor *The New York Times* published an article that showed the purported differences between the Western and Japanese mind. The Japanese mind was portrayed as selfishly pragmatic, doing things only for personal gain, whereas the Western mind was depicted as a strong, stable entity that was the best

---

<sup>20</sup> "Casualty List," Pearl Harbor.org, accessed November 5, 2010, <http://www.pearlharbor.org/history/casualties/pearl-harbor-casualties/>

<sup>21</sup> "Japan, US Close 88 Years' Worth Of Peace." *The New York Times*, December 8, 1941, pg 2.

<sup>22</sup> Bertram D. Hulen. "Hull Denounces Tokyo Infamy." *The New York Times*, December 8, 1941, front page.

hope for the world's freedom. According to the article, Japan's leaders believed that the future belonged to the most "virile" of men, and they regarded democratic idealism as "a mark of degeneracy, diplomacy, cooperation, and international dialogue were considered failures of national strength."<sup>23</sup> In the Japanese mind, practicing deception in order to gain the strategic high ground was not only necessary but also a regular course of action. Moreover, the average Japanese thought that the only thing that mattered was victory at any cost. "Fair play in international relations means just one thing to him—weakness. A lie is a weapon, not a problem in ethics. Success is the only gauge of right and wrong. He understands only one instrument of policy—force."<sup>24</sup>

The American press explained this type of behavior through a biased presentation of Japanese history, which military journalists and servicemen magnified. *The New York Times* branded Japanese culture as a "savage tradition unbroken through the ages eternal from the fabulous age of their savage gods to the present day."<sup>25</sup> *The Marine Corps Gazette*, a professional forum for US Marines that began publication in 1916, often ran articles written by Marines that conveyed their ideas about Japan. Marines frequently submitted writings that characterized Japanese soldiers as embodiments of their home country's utter backwardness. For example, a 1944 article described Japanese soldiers as "savage, dirty, treacherous" and at times "wholly fantastic fighters" whose actions were incomprehensible to the Western mind.<sup>26</sup> Unlike their explanations of Nazi "rebarbarization" in Germany, which Marines described as an aberrant recent

---

<sup>23</sup> Henry C. Wolfe. "The Enemy Mind: Totalitarianism fosters a philosophy of life which sets no bounds to ruthless aggression." *The New York Times*, December 21, 1941, pg., SM11.

<sup>24</sup> Wolfe. "The Enemy Mind," SM11.

<sup>25</sup> "Japanese Savagery." *The New York Times*, October 6, 1943, pg 22.

<sup>26</sup> Otto D. Tolischus, "False Gods-False Ideals," *The Marine Corps Gazette* 28:11 (1944): 14.

“phenomenon” produced by Adolf Hitler and his cohorts, Japanese savagery was “deep,” “primordial,” and had been an intimate part of the Japanese character for centuries.<sup>27</sup>

US Army propagandists were not any more forgiving towards the Japanese foe. In *Yank*, a weekly periodical by enlisted soldiers published by the US Army during the war years, articles portrayed Germans as a “menace” but fundamentally “like us” because most Germans were “nice, agreeable members of the family of nations.”<sup>28</sup> In contrast, American soldiers likened the people of Japan to pests, claiming that their entire civilization lived that way for over a thousand years. Visual culture reinforced servicemen’s claims that the Japanese people reaped all the benefits of the civilized world by capitalizing on the trials of others.<sup>29</sup> Japan was cast as a barbaric or even inhuman menace that needed to be stopped.

American military and civilian periodicals portrayed the Japanese as backwards people, ignorant of civilization, and devoted to doing absolutely anything to capitalize on the misfortunes of others. This image, coupled with the shocking raid on Pearl Harbor, led many Americans to conclude that the Japanese were vermin that must be exterminated. As the fighting progressed in the Pacific, American servicemen took out their anger on Japanese servicemen, at times committing brutal acts against them. Marines often took prizes from the corpses of IJA soldiers in order to show how proud they were of killing the Japanese. Richard Tegaskis, a civilian journalist sent to the Pacific and author of *Guadalcanal Diary* (1943), often witnessed such behavior. Tegaskis wrote about a Marine who boasted about taking gold teeth from the mouth of a

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>28</sup> Phil Stearns. “Which was a greater menace to our country and our values: Germany or Japan?” *Yank*, (September 7, 1945), editorial page.

<sup>29</sup> Kenneth M. Wright. Which was a greater menace to our country and our values: Germany or Japan?” *Yank*, (September 7, 1945), editorial page.

fallen Japanese soldier and fashioning them into a necklace.<sup>30</sup> Throughout the war, stories of corpse-robbing filled the pages of *Leatherneck*, a Marine Corps magazine published by off-duty Marines. One such story was titled “Young Old Men” in reference to the effects that the brutal war had on young Marines:

The other night, Stanley emptied his pockets of “souvenirs”—11 ears from dead Japs. It was not disgusting, as it would be from the civilian point of view. None of us became emotional over it. I tell you, Peg. It is quite common for the boys to gather this type of “souvenirs.” Stanley very seriously told me that he was unable to get the 12<sup>th</sup> ear because he shot the Jap through the side of the head and the ear was too mangled.<sup>31</sup>

Such actions revealed deep American contempt for Japan. According to E.B. Sledge, an embattled Marine sent to the Pacific who garnered postwar acclaim for his autobiographical writings, the nature of the Pearl Harbor attack combined with the unforgiving tactics of the IJA to create a “deep, personal resentment” felt by the Marine Corps. Sledge believed that to deny such hatred would be “as much as a lie as to deny or make light of the esprit de corps or the intense patriotism felt by the Marines.”<sup>32</sup> In Sledge’s view, the war in the Pacific was unlike any war previously fought because of the level of hatred involved. “This was a brutish, primitive hatred, as characteristic of the horror of war in the Pacific as the palm trees and the islands.”<sup>33</sup> The Marines’ boiling contempt for their Japanese foes found expression everywhere the Marines operated and was well documented in *Leatherneck*. In 1943 the magazine published a photograph of the bodies of Japanese corpses killed by Marines on Guadalcanal piled up beside each other on the ground. The caption below the photo read: “Good Japs are dead Japs.”<sup>34</sup>

That same year, a US Army poll indicated that about half of all American soldiers

<sup>30</sup> Richard Tegaskis. *Guadalcanal Diary*. (New York: Random House, 2000), 14.

<sup>31</sup> “Old Young Men.” *Leatherneck*, 26, no. 6 (1943): 29.

<sup>32</sup> E.B. Sledge. *With The Old Breed: At Peleliu and Okinawa*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 40.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> “GOOD JAPS.” *Leatherneck* 26, No. 2 (February 1943), 12.

believed that it would be necessary to kill all Japanese before peace could be achieved in the Far East.<sup>35</sup>

Opinions within the US Navy Officer Corps did not disagree. In January 1943 Admiral Harold Rainsford Stark, who served as US Chief of Naval Operations during 1939-1942, stated that defeating the Japanese would be a long and hard job. “You know, you have got to kill the Jap to beat him. The Japanese have got a great empire in being and they will not give it up easily. You will have to blow the Japanese out of their strongholds one by one.”<sup>36</sup> Admiral William Halsey, commander of the US South Pacific Force, once declared that the only good “Jap” was one that had been dead for six months. According to Halsey, “When we get to Tokyo, where we’re bound to get eventually, we’ll have a little celebration where Tokyo was.”<sup>37</sup> It was Vice Admiral Arthur W. Radford’s plan to take his aircraft carrier division and send it to Japan to make the Japanese “a nation without cities—a nomadic people.”<sup>38</sup> Japan had few if any sympathizers within the US military leadership throughout most of the war.

Putting it simply, “the Jap” was completely despised by the American men who fought him tooth and nail throughout the Pacific. Japanese soldiers used brutal tactics and put up stiff resistance in every engagement with American forces. According to Sledge and others, Japanese soldiers used deceptive tactics such as playing dead then throwing grenades or playing wounded and then knifing US Medical Corpsmen after calling out to them for aid.<sup>39</sup> In sum, Pearl Harbor, war propaganda, and the harsh experiences faced in the field inculcated among US servicemen—both enlisted and officers—a deep-seated hatred for their enemy that had not been felt since the wars of

---

<sup>35</sup> Dower. *War Without Mercy*, 53.

<sup>36</sup> “Stark Calls U-Boat Greatest Menace.” *The New York Times*, January 9, 1943, pg. 5.

<sup>37</sup> Dower. *War Without Mercy*, 79.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 55.

<sup>39</sup> Sledge. *With The Old Breed*, 40.

expansion waged against the American Indian.<sup>40</sup> Such rage persisted amongst US ranks as the war continued. It was a war without leniency that was suffused with despair, suffering, and hate. Sledge described the conflict as a black hole of degradation:

To the noncombatants and those on the periphery of action, the war meant only boredom or occasional excitement; but to those who entered the meat grinder itself, the war was a netherworld of horror from which escape seemed less and less likely as casualties mounted and the fighting dragged on and on. Time had no meaning; life had no meaning. *The fierce struggle for survival in the abyss of Peleliu eroded the veneer of civilization and made savages of us all. We existed in an environment totally incomprehensible to men behind the lines—service troops and civilians.*<sup>41</sup> [italics added]

The propaganda-fueled Pacific War became one of the bloodiest struggles yet experienced in the history of mankind. By the time when the Empire of Japan signed the Instrument of Surrender aboard the *USS Missouri* in Tokyo Bay on 2 September 1945, nearly 2 million Japanese soldiers and sailors had been killed while roughly 300,000 American servicemen had died fighting their supposedly “backwards” enemy.<sup>42</sup>

Contrary to the expectations and desires of many US servicemen and civilians, by war’s end Japan had not been wiped off the face of the planet. Japan was completely devastated as a result of the war but the Japanese nation continued to exist. Unconditional surrender put American military forces in the authoritative position of occupying Japan and rebuilding it into a prosperous, democratic country. Japan’s unconditional surrender shocked many US troops. Many American servicemen who had mentally prepared themselves for a costly and destructive battle for the Japanese home islands found themselves with the new mission of occupying Japan, rebuilding it from the ground up, and reforming its people to become advocates of a democratic state. American

---

<sup>40</sup> Allan Nevins. “How We Felt About the War,” *While You Were Gone: A Report on Wartime Life in the United States* (1946: Simon & Schuster), 13.

<sup>41</sup> Sledge. *With The Old Breed*, 131.

<sup>42</sup> Dower. *War Without Mercy*, 297-300.

fighting men, who had tried for years to destroy Japanese power in the Pacific, were now tasked with helping their former archenemy to get back up on his feet.

*US Servicemen's Role and Initial Impressions in the Allied Occupation of Japan*

The Allied Powers committed themselves to setting Japan on the path toward economic and political recovery but the big question was how that would happen. Debate about how to treat a defeated Japan waged at the high levels of the US government for months prior to Japan's capitulation. The recovery period was to be a time for Americans to heal old political and military wounds and establish new and productive relationships with the Japanese people as per the requirements of the Potsdam Declaration of July 1945 that called for Japan's unconditional surrender. According to the Potsdam Declaration, Japan would be placed under military occupation by the Allied Powers so as to remove all obstacles barring democratic tendencies such as the freedom of speech, religion, and thought. In addition, occupation forces would disband Japan's military, demilitarize the economy, and allow Japan's defeated soldiers to return home and begin new lives. Occupation authorities would also serve justice to the militarists who led the Japanese into war.<sup>43</sup> One month before the official Japanese surrender, a cover of *Yank* magazine showed a US Navy bomber being catapulted off the bow of an aircraft carrier as an image of hazy skies appear in the distance. The tagline of the image read: "Is it smarter for us to take *live* Jap prisoners?"<sup>44</sup> Similar questions about the Japanese were still being asked in October 1945 one month after the formal beginning of

---

<sup>43</sup> National Diet Library, "Potsdam Declaration", *Birth Of The Constitution of Japan*, <http://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/etc/c06.html> (accessed July 13, 2010).

<sup>44</sup> "Is it smarter for us to take *live* Jap prisoners?" *Yank*, (August 3, 1945), cover page.

the occupation. The strategic concern of *how* America must contend with a defeated Japan proved to be a considerable task.

In order to accomplish such a feat, the Allied Powers relied heavily on US Army personnel stationed in Japan. American servicemen were to be the guardians, caretakers, stewards, and teachers of the Japanese people. One might say that the situation resembled the “Pottery Barn Rule” used by US Secretary of State Colin Powell in 2002 when warning President George W. Bush about occupying Iraq: “You break it, you own it.”<sup>45</sup> Although the situations and contexts of these two military occupations were quite different, the fact remained that the United States was responsible for occupied Japan and the Japanese people looked to American servicemen and SCAP for guidance. In the words of Naoko Shibusawa, the typical American GI was entrusted with transforming the “vulnerable Japanese children” into a “mature” democratic people.<sup>46</sup>

The mission given to SCAP was an exercise and test of the American way.<sup>47</sup> SCAP was tasked by the US government with transforming a foreign government with a militarist infrastructure into a functioning democracy.<sup>48</sup> US objectives in Japan were broadly based off of a foreign policy known as modernization theory. Broadly stated, the United States sought to encourage nonwhite nations to “develop” into modern, mature, democratic societies rather than collectivize their economies or to redress social and economic inequities through violent revolution.<sup>49</sup> In order to counter such a revolution in Japan the SCAP orchestrated a “democratic revolution from above.” At times occupation

---

<sup>45</sup> Michael R. Gordon and Lieutenant General Bernard E. Trainor, USMC (ret.). *COBRA II: The Inside Story of the Invasion And Occupation of Iraq*. (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 81.

<sup>46</sup> Naoko Shibusawa. *America's Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 57.

<sup>47</sup> The “American Way,” as used above meant the success of the American economic and social systems. The occupation of Japan would be a test of America's economic structure as well as the democratic principles within a republican society.

<sup>48</sup> Dower. *Embracing Defeat*, 76.

<sup>49</sup> Shibusawa. *America's Geisha Ally*, 58-59.

authorities resorted to “hand of God” iconography in which “gifts from heaven” (i.e. canisters and supplies) dropped from American aircraft to Japanese people below.<sup>50</sup>

Prior to transforming Japan into an ally of the United States, American servicemen first had to come to terms with them as a people. Practically everyone in the US armed forces and the greater United States had consumed the banquet of wartime propaganda about the “treacherous” Japanese, but when the war entered its twilight period several military thinkers began to examine Japanese culture and society in ways unthinkable during the height of the war. In 1943 *The Marine Corps Gazette* published an article written by Marine Captain Sherwood Moran who had undertaken an extensive study of the Japanese people. Moran presented an objective, detailed analysis of what the Japanese public thought about Emperor Hirohito, Japanese soldiers, and the IJA at large, as well as an assessment of the effectiveness of Japanese wartime propaganda. Moran argued that “the danger must be avoided of generalizing too much, to make the easy assumption that ‘the Japanese’ because they are Japanese, must necessarily think so and so, or do so and so, in every single instance without exception.”<sup>51</sup> Moran sought to discredit American assumptions about the Japanese that had been regarded as truth during wartime. In his article, Moran debunked the idea that the Japanese people all believed in Emperor Hirohito’s professed divinity and challenged the notion that Japanese servicemen were treated differently than the rest of the population. Japanese troops were typically simple country males who earned their way through life and were not given any special privileges in society.<sup>52</sup>

Moran asserted that only three small segments of Japanese society had acted with savagery during the war: several high-ranking military officers, a cadre of young army

---

<sup>50</sup> Dower. *Embracing Defeat*, 69.

<sup>51</sup> Sherwood F. Moran, “The Psychology of the Japanese” *Marine Corps Gazette* 27, No. 2 (May 1943): 19.

<sup>52</sup> Moran, “The Psychology of the Japanese,” 19-22.

officers, and fanatical laymen who belonged to the ultranationalist organization called the Black Dragon Society. In the words of Moran,

These three groups take their fanaticism even right into the army and navy, and war against their own fellow-officers, and against government officials. They consider many respected army and navy higher-ups as mossback, “*kabikusai*” (smelling of mold), led astray by Western influences and shibboleths, and not alive to the real implications of the 100% “true” Imperial Way.<sup>53</sup>

Moran concluded that although Japan resembled Germany with regard to its military structure and medical practices, the Japanese people as a whole identified more with the Americans and the British when it came to athletics, philanthropic and missionary enterprises, education systems, movies, and business connections.<sup>54</sup> In Moran’s view, an Allied victory was inevitable, and if victory came in a responsible manner, then Japanese liberalism might rise to greet American occupation endeavors. However, if the Allies continued to belittle the Japanese, the reverse would take effect:

But if such a victory by the United Nations is accompanied by a racial and national arrogance that will give the Japanese the idea that they are being warred upon just because they are “Japs,” their liberals will continue to fight just as “do or die” a battle against us as the fanatical nationalists, and shoulder to shoulder with them, too.<sup>55</sup>

In sum, Moran argued that while postwar occupation presented a great opportunity win over the Japanese people, such a mission would fail if Americans persisted in waging a racialized struggle against Japan. As per the old adage, *if you want respect you have to give respect*, and Americans had to respect the Japanese people before they could win them over. Upon the surrender and dissolution of the Empire of Japan, there was no doubt that the American occupiers would have to rethink their former enemy so as to move forward with the recovery process. The big question was *how* to rethink the Japanese.

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>54</sup> Moran, “The Psychology of the Japanese,” 28.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

Building from the position that Americans needed to understand their former enemy, during the early years of the occupation SCAP employed instructional materials to direct American servicemen to reevaluate their former adversary. A notable example was *Our Job in Japan*, a short instructional film produced by the US War Department that was distributed to SCAP in early 1946 with the purpose of encouraging American GIs to begin regarding the Japanese in a more positive light. *Our Job in Japan* informed its viewers that the real problem faced in occupied Japan was the Japanese mind. The film likened the Japanese brain to all other brains in the world, stating that it could either “make trouble” or “make sense” depending on what was taught to it.<sup>56</sup> According to the film’s spoken narration, the success of remaking Japan depended entirely upon the Japanese brain:

There are seventy million of these in Japan, physically no different than any other brains in the world, actually all made of exactly the same stuff as ours. These brains, like our brains, can do good things [here appeared a still photo of a bearded old man, seemingly in a Christian church] or bad things [the screen now showed a famous wartime atrocity photo of a Japanese beheading a kneeling, blond soldier], all depending on the kind ideas that are put inside.<sup>57</sup>

*Our Job in Japan* asserted that the militarists and fanatics who had controlled Japan’s government and military had duped the ordinary Japanese people into war, and that if American occupation personnel could adjust the common man’s viewpoints, then Japan could become a prosperous postwar ally.<sup>58</sup> If the Japanese brain could be realigned to consider basic American ideas pertaining to democracy and “Golden Rule common sense,” SCAP could prove to the Japanese that Americans did “believe in a fair break for everybody, regardless of race or creed or color.”<sup>59</sup> *Our Job In Japan* aligned with

---

<sup>56</sup> Dower. *Embracing Defeat*, 215.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Moran, “The Psychology of the Japanese,” 28.

<sup>59</sup> Dower. *Embracing Defeat*, 216.

modernization theory and its belief in “manifest destiny” or a “God-given” task to raise the Japanese into fully “mature” and industrialized people.<sup>60</sup>

In order to bring such a mature, industrialized people in Japan, US servicemen recommended building upon the lessons learned in combat, such as applying cold, hard reason in reconstruction efforts. American GIs had to understand that the Japanese, although open to new ideas about how to rebuild their country, would never totally conform to America’s way of doing business. In the view of Major Harold Noble, a Marine who fought the IJA in the Pacific War and served in the occupation, democracy could never be imposed on Japan despite the establishment of an American military presence in the country:

The most we can do to extend democratic government in Japan is to remove obstacles to its growth. Fortunately, the chief mechanical instruments for such a government already are well established. What is lacking is not the machinery so much as the spirit and the tradition.<sup>61</sup>

To Noble, the occupation’s main effort should be to infuse the Japanese people with a sense of democratic tradition using the resources available in the existing Japanese government.

The power to implement “mechanical” reform rested with SCAP and the Japanese government, but creating an optimistic spirit of reform took place at the grassroots level. It was left to the American fighting man to inspire everyday optimism.<sup>62</sup> In order to achieve Allied objectives, Noble asserted that the first step must be to overcome an immediate obstacle in Japan: the language. There was hardly any difficulty with gathering German translators for the occupation in Europe because a lot of American citizens already spoke German at the time, and for those who were not fluent, German

---

<sup>60</sup> Shibusawa. *America’s Geisha Ally*, 73.

<sup>61</sup> Major Harold J. Noble, USMC. *What It Takes To Rule Japan*. (New York: U.S. Camera Publishing Corp: 1946), 79.

<sup>62</sup> Shibusawa. *America’s Geisha Ally*, 57.

proved relatively easy to master. The Japanese language, on the other hand, is remarkably different from English and thus requires intensive and extensive study.<sup>63</sup> The more Japanese that American troops knew, the better. This was especially critical because American servicemen were to be immersed among Japanese commoners so that GIs could set the tone for the Japanese recovery. However, proficiency was not the only tool critical to accomplishing the mission. Sometimes helping the Japanese simply required GIs to be themselves and use what *Our Job in Japan* called “common sense.”<sup>64</sup> Fostering a benevolent “revolution from above” often took simple forms like distributing sweets, cigarettes, and chewing gum, and engaging in offhanded friendliness.<sup>65</sup> These acts of good faith amongst the populace proved effective, especially among young Japanese, but in fact US servicemen were the guardians and the Japanese people at large were cast as “impressionable, vulnerable children.”<sup>66</sup> Such an outlook, belittling or not, helped American GIs to change their views.

Various aspects of Japanese culture remained vague to US servicemen stationed in Japan. American soldiers needed explanations of Japanese culture and society in order for reconciliation to spread faster in occupied Japan. One such explanation came in a study known as *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, a report published in early 1946 by Columbia University anthropologist Ruth Benedict. Employed by the US Office of War Information (OWI) and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in 1944, Benedict had been tasked with answering a multitude of questions about the Japanese enemy.<sup>67</sup> The US government required information that went beyond that found in military and combat

---

<sup>63</sup> Noble, *What It Takes To Rule Japan*, 68.

<sup>64</sup> This is referring to in *Our Job in Japan* as “Golden Rule common sense.”

<sup>65</sup> Dower. *Embracing Defeat*, 72.

<sup>66</sup> Shibusawa. *America's Geisha Ally*, 57.

<sup>67</sup> Ruth Benedict. *The Chrysanthemum And The Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1946), ix.

experience. Benedict stated that American forces must determine what the Japanese government could count on from its people. Americans needed to understand “Japanese habits of thought and emotion” and to possess the knowledge necessary for comprehending the patterns into which those habits fell.<sup>68</sup> It was critical to know the reasons behind those actions and opinions. Americans had to put aside the belief that Japanese people would act as Americans did in certain situations. American and Japanese mentalities and upbringings were not the same, meaning that Americans and Japanese people reacted differently to the same problems or issues.

Benedict employed certain techniques and postulates to accomplish her wartime objectives while studying Japan from afar. Because she could not converse with Japanese people face-to-face, Benedict interviewed Japanese men and women in the United States who had been “reared” in Japan and asked them about their own experiences.<sup>69</sup> Benedict also immersed herself in Japanese memoirs, journals, and antiquarian newspapers that shared vivid experiences and information about Japan’s culture and mindset. Literary works led Benedict to examine available visual materials such as propaganda movies, historical movies, and films about contemporary life in Tokyo.<sup>70</sup> In Benedict’s view, her work formed part of a greater strategy to reassess former enemies of the United States in order to help make them our allies. She believed that although vast cultural differences existed between the United States and Japan, it was dangerous to assert that the divide was “so fantastic” that it made it impossible to understand and cooperate with the Japanese.<sup>71</sup> In her opinion, Americans had to regard the differences between the two countries more as an asset than a liability if the United

---

<sup>68</sup> Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, 4.

<sup>69</sup> Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, 6.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, 7-8.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 10.

States was to change the Japanese from enemy to ally.<sup>72</sup> In order to do this, Americans first had to understand Japanese culture and then work with it in order to accomplish SCAP's agenda. For example, according to Benedict's assessment, Japan was an aristocratic society given structure by Confucian ideals of filial piety. As such, Japanese civilization valued a social order based on strict hierarchy, thus every greeting and every contact represented degrees of social separation between individuals. In Benedict's view, the Japanese used a "respect language" common to nations found in the Pacific region.<sup>73</sup> Once this became apparent to Americans serving in the reconstruction of Japan, they could then work with local groups in Japan and use hierarchy to reinforce the American occupation's authority.

After the war ended, Benedict had the opportunity to observe how the Japanese lived and coped with defeat under their Allied authority. To her pleasant surprise, for the most part the Japanese people regarded the occupation as an opportunity to rebuild and blaze a new path into the future. Benedict articulated that the true strength of the Japanese people came from their ability to stare defeat in the face, acknowledge their failures, and throw their energies into other channels that would lead to "the ultimate salvation of Japan" as well as the beginning of a new culture in "art and peace."<sup>74</sup>

American troops serving in the occupation bore witness to Japan's peaceful turnabout. The majority of the Japanese people acted friendly towards their American caretakers, and for many Americans it seemed incredible that these were the same people who had vowed during the war years to fight to the death with bamboo sticks to repel invaders from the Japanese islands.<sup>75</sup> Commenting on the positive interactions held

---

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>73</sup> Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, 47.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 305.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 306.

between both sides, Benedict declared that although American soldiers and Japanese people had been raised with different sorts of ethics, encouraging signs of reconciliation between the two groups demonstrated that two enemies could eventually become allies.<sup>76</sup> This new approach to understanding the Japanese proved to be immensely vital for the occupation. In fact, such advances had already been noticed on the ground in occupied Japan.

*On The Ground: US Servicemen Get Reacquainted With Japan*

The reestablishment of friendly relations between American troops and the Japanese people began with an air of uncertainty on both sides. Although many American troops felt bitter and resentful towards the Japanese immediately after the war's conclusion, perhaps there were more people in Japan who were concerned that the US military would come in and exact vengeance on their country. Officially, SCAP took proper steps to begin the occupation on a positive note. MacArthur wanted to present the idea that his democratic "revolution from above" would be as a liberating experience that gave Japan the best that American idealism and culture could offer.<sup>77</sup> However, the experiences of brutal combat remained vivid in the minds of the 400,000 American servicemen active in the Pacific during the war years. Helping to rebuild the enemy's country was not something that they looked forward to doing.

Beginning in September 1945 American and Allied forces began coming ashore at the Japanese Naval Center at Yokosuka. Marine Corps units were some of the first to arrive, and most Marines were still bitter about the fighting they encountered. One Marine remembered his platoon commander gripping his rifle and yelling out that he

---

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 306.

<sup>77</sup> Dower. *Embracing Defeat*, 69.

wanted to “kill a damn Jap.”<sup>78</sup> That same platoon commander was handing out chocolate to the Japanese children that had come to greet the Marines when they came ashore.<sup>79</sup> Despite the indiscriminate killing in the island campaigns of the Pacific and constantly hearing the continuous wartime propaganda about Japanese savagery, loathing the Japanese proved hard to sustain when dealing with Japanese civilians on an individual basis.<sup>80</sup>

Prior to the arrival of American troops, the majority of Japanese people thought that their new overlords would demand basic necessities be provided to them despite Japan’s own scarcity of basic rations and supplies.<sup>81</sup> In order to prevent placing undue burdens on the Japanese, MacArthur ordered occupation troops to bring their own provisions. In fact, American officers stated that as leaders of the occupation, they did not want to make any “unreasonable demands” on the Japanese.<sup>82</sup> By bringing their own food and supplies, the Allies set an instantaneous and prevailing impression on the Japanese that their new caretakers were going to be benevolent to the devastated nation. An overall attitude of good will set allowed for changing perceptions in occupied Japan.

Simultaneously, the Japanese people feared that they would become slaves to the Americans. Prior to the arrival of Allied troops in country, a few Japanese wrote editorial pieces in *The Japan Times*, a Japanese newspaper published in English for foreign readers. Toyohiko Kagawa, a popular evangelist and social worker, submitted a letter to MacArthur via *The Japan Times* that constituted a plea that MacArthur be sympathetic

---

<sup>78</sup> Perry. *Beneath The Eagle’s Wings*, 10.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>80</sup> Robert C Christopher. “When The Twain Met.” *The Occupation Of Japan: The Grass Roots: The Proceedings of a Symposium*, (General Douglas MacArthur Foundation: Norfolk, 1992), 130.

<sup>81</sup> Perry. *Beneath The Eagle’s Wings*, 10.

<sup>82</sup> “Occupation Troops Told To Bring Own Provisions: Order Issued by MacArthur in Light of Food Situation in Japan.” *The Japan Times*, September 10, 1945, Pg 1.

towards the Japanese people.<sup>83</sup> Japan, Kagawa argued, could not stand up again on its two feet unless the Americans showed its people “friendly help and assistance.”<sup>84</sup> If Allied troops showed a vengeful side to the Japanese, then the country would fall into “complete collapse” and the people of Japan would not be able to participate in the activities of the new world organization (the United Nations) proposed by the United States. Kagawa made it clear that Japan had no intention of isolating itself from this new organization and it would be much wiser if Americans extended “a helping hand” to Japan as opposed to tormenting its people in the wake of defeat. Kagawa claimed that an opportunity existed for welcoming Japan back into the international community and working with Japan to create a “new world civilization.”<sup>85</sup> However, it was not MacArthur who needed convincing, but rather the troops he sent into Japan’s cities.

Although Allied authorities aimed to promote peace and stability and warned Allied troops of severe punishment for misconduct, the outcomes of initial interactions between the occupying army and the Japanese people remained uncertain.<sup>86</sup> Many nervous Japanese braced for the worst. Some were aware of IJA actions in other countries and consequently assumed Americans would not be any more lenient than their own troops would be. Prior to the arrival of Americans troops, Japanese radio broadcasters at times urged women to flee the cities and seek refuge in the countryside to avoid being ravaged by American men. In the cases of women who could not flee for

---

<sup>83</sup> “Toyohiko Kagawa” *Building the Third Way: Economic Democracy for the New Millennium*, <http://buildingthirdway.blogspot.com/2010/06/toyohiko-kagawa.html> (accessed November 12, 2010). Toyohiko Kagawa was a famous Japanese pacifist who was known for a life dedicated to the poor. He spent his life amongst the less fortunate and erected schools, hospitals, and churches in Japan. He served as an adviser to the transitional Japanese government during the Allied occupation. He is also famous for his “Brotherhood Economics” that he saw as an alternative to the major economic theories at the time.

<sup>84</sup> “Plea for Sympathetic Treatment Made To MacArthur by Nippon Social Worker.” *The Japan Times*, December 2, 1945, Pg 2.

<sup>85</sup> “Plea for Sympathetic Treatment Made To MacArthur by Nippon Social Worker.” *The Japan Times*, December 2, 1945, Pg 2.

<sup>86</sup> “Peace And Order Is Aim Of U.S. Authorities Here: Occupation Troops Found Guilty Of Misconduct Will Be Severely Punished.” *The Japan Times*, September 6, 1945, Pg 2.

any reason, broadcasters instructed them to wear clothing that was “anti-erotic” in nature to avoid being harassed.<sup>87</sup> Despite the warnings of American brutality towards Japanese women, US servicemen did not rape or pillage the Japanese people on the massive scale that many people in Japan anticipated; however, that did not mean the sex market ceased to exist during the occupation.

As a result of the war, the strained Japanese economy, and the democratic reforms of the Allied occupation, many Japanese women became streetwalkers commonly known as *panpan*.<sup>88</sup> Prior to the beginning of the occupation, Japanese authorities organized government-run a sexual service firm called Recreation Amusement Association (RAA). Many women voluntarily joined the organization, if only because there was a short supply of jobs. Many joined because they felt they were serving their country by doing so. In late 1945 an American visitor to Tokyo named Robert Christopher was caught completely off guard by a middle-aged woman who came up to him and tried to forcefully press her sexual services upon him. It was only after Christopher convinced the woman that he was there only for sight-seeing did she admit that she was part of a corps of female patriots who had volunteered to sacrifice themselves to the “lust of the brutal Yankee soldiery in the hope of forestalling mass ravishment of innocent Japanese maidens.”<sup>89</sup> Although American servicemen did not engage in the barbaric behavior expected by the Japanese authorities, *panpan* went on to represent Japan to the occupiers for the rest of their stay.<sup>90</sup> That is not to say that the interactions between *panpan* and US servicemen were the ideal, cordial relationships.

---

<sup>87</sup> Christopher. “When The Twain Met,” 130.

<sup>88</sup> Kovner, “Base Cultures,” 782. The word *panpan* was derived from two terms: *wapan* (women for Japanese clients) and *yōpan* (women for foreigners).

<sup>89</sup> Christopher. “When The Twain Met,” 130.

<sup>90</sup> Kovner, “Base Cultures,” 784.

Interactions between American servicemen and *panpan* increased exponentially during the early weeks of the occupation leading to an unhealthy boom in the “entertainment business.”<sup>91</sup> In a surprising and unexpected letter to local Japanese municipal governments, US occupational authorities “blackmailed” local prefectures to provide sanctioned “comfort women” or else risk an occupation as long as “10 to 15 years” due to “many troubles” committed by American troops.<sup>92</sup> As a result of the implied American threat (or warning, as the case may be), Japanese sex workers catered specifically to American servicemen and stations were set up for American troops throughout Tokyo in September 1945.<sup>93</sup> These brothels became so busy that at one point 10,000 soldiers from the US 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division were visiting them weekly, thus creating scarcity among prophylactic materials and “individual items” (condoms).<sup>94</sup>

*Panpan* business became so popular that the US Army itself began to regulate it. US Military Police patrolled red light districts and often demanded “free service” for their duties.<sup>95</sup> The social consequences of *panpan* business were disturbing at many levels. Every 24 hours a woman “processed” 15 GIs, each of whom paid ¥50 (US \$3.30) of which the woman earned half, which she had to use to sustain herself and cover her medical expenses.<sup>96</sup> Several GHQ documents went as far to acknowledge that many *panpan* were women who had lost one or both parents as a result of US firebombing missions over Tokyo and thus had no dependable funds or means of making a living.<sup>97</sup> In sum, the life of a *panpan* was neither glorious nor comfortable; however, in spite of its

---

<sup>91</sup> Yuki Tanaka. *Japan's Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution During World War II and the US Occupation*. (New York: Routledge, 2002),152.

<sup>92</sup> Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, 151.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 152.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, 150.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 153-154.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 154-155.

disturbing consequences, the red light activities inadvertently breathed life into the Japanese economy.

The economic conditions of the US base town of Sasebo depended highly on American servicemen's demand for *panpan*. The sex market helped draw American servicemen off the base into the town, where they would buy clothes for their *panpan*, go to various restaurants, and take *panpan* around town during the night. However, when venereal disease began to spread rapidly in Sasebo's adjacent US army post, base commanders told city leaders that American troops would be confined to base and kept off the street until the outbreak was contained. Soon afterwards city officials formed the Sasebo Public Morals Purification Committee, which although moral in nature was created to protect commerce rather than promote chastity.<sup>98</sup> In effect, *panpan* constituted a community of Japanese women whose exotic services helped to draw American servicemen into urban marketplaces and thus reenergize Japan's local economy. Being a *panpan* was not a coveted job, but it did bring American servicemen into Japanese urban centers where non-sexualized interactions took place. The contribution of the *panpan* to the occupation years would be felt from day one of the occupation until the last American troops left Japanese soil.

American servicemen brought out the best in themselves while finding a new and profound respect for the Japanese people. For instance, during the first few weeks of the occupation, Tokyo lay in ruins and many Japanese families lived in dugout shelters. Because it was typhoon season, a huge storm passed through the Tokyo area. As a result of the storm, a piece of wall from a damaged building fell upon one shelter. Although most of the family managed to escape, the father was not so lucky and became pinned

---

<sup>98</sup> Kovner, "Base Cultures," 795.

beneath the rubble. At that moment, a relief squad from the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division passed by and witnessed the event. The soldiers immediately rushed to the scene and pulled the man out of the debris. As the troops administered first aid they noticed that the father suffered from broken bones and severe cuts. The American soldiers unhesitatingly put him in their vehicle and whisked the man to the police station hospital where he could be treated. Later, the Japanese family attempted to show their appreciation to the troops by presenting them with a “gift of some beer.”<sup>99</sup> Through their actions, the American soldiers demonstrated their willingness to help people in Japan during times of need.<sup>100</sup>

A similar event took place in September 1945 in the town of Tsumuri when a group of Japanese workers working with a heavy concrete mixer met with distress when the mixer unexpectedly tilted out of balance and pinned a worker underneath it. Two American soldiers who happened to be nearby rushed to unpin the worker and called an ambulance that took the injured man to an American military hospital. The doctors determined that the worker had suffered severe internal hemorrhage but early treatment removed him from danger. The other workers were “keenly impressed” and were struck with gratitude and appreciation, even though the two American soldiers insisted their acts did not warrant praise.<sup>101</sup> One of them said, “The man was hurt and it was only our duty to see that he was taken care of immediately.”<sup>102</sup> The story spread quickly around Tsurumi.<sup>103</sup> Essentially, the actions of the American soldiers presented a good example to the Japanese people in the town that there was nothing to fear from their new

---

<sup>99</sup> “U.S. Troops Aid Japanese: Help Injured Man Pinned Under Fallen Wall.” *The Japan Times*, September 21, 1945.

<sup>100</sup> The Japanese presented the American troops with beer. This action provides insight into how ordinary Japanese people knew a little about American culture and tried their best to show their gratitude in the best way they knew how. It is another example of how the change in perception was mostly mutual.

<sup>101</sup> “Two GI’s Play Role of Good Samaritans in Aiding Injured Japanese at Tsurumi.” *The Japan Times*, September 28, 1945, Pg 2.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> The story was brought to *The Japan Times* by a member of the construction group that witnessed the events. He insisted that the humanitarian act be made public.

caretakers. It was an eye-opening and positive occurrence that showed that American troops had begun to regard the Japanese as human beings rather than the savage beasts that wartime propaganda had made them out to be.

That same month a Japanese repairman named Kinjiro Yoshikawa who was working for the Transportation Bureau of the Osaka prefectural government was struck by a streetcar. Yoshikawa was greatly injured and moved to a police station hospital in Osaka. Yoshikawa had become previously acquainted with three Allied soldiers; and as soon as the three heard of Yoshikawa's accident they rushed to the police hospital, where they requested that he be transferred to the best ward in the hospital saying they would cover the expense.<sup>104</sup> The doctors told the soldiers that Yoshikawa's injuries were not critical enough to require him to stay overnight in the hospital, and as a result, the three men escorted their Japanese friend home. Yoshikawa's family greeted the group with excitement and was "completely overwhelmed with a true sense of heartedness of the three Allied soldiers."<sup>105</sup> The episode, which was documented in *The Japan Times* in late September 1945, relates that American servicemen were befriending Japanese people early in the occupation. Such an act would have been considered unthinkable only two months before. Demonstrating that old friendships could be rekindled, US troops actively sought out old friends from the IJA after the occupation began. Master Sergeant Julius W. Wenglare, a member of the 68<sup>th</sup> Army Airways Communication System who landed in Japan on 28 August 1945, used the radio to search for an old friend from the IJA named Taro Yagi. After some difficulty, Wenglare found Yagi and the two men met

---

<sup>104</sup> *The Japan Times* reported that this episode of friendship clearly illustrated the point that friendship known no nation or state boundaries.

<sup>105</sup> "Allied Soldiers' Friendship for Japanese Illustrated by Recent Episode in Osaka." *The Japan Times*, September 21, 1945. Pg 3.

at Yagi's house for tea and conversation.<sup>106</sup> The episode revealed that despite the devastating war, the two managed to find each other and resume their relationship from when it left off. The situation exemplified what could be attained in US-Japan relationships.

For many Americans who participated in the occupation, Japanese children helped bring together American soldiers and the Japanese people. When the occupation began on the ground in the city of Nagasaki, one US Marine Corps Sergeant told an American Red Cross worker that when Marines entered the city the streets were deserted because residents were hiding from them. However, Marines saw children spying on them in the streets and consequently gave them candy. Before long, the streets were filled with Japanese children trying to get their hands on the sweets. The Marine Sergeant thought it was incredible:

When the older people watching our every movement saw that we weren't bayoneting their kids and tearing them apart, but instead treating them with kindness, they realized we weren't quite the monsters they had expected. Soon the panels began sliding open.<sup>107</sup>

Interactions like this created an environment within which American servicemen and the Japanese public alike could see their former adversaries in an entirely different light.

Witnessing such scenes amidst the physical devastation wrought upon the terrain of Japan gave diehard anti-Japanese Americans pause to reconsider their former foes. US Army Master Sergeant Hugh O'Reilly, who joined the Marines at the outset of the war and later transferred to the Army, was rabidly against reconciliation with the Japanese in any form. He hated the idea of participating in the occupation. However, in winter 1949 his unit entered the city of Osaka to distribute toys at an orphanage. His unit found children

---

<sup>106</sup> "GI Renews Friendship." *The Japan Times*, October 23, 1945. Pg 3.

<sup>107</sup> Lucy Herndon Crockett, *Popcorn on the Ginza: An Informal Portrait of Postwar Japan* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1949), 171-172.

huddling together on a cold night in a damaged building, a saddening sight that startled both O'Reilly and his men. Within fourteen months, O'Reilly and his unit known as the "Wolfhounds" raised enough money to create fully insulated, Spanish-style buildings for the orphanage. O'Reilly became known as the "G.I. Father" and later married a Japanese woman.<sup>108</sup> O'Reilly and the Wolfhounds sponsored their orphanage for years, even after they left Japan and deployed to the war in Korea.<sup>109</sup>

Due to the fact that children were often the first people to greet American servicemen when they arrived in Japan, servicemen and Japanese kids set off on a good relationship from the start. In fact, Japanese children became so familiar with US servicemen that GIs sometimes went out of their way to help them in any way possible. In one episode dating to September 1945, a 12-year-old Japanese girl got lost on a Tokyo train while trying to get back home. At one stop, four American soldiers, sensing that something was amiss, approached the girl and asked through an interpreter if everything was okay. Calmed by their kind nature, the girl explained her situation. Her father had been killed during an air raid and her mother had subsequently opened a little vegetable stand, the scant income from which was barely enough for them to make ends meet. The soldiers then proceeded to give the young girl their coveted K-Rations and passed around one of their military caps to collect money, which amounted to ¥157.<sup>110</sup> The servicemen then gave the young girl a ride home in their automobile. The next day, the young girl's mother stopped at the American Military Police headquarters and asked to convey her

---

<sup>108</sup> Shibusawa. *America's Geisha Ally*, 31.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-31.

<sup>110</sup> According to *The Japan Times* issue of 10 September 1945, the Allied military scrips that were initially handed out for Allied troops to use in Japan were on par with the value of the Japanese yen.

gratitude to the soldiers that saved her daughter.<sup>111</sup> Such generous acts showed that wartime malice only ran skin deep in the hearts of American servicemen.

Perhaps the most significant example of an American serviceman helping a Japanese child came in late September 1945 when an US Army surgeon rushed down a dangerous mountain pass in the middle of the night to treat a Japanese girl suffering from pneumonia. Mitsuko, the daughter of a managing director of the Kirin Beer Company, became dangerously ill and developed a high fever on the night of 23 September; the family sent the older sister Kyoko to find help because it was confined to their remote mountain resort due to terrible weather. In the process, Kyoko flagged down an American Army jeep and explained the situation to the driver, who happened to be an Army field surgeon. He rushed to Mitsuko's bedside, concluded that she had pneumonia, then drove down the mountain and gathered medicine and some presents for Mitsuko to play with when she recovered. He drove back and treated Mitsuko, who fully recovered several days later. Her family was extremely grateful for the surgeon's actions and wanted to reward him generously. The story held a considerable amount of weight with the Japanese public because Japanese doctors refused their professional services unless patients showered them with gifts, food, or other generous commodities.<sup>112</sup> Medical supplies were scarce and medical treatment was expensive, during the early years of the occupation, but such acts of goodwill by American military doctor helped contribute to the positive image of Japan's occupiers. The event shined a great light on the American servicemen, especially with Japanese doctors behaving in ways that disgraced their

---

<sup>111</sup> "Four American Soldiers Befriend, Help 12-Year-Old Japanese Girl Who Loses Way." *The Japan Times*, September 25, 1945. Pg 3.

<sup>112</sup> "American Army Surgeon Rushes to Bedside of Little Japanese Girl, Saves Her Life." *The Japan Times*, September 28, 1945. Pg 3.

profession. More importantly, it showed that American servicemen were fully committed to the people they were servicing in Japan.

Ultimately, episodes of American servicemen helping Japanese children, workers, and friends revealed that a significant number of American servicemen no longer harbored the hatred and disgust for the Japanese that ran rampant during the war years. Although those feelings played a role in the initial days of the occupation, the actions and examples set by American servicemen showed how the troops could see their former enemy in a new light. Encountering the Japanese up close, disarmed, and impoverished brought out the philanthropic traits of American fighting men. Editorial pieces published in the English-language daily press showed how overly impressed the Japanese people were with the “gentlemanly behavior” of American troops.<sup>113</sup> The majority of American troops did not harbor ill will towards the Japanese people. If anything, they wanted to help. The war was already in the rear-view mirror. Although episodes of emergency and American goodwill helped to bridge the gap between the two groups, they more importantly helped American servicemen become more comfortable with learning about Japanese culture.

By virtue of their position, American servicemen had the opportunity to experience the Japanese way of life on a level never before experienced by most Americans, and through such immersion American perceptions of the Japanese people became more refined. American troops found various ways to familiarize themselves with their Japanese counterparts. Some troops did so by getting out of the rubble-filled cities and exploring the Japanese countryside. Grant Goodman, a US Army translator employed by SCAP, often took excursions into the countryside with his buddies to break

---

<sup>113</sup> “The American Attitude.” *The Japan Times*, September 15, 1945. Pg 4.

up the monotonous work routine in Tokyo.<sup>114</sup> On weekends Goodman and his fellow American servicemen traveled to the Izu Peninsula to immerse themselves in the beauty of the land and mingle with the country folks.<sup>115</sup> Goodman and his peers discovered that Japanese life in the countryside was totally different than what they had experienced in the major cities. SCAP personnel like Goodman had to use the same trains that everyday Japanese people used because there was no official mode of transportation for occupation personnel in Japan. The experience of such rides proved very invaluable because they gave American servicemen the opportunity to glimpse the lives of the Japanese people.<sup>116</sup> American soldiers often witnessed city dwellers coming to and from the country to barter their belongings.<sup>117</sup> Japanese people living in the countryside also took to American servicemen differently. In contrast to the apprehension experienced in the cities, American servicemen found the Japanese people in the countryside to be friendly and very approachable. Rural experiences proved that not all Japanese people were the same. Ironically the feeling was mutual for the Japanese. The country folk often displayed a deep interest in American troops, especially in their clothing. Often when Goodman and other American servicemen took baths, Japanese people in the countryside would come into the room and peek at their clothing, sometimes even putting their hands in the

---

<sup>114</sup> Grant K. Goodman. *America's Japan: The First Year, 1945-1946*. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 48.

<sup>115</sup> "Places of Scenic And Historic Interest Abound in Peninsula: Roads Not In Good Condition But Motorists May Find Trip to Izu Well Worth While." *The Japan Times*, November 4, 1945. Pg 4. The Izu Peninsula was often visited for two main reasons. The first was that it held the little harbor town of Shimoda, where the first US flag was seen in Japan. The second and more important reason was that there was a considerable amount of hot springs on the peninsula. Some of them faced the beach and Mount Fuji while others were nestled in the secluded in the thick-wooded mountains.

<sup>116</sup> Goodman. *America's Japan*, 49.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid. Since a lot of the Japanese countryside had been spared from the Allied strategic bombing campaigns during the war daily life there was hardly affected. For the most part, Japanese people living in the countryside were healthy compared to the city dwellers, who often experienced indefinite periods of malnutrition because of the devastation wrought upon major urban centers.

pockets searching for something novel.<sup>118</sup> These encounters fascinated American soldiers, and it was often the Japanese communities in the country that gave them their first experience in trading with the Japanese farmers.

American servicemen often took their C-rations to Japanese farmers and exchanged them for fresh food items, such as eggs and vegetables.<sup>119</sup> C-rations were highly valued by the Japanese, who gladly traded whatever American troops wanted for them.<sup>120</sup> Engaging in trade with ordinary people was an extremely important sign of rebuilding broken relationships. His testimony of what he witnessed revealed that barriers built up by war propaganda dissipated when both sides encountered each other in everyday settings. US servicemen in Japan saw the humanity of their former enemy because they intermingled with the Japanese people on a daily basis. Seeing those humane qualities bridged the gap between Japanese and Americans and showed that change was possible.

American servicemen changed their view of their once-despised enemy. It was natural to hate the enemy in combat; however, after he surrendered, it was just as easy to discover his basic humanity via simple day-to-day interactions. This change in perception did not occur overnight, and it would be wrong to say that negative impressions of different cultural customs did not go away. That does not negate that American troops discovered and embraced the humanity of the Japanese people. A prime example of such discovery comes from an American soldier named Don Howard. During the war, Howard claimed that he did not want anything to do with his Japanese counterpart. He claimed that, “If we had to invade Japan, I would have killed every

---

<sup>118</sup> Goodman. *America's Japan*, 50.

<sup>119</sup> Goodman. *America's Japan*, 48. GHQ mandated that American troops were required to bring their own food with them so as to not aggravate the terrible food shortage in the cities.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

living thing I saw in sight.”<sup>121</sup> However, because of his experiences in the occupation, Howard became a changed man. After arriving in Japan, he claimed that Japanese children had disarmed whatever thoughts he had about the Japanese. Children kept him busy during his stay by always shouting and waving and smiling every time he passed them in his jeep. “I have two baby girls back home. Maybe that’s why youngsters come so close to me. But as long as I am destined for about a year’s stay I’m going to get the most out of this chance.”<sup>122</sup>

In June 1946 US Navy Lieutenant Henry F. May, Jr., a naval translator working for SCAP, wrote an editorial piece in *Reader’s Digest* about occupied Japan. Everything about the atmosphere contrasted sharply with the assumptions many Americans held while heading to the Japanese islands, he wrote. The biggest surprise for American servicemen was the friendliness that they received from the people of Japan. May wrote about Japanese men who lived in small, shabby huts offering tea to American GIs as they passed through their villages. Some soldiers even found vendors who would sell them souvenirs on credit, telling the soldiers to “pay us next time you come.”<sup>123</sup> May also recalled that a group of Japanese people once helped American GIs pull their vehicle out of a ditch during a major flood in the countryside.<sup>124</sup> Such an outpouring of good will from the Japanese people made many American servicemen feel embarrassed of their initial negative feelings they brought from overseas.<sup>125</sup> May wrote that the new, cordial relationship between American servicemen and the Japanese people initially stemmed

---

<sup>121</sup> “His Life and Views.” *The Japan Times*, September 2, 1945. Pg 4. Howard’s story was part of a collection of stories *The Japan Times* put together called “GI JOE: His Life and Views” that followed soldiers from the US First Cavalry Division. The newspaper ran the story to shed light on and satisfy the Japanese curiosity of the American soldier. According to *The Japan Times*, Japanese people were interested in what American troops thought, expected and what they thought.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Henry F. May Jr., “MacArthur Era: Year I” *Reader’s Digest* (June, 1946): 55.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 55.

from a commercial craze for each other's valuables. The Japanese had a culture that most Americans initially knew nothing about and GIs proved themselves eager to buy souvenirs from Japanese vendors. For Japanese people, Americans possessed extensive power and riches that they regarded as manifestations of material progress.<sup>126</sup> Satisfying each other's curiosity through material wealth opened doors that lead to mutual trust between the two sides. This trust eventually became so great that it overcame the barrier between interracial relationships between Americans GIs and Japanese women.

In December 1946 the popular magazine *Life* published a full report on the Allied occupation titled "Fraternization Do's And Don'ts" that showed just how far servicemen's relationships with the Japanese had improved. The article related that certain public displays of affection between Americans and Japanese were forbidden in order to preserve the professional posture that SCAP required for its occupational troops. To give a few examples, taking a Japanese girl to a restaurant unescorted was out of the question, letting her ride in one's jeep or on one's bicycle was off limits, and kissing in public was not allowed. However, attending dinner at her family's house, going rowing on a pond, or riding on a streetcar were all permitted. The most intimate public display of affection allowed by occupational authorities was public handholding. According to the report, American servicemen holding hands in public with their Japanese dates was a common practice when a couple started seeing each other.<sup>127</sup> Such an act only the beginning of something much greater: romantic unions sealed between two formerly antagonistic peoples.

---

<sup>126</sup> May. "MacArthur Era: Year I," 56-57.

<sup>127</sup> Noel F. Busch, "A Report on Japan: U.S. occupation under General Douglas MacArthur is a great success in which a precious historic opportunity is being wisely utilized." *Life Magazine* 2 December (1946): 106-107.

More than 6,000 American servicemen married Japanese women between 1946 and 1952. In fact, soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines married Japanese women at a constant rate of 30 to 120 per day in 1946 alone.<sup>128</sup> The process of making such marriages official in American law proved to be very difficult. The couple first had to get written permission from the serviceman's commanding officer, and once that was done, the couple had to attend a chaplain's interview to ensure that the two interested parties understood what they were doing. If the couple wished to proceed, then they had to show proof of their respective citizenships as well as prove that they were single. Once that was taken care of, the woman had to produce her family record (*koseki*) and have Japanese police check on the whereabouts of her family so that US Counter-Intelligence could investigate the family before the union could be cleared. The final prerequisite was for the potential husband to prove that he could support his future wife. Once all of these requirements were met, *then* the couple could have an official US-sanctioned wedding ceremony.<sup>129</sup> The ceremony was not even that special: the couple merely showed up to the American consulate with the necessary paper and a couple of witnesses. After the official documents were signed, the American consular officer made the serviceman swear that there was no legal reason why he should not be married. Once he said, "I swear," then the ceremony was over and the couple was now officially married. They could have their own private ceremony, as many did, but they first had to go through a rigorous screening process and consequently attend a bland legal ceremony. Such a process was never needed in the United States.<sup>130</sup>

---

<sup>128</sup> Janet Wentworth Smith and William L. Worden. "They're Bringing Home Japanese Wives." *The Saturday Evening Post*. (19 January, 1946): 27.

<sup>129</sup> Smith and Worden, "They're Bringing Home Japanese Wives," 80.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

Understanding between American servicemen and the Japanese came about despite the ironic contradictions of the time period. In November 1945 the US 4025 Signal Corps published an article in *The Japan Times* that provided Japanese and Western readers alike with a report on American thoughts about Japan. In August 1945 American and Japanese troops had been engaged in bloody fights with each other on remote islands in the Pacific. To some the Japanese soldier was brutal and savage, but for others he was just barbaric. But a month later, American troops were helping to rebuild Japan and put its people back on their feet. The Japanese were not barbarians but rather were friendly, peaceful, and polite to their American occupiers.<sup>131</sup> Americans were confused by unaccustomed rituals, like bowing, but in spite of that, most American soldiers sent letters home filled with nothing but good things to say about Japan and its people. American troops intermingled with the Japanese all the time. Affable Japanese children disarmed US servicemen with their fearless spirits and joyous laughter. American troops found themselves captivated by the serene populace, and in many cases, charmed by the Japanese women. In the concluding words of the writer, “I think the Japanese and the American are both surprised.”<sup>132</sup> The writer echoed an article published in *The Japan Times* two months earlier that claimed that American troops had won via their “gentlemanly behavior” the respect of a surprised Japanese populace.<sup>133</sup>

The shift in US servicemen’s views of Japan became evident in works published by American servicemen following after their tours in occupied Japan. In 1946 Marine

---

<sup>131</sup> “American Thoughts On Japan.” *The Japan Times*, November 25, 1945. Pg 4.

<sup>132</sup> “American Thoughts On Japan,” 4.

<sup>133</sup> Kawamura, Shoichi. “The American Attitude.” *The Japan Times*, September 15, 1945. Pg 2.

Major Harold J. Noble wrote a strategic thesis titled *What It Takes To Rule Japan*.<sup>134</sup> Noble had fought against the Japanese and eventually served as foreign affairs attaché with the State Department. Noble's work offers a combatant's assessment of the Japanese people and outlines a path towards the successful reconstruction of Japan. Noble began his thesis by advising the reader that one must "give the Devils their due" because Japanese soldiers were, contrary to popular belief, "well-trained, well led, well-equipped, intelligent fighters."<sup>135</sup> According to Noble, Japanese forces had been a first-class enemy and it was time that Americans who had not participated in the Pacific War knew such because thinking otherwise was unfair to the US Marines and soldiers who fought such a highly skilled foe.<sup>136</sup> In Noble's opinion, the Japanese enemy had been cruel but the IJA constituted an effective fighting force. Contrary to the fighting styles of Europe, in Japan it was a disgrace to lose in an enemy engagement, where death in combat was regarded as a respectful alternative to becoming a dishonored prisoner. The effect of this Japanese mentality regarding frontline combat forced the Marines to be just as hard and determined, which consequently made battle more intense and bitter than in Europe.<sup>137</sup> According to Noble, the American victory over Japan resulted from determination, superior firepower, and the mechanization of the American fighting force. To him, Allied victories in the Pacific represented grand achievements because the Japanese foe had fought so fiercely. He believed no one should be the under the illusion

---

<sup>134</sup> Major Noble's assessment, although well-respected did not necessarily reflect the views of the Navy Department or the Naval Service at large.

<sup>135</sup> Noble. *What It Takes To Rule Japan*, 11.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

<sup>137</sup> Ford, "US Perceptions of Military Culture and the Japanese Army's Performance During the Pacific War," 15.

that the victories were inevitable accomplishments over a “savage and ignorant enemy.”<sup>138</sup>

Noble’s ideas are reflected in recent scholarship about the Pacific War. Historian Douglas Ford contends that for US military personnel the single most important factor to shape their view of the Japanese soldier was combat experience.<sup>139</sup> The Japanese used harsh and unusual tactics against American troops in the Pacific island campaigns. Such brutality, according to Ford, inevitably created animosity in American servicemen, as well as push them into the ‘kill or be killed’ mindset; however, it also forced them to never underestimate the Japanese soldier.<sup>140</sup> American officers in the field often reminded their soldiers about who they were up against. One US Army captain at Guadalcanal went so far as to opine that, “anyone who thinks the Japanese soldier is a pushover is a fool.”<sup>141</sup> Ford argues that US and Allied forces were able to prevail over their Japanese counterparts because of such attitudes. The US Army’s vast intelligence infrastructure judiciously identified the IJA strengths and its weaknesses. Such an elaborate, systematic apparatus for processing intelligence gave the US military a significant advantage in the fight.<sup>142</sup> Like Noble, Ford asserts that the Allies gained the upper hand in the war because of their ability to collect, analyze, and objectively use intelligence to understand their enemy and capitalize on his disadvantages. This was especially important because the Japanese were indeed a serious and brutal adversary.

---

<sup>138</sup> Noble. *What It Takes To Rule Japan*, 30.

<sup>139</sup> Ford, “US Perceptions of Military Culture and the Japanese Army’s Performance During the Pacific War,” 85.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid*, 86.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid*. When US soldiers were asked whether they noticed anything special Japanese fighting tactics, they replied, “The Japanese vary their tactics a good deal, fighting one way one time and then another way another time. They don’t let their tactics get into a groove.”

<sup>142</sup> Ford, “US Perceptions of Military Culture and the Japanese Army’s Performance During the Pacific War,” 75. The US Army had several intelligence organizations within its establishment, namely the Allied Translator and Interpreter Section (ATIS), the Joint Intelligence Center, Pacific Ocean Areas (JICPOA), the Military Intelligence Service (MIS), and the Office of War Information (OWI).

Ultimately, Noble believed that one must not belittle the Japanese because doing so underestimated the former enemy and put Americans at a disadvantage if the United States was going to rebuild Japan:

If we are to get an inkling of how they fought we must see the enemy in every action, and see him as intelligent, trained, battle-hardened and determined. However we may hate him we must see that his life and his death had become intertwined with ours.<sup>143</sup>

Noble insisted that Japan's destiny was now linked to that of the United States, and if Americans failed to see the Japanese as competent, respectable people, then everything that US Marines had fought for would be in vain. If anything, the vicious war showed how capable the Japanese actually were, not how savage Americans thought them to be. Noble's work exemplifies how American troops, who spent four years fighting the IJA in fierce combat, could personally experience a change in attitude towards the Japanese people by encountering them in different circumstances. By engaging the Japanese people on a personal level during the early months of the Allied occupation, US troops acquired an understanding and respect for the Japanese people that had been unthinkable during the war years. Noble's argument showed that given the opportunity for duty in occupied Japan, US troops could see their former enemies as a respectable and honorable people rather than a horde of savages.

In his farewell address delivered to the US Congress in April 1951, MacArthur commented on his trust in the Japanese following his role in reconstructing Japan. MacArthur stated that Japan had undergone one of the greatest reformations in modern history, claiming that its people had left the ashes of World War II and erected an

---

<sup>143</sup> Noble. *What It Takes To Rule Japan*, 31.

“edifice” built in tribute to the “supremacy of individual liberty and personal dignity.”<sup>144</sup>

MacArthur stated that he sent all four of his American occupation divisions to Korea without the slightest hesitation upon the outbreak of the Korean War because the Japanese had acquired his command’s total faith.<sup>145</sup> MacArthur’s closing statement summed up his view: “I know of no nation more serene, orderly, and industrious, nor in which higher hopes can be entertained for future constructive service in the advance of the human race.”<sup>146</sup> MacArthur’s statement reveals the emergent consensus of US servicemen that the Japanese people were not barbaric. Rather, they were an exceptional people who could contribute to the peace yearned for on both sides.

The devastating events experienced by American servicemen in World War II unleashed a created a deep, primordial hatred for the Japanese people. US troops thought of the Japanese as barbaric savages that had more in common with locusts or vermin rather than with actual men. In materials ranging from US military periodicals to journals and memoirs, the Japanese were presented as irrational fanatics that needed to be exterminated. During the war it appeared as if there would never be reconciliation with the Japanese people. Yet in spite of the contempt for the Japanese expressed by American troops, the postwar Allied occupation of Japan forced many of those men to come face-to-face with their former enemy and see them for the decent human beings they really were. By being immersed among the common Japanese people in the cities and the countryside, US soldiers saw a different side to the Japanese that ran contrary to most of the things they believed about them during the war. By helping the Japanese in tough times, carrying out acts of goodwill, being immersed in their culture, and dating

---

<sup>144</sup> Douglas MacArthur, “Farewell Address To Congress,” *American Rhetoric* (2009): accessed November 10, 2010, doi: <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/douglasmacarthurfarewelladdress.htm>.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

and marrying Japanese women, American servicemen pushed past their prejudices to regard the Japanese as peers. The Allied occupation of Japan serves as a testimony to the hope that enemies can put aside a rough past and face the future together by building new bridges and fostering understanding and respect for one another. It has been sixty years since the occupation ended and the American-Japanese relationship is remains one of the strongest among nations in the contemporary world. Such encounters can be attributed to American troops rising above the racism of World War II to lift the Japanese out of disparity and forge friendships that still sustain our alliance today.

## WORKS CITED

**Historical Primary Sources**

- “Allied Soldiers’ Friendship for Japanese Illustrated by Recent Episode in Osaka.” *The Japan Times*, September 21, 1945. Pg 3.
- “American Army Surgeon Rushes to Bedside of Little Japanese Girl, Saves Her Life.” *The Japan Times*, September 28, 1945. Pg 3.
- “American Thoughts On Japan.” *The Japan Times*, November 25, 1945. Pg 4.
- Benedict, Ruth. *The Chrysanthemum And The Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1946.
- Crockett, Lucy Herndon. *Popcorn on the Ginza: An Informal Portrait of Postwar Japan*. New York: William Sloane Associates, 1949.
- “Four American Soldiers Befriend, Help 12-Year-Old Japanese Girl Who Loses Way.” *The Japan Times*, September 25, 1945. Pg 3.
- “GOOD JAPS.” *Leatherneck*, 26, No. 2 (February 1943), 12.
- “GI Renews Friendship.” *The Japan Times*, October 23, 1945. Pg 2.
- “His Life and Views.” *The Japan Times*, September 2, 1945. Pg 4.
- Hulen, Bertram D. “Hull Denounces Tokyo Infamy.” *The New York Times*, December 8, 1941, front page.
- Is it smarter for us to take *live* Jap prisoners?” *Yank*, (August 3, 1945), cover page.
- “Japanese Savagery.” *The New York Times*, October 6, 1943, pg 22.
- “Japan, US Close 88 Years’ Worth Of Peace.” *The New York Times*, December 8, 1941, pg 2.
- Kawamura, Shoichi. “The American Attitude.” *The Japan Times*, September 15, 1945. Pg 2-4.
- May Jr., Henry F. “MacArthur Era: Year I.” *Reader’s Digest* (June, 1946): 55-57.
- Moran, Sherwood F. “The Psychology of the Japanese.” *Marine Corps Gazette*, 27, no. 2 (1943): 19-28.

- Nevins, Allan. "How We Felt About the War," *While You Were Gone: A Report on Wartime Life in the United States*, 1946: Simon & Schuster, 13.
- Harold J. Noble. *What It Takes To Rule Japan*. New York: U.S. Camera Publishing Corp: 1946.
- Noel F. Busch, "A Report on Japan: U.S. occupation under General Douglas MacArthur is a great success in which a precious historic opportunity is being wisely utilized." *Life*, December 2, 1946: 106-107.
- "Occupation Troops Told To Bring Own Provisions: Order Issued by MacArthur in Light of Food Situation in Japan." *The Japan Times*, September 10, 1945, Pg 1.
- "Old Young Men." *Leatherneck* 26, No. 6 (1943): 29.
- "Peace And Order Is Aim Of U.S. Authorities Here: Occupation Troops Found Guilty Of Misconduct Will Be Severely Punished." *The Japan Times*, September 6, 1945, Pg 2.
- "Plea for Sympathetic Treatment Made To MacArthur by Nippon Social Worker." *The Japan Times*, December 2, 1945, Pg 2.
- Sledge, E.B. *With The Old Breed: At Peleliu and Okinawa*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.
- Smith, Janet Wentworth, and William L. Worden. "They're Bringing Home Japanese Wives." *The Saturday Evening Post*. (19 January, 1946): 27-80.
- "Stark Calls U-Boat Greatest Menace." *The New York Times*, January 9, 1943, pg. 5.
- Stearns, Phil. "Which was a greater menace to our country and our values: Germany or Japan?" *Yank*, (September 7, 1945), editorials page.
- Tegaskis, Richard. *Guadalcanal Diary*. New York: Random House, 2000.
- "Tokyo Bombers Strike Hard At Our Bases On Oahu." *The New York Times*, December 8, 1941, Pg 1.
- Tolischus, Otto D. "False Gods-False Ideals." *The Marine Corps Gazette* 28, no. 11 (1944): 14-16.
- "Two GI's Play Role of Good Samaritans in Aiding Injured Japanese at Tsurumi." *The Japan Times*, September 28, 1945, Pg 2.
- "U.S. Troops Aid Japanese: Help Injured Man Pinned Under Fallen Wall." *The Japan Times*, September 21, 1945.

Wolfe, Henry C. "The Enemy Mind: Totalitarianism fosters a philosophy of life which sets no bounds to ruthless aggression." *The New York Times*, December 21, 1941, Pg, SM11.

Wright, Kenneth M. Which was a greater menace to our country and our values: Germany or Japan?" *Yank*, (September 7, 1945), editorial page.

### **Published Scholarship**

Christopher, Robert C. "When The Twain Met." *The Occupation Of Japan: The Grass Roots: The Proceedings of a Symposium*. General Douglas MacArthur Foundation: Norfolk, 1992.

Crawford, Miki, Katie Kaori Hayashi, and Shizuko Suenaga. *Japanese War Brides In America: An Oral History*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010.

Ford, Douglas. "US Perceptions of Military Culture and the Japanese Army's Performance During the Pacific War," *War & Society* 29, No.1 (2010): 75-86.

Goodman. Grant K. *America's Japan: The First Year, 1945-1946*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2005.

Gordon, Michael R., and Lieutenant General Bernard E. Trainor, USMC (ret.). *COBRA II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*. New York: Vintage Books, 2006

Kovner, Sarah. "Base Cultures: Sex Workers and Servicemen in Occupied Japan," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 68, No. 3 (2009): 782-795.

Perry, John Curtis. *Beneath The Eagle's Wings: Americans in occupied Japan*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1980.

Shibusawa, Naoko. *America's Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Tanaka, Yuki. *Japan's Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution During World War II and the US Occupation*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

### **Electronic Sources**

Casualty List," Pearl Harbor.org, accessed November 5, 2010, <http://www.pearlharbor.org/history/casualties/pearl-harbor-casualties/>

Douglas MacArthur, "Farewell Address To Congress," *American Rhetoric* (2009), <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/douglasmacarthurfarewelladdress.htm>

National Diet Library, "Potsdam Declaration", *Birth Of The Constitution of Japan*,  
<http://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/etc/c06.html>