Agents of Empire? American Women and the US-Occupation of Japan (1945-1952)

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Introduction

After the Second World War ended with the Japanese surrender on August 15, 1945, the United States occupied Japan until April 28, 1952. During these years, many US citizens traveled across the Pacific Ocean to settle in Japan. Some were civil servants tasked with transforming Japan's governmental structures. Others were military personnel, language teachers, academics, and 'dependents' who moved with their partners or parents. In whatever capacity they came, they collectively formed the face of the occupation. Their stories have helped inform our understanding of the occupation by providing perspectives on Americans' daily lives, their relationships with the Japanese, and the effect that the occupation's policies had on Japanese culture, society, and governmental structures.

Most stories celebrate the efforts of the occupational government. This government, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP), was tasked with the demilitarization and democratization of the Allies' former enemy "to ensure that Japan [would] not again become a menace to the United States or to the peace and security of the world," as the Initial Postsurrender Policy mandated.[1] Because it was believed that mere constitutional reform and the establishment of democratic institutions were insufficient to ensure that Japan would forever choose democracy over its fascist and militarist past, US civil servants were tasked with the promotion of democratic values and behavior through educational reform, workshops, lectures, print media, and radio broadcasts.[2]

[1] John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the wake of World War II* (New York: Norton & Company, 1999), 74-77.
[2] Mire Koikari, "Exporting Democracy?: American Women, 'Feminist Reforms', and Politics of Imperialism in the US-occupation of Japan, 1945-1952," *Frontiers* 23, no. 1 (2002), 25, 32-33; Tony Smith, *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 166-167.

Though some conceded disliking the behavior of other civil servants and military officials, most Americans argued that they supported the occupation as a whole. Jean Morden, who had worked in US-occupied Japan as a language teacher, explained in 1980:

> "I just feel very privileged that I was able to take part in that occupation. I think it was one of the most unusual events in the history of mankind and will go down this way. No matter how we change, how historians look at it in later times, I don't think they can really think otherwise because certainly it has changed the lives of the Japanese who will never go back to what they were before."[3]

Morden expected historians to keep viewing the US-occupation as an unusual, but revolutionary and positive occurrence.

Historians, however, have often criticized SCAP officials for being arrogant and paternalistic. They argue that the imposition of democracy from above (by revising the Japanese constitution) was not as much progressive, as indicative of Americans' conviction that the Japanese were unable to democratize on their own terms. Female officials, they argue, should not have been celebrated as feminist liberators as early postwar media and scholarship tended to do. Because they had received suffrage only twenty-five years prior and continued to face discrimination in the US, these women were ill-suited to serve as examples of liberated womanhood. As they positioned themselves as saviors of their Japanese counterparts anyway, US women helped construct the idea that the occupation was benevolent and uplifting, whereas it might have predominantly served US foreign policy goals.[4]

Nevertheless, however ironic it may seem that American women of the 1940s and 1950s became exemplars of liberated womanhood abroad, it would be reductive to argue that they

[3] Jean Morden, interview by Kay Dove, *Oral History Project on the Allied Occupation of Japan*, University of Maryland, June 1, 1980, 21-22.
[4] Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 23-24; Mire Koikari, "Feminism and the Cold War in the US-occupation of Japan, 1945–1952," *Asia-Pacific Journal* 9, no. 1 (2011), 2; ibid., "Rethinking Gender and Power in the US-occupation of Japan, 1945-1952," *Gender & History* 11, no. 2 (1999), 314; Jennifer Miller, *Cold War Democracy: The United States and Japan* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2019), 4.

were merely agents of American empire, legitimizing US armed supremacy and foreign interventions in the postwar era. As historian Malia McAndrew argues, these women forged friendships with Japanese women too, which suggests that their concern for the Japanese was genuine.[5] Similarly, interviews in Marlene Mayo's *Oral History Project on the Allied Occupation of Japan* indicate that American women in postwar Japan rejected the Orientalist views of their contemporaries. Based on their firsthand experiences, they argued that the Japanese were very eager to enhance their democracy, contrary to what wartime theories had postulated. Thus rejecting the theories presented by experts, many female US officials emphasized the importance of immersing themselves in a foreign culture to understand it.

This thesis examines how female US officials' perspectives differed from the status quo and how this affected SCAP's reforms. It focuses on American women involved in SCAP's efforts to promote gender equality, placing these efforts in the wider context of the US occupation of Japan (1945–1952), the rise of Cold War domesticity in the United States, and Americans' history of trying to understand the Japanese national character before, during, and after the Pacific War. It answers the question: "What was the significance of the presence of female US officials to the US-occupation of Japan?" This thesis approaches the topic from a historical perspective and draws upon scholarship in the field of women's history, occupation history, and Cold War cultural history. The goal of this thesis is to better understand how their unique position as career women in the early postwar era affected female officials' perspectives on gender equality, Japanese society, and occupation policy.

Recent scholars of the occupation have foregrounded female US officials' complicity in exporting the Cold War era's American domesticity ideology championing consumerism and traditional gender roles. They focus on the women in SCAP's Civil Education and Information Section (CI&E) who were tasked with the promotion of gender equality. Because of their

[5] Malia McAndrew, "Lt. Ethel Weed through Her Letters: The Personal Reflections of a Woman in the US-occupation of Japan," *US-Japan Women's Journal* 55 (2019), 111-112, 116.

background, historian Mire Koikari argues, these officials ended up promoting "American white, middle-class" domesticity as a means towards women's enfranchisement. Similarly, McAndrew argues that they spread "propaganda that glamorized all thing related to American womanhood." This propaganda, scholar Jennifer Coates writes, constructed "desirable images of postwar democratic living by placing the romantic union of the worker husband and housewife at the center of the family." Additionally, Coates asserts that by "presenting [housewives in] luxury homes and high fashion," SCAP suggested that American-style heteronormative domesticity went hand-in-hand with affluence.[6]

Whereas this strand of revisionist scholarship foregrounds US women's complicity in elevating domestic roles, another strand of recent scholarship suggests that female officials wanted to oppose the trend of women returning to domestic roles. Conceding that female officials indeed added cachet to consumerism and the Cold War era's white American gender norms, historian Michiko Takeuchi argues that "the role of American occupationnaire women was much more ambiguous than that of privileged imperial women." Though SCAP women held a position of relative power vis-à-vis the defeated Japanese, she explains, they shared some of the Japanese women's struggles because the Cold War domesticity ideology they promoted was imposed on them too. By the late 1950s, it were the full-time homemakers who symbolized the superiority of the US system. This meant that female officials defied the norm by choosing to be (unmarried) career women. As they did not adhere to the Cold War ideal of American womanhood themselves, it seems unlikely that they felt at ease spreading it overseas.[7]

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[6] Jennifer Coates, "How to Be a Domestic Goddess: Female Film Stars and the Housewife Role in Postwar Japan," *US-Japan Women's Journal* 50, no. 1 (2016), 33; Koikari, "Exporting Democracy?" 34-36; ibid., "Feminism and the Cold War," 4; Malia McAndrew, "Beauty, Soft Power, and the Politics of Womanhood During the US-occupation of Japan, 1945–1952," *Journal of Women's History* 26, no.4 (2014), 86; see also Michiko Takeuchi, "Cold War Manifest Domesticity: The 'Kitchen Debate' and Single American Occupationnaire Women in the US-occupation of Japan, 1945–1952," *US-Japan Women's Journal* 50, no. 1 (2016), 9-10.

[7] Takeuchi, "Cold War Manifest Domesticity," 3-4; see also Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American families in the Cold War era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 16-19. Takeuchi links the Cold War domesticity ideology to the 'Kitchen Debate' between Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev

This thesis contributes to such research by building on Takeuchi's position that the actual experiences and ambitions of female US officials contrasted the idealized version of American domesticity that SCAP promoted to the Japanese. Examining how SCAP women related to their role in promoting women's enfranchisement, it argues that they often negated, rejected, and subverted common perceptions of Japanese society. Furthermore, it argues that some female officials tried to mitigate SCAP's conservative turn as the Cold War intensified. Overall, these women were liberal, reformist, and feminist-minded. Therefore, they forged alliances with Japanese women and other reformist officials to promote women's rights when higher-ranking SCAP officials privileged economic growth.

This research situates itself in the brief window of time between the end of the Second World War and the intensification of the Cold War during the late 1940s. Though the Cold War was a political reality throughout the occupation, its impact on US foreign and domestic policy increased from the late 1940s onwards. By the 1950s its impact on domestic policies had culminated in McCarthyism, which, historian Ellen Schrecker has argued, "destroyed the [American] left" by wiping out the communist movement. After losing the "heart of the vibrant left labor Popular Front" that had stimulated reforms in the 1930s and 1940s, non-communist progressives found it difficult to effectively organize themselves, while fears of being labeled communist further dissuaded them from pushing for progressive policies.[8]

In Japan, Americans similarly grew to distrust the left. Consequently, the early postwar anti-militarist purge was followed by series of 'red purges', labor strikes were cancelled, and US officials increasingly cooperated with Japanese conservatives rather than progressives.

(1959), where Nixon argued that American women were better off than their Soviet counterparts because they could be full-time homemakers, rather than workers.

[8] Ellen Schrecker, *Many are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1998), 369-370, 388-389; see also, Hajimu Masuda, *Cold War Crucible: The Korean Conflict and the Postwar World* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015), 3-5, arguing that the Cold War was not experienced as a political reality by most American, Chinese, and Japanese citizens during the 1940s; see also, Michael Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan: The Origins of the Cold War in Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 21-28, arguing that Cold War concerns had little impact SCAP's policies before 1947.

Japanese media dubbed these changes the 'reverse course'. As the reverse course consisted of various overlapping changes in social, economic, and military policies, scholars differ on its causes and starting point. They agree, however, that SCAP's cancellation of the labor strike of February 1947 was an early indication of shifting priorities. Additionally, they agree that the Chinese Nationalists' defeat in the Chinese Civil War and the outbreak of the Korean War intensified the reverse course. By 1952, purged militarists had returned to politics, the National Police Reserve was established, and the industries that had previously supported Japanese imperialism were being rebuild. These measures served anticommunism, as a stable economy was believed to ward off communist influences whereas the National Police Reserve enabled the US to withdraw its own forces for use in Korea.[9]

This shift in focus from demilitarization to rebuilding Japan as an anticommunist bulwark was accompanied by shifts in media. Leftism was not only discouraged via red purges and a crack-down on labor activism, but also increasingly censored. Simultaneously, media outlets promoted consumerism and idolized American goods. As the Japanese economy was in a dire state after the war, it is unsurprising that Japanese citizens welcomed economic growth. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the shift mirrored trends in the (much wealthier) United States, with both nations promoting consumerism as an alternative to leftism. Female SCAP officials were caught in the middle of this transnational development. On the one hand, their positions as career women grew increasingly precarious because of the Cold War domesticity ideology. On the other, their political views became increasingly marginal. Many supported the Roosevelt administration's New Deal policies of the 1930s and hoped to implement similar reforms in Japan. However, when New Dealers lost political influence in the US, while SCAP

[9] Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 267-273, 433-438, 525-526; Miller, *Cold War Democracy*, 6, 12-13, 48-50, 56-58, 65, 72, 89-90; Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, 22, 24-30, 44, 67-68, 72, 88-90. The National Police Reserve later evolved into the Japanese Self Defense Forces that remain Japan's military until this day. The industrial combines – de facto monopolies – were initially designated to be broken up by SCAP to make Japan more equitable and prevent it from ever overtaking its neighbors again.

started privileging economic growth, it became increasingly difficult to do so. This thesis sheds light on the resulting tension between progressive and conservative SCAP officials by examining how female officials circumvented and opposed their agency's conservatism to enhance women's rights.[10]

My analysis is influenced by scholarship in the field of Orientalism and is cognizant of its role in legitimizing hierarchical US-Japanese relations. Orientalism posits that Westerners have interpreted Asian and Middle-Eastern peoples as their essential opposites from colonial times onwards. The imaginaries they created normalized hierarchical relationships between metropoles and their colonies. Because of its political impact, literary scholar Edward Said defined Orientalism as a "Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient." In the postwar era, Americans rose to global dominance and adopted the Orientalist worldviews that normalized hierarchical East-West relations. Historian Judy Tzu-Chun Wu adds that Orientalist imaginaries indeed pervaded US media during the occupation of Japan, legitimizing the US' role of leading by example. Historian Kristin Hoganson affirms this but emphasizes that Orientalism pervaded US culture during its post-Revolution era isolationism too. In short, these scholars demonstrate that US officials were primed to view Japan as an exotic, feminine, and irrational opposite to a more masculine and rational 'West'. Acknowledging this tendency, this thesis argues to that some US officials undermined the dominant Orientalist narrative after getting to know the Japanese on a personal level.[11]

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[10] Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 26-27, 220-221, 432-433; May, *Homeward Bound*, 16-19; Yole Granata Sills, interview by Marlene Mayo, *Oral History Project on the Allied Occupation of Japan*, University of Maryland, April 14, 1979, 5.

[11] Kristin L. Hoganson, *Consumers' Imperium the Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 3-4; see also, ibid., "What's Gender Got to Do with It? Gender History as Foreign Relations History," in *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, ed. Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 306, on the importance of analyzing gendered imagery in foreign relations; Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 3; see also Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 3-4; Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, "Gendering American Foreign Relations," in *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, ed. by Frank Costigliola and Michael J. Hogan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 278. Wu also notes that gendered imaginaries "were central to cultural and political discourse during the US-Spanish and US-Philippine Wars, the US campaigns in Asia during the Cold War, and the US War on Terror."

To illuminate SCAP women's perspectives on Japanese society and their own efforts to promote democracy and gender equality abroad, this thesis analyzes personal accounts of their experiences. Specifically, it examines the interviews with former SCAP officials that are included in the *Marlene J. Mayo Oral Histories Collection* at the University of Maryland. These interviews reveal how SCAP officials approached their work and their spare time in Japan. Additionally, they demonstrate how US officials' formal and informal interactions with the Japanese changed the way they viewed Japanese society. As the interviewees reminisce about their experiences, they explain why they often supported the occupation, despite rejecting the ideologies that underpinned it.[12]

Before turning to the primary sources, chapter 1 discusses the historiography on the promotion of gender equality in US-occupied Japan. First, this chapter examines how scholars have assessed the political motivations behind women's democratic enfranchisement. It argues that scholars conclude that democratization was pursued because it seemed the most efficient way to ward off militarist and communist influences. Second, this chapter examines how scholars have interpreted the ideological climate that informed Americans' perceptions of the Japanese. It argues that scholars agree that wartime research into the causes of the Pacific War facilitated a proliferation of cultural essentialism, portraying the Japanese as inherently different from Americans and blaming this difference on feudalism. Third, this chapter examines how scholars have assessed the impact of wartime theories on the US-occupation of Japan. It argues that scholars agree that essentializing assessments of the Japanese prevailed over more nuanced accounts that explained Japanese militarism as a strategic choice, rather than a cultural trait. Additionally, it argues that revisionist scholars suggest that these exotifying assessments were not universally shared, but differed along lines of class, gender, and political affiliation.

[12] These are theories postulating that the Japanese insufficiently valued freedom and democracy, attributing the Pacific War to this lack of sophistication rather than strategic concerns.

The second chapter dives into the primary sources and examines how American women remembered their time in US-occupied Japan. Based on their stories, it argues that women tended to adopt relatively nuanced perspectives on Japanese culture. Some explicitly rejected essentializing accounts by wartime scholars. Others indicated that they endorsed different views by reminiscing about the friendships they forged with the Japanese. As they emphasized that the Japanese were not radically different from Americans, it seems surprising that most of these women still supported an occupation that elevated Americans as prime examples of modern democratic citizenship. Therefore, the second section of this chapter examines the reasons US women gave for their support. It argues that they largely supported the occupation because they believed that its legal reforms had made Japan more equitable.

The third chapter examines how SCAP women promoted women's rights as the occupation turned increasingly conservative. First, this chapter argues that SCAP official Beate Sirota Gordon already faced some opposition from conservatives when drafting the women's rights sections of the Japanese constitution in 1946. Second, this chapter argues that the revision of Japan's civil and criminal codes in 1947 further revealed the tension between conservative and progressive SCAP officials. When the Japanese government debated whether they should retain the patriarchal family system, high-ranking SCAP officials urged to leave this issue to the conservative cabinet, while lower-ranking female officials supported progressive Japanese politicians trying to abolish the old system. Third, this chapter argues that officials could elevate the US unintentionally. Some indicated that they promoted American dishes and appliances in hopes of increasing the time Japanese women could spend on their careers. Therefore, female US officials' efforts could be interpreted as a last attempt to promote women's rights despite SCAP's conservative turn, rather than as an attempt to impose their own culture.

The limitation of this thesis is its exclusion of SCAP documents. I exclude these sources because they are only available in the United States. Because I am unable to access these

bureaucratic documents, this thesis' primary purpose is to assess the motivations and perspectives of SCAP women, rather than the (perhaps more calculated) decision-making processes by officials in SCAP's higher echelons. This thesis argues that female US officials were relatively progressive, which encouraged them to oppose SCAP's conservative turn in hopes of implementing the kind of progressive reforms that characterized the initial phase of the occupation.

Chapter 1: Historiography

This chapter examines the historiography concerning the US-occupation of Japan. First, it examines how scholars have interpreted the relation between occupation policy and broader foreign policy goals. Traditionally, scholars emphasized that fears about the spread of fascism and communism enticed US policymakers to push for democratization. According to this line of thinking, the ideologies of the world fought for territory, which meant that democracy had to be established to ward off militarism and communism. However, recent scholars suggest that policymakers' preoccupation with this ideological struggle has been overstated. Instead, such scholarship emphasizes that personal considerations and officials' biases affected policymaking too.

Second, this chapter examines how scholars have interpreted American Orientalism. Scholars agree that Orientalism thrived in the US, even when it criticized European colonialism. Some focus on the entertainment value of Orientalism, arguing that engaging with European modes of thinking led many Americans to perceive Asia in terms of its touristic offerings. Others, however, argue that political goals encouraged Orientalism. During the Pacific War, researching Asia became an increasingly lucrative career, as there was a need to understand Japanese militarism. The theories devised by the Office of War Information proved influential during the US-occupation of Japan. However, they have been criticized by recent scholars because they normalized the hierarchical relationship between the two nations.

Third, this chapter examines how scholars have interpreted transnational interactions in US-occupied Japan. Traditionally, scholars agreed that Americans were condescending towards the Japanese. However, some recent scholarship nuances this assessment, arguing that Americans' perspectives varied greatly. For instance, they suggest that US women might have questioned the validity of the United States' superior position. Because these women realized that the US still promoted traditional gender roles at home, they might have been inclined to

use their position of relative power to implement reforms that they desired for themselves. This thesis builds on such assertions by examining how American women interpreted Japanese society and to what extent they were able to formulate and implement the policies they preferred.

1.1 US foreign policy and the democratization of Japan

This section examines scholarship that analyzes how the transition from wartime to postwar US-Japanese relations affected characterizations of Japanese culture and society. It argues that US officials chose to democratize Japan because they were convinced that only democracy could prevent the Japanese from (re-)embracing subversive ideologies such as fascism and communism. To present the democratization of Japan as a feasible goal, Americans needed to re-evaluate their wartime perceptions of Japanese culture. New interpretations of Japanese culture were subsequently disseminated by American officials. As this section outlines, however, these officials could have ulterior motives that enticed them to exaggerate progress or emphasize the distinctness of Japanese society to make their accomplishments seem more impressive.

Scholars have argued that the US-occupation of Japan was tainted by racism and imperialism. Historian John Dower was one of the earlier critics of the occupation. On the one hand, Dower has argued that Americans' contempt for the Japanese was a remnant of wartime propaganda. On the other, he argued that the intent to enhance Japan's democracy incentivized US officials to rationalize its turn towards militarism during the 1930s. Specifically, he argued that the Japanese were depicted in American media as "children, savages, sadists, madmen, […] robots" or "apes" during the Pacific War, but that Americans' postwar task of transforming Japan into a responsible, non-threatening, democratic power, necessitated a re-branding of the Japanese as a people capable of sensible governance. In light of this task, Dower argued, it

benefited American planners that the wartime mobilization of behavioral scientists had led a contingent of "anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, and psychiatrists" to conclude "that the Japanese national character was pendulum-like, capable of swinging from one extreme to another – and consequently capable of shifting from fanatical militarism to some form of qualified democracy."[13]

While the pendulum thesis dispelled the myth that the Japanese were inherently incapable of sensible democratic governance, it did not negate the belief that they were inclined to follow authority. This standing belief might have accounted for American planners' decision to impose democratic institutions from above and to "utilize the emperor as a force for order and social cohesion."[14] Historian Michael Schaller, another pioneer in occupation studies, has observed that Under Secretary of State Joseph Grew frequently argued to abandon the policy of unconditional surrender in favor of allowing the Japanese to retain their emperor. Grew did so in hopes of shortening the war, fearing that "a protracted war might precipitate a Soviet surge into the growing political vacuum of East and Southeast Asia." However, when the development of the first atomic bombs enabled the United States to stick to the policy of unconditional surrender, officials chose to retain Japan's emperor anyway, hoping this would help legitimize their rule and increase cohesion among the Japanese.[15]

Besides agreeing to cooperate with the emperor, US officials were willing to negotiate with Japan's traditional conservatives. Americans identified these conservatives as liberals or moderates because they resented the expanded power of the military that constrained the economy. Accordingly, Secretary of War Henry Stimson, voiced that Japan "was not led solely by mad fanatics" but that the nation "had been a responsible great power" until its militarists

[13] Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 213-214, 218-219.
[14] Ibid., 80-81; Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, 10, 15-17.
[15] Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, 9-11. Grew was also the US Ambassador to Japan from 1932 until December 8, 1941, when the US and Japan suspended diplomatic relations following the attack on Pearl Harbor.

seized control. Stimson, Schaller emphasized, informed President Harry Truman that Japan's "liberal leaders" understood the military implications of further resistance. Cultivating these elements, Stimson explained, would allow the US to reconstruct Japan as a "responsible member of the family of nations" and a "useful member of the future Pacific community." Stimson's vision of postwar US-Japanese cooperation was partially based on bilateral relations during the 1920s. Grew, on the other hand, was directly encouraged by Japanese conservatives who had dispatched peace feelers near the end of the war.[16]

Though US officials were confident that Japan could become a cooperative non-threatening nation again, it was not self-evident that this would happen. As Dower asserted in 1999, the pendulum thesis postulated that Japan could either wholeheartedly embrace democracy, or swing towards another ideology, such as communism or autocratic militarism. Historian Jennifer Miller builds upon this argument in *Cold War Democracy* (2019). She argues that fostering a democratic mindset within the Japanese population was an important objective of American officials throughout the occupation because of their central concern that Japan might choose another ideology over theirs. She argues that US policymakers were convinced that the democracy they desired to protect the peace and stability in Asia not only depended on democratic institutions but also "on proper attitudes and mentalities."[17]

More recent scholarship on the occupation, such as Miller's work, tends to be skeptical about the depth of US officials' understanding of Japanese society. Schaller and Dower were already cognizant of SCAP leader Douglas MacArthur's lack of expertise on the nation he occupied. Miller, moreover, suggests that the entire direction of SCAP policies was based on a flawed understanding of Japan. This understanding postulated that it was vital to alter the Japanese 'spirit' or mindset if democracy were to take root in Japan because its society was compromised by lingering feudalism. Therefore, reforms such as making the cabinet subject to

[16] Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, 5, 10-12.
[17] Miller, *Cold War Democracy*, 3-5, see also 7-12.

parliamentary oversight and establishing universal suffrage were only considered meaningful if they would awaken the electorate to their democratic rights and responsibilities.[18]

Some scholars argue that the United States' promotion of democracy in the Cold War era did not stem from a belief that all citizens deserved democracy. Instead, they suggest that democracy was promoted when it was an efficient means to ward off communism but discarded when authoritarianism seemed more conducive to that goal. Political scientist Tony Smith has argued that democracy was promoted in postwar Japan because it seemed the most compelling alternative to fascist militarism and communism. It had to contend with the options to deprive Japan of its ability to wage war by dismembering its economy, on the one hand, and the option to retain its industrial base without pushing for democracy, on the other. Dismembering the economy would free up resources to pay reparations to the nations that Japan had occupied during the war. Rebuilding the industries would allow the United States to utilize them if armed conflict would break out in the region. As more of Japan's neighbors turned communist, it increasingly made sense to rebuild the industries, rather than to pay reparations.[19]

Scholars emphasize that economic reconstruction and democratization were both expected to help contain communism in Asia. As we have seen, Smith asserted that US officials already contemplated whether a rebuilt and stabilized Japan would benefit the United States when they still argued that it should pay reparations its neighbors. Similarly, Schaller argued that fears about communism propelled the decision to fully commit to rebuilding Japan's economy from 1947 onward. In this case, the decision was based on the rising conviction that prosperity would ward off communist influences. Nevertheless, Schaller conceded that some officials also hoped that bolstering Japan's economy would reduce the nation's dependence on American aid before this would become too expensive.[20]

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[18] Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 223; Miller, *Cold War Democracy*, 22, 32-36; Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, 23-24.
[19] Smith, *America's Mission*, 151-154.
[20] Ibid., 151-155; Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, 67-68.

Like the decision-making process, the methods used to promote democracy have been criticized for being reflective of the United States' self-interest rather than the interest of Japanese citizens. Smith emphasized that opinion polls indicated that the Japanese increasingly questioned whether political behavior could be considered authoritarian in the wake of the war. Additionally, he argued that Japan likely "would not have undertaken comprehensive land reform, abolished its military ministries, or reworked its constitution" without American interference. However, despite affirming the merits of SCAP's democratization efforts, he acknowledged that the replacement of authoritarian values and behaviors by democratic ones partially happened through what could be called "psychological deprogramming."[21]

Revisionist scholars, such as Miller, suggest that trying to alter citizens minds is antidemocratic, even if it serves democratization. Smith's work, however, predates this more critical narrative. Accordingly, he did not explicitly criticize 'psychological deprogramming.' Nevertheless, his wording reveals that the democratization of the former Axis powers hinged on the belief that their populations were not (yet) capable of establishing a functioning democracy on their own. This contradicts the philosophy underpinning democracy, which postulates that citizens should govern themselves despite their lack of expertise. On the other hand, however, one could argue that psychological deprogramming was necessary to enable citizens of the former Axis powers to think for themselves again. According to this narrative, the minds of German and Japanese citizens were compromised by ideologies imposed on them by the wartime regimes. The US would just undo the damage.

The perceived need to change the Axis populations' psychology was based on beliefs that the minds of German and Japanese citizens were different from American minds. Smith emphasized that MacArthur appeared convinced that the Japanese mind was fundamentally different from the American mind and to blame for Japan's embrace of fascist militarism.

[21] Smith, *America's Mission*, 167, 169, 173.

Whereas the commander of the American zone in Germany, Lucius Clay, soon determined that "German minds seemed […] to be remarkably like those elsewhere," MacArthur frequently invoked the "Oriental mind," claiming to have special insight into its workings. He moreover asserted that the 'Oriental mind' had infiltrated every facet of Japan's daily life and every branch of its government, keeping citizens in a "condition of slavery" in a society that was 'feudal', theocratic, and devoid of human rights.[22]

Smith is not the only one to observe MacArthur's self-proclaimed expertise on Japanese culture. Dower criticized MacArthur's ethnocentric generalizations about the 'Oriental personality.' Skeptical about the depth of the general's understanding, he emphasized that MacArthur "had no serious first-hand experience with Japan" while there was "no evidence that he read widely about the country" either. Dower concluded that MacArthur's apparent confidence that he could democratize Japan with no more than the guidance of "Washington, Lincoln, and Jesus Christ" was a mixture of "prejudice, presumption, and grand bromides, […] not to be confused with expertise."[23]

Other pioneer scholars of the occupation have been skeptical about MacArthur's level of expertise too. Schaller argued that MacArthur and his aides "cultivated a heroic myth regarding the Occupation" in service of his political ambitions. Because MacArthur was hoping to become the next president of the United States, much of what he did and said had "as large an American as a Japanese audience." Hence while it is undoubtedly in all officials' interest to present their accomplishments positively, MacArthur's political ambitions compelled him to proclaim unlikely victories and cultivate the idea "that he alone determined the course of events within Japan" at the expense of portraying the Japanese accurately and consulting with experts.[24]

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[22] Smith, *America's Mission*, 167.
[23] Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 223. Dower notes that 'Washington, Lincoln, and Jesus Christ' were often invoked by MacArthur.
[24] Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, 23-24.

Revisionist scholars of the occupation share the view that MacArthur and other officials were driven by personal considerations. Historian Hajimu Masuda agrees that MacArthur's actions were motivated by his presidential ambitions. In *Cold War Crucible* he argues that events of the late 1940s and 1950s that have been ascribed to Cold War considerations, often had more diverse and personal roots. SCAP's conservative turn, for instance, was partially informed by the political climate of the United States that indicated decreased support for New Deal-type reforms during the mid-term elections of 1946. Put simply, Masuda argues that MacArthur, who was a conservative Republican, had only implemented New Deal-type policies because he thought that they were popular in the US. Therefore, it was easy for him to abandon progressive reforms and crack down on labor activism when the American electorate seemed to prefer that.[25]

However inaccurate or politically motivated MacArthur's emphasis on the idiosyncrasy of the Oriental mind may have been, it informed SCAP policies due to the relative weight the general held in the agency's decision-making. The relative importance of MacArthur partially stemmed from the fact that he had executive and legislative authority while being instructed via a Joint Chiefs of Staff directive that SCAP was expected to "micromanage a democratization agenda." Additionally, Schaller argues, MacArthur suffered little interference from other officials because he had appointed his acquaintances from the Philippines and the Pacific campaigns as high-level administrators.[26]

In sum, scholars agree that the narrative that envisioned Japan as needing guidance lent itself to political goals. Focusing on MacArthur's motivations, they have argued that he celebrated the occupation as civilizational progress in service of his presidential ambitions. When emphasizing the dramatic transformations SCAP had brought about, MacArthur tended

[25] Masuda, *Cold War Crucible*, 3-5, 26, 28-29; see also Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 220.
[26] Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 74, 79; Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, 28; Eiji Takemae, *The Allied Occupation of Japan* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 116.

to Orientalize Japanese society, blaming militarism on feudalism and the distinctness of the 'Oriental mind' rather than assessing the strategic motivations for the Pacific War. As the next section argues, MacArthur's tendency to Orientalize the Japanese did not occur in a vacuum but built on a tradition of exoticizing Asia that had provided Americans with entertainment and affective power for decades.

1.2 American Orientalism: Characterizing Japan from afar

The exotifying assessments of the Japanese that US officials could draw upon were not just created in service of the occupation and the Pacific War but built on a longer tradition of American Orientalism. This section examines how scholars have accounted for the ideas about race and culture that pervaded the occupation. Some scholars root these ideas in the nineteenth century, emphasizing that American women adopted European fashion and lifestyles that took inspiration from the colonies. These scholars argue that US women partook in colonial culture before they had an empire. Other scholars emphasize that Americans utilized their purported expertise on the East to enhance their own positions. Accordingly, they suggest that essentializing narratives about Asia often reveal more about the context in which they were created than about their topic.

Scholars suggest that Orientalist narratives about Japan were not only shared by foreign policy officials, but pervaded US society. Hoganson argues that Orientalism affected the US because Americans maintained a "consumers' imperium" or "secondhand empire" by consuming imported household objects and Asia-inspired fashion and food. American women of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century decorated their homes in Orientalist styles and followed the Paris-based fashion system "as an expression of cosmopolitanism and as a means to participate in empire." Hence, Hoganson argues, Orientalist home decoration and clothing not only reflected the United States' commercial expansion, but also US women's desire to

assert "their class, racial, national, and civilizational standing" as being on par with that of European aristocrats.[27]

Besides helping them associate themselves with wealthy women on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, upper- and middle-class American women engaged with the 'Orient' as a source of entertainment. Because they were often unable to travel abroad, these women faked foreignness in their homes by indulging in exotic foods, "decorations, costumes, and music." Their engagement with other cultures could prompt them to either conclude that foreigners were barbarous and unrefined, or that their cultures had a lot to offer to Americans.[28] The latter conclusion was conducive to the rise of a 'tourist mentality', which Hoganson defines as "the tendency to understand the rest of the world in terms of its touristic offerings." This outlook was conducive to a geographic consciousness that focused on consumption, distinct from other lines of geographic thinking, striving to proselytize, profit, or understand.[29]

Though this consumerist outlook facilitated appreciation of Asian cultures, Hoganson emphasizes that it still exacerbated the perceived dichotomy between the East and West. Consumers could praise the Japanese for their 'Western efficiency' or for their art and design. However, advertisements for Japanese products tended to "cast Asian women […] as working-class producers rather than upper-class consumers" by emphasizing the intensive labor required to craft these sophisticated goods. Similarly, wearing kimonos signaled appreciation for Japanese culture while upholding the civilizational superiority of the West. By refashioning kimonos as home wear, American women equated the Japanese everyday with the sensuality and eroticism they desired to express at home. Conversely, the Japanese's adoption of Western

[27] Hoganson, *Consumers' Imperium*, 3, 9-11.
[28] Ibid., 10, see also 125-128, arguing that Japanese food could both be presented as indicative of the nation's status as "the fine flower of the Orient, the most polite, refined, and aesthetic of races," and as questionable and unadvanced.
[29] Ibid., 190, see also 154, noting that this was especially true for women in armchair travel clubs. Other lines of geographical thinking are missionary, commercial, governmental, and anthropological outlooks, that respectively serve proselytizing, profit, political influence, and academic knowledge.

dress was presented as indicative of civilizational progress. Hence while adopting Japanese fashion, US women upheld the distinction between Western modernity and Japanese pristine sensuality and handicraft.[30]

Other scholars agree that US women co-constructed Orientalism. Yoshihara emphasizes that their participation in this discourse not only provided them with entertainment but also offered "an effective avenue through which to become part of a dominant American ideology." By positioning themselves as experts on Asia, women gained agency that was denied to them in other realms of sociopolitical life. Hence, via consumption, missionary work, and academic contributions, American women not only gained affective power via-à-vis their Asian counterparts but also within US society. This brought new meaning to their identities as US women. Moreover, it allowed them to deploy narratives about Asia "to assert, address and/or challenge women's roles in American society." This indicates that the theories they constructed reveal more about the United States than about Asia.[31]

When the Pacific War erupted, Americans could draw upon several pre-existing strands of American Orientalism. Yoshihara identifies these strands and posits that one of them, intellectual Orientalism, greatly informed policies towards postwar Japan. This strand competed with its opposite: the highly charged political discourse about Asian immigrants that had emerged on the West Coast in the nineteenth century. While the latter form of Orientalism depended on racialized stereotypes to argue for a ban on Asian immigration, intellectual Orientalism emerged among professionals with experience in Asia. Some of them were hired as consultants by the Meiji government that sought to emulate Western governance. Back home,

[30] Hoganson, *Consumers' Imperium*, 36-37, 71, 90, 93.
[31] Yoshihara, *Embracing the East*, 6, 8.

these men "became pioneer 'Japanologists' and played crucial roles in introducing Japanese culture" to the West.[32]

Their work proved influential to scholars who were employed by the US Office of War Information (OWI) to research Japanese culture, psychology, and society during World War II. One of these scholars was anthropologist Ruth Benedict who published her study of the Japanese character in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* in 1946. Because the ongoing war prevented her from visiting Japan, Benedict based her research on interviews with "native informants": Japanese citizens who were currently in the United States, Japanese Americans, and non-Japanese people who had lived in Japan. Additionally, she examined movies written and produced in Japan and literature from and about Japan, including the works of the pioneer Japanologists who had consulted the Meiji government.[33]

Because she relied on sources written in or translated into English, Benedict's assessment has been criticized as inaccurate, dated, and unable to break free from the dominant discourse about Japan that presented the nation as feminine. However, Yoshihara emphasizes that Benedict distinguished her work from other gendered narratives about Japan by focusing on men. Whereas prior Orientalists feminized Asia by focusing on its women-filled domestic sphere, Benedict's predominantly male pool of informants allowed her to explain Japan's politics by constructing a model of Japanese masculinity. Trying to explain the nation's wartime aggression, Benedict feminized Japan by characterizing its men "as lacking in proper forms of masculinity" conducive to freedom, democracy, and individualism. Hence while warfare was

[32] Yoshihara, *Embracing the East*, 9. These consultants visited Japan from 1868 onwards, when the Meiji government was founded. This was fifteen years after US Commodore Matthew Perry's arrival in Japan had forced the nation to open its doors to foreign trade.
[33] Ibid., 175-177.

usually indicative of masculinity, Benedict facilitated an interpretation of Japan that reconstructed it as the feminine opposite of the United States despite its militarism.[34]

Benedict's work was part of a larger political and academic discourse that deployed psychological and developmental approaches to draw universalizing conclusions about the Japanese national character. At a conference by the Institute of Pacific Relations in December 1944, scholars debated "whether or not the 'elder-brother, younger-brother relationship' of the Confucian family would be effective as American propaganda for the Japanese." Furthermore, they argued to draw "a distinct analogy between Japanese character structure and the American adolescent." This reveals that terms signifying gender and developmental stages were not only deployed as the categories of analysis that represented various aspects of Japan's society but also became part of the language used to describe nations as a whole.[35]

Despite essentializing Japanese society as adolescent-like, wartime scholars could be viewed as progressive because they rejected scientific racism. Instead of race, Yoshihara emphasizes, these scholars posited that culture determined behavior. Though cultural patterns were believed to be deeply ingrained, they could be overcome – in contrast to biological factors. Similarly, scholar Christina Klein notes that Americans were receptive to this theory during World War II because it enabled them to defend democracy "as a universal political philosophy applicable to all peoples" while contrasting their enemies' quest for racial purity. In the postwar era, she argues, the United States consequently "became the only Western nation that sought to legitimate its world-ordering ambitions by championing the idea (if not always the practice) of racial equality." In US-occupied Japan, cultural determinism helped legitimize SCAP's efforts

[34] Yoshihara, *Embracing the East*, 178, 182. Discussing research and literature that feminized Asia by focusing on the domestic sphere, Yoshihara specifically mentions Pearl Buck's 1931 *The Good Earth*, which feminized China in its account of Chinese women in rural areas (see Yoshihara, *Embracing the East*, 149-151).
[35] Ibid., 181-182.

to democratize the nation, as it postulated that humans of all races were inherently compatible with democratic governance.[36]

However, some scholars contend that the researchers' suggestion that Japan's wartime behavior depended on its culture created its own set of problematic biases. Dower emphasized that the series of national character studies on Japan "gave a patina of scholarly credibility to the impression that the Japanese were unique in unattractive ways" which presented them as "lacking in diversity or individuality […] culturally and socially primitive, infantile or childish […] collectively abnormal, […] and tormented at every level by an overwhelming inferiority complex." Similarly, Yoshihara argues that Benedict's assertion that Japanese men were wired to devalue freedom and democracy "naturalized certain forms of gender relations as constitutive elements of Japanese culture." Hence, she agrees that the culture paradigm "reinforced the dominant stereotypes about Japan" despite negating scientific racism.[37]

The scholarly consensus is that it was precisely this combination of negative stereotypes and cultural determinism that proved foundational to SCAP's efforts to democratize Japan. Put simply, it upheld the idea that Japanese society was flawed, while positing that it could change. To legitimize its reforms in the eyes of the American public, historian Naoko Shibusawa argues, SCAP relied on a discourse that compared two universally recognized hierarchical relationships – between men and women and between adults and children – with the relationship between the United States and Japan. By casting them as women and children, Americans could regard the Japanese as dependents instead of enemies. Furthermore, perceiving Japan as childlike legitimized its temporary subjugation until it would be ready for autonomy. Their

[36] Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 11; Yoshihara, *Embracing the East*, 186-187.
[37] John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 122, cited in Yoshihara, *Embracing the East*, 189; Yoshihara, *Embracing the East*, 187-189. Dower explains elsewhere in *War Without Mercy* that Benedict and other social scientists were aware of the danger inherent to using psychological and psychopathological concepts to analyze cultures. However, he maintains that their work helped construct the view that the Japanese were unique in unattractive ways, since US media largely disregarded the experts' reservations while emphasizing the most shocking parts of their work (see Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 124, 134-135).

corresponding belief in what became known as Modernization Theory allowed US officials to distinguish their Cold War era foreign interventions from the longer-term exploitative colonialism that they criticized Europeans for.[38]

1.3 Americans in postwar Japan

The wartime theories blaming Japanese militarism on cultural traits found their way to US-occupied Japan where they laid the groundwork for US officials' interpretations of the Japanese. Several scholars have noted that Americans consequently feminized Japan by arguing that its male citizens failed to appreciate democracy, freedom, and individualism. Accordingly, they could easily believe that the US-occupation would rescue Japanese women from chauvinistic men via legal reforms and by setting the right example. Other scholars emphasize that some US officials regarded the Japanese as friends rather than objects of their rescue. Noting that female officials lamented the restrictions placed upon women in the United States, they argue that it is unlikely that these women believed that Americans could rescue Japanese women by exemplifying emancipated womanhood. This section explores both strands of scholarship because they reveal that American views on Japan were not uniform but differentiated across lines of political affiliation and gender identity.

Scholars argue that the wartime theories characterizing Japan as feminine and childlike prevailed in postwar media. Shibusawa emphasizes that US media rarely depicted Japanese men because they were more strongly associated with militarism. Instead, they depicted women and children, whom Americans could more easily perceive as victims. This helped Americans identify as world leaders rescuing foreign women and children from autocratic militarism. Some media, moreover, interpreted American GIs' popularity among Japanese women as a sign

[38] Naoko Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Alley: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy* (Piraí: Harvard University Press, 2006), 4-6, 11, 17, see also 56-58.

of their superior charm vis-à-vis chauvinistic Japanese men rather than as indicative of their financial status. Others argued that the Japanese were inherently subservient without mentioning that Americans mostly interacted with Japanese citizens who were employed as their servants.[39]

Other scholars similarly note Europeans' and Americans' tendency to portray Japanese women as in need of rescue. Anthropologist Lisa Yoneyama argues that this narrative increasingly circulated as Americans started to anticipate the end of the Pacific War. An article in the *Saturday Evening Post* discussed the disadvantaged position of Japanese women as early as 1944. This article titled "the unhappiest women in the world" described Japanese women as timid, frightened, and suffering from shyness and a sense of inferiority. Its author stressed that the women were unable to choose a career besides marriage or becoming a geisha. However, Yoneyama emphasizes, the article's white European author was also a woman without a career besides marriage. This reveals the asymmetry between Westerners' perceptions of white and Asian housewives.[40]

Such asymmetry in representations of white and Asian women continued throughout the US-occupation of Japan. In 1951, the *New York Times* emphasized that Jean MacArthur won applause for her decision to remain a homemaker while "she could have reigned as a queen" as Douglas MacArthur's wife. However, when Japanese women became homemakers during the early 1950s, US news outlets argued that Japan's old habits and traditions "were depriving Japanese women of their will and independence." By framing domestic life as a choice for American women but as a limitation for the Japanese, news outlets perpetuated the idea US women were subjects of free will, whereas Japanese women were objects to be rescued. This narrative was supported by the Orientalist belief that non-Western cultures were inherently

[39] Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Alley*, 19, 25, 44-45.
[40] Lisa Yoneyama, "Liberation Under Siege: US Military Occupation and Japanese Women's Enfranchisement," *American quarterly* 57, no. 3 (2005), 890.

more sexist than Western ones. Yoneyama adds that the prevalence of this belief was more indicative of the occupation's paternalism than of wartime racism, since Japanese women were depicted as masculine and fanatical warriors in wartime propaganda.[41]

In short, the postwar narrative about the United States and Japan normalized unequal relations, though it was less hostile to Japanese women than wartime narratives were. Shibusawa observes that many US citizens and officials in postwar Japan adopted the work of OWI anthropologists. This enticed them to regard their own civilization as more 'mature' than the Japanese one, even though Japan's civilization was much older. They explained Japan's lag in development by arguing that it had a feudal society. Consequently, US officials could blame Japan's wartime aggression on feudalistic personality traits such as a propensity for mood swings and ideological extremism. This prevented them from thoroughly assessing the geopolitical motivations behind Japanese imperialism.[42]

Thus choosing to rely on cultural determinism, officials tended to neglect assessments of Japan that suggested that the nation was similar to the United States. These assessments include *Mirror for Americans* (1948) by Helen Mears. Mears, a well-known Japanologist, published this work after traveling all over Japan as part of the US Advisory Committee on Labour in 1946. She expressed concern that her fellow committee members appeared utterly convinced that they could persuade anyone to embrace an American lifestyle. Mears herself was skeptical about the universality of the American Creed and professed to have had "little faith in the applicability of Western principles to the current dilemmas facing either the United States or the world." Additionally, she posited that the Japanese had always been more rational and like Americans than other works postulated, suggesting that militarism did not result from a distinct 'Japanese Creed'.[43]

[41] Yoneyama, "Liberation Under Siege," 891, 901-902.
[42] Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Alley*, 59-61.
[43] Ibid., 61-63; see also Takemae, *The Allied Occupation of Japan*, 328.

Scholars emphasize that these more nuanced assessments were less popular than those that exotified Japan. Shibusawa notes that whereas *Mirror for Americans* was censored in US-occupied Japan, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* by Ruth Benedict was recommended reading for SCAP personnel. As relatively nuanced assessments of the Japanese national character were obscured, SCAP personnel could uphold ideas postulating that Japan was a pristine island nation where citizens still "exhibited the immature behaviors associated with childhood." Consequently, Americans could look forward to their service in postwar Japan as if they went on a holiday. Accordingly, many regarded Japan an exotic locale or a souvenir-hunter's paradise that would enrich their lives through its touristic offerings.[44]

Scholars also note that Americans' perceptions of the Japanese were often informed by exoticizing assessments that characterized the Japanese as feudal. Feudalism, Miller argues, was allegedly preserved in an outwardly modern Japan. Pre-modern social, economic, and cultural hierarchies, the story went, had survived the industrial and governmental transformations of the Meiji era because of a compromise between the middle class and the feudal warlords. These hierarchies preserved Japan's patriarchal system while exalting martial virtues. In the postwar era, Miller notes, feudalism became the catchall phrase to describe such premodern legacies which many believed to have provided "the emotional blueprint for the people's love of military authority." Koikari adds that even the *Civil Affairs Handbook* suggested that the Japanese would eagerly subordinate themselves.[45]

The conviction that Japan's modernity was compromised by feudalism affected early scholarly assessments of the occupation. In 1999, Koikari argued that "American and Japanese scholars continue[d] to produce a uniform and uncritical narrative of the occupation as the

[44] Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Alley*, 20-21, 62-63, 66.
[45] Mire Koikari, *Pedagogy of Democracy: Feminism and the Cold War in the US-occupation of Japan* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), 37; Miller, *Cold War Democracy*, 32-33. The *Civil Affairs Handbook* provided information, rules, and guidelines to prepare US officials for their stay abroad (in this case to work for SCAP).

watershed event in Japanese women's history." Disagreeing with this narrative, she urged to keep in mind that categories of power mediated encounters. For instance, the US military's response to the high rates of venereal disease among GIs revealed power disparities between Japanese women and American men, since only the women were rounded up on the street and subjected to medical examinations. When Japanese women and their allies within SCAP protested this, they drew boundaries between 'respectable' and 'immoral' Japanese women, arguing that "treating working women as if they were streetwalkers" was an infringement on respectable women's human rights. The alliance of Japanese and American women rejected the idea that Asians had looser sexual morals without questioning whether Japanese bodies posed a threat to the health of American GIs. Instead, they blamed this on a select group of Japanese women.[46]

As categories of power were drawn across lines of nationality, race, class, and gender, Japanese and American women sometimes found common cause. Koikari indicated this when noting that Japanese and SCAP women both protested the methods used to combat venereal disease. Similarly, McAndrew has argued that Ethel Weed – the head of the CI&E's women's information branch – befriended many of her Japanese staff members and advisors. Tasked to promote women's participation in politics, Weed relied heavily on Japanese women to complement her lack of expertise on Japan's culture and language. According to McAndrew, SCAP women's affinity with the Japanese can be understood in contrast to their outlier status within the occupation forces. Weed, for instance, "would have been attracted to forming collaborations with strong women who had overcome obstacles far greater than her own" because she worked in a male-dominated organization. Additionally, the postwar trend of women returning to the home might have enticed SCAP women to identify with the Japanese

[46] Koikari, "Rethinking Gender and Power," 314-316, 321-325, 329.

even further, making it seem ironic that they were tasked with liberating women from plights that mirrored their own.[47]

Because of this irony, scholars have suggested that female SCAP employees were hesitant to promote an American lifestyle to Japanese women, especially if they did not adhere to its ideals themselves. Takeuchi posits that some female officials indeed challenged SCAP's promotion of the American Cold War domesticity ideology. She acknowledges that some adopted the narrative that American women were privileged because of their material conditions. Noting that Japanese kitchens were dark and unpleasant, these women gave credence to the idea that Americans could 'rescue' Japanese women from feudalism via the material comforts and efficient ways of housekeeping that went hand-in-hand with capitalism and democracy. Other officials, however, contested SCAP's intention to emancipate Japanese women so that "they may bring to Japan a new concept of government directly subservient to the wellbeing of the home." They argued for a more inclusive vision of women's enfranchisement that protected the social and economic rights of working women, guaranteeing their financial independence regardless of marital status.[48]

In personal interactions, SCAP women could negate their agency's rhetoric too. Takeuchi argues that Beate Sirota Gordon, Carmen Johnson, and Helen Mears were trying to liberate themselves from the postwar domestic paradigm that was promoted to Japan. As they conceded in their memoirs that women's employment options were limited in the United States, they "may have keenly felt the hypocrisy of America's claim to be liberating Japanese women by exporting the American way of life." Johnson indicated as much by expressing concern that

[47] McAndrew, "Lt. Ethel Weed through Her Letters," 109, 111-113, 115-121, 123.
[48] Michiko Takeuchi, "At the Crossroads of Equality Versus Protection: American Occupationnaire Women and Socialist Feminism in US-occupied Japan, 1945–1952," *Frontiers* 38, no. 2 (2017), 114-116; Takeuchi, "Cold War Manifest Domesticity," 5, 9-16, 19-23. The 'socialist feminists' arguing for protection emphasized that women had different needs from men and therefore needed legal guarantees that their livelihoods would not be threatened by, for instance, a pregnancy (even if this meant that they were temporarily unable to work). Takeuchi links this to a similar 'equality vs. protection' debate in the US, noting that SCAP women consulted with American feminists involved in this struggle.

marriage was "greatly sought after" by Japanese women and by voicing her contempt for American housewives. Accordingly, Takeuchi argues, Johnson's habit of explicitly stating that she was an 'old Miss' with no intention of getting married can be interpreted as a form of defiance against the domesticity ideology that SCAP promoted.[49]

For some US women, Japan became an arena to advocate for their own rights as well as those of the Japanese. This was possible, Koikari emphasizes, because women's liberation did not receive much attention from higher ranking officials – in contrast to what MacArthur's speeches implied. In practice, SCAP officials working directly with Japanese women had the autonomy to devise and promote their own visions of gender equality. In their enthusiasm to enhance the plight of Japanese women, they became involved in the ideological struggle of the Cold War and helped construct the narrative that the occupation of Japan was benevolent and beneficial. As this helped solidify "the image of the United States as the leader of freedom and democracy," it indicates that it was possible to be complicit in the construction of US hegemony while being skeptical of it, victimized by it, and trying to undermine it.[50]

1.4 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the historiography on women's enfranchisement in US-occupied Japan. First, it has argued that scholars emphasize that SCAP strengthened Japan's democracy in hopes of warding off militarist and communist influences. Granting women universal suffrage and stimulating their involvement in politics was part of this project. Furthermore, scholars agree that reforms promoting democracy and women's rights served to enhance individual SCAP officials' public image. Accordingly, they argue that such reforms were overrepresented in MacArthur's rhetoric (as long as they were perceived as popular). This was

[49] Takeuchi, "Cold War Manifest Domesticity," 5, 19-23.
[50] Koikari, *Pedagogy of Democracy*, 4-5.

conducive to the exotification of Japanese culture because Japan's alleged backwardness made SCAP's accomplishments seem more impressive.

Second, this chapter has examined how scholars have accounted for the ideas about Japanese society that pervaded US media in the early postwar era. Scholars agree that these ideas built upon a long tradition of American Orientalism that combined an admiration of the East with reservations about its social norms. During the Pacific War, the US Office of War Information hired experts to research the origins of Japanese militarism. Despite rejecting scientific racism, these experts upheld the idea that the Japanese were unique in unattractive ways. They blamed this on feudalism which had allegedly been preserved in an outwardly modern Japan.

Third, this chapter has illuminated how scholars have assessed the role of female officials in the US-occupation of Japan. It has argued that scholars criticize these women because they were complicit in the promotion and imposition of US culture in a Cold War context. Nevertheless, revisionist scholars suggest that female officials were inclined to reject exotifying assessments of the Japanese. Some of these women befriended and were inspired by Japanese citizens. Others voiced their skepticism about the position of women in the United States, indicating that they did not perceive themselves as examples of emancipated womanhood. This thesis focuses on such women, exploring why their perspectives differed from those of more conservative officials – such as MacArthur and others in SCAP's higher echelons – and how this affected SCAP's reforms.

Chapter 2: Interpreting Japan

In January 1948, Dallas Finn moved to Japan to be with her husband who worked for SCAP's Diplomatic Section. Highly educated, she remembered that she disliked being sent to Japan as a dependent and that she did not feel at home with most other Americans there – least of all with military families. Identifying as half of a diplomatic couple, Finn was disappointed by the attitudes of fellow Americans, but delighted that she was able to meet Japanese diplomats, academics, and others with an interest in the West. She preferred this over socializing within "occupation society" which she described as a "very dreary thing." Finn, in other words, distanced herself from other Americans in favor of meeting Japanese citizens.[51]

Thirty years later, she was interviewed about her experiences in postwar Japan. When asked in 1979 how she perceived the occupation, she recalled being frustrated with fellow Americans. Explaining that the US military was her first experience with a "thoroughly authoritarian and undemocratic system," Finn emphasized that she could not understand why these people were tasked with enforcing democracy, women's rights, and freedom of speech "when at every point that [she] saw them operate, it was quite the opposite." Additionally, she argued that some officials were only kind to the Japanese in a patronizing way, often referring to them as 'little.' "They always said, 'this little Japanese,'" she lamented, "there never was a big Japanese that any of these Americans seemed to meet."[52]

Finn was not the only American to criticize the occupation. In fact, many women interviewed for the *Oral History Project on the Allied Occupation of Japan* expressed disdain for their compatriots. These women lived in Japan between 1947 and 1952 as military personnel, SCAP officials, language teachers, scholars, and SCAP and army dependents moving with their partners or parents. Instead of socializing with Americans and Europeans,

[51] Dallas Finn, interview by Marlene Mayo, *Oral History Project on the Allied Occupation of Japan*, University of Maryland, November 29, 1979, 10-11, 14-15.
[52] Ibid., 27-28.

some of these women preferred to travel the country and meet Japanese citizens in their spare time. Others worked directly with Japanese citizens who subverted their expectations of Japanese society. Regardless of their profession, numerous US women concluded that the theories postulating that feudalism pervaded Japan were inaccurate.

Their perspectives on Japanese culture inevitably affected the policies they formulated, implemented, and endorsed. This chapter examines how SCAP women perceived Japanese society. It argues that some rejected the idea that Japanese citizens were submissive, militaristic, and inclined to follow authority. Additionally, it explores how these women reconciled their criticism of the attitudes and behaviors of some US officials with support for the occupation, arguing that they approved of the occupation because they believed that most Japanese citizens supported SCAP's policies.

2.1 Perceiving the Japanese

Like Finn who distanced herself from a dreary occupation society, SCAP official Yole Granata Sills believed that it would have been a waste of her stay in Japan if she had merely engaged with the American community in Tokyo. She had worked for the OWI as a radio broadcaster, before taking on numerous reporting jobs for SCAP. She knew "absolutely nothing about Japan" before moving there in 1946. However, as she traveled the country to report on land reform policies, she became increasingly interested in exploring its culture. Sills argued that there were two types of Americans in Japan: those eager to see and experience all that the country had to offer and those who were disinterested in the defeated empire. The latter category of civil servants, military personnel, and dependents "never really saw or understood Japan" but merely "lived the life of American suburbia" that they had recreated abroad. These

Americans, Sills emphasized, lived an "artificial life" in an "artificial community" instead of a real life among the Japanese.[53]

Others agreed that there was a difference between living in Japan and understanding Japanese society. Eleanor Jordan was a linguist who moved to Japan for her research. She argued that many Americans had no idea what Japanese society was like. Unless you went out of your way to meet Japanese people, she explained, you would just see "Americans everywhere." Jordan emphasized that it would take until the later stages of the occupation before "there was a little more feeling for the country as a Japanese nation rather than as a sort of branch of America."[54] Hence, like Finn and Sills, she asserted that interacting with the Japanese was a choice rather than a necessity. In sum, these women all agreed that the Japanese did not have distinct 'Oriental minds' that predisposed them to embrace extreme ideologies.

Women such as Finn, Sills, and Jordan emphasized that they were part of the occupation society on weekdays but explored the real Japan in their spare time.[55] They argued that their explorations of Japanese culture and society changed their lives by affecting the way they perceived art, food, architecture, and politics.[56] Additionally, some argued that their experiences sparked an interest in Japanese culture, history, and language that helped propel their careers.[57] Hence, like nineteenth and early twentieth-century women, they enriched their lives by engaging with foreign cultures. These cultures provided them with entertainment as well as avenues to enhance their societal standing.[58]

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[53] Sills, interview by Marlene Mayo, 2, 4, 7, 15-16, 25-26.
[54] Eleanor Jordan, interview by Marlene Mayo, *Oral History Project on the Allied Occupation of Japan*, University of Maryland, April 24, 1981, 15-16, 23.
[55] e.g., Luella Moffett, interview by Marlene Mayo, *Oral History Project on the Allied Occupation of Japan*, University of Maryland, September 11, 1979, 35.
[56] e.g., Elizabeth Chadwick Mark, interview by Kay Dove, *Oral History Project on the Allied Occupation of Japan*, University of Maryland, October 20, 1979, 33-34; Moffett, interview by Marlene Mayo, 46; Sills, interview by Marlene Mayo, 21.
[57] e.g., Mark, interview by Kay Dove, 33; Morden, interview by Kay Dove, 19-20.
[58] See Hoganson, *Consumers' Imperium*, 10-11; Yoshihara, *Embracing the East*, 6.

These women tended to distance themselves from Americans who lived 'artificial lives' in the American suburbia of occupation society. The latter category included Americans who adopted the theories on Japanese society that circulated most widely in US media, postulating that Japan lagged behind the US because of feudalism. It also included those who blamed the Pacific War on Japanese culture, those who believed that Japanese women's interest in American GIs stemmed from the soldiers' superior charm rather than from the women's economic predicaments, and those who argued that Japanese men were "lacking in proper forms of masculinity" conducive to freedom, democracy, and individualism, as Benedict had postulated while working for the OWI.[59]

The idea that Japanese men were disinterested in democracy, freedom, and individualism was soon rejected by American women who worked with them, such as Jean Morden. Morden had studied Japanese during the war because she believed it would help her find employment. In 1946, she moved to Japan to work as a translator for SCAP. Having grown tired of translating MacArthur's mail and eager to work with Japanese people, she soon applied for a job as a language teacher at the Army Education School in Yokohama. Here, she taught Japanese to US military personnel and English to Japanese citizens. Her male Japanese students, she recalled, "were always on time" and would jump to attention and bow when she entered the room. Because she was "not used to this sort of treatment as an American," she opted to sit around a large oval table where they could have discussions "in a more democratic way."[60]

Though taken aback by her students' politeness, Morden emphasized that they were extremely interested in learning about democracy and individualism. "That was what they all wanted to know," she emphasized, "*demokurashi*, how this worked." In more advanced classes, therefore, she decided to study Stephen Vincent Benét's *Creed for Americans*. It started with: "We believe in the dignity of every living soul, no matter in what body housed." Her students

[59] Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Alley*, 45; Yoshihara, *Embracing the East*, 178, 182.
[60] Morden, interview by Kay Dove, 1-3, 8, 11-12.

latched onto that phrase and wanted to discuss it at length. "We discussed and discussed that importance of the dignity of every and an individual Soul," she explained, "which is not in keeping with Japanese feelings. It really isn't." Arguing that the Japanese were used to a group philosophy wherein "the individual living soul is not that important," Morden emphasized that they spent "hours and hours" discussing what individualism meant.[61]

Morden thus rejected the idea that the character of Japanese men was to blame for Japanese militarism. Instead of characterizing them as 'lacking in proper forms of masculinity' conducive to freedom, democracy, and individualism, she emphasized that they were extremely interested in democracy and valuing the individual. Conceding that they were not used to individualism, Morden's emphasis on the men's eagerness to learn about it implies that they were not wired to reject it either. Instead, the men seemed as enthusiastic about democracy as Americans were. Accordingly, Morden argued, they "were behaving much more like American college students" by the end of the year. "[A]sking questions and discussing things in a very much more democratic way," they evidenced their compatibility with the US ideal.[62]

Other SCAP women trusted that the Japanese could easily embrace democracy too. Luella Moffett, who worked for SCAP as a secretary, met many democratic-minded Japanese citizens while traveling. She had lived in British India and the United Kingdom as a child but stayed in the US for a few years after the war before moving to Japan in 1949. She befriended a Japanese woman who worked with her as a translator for SCAP. Through this friend, Moffett met many Japanese citizens who subverted her expectations. One of them was a Japanese nobleman, Mr. Takagawa, who had lived one house away from the emperor's summer palace before the occupation. Because of his ties to the wartime regime, he had been subjected to SCAP's antimilitarist purges. After he found himself unable to continue his work and strapped for cash, Takagawa started breeding roses and opened a tea shop where he waited on his

[61] Morden, interview by Kay Dove, 22-23.
[62] Ibid., 24.

customers. Moffett emphasized her surprise, stating: "I was impressed. I couldn't see a nobleman in England doing that […] I mean, how democratic can you be, serving tea to the *hoi polloi*, so to speak." Hence, she expressed that the Japanese aristocracy took their loss in the war in stride and might have been less prideful and set on hierarchy than their British counterparts were.[63]

In all her other descriptions of Japanese citizens, Moffett similarly emphasized that they were serene, democratic-minded, and compatible with freedom. For instance, she mentioned a "very emancipated" former geisha and an admirably serene noblewoman who had lost everything after her husband had been purged by SCAP. Noting that these Japanese aristocrats not only took their nation's loss in the war in stride but were also more eager to embrace freedom and equality than their British counterparts, Moffett asserted that the Japanese did not strike her as extremists. Rather than incompatible with freedom and democracy but inclined to embrace fascist militarism, they appeared just like everyone else. If anything, they might have been even more interested in freedom and equality than some Westerners, according to Moffet. In short, Moffett's account undermines the idea that the Pacific War could be explained by lingering feudalism.[64]

Other US women agreed that the Japanese were like Westerners rather than predisposed to embrace extreme ideologies. Elizabeth Chadwick Mark moved to Japan with her parents and siblings in 1947. In 1949, she married an official from SCAP's communications center with whom she stayed in Japan until the occupation ended in 1952. Though Mark lived in Japan as a dependent, she met many Japanese citizens, either by volunteering as an English teacher, or because they were employed as her family's servants or acquainted with her husband. She was not convinced that Japanese imperialism had been facilitated by the population's propensity for

[63] Moffett, interview by Marlene Mayo, 1-8, 27, 30.
[64] Ibid., 28-29, 38-39. Moffett notes that the former geisha, Countess Kato, was "one of the most emancipated women [she had] ever seen" and that the serene noblewoman, Mrs. Midorikawa, was married to the former governor of Manchuria (which is why he was purged by SCAP).

ideological extremism. Instead, she argued that the Japanese were as susceptible to militarism as Westerners had been in the decades leading up to the Pacific War. When interviewed in 1979, she explained that "the Japanese were no more militaristic than anyone else" but rather believed that they needed an empire to be viewed as modern because most industrialized nations had one. Hence, Mark asserted that the Japanese's embrace of autocratic militarism stemmed from rational concerns such as their desire to industrialize and to be perceived as economically and militarily powerful. Put differently, she rejected the belief that Japanese imperialism was facilitated by feudal thinking patterns in favor of arguing that the Japanese's motivations were like those of Westerners.[65]

Fittingly, like Morden, Mark also rejected the idea that Japan had embraced autocratic militarism because Japanese men were 'lacking in proper forms of masculinity' conducive to freedom, democracy, and individualism. Instead, she argued that SCAP had merely encouraged the Japanese to embrace a "healthier type" of democracy than they previously had. She emphasized that this resulted from the constitutional revision that had "eradicated one of the principal defects" of the Meiji Constitution – i.e., "that the military was more or less independent." Hence, rather than framing militarism as the result of feudal thinking patterns, Mark posited that governmental structures had imperiled Japan's democracy.[66]

Similarly, she argued that Japanese citizens already understood that militarism was disadvantageous when the occupation started. When she arrived in Japan, she quickly noticed that there was a strong anti-militarist sentiment among the population, which her Japanese friends confirmed. "I don't think we had to teach them anything," she explained in 1979, "I think they learned it because they were intelligent enough to see what happened to them by this military adventurism." Re-emphasizing that militarism was mostly embraced because of

[65] Mark, interview by Kay Dove, 12-13, 19-21, 24, 34. Mark moved to Japan when she was nineteen years old and left at age 24.
[66] Ibid., 34-35.

economic considerations, Mark argued that the Japanese no longer needed it because they realized that they could get some of the same benefits through business.[67]

Like Moffett, Mark also questioned whether the Japanese were truly more docile than Americans. Wartime theories had rationalized Japan's embrace of autocratic militarism by arguing that its civilization was compromised by feudal mindsets that enticed people to reject individualism, submit themselves to authority, and embrace extreme ideologies. However, as Americans increasingly concluded that Japanese imperialism served economic goals, they questioned whether feudalism really pervaded the 'Oriental mind.' Mark noticed that the Japanese seemed unobtrusive to Westerners but emphasized that they were used to living in crowded spaces, rather than subservient. Elaborating on why she did not mind living with four Japanese servants and her family in one house, she explained: "I think with Westerners you feel this kind of pressure of somebody being in your house the way – a Japanese can live in a crowded atmosphere without bumping into others."[68]

Similarly, some US women understood that the devastation of the war had put many Japanese citizens in the position of servants. "Most of these people," Mark emphasized, "had not in their previous lives been servant class. They were above that level by far and much better educated." Accordingly, she refrained from describing her family's servants as subservient. Instead, she emphasized that their cook would tell her mother exactly what she had to do while her mother followed what he said. Additionally, she argued that the servants were as intrigued by her family as the other way around. "They laughed at us, and we laughed at them," she explained, "they got a lot of fun out of watching what we did." Hence, Mark did not perceive Japanese citizens as submissive. Instead, she understood that their ostensible subservience resulted from the disparity in authority and wealth between them and the Americans.[69]

[67] Mark, interview by Kay Dove, 35-36.
[68] Ibid., 17; see also Moffett, interview by Marlene Mayo, 27-30, 38-39.
[69] Mark, interview by Kay Dove, 17-18; see also, Moffett, interview by Marlene Mayo, 27-30.

Accordingly, several US women theorized that the Japanese took the occupation in stride because they were pragmatic. Whereas submissive behavior was linked to feudalism, pragmatism was admirable. Mark asserted that the Japanese did not always understand US officials' decisions, but nonetheless accepted them. Elaborating on the Japanese reaction to MacArthur's replacement in 1951, she explained: "I think that is one of the things that impressed me about the Japanese people […] they're willing to accept what is. They don't fight against it. They'll accept it." Similarly, Finn argued that the Japanese struck her as "the most utterly pragmatic people [she'd] ever seen" because they put up with the disrespectful behavior of some SCAP officials. Moffett, moreover, expressed admiration for the serenity of Japanese citizens, who never complained despite having lost almost everything during the war.[70]

2.2 Evaluating the occupation

Their rejection of the theories exotifying the Japanese should have put some Americans at odds with SCAP's ideology. However, most voiced approval of SCAP. Mark even argued that she grew to appreciate the occupation as a result of her stay in Japan. Since she rejected the idea that the Japanese were feudal, she must have had different reasons for her approval than officials believing that SCAP was successfully transforming feudal mindsets. As discussed in chapter 1, these officials feared that institutional changes would not safeguard democracy unless they were supported by corresponding mindsets. It seems unlikely that Americans who believed that the Japanese were already similar to Westerners would have been impressed by the eradication of feudalism. This section examines why they supported the occupation anyway. It argues that

[70] Finn, interview by Marlene Mayo, 28; Mark, interview by Kay Dove, 30-31; Moffett, interview by Marlene Mayo, 28-30.

they often referred to officials' lack of ideology instead of their 'victories in transforming a warrior race.'[71]

One reason for progressive Americans to support the occupation might have been the ostensible approval of it by the Japanese. Some US women noted their surprise at the Japanese attitude. Finn contemplated: "There must have been people who hated our guts, but where were they? […] We must have passed each other. We must have sat next to each other, but there was never any personal unpleasantness." SCAP official Beate Sirota Gordon spoke Japanese and knew people who had lived in Japan during the war. She explained the lack of unpleasantness as stemming from the Japanese's expectations. The girls, she argued, "were told to put ashes in their hair to make themselves ugly because they were told the GIs would come and rape." Consequently, she added, the Japanese were "absolutely stunned at the good way they were treated by the Americans."[72]

Some blamed such expectations on the way Europeans had treated Asians in the colonies. Moffett emphasized that she believed that SCAP was trying to "turn Japan into a friend, rather than an ex-enemy." In contrast, she argued, British officers would often disclose to her that they disapproved of SCAP's approach. These military officials suggested that the US "should have really stepped on the neck of Japan and crushed her" instead. Based on her childhood in colonial India, Moffett believed that the British would have done so if they had administered the occupation of Japan. "Even an English clerk, a very humble English nobody," she explained, "looked down on an Indian prince's black skin as a second-class citizen."[73]

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[71] Mark, interview by Kay Dove, 29; Miller, *Cold War Democracy*, 3-5, see also 7-12; Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, 22; Smith, *America's Mission*, 167.
[72] Finn, interview by Marlene Mayo, 28, 64-65; Beate Gordon, interview by Marlene Mayo, *Oral History Project on the Allied Occupation of Japan*, University of Maryland, December 8, 1978, 54; Mark, interview by Kay Dove, 30-31; Moffett, interview by Marlene Mayo, 28-30; Morden, interview by Kay Dove, 14-15; Sills, interview by Marlene Mayo, 11.
[73] Moffett, interview by Marlene Mayo, 20-21.

Several SCAP women credited MacArthur for the occupation's benevolence. Like Moffett, who emphasized MacArthur's objective to forge friendship, SCAP official Eleanor Hadley argued that MacArthur did not share the condescending attitude of some other Americans but rather "set a tone of great respect." Instead of framing defeat as a failure, she explained, he argued that Japan could become a pathbreaker in international affairs now that it had lost the ability to resort to war. Likewise, none of the women discussed in this chapter mentioned his emphasis on the alleged persistence of feudalism or his claimed victories in transforming Japanese minds. This allowed them to reconcile their disbelief in lingering feudalism with an approval of the occupation, leading Gordon to argue that the Japanese "felt towards MacArthur" and "revered him in the sense that he was giving them liberties that they had never dreamed that they could get."[74]

Instead of interpreting SCAP's endeavors as psychological deprogramming or spiritually transforming a warrior race, SCAP women praised officials for their pragmatism. Sills asserted that MacArthur was not ideologically motivated to transform Japanese mindsets. She explained: "I don't think he had a particular ideology of his own. He was a man who reacted to the moment." This 'reacting to the moment' could also be interpreted as capricious and utilitarianist. As discussed in chapter 1, MacArthur was a conservative Republican who wanted to run for the US presidency in 1948. Therefore, he has been accused of merely implementing New Deal-type policies in Japan because they appeared popular among the US electorate. These policies might have been abandoned because the mid-term elections of 1946 indicated that such policies were no longer in vogue. This means that MacArthur may have reacted to the moment

[74] Gordon, interview by Marlene Mayo, 55; Eleanor M. Hadley, interview by Marlene Mayo, *Oral History Project on the Allied Occupation of Japan*, University of Maryland, November 4, 1978, 32-33; Moffett, interview by Marlene Mayo, 20; see also Morden, interview by Kay Dove, 19, where she recalls lining up with other Americans and Japanese citizens to see MacArthur leaving SCAP's General Headquarters and standing in awe together; see also Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 223, Miller, *Cold War Democracy*, 22, 32-36, Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, 23-24, and Smith, *America's Mission*, 167 on MacArthur's Orientalism.

out of personal considerations, rather than because the situation in Japan demanded a change of course.[75]

Sills also appealed to pragmatism when voicing her approval of Ethel Weed. As the head of the CI&E's Women's Information Sub-Unit, Weed was responsible for promoting women's democratic participation. Sills argued that Weed was a pragmatic person, rather than an idealist. Recalling the "constant stream of young and older women going to her office in kimono," she noted that Weed was a warm, pleasant, and friendly person. Emphasizing that few people considered themselves feminists or "Women's Libbers" during the 1940s, Sills stated that she did not consider herself to be a feminist activist at the time, suggesting that Weed did not either. That Weed's activities constituted a feminist reform project resulted from her willingness to listen to Japanese women's concerns, according to Sills. Hence, like MacArthur, Weed was praised for reacting to the demands and requests of each moment.[76]

It is important to note that Sills' praise for Weed and MacArthur's lack of ideology mirrors Cold War rhetoric. This rhetoric emphasized that the US was not ideological, as ideologies belonged to the communist side of the conflict. Capitalism, they argued, was not an -ism in the ideological sense, but rather the most rational system to utilize. Similarly, 'pragmatism' was not an ideological -ism, but merely a way of doing things. Since Sills was interviewed in 1979, it is likely that she had adopted this rhetoric. It is, therefore, debatable whether MacArthur and Weed really lacked an ideological conviction, or that Sills just interpreted it this way in hindsight. What is likely, however, is that de-emphasizing officials' preoccupation with feudalism helped progressive Americans reconcile their rejection of popular theories about the Japanese with an approval of the US presence, including their own impact.

[75] Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 220; Masuda, *Cold War Crucible*, 26, 28-29; Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, 22; Sills, interview by Marlene Mayo, 28-29; Smith, *America's Mission*, 167.
[76] Sills, interview by Marlene Mayo, 56-57.

Moreover, whereas the belief that Americans had to rescue the Japanese from feudalism was questioned by many, the outcomes of the occupation – e.g., universal suffrage, economic growth, and women's entry to higher education – allowed even skeptics feel at ease with it. This was convenient for progressives who refused to endorse cultural stereotypes but were eager to work abroad. As female SCAP officials complained about the limited career options they had in the US and celebrated the rise of Japanese women in higher education and politics, it is likely that they did not condone the postwar trend of women returning to domestic roles. As their positions as overseas career women grew increasingly precarious, they might have felt pressed to legitimize their roles in the occupation – even if they disagreed with fellow officials. For this purpose, it was convenient that the occupation permitted some SCAP women to enhance Japanese women's rights, perhaps beyond what was reached in the United States.[77]

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that not all US officials endorsed the Orientalist theories about Japanese society that scholars emphasize as integral to the US-occupation of Japan. Instead, many US women rejected these theories in favor of formulating their own ideas. They concluded that the Japanese were like Americans, rather than submissive, feudal, and militaristic. Accordingly, they never stated in their interviews that Americans needed to transform Japanese citizens' minds. Whereas wartime planners might have concluded that democracy depended on mindsets and mentalities that were not yet shared by the Japanese, these women believed that institutional and legal reforms would suffice.

This makes it surprising that they supported an occupation that was led by a general proclaiming victories in transforming mindsets and emphasizing that Japan was compromised

[77] see May, *Homeward Bound*, 3-5, 9-12; Takeuchi, "Cold War Manifest Domesticity," 5, 19-23.

by feudalism. Significantly, some women not only argued that the occupation would have been worse if it were led by Europeans, but also that US officials were not ideologically motivated. MacArthur was praised for his 'lack of ideology' despite his claimed insight into the 'Oriental mind.' Similarly, Weed was admired for her willingness to react to the moment and listen to Japanese women's requests. As the next chapter argues, these requests were fulfilled with various measures of success, based on the opposition that alliances between Japanese and American women faced from alliances between conservative US officials and the Japanese politicians with whom *they* cooperated.

Chapter 3: SCAP's women's enfranchisement

In 1948, Elizabeth Spencer moved to Japan to organize entertainment for SCAP and military personnel. As a service club director, she often worked with Japanese citizens whom she hired as performers. When interviewed in 1979, she reflected on her sense of what the US was doing in Japan. She answered: "[W]e were really working side by side. I'm sure the Japanese, deep in their hearts, had ill feelings because they […] didn't win. But we worked together beautifully." Hence, like other US women in postwar Japan, she framed the occupation as a cooperative effort rather than an imposition of US culture. Similarly, Morden explained that she believed that the US was helping Japan evolve into a more democratic society. Conceding that the Japanese initially distrusted Americans, she argued that they "found it to be just the opposite." They were "as appreciative of us as we [were] of them," she explained, because "all made the best of a very unhappy, bad situation."[78]

The emphasis on cooperation is significant because it conflicts with the view that Americans merely imposed their own culture. Conversely, it aligns with the views of the women discussed in chapter 2 who concluded that the Japanese were already as compatible with democracy as Americans were. Instead of worrying about the potential resurgence of subversive ideologies, officials who perceived the Japanese as similar to Americans were at odds with more conservative colleagues. Acknowledging that SCAP promoted certain ways of thinking in Japan – via censorship, information campaigns, red and antimilitarist purges, and legal reforms – this chapter focuses on SCAP women who tried to enhance women's rights. Arguing that these women were increasingly unable to push for the reforms that they desired, this chapter sheds light on the tensions between conservative and progressive SCAP officials. Examining

[78] Morden, interview by Kay Dove, 22; Elizabeth Spencer, interview by Marlene Mayo, *Oral History Project on the Allied Occupation of Japan*, University of Maryland, September 12, 1979, 18-19.

the increasing opposition that progressive (female) officials faced during the reverse course, it explains why some of them became complicit in conservative policies.

To uncover the tensions between SCAP's liberal and conservative officials, this chapter examines three types of reforms that affected the status of Japanese women. The first section analyzes the constitutional revision, focusing on Beate Sirota Gordon's efforts to include adequate women's rights articles. The second section examines how SCAP officials became divided on the issue of the Japanese family system when the Japanese revised their civil and criminal codes. The third section explores efforts to enhance Japanese women's lives by promoting American ways of housekeeping. Conceding that this demonstrates that female officials indeed exported the American Cold War domesticity ideology, it argues that they did so unintentionally, hoping to alleviate Japanese women's burdens rather than to impose their own culture.

3.1 Revising the constitution

In December 1945, 22-year-old Beate Sirota Gordon moved from the United States to Japan. She was the first civilian woman to do so after the Pacific War had ended. She was eager to go because her parents lived there and she had not heard from them since the war broke out in 1941. She had lived in Japan herself as a child but left in 1939 to study in the United States. She soon found her parents who had been evacuated to Karuizawa with the other European residents from Tokyo. After finding her parents, Gordon stayed in Japan to work for the Political Affairs Division of SCAP's Government Section. In February 1946, this division was selected to write the Civil Rights sections of the new Japanese constitution that SCAP would present to the Japanese government. Because she was the only woman on the Civil Rights

Committee, its chair, Pieter Roest, suggested that she should write the section on women's rights. "I was delighted," she stated in her memoir, "I had been given a plum."[79]

Because of her background, Gordon's views on Japanese society differed from those of other Americans. Though she was naturalized as a US citizen, she was born in Austria and had grown up in Japan. Her parents were of Russian-Jewish descent but felt at home in Japan. Gordon only ended up in the United States because studying there seemed safer than studying in Europe, where the Second World War seemed imminent during the summer of 1939. Though she had lived in the US during the war, she emphasized that her views on Japanese society and Japanese women's needs were informed by her childhood experiences. Accordingly, she affirmed some popular theories about Japanese culture while rejecting others. For instance, she believed that Japanese men would try to hamper women's enfranchisement, but questioned whether adopting the US model would help Japanese women sufficiently.[80]

Because Gordon's a-typical background and perspectives affected the women's rights articles she drafted, the revision of the Japanese constitution reveals the tension between her views on Japanese society and her role as an SCAP official. This section argues that the women's rights articles in the Shōwa Constitution of 1947 were influenced by Gordon's willingness to help Japanese women and her conviction that she correctly understood their needs. Additionally, it argues that the views of higher-ranking SCAP officials (who had to approve the draft before presenting it to the Japanese) limited Gordon's ability to affect Japanese women's lives through the constitutional revision. These other officials were less familiar with Japan and more inclined to perceive the American system as a one-size-fits-all solution for democratizing nations around the world.

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[79] Beate Sirota Gordon, *The Only Woman in the Room: A Memoir of Japan, Human Rights, and the Arts* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), 22, 106; see also ibid., interview by Marlene Mayo, 26-28, 33-34, 43, 46.

[80] Gordon, interview by Marlene Mayo, 1-5, 11; ibid., *The Only Woman in the Room*, 60, 68-69, 76, 82.

For SCAP, revising the Meiji Constitution was vital to safeguard Japan's democracy. When this constitution went into effect in 1889, it signified Japan's transition into modernity. Following the European model, the Meiji Constitution granted the elected parliament – the Japanese Diet – some control over the executive branch. Consequently, Diet representatives were able to cut military budgets and oppose the military's expansionist designs during the 1920s. Despite their formal authority, however, Japan's political parties remained weak in comparison to the state and military, often proving unable to sway public opinion. Therefore, as the military boosted its popularity, it could gradually replace parliament as the center of political power.[81]

After the Japanese surrender in 1945, US officials believed that it was vital to enshrine the parliament's power in the constitution to ensure that militarists or other groups would never replace the elected government again. Initially, they assigned the constitutional revision to the Japanese. According to Gordon, however, the appointed officials "were dragging their feet" and "presenting drafts which were completely unacceptable." Therefore, MacArthur decided that SCAP officials would draft a new constitution instead. Subsequently, on February 4, 1946, the Chief of the Government Section, Courtney Whitney, assembled his staff and announced that they had received the order "to do the historic work of drafting a new constitution for the Japanese people." The first draft, he noted, needed to be finished by February 12, only eight days later.[82]

When interviewed in 1978, Gordon recalled the excitement and confusion that came with their unexpected task. "It was a very short thing," she emphasized, "we all rushed out. And the first thing I thought of was, I said, 'My God, it's such an opportunity. […] But what do I

[81] Smith, *America's Mission*, 149-150. The Japanese military's popularity rose significantly during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, after successfully annexing Korea and Manchuria and winning the First Sino-Japanese and the Russo-Japanese War.
[82] Gordon, interview by Marlene Mayo, 42; ibid., *The Only Woman in the Room*, 103-105; Miller, *Cold War Democracy*, 45.

know about constitutions?'" The constitutional lawyers in the Government Section would only take the final decisions. The preparatory work, conversely, rested on the shoulders of people who had little to no background in legislation. Feeling "a real sense of mission" and the desire to "really do something wonderful," they examined other constitutions that they could use as "some sort of model." Gordon reflected: "I looked at all the constitutions that I could get my hands on. I picked things from various ones that I thought would give the most specific rights to the women."[83]

Because she had only arrived in Japan in late December and already started working on the constitution in February, Gordon had little time to consult with Japanese women. She had visited the Japanese Diet and listened to female politicians who had gained access to politics via SCAP's Election Law in December 1945. However, Gordon emphasized that she lacked the time to get to know them personally, as officials of the Civil Information and Education Section had done. Therefore, her perspectives on women's needs remained largely informed by her childhood observations. Based on these, Gordon feared that Japanese men would be reluctant to grant women equal rights. "I was absolutely sure," she explained in 1978, "that men would do everything to hinder anything that wasn't just an exact implementation of what it said in the constitution." Her advocacy to enshrine women's rights in the constitution was thus based on her fear that Japanese men would uphold patriarchal norms. It is unclear, however, whether she believed that the Japanese were inherently more patriarchal than Americans. Alternatively, she may have hoped to enhance women's rights beyond what was achieved in the US.[84]

[83] Gordon, interview by Marlene Mayo, 41, 44, 47-48; see also ibid., *The Only Woman in the Room*, 106-107; see also Takemae, *The Allied Occupation of Japan*, 277, emphasizing that those on the Civil Rights Committee (Gordon, Roest, and Harry Emerson Wildes) lacked expertise in legislation, but shared an acute awareness of the importance of codifying human rights into law and had experience with living in other cultures.
[84] Gordon, interview by Marlene Mayo, 46-47; see also Susan Pharr, "The Politics of Women's Rights," in *Democratizing Japan: The Allied Occupation*, ed. Robert E. Ward and Yoshikazu Sakamoto, 221–552 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 227.

It was partly because of her views on Japanese men that Gordon rejected the idea that the United States could serve as an adequate model for Japan. Emphasizing that the American constitution was "just not the one that [gave] most rights" to women, she consulted European constitutions too. She found the constitutions of the Weimar Republic, Scandinavian nations, and the Soviet Union especially useful. The Soviet constitution spelled out specific rights for women. This seemed important, since the civil rights enshrined in the Meiji Constitution had been violated because the language was vague. Hoping to prevent this in the future, Gordon used her childhood memories to gauge which rights were essential to Japanese women. She decided that they not only needed suffrage and democracy but also guarantees for healthcare, education, and financial support during childcare and pregnancy. Therefore, she wrote detailed provisions for social rights, which more Americo-centric SCAP officials wanted to delegate to the civil code.[85]

Gordon viewed Japanese society slightly differently than her colleagues. It was both her apprehension about Japanese men and her memories of Japanese women that made her decide that the specifically worded women's rights provisions of the Soviet constitution would suit Japanese women better than the more general statements of the American constitution. Her insistence to include detailed provisions for women's social welfare set her apart from those who trusted that these would be enshrined in the civil codes and those who merely wanted to enfranchise women politically rather than socially and economically. As historian Jeanne Gleich-Anthony argues, MacArthur believed that female voters would prevent a resurgence of militarism because he perceived women to be "pacifists by nature." Additionally, he hoped that the Election Law of December 1945 – which granted women suffrage and entrance into politics – would help him win over female voters in the US, as he was still hoping to run for the US

[85] Gordon, interview by Marlene Mayo, 47-48; ibid., *The Only Woman in the Room*, 107-108.

presidency in the elections of 1948.[86] Gordon's desire for Japanese women evidently exceeded this desire for their political enfranchisement and was focused on improving their daily lives.

However, Gordon's position within SCAP meant that other officials needed to approve her draft before presenting it to the Japanese. These officials were apprehensive about Gordon's wordiness and her inclusion of provisions for social welfare. Moreover, they did not share her conviction that Japanese bureaucrats would neglect to protect women's wellbeing in the civil code unless the constitution mandated this. Instead, Charles Kades, Milo Rowell, and Alfred Hussey were steeped in the American legal tradition but possessed little knowledge of Japan. Furthermore, the latter two disliked centralized governance. This encouraged them to oppose provisions that would require government intervention. Asserting that it was impossible to impose a social mode by law, they decided to replace Gordon's seven social welfare provisions with one general statement.[87]

In 1978, Gordon appeared ambivalent about these changes. She argued that the officials of the Steering Committee had preserved "maybe 80 percent" of her draft's content. However, she emphasized that they had changed the layout "very dramatically." All her provisions for social welfare were combined into one paragraph. "If you see the constitution now," she explained, "there's an awful lot in one paragraph." This paragraph, Article 25 of the Shōwa Constitution, states that "in all spheres of life, the State shall use its endeavors for the promotion and extension of social welfare and security, and of public health." Her specific mandates for maternity leave and child support were removed from the draft and left in the hands of Japanese

[86] Gleich-Anthony, "Democratizing Women: American Women and the US-occupation of Japan, 1945–1951" (PhD diss., Ohio University, 2007), 41-44; Masuda, *Cold War Crucible*, 26; Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, 23-24; see also Smith, *America's Mission*, 169.
[87] Gleich-Anthony, "Democratizing Women," 58-65; Gordon, *The Only Woman in the Room*, 115-116, see also 117-118, for the rejected provisions.

bureaucrats revising the civil code. Therefore, Gordon felt strongly that she had been thwarted by the men of the Government Section.[88]

However, the Equality Clause, Article 14, did end up in the final draft, stating: "All people are equal under the law and there shall be no discrimination in political, economic or social relations because of race, creed, sex, social status or family origin." As political scientist Susan Pharr has observed, this type of equal rights provision – explicitly mandating equal rights for the sexes – was included in some European constitutions when Gordon was writing her draft. The American constitution, conversely, still lacked such a provision in 1947. An Equal Rights Amendment had been proposed in 1923 but was approved by the US Congress until 1972. When Gordon was interviewed in 1978, it was still controversial and had not been ratified by the requisite number of states yet. As of now, in 2023, the American constitution still lacks an amendment specifically mandating gender equality.[89]

Besides containing an Equality Clause, Japan's new constitution protected women's rights by mandating equality in marriage. Article 24 states that "marriage shall be based on the mutual consent of both sexes, and it shall be maintained through mutual cooperation with the equal rights of husband and wife as a basis." This provision was progressive in 1947 because very few constitutions guaranteed equality between spouses. As Pharr observed, only the constitutions of Poland and the USSR mandated equality in marriage by the 1980s. Because of the Equality Clause and Article 24, Gordon could readily perceive SCAP's constitutional revision as a victory for women's rights.[90]

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[88] Constitution of Japan, accessed August 25, 2023, https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html#:~:text=Article%2014.,social%20status%20or%20family%20origin, Article 25; see also Gleich-Anthony, "Democratizing Women," 61, 66; Gordon, interview by Marlene Mayo, 47, see also ibid., *The Only Woman in the Room*, 115-118.

[89] Pharr, "The Politics of Women's Rights," 224-225.

[90] Constitution of Japan, Article 24, cited from Pharr, "The Politics of Women's Rights," 224; see also Pharr, "The Politics of Women's Rights," 225. Pharr adds that equality in marriage was protected by the civil codes of the Scandinavian and most communist nations at that time.

It is important to note, however, that Gordon still Orientalized Japan, despite her familiarity with its culture. As Koikari emphasizes, her family's residence in Tokyo *was* a site of imperialism dependent on Japanese women's subordination to the European women who employed them. Consequently, some of Gordon's ideas about Japanese society came from Japanese women with a lower economic status, such as the family housekeeper. Others were informed by the gatherings her mother hosted for Western and Japanese officials, artists, and other "interesting people" who were well off.[91] Their conversations often Orientalized Japanese culture from a Western colonial perspective arguing that the society was less advanced and in need of guidance. Additionally, their exotification of Japanese women increasingly overlapped with the discourse of Japanese imperial politics that emphasized women's oppression to erase their complicity in racism, nationalism, and colonialism.[92]

Gordon's contradictory endorsement of imposing reform from above and enhancing Japanese citizens' rights was widely shared among SCAP personnel when she worked there from late 1945 until early 1947. Despite her a-typical background, she accepted and reinforced Orientalist perceptions of the East. Instead of questioning the whether the Japanese should write their own laws, she was 'delighted' to be able to 'really do something wonderful' for the Japanese people. During the initial stages of the occupation, Gordon emphasized, an interest in reform was shared among officials regardless of whether one voted for the Republicans or the Democrats. However, it were the 'New Dealers' who were most willing to push for far-reaching reforms.[93]

These New Dealers were later criticized for implementing reforms that were too radical or fast-paced. Sills emphasized that SCAP's New Dealers were not radical at all but rather "young, idealistic liberals […] what we would consider now [i.e., in 1979] middle-of-the-road

[91] Gordon, interview by Marlene Mayo, 3.
[92] Koikari, *Pedagogy of Democracy*, 59-60.
[93] Gordon, interview by Marlene Mayo, 41-42; ibid., *The Only Woman in the Room*, 106.

reformist liberals, Rooseveltians." However, from 1947 onward, New Dealers were often perceived as an obstacle to SCAP's goals. As US officials shifted their focus from promoting democracy towards rebuilding Japan's economy, the left-wing politics and activism that arose during the initial stages of the occupation were discouraged (as MacArthur's cancellation of the labor strike of February 1947 indicated).[94]

More importantly, US officials' increasing weariness of reformism encouraged them to cooperate with Japanese conservatives who similarly privileged economic growth over equity. As political scientist Kurt Steiner observed, the subsequent split between New Dealers and conservative SCAP officials affected debates around legal reforms. Whereas they used to promote reformism, US officials increasingly argued that SCAP's policies needed to fit Japan's "contemporary social realities" if they were to find the broad acceptance needed to ensure their permanence. With 'fitting the contemporary social realities,' they specifically referred to Japanese conservatives' desire to retain the Japanese family system, even though Japanese progressives and women's rights activists – also part of the 'contemporary social reality' – had pleaded to abolish this system for decades.[95]

Whereas the debates around family system coincided with the initial stages of SCAP's reverse course (in early 1947), the debates around the constitutional revision of February 1946 already hinted at the impending shift. When discussing the mandates for women's social and economic rights, Gordon and her colleagues opposed the Steering Committee's views that such provisions did not belong in a constitution. When Rowell argued that they could not impose a new mode of social thought upon a country, Gordon's colleague Harry Emerson Wildes

[94] Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 267-273; Miller, *Cold War Democracy*, 6, 12-13, 48-50; Sills, interview by Marlene Mayo, 5. As noted in the introduction, not all 'New Dealers' had been involved in President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal politics in the US. Instead, the term 'New Dealer' was used more broadly to connote those who approved of New Deal-type policies and hoped to implement them in Japan.

[95] Kurt Steiner, "The Occupation and the Reform of the Japanese Civil Code," in *Democratizing Japan: The Allied Occupation*, ed. Robert E. Ward and Yoshikazu Sakamoto, 188-220 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 208-211. Steiner was involved in the civil code reform himself (while working for SCAP's Legal Section). This has likely affected his analysis.

protested that SCAP had "the responsibility to effect a social revolution in Japan." Hence, even at this point, the high-ranking official of the Steering Committee was more apprehensive about far-reaching reforms than the lower-ranking progressives of the Civil Rights Committee.[96]

That the window for progressive reforms was closing was signaled by the Military Intelligence Section. Around the time that Gordon returned to the United States, in the Spring of 1947, this division issued a memorandum titled "Leftist Infiltration to SCAP." It contained a list of "pro-leftist" and "pro-communist" US officials who had given "every indication of a relentless effort to subvert the occupation." Gordon met most of the criteria: she had a Russian background, had applied to enter an American college, had recently acquired US citizenship, possessed a critical stance toward occupation policies, and was employed as a research expert. Additionally, she was suspected of leftist sympathies because she was acquainted with artists, intellectuals, musicians, and writers. Koikari notes that Gordon was specifically accused of "an overwhelming dislike for the Japanese police and bureaucracy." Moreover, the memorandum stated that there was "something inconsistent, if not dangerous, in a young immature person of this kind of obscure background […] wielding the power of the United States […] on matters which vitally affect the success of the occupation." As Gordon was initially welcomed for her firsthand experience with Japanese society – i.e., her 'obscure background' – the memorandum reveals that SCAP started to perceive officials differently from 1947 onwards, especially if they potentially held leftist views. This indicates that relatively reformist New Dealers had to maneuver more carefully in Japan after Gordon had left.[97]

[96] Pharr, "The Politics of Women's Rights," 231, see also 238-239, arguing that initiatives for women's rights increasingly came from lower-ranking officials from the reverse course onward, as SCAP's leadership increasingly accommodated Japanese conservatives, fearing that progressive reforms would uproot Japan's social fabric; see also Gordon, *The Only Woman in the Room*, 115-116, also narrating how the Civil Rights Committee and the Steering Committee debated her draft.

[97] Koikari, *Pedagogy of Democracy*, 66-67. She adds that SCAP officials allegedly sought after the job title of 'research expert' with the objective of gaining access to classified material. However, there is no evidence that Gordon ever sought after this title. Instead, it was given to her because of her relative expertise on Japan.

3.2 Abolishing the *ie* system

When reporting on the activities of SCAP's Civil Information and Education section, Sills witnessed many Japanese women whom this department was supposed to help gain equality with men. They surprised her because their nervous demeanors did not seem to match their activist drives. Sills recalled that they were "very shy" and "constantly smiling and tittering behind with their hands over their mouths." And yet, she emphasized, these women had clearly participated in feminist activities. Because of her work on the CI&E, Sills discovered that the shy demeanors of some Japanese women did not preclude them from effectively advocating for women's rights. Likewise, many other SCAP women concluded that seemingly submissive Japanese women were eager and able to advocate for themselves. Accordingly, the CI&E relied heavily on Japanese women to spread their messages and gauge which reforms to implement.[98]

As noted in the previous section, the cooperation between progressive US officials and Japanese politicians and activists became increasingly important over the course of the occupation. Whereas women's rights were initially championed to signal SCAP's benevolence, the onset of the reverse course in 1947 meant that high-ranking SCAP officials increasingly relied on the support of Japanese conservatives. To ensure the conservatives' support for partial remilitarization and economic reconstruction, US officials could sacrifice policies for social and cultural change, including those pertaining to women's rights. This shift in priorities meant that progressives had to be increasingly creative and persistent when promoting women's rights. A solution that they found was aligning with progressive Japanese professionals and politicians who were not part of the cabinet but nevertheless able to advocate for the reforms they desired.

This section examines how this cooperation between progressive SCAP officials and Japanese professionals and politicians played out with regards to the civil code revisions.

[98] Sills, interview by Marlene Mayo, 57.

Though it was clear that the new constitution required the Japanese government to revise the civil code, there was considerable debate about the correct interpretation of the women's rights articles (supporting Gordon's apprehension about using vague language). On the one hand, conservative politicians wanted to retain the traditional Japanese family system. On the other, there was a contingent of female Diet members who had been advocating for the abolition of this system for decades. With the support of SCAP's Civil Information & Education Section and Japanese lawyers and activists, the traditional family system was eventually rendered unlawful but not without facing considerable opposition from Japanese conservatives and their allies within SCAP.

Scholars emphasize that SCAP's efforts to enhance women's rights were not only radical and far reaching, but also imposed from above because of a belief in feudalism. Moreover, historian Yuka Tsuchiya emphasizes, the emancipation of women "did not exist as a goal by itself" but was part of the larger strategy to prevent a re-embrace of militarism and transform 'feudal' thinking patterns into democratic ones. Hence, the goal of helping women was always preceded by concerns about the stability of the region. As such, it was easily abandoned when US officials started to fear that a communist revolution might break out if they would not rebuild Japan's economy. The rise of such concerns – agitated by large scale labor protests and the conviction that communism thrived on poverty – might have aided US officials' insistence that it was vital to only implement reforms that were suitable to Japan's 'contemporary social realities.'[99]

This increasing conservatism was reflected in the leadership of the Civil Information & Education Section. Its first Chief, Kermit Dyke, had worked for the Office of War Information and for MacArthur's headquarters in the South Pacific. As head of Troop Information and

[99] Steiner, "The Occupation and the Reform of the Japanese Civil Code," 209-211; Yuka Moriguchi Tsuchiya, "Democratizing the Japanese Family: The Role of the Civil Information and Education Section in the Allied Occupation 1945-1952," *Japanese Journal of American Studies* 5 (1994), 138; see also Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, 5-6, 78-80, 91, discussing US officials' rising concerns about communism.

Education he was tasked with bolstering the morale of soldiers. Hence, Dyke had extensive experience with inspiring new ways of thinking. However, he was also concerned enough about women's rights to want to dedicate an entire division to them, inviting criticism from more conservative colleagues. In May 1946, Dyke was replaced by Donald Nugent, a conservative who had previously served as a psychological warfare officer. Nugent feared that 'politically naïve' Japanese women were vulnerable to communist influences. Their well-being was of secondary importance to him compared to the greater task of dissuading the Japanese from embracing subversive ideologies.[100]

Despite Nugent's appointment, women's issues remained central to the CI&E. Though he opposed the establishment of a separate women's rights division, the Education Division had to focus on women because women's education had to be reformed to facilitate their entrance to universities (which a directive by MacArthur had recently legalized). Additionally, the constitutional revision and the Election Law of 1945 required the Information Division to inform Japanese citizens about changes in women's rights. For this purpose, it established a Women's Information Sub-Unit which was headed by Ethel Weed. Because its employees spoke little to no Japanese, this branch relied heavily on Japanese women to spread its messages. In turn, Japanese women conveyed their needs and utilized the CI&E's media channels to promote the reforms they desired.[101]

Their requests included the abolition of the traditional Japanese household system that privileged men in marriage, divorce, parenthood, and inheritance. Some Japanese women had already advocated for the abolition of this patriarchal authoritarian family system before the war. Furthermore, in the 1920s, some male politicians had argued to replace this system with a

[100] Gleich-Anthony, "Democratizing Women," 91.
[101] See Gleich-Anthony, "Democratizing Women," 92, listing all six of the CI&E's divisions. Whereas Gordon claimed to have been the first *civilian* woman to arrive in postwar Japan in late 1945, Weed preceded her as a *military* woman of the Women's Army Corps, arriving shortly after the surrender. The Women's Information Sub-Unit is commonly referred to as the 'women's information branch' in scholarship as well as by former SCAP officials themselves. I will do the same.

nuclear family system, deeming the latter more modern. In the postwar era, these actors felt emboldened by the new constitution. Noting that Article 24 required equality in marriage while Article 14 prohibited discrimination against women in social and economic relations, they argued that Japan's *ie* system was unconstitutional. However, some conservative politicians remained unconvinced that the new constitution required its abolition. When debates arose, progressives felt emboldened by SCAP's earlier promotion of women's rights and democracy, which signaled to them that the agency would support the incorporation of equal rights provisions in Japan's civil and criminal codes.[102]

Americans had agreed that the *ie* system was outdated and preserved feudal hierarchies. Under the *ie* system, a family unit was made up of multiple generations living under one roof within a hierarchy (usually headed by the eldest male). As Miller notes, US officials argued that this system primed Japanese citizens to perceive themselves as units of a family and act in accordance with the family's interests. By extension, this also instructed them to perceive themselves as subjects of the state and act in accordance with the interests of the state. A nuclear family system, on the other hand, was conducive to individualism and democracy. This focus on the ideological implications of the family system came at the expense of more practical considerations. Consequently, Tsuchiya argues, reformers forgot that the *ie* system also served as a welfare system for extended family, which was vital to the well-being of those who were poor, widowed, or physically weak.[103]

The postwar push to abolish the *ie* system came from Japanese women with ties to SCAP. They had initially assisted in translating, but increasingly advised on social issues. As Tsuchiya notes, the CI&E's predecessor had issued a directive stating that some Japanese citizens were disposed to assist in demilitarization. These tended to be on the left side of the

[102] Steiner, "The Occupation and the Reform of the Japanese Civil Code," 190-192, 200; Tsuchiya, "Democratizing the Japanese Family," 138.
[103] Miller, *Cold War Democracy*, 33; Tsuchiya, "Democratizing the Japanese Family," 156.

political spectrum and included prominent Japanese feminists. Among them was Kato Shizue, a birth control activist and socialist who was elected to the Japanese Diet in 1946. She recommended Ethel Weed to hire Toshiko Kabashima and Nobuko Takahashi as her assistants. They ended up relating their experiences and opinions, besides translating, interpreting, and gathering information on Japanese women.[104]

Weed met even more Japanese women through her investigation of women's organizations. In hopes of finding organizations to cooperate with, the women's information branch examined all of them and labeled them as conservative, neutral, or progressive. The conservative ones represented housewives and were ideologically and structurally most similar to the Greater Japan Women's Association.[105] The neutral and progressive organizations, on the other hand, were often sympathetic to leftist ideas. Weed perceived the progressive Women's Democratic Club as a model for future women's organizations in Japan. It counted Marxists, liberals, and conservatives among its members. Weed consulted with all of them. Their conversations, Tsuchiya argues, created a basis of unity for the goals desired by progressive SCAP officials and Japanese feminists. One of these goals was the abolition of the *ie* system, which depended on the revision of Japan's civil and criminal codes.[106]

These revisions spurred debates in the Japanese Diet. On the one hand, the Diet's Legislation Deliberation Committee concluded that the constitution did not require the abolition of provisions upholding the *ie* system. On the other, a contingent of female Diet members and other progressives argued that the *ie* system had to be abolished anyway because it preserved

[104] Tsuchiya, "Democratizing the Japanese Family," 142-143.
[105] Barbara Molony, "From 'Mothers of Humanity' to 'Assisting the Emperor': Gendered belonging in the Wartime Rhetoric of Japanese Feminist Ichikawa Fusae," *Pacific Historical Review* 80, no. 1 (2011), 9-10. Molony notes that the Greater Japan Women's Association was established in 1942 by merging various feminist, Christian, and social reform groups with the patriotic civil society groups that were directed by the militarist government. Consequently, this organization was associated with the wartime regime and its ideology, including the view that women were primarily wives and mothers rather than public persons.
[106] Gleich-Anthony, "Democratizing Women," 105-106; Tsuchiya, "Democratizing the Japanese Family," 143-144. Tsuchiya notes that the wide variety of ideologies that the members of the Women's Democratic Club held later caused the organization to split.

feudal hierarchies. Those opposing the system referred to a memorandum that a group of female lawyers had presented to SCAP officials of the Legal, Government, and Civil Information and Education Sections. This memorandum pleaded for a nuclear family system, arguing that the *ie* system was "one of the grave remnants of feudalism" that continued to impose hardship on women. SCAP officials' approval of the memorandum signaled that the US would support the abolition of the *ie* system.[107]

However, unlike the constitution, the civil and criminal codes were not to be imposed by SCAP, as it trusted that Japanese officials would follow the constitution's demands. As Steiner notes, the legislation was to be based on Japanese drafts that had to be approved by SCAP, giving the latter an advisory role. This hands-off approach allowed officials to choose sides in the debates without undermining their employer's view. Consequently, the CI&E's women's information branch ended up cooperating extensively with Japanese politicians, reporters, lawyers, and activists who promoted the abolition of the *ie* system. More conservative officials, on the other hand, were willing to listen to Japanese conservatives' concerns about social unrest. Steiner notes that Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida contrasted the 'New Dealers' unfavorably with the 'soldiers' of SCAP in his memoirs. Whereas the New Dealers often promoted social and cultural reforms, the soldiers were 'practical' and "recognized the dangers of social unrest."[108]

The sides that SCAP officials took in the debates around the civil code were reflective of their views on Japanese society. As Steiner notes, some officials held a static view of

[107] Steiner, "The Occupation and the Reform of the Japanese Civil Code," 196-201.
[108] Gleich-Anthony, "Democratizing Women," 21-28, 84-87, 131-134, 180; Steiner, "The Occupation and the Reform of the Japanese Civil Code," 208-209; Tsuchiya, "Democratizing the Japanese Family," 145-146. Gleich-Anthony notes that Japanese women opposing the *ie* system often appeared on the CI&E's Japanese language radio program *Women's Hour*, which was the first radio program hosted by a Japanese woman. This program encouraged women to vote for reforms, explained what it meant for men and women to have equality before the law, and discussed music, culture, and daily life. At the *Women's Hour* roundtable, Japanese women emphasized that the *ie* system was an obstacle to gender equality that had been opposed for decades. Furthermore, they debated whether Gordon's social and economic rights provisions should have been included in the final draft of the constitution, agreeing that they should at least be enshrined in the civil code.

Japanese culture, meaning that they believed that it was essentially different form Western cultures. Because they assumed that the Japanese essence was fixed and homogenous, they believed that social and cultural reforms could only have superficial and ephemeral results. As they viewed Japanese society as largely unchanging, it is unsurprising that some officials did not want to risk their cooperation with Japanese conservatives for reforms that would not last. The New Dealers, conversely, were willing to push for reforms that challenged contemporary norms because they held a dynamic and pluralistic view of Japanese culture. This view was informed by the Japanese citizens with whom they interacted, who were progressive compared to the cabinet.[109]

That the *ie* system was eventually abolished via the civil code indicates that American and Japanese progressives could successfully advocate for the reforms they desired, even if they did not hold the highest positions within SCAP or the Japanese government. As the next section argues, lower-level officials working in the field could also implement progressive reforms if they were creative and persistent. For those far from Tokyo, there was more room to improvise and respond directly to Japanese citizens' requests without interference from SCAP or the Japanese government. Their experiences reveal that cultural reforms were still implemented after the reverse course had set in.

3.3 Beyond the reverse course

Whereas SCAP and the Japanese government enshrined gender equality in legislation, it was up to the US military to ensure that Japanese citizens understood what the new laws entailed. Therefore, the Military Government dispatched officers to monitor the implementation of women's rights policies. Carmen Johnson was one of them. Initially, she questioned whether

[109] Steiner, "The Occupation and the Reform of the Japanese Civil Code," 209-211.

legal requirements could change Japan, since feudal traditions seemed too deeply rooted and concepts such as democracy and gender equality too unfamiliar to the average Japanese. Nevertheless, she and her colleagues devised role-plays to teach Japanese women how to live democratically. Japanese women's eager participation in these skits assured Johnson that the nation would democratize after all.[110]

Scholars have argued that the skits promoted an American lifestyle characterized by consumerism and domesticity rather than gender equality. Additionally, they note that officers could deny Japanese participants' requests in favor of addressing topics of their own choosing. When Johnson was invited by a Japanese women's club to talk about happiness, she declined and urged to discuss the practice of issuing motions. As Koikari argues, she could not imagine that Japanese women would be more interested in happiness than in democratic procedures. The club president's "blank look" at her proposal to discuss motions convinced Johnson that she failed to understand that the topic was of crucial importance.[111]

As this example suggests, Women's Affairs Officers could choose which practices to promote. As the constitution and civil code did not mandate certain lifestyles, officers had much leeway to promote gender equality as they saw fit. This section examines the reasoning of US women for promoting certain types of womanhood to the Japanese. On the surface, the policies the women devised and endorsed served to free up Japanese women's time, facilitating their entrance to universities and heightening their involvement in democratic processes. On a deeper level, the methods they suggested were informed by the officers' own backgrounds as American women of the 1940s and 1950s. Though this supports scholars' criticism that Women's Affairs Officers promoted US culture, their methods to achieve women's liberation also correspond to

[110] Koikari, *Pedagogy of Democracy*, 113-114.
[111] Ibid., 114; see also ibid., "Exporting Democracy?" 34-36, ibid., "Feminism and the Cold War," 4, McAndrew, "Beauty, Soft Power, and the Politics of Womanhood," 86, and Takeuchi, "Cold War Manifest Domesticity," 9-10, also criticizing the officers' promotion of consumerism and domesticity.

the pressure female officials experienced themselves as American women increasingly exchanged employment for domesticity.

There are three main reasons that Women's Affairs Officers had a considerable impact on Japanese culture. First, local Japanese officials often interpreted their advice as orders because they were unaware that the officers lacked legislative authority. Second, Military Government Teams enjoyed considerable freedom to improvise on women's rights issues because SCAP had not provided clear guidelines on how to promote gender equality. Third, female officers suffered little interference from their male colleagues because the latter believed that feudalism hindered cross-gender cooperation. Initially, some male officers did work on women's rights. However, because they complained that Japanese women were unresponsive to them, many were reassigned and replaced by women who would be better equipped to negotiate with their Japanese counterparts.[112]

These women promoted democratic participation through skits, talks, and pamphlets. In contrast to male officers, they did not think that Japanese women were listless and unwilling to demand their rights. Instead, they concluded that Japanese women lacked the time to participate in democracy because they spent too much time on household chores. Therefore, the officers recommended time-saving appliances, easier dishes, and more practical clothing, all of which they had in the United States. Additionally, they suggested that men should take on some household chores. This is surprising because helping around the house was unusual for men in the United States too and Japanese men were suspected of being even more chauvinistic. Therefore, it indicates that Women's Affairs Officers were skeptical about the idea that Japanese men were relatively oppressive. Furthermore, it indicates that the Americanization of Japanese culture was not a main objective for them. Instead, it seems more likely that the

[112] Gleich-Anthony, "Democratizing Women," 294-300, 303-305; Takemae, *The Allied Occupation of Japan*, 119. The Military Government Teams' freedom could be compounded by their distance from Tokyo. Especially if the infrastructure was damaged (which was often the case), it often seemed more practical to improvise than to contact SCAP for instructions.

officers desired to promote gender equality, perhaps beyond what they had achieved in the United States.[113]

In preferencing women's enfranchisement over the Americanization of Japanese culture, the officers mirrored their civilian counterparts. Eileen Donovan of the CI&E's Education Division authorized a Japanese woman with an American degree in domestic science to revise the Japanese home economics curriculum. This can be viewed as the Americanization of the Japanese school curriculum, as the new home economics used American solutions to save time. For Donovan, however, the revision of the curriculum served to ease Japanese women's entrance to universities. She recalled that MacArthur had authorized that women were now eligible for the imperial universities, but that "that didn't make any difference at all because they didn't have the basic training necessary to pass the entrance exams." By the time they graduated high school, she discovered, Japanese girls were approximately two years behind boys in every subject they shared.[114]

Donovan shared her apprehension about home economics with Japanese women. Already intending to reduce the time spent on home economics, she found a Japanese woman, Matsuo Omoi, who had studied domestic science in the US. Omoi was the one who argued that she could change the curriculum so that Japanese girls "wouldn't have to spend half the time on the useless things they were doing." Stating that home economics was useless, Omoi signaled her intention to make Japanese women's education more similar to that of Japanese men rather than to Americanize it.

This view was supported by Japanese educators. Emphasizing her reluctance to impose reforms from above, Donovan recalled that she "kept [her] mouth shut" and "just listened to the Japanese women educators" until one of them trusted her enough to disclose the difficulties

[113] Gleich-Anthony, "Democratizing Women," 303; 335-336; see also McAndrew, "Lt. Ethel Weed through Her Letters," 119-121.
[114] Eileen Roberta Donovan, interview by Arthur L. Lowrie, *Foreign Affairs Oral History Project: Women Ambassadors Series*, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, April 7, 1989, 2-3.

they had faced during the war. This woman, Miss Hoshino, gave Donovan a copy of a book titled *Education for Women in the New Japan*, which was banned during the war. Hoshino confided: "You know, there isn't anything very new. We have known and wanted all these changes for many years, but we were forbidden to have them." Therefore, from Donovan's perspective, the educational reforms served Japanese women's desire to spend less time on home economics.[115]

Though it is easy to see many similarities between the version of womanhood that was promoted to the Japanese and the one that simultaneously gained traction in the United States, it is unfair to blame these similarities on female officials in Japan. These women might have shared some of the sensibilities of the time, but this does not mean that they upheld US culture as something to be emulated, nor that they felt that they could uplift Japanese women by imposing their own civilization. Instead, they seem to have been motivated by feminist sensibilities. These are evident in the officials' repeated preferencing of women's rights over other concerns. This put them at odds with colleagues accommodating Japanese conservatives or believing that feudalism prevented Japanese women from seizing the opportunities that postwar legislation had granted them.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that SCAP officials' disparate views affected reform policies. Beate Sirota Gordon was an a-typical official because she based her ideas about Japanese society on firsthand experiences from the prewar era. On the one hand, her childhood memories motivated her to look beyond the American model when drafting her part of the Japanese constitution. On the other, she trusted Japanese men even less than some of her colleagues did. Furthermore, as

[115] Eileen Roberta Donovan, interview by Ann Miller Morin, *Foreign Affairs Oral History Project: Women Ambassadors Series*, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, December 3, 1985, 13-14; Donovan, interview by Arthur L. Lowrie, 2-3.

she was convinced that Japanese politicians would fail to safeguard women's rights unless they were explicitly mandated by the constitution, she reinforced the idea that Americans had to liberate the Japanese from feudalism. This betrays her paternalistic feelings of superiority vis-à-vis the Japanese she had grown up with.

Sometimes, women without any prior experience in Japan gained an appreciation for Japanese citizens and an understanding of their plight that seemed to surpass that of Gordon. Ethel Weed of SCAP's Civil Information and Education Section supplemented her lack of expertise by consulting with Japanese women. SCAP had given the impetus for transnational cooperation by making an inventory of Japanese feminists who would be predisposed to assist in demilitarization. In time, however, the CI&E's cooperation with Japanese women exacerbated the tension between SCAP's leadership and its progressive officials. When discussing the *ie* system, debates arose between transnational groups of conservatives and progressives rather than between Americans and Japanese. The progressive bloc's success in abolishing the traditional Japanese household system reveals that lower-ranking officials could effectively oppose the conservative alliance despite rising Cold War concerns.

As we have seen, implementing progressive reforms became increasingly difficult as the reverse course intensified. Whereas the reforms of 1945 had granted universal suffrage and allowed women entrance to universities, Gordon faced opposition when defending her women's rights articles in 1946. By 1947, high-ranking SCAP officials were unwilling to push for the abolition of the *ie* system. Far from Tokyo, these changes were less overt. However, SCAP's lack of guidelines for women's enfranchisement signals that this was no longer a political priority but rather something that the market would fix. For women in the field, this meant that they had to use their own frame of reference and the requests from the Japanese to enhance women's rights. In the end, their efforts helped elevate the Cold War version American domesticity, even if they did not meet its requirements themselves.

Conclusion

This thesis has answered the question: What was the significance of the presence of female US officials to the US-occupation of Japan? It did so to better understand how their unique position as female officials of the 1940s and 1950s affected their perspectives on gender equality, Japanese society, and the occupation. Furthermore, it aimed to assess to what extent their views affected occupation policies. It has argued that female US officials negated, rejected, and subverted common perceptions of Japanese society. Based on their interactions with Japanese citizens, many rejected the idea that the Japanese were feudal in favor of arguing that they were like Americans. This was conducive to transnational cooperation.

The cooperation between progressive Americans and Japanese did not always lead to progressive policies, as the conservatives cooperated too. When high-ranking SCAP officials increasingly accommodated Japanese conservatives whose support they needed for economic and military goals, it became increasingly difficult to implement social and cultural reforms. The CI&E was relatively successful at pushing progressive reforms because of its cooperation with Japanese women. This alliance helped progressive Japanese politicians win the debate around the *ie* system. Afterwards, women's affairs were mostly handled by lower-ranking officials in the field while SCAP's leadership focused on economic reconstruction. These lower-ranking officials received few guidelines and often had to improvise. Promoting American kitchens, cuisine, clothing, and electric appliances in hopes of freeing-up Japanese women's time, they inadvertently helped construct and normalize US hegemony.

In short, US officials focusing on the enfranchisement of Japanese women helped align Japan with the US in the Cold War era by suggesting that the American way of life brought comfort, prosperity, and freedom. However, this cultural construct they promoted to Japanese women was also imposed upon themselves. As overseas career women, female US officials were in an unprecedented and privileged but increasingly precarious position. This helps

explain their affinity with Japanese women seeking greater autonomy and political influence too. As Cold War relations deteriorated and Japanese and American officials focused their efforts on averting communism, this constrained progressives' ability to enhance women's rights further than legal reforms had already accomplished.

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